

Pro bono strategic consulting for community nonprofits at *an inflection point*●

Engagement FAQ

Common questions about the consulting model: cost, commitment, phases, scope, and what to expect.

What does this cost?

The market value of this engagement could be as much as \$25,000. However, no payment to me is required. The minimum is accountability: your organization commits to follow through on agreed action steps and to show up for the work. That commitment is the payment.

And when the work succeeds — as it should when we do this together — you pay it forward: a meaningful contribution, at whatever level makes sense, to another 501(c)(3) of your choosing.

What's the time commitment for our organization?

It varies by phase. In Triage & Landscaping, a handful of conversations with the board and staff, key donors and peers, and some online research — low burden. In Groundwork, the intensive phase, expect meetings roughly every two weeks plus work between them: gathering information, building consensus with your board, making decisions and acting on them, reaching beyond your comfort zone. In Implementation, check-ins and accountability. Leadership time runs roughly six to ten hours per month during Groundwork, possibly less during Implementation. Your executive director is the main point of contact, but this project won't work without meaningful board engagement.

How does the engagement work?

Three phases, about one year maximum. **Phase 1 — Triage & Landscaping** (zero to two months): collaborative discovery. We explore your vision, map your niche, consider your resources and potential capabilities, connect with model organizations, and begin to picture what the step forward would look like. No commitments at this stage.

Phase 2 — Groundwork (two to three months): build consensus inside the organization, develop the strategic plan, and define a realistic path with action items and milestones your organization will own. This is intensive work.

Phase 3 — Implementation (six to eight months): validating the plan through execution — check-ins, accountability, honest course-correction, acquisitions of expertise and resources, making things happen — closing with a structured assessment of what worked and what the next big step might be.

What's not included?

This engagement is not designed for revisions to a policy handbook, bylaws updates, or incremental governance improvements. There are other resources better suited to those needs — including pro bono legal assistance and organizations like BoardSource. This is about inflection points, not increments. You would readily find an effective balance between self-help and pro bono support.

What is an inflection point?

A moment when your organization has a chance to become significantly more impactful — not just a little better at what it already does. It changes your trajectory: a step up to a new level of operations and impact. Examples from past work: building governance and organizational infrastructure that made an organization credible to major institutional donors; developing a knowledge-sharing platform that extended impact to a much broader community; importing a sophisticated operational approach that changed what an organization was capable of doing. An alliance or merger with a complementary organization.

Who decides whether this is the right fit?

Both of us. The engagement starts with Triage & Landscaping precisely so that neither of us commits before we've both concluded there's an inflection point worth pursuing, the timing and commitment are there, and we're the right partnership to pursue it. Neither party commits to Groundwork until the answer is yes.

How long does it take, and how does it end?

About one year at most. I'm not building a long-term consulting relationship. The goal is to help you reach your inflection point, close with a structured assessment, and step back. Where the project needs more than a year, you will be prepared to maintain the momentum.

Why do you do this pro bono?

This is my retirement avocation, chosen deliberately over paid consulting — a way to put forty years of consulting and legal practice to use in my own community, where it might matter most.

Do you have experience with nonprofits in our sector?

I have direct board and governance experience across education, fine arts (theater and choral), civic organizations, social services, and biomedical research in the nonprofit sector. My professional background spans law, technology transfer, institution building, and strategic planning at organizations including NIH, the J. Craig Venter Institute, and public companies. What transfers across sectors is the ability to identify the inflection point, build the consensus needed to pursue it, and help an organization develop the plan and accountability structure to get there.

How is this different from hiring a consulting firm?

Two things mainly. First, I bring board and governance experience from the inside — I know what it's like to sit at that table trying to lead change, not just advise from outside it. Second, I'm personally accountable to the outcome in a way a firm charging by the hour isn't. If we agree to do this together, I'm committed to showing up for a year and helping you get where we said we'd go.

You're an attorney, too. Is this legal advice?

No. This engagement is strategic and business advice. It is not legal advice, and it does not create an attorney–client relationship or any form of legal representation. Where legal questions arise along the way, I'll help you frame them and point you toward appropriate counsel, including pro bono legal resources.

What happens if it isn't working?

We talk about it. Triage & Landscaping is designed to reduce the risk of a bad fit before either of us commits beyond that phase. But if something changes mid-engagement — a leadership transition, a financial shock, an inflection point that turns out to be unreachable — we reassess honestly. My model doesn't contemplate billing anyway through a bad engagement. I'm committed to helping you succeed.