



## Some New Nonprofit Board Models

As demands for Board effectiveness and accountability continue to grow, research and discussions about how Boards might operate differently, continue to grow, as well. There are a variety of new ideas for Board models.

### **Networked Governance**

David Renz suggests that the effectiveness of governance could be enhanced when we realize that governance can include organizations and activities that go beyond the role of the Board in an organization. Nowadays, many nonprofit services to a community are often delivered across a network of organizations and, thus, the distributed governance of that network is a key point in the effectiveness of those services. Renz mentions the advantages of the perspective on networked governance and also mentions the difficult challenges inherent in that perspective, for example, how can individual nonprofits and Boards influence the overall network and how can we ensure that individual Boards are doing their fiduciary responsibilities.



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See *Exploring the Puzzle of Board Design: What's Your Type?* by David Renz, <http://www.nonprofitquarterly.org/content/view/69/28/> .

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### **System-Wide Governance**

Judy Freiwirth asserts that the traditional “top down,” “command and control” paradigm of Boards actually gets in the way of the nonprofit’s successfully working toward its mission. She suggests that the governance responsibility to be shared among constituents, including members, staff and Board. In System-Wide Governance, Board members are from the community and constituency. Although, governance is very democratic in nature, Board members do perform some legal and fiduciary responsibilities. She mentions the Whole Scale Change methodology as an example of how constituency-based planning and operations can be successful.



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See *System-Wide Governance for Community Empowerment* by Judy Freiwirth and Maria Elena Letona at <http://www.bsbpa.umkc.edu/mwcnl/Conferences/Governance2007/Papers/Session%20A/System-Wide%20Governance%20Model%20Freiwirth.pdf> .

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### **Community-Driven Governance: Governing for What Matters**

Community-Driven Governance is a framework that defines a Board’s primary purpose as leadership towards making a significant, visionary difference in the community the organization serves. The Board’s work centers around an annual plan that aims first and foremost at the difference the organization will make in the community. The plan then addresses the organizational infrastructure needed to implement that plans. The approach is intended to be simple enough for any Board to put into practice, while comprehensively addressing first the ends, and then the means for which a Board will hold itself accountable. The approach also aims to avoid a typical problem in Boards when they attend primarily to internal operations, rather than truly representing the needs of stakeholders.



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See *Governing for What Matters* by Hildy Gottlieb at  
[http://www.help4nonprofits.com/NP\\_Bd\\_Governing\\_for\\_What\\_Matters1-Art.htm](http://www.help4nonprofits.com/NP_Bd_Governing_for_What_Matters1-Art.htm) .

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## ***Relationship Model***

Steven Block proposes a model that, instead of having a rigid, top-down structure of roles and hierarchy of the traditional policy model, provides for Board and staff members to work together with great priority on generating relationships and value from those relationships. The Executive Director and staff play an important role in bringing matters to the group (a group of Board members and staff) and their opinions are greatly valued. Board and staff share experiences together, for example, rituals and meals, to develop relationships. Board members are not expected to take part in activities outside Board meetings. They can be there to assist staff. Committees are not used.



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See *Nonprofit Board Governance: The Relationship Model* by Stephen R. Block at  
<http://www.bsbpa.umkc.edu/mwcnl/Conferences/Governance2007/Papers/Session%20A/Stephen%20Block%20Relationship%20Model.pdf> .

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## ***Nested Boards***

While it is not necessarily a new perspective on Boards, nonprofit leaders should understand this Board model because they might encounter it when collaborating with other nonprofits. Nested Boards exist in associations or “umbrella” organizations that have members, or subgroups, that also are organizations. An example is a national organization that has chapters in various regions or states. Advantages to this arrangement are that the members benefit from the guidance and resources of the umbrella organization. The umbrella organization benefits from the structured involvement and representation of the various subgroups. Members of the organization’s Board of often are members of the Boards of the various subgroups. There can be a continual tension in the arrangement. Subgroups want the autonomy to serve their local constituents, yet want the benefits of their affiliation with the umbrella organization. Likewise, the umbrella organization wants the dedicated participation and contributions of the subgroups, yet wants the subgroups to effectively manage their own operations in their own locales.



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See *The Dynamics of Nested Governance in Nonprofit Organizations: Preliminary Thoughts* by Patricia Bradshaw at  
<http://www.bsbpa.umkc.edu/mwcnl/Conferences/Governance2007/Papers/Session%20A/Nested%20Gov%20Nonprofit%20Conf.pdf> .

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## ***Policy Governance® Model***

Although it is not new, Carver’s Policy Governance® Board is another prominent Board model. (“Policy Governance” is a commercial product and registered trademark of Carver Governance Design, Inc.) The model is designed to ensure that Board members always operate in a fashion that maintains strong, strategic focus for the organization. Board members enforce clear policies that determine the “ends” for the organization to achieve and they set very strict limits within which the Chief Executive operates. This structure is characterized by few, if any, distinct officer roles or Board committees. Nonprofits are encouraged to use trained consultants to implement this model.

Adapted from “Field Guide to Developing, Operating and Restoring Your Nonprofit Board”  
– to get the publication, click on “Publications” at [www.authenticityconsulting.com](http://www.authenticityconsulting.com)

Similar to other models, there are very strong critics and proponents. This model is not referenced throughout the guide because of its commercial and highly technical nature.



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See *Carver Policy Governance Model* at  
<http://www.policygovernance.com> .

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