

## Identifying Potential Board Members for Your Nonprofit

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In 2012, I wrote a series of articles published on our web site, [www.merskyjaffe.com](http://www.merskyjaffe.com). In March, 2012, as part of that series on strengthening your agency's board and volunteer leadership, I detailed the basic responsibilities of a board member and outlined how to begin "[Assessing the Current Makeup of Your Nonprofit Board.](#)"

In this article, I will focus on the ways in which you might identify potential board members.

### **Expanding the List of Candidates**

After analyzing your current board's strengths, gaps, and projected needs, your committee on governance and leadership development is ready to take the next step. In consultation with the board chairperson, chief executive, and senior development officer, the committee should identify prospective board members suggested by various sources, including:

- committee members;
- other board members;
- senior staff;
- your list of current and prospective major donors;
- people reported on in the print and electronic media; and
- board and organizational consultants.

The committee on governance and leadership development then assembles a confidential, cumulative, ongoing list of candidates. The committee may already have assembled such a list in the past that may include, for example, some prospects who were considered for board membership but were not chosen because of the mix of board skills at that time. Or, perhaps a prospect was approached and declined, but left the way open for a later invitation because he or she did not know enough about the nonprofit or was overcommitted.

### **Prospective Board Member Referral Form**

To capture and facilitate the use of valuable data about prospective board members, key people—staff and board members—in the organization should complete the Prospective Board Member Referral Form. ([Click here to download the form](#)) This form summarizes helpful information about board candidates, including qualifications, interests, background, and public records of giving (such as information found in annual reports, and theater, symphony, hospital, school, college, and university donor honor rolls).

The committee chairperson should also consider telephoning or meeting with key board members, staff, and others to stimulate suggestions for board member nominations. Consider this process of identifying future leadership—of replacing oneself—to be one of a board member’s ongoing responsibilities.

Nonprofits need a constant supply of strong volunteer leaders to guide their organizations toward achieving their mission and vision. This need not be a struggle. There is a path that you can follow to have a continuous pipeline of happy, productive board members. This is true, even if you have difficulty:

- Identifying prospective board members;
- Engaging these prospects; or
- Retaining your board members

Learn more about identifying potential board members in our e-Book, [How You Can Engage New Board Members—Strengthening Your Nonprofit Organization.](#)