American Council of Learned Societies
Convene Conference Center, 237 Park Ave (entrance on Lexington Avenue between East 45th and 46th Streets)
Monday, September 9, 2019, 8:30 breakfast, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
President-CEO Shared Leadership/Governance Seminar
DISCUSSION AGENDA & ADVANCED READINGS

9:00 CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

9:05 SELF-INTRODUCTIONS, AGENDA OVERVIEW, AND TERMINOLOGY

9:30 THE PEOPLE: BUILD A CONSTRUCTIVE PARTNERSHIP
   1.1. Define partnership roles, tools, and effective communication?
   1.2. Plan for board member engagement and improved peer relationships?
   1.3. Commit to diversity and inclusion?

10:45 THE WORK: CLARIFY TYPES AND FORMS OF DELIBERATIONS AND DECISIONS
   1.4. What does it mean to govern in the Fiduciary, Strategic, and Advocacy modes?
   1.5. What is your Society's strategic agenda (includes peer-to-peer learning)?

Noon Lunch

1:00 ...CONTINUE STRATEGIC ISSUES DISCUSSION & PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING...

1:00? THE WORK CONTINUED: STRUCTURE FOR MEANINGFUL WORK
   1.6. DESIGN BETTER BOARD MEETINGS?
   1.7. ENSURE MORE EFFECTIVE COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES?
   1.8. ADDRESS ANY OTHER STRUCTURE ISSUES?

3:00 THE CULTURE: EMBRACE PRINCIPLES OF THAT POWER EXCEPTIONAL BOARDS

3:30 THE COMMUNITY: PLAN FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

3:45-4 NEXT STEPS–What's our action plan based on this discussion and information?

ACLS Mission
The mission of the American Council of Learned Societies is "the advancement of humanistic studies in all fields of learning in the humanities and the social sciences and the maintenance and strengthening of relations among the national societies devoted to such studies."
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Constructing A Partnership

By: M. Christine DeVita, President, The Wallace Foundation, New York, NY

No matter their size or mission, nonprofit organizations need and deserve boards and staff that can openly discuss successes and challenges so that, together, they can help the organization be effective. That is the essence of a constructive partnership. A constructive partnership, in turn, is an essential element of a high-functioning board.

Creating a climate of openness, and the transparency that accompanies it, is critical to nonprofit organizational success, especially in an era marked by heightened accountability for performance and, in many cases, increased competition for resources. That climate depends on a shared agreement of the distinctive roles of the board and the chief executive and, by extension, staff. With a shared agreement, these players can take steps to create the “space” for constructive partnerships — by providing the right information at the right time, by promoting board cohesion and candor, and by creating the right meeting structure. By building on a mutual understanding of their respective roles, chief executives and boards can disprove the belief that “effective governance by the board of a nonprofit is a rare and unnatural act,” a phrase used by Barbara Taylor, Richard Chait, and Tom Holland in their Harvard Business Review article (see Resources).

All constructive partnerships require agreement on the complementary roles of board and staff. But the line distinguishing those roles may be drawn at very different places for different types of organizations.

For example, a small startup nonprofit organization with a part-time or single staff member needs board members who straddle both sides of the board–staff line, not only working on governance and strategy but also taking on more operational duties, like accounting, stuffing envelopes for a fundraising mailing, or securing publicity for an event.

At the other end of the continuum, a large nonprofit with many full-time staff would likely draw the line at a different place, with board members focusing more on governance, strategy, and performance assessment, leaving staff to use their professional expertise to manage the day-to-day operations and implement the approved program initiatives.

Exactly where the line is drawn between board and staff responsibilities will depend on what the organization most needs at its particular stage of development. But wherever it is drawn, the important thing is that the roles and responsibilities of board and staff are clearly discussed and agreed upon. Once this foundation is in place, we’ve learned that maintaining and enhancing a constructive partnership requires attention to three key areas.

1. **Filling the information gap** The first and perhaps most important component of constructive partnerships is bridging the inevitable information gap that occurs between staff who live and breathe the organization every day and board members who come together sporadically for a relatively brief time. To effectively fill that gap, nonprofit staff need to provide information that goes beyond reporting on past events and permits the board to contribute to future decision making in a timely manner. Getting this balance right is a process of constant adjustment. Too much information and board members may feel overwhelmed, even irritated; they may see only trees and miss the forest. Too little information and board members may feel that they can’t see the road they’re on or whether it is even leading to the forest.
In either case, candor is critical to creating a climate characterized by ongoing commitment to understand and analyze why things went well or poorly so that the organization can keep improving. A candid framing by staff of the situation can provide internal clarity about the relevant issues and make it easier for board members to find an entry point into the decision-making process. At the Wallace Foundation, such candid conversations about the strengths and weaknesses of various strategies have resulted not only in better strategies developed with board input but also greater board engagement and investment in our work as a whole.

And don’t underestimate the importance of communicating with board members between meetings. Periodic updates on progress and plans, or requests for advice, keep the board connected to the organization’s work between meetings.

2. **Building board cohesion** Because candor is difficult to achieve and sustain without a climate of mutual respect, time invested in helping the board come together as a team pays big dividends. It is important to provide time for board members to get to know one another and to have shared experiences. Like many organizations, Wallace schedules board dinners the night before a board meeting, often inviting an outside speaker whose contributions are relevant to the next day’s discussion. We often include senior staff, many of whom regularly present to the board.

Providing opportunities for the board to discuss issues privately is also an important way to build board cohesion and to reinforce the expectation that all board members are active participants at meetings, not just passive recipients of staff reports. Because staff members generally shape the meeting agenda, it’s important for board members to “own” some meeting time that is theirs alone. At Wallace, the board meets in executive session at the beginning and end of every board meeting, once with the chief executive and once without. These sessions provide predictable space and time for board members to ask questions or raise concerns about particular issues that may need attention. The results of these discussions often help shape future meeting agendas. In addition, the board annually discusses its own performance, including whether there has been adequate candor and active participation in board discussions.

3. **Creating the right meeting structure** The third component of constructive partnerships is ensuring board meetings focus on what is most important to the organization’s success so that board time is productive and the contributions of board members are maximized. At the Wallace Foundation, our board’s most important contribution is guidance on key strategic and performance issues — including the broad program areas in which we invest, the specific goals and strategies to be used in each area, the timing and duration of our initiatives, and our progress in meeting our mission.

We plan our meeting agendas to allow ample time for strategic and performance issues. At our January meeting, we review the progress of the past year and plans for the coming year. We have developed an annual State of the Foundation Report that functions as an internal scorecard for this purpose. For each of the three other meetings, we do a “deep dive” into one of our three focus areas, reviewing original goals and strategies, results to date, lessons learned, and options for moving forward. The background materials prepared for these discussions are sent at least a week in advance to ensure board members have time to reflect on the issues to be discussed.
At the meeting itself, staff presentations are limited to general framing comments, and most of the time is spent in conversation with the board, answering questions raised and listening to various perspectives expressed on the issues presented.

It’s important to note that we developed this approach in consultation with our board as a result of candid conversation in executive session. We all agreed we needed to provide more time for thinking ahead and reflection — something we observed was difficult when meetings were organized solely around specific recommendations for action. Now, we seek to create “space” for discussions with the board around the strategies that will ultimately drive the recommendations, while still allocating shorter blocks of time for other updates, reviewing financial performance, and voting on specific grants.

**Why bother?** Building a constructive partnership between board and staff is not easy (and perhaps not common). From the chief executive’s perspective, it takes time to develop the trust that candor requires, and it takes courage to admit to a room full of smart board members that things don’t always turn out as planned or that mistakes have been made. From the board’s perspective, it takes dedication and commitment to faithfully attend board meetings and to adequately review board materials in advance. And it requires a real investment of time and effort for board members to understand the issues facing an organization so they can help develop the right strategies and performance measures to ensure success.

But the benefits of creating a constructive partnership are well worth the effort. Board members who feel they are active contributors to the organization’s success are more engaged and supportive. They are able to more effectively represent the organization to various outside groups, which often results in greater visibility and support for the organization’s work. Recruitment becomes easier because new board candidates are attracted to the energy and enthusiasm displayed by current members. From the staff’s perspective, the organization’s work is strengthened through the counsel of board members. And there is real satisfaction and confidence in knowing that the strategies being implemented have the full understanding and endorsement of the board. And, most importantly, the organization benefits by making full use of the contributions of both board and staff — however the lines are drawn between the two.

In other words, the actions of both board and staff, in partnership, “construct” a more effective organization. And that, in turn, benefits the people across the country whose opportunities for education, enrichment, health, and overall quality of life depend in important part on the vigor and effectiveness of the nonprofit sector.
Antecedents to board member participation


What factors best facilitate active board member engagement in the core function of governance? Ground-breaking research by governance scholar Will Brown has uncovered four elements, part of a larger model of member participation that lay the foundation for effective participation in board discussion and decision making. Dr. Brown discussed those essential factors during an Alliance for Nonprofit Management Governance Affinity Group "research to practice" webinar last week.

While Will covered his larger engagement model during the session, the four antecedents took the spotlight. It's where I'm choosing to focus this post, not only because they're the foundation for everything else, but also because this is what I believe to be the biggest "aha" of this work. "The whole self being ready to participate..."

That simple descriptor took my breath away. In a research environment where structures, responsibilities, and demographics dominate, Will's in-a-nutshell description of the antecedents' role in board member engagement stands out. It reminds us that board members are human beings, first and foremost. We can't just plop them into a board seat and expect them to perform. They have needs and motivations - antecedents to engagement - that we must address to support effective governance.

So what are those factors that contribute to the "whole self" readiness to govern that emerged in Will's research?

- Perceived ability
- Task ownership
- Values congruence
- Trust and safety

**Perceived ability.** How confident is each member in his/her ability to live up to the board's responsibilities? Why would he/she bother if the likelihood of failure is high? Members don't want to feel that their time will be wasted, or that they will be set up for failure. They need to feel confident that they can live up to expectations and make a difference in their service. Brown offered at least three ways to build board member confidence: breaking big responsibilities into smaller, manageable steps; recruiting members with expertise, skills, and perspectives that are essential to the board's work; and providing members with the right set of tools and support to govern.

**Task ownership.** Board members must understand what is expected of them before they accept the job and throughout their term of service. But as important as it is to clarify expectations up front, Brown says, it is not enough. Board members must understand their purpose and see how that connects to their individual motivations to serve. They need to recognize discussion and deliberation as a core responsibility of governance. They need to own that responsibility and commit to it.
**Values congruence.** Members need to tie board tasks to their personal priorities, according to Brown. If we've recruited individuals whose personal values fit organizational values, making those connections "brings energy to the roles and functions" of board work. Are they committed to your mission? Do their values match yours? When the fit is right, and when we can help board members articulate that fit, commitment to the work grows.

**Trust and safety.** Board members need a sense of interpersonal trust, confidence that the boardroom is a safe space to interact without negative consequences. They need to know that this is a safe place for taking a moderate level of risk. This is not a process that can be hurried, Brown says. It takes time - and authentic interaction - for this antecedent to emerge. It would be easy to point to these antecedents as a lovely ideal to which all boards should begin working - and that would be a mistake. They really are the bottom line - borne out in Will's research - for engaging the community leaders we recruit in the work to which they are called. It we want them to succeed, if we expect them to succeed, we owe them this much.

What I appreciated about the insights shared in the webinar - and about Will Brown's work generally - is the attention given to the human side of nonprofit governance. Too often, governance research discounts (or ignores altogether) the fact that what drives the work is not the perfect job description or check marks ticking off demographic variables on a recruitment matrix. It's the people who serve.

Will discusses his larger model in the new book that he co-edited with Chris Cornforth, *Nonprofit governance: Innovative perspectives and approaches*. I encourage readers to pick up a copy and read Dr. Brown's chapter (and the rest of the book) to better understand the human element of board work.

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*Antecedents to board member participation; W. A. Brown, Nonprofit Governance, Routledge*
The Case for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As framed by Monisha Kapila, Ericka Hines, and Martha Searby of ProInspire, as a part of the Independent Sector’s resource hub on diversity, equity and inclusion.

Four key arguments make the case for diversity, equity, and inclusion:

- **The moral or social justice case** asserts that each person has value to contribute, and that we must address barriers and historical factors that have led to unfair conditions for marginalized populations. For example, racial equity refers to what a genuinely non-racist society would look like, where the distribution of society’s benefits and burdens would not be skewed by race, and individuals would be no more or less likely to experience them due to the color of their skin. From a moral perspective, nonprofits are created to improve society and as such they should be diverse, inclusive, and equitable.

- **The economic case** is based on the idea that organizations and countries that tap into diverse talent pools are stronger and more efficient. Economists see discrimination as economic inefficiency – the result of a systematic misallocation of human resources. In fact, the Center for American Progress finds that workplace discrimination against employees based on race, gender or sexual orientation costs businesses an estimated $64 billion annually. That amount represents the annual estimated cost of losing and replacing more than 2 million American workers who leave their jobs each year due to unfairness and discrimination. In this argument, organizations should become more diverse and inclusive because it makes economic sense to leverage the talent pools of different populations.

- **The market case** states that organizations will better serve their customers if they reflect the diversity of their market base. A dramatic demographic shift is under way in the U.S., which will be majority non-white around 2043 according to the Census Bureau. In the private sector, companies such as Deloitte recognize the buying power of minority populations and highlight that diversity is critical to growing market share and bottom line. In the nonprofit sector, clients are our customers, and they want to see themselves represented in the organizations that serve them. Donors are also customers, and organizations and their clients can benefit from the resources of different groups. What’s more, organizations with diverse leadership are more likely to understand the needs of a diverse client base.

- **The results case** is that diverse teams lead to better outputs. Scott Page, author of The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools and Societies, uses mathematical modeling and case studies to show how diversity leads to increased productivity. His research found that diverse groups of problem solvers outperform the groups of the best individuals at solving problems. Diverse nonprofit organizations, and the diversity of perspectives within them, will lead to better solutions to social problems.

**Board discussion:**

- What value would a more diverse board bring to your organization?
- What challenges might your organization face as you diversify your board?
Distinguishing a Board’s Steering and Rowing Work


As described in the book *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards*, to govern comprehensively, boards work in three modes: fiduciary, strategic, and generative. To use a metaphor in which an organization is a boat, boards can make two distinct types of contributions: steering and rowing.

When steering, the board collectively:

- Sets the direction of the organization;
- Determines which values and logic will guide it; and
- Ensures the organization’s resources are used prudently to advance its work.

When rowing, board members individually or collectively expand the organization’s resources by, among other things:

- Offering pro bono professional services or expertise to management;
- Volunteering as front-line service providers;
- Advocating for or championing the organization and its mission in the community; and
- Helping to raise funds to sustain the organization’s work.

It can be useful to distinguish steering and rowing by using a substitution test. Rowing work is substitutable. The board does not need to contribute to the organization’s resources, financial or otherwise, as long as it is satisfied they are adequate. For example, a foundation whose board does no fundraising because of its large endowment is not necessarily ungoverned. Given the assets of the organization, the board is simply not called on to do such work.

In contrast, steering work is not substitutable. An organization whose board is not steering may be led by its executives, and may be influenced by other stakeholders, but it is not legitimately governed unless its board deliberates and makes intentional choices regarding the organization’s values, strategies, and performance. (When it comes to oversight of management, boards are non-substitutable not just on legitimacy grounds but also as a matter of practicality: by definition, management cannot oversee itself.)
It is also useful to consider individual versus collective contributions. A single board member or several board members working in an individual capacity can be effective as rowers. In raising funds, doing outreach or working as front-line volunteers, the choice to work alone or in groups can simply be a matter of efficiency, convenience, or preference. But governing is a collective act. Not only do most legal regimes require the boards of nonprofit organizations to include at least several members, but the logic of strategic and generative governing, as proposed in Governance as Leadership, insists on it. It takes a group to test, challenge, and debate the assumptions and subjective preferences that are at the core of this governing work.

Organizations will vary as to how much of which work—rowing or steering—their boards routinely do. The framework below depicts four organizational profiles. The board's steering contributions run from low to high (left to right) on the horizontal axis. Its rowing contributions run from low to high (bottom to top) on the vertical axis.

To take an example: An organization whose board does a great deal of fundraising and outreach on its behalf, but is relatively uninvolved in setting strategy or monitoring performance, would be in the “Helping” quadrant (high on the vertical board axis and left on the horizontal governing axis).

Note that the “High Performing” quadrant—in which a board is governing while also generating resources—is not the only optimal spot for an organization. Depending on an organization's circumstances, the “Guiding” quadrant might be appropriate. For example, a professionalized organization with reliable revenue sources, an ample endowment, and a high profile may need no board assistance in these areas, and could therefore be justifiably low on the rowing axis. But it would still need governing. In the “Guiding” quadrant, the board does little rowing but is still steering.

From a governing perspective, the “Lagging” and “Helping” quadrants are suboptimal because, in both cases, the board is doing little steering. The “Helping” quadrant can be especially problematic. It is easy for boards in this quadrant to mistake their productivity as rowers—raising funds, doing outreach, or lending expertise to management—for effectiveness as steerers.

This briefing note is offered to complement and integrate some of the strategies and concepts described in Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards, by Richard P. Chait, William P. Ryan, and Barbara E. Taylor (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2005).
Why Carver? An Overview

By Tamara Kaattari, Former Chair of the Ontario Literacy Coalition http://www.on.literacy.ca/who/carver.htm

1. **What is policy governance?**

Policy governance is a method of governing an organization that is based on the development of policies. These policies identify the many ways in which a not-for-profit organization needs to show accountability. They also provide a framework for the Board of Directors to do its job.

The Board of Directors is ultimately accountable for the organization. But many Boards tend to be "hands on". They actively manage the day-to-day business of the organization. But a policy governance Board identifies which policies need to be developed. It develops the policies. And then it holds itself and staff responsible for doing business within these policies.

2. **Why Carver?**

The Carver model of governance is a policy governance model. How is it different from other models?

Under policy governance, a Board could choose to look at an organization's or an Executive Director's effectiveness. For instance, it might do this by making policies for how they handle finances or personnel issues or how they file needed papers with the government, or how they pay bills. Many Boards often do not get around to defining why the organization has all these policies.

John Carver asks a good question: when was the last time your Board sat around and talked only about literacy and how to make life better for people who have low literacy levels? Boards often spend a lot of time talking about staff pay, membership fees and which projects the ED should apply for. Are these really questions which a Board ought to deal with or are they questions that could be handled by an ED under suitable guidelines? John Carver wants Boards to focus only at the big picture and not get caught up in daily details.

3. **Clarifying Responsibilities**

Under the Carver model, the Board must monitor its own work and find out how well it is doing its job. This rarely happens under other models.

The Carver model works with four areas of policy. Two areas of policy describe how the Board needs to do its work. One area of policy talks about how the ED does his or her work (Executive Limitations). And the final area of policy is around what the Board thinks the organization should be achieving (Ends).

The Board must report on the two first areas of policy. The ED must report on the other two areas of policy (Executive Limitations and Ends).

It is not uncommon to find Boards that are doing the ED's work - much to the dismay of the ED. And in doing so, these Boards ignore their own work - connecting with the moral ownership and monitoring the organization.

4. **Connecting with the Moral Ownership**

The Carver model assumes that all the individual directors and the whole Board as a unit represent a certain group of people. A Board of Directors has to decide who exactly that group is. This group is called the "moral ownership". The group might be citizens of a particular geographical area. Or, if you are a membership organization, your moral ownership might be your members.
Under Carver, the Board's role is to connect with this group. Under other models of governance, Boards rarely connect with their moral ownership in a meaningful way. They then run the risk that they no longer can be said to represent the group.

5. Monitoring
Many critics of the Carver model say that the Board loses control over the organization. This is an interesting critique because Boards rarely have the kind of control they think they have. For example, most "hands on" Boards do not even evaluate their ED on a regular basis. So how concerned can they really be said to be about performance?

Under Carver, the Board can develop as many policies as it feels it needs in order to be aware of, and accountable for, what is going on in the organization. Each policy can be stated to the depth the Board believes is necessary. The Board can also say how often it wants to hear about compliance with a particular policy.

Once the Board is done writing the policies, it is up to the ED to interpret the policies and put them into motion. The Board evaluates the ED against these policies. This is a fair way to monitor because from the start the ED knows what he or she is going to be measured against.

6. What about a hybrid?
Some organizations try to make a balance between being a policy governance or Carver Board and being an operational or hands-on Board. This is not a very good idea. These styles are different in terms of delegation and responsibilities. Trying to be part one and part the other creates gaps in policy areas and confusion. This can lead to poor communication and lack of satisfaction on the part of staff and Board members.

7. What does this mean for Board meetings?
At meetings, the Board monitors the existing policies in terms of its own work and the ED's work. It does not focus on what exactly the organization is doing and how it is doing it. This is left up to the ED. Ideally, the ED reports to the Board before the meetings and this report is only addressed if there are questions.

At each Board meeting, a Carver Board will also receive education. This could take many forms. It could be information sessions from members in the community, training in the Carver model, information on financial practices and anything else that the Board thinks it needs to know about to do its job better.

The third component of a typical Board meeting is linking with the moral ownership. How does the Board intend to do this? How well is the Board doing this?

In general, Board meetings are shorter and more focused. There is greater emphasis on decision making.

8. In conclusion
Moving to the Carver model is an important shift from the way that many Boards have historically worked. It can involve a fair amount of work to make the transition. But the rewards are well worth it. You can be clear about what skills you need at the Board table and recruit for them. As a Board, you will give very clear directions to your ED and very clear performance indicators. You have also given your ED the trust and flexibility to do what he or she has been hired to do. The Board decides what the organization should achieve and the ED decides how to get the work done. The Board then monitors to make sure that the ED does, in fact, get the work done.
Governance as Leadership In Action! ©BoardSource

An Overview

*Governance as Leadership, Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards*¹, has practically revolutionized the way nonprofit leaders view the work of the board. The authors dared ask, “Why is there so much rhetoric that touts the significance and centrality of nonprofit boards, but so much empirical and anecdotal evidence that boards of trustees are only marginally relevant or intermittently consequential?” What we have learned, as a result, is that problems of performance may actually be a more fundamental problem of *purpose*. Board members are not confused about their role -- they are dissatisfied with their role.

*Governance as Leadership* challenges boards to engage in three modes of governance, to enrich their work and enhance their value to the organization: (1) fiduciary, (2) strategic, and (3) generative. In the fiduciary mode, board members provide oversight. This typically involves budgets, investments, fundraising, policies and practices, to name a few. In the strategic mode Board members may figure out how to get from the present to a preferred future. In the generative mode, the board must figure out what the preferred future is.

Generative work can be defined as any discussion or activity that tends to make sense of the organization, or any part of the organization, or its internal and external environment. It allows the board to confront challenges rooted in values, traditions, and beliefs and engage in sense-making and problem framing.

Generative, literally, is what comes first. Generative thinking is where goal-setting and direction-setting originate. Brilliant ideas, not brilliant plans, are springboards for revolutionary strategies.

**Generative Mode - What it is and isn’t:**

- Implicit, rather than explicit. Gets to the heart of values and vision.
- Thoughtful, rather than technical
- Framing the problem, rather than finding the solution
- Making sense of knowledge, information, and data, rather than looking for an answer in them
- Telling a story, not making a case

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¹ Richard P. Chait, William P. Ryan, and Barbara E., Taylor (2005)
Bringing Governance as Leadership into the Boardroom

Probe, Identify, Explore

How effective is your board when it comes to probing how they arrived at their sense of a problem or opportunity; identifying alternative ways of framing the issue; and exploring the sense of the past, as it relates to the organization’s proposed future? An inquisitive board that challenges assumptions, grapples with uncertainty, and provides a diversity of perspectives adds value. Getting to that point may require first working on the board culture.

Assess Your Culture of Inquiry

The board’s culture will significantly influence how board members work together and engage to carry out the organization’s work. It is no surprise then that boards which work efficiently and seamlessly in the generative mode tend to foster a genuine culture of inquiry.

A culture of inquiry is dynamic and exists where board members have mastered the skills of listening, dissecting the issues, and responding thoughtfully and truthfully. Indicators of a healthy culture of inquiry include:²

- a sense of mutual respect, trust, and inclusiveness among board members,
- the capacity to explore divergent views in a respectful rather than adversarial manner,
- a willingness to gather relevant information to inform decisions,
- equal access to information,
- the presence of active feedback mechanisms that help the board engage in continuous improvement, and
- an individual and collective commitment to decisions, plans of action, and accountability to follow through on the board’s agreements.

In such an environment, board members appreciate candor, dissent, deliberation, learning, and information gathering as part of the decision making process. They reject dysfunctional politeness in favor of robust discourse.

To assess your board’s culture, consider having the board answer and discuss the following questions³:

1. How well do we foster a sense of inclusiveness among all board members?
2. Is there sufficient diversity of backgrounds, opinion, and thought amongst our board members to ensure a diversity of opinions?
3. Do you find board members open to listening to differences of opinions with their peers?
4. How comfortable are Junior League board members in engaging in constructive debate within the boardroom on consequential issues?
5. Does our tradition of politeness inhibit our willingness to express divergent views?
6. Do board members receive materials in advance that provide appropriate background for discussing issues or making decisions?

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² Culture of Inquiry, Health Debate in the Boardroom, Nancy R. Axelrod (2007)
³ Derived from Culture of Inquiry, © BoardSource 2007
7. Are different formats used for board meetings, such as small-group discussions, facilitated sessions on strategic issues, or outside speakers?
8. Does the board enlist information from outside the organization, such as articles, research, reports, or feedback from external experts or stakeholders on issues that require additional expertise?
9. How willing are board members to ask for additional information?
10. Does the board chair try to engage all board members in discussions?
11. What mechanisms help ensure that all voices are heard?
12. Are board members acknowledged for asking great questions?
13. Does the board spend sufficient time exploring alternatives and consequences before it makes critical decisions?
14. When making or following board decisions, how do board members put the interests of the organization above all else?
15. How does the board balance input from the membership with the best interests of the organization?
16. Does the board give careful consideration to questions or concerns of the general membership?
17. What mechanisms does the board enlist for feedback on its performance, such as meeting evaluations or board self-assessment tools?
18. How effective is the board in reaching sustainable agreements on complex or controversial issues?
19. What suggestions do you have for enhancing the way the board works together as a group?

Fostering a Culture of Inquiry

Trust, information sharing, teamwork, and dialogue help strengthen the culture of inquiry. This is a real challenge with one year term limits, but there are steps you can take. For example, schedule a board retreat in the Spring to discuss board members’ answers to the above Culture of Inquiry questions. The questions can and should be used to initiate a candid dialogue about how the board will operate during the upcoming year. It’s also an opportunity to emphasize that it’s o.k. to respectfully disagree and raise contrary viewpoints.

Additionally, the leadership should think about activities to help board members get to know each other so they can work better as colleagues, not passing acquaintances. Facilitated team building activities are an excellent way to break the ice and barriers that may inhibit open and honest discussions from taking place in the boardroom. Consider incorporating team building at the retreat, during orientation, and at regularly scheduled meetings.

The orientation process is another opportunity for board members to set the tone for the year ahead. Use this time to share organizational stories, mentor new board members, and talk about expectations for individual board members and the organization.

Finally, when recruiting new members, consider the richness a diversity of talent, backgrounds, and personalities can add to the quality of discussions. Boards should be strategic about board development, and board diversity should be high on the list of priorities. It’s one of the best ways to ensure diversity of thought, which leads to better decisions for the organization.
Work at the Boundaries

Working within the confines of the boardroom can shield board members from cues and clues that help frame the issues and inspire generative thinking. Generative governing has boards starting and ending in the boardroom, but also, on occasion, venturing outside the boundaries of the boardroom to prepare for governing. For example:

- The board could meet with another community board or stakeholders to discuss common concerns, e.g., increased commercialization or changes in government policy.
- The board could meet with Junior League members, as a group, to listen and learn about the members’ views, interests, and ideas about the work and direction of the organization.
- Board members could meet with partners or collaborators to learn how external stakeholders see the larger environment. After these discussions, board members are virtually compelled to ask each other a generative question: "What do you make of this?"

External boundary work -- meaning opportunities for the board to engage, observe, or convene as a group outside the boardroom -- provides not only exposure to new alternative frames like the examples above, but also new occasions for generative deliberation.

Deliberate Differently

Board meetings are not be a spectator sport -- they are a participatory event! Board members should feel they are able to voice their opinions, ask questions, and contribute intellectual capital.

Facilitation styles and techniques can help stimulate board deliberations. Listed below are some techniques that may work with your board. Note, however, that not every suggestion is for every board or every situation. They do, however, offer options for breaking through some of the formality of board meetings and making board members comfortable with the generative mode.

**Silent Starts.** Take two minutes at the beginning of the board meeting for members to write (anonymously) the most important questions the board and management should address. Read and tally to identify the most crucial issues.

**One Minute Memos.** At the conclusion of each discussion item, board members take a minute to write down what they would have said if there had been more time. Collect for review by the chair and chief executive so there’s no doubt about what’s on the board’s mind.

**Future Perfect History.** In breakout groups, develop a future-perfect narrative of how the organization moved from its present state to its envisioned state. Compare story lines and pathways and detours.

**Counterpoints.** Randomly designate two board members to make the most powerful counterarguments to initial staff recommendations.

**Role Plays.** Ask subsets of the board to assume the perspective of different constituent groups likely to be affected by the issue at hand. How would they frame the issue and define a successful outcome? What would each group regard as a worst-case scenario?

**Surveys.** Prior to discussing a major issue, board members take an anonymous survey that includes questions like: What should top our agenda next year? What are we overlooking? What is the most valuable step we could take to be a better board? What are the most/least attractive and worrisome aspects of the proposed strategic plan? An analysis of the responses (not the loudest voice) drives subsequent discussion.
Ask Catalytic Questions

Catalytic questions are another way to invite creativity. Data and reports are not necessary; just a curiosity to explore and better understand the organization. Sample catalytic questions are:

- What three adjectives or short phrases best characterize this organization?
- What will be most strikingly different about this organization in five years?
- What do you hope will be most strikingly different about this organization in five years?
- On what list, which you could create, would you like this organization to rank at the top?
- Five years from today, what will this organization’s key constituents consider the most important legacy of the current board?
- What will be most different about the board or how we govern in five years?
- How would we respond if a donor offered a $50M endowment to the one organization in our field that had the best idea for becoming a more valuable public asset?
- What has a competitor done successfully that we would not choose to do as a matter of principle?
- What headline would we most/least like to see about this organization?
- What is the biggest gap between what the organization claims it is and what it actually is?

Beware

Some issues will benefit from deliberation in three modes, but board members must exercise caution and restraint. If the roof is leaking, fix it! There’s no need to engage in a generative debate. Over time, board members will become more adept at recognizing generative and “triple-helix” situations.

Assess Progress

To see if your board is becoming more generative, try the following:

- Compare recent and past agendas. Do we do more generative work now?
- Review, over the course of a year, where and when board members worked at the boundaries.
- Consider how often the board spotted or missed “triple helix” issues in the last year or two.
- Survey board members on whether the climate for robust discussion has improved or deteriorated.

Have Fun

There’s no rule that board members cannot have fun. Board members should look forward to attending board meetings, not dread it. Ensuring opportunities for board members to share their generative genius and engage in meaningful work will greatly increase the capacity and ability of board members to better govern the organization.

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4 Triple-helix issues require fiduciary, strategic, and generative considerations.
What Makes Associations Remarkable?

Excerpt from summary by Mark J. Golden—“Inspired by the work of business researchers Jim Collins and Jerry Porras, a group of association executives set out to discover what separates great associations from good ones. Some 18,000 hours of work later, they had their answer—and more questions.”

The Seven Measures

The first two measures group together under the general characteristic of an organizational commitment to purpose, that purpose being to serve its membership’s needs.

Customer Service Culture

This commitment went far beyond a glib marketing slogan about customer service. Every action of every staff member and volunteer in the remarkable association reflected a we-are-here-to-serve-you mentality that permeated the association and was ingrained in the organization’s DNA. It started with the member (or potential member’s) first encounter with the organization and carried through the entire experience.

The American Dental Association, for example, adopted “Members are the purpose of our work” as its value statement. All of the association’s systems, processes, and structures demonstrated that staff members and leaders didn’t just assume they knew what the members wanted and needed. They asked, and they listened carefully to the answers they got back, even when the answers weren’t what they wanted to hear.

Similarly, Associated General Contractors of America heard from its members that dues were too high and too complicated. The association downsized and streamlined its membership programs to make it possible to lower and restructure dues. The action resulted in a smaller association and narrower scope of work, but it was what the members wanted and needed.

Alignment of Products and Services with Mission

The remarkable associations knew not only whom they served but also what their mission was. And the mission wasn’t abstract. It was subdivided into areas of need, and specific products, services, and activities were developed to meet those needs. Revenue is indeed a required input for the association (no money, no mission), but the mission, not revenue, drove the remarkable associations’ product and service mix. Profitability was a means to achieving the mission, not an end in and of itself.

Take Girl Scouts of the USA as an example. The changing menu of products, services, and activities throughout its long history offers evidence of a consistent and persistent attention to the question “What do girls need from us today?”

The Radiological Society of North America restructured its staff and other resources around the three core academic groups it identified as critical to the association’s mission, rather than continuing to support the management of peripheral subgroups.

The next three measures group together around a commitment to analysis and feedback.

Data-Driven Strategies

The remarkable associations possessed the capacity to continuously gather and analyze data and make decisions based on that analysis. Doing so requires more than merely conducting a routine annual member needs assessment. It requires a willingness to ask, “What do we now know, and what are we going to do about it?”

This approach includes elements of externally focused environmental scanning. Girl Scouts of the USA, for example, regularly launches new programs to address contemporary trends relevant to its constituents, such as promoting math and financial literacy among girls and young women, creating girls’ antiviolence programs, and supporting the needs of girls from single-parent homes and even girls with mothers behind bars.
This approach also includes internal market research. The Society for Human Resource Management, for example, routinely asks what books members are reading, what questions they are asking, and what resources they are using, and it listens to what the answers can tell them about member needs.

Girl Scouts of the USA and the Society for Human Resource Management are large organizations, but it would be a mistake to assume that data-driven strategy is a characteristic of only the largest associations and a matter of technology resources. To be sure, groups like AARP are indeed data and research powerhouses. But even the smaller associations in the study, with limited and less sophisticated data technology capacities, demonstrated the same will to gather, share, and understand data through whatever means available and to use it as the fuel for knowledge-based decision making.

**Dialogue and Engagement**

Just as important as the capacity to capture data, is the organization’s ability to share what has been learned to staff members and volunteers so they can act upon it. The remarkable associations maintain a culture of continuous conversation, pushing information up, down, and sideways throughout the organization. They did not exhibit the typical silo mentality—organizational fragmentation by department or responsibility.

The National Association of Counties, for example, holds weekly staff meetings that are true dialogues. Rather than giving mere updates on projects and activities, participants engage in discussion of trends and developments where department activities intersect. The Radiology Society of North America even redesigned its physical office environment to foster open and collaborative energy.

**The CEO as a Broker of Ideas**

Many of the chief staff executives in the study were visionary leaders. The research showed that the CEO’s vision for the members and his or her ability to foster effective communication, shared vision, and collaborative action across volunteer and staff structures is what is important, not the CEO’s vision for the association. In other words, the CEO operates as a broker of ideas, able to inspire and facilitate visionary thinking throughout the organization.

CEOs in the study group constantly communicated with staff members and volunteers, making a concerted effort to clarify roles and responsibilities and facilitate the staff-volunteer partnership.

By contrast, CEOs in the comparison group often possessed insightful, even brilliant understanding of their organizations and could articulate them well. But they were often somewhat isolated, and their perceptions of their organizations and its culture differed from those of their staff members.

The final two measures group together around a commitment to action. Remarkable organizations aren’t just customer focused, aligned with mission, data-driven, and engaged; they also translate what they learn into action.

**Organizational Adaptability**

Many of the study group associations had weathered crises, in some cases significant crises, and learned from them, quickly assessing the situation and then taking action. Their nimbleness was at least in part a product of absolute clarity and firmness about what their mission and purpose was. They knew what could be changed without violating their core mission and what could not be changed. And then they had the will to act on that knowledge.

Data-driven decision making didn’t end with a product or service launch. Remarkable associations continued to track data on their achievement (or their failure to achieve) of the results they wanted. And if something wasn’t working, they stopped doing it or fixed it right away.
For example, the Girl Scouts of the USA has gone through three complete redesigns of the Girl Scout uniform in the past 50 years. The mission-based purpose behind a uniform (reinforcing a common identity and sense of belonging, eliminating visible socioeconomic differences, and so on) doesn’t change, but fashions do. Girl Scouts has remained true to its purpose but responsive to a changing world.

The Society of Human Resource Management determined that its established nomination and election processes weren’t creating the kind of board it needed in order to be successful. And as part of its annual process of “purposeful abandonment” they jettisoned the traditional standards of rising through the ranks with a competency-based nomination process, in which candidates applied for consideration based on their resumes and their demonstrated capabilities in the skill areas identified as necessary to the board.

**Alliance Building**

Most associations engage in some form of alliance building and coalitions, even product partnerships (particularly in the area of non-dues revenue programs). Associations in the study group engaged in alliances in a more systematic and intentional manner, driven by their own strategic needs.

The remarkable associations demonstrated a paradoxical combination of fierce self-confidence, almost arrogance, and honest humility, recognizing what they were truly good at. Upon discovering that they lacked a particular capacity that was important to their success, or that someone else did it better, they were not in the least bit threatened or intimidated by the prospect of reaching out to whoever was the best and finding a mutually beneficial arrangement to bring that superiority to bear in the service of their own membership and mission.

The same clarity of role, accountability, and goals so characteristic of internal operations in the remarkable associations extended to their alliances with outside parties as well. The remarkable associations communicated clear expectations for each specific partnership and did not hesitate to walk away if a win-win scenario didn’t materialize.

The American Dental Association, for example, recognized that its programs were producing great dentists, but that many of their members lacked the business skills to manage a dental practice. The association partnered with Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management to offer an MBA program tailored specifically to the needs of dentists.

The National Association of Counties turned down a potentially lucrative affinity credit card program, despite the high revenue potential, fearing it would be a distraction of management attention from the association’s mission.

By contrast, associations in the comparison group often engaged in alliances arising out of general needs (“We share a lot of common interests”) rather than with specific goals or outcomes. They also formed some alliances purely for non-dues revenue gains.

It is important to note the tight synergy between and among all seven measures in each of the study group associations. Being strong in a few of them wasn’t enough. Greatness lies in the sweet spot where all seven characteristics intersect.
Engine of Impact: Essentials of Strategic Leadership in the Nonprofit Sector

Meehan III, William F. and Jonker, Kim Starkey, Stanford Business Books, 2018

With a Foreword by Jim Collins you can expect that these authors have researched exceptional nonprofits—and it seems well sourced, intelligent, and very readable—with the intent to identify keys to sustained performance, or “seven crucial pillars (pages x-xi):”

1. Your mission must be clear and focused.
2. You must develop a strategy rooted in the few strategic concepts that matter most.
3. You must figure out how to count what counts to ensure impact.
4. You must have insight and courage, bringing heart and soul to making and executing on hard decisions.
5. You must build a superb organization, a team of teams that exemplifies the principles of high-performing organizations.
6. You must attend to money, as cash flow is like oxygen to breathe, by crafting a strategic revenue machine that includes right donors.
7. You must achieve exceptional governance, building and nurturing a strong board that works.

Concerning point number seven, this is the first nonprofit “strategy” book that directly addresses the importance of the board’s work. In the chapter entitled “Board Governance: Do What Works” (page 167-185), BoardSource’s Leading With Intent is mentioned frequently. Below are the headlines of these authors “six principles of effective nonprofit governance,” which should not surprise veterans of the field.

1. Make sure that your organization has a clear mission that is focused where the organization has the necessary skills/resources and embraced by the board, management, and other key stakeholders.
2. Hire, fire, and evaluate your executive director on the basis of a sound, objective, ongoing process.
3. Ensure that management has in place explicit goals, strategies, and impact measurement and evaluation directly tied to your organization’s mission.
4. Compose and structure your board using transparent structures and processes that support effective decision making.
5. Evaluate and sustain your board.

Further the authors suggest nonprofit boards should ask three questions to ensure strategic leadership (page 218):

1. What is our organization’s mission? Is it clear and focused?
2. What is our organization’s theory of change, and what is the resulting strategy? Is the theory of change logically sound? Is it supported by empirical evidence?
3. Does our organization’s impact evaluation support the theory of change and the resulting strategy? Does it do so cost-effectively?

In summary, this publication adds to the research on nonprofit strategy similar to Forces for Good and 7 Measures of Success. A brief summary of information may be useful to get board members thinking in new and different ways.
Membership Marketing

This article is for training discussion only, edited by this consultant from, The End of Membership as We Know It, Sarah L. Sladek, ASAE 2011

Associations have been losing their grip on the marketplace since the mid-2000s. First, younger generations began to question the value of membership and demanded a return on their membership investment. Then the economy took a nosedive, and now everyone is demanding a return on investment. Today it's possible for your members to access all kinds of professional development and networking, most of it for free. Demand is weak, competition is up, and your association's value is going down like a bad real estate investment.

There's only one way out of this mess: outcome-based member benefits. By "outcome based," I mean to address one of my biggest pet peeves about association membership: Too often, associations list the features of membership instead of the outcomes.

For instance, two popular benefits associations like to trumpet are networking opportunities and a listing in the membership directory. But I wouldn't recommend listing these as main benefits, because they don't really carry any substantial value. I could arguably access networking opportunities with members without purchasing a membership, and a listing in the directory has a small chance of actually driving more business to my doorstep.

So rather than describing a membership listing and networking as benefits, wouldn't it be better to say that membership in the association leads to business contacts that can result in new business opportunities? Better still, do some research and quantify those new business opportunities. When you can say, for instance, that 60 percent of members’ report their membership has resulted in a new business opportunity, you have actual proof that your membership is valuable.

Your members are looking for benefits that add value to their businesses and lives, not merely a basket of products and services. They also want experiences that give them a sense of belonging without leaving them feeling like they've had to earn the privilege. That's the essence of outcome-based membership. Member benefits are your association's one and only asset. For each of these organizations, change begins by turning previous mistakes into valuable memberships.

Bringing Value Back to Membership

The number-one reason members join an association is because they believe it will help them solve a problem. Right now, the number-one problem most people are facing is likely related to their finances. The economy has forced people out of jobs, cut into their savings, and jeopardized their futures.

This means two things. First, when members join your association or renew their memberships, they want that money to pay for access to more than a directory listing and a car-rental discount. Second, your members want your association to help them solve their problems. Right now, this means providing programming and services related to helping them find jobs, make money, and feel good about their futures.
Responding to Member Needs
A few years ago, some associations started opening the doors to nonmembers. The idea was that if nonmembers had access to the same pricing—or just slightly higher pricing—as members for events, products, and services, associations would draw more revenue. Nonmembers would "preview" the association, fall in love with it, and decide to join. And if they didn't join, at least the association was getting their money.

Bad idea. Every association should seriously consider whether or not they want to continue to operate as a membership association or if they'd rather be a group that organizes events. If your association is behaving like the latter (i.e., a Milk Association), you are likely making the mistake of tracking program ROI instead of member ROI. This means your association spends a great deal of time and resources on planning events, and the association's budget relies heavily on the income generated from those events from members and nonmembers alike. Outside of programming, your association has few additional streams of revenue and few member-only benefits. As a result, a high % of people who attend events or purchase services do not join.

A membership association, by contrast, is outcome based: completely focused on delivering value and tending to the needs of its members. Additional streams of revenue should be built into the association, all focused on addressing the needs and interests of the members. Also, members should receive access to exclusive, valuable, and beneficial resources that the general public does not receive or can only access at a premium price. A membership-focused association has a growing membership and high retention and participation rates. This is membership ROI; people are paying for access to a great membership.

This means delivering a variety of meaningful member benefits—not available to the public—to address member needs. It also means that when you do offer programming and resources to nonmembers, you charge them a premium. That way it always makes sense to purchase a membership and your membership holds more value.

Member Benefits Matrix
The most successful member benefits solve a problem or deliver a positive experience or emotion. Regardless of what your association is offering or may offer in the future, you should consistently measure the potential of all your member benefits. You need to make sure your association can be responsive to the needs of its membership, which are continually changing. Regularly survey members or host focus groups to monitor those changing needs. Nothing can replace the open, honest feedback you receive from members.

You want to make sure your benefits continually meet the core needs of your membership. Your deliverables may change, but the core needs of your membership never will: We all join associations with a problem to solve and we all want the experience to be positive, ultimately resulting in relationship-building opportunities.
Leadership of the Board Chair in Creating Board Culture

Posted by Mindy R. Wertheimer, Ph.D., LCSW

Are you the next or the new board chair? Thinking about it in your future?

Routinely, a new board chair begins to receive advice – and warnings – from others such as “but we have always done it that way,” or “don’t rock the boat” and, on the flip side, “breathe new life into our board” or “board members aren’t engaged – no one shows up for board meetings.” What do all these comments have in common? They all refer to board culture.

A favorite quote of mine from John Carver (1997): “Perpetually redefine quality. The definition of quality never stands still. What constitutes quality governance grows as we do, yet always remains a little beyond our grasp.” [Boards That Make a Difference]

As quality governance advances, so too should board culture. It shouldn’t be stagnant or ignored, but embraced and fostered. Board culture provides the foundation for how governance tasks are carried out, and it’s the board chair’s role to ensure its well-being.

How can you optimize board culture? Leave personal agendas aside and don’t make this about personalities – or let anyone else make it about personalities; stay focused on creating a board culture that drives board outcomes around the governance work supported by organizational mission, vision, and values. Build off your board’s strengths and be inclusive. Engage the full board along with your governance committee and partnership with the chief executive.

Begin by assessing the current culture and then decide what needs to change. The governance committee plays a pivotal role in partnering with the board chair in this two-step task:

1. Assess current board culture:
   - How are we defining board culture?
   - What does it look like in action?
   - What about our current culture works well to support our governance activities? What are our challenges?

2. Build a robust board culture (be guided by the “to do” list below):
   - How should we redefine our board culture?
   - What should we do differently to build and nurture our board culture?
   - What’s our action plan for change? How will it be monitored?
**Board Chair To-do List:**

1. Ensure that the board is actually governing. Each board member should understand one’s governance role and responsibilities. Duty of care, duty of loyalty, and duty of obedience should be followed by all board members and, as board chair, you must ensure these standards of conduct are operationalized as a component of board culture.

2. Create a board culture that empowers the board to its rightful place as the organization’s governing body. Ensure that the committee structure supports the work of the board, not operating in place of the board. This includes the executive committee, which too often is used as a de facto board.

3. Incorporate the "12 Principles of Governance that Empower Exceptional Boards" in building board culture. These principles focus on the process and context of governing (the how), which directly impact the outcomes of the governance tasks (the what). As board chair, your ability and commitment to apply these very tangible principles will help define your board culture.

4. Inspire and empower board members to follow your lead in devoting time and effort to foster an effective board culture and value its importance. Each board member is accountable for his/her actions and has responsibility in constructing and nurturing the board culture as witnessed in their behaviors and attitudes.

5. Ensure all communications are reciprocal, respectful, and inclusive off all voices and viewpoints.

6. Use your new board member orientation to communicate about board culture. Someone who has served on another board does not guarantee that its board culture aligns with your organization’s board culture. Don’t assume anything – take the time to educate and communicate!

7. Facilitate discussion to establish group norms to support board culture. These agreed-upon norms govern the interactions among board members in supporting productive teamwork. Such norms might include: no texting during meetings; be prepared; be punctual; communicate respectively – don’t attack individuals; listen attentively; and speak with one voice outside the boardroom.

8. Conduct an annual board evaluation that reflects both governance tasks and board culture. BoardSource recommends a formal, written evaluation once every two years, with a less formal process in the off-years. Use the results to inform growth towards quality governance framed around a robust board culture.
The Source: Twelve Principles of Governance that Power Exceptional Boards  
©BoardSource

Strategic

1. CONSTRUCTIVE PARTNERSHIP—Exceptional boards govern in constructive partnership with the chief executive, recognizing that the effectiveness of the board and chief executive are interdependent. They build this partnership through trust, candor, respect, and honest communication.

2. MISSION DRIVEN—Exceptional boards shape and uphold the mission, articulate a compelling vision, and ensure the congruence between decisions and organizational values. They treat questions of mission, vision, and core values not as exercises to be done once, but as statements of crucial importance to be drilled down and folded into deliberations.

3. STRATEGIC THINKING—Exceptional boards allocate time to what matters most and ensure the congruence between decisions and core values.

4. CULTURE OF INQUIRY—Exceptional boards institutionalize a culture of inquiry, constructive debate, and engaged teamwork that leads to sound and shared decision making.

Fiduciary

5. INDEPENDENT-MINDEDNESS—Exceptional boards are independent-minded. When making decisions on behalf of the organization, board members put the interests of the organization above those of the chief executive, themselves, or other interested parties.

6. ETHOS OF TRANSPARENCY—Exceptional boards promote an ethos of transparency and ethical behavior by ensuring that donors, stakeholders, and interested members of the public have access to appropriate and accurate information regarding finances and operations.

7. COMPLIANCE with INTEGRITY—Exceptional boards govern with full recognition of the importance of their fiduciary responsibilities, developing a culture of compliance through appropriate mechanisms for active oversight.

8. RESULTS ORIENTED—Exceptional boards track the organization’s advancement towards mission and evaluate the performance of major programs and services.

Advocacy & Resource Generation

9. SUSTAINING RESOURCES—Exceptional boards ensure that the organization’s resources are balanced with its strategic priorities and capacities. Individual board members extend the reach of the organization by actively using their own reputations and networks to secure funds, expertise, and access.

10. REVITALIZATION—Exceptional boards revitalize themselves through planned turnover, thoughtful recruitment, and intentional cultivation of future officers.

Structure & Best Practices

11. INTENTIONAL BOARD PRACTICES—Exceptional boards make form follow function when it comes to their own operations. To provide stable leadership to the organization, they invest in structures and practices that transcend individuals and thoughtfully adjust them to suit changing circumstances.

12. CONTINUOUS LEARNING—Exceptional boards embrace the qualities of a continuous learning organization, evaluating their own performance and assessing the value that they add to the organization.
Qualifications of the Consultant & Resources

Bruce Lesley has over 40+ years of nonprofit leadership and management experiences. He currently is a consultant helping nonprofit leaders realize their visions through strategic planning, innovation, and board development. Previously he was a staff professional with Junior Achievement, Inc., where from 1989 through 1991 he was National Executive Vice President of its headquarters operations. Junior Achievement is a $100 million international education organization. Bruce handles a number of assignments as a member of the BoardSource Consultant Network and has worked with over 500 client organizations which have a diversity of missions, legal structure, size, and geographic scope. He holds a B.A. degree with distinction in Economics from the University of Michigan. This is the seventh year he has worked with ACLS leaders.

Sample Clients Include:

ACREDITATION COUNCIL for CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE REGISTRAS and ADMISSIONS OFFICIALS
AMERICAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
AMERICAN BOARD of EMERGENCY MEDICINE
AMERICAN BOARD of PSYCHIATRY and NEUROLOGY
AMERICAN INSTITUTE of ARCHITECTS
AMERICAN INSTITUTE of PHYSICS
AMERICAN SOCIETY of CIVIL ENGINEERS
AMERICAN SPEECH-LANGUAGE-HEARING ASSOCIATION
ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE of AMERICA
ASSOCIATION of AMERICAN LAW SCHOOLS
ASSOCIATION of MEDICAL ILLUSTRATORS
ASSOCIATION of RESEARCH LIBRARIES
COUNCIL for UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

FULBRIGHT ASSOCIATION
INTERNATIONAL OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION for EDUCATION of YOUNG CHILDREN
NATIONAL CENTER for STATE COURTS
NATIONAL COUNCIL of TEACHERS OF MATHEMATICS
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES
NATIONAL STRENGTH/CONDITIONING ASSOCIATION
OREGON ARTS COUNCIL
SOCIETY for WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH
SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION
STANFORD CENTER for SOCIAL INNOVATION

Resources:

- "7 Measures of Success: What Remarkable Associations Do that Others Don't," ASAE, 2006
- "The End of Membership as We Know It," Sarah L. Sladek, ASAE 2011
- "Good to Great and the Social Sectors," Monograph to Accompany "Good to Great," Jim Collins, 2005
- "Nonprofit Governance: Innovative Perspectives and Approaches," edited by Chris Cornforth and William A. Brown