



Halton Hills

CULTURAL ROUNDTABLE

Helping culture grow

Governance – Board health score

The basics - Good Boards can be Great

by Ro Palumbo-Coates

Governance and Board health as a topic may be just what you were thinking needs to be at the top of the agenda. NOT!! but WAIT, what if belonging to an organization governed by a healthy board meant the difference between a good organization and a GREAT organization?

As each organization is different, so is each board. Some of the following may or may not be applicable to you or your board, if it has been a while since your board reviewed ITSELF, please enjoy the following and don't be afraid to ask questions of us here at HHCR or at HNN (Halton Nonprofit Network) or your board itself – but remember to respect the volunteer time and energy of your board and be clear about the questions and why you are asking. Allow time for consideration and plan for the future.

A Basic Understanding

What approach/model of governance does your Board employ?

Understand that there are many different styles and variations (Traditional, Carver etc.)

What is the role of your board? The board as a whole is responsible for setting the DIRECTION of the Organization, carrying out the PURPOSE, to create and focused adoption of the STRATEGY-Goals & Objectives

What is the responsibility/role/expectations of YOUR position on the board? Is it clearly identifiable?

Is your board aware of and taken steps towards implementation of: Ontario Not-For-Profit Corporations Act?

Risk Management – assessment & steps needed/taken to minimize?

Building a Great Board team:

The role of Board recruitment

The importance of board AND agency orientation

Deeper in, Issues and Topics for Greater Understanding or Discussion:

Board & Staff relations; monitoring Lead staff performance

Board Self-Evaluation (see Dalhousie Questionnaire)

Financial Stewardship – the role of Board oversight

Ensuring/Maintaining an effective Board-Community Connection

Engaging the voice of the community served

Program (outcome) Evaluation: Rationale for; Approaches to; and Short, Medium & Long term goals/outcomes.

Generating Revenue

Strategic Planning: How often is it reviewed? (3-5 years?)

Environmental Scanning – should be an agenda item at each meeting. (ie: What is going on “outside” – now/coming that affects (may/could) our organization – the way we operate?)

Review: “SWOT” Strengths; Weaknesses; Opportunities; Threats. Both internally and externally.

Building your Boards Legacy: Moving from “Good Enough” to “Outstanding”

Are processes and/or policies in place? How often are they reviewed? (Annually?)

MEETINGS!

Effective use of Time!

Ensure that Minutes/Agenda are made available well enough ahead of the meeting for attendees to have time to review.

Ensure that all attendees respect the time of others and arrive PREPARED! This preparedness goes a LONG way to improving the efficiencies of a board and their organization.

Ban forevermore the “Rolling of Eyes” at your meeting!! (Easier said than done! Employing some of these key items in this info-pak are a good start)

Effective Deliberation – Remember that the Board MUST speak as ONE VOICE. Dissention within a meeting may occur, but once a Decision is made, it is with the understanding that it is a Board Agreement! As such, it is a discourtesy to spread negativity about the board or organization’s choices outside the meeting.

Sample: Orientation for Governors (checklist)

1. Complete volunteer sign up – Police check, resume, biography, photo, (update Website, Membership form, profile)
2. Review:
 - a. governance model/style
 - b. governance policies and delegated authority
 - c. Role of the board of Directors
 - d. Strategic Plan and current strategic initiatives underway
 - e. Any scorecards, reports that may be discussed at upcoming meetings
 - f. “Elevator Speech”
3. Confirm Board meeting schedule – including any seasonal adjustments
4. Tour agency, meet a client or observe a program (if possible)
5. Provide past minutes (at least 3 meetings)
6. Arrange for meet and greet with other board members – add time to first meeting for social interaction

7. Sign an agreement or contract
8. <http://www.fastcompany.com/1630776/ten-things-you-must-know-you-join-nonprofit-board>

Links:

Board Self-Evaluation (see Dalhousie Questionnaire) http://www.tctontario.ca/user_files/File/BoardSelf-EvaluationQuestionnaire.pdf

<http://www.fastcompany.com/1630776/ten-things-you-must-know-you-join-nonprofit-board>

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/10n15#BK56>

<http://www.dal.ca/faculty/cce/programs/non-profit-sector-leadership/non-profit-resources.html>

Further information - guidance:

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Halton Nonprofit Network www.haltonnonprofitnetwork.ca

Volunteer Halton www.volunteerhalton.ca