

Board of Directors Self – Evaluation Instrument

This instrument has been developed to generate discussion among local community action board members as they seek to improve their effectiveness. Each board is unique in the way it operates and the values that guide its operation. Therefore, this instrument is not intended to be used as an absolute template to be universally imposed on every board. It is, however, an attempt to lay out a number of non-profit board “best practices” in a format that local community action agencies can use to assess their own operations.

As a result, it could be used in several ways. We suggest having board members complete it individually followed by a discussion of the full board during a board retreat or evaluation/planning session. Particular attention should be paid to areas about which a substantial number of members disagree or express concerns.

Yes No

Board Roles and Responsibilities

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| í | í | 1) Our board members understand their primary role as policy-makers and delegate day-to-day management of the agency to the executive director/ceo. |
| í | í | 2) Our board recognizes its responsibility to hire a competent executive director/ceo and prior to renewing his or her employment contract, conducts an annual performance appraisal that recognizes areas of achievement and sets measurable goals. |
| í | í | 3) Our board recognizes the importance of strategic planning and has participated in the development of and/or approved an agency strategic plan within the last five years. |
| í | í | 4) On a regular basis (at least annually) the board monitors the agency’s progress in achieving the strategic objectives outlined in its strategic plan. |

Financial Oversight

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| í | í | 5) Within the last year, utilizing recommendations of its auditor, the board reviewed and revised as necessary the agency’s financial management policies and procedures. |
| í | í | 6) The board monitors the agency’s financial situation by approving the annual budget, monitoring monthly/quarterly financial reports and ensuring the completion of an annual audit. |
| í | í | 7) The board carefully reviews the audit report and ensures actions to correct findings, disallowed costs, and/or material weaknesses are completed in a timely manner. |
| í | í | 8) Using a competitive negotiation procurement process, audit services are re-bid every three to five years to help ensure audits are reasonably priced and to infuse the audit process with fresh views and new perspectives. |

Program Oversight

- í í 9) The board regularly reviews internal staff reports to ensure program-related goals and targets are achieved and to ensure that problems in program administration are quickly identified and corrected.
- í í 10) The board reviews external monitoring reports completed by program funding sources and ensures appropriate and effective action is taken to correct identified deficiencies and findings.
- í í 11) The board regularly evaluates the effectiveness of agency programs, eliminating programs that are not effective or needed and adding new programs or services that are needed.
- í í 12) If administering a federally-funded Head Start program, the board ensures certain governance functions are shared jointly with the Head Start Policy Council or Committee in accordance with the requirements of the Head Start Performance Standards.

Managing the Risks of Board Service

- í í 13) We review our By-Laws annually to make sure they are in compliance with the law, do not conflict with our articles of incorporation, and are consistent with board practice.
- í í 14) Our board members are covered by Directors and Officers insurance.
- í í 15) The board seeks legal counsel when necessary.
- í í 16) With the advice of an attorney or consultant that specializes in personnel law, the board has reviewed the agency's personnel policies and procedures within the last year and approved whatever revisions were necessary.
- í í 17) The board understands that its meeting minutes are the only legal record of the actions it has taken and, therefore, carefully reviews the minutes for accuracy before voting to approve them.
- í í 18) Our board has a policy that requires members to disclose any conflict of interest involving an issue before the board, and to abstain from discussion or voting on this issue.

Committee Operations

- í í 19) Each standing board committee has a written job description from the full board and reports regularly to the full board.

- í í 20) Ad hoc committees are occasionally appointed to carry out specific, time-limited projects on behalf of the Board.
- í í 21) Our board committees save time by performing detailed and time-consuming work that could not be accomplished as efficiently by the full board.
- í í 22) Committee members understand that all final decisions rest with the full board.
- í í 23) Each committee meeting is organized around an agenda, a copy of which is provided to each committee member prior to the meeting.
- í í 24) In most cases, written committee minutes/reports are submitted in time to be sent to board members with the board meeting agenda packet.
- í í 25) Committee members are chosen for high interest and/or expertise in the committee's area of responsibility.
- í í 26) All members of each committee attended 90% of their respective committee meetings.

Board/Administrator/Staff Relationships

- í í 27) Board members consider the executive director/ceo to be an integral part of the board team and its decision-making process on all issues affecting the agency.
- í í 28) The executive director/ceo or staff members delegated by the executive director/ceo provide staff resources and support to the board and its committees.
- í í 29) This board does not hold closed meetings excluding the executive director/ceo except on those rare occasions when it is appropriate.
- í í 30) Our board understands the importance of the agency's chain of command policy and refers all complaints, concerns, or comments from staff, the public, or those we serve to the executive director/ceo.
- í í 31) Board members show concern for the well-being of staff, recognize their outstanding performance, and encourage their development by supporting job-related training activities.

Board Service Effectiveness

- í í 32) Our board monitors its membership to ensure it is in compliance with federal and state law pertaining to the tri-partite composition requirements and term limit restrictions of community action boards in Virginia.
- í í 33) Our board achieved a quorum at all of its meetings during the past year.

- í í 34) Using procedures outlined in the Agency By-Laws, inactive board members are removed and replaced.
- í í 35) Members of this board always base their decisions on what is best for all those whom we serve, not on special interests or personal agendas.
- í í 36) Individual board members understand that they can act on the agency's behalf only with the consent or authority of the full board.
- í í 37) While always seeking a genuine consensus, our board members understand that while we don't agree on every issue, we must support all majority decisions of the full board.
- í í 38) Our board values the contributions of all its members and accepts the fact that board members from a given sector (i.e. - locally elected public officials, low-income representatives, or the private sector) have no more power than board members from the other sectors.
- í í 39) Our board has adopted a code of ethics or code of conduct and reviews it annually.
- í í 40) The board occasionally plans teambuilding activities such as social outings, retreats, or special presentations to build the spirit of teamwork.
- í í 41) New board members are oriented to the organization, including the agency's mission, by-laws, policies, and programs, as well as their roles and responsibilities as board members.
- í í 42) Our board members are active advocates who promote the interests of the agency and the people we serve.

Please list below three areas or topics about which you feel the board needs additional training.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Sections of this instrument were developed from materials originating from the Management Assistance Program for Nonprofits in Minnesota and Carter McNamara, PhD. While copyrighted, reprint permission was granted, provided the materials are not used to generate profits.

Office of Community Services
 Virginia Department of Social Services
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