

Sharing Leadership in the Nonprofit Sector

IntegralOrg

February 19, 2025
1:00 – 2:00 pm



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Mohkinsstis Land Acknowledgement

Bearspaw First Nation **Siksika First Nation**

Piikani First Nation **Goodstoney First Nation**

Chiniki First Nation **Kainai First Nation**

Tsuut'ina First Nation

Métis Nation of Alberta, District 5 and 6



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Your facilitator for

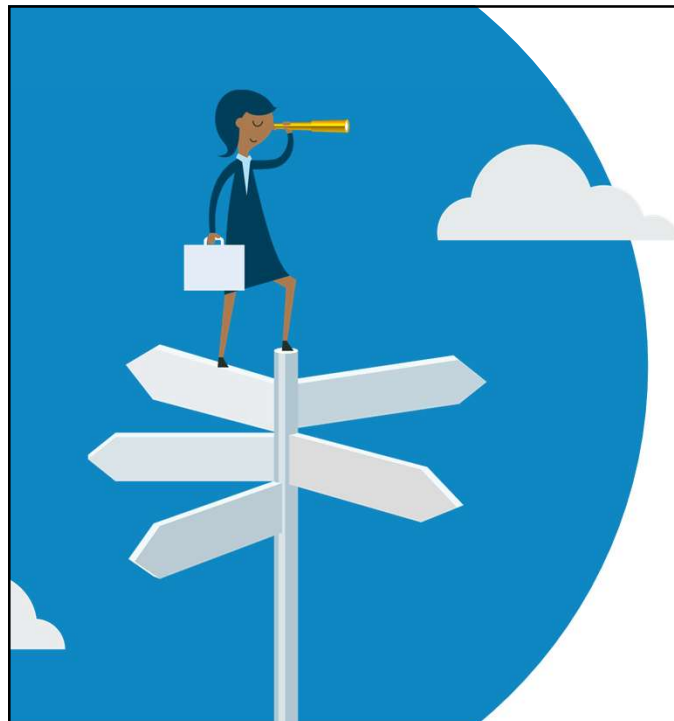
Sharing Leadership in the Nonprofit Sector

Mike Grogan

IntegralOrg, President and CEO



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Overview

- Setting the context of leadership in the nonprofit sector
- Sharing Leadership
 - Shared Leadership
 - Distributed Leadership
- Advantages and Cautions
- Steps to Consider
- Questions, thoughts and comments

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Enter in the Chat



What is ***one word*** that comes to mind when you think of **nonprofit leadership**?

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**Leadership is not a title;
it is a behavior.**

Robin Sharma

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Evolving Nature of Leadership

Defining "leadership" and what makes a good "leader" has, and will continue to, change over time.

How leadership is enacted depends on a myriad of factors including culture, personal and organizational traits, and the situation.



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Leadership Styles *Over the Centuries*

Great Man
Theory

Authoritarian
Leadership

Bureaucratic
Leadership

Relational
Leadership

Laissez Faire
Leadership

Servant
Leadership

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Some thoughts to consider...

Many of our governance and management processes and structures are dated and could be rethought to be more effective.

As our communities and demographics shift, traditional models of leadership and organizational design may not be sustainable.

Investment in leadership development at all levels of our organization is critical.



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“

Leaders today often feel they are expected to demonstrate the emotional intelligence of a human resources representative, the digital/data intelligence formerly associated with the IT department, and **everything in between**.

Despite the reality that each leader has their strengths and areas of interest, the **pressure** to master every aspect of leadership has **intensified**.

”

*Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning,
Time to Transform Report (2024)*

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The Mounting Pressure of Leadership

Senior leaders at mission-driven organizations are burning out at shocking rates and leaving roles because they don't feel supported – **62%** of respondents have **considered leaving** their organization in the past three years.

Organizations have reduced capacity to focus on strategic work, cannot be agile, innovative, and/or responsive to emerging needs, are more susceptible to financial and reputational risks, experience higher rates of board and staff turnover, and weakening of partnerships and relationships with donors, funders, and other partners.

On-Ramps, Sustaining and Retaining Leaders in the Social Sector, 2024

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Impact on Health

"A large proportion of senior leaders in this survey felt the impact of their role on their **physical (39%)** and **mental (29%)** health was **entirely negative**."

Please explain how your role has impacted your physical health in the past three years.

Considered stress to be a major factor

39%

Associated work with increased physical symptoms

38%

Said they struggle finding time to exercise

28%

Noted difficulties getting enough sleep

22%

On-Ramps, Sustaining and Retaining Senior Leaders in the Social Sector, 2024

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Compounding Impacts

“**Women** in the survey were also much more likely than men to report harmful impacts to their health. **BIPOC** [Black, Indigenous, Person of Color] women in particular were the most likely of all races and genders to mention entirely negative impacts to their physical health.”

On-Ramps, Sustaining and Retaining Leaders in the Social Sector, 2024

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Traditional Nonprofit Structure



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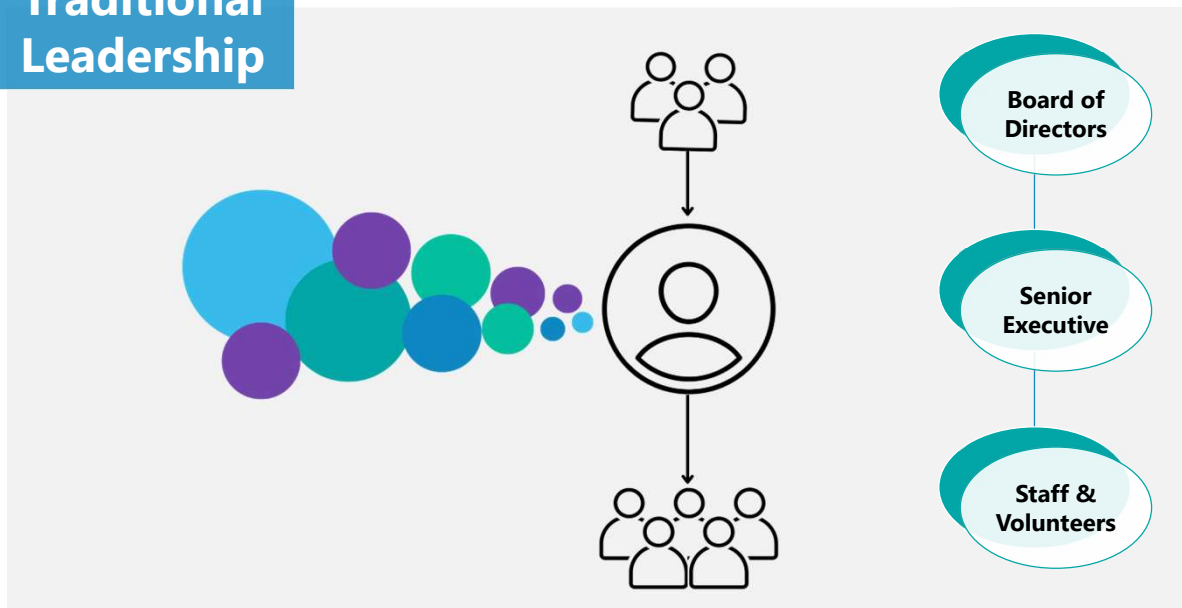
Boards are a unique and curious leadership structure.
 They have significant power, **but only as a collective**,
 since no individual board member can enact anything
 independently.

Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2021

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Traditional Leadership



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Sharing Leadership

Distributed Leadership: Emphasizes leadership **tasks and responsibilities** dispersed among many individuals.

Shared Leadership: Implies a leadership style where power may still be centralized, but **decisions are made collaboratively**.



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Team Building vs Sharing Leadership



- Working in a “team environment” is related to, but distinct from sharing leadership.
- Team building focuses on activities and behaviors to improve collaboration and cohesion within a group, often with a designated leader facilitating the process.
- Sharing leadership entails structural and authority changes where decision-making and responsibility are distributed.

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Distributed Leadership

Entry point is via the executive and management **tasks** which are distributed to several leaders.

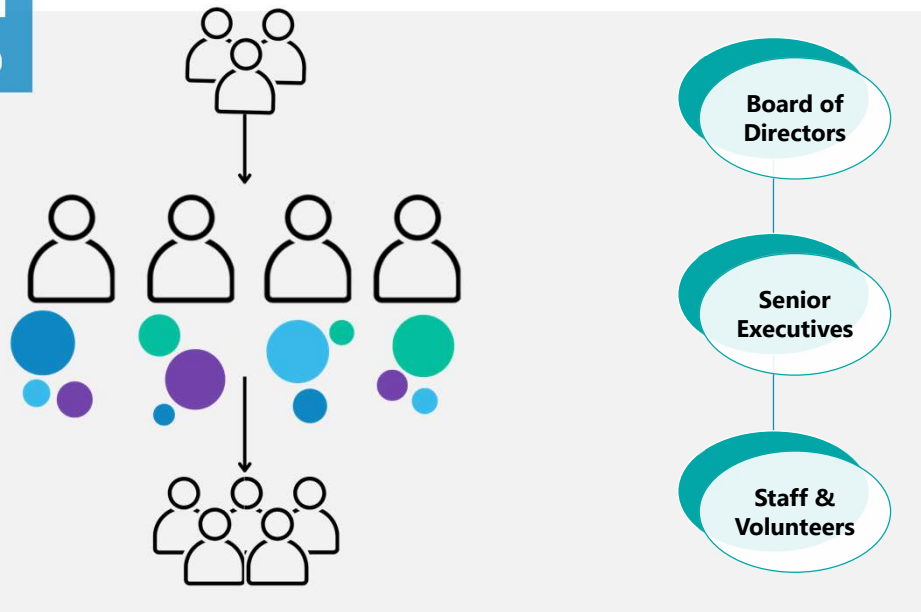
Functional expertise in a task area is the prime consideration for leadership along with ability to work collaboratively.

Coordination of duties is required but authority is shared amongst all team members.



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Distributed Leadership



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Distributed Leadership Examples

- Designing a structure where leadership roles are determined by functional areas such as Programs, Finance, Communications, etc.
- Structuring an organization where leadership roles are largely determined by program areas. E.g. Day Programs, Residential Programs, Counselling, etc.



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Shared Leadership

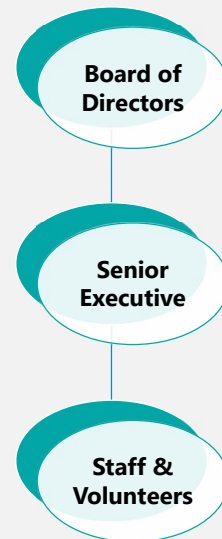
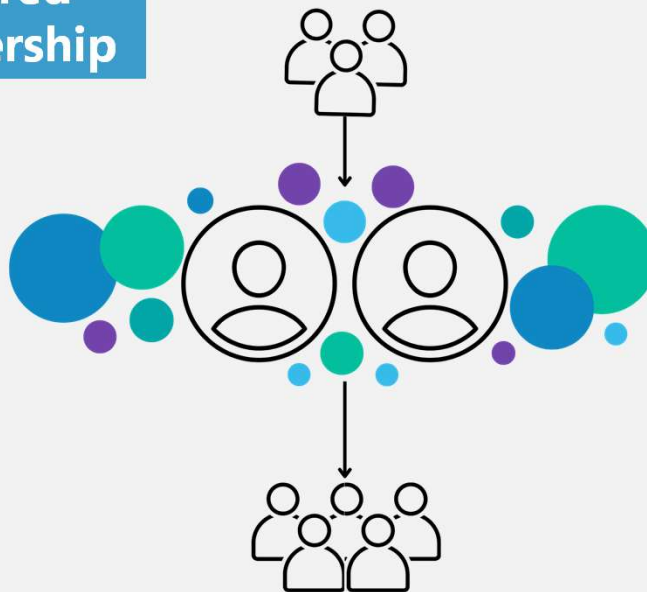
Starting point is **reshaping the singular role of leader** and splitting it with one or more other individuals.

Compatible and synergistic skills and styles is the key factor.



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Shared Leadership



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Shared Leadership Examples

- Permanent or Interim Co-Executive Directors.
- Shared Leadership with defined focus areas such as arts organizations with an Artistic Director and a Business Manager.
- Geographically separated organizations with a leader in each locale operating under a shared model.



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Advantages



- Reduced dependence and stress on a single leader.
- Increased diversity of experience and thought.
- Short & longer-term redundancy.
- Diversity of connecting points / style for staff.
- Better / more informed decision making.

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Cautions



- Clarity of roles, responsibilities need to be clear and constantly monitored.
- The pace of leadership may out pace the rest of the organization.
- Internal efforts (communication, decision making, accountabilities, performance management) need to be well thought out.
- Significant time needs to be invested in the leadership model as well as in leaders.

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Process Considerations



- Review and assess your goals, capacities and structure. A change in leadership style needs to fit in overall organizational strategy.
- Look at the board, staff and external readiness for change and put in place process and systems to support change.
- Carefully design and construct leadership teams, process and procedures. Reassess and refine often.

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A Few Closing Thoughts

- 2025 will potentially be a challenging year for the nonprofit sector with financing, workforce, and service delivery pressures.
- Undertaking an objective and informed assessment of all current (and expected) internal capacities, including leadership, may be a prudent move.
- Investment in people is critical.



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Questions?

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Elevated Leadership

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