

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.