

# BUILDING YOUR BOARD

Produced by the National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD®)

## NORD MEMBERSHIP QUALIFICATION:

NORD Platinum members<sup>1</sup> must meet the following qualification: “A minimum of five (5) board members that meet at least twice annually (in-person or by conference call).”<sup>i</sup>

NORD Gold members must meet the following qualification: “A minimum of three (3) board members and must meet at least twice annually.”<sup>ii</sup>

## WHY YOUR ORGANIZATION SHOULD BUILD YOUR BOARD:

- Rare disease nonprofits typically start out small because their communities are small. According to FasterCures, it takes an average of 15 years and \$1 billion to develop a rare disease treatment. If your mission involves research, treatments, and cures, your organization’s board of directors will need to grow, become diverse, reflect a variety skill sets, and bring in new leadership year after year. Building your board is a strategic way to invigorate your organization; to be stable and thrive, organizations need to be receptive to new perspectives and fresh ideas.
- When approaching board recruitment, think about how your board can be composed to truly reflect the people and communities your organization exists to serve, as well as what skillsets your board needs in order to conduct its business effectively.
- Building your board effectively can help:
  - Strengthen the work of your organization and further your mission by welcoming new talent and skills to organizational leadership.
  - Boost donations by connecting with new funders and donors through the networks of new board members.
  - Avoid burnout of the leadership/founding team by sharing the workload and responsibility across a wider network of people.
  - Serve your community more fully with a board that represents the diversity within your patient population.

## TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- **Cast a Wide Net:** When recruiting board members, consider searching outside of your rare disease community. Patients and their families may not have sufficient time to dedicate to your organization due to managing their health. Someone without a direct connection to the mission but with an interest in charity work can still bring dedication, enthusiasm, and expertise to your boardroom.
- **Recruit for Skillsets:** Recruit for the skills your board is lacking. It may be tempting to select the candidate with a strong tie to your mission, but it’s also important to consider what strengths they bring to your board. Explore your various networks, acquaintances, and community for the diverse skillsets you need to reach your goals and succeed.

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<sup>1</sup> organizations that work with medical advisors

- **Recruit from Your Volunteers:** Get to know the people volunteering with your organization and evaluate them for future leadership positions. Not sure what a volunteer can help with? Keep a running wish list of tasks you would like to accomplish but do not personally have time to complete.
- **Advertise for the Position:** Create a posting for your board role and promote it to a wider, diverse audience. Share your advertisement on professional networking sites (e.g. LinkedIn), job/volunteer sites (e.g. Idealist.org), and with professional or local associations and organizations.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- **Forming the Nonprofit's First Board (BoardSource)**
  - Basic tips and best practices for composing your first board.
- **The "Recruit New Board Members Fast!" Checklist (Joan Garry)**
  - A how-to on recruiting new talent fast.
- **Sample Board Posting: Volunteer Board Member (Advocacy Expertise) (BoardSource)**
  - A template board posting.
- **Finding the Right Board Members for your Nonprofit (National Council of Nonprofits)**
  - Find board members by contacting your **state association of nonprofits**, local United Way, or local community foundation, who may know about board-match programs in your area.
- **Board Recruitment: Are you Focusing on the Right Things? (BoardSource)**
  - Reflect on the areas of development and improvement at your organization and recruit board members with the right skillsets to fill the gaps.
- **What Makes a Good Board Member? (BoardSource)**
  - Find exceptional board members by searching for these specific traits during your recruitment process. This often means recruiting individuals outside of your family, community, and immediate network.
- **Building a Village: How to Re-Engage Your Board Members, Leaders and Volunteers (NORD Membership Webinar)**
  - Joan Garry speaks to how to avoid burnout by working smarter to engage the people within and outside of your network.
- **Grow and Diversify Your Board: When, Why and How (NORD Membership Webinar)**
  - Learn more about the ideal time for board recruitment and how to attract diverse board candidates.
- **Ensuring Your Board Reflects Your Diverse Community (NORD Membership Webinar)**
  - Implement recruitment processes that will enhance your organization's potential to better serve your community through sustainable best practices.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://rarediseases.org/for-patient-organizations/join-membership-network/membership-criteria/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://rarediseases.org/for-patient-organizations/join-membership-network/membership-criteria/>