

# Family Planning Manager

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING FAMILY PLANNING SERVICE DELIVERY

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## Working with Boards of Directors

### Editors' Note

In the private as well as the public sector, volunteer boards of directors are being increasingly recognized as contributors to the success of family planning organizations. Organizations that work with a formal board of directors, or a less formal advisory or managing board can benefit from the broadened vision, experience, and skills that a board provides.

All boards of directors have similar roles and responsibilities. A board of directors can help an organization plan its strategy and make critical decisions; provide effective financial oversight to ensure the stability of the organization; serve the interests of the community and government; and influence public policy in ways that promote the mission and goals of the organization.

This issue of *The Family Planning Manager* examines the major roles and responsibilities of volunteer boards and provides advice on how executive directors and board members can create productive working relationships and jointly guide the organization toward achieving its goals. A special supplement to this issue, the *Pocket Guide for Improving Board Performance*, provides guidelines and checklists designed specifically to help board members carry out their responsibilities and to strengthen the effectiveness of the board as a whole.

The guest editors for this issue are Bill Newbrander, Deborah Ruhe, Michael Hall, and Saul Helfenbein. Bill Newbrander is a Health Economist and Senior Associate of the Health Financing Program at Management Sciences for Health. Deborah Ruhe, formerly Senior Family Planning Management Advisor to the FPMD project, is now the Executive Director of Fenway Community Health Center in Boston. Michael Hall is a Senior Associate on the FPMD project. Saul Helfenbein is the Deputy Director of MSH's Population Program. They have all worked extensively with boards of directors in family planning programs around the world.

—The Editors

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## Working With Boards of Directors to Strengthen Your Program

In striving to become sustainable, family planning organizations need to continually reassess their contribution to the national family planning program. As times change and as the national program evolves, family planning organizations will find that they need to become increasingly sophisticated in adapting their programs and services to meet the needs of the communities they serve. Organizations that succeed in this endeavor often can thank the expertise of their professional staff and senior management for keeping them attuned to changing needs and making the changes in service delivery to keep up with the changing environment.

The tasks of managerial and technical staff, however, can be made easier if they have a dedicated, active board of directors with diverse backgrounds and experiences who can provide guidance and direction for the many difficult decisions which the professional staff need to make in keeping their organizations robust, responsive, and effective.

Boards of directors can be positive influences on the organization. However, they can also be impediments to change. Members, who are usually volunteers, can interfere with the routine tasks of professional staff. Frequently, when board membership extends over many years, board members may feel that their role as a volunteer entitles them to special perquisites. On occasion, instead of being there to serve the organization, they may feel that the organization is there to serve them.

Such role reversals occur when boards of directors are established without clearly defining the roles of the members and their relationship with the professional staff, especially with the organization's executive director and senior staff. When new members are not recruited or when members do not keep up with new approaches to carrying out board functions, the board can become an obstacle to rather than a force for sustainability. Managers can also reduce the effectiveness of the board if they see board members as competitors in decision making or in carrying out vital functions in the organization related to quality assurance, resource allocation and utilization, and long-term planning.

Both family planning managers and board members need to work together collaboratively and use their mutual strengths to enhance the sustainability of the organization. This issue of *The Family Planning Manager* focuses on the roles and responsibilities of boards and their relationship to senior management. It discusses the reasons boards are necessary, how they can best contribute to an organization's well being, and how they carry out their many roles to serve the goal of sustainability. ■

## Why Do Family Planning Organizations Need a Board of Directors?

**Boards are often required by law.** A board of directors is often a legal requirement for a nonprofit or for-profit organization. Organizations that serve the public and do not operate for any individual's personal gain are usually eligible for special concessions and immunities, such as tax exemptions. These organizations are usually required to have a governing board to ensure that the activities of the organization continue to focus on serving the public.

**Boards provide oversight functions.** In exchange for indirect financial assistance from the government, governments often require that a group of individuals voluntarily serve on a board of directors and act as guardians of the "public trust." This structure makes the organization's management accountable to a diverse group of people who have the general interest of the organization at heart, are not directly involved in the individual activities of the organization, and, due to the voluntary nature of the board, can effectively provide financial oversight since no personal financial gain is involved. This ability of the board to remain objective is critical to its effectiveness in guiding the organization.

**Boards promote the organization's cause.** In addition to fulfilling legal requirements, a family planning organization needs a board of directors made up of individuals who support the organization's mission, believe in it, and seek to promote it. Advocating for the organization and its cause is an important function of the board and involves promoting the mission and goals of the organization within the community and with the government.

**Boards help to raise funds.** The ability to raise funds is an important measure of a board's effectiveness in serving an organization. Board members who are influential in the community can often successfully elicit major contributions from a variety of private and business sources. Building an active group of financial supporters who regularly donate money to the organization will increase the resources available to implement programs, making it easier for the organization to fulfill its mission and achieve its objectives.

## Understanding the Purpose of a Board

Nonprofit organizations often have a board of directors (also known as a board of trustees, governing board, or oversight board) made up of volunteers with diverse skills and experience. In this issue, we will use the term "the board" to refer to these different types of boards, meaning a grouping of individual trustees or directors who are responsible for ensuring the long-term viability of the organization.

A board is the policy- and strategy-setting body of an organization. How a board defines and assigns responsibilities will influence how well an organization can adapt to changing conditions and, ultimately, will influence the success and survival of the organization.

The board has several key areas of responsibility including:

- Developing a strategic plan;
- Supporting the leadership and growth of the organization;
- Providing financial oversight;
- Maintaining community and government relations;
- Ensuring that high-quality services are provided;
- Managing its own board activities.

The board represents an organization's leadership and ownership. It is the board that is ultimately responsible for guiding the organization and ensuring its viability. This involves articulating the mission and values of the organization, protecting and expanding

its assets, and ensuring that it provides high-quality services.

Boards of directors working on behalf of family planning organizations around the world have been instrumental in creating effective links between their organization and the community, and between their organization and the government. However, boards often are either not involved enough or too involved in the operations of the family planning organization. For instance, the board may not be active enough in

developing the organization's mission and helping it to focus on its long-term goals to ensure that it is moving in an appropriate direction. Or, board members may be overly involved in the day-to-day operations of the organization so that they interfere and meddle with the roles of senior management. Effective boards help to guide and support the organization rather than manage its day-to-day affairs. ■

### Matching the Role of the Board with the Stage of Organizational Development

New family planning organizations typically start out with a small number of clients, a small budget, and few staff. These start-up organizations may have an outside advisor who helps the executive director to plan programs and make decisions. At some point, organizations formalize their relationship with their advisors by creating a managing board or board of directors. In the early years, the board is often composed of the founding members of the organization who work on a volunteer basis at the grassroots level. But as organizations grow, their needs inevitably change. More mature organizations often operate at the wider regional or national level, serving a large number of clients through a network of service outlets. They manage large budgets and employ greater numbers of staff. These more mature organizations will require the input of a larger board made up of members with the special skills needed to establish and shape the mission and policies of the organization. The following table presents a summary of the different types of boards that are appropriate for organizations at three different levels of development.

Stage of Organizational Development	Type of Board	Board Functions
Emerging	Informal group of community volunteers	Works directly with staff who carry out the daily work of the organization.
Growth/ Consolidation	More formal advisory board or small board of directors	Oversees development of organization's mission, policies, and operations.
Sustainable	Large board of directors with established sub-committees	Shapes mission and policies, raises money, and oversees organization's financial and programmatic performance.

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## Understanding the Responsibilities of a Board

Board members of private for-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and parastatal organizations are usually volunteers. They agree to serve an organization because they believe in the goals and objectives of the organization and the way in which the organization operates. Board members who work in family planning or health may feel that serving on the board of a particular organization allows them to do things they cannot do in their ordinary professional work. Other members from the business community may join the board because of a desire to do public service. In all cases, in order to be effective, board members need to maintain the voluntary nature of their commitment to the organization.

Since board members are volunteers, their activities should be part-time, short-term, and limited to well-defined areas of governance and oversight. Membership should rotate regularly in order to bring in members with new viewpoints and experience. Board members need to recognize when the base of skills and experience on the board needs to be expanded. For instance, when the organization begins to deal with issues such as adolescent sexuality or integrating health and family planning services, it may need board members with experience in these areas. The board must decide what types of skills and experience are needed and find new members with the necessary background so that the board can serve the needs of the organization more effectively.

To be effective, board members must have a clear understanding of their own roles and responsibilities, as well as those of the executive director and senior management. When a board is functioning well, its members support and guide the organization by asking pertinent questions about where the organization is going, the effectiveness of the services it provides, and the financial strength of the organization. Boards should not be involved in day-to-day operations or try to implement their own programs or policies.

The six major responsibilities of a board of directors are developing a strategic plan, supporting

the leadership and growth of the organization, providing financial oversight of the organization, maintaining good community and government relations, ensuring that quality services are provided by setting high performance standards and values, and managing its own board activities. The following sections discuss these responsibilities and clarify the role of the board and the organization's senior management. For practical guidelines and checklists for improving board performance and board and staff relations, please refer to the accompanying *Pocket Guide for Improving Board Performance*.

### Strategic Planning

Because the board of directors assumes a large share of the responsibility for the success of an organization, it must provide the critical link between the organization and the outside environment in which the organization works. It must also ensure that the organization reaches the population it intends to serve, and serves the needs of its clients. To fulfill this function, the board should help the executive director to establish a strategic planning process, should participate in the process, and should approve the final strategic plan.

**Formulating the mission statement.** The board must work with the executive director to formulate the organization's mission and decide whether particular activities and services fall within its expressed mission. The mission statement should define what the organization is and why it exists. It should clearly articulate the organization's main purpose and values, and identify the principal beneficiaries of its activities or services.

A good mission statement articulates the overall goal of the organization to everyone inside and outside the organization. It is used to guide strategic, long-term planning and helps to keep the organization focused during both smooth and turbulent times. The absence of a mission statement, or having one that is unclear, may cause confusion inside the organization as it faces various difficulties, or it may result in inappropriate decisions. For a mission statement to be useful, it should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it reflects the current environment in which the

organization operates and the changing needs of the people it serves.

**Developing the strategic plan.** The strategic plan charts the direction that the organization will take over a period of three, five, or ten years to achieve its goals and objectives and fulfill its mission. In developing a strategic plan, the board and the staff of the organization will need to analyze the internal and external environment, identify opportunities or limitations to fulfilling its mission, and consider its internal strengths and weaknesses. This information is critical to developing strategic goals and establishing strategies and programs designed to fulfill the organization’s mission.

The board should help the executive director in developing the strategic planning process and provide guidance and input to the plan. The board

can be particularly effective in providing and analyzing information about the external environment, current trends in social policy, or new financial opportunities. Because strategic planning takes time and effort, several sessions will need to be scheduled to complete all the strategic planning steps, including gathering program information, discussing current and proposed programs, projecting the financial resources that would be needed to implement the programs, prioritizing programs, and finalizing the plan. The board must formally approve the final plan, be committed to it, and support its implementation. For further discussion on developing a mission statement and program strategy, please refer to Volume III, Number 1 of *The Family Planning Manager*, “Learning to Think Strategically.”

Strategic Planning	
Board Responsibilities	Management Responsibilities
Form strategic planning committee. Define process and develop a schedule for completing the plan.	Participate in strategic planning process.
Develop the organization’s mission statement.	Help the board define the mission statement by soliciting input from other staff and communicating their ideas to the board.
Provide information from the external environment that will help in considering strategic options.	Collect and analyze program and service data, and present results to the board.
Make strategic decisions.	Recommend strategic options.
Approve operational plan and budget that reflects strategic decisions. Periodically review operational plan and budget.	Develop the operational plan and budget for board consideration. Implement the operational plan.

## Organizational Leadership and Growth

Organizations need good leaders and adequate resources. Boards are responsible for recruiting and supporting a dynamic director who can provide vision and leadership to the organization. Boards also must help raise the funds needed to support the programs and services provided by the organization.

**Hiring and evaluating the executive director.** The executive director acts as the bridge between the board and the staff of the organization. She or he is designated to act on behalf of the board to

implement its decisions. The executive director is given the authority to hire, organize, and supervise the staff of the organization, develop appropriate policies and procedures, and allocate resources within budgetary guidelines. When looking for a new executive director, the board must assess the organization’s specific needs, then seek a qualified individual who has the skills and experience to guide the organization in meeting those needs. The board should also periodically evaluate the performance of the executive director in carrying out the decisions of the board and other assigned responsibilities.

## The Role of Board Members in Development and Fund Raising Activities

- Work with other board members and with management to create an ongoing development and fund-raising program.
- Establish the goals and priorities of the development and fund-raising program based on the organization's strategic plan.
- Assist in formulating a list of prospective donors.
- Estimate the giving potential of prospective donors.
- Demonstrate commitment by being the first to contribute to the organization.
- Cultivate and solicit major prospective donors and demonstrate the organization's strengths and accomplishments.
- Represent the organization to the community by discussing significant developments and speaking to community groups about the organization's work.
- Keep the organization's management fully informed of development activities and contacts so they pursue funding possibilities.
- Establish a range of gift options that can enhance fund raising success. These might include:
  - Membership fees;
  - Annual donations;
  - Grants for special projects.

### Supporting the growth of the organization.

The board can support the growth of the organization by raising additional funds for setting up new programs and services and making capital and other improvements that will help the organization both to serve the needs of the population effectively and to operate more efficiently. Fund raising typically involves soliciting annual contributions to cover operating costs, organizing campaigns to fund specific capital

equipment or facility improvements, or acquiring targeted funds for very specific projects or special programs. Fund raising may also be used to establish an endowment through income from interest, dividends, rental of real estate, and contributed gifts which will help provide for future institutional needs. To raise funds effectively, board members must persuade prospective donors of the importance of the organization's work, and continually cultivate their goodwill and interest in the organization.

Organizational Leadership and Growth	
Board Responsibilities	Management Responsibilities
Hire and evaluate the executive director.	Provide the board with information on organizational needs.
Identify new financial resources to allow the organization to implement its mission and programs.	Develop budgets that identify the financial resources necessary for implementing programs that serve to accomplish organizational goals.
Solicit financial contributions through donations, grants, and contracts. Make financial contributions to the organization.	Develop mechanisms to help board members raise funds. Identify funding sources and prepare requests for board approval.

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## Financial Oversight

The board has the ultimate responsibility for the financial viability of the organization. In the early stages of an organization's development, the board may be in charge of formulating financial policies and monitoring all major financial and investment decisions. As the organization evolves and matures, the board will need to focus more on controlling costs, evaluating the economic environment within which the organization operates, and deciding how that environment affects the organization's ability to achieve its goals.

This oversight function consists of three main responsibilities. First, the board has to determine the financial goals of the organization and monitor management's progress in achieving those goals. Second, it needs to establish sound financial policies and monitor whether the organization's activities adhere to those policies. Third, the board must review the organization's financial control systems in order to safeguard the resources of the organization. In addition, most organizations are required to comply with donor or government regulatory provisions. To comply with these regulations, the board should arrange for a financial audit to be conducted by a licensed independent auditing firm at least annually or as otherwise required.

**Monitoring the organization's financial position.** While the board's role in helping to increase revenues is critical to the financial well-being of the organization, the board must also develop policies for reducing or controlling the cost of programs and services. Increasing the efficiency of management systems is one way that an organization can reduce costs while maintaining the quality of the services it provides.

To provide effective financial oversight, boards often create a special finance committee made up of members with experience in financial management. The members of such a committee should know the proper questions to ask, what information to review, and how to analyze and use the information to make financial decisions. If the organization has a number of large programs, or programs funded by different donors, the board may need to review each program individually. In any case, all financial information

should be reviewed in the context of the programmatic results achieved during the period under review.

At each board meeting, the board will need to receive certain financial reports that detail the organization's income, expenses, and any surplus or deficit. The reports should highlight any deviations from the budget, projected revenues, and any actions management is taking to correct those deviations. The board must know how to review and interpret three key financial documents:

- **A cash flow projection worksheet.** This worksheet usually covers a 12-month period and shows all anticipated financial obligations and expected cash revenues based on the existing work plan and budget. This worksheet helps to reveal if there will be any periods when funds will be insufficient to cover expenses. The worksheet should be updated each month to reflect any changes in cash projections.
- **A balance sheet.** This report shows the financial position of the organization at a particular point in time. It summarizes the organization's assets, liabilities (debts or payables), and reserves (equity or fund balance), which the board can use to assess the financial stability of the organization and to see whether its liabilities can be met.
- **An income statement.** Also known as a profit and loss statement, this report presents an analysis of the net income or deficit of the organization over a defined period of time. The board can use this report to assess the overall financial performance of the organization by comparing actual income and expenditures with the budget. It can also be used to compare current income and expenditures with those of the previous year. Using this information, the board can advise the executive director to revise budgets or work plans or to take actions to reduce costs by changing fee structures or increasing program efficiency.

Capital investments should also be reviewed by the board. Since any capital investments will have long-term financial implications that will affect the operating costs of the organization, these potential acquisitions should be scrutinized to determine whether they are consistent with the organization's mission and strategic plan, and whether they are financially sound.

**Keeping your board well informed.** The executive director should make sure that the board, or the board's finance committee, receives the following information on a quarterly basis:

- A report of revenue and expenses (income statement) compared to the budget, with explanations of any significant variance;
- A cash flow projection update.
- A balance sheet showing the financial position of the organization at that time;
- A report on the number of current clients compared with the number projected, and compared with the number in same period of the previous year, and in previous quarters of the current year;
- A report on information, education, and communication (IEC) activities and outcomes;
- A report on fund raising activities and results;
- A report on public and community affairs activities and results;
- A list of critical issues that might affect the stability of the organization.

Financial Oversight	
Board Responsibilities	Management Responsibilities
Approve the format and frequency of financial and programmatic reports.	Recommend format for financial and programmatic summary reports for board approval.
Analyze financial information relative to programmatic activities.	Provide accurate financial and programmatic information to the board and alert board members to any concerns that could put the organization at risk.
Make recommendations for improvement.	Propose changes or corrective actions when necessary or when directed by the board.

## Community and Government Relations

A family planning organization serves communities made up of people living within defined geographic areas. It may serve these communities alone or in conjunction with other public or private organizations. How well the organization relates to the community groups and other governmental and non-governmental agencies affects the organization's success and effectiveness in delivering services. By determining and addressing the needs and interests of different community groups, the board can help the organization maintain good relations with the community as a whole. The board should also work to maintain good relations with the government,

communicate the mission and goals of the organization to the public, and promote and propose changes in public policy that will help further the goals of the organization.

**Responding to the interests of the community and the government.** Maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship with the community should be a goal of all strategic plans. A family planning organization is in a better position to address community needs when at least one person from the community serves on the board. Having community representation on the board will promote good communication between the organization and the community and will ensure that community needs,

concerns, and service opportunities are not overlooked. An open communication process also can lead to more effective ways of providing family planning services that are appropriate and acceptable to the community. Access to comprehensive information on the community also empowers boards to make better decisions. The organization's staff should periodically provide the board with updated information on the characteristics of the community as well as with information on how the services are perceived by the community.

Good relations with the government are also important. Because the public sector plays a major role in family planning, it is essential that the board of a private organization cultivates a good relationship with government departments and agencies. Having a representative from the public sector on the board allows the organization to develop a strong and supportive relationship with the government and facilitates communication about issues that might affect the organization's programs. A good relationship with the government also provides an opportunity for the board to be more effective in lobbying for changes in legislation and regulations that will help to promote the organization's interests or in preventing legislation that would be detrimental to the organization's mission.

### 30-Second Quiz for Board Members

1. Can you describe the communities served by your organization?
2. Do you know the health needs of those communities?
3. Do you know the role of your organization in relation to that of other organizations providing services to these communities?
4. How is your organization's role integrated with that of other organizations?

**Articulating the organization's goals and programs to the public.** The board can play a critical role in making sure that the community is informed about the organization's long-term plans, available services, and the fees for those services. A well-informed community will not only use the organization's services but will also support its mission and goals.

Part of the board's role is to promote the organization. By helping the organization to develop a marketing plan and promotional campaigns, the board can greatly increase the organization's ability to reach all of its potential clients and at the same time promote the image of the organization in the government and among potential donors. Promotional activities should focus on communicating the benefits of the organization's services to the community, the cost-effectiveness of its services, and the achievement of public policy goals.

### The Board's Role in Public Affairs

The manner in which an organization promotes itself to the public will have far-reaching effects on its ability to further its mission, maintain financial stability, and keep good relations with the community. The board can help to promote the goals of the organization in the following ways:

- Provide guidance on the development of a public affairs program.
- Review, approve, and support the organization's long-term public affairs program.
- Work with the organization's staff to develop promotional campaigns.
- Work with the organization's management to promote the organization and its achievements to potential donors.
- Select board members with experience in public affairs.

**Proposing changes in public policy.** Board members are chosen because of their special skills and their reputation and stature within the community. For these reasons they are often able to influence national and local politicians and members of the press. The board can develop a public affairs strategy that includes contacts with high-level officials and directors of other organizations. Having such a strategy will help to further the organization's mission and influence public policy, both of which will help the organization to achieve its goals.

Board members' activities can include writing letters to legislators, lobbying legislators and policy makers on issues important to the organization, speaking at community meetings, and explaining the mission and goals of the organization to friends and influential colleagues. Management can assist board members by keeping them informed of public policy developments affecting the organization, disseminating this information to the board and staff, working with the media, and coordinating volunteer activities that deal with public affairs.

Community and Government Relations	
Board Responsibilities	Management Responsibilities
Confirm that the interests of the government and the community are being met.	Collect and analyze information on client needs and make sure those needs are being addressed. Keep the board informed of policy changes and of legislation affecting the organization.
Articulate the organization's missions, goals, and programs to the public.	Develop promotional materials and make sure that the board is fully informed of the organization's programs and services.
Propose changes to public policy that might help promote the organization's mission and programs.	Identify priority issues, develop strategies, and plan activities.

### Service Quality

Organizations that provide family planning and reproductive health services must strive to deliver high-quality services. It is the board's responsibility to hold professional staff to the highest standards in providing these services and to support them in making necessary improvements when they are needed. Many boards feel uncomfortable with this role, are uncertain about how to carry out this responsibility, and may think that only medical professionals are qualified to oversee service quality. One way that the board can ensure that high-quality services are being maintained is to establish and support a continuous quality improvement (CQI) program. The board should set the goals of the program, review the results, keep in close contact with the community to learn about any complaints, and make sure that necessary actions to improve service quality are implemented quickly.

**Supporting continuous quality improvement efforts.** Many family planning organizations have or are initiating ongoing quality improvement programs. These quality improvement programs require new ways of thinking, a willingness to change, and support from senior management and the board of directors. It is critical for the board to approve and support this process if it is to be successful. The board must assign high priority to the quality improvement initiative, communicate the importance of the initiative to the organization, and provide adequate resources to make the process work successfully. Most important, the board must be prepared to accept the changes that result from the quality improvement program. For more information on developing a continuous quality improvement program, please refer to Volume II, Number 1 of *The Family Planning Manager*, "Using CQI to Strengthen Family Planning Programs."

**Reviewing service quality.** The board should receive information from the organization's management that allows board members to assess the quality of services. This may include service delivery summary reports, client satisfaction surveys, evaluation reports, and any other studies dealing with the quality of services. When the need for quality improvements is identified, the board should support and strengthen the ongoing continuous quality improvement efforts within the organization to resolve the problems.

**Ensure that the interests of community and government are being met.** To ensure that an organization is meeting community needs and that the community is informed about the services provided, it is important to make sure that at least one person from the community serves on the board. This will allow access to information about the community and ensure that there is always a forum for presenting community needs, concerns, and opportunities. It will also help the board to assess community needs and seek solutions to community

health problems and make sure that the organization offers services that are appropriate and acceptable to the community. Maintaining a relationship with the community is mutually beneficial and is an ongoing process. Information about the community should be periodically reviewed and updated and input about the organization's service to the community should be continually gathered.

Government relations are also important. Because of the large role of government, it is also important for a private organization to cultivate its relationship with government departments and agencies that may have certain oversight, regulatory, licensing, or funding responsibilities. As leaders in the community, the board members are an important means for the organization to promote itself with the government. Having a good relationship with the government provides an opportunity for the board to lobby for changes in legislation and regulations that will be helpful or to prevent legislation that is detrimental to the organization's mission.

Service Quality	
Board Responsibilities	Management Responsibilities
Develop policies that emphasize the importance of quality.	Develop clinical guidelines for the delivery of high quality services.
Support continuous quality improvement efforts.	Implement a continuous quality improvement process.

### Management of Board Activities

A board must have procedures that allow it to carry out its responsibilities effectively. It should also be involved in activities that help the board members stay interested and well-informed about the organization's work. Among other responsibilities, board members need to periodically review the composition of their board to make sure that it is made up of people with diverse skills and experience that are needed by the organization. As the organization grows and changes, the board will need to recruit new board members. To conduct its

business, the board must create committees, such as a finance committee or a public affairs committee, which permit board members to work on special issues critical to the organization's future. Finally, the board must periodically evaluate its own performance, and make changes to increase its effectiveness in serving the organization's needs.

**Recruiting and selecting board members.** It is important for the board to be made up of members with diverse backgrounds, skills, and experience. This will secure for the organization a broad base of community support and professional experience in

areas such as fund raising, family planning service provision, and management. Many boards have a small nominating committee that searches for new candidates to serve on the board and presents a short list of qualified candidates to the full board. Management's role in this activity should be to help determine the kinds of skills and experience needed by the board to help the organization to achieve its goals.

**Educating the board.** Educating new and current board members is an ongoing process that is the responsibility of both the board and management. It can be accomplished in a number of ways. Initially, board members should receive orientation or training that helps them to understand their roles and responsibilities and to learn about the organization. Periodic retreats can provide a time for concentrated learning about the organization, the issues it is dealing with, and the general family planning environment. Conferences, family planning workshops, and visits to other family planning organizations can help increase the board's knowledge about key concerns, problems, and trends in family planning programs and provide insight on how to address key issues. Some organizations even have special guides that board members can use as self-training tools.

**Conducting board business.** Board business is usually conducted at quarterly or semi-annual meetings. Although board members are not paid for their work, bringing them together is still costly because of the time required and because board members will have to be reimbursed for their travel expenses. For this reason, it is very important for meetings to be well organized and well run. It is usually the responsibility of the board president, with the help of the executive director, to plan board meetings so that the board makes the most effective use of its time. Work done by the board is usually delegated to a variety of board committees. It is essential that the executive director of the organization be kept up to date on the work of the committees.

**Evaluating the performance of the board.** Every two to three years the board should formally evaluate its performance. This can be done by holding a retreat or by using a self-assessment tool. The goal of the evaluation should be to assess the board's ability to address the needs of the organization, the board's productivity, or the need for new members. The result should be a renewed commitment by its members to serve the needs of the organization and the community it serves.

### **What the Organization's Management Can Do to Orient its Board Members**

The executive director and staff can help new board members learn about the organization and the board's responsibilities by providing them with an initial orientation that might include:

- A tour of the facilities of the organization;
- A forum for getting acquainted with current board members and staff;
- An overview of the organization and its history, structure, and strategic plan for the future;
- An explanation of the financial position of the organization;
- A discussion of major areas the organization will focus on in the next three to five years;
- An explanation of the structure of the board;
- Job descriptions of board members and senior staff.

Management of Board Activities	
Board Responsibilities	Management Responsibilities
Establish criteria for selecting new board members with skills and experience appropriate to the organization's needs. Recruit, select, and educate new board members.	Work with the board to establish a process for selecting new board members. Search for and recommend qualified candidates to the board.
Search for board members with strong leadership qualities and diverse backgrounds and skills.	With the board, identify leadership development needs and provide the necessary training.
Develop meeting agendas (with the executive director) and conduct board business.	Meet regularly with the board president to develop meeting agendas and to plan presentations.
Structure the board so that it can perform its duties through committees, working groups, use of outside expertise, etc.	Provide necessary staff support for all board activities.
Evaluate board performance periodically.	Provide technical support for evaluating board performance.

## Helping the Board Grow with the Organization

As organizations grow, the issues they face become more varied and complex. The guidance and special expertise provided by an effective, active board will be critical to their success. Making sure that board members have or can develop the skills necessary to serve effectively on a board is just as important as training management staff. Board members must continually attempt to develop their skills, and must stay well-informed about the organization's activities as well as the needs and interests of the government and community. They will need these skills to help the executive director and his or her staff to develop and implement effective and sustainable programs.

An effective board of directors will make the mission and purpose of an organization more

significant as it guides the organization toward achieving its goals in the constantly changing family planning environment. Strong boards will provide good leadership, instilling the organization's staff with enough courage and risk-taking to help them face the challenges of the future. Boards must serve as advocates for their organization and help the organization obtain the funds it needs to operate. Board composition should be diverse to reflect the community being served, the public sector agencies with which the organization collaborates, and the specific experience the organization needs to carry out its work effectively. Using their dedication, enthusiasm, and hard work, combined with a full understanding of their roles and responsibilities, board members can help executive directors and their staff meet new challenges as their family planning programs grow and the social context changes. ■

### Using a Board in the Public Sector

Although boards of directors traditionally are closely associated with private-sector organizations, the board structure and the principles of board governance can be applied to the public sector. Technical committees, informal advisory boards, and medical committees can function in a manner similar to private-sector boards to guide government agencies in setting policy and making strategic decisions.

In Madagascar, the USAID-funded APPROPOP project, which is managed by a consortium of private voluntary organizations, provides assistance to Malagasy organizations and the Ministry of Health to improve or expand family planning services. The assistance includes technical support, materials and equipment, and grants to cover operational costs. At the inception of this project, a technical advisory committee (TAC) was established. This committee functions as the equivalent of a Board of Directors for the project. The committee is made up of representatives from the Ministry of Plan, the Ministry of Population, the Ministry of Health, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private for-profit organizations, USAID, and the APPROPOP project. Board members meet quarterly and make decisions by consensus. Members do not receive payment for their work.

The responsibilities of the technical advisory committee include:

- Reviewing and approving overall project activities;
- Reviewing and approving annual work plans and budgets;
- Developing the process and criteria for selecting or rejecting proposals for grants to organizations;
- Reviewing and approving grant proposals (after initial review by the project);
- Developing criteria for selecting candidates for long-term training and approving the final selection of candidates;
- Developing the need for and timing of periodic evaluation activities and selecting the members of the evaluation team;
- Assuring that APPROPOP strategies and plans are in harmony with those of other donors.

The project's senior managers support the board by providing comprehensive support services. Their responsibilities include scheduling meetings, helping to prepare the agenda for the meetings, providing secretarial services, writing the minutes, and collecting and disseminating information on critical project issues to committee members.

Because this technical committee is structured and has responsibilities similar to those of a board of directors, it has been able to help the project develop policies that accurately reflect the needs and values of a diverse community that includes the government and NGOs. For example, the committee has consistently emphasized the importance of sustainable programs and has helped to strengthen programs funded by the project by encouraging programs to include cost recovery mechanisms and by stressing the importance of managing project resources so that they are used effectively and efficiently.

## Reviewers' Corner

*A forum for discussing additional applications of FPM concepts and techniques*

**On creating the ideal board . . .** *One reviewer comments,* "In my experience, the board that you describe in this issue is more a vision of an ideal board, rather than a reflection of how most boards operate. In reality, boards are either too controlling or not involved in the affairs of the organization at all, neither of which is helpful to the executive director and his staff." [Editors' note: It is the intention of the editors to present and discuss the role of an ideal board in the hope that boards of directors will learn to become more effective and work productively with the organization's management to successfully achieve organizational goals.]

**On prioritizing board responsibilities . . .** *One reviewer writes,* "In my experience, many family planning organizations confuse board and staff responsibilities. Unfortunately, boards often want to manage, and managers want to set policy. I would suggest that the responsibilities of the board be prioritized differently: 1) choose and evaluate the chief executive officer; 2) set policies for the organization (not operational guidelines); 3) create and sustain a positive public image for the organization; 4) provide overall financial oversight; 5) undertake strategic planning for the organization in collaboration with the management; 6) mobilize resources for the organization."

**On the role of the board in start-up organizations . . .** *One reviewer recalls,* "Several years ago I served on the board of a new family planning organization. Because we didn't have enough staff, we, as volunteers, were involved in the day-to-day activities of the organization. The organization now has more staff and we are functioning more as advisors, focusing on developing policies and long-term plans for the organization."

**On avoiding conflicts of interest . . .** *One reviewer advises,* "Conflicts of interests have several dimensions: personal, financial, business, and interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships, particularly with regard to personnel management, is an area where the board and the executive director must avoid the perception of a conflict of interest, for instance when relatives or friends are hired or promoted in the organization or selected to serve on the board."

**On the difference a board can make . . .** *One reviewer reflects,* "In our organization, the involvement of the board has gone through several stages. In the beginning, the board provided the institution with the social and professional credibility that it needed to become a 'serious entity.' Today, sustainability and program diversification have become more critical to the organization's survival, and the administrative, managerial, and financial knowledge of board members has really helped to support the internal efforts of the organization."

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[Answers to Self-Test: 1 (M) Management should negotiate contracts and purchases; 2 (B) The board is responsible for making final determinations about implementing new programs; 3 (M) Management is responsible for monitoring day-to-day operations of the organization; 4 (B) The board is responsible for approving the final annual budget; 5 (B or M) The board and the management should meet with government officials to inform them of the mission and goals of the organization; 6 (B) The board is responsible for making the final decision about continuing or terminating current programs; 7 (M) Management handles personnel matters; 8 (M) Management prepares quarterly expense reports; 9 (M) Management is responsible for hiring all staff, with the exception of the executive director; 10 (M) Management is responsible for developing clinical guidelines and standards.]

## Self-Test: Understanding Board and Management Responsibilities

This issue has discussed the primary roles and responsibilities of a board of directors and an executive director of a family planning organization. But things are not so clear cut in the real world where you are faced with real decisions and activities and you must decide whose responsibility it is to handle them. Use this self-test to check yourself on which activities are the responsibility of the board and which are the responsibility of the organization's management. For each of the sample activities described below, indicate which party is responsible for each activity, the board (B) or the organization's management (M).

Decision or Activity	Party Responsible	
1. Negotiates contracts for purchase of clinic examination tables	B	M
2. Makes final determination to add comprehensive reproductive health services	B	M
3. Monitors client flow and waiting times	B	M
4. Approves final annual budget	B	M
5. Meets with government officials to inform them of organization's mission and goals	B	M
6. Makes final decision to subsidize the CBD program with revenue from laboratory services	B	M
7. Decides to terminate the employment of the accountant	B	M
8. Prepares quarterly expense reports	B	M
9. Hires clinic manager	B	M
10. Develops clinical guidelines for IUD insertion	B	M

[Answers to self-test appear in References section.]

*The Family Planning Manager* is designed to help managers develop and support the delivery of high-quality family planning services. The editors welcome any comments, queries, or requests for free subscriptions. Please send to:



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The

# Family Planning Manager

CASE SCENARIOS FOR TRAINING AND GROUP DISCUSSION

## Mr. Mwangi Versus the Board: Conflict in Kanapi

Mr. Mwangi felt discouraged this morning after his monthly Board of Directors meeting. Over the last five years, under his leadership as Executive Director of the Kanapi Health and Family Planning Agency, the program had successfully expanded services into rural areas. They now operated ten clinics in five districts and the strategic plan for the next five years called for adding two clinics a year. Each new clinic would have a community-based distribution program as well. The organization had also been contacted by the government to design a collaborative effort to reach more clients in rural areas. Overall, Mr. Mwangi was excited about these new opportunities, but recent staff turnover and vacancies in two senior positions made him very concerned about the agency's ability to meet these new challenges.

Just as he was thinking about last night's meeting with the Board of Directors, Mrs. Amolo, the Deputy Director, appeared in his doorway. "Good morning," she said. "How did the meeting go last night?"

Mr. Mwangi frowned, "It was very frustrating. The organization has so many exciting opportunities but the Board of Directors isn't providing us with the support we need. We started discussing the new proposal for collaborating with the government and I told the Board that until we resolved the problem of staff turnover and filled the vacant positions, we shouldn't proceed with the discussions."

Mrs. Amolo replied, "Don't they realize that the position for Director of Field Programs has been vacant for the past four months and that we haven't had a Medical Director for the past two months?"

We've told them over and over again that our salary structure isn't competitive with other organizations. Both of those people left because they found comparable positions with higher salaries and more attractive benefits at other organizations. What ever happened with the candidate that you interviewed to replace the Director of Field Programs? I thought she seemed excellent."

"She was exactly the person we were looking for," responded Mr. Mwangi, "but she was already earning more than we could offer her. When I went to the Board to ask them to consider changing the salary structure to be competitive with similar positions all over this city, they said it was impossible. In fact, the same thing happened with two candidates I interviewed for Medical Director. But the Board keeps saying that there is nothing wrong with our salary structure. They're living in the past—they have barely changed the structure since the organization began ten years ago. There's no way we can fill either position with a good candidate if we can't offer more competitive salaries."

"What else did you discuss?" asked Mrs. Amolo.

"Well, it turns out that the new Board member, Peter Konbu, is a close friend of an aide to the Minister of Health," responded Mr. Mwangi. "They belong to the same club and the aide introduced Konbu to the Minister. Apparently Konbu has started talking to the Minister about our organization. The Minister told Konbu he wants us to sign a contract to provide services in government

## Case Scenario: Mr. Mwangi Versus the Board

clinics and to start training their doctors immediately. I'm afraid Konbu has promised the Minister all sorts of things which we can't possibly take on at this point."

"Oh no, it sounds like Konbu is out of control," said Mrs. Amolo. "We could really be set back if he has been creating expectations that we can't meet."

"Exactly," replied Mr. Mwangi. "We haven't even had an opportunity to discuss this new initiative formally with the full Board of Directors and it isn't part of our current strategic plan. I was planning to hold a meeting with all of our program directors here this week to discuss some of our ideas and I have scheduled a special meeting with the Strategic Planning Committee of the Board at the beginning of next week to discuss our ideas with them. But we must resolve the issue about the vacant positions before we can make plans with the Ministry."

"Did you discuss the problem about the supervisory visits?" asked Mrs. Amolo.

"I brought it up again," answered Mr. Mwangi. "I told the Board that the supervisors have been complaining ever since they started sending a Board member on quarterly supervisory visits. I tried to get them to see it from the supervisor's perspective—that the presence of the Board member affects the willingness of the staff to be frank about problems and, in addition, staff feel that they need to impress the Board members. I also pointed out that the supervisors were often forced to change the dates of regularly scheduled visits in order to schedule a time that was convenient for the board member."

"It sounds like a very frustrating meeting," said Mrs. Amolo. "What do you think we should do now?"

## Case Discussion Questions: Mr. Mwangi Versus the Board

1. Identify three main areas of conflict between the Board and management that are affecting organizational effectiveness.
2. For each of these problems, describe what you believe is the Board's responsibility and what is the responsibility of the Executive Director, Mr. Mwangi.
3. What specific suggestions would you make to Mr. Mwangi and the Board to resolve these problems?

## Case Analysis: Mr. Mwangi Versus the Board

### 1. Identify three main areas of conflict between the Board and management that are affecting organizational effectiveness.

- There is conflict between the Executive Director and the Board over the need for a change in the current salary structure. At the present time, Mr. Mwangi cannot fill senior-level management positions because the salary structure is not competitive with other organizations.
- Private discussions regarding expanding activities for the organization with the Ministry of Health by the Board member, Mr. Konbu, and potential misrepresentation of the organization's capabilities create a potentially embarrassing situation for the organization.
- The Board is overly involved with the supervisory process and is making it difficult for the supervisors to do their jobs effectively.

### 2. For each of these problems, describe what you believe is the Board's responsibility and what is the responsibility of the Executive Director, Mr. Mwangi.

In this case there is some confusion over the appropriate responsibilities of the Board and the Executive Director and senior staff. More appropriate responsibilities for the Board of Directors and the Executive Director are summarized in the table below.

Problem Area	Responsibility of the Board of Directors	Responsibility of the Executive Director
Salary Structure	Reviews and approves salary structure for key positions.	Provides information to Board on salary structure of comparable organizations. Hires qualified staff and negotiates salary within range determined by salary structure.
New initiative to expand services in collaboration with the government	Reviews and approves plan for expanding services. Work with the Executive Director to develop this program with the government.	Presents major new initiatives or programs to the Board before implementing them.
Supervisory visits	Sets policies, monitors activities through regular reports provided by staff.	Conducts supervisory visits, collects data for reporting to organization and the Board.

## Case Analysis: Mr. Mwangi Versus the Board

### 3. What specific suggestions would you make to Mr. Mwangi and the Board to resolve these problems?

#### Salary structure:

Mr. Mwangi, the Executive Director, can conduct a management review to re-examine and revise job descriptions and qualifications for key positions within the organization. Part of this review should include researching salary data on similar positions in other family planning and health organizations. The Board will then have the information that it needs to assess the current salary structure and make changes. Establishing a salary structure is the responsibility of the Board. Final staff selection and salary negotiations should be handled by Mr. Mwangi.

#### Expanded activities:

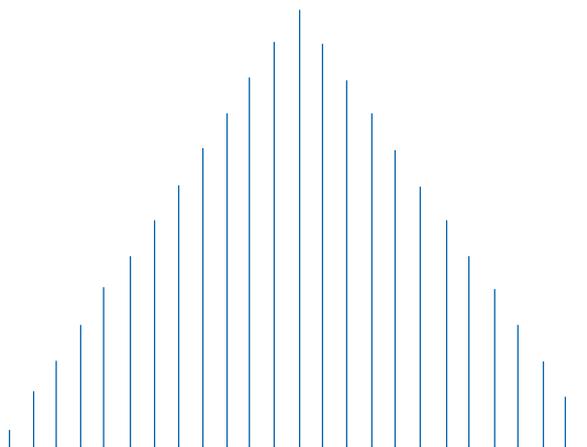
First, the Chairman of the Board is responsible for managing the Board members and for communicating with the Executive Director. In this case, the Chairman needs to make sure that Mr. Konbu is acting within his role as a Board member. If Board members discuss the development of programs with others outside the organization without involving the Chairman of the Board and the Executive Director, problems will arise.

Second, Konbu should not be talking directly with the Minister on behalf of the organization, unless the Board has asked him to do so. It would be more appropriate for Mr. Konbu to approach the Board and discuss how he might be able to facilitate negotiations. Mr. Konbu's contact with the government official may be useful, but Mr. Mwangi needs to be in charge of planning and implementing any new activity.

#### Supervisory visits:

Conducting supervisory visits on a regular basis with organization supervisors is not a Board responsibility. In fact, their insistence on participating in supervisory visits is creating difficulties for both the supervisors and the staff. The supervisors are unable to exercise their responsibilities freely, and the staff aren't getting the full benefit of the supervisory visit. The Board can approve supervisory policy and make suggestions to improve the supervision process, but Board members should not be involved in direct staff supervision.

*Pocket Guide  
for  
Improving Board Performance*



A supplement to *The Family Planning Manager*  
October/November/December 1994



A supplement to *The Family Planning Manager*  
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## **Pocket Guide for Improving Board Performance**

This pocket guide is designed to help members of boards of directors of family planning organizations to build an active board that works effectively to provide the best support and guidance to the organizations they serve. This guide also provides suggestions for building an effective working relationship between the board and the executive director.

To be effective, board members need to have an understanding of four critical areas:

- Board members need to have a thorough understanding of how their board operates.
- Board members must master the challenges of organizing and working on committees that conduct board business and they must be proficient in conducting effective meetings.
- Board members must be skilled in managing and staffing their board.
- Board members must develop open and effective communication with the organization's executive director and senior management, and have a clear understanding of the potential problems and legal issues that boards face.

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## Getting to Know How Your Board Operates

All board members should have a thorough understanding of the way their board operates, how it is structured, and how it conducts its business. Although there are differences between advisory boards, managing boards, and full boards of directors, there are some important common elements. Many non-profit boards have a legal document that states the reason for their incorporation. This document is often supplemented by bylaws that guide the governing or managing board. The bylaws include the responsibilities of the board and the procedures that it must follow in conducting its business. Some boards, like advisory boards, will have a scope of work or special regulations rather than legal articles of incorporation and bylaws.

**Defining the terms of office.** The terms of office and the limits on the length of service for board members are specified in the bylaws. It is helpful for new board members to know the extent of their commitment. Many boards permit members to have successive terms of office to ensure that there is a mix of old and new members, others may permit two to three successive three-year terms for board members. Still others may demand that members not serve for a set period of time after finishing their term. New members bring a fresh flow of talent and differing viewpoints to the board. Staggering the terms of office to avoid a complete turnover of members is one way to promote continuity of the board while finding new members to serve on the board.

**Deciding how many people should serve on the board.** The size and composition of an organization's board of directors will vary depending on its purpose and the scope and type of activities to be undertaken by the board. Generally, the smaller the board size, the more efficient its operation and decision-making process will be. For small, emerging organizations, the size may not be more than five board members. As the organization grows and evolves, the size of the board should increase as other areas of expertise are needed, the organization's base is widened, or greater community representation is desired.

## **Board Member's Self-Assessment Checklist**

All board members should know as much about the operations of the board and their organization as possible. The questions in this self-assessment checklist will help you to assess how much you know about your board and your organization. You can also use this checklist to identify the areas in which you need to improve your knowledge.

To use this self-assessment checklist, answer the questions below. Can you:

- State the mission and goals of your organization?
- Describe the primary responsibilities of the board?
- Explain the role and duties of the executive director?
- Describe the structure of your board and how it operates?
- Explain how the members of your board are appointed, elected, replaced, or rotated?
- Describe when and how board meetings are scheduled?
- List the committees of your board and describe their current activities?
- Explain the procedures and process for amending your organization's bylaws or changing its scope of work?

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## Organizing and Working on Board Committees

Board committees conduct a substantial amount of the work of a board. In small start-up organizations, the board will be too small to divide into separate committees and its members will tend to conduct work in meetings of the full board. As organizations and their boards grow larger, the work of the board increases; establishing board committees will help to get the work done. These committees wrestle with the key issues confronting the organization and develop recommendations for the full board. Full meetings of the board are used to review the work done in the committees and make final decisions concerning this work. Organizations configure and use committees of the board in differing ways. Most boards have at least three basic committees:

- **Executive committee.** Helps to make key decisions or to solve problems between regularly scheduled board meetings.
- **Finance committee.** Monitors budgets, revenue, and expenditures and approves capital expenditures.
- **Nominations committee.** Oversees the selection of new board members.

Depending on the size of the board, other committees may be formed on an ad hoc basis when there is a specific need, such as a search committee when the organization seeks a new executive director or a strategic planning committee when the organization is updating the strategic plan. Other types of special committees that can be formed are:

- **Development committee.** Raises money for the organization.
- **Public affairs committee.** Helps promote the organization's programs and services to the public.
- **Personnel Committee.** Assists in establishing and reviewing personnel policies.

### **Run an Effective Board Meeting**

The board chairperson is responsible for planning, organizing, and conducting board meetings. A well-run board meeting is productive and helps to maintain the enthusiasm and effectiveness of the other board members. To plan and run an effective board meeting, the chairperson should:

- Provide adequate advance notice of the meeting.
- Prepare a realistic agenda and supporting documents and deliver them to board members one week before the meeting.
- Start and conclude the meeting promptly.
- Introduce any guests, observers, or new members.
- Be familiar with the items on the agenda.
- Introduce each agenda item and clarify the primary issues.
- Address action items first and items that require more discussion second.
- Stick to the agenda and should not get side-tracked on other issues.
- Use parliamentary rules of order, but be flexible to achieve a consensus.
- Delegate to the board committees responsibility for overseeing detailed, time-consuming work requiring investigation and analysis.
- Summarize the discussion on each point, identify the course of action, and assign responsibility for work.
- Write up the minutes of the meeting immediately afterwards and distribute them while the meeting is fresh in people's memories.

Source: *Board Officer's Manual*.

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## Managing and Staffing the Board

**Choosing a board leader.** The effectiveness of the board is determined in part by its leadership. Thus, the choice of the board president or chairperson is critical and should not be assigned by seniority or through default. It is the responsibility of the board's nominating committee to recommend a strong candidate to chair the board. The responsibilities of this person include planning and conducting meetings, overseeing all board committees, evaluating the performance of board members, and planning for leadership succession.

The chairperson must not only have appropriate professional skills but also personal characteristics suitable for leading the board. Professional skills needed include:

- management or governance experience;
- good relations with the executive director, staff, and administration;
- experience in strategic planning;
- knowledge of issues related to health and family planning.

Suitable personal characteristics sought in a board chairperson include:

- integrity;
- commitment;
- independence;
- goodwill;
- good interpersonal skills;
- a balanced perspective.

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**Identifying the right people to serve on the board.** What should an organization look for in a board member? When selecting board members, look for individuals with the following traits:

***Experience.*** Has the individual served on other voluntary boards?

***Achievements.*** Has the individual proven to be successful in public service, business, or a profession?

***Skills.*** What talents does the individual bring to the board? Do they complement the skills of other board members? Do they fill any existing gaps in board member skills?

***Personal qualities.*** Does the individual listen well and does she or he have the ability to prioritize issues?

***Integrity.*** Does the individual exemplify high ethical and moral standards in personal and business life?

***Commitment.*** Will the individual remain committed to the organization and board over the long term?

***Objectivity.*** Is the individual sufficiently independent so that he or she can consider issues from an open and unbiased perspective?

***Willing to be trained.*** Is the individual receptive to learning and being trained about the organization and about board responsibilities?

***Available time.*** Can the individual devote adequate time to serving on the board?

### Select Board Members

When searching for new board members, the executive director and current board members can use the following six-step method to determine the skills and experience that are needed on the board and to help them to select the final candidates.

- Step 1: Identify the skills and attributes needed by the board.** Determine the key issues and decisions the organization is likely to face over the next three to five years. Use this assessment to identify the backgrounds, skills, and experience that will be necessary to address these issues.
- Step 2: Identify the skills and attributes of current board members.** Develop a profile of the skills and experience of current board members and identify additional skills that are needed to complement those of the current board members.
- Step 3: Develop criteria for selecting new members.** Based on the needs identified in Step 2, prioritize the skills and expertise the board is seeking and focus on these in your recruiting efforts. these in your recruiting efforts.
- Step 4: Recruit prospective candidates for the board.** Identify qualified and interested candidates and make recommendations to the nominating committee.
- Step 5: Select new board members.** The nominating committee should interview any promising candidates and make a short list of final candidates for presentation to the full board. The full board selects the new members.
- Step 6: Orient and involve new board members.** Once chosen, the new board members should receive an orientation to the organization and a full explanation of their role and responsibilities as board members.

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**Using a chart for creating and maintaining board diversity.** The chart on the next page is designed to help large boards maintain a diverse and balanced membership of people with different backgrounds, skills, and experience. It helps the board identify the desired attributes of new board members and helps it make a final selection among the final candidates, so that the skills, experience, and personal characteristics of new members will complement those of current board members.

To use the Chart for Maintaining Board Diversity on the next page:

- Define the characteristics of each current board member by placing a dot in the appropriate boxes. (The dots indicate the specific characteristics of each current board member.)
- Count the number of dots across each row to determine the total number of members who possess each characteristic.
- Compare these totals to the combination of characteristics that you think are desirable for the board as a whole. (This will help you to identify the characteristics needed in new board members.)
- Fill in the dots for each final candidate and select members based on your ideal board profile.

## Sample Chart for Main

### Characteristics/Experience

#### Age

Over 60

45-60

Under 45

#### Gender

Female

Male

#### Ethnic Background

Majority Ethnic Group

Minority Ethnic Group \_\_\_\_\_

Minority Ethnic Group \_\_\_\_\_

#### Location/Region/Zone

Urban

Rural

#### Professional Experience

Administration/Management

Finance

Health/Family Planning

Legal

Medical

Teaching/Training

Public Affairs

#### Organizational Experience

Business

Government

Nonprofit/NGO

*Adapted from Nonprofit Government Series, with permission from National Center for Nonprofit E*

# Maintaining Board Diversity

Current Board Members								Board Candidates			
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boards

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**Developing job descriptions for board members.** Increasingly, organizations are developing job descriptions for board members. Job descriptions may be used to recruit and orient new members and to evaluate current board members. A job description for board members should include their roles, responsibilities, and performance objectives. The officers of the board, such as the President and Secretary, should also have specific job descriptions.

A job description for board members should state the basic requirements for board membership, as well as the functional responsibilities of and expectations for board members. Basic requirements explicitly state the kind of commitment and support required by board members to support the organization's philosophy and values. Functional responsibilities detail the specific types of activities in which board members will be asked to participate. Expectations should indicate the conduct expected of board members. The following sample job description provides an example of a job description for board members of a family planning organization.

### **Sample Board Member Job Description**

#### **Job Description: Board Member**

##### **Sample Requirements:**

1. Endorse and support the stated mission and programmatic goals of the organization.
2. Commit time to attend the regularly-scheduled board meetings of the organization.
3. Actively participate in at least one of the standing committees of the organization.
4. Make a financial contribution to the organization.

### **Sample Functional Responsibilities:**

1. Participate in planning, monitoring, and evaluating organizational goals within the planning process adopted by the board.
2. Participate in periodic evaluation and revision of organization's policies, including but not limited to:
  - Personnel policies
  - Program service policies
  - Compensation policies
  - Investment policies
  - Medical service policies
3. Understand and adopt the annual budget and subsequent revisions as recommended by the Budget and Finance committee (or equivalent).
4. Review the annual audit summary and management letter prepared by the independent auditor selected by the board.
5. Reflect and vote upon legal, contractual, and policy issues that affect the organization.
6. Participate actively in the public affairs efforts of the organization.
7. Participate actively in the fund raising activities of the organization.
8. Ensure the employment and annual written evaluation of the organization's Executive Director.
9. Understand and respect the different expectations of board and staff, and the Executive Director's role in recruiting, hiring, managing, developing, deploying, evaluating, and as necessary dismissing staff within the framework of policies established by the board.

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### **Sample Expectations:**

1. It is expected that board members will be provided with the data, information, background materials, and staff support necessary to make decisions and effectively participate in organizational activities.
2. It is expected that board members will not be actively involved in delivering family planning or other direct program services because of inherent conflicts between the roles of the two positions.
3. It is expected that when a member is unable to attend a regular meeting, he or she will notify the board President or other designated person in advance.
4. It is expected that comments or recommendations about performance or behavior of staff will be shared with the Executive Director.
5. It is expected that, in addition to all the reading, discussion, interaction, decision-making, voting, and work, board members will feel a pride of ownership in the organization—and in the quality of its board, its staff, and its volunteers.

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## Dealing with Key Family Planning Issues

**Finding the best professionals to fill executive and senior management positions.** Boards may have to review salary levels occasionally so that the organization can remain competitive. Many organizations lose their best people because they offer low salaries or refuse to recognize the prevailing salaries for professional staff positions.

**Providing comprehensive reproductive health services.** Family planning programs are increasingly being judged on their ability to provide a full range of services to women. In the future, boards will have to design and promote programs that offer comprehensive reproductive health services to women.

**Introducing adolescent health services.** Meeting the need for adolescent services will require designing innovative programs and making radical departures from traditional service delivery approaches. Board members must be open to new approaches and avoid being influenced by conventional biases and prejudices that will impede establishing effective services for this group. They must also be aware of the potential controversies surrounding programs for adolescents and be prepared to deal with opposition from conservative religious and community groups.

**Eliminating costly and ineffective programs.** Sometimes board members must take a hard, objective look at their favorite programs and ask tough questions about the value of those programs to the organization and the national program. Sometimes they may need to discontinue costly or ineffective programs.

**Applying modern business techniques.** As organizations grow and become more complex, the board must make sure that senior staff have the opportunity to update their management skills. The board members themselves will also need to have the skills that make them qualified to lead and support major organizational changes such as restructuring programs, merging with other organizations, or decentralizing program management.

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## Dealing with Ethical Issues

As policy makers and keepers of the organization's mission, the board acts as the conscience of the institution. The collective integrity and the values of the board members provide the basis of the philosophy and ethics expounded by the board and guide the organization's decisions.

**Avoiding conflicts of interest.** A key part of establishing sound ethical standards is the need for board members to ensure there is no conflict of interest. A board policy requiring disclosure by board members of any potential conflicts of interest should also prohibit board members from voting on or using their influence in any issues in which they have a personal or business interest.

**Maintaining confidentiality.** The confidentiality of board meetings and their deliberations is another important ethical standard that the board must establish for its members. Confidentiality permits open and honest discussions at board meetings and protects the board and its members from disclosing information that would compromise the board's effectiveness. Confidentiality should govern issues related to the organization's strategic plan, program, financial information, and the performance of senior staff.

**Addressing cultural and religious issues.** The board of a family planning organization must realize that many of its decisions have ethical implications that may impinge on cultural and religious standards. Thus, board members must be alert to any inconsistencies that might emerge between the organization's mission and its activities. They must be fully aware of and take into consideration the existing political, cultural, and religious environment as they make decisions.

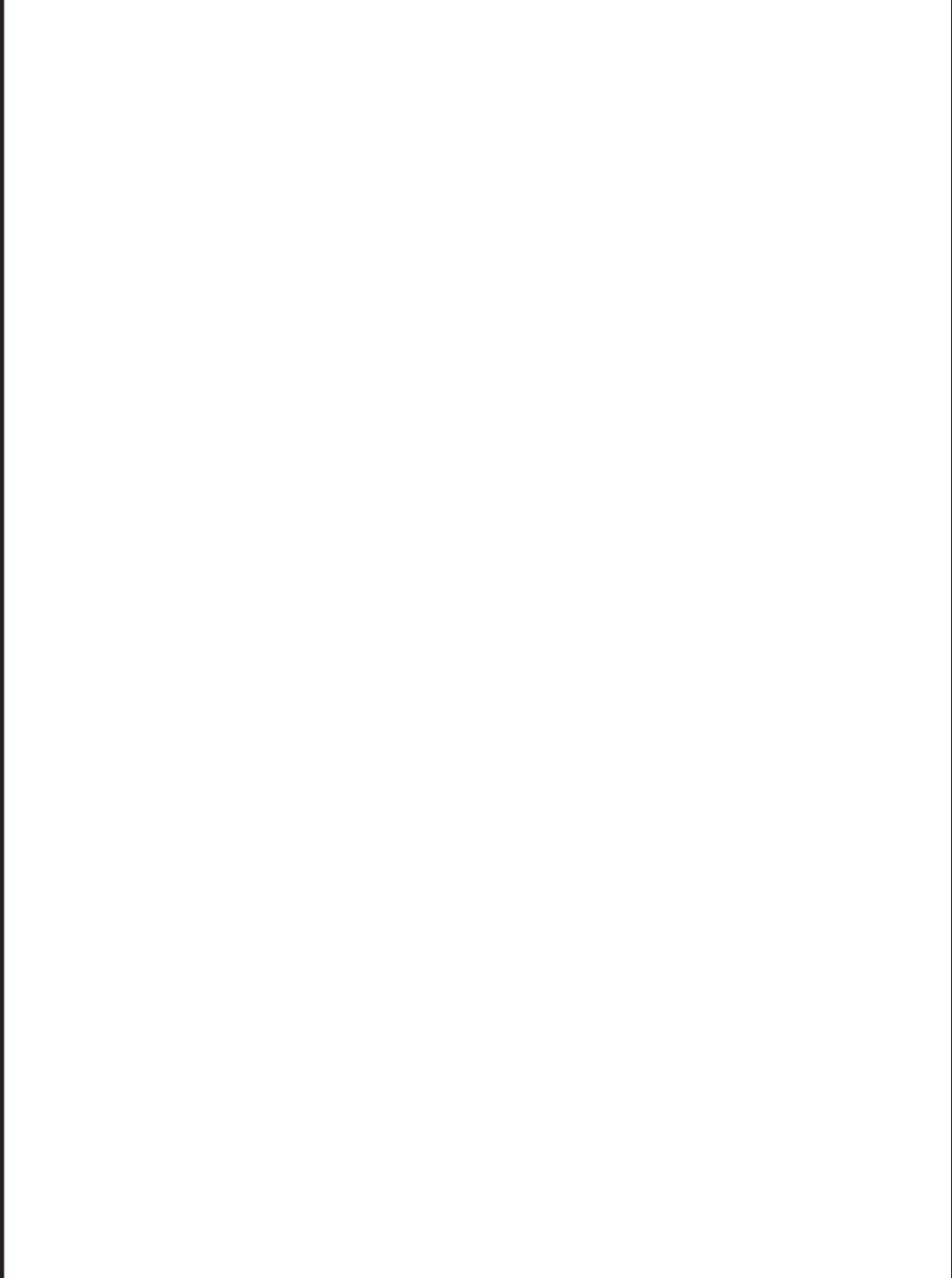
**Complying with government regulations and public policy.** The government's large role in financing health services makes it a major player in all family planning programs. This may mean that organizations may need to comply with specific government regulations, which can often be onerous, conflicting, and burdensome. Since incentives that exist under various government programs may be contradictory or ineffective, it is appropriate for board members to seek reform measures that decrease costly and unproductive regulation.













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