



GATEWAY *to* GRANTS

**GET YOUR BOARD
ON BOARD**



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Get Your Board on Board by Gateway to Grants. In this document, you will find resources to help you understand the basic, yet critical, responsibilities of nonprofit board service. First, we explain why it is so important to evaluate your organization's executive director each year. Next, we provide an exercise to help your board members develop an appeals speech and get comfortable promoting your organization. We also discuss the key board committees every nonprofit should have. Finally, in this tool, you will find an interview with Barbara Paradiso, Director of the Center on Domestic Violence at the University of Colorado Denver. Barbara is the former Board Chair of the Boulder YWCA. In this interview, she talks to us about the rewards and challenges of nonprofit board service.

Gateway to Grants is a grants management firm, featuring services that meet the needs of growing nonprofit organizations. These include industry leading prospect research packages, grant writing and reporting, grants management services, project management and training. We will help you gain confidence in your fundraising strategy and build a legacy for the future of your organization. Work with Gateway to Grants and stop missing important opportunities for funding today.

GET YOUR BOARD ON BOARD

HOW TO EVALUATE YOUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Why is it necessary to evaluate your nonprofit's executive director?

While the executive director may serve as both the functional and symbolic leader of your nonprofit organization, there is still one entity that should exercise accountability for this position – the board of directors! Without a strong board, the executive director may be isolated at the top of the organization, deprived of safe and secure confidants, guides, and partners in running an organization. The board of directors exists to fill this important supporting role.

One of the key responsibilities of the board is to perform an annual evaluation of the executive director and provide him or her with much needed feedback. This process is important to the overall success of a nonprofit because it offers opportunities for the board chair and executive director to build stronger rapport, plan for future growth, and identify the challenges and weaknesses of the organization as a whole. Strong evaluation procedures are essential to the executive director's success and development as a leader.

How do you evaluate an executive director?

The implementation of a formal evaluation will vary depending on the culture driving your organization and the preferences of your leadership team. While we believe that thorough evaluations benefit your organization to a greater degree than those more casual ones, a pre-arranged meeting between the board chair and executive director may suffice, as long as a written record detailing the nature and outcomes of the conversation is created. Evaluations should aim to the following elements:

- 1) Feedback from staff members (given to the Chair or designated board member)
- 2) A self-evaluation provided by the ED on his or her own perception of their strengths and weaknesses, given to the Board Chair
- 3) Feedback from other board members
- 4) Organization-wide surveys
- 5) Personal evaluation of the ED, conducted by the Board Chair, and
- 6) Feedback from the nonprofit's constituents

How often should the board of directors evaluate the executive director?

Nonprofit boards should plan to evaluate the performance of the executive director at least once a year. Some organizations opt to go through the process more often based on specific conditions or circumstances. For example, your board may want to evaluate a first-time executive director twice during his or her first year in the position. It may also be beneficial to evaluate the executive director's leadership more frequently through times of major organizational change or crisis.

What specific responsibilities of the executive director should be considered?

It is important to consider all of the activities of your executive director when evaluating his or her performance. Following is a list of potential topics to keep in mind. Some will vary from organization to organization:

- 1) Administrative effectiveness
- 2) Fiscal responsibility
- 3) Fundraising
- 4) Community Involvement
- 5) Public Relations
- 6) Personnel Management
- 7) Long-term planning
- 8) Overall Leadership Capability

How should you begin to develop your organization's evaluation process?

It is your board's responsibility to develop an effective evaluation process that truly assesses the performance of the executive director. We recommend that a team of board members be assembled for this specific purpose. It is also important that the executive director be made fully aware of the evaluation results and provided with clear direction on how to move forward. If necessary, your board should give the executive director an action plan for improvement. Typically, the best way to deliver this feedback is through a one-on-one meeting between the board chair and executive director.

BOARD MEMBERS: PRACTICE YOUR ELEVATOR SPEECH!

As a board member, you will have numerous opportunities to promote your nonprofit's incredible work. Whether you are attending a gala to raise funds, a networking event, or just an informational session, you should always be prepared to make an ask on behalf of your organization. Anyone (board members, staff, and volunteers) can become better advocates for your nonprofit by mastering a short elevator speech. When delivered effectively, this personalized elevator speech has the potential to expand your organization's support network and help raise funds.

The guide below is designed to help your leaders, staff, and other advocates make stronger appeals to potential donors and volunteers. Using the ideas below, mix and match sentences to create a conversation that you will be comfortable with.

I: INTRODUCTION (30 SECONDS)

- A. I'm a board member/committee chair/officer of [my nonprofit].
- B. Thank you so much for being here today.
- C. I'm so proud to be on the board of directors of [my nonprofit].
- D. I never tire of hearing and talking about our programs and projects.

II: THE NEED DESCRIBED (30 SECONDS)

What is the organization trying to solve?

- A. As you heard today, there are [#] of people (experiencing the need for the nonprofit) _____
- B. Our community suffers from _____
- C. Statistics show that _____
- D. Unfortunately, we know that _____
- E. As we were reminded today, _____

III: MISSION AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS (1 MINUTE)

What is the focus of the organization?

- A. The focus of [my nonprofit] is _____
- B. As you know, we work with _____ [client group] and provide _____

- A. Last year, we delivered _____ [statistic]
- B. We have [#] volunteers & [#] staff who work full-time to ensure_____
- C. Already this year, we have supported/provided/delivered_____
- D. I'd like to tell you about a recent experience I had with our client_____
- E. It makes me feel good when I know that my financial support helps_____

IV: BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS (1 MINUTE)

What does it cost to run the organization?

- A. To support staff, officers, and operations/programs, we need to raise [\$X] / year.
- B. Our annual budget is [\$X] / year.
- C. We enjoy the financial support of corporate sponsors like _____ and _____
- D. We proactively apply for 6-8 government and foundation grants each year.
- E. We have [X] members whose dues help support programs.
- F. Nearly [\$X/Y%] per year comes from individual donors like you.
- G. [X%] of every dollar goes to directly support our _____ programs.

V: THE APPEAL (30 SECONDS)

How would your donation support our mission?

- A. Your donation of [\$X] will provide _____
- B. If you could give us [\$X / month] over the next year, you would support _____
- C. Won't you join [spouse's name] and me in investing in this important cause?
- D. Won't you consider supporting [my nonprofit]?
- E. I'm here to ask you to make a pledge/donation to [my nonprofit] today.
- F. We particularly need funds to support our _____ project.
- G. Please think carefully about the stories you've heard today and consider helping clients like _____ with a charitable donation today.

VI: THANK YOU (30 SECONDS)

- A. Thank you for coming today. Enjoy the rest of your weekend!
- B. Thank you for being with us today to learn more about [my nonprofit].
- C. Thanks for coming today and for helping us promote this amazing organization.

KEY COMMITTEES FOR NONPROFIT BOARDS

One of the most effective ways to leverage the skills of your board members is to create task-oriented committees that oversee different aspects of your nonprofit's activities. These board committees, when functioning successfully, provide another layer of oversight for your organization and help board members gain deeper understanding of the day-to-day opportunities and challenges your team faces. Below are five committees that all nonprofit organizations would benefit from having. Of course, your board should decide if other types of committees are needed based on the nature of your organization's work.

Fundraising Committee

Fundraising is the lifeblood of nonprofit organizations. Ensuring the sustainability of your organization's mission and programs depends on your ability to raise money from a diverse array of sources year after year. Managing public, private, and corporate grant submissions, soliciting donations from individual donors, and planning successful fundraising events are enormous tasks that should be monitored by a committee of development-minded board members. This committee should create annual fundraising plans, track actual vs planned progress, and explore new avenues of funding through the insight of individual members.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee oversees the financial health of your nonprofit and keeps the organization fiscally accountable to its stakeholders. This committee approves yearly program and organizational budgets, develops short and long-term financial growth strategies, and checks all actual activity against original projections. As many of those who work in nonprofit finance know, it can be very difficult to anticipate future revenues and expenses, especially for organizations that are just getting started. Board members with finance backgrounds should be asked to sit on this committee in order to provide wise council and direction. All board members, whether on this committee or not, should receive training on how to read and understand financial statements for nonprofits.

Internal Review Committee

The Internal Review Committee looks into the internal workings of your nonprofit from a human resource standpoint. What kinds of staff positions do you need to carry out your mission? Do you have the right people working in those capacities? Is there open and clear communication between your nonprofit's leaders and the board of directors? These are all questions that can be addressed with an Internal Review Committee. From experience, we all know that healthy, inspiring, and productive work environments take hard work to cultivate. Put your nonprofit in a great position to create the work environment you desire by assembling an Internal Review Committee to focus specifically on this task.

Events Committee

If your nonprofit plans and implements several events throughout the year, a committee dedicated to overseeing these efforts may be beneficial, as successfully coordinating the marketing, fundraising, and logistics of major events is difficult. An additional layer of oversight focused on event execution could be the difference between an average event and a special experience for your constituents and stakeholders. Bring together several board members who have experience in event planning and help your nonprofit maximize the potential of events to grow your donor base, spread awareness of your mission, and serve more people within your target population.

Marketing and Branding Committee

Effective marketing and branding is essential to the sustainability of your nonprofit's mission. The internet and social media have opened up new avenues for organizations to connect with their stakeholders and share their work with the world. Annual reports and newsletters can also be used strategically to strengthen relationships with potential and current donors. Leveraging these tools to your nonprofit's advantage is critical if you plan to sustain your nonprofit's activities and share your mission. The Marketing and Branding Committee can implement a social media strategy, develop your nonprofit's brand, and help create marketing materials that align with the image and vision you aim to project. Of course, these activities may be carried out by a specific person in the organization. But, then again, the experience, personal networks, and wisdom of individual board members can significantly enhance these efforts.

INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA PARADISO, DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER. *Barbara is the former Board Chair of the Boulder YWCA. In this interview, Barbara talks to one of our consultants, Amanda, about the rewards and challenges of nonprofit board service.*

Amanda: I'm here this morning meeting with Barbara Paradiso, the Director of the Center on Domestic Violence. Good morning, Barbara.

Barbara Paradiso: Good morning.

Amanda: Barbara is also the Board Chair of the YWCA of Boulder County this year. That's what we want to talk to you about today, Barb. So in your own words, can you tell me – what is the role of the non-profit board chair?

Barbara: Well, I think the primary role of the board chair is to facilitate the work of the board of directors. Certainly to work in partnership with the executive director to identify what that work actually should be, and could be, for the future and then to put in place a plan, and to be sure that that plan is carried out over the course of the year, two years, or whatever period of time that you may be in that leadership position.

Amanda: Ok. And why did you choose to do this? Why this year and what does it mean to you?

Barbara: Well, the way that the YWCA leadership process works is that you move into a chair-elect position and then, ultimately, into a chair position, so it's a multi-year commitment in many ways. I remember very clearly that I was sitting in a board meeting feeling a little frustrated about the direction that the organization was going in and talking to myself about the need either to leave, you know, that if I was uncomfortable with what was happening that this might not be a good fit for me, or to really engage in the work of the organization and move myself into a position where I might be able to have stronger influence on that direction.

Amanda: How is that going this year?

Barbara: [Laugh]

Amanda: How are you feeling now?

Barbara: Frustrated, quite honestly. There are so many different moving parts in a nonprofit organization, especially if you have a staff, and a large staff. We happen to have a very large board of directors, so many different stakeholders, and things that are outside of your control like the state of the economy, and what resources might be available to the organization. So, despite the best possible vision, I think some of the frustration is being able to actually get to that vision in any kind of efficient period of time.

Amanda: I should say for those of us listening – I am also on this board and this is a large group, it's about 22...21 members and it is all women. There are multiple committees with various meetings going on at different times. So, how can you as a board chair help to ensure that everyone in that group is staying involved in a meaningful way? That they feel like their voice is being heard and that they are making a contribution?

Barbara: I think there are a number of different ways. One of them is I think it's important to try to touch in with every person as often as you are able to, either through phone calls or emails, or even just a board meeting...being able to be sure that you check in with people and see how they're feeling about their work with the board of directors. But, probably more effective than that is simply how board meetings are run. It is so important that there is time available at board meetings to talk about truly meaty issues that the organization is facing and give board members an opportunity to come into them to ask questions and to be really engaged in the process of decision-making for the organization.

Amanda: So, for some of those groups that are not like the YWCA, that have a hard time just getting people to show up and be involved at all...I think this is one of the strengths that this board has, is that people are very involved, and they are committed. How do you think that culture came about?

Barbara: You know, I think that has actually changed in my time at the YWCA. It seems to be getting stronger and stronger during my time with Y, I have to say. And I think part of that, is that we have gone through a very intensive strategic planning process that involved the entire board which really, and we took over a year to actually do a great deal of planning where we actually sat down and we, kind of, planned for the future, and that gave people an opportunity to really look hard, to work in small groups so there was more opportunity for people to have voice. It took place over a more extended period of time, so then there was more opportunity really for people to understand what was going on in the organization and formulate an opinion about what's going on in the organization, and then be able to express that opinion and feel as though you're really doing the work of the organization. I think whenever...that that helps people to feel as though they are a part of something and as though they're actually contributing to something and that's motivating. It helps people to feel good about the fact that they are giving up their time and want to show up at board meetings. It makes it a little easier.

Amanda: The executive director there is Janet Beardsley. Can you talk to me a little bit about your relationship with her and maybe what you've seen just in that role of board chair and executive director over time and then how that is actually in that role?

Barbara: Well, I have had the pleasure of knowing Janet for a number of years. I actually was the director of a nonprofit organization in Boulder and started the same year that Janet started at the YWCA. So, we were newbie executive directors in the community together. I've had an opportunity to know her for quite some time. I think one of the roles that is very important for the chair of a board of directors is to provide support for the executive director. It is to be there to listen to whatever their problems and concerns might be, whether or not they involve the board directly and to not only be that sounding board, but also to help with the process of problem-solving. There are not many places that the executive director can go to get confidential, safe, support, information, direction, and the relationship between the board chair and the executive director, when it's working well, can be helpful in that role for an executive director. I hope that I have been able to do that for Janet.

Amanda: I'm sure you have because you have actually been an executive director yourself so that puts in a good position as a listener to know exactly what it's like to be on the other side.

Barbara: I think that helps, actually. Knowing from a staff position about where those boundaries are between board work and staff work and how to help reinforce those boundaries.

Amanda: That leads right into my next question – how can you help to ensure that the staff members are being heard and that the board is leading and that those two things are working together and prevent some of the conflict that comes up with every group?

Barbara: I think one of the things that is really helpful is when a board and staff actually understand what their roles are and know what the limitations of their roles are. Part of what the YWCA does is a very strong board orientation at the beginning of service and helps to at least outline those different roles and the boundaries around them. It doesn't necessarily...that process doesn't always work because there is more learning that people come to the table with than just what might happen in a group orientation. But, at least it, sort of, sets the stage for what those boundaries are. I think that Janet actually, our executive director, does a good job of involving the staff at the Y in decision-making...helping them to feel comfortable when having a voice and inviting them to the table when it's appropriate, when there's work being done that involves the board, to share their expertise and their knowledge with the board. That certainly helps, I think.

Amanda: Can you think of a situation where a conflict has come up?

Barbara: Yes. There was a situation where the board was actually working with a consultant, who was also a member of the board, but was acting as a consultant and helping us do some marketing and branding work. A number of the staff members were sitting in on a work session that we had around branding and they were listening to the board of directors talk about the way that they saw the organization. You know, what they, sort of, the persona that they had for the YWCA as a board. That conversation itself went well, I certainly enjoyed it, but I heard a couple of weeks later from Janet when I was having a meeting with her, that the staff who were there were horrified about what they heard from the board of directors. That they felt like there was an absolute disconnect between what actually was and what the board sought to be or wanted it to be. They were worried about that level of miscommunication.

It certainly happens in every organization and I think part of what helped resolve, actually I'm not sure if it's completely resolved, because we're still in that process of determining who we are as an organization and how we want to present ourselves to the world. So, perhaps it might not be resolved for quite some time into the future, but I think what helped calm any kind of fears was understanding that it's a process. And where we are, where we might be in the future, and why we might be heading in that direction – it's all a part of communication. Being sure that the staff understands what might be going on from the board, that the board understands the realities of what's going on in the organization now and that we continue to educate one another and communicate with one another in very good ways.

Amanda: The last question is kind of a tough one. So, as you are coming to the end of this year and you look back, what do you think will be the most valuable thing that you have learned or contributed that you might not have seen coming?

Barbara: One of the things that I really wanted our board of directors to do over the course of this year is to tackle some of the really difficult questions that the organization has been grappling with, even long before my time on the board of directors. I've heard for many, many years that these have been issues that keep raising their head...that really there's been no resolution to and leaves the board and the staff, I think, feeling uncomfortable. Part of our plan for this coming year is to provide opportunities for those conversations to take place and I think if I leave anything behind at the end of this year...is that people will feel more comfortable in the place we are. Not necessarily that we will have resolved every single one of those issues, or that we will have THE answer, but that people will feel as though the issues and concerns are aired and that they are comfortable and in a place to be able to move forward more solidly as an organization.

Amanda: Is there anything else you'd like to share with people that are just considering serving on a board that have never done this kind of work before and why they might want to be involved?

Barbara: I think sitting on a board of directors is an amazing opportunity. I think especially if you work in the nonprofit sector and you've never sat on a board of directors, it's so fascinating and it's so educational to actually see what goes on in an organization from a different perspective. It's such a valuable learning experience. I would really encourage anyone who is interested in nonprofits, to try to find that opportunity. I believe that the nonprofits are sort of the heart of our community and that they take on the work that nobody else can or is willing to.

Whether that's the for-profit or public sector groups, and so it's always inspiring and always feels as though it enriches your life in ways that you may not have imagined before.

Amanda: Thank you so much for your time.

Barbara: Thank you.