



Good Governance Tips for Nonprofits

Navigating Uncertain Times

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In a nonprofit executive education session I taught recently, the executive director of a nonprofit serving an under-resourced population expressed a sentiment shared by many of the participants: "I have so much uncertainty to navigate and so little bandwidth to do it! I constantly feel like my hair is on fire." Between economic shocks from erratic political decisions, increasing attacks on DEI initiatives, and more cautious funders, many nonprofit leaders are feeling overwhelmed by the reactive nature of their work these days.

Like many nonprofit leaders, this ED spent most of her time reacting to things demanding immediate attention rather than executing her work strategically. When you're operating in reactive mode, it's exhausting, inefficient, and limits your organization's capacity for growth and impact.

Here are three powerful strategies to help your nonprofit not just survive but thrive in these uncertain times:

1. Diversify Your Funding Sources

The old saying "don't put all your eggs in one basket" has never been more relevant for nonprofits. Organizations that rely heavily on a single funding source—whether it's a major foundation grant, government funding, or one generous donor—are particularly vulnerable when economic or political winds shift.

Start by mapping your current funding sources. Identify gaps and opportunities. Where could you expand? Which funding source offers the most stability and the greatest potential for growth? Remember that diversification isn't just about having multiple sources—it's about having the right mix for your specific mission and community.

2. Strengthen Community Partnerships

No organization is an island, especially in uncertain times. Strategic partnerships with complementary organizations can create resilience that benefits everyone involved.

I recently watched two small nonprofits serving similar populations form an alliance that allowed them to share office space, administrative staff, and even technology resources. This partnership reduced overhead costs for both organizations by nearly 30%, creating breathing room in their budgets during a funding downturn.

Beyond resource sharing, strong partnerships can lead to joint programming, unified advocacy efforts, and a more powerful collective voice when addressing community needs. For organizations serving girls of color, partnerships with schools, healthcare providers, arts organizations, and businesses can create a supportive ecosystem that remains stable even when individual organizations face challenges.

Start by identifying potential partners whose missions complement yours. Approach partnerships with a clear understanding of what you can offer as well as what you need. The strongest partnerships are those where both organizations gain meaningful value.

3. Focus on Demonstrating Measurable Impact

When funders become more selective—as they often do during uncertain times—they invest in organizations that can clearly demonstrate their impact. Generic statements about "helping girls" or "building confidence" aren't enough anymore. Funders want specific, measurable outcomes that show exactly how your work is changing lives.

Start by identifying the outcomes that matter most for your specific population of girls. Develop systems to track these outcomes consistently. Use both quantitative metrics (numbers, percentages, scores) and qualitative data (stories, testimonials) to paint a complete picture of your impact. Then make this information easily accessible in your communications with funders, board members, and the community.

Remember, your nonprofit's work with girls of color is too important to be derailed by external uncertainty. By implementing these strategies, you can shore up your operations, reassure your staff, and continue making the impact your community needs.