



Challenging Board Members

Association of BC Public Library Directors

October 27, 2022

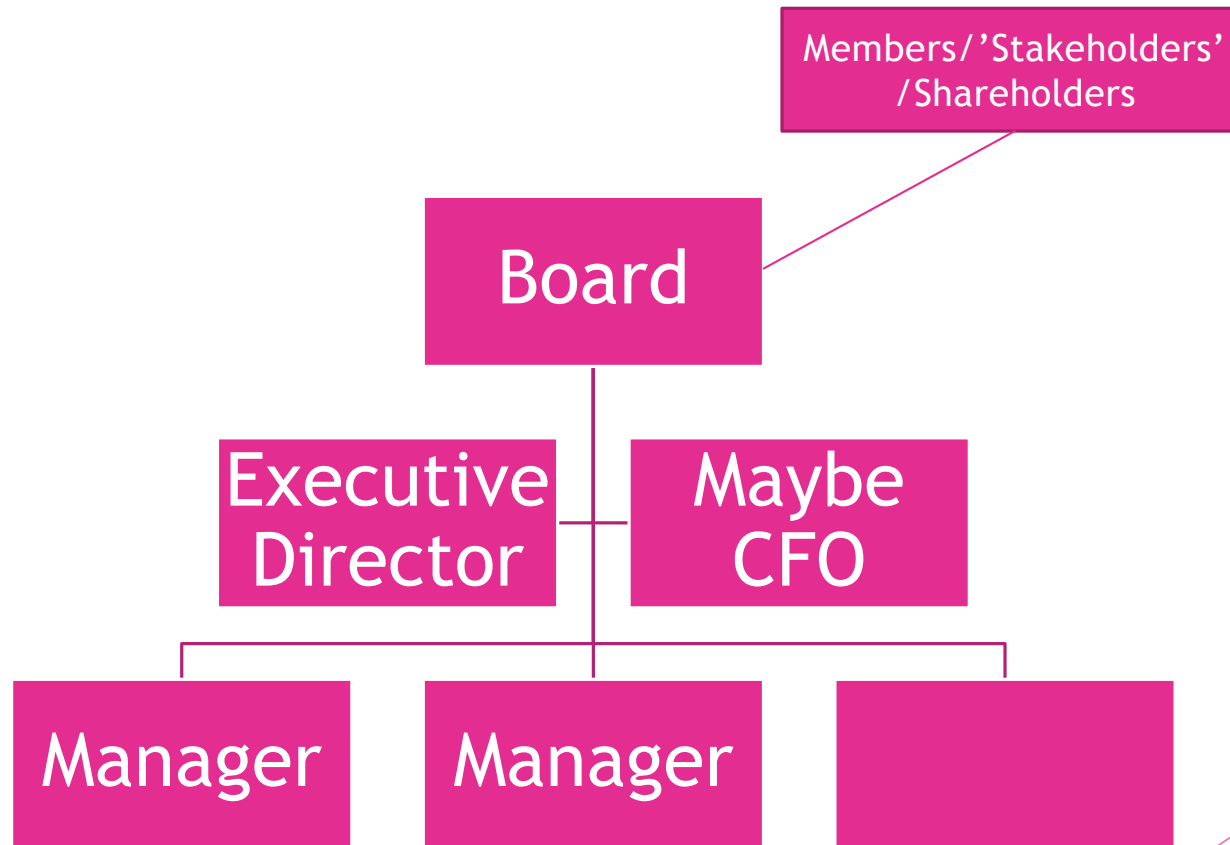
Territorial Acknowledgement

- ▶ I am joining you from the unceded territory of a number of Coast Salish Nations - the Semiahmoo, Malahat, Tswassen, Quw'utsuna, Stz'uminus people and other WASNEC nations. European settlers named it Pender Island - it was for centuries (and remains) a place of respite and recreation as well as a place to replenish. It is a great honour to live here..
- ▶ Public and nonprofit organizations have been active participants in colonization, but they also hold and control the resources we need to move truth and reconciliation forward.
- ▶ We will be better as a society if we reflect and learn from the ways the First Nations and Indigenous people cared for the resources of the land, practiced leadership, shared knowledge, and nurtured community wellness. Settler systems have caused harm and we must acknowledge this, reconcile ourselves as a community with these truths in order to build sustainable partnership, collaboration and eventually integrated, equitable and exciting future.

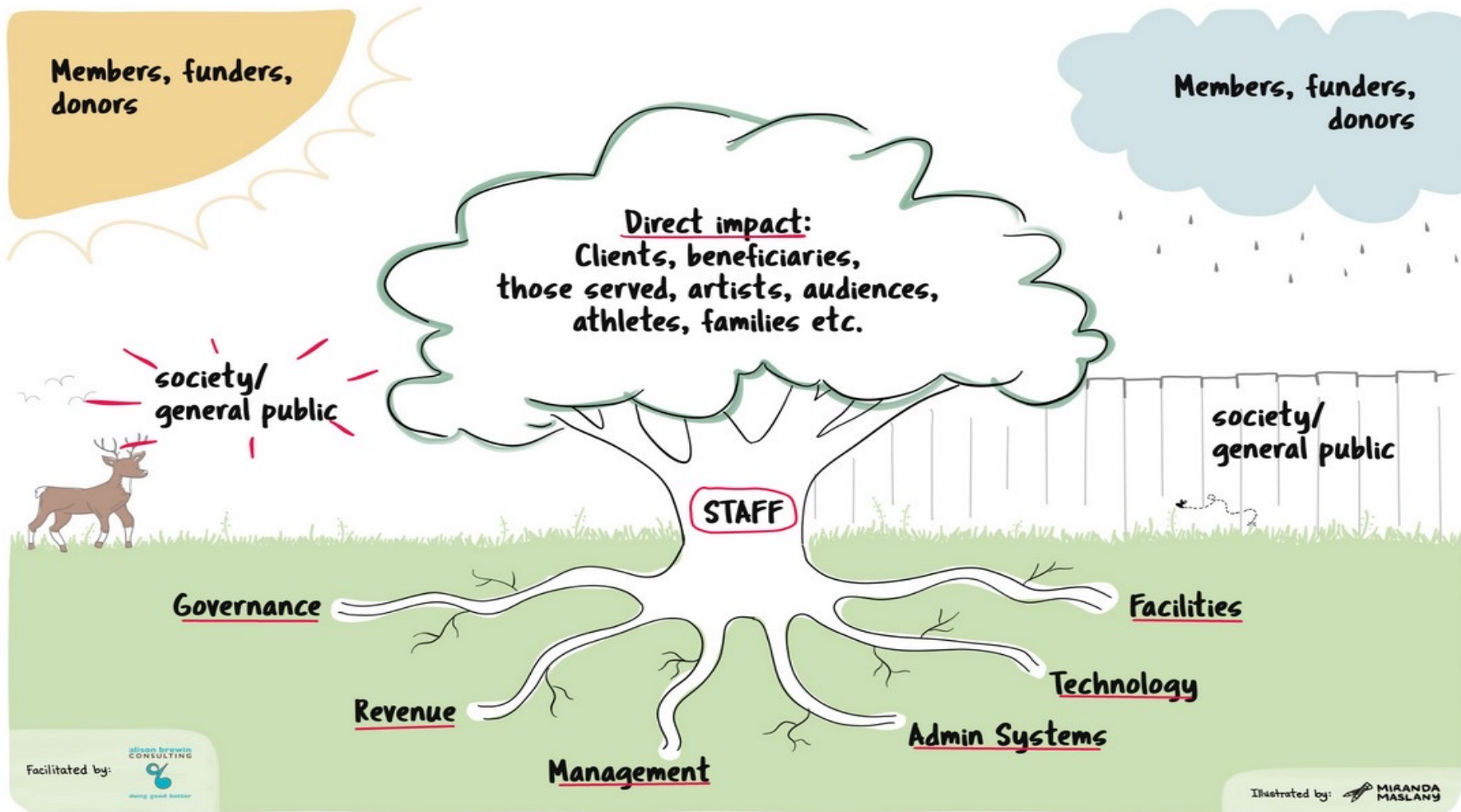
Agenda

1. A quick note on Governance generally
2. Common challenges
3. 5 Steps to Address a Challenging Board Member
4. Internal Resources - where and how to engage others
5. External Resources - Getting support from others
6. Case Studies - small group discussion
7. Report back and discussion

Traditional Corporate Governance



Alternative Perspective



Governance as Leadership

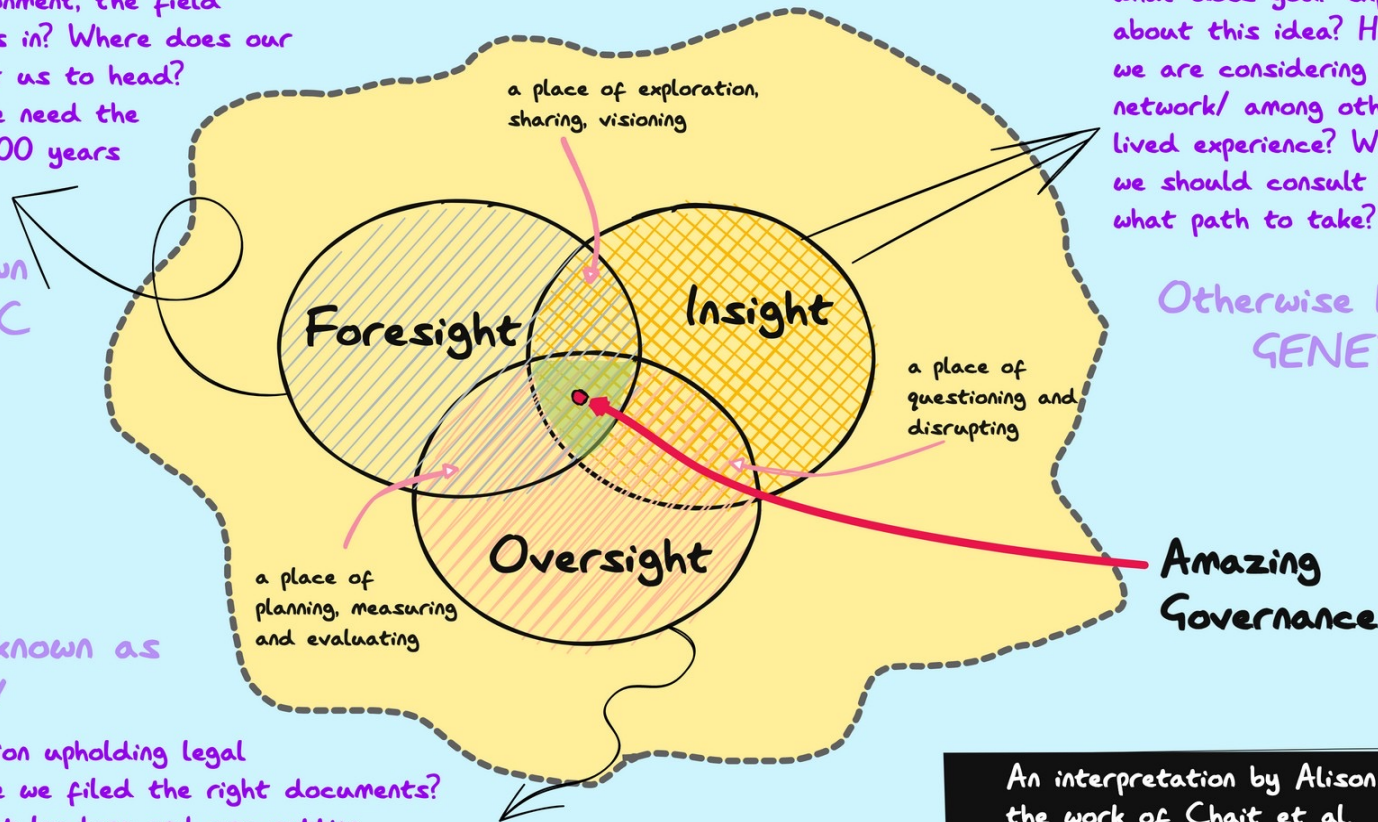
(Not Authority and Control)

Stuff like what's happening in politics, the environment, the field our non-profit works in? Where does our community need/want us to head? Where do our people need the org to be 3, 5, 10, 100 years from now?

Otherwise known as STRATEGIC

Otherwise known as FIDUCIARY

is the organization upholding legal obligations? Have we filed the right documents? Do we have great leaders and are setting them up for success well? Any bad and/or criminal things going on that are causing harm? Are we spending money on the right things? are our resources advancing our purpose?



what does your experience tell you about this idea? How would the options we are considering impact in your community/network/ among others with your lived experience? Who are we missing that we should consult with before we decide what path to take?

Otherwise known as GENERATIVE

An interpretation by Alison Brewin of the work of Chait et al.
aaa.alisonbrewin.ca

Common Challenges

1. Crossing operational/Board lines
2. Disengagement/no follow through
3. Inappropriate behaviour (Somewhat and/or Serious)
4. Domineering/Space hog
5. Interfering in external relations
6. Founder/Out of date but unmoving

Others?

Context

Before attempting anything, take a moment to consider and answer these questions:

- a) What would be possible if this person was off the Board?
- b) What does the organization need from this person, if anything?
- c) Are there other valuable contributions the person makes?
- d) How are others impacted by the behavior?
- e) How safe do I feel in my role? Is it true? Really?
- f) Has this crossed a legal line?
- g) Relations outside the Board room - what ongoing relationship do I need to have with this person? And more importantly, does the organization need to have?
- h) What's the worst thing that can happen?
- i) What's the best possible outcome?




5 Steps to Address the Challenging Board Member



1

Deal it right away
(or as soon as you can)

- In the moment, or
 - Shortly after interaction/incident, or
 - At the next available planned meeting
- 

2

Clarify your thoughts and identify a desired outcome(s).

- Context questions shared above.
- Focus on impact on the purpose/vision of org.
- Be clear with yourself about whether it is a personality conflict or actually about the org.
- You are there to lead the work of the organization and remember they need you to lead by having possible solutions.
- Know and be ready to share any formal (policies, Board motions, codes of conduct) or informal (org or board culture, practices) that support your perspective.
- Is it a sign of bigger Board dysfunction, or truly about one individual? If former, consider recommending Board training/planning/team building.

3

Talk to the person directly

- Not via email or text unless you feel confident it is a simple misunderstanding – 3 email rule).
- Use 'I' messaging.
- But also alert the Chair or a board member you trust about it in order to put your experiences at the Board table.
- Don't let it be personal and focus on examples of the impact.
- But allow for emotions (your own and others – anger, anxiety, defensiveness, etc).
- Listen, Listen (Active listening).
- Keep notes

4

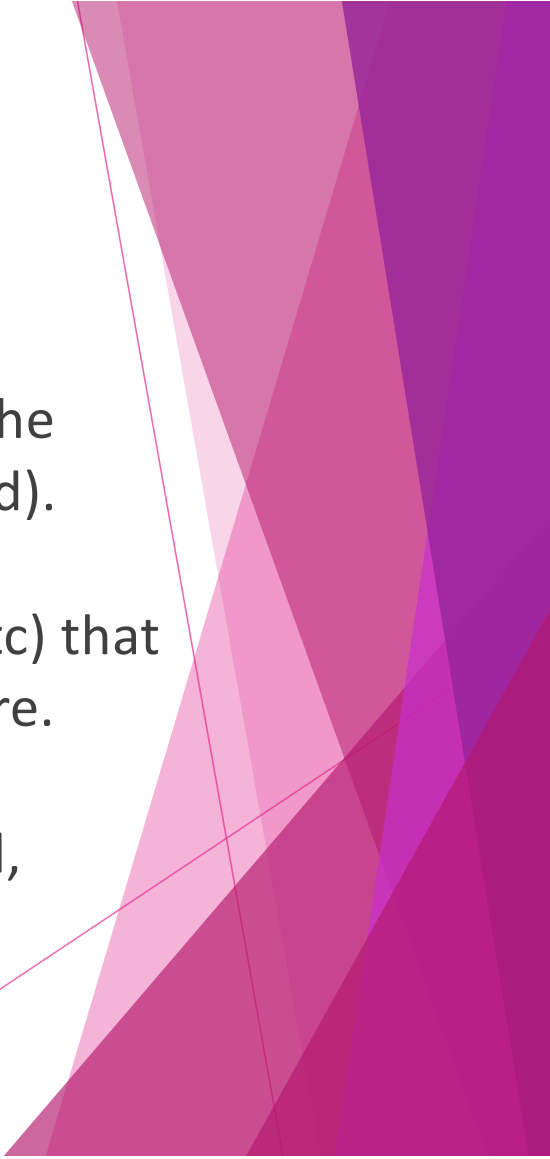
Communicate to others

- If you do talk but don't agree, or you feel uncomfortable speaking to them directly, report the issue to the Chair or Board. (if you meet but disagree, together if possible)
- Communicate results of discussion to initial 'confidant'/Chair
- Communicate to others involved (if it is a challenge a staff member is having)
- Without breaching confidentiality. Best to come to an agreement about next steps if possible.



5

Mitigate future issues

- Identify learnings for yourself, the Board Chair and the Board as a whole (and staff if staff members involved).
 - Identify tools (policy, by-laws, training, facilitation etc) that will help prevent similar issues emerging in the future.
 - Work with relevant people (staff, committees, board, stakeholders) to implement prevention plan.
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Internal and External Resources



Internal

- Board Chair
- Governing Docs (Library Act and regs)
- Policies and Procedures
- Board Orientation
- Code of Conduct

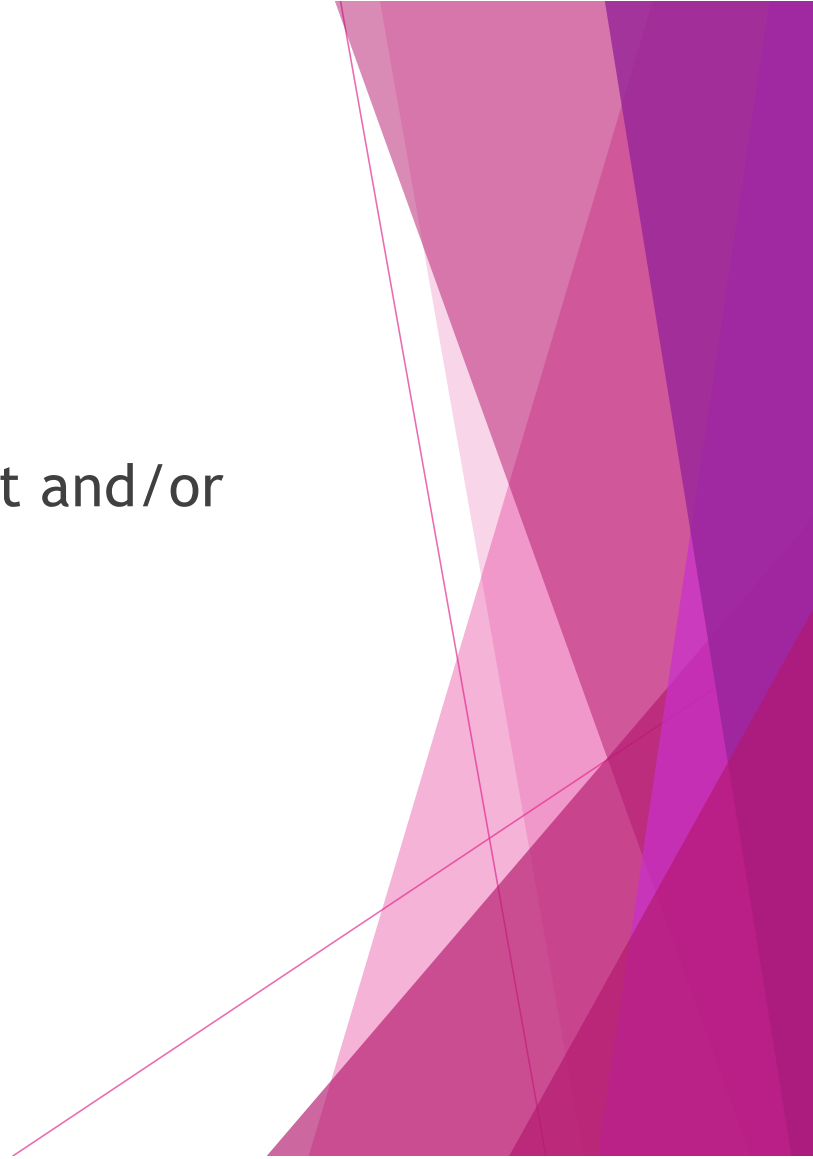
External

- Fellow Library Directors (Peers)
- Facilitation (consultant or training)
- Training (for individual, yourself of Board)
- Burn out Prevention!
- Mediation

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Small Groups

A. Choose a facilitator and timer - goal to ensure everyone has a chance to participate and share. A timer who can send to facilitator in the chat 2-minute warning. Chair then encourages comments from anyone who hasn't shared.

B. Engage in discussing these questions:

5 min 1. *Discuss the nature of the challenge* - has this happened to you? Do you all understand this kind of challenging Board member?

15 min 2. Go around and invite people to share what they would do.

10 min 3. What advice will you offer to the rest of us about how best to manage this kind of situation? (and yes, it will depend on specific circumstances). Can you summarize a consensus from the group?