

Council Presidents and Executive Directors: Process for a Successful Partnership

1. Preparation (Orientation for New Council Presidents and/or Executive Directors)

This process is designed to with the hope that it will lead to good communication between a Council President and the Council Executive Director. It is designed to ensure that a close working partnership is developed based on the exchange of views within the Vincentian Spirit of Spirituality, Friendship and Service.

It is important that all Council Presidents and Executive Directors go through a structured orientation process that clarifies the role and responsibilities of the Council Board, the President, and the Executive Director. A clear understanding of the Vincentian principle of servant leadership must be understood. It is also important that Council Presidents and Executive Directors familiarize themselves with the Strategic Plan of their Council and if the Council has no such plan to collaborate on involving the Board to develop one. They must then be prepared to review together the progress made toward accomplishing the goal of the Strategic Plan. Ideally, a Strategic Plan and accompanying annual plan defines the goals and objectives of the Executive Director and his/her team.

The first step therefore is to ensure that the following check list is completed by Presidents and Executive Directors and is discussed as they develop their partnership together.

Checklist for Council President/Executive Director - Orientation

Governance

1. Review The Rule, Manual, Bylaws and Vincentian Leadership book entitled *Governance: Council and Board*
2. Review Board of Director membership, committee charters and past year's board meeting minutes; determine how Board meetings will be conducted
3. Review Board policies, Financial policies and procedures, and Human Resources policies and procedures and Board orientation practice
4. Review Conflict of Interest, Whistleblower and Document Retention policies
5. Review meetings scheduled for the year, including at a National, Regional and Local level

Operations

1. Review job description for Executive Director
2. Provide a board committee for review of Executive Director's annual performance and compensation
3. Review organization chart, roles and responsibilities and current staffing
4. Provide list of emergency contacts
5. Determine preferred communication method between President and Executive Director
6. Review budget, year to date financials, last year's audit, National Report and 990

7. Review insurance coverage; understand disaster plan
8. Review any outstanding legal issues
9. Review strategic plan, goals and objectives for current year
10. Review property owned or occupied by the Society
11. Review program plans, including Special Works and Conferences
12. Review development plan and role of the Board in Cultivation, Stewardship and Solicitation
13. Review marketing and public relations material, including website, collateral, social media policies
14. Review collaborations, joint ventures and/or partnerships

2. The Partnership (On-Going)

Particularly important to the partnership and the Society are the elements of Friendship and Service as well as the observance of these in the relationship between Council President and Executive Director.

Part 3 Statute 1: The Essential Elements

The Essential Elements of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are Spirituality, Friendship, and Service.

The first step should be a meeting between the President and the Executive Director to discuss the following checklist. If any of these are not in place then a candid, respectful, and friendly discussion should be held to resolve any issues. This should be preceded by a joint prayer that requests guidance from the Holy Spirit, St Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

Because the relationship process goes beyond the Council President and Executive Director, it should involve the entire Board of Directors and the following checklist could well refer to the Board itself and not just to the Council President. If help is needed at any time with implementation, call your Regional Vice President or the National CEO.

Checklist for Council President/Executive Director - Partnership

1. Is there a shared partnership between the Council President and Executive Director according to each other's needs? And is information freely shared?
2. Is there a free flow of ideas between the Council President and Executive Director?
 - Is there a willingness to brainstorm?
 - Do they engage in problem solving discussions?
 - Do they think things through together?
3. Do the Council President and Executive Director seek opportunities to share knowledge about the organization?
 - Do they seek opportunities to learn together?
 - Do they learn from each other?
 - Are they willing to help each other learn?
 - Is there mutual support and reassurances of each for the other?
 - Do they open up to each other?
 - Do they share appreciation for each other?
 - Do they support each other?
 - Do they show concern for each other?
4. Do they engage in give and take?

3. Governance and Related Issues (Recommended Review on an Annual Basis)

The following checklist can provide a means for evaluating the effectiveness of the Council, its compliance with the Rule and with good practice and policy for non-profit organizations. Although a review should be held between the Council President and the Executive Director, it should also at an appropriate time include the entire Board.

Checklist for Council President/Executive Director - Governance and Related Issues

Legal

1. Has a 501(c)(3) status been obtained and preserved?
2. Has the annual 990, 990 EZ or 990 N been filed?
3. Have State requirements been met and state filings completed as required?
4. Are federal and state withholding taxes current?
5. Are payroll report filings current – quarterly if needed?
6. Are qualified health, welfare and/or retirement benefit plans in compliance with federal law – i.e. COBRA, IRS registration, annual 5500 CIR filings with USDOL?
7. Is a quorum defined and present for Board meetings?
8. Are Board minutes taken and kept in compliance with the document retention policy?
9. Is a quorum, consistent with the bylaws, present when conducting Council meetings?
10. Are Board members informed of pending legislation or litigation?
11. Are Sales Tax filings made on time and are the required payments transmitted?
12. Are there written contracts or agreements for any interagency activity?
13. Are all insurance policies reviewed with your insurance agent on an annual basis?

Governance

1. Are the bylaws compliant with the Rule and National Bylaws?
2. Are the bylaws compliant with IRS and State requirements?
3. Is the Board's role defined and respected?
4. Is Board focused on policy and planning and active participation in the planning process?
5. Does the Board help recruit, select, and employ the Executive Director?
6. Is Board appropriately diverse?
7. Are the Board's responsibilities defined?
8. Is there an operations manual for the Board?
9. Is there appropriate orientation and mentoring for new Board members?
10. Does the Board have an adequate conflict of interest policy – Is it signed by all?
11. Does Board have at least the minimum number of members required by the bylaws?
12. Is there a process for handling emergencies such as an Executive Committee?
13. Have all Board members reviewed and are they knowledgeable about the bylaws?
14. Do Board members serve without pay?
15. Is there an annual calendar of meetings?
16. Is there always a written agenda for Board meetings?
17. Do members receive adequate advance information of matters to be discussed at Board meetings?
18. Are family members of employees prohibited from being President or Treasurer?

Human Resources

1. Is there a written handbook of policies for employees? Has it been reviewed by legal counsel?
2. Is the handbook updated and in compliance with Federal ADA, Equal Employment Opportunities law, OSHA, Family Leave Act, other Federal and State laws?
3. Are there employee job descriptions for employees?
4. Are nondiscrimination practices followed?
5. Does the full Board annually review and evaluate the Executive Director in relation to his/her job description and expectations?
6. Are there annual employee performance appraisals?
7. Is there an employee compensation plan?
8. Have you documented work performance?

Volunteers

1. Is there a defined purpose for the roles of volunteers?
2. Is there a job description for volunteers?
3. Is there an anti-discrimination policy?
4. Are volunteers trained appropriately for their duties?
5. Are volunteers' abilities, limitations, and availability respected?
6. Are periodic performance appraisals completed and communicated to volunteers?

Planning

1. Do activities match the Society's mission and purpose?
2. Is community input sought?
3. Does the organization live up to the Society's mission?
4. Is there a written strategic plan?
5. Does the staff have the skills to carry out programs?
6. Is there an annual evaluation of activities?
7. Are standard accounting practices followed?
8. Do staff and the Board have adequate information to make sound and informed decisions?
9. Is there an annual comprehensive budget?
10. Is budget vs. actual income and expense monitored and reported to the Board on a regular basis?
11. Is cash flow monitored and reported to the Board on a regular basis?
12. Are cash accounts reconciled monthly?
13. Is an annual audit completed and shared with the Board, the Executive Director, the staff, volunteers, contributors and others?
14. Is there periodic training of Board and staff on accounting topics?

Fund Raising

1. Is it done in an ethical manner?
2. Is donor intent honored?
3. Is there a Board Committee to develop, evaluate, and review fund raising?
4. Are the Executive Director, Council President and Board Members aware of their fund raising responsibilities?

5. Is the organization accountable to donors?
6. Are outside fundraisers registered with the state as required?
7. Do outside fundraisers meet the standards of any state charities review council of similar groups?
8. Is there a contract outlining the responsibilities and duties of outside fund raisers?
9. Does the contract define how funds will be handled, and providing for a fair and reasonable fee?

4. Resources for Endangered Partnerships (As Needed)

If these measures do not resolve problems with the partnership then the matter should be brought to the appropriate board committee. Resources to Council Presidents and Executive Directors are the Regional Vice President or the National CEO who should discuss the problem with the parties using the checklists and who should also review the governance procedures of the Council. If further steps are needed to resolve existing problems, then either an Early Intervention Team should be brought in or mediation by a professional mediator should be initiated.