1. Courageous, Adaptive Executive & Board Leadership

1.1 Executives and boards **embrace their responsibility to deliver meaningful, measurable, and financially sustainable results.**	
1.2 Executives and boards **clarify the mission** of their organization and passionately push to keep getting better at pursuing it.	
1.3 Executives and boards **clearly define their respective roles and expectations**. They hold each other accountable for delivering on their commitments.	
1.4 Boards are **strong, assertive governors and stewards**, not just supporters and fundraisers. They recruit, advise, and hold accountable the lead executive (CEO). They ask probing questions about whether the organization is living up to its promises and acknowledge when course correction is needed.	
1.5 Executives and boards **listen and respond to the needs of the people they serve** (i.e., their primary constituents). This means systematically collecting, synthesizing, and using constituent feedback to inform decision-making.	
1.6 During the ongoing and iterative process of assessing effectiveness, executives and boards constantly ask: **What do our constituents need to make their lives better?** Is our program helping them get it? If not, what should we do differently?	
1.7 Executives and boards are constantly assessing not only what the organization should be doing but also **what it should stop doing**.	
1.8 Executives and boards are humble enough to **seek and act on feedback on their own performance and that of their organization**. Even the highest performers acknowledge that they still have a lot to learn and a lot of work to do.	
1.9 Executives and boards **recruit, develop, engage, and retain the talent** necessary to deliver on their mission. They know that great talent is a huge differentiator between organizations that are high performing and those that aren't.	
1.10 Executives and boards **marshal the external partners and resources** necessary to deliver on their mission.	
1.11 Executives and boards **cultivate trust-based relationships with key policymakers**. They keep policymakers informed about their work; advocate for policies and funding that can benefit constituents; and advocate against proposals that could adversely affect constituents.	
1.12 Executives and boards **cultivate diversity, equity, and inclusion at every level of the organization**, because a wide array of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives contribute to an organization's creativity, empathy, and effectiveness.	
1.13 Executives and boards **treat internal and external communications as a strategic function** that is essential for delivering great results and not just good PR.	

ACTION STEPS:

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2. Disciplined, People-Focused Management

2.1 Managers **translate leaders' drive for excellence into clear work plans and incentives** to carry out the work effectively and efficiently.	
2.2 Managers' **decisions are data informed** whenever possible.	
2.3 Managers, like executives and boards, **recruit, develop, engage, and retain the talent** necessary to deliver on the mission. They help staff get the tools and training they need in order to deliver the desired results.	
2.4 Managers **provide opportunities for staff to see how their work contributes to the organization's mission.** Managers know that doing so helps staff members find meaning and purpose in their work – and generally leads to higher motivation and performance.	
2.5 Managers **establish accountability systems that provide clarity** at each level of the organization about the standards for success and yet **provide room for staff to be creative** about how they achieve these standards.	
2.6 Managers **provide continuous, candid, constructive feedback** to team members and augment it with periodic performance reviews. They view performance reviews as an opportunity to help staff improve.	
2.7 Managers provide frequent **opportunities for staff to provide feedback to their supervisors**. Supervisors are not only open to receiving this feedback; they encourage it and are willing to act on it.	
2.8 Managers **acknowledge when staff members are not doing their work well**. They give these staffers help to improve or move them to more suitable roles. If it becomes clear that staff members are unable or unwilling to meet expectations, managers are **not afraid to make tough personnel decisions** so that the organization can live up to the promises it makes to participants, donors, and other key stakeholders.	

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3. Well-Designed & Well-Implemented Programs & Strategies

3.1 Leaders and managers who run programs that are intended to produce meaningful life changes **hold themselves accountable for helping participants achieve desired outcomes**. Programs intended to provide important but not life-changing products or services, such as food for homeless families, are not accountable for outcomes but **must deliver high-quality outputs.**	
3.2 Leaders, managers, and staff **treat constituents with respect, authenticity, and empathy.**	
3.3 Leaders and managers select or design their programs and strategies based on **a sound analysis of the issues and evidence-informed assumptions** about how the organization's activities can lead to the desired change (often referred to as "theory of change").	
3.4 Once programs and strategies are up and running, leaders and managers continually ask: "**Are we collecting the information we need to ensure we're effectively meeting the needs of our participants?** Are we reviewing and acting upon the latest evidence in our field? Are we open to counter-evidence that suggests we should be doing things differently?"	
3.5 Leaders and managers **implement their programs in a high quality manner** using rigorous implementation standards.	
3.6 Leaders and managers are **sensitive to the cultural, racial, and political dynamics in the communities they serve** and are open to making adjustments to their programs and strategies when these dynamics shift.	
3.7 Leaders and managers **establish and rigorously apply clear criteria for who is in their target population.**	
3.8 Leaders and managers do a good job of **recruiting, retaining, motivating, listening to, and learning from their participants.**	
3.9 In the case of direct-service organizations, all management staff **seek to build strong relationships with those they serve**. These relationships are often the single biggest determinant of whether participants will stay engaged in programming and thereby achieve the desired results.	
3.10 Leaders and managers **guard against the temptation to veer off course in search of numbers that look good in marketing materials or reports to funders**.	

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4. Financial Health & Sustainability

4.1 The board and senior management **take charge of their organization's financial destiny**. They articulate the value they deliver and develop overall strategies, tightly aligned with their mission, to support and sustain the organization.	
4.2 The board and senior management **nurture the external financing relationships** required to support their organization's operations.	
4.3 The board and senior management establish **strong systems for financial stewardship** and accountability throughout their organization.	
4.4 The board, management, and staff build and participate in **budget processes that are oriented toward achieving results** and not just conducting activities. This means allocating adequate resources for monitoring and evaluation. And it means making hard choices, especially in tough financial times, to direct money where it needs to go to drive the intended results.	
4.5 Senior management **uses financial modeling to make clear and transparent the organization's financial condition** and, at any given point, predict how it will end the year (and what will make the prediction more or less reliable).	
4.6 The board and senior management **share financial results transparently** with key stakeholders at regular intervals.	
4.7 The board and management **treat fundraising and development as a strategic function that requires focus, management, capital, and specialized skill sets**. They craft clearly defined roles and goals for the board and staff.	
4.8 The board and senior management operate their organization **at a surplus that allows them to continue to build a strong balance sheet with appropriate reserves**.	
4.9 The board, management, and key staff **understand their organization's cost structure,** which aspects of it are required to produce high quality programs and/or services, and how it aligns with reliable revenue sources for funding it year in and year out. They are relentless in making necessary investments with an eye to costs and benefits while being equally relentless in reducing unnecessary costs.	
4.10 Senior management instills and organization-wide **discipline of compliance with all regulatory requirements.**	

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5. A Culture That Values Learning

5.1 The board, management, and staff **understand the organization's mission and desired results and review them periodically** to ensure that they are still relevant.	
5.2 The board, management, and staff **continually seek to do even better for the people or causes they serve**.	
5.3 My organization's board, management, and staff are **open and transparent about their results** – whether the results are positive or negative – to fuel learning and improvement.	
5.4 People in all parts of the organization have **high expectations of themselves** and of their peers.	
5.5 The board, management, and staff **take on the challenge of collecting and using information**, not because it's a good marketing tool, and not because a funder said they have to. They believe it is integral to ensuring material, measurable, and sustainable good for the people or causes they serve.	
5.6 The board, management, and staff recognize they can't fully understand the needs of those they serve unless they **listen to and learn from constituents** in formal and informal ways.	
5.7 The board, management, and staff take the time to **benchmark themselves against, and learn from, peer organizations** that are at the top of their field.	
5.8 Senior management leads by example and encourages people throughout the organization to **be curious, ask questions, and push each other's thinking** by being appropriately and respectfully challenging. High-performance cultures are innovative cultures, mindful that every program and process eventually becomes dated, even obsolete.	
5.9 Senior management creates an environment in which staff members **feel safe acknowledging when there are problems.** They use what others might deem "failures" as an opportunity to listen, learn, and improve.	
5.10 Even the busiest leaders, managers, and staff members **carve out formal and informal opportunities to step back, take stock, and reflect.**	

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6. Internal Monitoring for Continuous Improvement

6.1 The board, management, and staff work together to **establish quantitative and qualitative indicators**, tightly aligned with the results they want to achieve, for each program and for the organization as a whole.	
6.2 Management and staff **produce frequent reports on how well the organization is implementing its programs and strategies**. Management and staff use these reports to chart course corrections and make operational and programmatic improvements on an ongoing basis.	
6.3 Management and staff **make the collection, analysis, and use of data part of the organization's culture and daily operations**. They ensure that people throughout the organization understand the key metrics. And they invest in training and coaching to help staff gain comfort in working with data as a natural part of their job.	
6.4 Management and staff **deploy systems to collect and analyze constituent feedback,** drawing on existing tools whenever possible. The best systems not only help staff understand constituents' views, they also help ensure that participants play a role in creating needed improvements.	
6.5 Management and staff of direct-service organizations **put special emphasis on data about recruitment and engagement of their target population** so they can find out if they are reaching the people they aspire to serve and engaging them in activities long enough to make a difference.	
6.6 Management and staff **prioritize collecting information that's relevant for determining how well they are achieving the desired results,** understanding what mix of efforts is critical to achieving those results, and continuously improving their results over time.	
6.7 The board, management, and staff **draw extensively on lessons from organizational assessments and evaluations of like programs** serving similar causes or populations.	

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7. External Evaluation for Mission Effectiveness

7.1 Leaders **complement internal monitoring with external evaluations conducted by highly skilled, independent experts**.	
7.2 Leaders commission external assessments to **learn more about how well their programs are being run, what these programs are or are not accomplishing, who is or is not benefiting, and how the programs can be strengthened.** Leaders do not use external assessments as a one-time, up-or-down verdict on the organization's effectiveness.	
7.3 Leaders recognize that there are many different types of external assessments, and **no one type is right for every organization or for every stage of an organization's development.** Independent evaluators who understand how different methodologies fit different contexts can help leaders **match the tool to the task.**	
7.4 Leaders draw a clear distinction between outputs (e.g. meals delivered, youth tutored) and outcomes (meaningful changes in knowledge, skills, behavior, or status). Those who are working to improve outcomes **commission evaluations to assess whether they are having a positive net impact.** In other words, they want to know to what extent, and for whom, they're making a meaningful difference *beyond what would have happened anyway.*	
7.5 Leaders who plan to expand significantly any programs aimed at improving outcomes have a **special obligation to commission a rigorous evaluation that can assess that impact.**	
7.6 Even those leaders who commission the most rigorous of impact evaluations do not stop there. They **commission additional assessments to gauge their impact in new settings** (or for new populations) and achieve greater positive impact for the money they spend.	
7.7 Leaders **share the methodology and results of their external assessments** to help others learn and avoid mistakes.	

ACTION STEPS: