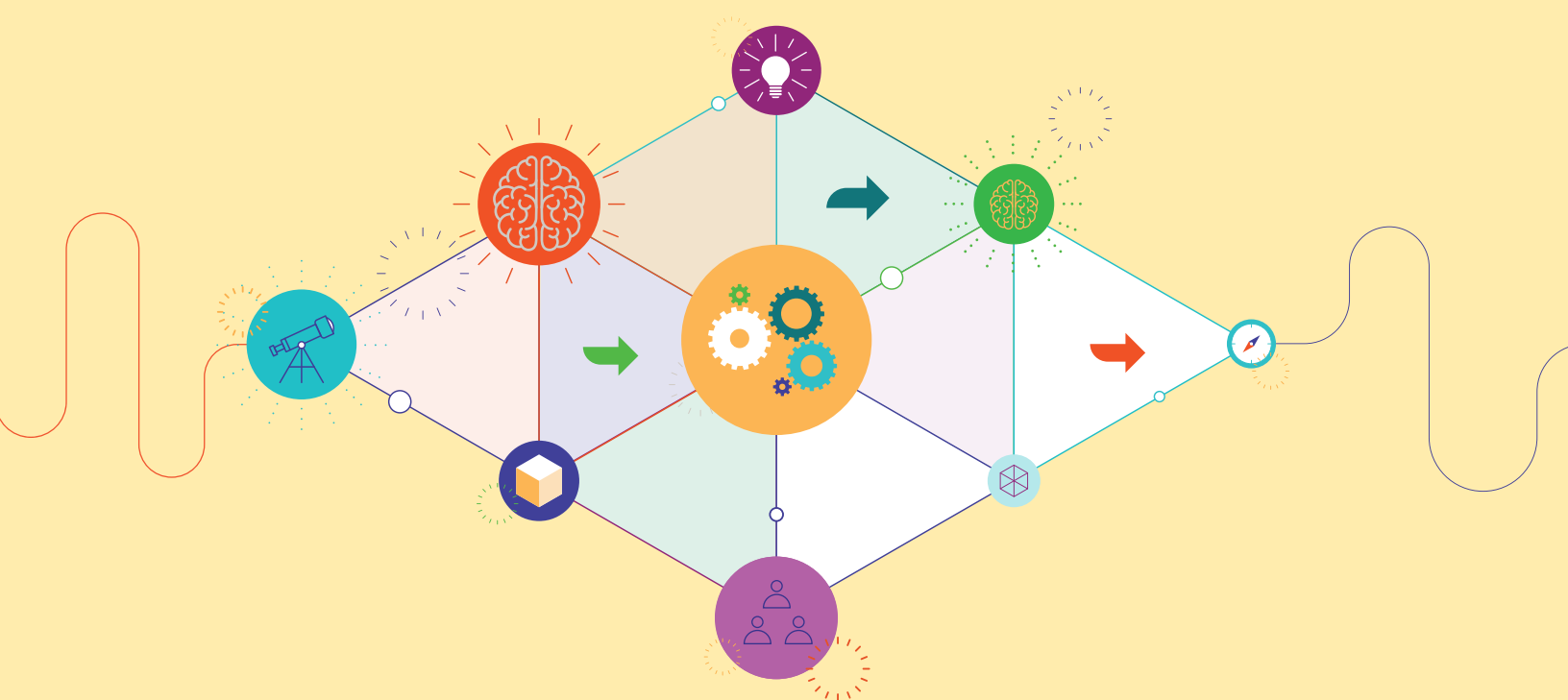


Elevating the Onboarding Experience

A GOVERNANCE PROFESSIONALS' GUIDE



ONTARIO
HOSPITAL
ASSOCIATION

The Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) is grateful to the following members of the Governance Professionals Peer Learning Network who contributed to the development of this guide.

Ruth Agi – *Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network*

Kimberly Bougher – *St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital*

Margaret Clark – *Peterborough Regional Health Centre*

Terri-Lynn Cook – *St. Joseph's Health Care, London*

Sue Davey – *Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance*

Patty Dimopoulos – *Brockville General Hospital*

Danette Dutot – *Hotel Dieu Grace Healthcare*

Cassa Easton – *Grand River Hospital Corporation*

Joanne Hartnett – *Queensway Carleton Hospital*

Loralee Heemskerk – *Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital*

Susan La Brie – *Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care*

Sheila Mabee – *Lennox and Addington County General Hospital*

Jennifer Matthews – *The Ottawa Hospital*

Trish Matthews – *Scarborough and Rouge Hospital*

Robin Moore – *Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences*

Julia Oosterman – *Bluewater Health*

Lise Peterson – *Erie Shores Healthcare*

Pam Porter – *Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences*

Wendy Sallows – *Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre*

Katrina Santiago – *Central Local Health Integration Network*

Anne Schnurr – *South Bruce Grey Health Centre*

Kathy Vader – *Pathways to Independence*

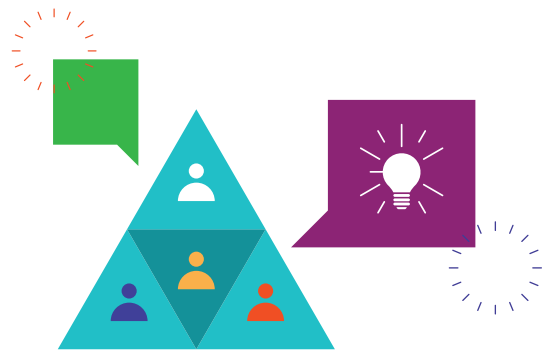
Elevating the Onboarding Experience: A Governance Professionals' Guide

The confidence of a new board member and the ability to engage and contribute meaningfully to the practice of good governance can be traced back to onboarding effectiveness combined with previous governance experience, sector knowledge, skills and expertise. A board orientation includes both content and process items which contribute to a new board member's ability to effectively fulfill their fiduciary duties.

Boards have different cultures and face different pressures and challenges so the approach to onboarding varies across organizations. Developing and implementing an effective onboarding process is, consistently, a key role of the governance and nominations committee of the board. Working in conjunction with this committee, the inherent function of the governance professional (the lead person supporting the board and its committees, though each person's title may vary) is to create a comprehensive and relevant orientation package and outline a process to successfully onboard and integrate new board members.

The purpose of this guide is to create a set of best-in-class guidelines to apply to hospital board member onboarding and orientation procedures. It is intended to be a support tool for governance professionals who work with the governance and nominations committee, the board chair and senior leadership to develop the most effective orientation process for new board members.

This guide is unique in that it was designed as an output of the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA)'s Elevating the Onboarding Experience workshop held in June 2018. This workshop was an exclusive program offered to members of the OHA's Governance Professionals Peer Learning Network and was the first learning and engagement opportunity for members of the network to come together to co-design and co-create a tangible product.



Workshop participants shared a great deal of valuable insight, experiences, feedback and suggestions for what best-in-class board member onboarding should be. This insight, together with the OHA's *Guide to Good Governance*, and multiple hospital examples and documentation, led to the design and development of this one-of-a-kind onboarding guide.

The guidelines included appear to be common best practice based on the feedback received and the overall goal is to prompt change or spark ideas for readers. These guidelines are designed for boards that are functioning well within a normative environment (e.g., recruiting members as part of a regular cycle). Some of the action items listed in this guide may happen simultaneously and not necessarily sequentially as listed. The OHA is grateful to the governance professionals who contributed to the development of this guide.

There are two sections in this guide:

1. Activities and processes for onboarding
2. A checklist of key orientation content



Not all hospitals have the same resources or capacity dedicated to the onboarding process for new board members. You are encouraged to apply relevant ideas from this guide and adapt the suggestions where necessary.

Annual Onboarding Workplan

The following table outlines a workplan template, which is part of a regular cycle of recruitment, selection, orientation and onboarding of new board members; with consideration to key timelines and milestones so to have new board members equipped for the first meeting of the new board in September.

| Pre-recruitment | Recruitment | Pre-Onboarding/ Selection | AGM | Onboarding | First Board Meeting |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| October – November | December – March | April – May | June | July – August | September |
| Activities include assessing the board skills matrix and needs for recruitment of new members to the board and committees of the board, updating recruitment and onboarding templates and engaging the governance and nominations committee of the board. | Application review, shortlisting and interview processes will take place during this time frame – there may be a need to work closely with a search firm at this time if applicable. Longer-term onboarding activities may begin to take place at this time with initial check-ins on the onboarding. | Pre-Onboarding and Selection Processes takes place for new board members and board committee members, providing them with a welcome package and identifying learning needs and coordinating work for the orientation session. There may be another opportunity for a longer-term onboarding review or check-in at this stage. | Annual General Meeting typically takes place in June. | Onboarding activities (immediate and longer-term) and hosting a more thorough orientation session. | New board terms and board business begins with first board meeting and sometimes the board retreat. As part of the longer-term onboarding strategy, this would be a good time to conduct a one-year touch-base with board members who began their board term the year prior, to identify any gaps or enhancements to the onboarding experience. |

Section 1: Activities and Processes for Onboarding



Pre-recruitment

This phase often occurs in October-November, eight to 10 months from the hospital's Annual General Meeting or the start of the next board year. Under the direction of the board chair, CEO and the governance and nominations committee, the governance professional should identify board members whose current terms are ending and/or who are not seeking re-appointment to the board for the following year. Outlined below are key tasks that should be addressed during this phase:

- Identify the number of vacancies that will be present on the board (ideally with staggered terms) and update the skills matrix to see where the gaps will be for the forthcoming year
- Assess the interest level, competency alignment and cultural fit for existing board committee members to join as full board members where applicable
- Review the committee membership as well to determine if there should be any movement or recruitment for the committees if applicable
- Engage the governance and nominations committee of the board, as well as the CEO and board chair to discuss recruitment strategies

- Where you have determined you will need to recruit new committee members, you will need to engage the committee chair(s) to discuss recruitment strategies
- Where an external search firm is being utilized as the primary recruitment strategy, the governance professional may take the lead role to liaise with the firm, communicating board needs, deadlines and required information for the firm to conduct an effective search
- The governance professional may also be required to place advertisements, publish the vacancies through other local communication outlets and support other recruitment-related or public outreach



The skills matrix should be reviewed regularly to ensure the expertise and skills required reflect best practices and the current needs of the board and the organization. As the goals and priorities of the board change, new skill sets may need to be introduced on the board.



Where a hospital board has rotating or staggered terms and directors are elected for three-year terms, the board must have at least 12 elected directors, plus the required *ex officio* directors to allow four directors' terms to expire each year as required by the *Public Hospitals Act*



Recruitment

Recruitment is often cited as one of the most challenging assignments for governance professionals. Part of the challenge is supporting the governance and nominations committee in identifying the right individuals who have the required time, skills and expertise that meet the needs of the board. To develop a sufficient and strong pool of candidates, there are several tasks that governance professionals can facilitate in collaboration with the governance and nominations committee, including:

- Map the applicants, their expertise and experience against the requirements needed on the board to facilitate the review of applications
- Coordinate the review of applications with the governance and nominations committee as well as the board chair and CEO and vet them to create a shortlist of candidates for interviewing
- Schedule interviews with potential candidates
- Work collaboratively with the board chair and the governance and nominations committee to finalize interview questions
- During the interview process, ensure communication of the time commitment expected, the risks/liabilities that an individual board member assumes when joining a board and any professional development that may be required
- Coordinate any necessary due diligence on the shortlisted individuals (e.g., conflicts of interest)
- Ensure the prospective candidate understands the board culture and set transparent expectations of what is required including ongoing learning



Governance professionals are often the first point of contact for board members – they are true ambassadors of organization and representatives of the board of directors.

- Discuss expectations and duties of board members as community representatives, if applicable
- Introduce and outline the role of the governance professional and supportive function for board members
- Outline the mentorship structure (if one exists) after recruitment while waiting for the board year to begin. Consider whether there is an opportunity for two mentors or perhaps a mentorship structure connecting board members from neighbouring facilities



Be transparent about the time commitment required of board members for training, meeting preparation and board business. It is a considerable obligation and there should be a clear understanding up front for both the potential new board member and the organization.




Pre-Onboarding/Selection

When candidates have been confirmed, the onboarding process begins. Various documents need to be issued such as a confirmation letter with explicit mention of board terms accompanied with the various codes of conduct which require a signature e.g., code of confidentiality. Corporate information also needs to be relayed, a level of camaraderie and kinship needs to be established and a significant education component will begin. Below are activities that will fall into this phase of onboarding that will be managed by the governance professional:

- Determine the most suitable location, group size and length for the orientation session and coordinate any logistics and meeting planning that is required for the delivery of the session
- Determine how these sessions will be set-up (e.g., workshop session) and the distribution of learning sessions throughout the year

- Understand the specific learning needs of the new board members based on a review of their respective backgrounds, skills, experience and interests to establish the appropriate and customized orientation deliverables. Depending on the degree of familiarity of new board members with the hospital sector, the orientation program may be tailored
- Identify appropriate external education options and resources (e.g., OHA's *Essentials Certificate in Hospital Governance for New Directors*) to accelerate new member understanding of the external environment and board responsibilities
- Set up a personal phone call or in-person meeting between each new board member and the board chair to welcome them to the board (or committee)
- Establish opportunities for new board members to observe committee meetings, if applicable
- Outline the mentorship structure after onboarding
- Discuss retreats for board members and opportunities to build fellowship and camaraderie
- Invite new board members to attend the Annual General Meeting as an introduction before their term officially begins (if permitted to do so before new members are elected by the members at the Annual General Meeting)
- Plan any activities or meetings for new board members to take place at the Annual General Meeting, if applicable

 **As a governance professional, you can strongly encourage one-on-one conversations between the board chair and new board members. This will help establish governance requirements and determine learning needs.**



Immediate Onboarding

As soon as a new board member's term begins, there are several activities required that can facilitate the transition into their new role and enable the new board member to contribute meaningfully to governance. Here are some steps to follow during this phase of onboarding:

- During the orientation meeting(s) the chair and CEO would lead discussion related to:
 - Setting the context by providing key organizational facts (e.g., number of beds, number of clinicians etc.)
 - Cover key information in the board orientation manual (e.g., board role, decision-making, committees, strategic plan and areas of focus for advocacy)
 - Connect the current activities of the board back to the organizational strategic goals for the new board members
 - Differentiate between critical information required up front and the information that can be learned as they move through their board term (e.g., conflict of interest, liability and governance versus management roles are all need-to-know items)
 - Answer any specific questions or address any concerns that the new board member may have about the process or expectations
- Schedule meetings with the senior leadership team and the new board members to provide a corporate overview and orientation
- Set up and conduct a tour of the facility for new board members

- Be sure to provide sufficient time for review of all packages and information required for the first official board meeting for new board members (at least a week prior to the meeting)
- Continue to check in frequently with new board members to gauge comfort and connection with the board processes and level of information provided
- Where necessary, time may be offered to provide orientation to any specific technology or devices (e.g., tablets, board portal and wireless internet access information)



The OHA's Board Self-Assessment Tool is one way to identify knowledge gaps and education needs across the board.

Here are some guidelines for longer-term onboarding:

- Canvas board members to identify knowledge gaps and education needs at regular intervals
- Encourage bite-sized learning throughout the year (rather than information overwhelm)
- Seek input from new board members regularly about enhancements for the orientation materials and process – What was missing? Was it too detailed? What else should have been covered? etc. and obtain input early enough to allow for adjustments or enhancements for the following board cycle to be made



The onus is on the board chair and current board members to be open to new board member questions and to make themselves accessible for these conversations. The governance professional can facilitate this open dialogue by reminding and encouraging the board chair and current board members of these valuable interactions.

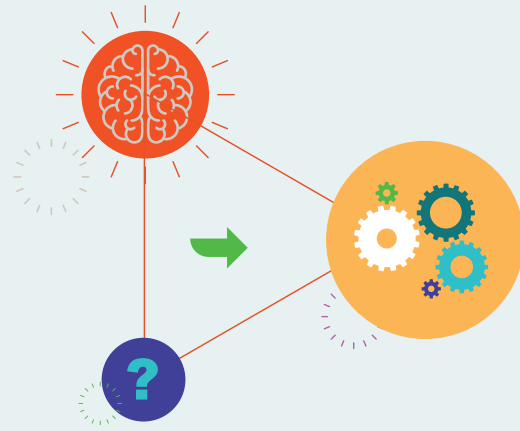


Understand that board members will not be experts in every aspect that goes before the board but they need to know why they should be concerned with what they are being told and they need to know what questions they should be asking – how can you as the governance professional facilitate this?

Longer-Term Onboarding

As with any process or function, evaluation and measurement are critical components of determining effectiveness. The onboarding process should be no different and as such, some longer-term check points need to be established. The governance professional can take the lead on checking in at various junctures and should also encourage the board chair and current board members to do the same, to ensure that new board members have the right information.

Further Considerations



- Do you own the onboarding process? If so, to what degree are you engaging the board chair and governance and nominating committee to ensure onboarding effectiveness?
- How does the timing of your orientation session align with your greater onboarding plan?
- How are you scheduling your own time and preparation for board orientation and board meetings?
- Does your organization use a board portal? Does everyone know how it functions and how to use it? Is it working effectively?
- What methods are you using to bring board members back to the orientation material as reference? (e.g., Including a note at the bottom of board agenda items that says where to find background details within the orientation materials, inject mentions of the board orientation materials in other board discussions to draw attention and remind board members of the resources available)
- How do you effectively evaluate information dissemination/learning?
- Do you have a mentorship program? Where one is in place, are there defined roles and guidance available for the mentors who will take on new board members as mentees?
- Do your board retreats include business, education as well as social components?
- How is the education component for the board determined? Are you getting input from the board members themselves?
- Are you incorporating feedback from previous onboarding experiences to guide future education of board members?
- Are you delivering your education to board members the same way every time? Try changing the format, content and presenters every time
- Are there any practices from other boards that you have encountered around orientation or board business that you can bring forth as an option for your board?
- Do your board member candidates confirm they are eligible to be part of the board and do not conflict with hospital by-laws as part of the application process? (e.g., a board member cannot be a relative of a member of the professional staff)
- As the governance professional, do you collect perceived and potential conflicts of interest to be reviewed and discussed at the governance and nominations committee including risks, ethical considerations and recommendations?

Section 2: Checklist of Key Orientation Content

Governance

- ☐ Accountabilities statement – outlining the differences between responsibility and accountability
- ☐ Role of the board – duties, obligations and expectations of individual directors
- ☐ Board policies including: code of conduct, conflict of interest, confidentiality, communications with the media, expense/travel reimbursement, board meeting policies (rules of order for board meetings)
- ☐ Board structures – committee terms of reference, committee member list
- ☐ Board calendar and workplan and board committee calendar and workplan
- ☐ Previous board meeting agenda and minutes (past three meetings)
- ☐ Board education and evaluation practices and any accompanying policies or tools
- ☐ Board resources including: letters patent, supplementary letters patent, corporate and professional by laws; summaries of relevant legislation
- ☐ List of questions that board members should consider when addressing board business
- ☐ Legal Liabilities resource

Organization

- ☐ Vision, mission and values statements
- ☐ Strategic plan
- ☐ Operating or business plan/annual budget
- ☐ Annual report /audited financial statement
- ☐ Hospital annual planning submission and hospital service accountability agreement
- ☐ Quality improvement plan and annual performance improvement targets

- ☐ Performance measures (e.g., dashboard/balanced scorecard)
- ☐ Patient experience data or framework
- ☐ Staff/provider engagement data
- ☐ Applicable operational policies (e.g., business ethics, whistleblower, respectful workplace)
- ☐ Staff (administrative and professional) organizational chart
- ☐ Patient declaration of values
- ☐ Patient and Family Advisory Council (if applicable)
- ☐ Communications and social media policies
- ☐ Organizational history information – could be in the form of a ‘did you know?’ document
- ☐ Website

Ontario Health System

- ☐ Outline of key partners and stakeholders
- ☐ Challenges and opportunities related to key partners and stakeholders
- ☐ Current articles, websites, list of organizations to follow

Administrative

- ☐ Board membership list and key staff contact list
- ☐ Board member job description
- ☐ Board chair job description and current goals/objectives
- ☐ Executive compensation framework
- ☐ CEO job description
- ☐ Board meeting calendar
- ☐ Facility map and parking information (if applicable)
- ☐ Health care acronyms list
- ☐ OHA's Essentials Certificate in Hospital Governance for New Directors brochure

200 Front Street West, Suite 2800
Toronto, Ontario M5V 3L1
www.oha.com