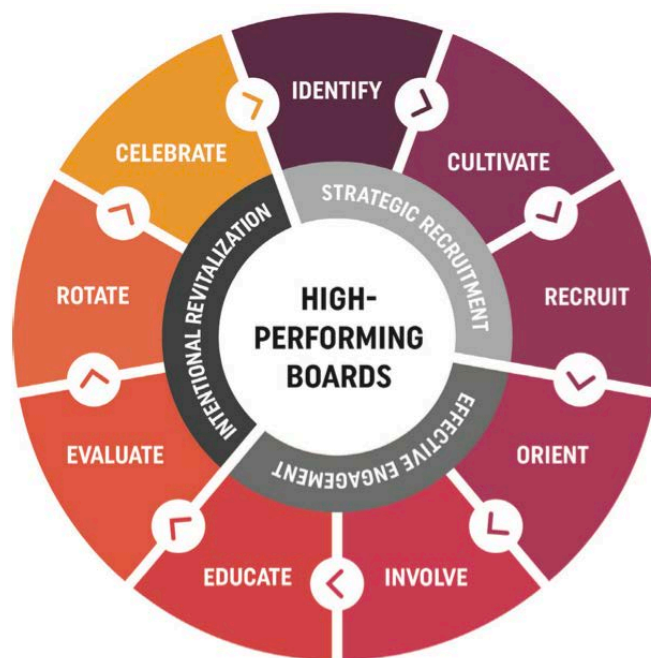


The Board Building Cycle

Building a nonprofit board involves more than just filling seats at a board table. The big question is how an organization finds, engages, strengthens, and sets board members up for success in the work that they do in supporting the nonprofit. Too often boards scramble to find eager and willing candidates to serve as members. This building process requires boards to be strategic about identifying, cultivating, and recruiting potential candidates. Building a board is a continuous cycle. Through three interconnected phases, it constantly seeks to create a culture of learning, engagement, and self-assessment that values the input of all members. The most effective boards are those whose members are deeply committed to the organization's missions, values, and purpose. They value those who bring diverse experiences, points of view, and cultural backgrounds. They evolve over time, changing with their community's needs, and have a focus on good governance.



Phase I: Strategic Recruitment

Step 1: Identify the future needs of the board. Determine the diversity of skills, knowledge, backgrounds, and perspectives you need to implement the strategic plan or framework and address upcoming opportunities and challenges. What do you have? What is missing?

Step 2: Cultivate potential board members and identify individuals with the desired characteristics. Ask current board members, senior staff, and others to suggest

candidates. Find ways to connect with candidates, pique their interest and keep them informed of your progress.

Step 3: Recruit prospects. Describe why a prospective member is wanted and needed. Explain expectations and responsibilities of board members, and don't minimize requirements. Invite questions, elicit their interest, and find out if they would be prepared to serve.

Phase 2: Effective Engagement

Step 4: Orient new board members both to the organization — explaining the history, programs, pressing issues, finances, facilities, bylaws, and organizational chart — and to the board — describing committees, board member responsibilities, and list of board members. Assign a board mentor to each new board member.

Step 5: Involve all board members. Discover their interests and availability. Involve them in committees or task forces. Solicit feedback. Hold everyone accountable. Express appreciation for work well done.

Step 6: Educate the board. Provide information concerning your mission area. Promote exploration of issues facing the organization. Hold retreats and encourage board development activities by sending board members to seminars and workshops. Don't hide difficulties.

Phase 3: Intentional Revitalization

Step 7: Evaluate the board and individual board members. Examine how the board and chief executive work as a team. Engage the board in assessing its own performance. Identify ways in which to improve. Encourage individual self-assessment.

Step 8: Rotate board members. Establish term limits. Do not automatically reelect for an additional term; consider the board's needs and the board member's performance. Explore advisability of resigning with members who are not active. Develop new leadership.

Step 9: Celebrate! Recognize victories and progress, no matter how small. Appreciate individual contributions to the board, the organization, and the community. Make room for humor and a good laugh.

Source: *The Board Building Cycle; Finding, Engaging, and Strengthening Nonprofit Board Members. Third Edition* (BoardSource, 2019)