



What should I ask before joining a nonprofit board?

Ask questions about the organization's programs.

- What is the organization's mission?
- How do its current programs relate to the mission?
- Can I visit the organization to observe a program firsthand?
- Does the organization have a strategic plan that is reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis?

Ask questions about the organization's financial status.

- Is the financial condition of the organization sound?
- Does the board discuss and approve the annual budget?
- How often do board members receive financial reports?

Ask questions about the organization's clients or constituencies.

- Whom does the organization serve?
- Are the organization's clients or constituencies satisfied with the organization?

Ask questions about the structure of the board.

- How is the board structured?
- Are there descriptions of the responsibilities of the board as a whole and of individual board members?
- Are there descriptions of board committee functions and responsibilities?
- Who are the other board members?
- Is there a system of checks and balances to prevent conflicts of interest between board members and the organization?
- Does the organization have directors and officers liability coverage?

Ask questions about individual board members' responsibilities.

- What are the ways that you think I can contribute as a board member?
- How much of my time will be required for meetings and special events?
- How are committee assignments made?
- What orientation will I receive to the organization and to the responsibilities of board service?
- Does the organization provide opportunities for board development and education?
- What is the board's role in fundraising?
- Will I be expected to make a specific annual financial contribution?
- What role will I play in soliciting donors?

Ask questions about the board's relationship to the staff.

- Is the board satisfied with the performance of the executive staff?
- How do board members and senior staff typically work with each other?