

An Effective Board Check List

Effective boards make it their top priority to set policy about....

- the ministry's mission, core values, over-arching purpose/vision
- the board's own operations (membership, election of officers, evaluation of board and member performance, etc.)
- major program goals or areas of mission, including the populations served
- staff configurations and evaluations
- how the budget is developed and funds raised
- how the ministry relates to the larger synod/congregation constituency

Effective boards are more than the sum of their parts and more than an expression of strong individual board members because....

- the process used during the board meetings encourages the participation of all board members
- board members practice the skills of active listening, clear speaking, and straightforward feedback
- problem-solving techniques are used to explore all possible solutions
- both disagreement and consensus are encouraged so that the board can speak with one voice

Effective boards insist on receiving in advance—at least one week before their meetings—*written agendas* which include...

- date, time, location, participants, and phone numbers for questions
- proposed resolutions or options (the board can always change the wording or start over with a new resolution)
- items for discussion or vote, including supportive information
- background material (material handed out at board meetings rarely receives the attention it deserves)
- the financial report, even if it is preliminary
- written staff reports (which should not be re-read at the meeting, although appropriate questions may be asked)

Effective boards distribute minutes following each meeting which....

- record only adopted resolutions—not discussion and not defeated resolutions (unless formally requested by board members)
- do not record votes (unless a board member requests that her or his yea, nay or abstention be recorded). The board speaks with one voice
- are sent out within one week after the meeting so that board members' memories are fresh enough to correct any inaccuracies

Effective boards use their meetings to make decisions by....

- starting on time and ending at a pre-established time
- placing time limits for the consideration of each agenda item (a motion can always be tabled or extended)
- presenting formal motions which are repeated before an actual vote is taken and which are submitted for a yea, nay or abstention
- having a chairperson who
 - does not participate in the formal debate on motions or resolutions
 - does not vote unless a tie exists
 - facilitates discussion by asking for every member's opinion
 - summarizes the discussion and repeats the motion or resolution before each vote
 - holds everyone else accountable for their part of the agenda

Effective boards take their fiduciary responsibility seriously by requesting....

- an annual budget which is formally adopted by the board
- monthly or quarterly financial reports—with balance sheets
- an annual audit by an outside accountant or a financial review by persons capable of conducting such review according to ELCA Best Practices for Campus Ministry
- proposed policies for the investment of reserve or encumbered funds
- an annual report and operating grant request by July 1, as defined by Policies and Procedures for ELCA Campus Ministry.

Effective boards evaluate the principal staff members....

- annually, which eventuates in a written report
- on the basis of specific objectives agreed to in advance by the board and the staff member
- on the basis of the staff member's performance in meeting budget and program goals and in carrying out the campus ministry mission.

Modified from a document by Stephen Hitchcock, "How Do Effective Boards Achieve Results: A Checklist for Boards of Directors and Trustees.

This information has been edited and expanded from original material contained in the *First Monday Report*, issued from 2001 to 2010 by Campus Ministry Advancement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, under the authorship of the Rev. Galen Hora. These documents may be copied and used by local ministries, provided appropriate credit is given.