



Is Now the Time to Reimagine Your Mission?

A Strategic Framework for Nonprofits (in collaboration with SmallBox)



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With all of the chaos and disruption 2020 has brought on over the last few months, it can be hard for any organization to really know how to move forward. For nonprofit organizations, staying strategic even during moments of great disruption can be an arduous task.

With these difficulties in mind, Boardable has partnered with **SmallBox** to develop a real-world, actionable framework for nonprofit organizations to leverage the industry's current challenges and recognize long-term opportunities for success. This ebook will dive into the Smallbox framework in more detail and give nonprofits a starting point for success in 2021 and beyond.





Introducing

smallbox

SmallBox is a design agency focused on creating strategies, as well as web and brand experiences, for nonprofit and mission-driven organizations. By focusing on a human-centered design approach, SmallBox has established itself as a leading consulting partner for mission-driven organizations to better understand and achieve their goals.

While SmallBox has been serving organizations with strategic, web, and brand solutions for years, 2020 opened up an entirely new need for the mission-driven organizations the team serves. By applying their human-centered design principles to the current needs of nonprofit organizations, **SmallBox has built a framework** for teams so they can refrain from a “crisis mindset” and move towards a strategic outlook. Simply put, the Smallbox framework is about long-term value – not just short-term impact.



The SmallBox Framework for Nonprofits

For many nonprofit organizations, looking beyond the current complex economic environment is daunting. With in-person events limited, disposable donor income dwindling, and news of nonprofit organizations closing doors every week, uncertainty is part of day-to-day reality. But this doesn't mean that there is no chance for new growth and opportunity in the nonprofit sector.

The SmallBox framework is designed to bring key nonprofit stakeholders together, identify areas of creative and innovative opportunity, and then work out how these short-term opportunities can become long-term strategic pathways to success. Sustainability, flexibility, and dynamic problem solving are all key phrases for teams leveraging this framework.



Before you get started

While starting a new exercise can be exciting, it is worthwhile to make sure your team understands the desired outcomes and purpose of this exercise prior to expending time and effort on it. By starting out on the same page, everyone involved will be better aligned on what your organization's goals are and how they contribute to the nonprofit's overall value.

Treat this exercise as a true strategic planning session. Bring together a diverse group of stakeholders (board members, volunteers, people you serve, etc.) for a dedicated half-day session with clear ground rules and expectations. This should not be a debate or argument over the future of your nonprofit. Instead, this framework is designed to set the stage for creative, positive conversations and idea sharing in order to reach a scalable path for success.

Once everyone understands the purpose of this meeting, it's time to dive in!

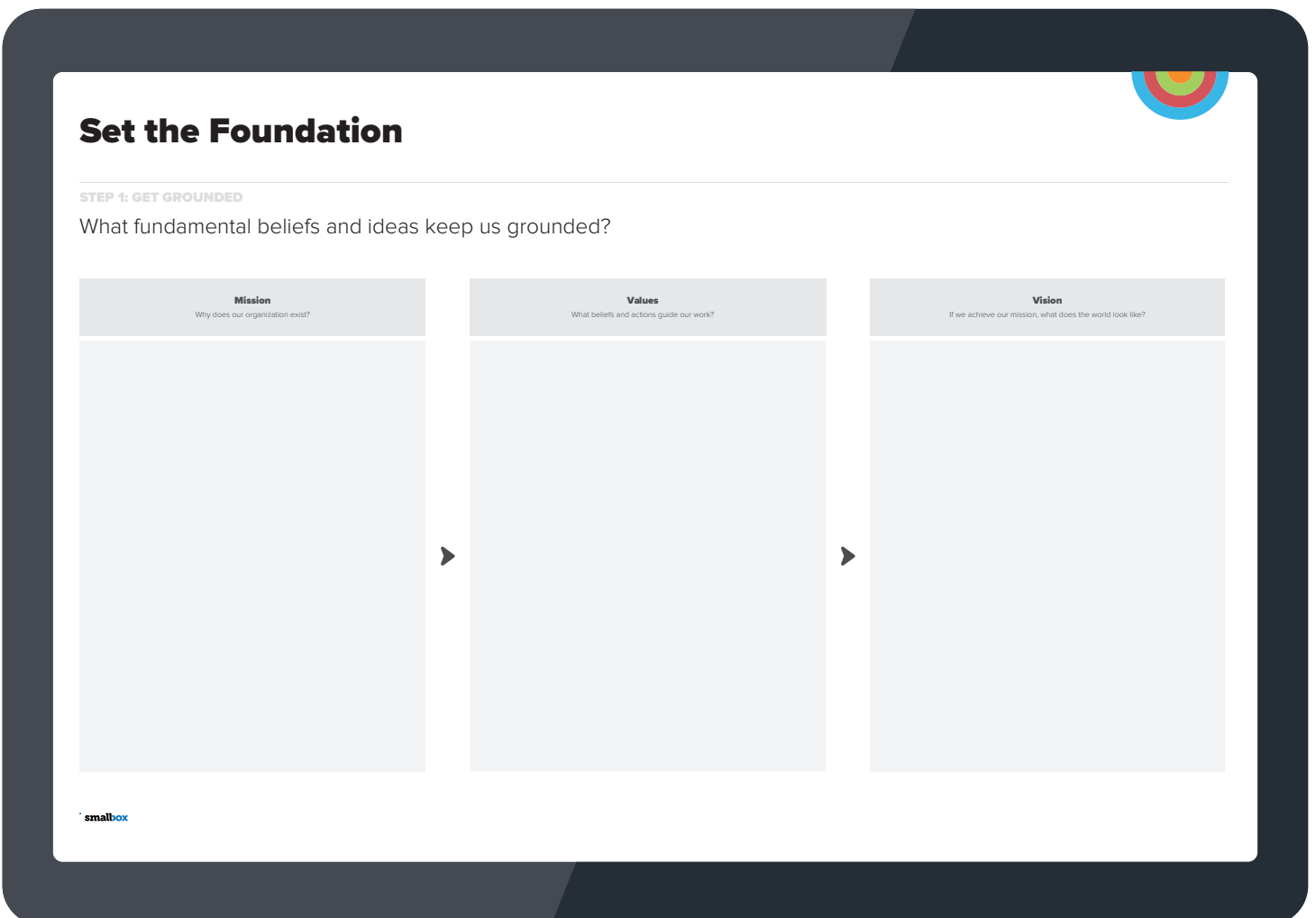


Step 1 – Set the Foundation

First and foremost, you will want to establish the foundation for this exercise. Reminding yourselves of the mission, vision, and values of your nonprofit will give your team a lodestar by which to center the rest of your conversations throughout the exercise. Ask yourselves the following questions:

1. What in our mission speaks to our audience's values?
2. How does this mission reflect our core values?
3. What in our vision is essential and inspirational?

During this first step, it's important to remember that you're not trying to "reinvent" any messaging for your organization. Instead, this is the time to look at your current strategic language and determine whether or not it is still applicable and accessible in today's environment.



The screenshot shows a digital workspace titled "Set the Foundation" with a colorful circular logo in the top right corner. Below the title is the sub-header "STEP 1: GET GROUNDED" and the question "What fundamental beliefs and ideas keep us grounded?". The workspace contains three vertical columns, each with a header and a large empty text area. The first column is labeled "Mission" with the sub-question "Why does our organization exist?". The second column is labeled "Values" with the sub-question "What beliefs and actions guide our work?". The third column is labeled "Vision" with the sub-question "If we achieve our mission, what does the world look like?". Small right-pointing arrows are positioned between the columns. A "smallbox" logo is visible in the bottom left corner of the workspace.

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Step 2 – Reimagine Mission Delivery

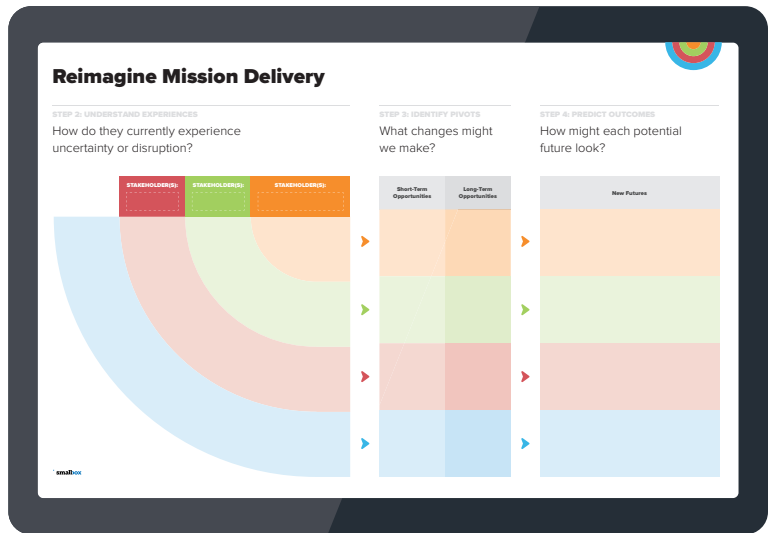
Now it's time for the bulk of the exercise. Here, nonprofit teams will have the opportunity to think about how they've been doing work in the past and then identify areas of disruption. Ideally, teams will find opportunities to put those whom they serve at the center of their planning.

First, clearly identify your audiences. From your donors to volunteers to board members to people whom your mission supports, you have different constituents looking for different things from your organization. And, over the last few months, all of these people have experienced some sort of challenge or disruption. Putting pen to paper in order to clearly define these challenges allows nonprofits to move forward and ask, "How can we help overcome these challenges?"

With these audiences and challenges defined, it's time to get creative. Now is when your team can brainstorm short and long-term opportunities to address the disruptors you previously identified directly. While there may be a short-term answer to an issue (hosting virtual events in place of in-person ones), should these short-term changes translate into long-term solutions? If so, how?

And this is where the final step, future predictions, comes into play. This is the time to think big and not let little details stand in your way. Of course, there may be on-the-ground details you'll need to address, but now is the time to think about the ideal future state for your audiences and the opportunities in front of them.

Here is just one example of reimagining nonprofit mission delivery: Take a childcare



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organization with tons of educational programs for parents and daycares. Before the disruption of 2020, they would host workshops for maybe five to ten attendees. By shifting to virtual events, they've been able to get four times as many participants at any given time. But the opportunity doesn't stop there. The organization started recording these sessions and made them available to people to view on demand. Finding the opportunity within the challenge allowed the organization to completely shift the way they deliver educational resources moving forward, even when things go "back to normal."

The purpose of reimagining mission delivery is to help nonprofit leaders move away from the "doom and gloom" mindset and start thinking about the future in an action-oriented, positive way. Instead of thinking about these disruptions as obstacles, teams can instead think about these situations as opportunities for future growth and success.



Step 3 – Assess Resources

Now it's time to take these identified solutions and put them into action. There will always be a gap between “where we've been” and “where we're going” from a strategic point of view, but this is an opportunity to fill in this space with new, actionable content. Taking the five most strategic opportunities from the last step, your team can focus on making a real plan.

During this exercise, you'll ask:

- How can the team make these opportunities happen?
- Who will own this process?
- What can we do ourselves right now?
- In which cases do we need to bring in partners to help?
- What are the steps involved?
- Do we need funding for this project, and if so, where can we get it?

The innovation and creativity your team leaned on in step two will circle back to your nonprofit's reality. With the right ideas and strategic vision, your team will be resilient and creative as they step into the future.

Assess Resources

STEP 5: PRIORITIZE
What opportunities are we acting on?

Opportunity <small>(list one per row)</small>	Actions <small>What actions will be required to make our ideas successful?</small>	Capabilities & Partnerships <small>What are we capable of? What can't we do that we might partner with someone on?</small>	Responsibilities <small>Who is responsible for doing it?</small>	Funding <small>Where might we obtain funding?</small>	Gaps? <small>What is outside of our control?</small>
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STEP 6: DEVELOP STRATEGIES
What would it take to implement these new opportunities?

Actions <small>What actions will be required to make our ideas successful?</small>	Capabilities & Partnerships <small>What are we capable of? What can't we do that we might partner with someone on?</small>	Responsibilities <small>Who is responsible for doing it?</small>	Funding <small>Where might we obtain funding?</small>	Gaps? <small>What is outside of our control?</small>

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Continuing Education

If 2020 has taught us anything, it's that nobody can predict what will happen next week, let alone next year or in 2024. That is why Boardable is partnering with Smallbox to bring strategic planning resources, materials, and educational content to nonprofit organizations. You can [download your Smallbox framework worksheets](#) now to get started on the steps outlined above.



About Boardable

Built by Nonprofit leaders, for Nonprofits. Boardable empowers you to work more effectively with your boards and committees. We know the frustration you feel (and the hours you lose) just from organizing a meeting via email, phone, and text. We've lived it. We're from the nonprofit world, too. After looking around for the right tool but not finding it, we decided to build it. Boardable is a software platform that centralizes all communication between you and your board. Find the best meeting times, securely store all of your documents, archive discussion threads and more—all in one place.

For more information, to schedule a demo, or to try Boardable for free (no credit card or commitment), visit us at boardable.com.



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About SmallBox

SmallBox is an Indianapolis-based design agency, specializing in strategy, brand, and web for mission-driven organizations. Since 2006, we have cultivated a portfolio of organizations dedicated to making their community—and the world—a better place to be.

Simply put, we serve clients who serve others. Embracing this philosophy has led to a client roster rooted in community foundations, nonprofits, healthcare, higher education, and faith. We take pride in using human-centered design practices, creating authentic client relationships, and working collaboratively as a strategic partner rather than a service-level vendor.

