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## *Public Boards and Commissions*

### *OVERVIEW*

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#### WHAT ARE BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, TASK FORCES AND OTHER FORMS OF PUBLIC APPOINTMENT?

Boards, commissions, taskforces, advisory groups and other type of public appointments work with state agencies or professional groups to shape public policy and inform the public on significant issues facing our communities. Regulatory boards and commissions set licensing standards and professional requirements for members. Advisory boards and commissions provide guidance and advice to the program, agency or elected officials with which they are affiliated.

#### WHY SERVE IN A PUBLIC APPOINTMENT?

Serving on a board or commission is an excellent way to get involved in civic life and to make a considerable difference in your community. For those who have leadership experience in the non-profit or in private industry, this is a logical next step to serve the larger community in which you live. As a member of a board or commission, you can influence public policy, improve your expertise in a given area, gain recognition for your contributions and advance your career. Many people use their seat on a board or commission as a stepping stone to another appointed position, elected office or a federal advisory committee.

#### BY SERVING ON A BOARD OR COMMISSION YOU CAN:

- Influence public policy.
- Bring attention to issues that you care about and help others understand why they are important.
- Learn about the political process.
- Serve as a role model to other women.
- Gain access to policymakers.

#### SIX STEPS TO GETTING APPOINTED:

- Learn all you can. Research boards, commissions, task forces, advisory groups and more.
- Make a match. Select the role that is right for YOU. Complete your personal inventory.
- Build your qualifications: gain the experience you need.
- Get connected: build support for your appointment.
- Prepare your application.
- Submit your application.

Source: Excerpted from the *New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Women*

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## *Applying to a Public Board or Commission*

### *Personal Inventory*

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**Describe your field of expertise.** (transportation, health, education, employment law, etc.)

**What other fields do you have an interest in but perhaps don't have professional experience in?** (i.e. arts and theater, environment, early childhood education, etc.)

**Would you be willing to serve in an area that you haven't even considered?** (pensions for public employees, fire commission, natural resource allocation, etc.). Are you willing to "move outside your comfort zone" or are you certain you want to serve in your area of expertise or interest?

**At what level do you want to serve in your appointment? This could include the city, county, state or federal level.**

**How long are you willing to serve?** One year, two years, four years, etc.

**What are your meeting limitations?** (i.e. days of the week, can you travel overnight, are you accessible during the day or evenings)

**Give some consideration to the role you want to play on a public board or commission.**

- For example, do you want to have policy making authority or would you prefer to be advisory in nature.
- Do you want to oversee Board staff?
- Do you want to address a specific issue such as creating a white paper with a set of recommendations for eventual implementation? Are you willing to have your role be more ambiguous?
- Do you want to have fiscal oversight and fund allocation?

**What are the types of committees in which you have most enjoyed serving?**

**Do you want to be compensated for your appointment or are you willing to be uncompensated?**

**At the end of your appointment, what do you hope to accomplish through your time on the Board / Commission?**

**Do you know the elected official who makes the appointments to the roles? If not, find out who your elected officials are at each level:**

- City council or mayor,
- County Board of Supervisor,
- State Assembly or State Senator
- Governor
- Congressional member or Senator

**Have you obtained a list of vacancies for public appointment?**

- If no, you are not unique! We can provide a sample script for reaching out to their district offices to introduce yourself and obtain a vacancy listing.

**Provide a list of individuals that you would use as references during the interview process.** Give consideration to people who can speak to the breadth of your expertise professionally, non-profit, your character, etc. You generally need 3-5 references.

## *Navigating the Appointments Process: 10 Tips for Women Seeking Appointment*

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1. Make sure your resume is up to date.
2. Look within your networks for people who can support your appointment and ask them for a letter of recommendation.
3. Don't be afraid to try an issue area you may not feel comfortable in. You might surprise yourself and really like it.
4. Know who your colleagues on the board or commission will be. You will be seeing these people often.
5. Ask yourself if you are comfortable in the public eye. Being appointed is about transparency and you never know when someone might ask you a question or print an article about an issue that you are working on.
6. Make sure you have the time to commit to being on the board or commission.
7. Know the power of being a "public member." Boards and commissions need women who ask insightful questions, make excellent decisions and can be held accountable. You don't have to be the expert.
8. Be professional with the appointments staff. Remember they are dealing with thousands of appointments and applications. A friendly word and a lot of patience can go a long way to getting an appointment.
9. Remember there are politics involved with appointments. If your appointment gets caught up in the political web, realize it has nothing to do with you. Don't take it personally.
10. When women get appointed you rarely hear "what was I thinking?" Instead, most women agree being appointed is one of the most rewarding ways you can give back to your community, your county, your state and to yourself.

Source: Excerpted from *California Women Lead*