



Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

A Tool for Improving Governance Practice
For Voluntary and Community Organizations

❖ Guidelines ❖

Non-Profit Sector Leadership Program
College of Continuing Education

VERSION II

 **DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY**
Inspiring Minds

Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

Guidelines on How Best to Use This Tool

- This tool is designed to be used as an annual board evaluation. It seeks to help a board answer the question: *what are we as a board now doing well and what can be do better?*
- The tool is designed for organizations large enough to employ staff, those with someone in an executive director or CEO role. The concept and many of the questions may also be of value to totally volunteer-run organizations.
- Section D on the **Performance of Individual Directors** provides an opportunity for board members to personally reflect on their own performance. This portion of the questionnaire, once completed, should be retained by each board member, although board members may feel comfortable sharing their overall rating for this section at the bottom of the page or what one of the issues identified they most want to improve upon
- This version (Version II) includes a new but optional section, Section E, that seeks to provide feedback to the Chair of the board.
- The rating scale at the bottom of each page (“My Overall Rating”) asks that board members add up the total of the numbers circled on the page. This number is intended as a rough interpretation of the results of each section. The range of numbers will change with the number of questions asked and answered in the section.
- We would encourage boards to use this as a source of ideas to inform the development of their own board self-evaluation tool. Your board can complete this assessment as an “experiment” and then develop a customized version based this experience.
- Remember that this tool is best used to stimulate reflection and discussion; it is not a scientific survey instrument that has been tested on a large number of boards and for which there are average results.
- Boards should consider bringing in an **independent person** to conduct the evaluation and compile, summarize and report on the results. This will insure that individual responses are kept confidential and may result in more honest answers. If you choose to do this then completed copies of Section D could be passed on for that person to compile.
- Ask that board members complete the questionnaire at home before bringing it to a meeting. The space for a board member’s name on the front cover is meant for distributing the questionnaire rather than for collecting it and compiling the results. Directors may want to hand back only Sections A, B, C and E.

- Consider evaluating other things such as the effectiveness of committees or board “follow-through”. Avoid questions that compare individual board member performance; keep the focus on the whole board.
- If your board relies on an **Executive Committee** which meets between full board meetings a separate section might be needed to assess its relationship to the board (to be answered by everyone), its relationship to the Executive Director and the conduct of Executive Committee meetings. Questions for such a section could be drawn from the other sections.
- Section C on the **Board’s Relationship with the Executive Director** is **not** intended as an evaluation of the Executive Director but rather an evaluation of the quality of the board’s relationship with the Executive Director as judged both by the board and by the Executive Director. The items evaluated here should focus on matters that the board can change about its performance.
- Board evaluation can be done at any time of the year and should be put on the board’s annual agenda. It may be best not to schedule it at the same time of the year that the board is conducting an evaluation of the Executive Director or preparing for the AGM.

These guidelines are for Version II of this questionnaire. Version I was tested by several organizations and suggestions for improvements from this exercise have been incorporated here. If you are adapting this for your own use we would appreciate crediting us as a resource. We would also welcome receiving your feedback and/or a copy of your own version.

NPSLP



Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

A Tool for Improving Governance Practice
For Voluntary and Community Organizations

Name _____ For period from _____ to _____
(optional)

Non-Profit Sector Leadership Program
College of Continuing Education

VERSION II



Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire



Questions should be answered by all board members. When completed individually the results of Sections A, B and C should be compiled, shared and discussed by the whole board to determine an average group answer to each question and an overall section rating. Section D should be answered by board members alone but not shared with the group. Sections A, B and C should also be completed by the **Executive Director or CEO**. This version also includes Section E, which provides feedback to the Chair of the Board.

*Circle the response that **best** reflects your opinion. The rating scale for each statement is: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Maybe or Not Sure (3); Agree (4); Strongly Agree (5).*

A. How Well Has the Board Done Its Job?

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Our organization has a three to five-year strategic plan or a set of clear long range goals and priorities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. The board's meeting agenda clearly reflects our strategic plan or priorities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. The board has insured that the organization also has a one-year operational or business plan. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. The board gives direction to staff on how to achieve the goals primarily by setting or referring to policies. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The board ensures that the organization's accomplishments and challenges are communicated to members and stakeholders. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. The board has ensured that members and stakeholders have received reports on how our organization has used its financial and human resources. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

My overall rating (add together the total of the numbers circled):

- Excellent (28+)
 Very Good (20-27)
 Good (15-19)
 Satisfactory (12-18)
 Poor (7-11)

B. How Well Has the Board Conducted Itself?

*Circle the response that **best** reflects your opinion. The rating scale for each statement is: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Maybe or Not Sure (3); Agree (4); Strongly Agree (5).*

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Board members are aware of what is expected of them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. The agenda of board meetings is well planned so that we are able to get through all necessary board business. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. It seems like most board members come to meetings prepared. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. We receive written reports to the board in advance of our meetings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. All board members participate in important board discussions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. We do a good job encouraging and dealing with different points of view. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. We all support the decisions we make. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. The board has taken responsibility for recruiting new board members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. The board has planned and led the orientation process for new board members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. The board has a plan for director education and further board development. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Our board meetings are always interesting. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Our board meetings are frequently fun. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

My overall rating:

- Excellent (50+)
 Very Good (40-49)
 Good (30-49)
 Satisfactory (20-29)
 Poor (10-19)

C. Board’s Relationship with Executive Director

Circle the response that *best* reflects your opinion. The rating scale for each statement is: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Maybe or Not Sure (3); Agree (4); Strongly Agree (5).

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. There is a clear understanding of where the board’s role ends and the Executive Director’s begins. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. There is good two-way communication between the board and the Executive Director. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. The board trusts the judgment of the Executive Director | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 4. The Board provides direction to the Executive Director by setting new policies or clarifying existing ones. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The board has discussed as communicated the kinds of information and level of detail it requires from the Executive Director on what is happening in the organization. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. The board has developed formal criteria and a process for evaluating the Executive Director | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. The board, or a committee of the board, has formally evaluated the Executive Director within the past 12 months. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. The board evaluates the Executive Director primarily on the accomplishment of the organization’s strategic goals and priorities and adherence to policy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. The board provides feedback and shows its appreciation to the Executive Director on a regular basis. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. The board ensures that the Executive Director is able to take advantage of professional development opportunities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

My overall rating:

- Excellent (45+)
 Very Good (39-44)
 Good (29-38)
 Satisfactory (20-28)
 Poor (11-19)

D. Performance of Individual Board Members (Not to be shared)

Circle the response that **best** reflects your opinion. The rating scale for each statement is: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Maybe or Not Sure (3); Agree (4); Strongly Agree (5).

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I am aware of what is expected of me as a board member. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I have a good record of meeting attendance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I read the minutes, reports and other materials in advance of our board meetings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I am familiar with what is in the organization's by-laws and governing policies | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I frequently encourage other board members to express their opinions at board meetings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I am encouraged by other board members to express my opinions at board meetings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I am a good listener at board meetings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I follow through on things I have said I would do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I maintain the confidentiality of all board decisions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. When I have a different opinion than the majority, I raise it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I support board decisions once they are made even if I do not agree with them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I promote the work of our organization in the community whenever I had a chance to do so. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I stay informed about issues relevant to our mission and bring information to the attention of the board. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

My overall rating:

- Excellent (55+)
 Very Good (45-54)
 Good (32-44)
 Satisfactory (20-31)
 Poor (13-19)

E. Feedback to the Chair of the Board (Optional)

Circle the response that **best** reflects your opinion. The rating scale for each statement is: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Maybe or Not Sure (3); Agree (4); Strongly Agree (5).

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The board has discussed the role and responsibilities of the Chair. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. The Chair is well prepared for board meetings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. The Chair helps the board to stick to the agenda. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. The Chair ensures that every board member has an opportunity to be heard. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The Chair is skilled at managing different points of view. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. The Chair can be tough on us as a group when we get out-of-line. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. The Chair knows how to be direct with an individual board member when their behaviour needs to change. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. The Chair helps the board work well together. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. The Chair demonstrates good listening skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. The board supports the Chair. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. The Chair is effective in delegating responsibility amongst board members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

My overall rating:

- Excellent (45+)
 Very Good (35-44)
 Good (25-34)
 Satisfactory (20-33)
 Poor (11-19)