

Are you ready to be a Board/Committee member?

Have you been asked to become a member of a board or management committee? If so, you are likely to need some information before you can make a decision. Below you will find some questions which you can ask of the organisation and yourself to help you decide. This list is intended as a general guide – there will almost certainly be other questions specific to your own circumstance that you will want to add.

Questions you might like to ask the Board or Committee

1. **How much time is required of a Board /committee member?** How often does the Board meet? Where will it meet? How long do meetings usually last? Sub-committee membership? Remember to consider the length of time needed to read through papers etc.
2. **Why do they want you on the Board? What skills or experience are they seeking?** Knowing the Board's expectations will help you decide whether you can ably fulfill the role they are asking of you. You might also like to ask why the vacancy exists.
3. **Who else is on the Board?** A Board needs a good blend of skills and experiences. If other Board members have similar backgrounds to you, you may want to consider what extra your involvement would bring.
4. **What are the Board's roles, mission and direction?** It is important you have a good understanding of what the Board does, why it does it and what it plans to do in the future. Only then can you decide whether you can support and work towards the mission.
5. **What will the responsibilities be? Is there a job description?** Many organisations have a detailed role remit of some kind to help incoming Board or committee members understand that role. If no such document exists, ask an existing member.
6. **Are recent meeting minutes available?** Asking to see previous minutes can be valuable, giving you an insight into the types of issue considered, and the type of decisions made.
7. **How financially viable is the organisation?** As you will become responsible for the organisation's finances it is valuable to ask to see the financial plans and budgets. You need to be fully informed about the existing financial position before you agree to take on these responsibilities. Remember you may be held liable in the future if things do not go well.
8. **Does the Board offer insurance for its members? How much?** In the unlikely event that your Board is found to be negligent, it is important that a certain level of insurance is in place.
9. **What information or support will be available?** Try to find out the resources which will be available to help you in your new role. There may be formal or informal mentoring programs, induction sessions, administrative support, office equipment, stationery, travel expenses, etc.

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MasterBank Factsheet : Are you ready to be a Board member?

Some Questions You Might Like to Ask Yourself

1. **Can you commit the time and energy the position needs?** Think realistically about the time requirement. Do you have this amount of time to offer?
2. **Why am you being approached/considering on this position ?** Once you have found out why the Board wants you or why you want to join you must decide if you are ready. Be honest with yourself, but do not underestimate your own potential contribution.
3. **Are you the right person at this time?** Groups need different types of skills and levels of commitment at different times. Does your personal life allow for your involvement?
4. **What do you want from this experience?** People join Boards for a many reasons. Think through your own motivations and expectations from your involvement and assess if you are likely to achieve these.
5. **Can you hold this position without conflicts of interest?** Make sure that none of your business or personal interests, or those of your family and friends could bring you into a conflict of interest situation.
6. **Can you work with the other Board members?** The way Boards work together will determine the quality of your experience – remember boards must work together to be successful.
7. **Does the Board clearly understand its aims, and are those achievable?** A Board that does not know its way is difficult one to govern. Getting it back on track will require hard work and may not be possible at all. Remember aims should be achievable but ambitious.
8. **Do I share those aims?** Once you've found out that the Board (a) has aims and (b) has achievable aims, you need to decide if they are aims that you believe in. If your heart's not in it, it is unlikely you will be able to enthusiastically contribute to the Board's achievements.
9. **Can you speak to current or past Board members about things?** Having the chance to ask someone directly what will be expected of you is invaluable and will help you decide if this is the right opportunity for you.

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