

THE ROLE OF NON-PROFIT BOARD CHAIRS

The chair of the Board of Directors of a non-profit organization has very specific leadership responsibilities. This tool spells out those responsibilities. Board chairs can use this tool to help clarify their role and adjust their focus accordingly.

Facilitator of Board meetings

- The chair should determine the agenda for Board meetings in consultation with the executive director, committee chairs, and other officers as needed. The chair should make sure that the Board of Directors focuses on those issues and topics that belong to the Board to decide and deliberate. The agenda should provide for lively interaction and discussion – not updates and reports.
- The chair should always be mindful of the executive director's leadership role and make sure that neither the chair nor other Board members are guilty of micro-managing.
- The chair should preside over and facilitate Board meetings – and make sure meetings are well-organized. In that capacity, the chair should make sure that discussions are focused, fair, open, and timely. As facilitator, the chair should never be the first to speak, but the last.

Organizer of Board work

- The chair is responsible for facilitating the development of clear goals and expectations for Board members (e.g. fund-raising goals). The chair should ensure that the Board is engaged in regular monitoring reports on the Board's progress in meeting its goals.
- The chair typically organizes the committees of the Board, creates new committees and disbands old ones, and appoints the chairs of committees.

Liaison with executive director

- The chair is responsible for ensuring a smooth coordination of activities between the executive director and the Board.
- The chair is responsible for scheduling and coordinating the annual evaluation of the executive director.
- The chair has no authority to supervise or direct the executive director, apart from authority expressly granted him or her by the Board.