



**TRANSFORMING  
BOARD  
STRUCTURE  
STRATEGIES FOR COMMITTEES  
AND TASK FORCES**

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Established in 1988, BoardSource's work is grounded in the fundamental belief that boards are critical to organizational success. With decades of hands-on experience working with and supporting nonprofit boards, BoardSource is the recognized leader in nonprofit governance and leadership, and a go-to resource for nonprofit board and executive leaders. BoardSource supports a broad and diverse cross-section of social sector organizations with

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The need for effective board leadership and governance knows no geographic boundaries, and BoardSource is committed to strong social sector board leadership and governance around the globe. While BoardSource uses United States laws and policies as the legal framework for our resources and recommendations, most of our resources do not focus on legal matters but rather on good governance practices, making them relevant to organizations working outside of the United States. We do suggest, however, that you refer to applicable laws in your country regarding financial reporting and other legal and transparency issues.

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# *Introduction*

Nonprofit boards shoulder enormous responsibility: planning for the future of the organization, overseeing its fiscal health, and making sure its programs are worthwhile. In most cases, boards have far more work than even the most efficient board could accomplish in bimonthly or quarterly meetings alone.

To manage this work, most boards create work groups to accomplish tasks that need to be done outside board meetings. These work groups may be charged with developing proposals for board action or with acting on behalf of the board. In many organizations, these work groups — committees and task forces — do the majority of the board's work and allow the board to keep its attention on the big picture and on decisions that need to be made.

Committees and task forces can be as beneficial to the members of the board as they are to the organization as a whole. They give board members opportunities to contribute to the work of the board in ways they can't often do in regular meetings. They enable members to use their expertise to benefit the organization. Committees provide more opportunities for board members to learn from each other and get to know each other better. They foster board-staff interaction and cooperation and deepen the board's understanding of the issues that have an impact on the life of the organization.

As helpful as committees can be, they can also be a hindrance to the board if they are not set up or used appropriately. Frequently reevaluating your board's committee structure and keeping it flexible will allow

your board to address structural problems as they occur or even before they start. This book provides guidelines on how to keep the structure of your committees simple and flexible so they will be better able to meet the needs of the organization. The book includes

- step-by-step guidelines for determining the appropriate committee structure for your board
- job descriptions of the most common committees and task forces
- tools for committees to use
- guidelines for working with committees

There is no one-size-fits-all model for how boards should prioritize their work, so each board will have to determine its own ideal committee structure. Although some nonprofits, such as associations and foundations, have additional committee needs that do not fall into the scope of this book, the suggestions presented here can apply to nonprofits of every type. Use this book to explore the different ways your board can use committees and task forces, and then consult it for guidelines on how to work with these groups once they are established.

### **Using the CD-ROM**

All of the job descriptions and the tools for the executive, governance, and finance committees are on the CD-ROM included with this book. The tools and job descriptions are saved in both Microsoft Word and generic text format. Customize these files to suit the needs of your board, and print them to share with other board members.