

Questions to Ask Before Joining a Board

Joining a nonprofit board can be a tremendously rewarding and enriching experience. As with any new relationship, finding the right match can be a key determining factor in the success of the interaction. Knowing what your own hopes are for the experience is a good way to start and will allow you to ask the right questions and think through whether a particular board seat is right for you at this time.

The following is a checklist of some of the questions you can ask yourself and the prospective organization to guide you as you assess whether a particular board role is right for you.

Mission/Interest:

- Does the mission align with my interests?
- Can I serve as a strong ambassador for this organization?
- Are the issues addressed by the organization a concern that I share in my community?
- Do I have a personal connection to the issues addressed by the organization?

Personal Goals:

- Will this role help me get better connected to others in my community?
- Will this role help me make more contacts for my business?
- Will this role provide me with an opportunity to work as part of a team with a committed group of people to solve problems?

Time/Commitment Expectations:

- Are meetings held at a time that works for my schedule?
- What time-commitment should I plan for preparing for a board meeting?
- In addition to board meeting attendance, is sitting on an active committee an expectation? What is the time commitment?

Fundraising Expectations

- Is each board member expected to make a personal contribution? If so, is there a set amount?
- Is each board member expected to play a role in fundraising? If so, what is it?



Organizational Expectations:

- Does the organization seem to be on sound financial footing?
- Are financials and audit results regularly shared with board members?
- Are sufficient internal controls in place? If so, what are they?
- Does the Board have Directors and Officers Liability Insurance?
- Does the organization have a strategic plan? Does it seem to be effectively planning for the future?
- Does the organization have a good reputation in the community?

Culture:

- Does the board seem well-organized and prepared for meetings?
- Does the board work together well as a group?
- Are materials sent in advance allowing board members to prepare adequately?
- Does the Executive Director seem like a capable individual that I can fully support?
- Do staff members seem competent and effective in their jobs?
- Do the other board members seem welcoming and interested in working together as a team?

*Given the answers to all these questions,
what does my gut say about joining this board?*

