Volunteer Boards and Executive Directors

Roles & Responsibilities
“Leadership in staffed nonprofit organizations in Canada is a shared responsibility between paid staff, usually headed by an executive director, and a volunteer board of directors headed by a chair or president.”
Roles & Responsibilities

“ A 2006 study of executive directors in the United States found that the executive director’s relationship with the board strongly affects the rate of turnover among executive directors (Bell, Moyers & Wolfred). The study also found that most executive directors do not see their relationship with their board as an effective strategic partnership.”
Roles & Responsibilities

- Adversely, volunteer boards by their very nature have a tendency to manage the operations of the organization especially in the presence of a “void”
The Three Essentials

1. Respect for the distinctions of roles
   - Chair, Board members and Executive Director
2. Forthright, candid, transparent communication
3. A desire to work together for the good of the community/region
Role of a Board

- **Leadership:**
  - vision, priorities, dispute resolution

- **Decision-making:**
  - best process, access to quality information & advice

- **Public participation:**
  - determine best approach; identify administrative contact
  - Ensure open door communication
    - Provide access; ensure information available; don’t over-react

- **Guard resources:**
  - Set policies; monitor; meet with auditor

- **Policy Leadership**
  - Identify the issues; review/refine/update/observe
Key Roles of the Executive Director

- Experienced, educated, professional policy advisor
- Team leader of the staff
- Conduit of Board decisions to staff
- Approval authority for staff decisions
- Implementer of Board decisions
- Quality control of advice up & action down
- Partnership builder; liaison to other organizations
Board/E.D. Role Clarity

- Impact of Board/E.D. Relationship
  - The role and performance of the E.D. is critical to the confidence of the Board & the stakeholders
  - Evidence of collegiality/respect between Chair & E.D. is important to the “larger audience”
  - Respect for professionalism & independence of each other
Governance vs. Management

- **Governance** is about vision, and the translation of vision into policy.

- **Management** is about making the decisions needed to implement policy.

- **Operations** are about implementing managerial decisions.
Roles & Responsibilities

- Governance
  - Goals, Purposes, Policy

- Management
  - Policy, Programs, Projects, Targets (Orders)

- Operations
  - Targets (Orders), Activity, Performance
Governance Functions

- **Strategic Direction** - setting a direction for the organization that reflects community needs.
- **Resource Development** - developing financial resources that support program activities.
- **Financial Accountability** - managing financial resources that ensure honesty and cost-effectiveness.
- **Leadership Development** - developing the human resources that lead the organization today and in the future.
Management Functions

- **Program Planning and Implementation**
  - taking the strategic direction to the next level of detail and putting it into action.

- **Administration**
  - ensuring the effective management of the details behind programs.
Governance/Management Model

- BOARD
- POLICY
- EVALUATE
- STAFF

Vision
Implement
Dysfunctional Signs

“Board members don’t take their role seriously”
Members

- Attend meetings
- Ensure that you are member for the right reason(s)
- Recruitment
- Belief in the organization
Dysfunctional Signs

“Board meetings are unspeakably boring or longer than they should be”………….or
Dysfunctional Signs

“All those in favour say 'Aye'.”

“Aye.”

“Aye.”

“Aye.”

“Aye.”

“Say it ain’t so!”

“Perish the thought!”

“You’ve got to be kidding!”

“Heaven forbid!”

“No! No! A thousand times no!”

“Board meetings are enjoyable but decisions are rarely made; things are always being deferred”
Successful Meetings

- Prep work leading up to the meeting
- Reports to the board
- Format of the agenda
- Time limits
“Decisions are made but are not followed through or implemented”
Following through

- One employee system
- Workload
- Lack of resources
Dysfunctional Signs

“Board members are unclear about their responsibilities”
Roles & Responsibilities

- Exercise to discuss the intricacies of “Governance” and “Management” roles
What can we do to improve the way our organization’s operate?