



Association Board of Directors Fact Sheet #6

Board Members as Volunteers

Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations have begun to adopt and implement a new Volunteer Involvement Policy (VIP) and related procedures. The purpose of the policy is to set forth the terms under which the Cornell Cooperative Extension Association volunteer relationship is established, and outline the procedures most critical for a volunteer experience that is productive for the individual and the organization.

A central feature of the VIP is the identification of four categories of volunteers: casual, elected, enrolled and supervising. Enrolled volunteers are required to sign a Volunteer Agreement, and depending on the nature of their volunteer work, may be required to undergo background checks.

A question sometimes arises as to how the VIP applies to members of association Boards of Directors. The policy states:

Members of Boards of Directors are governed by the rules set forth in N.Y. County Law 224 (8)(b), the Association Constitution, and Cornell University

*To be permitted to serve as CCE Association Volunteers all individuals **other than Board Members**.... must be willing to provide services according to this Volunteer Policy. Volunteers who participate in multiple roles in the organization (as an example: a Board Member who is also a 4-H club leader) will adhere to the standards prescribed in the Volunteer Policy under the category of Enrolled Volunteer, if appropriate.*

Thus, since Board members have legally-defined governance responsibilities they typically would **not** be subject to background checks or be required to sign the volunteer agreement **unless** they are serving in another volunteer capacity where these provisions apply.

An association Board may, if it wishes, adopt a local policy requiring that Board members undergo background checks and sign the volunteer agreement. However, since the Board of Directors supervises staff through the executive director (not the other way around) the following provision of the VIP should **not** apply to Board Directors **when engaged in their governance responsibilities**:

Accept supervision and support from professional Extension staff and/or supervisory volunteers.