

# **TIPS FOR NEW AOC BOARD MEMBERS**



ASSOCIATION OF OLD CROWS

1000 North Payne Street

## TIPS FOR NEW AOC BOARD MEMBERS

As a new member of the AOC Board of Directors you may have some questions about “how it works.” The following “thought-starters” should help you get adjusted to life as an AOC Director.

### PURPOSE

The Board of Directors is the governing body of the association, responsible for the ultimate direction of the management of the affairs of the organization. The board is responsible for policymaking, while employees (and to a certain extent, officers) are responsible for executing day-to-day management to implement board-made policy. However, the ultimate legal responsibility for the actions (and inactions) of the association rests with the board.

### GOVERNANCE

- a) Learn about the AOC – its mission, strategic plan, programs, policies, operations, finances, challenges and opportunities.
- b) Review and be familiar with the AOC Bylaws, Constitution, the AOC’s OpMan and Strategic Plan; review from time to time.
- c) Participate in the new board member orientation program. Ask questions. Continue to stay informed during your service on the board. Learn something new about the organization each month. Ask questions.
- d) Attend all board and committee meetings and participate actively. Be attentive during meetings – save the newspaper and email for the breaks. Come prepared to participate in discussions and be equipped to make decisions. Make decisions deliberately and without undue haste or pressure. Review the agenda and any supporting materials prior to the start of the meeting and make notes. Ask questions.
- e) Participate responsibly in board and committee meetings. Know the basic operation of the parliamentary authority “Robert’s Rules of Order” used by the AOC. Respect your fellow board members and their time. Keep to the agenda and avoid digressions that do not move the organization forward. Ask questions.
- f) Support the decisions of the board. Once a decision has been made, it is the decision of the board. Question it in private with the board if you must, but support the decision that is made before the staff, the volunteers and the public.
- g) Review meeting minutes to ensure they accurately reflect the vote counts (including dissenting votes and abstentions) on actions taken at meetings.
- h) Use any special skills or training you may have to further the work of the board and the organization. If the organization has staff or paid consultants in your area of expertise, treat them with respect.
- i) Express professional disagreement in a way that moves the discussion forward. Your fellow board members may rely on your expertise so be careful in the opinions that you give. You may not consider yourself to be an expert but your fellow board members may. Distinguish your personal opinions from your professional ones when sharing them with the board.
- j) Accept committee assignments and make the most of your committee service. Recognize that not everyone can be on the “fun” committees. The organization is served by the work of all of its committees.
- k) Accept the non-governance responsibilities that come with service on the board – attend social and other functions sponsored by the organization when your schedule allows, communicate with others

about the work of the organization, and show your support for the organization when talking with others.

- l) Follow all conflict of interest and confidentiality policies of the organization. Err on the side of reporting even potential conflicts.
- m) Do not ask for favors or special treatment.
- n) Do not take on more responsibility than you can reasonably handle given your employment, family and other social and volunteer commitments. You will be a more effective volunteer if you do one or two assignments well and do not spread yourself too thin.

### **FINANCES**

- a) Become well acquainted with the AOC Budget.
- b) Provide financial support to the organization according to your ability.
- c) Assist with fundraising efforts. Be financially literate. Be able to read and understand the financial reports used by AOC. Know the organization's financial situation.
- d) Review the Form 990 filed by the organization each year. Ask questions.
- e) Understand the budget in terms of the dollars but also how the funds are being allocated. Understand what decisions are being made as to the operation of the organization when you approve a budget each year.
- f) Establish a policy on how performance against the budget will be measured and how budget adjustments will be handled. Hire outside auditors.
- g) Ask tough questions of your outside auditors. Read the management letter from the auditors and hold staff accountable in reporting back on addressing any items identified as potential problems by the auditors.
- h) Adopt policies on board travel, meeting expenses and reimbursements. Follow the policies and hold other board members to them too.
- i) The AOC will not object to and would greatly appreciate your employer covering your travel expenses if so inclined.

### **PERFORMANCE**

- a) Annually assess the performance of the board as a whole and your own performance as a board member.
- b) Identify areas in need of improvement and acknowledge those things that are going well.
- c) Provide assistance to those board members who are not meeting the expectations of the board.
- d) Do not be afraid to ask board members to leave if they are not meeting the expectations of the board and show no sincere interest in doing so.
- e) Annually assess the performance of the organization as a whole.
- f) Review the strategic plan and objectives for the years ahead and make adjustments as needed.
- g) Coordinate the strategic plan with the budget and ensure that adequate resources are provided to achieve successful results.

### **STAFF**

- a) Understand your role as a Director and the roles of staff and other volunteers in the governance and operation of the organization.
- b) Respect the senior staff member's position and responsibility to manage the staff. Take up any complaints with the executive director.
- c) Give recognition and praise to the staff when it is due.
- d) Do not ask the staff to support your pet projects.
- e) Do not say negative things about other board members to the staff. Develop the executive director job description and hire the executive director.
- f) Review his or her performance at least annually, set compensation and goals that are appropriate for the organization, and remove the executive director if necessary.
- g) Ensure that there is a succession plan in place for all senior managers.
- h) Review and approve regularly the compensation and benefits package for the employees.
- i) Regularly review employment policies and practices.
- j) Ensure that the staff is adequate to perform the work that is needed – have the right people for the right jobs and pay them a competitive wage for their profession and your industry and geographic area.

### **LEADERSHIP**

- a) Participate in the active recruitment, selection and orientation of new board members.
- b) Encourage continuing education for all board members and participate in the programs AOC offers.
- c) Serve as a mentor for a new board member when you are ready.
- d) Help to identify and cultivate new leaders on the board.
- e) Participate in the board leadership (Executive Committee) if you are able to do so.
- f) Familiarize yourself with our AOC Chapters. Make an attempt to build a relationship with those chapters in your region. If you have no chapters in your region because you are an "At Large Director" but either reside and/or travel to places where chapters exist, please don't hesitate to correspond with the regional director assigned if you'd like to reach out to a specific chapter. The reach out would be greatly appreciated and more productive if coordinated.
- g) With regard to term limits, know when it is time for you to step down from the board. If you have recruited new board members and assisted with the development of new leaders on the board, you can step down knowing you are leaving the organization in good hands.