Taking Stock and Setting Goals

Board Composition Assessment/Recruitment Matrix 1

United Way of King County Washington has provided a very adaptable Excel spreadsheet for assessing current board composition and identifying recruitment needs. A modified version of the Board Composition Analysis in the Board Toolbox, under Board Member Role and Purpose.

General Approaches

Moves to Develop a Diverse Board 2

1. Know why you need diversity – including ability to anticipate and address the diverse needs and opportunities of your community.
2. Be clear about what you need – inventory current composition of the board and recruit based on specific perspectives needed based on demographics, content areas, board competency, geography, etc.
3. Don’t succumb to tokenism – don’t expect individuals to be able to speak on behalf of diverse populations and bring multiple people in when you can.
4. Realize diversity comes with a price – with different perspectives represented there will be different takes on priority and ways of doing business. Trick is to use those differences to explore deeper understanding of the community.
5. Provide opportunities for social interaction – members need to get to know each other to perform as a board.
6. Get new board members involved right away – provide solid orientation and expect full participation.
7. Ask for feedback – solicit feedback on the board’s work and the experience of individuals as a member.
8. Make use of everyone’s gifts – draw from the interests and talents of members beyond professional roles (e.g., an accountant need not always be on the finance committee).
9. Be aware of differences – don’t diminish or override differences that arise, explore them and use them to gain fuller perspective.

Building Board Diversity 3

1. Define the types of diversity needed. (see matrix above)
2. Assess where you stand currently. (see matrix above)
3. Clarify and articulate your board mission, policies and strategies.

4. Tap into local programs to build into networks and relationships
   - Current audiences
   - Community leadership programs
   - Chambers of commerce
   - Minority business directories
   - Non-profit organization training groups
   - Community associations, etc.
   - Make a database of potential board members from diverse groups
   - Use resources and consider best practices from BoardSource – national organization
cut dedicated to increasing the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations. (Book; Diversity: Who
Should Sit At Your Table, http://www.boardsource.org/Bookstore.asp?Item=153)

5. Recruit from board development/volunteer training programs.

Challenges and Traps Avoiding Tokenism 4

1. Start with a firm commitment to diversity – formally stated and available.
2. Be honest that you are trying to diversify your board.
3. Don’t expect an individual to speak for an entire population. Ask them to speak from their
   experiences and perspective.
4. View the board as a collection of diverse perspectives, not spokespeople for particular groups.
5. Remind all board members of their obligations to the organization, not particular perspectives.
6. Treat all members equally – new and old members. Expect the same from everybody.
7. Assign tasks across all groups.
8. Invite more than one member from diverse groups at the same time if possible.
9. Value board members as individuals, not representatives.

Factors in Losing Diverse Members 5

1. Inviting members “for diversity” rather than the talents, knowledge, and skills they bring.
2. Failure to communicate expected roles/commitments when extending an invitation.
3. Failure to articulate the benefits to the individual of serving on the board (not just the benefits to
   CCE).
4. Failure to provide adequate orientation.
5. Failure to involve new members in all activities of the board
6. Allowing other board members to ignore or dismiss ideas provided by new members.
7. Failure to tap into connections/organizations that new members are linked to.
8. Thinking “we did it” when new members are brought on without regularly assessing how things
   are going for all members.

Long-Term Solutions 6

In an article entitled “Board Diversity: A Bigger Issue than You Think,” author Gottlieb (2005)
argues that lack of board diversity is a symptom of failure to engage the broader community
effectively. Gottlieb argues that the only real solution is to work with the communities you are
attempting to reach. Suggested strategies include:
1. Directly involving the board in discussion of how the organization can better serve the broader community and in identifying strategies for engagement.
2. Develop a deliberate community engagement plan, start to implement it and monitor progress.
3. Community sleuthing – actively asking members of communities of interest how to make your programs more attractive and accessible.
4. Keep the board directly involved in the engagement/sleuthing process.

1 Source for the spreadsheet and other board development materials: http://www.uwkc.org/nonprofit/governance/board/

Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities.