

I. 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:**

- I.1 Vision, Mission and Values
- I.2 Legal Status
- I.3 Governing or Advisory Board
- I.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.

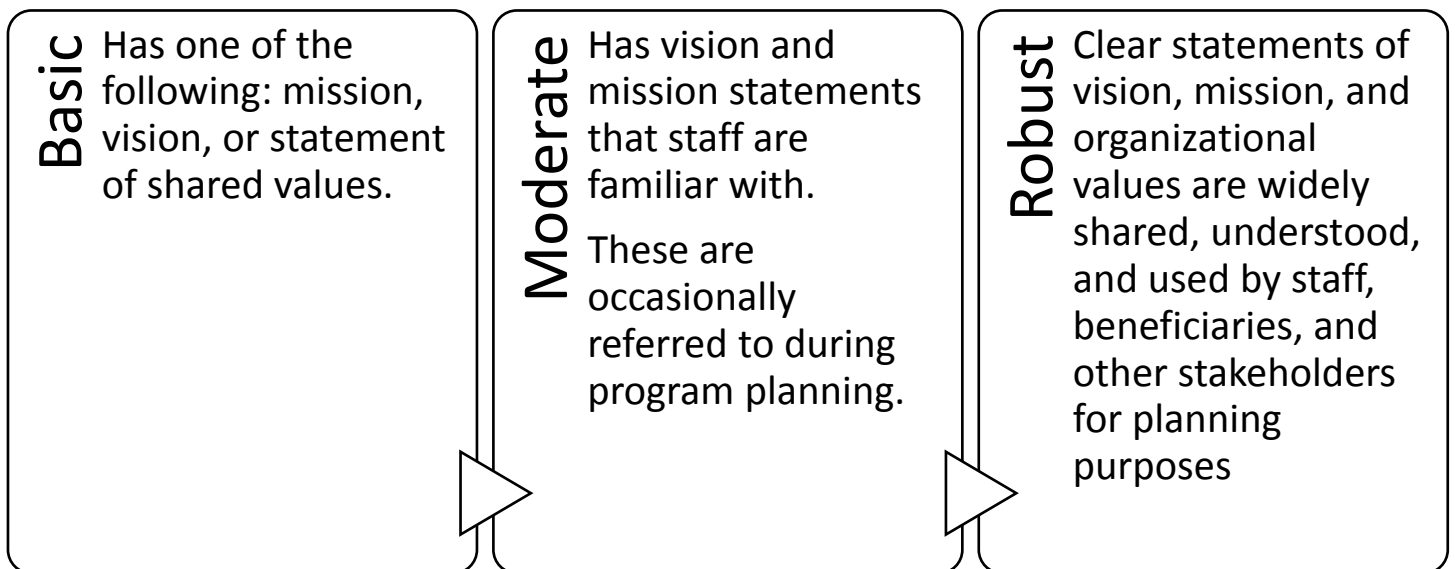
I.1 Vision, Mission, and Values

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?**



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?

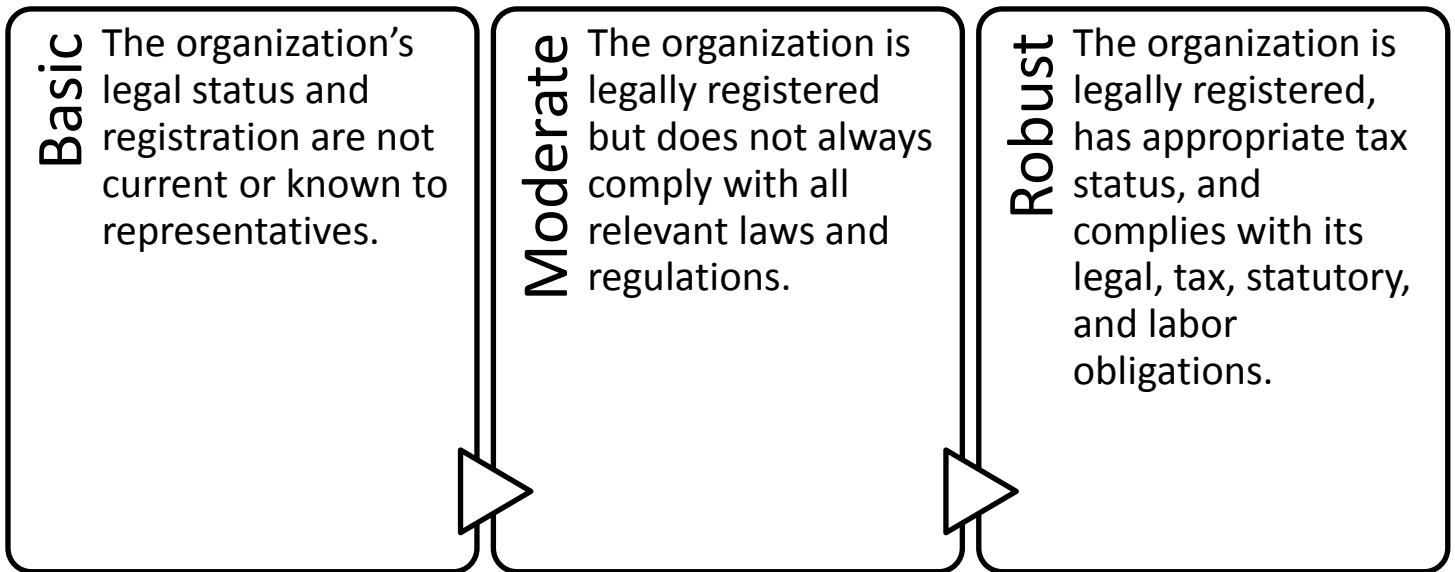
I.2 Legal Status

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?

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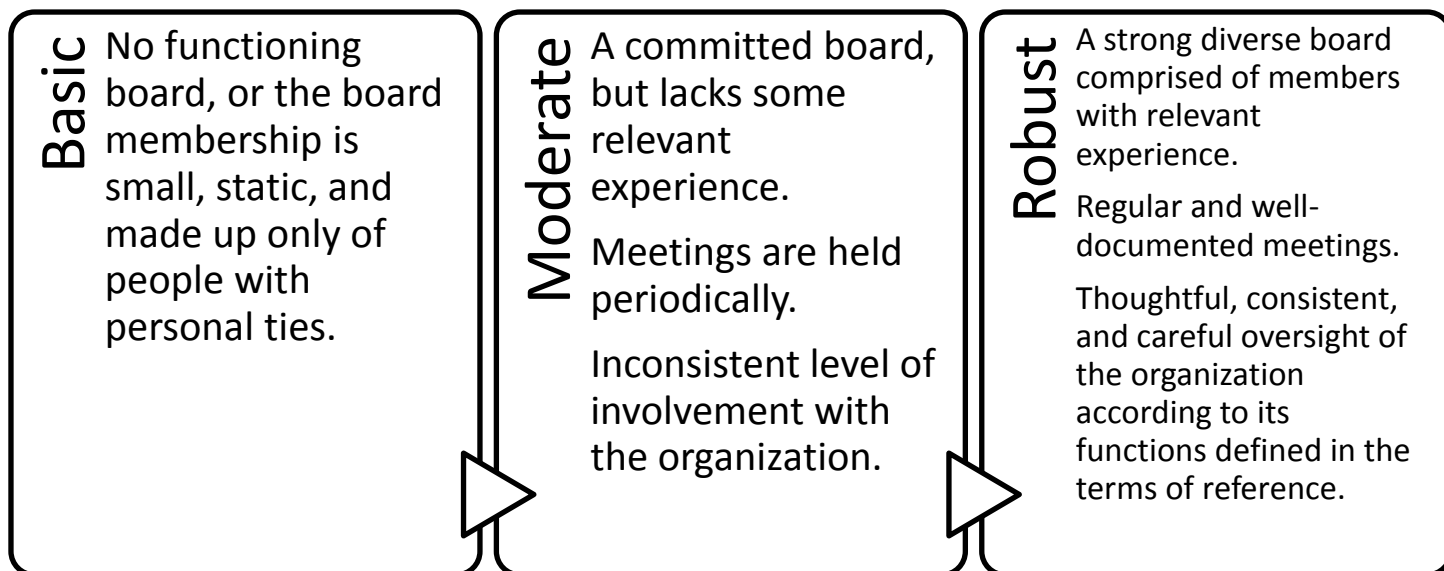
I.3 Governing or Advisory Board

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?**



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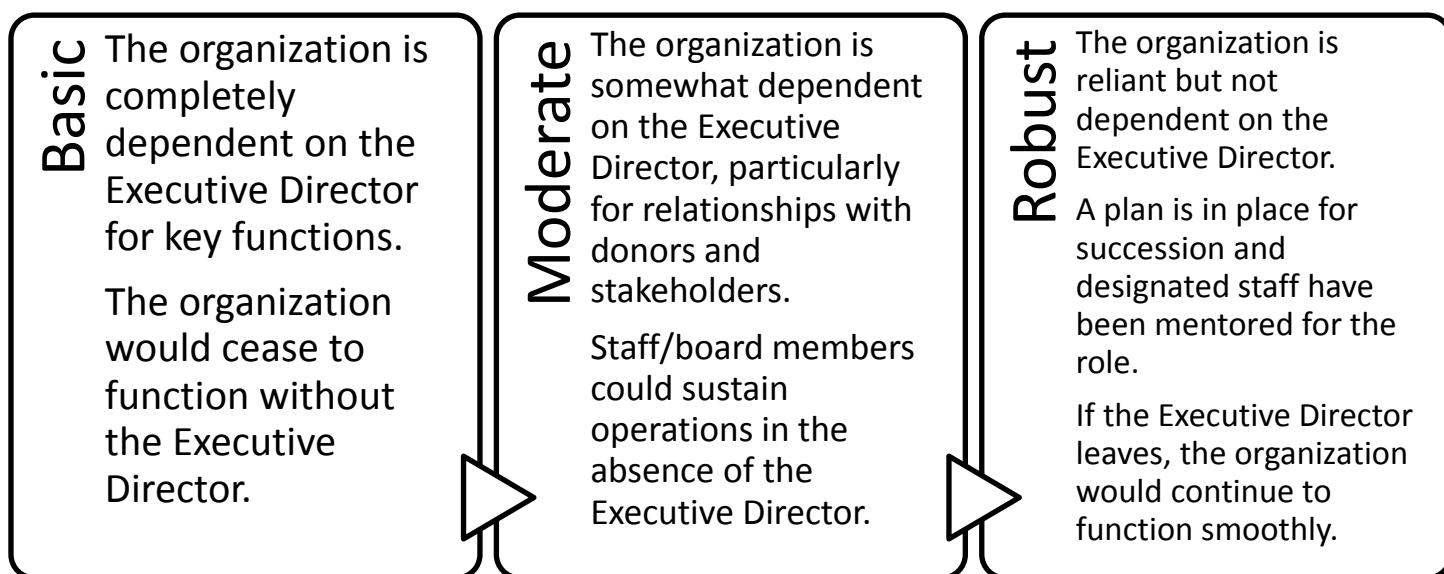
I.4 Leadership and Succession Plan

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?**



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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.