

# ONBOARDING NEW BOARD MEMBERS

For Affordable Housing Non-profits



**CENTER FOR  
HOUSING  
OPPORTUNITY**  
LITCHFIELD COUNTY

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September 2023



# ONBOARDING HANDBOOK

## INTRODUCTION

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Providing an onboarding (or orientation) meeting for new board members can help set the stage for productive engagement and retention of these new members.

### Who conducts the orientation?

- ▶ In the absence of a paid staff member, the Board Chair or member of the Executive Committee can meet with new board members and conduct the orientation meeting.
- ▶ Include one or two other Board members if possible to offer anecdotal input during the orientation, perhaps sharing why they joined the organization.

### Which topics should the orientation cover?

- ▶ Set expectations up front for time commitment (typically 1-1.5 hours) and try to stick to it.
- ▶ Consider using the “Onboarding Handbook” Table of Contents below as your agenda. Hopefully your new board member has already received some of this information or reviewed it on your website, so you can focus on answering any questions they have or adding updates or context to the basic information.

### What is an Onboarding Handbook?

- ▶ The following pages provide some suggestions for documents to include in a Board of Directors Onboarding handbook. This can be provided to board members in hard copy and/or in an online or electronic format. If you’d like help putting this all together in one place, reach out to LC-CHO, we can help!
- ▶ Some housing non-profits have created a “Google Drive” system accessible by all board members to house the latest versions of all this information.

## SAMPLE TABLE OF CONTENTS

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- ▶ History of Organization
- ▶ Mission/Vision
- ▶ Board of Directors contact list
- ▶ Schedule of Board Meetings for current FY; including dates of any events or important organization gatherings
- ▶ Minutes from previous two Board meetings
- ▶ By-laws

- ▶ Conflict of Interest Policy
- ▶ Board Member Job Description / Agreement
- ▶ Financials
  - **990 (last filed)**
  - **FYE Balance Sheet, Profit & Loss Statement**
  - **Year to Date Balance Sheet, Profit & Loss Statement**
- ▶ List of Committees and Committee Descriptions (if applicable)
- ▶ Policies
  - Conflict of interest policy
  - Document retention policy
  - Financial policies (example- how many officers are needed to sign checks, who is authorized)
  - Personnel Policies (if applicable)

### **History of Organization**

Providing a brief description of when, how, and why the organization got started, including a list of founding members can be helpful to a new member.

Consider including a timeline/history of your projects (dates when land or properties were purchased or donated and when developments were constructed/renovated). This information could also be listed on your website.

### **Mission/Vision**

Board members should know and be able to easily share with anyone who asks- what the organization's mission is and how this impacts the community. If you have a Strategic Plan, include key goals and objectives of the plan. The mission, vision, goals and objectives can be referenced when creating your elevator speech (for help with creating your elevator speech, please reference the LC-CHO Fundraising Toolkit- page 23).

### **Board of Directors contact list**

Including name, phone/email, Board Title (President, Chair, Secretary, Director, etc.), year started on board, occupation/area of expertise, other affiliations.

### **Minutes from previous two Board meetings**

While new Board members should have access to all meeting minutes, initially providing minutes from the last two meetings is sufficient to help new members get up to speed on recent votes and actions by the Board.

### **Schedule of Board Meetings and other important dates**

Include a list of all meeting dates for the current year, including the organization's annual meeting. If there are specific times throughout the year when events take place or opportunities for participation in community events are encouraged, include those dates as well.

## **By-laws**

All Board members should be provided a copy (paper or electronic) of the organization's by-laws or be able to access them on a shared drive. Briefly reviewing the main parts of the by-laws at the orientation meeting can be helpful.

## **Conflict of Interest Policy**

All Board members will complete and submit the Acknowledgment & Disclosure Statement page (the last page) of the Conflict of Interest policy when they join the organization and annually, usually re-submitted at the Board's Annual Meeting.

## **Board Member Job Description / Agreement**

A sample Board Member Agreement is included in the Appendix. Your board can discuss if having something like this could be helpful. It includes a bulleted list of the roles and expectations of both the board member and the organization. This document could be reviewed annually, updated if needed, and re-submitted at the Board's Annual Meeting along with the conflict of interest form.

## **List of Committees and Committee Descriptions**

If your board has committees, include a list of them and a brief description of what they do. Ask new board members at the orientation meeting, what committee(s) they might be interested in serving on. Some examples of the types of committees housing organizations have as follows:

- ▶ Executive
- ▶ Finance
- ▶ Governance
- ▶ Nominating
- ▶ Fundraising & Philanthropy
  - Event Committee (ad hoc)
- ▶ Communications and Public Relations
- ▶ Building / Construction
- ▶ Land Acquisition
- ▶ Family Selection (for homeownership model)
- ▶ Family Liaisons for each family (for homeownership model)

## APPENDIX: SAMPLE BOARD AGREEMENT

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The Board Member Agreement should reflect the priorities of the organization; select/modify the following aspects you would like to see reflected in your Board:

### Sample [Organization Name] Board Service Agreement

“Mission Statement”

[Organization Name] views service to its Board as both a privilege and a responsibility. This agreement defines the commitment we make to those we serve and to each other as members of its Board.

#### **[Organization Name] agrees to provide each member of the board with the following:**

1. An orientation that introduces Board members to our organization and helps you understand your role and responsibilities.
2. Access to the information necessary for you to become an engaged and participatory member of the Board.
3. Ample notice of all meetings with the information necessary for you to engage in meaningful discussion and make good decisions.
4. To the extent allowed by law, indemnification from liability for a board member’s reasonable and necessary actions. Adequate D&O insurance liability coverage.
5. Reimbursement for reasonable expenses in conducting the work of the Board as appropriate, i.e., attendance at conferences that further your education and contribute to your participation in a Board meeting.
6. Respond to all your emails, phone calls and requests for information in a timely manner.
7. Respect for your time, including the most effective use of your skills, talents and preferences in Board service

#### **As a member of the board, I agree to do the following:**

1. Understand and perform my legal responsibilities as a member of the Board: duty of care, duty of loyalty and duty of responsibility.
2. Maintain and participate in developing and fulfilling the long-range strategic plan for the organization, including ensuring a clear and current statement of the mission and a means to measure [Organization Name] progress in relationship to the plan.
3. Learn about [Organization Name], read financial reports and other [Organization Name] documents, and keep up-to-date on [Organization Name] programs, finances, and management, as well as trends and practices in the community.
4. Prepare for and attend 100% all Board and assigned committee meetings. If a meeting must be missed, the board member is expected to notify either the Board Chair or Executive Director of the absence.

5. Respond to all communications (phone calls, e-mails, etc.) and requests for information within a timely manner and within timelines that have been requested.
6. Participate in a minimum of one committee.
7. Work to identify, recruit and orient new Board members and participate objectively in regular Board performance assessments.
8. Avoid all direct or indirect conflicts of interest and involvement in any political campaigns in the name of [Organization Name] and when using [Organization Name] assets.
9. Introduce new people to [Organization Name] who might become advocates, participate in committee work, potentially serve on the Board and/or contribute to [Organization Name].
10. Play an active role in stewarding donors to the organization.
11. Participate in the majority of [Organization Name] events, including educational, cultivation and fundraising events.
12. Financially contribute to the best of my ability.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ [Organization Name] President of the Board

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Board Member

## ABOUT LITCHFIELD COUNTY CENTER FOR HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

Our mission is to facilitate a coordinated, regional response to address housing affordability in Litchfield County, aligning and delivering critical resources, data, and technical assistance to municipalities and non-profit housing organizations.

