

2011 Georgia Nonprofit Governance Index

An original research study by the Georgia Center for Nonprofits providing context and insight for citizens who serve as nonprofit board members and leaders.



with generous support from
The Home Depot Foundation

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

Nonprofit governance is both an honor and a duty. As nonprofit leaders and community stakeholders, it is critical that we understand the pragmatic elements of effective governance, and that those who accept this responsibility fully embrace the meaningfulness of their role as a governance team.

In an exercise that aims to provide a level of context for citizens who serve the public as nonprofit board members and nonprofit leaders, the Georgia Center for Nonprofits presents the **2011 Georgia Nonprofit Governance Index**, our latest original study.

This survey of nearly 300 nonprofit board members and executive directors from across the state provides an “inside view” of the pragmatic elements of current governance practices among peers. Our goal is to illuminate some of the challenges nonprofit leaders face when working to ensure board effectiveness, while providing ideas and learning opportunities for best practices.

Within the full report, the resultant data and profile of nonprofit leadership norms are examined through the lens of three key board functions:

1. **Setting direction;**
2. **Providing oversight relative to that direction;** and
3. **Ensuring adequate resources** to both achieve their mission and sustain the organization.

Within the context of these functions, we found a high level of strategic attachment and dedication to service coupled with across-the-board opportunities to strengthen nonprofit governance practices. Our study reveals that Georgia’s nonprofit boards and executive directors excel in many areas, yet disparities often arise as a result of misaligned expectations that can hinder effectiveness.

For example, when examining perceptions of board roles and performance, we found a number of differences between the board members and EDs. Board member and ED ratings were well aligned in the areas of establishing the organizational mission, board operations and financial oversight – the only area where EDs rated their boards more highly than did the board members themselves. However, significant gaps between the two groups occurred in the areas of strategic planning and board recruitment, with the greatest disparity in the areas of fundraising, engaging in advocacy, and community relations & outreach.

The results of this study attest that sector leaders have much to learn by observing peer practices, heightening their awareness and understanding of best practices, and applying this insight to a critical reexamination of their own governance practices.