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Guide for Building Board Succession

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Effective succession plans are tailored to the unique dynamics of your board. There’s no one-size-fits-all solution; what works for one might not work for others. However, with some hard work and commitment, this process can yield positive outcomes.

Successful succession planning hinges on an understanding of current leadership roles and an alertness regarding potential successors. Identifying strong leaders proactively proves valuable for when a specific vacancy emerges. Furthermore, boards that document critical company or organizational information in an easily shareable format are prepared for emergencies. Ensure that multiple individuals are well-versed in the set-up and rationale behind board operational tools.

A well-structured succession plan encourages a sense of responsibility and accountability while garnering support from stakeholders. It serves as a tool to pinpoint areas of focus. Integral to this plan is a regular assessment of the board’s performance and a thorough analysis of existing gaps. By doing so, it becomes a strategic tool for forecasting upcoming vacancies and assembling a roster of potential candidates.

Overview Checklist: Board Succession Plan

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Item	Date
Review term limits for board members and officers in current bylaws	
Review current board, officer and committee rosters	
Evaluate effectiveness of current assignments	
Conduct board self-assessments (if not completed within last 12 months)	
Determine upcoming term expirations/vacancies – (in terms of people and skills)	
Conduct exit interviews with members leaving board to learn positives and negatives of their experience on board	
Review needs of organization with regard to upcoming projects, developments, etc.	
Review potential new board members identified throughout the year for skills and dynamics	
Identify potential leaders from current board list	
Complete board and leadership succession grids	
Assign a mentor to each newly elected board member	

■ Board Member Recruitment Matrix

A board member recruitment matrix is a valuable tool for ensuring that your organization's board is composed of individuals with the right skills, experiences and diversity to effectively govern and guide the organization. Here are several reasons why you should consider creating a board member recruitment matrix:

1. **Alignment with organizational goals:** to ensure that the skills and expertise of potential board members align with the strategic goals and needs of the organization.
2. **Diversity and inclusion:** to work toward building a diverse and inclusive board to ensure that your board reflects the community or stakeholders you serve.
3. **Avoiding skill gaps:** through mapping out the skills and experiences of existing board members, you can identify areas where there might be deficiencies and seek individuals who can fill those gaps.
4. **Board composition:** to ensure that you have the right balance of different types of directors, such as those with financial, legal, marketing, fundraising or industry-specific expertise, depending on your organization's needs.
5. **Succession planning:** to identify potential future board members and groom them for the role, ensuring a smooth transition when current members step down.
6. **Accountability:** to add a layer of accountability to the board recruitment process by ensuring that decisions are based on objective criteria rather than personal preferences or biases.
7. **Transparency:** to make it clear what qualifications and characteristics are being sought in board members.
8. **Long-term board effectiveness:** to ensure that the board remains agile, responsive and capable of leading the organization in a changing environment.

When creating a recruitment matrix, consider involving multiple stakeholders, including current board members, executive leadership, and even community or stakeholder representatives. This collaborative approach can lead to a more comprehensive and balanced assessment of the board's needs and priorities.

Leadership Succession Grid

Position / Title	Currently Held by (Name)	ACTION Re-elect / Rotate	Successor / Year
Executive Committee			
Board Chair			
Vice Chair			
Treasurer			
Secretary			
Standing / Board Committees			
Finance Chair			
Governance Chair			
Development Chair			
Programmatic / Organizational			
Membership			
Volunteers			
Public Relations			
Education / Outreach			
Ad Hoc Committees			
Strategic Planning Chair			
Annual Event Chair			

Board Member Succession Plan

Name	ACTION Re-elect / Rotate	TERM #1		TERM #2	
		Year Start	Year End	Year Start	Year End

■ Board Member Self-Assessment

Board members should conduct self-assessments to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement. Self-assessments allow for the board to look internally at itself and reflect on the board members' individual and shared responsibilities. It can help identify different perceptions and opinions among board members and determine areas of responsibility that may need attention. In addition, it can increase the level of board teamwork, clarify mutual board/staff expectations and common objectives as well as check that everyone is speaking the same language. It provides boards the opportunity to focus on:

Performance Improvement: to provide an opportunity for board members to reflect on their performance and identify areas where they can improve. This process can lead to enhanced board effectiveness, better decision-making and improved governance.

1. **Accountability:** to encourage accountability among board members.
2. **Alignment:** to help ensure that board members are aligned with the organization's mission, vision and strategic goals.
3. **Identifying skill gaps:** to reveal gaps in the skills and expertise of individual board members to inform decisions about board recruitment and development efforts.
4. **Communication and team dynamics:** to identify issues such as conflicts of interest, challenges in collaboration or differences in leadership styles.
5. **Transparency:** to foster a culture of transparency and trust within the organization.
6. **Continuous improvement:** to adapt to changing circumstances, stay responsive to stakeholder needs and evolve in a dynamic environment.
7. **Stakeholder confidence:** to display credibility to funders and other external audiences in the board's ability to govern effectively and make informed decisions on behalf of the organization.

Overall, self-assessments are a valuable tool for boards to enhance their performance, ensure alignment with organizational goals, and maintain a culture of accountability and transparency. They play a crucial role in effective governance and contribute to the long-term success of the organization.

Board Member Self-Assessment Tool

Should be completed by each board member.

Rating Scale: 1) Unsatisfactory 2) Needs Improvement, 3) Satisfactory, 4) Very Good, 5) Exceptional

I. Board / Meetings					
1. The board conducts all board meetings efficiently and effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Board members agree upon the basic mission/purpose of the board and organization.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The public is given notice of district meetings, and open meeting laws are followed if required.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The board has procedures for developing the agenda and getting materials to the members in advance of meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I make a sincere effort to be informed on all agenda items prior to meetings and carry out responsibilities like completing assignments, connecting with other groups, etc.	1	2	3	4	5

II. Board / Community Relations					
1. The board allows for stakeholder input through annual meetings or advisory committees or similar.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The board uses a variety of approaches to ensure effective communication among members, stakeholders, staff (if applicable), and the public (if applicable).	1	2	3	4	5
3. The board strives to maintain an open dialogue with partners (local, state or national).	1	2	3	4	5

III. Board Qualities					
1. I understand my responsibilities outlined in the board constitution and bylaws.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Each year I participate in required board training and education to improve my knowledge and skills in critical areas such as board and personnel management.	1	2	3	4	5
3. As a board member, I make a point of attending and/or participating in organization-related events/activities.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am open-minded and respect the opinions of individual board members and employees on various issues.	1	2	3	4	5

IV. Financial Management					
1. The board monitors and/or is aware of the financial status of the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The board provides formal and informal opportunities for stakeholders and staff (if applicable) to have input during the budgetary process.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The board seeks national, regional and state funding or available grant programs when needed.	1	2	3	4	5

V. Board In-Service

1. I keep abreast of organization-related issues by attending educational workshops and conferences at the local, regional and state levels.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I annually assess my performance and commit to the training necessary to improve my performance.	1	2	3	4	5

VI. Goal Setting and Planning

1. The board annually reviews and revises the organization's strategic short- and long-range plans that have clearly defined action steps with identified timelines and responsible individuals or committees.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The annual plan of work clearly defines educational and outreach activities with community partners.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The annual work plan is reviewed monthly at board meetings and evaluated during the year for progress.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The board adopts a process and timeline for the preparation of the budget.	1	2	3	4	5

VII. Media Relations

1. The board supports organizational outreach and marketing of its roles.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The use of communication tools, such as newsletters, print media, TV, radio and social media, are clearly set forth and included in the annual plan of work for effective usage.	1	2	3	4	5

VIII. Board / Employee Relations (If Applicable)

1. The board encourages professional growth and increased competency of the staff through attendance at educational meetings and staff development events.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The board establishes and provides, through the policy manual, a clear set of expectations, procedures and policies for employees.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The board maintains a professional compensation and benefits package for employees.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The board provides appropriate staffing based on the needs of the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Board members or a committee of board members meet with staff annually to update position descriptions, conduct annual performance reviews, and assess employee training plans and needs.	1	2	3	4	5

IX. Self-Reflection Comments

■ Board Inventory

Completing an inventory is a valuable task for a board as it helps the board maintain a comprehensive record of its contacts and information, which can include individuals, organizations and resources. Here are several reasons why a board should consider completing an inventory:

1. **Network utilization:** to provide a database of the board's existing connections and relationships that can be instrumental in leveraging these networks for fundraising, partnerships, sponsorships or other initiatives that benefit the organization.
2. **Resource identification:** to identify potential resources that can be tapped into for support, such as experts in the field, mentors, advisors or volunteers who can contribute their time, skills or expertise to the organization.
3. **Strategic partnerships:** to highlight potential partners or collaborators that can lead to strategic alliances that benefit the organization's goals.
4. **Crisis management:** to ensure that the board can quickly reach out to relevant stakeholders for support, guidance or assistance.
5. **Succession planning:** to identify potential candidates for leadership roles in the board or the organization.
6. **Transparency:** to foster transparency by ensuring that the board's contacts and relationships are well-documented and accessible to all relevant parties.
7. **Knowledge preservation:** to serve as a repository of institutional knowledge.

When completing a contact inventory, keep the information up to date and secure, respecting privacy and confidentiality where necessary. Regularly reviewing and maintaining the inventory ensures that it remains a relevant and valuable resource for the board's activities and responsibilities.

AUDITOR	
Name	
Phone	
Email	
Address	

BANK	
Bank Name	
Account Numbers	
Line of Credit	
Branch Representative	
Name	
Phone	
Email	
Address	

Key Stakeholder Contacts

Stakeholder Name	Phone	Email	Address

Organizational Information

Nonprofit Status	Onsite Location	Offsite Location	Online URL
IRS Determination Letter			
IRS Form 1023			
Bylaws			
Mission Statement			
Board Minutes			

Financial Information	Onsite Location	Offsite Location	Online URL
EIN			
Financial Statements			
State or District Tax Exemption Certificate			
Blank Checks			
Online Account Passwords			
Donor Records			
Volunteer Records			



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