




BoardSource[®]

Empowering Boards. Inspiring Leadership.

Our Work in 2015

The image features a close-up of two hands, one with a pink beaded bracelet and the other with a blue beaded bracelet, holding a small, clear, heart-shaped object. The background is a warm, out-of-focus orange and yellow. A large, dark blue geometric shape, resembling a triangle, overlays the right side of the image. The text is positioned within this blue area.

BOARDSOURCE ENVISIONS A
WORLD WHERE EVERY SOCIAL
SECTOR ORGANIZATION HAS THE
LEADERSHIP IT NEEDS TO FULFILL
ITS MISSION AND ADVANCE
THE PUBLIC GOOD.

OUR MISSION

To inspire and support excellence in nonprofit governance and board and staff leadership.

2015 HIGHLIGHTS

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DEAR FRIENDS & SUPPORTERS,

2015 was a year of many programmatic and organizational accomplishments for BoardSource, as well as an important period of reflection and thinking as our board and senior leadership worked together to design a new strategic framework to guide our work going forward.

This work resulted — at the close of the year — in BoardSource formalizing an ambitious vision for our future and a new set of strategic imperatives focused on inspiring board action on critical issues, deepening understanding within the field of nonprofit governance, and providing relevant resources that are accessible to the broad needs of nonprofit boards and leaders.

Our vision invites us to imagine a world where every social sector organization has the leadership it needs to fulfill its mission and advance the public good.

What would it mean to our organizations if each and every one of us had an inspired and effective group of board leaders who were leveraging their full potential as strategists, ambassadors, connectors, and influencers?

What board and staff talent would we be able to attract if the leadership partnerships between boards and executives were characterized by trust, respect, openness, and shared accountability?

We believe in the transformative power of leadership, and are committed to unleashing the full potential of board leaders to advance the public good.

And how much more impact could we have if our leadership bodies were truly aligned around mission and strategy, and were singularly focused on service to our communities and our world?

We believe that this future is possible, and are excited to share with you how our work in 2015 informed our thinking and planning. And we invite you to join us as we work to inspire and support the board and staff leadership we need to make all of our visions a reality.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anne Wallestad". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Anne" being more prominent than the last name "Wallestad".

Anne Wallestad
President & CEO



Forward-Thinking and Ambitious: OUR NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

When BoardSource's board and staff leaders decided to embark on a new strategic planning process in the spring of 2015, we took inspiration from the ideas and concepts of emergent strategy and focused on tackling the big questions about who we are as an organization, how the social sector calls on us to serve and lead, and how best to prioritize our efforts in the context of virtually infinite opportunity, but finite resources.

The result? A framework and vision for our future that we believe is forward-thinking and ambitious. And a shared understanding of how we will prioritize our resources and energy on what we believe matters most:

- Deepening understanding of board leadership and inspiring action on critical sector issues
- Educating leaders and providing support for effective board service and governance

How will BoardSource's work change? By challenging ourselves to the following objectives, many of which we began working on in 2015 and touch upon in this report.

- Identify and interpret trends impacting nonprofit leadership performance and effectiveness through an expanded research practice and partnerships with colleague organizations and academics.
- Create positive change by directing attention to key opportunities and challenges facing nonprofit leaders, such as the opportunity to expand our organizations' impact through advocacy and policy change.
- Generate evidence-based recommendations for board practice by aligning our consulting practice with our research and learning.
- Provide relevant and accessible resources and guidance to strengthen board leadership globally with an emphasis on affordable and scalable supports that serve nonprofit leaders without geographic limitations.
- Engage and support a broad network of board and staff leaders, including the more than 115,000 nonprofit leaders who are a part of BoardSource's network today.
- Inspire new and diverse leaders to serve on boards by emphasizing the positive potential of board service and leadership.

Through it all, you also will see more of what you have come to know of BoardSource over the past several years — a commitment to ongoing learning, a willingness to change and adapt, and deep respect and appreciation for the work of the nonprofit sector and its leaders. As we move forward, we do so with the humble understanding that our new framework identifies priorities on which to focus, but not solutions to the sector's challenges. It offers guidance on how to make wise decisions, not the answers to tough questions that are sure to emerge. And it provides an approach that remains flexible to what the future may bring, but not a roadmap to define how we will get there.

And that means that the challenge to BoardSource is to allow this new strategic framework to point us in an exciting new direction, and then work each and every day to anticipate, embrace, and adapt in ways that will serve our mission, our world, and you, our community even better. We can't wait and look forward to telling you more about this here and in coming years.

VISION

MISSION

GOALS

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

A world where every social sector organization has the leadership it needs to fulfill its mission and advance the public good.

To inspire and support excellence in nonprofit governance and board and staff leadership.

Deepen understanding and inspire action on critical sector issues

Educate leaders and support effective board service and governance



- › Generate evidence-based recommendations for board practice.
- › Identify and interpret trends impacting nonprofit leadership performance and effectiveness.
- › Create positive change by directing attention to key opportunities and challenges facing nonprofit leaders.
- › Inspire new and diverse leaders to serve.



- › Engage and support a broad network of nonprofit board and staff leaders.
- › Provide relevant and accessible resources and guidance to strengthen board leadership globally.

BoardSource's Leadership Agenda

DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING & INSPIRING ACTION ON CRITICAL SECTOR ISSUES

As the leader in nonprofit board leadership and governance, BoardSource has a unique vantage point and leadership role within the sector. We have the opportunity to look across the sector and identify trends, opportunities, and challenges. We can go deep into the board experience and rigorously test and evaluate approaches to strengthen governance. And we can translate those observations and learnings into a call to action for boards across the country and around the globe.

Our strategic framework has focused us on this broadened leadership agenda, which will continue to grow and deepen in the coming years. This work began even before the strategic framework was finalized, and included significant achievements in 2015.

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

Identifying and Interpreting Trends Impacting Nonprofit Leadership Performance and Effectiveness

BoardSource plays an important leadership role in mapping sector-wide trends in board leadership and governance. We do this most visibly through our biennial study, [Leading with Intent](#), which takes a macro look at board composition, practices, and performance. Our 2015 study, which was based on a 2014 survey of nearly 1,100 executive and board leaders, found the following:

1. **Boards demonstrate room for improvement.** To evaluate board performance, BoardSource asked executives and board chairs to grade their boards. Boards earned a 2.65, or B- average. The findings reveal that boards are generally better at technical tasks, such as financial oversight and compliance, than they are at adaptive work related to strategy and community outreach.
2. **Board members need to speak out more.** Board members are essential to successful community outreach and advocacy, and they have more work to do in these roles in response to shifts in government funding and public policy.
3. **Distinct diversity gaps persist. Board composition — size and diversity — is changing, but slowly.** As boards shrink, it's even more important to carefully compose the board. The nonprofit sector has seen modest progress on increasing racial/ethnic, gender, and age diversity among executives and board members, but distinct gaps need to be addressed.
4. **Best-in-class boards pay attention to culture and dynamics.** A productive leadership culture requires having the right people on the board, achieving clarity around roles and responsibilities, and educating and engaging board members. Strengthening culture requires thoughtful

planning, determined dedication, and a collective commitment from chief executives, board chairs, and board members.

5. **Board members need to embrace their roles as fundraisers.** In the 2014 survey, fundraising again received the lowest grades and topped the list of board challenges.
6. **Finding financial stability amid constant change requires strategic leadership.** In the wake of the economic downturn, nonprofits continue to find their funding unpredictable and the demand for their services rising. The political, economic, and demographic forces shaping our society are constantly changing, and so must our organizations if we wish to remain vital and vibrant.

The release of the report, available at leadingwithintent.org, sparked a sector-wide conversation about board performance and it, as well as resources related to it, have been downloaded nearly 33,000 times. We were especially pleased with the widespread response, but disappointed with progress in the area of board diversity, and the focused conversation around why it matters and what to do about it.

Highlighted articles include:

- Nonprofit Quarterly: [Is Your Board “Normal”?](#)
- Nonprofit Quarterly: [The Face of Nonprofit Boards – A Network Problem](#)
- Huffington Post: [How to Get Beyond B-Minus – The State of Nonprofit Boards Today](#)
- CompassPoint Blog: [Does Your Board Foster Inclusivity?](#)

Looking ahead, BoardSource will be expanding and deepening our research, working to identify new ways to increase our understanding of what is happening in boardrooms across the country and learning from those organizations and boards that are leveraging their boards most effectively

to strengthen their organization’s impact and performance. This will include a continued emphasis on partnerships with colleague organizations and academics, which was an important priority in 2015. Through partnerships and collaborations in 2015, we were able to:

- **Explore the relationship between board leadership capacity and overall organizational capacity.** Through a partnership with the TCC Group, BoardSource identified some promising findings in the critical areas of the board-staff partnership and strategic planning, and adaptive and leadership capacity. BoardSource and the TCC Group shared the preliminary findings as a part of a session at the 2015 BoardSource Leadership Forum and intend to release a paper documenting further findings.
- **Document trends in foundation governance.** BoardSource worked with The Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) to structure and interpret its survey and report on foundation board practices. [Benchmarking Foundation Governance](#) shares data and infographics on crucial topics related to foundation governance based on survey responses from CEOs at 64 private, U.S.-based foundations giving at least \$10 million annually. BoardSource will expand on these findings as a part of our next Leading with Intent study, which will be released in early 2017.
- **Support other research being conducted on nonprofit board leadership and governance.** In 2015, we had the opportunity to support several projects, including the Stanford Graduate School of Business’s [2015 Survey on Board of Directors of Nonprofit Organizations](#).

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

Creating Positive Change by Directing Attention to Key Opportunities and Challenges Facing Nonprofit Leaders

BoardSource's leadership agenda emphasizes opportunities that can help the sector leverage resources, capacities, and strategies for greater impact, including trends identified through our research. In 2015, that included a continued focus on increasing transparency around board leadership practices, strategic and diverse board recruitment, and — most visibly — the important leadership role that board members can and should be playing as active and engaged advocates for their missions.

Reinforcing the board's role as ambassadors and advocates for their missions, BoardSource believes that it is absolutely essential for nonprofit board members to embrace this role for their missions. In 2014, we launched a coordinated effort to encourage board engagement in advocacy called the [Stand for Your Mission campaign](#), together with our colleagues at the Alliance for Justice, Campion Foundation, Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and National Council of Nonprofits.

Building on the momentum of the [Stand for Your Mission campaign](#), in 2015 BoardSource codified the expectation for board ambassadorship and advocacy as a part of a new edition of [Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards](#), which is widely recognized as the definitive resource on the roles and responsibilities of nonprofit boards and board members.

Updating this flagship publication was not something that BoardSource took lightly. "Ten Basics" is the lead title in BoardSource's Governance Series and is cited in an immeasurable number of board orientation handbooks and trainings. It is also the foundation for many BoardSource trainings and tools, including BoardSource's Board Self-Assessment, which is used by boards to evaluate their performance and benchmark against other boards. Making the board's role in ambassadorship and advocacy explicit as a part of this core resource sent a visible and important message that board advocacy is essential.

Make Advocacy a Part of Every Board Member's Duty

By Sonya Campion

Why Board Engagement in Advocacy Is Essential

By ANNE WALLESTAD | July 15, 2015

Will Your Board Members Be Willing to Ask – Who's the One?

Stand For Your Mission Pushes Board Advocacy

By Patrick Sullivan - July 15, 2015

THE BLOG

A Compelling Case to Make Advocacy a Part of Board Culture



STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

Generating Evidence-based Recommendations for Board Practice

The combination of BoardSource's broad research and direct support uniquely positions us to bridge research and practice, and generate truly evidence-based recommendations for board practice. While there are many ways that we are working to fulfill this strategic imperative, one of the most promising tactics is through evaluation-driven consulting that seeks to document learning and change that occurs over time as a result of focused board interventions. The following are two 2015 examples of these types of "BoardSource Learning Projects."

- **Supporting executives and the board-staff partnership.** BoardSource continued its partnership with the Eugene & Agnes E. Meyer Foundation in taking a community-based, cohort approach to engaging nonprofit executive directors and their boards in ongoing board development and growth through the "Strengthening Board Governance Program." Now in its fifth cohort, this program combines the Board Self-Assessment and educational resources of the [Board Support Program](#) with ongoing, cohort coaching for participating executives. Each completed cohort resulted in documented improvements in board knowledge, performance, and impact, and is supporting executives in the critical role that they play in strengthening the board-staff partnership.
- **Helping boards and executives plan for leadership change.** In 2015, we partnered with the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta to launch a program to help 15 Atlanta-area nonprofit executive directors and their boards develop thoughtful and strategic succession plans for their organizations. The program included individualized support for each organization, as well as cohort coaching for the executives, which helped them think through and articulate needs and challenges related to their own leadership plans and future transitions with the guidance and support of their peers and a BoardSource consultant. At the end of the six-month program, each participating nonprofit had developed a succession plan policy, an emergency succession plan, and a departure-defined succession plan, helping to ensure that each of the fifteen organizations was prepared for planned or unplanned change and well-positioned to provide strong and resilient leadership through that transition.

"Before the Strengthening Board Governance Program and the changes we made as a result of it, I dreaded going to board meetings. I realized it shouldn't be this way but I didn't know my way out of the situation. I didn't know what I didn't know about how to make it better. That said, I wasn't ready to leave the organization — there were too many things I wanted to see us accomplish. The program with BoardSource helped me find a positive path forward with my board. Now board meetings — and the board overall — are productive. We know how to work in partnership, and we're having fun doing it."

— Christopher Fay, executive director, Homestretch

"The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta's 2014 research indicated that in order to engage in an effective succession planning process, nonprofit CEOs and board members need and want guidance from a trusted, experienced advisor. Workshops providing overviews or templates were not going to fully meet their needs. In response, the Community Foundation partnered with BoardSource to design a program that would give a group of Atlanta-area nonprofits access to research-based instruction and individual guidance — someone in their corner guiding them along the way, holding them accountable and forcing them to answer the tough questions. Reflecting upon it now, we know our model was successful."

— Lita Pardi, senior program officer, The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

Inspiring New and Diverse Leaders to Serve

The future of the social sector depends on our ability to attract and engage top talent at the board and staff levels and to do so in a way that builds relevance and credibility within our communities. This requires boards to lead from the top when it comes to a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity, and to make real progress in diversifying nonprofit board leadership.

In 2015, BoardSource continued efforts to support more strategic board recruitment that results in stronger and more diverse boards, including through our free [Board Recruitment Center](#), which emphasizes the importance of thoughtful and diverse board composition and nontraditional board recruitment strategies that move beyond insular, network-driven board recruitment that tends to replicate — rather than diversify — existing trends in board composition.

Looking ahead, BoardSource will be expanding its leadership on the critical role that boards play in their organization's overall orientation to diversity, inclusion, and equity and working to create greater urgency and momentum to drive change.

Nonprofit Board Service Reaches a Tipping Point in Corporate Volunteerism Programs

In 2015, a report by the Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy and The Conference Board reported that — for the first time — the majority of corporate volunteerism program included a formalized board service programs (53 percent up from 43 percent in 2012). BoardSource has long recognized that corporate programs in nonprofit board service are a powerful way to inspire new board leaders to serve and to support strategic board recruitment amongst nonprofit organizations.

BoardSource's work with corporations continues to grow, and represents an important way to drive new talent and expertise into the nonprofit sector and to help nonprofit organizations access the skills, expertise, and networks needed to advance their missions.

BoardSource's Resources & Services:

EDUCATING LEADERS AND SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE BOARD SERVICE AND GOVERNANCE

BoardSource's new strategic framework envisions a world where every social sector organization has the leadership it needs to fulfill its mission and advance the public good. This broad vision reinforced our commitment to providing board leadership supports that are affordable, scalable, and accessible beyond the limits of geography and time zones. It also strengthened our mandate to serve organizations that may not have access to support from other board leadership resources, including the 83 percent of charitable organizations with budgets of less than \$1 million a year.

This commitment to accessible and scalable resources that enables us to reach and serve a growing global network of social sector leaders is captured in our final two strategic imperatives:

- Provide relevant and accessible resources and guidance to strengthen board leadership globally
- Engage and supporting a broad network of nonprofit board and staff leaders

How our work in 2015 helped advance these two strategic imperatives:

Board Support Program: Providing Year-Round Board Development Support

BoardSource's research supports that regular and rigorous board self-assessment is the key to strengthened board performance, and we have institutionalized that concept as a part of our year-round board development program for organizations. The program encourages boards to conduct a board self-assessment, included as a part of the annual program fee, and then provides open access for both board and staff members to learn about ways to grow and change together. It compels organizations to commit to an ongoing cycle of board assessment and education that supports continuous improvement and helps identify and address opportunities for improvement before they may hamper organizational performance.

"What boards do — or don't do — matters. Foundation boards have the power to send powerfully positive messages about the importance of strong and effective board leadership that is committed, invested, intentional, and inspired. And as is always the case, the message is much more compelling when it's based on what they do, rather than simply what they say."

— Anne Wallestad, president & CEO,
BoardSource — CEP & HuffPost
Blog: "Who Cares About
How Foundation Boards
Govern Themselves?
I Do, and You
Should Too"

The [Board Support Program](#) has become BoardSource's core board development offering and is based on budget size, with the smallest organizations (annual budgets of less than \$500,000) having access at a subsidized rate of \$500 per year. It is BoardSource's fastest growing program, showing 24 percent growth over a two-year period.

Supporting & Strengthening Foundation Board Leadership

BoardSource is doing more and more work with foundation boards, which face many of the same challenges as nonprofit or charity boards, but also have unique leadership needs and dynamics. In partnership with The Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) and our collaborative research agenda, we worked in 2015 to initiate an ongoing dialogue about the importance of strong and effective foundation board leadership, and to call attention to opportunities for foundation boards to reflect on their own leadership and performance.

A highlight was our collaboration with CEP to advance governance practices in the philanthropic sector. The partnership enables both organizations to offer a powerful suite of tools designed to help foundation boards strengthen their practices and lead their organizations to higher levels of performance. This suite of tools includes BoardSource's foundation board self-assessment, community foundation board self-assessment, and peer-to-peer assessment. CEP, which is focused on the development of comparative data to enable higher-performing grantmakers, brings a grantee perception report, donor perception report for community foundations, and staff perception report to the partnership.

Igniting Passion and Momentum for Board Leadership

2015 BOARDSOURCE LEADERSHIP FORUM

The BoardSource Leadership Forum is a unique opportunity for BoardSource to convene a community of leaders committed to strong board and executive leadership for an inspiring and forward-thinking program. In 2015, the conference took place in New Orleans — a city that is testament to the power of an engaged and committed nonprofit community. Then marking the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, the city served as an inspiring and energizing environment for a conference organized around the theme, “Leading Together for the Public Good,” and for the 900-plus nonprofit leaders from all segments of the sector who joined us there.

In sessions and plenaries presented by a diverse group of leaders from throughout the social sector, everyone in attendance had the luxury of focusing — for two full days — on why and how to invest in their board’s leadership. We shared success stories, dissected failures, discussed challenges, identified solutions, and imagined our futures.

In a post-conference blog post, a young board chair spoke of applying his newfound knowledge on the spot, after learning during the conference that the executive director of his organization was departing. “I was bowled over by the depth of knowledge and experience from the leadership at the conference,” he wrote. “From better presentation of financials to recruiting and retaining high-performing board members, I was able to not only pick up some wonderful advice, but also found myself re-energized for the tasks that lay ahead of me in the coming months as board president.”

BoardSource also initiated a biennial schedule for the BoardSource Leadership Forum at the 2015 conference, which was the result of a board-level discussion of how best to expand BoardSource’s capacity for broad leadership beyond the conference. We are excited about what this new biennial conference schedule is making possible, and look forward to convening again in Seattle in 2017.





PARTNERING WITH CONSULTANTS IN SUPPORT OF STRONGER BOARDS

BoardSource has long recognized the important role that independent consultants play in serving and supporting nonprofit organizations and their boards. Building on the work that we have done to expand our consultant network, in 2015 we launched a new membership program specifically for consultants who work with or desire to work with nonprofit boards. By providing consultants with membership benefits that include resources,

training, and networking opportunities, our consultant members have the opportunity to build upon their knowledge of nonprofit governance, strengthen their consulting practices, and increase their value to their clients. This in turn enables BoardSource to reach even more nonprofit boards and leaders with the guidance and information they need to strengthen their board leadership and governance practices.

“BoardSource is my go-to place for resourcing my clients, as well as honing my own knowledge and skill, and keeping up to date on new approaches to building governance strength.”

– Donaldson Hill, consultant



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS!

The support of grantmakers nationwide propels BoardSource's mission forward and empowers us to reach thousands of new nonprofit leaders every year. We are grateful to the institutions and individuals whose support enables us to provide guidance, educational resources, and tools to nonprofit organizations of all sizes in communities across the country. We also thank the many donors and volunteers who provide financial and in-kind support of BoardSource's mission.

\$100,000 OR MORE

Annenberg Foundation
Campion Foundation
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Ford Foundation
Kellogg Foundation
The Lodestar Foundation
Lyda Hill Foundation
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
The Patterson Foundation
UPS Foundation

\$50,000 TO \$99,999

Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund
Moore Foundation
Prudential

\$25,000 TO \$49,999

Alcoa
Commonfund

\$10,000 TO \$24,999

Adobe
Allstate
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Asiatico & Associates
Chevron
Corporate Executive Board
Disney
Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation
Google
Gulf Coast Community Foundation
Kaiser Permanente
MetLife
New York Life
PricewaterhouseCoopers
Relationship Science
Scan Foundation
Sony Pictures Entertainment
Streamlink
Target
The Moody's Foundation
Thrivent Financial
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

\$5,000 TO \$9,999

Advanced Solutions International
Association Headquarters
BoardEffect
Caplin & Drysdale
Case Foundation
Corning Incorporated
John Deere
Laurel Foundation
McGregor Fund
Nasdaq
Sterling Martin Associates
Xerox Corporation

PROGRAM REVENUE

Program	Amount (\$)	Amount (%)
Contributed Support	1,956,906	29
Consulting Services	1,557,504	23
Membership Programs	1,004,586	15
Publications	833,782	13
Assessment Services	513,379	8
BoardSource Leadership Forum	392,360	6
Training Programs	268,785	4
Investments & Other Income	130,969	2
Total	\$ 6,389,490	100%

PROGRAM EXPENSES

Program	Amount (\$)	Amount (%)
Consulting Services	1,486,972	25
BoardSource Leadership Forum	867,869	14
Membership Programs	690,351	11
Sector Leadership Initiatives	577,591	10
Publications	565,123	9
Fundraising	455,586	8
Assessment Services	447,872	7
Training Programs	396,787	7
General & Administrative	535,500	9
Total	\$6,023,651	100%

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As of 12/31/15



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boardsource.org