



Good Governance Assessment

Description:

This tool offers an outline of the six elements of good governance and an organizational assessment.

How it can be used:

This tool explains how good governance is demonstrated in an organization. The assessment can be used to examine which key areas of governance are strong or which require extra attention. It can be helpful when creating or strengthening your guiding group.

What is governance? (hint, it is not the same as government.)

Governance:

- describes how decisions are made within an organization;
- defines who should have power and why;
- clarifies who are the decision-makers;
- explains how accountability will be allocated.

Quite simply it clearly describes how an organization is structured, who is accountable for what, to whom, and why.

There are six key elements of good governance. They are:

- **Leadership and Competencies** – Leadership is perhaps the most important aspect of governance and a critical success factor of a high performing organization. Leaders are central to providing direction and bringing the members of an organization and its stakeholders together to achieve common goals.
- **Roles and Responsibilities** – Regardless of the governance model being used in your organization, it's essential to have clear roles and responsibilities.
- **Plans and Policies** – The health organization's ultimate success hinges on how well leaders plan for the long term, develop effective strategies, create strong policies, and implement action plans to produce results.
- **Accountability and Transparency** – Accountability is the same thing as responsibility; either to a person or a group of people. Being accountable means that you are acknowledging and assuming responsibility for your actions, decisions, and results. Being transparent means that all decisions and the decision-making processes are open and shared where possible.
- **Systems and Programs** – This is where the concepts of governance are operationalized and put into practice; where the “rubber hits the road”. Examples include an orientation process, training and development, decision-making processes, strategic and annual planning processes, etc.





- **Relationships and Communication** – Effective relationships based on respect and trust are the foundation of all successful organizations. In addition, a strong approach to communication which asks for stakeholders’ input, listens to their concerns, keeps them informed about health services activities, lets them know about failures and successes, and solicits their feedback on an ongoing basis, will ensure your planning processes have broad support.

Assessment

This assessment considers five governance pillars for Indigenous service delivery organizations and ways to achieve them. ¹

1. Incorporation of Indigenous values and culture.

- Identify, agree upon, and define the values and culture that you wish to reflect. Incorporate them into the policies and practices of your health organization. Some ideas when working with non-First Nation partners:
 - Designate a minimum number of First Nations representatives to sit on the board to ensure community values are represented.
 - Designate that the Chair must always be First Nations.
 - Set criteria for Non-First Nation board members.
 - Engage the community in decision-making and gather feedback on the services.
 - Include Elders on the board (can be advisory, voting, or non-voting members).

How does your Board or Health Committee incorporate your values and culture?

2. Strong Executive and Board or Health Committee.

- The Board or Health Committee has a key role in all five pillars. The challenge can be to get the right people and qualified people (based on culture, values, and skills) on the Board.

How strong is your Board or Health Committee?

A strong Board/Committee can:	Have This	Could be Better	Need This
Ensure the organization’s financial health			
Ensure sound relationship with stakeholders			
Ensure high performance and achieves goals			

¹ Adapted from the Institute on Governance, (Mitchell and Bruhn, 2009)





A strong Board/Committee can:	Have This	Could be Better	Need This
Communicates or advocates effectively with the community			
Develops and updates a longer-term plan			
Ensures the existence of a sound governance framework (bylaws, policies, practices)			

Are there areas where the Board or Health Committee could be stronger? Describe them.

The Board or Health Committee often has a role in selecting and hiring the Executive Director for a health organization, another key person in supporting good governance.

A successful leader/Executive Director:	Have This	Could be Better	Need This
Has a vision for the organization			
Engages in the community			
Demonstrates strong organizational and management skills			
Has qualities like self-awareness, works with change, creativity, curiosity			
Uses a collective leadership approach that inspires staff to work together			

Does your Executive Director/Leader meet the above criteria?

What other criteria does your Executive Director/Leader meet that are important to your organization or community?

- 3. Formal processes and structures.**
 - a. Includes organizational structures such as:
 - i. lines of accountability and reporting.





- ii. Roles and responsibilities.
- iii. Policies and procedures.

Governance codes and policies:	Have This	Could be Better	Need This
Developing, approving and communicating organization policies			
Relationship of Council to the health organization			
Relation of Council to its Health Committee			
Roles and responsibilities – Board/Committee and staff			
Code of Conduct policies			
Management of Board/Committee meetings			
Conflict of Interest guidelines			
Grievance and Appeal processes			
Meeting Evaluation form – for Board and Committees			
Rating your Board or Committee			
Criteria for identifying high quality Board members			

4. Continual and effective planning and evaluation.

- a. Your organization has a strategic plan that outlines where you are, where you want to be and how you’ll get there.
 - i. It can be for 5, 10, or 20 years, depending on community priorities.
 - ii. The process is done at set intervals according to community plans and priorities.
 - iii. The strategic plan is integrated into the day-to-day plans and work of the organization.
 - iv. It includes regular and planned reviews.
 - v. Evaluations collect and review information on process and outcomes and identifies how well goals and objectives are being met.
 - vi. Can include performance evaluations from staff and board members as well as external stakeholders, partners, and community members.

Strategic planning <i>should</i>:	Have This	Could be Better	Need This
Identify and respond to the most fundamental issues facing your organization			
Re-examine the mission and values			





Strategic planning <i>should</i>:	Have This	Could be Better	Need This
Examine the concerns of internal and external stakeholders to ensure that decisions and strategies have support			
Involve staff from all levels, relying most heavily on senior staff and management			
Include candid evaluation of critical issues			
Ensure the plan is action-oriented; develop plans for implementing the strategies			
Focus on what can be done now to help positively shape the future			

Do you have a vision of where you want to go, how you will get there, and how long you think it will take?

Do your goals and activities fit with your vision or mission?

How often does your organization conduct strategic planning?

Who is involved in your strategic planning process?

What are your priorities for change?





5. Strategic sustainability.

- a. This refers to balancing sufficient funding sources to ensure sustainability of the organization, while balancing the freedom to respond to needs of stakeholders.
- b. Includes human resource practices and relationships with political entities and other stakeholders.
- c. Day-to-day operations must be free from political interference.

How does your organization remain sustainable in these areas?

Financial:

Human resources:

Relationships (e.g., with community, stakeholders, partners, political bodies, etc.)

What could be improved?

