
Building a Governance Legacy

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Reimagining Nonprofit Boards

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Agenda

01 The State of Today's Boards

02 Shared Understandings

03 Constructive Partnership

04 A New Mindset

05 Culture of Inquiry

01

The State of Today's Boards

The State of Today's Boards

Nonprofit Boards Often are:

- Disconnected from communities/people they serve
- Ill-informed about the ecosystems in which they operate
- Lacking in racial and ethnic diversity
- Preoccupied with fundraising above all else

Governance Issues 2023

- Building board diversity
 - Financial instability
- Understanding of organizational strategy/innovation
 - Collaborations/Partnerships/Mergers
 - Succession Planning/Great Resignation

Board Composition Considerations

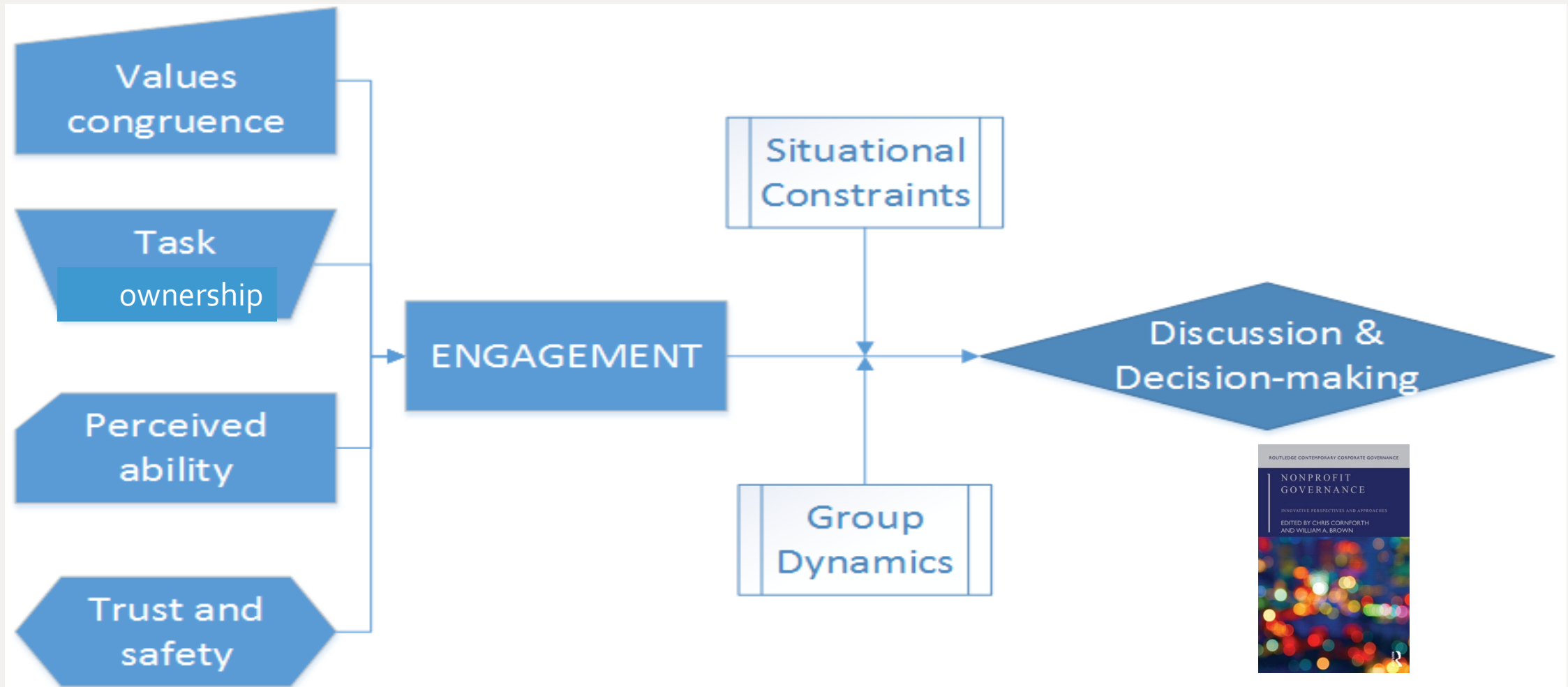
- The board members you recruit today are your leaders of tomorrow.
- Diversity matters.
- Clear expectations set the table for accountability.
- Work hard to be the kind of board that those we aspire to recruit will want to serve on.



02

Shared Understandings

Full Board Member Engagement



Antecedents to board member participation; W. A. Brown, Nonprofit Governance, Routledge

Principles of Trusteeship

Understand Governance

- Embrace responsibilities
- Respect role differences
- Be an ambassador

Think Strategically

- Learn about mission, constituents & culture
- Focus on what matters most
- Ask insightful questions with open mind

Lead by Example

- Champion justice, equality & inclusion
- Think independently, act collectively
- Conduct yourself with impeccable integrity

Engaged Board Members

1-Share the Passion

- Make a personal commitment
 - Generate interest in org
- Identify/Build relationships

2-Make an Ask for Involvement

- Will you visit our website?
- May I have __ call you about..?
- Can you refer someone?

3-Influence Decision-Makers

- Advocate on behalf of the organization
- Introduce org's mission to your network
- Communicate use of resources



Primary Board Roles



Set Direction



Ensure Resources



Provide Oversight

BoardSource

Primary Executive Roles

- . Planning
- . Administration
- . Financial Management
- . Communications and Public Relations
- . Fundraising
- . Board Relations



03

Constructive Partnership

Governance is a
Collective
Endeavor



The Concept of Constructive Partnership*



“Exceptional boards govern in constructive partnership with the executive, recognizing that the effectiveness of the board and executive are interdependent. They build this partnership through trust, candor, respect, and honest communication.”

*CONSTRUCTIVE PARTNERSHIP:
PRINCIPLE 1, THE SOURCE, BOARDSOURCE.

Building a Constructive Partnership



Governance

Board Decisions

Exec
Insight

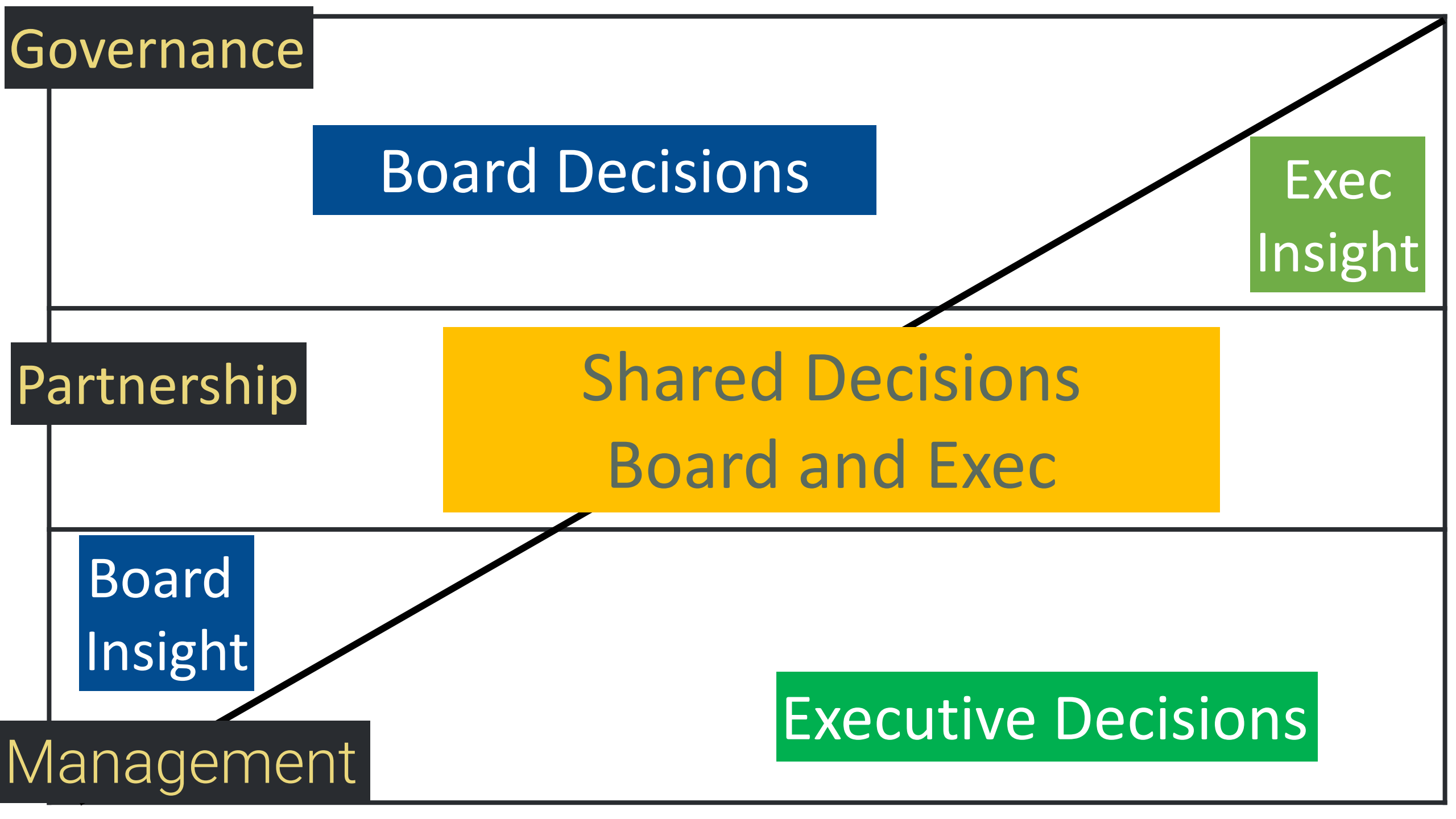
Partnership

Shared Decisions
Board and Exec

Board
Insight

Management

Executive Decisions



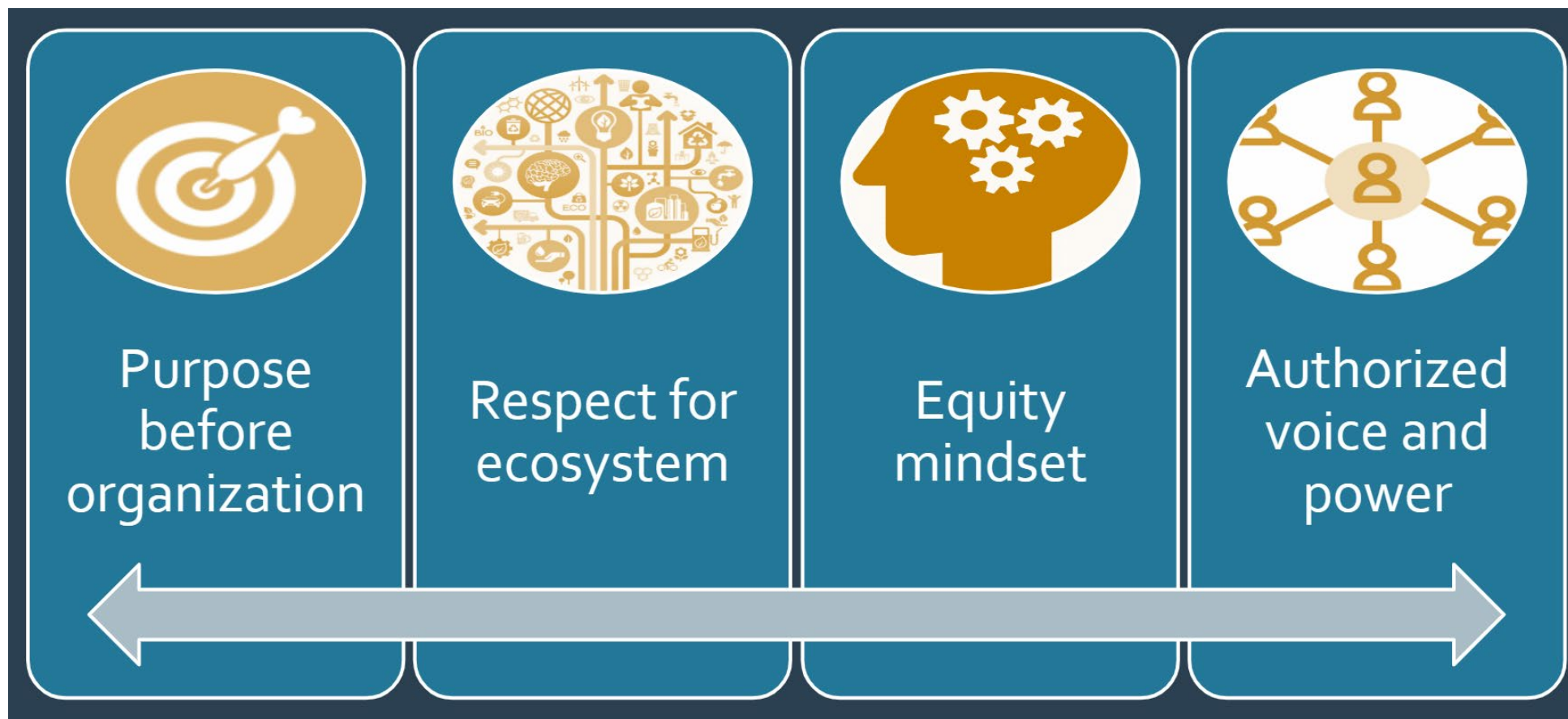
Clarity and Shared Agreements

- The priorities the Executive should be focused upon
- The ways in which the Board can support the Executive
- The board is responsible for holding board members accountable
- The Executive presents materials to the board at a strategic level
- The Board Chair/Executive relationship is critical

04

A New Mindset

Purpose-Driven Board Leadership



Principle #1 : Purpose before Organization



What's best for
our
organization?

What's best for
the desired
social outcome
we seek?

Principle #2: Respect for Ecosystem



The diagram consists of two large, blue, arrow-shaped boxes pointing in opposite directions, one to the left and one to the right. The left arrow contains the text 'How would this impact our organization?' and the right arrow contains the text 'How would this impact the players and dynamics within our ecosystem?'. The arrows are positioned horizontally and are separated by a small gap.

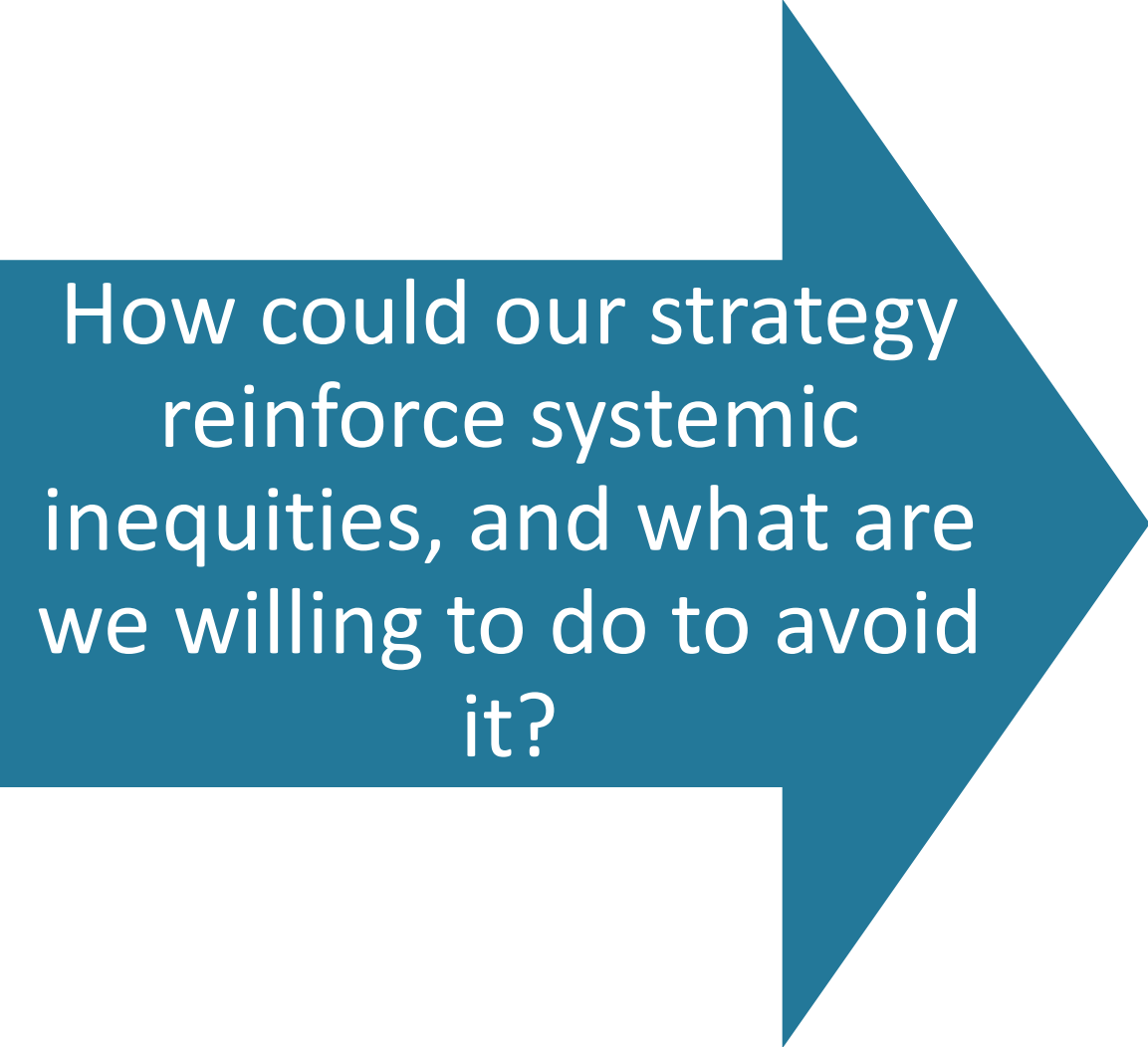
How would this
impact our
organization?

How would this
impact the players
and dynamics within
our ecosystem?

Principle #3 : Equity Mindset




How will our strategy advance our mission?




How could our strategy reinforce systemic inequities, and what are we willing to do to avoid it?

Principle #4:

Authorized Voice & Power



What do we* think
is best?



Are we doing all we can
to understand what our
programmatic
stakeholders tell us is
most important?

5 Questions Boards Should Discuss

1. Is our organization's reputation being negatively or positively impacted by our board's current composition regarding diversity?
2. If someone were to make assumptions about our organizational values based on our board composition, what would they be likely to think?
3. How well are we cultivating a deeper understanding of the community(ies) we serve and bringing their perspectives, needs, feedback and priorities into our strategic boardroom discussions?
4. Are we ever at risk of making decisions without fully understanding how these decisions affect those we serve?
5. If we were to make a deeper commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, what would that mean for our mission, our work and the people we serve?



Board Recruitment Strategies

- Reconsider who should serve on the board and move beyond regular channels for board recruitment:
 - Post board searches
 - Connect with local chapters of ethnic professional and civic associations
 - Engage staff
 - Engage every board member

05

Exceptional Boards Build
a Culture of Inquiry

Deliberating Differently

- What is our greatest hope for how our organization will be in 10 years?
- What if our reserves quadrupled tomorrow? What would we do differently? What would the board spend its time on?
- How must our board operate differently in order to provide leadership during these changing times?
- What are we most resistant to, and why?

Catalytic Questions



- If you could make 2 changes to greatly enhance your board's effectiveness, what would you change?
- On a 1-10 scale, how engaged is the full board? What would it take to achieve a 10?
- In 3 words, describe your board's current culture. What words describe your aspirational culture?
- What is the single greatest contribution that you wish your board would make to your organization over the next 2 years?

“A Good Board is a
Victory, Not a Gift”

Cyril O. Houle
Governing Boards