

THE CORPORATE FUND

**Nonprofit Board  
Self-Assessment  
Guidebook**

## The Corporate Fund

In 1983, a group of New Hampshire businesses founded The Corporate Fund as an investment in the future of New Hampshire's nonprofit sector. The Corporate Fund is governed today by The Corporate Fund Panel, comprising representatives of each of the participating companies, in partnership with the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. Contributions of participating members are used to award grants for management and governance improvement and to support training and technical assistance programs for strengthening nonprofit organizations throughout the State.

The mission of The Corporate Fund underscores the importance of leadership, management, and governance to the nonprofit sector's ability to serve a wide range of needs and interests. The Corporate Fund also recognizes the achievements and talents of nonprofit managers through the annual Walter J. Dunfee Awards for Excellence in Management.

The Howes Management Center at the Antioch New England Graduate School in Keene, provides professional staff support to The Corporate Fund, reviewing grant applications, and developing training and technical assistance programs that carry out Corporate Fund initiatives.

The members of The Corporate Fund are:

- Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield
- BAE Systems
- Bank of New Hampshire
- Citizens Bank
- Comcast
- Fidelity Investments
- Fleet National Bank
- Hitchiner Manufacturing Company, Inc.
- Markem Corporation
- New Hampshire Charitable Foundation
- Northeast Delta Dental
- Public Service of New Hampshire
- Tyco International Ltd.
- Verizon

## Foreword

The Corporate Fund Nonprofit Board Self-Assessment Kit is the first in a series of tools to support leaders and managers of New Hampshire's nonprofits in their efforts to strengthen their organizations.

Staff of the Management Institute at Antioch New England Graduate School developed the kit, but the idea for low-cost, self-help "tools" was suggested in 1990 by Bill Barker, Markem Corporation's representative to the Corporate Fund. The concept was strongly supported by other members of the Panel and in 1992, funds were allocated to develop and test this first product to assist governing boards in self-assessment. The kit was initially published in January 1993.

Abundant encouragement, constructive challenge, and excellent advice were consistently available from Deborah Cowan and Lew Feldstein of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. Lew's inquiries always produced better thinking on our part, and Deborah's ready availability to offer feedback, wisdom, and attention to nuances always made a positive difference.

Colleagues at Antioch New England Graduate School were especially generous in sharing their experience and skills in working with nonprofit organizations and their boards. The contributions of Nancy Howes, Chair of the Department of Organization & Management, Phyllis Greene, Core Faculty at Antioch's site in Portsmouth, and Michael Burns, faculty at our New Haven site, were invaluable. Antioch New England Provost Jim Craiglow's never-wavering support of the Corporate Fund concept, our role in it, and his pride in that role, were a constant confirmation of the importance of this kind of work.

This effort also benefited significantly from the individual and collective experience and thinking of Thomas Holland, Richard Chait, and Anthony Kovner, the consulting-research team working here in New Hampshire as part of the Kellogg Foundation's national project on nonprofit board performance.

Thanks must go to Antioch colleague Jane A. Matthews whose contributions to the design of the questionnaire and this Guidebook are a tribute to her unique talents and good taste.

Finally, our ultimate gratitude must go to the board members and staffs of New Hampshire's nonprofit organizations. We have worked in various ways with over 2,000 or more of these dedicated, talented people since the Management Institute began. They are a large part of what makes our state able to respond to the needs of its citizens in the areas of health and human services, education, the arts, and the environment. We have learned from them and they from us. We hope this effort to identify areas in which boards can strengthen themselves will be yet another way we can work together to improve life in New Hampshire for all of us.

Edward J. Tomey  
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Antioch New England Graduate School  
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# Section 1 – Introduction

## Background

From 1983 to 1994, the Corporate Fund awarded more than \$1 million in management improvement grants to over 200 nonprofit organizations and provided management training and technical assistance programs to scores of others. A significant portion of this assistance has been directed toward strengthening the effectiveness of the governing boards of New Hampshire’s nonprofit organizations.

While differences among the many nonprofit boards the Corporate Fund has assisted are clearly evident, it is also clear that there is a great deal that boards have in common, regardless of such variables as service area, geographic location, organizational size, number of members, and the like. These commonalities have surfaced over the past several years as boards from human services, arts, environmental, and educational groups have asked the Corporate Fund for resources to support planning retreats, training events, and other board development efforts.

A typical request for assistance includes funding to conduct a “needs assessment” among board members to help determine the high-priority areas on which board development should concentrate. Often, the proposal indicates that the assessment is to be designed and implemented by an external consultant.

While the Corporate Fund recognizes and actively supports the value that external consultants can bring to an organization, it also seems possible that many boards can themselves determine the areas requiring attention for increased board effectiveness. Once these areas are identified by the board, a consultant might still be among the likely options for improving how it functions.

## The Project

The Corporate Fund Nonprofit Board Self-Assessment project is intended to help the governing boards of New Hampshire’s nonprofit community identify key areas of the board’s operations that may need strengthening. By using the materials and recommended processes in this kit, an organization’s board members can surface important roles and responsibilities that may be inadequately addressed and get them on the discussion table so that steps can be taken to resolve shortcomings. This approach seeks to answer such broadbased questions as:

*“Is the board doing what it should be doing to ensure the organization has the funds it needs to produce, market, deliver, and evaluate its programs?”*

*“Does the board jointly set measurable performance goals for the organization’s Chief Executive, then regularly check progress against goals, ending with a formal appraisal of the Chief Executive not less frequently than once a year?”*

If the answer to questions such as these is “No,” then the board can decide whether the lack of strong performance on such matters is seen as important enough for the board to take corrective steps. If it is, then the members determine what actions to take to close the gap between desired and actual board performance.

## How this Guidebook is Organized

The sections of this Guidebook present ideas to the leaders of New Hampshire’s nonprofit boards on the effective administration of the questionnaire developed for this project, and on processes for analyzing the results and deciding on next steps. Following is a brief synopsis of the sections that follow:

- Section 2      **Board Roles and Responsibilities** summarizes the primary tasks a nonprofit board must carry out on behalf of the organization it serves.
- Section 3      **Preparing the Board for Self-Assessment** recommends ways to ensure maximum board participation in the project and to encourage forthright responses to the questionnaire contained in this kit.
- Section 4      **Administering the Questionnaire** addresses such matters as time required to administer the questionnaire, the desired physical environment, instructions to board members, monitoring the process, responding to questions, and collecting completed questionnaires.
- Section 5      **Tabulating Results** guides board members in “scoring” the completed questionnaires and preparing the data for analysis and priority-setting.
- Section 6      **Analyzing Data** describes the process for turning the tabulated results into a list of strengths the board sees in its operations, and an initial list of priority issues needing attention from the board.
- Section 7      **Finalizing Priority Issues Needing Board Attention** offers ideas for conducting discussions among board members that narrow the initial list of priority issues down to a more manageable number to be addressed by the board.
- Section 8      **Next Steps** suggests approaches to identifying resources that might help the board close gaps it discovers between desired and actual board performance.
- Appendices    In the **Appendices** to this Guidebook, users will find a copy of the Self-Assessment Questionnaire, a copy of the Tabulation Sheet for recording responses, a copy of the Data Analysis sheet, a Selected Bibliography on the management and leadership of nonprofit organizations and a suggested list of descriptors for each item in the questionnaire.

## ≡ Section 2 – Board Roles and Responsibilities

One of the most common problems experienced by governing boards of nonprofit organizations is the lack of recognition and agreement among members of the board, or between members of the board and staff, regarding the board's roles and responsibilities. Without such recognition, acceptance of the roles and responsibilities can be haphazard, confused, or non-existent.

Further, if the board is not spending its time wisely or well on its own tasks, it leaves its members free to spend time on others' tasks, including those that belong to the Chief Executive and other staff members. When such role confusion sets in, disappointment and conflict may soon follow, and will likely negatively affect organizational performance.

Problems in recognizing and accepting key roles and responsibilities are not the result of actions by board members who mean harm. On the contrary, the evidence is clear that many board members of New Hampshire nonprofits precisely fit the characterization of board members given by Tom Holland, Dick Chait, and Tony Kovner in their description of board members involved in the Kellogg Foundation project on improving board effectiveness:

*“They bring altruism, skills from their business and professional areas, and concern for the needs addressed by the organization. Few, however, are well prepared for the challenges of monitoring and assessing organizational performance, translating values into clear statements of guiding mission and objectives, setting priorities, and shaping the organization’s future directions into a complex environment.”*

In addition to encouraging boards to examine their *effectiveness* at carrying out roles and responsibilities then, the Corporate Fund self-assessment project also seeks to stimulate discussion among board members about whether they are engaged in the *real work of a board*.

In that regard, following is a brief discussion of the nature of board work, according to “conventional wisdom” Antioch’s Management Institute has developed over the years, and confirmed by the experience of respected colleagues working with nonprofits in New Hampshire and elsewhere.

### Seven “Conventional Wisdom” Board Roles & Responsibilities

- 1** Establish the *broad-based* policies that govern the operations of the organization. The emphasis here on “broad-based” policy development reflects concern for the tendency of boards to spend valuable volunteer time on details best handled by the staff of the organization. While many decisions regarding the mission and policies of the organization will result from an effective board–executive coalition, it is vital that the board maintain its focus on discussing and communicating to its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) the values and important viewpoints that will guide the organization’s operations. The CEO and other staff can then translate those viewpoints and values into more detailed policies, procedures, and actions that will bring the organization’s programs to life.

A case in point: Many boards have a Personnel or Human Resources Committee that spends months detailing the organization's personnel policies in a manual for employees. Long discussions and multiple editing sessions are held to get the words just right about such matters as supervision, performance appraisal, compensation schedules, qualifications and processes for advancement, professional development, and travel reimbursement. This level of detail keeps members of the board bogged down in procedures and nuances that more properly belong to the staff. The committee would serve itself and the organization better if it focused instead on providing the CEO with a clear list of policy-oriented values that demonstrate the quality of work life and the expectations between employer and employee the board supports. For example, a policy calling for fair and competent supervision could lead to a supervisory development program implemented by the CEO; a policy stipulating that employees should be informed regularly on their work performance would result in the establishment of a comprehensive appraisal system; and a policy seeking an organized approach to compensation that still leaves managers room to negotiate with individual employees ought to be visible in a CEO-developed salary schedule that has well-defined, flexible, and fair salary ranges. (The board can approve the salary schedule when it reviews the CEO's manual.)

**2** **Develop a long-range, strategic plan for the organization** which includes a values-based vision of the future; a mission statement that speaks to the organization's purpose now and in the foreseeable future; a set of critical issues that must be resolved if the vision is to be realized; a prescribed and coordinated set of strategies that will resolve the critical issues; and a series of action steps that will move the organization forward by implementing the pre-scribed strategies.

Many New Hampshire nonprofits have, over the past 10 years, taken the need for strategic planning seriously and have engaged in strategic planning efforts. The most successful of them have ensured that the plan did not become a dust-collector, but rather a guide to the organization's annual program planning and long-term development. They also recognized that the process has to be continuous – that a strategic plan needs to be updated at least annually, and that a new plan needs to begin taking shape long before the current one has run its course. The most effective boards have also discovered ways of ensuring the strategic plan is the product of a smoothly functioning board–executive team.

**3** **Select and hire the Chief Executive Officer of the organization**, and then delegate to the CEO the responsibility and authority to develop and implement annual operating plans that are consistent with the long-range strategic plan and broad-based board policies. The board needs to encourage and support the CEO as that person carries out the task of implementing board policy. And while it may be tempting for board members to spend time with staff as a way to stay in touch with how the organization is doing, it is the CEO who is accountable for creating and nurturing a healthy, supportive work environment for the organization's employees. The board's role with the CEO also must include a formal evaluation of the CEO's performance on a regular basis and, if appropriate, replace the CEO.

A key to successful board–CEO relationships is clear delineation of board and staff roles, including those times when the board and staff form a coalition on specific tasks, such as the development of the strategic plan. When such clarity exists, there is little reason for board members to be delving into the details of the organization's daily routines. Exceptions must be made when an

organization has no staff or only one or two staff members. Yet even under these circumstances, clarity of task, role, responsibility and authority will prevent problems from arising.

**4 Accept full responsibility for the financial well-being of the organization**, including raising necessary income, managing endowments and other investments, and approving and monitoring the annual operating budget.

This is a pitfall role for many boards. They take seriously their legal obligation to ensure resources are used wisely and ethically to achieve the organization's mission. Perhaps too seriously. In his book *Boards that Make a Difference*, John Carver states that boards often spend too much time reviewing the previous months expenditures – money already gone – when their larger and more significant task is to explore and project how to ensure *future* dollars will be available to the staff to carry out the organization's mission.

Many boards need to be more deeply enough involved in the *fund raising* element of their financial well-being role, especially in the development of fund raising *strategy*. They often leave it to the staff to figure out strategy and wait to be told what to do. Or they focus their own engagement in fund raising on bake sales and raffle tickets – not unuseful events, but quite tactical in nature, and not broad enough in scope or impact. The effective governing board articulates its *acceptance* of the fund raising role, and ensures that strategies are developed that will make a difference in the solidity of the future. This does not mean that staff have no role in fund raising. In fact, they are key to the effort. But the responsibility for ensuring funds are available both now and in the future belongs to the board.

**5 Ensure evaluation of progress against plan on an ongoing basis.** Nonprofit boards spend a great deal of time trying to determine what *should* happen. This is a perfectly appropriate role, but the most effective boards also ensure that someone is measuring how much of what was *supposed* to have happened *did* happen. Whether the staff takes these measurements and reports to the board (through the CEO), or whether the board itself is engaged in measuring progress against plan is less important than the fact that it does happen and that the board inquires, consults, and guides, within the bounds of noninterference, regarding what needs to be done to close gaps or adjust expectations.

**6 Develop and maintain communications links and beneficial relationships with various communities, funders, and other stakeholders in the organization's success.** Board members are often in advantageous positions in their communities that can be strategically used to foster strong ties to key groups and individuals whose support is critical to the organization's success. Board participation in marketing and community relations activities (whether designed by the board or the staff) is central to mission achievement. This kind of involvement also provides board members with opportunities to hear about the organization and the various perceptions held by community members, constituents, funders, media representatives, and the like. Such information needs to be discussed at committee and full board meetings as needed, and where appropriate, given to the CEO for staff-level use.

**7 Provide for the continuous self-evaluation and renewal of the board itself.** Increasingly more nonprofit boards in New Hampshire are paying attention to their own effectiveness in carrying out their roles and responsibilities. Some of the areas that need attention from the board in looking at itself are:

- How decisions get made and are communicated
- Quality of meetings that are forums for the board's work
- Effectiveness of the board's structure (including the appropriateness and contributions of various committees)
- Scope and depth of the composition of the board's members, e.g., skills, experience, gender, race, socio-economic group, constituencies represented, and financial contribution ability
- Effectiveness of recruitment and orientation of new board members
- Conscious development of board members as future leaders of the board.
- Quality of the board's planning, fiscal management, fund raising, external relations, and policy development practices

It is this seventh role and responsibility – the ongoing self-assessment by the board of its work on behalf of the organization it governs – that provides the impetus for the Corporate Fund Nonprofit Board Self-Assessment project.

## Section 3 – Preparing the Board for Self-Assessment

Self-assessment will not be an easy task for everyone. Some board members may see the project as a challenge to their wisdom or integrity. Others may see it as a “test” that needs to be passed. Such perceptions may lead to various forms of resistance to full and forthright participation. Your role as a board leader is to help the members of your board see their involvement in this project as an opportunity for them to make a major contribution to the effectiveness of the board.

Fortunately, many, if not most, board members will readily see that this approach to self-assessment gives them an opportunity to learn more about their roles and responsibilities as board members and offers a chance to lay the groundwork for building a more cohesive governing board.

Even boards that are operating effectively may view this process as a way to confirm their effectiveness or perhaps to “fine-tune” specific board operations.

Whatever the case in your board’s situation, you will want to establish an atmosphere among your board members that helps them see the distinct advantages of a self-assessment process. Following is a suggested approach:

- 1** Raise the topic at a board meeting before you administer the questionnaire to the board. Give board members the background and purpose of the project, and describe the various steps of the self-assessment process, including how the results will be managed. Let them look over the questionnaire. If the questionnaire will not be administered at this same meeting (see number 4, below) be sure you collect the questionnaires before the meeting is over and hold onto them yourself until the meeting at which they will be completed.
- 2** If you attended one of the introductory workshops on the use of the self-assessment kit, share with your board some of the stories told by leaders of other boards regarding the common practices of nonprofit boards that typically need attention. This is an opportunity to let them know that all boards struggle with their roles and responsibilities to some extent.
- 3** Conduct a brief question and answer period to deal with technical concerns, timing, confidentiality, and any other issue that might be troubling your members. The likelihood is that each question has value, and a calm, considered response is more likely to allay fears and reduce resistance.
- 4** At the leadership level, or, if possible, involving all members of the board, decide on the approach the board will take to complete the self-assessment process. Here are some models to consider:
  - a.** Introduce the process at one board meeting (30 minutes), administer the questionnaire at the next (30–45 minutes), and conduct the discussion of priorities at a third meeting (90 minutes). This approach allows other business to be accomplished at each meeting and requires no additional time of board members. However, it does stretch the process out over three months or more.

- b.** Introduce the process at the same meeting the questionnaire is administered (60–90 minutes) and conduct the priorities discussion at the next meeting (90 minutes). This shortens the time frame, but will require more time at the first meeting. It also does not allow the idea of self-assessment to set in at a slower pace. This may or may not be a problem for your particular board.
- c.** Introduce the process at one meeting (30 minutes), administer the questionnaire at the next (30–45 minutes) and schedule a special meeting the following week or two weeks later to conduct the priorities discussion (90 minutes). This requires additional time from board members but keeps the time frame from stretching over three months and uses time from only two regular board meetings.
- d.** Design your own timing that makes sense for your board, e.g., there may be a retreat coming up at which all three steps can be accomplished.

Again, the most important part of this step is setting a comfortable environment for members to willingly engage in assessing the board without feeling the process implies they are doing it “wrong” or are being “tested.”

## Section 4 – Administering the Questionnaire

If the atmosphere for willing and open self-assessment has been set, administering the questionnaire should go smoothly. In Section 3, the recommended structures implied that the questionnaire should be administered in a group setting. This is important for several reasons, including:

- It provides the opportunity for you to set a positive environment and promote a sense of team approach to board strengthening.
- You are able to provide a common set of instructions to all members that will help ensure a clear understanding of purpose and process.
- Answers to questions individual members ask about the process will be heard by all the members.
- Conventional wisdom in this kind of research says that the “return rate,” that is, the percentage of completed questionnaires turned into the project, is substantially greater when administered in a group setting than other methods that allow individuals to take the questionnaire with them with the intent to turn it in at a later date. (You may have to deal with this to a minor extent when it comes to absentees from the meeting at which you administer the questionnaire. You will need to make arrangements to get absent members a copy and provide them with guidance for completing it.)

Assuming, then, a group setting for administering the questionnaire, following are some recommended guidelines:

- 1** Schedule adequate time (30–45 minutes). This effort will not work well if members feel rushed or if other important agenda items are creating an impatient atmosphere. If time from a regular board meeting is being used, it’s best if the last hour of the meeting is reserved for completing the questionnaire. It becomes important, then, for board leadership to manage the rest of the meeting time so that the full hour set aside for self-assessment can be available. You want members to be concentrating on thoughtful responses to important questions, not glancing at their watches because they need to be elsewhere.
- 2** Hold the session in an appropriate environment. Comfortable chairs, plenty of room at writing tables, good lighting, adequate room temperatures, controlled external noise levels, and other physical factors are known to make at least subtle, if not distinct differences in the quality of people’s responses to questionnaires.
- 3** Have enough sharpened pencils with erasers for the board members to use to fill out their questionnaires (It’s wise to have a few extra pencils or a pencil sharpener as well.) Most people carry pens with them and the results can be messy, scratched out answers that are difficult to figure out and tabulate.
- 4** Distribute the questionnaires and pencils to board members and ask them to wait until you read over the instructions *aloud* as they follow along. This may seem school-like, but again, conventional research wisdom indicates that such an approach avoids misunderstandings

and results in more valid responses. In reading the instructions, emphasize again that this is *not* a test and that the forthrightness of their responses will enrich the value of the self-assessment. Remind the members that the data are being collected anonymously.

- 5** Collect the completed questionnaires before members leave. Ask them to check over the forms before they turn them in to ensure they have responded to *all* statements in the questionnaire. To demonstrate your commitment to keep the process anonymous, avoid looking over individual questionnaires as they are handed in.

## Section 5 – Tabulating Results

Most board leaders will likely choose to tabulate questionnaire data in between meetings of the board, rather than to feel rushed if attempting to tabulate the data during a board meeting. You'll also want to conduct an initial analysis (See Section 6: Analyzing Data) in order to prepare a presentation to the board on the results of the self-assessment. This will take some thoughtful time.

Tabulating the results of board members' responses to the questionnaire is not a difficult task, but accuracy is critical to set the stage for analysis and priority-setting, so a disciplined approach is strongly recommended.

In Appendix 2 is a copy of the Tabulation Sheet. This sheet follows the format of the questionnaire itself, and is designed to accommodate the "hash-mark" system of tracking data. If you're not familiar with this approach, here are three examples:

$$\cancel{///} \quad /// = 8 \qquad \quad /// = 3 \qquad \quad \cancel{///} \quad \cancel{///} \quad // = 12$$

Following is a recommended process for tabulating:

- 1** Go through the completed questionnaires one at a time, tabulating responses to all numbered items within each of the 12 sections. Enter hash-marks for each board member's responses in the appropriate spaces on the Tabulation Sheet.
- 2** Total the number of hash-marks within each response category for each item (include totals under "don't know" and "not applicable"). Enter the totals in the appropriate spaces.
- 3** Add together the "1's" and the "2's" to get a combined number of "Agrees," and the "3's" and the "4's" to get a combined number of "Disagrees." Enter this combined total in the appropriate space.

NOTE: By combining responses, analysis of the data is made significantly easier, and probably will not change the outcomes. Later on in the analysis process, you may want to look at the *uncombined* responses to help your board decide how to break a tie between two items.

## Section 6 – Analyzing Data

This step in the self-assessment process uses the tabulated data to arrive at a list of items that represent the board’s “first cut” at the priority issues that may need attention from the board in order to further develop its effectiveness. It is also an opportunity to generate information for board members regarding the strengths of the board – the things members feel they do well on behalf of the organization.

The Data Analysis Sheet (can be found in Appendix 3) is used to record the items for which board members collectively rated board performance that reflect the board’s strengths and the board’s possible problem areas.

Your goal is to create a list of 8–12 items that indicate areas in which the board seems to be performing well, and an additional 8–12 items that reflect areas that need strengthening.

NOTE: Although the questionnaire is organized into 12 discrete sections, e.g., roles and responsibilities, policy, planning, etc., the recommended approach to analysis does not attempt to identify whole sections as having strengths or needing improvement. Rather, the focus is on individual items within sections.

### 1. Identifying Strengths

To identify 8–12 areas in which the board seems to be performing well, review the Tabulation Sheet and list the items that received the most combined totals of “1’s” and “2’s” in descending order, with the highest total listed first. Stop developing the list somewhere between 8 and 12 items, wherever it seems to make the most sense. For example, let’s assume if you have a list that looks like this:

Rank Order	Section	Item Number*	No. of Members Giving 1’s & 2’s
1st	1	4	15
2nd	1	5	14
3rd	3	2	13
4th	4	4	12
5th	5	1	11
6th	7	3	9
7th	7	4	8
8th	9	2	7
9th	10	2	3

\*You can also use descriptors for items. (See Appendix 5 for suggested descriptors.)

In this example, you would elect to stop the list at the 8th-ranked item, because the gap between the 8th item and the 9th item is very large and the number of board members ranking the item as well-performed (3) would not be significant on a board that had 15 or more members.

If there happen to be tied scores among the list of 8–12 items, still keep the list limited to 12. Here’s an example of how to treat ties:

Rank Order	Section Number	Item Number	No. of Members Giving 1's & 2's
1st	1	4	15
1st	1	5	15
3rd	3	2	13
4th	4	4	12
4th	5	1	12
4th	7	3	12
7th	7	4	10
8th	9	2	9
8th	10	2	9
10th	10	3	8
11th	11	1	3

Even with ties, the list is kept to 10, because the gap between the 10th and 11th items is very large.

You might also want to break a tie if you see from the Tabulation Sheet that there were significantly more “1’s” (Strongly Agree) than “2’s” (Agree) on one item’s total.

## 2. Identifying Problem Areas

To identify those areas of the board’s operations that seem to be problems, follow a similar process as you used to develop the “strengths” list. The goal is to develop a list of 8–12 items that members did not see as adequately addressed by the board. First, review the Tabulation Sheet again, and for each item, combine the totals of the 3’s (Disagree) and 4’s (Strongly Disagree) given each item. Then, list the items that received the greatest number of combined totals of 3’s and 4’s in descending order, with the highest total listed first. Stop developing the list somewhere between 8 and 12 items, wherever it seems to make the most sense. The concepts behind the examples of rank-order lists used for identifying strengths also apply to problem areas.

At the end of the analysis work, then, you should have two lists: a list of 8–12 items reflecting areas in which the board thinks it is doing reasonably well, and a list of 8–12 items the members believe need some improvement.

Note that the recommended process for analysis does not suggest that a majority of members needs to think an item is in need of improvement in order for it to make the list of 8–12. For example, if only 25 percent of a board of 16 members, thinks an area needs work, those four members may be enough to warrant the item being on the list.

### **3. “Don’t Knows” and “Not Applicables”**

If, during your analysis of the data for problem areas, you discover a significant number (25 percent or more) of board members responding “Don’t Know” to an item, you may want to include those items in your list of 8–12. Such data may signify a problem area. For example, it would not be a good sign if six members of an 18-person board indicated they did not know if the “organization’s mission and purpose are clearly understood and accepted by the board” (Section 3, item 1). On the other hand, it may not be as important of the same number of members answered “Don’t Know” to the statement, “Our board’s size is just about right” (Section 6, item 3). In the first example, it is essential that all members know and support the organization’s mission and purpose. The lack of agreement on such a core issue would likely have a negative impact on board operations. On the other hand, a difference of opinion on the size of the board is the kind of disagreement that can exist without it being detrimental to the work of the board.

The primary purpose of the “Not Applicable” response is to allow boards to differentiate themselves from other boards for specific reasons. For example, an organization that has no paid staff and is essentially governed and operated by the board, would likely not find the items focusing on differentiating board and staff roles particularly valuable. It is possible that some members will think an item is not applicable to the organization and others will disagree. In such a case, the disagreement should be surfaced for discussion along with other problem areas. Simple clarification of viewpoints may resolve the matter, but it may also be that the disagreement signifies an important difference in the understanding of mission, role, or structure.

## ≡ Section 7 – Finalizing Priority Issues Needing Board Attention

It is now time in the self-assessment process to feed back to the members the results of their collective responses to the questionnaire, and to engage them in discussions that narrow down the areas in need of board attention to the 3–5 most important issues. The idea is to offer board members the opportunity to state why they think particular items constitute problems for the board.

After analyzing the data for priority issues, the board leaders should prepare a presentation to be given to the boards members that cites:

- 1 The 8–12 areas seen by the membership as *strengths* the board exhibits in carrying out its roles and responsibilities; and
- 2 The 8–12 areas the board sees as *priority issues needing improvement*.

We encourage board leaders to start their briefing with the identified strengths. Such “feedback” usually is more beneficial if the members can see and hear about the data and analysis that led to the list’s development. A handout and/or a large sheet of newsprint displaying the list of 8–12 strengths is recommended. This part of the presentation offers the board not only some information that speaks to its competencies and achievements, but may also cite the kinds of skills and knowledge that will be useful in taking steps to resolve those areas that it thinks are not being performed as adequately. *It is not necessary to narrow down the list of 8–12 strengths to some smaller number.*

The next section of the feedback briefing should be the list of 8–12 priority issues in need of board attention. Again, the numbers and reasoning that went into making up the list will be valuable to the members’ acceptance and understanding of the task ahead of them.

After the two lists have been presented, allow 5–10 minutes for questions and clarification. Then begin the discussions that will help the board narrow down the list of 8–12 problem areas to a more manageable list of the 3–5 key issues to be resolved. Ideally, the members will arrive at a consensus on the most important items, that is, a list that all the members could live with, even if individual members might arrange the list somewhat differently if they were creating the list by themselves.

### Achieving Consensus on Problem Areas

Arriving at real consensus on important matters can be one of the most beneficial skills a board can develop. Done well, it provides an opportunity for members to share their knowledge and opinions, to attempt to influence each other through clear presentation and careful listening, and to make a thoughtful decision on behalf of the organization.

Consensus is not always easily achieved. The optional processes recommended for this important step in self-assessment are designed to assist boards to find a method that works best for them. Whichever method is chosen, there is a basic structure for leaders to follow that is common to all:

- 1** Conduct a discussion of the 8–12 problem areas in order to bring forth members’ opinions and their rationales for those opinions;
- 2** Ask individual members to rank-order what they see as the most important problems on the list of 8–12 issues, based on what they learned during the discussions;
- 3** Use the collective results of the rank-ordering to create a list of the 3–5 most important problems that will come out of the self-assessment, and use this list as the basis for a consensus decision.

## Conducting Discussions

Here are some possible approaches to the kinds of discussions that should help the board get started on the road to consensus:

### Approach #1

Ask the members to discuss each of the items on the list of 8–12 for about 5 minutes. (This approach will work more efficiently if the list is closer to eight items than to 12.) In the discussion, speakers should address as briefly as possible why they think the item is or isn’t important enough to make the final list. Members should be encouraged to listen carefully to the points others bring out, so as to be available to agree, disagree, or even change their minds. You will also want to ask members not to repeat arguments for or against an issue that have already been made so as to help you keep within the five minutes allotted to each item. After the allotted time for the discussion period, move the group toward one of the rank-ordering methods described under Ranking Procedures and Testing for Consensus later in this section.

### Approach #2

After publishing the list of 8–12 problem areas, ask each board member to present a 2–3 minute argument for the one item that person sees as the highest priority issue to be addressed by the board. Note the items that seem to get the most members speaking for them, and those that get no one speaking for them. After everyone who wants to speak has done so, you can choose to mention, as a point of information, the informal tally you’ve been keeping. Then, move the group toward one of the rank-ordering methods described under Ranking Procedures and Testing for Consensus later in this section.

### Approach #3

Publish the list of 8–12 problem areas and announce an approximately 45-minute open discussion period during which members may make arguments for and against various items on the list. If they choose, members may also pose a list of their top 3–5 items and give reasons for their choices. (It’s possible that this more open discussion style may result in a few members speaking at length, thus depriving others of “air time.” Should this occur, invoke your privilege as discussion leader to ask the member to yield the floor to others. After a

particularly well-made argument, ask whether other members of the board agree or disagree with the speaker and allow for supporting and counter-arguments. At the end of 45 minutes, or earlier if it seems justified, move the group toward one of the rank-ordering methods described under Ranking Procedures and Testing for Consensus later in this section.

#### Approach #4

Your board may have its own style of effectively wading through data and engaging in discussions. There is no reason not to use that known style in this situation. In other words, use the system that works for you and your colleagues. Then, move the group toward one of the rank-ordering methods described under Ranking Procedures and Testing for Consensus, below.

### Ranking Procedures and Testing for Consensus

It is important now to move the group closer to a decision, using what they have learned during the initial discussion on the 8–12 problem areas.

Despite the difficulties many boards experience in attempting to achieve real consensus when trying to select from several options, leaders can be of significant help to the members by employing of a ranking procedure to narrow down the choices. Here are three procedures you may find useful:

#### Procedure 1

**“Pick Five”:** Publish the list of 8–12 problem areas on a large piece of newsprint, leaving space to tally data you will collect from the members. Ask each member to rank order the top five problems needing attention as that member sees them, with a “1” being the most important and a “5” being the fifth most important. Members should work independently on their lists, they should write their five items on a sheet of paper and then hand them to the meeting leader. You then display the choices the members have made and lead a discussion on what patterns seem to emerge. Your chart, drawn on a large sheet of newsprint, might look as follows:

Problem*	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
A	////	//// ///	///		
B	//		////	////	////
C	/	//// /	//	//// /	
D				///	////
E	////	//// ////			
F				/	/
G		/	////		
H	/			/	/

\*You can use letters, section/ item numbers, or descriptors for items. (See suggested descriptors in Appendix 5)

In the example above, the 16 board members placed their rankings in a way that would allow you to propose eliminating items D, F, and H. (This particular proposal is arrived at through the unscientific “eyeballing” method; a more statistically-oriented group might choose to multiply values times the number of votes and then compare resulting mean scores.) You would then have a list of five, whose rank order might be posed as follows:

- 1st ..... Item E
- 2nd ..... Item A
- 3rd ..... Item C
- 4th ..... Item B
- 5th ..... Item G

Announce these results to the members and conduct a discussion to see if there are major problems in the outcome, or if all members can be satisfied that the list of five is a reasonable place for the board to start working on priority problems it needs to address. If there is still resistance, explore with the group what kinds of shifts in the outcome would make the difference and whether all members could live with those changes.

### **Procedure #2**

**“Place the Dots”:** This procedure has some similarity to “Pick Five,” in that it asks members to select five problem areas from the list of 8–12 (posted on a large sheet of newsprint). However, instead of numbering the preferred five items, each member places a small, self-sticking “dot” on each of the five that member favors. (Dots, in various colors on strips of paper, are available from most office supplies stores and some stationery stores.) After each member has selected five, you count the number each item gets and rank order the top five, with the problem getting the most dots listed first. Conduct a follow-up discussion to see whether members can agree to the ordering the dots suggest. If they can, you have consensus. If they can’t agree right away, lead a brief discussion that explores what minor shifts in the list may capture consensus.

### **Procedure #3**

**“Spread Your Points”:** Again, the 8–12 problem items are listed on newsprint. Each member is given 30 points to spread over five of the problem areas, but no one problem area may be given more than 10 of those points by any one member. After all points have been allocated, you add them up and publish the top five “point-getters.” Lead a discussion to see if members agree with the ordering. If they do, you have consensus. If not, talk over the trouble spots with the board to see whether all members can live with a few shifts in the list.

Using one or more of the discussion approaches and ranking procedures described above, your board should be able to come to a consensus agreement on the 3–5 problems facing the board that require the board’s serious attention.

## Section 8 – Next Steps

The board has now identified 3–5 issues that members believe need to be addressed by the board. The assumption is that if these issues can be resolved, the role the board performs for the organization can be strengthened.

In one sense, the Board Self-Assessment process has done its job: It has surfaced and put on the table for discussion, important issues that the board may not have been aware existed, or, if they did know, they didn't feel free to bring the matters up to the board.

But the process cannot stop here. It is useful to consider some possible next steps the board could take to seek assistance in successfully addressing the issues it has raised. Two ingredients are key:

- 1** The board's level of commitment to strengthening itself; and,
- 2** The board's ability to bring appropriate resources to bear on the issues.

Commitment needs to come from within the board itself. If they have done their self-assessment work forthrightly and reasonably well, members know what needs to be done. The commitment to change needs to be explicit and clear, and all the symbols of change need to be very visible. As a board leader, your task is to help the members generate widely supported goals for each of the high-priority problem areas and develop a concrete, realistic plan to address each area. Assignments need to be made to responsible individuals who are skilled at making things happen on time.

If resources are needed to help make the changes happen, you must lead the board to those resources, or ensure they are brought to the board. Resources, as we define them here, principally include skills and knowledge, and, if need be, funds to purchase such skills and knowledge.

Following are three methods for gathering resources to assist the board with next steps in the process of strengthening itself. You might choose to use them individually, or in combination with one another:

- 1** Look within the board or staff itself for the skills and knowledge required to make the needed changes. For example, board members with successful, long-term business operations may well have the abilities and experience that will effectively introduce strategic planning into the organization. The CPA on your board may be the right person to teach the other members how to understand the organization's finances. The board member who serves as Executive Director of another nonprofit may be the perfect person to help delineate well-defined roles for board and staff. One of your organization's staff members may have done similar work for a previous employer.
- 2** Search for *new* members who are willing to join the board to apply a specific skill. If by-laws need to be rewritten, or an oversight program for the organization's complex contracts needs developing, recruiting the attorney in your catchment area with the right mix of nonprofit experience and genuine interest in the mission and purpose of your organization may be the resource ingredient that turns the situation around for your board.

- 3** Invite a volunteer from your community to join (or lead) an innovative board effort. For example, someone who has extensive nonprofit fund raising experience but who has just completed six years with the area's United Way and is feeling "burned out," may be willing to spend 3–5 weeks developing a unique fund raising strategy for the board. The person doesn't need to make a long-term commitment to the board – but just help for a specified period until the strategy is formed and can be taken over by ongoing members of the board.
- 4** Check on the availability of the skills and/or knowledge you need among the faculty (or even perhaps the students) of a college or university near you. Such institutions often make this kind of assistance an integral part of their community relations programs. Many also promote internships or class projects to be carried out with local nonprofits.
- 5** Contact your region's RSVP or SCORE program to see if help is available in needed areas from retired professionals or standing-by volunteers. The person you need may well be waiting for a challenge very much like the one you have ready to present.
- 6** Allocate funds from your budget to hire an outside expert possessing the skills or knowledge required. Consultants can be expensive, but nonprofits must learn to invest in themselves when it counts. And many consultants have special rates for nonprofits.
- 7** Seek an outside expert supported by funds from an organization which has a special interest in the particular problem area. Some foundations or funds may give priority to nonprofits developing themselves in the areas of planning, or marketing, or board member development, or in your particular field.
- 8** Delegate the change task to an existing standing committee of the board, or form an *ad hoc* committee, to develop a concrete plan to achieve the desired goals. Ask the committee to research the possibilities from among the ideas in this list, or to be as creative as possible and come up with other tactics and strategies.

The most important task is to follow through on the discoveries of the self-assessment process and make the best possible use of the excellent work your board has done.

# **Appendix 1** **Questionnaire**



# Corporate Fund

## Nonprofit Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire

(organization)

(month/year)

This questionnaire will assist you and your colleagues in assessing your board's management of its role on behalf of the organization you serve. After everyone's responses are tallied, members will have the opportunity to discuss the outcomes and to decide on any steps that might strengthen the board's performance.

It is important that you not see this questionnaire as any kind of test, but rather as a helpful tool for increasing board effectiveness.

The questionnaire is divided into 12 sections dealing with important areas of nonprofit board operations. For the statements in each section, you will be asked to choose from among the following responses:

- 1 = Strongly Agree with the statement.
- 2 = Agree with the statement.
- 3 = Disagree with the statement.
- 4 = Strongly Disagree with the statement.
- DK = Don't Know (just don't have enough information)
- NA = Not Applicable to your board or organization

Please be forthright in your responses. Only straightforward answers can be of real help to your board's self-assessment.

Circle the response that most closely reflects your opinion on each of the statements in this questionnaire.



### Section 1: Board-Staff Roles

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
1. The roles and responsibilities of our board are clearly defined and separate from those of the staff.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
2. Our board takes the primary responsibility for setting the organization's policies.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
3. Board members seldom assume roles and responsibilities that belong to staff.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
4. The board delegates to the organization's chief executive sufficient authority to lead the staff and carry out the organization's mission.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
5. When a problem or conflict arises between board and staff, we move quickly and effectively to resolve it.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA

## Section 2: Policy-Making Practices

1. If a new policy is needed for the board or the organization as a whole, the issue is clearly presented to and discussed by the board.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
2. The full board approves all new organizational policies before they are implemented.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
3. Policies exist for key areas such as finance, personnel, safety, and ethics, and all functions unique to our organization's work.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
4. Our organization's policies are effectively communicated to all board members.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
5. The board reviews policies at least annually, and updates them as needed.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA

## Section 3: Planning Practices

1. Our organization's mission and purpose are clearly understood and accepted by our board.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
2. The members of the board have reached consensus on a vision that indicates where the organization will be headed over the next 3–5 years.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
3. The full board collaboratively reviews and updates the organization's strategic plan at least every two years.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
4. Staff develop and carry out annual plans based on our board's approved strategic plan.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
5. The board is well-briefed by the staff on annual plans developed by staff.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA



### Section 4: Fiscal Management Practices

1. The organization's annual budget is fully discussed by the board prior to its approval.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
2. The fiscal status of our organization is regularly reviewed and needed board actions are taken thoughtfully but quickly.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
3. Board leadership takes steps to ensure that fiscal reports are thoroughly understood by board members.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
4. The annual report of our organization's independent auditor is reviewed and needed actions are taken in a timely way.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
5. Board members are well-aware of their legal responsibilities for the organization's fiscal management.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA



### Section 5: Fund Raising Practices

1. Our organization's fund raising needs and strategies are understood by the board.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
2. The board has a clear policy on the individual board member's responsibility to raise funds.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
3. Board members play an active role in the organization's fund raising efforts.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
4. The board periodically engages in long-range fiscal planning to ensure an adequate flow of resources to the organization over time.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
5. Capital fund raising needs are reviewed regularly by our board and action taken as necessary.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA



## Section 6: Board Structure & Practices

1. Our board's structure allow us to get our work done well and in a timely way.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
2. The board's standing committees streamline our work process and increase board effectiveness.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
3. Our board's size is about right.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
4. Our members' terms on the board are about the right length.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
5. We consciously select and prepare our board officers for their leadership responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
6. Board members have a working knowledge of the organization's by-laws.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA



## Section 7: Board Committees

1. Task and standing committee assignments generally reflect the interests and expertise of individual board members.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
2. I serve on at least one standing board committee.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
3. Any standing committee I serve on completes its tasks in an effective and timely way.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
4. Most board members actively participate in standing committee activities.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
5. Any standing committee I serve on reports to the full board at least quarterly.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
6. Each standing committee establishes its goals and plans at the beginning of the fiscal year.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA



## Section 8: Board Meetings

1. Our board's meeting schedule has the right number and length of meetings.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
2. The agendas of our board meetings and supporting written material are usually given out in advance of meetings.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
3. Board leaders and standing committee members contribute items to meeting agendas.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
4. Board meetings are generally well-run and make good use of members' time.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
5. Our board tends to brainstorm and identify creative approaches to problems.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
6. Our board thoroughly examines the pros and cons of all major decisions.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA



## Section 9: Board Membership & Orientation

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
1. The areas of expertise, skills, and other factors we need to be an effective board for this organization are adequately represented among current board members.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
2. Our board successfully identifies the expertise, skills, and other contributions we need from potential new board members to maintain or increase our effectiveness.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
3. We actively recruit new board members based on identified needs.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
4. When seeking members for the board, we use a wide variety of referral sources within the communities we serve.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
5. Our board and staff inform new board members about responsibilities and important organizational information through a structured new member orientation program.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA



## Section 10: Board-Executive Relationship

1. Our board uses a structured and participative process to recruit and hire our organization's chief executive.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
2. The board has approved a written job description that clearly spells out the chief executive's responsibilities and authority.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
3. The chief executive's performance is formally assessed at least annually based on objectives established at the beginning of the fiscal year.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
4. The chief executive receives ongoing feedback regarding job performance in addition to any formal assessments.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
5. Board members provide the necessary support that allows the chief executive to carry out the role successfully.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA

## Section 11: Monitoring & Evaluation Practices

1. Board members are adequately knowledgeable about the organization's programs and services.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
2. We periodically review with the chief executive the possibilities of adding new programs and services, and modifying or discontinuing current programs and services.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
3. Our board keeps itself informed of our organization's performance against predetermined plans and goals.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
4. The effectiveness of our board and committee structure is assessed at least every 2–3 years.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
5. We annually assess our individual members' satisfaction with their participation on the board.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
6. We regularly evaluate the effectiveness of our board meetings.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA

## Section 12: External Relations Practices

1. Our board regularly assesses the effectiveness of our relations with our different external constituent groups.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
--	---	---	---	---	----	----

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
2. Most of our individual board members are active either professionally or personally within the communities served by our organization.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
3. The board has approved effective marketing and public relations strategies for the organization.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
4. Individual board members actively support public relations and marketing events that benefit the organization.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA
5. Board members are clear about who serves as official spokesperson for the organization.	1	2	3	4	DK	NA

### Additional Comments

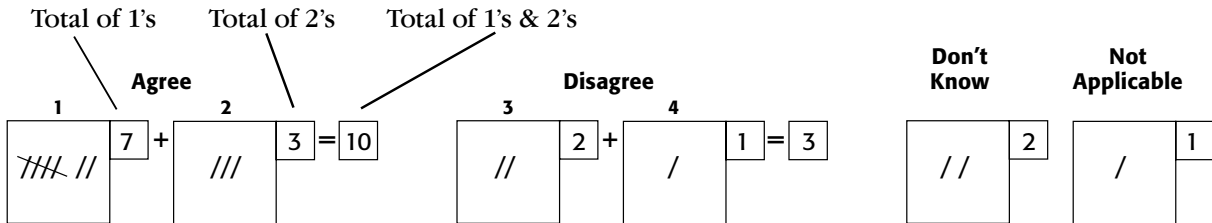
Please add any additional comments you have on the work of the board that may be helpful to this self-assessment:

## **Appendix 2** **Tabulation Sheet**

# Nonprofit Board Self-Assessment Tabulation Sheet

- 1 = Strongly Agree with the statement.
- 2 = Agree with the statement.
- 3 = Disagree with the statement.
- 4 = Strongly Disagree with the statement.
- DK = Don't Know (just don't have enough information)
- NA = Not Applicable to your board or organization

1. Tabulate responses to all items in each of the 12 sections, one questionnaire at a time. Enter hash-marks as shown in example.
2. Total hash-marks in each response category and enter number in appropriate spaces.
3. Add "1's" and "2's" to get combined number of "Agrees" and the "3's" and "4's" to get combined number of "Disagrees." Enter combined totals in appropriate spaces.



## Section 1: Board-Staff Roles

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4		
1.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>



## Section 2: Policy-Making Practices

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4		
1.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>



## Section 3: Planning Practices

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4		
1.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>



### Section 4: Fiscal Management Practices

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4		
1.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>



### Section 5: Fund Raising Practices

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4		
1.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>



## Section 6: Board Structure & Practices

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4		
1.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
6.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>



## Section 7: Board Committees

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4		
1.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
6.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>



## Section 8: Board Meetings

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4		
1.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
6.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>



### Section 9: Board Membership & Orientation

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4		
1.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>



### Section 10: Board-Executive Relationship

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4		
1.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>



## Section 11: Monitoring & Evaluation Practices

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4		
1.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
6.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>



## Section 12: External Relations Practices

	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4		
1.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

# **Appendix 3** **Data Analysis Sheet**

# Data Analysis Sheet

## **Top 8–12 Strengths of the Board**

(Use Questionnaire section and item numbers, or short descriptive code for the item, such as “Board seldom assumes staff roles,” or “Board structure works well.” See Appendix 5 for suggested codes.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.

## **Top 8–12 Problem Areas Needing Attention**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.

## **Appendix 4** **Selected Bibliography**

# **Nonprofit Board Self-Assessment Selected Bibliography**

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## **Appendix 5** **Suggested Descriptors**

# Nonprofit Board Self-Assessment Suggested Descriptors

## **Section 1: Board–Staff Roles**

- Item 1 Clear board–staff roles
- Item 2 Policies set by board
- Item 3 Board seldom assumes staff roles
- Item 4 Board delegates to CEO
- Item 5 Board–staff conflicts quickly resolved

## **Section 2: Policy Making Practices**

- Item 1 Full discussion of needed new policies
- Item 2 Full board approves new policies
- Item 3 Policies for all key areas
- Item 4 Policies communicated to full board
- Item 5 Policies reviewed, updated annually

## **Section 3: Planning Practices**

- Item 1 Mission and purpose clear, accepted
- Item 2 Consensus on 3–5 year vision
- Item 3 Strategic planning every 2 years
- Item 4 Staff's annual plans based on strategic plan
- Item 5 Board briefed on annual plans

## **Section 4: Fiscal Management Practices**

- Item 1 Annual budget fully discussed, approved
- Item 2 Needed fiscal actions taken quickly
- Item 3 Members understand fiscal reports
- Item 4 Board reviews, acts on auditor's report
- Item 5 Fiscal legal responsibilities understood

## **Section 5: Fund Raising Practices**

- Item 1 Board understands strategies
- Item 2 Clear policy on members' responsibilities
- Item 3 Members active in fund raising
- Item 4 Periodic long-range fiscal planning
- Item 5 Capital needs reviewed regularly

## **Section 6: Board Structure and Practices**

- Item 1 Structure supports good, timely work
- Item 2 Standing committees effective
- Item 3 Board the right size
- Item 4 Term length about right
- Item 5 Prepare members for leadership
- Item 6 Board knows by-laws

## **Section 7: Board Committees**

- Item 1 Assignments reflect interest, expertise
- Item 2 Assigned to at least one committee
- Item 3 Committees effective
- Item 4 Members active on committees
- Item 5 Committees report quarterly
- Item 6 Committees have goals, plans

## **Section 8: Board Meetings**

- Item 1 Number and length of meetings about right
- Item 2 Agendas distributed in advance
- Item 3 Leaders, members contribute to agenda
- Item 4 Board meetings well-run
- Item 5 Brainstorming, creative problem-solving used
- Item 6 Decisions examined for pros and cons

## **Section 9: Board Membership and Orientation**

- Item 1 Needed expertise, skills represented
- Item 2 Board identifies expertise, skills still needed
- Item 3 Members recruited based on board needs
- Item 4 Community sources used in recruiting
- Item 5 Structured new member orientation

## **Section 10: Board-Executive Relationship**

- Item 1 Structured, participative CEO hiring process
- Item 2 Clear CEO job description
- Item 3 Annual objective-based performance appraisal
- Item 4 Ongoing feedback to CEO
- Item 5 Board supportive of CEO

## **Section 11: Monitoring and Evaluation Practices**

- Item 1 Members knowledgeable about programs and services
- Item 2 Review programs and services with CEO
- Item 3 Measure performance against plan
- Item 4 Assess effectiveness of board–committee structure
- Item 5 Annually assess board satisfaction
- Item 6 Evaluate board meeting effectiveness

## **Section 12: External Relations Practices**

- Item 1 Assess effectiveness of external relations
- Item 2 Members active in target communities
- Item 3 Approved marketing and public relations strategies
- Item 4 Members support public events
- Item 5 Clear on spokespersons