

STRENGTHENING BOARDS, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

**SUPPORT, EQUIP, AND CULTIVATE
EXCELLENT LEADERS**



Provided by the Clayton County Foundation for the Future, this project has been made possible through support from the Iowa Council of Foundations.

Based on the work of Susan Howlett, author of *Boards on Fire! Inspiring Leaders to Raise Money Joyfully*, as presented through the Iowa Council of Foundations' 2020 Connect Community Foundations Conference. To borrow Howlett's book, or for additional board tools, contact CCFF Coordinator Emily Sadewasser at ccff@dbqfoundation.org.



PERSONAL CONNECTION

Meet one-on-one over coffee to get to know your board members. Host socials to help them strengthen their relationships with each other. Ask their advice and let them know you value their opinions and unique experiences.

STORIES OF IMPACT

Show board members the impact of their work with stories, highlighting the benefit to individuals. Celebrate the little victories!

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

How can you ensure your board members feel understood and appreciated? How do you help them feel included and connected to your organization? Use these tips to deepen relationships with your board members and cultivate an environment that motivates commitment, personal responsibility, and a sense of community.

- Board members are giving their time, talent and treasure to your organization. Ask what they expect to get out of serving on your organization's board and consider ways to help them learn new skills, connect with other leaders, and achieve something meaningful.
- Find out the reason your board members were drawn to your organization. Ask them to share a story about why they got involved or about someone they know who has been impacted by the organization's activities. What are their hopes for the organization? Record and share their stories in your community through a local paper or social media.
- Provide immersive experiences that help your board or donors feel what your mission is all about. Site visits and hands on activities are a fun and valuable way to illustrate the impact of your work to your board members. They'll feel a sense of community and ownership of your organization and will be eager and proud to tell others about it.
- Use language to strengthen relationships. When talking about your board and organization, use "we," "family," "community," and "connect." This sets the tone for board member interactions with others on behalf of your organization.
- Write personal notes to board members to thank them for their contributions. Highlight their accomplishments at board meetings to encourage and cheer them on.

Clayton County
Foundation for the Future, Inc.

An Affiliate of the
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF GREATER DUBUQUE

DESIGN MEETINGS THEY'LL LOOK FORWARD TO



Plan engaging and efficient meetings that your board members won't want to miss. Provide opportunities for learning and growth and make the most of your meeting time with these insights.

Ingredients for a productive meeting in 90 minutes or less

- Refreshments
- Consent agenda
- Your strategic goals
- 1 minute story of impact
- Educational element
- Feedback

Start and end with check-ins

Each person should be part of the conversation at every meeting. Open the meeting with a light, personal check-in (what's your favorite travel destination?) or have each person share something positive from their life. Use one minute at the end of the meeting for each person to share a takeaway, question, concern, or commitment.

- Keep meetings at 90 minutes or less, and use a consent agenda to ensure you're spending your time on strategic priorities. During annual planning, choose a substantial discussion topic for each meeting and put it on the board schedule.
- Set a goal for meeting attendance within your established board member expectations. Assess attendance and participation in activities with annual board and self evaluations.
- Assign special tasks for those who aren't very vocal or are struggling to find their role. If you have a member who dominates meetings, engage with them before the meeting to keep the agenda on track.
- At each meeting, ask a board member to share a one-minute story showing the impact your organization has had on someone in the community. This helps keep them connected to and excited about the work and your community, and assists them in building up a supply of stories to share outside of your organization.
- Include education in each meeting, bringing additional benefit to your members and guidance on work they're performing in the community. Teach effective storytelling about the work your organization is doing, share important developments in your field, or show short video clips to teach a specific lesson. Provide opportunities for learning outside of meetings through webinars, lectures, books, and articles of interest.
- Have board members complete a short survey at the end of each meeting. Knowing that their opinions are being taken into consideration, they can feel confident that meetings will be worthwhile.

Provide consistent board orientation

- During an orientation, spark the outcomes you seek by telling stories about people impacted by the work. Share the role board members play, being open about why you asked them to get involved specifically, and what gifts, talents, knowledge, or experience you want them to bring.
- Clarify expectations so they can begin with confidence.
- Share the organization's history, policies, board member guidebook, strategic plan, and schedule for the year.
- Let them know what they can expect at meetings. How long are meetings? Will there be food? Is there a seating chart? Do meetings ever get contentious?

SETTING LEADERS UP FOR SUCCESS



How many people should be on a board?

Aim for no more than nine people on your board. This size allows a staff person to build and maintain strong relationships with each member.

Take care of new members.

Make sure new board members are welcomed, included, and that someone is looking out for them. Pair a new board member with a seasoned board member for at least their first few meetings. The veteran member can help the newcomer get acquainted and comfortable with the group and the work.

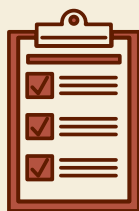
How do your policies affect your recruitment goals?

A three year term could be too long for someone with a young family. Daytime meetings may not be feasible for those in the workforce. Long travel time to meetings or residency requirements might also be prohibitive. Check your organization's bylaws and policies to see if they preclude involvement.

Using your strategic plan as a guide, work with your board to establish or review and revise expectations and responsibilities for organization leaders. Be transparent about the expectations when engaging candidates so everyone can unite around a shared vision and plan.

- Be open and specific about expectations for board members when you're recruiting; don't gloss over parts of the position that you think may be unappealing. Lay out what the board as a whole is responsible for accomplishing, activities or tasks that all board members are expected to take part in, and responsibilities that individual members have committed to. Create a document detailing the expectations and review it annually. Offer an annual self-assessment for individuals and the body as a whole.
- Board members bring different skills and strengths to your organization and should be asked to use them to achieve the organization's strategic goals. Make a list of tasks associated with your strategic goals. With the annual review of expectations, have leaders choose the tasks they'll complete to support the mission. Sign a contract; discuss, review, and update each year. It may be helpful to have members take leadership or personality tests as your team establishes roles.
- Establish a leadership development committee to consider the welfare of the board throughout the year and strengthen relationships with potential members. Complete a leadership self-assessment for the whole body and for each person.
- Encourage emeritus board members to stay involved. Ask for their help and advice.
- Create a list of key messages for your organization, review them with your board members and provide a hard copy for their reference. These messages serve as a single source any staff or board member can draw from when communicating about the organization.

Support your board members with:



Clear expectations



Effective communication



Appropriate resources

CULTIVATING FIRST-RATE BOARD MEMBERS



Using your strategic plan and a matrix, work with your leadership development committee to determine who you need on your team to accomplish your goals.

- Create a matrix like the one below pinpointing the skills, talents, and experience you need on your board to achieve your strategic goals. Ask board members to check off their own attributes.
- Consider candidates' backgrounds, personality and leadership styles. Are they team players? Do they have a history of reliability?

Plan ahead

Keep a running list of candidates for board openings in the years to come. Plan how you will connect them with your organization well in advance of nominating them to the board. Map out a path to guide candidates from interest to engagement and taking personal responsibility for the organization.

How can you engage with potential candidates?

- Ask them to serve on a committee.
- Ask them to help with a small task or in-kind gift.
- Have a discussion about your organization. Get their perspective and opinions.

Where could you find potential board members?

Your own constituency • service organizations • young professionals groups • recent graduates of college/university programs • employers of people with the skills you seek • academics from fields related to your work • youth groups • organizations led by people from marginalized communities • faith communities • groups for people with disabilities • small business owners • corporate retirees

	Member Names					Candidate Names				
Years on Board										
Age										
Under 18										
19-34										
25-50										
51-65										
65+										
Gender										
Male										
Female										
Non-Binary										
Other										
Race/Ethnicity										
Asian/Pacific Islander										
Black or African American										
Caucasian										
Hispanic/Latino										
Native American										
Other										
Disability										
Board member identifies as having a disability										
Sector										
Agriculture										
Civic/Government										
Education										
Faith Community										
Healthcare										
Manufacturing										
Media										
Non-Profit Organization										
Other										
Geographic Area										
County Seat Community										
Farm										
Metropolitan										
Rural Community										
Suburban										
Community/Area										
Area of Expertise										
Grantwriting										
Financial Management										
Fundraising										
Legal/Human Resources										
Personnel Administration										
Program										
Marketing/Social Media										
Connections										
Agricultural Business										
Community Leaders										
Financial Resources										
People and Expertise										
Neighborhood Leaders										
Public/Government										