

Standard 3: Board Accountability

The Prairie Enthusiasts board acts ethically in conducting the affairs of the organization and carries out the board's legal and financial responsibilities as required by law.

Practice 3A: Board Responsibility

It is the policy of TPE that Board of Directors ensures the ultimate effectiveness, sustainability, health and integrity of the organization. The Board approves programs and projects, either specifically or by category; manages the organizational structure; oversees the committees; approves the annual plan and budget; and exercises independent oversight of the performance of the organization. The Board guarantees the accountability of TPE by assuring that it (a) achieves appropriate results for its members and (b) avoids unacceptable activities, conditions, and decisions.

It is the ongoing responsibility of the Board to monitor TPE to assess its progress towards goals and its compliance with standards and guidelines and to reevaluate the policies of TPE in light of changing circumstances, new opportunities, and new dangers.

In carrying out these responsibilities, the Board

1. Evaluates TPE's organizational effectiveness and performance, requiring the Board to
 - consider, determine and evaluate the mission and philosophy;
 - ensure effective organizational planning;
 - select, collaborate with and evaluate staff;
 - approve the annual budget and plan and monitor performance thereunder;
 - evaluate organizational performance and communicate results of reviews to Board and staff.
2. Safeguards the legal integrity of TPE.
3. Ensures the fiscal health of TPE, requiring the Board to
 - consider, determine and evaluate major resource allocations;
 - help develop and solicit sources of support;
 - develop and monitor investment policies.
4. Serves as a link between TPE, its membership and the community at large, requiring the Board to
 - communicate public interests and concerns to TPE;
 - represent TPE to the public, especially to potential sources of financial support;
 - represent TPE to other organizations through linkages to other Boards;
 - enhance TPE's public image and community and governmental relations.
5. Enhances Board performance, requiring the Board to
 - assess general Board and individual board member performance;
 - ensure that individual board members understand TPE's mission through a regular process of training and orientation;
 - ensure a regular process of Board assessment and development;
 - assist in identifying potential new Board and committee members;
 - ensure Board's responsiveness to TPE's needs.

Practice 3B. Board Composition

The composition of the Board is described in the TPE ByLaws.

At-Large Members. The names and resumes of at-large board member nominees are brought before the TPE Board Development Committee for evaluation and review. The committee reviews resumes and interviews the individuals. At-large members are selected for diverse skills, backgrounds, and experiences and their commitment to board service (refer to the Appendix Z, Board Profile Grid). Names of qualified nominees are brought before the Board for a vote.

Board Member Job Description. All board members (chapter representatives and members-at-large) review and sign the Board Member Job Description (Appendix Z). This document describes their responsibilities to The Prairie Enthusiasts and to the other Board Members. It also describes what the member can expect in return.

Board Member Training. The Board Development Committee, working closely with the board chair and the staff, ensures all Board members receive the Board Member Handbook, which includes information on how to find the bylaws, articles of incorporation, a description of programs and services, the current budget, last audited financial statements, a list of board members and their addresses, lists of committees and any staff assignments, copies of minutes for the previous year and a copy of the organization's strategic plan. The Committee assigns a mentor board member to work with the new board member at least through the first several months.

Practice 3C. Board Governance

It is the policy of TPE that the Board meets no fewer than six times per year.

Each Board member will do their best to attend each meeting, with the understanding that three consecutive unexcused absences will be considered resignation from the Board (refer to Appendix Z, Board Member Job Description).

Practice 3D. Preventing Minority Rule

The Prairie Enthusiasts' bylaws prevent a minority of board members from acting for the organization without proper delegation of authority.

Practice 3E. Delegation of Decision-Making Authority

The Board cannot participate directly in all activities of TPE. There have been and continue to be numerous delegations of the authority of the Board to enable the organization to operate. All delegations require appropriate reports back to the Board through minutes of meetings, through periodic reports at board meetings, or through the business manager. Urgency of reporting depends on the nature of the subject matter, the risk to TPE or others, the degree to which existing policies fail to provide guidance for action, the speed with which the circumstance develops, the length of time before the next Board meeting, and similar considerations; any question concerning the need for a report at all or a more rapid report than the minutes should be resolved by reporting or reporting by telephone to the President.

Delegation to Officers. The officers of TPE are its president, vice president, treasurer, immediate past president and secretary, who are all members of the Board elected in accordance with the bylaws and constitute the Executive Committee. The day-to-day policy oversight of TPE is delegated to the Executive Committee, which is in frequent communication with the executive director or chief staff person as appropriate to the specific responsibilities of each officer.

Delegation to Chapters. The Board has delegated to each of the chapters the responsibility to manage the prairies and oak savannas subject to the limits imposed by the Board–approved work program and budget, and Board policies and directives. Each chapter remains subject to the approved annual plan and budget and subject to the obligation to report to the Board through minutes or, if there is need for urgency, to the president.


Delegation to Committees. Committees may be established at the direction of the Board of Directors or the President. Committee members may be derived from the Board or the President may appoint members from the general membership to serve on the committee. All Board members are expected to serve on at least one committee. Committee chairs are either appointed by the President, or the President may direct the committee to select a chair from their ranks.

Delegation to Staff. TPE staff is accountable to the Executive Committee. The Committee delegates responsibilities to the appropriate staff through written policies, Board resolutions, job descriptions and annual performance reviews.

Practice 3F. Board Approval of Land Transactions

The Board has delegated decision-making authority on transactions to the Land Protection Committee. The committee charter defines the limits to that authority, the criteria for transactions, the procedures for managing conflicts of interest, and the timely notification of the full board of any completed transactions. The Board periodically evaluates the effectiveness of these policies.

Appendix Z. Board Profile Grid

									
Skills & Knowledge									
Accounting/Financial									
Fundraising									
Strategic Planning									
Nonprofit Mgmt									
Coordinate Volunteers									
P.R./Marketing									
Website/Publications									
Legal Issues									
Education									
Biology/Site Ecology									
Grassroots Organizing									
Real Estate/Easements									
Burn Expertise									
Build Memberships									
Special Events									
Contacts & Influence									
Business Community									
Banking									
Legal Profession									
Media									
Government Agencies									
Conservation Orgs									
Native Tribes									

Social Organizations									
Demographics									
Male									
Female									
Under 45 Years									
Over 45 years									
Hunter/Fisher									
Restoration landowner									
Remnant landowner									

Responsibilities

The TPE Board as a whole has responsibility for governing the entire organization. The Board is responsible for establishing the organization's mission, determining strategic direction and setting policies to carry out the mission, and, as required by law, the oversight of the organization's finances and operations.

The following describes your responsibilities to The Prairie Enthusiasts and to the other Board Members. It also describes what you can expect in return.

What Board Members Provide	What Board Members Can Expect in Return
I will give my best effort to “hit the ground running” when beginning my service with the Board.	TPE will provide you a full orientation, including background information on work accomplished to date.
I will learn about TPE’s mission and programs, and be able to describe them accurately.	TPE will provide you with relevant materials and education.
I understand that the Board meets six times per year, plus one annual full-day retreat. I will do my best to attend each meeting, with the understanding that three consecutive unexcused absences will be considered resignation from the Board.	Board meetings to be well run and productive, with a focus on decision making rather than reporting. I understand that agendas will be distributed at least one week in advance. If I wish to add items to the agenda, I will contact the business manager at least two weeks in advance.
I accept fiduciary responsibility for TPE and will oversee its financial health and integrity.	Timely, accurate, and complete financial statements are distributed at least quarterly, one week in advance of the relevant board meeting. I also expect to be trained to interpret these financial statements.
I accept ethical responsibility and will help to hold fellow board members, the business manager (and, by extension, the full staff) to professional standards.	TPE will provide you with relevant training.
I will serve as an ambassador to the community and to other organizations to educate others and promote TPE’s work.	TPE will provide materials to do this job effectively.
I commit to increasing my skills as a board member.	TPE will provide you with appropriate training and support.

What Board Members Provide	What Board Members Can Expect in Return
I will participate in fundraising to ensure that TPE has the resources it needs to meet its mission. I commit to making a personal donation (above and beyond membership dues and the annual appeal). TPE will be among the top three charities I support each year that I am on the board.	TPE will provide a range of fundraising activities, and you can expect relevant training and support to help you fulfill your obligations. You have the option of fulfilling your personal pledge in monthly or quarterly installments if you choose.
I will support the business manager and provide on-going assistance as requested by the business manager. I will support the executive committee in their performance review of the business manager.	The performance evaluation will be based on goals developed jointly by the president and the business manager.
I will follow adopt and enforce TPE policies regarding land use, prescribed burns, and land ownership.	TPE policies are posted to the website.
If I am a chapter representative to the board I will communicate with the chapter leaders before board meetings so they are aware of issues on the agenda and I will communicate with them after the board meeting so they are aware of decisions made by the board.	Board meetings will be set at least two months in advance. Meeting minutes will be provided to me within two weeks after the board meeting. In addition, all approved board meeting minutes are posted to the TPE website.

I understand and agree to these responsibilities:

Signed

Date