

Executive Director Evaluation

From the
National Center for Nonprofit Boards

Introduction

By failing to adequately evaluate the chief executive, many nonprofit boards miss an opportunity to express support for the executive and strengthen his or her performance. Neglect can be costly, resulting in high turnover, mistrust, and ongoing poor performance.

In too many nonprofit organizations across the country, the board seldom—if ever—takes the time to assess the chief executive’s performance. In many cases, the assessment is perfunctory and may not produce useful results for the executive or organization. When the executive does receive feedback, it is often during a period of change or stress—hardly a time when effective dialogue can take place.

Why is assessment so often neglected? Some boards feel that it requires too great a commitment of time and energy. Others are reluctant to open a can of worms when things seem to be going just fine. Often the board chairperson and the executive have mixed emotions about giving or receiving candid feedback.

There are many reasons why a board should conduct regular, systematic assessments of the chief executive. First, the executive’s position within the organization, with no peers and no direct supervisor, makes it difficult for him or her to obtain honest feedback to use as a basis for improving performance. Many executives would welcome this feedback and complain that they can’t get the board to let them know how they’re doing. The assessment also provides an opportunity for the board to express formal appreciation for a job well done, which most executives will appreciate. Most important, the chief executive’s performance affects the performance of the entire organization—one of the board’s chief concerns.

This publication is designed to guide the board and the chief executive through an effective dialogue. The assessment process has three broad goals:

- to clarify expectations between the board and the chief executive on roles, responsibilities and job expectations;
- to provide insight into the board’s perception of the executive’s strengths, limitations, and overall performance; and
- to foster the growth and development of both the chief executive and the organization.

The assessment should be a learning exercise. It is not meant to be a report card, to assign blame, or to be used strictly as a basis for setting compensation. This assessment instrument provides tools to lead the board and the executive through a thoughtful discussion about the chief executive’s past performance and future aspirations. It is only through discussion of this type that nonprofit leaders can chart courses of action and make progress in fulfilling their organizations’ missions.

The National Center for Nonprofit Boards offers consulting services to assist in chief executive assessment. For more information on these services, contact NCNB by telephone at 202-452-6262, by fax at 202-452-6299, or write to: Director of Education, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, Suite 510, 2000 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-4907.

How to Complete the Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to help you, your board colleagues, and the chief executive assess the chief executive's performance. It should take you 30 to 60 minutes to complete. *To encourage candor, the questionnaire does not ask for your name.* Your confidential responses, along with the responses of your colleagues, will be summarized and shared with the chief executive at a meeting with a small committee of the board.

Each section begins with a brief description of an important area of responsibility. Please read it and then answer the questions that follow. The questions measure your level of satisfaction with how the chief executive is carrying out various aspects of each responsibility. Check off the number representing the degree to which you are satisfied or not satisfied with the chief executive's performance in each responsibility mentioned. The answer you mark can range on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing "Very Dissatisfied" and 4 representing "Very Satisfied."

1 - Very Dissatisfied

2 - Dissatisfied

3 - Satisfied

4 - Very Satisfied

You also have the option of answering "Not Sure." If you think a particular question is not applicable, feel free to skip it.

At the end of each section and at the conclusion of the assessment are a number of open-ended questions. Please take the time to answer these questions, since your responses will be especially helpful when the board and chief executive look for ways to strengthen the executive's performance and the organization as a whole.

I. Vision, Mission, and Strategies

The chief executive's role has both strategic and operational components. Working with the board, the chief executive must develop a shared vision for the future of the organization, build understanding around the current mission, and develop appropriate goals and strategies to advance that mission.

		Not Satisfied		Satisfied		Not Sure	
How satisfied are you that:		1	2	3	4	NS	
1-1	The chief executive has worked with the board to develop a clear vision for the organization and understands his or her own leadership role?						
1-2	The chief executive, working with the board, translates the organization's mission into realistic goals and objectives?						
1-3	With input from the board and staff, the chief executive has created an effective process for long-range or strategic planning for the organization?						
1-4	The chief executive has a sense of what must change and what must remain the same in order to accomplish the organization's mission and realize its vision?						

What are the major strengths of the chief executive in this area?

How can the chief executive do better in this area?

II. Accomplishment of Management Objectives

Working with the board, the chief executive establishes operational objectives that support the strategic plan. The chief executive is responsible for leading the staff in the implementation of the strategic plan and any annual plans.

		Not Satisfied		Satisfied		Not Sure	
		1	2	3	4	NS	
How satisfied are you that:							
2-1	The chief executive selects and cultivates qualified senior staff, models effective behaviors and skills, and builds morale among staff and volunteers?						
2-2	The chief executive ensures that there are appropriate systems in place to facilitate the day-to-day operations of the organization in the areas of:						
a	development and delivery of programs?						
b	education and outreach?						
c	policy development?						
d	administration and operations?						
e	fund raising and resource development?						
2-3	The chief executive has made progress in accomplishing the personal and organizational management objectives established by the board (or appropriate committee) during his or her last annual review?						

What are the major strengths of the chief executive in this area?

How can the chief executive do better in this area?

III. Program Management

A nonprofit organization carries out its mission by offering specific programs and services. The chief executive leads the staff in managing and administering these programs and services. This requires a thorough knowledge of the organization's mission area as well as an understanding of technical, operational, and ethical issues.

		Not Satisfied		Satisfied		Not Sure	
How satisfied are you that:		1	2	3	4	NS	
3-1	The chief executive demonstrates substantive knowledge regarding the organization's programs and services?						
3-2	The chief executive works with the board to develop appropriate policies to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of programs?						
3-3	The chief executive ensures that staff manage these programs effectively?						
3-4	The chief executive, through effective oversight and staffing, sets high standards of quality for the organization's programs?						
3-5	The chief executive recommends new programs and the modification or discontinuance of current programs, as appropriate, to the board?						

What are the major strengths of the chief executive in this area?

How can the chief executive do better in this area?

IV. Effectiveness in Fund Raising and Resource Development

The chief executive, in partnership with the board and appropriate staff, is responsible for developing and implementing appropriate fund-raising and financial development strategies. The chief executive and board use their combined strengths, knowledge, and relationships to help the organization achieve its objectives.

		Not Satisfied		Satisfied		Not Sure	
How satisfied are you that:		1	2	3	4	NS	
4-1	The chief executive has a clear understanding of the current and future financial resources needed to realize the organization's mission?						
4-2	Working in concert with the board and development staff, the chief executive implements a fund raising program that meets the goals established for the organization?						
4-3	The chief executive is innovative in the creation of partnerships with businesses or other institutions that contribute to the organization's resources?						
4-4	The chief executive guides revenue-generating activities in order to provide adequate income to the organization?						
4-5	The chief executive is an effective fund raiser, working well with staff, donors, and board members to secure adequate income and strong personal commitments from those who have an interest in the organization?						

What are the major strengths of the chief executive in this area?

How can the chief executive do better in this area?

V. Fiscal Management

Ensuring that income is managed wisely is especially important for a nonprofit organization operating in the public trust. It is the role of the chief executive to see that solid planning and budgeting systems are in place and that the organization's goals and strategic plan serve as the basis for sound financial planning. In addition, it is the chief executive's responsibility to ensure that qualified staff are hired to accurately monitor, assess, and manage the financial health of the nonprofit.

		Not Satisfied		Satisfied		Not Sure	
		1	2	3	4	NS	
How satisfied are you that:							
5-1	The chief executive is knowledgeable regarding financial planning, budgeting, management of the organization's investments and endowment, and understands the place of each in the organization's overall financial picture?						
5-2	The chief executive has established a system linking strategic and operational planning with the organization's budgeting process?						
5-3	The chief executive presents financial reports to the board on a regular basis and submits an annual budget for board review, revision, and approval?						
5-4	The chief executive ensures that a clear and accurate accounting system is maintained, allowing the board to monitor the organization's finances and operations in relationship to the approved budget and to make informed financial decisions?						

What are the major strengths of the chief executive in this area?

How can the chief executive do better in this area?

VI. Operations Management

The chief executive is responsible for day-to-day management. The chief executive works with staff to develop, maintain, and use the systems and resources that facilitate the effective operation of the organization.

		Not Satisfied		Satisfied		Not Sure	
How satisfied are you that:		1	2	3	4	NS	
6-1	The chief executive is knowledgeable regarding the operations of an effective office environment?						
6-2	The chief executive has assured the organization has in place:						
a	sound risk management policies, including adequate insurance coverage?						
b	accounting, payroll, and cash management systems?						
c	appropriate personnel policies and systems for staffing?						
d	appropriate space management plans, which help build an efficient and harmonious work place?						
e	plans for the appropriate use of technology and technological systems?						
6-3	The chief executive ensures compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements?						

What are the major strengths of the chief executive in this area?

How can the chief executive do better in this area?

VII. The Chief Executive/Board Partnership

The chief executive and the board must work together as partners. Each arm of leadership draws upon its own unique strengths and abilities. The chief executive and the board have joint responsibility for developing and maintaining a strong working relationship and a system for sharing information. The board is responsible for creating a written job description for the chief executive that is clear and agreed to by all parties.

		Not Satisfied		Satisfied		Not Sure	
How satisfied are you that:		1	2	3	4	NS	
7-1	The chief executive and the board are clear about the differences between their respective roles?						
7-2	The chief executive is treated as a respected professional by members of the board?						
7-3	The chief executive has been delegated the authority necessary to manage the organization effectively?						
7-4	The chief executive raises issues and questions and provides adequate information to inform board discussions?						
7-5	The chief executive receives the annual review to which he or she is entitled in a timely and thoughtful way that articulates specific strengths and areas for improvement?						

What are the major strengths of the chief executive in this area?

How can the chief executive do better in this area?

VIII. The Board/Staff Relationship

Because many organizational issues require a partnership of board and staff to be addressed effectively, the chief executive should work to create opportunities for senior staff to interact with board members and to ensure that board and staff have a good working relationship.

		Not Satisfied		Satisfied		Not Sure	
How satisfied are you that:		1	2	3	4	NS	
8-1	The chief executive has established appropriate systems for dialogue and communication between the board and staff to ensure that the board maintains a good knowledge of the organization?						
8-2	The chief executive and senior staff have built effective working relationships with the officers of the board and committee chairs who are responsible for specific aspects of organizational governance?						
8-3	The working relationships among the chief executive, staff, and board are collegial?						

What are the major strengths of the chief executive in this area?

How can the chief executive do better in this area?

IX. External Liaison and Public Image

The chief executive and board members are key players in establishing and maintaining positive relationships with the many groups that support the work of the nonprofit.

		Not Satisfied		Satisfied		Not Sure	
		1	2	3	4	NS	
How satisfied are you that:							
9-1	The chief executive maintains a positive professional reputation in the local community and is a good ambassador?						
9-2	The chief executive cultivates effective relationships with:						
a	community and business leaders?						
b	constituents?						
c	public officials?						
d	relevant professional organizations?						
e	potential funders?						
9-3	The chief executive is an articulate and knowledgeable spokesperson?						
9-4	The chief executive is well regarded by his or her professional peers in the organization's area of focus?						

What are the major strengths of the chief executive in this area?

How can the chief executive do better in this area?

X. Board Perceptions of the Organization

As the board reviews the performance of the chief executive, it should also gauge its perceptions of the general operations and quality of the organization in the following areas. The responses to these questions may help to focus the board and chief executive’s attention on specific areas of organizational strength and limitations and will help to guide future organizational development efforts.

		Not Satisfied		Satisfied		Not Sure	
		1	2	3	4	NS	
How would you rate:							
a	Administration and Operations						
b	Program Development and Delivery						
c	Financial Management						
d	Marketing and Public Relations						
e	Long-Range and Strategic Planning						
f	Fund Raising						
g	Client Services						
h	Overall Quality of Staff Performance						
i	Other: _____						

Comments:

Open-Ended Questions

1. What are the three major strengths of the chief executive?
2. What are some limitations in the chief executive's performance?
3. What have been the most significant achievements of the chief executive over the last year?
4. What external factors have influenced the chief executive's performance?
5. In the last year, what difficult issues have faced the organization, and how did the chief executive bring them to resolution?
6. Have any legal or ethical issues arisen with regard to the operations of the organization? How were these brought to successful resolution?
7. What are areas in which the board could provide better support to the chief executive?
8. Additional comments:

Executive Director Self-Evaluation

Self-Assessment Questionnaire

This self-assessment questionnaire is designed to help you assess your personal performance over the last year and to facilitate discussion between you—the chief executive—and the board. The first section of the questionnaire addresses the ten areas of general responsibility examined in the board questionnaire. These areas are:

- I. Vision, Mission and Strategies
- II. Accomplishment of Management Objectives
- III. Program Management
- IV. Effectiveness in Fund Raising and Resource Development
- V. Fiscal Management
- VI. Operations Management
- VII. The Chief Executive/Board Partnership
- VIII. The Board/Staff Relationship
- IX. External Liaison and Public Image
- X. Perceptions of the Organization

The questions measure your level of satisfaction with how you have carried out various aspects of these responsibilities. Check off the number representing the degree to which you are satisfied or not satisfied with your performance in each responsibility mentioned. The answer you mark can range on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing “Very Dissatisfied” and 4 representing “Very Satisfied.”

1 — Very Dissatisfied 2 — Dissatisfied 3 — Satisfied 4 — Very Satisfied

The second section of the assessment contains a number of open-ended questions that will help to guide you as you assess your own performance.

After both you and the board have completed the assessments, a meeting will be scheduled between you and a representative of the board to review the results of this assessment. During this meeting, you and the board representative can use the assessment results to identify areas for personal growth and draft action plans for your professional development. This meeting will also be a good opportunity to discuss ways in which the board can better support or complement your work and to discuss mutual hopes for the future of the organization.

Chief Executive Self-Assessment

		Not Satisfied		Satisfied		Not Sure	
How satisfied are you that YOU:		1	2	3	4	NS	
1.	Have developed a clear vision for the future of the organization?						
2.	Have successfully communicated an understanding of the organization's mission to board members, staff and the community?						
3.	Have developed appropriate goals and strategies to advance that mission?						
4.	Have established operational objectives that support the organization's strategic plan?						
5.	Have efficiently led the staff in the implementation of the strategic plan and any annual plans?						
6.	Have effectively led the staff in managing and administering the programs and services the organization offers?						
7.	Have a thorough knowledge of the organization's mission areas?						
8.	Have a strong understanding of the technical, operational and ethical issues facing the organization?						
9.	Have developed and implemented appropriate fund-raising and financial development strategies?						
10.	Have ensured that solid planning and budgeting systems are in place?						
11.	Have ensured that the organization's goals and strategic plan serve as a basis for sound financial planning?						
12.	Have recruited and developed qualified staff to accurately assess, manage and project the financial health of the organization?						
13.	Have worked with the staff to develop, maintain, and use appropriate operating systems and resources that facilitate the effective operation of the organization?						
14.	Have maintained a strong working relationship with the board, characterized by open communication, respect, and trust?						
15.	Have modeled effective working relationships with the board to staff?						

16.	Have established appropriate systems for dialogue and communication between the board and staff?						
17.	Have established and maintained positive relationships with the many groups that support or are involved in the work of the organization?						

The Chief Executive's Perceptions of the Organization

As you review your own performance, you should also take the opportunity to gauge your perceptions of the general operations and quality of the organization in the following areas. The responses to these questions may help to focus the board's and your own attention on specific areas of organizational strength and limitations which will help to guide future organizational development efforts.

		Satisfied		Not Satisfied		Not Sure	
How would you rate:		1	2	3	4	NS	
a	Administration and Operations						
b	Program Development and Delivery						
c	Financial Management						
d	Marketing and Public Relations						
e	Long-Range and Strategic Planning						
f	Fund Raising						
g	Client Services						
h	Overall Quality of Staff Performance						
i	Other: _____						

Comments:

Chief Executive Self-Assessment—Open-Ended Questions

JOB EXPECTATIONS AND OBJECTIVES

1. What are the primary objectives and responsibilities of your position as chief executive, as you understand them?

2. What have been your major accomplishments of the last year?

3. What difficulties did you have in achieving your job expectations and objectives over the last year? What prevented you from achieving these goals?

4. In what ways could the board better support you in your work?

PERSONAL SKILLS AND DEVELOPMENT

5. What are your greatest strengths?

6. What are your most serious limitations?

7. What areas of your work are most personally rewarding to you? Why?

8. What areas of your work are least personally rewarding? Why?

9. What are your short-term personal development goals for the next year? How do you plan on achieving them?

10. What are your longer-term personal development goals?

11. In the last year, what difficult issues have faced the organization, and how did you bring them to resolution?

12. Have any legal or ethical issues arisen with regard to the operations of the organization? How did you bring these to successful resolution?

13. Other comments