Centre of Excellence in Non-profit Governance

In 2016, the Niagara Community Foundation launched the Centre of Excellence in Non-Profit Governance (COE). The decision to create the COE was as a result of the research undertaken to produce the Foundation's 2015-2017 strategic plan.

Webinar: Centre of Excellence in Non-Profit Governance (COE)

The vision for the COE is a stronger non-profit sector in Niagara.

Our research showed us that:

- Governance of the non-profit sector continues to be a challenge and problems tend to be cyclical
- Professional development training is available, but from a variety of providers and, from the sector's perspective, hard to source
- Budgets for professional and organizational development are limited
- Organizations are aware that they need help but don't have the time, the expertise nor the financial resources to address governance issues
- There are opportunities to learn from, link to and work with existing, successful governance-related programs and resources

There are six sections to the COE, some of which are delivered by the Foundation and some in partnership with Niagara Connects through the Niagara Knowledge Exchange (NKE) tool.

SECTION 1: GOVERNANCE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (GPP)

GPP was launched by the Foundation in 2016 and is based on a similar program offered by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation. This program is being offered to assist organizations to identify challenges they are facing with respect to their organization's governance and management and to provide expertise and resources to help charities to improve their practices in these areas. With this program charities complete our Governance Gap Analysis tool and use the results of the analysis to put together a work plan to addresses the identified governance gaps. What is critical is that the Board Chair/President **and** the organizations' senior staff leadership (ex. CEO, ED, senior staff member) work on this initiative together.

The Governance Gap Analysis Tool covers five areas:
1. Board governance
2. Financial accountability and transparency
3. Fundraising
4. Staff management
5. Volunteer involvement

The Governance Gap Analysis Tool is based on the Imagine Canada Standards. The Standards were developed to build excellence within Canada's charities and nonprofits through common standards of practice and to strengthen confidence in the sector. The Standards are tailored to different sizes of charities, depending on the number of staff and operating budget. Imagine Canada uses the Standards as the basis for their national accreditation program. However, there is neither an expectation nor any obligation on the part of the charity wishing to use the Governance Gap Analysis Tool to work with Imagine Canada on their accreditation program. However, if a charity is interested in this program, here is the link for more information: http://www.imaginecanada.ca/our-programs/standards-program

The work plan to address the governance gaps identified by the Governance Gap Analysis Tool can either be developed and implemented by a committee of the charity's board or the charity's board and staff leaders can work with the Foundation's GPP Coordinator and one of the Foundation's governance consultants on the development and implementation of the plan to address the governance gap. In 2016 all our GPP consultants will be participating in the Imagine Canada Standards Coaches training program. The GPP consultant's fee is $100 per hour, and the Foundation will provide the charity with a cost-sharing grant of $50 per hour towards the proposed cost to implement the plan. The charity can access only one GPP grant annually.

The Foundation has created three versions of the Governance Gap Analysis tool as an excel spreadsheet. By completing the GPP Gap Analysis tool, organizations will have a fairly comprehensive assessment of governance practices requiring attention. The tool will also help to prioritize the importance to the organization of those practices requiring attention.

(Click on the link below to access the document, download a copy and save on your computer)

- Organizations with up to 5 FTE employees and up to $2 million in annual expenses.
- Level 1 (excel)
- Organizations with up to 50 FTE employees and up to $10 million in annual expenses.
- Level 2 (excel)
- Organizations with more than 50 FTE and over $10 million in annual expenses.
- Level 3 (excel)

Another valuable tool your board may wish to use is a Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire developed by Dalhousie University. You have 2 options to use this tool:

1. Click on Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire to download and print free copies of the questionnaire. Each board member should complete it individually.
2. Complete it as an online survey. If you would like to use the online version, you will receive a link to send to each board member so that they can complete it individually. The results will be compiled for you and a detailed report generated. A $25 processing fee will apply for the online option only. Contact the GPP Coordinator, below, if you're interested in this option.

For further information on the Governance Partners Program, please contact Gay Douglas, the Governance Partners Program Coordinator at douglasandassoc@gmail.com or by calling 905-835-2446.

SECTION 2: INSTITUTING MINIMUM GOVERNANCE PRACTICES FOR GRANT APPLICANTS

It is the intention of the Foundation that charities applying for grants will need to have 8 out of 14 of the governance practices listed below to be eligible to apply. However, if a minimum of 8 practices are not currently in place, **a charity is allowed to apply once** and the charity is directed to appropriate resources and support to address gaps. A list of resources is at the end of this section. The Governance Partners Program cost-sharing grant listed in Section 1 above is exempt from this requirement.

Charities are not permitted subsequent applications until 8 of the minimum practices have been met or a plan is in place to achieve them and the items marked with an asterisk * are compulsory.

1. *The organization has written HR management policies that comply, at minimum, with employment, health and safety, and other applicable legislation.
2. *Does the board approve an annual budget?
3. Does the board review actual to budget at least twice a year?
4. *Does the board meet a minimum of 3 times annually?
5. Are board policies reviewed at least every 4 years?
6. *Is there a policy that clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of board and officers?
7. Are there fixed terms for board members?
8. Has a strategic plan been developed in the last 4 years?
9. Does the board annually review progress on achieving strategic plan goals and adjust the plan to reflect progress and new opportunities?
10. *Is ED/CEO performance reviewed annually?
11. Is a board evaluation undertaken annually?
12. Is there an interim succession plan in place or being developed in the unexpected changeover in organization leadership?
13. Is there a conflict of interest policy?
14. Is there a reserve policy?

Here is the link to some tips, tools and resources for each of the 14 governance practices: Resources for Governance Practices

SECTION 3: ACCESSING CANADIAN GOVERNANCE RESOURCES

We work in partnership with Niagara Connects to ensure current Canadian-based governance resources are posted on the Niagara Knowledge Exchange (NKE). Relevant, reliable resources are identified, tagged, accessible, and promoted to the sector. Here's the link to the NKE website: niagaraknowledgeexchange.com Type 'governance' into the search box on the NKE and a list of governance-related learning events and information resources, with related links will be identified.

SECTION 4: GRANTS FOR PROFESSIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Foundation has provided capacity building grants to support professional and organizational development since 2001. They are available through our Community Grants and Mini-Grants. Go to the Grants section of our site to get further information and links to our application forms.

SECTION 5: PUBLICIZING GOVERNANCE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Foundation is working in partnership with Niagara Connects Knowledge Brokers to ensure that relevant professional development (PD) opportunities are sourced, tagged and regularly added to the Niagara Community Calendar on the Niagara Knowledge Exchange (NKE). A process is in place to keep PD opportunities on the Calendar current and promoted to the sector. Organizations providing professional development for the sector are encouraged to post on the Calendar on the NKE. To access the Calendar go to the NKE site, then type the following text, *including quotation marks*, in the search box: "for-social-profit" AND "training and learning".

SECTION 6: SPONSORING GOVERNANCE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Foundation will consider sponsoring sector-wide governance professional development opportunities in Niagara. The purpose of the sponsorship is to ensure that fees are not a barrier to participation by charities. Please contact the Foundation to inquire about sponsorship opportunities at info@niagaracommunityfoundation.org