Policy Officials Peer Learning Lab

2012 NADO ANNUAL TRAINING CONFERENCE
Sunday, October 14 | 10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Strategies for Effective Board Leadership
In a Changing World

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Overview

- About NADO & Regional Development Organizations
- Seven Significant Issues Facing Regional Councils
- Board Member Evaluation/Group Exercise No. 1
- Best Practices Evaluation/Group Exercise No. 2
- Roles and Functions of Governing Body
- Board Member Resource Checklist
- Tips for Effective Policy Boards
- Due Diligence for New Board Members
- Summary
About NADO

- Strengthen local governments, communities and economies through the regional strategies, partnerships and solutions of the nation’s regional development organizations
Self-Assessment Toolkit

- Defining Today’s Era of Regionalism
- Evaluating Your Role in Modern Era of Regionalism
- Seven Significant Issues Facing Regional Councils
- **Managing an Effective Regional Council Policy Board**
- Regional Council Executive Director Checklists
- State Associations of Regional Councils
- Regional Council Snapshots: Innovations and Practices
- Peer Resource Exchange: Food for Thought
- Concepts of Leadership
Special Thank You to

- Development District Association of Appalachia
- Appalachian Regional Commission
- Missouri Association of Councils of Government
- SouthEast Regional Directors Institute
- U.S. Economic Development Administration
- NADO Board of Directors and Membership
Fundamentals of Regional Development Organizations

Policy Board and Member Governments

Innovate

Analysis

Strategy

Action

Results

Funders and Clients

Executive Director

Staff
Seven Significant Issues Facing Regional Councils

- Relevance
- Convener of the Region
- Ownership and Governance
- Relationships with Local Governments
- Relationships with Federal and State Officials
- Statewide Uniformity and Capacity
- Public Relations/Image
“Regional councils are sometimes less bold in structure and authority than a region’s needs might warrant, yet more advanced than area politics comfortably accept.”

- James Ray, Texas Association of Regional Councils (1978)
Fundamentals of Regional Development Organizations

- Regional councils are **political entities** that must function politically to be highly effective, yet they must also act in a **non-partisan** manner.
  - Regional Council Self-Assessment and Resource Toolkit (August 2009)
Fundamentals of Regional Development Organizations

- “There are really very few roadblocks to creating stronger RPCs (i.e. RDOs). It is simple. They just can’t act like lone wolves. And, they need to focus on **statewide consistency**, have a **positive attitude** and focus on adding value.”

  Anonymous Quote from VAPDA Statewide Assessment Interviews, January 2011
Fundamentals of Regional Development Organizations

- RDOs are **knowledge-based firms**
- Presentation of **data, concepts and ideas** are our lifeblood
- We are driven by ideas, **innovations, solutions and results**
Regional Policy Boards:

How Does Your Policy Board Measure Up?
How Does Your Policy Board Measure Up?

- Establishing **Policy**
- Establish **Partnership** with Executive Director
- Regional **Vision**
- Direction Through **Strategic Planning**
- **Financial Integrity** of the Organization
- **Participate** Responsibly
- Member **Commitments**
1) Establishing Policy: How Does Your Policy Board Measure Up?

*Please rate each item between 1 and 5 (1 is low, 5 is high)*

- Focuses on meeting the **overall needs of our region**, not just their own individual communities.
- **Sets the policies and strategic direction** that guide our regional council to run effectively, legally and ethically.
- **Advocates** the use of our regional council to serve as a primary convener, regional planning expert and technical assistance resources to address regional goals and issues.
- Has developed the **policy and governance framework** that is needed to allow management and staff to implement the vision and priorities of the board.
2) Establish Partnership with Executive Director: How Does Your Policy Board Measure Up?

*Please rate each item between 1 and 5 (1 is low, 5 is high)*

- **Sets overall policies and guidelines** that govern the authority, responsibility, accountability, and performance evaluation of the executive director.
- Provides the **support** necessary for the executive director and staff to succeed in advancing the goals and priorities of the board.
- Allows the **executive director to manage the day-to-day operations** of the regional council, without micromanaging staffing and programmatic decisions.
- Remembers that our regional council is NOT always under the **same rules and restrictions as local government**.
3) Regional Vision: How Does Your Policy Board Measure Up?

*Please rate each item between 1 and 5 (1 is low, 5 is high)*

- Shares a common **vision**, sense of **mission** and clearly identified **goals** at the board level.
- Takes the **long-term view** with incremental performance measures to evaluate progress of the regional council.
- Places an emphasis on developing a **regional development roadmap** with performance benchmarks and measurements compared with other similar regions in the nation.
- Focuses on putting difficult decisions into the larger **regional context** and perspective, rather than just interests of individual communities.
- Remembers that **organizational risk taking** is essential for progress and innovation.
4) Direction Through Strategic Planning: How Does Your Policy Board Measure Up?

*Please rate each item between 1 and 5 (1 is low, 5 is high)*

- Conducts regular **outreach** and feedback sessions with rank-and-file members of the regional council membership.
- Does not limit input and feedback only from members of the board.
- Conducts regular and thorough **strategic planning retreats and visioning sessions** to establish long-term goals and objectives, as well as short-range tasks and action plans.
- Assesses our organizational **opportunities, threats, weaknesses and strengths** on a regular basis.
- Places a major emphasis on the implementation of our organization’s **strategic plan**, including personal involvement in outreach and advocacy for the organization at federal, state and local levels.
5) Financial Integrity of the Organization: How Does Your Policy Board Measure Up?

Please rate each item between 1 and 5 (1 is low, 5 is high)

- Provides for board members to have a firm grasp on the **financial conditions, integrity and operations** of the organization. This includes monitoring annual budget vs. expenditures, conducting an annual audit by independent CPA firm and maintaining a finance committee.

- **Delegates the day-to-day financial management to the executive director**, yet maintains appropriate internal controls.

- **Monitors financial outcomes and performance**, including financial reports at board meetings and review of annual audit findings.

- Maintains appropriate controls and oversight of **nonprofit affiliates** of the regional council.

- Thinks long-term and big-picture about building the organization’s **financial foundation**, not only annual profit and loss statements.
6) Participate Responsibly: How Does Your Policy Board Measure Up?

Please rate each item between 1 and 5 (1 is low, 5 is high)

- Commit the **time** necessary to serve as a board member.
- Keep local politics in perspective to **regional needs and priorities**.
- Review agenda materials prior to the meeting and are prepared to ask **informed questions** and provide good input.
6) Participate Responsibly:
How Does Your Policy Board Measure Up?

*Please rate each item between 1 and 5 (1 is low, 5 is high)*

- Conduct their **homework** on the organization’s activities, plans and programs, along with understanding the regional and local politics.
- Keep the board working on a **policy level**, rather than micromanaging staff level decisions.
- Address serious **management issues** that require board action or attention.
- Are open to involving **committees, advisory working groups** and **staff** in the organization.
6) Participate Responsibly: How Does Your Policy Board Measure Up?

Please rate each item between 1 and 5 (1 is low, 5 is high)

- Take **special assignments** willingly and enthusiastically when asked.
- Serve as **goodwill ambassadors** for the organization at the national, state, regional and local levels.
- Actively participate in **membership retention** and outreach.
6) Participate Responsibly: How Does Your Policy Board Measure Up?

Please rate each item between 1 and 5 (1 is low, 5 is high)

- Support the organization’s public policy, programmatic and project agenda through **advocacy**.
- **Attend** events and activities, including board meetings, educational seminars and planning meetings.
- **Speak** for the board or the organization only when authorized and appropriate.
6) Participate Responsibly: How Does Your Policy Board Measure Up?

*Please rate each item between 1 and 5 (1 is low, 5 is high)*

- Serve the **whole organization**, rather than any special interest group or constituency.
- **Avoid even the appearance of conflict of interest**, especially on funding and personnel decisions.
- **Disclose** any possible conflicts in a timely and open fashion.
- Commit to **continuous improvement** of the organization.
7) Member Commitments: How Does Your Policy Board Measure Up?

Please rate each item between 1 and 5 (1 is low, 5 is high)

- Know the goals, mission and programs/services of the organization.
- Have defined roles and responsibilities as a board member.
- Provide constructive and timely feedback.
- Respect and value diversity of thought and opinion of board members, executive director, staff and stakeholders.
7) Member Commitments: How Does Your Policy Board Measure Up?

Please rate each item between 1 and 5 (1 is low, 5 is high)

- Develop **trust and fight fair** with other board members, management and staff.
- Pitch in to help **advance** the mission of the organization.
- Know how to solve problems and **work toward solving problems and issues**.
- Focus on achieving **positive results** for the region and the regional council.
How Does Your Policy Board Measure Up?

Group Exercise No. 1

- Strengths and Assets
- Opportunities
- Threats
- Weaknesses and Challenges
Regional Policy Boards:

Best Practices of Effective Organizations
Regional Policy Boards: Best Practices of Effective Organizations

Please Answer Yes or No

- Does board set **specific performance goals and benchmarks** for the organization, including holding organization accountable for reaching key milestones and performance targets?
- Does board **meet** at least bi-monthly with a regular meeting time and date?
- Does board have **strong attendance** and no trouble meeting quorum requirements at regular meetings (which is basic measurement of the value placed on the organization by local officials)?
- Does board focus on **policy level issues**, including issues of regional significance, and identifies overall goals and strategies for making the region more economically competitive with a higher quality of life?

Content is based on materials of the Nonprofit Sector Leadership Program, Dalhousie University, Canada
Regional Policy Boards: Best Practices of Effective Organizations

Please Answer Yes or No

- Do all board members have copies of the state law and regulations, bylaws and other written policies and procedures that govern the organization and its affiliates?
- Does board operate according to state law and regulations, organizational bylaws and other written policies and procedures?
- Does board or its executive committee normally plan and review the board meeting agenda in advance of the meeting?
- Are board meetings typically conducted in the allotted time?

Content is based on materials of the Nonprofit Sector Leadership Program, Dalhousie University, Canada
Regional Policy Boards:
Best Practices of Effective Organizations

Please Answer Yes or No

- Are minutes, committee meeting information/results and staff reports distributed to the board members at least a week in advance of board meetings?

- Are there written job descriptions and conflict of interest guidelines for members of the board, committees, working groups and for staff?

- Do board members receive regular financial reports and monitor the performance of the organization in relation to its budget, assets and liabilities?

- Do board members receive the annual audit report by an independent accounting firm, and the board has an audit committee to serve as a liaison with the auditors?

Content is based on materials of the Nonprofit Sector Leadership Program, Dalhousie University, Canada
Regional Policy Boards: Best Practices of Effective Organizations

Please Answer Yes or No

- Is there a **policy manual** containing all of the organization’s written policies and procedures, including accounting, human resources/personnel, conflict of interest guidelines and grant management standards?

- Does board adopt **quality of service goals and standards** for the organization to follow?

- Do board members regularly solicit the opinions, views and feedback of non-board member **local government officials**?

- Do board members regularly solicit the opinions, views and feedback from **federal and state policy makers and funders** about the performance and services of the organization?

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Regional Policy Boards: Best Practices of Effective Organizations

Group Exercise No. 2

- Strengths and Assets
- Opportunities
- Threats
- Weaknesses and Challenges
Regional Policy Boards:

Resource Checklist for Board Members
Regional Policy Boards: Resource Checklist for Board Members

Keep Informed:

- **Be prepared for meetings.** Prior to regularly scheduled board and committee meetings, be sure to read staff reports, draft and proposed plans, program reports, and meeting materials and minutes.

- **Stay informed of important organizational management and operational issues,** such as budget and audit reports, work program reports, statewide and regional partnerships and programs, and federal and state policy decisions and events.

- **Attend national and statewide events,** as well as read national and state level publications to stay current on federal policy and program activities, national and state program innovations, and industry trends and conditions.
Regional Policy Boards: Resource Checklist for Board Members

Be a Leader:

- **Attend and participate in all regional council meetings.** An active engaged board is the strength of regional development organizations.

- **Remember that you, as a policy board member, are an owner of the regional council.** Be sure to ask timely and appropriate questions, engage in the decision-making process, and learn about the subject areas being discussed at the meetings.

- **Use your expertise and skills to advance the goals and mission of the regional council,** whether it is political knowledge and relationships, public speaking / communications, “behind the scenes” consensus builder, issue area expert, or regional thinker and visionary.

- **Build professional relationships and networks with policy officials from around the region,** not just your county or city. One of the most valuable roles of the regional council is to build trust and cooperation of local officials within a region, and this takes tremendous confidence, trust and understanding of each jurisdictions’ needs, priorities and viewpoint.
Regional Policy Boards: Resource Checklist for Board Members

Spread the Gospel Back Home:

- **Keep your colleagues back home informed** of regional council issues, programs and decisions, especially results and outcomes of programs and projects.

- **Let your colleagues know about regional activities** that would benefit or involve your local community/jurisdiction.

- **Host an event** within your community to showcase special projects, programs and achievements, especially programs/facilities that have benefitted from the work of the regional council.
Regional Policy Boards:

Roles and Responsibilities
Regional Policy Boards: Roles & Responsibilities

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Define and oversee the mission of the regional council and keep it relevant to the needs of the region and its individual local governments and communities.

- Approve programs and services and monitor their effectiveness and usefulness.

- Provide strategic guidance to the organization and the chief executive officer.

- Ensure financial solvency, integrity and soundness, including through fundraising assistance.

- Select, support and evaluate the chief executive officer.

- Ensure continuous board improvement and engagement.
Regional Policy Boards: Roles & Responsibilities

- **Attend** each meeting of the board.
- **Participate** in statewide and regional activities of the organization, as needed and requested.
- **Serve** on at least one board committee.
- Hold the regional council to a **high standard** of performance and integrity.
Regional Policy Boards:

Tips for Effective Regional Policy Boards
Regional Policy Boards:
Tips for Effective Regional Policy Boards

- **Strategic planning** with board members, including trust building, issue discussions and strategic visioning for the region and regional council.

- **Action-oriented board meetings** with timely, pertinent and useful information.

- **Meetings with key federal and state officials**, including office visits and project tours.
Regional Policy Boards: Tips for Effective Regional Policy Boards

- **Host forums and events** with high-profile international, national, state and regional leaders at board meetings, State of the Region forums and issue specific events. *(Don’t forget to invite and involve private sector and nonprofit sector leaders from the region!)*
Regional Policy Boards:

Due Diligence Checklist for New Board Members
Read the organization’s founding **legislative or executive order, bylaws, board and committee minutes and progress reports** for at least the past two years to learn about its stated purpose, activities and concerns. This will give a new board member an understanding of what the organization is about and how it must be legally governed.
Regional Policy Boards: Due Diligence Checklist for New Board Members

- Obtain a **current list of board and committee members** and meet with the organization’s chief executive officer to determine what is expected of board members. This will give new board members a better understanding of the organization’s culture, programs, governance structure and mission.
Regional Policy Boards: Due Diligence Checklist for New Board Members

- Review the organization’s **audited financial statements** for at least the last two years as well as its current financial reports to see how the organization uses its assets and to evaluate its financial health.

- Obtain an understanding of the **board and committee structures** of the organization and how internal controls are used to monitor the operations of the organization.
Regional Policy Boards: Due Diligence Checklist for New Board Members

- Understand the organization’s **mission**, learn about its **programs**, read its **publications, reports and Web site**, and talk to management.

- Review the **organizational chart** and understand the accountability structure of the organization. Remember that the board should hire the chief executive/staff officer, who is responsible for the day-to-day management and operations of the organization, including hiring, firing and evaluation of employees.
Regional Policy Boards:  
Due Diligence Checklist for New Board Members

- Make sure there is a **conflict of interest policy** and form, along with a general code of ethics in place and that it is periodically reviewed and updated.

- Be sure to receive and review the regional council’s **annual budget**, **audit and financial statements**, in addition to making sure the organization has **insurance coverage**, including Directors and Officers liability insurance, general liability coverage and employee fidelity insurance.
Regional Policy Boards: Due Diligence Checklist for New Board Members

- Regional councils are focused on addressing areawide issues that require **regional solutions** and attention. Primary focus should be on regional programs and services that cross jurisdictional boundaries and **technical assistance** requests for specific needs, plans and projects, especially in more rural communities, or federal and state mandates.
Regional Policy Boards:
Due Diligence Checklist for New Board Members

- Make sure to devote the time and energy expected of a board member.
- A regional council is often only as strong and productive as its policy board will allow and expect.
- A strong policy board typically translates into a strong and vibrant regional council.
Summary

- Board Member **Engagement**
- Board Member **Policy** Role
- Board Member **Financial Oversight** Role
- Board Member **Ambassador/Champion** Role
THANK YOU!

For more information, contact Scott Koons at 352.955.2200 or koons@ncfrpc.org.
Visit our website at www.ncfrpc.org.
and
For more information, contact NADO at 202.624.7806 or info@nado.org.
Visit our website at www.nado.org.