



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF AMERICA**

BOARD BRIEF: Board Development

Board Briefs are "at-a-glance" resources that help board volunteers better support their Boys & Girls Club. They are designed to occur as five-minute education opportunities at board meetings.

SUMMARY

Effective boards of directors routinely add qualified new board members and keep them engaged. Board building is a year-round process that is typically led by a governance committee and the Board Chair. Board diversity and engaged, committed members ensures strong and passionate leadership for a vibrant organization.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR BOARD BUILDING

Good boards don't just happen. They grow from leaders who take care, thought and planning to build a strong group of the right leaders. Board development is a long-term, ongoing process and a significant aspect of a quality organization.

Governance Committee

The governance committee oversees board development in five major areas.

1. **Help create board roles and responsibilities.** Leads the board in regularly reviewing and updating descriptions of roles, areas of responsibility and member expectations.
2. **Pay attention to board composition.** Assesses current and anticipated needs (board composition; knowledge, attributes, skills, abilities, influence, resources). In addition:
 - Identifies prospects, explores interest in board service, nominates to full board.
 - Works with Board Chair to assess re-election options for current members.
 - Identifies new roles and contributions for members to increase engagement.
3. **Encourage board development.** Educates candidates about board service during cultivation process. Designs and oversees new member orientation to the board and the organization. Implements year-round board education and team-building activities.
4. **Assess board effectiveness.** Initiates periodic assessment of board performance, and proposes changes as needed. Provides ongoing counsel to the board to enhance its effectiveness. Routinely reviews board practices (participation, conflicts of interest, confidentiality, etc.). Updates board policies and practices as appropriate.
5. **Prepare board leadership.** Leads officer succession process and plans future board leadership. Nominates board members for election as board officers.

¹ Adapted from the work of Fred Miller, Chatham Group, Inc.

Although the brunt of board building lies with the governance committee, the entire board carries the responsibility for its development. For example, all board members should identify new board prospects. The CEO also plays a critical role in educating the full board on Club matters.

THE BOARD BUILDING CYCLE

Fortunately, the board building process is a cyclical one, enabling board members to effectively plan the depth and breadth needed for their board's development.

Step 1: Identify – What does the organization have? What does it need? Are there gaps? Keep affluence, influence and diversity in mind to ensure sustainability and greater perspectives.

Step 2: Cultivate – Cast a wide net. Share desired characteristics with major donors, partners and other supporters. Solicit prospects from professionals in related fields and other nonprofits.

Step 3: Recruit – Explore prospect interests and interview for fit and red flags. Re-emphasize time and service commitment, then if still interested, nominate to full board for election.

Step 4: Orient – Provide new members with board orientation (roster, past minutes, etc.) as well as Club orientation (history, culture, programs, facilities)

Step 5: Involve – Getting new members actively involved early on builds on the momentum of orientation and fuels their enthusiasm. All board members should be engaged in important work.

Step 6: Educate – Some form of education should be on the agenda of nearly every board meeting. Also, online learning, informal education and state/regional events are great options.

Step 7: Evaluate – This assessment includes three levels: Board effectiveness should be evaluated; individual board leaders should be assessed; and board meetings should be reviewed.

Step 8: Rotate – Keep the board fresh and avoid burnout. Make room for new members. Use committees to rotate roles and duties of members and invoke term limits.

Step 9: Celebrate – Recognize small and large accomplishments. Acknowledge service through BGCA's National Service Recognition Awards program.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Do we have a governance committee to lead board development? Are changes needed?
- What step of the cycle do we do well? What could we improve and how?
- How diverse is our board? What benefits and challenges does this diversity present?
- What can we do to strengthen the role each current member plays in identifying, cultivating, involving and educating new board member?

