

New Mexico Coalition for Literacy

CREATING THE BOARD

HOW TO FORM AN ADULT LITERACY PROGRAM
BOARD OF DIRECTORS



NMCL

Literacy resources
for adult students,
tutors, and program
administrators

The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy

a simple guide

Choose them

Court them

Organize them!

Support them

Prepared by Rena Paradis for the NMCL
2008

NOTES ABOUT BOARD DEVELOPMENT:

Page 2

For more information call: 800 233-7587

The BOD (Board of Directors) can make or break a nonprofit organization. If they do not feel needed, if they are not informed, if they do not share the vision and mission of your organization, you have the difficult (if not impossible) task of doing everything yourself.

A carefully chosen board will provide you with members who possess the talents, connections, and energy that will move your organization forward. They will help you set and meet goals and better serve the community. They represent a responsible body of stewards to foundations and the public. They are legally responsible for the solvency of your program. They are the public face of your adult literacy program.

Step 1

CHOOSE THEM

An intelligent search involves an analysis of who you have and who you need in order to round out your board. It sometimes becomes more clear when you think about the committees you have or will have, such as Finance/Fund development, Public Relations, Policies and Procedures, not to overlook ad hoc committees such as, Nominating, annual recognition or a specific fundraising or event committee.

The BOD should be representative of the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of your community. Background, influence, skills, careers or previous careers, all are important considerations. For example, every board should have an attorney either serving on the board or willing to assist when needed.

The most important element, however, is finding people who are concerned about the literacy levels of adults in the community, and who understand the emotional and practical impact illiteracy has upon families and the economic welfare of your town. That's your job. You must be prepared to make your case.

Most of all, these individuals must share your desire to create a solid, effective, organization that will recruit volunteers and adult students into a partnership of learning.

Take care not to inadvertently "stack" the board. Try not to have too many educators, political figures, religious representatives, etc. Bring on a tutor, a student or electrician. In other words, diversify.

Packet Ideas: (If yours is a new program, you may be limited in access to these materials, so you'll have to be imaginative!)

- Program Brochure
- Annual Report
- List of Board members
- Fact Sheet – Literacy statistics for your area
- Copies of any promotional material you may have
- Copies of any articles about your program from print media
- Positive written testimony from students (be sure to get permission to use)
- Positive written statements from a few volunteers

Step 2

COURT THEM

The initial contact with a potential board member should be as follows:

1. A letter
2. A follow-up phone call for an appointment
3. A personal visit and a leave-behind packet

It is important that your prospect feels that he or she wasn't simply picked at random, and that your membership specifically nominated them for a board position. Membership on your BOD should be an honor, and everything you do should reflect that perception.

The letter should be a one-page, formal invitation to the board. You should briefly describe your organization, its mission, and the problem of illiteracy in your community. You can include a brochure or fact-page. You should indicate that a specific person (name), or you, will follow up with a phone call.

The follow-up phone call is meant to remind the prospect that you sent a letter, and to find out if you can have a brief meeting with them. When you make the appointment, be sure to give them the name or names of who will be representing your organization.

The meeting should be a friendly visit performed in a professional way. Be prepared to answer questions including the time involved in board membership. Whoever attends the meeting should be completely informed of what you do, what problem you are solving, how you are organized and what your volunteers do. They should know your level of professionalism, such as membership with the NMCL, and the fact that you have volunteer tutors who are trained by professionals.

The leave-behind packet can contain similar information as was discussed at the meeting as well as statistics that would be of interest, a list of current BOD membership, and how you are funded. If you have an annual report, be sure to include it with the packet.

Committees

Executive Committee: Made up of officers and Committee chairs

Public Relations: Should be made up of those who have strong business and/or community connections. They should be helpful with ideas and implementation of high-profile activities that help raise awareness and recruit volunteers and students.

Finance/Fundraising: This committee should be “on top” of the funds, how they are spent, and alert the board as to when they need to fundraise.

Special Events: This committee can support all tutor training events as well as special meetings and your annual recognition event. They can also be part of any fundraising activities the board may decide upon. If you do not have an active program, you may want to have this as an ad hoc committee.

Depending on your situation, you may decide you need additional permanent committees.

Ad hoc committees: These committees meet for a specific purpose, and are not required to meet regularly. They have one specific purpose.

Governance: This committee may be charged with developing a Policies and Procedures document. They may also develop By Laws for board approval.

Nominating: This committee may be in charge of getting nominations for the board. As board members leave, they will perform a search. Names and qualifications will be presented to the board for approval.

You may develop ad hoc committees at any time the board deems it necessary and dissolve them when they are no longer needed.

Step 3

ORGANIZE THEM

Every BOD must have these officers: President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. You must have enough membership to support committees so that the work of the board is evenly distributed. The paid program director may not serve on the board (nor may a relative or spouse), and cannot vote. A paid program director is hired by the board and is basically an employee of the board. Spouses should not serve on a board together, nor should those who have relatives on the board. You must be cautious about conflicts of interest.

Every board member should be expected to serve on at least one committee of his or her choice. If they don't choose a committee, the President should assign a committee. Each board can determine what committees they will have, and they can add committees and ad hoc committees as needed. Some committees are: the Executive Committee (board officers), Finance/Fund Development, Governance, and Public Relations. Ad hoc committees can be: Annual Recognition, Nominating, and Special Events.

The board and Governance Committee will develop the official Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Policies and Procedures, and By Laws.

Take some time at your next board or steering committee meeting to create a list of ways that your board can be supported. We will start the list for you:

- Provide job descriptions
- Have an NMCL board training and retreat
- Have a strong orientation to new board members quickly
- List their names on your stationery
- Recognition at an annual meeting
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

When you complete your list, please know that the **Orientation** may be the most important activity. **Recognition** may be the second.

Step 4

SUPPORT THEM

It is critical that new board members receive an orientation very soon after they are placed on the board. Do not wait until your next board meeting or for an annual event unless it's coming up soon. Orientation of new board members must be part of the recruitment plan. Orientation should include the program director and a seasoned volunteer from the board as facilitators. You can involve a favorite tutor and students, if you like. The purpose of the orientation is not only to inform, but to inspire.

If you have job descriptions for board members, you should share them at this time. The Secretary of your board should maintain a board book, which documents every meeting, votes taken, and other critical program information. Each board member should be provided with a copy, and the new board member should receive it at the orientation so that it can be explained.

It is most helpful if new board members can attend part or all of a tutor training so that they can have an idea as to how volunteers are prepared to tutor.

The board president should have a policy as to what communications from the office should be distributed to the general board. But all members should be informed of meetings and issues that will involve a decision from them at a meeting. If you have a newsletter, it should be sent to every board member.

Recognition is very important to all volunteers, including the fine folks serving on your board. Their names should appear on your formal letterhead stationery. You can also list them in your brochure if there is room.

As part of their membership, each board member should submit a bio that can be used as publicity for that member, with his or her permission. If you have a newsletter, you should feature a board member in each edition, if possible. It would be helpful to take a photo of each new board member at orientation, and keep it in your files for future use.

Every program should have an annual recognition event for tutors, students, and the board. This is your chance to complement your board for their hard work, and to bring them closer to the volunteer tutors and students. This is the time to introduce the board formally, and a very good opportunity for the President of the Board to give out awards to board members for their outstanding work.

Stages of an Organization (Literacy Volunteers of America)

	<u>STAGE I</u>	<u>STAGE II</u>	<u>STAGE III</u>
Responsibilities	Meetings are held frequently with Steering Comm. & Board operating as a "Committee of the Whole."	Formal Board of Directors is established, including a committee structure in which work is accomplished between meetings of the entire group.	Board of Directors becomes a policy making body that monitors and evaluates the results of a long-range or strategic organization plan.
PROGRAM	Members are involved in implementing every aspect of program intake and support.	Board members establish an Annual Program Plan, which is usually implemented by a Program Coordinator. Program Coordinator is responsible for implementing the Annual Program Plan and may be assisted by the Board. Program Coordinator seeks approval for new Program Initiatives.	Board monitors and evaluates the outcomes of the Annual Program Plan. The Executive Director is authorized to make all decisions that fall within the mission. The Executive Director develops new Program initiatives that fall within the mission.
Budget/ Finance	All members of the Steering Committee/Board review and approve all expenses.	Board approves and monitors an Annual Budget. Program Coordinator authorizes expenses within the program portion of the budget and seeks approval for additional expenses.	Board approves, with recommendations of the Executive Director, and monitors an Annual budget. Executive Director authorizes all expenses that fall within the scope of an approved budget and seeks approval for expenses outside of the budget.
Fund Development	Steering Committee/Board are responsible for planning and implementing fund-raising	Board is responsible for planning and implementing fund-raising. Program coordinator is <u>not</u> responsible for "raising the budget."	Board develops and approves a multi-faceted long-range plan. Board provides access within each member's sphere of influence to resources that will contribute to fund development. Executive Director is responsible for managing the fund development plan.
Public/Community Relations	Members of the Steering Committee/Board are responsible for publicity, networking and recruitment.	Board may assist the Program Coordinator in awareness and recruitment efforts. Program Coordinator has primary responsibility for public/community relations efforts related to accomplishing intake and support.	Board develops and approves a multi-faceted long-range plan. Board provides access within each member's sphere of influence to resources that will enable the public/community relations plan. Executive Director manages the public/community relations plan.
Personnel	There is no paid staff but some other volunteers besides those on steering committee may assist in the work of the organization	Board hires the Program Coordinator and evaluates him/her based on the outcomes of the Annual Program Plan. Program Coordinator may supervise additional staff (paid or volunteer) that implements the Annual Program Plan.	Board hires the Executive Director and evaluates him/her based on the outcomes of the long-range or strategic organizational plan. Exec. Dir. Hires and manages a staff (paid and volunteer) that implements all phases of the organizational plan.
Board Development/ Nominating	All members are involved in recruiting replacements for the group	All members agree responsible for assisting in the recruitment, orientation and training of the Board's membership. Program Coordinator may assist in recruitment and training of Board of Directors	Board members and staff assist a committee in the recruitment, training and development of the Board's membership. Executive Director assumes a major responsibility for informing, training and developing the Board.

The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy (NMCL) has job description ideas for key board members that we can share with you. You can customize them to suit your needs.

The NMCL is available to you for help, advice, and resources at any time during any state of your program development. Please feel free to call our hotline, 1-800-233-7587 when you need to. And please let us train your board. Even if you have experienced board members, our training will include training specifically for volunteer adult literacy programs. Our board training includes specifics about program management that will be helpful to staff, as well.

We will train your volunteer tutors. Our tutor training is nationally certified, and your volunteers will be prepared to confidently work with a student.

There is no charge for any of our services to you.



www.nmcl.org

New Mexico Coalition for Literacy
3201 B Mercantile Court
Santa Fe, NM 8707
1-800-233-7587