

BOARDS IN GEAR

Strengthening Boards to Achieve Mission

1 Connection to Cause

SHOW

KNOW

Articulate how your mission connects to your cause.

Describe a time when board members were ambassadors for the organization.

Describe how board members have engaged key community decision makers.

Describe how you partner with another organization.

Explain why it matters that your mission is achieved.

Tell a story of someone or something helped by your organization.

Talk about what leadership means to you.

KNOW

2 Responsibilities

SHOW

KNOW

Board members have responsibilities defined by best practice and the law.

The board has a set of legal responsibilities.

The board has a set of financial responsibilities.

The board takes action to minimize risk.

The board meets legal standards of conduct: Duty of Care, Loyalty, and Obedience.

KNOW

3 Composition & Development

SHOW

KNOW

The board has a structure to recruit and select board members.

The board is made up of people committed to the mission.

Board members manage conflicts of interests.

The board has enough people serving in clear jobs.

Describe how the board represents community diversity.

Describe the role of the executive director on the board.

Describe the process to recruit, select, and orient board members.

Name when you last had a board orientation. Describe what was covered.

Name the last time board members signed a conflict of interest document.

Review your board job description.

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Describe how the board represents community diversity.

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The board is made up of people committed to the mission.

The board has a structure to recruit and select board members.

Bring Finance Unlocked for Nonprofits (FUN) to an upcoming board meeting.

KNOW

Describe why board members care about your mission.

Name how the organization stays compliant with government requirements.

Talk about the budget and 990 review process.

Describe how the board adds value to programs and services.

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4 Board Operations

SHOW

KNOW

Describe how the board supports and supervises the executive director.

Name a plan or policy that supports the staff.

Describe the last time the board evaluated itself.

Describe how board decisions get made.

KNOW

Regular, effective board meetings advance your mission.

Committees can make the board more efficient, effective, and strategic.

Clarifying roles between board and staff focuses everyone on the mission.

Strong boards evaluate, practice, and learn.

Describe what progress was made at the most recent meeting.

Describe your committee structure.

Name a plan or policy that supports the staff.

Describe the last time the board evaluated itself.

Describe how board decisions get made.

KNOW

Tell a story of how you have engaged new people in the organization's growth.

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Name a plan or policy that supports the staff.

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KNOW

Board members have a role in raising funds.

The board plans how to achieve its fundraising goals.

Board members have the tools, systems, and stories to raise funds.

The board ensures that fundraising happens in compliance with the law.

Explain your role in raising funds for your organization.

Say why fundraising matters to you.

Name the information and resources you have for fund development.

Describe where you fit in the process for engaging potential donors.

Explain why you give.

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KNOW

Organizations exist with a larger context.

Board members have a powerful voice.

Advocacy can be a tool to advance cause.

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CONNECTION TO CAUSE

Why It Matters

- It gets to the core of your existence—what you exist to change.

Key Tools

- Up-to-date communications tools for the organization

Map all of the players who have a stake in your work. Get to know them better.

Bring conversation about the context of your work into your board meetings. Ask “why does it matter?” at the right times.

Develop a deeper understanding for your work, including what makes your organization needed at all.

Explore concepts of leadership: what it means to lead an organization, what it means to lead a cause.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Why It Matters

- They provide the oversight an organization needs to grow its mission and protect its assets.
- They make intentional decisions that respond to new opportunities or threats.
- They steward the organization on behalf of the community, which is entrusting them with resources to make a difference.

Key Tools

- IRS Form 990
- Washington Secretary of State communication
- Conflict of interest policy
- Job description
- Commitment form

Discuss Duty of Care, Loyalty, and Obedience and what they mean to your board.

Get your compliance act in gear, putting key dates on your organizational calendar.

Talk about your mission and how well it is being achieved through your programs. Create a dashboard of two or three key metrics.

COMPOSITION & DEVELOPMENT

Why It Matters

- It can better provide the oversight its organization needs to grow its mission and protect its assets.
- It has the right people with the right tools in place to respond to new opportunities or challenges.
- It can bring the community into its membership.

Key Tools

- Job descriptions
- Board matrix
- Self-assessment
- Rotation policies
- Orientation schedule
- Calendar

Create a calendar that maps out recruitment, orientation, learning, and mentor activities.

Establish a Board Development Committee.

Tie board recruitment to your planning. Determine what kind of people you need to succeed in the next three years.

BOARD OPERATIONS

Why It Matters

- It has the space and structure in place to provide the oversight an organization needs to grow its mission and protect its assets.
- It makes intentional decisions that respond to new opportunities or challenges.
- It can better steward the organization on behalf of the community entrusting it with resources to make a difference.

Key Tools

- Meeting agenda
- Job descriptions
- Committee descriptions
- Strategic plan

Look at your meeting agendas. How much time is spent on the past versus the future?

Gauge whether your board meets too frequently or too infrequently to get its work done. Think about how committees play into this.

Talk about the relationship between board and staff (or lead volunteers if you have no staff).

FUNDRAISING

Why It Matters

- It ensures that fundraising is conducted in an ethical, professional manner.
- It provides the resources needed for the organization to be strategic in how it fulfills its mission.
- It expands the community supporting the mission, bringing a larger set of individuals into the cause in which it operates.

Key Tools

- Case for support
- List of current donors and/or members
- Budget
- Fundraising plan

Describe the many ways that board members can be involved in the fundraising cycle.

Look at the organization's diversification of funds and build out a plan that keeps them diversified.

Build into the board experience (meetings, events, etc.) time for storytelling.

INSTRUCTIONS

Get In Gear, Spark Conversation, Roll To Win!

Brought to you by Washington Nonprofits, Boards in Gear was designed to make learning fun as we deliver on a simple premise: that strong boards make strong nonprofits. All you need is a willing team of board leaders and the dice, and a desire to learn how to become a stronger board on behalf of your mission.

Simply “roll to win”—each section of the gear graphic is designed to spark conversation about one of the five key areas of board leadership. Roll the dice. Choose one *Show* statement and answer it. If you roll a six, then you're in luck—you can choose which area you want to explore and discuss with your team.

Boards In Gear will ignite learning in ways that open possibilities for your board. Ready to roll? Let's play!

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