Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards – BoardSource, 2005

1. Determine mission and purpose. It is the board's responsibility to create and review a statement of mission and purpose that articulates the organization's goals, means, and primary constituents served.

2. Select the chief executive. Boards must reach consensus on the chief executive's responsibilities and undertake a careful search to find the most qualified individual for the position.

3. Support and evaluate the chief executive. The board should ensure that the chief executive has the moral and professional support he or she needs to further the goals of the organization.

4. Ensure effective planning. Boards must actively participate in an overall planning process and assist in implementing and monitoring the plan's goals.

5. Monitor, and strengthen programs and services. The board's responsibility is to determine which programs are consistent with the organization's mission and monitor their effectiveness.

6. Ensure adequate financial resources. One of the board's foremost responsibilities is to secure adequate resources for the organization to fulfill its mission.

7. Protect assets and provide proper financial oversight. The board must assist in developing the annual budget and ensuring that proper financial controls are in place.

8. Build a competent board. All boards have a responsibility to articulate prerequisites for candidates, orient new members, and periodically and comprehensively evaluate their own performance.

9. Ensure legal and ethical integrity. The board is ultimately responsible for adherence to legal standards and ethical norms.

10. Enhance the organization's public standing. The board should clearly articulate the organization's mission, accomplishments, and goals to the public and garner support from the community.

Twelve Principles that Power Exceptional Boards – BoardSource, 2005

Principle 1:  Constructive Partnership

Exceptional boards govern in constructive partnership with the chief executive, recognizing that the effectiveness of the board and chief executive are interdependent.

Principle 2:  Mission Driven

Exceptional boards shape and uphold the mission, articulate a compelling vision, and ensure the congruence between decisions and core values. The mission is integrated into fund raising, meetings, and decision-making.

Principle 3:  Strategic Thinking

Exceptional boards allocate time to what matters most and continuously engage in strategic thinking to hone the organization’s direction. This thinking is part of the ongoing work of the board.

Principle 4:  Culture of Inquiry

Exceptional boards institutionalize a culture of inquiry, mutual respect, and constructive debate that leads to sound and shared decision-making. Board members will seek more information, question assumptions, and challenge conclusions while drawing upon multiple sources and perspectives.

Principle 5:  Independent-Mindedness

Exceptional boards are independent-minded. When making decisions, board members put the interests of the organization above all else.

Principle 6:  Ethos of Transparency

Exceptional boards promote an ethos of transparency by ensuring that donors, stakeholders, and interested members of the public have access to appropriate and accurate information regarding finances, operations, and results.

Principle 7:  Compliance with Integrity

Exceptional boards promote strong ethical values and disciplined compliance by establishing appropriate mechanisms for active oversight.

Principle 8:  Sustaining Resources

Exceptional boards link bold visions and ambitious plans to financial structure, expertise, and networks of influence. A budget tied to the strategic plan, a solid infrastructure including focus on human resources, technology, and facilities, and active engagement in fundraising will help contribute to success.

Principle 9:  Results-Oriented

Exceptional boards are results oriented. They measure the organization’s advancement towards mission and evaluate the performance of major programs and services. The efficiency and impact of programs are primary considerations.

Principle 10:  Intentional Board Practices
Exceptional boards intentionally structure themselves to fulfill essential governance duties and to support organizational priorities. Evaluation of board size and structure, committees and task forces and the use of consent agendas are all intentional considerations.

**Principle 11: Continuous Learning**

Exceptional boards embrace the qualities of a continuous learning organization, evaluating their own performance and assessing the value they add to the organization. This learning is about the organization and industry and includes board orientation and self-assessment and extends beyond the boardroom.

**Principle 12: Revitalization**

Exceptional boards energize themselves through planned turnover, thoughtful recruitment, and inclusiveness. They understand the importance of fresh perspectives and the risk of closed groups. They review board composition, term limits, and diversity and implement recruitment strategies as a result.