

CA BOARD PLANNING & ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE
UPDATED SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS W/BOARD MEMBERS
RE: RESTRUCTURING BOARD AND COMMITTEES
APRIL 12, 2019

From Jan 28 through today, Board President Wil Harlock has contacted all current Board members (16 – WH) and Alternates (10) to arrange for a one-on-one meeting to discuss the foundational work of the BP&E Committee regarding restructuring the Board and Committees to better meet both the agency’s needs and those of the Board members. Some members have been contacted multiple times. Some have not responded, or for other reasons have not met. To date, Wil H has met formally with 13 Board members, 5 Alternates, and 4 former Board Members. Efforts continue to complete the one-on-one meetings with all so as to try to get as complete a picture of Board member’s views as possible. Meetings are scheduled with 2 more Board Member and 2 more Alternates in the next 10 days.

The discussions used the old Board Engagement form as a jumping off point with additional questions regarding Board size, having non-Board Members on Committees, setting up ad hoc Workgroups for particular issues, meeting day/time, improving effectiveness of Board, and how to make Board Member experience more engaging and satisfying. Former Board Members were asked the same questions. Several interviewees identified their own skills and experience that they brought to the table and felt were being used, or they thought could be used better. Recently Board members /Alternates were asked to complete the new Board Member Engagement form, which specifically asks about skills and experience – hopefully people filled this section out for the record.

Below are narrative comments excerpted from Wil’s conversations and notes on the interviews to date, without attribution. Questions asked / topics discussed included:

1. WHAT ASPECTS OF CA MOST SPEAK TO YOU, WHERE FEEL MOST ENGAGED, WHERE IS YOUR PASSION?

- Advocacy / Self-Development / Donor Development events / Applaud efforts for change – feels like a shift since the retreat / excited to have extra Committee members
- collaborative connections on overlapping interests – my work aligns with a major part of CA services – similar case plans, goals, data sharing / I understand the service population, what current situation is & gaps, perception in the community of needs, trends and jobs situation
- I am committed to the agency’s work – they are great at what they do in & for our community
- CA mission matters – CA makes a difference for people in need / serves as essential safety net, source of hope and training / CA also a convener of partners in our communities / advocacy for clients important
- I value CA’s work in the community, especially programs that equip people to exit poverty, financial education, and housing
- housing and homelessness is a focus
- anti-poverty mission – helping people get out of poverty / homelessness and importance of affordable housing
- financial stability – make sure CA can do its work
- recognize CA very important service provider in community – I support the mission

- my work dovetails with some of agency mission and programs
- mission aligns with my values – help those less fortunate get out of poverty
- Advocacy generally, maybe Finance
- poverty, housing, homelessness, education
- general support for CA's work in providing services, in light of the stress our social safety nets are under
- advocating for CA and its mission – seeing the bigger picture in our community
- housing and homelessness in our community
- seeing the big picture in our county and how CA fits in and fills needs
- seniors needs and affordable housing
- housing needs to be more available for lower cost / seniors issues

2. WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU KNEW MORE ABOUT OUR AGENCY, BOARD OR COMMUNITY?

- learn more about who CA partners with – I don't know all the services CA offers – like the monthly presentations / would like to hear more about Division Reports at Board meetings – informs members and committees and provides an opportunity to follow-up with staff
- I know what I need to know about services that overlap with my own work / open to know more about agency
- I am familiar with many or most aspects of CA's services – like the presentations at meetings by Board members
- feel well informed – appreciate monthly Board packet and use of email to keep Board updated
- appreciate the presentations by Board members at meetings – bite-sized learning that's relevant to Board's work / like to know who I can talk to when I have questions – who at the agency is my best resource for information
- always want to know more – so much to know / presentations to Board (by members or staff) on agency's programs and work is very valuable learning experience
- always learning – presentations to Board by members are good opportunity to broaden knowledge of CA
- I'm becoming more familiar with CA and programs – like presentations at Board meetings
- know lots about programs already, but would like to know more about asset procurement / how to create sustainable funding stream for carry out mission
- CA is big agency – I can always learn more
- learning more all the time – like presentations to the Board from members and staff

3. BOARD COMPOSITION (acknowledging CA requirement for tripartite representation)

a) # OF BOARD MEMBERS?

- 12 seems a good number – current situation too many / terms & term limits a good idea – allows for orderly turnover on the Board – new ideas and perspectives important
- 9 or 12 seems a good # - too many now
- 10-12 ideal, but tripartite means multiple of 3, so 12
- smaller
- first figure out what the Board needs so sure have enough members to cover / important question is what is a quorum and make sure can get it regularly
- not a concern
- 12

- 12 good / make sure have certain required skills and expertise on Board / 3yr terms with term limits, staggered terms so not all new at same time – brings objectivity, new ideas
- 12 best – Board members can be each other’s alternates if can’t make a meeting – touch base after to find out what missed, was decided, etc. / 3 yr terms with term limits (2-3 terms), rotating terms so not all new at once / ditch the “Mayor” requirement in current bylaws – just generically public/ elected officials
- smaller – 9 / 2 yr terms, staggered so not all new at same time / term limits – 2-3 terms / each Board member must serve on at least one Committee – could be the person to report back to Board on that Committee (or Chair if a non-Board member – have to decide reporting structure)
- 12 minimum - members need to match Board’s needs, not just a live body / get direct services recipients where possible for Client sector seats
- 12-15 / 3 yr terms, staggered so not all leave at same time / term limits / alumni as mentors
- 12 / be intentional in selection – consider what Board needs / 3yr term, staggered / term limits (2)
- 8 to 12
- 9-12 is best / have set terms with term limits (3yr / 2 terms)
- smaller would be much better, more engagement – 12 seems good / try to re-engage former Board members
- 12 seems a good number – more focus / use Board alumni better – keep in touch
- 12 is more manageable – more cohesive / United Way did this (reduced Board size & expanded Committees) a few years ago and it has worked very well
- 12 makes sense – more like a team / 3 yr terms is reasonable (staggered) with a limit of 2 terms / stay connected with former Board members
- 12 is a good number – smaller room makes a difference to engagement / should have terms (3 yrs is good) and term limits (probably 2)
- 9 – 12 / need set terms (3 yrs is usual) and term limits (2) to get new voices in the mix
- 12 seems good
- Board is too big – 12 should be enough to get the work done / need set terms and term limits

b) ROLE OF ALTERNATES?

- no good reason for – no ownership
- doesn’t seem to work - fragmented information transfer if 2 people doing one job – feel out of the loop
- in past has meant more people involved, but understand the large size of Board + Alternates might make it harder to get things understood and done
- drop – confusing
- can be helpful for Alternates to sit in on meetings to learn about CA, but could also invite anyone as a member of the public to come
- not a concern to me, but understand issues of sense there’s diffused responsibility
- okay either way – see the point of smaller group of committed people to do Board’s work
- drop – dilutes the Board / quality over quantity – better to have smaller committed group
- get rid of – not working
- can go either way, but understand frustration with sense of non-involvement and lack of continuity in representation
- absurd - place holder system – don’t feel valued / but builds in possible new Board members
- get rid of – not working

- doesn't work
- Board is too big – easy to stay quiet – not having Alternates puts more focus on Board members
- Board already too big and engagement diffuse – not needed – better to expand committees
- better to use as committee members
- hasn't really worked
- doesn't work – easy to sit back, not engage (goes for large Board as well)
- sounds good but has always been an issue re: engagement
- hasn't worked lately

c) ROLE OF COMMITTEES / WORKGROUPS – expand to include non-Board Members

- love idea of having non-Board members on committees – more community involvement / create a name for them? Fellows?
 - great idea to expand to include non-Board members – access to more resources and experience from people who don't want to sit through a monthly meeting about stuff they don't particularly care about (nuts & bolts of agency)
 - good idea to broaden participation on Committees – also a way to get folks who might be interested in being on the Board involved – create a pipeline of candidates for Board
 - broaden Committees /use Workgroups to include non-Board members = greater access to more expertise and commitment / use as pipeline for new Board members / makes Board more efficient
 - it can be a positive to be a Committee member instead of a full time Board member – maybe more committed because can use their experience and skills in focused way that matches their interest / might need to have a separate/different application for Committee volunteers
 - good to expand beyond Board members – potential Board members can pick a Committee to try on
 - good to expand Committee /Workgroup membership beyond the Board / try to attract employees, clients to join? / acknowledge former Board members – try to re-engage in Committee work / investigate asking employers to let their employees work on Committees – often have policies to do that
 - good to expand Committees and Workgroups to include non-Board members – use as a training track for potential Board members
 - great idea to include non-Board members – can attract more people with limited time and interest but still have expertise / attract past Board members to sit on Committees /Workgroups / create pipeline of potential Board members – training for Board and knowledge of CA
 - involve Board alumni – already know CA and support it (hopefully) – use them for Committees, events / need a Housing Committee, maybe some others, depending on agency's focus / Committees report to Board on how measuring up to agency goals and strategic plan
 - great to expand Committees / Workgroups to include non-Board members / put in place before implement new Board structure so those displace (especially alternates) have a place to go / bringing new people in gets other members excited / especially engage alumni Board members – already know CA – Ambassadors, maybe still donors / may need new Committees depending on agency focus – Vets committee, legislative liaison = elected officials or their staff if committed to poverty issues, Housing, Employment
 - support expanded Committees /Workgroups with non-members / need a Housing Committee
 - support including non-Board members on Committees – help train potential Board members and also allows people with limited time to serve doing something they are really interested in

- I'm task-oriented & analytical thinker, so would be happy to work on a Committee or Workgroup that's working on actionable items /targeted efforts
- great to include non-Board members on Committees as a way to spread CA's message / need a Housing Workgroup / like idea of getting elected officials together with CA Board and staff for roundtable discussion around CA goals
- like idea of larger committees with more representation from the community / Workgroups to focus on particular issues like Housing
- for many, service on Committees than is a better use of time
- great to include non-Board members – more varied experience & expertise
- like idea of non-Board members on committees – easier to commit to than to full Board spot
- better committees with additional people on – more involvement, engagement / need a Housing Workgroup / like idea of getting elected officials together with CA Board and staff for roundtable discussion to share info around CA goals – opportunities arise from such open discussions
- support having non-Board members on committees and having separate Workgroups for current important issues / also meeting regularly with elected officials to share information in CA sector
- good idea to have non-Board members on committees / need a Homelessness /Affordable Housing Workgroup, maybe another for Housing Advocacy, or Seniors Needs / like idea of gathering of elected officials once or twice a year to share information and discuss key issues that impact our county
- especially like adding some targeted Workgroups to take on current issues

4. MEETING DAY & TIME

- current time is not ideal – hard for me because of other commitments / can we use technology better to make it easier for people to attend?
- current time often means I can't attend at the last minute because something comes up at work – need that time to deal with job-related issues
- current time is fine for me – realize other people have different time constraints because of work / flexible
- currently not great for me – I often need that time of day to solve work issues that come up in the morning / would prefer after work (5-7) / more time – currently feels like rushing through to complete Agenda
- current time works ok for me / poll Board members, especially if interferes with work / if client sector representation is an issue, meeting time could be a factor – missing work
- current time works ok for me
- current time does not work for me / otherwise flexible – before or after work times
- prefer evenings after work – current time cuts into work / not 3rd Thursday
- prefer after work meeting time – too hard mid-day – rushed / also more likely to have members of public attend if not mid-day / staff needed but can time-shift / publish dates & times of Board meetings on website
- prefer evening, after work – 5 or 5:30pm / mid-day interrupts work and sometimes can't come
- at this time mid-day meeting is not good for me
- flexible
- no issue currently – flexible
- probably more practical for most people if at end of work day – less intrusive at work / have some food
- any time after 4pm would be better / possible to attend remotely? (by phone)
- after work is good – may have big effect on attendance and recruitment / any way to have a Board meeting in another Skagit city?

- flexible, but after work is more usual time and probably works better for most people
- absences are a real issue – after work makes sense and would have made a difference to me
- after work meeting time is better for most people and more common than mid-day, which is intrusive
- after work is best

5. HOW CAN BOARD FUNCTION MORE EFFECTIVELY?

- smaller Board / would like to have info on Board members – profiles? To get to know them better / more social opportunities to bond
- smaller group – would take less time to do the agency’s business / tighter bond
- Agency is complex / part of being a NonProfit means things move more slowly than in business
- get rid of Alternates /smaller Board / use expanded Committees including non-Board members as potential source for new Board members / set terms – staggered + term limits / promote more diversity on Board / retain contact with former Board members – for advice or help on Committees or donors
- like having regular meetings (Board, Committees) / Consent Agenda works – like time for discussion, hearing from ED about agency work / in past year a lot of emphasis on Capital Campaign but Board needs information
- use a website repository for Board members to access information (past and current), meeting materials, links to information related to agency’s mission, trainings / more transparency
- would like more background information in the Board packet materials – or link to somewhere I can get it
- get monthly reports earlier for Board meetings so have more time to read and get questions answered in advance if possible / have someone without accounting background on Finance Committee – will ask questions that may not otherwise come up until the Board meeting itself
- setting out expectations at the start so all on the same page about the job of Board members
- have a website portal for Board (and Committee) members to access information, archived and current; Board packets so less email; Question Box – ask questions of staff prior to Board meetings about reports in the Board packets

6. HOW CAN WE USE BOARD MEMBERS BETTER?

- all Board members don’t have to have same skills – know what each has to offer and use them appropriately / need to recruit people according to what the agency needs to help do the Board’s work
- there are people in the community like me who have a real commitment to CA’s work and want to help, but who don’t necessarily want to be a full Board member – want to be effective with my time, see that I am helping / Committee work or Workgroup would be better for me – I feel that would be better use of me
- I feel I’m being well used – happy to contribute time and experience
- steer people to their interests, whether as Board member or on a Committee /Workgroup / CA website should have a dedicated webpage for Board – portal to access archived info, monthly Board info packets, be able to ask a question & get a response
- learn what skills & experiences Board members have and use them – eg. experience with Bylaws or Finance will come in handy for the Board /Committees
- I feel I am used well – interested in Strategic Planning of organization & being up on the financial aspects / use Board alumni better – recognize them and try to re-involve them at Committee levels or at least as donors (if they’ve lapsed).
- use former Board members better – keep in contact, invite to events, including any Board events

- have Committees /Workgroups that interest Board members and non-members – eg. housing, legislative issues / non-adversarial environment
- get to know Board members better so know who they are connected to – and then use them for reaching out to community members not already engaged in CA mission
- put members on Committees that match their interests
- promote Advocacy as part of Board's job
- offer interesting Committee /Workgroup work; consult /re-engage Alumni Board Members
- use public sector /elected officials better – they could be a conduit to CA programs (Vets, housing, food) – champion that program / more outreach using their own networks – tell CA stories
- use both Board and Committee members better as outreach – connect to various communities locally – tell CA stories / seed the ground to help reach donors around whole county
- make clear the expectations regarding actions of Board members on behalf of CA – not just passive recipient of information (eg. attendance at meetings, retreat and events, 100% giving Board)
- meet with program staff to better understand the work / go with staff to meet with funders

7. HOW CAN WE MAKE EXPERIENCE OF SERVING AS A BOARD MEMBER MORE SATISFYING?

- more social opportunities to get to know fellow Board members – bond as a team / training on the work of Board members – acknowledge they've done it – sort of like giving gold stars for finishing trainings / more visibility in community
- to feel like a team, Board members need to know each other better / training / don't waste their time
- it's good to have the presentations that help Board members learn about the agency's work – especially the stories that go with that
- get to know other Board members better – make a more cohesive (smaller) team that's committed
- broaden representation on Board – more diversity
- work more on Advocacy and policy / current onboarding is good, but offer more options for where Board members can spend their efforts
- depending on meeting times (including Committees), have some light food, coffee, tea available – especially if after work
- better orientation when come onto Board – I know this is evolving
- better orientation – I hear this is getting better, but a lot of people don't know what getting into – give expectations up front
- better orientation for new Board members – spell out expectations / more services, program info, nuts & bolts of who CA serves in packet – should feel like you learned something when complete / bring real issues to Board for discussion and decision on the record so feels less like a rubber stamp of Exec /Admin
- more education – on agency work and trainings
- orientation is like drinking from a fire hose if not familiar already with CA – more printed info to take home and look at, absorb
- make expectations clear up front
- Good onboarding when first come onto Board – make expectations clear at outset
- more practical meeting time (after work) / tell good news story at mtg
- build Board camaraderie / continue Board member presentations at meetings / keep learning about CA
- Board members need clear expectations at time they come on, and good onboarding to get them up to speed

8. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

- very important – Board members need to know their responsibilities & ways to be a better Board member
- very important perk – what you learn is transferrable to other areas like work or personal life – absolutely
- very important, especially if haven't served on a Board before
- very important
- very important / transferrable skills is a positive for Board members – extend to Committee members too
- great perk – important to help be better Board member
- yes it's important – hope Board members take advantage
- yes – Board members should know their responsibilities
- absolutely essential – know your work
- yes all Board members should take advantage of opportunities
- very important
- very important perk
- yes I appreciate opportunities
- Board training & professional development is great – real benefit
- Professional development is good
- great to have the opportunity – lead to more engagement
- expect Board members to take advantage of PD opportunities
- important for Board members to understand their responsibilities – encourage or even make required
- Board training is necessary so understand their job
- very important – all Board members should do some basic amount of training

9. HOW HANDLE TRANSITION TO A NEW BOARD /COMMITTEE STRUCTURE?

- have everyone who wants to remain on Board complete the Board application form – have Exec review to choose, along with any potential new Board members / offer people who don't want to be full Board members opportunity to be on Committees they feel best matches their interests – acknowledge the work of Committee members as very valuable / have a party after new Board seated
- you may be surprised at # of members who are now there who would rather just work on the part of the agency's work that interests them the most – certainly true for me but can't speak for all
- see who really wants to stay vs be on newly structured Committees
- figure out what Board needs (skills, connections, experience) and solicit / see what current Board members want – full Board or Committee /Workgroup – if they match CA needs / treat like any potential new Board member?
- ask current members what they want to do / if not attending, less likely an issue if don't remain
- application process for all who want to be on Board / maybe applications for Committees too?
- ask current members if wish to stay on Board or transition to a committee – either way submit application

10. OTHER?

- would like to see a way to access Board info in one place – website? / also training links there instead of many emails – it's hard to keep track
- access to information – an easier way than multiple emails
- appreciate staff presence and engagement at Board & committee meetings

- keep stressing importance of being 100% giving Board – grantors demand and we don't want to lose out – it's not the size of the gift that matters – just a commitment to giving, whatever you can
- revisit Finance policy / do spot audits (best practices)
- need succession plan for Board officers and generally for Board and ED
- ask what does CA staff need from leadership?
- question presence of multiple staff for duration of Board meetings – is this best use of staff time?
- more outreach in the community (separate from Capital Campaign)
- use website more effectively for program exposure, building CA brand / explore more employee giving /matching and research offering 'team building' events to employers using employees as volunteers for CA programs
- engage more with Tribes – get someone on Board
- wonder if having so many staff present for entire Board meeting is good use of their time – maybe be there if presenting something, timed to Agenda, and then go back to work?
- broaden recruitment efforts for Board members – there are people in the community who aren't yet thinking of being on a Board (not burned out by service) – find them
- wonder if need so many staff present for entire Board meeting? Adds up to a lot of time – must be a better way to get a question answered?
- may be important for staff to attend meetings if presenting info that's not already in the Board packet, but don't need to stay for whole meeting.

11. DO YOU WISH TO REMAIN ON THE BOARD / TRANSITION TO A COMMITTEE?

- yes – I enjoy my Board involvement and have prioritized my participation
- really I would prefer to be on Committee
- yes – I am interested in the agency's work and want it to be successful
- yes – CA is important to our community
- yes – committed to being on Board
- yes – I enjoy the involvement, but work often limits my time and possible involvement, so Committee also possible
- yes – I'm committed – good experience
- yes
- possibly willing, but not likely – time issue
- yes, but also want Committee work
- rather be on committee