

This document uses the terms “board member” and “board of directors,” referring to the governing group. Other organizations use other terms, e.g., trustee, governor, board of trustees, board of governors...whatever. The intent is the same. How do you make this work when your board members may be appointed – or elected through citizen voting?

Performance expectations of you, the individual as a board member

Each Board member of this organization affirms the expectations outlined here and strives to perform accordingly. We treat all Board members the same when it comes to these expectations.

We clearly articulate these expectations during the recruitment process – and secure commitment prior to nomination. By accepting nomination or appointment, the individual confirms that this board service is one of his / her top volunteer and giving commitments.

Specific performance expectations are:

1. Believe in and be an active advocate and ambassador for the values, mission and vision of the organization.
2. Participation in group processes, e.g., meeting preparation and performance
 - a. Act in a way that contributes to the effective operation of the Board – and work with fellow Board members and staff to assure that the Board and its committees function well.
 - i. Focus on the good of the organization, independent of personal agenda, self-interest, or influence of others.
 - ii. Support the organization’s policies and procedures for conducting business.
 - iii. Maintain confidentiality of all work unless authorized otherwise.
 - iv. Support Board decisions once these are made.
 - v. Help build a good corporate culture.
 - b. Regularly attend Board and committee meetings. Prepare for these meetings by reviewing materials and bringing materials to meetings.
 - c. Use conversation as a core business practice, asking strategic questions and participating in dialogue.
 - d. Be available to serve as a committee/task force chair or member. Be a prepared and active participant.
 - e. Inform the Board of Directors of any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived, and abide by the decision of the Board related to the situation.
 - f. Respect the authority of the chief executive officer and staff; and, adhere to the limitations of the Board, its committees and individual Board members.
3. Personal development
 - a. Keep informed about the organization, its issues, and its connection to the community through active participation within the organization and outreach outside the organization. (Another way of saying this might be: Participate in opportunities to engage in/understand the organization’s mission.)
 - b. Participate in professional development opportunities to strengthen corporate governance and advance the organization’s effectiveness through learning¹. Participate in appraisal of own performance and others, as called upon.

¹ Suggested by Cohort 20, Saint Mary’s University Masters Degree in Philanthropy and Development.

4. Individual leadership acts outside board and committee meetings
 - a. Promote a culture of philanthropy.
 - b. Help support the charitable contributions operation of the organization. Specifically:
 - i. Reach into diverse communities and help identify and cultivate relationships to support the organization as donors, volunteers, and advocates.
 - ii. Give an annual financial contribution to the best of personal ability². If the organization launches a special campaign, give to that, too.
 - iii. Participate in fund development by taking on various tasks tailored to your comfort and skills.
 - c. As appropriate, use personal and professional contacts and expertise³ to benefit the organization, without compromising ethics or trespassing on relationships.
5. Agree to step down from Board position if unable to fulfill these expectations.

P.S. And for all-volunteer organizations, board member performance expectations might include management assignments. How would you include those assignments in this document?

² Some organizations make this type of statement: “Consider this organization one of your top 2 – 3 charitable commitments.” What do you think of that? Why would an organization include that statement?

³ Each candidate is invited to join the Board in order to provide specific expertise to the governance process. The individual is informed of this need – and agrees – prior to nomination or appointment.