

Tips for a Non-Profit Board Recruitment Package

Here are some tips on what to include in a non-profit board's recruitment package, what you give to prospective board members. A decision to join a board is an important one. You want candidates to be well informed about the organization and have given their commitment considerable thought before they agree to serve.

The existing board needs to put its mind to what is expected of new members, including what characteristics are needed on the board and the nature of the commitment. Look at effective board recruitment as part of the continuous effort to inform and listen to the community. You want to educate candidates about your organization and the board's role and even if they do not say yes to your request this year, they might be interested in the future.

The Essential Ingredients

1. Personal invitation

There is no substitute for a personalized approach. An invitation, by email, formal letter and perhaps a phone call should make the case as to why they should choose your organization, its current strengths and challenges and why your organization has identified them as a potential board member. The letter might include an invitation to meet with an existing board member and be given a tour.

2. Organizational Overview

A brief description of your organization, what it does and how it came about (history) is an essential piece.

3. Mission Statement and Objectives

Your organization's vision, mission, objectives and values are what can get prospective candidates most excited about joining your board. The statement of purpose found in most incorporation documents (e.g., by-laws) can sometimes be too general.

If you have a strategic plan it will likely cover the important aspects of your mission and objectives. If your plan is a very detailed document, you may want to provide candidates with a few key pages.

4. Board Member Job Description

It is essential that you include a "job description" in some form, indicating what you expect of board members (their responsibilities) including a realistic indication of how much time is typically involved. Do not downplay the kind of commitment you want. If your board is involved in fundraising, the expectations of board members in regard to this should be clearly spelled out.

5. Financial Statement

An approved budget or the operating statement and balance sheet for the most recent year should be included. Your organization's Annual Report or a photocopy of your last Auditor's Report would be fine.

6. List of existing Board Members and Staff

A list of existing board members and key staff persons is essential information.

Some Optional Items

7. Board Application Form

Some organizations take the approach that they want to invite people to apply to serve on the board and therefore not all invitations or nominations result in automatic board membership. Indeed, an interview with potential board candidates is a good practice you may want to adopt.

A board application form can ask for information on a candidate's experience, why they are interested in your organization, what they bring to the board, what they expect from serving as a volunteer board member and what other volunteer commitments they may have. The person's contact information should be requested.

The application may serve as a guide to their nominator or the board member interviewing them as a possible candidate. It can be something to bring back to the board when you are considering your options for new members.

The application form or the letter of invitation should also indicate what the next steps in the recruitment process are, including the possibly of an interview.

8. By-laws and Governing Policies

Providing a copy of your by-laws and governing policies may be too much to include in a recruitment package; it may something best left to sending to the person once they have been accepted and have agreed to serve. You may want to ask however, if such material is of interest.

9. Fundraising Campaign Description

If your board plays an active role in fundraising you will want to include a campaign description.

10. Board Member Agreement

Some organizations ask board members to read, date and sign a board member agreement, essentially a statement of responsibilities (the person to the organization, the organization to the board member). If you employ this, a sample copy should be included in your recruitment package.

One of the areas which may need to be highlighted to prospective board members is whether the organization has *Directors and Officers Liability Insurance*.

11. Sample Board Meeting Agenda

12. Invitation to the Annual General Meeting

You may want to put some of the above information on your organization's website. A board members job description, board application form and brief description of the recruitment and nomination process can be put on the same page as your list of board members or have its own page as part of a governance section under a "About us" menu item.