****

**Governance Code for Sport**

**Stakeholder Engagement**

Checklist

Disclaimer

Sport Ireland is making available a range of resources including guidance notes, policy documents and templates for selected areas aligned to the Governance Code for Sport which will support sport organisations, boards, management and staff in the development of relevant governance processes and procedures particular to their own organisation.

For the avoidance of doubt, the final decision on the nature, type, extent and format of approved governance policies, procedures and processes for each organisation is a matter for the board / highest governing structure of the organisation and the resources and material provided may assist the approval process.

This document is not, nor is it intended to be, a definitive statement of the law and it does not constitute legal advice.

This document is not a substitute for professional advice from an appropriately qualified source and it is recommended that sport organisations consult their governing document or obtain their own independent legal advice where necessary. Sport Ireland does not accept any responsibility or liability for any errors, inaccuracies or omissions in this document.

**Why an organisation needs stakeholder engagement**

Sporting organisations have a wide and varied stakeholder group that, collectively, will help support the successful implementation of your strategic plan and enhance your organisation’s reputation and impact beyond sport. A stakeholder is a person or group with an interest (a stake) in the actions or policies of an organisation, which means they may affect the actions or policies and/or be affected by them. Key stakeholders might include: members, funders, staff, volunteers, the general public, and regulators. Board members are a primary point of contact among these groups and stakeholder engagement is a key component of your responsibilities under the Code.

Good stakeholder engagement speaks especially to principle 3 of the Code, ‘Being Transparent and Accountable’. The sub-principles state that the organisation should:

* Identify those who have a legitimate interest in the work of our organisation (stakeholders) and making sure there is regular and effective communication with them about our organisation.
* Respond to stakeholders' questions or views about the work of our organisation and how we run it.
* Encourage and enable the engagement of those who benefit from our organisation in the planning and decision-making of the organisation.

Furthermore, principle 5, ‘Behaving with Integrity’ has a sub-principle of ‘Protecting and promoting our organisation's reputation’ which is also supported through good engagement with stakeholders.

Stakeholder engagement is equally important for Type A, Type B and Type C organisations – the larger the organisation the likelihood of greater numbers of stakeholders, but equally the availability of more resource to engage with them.

There are a number of reasons why stakeholder engagement is important:

* It gives increased opportunities to the organisation for learning
* It allows for more effective risk management
* It allows for the establishment of trust with stakeholders by providing assurance to stakeholders that the Board is effective
* It gives a better understanding of member’s needs at different levels and across different areas
* It allows for more informed decision making
* It means that everyone involved in the organisation has a voice, meaning more insight and innovation
* It shares the vision of the organisation amongst key influencers
* It allows the organisation to shape its strategy to best respond to its environment and supports the delivery of mutually agreed objectives

Whose responsibility is it to undertake stakeholder engagement?

It is the responsibility of the Board to ensure that all the principles of the Code are being upheld and delivered, and that includes the principles around stakeholder engagement. The executive lead / Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is often

tasked with ensuring that the principles of the Code are being implemented in the organisation and thus will be responsible for executing some of the engagement e.g., Communications Plan. In larger Type C organisations there may be a Head of Communications or Public Affairs whose role will include stakeholder engagement. In smaller Type A or B organisations there may be a PRO (Public Relations Officer) whose role will be to communicate with stakeholders.

Who are the organisation’s stakeholders?

An organisation will have internal and external stakeholders.

Internal stakeholders - These are commonly referred to as the sports’ ‘family’ as these stakeholders have a direct input into the organisation.

Internal stakeholders are comprised of:

* Congress and members
* President and Board
* Standing committees of the organisation
* Local Authority Management - Councillors
* Senior management and staff
* European and International federations
* Regional and county boards
* Clubs and leagues
* Players/athletes
* Match officials
* Coaches
* Volunteers

External stakeholders - these stakeholders are not bound by the rules that govern the organisation (constitution, bye-laws and the like) but are often valuable partners of the organisation. Collectively these stakeholders are important in providing a wider impact and visibility to growing and developing the sport. The organisation should build strong relationships that can help put its sport at the forefront of the nation’s consciousness and be seen as a force for good across communities and groups.

External stakeholders are comprised of:

* Sport Ireland
* National government
* Universities
* Local authorities (In some cases LSP local authorities will be internal stakeholders)
* Sponsors and commercial partners
* Fans
* Media
* Olympic Federation of Ireland / Paralympic Federation / Federation of Irish Sport
* Sport NI
* Local Sports Partnerships
* Other national governing bodies of sport

How to better engage with stakeholders?

A useful way for an organisation to understand its stakeholders better is to conduct a stakeholder analysis. Conducting a stakeholder analysis will quickly and concisely help an organisation gain a more accurate and relevant understanding of its stakeholders and assist towards developing a greater working relationship with them. Ideally, an organisation will conduct a review of its stakeholders annually as the environment and capabilities of the organisation and those of its stakeholders continue to evolve.

**Stakeholder Analysis Worksheet**

| **Stakeholder/**  **Stakeholder Group** | **Stakeholder expectations of us** | **Stakeholder provides to us** | **How we communicate with the stakeholder** | **Stakeholder’s other resources not currently provided to us** | **Stakeholder relations improvement** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Instruction: Name the stakeholder or stakeholder group here*** | ***Instruction: List those services, deliverables and support the organisation provides to the stakeholder*** | ***Instruction: List those services, deliverables and support the stakeholder provides to the association*** | ***Instruction: list the ways, frequency and channel (through whom) the organisation communicates with the stakeholder and vice versa*** | ***Instruction: List those other resources that the stakeholder has access to, that the organisation has not previously utilised (e.g., networks, facilities, experience, etc.)*** | ***Instruction: For each stakeholder, consider 3 things that can be done in the short-term that will strengthen the relationship*** |
| **Further rows for completion** |  |  |  |  |  |

Implementing good stakeholder engagement: how to do it

Good stakeholder engagement is about understanding the position and needs of the organisation’s stakeholders and engaging/communicating with them in way that is appropriate to the relationship. Having a communications plan in place will provide the roadmap for how an organisation will communicate with its stakeholders. Other ways to communicate with stakeholders include:

* Public affairs
* Meetings and AGM/Congress
* Internal communications incl. Newsletters
* Through the publication of an Annual Report of the organisation's activities and financial performance throughout the preceding year
* Conferences, workshops and forums
* Website and social media – incl. a ‘Contact Us’ option
* Surveys and public meetings
* 1:1 meeting
* Bringing stakeholders to one of your events or attending stakeholder events
* Public Event Launches & Annual Grant Schemes
* Mass participation / flagship events

Further links and resources

[**Public Relations Institute of Ireland**](https://www.prii.ie/)