

Program offers support, information

Volunteer board members have an exceptional role to play within a non-profit organization, but sometimes understanding that role can be challenging and confusing.

The Board Development Program is hoping to change that by providing volunteer board members with information and resources like workshops, consultative services and resource materials on how to build a strong, effective board.

Cheryl Natrass, co-ordinator of the Board Development Program, explains that the program was the result of a need for training board members of performing arts organizations in the early 1980s.

WIDE RANGE OF RESOURCES

The workshops, she says, were so successful that the program made their services available to a variety of non-profit organizations.

"Anyone is welcome to call the office to discuss board governance issues and if we don't have the information necessary, we can make referrals to a wide range of resources," she says.



Resources like information bulletins that explore topics from policy development to legal and ethical issues can be found on their website, along with workbooks and a video that explains board roles and responsibilities.

The program's workshops are provided to organizations across the province on just about anything related to board development.

Natrass notes that some of the top ongoing issues boards face include understanding roles and responsibilities, how the board relates to the rest of the organization, building and maintaining strong relationships between board and senior staff, and how to recruit and orient new members.

To address these complex topics, the Board Development Program relies on volunteer instructors to deliver workshops

IT'S ONE-STOP SHOPPING FOR VOLUNTEER BOARD MEMBERS

across the province.

"We recruit and train people who are experienced board members or staff in non-profits to do these workshops," she explains.

There are no set requirements to volunteer, but having experience in non-profit organizations is a must-have.

"We also look at the whole person - what experiences they've had - to see if they are a good fit."

Volunteers receive extensive training and support before venturing out for their first workshop.

They learn a series of modules on common board issues, then take part in a peer learning process where volunteers have the chance to present a mock workshop to gain feedback.

The next application date to become a volunteer workshop instructor is Friday.

The workshops run on weekends from September through June, excluding long weekends.

Non-profit organizations and board members interested in taking advantage of the unique services offered by the Board Development Program can visit www.albertabdp.ca, email bdp@gov.ab.ca or call 780-427-2001 for more information.

LOOKING FOR IDEAS

To learn about volunteerism, visit www.volunteeredmonton.com.

Look to this space to see the work that the city's volunteers and non-profit organizations are carrying out and what it is that Volunteer Edmonton is involved in. For more information or suggestions for story ideas, please contact Evelyn Pham, communications co-ordinator, at epham@volunteeredmonton.com or call 780-732-6655

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