1. GOVERNANCE

The objective of this section is to assess the clarity of the organization's motivation, purpose, and stability by reviewing its guiding principles, structure, and oversight mechanisms.

► **Sub-Sections under Governance:**
  1.1   Vision, Mission and Values
  1.2   Legal Status
  1.3   Governing or Advisory Board
  1.4   Leadership and Succession Plan

► **Resources you may wish to refer to in this section:**

  -   Vision, mission, and/or values statements;

  -   By-laws or articles of incorporation;

  -   Terms of reference for board members;

  -   Board meeting minutes;

  -   Succession plan;

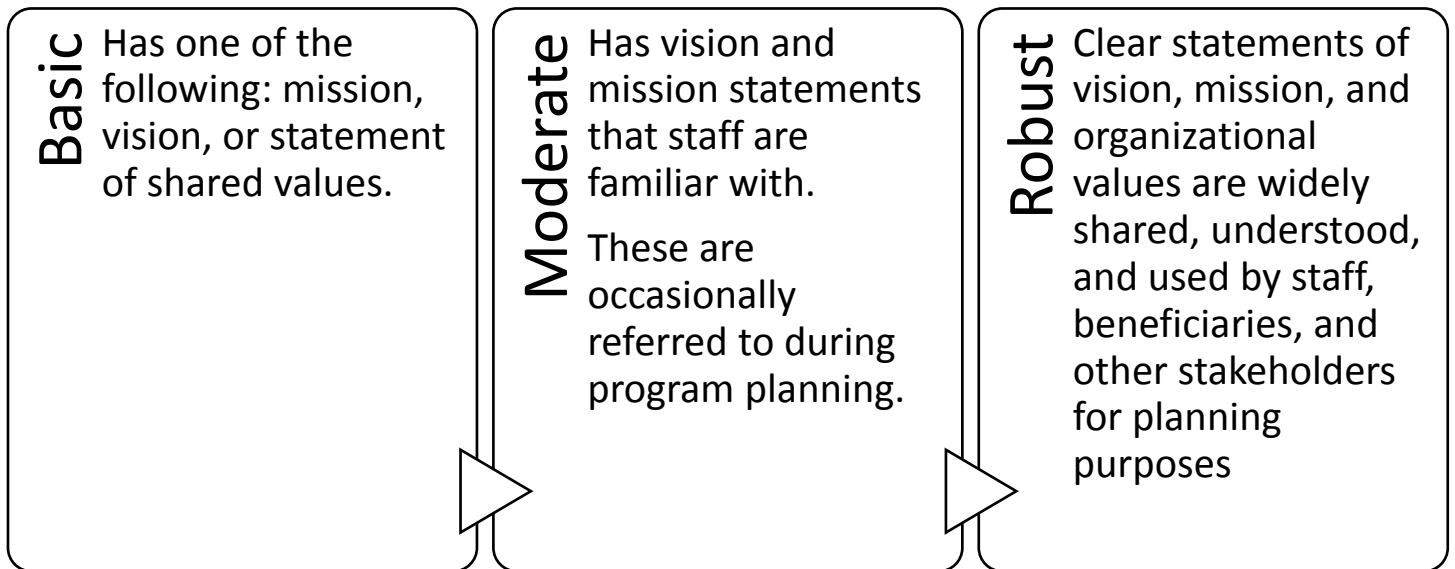 -   Certificate of legal registration.

1.1 Vision, Mission, and Values

Importance: Organizations that have articulated and shared what drives them and what they are working towards create a sense of shared ownership and common commitment to activities.

➢ **Discuss some or all of the following questions:**
- ❑ Does the organization have a vision statement, mission statement, and statement of values?
- ❑ Was the community involved in the development of the vision or mission statement(s)?
- ❑ Are the vision and mission used to set priorities? If so, please describe how.
- ❑ Are these statements posted openly in the office or somewhere that staff and visitors can see?
- ❑ Are these statement(s) used in human resource materials (i.e., staff handbooks, orientation materials, job descriptions, etc.), organizational brochures, reports, and proposals?
- ❑ Does the organization regularly review the vision and mission statements (for example, in conjunction with strategic and/or operational planning)?
- ❑ Does the organization regularly assess whether programming is in line with the overall mission?

➢ **Come to consensus: Where does the organization fall on this spectrum?**

Basic Has one of the following: mission, vision, or statement of shared values.	**Moderate** Has vision and mission statements that staff are familiar with. These are occasionally referred to during program planning.	**Robust** Clear statements of vision, mission, and organizational values are widely shared, understood, and used by staff, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders for planning purposes

Indicate where you approximate your organization to be in this category on a scale of 1 to 5.

Basic		Moderate		Robust	N/A
1	2	3	4	5	

Discussion Notes/Rationale for rating.

On the above scale of 1 – 5, where would you like to see your organization in 12 months? _____
Brainstorm briefly: how could the organization get to where it wants to be?
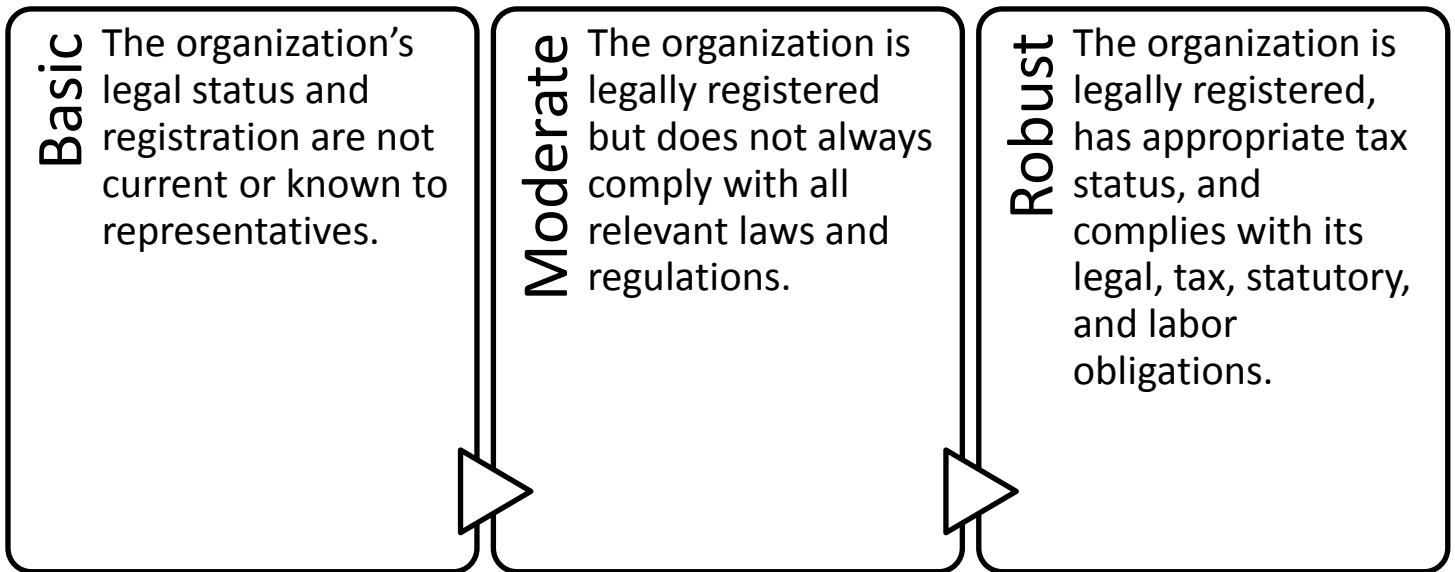
1.2 Legal Status

> **Importance:** Legal registration and careful adherence to relevant tax and labor laws enable an organization to gain recognition, perform functions like holding a bank account, implement programs accountably, and allow individuals to 'write off' donations to the organization in their taxes.

➢ **Discuss some or all of the following questions:**
- ❑ Is the backbone organization or coalition legally registered and is the documentation of current legal registration readily available (or posted) in the office and online?
- ❑ Are labor laws adhered to? Is this documented in human resource policies?
- ❑ Does the organization comply with the tax codes for both itself and the staff?
- ❑ Does the organization comply with annual statutory requirements, such as audits and other reporting?
- ❑ Does the board review and approve the audit and other statutory reports?

➢ **Come to consensus: Where does the organization fall on this spectrum?**

Basic	Moderate	Robust
The organization's legal status and registration are not current or known to representatives.	The organization is legally registered but does not always comply with all relevant laws and regulations.	The organization is legally registered, has appropriate tax status, and complies with its legal, tax, statutory, and labor obligations.

Indicate where you approximate your organization to be in this category on a scale of 1 to 5.

Basic		Moderate		Robust	N/A
1	2	3	4	5	

Discussion Notes/Rationale for rating.

On the above scale of 1 – 5, where would you like to see your organization in 12 months? _____
Brainstorm briefly: how could the organization get to where it wants to be?
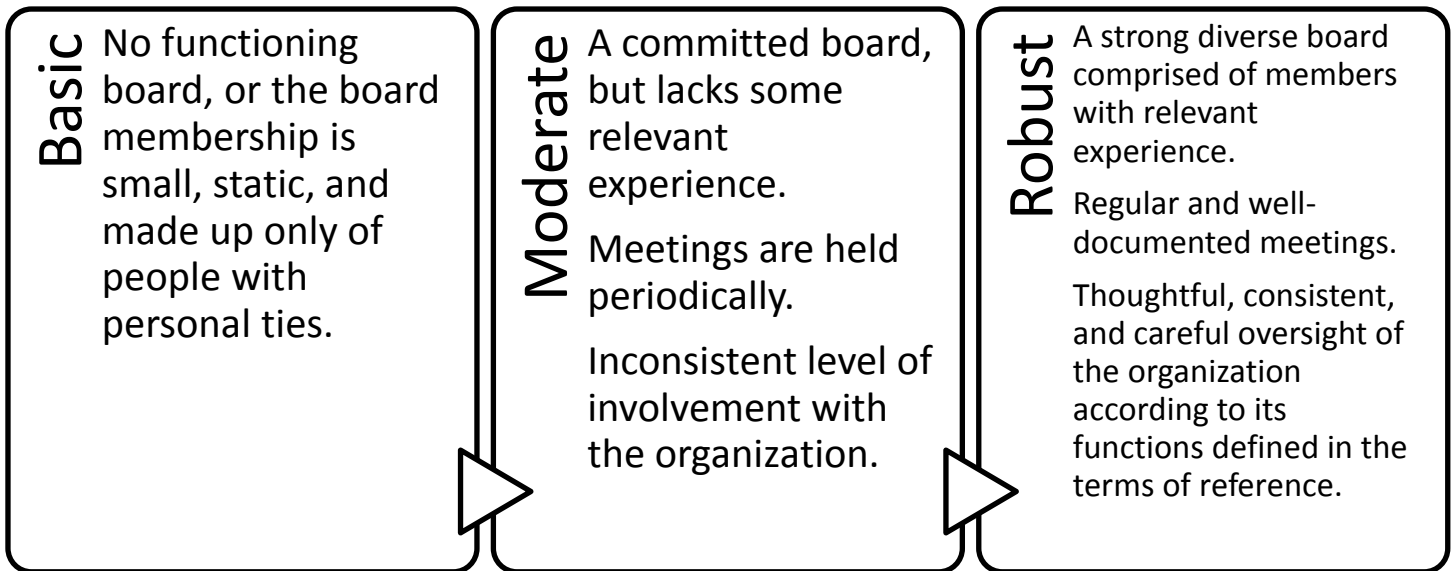
1.3 Governing or Advisory Board

Importance: Governing or advisory boards with members who are committed to the organization bring relevant knowledge and experience, provide guidance, support, and oversight to the organization's staff and operations.

➢ **Discuss some or all of the following questions:**
- ❑ Does the board have clearly defined terms of reference (TOR) that detail its primary duties?
- ❑ Are board roles clearly differentiated from the executive roles?
- ❑ Are there clear and documented criteria for becoming a board member?
- ❑ Are there term limits and a system for electing or approving board members?
- ❑ Does the board meet regularly and document its decisions with minutes?
- ❑ How are board members involved in strategic planning, resource mobilization, and developing and approving organizational policies and budget and annual financial statements?
- ❑ Does the board include representation from people who have firsthand experience with food insecurity from your community?
- ❑ Does your board include individuals who represent a diverse set of voices?
- ❑ If community liaisons are a part of board, do they have decision making power? Are they compensated for their time?

➢ **Come to consensus: Where does the organization fall on this spectrum?**

Basic	Moderate	Robust
No functioning board, or the board membership is small, static, and made up only of people with personal ties.	A committed board, but lacks some relevant experience. Meetings are held periodically. Inconsistent level of involvement with the organization.	A strong diverse board comprised of members with relevant experience. Regular and well-documented meetings. Thoughtful, consistent, and careful oversight of the organization according to its functions defined in the terms of reference.

Indicate where you approximate your organization to be in this category on a scale of 1 to 5.

Basic		Moderate		Robust	N/A
1	2	3	4	5	

Discussion Notes/Rationale for rating.

On the above scale of 1 – 5, where would you like to see your organization in 12 months? _____
Brainstorm briefly: how could the organization get to where it wants to be?
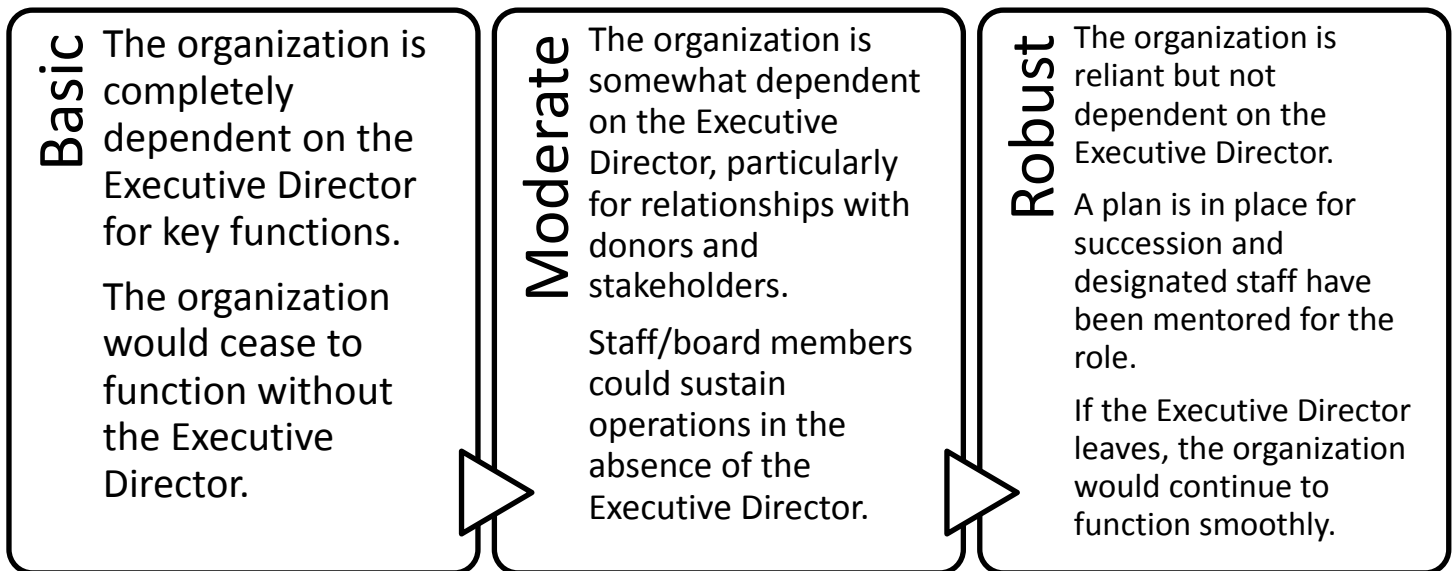
1.4 Leadership and Succession Plan

> **Importance:** Over-reliance on a single person, such as the executive director (ED) or founder puts an organization at risk of failing in the absence of that person.

➢ **Discuss some or all of the following questions:**
   - ❑ Is there a deputy or other staff/board member who can fulfill the duties of the ED if he or she is absent for short or long periods?
   - ❑ Does the organization support capacity-building to ensure that others are able to take on or assist with the key functions of the organization's leadership (fund-raising, operations, and program quality)?
   - ❑ Is there a documented succession plan for the ED?
   - ❑ Do people other than the ED have contacts and relationships with key donors and stakeholders?

➢ **Come to consensus: Where does the organization fall on this spectrum?**

Basic The organization is completely dependent on the Executive Director for key functions.

The organization would cease to function without the Executive Director.

Moderate The organization is somewhat dependent on the Executive Director, particularly for relationships with donors and stakeholders.

Staff/board members could sustain operations in the absence of the Executive Director.

Robust The organization is reliant but not dependent on the Executive Director.

A plan is in place for succession and designated staff have been mentored for the role.

If the Executive Director leaves, the organization would continue to function smoothly.

Indicate where you approximate your organization to be in this category on a scale of 1 to 5.

Basic		Moderate		Robust	N/A
1	2	3	4	5	

Discussion Notes/Rationale for rating.

On the above scale of 1 – 5, where would you like to see your organization in 12 months? _____
Brainstorm briefly: how could the organization get to where it wants to be?

Helpful Resources: Governance

- California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, [Governance and operations toolkit](#)
  This toolkit includes guidance on creating a governing or advisory board, creating board meeting agendas, and evaluating a board as well as creating a leadership structure with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

- Community Tool Box: [Proclaiming Your Dream: Developing Vision and Mission Statements](#)
  This chapter details the what, why, and how to develop an effective vision and mission statements that effectively communicates the work of your organization or effort.

- Cullinane Law Group, [How to Set Up a Non Profit with 501(c)(3) Status](#)
  This infographic offers a detailed breakdown of the process of establishing your organization as a 501c3.

- [Board development toolkit, Mississippi Center for Nonprofits](#)
  This toolkit lays out best practices for forming a board, provides useful templates for creating board policies, and resources on succession planning.