

# Recruiting New Board Members



Your board members are some of your best allies and stakeholders. To make sure you have the right people on the bus, it's important to know what skills, lived experiences, and perspectives will guide your nonprofit through its current life cycle. Clarity on your mission goals and skills needed will in turn help guide you in your board recruitment process. Here are a few questions to consider along your recruitment journey, as well as recruitment tips.

## Before You Start Recruiting & Onboarding New Board Members

### Do you have a clear strategic direction and priorities?

Be clear on where you're going as an organization and what strategies potential board members will be asked to help inform. What are your top strategic goals? What skillsets and perspectives do you need to get there? Using a board profile matrix can be a helpful tool; find a sample [board profile matrix](#) at [PropelNonprofits.org](#).

### Are you prepared to invest time in effectively onramping new members? Do you have a process?

Avoid welcoming new board members in the midst of preparing for your annual gala or anytime you won't have capacity to introduce them to their role, the rest of the board, and where the organization is at. Charge someone – or a board committee – to formalize a board recruitment and on-ramping process; there's no need to reinvent the wheel every year. Typical governance committee responsibilities include analyzing board composition to find gaps, equipping the board with board recruitment processes and tools, championing policy review, and leading board self-assessments.

### What are your expectations for board service? And are they realistic for your desired pool of board candidates?

As your organization evolves, what you'll need from your board will evolve, both in terms of time commitment and the nature of the work. As a board, clarify the job description of a board member so new people know what's expected of them. This list should include desired skills, meeting location, frequency of meetings, expected time commitment per month, whether members are expected to sit on a committee or make financial contributions, your annual budget (including top sources of funding), strategic direction, fundraising expectation, length of board term, and whether you carry liability insurance.

Be realistic. If your top recruits are also working parents of young children, a 20-hour-a-month time commitment will be a barrier. If making your board more accessible is important, consider providing child care, for example, or investing more effort in other accommodations folks might need.

Also, know that recruiting officers can be challenging. We recommend onboarding new people as board members and develop them for officer roles once they are more familiar with the organization and board responsibilities.

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## Is your board prepared to incorporate diverse perspectives and experiences?

If your board is actively looking for better representation from the communities it's working with or to be more inclusive of people of a different race, culture, sexual orientation, or ability, be sure you're prepared to fully engage new people and perspectives. This may mean changing the structure of your meetings, time or place you meet, and how decisions are made.

## Where to Recruit Board Members

### Leverage your current community engagement channels.

People join boards of nonprofits they are already familiar with and engaged in. Consider outreach to people who have attended your events, benefitted from your services, or already contributing financially to your organization. Think about hosting an open board meeting, setting up one-on-one meetings between board/staff, or other volunteer engagements. In addition to recruiting new board members from your existing pool of already-engaged people, consider viewing your current contacts as ambassadors to help you find new recruits. For example, you could establish a nominating committee, where the group meets once to recommend names of people they know who could be potential board members.

### Engage your existing board members.

The number one reason people join boards is because they were asked. Board members are responsible for helping to generate ideas of who could be good for the board. **Remember: the most important criteria is someone invested in your mission and who has time to commit.** We can teach the technical skills needed to be a treasurer or board chair, but we can't make them love your organization or clear space in their calendars.

## Develop a leadership pipeline to board service.

Create multiple opportunities for clients and community members to convert from being a stranger to being an advocate for your organization. From this pool of advocates, create a structure that allows for more limited involvement in volunteerism so both you and the potential member can be sure it's a good fit. This could include asking potential candidates to volunteer at an event or asking them to serve on a committee for a year.

## What are the institutional and virtual pathways that make the most sense to connect with your target market?

If you have a broad mission, cast a wide net with your 'external' posting virtually through:

- [Propel Nonprofits' Board Connector](#): If your organization has at least one paid staff, has been operating as a nonprofit for at least a year, has a board in place with regular board meetings, has active participation by board members, has board officers in place, and is relatively stable organizationally and financially, email [boardconnector@propelnonprofits.org](mailto:boardconnector@propelnonprofits.org) for more information about finding new board members through Board Connector.
- [HandsOn Twin Cities](#)
- [Minnesota Council of Nonprofits](#) and [Pollen's jobs & opportunities boards](#)
- Social media, including LinkedIn

The more targeted your recruitment needs or mission, the more effective other strategies might be.

In either case, staying connected with your community partners is critical to having the network you need to find new people who are passionate about your mission. Don't be afraid to get creative and use this opportunity to step outside your existing networks. **Board recruitment is an ongoing process and part of the responsibility of all board members as ambassadors of your nonprofit.**