

Sounding Board

A publication of Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center Charter School Division

Promoting Quality Charter School Governance
ISSUE 15



Recruitment of Charter School Board Members

We know one of the keys to a great school is engaged and inspired board members. But one of the consistent struggles is attracting top-level talent while giving them an honest assessment of what to expect as a charter school board member. A charter school, and its board in particular, must be accountable and responsive to its constituents. Given the current climate, it is more important than ever to engage and inspire board members while maintaining an unwavering commitment to the school's mission.

Arguably, the hardest part of recruiting board members might be coming up with messaging. What is it that your organization is tasked with doing, and what are the types of skills and mentalities required to achieve those goals? Is every member clear on a common understanding of key priorities to push the organization forward? While each of you might have different reasons as to why you have specifically come to this line of work, finding common language helps build the collective narrative of who you are as an organization, along with your hopes and dreams for the future. Recognizing that all public charter schools are governed by an independent board, it is crucial to acknowledge that each of you plays a critical role in shaping the direction and future success of the school.

Take a moment to listen to this [TedTalk](#) with Carrie Irvin, founder of Charter Board Partners. She shares the impact charter schools can have on their students due to board members' involvement. Have a discussion with your board regarding the effect you want to have with your students and the school community. Envision how you could make an impact while unearthing ways to design marketing and recruiting materials to help tell your story.

<https://youtu.be/-dQFkhRFH9Q>

Now, where are we going to find these individuals to support on our school boards? Often, schools don't cast a wide enough net when thinking about sources for our referrals. The people in our immediate networks surrounding the school come to mind initially, but where should you go after you think you have tapped your personal resources?

- Reconnect with colleagues from college or any professional networks
- Local community groups or the Chamber of Commerce
- Local businesses you support; often there is synergy with other passions you support
- Engage with other nonprofit boards, especially if they have similar missions
- Social media (like Facebook and LinkedIn); don't be afraid to "cold call" (or message) people to gauge their interest.

As a team, read through the [Tips for Finding and Recruiting Exceptional Board Members](#) developed by Board On Track. They have even provided a board candidate evaluation form, which can support understanding what gaps currently exist on the board and how you can intentionally recruit to fill those areas.

Learn more at
OspreyWilds.org



Explore these questions to guide the narrative as you begin your search:

What's the narrative of the board? What is the story...the good, the bad, and ugly?

How is each member personally connected to the mission within the school and engaged and inspired by the work?

What are the recruiting goals of the board? What is the primary mission/vision to meet these goals? Have we thought through our goals on a 3-5 year timeline or only in the short term?

What gaps are we looking to fill on our board? (How do we align those characteristics with our school's mission?)

Who do we know that can fulfill these common skills necessary for any board:

- Finance, Education, HR, Communications / Marketing, Strategic Planning, Fundraising, Real Estate, Governance, Legal, and experience relevant to school's mission / context
- If we don't specifically know these people within our networks, who can help us find these individuals?

How are we tapping into local professional associations and organizations?

How does our interview process indicate the goals and expectations of board members? How are we thinking about all the touchpoints through the interview process? (Initial contact, connecting with school leader through a school tour, interview with the board, observing a board meeting, etc.) How do we maintain communication and adhere to our timeline?

How do our interview questions support the overall mission of the school? Will the applicant leave with a true understanding of a board member's role and responsibilities?