

PLEASE ROUTE:

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR _____

PROGRAM OFFICER _____

CHAIR GRANTS COMMITTEE _____

BUILDING COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

GRANTMAKING CONSULTING PROGRAM

Sponsored by:

PHILANTHROPIC VENTURES FOUNDATION-
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BOARD MEETINGS

Meetings of foundation Boards of Directors take many forms. Some are totally private with no outsiders allowed. Some exclude all foundation staff except the executive director. Some are open to the public. Some are even advertised and the media invited. Some include presentations by applicants. Some Board meetings are chaired by the foundation executive director.

The point is that board meetings cover such a variety of formats that what one group thinks is impossible is being done by another group.

In issue #29 of this Bulletin we described what makes for a good board meeting and listed some divisive elements that break down the effectiveness of a board such as absenteeism, micro management, etc.

All sorts of aphorisms abound regarding Boards of Directors. "Board members are made up of the wealthy, those who know the wealthy and workers." "Give, get, or get off." Many community foundations see their boards as a place for wealthy and prestigious persons.

Boards of Directors vary in size from 5 to 65. Large boards usually have an executive committee of 12 persons who handle much of the business. Interestingly, larger foundations seem to have smaller boards.

Boards meet anywhere from monthly to annually with the optimum being quarterly. Boards have 3 to 8 committees. The basic committees are: Grants, Investment, Development/Public Relations.

Board Minutes vary from direct quotes to a summarized report of the meeting. The length of board meetings runs from 1 hour to 3 hours with 1 1/2 hours the norm.

The ideal Board of Directors is comprised of members with passion for the success of the foundation. People who come to a meeting prepared, who seek change, who think about the foundation even between meetings create a dynamic, active Board. In addition, a board that tolerates failure as a learning experience, that encourages risk taking, that gives the Executive Director latitude to be creative is an effective body. A foundation with 9 members who meet quarterly, has three committees, receives materials at least two weeks prior to a meeting, and limits its meetings to 1 1/2 hours is effective.

CENTRAL CAROLINA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

As mentioned above, some foundations strive to make their board meetings more meaningful. The Central Carolina Community Foundation (CCCF) in Columbia, South Carolina shared with us its process for holding board meetings.

Lack of Space - an Asset?

One of the frequent problems of new community foundations or those who are smaller and struggling with administrative budget shortfalls is limited office space. In the beginning community foundations are frequently given an extra closet in the chairmans office or donated space when it is needed.

As a recipient of such generosity, it is difficult to ask for amenities such as a conference room, board room or other meeting space. Of necessity therefore, foundation board meetings were held offsite, usually in the board rooms donated by board members.

Central Carolina Community Foundation regularly held grant announcement festivities at various grantee locations such as a Boys and Girls Club or a center for the homeless. The responses from board members were very positive when they visited the organizations for these grant programs. The board members felt more connected to the organization, more knowledgeable of its role in the community, more appreciative of its services, and more aware of its struggles. In 1990, CCCF decided that all distribution committee and board meetings would be held in the nonprofit community.

Board meetings have been at locations such as the Oliver Gospel Mission, the National Federation of the Blind, the Carolina Children's Home, the Capital Senior Center and Sandhills Academy. At each occasion, the host Executive Director speaks briefly on the programs of the organization, answers questions and offers tours. The Executive Directors are enthusiastic about hosting the meetings because of the opportunity to "show off" their organization to an influential community group like the community foundation board.

The organizations are not necessarily grantees although most are. The size of the CCCF board, 32 members, makes some locations better suited for board meetings and some for a committee meeting. The foundation provides refreshments, cups, ice, etc. so as to minimize the inconvenience for the organization.

Giving precise direction is critical. "Nothing frustrates a board member more than being lost trying to attend a meeting," cautions Mac Bennett, Executive Director. "Our board knows that we are never in the same place twice. They have been flexible and willing to venture into unknown territory," adds Bennett.

"I never knew this was here" or "I never knew this organization existed" are frequent board member comments, adds Mary Choate, Associate Director. "We have also held donor recognition events at several nonprofits. We feel it is a responsibility to educate the foundation board on community assets and resources as well as needs and problems. This simple step of meeting outside of corporate headquarters accomplishes a great deal."

Seeing the nonprofits in their settings adds a dimension that grant applications and reports cannot convey. "Because I am not on the Distribution Committee, I am not as familiar with these organizations as is the committee. Meeting at their location introduces us to their environment and gives us an insight we would not have otherwise. I enjoy actually seeing these agencies and I feel in better touch with the community," said Joyce Brown, CCCF Board President.

DONOR ADVISE AGREEMENT

We get requests for agreement forms for establishing Donor Advise Funds. The agreement below was created for a corporation to use in setting up such a fund. It would be possible for such a letter to originate from the foundation or donor.

(Sample Letter of Understanding to create a Donor Advise Fund)

Executive Director
Community Foundation
Street Address
City State Zip

Dear Executive Director,

We would like to start a Donor Advise Fund with the _____ Community Foundation. To simplify things, we have listed below our understanding regarding this Fund:

- It would be called _____ Fund.
- No distribution from this Fund would occur unless we recommend it.
- An annual administrative fee of ___ % of principle would be charged by the Foundation.
- Donations can be given anywhere in the United States or abroad.
- The minimum amount for a grant from this Fund would be \$200.
- This is not an endowment fund therefore it can be spent down if so desired.
- Acknowledgment will be given to the _____ Fund in the grant transmittal letters as follows, "This grant comes to you from money contributed by and at the recommendation of _____."
- We have the option of creating a new letterhead for this Fund which would give more exposure to us as well as acknowledge the _____ Community Foundation.
- Assuming our recommendations are for charitable causes, it is agreed that grants can be made within ___ days of the recommendation.
- It is our option to be able to give to anything of a charitable nature regardless of whether it has 501(c)(3) status.
- The _____ Community Foundation is welcome to call outstanding giving opportunities in the _____ field to our attention.

AGREED:

Community Foundation

Donor or Corporation

Date: _____

Date: _____

~ Common Application Forms ~

Our collection of common application forms is growing. 10 different common application forms for various regions around the country are available to readers.

For a complete set, send \$5 (for copying and mailing) to:

Philanthropic Ventures Foundation
1212 Preservation Park Way
Oakland CA 94612

~ Community Foundations ~

Three day grantmaking visits are available to community foundations. If assets are \$8 million or less, the only cost to the foundation is the consultants living expenses. Foundations with assets above \$8 million include travel. The Packard Foundation covers the consultant's time.

For further information call (510) 645-1890

Building Community Foundations

Philanthropic Ventures Foundation
1212 Preservation Park Way
Oakland CA 94612

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