LIFE STAGES OF NONPROFIT BOARDS

ORGANIZING BOARD

Leading
Circle of leaders with shared vision

or

Following
One leader gathers supportive group

Characteristics:
- small
- homogeneous
- informal
- committed
- involved in everything
- find it difficult to hire/trust first staff members and share power
- founders think they know best

Original structure is strained by:
- Growth
- Overwhelming tasks
- Burnout
- Crisis (financial or organizational)
- Division on key issue

Transition
- in face of new demands, board and staff must redefine roles,
  open organization to new people
- some founding members leave
- roles are renegotiated
- development of systems, clearer job descriptions

GOVERNING BOARD

Characteristics:
- board accepts responsibility for "traditional" board tasks
- board is enlarged, diversified
- committee structure allows some tasks to be delegated
- staff may gain new responsibilities and decision-making power

Transition
- established organization becomes increasingly "professionalized"
- fundraising function of Board increasingly important

INSTITUTIONAL BOARD

Characteristics:
- focus on recruiting a large board which includes wealthy and influential people
- serving on the Board is considered prestigious
- board oversight responsibilities delegated to committees, including a strong executive committee