

Working with Nonprofit Organizations in Community Settings: Governance, Board Officer Descriptions¹

Muthusami Kumaran²

Introduction

This article is part of a series, *Working with Nonprofit Organizations in Community Settings*, designed to provide basic information on governance, planning, and operational details for community-based nonprofit organizations. Information provided in this series will help the Board of Directors, leaders, staff, and volunteers of nonprofit organizations that provide a variety of services to local communities.

Description of Board Officers

Board Chair

- Provides leadership to the board, helps to develop policy for the board's operations
- Sets the agendas and chairs the meetings of the board
- Appoints Committee chairpersons in consultation with other board members
- Serves as ex-officio member of committees and attends meetings when appropriate
- Works with Chief Executive on any issues of concern to the board
- Monitors financial planning and financial reports
- Plays a leading role in fundraising plan and activities
- Formally evaluates work of Chief Executive

Vice Chair

- Performs Chair responsibilities when Board Chair is not available
- Reports to Board Chair
- Works closely with Board Chair and Chief Executive
- Works with Board Chair to implement officer transitions

Committee Chair

- Ensures committee members have the information needed to do their jobs
- Handles the logistics of the committee's work
- Reports to Board Chair
- Reports on the work of the committee to the board
- Works closely with the Chief Executive and other staff as agreed to by Board Chair and CEO

- Sets agenda for committee meetings, presides at meetings, and assigns work to committee members

Board Member

- Attends all regularly scheduled board meetings
- Makes serious commitment to participate actively in committee work
- Volunteers for and accepts assignments and completes them thoroughly and on time
- Prepares for meetings, stays informed about committee matters, reviews minutes and reports
- Builds a collegial working relationship with other board members
- Participates in fundraising campaigns/activities for the organization

Secretary

- Maintains records of the board and ensures effective management of organization's records
- Manages minutes of board meetings
- Ensures minutes are distributed to members shortly after each meeting
- Is knowledgeable about legal documents (articles, bylaws, IRS letters, etc.)

Treasurer

- Manages finances of the organization
- Administers fiscal matters of the organization
- Works with audit committee as appropriate
- Provides annual budget to the board for members' approval
- Ensures board review of financial policies and procedures

Chief Executive—Expectations of Board of Directors

The nonprofit organization must decide whether or not to make the chief executive a member of the board. Some organizations do because they think it strengthens ties within the organization. Others do not because they feel the board should have a more distinct role in the organization. It is best for the nonprofit to examine its mission, vision, and board policies to decide the role of the

chief executive in board deliberations. The description of the Chief Executive's responsibilities will vary by organization although most nonprofits have some standard expectations for this position. The following description is adapted from *The Complete Guide to Nonprofit Management* (Wilbur 2000, 45):

- Provides leadership and policy guidance for the organization
- Manages and directs all operations, programs, and activities
- Implements the policy decisions and directives of the board
- Reports to the Board of Directors and keeps the board fully informed of all organizational activities
- Approves all financial disbursements and otherwise monitors all financial and accounting activities
- Prepares annual budgets with assistance of treasurer and finance committee
- Hires, supervises, and evaluates all staff
- Maintains organizational records, files, documents, and archives

- Represents the organization to other organizations, the media, and the public at large
- Maintains confidentiality of sensitive information

References

BoardSource. "Board Member Roles and Responsibilities." Retrieved June 25, 2006.

<https://boardsource.org/fundamental-topics-of-nonprofit-board-service/roles-responsibilities/>

Wilbur, R.H. 2000. *The Complete Guide to Nonprofit Management (2nd edition)*. John Wiley & Sons.

Acknowledgments

Original article written by Elizabeth B. Bolton, professor emeritus, UF/IFAS Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Gainesville, FL; and Anna Guest-Jelley, former director of Violence Prevention Program, Peaceful Paths Domestic Abuse Network, Gainesville, Florida.

¹ This document is FCS9247, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date July 2009. Revised June 2012, June 2015, and July 2025. Visit the Ask IFAS website at <https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu/> for the currently supported version of this publication.

² Muthusami Kumaran, Ph.D., associate professor, nonprofit management and community organizations, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county's UF/IFAS Extension office. U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Andra Johnson, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.