**Board Structure**

Having the right governance structure adds value to the organisation and provides continuity. Board structures should be pragmatic enough to suit the size and individual circumstances of the organisation. However, it is important to have minimum governance standards around board size, diversity levels and independent directors. Where boards can take governance to the next level, there should be a push for gender parity, increased diversity and independence levels. Having a manageable board size of a maximum of 12 members improves the quality of discussions and board meetings will become easier to organise.

Independence is defined clearly to mean that directors have no interest in the organisation which could influence their objective judgement, as the more directors know about the company and its operations, the less objective they become. Having at least 25% as independent directors allows for external expertise, diversity and independence of thought. Smaller boards need to work to get the independence balance right for their organisation and where there are fewer independent members, a regular review of board appointments is recommended.

Board renewal is important to make sure there is always an independent perspective and a flow of new ideas. Having term limits reduces the risk of stagnate thinking in boardrooms. (It is also important that smaller boards have continuity and do not lose expertise which is crucial for their survival. This can mean making sure that only one third of directors are up for re-election/re-appointment each year, which will help with continuity.)

Boards should comprise of people from different backgrounds, experience and perspective alongside members with sector experience. A written recruitment policy can help organisations achieve this and help to stabilise board recruitment practises. There are many ways to improve diversity on boards, for example, consider appointing young board members, reaching out to women only networks, BAME communities and advertising outside of the usual platforms to attract a wider pool of candidates when appointing board directors. *The Duty of Care in Sport* review recommends that NGB boards should have athlete representation to communicate the athlete voice. This can be achieved by appointing athlete representatives to boards, setting up an athlete commission or holding regular focus groups with athletes in the performance system.

Succession planning is about sustainability and building a pipeline of future leaders, board members and executive team members; it is particularly important to smaller and developing organisations. Regardless of potential changes on a board, taking steps to increase readiness for these inevitable occurrences increases the chances of a positive appointment process. Succession planning doesn’t have to be an onerous process, simple steps such as identifying key roles and positions, determining the risk of losing these roles and identifying suitable candidates within the organisation, or having good indication of the ideal candidate, will help with future planning and recruitment process.

In the sports sector, boards should have a combination of elected and appointed directors to balance sports expertise and independent thinking. It is important that appointments to the board are made on the basis of competencies, knowledge, skills and experience and that these skills are clearly set out in the role descriptions. Whether appointed or elected, a director’s legal duties remain the same and the board, as a whole, is responsible for fulfilling the legal obligations.