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Hallmarks of a Healthy State Think Tank Board

Sound, Ethical Governance

Board members have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, both as part of the board and as individual board members.

- The CEO and board chair ensure board members receive clear guidance on expectations and obligations, as well as making training and resources available to help board members successfully fulfill their duties.
- Board chair consistently encourages board accountability. (Annual board self-evaluations, feedback, etc.)
- The board chair and CEO ensure clear alignment on expectations of the board, the CEO's role, and the board/CEO relationship; healthy feedback loops are well established in both directions.
- The board structure and processes are clear and documented.

The board embraces its role in managing, supporting, evaluating, and growing the organization's chief executive.

- Clear CEO performance expectations are set and evaluated annually.
- A transparent relationship between the CEO and board is cultivated, with respectful challenge and debate nurtured on both sides.

The board serves as an active keeper of the organization's mission, participating in organizational vision development and high-level strategic planning, and remaining well informed about ongoing organizational goals and strategies, asking informed questions, and holding the organization accountable for results.

- Regular board meetings are structured to ensure board members stay well informed and encourage board members to engage substantively on key issues of relevance to the organization; board members are encouraged to ask questions and share opinions.

The board takes seriously its role in ensuring proper stewardship of all organizational resources – including financial resources and human capital.

- The board has the knowledge and information needed to guard the financial health of the organization and manage risk, ensuring resources to meet the organization's goals today and tomorrow and to weather unexpected internal and external challenges.

- The board holds the CEO accountable for exemplary management of the organization.

A robust succession plan for the board and the organization encourages active organizational bench building and board talent scouting.

Clear board processes and yearly check-ups ensure board and organizational compliance issues and efficient governance remain top of mind.

Generous, Robust Support of the Organization & Its Mission

Board members demonstrate a clear, unwavering commitment to the organization, its mission, and efforts.

- Board members are clear about the organization's priorities and work, have the tools and information needed to effectively promote the organization and its efforts/achievements, and can clearly articulate the organization's WHY and the HOW.
- Disagreements are handled privately; publicly, board members are always prepared to support the organization when it is challenged.

The board as a whole, and individual board members, are committed partners in the organization's fundraising efforts.

- The board chair and CEO work in partnership to create clarity about fundraising expectations and the variety of ways board members can support the organization's fundraising efforts.
- Board members are held accountable by the board to commitments made.
- The CEO – with the support of organization staff – ensure board members have the resources needed to help them meet any external fundraising commitments made.

Board members are clear about the wide range of ways they can actively support the organization and are regularly encouraged by the board chair and CEO to engage.

- Ambassador/connector/networker
- Professional skills and expertise
- Wisdom/guidance