

# What is the Role of a *Board Chair?*

Reproduced from Boardsource - The Handbook of Nonprofit Governance and  
THE ASSOCIATED's Agency Excellence Committee

The board chair's role is framed by the accepted legal and ethical standards of conduct for nonprofit boards. The chair needs to stay well informed about any legal changes that will affect the functioning of the nonprofit and communicate in a clear and timely way with board members about how the changes will affect them. As the board's leader, the chair must set the example in adhering to legal and ethical standards of conduct. Ensuring compliance with these standards requires the chair to; apply effective communication and facilitation skills in all board discussions and deliberations, operate according to what's best for the organization, show transparency with full personal/professional disclosure, ensure that board members have all the necessary facts and figures (pro and con) when making decisions.

## **Example Board Chair Description:**

- Oversees board and executive committee meetings
- Works in partnership with the chief executive to make sure board resolutions are carried out
- Calls special meetings if necessary
- Appoints all committee chairs and with the chief executive, recommend who will serve on committees
- Assists chief executive in preparing agenda for board meetings
- Assists chief executive in conducting new board member orientation
- Oversees searches for a new chief executive
- Coordinates chief executive's annual performance evaluation
- Works with the governance committee to recruit new board members
- Acts as an alternate spokesperson for the organization
- Periodically consults with board members on their roles and help them assess their performance

## **Responsibilities of the Board Chair**

### **LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

#### *Personal Qualities:*

- Be approachable
- Be a good listener and communicator
- Show integrity, respect, and humility
- Be a strategist and a visionary and generative thinker
- Develop group facilitation skills
- Encourage open communication and constructive debate

- Celebrate the hard work and achievements of individual board members and the collective board.
- Promote outstanding board development and governance practices

*Commitment to the Organization:*

- Show an understanding of and passion for the mission, values, and work of the organization.
- Engage board members to show commitment
- Uphold legal and ethical standards of conduct

**DUTIES**

***Chief Executive***

- Cultivate a working partnership with the chief executive
- Oversee the hiring, monitoring, and evaluation of the chief executive

*Board Members*

- Ensure that every board member carries out the roles and responsibilities of board service
- Be the contact for board members on board issues
- Oversee a board assessment process

*Meetings*

- Preside at all meetings of the board and executive committee and at other meetings or events as necessary
- Promote meaningful dialogue at board meetings, and give every board member an opportunity to contribute.

*Board Committees*

- Appoint board committee and task force chairs
- Ensure ongoing communication with the board
- Serve as ex officio member of all committees except the governance committee

*Community*

- Cultivate relationships with individual donors, funders, and other community stakeholders.
- Serve as a community ambassador and advocate for the organization.
- Speak at the annual meeting, organizational programs, and community events, and contribute to the organizations Web site, newsletter, and other communication pieces.