



What You Need to Know BEFORE You Serve on a Board

Serving as a board member can be one of the most important, challenging and rewarding experiences of your life. Board members have important legal and fiduciary responsibilities that require a commitment of time, skill and resources. Here are some pertinent questions you may want to ask before accepting an invitation to serve on a board.

- What is the organization's mission?
- How do its current programs relate to the mission?
- Does the organization have a strategic plan that is reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis?
- What is the organization's financial condition?
- How often do board members receive financial reports? Are they understandable?
- Does the board discuss and approve the budget annually?
- Whom does the organization serve?
- What is the composition of the board?
- How big is the board and who is on it?
- Are there descriptions of responsibilities for the board as whole and individual board members?
- Will you receive a copy of the organization's by-laws?
- Does the organization have an independent auditor?
- Do board members sign conflict-of-interest forms annually?
- How often does the board meet? Where? For how long?
- Are board members expected to serve on committees?
- Is there a board retreat?
- How long will I serve on the board?
- Are there events that board members are expected to attend?
- Does the organization have directors and liability insurance?
- Is there a specific expectation for an annual financial contribution from each board member? If so, how much?

- What is expected of a board member in terms of fundraising? Solicit funds, attend fundraising events, identify and cultivate donors?
- What kind of orientation and education is given to board members?
- How will board members continue to learn about the organization?
- How do board members interact with the staff and CEO?
- What are the expectations the board seeks from me?

After you ask these and other questions you might have, think about whether this is the right fit for you. You can do this by asking the following questions.

- Do you have the time and commitment level to be an effective board member?
- Are you comfortable with the organization's fundraising efforts?
- Is this a group you would be proud, comfortable and enthusiastic to be a part of?
- What will I bring to this board?