GETTING STARTED: STRENGTHENING YOUR NONPROFIT'S GOVERNANCE

Good governance isn't about meetings — it's about mission, accountability, and leadership.

Strong governance keeps your nonprofit focused, effective, and trusted. It defines how decisions are made, how responsibility is shared, and how results are achieved. Here are five key steps to build stronger governance that drives impact.

1 CLARIFY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Define the distinct roles of the Board, Board Members, and Executive Director.
- Ensure all members understand the difference between governance and management.
- Review and update bylaws, role descriptions, and terms of reference annually.
- Reinforce expectations through onboarding and periodic board reviews.

✓ ***Clarity prevents confusion and empowers stronger decision-making.***

2 ALIGN GOVERNANCE WITH STRATEGY

- Ensure governance is tied directly to your strategic plan by using a monitoring dashboard and key performance indicators (KPIs) to track implementation.
- Review progress on strategic objectives at every meeting.
- Ask: Are we doing the right things, are we doing them well, and are we on the right track?

✓ ***A strategic board keeps the organisation focused on mission and results.***

3 BUILD A STRONG GOVERNANCE CULTURE

- Set an annual calendar with deliverables (ie. annual planning and budgeting, quarterly KPI and risk reporting updates, monthly financial reporting).
- Provide materials in advance and start and end meetings on time to promote efficiency and respect people's time.
- Foster trust, respect, and shared purpose among board and staff by encouraging open dialogue and valuing diverse perspectives.
- Conduct annual board self-assessments to reflect and improve.

✓ ***A positive culture transforms governance from compliance to collaboration.***

4 STRENGTHEN ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

- Adopt and enforce policies for conflict of interest, ethics, and financial oversight.
- Document all decisions in board minutes and follow up on actions in subsequent meetings to ensure follow through.
- Share financials, impact results, and annual reports publicly.
- Evaluate both organisational performance and board effectiveness.

✓ ***Transparency builds trust with staff, donors, and the community.***

5 PLAN FOR CONTINUITY

- Create a leadership succession policy for both staff and board leadership roles.
- Prepare emergency and temporary succession plans for unexpected absences.
- Invest in leadership development and mentorship within your organisation.
- Keep continuity tools — key contacts, policies, systems — accessible and current.

✓ ***Good governance plans ahead, ensuring stability through change.***

TAKEAWAY

Governance is not about bureaucracy — it's about stewardship. When roles are clear - strategy drives agendas, and culture supports accountability - your nonprofit becomes more trusted, resilient, and impactful.

Strong governance leads to stronger missions.

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