

10 Qualifications of the Ideal Board Member

Every member of a board of directors is a spokesman for the Association, and as such has the ability to enhance or denigrate its reputation. Because of the importance of the selection process for a board of directors, the nominating committee should use a checklist of qualifications, such as the following:

1. **The candidate must be interested in more than the honor inherent in the position.** Selection for board participation represents a serious commitment; it is not merely a reward.
2. **The candidate must be able to devote adequate time to the job.** Selection to the board requires a commitment of time and effort. AAIDD has a written board policy manual that calls for the removal of board members who fail to attend and participate in board meetings.
3. **The candidate must have sufficient energy to devote to the position.** Selection to the board should not be seen as a tribute to someone in declining health or another feather in the cap of someone who is professionally overextended.
4. **The candidate must be able to subordinate personal, business, and regional biases to the good of the Association.** Board members must be able put the good of the Association above any personal feelings. The AAIDD board is an elected body of the entire Association; it is not a body of representatives of diverse constituent groups.
5. **The candidate should communicate effectively with other board members, the Association as a whole, and the public.** "Great minds" who cannot communicate well with others are unlikely to make significant contributions as board members.
6. **The candidate should be able to work effectively with the chief executive.** Board membership is a unique teamwork with the chief executive, and the ability to get along well with others is essential.
7. **The candidate should be able to tolerate the limelight as well as the inevitable criticism of leadership.** Board members should be reasonably self-effacing in the spotlight and tolerant of member criticism resulting from changes within the Association or new courses of action.
8. **The candidate's personal conduct must reflect favorably upon the board and Association.** No Association has the right to meddle in personal affairs, but individuals who are notorious for unorthodox behavior may prove to be more irritating or embarrassing than amusing or helpful.
9. **The candidate should be able to step down gracefully after his or her term of office.** Every board member's term is limited; board member should expect to continue to contribute to the Association in ways other than board service after their term ends.
10. **The candidate should be a proven performer.** Candidates should have high integrity, knowledgeable about the field, experienced, capable, and be active in the Association.