

# OPERA AMERICA OPERA COMPANY GOVERNANCE REPORT

— PUBLISHED 2019 —

The success of opera companies depends on effective board leadership and management. It relies on healthy board composition, productive committee structure, judicious establishment of policies and clear expectations of board members. This report, excerpted from data from 78 American and Canadian opera companies, provides a context for company staff and board members to compare their practices to those adopted across North America. The benchmarks provided are not intended as prescriptive ideals. No company should aim to hit each average. Rather, this information should serve as a reference to make decisions that are appropriate for each company and its community.

Data are presented in aggregated averages and are, at times, broken apart by company budget size. Budget 1 pertains to budgets of \$15 million or more; Budget 2 to \$3 million to \$15 million; Budget 3 to \$1 million to \$3 million; Budget 4 to \$250,000 to \$1 million; and Budget 5 to under \$250,000. Canadian companies are aggregated across budget size.

## Board Size

	Average Size	Minimum Allowed by By-Laws	Maximum Allowed by By-Laws
Budget 1	63	42	77
Budget 2	30	13	48
Budget 3	24	11	39
Budget 4	14	7	25
Budget 5	12	6	15
Canadian	10	7	14

## Demographics

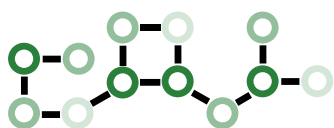
**Non-White:**  
5–10% among Budgets 1–5  
34% among Canadians

**Women: 47%**

**Under 40:** From 2% (Budget 1) up to 20% (Budget 5)  
**41–60:** 1/3 of all trustees  
**61–80:** 1/2 of all trustees  
**81 & over:** From 12% (Budget 1) down to 1% (Budget 5)



## Structure



**Board Officers:** Between 3 (Budget 5) and 8 (Budget 1)

**Committees:** Between 4 (Budget 5) and 11 (Budget 1)

### COMMON COMMITTEES:

Development	87%
Finance	79%
Governance	71%
Executive	69%
Audit	36%

Education/Community Engagement	36%
Marketing	35%
Special Events	24%
Planning/Innovation	23%
Nomination	21%

Others include Artistic, Facilities, Human Resources, Investment and Campaign.

**44%** of companies (as high as 89% among Budget 1 companies) have used **task forces** to supplement committees for anniversary celebrations, diversity initiatives, special campaigns, crisis management, policy/manual development, feasibility studies, financial planning and other initiatives.

## Special Roles

	Honorary Trustees	Emeritus Trustees	Ex Officio Trustees
How many?	0–6	0–4	0–3
Who are they?	singers/artists, patrons and government officials	former members of the board of directors, including past chairs/presidents and committee chairs	general directors, government officials, guild representatives, young professional leaders and community representatives

## Specialty Boards

# 46%

of companies have advisory or subsidiary boards. They include **endowment boards, fundraising boards, advocacy boards, advisory councils, young professional boards, artistic advisory boards** and **facility boards**.

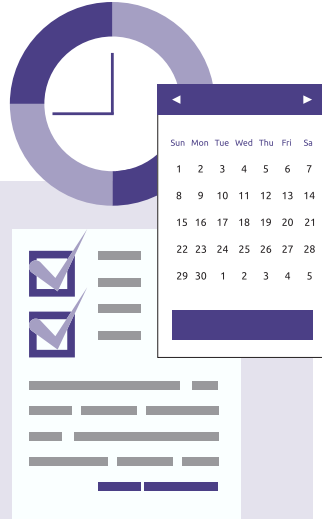
## Meetings

**Meeting Duration: 90–120 minutes**

**Meeting Scheduling: 94%** of board meetings take place on weekdays, of which **45%** are in the evening and **30%** in the afternoon.

### Meeting Agenda:

Fiduciary Reports	99%
Artistic Reports	95%
Executive Session	44%
Meal or Social Reception	30%
Live Performance	27%
Presentation from Program Participant(s)	21%



## Terms and Policies



Have term limits: **89%**

Average term: **3 years**

Limit the number of consecutive terms: **55%**

Average number of terms: **2–3**

### Common Board Policies

Conflict of Interest Policy	91%
Harassment Policy	59%
Whistle-Blower Policy	54%
Board Code of Ethics Policy	47%
Gift Acceptance Policy	45%
Investment Policy Statement	42%
Endowment Spending Policy	35%

Other policies include Diversity Charter, Confidentiality, Document Retention and Destruction, Executive Compensation, and Social Media.

## Board Giving and Participation

**93%** of board members contribute to the annual fund.

**30%** of total contributed revenue comes from board giving.

	Average Board Member Gift
Budget 1	\$81,660
Budget 2	\$21,009
Budget 3	\$6,840
Budget 4	\$6,505
Budget 5	\$1,136
Canadian	\$4,581



	Has a minimum required board gift	Average minimum required board gift	Allows board members to "give or get"
Budget 1	67%	\$26,667	17%
Budget 2	89%	\$10,444	29%
Budget 3	81%	\$4,654	39%
Budget 4	70%	\$2,833	25%
Budget 5	57%	\$1,375	50%
Canadian	60%	\$760	0%

	Requires board members to purchase tickets or subscriptions	Requires board members to purchase gala or special event tickets
Budget 1	22%	22%
Budget 2	72%	67%
Budget 3	56%	31%
Budget 4	52%	44%
Budget 5	14%	0%
Canadian	80%	60%