



Should your nonprofit have an advisory board?

Your not-for-profit is likely governed by a core group of board members. But the addition of an informal advisory board can bring complementary — and valuable — skills and resources to this group.

Review representation

Look at your general board members' demographics and collective profile. Does it lack representation from certain groups — particularly relative to the communities that your organization serves? An advisory board offers an opportunity to add diversity to your leadership. Also consider the skills current board members bring to the table. If your board lacks extensive fundraising or grant writing experience, for example, an advisory board can help fill gaps.

Adding advisory board members can also open the door to funding opportunities. If, for example, your nonprofit is considering expanding its geographic presence, it makes sense to find an advisory board member from outside your current area. That person might be connected with business leaders and be able to introduce board members to appropriate people in his or her community.

Waive commitment

The advisory role is a great way to get people involved who can't necessarily make the time commitment that a regular board position would require. The advisory role also may appeal to recently retired individuals or stay-at-home parents wanting to get involved with a nonprofit on a limited basis.

This also can be an ideal way to “test out” potential board members. If a spot opens on your current board and some of your advisory board members are interested in making a bigger commitment, you’ll have a ready pool of informed individuals from which to choose.

Be candid

Advisory board members likely will be present at board meetings, so it’s important to explain to them the role they’ll play. Advisory board members aren’t involved in the *governance* of your organization and can’t introduce motions or vote on them.

How you use your advisory board members is up to you. Use them as much, or as little, as you need; just make sure they understand limits to their authority. Contact us for more information.

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