



Similarities and Differences Between Governmental and Private Agency Boards

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This essay opens a dialogue on the *Similarities and Differences Between Governmental and Private Agency Boards*, especially Federal Councils, Boards and Task Forces relative to Hospital, Professional Association and other such private boards. It is important to consider such similarities and differences since most of us move among the different types of Boards or may sit on several Boards at one time.

There are a number of similarities among the Boards. One major likeness is that regardless of the type of Board, the focus and topic of the agency must be one that you are excited about and can be committed to, in the sense of time and involvement. Membership on Boards requires providing time and often, financial resources. Thus, the topic or focus of the Board/Agency needs to be one that you are passionate about, enjoy working with and draw energy from being involved in it.

Another similarity is selecting Agency/Boards focusing on topics that you can contribute knowledge and expertise to the group discussions. The agenda for the Board needs to contain items that you are able and want to contribute to from your background. It is important to remember that the strongest arguments and recommendations are based on science/research and professional experience. In addition, as an AAN member, our goal is to bring science into policy. This does not vary by what type of Board on which we are functioning.

Differences exist among Boards, such as level of policy impact and need for discretion. Level of policy impact obviously varies among federal and more locally based private Boards/Agencies as a direct result of their underlying jurisdiction and responsibility. For example, recommending a quality measure for health care evaluation within a Hospital Board could impact the care for all patients within that specific Agency. On a Federal Board, such a recommendation influences health care for large populations of patients. The important issue is being aware of the level of impact because some recommendations may be excellent for a hospital but not be generalizable to large populations. Thus, the nature of your comments and recommendations may change.

Boards differ on the amount of discretion requested and on what types of issues. On private Boards, quality measures for agency performance and financial issues/data are often shared by the central organization but individual Board members are asked not to speak on such issues. While on Federal Boards/Councils/Task Forces, members may be asked not to share data being used for decisions or the ultimate recommendations of the group until formal reports or statements are released. Thus, the need for discretion is required for almost all Boards but the focus of the request for silence varies by the type of Board and its' purpose.

This essay addresses only a few of the similarities and differences among governmental and private Boards. Members need to understand and respect these characteristics in order to adjust discussions and recommendations.