



Wanted: Board Statistics and Models

Should the executive participate in board meetings? What resources exist to help you decide such matters?



With what frequency, stated as a percentage, do nonprofit boards, categorized by type, size, income, or other means, have policies and procedures in place that:

- 1. require periodic, in-person reports by the executive director to the fully assembled board?**
 - 2. require the executive director's participation in regular board meetings?**
 - 3. accord voting status to the executive director at board meetings?**
- What are the pros and cons of having management participate in board matters? What resource materials and models exist to help establish guidelines for such participation?**

*Rebecca Morris, Volunteer
Delaware, Ohio*

A Whew! There's a couple million dollars' worth of research in that question! Now if we can only find a funder!

In all seriousness, you ask some very interesting questions (and I'm glad to see that you want breakdowns by organizational type). The quick answer is that there's no research covering the broad scope of this question—most likely because the data would be almost impossible to get and highly unreliable. We don't even know how many nonprofit organizations exist in a given area (many

on your questions—albeit not in any systematic, comparative way. The few studies on boards that have put together large samples or populations have agreed overwhelmingly on one thing: There is an enormous variety of nonprofit board practices and structures. This finding speaks to the importance of breaking the sector down by type of organization, size, and so on. The good news is that more data may be available if the question is limited to one subsector (such as hospitals, art museums, environmental organizations, etc.) If only one type or size of organization is of interest, research may be slightly more avail-

able—and you still would have to narrow down your query.

Answers to your first three questions, then, are completely beyond the scope of any studies of which I know. Anecdotal and impressionistic answers are the only way to go here. You might want to think about referent organizations and then poll them to get an idea of percentages.

As for the last set of questions—much more material is available on these issues. Indeed, the National Center for Nonprofit Boards (Suite 510, 2000 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, phone 202-452-6262) would be thrilled to provide you with information addressing many of these issues. Models of the board/executive director nexus abound in the research literature. Some of the more useful include Miriam Wood's Board Lifecycle model, Robert Herman's seven-fold classification system, and Margaret Harris' stakeholder models. All three of these models take into account various dimensions of an organization's context before setting out the governing choices available. You might want to take a look at some recent issues of the journal *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, which publishes work by the above-mentioned authors. (For ordering information, contact Jossey-Bass Publishers, 350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, California 94104-1342, phone 800-956-7739 or 415-433-1767.) And of course *Nonprofit World* deals with such issues regularly. See its "Board Room" column, its *Board Leadership and Governance*, *Leadership Series* collection of board articles (to order, see page 25), the index of all *Nonprofit World* articles on its web site (<http://danenet.wicip.org/snpo>), and its CD-ROM containing all *Nonprofit World* articles since its first issue in 1983 (see page 25 to order).

Good luck—and if you find anything, let us know!

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are not incorporated, not registered, and not listed), much less how they organize their governance. Without knowing the number of nonprofit organizations, there's no way to estimate any behaviors in terms of percentages.

Yet the issues you raise are indeed important, and some research has taken

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