



Boards for All

Introduction





Background

The belief that underlies our pursuit of basic human rights stipulates all persons must be guaranteed equal opportunities to life and liberty. As echoed in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, this international human rights instrument of the United Nations is intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Parties to the Convention are required to promote, protect, and ensure—through policy and practice — the full enjoyment of equality under the law. Yet without comprehensible information and the availability of accessible materials, full community participation, with its concomitant opportunities and responsibilities, cannot be achieved.

Historically, people with limited literacy, intellectual disabilities or culturally diverse backgrounds have been excluded from social and governmental affairs that impacted their lives. As societies seek to expand the exercise of civil rights, increased diversity is one of the greatest transformations occurring across communities today. Governing groups are remodeling their policies and practices to capitalize on the potential offered by differences that make up their service communities, such as gender, ethnicity, economic status, and disability.

Because access to information is central to knowledgeable decision making and civic engagement, clearly designed materials in “plain” or straightforward language must be available. Access to understanding is as vital to the exercise of human rights as are curb cuts to the right of entry.



In signing the Plain Writing Act of 2010, President Barack Obama acknowledged the significance of requiring federal agencies to employ “clear Government communication that the public can understand and use.” In 2011 he also issued a new Executive Order, “Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review,” which

states that “our regulatory system must ensure that regulations are accessible, consistent, written in plain language, and easy to understand.”



Individuals with varied backgrounds can play an active role in shaping their world through meaningful participation in advocacy and governance. It is strongly believed that expanding fuller participation for the few, by providing

support and access to essential information, enriches prospects for all.

For two decades, non-profit regional centers, contracted by the state of California to provide and purchase services, have worked to enhance the quality of life for more than 250,000 persons with developmental disabilities. The Lanterman Act, which created this regionalized system, outlines responsibilities of regional center boards of directors to promote community participation in governance of these essential community agencies. Members of regional center boards must be representative of communities that are served.



Providing a means to this end, **Boards for All** presents straightforward training and tools for all users to learn about the importance of civic engagement and performing effectively as a member of a board of directors, advisory committee or community council. By delivering basic training in board governance, the series opens doors for many individuals to contribute rewardingly. Community members who had not considered the possibility of leadership in the past, due to limited literacy or disability, are enrolling to play a role in this significant work.

Boards for All is a boardsmanship webcast training sequenced with an easy-to-follow design, accessible language and tools that incorporate strategies to increase community leadership. It serves two objectives: to increase personal empowerment and create opportunities for participants to be valued community members who have influential voices.

The webcast teaches basic rules of nonprofit governance for a range of organizations, from advocacy groups to stakeholder committees and non-profit corporations with multi-million dollar budgets that deliver public services. It includes a segment on facilitation and meeting mentors to highlight the value of assisting board or committee members who may need individual support. The series also discusses the benefits of partnership with regional and statewide public agencies to facilitate wider public engagement and leadership in community, state or national organizations.



The series is divided into five short videos with worksheets that address the following topics:

- Board of Directors
- Role of Board Members
- Purpose of Committees
- Board Development
- Facilitation and Mentoring

After each video segment, the user is guided to complete a worksheet that reinforces the content presented. At the end of the series, session participants are asked to create their own leadership mission statements as they relate to volunteer participation on a board, committee or council.

Your Invitation

While the role of a board of directors can seem complicated, **Boards for All** offers an easily understood way to learn about successful engagement in community affairs and leadership by individuals with a range of backgrounds. The series assists participants when deciding whether board membership is right for them or if they need basic understanding of boardsmanship practices. Any community member who thinks of joining a board, advisory committee or council will find the video and tools useful.



Collaborators



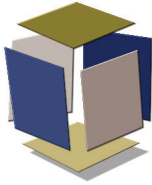
Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center

ELARC is a private, not-for-profit corporation contracting with the state of California for the provision of services to persons with developmental disabilities. The board of directors is committed to ensuring that the agency's mission is carried out by a volunteer board whose membership includes individuals with disabilities, parents, community members and others with specific skills and knowledge. <http://www.elarc.org>



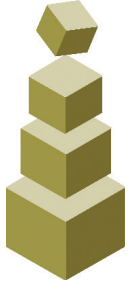
California State Council on Developmental Disabilities

SCDD is established by state and federal law to ensure people with developmental disabilities and their families receive the services and supports they need. It is composed of individuals with developmental disabilities, family members and representatives of State agencies. Members are appointed by the governor. <http://www.scdd.ca.gov>



Board Resource Center

BRC assists organizations and groups to transform their approach to leadership by integrating effective policies and services based on the ideal of inclusion. *By making complex ideas simple* using accessible approaches, people from diverse backgrounds can be contributing members of governance boards. Outcomes are accomplished in partnership with end-users as co-developers, associates, and content adaptation specialists. <http://www.brcenter.org>



The SCILS Group

A nonprofit consulting organization SCILS serves communities with personalized inclusion thinking, strategies and training that guide people with disabilities to become contributing members of their community. <http://www.scilsgroup.org>