Effective Board Recruitment:
Preparing for Success with a Blue Ribbon Nominating Committee

This worksheet will help your Board accomplish one of its most important roles: finding great people to join you in advancing your mission. Following the steps below, you'll attract people who will make specific contributions to your priority goals and strategies, instead of recruiting around a list of more abstract categories of skills and networks. The steps will also enable you to recruit beyond your own circle of acquaintances by tapping the networks of other knowledgeable and influential people who support your mission. The vehicle for gathering their input is a "Blue Ribbon Nominating Committee.

The steps are as follows:

A. Be clear and specific about what you need from Board members **now**, given the organizations goals and priorities.
B. Assess how the current Board fits those needs,
C. Identify the specific gaps in skills and networks to fill with new Board members who are able and willing to take action.
D. With your needs clear, brainstorm names of people who support your mission, but are likely not candidates for the Board themselves, for a variety of reasons.
E. Invite them to participate in one meeting of a "Blue Ribbon Nominating Committee" to help you identify great potential candidates given the organization's needs.
F. Prioritize the names generated by the Committee and reach out to your top choices. Use the name of the Blue Ribbon Committee member as your introduction.

Please note: These guidelines are for medium to large size communities, but the process is sound for any sized community or group. Feel free to adapt the target numbers to fit the size of your community.

References and Resources:

Blue Ribbon Nominating Committee for your Board, Jan Masaoka, www.BlueAvocado.org, 4/2/2011
You Don't Need a Big Board, You Need a Better Board: 5 Lessons to Effectively Recruit New Members; Emily Hall, www.TheOliveGrove.com
Ditch Your Board Composition Matrix, Jan Masaoka, BlueAvocado.org, 6/11/2012
Right from the Start: What your Board Needs in Three Easy Tables, Karen Beavor, Georgia Center for Nonprofits at www.Bridgespan.org (see first table)
Board Building: Recruiting and Developing Effective Board Members for Nonprofit Organizations, Muttart Foundation et al, 2008

A. What do you need to do over the next 1-2 years?

Based on your mission and your priority goals and strategies for the next year or two, what are the things you are going to need your Board to do well? Be as specific as possible about the activities the Board, a Board committee, or an individual on the Board can spearhead.

Key Strategy	Specific tasks that Board members could take on

B. Do you have the right people on board already?

Analyze the current composition of the Board- what tasks can existing Board members take on? What, if anything is missing in terms of skills, connections or representation to accomplish what you need to do?

Board member	Current expertise and role, potential to take on new tasks

C. What gaps do you need to fill? Why would someone say yes?

Task	The "pitch" to a potential Board member in terms of how they would make a difference by joining the Board?

Top three priority tasks:

D. Who could you approach for recommended names?

Organize a "Blue Ribbon Nominating Committee" of about 25 people, who like your organization but are unlikely to join the Board themselves (too busy, too famous, not a "meeting person"!). Invite them to participate in one meeting for 90 minutes to help you surface great candidates for your Board. The meeting will include lunch, and an update on the organization's priorities. Call them personally, then follow up with email. Make them feel valued for this serious task!

Name	Why? (what kinds of people might they connect you with?)	Who should contact

F. Blue Ribbon Committee Agenda Checklist

Meeting attendees confirmed (expect about half of those you ask to be able to attend)

Agenda

Serve a nice meal! (30 minutes)

Welcome: Board Chair and/or Executive Director:
(15 minutes) Welcome and introduction of the organization's current programs, strategic priorities, and opportunities and challenges the organization faces. State the most critical actions that you hope can be accomplished by new Board members.

Group discussion:
(30 minute) Ask the group to suggest 3-5 names each, indicating ow they think each person could contribute. Record all names in a visible place (e.g. whiteboard). Encourage people to build off each other's ideas, and reference the critical priorities as needed to be sure all are addressed. If members of the Committee are interested in themselves serving, note that as well. You should then have a list of 35-50 potential Board members from which you can draw current year recruits, committee members and future year recruits.

Closing: Board Chair or Executive Director:
(15 minutes) Thank you, thank you! Provide timetable for when you'll be making decisions on who to invite.

G. Potential New Board Members as Recommended by Blue Ribbon Committee

Take the list of potential members and decide which people you would like to approach first. Be sure that everyone on your Board is familiar with the protocol for how your organization goes about extending formal invitations (e.g. are they invited to a Board meeting first? Do they have to fill out an application? etc) so that no one is invited prematurely!

Keep the list of potential candidates for future committee and board recruitment.

Name	Who recommended?	What can we ask them to do	Priority