



## What are a Board Member's Responsibilities?

The board of directors bears a legal responsibility to govern a corporation. Fulfilling that responsibility encompasses many individual [roles and responsibilities](#). Each board member brings different strengths, talents, and abilities to the board. When board members merge their skills toward the mission and vision of an organization, it creates a synergy that makes the whole board greater than the sum of each individual's contribution. Serving on a board requires time and dedication.

**Effective board members** possess solid [character traits](#) and personal integrity. They are active members who have tolerance of differing viewpoints and can communicate honesty with sensitivity. Board members should be amiable, responsive, and patient. It always helps to have a bit of a sense of humor.

### Establishing the Organization's Mission and Purpose

Every board of directors gets its direction from the organization's [vision](#) and [mission](#). The vision is what the organization wants to see happen. The mission is the action plan to accomplish the vision. Because virtually everything the board does centers around the mission and vision, the board of directors should take great care in forming mission and vision statements that encompass the organization's goals. The board should incorporate perspectives from each person on the board.

### Executive Director-Selecting, Supporting, Reviewing

The board is responsible for vetting and selecting [Executive Director](#) candidates and selecting a qualified candidate from the pool of applicants. Once the Executive Director had been appointed, the board will work collaboratively with him/her to carry out organizational plans. The board of directors is also tasked with [reviewing the performance](#) of the Executive Director on an annual basis. Board members may be asked to serve on a committee that prepares an annual performance review of the Executive Director and present it to the full board.

### Organizational Planning

Board members spend the bulk of their time in organizational planning. They determine and monitor the organization's products, services, and programs. In addition, they keep up to date on competitors and developments in the organization's field. Board members should periodically review the strategic plans and review whether goals are being met.

### Monitoring and Managing Financial Resources

Board members should learn how to read a [financial statement](#). They don't need to be accounting experts, but they should have a good idea of how much money is coming in and how much is going out. Board members should monitor funds and spending categories, because they have a collective responsibility for fiscal expenditures to their shareholders.

### Assessing and Developing Skills

Each board member should continually develop his/her skills by seeking opportunities to further educate himself/herself about the organization. Board members should develop skills in the areas of organizational knowledge, fundraising, cultivating and recruiting board members and volunteers, and understanding financial statements. Board members may take advantage of seminars and workshops to enhance their skillsets as a productive member of the board.



## **Serve on Committees**

Board members should have a willingness to serve on committees or task forces and take on special assignments, as necessary. Board members should mentor their peers on how to chair a committee and present committee reports to the rest of the board.

## **Recruiting New Board Members**

Through their networking opportunities, board members should be on the lookout for potential new board members who would bring additional knowledge, talent, experiences, or perspective to the board (check out our post on [A Board Member's Take on Board Recruitment](#)). They should educate and inform prospective board members about the work of the board and invite them to board meetings and other organizational activities. Board members should suggest possible candidates to the board as openings arise.

## **Spread the Word About the Organization**

Most people join a board because of their passion and commitment to the organization's vision and mission. Part of being an active board member is sharing that passion with others, inspiring them to become involved. Board members should actively network with others, opening new doors and opportunities with the business network or community.

## **Time Commitment**

Board members should accept their positions with full understanding that being a board member requires a [time commitment](#). Prior to accepting a position as a board member, a candidate should review the meeting schedules to make sure that he doesn't have any conflicts. Once a board member has been nominated and appointed, he should carve out enough time in his/her schedule before meetings to review materials and prepare for the board and any committee meetings. After reviewing materials, he should ask questions about the upcoming agenda so that he can be an informed contributor to the meeting. Board members should take the responsibility for accepting tasks and follow through on given assignments.

## **Maintaining Integrity**

Responsible board members follow [conflict of interest policies](#) as set forth in the organization's by-laws. They maintain confidentiality regarding sensitive matters and other private board matters.

In bringing together many voices and perspectives, there is bound to be some conflict among board members from time to time. Board members share the responsibility for staying true to the vision and mission of the organization when conflicts arise. They should be active listeners who can communicate the facts clearly. They should be ready to answer questions and objections and participate in productive discussions. They should devote enough time to fulfill their roles appropriately and advance the work of the organization.