

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the results of the board performance self-assessment survey (BPSAQ) that was held at Food for all, a nonprofit organization aimed at the creation of a network of food pantries. The main challenges the board of this organization faces based on an initial analysis (see report part 1) are the need for consensus between its member organizations, the degree to which board members should be involved and the role of the executive director. Besides reporting on the results of the survey, this report will assess the effectiveness of the board by using the data gathered in the survey and combine this with theoretical concepts on board governance effectiveness. This report is part 3 of a 3 part series. The other parts describe the organization in greater detail and provide a conceptual framework for governance. Combined, the three parts will provide a comprehensive overview of the organization and how it can improve in reaching its objectives.

Methodology

The theoretical framework described in this report was developed by consulting the reading material that was part of this course. A selection was made based on the perceived relevance by the author of the documentation on the topic of effective board governance in nonprofit settings. This selection was then consulted to find areas in the field of board governance that related to the problems that are faced by Food for All's board. Problem areas as well as areas of positive performance were assessed by using the board performance self-assessment survey (BPSAQ) which was filled in by officials from Food for All. The BPSAQ is a survey instrument that measures self-reported board performance by asking participating boards to rate themselves on a number of indicators. In this report these indicators are linked up with the theoretical concepts derived from the literature.

Defining nonprofit governance

Governance, with all its dimensions can be seen as a form of strategic leadership in an organization. Being defined as *"the exercise of authority direction and control of an organization in order to ensure its purpose is achieved"* (Gill, 2005). It can be divided into four components: accountability, transparency, predictability and participation. Alongside these four components Murray and Harrison (2012) identified nine dimensions that determine effective governance: clarity of authority and responsibilities, role in planning, role in performance assessment, role in fundraising, structure and operating procedures, effective board meetings, composition and board development, informal culture, and leadership on the board. Together, these dimensions determine the effectiveness of a board.

Areas of board performance of the Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire

The BPSAQ covers eight dimensions of board governance: board meetings, leadership, role clarity, planning & oversight, performance assessment, culture, fundraising and board composition &

development. These are combined in an overall indicator that focuses on the overall performance of the board. The board meeting indicator focuses on the efficiency of the meetings of the board. Well performing boards will have efficient meetings. This relates to the operating procedures dimension as described by Murray and Harrison (2012). This dimension can be divided into two groups: procedural performance and board structuring. The board meeting indicator focuses primarily on the procedural performance aspect of the procedure dimension.

The leadership indicator focuses on the effectiveness of the leadership role of the board as well of the leadership within the board. Well performing boards have a strong leadership (from both the chair and its CEO). This relates to the leadership on the board dimension of Murray and Harrison (2012).

The role clarity indicator focuses on the clarity with which roles are divided across the organization and within the board. Well performing boards will have a clear division of roles and responsibilities. This indicator relates to the clarity of authority and responsibilities dimension of Murray and Harrison (2012). This includes both legal responsibility (fiduciary duty) and authority (division of roles between board and staff). The role clarity indicator focuses on both of these aspects.

The planning & oversight indicator focuses on the role of the board in long-term planning. Well performing boards will be involved in this planning while delegating day-to-day responsibilities to staff members and volunteers. This indicator relates to the role in planning dimension of Murray and Harrison (2012). This involves planning for the future (for example, through developing strategic plans) and monitoring performance.

The performance assessment indicator focuses on the ability of the board to track the performance of the organization as well as individual staff. Well performing boards have a good overview of how the plans are realized and are informed quickly and accurately when deviations occur from the plan. This indicator relates to the role in performance assessment indicator by Murray and Harrison (2012).

The culture indicator focuses on the informal culture and how this contributes to the overall effectiveness of the board. Well performing boards have an informal culture that improves its efficiency. This relates to the informal culture dimension of Murray and Harrison (2012).

The fundraising indicator focuses on the ability of the board to select sources for funding and the ability to secure it. Well performing boards are able to identify funding opportunities and are able to secure them. This indicator relates closely with the role in fundraising dimension of Murray and Harrison (2012). This task is often seen as the hardest for boards as boards can have trouble to find candidates or existing members that have experience with or are willing to participate in fundraising activities.

The board composition & development indicator focuses the formal structure of the board and the recruitment of new board members. Well performing board will have a clear structure and structured recruitment procedures. This indicator is aligned with the composition and board development and operating procedures dimension of Murray and Harrison (2012). Here composition and board development are related to both activities measured in this indicator whereas operating procedures (board structuring) only relates to clarity of structure.

Conclusion

Using theoretical concepts and the BPSAQ survey, a conceptual framework to identify the positive areas and areas of improvement for the Food for All board was developed. This framework includes 8 indicators (board meetings, leadership, role clarity, planning & oversight, performance assessment, culture, fundraising and board composition & development) and an overall indicator. These indicators were aligned with a theoretical concept framework to identify the relation between the indicators. The next report in this series will focus on the result of the BPSAQ survey.

References

Gill, Mel D. (2005). *Governing for Results*. Victoria, BC, Canada: Trafford Publishing.

Murray, Vic and Harrison, Yvonne (2012). *Guidelines for Reviewing Board Performance and Processing Board Check-Up Results*. Authors.