



10 Essential Questions Every Nonprofit Board Candidate Must Ask

Here's a comprehensive list of questions to ask before you say yes to a board seat with a nonprofit:

I. Fiduciary & Risk Oversight

1. Financial Health & Risk: "Beyond reviewing the annual audit, what are the primary financial metrics the board reviews monthly? What is the board's biggest non-financial risk concern right now (e.g., regulatory, reputational), and what active steps are we taking to mitigate it?"
2. Executive Succession: "What formal processes are in place to preparing for a legal or financial crisis? How does the board become informed of these issues?"

II. Strategy & Impact

1. Strategic Clarity: "What is the organization's single most critical strategic priority for the next 18-24 months, and what is the board's specific role in achieving it?"
2. Measuring Success: "Can you describe how the board currently measures the impact and success of our programs, beyond simple headcounts or services rendered? What metrics do we use to evaluate our effectiveness in the community?"

III. Board Engagement & Culture

1. Governance vs. Management: "Could you share a recent example of a major decision where the board pushed back on the Executive Director, and a decision where the board deferred entirely to management? This helps me understand the 'line' between governance and management."
2. Board Accountability & Engagement: "What mechanisms are in place to address underperforming or disengaged board members, and what is the board's established process for its own annual self-evaluation?"

IV. Recruitment & Onboarding

1. Skill Gaps & Recruitment: "What is one significant gap in the current board composition—a skill, background, or demographic—that the committee is actively trying to fill through this recruitment process?"
2. New Member Onboarding: "How are new board members typically onboarded, and what specific training or mentoring is provided to ensure they fully understand their legal and financial duties and other board responsibilities?"



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V. Fundraising & External Relations

1. Fundraising Expectations: "What are the specific, measurable expectations for board members in terms of personal financial contributions, 'opening doors,' and actively participating in fundraising or advocacy events?"
2. Staff/Board Morale: "If I were to ask staff members one thing they wish the board understood better, what do you think that would be? What is the general sentiment or morale among the staff regarding the board's involvement?"

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