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Check the Boxes – Director Evaluation
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Directors know whether or not they are fulfilling their governance responsibilities. Given a board self-evaluation form, how would they check off the boxes?

Convey Responsibilities

Every director starts their term intending to do a good job. For success they need access to information and orientation.

Board training is recommended annually, even for directors continuing their terms. It is an opportunity to "refresh and blend" the team.

Provide the essential governing documents. Delivery could take the form of a leadership manual, on-line access, or a memory stick. Include:

- ✓ Bylaws
- ✓ Articles of Incorporation
- ✓ Policies
- ✓ Strategic Plan
- ✓ IRS Form 990
- ✓ Budget
- ✓ Organizational Chart
- ✓ Rosters
- ✓ Board Expectations

Let the minutes reflect an orientation was conducted and the documents provided. This might benefit the association if there is a question about fulfilling fiduciary duties, the principle of volunteer immunity, or a legal challenge.

Full Disclosure

Disclose everything expected of directors.

Recently I heard a board chair remind directors they are expected to contribute $10,000 to association's foundation. Some of the directors looked at each other and said, "This is the first time I heard about making a contribution."

Not all duties are described in governing documents. For example, asking board members to make a financial commitment to the foundation or political action committee. Supplementary responsibilities will include chairing committees, visiting chapters, and signing up sponsors.

Create a guide to board expectations listing the responsibilities beyond what is described in bylaws.

If directors are not fully engaged, it could be that nobody told them. Disclosing expectations is part of the nominating or on-boarding processes.

Director Self-Evaluation

What reasons cause directors to underperform, miss meetings, fail to take on added responsibilities, or not be a good team player?

The cause might be outside distractions. Possibly their work or family is drawing them away from board responsibilities. Or they have lost interest in volunteering. Maybe they didn't realized the extent of the commitment.

Underperforming directors often know the problem but not the remedy. Chances are the rest of the board senses the issue.

Use a self-evaluation form to help them realize their duties and to assess how they are performing. A director who cannot check the boxes may want to have a discussion with the officers or executive director about improving or serving in a different capacity.

Create a grid of director duties and expectations. .

Responsibilities	**Director #1 Name**	**Director #2 Name**	**Director #3 Name**	**Director #4 Name**	**Director #5 Name**
Attend 4 Board Meetings a Year					
Contribute to Foundation					
Contribute to PAC					
Sign Up 2 Members					
Visit a Local Chapter					
Serve as Liaison to a Committee					
Attend a Day-at-the-Capitol					
Purpose Table at the Annual Gala					
Financial or In-Kind Commitments are Met					
Other Duties					

Board Evaluation

Another method of improving performance is to evaluate the whole board as a team. Use this for a group discussion.

The intent is to identify methods to improve governance. Sometimes small suggestions have big impact. For example, one group decided serving lunch was a distraction at meetings. Another board recommended any persons giving reports should provide them in advance rather than having guests sit through the meeting.

The form is usually a page or two. The board chair or a governance committee should lead the discussion.
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	Strongly Agree	**Uncertain**	**Strongly Disagree**
Mission Statement is being Advanced			
Full Compliance with Governing Documents			
Strategic Plan Guides Board Discussion and Decisions			
Committees Supplement the Work of the Board and Staff			
Finances are Understood and Safeguarded			
Each Board Meeting Concludes with Desired Results.			
Annual Orientation is Effective			

The evaluation process identifies strengths and weaknesses. It starts the conversation. If weaknesses are identified, corrective actions should be discussed.

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Note: Bob Harris, CAE, provides free governance tips and templates at www.nonprofitcenter.com.