

TEN BASIC BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Determine the Organization's Mission and Articulate its Vision and Values

The Board, in collaboration with the chief executive(s) – artistic director, executive director, producing director, managing director – should periodically review the organization's mission, revising it when necessary. The mission statement should be clear and concise, and each member of the board should understand and support it. The organization's leadership also needs to articulate a shared vision – an image of the desired future – accompanied by realizable goals and agreed upon values that guide its planning and operations.

2. Understand the Relationship Between the Board and the Staff

Board and staff share joint custody of the organization's mission. Effective boards are involved without micromanaging. Everyone should remember that the vision and energy of the artistic leadership are the soul of the organization.

3. Choose, Support and Evaluate the Chief Executive

The board is responsible for ensuring the continuity of the organization's leadership. It should have a clear job description outlining the duties of the chief executive(s), conduct a methodical search when the position is open and provide constructive feedback through regularly scheduled performance evaluations. The board should provide the moral and substantive support that is crucial to the executive's success.

4. Ensure Effective Fiscal Management and Accountability

The board should approve and monitor an annual operating budget and authorize material transactions. Exercising fiduciary responsibility also includes adopting and reviewing policies and procedures addressing risk management and insurance, internal controls, investment of the organization assets and compliance with ethical standards and legal and regulatory requirements.

5. Raise Money

The board should approve an overall fundraising plan. Board members should personally support the organization at a level that is significant relative to their own financial situation. They should actively ask others to support the organization and should identify new prospects for financial support.

6. Monitor and Evaluate the Organization's Programs and Overall Performance

The board is responsible for assuring that programs are consistent with the organization's mission and values and for monitoring the programs to ensure their quality and cost effectiveness. The board also should set policy and provide direction in operational areas such as personnel, marketing, facilities, intellectual property, technology, and collaborations.

7. Engage in Strategic Planning

The board should periodically engage in the strategic planning process to examine the environment in which their arts organization is working and to consider how it will meet opportunities and challenges.

8. Enhance the Organization's Public Standing

The board of directors is a primary link to the community – audiences, the immediate neighborhood, government, the public, the media, donors and funding sources. Clearly articulating the organization's mission and speaking credibly and positively about the organization's accomplishments and priorities are important components of a comprehensive public relations strategy.

9. Carefully Select and Orient New Board Members

The board should be composed of committed individuals who can contribute needed skills, experience, clout, sound judgment, business acumen and time to the organization. A board should have a plan to recruit prospects and orient new members to the organization. To ensure the infusion of new ideas, an organization should rotate members off the board and determine how board membership should reflect the diversity of its community.

10. Organize Itself to Operate Efficiently

Board meeting, held at least quarterly, provide a crucial forum for conducting business, educating board members and consensus building. Well-planned and facilitated board and committee meetings allow participants to contribute their best thinking and inspire them to take action. By periodically evaluating its own performance in fulfilling its responsibilities, the board can take pride in its accomplishments and identify areas that need to be improved.