

CLEAR PROCESSES AND PRACTICES

TOPICS

The Problems of Weak Governance Infrastructure

The Power of Integrated Governance Practices, Principles, and Processes

Practical Ways to Improve Governance Integration

This section sets the stage for the following sections on best practices and processes for good governance in the health sectors of low-resourced countries.

THE CHALLENGE

You direct a large national program designed to provide integrated family planning and maternal and child health services for women. You want to invite 17 men and women from around the country to develop and publish a small guide for governing bodies of local health centers about how to do their work. What practices and decision-making processes do you want these local community governing bodies to use?

THE PROBLEMS OF WEAK GOVERNANCE INFRASTRUCTURE

The importance of strong governing bodies has never been more clear. Countries are now rushing to establish local and provincial health councils, and they are dealing with a growing number of civil society organizations. Maximizing the value of such governing bodies, however, requires clear decision-making processes and practices.

Unfortunately, many health sector governing bodies do not have well-defined processes, and their practices are underdeveloped. This weakness is exacerbated by a lack of the basic infrastructure building blocks for good decision-making described below:

- Formal terms of reference for the overall work of the governing body, plus a related understanding of the essential practices of a high-performing governing body;
- Clear job descriptions for governing body leaders and committees, as well as a clear distinction between the work of management and the work of the governing body;
- A model agenda and guidance for good meetings;
- A calendar of meetings throughout the year with themes that blend decision-making and education;
- An informative and motivating induction/orientation program as members join the governing body;
- An annual member-education program;
- An annual governing body self-assessment process;
- Clear procedures for decision-making processes about:
 - community needs assessments
 - strategic business planning and budgeting
 - service quality
 - staff development
 - resource mobilization
 - community and stakeholder relations.

How well do you believe your governing body is prepared to address this need for building blocks that are well defined and understood? A district health council board in Africa found it useful to make this assessment using the principles in Box 10.1.

BOX 10.1 Understanding the essential principles and practices of governance

1. creating a culture of accountability that integrates the principles of transparency, ethics, and oversight
2. engaging with diverse stakeholders within and outside the organization in a way that integrates the principles of participation, gender, diversity, and inclusion
3. setting strategic direction by integrating the principles of alignment, leadership, and advocacy
4. stewarding scarce resources with an integrated approach for capacity development, financial prudence, and efficiency
5. working to continuously improve all of these key practices along with the processes and infrastructure that support and enable them to be effective

Source: Adapted from Richard T. Ingram, *Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards* (Washington, DC: BoardSource, 2009).

THE POWER OF INTEGRATED GOVERNANCE PRACTICES, PRINCIPLES, AND PROCESSES

Wise governing body leaders in the health systems of low-resourced countries have discussions about three different dimensions of “integrated governance:”

1. They are integrated in that there must be a coordinated balancing of policy, plans, and investments, which in turn integrate the issues of health with education, environment, housing, food and water security, political stability and economic development, and poverty reduction.¹
2. They are integrated in that there is a careful balancing of the work of the governing body, its committees, executive leadership, and what the National Health Service of England calls “clinical governance.”²
3. They are integrated in that the decision-making processes—as cited above—exist within the governing body for it to wisely use the time and talents of members, managers, and health workers.

Work to develop, evaluate, and enhance health-sector governing bodies in Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Europe calls for understanding and mastering the essential principles and practices shown in Box 10.1.3 [Appendix 10.1](#) provides a table of the principles associated with each of the practices.

The following sections explore in more depth all of these interrelated practices, processes, and principles.

1. See USAID, “Importance of Democracy, Human Rights, & Governance to Development” (Washington, DC: USAID, July 26, 2012). Available at: <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/democracy-human-rights-and-governance/importance-democracy-human-rights-governance>

2. For the policy framework on clinical governance in Scotland, see NHS 24, “Clinical Governance” (Glasgow: NHS 24, no date). Available at: <http://www.nhs24.com/aboutus/ourpolicy/clinicalgovernance/>

3. For an overview on key concepts and practices, see Management Sciences for Health, “How to govern the health sector and its institutions effectively,” *The eManager* (Medford, MA: MSH, March 2013). Available at: <http://www.lmgforhealth.org/emanager>

FIGURE 10.1 Practices of good governance. Cultivating accountability, engaging stakeholders, setting a shared strategic direction, and stewarding resources are essential practices of good governance. Continuous governance enhancement—periodically assessing and continuously trying to improve governance—entails consistent application of the four essential practices.



PRACTICAL WAYS TO IMPROVE GOVERNANCE INTEGRATION

To make the work of your governing body more effective using integrated-governance decision-making, consider these five actions:

1. Download and review documents describing the need for, nature of, and elements of good governing body decision-making at all levels of the health systems in low- and middle-income countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
2. Ask two to three members of your governing body to organize a discussion of the practices described in this book. They can then conduct an assessment in which all members are invited to assess the degree to which your group is accomplishing each of the practices. A sample survey tool is available in [Section 23](#) on self-assessment.
3. Have a discussion at your next board meeting of the assessment results. At that time, define two to three actions your governing body and managers can take in the coming months to improve your approach to accomplishing each of the practices and the processes and procedures you need for success.
4. Review your progress in implementing the governance plan after six months and celebrate your accomplishments.
5. Repeat your assessment in an annual review, as described in [Section 15](#).

Discuss with your governing body leaders how to adapt actions to your unique realities.

APPENDIX 10.1

Principle governing practices

GOVERNING PRACTICE 1: CULTIVATE ACCOUNTABILITY

Foster a facilitative decision-making environment based on systems and structures that support transparency and accountability

Principles Underlying the Practice

Accountability
Transparency
Legal, ethical, and moral behavior
Accessibility
Social justice
Moral capital
Oversight
Legitimacy

Governing Actions You Can Take

Establish, champion, practice, and enforce codes of conduct that uphold the key governance principles and demonstrate the authority of the governance decision-making processes.

Embed accountability in the governing institutions by creating ways to share information and rewarding behaviors that reinforce the key governance principles.

Make all reports on finances, activities, and plans available to the public, and share them formally with stakeholders, staff, public monitoring bodies, and the media.

Set expectations that other stakeholders share.

Establish oversight and review processes to regularly assess the impact and appropriateness of decisions made.

Establish a formal consultation process through which stakeholders may voice concerns or provide other feedback.

Sustain a culture of integrity and openness that serves the public interest.

GOVERNING PRACTICE 2: ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

Identify, engage, and collaborate with diverse stakeholders representing the full spectrum of interested parties

Principles Underlying the Practice

Participation
Representation
Inclusion
Diversity
Gender equity
Conflict resolution

Governing Actions You Can Take

Empower marginalized voices, including women and youth, by giving them a meaningful place and a meaningful role in formal decision-making structures.

Ensure appropriate participation of key stakeholders through fair voting and decision-making procedures.

Extensively hold and enable open meetings, surveys, public comment, public workshops, national forums, and citizen advisory committees.

Create and maintain a safe space for sharing ideas, so that genuine participation across diverse stakeholder groups is feasible.

Provide an independent conflict resolution mechanism accessible by all stakeholders, as diverse stakeholders may have competing interests, giving rise to conflict.

Elicit, and respond to, all forms of feedback in a timely manner.

Build coalitions and networks, where feasible and necessary, and strive for consensus on achieving the shared direction across all levels of governance.

Establish alliances for joint action at whole-of-government and whole-of-society levels.

GOVERNING PRACTICE 3: SET SHARED DIRECTION

Develop a collective vision of the “ideal state” and a process for designing an action plan, with measurable goals, for reaching it

Principles
Underlying the
Practice

Stakeholder alignment

Leadership

Management

Advocacy

Governing Actions You Can Take

Oversee the process for developing and implementing a shared action plan to achieve the mission and vision of the *governed* (organization, community, or country). Engage citizens and other stakeholders.

Advocate on behalf of stakeholders’ needs and concerns, as identified through the formal mechanisms above, making sure to include these in defining the shared direction.

Document and disseminate the shared vision of the ideal state.

Oversee the process of setting goals to reach the ideal state.

Make sound policies, laws, regulations, rules of procedure, programs, and protocols to achieve the ideal state.

Establish accountability mechanisms for achieving goals that have been set, using defined indicators to gauge progress toward achieving these goals.

Advocate for the ideal state in higher levels of governance, other sectors outside of health, and other convening venues with a role to play in its realization.

Oversee the process of realization of the shared goals and the desired outcomes.

GOVERNING PRACTICE 4: STEWARD RESOURCES

Steward resources responsibly, building capacity

Principles
Underlying the
Practice

Financial
accountability

Development

Social responsibility

Capacity Building

Country ownership

Ethics

Resourcefulness

Efficiency

Effectiveness

Governing Actions You Can Take

Champion the acquisition and use of resources to accomplish the organization’s mission and plans.

Protect and wisely invest the resources entrusted to the governing body to serve stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Collect, analyze, and use information and evidence for making decisions on the use of resources, including human, financial, and technical resources.

Develop and implement a strategy for building the health sector’s capacity to absorb resources and deliver services that are high quality, appropriate to the needs of the population, accessible, affordable, and cost-effective.

Advocate for using resources in a way that maximizes the health and well-being of the public and the organization, and invest in communication that puts health on the policy-making agenda.

Inform the public and create opportunities for them to be included in monitoring and evaluating the way that resources are raised, allocated, and used.