



# Tips for Securing a Non-Profit Board Position

At a glance:



**Identify your passion:** Determine causes and organizations that resonate with you and start engaging through volunteering or attending events to build connections and demonstrate commitment.



**Understand board roles:** Learn about different types of non-profit boards (e.g., governance, advisory, fundraising) to determine the best fit for your skills and interests.



**Do your research:** Conduct due diligence on potential boards, including their leadership, culture, expectations, and D&O insurance coverage.



**Apply strategically:** Tailor your resume to highlight relevant experience, express interest thoughtfully, and be proactive in letting your network know of your interest to serve on a non-profit board.



**Prepare and train:** Attend CLE programs or other trainings to gain a deeper understanding of board governance, responsibilities, and legal considerations.

## Explore

1. **Identify your passion:** Start your search by identifying causes or missions that resonate with you. Think about your passions and interests. Also consider organizations that have had an impact on you or with which you have had a connection, such as schools or religious institutions.
2. **Volunteer and engage:** Become involved with organizations as a volunteer or supporter before seeking a board position. This will help you understand the mission, operations, and culture firsthand, while making important networking connections.
3. **Build relationships:** Cultivate relationships with current board members, staff, and stakeholders. Attend events and volunteer opportunities to connect with people involved in the organization.
4. **Demonstrate commitment:** Show your commitment to the organization through consistent involvement and support. Board members seek candidates who are genuinely passionate and dedicated to the organization's mission.

## Prepare

1. **Consider various board roles:** Depending on the nonprofit entity you're interested in serving, there may be more than one board. Each type of nonprofit board has different responsibilities and expectations. It's important to understand the differences to help you decide which role makes the most sense for you.
  - Board of Directors – this is the most common type of board, and its role is overseeing all activities and establishing the organization's mission, strategy, and goals.
  - Advisory Board – unlike the Board of Directors, which is responsible for governance or management, the Advisory Board provides guidance and recommendations to the Executive Director or Board of Directors.
  - Fundraising Board – this board's sole focus is ensuring there is enough funding to sustain operations of the nonprofit.
  - Working Board – this board is typically found in smaller nonprofits that lack full-time staff and, in addition to governance responsibilities, board members are involved in aspects of the organization's daily operations.
  - Governance Board – this board exists to provide high level strategic direction, generative foresight, and financial oversight to the nonprofit.

2. **Review resources:** Serving on a nonprofit board differs greatly from practicing law. Take time to prepare for this role and understand the scope of board responsibilities.
3. **Conduct due diligence:** Do your due diligence on the board and leadership team of organizations that are potential opportunities. Ensure compatibility with the organizational culture. Also, make sure to understand the expectations the board will have of you, including your responsibilities, time commitment, and financial obligations.
4. **Verify insurance:** Confirm the board's Directors and Officers (D&O) insurance policy is robust and well-funded. Make sure it provides adequate protection for board members.

## Apply

1. **Tailor your resume:** Have a different resume specifically for nonprofit board positions that highlights your experience and skills relevant to these organizations. This may include legal knowledge, fundraising skills, financial management, strategic planning, corporate governance, pro bono work, or community service.
2. **Express interest:** Once you have built rapport with an organization and its leadership, express your interest in serving on the board. Share how your skills can contribute to the organization's success.
3. **Search for opportunities:** Visit websites such as [Idealist.org](https://www.idealists.org) and [VolunteerMatch.org](https://www.volunteermatch.org) to search for board openings, using keyword search "Board Member" and filtering on "Volunteer Opportunities." Apply to organizations whose work aligns with your values and interests.
4. **Communicate your willingness:** Be proactive in letting your network know your desire and readiness to become a nonprofit board member. Network strategically, constantly refreshing your connections, to gain access to helpful connections.

## Train

**Attend CLE training:** Participate in CLEs tailored to attorneys serving or aspiring to serve on nonprofit boards. These programs can provide helpful information on board governance, insurance requirements, managing conflicts, and distinguishing between the role of a board member from that of legal counsel.