

Nonprofit Board Self-Assessment

NONPROFIT BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEY

This customized nonprofit self-assessment tool is designed to help nonprofits assess their board's current performance and to identify priorities for board activities going forward. The results of this assessment are intended to focus board discussions around governance activities that can result in the greatest benefit for the organization.

The tool may be used by nonprofit managers and board members:

- To identify the areas of board performance that are strongest and those that need improvement
- To identify priority areas for the board to focus on over the next 1 or 2 years
- To allow different views to emerge – the difference between responses given by two groups of board members or by the board and senior staff can be tracked and then used to start a discussion

The survey should take 15-20 minutes to complete. Your responses will be anonymous and results will be reported in aggregate.

This tool is based on the McKinsey and Company Short and Long Form Assessments tools. It was adapted by the Jericho Road Project.

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ASSESSING THE BOARD'S CURRENT PERFORMANCE ON KEY BOARD FUNCTIONS

Effective nonprofit boards fulfill a number of roles for the organizations they support. Please rate the performance of the board against these nine board responsibilities.

Please mark the response in for each responsibility that is closest to describing the situation at hand; descriptions will rarely be a perfect match, so use the comments section at the bottom of the page to expand on any aspects you wish.

1. Understand and Shape Organization's Mission and Vision

Board members lack understanding of the organization's vision and/ or its mission; Board has no formal process for reviewing its mission and/or vision

Board members appear to share a basic understanding of the mission, issues may exist but haven't been raised; Board members infrequently refer to mission and vision in discussions on the future of the organization or on policy matters

Board members informally refer to mission and vision in policy and planning discussions; Mission and / or vision discussions brought before board on an ad hoc basis when there is momentum

All board members share an understanding of a mission that has been stress-tested through discussion; Board members share a common vision of where the organization wants to be in 5-10 years with clearly documented goals; Formal process exists (e.g. retreats) to foster board review of related issues

2. Resolve Key Strategic and/ or Policy Issues

No strategic plan exists; or A plan exists but board members don't use it to guide key decisions, or there are disagreements between board members or between board and staff on long term goals or priorities, Staff feels unsupported and/ or board feels disconnected

A strategic plan exists but it is used on an ad hoc basis and/ or there is very little involvement by board members in developing the plan; Board mostly "rubber stamps" a plan with limited discussion; Plan has holes-such as a situation analysis or resource implications

A process exists for developing a strategic plan but plan is mostly driven by staff or external forces; Key elements are addressed in the plan; unresolved issues are identified for future investigation; Board and staff have a high level understanding of distinction between board and management decisions

Board has a process for developing and updating a plan that includes a balance of all members and key staff; All parties feel their views are heard in the process; Plan elements are tightly linked to organization's mission and vision and/or there is a clear plan for closing resource gaps if any

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3. Select, Evaluate and Develop the ED/CEO

jn Board has no clear succession plan; Hiring decisions are subjective and/or handled on ad hoc basis; If hiring new CEO: little to no discussion of criteria and or unclear decision-making/ ranking processes

jn Board has informal discussion with CEO on succession; Evaluations are performed annually against pre-agreed criteria; board members have input into the process; If hiring CEO: limited discussion of criteria or search plan and/or some board members left out of the process or frustrated by quality of candidates

jn Board has clear view on succession; works with CEO to identify internal candidates with leadership potential; Annual evaluations performed against pre-agreed criteria; If hiring new CEO: formal criteria and plan discussed at board; internal and external candidates considered and at least one strong candidate emerges

jn Board works with CEO to identify and develop internal candidates; Annual evaluations performed against pre-agreed criteria plus 360 degree feedback or other data; CEO has written development plan; compensation tied to performance; If hiring new CEO, specific search criteria used to identify best candidates

4. Ensure Adequate Financial Resources

jn No clear understanding of resource gaps; Individual members' financial support inconsistent or misses goals set for the board; Board members role in raising funds is not commonly shared and involvement in fund-raising is handled by a few board members

jn Board has some understanding of the resources needed primarily discussions around budget; Board members' financial support varies by individual; Expectations for support not clearly understood prior to joining board; No systematic effort by board to introduce staff to funding sources

jn Board understands and feels "ownership" for resource gaps; Most board members donate consistently at an expected level; board meets set donation goals; Directors active work with staff to develop diverse fund-raising plan and frequently introduce staff to contacts

jn Board and staff develop clear plan to meet fund-raising targets; All board members financially support organization; donations are seen as a priority by all members of the board; board sometimes exceeds its own donation goals; Board introduces staff to donors; drives fund-raising activities when appropriate

5. Provide Expertise or Access for Organizational Needs

jn Board members rarely discuss and/or see access as a priority or board plays no role in providing staff access or influence; Board member expertise not specifically discussed or seen as a core board priority; Board doesn't see providing expertise as a vital role and rarely offers assistance

jn Board members provide access only when CEO requests; Board involvement or support seen of little value to the organization; reactive; CEO reaches out to individuals for assistance; but help generally needs as of modest value

jn Board understands needs based on strategic planning with CEO/staff; Board provides access to individuals and institutions; access and influence seen as of moderate value to institution; Board members' access and expertise seen as valuable to organization

jn Needs for access and influence directly tied to strategic planning objectives; Board proactive in reaching out to further organizational goals; frequently influential in achieving them; Board access and expertise highly valued in organization

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6. Build and Enhance Organizational Reputation

jn Building organizational reputation needs not seen or discussed as important; Board plans include almost no role in building organizational reputation

jn Reputation objectives understood in vague terms; Some individual board members participate when invited to community events

jn Board understands key goals for target communities (e.g. funders, press, key stakeholders, etc.); Individual board members' contributions and/or effectiveness varies

jn Needs for reputation based on strategic plan and /or needs allow meaningful roles for board members; Board members proactively reach out in community to build awareness and excitement about the organization, seen as ambassadors for the organization

7. Oversight of Financial Performance and Risk Management

jn Budgets prepared with little to no input from board; sporadic or infrequent budget reviews; No independent financial audit, limited compliance understanding; No clear understanding or discussion of organizational risks

jn Board actively reviews annual financial plan, objectives generally understood and monitors financial statements at set intervals (e.g. monthly or quarterly); Independent audit performed and results discussed with board; Little board involvement with compliance to other regulatory bodies; Some ad hoc risk discussions/ action (insurance)

jn Board reviews and approves 3-5 year financial plan, and /or has written investment policies guides; Board regularly monitors finances; staff can answer most complex inquires in timely manner; Independent audit performed & results discussed with board; Board annually reviews its risk mitigation efforts

jn Board actively involved in preparing/ reviewing multi-year financial plans; Robust discussions of resource allocations; Board regularly monitors finance statements, can explain variances and corrective actions ("no surprises"); Board ensures timely independent audit; understands and acts to achieve fiduciary compliance and risk management

8. Monitor Organizational Performance and Accountability

jn Performance discussed infrequently or not at all; No formal process for monitoring progress performance; Board doesn't see itself as accountable to its stakeholders and/or has no mechanisms for gathering stakeholder feedback

jn Planning discussions lead to annual performance goals; these tend to focus on input/activity levels (e.g. number of meals served); Limited discussions of board accountability; Divergent views regarding key stakeholders; Feedback from stakeholders limited to staff presentations; Some stakeholders are missed or not represented

jn Board sets 1- to 3-year goals; metrics include activities and evaluation measures; Board routinely discusses performance and objectives but lacks ways to update strategic plan/CEO evaluation; Ad hoc accountability discussions, not turned into actions e.g. stakeholder communications; Board seeks stakeholder feedback; agrees on areas for improvement

jn Board works with staff to set outcome based metrics and targets for 1 to 3 years; Other organizations' metrics used for comparisons; Board routinely monitors and evaluates performance; Board ensures that results are regularly communicated to stakeholders; Board actively seeks stakeholder feedback; incorporates suggestions into long range plans

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9. Improve Board Performance

jm No board performance goals are set; No board evaluation conducted; No process in place to evaluate individual board member performance; Board discussion of its own performance is limited and/or unstructured

jm Board translates strategic plan into goals in an ad hoc manner; no clear committee assignments; Board informally evaluates its own performance; Individual directors are informally evaluated as part of a re-nomination process; Informal process for evaluating board performance is large driven by chair and/or CEO and improvement plans not widely know by entire board

jm Board translates strategic plan into some goals, e.g., fund-raising; Board formally evaluates its performance on major goals; Board sets up self-improvement committee; most members seen as valuable contributors; Board intentionally self-evaluates its own performance every few years; board leaders generally seen to have clear board performance improvement plans

jm Board has concrete goals tied to strategic plan and a clear committee structure/ goals including timeline and staff support; Board regularly evaluates its own performance against these goals; uses/ applies lessons learned; Formal process results in clear plan for improvement; all board members "own" board improvement as a core value

10. Please add any additional thoughts to explain your answers:

	5
	6

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PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE NEXT 1-2 YEARS

A nonprofit board adds value by undertaking each of the nine responsibilities identified; however, boards rarely have time to focus on all of the responsibilities. Good nonprofits prioritize activities depending on the context of the organization. As you complete this section, please identify those areas of potential board focus that are most needed over the next 1 to 2 years to ensure the organization succeeds against its mission.

1. How important is it for the board to focus on:

	Low	Medium	High
Clarifying the organization's mission or vision	jn	jn	jn
Resolving key strategic or policy issues (please identify issues below)	jn	jn	jn
Developing (or replacing) the CEO	jn	jn	jn
Developing the financial resources needed to support the strategy	jn	jn	jn
Providing expertise or access to support organizational priorities (please identify priorities below)	jn	jn	jn
Building/enhancing reputation of organization with key stakeholders/community (please identify stakeholders/community targets below)	jn	jn	jn
Overseeing financial performance and ensuring adequate risk management	jn	jn	jn
Assessing performance against mission and key program priorities	jn	jn	jn
Improving board performance	jn	jn	jn

2. Please add any additional thoughts to explain your answers or identify additional needs:

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ASSESSING KEY ENABLERS OF BOARD PERFORMANCE

Good nonprofit boards have a number of common-sense enablers in place to allow them to work effectively and productively. Please rate the board against these key enablers.

1. Are enablers of board effectiveness in place?

	Disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Board size is appropriate	jñ	jñ	jñ
Board has appropriate committees with clear charters	jñ	jñ	jñ
Board composition is appropriate	jñ	jñ	jñ
Board has effective processes for identifying, cultivating, and integrating new directors	jñ	jñ	jñ
The right leaders are in place as board chair and committee chairs	jñ	jñ	jñ
Board has an effective process for selecting, developing, and transitioning new leaders	jñ	jñ	jñ
Board/committee meeting calendars, advance materials, and agendas support the board as needed	jñ	jñ	jñ
Board and committee meetings run well, e.g. start/end on time, give members a chance to engage in issues, ensure all voices are heard	jñ	jñ	jñ
Board strikes the right balance of work and fun activities, including effective efforts to connect board members to the mission of the organization	jñ	jñ	jñ

2. Please add any additional thoughts to explain your answers:

	5
	6

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THANK YOU

Thank you for completing this survey. Staff at Jericho Road will collate and analyze the results of the self-assessment and provide your board with a report. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Jodi DeLibertis at 978-761-4506.

