



Fundamental Steps to Take to be Nominated/Elected to a Board Randy A. Jones, PhD, RN, FAAN

Nurse leaders not only play critical roles as members of clinical healthcare teams that deliver direct patient care, but also as board members. Nurses' daily interaction with patients, families, and other healthcare providers along with knowledge and expertise related to the healthcare system enables nurses to be great candidates to be on boards. Effective nurse leaders are transformational, and they have developed or are in the process of developing the skills to stretch the boundaries of the profession and the healthcare field. Those skills may include, but not limited to good communication skills, forward thinking, innovative, a problem-solver, and inspirational. Historically, nurses have not been included on boards that have major impact on healthcare. Being a board member comes with great responsibility, and nurses make great contributions to boards in different ways. First, how does one become nominated or elected to be on a board? This essay provides some insight that may help you prepare.

When thinking about serving on a specific board, **take inventory of your skills you have acquired from previous board membership experiences.** This will enable you to identify what skills you may be lacking and what other experiences are needed. If you have never been on a board, then consider joining a community-based nonprofit organization that you are passionate about and matches your expertise/values to gain experience. Consider utilizing a board-readiness tool, such as the AAN Board-Readiness Self Assessment Worksheet. This worksheet can assist you in determining your readiness to serve on an aspiring board, and helps you self-identify your current and needed skills.

You should have **an understanding of what skills are needed by the board you are interested to serve on.** Look at the organization's mission, values, and vision statements, current/past board members' biographies, and the organization's financial statements (if available). Obtain as much information about the board as you can to see if it will be a good fit for your own personal/professional values, as well as if you would be equipped to serve effectively on the board if appointed. Find ways to enhance or develop the skills that you may lack to help prepare you for a particular board. Be familiar with the aspiring board's bylaws and understand the board's fiduciary/legal /voting processes (if available), which would aid in your preparation and effectiveness on the board if appointed (Stalter & Arms, 2016). This information may be available on the organizations' website, newsletters, or other public documents. Viewing the board's website or other related documents may provide you with limited information. This is where connecting with a previous or current board member may be beneficial.

Utilize your network of friends, colleagues, and associates who may have been on the board you are interested in or a similar board. Ask them about the responsibilities and skills you should have to be effective to serve on the board. Let them know that you are interested in serving, and ask them about the process to be nominated/elected for a position on the board. If you do not know a previous board member personally, then reach out to organizations that you are a member and ask organizations that foster nurses being on boards (i.e. American Academy of Nursing, Nurses on Boards Coalition, American Nurses Association, Campaign for Action by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and AARP). **Note:** If you are someone who is currently on several boards, consider seeking out and invite a nurse to participate as a board member, particularly if you are rotating off of a board and believe it would be beneficial for that position to be filled by a nurse.

Investigating the board you are interested in, identifying your skills and board-readiness, and making it known to others that you are interested in serving on a board, will help you in your journey to be nominated/elected to serve on a board. Remember that if you are nominated and not elected the first time for the board appointment that you aspire to, do not give up. Be persistent and try again the next time there is a vacancy on the board or seek another board that may be a better fit.

Reference

Stalter, A., Arms, D., (February 26, 2016) "Serving on Organizational Boards: What Nurses Need to Know" *OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing* Vol. 21 No. 2.