

Delta Institute Board Designed Alliance

The development of this Designed Alliance was facilitated by Jaré Akchin, Delta Institute Board Director and Chief Impact Officer at Third Plateau Social Impact Strategies.

Why?

This board is awesome! We're doing a great things and this group contributes in amazing ways.

A designed alliance only strengths this, helping us ensure we continue to operate at a high level and in a way that meets the needs of all players – board and staff. It gives us:

- Agreements about how we want to work together, creates the container we will operate within.
- Understanding of what is inbounds and out of bounds
- Operational and relational structures

Board Structures

Delta is a Mature Organization

- Programs established, recognized
- Professional managers for larger staff
- Clear accountability across staff
- Strong systems and operations
- Reliable, diverse funding
- Diverse board, focused on policy and fundraising

Which requires a...



Governing Board

- Our primary role is to be mission keepers
- We support strategic direction and ensure the staff is well supported to meet organizational goals
- We primarily provide input, rather than decisions

Shared Leadership



This is a helpful guide for considering shared leadership. Every organization (including Delta) is unique and some fluidity exists across roles as a result.

Our Designed Alliance



How We Gather: Meetings

Operational

- Quarterly meetings
- One annual in-person board retreat that, when possible, includes an optional project site visit
- Read materials in advance, allowing for discussion not reporting
- Provide strategic input, and programmatic input upon request
- Alert staff in a timely manner about our attendance and provide input by email if unable to attend

Relational

- We have fun!
- We support each other
- We are easy on people, hard on ideas
- We center DEI, ensuring all are welcomed, belong, and feel heard
- Self-organize in-person and virtual get togethers twice a year
- We respect one another and their perspectives, backgrounds, and philosophies to ensure that all members of the board, DELs, and staff can grow and flourish

How We Gather: Engagement

Operational

- Per our board participation agreement, we attend a minimum of three board meetings a year, participate in a Standing Committee, at attend at least one Delta event per year (virtually or in-person)
- Self-organize in-person and virtual get togethers twice a year
- Attend, as much as reasonable, Delta functions, including events, Delta Mixers, and other gatherings led by staff

Relational

- Consider the geographic spread of our board when developing engagement opportunities to ensure everyone is present, feels seen, and can get to know each other
- Consider the accessibility needs of board members when developing engagement opportunities

How We Govern

Operational

- Utilize Consent Agendas to streamline meetings and pass routine, non-controversial items while learning what each Committee discusses in (reasonable) real-time
- Develop clear guidance for staff on content provided and needed to make decisions; limiting the impact on their capacity as much as possible
- Identify the key questions that should be regularly asked to ensure we are supporting the organization and staff in its strategic vision

Potential Sample Guiding Questions

- What are our core values and are we living them through our budget, culture, and programmatic work?
- What are our key priorities and strategies?
- How effective are we at meeting our strategic goals? How might we continue to enhance our ability to meet strategies and/or pivot/adapt our strategies?
- How are we measuring impact? How impactful are we?

Our Primary Board Roles



Outside of our mandated fiduciary and CEO oversight responsibilities, we serve as:

- **Ambassadors**

- Share Delta's work with others, building knowledge and interest in the organization

- **Strategists / Thought Partners**

- Ensure resources at the organization are aligned with strategic focus
- Provide insight into potential strategies that support Delta's ultimate goals
- Provide oversight and accountability for meeting Delta's strategies
- Help set outcomes/metrics for strategy

- **Fundraisers / Friendraisers**

- Make meaningful personal contributions
- Assist in raising additional resources for Delta by building connections and networks that support Delta through advocacy, funding, partnerships, etc.

We Also (When Appropriate)

- **Provide CEO Performance Feedback**
 - The Executive Committee manages and convenes the CEO performance review process, gaining feedback from the Board, and sharing with the CEO; staff may be asked for feedback
- **Support the DELs**
 - Authentically connect with the DELs to foster meaningful relationships and consider next steps in their board service at Delta or beyond
 - Provide support to the DELs for their amazing fundraising work
- **Provide Industry Expertise on Critical Delta Programs**
 - Appreciate the complexity that Delta works within, and that not all Delta projects are available to non-resident and/or non-community participants. However, when available, volunteer opportunities and engagement pieces will be shared proactively with the Board for self-selected opt-ins.

How We Share Leadership

- Collectively set strategic goals for the organization
- Provide input into metrics and milestones around strategies
- Collectively assess how we are doing against organizational goals and strategies
- Help identify, cultivate, and recruit potential board members and DELs
- Support succession planning and pipeline development for board and staff
- Ensure our budget aligns with our mission and goals
- Shared support for fundraising and networking