



Entrepreneurial Board Governance: A New Approach to Non-Profit Leadership

SPEAKER: LEE HERRIN



About CanadaHelps

- CanadaHelps is a charitable organization increasing giving in Canada through technology.
- **For Canadians**, CanadaHelps offers the most comprehensive and flexible range of giving solutions for donating or learning about any charity in Canada.
- **For Canada's 85,000 charities**, CanadaHelps provides affordable fundraising tools and education to help charities increase their impact.
- Since 2000, more than 5 million Canadians have donated over \$3.7 billion to charities using CanadaHelps.





Housekeeping

- The recording and slide deck will be emailed to you following the webinar. You'll be able to watch the recorded video on demand.
- You can hear us, but we can't hear you.
- Have questions or technical difficulties?
- Type them into the Questions Log at anytime.



Territorial Acknowledgement



Lee Herrin
Director, Coaching and Consulting

Thriving Non-Profits journey to resilience



1

Learning

Programs that build capacity in Financial resilience and revenue strategy.



2

Consulting and Coaching

Support to create strategy, plan for growth, and strengthen operations.



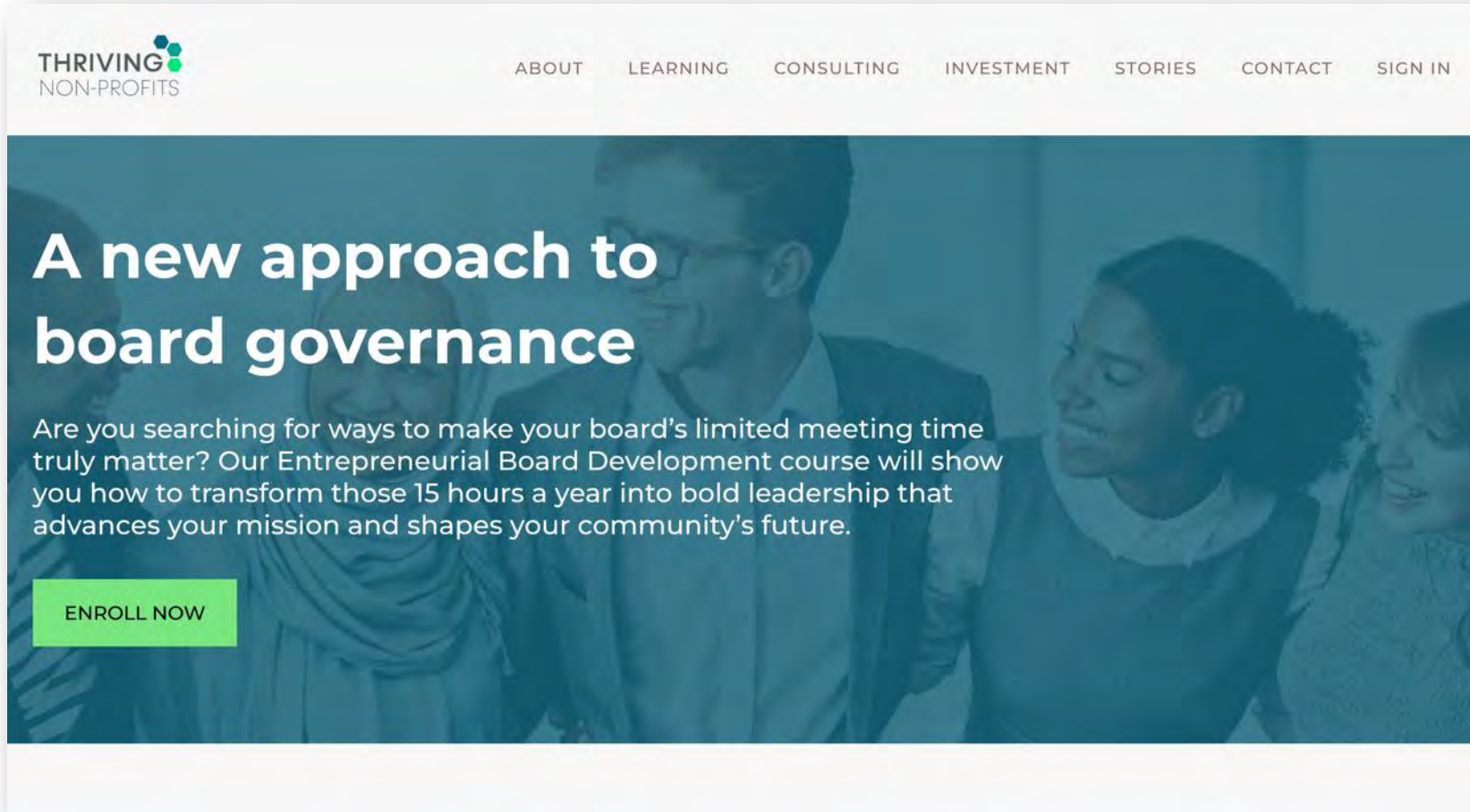
3

Investment

Access to values-aligned capital, designed for the non-profit sector.



Accompanying resource



THRIVING
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ABOUT LEARNING CONSULTING INVESTMENT STORIES CONTACT SIGN IN

A new approach to board governance

Are you searching for ways to make your board's limited meeting time truly matter? Our Entrepreneurial Board Development course will show you how to transform those 15 hours a year into bold leadership that advances your mission and shapes your community's future.

ENROLL NOW

A self-paced course designed to help non-profit boards govern in today's environment.

Making the most of today's session



- **During this session:**
 - Polls, questions, and space for reflection points
 - Feel free to make brief notes
 - Use chat for quick topical questions
 - 30-minute Q&A following the presentation for deeper questions

Opening poll



1. Do you currently sit on a board of directors?
2. How would you rate your level of experience as a board member?

*1 = No experience at all,
5 = Very experienced*

1. If you do sit on a Board of Directors please rate your level of agreement with this statement:

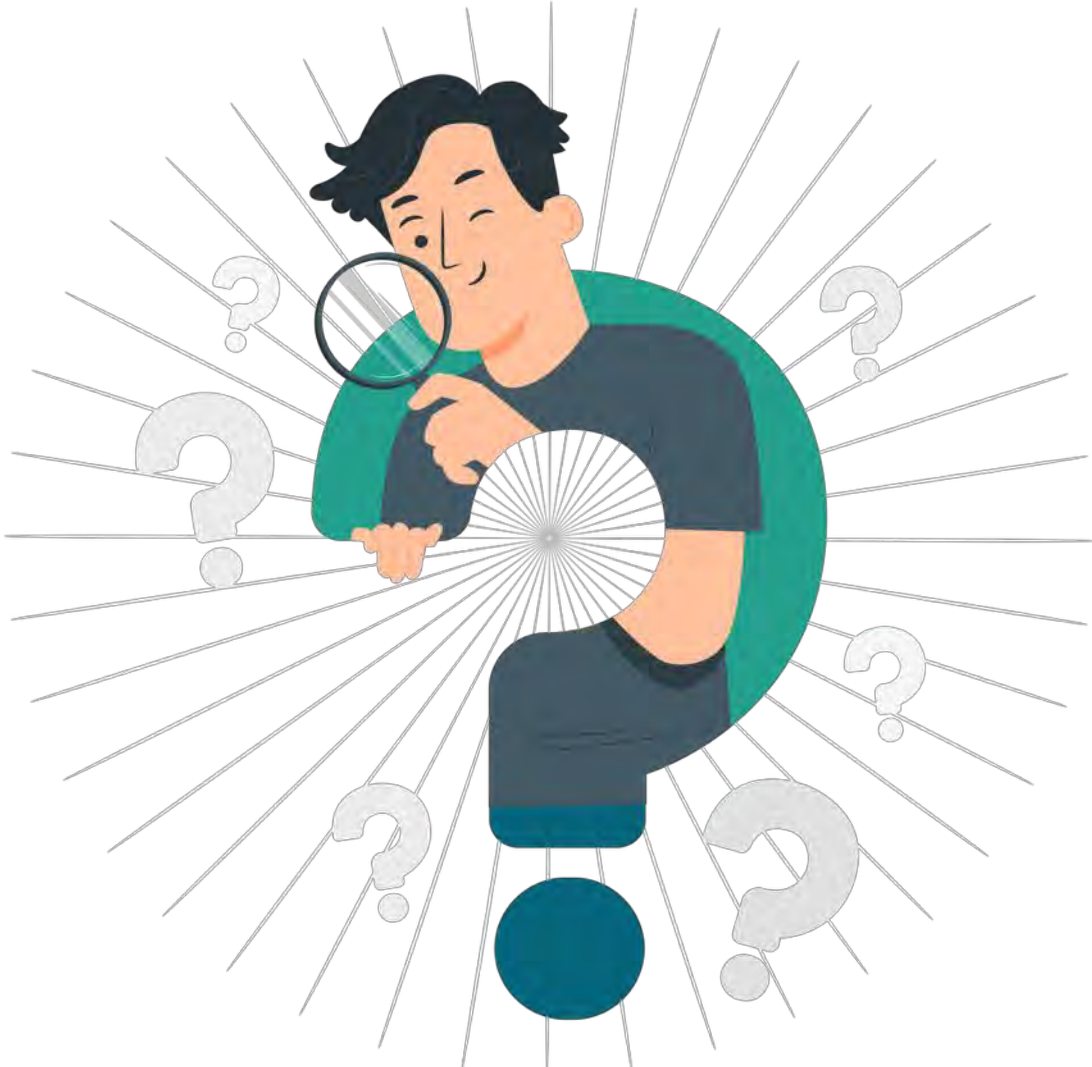
Board meetings are well-organized and productive. (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)

Why governance must evolve



- Funding is volatile. Demands are rising. Strategy must adapt quickly.
- Innovation, partnerships, and enterprise models are essential—but require bold, informed governance.
- The board's role is not to approve what's safe—it's to support what's necessary.

An organizational riddle

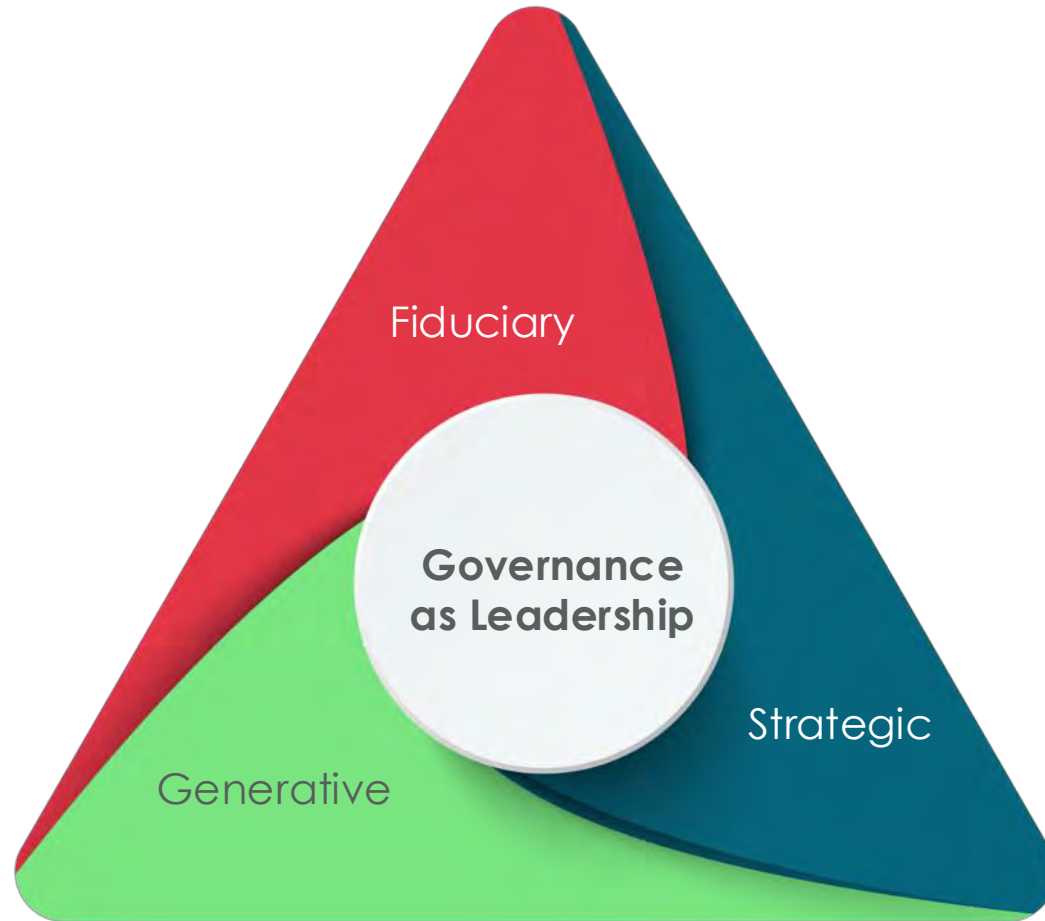


- Most boards typically meet for 15 hours per year
- All Boards do at meetings is talk
- How does 15 hours of talk per year change the world?

Entrepreneurial board governance



Three modes of board governance



from Chait et al., *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the work of Nonprofit Boards*, 2005.



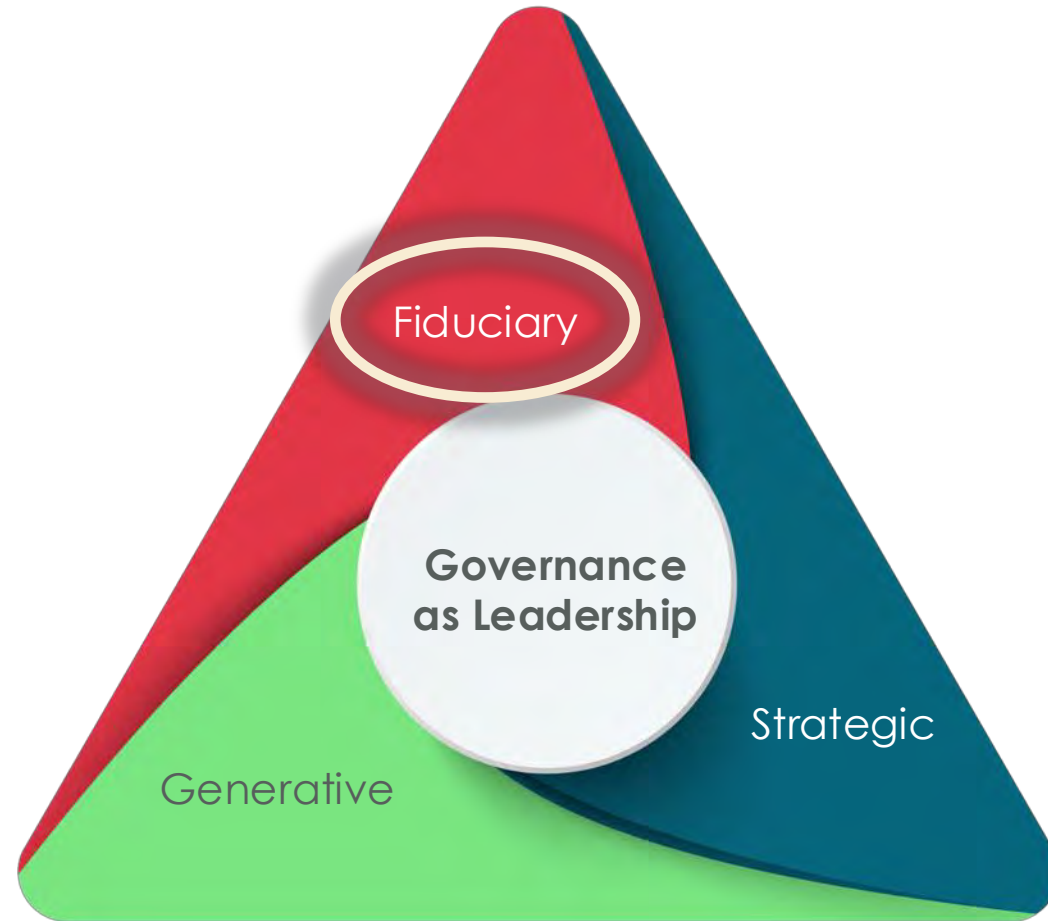
Boards and Leadership

Duties of board directors



- The duties of Board Directors are defined by law
- **Loyalty:** Put the organization's interests first
- **Care:** Act with diligence and good judgment
- **Obedience:** Follow the law, bylaws, and mission

Fiduciary mode



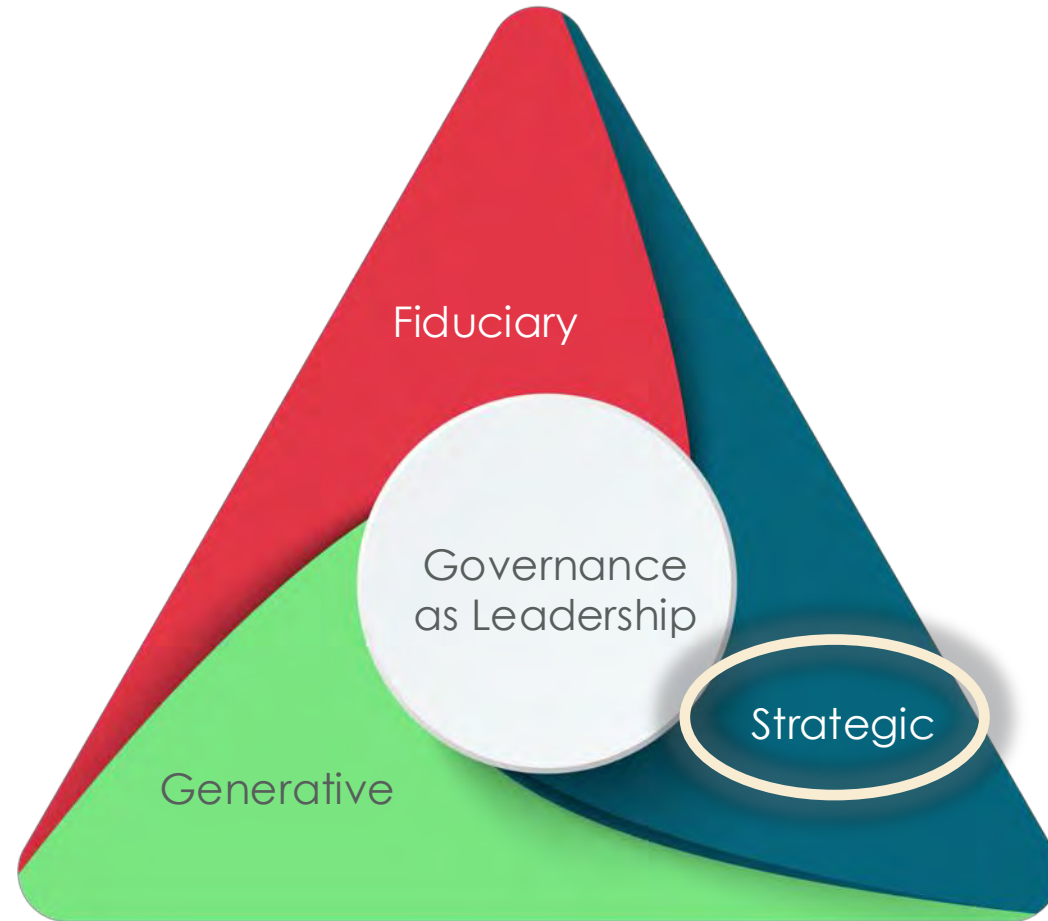
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Fiduciary role of board directors



- Board directors manage—or supervise the management of—the organization’s internal affairs
- The law defines the **minimum** level of oversight required by fiduciary duty
- Boards may take on broader leadership roles, but they **cannot fall below** this legal standard

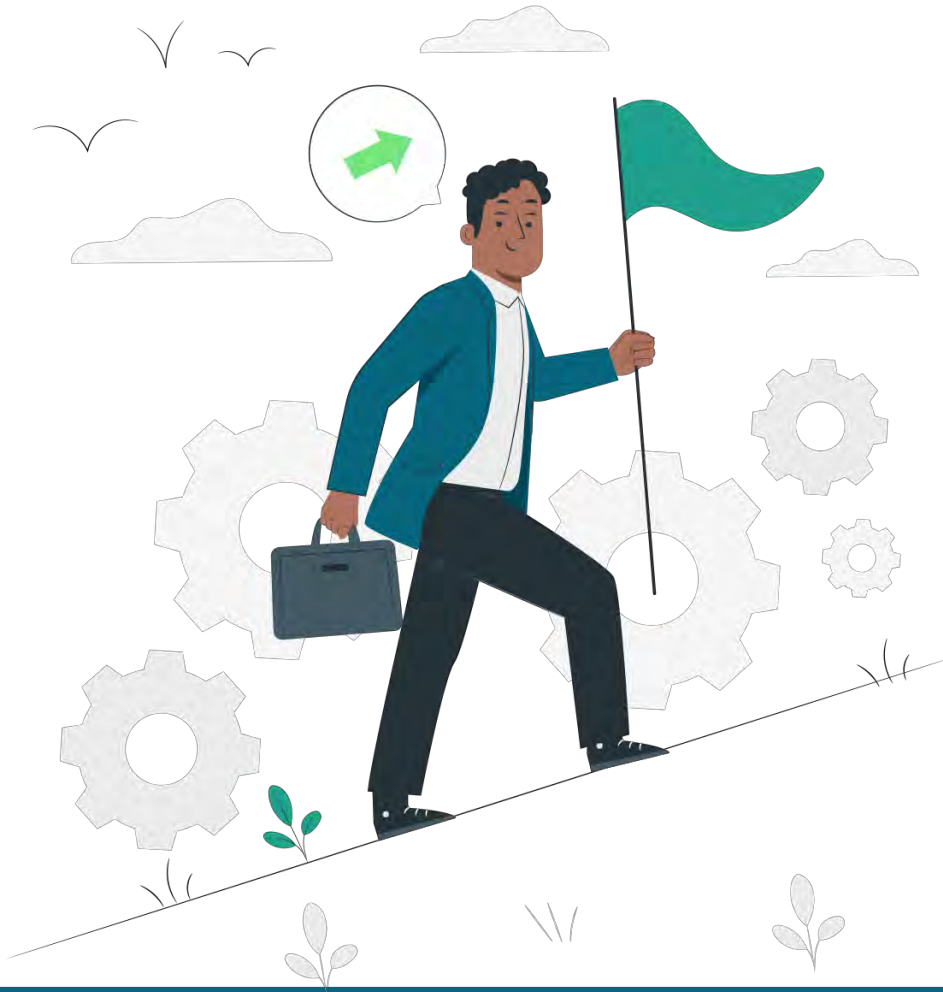
Strategic mode



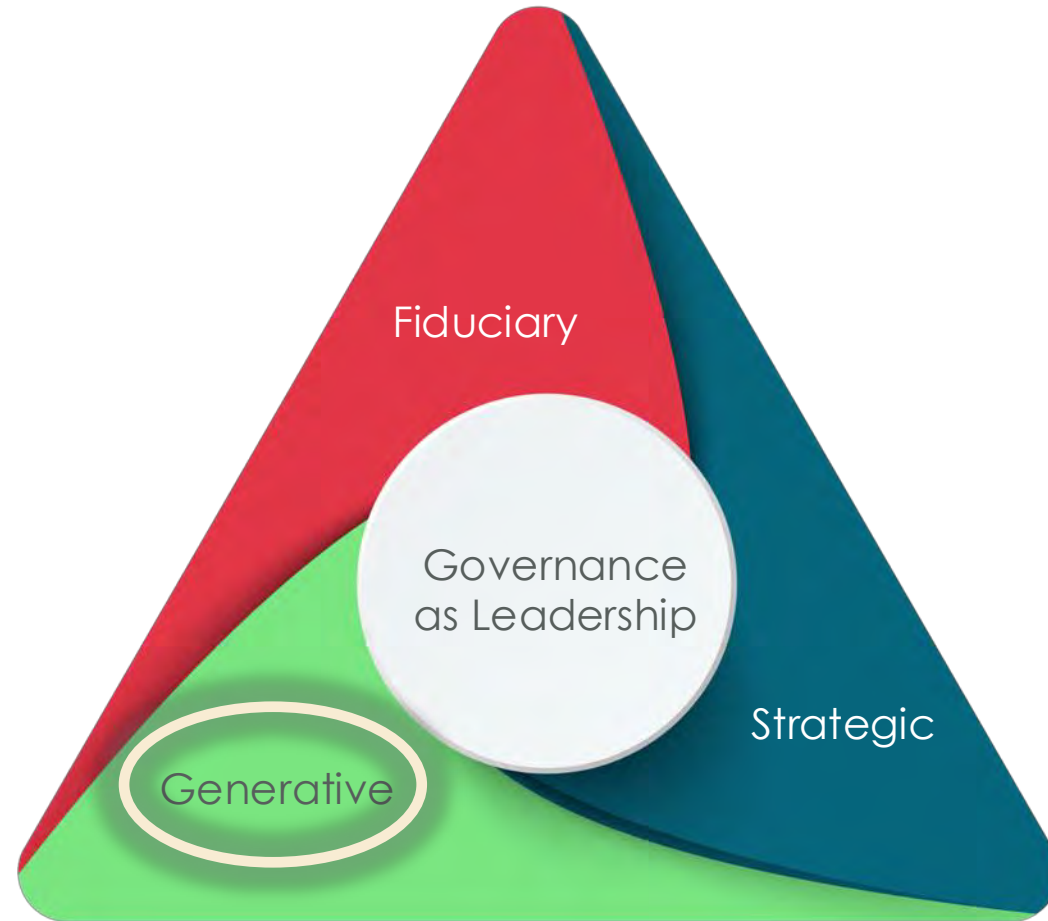
from Chait et al., *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the work of Nonprofit Boards*, 2005.

Strategic governance

- Board structure aligns with strategic goals, not just fiduciary tasks
- Strategy discussions are grounded in data from multiple sources
- Board meetings focus on meaningful, forward-looking content
- Board and senior leadership think together to identify strategic priorities

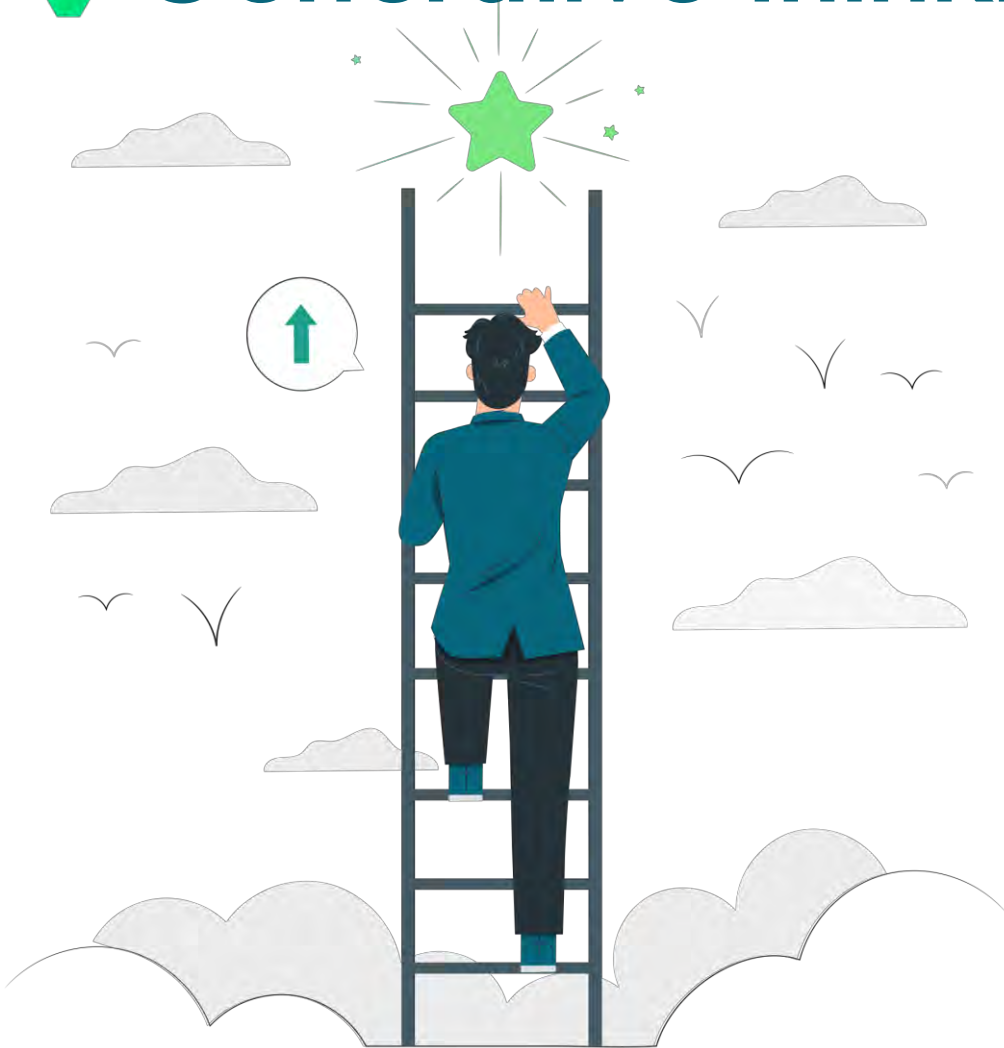


Generative mode



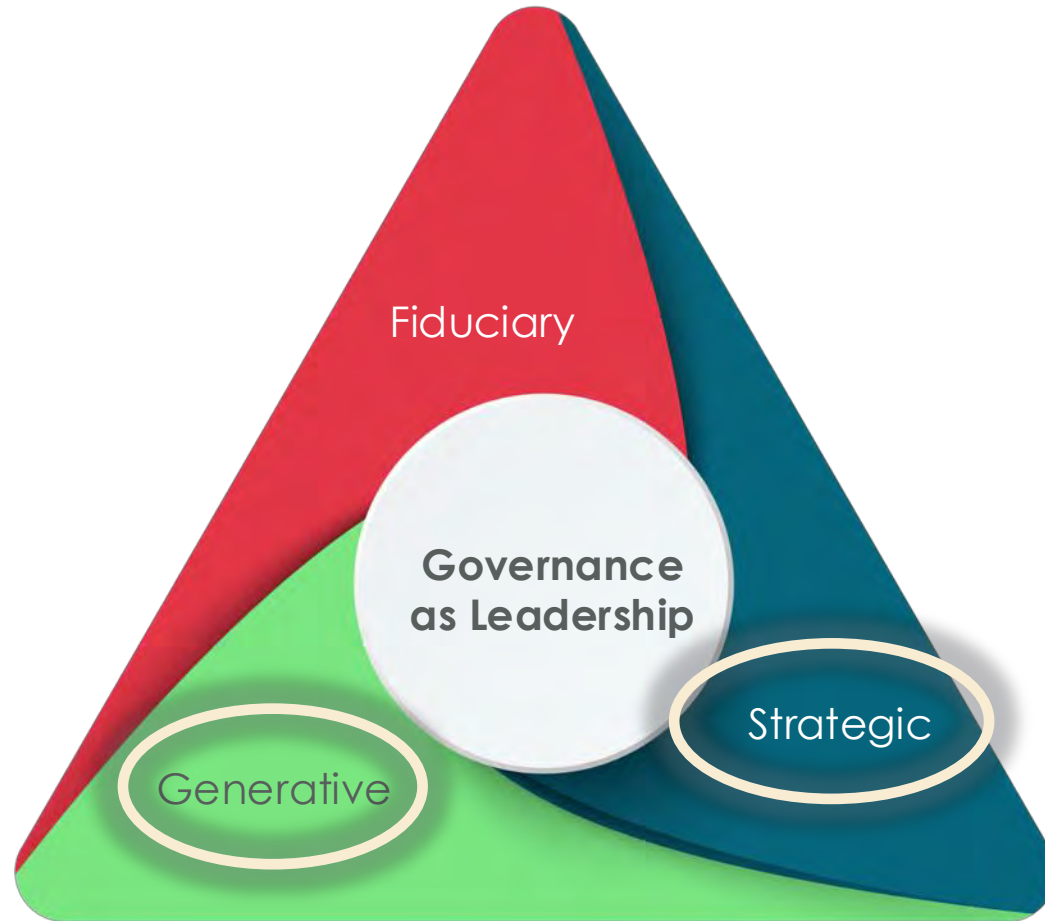
from Chait et al., *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the work of Nonprofit Boards*, 2005.

Generative thinking



- Time for sensemaking—what do the data and experiences mean?
- Opportunity to understand the past and challenge assumptions
- Space for creativity and shifting mental models
- Conditions for powerful thinking about problems and opportunities
- A pathway to recognize and shape opportunity for the future

Three modes of board governance



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Three Modes: Annual Calendar



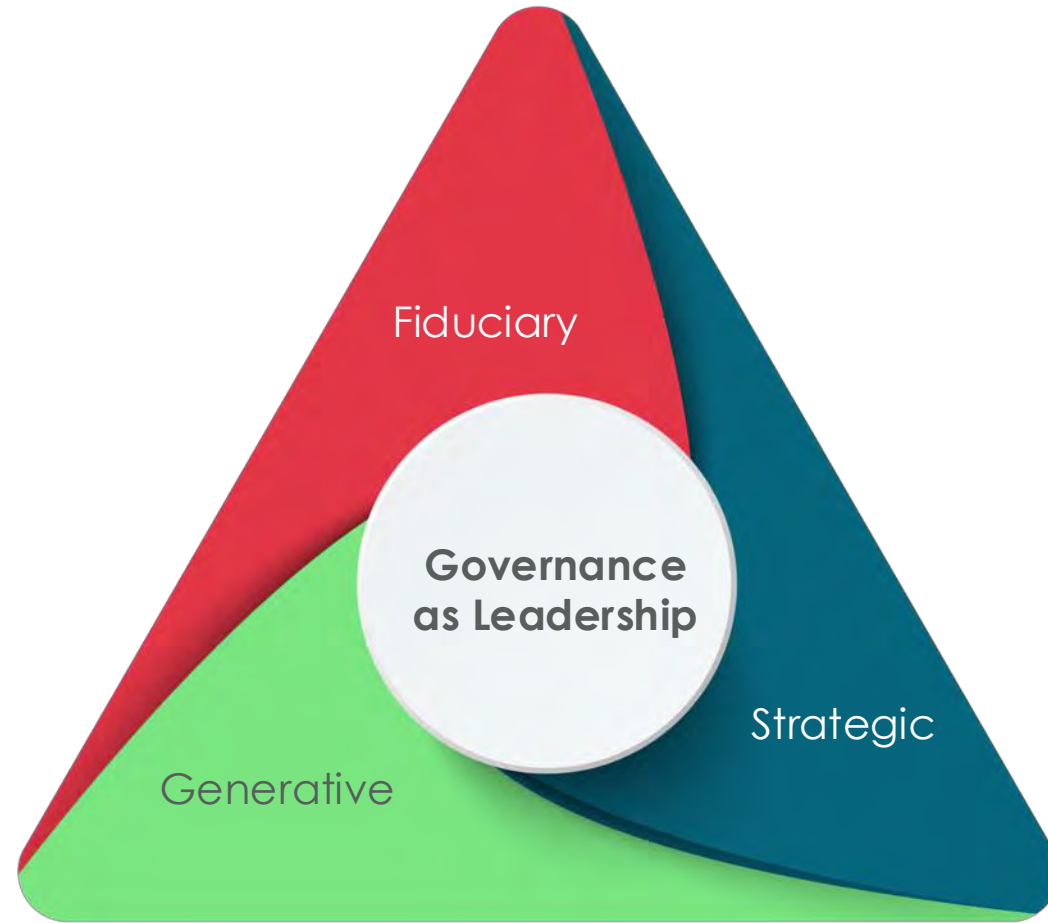
Three modes: Annual board calendar

	Q1.1 April	Q1.2 May	Q1.3 June	Q2.1 July	Q2.2 September	Q3.1 October	Q3.2 November	Q4.1 January	Q4.2 February	Q4.3 March
30 min	Consent agenda, monitor performance, set new policy as required									
30 min		Financial review	Prepare for AGM	Assess program outcomes	Evaluate ED/CEO & Board	Update Risk Register	Strategic Plan Review		Approve Annual Budget	
30 min										
	Serve as bridge between organization and community (outside of meetings)									

8.0 hrs Fiduciary
3.0 hrs Strategic
4.0 hrs Generative

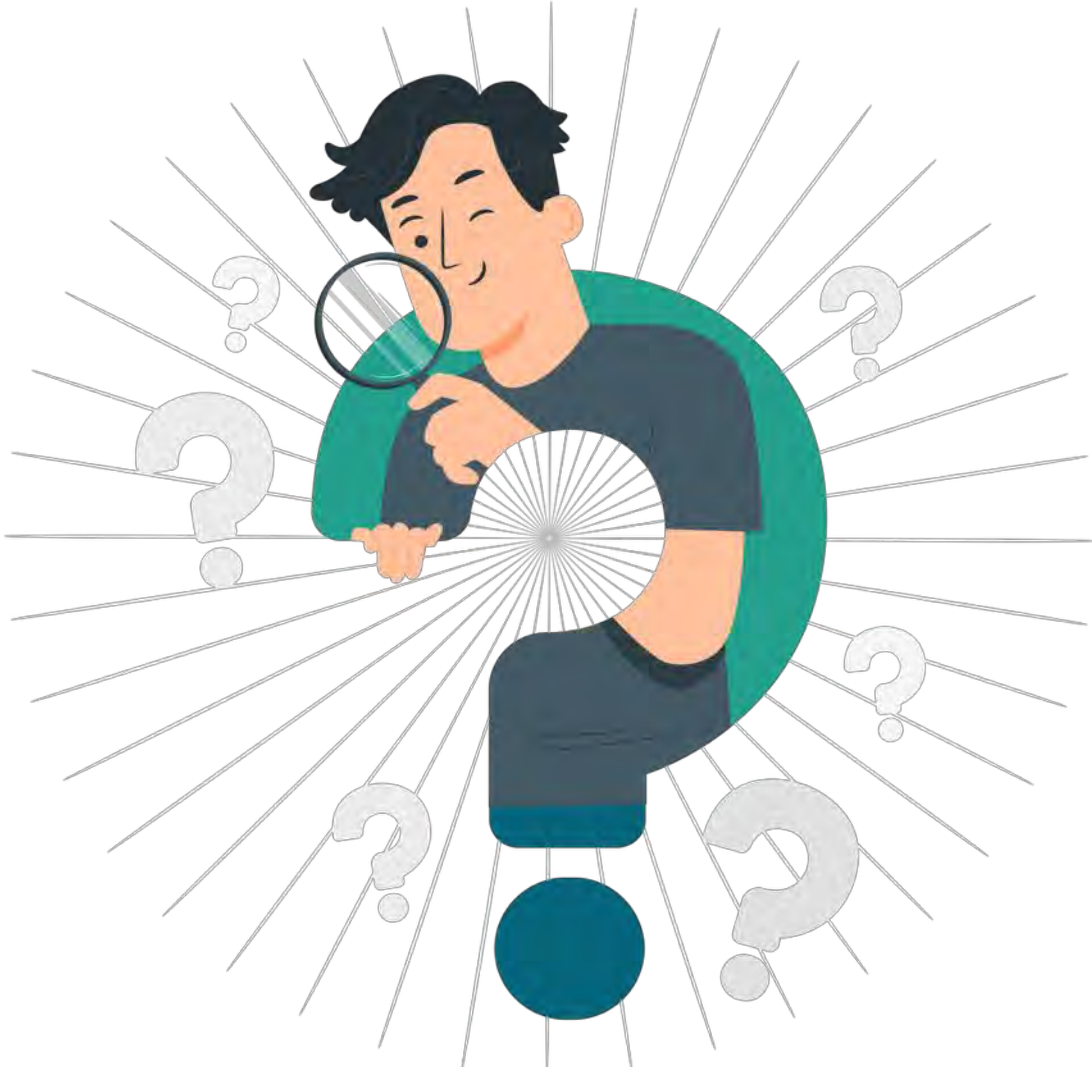


15 hours of talk *can* change the world!



from Chait et al., *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the work of Nonprofit Boards*, 2005.

An organizational riddle



- Most boards typically meet for 15 hours per year
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- How does 15 hours of talk per year change the world?



Annual board calendar template

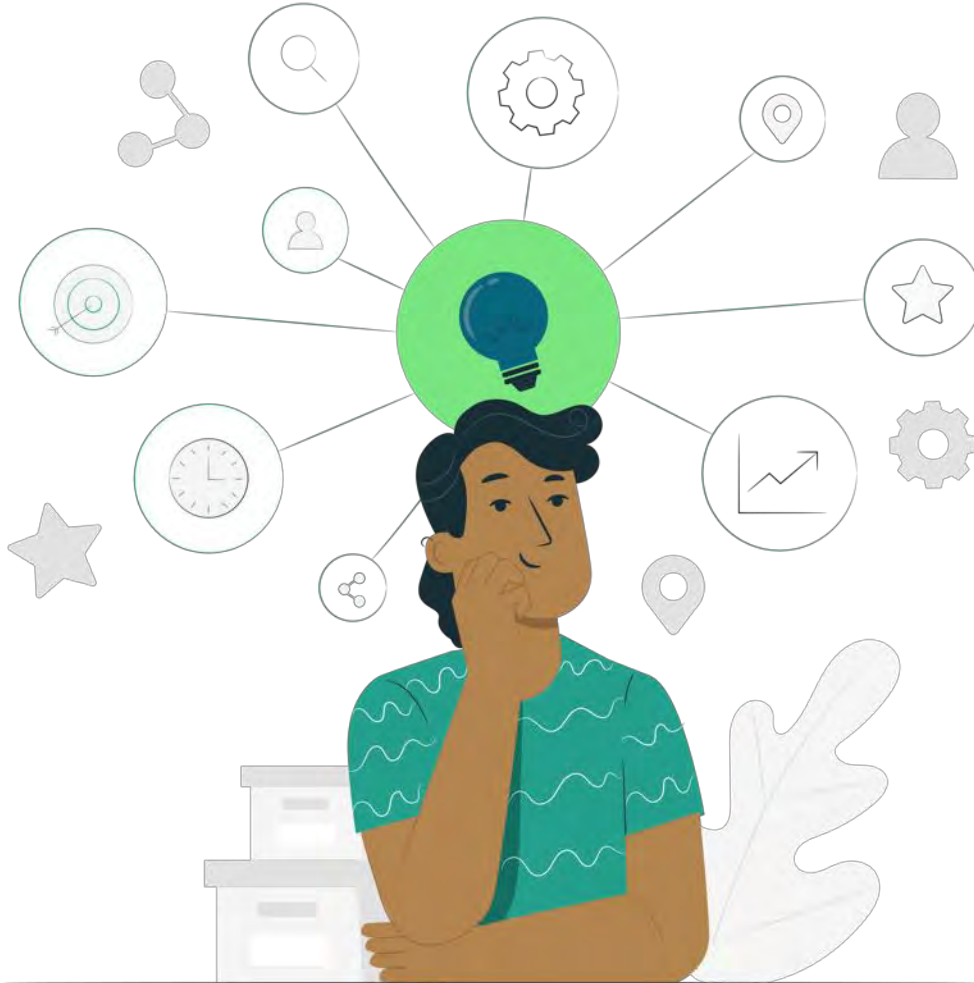
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30m	Generative	Strategic	Generative	Strategic	Generative	Strategic	Strategic	Generative	Strategic	Generative

How does your board spend its time?



- How well does your board currently incorporate the three modes into your meetings?
- Do you have regular check-ins on strategy and direction?
- Do you have time in meetings for open-ended discussion?

Key aspects of board leadership

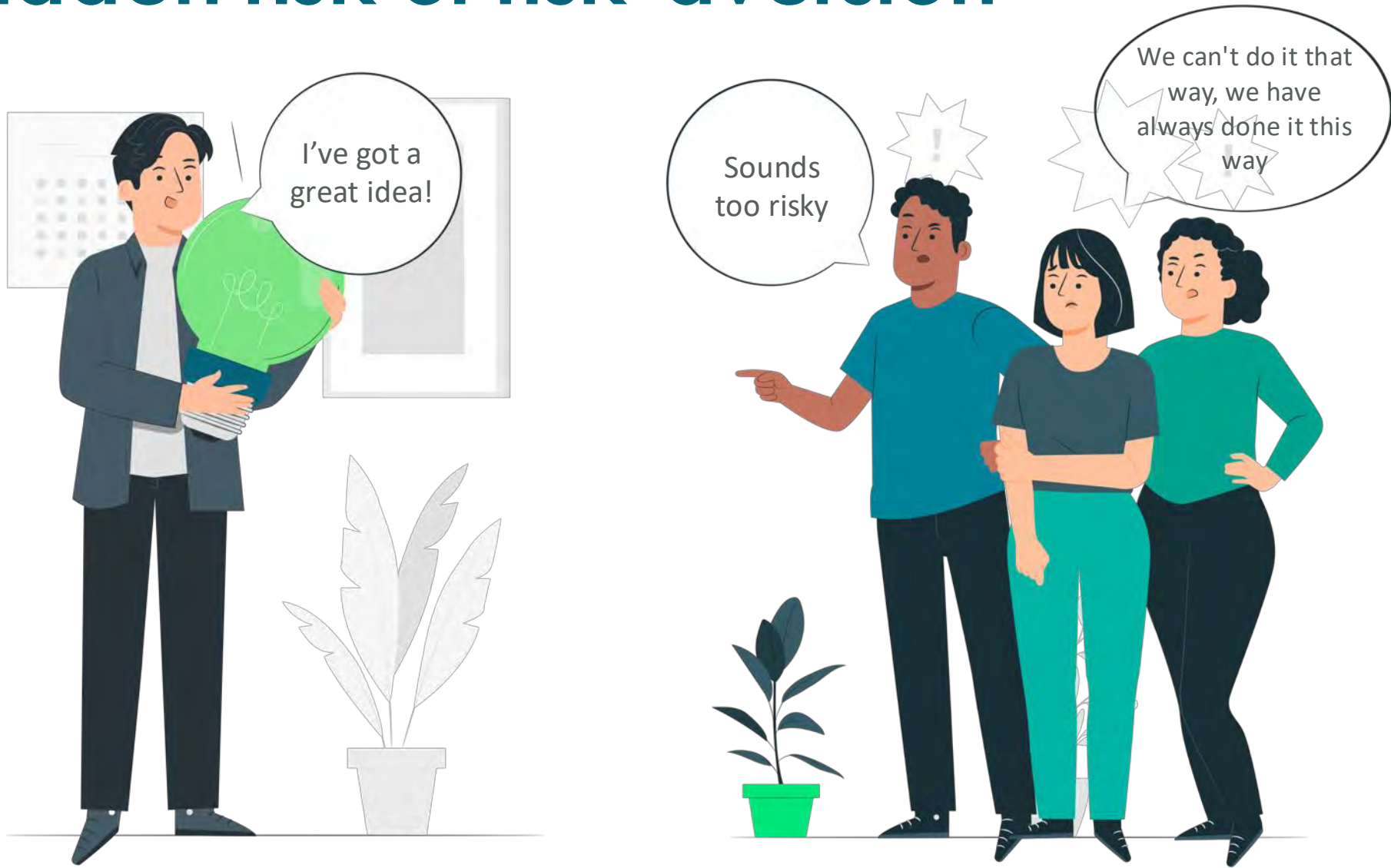


1. Boards & Leadership
2. Boards & Risk
3. Boards & Strategy
4. Boards & Finance
5. Boards & the Executive Director
6. Boards & the Community



Boards and Risk

The hidden risk of risk-aversion



Duties of board directors



- The duties of Board Directors are defined by law
- Loyalty: Put the organization's interests first
- **Care: Act with diligence and good judgment**
- Obedience: Follow the law, bylaws, and mission

Duty of Care doesn't mean avoiding risk...

Fiduciary role of board directors



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- The law defines the **minimum** level of oversight required by fiduciary duty
- Boards may take on broader leadership roles, but they **cannot fall below** this legal standard

Risks boards must be aware of



- Boards must think about risk across multiple dimensions:
 - **Mission risk**
 - **Financial risk**
 - **Reputational risk**
 - **Operational risk**
 - **Legal/regulatory risk**
 - **Strategic risk**

Risk culture



Your board and risk



- Does your organization discuss risks regularly in meetings?
- Would you describe your board as "risk averse" or "open to opportunity"?



Boards and Strategy

What is strategy?



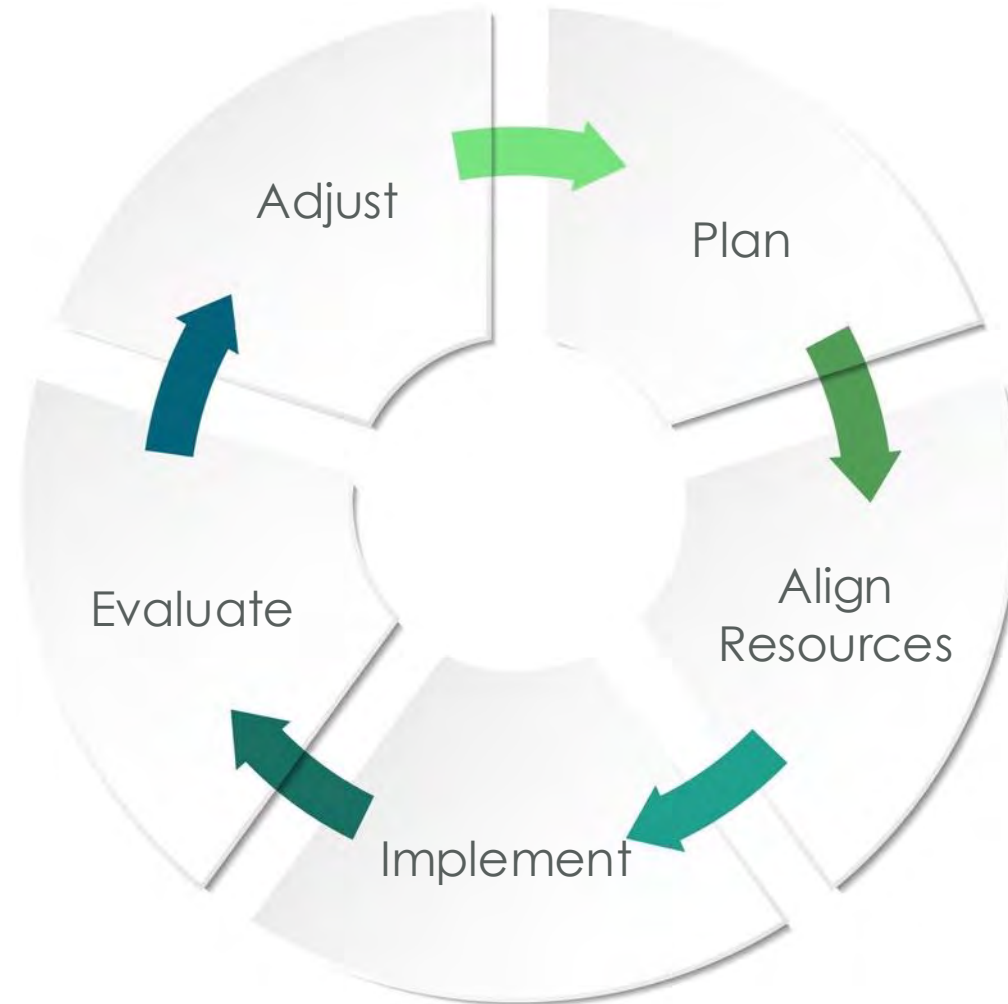
- Strategy is a multi-year plan for mission impact and sustainability
- It aligns programs, people, and resources with your goals
- It requires choice: what to do, what not to do, and when



Strategic plan ≠ theory of change

Strategic Plan	Theory of Change
What we will do	Why we believe it will work
Multi-year goals and priorities	Long-term impact logic
Aligns resources and timelines	Maps causal pathways to change
Guides decisions and operations	Informs measurement and learning
Used by board and staff	Often shared with funders and evaluators

Strategy is a cycle, not a moment



A strategy is as strong as its resources



- A clear mission and strategy guide what we do
- But we must resource that strategy to deliver impact
- Underfunded plans lead to overwork, underperformance, and burnout
- The board's next task: ensuring the strategy is financially sustainable

Quick poll

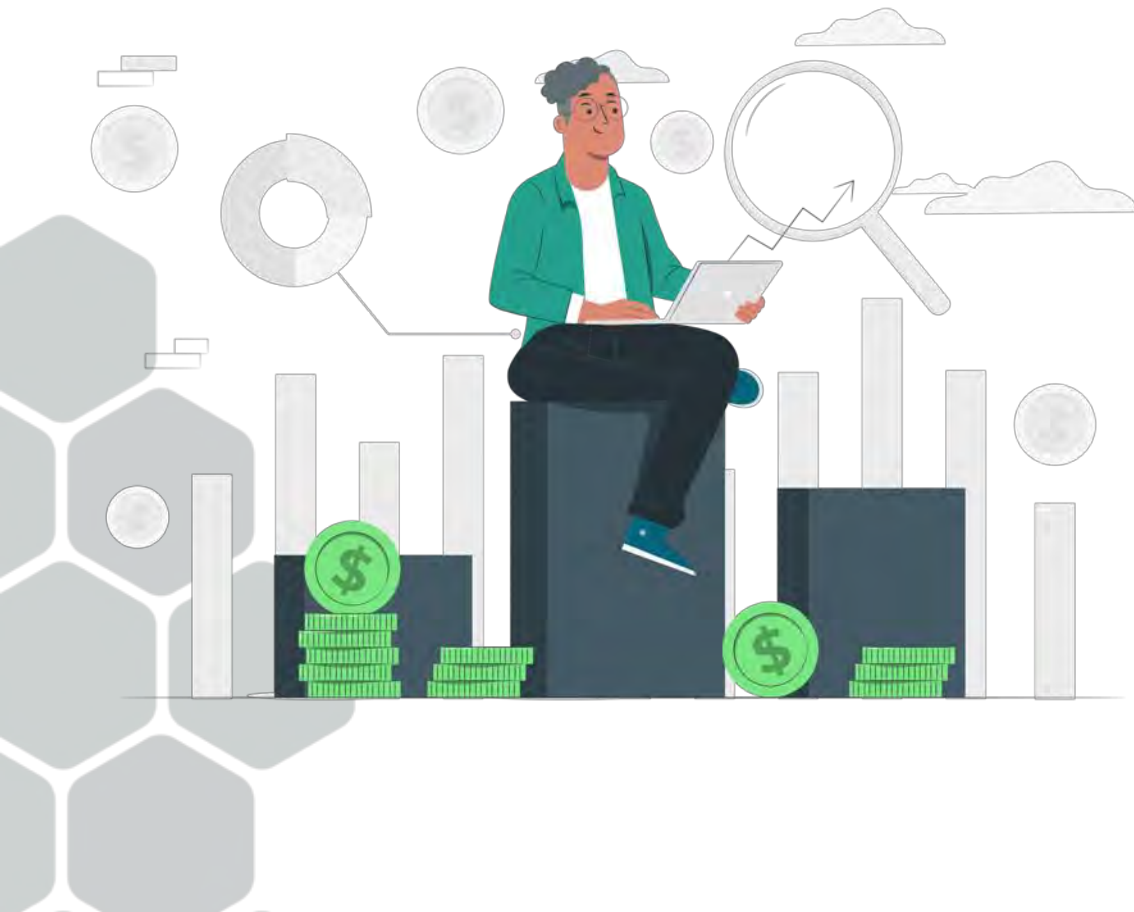


1. Our organization has a strategic plan
2. We discuss our strategic plan in Board meetings more than once a year
3. We have deliberately linked our strategy to our budget, and our budget to our strategy



Boards and Finance

The Board's role in financial oversight



- Every director must be financially literate—not a financial expert
- Fiduciary duties include oversight of financial health
- Oversight cannot be delegated to a Treasurer or Finance Committee
- The duties of care and of loyalty apply to financial decisions

Dealing with uncertainty



- Most budgets include revenue and expense uncertainties
- Especially true for grants, donations, and new initiatives
- Uncertainty must be acknowledged—not ignored or feared



Two common (but flawed) approaches

1

Ultra-conservative:
budget only
confirmed revenue

2

Magical thinking:
assume gaps will
resolve themselves

Both approaches create risk—for the organization and staff

A balanced approach



- Include confirmed revenue—and a reasonable portion of unconfirmed
- Identify the gap between likely revenue and total expenses
- Build a plan to close that gap through targeted action

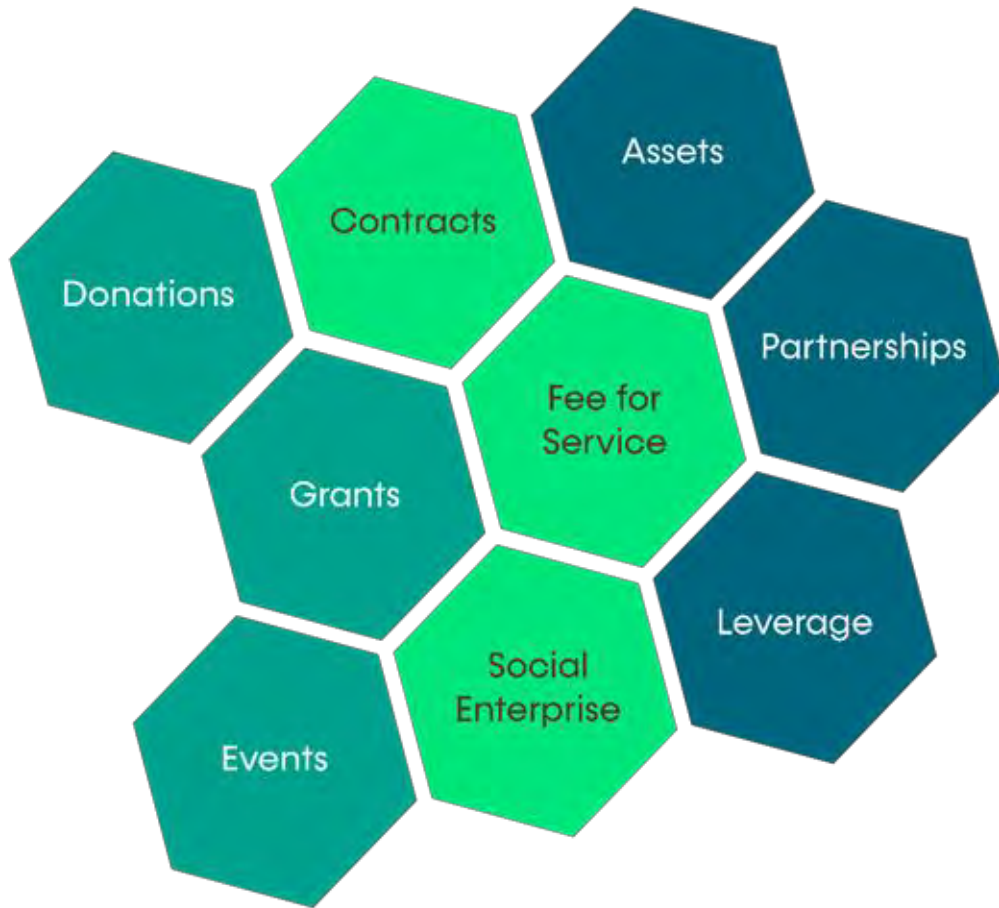
The link between strategy and resources



The right funding for your strategy



Thriving Non-Profits honeycomb



- Many diverse funding streams contained within one entity
- Stable and focused on core mission
- Constantly expanding and building assets

Growth requires more than money



- Cash constraints limit growth—but leadership choices shape strategy
- Growth requires deliberate risk, strong financial oversight, and Board alignment
- The Executive Director and Board play key roles in navigating this tension
- Next: evaluating how we lead—individually and together

Strategy, funding, and uncertainty

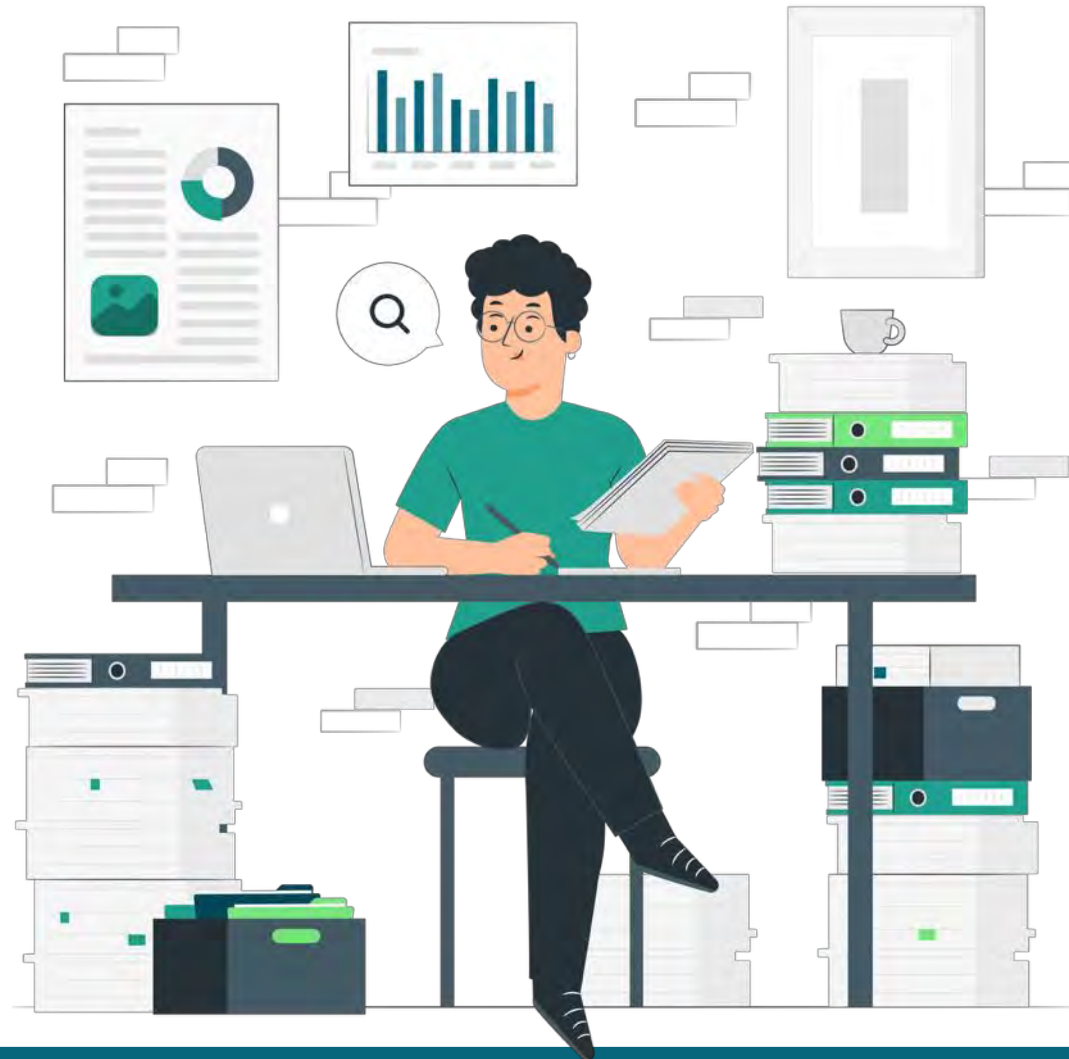


- When you build a budget, do you name the uncertain funding gap and plan for it?
- Does your funding model fit your strategy?



Boards and the Executive Director

Boards and the Executive Director





Leadership drives results

Executive Leadership Performance

- Vision, execution, culture, relationships



Organizational Capacity

- Team alignment, program quality, financial health



Organizational Results

- Mission impact, stakeholder trust, sustainability

The performance of the Executive Director is the single strongest lever the Board holds for improving organizational performance.

What EDs need from the Board



- **Clarity:** shared expectations and defined boundaries
- **Responsiveness:** timely decisions and communication
- **Trust:** freedom to lead and space to perform

What Boards often miss



- The ED role looks straightforward from the outside
- But it involves managing complexity, pressure, and ambiguity
- Boards must understand the lived experience to support and evaluate the ED's work

Evaluating the Executive Director



Effective ED evaluation is:

- Based on clearly defined expectations
- Linked to real organizational goals
- Focused on learning, not just judgment
- Delivered through respectful, structured conversation
- Informed by multiple perspectives when appropriate

Evaluating the Board



Boards should regularly evaluate:

- How well they govern as a team
- Whether they follow through on commitments
- How they show up in fiduciary, strategic, and generative modes
- Whether they support, challenge, and partner effectively with the ED
- If they have the right members

Evaluation as shared practice



- The ED and the Board are a leadership system
- Evaluating one without the other creates imbalance
- Regular, honest reflection strengthens both roles
- Accountability is a tool for alignment, not control



Internal leadership to external stewardship

1

The ED and Board are partners in internal leadership

2

The Board also plays a unique role outside the organization

3

Next: how Boards build trust, represent the organization, and manage boundaries

Your board-Executive Director partnership

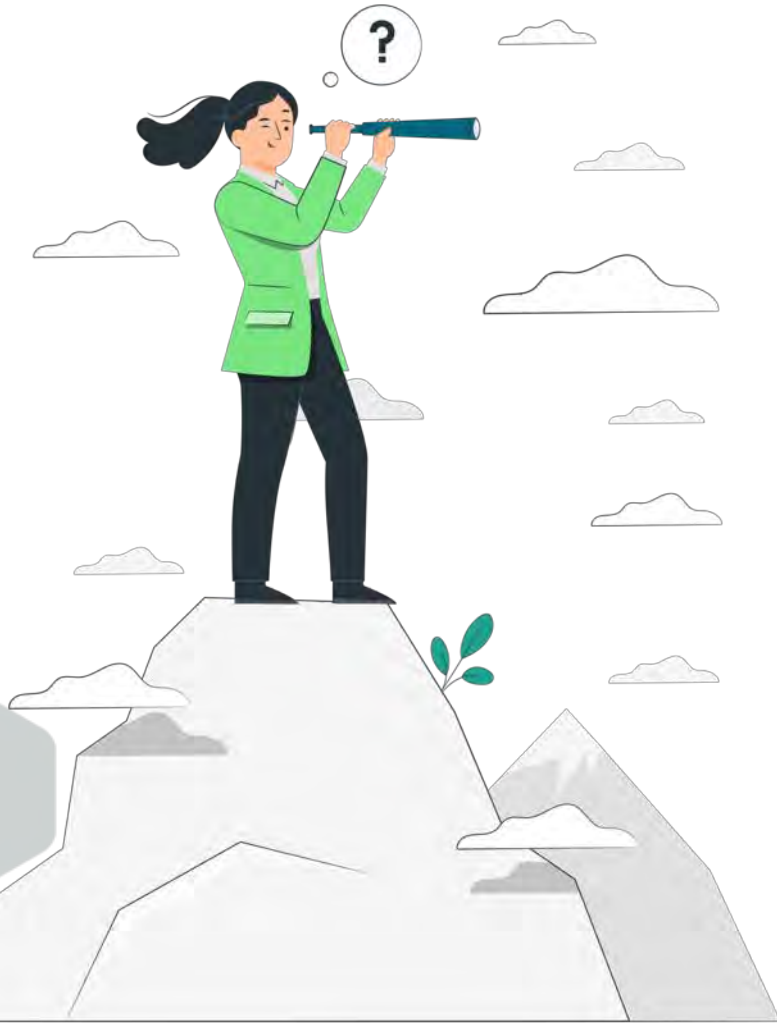


- Does your board give the Executive Director room to lead?
- Does your board evaluate its own performance?



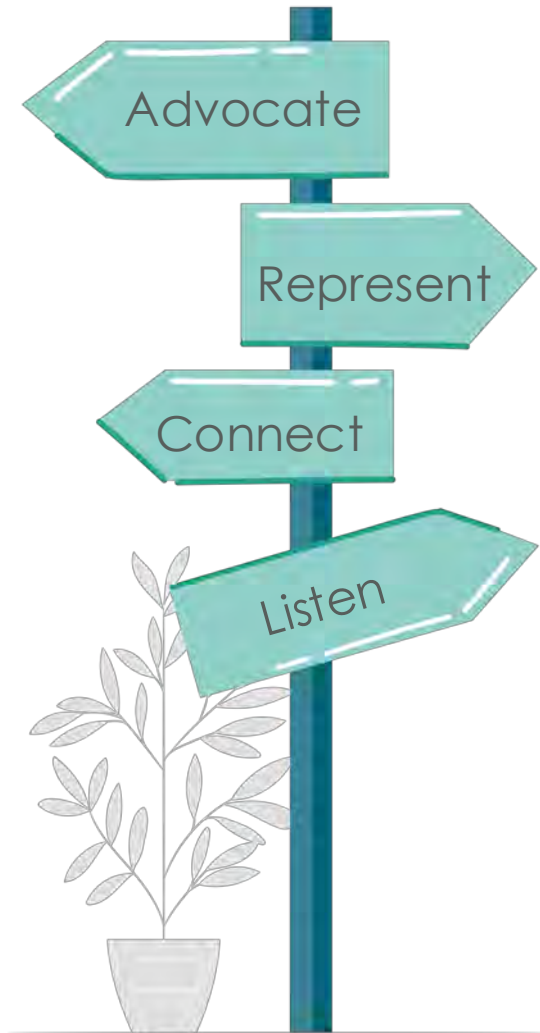
Boards and the Community

Why outward-facing governance matters



- Boards don't just oversee organizations—they represent them.
- In every community interaction, directors shape how the mission is understood and trusted.

Four modes of external engagement



- **Advocate:** Support the organization's mission in public or strategic spaces
- **Represent:** Speak credibly and knowledgeably about the organization
- **Connect:** Make introductions, share leads, and build networks
- **Listen:** Surface insights and report back to help guide direction



Principles for effective engagement

1 Speak about the mission when it adds value.

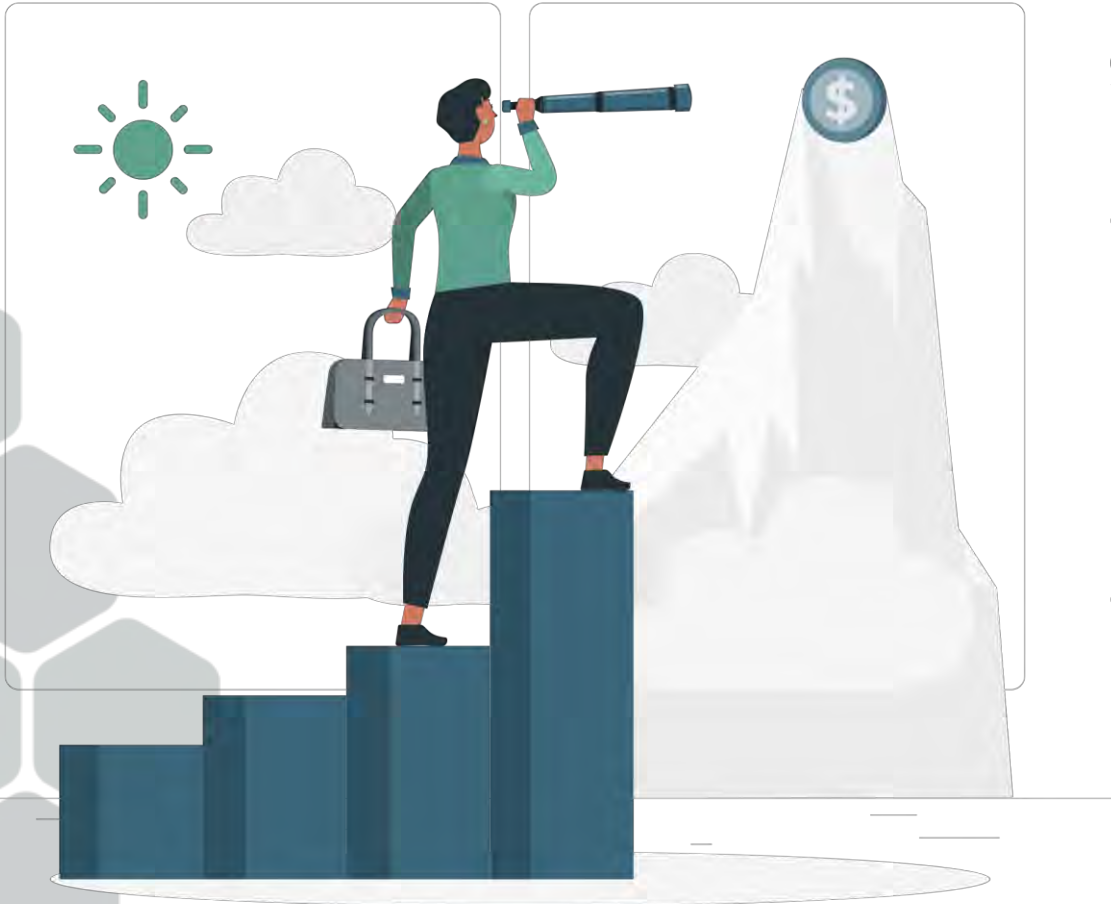
2 Attend key events that fit strategic goals.

3 Share what you hear with the Board and staff.

4 Represent, don't commit, unless authorized.

5 Partner up: Attend with another Director when possible.

Beyond the boardroom



Great governance doesn't stop at good meetings.

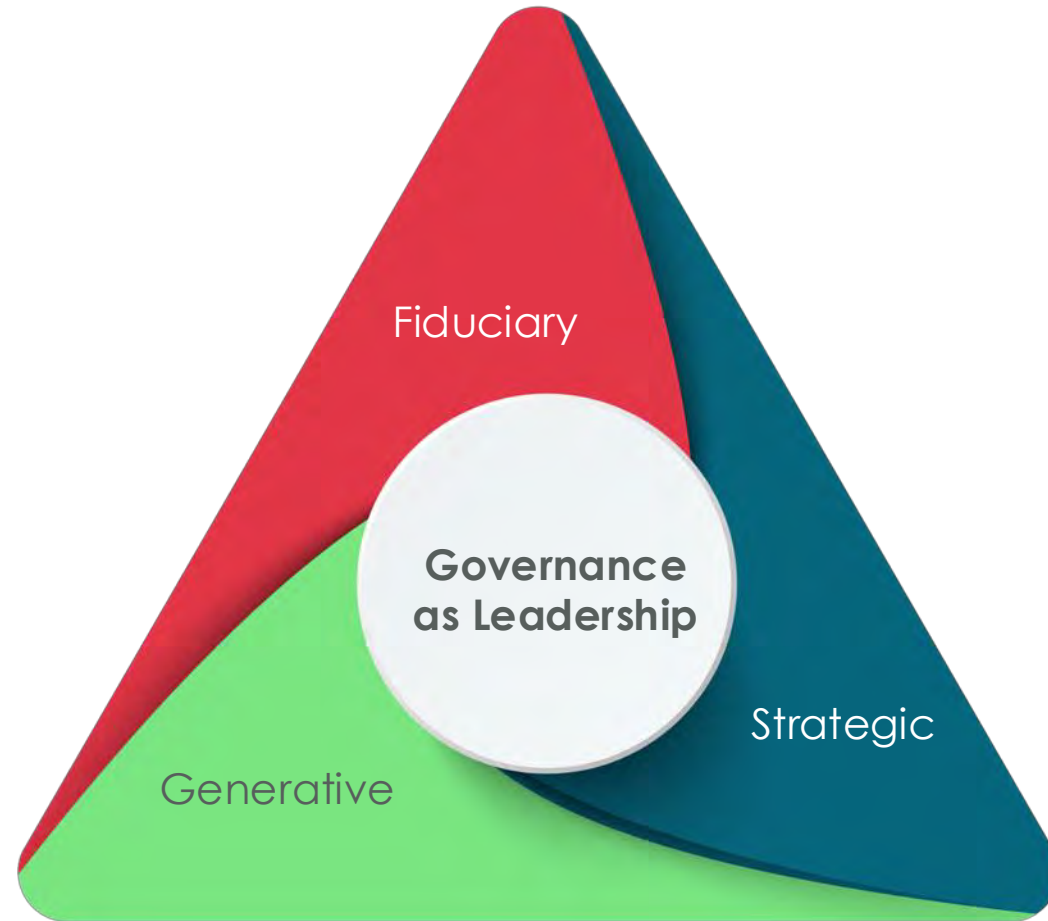
- It lives in what board members:
 - Model in their leadership
 - Say in their conversations
 - Do in their communities
- When board members lead with purpose beyond the room:
 - They build trust in the organization
 - And momentum for the mission.

Your board in the community



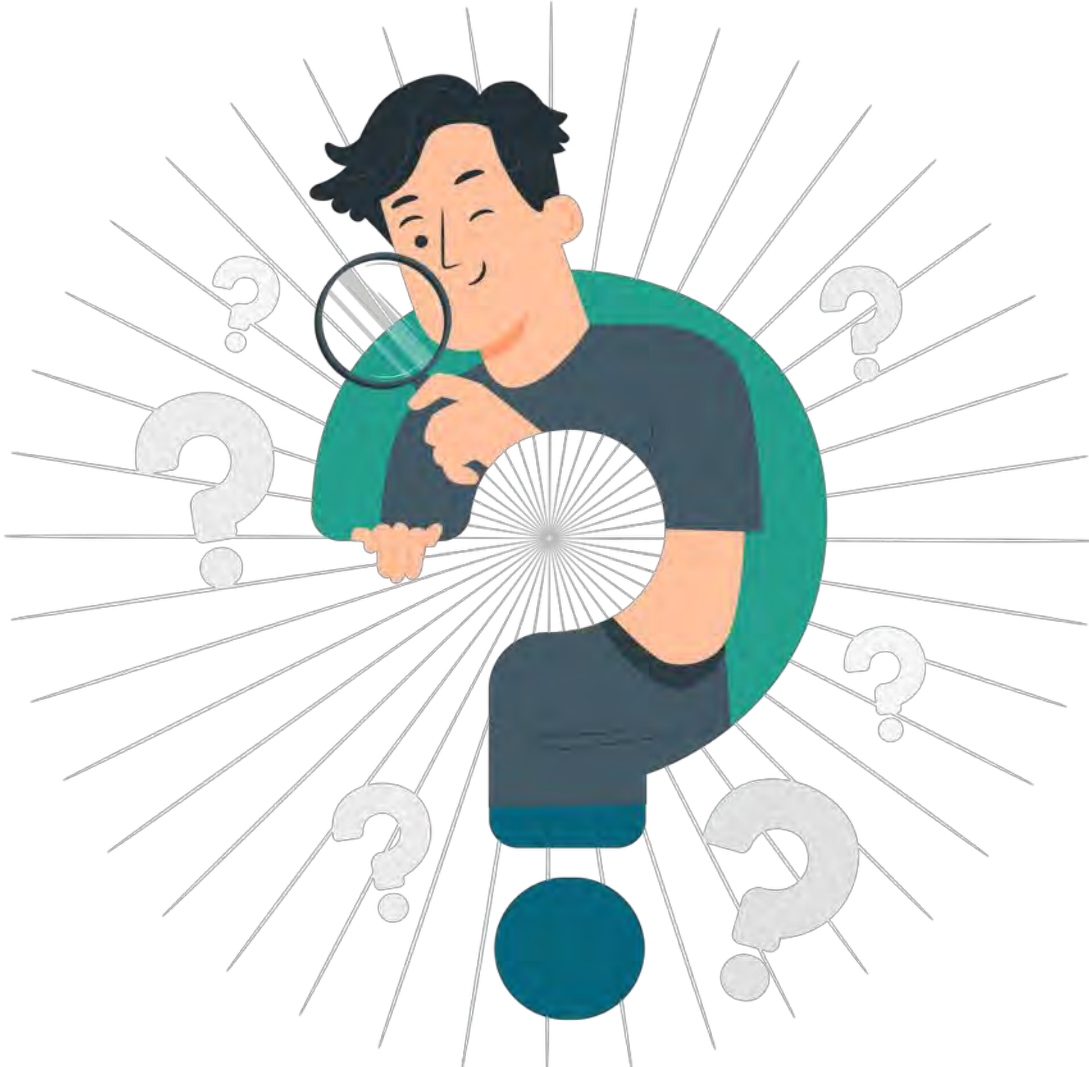
- Is your board's external presence intentional?
- Are directors confident representing the organization in the community?

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An organizational riddle



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Your board in the community



- Where do most of your "fifteen hours" of meeting time go?
- What is the one shift that would make the biggest difference?

The Thriving Non-Profits journey



1

Learning

Programs that build capacity in financial resilience and revenue strategy.



2

Consulting and Coaching

Support to create strategy, plan for growth, and strengthen operations.



3

Investment

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REGULAR PRICE	WORKSHOP PRICE
\$99	\$49



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30m	Generative	Strategic	Generative	Strategic	Generative	Strategic	Strategic	Generative	Strategic	Generative

Annual board calendar template to help you map all three governance modes across the year.

Questions and discussion





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Learn more at:
www.thrivingnonprofits.ca

Get in touch: hello@thrivingnonprofits.ca