

Ten Best Practices when Evaluating the Chief Executive

Scott Heyman, Workshop Series Coordinator
Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County

sheyman@hsctc.org

607-273-8686, ext 235

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- 1) The evaluation process should take the form of a give-and-take, talk-and-listen, conversation between the chief executive and the *full* board throughout the year. If the process is delegated to a board committee the full board should be brought fully up to speed several times during the year – with and without the chief executive in the room.
- 2) A great way to ensure that the process of evaluating the chief executive is not ignored until real problems emerge is to include an executive session at the end of every board meeting. Board members should volunteer to clean up the meeting room at the end so the chief executive does not have to “sit and stew and wonder” if the conversation drags on.
- 3) The process needs to focus on topics of importance, not trivia or “style.”
- 4) The process represents a golden opportunity for the board to shift its time away from passively listening to staff reports about their activities to focusing on the aspects of the agency that are most crucial to its success.
- 5) The process is an opportunity for the board to model a culture of accountability in which everyone is expected to listen to critical feedback, try to change and improve, and participate in discussions about whether that change and improvement is on track.
- 6) The chief executive should be expected to produce an agency work plan and his/her own job performance review should be closely related to that plan.
- 7) The board should not evaluate the chief executive unless it is evaluating itself and its members are evaluating their own performance.
- 8) The Board needs to think carefully about what to criticize and what to “let slide.” It needs to look at the whole picture when making this decision.
- 9) The board does not always know what is best for the agency or for the community, and it may not always be the best judge of the quality of the chief executive’s work. But it should have the confidence of its convictions.
- 10) Succession planning for the position of chief executive should be an ongoing part of the evaluation process. Even if the chief executive has no plans to leave and the board is thrilled with her/him – accidents and illnesses happen and the organization should be prepared.