Practical Governance Assessment

Taking into consideration implementers' limited time and resources, the tools in Pathfinder International's *Straight to the Point* Series provide clear, concise guidance on a variety of issues related to program design, implementation, and evaluation.

Pathfinder
INTERNATIONAL
Sexual and reproductive health
without fear or boundary

Assessment Objectives

THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS TOOL ARE TO:

- Assess organizational skills, systems, knowledge, and practices in 3 key areas related to organizational governance;

- Identify key capacity gaps; and

- Provide the foundation for making an action plan to address these gaps.

AREAS COVERED BY THIS TOOL:

- Board of Directors

- Mission statement

- Leadership

How to Use this Tool

Identifying the interviewer: This assessment can be conducted by an external assessor (for example, by a group planning to provide capacity building support to the organization) or by the organization itself as part of an internal learning process. If conducted as a self-assessment, the assessment team should include members from multiple levels of the organization, and there should be ongoing discussion and feedback among the team members.

Conducting the interviews: You should interview a variety of people in the organization, including representatives from the organization's leaders, contact staff, non-contact staff, and volunteers. Try to interview representatives from as many relevant groups as possible so that you gain a clear, comprehensive understanding of the organization's governance capacities. By speaking to a variety of people about similar issues, you can learn how different groups perceive the organization's effectiveness and areas of need.

Interview methodology: If the assessment is conducted by an outside group, this is also an important opportunity to begin building productive, collaborative relationships with the organization. Remember that this is not a test— it is an opportunity to determine which capacity areas are in most need of support. The interview should be informal and conversational. You do not need to fill out the assessment tool as you are conducting the interview, but you should keep it with you and use it as a guide as you take notes in the space provided for description/justification (or in a separate notebook for later reference). Do not circle the ratings as you are conducting the interview, but do make sure organizational representatives understand what a "yes" or "no" means, and why each capacity area is considered important. When you fill out the profile be sure to justify your assessment (i.e., write the reasons for your decisions).

If the assessment is being conducted by someone outside the organization, the assessment team should visit the organization (spending at least half a day with them) to conduct interviews with relevant individuals and learn about their work and work environment. A copy of this tool should be shared with the organization prior to the assessment to give them the opportunity to read through and ask questions.

Developing a governance action plan: After completing the interviews, review the capacity area questions where the respondents gave a "no" answer and their suggestions for how that area could be addressed. Each question is designed to illustrate an ideal characteristic of that capacity area and to inform how the gaps might be strengthened. Discuss your observations with members of the organization and ask for their feedback. Together, determine which areas related to governance will need to be prioritized and supported.

Key Terms

ACCOUNTABILITY

The responsibility of organizational leaders to report to the Board of Directors and to the general members on the use of resources, decision-making processes, and progress toward meeting organizational standards or goals.

Accountability also refers to the organization's responsibility to the people it serves. Organizations have a responsibility to uphold their commitments to addressing those people's needs.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A situation when a person's individual desires and goals may affect their ability to do their job fairly and in a professional way (for example, giving or accepting gifts or favors within the organization or with vendors).

GOALS

The result of organizational or programmatic activities which the organization uses to measure progress and achievement.

GOVERNANCE

The provision of leadership and direction to an organization, including oversight of important organizational functions like setting goals, planning, and managing financial and human resources.

LEADERSHIP

The capacity of senior organizational members to provide guidance and direction in the organization to support it toward the achievement of its goals.

MISSION

A statement of an organization's primary purpose for existing, describing what the organization seeks to accomplish, with or for whom, why, and how.

OVERSIGHT

Monitoring and supervision of organizational direction, activities, and progress.

STAKEHOLDERS

People or groups who are invested in an organization's outcomes. A stakeholder could be a member of the organization or the Board of Directors, a donor, a member of the group which benefits from the organization's activities, or a member of the wider community where the organization works.

TECHNICAL EXPERTS

Organizational or community members with knowledge, skills, and expertise in a specific area related to an organization's mission (for example, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV).

General Information

Organization name: _____ Contact person: _____

Address:_____

Physical location: _____

Phone number: _____ Main contact email address: _____

Interviewer(s): _____

Date(s) visited: _____ Duration of visit(s): _____

List all people interviewed and their position in, or relationship to, the organization:

PERSON INTERVIEWED	POSITION IN/RELATIONSHIP TO THE ORGANIZATION

List all supporting documents (such as mission statement, policies, or procedures) collected as part of the assessment process. Copies of these documents should be attached to the final assessment.

Board of Directors

	YES	NO
Do you have a Board of Directors? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Does your Board include community leaders, technical experts, and other stakeholders? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Is the CEO accountable to the Board for his/her actions? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Are the members of the Board committed and actively engaged in the activities of the organization? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Does the Board meet regularly, both internally and with staff? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Are your Board members free from any conflicts of interest? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Are the roles and responsibilities for your Board clear to the other members of the organization? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Does your Board play a role in programmatic and financial oversight, and overall accountability? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO

Mission Statement

	CIRCLE ONE	
Does your organization have an up-to-date mission statement? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Is your mission statement reviewed on a regular basis? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Is your mission statement understood by all members of the organization and other key stakeholders? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Is your mission statement specific and unique to your organization? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Does your mission statement clearly identify the specific group of people you are serving and address their problems or issues? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Does your mission statement affect which projects and activities you choose to implement? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Do the projects and activities your organization implements contribute toward achieving this goal? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO

Leadership

Is leadership and decision-making power shared throughout the organization? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Are middle-level leaders are empowered to make appropriate decisions? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Are your leaders effective communicators? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Do your leaders ask for input into their decisions, and allow input to influence their decisions? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Do your leaders have a long-term vision for your organization? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Are there women leaders in your organization? How many, compared to men? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Is it clear how someone can become a leader in your organization? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO
Do you have systems to make sure that ineffective leaders are removed from their positions? *If YES, explain. If NO, how could you address this?*	YES	NO