

## Appendix 4 Board Self-Evaluation Example

### Assessing Board Performance

#### Background

All effective organizations have a bias for determining their effectiveness. Boards assess because they are committed to accountability. Governing boards insist that employee performance be assessed to assure that resources are being used effectively and services are being delivered at the expected level of quality. Yet, far too many boards refuse to hold themselves accountable, at their level of contribution to the effectiveness of the organization they head.

Boards direct the affairs of the organizations they head through their policy function, as well as, their overall vision for the organization. Self-assessment provides valuable information and insight for the board's own internal use as it seeks to refine its performance. The board's contribution to the overall organization cannot be assumed; it must be assessed against the board's own pre-determined values, and modified as appropriate.

Only when the board consciously draws conclusions about its own performance can it take steps to improve. A regular assessment will assure the board is operating at maximum efficiency and effectiveness, and that it is adding value to the organization it governs. It is hypocritical for the board to insist upon regular assessment of employees and programs without also insisting upon a rigorous assessment of its own performance.

#### Objectives of Self-Assessment

The following are some of the objectives a board should try to accomplish through a self-assessment process:

1. To assure the board is accountable for its own performance.
2. To allow each member of the board to assess his/her individual performance as a member of a team.
3. To improve communication among board members and between the board and the manager.
4. To assure a thorough understanding of the district's goals and commitments.
5. To assure that individual concerns about the board's performance are known and understood by each board member.
6. To assure that decision-making processes are effective and meet the expectations of board members.
7. To assure that new members joining the board understand the operational procedures and group expectations.
8. To assess the individual strengths and weaknesses of board members.
9. To assure continued improvement and capable leadership by the board.



## **Establishing an Assessment Process**

Before performance is assessed, it is important that the board and manager agree on a process as well as appropriate instruments to be used. Boards should be willing to adopt a process that holds promise for effectively measuring performance, with the understanding that the process and instrument may change with the board as it grows. The assessment process is evolutionary.

The effectiveness of any assessment process depends more on the board's commitment to look at its own performance than on the inherent adequacy of the process and instrument. When board members' mutual commitment is present, they will find suitable vehicles for open conversation to occur. Seek to make the assessment process as acceptable as possible, realizing there is no perfect solution. The central commitment must be to review performance, not fail to do so because the process may be somewhat flawed. In the absence of a full commitment to assess performance, no plan, will be effective.

## **Summary of the Characteristics of Board Self-Assessment**

1. The process of assessing, and the instruments used to accomplish that purpose, should be aimed at improving performance. Assessment is not intended to be punitive but rather to reward good performance and point out areas that need improvement.
2. Members of the board themselves should determine that standards against which the board will assess its performance. To assess someone else's values rather than the board's own values, will accomplish little.
3. The board must recognize the difference between goals that it sets for the district versus the goals that it adopts for its own internal performance. While there may well be significant overlap between the two, in this instance the board is not assessing the district's achievement of its goals, but rather the board's performance and the value it adds to assist in the overall district effectiveness.
4. Once the assessment has been conducted, the job is not finished until a performance improvement plan has been established. Appropriate instruments are included in these materials to assist the board in formulating improvement plans.
5. Regardless of how thorough an assessment instrument seems to be, it is to be expected that the board, in its follow-up discussion, will identify other areas of its performance that are worthy of review. The purpose of the assessment instrument and process is to stimulate discussion. That discussion can be rather free-wheeling, which is perfectly acceptable.
6. The board should commit to assess its own performance at least annually, and should determine in advance the date and time for that event to occur. Of course, continuing assessment of various parts of the board's performance might be done but it is supremely important for a thorough assessment to be conducted at least annually.
7. An overall assessment of board strengths and opportunities for development should be the result of individual board member assessments. It is not uncommon for the views of individual members to vary considerably from the views of other members. However, in follow-up conversation, it should be expected that some board consensus can be reached about the board's overall performance.

8. Once conclusions have been drawn, and after performance plans have been established, the board should provide for itself appropriate training and assistance to assure its performance meets predetermined expectations.

### **Post-Assessment Improvement Plan**

After the board has completed its self-assessment and the results have been determined, conclusions should have been made about areas for improvement. Keep in mind these performance-enhancing actions are not to be directed at the district, but rather at the board itself. Your objective is to determine procedures for the board to follow to improve its own performance.

These might be some examples of areas for board improvement:

- To improve relationships with the manager.
- To make meetings more effective, and more efficient.
- To improve internal relations among members of the board in order to present a more harmonious picture to the constituents.

These are the things you want to do. This is what you want to accomplish. Now it is important to determine how these things will be achieved. For example, what specific actions should be taken by the board to improve internal relationships? It is important for the board to think sequentially, one step at a time, in order to assure that the goal can be achieved in an efficient manner. In addition to deciding what is to be achieved and by what means, the board then should determine who will be responsible for taking each of those actions, and a date by which those actions should be taken. Finally, the board should decide some measure of success in order to allow members to know when these actions have been achieved and the goals met.

## Example Board Self-Assessment Tool

- Intended for:** Boards seeking to assess their own performance.  
**Objective:** Examine both performance and priority of board activities.  
**Time Required:** 30-60 minutes.  
**Comments:** Board members can complete individually or discuss as a group.  
 Works well with a facilitator.

**PRESENT PERFORMANCE**

For each item, circle one number on the left-hand side of the page to indicate your assessment of the level of effectiveness with which the board is presently carrying out that activity.

**SIGNIFICANCE**

For each item, circle one number on the right-hand side of the page to indicate your assessment of the relative importance of this activity in contributing to the board's overall effectiveness.

Ratings used are:					Ratings used are:					
1 - Very low					1 - Not significant					
2 - Low					2 - Low significance					
3 - Satisfactory					3 - Moderate significance					
4 - High					4 - High significance					
5 - Very high					5 - Very high significance					
A. Governance										
1	2	3	4	5	1. The board meets in a suitable room, with adequate facilities for visitors.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	2. Board members come to meetings familiar with the agenda, backup reports and other materials.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	3. Except when unavoidable, late items are not added to the agenda after it has been circulated to board members.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	4. The board selects its chair on the basis of the ability to provide leadership, to conduct meetings and to participate effectively in all aspects of board activity.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	5. The chair ensures that meetings proceed in a business-like manner, while allowing opportunity for full discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	6. The board refers business that requires prolonged or detailed study to the manager or to a committee for review and recommendations.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	7. The board avoids voting cliques and does not allow personal conflict to affect its actions, but reaches decisions solely on the merits of the issue.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	8. Board members abide by board decisions and do not make individual decisions or commitments on the board's behalf.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	9. The board develops objectives and priorities to enable it to attain its goals.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	10. The board seeks input from staff and community in establishing policies, goals and objectives.	1	2	3	4	5

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1	2	3	4	5	11. The board has an ongoing procedure for the review and revision of its goals, objectives and policies.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	12. Individual members of the board treat other members and the staff with respect.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	13. Board members pursue opportunities for further training in effective boardsmanship.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	14. New board members have opportunities for systematic orientation to their responsibilities and to board policies and operating procedures.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	15. The board focuses its efforts primarily on the development of policy and relies on staff to implement board policies.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>B. Liaison and Communication</b>										
1	2	3	4	5	1. Agenda of board meetings are issued in advance of the meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	2. There is an established procedure whereby members of the public may speak regarding items, on or not on the agenda, at board meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	3. The board advises individuals or groups who have made presentations of any decisions made concerning their presentations and gives reasons for its decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	4. A summary of important business conducted at each board meeting is circulated to staff and the media.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	5. The minutes of open regular and special board meetings are available to staff and the public.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	6. Members of the board take specific actions to secure maximum support for a good district program.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	7. The board informs citizens regarding matters of vital concern to them, through such means as advertisements in the press and letters to the editor.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	8. There is an ongoing, planned program of information about district programs.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	9. The board seeks others' opinions through surveys, public meetings, advisory committees or other appropriate means before making major policy decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	10. The board actively seeks to maintain positive working relationships between board members and district staff.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	11. Board policy outlines a procedure by which the board deals with complaints.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	12. The board communicates effectively with its manager and staff.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	13. Copies of current board policies and administrative regulations are compiled and are available to all staff.	1	2	3	4	5

Ratings used are:					Ratings used are:					
1	2	3	4	5	14. Members of the board attend district functions when feasible.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>C. Personnel</b>										
1	2	3	4	5	1. The board has a written procedure for dealing with employee concerns, complaints and grievances.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	2. Board members try to become acquainted with as many of the district's employees as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	3. Board members do not allow personal friendships with district personnel to affect board decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	4. There is a climate of mutual respect and trust between the board and its staff.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	5. Any board member criticism of a staff member is offered tactfully and privately to the manager.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	6. The board provides its staff with encouragement and opportunities for growth through a program of in-service training and professional development.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	7. There is a clear understanding of the board's expectations for the performance and personal qualities of the manager and other senior staff members.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	8. The board is willing to defend staff members from unjust and unfounded criticism.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D. Administration</b>										
1	2	3	4	5	1. The board recognizes the manager as its chief executive officer and seeks his/her recommendations on all important matters.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	2. The board delegates to the manager the responsibilities for administering board policy and implementing board decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	3. The board requires the manager and staff to establish performance objectives, periodically review progress and recommend new goals annually.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	4. The board is well informed about district projects.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	5. Individual board members and the board as a whole avoid dealing with matters related to day-to-day operation of the district.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	6. The board requires that staff and committee recommendations clearly outline the options and alternative courses of action open to the board.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>E. Business Operations</b>										
1	2	3	4	5	1. In preparing the annual budget, the board attempts to strike a reasonable balance between its financial resources and the need to provide a comprehensive district program.	1	2	3	4	5

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1	2	3	4	5	2. The board seeks input from staff members in establishing priorities for budgeting purposes.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	3. The budget is presented to the board in a clear and concise manner.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	4. Members of the board participate in the presentation of the annual budget to the county government.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	5. Written board policies ensure efficient administration of the budget and proper accountability for the expenditure of funds.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	6. A complete annual audit and a systematic process ensure that financial operations are performed efficiently.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>F. Facilities</b>										
1	2	3	4	5	1. The board regularly reviews the suitability of district facilities for current district needs.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	2. There is a long-term plan for district growth and the acquisition of suitable facilities and resources.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5