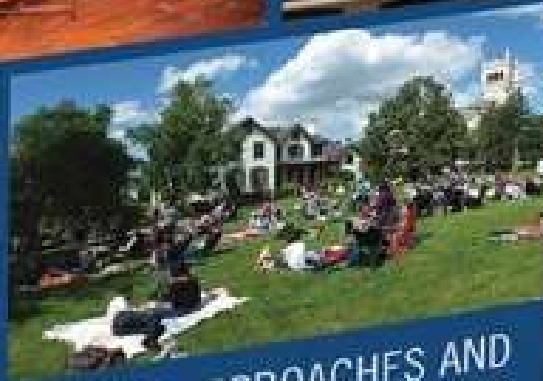


# REIMAGINING HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUMS



NEW APPROACHES AND  
PROVEN SOLUTIONS

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**Final version 5-18-2017**

*Reimagining the Historic House Museum: Catalysts for Change* (working title)

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## **The essential role of boards in reimagining house museums**

This chapter is for board members and staff of historic house museums who may be unfamiliar with some basic nonprofit management concepts critical to board service at historic house museums. Most people see board service as honorary or as an acknowledgement of personal achievement. We have found that most board members begin their house museum board service with little understanding of their legal duties as fiduciaries of state-chartered nonprofit organizations: the historic house museum organization itself, its site, and its collections. This chapter explains the board of director's basic legal duties under your state's nonprofit law, ten broader responsibilities of historic house museum board members, and how these responsibilities reinforce good historic house museum stewardship.

Whether your historic house museum is new and managed entirely by volunteers or by a longstanding local museum with professional staff, this overview will clarify board members' specific roles. As the governing authority for your historic house museum, the board plays a vital role in setting its future direction, especially as its role is reinvented or reimagined for the future. We believe that clarifying the board's role will ultimately be helpful for paid staff, so that the organization can best use the time and talents of both board and staff most efficiently. All historic house museums, no matter their size and longevity, need a high functioning and well-performing board of directors to ensure its success.

### Legal duties of board members

As legal trustees of a state-chartered nonprofit corporation, your house museum board has certain duties required by your state nonprofit law. Nonprofit board members are fiduciaries who must oversee the assets of the corporation for the benefit of the public.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of an historic house museum, the organization's assets are its finances, the buildings and grounds, and the collections. The board is responsible for maintaining and enhancing all the assets of the corporation in their care. These assets are concrete; board members determine how the organization maintains the museum and individual objects over time. Board members can monitor their ongoing stewardship of these assets through inspecting the buildings, grounds, and collection objects regularly to identify preservation issues or collections concerns.

The assets are held by the board of directors on behalf of the public, to whom the board is ultimately accountable. Most states have an agency that provides oversight of nonprofit corporations: 45 states regulate charitable fundraising, and 41 states require nonprofits to register (and, in most cases, to pay a fee).<sup>2</sup> Timely submissions of these reports and fees are a board responsibility often delegated to staff.

In addition to serving as fiduciaries, state chartered nonprofit corporation board members have three legal duties contained in their state nonprofit law that govern how board members carry out their work. These legal duties are:

- 1) Duty of care,
- 2) Duty of loyalty, and
- 3) Duty of obedience to the law.

#### Duty of care

The duty of care describes the level of competence and judgement that is expected of a board member. It is commonly expressed as the duty of "care that an ordinarily prudent person would exercise in a like position and under similar circumstances."<sup>3</sup> This means that a board member owes the duty to exercise reasonable care when he or she accepts a nomination to become a steward of the organization.<sup>4</sup> You do not need highly specialized skills to meet the duty of care as a board member; you are expected to provide oversight in the same way you would for your own affairs.

There are many practical ways that historic house museum board members can proactively perform their duty of care at their house museum. Historic house museum board members should regularly attend board meetings; read the minutes, financial statements, and bylaws; and be up to date on all key matters. Most importantly, board members should ask questions about these documents to ensure they understand them. Participating in committee work will also expand

your knowledge of the historic house museum and its collections. All board members should participate in the creation of the organization's strategic or long-range plan, since it lays out strategies and future projects. Board members also perform their duty of care by adhering to any restrictions on the use of funds from grant sources, endowments, or individual donors.

The Statement of Professional Standards from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) can help board members be better stewards of their house museum.<sup>5</sup> This document presents clear guidance about the role of the board as the governing authority for a history organization. The AASLH has several samples of Ethical Guidelines on their website which might be useful if your historic house museum does not have one in place now, or plans to update it soon.<sup>6</sup>

The American Alliance of Museum recommends that all museums create the following five core documents.<sup>7</sup> These key documents clarify the board's stewardship responsibilities toward their historic house museum and collections.

1. Mission/vision statement
2. Organizational code of ethics
3. Collections management plan
4. Disaster preparedness plan, and
5. Strategic or long-range plan.

The collections management policy is a critical document for historic sites, and is essential to the board's duty of care. This document provides guidance about what the organization collects and why, and how these objects should be displayed, stored, and managed for the benefit of the public.

If your organization is just starting a house museum, you may want to know about the AASLH's Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (StEPs).<sup>8</sup> StEPs is a self-study program offered by AASLH, and designed specifically for small- to mid-sized history organizations, including all-volunteer ones. The StEPs workbook guides organizations in assessing their policies and practices using a Basic, Good, and Better benchmarking system and includes chapters on creating all five core documents mentioned above.

Historic house museums should also follow *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties, with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* for any maintenance, preservation or conservation activity for

the historic buildings that the board owns or manages for others.<sup>9</sup> Whether your property is historically designated or not, these standards provide common sense guidance for maintenance of your historic house museum.

### Duty of loyalty

The duty of loyalty is a standard of faithfulness; a board member must give undivided allegiance when making decisions affecting the organization. This means that a board member can never use information obtained as a member for personal financial gain, and must act in the best interests of the organization.<sup>10</sup>

Historic house museum board members can fulfill their duty of loyalty to the corporation by ensuring that confidential information is not shared with others outside the organization. Every board member should understand and agree to abide by the organization's conflict of interest policy and alert the board president if they think that they might have an actual or potential conflict of interest. The AASLH has several sample conflicts of interest policies on their website, free for download.<sup>11</sup> Historic house museum board members should not act on information they receive as part of their board service for personal financial gain, or compete with the organization should the organization be actively collecting objects for the site, for example. The board should deliberate and debate decisions with all board members participating. Once a decision is made – when a quorum is present – the board must act as one body and speak with one voice. Board members can be passionate and disagree, but once the matter has been thoroughly debated and the board decides, it is essential that all board members line up to support the board's decision.<sup>12</sup>

### Duty of obedience

The duty of obedience requires board members to be faithful to the organization's mission. They are not permitted to act in a way that is inconsistent with the central goals of the house museum. A basis for this rule lies in the public's trust that the organization will manage donated funds to fulfill the house museum's mission.<sup>13</sup>

There are many ways that historic house museum boards show their duty of obedience to the law. They should pay payroll taxes on time and adhere to any policies or restrictions on grants, endowments, or donations they receive.

Board members should take care not to endanger the organization's tax status by lobbying inappropriately.<sup>14</sup> The board must make the organization's most recent IRS 990 tax return available to the public immediately upon request. To promote organizational transparency, your board might want to post this document on your web site, since it is already available on the web for free at [www.guidestar.com](http://www.guidestar.com). The organization should adhere to state and federal laws, and not discriminate against anyone based on race, color, creed, age, sex, religion, nationality, or sexual orientation.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the house museum should register with the state's charity or nonprofit bureau if it is required, and pay any annual fees.

#### Both a working and governing board

Historic house museum boards are almost always both working AND governing boards. Historic house museum board members often *do the work* of the organization because there are few or no staff members. Board members serve as volunteers, and frequently work as docents, run events, maintain collections, and host fundraisers whether there is staff or not. The historic house museum board also *governs* the organization. The dual role of being a working and governing board can create confusion during a house museum board's transition from being all-volunteer run to having its first professional staff. A good job description for any new staff member can go a long way to help to prevent micromanagement of new staff.

It is a good idea to have written job descriptions for every volunteer officer, board member, and committee chair. These volunteer job descriptions can be short or long, but they should make it clear who does what and the limits of authority for each role.<sup>16</sup> Another reason to have written descriptions for volunteer jobs is to define the chain of reporting and identify the volunteer's supervisor, as this may help prevent misunderstandings about the lines of authority. Volunteer job descriptions may be particularly helpful when paid staff and board members are providing leadership roles for projects and activities, as they should define reporting relationships. Written job descriptions for paid staff should be both routine and realistic for all staff, including part-time positions. Finally, a yearly commitment to training every board member on their roles and

responsibilities (see Item 7 below) can also help make it clear who does what for the house museum daily.

### Ten historic house museum board member duties

Board Source™, a national organization whose mission is to inspire and support excellence in nonprofit governance and board and staff leadership, has identified ten duties of all nonprofit board members that advances their organization's mission, vision, and values.<sup>17</sup> We have taken these ten basic responsibilities and expanded upon them in the context of historic house museum management with the hope of making it clear that historic house museum boards have many important tasks.

1. *Determine the organization's mission/purpose*—The historic house museum board must fulfill the mission of the organization through its actions, resolutions and fundraising. Your mission statement explains why the organization exists. Often, a mission statement is written when the organization is incorporated and may not have been reviewed in decades. Reviewing your mission or purpose statement at least every other year helps ensure that it is still relevant for the current or near-term future of your house museum. If the mission statement is old, or parts are not relevant, consider making changes as part of a larger strategic planning effort (see Item 6 below).
2. *Select the chief executive*—If your historic house museum has developed to the point that a paid staff member is needed to serve as executive director, the board should make an offer to the prospective executive director to join the organization after an appropriate personnel search. If the house museum is entirely run by volunteers, the board president often provides day-to-day guidance to other board members and volunteers working on behalf of the museum in much the way an executive director might. Identifying a paid executive director for your organization is hard work and it takes time, often more than six months, to conduct a proper search. The board may decide to appoint an interim executive director or elevate another staff member to the job as a temporary measure until the personnel search is complete. Use the resources available from your regional or state museum association for your personnel search.<sup>18</sup> These groups can help

you create an appropriate job description, give advice about salary ranges, and possibly identify potential candidates.

Historic house museums have increasingly hired local business leaders with no experience in nonprofit management or historic house museums as executive directors. This may be tempting for larger house museums where for-profit management skills might be useful for maintenance of extensive buildings and grounds, or where earned revenue sources are critical. Boards taking this action must understand the limitations of these individuals' breadth of specialized knowledge about historic house museums. If a board chooses the path of hiring someone with a background in for-profit business management as executive director, it is essential that strong nonprofit management, curatorial, maintenance, and grounds staff are in place to compensate for the lack of experience in nonprofits, museums, or preservation. To prevent lapses in museum ethics or standard practices around museum collections, a strong partnership between senior staff and the executive director with a for-profit background is essential.

3. *Provide proper financial oversight of budget, establish financial controls*—Historic house museum board members are ultimately responsible for keeping their organization well-funded. They may delegate some of those fundraising responsibilities to staff (if there is any), but the board must provide appropriate oversight of the organization's money. Boards do this by having regular financial statements (we recommend monthly), engaging in good accounting practices (such as assigning check writing and checkbook balancing duties to different people), and submitting annual tax returns (IRS 990 forms), and any state charities' registration paperwork on time. Even the smallest historic house museum must engage in good financial practices to inspire confidence from outsiders and to attract funding from neighbors and other donors.
4. *Ensure adequate resources*—Resources are not limited to financial resources. They include human resources in the form of volunteers and staff to run the historic house museum. The board is responsible for assuring that there are sufficient funds to operate the site, staff to manage the operations, and volunteers to undertake various projects at your museum. Most nonprofit managers assume that the word “adequate,” as noted here in Board Source's list, is equal to “enough.” We disagree. There is never enough money



to manage a house museum. The historic house museum board must be involved in decision-making about the budget and staffing to be certain that your organization has all the assets to maintain the house, landscape, AND collections.

5. *Ensure legal and ethical integrity/maintain accountability*—The historic house museum board must make sure that it adheres to its bylaws and corporate charter, maintains its charitable tax status, and files required reports and taxes on time. These are all part of the board's duty of obedience to the law. Other high-priority policies that historic sites should implement include conflict of interest, personnel, whistleblower, and financial accountability/management policies. Adopting an institutional code of ethics for the historic house museum would fall into this last category. The American Association for State and Local History has several Code of Ethics Statements available on their web site to use as samples if your organization is writing or revising one.<sup>19</sup>
6. *Ensure effective organizational planning*—Organizational planning is wide-ranging and includes activities as simple as agendas for each board or Executive Committee meeting. After the meeting, the board and Executive Committee meeting minutes need to clearly identify who attended, reports heard, and any actions taken to plan the next steps. Once your historic house museum is beyond its startup stage, it will need a strategic or long-range plan to help prioritize the goals and projects needed to support its stewardship role of maintaining the buildings, grounds, and collections in the long term. The AASLH has good advice about creating strategic plans.<sup>20</sup> Board members should be actively engaged in formulating any long-term plan, and should review it yearly to assure the goals and strategies are being fulfilled by board, staff, and volunteers.
7. *Recruit and orient new board members; assess board performance*—The historic house museum board is only as good as the nominating committee that identifies, vets, and creates a slate of new board member candidates.<sup>21</sup> The nominating committee is critical for the organization's future, and should not wait to spring into action until just a few weeks before the Annual Meeting. Rather, this committee should identify the skills that the house museum needs over the coming years, so that individuals can be invited to participate on committees in order to ascertain if they would be good potential board members in the future.

We encourage the nominating committee to provide a thorough briefing for any prospective board member in advance of their nomination so that they understand the totality of the house museum's operation. This would include a tour of the house and grounds and a visit to the collections storage area. They should be given any reports about the site, such as the collections care plan and recent reports from the Museum Assessment Program (MAP) or Collections Assessment for Preservation Program (CAP), if completed.<sup>22</sup> We also encourage sharing the museum's most recent financial statement with board member candidates, so that they understand the museum's current financial position in advance of being nominated.<sup>23</sup>

Candidates for board service should understand that every board member is expected to make their own gift in addition to their volunteer labor. We recommend that each site create a board contract or agreement which spells out all the board responsibilities and expectations (see section below). This document can help prevent any misunderstanding by board candidates in advance of their nomination.

We recommend that historic house museum boards have specific term limits noted in their bylaws. Term limits permit the organization to benefit from new ideas and perspectives as board members rotate on and off the board each year. Board terms can be two or three year terms, and board members should be able to serve for two consecutive terms before being required to rotate off the board for a year. Seasoned board members can be re-elected to the board after their one year of "rest."

It is unfortunate that board member performance assessment gets such short shrift in history organizations. Self-assessments of board performance for house museums are not done often enough or with enough rigor to look inward and use these insights to make needed changes. Even if the board started with the most basic of assessments of their activities relative to their volunteer job descriptions, that would be an improvement.<sup>24</sup>

8. *Enhance the organization's public standing: be a good ambassador and advocate on behalf of the house museum*— All board members should speak positively about your house museum, its staff, volunteers, and other board members in public and private. Being a good advocate for the historic house museum happens at the local grocery store as well as in a foundation's office. Board members are the front line when it comes to public perception about your historic house museum. Make sure board members are up-

to-date on current plans and feel comfortable speaking about the historic house museum, its future, and its current activities.

9. *Determine, monitor, and strengthen programs and services*—Through board member participation in committee work, or as a volunteer working on projects or fundraising events, board members learn more about the work of the house museum and can make your historic house museum better. Every board member contributes to the future of the historic house museum through their involvement in projects that interest them.
10. *Support and evaluate the chief executive*—If the board employs an executive director, he or she should be supported in the position by opportunities to attend trainings, speak at conferences, and network with peers. Board members should be supportive of staff through word and deed, whether it is a hearty “well done!” after a difficult board meeting, a birthday card, or a timely raise or bonus. Staff need to know that board members appreciate their work. The board should take time each year to evaluate their executive director and provide bonuses and raises when possible. The American Alliance of Museums has sample staff evaluation plans on their web site for download if your organization is a member.<sup>25</sup>

#### Actions by the board

The board provides direction for your historic house museum through resolutions and reviews of committee and staff reports when a quorum is present at properly called board meetings. The board, through its bylaws, may give specific authority to an executive committee to take certain actions between board meetings. Those actions should be documented and reported to the rest of the board by circulating minutes of the committee and by reporting at the following meeting. Other committees may be empowered to implement projects or take specific actions by board resolution. It is very rare that individual board members are given authority to make decisions, as decision-making is a collective board responsibility.

#### Board role in fundraising

Board members certainly contribute their time and talent to the organization, but they also donate money, and are responsible for the organization’s finances. They cannot delegate this

responsibility entirely to staff. Board members monitor financial statements regularly, adopt the annual budget, put in place appropriate policies (like a gift acceptance policy), and should have a long-term funding strategy for the organization through a strategic plan. Board members should also make their own yearly gift to the house museum, participate in all fundraising events, assist the staff in identifying potential donors, sponsors, and members, and identify new board members willing to raise funds.

### Individual board member roles

Individual board members should be well-informed about the historic house museum's budget, plans, and activities by reading materials circulated to them and by asking questions about any points that may be unclear. Seeking clarification and raising concerns are an individual board member's most important contribution to your house museum. All questions should be answered thoroughly, either at the meeting or in subsequent correspondence with staff or the board president. Adopting a board member agreement (see below) can highlight the specific expectations of individual board members.

We recommend that the board be trained on its roles and responsibilities during a board meeting once a year, because board members come and go each year, if term limits are in place. State museum associations can help you identify consultants or other museum directors that can provide high quality training.

### Board member agreement

One way to spell out the expectations for all board members, and for those who might wish to be nominated to the board, is to create a board member agreement. This simple informational document includes key information about board service at your historic house museum. The document should include statements on the following topics:

1. How often the board meets, including the typical date, time, and location. Ideally, the board meeting should be no longer than an hour and a half.
2. Board attendance requirements as noted in the bylaws, term limits noted in the bylaws, and any consequences for not attending the minimum number of board meetings.

3. An expectation that board members will review the minutes, financial statements, IRS 990 informational tax return, and other documents sent to them in advance of each board meeting, and come prepared with questions. Insist that all board members be familiar with the bylaws, strategic plan, conflict of interest statement, collections care policy, and other policies at your museum. A well-prepared board orientation binder should contain all the relevant information and be reviewed with every incoming board member during their orientation.
4. If committee service is expected of all board members, include information about each committee's specific charge, and how often the committee(s) meet.
5. Each board member should help identify new board prospects, sponsors, and potential donors to the museum.
6. Expectations, if any, about board financial support beyond their volunteer participation in events, activities, and projects. State if there is a minimum gift amount expected of each board member. The board president typically contacts board members about their annual gifts and collects the checks.
7. Explain that each board member is an ambassador for the historic house museum and should speak positively about the house museum and its staff in public and private, and
8. Identify who is the board spokesperson (usually the executive director or the board president) for any press inquiries. Individual board members should not speak with the press unless authorized to do so in advance. Typical exceptions might be an event committee chairperson who appears on the press release about that event and is encouraged to talk to reporters. Board members should refer any press inquiries they receive to the executive director immediately.

### Board president tasks

The board president has a host of tasks to ensure the progress of the museum. Small, all-volunteer historic house museums without staff often designate the board president as the Chief Executive Officer, spokesperson, and official representative. Once staff is hired, the executive director usually assumes these duties. The board president is usually the executive director's day-to-day supervisor and may sign checks along with the treasurer. It is ideal if the board president

reports annually in writing to the house museum's membership about the activities of the museum. The board president's specific duties are often contained in the bylaws and will include chairing board and executive committee meetings, setting the agenda for these meetings, and appointing committee chairs and perhaps committee members. The board president also needs to be an excellent problem solver as he or she is the liaison for issues between board members, between board and staff, or between board members and committee volunteers.

### Typical board committees

In a quest to broaden the number of workers for the organization, historic house museums often establish committees to undertake the work of the organization. Committees may create efficiencies for the board, but they do not relieve the board of its legal and fundraising responsibilities. Some committees may be standing committees as identified in the bylaws, or ad hoc or temporary committees designed to take on a specific task for a limited time. Committee members don't all have to be board members. Consider asking other volunteers with subject area expertise to join committees that might interest them.

Typical historic house museum committees include an executive committee, finance/audit, collections, nomination, events, fundraising, and buildings and grounds. Each committee should have a written purpose or job description and a specific understanding of the limits of its authority.<sup>26</sup>

### Board role in managing staff

The board hires, rewards, and terminates the executive director. Other staff are hired or fired by the executive director with board approval and within budget limits. While the executive director is hired by and responsible to the board, executive directors need one day-to day-supervisor, and we recommend the board president for that job. This reporting relationship will prevent board members from thinking they are "the boss of the staff." Any conflicts between board members and the executive director should be managed by the board president.

### Executive director's role

The paid executive director carries out the board's vision for the organization and oversees program development, communications, and record keeping. He or she is responsible for fundraising, manages other staff, works all special events, and acts as a spokesperson. Executive directors coordinate volunteers, attend board meetings, and take care of other duties as assigned. Staff is responsible for the daily and annual work of the organization to fulfill the strategic plan.

### Reinventing your house museum

Reinvention of any organization is hard work. Historic sites, being traditional local history organizations, may struggle with creating programming that is relevant to their neighbors, members, and the general public. Today's visitors want a different house museum experience than their parents, and thus we must adapt to the interests of these new visitors. The board president and the executive director may be the ones most interested in reinventing the mission and programming for your house museum, and must work to persuade other board members of the merits of any new initiative over months or perhaps years. Seeing is believing, and we suggest that board and staff together take field trips to other historic sites that are undertaking transformation activities as a research activity. After the visit the board should have a candid discussion about any lessons learned from this research. These visits can help convince reluctant board members, and help steer your reinvention efforts in a new and better direction.

### The joys of board service

Serving on a historic house museum board is both an honor and privilege. As a responsible board member, you are one in a long line of stewards who have worked hard to assure that a tangible piece of American history lives on for future generations of school children, scholars, neighbors, and visitors. Without board member advocates, the visiting public would never know about your museum's special story and how it binds our citizens to the American past. We hope that by being better informed about your roles and responsibilities as a board member, you will relish this opportunity and inspire others to take on similar roles at house museums in their hometown. Thank you for your service.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup>Board Source, *The Nonprofit Board Answer Book, Second Edition* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 25-26.

<sup>2</sup> Suzanne Coffman, "Navigating State Fundraising Regulations" posted May 3, 2016, accessed January 2, 2017, <https://trust.guidestar.org/navigating-state-fundraising-regulations>

<sup>3</sup> Board Source, *The Nonprofit Board Answer Book*, 25.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "Statement of Professional Standards and Ethics (Revised 2016), accessed December 29, 2016, <http://resource.aaslh.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2017/01/2016-Statement-of-Professional-Standards-and-Ethics.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> "Shiloh Museum of Ozark History Ethical Guidelines," accessed December 30, 2016, <http://download.aaslh.org/StEPs+Resources/Ethical+Guidelines+Shiloh+Museum.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> The American Alliance of Museums has samples of the core museum documents available on their website accessed on January 2, 2017, <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/assessment-programs/core-documents/documents>

<sup>8</sup> The American Association for State and Local History's Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations, accessed January 2, 2017, <http://tools.aaslh.org/steps>.

<sup>9</sup> "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties, with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings," accessed January 1, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments/standguide/index.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Board Source, *The Nonprofit Board Answer Book*, 25.

<sup>11</sup> <http://download.aaslh.org/StEPs+Resources/Conflict+of+Interest+Policy+Chester+County+Historical+Society.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> John Carver, *Boards that Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations, Second Edition*, (San Francisco CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997), 125-129.

<sup>13</sup> Board Source, *The Nonprofit Board Answer Book*, 26.

<sup>14</sup> Find more information about lobbying in "IRS Publication 4221," Compliance Guide for 501 (c) (3) Public Charities" describes activities that may jeopardize a charity's tax exempt status, including political campaign intervention which is strictly prohibited, accessed December 27, 2016, <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4221pc.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup>This statement is Item G under Human Resources in the AASLH Statement of Professional Standards and Ethics., accessed December 28, 2016, <http://resource.aaslh.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2017/01/2016-Statement-of-Professional-Standards-and-Ethics.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Generic examples of board and officer job descriptions for a typical nonprofit can be found on Management Help website, accessed December 28, 2017, <http://managementhelp.org/boards/job-descriptions.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> <https://boardsource.org/about-boardsource/>. See the complete list of Ten Board Responsibilities in Board Source, *The Nonprofit Board Answer Book*, 3-5.

<sup>18</sup> The Field Services Alliance of the AASLH is an affinity group for those working in statewide and regional museum service organizations, accessed on January 2, 2017, <http://blogs.aaslh.org/ask-fsa-what-is-field-services/>

<sup>19</sup> This is one sample of an institutional code of ethics from the AASLH web site, there are several for different size history organizations, accessed on December 28, 2016,

<http://download.aaslh.org/StEPs+Resources/Code+of+Ethics+Pennsylvania+Historical+and+Museum+Commission.pdf>. Independent Sector, a national leadership network for nonprofits, foundations, and corporations committed to advancing the common good, created a brief document to help strengthen board governance and accountability. It includes a short, handy checklist you can use at a board meeting to illustrate these goals, accessed on January 3, 2017,

<http://www.okmuseums.org/sites/oma/uploads/images/documents/ISChecklistAccountability.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Catlin-Legutko, Cinnamon, "Technical Leaflet: DIY Strategic Planning for Small Museums," Spring 2008, accessed May 8, 2017, <http://resource.aaslh.org/view/diy-strategic-planning-for-small-museums/#sthash.svBtXNho.dpuf>

<sup>21</sup> This list of board and committee job descriptions (including the nominating committee) from Board Cafe is generic for all kinds of organizations but is extensive, accessed on January 4, 2017,

<https://www.compasspoint.org/board-committee-job-descriptions>.



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<sup>22</sup> Information about the Museum Assessment Program can be found on the American Alliance of Museums web site, accessed January 4, 2017, <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/assessment-programs/MAP>. Information about the Collections Assessment for Preservation Program can be found on the Institute of Library and Museum Services web site, accessed January 1, 2017, <https://www.ims.gov/grants/available/collections-assessment-preservation-program-cap>.

<sup>23</sup> A good checklist for Board Orientation can be found on page 109 of Board Source, *The Nonprofit Board Answer Book*.

<sup>24</sup> See the sample of a board self-assessment for a small museum provided on the AALSH web site, accessed January 2, 2017, <http://download.aash.org/StEPs+Resources/Board+Self+Assessment+Shiloh+Museum.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Sample documents available from the American Alliance of Museums, accessed January 3, 2017, <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/information-center/sample-documents>. Tier 3 members have access to sample documents on the American Alliance of Museums web site.

<sup>26</sup> There is a good selection of job descriptions for board committees on the Compass Point web site, accessed December 29, 2016, <https://www.compasspoint.org/board-committee-job-descriptions>.

## About the author

Donna Ann Harris is the principal of Heritage Consulting Inc., a Philadelphia-based consulting firm that works nationwide providing training, research, coaching and consulting services on historic preservation, audience development, volunteer management, heritage tourism, and organizational development issues for historic sites, downtowns and heritage destinations. In the past thirteen years, Ms. Harris has been speaking about and consulting with historic house museums around the country about alternative uses and stewardship responsibilities. AltaMira Press published her book *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic Houses* in 2007.