



## “Board Buddy” Program

### What is the purpose of board buddies?

Board buddies engage with new board members to promote individual and organizational learning.

### What is the goal of board buddies?

The foundation membership committee created the mentoring program to make new members feel welcome, connected to their fellow members, and invested in the mission of the organization.

### Recommendations for board buddies:

- Meet before the new member’s first board meeting.  
Meet in person to get to know one another. Help the new member know what to expect at the first board meeting (including what to wear, how the meeting flows, and any practices that may be unique). Use this as a time to gather information to use in introducing the new board member at their first meeting (this should be more than getting a copy of his or her bio).
- Sit next to each other at board meetings.  
If the mentor sits next to the new board member, they can act as a coach - quietly providing additional background information, translating terms and acronyms, and help them navigate through the board materials.
- Follow-up between meetings.  
Debriefing after meetings is especially important for new board members who may be looking for some additional information, a bit of history, or the perspective that a long-time board member can bring. This is especially important if they miss a meeting. Participation and perspective are important for the health and effectiveness of the board.
- Ultimately, the mentor should be the go-to peer to answer questions, bounce ideas off of, and help explain organizational practices and history.

### Mentoring Do’s and Don’ts

- **Do** establish points of connection early on in the relationship. **Don’t** assume because you serve together that you know each other.
- **Do** be sensitive to the day-to-day needs of your buddy. **Don’t** forget to find out what else is on your buddy’s plate.
- **Do** identify and utilize multiple venues for communication. **Don’t** rely on face-to-face interaction alone.
- **Do** set a regular contact schedule. **Do** be understanding and flexible.
- **Do** check regularly on the effectiveness of communication. **Don’t** assume that the messages you are sending are being received or understood.
- **Do** talk about the effectiveness of the mentoring process. **Don’t** forget to evaluate learning progress.

Sources: BoardSource, Starboard Leadership Consulting