How You Can Help
Support The Center for Nonprofit Excellence

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Select: The Center for Nonprofit Excellence
Choose: Your gift amount
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The strength and health of our communities is directly tied to the strength of our region’s nonprofit sector.

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Learn more about The Center for Nonprofit Excellence and the work being done to improve and strengthen our region’s nonprofit sector at: www.fccfoundation.org.

The State of Board Governance in Fairfield County
Report produced by
The Fairfield County Community Foundation’s
Center for Nonprofit Excellence
A Summary of 2012 Survey Results
Improving Board Governance

Better understanding the needs of Fairfield County nonprofit boards was an important outcome of this survey. The Fairfield County Community Foundation’s Center for Nonprofit Excellence workshops are geared toward professional staff of nonprofit organizations to support the development of effective boards as well. Future board governance training will be specifically based on the findings from this survey. The CNE will sponsor professional development workshops for Fairfield County nonprofit executives, directors, senior staff and board members.

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Provides a planning calendar for nonprofit fundraising events, a highly discounted subscription to the Foundation Center Online Directories, and free meeting space for Fairfield County nonprofits. In addition to Foundation support, The Center for Nonprofit Excellence is sponsored by Allied Air and Holmes Hardware/Bituminous Foundation, First Federal Bank of Fairfield, Citizens Community Foundation, Daun Cosy, OffCenter and Wililton Title, AFSCME Local 1749, Pasek-Mitchell Foundation, Force Foundation, Family Planning, Alumni of Brookfield Foundation, The Hills Towne Foundation, The United Way of Western Connecticut, Union Savings Bank.

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About The Fairfield County Community Foundation

The Fairfield County Community Foundation works closely with donors, providing guidance and support to philanthropists to improve the quality of life throughout Fairfield County. Individuals, families, corporations and organizations establish charitable funds in our community to support the needs of the diverse population it serves.

About The FCCF Center for Nonprofit Excellence

The Fairfield County Community Foundation created The Center for Nonprofit Excellence to strengthen nonprofit effectiveness, efficiency and impact within the Fairfield County community. The Center aims to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of nonprofits that serve the Fairfield County community.

Executive Summary

Survey Results & Analysis

Findings

The State of Board Governance in Fairfield County

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 1
Survey Results & Analysis 2-3
Recommendations 4

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Findings

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Table of Contents

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Survey Results & Analysis 2-3
Recommendations 4

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Survey Results & Analysis

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The State of Board Governance in Fairfield County

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 1
Survey Results & Analysis 2-3
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The Fairfield County Community Foundation works closely with donors, organizations and philanthropists to improve the quality of life throughout Fairfield County. Individuals, families, corporations and organizations establish charitable funds to contribute to existing funds focused on specific areas of interest in Fairfield County. The Foundation provides philanthropic, advisory services, talent, local and national development efforts, fund development and leads initiatives to build a community stronger. In line with our mission to support the Fairfield County Community Foundation has invested over $300 million in grants to nonprofit organizations in Fairfield County and beyond. For more information, visit www.fccfoundation.org.

About The FCCF Center for Nonprofit Excellence

The Fairfield County Community Foundation created the Center for Nonprofit Excellence to strengthen nonprofit effectiveness, efficiency and fundraising skills for organizations that support the Fairfield County community.

• Provides a training calendar for nonprofit fundraising events, highly discounted subscription to the Foundation’s online Direct and free monthly issue for Fairfield County nonprofits. In addition to its Foundation support, the Center for Nonprofit Excellence is generously funded by Affiliated and Helen DeVos HomeCare (Buck Huang Fund of PCF; Chime’s Caitlin Foundation; Dann, Green, Coven, Offers and The Hilfiker’s Epstein Family Foundation, People’s United Bank, Fairfield County Volunteer Center, The Fairfield County Community Foundation, First Financial Bank, The United Way of Western Connecticut, United Bank Foundation.

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Awards special technical assistance grants to Fairfield County nonprofit organizations.

• Provides a community calendar for nonprofit fundraising events, • Offers access to the online membership of nonprofits in the community.

The Center for Nonprofit Excellence offers the following opportunities:

• Convenes nonprofit leaders from across Fairfield County, so they can share best practices and discuss common challenges.

The Fairfield County Community Foundation created The Center for Nonprofit Excellence to offer professional development workshops for Fairfield County nonprofit executive directors, senior staff and board members.

• Offers onsite, one-on-one technical assistance to nonprofit executives and board members who call the Foundation’s specific business advice.

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Improving Board Governance

Better understanding the needs of Fairfield County nonprofit boards was an important outcome of this survey. The Fairfield County Community Foundation and the Center for Nonprofit Excellence have continued to develop the annual Fairfield County Board Survey to better understand nonprofit boards in Fairfield County. The survey asks nonprofit board members about their experiences, board effectiveness, the most common responses included:

• Board members not understanding how to fundraise.

The areas where respondents expressed they would most benefit from training included:

• Monitoring the performance of the organization.

The survey has been conducted for the past four years. The survey is designed to gather the best information about nonprofit board members and organizations.

A validation of the survey was conducted in April 2011. The survey was conducted in the early evening.

The survey was conducted in the early evening. The worst time to offer training to board members is in the afternoon according to respondents.

When asked which credentials were the greatest obstacles impacting board effectiveness, the most common responses included:

• Small board size, as board members stretch to fill critical roles.

Boards in Fairfield County do not reflect the diversity of the region. 70% of respondents have boards that are overwhelmingly white and male. Over 75% of these boards have no Asian-American board members. Over 75% of these boards have no African-American board members. Over 75% of these boards have no Latinx board members under the age of 40 and over 50% of these boards have no Latinx board members.

Board Recruitment

In terms of recruiting board members, 40% of respondents reported that it was somewhat difficult to very difficult to recruit new board members.

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The State of Board Governance in Fairfield County

Findings

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 1
Survey Results & Analysis 2 - 3
Recommendations 4

Learn more about The Fairfield County Community Foundation and its Center for Nonprofit Excellence: www.fccfoundation.org
The "Backbone" of Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit boards are the backbone of charitable organizations. Boards exercise authority over the organization and have a range of responsibilities. The most important of these responsibilities include providing financial and legal oversight, ensuring that the organization has sufficient resources, and setting the strategic direction of the organization.

Given these responsibilities, it is widely accepted that a strong, engaged, nonprofit board is an essential ingredient to a nonprofit’s ability to achieve impact.

Today, more than ever, there is increasing pressure on nonprofit boards to operate effectively. Greater scrutiny on nonprofit practices, coupled with increased demand for nonprofit services and funding decreases are challenging boards in new ways.

How are nonprofit boards in Fairfield County, Connecticut stepping up to these challenges? Where are they shining and struggling? What do boards look like in terms of their composition? And how are local nonprofit organizations attracting and retaining board members?

We set out to answer these questions and more in a survey we conducted in January 2012 of Fairfield County executive directors and board members. Our findings are based on the responses of 120 nonprofit leaders in Fairfield County - a 26% response rate. These respondents include 100 executive directors and 20 board members. Respondents represented organizations working in the arts, education, workforce development and everything in between. One-third of the respondents were organizations with operating budgets between $1-3 million dollars and one-third of respondents were human service organizations.

These findings are just a snapshot of the state of nonprofit governance in Fairfield County. This report is meant to be a tool for the leaders of our local boards and how they are performing. It is not a statistically weighted, representative sample of the nonprofit sector in Fairfield County.

Executive Summary

Findings

In terms of board performance, respondents rated their board high in terms of understanding their mission, financial and legal oversight, and setting the strategic direction of the organization. Respondents rated their board's performance poorly in terms of fundraising for the organization, recruiting new board members and monitoring the board's own performance.

In terms of the board’s responsibility for fundraising, only 52% of respondents say board members do not solicit funds on behalf of the organization.

- 52% of respondents say board members do not solicit funds on behalf of the organization.
- 62% of respondents say board members do not identify donors.
- 52% of respondents say board members do not attend fundraising events.
- 28% of respondents say board members do not make a personal donation to the organization.

Boards range in size from 5 to 56 members, with 69% of boards having 11 to 20 members. Over 90% of boards have written by-laws, record minutes of board and committee actions, and have an executive committee. 57% of boards provide in-person, structured board orientation for new board members and only 29% use a data dashboard report for board meetings. 72% of respondents felt that their board operated at a strategic versus operational level.

Nonprofit Board Size

- 48% of board members
- 24% of board members
- 20% of board members
- 8% of board members

Nonprofit Board Size

- 5-10 board members
- 11-20 board members
- 21-30 board members
- 31+ board members

What We Learned

Boards range in size from 5 to 56 members, with 69% of boards having 11 to 20 members. Over 90% of boards have written by-laws, record minutes of board and committee actions, and have an executive committee. 57% of boards provide in-person, structured board orientation for new board members and only 29% use a data dashboard report for board meetings. 72% of respondents felt that their board operated at a strategic versus operational level.

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What We Learned

Boards range in size from 5 to 50 members, with 60% of boards having 11 to 20 members. Over 90% of boards have written by-laws, record minutes of board and committee actions, and have an executive committee. 57% of boards provide in-person, structured board orientation for new board members and only 29% use a data dashboard report for board meetings. 72% of respondents felt that their board operated at a strategic versus operational level.

In terms of board performance, respondents rated their boards high in terms of understanding their mission, financial and legal oversight, and setting the strategic direction of the organization. Respondents rated their boards’ performance poorly in terms of fundraising for the organization, recruiting new board members and monitoring the board’s own performance.

In terms of the board’s responsibility for fundraising, only 35% of respondents rated their board performance as Excellent to Very Good.

• 52% of respondents say board members do not solicit funds on behalf of the organization.
• 42% of respondents say board members do not identify donors.
• 32% of respondents say board members do not attend fundraising events.
• 28% of respondents say board members do not make a personal donation to the organization.

Findings

Nonprofit Board Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board Size</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-10 board members</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 board members</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 board members</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31+ board members</td>
<td>4%</td>
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</table>

In terms of the board’s responsibility for fundraising, only 35% of respondents rated their board performance as Excellent to Very Good.
Foundations, such as financial management assistance grants and grants to support individual nonprofit capacity building with qualified nonprofit consultants.

A strong partnership with any organization is not just with the staff of that organization. It’s also with the board of directors and the organization’s leadership team. This is especially true when it comes to training needs. When respondents were asked what were the greatest obstacles impacting their board’s effectiveness, the most common responses included:

- Board members not understanding how to fundraise
- Small board size, so board members stretched thin and not effective
- Shifting from a passive board to a working strategic board is difficult
- Evaluating the chief executive
- Monitoring the performance of the organization
- Board’s role in financial oversight
- Board’s role in fundraising
- Orienting new board members
- Strategic planning for the organization
- Board recruitment

When respondents were asked what are the greatest obstacles impacting board effectiveness, the most common responses included:

- Board members not engaging enough to dedicate to board work
- Small board size, so board members stretched thin and not effective
- Board members not engaged
- Board members not understanding how to fundraise
- Shifting from a passive board to a working strategic board is difficult

Boards in Fairfield County do not reflect the diversity of the region. Over 75% of respondents have boards that are overwhelmingly white and older. Over 70% have no Asian board members, nearly 50% have no Hispanic board members and 50% have no African American board members. Over 75% of respondents have no board members under the age of 39 and over 25% have no board members under the age of 30. Boards in Fairfield County do not reflect the diversity in the community. 70% of respondents have boards that are overwhelmingly white and older. Over 75% have no Asian board members, nearly 50% have no Hispanic board members and 50% have no African American board members. Over 75% of respondents have no board members under the age of 39 and over 25% have no board members under the age of 30. Boards in Fairfield County do not reflect the diversity of the region. Over 70% have no African American board members, nearly 50% have no Hispanic board members and 50% have no Asian board members. Over 75% of respondents have no board members under the age of 39 and over 25% have no board members under the age of 30.

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