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2024 Minnesota Public Transit Conference

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# Working with Boards and Committees

Pathways to meetings that matter

Tuesday, October 15, 2024  
Abbey Guggisberg

# Welcome

## Abbey Guggisberg

Leadership & Civic Engagement Educator  
University of Minnesota Extension

- Non-profit leadership
- K-12 education
- Rural civic engagement



# Goals of Session



Explore ideas for improving the function of your board



Boost understanding in building and leading your team through transition



Share resources for you to consult in the future



What brings you here today?

role, curiosity, question, specific problem, something else?

menti.com

Code: 7339 0207

What is **working well** for you?

What is a **challenge**?

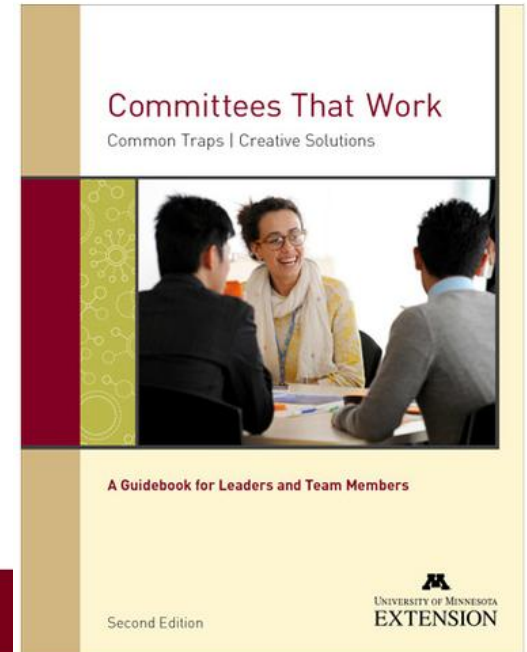
3:00 timer



# *Committees That Work:*

## *A Guidebook for Leaders and Team Members*

- Letting Private Interests Influence Public Decisions
- **Lacking Direction and Purpose**
- **Filling Seats with the Usual Suspects**
- Going Off Track
- Making Decisions Outside of the Meetings
- **Getting Stuck in Conflict**
- Lost in Virtual Space



# Effective Groups

## Members

- Show up
- Contribute
- Follow through

## Process

- Guides
- Structures
- Evolves

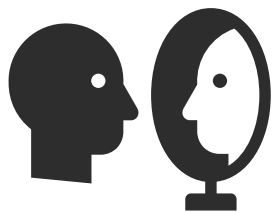


## Leaders

- Listen
- Adapt
- Communicate



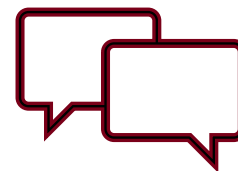




**Working  
with Purpose**



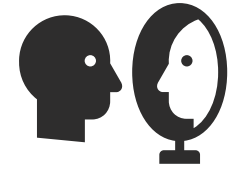
**Building  
your Board**



**Navigating  
Conflict**



# Working with Purpose



- Vision, mission, values, and purpose – What's the difference?

## Vision

- Desired future state
- *What*

## Mission

- Role in working toward its vision
- *How*

## Values

- Principles that guide mission implementation
- *How*

## Purpose

- Reason for being in the world
- *Why*

# Does your committee have clarity of **purpose**?

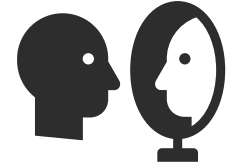
If **yes**, how does it  
(or does it not)  
**guide** your work?

If **no**, what are  
**barriers** to defining a  
purpose?

3:00 timer



# Working with Purpose



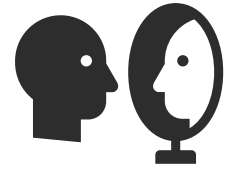
**Make time**

**Understand  
your terms**

**Answer the  
right  
questions**

**Create a  
plan of  
action**

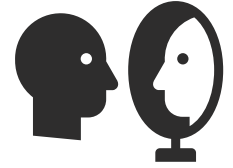
# Working with Purpose



## Questions to consider:

- What is our image of a preferred future, our hopes, our dreams?
- What is our past, our foundation, our memories?
- What are the facts? Where are we now?

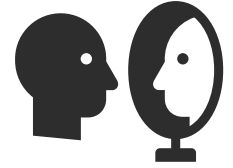
# Working with Purpose



## Creating a plan of action

- What is the task?
- Who is responsible?
- When should this be completed?
- What else do we need?

# Working with Purpose



Action example:

## **Create a board manual**

- Educate as you onboard



# What Goes Into a Board Manual?

- Board information
- Historical organizational info
- Strategic framework
- Bylaws
- Finance and fundraising
- Annual calendar
- **And so much more!**



Clarity



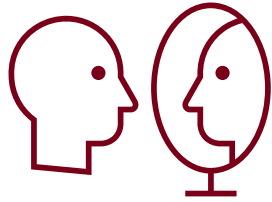
Connection



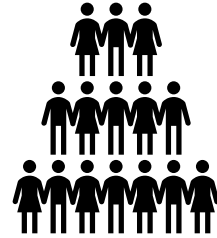
Success

What is the board's role in leading the organization?

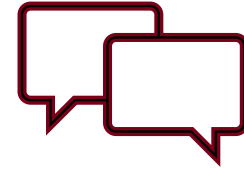
How does that role connect to the organization's larger purpose?



Working  
with Purpose



**Building  
your  
Board**



Navigating  
Conflict

**Who** do you serve?

How do you know the needs of  
the community?

3:00 timer





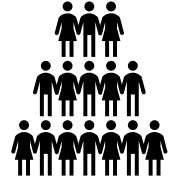
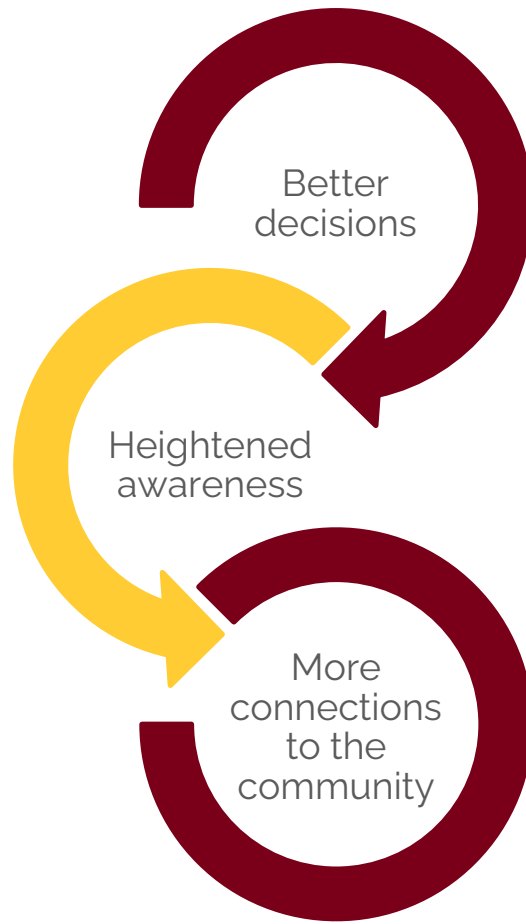
# 49%

of chief executives said that they did not have the right board members to “establish **trust** with the communities they serve.”

**Why** is that a problem?

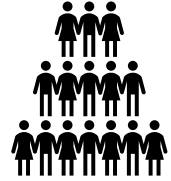


# Benefits of a diverse board



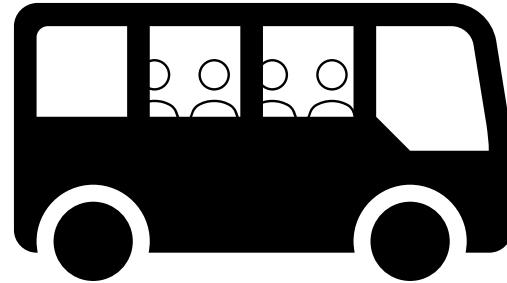
(Source: [National Council of Nonprofits](#))

# Building your Board



Who do you serve? Consider:

- Demographics
- Sectors
- Skillset
- Perspectives





# How well does your board represent your community?

- ▶ Which demographics are currently represented?
- ▶ Which are not represented? Should they be?
- ▶ **Who is most impacted by this issues/topic? Are they represented?**

sex

age

race

location

education

employment

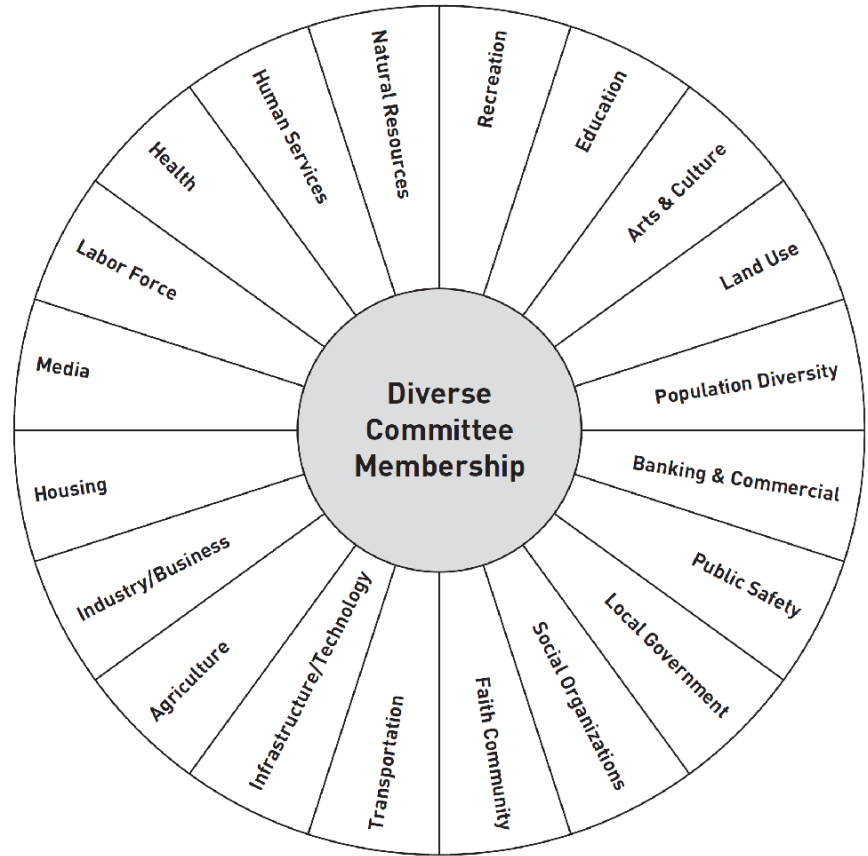
income level

homeownership



# How well does your board represent your community?

- ▶ Which sectors are currently represented?
- ▶ Which are not represented? Should they be?
- ▶ **Who is most impacted by this issues/topic? Are they represented?**



Are the communities you serve  
**represented** on your committee?

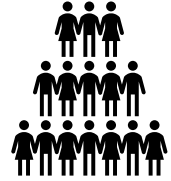
If **yes**, how does  
that (or does it not)  
**inform** your work?

If **no**, what are  
**barriers** to bringing  
people in?

3:00 timer



# Building your Board



## Recruitment strategies

- Build authentic relationships
- Share stories
- Show appreciation
- ASK!

Ideas generated by  
Red River Valley  
Emerging Leadership  
Program participants,  
January 2024

Clarity

Who do we represent?



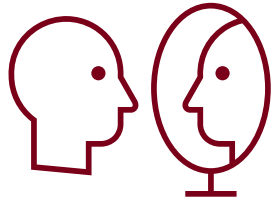
Connection

How does our work connect  
to the needs of the  
community?



**Success**





Working  
with Purpose



Building  
your Board



**Navigating  
Conflict**



# Conflict:

Any **misalignment** of views, opinions, practices, and/or strategies that cause some kind of **discomfort** between one or more parties.

(Olton, 2022)

## Agree or disagree:

I feel very comfortable leading my team through conflict.





# Navigating Conflict



Conflict can commonly arise as a result of....

the **processes** the group is using

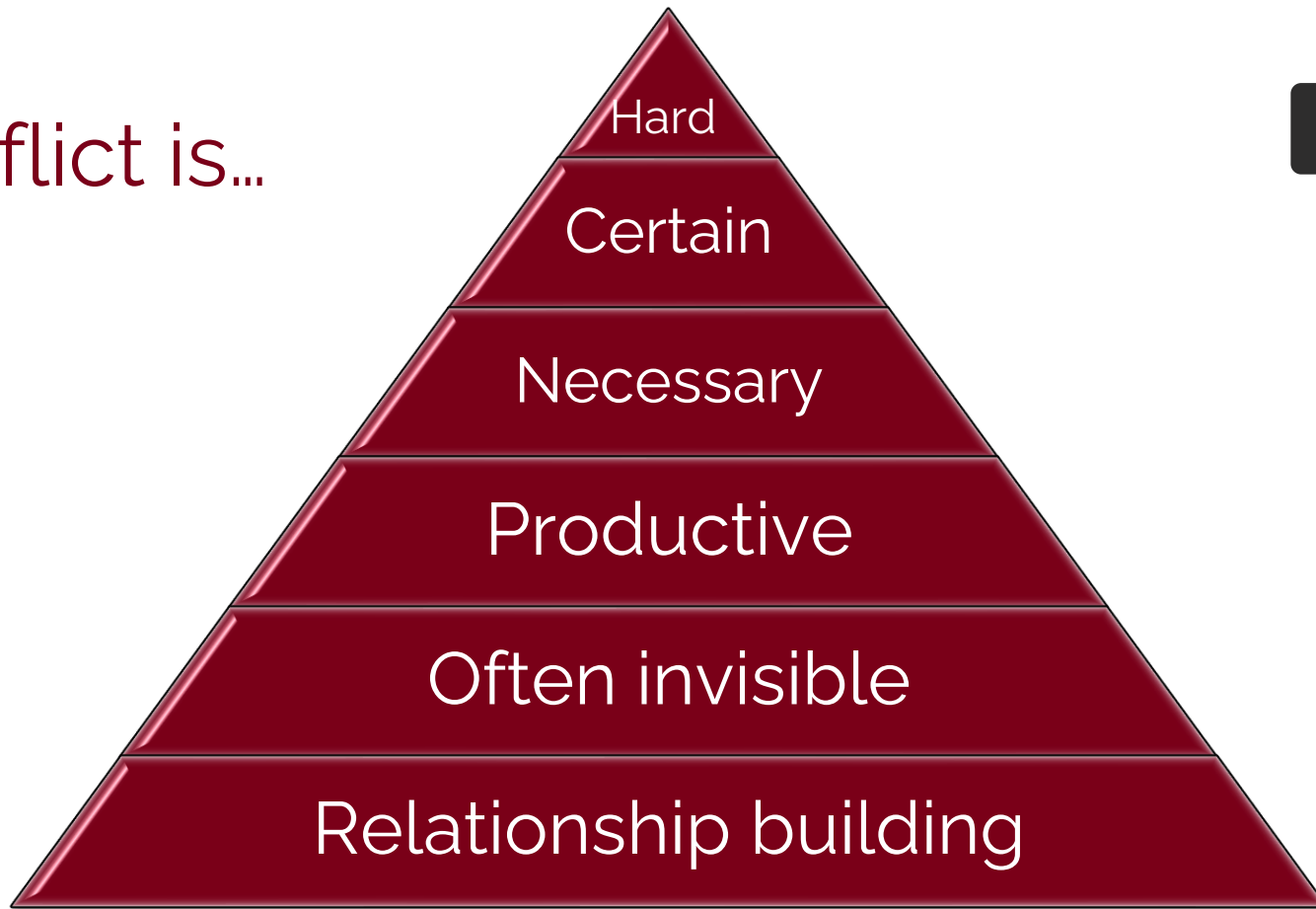
the **content** being discussed

the people (or **personalities**) involved in the discussion

Is conflict inherently a **bad** thing?



Conflict is...



# Navigating Conflict

Signs in the workplace:

Confusion

Burnout

Complaints

Emotional stress

Absenteeism

Decreased productivity

High turnover



What does conflict look like in your organization?



# Navigating Conflict



Preventive measure: Group agreements

- Set the tone for meetings
- Establish expectations for when conflict arises

# Group Agreements Example

- Name it out loud when things are hard.
- Speak from your own experience.
- Strive for the growth zone (beyond the comfort zone!)
- Take the lesson, not the specifics.

# Navigating Conflict



5 questions for finding common ground when in group conflict

1. On what specific points do we have **agreement**?
2. What points need **further dialogue**/resolution?
3. On what issues do we agree we need **more information** to make a decision?
4. What **values** should we keep in mind while making a decision?
5. How do these values **impact** the decision? What do we need to do to **move forward**?



# Navigating Conflict



Communicate to diffuse conflict

- Listen to the story
- Ask open-ended questions
- Use affirming statements



# Navigating Conflict



## Neutral vs. Judgmental questions and statements

- Neutral: "What happened then?"
- Judgmental: "I can't believe it! What happened?"
  
- Neutral: "How did you feel when \_\_\_\_\_?"
- Judgmental: "I bet you really felt awful when \_\_\_\_\_."

# Kindness



Clarity



Connection



Success

What is the team's  
expectation for navigating  
conflict?

How can we leverage what  
we have in common to  
bridge our differences?



# Effective Groups

## Members

- Show up
- Contribute
- Follow through

## Process

- Guides
- Structures
- Evolves



## Leaders

- Listen
- Adapt
- Communicate



# Is there clarity about the way things are done and why?

➤ If YOU could change one thing about your board, what would it be?



➤ How would YOU make that change?

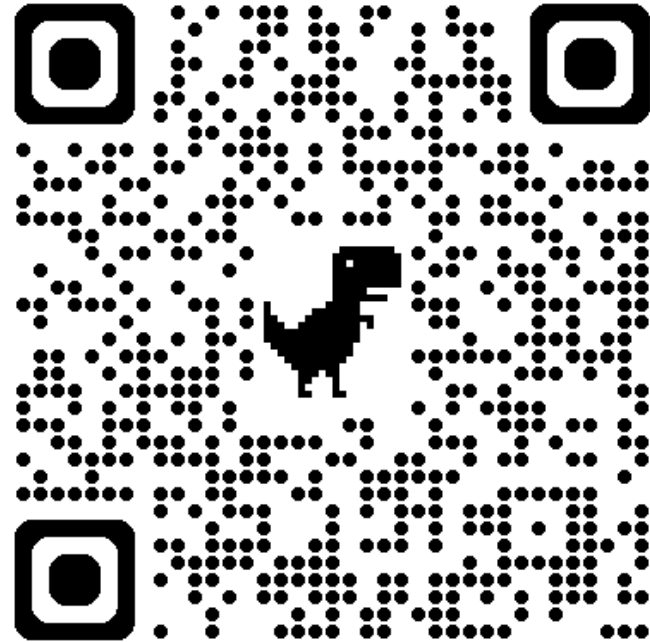
## Discuss, then DO it!

It starts with  
**clarity + communication.**



Resource	Topics
<b>Board Orientation</b> National Council of Nonprofits	New member orientation; board manual; onboarding process
<b>Candid Conversations about Board Governance – Tip Sheet</b> National Council of Nonprofits	Advocacy; conflicts of interest; diversity; fundraising; social time for the board; leading with core values
<b>Chief Executive Dos and Don'ts of Recruitment</b> BoardSource	Recruiting; organization leadership; roles and responsibilities; best practices
<b>Leading with Intent: BoardSource Index of Nonprofit Board Practices</b> <a href="http://leadingwithintent.org">leadingwithintent.org</a>	Leading with purpose; advocacy; centralizing mission; vision; guided conversation with questions
<b>Purpose-Driven Board Leadership: A Conversation Starter for Boards</b> BoardSource	Defining purpose; leading with purpose; ecosystem; equity mindset; guided conversation with questions
<b>Taking Action on Board Diversity: Five Questions to Get You Started</b> BoardSource	Board diversity; representation; recruitment practices; practical action guide
<b>What Goes into a Board Manual?</b> BoardSource	Orientation; process; board manual; new board members

Google Drive resource folder:





# Questions?





# Thank you

## **Abbey Guggisberg**

Extension Educator, Leadership and Civic Engagement

[guggi026@umn.edu](mailto:guggi026@umn.edu)

## **Holli Arp**

Program Leader, Leadership and Civic Engagement

[arpxx001@umn.edu](mailto:arpxx001@umn.edu)

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