

# The Board Chair/Executive Director Equation

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Roles, responsibilities, and ideas to keep the partnership  
– and your organization – healthy

Presented by:

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Cantata Singers

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# It's Challenging!

As primarily small choral arts organizations, most of us are doing a lot on a shoestring:

- ✓ Budgets are tight
- ✓ Fundraising is hard
- ✓ Performing is expensive
- ✓ We depend heavily on volunteers

**BUT we have a passion to sing!**

*So how can we set ourselves up for success?*

# Foundation for the Art



## Artistic Product

### Board

- Develops strategy to pursue the mission and attain the vision
- Ensures financial stability for the organization
- Ensures adequate resources to support operations
- Maintains a pipeline of supporters/board members
- Accountable to ensure the organization fulfills its mission

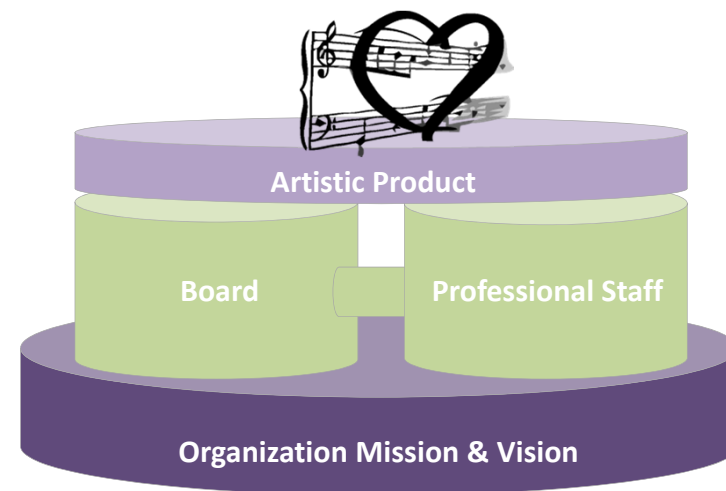
### Professional Staff

- Develops budgets and plans to implement the organizational strategy
- Handles daily operations, program delivery and concert production
- Provides data, analysis and feedback to shape future planning
- Helps structure and prioritize cultivation of audience and donors
- Leads marketing, communication and community-building activities

## Organization Mission & Vision

# The Partnership

So how do the Board Chair and Executive Director work together to keep the foundation strong?



## Pillars

1. Defined roles
2. Frequent communications
3. Mutual accountability
4. Focus on sustainability
5. Pursuit of creativity

## Points of Focus

- Collaboration with artistic leadership
- Contribution of the (often volunteer) performers
- Maintaining a sense of purpose
- Finding the joy in our music!

*What does this partnership look like in practice?*

# Partnership in Practice

## Pillar #1: Defined Roles

Points of Focus	Board Chair	Exec Dir
Collaboration with artistic leadership	Ensures a strategic plan is maintained to provide clear goals and ground rules for the artistic leadership.	Understands who has leadership/authority and when. Partners directly with AD/MD to deliver programs.
Contribution of the (often volunteer) performers	Ensures transparency and mutual understanding of how decisions are made for the organization.	Identifies/creates opportunities for operational involvement (committees, teams, events).
Maintaining a sense of purpose	Partners with ED to ensure all activities are aligned to support the mission.	Reflects back to the board how activities are working “on the ground” and advises accordingly.
Finding the joy in our music	Partners with ED to solve any problems distracting from the mission.	Forecasts “speed bumps” as far out as possible to address/eliminate, ensuring the art is front and center.

# Partnership in Practice

## Pillar #2: Communications

Points of Focus	Board Chair	Exec Dir
Collaboration with artistic leadership	Communicates guiding principles and financial guardrails to the artistic leadership.	Develops accurate information (budget, trends, etc.) so that both board and MD are able to make solid decisions.
Contribution of the (often volunteer) performers	Communicate to thank the performers and build mutual awareness of board/chorus contributions.	Serves as the go-to for questions and answers. Creates stability and structure for musicians and organization at-large.
Maintaining a sense of purpose	Focused on engaging and educating the board in the important of the mission.	With MD, generates ideas and opportunities to pursue (wisely). Works to maintain the sense of what's possible.
Finding the joy in our music	Serve as lead champion and evangelist for the choral art form and its power.	Expresses gratitude continuously; ensures organization is focused on the "why".

# Partnership in Practice

## Pillar #3: Mutual Accountability

Points of Focus	Board Chair	Exec Dir
Collaboration with artistic leadership	Focused on assuring program is aligned with mission; performance appraisal of the artistic director.	Asks the right questions. Stays in lane when necessary. Translates board's vision to MD and ensures alignment across programs.
Contribution of the (often volunteer) performers	Strategizes with ED on how to maintain a welcoming, rewarding environment for performers.	Helps decide who sends what messages. Works toward alignment of goals/processes.
Maintaining a sense of purpose	Supports ED to maintain a productive, rewarding work environment and experience for staff.	Encourages board chair/board with positive feedback and brings new ideas.
Finding the joy in our music	Recognizes ED/staff for their contributions to our success.	Reminds board chair/board of why we do what we do.

# Partnership in Practice

## Pillar #4: Sustainability

Points of Focus	Board Chair	Exec Dir
Collaboration with artistic leadership	Works with ED to set the financial guardrails for musical program.	Ensures MD understands the financial guard rails. Maintains up-to-date, accurate information.
Contribution of the (often volunteer) performers	Keeps organizational focus on ways to sustain and renew performer/volunteer engagement.	Provides organizational structure to reduce headache and frustration operationally.
Maintaining a sense of purpose	Helps activate board to support donor cultivation and communication of our value to the community.	Pushes all areas of the organization back to the mission statement.
Finding the joy in our music	Works with ED to expand the circle and bring new listeners into it.	Serves as organization's cheerleader and "thanker-in-chief". Works to keep all fulfilled.



# Partnership in Practice

## Pillar #5: Creativity

Points of Focus	Board Chair	Exec Dir
Collaboration with artistic leadership	Helps set parameters that encourage creative programming and program delivery.	Stays current with choral field trends and works to understand repertoire. Advises MD as needed.
Contribution of the (often volunteer) performers	Brainstorms with ED on ways to engage the talents of the group in new programs.	Facilitates space for feedback on current programs and operations; makes it safe to generate new ideas.
Maintaining a sense of purpose	Creates an environment that encourages out of the box thinking of ED and professional staff.	Pushes staff (professional or volunteer) to find moments of creativity instead of singular focus on day-to-day operations.
Finding the joy in our music	Prioritizes efforts to remove barriers to access and build a sense of belonging for new audiences.	Looks for ways to build a bigger “tent”. Pulls and pushes org levers to give access to the most music-makers and listeners.

# What is your experience?

## 5 Pillars

**Defined Roles**

Gather with your “pillar”  
discussion group

**Communications**

Compare experiences and ideas:

- What do you do to “live” the pillar?
- What obstacles do you face that you’d like help with?

**Mutual Accountability**

**Sustainability**

Prepare to share your strategies  
and challenges with the whole  
group

**Creativity**

# Parting Thoughts



*It's not just about doing the work;  
it's about HOW you do the work.*

*Investment in the Board Chair/Executive  
Director relationship ensures the organization  
– and the choral art form – thrives!*

# Thank you!

## Questions?

Feel free to contact us:

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# Additional Resources

**Board of Trustees Job Description**  
**Executive Director Job Description**

# Job Description

## Member, Board of Trustees

The primary role of the Trustees of Cantata Singers, Inc. is to ensure that the organization is fulfilling its mission, and to be accountable for the overall health, viability, and effectiveness of the organization. The following guidelines and expectations have been developed so that each individual Trustee understands his/her role in ensuring that the primary role of the Board of Trustees is successfully accomplished. Trustees are elected to a three-year term, with the potential to be re-nominated for additional terms.

- Understand and commit to Cantata Singers' mission, vision and values, and be able to articulate them to the wider world,
- Be an ambassador for Cantata Singers in the community,
- Each Board member shall hold no less than one paid season subscription and attend all concerts, bringing friends, business associates, family, whenever possible. Complimentary tickets can be reserved on a first come, first served basis as they are available and should be used as tools to introduce new people to the Cantata Singers in the hopes that they will become potential subscribers, individual ticket buyers, corporate sponsors or cultivation prospects for board membership,
- Help identify and cultivate relationships with potential donors, board members and volunteers.
- Participate in the fund raising process,
- Regularly attend and participate in CS board meetings. Review meeting materials in advance, and be an active discussion participant,
- Be informed about CS and the challenges and opportunities present in the Boston musical scene,
- Give an annual financial contribution to the best of one's personal ability. It is suggested that the Trustee contribution include both a base line annual trustee gift as well as support for additional fund-raising campaigns (e.g., Gift of Music, auctions, etc.),
- As appropriate, use personal and professional contacts and expertise for the benefit of the organization,
- Be available to serve on a committee or task force.

# Job Description

## Executive Director, Cantata Singers

The Executive Director is a visionary leader who will—with creativity and administrative acumen—lead the organization through growth, opportunity, and continued artistic excellence. As the organization’s chief administrative officer, the Executive Director is responsible for the overall management and oversight of Cantata Singers’ finances, development, artistic performances, and long-range planning. The Executive Director reports to the board of trustees, works in creative partnership with the Music Director, and oversees the staff.

### **Fundraising**

As the organization’s chief development officer, develop and oversee a fundraising strategy that brings in annual contributed revenue to meet programmatic needs. Effort includes cultivating and soliciting leadership gifts, grant-writing, special events, and supporting annual giving initiatives. Engage the board of trustees in the cultivation process, activating trustee networks and ensuring the development of strong relationship between the organization and its donors.

### **Financial Management**

Develop and monitor all budgets using the model of a three year forward program plan and budget. Facilitate the process of reconciling programmatic demands and creativity with budget and fundraising feasibility. In partnership with the Marketing and Finance Associate, oversee the development of all financial reports and statements.

### **Marketing**

With the goal of continuing robust and diversified earned income, oversee all marketing efforts and brand development.

### **Artistic Planning**

Work in close partnership with the Music Director and Production and Education Manager. Support the development of musical and educational programming that fulfills Cantata Singers’ mission with vibrancy and vitality on stage and in the classroom. Collaborate with artists, and understand the symbiotic relationship between an organization’s business model and artistic aspirations.

### **External Relations**

Represent Cantata Singers to its diverse constituents, including funders, musicians, audience members, and the community at large. Develop and sustain strategic partnerships that build the visibility and reputation of the ensemble.

### **Administration and Planning**

Work with the board of trustees to develop, and with the staff to execute on, strategic priorities in all key operational areas. Build on the strategic planning and operations foundation established over the past 5 years to help ensure the organization continues to thrive in a changing landscape. Hire, supervise, and cultivate the professional growth of a small, dedicated, and talented administrative staff.