



The Board Doctor's Annual Checkup

Board Governance and Best Practice Self-Assessment
Updated and Revised

Instructions: Please place an X in the box that most nearly corresponds with your view on each statement where SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral or Don't Know, A=Agree, and SA=Strongly Agree. In the right-hand column mark a "Y" for any item you believe represents an actual problem being experienced by the group right now. Use the comment box below each set of questions to provide any additional information that will help the group assess its current status.

Section 1: Legal Requirements, Bylaws, Board Policies						
	SD	D	N	A	SA	Priority? Y/N
1. The board conducts a periodic review of its compliance with federal and state laws.						
2. The board or a duly-designated committee reviews and certifies the accuracy of the IRS 990 each year before it is filed.						
3. The board completes and files any state-required registration and disclosures including those related to charitable solicitation laws.						
4. The board adheres to its written bylaws.						
5. The board has reviewed the bylaws in the last three years.						
6. The bylaws provide for limited terms for board members and officers.						
7. The bylaws provide a process for removing a board member when necessary.						
8. The bylaws provide a process for handling urgent matters between meetings.						
9. The board adheres to a legally-compliant Document Retention and Destruction Policy that addresses electronic as well as paper records.						
10. The board adheres to a Conflict of Interest Policy requiring board members to disclose potential conflicts and to abstain from discussion and voting.						
Comments:						

Section 2: Board Role and Responsibilities

Board members often wear many hats, and perform a variety of volunteer functions that are needed but are not necessarily a board function. The questions in this section refer to the board's governance responsibilities - those duties that cannot be delegated to staff or other volunteers.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Priority? Y/N
11. The individual and collective responsibilities and expectations of board members are clearly spelled out in a board member position description.						
12. Board members accept their fiduciary obligation to the organization and its donors, upholding their legal Duties of Care, Loyalty and Obedience.						
13. Board members make a priority of preparing for and attending board and committee meetings.						
14. All board members participate in crafting the organization's values, goals, policies and plans, making decisions governing the organization.						
15. The board establishes an annual budget reflecting the organization's priorities, goals and values.						
16. All board members are actively involved in securing adequate financial resources to fund the budget.						
17. The board participates in identifying its board development needs and recruiting potential board members who might meet those needs.						
18. If the organization employs staff, the board clearly defines its expectations in written documents.						
19. The distinct roles and responsibilities of board and staff are understood and respected by all.						
20. The board conducts a regular self-assessment of its governance function.						

Comments:

Section 3: Board Composition and Engagement

To be effective, a board of directors must be comprised of a well-rounded set of diverse individuals who between them have the skills needed to guide the organization in the achievement of its unique mission and vision. All board members should be engaged, involved, and contributing to group success.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Priority? Y/N
21. The board is comprised of individuals with the requisite skills, characteristics, interests, and experiences to perform the board's functions.						
22. The board composition represents the diversity in the community in terms of gender, race, age, geographic distribution, and stakeholder interests.						
23. The board has enough productive members to effectively govern and fulfill its responsibilities.						
24. A governance committee is responsible for board evaluation, recruitment, onboarding, and development/review of governance policies.						
25. Each new board member receives a board-led orientation to the organization including its policies, expectations, financials, practices, and history.						
26. A regular process is in place for veteran board members to mentor newer board members.						
27. Board members communicate with each other in a way that builds trust and encourages full participation in discussion and decision-making.						
28. Board members engage in regular opportunities to participate in training and ongoing education.						
29. All board members annually self-evaluate their own performance as board members.						
30. The board anticipates its leadership needs and develops board members for leadership roles.						

Comments:

Section 4: Board Structure and Meetings

Because form follows function, no two boards of directors will be structured exactly the same way – unless they have identical missions, visions, contexts, and group dynamics. Boards should make sure their officer roles, committee responsibilities and meeting formats advance their goals.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Priority? Y/N
31. The roles, responsibilities and authorities of the officers are clearly spelled out in written position descriptions and reviewed regularly.						
32. The committee structure contributes to effective board governance and decision-making.						
33. The structure and responsibilities of each committee are clearly outlined in written policies.						
34. The board's committees are active and responsible for the work in their area.						
35. All committees, including any Executive Committee, report their activities to the board.						
36. Meeting agendas and supporting materials are provided to board members prior to each meeting.						
37. In meetings, adequate time is given for free and full discussion of important matters.						
38. Minutes are prepared for each meeting which are approved by the board and held in a central location as the corporate record.						
39. Boardroom discussions are focused on policy, planning, evaluation, fiscal responsibility, and other important long-term matters rather than on day-to-day operations and events.						
40. The board chair effectively facilitates to keep each meeting on track and productive.						

Comments:

Section 5: Fiduciary Responsibility

The board of directors is responsible for the effective and prudent investment of organizational resources. Even when a great treasurer or staff member is on the job, all board members are obligated to understand and support financial decision-making, and address any concerns that arise.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Priority? Y/N
41. The budget is thoroughly discussed by the board before it is adopted.						
42. The board regularly receives financial reports (Year to Date Actuals/Balance Sheet) that are timely, understandable, and support decision-making.						
43. Financial reports clearly distinguish between unrestricted general funds and any restricted, program-specific funds such as grants.						
44. The treasurer or another board member is actively involved in preparing financial reports.						
45. The board discusses discrepancies between the approved budget and actual income or spending.						
46. The board reviews program effectiveness to insure an appropriate return on investment.						
47. The organization has and follows written financial management policies addressing internal controls, monitoring, whistleblowing, and investments.						
48. The organization's financial policies are regularly reviewed and approved by the board.						
49. The board requires and reviews an annual audit by an external accounting firm OR [for smaller organizations] provides for an internal audit performed by board members not ordinarily having access to financial records and accounts.						
50. The board ensures that the organization carries sufficient and appropriate insurance policies.						

Comments:

Section 6: Planning and Evaluation

A key responsibility – indeed, a key fiduciary obligation – of the board is to ensure that both programs and organizational health are planned for and monitored. Even when a professional staff is in place, the board owns the organization’s key strategies and goals, and is accountable for outcomes.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Priority? Y/N
51. The board has reviewed its mission statement in the last 3 years for appropriateness and relevance.						
52. There is a clearly-articulated vision of what the organization will be like in 5- or 10-years.						
53. The organization has written document(s) that clearly describe its mission, vision, values, long-term goals and short-term objectives.						
54. The plan outlines specific objectives for the board, officers, and committees as well as staff.						
55. The board regularly reviews the progress on its stated goals, and makes adjustments as needed.						
56. The organization’s measures for successful programs, services, and operations are clear to all.						
57. The board reviews performance measures and outcomes data to monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of programs and makes adjustments.						
58. The board has information, in addition to staff reports, by which to evaluate programs.						
59. There are written succession plans in place for the board’s top leadership positions.						
60. The organization has a written plan for its public relations, marketing or outreach objectives, with clearly-defined roles, messages, and timelines.						

Comments:

Section 7: The Board as Employer

If your organization does not have paid staff, please skip to Section 8. For those who do, this section will help determine if the board is adequately performing its role as an employer without micro-managing. As used here, "CEO" is the Executive Director or other top staff, answering directly to the board.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Priority? Y/N
61. The board approved an Employment Manual with policies for staff selection, training, promotion, wages and benefits, leave, standards of conduct, philosophy of discipline, and grievance procedures.						
62. The board adopted and annually reviews a written job description for the CEO that clearly spells out her/his responsibilities.						
63. The board completes an annual performance evaluation for the CEO which is based on clearly identified expectations spelled out in plans, policies, and position descriptions.						
64. The board annually reviews and updates the salary and benefits packages of the CEO and employees.						
65. Personnel files are maintained in a secure, legally-compliant manner.						
66. The board adopted and regularly reviews its written succession plan for the CEO.						
67. The board reviews contracts and monitors performance of any independent contractors employed by the organization.						
68. The board provides the CEO with adequate resources and authority to achieve goals and meet stated expectations.						
69. A climate of mutual trust and respect exists between the board and CEO.						
70. The board allows and provides the CEO professional growth and development opportunities.						

Comments:

Section 8: Fundraising

Fundraising is a top tier responsibility of the board. If the organization needs money to achieve its goals and meet its budget, then all board members should participate in any way they are able. Those who cannot or will not participate should step down and serve the organization in a different capacity.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Priority? Y/N
71. The organization has adequate resources to fund its programs and operations.						
72. The organization has a written plan for fundraising that outlines roles and responsibilities of board, staff and volunteers.						
73. The organization has a written plan in place that outlines the case for support and identifies how it will identify, cultivate, solicit and steward donors.						
74. The board understands and supports the organization's income strategies and activities.						
75. There is a written agreement concerning any expectation that board members personally give.						
76. Board members are aware of grants received, any restrictions or requirements in the award contract and how the funds are tracked in the financials.						
77. The board adheres to a written Gift Acceptance policy outlining the conditions under which it would not accept a specific donation.						
78. Board members are able to confidently articulate why potential donors should give.						
79. The organization's budget provides sufficient funds for fundraising (printing, mail, events, etc.)						
80. The organization regularly solicits donations from board members, staff, volunteers, and members.						

Comments:

Section 9: Volunteer Programs

Most nonprofit organizations employ volunteers (other than board members) to deliver programs and assist with operations. Even when volunteer management is a staff function, the board still has an interest in protecting organizational assets through effective policy-setting and monitoring.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Priority? Y/N
81. The organization has a policy manual or handbook governing its volunteer program.						
82. The organization has a strategy for outreach and volunteer recruitment.						
83. The organization effectively screens, selects, and matches volunteers with responsibilities.						
84. The organization conducts background checks on volunteers who handle money or who are around vulnerable people (children, elderly, disabled, etc.)						
85. The organization clarifies roles, and re-trains and supports volunteers throughout their tenure.						
86. The organization's budget contains sufficient resources for developing/supporting volunteers.						
87. The organization's leaders are readily available to volunteers and welcome dialogue and input.						
88. The organization has a method to track the outputs and outcomes of volunteer contributions.						
89. The organization monitors the quality of the volunteer experience.						
90. The organization is able to articulate volunteer contributions and impact.						

Comments:

Section 10: Advocacy

Advocacy is the act of standing up and speaking out for what your constituents, customers, or organization needs from others, especially government agencies and legislative bodies. Fundamental to mission success, most national organizations now consider advocacy to be a core board function.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Priority? Y/N
91. The organization adheres to a written policy on when and how it will get involved in public issues.						
92. Garnering support through advocacy/lobbying is part of the organization's strategic thinking about how to achieve its mission.						
93. Board members see advocacy as an important part of their role in fulfilling the organization's mission.						
94. The board is in compliance with laws governing legislative advocacy and lobbying.						
95. The organization's budget contains sufficient resources for advocacy activities and carefully tracks advocacy-related expenditures.						
96. Board members are aware of existing and proposed public policies that have a positive or negative effect on the organization and its mission.						
97. The board has candid conversations about public policy and legislation affecting the mission.						
98. Board members actively engage in conversations with decision-makers about public policies that affect the organization and its mission.						
99. The organization actively participates in coalitions with other organizations that are helping to advance its advocacy strategy.						
100. The organization has the infrastructure to keep its members informed of public policy changes that affect the organization and its mission.						

Comments: