



# Trust-Based Philanthropy & Board Governance

**Trust-based philanthropy (TBP)** is a **values-driven** approach to **philanthropic relationships** grounded in **accountability, community, justice, and power consciousness**. It extends beyond grantmaking to offer a *holistic* framework for addressing systemic challenges in the sector.

## Why it matters:

Boards hold significant influence over how foundations and nonprofits operate. A trust-based philanthropy (TBP) lens shifts governance away from compliance-only practices and towards values-driven, equity-conscious leadership that centres on community voices.

**Mandate:** What's the board's role?



**Composition:**  
Who's at the table?

**Dynamics:**  
How does the board work together?

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## **Mandate:** What's the board's role?

- **Beyond compliance:** Governance that moves past oversight and control to become stewardship of mission, values, and impact.
  - A TBP lens expands the board's role from oversight to generative leadership, connecting governance to real-world community impact.
- **Values-driven strategy:** Decisions are guided by power-consciousness, equity, and community priorities.
- **Financial alignment:** Especially in times of financial stress, practices should remain consistent with the mission and values.

## **Composition:** Who's at the table?

- **Representation matters:** Boards must question traditional notions of "who governs" and intentionally include voices reflective of the communities served.
- **Diversity as power-sharing:** Includes gender, age, race, ethnicity, ability, and lived experience – not as a checkbox, but to ensure decision-making reflects those most impacted by the mission.
  - Board diversity is not just demographics – it's about redistributing power and making space for multiple forms of expertise.
- **Equity focus:** TBP requires conscious efforts to advance racial equity and shift who is deemed "trustworthy."

## **Dynamics:** How does the board work together?

- **Collaborative leadership:** Boards share decision-making with staff and stakeholders, centring relationships over hierarchy.
- **Inclusive decision-making:** Power is distributed so no one person or group dominates; decisions are shaped collectively.
- **Accountability with integrity:** Boards remain clear about both *who* they serve and what they commit to, keeping mission and values at the core.

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**For the full research report, email:**  
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