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A PLAYBOOK FOR CHAIRS · ASSOCIATE BOARDS

Lead Your Associate Board

A playbook for first-time chairs and co-chairs

From “I inherited this” to a steady year and a clean handoff.



Before you begin

Who this is for. You just became chair or co-chair of an associate board: new, young or in need of a lift. You are good at your job but have never led a volunteer board. You are in good company: in one study, associate board leaders often said they took the role because "there was no one else to do it." [1] (A small interview study of 11 people.)

Associate board practice

Who wrote this. CariClub, which connects nonprofits with professionals who want to serve on boards. More about us on page 37.

What we mean by an associate board. A selected volunteer group with defined terms and work obligations inside a host nonprofit. It is non-fiduciary: it has no legal duty to oversee the nonprofit's money and decisions. Junior board, young professionals board, auxiliary board: we call it an associate board.

A note on advice. This is general information, not legal, tax or insurance advice. The legal and tax checks in this playbook are written for US charities that can receive tax-deductible gifts, usually 501(c)(3) public charities. Private foundations, other kinds of nonprofits and organizations outside the US need different checks, and state and local rules also apply. Your nonprofit's policies and your liaison's guidance come first.

A candid note on evidence. Associate boards are rarely studied. Most leadership research is about governing boards or volunteers in general. Every claim carries a label:

- **Associate board practice:** what real associate boards publish or report.
- **Board guidance:** advice, policies and studies about governing or advisory boards, applied here.
- **Volunteer research:** studies of volunteers in general.
- **Law or regulator:** a statute, an official agency page, or a lawyer's general explanation of the law.
- **Our recommendation:** our judgment where the evidence is thin.

Associate board practice | Board guidance | Volunteer research | Law or regulator | Our recommendation

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Your control panel

You will finish with a working system. Most chapters end with a tool from the separate toolkit.

Part	Tool	Toolkit page	Done
Take the handoff	B-T1 Week-one triage	3	☐
	B-T2 Chair and liaison working agreement	4	☐
	B-T3 Co-chair agreement	5	☐
	B-T4 Escalation card and red lines	6	☐
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	B-T6 One-on-one guide and pulse check	9	☐
Build the rhythm	B-T7 Annual road map	11	☐
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	B-T10 Minutes	15	☐
	B-T11 Committee card	16	☐
Lead people and money	B-T12 Give-or-get tracker	17	☐
	B-T13 Conversation scripts	20	☐
Deliver and hand over	B-T14 Event approval sheet	22	☐
	B-T15 Dashboard	25	☐
	B-T16 Midyear and year-end report	26	☐
	B-T17 Transition memo	27	☐

Your job on one page

Six things you do

Partner

With your staff liaison.

Plan

The year with staff: two or three goals, one calendar.

Run

Meetings that are short, prepared and worth attending.

Engage

Every member with a real job.

Grow

The next class and the next leaders.

Report

Results to the nonprofit.

Three things you don't do

- **Speak for the nonprofit**
- **Sign contracts or commit its money**
- **Approach a company or donor without clearing the name with staff**

Five red lines

Our recommendation

1. Never sign or verbally commit the nonprofit.
2. Never promise a donor or sponsor anything in return, such as tickets, recognition, exclusivity or a guest list; staff decide that. Never contact a prospect staff have reserved without clearance.
3. Never export donor or client data, or keep it in personal systems, without written approval.
4. Escalate at once: safety, harassment, safeguarding, legal threats, press, and any money that doesn't add up.
5. Never collect money yourself. Tickets, gifts and sponsorships go only to the nonprofit's accounts or to online pages staff approve, never to a personal bank or payment-app account.

Leave with: B-T4 Escalation card and red lines (toolkit page 6)

CHAPTER 1

Your authority

Your authority is real, but borrowed. Here is where it starts and stops.

Your authority is real, but borrowed. An associate board "has no formal governance responsibilities." A board of directors "must, by law, oversee certain financial and operational processes for the organization, but there are no legal requirements that determine what an AB must do." [2] You lead through clarity and relationships.

Associate board practice

That is about governance. Fundraising, raffles, alcohol, data and contracts all carry legal rules, which is why staff approve them (chapter 10). A request from a governing board member also goes to your liaison before you act; if it conflicts with what staff have agreed, the executive director decides.

Our recommendation

What chairs do in real role descriptions

Associate board practice

- Lead meetings and build agendas with staff: "Assists... in developing meeting agendas and leading meetings." [3]
- Set direction: "Provides leadership and direction for the Associate Board members." [3]
- Link members, staff and the governing board: "Be liaisons between the... board, staff & the YPC." [4]
- Recruit members and leaders, and help onboard new ones [3][4]; one program also asks its chair to recommend and evaluate members. [35]
- Plan who leads next.

  Our recommendation

A GOOD PLACE TO START

In your first meeting with your liaison, ask: "What can I decide on my own, and what needs staff?" Write the answer into your working agreement (B-T2).

Your most important partner

Your staff liaison is your partner, not your assistant. In one study, “unclear expectations for an associate board paired with lack of constructive conversations about its role often leads to a strained relationship between the leadership of the associate board and the staff liaison.” [1] The same study found “a standing and consistent relationship” with staff kept momentum going. [1]

Associate board practice

Respect their time. One guide advises nonprofits to give the role “at least 1-2 hours per week” to start. [2] In one study, staff said managing an associate board is often outside their normal job. [1]

Associate board practice

Agree on how you work, in writing: how often you meet; what you decide, what you decide together, what staff decide; how fast you each reply; who talks to the executive director, and when. Use the split below as a starting point. On new members and ending a membership, you and your liaison recommend and the executive director decides, unless your charter says otherwise.

Our recommendation

For governing boards, BoardSource notes that when the chair and chief executive relationship “goes awry, it’s often due to confusion over individual responsibilities.” [6]

Board guidance

Yours

- Committee assignments

Shared

- Meeting agendas
- Event concept

Staff’s

- Venue contract
- Sponsor ask (after clearance)
- Posts that speak for the nonprofit
- New member offers
- Give-or-get exceptions
- Ending a membership
- Budget
- Use of logo
- Press

Leave with: B-T2 Chair and liaison working agreement (toolkit page 4)

Make your liaison's hours count

Staff time is a common worry when a nonprofit starts an associate board; in one study, it was "one of the recurring themes." [1] The same study describes the liaison's role as guiding members, giving the board access to what it needs from the nonprofit, and "setting clear boundaries and pointing the board in the right direction in their efforts." [1] Running the board's day-to-day work is the board's job, shared across the whole team, not something you and your co-chair carry alone.

Associate board practice | Our recommendation

Six habits that help

Our recommendation

- **Give every task an owner and a date.** Committee chairs follow up with their own members, so your liaison never has to chase anyone.
- **Bring a draft, not a blank page.** Come with a plan, the options you considered and your recommendation, so staff can approve or adjust it in one pass.
- **Keep one list of what you need from staff,** and work through it at your regular check-in instead of sending many small requests.
- **Handle the routine yourselves:** scheduling, reminders, agendas, minutes, and the member questions you can answer.
- **Ask early.** Anything in staff's column goes to staff before you act, with enough time for them to decide.
- **Close the loop.** After each check-in, send a short note: what you agreed, who does what, by when.

Doing the legwork is not the same as deciding alone. You prepare and run the work; staff still approve what is theirs to approve, and you talk with your liaison before anything changes direction. As the board finds its rhythm, it should need less staff time. One guide tells staff that once the board is running, "you'll likely be able to scale back the amount of time you spend on it." [2]

Associate board practice

Week-one triage

Before you plan anything, find out what is already in motion.

Our recommendation

1. **Who is my liaison, and when do we meet this week?**
2. **Is anything already booked, signed or promised?**
   Events, venues, sponsors, dates.
3. **Is anything urgent or at risk?**
   Safety, money, press, an unhappy member. Agree on who handles it, and by when. Report harassment, abuse or a safety concern at once (B-T4).
4. **Where are the roster, calendar and documents, and who owns them?**
5. **When did the board last meet, and what did it decide?**

If something is promised that you can't keep, tell your liaison this week. It is easier to change a plan in week one than in month three.

If your liaison changes, go through these five questions again with the new or acting liaison. Then sign a new working agreement together (B-T2).

Our recommendation

MISTAKE TO AVOID

Setting goals before you know what is already promised. Finish the triage first.

Leave with: B-T1 Week-one triage (toolkit page 3)

CHAPTER 2

Your first 90 days

Listen first, meet everyone, then agree on the plan.

Listen before you change anything. A chair transition guide from the Institute of Directors in New Zealand says "change is not the measure of a successful transition." [7]

Board guidance

Days 1 to 30: learn. Meet the outgoing chair if there is one [7], your liaison, and the executive director or development lead. Ask what the nonprofit most needs this year, and sign your written working agreement with your liaison (B-T2).

Board guidance | Our recommendation

Days 31 to 60: meet every member. A governing board guide recommends individual meetings "within the first 60 days" to "understand their motivations, strengths, and expectations." [8] People volunteer for different reasons; when the experience fits their reasons, they are more satisfied and more likely to say they will keep volunteering. [9]

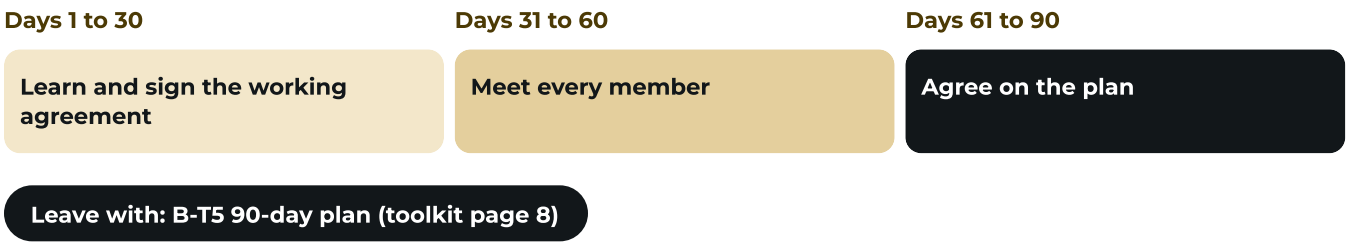
Board guidance | Volunteer research

Days 61 to 90: agree on the plan. Two or three goals and the calendar.

Our recommendation

Brand-new board? Use your charter and launch file from Start an Associate Board in place of the outgoing chair's notes.

Our recommendation



Leave with: B-T5 90-day plan (toolkit page 8)

The diagnostic

Gather in month one

Our recommendation

Roster

Roles, committees, term dates, how each person joined.

Engagement

Attendance over the past year; who has taken part.

Money

Last year's total, net of costs, held by the nonprofit (ask your liaison).

Give or get

Each member's progress and the written policy.

Documents

Charter, expectations, calendar, minutes, handover notes.

Five questions for every one-on-one

1. What made you say yes to this board?
2. What do you want from it this year?
3. What has worked? What hasn't?
4. Where would you like to help?
5. What would make you more likely to stay involved?

A GOOD PLACE TO START

Ask your liaison for the roster and last year's results before your first one-on-one, so you listen with context.

Leave with: B-T6 One-on-one guide and pulse check (toolkit page 9)

CHAPTER 3

Working agreements and escalation

Write down how you work together, and what to do when things go sideways.

If you are co-chairs. Research on governing boards lists the upside: sharing the role "can prevent burnout," and one co-chair "can ensure stability while the other is transitioning." And the risks: confusion "over who is accountable," slower decisions and diluted authority. [10]

Board guidance

Make it work

Our recommendation

- Split by domain: one of you takes inside work, the other outside work (below).
- One named contact per topic.
- A written tie-break (for example, your liaison decides after a three-way call).
- Staggered terms; if one of you is away or leaves early, the other covers both domains.

Inside work	Outside work
• Meetings	• Staff and executive director
• Members	• Governing board
• Committees	• Signature event
• Give-or-get tracking	• Finding sponsors

Speaking for the organization. One museum's policy, for example, says only "designated spokespersons" may speak for it in media interviews or online. [11] Assume the same applies to you unless staff say otherwise.

Board guidance

Leave with: B-T2 Chair and liaison working agreement (toolkit page 4) · B-T3 Co-chair agreement (page 5)

The escalation path

The hard moments are usually operational, not personal.

Our recommendation

IF THIS HAPPENS	DO THIS FIRST
Your liaison leaves, or is away for two weeks	Contact the backup liaison (B-T2) or the executive director's office; pause new commitments; staff keep existing bookings
Staff reverse a plan	Ask why, in private; adjust; tell members together
A sponsor you approached is already assigned to someone else	Stop; hand it to staff; thank the member
A member has donor data on a personal device	Tell your liaison the same day; ask the member not to use, share or delete it until staff say what to do
A venue asks you to sign	Don't. Send it to staff
A post risks safety or privacy	Tell your liaison at once, before you contact the member; staff decide what comes down
A post uses the logo or speaks for the nonprofit	Contact the member privately; tell your liaison the same day
You learn of harassment, abuse or a safety concern	Report it at once to the incident contact, or to the alternate contact if that person is involved; don't investigate or confront anyone; if the law requires you to report it yourself, do that too
An incident at an event	Call 911 if anyone is hurt or in danger; then call the incident contact; write down only the facts and give them to staff

Three scripts

- "Let's pause this until staff approve it."
- "We can't accept that gift or condition yet. Let me bring in our liaison."
- "I need our liaison in this conversation."

MISTAKE TO AVOID

Handling it alone. Bringing in your liaison early is part of the job, not a sign that you failed.

Leave with: B-T4 Escalation card and red lines (toolkit page 6)

CHAPTER 4

Road map and calendar

Start from what the nonprofit needs, and plan the year with staff.

Start from what the nonprofit needs. In one study, drifting out of line with the organization was one of the three biggest challenges: "without continuous conversations rooting them in their purpose, many associate boards fell out of alignment with the organizations' missions." [1] One associate board's founders: "Making sure you are all aligned about what the non-profit actually needs and expects is critical." [12] And: "An associate board will not solve all your institutional woes." [13]

Associate board practice

Build an annual road map with staff, focused on "a couple of core events or initiatives." [1] Answer four questions:

Associate board practice

1. What is our purpose this year?
2. What are our two or three goals?
3. How will we reach them?
4. What support do we need from the nonprofit? [1]

Tie money to something concrete. One hospital's associate board helps fund "the salary of a full-time Art Therapist." [14] Before you tell anyone their money will fund one program, check with staff that the nonprofit can keep that promise.

Associate board practice Our recommendation

Leave with: B-T7 Annual road map (toolkit page 11)

Good goals and real calendars

Good goal / weak goal (illustrative; set your own numbers with staff)

Our recommendation

WEAK “Raise awareness.”	**GOOD** “Bring 40 new people to a program visit by June.”
WEAK “Have a great gala.”	**GOOD** “Net $20,000 for the art therapy program at our spring event.”
WEAK “Grow the board.”	**GOOD** “Seat six new members by September, each on a committee.”

Real calendars

Associate board practice

- A university young alumni board opens applications in February, votes in April, rolls off finishing members in May and holds orientation in July. [5]
- A hospital associate board holds two membership meetings a year, socials in summer and winter, a signature event, and volunteer events with patient families. [14]
- A child advocacy associates board meets “on the third Wednesday of the month” and starts its fiscal year on July 1. [15]

A GOOD PLACE TO START

Set goals with staff, not for them. Bring a draft, and let your liaison shape it before the board sees it.

Leave with: B-T8 Annual calendar (toolkit page 12)

CHAPTER 5

Meetings

Short, prepared meetings that end with decisions.

Write agenda items as questions, and say whether each will "share information, seek input on a decision, or make a decision," and who leads it. [16]

Board guidance

Bundle the routine. A consent agenda is "a bundle of items that is voted on, without discussion, as a package." [17] Without formal votes, use a read-ahead block for minutes and updates; any member can pull an item for discussion.

Board guidance | Our recommendation

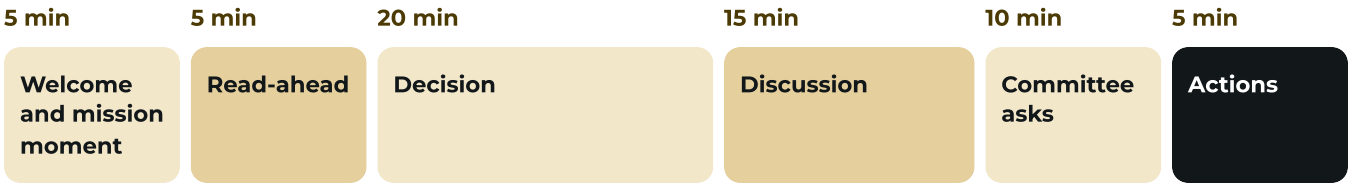
Send materials early. BoardSource recommends "at least a week before the meeting," which 41% of governing boards do. [18] (US governing board survey, 2021.)

Board guidance

Start and end on time, important topic first. [19]

Board guidance

A 60-minute meeting



Leave with: B-T9 Meeting agenda (toolkit page 14)

Meetings (continued)

Hybrid meetings. If some people join remotely, make them equal: people in the room should see remote members, and everyone gets the same follow-up note. [19] Some boards avoid the issue by meeting all in person or all online. Decide on purpose.

Board guidance | Our recommendation

Minutes record decisions and actions. One university nonprofit center advises recording what was done at the meeting rather than what members said, and summarizing action items before the meeting ends. [20] Note which decisions are yours and which need staff approval. Leave out complaints about people and personal matters such as health, family or money; raise those in private. Use a recording, a transcript or AI notes only if staff approve and everyone agrees.

Board guidance | Our recommendation

Attendance. Programs set different rules. One asks for "at least 75% of board events and meetings, whether in person or virtually" [21]; another asks for "at least seven meetings annually (in-person or via phone)." [15] Use the attendance expectation in your charter or expectations sheet. If there is none, agree on one with your liaison, in writing.

Associate board practice | Our recommendation

Some social time helps. Governing boards with some social time reported stronger culture, with a possible "sweet spot" of about 5 to 8 hours a year. [18] (Survey correlation, not cause and effect.)

Board guidance

A GOOD PLACE TO START

End every meeting by reading the action list aloud: who does what, by when.

Leave with: B-T10 Minutes (toolkit page 15)

CHAPTER 6

Committees

Small teams with one job each quarter.

Common structures: events and fundraising; membership and recruitment; governance or operations; sometimes volunteering. [21][22][5]

Associate board practice

Everyone serves on one. The boards at All Chicago and The Bridge both ask every member to serve on at least one committee. [21][22]

Associate board practice

Every committee needs

Our recommendation

- **A named chair**
- **A one-line purpose**
- **One deliverable this quarter**
- **A two-minute update for each meeting**

Raise inactivity early. One board asks committee chairs to tell the executive team when a member "is not active." [5]

Associate board practice

Follow-up stays inside the board. Committee chairs check in with their own members, so your liaison doesn't have to chase anyone.

Our recommendation

Fewer than 10 members? Two committees: membership and one for your top goal. In bigger groups it's "easy for members to feel like they're unimportant or that they don't have anything to do." [2]

Our recommendation Associate board practice

Leave with: B-T11 Committee card (toolkit page 16)

CHAPTER 7

Engagement

Why people stay, and how to give everyone a reason to.

Why people leave. Usually for practical reasons, not a bad experience. In a 2023 UK survey of volunteers: [23]

Volunteer research

37%

of those unlikely to continue cited “having less time due to changing circumstances.”

10%

Only 10% of the same group cited how their volunteering was organized or managed.

81% vs 26%

Satisfaction still matters: 81% of satisfied volunteers said they were likely to continue, against 26% of dissatisfied ones.

What keeps people. A national study of US charities (surveyed in 2003) linked retention to three practices: recognizing volunteers, offering training and development, and matching people to the right tasks. [24] Only about a third of charities publicly recognized volunteers to a large degree. [24]

Volunteer research

Expect turnover. Plan for “higher fluidity and turnover than on your governing board.” [13]

Associate board practice

Recognize

Thank people in public and in private.

Develop

Offer learning and stretch roles.

Match

Fit each task to the person’s reasons.

A GOOD PLACE TO START

Ask about time before you ask about commitment. Changing circumstances, more than how the board is run, are why many volunteers step back.

Match the job to the person

Six reasons people volunteer: values, understanding (learning), social, career, protective (easing guilt or personal troubles) and enhancement (growth). [9]

Volunteer research

Values

Lead a volunteer day

Learning

A stretch project with staff

Social

Host the retreat

Career

Chair a committee or present to the governing board

Protective

A low-pressure task with a friendly team

Growth

Mentor a new member

Ask, don't label. The jobs above are our suggestions. Ask each member what they want, in their words, rather than sorting people into types.

Our recommendation

Give everyone a concrete job. "It can be as simple as creating small, concrete ways for people to contribute." [2]

Associate board practice

Avoid the kids' table. Keeping younger members apart from real board work "can create resentment and distance them from the organization." [25] Invite trustees to speak, offer mentors, and include learning in meetings. [26]

Associate board practice

Low-cost recognition: a thank-you in the meeting, a note from the executive director, a newsletter spotlight, first look at a program visit.

Our recommendation

Leave with: B-T6 One-on-one guide and pulse check (toolkit page 9)

CHAPTER 8

The give or get

Fair, flexible and handled kindly.

A quick reference. A give or get is a yearly amount each member gives, raises from others, or both. Programs ask in three different ways; more examples, sorted the same way, are in Start an Associate Board. Figures as published by each program; check current pages.

Associate board practice

Flexible give or get

- **$100:** Cleveland Sight Center [27]
- **$500:** All Chicago [21]; The Bridge [22]
- **$1,000:** The People's Music School [28]; Make-A-Wish Greater Los Angeles young professionals council, 2020 [4]

Dues

- **$250:** Shirley Ryan AbilityLab [14]

Tasks or participation

- Ticket sales
- Appeal asks
- Auction items
- Volunteers recruited

Make it fair

Associate board practice

- Pro-rate (reduce the amount) for late joiners. [22]
- Offer many ways to "get": "event ticket sales, event sponsorships, in-kind contributions, raffle/ silent auction items, providing pro bono professional services." [15]
- Ask for notice: one board asks members to tell the fundraising chair "by March 1" if they can't meet it. [5]
- Aim for everyone taking part: one board expects "100% participating." [5] Funders often ask whether 100 percent of board members give, but don't let the number shut out good people. [29]

  Board guidance

Tracking and the conversation

Track it without becoming a debt collector. Staff record gifts; ask your liaison for a short report each month or quarter. Ask for the written money policy too: it says what counts and who gets credit. If there isn't one, staff can start from A-T4 in Start an Associate Board. Agree with your liaison who may see each member's progress. BoardSource observes that few boards "know how their board is performing against these expectations. They need a dashboard!" [30]

Our recommendation · Board guidance

Credit is not a tax receipt. Staff send donors their tax receipts. Credit toward the give or get is an internal count, not a tax value. Never tell anyone what they can deduct; send tax questions to your liaison.

Our recommendation

When someone falls short: a conversation, a plan, then formal steps. One board reviews attendance twice a year; members who miss most events or the give or get by year end "meet with the Chair… to discuss a plan of action." [22] Another uses a "6-month probationary period." [5]

Associate board practice

The conversation in five steps

Our recommendation

1. **Thank them for what they've done.**
2. **Ask what got in the way.**
3. **Offer routes**
   Tickets, an employer match, an in-kind item (donated goods or services), a sponsor lead for staff to clear. An employer match counts only if the employer's rules allow it, and only once the nonprofit receives it. If cost is the barrier, don't ask for details; refer them to your liaison, who can approve a change in private.
4. **Agree on a date.**
5. **Follow up in writing, kindly.**

MISTAKE TO AVOID

Raising a shortfall in front of the group. Every give-or-get conversation happens one-on-one, in private.

Leave with: B-T12 Give-or-get tracker (toolkit page 17) · B-T13 Conversation scripts (page 20)

CHAPTER 9

Recruit and onboard the next class

Recruit all year, choose with care, welcome well.

A yearly cycle. For example: applications February to March, decisions in April, orientation in July. [5] Start building your pipeline early. [12]

Associate board practice

Where new members come from: your events and members' personal networks, the two main routes in one study. [1] Make it everyone's job: one board asks each member to "Recruit ONE new member annually or introduce FIVE individuals." [21] Charities that enlist volunteers in recruiting others report better retention. [24]

Associate board practice | Volunteer research

Choose with care: an application and a conversation [21]; background checks where the mission requires, run by staff under your nonprofit's screening policy with the person's written consent [15]; "recruit doers." [12] Size to your liaison's time and the real jobs, not a target. Agree with your liaison on who tells each applicant the decision, including those not chosen.

Associate board practice | Our recommendation

Welcome well: a signed expectations sheet [27], orientation, and a social "within the first month or two." [2]

Associate board practice



For a selection rubric, interview guide and orientation checklist, see A-T12 to A-T14 in Start an Associate Board.

Our recommendation

Leave with: B-T8 Annual calendar (toolkit page 12)

CHAPTER 10

Events

Pick the event for the goal, clear it with staff, and plan the day.

Choose the event for the goal

"If you're more focused on raising funds, you'll probably want to charge for tickets." [12]

Associate board practice

Price for your audience

One symphony's first associate board chair: "We sold tickets at $150 for a cocktail reception before a $35 outdoor concert. It did not work." The next year they charged $50 and redesigned the evening around the music. [13]

Associate board practice

Count net, not gross

Know the budget before you commit. Report net: the money raised minus the event's cash costs.

Our recommendation

Protect people's time

One signature event plus mission volunteering usually beats many small socials. If staff don't have the time, plan something smaller, like a volunteer day.

Our recommendation

Who pays, and when. The nonprofit pays the event's costs. Never pay one yourself unless staff approve it first; the nonprofit then repays you. A venue may want a deposit when the contract is signed, before any ticket money comes in, so agree a go/no-go date with staff before that deposit stops being refundable. On that date, staff compare sales and confirmed sponsors with costs and decide: go ahead, scale down or cancel.

Our recommendation

MISTAKE TO AVOID

Choosing the event before the goal. Decide whether it is for money, new people or the mission, then design it.

The event approval sheet

Don't announce, ask sponsors or sell tickets until staff sign. The nonprofit is the legal party.

Our recommendation

- [ ] Goal, budget, staff hours, deposit dates and go/no-go date agreed with staff
- [ ] Venue contract signed by an authorized staff member
- [ ] Insurance for this event, including injuries to members, confirmed in writing by staff
- [ ] Alcohol: plan, license and insurance for this event confirmed in writing by staff
- [ ] Raffle or games: allowed here, with any license and reporting handled [31] — Law or regulator
- [ ] Ticket disclosures for payments over $75 that are partly a gift [32] — Law or regulator
- [ ] Candidates, elections or lobbying cleared by staff; never for or against a candidate [37] — Law or regulator
- [ ] Sponsor agreement signed by staff
- [ ] Photo plan agreed with staff: who takes photos, what members may post, how to opt out
- [ ] Accessible venue checked; announcement says who to contact about access needs
- [ ] Staff lead for the day named
- [ ] Payments go only to the nonprofit, never to a personal bank or payment-app account
- [ ] Online ticket or donation page set up by staff; charitable solicitation registration confirmed [36] — Law or regulator
- [ ] Minors or vulnerable people: screening and supervision confirmed by staff

Think about what could go wrong. "Special events are multifaceted opportunities for surprise." Plan for risks to "the people, income, reputation and goodwill of the organization." [33] Then plan the day with your staff lead on page 2 of B-T14. Staff decide any change, cancellation or refund.

Board guidance · Our recommendation

TALK TO YOUR COUNSEL

Raffles, alcohol and ticket disclosures follow state and federal rules. Your liaison confirms with counsel what applies before any ticket is sold.

Leave with: B-T14 Event approval sheet (toolkit page 22)

CHAPTER 11

Inactivity, conflict, conduct, removal

Agree on the rules before you need them.

Agree on the rules before you need them. If your associate board has no written rules on this, agree with your liaison, in writing, how inactivity is handled and how membership ends; staff take part in any removal.

Our recommendation

The ladder (from real boards [22][5])

Associate board practice

Notice early	Check in	Agree on a plan	Probation	Exit with thanks

Term limits are the quiet exit.

Misconduct skips the ladder. The ladder is for missed commitments. Report harassment, discrimination, threats, abuse or unsafe behavior at once to the incident contact, or to the alternate contact if that person is involved (B-T4). Never investigate or confront anyone yourself, and never penalize anyone for raising a concern in good faith. Your nonprofit decides what happens next.

Our recommendation

Suspected child abuse. In some states, anyone who suspects it must report it to the authorities; telling the nonprofit may not be enough. Anyone may report. [38] Ask your liaison what applies.

Law or regulator Our recommendation

Conflict. "Be clear and direct with communicating hopes as well as expectations, but be ready to have difficult conversations about alignment and purpose when necessary." [1] If you and staff still disagree about something big, such as what the group is for, ask your liaison to bring in the executive director, and agree on a date to decide. Until then, follow the current plan.

Associate board practice Our recommendation

Conduct: posts, photos and elections

MISTAKE TO AVOID

Removing someone on your own. Staff take part in every removal, and the steps follow your written rules.

Social media. Agree on a short rule at onboarding. Members post as themselves, and a post that only mentions the nonprofit is fine. So is asking friends to give or buy tickets through pages staff approve. Posts that speak for the nonprofit need staff approval first, and its logo needs written permission. [34] No one posts private details about donors or the people the nonprofit serves without staff approval.

Our recommendation

Photos and video. The nonprofit's consent covers its own use, not members' posts. Ask before you post anyone, take it down if they ask, and don't photograph anyone who says no, including a child. Images of children, clients or vulnerable people need staff approval, with no names or locations.

Our recommendation

Elections and lobbying. The IRS says a 501(c)(3) charity "may not participate in any campaign activity for or against political candidates," and its lobbying must stay limited. [37] Members may back candidates as private citizens, but never in the name of the board or the nonprofit, and never with their events, logos, social media accounts, lists or money. Ask your liaison before inviting a candidate or urging anyone to back or oppose a bill or ballot measure.

Law or regulator Our recommendation

A problem post. If a post could put someone at risk or shares private information, tell your liaison at once, before you contact the member. If it otherwise breaks the rule, talk to the member privately and tell your liaison the same day. If it raises a complaint, tell your liaison, or the alternate contact (B-T4) if the complaint involves staff, but never ask for it to come down. Staff decide what comes down, whether to keep a copy and any public response.

Our recommendation

Conflicts of interest and scripts

Conflicts of interest. Watch for a member's employer bidding as a vendor, a member steering a sponsorship to a client, or recruiting attendees for their own business. Before a decision on a vendor, venue or sponsor, ask whether anyone has a conflict of interest. A member who has one says so, answers any questions and then sits out the discussion and the decision. Note in the minutes who sat out, and tell your liaison, who decides any next step.

Our recommendation

Four scripts (full versions in B-T13)

- Inactive member: "We've missed you. Is this still the right time for you? If yes, here's one thing you could own this month."
- Give or get: the five steps on page 22.
- Social post: "I know you meant well, but posts that speak for the nonprofit or use its logo go to staff first. Could you take it down for now?"
- Conflict of interest: "Thanks for flagging it. Let's have you sit out the discussion and the decision. I'll note it in the minutes and let our liaison know."

A GOOD PLACE TO START

Ask your liaison for the nonprofit's conduct policy, including how to raise a concern, and the conflict of interest disclosure form (a sample is A-T10 in Start an Associate Board). Put them in your onboarding packet with the social media rule, the photo rule and the elections and lobbying rule, so no one hears them for the first time in a hard conversation.

Leave with: B-T13 Conversation scripts (toolkit page 20)

CHAPTER 12

Dashboard and report

Report what changed, and hand over cleanly.

A one-page dashboard. “Before you can create a dashboard, your board must define significant measures of success for itself,” using “red, yellow, and green signal lights.” [30]

Board guidance

What to measure

Our recommendation

Money

Raised, net of costs; give-or-get completion; share who gave.

People

Attendance; retention; new members; new people introduced.

Mission

A result staff confirm; volunteer events and hours; advocacy approved by staff.

Pipeline

Members moving into leadership.

Ask your liaison what changed. Before each report, ask what the associate board’s work changed for the program and how much staff time it took. Put both in your report.

Our recommendation

How to count. Net raised is money raised minus the cash the nonprofit spent on it, as finance confirms. Give-or-get completion counts members who have met their give or get in the staff gift report, and share who gave counts members with their own gift or dues there. Attendance counts members who meet your attendance expectation. Retention counts members who did not leave early, out of all who started the year.

Our recommendation

Counting is not engagement. Tracking volunteer numbers and hours was “unrelated to retention of volunteers,” even though it helps in other ways. [24]

Volunteer research

A sample dashboard

What one page can look like at midyear. Illustrative example with made-up numbers; set your own measures and goals with staff.

Our recommendation

SAMPLE
$14,200
Net raised
Plan by now $16,000 · Yellow

SAMPLE
6 of 10
Give-or-get completion
Plan by now 5 of 10 · Green

SAMPLE
8 of 10
Attendance: members meeting the expectation
Plan by now 8 of 10 · Green

SAMPLE
9 of 10
Members retained
Plan by now 8 of 10 · Green

SAMPLE
12
Mission result: shifts filled that staff could not cover
Plan by now 16 · Yellow

SAMPLE
1
Members moving into leadership
Plan by now 2 · Red

Use signal colors so the board sees at a glance where to help. Compare each number with where you planned to be by now, not with the full-year goal. Green: on plan or ahead. Yellow: behind, with a way to catch up. Red: behind, and you need help.

Our recommendation

Report twice a year, at midyear and at year end, to staff and the governing board.

Our recommendation

Leave with: B-T15 Dashboard (toolkit page 25) · B-T16 Midyear and year-end report (page 26)

Succession and the handoff

Succession is one of the hardest parts, one study found, made harder by "the unpredictability of associate board members' life situations." [1]

Associate board practice

Build a ladder. "The Vice Chair will serve as Board Chairman following their one-year term as the Vice Chair." [35] Another board keeps "the past Executive chair" on the executive committee "to help guide the current chair." [5]

Associate board practice

Member	Committee chair	Vice chair	Chair	Past chair

Write it down as you go: roster and terms, give-or-get status, calendar and deadlines, promises still open, contacts (held by staff), who has access to which accounts, dashboard, open issues, your working agreement. Leave out complaints and personal details; staff hold those. If the group pauses or closes, give the memo to your liaison.

Our recommendation

The path to the governing board. Many nonprofits hope for it, and some report it: a Dallas conservancy says at least six junior board members later joined its board. [25] We found no data on how often this happens. Don't promise a seat. Good first steps, where allowed: a governing board committee [26] or attending board meetings as a guest. [13] Most alumni will serve in other ways; plan for them too.

Associate board practice Our recommendation

A GOOD PLACE TO START

Identify a likely successor by midyear, so they can work beside you before the handover.

Leave with: B-T17 Transition memo (toolkit page 27)

Month-two rescue

IF THIS HAPPENS	DO THIS FIRST	
Nobody comes to meetings	One-on-ones; shorter meetings; one decision per meeting	p10, p16
Your liaison has gone quiet	Ask for 15 minutes; then the executive director's office	p13
A member wants a raffle next month	Approval sheet first; raffles need checks, and next month may be too soon	p25
Co-chairs disagree	Reread your co-chair agreement; three-way call	p12
You and your liaison disagree	Reread your working agreement; if still stuck, ask your liaison to bring in the executive director	p7, p26
The give or get is far behind	Staff report; five-step conversations	p22
A sponsor wants exclusivity	Don't promise; hand to staff	p5, p13

First moves we recommend when something stalls.

Our recommendation

A GOOD PLACE TO START

When something stalls, name one owner and one date before you discuss solutions.

Your year at a glance

Week 1
Triage what is already in motion
Use B-T1 (toolkit page 3)

Days 1 to 90
Listen, meet everyone, agree on the plan
Use B-T5 (toolkit page 8) and B-T6 (page 9)

Month 3
Road map and calendar agreed with staff
Use B-T7 (toolkit page 11) and B-T8 (page 12)

Each quarter
Committee deliverables
Use B-T11 (toolkit page 16)

Midyear
Dashboard and midyear report to staff and the governing board
Use B-T15 (toolkit page 25) and B-T16 (page 26)

Before any event
Approval sheet started three months out; signed before you announce
Use B-T14 (toolkit page 22)

Two weeks before
Plan the day with your staff lead
Use the second page of B-T14 (toolkit page 23)

Year end
Dashboard and year-end report
Use B-T15 (toolkit page 25) and B-T16 (page 26)

Handover
Transition memo and handover meeting
Use B-T17 (toolkit page 27)

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[37] IRS, Exemption requirements: 501(c)(3) organizations.

[38] Child Welfare Information Gateway, Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect, state statutes current through May 2023.

Quick reference

Keep this page where you can find it.

Our recommendation

Five red lines

1. Never sign or verbally commit the nonprofit.
2. Never promise a donor or sponsor anything in return, such as tickets, recognition, exclusivity or a guest list; staff decide that. Never contact a prospect staff have reserved without clearance.
3. Never export donor or client data, or keep it in personal systems, without written approval.
4. Escalate at once: safety, harassment, safeguarding, legal threats, press, and any money that doesn't add up.
5. Never collect money yourself. Tickets, gifts and sponsorships go only to the nonprofit's accounts or to online pages staff approve, never to a personal bank or payment-app account.

Who to call	Name	Phone or email
My staff liaison		
Executive director's office		
Incident contact (safety, harassment, abuse)		
Communications		
Alternate contact outside staff, if a concern involves anyone above		

Anyone hurt or in danger? Call 911 first. Report harassment, abuse or a safety concern at once; don't investigate or confront anyone. If the law requires you to report it yourself, do that too.

Our recommendation

Three scripts

- "Let's pause this until staff approve it."
- "We can't accept that gift or condition yet. Let me bring in our liaison."
- "I need our liaison in this conversation."

About this playbook

About this playbook. Written by CariClub from public sources, real program documents and published research. General information, not legal, tax or insurance advice.

About CariClub. CariClub places accomplished professionals on associate, advisory and governing nonprofit boards, prepares them to serve well, and supports them through every stage of service. Building board leaders since 2016. Members bring experience from firms like KKR, Davis Polk, Morgan Stanley, Deloitte, EY and Unilever.

Where CariClub can help.

List your open associate board seats

Members who fit tell you why they want to serve. Your nonprofit decides who joins.

BoardLaureate™

A board-readiness program built specifically for associate board members.

6,000+

board placements

10,000+

nonprofit organizations across 15+ metro areas

For nonprofits: CariClub is available at no cost to approved nonprofits and their staff. Request access at cariclub.com/nonprofits · nonprofits@cariclub.com

For associate board members: if you already serve on an associate board, your staff liaison can invite you to limited CariClub access: your board's room on CariClub and the first three modules of BoardLaureate. For full access, including searching for other board roles, most members join through their employer. If yours isn't a CariClub partner yet, request access at cariclub.com and we'll work with you to bring your employer on, or you can join on your own.

The toolkit. Every tool here is in the fillable toolkit, B-T0 to B-T17.

Companion guide: Start an Associate Board, a first-time guide for nonprofits, written for your nonprofit's staff. Tools coded A-T0 to A-T17, such as A-T4, are in its own toolkit. Ask your liaison whether your nonprofit has the guide and its toolkit.

cariclub

TOOLKIT · LEAD YOUR ASSOCIATE BOARD

Lead Your Associate Board: Toolkit

Seventeen tools for your year as chair or co-chair.

Print it at actual size (100%), or fill it in on a computer.



B-T0 FILL-IN TOOL

Control panel

Use this page to track your year. Put a date beside every tool. For a tool you use again, write its first date here and the rest on B-T8. Keep this year's filled-in pages in the nonprofit's approved location.

How to use these tools. Write in the blank boxes and replace text in [brackets]. Pre-filled answers are starting points; change them to fit your board. A row that states a legal rule names its source; the rest is our recommendation. Your nonprofit's policies and your liaison's guidance come first.

My liaison: _____ **My co-chair:** _____ **This year ends:** _____

Tool	Page	Due	Done
B-T1 Week-one triage	3		☐
B-T2 Chair and liaison working agreement	4		☐
B-T3 Co-chair agreement	5		☐
B-T4 Escalation card and red lines	6		☐
B-T5 90-day plan	8		☐
B-T6 One-on-one guide and pulse check	9		☐
B-T7 Annual road map	11		☐
B-T8 Annual calendar	12		☐
B-T9 Meeting agenda	14		☐
B-T10 Minutes	15		☐
B-T11 Committee card	16		☐
B-T12 Give-or-get tracker	17		☐
B-T13 Conversation scripts	20		☐
B-T14 Event approval sheet	22		☐
B-T15 Dashboard	25		☐
B-T16 Midyear and year-end report	26		☐
B-T17 Transition memo	27		☐

B-T1 FILL-IN TOOL

Week-one triage

From chapter 1 of the playbook, page 6. Fill this in during your first week, with your liaison, and again if your liaison changes. Brand-new board? Use your charter and launch file from Start an Associate Board.

Date:

_____

If you learn of harassment, abuse or a safety concern, report it at once to the incident contact on your escalation card (B-T4), or to the alternate contact if it involves your liaison. For these concerns, write here only who you told and when.

Question	Answer	Done
Who is my liaison, and when do we meet?		☐
What is already booked, signed or promised (events, venues, sponsors, dates)? Write the main ones and where the full list is kept.		☐
What is urgent or at risk (safety, money, press, people)? Who handles it, and by when:		☐
Where is the roster, and who owns it?		☐
Where are the calendar and documents, and who owns them?		☐
When was the last meeting (if any), and what was decided?		☐
Has anything been promised that we can't keep? Raised with the liaison on: Who handles it, and by when:		☐

B-T2 FILL-IN TOOL

Chair and liaison working agreement

From chapters 1 and 3 of the playbook, pages 6 and 12. Fill it in with your liaison, then both sign. Starting points: reply within two business days. The executive director names a backup liaison; if there is none, use the executive director's office. If you disagree, talk it through within a week; if you are still stuck, ask the executive director to decide by an agreed date.

Topic	Our agreement
We meet (how often, day, time, length)	
We reply within	
The chair decides	
We decide together	
Staff decide	
Who talks to the executive director, and when	
Backup if the liaison is away or leaves	
If we disagree	
We review this agreement on	

Always handled by staff: contracts, receipts, sponsorship agreements, donor and client data, and media.

Before any contact: the chair clears every company or donor name with staff first.

Harassment, abuse or a safety concern: report it at once (B-T4), even if it involves your liaison.

Before you sign: check this agreement against your charter and the nonprofit's policies, and change anything that conflicts with them. On new members and ending a membership, you and your liaison recommend and the executive director decides, unless your charter says otherwise.

Chair: _____ **Liaison:** _____ **Date:** _____

B-T3 FILL-IN TOOL

Co-chair agreement

From chapter 3 of the playbook, page 12. One way to split the work: one co-chair leads inside work (meetings, members, committees, give-or-get tracking) and the other leads outside work (the staff and executive director relationship, the governing board, the signature event and finding sponsors). Change it to fit you.

	Inside work	Outside work
Who leads		
What it covers		
Staff contact		
Term ends		

Neither of us signs or promises anything on the nonprofit's behalf; staff decide every sponsor ask.

If we disagree: we hold a three-way call with our liaison within a week. If we are still stuck after the call, our liaison decides.

If one of us is away for two weeks or leaves early: the other tells our liaison that week and leads inside and outside work until that co-chair returns or a new one is named under our charter.

We review this agreement at midyear and whenever a co-chair changes.

Co-chair: _____ **Co-chair:** _____ **Date:** _____

B-T4 FILL-IN TOOL

Escalation card and red lines (1 of 2)

From playbook pages 5, 12 and 26. Save these contacts in your phone. Wallet card on the next page.

Red lines

1. Never sign or verbally commit the nonprofit.
2. Never promise a donor or sponsor anything in return, such as tickets, recognition, exclusivity or a guest list; staff decide that. Never contact a prospect staff have reserved without clearance.
3. Never export donor or client data, or keep it in personal systems, without written approval.
4. Escalate at once: safety, harassment, safeguarding, legal threats, press, and any money that doesn't add up.
5. Never collect money yourself. Tickets, gifts and sponsorships go only to the nonprofit's accounts or to online pages staff approve, never to a personal bank or payment-app account.

Who to call

Contact	Name	Phone or email
Staff liaison		
Executive director's office		
Incident contact (safety, harassment, abuse)		
Communications		
Alternate contact outside staff, if a concern involves anyone above		

Anyone hurt or in danger? Call 911 first. Report harassment, abuse or a safety concern at once; don't investigate or confront anyone. If the law requires you to report it yourself, do that too.

Three things to say

- "Let's pause this until staff approve it."
- "We can't accept that gift or condition yet. Let me bring in our liaison."
- "I need our liaison in this conversation."

B-T4 FILL-IN TOOL

Escalation card and red lines (2 of 2)

From playbook pages 5, 12 and 26.

Wallet card. Make one for you and one for your co-chair.

1. Print or photocopy this page by itself at actual size (100%), so you don't cut into the next page.
2. Fill in a card from the table on the previous page. Check each number with your liaison.
3. Cut on the dashed line. Fold on the dotted line, with the writing outside.

Anyone hurt or in danger? Call 911 first.

Incident contact (safety, harassment, abuse)

_____

Alternate contact outside staff, if staff are involved

_____

Staff liaison

_____

Report harassment, abuse or a safety concern at once; don't investigate or confront anyone. If the law requires you to report it yourself, do that too.

Three things to say

"Let's pause this until staff approve it."

"We can't accept that gift or condition yet. Let me bring in our liaison."

"I need our liaison in this conversation."

Anyone hurt or in danger? Call 911 first.

Incident contact (safety, harassment, abuse)

_____

Alternate contact outside staff, if staff are involved

_____

Staff liaison

_____

Report harassment, abuse or a safety concern at once; don't investigate or confront anyone. If the law requires you to report it yourself, do that too.

Three things to say

"Let's pause this until staff approve it."

"We can't accept that gift or condition yet. Let me bring in our liaison."

"I need our liaison in this conversation."

B-T5 FILL-IN TOOL

90-day plan

From chapter 2 of the playbook, page 10. Listen first, meet everyone, then agree on the plan. If you find anything urgent along the way, escalate it at once (B-T4).

Day 1 (date):

_____

Days	What to do	Due	Done
1 to 30	Meet the outgoing chair (if there is one)		☐
	Agree on a meeting rhythm with your liaison		☐
	Sign the working agreement (B-T2)		☐
	Meet the executive director or development lead		☐
	Ask your liaison for the diagnostic: roster, results, calendar, money		☐
31 to 60	Hold a one-on-one with every member (B-T6)		☐
61 to 90	Agree on two or three goals with staff (B-T7)		☐
	Agree on the calendar with staff (B-T8)		☐

B-T6 FILL-IN TOOL

One-on-one guide and pulse check (1 of 2)

From playbook pages 10 and 19. Twenty minutes with each member. Listen more than you talk. Note only what they want, a role idea and a next step. Leave out health, family and money matters. Keep it confidential, in [the nonprofit's approved location], never on a personal device or in personal email.

Five questions

1. What made you say yes to this board?
2. What do you want from it this year?
3. What has worked, and what hasn't?
4. Where would you like to help?
5. What would make you more likely to stay involved?

Tracker

Member	Date met	What they want (in their words)	Role idea	Next step and date

B-T6 FILL-IN TOOL

One-on-one guide and pulse check (2 of 2)

From playbook pages 10 and 19.

Pulse check. Ask every member twice a year. Score each line from 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely). Ask your liaison to collect and keep the answers without names, on paper or in an online form that doesn't record who answered, and to share only averages and themes with you. Before members answer, tell them they can skip anything and that on a small board, handwriting or a detailed comment can still show who wrote it. At the next meeting, tell the board what you heard and one thing you will change.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I know what is expected of me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have a real job on this board.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My time is well used.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel connected to the mission.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would recommend serving here.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

One thing that would make this board better:

Urgent concerns: don't use this form for safety, harassment or anything that can't wait. Contact the incident contact, or the alternate if that person is involved:

B-T7 FILL-IN TOOL

Annual road map

From chapter 4 of the playbook, page 14. Start from what the nonprofit needs. Measure a mission goal by a result staff confirm.

Our purpose this year:

Goal	Measure and target	Lead	By when
1			
2			
3			

How we will get there:

Support we need from the nonprofit:

Our budget this year: **Set by:**

$ _____ _____

The nonprofit pays the group's costs from this budget. Never pay a cost yourself unless staff approve it first; the nonprofit then repays you.

Agreed with: **Date:**

B-T8 FILL-IN TOOL

Annual calendar (1 of 2)

From chapters 4 and 9 of the playbook, pages 14 and 23. Agree it with staff before you announce anything. In each box, write a date and a few words (for example, July 15: orientation). Then ask staff to add the dates to the nonprofit's calendar.

Month 1 (month and year): _____

Officer transition month: _____

Month	Meetings and committees	Recruiting and members	Events and mission work	Reports and handover
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

B-T8 FILL-IN TOOL

Annual calendar (2 of 2)

From chapters 4 and 9 of the playbook, pages 14 and 23. Months 7 to 12. In each box, write a date and a few words.

Month	Meetings and committees	Recruiting and members	Events and mission work	Reports and handover
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				

Event approval sheets (B-T14): start each one with staff at least [three] months before the event, earlier if a permit needs it. Staff sign it before you announce, ask sponsors or sell tickets.

Orientation checklist for each new class: A-T14 in Start an Associate Board.

B-T9 FILL-IN TOOL

Meeting agenda

From chapter 5 of the playbook, page 16. Sixty minutes. Send materials at least a week ahead.

Meeting date:

Start time and time zone:

Place or video link:

Materials sent:

Contact for access needs or tech help:

Recording, transcript or AI notes: ☐ No ☐ Yes, if staff approve and everyone agrees

Write each decision and discussion as a question. Say whether each decision is ours or needs staff approval. For example: “Which fall event idea should we take to staff for approval?”

Time	Item	Question or topic	Lead
5 min	Welcome and mission moment (a short story about the mission)		
5 min	Read-ahead items: any to pull for discussion?		
20 min	Decision		
15 min	Discussion		
10 min	Committee asks		
5 min	Actions and close		

B-T10 FILL-IN TOOL

Minutes

From chapters 5 and 11 of the playbook, pages 16 and 26. Record decisions and actions, not who said what. Leave out complaints about people and personal matters such as health, family or money; raise those in private. For a conflict of interest, note only who sat out and why, in a few words.

Group name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Next meeting:** _____

Members absent (names): _____

Decision	Ours, or needs staff approval?	Conflict of interest: who sat out

Action	Who	By when

After the meeting. Within a week, send the minutes to your liaison and members. Add them to the next read-ahead so members can correct them, then file them in [the nonprofit's approved location].

B-T11 FILL-IN TOOL

Committee card

From chapter 6 of the playbook, page 18. One card per committee, updated each quarter.

Item	Our answer
Committee	
Purpose (one line)	
Chair	
Members	
This quarter's deliverable and due date	
What we need from the board	
What staff approved (budget, staff time), who approved it, and when	

Before you spend: your committee has no spending authority of its own. Staff approve every cost before anyone spends money or agrees to pay. Events also need the event approval sheet (B-T14).

Status (check one): ☐ On track ☐ At risk ☐ Done

Quarter (dates): _____

Updated on: _____

B-T12 FILL-IN TOOL

Give-or-get tracker (1 of 2)

From chapter 8 of the playbook, page 21. Use the staff gift report as the source. Keep it confidential, in [the nonprofit's approved location], never on a personal device or in personal email.

- **Commitment:** each member's amount or tasks, after any late-joiner reduction or approved exception. In every column, keep each part separate, such as "$100 dues; $250 give or get."
- **Count only what the staff gift report shows** and tasks your liaison confirms. Promised gifts or matches not in the report yet go under Promised. Credit toward the give or get is an internal count, not a tax value.
- **Write the next step, never the reason someone is behind.** Share only group totals.

Staff gift report dated: _____

Give-or-get year ends: _____

Seen only by (agreed with your liaison): _____

Member	Commitment	Own gift or dues	Raised or tasks done	Promised	On track?	Next step and date

B-T12 FILL-IN TOOL

Give-or-get tracker (2 of 2)

From chapter 8 of the playbook, page 21. A filled example is on the next page.

Member	Commitment	Own gift or dues	Raised or tasks done	Promised	On track?	Next step and date

Filled example: B-T12 give-or-get tracker

From chapter 8 of the playbook, page 21. This page shows five of the ten members behind the sample dashboard on page 30 of the playbook, at midyear. A real tracker lists every member.

Sample only. A fictional board. Every name, number and date is made up.

Staff gift report dated: January 10. **Give-or-get year ends:** June 30.

Seen only by (agreed with your liaison): the chair and the liaison.

Member	Commitment	Own gift or dues	Raised or tasks done	Promised	On track?	Next step and date
Member A	$500 give or get	$250	$300	None	Met	Thank-you note by January 20
Member B	$375 give or get, reduced for joining late	$150	$100	$125 employer match	Yes	Liaison confirms the match by March 31
Member C	$100 dues; 3 event tasks	$100 dues	1 task (liaison confirmed)	None	Not yet	Chair check-in, one-on-one, by February 15
Member D	$500 give or get	$100	$0	$200 pledge	Not yet	Chair check-in, one-on-one, by February 15
Member E	$500 give or get	$500	$0	None	Met	Thank-you note by January 20

What the chair shares with the board: 6 of 10 members have met their give or get. Share the total only, never this page.

B-T13 SAMPLE TO ADAPT

Conversation scripts (1 of 2)

From chapters 8 and 11 of the playbook, pages 21 and 26. Use your own words. Have the hard ones in private.

Give-or-get check-in

"Thanks for everything you've done on [project]. I'm checking in with everyone on the give or get. Where are you, and what's gotten in the way? Here are some ways others are getting there: [routes]. If none of these work, [liaison] can talk with you privately about other options. Could we agree on a plan by [date]?"

Inactive member

"We've missed you at the last few meetings, and I wanted to check in. Is this still the right time for you? If yes, here's one thing you could own this month. If not, that's OK too; let's talk about what works."

A social post

"I saw your post about [topic]. I know you meant well. It [uses the logo / reads as if you speak for us], and our rule is to check those with staff first. Could you take it down for now? I'll loop in [liaison] today."

A conflict of interest

"Thanks for flagging that [your company] is involved. Let's have you sit out the discussion and the decision. I'll note it in the minutes and let [liaison] know."

Social posts: if a post could put someone at risk or shares private information, tell [liaison] at once, before you contact the member. A post that only mentions [Organization] is fine. So is asking friends to give or buy tickets through pages staff approve. A fundraiser a member starts on a social platform needs staff approval too. Sponsor asks need staff clearance first. If a post asks people to pay anywhere else, ask the member to use an approved page instead and tell [liaison] the same day. If a post raises a complaint, tell [liaison], or the alternate contact (B-T4) if the complaint involves staff, but never ask for it to come down. Staff decide what comes down, whether to keep a copy and what happens to any money already sent.

B-T13 SAMPLE TO ADAPT

Conversation scripts (2 of 2)

From chapters 8 and 11 of the playbook, pages 21 and 26.

When staff reverse a decision

"Can you help me understand what changed? I want to explain it well to the board."

A gift with conditions

"Thank you. Before we accept, I need our liaison to review the conditions."

Ending a membership, with the liaison present

"We agreed in [month] on a plan, and it hasn't been possible to meet it. [The executive director] has decided it's best to end your term now. Thank you for [contribution]. We'd love to stay in touch as [alumni role]."

When someone reports harassment or abuse

"Thank you for telling me. Is anyone in danger right now? I'm passing this to [incident contact or alternate] right away, and I'll share it only with people who need to know."

Before a hard conversation: agree on the outcome with your liaison first, and have the conversation in private. When you end a membership, name whoever your written rules say decides. If they don't say, it's the executive director. For harassment, abuse or a safety concern, don't hold the conversation yourself: report it at once (B-T4).

B-T14 FILL-IN TOOL

Event approval sheet (1 of 3)

From chapter 10 of the playbook, page 24. Don't announce, ask sponsors or sell tickets until staff sign. If plans change, staff sign again. Full risk checklist: A-T7 in the Start an Associate Board toolkit.

Event: _____ **Date:** _____

Goal:

_____

Gross target: $ _____ **Costs:** $ _____ **Net target:** $ _____ **Staff hours agreed:** _____

Deposits due by: _____ **Refundable until:** _____ **Go/no-go date:** _____

Net is the money raised minus every cash cost of the event, fees included. Set the go/no-go date before any deposit stops being refundable. On that date, staff compare sales and confirmed sponsors with costs and decide: go ahead, scale down or cancel. Attach the event budget agreed with staff. Its total cash cost goes under Costs.

Check (tick when staff confirm it for this event, or that the event doesn't include it)	Done
Venue contract signed by authorized staff	☐
Insurance for this event, including injuries to members, confirmed in writing by staff	☐
Alcohol: plan, license and insurance for this event confirmed in writing by staff	☐
Raffle or games cleared (license and reporting under state, local and IRS rules)	☐
Ticket disclosure set by staff for payments over $75 that are partly a gift (IRS rule)	☐
Candidates, elections or lobbying cleared by staff; never for or against a candidate (IRS rule)	☐
Sponsor agreement signed by staff	☐
Photo plan agreed with staff: who takes photos, what members may post, how to opt out	☐
Accessible venue checked; announcement says who to contact about access needs	☐
Staff lead for the day named (page 2)	☐

B-T14 FILL-IN TOOL

Event approval sheet (2 of 3)

From chapter 10 of the playbook, page 24.

Check (tick when staff confirm it for this event, or that the event doesn't include it)	Done
Announcement approved	☐
Payments go only to the nonprofit, never to a personal bank or payment-app account	☐
Online ticket or donation page set up by staff; solicitation registration confirmed (state law)	☐
Minors or vulnerable people: screening and supervision confirmed by staff	☐

Staff sign-off: _____ **Date:** _____

The day and after. Plan the day with your staff lead two weeks ahead, and scale it to the event.

Event: _____ **Staff lead on the day:** _____ **Phone:** _____

Decides to change or cancel: _____ **Tells guests if plans change:** _____

Time	What happens	Lead	Backup
	Final check (weather, venue, vendors): go, change or cancel		
	Setup; vendors and supplies arrive		
	Brief the helpers (below)		
	Guests arrive; main program		
	Close and cleanup		

B-T14 FILL-IN TOOL

Event approval sheet (3 of 3)

From chapter 10 of the playbook, page 24.

Brief every helper

- **Safety:** who is in charge, exits, the accessible entrance, first aid, and where to meet.
- **Money:** payments go only to the nonprofit, never to a personal bank or payment-app account.
- **Photos:** follow the photo plan, and don't photograph anyone who says no, including a child.
- **Alcohol:** only the servers named in the alcohol plan pour it and check IDs.

If something goes wrong: call 911 first if anyone is hurt or in danger. Then tell the staff lead, who records it on the nonprofit's incident form and tells the incident contact. Give only the facts: when, where, what you saw and did. Don't guess or blame, and keep it out of posts, chats and minutes.

After the event

Net raised: $ _____

Attendance: _____

New supporters: _____

Thank-yous sent: _____

Tax receipts sent by (staff): _____

Date: _____

Final numbers from finance on: _____

Debrief with staff on: _____

B-T15 FILL-IN TOOL

Dashboard

From chapter 12 of the playbook, page 29. When you set your goals with staff (B-T7), agree on a midyear plan for each. Chapter 12 shows how to count, with a filled sample. **Green:** on plan or ahead. **Yellow:** behind, with a way to catch up. **Red:** behind, and you need help.

Prepared by: _____ **As of:** _____

Measure	Plan by now	Actual	Signal color	Next step, who, by when
Net raised				
Give-or-get completion				
Share of members who gave				
Attendance				
Retention				
New members				
New people introduced				
Mission result (staff confirm)				
Volunteer events and hours				
Advocacy approved by staff				
Members moving into leadership				

B-T16 FILL-IN TOOL

Midyear and year-end report

From chapter 12 of the playbook, page 29. One page, for staff and the governing board, at midyear and again at year end. Attach your dashboard (B-T15). Report money and attendance as group totals. Leave out anything that could identify a client. Complaints, conduct issues and personal details stay with staff. Send the report and dashboard to your liaison to pass on to the governing board.

Prepared by: _____

Period covered: _____

Section	What to write
Goals and results	
What we learned	
Thanks	
Plan for the next six months, or next year's goals at year end	
Decisions or support we need from the nonprofit and governing board	

B-T17 FILL-IN TOOL

Transition memo

From chapter 12 of the playbook, page 29. Hand over cleanly. Contacts and records stay with staff. Give staff any files they need, then delete your copies unless they tell you otherwise.

Prepared by:

Item	Where it is, or what to know
Roster and term dates	
Give-or-get status	
Calendar, bookings and deadlines	
Promises still open (sponsors, venues, members), who on staff handles each, and by when	
Contacts (held by staff)	
Accounts (social media, email, shared files): who has access, and what staff should change	
This year's dashboard	
Open issues, who handles each, and by when (leave out complaints and personal details; staff hold those)	
Working agreement	
Advice to my successor	

Handover meeting with my successor and our liaison:

Incoming chair:

Check-in 30 days later:

About this toolkit

About this toolkit. These tools go with Lead Your Associate Board, a playbook for chairs and co-chairs, written by CariClub. They are general information, not legal, tax or insurance advice. Your nonprofit's policies and your liaison's guidance come first.

About CariClub. CariClub places accomplished professionals on associate, advisory and governing nonprofit boards, prepares them to serve well, and supports them through every stage of service. Building board leaders since 2016. Members bring experience from firms like KKR, Davis Polk, Morgan Stanley, Deloitte, EY and Unilever.

For nonprofits: CariClub is available at no cost to approved nonprofits and their staff. Request access at cariclub.com/nonprofits · nonprofits@cariclub.com

For associate board members: if you already serve on an associate board, your staff liaison can invite you to limited CariClub access: your board's room on CariClub and the first three modules of BoardLaureate. For full access, including searching for other board roles, most members join through their employer. If yours isn't a CariClub partner yet, request access at cariclub.com and we'll work with you to bring your employer on, or you can join on your own.



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Lead Your Associate Board: Toolkit

Seventeen tools for your year as chair or co-chair.

Available at no cost to approved nonprofits and their staff. Request access at cariclub.com/nonprofits · nonprofits@cariclub.com

Companion guide: Start an Associate Board, for nonprofits starting one.