

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.

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—The Editors

The Family Planning Manager

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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.

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 Responsibilites
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.

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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