



2022

# STRONG BOARDS

JOIN THE STRONG BOARDS MOVEMENT!



SOUTH EAST SPORT, CULTURE & RECREATION  
DISTRICT





# ABOUT STRONG BOARDS

Most recreation, sport and arts/culture volunteer boards are founded to answer a need in the community. The original board members saw the issue and volunteered their efforts to do something about it.

Board members have a specific task, to help their respective organizations carry out their cause to the best of their ability. As organizations grow and change, their boards need to grow and change, too.

**South East Sport, Culture & Recreation District** has created STRONG BOARDS to help volunteers to respond to this growth and change. By reviewing and completing a simple checklist tool (*provided at the end of this document*), your board can identify and take steps to strengthen processes, improve structures, and enhance operations. Consider participating so you can **join the STRONG BOARDS movement!**

Outcomes:

- *Boards have increased ability to address gaps, strengths, opportunities and weaknesses*
- *Boards have enhanced access to tools, education and templates to create efficient volunteer boards*

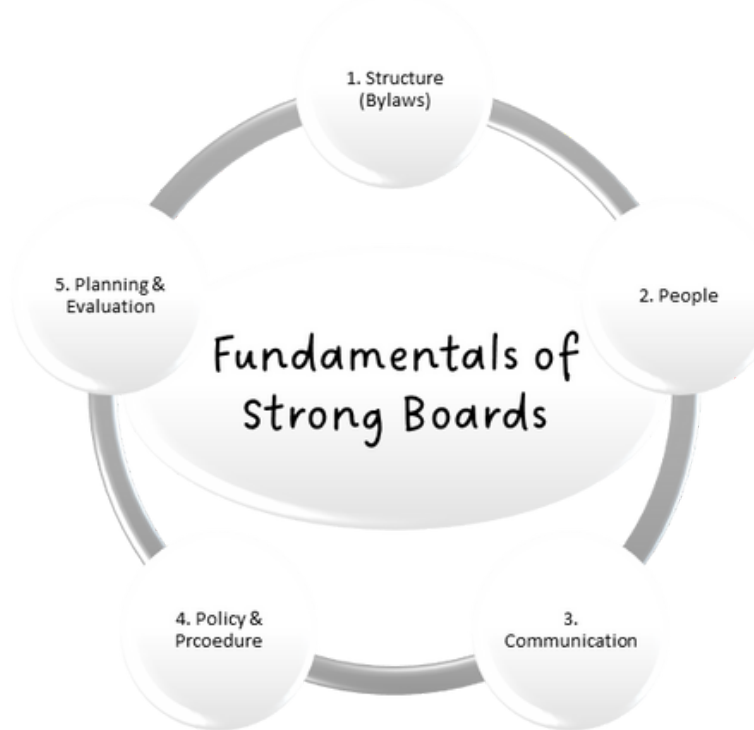
## **Disclaimer**

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# STRONG BOARDS FRAMEWORK

## THE FIVE FUNDAMENTALS

STRONG BOARDS uses a framework of **five (5) fundamentals** that volunteer boards and committees can review and focus on to become more efficient and effective. These include: *Structure, People, Communication, Policy & Procedure, and Planning & Evaluation*. Each fundamental area is essential for long-term success of a volunteer board and is based on best practice.



The following pages describe the fundamentals in greater detail, and a checklist is provided as an assessment tool at the end of this document. South East District's approachable staff team is available to help you determine which resources can assist you in addressing any deficiencies your board identifies from the checklist work.

Contact Joni Hagen, Executive Director, at [ed@southeastdistrict.ca](mailto:ed@southeastdistrict.ca), for more information.





# STRONG BOARDS CHECKLIST

## YOU ARE ON YOUR WAY TO A STRONGER BOARD

Local boards can use the following **STRONG BOARDS checklist** (*the printable version of the tool is available at the end of this document*) to determine which of the five fundamentals they wish to address or improve upon. Simply go through the indicator questions at your next board meeting. Board members can review and answer the questions together as a group. The board can then decide which areas they want to prioritize and address.

Over the years, South East Sport, Culture & Recreation District has created and compiled various supports and resources that address each fundamental area. Contact us ([www.southeastdistrict.ca](http://www.southeastdistrict.ca)) to discuss what support tools would be best to meet your needs!

First, let's learn more about the five (5) fundamentals to a stronger board!

### STRUCTURE

#### WHY IMPORTANT?

It is essential to know why your board/organization exists, so that you know what to focus on in your daily operations. It is also imperative that the role of the board is clear and concise.

**HOW TO MEASURE structure?** Review the indicators below to see if we are on the right track and/or what we need to address:

1. Do we have updated bylaws that are current and relevant?
2. Do we have a mission and vision (purpose is clear)?

#### SUPPORT TOOLS

Contact [South East District](http://www.southeastdistrict.ca) for these optional supports:

- Bylaws Templates
- Bylaws Review Session (free facilitation services)
- Mission and Vision Think Tank
- Recreation Board Development

**"DECISION-MAKING WILL BE EASIER WHEN YOU HAVE AN APPROPRIATE STRUCTURE IN PLACE."**



# STRONG BOARDS CHECKLIST CONT'D

## PEOPLE

### WHY IMPORTANT?

Groups already have lack of human power to perform primary tasks - core volunteers are overburdened and are often faced with STP (Same Three People) Syndrome. The need to invest in human resource development for volunteers is crucial.

Evidence suggests that every board or organization should utilize a *volunteer management plan* if they wish to:

- Enhance volunteer engagement
- Increase volunteer retention
- Boost effectiveness in operations

**HOW TO MEASURE people?** Review the indicators below to see if we are on the right track and/or what we need to address:

1. Do we have job descriptions for the board and do people know their roles and responsibilities?
2. Do we have recruitment and retention strategies to engage new perspectives on the board?

### SUPPORT TOOLS

Contact [South East District](#) for these optional supports:

- inVest in your Volunteers Program
- Volunteer Recruitment & Retention Resources (manual/templates)
- Volunteer Mini-Workshops
- Job Description development supports
- Secretary Bootcamp On-Demand Module

**"I THINK THAT WE ALL STRUGGLE TO RETAIN VOLUNTEERS AND PART OF THAT IS HAVING PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW WHAT IS EXPECTED. HAVING ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE SET UP PROPERLY WITH BYLAWS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES THEN THE VOLUNTEERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO STICK AROUND."**

*Survey Respondent*



# STRONG BOARDS CHECKLIST CONT'D

## COMMUNICATION

### WHY IMPORTANT?

Effective communication is a critical tool available to the board of directors to promote a positive and cooperative spirit within the organization. Good communication helps to build trust, enhance decision-making, and protect the organization's reputation. When communication is lacking in the boardroom, it can lead to serious problems or even a major crisis.

Board members are also charged with being ambassadors for the organization to the community they serve. Effective communication external to the board is needed for accountability and transparency.

**HOW TO MEASURE communication?** Review the indicators below to see if we are on the right track and/or what we need to address:

#### *Internal:*

- 1. Do we have productive meetings with an inclusive culture that encourages full participation and contribution in the most respectful environment?*
- 2. Do we welcome informative debates where diverse perspectives are the norm?*
- 3. Do we have a strong board culture (maintain good camaraderie and dynamics)?*
- 4. Do board directors support board decisions even when they disagree with them behind closed doors or when they voted against them?*

#### *External:*

- 1. Does the broader community and general public know who we are and what we do?*
- 2. Do we use a variety of communication mechanisms to outreach and promote to community (i.e. website, newsletter, social media)?*

### SUPPORT TOOLS

- *Effective Meetings That Produce Results* Mini-Workshop
- Chairperson Toolkit
- How to Chair Meetings Webinar
- Technology Tools
- Training Fund (grant for training workshops for volunteers)



# STRONG BOARDS CHECKLIST CONT'D

## POLICY & PROCEDURE

### WHY IMPORTANT?

Policies provide the framework for the rules under which the organization conducts its daily work and are generally formulated and adopted by the organization/board.

Established policies and procedures ensure the organization's processes do not deviate or deteriorate over time, even if key board members, contractors or employees leave. Consistent policies also help new board members get up to speed quickly on how the organization operates and what's expected of them as a board member.

Formal, written policies and procedures improve overall organizational performance by keeping everyone "on the same page" when it comes to expectations and issues. When everyone is 100% clear about what needs to be done, how it needs to be done and who's responsible for doing it, it leads to smooth operations.

**HOW TO MEASURE policy?** Review the indicators below to see if we are on the right track and/or what we need to address:

1. *Do we have consistent written processes in place for finances, programs, facilities operations and administration?*
2. *Do we base decision-making on policy?*
3. *Do we have a written policy manual that is easily accessible by all board members and staff?*
4. *Do we have a code of conduct and conflict of interest policy for the board?*

### SUPPORT TOOLS

- Policy & Procedure On-Demand Module
- Policy & Procedure Template Manual
- Policy & Procedure Development Guide
- Policy & Procedure Mini-Workshop





# STRONG BOARDS CHECKLIST CONT'D

## PLANNING & EVALUATION

### WHY IMPORTANT?

#### *Planning*

Boards need a roadmap to help them meet the needs of their communities by fulfilling their mission and stated purpose. The board's role in developing a strategy plan is to set goals for the coming year, clarify what they need to do to make progress toward their goals, and develop a clear plan for how they can put their plans into practice.

#### *Evaluation*

The sport, culture and recreation sector considers evaluation an essential organizational practice. Through evaluation, local organizations can gain insights and solicit feedback about their programs. Evaluation can inform decision-making, guide program improvements, and build stakeholders' value and advocacy for programming.

**HOW TO MEASURE planning and evaluation?** Review the indicators below to see if we are on the right track and/or what we need to address:

#### Planning

1. *Do we have a strategic plan?*
2. *Do we have established goals and priorities?*
3. *Does our daily work (events/activities/operations) align with our mission and vision?*

#### Evaluation

1. *Does our programs and services reflect our community's needs?*
2. *Do we have a process for collecting feedback from users/participants of our programs?*
3. *Do we change/revise our services based on feedback received?*

### SUPPORT TOOLS

- Community Recreation Plan Grant
- Facility Inventory Champions Program (asset management/planning)
- Recreation Strategic Planning Template
- Programming Toolkit (program evaluations)





# DOCUMENT SOURCES

Source: Sport England, A Code for Sports Governance, Retrieved July 20, 2022; [https://www.sportengland.org/campaigns-and-our-work/code-sports-governance?section=tier\\_1\\_-\\_requirements\\_with\\_guidance](https://www.sportengland.org/campaigns-and-our-work/code-sports-governance?section=tier_1_-_requirements_with_guidance)

Source: BoardEffect, Best Practices for Improving Board Member Communications; Retrieved July 20, 2022; <https://www.boardeffect.com/blog/best-practices-improving-board-member-communications/>

Source: CMHC, Why are policies important?; Retrieved July 20, 2022; <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/professionals/industry-innovation-and-leadership/industry-expertise/affordable-housing/managing-affordable-housing/manage-affordable-housing-projects/policy-information/why-are-policies-important>

Source: SIRC; Three recommendations for sport organizations when engaging in evaluation; Retrieved July 20, 2022; <https://sirc.ca/blog/three-recommendations-for-evaluation/>

Source: BoardEffect; Retrieved July 20, 2022; The Board's Role in Developing a Strategy Plan for a Nonprofit; <https://www.boardeffect.com/blog/boards-role-developing-strategy-plan-nonprofit/>

## STRONG BOARDS CHECKLIST

The checklist below can be used by the entire board or a committee of the board to complete an assessment of effectiveness looking at the five (5) fundamentals of STRONG BOARDS. Review all indicator questions for each fundamental to determine what areas the board needs to focus on for improvement. When you have completed the checklist, you will be able to identify the fundamentals your board should address.

*You are on your way to becoming a STRONG BOARD!*

### Instructions:

**Place checkmark beside each indicator that your board has met/achieved.**

FUNDAMENTALS OF STRONG BOARDS	INDICATOR QUESTIONS (MEASURES)
<p><b>STRUCTURE</b> It is essential to know why your board/organization exists, so that you know what to focus on in your daily operations. It is also imperative that the role of the board is clear and concise.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Do we have updated bylaws that are current and relevant?</p> <hr/> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do we have a mission and vision (purpose is clear)?</p>
<p><b>PEOPLE</b> Groups lack human power to perform primary tasks - core volunteers are overburdened and are often faced with STP (<i>Same Three People</i>) Syndrome. The need to invest in human resource development for volunteers is crucial. Evidence suggests that every board or organization should utilize a volunteer management plan if they wish to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance volunteer engagement</li> <li>- Increase volunteer retention</li> <li>- Boost effectiveness in operations</li> </ul>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Do we have job descriptions for the board and do people know their roles and responsibilities?</p> <hr/> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do we have recruitment and retention strategies to engage new perspectives on the board?</p>

<p><b>COMMUNICATION</b>  Effective communication is a critical tool available to the board of directors to promote a positive and cooperative spirit within the organization. Good communication helps to build trust, enhance decision-making, and protect the organization's reputation. When communication is lacking in the boardroom, it can lead to serious problems or even a major crisis.</p> <p>Board members are also charged with being ambassadors for the organization to the community they serve. Effective communication external to the board is needed for accountability and transparency.</p>	<p><b>Internal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do we embrace diversity of opinion and 'difficult' conversations?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do we have productive meetings with an inclusive culture that encourages full participation and contribution in the most respectful environment?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do we welcome informative debates where diverse perspectives are the norm?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do we have a strong board culture (maintain good camaraderie and dynamics)?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do board directors support board decisions even when they disagree with them behind closed doors or when they voted against them?</li> </ul> <p><b>External:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the broader community and general public know who we are and what we do?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do we use a variety of communication mechanisms to outreach and promote to community (i.e. website, newsletter, social media)?</li> </ul>
<p><b>POLICY &amp; PROCEDURE</b>  Policies provide the framework for the rules under which the organization conducts its daily work and are generally formulated and adopted by the organization/board.</p> <p>Established policies and procedures ensure the organization's processes do not deviate or deteriorate over time, even if key board members, contractors or employees leave.</p> <p>When policies and procedures are well established and consistently followed, an</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do we have consistent written processes in place for finances, programs, facilities operations and administration?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do we base decision-making on policy?</li> </ul>



<p>organization can refute allegations of unfairness or legal violations that residents may file against it.</p> <p>Formal, written policies and procedures improve overall organizational performance by keeping everyone “on the same page” when it comes to expectations and issues.</p> <p>When everyone is 100% clear about what needs to be done, how it needs to be done and who’s responsible for doing it, it leads to smooth operations.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Do we have a written policy manual that is easily accessible by all board members and staff?</p>
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Do we have a code of conduct and conflict of interest policy for the board?</p>
<p><b>PLANNING &amp; EVALUATION</b></p> <p>Boards need a roadmap to help them meet the needs of their communities by fulfilling their mission and stated purpose. The board’s role in developing a strategy plan is to set goals for the coming year, clarify what they need to do to make progress toward their goals, and develop a clear plan for how they can put their plans into practice.</p> <p>Taking the time to plan results in these benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inspires the development of new activities</li> <li>- Improves decision-making</li> <li>- Enhances the legitimacy of the organization</li> <li>- Builds networks within the community</li> <li>- Sets the organization up to be responsive to the community’s needs</li> </ul> <p>There is long-term planning, short-term action plans (annual), and specific planning such as building capital facility plans.</p>	<p><b>Planning:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do we have a strategic plan?</p>
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Do we have established goals and priorities?</p>
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Does our daily work (events/activities/operations) align with our mission and vision?</p>
	<p><b>Evaluation:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does our programs and services reflect our community’s needs?</p>
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Do we have a process for collecting feedback from users/participants of our programs?</p>
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Do we change/revise our services based on feedback received?</p>

## Reflection Summary:

What areas do we need to work on?

Which areas are priority?

\*Contact South East District at [ed@southeastdistrict.ca](mailto:ed@southeastdistrict.ca) to inquire about our support tools and workshops.