

# Basic responsibilities of a DD Council Member

---

*Adapted from BoardSource Governance Series*

## **Role and Responsibility: What is the difference?**

**Role** defines position within an organization

**Responsibility** defines duties of the position

### ✓ **Determine mission (the purpose of a DD Council is mandated by the DD Act)**

- **Create and review a statement of mission and purpose that speaks to the DD Council's goals and primary people served.**

TIP: Use the mission statement as a frame of reference when making DD Council decisions. Review the mission statement regularly for reaffirming the current mission statement or to determine if changes need to be made.

### ✓ **Select the Executive Director**

- **Review and update the Executive Director's job duties and responsibilities; conduct a careful search to find the most qualified person for the position**

This is a DD Act mandate. If a vacancy occurs, the DD Council recruits and hires the Executive Director. The Executive Director recruits, hires, all other staff.

### ✓ **Support and annually evaluate the Executive Director**

- **DD Council members should ensure the Executive Director (ED) has the moral and professional support to further the goals of the organization; annually evaluate the Executive Director following applicable policies and procedures.**

The DD Act requires an annual evaluation of the DD Council ED. The annual evaluation is important for providing feedback on job performance and often time includes highlights and accomplishments from the year, areas for improvement, plans for professional development and goals for the coming year. The process for conducting an evaluation vary from DD Council to DD Council; however, it is important that the annual evaluation

for a DD Council Executive Director be conducted by the DD Council (not the DSA or other entity of the state).

TIP: Ensure all DD Council members know the general process and timeline for the annual evaluation of the Executive Director. The responsible person or person(s) should inform the DD Council of the completion and results of the annual evaluation once completed.

✓ **Ensure effective planning**

○ **DD Council members should actively participate in the overall planning process for the DD Council 5 – year state plan**

This is a DD Act mandate. “The Council shall develop the State plan and submit...” Active participation means that a DD Council member will use the information gained from the Comprehensive Review and Analysis (the present status of services and supports provided for people with DD and their families in the State) and information from the public to identify the unmet needs of people with DD and their families.

TIP: The firsthand experiences citizen members of a DD Council bring to the Council is important because they have current knowledge and experiences about accessing the service delivery system, community services, personalized supports and other experiences connected to the disability experience. However, individual DD Council members represent all citizens with developmental disabilities in the State/Territory. In other words, the leadership and guidance provided by a DD Council member affects all citizens with developmental disabilities in the State/Territory.

DD Council members can take advantage of opportunities to listen to other people in the State/Territory who live with developmental disabilities. Information gained at the local level can be shared during DD Council meetings.

✓ **Implement and monitor the DD Council 5-year State plan**

○ **DD Council members should actively participate in the implementation of the 5-year State plan (by providing leadership for strategies, activities, and approving funding) and monitor the plan’s goals**

Each year, a DD Council must submit a report of its progress toward the goals of the 5-year state plan. This report is called the Annual Program Performance Report – or PPR. Many DD Councils include a status report on all activities of the 5-year State plan during their regular scheduled meetings. This is a wonderful way for the Council to celebrate successes,

address challenges, and provide leadership and guidance to the DD Council staff on the implementation of the 5-year State plan.

TIP: As part of each DD Council meeting agenda, report on activities and initiatives used to implement the 5-year State plan. Ensure all DD Council members know what process the DD Council staff uses to assess the impact of DD Council work; determine how the information can be used to inform the work and future decisions.

Note: The DD Act mandates a minimum of 70% of each year's federal grant award be dedicated to implementing projects and activities that address the goals/objectives of the DD Council 5-year State plan.

✓ **Approve and implement the budget; provide financial oversight**

○ **DD Council members should assist in developing, approving, and implementing the annual budget**

This is a DD Act mandate. Each Council shall prepare, approve, and implement an operating budget – this often includes tasks such as approving funds for programs, projects, and activities, approving funds for DD Council staff to conduct activities and/or approving new and continuation subrecipient awards. In addition, a DD Council should provide financial oversight by monitoring the Council's financial status on a regular basis (most Councils do this as part of their regularly scheduled meetings).

For a DD Council member to fulfill their ROLE, and perform the responsibilities of their role, the following is common information DD Council staff provide to DD Council members:

- Annual Operating budget
- Funds awarded for projects, activities, and programs supported by the 5-year goals and related objectives
- Summary of Federal Year of Funds
- Funds Available for Future Projects

Common responsibilities of DD Council staff related to budget activities include: Establish the operating budget for the DD Council, allocation of funds among strategies and initiatives; approving expenditures of funds within the budget approved by the DD Council; completing financial reports in a timely manner; and, recommending budgetary activities.

✓ **Build a competent DD Council**

- **Identify potential members for appointment; orient and mentor new members; periodically evaluate individual and overall DD Council membership effectiveness**

A DD Council will only be as effective as its individual members. The DD Act allows for DD Councils to recommend to the Governor people to serve as members. This is not a mandate but it is allowed and should work in concert with the process the DD Council follows in the State/Territory. Orientation to the DD Council will help clarify expectations for individual DD Council members. Orientation sessions typically include topics such as - responsibilities, how the DD Council is organized to do the work, relationships with staff, etc. Additional information such as mission, history, major achievements and accomplishments, budget, 5-year state plan, initiatives and other topics are also included.

✓ **Ensure legal and ethical integrity (conflict of interest, code of conduct, etc.)**

- **Be knowledgeable about legal and ethical requirements for public officials; follow all conflict of interest policies (and other policies, as applicable) to ensure the public trust.**

Words such as diligence, commitment, and vigilance are often attached to a DD Council member role as they oversee Council business – words such as compliance, openness, and accountability are often attached to the DD Council reputation and public standing.

*Compliance* means that the DD Council is adhering to the regulatory (DD Act mandates) and legal conditions required for the funding and operation of a DD Council.

*Openness* means being open with accurate information about funding, the use of funding, major activities, and other areas such as organizational policies and procedures, requests for information, etc.

*Accountability* refers to the ability to follow DD Council policies and procedures. Annually, a DD Council is required to share information with policymakers, the public, agencies, and other stakeholders about DD Council activities, accomplishments, and challenges for specific reporting periods. In addition, the DD Act mandates all Councils adopt and use a conflict of interest policy to ensure DD Council members are free from real or perceived conflict(s) of interest.

✓ **Enhance the DD Council's public standing**

- **Can talk about the DD Council mission, accomplishments, and goals to the public and gain support from the community.**

DD Council members serve as a link between the DD Council and the citizens of the State. The ability to strategically communicate a DD Council's story and contribute to a healthy and accurate public image for the DD Council is essential. DD Council members should be able to talk about DD Council achievements (information in annual reports, press releases, web-site announcements), and be able to deliver an interesting and compelling explanation of a DD Council's purpose and mission.