

# Elevating Governance to Drive Impact...

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...in uncertain times

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# Objectives and Approach



There is a LOT to say about board governance



We will focus on optimizing board engagement during our current challenging times



There will be time for general discussion



You will leave this session with some practical ideas to apply

# Support Center – Who We Are

## *ACCELERATING POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE*

### **MISSION**

To empower nonprofits and social enterprises to transform their leadership and management and advance our vision for social change.

### **VISION**

Our vision for social change is deeply rooted in the desired outcomes of our efforts. Specifically, we aspire to create a society where:

- Coalitions and organizations are equipped with the necessary resources to recognize and address inequalities.
- Boards and their organizations actively strive to cultivate, retain, and promote diverse leadership.
- Communities and individuals most affected by issues lead and represent organizations and coalitions.
- Support Center, our partners, and clients uphold mutual accountability in understanding and challenging systems that perpetuate inequalities in health, wealth, happiness, safety, and security.
- We embrace and implement new operational approaches that challenge norms entrenched in white-dominant culture.

# Support Center – What We Do

## STRATEGY & MANAGEMENT

By crafting robust plans and developing strategic approaches, Support Center aims to empower your organization to seize opportunities and navigate change with confidence. Our team of seasoned change specialists, coupled with our comprehensive suite of organizational tools, offers a diverse range of services tailored to enhance the effectiveness of nonprofits in reaching their long-term objectives.

## ORGANIZATIONAL NAVIGATION

Support Center employs an "organizational coaching" approach to facilitating sustainable change within organizations. Through tailored support spanning 12 to 24 months, we guide organizations through transitions in their operational landscape or stages of growth. Our aim is to empower organizations to take ownership of their capacity-building journey.

## PROFESSIONAL & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Support Center equips nonprofit leaders and staff with practical tools and strategies to enhance their effectiveness, fostering collaboration among organizations and funders to cultivate innovative and forward-thinking approaches within the sector.

## EXECUTIVE SEARCH & TRANSITION

Support Center guides organizations through the entire leadership transition process, ensuring they preserve their strengths and values, mitigate risks, and reinforce relationships with all stakeholders. Our interim leadership strategy allows organizations to continue operating their programs and services seamlessly while searching for a new leader.

# Board basics

Vision

Governance

Viability



# Our current situation

- Government funding issues
- Unsettled nonprofit environment
  - Targeting of the nonprofit sector
  - Massive changes in some fields
  - Mergers+
- Anti-equity efforts
- Workforce: generational shifts
- Post-Covid dynamics
- Changing nature of boards

# Three focus areas

Scenario Planning

Mission Alignment

Fund Development



# Scenario Planning



Engage the board as **strategic thought partners**, not just overseers—invite them to co-create response plans.



Present **multiple financial and programmatic scenarios** (best case, moderate, worst case) to help the board visualize trade-offs.



Encourage board members to **bring their external expertise** (finance, legal, sector trends) to enrich planning.



Use scenario exercises to **clarify organizational priorities**, capacity limits, and risk tolerance.



Ensure there is a clear **decision-making framework** so the board understands when and how it will be activated.



Schedule **regular “pulse check” discussions** to update scenarios as conditions change.



# Mission Alignment

- Reaffirm **core mission and values** as the anchor in decision-making.
- Facilitate board conversations around **what is essential vs. what can be paused** or adapted.
- Use mission clarity to **align staff, board, and external stakeholders** around shared priorities.
- Highlight **impact stories and data** that connect the board emotionally and strategically to the mission.
- Invite the board to act as **ambassadors for mission integrity**, ensuring programs and strategies remain focused.
- Leverage board expertise to **build community trust** during times of uncertainty.



# Fund Development

- Position the board as **fundraising allies**, not just donors. Provide clear roles and scripts to make engagement easier.
- Offer **concrete opportunities**: hosting virtual events, leveraging networks, opening doors to funders.
- Share **transparent financial snapshots** so board members understand the urgency and goals.
- Frame the current challenges as **calls to action**.
- Equip the board with **storytelling tools** that connect donor interest to the mission.
- Celebrate wins and **recognize board contributions** to build momentum and accountability.





# Key Points

- Emphasize the **shared leadership** model between board and staff during challenging times.
- Make engagement **personal and actionable** for each board member; avoid one-size-fits-all appeals.
- Incorporate **short-term wins** to sustain board energy while navigating long-term challenges.
- **Be specific** in calls to action: Outline what the goals are, the relevance to the current challenge, and what is in the board's lane.





# Action steps and best practices

- Invest in board training: Frame it in our current situation
- Board development: Identify skillsets specific to current challenges
- Governance standards: Tune up governance and use this to clarify board roles and purpose
- Ensure shared agreements to minimize friction
- Do not overstate: Be data-driven
- Balance: Board engagement is critical, but do not cede authority



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THANK YOU!