

Recruiting The Right Board Members

Questions and Guidelines for Nonprofit Organizations

Finding the right board members is essential to a nonprofit's success. A thoughtful recruitment process helps ensure strong alignment between the organization's mission and a candidate's interests, availability, and skills. An informal meeting—such as coffee or lunch—can be a great opportunity to have an open conversation and assess whether there's a good mutual fit.

Below are suggested **questions** and **topics** to cover to guide that conversation.

Conversation Starters for Potential Board Members

Use these questions to learn more about the candidate's interests, background, and motivations:

- How did you first hear about our organization?
- Have you had any past experiences with our organization or its programs?
- What have you heard from others in the community about our work?
- What draws you to our mission and work?
- Can you share where that interest or passion comes from?
- Have you served on other nonprofit boards? If so:
 - Which organizations?
 - What aspects of that experience did you enjoy?
 - Were there challenges or aspects you did not enjoy?
- What skills, experiences, or networks would you bring to the board?
- Are there any concerns or questions you have about serving on a board?
- Does your current schedule allow the time needed to fulfill board responsibilities?
- How comfortable are you acting as an ambassador for our organization in the community?

Key Topics to Discuss with the Candidate

If the conversation is progressing positively, be sure to clearly outline what board service involves. These points help set realistic expectations:

Time Commitment

- Frequency and duration of board meetings
- Preparation expectations (e.g., reviewing materials in advance)
- Attendance policies and expectations

Committee Involvement

- Are all board members expected to serve on a committee?
- What committees currently exist?
- How is committee placement determined (interest, skillset, or assignment)?

Financial Commitment

- Is there a minimum or “stretch” personal donation expected of each board member?
- How does the board define and encourage 100% board giving?

Participation in Events

- Are board members expected to attend certain key events (e.g., annual gala, fundraising events)?
- Will board members be asked to bring guests or help with ticket sales?

Fundraising Expectations

- Are board members expected to participate in fundraising efforts?
- Do responsibilities include soliciting donations, identifying prospects, or securing sponsorships?

Organizational Landscape

- Are there any major strategic, financial, or operational issues the board is currently addressing?
- Is the organization in a stable financial position?
- Is the staff leadership team stable and effective?
- Are there any legal, reputational, or public relations challenges underway?
- How would you describe the current board culture (collaborative, divided, in transition)?

Final Thought

Recruiting a new board member is a two-way process. A strong match benefits both the individual and the organization. Clarity, honesty, and open dialogue in these early conversations lay the groundwork for productive and engaged board service.

