

# JCI LOCAL ACTION GUIDE

## Local Board of Directors

It would be difficult for a Local Organization to meet every time a decision needs to be made. A Board of Directors is a smaller body elected by the members and given the authority to decide on their behalf. The Board of Directors also carries out the daily business of the organization.

The scope of the decisions of the Board must be restricted to those that are not at the level of the General Assembly.

The authority, decision making and responsibilities must always remain in the hands of the membership in the form of a General Assembly. A Board of Directors does not rule the local organization. Instead, it carries out the decisions and mandates of the membership.

A Board member is given the permission to make some decisions on behalf of the membership and can be held legally responsible for abuse of power of misrepresentation and misuse of the position.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

A successful Local Organizations needs a high-performing team on the Board of Directors with the following qualities:

- Everyone knows the goals of the organization and his or her role.
- Everyone is committed to providing honest feedback.
- Each person on the team respects and values diversity of thought.
- The team develops trust and the ability to disagree without being disagreeable, and is willing to pitch in and help
- The team gets results.
- The team celebrates successes and achievements as a whole

A Local Board of Directors has the following basic responsibilities:

### 1. Establishes policies and guides, and supervises operations.

Members of the Board of Directors must constantly evaluate if the policies are still valid or effective. They lead and guide members and supervise to ensure effectiveness. The Board establishes policies within the local constitution to guide the Local Organization to run effectively, efficiently, legally and ethically.

The Board's role is to establish the framework within which the members can run activities. The Board identifies the scope of the activity, defines the critical issues to be addressed, establishes policy positions, determine priorities, sets targets and then lets the directors and project managers determine how to get the job done.

### 2. Provides leadership.

Each Board member will lead some members of the Local Organization, applying the leadership knowledge they already have and gaining more. But the most important part is the leadership the Board will show as a team as they lead by example.

Officers and directors often believe they know their roles as leaders, but they sometimes miss the point: that they are players on a leadership team. This is true even for the President, who needs to view his or her role as first among equals.

The Board and officers lead after developing a shared vision, sense of Mission and organizational plan. Personal agendas must be set aside. Volunteer leaders need to bring their opinions and passions to the Board table when issues are discussed, but once the Board has made a decision, individual directors and officers are obligated to support the Board's decision outside the Board room.

### 3. Provides direction through planning.

The Board is responsible for ensuring the Local Organization has a yearly plan of action and a clear, concise strategic or long-range plan that spans three to five years. The Board is not solely responsible for developing the plan but must be sufficiently involved to feel a sense of participation in its development.

Ownership of the plan is the key to success. All decisions of the Board and all actions of committees need to be linked to the implementation of the plan.

By equally distributing the activities throughout the year, the Board ensures that members will always have challenges and activities without being overloaded.

#### 4. Ensures the financial integrity of the organization.

Transparency, honesty, efficiency and professionalism are the key words to keep the Local Organization finances sound and solid. Monthly reports on the finances must be circulated to the members to keep them informed on the financial situation of the Local Organization.

Perhaps the best-understood role of a Board is its responsibility for the fiscal health of the organization. To fulfill this responsibility, the Board needs an organizational financial plan that is tied to a strategic plan. The financial plan does not drive the strategic plan – these plans work vice versa.

The strategic plan provides the direction and sets priorities, and the financial plan simply states how resources are to be allocated to achieve the strategic plan.

To be able to link the financial plan to the strategic plan, the Local Organization must have a budgeting system that identifies income and expenses at a programmatic level. Then, on an annual basis, financial and programmatic performance can be linked, and adjustments to the strategic and financial plans can be made.

Finally, the Board's focus must be as much on the long-term financial plan as on the annual budget, ensuring the financial integrity of the Local Organization by looking long term, accumulating reserves at certain times and investing them at others.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Each Board member:

#### 1. Participates responsibly.

Too many people are depending on the Local Organization's success for any single Board member not to carry his or her fair share of the leadership responsibility.

Board members cannot execute their

responsibilities without dedicating a substantial amount of time, including preparing for Board meetings, attending these meetings, doing follow-up work after Board meetings, attending Local Organization meetings, representing the organization within and outside the field, and doing the necessary reading and preparation between Board meetings.

Successful Board meetings are characterized by strong participation by all Board members – not domination by a few.

#### 2. Evaluates at all levels.

An effective evaluation program examines performance in these areas.

**Policy performance:** Are the policies of the Local Organization relevant and current? Are mechanisms in place to ensure routine review of all policies?

**Financial performance:** Is the budget tied to the strategic plan? Is the budget monitored routinely by the Board and general membership? How successful is the Local Organization at achieving the budget each year?

**Organizational performance:** How successful has the Local Organization been in implementing the objectives in the strategic plan?

Every year the Board of Directors must evaluate if the current structure is still applicable and efficient. Changes in the number of members, activities, finances, etc, may result in the need to change the current structure. This will affect the finances and performance.

The Board of Directors **does not** change the structure but recommends changes to the General Membership for consideration or approval. The Board of Directors must constantly review the structure and its efficiency.

## SUMMARY

Participation on the Board of your Local Organization is an honor and duty not to be taken lightly. The Board's responsibility is to achieve organizational goals in an effective and efficient manner through planning, organizing, leading and managing resources.