

Some characteristics associated with healthy boards

- Bylaws in order
- Policies and meeting processes in place
- Job descriptions for Board Members-everyone has something to do
- A well organized Chair or President to lead the meeting
- Length of meeting is set
- Agendas and minutes prepared and circulated
- There is opportunity for everyone to speak at the meeting
- Mutual respect
- Fun! Some social aspect i.e. networking time, perhaps treats
- Dynamic
- Enthusiastic Nominating Committee
- Productive meetings
- There are opportunities to learn new skills
- Mutual trust
- Shared vision
- Strategic plan
- Regular evaluations
- Debriefing after heavy meetings
- Appreciation of the time given by board volunteers
- Recognition of contribution of board volunteers

Ideally new members know about the organization and the board; they have the skills needed or understand the skills they can gain by becoming involved; they are given the resources to help them understand the job they are being asked to do.

Things every board member must know about the organization: What year was org. incorporated; how many people does it serve per year; how many full and part time staff; how many volunteers assisted org last year; what is current year's total operating budget; is current budget break-even/projected surplus/projected deficit; was there a surplus/deficit last year; what are three major sources of revenue; what percentage of revenue is from each source; what are the two largest expenses (and what % of total expenses do those represent); what is minimum and maximum # of board members as stated in bylaws; who elects the officers of the board; what is the term of a director/officer; what is the fiscal year; who may sign documents on behalf of the org; what is the mission; what are major programs/services of the org; when was the last performance evaluation of the executive director; does the org have a strategic plan and what are major goals; what was last year's fundraising goal and was it met?

Examples of items in a board orientation binder: Code of conduct, confidentiality statement, job description of board members and executive positions, expectations of the board members, liability information, bylaws, history of the organization, the vision and mission of the organization, policies, strategic plan, budget, example of funding application, minutes of last year's meetings, financial statements, contact information for board and staff, brochure, annual report, space to add meeting minutes/agendas etc.