

12 Questions for Your First Nonprofit Finance Meeting

A QUICK-START GUIDE FOR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

You don't need to know every accounting term. Start with the questions that reveal where the organization stands and what needs your attention.

- 01 How much unrestricted cash do we have available for operations?**
Know what is truly available—not simply the total bank balance.
- 02 Approximately how many months of operating expenses does that represent?**
Understand your financial runway and liquidity position.
- 03 Are we currently ahead or behind budget—and why?**
Focus on meaningful variances and whether they are temporary or likely to continue.
- 04 What revenue are we counting on over the next six to twelve months?**
Look ahead to grants, contributions, reimbursements, and other funding.
- 05 Which expected revenue is committed, and which is still uncertain?**
Separate dependable funding from applications, goals, and assumptions.
- 06 Are there any major cash flow pressure points approaching?**
Consider payroll, large payments, grant timing, seasonal fundraising, and reimbursements.
- 07 Do we have significant receivables, overdue pledges, or grant reimbursements outstanding?**
Understand what is owed to the organization and when it is expected.
- 08 Are any programs, grants, or departments materially over or under budget?**
Ask what is driving the variance and whether action is needed.
- 09 What funds are restricted, and what can they be used for?**
Know which resources are—and are not—available for general operations.
- 10 Are there audit, tax, grant, debt, or other compliance deadlines I need to know about?**
Build visibility into upcoming financial and compliance obligations.
- 11 Are there internal-control or accounting issues leadership or the board has been working to resolve?**
Ask about open audit recommendations, process gaps, and recurring reporting challenges.
- 12 If you were in my seat, what financial issue would you be watching most closely right now?**
A simple question that can surface risks or opportunities not obvious in standard reports.

Remember: Your first finance meeting isn't about having every answer. It's about understanding the financial position, identifying follow-up questions, and establishing a reliable reporting rhythm.

Need a clearer financial picture? Bay Business Group can help.

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