A Guide to Using the Governance Tools

INTRODUCTION

Good governance is the cornerstone of organizational and service excellence. It builds public trust by maximizing effectiveness and mitigating risk. In response to increasing public expectations for transparency and higher standards, the Ministry of Government Services has developed a suite of tools to help agencies practice good governance.

The suite of tools is drawn from best practices across the Ontario Public Service, in the private sector and in other jurisdictions. It was shaped by a diverse group of experienced agency appointees and agency staff to fit the overall needs and culture of the agency community. It was developed by agencies for agencies.

Ontario's agencies are committed to best practices in governance, but may be at different points along the path to excellence. Some agencies may have comprehensive practices in place already, and where this is the case, they are encouraged to use these tools to update and enhance their existing practices. Where an agency's governance practices are still in development, the tools are designed to ensure they have the foundation components in place.

The tools are generic and can be customized to reflect an agency's specific context.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOLS

The tools are available for use by any agency but designed for two broad groups, in two separate sets:

- Operational Service and Operational Enterprise agencies
- Regulatory and Adjudicative agencies

While the suite was developed with these agencies in mind, many concepts are applicable to Trusts, Crown Foundations and Advisory Agencies.

These generic tools serve a spectrum of beneficiaries: current and prospective appointees, ministry staff responsible for agency relations or appointments, and the public interested in learning more about how an agency functions.

POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Position descriptions identify the purpose, key duties and qualifications for individual positions.

They can be used to advertise vacancies, explain the requirements of the position to prospective appointees, inform new appointees about their role and clarify expectations.

Operational Service / Enterprise

> Chair
> Vice-Chair
> Member

Regulatory / Adjudicative

> Chair
> Vice-Chair
> Member

CORE COMPETENCIES

Core competencies identify the key skills, abilities and behaviours needed for effective performance in these individual positions.

They can be used in drafting ads for appointment vacancies, interviewing prospective appointees, appointee orientation, appointee succession planning, fostering a culture of excellence and understanding agency needs at the appointment level.

Operational Service / Enterprise

> Chair
> Vice-Chair
> Member

Regulatory / Adjudicative

> Chair
> Vice-Chair
> Member

CODES OF CONDUCT

A code of conduct identifies the standards of ethical and professional conduct expected of an appointee.

It serves to clarify the conduct and values that the public, stakeholders, colleagues and staff can expect from appointees.

Operational Service / Enterprise

> All appointees

Regulatory / Adjudicative

> All appointees

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT MAPS

The learning and development maps help agencies collect and articulate learning and development opportunities based on core competencies.

These maps will help appointees engage in discussions about how to achieve excellence, contribute to coordinated learning and development among appointees, help chairs articulate an agency's successes and needs and demonstrate an agency's commitment to the pursuit of excellence.

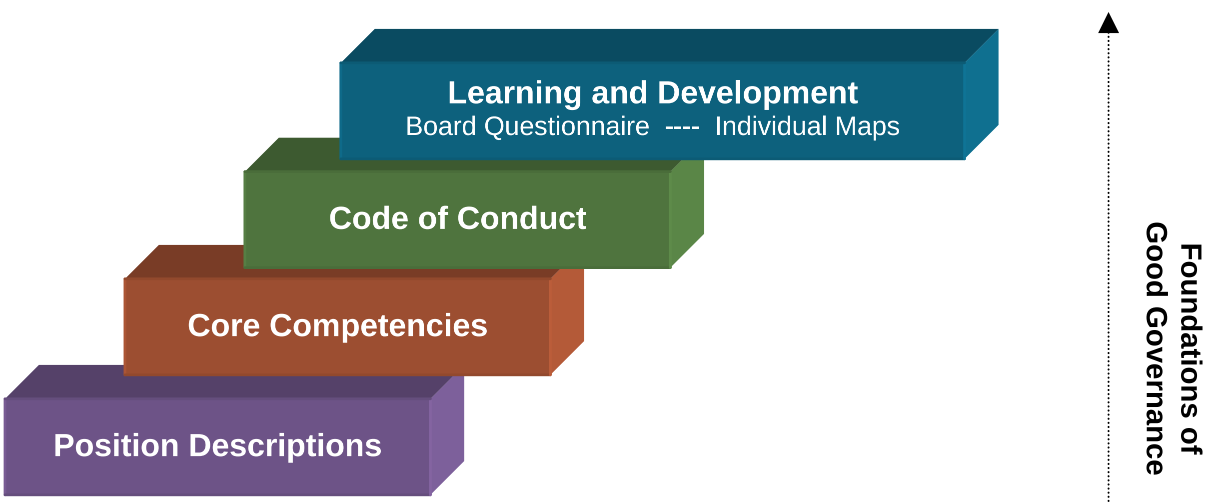
Operational Service / Enterprise

- Board Questionnaire
- Individual Learning & Development Maps
  > Chair
  > Vice-Chair
  > Member

Regulatory / Adjudicative

- Board Questionnaire (for agencies with governing boards)
- Individual Learning & Development Maps
  > Chair
  > Vice-Chair
  > Member

As stepping-stones to good governance, these tools build on one another.



APPLYING THE TOOLS

All the tools can be tailored to the agency's particular circumstances by adding, removing or reframing elements. Agency-specific products can be developed in stages, as pictured above in the stepping-stones approach (first position descriptions, then core competencies, etc.), or all at once. Some tools may be immediately put to use, while others may take more time.

To adapt the tools, the following steps are recommended as a general approach. They could be undertaken by a Chair, a Vice-Chair or Member to whom the Chair has assigned the responsibility, a committee of appointees, senior management staff (agency or ministry), legal counsel, a ministry official in consultation with the Chair, or an external facilitator engaged for this purpose.

> Download the suite of tools that applies to the particular agency (i.e. Operational Service / Operational Enterprise OR Regulatory / Adjudicative)

> Add the agency's
  - Name
  - Position titles
  - Name of statute(s)

> Ask current appointees to review and comment on the document(s)

> If possible, have appointees discuss the document as a group to reach a common understanding

> Remove aspects that do not apply to the agency and insert missing ones

> Share final product(s) with all appointees

> Add to orientation material for new appointees

> Consider posting final product(s) on agency's website, particularly the position descriptions, core competencies and code of conduct

> Review periodically, e.g. when vacancies are approaching, as a result of adjustments to the mandate, or legislative change

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN ADAPTING THE TOOLS

Position Descriptions

Consider:

> What specific positions the agency has (e.g. is there a Vice-Chair position)

> The functions articulated for the Chair in the agency's Memorandum of Understanding and constituting documents

> The division of responsibilities between the Chair and the agency's senior management (e.g. identify who is the agency's principal liaison with the ministry, who approves external communications, etc.)

> The nuance of verbs that assign authority and action

> Any professional designations or specialized training

> Terminology that is commonly used in the sector and by stakeholders

Core Competencies

Consider:

- The right mix of competencies between positions (e.g. Vice-Chair and Member)
- Checking that descriptions (“elements”) of how the skill / attribute is demonstrated in the position accurately describe effective performance
- Updating these descriptions when significant changes occur
- Including agency-specific terminology (e.g. legislation, specific skill designations) and examples

Code of Conduct

Consider:

- The legislation or authority under which the agency operates
- Internal written rules of procedure
- Rules of conduct that apply to staff
- Conflict of Interest provisions proclaimed in legislation
- Specific professional requirements or standards that apply to professional designations
- Asking each appointee to sign the code and reaffirm periodically

Learning and Developmental Maps

Consider:

- The nature and frequency of contact between appointees
- Level of commitment or engagement of appointees to the process
- How formal or informal the process should be
- Who will complete the maps (e.g. Chair, individual, mentor appointee, peers in agency)
- Frequency of completing the maps
- Time involved
- Record retention of completed documents
- Capacity of the agency to address needs and opportunities
- Any adaptations made to core competencies to ensure they are repeated in the maps

For more information on using the learning and development maps see the introductions to this tool.

Board Questionnaire

The questionnaire applies primarily to Operational Service and Operational Enterprise agencies, although it could also be useful in Regulatory agencies with a governing board.

It serves to help the Board of Directors discuss how the members function together as a group. Operational Service and Operational Enterprise agencies (and Regulatory agencies with a governing board) may therefore want to consider starting with this tool for learning and development initiatives.

As the questionnaire relates directly to core competencies, ensure that any modifications made to the core competencies are reflected in the questionnaire.

Results can be discussed as a group among all appointees, or individually with the Chair or delegate. To streamline the process, an abridged version could be used on a regular basis with the full version on a longer cycle.

Individual Maps

This tool serves to collect information on an individual basis about appointees for planning and discussion purposes.

In Regulatory and Adjudicative agencies the work of appointees tends to be conducted on an individual basis and therefore it is advisable to start with this tool for learning and development purposes.

Operational Service and Enterprise agencies might consider using this tool as an evolutionary step after using the Board questionnaire.

This tool will identify where competencies are strong among specific individuals. These identified models of excellence may then be shared with others for knowledge transfer (e.g. through internal coaching, mentoring and teaching) or growth. The analysis can also identify other learning needs for appointees.

Roll-Up to Agency Plan

Once individual information has been collected on all appointees, consider putting all the salient information in one place to identify any patterns that might apply across a spectrum of appointees.

See the guide on using the learning and development maps for more information.