

GOVERNANCE AS SHARED LEADERSHIP

Who participates in governance and how

The increasingly complex environment makes it tough for nonprofit boards to fulfill all the responsibilities of governance, particularly with limited volunteer time, high expectations, and the pull of other non-governance responsibilities like fundraising. There's also an urgency to deepen equity in decision-making, including widening the diversity of perspectives and challenging traditional ideas of who does governance work. These circumstances raise the stakes on the question of who should and could share in governance decision-making, and how?


This tool addresses this critical question. It explores the full spectrum of who's involved in governance, as well as the principles that drive relationships. It also offers a practice that can be used to match who participates with specific governance responsibilities and decisions. Access our video, [Governance as shared leadership](#), to learn more.



At a glance: What this tool makes possible

Take a fresh look at who's doing what.

- Reduce confusion of governance responsibilities
- Build capacity through shared leadership
- Weave equity into the fabric of your governance

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



HOW IT WORKS

The goal is to create clarity, prompt generative conversations, open new possibilities, and if necessary, get you unstuck.

This work can be done by all those who directly participate in governance or by a smaller working group. It can be completed over several months or in a couple of sessions (4 – 6 hours).



DEEPER DIVE: WHAT THIS TOOL MAKES POSSIBLE

- **Reduce confusion of governance responsibilities.** There may be confusion because of the complexity of the board-management partnership in governance work. In other cases, governance roles have been assigned piecemeal, built over time, and often tangled in history. Organizations that are part of a larger collaboration or network face even greater complexity when governance decisions are made outside the organization's board room (*e.g. setting collective priorities*).
- **Build capacity through shared leadership.** The board can't do it all given the complexity of demands. It's critical to leverage all the talents, experiences, and knowledge available within your organization's ecosystem, whether they are staff, other leadership volunteers or people who are served by the organization. This reduces the burden of governance work, while also drawing on a diversity of perspectives, which is essential for good decision-making.
- **Weave equity into the fabric of your governance.** It's critical to openly explore who has power or influence in governance decision-making.



ACCESS DETAILED PROCESS STEPS:

- 1 [Explore who could participate in your governance work](#) in a generative session exploring four questions that prompt you to look to the future, consider possibilities, and see new directions.
- 2 [Determine what specific governance functions and decisions could be matched](#) with which stakeholder groups. This exercise can be used in many different ways.
- 3 [Decide "what now?"](#) - this session helps you identify next steps.

OPTIONAL: Start with some [foundational work](#) that can enhance conversations and choices about who participates in governance and how.

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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