



# BOARD RECRUITMENT

## Are You Focused on the Right Things?

*Leading with Intent: 2017 National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices* compiled perspectives on board leadership from board chairs and chief executives representing more than 1,300 nonprofit organizations located throughout the country. Based on responses to questions related to boards' strengths, weaknesses, and priorities, the study illuminates an area of focus for boards intent on improving their performance: recruitment.

### Board Report Card

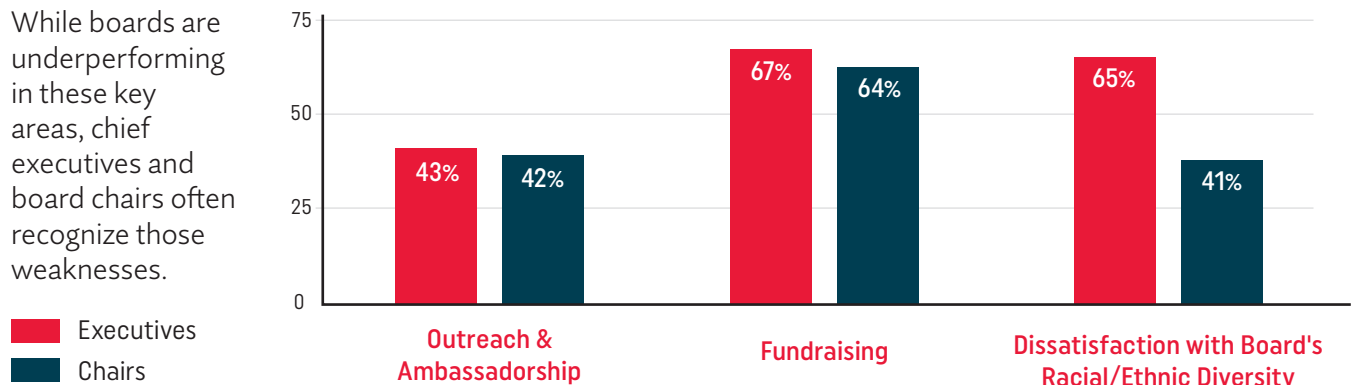
Average grades given to boards by chief executives and board chairs.

Strength	Executive	Chair
Understanding mission	A-	A-
Weaknesses		
Community-building and outreach	C+	B
Fundraising	C	C+
Increasing board diversity	C	C+

## AREAS FOR BOARD IMPROVEMENT

Chief executives and board chairs are generally aligned in their assessments on how the board is performing in these areas.

While boards are underperforming in these key areas, chief executives and board chairs often recognize those weaknesses.



Executives  
Chairs

*"What are the three most important areas the board should address to improve its own performance?" Fundraising and advocacy are chief executives' and board chairs' two most-selected responses.*

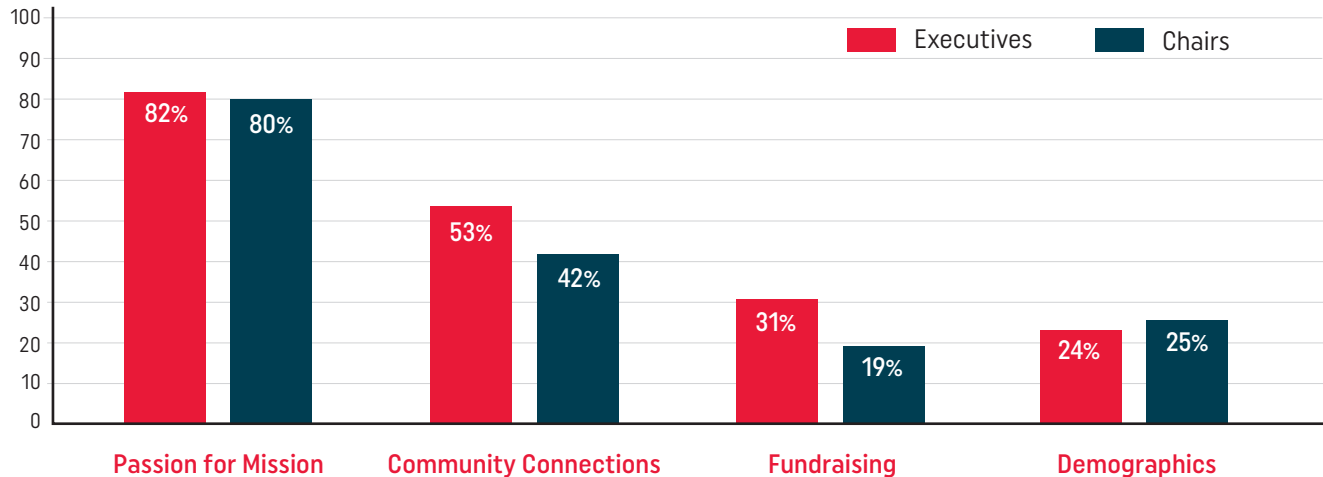
This illustrates the percentage of chief executives and board chairs who report being dissatisfied with their current board's racial/ethnic diversity.

CONTINUED >



## CURRENT AREAS OF PRIORITY IN BOARD RECRUITMENT

Despite recognizing that boards can improve their performance in specific areas, chief executives and board chairs are not always prioritizing these same areas in board recruitment.



## HOW TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES IN RECRUITMENT

Without improving the board candidate pipeline, it is difficult to make meaningful and sustained changes in under-performing areas.

A vast majority of boards prioritize a passion for the organization’s mission when recruiting new board members, which is reflected in both chief executives and board chairs ranking “understanding of mission” as the highest strength area for board members. However, *in the case of fundraising, advocacy/community-building, and diversity, a lack of attention during the recruitment process is contributing to self-identified areas of weakness.*

To improve board recruitment practices and focus on improvement areas, boards can focus on the following:

- Identify the areas you want to address early in the recruitment process using a [board recruitment matrix](#). Ask board members to identify possible candidates within your target areas. Be careful not to create token positions through the use of a matrix, however, and instead use this tool as a road map to indicate where your board is in terms of finding the right mix of diverse backgrounds and perspectives.
- Set expectations up front with board candidates, especially as it relates to fundraising. Ensure there are no surprises when a candidate joins the board.
- Assess candidates’ level of comfort and experience on prioritized topics. Identify resources you can provide them immediately after joining the board, such as a mentor to provide guidance.
- Move beyond regular channels for board recruitment. For example, to commit to a more diverse board, it may be wise to consider nontraditional recruitment strategies, such as a posted board search or use of a search firm. Board composition is a reflection of organizational values — to change practices in a lasting and impactful way, boards must have candid conversations about their diversity and inclusion efforts and develop a plan to prioritize those during recruitment.