# 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. Vision, Mission and Values
  2. Legal Status
  3. Governing or Advisory Board
  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?

**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?

**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?

**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?

**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](https://www.camft.org/images/PDFs/chapters/Governance_and_Operations_Toolkit.pdf)   
  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](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/strategic-planning/vision-mission-statements/main)

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](https://cullinanelaw.com/how-to-set-up-a-non-profit-with-501c3-status/) This infographic offers a detailed breakdown of the process of establishing your organization as a 501c3.
* [Board development toolkit, Mississippi Center for Nonprofits](http://msnonprofits.org/images/pdf/Board_Development_Toolkit.pdf)  
  This toolkit lays out best practices for forming a board, provides useful templates for creating board policies, and resources on succession planning.