



# Recruiting and Retaining Good Board Members

An effective board should include active members of the community the organization serves and accurately reflect the diversity of that community. A nonprofit with a well-organized board recruitment process, as well as clear position descriptions and job duties, will not only make new member selection go more smoothly, but will attract appropriate candidates. Nonprofits can take several steps to recruit good board members, including:

- Establishing clear bylaws that include comprehensive information about the board of directors' election process.
- Creating board member job descriptions, including meeting requirements and additional time commitments.
- Clarifying duties to ensure potential board members understand their legal and fiduciary duties.
- Developing officer positions designed to meet the needs of specific organizations; Minnesota law requires that a nonprofit fill the offices of president and treasurer.
- Establishing a board governance or nominating committee to analyze the needs of the board, such as professional skills, community connections, representation, and oversee the election process.

## Personal Characteristics to Consider When Selecting Board Members

Identifying, recruiting and choosing the right board member for a nonprofit can be a difficult task. It takes careful planning and thoughtful input from the board and can even involve other stakeholders. The following is a list of character traits provided by Berit Lakey's [Board Building Cycle](#) that can be helpful when recruiting and selecting board members.

- Ability to listen, analyze, think creatively and work one-on-one with people and in a group setting.
- Willing to learn more about the nonprofit, prepare for and attend board and committee meetings, ask questions, take responsibility and follow through on assignments, contribute generous personal and financial resources depending on circumstances, open doors in the community and evaluate oneself as a board member.
- Open to developing skills, such as cultivating and soliciting funds, recruiting additional board members and other volunteers and reading financial statements.
- Possess honesty, sensitivity to and tolerance of differing views, a friendly, responsive and patient approach, community-building skills, a sense of values and a sense of humor, personal integrity and concern for the nonprofit's development.

## Retaining Good Board Members

Once an organization has effective members of its board of directors, it is essential to retain them. Nonprofits can ensure effective board members continue their vested interest in the organization by doing the following:

- Prepare new board members with an orientation by staff and existing board members. New board members should be given collateral materials about the organization's current and recent activities, as well as any information that will be useful in their position.
- Thank and recognize board members to sustain job satisfaction for volunteer board members.
- Lead by example through good attendance and active participation in board meetings. This can be an effective way to deal with inactive board members.
- Conduct exit interviews for board members who leave mid-term or after his or her term has ended to learn more about their board experience.
- Maintain relationships between nonprofit staff and board members, as both work together to govern and manage the organization.