



Being an Effective Member¹

REQUIRED TRAINING

Members who have started or were appointed on or after 1/1/16 are required to complete a New Board, Commission and Executive Director Required Curriculum Course. This training consists of two online courses and 1 classroom course. You will be required to complete the two online courses before you can enroll in the classroom course. The online courses are available on ilearn.oregon.gov. If you do not have previous access to iLearn, please contact todd.a.nell@oregon.gov or kelly.d.zinck@oregon.gov for assistance. The New Board, Commission and Director Required Curriculum includes three training components that need to be completed within 6 months of your start date.

REPRESENTATION

It is important to keep in mind that all members have been appointed to the board to serve the public at large. The concerns and points of view of all interested parties must be represented and considered, but ultimately, the primary responsibility of every board member is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the general public.

If you were recommended by a professional association or special interest group, you will be expected to provide the board with your technical expertise, and to bring the point of view of the group to the board. However, you were not appointed to serve only as the representative of a specific group. When the group's interest conflicts with that of the general public, your primary responsibility is to the public. All board members must work for the benefit of the public first, with the good of any particular profession, industry or special interest group taking a secondary position.

If you were appointed to fill a designated "public member" position, you may feel intimidated on occasion by other members' experience in the field or expertise with the subject matter. You are, however, a vital part of the board, representing the Oregon consumer's point of view. Each of you is encouraged to ask questions and seek information until you have a clear answer and good understanding of the items under discussion.

Public and special interest members working together form a productive, effective complement to one another in conducting the work of the board. Listening to all viewpoints and working as a cohesive group

¹ Excerpts from [The Governor's Membership Handbook for Boards & Commissions](http://www.oregon.gov/gov/admin/Pages/How_To_Apply.aspx) accessible at http://www.oregon.gov/gov/admin/Pages/How_To_Apply.aspx.



provides an excellent forum for developing good policies and procedures and finding fair solutions to problems.

BEING AN EFFECTIVE BOARD MEMBER

Oregon boards are generally small in size (three to 10 members) and are composed of a carefully balanced membership. The WTDB is a 35 member board at full membership which makes this balance more complex to manage. Each board member has the potential to influence board decisions.

The most important factor to ensure the decisions your board makes are fair and meaningful is regular attendance by all members. In addition, it is important that you prepare for meetings by reading reports, proposals and other documents prepared or distributed by staff. If you are unsure about something, seek advice and information before and during each meeting that enables you to make a knowledgeable recommendation or decision.

State law also places an important emphasis on regular attendance. In [ORS 182.010²](#), it says that a member who has two successive, unexcused absences “shall forfeit his or her office unless prevented from attending” for reasonable cause.

To summarize, effective board members:

- Attend all board meetings.
- Prepare for meetings.
- Recognize that serving the public interest is the top priority.
- Recognize the board must operate in a public and open manner.
- Learn about issues affecting the board.
- Examine all available evidence before making judgment.
- Are aware that authority to act is granted to the board as a whole, not to individual members.

PUBLIC RECORDS/PUBLIC MEETINGS

Oregon is known for an open form of government that allows for citizen participation and involvement. Two illustrations of this open form of government are the public records and open meetings laws, designed to protect public interest and to make sure the public’s business is conducted in an open forum. As a board member, you should become familiar with these laws and how they apply to the

² https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ors/ors182.html



board on which you serve. More information can be found on the [Oregon Department of Justice Public Records and Meetings Law](https://www.doj.state.or.us/oregon-department-of-justice/public-records/public-records-and-meetings-law/)³ webpage.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The ADA sets criteria for accessibility and accommodation. Under the ADA, people who have disabilities have a right to an equal opportunity for effective participation in the activities of boards, whether as appointed members or as members of the public. Meetings and other board sponsored activities should be held in wheelchair accessible locations.

Qualified sign language interpreters, materials in accessible format such as Braille, large print and tape, and other forms of auxiliary aids for effective communications should be provided upon request. Reasonable modifications should be made to policies or procedures whenever they create a barrier to the full and equal participation of a person who has a disability.

COMMON SENSE

Board members must be familiar with and operate within their board's governing statutes and bylaws, and state and federal laws at all times.

To ensure accountability, all applicable policies and procedures adopted by the board should be in written form. No board member should make decisions or take unilateral action without the consent of the board as a whole.

Questions about board issues should be directed to the board's administrative or executive officer, who will see that all board members receive full information by the next regular meeting. No details of board investigations or matters dealt with in executive session should be disclosed by a board member unless they are part of the public record.

Board members should use caution about participating in private discussions on behalf of one party in the absence of other parties to a dispute. Board members should remember they are seen as representatives of the board when they appear at industry or professional gatherings. They must take care not to appear to be speaking for the board unless specifically authorized by the board to do so. Board members must keep in mind that their mission is to serve the public, and it is inappropriate to use board membership to create a personal platform.

³ <https://www.doj.state.or.us/oregon-department-of-justice/public-records/public-records-and-meetings-law/>