

Tip Sheet for Candid Conversations about Board Governance "How are we doing?"

These tips are based on the governance areas most likely to be a challenge for boards of small-to-mid-size nonprofit organizations, as identified in *Leading with Intent* (BoardSource, 2015).

Areas of potential improvement for the board to discuss	Practice Tips
<p>Advocacy: A minority (less than half) of boards surveyed by BoardSource in 2014 reported they were aware of, or participated in, their organizations' advocacy work. Some board members continue to believe (incorrectly!) that "nonprofits can't do advocacy."</p>	<p>Use the materials available through Stand for Your Mission to spark your board's awareness about their vital role as advocates to advance the mission.</p>
<p>Conflicts of Interest: 88% of nonprofits reported they had a policy, but didn't require disclosure of conflicts annually.</p>	<p>Don't assume that just having a conflict of interest policy that board members sign means that your nonprofit never has to worry about conflicts. Revisiting the policy on an annual basis through a disclosure requirement is a way to promote a culture of candor, as well as provide a reason to discuss as a board what types of situations may result in conflicts of interest. Conflict of Interest Policy with Annual Disclosure Statement (Montana Association of Nonprofits).</p>
<p>Diversity: 25% of respondents' boards were all-white in 2014, when the most recent BoardSource survey data were collected.</p>	<p>Different is better! Better decisions, heightened awareness, more connections to the community and its needs, are just some of the benefits of increased diversity on nonprofit boards. Show a video to prompt discussion.</p>
<p>Evaluating the executive director: Only 69% of small organizations reported they had evaluated the executive director within the last two years – meaning almost a third had not been conducting regular evaluations.</p>	<p>Executive directors who receive regular feedback and support from their boards, such as through formal performance reviews, report higher job satisfaction. Sample executive director/CEO evaluation form (Colorado Nonprofit Association).</p>
<p>Fundraising: <i>Not enough boards walk the talk.</i> Only 60% of boards responding to the 2014 BoardSource survey reported that 100% of board members made a charitable contribution to the nonprofit.</p>	<p>100% board giving is a way to demonstrate that the board stands behind the organization and the executive director. Manage expectations while recruiting new board members by using a written agreement and then a board orientation. To get the conversation started, here are two simple ways to communicate expectations about money.</p>
<p>Strategic direction: 18% of nonprofit boards are not regularly engaging in strategic planning, and many boards that go through the strategic planning process don't refer to those plans when later making decisions or setting future directions.</p>	<p>Engaged board members are those who are more likely to want to spend time discussing strategic directions. Help board members stay focused on strategic directions by organizing meeting agendas with the organization's strategic directions in mind.</p>