

The 14 Attributes of a Healthy Nonprofit

People

	MESSY	GROWING	HEALTHY	THRIVING
Board Diversity	Board has no diversity of skills nor reflects the community it serves	Ad hoc board recruitment. Reactive based on current needs. No overall plan.	Developed composition matrix for the ideal board. Works to achieve it.	Board diverse in skills and reflective of the community it serves
Board Responsibilities	Board responsibilities are not defined. No orientation or onboarding process.	Primitive orientation process. Either no committees or committees without goals/clear charge.	Regular discussions and training regarding the role of the board. Onboarding process.	Board is clear on responsibilities, takes them seriously, and executes effectively
Leader Relations	The board chair and ED actively sabotage each other.	ED feels compelled to do everything on her own and brings "completed" products to the board	Clear points of synergy around some aspects (board recruitment, some aspects of fundraising)	True partnership between board chair and ED
Leadership Pipeline	Neither the Board nor staff has anybody prepared or groomed to take on leadership responsibilities when current leadership wants out.	Board recruitment based on current organizational needs. Jobs posted on standard nonprofit recruitment websites. Not enough resources to recruit a great candidate pool.	Board active in recruiting those with leadership skills. Committee chairs held accountable and supported. Entire org involved in recruiting. Willingness to pay for excellence.	Board and staff have strong leadership pipeline and bench strength
Performance Reviews	No regular performance reviews or assessment for anybody (board or staff)	No board assessment. Very basic staff assessments.	Board has rudimentary assessment process in place.	Regular performance reviews / assessments
Staff recruitment and retention	Hard to find good people. No recruitment process.	ED does all hiring. Rudimentary job descriptions. Limited outreach. Intentional appreciation of staff.	Hiring handled beyond ED level. HR compliance. Full job descriptions. Board and other stakeholders involved. Strong staff retention strategies in place	Seen as a workplace of choice

Money

Financial Stability	No financial stability. Trouble meeting payroll.	Can make payroll but cashflow is inconsistent. Basic financial tracking. No cash reserve. Informal budget process.	Smart, staff-driven budget process. Active board treasurer and finance committee. Cash reserve building.	Board and staff partnership. Solid cash reserve. Strong positive cash flow. Operating expenses - at least 1 month in the bank and 3 - 6 months available as unrestricted cash balances. Little debt. No long term AR or AP. Endowment (?) at least 3x the operating budget.
Fundraising	Reliant on a single, unstable fundraising stream	Basic fundraising plan with dedicated staffer leading, typically focused on events	Board more involved and sophisticated about fundraising. Growing dev staff. Focus on bringing in larger donors (corporate, foundation, individual)	Fundraising streams are balanced, diverse, and sophisticated

Programs

Mission-Centric Programs	Programs aren't clearly mission-centric	Many programs are mission-centric but some are not and there's no plan on fixing this or ability to "just say no"	Strategic discussions about how to best invest program dollars. Ability to say no to programs that aren't mission-centric but some are still running.	All programs are mission-centric
Metrics	No attempt to evaluate program impact	Focus on "vanity metrics" and what's very easy to measure. No good infrastructure in place for measurement.	Plans and accountability in place to build out necessary measurement systems. Desired impact metrics identified. Basic dashboard created.	Can evaluate the impact of programs (quantitative and qualitative)

Narrative

Clear Brand	Inability to state organizational mission in a way that is clear, concise, and attractive to the right people.	Strong elevator pitch. Basic visual branding. Clarity on how to talk about the organization extends to staff.	All visual branding is integrated and cohesive. Organization has a clear voice. Ongoing board training on how to talk about the organization. Beginning to understand stakeholder segments in a deeper way.	Clear, strong, compelling, integrated, targeted, and highly visible external presence. Understood and communicated clearly by all stakeholders. Sophisticated and deep understanding of all stakeholder segments.
Strategic Marketing / Stakeholders	Few people know the org exists. No idea how to grow stakeholders or engage with existing ones	Basic website, email list, social media. Audience growing but haphazard and not strategic.	Well designed and consistent website and media with a clear strategy and capacity to grow audience, authority, and stakeholder participation around the mission.	Integrated and scalable strategy for growing, segmenting and engaging stakeholders in the work.
Public Champion	ED is rambling, unclear.	ED is wonky. "Laundry list". No storytelling.	ED is informative, interesting and clear, but not "sticky" or memorable	ED is visible, vocal, and effective public champion/voice for the org. Great storyteller.

Strategy

Strategic planning	No long-term strategy	Staff sets broad goals for next few years. Board not really involved. Motivation is to prove to funders there's a plan.	Solid, but limited plan developed jointly by staff and a board committee with no goals set for the board and no outside resources.	Thoughtful long-term strategy developed jointly by board and staff that sets inspiring vision
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