

Strong Boards

Information Sources

Building a strong group of stewards for our institutions connects us to our communities, creates public accountability, and provides management with critical guidance and support for short and long-term activities that assure a thriving and robust public service. As Bill Kling once said in reflecting on the experience of Minnesota Public Radio, “Over the years, the expertise, oversight and involvement of that board have been invaluable. Board members have mentored. They’ve challenged. They’ve questioned. Their tough, visionary leadership has been central to the success of all of our public radio ventures.”

But there no one-size fits all solution to building a board.

Public radio lives in a variety of organizational settings – stand-alone, part of a television-radio operation or one of many activities inside an educational institution or other entity. Budgets for CPB-supported stations range from \$125,000 to \$48 million. Compensation may be guided by the marketplace or may be constrained by a larger licensee’s salary guidelines for a range of educational services. Location varies from extraordinarily isolated communities to our largest cities. Audience service objectives heavily influence the makeup of staff and board members.

Fortunately, particularly with the internet, organizations can easily network and benefit from the expertise of a number of organizations and consultants. What follows is a list of key sources we have found are used over and over.

BoardSource, formerly the National Center for Nonprofit Boards, has the most concise, clear and comprehensive web site on non-profit governance. Although there is some push to buy their materials and become a member, the web site provides detailed information (under Board Info) on the role and responsibilities of board members and their organizations. <http://www.boardsource.org/>

CompassPoint provides information valuable to board members and non-profits CEOs, but you have to work to find some of it. The site touts the consulting services of the organization, but under “Topics,” you’ll find case studies, tools and articles that are helpful. The site is San Francisco-based and has some California specific programs. The site also includes a link to Board Café, the organization’s newsletter for members of nonprofit boards of directors. <http://www.compasspoint.org/>

MAP – Management Assistance Program – offers consulting services and links to other governance sites. MAP is based in St. Paul and the site contains some specific information for Minnesota non-profits. The highlight of the site is a link to the Free Management Library (<http://www.managementhelp.org>), which requires a lot of clicking through to get to the material, but the information is usually helpful once you get there. Click on “Boards of Directors” from the library menu and you’ll access the board toolkit. <http://www.mapfornonprofits.com>

Institute on Governance is an Ottawa, Canada-based site that offers a comprehensive look at governance. The most fun and interesting feature of the site is its “Quick Check” assessment for boards (click Knowledge Area on the home page, then Board Governance, Board Governance Learning Tools, Assess Your Governance, Take the Quick Check). The site also offers governance models. <http://www.iog.ca/>

The Internet Nonprofit Center site is not very slick, but it does contain an extensive bibliography on nonprofit literature. Its Nonprofit FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) is similar to what’s found on the other sites. <http://www.nonprofits.org/>

Carver Governance is a site dedicated to John Carver’s Policy Governance model, described as the “world’s only complete universal theory of governance.” Some of the site is password protected, but any user can read about the concepts and principles of Carver Governance. It’s a bit dense, but the model, which proposes board members as “owner-representatives” and “servant-leaders,” is interesting and seemingly appropriate for public radio. <http://www.carvergovernance.com/>

Alliance for Nonprofit Management offers a site that’s similar to the others, although not quite as detailed in its information. One feature worth checking is the Case Study of the Month. <http://www.allianceonline.org/>

The Nonprofit Genie provides links to other sites, a good list of publications and a not very detailed FAQs. The most useful part of the site is its offering of opinions from non-profit experts, leaders and grantmakers on a variety of topics. <http://www.genie.org/index.html>

Nonprofit Times is less focused on governance but does offer information on some of the latest trends in nonprofits. It also has an annual survey of executive salaries in nonprofits. <http://www.nptimes.com/>

The McKinsey Quarterly offers information on the latest trends and news in the business world, including valuable material on nonprofits. You can sign up for the free newsletter. <http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/home.asp>