



# VY Board Assessment Tool

**YOUR ORGANIZATION:**

The Board Assessment Tool is designed to help your board review how well the board is performing its duties and to identify areas for improvement. This tool focuses on the board – it is not meant to assess the performance of the entire organization, just of the board.

*There are no 'right' answers!*

To ensure your board gets the most out of this tool, please answer all of the questions honestly and openly. When discussing the results with other board members, everyone will need to identify where there are challenges as well as opportunities for improvement in your board's performance. It is important that all members are open to new ideas and perspectives on how the board operates.

## PART A

For each question, please put one 'X' in the column that best represents your answer to: "Does this describe your board?" (Please do not put an 'X' in two columns to indicate a "halfway between" decision – pick the ONE column that is closest to your opinion).

### EXAMPLE

Area of focus	1. Does this describe your board?				
	no	a bit	mostly	yes	don't know
1. Our organization has a written vision statement and/or mission statement that is relevant to the work we do.				X	
2. Board meetings are well-attended.		X			
3. New board members are oriented to their job. They are given information on board policies and on the organization's mission, practices and programs.					X

**PLEASE COMPLETE ALL QUESTIONS BELOW.**

Area of focus	1. Does this describe your board?				
	no	a bit	mostly	yes	don't know
<b>Visioning and planning</b>					
1. Our organization has an up-to-date written vision statement and/or mission statement.					
2. We have relevant strategic goals in place.					
3. As a board, we often talk about issues of importance to the organization's long range future.					
4. We involve other participants (e.g. staff, volunteers, key partners) in our strategic planning processes.					
5. There is a clear set of values for the organization ( <i>values might include things like "respect diversity", "be open to new ideas", "be accountable and transparent", "embrace partnerships", "learn from our mistakes"</i> ). These values guide how we do our work.					
<b>Community relations</b>					
6. The board has discussions at least once or twice a year about role of the organization in the community or in its sector ( <i>e.g. health, environment, arts</i> )					
7. The board consults and communicates directly with the groups of people it serves or represents ( <i>this helps the board provide direction to the organization on behalf of the people it represents</i> ).					
8. The board pays attention to changing community needs and trends related to our area of work.					
<b>Board Liability and Accountability</b>					
9. Board members act in good faith and in the best interests of the organization.					
10. The Board ensures that anyone who may financially benefit from a decision does not participate in making that decision.					
11. Board members actively participate in board decision making to the best of their abilities ( <i>e.g. they regularly attend meetings, speak on issues of concern and participate in votes or other decision processes</i> ).					
12. The board is aware of the legal requirements the group must abide by and is confident that the organization is meeting them.					
13. The Board regularly assesses the risks to the organization, board, volunteers, clients and staff and ensures processes are in place to minimize any risks.					
14. There are financial controls and practices in place which prevent people in the group from misusing funds.					
15. The board ensures the organization has financial reserves to cover at least basic operating costs ( <i>e.g. wages, rent, phone</i> ). These reserves are enough to cover financial obligations and liabilities in case the group runs out of other funding sources.					

Area of focus	1. Does this describe your board?				
	no	a bit	mostly	yes	don't know
<b>Financial responsibilities</b>					
16. Our annual budget reflects our strategic priorities for the year.					
17. The board ensures the organization has a financial plan that will provide stability for the organization.					
18. The board regularly receives, reviews, and appears to understand the financial statements for the organization.					
19. When reviewing financial statements, the board focuses on what they mean in terms of the financial health of the group (i.e. it focuses on the big picture, not individual items).					
<b>Bylaws and Policies</b>					
20. Board members are all provided with a copy of the organization's bylaws and are expected to be familiar with them.					
21. The organization operates according to its current constitution and bylaws (e.g. elections, notice to membership, amendments to bylaws, removal of board members, etc.)					
22. The board ensures that the organization has the policies it needs in place. These policies are up-to-date and easy to understand.					
<b>Individual roles and responsibilities</b>					
23. Board members appear to understand the mission or purpose of the group and are committed to fulfilling it.					
24. All board members appear to understand their roles and responsibilities as board members.					
25. Board members appear to know the difference between their responsibilities as Directors and any other volunteer responsibilities they may also agree to take on for the group.					
26. Board members usually follow through on the things they agree to do.					
27. Board members understand the work of the organization (what it does, what the programs are).					
<b>Board team work and decision-making</b>					
28. The process for how we make decisions is clear.					
29. The Board constructively deals with any conflicts that arise.					
30. All board members agree to live by the group's decisions. (Once a decision is made by the group, board members do not speak out against that decision with non-board members.)					
31. The Board makes decisions based on good information and often explores a list of creative solutions when faced with an important issue.					
32. Our board regularly does things to ensure we get to know each other better.					
33. We recognize our achievements as a group.					
<b>Board meetings</b>					
34. Board members receive the agenda and the materials they need for decision-making far enough in advance of the meeting.					
35. Board meetings are well-attended.					

Area of focus	1. Does this describe your board?				
	no	a bit	mostly	yes	don't know
36. The Board records its decisions and maintains a record of its decisions (e.g. minutes, policy statements).					
37. Board meetings are well planned and productive.					
38. The board's agenda and discussions focus primarily on the organization's overall strategic priorities.					
<b>Board composition and renewal</b>					
39. Our board talks each year about the skills and knowledge its members should have and seeks new people based on this understanding.					
40. New board members are oriented to their job. They are given information on board policies and on the organization's mission, practices and programs.					
41. We create opportunities for board members to receive education and development related to their role.					
42. Our board identifies potential leaders within the board and does things to help them develop as leaders.					
43. We do not have a problem with high turnover of board members (people typically stay on more than one year).					
<b>Evaluating and measuring performance</b>					
44. In the last year, the board, other key participants and staff (if group has any) have assessed our organization's performance and how well it is achieving its goals and mandate. (This assessment you're filling out now is only for the board but the board should ensure the organization's performance is being reviewed).					
45. The board periodically talks about our mistakes and what we can learn from them. We also talk about how we can improve how we work together and how we lead the organization.					
46. We regularly ask people who are not on the board for information and feedback on our performance as a board.					
<b>Staff/Board roles [skip to Part B if your group does not have staff]</b>					
47. There is a clear understanding of when a decision should be a board decision and when a decision should be a staff decision.					
48. The board ensures that its senior staff person is able to take advantage of different professional development opportunities.					
49. There is respect and trust between the board and staff.					
50. The board has established goals that the most senior staff person is supposed to work towards.					
51. We do a performance evaluation of our senior staff person every year.					
52. The board provides feedback to the most senior staff person on a regular basis.					

**PART B**

1. ***What do you think are your board's three top strengths?*** (Focus on the strengths of the board, not of the overall organization.)
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
2. ***What do you think are your board's three greatest challenges?*** (Focus on the challenges the board faces in carrying out its duties, not the broader challenges of the organization.)
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
3. ***What three areas do you think your board should focus on improving in the next year to improve its own performance?*** (Focus on what the board needs to do to improve its own performance as a group of people with specific responsibilities. Do not focus on what the organization as a whole needs to do.)
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
4. ***Are there any other comments you would like to raise about the performance of this board that hasn't been captured in this assessment tool?***