

## PCPC : Parent Co-Operative Preschool Corporation

### Filling the Gap: Recruiting New Directors for Your Board!

When the topic of recruitment is raised at Board meetings, it is often met with sighs of despair or a blanket of silence. Directors rack their brains for potential candidates and inevitably someone decides to approach a friend out of desperation. Many view Board member recruitment as one of the least desirable and most difficult duties of their term. However, in many cases, the stress of recruitment can be avoided by simply defining the process ahead of time.

#### **Why Define a Recruitment Process for Your Centre?**

Why do organizations use a process to recruit paid staff? The answer is simple: to find the best person for the job. It would be unthinkable for a manager or human resources NOT to solicit a number of qualified candidates who are then required to follow a defined application and interview process. An undefined process would not take into account the needs of the organization or responsibility to clients and co-workers. Recruiting for a volunteer Board position is just as important as recruiting for a paid position and should be undertaken with the same care and diligence.

#### **Defining Available Positions on Your Board**

The first place to start in the recruitment process is defining the position that needs to be filled. In order to determine the need of the Board, start by making a list of all positions both filled and unfilled. Include a list of term expiry dates so you know when the next position will ultimately need to be filled. Write a job description for each role and follow the format of a paid position. Define both the job and the qualities of your preferred candidate. At minimum, include the following categories:

- ✓ Experience, which may include areas like general Board experience, a specific role such as a chairperson, skills in defined areas such as finance, or practical experience from a field connected to your mission
- ✓ Personal attributes, such as a team player, results-oriented or a decision-maker
- ✓ Technical competencies, such as computer skills if your Board requires report writing or online document sharing

On a broader level, you should define what qualities are needed to create a solid working dynamic within the Board. Passion for the organization should be at the top of the list, but other areas to consider may include the ability to meet time commitments or contribution to Board diversity through areas such as age, gender, or geographic representation.

Remember to refer to your strategic plan and be sure to include any attributes necessary for meeting position or general Board goals.

#### **When and Where to Look for a New Board Member**

Filling a specific position does not preclude you from developing leads throughout the year. Board members should be encouraged to network with potential candidates on an ongoing basis and stay connected in case a position should become available. Unforeseen circumstances could mean that an opening becomes available on the Board prior to an expiring term. Again, just like with paid positions, keep resumes on file and follow the development of future applicants.

When an opening on the Board becomes available, make sure to let the world know about it! You want to generate several qualified applicants so that you can, in fact, choose the best person for the job. Candidates may come to you, but most of the time applicants are solicited. In fact, many people believe that you need to be invited and they will not simply throw their hat into the ring. Mention the position opening at events sponsored by your organization and those that may have potential candidates such as centre networking evenings. Advertise on your website and in your organization's newsletter. Your current directors are your best recruitment ambassadors so charge them with spreading the word! Remember, it's in their best interest to find the best fit for their team.

#### **So You Have a Potential Candidate, Now What?**

Now that you have a candidate, you need to start a timely (and enthusiastic!) process to determine suitability for both parties. Appointing a Nomination Committee helps with this process as they can be a single and streamlined point of contact. A good process usually includes these three steps:

- ✓ **Application:** The application should include contact information, a statement about why the candidate is applying for the job and is interested in the organization, and a resume.
- ✓ **Orientation:** In order to ensure a good match, it's best to make sure the potential candidate has a solid understanding of the organization and position. A good orientation package should be provided that includes:
  - ✓ Organizational chart and position descriptions
  - ✓ Current Board member and executive director biographies

- ✓ Board member responsibilities
- ✓ The Centre's annual report
- ✓ The most recent audited financial statement
- ✓ The Centre's strategic plan
- ✓ The Centre's most recent newsletter and/or brochure
- ✓ Questions that a candidate should consider about any organization

After the orientation material has been reviewed, it's advisable to have the candidate attend a Board meeting to get a feel for the organization and the Board's working style. Follow up with a call to find out how the candidate felt about the meeting.

- ✓ **Interview:** There are a number of different ways to interview the candidate. The timing and interviewer will be determined by your Board but should include at least preliminary and final interview with each of two different Board members, one being the President of the Board. Be prepared with specific question just like you would with a paid staff position. During this part of the process it's important to keep an open dialogue so that all questions from the candidate and the organization are answered.

## **You're Hired!**

Once your search has been successful and a new Board member has been voted in, you need to make sure they are up and running as soon as possible. Have the following documents ready:

- Board manual
- Contract to sign outlining duties, terms of service, time commitment and financial contribution (if applicable)
- Conflict of Interest Statement

Review the documents with the candidate and also provide any hands-on training that is necessary. If possible, provide a 'new hire orientation' that addresses the basics of functioning within the Board, such as communication procedures, so that the experience starts off on a positive note. Ask current Board members for feedback on what they would have liked to know at the beginning.

## **The Final Step!**

Sit back and watch the success that your recruitment process has delivered! Lather, rinse and repeat.