

APPENDIX G

Section I: Testing Your Board's Effectiveness

There's more to being a good board member than just understanding the basics. For a board to operate at peak efficiency, board members need to hone their board skills, examining and reexamining their policies and procedures.

The following are statements that may be used to gauge the board's efficiency. Check "Yes", "No" or "Gray Area" as the statement applies to your board. Then compare your answers to those of the rest of your board members.

	Yes	Gray Area	No
1) Our board meetings usually last less than two hours for monthly meetings or four hours for quarterly meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2) All board members feel free to vote against the majority.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3) We discuss issues, not personalities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4) We use good methods of conflict resolution when conflict occurs among board team members.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5) We focus on policy review and planning not management and staff matters.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6) We focus on long-range financial needs of the management not lists of bills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7) We have occasional planned social activities for the board team.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8) We have job descriptions for board members, executive director/administrator, committee member and advisory committees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9) Our board has all policies codified and assembled in a manual and each board member has a copy of the policy manual.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10) We have a policy for reviewing all board policies annually.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	Gray Area	No
11) We have a plan for recruiting quality board members.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12) We have a plan for orienting new board members.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13) Both board members and executive orient new board members.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14) We have a policy and a plan for annually evaluating the executive/administrator.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15) We have a policy and a plan for annually evaluating our own operations as a board team and as individual members of the team.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16) We have a board policy that explains board members conflict of interest and outlines how board members must handle conflict of interest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17) Our board has a plan for maintaining good meeting attendance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18) We have a policy and plan for ongoing board development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19) The board budgets funds for board development expenses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20) We have a plan for board members to act as advocates for the organization—lobbying, public relations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21) Our board members actually act as advocates for the organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22) All board members understand their liability for the organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23) Our board understands the difference between management and governance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24) Our board is comfortable with delegating all management responsibility to the executive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25) Our board conveys, in clear terms, what we expect from the executive/administrator.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26) Our board considers the executive director an integral part of the board team and its decision-making process, no matter what the issue before the board.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27) We have an annual meeting calendar outlining board duties that occur annually.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	Gray Area	No
28) All board members understand the difference between a for-profit business and the unit of government we serve.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29) All board members know the history of the organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30) We have a mission statement and annually review our mission statement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31) We have a long-range plan and annually review the long-range plan.			

Section II: A Code of Ethics for Board Members

As a member of the board I will:

1. listen carefully to my teammates, and the constituents I serve.
2. respect the opinion of my fellow board members.
3. respect and support the majority decisions of the board.
4. recognize that all authority is vested in the board when it meets in legal session and not with individual board members.
5. keep well-informed of developments that are relevant to issues that may come before the board.
6. participate actively in board meetings and actions.
7. call to the attention of the board any issues that I believe will have an impact on the District or to our constituents.
8. refer constituent or staff complaints to the proper level on the chain of command
9. vote to hire the best possible person to manage the District.
10. represent the needs of *all* constituents in the District, not just a particular geographic area or special interest groups.
11. consider myself a "trustee" of the District and do my best to ensure that the District is well maintained, financially secure, growing and always operating on the best interests of constituents.
12. always learn more about the board member's job and how to do the job better.
13. declare any conflicts of interest between my personal life and my position on the District board, and avoid voting on issues that appear to be a conflict of interest.

Section III: The Board Evaluates it's Meetings

The outcome of any meeting depends heavily on the process. A well-organized and well-managed meeting produces good results. A disorganized meeting produces frustration and anger and does nothing for your organization.

Just as you pay careful attention to maintenance of your car so it will continue to get you where you want to go, you must also pay careful attention to the maintenance of your meeting process so it will get the board where it wants to go.

The following questions will help you assess your board or committee meeting process and suggest some ways to improve that process. All members of the board team - board members and executive - should complete the form individually and then discuss the results as a team. Use the evaluation form several times per year and compare the results with previous evaluation results.

Circle the response that best describes your meetings:

- | | | | |
|--|-----|----|-----------|
| 1) Do meetings begin and end on time? | YES | NO | SOMETIMES |
| 2) Do meetings have a positive tone? | YES | NO | SOMETIMES |
| 3) Does the board chairperson lead the meetings? | YES | NO | SOMETIMES |
| 4) Does everyone come prepared? | YES | NO | SOMETIMES |
| 5) Do board members stick to the agenda? | YES | NO | SOMETIMES |
| 6) Does the board work for consensus? | YES | NO | SOMETIMES |
| 7) Do all members participate in discussions? | YES | NO | SOMETIMES |
| 8) Are meetings completed in less than two hours? | YES | NO | SOMETIMES |
| 9) Is the Admin/Executive encouraged to participate? | YES | NO | SOMETIMES |
| 10) Is the meeting room comfortable? | YES | NO | SOMETIMES |
| 11) Has the board agreed on a parliamentary resource such as Roberts Rules of Order? | YES | NO | SOMETIMES |
| 12) Does the board have enough information to make decisions about agenda items? | YES | NO | SOMETIMES |
| 13) Do at least 90-95% of the members attend? | YES | NO | SOMETIMES |
| 14) Does the agenda focus on policy issues rather than management issues? | YES | NO | SOMETIMES |

15) Are board members equal in the discussions and not dominated by one or two members?	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
16) Do board committees demonstrate that they are working and producing results?	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
17) Is discussion cordial and does it avoid personal attack?	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
18) Do board members feel free to express even dissenting viewpoints?	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
19) Do board members leave the meeting still feeling like a team?	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
20) Do board members leave the meeting with a feeling of accomplishment?	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
21) Is the meeting room arranged so board members sit in a "team huddle" arrangement, not a "panel" arrangement?	YES	NO	SOMETIMES

Evaluation follow up:

You should have answered "YES" to all the questions above. If you circled any "NO" or "SOMETIMES" responses, list below the actions you will take to correct the problem so your meetings will run better and produce better results.

Our next meeting review will be _____.

Section IV: Annual Board Evaluation

ANNUAL BOARD EVALUATION

Every Board member should complete this form. Take plenty of time to consider your responses. Then hold a special board meeting to discuss the results.

KEY: Check “**Yes**” if the item is true all the time. Check “**Some**” if the item is at least partially true. Check “**No**” if the item is never true.

YES	SOME	NO		Policies
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board activities are confined to policy issues rather than management issues.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		All management activities are delegated to the administrator.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		The Board annually reviews important documents and policies.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Disciplinary action is taken when a board member misses three monthly meetings per year (un-excused)
YES	SOME	NO		Roles and Responsibilities
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Each board member has a copy of his or her job description.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board members understand their legal responsibilities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board members participate in securing funding for District programs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board members are lobbyists.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board members contribute extra time outside regular meetings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board members talk positively about the organization in public.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		The board holds yearly self-evaluations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Committees meet only if they have work to do.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		The full board approves the annual evaluation of the administrator.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board needs are clearly communicated to the administrator.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Vacancies on the board are filled within two months.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		The board has at least two candidates for each board member opening.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board members are recruited for their knowledge, skills and clout.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		New board members are oriented before they attend their first meeting.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Officer terms are limited to a maximum of three consecutive terms.
YES	SOME	NO		Roles and Responsibilities
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Each board office and committee has a job description.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board members attend training/information meetings offered by Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, or others.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Conflicts between board members or board members and the administrator are confronted and quickly handled by the board chairperson.
YES	SOME	NO		Planning
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board activities focus on the mission statement.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		The board adjusts the direction of the District programs to match community needs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		The board makes a written long-range or strategic plan.
YES	SOME	NO		Meetings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board meetings follow a system of parliamentary procedure.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board meetings stick to the agenda and are businesslike.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board meetings start on time and end on time.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board members arrive on time for meetings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board meetings last two hours or less.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board members participate in discussions at board meetings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board members absences from meetings are excused absences.
YES	SOME	NO		Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board members visit the District office regularly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		The District has shown significant achievement under this board's leadership.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board members are satisfied with the overall operation of the board.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board members seek the office of board chairperson and other offices rather than being drafted.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Board members enjoy serving on this board.

Results:

If you checked any **Some** or **No**, these checks point out areas your District Board may want to consider working on to improve the operation of your District Board and the programs you are delivering to the constituency of your District.

If you would like assistance in developing a program or strategy to improve the way your board operates, contact the Michigan Department of Agriculture – Environmental Stewardship Division, P.O. Box 30017, Lansing, MI 48909. Phone: 517/373-2620 FAX: 517/335-3329.

Section V: Committee Operations Analysis

A committee system that doesn't work is worse than no committee system at all. A board makes its committees work just as the board makes itself work- by paying careful attention and doing an annual formal evaluation of committee operation.

Committees should first meet some basic criteria to remain viable committees. They should be:

Accountable to the Board

Results Oriented

Subservient to the Board

Team Oriented

The following short analysis can be applied to most committees and will help you determine how well a committee meets the above criteria.

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1) The committee has a written job description from the full board. | YES | NO |
| 2) The committee reports regularly to the full board. | YES | NO |
| 3) When the committee makes recommendations to the board, a committee member is ready with a motion to accept the committee recommendation. | YES | NO |
| 4) Each committee meeting is organized around an agenda. | YES | NO |
| 5) Committee members have a copy of the committee meeting agenda several days prior to the committee meeting. | YES | NO |
| 6) Functions of this committee could not be accomplished as efficiently by a committee of the whole. | YES | NO |
| 7) The committee is chaired by a member of the board. | YES | NO |
| 8) The committee chairperson attempts to get all members of the committee involved. | YES | NO |
| 9) Committee reports are submitted in writing in time to be sent to board members with the board meeting agenda packet | YES | NO |
| 10) All board members understand that the only power/ authority the committee holds is that specifically granted by the full board. | YES | NO |
| 11) Committee meetings are conducted in the same orderly fashion as board meetings. | YES | NO |
| 12) The committee meets all deadlines set by the board. | YES | NO |
| 13) The committee makes great effort to look at all sides of issues it considers. | YES | NO |
| 14) Committee reports to the board reflect consensus of the committee members. | YES | NO |
| 15) Committee members are chosen for high interest or expertise in the committee's area of responsibility. | YES | NO |

16) The executive or a staff member delegated by the executive is a member of the committee.	YES	NO
17) Committee members are appointed by the board chairperson.	YES	NO
18) The committee chairperson is appointed by the board chairperson.	YES	NO
19) All committee members understand that final decisions rest with the full board.	YES	NO
20) Committee members are appointed or reappointed every year with attention to maintaining experience as well as bringing in new people.	YES	NO
21) Committee records are adequate to make committee operations flow smoothly from one year to the next even though the makeup of the committee changes.	YES	NO
22) The committee functions as a facilitator for the full board, not in place of the full board.	YES	NO
23) The committee (except the executive committee) recruits and utilizes skills of non board members.	YES	NO
24) All members of the committee attend 90% of the committee meetings.	YES	NO

Evaluation follow up:

You should have answered **“YES”** to all of the statements above. If you circled **“NO”** for any of the above statements, list the actions your board or committee will take to correct the problem so your committee operates as it should.