REIMAGINING GOVERNANCE

WHAT'S FIXED OR FLUID?

Map the circumstances shaping your organization's governance

There are a range of circumstances that shape an organization's governance policies and practices. A few are fixed in place because there are legal and regulatory rules that must be met, like the board's duty of care and loyalty and the number of board members. Some are formally documented expectations that can be changed or negotiated, like bylaws and funder requirements. Many organizational circumstances might feel fixed because governance has "always" been done that way, but are actually based on norms and habits that have evolved over time.

This tool helps organizations map the unique circumstances that dictate or influence their governance so it's made visible, enabling a clear and shared understanding by board members, staff leadership, and other stakeholders. Creating this snapshot is an important foundational step to finding innovations in how governance is done.

🌱 At a glance: What this tool makes possible

Based on a clear and shared understanding, uncover what aspects of your governance are open for innovation.

⚙ HOW IT WORKS

The process helps to capture the circumstances shaping governance, including legal and regulatory requirements, lifecycle stage, stakeholders, capacity, history, funding model, and culture. Participants create a snapshot of their unique circumstances and plot them on a continuum for easy reference, and then host a session to explore insights and learnings.

There is pre-work that can be done by a small working group in a few hours. Ideally, all those who participate in governance can then convene for a one- or two-hour session.

What's fixed or fluid?

🔍 DEEPER DIVE: WHAT THIS TOOL MAKES POSSIBLE

- **Based on a clear and shared understanding, uncover what aspects of your governance are open for innovation.** Every organization has a unique set of circumstances which shape its governance. Unpacking which circumstances are fixed and which ones are more fluid helps create a clear and shared understanding by all those who participate in governance.

  It enables innovation by challenging assumptions about how it must be done and providing an opportunity to refresh governance practices, so they are more responsive to the complex environment. For example, organizations can negotiate with funders to shift expectations, as long as they meet certain standards. Outdated structures and processes can be revised to meet the demand for greater agility and equity, and culture can shift from an invisible force to a more intentional set of values.

🖱 ACCESS DETAILED PROCESS STEPS:

1   **Create the snapshot of organizational circumstances** shaping your governance and plot them on a continuum.

2   **Host a generative conversation to explore possibilities.**

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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