



Board of Directors Handbook

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Welcome to the NCSEA Board of Directors. This Handbook is intended to provide you introductory information for serving as a member of the Board of Directors. It is not meant to cover everything, but hopefully provide you the answers to a few of your initial questions.

Members of the NCSEA Board of Directors also serve on the NCSEA Foundation Board, a 501c3 organization that supports the philanthropic efforts of NCSEA, including scholarships, SEA grants, outreach and education. Typically, the Foundation Board meetings are held in conjunction with NCSEA Board meetings.

The NCSEA Board of Directors has a Basecamp presence that contains other resources on NCSEA as well as the material for Board of Directors meetings. Basecamp is an online project management system. Please let NCSEA staff know if you are not able to access Basecamp.

Who are We?

NCSEA was formed in 1993 to provide an identifiable resource for those needing communication with the structural engineering profession. The organization serves to advance the practice of structural engineering and, as the national voice for practicing structural engineers, protect the public's right to safe, sustainable and cost-effective buildings, bridges and other structures. NCSEA serves not only the needs of the structural engineering profession and its clientele, but also...

- Architects
- Building Code and Enforcement Authorities
- Construction Industry
- Owners
- Developers
- Public Building Agencies
- Licensing and Registration Boards
- Legislatures and Regulatory Agencies
- Structural Material Trade Groups
- Public News Media
- Engineering Societies
- Disaster Response Organizations

Mission Statement

NCSEA, in partnership with its Member Organizations, supports practicing structural engineers to be highly qualified professionals and successful leaders.

Vision Statement

Structural Engineers are valued for their contributions to safe structures and resilient communities.

Board Meetings

The current schedule is five meetings per year (four live and one video) but this is at the discretion of the President. At the Summit Board meeting in the Fall, the meeting schedule for the upcoming year is discussed.

Summit

Board members are expected to attend and register for the Summit at their own expense (see exceptions below). Travel and hotel is reimbursed as outlined in the Travel Reimbursement Policy. The Summit typically requires Board attendance at the following events:

- A Board meeting on the day before the Summit.
- Committee meetings on the first day of the Summit. Board members are assigned as a liaison to an NCSEA Committee
- Delegate functions during the Summit

Exceptions to NCSEA Travel Reimbursement Policy include:

- NCSEA President and a guest receive free Summit Registration.
- NCSEA BOD Members always receive the lowest full registration price, regardless of the date they register.
- Hotel room upgrades and enhancements provided by the hotel are reviewed by the BOD annually for distribution to BOD members.

Member Organization Visits

Board Members are assigned as a liaison to 5-6 Member Organizations (including your home state). The goal is to visit those MOs (at a SEA BOD meeting, at an annual conference, etc.) once every two years. These visits are intended as an opportunity for NCSEA to reach out and support the MOs and fulfill our mission as an organization. A written report is requested by the next Board meeting detailing your visit and subjects discussed. The expenses from these visits are reimbursed following the normal travel policy.

Committee Liaison

Board Members are assigned as a liaison to at least one of the NCSEA Committees. As liaison, you attend their committee meetings (typically conference calls, except when held at the Annual Summit) and serve as the committee's voice from and to the NCSEA BOD. In addition, the liaison is there to assist the committee with its annual budgeting and reporting responsibilities. A list of NCSEA Committees follows this page in the Handbook.

Expenses

A copy of the Travel Reimbursement policy is in the Board's Basecamp project.

President

- Attend the NCEES Annual Meeting to represent NCSEA
- Preside over the Annual Banquet and Deliver President's Message at NCSEA Summit
- Attend the NCSEA/SEI/CASE leadership meeting (held twice per year) at two of the organization's annual events (three officers requested)
- STRUCTURE Editorial (President's Message)

Vice President

- Serve as the Chair of the Board of Directors Nominating Committee
- Deliver Incoming President's Message at the NCSEA Summit
- Attend the NCSEA/SEI/CASE Leadership Meeting (held twice per year) at two of the organization's annual events (three officers requested)

Treasurer

- Serve as a member of the NCSEA Media Board of Directors
- Serve as Chair of the NCSEA Finance & Investment Committee
- Serve as a member of the Grant Program Review Committee
- Attend the NCSEA/SEI/CASE Leadership Meeting (held twice per year) at two of the organization's annual events (three officers requested)
- Serve as a member of Board of Directors Nominating Committee (if not up for election)

Secretary

- Preside over the Annual Business Meeting
- Serve as the Board Liaison to the Committee Chairs
- Preside over the annual Committee Leadership Roundtable
- Attend the NCSEA/SEI/CASE Leadership Meeting (held twice per year) at two of the organization's annual events (three officers requested)
- Serve as a member of Board of Directors Nominating Committee (if not up for election)

Past President

- Serve as a member of the Board of Directors Nominating Committee
- Attend the NCSEA/SEI/CASE Leadership Meeting (held twice per year) at two of the organization's Annual Events (three officers requested)

Basic Education Committee

The Basic Education Committee seeks to supplement the current educational curriculum offered by accredited institutions to structural engineering students by engaging with educational professionals and NCSEA Committees to assist in activities which promote the knowledge and skills the engineering community views as necessary when entering the profession.

Code Advisory Committee

The Code Advisory Committees operate as eight separate subcommittees, structured to work with Model Code and Standards issues and activities, such as generating and responding to code changes, preparation and codification of resource documents, trial design studies, and practical application guidelines.

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee's initiatives are divided between its Internal and External Communications Subcommittees. The Internal Communications Sub Committee works to ensure effective communication between NCSEA and its Member Organizations, facilitate communication among the Member Organizations, and ensure that all SEAs are contacted regularly, either by a Board member, a Communications Committee member, or NCSEA Staff. The Committee's External Communications wing has established as its mission to both build public awareness of the structural engineering profession and establish NCSEA as the national voice of the structural engineering profession.

Continuing Education Committee

The Continuing Education Committee works with NCSEA staff to develop and present continuing education content for structural engineers, generally through NCSEA webinars. The Committee collaborates with the other NCSEA Committees and MOs to identify appropriate topics and authors for new content, with focus on filling the educational gaps identified by the Basic Education Committee and on training deemed important by practicing SEs. The Committee engages those resources for distribution to NCSEA members through webinars and live presentations.

Publications Committee

The Publications Committee collaborates with the other NCSEA Committees to identify appropriate topics and authors for new publications to be produced by NCSEA, and then coordinates and manages those publications.

Resilience Committee

The Resilience committee develops positions and recommendations on issues in the emerging field of resilience-based planning and design. The committee coordinates with state and local efforts by SEA member organizations and works with other groups (including NIST, FEMA, ASCE, and ICC) to develop concepts of natural hazards resilience as they relate to the practice of structural engineering.

Structural Engineers Emergency Response (SEER) Committee

The SEER Committee advances NCSEA’s commitment to safe structures and resilient communities by promoting the expeditious post-disaster recovery of communities through building safety evaluations. The SEER Committee realizes this purpose through the following initiatives:

- Facilitate the education of post-disaster building safety evaluators.
- Promote the expeditious, efficient, and effective engagement of post-disaster building safety evaluators.
- Facilitate the espousal of a single, national database of post-disaster building safety evaluators.

Structural Engineering Engagement and Equity (SE3)

The Structural Engineering Engagement and Equity (SE3) Committee’s mission is to study and promote engagement and equity in the structural engineering profession, primarily via conducting a nationwide biennial survey of structural engineering professionals. Topics addressed in the survey include career advancement, compensation, and work-life balance, and a biennial report will be issued to document the findings from each survey and note recommended best practices that stem from findings. Additionally, the NCSEA SE3 Committee facilitates and assists in the creation of local SE3 groups for SEA member organizations to foster the mission of SE3 in their communities.

Structural Engineering Summit

The Structural Engineering Summit Committee develops a slate of educational programming for the annual NCSEA event through recommendations, requested topics, and abstract submissions.

Structural Licensure

The Licensing Committee works with the Member Organizations to influence states to adopt consistent licensing laws and rules in the interest of public safety, especially relating to licensure of structural engineers.

Sustainable Design Committee

The Ad-Hoc Sustainable Design Committee aims to promote sustainable design practices within the profession of structural engineering through leadership, advocacy, outreach and education.

Young Member Group Support

The Young Member Group Support Committee (YMGSC) facilitates the formation, growth and success of NCSEA Member Organization Young Member Groups through collaboration, support and outreach in an effort to transition students and young engineers into successful, professional engineers and future leaders of the Structural Engineering Profession.

STRUCTURE Editorial Board

Oversees the editorial direction of STRUCTURE. Manages the volunteer Board representatives from SEI, CASE, and material industries.

NCSEA Media Board

Oversees the business side of STRUCTURE.

NCSEA Finance & Investment

Oversees the long-term investments and financial strategy for NCSEA, while advising the NCSEA BOD on these matters.

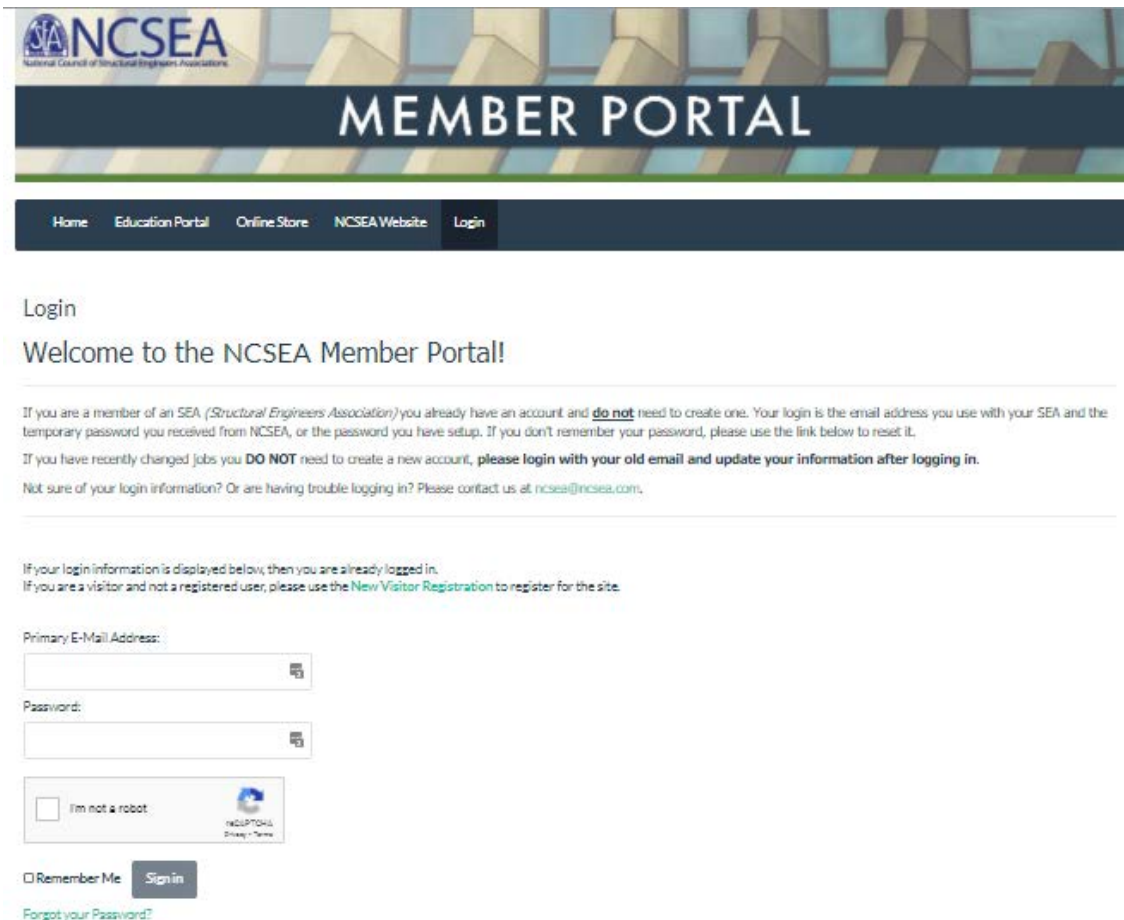
The NCSEA website, www.ncsea.com, is full of information and resources for NCSEA members and other structural engineers. The website includes information on NCSEA events and programs such as the Structural Engineering Summit, SE Exam Review Course, and monthly NCSEA webinars. NCSEA Member Organizations are encouraged to place their MO events in the online calendar and for promotion in *Structural Connection*, NCSEA's monthly email newsletter. There is an online form to submit an MO event for the calendar, available by clicking on the calendar on the home page.

Member-Only Resources

The NCSEA Online Member Portal is a benefit that allows members of NCSEA Member Organizations, as well as NCSEA Associate and Sustaining members, access to documents, resources, and discounts to NCSEA programs.

When you click on a member-only resource, you will be prompted to log in as a member. You may also access the member portal via the log-in located in the upper right corner of ncsea.com. If you have misplaced your temporary password, contact the NCSEA office.

Before logging in, you will see the screen below.



The screenshot shows the NCSEA Member Portal login page. At the top, there is a banner with the NCSEA logo and the text "MEMBER PORTAL". Below the banner is a navigation menu with links for Home, Education Portal, Online Store, NCSEA Website, and Login. The main content area is titled "Login" and "Welcome to the NCSEA Member Portal!". It contains instructions for members and visitors, a login form with fields for Primary E-Mail Address and Password, a CAPTCHA, a "Remember Me" checkbox, a "Sign in" button, and a link for "Forgot your Password?".

10 Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards



The National Center for Nonprofit Boards has issued a paper on “Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards” to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the board as a corporate or collective entity and to summarize individual board members’ responsibilities. In addition, five assumptions are listed at the end of this article to reduce the many questions surrounding effective board leadership.

The ten board responsibilities which follow, along with the individual board member’s responsibilities, strive to set criteria by which boards may periodically review their performance and ensure a measure of accountability.

1. Determine the Organization's Mission and Purpose

The board's fundamental responsibility is to satisfy itself that everyone connected directly or indirectly with the organization understands its reasons for existing. This usually takes the form of a written mission statement. In addition to ensuring that the organization has a modern statement of what it is, represents, and does, the board should periodically review the statement's adequacy, accuracy, and viability.

A widely distributed statement of mission and purpose should clearly express the organization's goals, means, and primary constituents served. Further, it should explain what makes the organization distinctive and special and present a compelling reason for individuals, foundations and corporations to support it financially.

An adequate statement of mission and purpose should serve as a guide to organizational planning, board and staff decision-making, volunteer initiatives, and setting priorities among competing demands for scarce resources. It sets the state for developing fund raising strategies and strategic planning as well as the board's many other responsibilities.

2. Select the Executive Director

This responsibility undoubtedly has the greatest impact on the organization's development and effectiveness. While this function may also be shared with others who have a stake in the outcome, the final decision is the board's to make.

A carefully considered search process is essential, but a prerequisite of effective executive performance is the board's recognition of its duty to provide the type of working environment that will enable the top staff executive to succeed. Prior to a search process, the board should review the organization's major strengths and needs; establish specific priorities for the next period of executive leadership; articulate the particular characteristics, skills, and style it seeks in its new executive; establish clear objectives and clarify expectations for at least the first year of his/her service; provide an adequate compensation package and other employment terms; and clarify its own functions as distinct from those of the executive and staff, including the executive's own exclusive responsibility to select and supervise a management team without board interference.

Finally, the board should prepare a comprehensive job description that includes a response to this fundamental question: Who is the organization's chief executive? Is it the chief staff officer (by whatever title), or is it the top elected volunteer officer (by whatever title)? Or is it some vague and perilous combination of both?

3. Support the Executive and Review His/Her Performance

Nowhere else can the chief executive seek the kind of moral and substantive support he/she consistently needs except from his/her board. Although this responsibility is often manifested through the board's top elected officer, it remains a board function. Some boards have found it useful to assign this responsibility to its executive committee. This helps, but the board as a whole should be satisfied that the chief executive:

- Receives frequent and constructive feedback;
- Is introduced to other community leaders and organizations;
- Is invited to important social functions;
- Is complimented for exceptional initiatives;
- Is encouraged to take professional and personal leave for renewal;
- Is assisted when members overstep prerogatives or misunderstands their roles;
- Feels that the board is aware of and sensitive to family situations and needs; and
- Feels that his/her performance is being assessed in relation to the board's performance.

With regard to informal and formal performance reviews, the board and executive should agree on purposes and processes. This delicate business is helped immeasurably if annual goals and objectives are mutually discussed and agreed on; they become the primary criteria for review through informal and candid discussion.

4. Ensure Effective Organizational Planning

The conventional wisdom is that boards should insist that comprehensive organizational planning is done and done well. So far, so good; but the perplexing questions for board and staff are: 1) who should do it; and 2) how can busy volunteer board members be meaningfully in-

volved in the process? Opinions differ on how these questions should be answered, but there is wide agreement on at least these principles:

- Board members must be involved extensively in the planning process if they and the board are to assume proper ownership of the plan and otherwise help to implement many of the plan's goals and objectives including the acquisition of new resources.
- Their role is essentially one of asking good questions, expecting good answers, and serving as resources in areas of personal and professional expertise.
- The board's committee structure offers particularly helpful opportunities to engage board members in certain areas to be addressed in the plan. Functional areas not obviously tied to board standing committees could be made part of the executive committee or full board agendas.
- The board should formally and enthusiastically approve the plan following an extended period of consultation and opportunity for revision. While some long range forecasts can be made, it is probably best not to cover more than a three-year period. Annual progress reports by the executive will keep the staff accountable and the board aware of progress on priorities.
- When there is professional staff, the conduct and coordination of planning is best entrusted to it. We should not expect volunteer board members to be

full-time authorities on programmatic, financial and managerial issues or to commit to more and longer meetings. The organization's executive and staff must share at least as much enthusiasm and ownership as does the board, and perhaps even more because they bear the primary responsibility for implementing it.

- This is not at all to minimize the board's vital involvement in the planning process, however. Because the board members are, or should be, free of vested interest and are responsible for considering issues and rendering judgments for the organization as a whole, and because they must ultimately assess the quality of the goals and objectives resulting from the process, they should be involved extensively in it.

Planning occurs at various levels within an organization depending on its size and complexity, the attitudes of the executive, staff and board concerning its relative importance, and many other circumstances. Planning can be operational (day to day), short term (ad hoc to meet a specific priority), annual (operational), or long range or strategic (comprehensive and very forward looking). It is the board that should insist on the latter or its seldom gets done, but we should remember that all planning is more art than science. Depending on the special circumstances, mission and purposes of the organizations, the most long-range or strategic plans will include a combination of these elements.

- Statement of mission and purposes;
- Assumption about the future (likely internal and external circumstances);
- Current programs and services;
- New programs and services;
- Membership development and retention strategies (if apropos);
- Staffing (current and projected);
- Board of directors (size, method of selection, committee structure, other bylaws provisions);
- Financial projections (income and expenditures);
- Fund raising strategies;
- Public relations;
- Appendices (current and proposed staff organization charts, financial trends for the preceding three to five years and projections for the next three years, trend data on clients and constituents served, etc.)

10 Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards

1. Determine the Organization's Mission and Purpose
2. Select the Executive Director
3. Support the Executive and Review His/Her Performance
4. Ensure Effective Organizational Planning
5. Ensure Adequate Resources
6. Manage Resources Effectively
7. Determine and Monitor the Organization's Programs and Services
8. Enhance the Organization's Public Image
9. Serve as a Court of Appeal
10. Assess its Own Performance

they are in essence the trustees in the literal and legal sense of the term. No matter how the organization is structured or the degree of authority delegated to staff, committees, or affiliates, the board and therefore the individual trustees are ultimately accountable.

Whether it is a service agency or a cause-oriented membership association, the board has the principal responsibility for fulfillment of the organization's mission and the legal/fiduciary accountability for its operations. There have been several legal cases where board members were held legally accountable, largely because they had failed to exercise reasonable oversight and objectivity. The law, however, is fair as long as the board members' attention to responsibility is reasonable. Joseph Weber, former head of the Greater New York Fund, pointed out in *Managing the Board of Director* that this does not mean that a director needs to fear liability for every corporate loss or mishap that may occur. On the contrary, a director is generally protected from liability for errors of judgment as long as he/she acts responsibly and in good faith, and with the basic interests of the corporation as the foremost objective.

Boards traditionally exercise this responsibility by helping to develop and approve the annual budget. Indeed, this annual rite is probably one of the board's most significant policy decisions because it sets in motion a host of programmatic, personnel and other priorities. This responsibility should not be delegated to the board's executive for finance committee.

The board can only monitor the budget's implementation if it has clear, intelligible, accurate and timely financial reports. All board members should receive quarterly balance sheets with a consolidated accounting of all assets and current liabilities. Monthly finance reports should be provided to the treasurer and members of the finance or executive committees; in the absence of such committees, all board members should receive them. Board members should not shy away from suggesting improvement in the formats and presentations of financial report.

The board should insist on an annual audit by an independent certified public accountant or accounting firm. The audit function should not be performed by a volunteer board member. It is also good practice for an audit subcommittee of the board's finance committee or a separate audit standing committee, if the board is of

sufficient size to accommodate it, to meet with the auditor at least subsequent to the audit process and before the audit is in final form. Finally, all board members should receive the audit report prior to the meeting at which it is discussed.

7. Determine and Monitor the Organization's Programs and Services

The board's fundamental role begins with the question of whether current and proposed programs and services are consistent with the organization's stated mission and purposes. Given limited resources and unlimited demands on them, the board must decide among competing priorities. Financial and programmatic decisions should not be made independently.

What the organization does for its members, constituents or clients determines its significance as a social institution. Yet, there is nearly universal complaint by board members that their meeting agendas are dominated by finance and fund raising issues. Every board must find a sensible division of labor among its members to ensure that programs and services are demonstrably consistent with the organization's mission and purposes and are of high quality. This minimally argues for an appropriately named standing committee.

The board should have a good sense of its monitoring and oversight role by seeking a balance between the board's responsibility to ensure quality, cost-effective programs and services, and the staff's responsibility to creatively initiate and conduct them.

It is in meeting this particular responsibility that board and staff roles often become confused, particularly when board members also volunteer extensively to conduct and manage programs. Candor, openness and explicit job descriptions go a long way toward negotiating a accommodation satisfactory to everyone.

8. Enhance the Organization's Public Image

The board serves as a link between the organization's staff or volunteers and its members, constituents or clients. But government leaders, the media, and current and potential funding sources call for an ambitious and

effective public relations program to ensure a healthy public image for the organization. Clearly outlined achievements, contributions to the public good, and explanations for how gifts, grants and other revenue sources are allocated, are all part of the process. Written annual reports, timely and informative press releases, consistent communication initiatives with community and government leaders, and timely speeches by appropriate board members to civic and community groups are important elements of a comprehensive public relation strategy.

One of the most important decisions to be made by the executive and the board's top elected leaders is who should be the organization's spokesperson. This decision is normally situational, but there are advantages to having an especially articulate board chairperson or volunteer president who can serve this important function. Volunteer leaders who convey their commitment and dedication through advocacy and a willingness, on behalf of their boards, to get out in front of their executive and staff on the thorny issues, command more public attention and respect because they do not receive remuneration.

Boards, however, should guard against the occasionally overzealous board member who may take inappropriate and unilateral initiatives without clearance. The board's elected leaders should ensure that the board appropriately disciplines itself. No board member should represent himself/herself as speaking for the board or organization unless specifically authorized to do so.

9. Serve as a Court of Appeal

One of the marks of an effective managed and governed organization is its ability to avoid having its board arbitrate personnel issues except in the rarest of circumstances. Solid personnel policies and procedures, grievance protocols and especially clear understanding about the executive's responsibility for hiring, developing and releasing staff help to unsure appropriateness in this area. Nevertheless, the time may come when the executive's judgment will be challenged. The wise executive know when to consult with the board and to ask for its judgment involving disputes not otherwise manageable within the executive's prerogatives.

10. Assess its Own Performance

John W. Nason in *The Nature of Trusteeship* strongly urges boards to conduct substantive review of their own performance. This is the most contemporary of board responsibilities, one that is being taken very seriously in not-for-profit organizations.

Every three to five years, the board and its executive should stand back from their usual preoccupations and reflect on how the board is meeting its responsibilities. This process should include a look at how its membership composition, membership selection process, organization or structure and overall performance can be strengthened.

A candid and anonymous written survey of board members' perceptions in advance of a workshop or retreat can pave the way for consensus on priorities. A qualified third-party facilitator can bring experience, objectivity, credibility and perspective along with some innocence to the process. An overnight stay away from the organization's boardroom combined with opportunities to socialize can build camaraderie and trust among board members and between the board and the executive.

Conclusion

Of course, there are other board responsibilities. Assuring compliance with local, state and federal laws and regulations; questioning unreasonable governmental intrusion; adhering to the highest ethical and moral standards of organization behavior; and selecting its own successors are but a few that deserve mention.

Boards are learning to balance their nearly limitless organizational powers with self-restraint, to delegate authority where possible and sensible without abdicating their considerable responsibilities, and to channel board members enthusiasm and commitment into appropriate behaviors. As the nation's nonprofit, voluntary organizations continue to evolve and develop more programs to strengthen their governance, the nonprofit sector will surely strengthen its already significant contributions to American society.

Assumptions:

1. Board and board member responsibilities are fundamentally the same for all organizations (although nearly everyone feels that his or her organization is unique and special).

2. How boards and board members actually fulfill their responsibilities will vary as a function of many factors. These may include whether the agency is membership or non-membership based, whether its budget and staff levels are modest or substantial, and whether it is newly formed or has a long history of growth and development.
3. There is no generic model of board size or composition or organization that has proven itself to be viable in all circumstances. On the other hand, a body of knowledge has evolved that argues for certain structures, policies, and practices that consistently work better than others.
4. All organization undergo a metamorphosis over time that calls for periodic review, fine tuning, and sometimes major overhaul of their governance structure. Organizational performance, like human performance, is cyclical in effectiveness and in need of renewal as it evolves over time.
5. Board members begin to reach their optimal levels of performance when they exercise their responsibilities primarily by asking good and timely questions rather than by 'running' programs or implementing their own policies. It is when mutual expectations are agreed upon that issues and responsibilities are clearly defined and board/staff relationships are what they should be.