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**Governance 2001-2021:
The Changing Nature of
Jackson Hole's Nonprofit Boards**

Jonathan Schechter; November 2021

Executive Summary

(The full version of this paper can be downloaded [here](#))



This study examines 22 prominent Jackson Hole-based nonprofit organizations operating in both 2001 and 2021. For both years, basic financial data were collected for each organization, as well as information about its board members (profession, gender, and whether they earned their livelihoods in Jackson Hole or elsewhere).

The table on the next page summarizes this paper's basic statistical findings. In both 2001 and 2021, 336 people belonged to the 22 boards examined. In 2001, 70% of all board members worked for some type of for-profit business, including 9% who worked in Finance. In 2021, 82% of all board members worked in some type of for-profit business, including 25% who worked in Finance.

The membership of the boards examined went from being 41% female in 2001 to 52% female in 2021. In 2001, 53% of all board members earned their livelihoods in the Jackson Hole area. In 2021, that figure was 47%.

Between 2001 and 2019 (the most recent financial filing year), the 22 nonprofits saw their combined revenues go from \$100 to \$105 million; their combined expenses go from \$55 to \$94 million; their combined net "profit" fall from \$44 to \$11 million; and their combined net assets grow from \$105 to \$326 million.

The preponderance of the net asset growth was enjoyed by the eight largest nonprofits examined in this study, whose collective net assets grew from \$95 million in 2001 to \$290 million in 2021. There were also significant differences in board composition between the bigger and smaller nonprofits, with the bigger organizations' boards tending to be larger, more male, with more members with Business/Finance backgrounds; and with more members earning their livelihoods from non-local sources.

Understanding the composition of a nonprofit board is important because members' backgrounds and perspectives affect how a board evaluates their organization's performance and guides its future.

In America, we look to for-profit businesses to provide those goods and services that can earn a financial profit; i.e., that can be sold for more than they cost to produce. In turn, financial profit is the fundamental metric boards and, by extension, society uses to judge the success of for-profit businesses.

Not all goods and services can be produced profitably, however. To provide these non-profitable products, society turns to government or, failing that, nonprofits. By extension, because governments and nonprofits provide goods and services that cannot be produced profitably, their performance must be judged using other, non-financial metrics. Unfortunately, no single metric for judging nonprofit and governmental performance is as easy to understand, easy to use, and ubiquitously used as financial profit. As a result, nonprofit boards must guard against using financial profit or other related metrics to fill the "evaluation void," for such tools will, by definition, inevitably result in the organization being judged a failure.

Put another way, while it is necessary for a nonprofit board to assess their organization's financial performance, it is not sufficient. In addition, the board must also evaluate the organization's performance vis-a-vis its mission, a task for which financial profit and related metrics are not well-suited. Alternative tools such as the Toyota Production System and its Statement of Ideal can help address the evaluation void. Like financial profit, such assessment tools are both aspirational and operational; unlike financial profit, they allow an organization's board and management to focus on the qualities driving its mission.

Table 2
Governance 2001-2021 – Basic Findings, by Organizations’ 2019 Net Asset Size
“Smaller 14” <\$10 million

Art Association, Curran-Seeley, Children’s Learning Center, Community Safety Network, Dancers Workshop, Friends of Pathways, JH Conservation Alliance, JH Community Counseling Center, JH Historical Society, JH Ski Club, JH Wildlife Foundation, Senior Center, Teton Literacy Center, Teton Youth & Family Services

“Bigger 8” >\$10 million

Center for the Arts, Community Foundation, Grand Teton Music Festival, Grand Teton NP Foundation, JH Land Trust, National Museum of Wildlife Art, St. John’s Health Foundation, Teton Science Schools

	Smaller 14				Bigger 8				Total			
			Change				Change				Change	
	2001	2021	#	%	2001	2021	#	%	2001	2021	#	%
Total Board Members	149	158	9	6%	187	178	(9)	-5%	336	336	0	0%
Gender												
Female	63	89	26	41%	76	86	10	13%	139	175	36	26%
Male	86	69	(17)	-20%	111	92	(19)	-17%	197	161	(36)	-18%
Income Source												
Local	115	105	(10)	-9%	64	53	(11)	-17%	179	158	(21)	-12%
Non-local	34	53	19	56%	123	125	2	2%	157	178	21	13%
Occupation												
Finance	11	25	14	127%	20	60	40	200%	31	85	54	174%
Other Business	102	102	0	0%	101	88	(13)	-13%	203	190	(13)	-6%
Non-Business	36	31	(5)	-14%	66	30	(36)	-55%	102	61	(41)	-40%
Finances (millions)												
Revenues	\$7.9	\$25.1	\$17.2	218%	\$92.0	\$79.6	(\$12.4)	-13%	\$99.9	\$104.7	\$4.8	5%
Expenses	\$7.9	\$23.7	\$15.8	200%	\$47.6	\$69.8	\$22.2	47%	\$55.5	\$93.5	\$38.0	68%
Net Gain/Loss	\$0.0	\$1.4	\$1.4	??	\$44.4	\$9.8	(\$34.6)	-78%	\$44.4	\$11.2	(\$33.2)	-75%
Net Assets	\$9.9	\$35.8	\$25.9	262%	\$95.2	\$290.5	\$195.3	205%	\$105.1	\$326.3	\$221.2	210%

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