

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.

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- 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?
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- 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?
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