

Example of Nonprofit Board Commitment Form

Thank you for your willingness to serve as a director of _____ board. This is a responsibility that should not be taken lightly, as your actions will impact the lives of those we serve. As a director, you have full responsibility (along with other board members) for the legal, financial, and ethical practices of _____.

This board agreement serves as your promise to serve the mission of _____. By signing it, you are stating that you understand your responsibilities and agree to fulfil them to the best of your abilities.

Ten Basic Responsibilities of a Board Member:¹

| Initial | Item: |
|---------|--|
| _____ | 1. Determine the mission and purposes and advocate for them |
| _____ | 2. Select the chief executive of the organization |
| _____ | 3. Support, supervise and evaluate the chief executive |
| _____ | 4. Ensure effective planning |
| _____ | 5. Monitor and strengthen programs and services |
| _____ | 6. Ensure adequate financial resources |
| _____ | 7. Protect the organization's assets and provide financial oversight |
| _____ | 8. Build and sustain a competent and active board of directors |
| _____ | 9. Ensure legal and ethical integrity |
| _____ | 10. Enhance the organization's public standing |

Most Common Errors: Equally important to the responsibilities you must fulfil is a commitment to avoid pitfalls and governance mistakes, which harm the organization. The list below are the most common errors that you are asked to avoid:²

| Initial | Item: |
|---------|--|
| _____ | 1. Failing to understand your fiduciary duty as a board member |
| _____ | 2. Failing to provide effective oversight of the organization |
| _____ | 3. Blind deference (rubber stamping) to the executive committee, board president, chief executive and/or founder. |
| _____ | 4. Attempting to manage/supervise staff or operations (the only staff the board should supervise is the chief executive) |
| _____ | 5. Avoiding hard questions |
| _____ | 6. Insufficient conflict management |
| _____ | 7. Lack of awareness of the laws that affect nonprofit governance |
| _____ | 8. Operating with outdated and/or inconsistent governing documents |
| _____ | 9. Airing disagreements outside the board room |
| _____ | 10. Failure to cultivate board diversity |
| _____ | 11. Recruiting and selecting board members without due care |
| _____ | 12. Failing to education/motivate board members |
| _____ | 13. Failing to document actions appropriately |
| _____ | 14. Failing to review program effectiveness and take appropriate action |
| _____ | 15. Failing to hold executive director and other board members accountable |

¹ From [Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards](#) by Richard T. Ingram

² Based on an article from Ellis Carter on the blog *Charity Lawyer*

As a board member of _____, you are agreeing to the following:

- | Initials | Item |
|----------|---|
| _____ | 1. Fulfill the ten basic responsibilities and avoid the common errors listed above. |
| _____ | 2. Represent _____ work and values to the community and act as a spokesperson when needed. |
| _____ | 3. Always keep the mission and the clients in the forefront of my mind and act in their best interests |
| _____ | 4. Participate fully by attending at least 80% of meetings, arriving on time and being prepared for the meeting by reading any preparatory documents before I arrive (these may include financial statements, reports, planning documents, etc.) |
| _____ | 5. Notify the board in advance if I cannot attend a meeting |
| _____ | 6. Serve as an active member of at least one committee |
| _____ | 7. Make a significant personal contribution to _____ that reflects the top 1-2 charitable contributions my family makes annually. |
| _____ | 8. Actively participate in fundraising activities |
| _____ | 9. Excuse myself from any discussions or votes where I may have a conflict of interest |
| _____ | 10. Maintain appropriate confidentiality |
| _____ | 11. Support recommendations of committees whenever possible |
| _____ | 12. Encourage and respect contributions of fellow board members |
| _____ | 13. Respect and support the Executive Director's authority, communicate ideas about program or administrative activities directly to them (rather than to staff or clients) and avoid making requests of or having operating discussions with staff |
| _____ | 14. Stay informed about what's going on in the organization and development in fields relevant to the organization |
| _____ | 15. Participate and take responsibility for making decisions on issues, policies, and other matters. I will NOT stay silent if I have questions or concerns |
| _____ | 16. Participate in the assessment of my fulfillment of these duties and, if asked, agree to step down from the board |

As a board member, you can expect _____ staff to do the following:

- Provide you with regular updates on organizational activities and progress toward goals.
- Offer and facilitate opportunities for you to meet and interact appropriately with our clients.
- Keep you informed about issues in the field and offer opportunities for professional development as a board member.
- Respond to requests for information in a timely and straightforward manner.

I am eager to serve the mission of _____ as a board member and agree to serve the organization to the best of my ability as described above.

Signature

Date