8.
Board
Evaluation
2. **Qualities of Outstanding Boards**

To establish a sound foundation for an ethical approach to good governance, we must examine the qualities of outstanding boards. The following is a list of 15 qualities that have been proven over time:

1. Every board member accepts each board member with a due appreciation of his or her strengths and a tolerance of his or her quirks and weaknesses.

2. There is an easy familiarity of approach among the members of the board, with an awareness of one another's backgrounds and viewpoints.

3. Everyone concerned with decisions helps to make them.

4. The contribution of each person or group is recognized.

5. The board has a sense of being rooted in an important tradition and of providing continuity for a program that has been and continues to be important. Alternatively, the board is launched on a new and exciting mission and its members are constantly challenged by the need to be innovative.

6. The attitude of the board is forward-looking and is based on a confident expectation of growth and development in the program.

7. There is a clear definition of responsibilities so that each person knows what is expected of them.

8. The members of the board can communicate easily with one another.

9. There is a sense that the whole board is more important than any of its parts.

10. There is a capacity to resolve dissent and discord, or, if it cannot be resolved, to keep it in perspective in terms of larger purposes.

11. There is acceptance of and conformity to a code of behavior, usually involving courtesy, self-discipline and responsibility.

12. There is an awareness of the fact that all boards contain clusters or pairs of people who tend to like or dislike one another, as well as ones who may not be closely involved with others. There is also a capacity to use their personal relationships as effectively as possible to achieve the larger purposes of the program.

13. There is an ability to recognize and use wisely the influence of individual board members that arises from their power, connections, wealth, social status, age or ability.

14. In case of internal conflict, the group has the capacity to examine the situation objectively, identify the sources of difficulty and rectify them.

15. Most important of all, the board members share a clear understanding of, and commitment to, the mission of the organization.

**PRACTICE # 18—The board will use the 15 qualities of outstanding boards as a discussion and evaluation tool.**