

# Empowering Adirondack Nonprofit Boards for Success

## Summary of Training Series

March/April 2025

Facilitated by  
**Andy Robinson**



- Sponsored by
- **Adirondack Foundation**
  - **Cloudsplitter Foundation**
  - **United Way of the Adirondack Region**





# Empowering Adirondack Nonprofit Boards for Success

## About the Training Series

Join us for **Empowering Adirondack Nonprofit Boards for Success**, a virtual training series designed to strengthen nonprofit leadership and governance. This series will provide opportunities to exchange ideas, explore best practices, and build connections with other nonprofit leaders—helping organizations create strong and effective boards.

-  **6 Weekly Sessions**
- Fridays from 12:00 - 1:00 PM**
- March 7 - April 11, 2025**
-  **Hosted Virtually via Zoom**

## Hosts and Facilitators

Hosted by **United Way, Cloudsplitter Foundation, and Adirondack Foundation**, this series features facilitation by Andy Robinson, along with Bryan Hartman and John Bernardi from United Way. Together, we're bringing practical insights and locally relevant strategies to support Adirondack nonprofits in their vital work.

## Registration

The full series is available for **\$150 per organization** (\$25 per session) with unlimited participation for your board and staff. Register at: [bit.ly/m/ADKboards2025](https://bit.ly/m/ADKboards2025)

## Series Topics

- 1. Introduction & Board Roles and Responsibilities**  
Establish foundational knowledge of board roles, responsibilities, and best practices in governance.
- 2. Financial Oversight & Fiscal Accountability**  
Equip board members the basics of nonprofit finances, financial oversight responsibilities, and budgetary best practices.
- 3. Recruitment, Nominations, and Retention**  
Discuss best practices for recruiting and retaining effective board members, engaging people who aren't traditionally engaged, and planning for succession.
- 4. The Board's Role in Fundraising & Development**  
Define the board's role in fundraising and strategies to engage board members effectively in development efforts.
- 5. Orientation & Training for New Board Members**  
Share methods for onboarding and supporting new board members to foster effective board service.
- 6. Alternative Governance Models & Nonprofit Lifecycles**  
Understand innovative governance approaches and lifecycle transitions.



# Empowering Adirondack Nonprofit Boards for Success

## Part 1: Governance 101



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- **United Way of the Adirondack Region**

**March 7, 2024**

# Governance and Beyond

What are our responsibilities as board members?

Board responsibility	Board score	My involvement	Notes and questions
<b>Vision and planning:</b> Working with staff to develop our vision of success and strategic plan, including leadership succession planning.			
<b>Evaluation and monitoring:</b> Working proactively with the executive director to ensure progress on our organizational goals and metrics.			
<b>Fiduciary oversight:</b> Ensuring the financial health and integrity of our organization.			
<b>Compliance and culture:</b> Ensuring that our organization is following the law, avoiding conflicts of interest, honoring professional standards, and providing a healthy, rewarding work environment.			
<b>Ambassadorship:</b> Educating others and promoting our work.			
<b>Fundraising:</b> Helping to raise resources by building our skills, expanding our networks, and participating in fundraising activities.			
<b>Learning:</b> Always striving to improve our skills as board members and leaders.			
<b>Participating:</b> Prioritizing board service and showing up!			

- + outstanding
- √ adequate
- poor
- ? don't know

# Empowering Adirondack Nonprofit Boards for Success Part 2: Financial Oversight & Fiscal Accountability



Facilitated by  
**Andy Robinson**

Sponsored by

- **Adirondack Foundation**
- **Cloudsplitter Foundation**
- **United Way of the Adirondack Region**

**March 14, 2024**

# Financial Management Board Quiz

## Financial management 101

What every board member should know...and probably doesn't

Can you answer these questions without referring to your board materials?

1. What's your organization's annual budget?
  2. What are the current sources of income for the organization – and what would be the *best* mix of income?
  3. What are your largest expenses? What percentage of the budget do they consume?
  4. Does your organization have a reserve fund? How much money is in it, and under what circumstances can it be used?
  5. What are your organization's biggest financial risks?
  6. How do you use financial management tools to measure your organization's impact? Does your organization compute the cost per unit of service; for example for each client you help, audience member you entertain, or acre you protect?
  7. What would help you to better understand your organization's financial status?
-

# Financial Dashboard

Indicator	How measured	What it tells you	2 years ago final	Last year final	This year target	Year to date 8 mos
<b>FINANCIAL</b>						
<b>Annual budget</b>	Total expenses	<i>Scale:</i> What our work costs	\$307,200	\$323,550	\$ 325,500	\$236,602
<b>Net income</b> ( ) = loss/deficit	Total revenue minus total expenses	<i>Profitability:</i> Do revenues exceed expenses? Goal is positive number	\$12,540	\$4,190	\$240	\$(28,427)
<b>Months cash on hand</b>	Cash on hand/operating expenses per month	<i>Liquidity:</i> Uncommitted cash, goal is at least three months cash on hand	2.53	2.39	2.36	1.52
<b>Net worth (or net assets or fund balance)</b>	Total equity: assets if everything is sold	<i>Solvency:</i> Goal is positive number	\$106,640	\$110,330	\$108,820	\$91,903
<b>Restricted income</b>	Share of total budget for restricted uses	Flexibility in budgeting. Goal varies by group; 67% or less is good target	90%	85%	85%	88%
<b>Govt funding as percent of total income</b>	Govt grants and contracts total income	<i>Dependency:</i> Reliance on government funding, which can be unpredictable	85%	81%	77%	75%
<b>EFFICIENCY</b>						
<b>Cost per client served</b>	Total expenses/total clients	Efficiency in providing services	\$1,299	\$1,123	\$1,415	\$1,127
<b>Cost per volunteer</b>	Total volunteer costs (includes training, coordination)/number of volunteers	Efficiency of using volunteers, who are not "free" labor	\$659	\$625	\$606	\$758
<b>IMPACT</b>						
<b>Number clients served</b>	Unduplicated clients	<i>Reach:</i> Given aging population, goal is 10% increase per year	250	288	230	210
<b>Number of volunteers engaged</b>	Unduplicated volunteers	<i>Reach:</i> Given higher demand, goal is 15% increase per year	78	85	90	75
<b>Average client contact hours per month</b>	Total hours, staff plus vols/ number of clients	<i>Depth:</i> Assumes that more time equals deeper service	5.07	5.12	5.00	4.51
<b>Number of clients still living at home</b>	Annual tracking	<i>Impact:</i> Are we succeeding at our overall goal?	197	255	210	205

# Board/Staff Financial Responsibilities

Activity	Staff role	Board role	Watch out for...
<b>Budgeting</b>	Budget research Prepare draft budget	Set annual targets for income and expenses  Amend and approve budget	Board members who focus on specific line items and relatively small amounts, rather than the big picture  Board members who reflexively want to cut expenses before looking for ways to diversify and increase income
<b>Financial systems</b>	Manage financial records, expenditures, and budgets; use systems to analyze data and report trends to the board	Use actual financial data for planning, oversight, and evaluation, rather than relying on hearsay or gut feelings about cost or performance	"We've got the wrong software, we need to use _____," rather than, "To provide appropriate oversight, we need different information than we're getting."
<b>Expenditures</b>	Prepare checks and other payments	Approve budget and high-cost purchases  Countersign checks (usually for larger amounts)	Board members who want to behave like the bookkeeper and handle payments
<b>Salaries</b>	Set salary structure and hire staff (other than the executive director)  Authorize raises	Hire executive director  Approve salary and benefits structure as a component of the overall budget	"Why are we paying \$_____ for development staff? Can't we get someone for less?"
<b>Fundraising and income diversification</b>	Develop a diversified fundraising plan that reflects budget goals and organizational needs	Understand, amend, and approve the funding plan  Participate in fundraising activities as assigned and expected of the board	Trustees with a favorite fundraising idea they want someone else (staff) to implement, even though it's not included in the plan
<b>Financial troubleshooting</b>	Identify and address day-to-day financial problems	Identify anomalies that appear in the financial reports and ask questions  Provide guidance and suggestions	Board members who say, "This is how we [the board] will fix the problem," rather than offering support and tools to exec. director

## Mapping your income diversification

	Dollars	%
<b>Operating budget</b>		
Foundations		
Corporate & business		
Government		
Membership dues & donations		
Major gifts & board giving		
Benefit events		
Earned income		
Investment & interest		9
Other		

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## Managing risk

- Diversify your income
- Create separation of duties and strong financial controls
- Buy appropriate insurance: liability, automobile, directors & officers, etc.
- Create plans for business continuity, site security, and data back-up



# Financial Responsibility Checklist



*Finally,*

- Focus on strategy, not line items
- Because it's not your money, create policies to avoid conflicts of interest
- Invest the time to train the board to understand your financial statements

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# **Empowering Adirondack Nonprofit Boards for Success**

## **Part 3: Recruitment, nominations, and representing the community you serve**



Facilitated by  
**Andy Robinson**

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- **Adirondack Foundation**
- **Cloudsplitter Foundation**
- **United Way of the  
Adirondack Region**

**March 21, 2024**

# Skills, Qualities and Representation Analysis



**Skills:** What do they know how to do?

**Qualities:** How do they behave?

**Representation:** Who are they? Do they represent the breadth of the community you serve?

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# Board Job Description



## Why you need a board **job description**

- Sets clear expectations
- Helps with recruitment
- Clarifies what board members can expect from the organization; reciprocity
- Weeds out poor candidates

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# Board Member Job Description – Reciprocity of Expectations

What board members provide	What board members can expect in return
1. I will give my best effort to “hit the ground running” when beginning my service with the board.	1. The organization will provide me with a full orientation, including background information on work accomplished to date.
2. I will learn about the organization’s mission and programs, and be able to describe them accurately.	2. The organization will provide me with relevant materials and education.
3. I understand that the board meets ___ times per year, plus one annual full-day retreat. I will do my best to attend each meeting, with the understanding that three consecutive unexcused absences will be considered resignation from the board.	3. I expect that board meetings will be well run and productive, with a focus on decision-making and not merely reporting. I understand that agendas will be distributed at least one week in advance. If I wish to add items to the agenda, I will contact the chair at least two weeks in advance.
4. I accept fiduciary responsibility for the organization and will oversee its financial health and integrity.	4. I expect timely, accurate, and complete financial statements to be distributed at least quarterly, one week in advance of the relevant board meeting. I also expect to be trained to read and interpret these financial statements.
5. I will provide oversight to ensure that our programs run effectively.	5. I expect monthly reports from the executive director, program updates, news media, etc.
6. I accept ethical responsibility and will help to hold fellow board members and the executive director (and, by extension, the full staff) to professional standards.	6. The organization will provide me with relevant training.
7. I will serve as an ambassador to the community to educate others and promote our work.	7. I will need materials and may need training (public speaking, etc.) to do this job effectively.
8. I commit to increasing my skills as a board member.	8. The organization will provide me with appropriate training and support.
9. I will participate in fundraising to ensure that our organization has the resources it needs to meet its mission. I commit to making a personal donation; our organization will be one of the top three charities I support each year that I am on the board.	9. I will be able to choose from a range of fundraising activities, and I expect relevant training and support to help me fulfill my obligations. I will have the option of fulfilling my personal pledge in monthly or quarterly installments, if I so choose.
10. I will evaluate the performance of the executive director.	10. This evaluation will be based on goals developed jointly by the board and the E.D.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board member signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board chair signature                      Date

## Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy Board Member Agreement

I, \_\_\_\_\_ understand that as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, I have a legal, moral and fiduciary responsibility to ensure that the organization does the best work possible in pursuit of its goals. I believe in the purpose and the mission of the organization, and I will act responsibly and prudently as its steward.

My duties and responsibilities as a board member include:

1. I will serve a three-year term. I understand that my term may be renewed one time, if I wish and the board agrees, for a maximum of six consecutive years of service.
2. I will represent the organization, and interpret the organization's work and values to the community. I will act as an ambassador in support of CMLC's goals to attract new volunteers, trustees, donors, and land projects to the organization.
3. I will engage in long-term planning for CMLC and I will help shape the vision and work of the organization.
4. I will attend at least 75% of board meetings and key events (i.e. Spring Annual Meeting and Fall Fundraiser). I will inform the staff or President beforehand if I will not be able to attend a meeting or event.
5. I will make a personal financial contribution at a level that is meaningful to me.
6. I understand that Board members are sometimes asked to help with fundraising (including help with donation letters, events, donor visits, and foundation meetings) and I will support CMLC's fundraising as the need arises and my schedule allows.
7. I will act in the best interests of the organization, and excuse myself from discussions and votes where I have a conflict of interest.
8. I will stay informed about what is going on in the organization. I will ask questions and request information. I will participate in and take responsibility for making decisions on issues, policies, finances and other board matters. I will, to the best of my ability, take advantage of educational and professional development opportunities in order to be informed.
9. I will participate in the organization by serving on at least one committee or project.
10. If I don't fulfill these commitments to the organization, I will expect the board president to call me and discuss my responsibilities with me.

In turn, the organization will be responsible to me in several ways:

1. I will be sent, without request, bi-monthly financial reports and an update of organizational activities that allow me to meet the legal requirements of being a board member.
2. I will be provided with an initial orientation and offered subsequent educational and professional development opportunities to help me perform my duties and keep me informed about issues in the land conservation field.
3. Board members and staff will respond in a straightforward fashion to questions I have that I feel are necessary to carry out my fiscal, legal and moral responsibilities to this organization. Board members and staff will work in good faith with me towards achievement of our goals.
4. If the organization does not fulfill its commitments to me, I can call on the board president and executive director to discuss these responsibilities.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member, Board of Trustees                      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
President, Board of Trustees                      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[Have the Board President sign two copies of this Agreement, and ask new board members to sign them, return one copy to the Board President, and keep the other for reference.]

# Succession Planning



## Succession planning 101

*Definition:* Identifying and supporting the next generation of leaders for your organization.

# Succession Plans

## You need more than one plan

**Contingency plan.** What happens if you lose your leader(s) unexpectedly?

**Leadership succession plan.** How will you plan for an orderly long-term transition?

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- Communications plan
- Financial plan –  
transitions cost money
- Relationship plan –  
transitioning  
relationships with key  
partners and donors
- How will you celebrate  
the departing leader?



## Things to include in the plan

- Calendar or timeline
- Skills and qualifications: ongoing and new
- Will you identify and develop your next leader internally ... or look outside?
- Clarify roles of board, staff, and departing leader throughout the transition (and after)

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# Empowering Adirondack Nonprofit Boards for Success

## Part 4: The Board's Role in Fundraising and Development



Facilitated by  
**Andy Robinson**

Sponsored by

- **Adirondack Foundation**
- **Cloudsplitter Foundation**
- **United Way of the Adirondack Region**

**March 28, 2024**

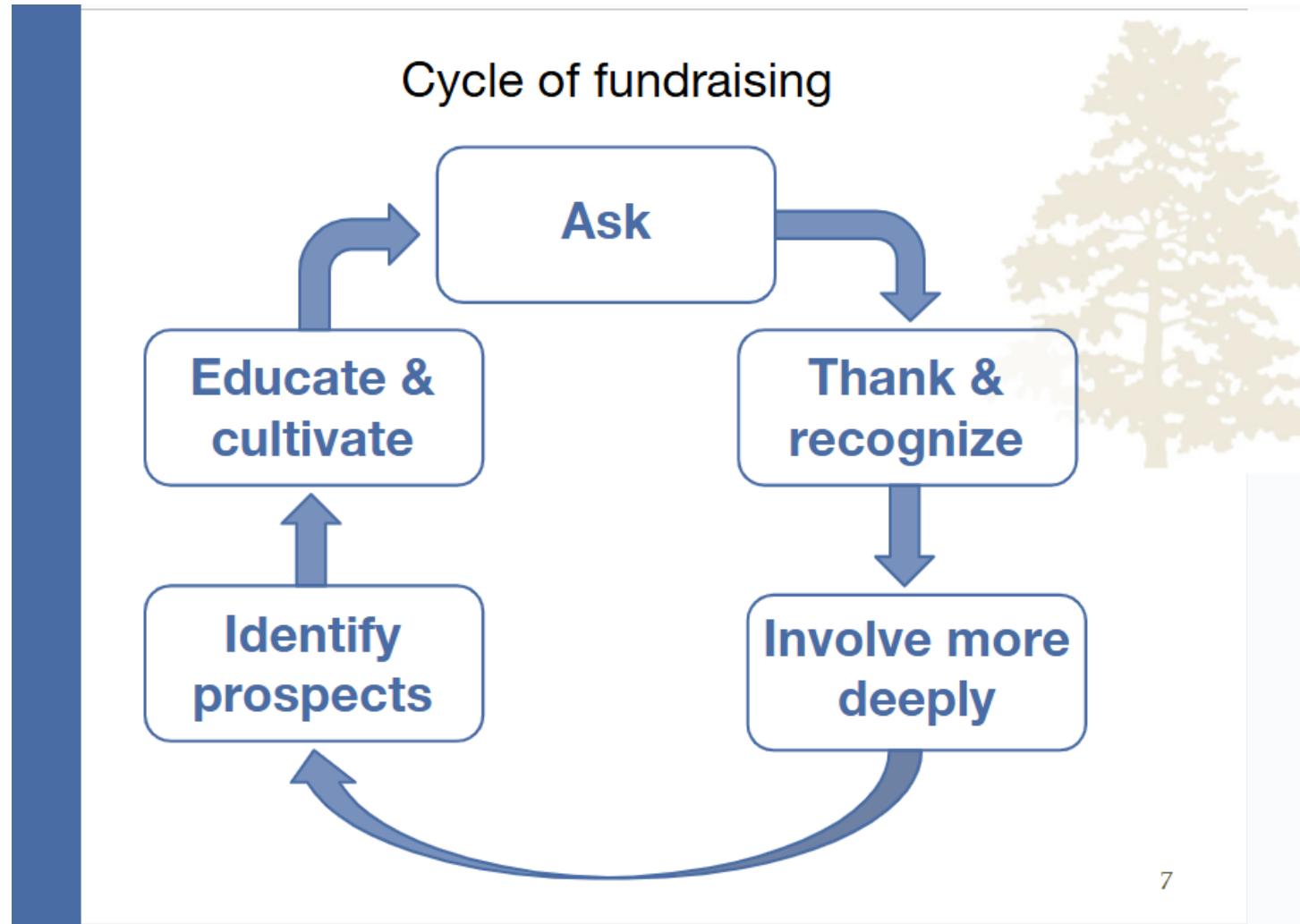
# Items Needed for Fundraising

## To raise money successfully, you need four things

- A strong case for giving
- Prospective donors to ask
- People to do the asking
- Systems to track data, money, donor recognition, etc.

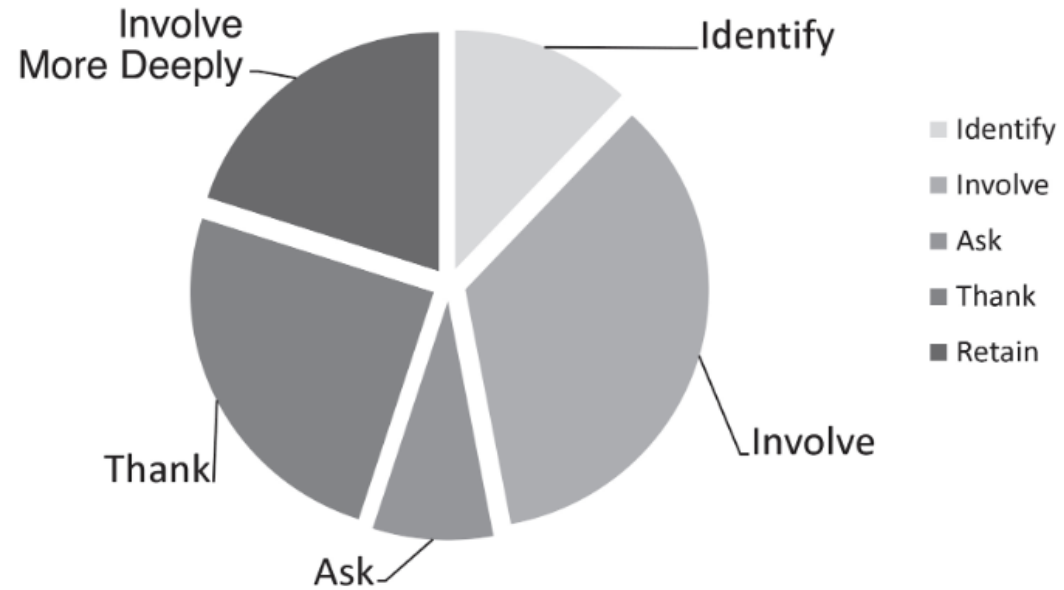


# Cycle of Fundraising – Starting With Identifying Prospects

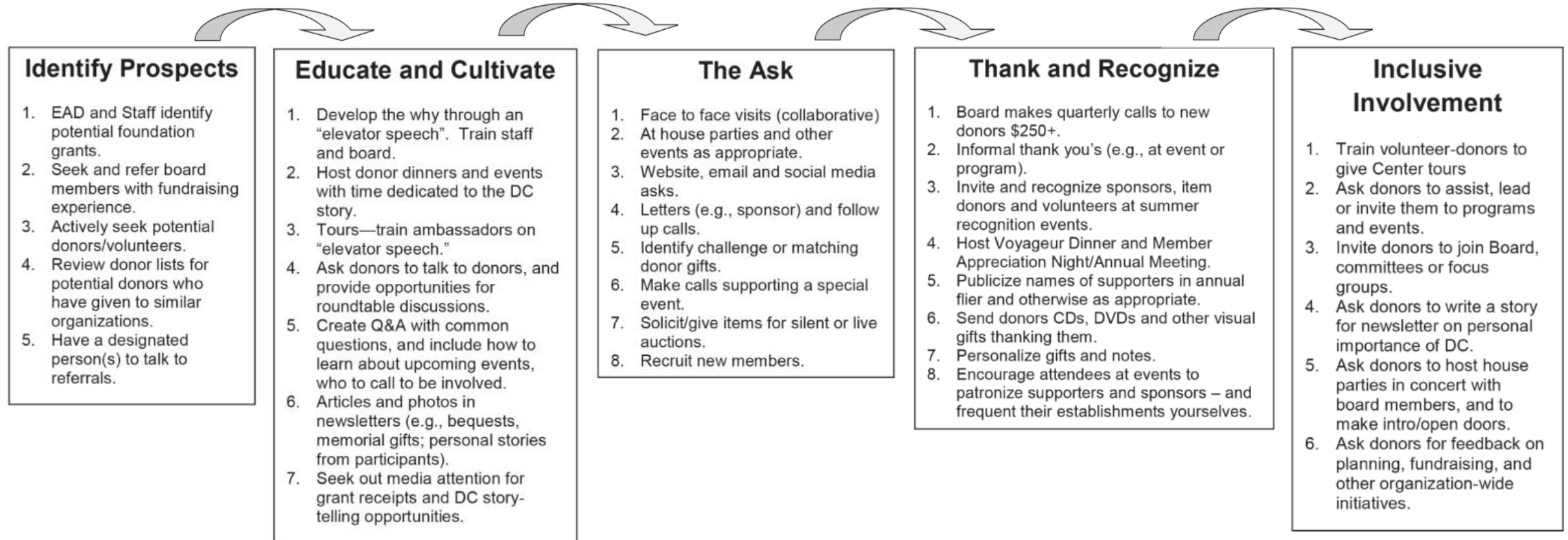


# Most Time is Spent on Involving and Thanking

## Time allocation



# Cycle of Fundraising - Tasks



# Why Do You Give?



## Four important reasons

- You were asked!
- You were asked by someone you know and trust
- Giving is an easy way to participate
- **Giving feels good!**

# Menu of Fundraising Opportunities

Board Members Commit to at Least One Per Category



## Menu of 2017 Fundraising Opportunities

Board Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*This is an "all you can eat" menu!  
We ask you to commit to as many items as you like – but at least one per category.*

### Appetizers

- Provide names of donor prospects
- Personalize letters to current and prospective donors
- Attend and mingle with donors at a House Party
- Introduce development staff to members of the business community

### Entrees

- Host a House Party
- Arrange a site tour for some of your friends, conducted by the Executive Director
- Accompany the Executive Director or other staff on donor visits
- Organize a 2-hour volunteer party with friends or colleagues
- Recruit new board members with fundraising experience and connections
- Recruit Wintergreens or Farm Party sponsors
- Volunteer to help at Wintergreens or the Farm Party

### Desserts

- Collect copies of other organizations' solicitations and annual reports for GCH staff
- Make thank you calls to donors
- Promote and attend one of our annual events and mingle with donors



# Sample Board Fundraising Agreement

## Sample board fundraising agreement

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

To support the mission of our organization, I agree to take on the following:

**1. My gift:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Payment completed by (date) \_\_\_\_\_

Terms of payment (check, credit card, installments, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Prospects.** I will provide names and contact information for \_\_\_\_\_ prospects by (date) \_\_\_\_\_. Even if I am unable to follow up with all of these people personally, I will still add names to the list for mailings, event invitations, etc.

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## Sample board fundraising agreement (continued)

**3. My fundraising support tasks** (taken from our menu):

**a. Activity** \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Projected revenue (if applicable) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Help / support needed from staff or board \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**b. Activity** \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Projected revenue (if applicable) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Help / support needed from staff or board \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**c. Activity** \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Projected revenue (if applicable) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Help / support needed from staff or board \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of board member/volunteer      Signature of board chair

# **Empowering Adirondack Nonprofit Boards for Success**

## **Part 5: Orientation & Training for New Board Members**

Facilitated by

**John Bernardi & Bryan Hartman**

Sponsored by

- **Adirondack Foundation**
- **Cloudsplitter Foundation**
- **United Way of the Adirondack Region**

**April 4, 2024**

# Purpose of Board Orientation

- Provides new board members information, context and perspective to speed up the learning curve
- Learn the mission, goals and strategic direction of the organization
- Explain the governance process
- Review fiduciary duties
- Review policies and procedures
- Start developing new relationships

# Board Governance

- Articles of Incorporation
  - established in \_\_\_\_\_
  - Nonprofit corporation
  - exempt under IRS sec. 501(c)\_organization
- Bylaws
  - governance duties
  - specifics
- Policies
  - Interprets bylaws and articles
  - Best course of action for now and the future
- Strategic Plan
  - Roadmap for 3 to 5 years
  - Guide for officers, board, committees and staff
- Annual Budget

# Board of Directors

- Number of voting members
- Review list of current members
- Officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Past President (maybe others)
- Committees and board member participation
- Executive Director is a non-voting position

# The Board - Staff Relationship

## Two Partners, One Team

- Board focuses on governance, direction and vision
- Staff manages day-to-day operations within the context of the board's direction
- This partnership between board and staff allows the organization to achieve its goals, avoids micro-management of the staff and over-taxing of the volunteer leaders. Leaders govern; staff manages.



# Board Responsibilities

- Establish strategic plan and annual goals and objectives
- Determine association policy
- Allocate resources through the budget
- Monitor progress
- Promote the organization
- Fundraising
- Oversee the executive director, attorney and CPA

# Budget and Financial Responsibilities

- Board reviews and accepts financial reports
- Board approves budget
- Board ensures an annual audit, then reviews audit report and year-end financial statements prepared by outside auditor
- Board views Form 990 IRS submission annually

# Legal Considerations

- Duty of Care
  - Good organization judgment at all times
  - Due diligence in decision making
- Duty of Loyalty
  - Act in the best interest of the organization and membership
  - Avoid conflicts of interest
- Duty of Obedience
  - Faithful to the mission and goals
  - Follow the governing documents

# Expectations of Board Members

- Attend all board meetings
- Understand the mission, bylaws, and strategic plan
- Prepare for meetings
- Stick to established agendas during meetings
- Treat information and discussions as confidential
- Be respectful of people and ideas
- Promote organization to others
- Recruit future members and leaders
- Stay current on issues and trends
- Volunteer for committees
- Readily communicate with staff

# Contents of Orientation Packet

- Board Orientation Agenda
- History One Pager
- Staff Org Chart
- Program Highlights Covering a Year's Time
- Board Roles, Responsibilities and Policies
- List of Current Board Members
- List of Board Committees, Charge, and Members of Each
- List of Upcoming Meetings and Events
- Any Strategic Planning Document
- Approved Budget – Most Recent
- Most Recent Monthly Financials
- Most Recent Audited Financial Statement
- Copy of Organization's Bylaws
- Fundraising One Pager
- Board Meeting Minutes – Last Three Meetings
- Agenda for the First Board Meeting

# **Empowering Adirondack Nonprofit Boards for Success**

## **Part 6: Nonprofit Lifecycles & Alternative Governance Models**



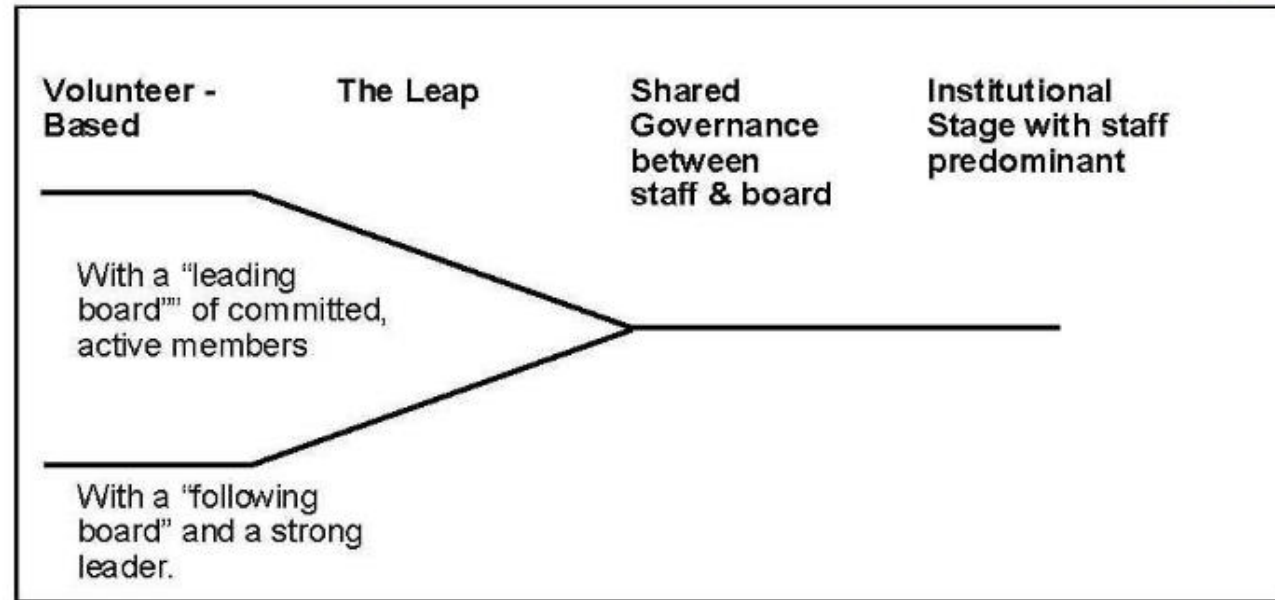
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**March 28, 2024**

# How organizations change: The Four Stages



Adapted with permission from Institute for Conservation Leadership, [www.icl.org](http://www.icl.org)



## **Alternative governance models** **We'll explore three approaches...**

1. Tweaks and hacks to the current model
2. Rethinking governance
3. Other structures beyond the 501(c)(3)

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## Strategy 1: Tweaks and hacks

### **Project Chimps**, Morganton, GA

#### Innovation: **Couples sharing a board seat**

- One vote per couple
- More accessible for busy young families
- Couples reinforce each other's commitment
- Bonus points: More cred with their kids!





## Youth as Resources, Baltimore, MD

Innovation:  
**Youth-led board  
of directors**

- Grantmaker – since 1994, raised and re-granted over \$1M to 500-plus youth-led projects
- Workforce and leadership development, organizing, advocacy, and disability rights programs
- **Board: 23 youth and young adults, ages 14–24**



## More tweaks and hacks

- Fewer meetings! If you're simply sharing info – and not making decisions – consider cancelling the meeting
- Fewer standing committees; more as-needed, time-limited work groups
- Replace development committee with seasonal committees; each season focuses on one fundraising project

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## Major tweak

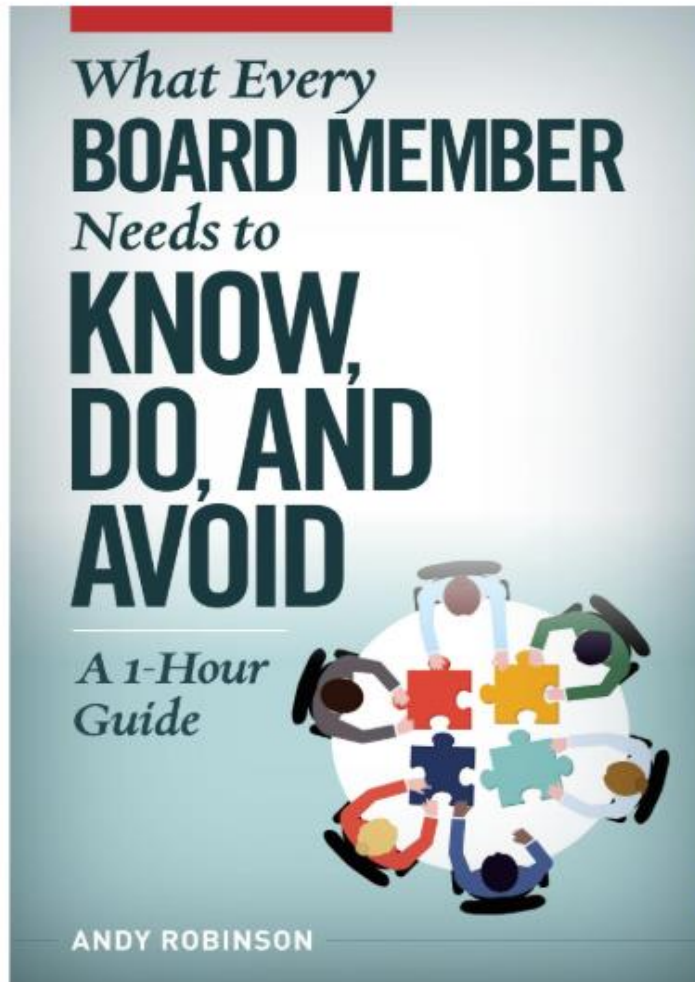
# Online board meetings



Increases accessibility for some;  
limits accessibility for others.

**What's your current model?**

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**Andy's latest book**

Available from

<https://hilborn-civilsectorpress.com/>