

CREATE A MORE INTENTIONAL GOVERNANCE CULTURE


Every nonprofit organization has a culture that influences how governance is done. Whether it's named and intentional, or invisible and arbitrary, **governance culture is the culmination of the mindsets, values, and ways people interact.** Governance culture is deep and far-reaching. It can determine who has a voice in governance decision-making and whether it's inclusive and collaborative, or narrow and hierarchical. It underpins the partnership between the board and staff, and impacts what policies are put in place. Individual beliefs, worldviews, and personal experiences can also influence who is recruited to do the work of governance, which in turn shapes things like what gets evaluated, how priorities are determined, and how success is defined.

This tool helps shine a light on your governance culture so it's more visible. It can be used to capture a snapshot of the organization's current governance culture, as well as help organizational leaders set a more intentional culture going forward.



At a glance: What this tool makes possible

Envision the desired culture shaping your governance decisions, practices, and relationships.

 You may find it helpful to start with this [Innovation readiness pulse-check](#).



HOW IT WORKS

The goal is to prompt organizations towards an intentional culture which is consistently held by those involved in governance. While it evolves over time, a healthy governance culture enables organizations to navigate complex environments and support transitions of leadership.

This work can be done by everyone who directly participates in governance, or by a smaller working group who drafts materials for the larger group. A deeper dive, which creates a snapshot of the current governance culture, is more extensive, but the shorter process could be completed in a few sessions.



DEEPER DIVE: WHAT THIS TOOL MAKES POSSIBLE

Envision the desired culture shaping your governance decisions, practices, and relationships.

Most organizations have a set of values which may carry over to governance work. Fewer organizations have intentionally defined their desired governance culture and hold themselves accountable for living it. It's often more implicit – it appears in norms and habits accumulated over the years and in the individual behaviours, mindsets, and values of whoever is doing the governance work.

There are many benefits to choosing and cultivating governance values, mindsets, and ways of interacting with deep awareness and intentionality.

For example:

- ✓ Leadership volunteers can be drawn to the organization because of its governance culture.
- ✓ There's alignment between the organizational values and the way governance work is conducted.
- ✓ There's increased stability during times of change.
- ✓ Those who participate in governance share a common language and shared understanding.



ACCESS DETAILED PROCESS STEPS:

- 1 **Capture the declared governance values.** Identify any existing values which are formally expressed in documents.

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- 2 Take a deeper dive and learn about how your governance culture is currently experienced.** If you're interested in a deeper reflection on your current governance culture, you may choose to do this step. Otherwise, go to step 3.

There are two options:

[Online questionnaire & discussion](#)

Complete an online questionnaire and then have a sense-making conversation.

[This option needs the support of an external facilitator or consultant.](#)

OR

[Self-guided journal & discussion](#)

Complete a journaling tool over the course of two weeks and then host a self-guided team reflection.

- 3 [Identify the desired governance culture](#)** through a reflective conversation. Explore the values and mindsets that should shape governance and what they could or should look like in practice.
- 4 [Embed the governance culture](#)** by identifying actions and strategies that you need to move forward and anchor your governance in the desired culture.

Learn more about [Governance culture in a nonprofit organization](#)

This tool is part of the Reimagining Governance Lab, a virtual hub for governance innovation full of resources, tools, and stories. [Visit the Lab.](#)

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