

Charter Boards

BOARD CHAIR JOB DESCRIPTION

Every charter school board should have a full slate of officers at all times to maintain consistent leadership and clarity of roles. Charter school boards can use the familiar board officer structure — board chair, vice chair, treasurer, and secretary — that most nonprofits use. The board chair leads this officer team and leads the full board. It is important that all board officers are committed, engaged, and sufficiently informed to govern effectively and participate fully. Most importantly, every board must have a strong, well-trained board chair.

The process for selecting and installing officers should be contained in your board's bylaws. Having thoughtful job descriptions for every officer helps set high expectations and ensures that the board selects people with the right characteristics, experience, and expertise for the roles. This tool provides a job description for a charter school board chair.

The board chair assumes responsibility for the overall functioning of the board. He/she facilitates board meetings, oversees the work of the committees, and works most closely with the school leader. Often, the board chair also has special authority (e.g., sign checks, approve contracts, etc.).

The board chair also plays an extremely important role on the interpersonal side of the board. He/she must be responsive to other board members' views, maintain a collegial atmosphere, manage different personalities and perspectives, and work hard to foster a trusting yet candid relationship with the school leader. The board chair must be a strong communicator and a skilled facilitator.

This can take time, sometimes require training, and be frustrating, however, interpersonal dynamics can often make or break a board. Ultimately, the board chair must monitor and nurture positive dynamics by creating an environment in which board members feel engaged, included, respected, and able to make a positive contribution.

RESPONSIBILITIES

A charter school board chair coordinates the full board's activities so the board achieves its goals and operates in accordance with its bylaws.

Overarching Duties

- Ensures that the board is functioning effectively and meeting high standards for effective governance
- Holds the board accountable for executing key board functions
- Facilitates all meetings of the board and other meetings or events as necessary
- Develops board meeting agendas in partnership with the school leader that reflect the school's and board's priorities, drive strategic conversation and decision making, and keep the board's work focused on the goals
- Makes sure that the board conducts a self-assessment each year and addresses areas for improvement
- Leads the discussion on planning board retreats

Committee Work

- Sets clear expectations for committee operations and communication with the board
- Holds committees accountable for achieving their annual goals
- Appoints committee and task force chairs, and assigns members to committees

School Leader Relationship

- Builds a constructive, candid relationship with the school leader
- Participates in regularly scheduled check-ins with the school leader to discuss strategic issues, monitor progress toward goals, and identify opportunities where he/she needs support from the board
- Guides the board through the process of hiring, evaluating, and supporting the school leader

Compliance

- Serves as the main point of contact with the authorizer
- Ensures all board actions and board members meet and understand legal and ethical compliance standards
- Shares all relevant information from the authorizer with the full board

Leadership Skills

- Models effective networking with community members and stakeholders by serving as the board's ambassador
- Champions diversity and inclusion on the board
- Supports and recognizes board members who make positive contributions to the board
- Takes the lead in removing board members who are persistently disruptive or disengaged

Communication

- Respects and engages every board member while encouraging an open and constructive line of communication
- Is approachable, available, and responsive
- Makes sure that each board member has a clear role to play on the board
- Listens and communicates well, including being available for conversations after hours and on weekends when necessary