



The Board-Staff Partnership

The partnership between the board and the executive leader is critically important to the success of an organization.

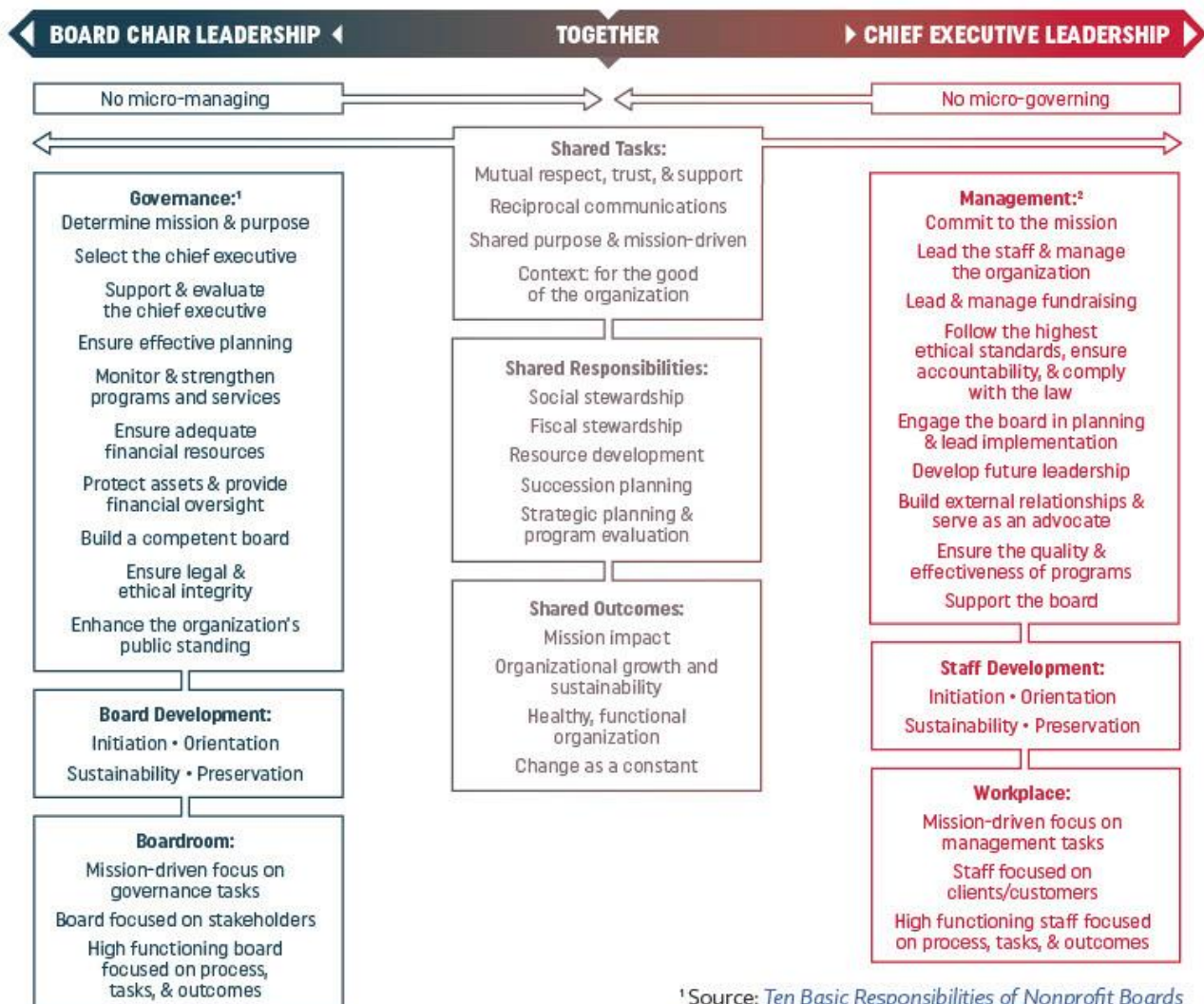
A strong and healthy board-staff partnership provides flexible and resilient leadership that contributes positively to the organization's overall impact. A weak or dysfunctional partnership impedes the effectiveness of both the board and the executive, and puts the organization at risk in a number of ways – lack of strategic alignment or direction, executive turnover, a toxic organizational culture; the list could go on and on.

To cultivate the trust, respect, candor, and communication that characterize a healthy partnership between a board and staff, BoardSource **recommends a number of key practices**, including the following:

- Regular check-ins between the executive and chair. Open and consistent communication channels between the executive and the board chair help build a strong working relationship and surface issues and challenges before they get bigger.
- A commitment to “no surprises.” For both the executive and the board, it's important to share openly and honestly, including when there's bad news. This is especially important between the executive and the chair, who set the tone for the relationship between the executive and the board as a whole.
- Thoughtful reflection on performance. One of the board's essential responsibilities is to **annually evaluate the executive's performance** and provide honest feedback on successes and challenges. Equally important, however, is that the **board assesses its own performance**. In addition to helping strengthen board performance, it demonstrates the board's commitment to shared leadership and responsibility.

THE BOARD CHAIR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE PARTNERSHIP

The partnership of the board chair and chief executive provides a structure for accomplishing the tasks of the organization. Governance and management complement and support each other — together focused on mission through different perspectives and actions. The partnership itself is critical in providing a communications headquarter for sharing information, addressing issues, and planning next steps appropriate to the individual and collective responsibilities.



¹Source: *Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards*

²Source: *The Nonprofit Chief Executive's Ten Basic Responsibilities*