

10 Questions Directors Should Ask¹

1. Does this 'fit' with our mission?

Directors should know the mission statement intimately. Include it on meeting agendas so it's always top of mind. When passionate discussions and ideas come before the board, directors should ask whether they align with the mission.

2. Will this advance the strategic plan?

Directors should be confident with their knowledge of the strategic plan. When a new idea is presented to the board, before it is debated fully, directors should ask whether the idea advances the plan.

3. Are we doing committee work at the board table?

Committees supplement the work of the board. They research and formulate recommendations based on their mandate. Redoing the work of the committee at the board table is of no value. And it takes away from the strategic thinking that the board should be doing.

4. How will we measure success?

Good boards make knowledge-based decisions and rely on performance measures. They resist talking about something if they cannot measure its success. Directors need to ask, "What metrics or performance indicators will we monitor? Have we set a timeline? Do we know the cost? Can we expect to see measurable results?"

5. Is this discussion in the weeds?

Governance requires the board to be visionary, often described as discussions at the 50,000-foot level. Discussions at lower levels can be characterized as committee work (25,000- to 35,000-foot level) or staff work (10,000-foot level). Directors should stop discussions that drop below the governance level by asking, "Are we in the weeds?"

6. Isn't that the responsibility of our executive officer, not the board?

The board's governance responsibilities are distinct from operational duties. Directors must focus on governance and leave the operations to staff.

7. Will it add value?

Some boards try to be all things to all people. Too many projects exhaust resources and staff. Instead of responding to recommendations with, "We should probably do that," encourage the board to focus on core competencies that add value or equity to the association. This requires board discipline and a willingness to say "no."

¹ Adapted from 10 Questions You Want to Hear Board Members Ask, by Bob Harris, CAE, The NonProfit Center.

