

The Board Building Cycle

Step One: Identify the needs of the board: the skills, knowledge, perspectives, connections, etc., needed to implement the strategic plan. What do you have? What is missing? Identify sources of board members with the desired characteristics.

Step Two: Cultivate potential board members. Ask current board members, senior staff, and others to suggest potential candidates. Find ways to connect with those candidates, get them interested in your organization, and keep them informed of your progress.

Step Three: Recruit prospects. Describe why a prospective member is wanted and needed. Explain expectations and responsibilities of board members, and don't minimize requirements. Invite questions, elicit their interest, and find out if they would be prepared to serve.

Step Four: Orient new board members both to the organization – explaining the history, programs, pressing issues, finances, facilities, bylaws, and organizational chart – and to the board- describing committees, board member responsibilities, and lists of board members and key staff members.

Step Five: Engage all board members. Discover their interests and availability. Involve them in committees or task forces. Assign them a board "buddy." Solicit feedback. Hold everyone accountable. Express appreciation for work well done.

Step Six: Educate the board. Provide information concerning your mission area. Promote exploration of issues facing the board. Hold retreats and encourage board development activities by sending board members to seminars and workshops. Don't hide difficulties.

Step Seven: Rotate board members. Establish term limits. Do not automatically re-elect for an additional term; consider the board's needs and the board's performance. Explore advisability of resignation with members who are not active. Develop new leadership.

Step Eight: Evaluate the board as a whole, as well as individual board members. Examine how the board and chief executive work as a team. Engage the board in assessing its own performance. Identify ways in which to improve. Encourage individual self-assessment.

Step Nine: Celebrate! Recognize victories and progress, no matter how small. Appreciate individual contributions to the board, the organization, and the community. Make room for humor and a good laugh.

Source: *The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members*, The National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 2000