

FOREWORD
UNDERSTANDING THE COMMITMENT
OF VOLUNTEER BOARD LEADERSHIP

“We need to raise awareness about the importance of the complex issues facing volunteer board leaders and develop national standards that articulate good governance, delve into risk management and capitalize on innovation. ”

– MARCEL LAUZIÈRE

Volunteer board leadership in Canada has evolved dramatically in the face of the continual changes within the economic landscape, the increased attention paid towards accountability and the institutional sophistication with greater needs to support community endeavours and society as a whole.

Determining what leadership role to play within the growing not-for-profit sector, how to conduct oneself and which direction to head is as much about personal growth and public demand. Proper enlistment and continual board training will be increasingly necessary for maintaining high performance board engagement.

Volunteerism is something that requires greater attention if the non-profit board is to maximize its desired objectives. Serving to help others is a noble endeavour and working with professional staff certainly requires time, training and dedication. The question arises within the Canadian philanthropic landscape: will boards need to seek even higher standards to create greater efficiencies that will ultimately benefit those who serve and those who benefit from the work of the non-profit?

This book is intended to provide insights into how to best engage non-profit board volunteers and understand more about the effective means of deploying our volunteer leadership. This publication will provide a greater understanding of board leadership for Canadians who are currently involved and/or wish to become more engaged in not-for-profit governance.

Chapter 1 sets out in detail the background on what is involved in helping to shape and define volunteer leadership itself. It provides initial background on why a volunteer would want to be engaged in the non-profit sector in Canada.

Chapter 2 provides an introduction to the role of Board of Directors. It focuses on the notion of what a Board Member needs to provide the charity, from both a practical and applied perspective.

Chapter 3 looks at board governance. It demonstrates the importance of the duty of care and what volunteer board members must undertake in light of Sarbanes-Oxley.

Chapter 4 outlines the importance of proper board recruitment. It provides food for thought on best practices and what criteria and questions need to be answered by both parties involved in the process.

Chapter 5 examines the best method for conducting effective board meetings. With the increased complexity of various charitable organizations, board members must be conscious of the best practices to employ within their institutional culture and needs.

Chapter 6 takes a look at board evaluations and outlines several different alternatives. Performance is a critical factor in advancing the oversight and engagement that is so necessary for the advancement of a non-profit.

Chapter 7 deals with different aspects involved in an organization's financial management. All institutions must ensure they are in full compliance with all of the regulatory requirements. Board members need to ask the appropriate questions to ensure both transparency and successful institutional outcomes.

Chapter 8 reviews the specific roles of the CEO. The CEO of a non-profit is the critical conduit that will arguably determine the success of the board, staff and charity as a whole.

Chapter 9 looks in detail at the mission, vision and values that help anchor and focus the culture of the non-profit. Board values shape the principles that are essential deliberations, decisions and direction of the enterprise.

Chapter 10 deals with philanthropic engagement. It outlines the importance of making sure boards are effective, financially successful and philanthropically engaged.

Chapter 11 provides an outline of some of the key governance and philanthropic trends that are emerging. It provides some of the current perspective regarding the issues of board engagement.

Chapter 12 outlines the framework of the new proposed voluntary standards that will be developed for the Canadian non-profit sector over the next several years. These standards will help raise the level of engagement at the boardroom table.

In order to properly engage voluntary board action in Canada, charitable organizations will require greater discipline in the enlistment process, stronger training and careful due diligence. Some of the challenges facing the voluntary sector are awareness, capacity and experience. Increased good governance and philanthropic connection will have a tremendous impact on the continued transformation of the charitable sector as a whole.