

UNCOVER INNOVATION IN HOW YOUR GOVERNANCE WORKS

Nonprofit organizations create governance processes and practices to support good decision-making; build confidence that assets are well utilized and protected; the right voices are heard; accountabilities are fulfilled; and to ensure progress is made on the mission. Governance processes and practices sit within a complex system, and are often shaped by legislation and funder requirements, "best practices", the personal knowledge and beliefs of governance leaders, and historical ways of doing things.

This tool will help organizations uncover opportunities for innovations by designing for the functions that need to be fulfilled, exploring how the organization's unique ecosystem shapes governance processes and practices, and imagining new ways of working.



At a glance: What this tool makes possible

Feel confident about how your organization does governance.

Ensure your governance remains relevant and responsive.



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 in how your governance processes and practices work. Organizations can complete it in a few sessions. If you choose to do the foundational work, it's more extensive (e.g. over a number of months). It can be done by all those participating in governance or a smaller working group.



DEEPER DIVE: WHAT THIS TOOL MAKES POSSIBLE

- **Feel confident about how your organization does governance.** Governance processes and practices might feel arbitrary if they are a compilation of best practices, or evolve over time as habits and norms become policies. In many instances, they are over-weighted toward fulfilling compliance rules. Even if there's a comprehensive governance manual in place, new board members or staff leadership may struggle to see how it all fits together as a coherent system of governance. Organizational leaders and other stakeholders will feel more confident if there's an open and creative look at how the processes and practices work.
- **Ensure your governance remains relevant and responsive.** Governance processes and practices are influenced by an organization's ecosystem. A shift in the ecosystem should trigger a refresh of how governance work gets done. The triggers might be external trends (e.g., *working towards equity, increased collaboration*), or a shift in organizational circumstances (e.g., *change in mission, shift away from a working board*). At the same time, governance culture, both intended and unintended, shapes how work actually gets done, decisions are made, and what metrics matter. It's important that governance processes and practices stay relevant and responsive to the complex and changing environment.



OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

- 1 **[Host a session to imagine new possibilities.](#)** This generative session(s) offers three creative and energizing alternatives to generate new ways of working. Go to: Step 2: Facilitator's Guide: Imagine new possibilities
- 2 **[Host a session to do action planning.](#)** Go to: Step 3: Facilitator's Guide: Action Planning

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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