

2019 LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

Building Powerful Boards

MARLA J. WESTON, PHD



“ An association is defined as a group of people banded together for a specific purpose. ”

People

Purpose

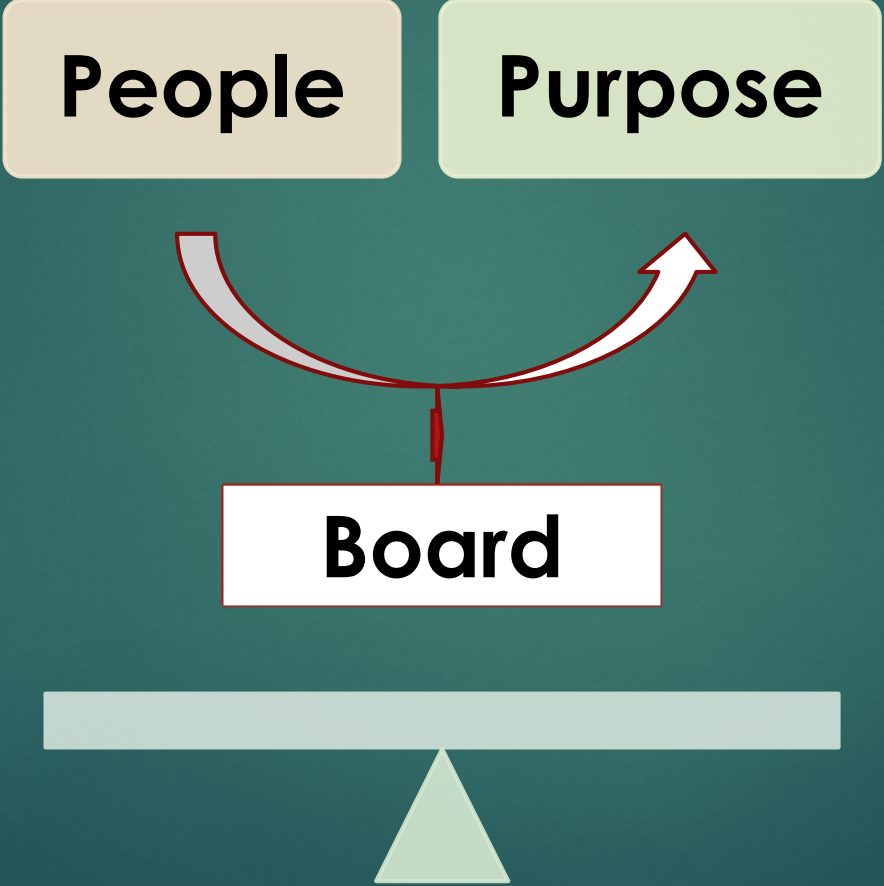


League of Women Voters

We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate. We believe in the power of women to create a more perfect democracy.

➤ Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.





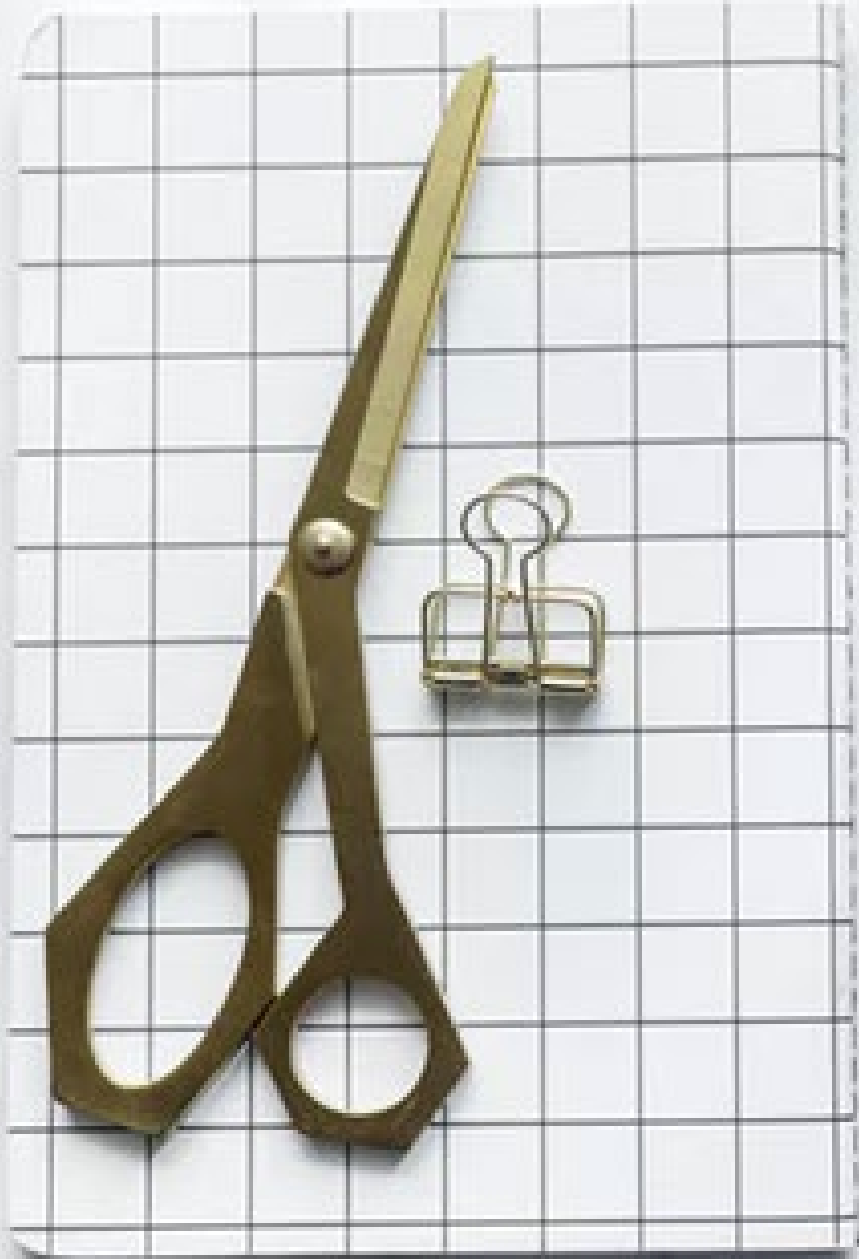


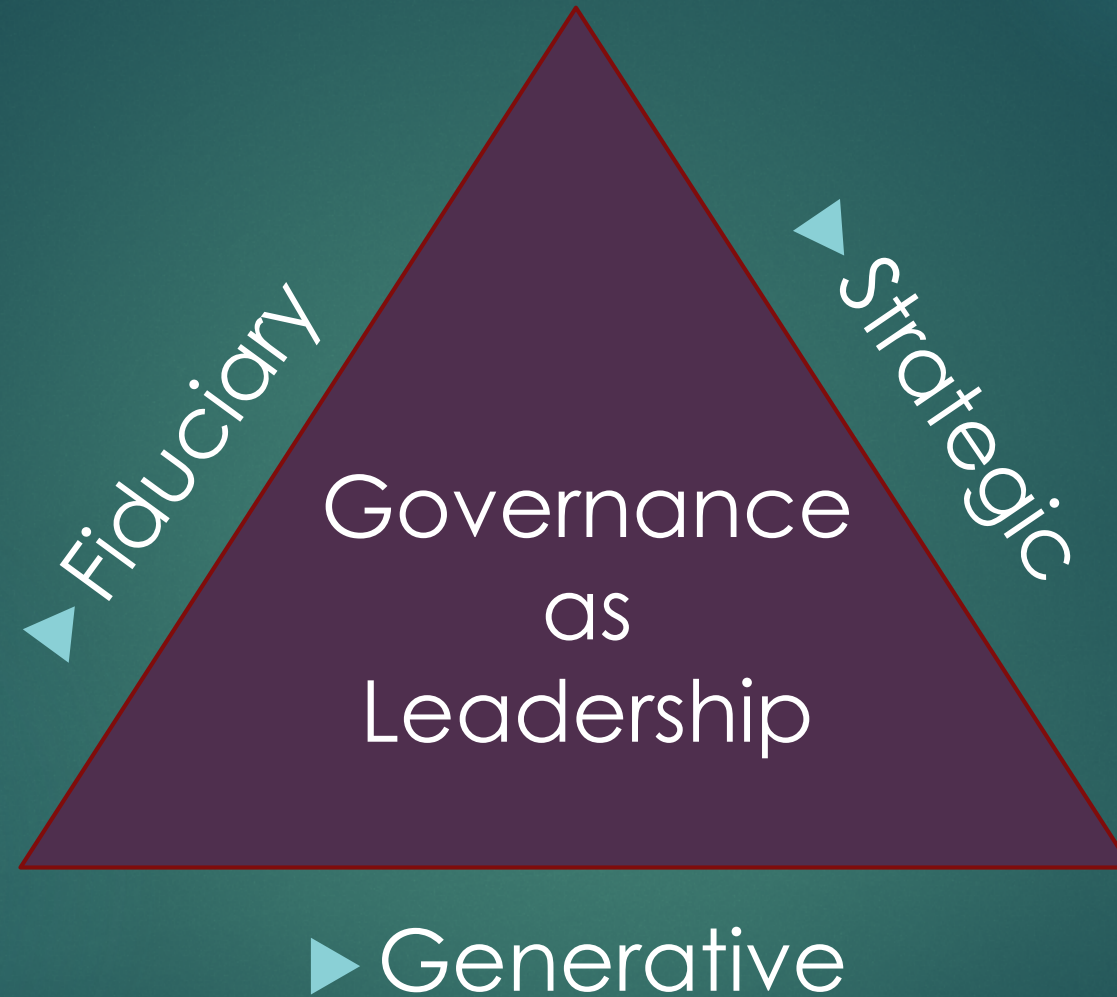
Key's to Powerful Board

1. Focus on organizational governance and stewardship
2. Competent individual board members → competent/high performing board



**Operational →
Governance**





Chait, R.P., Ryan, W.P., Taylor, B.E. 2005. *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards*. Board Source.

Modes of Governance



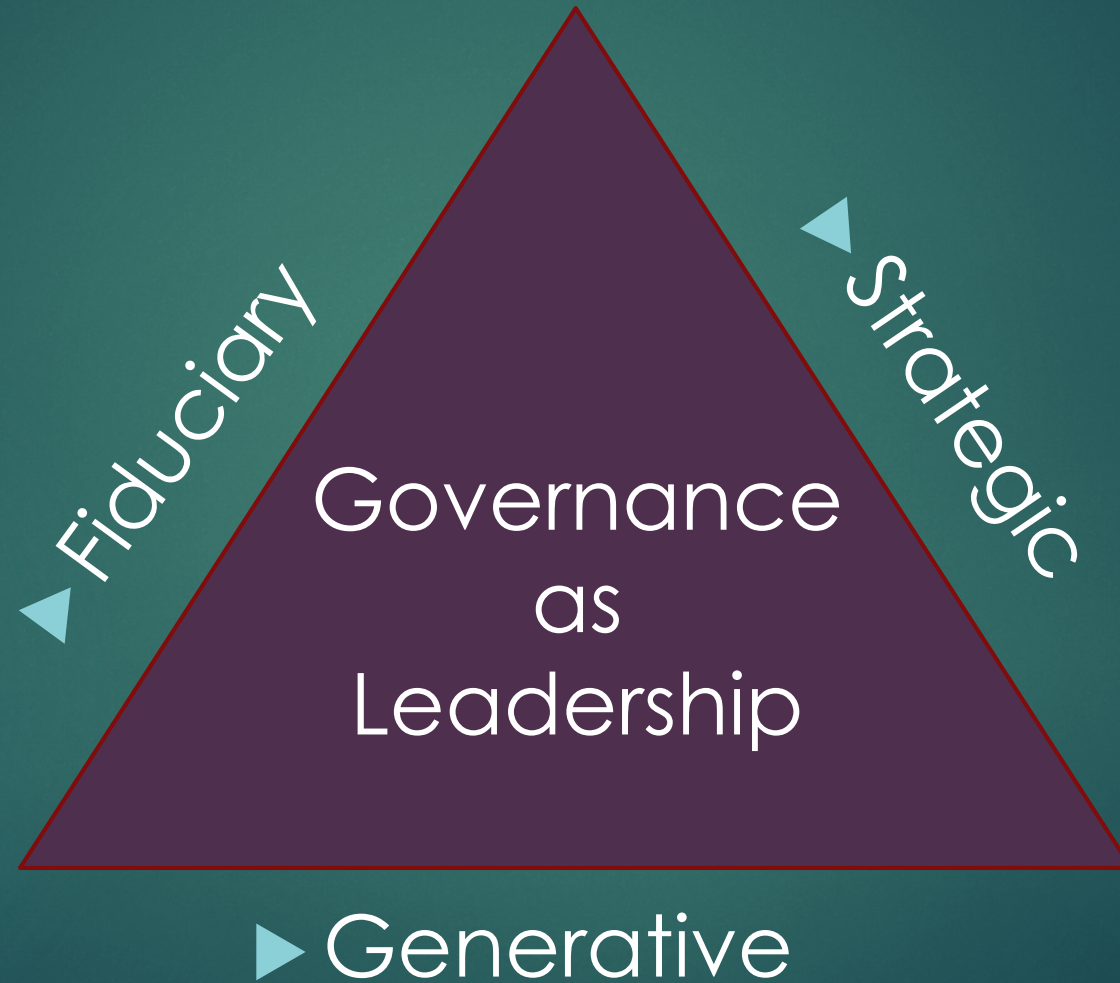
- I. **Fiduciary:** Act as stewards of tangible assets; deploy resources wisely; ensure legal and financial integrity
- II. **Strategic:** Scan internal and external environments; strategic thinking; design and modify strategic plans
- III. **Generative:** Frame and confront challenges rooted in values, traditions, and beliefs; engage in sense-making, meaning-making, and problem framing

	Fiduciary	Strategic	Generative
Board Focus	Define problem(s)	Solve problem(s)	Frame problem(s)
Board Process	Parliamentary procedure	Logical and empirical discussion	More informal and creative
Problems are to be...	Spotted	Solved	Framed
Decision Making	Resolution	Reaching consensus	Framing the question
Board sees their role as....	Oversight/ authority	Strategist	Fresh perspective
Key Question	What's wrong?	What's the plan?	What's the question?
Performance Metrics	Facts, figures, finances, reports	Strategic indicators, competitive analysis	Signs of learning and discerning



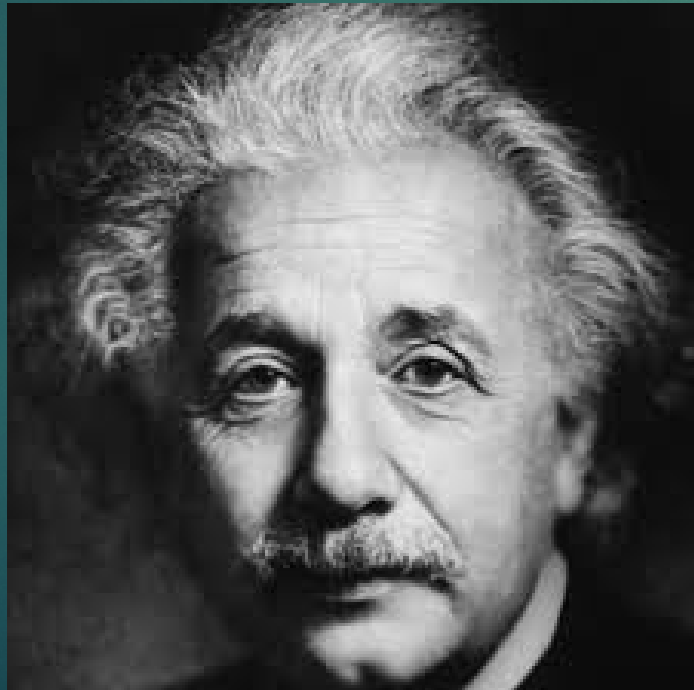
mission = promote literacy and a thirst
for knowledge in all community members

The Governance Triangle



Generative Governing


- ▶ Frame the key issues
- ▶ Identify the right questions
- ▶ Generate options



“If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on it, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I knew the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than 5 minutes.”

-Albert Einstein

Asking Powerful Questions



Yes/no
Which

Who
When
Where

Why
How
What

Generative Questions

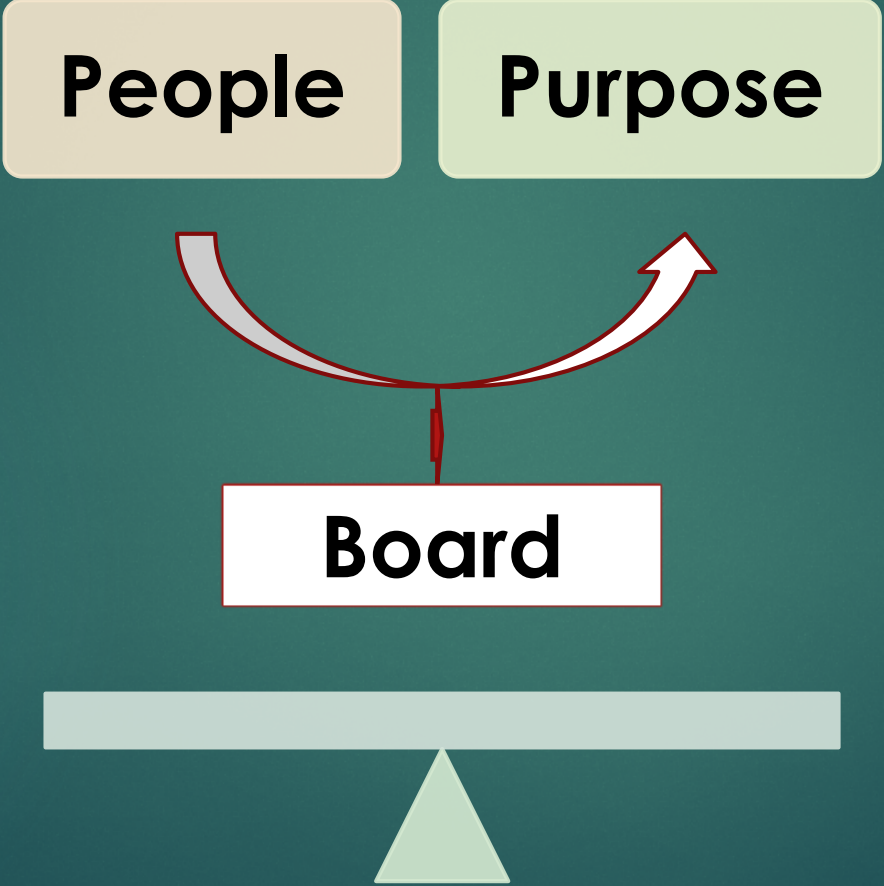
- ▶ Is this a preference, tradition or requirement for success?
- ▶ How do we use our power effectively?
- ▶ How do we [xxx] in a way that advances our mission/goals?
- ▶ What are we good at? How do we leverage what we are good at?
- ▶ Do we have the problem right? Are we asking the right questions?

Board Agenda

- Big stuff first
- Minivisioning sessions with provocative questions
- Background briefing papers
- Silent starts / one minute essays





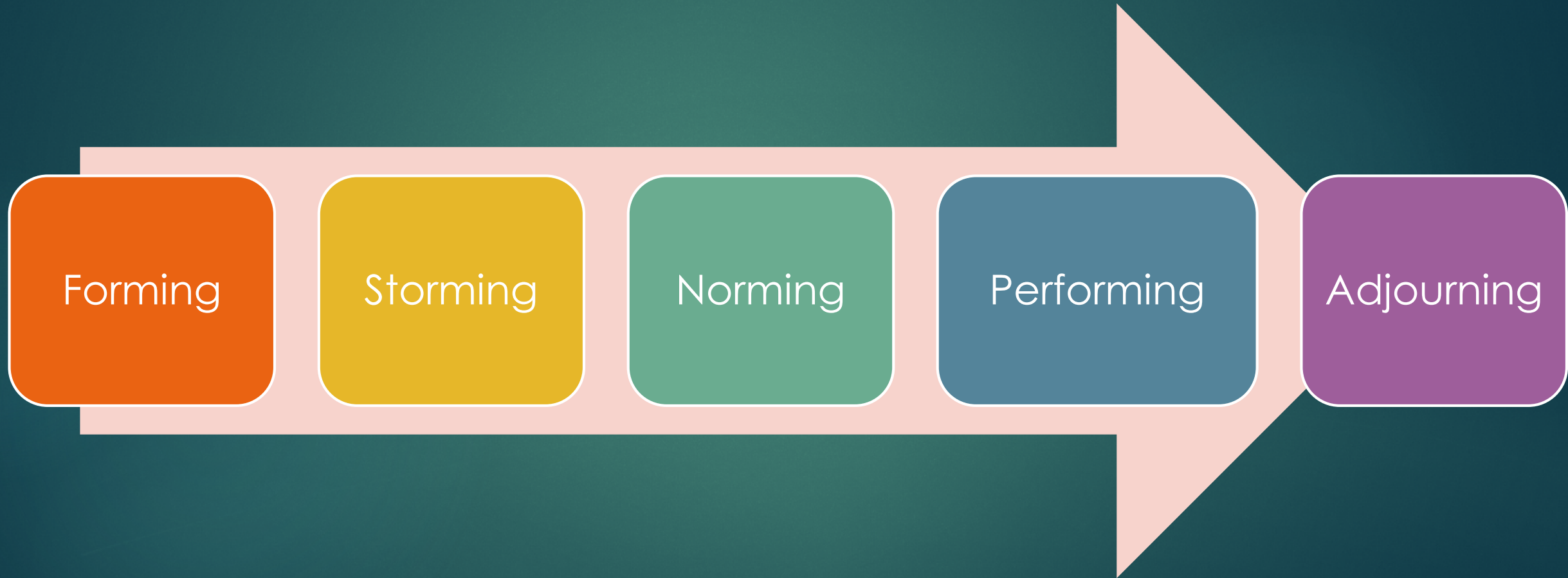


Sonnenfeld's Markers of Great Boards

- ▶ Climate of trust and candor
- ▶ Willingness to share information
- ▶ Culture that invites multiple perspectives
- ▶ Commitment to assessment of collective board as well as individual board members

Source: "What Makes Great Boards Great", by Jeffrey Sonnenfeld,
Harvard Business Review, Sept. 2002

Tuckman's Team Development Model



Forming



Excited Confusion



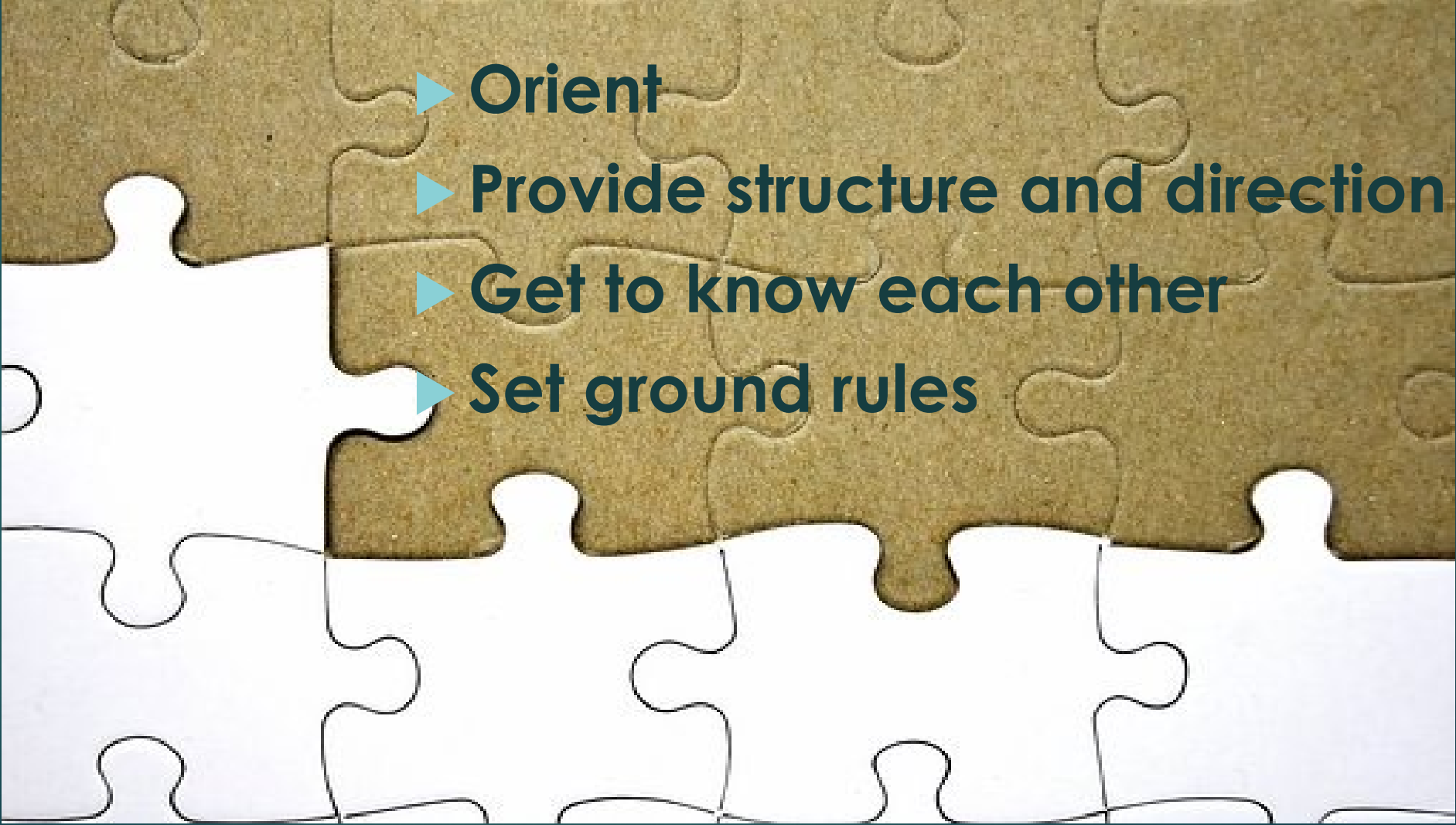


"All those in favor say 'Aye.'"

"Aye." "Aye."


"Aye." "Aye."

Forming

- 
- ▶ **Orient**
 - ▶ **Provide structure and direction**
 - ▶ **Get to know each other**
 - ▶ **Set ground rules**

Storming





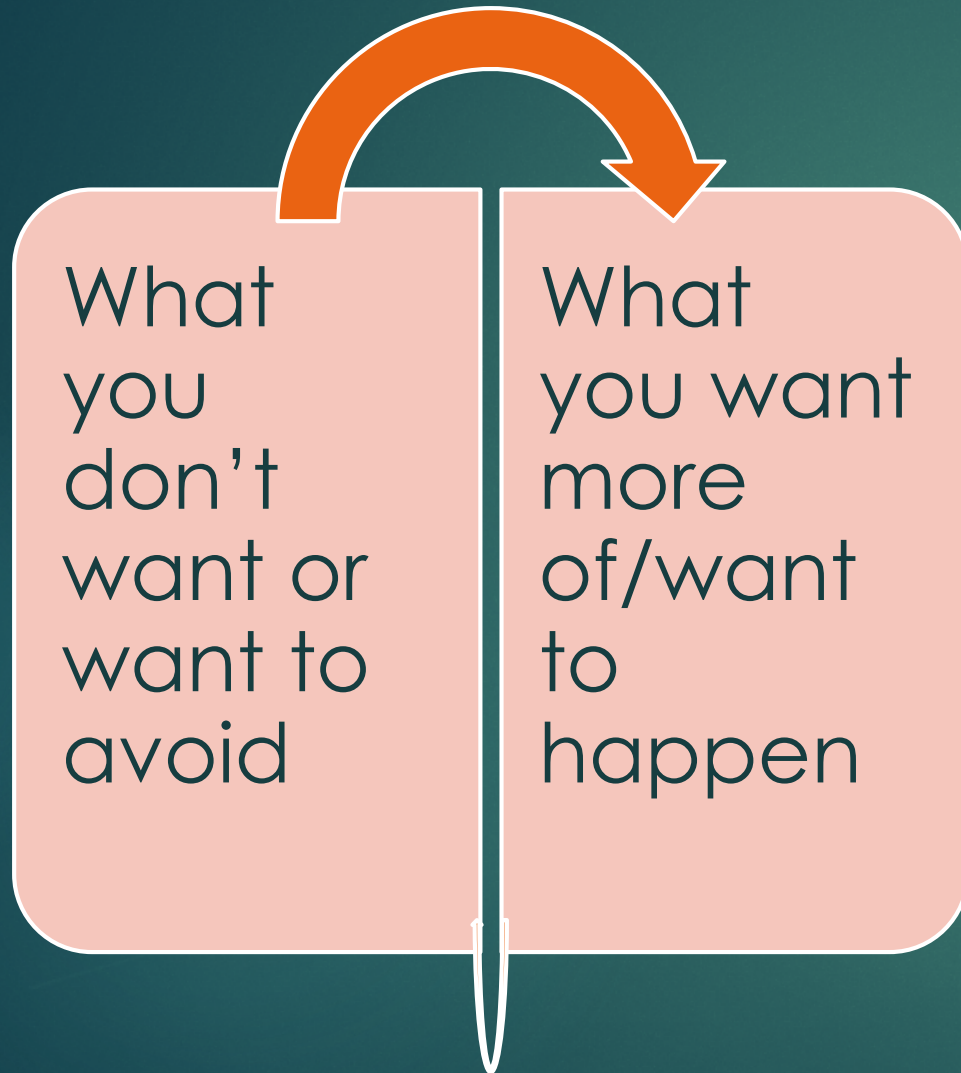
“Reasonable people, making decisions under conditions of uncertainty, are likely to have honest disagreements over the best path.”

(Eisenhart, KM, Kahwaju, JL, & Bourgeoise LJ, 1997, How Management Teams Have a Good Fight, HBR.)

Storming

- ✓ Allow differences / expect to be challenged
- ✓ Engage all voices – How do you see it?
- ✓ Fiduciary/strategic/generative?
- ✓ Keep focused on the common purpose (mission, roadmap)
- ✓ Multiply alternatives using positive framing

Positive Framing



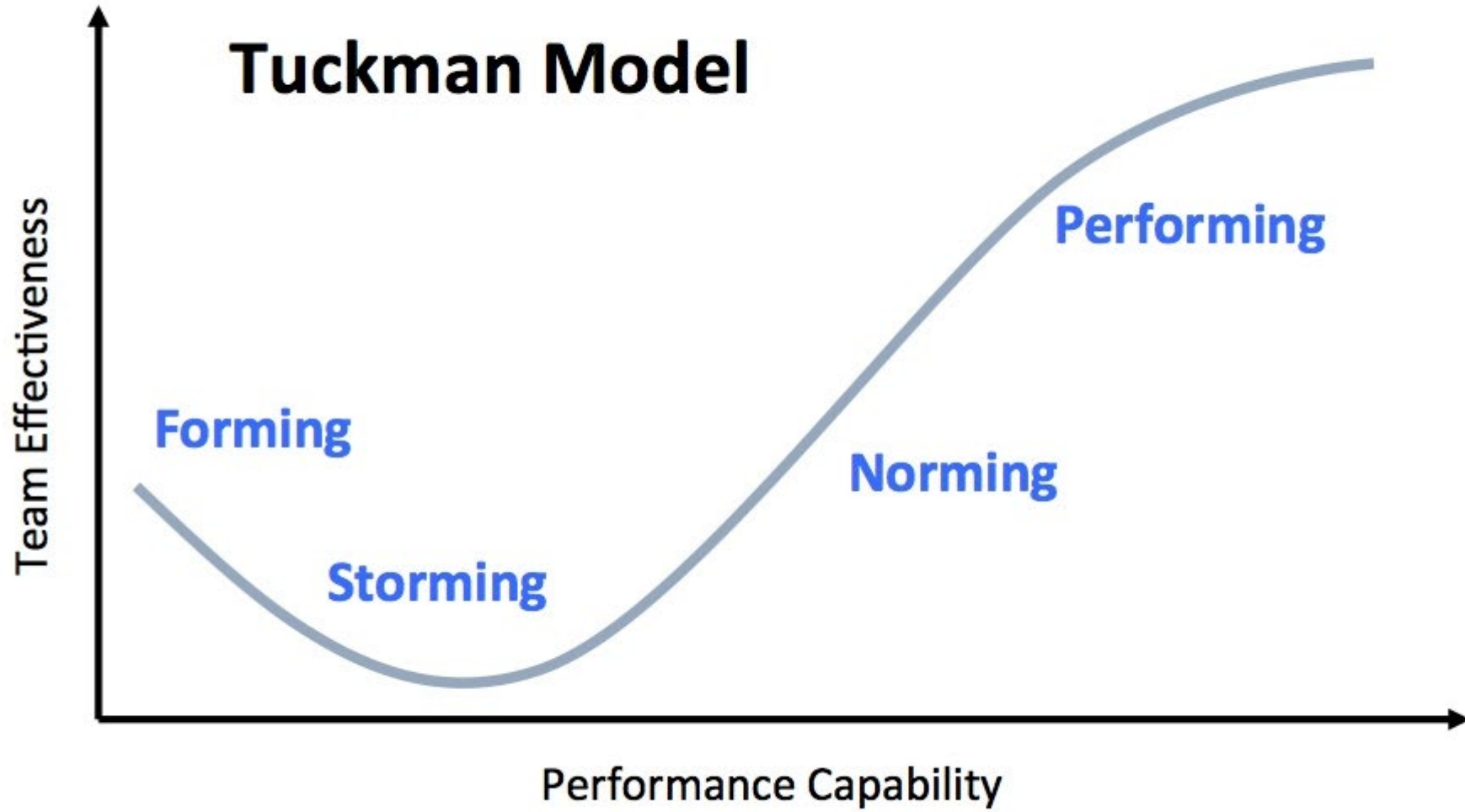
- ▶ How might we handle this better?
- ▶ What would it look like if it were ideal?
- ▶ Where is it working?
- ▶ How can we get both (yes/and)?

Storming

- ▶ Hold each other accountable to the ground rules
- ▶ KEEP THE CONVERSATION IN THE MEETING



Tuckman Model



Norming/Performing



Norming/Performing





Adjourning



Norming/Performing/Adjourning

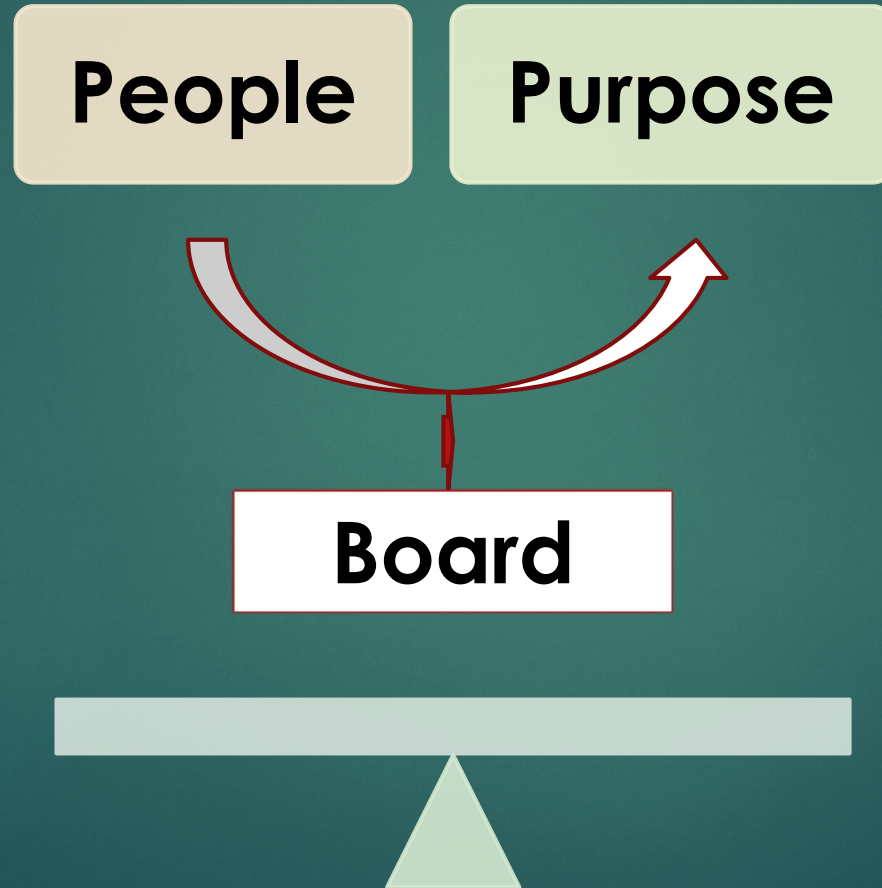




Practice health, resilience and joy



Association



A top-down view of a group of people's hands stacked in a circle, symbolizing teamwork and engagement. The hands are of various skin tones and are wearing blue wristbands. The background is dark, and the overall mood is one of unity and collaboration. A red rectangular shape is visible in the top right corner of the image.

Involve Others

Member Engagement

**Volunteering = Giving one's time
and talent to drive mission**



Microvolunteering

- ▶ Easy, quick, low-commitment activities – help from home
- ▶ Convenient, bite-sized, crowdsourced, networked
- ▶ Daily action that involves brief amount of time
- ▶ Micro-small activities

Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.

Marjorie Moore



