



Effective Boards: So, You Want to Be President

March 26, 2024
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Geekdom Event Centre

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Effective Boards Series 2024 Description



Program Agenda: So, You Want to Be President

Introductions: Trainers, Sponsors, Attendees — Leilah Powell

I'm the Board Chair. What does that mean? — Leslie Palmer

Fireside Chat with Two New Board Chairs — Leslie Palmer

Panelists: Hondo Webb, TEAMability & Morgan Jones, Students of Service

- What do you wish you knew before accepting the position?
- What are the most important skills you have used?
- What have you learned since assuming this role about board management and organizational governance?

Break (20 minutes)

The Seasoned Leader —Nancy Hard

- What are the most important aspects of the Board Chair role?
- What challenges and successes have you experienced in managing the board?
- Knowing what you do now, what might you do differently?

The CEO / Board Chair Partnership — Leilah Powell

Panelists: Becky Dinnin, Social Venture Partners San Antonio; Gilbert Gonzalez, San Antonio Board of REALTORS; Mark Carmona, City of San Antonio; Megan Legacy, SA Hope Center

- How is your organization's Board Chair Chosen?
- How have your multiple roles informed each other?
- How can Chairs and CEOs build relationships? Why is that important, and what are the biggest challenges?
- How can staff help board members build skills? Is this a sensitive topic?
- How can we ensure that the distinction between governance and management is respected?
- Who's doing the succession planning?
- What is one key piece of advice you would give?

Q&A

Evaluations

Effective Boards Series 2024

**Upholding
the Public Trust** Thursday, February 15
3 – 4:30 p.m.
Zoom

**What Does a
Treasurer Do?** Tuesday, February 27
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Geekdom

**So, You Want to be
President** Tuesday, March 26
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Geekdom

**Why Do We Need a
Secretary?** Tuesday, April 30
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Geekdom

**Funders' Perspectives
on Effective Boards** May
Zoom

**Representing Your
Organization** August
In-Person

**Recruiting & Orienting
Board Members** September
Zoom

**Fundraising for
Board Members** October
Zoom

**Board Member
Journey** November
In-Person

LISC SAN ANTONIO



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LISC SAN ANTONIO

ABOUT

Local Initiatives Support Corporation

Together with residents and partners, LISC's 38 local offices help forge resilient and inclusive communities of opportunity across America.

MISSION

Working in community to build wealth, health and power

STRATEGY

Expanding local partners' capacity
Advocating for & leading systems change

VALUES

People are at the center of our work
We move at the speed of trust

VISION

A community in which residents are
empowered to achieve their aspirations

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AGENDA

So, You Want to Be President

- Introductions
- I'm the Board Chair. What does that mean?
- Fireside Chat with Two New Board Chairs

Break

- The Seasoned Leader
- The CEO / Board Chair Partnership Panel
- Q&A

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Presenters & Speakers

Leslie Palmer

Managing Consultant & Founding Principal – M. Leslie Palmer Consulting Group

Hondo Webb

VP Commercial Loan Officer – Lone Star Capital Bank
Board Chair – TEAMability

Morgan Jones

Director Transformative Leadership – Spurs Sports & Entertainment
Board Chair – Students of Service

Nancy Hard

Vice Chair – Prospera Housing Community Services
Former CEO – Family Service

Becky Dinnin

Executive Director – Social Venture Partners San Antonio
Board Member – Triple H Equitherapy

Gilbert Gonzalez

President & CEO – San Antonio Board of REALTORS

Mark Carmona

Chief Housing Officer – City of San Antonio
Former CEO – Haven for Hope

Megan Legacy

CEO – San Antonio Hope Center
Interim Board Chair – Prosper West San Antonio

Leilah Powell (Moderator)

Executive Director – LISC San Antonio
Former Board President – Close to Home

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2024 EFFECTIVE BOARDS

LISC San Antonio



WELCOME TO SO YOU WANT TO BE PRESIDENT

While the board as a whole is responsible for effectively governing an organization, the officers are responsible for leading and operating the board. They ensure the necessary tasks are completed smoothly and promote a positive board culture.



TODAY'S CONVERSATION



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KNOW THY MISSION, VISION & VALUES

- Know what problem you are trying to solve.
- Know how you go about solving that problem.
- Know the values your organization abides by.

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ACCOUNTABILITY

America's charitable nonprofits rely on the public trust to do their work and advance their missions. That is why it is so important that charitable nonprofits continuously earn the public's trust through their commitment to ethical principles, transparency, and accountability.

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GOVERNANCE VS MANAGEMENT

"Governance" is the strategic task of setting the organization's goals, direction, limitations and accountability frameworks.

"Management" is the allocation of resources and overseeing the day-to-day operations of the organization.

One way to think about this is that Governance determines the "What?" - what the organization does and what it should become in the future. Management determines the "How?" - how the organization will reach those goals and aspirations.

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BOARD DEVELOPMENT

- Clarity of roles
- Transparency on time commitment
- Recruit for skill set as well as passion
- Build a bench
- Seek professional development
- Work within a committee structure

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SKILLS & RESPONSIBILITIES

SKILLS

- collaboration
- commitment to service
- communication
- conflict resolution
- finance
- fundraising
- leadership
- listening
- passion
- relationship building
- stewardship

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Preside over board meetings
- Liaison between board and CEO/ED
- Set board priorities and agendas
- Coordinate CEO/ED performance review
- Partner to CEO/ED for fundraising, and carrying out board directives and policies
- Assure recruitment, development and contribution of board members

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DELEGATION & COMMITTEES

Don't go it alone! Engagement of board members is a key indicator of success. Accountability matters.

Committees - varies by needs of organization

- Executive: Officers
- Standing: Fundraising, Finance, Governance, Communications
- Ad-Hoc: temporary such as an event

Small board model:

- Governance (Executive): board development, meetings and performance
- Internal: finance, investments, personnel
- External: fundraising, marketing, communications, PR



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Fireside Chat with New Board Chairs

What do you wish you knew before accepting the position?

What are the most important skills you have used?

What have you learned since assuming this role about board management and organizational governance?

Effective Boards: So, You Want to Be President

Seasoned Leader Perspective

Nancy P. Hard

3/26/2024

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Most Important Aspects

- Leadership and Management
- Board Education
- Accountability to Mission, Board Team, CEO/Director
- Conflicts of Interest
- Intentionality of Recruitment and Succession

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Successes/Challenges Might Do Differently

- Setting the tone for your leadership – Expectations and Priorities
- Officers are prepared for their role
- CEO-Board Partnership
- Managing communications and conflicts

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The CEO / Board Chair Partnership

- How is your organization's Board Chair Chosen?
- How have your multiple roles informed each other?
- How can Chairs and CEOs build relationships? Why is that important, and what are the biggest challenges?
- How can staff help board members build skills? Is this a sensitive topic?
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- Who's doing the succession planning?
- What is one key piece of advice you would give?

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BOARD CHAIR PREP

Are you about to become your organization's board chair? Here are eight things you need to do now to prepare for this key role.

1. REVIEW THE JOB DESCRIPTION.

As the senior volunteer leader of the organization, the board chair is responsible for leading the board in the oversight and support responsibilities that are critical to good governance. The chair must be knowledgeable about the organization — its mission, vision, values, programs, services, constituents, and resources — and understand its place in the larger framework of the community and the still larger sphere of local and national peer organizations. The chair's role is usually defined in the bylaws, but a separate job description should outline the duties in more detail. *See sample on page 2.*

2. CARVE OUT TIME IN YOUR PERSONAL SCHEDULE.

As you undoubtedly know, being the board chair is a considerable time commitment. It should not consume your life, however. Be cognizant of how much time you can commit to the organization and then achieve and maintain a balance.

3. CONSIDER CREATING A TIMETABLE TO ORGANIZE THE TIME YOU DEVOTE TO THE POSITION.

Using a timetable will help you organize your time and manage the expected tasks and responsibilities. The timetable can be divided into monthly, quarterly, annual, and periodic tasks. Adding board meetings and other organizational events to the timetable will help you visualize the time commitment and its ebb and flow at various times of the year. The list of tasks need not be all-inclusive because it will change as the organization responds strategically to needs and opportunities.

4. MEET WITH THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OR CHIEF EXECUTIVE TO DISCUSS:

- Their expectations of the board chair and the working relationship, including professional boundaries.
- Vision for the organization
- Their personal goals as chief executive
- The status of the strategic plan or framework
- Current and evolving relationships in the community
- Trends affecting the organization
- Challenges and opportunities facing the organization
- Organization's financial health

5. MEET WITH THE FORMER BOARD CHAIR TO DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING:

- Time commitment
- Challenging issues that arose during their tenure
- Unfinished board business
- Their working relationship with the chief executive, board members, community leaders, donors, and other community stakeholders

6. REACH OUT TO EVERY BOARD MEMBER TO DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING:

- Why they joined the board
- How their board service is going
- What they are looking for in a chair

- Board meeting effectiveness — how could meetings be improved?
- Secure their support
- Thank them for their service

7. IF NECESSARY, STRENGTHEN YOUR COMMUNICATION AND MEETING FACILITATION SKILLS.

Strong communication skills are essential to the role of the board chair, who facilitates board meetings and represents the organization in different settings and situations. Some circumstances — such as board meetings — require the chair to create an atmosphere in which everyone is invited to share their opinions through facilitated discussion and dialogue. In other contexts — such as meetings with funders — you may be asked to represent the organization and communicate on its behalf. We often assume that anyone who becomes a board chair already is a good communicator, but that is not necessarily the case.

8. SET GOALS.

A good way to help you, and, in turn, the board set goals is to assess the board's current performance. By doing so, you will be able to identify the board's strengths and weaknesses and then set board development priorities and goals. It will help you determine where to focus your energies as you begin your tenure.

SAMPLE BOARD CHAIR JOB DESCRIPTION

The board chair is the senior volunteer leader of XYZ and presides at all meetings of the board, the executive committee, and other meetings as required.

Key Responsibilities

- **Policy and Planning:** Works with the chief executive and the board to establish the guiding principles, policies, and mission for the organization.
- **Budget and Finances:** Works with the appropriate board members and committees to oversee the budget of the organization and assumes ultimate responsibility for the integrity of its finances.
- **Board Meetings:** Leads and facilitates board meetings by making sure that the agenda is closely followed, every board member has the opportunity to participate in discussions, and the board uses proper decision-making procedures.
- **Board Committees:** Serves as an ex-officio member of all board committees and works to structure a committee system that contributes to the board's overall effectiveness.
- **Board Development:** Oversees efforts to build and maintain a strong board by setting goals and expectations for the board, cultivating leadership among individual board members, and working with the governance committee to make board development a priority.
- **Board Recruitment and Orientation:** Works with the governance committee to identify and recruit new board members who bring important skills, knowledge, and diversity to the board.
- **Board Evaluation:** Works to make sure the board has opportunities to reflect regularly on how well it is meeting its responsibilities to the organization — in part by overseeing a board self-assessment every two to three years.
- **Staff Oversight, Compensation, and Evaluation:** Oversees the hiring, evaluation, and compensation of the chief executive; and ensures the existence of a succession plan for the chief executive's position.
- **Fundraising:** Guides the work of the board to secure funds for the organization by overseeing the development of fundraising policies, encouraging and supporting the fundraising efforts of the development committee and individual board members, soliciting contributions from board members and selected outside contributors, and setting an example by contributing their own funds to the organization.
- **Public Relations, Communications, and Advocacy.** Speaks for the board in the event of a controversy or crisis; oversees the development of communications policies; and works to promote the work of the organization in conversations, speeches, interviews, and other day-to-day activities.

BOARD CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

A strong partnership between the chief executive and board chair is essential to leading an effective organization. When the relationship goes awry, it's often due to confusion over individual responsibilities.

In general, the chief executive's role is focused on management and working with staff to implement programs and initiatives in support of the mission. The board chair is responsible for governance and oversight, leading the board in evaluating the organization's work from a macro-perspective and ensuring that the work advances the mission in an ethical and legal manner.

But how do these general roles manifest in key responsibilities, such as fundraising or board meetings? Read on to find out.

POLICY AND PLANNING

Board Chair/Governance	Shared	Chief Executive/Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops and/or reviews guiding principles (mission, vision, values) and policies Ensures effective planning, overseeing board involvement in development and approval of strategic plan Monitors organization's programs and services in support of the mission and strategic plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic planning and program evaluation Mission impact Organizational growth and sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commits to and carries out mission Provides administrative support for board policymaking Engages the board in planning Implements strategic plan Monitors the quality and effectiveness of individual programs, providing board with data and information needed to evaluate program effectiveness, impact, and outcomes

BUDGET AND FINANCES

Board Chair/Governance	Shared	Chief Executive/Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures adequate financial resources; protects assets; provides financial oversight Reviews and approves annual budget Oversees annual audit process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fiscal stewardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepares and proposes budget to board Manages programs according to board-adopted financial policies and budget guidelines

FUNDRAISING AND DEVELOPMENT

Board Chair/Governance	Shared	Chief Executive/Management
<p>Maximizes board member participation in resource development; oversees approval of fundraising plan</p> <p>Attends fundraising events, cultivates donors, and makes a personal contribution</p> <p>Solicits contributions from board members</p>	<p>Solicit contributions from outside donors</p> <p>Engage board members in fundraising activities</p> <p>Evaluate effectiveness of fundraising strategies</p>	<p>Develops fundraising plan and coordinates overall fundraising efforts</p> <p>Ensures staff support for board fundraising</p> <p>Updates board on development efforts</p>

BOARD MEETINGS

Board Chair	Shared	Chief Executive
<p>Leads and facilitates board meetings</p>	<p>Develop meeting agenda</p>	<p>Ensures that board members have necessary information and meeting materials</p> <p>Attends meetings, except specific executive sessions</p>

COMMITTEE WORK

Board Chair	Shared	Chief Executive
<p>Ensures that board has effective committee and task force structure</p> <p>Appoints board committee and task force chairs</p> <p>Serves as ex officio, non-voting member of all committees, except the governance committee when discussing elections</p> <p>Keep board informed of committee and task force work</p>	<p>Develop and review committee structure and individual committees to ensure alignment with mission and strategic goals</p> <p>Identify committee members</p>	<p>Sits in on appropriate committee meetings as non-voting member</p> <p>Ensures that committee members have staff support and needed materials/information</p>

BOARD RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Board Chair	Shared	Chief Executive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures strategic board building and recruitment Sets goals and expectations for the board Cultivates leadership among individual board members Prioritizes board development, including orientation and educational sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify skills, expertise, and attributes needed for the board Keep all board members engaged in the work of the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops and sustains strong working relationships with board members Shares appropriate information to keep board informed and educated about ongoing organizational activities and changes in the field in which the organization works Identifies potential new board members and participates in orientation

BOARD ASSESSMENT

Board Chair	Shared	Chief Executive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures regular opportunities for assessment Oversees comprehensive board assessment every two years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate assessment results and identify board development opportunities in collaboration with governance committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assists board assessment process

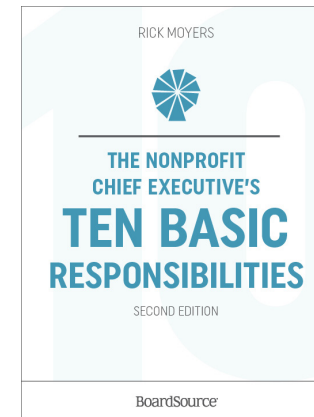
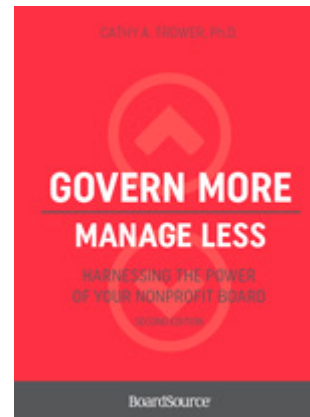
STAFF OVERSIGHT, COMPENSATION, EVALUATION

Board Chair	Shared	Chief Executive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversees hiring, compensation, and evaluation of chief executive Ensures chief executive succession plan exists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide general oversight to ensure strong and effective staff resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversees and evaluates all staff Sets staff salaries within budget constraints

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Board Chair	Shared	Chief Executive
<p>Promotes the work of the organization and encourages board members to do so as well; advocates for the organization’s mission with public policy makers</p> <p>Speaks for the board when a controversy or crisis arises</p>	<p>With full board and staff, develop message that conveys the organization’s mission effectively and can be used consistently by everyone within the organization</p> <p>Public policy advocacy</p>	<p>Serves as public face and official spokesperson for the organization</p> <p>Coordinates public relations and communications and advocacy efforts</p>

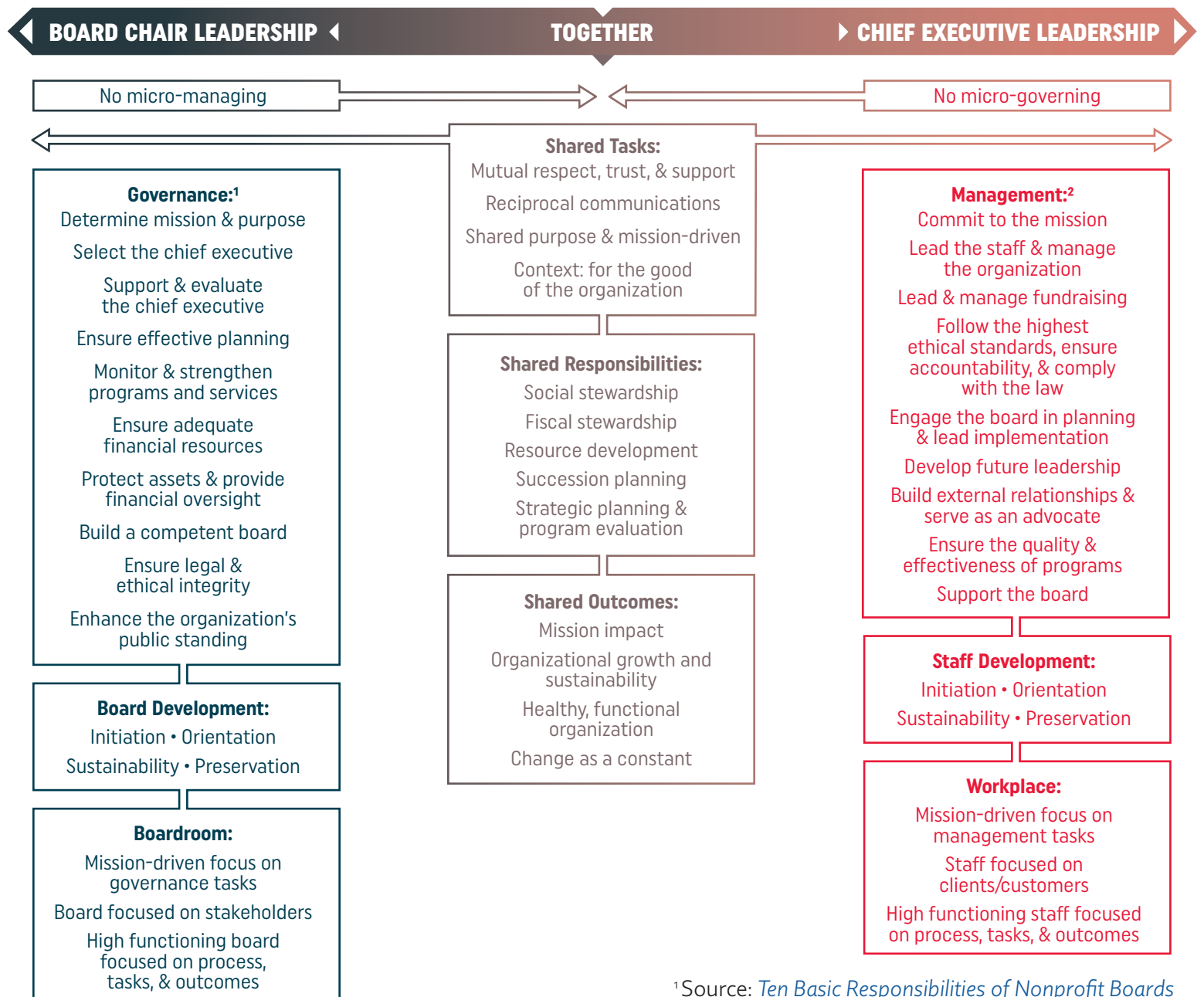
RESOURCES



Please note that this delineation of roles and responsibilities is recommended practice and may not apply to all organizations, including those small and new organizations without staff.

THE BOARD CHAIR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE PARTNERSHIP

The partnership of the board chair and chief executive provides a structure for accomplishing the tasks of the organization. Governance and management complement and support each other — together focused on mission through different perspectives and actions. The partnership itself is critical in providing a communications headquarter for sharing information, addressing issues, and planning next steps appropriate to the individual and collective responsibilities.



¹ Source: *Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards*

² Source: *The Nonprofit Chief Executive's Ten Basic Responsibilities*

Board Chair and Chief Executive Communications | FAQs

What makes exceptional organizations exceptional? One of the key ingredients is a constructive partnership between the board chair and the chief executive. But, just like any relationship, building and maintaining the board chair–chief executive partnership calls for hard work by both parties — and communication is key. Communication is how we exchange information and ideas — two things every board chair and every chief executive need to do their jobs. Knowing when, where, how, and how much to communicate can make a big difference in enabling a strong board chair–chief executive partnership. This resource featuring frequently asked questions is designed to help.

Q: How often should the board chair and chief executive communicate?

A: Frequent communication is important. A regular weekly meeting ensures both leaders stay informed and up to date on any ongoing issues or projects. Identifying and scheduling a set time for the weekly meeting enables both the chair and the CEO to prepare in advance for the meetings and removes much of the administrative burden of trying to find free time on each individual's calendar.

Q: Where should the board chair and CEO meet?

A: If possible, at least one meeting each month should be in-person — over breakfast, lunch, coffee, or inside the office. When that is not possible, the board chair and CEO should consider video conferencing. Meetings taking place between in-person or video meetings can occur via phone. No matter the exact location, meetings should take place in a quiet space where both the board chair and chief executive are comfortable and confidentiality can be maintained.

Q: Should there be an agenda for the meetings? What should be discussed?

A: Even for one-on-one meetings, an agenda can help both individuals prepare in advance and cover all pertinent topics. The chief executive should take the lead in creating the agenda, but should include input from the board chair. As with board meeting materials, the agenda should be sent in advance of the meeting to ensure that both sides have adequate time to prepare.

Meetings can cover any issues that either the board chair or chief executive would like to discuss — updates, ideas, concerns, or suggestions. The chief executive should not be afraid to discuss potential issues facing the organization. Some CEOs find it useful to share “the things that keep them awake at night.” This type of information can help the board chair understand where the chief executive's “head is at” and offer feedback, resources, and support. The board chair should not hold back any concerns relayed from the board. Discussing potential challenges early on allows the problem to be dealt with immediately and minimizes the chances of a small issue turning into a crisis. Additionally, meetings can help clarify any questions in regard to organizational leadership and individual responsibilities.

Q: What if there are no updates for the next meeting?

A: Even if there is not a specific agenda item that needs to be discussed, the board chair and chief executive should still have a weekly meeting. Some meetings may be shorter than others, but keeping lines of communication open to ensure both individuals are on the same page and up to date on organizational activities is important.

Q: Should the board chair and chief executive be communicating outside of scheduled meetings? How?

A: Yes. Emails and phone calls are a great way to share quick updates or ask clarifying questions. If an urgent matter comes up or a crisis occurs, the board chair and chief executive should connect as soon as possible and mutually decide how best to proceed.

Q: Are there occasions in which the board chair and chief executive should meet more frequently than usual?

A: There may be situations, such as the weeks leading up to a board retreat or the first board meeting focused on creating a new strategic plan/framework, in which the board chair and chief executive naturally begin communicating more frequently than what is typical. However, both sides should be wary of over-communication leading to micromanagement. Touching base when necessary is important, but analyzing every organizational decision places an undue burden on both leaders.

Q: Any tips for chief executives and board chairs who have just started working together?

A: Early on in their partnership, it is important for both the chair and chief executive to establish expectations of one another in areas such as communication preferences, frequency of reporting and meetings, and shared and individual priorities. Starting off the relationship by taking time to understand each other’s working style and approach to their roles builds the foundation for a mutually beneficial and successful partnership.

It can also be helpful for the board chair and chief executive to create an accountability pact at the beginning of their relationship. The agreement can include issues such as scheduling weekly meetings, providing feedback on the chief executive’s performance, or expectations of functions in which the board chair is expected to participate. The accountability pact can be used to guide future meetings.

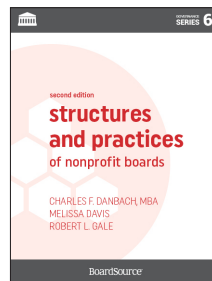
Q: What if the board chair and chief executive do not have a good relationship?

A: Not all individuals naturally click with one another. Some relationships, simply by nature of personal preferences or working styles, take more work than others. That being said, almost any relationship can be improved with commitment from both sides. They should strive to find common ground from which to operate and to strike a balance between the personal and the professional, understanding that flexibility is key. If communication difficulties escalate to the point where only the intervention of an objective third party can help, it could be useful to ask a consultant to mediate and help strengthen the relationship.

HELPFUL RESOURCES



[*Building the Governance Partnership*](#)



[*Structures and Practices of Nonprofit Boards*](#)



[*The Board Chair Handbook*](#)



Are you on
the board chair track?

SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR THE BOARD CHAIR POSITION

The board chair role is one of the most important positions in a nonprofit — in fact, some would argue *the* most important position. As the leader of the body that has ultimate accountability and authority for the organization, the board chair is responsible for leading the board in the oversight, thinking, and support that are critical to good governance and organizational success. This is why board chair succession planning — as well as the identification and nurturing of promising board members — should be a priority and an ongoing activity for every board.

BOARD CHAIR ROLE

A board chair must be knowledgeable about the organization — its mission, vision, values, programs, services, constituents, and resources — and understand its place in the larger framework of the community and the still larger sphere of local and national peer organizations.

To be effective, board chairs should have particular skills as well as a firm understanding of the role's responsibilities. The following list works as a board chair job description:

Key leadership skills

Personal qualities:

- Be approachable.
- Be a good listener and communicator.
- Show integrity, respect, and humility.
- Be a strategist, visionary, and generative thinker.
- Be fair and open-minded, authentic and genuine.
- Be adept at group facilitation; encourage open communication and constructive debate.
- Be a student and a teacher.

Commitment to the board:

- Engage board members to take ownership for the work of the board.
- Celebrate the hard work and achievements of individual board members and the collective board.
- Promote outstanding board development and governance practices.

Commitment to the organization:

- Show an understanding of and passion for the mission, values, and work of the organization; encourage board members to show the same commitment.
- Uphold legal and ethical standards of conduct.
- Ensure board members and management speak with one voice in the community.
- Ensure transparency, compliance, and accountability for the organization's operations.

Key duties

Partner with chief executive

- Cultivate a strong, working partnership with the chief executive.
- Understand the key differences between the governance role of the board and the management role of the chief executive.
- Oversee the hiring, support, and evaluation of the chief executive.
- Assess and monitor organizational alignment with mission.
- Engage in strategic planning and program evaluation.
- Oversee fiscal affairs and organizational assets.
- Develop and maintain risk management safeguards.
- Groom and help develop the next board chair.

Manage board

- Ensure that every member carries out the roles and responsibilities of board service within the context of their legal and ethical obligations (duties of care, loyalty, and obedience).
- Ensure that the board self-assesses its performance every two years; ensure a comprehensive board development plan.
- Serve as the contact for board members on board issues; ensure ongoing communication with the board.
- Adopt a work structure that efficiently supports the work of the board.
- Appoint board committee and task force chairs.
- Serve as ex-officio member of all committees.
- Help to lead and facilitate fundraising efforts; ensure all members support the organization financially.

Oversee board meetings

- Develop a board meeting agenda in partnership with the chief executive.
- Preside at all board meetings and committee meetings or events as necessary.
- Be adept at group facilitation; encourage open communication and constructive debate.

Play a leadership role in community relations

- Cultivate relationships with individual donors, funders, and other key community stakeholders.
- Serve as ambassador, advocate, and fundraiser for the organization.

BOARD CHAIR DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

When you take all of the characteristics listed above into account, it should be clear that the board chair role is not for all board members, so don't leave it to chance. Don't find yourself pleading with an outgoing chair to stay on in the role or just appointing whoever volunteers for it. Instead, commit to and invest in board development overall and to developing emerging leaders in particular. Grow your board chairs.

1. Recruitment

During the board recruitment process, think about the long-term future of the board and organization and whether a candidate has the potential to provide leadership down the road. Do they exhibit some, if not all, of the personal qualities listed above? If so, support their candidacy.

2. Committee leadership

Are there board members who volunteer to take on new take on new responsibilities, who draw out the best in others, who offer constructive suggestions, who can be counted on to follow through with their tasks? If so, providing them with opportunities to lead — in committees, task forces, and fund development activities, for example — allows them to learn about the various facets of the organization, to test and prove their leadership, and to strengthen their leadership skills. Ideally, you will have several potential board chairs in the pipeline at all times.

3. Succession process

Some boards create a chair-elect position to secure future board leadership. In other boards, the individual serving as vice chair may naturally assume the role of chair (for this assumption to be automatic, it must be defined that way in the board's policies). The primary role and responsibilities of both of these positions are generally defined in the bylaws. You also should have separate job descriptions for each.

In general, the vice chair provides the board with additional and substitute leadership and fills in for the chair when they are absent. Both positions carry out special assignments as requested by the board chair, understand the responsibilities of the board chair position, are able to perform those duties in the chair's absence, and participate as a vital part of the board leadership, such as serving on the executive committee if one exists. Both positions are seen as leadership training grounds.

If the board has a chair-elect position, the election process often works in the following way:

1. A year out, the current board chair notifies the board that they will not be seeking re-election in a year's time. Normally, board chairs serve in the role for two or three years, though they are typically re-elected annually per the bylaws.
2. The board invites those interested in the position to submit their names to the governance or executive committee. These committees also may seek out specific candidates.
3. The full board reviews the candidates thoroughly. Individual candidates should recuse themselves from the discussion pertaining to them.
4. The chair-elect is elected by a majority vote of the board.
5. The chair elect then works closely with the current board chair for the remainder of the current chair's term to prepare for a smooth transition.
6. The board then elects the chair-elect to the board chair position.

4. Mentorship

Mentoring is a valuable leadership succession tool. During the year leading up to the transition in leadership, the board chair should address the following with the chair-elect:

- Role execution and responsibilities of the position.
- Challenging issues that emerged during their tenure.

SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR THE BOARD CHAIR POSITION

- Unfinished board business.
- Status of strategic plan and future trends.
- Partnership with the chief executive.
- Building relationships with individual board members, community leaders, donors, and other stakeholders.
- Balancing competing demands at one time.
- Big-picture issues.
- Communications.
- Best governance practices.

Many organizations invite the incoming board chair to participate in the regular meetings or phone conferences between the current chair and the chief executive during the months leading up to becoming board chair.

Sometimes an organization will use other approaches for orienting a new board chair, such as seminars or workshops; online and print resources; community resources; guidance from other board chairs; and coaching and mentoring from an expert. An investment in developing a board chair who displays strong leadership skills and governance practices can benefit an organization for years to come.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



[The Board Chair Handbook](#)



[Leadership Certificate for Nonprofit Board Chairs](#)