

BE A BOARD EVERYONE WANTS TO JOIN

Twelve Action Steps for Nonprofit and Municipal Boards

Job Descriptions

Create brief job descriptions for each officer on the board and for members at large. This is valuable for new board members, potential volunteers, and also defining what to look for when new officers are needed. Review these job descriptions annually.

- Tips**
- Include the mission of the board, the typical time commitment, and what type of work board members are asked to do
 - Start with a template (see resources from [Boardsource \(nonprofit\)](#), and [Townshend \(town\)](#))
 - Alternative: A general board member “contract”

Board Training

Keep a running list of training and board development opportunities. Regularly encourage the board to look at this list and use their membership on the board/commission as an opportunity to learn new skills!

- Tip**
- Make sure each board member attends at least one training or conference a year (you can add this to your job descriptions).
 - Include funding for trainings in your annual budget (for towns, this could be a single line item or per committee or board).

Board Prospects List

Maintain a list (or spreadsheet) of people who might be good to invite to join your board or committee. Include their skills and connections!

- Tips**
- In a municipal setting, you can share across town boards so you don't duplicate efforts – but one person should be charged with maintaining the list.
 - Remind folks of the opportunity to add names on a regular basis, and carve out meeting time to add to the list at least 2x/year.

Onboarding Packet

Create an onboarding packet for new members with basic information about the board. Include links to any available trainings, background reading (including recent meeting minutes), basics of meeting procedures, committee responsibilities and limits of power, along with board bios and job descriptions for all officer positions.

- Tip**
- Have a board member or two offer an “orientation” to new members, going through the information in the onboarding packet, and physically visiting any relevant sites. Here's a helpful [guide to board orientation](#).

Exit Interviews

When someone leaves the board, have one or two other members sit down with them and find out what they liked and didn't like about being a board member. Here are some [sample questions](#).

- Tip**
- Review exit interviews as part of the board's annual self-evaluation (see next page).

Mentors

Pair new board members with a longer-serving mentor for their first year of service. As a board, define what mentorship for new board members will look like (and include this in your job descriptions. [Here's a helpful article](#).)

Board Self-evaluation

Once a year, take some time to reflect.

- Evaluate the board by creating a spreadsheet listing current board members' terms, and special skills and expertise. Use this to see what skills and expertise you'd like to add to the board. Here is a handy [template](#).
- Have each board member complete a self-evaluation as well. [Here is an example](#).

Tip

This can happen at an annual reorganization meeting, or you can plan a retreat.

Public Engagement

Share what you do with the public! Have an open house, or set up a table or info session at a popular local event. Bring some pictures that tell the story of some projects your board or committee has worked on &/or provide an opportunity for public input into a topic you're currently engaged in.

Tip

Invite public input and participation as often as you can, announcing public meetings on social media and town newsletters, creating surveys, or sharing open-ended questions in your email newsletter or social media posts.

Celebrate Together

At least once a year, have a potluck or a social gathering. This is not a fundraiser (although those can be fun too), but rather might center around commemorating the end of the year, a longtime board member's retirement, or new board members' arrivals. Celebrating together can truly increase the effectiveness of a team and the longevity of its volunteer members.

Tip

Make sure board development is a regular part of your board's operations. At each meeting, or once a month, include at least one board development item from this list on your agenda for action or discussion.

Board Prospect Meetings

Have current members connect 1:1 with potential members to talk about what being on the board is like and what role the potential member might play.

Governing Documents

Annually review the board's governing documents, so that board members are confident in their roles, responsibilities, and limitations. For municipal boards, these documents might include the state statute or charter that created the board, along with regulations such as open meeting law. For nonprofits, this would include bylaws and other policies (such as HR, whistleblower, or conflict of interest policies).

Board Member Bios

Have each board member write a brief bio, sharing what they find fulfilling about doing this work and what skills or experience they draw on as they do the work. Share on your website and include in onboarding materials. Review them once a year.

Tip

Write bios in first person (using "I" statements) and be specific about what's meaningful to you (not just "giving back to the community").

Suggestions

Select a member to be in charge of these actions (and planning the discussions around them, including adding them to meeting agendas). This is an excellent job for a vice chair, who often doesn't have a defined role (other than sitting in for the chair when the chair is absent).

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