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BOARD AND STAFF COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

The Board is responsible for policy making and legal compliance, approving the organization's vision, mission, and strategic direction, and providing oversight of financial affairs. Based upon national surveys that repeatedly report board members not having adequate knowledge about their responsibilities, the Board Chair is responsible for ensuring that orientation of new board members includes communicating expectations regarding board roles and responsibilities. The Board Chair is further responsible for reinforcing these expectations on a regular basis.

The board selects and evaluates the Executive Director. In practice, the Board concerns itself primarily with the strategic direction of the organization, and delegates operational (day to day management) issues to its staff.

Only the Board of Directors collectively may provide direction to the Executive Director. The board may have an Executive or other committee that can help decide matters involving the Executive Director but any major decision impacting the Executive Director's position, such as termination, shall be made collectively by the entire board. Other, less serious matters may be decided by a board committee and communicated to the ED through that committee or the board chair. For instance, the annual performance evaluation of the ED can be conducted and shared with the ED by the board committee, but only after the evaluation is shared with the full board.

To avoid placing the Executive Director in the position of having multiple "bosses," communication between the board and the Executive Director regarding day to day activities of the organization should occur between the board chair and the Executive Director unless other arrangements are agreed upon by the Executive Director and Board Chair.

The Executive Director (ED) is responsible for the management of the organization. While the ED may delegate tasks to other staff, the ED remains accountable for staff performance. Staff are not directly accountable to the Board.

The ED is responsible for the implementation of Board policies and the flow of information to the Board to review and monitor results. Communication between Board members and the organization's staff should, except in exceptional circumstances, go through the ED.

The ED is, therefore, the contact for Board members pertaining to operational matters. Neither the Board of Directors nor an individual board member may provide direction to any staff member under the Executive Director.

Individual board members may request information from another staff member provided that the Executive Director is formally notified of the request and the information is more easily accessible through the staff member under the ED.

These guidelines are not meant to hinder the board chair and executive director from working together on managing, planning and leading the organization when their relationship is characterized by a high degree of trust. Rather, the Guidelines are meant to clarify appropriate roles during periods of transition, or when there exists conflict or other challenges requiring clarification of roles and responsibilities.

The Board Chairperson should seek to meet regularly with the Executive Director or be available upon request for support, supervision, and annual appraisal.