

Working with Nonprofit Organizations in Community Settings: Governance, Board Officer Descriptions

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Every Board of Directors should choose officers to run the affairs of the board and to be in charge of essential and well-defined duties. These officers are vital to the functioning of the organization. According to Florida Statutes, each board is required to have at least three members. If there are more board members, then officers should be chosen from membership of the board. When boards meet to select their officers or to determine which of the offices the selected board members will take, consideration should be given to experience, expertise, commitment, and interests. Board officers will be required to make substantial commitments of time and money to the organization

The descriptions of the Board of Directors and the various offices can be found in many sources and they are all very similar. The following are derived from BoardSource (2006). These descriptions are general guidelines only—each organization will need to determine its own accordingly.

Descriptions of Board Officers

Board Chair

- Provides leadership to the board, helps to develop policy for the board's operations
- Chairs the meetings of the board
- Appoints Committee chair persons in consultation with other board members
- Serves as ex officio member of committees and attends meetings when appropriate
- Works with Chief Executive on any issues of concern to the board
- Monitors financial planning and financial reports
- Plays a leading role in fundraising plan and activities
- Formally evaluates work of Chief Executive

Vice Chair

- Performs Chair responsibilities when Board Chair is not available

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- Reports to Board Chair
- Works closely with Board Chair and Chief Executive
- Works with Board Chair to implement officer transitions

Committee Chair

- Ensures committee members have the information needed to do their jobs
- Handles the logistics of the committee's work
- Reports to Board Chair
- Reports on the work of the committee to the board
- Works closely with the Chief Executive and other staff as agreed to by Board Chair and CEO
- Sets agenda for committee meetings, presides at meetings, and assigns work to committee members

Board Member

- Attends all regularly-scheduled board meetings
- Makes serious commitment to participate actively in committee work
- Volunteers for and accepts assignments and completes them thoroughly and on time
- Prepares for meetings, stays informed about committee matters, reviews minutes and reports
- Builds a collegial working relationship with other board members
- Participates in fundraising campaigns/activities for the organization

Secretary

- Maintains records of the board and ensures effective management of organization's records
- Manages minutes of board meetings
- Ensures minutes are distributed to members shortly after each meeting
- Is knowledgeable of legal documents (articles, bylaws, IRS letters, etc.)

Treasurer

- Manages finances of the organization
- Administers fiscal matters of the organization
- Works with audit committee as appropriate
- Provides annual budget to the board for members' approval
- Ensures board review of financial policies and procedures

Chief Executive—Expectations of Board of Directors

The nonprofit organization must decide whether or not to make the chief executive a member of the board. Some organizations do because they think it strengthens ties within the organization. Others do not because they feel the board should have a more distinct role in the organization. It is best for the nonprofit to examine its mission, vision, and board policies to decide. The description of the Chief Executive's responsibilities will vary by organization although most nonprofits have some standard expectations for this position. The following description is adapted from *The Complete Guide to Nonprofit Management* (Wilbur, 2000, page 45):

- Provides leadership and policy guidance for the organization
- Manages and directs all operations, programs, and activities
- Implements the policy decisions and directives of the board
- Reports to the Board of Directors and keeps the board fully informed of all organizational activities

- Approves all financial disbursements and otherwise monitors all financial and accounting activities
- Prepares annual budgets with assistance of treasurer and finance committee
- Hires, supervises, and evaluates all staff
- Maintains organizational records, files, documents, and archives
- Represents the organization to other organizations, the media, and the public at large
- Maintains confidentiality of sensitive information

References

BoardSource (2006). Board roles and responsibilities. [Online] Retrieved on June 25, 2006 from <http://www.boardsource.org>.

Wilbur, R.H. (Ed.). (2000). *The complete guide to nonprofit management (2nd ed., p. 45)*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.