

**For Your Reflection: As you consider joining the board,
here are some questions to consider:**

Is Just Food Co-op the Right Cause and Organization for Me?

Approach this decision as if you were planning to make a major donation: you would probably begin by thinking of areas where you have strong feelings – perhaps healthy food, sustainable farming, or fair trade in agriculture. After settling on a subject area, you might then learn about several different organizations working in that field, and investigate ones that seem to have high impact and are well managed. Only after you were fully satisfied would you make the donation.

The next time you consider joining a board, first ask yourself whether you truly feel strongly about the type of work that the organization does and the people it serves. Since, as a board member, you'll be investing time and energy, ask yourself whether the organization seems to be a pretty good risk as an investment.

Can I Work with This Organization and This Board at This Particular Stage in Its Life?

At one time in an organization's life, board service may be fairly smooth with a few bumps, while at another time board service may involve a hair-raising roller coaster ride (of course, an unexpected event can throw any board for a loop). What type of board seems right for you right now? What about the diversity of the board – does it represent the stakeholders in the community? You may want a board that really lets you roll up your sleeves and get to work with the other board members, or you may want a board that is stable and can let you learn about board work in a deliberate way.

What Can I, and What Will I, Contribute to This Organization?

What skills, contacts, and perspectives do I have that will be useful to this organization? How, specifically, will the board use what I can bring? Often as board members, we find that some of our talents and contacts never seem to get utilized by the boards we're on. Perhaps you gave up a music career for accounting, or have writing skills that are not used at your job. Perhaps your network includes dozens of influential community leaders. Consider first what you bring to the table, and then, whether you are willing to give that to the organization. Look, too, for vehicles for your skills: if you can't see a specific vehicle (work on an event, help market a service, work with the Treasurer), your desire to contribute may well go unfulfilled.

Do I believe in this organization enough to introduce my friends to it?

Can I make a commitment to attending at least 75% of the meetings? Am I willing to give up one or more evenings a month? Can I volunteer with other board members at other times than meeting dates? Would I feel comfortable having my name on the

organization's materials? The right time to ask these questions is before, not after, you have joined the board.

This final question is one that potential candidates should ask themselves and one that active board members should periodically re-examine during their board service:

What Do I Want to Get Out of Being on This Board?

An all-too-common experience for board members at the ends of their terms is a feeling that they didn't, after all, really get deeply involved and don't, as a result, feel that they either contributed as much or got as much as they had hoped when they first joined. Board members who plan and ask for what they want in the board will contribute more as well as gain more. For example, if you don't have a finance background but wish you knew more about finance, consider asking to be appointed to a financial task force. If there's a community leader on the another committee who you would love to get to know, ask to be on that committee, and put in the time to be sure you get to know all the members well. If one of your reasons for joining the board was to meet new people, volunteer to help any way that makes sense.