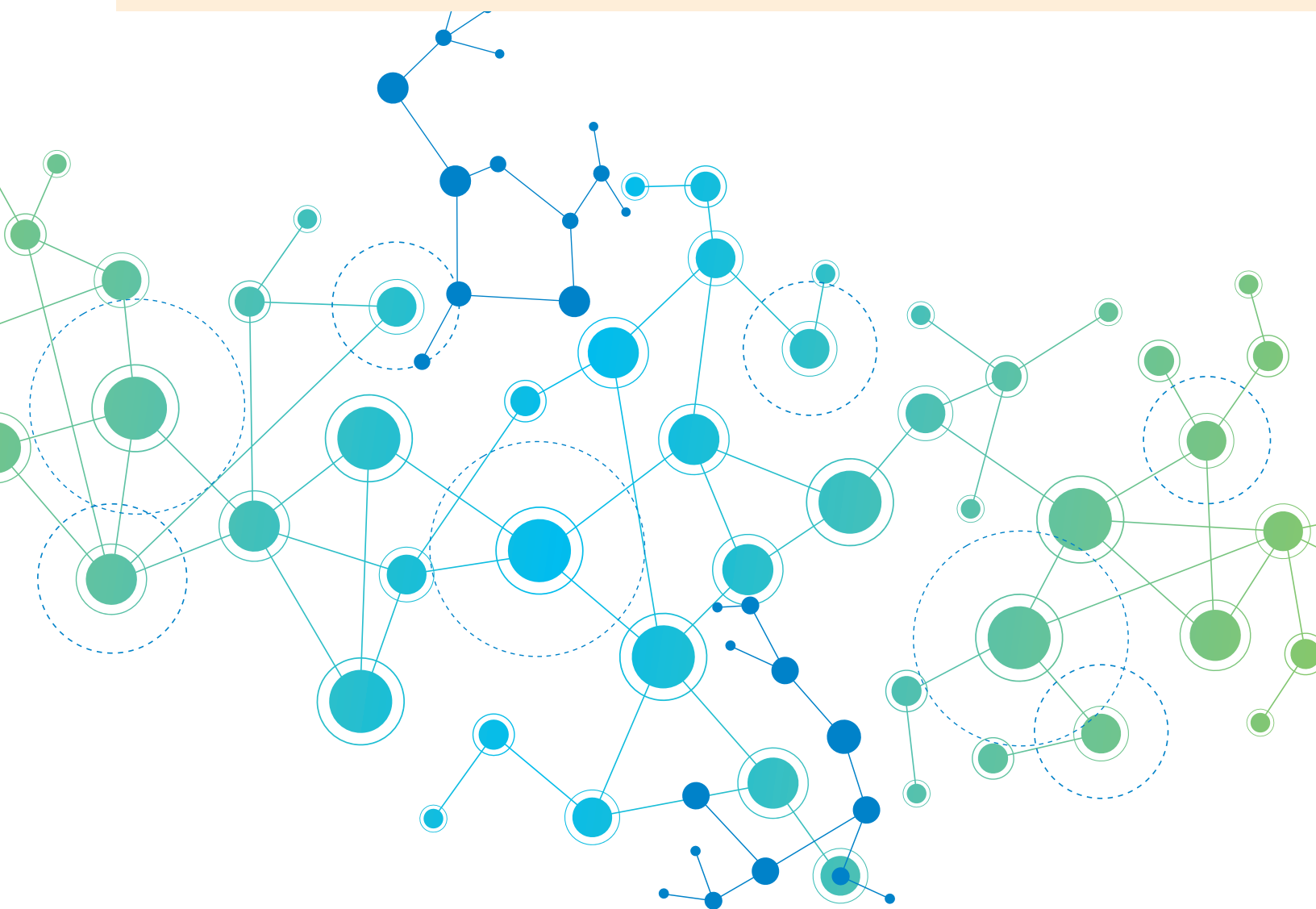


# Shared Decision-making for Nonprofit Governance



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## Reimagining Governance Initiative

This paper was developed for Reimagining Governance, which is an ONN initiative designed to advance new approaches to the governance of nonprofit organizations. In response to a changing environment, it aims to help nonprofit leaders reimagine a more effective way to fulfil governance functions, including its structure, practices and processes.

For more information, please go to: <https://theonnc.ca/our-work/our-people/reimagining-governance/>

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## Introduction

Complex demands, technological advances, and next generation leaders' shifting interests put a spotlight on the shape and function of governance in nonprofit organizations.

This paper is a part of the Reimagining Governance initiative's research series, which is designed to help nonprofit leaders reimagine a more effective way to fulfill their organization's governance including its structures, processes and practices.

An increasing number of researchers and capacity-builders in the nonprofit sector have concluded that traditional governance models are often inadequate to effectively respond to the rapidly changing environment and other challenges faced by non-profits and their communities. <sup>1</sup>

The need for innovative approaches to fulfill governance comes at a time when there is more pressure and more opportunities for nonprofit leaders to adopt a shared leadership model with staff, in their governance work and at collaborative tables. A Mowat NFP paper, Peering Into the Future, says:

*"There is a growing literature that suggests that new, transformative and adaptive approaches to governance are needed to ensure better responsiveness to social issues, system-wide impact and adaptability to the changing environment. This thinking envisions governance as more collaborative – a function that can be shared and not limited to the board."*<sup>2</sup>

Shared governance decision-making happens regularly within nonprofit organizations among board members and between the board, governance committees, and staff. Organizations are also increasingly involved in collaborative organizing structures such as community governance models in the health sector, collective impact initiatives, and community hubs. However, it is less common for organizations to intentionally share governance-level decision-making beyond the board, such as with those they support, community partners or content experts.

While organizations often involve stakeholders in consultations, for example, consultations about priorities for a strategic plan, it is less common to involve a wide range of stakeholders in governance decision-making. In other words, stakeholders are invited to provide input but not to decide.

The research paper, Participatory Revolution in Nonprofit Management describes it this way:

*"...even in the most stakeholder-oriented organizations, broader stakeholder participation is generally limited to providing input and being heard; ...there is little 'depth' to the participation, in the sense of having the power to make ultimate decisions. The majority of organizations are in the second rung of the participation ladder, where stakeholders are only indirectly included in the decision-making process via the 'representative role by which individual board members serve their constituencies."*<sup>3</sup>

Two forces – the need to change the way governance is fulfilled and the growing demand for more shared decision-making approaches – make this an important juncture to explore how shared decision-making can enhance governance by increasing diversity, involving more voices, and capitalizing on a wider range of competencies than a handful of board members can provide.

Interestingly, our research didn't find many examples of broad-based shared governance decision-making in the nonprofit sector. So we focused more on the concept – the definition, the case, benefits and challenges, critical success factors, and topics for further reflection and research. Our paper presents what we learned under the following headings.

## Definition of shared leadership and decision-making

Our starting place was to clarify what shared leadership and decision-making mean because there is a vast array of definitions and perceptions. We present what we believe are two useful definitions.

**For the purpose of this paper we've defined governance shared decision-making as a broader-based approach that goes beyond the board as the sole locus of governance control. It assumes that management, constituents, experts, collaborative partners and other stakeholders are also involved in making governance decisions.**

## The case for shared decision-making

We then asked ourselves whether broad-based shared decision-making should be part of new approaches to governance not just as a nice-to-have if you can find the time and resources but as an essential ingredient of good governance.

## Benefits and challenges

We identified common characteristics of various approaches to shared decision-making and provide a summary of the related benefits and challenges.

## Critical success factors

Information about shared decision-making comes from literature on areas as diverse as agile organizing models, people-centred clinical approaches, distributed leadership staff models, and networked and collaborative governance. We've drawn from these areas to identify critical success factors. This is helpful information for organizations that want to effectively broaden their governance decision-making.

## Topics for further reflection and research

Governance could be strengthened by broader-based decision-making if we knew how to do it well. With the hope that this paper is the beginning of a more substantive conversation, we've identified further areas of exploration.

## Definitions

Shared leadership and decision-making are often talked about but not well or consistently understood.

For this paper, we use the following definitions:

- Shared leadership is a “style that broadly distributes leadership responsibility such that people within a team and organization lead each other. Shared leadership has frequently been compared to horizontal leadership, distributed leadership, and collective leadership and is most contrasted with traditional, ‘vertical’, or ‘hierarchical’ leadership that resides predominately with an individual instead of a group.”<sup>4</sup>
- Shared decision-making is a complex process in which decisions are made in a collective way that is dispersed more broadly than a few individuals in key positions.<sup>5</sup>

Shared leadership, decision-making and accountability are intertwined. You can’t have one without the others; success is achieved by finding the sweet spot between the three elements as explored in the section titled Critical Success Factors.



Before shared decision-making can work effectively, the organization’s leaders need a clear and collective understanding about what it means. They must also share a commitment to an authentic process. Getting input through consultation, feedback and other engagement strategies plays a part but asking for input is not the same as sharing decision-making.

To be authentic, shared decision-making requires an organization to share power. This means sharing the authority to make decisions and sharing the responsibility to be held accountable for outcomes.

# The Case for Shared Decision-making

Shifts in the environment make shared leadership and its requisite shared decision-making approaches and processes critical components of nonprofit governance.

## Collaborating to achieve mission and impact

There is growing acknowledgement that single organizations working in isolation cannot move the needle on entrenched social issues or create the necessary efficiencies of scale. As a result, sector leaders are seeing collaborations and networked strategies as being critical for success.

In complex collaborations, aspects of governance and management are shared by organizations that function as equal partners. Research has shown that when these collaborations fail or experience inertia, it's often because they have not put adequate or effective processes in place to share in decision-making and manage multiple accountabilities. Understanding how to do this effectively has become a core leadership competency.

**“Moving forward in today’s digital age involves a complete shift in mindset, culture and operating philosophy... (that shift) away from command-and-control cultures toward management practices that harness diverse crowds of people who are engaged, energized and focussed...”<sup>6</sup>**

## Creating more agile, participatory organizations

Organizational leaders are moving away from rigidly hierarchical, command and control structures toward more agile, participatory approaches, adaptable organizing designs, and self-managing teams. In her article *Organizing for Empowerment*, Chloe Waretini explains the reason for this shift as follows: “centralized authority structures which were very effective in past centuries are now often obstacles to the change we want to effect. They inhibit creativity and innovation, leave large numbers of people disengaged, and can perpetuate systems of inequality.”<sup>7</sup>

Unlike previous generations, the volunteer leaders, staff, donors and constituents who grew up with digital connectedness expect to be included in critical decisions that affect them. To satisfy this expectation, organizations require agile, participatory structures and the sophisticated processes, practices and organizational cultures that enable it.

## Technology is a game changer

Technology enables the deeper, broader, more complex shared decision-making approaches that are essential if nonprofit leaders want to create strong networks and use decentralized action to achieve a shared vision.

In her review of the book *New Power*, Hilary Pearson says: “Technology gives us all (or all of us who can access it) ways to participate, to collaborate, to create, and to engage.” She describes digital technologies that link us as “hardware and software that enable us to communicate broadly, rapidly, and yet intimately”.<sup>8</sup> Canada Helps’ CEO Marina Glogovac says “the digital world is no longer a mere channel, but a transformative force that is creating completely new behaviours and opportunities.”<sup>9</sup>

**“For the majority of us, neither the primary motivation nor the results of shared leadership is having less work to do. It’s actually a lot of work, but the results are exponentially better...what we’re able to accomplish together is way more than...any one person can accomplish.”<sup>10</sup>**

## The Benefits and Challenges of Shared Decision-making

A shared decision-making approach may present benefits and challenges. The goal is to capitalize on the benefits while mitigating the challenges.

	Benefits	Challenges
<b>Diversity</b>	Generates a diversity of perspectives which leads to better decisions and more innovation.	Produces too many points of view and perspectives which are hard to consolidate.
<b>Engagement</b>	Builds higher levels of engagement, which energizes stakeholders and creates greater investment in the organization's success.	Requires letting go of power and authority to a wider network. It also requires the willingness and capacity of people to assume responsibility for decision-making.
<b>Competencies</b>	Broadens access to competencies (knowledge, skills), which builds the organization's leadership capacity.	Demands an investment in recruitment strategies, training, coaching and mentoring.
<b>Connectivity</b>	Expands connectivity to a diversity of networks.	Dilutes organizational focus.
<b>Complexity</b>	Positions the organization as a good collaborative partner because it's seen by those partners as willing to share leadership.	Demands more complex decision-making processes.
<b>Decisions</b>	Leads to sound and robust decisions.	Leads to impractical or misinformed decisions and burdensome and costly processes.
<b>Accountability</b>	Generates stronger accountabilities by dispersing ownership across a wider group of stakeholders.	Creates confused accountabilities and vague reporting structures.

The legal and regulatory requirements for boards in the nonprofit sector present both opportunities and limitations for shared governance decision-making. Mowat NFP's paper *Peering into the Future: Reimagining Governance in the Nonprofit Sector* describes these. They can be found in Appendix A.



## Critical Success Factors

If the critical success factors are in place, there is a greater likelihood that an organization can realize the benefits that shared decision-making offers and mitigate the challenges it can present.

Based on a review of literature on agile organizing models, people-centred clinical approaches, distributed leadership models, networked governance and governance in collaborations, we identified a wide range of success factors that are required for shared decision-making to work well.

Nonprofit leaders who want to build a broader-based approach to their governance decision-making, should focus on four critical success factors:

- Leaders who have the right competencies
- A culture that is enabling
- Processes that are clear and intentional
- A commitment to build and nurture trust

### Success factor

## Leaders have the right competencies

Shared leadership and shared decision-making are intrinsically bound – you cannot have one without the other. This means that shared decision-making only works if the people implementing it are comfortable with a shared leadership style.

There are many examples of organizations that created the right processes for shared decision-making but did not get the desired results. This failure is often attributed to the style and competencies of the people who were leading the process. Without the right skills, aptitudes and mindsets, board members, management and other people who lead shared decision-making approaches will struggle to make it work effectively.

These leaders can work easily with people who think differently, who ask different questions, and approach problem solving in a way that helps the group see around all sides of the problem.<sup>12</sup>

There is substantive literature which describes the competencies demonstrated by people who can effectively share leadership, such as Daniel Goleman's characteristics of emotional intelligence <sup>11</sup>. We have summarized these competencies into four categories that we describe below: self-awareness and self-control, the capacity to be adaptive, the ability to see the big picture, and having the tools to manage conflict.

- **Self-awareness and self-control:** Effective leaders have a high degree of self-awareness and self-control and are naturally empathetic. They are attuned to their own emotions and know how to manage them effectively. They are also keenly aware of what others are experiencing and can appreciate their frames of reference. These are critical competencies for sharing decision-making with an array of people who have different personalities, perspectives, capacities and life-experiences.

## Critical Success Factors

Leaders with self-awareness and self-control are curious, possess cultural intelligence and understand the role that bias plays in decision-making. These strengths give them the confidence to relinquish power and control in return for richer, more innovative ideas and strategies and more relevant outcomes.

- **Capacity to adapt:** Effective leaders have the capacity to adapt, navigate ambiguity, and stay focused on end results while being flexible on how to achieve them. This is critical to shared leadership because working collaboratively is more complex than working with a smaller group of decision-makers and seldom follows a linear process.
- **Ability to see the big picture:** Effective leaders can see the big picture and the complexity of interrelationships between all the players and the system in which the organization operates. This allows leaders who are working with a shared decision-making model to do four things:
  - understand the complicated dynamics at play
  - help others visualize the dynamics
  - reach comfortably outside the usual boundaries
  - activate networks that can add to organizational capacity and better program outcomes
- **Having the tools to manage conflict:** Effective leaders have the ability to manage the conflict that is inevitable in collaborative, broader-based decision-making so that different perspectives are acknowledged and common ground is found.

**Shared decision-making can't work if leaders are stuck in old mindsets and old ways of working.**

The bottom line is that people with shared leadership competencies don't need to micromanage. They not only have EI, but they also have strong strategic and integrative thinking skills and are adept at energizing, empowering and connecting people. They are enablers, not controllers.

**Leaders are inclusive orchestrators versus technical task masters in order to unlock the full potential of diverse skill-sets.<sup>13</sup>**

It can be challenging to recruit leaders with these competencies to the work of nonprofit governance. Organizations committed to a shared decision-making approach will need to invest intentionally and substantially in finding and cultivating these competencies, particularly in their board and management team.

Organizations need to embed these competencies into their hiring and recruitment practices – make them dominant in the competency matrix used to select leaders, present in job or task descriptions, and considered during performance reviews. It's also important to create coaching, mentoring and training opportunities for both current leaders and those within the leadership pipeline.

## Success factor

### The culture is enabling

The literature and experience tell us that good shared decision-making processes only work when the organizational culture enables them. The required culture has distinguishing, interrelated features that should be a part of the organization's DNA.

Here's what an enabling culture looks like:

- **A North Star:** The organization's vision, mission, goals, priorities and, most importantly, the outcomes it is trying to achieve act as a North Star that guides all decisions. This clear, compelling and collective sense of purpose is the glue that holds shared governance decision-making together. A sense of purpose reduces the need for a strict, controlling hierarchy and for people to seek direction from superiors. Without a clear sense of direction, everything will seem important and decisions will get way-laid by other forces such as personal agendas, complicated accountabilities, and undisciplined choices.<sup>14</sup>
- **Inclusiveness:** Diversity and inclusion are part of the organization's ethos. Leaders demonstrate their inclusiveness through their words, actions, and priorities and in the way they measure success. This creates an imperative to not only listen to diverse voices but also to enable authentic engagement in decision-making.
- **Comfort with measured risk:** The staff and board are comfortable taking measured risk because innovation is highly valued and learning is considered more important than getting everything right. This attitude is critical because sharing power, authority and accountability is inevitably risky. The trick is to mitigate the risk, not eliminate it.
- **Teamwork:** The organization values teamwork and ensures everyone feel empowered to make, and take ownership for, decisions and actions:
  - the organization's leaders work as teams not as a command-and-control hierarchy
  - the board and management see themselves as equal partners with clear roles and responsibilities that enhance each other's efforts
  - programs are not separated by rigid silos
  - staff work well across functions

Implementing enabling structures and processes takes significant time and may well reduce efficiency in the short-term because they increase the frequency and number of interactions between stakeholders. However in the longer-term, time is saved through improved problem solving of complex challenges when diverse perspectives and expertise are engaged.

Research also shows that if the board and staff are not working collaboratively then it will be difficult to extend governance decision-making beyond a small cadre of organizational leaders.

- **Agility:** People describe the organization as agile because its culture values nimbleness and the ability to seize the right opportunities as they arise. The leaders are proponents of emergent strategic thinking rather than a set-it-and-forget-it<sup>15</sup> strategic plan that is updated every three years. Organizational leaders also minimize bureaucracy by finding the right balance between decisions that must be made by a few and those that can be made by a larger group using inclusive, shared approaches.

## Critical Success Factors

- **Transparency:** Leaders do not see information as a source of power, but as something that enriches decision-making and therefore should be shared. In fact, the default position is that all information is shareable unless it has been flagged as non-shareable for good reasons. Timely, comprehensive and relevant information is critical to effective shared decision-making. Without good information, decisions will be impractical, misinformed and lack credibility.

### Success factor

## Processes are clear and intentional

Shared decision-making processes need to be explicitly designed so they are widely accessible and generate buy-in and trust among participants. This cannot be achieved by tweaking an existing process.

Once shared decision-making processes are implemented, they need to be monitored and revised or replaced if they are not working as intended.

Clear and intentional processes for shared governance decision-making can be developed following a three-step process:

- **Step 1:** Determine who will make what kind of decisions and how they will make them
- **Step 2:** Clarify accountabilities – the authority and responsibility – for making decisions
- **Step 3:** Identify and acquire or create tools that enable effective shared decision-making

Before we look at each of the steps, it's worth noting that clear and intentional processes must be supported by the other success factors – the right leadership competencies and an enabling organizational culture.

Traditional organizational charts are outdated. "Sticks and boxes" offer little insight into how work gets done and who influences whom. <sup>16</sup>

## Step 1: Determine who will make what kind of decisions and how they will make them

Clarity is essential. People must know who, or what group, has the authority to make what kind of decisions and understand the processes for making them. In the absence of clarity, people will guess or make assumptions. This often slows down and complicates shared decision-making.

Create shared objectives, metrics, and collaboration targets. These will help the persons involved feel responsible, not just for their individual contributions, but also for the processes' overall effectiveness.<sup>17</sup>

- **Start with the type of governance decisions that will be made.** For example, are the decision related to creating, monitoring or stewarding the organization's direction, ensuring resources are in place, overseeing performance, or managing compliance and accountabilities?
- **Clearly articulate decision parameters and ensure they are compelling, clear and measurable.** For example, parameters could require that decisions must be:
  - informed by the stakeholders they will most affect
  - evidence informed and consider intended and unintended outcomes
  - feasible
  - align with mission, vision and values
- **Be clear about the type of decisions that will be made.** Are they big-bet decisions with major consequences for the organization? Are they complex decisions that cross functions, organizational boundaries or priorities? Are they episodic or regular decisions?

The type of decision that needs to be made will determine the controls, authority and accountability required.<sup>18</sup> For example, regular decisions that have low organizational risk and are clearly aligned with goals and priorities such as monitoring financial and program results can be handed to a group of governance decision-makers without a lot of controls and boundaries. In contrast, a big-bet decision such as making a large expenditure that could put a program at risk will require different kinds of controls, competencies, and deliberations.

- **Don't assume that the board will make all governance decisions.** Think about who is in the best position to make a decision and identify the necessary competencies (skills, knowledge, and perspectives). Provide a clear rationale.
- **Consider how decisions will be made.** In shared decision-making, decisions are thoroughly debated and diverse views are incorporated. Many decisions will be consensus based. But this doesn't mean you're aiming for 100% agreement; it means there is 100% commitment to the best decision. In some cases, decisions may need to be unanimous or be approved by a supermajority (more than 50%).
- **Consider the way the decision can be made.** Does it require an in-person meeting because the decision is complex and/or there are very diverse points of view? Would a teleconference or Zoom meeting work because people need to talk through questions or issues, but it's not highly controversial? Can the decision be made digitally because it is to approve something that has already been discussed and tentatively accepted?

### Step 2: Clarify accountabilities – the authority and responsibility – for making decision

Clarifying accountabilities – explicitly delegating authority and responsibility – is a key to successful shared decision-making. People cannot be held accountable for decisions and actions they don't own. In order to feel ownership, people need to help shape decisions and formally agree to expectations; they also need to view expectations as compelling and achievable. Most importantly, people can't be held accountable if they haven't been delegated real authority to act.

The critical step in making ....transparency happen is laying out everyone's work and accountabilities. We're striving to make clear where power lives in the organization and shining a direct light on it.<sup>19</sup>

The following scenario is an example of what can happen when decision-making accountabilities, responsibilities and authority are opaque:

A group of governance leaders wants to expand the number of people involved in decision-making. But they do it without being explicit; they want to assign responsibilities, but don't really want to delegate power. Those who are now sharing decision-making find they are constantly second guessing what the people with power and authority think so they wait to be told what to do. They measure their success by the amount of time and effort expended rather than by the results achieved. Decisions are not made; they are deferred or referred to others.

Successful shared decision-making requires clear boundaries around authority and expectations. The boundaries may be broad or narrow depending upon the intended outcome and the level of risk to the organization.

Let's take strategic planning as an example of how shared accountability and authority can work. Strategic planning is a critical governance function, but it doesn't have to be done by the board. In fact, board members may not have the right competencies to do it well. The board can assign strategic planning to the senior management team and a group of well-qualified leadership volunteers beyond the board and set clear expectations and accountabilities for the plan itself. For example, the board could state that the strategic plan must do the following:

- demonstrably align with the mission or propose a revised mission
- consider how the changing landscape and diverse stakeholder input/perspectives will inform future strategic directions/priorities
- be financially viable and provide evidence that resources exist or can be acquired to implement the plan
- include measurable outcomes and impacts that achieve progress toward the mission

Control only what you need to control. To truly embrace autonomy... executive leadership team chooses not to execute their full operational control as entitled to them by their position...but consciously opt not to because they believe that they have better results and more impact by letting go.<sup>20</sup>

In the above scenario, the board has delegated authority and accountability to a competent task group, empowered the group by giving it real authority to make decisions, created a situation that allows the group to take real ownership of both the planning process and the resulting plan, and created a check list it can use to assess the resulting plan.

Because the strategic planning group has clarity about its authority and responsibility, it can focus on meeting the board's clearly stated requirements without fear that the board will second guess its decisions.

### Step 3: Identify and acquire or create tools that enable effective shared decision-making

Shared decision-making is more likely to be effective if it is supported by the right tools, which include those listed below:

- tracking and feedback mechanisms that allow for course corrections and efficient decision-making
- information and data sharing protocols that allow for accessible, thorough, timely and helpful information sharing
- decision-making tools that assign accountabilities and responsibilities such as RASCI Responsibilities Matrix or RAPID (recommend, input, agree, decide, perform) or GlassFrog, which visually represents the organizational structure so that anyone can log in and see who is accountable for what
- processes for addressing and resolving conflicts
- technologies that can enable shared decision-making e.g. Loomio

See Appendix B for a summary of decision-making methodologies for large groups.

### Success factor

#### There is a commitment to build and nurture trust

Trust is the cornerstone for effective shared decision-making. If the other three success factors – leadership competencies, enabling culture, clear and intentional processes – exist, then trust will likely follow.

- Leaders with the right competencies will foster confidence in decisions and build trust.
- An enabling culture will reinforce the values that foster trust: openness to new ideas and ways of thinking, a willingness to include diverse voices/perspectives, and a commitment to be transparent (i.e. share timely, comprehensive and relevant information).
- Clear and intentional processes will help people trust that the outcomes will be meaningful.

Trust is hard to build and easy to lose so it requires a continuous investment of time and attention.

## Topics for Further Reflection and Research

The following questions emerged from the paper and warrant further reflection and research:

- Why doesn't broader-based shared decision-making exist more often in organizational governance?
  - Is it because organizations are typically hierarchical, or current governance structures hamper the ability to look at other processes?
  - Is it a question of resources and if so, how feasible is it to adopt a broader shared decision-making approach given capacity challenges?
  - To what degree is it mindset or lack of knowledge about how to do it effectively?
- How can broader shared decision-making be done in a way that leads to sound and robust decisions and mitigates costly, burdensome processes? Are there case studies or examples from the nonprofit or other sectors?
- What can be learned from Indigenous governance models that employ shared decision-making?
- Can we effectively implement emerging insights or ideas in shared decision-making without next generation leaders already being in leadership positions? Next generation leaders have different expectations about engagement and connectedness than previous generations and a comfort with more fluid structures and technology. Should they be actively involved as part of a co-design process?
- What role can funders and capacity builders play to set new standards and test/evaluate/share promising practices in shared governance decision-making?



## Appendix A: The Board's Legal and Regulatory Requirements

Mowat NFP's paper Peering into the Future: Reimagining Governance in the Nonprofit Sector (2018) describes the board's legal and regulatory requirements. These present both opportunities and limitations for shared governance decision-making.

"There is an assumption that boards are the sole locus of governance for their organizations.... However, there are no statutory requirements for boards to act as the sole governance entity of a non-profit organization...Organizations can maintain significant discretion in the structure and focus of their governance body. Because the legislative requirements are limited and vary from province to province, a wide variety of governance options for the sector are possible.

Incorporated non-profit organizations must have a board of directors and their central purpose is to ensure that resources are used efficiently and appropriately. In other words, the board must provide organizational oversight to ensure the organization is realizing its mission. They must also act in the best interests of the organization (fiduciary duty). Other statutory requirements may apply, depending on the types of programs and services an organization delivers. While boards can delegate responsibilities and activities to management or any other person(s), they have ultimate accountability and liability.

Notably, there is no standard size for all boards and the legal requirements varies by province. In Ontario, non-profits require a minimum of three directors for incorporation..."

## Appendix B: Decision-making Methodologies

The following table provides a summary of large-group decision-making methodologies including those that use technology.

Technique	Brief Description	Link for more information
<b>Consensus conferences</b> (Saxon, 2012)	<p>A consensus conference is a chaired public hearing with an audience from the public, active participation of 10-15 people that is called a jury or panel, and a corresponding number of different experts. Consensus conferences are used for the following purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to find common ground among a diverse number of individuals on broad and complex issues</li> <li>• to achieve a more nuanced definition of the issue under review by receiving the public's opinions on what should and what should not be done</li> </ul>	<a href="https://participedia.net/en/methods/consensus-conference">https://participedia.net/en/methods/consensus-conference</a>
<b>E-governance</b> (Freiwirth, 2011)	<p>E-Governance is when governments use information and communication technologies (ICTs) to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• alter governance structures or processes in ways that are not feasible without ICT and/or (structural governance)</li> <li>• create new governance structures or processes that were heretofore not possible without ICT and/or (structural governance)</li> <li>• (3) reify heretofore theoretical ideas or issues in normative governance</li> </ul>	The pdf article Bannister & Connolly (2012) provides a definition of e-governance and discusses its use
<b>Future Search</b> (Freiwirth, 2011; Saxon, 2012)	<p>A future search is a principle-based planning meeting that helps people transform their capability for action very quickly. Future search has the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The meeting is task-focused and brings together 60 to 100 people in one room or hundreds of people together in parallel rooms.</li> <li>• People meet for 20 hours spread across three days to tell stories about their past, present and desired future. Through dialogue participants discover common ground and develop concrete action plans.</li> <li>• The method relies on mutual learning among stakeholders as a catalyst for voluntary action and follow-up.</li> </ul>	<a href="http://futuresearch.net/about/whatis/">http://futuresearch.net/about/whatis/</a>

Technique	Brief Description	Link for more information
<p><b>Open space technology</b> (Freiwirth, 2011; Saxton, 2012)</p>	<p>Open space technology (OST) is an approach to purpose-driven leadership that includes a way to host meetings and other group events that are focused on a specific and important purpose or task.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings begin without any formal agenda beyond the overall purpose or theme.</li> <li>• Participants create and manage their own agendas for parallel working sessions about a central theme of strategic importance.</li> <li>• The open space technique works with any size group and various meeting formats e.g. workshops, conferences, weekly meetings.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://openspaceworld.org/wp2/what-is/">http://openspaceworld.org/wp2/what-is/</a></p>
<p><b>Participatory budgeting</b> (Saxton, 2012)</p>	<p>Participatory budgeting (PB) is a democratic process in which community members decide how to spend part of a public budget.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A steering committee, representative of the community, creates the rules in partnership with government officials to ensure the process is inclusive and meets local needs.</li> <li>• Through meetings and online tools, residents share and discuss ideas for projects that are developed into feasible proposals that are vetted by experts.</li> <li>• Residents vote to divide the available budget among the projects proposals.</li> <li>• The government implements the funded projects.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/">https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/</a></p>
<p><b>Social media</b> (Freiwirth, 2011)</p>	<p>Social media is a form of electronic communication (e.g. websites for social networking and microblogging) used to create online communities for sharing information, ideas, personal messages, and other content such as videos. (Merriam-Webster.com)</p> <p>Specific apps such as Liquid Feedback and Democracy OS use procedures such as digital assembly, civic participation and data revision to help groups through a shared decision-making process.</p>	<p>See Social Media Best Practices for Nonprofit Organizations (Cole, 2014)</p> <p>See apps such as Liquid Feedback Democracy OS</p>

## Endnotes

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