

GOVERNANCE4FE

Governance for Further Education and Skills

Guidance Note

Impact Reporting for Governing Bodies

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GUIDE TO IMPACT REPORTING FOR GOVERNING BODIES

Good impact reporting is an essential part of impact measurement; it allows the Board to learn from its work, and it promotes a culture of accountability and transparency. However, many institutions boards struggle with what to measure and report on. There is no right or wrong way to go about this – some institutions use the Ofsted areas of judgement, others, Codes of Governance, or the Nolan Principles.

1 Why should the Board measure and report its impact?

This activity can help the Board to:

- review the Boards' impact against your vision and goals;
- create a learning organisation where people focus on results and adapt and improve services;
- motivate staff and board members through celebrating achievements;
- build trust and credibility with supporters, funders, policy makers, and beneficiaries; and
- share lessons with similar organisations.

Our primary business is to create social and economic change through education, so we need to report on the difference we're making. If you've ever had an uncomfortable meeting with an Ofsted Inspector, either as a Board member or governance professional where they've said, 'stop telling me about what you've done and start telling me what the impact of it is', you'll understand why this activity is so important.

2 What should the Board measure and report?

The Board should address the following key questions:

- Need: What is your purpose as a Board of an FE institution (where should your energies be focused, in order that you will have the most impact)?
- Activities: What is the Board doing to address this?
- Outcomes: What are the results of these activities?
- Evidence: How will the Board know it has made a difference?
- Lessons learnt: How will you change how your board works for the better?

Primarily, impact measuring and reporting should be structured around outcomes not activities.

3 Start planning early

Impact measuring and reporting works best when it's something you do as you go along, rather than just at the end of the year. This may be through reviewing effectiveness at the end of each board/committee meeting and keeping a record of it for collation at year end. See later in the guidance for such examples.

Prioritise which outcomes the Board want to measure and ensure that the Board are collecting relevant data throughout the year. Then, when planning your impact reporting, think about what messages the Board want to communicate. By setting out clearly at the start of the year what the Board's priorities are and then planning meeting timings and

agendas around these key objectives (as opposed to simply following business as usual cyclical reporting), can make impact measuring a much easier task.

4 Engage all boardroom stakeholders

Impact measurement is a collaborative effort. Discuss openly and collectively agree what is to be measured how you can record outcomes as you go along. Build a culture of learning in the boardroom by including the impact report in role descriptions, inductions, internal and external governance reviews, and sharing impact stories across networks. Management will play a key role in feedbacking their views on the Boards' impact.

5 How should the Board report impact?

The principles of good impact reporting are simple and easy to follow:

1. Clarity: 'The reader can quickly and easily understand your purpose as a board and what the Board is trying to achieve. Be conscious of not using long lists of statistics and explanations, instead replacing them with a simple infographic where possible.
2. Accessibility: Whilst impact reporting is great of improving efficacy of board members and improving engagement, consider your external audience – be thinking about what they need and want to know, as well as what the Board want them to know.
3. Transparency: This is not about being perfect - impact reports should reflect on the Board's shortcomings, as well as its successes.
4. Accountability: Impact reporting is all about being accountable for the Boards' work. The report should reflect this and should be upfront about its commitment and motivations.
5. Verifiability: Providing a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence for any impact is key to the depth and breadth of your report.
6. Proportionality: Brevity, where possible, is always welcome. Some topics are more suited to detail than others, and it is worth thinking about how topics can be summarised in places for those looking for a quick overview of your work.

6 Be creative!

Explore alternative ways of gathering evidence and communicating impact. Think about how to make your impact report more interactive through presenting it digitally.

7 Example Impact Recording Sheet

Examples of Board members' Impact				
Area	Activity	Key Points	Impact	Evidence
Culture	Adoption of Code of Conduct and Institution Code of Governance	Well-designed codes which clearly promote sought after values, are effective in promotion of good behaviour	By exhibiting desired behaviours, the Board influences culture throughout the organisation	Management questionnaire from external board reviews shows strong agreement that Board members model agreed behavioural norms and organisational values
Leadership & Management	Board members identified their skills and worked with the Dir. of Governance to fill the skills gap on the Board and its committees	Knowledge of the need for a range of skills in response to sector changes and institution needs	2 new co-opted Board members appointed to the property committee brought challenge to the institution's advisors	The challenge resulted in providing more realistic project costings, thereby improving budgeting accuracy and ensuring solvency of the institution
Leadership & Management	Board members undertook a review of its performance against the Institution Code of Governance	A succession plan has been agreed which complements the policy put forward for discussion by the Dir. of Governance	Greater awareness of Board members' role and terms of office and the need to plan continuously for the future to ensure a strong and cohesive Board, thereby providing excellent leadership of the institution	There have been no vacancies on the Board or difficulties in recruiting to positions, over the past 12 months
Leadership & Management	Board members repeatedly challenged the Group Principal & CEO to provide a Succession Plan	Due to the retirement of the Deputy CEO and considerable staff changes as part of the merger process, there was no clear succession plan, either for a planned or emergency replacement of the CEO	Board members now have some assurance on the stability of the organisation going forward, in the event of the sudden departure of the CEO.	A well-articulated and transparent succession plan is in place

Examples of Board members' Impact				
Leadership & Management	Board members requested increased involvement in the new strategic plan	Board members set up a vision and values working party to consider Board members input into the strategic plan, as well as the level of stakeholder engagement	Vision & Values are more clearly and widely stated and understood.	The new strategic plan shows wide ranging input from several key stakeholders. External governance review shows a clarity from Board members of the purpose and aims of the institution
Finance	Reviewed auditors	Selection panel of 2 Board members and the Deputy CEO interviewed three internal auditor candidates	New internal auditors selected with an overall fee reduction to give fresh scrutiny of the institution's processes	Internal auditors contracted.
Finance	Board members challenge SMT on link between curriculum provision and financial position	Value for money, class utilisation, financial policies, staff as a percentage of expenditure are closely monitored	The institution continues to have a breakeven position each year.	There is ongoing good reputation of the institution with its partners, with the institution delivering a financial grade of Good
Performance Management	Clarity on KPI reporting data and achievement against strategic goals	Challenge SMT on more efficient presenting of data at Corporation and committees.	KPIs continue to be met on a regular basis and where they are not, clear action plans are in place on how to address any short comings	Management reports, minutes, and institution outcomes
Personal Development	Board members visit institution and attend monitoring meetings and events	Board members observe staff emphasising and modelling appropriate attitude and behaviours such as timeliness, and	Student expectations are high Students feel safe Employers respect students from this institution	Student and employer surveys demonstrate these findings

Examples of Board members' Impact				
		witness embedding of core British values into lessons.		
Quality of Education	Board members challenged SMT on staff who are not performing optimally	Difficult decisions have been made to let some staff go. Remaining staff are supported and coached	Students are better taught, supported, and coached Board member visits have enabled Board members to see first-hand the benefits of merger – shared knowledge and experience across campuses – positively impacting the quality of education	Improving achievement outcomes for students
Quality of Education	Board members challenged SMT on student destinations	Remodelling of how destination information is gathered and used and reported to Corporation	Effort is made to ensure learners are going down appropriate routes for them individually	Destination and Alumni data collection
Safeguarding	Board members undertook training on Safeguarding and appointed a lead Board member for Safeguarding	Safeguarding lead Board member has in place additional reporting mechanisms and ensures that safeguarding/prevent is embedded into curriculum visits to understand how safeguarding is being implemented from staff & students' perspective	Institution has a respectful and harmonious working environment. Visitors and students comment on it.	External safeguarding audits Student surveys
Strategic Partnership	Board members re-assessed the governance structure to ensure local stakeholder engagement for communities	A new stakeholder group has been implemented. One member of the Board sits on this management group.	Excellent relationships are being built with external stakeholders, improving the institutions' reputation in its community, and giving better choice for students – both for study and future employment	Increasing student recruitment

GOVERNANCE4FE

Governance for Further Education and Skills

We are a unique organisation that focuses on corporate governance in the Further Education & Skills sector, making us the 'go to' place to find and be directed to trusted information, expert advice and consultancy, sophisticated software tools, inspirational training, and a library of support documents. Our desire is to see governing bodies positively influence their institutions through effective governance, enabling them to improve outcomes for all students and their communities. We are the ultimate one-stop shop for all your requirements in Further Education governance.

Our purpose is to come along side all those operating in the Further Education governance space to support them to deliver effective governance by providing an outstanding service which delivers resources that are:

- **Practical** – something you can adapt, adopt and utilise immediately
- **Instructive** – you learn in the act of doing – change happened best, is more sustained, and has greater rewards when it takes place from within the organisation
- **Inspirational** – by providing a new perspective, stimulating curiosity, and bringing hope of an improved future

Guidance notes are prepared by the Governance4FE team and peer reviewed by our associates, who are highly experienced and qualified governance experts.

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