

Please introduce yourself in the Chat...



Name—

Location—

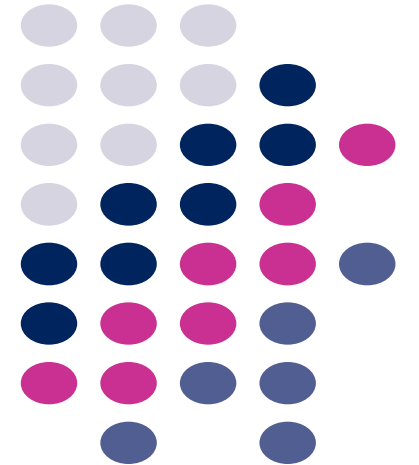
Organization you are representing—

Your role in that organization—

Library Friend or Foe? Top 10 Things Every Library Friend or Trustee Member Should Know - But Often Don't

Presented October 28, 2025

Presenter: Mary Beth Harrington, CVA,
Passionate Nonprofit Expert
501c³ Empowering Nonprofits, LLC
972-839-9960
mbharrington@nonprofitpassion.com





Library Staff

Friends of the Library

Library
Foundation Board

Library Board
Members/Trustees

Who Am I?



- ❖ Library Staff – Dallas Public Library
- ❖ Friends of the Library – Friends Consultant
- ❖ Library Foundation Board – Executive Director of the Austin Public Library Foundation
- ❖ Library Board Members/Trustees – Past President of the Timberland Regional Library Board of Trustees

Housekeeping



- ❖ No Copyright
- ❖ This is going to be...
- ❖ Q & A afterwards
- ❖ Free Advice and Counsel!



Disclaimer



- ❖ We only have 60 minutes
- ❖ You are all from different types of libraries and organizations
- ❖ This session is not intended to answer specific questions about your organization
- ❖ Intended for you to learn about effective boards
- ❖ I am available **FOR FREE** to discuss specific issues within your organization!

Today's Agenda



- ❖ Understanding Your Board
- ❖ Top Ten Things Every Board Member Should Know
- ❖ Nonprofit Resources

Understanding Your Board



What Kind of Board Are You?



- ❖ Fundraising – Community connections, raise money, grants
- ❖ Advisory – Advocate, provide wisdom
- ❖ Hybrid – Mix of some of these

What Kind of Board Are You?



- ❖ **Operational/Nonprofit** – Civic groups, start-up, no staff
- ❖ **Governing** – Set policies, financial oversight, supervise the director, organization, strategic planning

If your organization were a body part, what would the Board be?



What Do We Mean by THE BOARD

THE BOARD = One



Whose Job Is It Anyway?



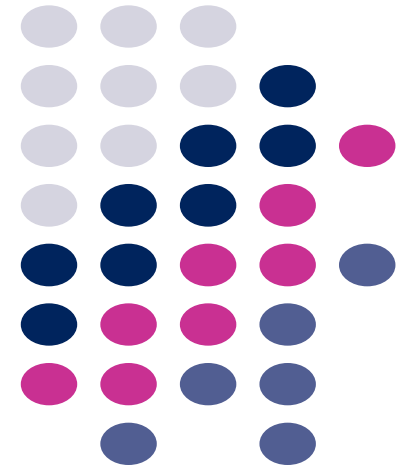
- ❖ Governance
- ❖ Fiduciary
- ❖ Board Management
- ❖ Board Recruitment
- ❖ Financial Sustainability and Advocacy
- ❖ Evaluation



**In the chat:
Type ED (for Executive Director)
or B (for Board)
for each job as we discuss**

#1 Thing Every Library Board Member Should Know

Board Service is a Job



Not Your Father's Library Board



- ❖ Chances are previous boards on which you have served, have been **ineffective**
- ❖ **More** than attending a board meeting
- ❖ Consider this your **new part-time job**
- ❖ **Requires 100%** commitment from **100%** board membership
- ❖ Should be considered an **honor, privilege, and duty to serve**

Not Your Father's Library Board



If you have
seen 1 board...

You have seen
1 board

Duty of Care



“Board members must act as an ordinarily prudent person would act under similar circumstances.”

Translation:

- ❖ Board members must come to meetings prepared.
- ❖ The Board speaks with *one voice* and respects the wishes of the majority.

Duty of Loyalty



Board members must put the interests of the organization above their own.

Translation:

- ❖ The Board has a conflict of interest policy and consistently enforces it.

Duty of Loyalty



It should **NEVER** even **LOOK** as if a Board Member **COULD HAVE** profited from their involvement.



Duty of Honesty



Board members must act in accordance with the organization's stated mission and applicable laws.

Translation:

- ❖ The Board follows the bylaws, ensures timely and accurate filing to regulatory bodies, reviews Form 990 before it is filed, etc.

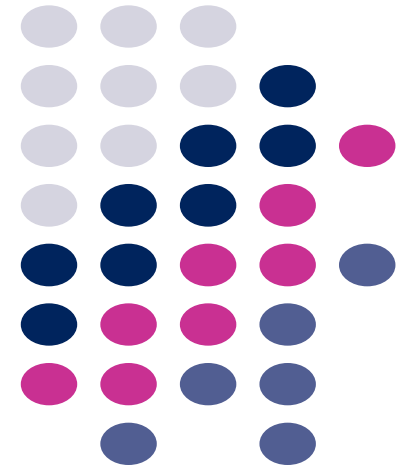
Board Commitment Letter



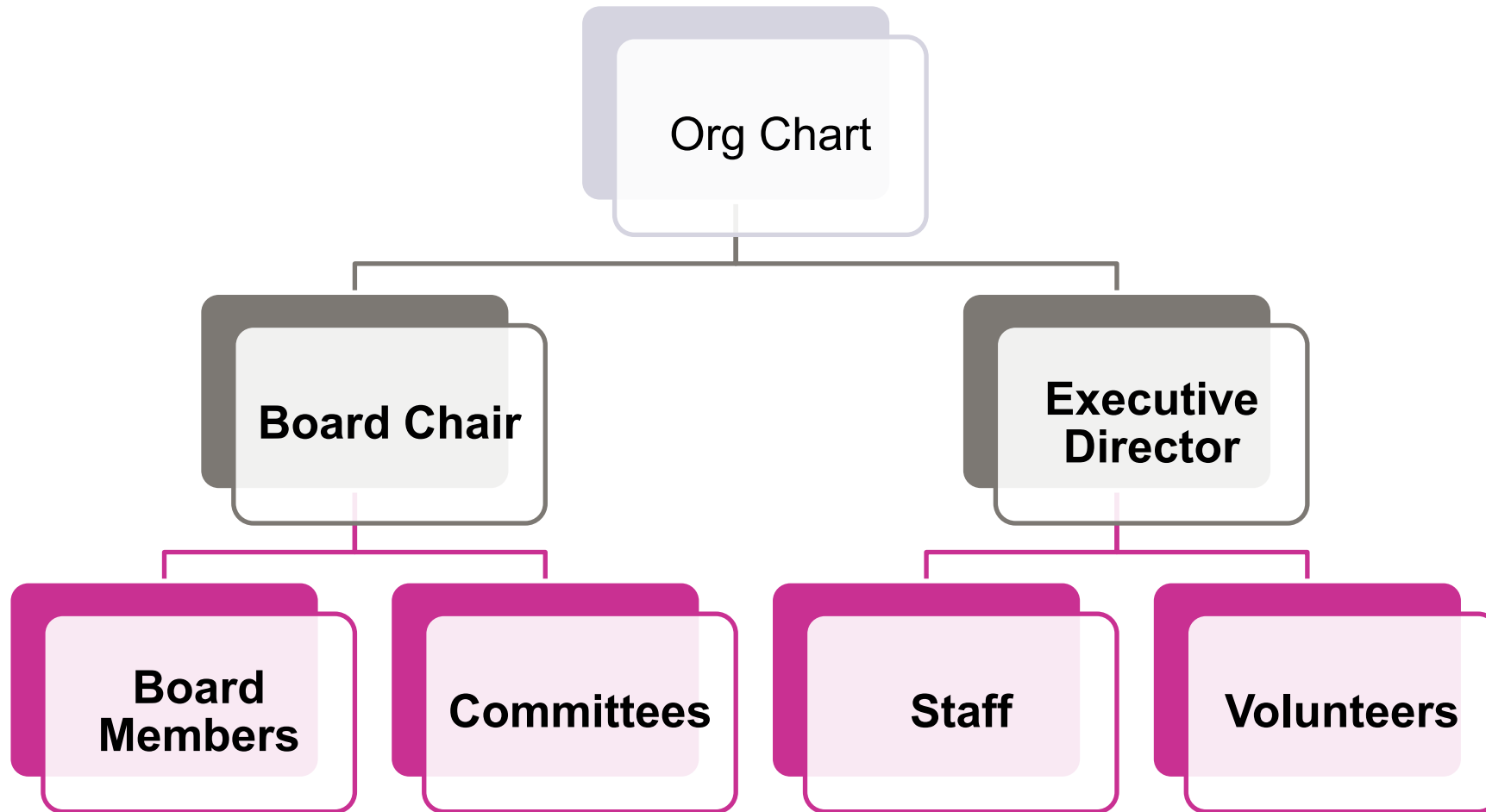
- ❖ Restate individual board member job description
- ❖ Includes **ALL** board members' commitments
- ❖ Written and signed annually by the Board
- ❖ Board Chair responsible for distribution and regular evaluation

#2 Thing Every Board Member Should Know

Stay in Your Lane



Roles and Responsibilities



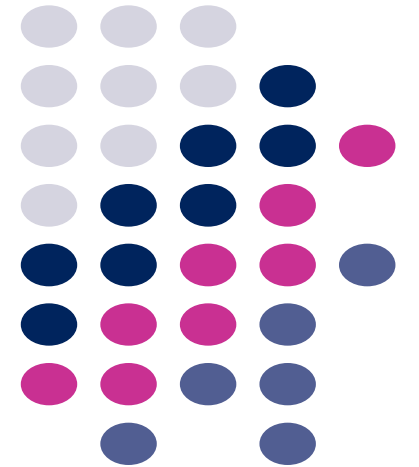
Board and Staff Relations



- ❖ Board **DOES NOT** supervise staff
- ❖ Board **DOES NOT** intervene in staff issues
- ❖ Board Members **DO NOT** communicate with staff directly without knowledge of the board chair and Executive Director
- ❖ Staff **DOES NOT** communicate with Board Directly without the knowledge of the Executive Director

#3 Thing Every Board Member Should Know

Board Orientation Should be Required
for All Board Members



Board Orientation



- ❖ Required for New Board Members
- ❖ Governance and fiduciary duties
- ❖ Budget and financials (Form 990)
- ❖ Strategic plan
- ❖ Board Member job descriptions
- ❖ Commitment letter
- ❖ Mission, vision and core values
- ❖ Policies and procedures
- ❖ Conflict of interest
- ❖ ***Connections! Networks!***



Mission and Purpose



The Board has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the organization operates to serve its

Mission and *Purpose*

through mission-driven decision making to prevent **mission-drift**.

Mission and Purpose



Mission Statement - Articulates the essence of why your organization exists.

Vision Statement - What the world will look like after you complete your vision mission.

IDEA! – Print mission on all board and committee agendas

Strategic Direction



The Board has ultimate responsibility for setting the organization's
Strategic Direction.

Strategic Direction

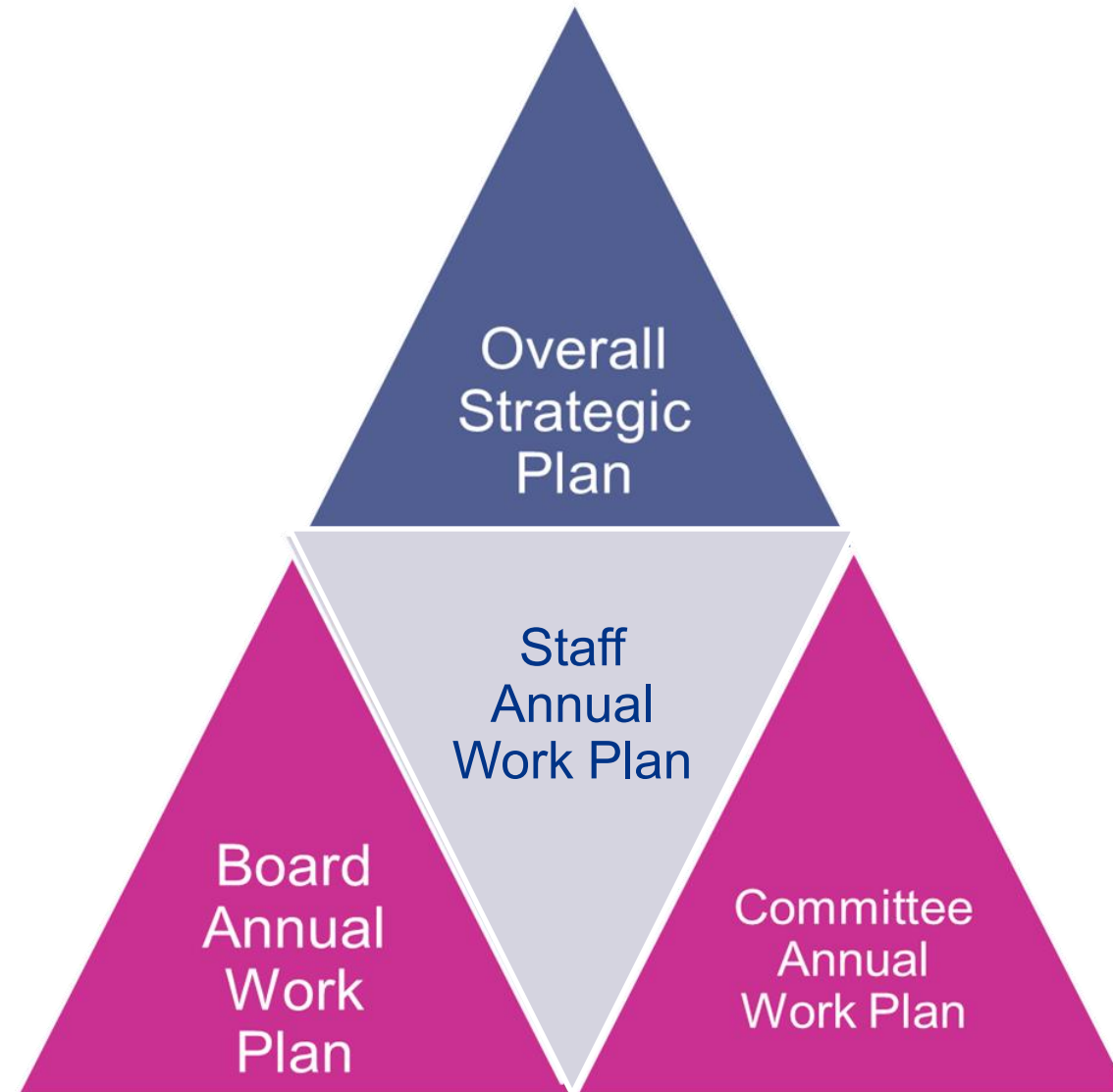


- ❖ Annual planning retreat to set annual goals
- ❖ Strategic plan is kept alive with progress reports at *every* Board meeting
- ❖ Everyone plays a role in the success

Annual Planning Retreat

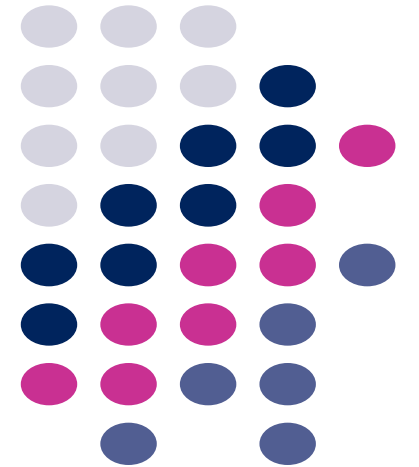


- ❖ Focus forward, build consensus
- ❖ 3-5 S.M.A.R.T. Goals with corresponding strategies (Strategic, Measurable, Accountable, Realistic, Time-Bound)
- ❖ Team building and fun



#4 Thing Every Board Member Should Know

Board Members Can be Personally Responsible for Mismanagement



Board Members as Fiduciaries



- ❖ *Prudently handle organization's resources*
- ❖ *Personal liability* can result should board member breach standards of fiduciary responsibility
- ❖ Act for the good of organization, *rather than personal benefit*
- ❖ Every action geared towards *forwarding the organization's mission*

-
- A person with their back to the camera, standing in front of a chalkboard filled with mathematical formulas. The person is wearing a dark jacket and has their hands raised to their head. The chalkboard contains various equations, including the quadratic formula, the area of a circle, the Pythagorean theorem, and the formula for the area of a triangle.



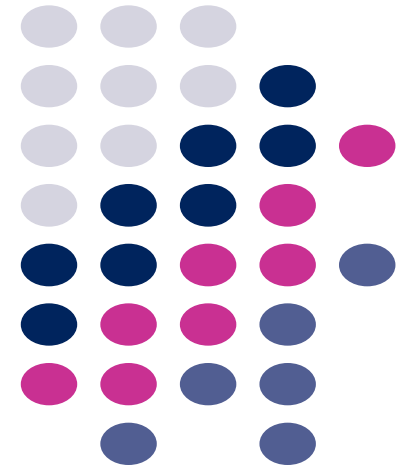
Policy “Musts”



- ✓ Conflict of Interest Policy
- ✓ Whistleblower Policy
- ✓ Document Destruction Policy
- ✓ Director's & Officers Insurance

#5 Thing Every Board Member Should Know

Board Management is the responsibility
of the
Board Members



Hold Effective Board Meetings



- ❖ Monthly, lasting no more than 90 minutes
- ❖ Board Chair *leads* meetings
- ❖ Full board responsible for board documents
- ❖ Use Consent agenda
- ❖ Delegate committee work to committees

Hold Effective Board Meetings



- ❖ Decide how/when to use Robert's Rules
- ❖ Stick to agenda
- ❖ Begin/end on time
- ❖ Consider Executive Session at every meeting

#6 Thing Every Board Member Should Know

Don't Ask Your Friends
to Join the Board



Nominating Committee



- Responsible for *managing new board member process, not recruitment!*
- *Year-round* standing committee
- Usually chaired by president-elect, past president, or seasoned member
- Executive Director serves as pro-bono (non-voting) member
- All board members identify potential new members

Tools for the Nominating Committee



- ❖ Use Commitment Letter
- ❖ Board Matrix to identify:
 - ❖ What skills are needed?
 - ❖ Does the board reflect community?



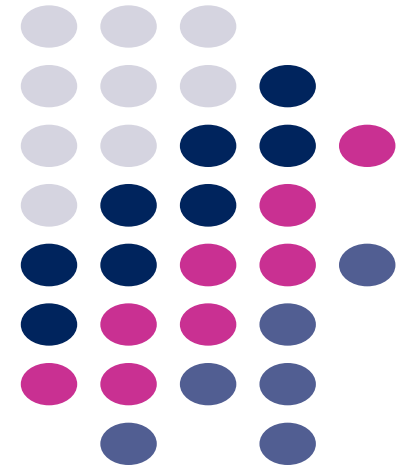
Board “Bless and Release”



- ❖ Misrepresenting organization or speaking about board business to those outside the organization
- ❖ Doing media/public relations without knowledge of organization
- ❖ Misunderstanding or taking no part in fundraising role of board
- ❖ Being difficult or overly negative
- ❖ Not attending board meetings

#7 Thing Every Board Member Should Know

You Don't Have to Be a Board Member
to be Involved



Establish Effective Committees



- ❖ Report to Board via Committee Chair
- ❖ Require progress reports at every Board meeting
- ❖ Members **may** include individuals outside Board
- ❖ ~~Executive Committee~~

~~Advisory Board~~

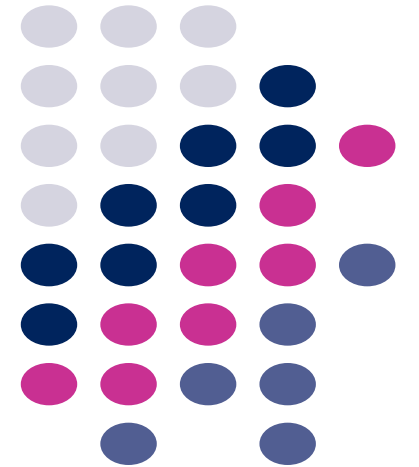


Leadership Circle...Friends...

- ❖ Members can include those who cannot be on the board
- ❖ Keep continually engaged and committed

#8 Thing Every Board Member Should Know

Fundraising and Advocacy
are Part of the Job



Most Effective Fundrai\$ing



Greatest Success

- Individual contributions
- Bequests
- Grants
- Corporate donations
- Special events

Time / Effort

- Special events
- Corporate donations
- Grants
- Bequests
- Individual contributions

Special Event Fundrai\$ers



Which of these is the *real* purpose of a special event?

- 1) To make as much money as possible?*
- 2) To use the event as a way to market our mission to cultivate potential new donors and if we make a profit, all the better?*

Special Event Fundrai\$ers



What is the **most critical** element to ensure a successful special event fundraiser?

- *Marketing the event throughout the community*
- *Marketing the event throughout the community coupled with 100% support by the board to promote, solicit, volunteer and attend the event.*

Giving Days



- Primary Purpose: Develop new donors not current
- Board members participation is essential
- 63% of donors gave online
- 25% of all revenue raised on a phone
- GivingTuesday 2023 raised \$3.1 billion



GIVING TUESDAY

December 2, 2025

Library Giving Day

April 1, 2026

~~Board Members as Fundraisers~~



- ❖ Realize alternatives to fundraising if the Board does not fundraise.
 - Reduce services?
 - Change the mission?
 - Close?

<http://www.nonprofithub.org/fundraising/transform-your-board-of-directors-into-fundraising-champions/>

Advocate



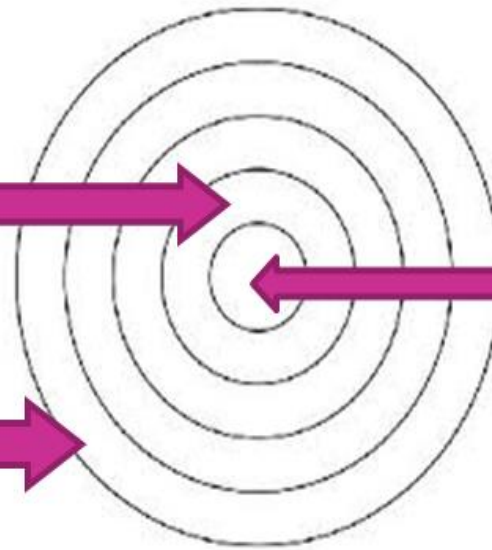
- ❖ Once a week tell someone about the library
- ❖ Be the “go-to” person for information on the library
- ❖ Effective board members serve on one board at time



One Board
Member



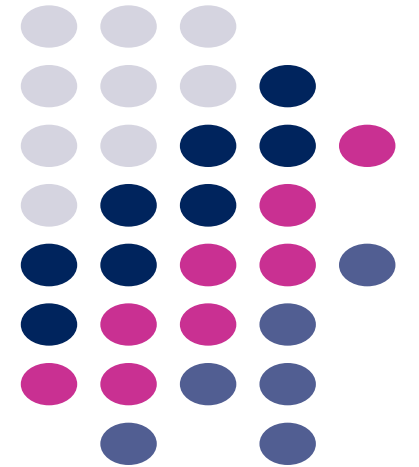
All Board Members



Your
Organization

#9 Thing Every Board Member Should Know

Annual Evaluations Should be
Conducted for Everyone



Executive Director Evaluation



- ❖ Assign committee to manage process
- ❖ Mutually agree on evaluation tool
- ❖ Full Board evaluates, report all responses
- ❖ Executive session to discuss with the ED
- ❖ Allow ED to respond to full board

Board Tenure



- ❖ *Term Limits. Term Limits. Term Limits.*
- ❖ New blood, ideas, connections, \$\$\$'s
- ❖ Remove deadwood
- ❖ Hold board members accountable
- ❖ Average tenure is 3 years, renewable once
- ❖ Retire to Advisory or Emeritus Status

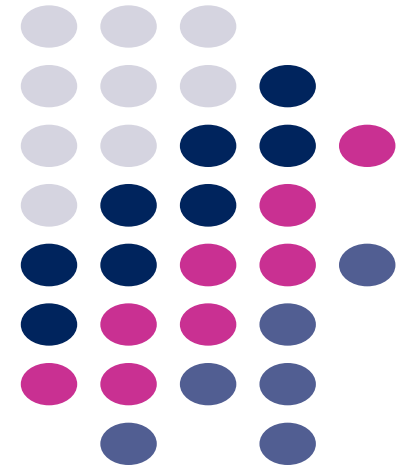
Deal with Unproductive Members



- ❖ *You get what you accept and what you reward!*
- ❖ Term limits are critical
- ❖ Maintain commitment letters
- ❖ Keep performance expectations high

#10 Thing Every Board Member Should Know

Attributes of an Effective Nonprofit
Board Member



Attributes of an Effective Board Member

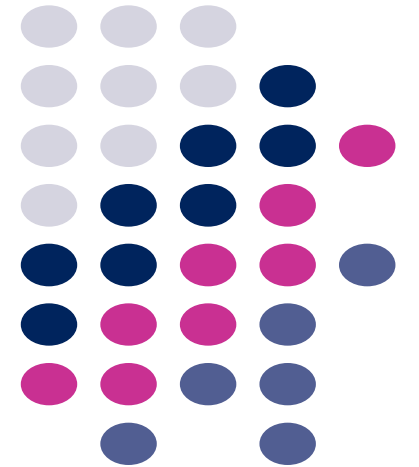


- ❖ Commitment to the *mission* of the organization
- ❖ Understanding of the board's *governance roles*
- ❖ *Active involvement* in board activities, committees
- ❖ *Thinking and acting strategically*; not involved in day-to-day management of the organization
- ❖ Abiding by the Duties of *Care, Loyalty, and Honesty*
- ❖ Supporting the organization *financially* and through *advocacy*

Remember, the Mission....



NONPROFIT RESOURCES





Mary Beth Harrington, CVA



501c³ Empowering Nonprofits

San Antonio Area Foundation

TANO – Texas Association of Nonprofit Organizations

Austin Public Library Foundation

Volunteer Center of North Texas (Volunteer NOW)

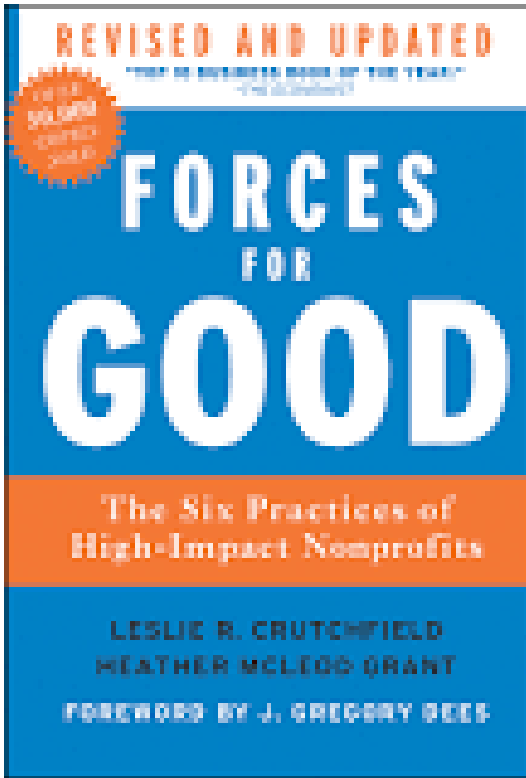
Dallas Public Library

Carter BloodCare

Clients Include...



- ❖ Habitat for Humanity International
- ❖ Meals on Wheels of America
- ❖ US Tennis Association (USTA)
- ❖ Susan G. Komen
- ❖ Arkansas Literacy Council
- ❖ AFP Oklahoma and Texas
- ❖ Texas CASA
- ❖ Texas Association of Museums
- ❖ One Star Foundation/AmeriCorps
- ❖ United Way of Texas
- ❖ USTA Texas
- ❖ Corporation for Public Broadcasting
- ❖ Keep Texas Beautiful
- ❖ Literacy Texas
- ❖ Texas Library Association
- ❖ Louisiana Library Association
- ❖ Junior League of Texas
- ❖ San Antonio Nonprofit Council
- ❖ Bike Texas/Dallas Bike Alliance
- ❖ Aberg Center of Dallas
- ❖ Dallas/Fort Worth Tourism Council
- ❖ Washington Nonprofits



Authors: Leslie Crutchfield and
Heather McLeod Grant



1. Advocate and Serve
2. Make Markets Work
3. Inspire Evangelists
4. Nurture Nonprofit Networks
5. Master Art of Adaptation
6. Share Leadership

FREE ADVICE AND COUNSEL

Mary Beth Harrington, CVA
501c³ Empowering Nonprofits, LLC.
mbharrington@nonprofitpassion.com
972-839-9960

