

# BOARD STRUCTURE: CONSTRUCTING A SUSTAINABLE BOARD

# Presenters



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## Today's Format

- Content rich webinar
- Brief time for Q&A at the end
- Evaluation

*This session is being recorded. The recording and PowerPoint will be made available at [www.TheCenterForCharters.org/Events](http://www.TheCenterForCharters.org/Events).*

## What We Are Going To Cover

- Board Structure: Why constructing a sustainable board matters.
- Board Building Cycle- Board Source
- How well functioning committees support good governance.
- Q&A

# Some Framing Thoughts

## A Few Notes Before We Dive In

- It's all about the kids.
- We are going to articulate a very high bar. The students in your charter school deserve nothing short of excellence.
- Terminology:
  - BoardOnTrack uses the term "CEO" to denote the person at the very top of the org chart, who reports directly to the board.

## Quote from Cyril Houle

“...the selection of board members should be made by deciding who is ‘right’ for a particular board, who can strengthen it, and who can give it the distinctive qualities that it needs at the present moment.”

# Why Constructing a Sustainable Board Matters



## Why the focus on sustainable boards?

- Great boards instill sustainability into the DNA of the organization.
- Sustainable boards impact the outcomes of organizations.
- Poor boards allow mediocracy or worse failure.

# Great Boards Evolve Over Time



## Path to Excellence

A Charter School Board's Evolution

BOARD AND CEO PROGRESS TOGETHER

**LEVEL 1**

**Basic**

- Adhoc, reactive, heroics
- Desire to understand and improve

**LEVEL 2**

**Emerging**

- Begin to develop repeatable processes
- Board work connects to results for kids

**LEVEL 3**

**Intermediate**

- Data-driven governance
- Board value-add becomes evident and essential

**LEVEL 4**

**Advanced**

- Sustainable processes
- Succession planning
- Outstanding results

**LEVEL 5**

**Excellent**

- Optimizing mission, sustainability, growth and replication
- Sustained outstanding results

**Reactive**  
High Risk

Strong  
Academic  
Results

**Strategic**  
Low Risk



## Traditional Board Recruitment

- The usual suspects, or circle of friends approach to board recruitment.
- This approach is too limited in today's competitive environment.

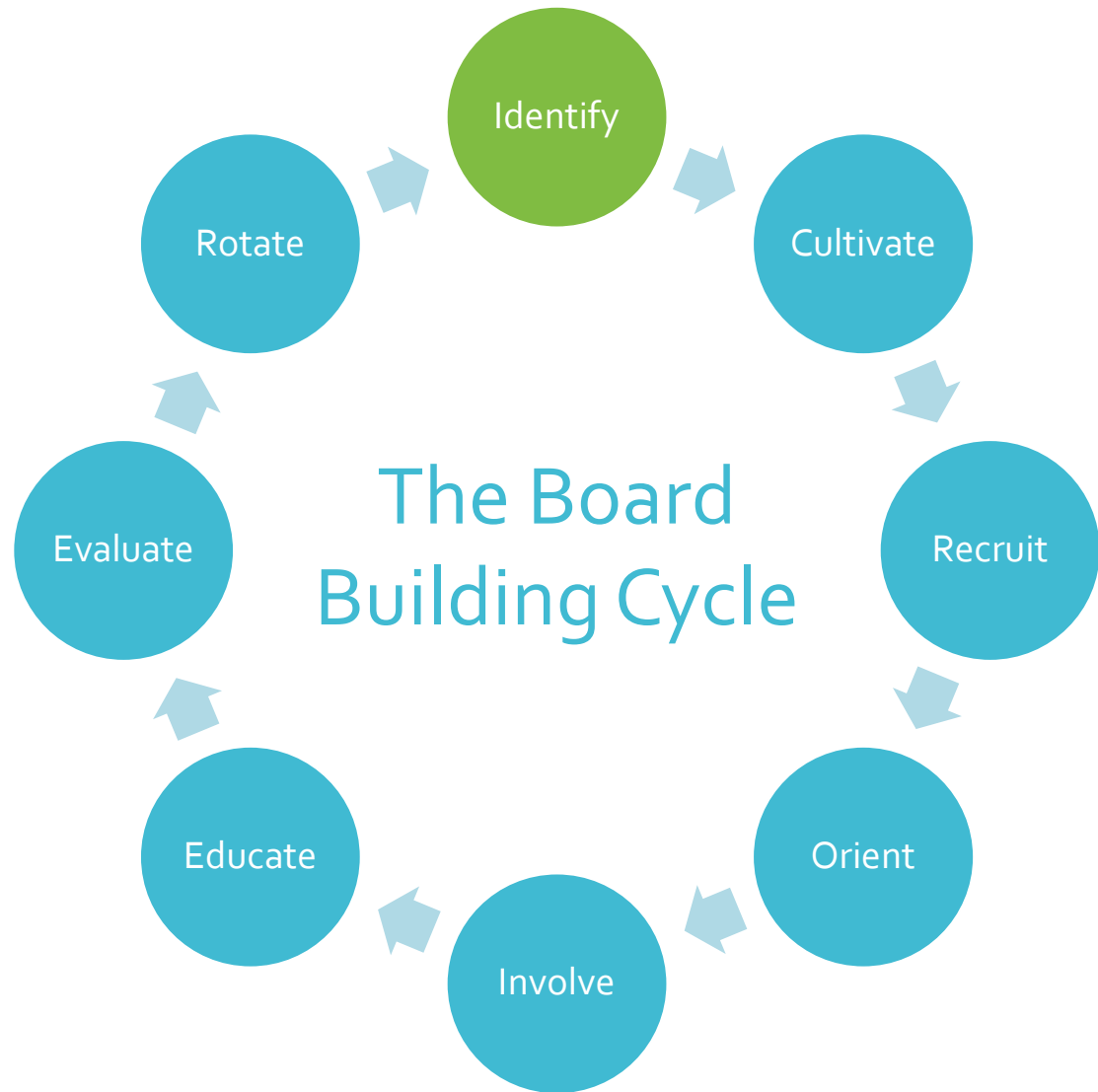
## Traditional Board Recruitment

- To be effective, recruiting must be a continuous process rather than a series of isolated events.
- To build the best possible organization, board members need varied expertise and connections that will assist in realizing the school mission.

# Board Building Cycle

# Nine steps to finding, recruiting, and engaging nonprofit board members

© 2007 Board Source



## Identify

- Identification of board members is a strategic activity with long term implications.
- Identify the needs of the board based on the strategic plan, including skills, knowledge, perspectives, connections, etc.
- Develop a board profile so that you can identify skills that you currently have on the board and the skills lacking.





## Identify

### **Four key areas for consideration when evaluating potential new members:**

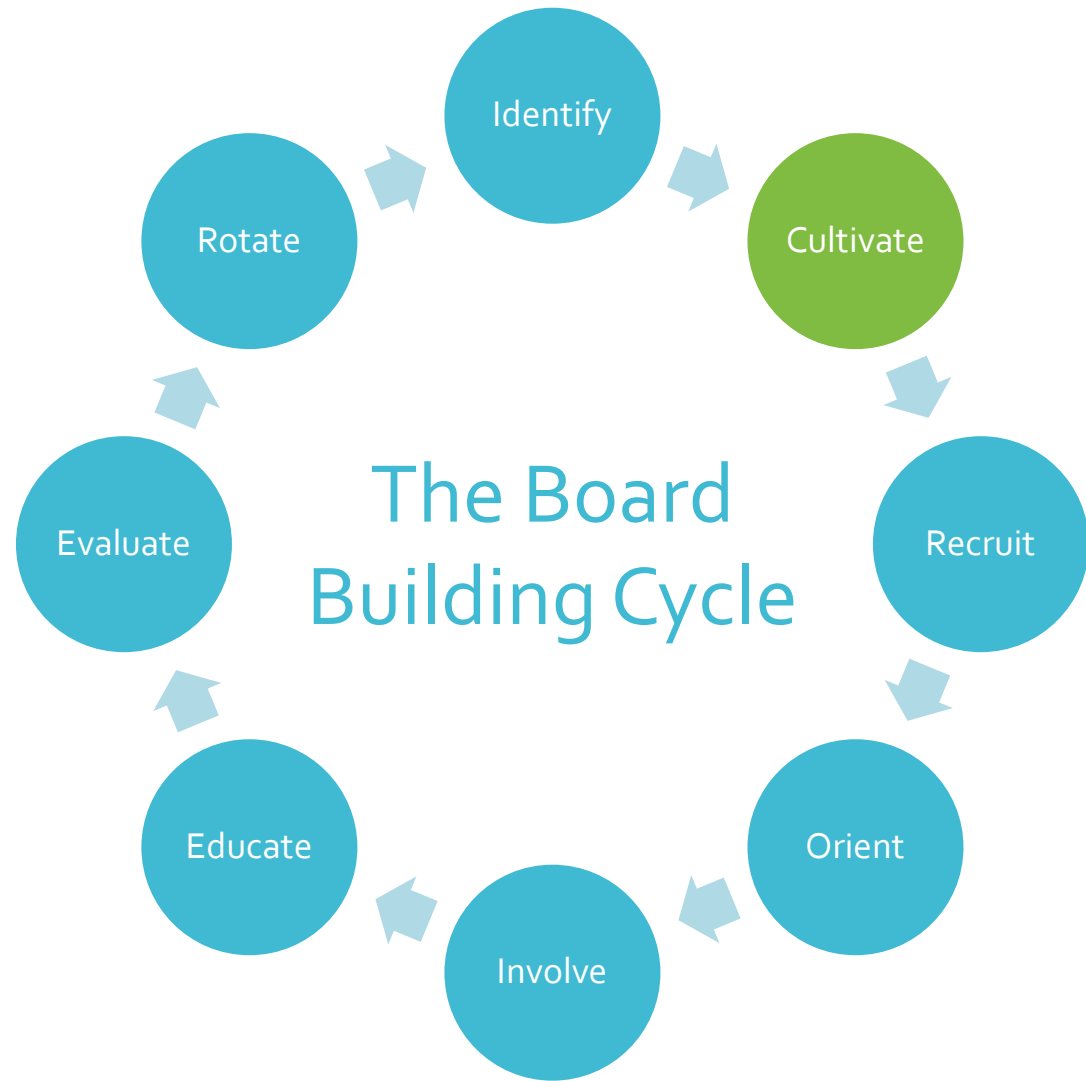
- Relevant experience
- Teamwork
- Commitment
- Philosophical alignment

## Identify

### **Where can we find potential board members?**

- Local chamber of commerce
- Other non-profits (similar missions)
- Local business community
- Potential donors
- Nearby colleges and universities
- Professional organizations

Cultivate



## Cultivate

Cultivating potential board members should be an ongoing activity so that when the time comes to nominate someone you have a pool of individuals to choose from.

## Cultivate

- Cultivation involves developing relationships.
- Once prospects have been identified, create an information sheet and bring them into the fold by sending them annual reports, brochures, favorable press, newsletters and other basic information.
- Invite prospective board members to participate in the organization in some way.

## Cultivate- Committee

- During the process of building relationships with new candidates identify their strengths and weaknesses.
- Consider if there is a committee that would best suit their skills.
- This process allows the candidate the opportunity to get to know the organization while you get to know the candidate.

## Cultivate- Committee

### **We advocate for a minimum of three standing board committees:**

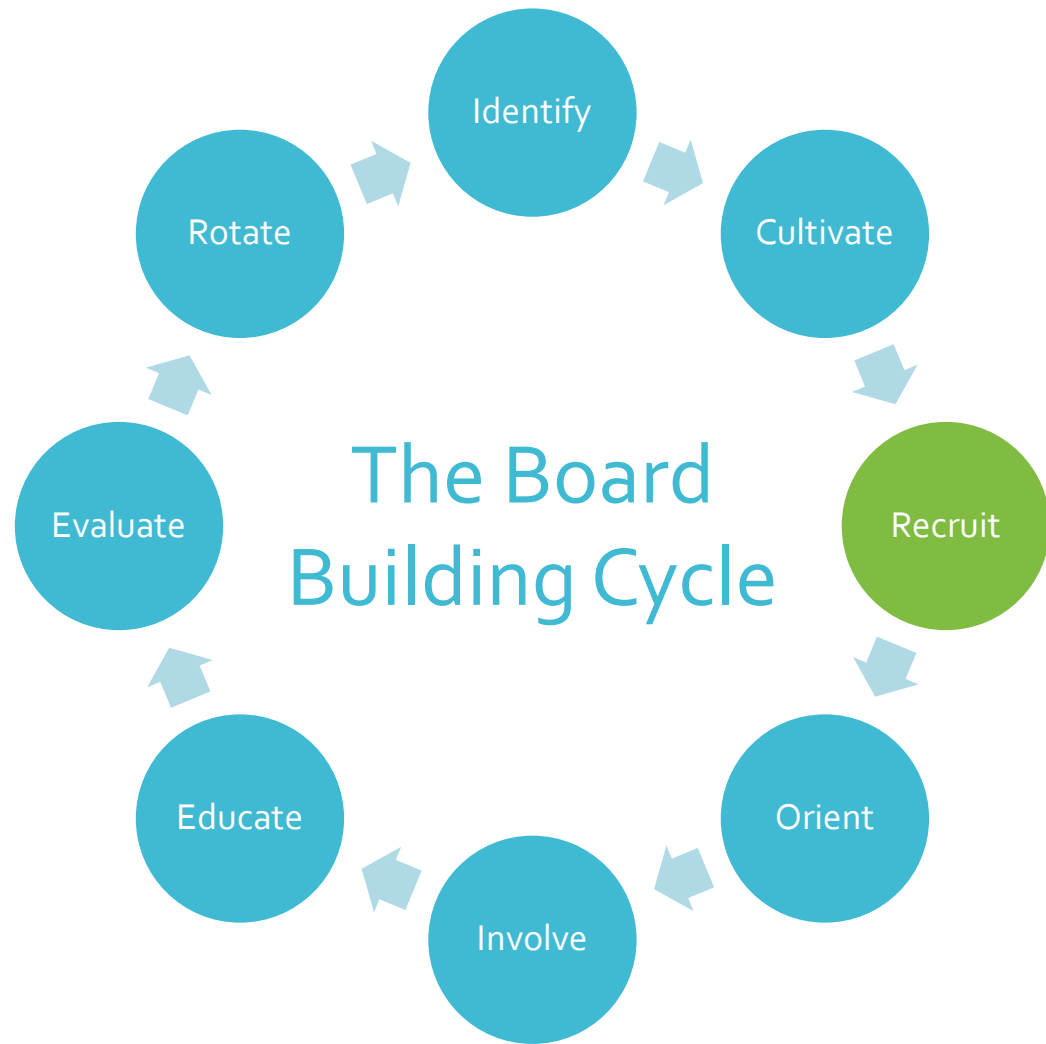
- Academic
- Fiscal
- Governance

Committees will provide an opportunity for each party to get to know each other.

Be sure to provide expectations so that misunderstandings don't happen.



Recruit



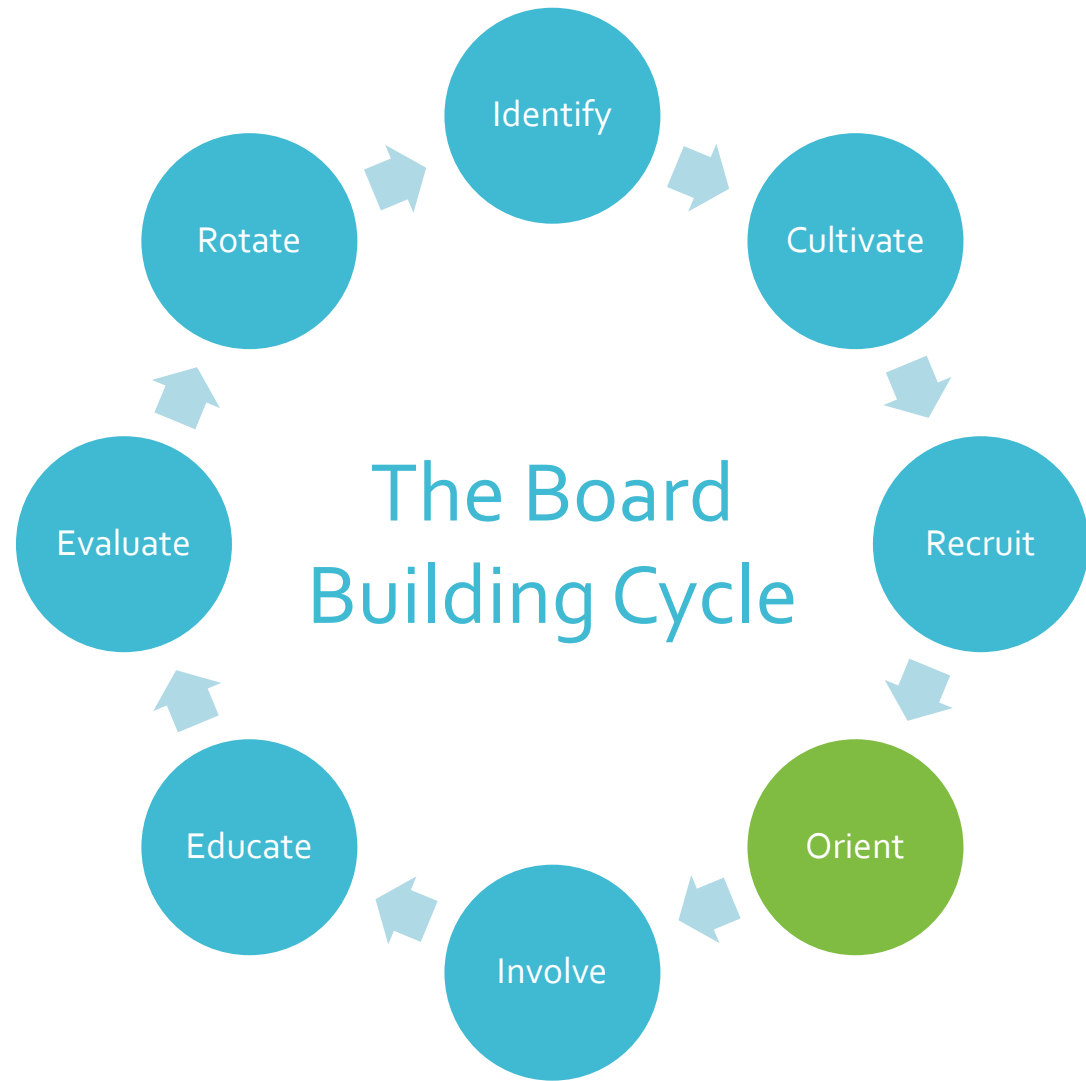
## Recruit

- Explore the interest of the candidates through conversation or by involving them in organizational activities.
- The governance committee could be tasked with identifying and presenting a group of candidates and outlining the process for appointment.
- Ensure that everyone on the board understands and has bought into the process that has been developed.

## Recruit

- Be sure to have sufficient information on each nominee prior to nominating a candidate.
- Interview the candidates to gauge their commitment to the mission.
- Evaluate to ensure that they are the right fit for the organization.

Orient



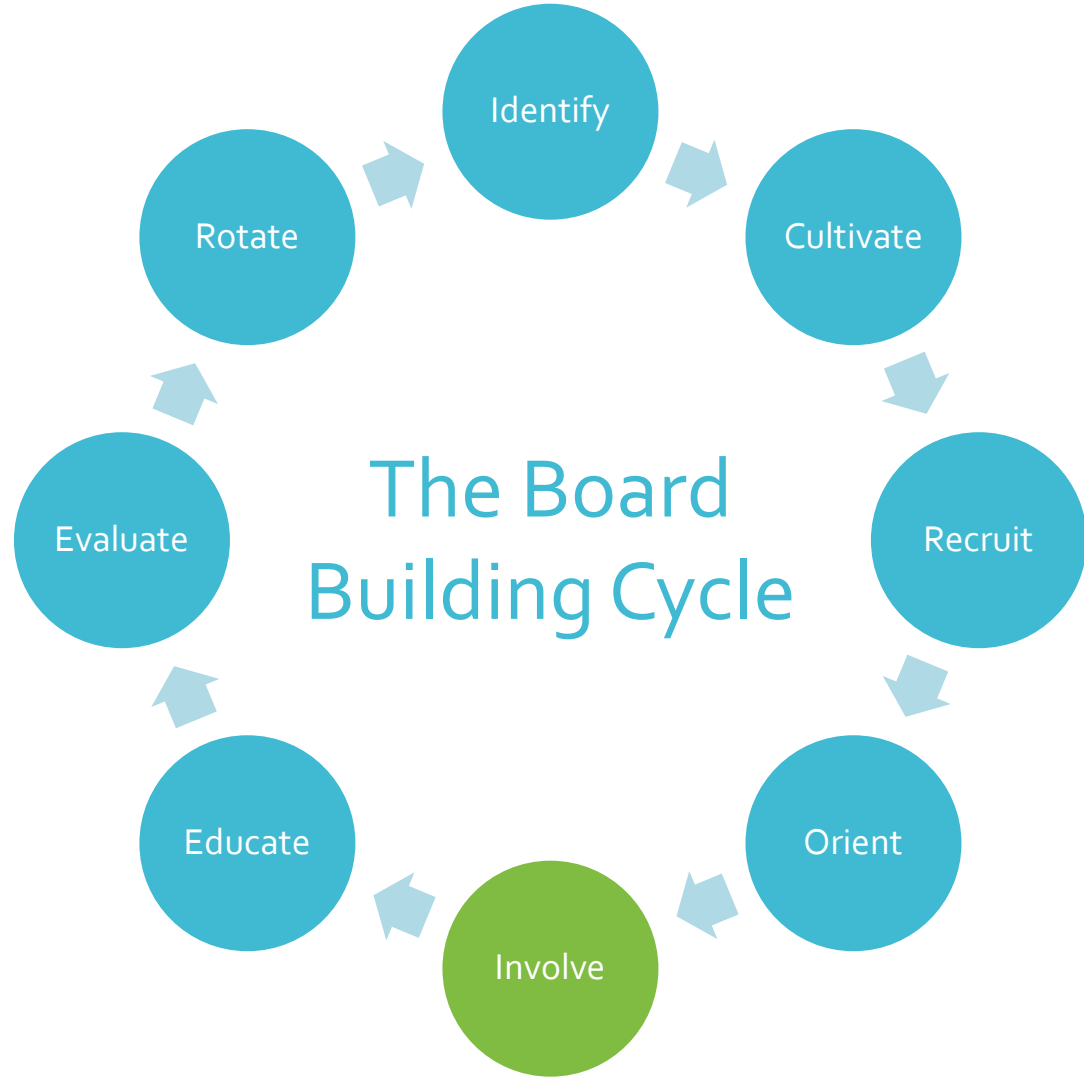
## Orient

- Take time to communicate information regarding the culture of the board.
  - Examples: dress for meetings, formality of meeting, expectations of participation of school events
- Encourage new members to attend CMU new board member orientation.
- Conduct orientation as soon as possible after appointment.

## Orient

- Plan a follow-up orientation session later in the year to help answer new members questions and solicit feedback about your process.
- Consider assigning new board member mentors to help answer questions and provide a friendly transition.
- Prepare new board members for active participation.

Involve



## Involve

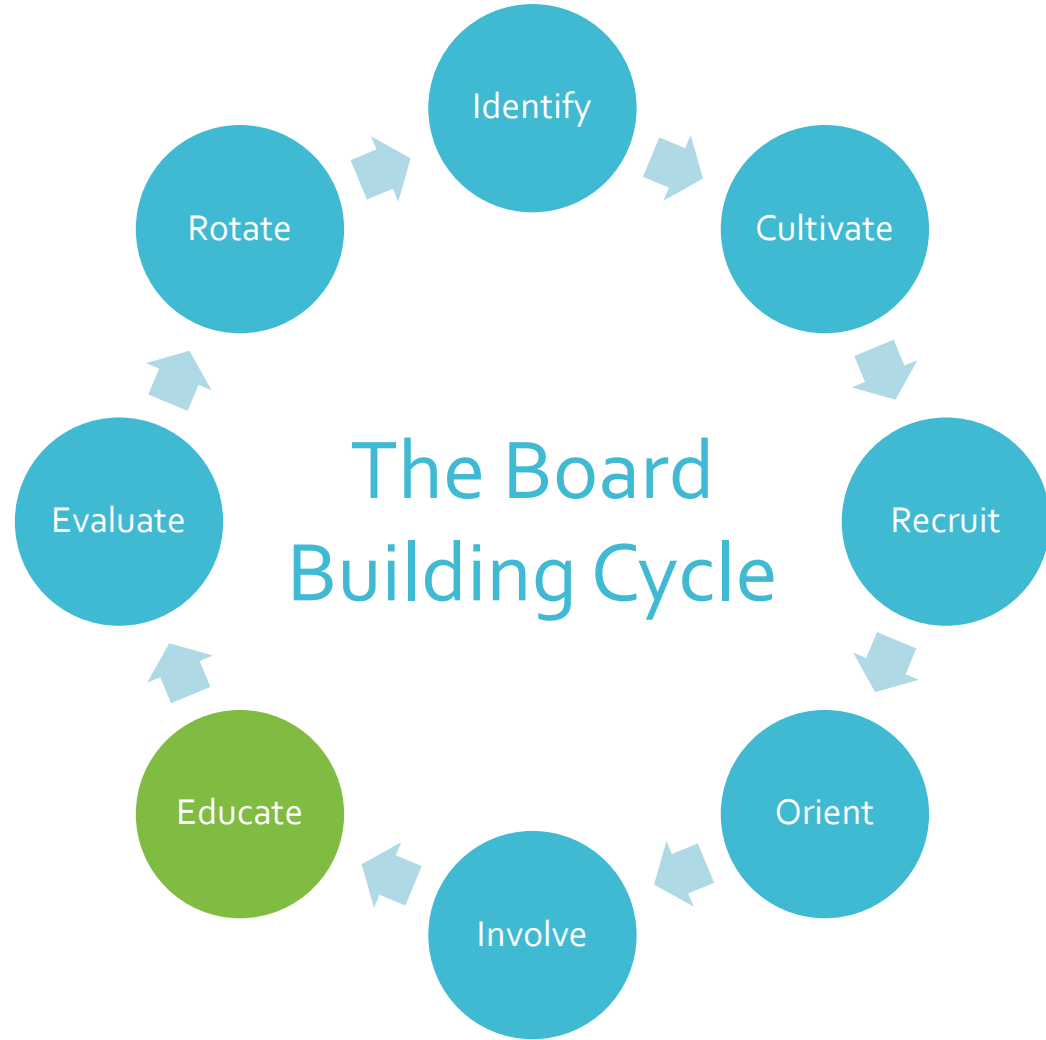
- Provide opportunities for active participation through interactive board meetings.
- Make information easily available to the board.
- Focus the board on strategically important issues.



## Involve

- Create opportunities for social interaction, sharing of experience and exploration of ideas through retreats or fundraisers.
- Structure board meetings to be effective so that board members feel like their time is well spent.

Educate



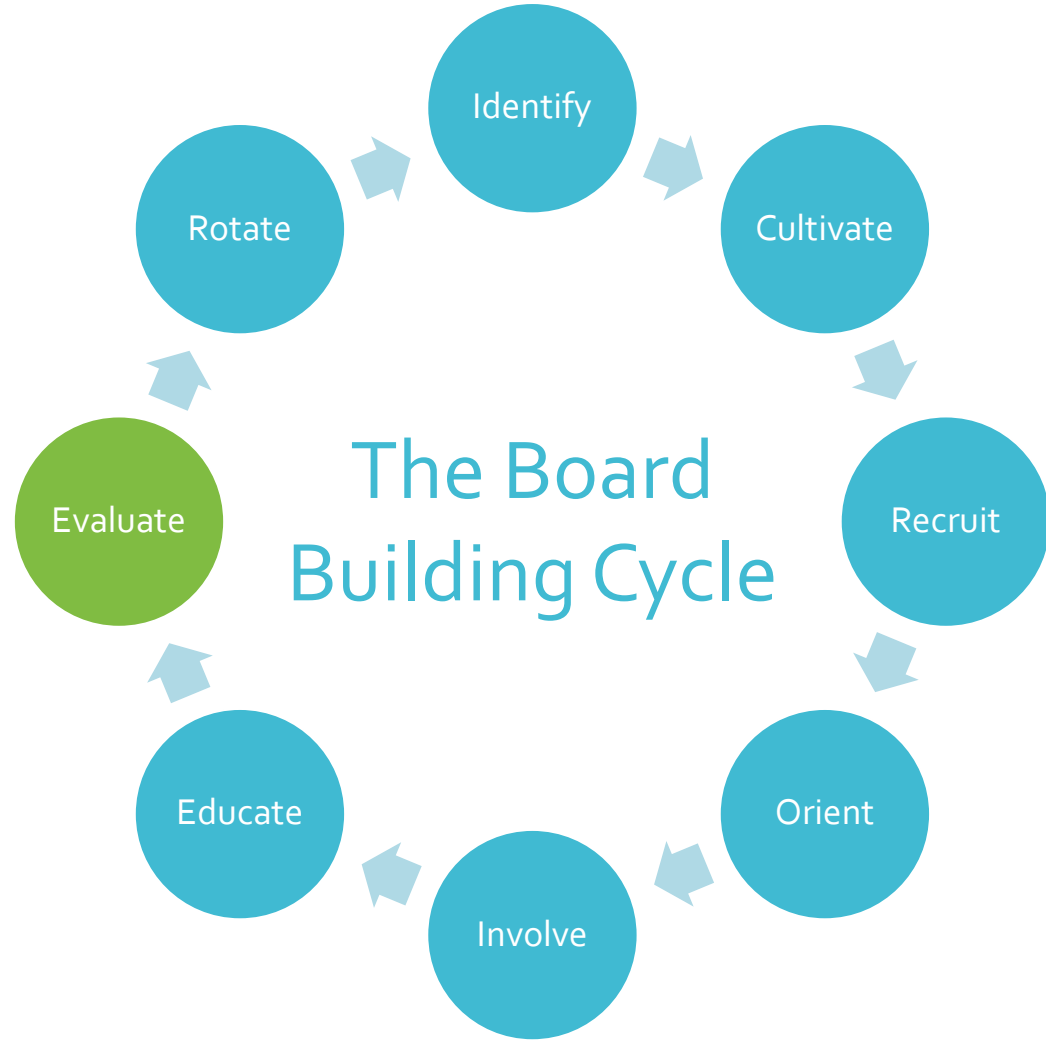
## Educate

- Build in opportunities for the board to expand its knowledge, awareness and understanding.
- Continuous learning is a key characteristic of boards that stand out from the crowd.
- Make information readily available to board members through email or on a password-protected website.

## Educate

- Educate board members on external issues that might affect the organization and mission as well as on specific board functions.
- Organize activities that get board members involved and that provide board members with opportunities to learn outside of the regular boardroom context.

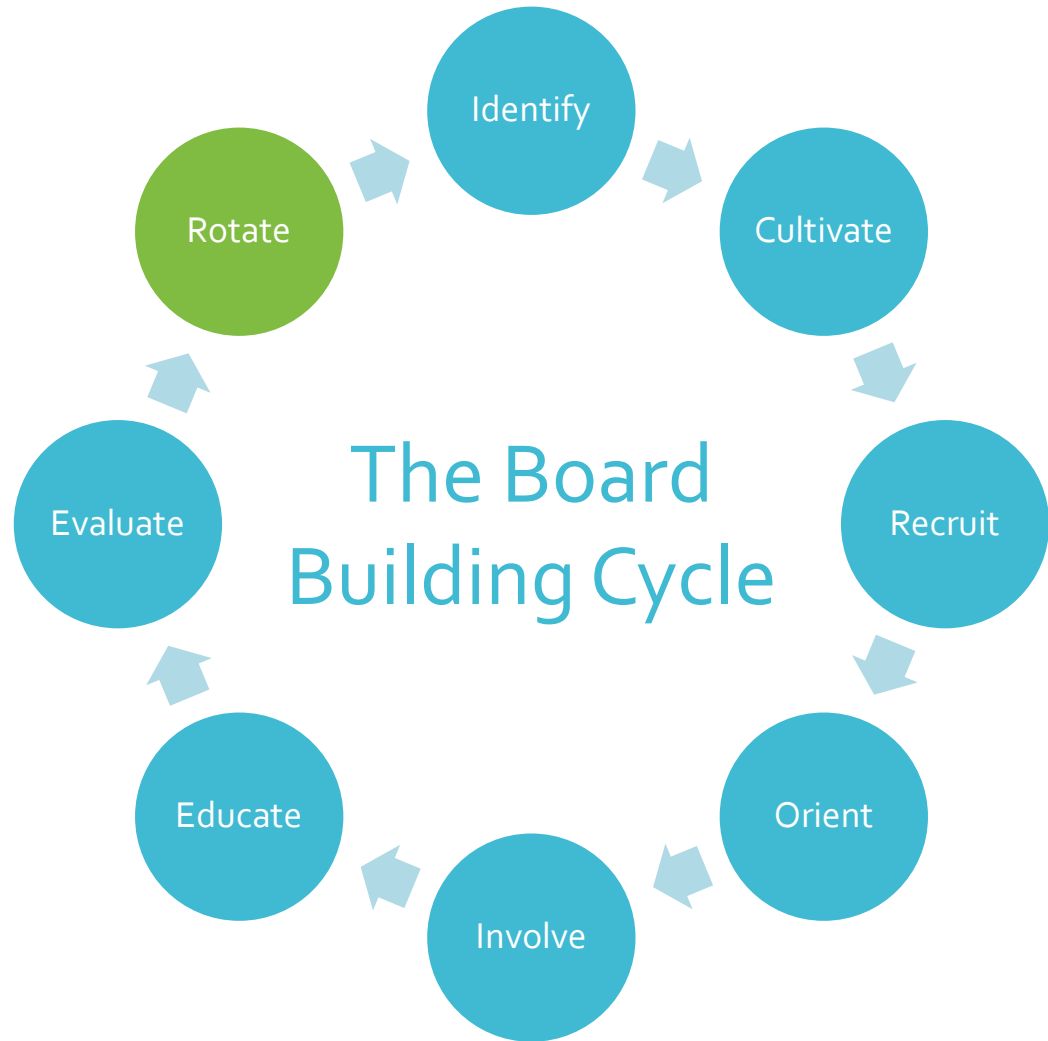
Evaluate



## Evaluate

- To help promote the board's continuous growth and improvement, take time to reflect on the board's performance and that of individual members.
- Conduct a full scale board assessment on a regular basis.
- Establish criteria for what the board considers to be an effective meeting and then regularly evaluate meetings based on this criteria.

Rotate



## Rotate

- Balance the need for new members with the need for institutional memory and retention of valuable resources.
- Bring new members onto the board to ensure fresh insights and ideas.
- Assign board members to different committees over time and provide opportunities for leadership roles to keep board members interested.
- Be very intentional about the process for board members to be re-nominated.



# Celebrate

- Be sure to find time to reward the hard work that has taken place in your buildings.
- Find creative ways to celebrate successes.
- Be sure to say thank you!

Questions?

Upcoming  
Events

## **Changing the Mindset of College and Career Readiness**

Novi, February 8

## **Building Board Structure – Unit Three**

Webinar, March 5

[www.TheCenterForCharters.org/Events](http://www.TheCenterForCharters.org/Events)