

THE LEADERSHIP GROUP

Board Governance White Paper

Creating a Strong Governance Model

Remember the story of *The Three Little Pigs*? Each of the brothers set off to build a shelter to protect them from the neighborhood menace, that big, bad wolf. Taking some shortcuts, and not being all that creative and willing to put in the time, two of the pigs built homes of straw and sticks. The third one, however, with an eye towards sustaining his vision, put in the extra time and sweat equity to build his home out of bricks. When the big, bad wolf came a' callin', guess who was safe and sound? Rumor has it that this forward-thinking pig added on to his brick manse to house his brothers as well as other neighbors in need.

Just like the choices for shelter in this children's fable, nonprofit board governance can be executed in a variety of ways. However, there are some basic principles to follow to make sure you are building your organization on a foundation of brick.

The Leadership Group helps organizations build a strong organizational foundation, or board governance strategy, using these 6 essential steps:

Getting on the same page (building the foundation)

The Leadership Group uses its proprietary governance questionnaire to assess where your organization is and where it is heading. The answers to these key questions and the subsequent discussions, led by one of our trained facilitators, gets your leadership team on the same page. This is essential as it is only when this important group agrees upon what is going well, what the opportunities for improvement are, and where to steer the organization that you can move forward and fulfill your mission.

Selecting a governance model (brick vs. cinderblock vs. steel)

There truly is no 'one size fits all' model for board governance, just as the various climates across the United States require different building materials. We work with our client organizations to assess their unique climate (service sector, regional factors, funding opportunities, staffing landscape, client need, and policy influence). Once there is a comprehensive understanding of the climate, the governance model most appropriate is selected.

Following this, the legal requirements, committee structures and roles, and the unique work of the board can be discussed. The Leadership Group facilitates these key discussions and assist nonprofits with effectively integrating its governance model into actual practice.

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Strategic leadership (bringing the organization into its future)

With everyone on the same page and working within the optimal governance framework, the board can now effectively begin its role as the strategic leadership body of the organization. The Leadership Group works to ensure there is a clear delineation of the roles of the governing body and the organizational management team. This allows the organization to function at its highest level on a day to day basis as well as strategically.

Recruitment & retention of active members (the right line-up of key players)

How do high-performing nonprofits attract and retain the best people for their boards? This function is very important, yet many boards consider it a task to be tackled only at nomination time.

To effectively recruit and retain the very best line up of members for a nonprofit's board of directors, it must be done throughout the year, every year. The Leadership Group's consulting process provides the information and structure necessary to understand where to find the best possible new members for your board, develops a board orientation program that clarifies expectations and provides new board members with the tools necessary to successfully serve, and includes strategies for keeping members active and productive.

Setting a board agenda for the year (the organization's GPS)

The Leadership Group advises its clients set an annual board work plan and timetable. After all, you wouldn't set out on a cross country trek without a map and a rough travel plan. As you drive along, you may need to take a slight detour due to road construction or a flat tire. But your initial plan is essential in keeping you on track and on schedule. This is also true of the board agenda. While situations and events may arise that call for a change in the agenda, setting it for the year keeps everyone on the same page and focused on the same destination.

Suggestions for Follow Up

Effective board meetings all end in a similar way. Before adjournment, there is a clear understanding of the 'to do' list for the next meeting. The Leadership Group works to create meeting follow ups that are successful and prevent items from getting lost.

Moving towards the best governance model.

If your organization isn't operating at its most effective and efficient level, this may be a symptom of a poorly matched governance model. Investing the time and resources to build a strong organization governance foundation is critical to sustainability and future success. To discuss how The Leadership Group can help your organization, contact us at 609.392.4872 or regina@leadershipgroup.info.

The Leadership Group's Difference

With over 15 years in the nonprofit consulting arena, The Leadership Group is uniquely positioned to provide and enhance strategic planning, strategic governance, and strategic

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leadership of nonprofit organizations. Our consulting services are provided by people who have years of experience in the nonprofit sector. We know what it takes to meet the everyday demands of funders and clients while also looking towards the future - maximizing opportunities and addressing challenges.

Regina Podhorin, founder and president, is a thought leader in the nonprofit field and is a sought after speaker.

To learn more about The Leadership Group, visit www.leadershipgroup.info.

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