

BOARD CHAIR PREP KIT

Introduction

This **Board Chair Prep Kit** provides essential insights, quick tips, and best practices, focusing on the initial **30, 60, and 90-day periods**, as well as key planning tasks throughout the **first year**.

Serving as a board chair for a non-profit is an honor and a joy, but it can be challenging due to a lack of clarity or shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities. This guide aims to bridge that gap by offering comprehensive resources and insights to prepare you for success in your role.

As you delve into this kit, you will find detailed explanations of the core responsibilities and functions of a board chair. Additionally, the kit contains practical advice on common challenges faced by board chairs, such as managing board dynamics, facilitating productive meetings, and engaging with the community. By leveraging the tools and resources provided, you will be able to build a strong foundation for your leadership and enhance your effectiveness in guiding the board to success.

Board Chair Prep Kit Main Sections:

Section One - Trainings and Resources

Section Two - Role of a Board Chair

Section Three - Tips Before Being Elected as Board Chair

Section Four - Tips and Best Practices for Your First 30, 60, and 90 Days

Section Five - Board Chair Key Responsibilities

Section Six - Board Chair Key Functions & Activities

Section Seven - Sample Timeline of Key Board Chair Tasks

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Section One: Trainings and Resources

In addition to this prep kit, these resources are designed to support onboarding, address common challenges, and provide practical solutions that are essential for effective leadership. They cover various aspects, from governance and strategic planning to board member engagement and performance evaluations. Utilizing these tools will help you build a strong foundation for your board leadership and enhance your overall effectiveness in the role.

1. **Good-to-GOTR and GOTR-Need-to-Know:** Once a board member is elected and onboarded, they will be assigned Volunteer and Staff Training to complete from GOTR HQ. Good-to-GOTR provides a broad overview of Girls on the Run, essential expectations and empowering resources and information critical to a successful transition into Girls on the Run. GOTR Need-to-Know is the next step in the orientation process, after completion of Good-to-GOTR. New staff and board members will complete a series of self-paced virtual trainings and review policies designed to familiarize them with the organization's key initiatives, latest resources available from Girls on the Run HQ and to become informed of the overall health and vision of the organization.
2. **Board Resource Hub:** This is a comprehensive resource page designed for board members to support board operations, development, and engagement. Board members can use these resources to assist with strategic planning, board operations, member expectations, job descriptions, recruitment, onboarding, evaluations, performance reviews, and succession planning.
3. **Board Chair Training webinar:** This pre-recorded self-paced webinar is a valuable resource designed to provide board chairs with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in their roles.
4. **Board Fundamentals 4-part miniseries:** This pre-recorded self-paced series is designed to provide you with a thorough understanding of the fundamentals of board governance and the critical aspects of board service.

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Section Two: What is the role of a board chair?

The board chair is responsible for leading the board in the oversight, thinking, and support that are critical to good governance. By fully understanding and embracing your responsibilities and key functions, you will be better equipped to lead with confidence and efficiency.

It is essential to foster open communication and a collaborative environment among board members. This includes setting clear expectations, actively listening to diverse perspectives, and facilitating constructive discussions. Moreover, staying informed about the latest trends and best practices in governance will enable you to implement effective strategies and drive the organization forward.

Section Three: 3 Tips Before Being Elected as Board Chair

#1 Review the position description and term limits outlined in the bylaws:

A Girls on the Run board member must possess the time, passion, and commitment to improving the lives and opportunities of girls in third through eighth grades. Board members must take responsibility in raising awareness, funds, and resources that support the organizational infrastructure, sustainability, and capacity for growth.

Examine the position description thoroughly and inquire about the responsibilities, expectations, and accountability measures associated with the role. Non-profit board positions are typically either a two-year term with up to three renewals (total of six years) or three-year term with up to two renewals (total of six years). These terms, along with other board operations, are outlined in the bylaws.

#2 Meet with the executive director to discuss:

- Expectations and wishes around the working relationship between the board chair and executive director.
- The status of the strategic plan and their individual goals as executive director.
- Trends affecting the organization; challenges and opportunities facing the organization; relationships in the community.

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- Organization's financial health.

#3 Meet with the outgoing board chair to discuss (if possible):

- Expectations, role, and time commitment.
- The orientation and onboarding process.
- Milestones/celebrations and challenges that arose during their tenure.
- Unfinished board business to be aware of.
- Their working relationship with the executive director, board members, community leaders, donors, and other community stakeholders.
- Professional development opportunities and resources available to support board chair role.

Section Four:

Tips for your first 30, 60, and 90 days

First 30 days

Establish a relationship with the executive director

In Joan Garry's article, "[What's The Single Best Sign of a Healthy Nonprofit?](#)", she states, "The board chair and CEO need to act like co-pilots in the cockpit of a twin-engine jet, working in tandem to steer the plane safely." It is critical to schedule regular touchpoints that create a space where you can strengthen your relationship, communicate openly, address concerns in a timely manner, monitor strategic progress, and celebrate milestones.

Here are some best practices to achieve this:

1. **Weekly Check-In Meetings:** Schedule brief, weekly check-in meetings to discuss ongoing projects, address any immediate concerns, and celebrate small wins. These meetings do not need to be lengthy but should be consistent to provide a reliable touchpoint.
2. **Monthly Strategic Sessions:** Set aside time each month for more in-depth strategic sessions. These meetings should focus on long-term goals, major initiatives, and any potential obstacles that need to be navigated. This longer format allows for a thorough discussion of more complex issues.
3. **Open Communication Channels:** Establish open communication channels such as dedicated email threads or messaging apps. This ensures that both the board

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chair and executive director can quickly share updates or seek advice when needed.

4. **Informal Touchpoints:** Don't underestimate the power of informal touchpoints. Occasional lunch meetings, coffee breaks, or even casual drop-ins can help build rapport and create a more comfortable working relationship.

By implementing these strategies, you will establish a robust framework for continuous and effective communication, fostering a strong partnership that is crucial for steering the organization towards success.

First 60 days

Meet individually with all board members and officers.

Meet individually with all board members and officers. Building relationships with each board member is critical in fostering positive board culture. Set aside time to connect with each board member early on to learn more about their story, why they joined the board, what experience or talents they bring to the board, what committees they serve on, and what their overall board experience has been like.

Here are some best practices to achieve this:

1. **Schedule One-on-One Meetings:** Arrange individual meetings with each board member within the first 60 days. Use these sessions to understand their motivations, strengths, and expectations.
2. **Be Prepared:** Before each meeting, review the board member's background, their contribution to the board, and any notes from previous interactions. This preparation helps to make the conversation more meaningful and productive.
3. **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Encourage board members to share their thoughts and feelings by asking open-ended questions. This can provide deeper insights and foster a collaborative environment.
4. **Active Listening:** Demonstrate active listening by acknowledging their points, asking follow-up questions, and summarizing their key concerns or suggestions.
5. **Follow Up:** After the meetings, send a follow-up email to thank them for their time and outline any action items or next steps discussed during the meeting. This shows your commitment and helps maintain a structured approach.
6. **Periodic Check-Ins:** Continue to nurture these relationships through periodic check-ins and solicit their feedback to keep them engaged and informed.

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Tip: To continue to strengthen these relationships, consider icebreakers or mission moments at the beginning of board meetings, board buddies, or periodic social gatherings before or after board meetings.

First 90 days

#1 Understand the work of each committee and establish regular communication with committee chairs.

A best practice is for the board chair to serve on the finance and development committees and be the chair of the governance committee. Additionally, the board chair should understand and monitor the progress of each additional committee by meeting regularly with the committee chairs.

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Here are some best practices to achieve this:

1. **Attend Committee Meetings:** The board chair should make it a priority to attend committee meetings periodically to stay updated on their activities and challenges.
2. **Regular Updates:** Establish a routine where committee chairs provide updates in the consent agenda or during board meetings, ensuring everyone is informed about each committee's progress.
3. **One-on-One Meetings:** Schedule regular one-on-one meetings with committee chairs to discuss their specific goals, progress, and any support they might need.
4. **Establish a Reporting Framework:** Standardize how committee chairs report to ensure clear and consistent information.
5. **Encourage Collaboration:** Foster an environment where committee chairs feel comfortable collaborating and sharing insights with one another, promoting a cohesive approach to the board's objectives.
6. **Promote Teamwork:** Encourage committee chairs to work together and share their insights, leading to a unified approach to the board's goals.
7. **Professional Development:** Organize workshops and training sessions for committee chairs to enhance their leadership skills and committee effectiveness.

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8. **Feedback Mechanism:** Implement a feedback mechanism where committee chairs can share their thoughts and suggestions on how the board can better support their efforts.

#2 Review the strategic plan and goals.

Align with the board by thoroughly reviewing the organization's strategic plan. Understand progress to goals, the process, timing, and communication of updates.

Here are some best practices to achieve this:

1. **Read the Plan Thoroughly:** Start by carefully reading the entire strategic plan document. Pay close attention to the mission, vision, goals, and objectives outlined in the plan. Take notes on key areas and any questions or clarifications needed.
2. **Identify Key Metrics:** Look for the GOTR Mission Advancement Markers (MAMs) or key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics that will be used to measure progress towards the strategic goals. Understanding these metrics will help you track the organization's success and areas needing improvement.
3. **Schedule a Review Session:** Organize a dedicated session with the executive director or strategic planning committee to discuss the strategic plan in detail. Use this time to ask questions, seek clarifications, and gain insights into the rationale behind the strategic choices made.
4. **Analyze Past Performance:** Review the organization's past performance and compare them with the strategic goals. This will give you a sense of the organization's progress and areas where additional focus might be needed.
5. **Review Meeting Minutes:** Go through the minutes of previous board and committee meetings to identify discussions and decisions related to the strategic plan. This will help you understand the board's priorities and any ongoing initiatives.
6. **Create a Summary Document:** Develop a brief document outlining the strategic plan's main points, goals, and timelines as a quick reference guide for you and other board members.
7. **Ensure a Monitoring Mechanism:** Set up a regular monitoring mechanism to track the progress of the strategic plan. This could include periodic status reports from the executive team, dashboards with real-time data, or regular updates during board meetings.

Resource Tip: Mission Advancement Marker & Strategic Planning resources are available on the [Board Resource Page](#). The strategic planning resources are designed to support

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council leadership create strategic plans at the local level. Council leadership can leverage our Mission Advancement Markers (KPIs) in setting goals and planning. There are 4 Mission Advancement Markers that connect directly to boards: board size, board financial participation, competitive council director compensation, and board and staff diversity.

Section Five: Board Chair Key Responsibilities

To the executive director...	To the board...	To the board & executive director...
<p>Cultivate a working partnership with the executive director.</p> <p>Oversee the hiring, monitoring, compensation setting, and evaluation of the executive director.</p>	<p>Focus on governance responsibilities.</p> <p>Ensure that every board member carries out the roles and responsibilities of board service within the context of legal obligations.</p> <p>Be the contact for board members on board issues.</p> <p>Oversee a board evaluation process.</p>	<p>Ensure a comprehensive board engagement plan.</p> <p>Assess and monitor organizational alignment with mission.</p> <p>Engage in strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p>Oversee fiscal affairs and organizational assets.</p> <p>Ensure legal and ethical compliance of all board work.</p> <p>Develop and maintain risk management safeguards.</p> <p>Implement and adhere to strong governance practices.</p>

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Section Six: Board Chair Key Functions & Activities

<p>Board Meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend all board and executive committee meetings and other meetings or events as necessary. • Develop a board agenda of items that require board input and use a consent agenda for “information only” items. • Promote meaningful dialogue at board meetings and give every board member an opportunity to contribute.
<p>Board Structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other than the standing committees outlined in the bylaws, adopt a committee and work structure that efficiently supports the work of the board and ensures communication linkages. • Appoint board committee and task force chairs. • Ensure ongoing communication with the board. • Serve as ex officio member of all committees except the governance committee (<i>no need to attend all committee meetings, but firsthand experience does provide insight</i>).
<p>Greater Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate relationships with individual donors, funders, and other community stakeholders. • Serve as a community ambassador and advocate. • Serve in a public relations role by giving speeches, welcoming others, and/or showing support for lead players. • Write an article, column, or blog to be featured on the organization’s website, newsletter, or on other communication outlets.

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Section Seven: Sample Timeline of Key Board Chair Tasks

Resource: Review and customize the [Sample Governance Timeline](#) for your planning.

Weekly, Monthly, or Quarterly	Annual	Ongoing
<p>Consistent communication with the council director and board.</p> <p>Prepare for board meetings.</p> <p>Schedule executive committee sessions as needed.</p> <p>Prepare quarterly strategic planning reports; monitor and evaluate strategic plan.</p>	<p>Conduct council director evaluation.</p> <p>Conduct board evaluations and board self-assessment.</p> <p>Acknowledge and celebrate outgoing board members.</p> <p>Recruit and onboard new board members.</p> <p>Contact donors for annual campaign.</p> <p>Hold budget allocation meetings.</p> <p>Prepare for the annual meeting.</p> <p>Support strategic planning process</p>	<p>Engage with fundraising events; support/attend community events.</p> <p>Support/attend committee meetings.</p> <p>Identify board education opportunities.</p>

By familiarizing yourself with the strategic plan through these methods, you can ensure that you are well-prepared to lead the board in achieving the organization's long-term objectives.

Please reach out to your [regional director](#) for any questions or further information about your board chair service.