

28 Tips to Help Make You a Better Charity Board Member

1. Always act honestly.
2. Always act in the best interests of the organization.
3. Know the organization's purposes or objects language in its constitution or letters patent.
4. Study the by-laws to see what governance mechanisms have been adopted, and ensure the bylaws are complied with.
5. If the organization has adopted rules and policies, read them.
6. Become familiar with the statutes under which the organization is incorporated, and any other statutes or regulations that are particularly relevant to the organization.
7. Become familiar with the legal and administrative requirements to maintaining charitable registration.
8. Bookmark and regularly visit the Charities Directorate website at <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/menu-eng.html>.
9. Understand what work the organization is doing, and learn its history.
10. Pay close attention to the state of the organization's finances.
11. Ensure that the financial records of the organization are clear, complete and meet book keeping standards acceptable to an accountant.
12. Ensure that the organization keeps complete and accurate non-financial records, including minutes of meetings, contracts and correspondence.
13. Ensure all required filings are submitted on time.
14. If the organization has employees, make sure all required payroll deductions are remitted on time.
15. Prepare for each board or committee meeting by studying the agenda and supporting material.

16. Be an active director by asking questions and sharing your views.
17. Be firm if you need to be. If answers or work quality are insufficient on an important issue, say so.
18. Vote on all issues brought to the board. If the board proposes to do something you oppose, vote against it and ensure that your opposition is recorded in the minutes.
19. Declare any conflict of interest you may have to your board colleagues (where you have a personal or family financial interest in an issue also of interest to the organization). If you are in a conflict, do not participate in the decision-making on the issue in question. Ensure the minutes reflect the facts that you disclosed the conflict and did not participate further.
20. Keep written notes of board and committee meetings, and review the minutes to ensure they are accurate.
21. Follow-up on decisions and commitments.
22. Manage risks by considering the facts, risks and options and applying your best judgment.
23. Obtain independent professional advice (legal, accounting, etc.) on difficult and important issues.
24. Assess the insurance needs of the organization on a regular basis. Avoid under-insuring and over-insuring.
25. Review the constitution, bylaws and key policies regularly (every 24 months) to see if they need to be revised.
26. Pay attention to changing circumstances internally and externally.
27. Engage in regular planning and performance review.
28. Don't rely completely on this list. It doesn't cover all situations.

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