

THE CENTER FOR CREATIVITY, INNOVATION, AND DISCOVERY

Board Member Roles and Responsibilities

Charter School Board Members

Every charter school board is unique in its board member roles, as those roles often vary depending upon the board's size, board member titles and responsibilities, and even the mission and vision of the school—or what the school values most. Even so, commonalities emerge among board member roles across charter schools.

Main Function of the Board of Directors

Each board carries a fiduciary responsibility for the following:

- Duty of Care: Ensuring all assets are used prudently.
- Duty of Loyalty: Ensuring all decisions are made in the best interests of the organization and help it move closer to its mission.
- Duty of Obedience: Ensuring the organization abides by or is compliant with all applicable laws and regulations, as well as its own bylaws.

Other Responsibilities of the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of a charter school has additional responsibilities:

- Establishing the mission and vision of the organization
- Serving the organization's stakeholders
- Financial oversight
- Setting board-level policies
- Setting board-level goals
- Measuring board-level goals and achievements
- Managing board processes such as recruitment, onboarding, and board evaluation
- Improving the organization's strategic focus and effectiveness
- Shaping the organization's culture
- Hiring, overseeing, and evaluating the Executive Director, as well as determining the Executive Director's compensation
- Fundraising
- Addressing conflicts of interest
- Ensuring the organization's programs and services are effective
- Reviewing and approving the budget and providing ongoing financial oversight
- Ensuring the organization meets all legal and ethical obligations
- Maximizing the support of the community
- Regularly attending board meetings and committee meetings
- Recruiting new board members who meet the needs of the board and the organization

Boards of Directors at Charter Schools—Governing a School and a Non-Profit Corporation

Serving as a member of a charter school board means that you are also the board member of a non-profit corporation. The responsibilities involve more than simply

showing up to board meetings. The people you choose for your board must also understand governance, think strategically, and lead by example. Of course, your board should be continually training its board members at board meetings and through other resources to become members who can achieve that level of board expertise.

Specific Board Roles Individual Members Take

Board Chair: Sometimes referred to as Board President, this person works closely with the organization's leaders and management to ensure the organization's mission and goals meet the highest standards and are carried out to everyone's satisfaction. The Board Chair is also responsible for setting agendas, conducting board meetings, and taking a leading role in hiring and overseeing the CEO, creating committees, and appointing committee chairs.

Dr. Randall S. Peterson, Professor of Organizational Behavior at London Business School, offers the following tips for what makes a great Board Chair:

- Fostering a culture that's truly inclusive, where people feel like they belong.
- Creating an atmosphere where multiple voices are heard, and opinions are valued.
- Developing leadership skills, such as emotional intelligence, patience, and diplomacy.
- Modeling the values they wish to encourage in their team.
- Becoming digitally aware to modernize the board-meeting process.
- Establishing trust through managed conflict and effective decision-making.
- Listening more than you speak, and remaining open-minded to new ideas.

Vice President: Also referred to as the Vice Chair, the person serving in this role serves as second-in-command and keeps abreast of all board activities, so they're ready to step in as Board President when the need arises. They also take on special projects assigned by the Board Chair, such as leading an important board committee. Vice Presidents are typically groomed to be the Chair's successor near the end of the Chair's term.

Secretary: This person handles the many tasks involved to ensure board meetings (and the board in general) remain effective and efficient. This includes providing meeting notices, working with administration to prepare agendas, taking minutes during board meetings, and then distributing the approved minutes to the entire board. In addition, a board's secretary prepares and maintains various board records needed for board member on-boarding, historical reference, and regulatory requirements related to the board.

Treasurer: This person monitors finances, prepares the organization's budget with the business manager, and typically oversees the board's Finance Committee.

Committee Chair: Boards often choose to create or are required to create various committees to dive deeper into different initiatives or responsibilities of the school. A

Committee Chair leads the committee, sets the agenda for committee meetings, and reports information gleaned back to the full board.

Director: Individual board members fulfill director roles on a board. Their responsibilities typically fall under the umbrella of a fiduciary or legal advisor — or providing sound, ethical, legal governance, and financial management policies. They're also tasked with fundraising and advocating for the organization.

No matter which role a board member serves on the board, members must be engaged individuals who embrace change and show a willingness to consider ideas other than their own. A diverse board with a varied set of professional experiences, age ranges, and economic backgrounds can help the board serve its community in more impactful ways than a homogenous board.

Average Time Commitment for Board Members at Charter Schools

Board members spend on average about 8-10 hours per month on board business. Although board members are encouraged to attend board meetings in person when they can, board members can put in most of their “board hours” flexibly at home or in virtual meetings. Board members’ monthly work usually consists of the following:

- Two to two and a half hours in a monthly board meeting
- Two hours preparing for board meetings by reviewing the monthly financials, the executive report, last month’s minutes, new and previously established policies, and other materials distributed in advance
- Two hours participating in an assigned committee meeting
- One to two hours attending a school event, volunteering, observing classes or programs, or other chosen interactions with the school
- Travel to and from the school for board meetings

Note: Board officers will spend more time than other board members in fulfilling their board service.

*The description of board member roles is a modified version of information provided by *Board OnTrack*.