



An Overview of Board Expectations

- Our board members serve 3 year terms.
- Approximately 2-4 hours of work per month.
- Attendance at our meetings. Our board meets 5 times per year - January, March, May, September, and November - typically in person, but sometimes on Zoom.
- A commitment to assist the organization in a way that makes sense for us and you -- ex., time, relationships, skills, knowledge, financial resources, fundraising capacity, and participation.
- A deep interest in our mission and values as an unconventional nonprofit.

Please read on to learn more about us and our work. If you are interested in moving forward, please email Gina@compassarts.org to schedule a time to talk in person in October (note: she will be away until 10/3 and will respond to emails upon her return). We look forward to hearing from you!



About Compass Arts Creativity Project

Arts as a way of building community

Compass Arts Creativity Project (CACP) is a nonprofit arts organization based in Beacon, NY. Our mission is to create healthy, just, equitable, and resilient communities through arts-based classes, performances, and events rooted in exploration, collaboration, creation, and play.

We believe the arts are not simply a product to be consumed or an enrichment activity added onto “more important” work. Creative practice can help people develop connection, confidence, empathy, curiosity, agency, and a sense of belonging. It can create opportunities for people to encounter one another across differences and imagine possibilities that might not otherwise be visible.

Our work spans generations and communities. We provide arts education to young children, including free programming in Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms; create opportunities for adults to make and experience art together; and produce community events and performances that connect people from different walks of life.

Our programs primarily serve Beacon and the surrounding Mid-Hudson Valley, while our participants, artists, and audiences come from communities throughout the region.

We are interested in more than access to the arts.

We are interested in what becomes possible when people have meaningful opportunities to create, connect, and participate.

That means paying attention not only to what we produce, but to how we work—with our students, teaching artists, staff, volunteers, Board members, partners, and community.

We are continually asking:

- Who has access to participate?
- Whose voices are being heard?
- Who gets to make decisions?
- What assumptions are we bringing into the room?
- What structures help people thrive, and which ones get in the way?
- How can our organizational practices reflect the kind of community we are trying to create?

This is an ongoing practice, not a finished achievement.

Our work

- Arts education and creative programming for young children, including free programming in Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms.
- Adult arts programs and opportunities for people to create and connect together.
- Performances, community events, and other opportunities that bring people together through the arts.
- Partnerships with schools, community organizations, artists, and local institutions.





How We Work

Compass Arts is intentionally exploring a different way of organizing and working together. We are building toward a culture that is more collaborative, relational, equitable, and liberatory—and we want our Board to be part of that work.

1. Liberation Mindset

We want to understand how power, privilege, systems, and assumptions shape our work—and our relationships with one another.

This means being willing to ask uncomfortable questions, listen to perspectives that challenge our own, examine our assumptions, and stay engaged when conversations become difficult.

A liberation mindset does not mean having all the answers. It means being willing to keep questioning, learning, and changing.

2. Healthy Boundaries

We believe good governance does not require a hierarchy between the people who govern an organization and the people who do its work.

At Compass Arts, staff are closest to the day-to-day work and are deeply involved in organizational decision-making. The Board provides governance, accountability, perspective, support, and stewardship while trusting the people doing the work to lead day-to-day operations.

Board members are encouraged to build genuine relationships with staff and understand their experiences.

Relationship does not mean supervision.

Healthy boundaries allow us to care about one another without recreating traditional workplace hierarchies—and allow the Board to provide meaningful oversight without directing the day-to-day work.

3. People Over Production

We care about the success and sustainability of Compass Arts. But we do not believe organizational success should come at the expense of the people who make the work possible.

We are practicing being honest about capacity, recognizing that rest and sustainability matter, and asking what people need in order to do good work over time.

People are not resources to be optimized.

Our goal is to build an organization where the well-being of staff, artists, volunteers, participants, and community members is part of what we mean by success.

Culture-building is part of Board service.

These aren't simply values we want Board members to agree with on paper. We want Board members to practice them with us.

That includes building authentic, generative relationships; listening deeply; engaging honestly with difference and discomfort; and participating in the ongoing work of creating a healthier organizational culture.

We are learning as we go. We do not expect Board members to arrive already knowing how to do this. We do expect them to be curious, engaged, reflective, and willing to learn.





Who Is Our Ideal Board Member?

The qualities below are not a checklist of qualifications. They describe the ways of thinking, relating, and participating that we believe will help a Board member thrive at Compass Arts—and help us build the organization we are working toward.

Curious and self-reflective

You are willing to examine your own assumptions and understand that your experience is not universal. You can receive feedback without becoming defensive, recognize when you may be missing something, and change your mind when new information or perspectives warrant it.

Able to engage with power

You are willing to talk honestly about power, privilege, inequity, and the systems that shape our communities and our organization. You do not need to be an expert in this work, but you do need to be willing to engage with it—even when it is uncomfortable.

Relational

You value authentic, generative relationships and understand that good governance is built through trust, communication, and deep listening. You are interested in knowing the people who make up Compass Arts rather than relating to the organization only through its structures and responsibilities.

Able to hold boundaries

You can distinguish between governance and operations, support and supervision, accountability and control. You can care deeply about staff and the work while respecting the expertise and authority of the people closest to day-to-day decisions.

People-centered

You understand that organizational sustainability depends on the well-being of the people doing the work. You are willing to consider capacity, rest, relationships, and care alongside goals, deadlines, growth, and production.

An independent thinker

You are comfortable bringing a different perspective into the room. You can disagree without making disagreement personal, ask questions that others may not be asking, and remain open to being challenged yourself.

A community connector

You are excited to help people discover Compass Arts and to build relationships that strengthen our work. Your contribution might come through fundraising, financial resources, professional skills, community relationships, advocacy, participation in programs and events, or simply helping more people understand why our work matters.

A learner

We are not looking for people who already know how to build a different kind of nonprofit. We are looking for people who are willing to learn, experiment, reflect, and help us figure it out together.

The goal is not to find people who fit a template. It is to build a collective whose different strengths, experiences, and perspectives make all of us better.



Joining the Board Is a Mutual Process

Getting to know one another

We don't expect you to decide whether Compass Arts is right for you based on this document alone. Becoming a Board member is a process of mutual discernment: you will learn about our work, culture, governance, and expectations, and we will get to know you and what you might bring to the collective.

As part of the process, prospective members will have opportunities to:

- Learn more about Compass Arts and our current work.
- Meet staff and current Board members.
- Ask questions about our culture, governance, and expectations.
- Experience some of our programs, performances, or other community work.
- Consider whether this community and way of working is something they genuinely want to be part of.

We are building the model as we go.

Compass Arts is continuing to explore what shared and collective leadership can look like in practice. Our governance structure will continue to evolve as we learn.

We are interested in a Board that can participate in that experimentation rather than simply reproduce a familiar nonprofit model. That means we may ask you to think differently about what a Board is, how decisions get made, and where authority belongs.

You do not have to have served on a Board before. Traditional nonprofit Board experience is not a requirement. What matters more is your willingness to engage thoughtfully in the work of building something different.

A note about contribution

We are intentionally broad in how we think about what a Board member contributes. Different people will bring different combinations of time, relationships, skills, knowledge, financial resources, fundraising capacity, community connections, and participation.

No one person is expected to contribute in every way. We are interested in what each person brings and how those contributions can complement one another.

What happens next

Our recruitment process is designed to give both prospective members and Compass Arts time to determine whether there is a strong fit. Selected candidates will have an opportunity for deeper conversation and onboarding before formally joining the Board. Please email Executive Director Gina Samardge at gina@compassarts.org to schedule a time to speak further. We look forward to talking with you!

