



PolyColumbus Board Member FAQs

last updated December 8, 2015

What are the expectations of me as a board member?

Board members are expected to:

1. Reside or work in the geographic area served by PolyColumbus (currently the entire State of Ohio).
2. Self-identify as polyamorous, open, ethically non-monogamous, or similar, and be willing to be publicly associated with PolyColumbus under their real name.
3. Practice ethical non-monogamy. Others are looking to us as role models!
4. Enthusiastically endorse the Mission, Vision, and Core Values of the organization.
5. Consistently take an active role in the organization's events, whether discussion meetings, social outings, special speakers, or other events.
6. Give or raise the minimum annual gift to ensure the financial stability of the organization (currently \$250 per year).
7. Beyond the minimum, enthusiastically fundraise on behalf of the organization, seeking out the assistance of more experienced board members as necessary.
8. Prepare for each in-person board meeting by timely submitting applicable agenda items to the Board Chair and reading the draft agenda ahead of time. We currently meet every other month to handle the organization's business.
9. Absent a bona fide emergency, personally attend and play an active role in each in-person board meeting.
10. Provide or find answers to questions raised by the membership of the organization or other stakeholders. Certain inquiries (such as press inquiries) may be guided by a special policy.
11. Contribute significantly to advancing the goals of one or more committees or subcommittees. Actively solicit input for ideas from the membership.
12. Actively check the PolyColumbus Slack page, and provide input / responses to board business discussions.
13. Be familiar with and help implement our inclusivity policies, including the Community Conduct Policy.
14. Handle any task delegated by the Executive Director.
15. Recommend other potential board members to the Governance Committee for consideration in filling current or future vacancies.

16. In all activities, respect any limits set by the board of directors as a whole (e.g. the budget or specific policies).
17. Actively engage in succession planning for your own position on the board. Regularly assess how much longer you think you can make excellent contributions, check in with other board members about your thinking, participate in the annual board self-review process, and take an active role in planning to cycle off the board when the time is right.

The board of directors may pass other policies identifying additional expectations of board members, but these are the baseline.

How long are board member terms?

Board member terms are two years, with half of the board's terms expiring at midnight each year. Each term follows the seat, so unless appointed effective January 1, a new board member will fill an unexpired term before coming up for review on a full two-year term.

In the event that the board has multiple open seats, the board may adjust individual seat terms to ensure that approximately half of the board's terms are expiring at midnight each year.

What decision-making authority do I have?

No board member should ever make a decision based on their own individual authority as a board member. The exception relates to our Community Conduct Policy, where any board member may remove someone from a PolyColumbus space if needed to maintain a safe, comfortable, and welcoming environment.

Otherwise, being on the board empowers you to deliberate and vote on matters coming before the board, and to fill other authority-granting roles. In an individual capacity, board members are granted authority based on:

1. Holding an officer title, such as Executive Director or Treasurer, which grants authority specific to that title's responsibilities.
 - a. The Executive Director and (if the Executive Director is unavailable) Deputy Executive Director have general authority to keep the organization running smoothly.
 - b. Specialized authority resides in the Treasurer (matters of finance), Secretary (matters of organizational records), Board Chair (matters governing the board).
2. Chairing a committee (or subcommittee), which grants authority to lead and make decisions pertaining to that committee.
3. Serving on a committee (or subcommittee), which grants authority to address minor questions pertaining to their committee if a Chair or Vice Chair is unavailable.

How do I differ from a staff member?

Staff are known and trusted PolyColumbus members who serve on a committee (or subcommittee) but do not hold a seat on the board of directors. Non-chair committee members are functional peers to staff.

Can I provide direction to staff?

Although we prefer a collaborative atmosphere, generally only chairs or co-chairs should provide directives to staff. Non-chair committee members are functional peers to staff.

Note that the Executive Director and (in the absence of the Executive Director) the Deputy Executive Director have general authority to keep the organization running smoothly. Specialized authority resides in the Treasurer (matters of finance), Secretary (matters of organizational records), and the Board Chair (matters governing the board).

Officers will generally chair or co-chair committees relevant to their officer authority, or defer to the committee chair(s). However, in **rare** circumstances, an officer can give directives to staff (or committee members or chairs) when the relevant committee intersects with the officer's authority **and** the officer believes such a directive is necessary to safeguard the organization's interests.

Do I have to attend the in-person board meetings?

Yes. The in-person board meetings (currently held every other month) are a critical component of our governance, in part because of the rich exchange and refinement of ideas that are possible by having everyone around the same table. We set these dates and times months in advance, and board members are expected to prioritize these times. If an emergency arises, you should contact the Board Chair to either make arrangements to join remotely or be brought up to speed shortly afterward.

Pursuant to our Code of Regulations, failure to attend two consecutive in-person board meetings without advance notice and explanation to the Board Chair will automatically result in a board member's removal from the board of directors.

What are the officer roles (with their requirements and responsibilities)?

Executive Director

1. Be a member of the board of directors.
2. Generally, will chair the Events Committee.
3. Provide oversight and input on all committees as needed.
4. Be a leading fundraiser for the organization, supporting other board members in their fundraising.

5. Take a leading role in the passage of the annual budget.
6. Handle any unassigned or incomplete tasks necessary to execute the mission of the organization. The buck stops with the Executive Director.
7. Be a highly visible advocate and representative of the organization.
8. Exercise all other powers granted by law or custom to the President or Executive Director of an organization.

Deputy Executive Director

1. Be a member of the board of directors.
2. Generally, chair the Outreach Committee.
3. Be the primary person for Executive Director task delegation or support.
4. In the Executive Director's absence or unavailability, exercise the powers and meet the responsibilities of the Executive Director.
5. Exercise all other powers granted by law or custom to the Vice President or Deputy Executive Director of an organization.

Treasurer

1. Be a member of the board of directors.
2. Generally, chair the Finance & Membership Committee.
3. Take the primary role in the creation and passage of the annual budget.
4. As the year progresses, update the budget with the funds actually received or spent, bringing any significant discrepancies to the attention of the Finance & Membership Committee and/or full board.
5. Handle expense reimbursement for board members and staff.
6. Handle tax receipts for members / donors.
7. Handle any regulatory filings of a financial nature (e.g. Form 990).
8. Be a leading fundraiser for the organization, supporting other board members in their fundraising.
9. Exercise all other powers granted by law or custom to the Treasurer of an organization.

Board Chair

1. Be a member of the board of directors.
2. Generally, chair the Governance Committee.
3. Lead the recruitment of new staff and board members.
4. Lead the review process for existing board members.
5. Be a leading fundraiser for the organization, supporting other board members in their fundraising.
6. Plan, preside over, and facilitate in-person board meetings, including creation and circulation of the draft agenda.
7. Be a highly visible advocate and representative of the organization.

8. Exercise all other powers granted by law or custom to the Board Chair or Board President of an organization.

Secretary

1. Be a member of the board of directors.
2. Maintain and organize the records of the organization so agendas, resolutions, policies, etc. can be readily located in the future.
3. Bring two physical copies of key documents to the in-person board meeting for ease of reference. Examples of such key documents include the current version of the Articles of Incorporation, important policies, and other information especially relevant to that meeting's agenda.
4. During the in-person board meeting, record notes in the meeting's agenda, including relevant discussions, motions, and votes. The contemporaneous note-taking may be delegated to a trusted non-board member with the approval of Secretary and Board Chair.
5. Address all governmental filings of an administrative nature (e.g. filing the Certificate of Continued Existence with the Ohio Secretary of State).
6. Maintain and update a contact list for board and staff members.
7. Maintain and update the membership rolls for the organization.
8. Exercise all other powers granted by law or custom to the Secretary of an organization.

How does the board review itself / hold itself accountable?

The board maintains a Governance Committee, which undertakes the initial work of vetting potential new board members, as well as leading an annual self-review process that helps board members to better understand how they are doing as board members.

The Governance Committee provides appropriate recommendations or information to the full board of directors, which then votes on whether to accept a potential new board member, renew an existing board member's term, or remove a board member.

Removal of a board member (aside from at the end of a term where they were not renewed by majority vote) requires a two-thirds vote of the board of directors.

Do I have to contribute financially to the organization?

The required minimum annual financial contribution of each board member is \$250. This amount can be personally given, or raised by utilizing an approved option for being credited with \$250 in revenue. Some board members choose to give or raise more than \$250, and all board members are expected to enthusiastically fundraise on behalf of PolyColumbus.

Are my contributions refundable?

Board members are reminded that gifts they give to PolyColumbus are precisely that: gifts. PolyColumbus provides no goods or services in exchange for their gift. Further, regardless of the circumstances of their departure, a departing board member will not be entitled to a full or prorated refund for any previous gifts.

How do I get elected to the board of directors?

Raise your hand! Let us know you're interested in being involved. If you're not yet ready to make a commitment to the board, serve as a staff member on a committee and see how you like it.

What if my spouse or partner (or both) is already a member of the board?

While we prefer to limit board membership to one individual per household, we will review this on a case-by-case basis. Given the nature of our organization, partnerships between current and potential board members is a natural and likely thing to happen. Our intent is to minimize sources of conflict on the board, including through the use of our Multiple Interests in a Matter Policy.

What is the average time commitment required of me?

While this will vary depending on the individual and number of committees you are involved in, on average, you will likely spend **at least** five to ten hours a month on PolyColumbus activities. If you chair an active committee, your time commitment might be higher. If you hold an Officer position, your time commitment will likely be significantly higher, perhaps ten to fifteen hours per month. Some board members choose to give more time.



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for Board Member FAQs

The core of the PolyColumbus Mission is empowering individuals that either self-identify as polyamorous, open, or ethically non-monogamous, or are exploring such possibilities. Part of this empowerment comes from serving organizations with similar goals by documenting best practices and creating other resources for successfully running such an organization.

Good policies and related documents facilitate the orderly and sustainable growth of communities and events that advance the PolyColumbus Mission, whether in the Columbus, Ohio area or elsewhere.

PolyColumbus does not claim a monopoly on wisdom. What we do claim is fifteen years (and counting) as an organization, and leadership with relevant and valuable education, experience, and training. We have confidence in the documents we draft, as well as the humility to revise them when necessary in light of experience.

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Please contact our board of directors at board@polycolumbus.org with any questions or comments on using our documents.

