Doing It All:

Nonprofit Governance & the Working Board

April 8, 2025

IntegralOrg

1

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

2

Your facilitator *for*

Doing It All:
Nonprofit Governance & the Working Board

Mike Grogan
President and CEO of IntegralOrg
mike@integralorg.ca

IntegralOrg

3

Overview

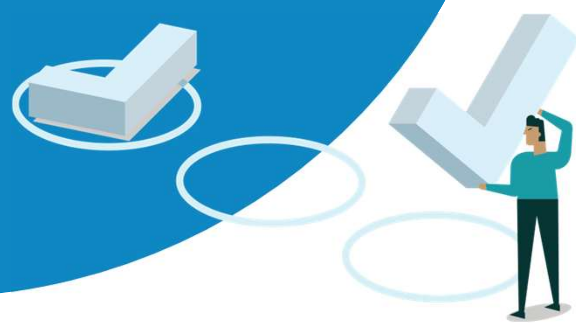
- Nonprofit landscape in Alberta
- Overview of working boards – strengths and challenges
- Insights for building impactful boards
- Resources and tools

4

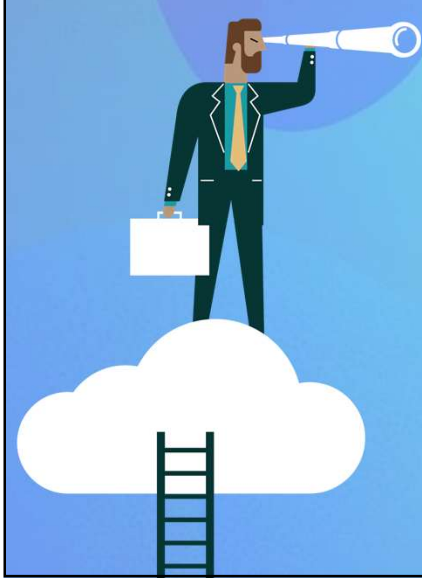
Poll:

What type of board do you have?

1. Working Board – no staff
2. Working Board – only administrative staff
3. Governing Board



5



> The board is responsible for all aspects of the organization, including overseeing its operations and holding management accountable for delivering on the mission of the organization.
>
> **CPAC, 2014**

6

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

7

A Look at the Sector

- There are over 27,000 nonprofits operating in Alberta with around 1,200 new groups incorporating every year.
- 57% of nonprofits have no paid staff and are entirely governed and operated by volunteers
- Approximately 80% of nonprofits have annual budgets of less than $250,000

8

Let's Discuss!

In the current model of nonprofit governance…

What works well?

Where does it fall short?

9

Balancing Theory and Reality

Governance theory and best practice

The structure, style, history, and culture of a board

10

A working board is a type of nonprofit board where members are actively involved in both governance and operational tasks. Unlike traditional governing boards that primarily focus on strategic oversight and policy-making, working boards take on a hands-on role in the day-to-day activities of the organization.

Referencing Governing Good & BoardSource

11

	Working Board	Governance Board
Governance	Board of Directors	Board of Directors
Management	Board of Directors and/or Executive Committee	Senior Executive
Operations	Volunteers, Admin Staff	Staff and Volunteers

12

	 Working Board	 Governance Board
Role	Involved in both governance and operational tasks	Focuses primarily on governance and strategic oversight
Responsibilities	Hands-on involvement in day-to-day activities	Policy-making, strategic planning, and oversight
Staffing	Often limited paid staff, relies on board directors	Usually has a full-time staff to handle operations
Decision-Making	Board directors make both strategic and operational decisions	Board focuses on strategic decisions, staff handles operations
Skills and Expertise	High levels of programmatic knowledge	Engagement focused on governance and oversight
Committees	May have fewer committees, more task forces	Structured committees for specific governance areas
Flexibility	Highly adaptive to changing needs	Can be more rigid in their structure

13

> Our perspective is that the working board is not a less sophisticated approach to governance structure. Rather, a working board requires a more thoughtfully constructed structure that relies upon diligent consistency in its implementation while maintaining entrepreneurial flexibility and responsiveness as the organization grows and/or adapts to its changing environment.

BoardSource, 2013

14

Misconceptions about Working Boards

- Working Boards Are Only for Small Nonprofits
- Board Members Should Only Focus on Governance
- Working Boards Are Temporary
- All Board Members Must Have Nonprofit Experience
- Working Boards Are Less Professional
- Working Boards Can't Handle Complex Issues

Source: Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2021

15

Benefits of Working Boards

- Increased Engagement and Commitment
- Diverse Skill Sets and Expertise
- Enhanced Organizational Capacity
- Cost-Effective
- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Improved Oversight and Accountability

Source: Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2021

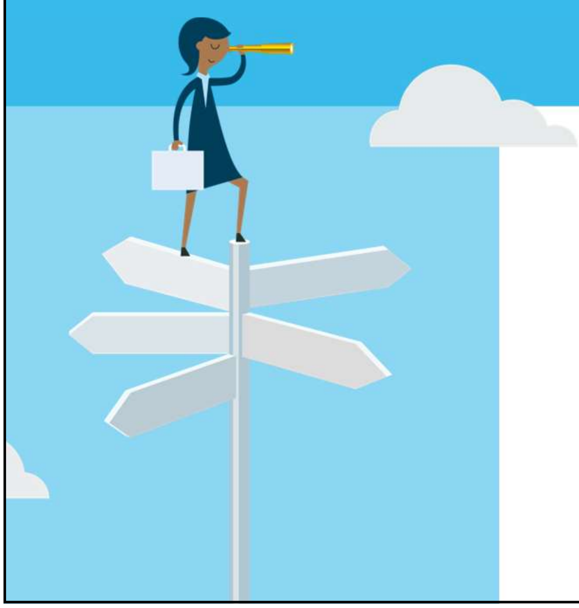
16

Challenges of Working Boards

- Time and Resource Constraints
- Balancing Governance and Operational Roles
- Maintaining Clear Role Definitions
- Effective Communication
- Recruitment and Retention

Source: Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2021

17



Director Duties

Each individual director on the board has a fiduciary duty to the organization, which is comprised of two main duties:

Duty of care — to act with the competence and diligence that a reasonably prudent person with similar knowledge and expertise would exercise in comparable circumstances.

Duty of loyalty — to act honestly and in good faith in the best interests of the organization.

Source: CPAC, 2014

18

Effective Boards…

- Understand and practice **good governance**
- Focus the **long-term sustainability** of the organization
- Are clear about the relationship between the governance and programmatic aspects of the organization.
- Ensure **policies** are set, kept up-to-date and are effective
- Attend to their own continuity through **recruiting** and **developing new board members**
- Are **ambassadors** for the organization
- Focus on **whole organization**
- Work together as a whole - **Speak with one voice**

19

Principles of Governance

Governance as Leadership

20

Governance incorporates **three** interconnected modes of responsibility:

1. **Fiduciary:** stewardship of the organization's assets.
2. **Strategic:** creating strategic partnerships with management regarding the future of the organization.
3. **Generative:** focusing the board and staff on sense-making for the future of the organization and exploring new directions.

21

Principles of Governance

Governance is a Team Activity

22

> Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.
>
> **Andrew Carnegie**

23

People

- **Be thoughtful & intentional** regarding composition of the board.
- **Equip new board** members with fundamentals of board governance.
- **Orient & align board members' skills and interests** with organization's governance & their own interests.
- **Structure** work of the board (size of the board, committees, meeting frequency & schedule, term limits, etc.) to allow for meaningful participation

Source: Perry, 2016, Board Source, 2020

24

Process

- Create space for **meaningful participation** among members. Encourage open debate and questioning, and an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.
- Be clear about **decision making processes**. The board should have a set, shared view of the process and which decisions each should make.
- Create expectations regarding the **type**, **level** and **timing** of the **information** needed by the board in order to govern effectively.

Source: Perry, 2016, Board Source, 2020

25

Performance

- Set **clear expectations** for board members for individual and group participation.
- **Stay focused** on issues of governance and what's best for the organization alongside of the programmatic and administrative work.
- Encourage social time to create closer relationships among board members to **engender trust** and a sense of team.

Source: Perry, 2016, Board Source, 2020

26

Nonprofit Evolution Lab

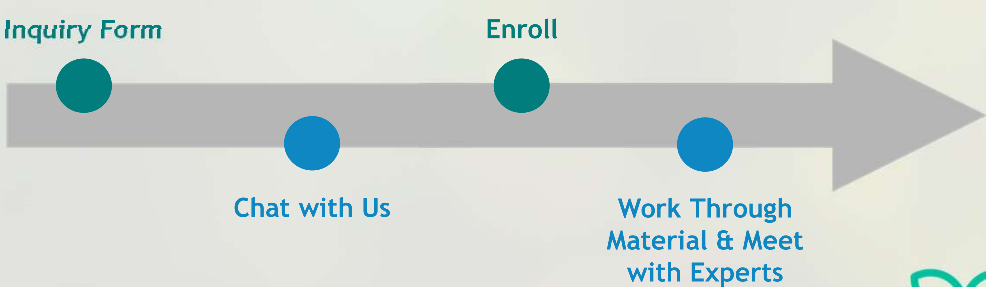
Self-paced Learning
Work through the elements of nonprofit development at your own pace

Organizational Development Plan
Get clear on your priorities and next steps

Expert Coaching
Receiving coaching from subject matter experts to ensure you are on the right track

27

Enrolment Process



28

Questions?

29

Go-to governance resources for non-profits:

Imagine Canada Standards Program Handbook: The Governance section contains shared standards for charities and nonprofits in board leadership, board oversight, and governance policies and processes.

The Board Development Program: Alberta-based resources for nonprofit governance.

Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada: A wide range of high quality and up-to-date resources on nonprofit finance, governance, and human resources.

BoardSource: BoardSource provides leaders with an extensive range of tools, resources, and research data to increase board effectiveness and strengthen organizational impact.

30

Thank you for attending!

At IntegralOrg, we offer workshops across Alberta in governance, legal compliance, financial management, change management, and risk management.
Register at integralorg.ca

Please complete our evaluation survey!
Your feedback will inform the delivery of our future training opportunities!

31

When you have questions, IntegralOrg has services to help

A virtual or phone conversation
or
A clinic, a 1-hour problem-solving session between IntegralOrg subject matter experts and your team.

You might have questions about

- Attaining charitable status
- Strategic planning
- Policies & bylaws (writing and review)
- Social enterprise legal structures
- Governance and board development

These services are free of charge!
Find out more at *integralorg.ca/who-we-work-with/clinics/*

32

IntegralOrg

Consultations | Workshops | Toolkits | Organizational Development Projects

Go-to problem solver for your nonprofit

- Governance
- Board Development
- Strategic Planning
- Risk Management
- Legal Compliance

www.integralorg.ca admin@integralorg.ca (403) 910-7279

33

Disclaimer

IntegralOrg

- All information or advice provided as part of this presentation is intended to be general in nature and you should not rely on it in connection with the making of any decision.
- IntegralOrg tries to ensure that all information provided is correct at the time of the presentation but does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of such information.
- All content, information and advice is provided on an "as is" basis and IntegralOrg hereby expressly disclaims all liability for any action you may take as a result of relying on such content, information or advice or for any loss or damage suffered by you as a result of you taking this action.
- Neither IntegralOrg nor any of its employees or agents shall be liable for any damages either direct, indirect, special, consequential, punitive or other damages (including but not limited to financial losses, loss of data, loss of profits, loss of business, and business interruption) arising out of the use of the content, information or advice provided herein.

34