

Associate Members



BUILDING BETTER Hospital Boards

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IN TODAY'S TUMULTUOUS HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENT, high-performing hospital boards are needed more than ever to promote quality of care, patient safety, financial stability and community support. But board members require specific traits to be effective in achieving those goals, according to Community Hospital Corporation (CHC).

Hospital boards have been traditionally composed of community and business leaders skilled in finance, investment, fundraising, marketing and other key areas. Those with clinical backgrounds, healthcare management experience and information technology acumen are also in demand. Additionally, boards should be diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, age and gender to better represent and serve the community

Recruiting qualified board members involves more sophistication than asking for nominations from the community. For example, one CHC hospital's vetting process for applicants includes a preliminary interview aimed at determining, among other things, if they will be fully invested in the position.

Posting clearly defined job roles and requirements when recruiting board members can help eliminate organizational dysfunction. Formal job descriptions for board members, board chairs and committee chairs also keep incumbents focused on their governance functions.

It's helpful for new board members to complete a structured orientation program to familiarize them with the hospital's mission and objectives; the board's role and responsibilities; and the expectations of members.

IMPLEMENTING THE RIGHT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO OPTIMIZE EFFICIENCY

To achieve and maintain high standards, hospital boards often have continuing education requirements that make members aware of changes and emerging healthcare industry challenges. To keep meetings on track, a board should allocate time for informal discussion among members before the CEO and other attendees join. This improves focus and efficiency and prevents members from straying off-topic in meetings.

Other practices that keep proceedings running smoothly include sending informational packets to members prior to meetings and focusing face-to-face time on three to five major issues.

An effective board also strives for continuous improvement, building on formal self-evaluations conducted at least every two or three years. For instance, the board should evaluate its chair six months to a year before term expiration, giving the board time to find a successor should the board chair position become vacant. Board self-assessments identify opportunities for



improvement and provide the basis for reappointment decisions.

FOCUSING ON THE RIGHT PRIORITIES TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY

Board members often blur the lines between governance, management and operations. It's important to keep the board focused on developing effective strategies and let hospital leadership handle the execution.

Board responsibilities encompass:

- Strategic direction;
- Financial performance;
- Quality care;
- Executive performance;
- Stakeholder relations;
- Board structure and performance.

Many hospitals that set out to build a better board find that advisory services provide them with a foundation and blueprint.

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