

## Board Culture Profile: Improving the Work of Governing Boards

It's no secret that effective governing boards are essential to successful organizations. What is less obvious, because it is often invisible and simply accepted without scrutiny, is the impact of board culture. The ways trustees interact, discuss issues, and make decisions determines outcomes.

We have designed an approach and survey to identify and surface board culture in order to:

1. Reveal predominant board behaviors and how they affect board work both positively and negatively;
2. Create meaningful, comparative board culture profiles; and,
3. Engage trustees in critical thinking about the relationship between board culture and higher governance and organizational performance.

The result for boards is a roadmap to improved governance to take better advantage of their cultural strengths, reveal possible blindspots, and mitigate weaknesses as they relate to the work they are facing and the contexts in which they operate.

### Key Cultural Dimensions

Our approach to board culture focuses on four key dimensions:

1. *How boards act;*
2. *How boards decide;*
3. *What boards have as a predominant mindset; and,*
4. *How boards perceive their roles.*

These components and their scales are grounded in research on organizational culture and dynamics, and team function/dysfunction, as well as field-based research on boards. Each element matters to board behavior, and together they paint a deep and comprehensive picture of the culture of each board.

### Project Principals

- Cathy Trower, President, Trower & Trower, Inc.  
<http://www.trowerandtrower.com/about-us/cathy/>
- Peter Eckel, Senior Fellow and Director of Leadership Programs, Penn AHEAD  
<http://scholar.gse.upenn.edu/eckel/>
- Matt Hartley, Professor of Education at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education and Executive Director of AHEAD  
<http://scholar.gse.upenn.edu/hartley/>

[www.trowerandtrower.com](http://www.trowerandtrower.com)  
[www.ahead-penn.org](http://www.ahead-penn.org)

### Board Culture Project Detail Overview

Please click here for additional information about this approach. <http://www.trowerandtrower.com/wp-content/uploads/Board-Culture-Project-Overview.pdf>

### Contact Information

For more information about this project or to learn more about how to participate, please contact:

Cathy Trower

President, Trower & Trower, Inc.

603-529-3737

[catrower@trowerandtrower.com](mailto:catrower@trowerandtrower.com)

Peter Eckel, Ph.D.

Senior Fellow and Director of Leadership Programs

Penn AHEAD

215-573-4342

[EckelPD@UPenn.edu](mailto:EckelPD@UPenn.edu)