

# The **14** Attributes Of a Thriving Nonprofit

 **People**

 **Money**

 **Programs**

 **Marketing**

 **Strategy**

	MESSY	GROWING	HEALTHY	THRIVING
<b>BOARD DIVERSITY</b>	Board has no diversity of skills and does not understand how critical diversity is to a high functioning board. Board members are part of the same networks.	Ad hoc recruitment, highly reactive. Sees diversity recruitment as "boxes to be checked". Little cultural awareness.	Developed a composition matrix for the ideal board. Seeks insights that diverse perspectives and life experience brings. Working intentionally on inclusion and belonging.	Board has demonstrated its commitment to diversity in its recruitment strategy and has engaged in DEI work and ongoing training. Power is shared. Individual members respect the full value of the skills and attributes brought by diverse members.
<b>BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	Board responsibilities are not defined. No orientation or onboarding process.	Primitive orientation process. Either no committees or committees without goals/clear charge.	Regular discussions regarding the role of the board. Onboarding process has been revised and sets up new board members for success. New board members are assigned a mentor.	Board is clear about its responsibilities and engages in ongoing enrichment and training. Board understands that it has a very important job to do – fiduciary and governance. Board social gatherings are intentionally inclusive.
<b>LEADER RELATIONS</b>	The board chair and ED actively sabotage each other. Behind closed doors, micro-management, passive aggression. No trust or thought partnership between board chair and ED.	ED feels compelled to do everything on their own and brings "completed" products to the board. Board chair is happy to let the ED do it all. Hard to tell who runs the meetings.	Clear points of synergy around some aspects (e.g. board recruitment, fundraising, board development, creating a sense of belonging with board and staff). Discussions beginning about DEI.	High functioning partnership where board and staff each know their roles and regularly partner when appropriate. Both model inclusion, foster belonging, and are committed to ongoing DEI training.
<b>LEADERSHIP PIPELINE</b>	Pays no attention to the importance of building a leadership pipeline. Committees function poorly, if at all, and lack of term limits thwart need for one.	Board members are recruited from a place of scarcity, focus is on filling seats. Little attention to the need for leadership attributes. Parts of the same networks. Lack of diverse applicants.	Committee chairs are seen as key folks in the pipeline. Staff and entire board engaged in prospecting. Recruiting in diverse networks.	"Leadership" is seen as a key attribute of recruitment. Committee chairs are supported, held accountable and are seen by themselves and others as leaders. Robust and diverse pipeline created and nurtured.
<b>PERFORMANCE REVIEWS</b>	No regular performance reviews or assessment for anybody (board or staff). No awareness of hidden biases.	No board assessment. Very basic staff assessments. Board and staff beginning to learn about unconscious biases and belonging.	Board has rudimentary assessment process in place. Staff assessments are given regularly.	Regular performance reviews / assessments.
<b>STAFF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION</b>	Hard to find qualified candidates. Little to no effort to diversify prospects. Some staff not given support or a real pathway to success.	ED does all hiring. Rudimentary job descriptions. Limited outreach. Intentional appreciation of staff. Some intention toward recruiting a team reflective of the community it serves.	ED oversees all staff and hiring. Robust outreach from all stakeholders for strong and diverse hiring reflective of population served. Solid HR compliance* based on commitment to organizational values.	Seen as a workplace of choice. Staff feels a sense of commitment and agency. Hiring process is transparent.
<b>FINANCIAL STABILITY</b>	No financial stability. Trouble meeting payroll. Treasurer is left to do the work with little or no accountability (verification of transactions).	Can make payroll but cashflow is inconsistent. Basic financial tracking. No cash reserve. Informal budget process. System of checks and balances in place.	Smart, staff-driven budget process. Active board treasurer and finance committee. Cash reserves building.	Board and staff partnership. Solid cash reserve. Strong positive cash flow. Operating expenses of at least 1 month in the bank and 3 - 6 months available as unrestricted cash balances. Little debt. No long term AR or AP. Endowment (?) at least 3x the operating budget.
<b>FUNDRAISING</b>	Reliant on a single, unstable fundraising stream – often a grant. Board does not engage in fundraising. ED viewed as the paid fundraiser.	Working to diversify revenue. Potentially hiring a development director, even if part-time. Board is encouraged to participate in fundraising. An annual event is added.	Individual giving program begins with direct mail, name acquisition, and prospecting for major donors. Select board members step up.	Revenue streams are balanced and diverse. Strong data foundation. Board generates prospects and closes gifts. Senior staff regularly close gifts. Eye toward community-centric fundraising.
<b>MISSION-CENTRIC PROGRAMS</b>	Limited programs. Programs designed with little regard to population organization is serving.	As resources grow, so do the number of programs, but not at all strategically. Hard to say no. Programs are sometimes started at the request of major donors. Mission creep.	Strategic discussions with board lead to evaluation of programs and how best to invest program dollars. Still hard to say no.	Each program is evaluated and is integral to the success of the org's strategic plan. All are mission-centric and values-based with clear, measurable outcomes. Bonus points for ending off-mission programs.
<b>METRICS AND EVALUATION</b>	What metrics?	Focus on metrics that tell "good news" — all anecdotal. No real structure in place. No logic models to clarify outcomes.	A logic model has been developed that helps board and staff define impact measurements. Data collected and basic reports can be generated. Eye on equity and belonging.	Qualitative and quantitative metrics are in place with a dashboard reviewed by board and staff regularly.
<b>CLEAR BRAND</b>	Inability to state organizational mission in a way that is clear, concise, and attractive. Lack of attention to how words/images can offend. No intentional inclusion.	Strong elevator pitch. Basic visual branding. Clarity on how to best talk about the organization extends to staff. Beginning to be conscious about using inclusive language.	All visual branding is integrated, cohesive, and reflective of community. Org has a clear voice. Ongoing board training on how to talk about the org. Beginning to understand stakeholder segments in a deeper way.	Clear, strong, compelling, integrated, targeted, and highly visible external presence. Understood and communicated clearly by all stakeholders. Sophisticated and deep understanding of all stakeholder segments.
<b>OUTREACH</b>	Few people know the organization exists. No idea how to grow stakeholders or engage with existing ones. Little to no community engagement.	Basic website, email list, social media. Audience growing but haphazard and not strategic. Lack of attention to whether imagery reflects diversity or the community served.	Well designed and consistent website and media with a clear strategy and capacity to grow audience, authority, and stakeholder participation around the mission.	Integrated and scalable strategy for growing, segmenting, and engaging diverse stakeholders in the work. Design choices are made to be both reflective of the community and mindful of the experience of the end recipient.
<b>BRAND STEWARDSHIP</b>	ED role as "brand shepherd" is unclear. Pitches ramble like a list. Not "sticky" or memorable. Board role as "brand ambassadors" unclear; assumes that the staff leader is the storyteller.	ED intentionally develops storytelling skills by feeding stories to board to ignite enthusiasm. Some board members initiate outreach. Use of more inclusive language.	ED begins intentional work to build a team of storytellers with regular practice at board meetings encouraging inclusive language. Chair schedules regular storytelling & elevator pitch practice.	Organization has a culture of storytelling. ED is visible, vocal, and effective public champion/voice. Board members excited to share stories in person and on social media, building reach and prospects.
<b>STRATEGIC PLANNING</b>	No real strategy and board does not understand that its role is to set one.	Staff sets annual goals but are often quite tactical. Board approves them but does not shape them. Goals often set to please funders	Solid plan, largely staff driven with a board committee. Strong, but not a document to inspire donors. Plan includes DEI, but no clear goals/outcomes.	Staff and board develop an exciting and marketable plan with a clear vision and identity at the foundation. DEI organically present and measurable throughout.

\* Corrected August 2020. For further clarification: When a finance person is hired, it is useful for the Board Treasurer to do a meet and greet - they will be partners. Same true of the Development staff and Development chair. At a HEALTHY stage, these two board members should be pretty strong and you'd want them involved. It's also possible the staff may be large enough that someone other than the Executive Director may be supervising staff, but this is not a requirement for the HEALTHY stage.