



TOOL KIT #1

BOARD STRUCTURE

FAQ - RECRUITMENT

1. What are special considerations for Parent Center Board recruitment?

The IDEA requires that a PTI or CPRC must be a parent-led organization that has a Board of directors, the majority of which must consist of parents of children with disabilities from birth to age 26 with disabilities. The Board must also include individuals with disabilities and individuals working in the fields of special education, related services, and/or early intervention. The parent and professional members of the Board must be broadly representative of the population to be served, including low-income parents and parents of English learners.

2. How do Parent Center requirements affect the basic responsibilities of Board members?

In addition to the general responsibilities all nonprofit Boards share, Parent Center Boards are responsible to review progress toward goals quarterly, and assure that the organization:

- performs all the work outlined in the federal application,
- makes progress toward goals,
- maintains effective Board composition,
- reflects work done in the annual OSEP continuation report, which is signed by the Board Chair, and
- does drawdowns of federal funds that are appropriate and reflect activities.

3. What is the Board's relationship to the Parent Center CEO/Executive Director?

The Board hires and supervises the CEO and/or Executive Director ONLY, who may or may not be the Parent Center Project Director.

4. How can we balance the IDEA requirements for representation with the skills and attributes we need to move the organization into the future?

It's essential to recruit BOTH for IDEA-required representation and the skills and attributes needed to assure the success of the organization. A parent representative, accountant, or lawyer who does not have the interpersonal qualities of a good Board member can end up doing more harm than good. Do not succumb to the temptation to bring someone on Board ONLY because he/she allows you to check an IDEA box or fill an identified "skill" need.

Some parent members may come with knowledge of technology or law or great community connections. Others may have limited skills and knowledge, but bring essential perspectives. While parent members may not bring all needed skills to the Board, consider recruitment of additional members who bring significant strength in their area. Use the "49 percent" to build a balanced and complimentary Board.



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5. How can we cultivate and recruit the Board members we need?

Our cause is universal. Practically everyone knows someone who has a disability or a family member with a disability. Parent Center work strengthens social justice, access, and opportunity for young people with disabilities and their families. We have a cause that resonates across all economic, racial, cultural, and geographic boundaries. Recruitment happens when Board members intentionally act as ambassadors for the organization across the personal, professional, and community settings in which they engage.

Some things to help cultivation and recruitment:

- a brief and compelling elevator speech. Board members need to be able to communicate their pride and passion for the organization across personal and professional situations. Remember, the elevator speech IS NOT the mission statement.
- materials that shine. Whether it's a card, a brochure, an annual report, or something else, make sure that you have materials that are professional and polished.
- opportunities to bring colleagues and friends to see us in action. Parent Center work is out and about. Bring prospects to a great training, conference, or community event where you shine.
- build non-governing Boards or ad hoc committees to add skills and perspectives needed to meet your goals – and to cultivate and engage potential Board members. An advisory Board can also enable Board members to rotate off the Board and remain contributing and engaged in the mission.

6. Should I talk with prospects about fundraising during the recruitment and cultivation process? What about people who have financial challenges, like so many of the parents we serve?

Yes. All potential Board members should understand that they are expected to give a gift that is significant and meaningful for them. While people will have very different situations and different means, your organization should be at the top – or near the top – of their charitable giving. Do not apologize... this is essential.

Development Team:

David Blanchard, Region 3 PTAC, at P2P of GA; Glenda Hicks, Glenda Y. Hicks, CPA; Rachel Howard, Rachel Howard Consulting; Jan Serak, Region 4 PTAC, at WI FACETS

Other Contributors:

Debra Jennings, CPIR, at SPAN; Diana Autin & Carolyn Hayer, NE-PACT/Region 1 PTAC, at SPAN; Connie Hawkins, Rene Averitt-Sanzone, Laura Weber, Region 2 PTAC, at ECAC; Debi Tucker, Stephanie Moss, Region 3 PTAC, at P2P of GA; Courtney Salzer, Region 4 PTAC, at WI FACETS; Barb Buswell, Emily Rome, Jacey Tramutt, Region 5 PTAC, at PEAK; Nora Thompson, Region 6 PTAC, at Matrix



The contents of this product were developed under a grant to WI FACETS from the U.S. Dept. of Education, #H328R130010. The contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Dept. of Education and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.
Project Officer: David Emenheiser.
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