

Foundations: Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Commissioners

Being named a commissioner is a great opportunity to serve your community, and with your appointment you have assumed significant responsibilities. The Board of Commissioners is the legally and financially responsible governing body of a PHA and the first line of accountability for the PHAs performance.

What Boards of Commissioners Do

Provide Leadership

- Set and champion the mission of the PHA
- Make strategic decisions to ensure the financial solvency of the agency
- Speak up when concerns arise

Provide Oversight

- Monitor the agency's ability to meet statutory, regulatory, and contractual obligations
- Assure PHAs meet obligations on audit recommendations
- Approve internal controls to safeguard the agency's assets
- Safeguard the financial integrity of the PHA, preventing fraud, waste, mismanagement, and abuse
- Approve, review, and monitor budgets, contracts, and other financial documents
- Conduct monthly reviews of budgets with actual expenses and revenues
- Ensure ethical, legal, and effective work performance
- Keep informed of subsidized housing industry rules and regulations

Actively Participate in Board Meetings

- Conduct and maintain an accurate record of board proceedings
- Follow open meeting requirements

What Commissioners Should Know

- The agency's history, mission, programs, financials, and strategic plan
- Agency policies and procedures
- Agency-owned developments and properties
- Board and committee meeting processes, including open meeting requirements and confidentiality
- Federal and state laws and regulations

Executive Director and Executive Staff

The commissioner's role is governance—establishing policy and ensuring oversight. The executive director's role is management. Commissioners and executive directors need to be cognizant of one another's roles without overstepping or undermining the other. Specifically, the executive director:

- Keeps commissioners informed
- Develops, implements, and oversees the operating budgets
- Ensures compliance with all federal laws and HUD guidelines
- Manages the day-to-day operations of the PHA
- Hires, evaluates, trains, and terminates staff
- Executes board-approved policies

The executive team at an authority includes more than the executive director or chief executive officer. Depending on the size of the PHA, there may also be other executive staff. These staff members are hired by the executive director, and are concerned with the day-to-day management of the PHA.

RESIDENTS: AN ESSENTIAL VOICE

All PHAs must have a Resident Advisory Board (RAB) and Resident Commissioners. These voices can provide an important perspective on the most pressing issues facing the community of residents.

You should also get out, walk around these communities, and get to know the people you serve.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

HUD interprets the laws handed down by Congress, developing regulations to guide PHAs. These regulations are distilled in the Annual Contributions Contract (ACC), a legally-binding contract between HUD and the PHA. HUD is a resource for PHAs. HUD guidebooks, notices, and handbooks are important tools to guide your oversight. The PHA may also contact the HUD Field Office, Regional Office, and Headquarters for resources and support.