A New Lens On Board Engagement

MN Public Transit Association
Oct 24, 2022

Contact me at:

Mary Kay Delvo
marykay@inspiringsight.com
612-750-0814
www.inspiringsight.com
Board Engagement Formula

Board members need to understand:

Why does it matter?  
Understand why your participation matters to the organization

What can I contribute?  
Skills, Expertise & Perspective  
Recognition of the value I bring to the table

Where can I contribute it?  
Opportunity.  
Processes that make it easy for me to share my skills/expertise

“Your association members are the tentacles throughout the industry that help ensure its organizations can continue to operate.”
Highly Engaged Board Members

~ Share industry perspectives
~ Are **thought leaders** & **forward thinking**
~ Come **prepared** with questions and having read the materials in advance
~ Bring **curiosity** & problem solving to the board
~ Volunteer to serve on/lead committees

~ **Look ahead, out & around** the organization
~ Take leadership in areas of expertise & interest & serves as a **champion of excellence** in their functional area
~ **Identifies pro bono resources** that support the organization

“In a world that is on fire...we can no longer afford to spend our time being stuck anywhere”
Core Reasons Boards Are Not Engaged

1. Limited Understanding of role why boards exist & their importance for the organization
   Board members tend to respond only to the level of expectation persistently articulated to them

2. One-time event approach to engagement
   Board Building-Cycle

3. Process & structure fail to leverage what the board has to offer
   Infuse engagement in all processes
Core Roles of a Board

**Foundational**
- Alignment of Vision, Mission, Strategic Directions
- Oversight & Accountability-executive director & financial
- Board succession and engagement

**Strategic & Adaptive**
- Constructive partnership with the chief executive
- Thinking & leading strategically
- Intentional board practices

**External Leadership & Ambassadorship**
- Fundraising
- Community Outreach
- Advocacy

Adapted from BoardSource
If on this list, bother the board with it!

**Controversial** - contentious with 1 or more stakeholders

**Directional** - if connected to strategic directions, consult board

**Essential** - board owns vision, mission & values

**Financial** - big departure from budget

**Permanence** – long implications of decisions

**Positional** – if has the endorsement of the organization

Intersection of Governance & Management

Management

Governance

People & Culture
- Protect
  - Policies, anticipate change & threats

Programs, Brand Management & evaluation
- Direct
  - Strategic plan
  - Set budget
  - Executive director/mgr

Finances & Partnerships
- Assess & Advocate
  - Strategic conversations ambassadorship

©INspiringSIGHT2022. All Rights Reserved
Identify Transportation System Influencers

The value of board members to the organization is to look up, out, and around & communicate those observations & experiences to staff, industry leaders & policy makers.

- General Public
- Industry partners
- What do you understand about all the influencers on the transportation sector?
- System - Regulatory

©INspiringSIGHT2022. All Rights Reserved
Three principles for effective boards

1. Your board will only be as effective as its individual members.

2. Board members tend to respond only to the level of expectation persistently articulated to them.

3. A well-balanced & functioning board depends on the sustained hard work of the governance committee.
High Performing Board-Building Cycle

PHASE I  Strategic Recruitment
- Identify
- Cultivate
- Recruit

PHASE 2  Effective Engagement
- Orient
- Involve
- Educate

PHASE 3  Intentional Revitalization
- Evaluate
- Rotate
- Celebrate

## Traditional Board Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome approval of last meeting minutes-vote</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer’s Report-vote</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Director’s Report</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance Committee Report</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominating Committee Report</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Committee Report</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising Committee Report</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New business</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjourn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Length of meeting:** Two - hours

*Traditional board agendas are designed for unprepared board members who want to be read to instead of doing their pre-work on their own. This format drives dis-engagement.*

## Strategic Board Agenda (sample)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction of strategic discussion by chair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generative discussion of a Strategic Direction</td>
<td>20 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generative &amp; strategic discussions: ahead, out &amp; around</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board training topic or industry topic</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions about consent agenda items</td>
<td>10 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval of Consent Agenda: minutes, ED report, finance committee report, other committee reports</td>
<td>5 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry-over questions/topics for next meeting</td>
<td>5 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments &amp; announcements</td>
<td>5 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjourn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Length of meeting:** 75 minutes

*Board members spend time reading reports outside of meeting time. Meetings are saved for robust & strategic discussion & voting.*
**Powerful Questions**

- I wonder if...
- I’m curious about...
- Walk me through...
- It occurs to me...

How...
- would you describe...
- might that change things?
- would you go about...

What...
- about this feels different?
- would you like to happen?
- difference might it make?
- is going on for you?

...are open-ended
...driven by curiosity,
...don’t have easy answers

HOW

WHAT

WHERE

WHO, WHEN, WHY

©INspiringSIGHT2022. All Rights Reserved
Generative Discussions

- Engage the expertise, experiences and perspectives of the entire board.

- Keep the conversation at a strategic and forward-looking level, and away from jumping to a solution too quickly.

- Are about strategic thinking and resiliency, not about quick fixes.

- Inform staff about the environment outside the organization so they have what they need to move forward in the most relevant way.

- Assist staff and board in responding in alignment with your organizations’ mission and work when dealing with issues in the public eye & press.
The Engagement Formula Worksheet

**Why**

**What**

**Where**

**ENGAGEMENT**

**Why does it matter?**

Understand why your participation matters to the organization

**What can I contribute?**

Skills, Expertise & Perspective
Recognition of value I bring to the table

**Where can I contribute it?**

Opportunity.
Processes that make it easy for me to share my skills/expertise

Things to explore with my board chair & staff: