Strategies for Improving Board Recruitment, Engagement, and Retention

2020 Management & Leadership Training Conference
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Agenda

- Strategically Recruiting and Selecting Board Members
- Developing Effective Board Orientation and Training
- Boosting Board Engagement and Retention
- Keeping the Board Fresh
Who’s Here?

- **Board Members:** How many years have you served on the board?
  - 0 to 3 years
  - 3 to 5 years
  - 5 to 10 years
  - 10 to 15 years
  - 15 to eternity . . .

- **Staff:** How many years have you worked in Community Action?
  - 0 to 3 years
  - 3 to 5 years
  - 5 to 10 years
  - 10 to 15 years
  - 15 to eternity . . .
Strategically Recruiting and Selecting Board Members
Board Recruitment and Selection Procedure

1. Use board committee
2. Recruit smartly & strategically
3. Require applications
4. Follow selection procedures
How do you get the right people on the board?
How do you get the right people on the board?

- Are there areas of expertise you wish were represented on your board?
- What are some ways in which your CAA could develop a pipeline of candidates for board service?
Tripartite Board Resource

**Raising the Low-Income Voice**

Case Studies in Democratic Selection Procedures

**INTRODUCTION**

Since the inception of the Economic Opportunity Act, a fundamental goal of Community Action has been to provide low-income individuals with a voice in the administration of its poverty alleviation programs. With the Community Service Block Grant’s (CSBG) call to achieve “maximum participation” of the low-income community in the development, planning, implementation, and evaluation of CSBG-funded programs, a critical venue for the low income community’s participation is through their representation on the tripartite board.

Despite the importance placed on maximum participation of the low-income community, there is relatively little federal law that explains what this means in the context of democratic selection procedures. The federal CSBG Act requires that “(i) not fewer than 1/3 of the members [of the board] are persons chosen in accordance with democratic selection procedures adequate to assure that these members are representative of low-income individuals and families in the neighborhood served; and (ii) each representative of low-income individuals and families selected to represent a specific neighborhood within a community resides in the neighborhood represented by the member.”

The only further federal guidance comes in the Information Memorandum (IM) 82 from the Office of Community Services (OCS). This nonbinding guidance advises Community Action Agencies (CAAs) to “assure that board members representing low-income individuals and families have been selected on the basis of some form of democratic procedure either directly through election, public forum, or, if not possible, through a similar democratic process such as election to a position of responsibility in another significant service or community organization such as a school PTA, a faith-based organization leadership group, or an advisory board/governing council to another low-income service provider.” IM 82 advises CAAs to ensure democratic selection procedures “directly through election [or] public forum,” but if that is not possible, it lists a number of alternatives. These case studies are focused on the “direct” democratic procedures. If a CAA determines that direct democratic procedures are not possible, it will likely be able to comply with the law by creating what may be called “indirect” democratic selection procedures, whereby the CAA asks another entity comprised primarily of individuals elected from the low-income community (e.g., a tenants association from a local low-income housing development) to select someone from their organization to sit on the CAAs board.

While it is clear that CAAs must establish some kind of democratic selection procedure, it is not clear from the federal law what those procedures should—or may—look like. Given this, it may come as no surprise that one of the more common questions asked of CAPLAW is, “How do we conduct a democratic selection process?” Therefore, we have created these case studies to help the Community Action network answer this question by learning from their peers.

**CAPLAW Case Studies:**

Democratic Selection Procedures, [http://caplaw.org/resources/PublicationDocuments/raisingthelowincomevoice.html](http://caplaw.org/resources/PublicationDocuments/raisingthelowincomevoice.html)
CAPLAW FAQ: Elected Public Official Representatives,
INTRODUCTION: The Board’s Role in the CSBG Organizational Standards

This case study focuses on how the tripartite board of a public Community Action Agency (CAA) fulfills its responsibilities with respect to the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Organizational Standards set forth in the federal Office of Community Services’ (OCS) Information Memorandum (IM) No. 13B. Because a public CAA and its tripartite board are usually operating under the auspices of an established local government framework, the applicability of the CSBG Organizational Standards (Standards) is markedly different from their applicability to a nonprofit CAA.

While the federal CSBG Act requires the board to “participate actively in the development, planning, implementation and evaluation1 of Community Action programs, the reality of how to fulfill this role in an impactful way is not always clear. A public CAA tripartite board often perceives its ability to act on behalf of the public CAA as limited by the level of authority delegated to it by the local governing body. Even though establishing a delegation of authority arrangement is necessary and important, doing so does not lessen the impact and role the board plays. As you will see in this case study, defining and establishing the role of your public CAA tripartite board helps to foster a positive relationship between the board and the local governing officials and results in more engaged and effective board members.

After spending time speaking with representatives of Montgomery County Community Action Agency (MCCAA), a public CAA in Maryland, we were impressed by the ways in which its tripartite board helps the CAA achieve compliance with the Standards. Two key characteristics stand out with MCCAA’s board – they understand the vital role they play and they embrace that role. Even though MCCAA’s delegation of authority arrangement does not often place the tripartite board in a decision-making position, the board continually manages to effect change. This case study highlights many of the ways in which the board does so. The board not only takes very seriously the recommendations it is asked to make but it is also constantly advocating on behalf of MCCAA and the low-income community. A few of the ways in which the board fulfills its responsibilities include: developing and implementing initiatives to engage the community served; regularly meeting with local government officials; participating in county-wide hearings and meetings; and collaborating with other county groups to ensure the community’s needs are met.

MCCAA acknowledges that it is not yet 100% in compliance with the Standards but the ongoing efforts of its tripartite board to reach that goal are inspiring and, we hope, informative, especially for those public CAA tripartite boards that are struggling with challenges related to compliance with the Standards. Throughout this case study, we identify Standards that we believe MCCAA’s tripartite board is either addressing or attempting to address through its actions. Our goal with this case study is not to identify all of the Standards that may be met through the board’s efforts; but rather, to highlight key characteristics of the board that contribute to its effectiveness and compliance with CSBG Organizational Standards.

A Note on Bylaws

- Give board maximum flexibility to recruit, select and seat board members
- Check that bylaws reflect grant requirements (CSBG, Head Start, etc.)
  - Board composition
  - Board selection
- Follow procedures outlined in bylaws
Bylaws/Governing Documents

Standard 5.3: Nonprofit

- Org’s bylaws have been reviewed by an attorney within the past 5 years (not applicable to public CAA).

Standard 5.4: Nonprofit/Public

- Org/dept. documents that each board member has received a copy of the bylaws within the past 2 years.
Developing Effective Board Orientation and Training
Board Alignment

Effective

Board

Orientation

And

Training
Why Conduct Orientation and Training?

- A knowledgeable board is empowered, aligned, and more likely to engage
- To ensure board members are equipped and prepared to carry out their responsibilities as board members
- To ensure a high-functioning board and strong board-Executive Director relationship
- To help increase board engagement
Why Conduct Orientation and Training?

**Standard 5.7: Nonprofit/Public**

- Org./Dept. has a process to provide a structured orientation for governing/ advisory board members within 6 months of being seated.

**Standard 5.8: Nonprofit/Public**

- Board members have been provided with training on their duties and responsibilities within the past 2 years.
What’s the Difference Between Orientation and Training?

**Orientation:**
- Occurs when onboarding new board member
- Provides overview
- Highlights CAA-specific information
- Presented by staff or board
- Stimulates initial engagement

**Training:**
- Occurs within 2 years and preferably periodically throughout a year
- In-depth
- Focuses on single topic
- Presented by staff, board and/or 3rd party
- Supports ongoing engagement
Training & Orientation

Options

- Use a governance committee to work with executive director and designated staff to:
  - Develop a comprehensive approach
  - Identify topics, e.g., financial oversight, board operations, etc.
  - Establish methods, e.g., webinars, in-person, etc.
Orientation and Training Topics

1. Mission
2. History
3. Programs
4. Strategic direction
5. Financial oversight
6. Strategic planning
7. Organizational structure
8. Board composition
9. Board roles & responsibilities
10. Board operations
How Should You Conduct Training?

- In-person
- Webinars
- Videos
- Training modules
- Conferences
- Group discussion (including of handbooks, articles, policies)
- One-on-one meetings
- Mentoring
- Committee participation
- On-site tours
- Volunteering
- Advisory committee (for potential board members)
How Should You Conduct Training?

- Practical examples (case studies/scenarios)
- Role playing
- Small group discussion
- Opportunities to apply what they’ve learned
- Encourage sharing of ideas, experiences
- Opportunity for Q&A
- Problem solving
- Quizzes
Available at www.caplaw.org or www.communityactionpartnership.com
Board Operations Scenario One

Even though CAA board member Sheila is really proud of all the amazing work the CAA does in the community, she recently became concerned about employee wages at the CAA. After reading an article in the local newspaper about nonprofit employees facing the same financial challenges as the clients they serve, Sheila contacted the CAA’s Human Resources Coordinator and asked to see the salaries for all CAA employees.

Do you agree with Sheila’s approach? Why or Why not?
Example Orientation Exercise: Board Member/Staff Contact

Direct Contact
3. Seek staff input on ED evaluation

4. Reports of fraud, misuse of resources, discrimination or harassment involving the ED

Via the ED
1. Coordinate board meeting logistics with staff admin

2. Staff liaison assists with board committee business
Training & Orientation Tool for Nonprofit CAA Tripartite Boards

Board Roles & Responsibilities: Nonprofit Community Action Agencies PowerPoint

This presentation was created in response to a need in the network for training and orientation materials that state Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) offices, state associations, and individual Community Action Agencies (CAAs) can use to educate their own boards and staff that work with the board on the board's vital role in the organization. This presentation is specifically for tripartite boards of nonprofit CAAs and acts as a guide for those training or orientating board members on the board's responsibilities.

The various ways we envision the Community Action network using the presentation include:

- Giving the presentation in its entirety;
- Presenting the slides in sections as noted on the webpages; and/or
- Augmenting an existing presentation with specific slides from this presentation.

Introduction to and Tips for Training and Orientation Tool for Nonprofit CAA Tripartite Boards

Download the Introduction

Board Roles & Responsibilities PowerPoint

Download Full PowerPoint

Download by Individual Section

Brief Introductions
Legal Requirements Governing Tripartite Boards
A Few Brief Points About How a Board of Directors Operates
Role of the Tripartite Board
**News: All a-Board! The Purpose, People, and Process of CAA Boards**

*Free Video Series!

Introducing CAPLAW’s new video series, All a-Board! The Purpose, People, and Process of CAA Boards. CAPLAW developed these 6-10 minute animated shorts to boost the capacity of community action agency (CAA) boards to recruit, engage, and fulfill their responsibilities.

Whether you’re a new CAA board member eager to orient yourself to the work of community action, an existing board member looking for clarity on your role and responsibilities, or a board chair planning to facilitate a training at the next board meeting, the All a-Board series can serve as a starting point or a refresher. As standalone resources, the videos offer frameworks and hypotheticals based on real-life board situations to help directors understand key aspects of CAA board service. They also complement CAPLAW’s existing resources, highlighting important issues that board members can learn more about in our other publications.

These brief videos can be viewed by board members on their own at each board member’s convenience, or as a group as part of a full board training or series of short board trainings at the beginning of each board meeting. However they’re consumed, CAs may use these videos to help meet CSBG Organizational Standards 5.7 and 5.8, which call upon organizations to conduct board orientations and ongoing board trainings.

These initial three videos offer an overview of why CAA board titles exist, the reasons people serve, and how effective boards operate. The videos also review specific local and governance issues that impact CAA boards, and present practical guidance to help board members navigate board service.

And stay tuned for more! CAPLAW plans to release additional short board videos as part of the All a-Board! series.

*Provide feedback on the video series! Help us create additional videos in this series! Share them with your CAA's board members and complete this feedback survey by December 31, 2019.*
Boosting Board Engagement and Retention
Engagement Scenario

Jack, a recently retired school superintendent, joined the CAA board 10 years ago and continually gets re-elected to the private sector. He assumes he is on the board because the CAA operates a Head Start program. He is tired of attending community gatherings and interacting regularly with others – he did it for over 30 years with his school job. He likes his fellow board members and makes a real effort to attend board meetings focused on early education matters, but doesn’t worry if he can’t make other meetings. Is Jack an engaged board member?
Ways to **INCREASE** Engagement

- Strategically Recruiting
- Regularly Orienting & Training
- Building Relationships
- Conducting Assessments
- Connecting with Community
Building Relationships
Executive Director and Board Members

- Meet one-on-one with board members; among other things, find out:
  - What motivates each to serve on the board?
  - How do they connect with the org’s mission?
  - What do they hope to gain from board service?
  - What can they contribute?
  - What skills/knowledge do they need or want to develop to become a more effective board member?
  - What could make their experience more satisfying?

- Periodic check-ins
Building Relationships
Executive Director and Board Members

- Help them get to know one another
- Encourage board members to be actively engaged at board meetings
  - Seek input from individual board members
- Conclude meeting with action items
  - Assign tasks to committees or individuals
  - Check in between board meetings to be sure they have the support they need
Developing Board Members

- Alert board members to opportunities to develop their skills

- Be on the lookout for board members who show aptitude for and interest in leadership roles
  - Give them an opportunity to try out those roles (assignments, projects)

- "Know that every board member has value to offer and discover how best to maximize what each has to offer"
  - Board Source: Building the Governance Partnership: The Chief Executive’s Guide to Getting the Most from the Board
SECTION 1: VISION AND MISSION

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ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS BASED ON YOUR PERCEPTION OF BOARD’S PERFORMANCE

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<td>1. The organization has clearly stated vision and mission statements.</td>
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<td>2. The organization’s vision and mission have specific goals.</td>
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<td>3. The organization’s mission is clearly understood and accepted by the board.</td>
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<td>4. The board considers how all programs, activities, and policy decisions fit with the organization’s mission.</td>
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<td>5. There is consensus among the board that the vision and mission accurately reflect where the organization is headed in the next two to three years.</td>
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6. What are your suggestions for how the board can do a better job in this area?
Board Assessment

Process

1. Get your full board on board!
2. Establish a group of board members to oversee the process
3. Administer the assessment tool
4. Tabulate responses
5. Discuss results – strengths, weaknesses
6. Establish a realistic action plan
7. Follow up and reassess!
Board Assessment

Resources

• Decide on and use appropriate format/tool

  
  
  
Strategies for Board Retention

▪ Be clear about board responsibilities during recruitment

▪ Provide adequate orientation and training, especially on “board basics”

▪ Actively solicit input from new board members and be intentional about providing opportunities to participate
Strategies for Board Retention

▪ Use mentors
▪ Use the press and social media to recognize contributions of new board members
▪ Think about the “extras” – child care, meals
▪ Conduct board assessments to identify challenges and concerns
Keeping the Board Fresh
Coasting Board Member Scenario

Carol is chair of CAA’s six-member board. Another board member, George, joined the board 14 years ago. While he is amiable and friendly with other members before and after board meetings, he never comments on agenda items, doesn’t offer new ideas, and spends most meetings seated quietly at the table looking at his phone or staring out the window. Several board members recently commented to Carol that they noticed George sleeping at points during the last two board meetings. When Carol confronted George about it he smiled gently and remarked, “We should get some stronger coffee for the meetings from now on.”

Carol wants an engaged, dynamic board. What bylaw provisions could help her “freshen” up the board and keep it “fresh“?
Board Size

- Look at board size and decide on right number of board members
  - Federal CSBG Act does **NOT** address board size
  - Some states’ CSBG law and/or regs impose board size requirements
    - **Example**: AL CSBG Statute, Ala. Code 11-96-3(b) establishes range of 15 to 51 board members
Board Members’ Terms

- Federal CSBG Act does NOT address CAA board terms or term limits
- Bylaws should state board members’ terms
  - Check state law!
  - If the bylaws are silent, some state nonprofit corporation law sets a default term
Board Members’ Terms

- May provide for **staggered terms**
  - Good idea to have a mix of new and experienced board members
  - Terms can be different lengths for different sectors

- **Three-year terms is a common term length for nonprofit board members**
Term Limits

- If state law does not specify term limits, CAA board members may serve for any number of successive terms
  - Individual CAAs may decide to have term limits
  - Some CAAs permit board members who have reached their term limits to re-join the board after a break (e.g., 1 year)
Removal of Board Members

- Specify whether removal can be without cause, or whether it must be for cause
  - If for cause, define or give example(s) of what cause is in bylaws
    - But use “including, but not limited to”
- Specify vote needed to remove board member in bylaws

Recommendation

- Consider including strong removal provisions in bylaws and use them if necessary.
SAVE THE DATE
Chicago, Illinois  |  June 30 - July 2

2020 CAPLAW
National Training Conference
Your feedback is important to us.
Please complete the paper evaluation and return it to the presenter.