

Proposed criteria for the selection of START Board members

This document describes key criteria for Board members that reflect START's strategic priorities with respect to programs, regions, finance, and administration. These criteria include:

1. Regional representation: Board members from Africa and Asia (or who have long-standing ties to these two regions) who can help START consider evolving regional opportunities and can help facilitate START's engagement with key regional institutions and actors. Board members from North America and Europe are also important for both programmatic development and connection to funders.
2. High-level connections to funders: Resource mobilization is a key function of any non-profit board and remains a foremost priority for START. Given the tight funding climate, members with significant understanding of traditional and non-traditional partners and funding sources are especially important. START functioned with consistent core funding for 25+ years but that funding source has diminished in recent years making it more difficult for START to meet core operational needs.
3. Diversity in disciplines and backgrounds: Given that START's core engagement is through sustainability science, START seeks Board members who are active in both social and biophysical sciences. Historically, the Board has been heavily tilted towards the latter. As START continues to prioritize work on the SDGs and transformations and on TD research, a stronger social science perspective on the Board would be helpful.
4. Gender: Achieving gender balance with START Board members remains a persistent challenge, and needs further attention in the context of the other criteria. Consideration of age, ethnicity, and geography are also important for achieving greater overall diversity in Board composition that reflects START's mission.
5. Experience with small non-profit organizations: As START contends with an increasingly challenging funding outlook, having at least one Board member with expertise in small nonprofits with respect to strategic visioning, management systems, communications and fundraising is desirable. The Board currently (and historically) has not had this kind of expertise on its Board.
6. Knowledge of START: Board members who have worked with START and are familiar with and committed to its mission and trajectory but who are not stuck in past thinking of what the organization was doing during its more impactful period of the 1990s and early 2000s.
7. Commitment: START is a small nonprofit that thrives with participation from its board as well as its staff. Board members should have the expectation that they will play a hands-on role in the short and long-term vision and strategy-setting of the organization. This includes, but is not limited to, regular emails and participatory teleconferences, an annual meeting and various ad hoc requests as appropriate to the role of a Board member.