

## 12 Partnership Principles for Executives and Board Leaders

### **1. Know Yourself & Your Counterpart(ner)**

With thanks to Socrates: know yourself. And get to know your counterpart. Take the time to be intentional about how you work together as a leadership team. What are your respective strengths? Where do you struggle? What are your communication preferences? How do you each contribute best to a group? How can you best support each other? etc.

### **2. Tend Toward Trust**

Trust that your counterpart has good intentions. If you feel yourself rushing to judgment, check the validity of your assumptions by asking questions and listening well. Be willing to share your perspectives and the thinking behind your opinions.

### **3. Mission First: It's about the work, not the title**

Understand your formal authority and that of your counterpart, but focus more on the work of the organization than on positional power. Keeping shared purposes at the forefront promotes a healthy sense of responsibility for the whole organization.

### **4. Make Meetings Matter**

Collaborate to design meetings that emphasize interaction and strategic priorities rather than one-way reporting. Good meetings build confidence, strengthen your community, and deepen everyone's understanding of the issues—which leads to well-informed decisions and committed action.

### **5. Welcome Differences**

Recognize that creative energy arises when different perspectives come into play. Welcome differences as opportunities to test and evolve your own ideas, values and ways of working.

## 6. Take a Systems Perspective

It's easy to lay blame when things go wrong. It's more useful to consider: "Is there anything in our systems or organizational structure that is contributing to this problem?"

## 7. Be Willing to Experiment

Nonprofit organizations are action laboratories for democracy. Consider new ideas and try different ways of operating. Question orthodoxy. Tinker. Sow some seeds.

## 8. Support Leadership Development

Look for opportunities to support your own leadership development and that of your counterpart. We never fully "arrive" as leaders. There is always more we can do to become self-aware and to deepen our skills.

## 10. Create Feedback Loops

Be open to feedback: seek feedback on your own performance and be willing to give constructive feedback to your counterpart. Create routines and systems to make feedback a norm within your leadership and your organization.

## 11. Be the Change You Seek to Create

Creating change in the organization and the community starts with our individual attitudes, behaviors and actions. As Gandhi said, "Be the change you seek to create in the world."

## 12. Have Some Fun!

Nonprofit leaders are often workaholics. The work we do is important, but can only be sustained if we take time to relax and celebrate!

*"Teamwork begins by building trust. And the only way to do that is to overcome our need for invulnerability."*

— Patrick Lencioni

