

# BOARD TYPES

A well-functioning board of directors is essential to the efficacy of any nonprofit organization. As an organization grows and develops, the functions of a nonprofit board grow and develop.

For the purposes of our evaluation of an organization's relationship with their board to inform services and referrals provided by the Michigan Community Resources, we consider a few different models for classifying boards. Therefore, an organization's board may be able to be characterized by more than one of the below board types.

## FOUNDING BOARD

This group established the organization themselves, is fairly small, may or may not include a paid executive director as a board member, and is very active leading and supporting the operations as the organization is launching or developing.

## WORKING BOARD

This group succeeds the original founders of the organization, is more expanded in terms of members, may or may not include a paid executive director, and is very active leading and supporting day-to-day operations—often because the organization has few or no paid staff.

## FUNDRAISING BOARD

This group is very focused on financial management and health of the organization, often directly contributing financially to the organization or playing the main role as fundraisers themselves. They have limited roles in the day-to-day operations of the organization. The executive director is likely paid and taking the lead on both operations and strategic direction and management, with limited input from the board.

## GOVERNING BOARD

This board is not involved in the day-to-day operations of the organization, but does focus on setting and managing the strategic direction of the organization with a paid executive director who is supported by staff. In addition to strategic partnership and leadership with the executive director of the organization, the board also plays an important role in fiduciary oversight. Unlike a fundraising board, while a governing board may have some role in raising funds for the organization, they do that in partnership with the director and fund development consultants or staff, rather than being solely responsible for fundraising.

## INSTITUTIONAL BOARD

This board is similar to a governing board in the functions it serves, but is less concerned with managing the director's or staff's work, and more concerned with setting and supporting the achievement of the organization strategy. Board members are recruited less for what they do as individual board members and more for their connections, reputations, and their capacity to build a network of resources for the organization. This board still manages strategic and fiduciary concerns, but have more of an oversight role than a governing board.

## GENERATIVE BOARD

This board could be at any of the other stages, but performs the roles essential to the organization in a dynamic way at the same time it is actively identifying opportunities and solving for threats preventing the organization from carrying out its mission. Generative boards can be of any size and often have a flexible, responsible relationship with the executive director. A generative board is less focused on management and more focused on positioning the organization to be in the right place at the right time. It often carries out the functions and responsibilities of the other board types, but what characterizes a generative board is not so much what board members are doing or what life stage the organization they serve is at—rather, it's how board members are tuned into the organization and how they are thinking proactively and creatively about their role in supporting its success.