A CULTURE THAT VALUES LEARNING

In high-performance organizations:

- The board, management, and staff understand the organization’s mission and desired results and review them periodically to ensure that they are still relevant.

- The board, management, and staff continually seek to do even better for the people or causes they serve.

- The board, management, and staff are open and transparent about their results—whether the results are positive or negative—to fuel learning and improvement.

- People in all parts of the organization have high expectations of themselves and of their peers.

- The board, management, and staff take on the challenge of collecting and using information, not because it’s a good marketing tool, and not because a funder said they have to. They believe it is integral to ensuring material, measurable, and sustainable good for the people or causes they serve.

- The board, management, and staff recognize they can’t fully understand the needs of those they serve unless they listen to and learn from constituents in formal and informal ways.

- The board, management, and staff take the time to benchmark themselves against, and learn from, peer organizations that are at the top of their field.

- Senior management leads by example and encourages people throughout the organization to be curious, ask questions, and push each other’s thinking by being appropriately and respectfully challenging. High-performance cultures are innovative cultures, mindful that every program and process eventually becomes dated, even obsolete.

- Senior management creates an environment in which staff members feel safe acknowledging when there are problems. They use what others might deem “failures” as an opportunity to listen, learn, and improve.

- Even the busiest leaders, managers, and staff members carve out formal and informal opportunities to step back, take stock, and reflect.