

## Understand the Organization Before You Join the Board

Looking to join a board takes thoughtful consideration. You want to do something that is challenging but you also want to enjoy the work you are doing, the people you work with and achieve something great...this takes through review to find the right organization.

You should meet with 1 or 2 board members and the Executive Director to get the necessary information to make your decision.

What you should learn in this process:

### Organization Background

- What are the mission, values and vision?
- Who do they serve?
- How are they perceived in the community?
- Do they have a current strategic plan that they consider a roadmap to success? How do they measure success?
- What are current challenges facing the organization? How does the board address challenges?
- Are there current opportunities facing the organization that need to be taken advantage of but lack resources?

### Board Organization and Responsibilities

- How many current board members are there? What is minimum/maximum membership?
- Are there any particular skills/roles lacking in the current board membership that they are looking to fill? How can you help?
- What is expected role for a board member in their 1<sup>st</sup> year?
- How long is a term? How many terms can you serve?
- Is there a board positions description?
- Are there board committees with descriptions? What's the expectation for committee membership?
- When are board meetings? How much of a time commitment are they looking for?
- What is typical agenda for a board meeting?
- What is the board's role in fundraising?
- What are expectations around annual personal contributions?
- Is there an ongoing board development/training plan?

### Financial Situation and Risk Management

- How often is the board provided with financial reporting? Does it include Balance Sheets, Profit and Loss Statements, cash flow and performance against approved budget?
- Does the board review and approve an annual budget?
- What is current financial situation? Do they have a comfortable reserve (how is that measured)? Is there positive cash flow? Any outstanding loans?

- What are sources of funding? Are any of those currently at risk?
- Is there Directors and Officers Liability insurance?
- Is there an annual independent audit of financial statements? Are IRS Form 990s filed in a timely manner?
- Are there conflict of interest and whistle blower policies in place?

### **Relationship with Staff**

- Do the Executive Director and the board members have the same understanding of the relationship between staff and board?
- Does the staff have input to the strategic plan and annual plans?
- How do the staff share program results with the board and the board monitor related outcomes?
- Are there Employee Policies that are updated annually and reflect current regulations? Are there any outstanding human resources issues?

### **Documents/Resources that May be Useful**

- Web-site should provide information about the organization, staff, programming
- Annual report
- Recent audited financial statements
- Board member position description
- Newsletters, brochures, articles
- List of other board members and affiliations
- Current strategic plan

### **Is the Organization a Good Match for you?**

- Do you like what you've heard about the mission and direction of the organization?
- Do you feel strongly about the type of work they do and the people they serve?
- Does the organizations and its' member match/complement your personal style?
- Did you see a use for your current skills or a new skill you'd like to utilize within the organization?
- Can you commit to the time required?
- Is it an organization you'd be proud to represent to your friends, family, workgroup and other community members?
- Is it an organization that you'd gladly donate a significant portion of your annual contributions to?
- Can you articulate why you want to be on their board?