

# EMPOWERING BOARDS

# REIMAGINING OUR WORLD





# EXCELLENCE IN BOARD GOVERNANCE... TOWARD A MORE HOPEFUL FUTURE

THRIVING BUSINESSES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMMUNITIES

**SOCIAL EQUITY, JUSTICE, AND A BETTER WORLD**

WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE GREATER GOOD


**WELLBEING OF HUMANITY**

Such are ideals we embrace and desire for our world—in our local settings and globally. Such are commitments each of us must honor.

We have entrusted the health of our world and communities to organizations of all types—governments, corporations, and nonprofits.

**Our world is in good hands** only when every organization we build, propelled by visions of service, contribution, and legacy, is led with clarity of purpose, a determination to create lasting results, deep loyalty to fundamental values, and an unwavering dedication to the people for whose benefit it exists.

In essence, organizational leadership refers first and foremost to governing effectively, as a critical precursor to managing well.



An organization's ultimate success depends on how well it is governed, the responsibility for which lies squarely with its board.

A board must therefore direct an organization with focus and intent, and protect its health and development in the face of ever-increasing complexity and fast-paced change—in order to ensure ongoing responsiveness to its larger community.

In this context, board governance requires our focus and attention. Yet, insufficient resources have been invested in scholarship and efforts to examine and understand effective governance as a distinct discipline.

*Govern for Impact is rising to meet that challenge.*

**We have all heard stories of organizations that faltered, missed serious opportunities for growth or impact, or caused irreparable harm.**



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Consider a community devastated by a weather event for which the city could have been better prepared.



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Consider injury or loss of human life caused by deceitful corporate practices that could have been prevented.



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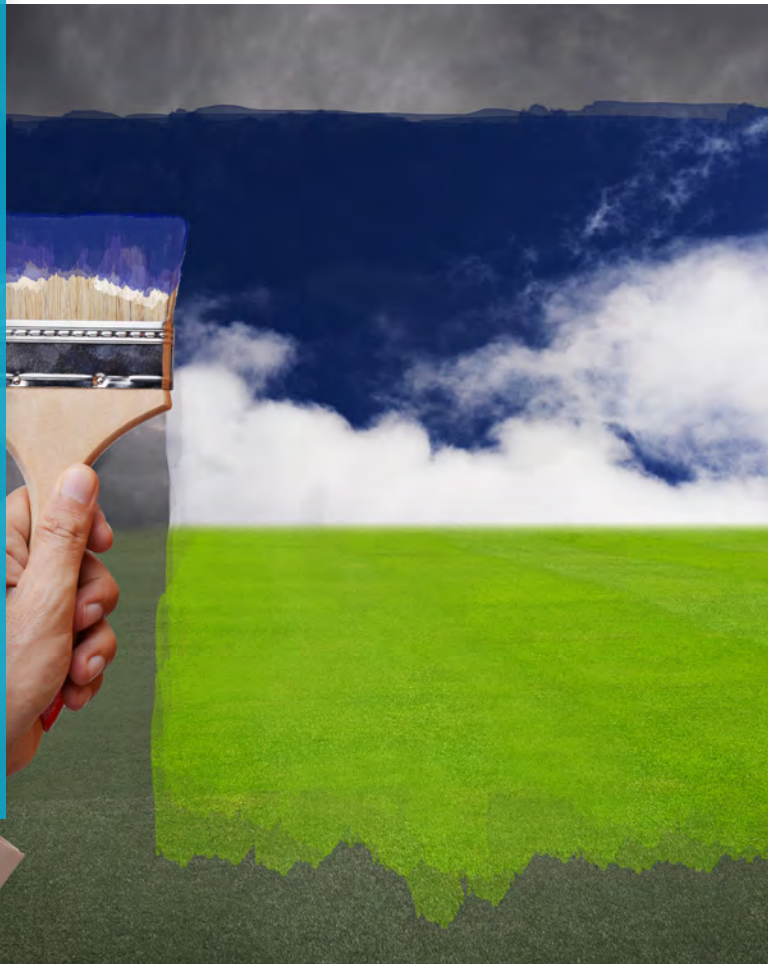
Consider families in prolonged distress that could have found relief sooner had nonprofit funds not been misused.

**Who is responsible for these injustices or tragedies?**

**Is it the mayor, the CEO, or the Executive Director? Is it the community or the shareholders?**

**Or does the responsibility land firmly with the governing boards that must hold these executives accountable?**

Now imagine with us a city council or a business or nonprofit board, as a matter of practice, taking full responsibility for the organization it governs—upholding core values, serving with transparency, understanding the greater context, asking the right questions, listening to constituents or stakeholders, empowering organizational leaders, and consistently holding them accountable to the highest standard...



## COULD SUCH UNACCEPTABLE OUTCOMES BE AVOIDED OR MINIMIZED?

## COULD FUTURE FAILURES OR TRAGEDIES BE PREVENTED?

Organizational governance is an obligation that has far reaching moral, legal, financial, cultural, and human consequences.

We expect boards to act with integrity and prudence on behalf of their stakeholders and constituents to whom they are ultimately accountable. Whether elected, selected, or appointed, must not all boards take such obligations most seriously?

**Organizations of all types** exist solely to anticipate or respond to community needs. By extension, each board's *raison d'être* is to direct and protect its organization, while serving as the integral bridge between its organization and the community itself.

# IMAGINE HOW EFFECTIVELY BOARDS WOULD SERVE THEIR ORGANIZATIONS, THEIR CONSTITUENTS, AND THE GREATER GOOD WHEN THEY...



- 🌐 **Listen closely** and respond to their communities and constituents.
- 🌐 **Speak in a unified voice** by directing policy according to a set of clear principles.
- 🌐 **Delegate judiciously** and maintain vigilant oversight, while empowering CEO innovation.
- 🌐 **Establish clarity** of roles and seamlessly coordinate their responsibilities with those of the organization.
- 🌐 **Ensure continuous learning**, mind their own performance, and hold themselves to higher standards.
- 🌐 **Stay attuned** to external conditions, adapting to change and growing complexity.



# WHAT SORT OF WORLD MIGHT WE BECOME IF BOARDS OF ORGANIZATIONS OF ALL TYPES GOVERNED WITH SUCH EXCELLENCE



Building and sustaining highly functioning boards is a holistic discipline, separate and apart from the executive function. When both a board and its executive pull in the same direction with strong clarity about their distinct and mutually dependent roles, there occurs a synergy that propels a nonprofit or business or government entity to thrive, strengthening its impact on the people and communities it serves.

At *Govern for Impact*, not only do we imagine such a future, we diligently and deliberately work toward it—with devotion, passion, and know-how. Our work and vision for impact has been inspired by the Policy Governance® system of governing.

We invite you to engage with us. The sole purpose of *Govern for Impact* is to help advance this reality.

We are a dedicated group of thinkers, practitioners, and consultants. Together, we are stepping up our efforts to address the widening gap between what is and what could be.



## We invite you to join hands, hearts, and minds with us.

We strongly believe that every organization, through principled board and executive leadership, guided by a moral imperative, has the capacity to become ever more **responsive, agile, and resilient** and, in the process, to change **the world for the better**.

When they uphold an integrated set of principles within a sound framework, we have seen boards lead with greater clarity of purpose and focus on the future. Boards that have lasting impact behave as unified bodies, engage in meaningful discourse, placing the needs of the greater community (referred to as moral owners) first, anticipating and leading change on behalf of that community, and ensuring proper stewardship of resources—human, natural, and/or financial.



We envision a world in which boards operate responsibly, ethically, and with a clear commitment to valued results and the greater good.

We envision boards that govern risk judiciously and, by properly overseeing authority delegated to their executives, enable optimal organizational performance, innovation, and resilience.

When boards operate in this fashion, organizations are compelled to focus on their higher purpose, harnessing their scarce resources into greater value to meet the needs of constituents—be they customers, citizens, or communities. And when all organizations operate at this high level of consciousness and integrity, our world will be so much better for it.

Our cities become vibrant places of civic engagement, where we together take stock of our present and create a shared future.

There will be renewed trust in our businesses, which will seize opportunities for profitability while achieving positive impact and remaining responsible to their customers and communities, locally and globally.

Our societies will be well served by nonprofits and NGO's whose passion for social causes is only matched by the quality of results they achieve and the lives they touch.

**ENVISION WITH US.**

By working with and on behalf of principled boards devoted to such excellence, *Govern for Impact* is strategically positioned and prepared to contribute to these outcomes.

*Govern for Impact* is here for all of us, dedicated to making a significant difference for all organizations, through all communities, and across the whole world.

## THOSE WHO CONNECT WITH GOVERN FOR IMPACT WILL FIND

- **Meaningful connections with others,**
- **Thoughtful exploration of governance excellence, and**
- **Rich resources to advance effectiveness in governance... in ways that integrate theory and practice.**

Today, we emerge stronger and more vibrant, building on 20 years of advancing excellence in governance. We are passionate about our work, which will be even richer in academic rigor and practical know-how, deeply engaging a growing community of practitioners, thinkers, and scholars.

*Govern for Impact* will leverage significant resources invested over the years toward effectively creating networks of like-minded individuals and organizations and significantly contributing to the development of valuable learning opportunities and resources.



*Govern for Impact* is an advocacy movement, a learning community, and a center for research. We are each of these and all of them, driven by an ambitious vision for a world and a future for which we are all called upon to be good stewards.

**We study and examine models and outcomes of effective governance, built on**

- (a) robust theoretical frameworks, fundamental values of excellence, and particular attention to stakeholders and constituents;
- (b) principles of integrity and accountability; and
- (c) an integrated set of sound policies.

**We advocate for effective governance by**

- (a) sharing what is learned through conferences, forums, and online programs; and
- (b) developing a cadre of dedicated practitioners who fully understand the depth of such principles, the impact of such policies, and how to apply them effectively.

**We develop and disseminate dynamic** learning platforms to facilitate vigorous, intellectual discourse, and publications.

We are launching an ambitious three-year “1.5 million USD” engagement campaign to build out and integrate our research, learning, and advocacy initiatives for governance excellence.

## WE WILL LAUNCH IN OUR NEXT PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT A SERIES OF INTERCONNECTED INITIATIVES. WITH YOUR SUPPORT, WE WILL:

-  **Identify and disseminate** Evidence-based Characteristics of Excellence in Governance, as informed by action research of “real” organizations.
-  **Publish** a series of whitepapers on critical governance concepts and issues, enriched by our community’s deepest expertise to refine and advance a principled governance-based approach.
-  **Develop, curate, and deploy** a searchable, interactive online library of multimedia resources to further inform the learning and practice of principled, owner-accountable board governance.
-  **Establish and implement** advanced governance certification program(s) and other accessible learning and peer-support opportunities of value.
-  **Galvanize** a growing community of researchers, practitioners, and advocates, working together to expand governance excellence throughout the world.
-  **Lead and stimulate** global conversations about how effective board governance will address challenges facing corporations, governments, nonprofits, and the world.

We want to place principled, owner-accountable board governance  
at the core, where it belongs, as a professional discipline,  
worthy of the trust placed upon it by our world.

## HELP US MAKE HEADWAY TOWARD OUR VISION.

We need your **support, contribution,** and **engagement**  
at all levels—financial, intellectual, and moral.  
We need your voice and your presence.

Take part in our campaign.  
Engage your boards in this work.  
Help fund our initiatives.

## JOIN US.

So we can together achieve the objectives we all share...for the sake of  
our children's future, for the sake of our planet, for the sake of humanity.

Through the efforts of Govern for Impact  
boards of all types will be inspired to govern  
with excellence, helping to create thriving  
organizations, businesses, and communities in  
service to our common humanity.







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Inspired by and developed  
from the **International Policy  
Governance Association**