

This E-Policy Sampler is excerpted from The Nonprofit Policy Sampler, Second Edition. Additional information about developing policies and using this resource can be found in the [Preface \(PDF\)](#) and [Introduction \(PDF\)](#) to the Second Edition. A complete list of categories of policies can be found in the [table of contents \(PDF\)](#).

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## **Board Chair Job Description — Download 7 Samples**

### **Introduction**

The job of the board chair is one of the most challenging roles in the nonprofit world. A successful chair inspires a shared vision for the organization and its work, builds and nurtures future board leadership, and manages the work of the board. This position demands exceptional commitment to the organization, first-rate leadership qualities, and personal integrity. For many boards, success may rest heavily on the individual chosen to lead it.

### **Key Elements**

- As the chief volunteer officer, the board chair's duties run from managing the board to working closely with the chief executive. Additional duties may relate to his or her role as a spokesperson for the organization. If the board has an executive committee (see E-Policy Sampler: Executive Committee), the board chair also chairs this committee.
- In functioning as the team leader of the board, the board chair sets goals for the board, involves all board members in the work of the board (during meetings and through committee assignments), serves as the contact for all board members on board issues, and facilitates board meetings.
- In working closely with the chief executive, the board chair may be assigned responsibility for managing the overall board-chief executive relationship, such as developing meeting agendas and coordinating the executive's annual performance review.

### **Practical Tips**

- The chair's role is usually defined in the bylaws, but a separate job description should be created to outline the duties in more detail.
- The official title of the chief volunteer officer varies from organization to organization. The terms "chair" and "president" are the same, and the organization's bylaws should dictate which is used. The most

common — and least confusing — title is that of “chair.” This prevents confusion with the chief staff officer, who may have a title of president and chief executive officer.

- If the expectations for the board chair become too demanding and the position too time-consuming, it will be difficult to recruit new chairs. Often, some of the responsibilities and tasks can be shared with other board officers to make the position more reasonable for a volunteer.

## **Sample Board Chair Job Descriptions**

The seven job descriptions run from brief and broad to formal and focused.

1. This bylaws clause broadly defines the role of the board chair.
2. This short statement lists the main duties of the chair as they relate to the functions of the board.
3. This brief sample clarifies the authority of the chair as the leader of the board and the manager of board practices.
4. This basic list outlines expectations for the chair of an organization that does not have a large staff.
5. This brief job description elaborates on core board chair duties towards the organization, chief executive, board process, and community.
6. This more comprehensive job description outlines the various functions of the board chair position in relation to overall board responsibility categories.
7. This detailed job description addresses all aspects of the board chair’s position, from purpose to qualifications.

### **Sample #1**

*This bylaws clause broadly defines the role of the board chair.*

## **APPLICABLE BYLAWS**

### **Article \_\_, Section \_\_**

**Board Chair:** The board chair shall preside at all meetings of the organization, and of the executive committee and board of the organization. The board chair shall exercise general supervision over the affairs of the organization and shall be an ex officio member of all committees of the board. He or she shall have the power to sign with the chief executive, in the name of the organization, all contracts authorized either generally or specifically by the board. The board chair shall appoint the chairs of all committees and task forces of the board and perform other duties as may be assigned by the board.

In the absence of the board chair, the board chair–elect shall perform the duties of the board chair.

### Sample #2

*This short statement lists the main duties of the chair as they relate to the functions of the board.*

It shall be the duty of the board chair to preside at all meetings, to guide the board in the enforcement of all policies and regulations relating to XYZ, and to perform all other duties normally incumbent upon such an officer. The board chair shall appoint all members, including the chair of each standing committee and all other committees deemed necessary by the board. The board chair may serve as an ex officio member of each committee, except the nominating committee, but may not vote.

### Sample #3

*This brief sample clarifies the authority of the chair as the leader of the board and the manager of board practices.*

## **BOARD CHAIR'S ROLE**

The responsibility of the board chair is, primarily, to ensure the integrity of the board's process. The chair is the spokesperson for the board itself, other than in specifically authorized instances when others fill that role. The chair ensures that the board operates within its own rules and those legitimately imposed upon it from outside. Business meetings will focus on policy clearly belonging to the board, not the staff. The chair has no authority to make policy decisions for the board, but is expected to help the chief executive interpret board policy.

### Sample #4

*This basic list outlines expectations for the chair of an organization that does not have a large staff.*

## **Responsibilities**

1. Be directly responsible to the board for the administration of the association.
2. Appoint committee chairs and members as necessary and delegate committee activities, with board approval.
3. Appoint members to fill other positions, such as liaisons, editorial positions, section chairs, and focus group leaders, as appropriate with board approval.
4. Preside at all board meetings.

5. When appropriate, serve as the official representative and spokesperson of XYZ.
6. Approve all contracts into which XYZ enters. Responsibility may be delegated to the chief executive.
7. Serve on the executive, budget and finance, and other committees as appropriate.
8. Provide a report at each board meeting of his or her activities since the previous board meeting.
9. Perform any other duties that are necessary for the successful execution of XYZ's mission.

### Sample #5

*This brief job description elaborates on core board chair duties towards the organization, chief executive, board processes, and community.*

## **BOARD CHAIR JOB DESCRIPTION**

**General:** Ensures the effective action of the board in governing and supporting the organization and oversees board affairs. Acts as the representative of the board as a whole, rather than as an individual supervisor to staff.

**Community:** Speaks to the media and the community on behalf of the organization (as does the chief executive); represents the organization in the community.

**Meetings:** Develops agendas for meetings in concert with the chief executive. Presides at board meetings.

**Committees:** Recommends to the board which committees are to be established. Works with committee chairs in seeking volunteers for committees and coordinating individual board member assignments. Makes sure each committee has a chair and stays in touch with committee chairs to be sure that their work is carried out; identifies committee recommendations that should be presented to the full board. Determines whether executive committee meetings are necessary and convenes the committee accordingly.

**Chief Executive:** Establishes search and selection committee (usually acts as chair) for hiring a chief executive. Convenes board discussions on evaluating the chief executive and negotiating compensation and benefits package; conveys information to the chief executive.

**Board Affairs:** Ensures that board matters are handled properly, including preparation of pre-meeting materials, committee functioning, and recruitment and orientation of new board members.

### Sample #6

*This more comprehensive job description outlines the various functions of the board chair position in relation to overall board responsibility categories.*

## THE BOARD CHAIR

### Position Summary

The board chair is the senior volunteer leader of XYZ and presides at all meetings of the board, the executive committee, and other meetings as required.

### Key Responsibilities

- **Policy and Planning:** Works with the chief executive and the board to establish the guiding principles, policies, and mission for the organization — for example, by initiating a regular review of the organization’s strategic plan and mission to keep them fresh and relevant, and by establishing metrics to measure success.
- **Budget and Finances:** Works with the appropriate board members to oversee the budget of the organization and assumes ultimate responsibility for the integrity of its finances — for example, by overseeing independent outside audits and, as appropriate, internal audits as well.
- **Board Meetings:** Leads and facilitates board meetings by making sure that the agenda is closely followed, every board member has the opportunity to participate in discussions, and the board uses proper decision-making procedures.
- **Board Committees:** Serves as an ad hoc member of all board committees and works to structure a committee system that contributes to the board’s overall effectiveness.
- **Board Development:** Oversees efforts to build and maintain a strong board by setting goals and expectations for the board, cultivating leadership among individual board members, and working with the nominating committee to make board development a priority.
- **Board Recruitment and Orientation:** Works with the nominating committee to identify and recruit new board members who bring important skills and knowledge to the board.
- **Board Evaluation:** Works to make sure the board has opportunities to reflect regularly on how well it is meeting its responsibilities to the

organization — in part by overseeing a board self-assessment every \_\_\_ years.

- **Staff Oversight, Compensation, and Evaluation:** Oversees the hiring, evaluation, and compensation of the chief executive; and works to develop a succession plan for the chief executive's position — for example, by making sure that other staff members have the capabilities they need to lead the organization.
- **Fundraising:** Guides the work of the board to secure funds for the organization by overseeing the development of fundraising policies, encouraging and supporting the fundraising efforts of the development committee and individual board members, soliciting contributions from board members and selected outside contributors, and setting an example by contributing his or her own funds to the organization.
- **Public Relations and Communications:** Speaks for the board in the event of a controversy or crisis; oversees the development of communications policies; and works to promote the work of the organization in conversations, speeches, interviews, and other day-to-day activities.

### Sample #7

*This detailed job description addresses all aspects of the board chair's position, from purpose to qualifications.*

**Title:** Chair of the Board

#### **Purpose**

The chair is the senior volunteer leader of XYZ who presides at all meetings of the board, the executive committee, and other meetings as required. The chair is an ex officio member of all committees of the organization. The board chair oversees implementation of organizational policies and ensures that appropriate administrative systems are established and maintained.

#### **Key Responsibilities**

- Works with the chief executive, board officers, and committee chairs to develop the agendas for board meetings, and presides at these meetings.
- Appoints volunteers to key leadership positions, including positions as chair of board committees and service committees.
- Supports annual fundraising with his or her own financial contributions. Recognizes his or her responsibility to set the example for other board members. Thanks and solicits other board members.
- Works with the board and paid and volunteer leadership, in accordance with XYZ bylaws, to establish and maintain systems for

- Planning the organization's human and financial resources and setting priorities for future development
- Reviewing operational and service effectiveness and setting priorities for future development
- Controlling fiscal affairs
- Acquiring, maintaining, and disposing of property
- Maintaining a public relations program to ensure community involvement
- Ensuring the ethical standard

**Elected By:** Board

**Length of Term:** \_\_\_ year(s)

**Time Commitment:** Negotiable to meet the requirements of the organization

**Reports To:** Board

**Support:** Chief executive

### Qualifications

- A commitment to XYZ and its values; an understanding of XYZ's objectives, organization, and services; and the responsibilities and relationship of paid and volunteer staff
- Knowledge of and influence in the community
- Ability to understand concepts and articulate ideas

### Budget Support

Travel and maintenance, work space, telephone, postage, and computer equipment, as appropriate, and costs of conferences and conventions.

### Suggested Resources

- BoardSource. *The Source: Twelve Principles of Governance That Power Exceptional Boards*. Washington, DC: BoardSource, 2005.  
<http://www.boardsource.org/Bookstore.asp?Item=171>
- Dietel, William M. and Linda R. Dietel. *The Board Chair Handbook*. Washington, DC: BoardSource, 2001.  
<http://www.boardsource.org/Bookstore.asp?Item=57>
- Gale, Robert L. *Leadership Roles in Nonprofit Governance*. Washington, DC: BoardSource, 2003.  
<http://www.boardsource.org/Bookstore.asp?Item=120>
- Ingram, Richard T. *Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards*. Washington, DC: BoardSource, 2003.  
<http://www.boardsource.org/Bookstore.asp?Item=112>

- Light, Mark. *The Strategic Board: The Step-by-Step Guide to High-Impact Governance*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2001.  
<http://www.boardsource.org/Bookstore.asp?Item=65>
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Excerpted from [The Nonprofit Policy Sampler, Second Edition](#) by Barbara Lawrence and Outi Flynn, a publication of BoardSource, formerly the National Center for Nonprofit Boards. For more information about BoardSource, call 877-892-6273 or visit <http://www.boardsource.org/>. BoardSource © 2009. Text may not be reproduced without written permission from BoardSource.

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