

Small Cohort: Good Governance – Building Highly Effective Boards

Leadership Roles Comparison Table

Function	Executive Director	Board Chair	Board of Directors
Primary Focus	Day-to-day operations, staff leadership, program implementation	Board governance, meeting leadership, partnership with the ED	Mission, strategy, oversight, and accountability
Leadership Type	Operational leader (staff role)	Governance leader (volunteer role)	Governing body (volunteer role)
Decision-Making Role	Advises; implements board-approved decisions	Facilitates board decision-making; does not act independently	Makes major decisions (budget, strategic plan, hiring ED)
Relationship to Staff	Supervises all staff, including hiring and evaluation	No supervisory role over staff (except ED)	No direct role in supervising staff (except ED oversight)
Relationship to Board	Reports to the Board; collaborates with the Board Chair	Supports and evaluates ED; guides board performance	Hires, supports, and evaluates the Executive Director
Meeting Responsibilities	Prepares materials; attends all meetings but does not vote	Presides over the board and executive committee meetings	Attends and participates in board and committee meetings
Strategic Planning	Executes strategic plan and reports progress to board	Leads board in setting strategic direction	Approves and monitors strategic goals
Financial Oversight	Prepares budget; monitors and reports on finances	Ensures board reviews budget and financial reports	Develops sound fiscal policy; ensures adequate internal controls
Public Representation	Often serves as public spokesperson	Represents board when needed in partnership with ED	Champions the mission; some members may speak publicly
Evaluation Responsibilities	Evaluate annually by the Board of Directors	Leads evaluation of ED and board effectiveness	Evaluates strategic plan, ED performance, and conducts board self-assessment