

Nonprofit CEOs Say Board Members Need to Be Better Fundraisers

By Holly Hall

Nonprofit leaders gave their boards an average grade of B minus, according to [a study](#), and trustees were judged to be better at technical tasks like financial oversight than they were at setting strategy or reaching out to the community.

As in years past, fundraising was cited as a significant concern; 60 percent of chief executives said it was the area their [boards](#) most needed to improve.

[The study](#) was conducted by [BoardSource](#), a nonprofit group that works to improve governance.

In 1994, chief executives said that 60 percent of their board members gave money to the organization, a figure that grew to 85 percent in this year's survey. But giving by 100 percent of all board members—the gold standard espoused by BoardSource and other nonprofit experts—was reported by only 60 percent of the respondents in this year's survey.

Many nonprofit organizations set minimum donations expected by trustees and encourage them to contribute at least that amount and ask others to follow their example. But trustees remain challenged when it comes to asking family members, friends, and colleagues for donations; 43 percent of board members in this year's survey, about the same as in previous years, said they are uncomfortable asking for money.

The survey also found some signs of improvement in boards' racial and ethnic diversity, which was rated as more important for boards than including equal numbers of male and female trustees or making sure that organizations recruit trustees of different ages. Respondents reported that 20 percent of their board members, on average, are people of color, up from 16 percent in 2010, but a quarter of the respondents said their boards are all white and nearly 70 percent of respondents indicated they are dissatisfied with the racial and ethnic composition of their boards.

Gender representation among the executive ranks of nonprofit organizations in the survey has improved over the years, but women remain underrepresented as chief executives in large organizations. Women accounted for 65 percent of chief executives in groups with budgets under \$1-million 75 percent among nonprofits with budgets of \$1-million to \$9.9-million. But among groups with budgets of \$10-million or more, only 37 percent of chief executives were women.

Nonprofits appear to be recruiting more board members under 40 years old, with 17 percent of respondents in this year's survey reporting trustees in that age group, up from 14 percent in 2010.

Nonprofits also are recruiting smaller boards, the survey found. In 1994, the first year of the survey, respondents reported 19 trustees, on average. In this year's survey, that number dropped to 15.

The survey elicited responses from 850 chief executives and 246 board chairs who responded to questions about their nonprofit organizations. It has been conducted roughly every two years since 1994.

A free copy of preliminary findings from the "Leading with Intent" survey are available [online](#), and BoardSource said that it will publish a more complete report on its website in December.