

# Building an Engaged Board

Monday, January 26, 2026





# Our Journey (Agenda)



Purpose, Mission, and Vision



Know Your Board Role



Stay Engaged



Educate Yourself



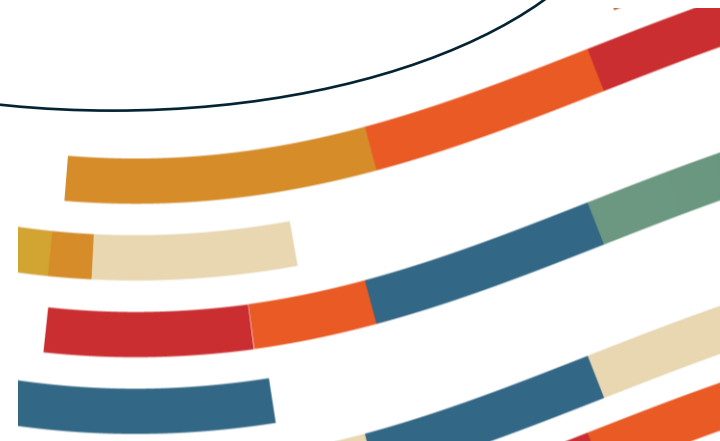


# Board Service is Stewardship

A mission-centered board is one that consistently asks,  
*“Does this advance the impact we exist to create?”*  
and has the courage to act on the answer.

Board members are **responsible**  
**for an organization’s reason for**  
**being, the communities it serves,**  
and the **future** it is working  
toward.

Board members are **entrusted**  
**with something much larger** than  
the organization as it exists today.



# Purpose, Mission, and Vision DEFINED

## **Purpose: Why do we exist?**

- Purpose speaks to the need in the world that calls the organization into being.
- It anchors the organization morally and socially, especially in times of change or uncertainty.

## **Mission: What the organization does, for whom, and to what end (right now)**

- A clear mission helps boards recognize when opportunities advance impact and when they create mission drift.
- It is both a compass and a boundary.

## **Vision: What is the future the organization strives to create?**

- Vision invites board members to look beyond today's constraints to the long-term change the organization seeks.
- It helps frame difficult decisions, strategic investments, and conversations about growth, sustainability, and relevance.
- Vision keeps the board oriented toward impact rather than maintenance.

# Know Your Board Role



Purpose, Mission, and Vision are the foundation for **Board Responsibilities:**

- Ensure legal & ethical integrity
- Strategic decision-making
- Fiduciary oversight and resource stewardship
- setting and protecting organizational priorities
- Hire, support, monitor, and evaluate the CEO/Executive Director
- Risk-management
- Equity, inclusion, and community accountability (ensure public standing)
- Personal and collective engagement on the board

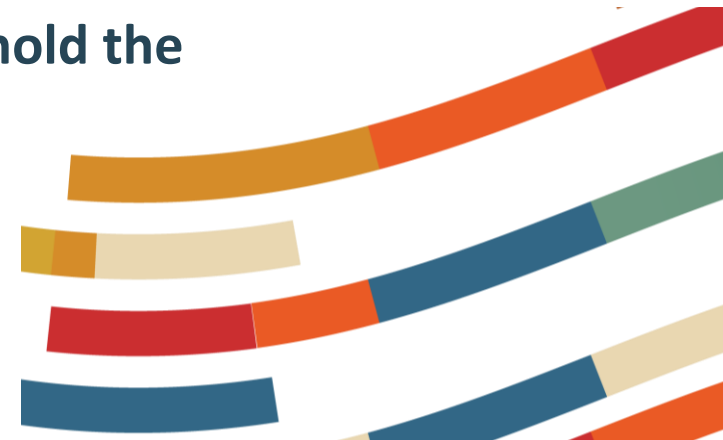


# Board Service is Values-Aligned Work

This work is especially important in the current environment, where organizations face:

- changing community needs
- funding pressures
- expectations around equity and representation
- staff burnout and leadership transition
- rapid social and technological change

In moments like these, the board's role is not to do more tasks—it is to **hold the organization steady in its purpose while allowing it to evolve in form.**





# Temperature Check

**What does this organization exist to change or make possible in the world?**

**What feels most essential to protect about this mission?**

**How does my own sense of purpose connect to this organization's purpose?**

**Where might we be drifting away from our purpose—without realizing it?**

**How do our decisions reflect who we say we serve?**





# Stay Engaged



# Myths of Low Board Engagement

## **Myth #1:**

I expect too much of my board already.

## **Myth #2:**

Board members don't volunteer because they don't want to.

## **Myth #3:**

I don't have high turnover, so my board members must be happy.

# Signs of Low Board Engagement



## Productivity

- Missing Assignments
- Misalignment of mission
- Waiting to be asked to complete tasks

Check:  
Participation Rates



## Attendance

- Lateness
- Absenteeism
- Leaving Early
- Frequent scheduling conflicts

Check:  
Track attendance



## Turnover

- Failing to complete full term
- Low satisfaction
- Lack of engagement during meetings

Check:  
Monitor term limits



CHESTER COUNTY  
**community**  
FOUNDATION

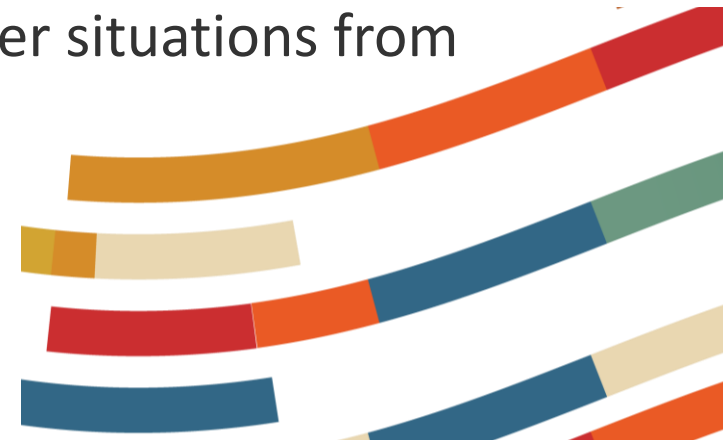




# Engaged board members

...

- Consistently ask themselves questions (Am I playing my role? What do I need to know and understand?)
- Stay well informed about new developments, emerging trends and the implications on the future
- Are motivated and willing to commit the time to govern effectively.
- Voluntarily seek to be well informed and knowledgeable.
- Think and speak confidently in discussions about a current crisis and complex future challenges
- Display creative thinking and consider situations from various angles



# Create an Enjoyable Experience

**Stir their  
emotions**

**Learn and  
Grow  
Together**

**Have Fun**

**Share stories**

**Exposure to  
the work**

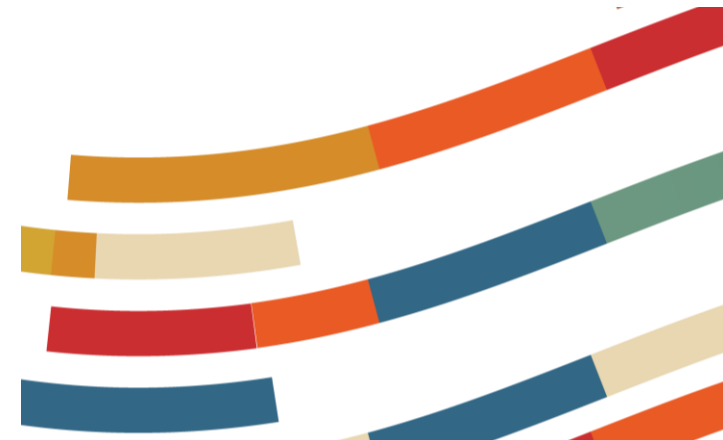
**Honor Folks  
Time**



# Educate Yourself

- ## *Create an action-oriented board culture...*

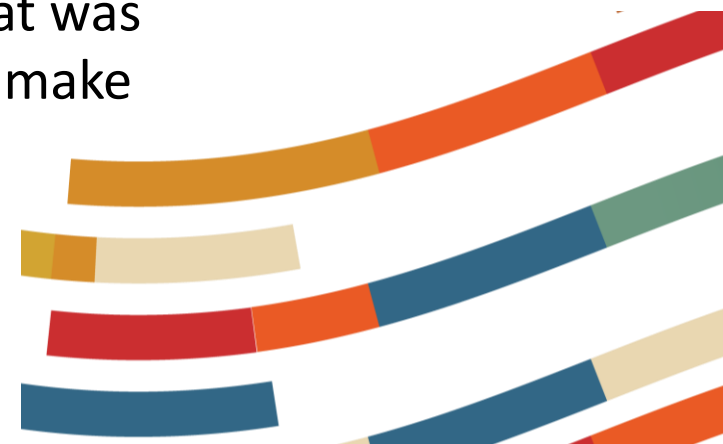
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# Take the Pulse (stay curious)

- **Welcome surveys** tell you why members joined in the first place. Once you understand their expectations, you can strategize about how your membership program can meet them.
- **End-of-year satisfaction surveys** about the programs, services, and resources you offer. This will get you ready to make changes in the coming year—especially before holding your annual member acquisition drive.
- **Post-event surveys** give you immediate feedback on how members feel about your offerings. Sending these out promptly will give you honest reactions while the event is still at the front of your members' minds.
- **Exit surveys and interviews** aren't always fun, but they show you what was missing for certain members. If you see a pattern, it might be time to make some changes.



# Top Board Engagement Survey Questions

- **Do You Understand Your Role as a Board Member?** Engaged board members clearly understand their roles.
- **How Would You Rate the Board's Effectiveness?**
  - Effectiveness of board structure
  - Competence of board members to lead the organization in the right direction
  - Board's commitment to the organization's overall vision and culture
  - If most responses are negative, you may need to improve your board structure, provide training, or seek out an advisory board.
- **How Would You Rate the Board Meetings?**
  - Board meetings should be effective and efficient. A low rating of board meetings shows room for improvement, such as:
    - More organized and structured agendas
    - Better agenda time management to keep meetings on task
    - Focus on the most important discussion topics, which can be discovered with engagement analytics
- **What Challenges Do You Face in Your Role?**
- **How Might We Improve Board Engagement?**

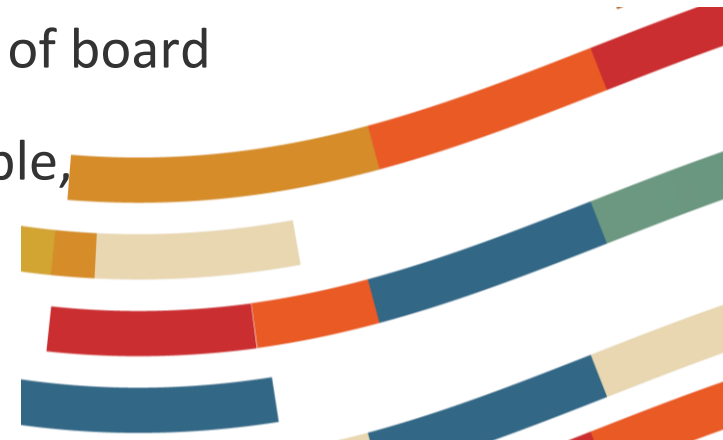




# Temperature Check

**Do your board members...**

- Feel valued and are enthusiastic about their board service.
- Trust one another and trust management.
- Take the time to discuss difficult issues.
- Feel the meeting agendas and management style encourage openness and participation.
- Believe the governance culture is open to alternative views and constructively challenges “conventional wisdom.”
- Use the majority of our meeting agendas and time together is devoted to strategic-level discussion and decision-making (what’s coming versus what has happened).
- Engage in critical conversations to positively impact how trustees relate to the CEO and to one another.
- Have a strong orientation program as a tool for productive engagement of board members.
- Conduct an assessment annually and use the results to develop actionable, measurable plans for governance improvement and engagement.





# Thank you for participating

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