ALLIANCE FOR BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

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Board Self-Assessment

Alliance for Board Effectiveness

Nonprofit Organizations Use This List To...

- Check whether they are missing any good governance practices
- Suggest topics for their board development committee to consider
- Assess what all directors think the board is doing well or should be doing
- Identify where they may need outside help

		Doing Well	Doing Somewhat Well	Not doing But should	Doesn't fit us	Not sure/ No opinion
	Foundations of Board Structure and Process					
1	We have a clear vision and mission that attract and guide people, programs, and resources.	1	2	3	4	5
2	We have defined measures of desired outcomes and we focus on them.	1	2	3	4	5
3	The size of our board is workable and is neither too big or too small.	1	2	3	4	5
4	We have a defined profile of desired expertise, mix, and diversity of board members.	1	2	3	4	5
5	We build a pool of candidates throughout the year, using a board profile template.	1	2	3	4	5
6	Our directors contribute wealth, wisdom, wallop (influence) and witness (advocate).	1	2	3	4	5
7	We have defined terms (2-4 years) and consecutive term limits.	1	2	3	4	5
8	We conduct pre-election (nominees) and post- election (new directors) orientations.	1	2	3	4	5
9	We have clear roles and responsibilities for the board as a whole, individual directors, committees, CEO, and staff.	1	2	3	4	5
10	We have all directors sign an annual affirmation of board-approved expectations.	1	2	3	4	5
11	We conduct peer evaluations prior to nominating current board members for another term.	1	2	3	4	5
12	We have a Bylaw provision for terminating directors mid-term, even without cause, if necessary.	1	2	3	4	5
13	We have an elected chair, gifted and prepared to manage the board and relate positively with the CEO.	1	2	3	4	5
14	The CEO is not the chair but is <i>ex officio</i> on the board without vote.	1	2	3	4	5
15	We have no limits on consecutive terms for board chairs.	1	2	3	4	5
16	We understand directors may wear several "hats" but we elect them for the governance hat, i.e., their role as governors.	1	2	3	4	5
17	We expect each director to wear the volunteer, participant, and (maybe) implementer "hats" as well	1	2	3	4	5

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	Executive Leadership					
18	We have a clear definition of the type of CEO needed for our mission and the future of the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
19	We intend to implement an open, professional search process for the next CEO.	1	2	3	4	5
20	We have mutually agreed upon expectations and goals for the CEO.	1	2	3	4	5
21	The board allows the CEO recruit, hire, evaluate, and terminate (if necessary) all staff.	1	2	3	4	5
22	The board defines what information and data it wants from the CEO and how often.	1	2	3	4	5
23	The board provides a good annual CEO performance review based on agreed upon goals.	1	2	3	4	5
24	The CEO is transparent with directors and informs them through regular emails or conference calls	1	2	3	4	5
25	The CEO and board chair have regular pre-scheduled times with agendas for conversations.	1	2	3	4	5
26	The board has a comprehensive succession and transition policy for board and management leaders.	1	2	3	4	5
	Board Committees					
27	We review the committee structure periodically and change when wise to do so.	1	2	3	4	5
28	We have clear, written job descriptions for all committees.	1	2	3	4	5
29	Committee chairs lead in setting agendas focused on governance, not management.	1	2	3	4	5
30	Our Bylaws allow non-directors to serve on committees.	1	2	3	4	5
31	Our committees speak "to the board" and not "for the board" (except an Executive Committee).	1	2	3	4	5
32	If we have an Executive Committee, it meets only when needed.	1	2	3	4	5
33	We have a board development committee that nominates, educates, and evaluates.	1	2	3	4	5
34	We have a separate Audit Committee that is focused on regulations, risk, and internal procedures.	1	2	3	4	5
35	The staff prepares advance board material that is policy-oriented, not management focused.	1	2	3	4	5
36	Our board creates ad hoc task forces for short-term, specialized issues.	1	2	3	4	5
	Board Meetings					
37	We schedule board meetings at least two years in advance.	1	2	3	4	5

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38	The number of board meetings each year is sufficient to maintain board unity and high performance.	1	2	3	4	5
39	We have fewer longer meetings rather than many short meetings	1	2	3	4	5
40	Our directors receive reports whenever developed, but all at least one week in advance of meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
41	Our directors build a culture that expects all to come fully prepared and ready to participate.	1	2	3	4	5
42	Our schedule of board meetings provides for periodic in-depth reviews of each major function.	1	2	3	4	5
43	We limit the time for staff reports and staff Q&A to allow for more in-depth board dialogue.	1	2	3	4	5
44	Our board meetings include time for board business, board education, and social interaction.	1	2	3	4	5
45	The board chair shapes the final agenda, including a consent agenda, and manages for maximum board participation on strategic issues.	1	2	3	4	5
46	All of our meetings have a short executive session at the beginning <u>without</u> the CEO.	1	2	3	4	5
47	All of our meetings have a short executive session at the end together with the CEO.	1	2	3	4	5
48	The primary focus of board meetings is assessing outcomes and adjusting policies.	1	2	3	4	5
49	We conduct regular retreats, often with spouses, to build relationships and focus on long-term strategy.	1	2	3	4	5
50	All board members evaluate every meeting and suggest improvements in protocol, agenda, venue, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
	Board Policies					
51	Our board policies manual (BPM) has all on-going board policies in one well-organized document.	1	2	3	4	5
52	One section of our BPM describes clear vision, mission, values, strategies, and top goals.	1	2	3	4	5
53	One section of our BPM has key policies about governance structure and meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
54	One section of our BPM clarifies the board-staff relationship and roles.	1	2	3	4	5
55	One large section of our BPM articulates board parameters around all major executive functions.	1	2	3	4	5
56	We review and improve our board policies manual (BPM) at every meeting.	1	2	3	4	5
57	The CEO recommends edits to standing policies in advance of each meeting.	1	2	3	4	5
58	Our committees review staff suggestions to the BPM, then recommend changes to the board.	1	2	3	4	5
59	The key outcome of our board meetings is wiser policies documented in our BPM.	1	2	3	4	5

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	Strategic Planning and Budget Planning					
60	Our board policies specify that the CEO leads strategic planning involving key persons on and off the board.	1	2	3	4	5
61	Our board reviews plans and finances at every meeting, often reflected in CEO "dashboard" reports.	1	2	3	4	5
62	Our annual budget reflects our strategic plan and prioritizes funds to achieve defined goals while reducing spending on low priorities.	1	2	3	4	5
63	Our board makes key results public for needed transparency and accountability.	1	2	3	4	5
	Fundraising					
64	Our board contributes to fundraising with good CEO selection, clear policies, and director involvement.	1	2	3	4	5
65	We enforce a policy that every director be a donor of record, ideally in the first quarter of every year.	1	2	3	4	5
66	We have a clear expectation that all directors participate in executing a good fundraising plan.	1	2	3	4	5
67	We appoint talented leadership for capital campaigns including non-board members.	1	2	3	4	5
	Other Characteristics of Good Governance					
68	Our board faithfully honors all laws and government regulations.	1	2	3	4	5
69	The CEO uses emails, conference calls, a board website and other means to improve board communications.	1	2	3	4	5
70	We ensure that a culture of transparency, accountability, and integrity is promoted at all levels.	1	2	3	4	5
71	We reserve the right to request outside assessments or audits of legal, financial, program, or fundraising.	1	2	3	4	5
72	We conduct intentional research on and visits to similar organizations by board and staff.	1	2	3	4	5
73	We maintain membership in and partnership with significant organizations and associations.	1	2	3	4	5
74	We invest in professional development for board members, staff, and volunteers.	1	2	3	4	5
75	Our board protocols are documented, including our commitment to confidentiality on appropriate matters.	1	2	3	4	5
76	We ensure that technology is maximized for efficiency in governance and programs.	1	2	3	4	5
77	We ensure that contracts and agreements with others include alternative dispute resolution.	1	2	3	4	5
78	We make sure to thank and honor board members and staff when they depart.	1	2	3	4	5

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79	We regularly review Articles and Bylaws to reflect changing culture, laws, and regulations.	1	2	3	4	5
80	Our board knows why, when, and how it would close or merge with another organization.	1	2	3	4	5

Source: This self-assessment is based on the governance tool "80 Principles/Practices of Effective Boards" from the Good Governance Toolbox by The Andringa Group. Contact bobandringa@mac.com. The self-assessment above is provided free by the Alliance for Board Effectiveness. You can learn more about this group of consultants at www.boardeffectiveness.org.