

Organizational Assessment Group Interview Questions

The Art of Organizational Assessment

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW

I. MISSION AND STRATEGIC PLAN

1. Could you give a brief overview of your agency's mission, history, (and broadly) its programs and services? What have been your significant turning points?

2. What distinguishes you and what you do? Can you characterize your position or niche in the larger field?

3. How would you characterize your organizational culture? What do people experience when they walk in the door? What would a new staff person note?

4. How would you characterize your decision-making processes in the organization? Does the organization encourage and value differing viewpoints in the decision-making process? Can you give examples?

5. Have there been any recent internal incidents or changes, or changes in your environment that have caused you to want to review the way your organization works? Do you think your current operation is strategically on the mark?

6. Have you ever had a conversation regarding a possible merger?

7. Are there any other outstanding questions you are pursuing as an organization?

8. Who do you see yourselves as primarily accountable to? Why? How do you communicate with them?

9. Is there a common understanding of your mission among Board, staff, and volunteers? Within you community? Among those who make use of your services/programs? Among your funders?
10. Do your programs and projects adequately fulfill your mission? How do you know this to be true (or not)?
11. What are the end results you would see if your organization were to be completely successful? Have you translated that vision into an organizational plan? Can you describe the process you used to develop that plan?
12. What span of time does the plan cover?
13. Does your plan include projections and strategies on?
 - Program development and adjustment of activities?
 - Staff Development?
 - Constituency leadership development?
 - Budget development (capital and operating)?
 - Expansion and diversification of fundraising base?
 - Development of a wider base of support for mission and goals?
 - Advocacy?
14. Who participated in the development of the plan? Is there a method for its revision? Is it followed? Is the plan revised periodically?
15. Are there tasks and timelines assigned?
16. Who monitors the progress of the agency towards the plan's completion?

II. FUNDRAISING

1. What is your organization's funding history (how much and from what sources) both capital and operational?
2. Does the Board have policies regulating how funds can be raised/obtained?

3. Can you raise money for what you really want to do? What's the gap?
4. What methods of fundraising have been tried by your agency and with what results?
What are the general proportions of these sources in your budget? (this information is generally available before this meeting in which case you just want to quickly review the proportions)
 - Government Contracts
 - Foundation Grants
 - Corporate Grants
 - United Way
 - Earned revenue (describe)
 - Grassroots (list and describe) (Large donor, capital campaigns, events, direct mail appeals, etc.)
5. Does any portion of your current funding restrict your activities in any way counter to your mission or limit what your organization activities might otherwise include?
6. Do you have a fundraising plan? Within this plan are tasks and timelines assigned?
7. Who takes part in the development of your fundraising plan?
8. Who takes on fundraising tasks?
9. Is your Board expected to take part in fundraising? Is this a written requirement?
10. Do volunteers participate in fundraising? Is this option presented to them when recruited?
11. How are possible new funding sources identified?
12. Between the Board and staff, does the expertise exist to expand your funding base?
In what areas?

III. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1. In one or two words or phrases – how would you characterize your Board?
2. What is the value addition you expect from the Board?
3. Who does the Board see itself as accountable to? How does it evidence this accountability?
4. What are your Board's major responsibilities? Are these written?
5. Who sits on your Board? Do you have a method of proportionate representation or appointment? On what standards is this method based?
6. Does staff attend Board meetings? If not, is there a method by which staff interests are fairly represented?
7. Are your constituents represented on your Board? If not, is there a method by which your constituent interests are fairly represented? How are persons of color represented on the board and in what roles?
8. What is the range of longevity among Board members? Do you have a system of rotation?
9. How often does your Board meet?
10. Describe a typical Board meeting.
11. Approximately how many times over the past year have you met without a quorum being present?
12. Who sets the Board agenda? How are tasks assigned to the Board?

13. Does a Board handbook exist? How are new Board members recruited? Is there an orientation process?
14. Is the background information needed for good decision making distributed to Board members prior to meetings and in sufficient time to allow for careful study?
15. Do you have the expectation that yours is a “working Board”? Does your Board share that expectation?
16. Does the Board have committees? What are they? Do these committees ever include non-Board members?
17. Do members of your Board provide in-kind services such as legal, accounting, or development work?
18. Do Board members generally follow through on their commitments?
19. Is there a method by which the agency director (or staff administrative body) received advice of the Board between meetings when the situation indicates a need?
20. When a decision is in front of the Board will directly affect a staff member’s work, is the input of that staff person solicited? By whom?
21. Does either the staff (director) or the Board set or implement policy without properly consulting the other body?
22. Have conflicts over perceived “improper” decision making practices occurred over the past year?
23. Have you done Board training over the past year? On what issues? How are issues for Board training identified?

IV. PERSONNEL

1. What would you define as being your staff concerns over the past year?
2. Do you have written personnel policies? When were they written? When were they last revised? Are these personnel policies or an employee handbook presented to employees at the time they are hired?
3. Do you have Diversity/Equity/Inclusion policies within HR?
4. Who participated in the most recent review of the policies?
5. How many paid staff do you have? How many supervisors?
6. What is your process for supervision? How is the Director supervised?
7. How are your employees evaluated? Who participates in the evaluation of employees?
8. Are evaluations performed on a schedule defined in your personnel policies? Are they often late or missed?
9. How often are job descriptions updated?
10. Are they currently accurate to the respective staff person?
11. Who participates in the formulation of job descriptions?

12. What benefits are offered to employees?

13. Do these seem sufficient?

14. Would you consider staff salaries sufficient? Does the staff?

15. What is the average longevity for staff?

16. Is staff longevity a recognized Board priority?

17. Is training offered to all employees?

18. If the training budget is limited, how are decisions made about who will receive training and in what areas?

19. Do you hold regular staff meetings? Who participates? How often are they cancelled?

20. How diverse is your staff? Does it reflect your constituency demographics (race, age, etc.)?

21. Do people feel they can raise race-related concerns about policies and programs without experiencing negative consequences or risk being labeled as a troublemaker?

V. VOLUNTEERS

1. How many volunteers do you have? Approximately, how many of these are active? Do you have volunteer contracts or job descriptions?
2. What tasks are assigned to volunteers and by whom?
3. Who is responsible for recruiting, orienting and managing volunteers?
4. Where in the community do the volunteers come from and how do they learn about your organization?
5. Does this person also have other job responsibilities? If so, what percentage of his/her time is spent on coordination of volunteer activities?
6. What is the average longevity for volunteers in your agency? How are volunteers kept involved?
7. In planning for staffing, are volunteers considered as an alternative work force if funding is not available for staffing?
8. Is paid staff considered preferable to volunteers if funding is available?

VI. PROGRAM, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

1. How effective is your internal and external communication in telling the story of your organization's work and impact?
2. How often do you seek community input on program and services provided or intend to provide?

3. Are program's culturally responsive?
4. On what levels do you perform research or evaluation relative to the work that you do?
5. How are the questions for this research or evaluation developed?
6. Is your research or evaluation connected at all to planning?
7. Do you disaggregate data and root causes of race disparities that impact the organization's programs and the populations served?
8. Do your evaluation efforts incorporate the disaggregation of data in order to surface and understand how every program, service, or benefit impacts every beneficiary?
9. Who develops the questions that you use to evaluate your work? How are they developed? Who collects data for evaluations? Who reviews that data?
10. Are evaluations performed primarily for funders? Are they required?
11. How often are your programs evaluated?

VII. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

1. What would you characterize as your major concerns/frustrations related to financial management?
2. What is the process by which the organization develops its annual budget?

3. Who is included in the process and at what stage?
4. Who is involved in monitoring the budget?
5. Describe your bookkeeping and accounting systems including who performs the work.
6. Do you have a fund balance? A line of credit? Do you ever pay bills late? Why? Are you able to buy or replace needed equipment in a timely manner (describe if no)?
7. Do you have an annual audit done? If not, do you have an annual review of your systems?
8. Does your auditor make suggestions to staff and/or Board regarding fiscal management procedures? Who takes responsibility for the implementation of the procedures? What was in your management letter last year? Were any of these items carryovers from the year before?
9. Does the Board receive regular reports on the financial status of the organization?
10. Who signs checks in your agency? Does anyone ever sign a check before it is actually made out? What are the restrictions on check signing powers?
11. Are cash flow reports given? To who and how often?
12. Are quarterly reports that show the relationship of the budget to the actual expenditures given? How often?

13. Who gives these reports? Do Board members know how to interpret these reports?

14. Does the treasurer of the organization have fiscal management skills?

15. Does the Board understand the legal requirements of operating a non-profit?

VIII. PARTNERSHIPS, COLLABORATIONS AND ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

1. What would you say are your most significant and successful collaborations? Describe how they developed, towards what end and how “real” they are in terms of centrality to your overall strategy.
2. What other organizations are working in the same sector space? What other service providers do you partner in order to achieve mission and desired outcomes for the population served?
3. To what degree is your organization involved in advocacy activities? Is your Board involved? Your constituents? Please describe.
4. What do you believe to be the neglected areas in advocacy and collaboration?

IX. SUMMARY

1. So, how do you feel?
2. What are the items that we talked about today that stand out most as the most critical or overriding issues?
3. What are some of the immediate things that can or need to be taken care of quickly?
4. Debrief i.e., be sincere, positively reinforce people in the room (lovely group – we laughed we cried) – thank you for the opportunity.

Originally written By Ruth McCambridge

Financial Assessment Guide

Financial Management Questionnaire

Please respond to all applicable financial management questions and return questionnaire at your earliest convenience.

Questions	Comment/Notes
1. Please explain your budget development process.	Best done in person
2. Who is included in the budget process and at what stage?	Name of staff and committee. Planning , draft review and approval
3. How are financial management issues resolved? Explain the process that your organization uses.	Best done in person
4. How often are financial statements reviewed by the board?	Monthly, quarterly, every other month
5. Is the Board structured adequately for financial oversight?	How is the board structured to provide financial oversight?
6. If there has been large items of revenue budgeted for the current year budget? What is the likelihood of receiving funds?	
7. What type of accounting system does the organization use?	Such as Quick Books, Sage
8. Which staff has access and authorization to use the accounting system?	Looking for position

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9. Does the organization have a system for segregating and tracking restricted funds?	
10. Are the bank reconciliations reviewed and completed monthly?	
11. Are tax reports filed when their due?	
12. Are there tax issues or legal issues pending? If so, briefly describe.	
13. How much debt does the organization currently have? Will this increase/decrease in the future?	Best asked in person
<i>14. How well would you rate your organization in terms of how well protected you are against fraud?</i>	Best asked in person
<i>15. What controls/processes are in place when processing pledges and/or incoming checks?</i>	Best asked in person
<i>16. What controls/processes are in place to prevent the unauthorized disbursement of funds from any bank accounts or by an employee or officer?</i>	Best asked in person
17. Does the board of directors review the financial statement audit and the 990 tax return? Please explain the board's review process.	

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18. Does the organization present monthly financial reports to all staff?	
19. Does the organization hold regular finance committee meetings and are minutes of these meetings kept on file?	
20. Who authorizes the use of unrestricted funds (reserves)?	
21. <i>Any current financial issues that need to be resolved?</i>	Ask in person

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