



Nonprofit HR Infrastructure Maturity Map

Score your nonprofit's people infrastructure across eight domains — from governance to burnout — and see what to build next.

WHAT THIS HELPS YOU DO

Use this map to assess where your nonprofit's HR infrastructure actually stands across eight domains, so the board and ED invest in the next maturity level instead of firefighting the same people problems annually.

WHEN TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

- At strategic planning or board retreat season
- When the same people problem has recurred three times
- Before a growth spurt, major grant, or first big hire wave
- When a founder or long-time ED is transitioning
- When funders start asking about organizational capacity

WHAT THIS DOCUMENT HELPS PREVENT

- HR built entirely inside one heroic person's head
- Governance confusion between board and ED surfacing as staff casualties
- Grant growth outpacing the systems that must carry it
- Burnout normalized as devotion until resignation letters arrive
- Capacity questions from funders answered with silence

Faulkner HR Solutions focuses on the system behind the people problem. This tool is designed to help employers slow down the decision, identify the risk, and create proof before the issue becomes a claim, complaint, turnover event, or credibility problem.

BEFORE YOU START: READINESS CHECKLIST

Gather the following before working through this document. Incomplete inputs are one of the most common reasons employer decisions fail under later scrutiny.

Have it	Input	Notes / location
☐	Employee name and role	
☐	Date of incident, request, or separation	



Have it	Input	Notes / location
☐	Supervisor involved	
☐	Policy or handbook section that applies	
☐	Prior documentation on file	
☐	Pay records, if applicable	
☐	Relevant emails, texts, notes, or complaints	
☐	Decision-maker name	
☐	Deadline, if applicable	



MATURITY MAP

Score each domain 1-4: (1) Ad hoc — lives in someone's head; (2) Documented — written but unevenly used; (3) Operating — consistently practiced; (4) Managed — reviewed and improved on a cycle. Be honest; flattery here is self-sabotage.

Domain 1 — Governance and Board Role

Score	Indicator	Evidence
☐	Board governs (policy, ED oversight, resources); ED manages staff — and both know it	
☐	ED evaluation happens annually against written goals	
☐	Board committees don't direct staff members individually	
☐	A board-ED covenant or authority matrix exists (see Authority Matrix resource)	

Domain 2 — Decision Authority

Score	Indicator	Evidence
☐	Hiring, firing, spending, and program decisions have named owners	
☐	Staff know who decides what without asking the ED everything	
☐	Founder/long-tenure gravity doesn't override written authority	
☐	Decisions survive the deciding person's vacation	

Domain 3 — Pay and Classification

Score	Indicator	Evidence
☐	Pay ranges exist and offers are made within them	
☐	FLSA exemptions tested per role — 'we're a nonprofit' is not an exemption	
☐	Stipends, contractors, and 'part-time exempt' arrangements reviewed for legality	
☐	Compensation reviewed against sector data on a cycle	

Domain 4 — Roles and Structure

Score	Indicator	Evidence
☐	Current job descriptions exist for filled roles (not aspirational ones)	



Score	Indicator	Evidence
☐	Nobody's actual job is 'everything nobody else does' — or if it is, it's named and time-boxed	
☐	Reporting lines are real: people are managed by their actual manager	
☐	Growth plans include structure, not just headcount	

Domain 5 — Compliance Basics

Score	Indicator	Evidence
☐	Payroll, I-9s, postings, and required policies current	
☐	Employee vs. contractor vs. volunteer classifications defensible (see Volunteer Classification Guide)	
☐	Handbook updated within 3 years and acknowledged	
☐	Personnel files structured; medical information separated	

Domain 6 — Documentation and Institutional Memory

Score	Indicator	Evidence
☐	Key processes written down where successors can find them	
☐	Personnel decisions documented at decision time, not reconstructed	
☐	Grant-required records (time tracking, allocations) maintained continuously	
☐	One person's departure would not erase how anything works	

Domain 7 — Workload and Burnout

Score	Indicator	Evidence
☐	Workload is planned against actual capacity, not mission urgency	
☐	PTO is taken, not just accrued — including by the ED	
☐	'Other duties as assigned' isn't 40% of anyone's job	
☐	Burnout is treated as a system signal, not a personal failing (see Burnout Triage resource)	

**Domain 8 — Volunteer/Employee Boundary**

Score	Indicator	Evidence
☐	Volunteers are genuinely voluntary — no wage-replacement 'volunteering'	
☐	Employees never 'volunteer' extra unpaid hours doing their own job	
☐	Volunteer roles have descriptions, boundaries, and a handbook	
☐	Supervision of volunteers is assigned, not assumed	

Scoring Summary and Build Plan

Domain	Score (1-4)	Next maturity step	Owner / date
1. Governance			
2. Authority			
3. Pay & classification			
4. Roles & structure			
5. Compliance			
6. Documentation			
7. Workload & burnout			
8. Volunteer boundary			

Role	Name / signature	Date
Assessed by		
Reviewed with (ED / board chair)		

STOP AND REVIEW BEFORE ACTING

If any statement below is true, pause. Get the decision reviewed by HR, counsel, or Faulkner HR Solutions before you act.

- ☐ Any domain scored 1 while the organization is adding staff or grants.
- ☐ The board is interviewing staff about the ED without a process.
- ☐ Payroll exemptions have never been tested against the duties test.
- ☐ The ED hasn't taken a full week off in over a year.



- ☐ A single departure would take payroll, grants reporting, and HR knowledge simultaneously.
- ☐ Volunteers are doing work that laid-off employees used to be paid for.

MINIMUM DOCUMENTATION STANDARD

Before this file is closed, the employer should be able to answer every question below and point to where the proof lives.

Question	Your answer / where the proof is stored
What happened?	
When did it happen?	
Who observed or reported it?	
What policy, standard, deadline, or expectation applies?	
What decision was made?	
Who had authority to make the decision?	
What alternatives were considered?	
What risk was reviewed?	
What follow-up is required?	
Where is the proof stored?	

COMMON MISTAKES

1. Confusing passion with infrastructure — mission does not process payroll.
2. Scoring aspirationally because the truth feels disloyal.
3. Building HR sophistication in one domain while governance stays at level 1 (it drags everything down).
4. Treating the map as an audit to pass instead of a build sequence.
5. Assigning every 'next step' to the same exhausted person.
6. Skipping the volunteer boundary domain because 'our volunteers love us.'

WHAT TO DO NEXT

Bring the scoring summary to the ED and board chair together, pick the two lowest domains, and fund one concrete step in each this quarter. Re-score annually — maturity is a build sequence, not a verdict.

Before you terminate, deduct, discipline, classify, or respond, get the decision reviewed.

Call 210.446.8730 or email thomas@faulknerhrsolutions.info.



Mission does not replace infrastructure. If the same people problem keeps coming back, the system needs to be rebuilt.

Need help applying this to a real workplace decision?

Faulkner HR Solutions helps Texas employers, nonprofits, municipalities, and growing businesses fix the people systems behind recurring workplace problems.

If this document raised a risk flag, do not guess your way through the next step.

Call: 210.446.8730

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Website: faulknerhrsolutions.info

DISCLAIMER

This resource is provided for general employer education and planning purposes. It is not legal advice and does not create an attorney-client relationship. Employment laws, agency guidance, and local requirements may change. Employers should review the facts of each situation before acting and consult appropriate HR or legal counsel when needed.