

Case Study – Principle 2: Defining and evaluating the role of the board

Questions to consider

What were the circumstances of your organisation before signing up to the framework?

- Were you having problems, or were things working well?
- What was your board like and how was it managed?
- How was the relationship between the board and the rest of the organisation (including staff and members)?

What were your motivations for signing up to the framework?

- Was there a specific catalyst, or was it a more general wish to improve the organisations governance and leadership?
- Welsh Football Trust were one of the pilot organisations; why were you so keen to be involved in this project?

What development priorities did you identify?

- Did you always know what you wanted to work on, or did the facilitated evaluation process guide your thinking?

What action did you take to achieve your goals?

- How did you prioritise the actions you wanted to take?
- How did the consultant support help with this?
- Did you include work on behaviours as well as the minimum expectations and other considerations?

What was the impact of making these changes?

- In the short term, what were the immediate impacts (positive and negative)?
- In the medium to longer term, have you seen sustainable impact and change?

What have been the biggest challenges you've faced in the process so far?

- Have you faced any resistance to implementing change?
- Have there been other difficulties related to the project?

What would you consider to be the greatest benefit of the Governance and Leadership Framework so far?

What's next for WFT?

- Have you identified new priorities in the GLFW, or will you be focussing on something else?

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NGB Response

Using the questions above to guide your response, let us know about your experience with the Governance and Leadership Framework for Wales programme so far. The Voluntary Code of Good Governance case studies can provide an example of previous submissions if you're seeking inspiration.

FAW Trust

The Trust's Board is 14 strong and comprises 50% representation from the Football Association of Wales (FAW) Council and 50% independently recruited Trustee Directors. Following a period of relative stability in Board membership, a governance review completed by the FAW and the retirement of a number of independent Trustees led to significant changes in Board composition. This presented an opportunity to use the Framework to develop Board skills and competence in the newly appointed Trustee Directors whilst also enhancing Board performance amongst existing members. The Trust's Chief Executive had also played a lead role in consulting on behalf of the sector on the Governance and Leadership Framework in Wales and so felt responsible for setting an example and reviewing his own organisation against the Framework's key principles.

The Chairman's buy-in to gaining overall Board commitment to work towards the framework principles was an important factor and subsequently easily achieved. With the support of Sport Wales and the Sport and Recreation Alliance, a Consultant was appointed to work with us. An initial workshop session with the Board led by the Consultant identified Principle 2 – Defining and evaluating the Board – as the main focus for our work as the consensus was that this principle underpinned many of the other key principles and is fundamental to a high performing Board. Other identified priorities included:-

- A Trustee Director self-assessment of the Board's existing performance against all seven Framework principles and associated behaviours to help understand our starting position;
- A review of the Trustee Director induction programme;
- Developing a Board evaluation process;
- A skills analysis of the Board to support future succession planning.

A small sub group of the Board comprising the Chairman, Chief Executive and three other Trustee Directors was formed and charged with overseeing the process and developing an improvement plan to address key outcomes. The Consultant led on the design of a questionnaire to assess performance against the Framework and although this identified a range of issues the Working Group agreed to focus on a small number of priorities based on the incidence rate of feedback received. All Trustee Directors were consulted on a potential Board evaluation process and agreed a phased introduction over a three year period. Although the Board as a whole responded positively to the work being undertaken a small number of Trustee Directors, following a numbers of months' work on this area, became frustrated at a the predominant focus on governance work versus other perceived priorities.

Convening and progressing actions between Board meetings over a 10 month period, the Working Group with the support of the Consultant produced a four year improvement plan which was signed-off by the Board at the start of 2016 following agreed revisions to two previous drafts. Over that period a number of other improvements were identified relating to meeting administration, structure and evaluation plus the formation of other sub groups of the Board to support the Executive on specific projects. To maintain Board harmony the Chief Executive and Chairman decided to reduce momentum on the improvement plan for two Board meetings before then assessing that an appetite for further work was secured. Our priority will be delivering the improvement plan for which progress will be kept under review until such time that additional priorities or areas of focus emerge. The long

term benefits of this work will not be known for some time however the short term benefits have included Trustee Directors better understanding the importance of governance as part of their roles and responsibilities and improved quality of Board meetings with enhanced challenge and support of the Executive team.