



# **Survey of Nonprofit Board Attitudes and Effectiveness**

## **Summary of Results**

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## Summary of Results

This survey aimed to capture information about the composition, functions and performance of nonprofit boards in Australia. A total of 54 nonprofit board members participated in this survey.

### *Participant Demographics and Board Involvement*

The typical participant in this survey was male, aged between 45 and 64 years, and employed on a full-time permanent basis. Around one third of participants had completed tertiary qualifications.

Most participants had been serving on nonprofit boards for more than 5 years, though the majority had served on their current board for less than four years. Although one participant reported serving on five or more nonprofit boards concurrently, most participants (62%) served on only one.

The majority of participants reported spending less than 10 hours per month serving on nonprofit boards, and almost all (72%) reported incurring a personal financial cost (average \$112 per month) from their involvement on the board.

### *Identification with the Organisation*

In general, participants reported a high level of identification with their nonprofit organisation, with the majority of participants indicating either agreement or strong agreement with statements such as *“I am very interested in what others think about my organisation”* and *“The organisation’s successes are my successes.”*

### *Preparation for Board Meetings*

Generally, most participants indicated either agreement or strong agreement with statements regarding mental preparation (e.g. *“I think about how the meeting will run based on past experience”*) and behavioural preparation (e.g. *“I read board papers and pre-meeting information”*) for board meetings. On another question, just over half (51%) of participants indicated a moderate degree of preparation overall for their nonprofit board meetings, indicating that the statement (*“I spend time ensuring I read the papers and thinking in quite some detail about the meeting prior to attendance”*) best described their meeting preparation habits.

### *Board Roles*

Participants reported that their boards placed comparable importance on a wide range of functions. Generally, results indicated that boards focussed on strategic, rather than financial, measures when evaluating expenditure, assessing management's performance, and recruiting CEOs.

### *Board Effectiveness and Performance*

Overall, participants attributed high levels of performance to their nonprofit board across a number of domains, including strategy, risk management, and ensuring an appropriate governance system is in place and operative. Indeed, for all board functions bar one, most participants rated their board's performance as either "good" or "very good." Similar results were observed with regards to the nonprofit organisation's management and the organisation itself.

### *Satisfaction and Intentions to Leave*

On the whole, a large majority of participants (over three quarters) reported either agreement or strong agreement with a series of statements in this section (e.g. *"I am satisfied with the board on which I serve"*), indicating a high degree of satisfaction with their current nonprofit board. Similarly, the majority of participants indicated that they definitely did not intend to resign from their nonprofit board for any reason in the near future. Further, no participants indicated a definite intention to leave.

### *Congruence, Culture and Perceived Cohesion*

Participants generally reported a high degree of alignment between their own goals and those of their nonprofit organisation. All participants indicated either strong agreement or agreement with the statements *"The goals of the organisation are worthwhile"* and *"The goals of this organisation are important to me"*, while 85 percent indicated either strong agreement or agreement with the statement *"The goals of this organisation match my own goals."* Similarly, most participants reported that they fit well with their board, felt a sense of belonging to the board, and were content to be part of the board.

Participants reported that their board generally valued a broad range of characteristics. Among the most highly valued characteristics were: participation and open discussion; outcome excellence and quality; board member concerns and ideas; getting the job done; morale and pulling together to do the work; and sharing and communicating information well with board members.

### *Psychological Safety*

Very few participants indicated that they felt threatened or uncomfortable when acting on their nonprofit board. Overall, the majority of participants reported feeling as though they could comfortably express opinions, raise difficult issues, take risks, and ask for help when serving on the board, without fear of reprisal or negative consequences.

### *Organisational Change*

The general trend in results indicates that participants' nonprofit boards were typically positively affected by organisational and structural change, with the majority of participants indicating wither agreement or strong agreement with the statements *"The board is positively impacted by organisational change"*, and *"From my perspective, changes to the board have been for the better."* Further, most participants considered themselves open to changes to the board, their roles on the board, and how they conduct their work on the board.