

# Carmichael.

## **How do you conduct a board self-assessment?**

Good governance involves making sure that your board is as effective as possible in providing oversight for the organisation. It is worth taking time out periodically to review/assess how you are doing and identify improvements. This can be done in different ways.

In its simplest form, it should involve a run-through of any governance codes you have signed up to such as the Charities Governance Code. This is a mandatory code for registered charities and requires boards to renew their compliance on an annual basis. Principle 5 (Working Effectively) of the Charities Governance Code includes the following minimum standard: “review how your board operates and make any necessary improvements”.

Additional standards for more complex charities include the following:

- assessing board effectiveness
- adherence to the board’s Code of Conduct
- assessment of how sub-committees are managed
- board skills audit
- board training and development
- recruitment of new board members to fill skills or competency gaps

It is up to the board to decide how it goes about its own self-assessment. See below two possible templates. The first is a simple board health check, which can be a basis for collective discussion. The second is for each board member to assess their own performance. This can help individual board members to stand back, assess their own effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

## **Board Health Check**

1. Do all board members understand that they are responsible for the governance of the organisation?
2. Are all board members clear about the full extent of their responsibilities in terms of the direction, assets, accountability and legality of the organisation?
3. Do all board members understand that there is a difference between governance and management?
4. Does the board have a tendency to 'micro-manage' or are they too 'hands-off' in their approach?
5. Are different levels of decision-making (E.g. decisions that staff can make on their own vs decisions that must go to the board) clear to everyone within the organisation?
6. Does the agenda of board meetings reflect the governance role of the board?
7. Do the board members receive the agenda, minutes and papers in good time for the meeting?
8. Does the Chairperson guide the meeting away from operational detail and help the board focus on the decisions that need to be made?
9. Is there an agreed system of communication between the Chairperson and the CEO (or equivalent)?
10. Does the CEO (or equivalent) have an annual appraisal?

## **Individual Board member self-assessment**

1. I understand the organisation's purpose, values and culture and am willing to commit my time and energy to it.
2. I understand my role and responsibilities as a Board member, including:
  - Being familiar with our governing document and relevant legal requirements so that I can ensure that the organisation operates within the law.

- Being clear on standards of behaviour expected of me, including maintaining confidentiality and what to do in relation to gifts and hospitality, out-of-pocket expenses etc.
  - Contributing to decision-making that is in the best interests of the organisation.
  - Fully understanding actual and potential conflicts of interest and loyalties and declaring them in a timely fashion.
3. I am familiar with the aims and objectives set out in plans and the budget that supports these plans.
  4. I understand the key risks that face the organisation and how they are being managed.
  5. I am familiar with relevant Codes of Governance/Conduct and what is required of me having signed up to the Code(s).
  6. I attend Board meetings regularly, and give advance notice if I am unable to attend a meeting.
  7. I read agendas and board papers in advance and familiarise myself with the issues to be dealt with.
  8. I read board meeting minutes to ensure they are an accurate reflection of agreed decisions and actions.
  9. I regularly make contributions to discussions at Board meetings and feel able to do so.
  10. I contribute to the organisation outside of Board meetings as appropriate (E.g. by attending events, following up contacts, being part of a working group or sub-committee, etc.).