



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE JOINING THE AEEA BOARD

Is AEEA the right cause and organization for me?

Approach this decision as if you were planning to make a major donation: you would probably begin by thinking of areas where you have strong feelings—perhaps care for the elderly, or civil rights, or the environment. After settling on a subject area, you might then learn about several different organizations working in that field, and investigate ones that seem to have high impact and are well managed. Only after you were fully satisfied would you make the donation.

First ask yourself whether you truly feel strongly about the type of work that the organization does and the people it serves. Since, as a board member, you'll be investing not only money but time and energy, ask yourself whether the organization seems to be a pretty good risk as an investment.

Can I work with the AEEA Board at this particular stage in its development?

At one time in an organization's life, board service may be fairly smooth with a few bumps, while at another time board service may involve a hair-raising roller coaster ride (of course, an unexpected event can throw any board for a loop). What type of board seems right for you right now? You may want a board that really lets you roll up your sleeves and get to work with the other board members, or you may want a board that is stable and can let you learn about board work in a deliberate way.

What can I, and what will I contribute to AEEA?

What skills, contacts, and perspectives do I have that will be useful to this organization? How, specifically, will the board use what I can bring? Often as board members we find that some of our talents and contacts never seem to get utilized by the boards we're on.

Consider first what you bring to the table, and then, whether you are willing to give that to the organization. Look, too, for vehicles for your skills: if you can't see a specific vehicle (work on an event, help market a service, work with the Treasurer), your desire to contribute may well go unfulfilled. Some questions to consider:

- Do I believe in this organization enough to introduce my colleagues to it?
- Can I make a commitment to attending at least 75% of the meetings?
- Can I volunteer with other board members on occasional Saturdays, if needed?
- Would I feel comfortable having my name on their letterhead or on their brochure?

What do I want to gain from serving on the AEEA Board?

The final question is one that potential candidates should ask themselves and one that active Board members should periodically re-examine during their Board service. An all-too-common experience for board members at the ends of their terms is a feeling that they didn't, after all, really get deeply involved and don't, as a result, feel that they either contributed as much or got as much as they had hoped when they first joined. Board members who plan and ask for what they want in the board will contribute more as well as gain more.

Key qualities of an engaged and successful Board member:

- ~ Ability to: listen, analyze, think clearly and creatively, work well with people individually and in a group.
- ~ Willingness to: prepare for and attend board and committee meetings, ask questions, take responsibility and follow through on a given assignment, contribute personal and financial resources in a generous way according to circumstances, open doors in the community, evaluate oneself.
- ~ Skills and experience to: cultivate and solicit funds, cultivate and recruit board members and other volunteers, read and understand financial statements, learn more about the programs of AEEA.
- ~ Possess: honesty, sensitivity to and tolerance for differing views, a friendly, responsive, and patient approach, community-building skills, personal integrity, a developed sense of values, concern for your AEEA's organizational development, and a sense of humor.