

# Finding and Preparing New Board Members for Service

Betsy Aldrich Garland

Management of voluntary organizations today has become increasingly complex. The capacity of the board of directors and other top volunteer leaders to provide sound guidance is the *sine qua non* for success.

Finding the right people can be tricky, however. Every board needs to determine the right balance of skills, experience, and constituencies to include and to build a board based on the principles of complementary diversity and collective wisdom. Recruitment should be thoughtfully planned and carried out with an eye to the organization's need as well as to the potential for interest and satisfaction of each volunteer.

Once members are elected it is in the best interests of both the board and the

volunteers to prepare them for service as effectively and quickly as possible. While there is a common body of knowledge related to boards in general, each organization is unique, and the experience of incoming board members differs widely. An orientation for board members, therefore, needs to be prepared in light of the organization's mission, function, style and expectations of its members.

Board development begins with attracting and involving qualified and committed volunteers. The following check list, "Step-by-Step," and the "Outline for Orientation" are offered as guides for the process of board development for board members, nominating committees, and staff.

## "STEP-BY-STEP"

### BOARD DEVELOPMENT AND NOMINATING PROCESS

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Determine the ideal board composition for the organization. Solicit board input. Design BOARD PROFILE AND NOMINATING GRID. (SAMPLE A)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Review bylaws for clarification of
  - Nominating Committee charge.
  - Mandated number of officers and board members, requirements, and length of terms.
  - Organizational structure (*e.g.*, whether officers are elected separately from the board or are elected from and/or by the board, or how committee chairs are chosen).
  - Election procedures and requirements for the slate or slates.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Design, or review, the JOB DESCRIPTION FOR AN INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBER (SAMPLE B) of the organization. Get board confirmation for changes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Determine which officers' and members' terms are expiring, which are continuing, and if those whose terms are expiring are eligible for another term.

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- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Check attendance records and determine if there are any members whose terms are *not* expiring who might be dropped, or asked to resign, because of lack of interest or participation. (Check bylaws for mandate.) Discuss this with the president, executive director, and/or board as seems advisable, and see that the appropriate person follows through. *Take care not to alienate the person being removed.*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Determine the vacancies to be filled. Design a NOMINATING COMMITTEE WORKSHEET (SAMPLE C) based on your board structure called for in the bylaws and enter the names of the people you *have*, leaving lines to be filled in as the Committee work proceeds.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Evaluate the board composition (those members left after steps 4 and 5) in light of need. (See step 1.)
  - Plot members on the GRID.
  - Determine "gaps" in skills, experience, and representation.
  - Decide on priorities based on present board weaknesses.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Recruit and/or renominate a candidate for president (if not in mid-term) and then, after consulting with that presidential candidate, the other officers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Decide on renominations (if any). The "ask" may be by phone or in person.
  - Unqualified (There's no question that you want to keep him/her.)
  - Programmed (If he/she thinks he/she can be more involved this year.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Add renominees to grid and reassess needs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Identify potential candidates and/or categories of candidates and target groups *who meet the needs of the organization*. (See step 7.) In order,
  - Check BIOGRAPHICAL DATA SHEETS (SAMPLE D) in your board resource pool for candidates already expressing interest.
  - Solicit suggestions from the board. Have Biographical Data Sheets available for members to submit.
  - Apply to the Volunteer Center's Board of Directors Registry (if one exists).
  - Identify target groups and contacts within targets who can help you identify candidates and help recruit them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Screen suggestions and decide who will be asked and in what order. (If you have alternate choices in case some people turn you down, this will help things move more quickly.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Schedule recruitment interview, preferably *in person*. Decide who are the right persons to represent the organization to this candidate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Hold the recruitment interview. Remember that you are asking only for the candidate's permission to *place his/her name in nomination*.
  - Testimonial as to the worth of the organization.
  - Information about the organization. (You may wish to leave a kit behind for the candidate's perusal.)
  - The role, expectations, and time required of board members. Have the JOB DESCRIPTION in hand. (See Step 3.) *Be honest.*
  - An opportunity for recruiter and candidate to determine if his/her participation on this board will be mutually beneficial. *Be grateful for the "no's" as well as the "yes's."*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Finalize the slate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Send a letter of confirmation and thanks to candidates with additional materials if promised. Invite them to the annual meeting if this is the organization's custom.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Prepare an annotated list of candidates and present same to electing body (e.g., board, corporation, membership). This may be distributed before the meeting if this is the organization's custom.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. Remind the president to send a letter of appreciation to members who will be leaving the board. Plans may also be made to recognize them at the annual meeting or at other times. (Prepare a list of those retiring from the board.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Make formal presentation of nominees to the body. If candidates are present, they may be introduced.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Conduct elections. (N.B., Sometimes a nominating committee is also elected at this time.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. Notify and welcome newly elected members (if they are not present).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. Release publicity to newspapers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. Plan and hold an orientation for new board members. (Old members should be invited to come and participate.) See following section on "An Outline for Orientation."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. Provide for continuing education and recognition of board members.  
(N.B., Take care to keep the board informed of the Committee's process and progress throughout the year.)

		VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION Board Profile and Nominating Grid Year _____	
No.	Name	Years on Board	
			Gr. Providence
			East Bay
			Kent County
			Blk. Valley
			Scituate
			South County
			Gr. Westerly
			Newport County
			Woonsocket
			Out-of-state
			Under 25
			25 to 40
			41 to 60
			Over 60
			Male
			Female
			White
			Black
			Hispanic
			Asian
			Native American
			Voluntary
			Government
			Business
			Education
			Health/M.H.
			Labor
			Civic
			Social Service
			Art/Humanities
			Media
			Religious
			Volunteer
			Consumer
			Management
			Finance
			Legal
			Personnel
			Insurance
			Fund Dev't
			Planning
			Research/Eval'n
			Marketing/PR
			Training
			Public Spk.
			Legislation
			Writing
			Graphic Arts

## SAMPLE B

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### *Individual Job Description*

**TITLE:**—*Member of the Board*

**RESPONSIBLE TO:**—*President*

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Participation in the normal collective responsibilities of a governing body
- Attendance at regular and special meetings of the board
- Participation on at least one committee of the board
- Lending of one's particular expertise and experience to the organization
- Maintaining an awareness of trends in the field of voluntarism
- Acting as a liaison with the public, interpreting VIA's program to those outside the agency and informing VIA of needs in the community.

**QUALIFICATIONS:**

- Interest in the organization
- Adequate time to ensure effective participation

**TIME COMMITMENT:**

Election of officers and members of the board is held in May of each year. The commitment is for a three year term unless specified otherwise. Board meetings are usually held every third Wednesday from noon to 1:30 pm. Most committees meet monthly at a time convenient to their members. The Executive Committee, i.e. officers and committee chairs, meets additionally on the first Wednesday of every month.

**ORIENTATION AND TRAINING:**

An orientation session will be provided prior to the first meeting of the board following the annual meeting, and members are welcome to meet with the president and executive to discuss the organization and their role. VIA board members are encouraged to attend at no cost workshops on the roles and responsibilities of a board which VIA offers to the community at large

**BENEFITS:**

An opportunity to

- Observe and participate on a seasoned community board
- Influence services available in Rhode Island
- Meet new people who share a common interest
- Improve quality of volunteer involvement across the state
- Participate in state, regional, and national events

**COMMENTS:**

**Unreimbursed expenses incurred in the course of fulfilling one's responsibility as a member of the board may be deducted as a charitable contribution under the Internal Revenue Code. These include automobile mileage, bus and cab transportation, telephone bills, entertainment and meals for others, overnight conference costs, and tickets for charity benefits above actual value.**

SAMPLE C

\_\_\_\_\_  
Year

Nominating Committee

Nominating Committee  
Members:

WORKSHEET

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Executive Committee

Officers:

President \_\_\_\_\_  
Vice-President \_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary \_\_\_\_\_  
Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_  
Vice-Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_

Class of \_\_\_\_\_

Class of \_\_\_\_\_

Class of \_\_\_\_\_

- |     |       |       |       |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| 1.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 7.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 8.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 9.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 10. | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Executive Committee

Standing Committees (appointed by President)

Chairpersons:

Agency Relations \_\_\_\_\_  
Finance \_\_\_\_\_  
Nominating \_\_\_\_\_  
Personnel \_\_\_\_\_  
Placement \_\_\_\_\_  
Public Information \_\_\_\_\_  
Research & Evaluation \_\_\_\_\_  
Regional Development \_\_\_\_\_  
Training & Education \_\_\_\_\_

Nominating Committee (for next year \_\_\_\_\_)

Board Members - \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Corporation  
Members - \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

SAMPLE D

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Biographical Data Sheet

(For Nominating Committee Use)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted by \_\_\_\_\_

I. Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Office \_\_\_\_\_

Employment \_\_\_\_\_

Educational background \_\_\_\_\_

Professional skills or training \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer experience (Attach additional sheets, if necessary.):

<u>Years</u>	<u>Organizations</u>	<u>Position/Activity</u>

Additional civic and fraternal activities: \_\_\_\_\_

Special awards, citations: \_\_\_\_\_

Special interests: \_\_\_\_\_

Availability for meetings: Morning \_\_\_ Lunch \_\_\_ Afternoon \_\_\_ Evening \_\_\_ Weekend \_\_\_

II. Exposure to the field of voluntarism:

III. Skills/experience:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Management                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Committee Leadership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning/Evaluation  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Policy/Decision-making     | <input type="checkbox"/> Community contacts   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Management       | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal/Insurance      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resource Development       | <input type="checkbox"/> Parliamentarian      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speakers' Bureau           | <input type="checkbox"/> Training             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing/Public Relations   | <input type="checkbox"/> Legislation          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Displays/layout & Design   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program development        |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel                  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Service             |   |

IV. List areas of interest relevant to Volunteers in Action:

V. Additional comments:

(For Committee Use Only)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Asked to Serve</u>	<u>Comments</u>
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## AN OUTLINE FOR ORIENTATION

The ability of a voluntary organization to attract and involve qualified and committed volunteers in lending their skills and experience to the guidance of the organization has a tremendous impact on the success of the organization. Service on a board, however, places considerable demands on a volunteer's time and a large measure of responsibility. Board members need to find the experience personally rewarding and satisfying in order to maintain their interest and participation.

It is in the best interest of both board and individual volunteer, therefore, to prepare new board members for service as effectively and quickly as possible. While there is a common body of knowledge related to boards in general, each organization is unique, and the experience of incoming board members differs widely. An orientation for board members, therefore, needs to be prepared in light of the organization's mission, function, style and expectations of its members.

The following outline may be used as a guide for that process.

1. **Members Need:** To know why they were selected.  
**Content:** Board members are legitimately recruited for different skills and to represent various constituencies and need not be experts in every board task.  
  
Recruits need to be told a) what special skills, experience and perspectives they have that the organization is seeking, and b) what the organization expects of them.  
**Method:** Cover in the recruitment interview.  
**Who is Responsible:** Nominating Committee
2. **Members Need:** Information about the organization.  
**Content:** Soon after being elected, if not before, new board members need a good orientation to the organization including history, structure, mission and goals, programs, services provided and clients served, budget and funding sources, relationship with other organizations, problems and reasons for celebration within the organization.  
**Method:**
  - a) Manual with relevant materials (see attached list)
  - b) History book
  - c) Conference with longtime members.
  - d) Films about organization.
  - e) Opportunity to observe program in operation.
  - f) A tour of the geographical area served and any properties owned or occupied by the organization.**Who is Responsible:** Executive Committee or Nominating Committee with staff assistance.
3. **Members Need:** Information about the board on which they are asked to serve.  
**Content:** The type of board (governing, advisory, associational) and its role in the organization; the authority and liability the board carries and its relationship to other groups in the organization; the role of the officers; committees and how they function within the organization; who the other board members are; when and how often the board meets and expectations for attendance; relationships and division of labor between board and staff members.  
**Method:**
  - a) Include appropriate documents in the manual.
  - b) Review of the organizational chart.
  - c) Review of board meetings and business conducted.
  - d) Get-acquainted times for new members.**Who is Responsible:** The Executive Committee, president or their designees.

- 4. Members Need:** Information on the general roles and responsibilities of board members.
- Content:** A general grounding in the business of boards and their responsibility for finances, property and legal status, and services; program planning and evaluation; hiring, supporting and evaluating the performance of the executive; fund development; and public community relations.
- Method:** Officers will need special attention to help them understand their roles and responsibilities. Presentation with background reading. (Local libraries and national organizations often have excellent resources.)
- Who is Responsible:** Job description and background reading for each officer. The Executive Committee or their designees. Outside consultant may be asked to provide training.
- 5. Members Need:** To understand the role of standing committees and task forces in the organization.
- Content:** Committees serve three purposes: doing homework for the board between board meeting to expedite its work; serving as places where participation and loyalty to the organization are built; and acting as a training ground for leaders.
- Method:** New board members need to know what the standing committees are in that particular organization and how they function. They should be appointed or assigned to one as soon as possible. Care must be taken to differentiate between board work, committee work and staff work. A presentation of committees and their work.
- Who is Responsible:** Committee chairpersons
- 6. Members Need:** Information on the corporate offices and staff.
- Content:** There is no substitute for seeing the office, its operations and employees in the workplace in order to understand the organization.
- Method:** Tour of headquarters; introduction to staff and staff assignments.
- Who is Responsible:** Executive Director
- 7. Members Need:** To understand the organization's style and expectations.
- Content:** Organizations are like people. They may be formal or informal, friendly or reserved, trusting or cautious, noisy and chaotic, or quiet and orderly. They may expect certain dress or behavior. There may be unspoken rules or customs. Important issues of style and behavior should be addressed directly and members helped to feel comfortable with diversity within acceptable parameters.
- Method:** New members may or may not be sensitive to such subtleties. They may be covered tactfully in formal presentations to new members or may be handled individually.
- Who is Responsible:** President or board members assigned to "shepherd" new board members.
- 8. Members Need:** How to participate effectively in meetings.

- Content:** Productive meetings are an art requiring the delicate balancing of individual, group and organizational needs. However, individual participation can be enhanced by an appreciation for the purpose of agendas, minutes, financial reports, written information, protocol and parliamentary procedure.
- Method:** Inclusion of appropriate material in the Board member manual.  
A "recap" of a meeting with an experienced board member.  
Training in parliamentary procedure.
- Who is Responsible:** Executive Committee or its designee
9. **Members Need:** To feel accepted and needed by the organization.
- Content:** Everyone needs to "belong" and new board members are no exception. A good orientation and genuine welcome help a new board member make the leap from "you" to "we." Ensuring that board members find the place where they can begin to contribute is also important. People care about what they are involved in, and they are involved in what they care about.
- Method:** Work with individual board members until satisfactory assignments are made.
- Who is Responsible:** President and committee chairpersons
10. **Members Need:** To be knowledgeable about the field of service.
- Content:** Both member participation and personal growth can be enhanced by the board members and the staff being aware of trends in the particular field of service, legislation, new developments and the like.
- Method:** Provide pertinent articles; make publications available to board members.  
Offer board members an opportunity to attend conferences.
- Who is Responsible:** Executive Director and Board

### CHECKLIST FOR BOARD ORIENTATION MANUAL

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>___ Organization's purpose statement</li> <li>___ Constitution and Bylaws</li> <li>___ Organizational chart</li> <li>___ History of the organization</li> <li>___ Policies and procedures</li> <li>___ A list of affiliations (if any)</li> <li>___ Program descriptions</li> <li>___ Goals and objectives</li> <li>___ A list of funding sources and contracts</li> <li>___ Board roles and responsibilities (as a collective body)</li> <li>___ Individual board member job descriptions</li> <li>___ Standing committees and their charge</li> <li>___ Task forces and their charge</li> <li>___ Staff list with assignments</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>___ Personnel policies</li> <li>___ Board list with identifications and phone numbers</li> <li>___ Meeting information: days, dates length of meetings, place</li> <li>___ Minutes from meetings for last fiscal year (or where they are available)</li> <li>___ Procedures and forms</li> <li>___ Evaluation techniques and charts</li> <li>___ Map of the service area</li> <li>___ Yearly organizational calendar</li> <li>___ Publications and articles</li> <li>___ Professional standards</li> <li>___ Simplified parliamentary procedures</li> <li>___ Fees, charges</li> </ul> |
|---|---|