WHO'S AT BAT?

Session Three

ACHARAI
The Shoshana S. Cardin Jewish Leadership Institute

The Associated
Inspiring Jewish Community

Session 2: The Grandslam: Organizational Sustainability

Welcome and Introductions of Facilitators

Session Goals:

• Identify tools and techniques for leadership conversations

• Assess Your Organizational Sustainability

• Hone current on boarding, mentorship and board assessment

Job Description Sharing

Screen TED talk: What it takes to be a great leader

https://www.ted.com/talks/roselinde_torres_what_it_takes_to_be_a_great_leader?language=en

Leadership Conversations – Role Plays

• Inviting a new board member

• Current board member mid term

Tools to have in place for a leadership conversation:

• Job description

• Organization's talking points

• Current roster

SWOT Analysis: Stakeholders, Wishes, Options and Truths

On Boarding and Contracting

Your organization will want to provide a warm, welcoming informative orientation opportunity for new board members prior to their initial board meeting. A nice idea is to have this at your President's home over a meal.

Board Orientations:
Start the relationship off right by introducing new board members to the basic roles and responsibilities of service as a nonprofit board member, and also provide specific information about your nonprofit's mission and activities.

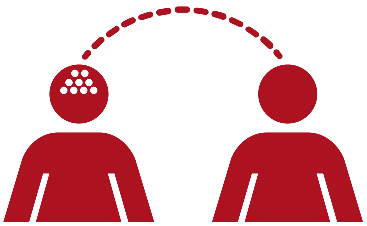
Here is a sample roster of what might be covered in the orientation:

- Your nonprofit's mission and history
- Bios of current board members and key staff
- Board member job description and expectations
- Board member agreement
- Conflict of interest policy and questionnaire
- Recent financial reports and audited financials
- Bylaws and certificate of incorporation
- Determination letter from the IRS and certificate of tax exemption
- Summary of Directors' and Officers' insurance coverage
- Personnel policies relating to the CEO/executive director, such as those governing board review of the executive's compensation
- Whistleblower policy
- Annual report or other document that lists the donors/grantmakers that support the nonprofit
- List of committees, their charters, and who serves on them
- Calendar of meetings for the year ahead

Best Practices:

- Name tags and/or tent cards on the table at meetings are helpful so that new board members can get to know their colleagues.
- Some people join boards to share their professional expertise with the nonprofit. Others want to do something completely different from their normal professional life when they volunteer, so make sure to ask your new board member what they are most interested in.
- A follow-up phone call from the board chair after the board member agrees to serve, but before his or her first meeting, can set the stage for a positive and productive relationship with the board chair.
- The orientation meeting itself can include a field trip to see the nonprofit's mission in action, or tour of the nonprofit's facilities.
- Don't forget to include those special issues that pertain specifically to your nonprofit's mission, plus information on: governance policies (so that all board members are reminded about their legal and fiduciary duties); accountability practices (such as the need to disclose conflicts of interest); and the responsibility to review and approve the executive director's performance and compensation.
- Inviting fellow-board members, such as officers or committee chairs, to lead relevant portions of the orientation offers another way for board members to get to know their colleagues on the board as well as the roles they play individually.
- Inviting all veteran board members to attend each board orientation gives those board members who missed their own orientation – or would like a refresher – to get caught up, and also reinforces a culture of continuous learning.
- Keep it short – maybe approach it in "bites" instead of one huge gulp – so that new board members are not overwhelmed with all the information.
- Make sure every board member knows who s/he can ask with questions, and that there is no such thing as a "dumb" question!

Next Up:
The community expects so much from our volunteer board members – in turn we need to thoughtfully prepare and support them. Rarely do new members arrive on the board with years of experience in the nonprofit sector. Many will have only a passing familiarity with what a nonprofit is all about, but lots of passion for the mission of your organization. Consequently, regularly educating your board members about their important role, as well as about issues that impact the environment in which the nonprofit operates, and about the nonprofit itself, are high priority activities that promote ongoing board engagement.



Benefits of Mentoring for your board
Mentoring can serve many purposes for both parties in the relationship and the greater organization. It can be a strong tool for orientation to the board, promoting learning and preparing for leadership succession. Serving as a mentor can build a person's commitment to the board, increase contributions and attendance at meetings, and support term limits and transitions, in addition to being gratifying.
Peer mentoring is a powerful tool for board education because it engages people and utilizes the individual and collective power of the group. It also facilitates more meaningful board member relationships, builds cohesion and promotes more informed decision making.

The more welcomed a new board member feels, the more likely they are to be willing to give their time, feel connected to the work, the mission and position themselves better as an organization's ambassador.
For board members who are identified to rise in the line of succession, having a mentor higher up in the succession can prepare the mentee for responsibilities, make key introductions and begin working on strategic issues. It also allows for time to identify growth areas and address them in order to ensure successful leadership from the get-go.

Finally, for seasoned leaders serving as a mentor, gives them an opportunity to share their knowledge and is a good reminder of the importance of adding "new blood" to a board which eases transitions off. Mentors can maintain a connection to the organization even once their term expires through continued contact with their mentee- even if it is outside the confines of the original connection.

Formal vs. Informal Mentoring programs
There are two types of mentoring: formal and informal. In a more formal mentoring program pairs are assigned and introduced and even seated next to each other at board meetings. In more informal settings, the mentor is charged with setting time to check in with their "mentee" to see how their experience is and if they have any questions, and serve as a friendly face in the group. Another type of informal mentoring is "stealth mentorship", where only the mentor is instructed on the plan, and is instructed to reach out to their "mentee" and engage with them at a meeting. The thinking behind this "stealth mentorship" is to create a feeling of comfort for the new board member, that the more veteran "mentor" is welcoming and friendly, but not necessarily reaching out of obligation or formality.
Building a Mentorship Culture
- Establish concrete learning objectives and measurable goals
- Secure support and commitment from top leadership and professionals, and identify teams to develop, implement and evaluate the program
- Decide how mentors and mentees will be paired and how to structure the mentorship program

Board Assessment:

A formal board assessment is based on the belief that a board of directors should periodically assess and reflect on its performance in carrying out key board responsibilities. This allows board members to step back from routine governance matters and candidly reflect on how well the board is meeting its responsibilities. Many boards are caught up in the daily oversight of their organization. How is the fund-raising proceeding? Are we on track with our budget? Should we undertake a new program initiative? Self-assessment gives the board an opportunity to step back and say "How are we doing as a board? How can we improve on the way we operate?"
Assessment is not meant to produce a report card. It should not place blame, embarrass or demean particular members of the board. Properly conducted, a self-assessment offers both tangible and intangible value to participating board members, the executive director, the organization they govern and assist, and ultimately to the people that the organization serves. Board assessments can be done as self-assessments or conversations with either a chair or professional and can be done mid year, or annually.

Board Assessments can be helpful in:

- Refreshing and clarifying the board's understanding of its roles and responsibilities
- Identifying important areas of board operation that need attention/improvement
- Assessing progress toward existing plans, goals, and objectives
- Shaping future structure and as a result, operations of the board
- Defining the criteria for an effective and successful board
- Building trust, respect, and communication among board members, the executive director and staff Enabling individual board members to work effectively as part of a team

Some Sample Questions:

What's working well?
What can be improved upon?
What should we keep doing? Start doing? Stop doing?
How do we define success for our committee/program/work? How can we achieve it?
Discuss other involvements – past, present and future (ie, what do you want to do next?)
Where do you see yourself next year?
What type of role do you want to take on?
What are your interests? (Committee leadership positions, agency boards, campaign, hands on volunteering, work with a specific population, etc.).
What are you passionate about?
Where do you see yourself and your involvement in 5 and 10 years?
What skills or knowledge could you use? Discuss how to obtain.

Transition/Exit Interviews

As a board member nears the end of their term (or terms as the case may be), they possess a wealth of information and investment in your organization. We recommend scheduling a transition conversation in the final quarter of their term which will help gather information on their experience, identify next steps for their involvement (either in your organization or another community organization), and solidify your commitment and appreciation for their time and contributions in their role. We want to make our transitioning leaders feel appreciated for their time and efforts and make sure they do not feel dropped.

Sample Transition Interview Questions:
What were your expectations of your volunteer position? Were those expectations met?
What is your impression of our organization after having completed your volunteer position?
In your experience, did this volunteer experience provide a helpful introduction/more information regarding opportunities within the organization?
How connected do you now feel to other volunteers?
What skills/knowledge did you gain as a result of your volunteer position?
How would you like to implement these skills/knowledge? (Have you started to find your "passion")?
What additional skills do you feel you still need in order to become more involved within our organization?
What are your interests within our organization for the coming year? (Committee leadership positions, agency boards, campaign, hands on volunteering, work with a specific population, etc.).
How do you see your involvement growing in the next several years, if at all?
Do you know anyone who would be interested in volunteering with our organization? What are their names and contact information?

CHAI Board of Directors - Exit Interview Questions

Coming on to the Board

1. How were you asked to join the Board of Directors? Was this an appropriate way of approaching potential Board members? Is there another approach we should consider?
2. Which skills do you feel that the Board was looking for in you when you were asked to join the Board? Was this made clear to you when you were asked to join?
3. Do you feel like you have fulfilled this purpose or a different one?
4. When you were recruited, were the obligations of being a board member clear to you?
5. Did you attend a Board orientation when you started with the board? What was missing and what was helpful?

Board use of Skills and Tone

1. Did your committee assignments and other roles use your skills and knowledge appropriately?
2. Does the Board use members' skills as fully as it should? Do you have any suggestions for alternative ways to better use the board members?
3. Does the Board, through its committees and full meetings, effectively and efficiently use members' time? In which ways does the Board use time well? (Committee work, committee meetings, full board meetings, pre and post meeting communications) In what ways may they be improved?
4. Is the Board culture welcoming to all voices during Board meetings? Why or why not?
5. How do you feel the Board addressed the fiduciary, strategic and generative aspects of its work for CHAI? Which of these did the board spend too little or too much time on?

Overall picture of Operations

1. During your time on the Board, did you understand how the Board's work fit into the work of CHAI and other stakeholders to meet CHAI's mission? What were the strengths? The weaknesses?
2. Do you feel that CHAI's current plan/vision is appropriate? Why or why not?

Overall assessment questions

1. What were the moments of the board's strength during the time that you served? What were the moments that you felt the board could have done better or you wished that more could have been done?
2. What upcoming projects or challenges do you see for CHAI most clearly? Are there projects or other areas that are receiving too much board attention?
3. Is there anything you would like to share about your time on the Board, with CHAI, or anything else related to your service?