

ED 340 913

CE 060 113

AUTHOR Dyer, Delwyn A.; Williams, Oscar M.
 TITLE Developing Effective Boards, Councils and Commissions. Revised.
 INSTITUTION Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, Blacksburg.; Virginia Polytechnic Inst. and State Univ., Blacksburg. Center for Volunteer Development.
 SPONS AGENCY Kellogg Foundation, Battle Creek, Mich.
 PUB DATE 91
 NOTE 28p.; For related documents, see CE 060 109-112.
 AVAILABLE FROM Center for Volunteer Development, CVD Suite, Donaldson Brown Center, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0150 (Publication No. 301-022).
 PUB TYPE Guides - General (050)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Advisory Committees; Advocacy; *Citizens Councils; Community Cooperation; Fund Raising; *Governing Boards; Legal Responsibility; Linking Agents; Marketing; Mission Statements; Nonprofit Organizations; *Organizational Effectiveness; Organizational Objectives; Participative Decision Making; Planning; *Planning Commissions; Policy Formation; Program Evaluation; Sanctions

ABSTRACT

Effective board operations are an art as well as a science. Local advisory boards or governing boards/councils refer to active, duly organized, and representative bodies that hold regular meetings and make decisions on behalf of the membership, and whose members serve without pay. Advisory boards assist those who make organizational decisions but do not exercise final authority. Organizational boards and councils organize work around a planning frame. Boards do not get involved in program delivery detail, but in many organizations board members are also program volunteers. Although some board functions are for maintenance, others are developmental. These functions are true for most community-based nonprofit boards and are categorized under 10 broad headings: mission statements and policy-setting; long- and short-range planning; resource development; fiduciary care; assuring compliance; image development; linkage and sanctioning; advocacy; ensuring the quality of the chief executive officer and/or staff; and evaluation. (This document contains five figures: hierarchy of planning, board-committee meeting cycle, policy formulation, higher degree of goal integration, the communications network. Nine references and three additional sources of assistance are included.) (NLA)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

ED340913

Developing Effective Boards, Councils, and Commissions



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."



Virginia
Cooperative
Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State

Publication 301-022
Revised 1991

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CE 060 113

This publication is made possible, in part, by a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan, to the Center for Volunteer Development at Virginia Tech and the Cooperative Extension Services of the following states:

ALABAMA

ALABAMA A&M UNIVERSITY
Normal, Alabama
(205) 851-5710

AUBURN UNIVERSITY
Auburn, Alabama
(205) 844-3681

TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY
Tuskegee, Alabama
(205) 727-8114

ARKANSAS

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS
Little Rock, Arkansas
(501) 373-2500

and

Pine Bluff, Arkansas
(501) 541-6500

GEORGIA

FORT VALLEY STATE COLLEGE
Fort Valley, Georgia
(912) 825-6268

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
Athens, Georgia
(912) 382-3509

MISSISSIPPI

ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY
Lorman, Mississippi
(601) 877-6125

TENNESSEE

TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
Nashville, Tennessee
(615) 320-3650

VIRGINIA

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
AND STATE UNIVERSITY
Blacksburg, Virginia
(703) 231-7966



Center for Volunteer Development

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs, activities, and employment opportunities are available to all people regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, handicap, or political affiliation. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. James F. Johnson, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; Clinton V. Turner, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State, Petersburg.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE BOARDS, COUNCILS AND COMMISSIONS

*Delwyn A. Dyer, Director
Center for Volunteer Development
Oscar M. Williams, Associate Director
Center for Volunteer Development*

Millions of Americans serve on boards of voluntary agencies or organizations. They work millions of hours without pay and govern the expenditure of billions of dollars annually. Directly or indirectly, they influence the welfare and future of millions of other Americans. Nearly all community-focused programs require some form of citizen participation; and thousands of corporations, public as well as private, profit as well as nonprofit, utilize citizen boards either for policy making or program implementation.

Many citizens are unprepared for the challenges of board service. There is widespread agreement that board members, agency executives, and staff need help in looking at the roles of board members and the relationship of their work to that of others in the organization. They also need to increase their understanding of how boards function, who should serve on them, and how boards affect the day-to-day operation of voluntary organizations. Additionally, professional staff need to be prepared to assume board/staff management responsibilities.

Effective boardmanship is an art as well as a science. It requires that members be skilled in interpersonal relationships and have a clear understanding of the organization's mission. It also requires that board members possess a realistic appreciation for what is desirable, possible, and fair for all.



LOCAL BOARDS WHAT ARE THEY?

The term *local board*, for the purposes of this publication, refers to any active, duly-organized and representative body that holds regular meetings, makes decisions on behalf of a membership, and whose members serve without pay. Depending on the organization, boards may be called committees, commissions, or councils.

Primarily, a board is concerned with formulating "board-level" decisions; i.e., decisions pertaining to broad courses of action, rather than decisions concerning the means for carrying out a specific course of action. Its individual members cannot speak for it, but the collective decisions of its members determine the organization's overall course of action.

A board can be **advisory** or **governing**. If it is an advisory board, it offers advice to an individual, group, or body responsible for programs or management of an organization.

If it is a governing board, it governs the programs or management of an organization. It is legally responsible for the operation, program, business, and management of the body it represents.

Governing boards are sometimes called administrative or policy-making boards. Regardless of name, the final authority on all matters affecting an agency rests with this board. Advisory boards may assist governing boards in all aspects of their activities and responsibilities; but with the exception that some other person, agency, or organization is ultimately accountable for the program or its impact on the community. Advisory boards most often are selected to represent the community rather than the organization's membership or client group.

In organizations that have a cadre of paid staff and a strong volunteer force, "board work" is more easily separated from the day-to-day operation of the organization. Many grass-roots community organizations will not be in that situation and members of the board may actually perform most of the work. When this is true, members must take great care to separate their board role(s) from other roles they assume in the organization.



LOCAL BOARDS WHY DO WE HAVE THEM?

Since the signing of the Mayflower Compact, Americans have recognized that their community and group interests are most effectively met through citizen representation and participation. Citizens have come to expect that those chosen to represent them will act responsibly, and that they will impress upon the parent body--to the fullest extent possible--the views held by the people they represent. Such groups have made federal, state, and other programs more effective and relevant to local situations in at least two significant respects:

1. they have helped agencies, groups and other organizations plan and deliver programs/services in a manner that more effectively and responsibly meets the community's needs and values, and
2. they have assured that the community's resources are efficiently utilized.

The extent to which an organization or agency may need guidance and direction of a board in effectively planning and delivering community products, programs, and services is probably directly related to its size or the complexity of the product, program, or service it delivers. For example, some small organizations of five or ten persons that deliver small, well-planned, intact programs probably do not need a board. They may need only to implement their program or service. On the other hand, a moderate or large organization delivering a fairly complex product, program, or service may indeed need a group of individuals representative of a larger membership or the greater community to advise it. It is much easier to work with a small representative group than to "try to assemble the total community or membership of a larger group.

The extent to which an organization uses a community's resources, i.e., people's

time, talents, and money, determines the extent to which a board or council becomes duty-bound to assure that the services being offered are needed and that the resources and talents of the community are "well spent" in response to the need.

LOCAL BOARDS RESPONDING TO A COMMUNITY NEED

Occasionally, an organization undertakes programs that do not directly lead to the accomplishment of its mission just because the community thinks the organization is the "right" one to undertake a certain program. The board, while it may consent to do these things, must also question its decision to do so. Do these activities, performed in the name of the organization, enhance the organization's mission? Do they conform to the organization's legal mission or to an assumed mission imposed on the organization by external sources? The board alone is responsible for the final answer to such questions. Only the board can decide whether to keep the auxiliary programs, cease a particular mode of operation, or increase or decrease a particular practice. An organization cannot long survive if too much of its effort is concentrated away from its mission. On the other hand, boards must remember that the community can withhold support if the organization rejects a good community-service function. Those board members effectively linked into the community must make decisions based on their knowledge of the community and the strength of the organization they serve.

There are times when additional citizen involvement becomes necessary even with established boards. It is not unusual for a board itself to have an advisory council or committee. These community representatives can help established boards reach new client groups and/or devise alternative modes of delivery for programs, products, or services, especially those boards experiencing difficulties.

A board is responsible for a wide range of functions which cover policies as well as program and organizational matters. Their specific functions and responsibilities will vary according to the nature and mission of the organization.

GOVERNING BOARDS OR COUNCILS

While scholars and authorities on boardmanship readily agree that an important function of governing boards is to establish policies, experienced leaders and community development specialists recognize a wide range of other functions for governing boards. Some of these are:

1. Reviewing and revising the organization's mission statement.
2. Planning for long- and short-range activities.
3. Setting goals and developing strategic plans.
4. Assuring that strategic plans are followed.
5. Establishing policies to assure the proper conduct of business.
6. Ensuring adherence to established policies.
7. Developing resources (including fund-raising, securing materials, assuring the proper image of the organization/agency enforcing agency compliance with conditions of gifts and grants).
8. Exercising fiduciary care (approving budgets, financial plans, and expenditures).
9. Authorizing and ensuring proper audits.
10. Advocating, sanctioning, and developing community linkages.
11. Evaluating the agency's programs.
12. Assuring the quality of the chief executive officer.

ADVISORY BOARDS

The primary purpose of advisory boards and councils is to advise and assist groups or individuals responsible for making decisions about the organization (i.e., planning, organizing or administering organizations and their programs). Advisory councils, in a developmental sense, perform many of the same functions as governing boards. **The major difference is that they give advice rather than exercise final authority regarding such functions as:**

1. Assist the policy-making authority by recommending relevant policies for specific programs, in so far as the community or various publics are concerned.
2. Help mobilize the community or public leadership for activities sponsored by the organization.
3. Serve as a talent pool from which to draw future governing board or program volunteers, thereby ensuring stability of the organization within the community.
4. Assist in improving public relations through linkage with civic, business and other community representatives.
5. Provide an additional, and possibly more objective, source for evaluating programs and policies.
6. Assist in determining the need for new programs.
7. Provide technical assistance on matters outside the organization's competencies.

In the final analysis, all members of the organization, those who serve on the board (advisory or governing) and the staff, must work closely together to help the organization reach its full potential. If governing boards do not have input from the staff and their various publics, it is likely that staff or volunteers who must carry out the organization's programs will not be able to

maximize their efforts. If the agency or staff with authority to set goals fails to listen and wisely use input from its advisory board, then the organization will suffer.

BOARDS and COUNCILS How Do THEY FUNCTION?

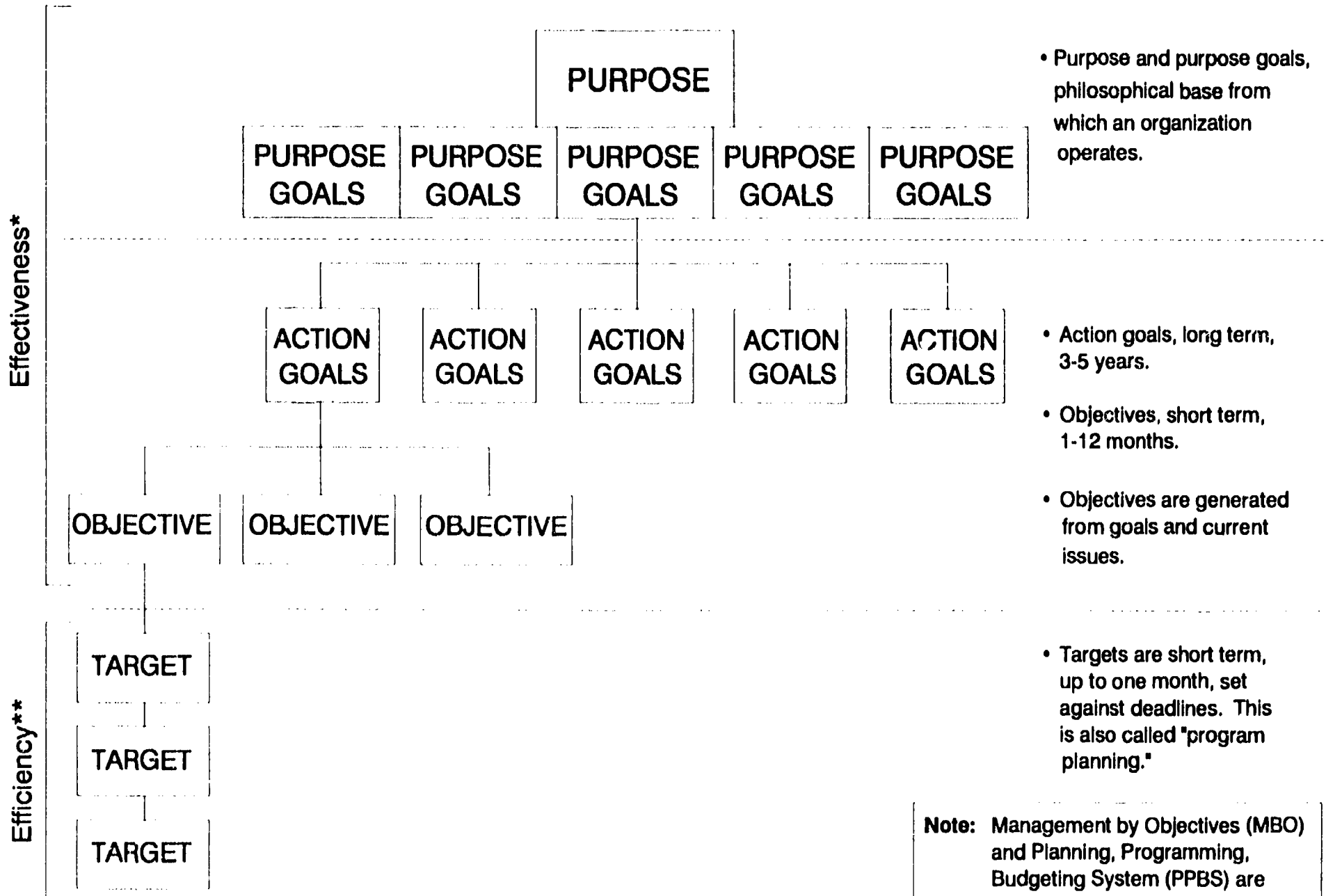
All organizations exist to deliver a product, reach a goal, or provide a service. They are goal-oriented entities. To be effective, the boards and councils of organizations must organize for work around a planning frame. Generally, they form and operate in sub-committees composed of board members and non-board members.

The more successful organizations also develop an understanding of a hierarchy of planning. That is, the entire organization and the board that governs or advises it must together develop an understanding of who has authority and responsibility for decisions and actions at various levels of planning. (See Figure I.) Even the least complex organization (i.e., in size and scope) can benefit from a clear understanding of planning and decision making. This planning must be done in full accordance with the organization's mission.

The purpose of the organization should be captured in the mission statement, a comprehensive, visionary, one-or-two paragraph statement that sets forth the high ideals of the organization. It should be developed or updated by the governing board, but with input from the staff and others, as appropriate.

Goals (long-range plans) and objectives (annual or short-range plans) are stated and adopted by the board after much study; and often with recommendations from various staff members, publics, and sometimes sub-committees. Goals are to be accomplished in five-to-ten years or more. Objectives, generally, are statements of things to be accomplished in one year.

FIGURE I. HIERARCHY OF PLANNING



* Effectiveness is defined as doing the right things.

** Efficiency means doing things right.

Note: Management by Objectives (MBO) and Planning, Programming, Budgeting System (PPBS) are other synonyms for planning.

Boards usually do not get involved in program-delivery detail, except in the area of fundraising and other resource development activities. Program delivery is the responsibility of staff. Thus, employing highly qualified staff is important. In many voluntary organizations, persons who are board members are also program volunteers. That is, they help design and deliver the organization's programs or services. When this is the situation, the member must take care to remember which role he or she is assuming at the time (individual or board), and act accordingly.

Effective boards and councils perform the bulk of their work through committees, as illustrated in Figure II. This method is particularly beneficial if matters facing the board are technical in nature and require in-depth study or lengthy discussion. To resolve some complex or technical matters, a board may need to reach beyond its own membership and select persons with the expertise needed. For some matters, this may be especially advisable.



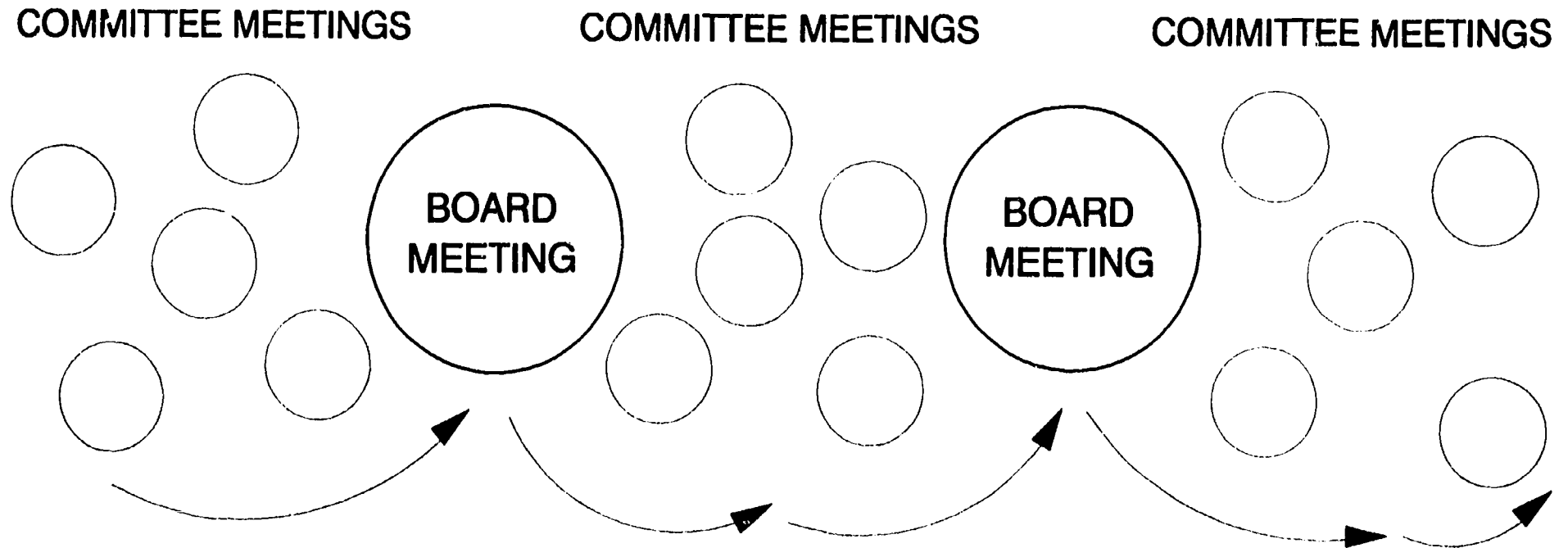
After a board committee meets and thoroughly considers an issue, it should make its recommendation(s) to the authority that appointed it (usually the full board), unless it is directed by the appointing agency to report to a different body. The full board, or the body to which it reports, exercises its judgment as to the quality of the report and any recommendations it may contain. The report may be accepted, rejected (in whole or in part), and/or referred to another committee or body, based on the board's judgment as to how beneficial the recommendations are to the organization's mission or delivery of its programs, products, or services.

DEVELOPMENTAL FUNCTIONS OF BOARDS

While some board functions are purely MAINTENANCE (e.g., committee appointments and purposes, agenda setting, recordkeeping), others are DEVELOPMENTAL. These functions are true for most community-based nonprofit boards and can be categorized under the following broad headings:

1. Mission statements and policy-setting
2. Long-and short-range planning
3. Resource development
4. Fiduciary care
5. Assuring compliance
6. Image development
7. Linkage and sanctioning
8. Advocacy
9. Assuring the quality of the chief executive officer and/or staff
10. Evaluation

FIGURE II. BOARD-COMMITTEE MEETING CYCLE



Board and committee meetings should be spaced so board volunteers are not "meeting out." If committees function properly, the board probably could/should only meet quarterly.

PURPOSES OF THE BOARD MEETING

- To hear committee reports of progress and plans
- To make policy decisions required by committee reports
- To give input to committees
- To inspire
- To reinforce board and staff commitment to the mission and plans of the organization and programs
- Communication
- Coordination
- Organizing
- Control
- Legitimation of the organization

FUNCTION 1: MISSION STATEMENTS AND POLICY-SETTING

Every organization needs a mission statement which clearly defines and explains its purpose. It is usually an idealistic statement which sets forth the noble vision(s) of the organization. The statement alerts the public to the kinds of programs and activities it can expect from the organization and addresses directional undertakings.

Mission statements and policy decisions are the exclusive prerogative of the board in "governed" organizations. Boardmembers, however, should not develop such a statement in a vacuum. They should seek input from staff, and clients or client groups, especially those having knowledge in the areas of board concern. Mission statements are different from policy statements and should not be confused with them.

Although policy statements address procedural matters, they are not cast in concrete nor intended to last forever. Boards should establish a practice of reviewing, reconciling, updating, and perhaps deleting, outdated policies every two or three years. Such a practice provides new members the opportunity to become familiar with board policies and provides smooth, consistent continuity of relevant policies and programs. A special committee of the board should be appointed to do this.



Policies and policy statements most often grow out of issues and circumstances facing an organization and these change from time-to-time. Policy, appropriately established for one program, or at a certain time, may be totally inappropriate for another program or another time, even for the same agency. Policy statements should reflect the changes in time and any change in mission(s) that may have occurred within the organization. Although policy decisions are sometimes the exclusive prerogative of the board, the staff of the organization should be involved in policy setting. Goals or policies set or imposed by either the board or key staff without the active involvement of both board and staff are difficult to implement in most organizations. Figure III depicts areas of collaboration in this process.

Board Policy Process

Consideration of Policy Options	Board/Staff
Policy Determination	Board
Policy Implementation	Staff
Policy Monitoring	Board/Staff

Figure III illustrates the steps boards should consider in the formulation of good policy. Notice the various public issues that the board must consider before a good policy can be formulated. The board can set policy and direct itself or the staff to implement it; it can return the issue to a committee for further study; or it can decide no new policy is needed to resolve the issue.

Many boards and councils find it helpful to record their policies in a binder or notebook which might be appropriately called a manual of *Policy and Operational Guidelines*. Some organizations that have selected *Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised (1990)* as their parliamentary authority may elect to call this notebook a *Manual of Standing Rules*. At any rate, this binder should include resolutions and (policy) statements setting forth the conditions predicated the establishment of the adopted policies.

FIGURE III. POLICY FORMULATION

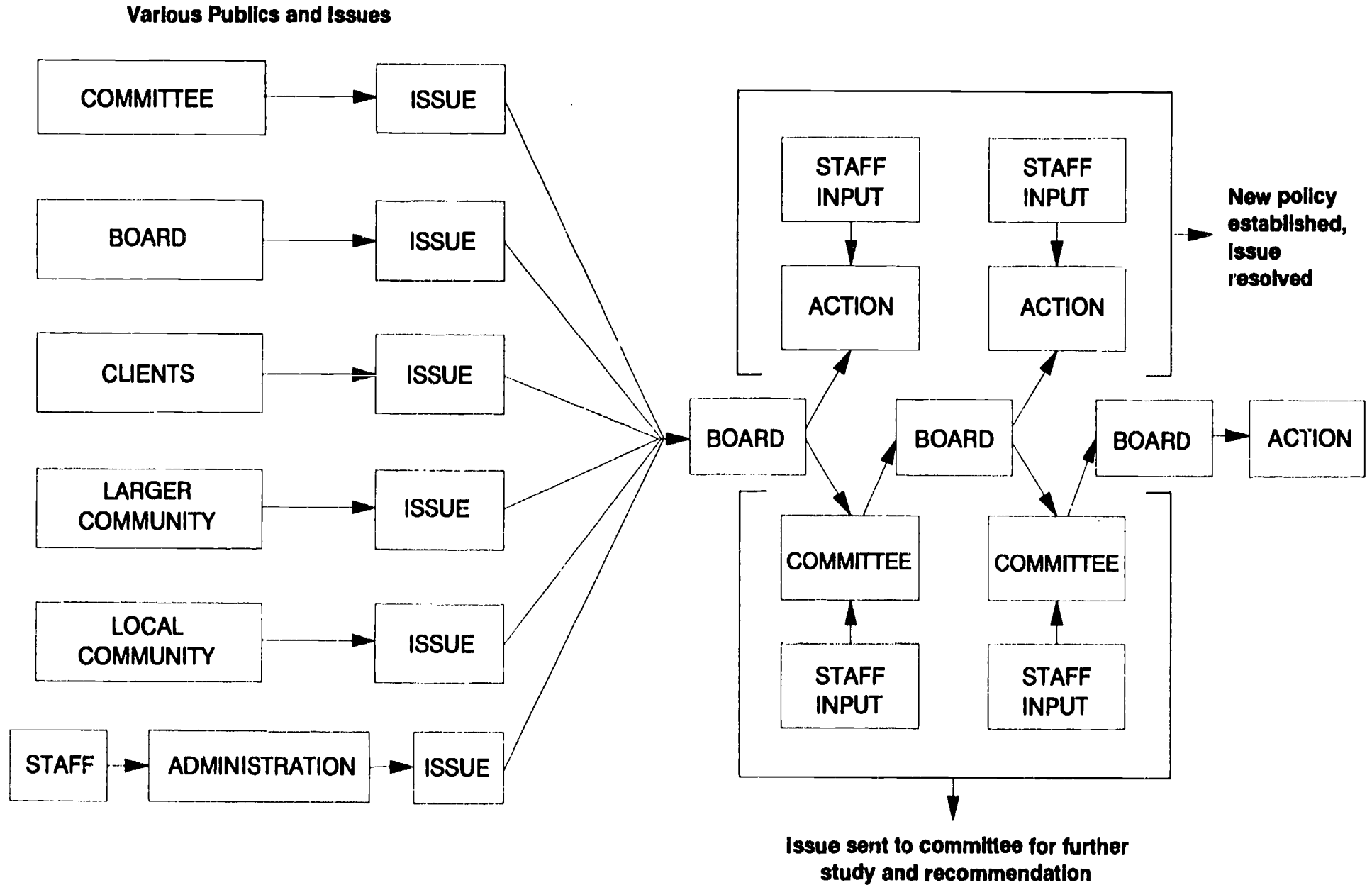


FIGURE IV. HIGHER DEGREE OF GOAL INTEGRATION



10

16

Results in better organizational functioning and greater satisfaction of individual's organizational role.

17

FUNCTION 2: LONG- AND SHORT-RANGE PLANNING

A commonly overlooked obligation of many boards is the responsibility to plan for the organization's long and short-term renewal. Many boards organized during the mid-60s and 70s, having become accustomed to federal or local financial support, easily neglect this obligation. Board members must keep the long view in mind. They must concern themselves not only with the adequacies and accommodations of present programs but also with future program development needs such as space, facilities, equipment, and supplies. With changes in population, citizen demands, program availability, and shifts in the economy, self-renewal is not only desirable, but also essential for the life and well-being of the organization.

Questions of growth versus no-growth, or how big is "big enough", are constant concerns of boardmembers. If the organization elects to grow, either through the expansion of a single program or the addition of others, additional space and facilities become critical requirements. A working and alert board must plan for this eventuality.

Goal-setting is an indispensable component of organizational planning; no organization should undertake it lightly. Board members should view goal setting as an indispensable function of the board. As shown in Figure IV, goals of the organization should mesh with at least two other sets of goals. Shared goals result in a better-functioning organization. From the goal(s), staff and board form objectives. From the objectives, targets and strategies are developed. This type of planning involves looking into the future. While it is a creative process, it requires much realism on the part of the members. Realistic planning takes into account not only the magnitude of need, but also the availability of people and resources to carry out the plan.

Goal setting involves at least three factors:

- long-range plans,
- short-range plans, and
- action strategies.

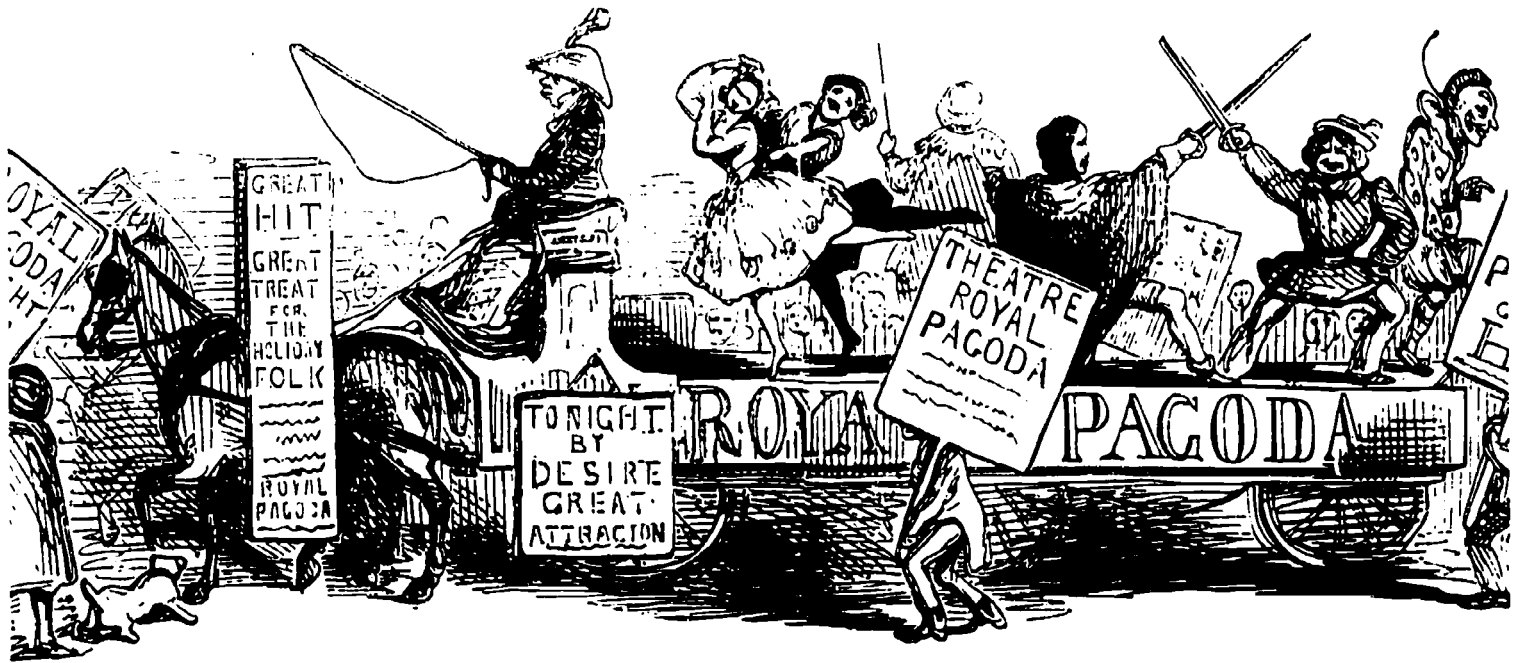
The differences between these three are explained in Figure I, p. 4.

FUNCTION 3: RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Resource development is more than fundraising, and ALL BOARD MEMBERS have resource-development responsibilities. They should "give, get, or get off the board". That is, they must give of their time, energies, expertise and personal resources; get the same from other publics (individuals or organizations); or they should get off the board. Consider the following additional resource-development functions of board members:

- ***Selecting and Developing Volunteers.*** The board has the responsibility for selecting and recruiting volunteers to the board, as well as selecting volunteer staff to work with the Chief Executive Officer, if one is hired. (In many instances, local organizations begin with limited finances and few, if any, paid staff. Members of the board often double as staff.)

While individuals may be willing to serve on the board, they generally have little or no training in the tasks to be performed. Most require training. In many instances, present board members and newcomers to the board learn together. This process, however, is time-consuming and inefficient. Attention must be given to good orientation, training and development of the board, staff, and volunteers. In established organizations, continuing members can



provide orientation and help new members understand the organization.

Most new board members join boards because someone they know actively recruited them to membership. Generally, they are given a brief orientation that consists principally of receiving informational material such as a list of board members, committee members, an annual report and sometimes a statement of the organization's programs; an opportunity to meet the Chief Executive Officer; and perhaps, being placed on a standing committee. Needless to say, such an orientation is inadequate.

A board orientation or training program should consist of at least the following:

1. responsibilities of the board and board members,
2. mission(s) and programs of the organization,
3. resource development responsibilities,
4. responsibilities of the staff in the organization,

5. administrative policies currently governing the organization, including articles of incorporation, charter, constitution and/or bylaws, and
6. evaluation procedures applied to the organization, board, and staff.

The board is responsible for providing orientation and training for its new members and for establishing or monitoring job descriptions for its paid and volunteer staff.

- **Materials Development.** Just as the board is responsible for space and facilities, it is responsible for materials, equipment, and supplies. Many boards itemize their materials, equipment and supply needs just as they do their financial needs. Board members are responsible for helping to obtain what is needed, both individually and as a board.

If the organization grows, additional properties must be acquired. Proper and sufficient working materials are necessary to get the additional jobs done. Regardless of the nobility of the organization's plans, without the wherewithal to do the "what alls", the organization will remain lifeless.

- **Fundraising.** Many members of local boards believe fundraising is a staff function or a responsibility that should be "farmed out" to professional fund raisers. Such is not the case! Often newly-created agencies have no paid staff or they have limited staff and office space, and little or no program budget. More and more, local boards of community associations are reserving fundraising and the accountability for these funds to themselves. All members of boards and councils, to the extent of their financial ability, have a personal obligation to give to the organization, as well as an obligation to help raise funds. Increasingly, philanthropic groups, and private donors as well, are asking, "How much are the members of the board giving?" To those who reply negatively, their next question often is, "By what right do you expect us to give when you have not given?"



FUNCTION 4: FIDUCIARY CARE

The term **accountability** (fiduciary care) has gained increased significance in recent years. All governing boardmembers should consider themselves accountable for all funds coming into their agency. Fiduciary care means that all members have personal financial responsibility for the funds entrusted to the organization. Legislatures and fiscal regulatory agencies such as the IRS are continually enacting laws and rulings that address the financial responsibilities of board members. Repeatedly, in instances of malfeasance, misfeasance, and nonfeasance, courts have imposed fines and jail sentences. Board members found lax in their responsibility for accountability of funds entrusted to them have been required to "make good" on misspent funds.

Fiduciary care means that board members must exercise prudence and make provisions for the organization's financial soundness. Board members can fulfill this obligation in many ways. Some are:

- Approving the organization's budget and being familiar with the organization's financial situation and commitments.
- Designating signatories, depositories, bank accounts; approving contracts; insisting on regular audits; and overseeing investment programs.
- Establishing clear, unambiguous policies involving the expenditure of funds and assuring adherence to these policies.
- Attending board and committee meetings regularly.
- Treating the affairs of the organization as their own affairs; yet avoiding self-serving policies and the appearance of conflict of interest.
- Being familiar with the organization's corporate structure: Articles of Incorporation, charter, constitution/bylaws, and standing rules, as well as the organization's goals, objectives, and minutes.

- Monitoring the public image of the organization.
- Insisting that there be well-established personnel development programs.
- Hiring a competent chief executive.
- Being certain the organization operates within its mission and tax-exempt status.



FUNCTION 5: ASSURING COMPLIANCE

The staff of an organization, as well as members of its board, must without exception comply with all policies of the board. Organizations use scarce human and other community resources. Board members must assure that all who could benefit from the services or programs of their organization have appropriate access to them. In many instances, because of limited resources, legal arrangements, or other purposes, nonprofit and voluntary organizations form partnerships with public and private agencies that also use tax dollars, public facilities, or materials. Such alliances, formal or informal, that use public resources have legal as well as moral obligations for compliance with equal opportunity and affirmative action laws. Board members must be sensitive to these laws and their requirements. Proof of compliance may be required.

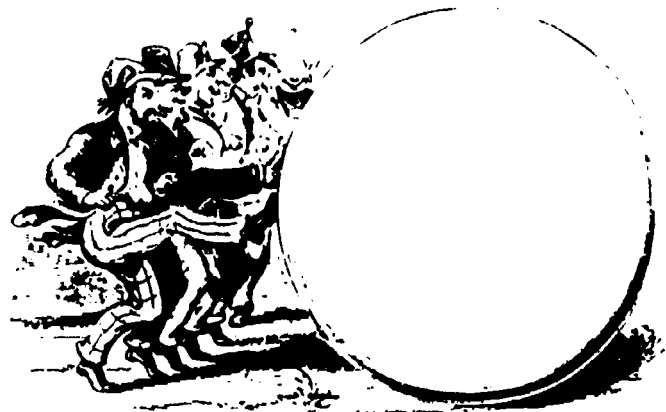
FUNCTION 6: IMAGE DEVELOPMENT

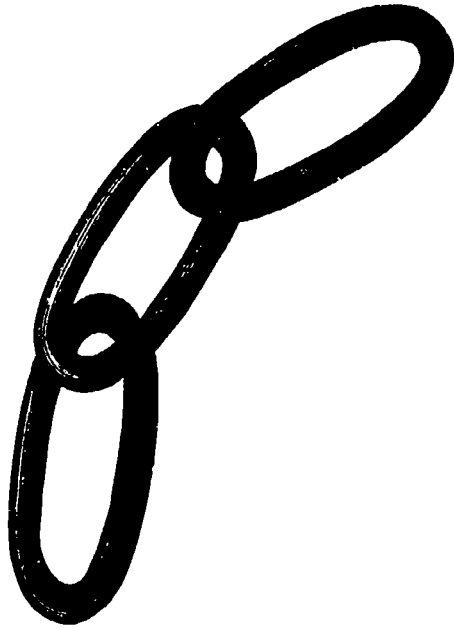
Image development has at least two distinct aspects:

- what the organization tells people they are (through reports and publicity), and
- what clients learn about the organization through contact with it.

Image building is the responsibility of the board. It is closely related to resource development--if not a part of it. Many local boards fail to keep the community adequately informed of the good community-betterment activities their organization is performing. All board members have the responsibility to let others know about the good things done by organizations in their community. That is, all board members have an obligation to help others form a good image of their organization. Not to communicate the good being done by the organization tends to give all people a less than positive image of it.

Another important aspect of image development is the impression clients form when they learn what the organization is or have contact with it. Are they cordially and fairly treated? Is the service or program of good quality? Were their needs met? The board must seek this kind of information through a feedback mechanism of some sort. Without this community feedback, general organizational support can also be lost.





FUNCTION 7: LINKAGE AND SANCTIONING

Linking is a "hooking" process. Board members have a responsibility to determine if/how their organization should form linkages with other agencies and programs, community resources, and individuals to deliver their goods and services. Linking may be done board-to-board, by representatives to/from boards, planned communication, or all of these, depending on the circumstances.

Boards should be open and responsive to invitations to enter into collaborative pursuits. This form of linkage conserves the community's scarce resources and provides the community with the collective wisdom of its agencies and organizations. Also, through a linking process, the community can better understand various organizations and will likely find more effective and efficient ways to support them. The organizations will thus be in a more favorable position when they need to call on the community for more volunteers and/or services at a lower cost.

Communication is an important part of linkage. (Figure V, p. 16, illustrates linkage as provided through an effective communication network.) Communication with diverse groups

or members of other boards helps any board to increase the quality of its decision making and--at the same time--reflect the views, values, and needs of the community.

Sanctioning is an act of acceptance, approval, and support of an agency and its activities in a community. It is frequently overlooked as an element of concern for citizen boards. Communities often exercise social control over organizations by granting access to resources and clients, or withholding such access. Unless the community accepts the organization's purposes and programs, clients in need of the program(s) will not be encouraged to participate.

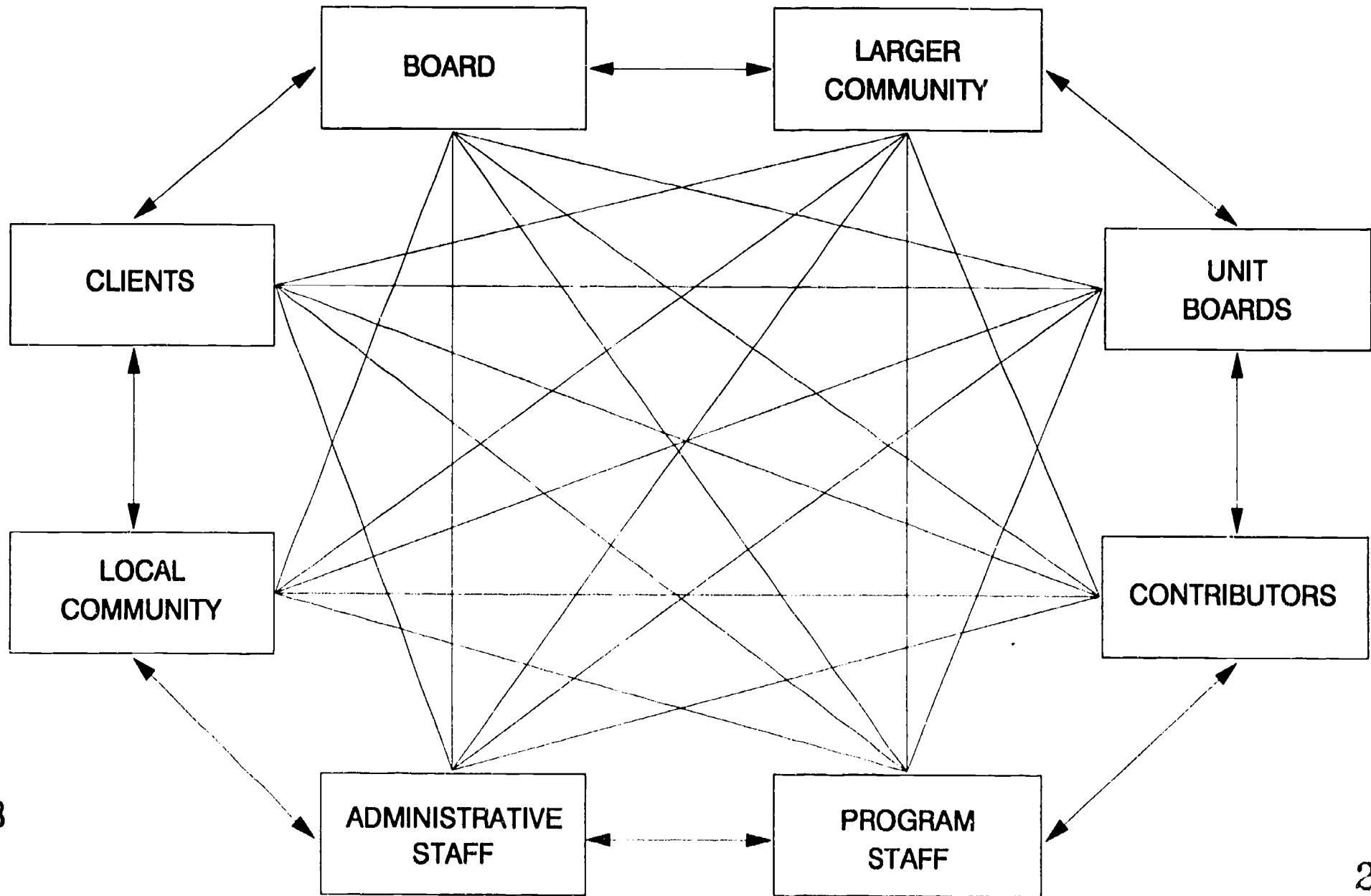
Sanctioning is helping the community accept and "buy into" the mission (spirit) of the organization, without which the agency and its programs are not likely to be well-received. Board members provide this vital function between the organization and the community. There is a Jamaican saying which boards may want to remember: "Me spirit tek (take) to you" or "me spirit no tek (does not take) to you."

FUNCTION 8: ADVOCACY

Advocacy is a process of persuasion. An advocate is one who pleads the case of another. Boardmembers have a responsibility to promote the mission of their organization or to demonstrate positive support for it and any of its activities. Each board member must be an advocate for the organization. Each must believe in its purposes and mission and be confident that the organization is doing the right thing.

Conflicts often arise in board deliberations, but they must be resolved within the confines of the organization's structure. While good boardmanship fosters active discussion and forceful presentation of different viewpoints, it also requires loyalty to the board's decisions and commitments. Once the board has arrived at a decision, all members are duty-bound to carry it out,

FIGURE V. THE COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK



16

23

24

including those who may have held opposing views. Also, each boardmember must become a supporter and advocate for the board's position in the community.

Advocacy must extend beyond "saying good words" for the current programs and projects, it must advocate for the board's future directions as well. Occasionally board members find themselves caught in the cross-fire between positions taken by the majority of the board and positions assumed by the community or a defined group. The board member must be prepared to explain the reasons for the board's decision. When a member is so troubled by a board decision that he or she publicly "bad-mouths" the organization, that boardmember should resign. If the member remains with the board, he or she should ethically lobby from within the board to reverse the decision.

FUNCTION 9: ASSURING THE QUALITY OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

If the board is a governing board and establishes a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) position, it must try to fill that position with the highest qualified person available. Obtaining such a person is considered by many authorities to be the most important function of the board. For most boards, employing a top administrator is the only direct hiring it can appropriately do.

The Chief Executive Officer, the link between the board and staff, must interpret to the staff the intentions and policies of the board. He or she usually has the responsibility to select other key staff for critical positions created by the board. The CEO must have the ability to manage and coordinate activities of staff (salaried and volunteer) so that programs approved by the board can be implemented with maximum efficiency. CEOs can help the board create a vibrant, dynamic agency responsive to the social and/or economic life of the community and be a participant in its betterment.



Advisory boards, while often not directly involved in the hiring of staff, must be concerned about its quality. They can have influence in the selection process and in the continued improvement of the staff they advise.

The board must help the chief executive by establishing policies and goals that maximize the staff's ability to function within the framework of the organization's mission. Consequently, policies should be broad and flexible and speak to general directions, rather than narrowly attempt to address every conceivable single occurrence or activity.

Once a chief executive has been named, he or she should be allowed to administer the duties and responsibilities of the position. The CEO's guidelines and job description should clearly and unambiguously set forth what is expected. Within the framework of the job description and board policies, the CEO should be given the discretion of staffing, supervising, coordinating, and evaluating all personnel, paid staff and volunteers, at all levels. It is essential for the organization's managers to remember that once responsibilities are delegated to a position, the person filling that position must be granted the authority with which to carry out those responsibilities. Boards must continually be concerned about the renewal and upgrading of staff. They should make recommendations to staff and to those who manage staff development.

An often overlooked--but important--function is to provide continuous learning opportunities for the CEO and staff. To that end, the board must provide an incentive for its staff to undertake additional training. Provisions should be made for key staff to attend seminars, conferences, short courses and workshops where new and innovative techniques and information are constantly unfolding.



Board members must remember that information promoted a few years ago is probably not relevant today. Staff must continually be provided the opportunity to refresh their knowledge and skills and gather relevant and current data necessary to remain abreast of the times. Often staff become so involved in their day-to-day work that they overlook the need for further training. Consequently, the opportunities must be provided in a manner that catches the attention of the staff and motivates them to become involved.

FUNCTION 10: EVALUATION--ASSURING A QUALITY PROGRAM

To ensure the quality of its programs and staff involvement, the board must encourage evaluations and assessments of its programs and staff and provide opportunities for such. The board must evaluate effectiveness and efficiency. Effectiveness is simply doing the right things. Is the organization engaged in programs and/or services that allow it to accomplish its purpose and goals? When assessing effectiveness, members of boards and councils should remember that programs, rather than people, should be evaluated. Efficiency means making the best use of time and resources to complete a task. Through evaluations of programs, staff can evaluate their own individual efficiency and effectiveness. Evaluations of program efficiency and effectiveness can yield helpful data and information needed by the board or organization to make program decisions.

Many staff and volunteers are leery of program evaluation. Most fear that negative evaluations are in some way reflective of their personal performance. The board, nonetheless, in the interest of quality performance, should insist on thorough evaluations of each program. The board should regularly evaluate the performance of the top executive and encourage systematic and regular evaluation of staff (both salaried and volunteer) performance by their appropriate supervisor.

REFERENCES

Allender, Donna A. & Robert. (1982). **I Am a Member of the Board**. New York, New York: Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America.

While aimed specifically at Big Brothers/Big Sisters, this two-volume notebook is adaptable to many other voluntary associations. It includes a leader's guide for persons who have responsibility for staff and board training relative to the work of the board. Areas covered are leadership styles, committee structure, agenda setting, conducting meetings, taking and reporting minutes, the nominating process, duties of officers, and board development.

Anthes, Earl, Cronin, Jerry, & Jackson, Michael (Eds.). (1985). **The Nonprofit Board Book: Strategies for Organizational Success**. West Memphis, Arkansas: Independent Community Consultants.

Twelve experts in various aspects of boardsmanship share their expertise on the board and the life of the organization in three major sections: overview of the board, organizing the board, and tasks and essential concerns of the board.

Conrad, William R. & Glenn, William R. (1983). **The Effective Voluntary Board of Directors: What It Is and How It Works**. Athens, Ohio: The Swallow Press, Inc.

Conrad and Glenn present clear answers, backed by graphics, to questions such as a definition of mission, policy formation, functions of boards and staff, roles of board members and the Chief Executive Officer, why people join boards, and evaluation of board members. Also presented is a basic management concept for voluntary organizations.

Dyer, Delwyn A. & Williams, Oscar M. (1985). "Developing Effective and Efficient Local Committees". Blacksburg, Virginia: Extension Division, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Extension Publication #301-023).

A monograph from the same series as "Developing Effective Boards, Councils and Commissions". Detailed explanation of committee purpose and function and specific responsibilities of both the appointing body and committee members.

Herman, Robert D. & Van Til, Jon (Eds.). (1989). **Nonprofit Boards of Directors: Analyses and Applications**. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.

A compendium of research studies on board make-up and fundraising success, board-member expectations, boardmember participation, women and boardsmanship, board/staff roles in management and the planning and implementation of programs.

Houle, Cyril O. (1989). **Governing Boards: Their Nature and Nurture**. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.

Houle outlines in detail the responsibilities of the board, the chief executive, and staff, and shows how these three units can divide important tasks and work together effectively to help organizations fulfill their missions. He describes strategies for

structuring the board and improving overall board operation, showing how to bring out the best in board members, maximize each person's contribution, and help the board identify and achieve important goals.

O'Connell, Brian. (1985). **The Board Member's Book: Making a Difference in Voluntary Associations**. New York, New York: The Foundation Center.

Based on extensive experience working with volunteer boards and serving on them, O'Connell has developed a practical guide on such topics as legal responsibilities; finding good board members; planning, budget and financial accountability; the role of the board president; board/staff relations; and fundraising.

Richards, Audrey (Ed.). (1980). **Board Member Trustee Handbook**. San Francisco, California: Public Management Institute.

A loose-leaf notebook format with over 400 pages of text, work forms, checklists, etc., covering the areas of assessment, boardmanship process, the board as managers of planning and evaluation, committees and meetings, the board and the community, and leadership and team building. (Permission to copy is given.)

Swanson, Andrew. (1988). **The Collected Board Sense: Common Sense for Nonprofit Board Members**. Rumford, Rhode Island: Community Services Consultants, Ltd.

This compendium of over 60 articles originally appeared in newsletters or newspaper columns. Swanson usually covers one topic per article. They are easy to read and remember.

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE ON BOARDS, COUNCILS, AND COMMITTEES

- Center for Volunteer Development
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA 24061-0150
(703) 231-7966
- Department of Volunteerism
Commonwealth of Virginia
223 Governor Street
Richmond, VA 23219
(804) 786-1431
- The National Center for Nonprofit Boards
1225 19th Street, N.W., Suite 340
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 452-6262
- Better Boards programs located in many communities and organized collaboratively by volunteer centers, United Ways, county or city cooperative extension offices, and community colleges. These groups offer workshops and conferences on boardmanship tailored to needs of local organizations.