



# BOARDS IN GEAR



**Nonprofit Association  
of Washington**

In partnership with



**WASHINGTON**  
Secretary of State

Corporations & Charities Division

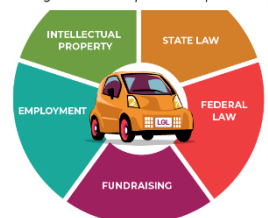
## FINANCE UNLOCKED *for* NONPROFITS

- 1 Balance Sheet
- 2 Income Statement
- 3 Nine-Ninety
- 4 Giving
- 5 Oversight

*Boards in Gear* is part of a resource series on nonprofit fundamentals that includes *Finance Unlocked for Nonprofits* and *Let's Go Legal*. Connect to these resources and more at [nonprofitwa.org/learn](http://nonprofitwa.org/learn).

## LET'S GO LEGAL!

The right road to compliance and protection



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**Important Note:** This information is provided for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal or technical advice. If you are unsure about anything covered in this guide, we suggest that you contact the appropriate agency or seek professional advice.

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# Introduction to Boards in Gear

## 1. ABOUT THIS GUIDE

*Boards in Gear*, which intentionally abbreviates to BIG, recognizes the large role boards play in a nonprofit's success. The BIG guide draws from a range of resources across the nonprofit sector and is complemented by Nonprofit Association of Washington's *Finance Unlocked for Nonprofits* and *Let's Go Legal* guides. Designed to provide actionable information and tools to elevate your board practices, BIG has activities, worksheets, and reflection questions throughout the guide. This is a starting point and an invitation to be curious, ask questions, and share your learning with others at your organization.

Organized into five chapters, the guide covers the following: Connection to Cause, Responsibilities, Composition & Development, Board Operations, and Fundraising. The chapters aim to address a few basic questions about nonprofit boards' why, what, who, and how.

- Why does your organization exist? Why do you serve on the board?
- What is the role of a board member?
- Who serves on the board? Who works to reinvigorate the board over time?
- How does the board operate to advance a nonprofit's mission?

### Thank you!

Washington State Office of the  
Secretary of State,  
Corporations & Charities  
Division



All the nonprofits who participate in *Boards in Gear* trainings and use the materials, your feedback helps guide efforts to create exceptional resources about nonprofit fundamentals.



Special thanks to RVC Seattle's Capacity Building Team for your insights and support.

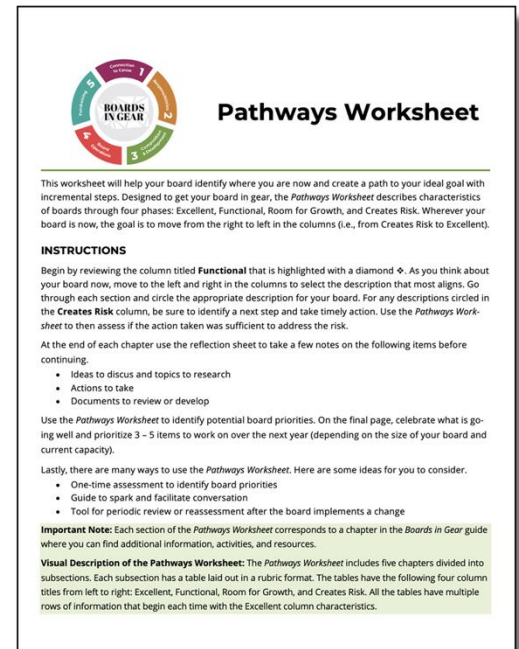
Accompanying this guide, you will find the *Boards in Gear Pathways Worksheet* that will help your board identify where you are now and create a path to your ideal goal with incremental steps. There is a *Boards in Gear* board game to bring some fun to your next board meeting and help you practice what you learn through the guide!

## 2. WHY GET YOUR BOARD IN GEAR?

You joined a nonprofit board because you care about the organization's mission. You want your contributions as a board member to positively affect the issues addressed by the organization. As a board, you want your nonprofit to thrive and make a difference in the communities served by your organization. Whether your nonprofit is just starting or is long established, getting your board in gear can help put your organization on a clear path forward.

Organizations have lifecycles or stages of development, like any living thing, so start from where your nonprofit is now. Your nonprofit may be newly created, experiencing growth, reaching a plateau, or nearing an end. Your board's work and focus areas will change depending on where your nonprofit is in its lifecycle and what is happening around the organization. Also, whether your organization has staff or is an all-volunteer endeavor heavily influences the board's role and scope.

Boards guide nonprofits towards mission achievement through a complex landscape of regulations, funding opportunities and challenges, other organizations, and many more considerations. To navigate the nonprofit landscape effectively, boards need to ask questions as organizational stewards, strategists, and sense-makers. Through oversight and technical work, board members steward the organization and ensure compliance with legal obligations. With foresight in mind, board members serve as strategists for planning and development. As sense-makers, board members consider the nonprofit within a bigger cause and explore what will best move the organization forward over time as communities and the world change.



### 3. HELP FOR NONPROFITS



#### ***Government***

#### **WASHINGTON STATE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE, CORPORATIONS & CHARITIES DIVISION**

The Washington State Office of the Secretary of State, Corporations & Charities Division has information available on nonprofit corporations and charities in Washington, training resources, frequently asked questions, and a live chat option to support your organization.



**WASHINGTON**  
**Secretary of State**

Corporations & Charities Division

- Corporations:
  - <https://www.sos.wa.gov/corps/>
  - Email: [corps@sos.wa.gov](mailto:corps@sos.wa.gov)
  - Phone: 360-725-0377
- Charities:
  - <https://www.sos.wa.gov/charities/>
  - Email: [charities@sos.wa.gov](mailto:charities@sos.wa.gov)
  - Phone: 360-725-0378, opt 1; 800-332-4483 (WA only)



## ***Nonprofits***

### **NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON**

Nonprofit Association of Washington (NAWA) convenes a powerful network of nonprofit organizations across Washington State to learn, advocate, and collaborate, so that nonprofits can achieve their missions. NAWA has learning opportunities and resources to help strengthen your nonprofit management practices and build connections with others around the state.



**Nonprofit Association  
of Washington**

- <https://nonprofitwa.org/>
- Phone: 855-299-2922

### **501 COMMONS**

501 Commons provides expertise to nonprofits through 30+ services, including a full range of management consulting, technology consulting, outsourced HR, accounting, IT infrastructure, and database management as well as professional development and board training, free information, and referral services.



- <https://www.501commons.org/>
- Phone: 206-682-6704

### **COMMUNITIES RISE**

Communities Rise offers legal services, trainings, peer learning, and coaching. Communities Rise works with organizations, small businesses, and communities located in Washington State that have been impacted by systemic oppression to increase capacity and build power as well as community leaders in the broader nonprofit, public, and philanthropic sectors to create systemic change.



- <https://communities-rise.org/>
- Phone: 206-324-5850