

Start-Up	Sustainable
Founder-Driven – Most decisions and operations depend on one person (often the founder).	Leadership-Distributed – Systems, roles, and documentation allow others (board and staff) to lead and maintain operations smoothly.
Hands-On Board – Board members jump in on day-to-day tasks, events, and operations.	Governance-Focused Board – Board members focus on strategy, oversight, and fundraising rather than operational work.
Informal Processes – Few written policies; much knowledge lives in people's heads.	Documented Systems – Clear procedures for programs, finances, and volunteer management ensure continuity.
Reactive Decision-Making – Priorities shift quickly based on immediate needs or crises.	Strategic Planning & Metrics – Decisions guided by multi-year strategy, KPIs, and regular performance reviews.
Funding is Project-Based or Opportunistic – Revenue comes from small grants, ad-hoc donations, or events.	Funding is Diversified & Predictable – Multiple income streams, donor retention systems, and reserves support stability.
Founder as Primary Fundraiser – Limited board or team involvement in donor development.	Shared Fundraising Leadership – Board members and staff collaborate in cultivation, stewardship, and relationship-building.
Roles are Overlapping or Undefined – People wear many hats; responsibilities shift frequently.	Defined Roles & Accountability – Clear job descriptions, delegated authority, and performance expectations.
Volunteer Leadership is Informal – Recruitment based on availability or relationships.	Volunteer Systems Are Structured – Standard onboarding, expectations, and leadership pathways align with mission and culture.
Board Recruitment is Ad Hoc – Members invited based on availability or enthusiasm.	Board Recruitment is Strategic – Skill, diversity, and influence are considered to fill governance and fundraising gaps.
Short-Term Focus – Success measured by number of activities or immediate outcomes.	Long-Term Focus – Success measured by impact, sustainability, and alignment with community outcomes.
Minimal Evaluation or Reflection – “We’re too busy doing the work.”	Learning Culture – Regular board self-assessment, financial review, and organizational learning cycles.
Founder Burnout Risk is High – Little backup or succession planning.	Succession Planning in Place – Organization can function smoothly if leadership changes or grows.
Staff Are Viewed as Helpers – Staff (if any) take direction from the board or founder with unclear boundaries between governance and management.	Staff Are Empowered Implementers – The board partners with the CEO to set direction and policy, while staff execute the mission day-to-day with clear authority and accountability.