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How to Start a Nonprofit | Step 2: Build a Solid Foundation

The Board of Directors

Just as it “takes a village to raise a child,” it takes much more than a solo founder to create a nonprofit. Having lots of people willing to help launch a nonprofit – as board members, other volunteers, and advisors – can signal broad community support and a better chance of future success.

Every nonprofit has an initial board of directors to comply with state law in the state of incorporation.

In addition, while state laws vary, most require at least three board members.

It’s a lot of work to be a founding board member, since the founders will put in place the policies and practices essential for the nonprofit’s future.

Selecting the Founding Board of Directors

Your nonprofit’s first board of directors will most likely be a group of passionate people, willing to volunteer their time to help you build the nonprofit from the

ground up.

[This article offers practical advice](#) for putting in place the founding board as a solid base for your nonprofit's future.

See our [resources on boards and governance](#) and BoardSource's [page on forming a nonprofit's first board](#) for additional tips and information.

The initial Board of Directors is also responsible for following all legal requirements so that the nonprofit's corporate status meets state and federal requirements for tax-exemption described in the next section.

If you are having trouble finding willing volunteers to serve on the board of directors, that could be a signal that it will also be a challenge to raise funds for your nonprofit. Consider alternatives to forming a new nonprofit, such as [fiscal sponsorship](#).

Be aware of the commitment that will be needed from your volunteer board to ensure ongoing sustainable and sound management practices, [ethical practices](#), and [strategic](#) and [business planning](#).

Once your founding board is in place, continue to [Step 3 | Incorporation and State Forms](#).

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