

THE CULTURALLY CONSCIOUS BOARD

BOARD DEPTH SERIES

# Staff Encouragement

---

A Tool to Help Boards  
Reflect on Year-End  
Appreciation Postures.

# Year-End Staff Encouragement | Reflection & Checklist

## PURPOSE

December giving is often publicly attributed to boards and campaigns, but staff carry the relational, logistical, and emotional labor that makes generosity real. This tool helps boards recognize staff as the primary stewards of gift-giving while closing the year with gratitude, clarity, and appropriate restraint. Use this checklist during December board meetings or in partnership conversations with the Executive Director.

## Section 1: Year-End Staff Encouragement Checklist (Board Lens)

- We explicitly acknowledged that staff—not the board—mediate donor relationships, community trust, and gift fulfillment.
- We named the additional emotional and relational labor staff carry during year-end giving.
- We avoided introducing last-minute requests or pivots during peak workload weeks.
- We ensured year-end appeals and events were adequately resourced before approving them.
- We resisted interpreting fundraising totals as a proxy for staff effort or worth.
- We publicly recognized invisible work such as stewardship, donor care, reporting and systems cleanup.
- We authorized leadership to prioritize closure over optimization.
- We communicated trust in staff judgment and execution.

## Section 2: Making Staff the Heroes of Gift-Giving

Boards rarely give gifts directly. Staff translate generosity into lived experience. Board language and posture should reflect this reality:

- Celebrate care, coordination, credibility, and follow-through—not just totals.
- Name staff as stewards of trust on behalf of the mission.
- Frame success as generosity delivered, not pressure sustained.

## Section 3: Year-End Boundaries & Wisdom

- Common Board Missteps in December:
  - Introducing new expectations under the banner of momentum
  - Using celebratory language while escalating pressure
  - Treating staff endurance as evidence of unlimited capacity

Wiser Alternatives:

- Explicitly close the year and release unfinished work
- Separate appreciation from performance evaluation
- Signal steadiness rather than urgency

**Reflection |** Express appreciation with specificity, not in generalities: If donors or community members knew the full story, what would they thank staff for? (List, below)

## Section 4: Board-to-Staff Appreciation Statement (Delivered Through ED)

**Sample Language |** “As a board, we recognize that this season asks more of you than is visible. Your work makes generosity possible, sustains trust, and carries our mission into the community. We see the effort behind the outcomes, and we are grateful.”

## Section 5: Board Appreciation & Self-Reflection

Healthy staff encouragement includes board self-awareness.

- Where did the board add clarity and steadiness this year?
- Where might we have added pressure without realizing it?
- How well did we respect governance–management boundaries?

**Board Appreciation Note |** Name one way the board supported—not complicated—staff work this year: (List, below)

## Next Step Considerations

- All appreciation flows through the Executive Director.
- This tool reinforces governance posture, not operational involvement.
- Encourage specificity without evaluation.
- Close by naming one signal the board intends to carry into January.