



While both the executive director and board chair play important leadership roles, they have different responsibilities and areas of expertise. Learning how these roles divide the responsibilities for guiding and running your nonprofit ensures that your organization is well structured and that you remain in full compliance with all rules and regulations covering nonprofits.

In this ebook, we'll examine the similarities and differences between board chairs and executive directors, as well as discuss how defining these roles can set your board up for success.



# Board Chair vs. Executive Director – What's the Difference?

Your board, including your **board chair**, is an advisory group that makes important decisions and ensures your nonprofit follows all rules and governance guidelines. While the board is critical to a nonprofit's success, it is not involved in daily management; instead, it makes broad decisions, guides initiatives, and monitors success and results. As the leader of the board, the chair's primary goals are to help ensure success, to see the big picture, and to help your organization fulfill its mission.

An **executive director** is far more hands-on than a typical board member—even more so than the board chair. The executive director oversees operations of your nonprofit and is ultimately responsible for the day-to-day activities and initiatives the organization pursues. The executive director's responsibilities include hiring and training staff, generating a marketing strategy, working toward goals, and fulfilling your mission.

The board chair and the executive director do share some responsibilities, and their work has a direct impact on your organization's success. It is essential that these individuals work well together so that your nonprofit's needs will be covered. Fully understanding and defining the responsibilities of the board chair and the executive director will empower them to do their best work, in addition to facilitating collaboration.







## Board Chair and Executive Director Responsibilities

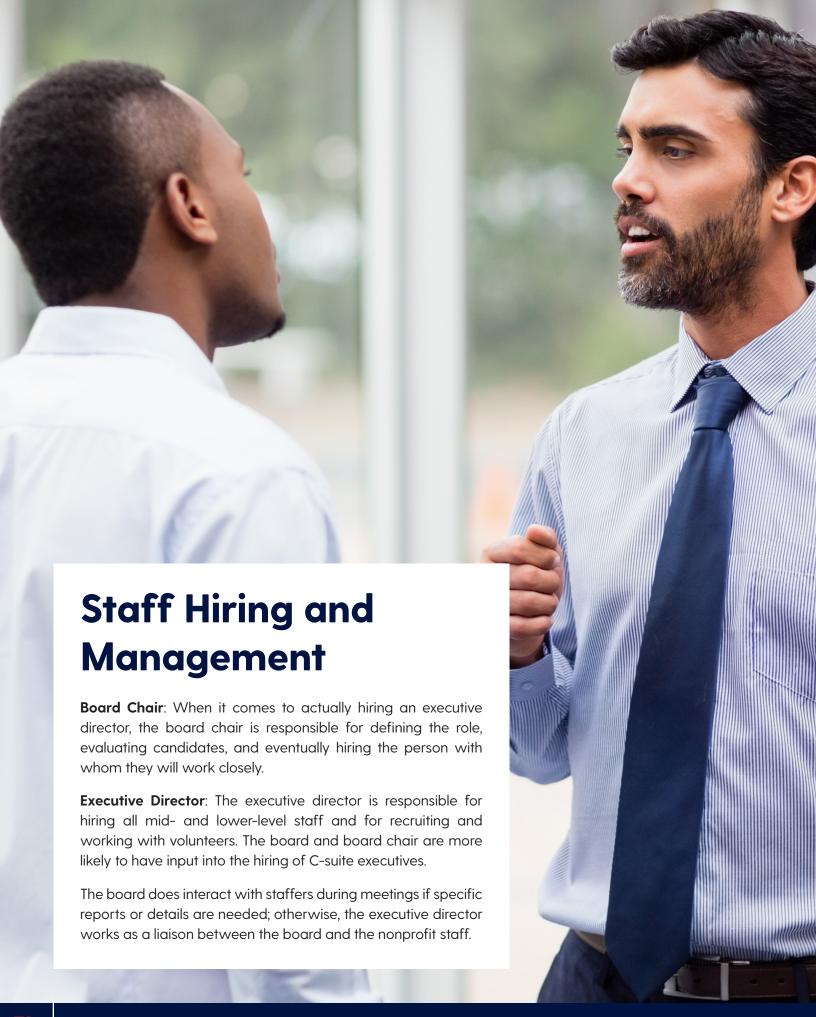
While every nonprofit is different, **board chairs and executive directors** perform similar roles for each organization. The topics we explore here are important to any nonprofit and detail the responsibilities for each of these critical performers.

Board Chair: The board chair and other members are in charge of planning, strategy, and ensuring the organization is **moving directly towards its goals and mission**. The board is not responsible for the day-to-day operations of the nonprofit or for the internal structure and staffing. Too much crossover and intervention from the board can result in confusion and even non-compliance with some key nonprofit requirements.

Executive Director: The day-to-day operations of a nonprofit are the direct responsibility of the executive director and their staff. Several **key responsibilities** include:

- Supervising and collaborating with staff
- Creating and administering strategic plans
- · Planning and overseeing an annual budget
- Establishing and maintaining relationships with various organizations and utilizing those relationships to strategically enhance the mission
- Engaging in fundraising and developing other revenues
- Implementing marketing and other communication efforts





#### Governance

**Board Chair**: According to the National Council of Nonprofits, your board and your board chair are fundamentally responsible for the big picture, including the governance of your organization. Governance for nonprofits includes financial oversight and monitoring progress toward specific goals.

**Executive Director**: Your Executive Director is obligated to follow board-generated guidelines, but is not directly responsible for the compliance of governance standards; this falls to the board.



### Financial Responsibility

**Board Chair**: While all employees have a responsibility to maintain accurate accounts and to handle funds and assets properly, the overall fiduciary responsibility falls to your board and board chair. Sound and savvy financial leadership is particularly important for nonprofits, since there are specific requirements with which you must comply.

**Executive Director**: An executive director is involved with and aware of day-to-day and ongoing financial expenditures but is not legally responsible for the organization's finances.





#### Recruitment

**Board Chair**: The board chair is responsible for properly staffing committees, **orienting new members**, and preparing them for their new responsibilities. The board will focus on fulfilling key roles and recruiting members who can help the organization grow and thrive under the supervision of the board chair.

**Executive Director**: Board members serve a specific term, so recruitment should be ongoing. While finding new members primarily falls to the existing board, the executive director may share insights or suggest individual members.

#### **Evaluations**

**Board Chair**: The board and board chair will evaluate the performance of the executive director and may also review performance evaluations from other key staffers. The board chair may coordinate assessments of the board itself, both collectively and with individual board members.

**Executive Director**: Evaluations of the board chair are not performed by staff or by the executive director; instead, they are conducted by the board itself on an annual basis. The executive director will perform reviews of their team members and report to the board as needed.

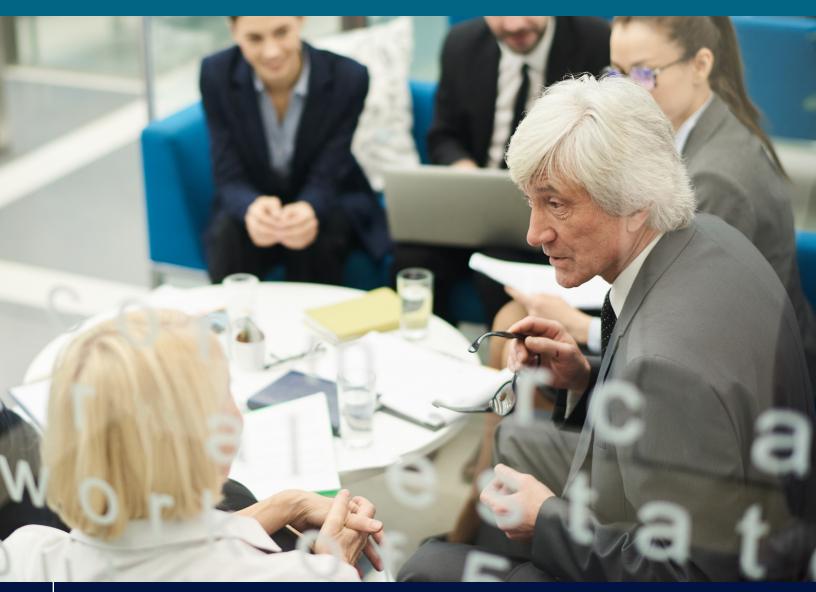


#### **Board Meetings**

**Board Chair**: Like all board members, the board chair is required to attend regular board meetings and to **follow the outlined procedure** that the organization has adopted for meetings. Participation is important; without dedicated attendance, the board simply will not be able to work effectively. The board chair not only attends meetings, he or she also runs them, listensto the counsel of other board members, and guides regulation compliance.

**Executive Director**: The executive director is often included in meetings and will relay important details about day-to-day operations, goals, challenges and more, but does not directly run board meetings. He or she simply participates as needed and when asked. In some cases, the executive director will be excluded from sessions and closed-door proceedings.

Defining the specific responsibilities of your board chair and executive director provides transparency and helps these key members of the organization do their jobs effectively and successfully.





#### **About Boardable**

**Built by nonprofit leaders, for nonprofits.** Boardable empowers you to work more effectively with your boards and committees. We know the frustration you feel (and the hours you lose) just from organizing a meeting via email, phone, and text. We've lived it. We're from the nonprofit world, too. After looking around for the right tool but not finding it, we decided to build it. Boardable is a software platform that centralizes all communication between you and your board. Find the best meeting times, securely store all of your documents, archive discussion threads and more—all in one place.

For more information, to schedule a demo, or to sign up for your FREE 14-day trial, visit us at **boardable.com**.



Copyright © 2020 Board Management Software, Inc. All rights reserved.

Any reproduction, modification, distribution, transmission, publication, translation, display, hosting or sale of all or any portion of the contents of this document is strictly prohibited without written permission of an authorized representative of the publisher.