

Board Notebook

Your Board members are busy people with interests and responsibilities outside of the nonprofit organization. Anything that helps them perform their duties more easily, efficiently, and effectively is appreciated.

A Board notebook is essential in helping your Board members stay organized.

What is a Board Notebook?

A Board Notebook serves as a convenient quick-reference resource of important documents and information that helps keep Board members informed and organized throughout the year.

Most organizations create a physical binder divided into tabbed sections that include a range of materials from governance documents, established policies and procedures, organizational information, and other reference documents or resources. Many organizations use a dedicated Google Drive to store their Board documents.

These days some boards may prefer a completely digital version that is accessible online and maintained in-house via the nonprofit's website. There are also some great options out there for digital Board notebooks such as BoardNotebook.com and Boardable.com. These sites charge a fee based on number of users, store all your key organizational information, and allow users to manage meetings and materials from one location.

Regardless of the format your Board adopts, there are many things to consider when it comes to assembling your Board Notebook.



Who Manages the Board Notebook?

Typically, the Board Secretary is charged with creating and maintaining the Board Notebook. The Secretary will also provide a copy to new Board members, as well as ensure that all members have updated copies of documents as needed.



How to Create Your Board Notebook

Consider using a durable loose-leaf style ring binder for your Board Notebook. It should include a table of contents and labeled dividers. This will make it easier to keep up-to-date by adding or removing information as needed.

The binder should also have pockets so Board Members have a convenient place to store stationery, brochures, or other relevant loose items.

It's best to date all materials and additions. Also, adding a footer containing the filepath to where digital documents are stored prior to printing them out will make it faster to locate specific files when changes are required.

What Should Your Board Notebook Include?

As an organizational resource, it should reflect and serve the needs of its specific organization and its Board. It should be easy to update and include the information most useful for board members to have handy and readily available.

There are documents important to include in every Board Notebook. These include: copies of the Bylaws; the Mission, Vision, and Values Statements; an Organizational Chart; List of Board members, terms, and contact information; and the Annual Board Governance Calendar.

New board members are given a copy upon joining the board by the Board Secretary. Members give their copy back to the Board Secretary upon leaving the board.

Here is a sample list of items commonly included in a Board Notebook:

- Welcome letter from Chair/President
- Welcome letter from Executive Director
- Mission, Vision, and Values Statements
- List of Board members with contact information and terms
- Duties and responsibilities of Board members
- Board Committees
- Annual Board calendar
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Conflict of interest statement (two copies pre-signed by the board president, one copy to be signed by the new board member and returned)
- History of the organization
- Organizational chart
- Bylaws
- List of professional staff with titles and bios
- Articles of Incorporation
- Strategic Plan
- Current budget
- Financial resource development plan
- Recent audited financials or Form 990 tax return
- Copy of D&O Insurance
- Organization's policies
- Minutes from the past year
- Reference to documents stored online
- Blank expense/mileage reimbursement forms
- Membership application forms (for membership organization)
- Contribution response envelope
- Blank sheets where notes can be added during meetings

A Board Notebook will keep all your important documents organized, and ensure your Board members have what they need to serve the organization's mission. It serves 4 primary purposes:

- It is an orientation resource for new members
- It is evidence of the board's work for existing board members
- It acts as a policy manual
- It helps board members stay organized