

Memorandum

To: Board of Directors
From: Foundation Staff
Date: May 4, 2018
Re: Board Self-Assessment Survey

Background

Self-assessments are widely viewed as a best practice for continuous improvement. As a result, the staff recommended conducting a Board self-assessment this year as one of our goals. The assessment will be administered via a SurveyMonkey shortly after the May Board meeting. We plan to discuss responses during our summer lunches with individual Board members and present overall findings and recommendations at the fall Board meeting.

In order for the assessment to be helpful, Board members must take time to provide honest and thoughtful responses. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. The exercise should be regarded as a process to help us maximize the Board's effectiveness, not a one-time rating activity.

The survey will have three sections as outlined below: 1) overall performance of the Foundation, 2) overall performance of the Board of Directors, and 3) individual performance as a Board member. Responses will only be shared in the aggregate with the full Board and not attributed to individual Directors. The survey has some open-ended questions, so we expect it will take 20-30 minutes to complete.

At the Board meeting, we will review the proposed topics and explain the purpose behind each section. We will welcome any input the Board may have on the survey topics, questions or process. Once we have the benefit of this input, we will email the final survey to each Board member to complete.

Section 1 – Overall Performance of the Foundation

Scale:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Needs Improvement
- Do Not Know

1. The Foundation's grantmaking is well-aligned with its mission, vision and beliefs.
2. The Foundation has a positive reputation in the community.
3. The Foundation is an effective grantmaker that seeks to employ best practices.
4. The Foundation's priorities, focus areas and grantmaking reflect Board members' interests and priorities.
5. The Foundation brings the family together.
6. The Foundation has effective strategies and provides appropriate opportunities for engaging the next generation of family members.

7. The Foundation is a learning organization that evaluates its performance at appropriate intervals and holds itself accountable to its goals.
8. The Foundation takes advantage of tools beyond grantmaking, such as capacity building, convening and collaboration, to enhance its impact.
9. The Foundation has appropriate resources (staff, financial management, technology, workspace, etc.) to accomplish its mission.

Open ended questions:

10. If you have comments on any of your above responses (especially if you selected ‘Needs Improvement’), please provide more detail here.
11. What would you like the Foundation to be known for locally, nationally or in the areas in which we fund?

Section 2 – Overall Performance of the Board of Directors

Scale:

- Strongly Agree (a model for other foundations)
- Agree (a strength of our foundation)
- Neutral (adequate for our foundation)
- Disagree (needs some attention)
- Strongly Disagree (requires improvement)

1. The Board understands its roles and responsibilities and members appreciate and fulfill the primary duties of the Board.
2. Board members understand and agree with the Foundation’s mission, vision, beliefs and priorities and review these at appropriate intervals.
3. Board members understand the Founder’s Statement and will be able to use it as a guide for Foundation grantmaking and Board activities in the future.
4. The Board makes important policy-related decisions when needed, and these decisions effectively guide operational activities of the staff.
5. The Board is sufficiently informed about trends and developments in the focus areas and communities in which we make grants.
6. Board members work well together as a team; different perspectives are respected and incorporated into decision-making.
7. Board meetings provide opportunities for an appropriate level of participation and enable the Board to focus on the progress of important Foundation goals and activities.
8. The Board evaluates and supports the annual goals, objectives and performance of the President.
9. The Board works well with and supports the work of the staff.
10. The Board commits sufficient time to its activities to ensure that the Foundation operates effectively and in a manner that is consistent with its mission, vision and beliefs.
11. The Board exercises an appropriate level of oversight over the Foundation’s budget/finances/investments, legal compliance, grantmaking and other important operational issues.
12. The Board spends an appropriate amount of time planning for the Foundation’s future.

Open-ended questions:

13. If you have comments on any of your above responses (especially if you selected ‘Disagree’ or ‘Strongly Disagree’), please provide more detail here.
14. What issues, if any, have occupied too much of the Board’s time and attention during the past few years?
15. What issues, if any, have not received enough Board attention during the past few years?

16. Are there ways that we could change Board activities (such as meetings or site visits) or other aspects of Board operations to improve Board engagement?

Section 3 – Individual Performance as a Board Member

Scale:

- Personal strength
- Satisfactory
- Needs improvement

1. I understand and support the Foundation’s mission, vision and beliefs.
2. I am aware of, understand and follow the Foundation’s policies, grantmaking guidelines and Statement of Director Expectations (*attached*).
3. I understand my role and take my responsibilities as a Board member seriously.
4. I can identify potential conflicts of interest that may arise and understand how these situations should be handled by the Board.
5. I attend all Board meetings.
6. I attend a sufficient number of Foundation activities, such as Board/staff discussions, site visits, etc., to allow me to make informed decisions as a Board member.
7. I prepare for meetings by reading materials in advance.
8. I actively participate in meetings and feel comfortable voicing my opinions and sharing-ideas.
9. My knowledge and experience are appreciated and well utilized by the Board and staff.
10. I believe I have an appropriate level of knowledge about the important issues and trends in the areas in which the Foundation makes grants.
11. I encourage and support the staff. My attitude and communications are timely, respectful and helpful.
12. I find serving on the Board to be a satisfying and rewarding experience. Board service provides a good balance between work and fun.

Open ended questions:

13. If you have comments on any of your above responses (especially if you selected ‘Needs Improvement’), please provide more detail here.
14. What can the staff do to better support you as a Board member?
15. What would you like to learn about the Foundation or the sector to help you contribute more effectively as a Board member?
16. What method(s) of communication do you prefer for learning about grantee and sector developments (e.g. email updates, in-person presentations, article sharing, videos)?
17. Please provide any other comments you would like to share related to your role as a Board member.