

# Exit Interviews for BOARD MEMBERS

Board members join a board in the hopes of applying their experience and skills to a cause that matters to them and that is making an impact in the community. When a board member leaves — either because they have reached the maximum of their term for service, or they leave for personal or other reasons — they are departing with an accumulated knowledge of the board’s operations. A board member’s departure is an excellent time to invite members to reflect on their experience of serving on the board and gain valuable feedback that can provide improvement opportunities for the board experience.

Ideally, board member exit interviews are conducted by another board member, often the board or governance chair person, though a staff member such as the Executive or other senior leader may be present. Board members will likely feel more comfortable giving feedback to a peer on the board and since it is intended for board improvement, the information needs to eventually be in the hands of those who are shaping the board’s experience — typically the governance committee or board officers.

## How to Conduct an Exit Interview

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**Select the person(s)** on the board who will be conducting the exit interview. Decide if a staff person will also be present. Circumstances surrounding the exit might influence who is best to invite.

**Schedule the meeting** for a time that is convenient to everyone and is respectful to the exiting board members’ availability. Host it at a time where there will be no distractions. Send out questions in advance.

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**Create hospitality in the room** whether it is virtual or in person. Arrive early and ensure that all technology works or the room is set up well. A restaurant or other public space may provide a comfortable setting.

**Conduct the exit interview as a conversation** and ask follow up questions to illicit more information. Express genuine interest and gratitude for all the information that was shared. Take notes.

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**Use the information** by sharing it with appropriate committees, such as the governance committee. Use the feedback to make changes that would further develop the board’s function, while also celebrating present strengths.

## Exit Interview Questions

The following are a **suggested list** of questions for an exit interview. **Select the 5 or 6 questions** that would be most relevant for your board's culture and the feedback you would like to receive.

**Consider setting up the questions as a survey or fillable form** which the exiting board member can use to collect their thoughts and provide a written version of their feedback. Still, **offer a time to meet in person or virtually to review their answers.**

1. What attracted you to be on the board?
2. How did orientation or your first year on the board set up your experience as a board member?
3. What did you enjoy most about your board service?
4. How would you describe your experience as a board member?
5. When the board was at its best, what did that look like to you?
6. What was your biggest problem or frustration with how the board works?
7. How would you describe the board's culture?
8. How did you feel board meetings went? How did you notice you felt during meetings, or perhaps once they concluded?
9. What feedback would you like to provide on board meetings?
10. What feedback do you have on what is expected of board members?
11. How would you describe your experience at the committee level?
12. What could this board do improve the board's impact on our mission?
13. What feedback would you like to provide on how the board relates with senior leaders, including the Executive?
14. What information would you have liked to receive that would have helped you govern better?
15. Did you have other board members you felt you could turn to if you had questions? If so, what was valuable about that?
16. What are the 2-3 items this board should consider in the foreseeable future in order to increase its effectiveness as governors?
17. Would you be interested in serving on a committee or coming back on the board at a later time?
18. Is there anything else you would like us to know?