Guidance for trustees

Sample board evaluation questions

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The Pensions Regulator

How effective is your trustee board?

There are many ways to evaluate how effective your board is, and a number of services and free resources available from third parties. The example questions below are not intended to be an exhaustive list, but as well as helping you assess how effectively your board is structured and how it operates, there are questions which will help you consider your skills and decision-making.

Each board member should assess their skills, behaviours, knowledge and understanding based on those they've identified in the skills matrix. Then they can identify strengths and weaknesses and any skills gaps. These self-assessments, along with feedback from the chair, other board members and advisers, will provide valuable information for your board evaluation.

Sample questions

Board effectiveness	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
All board members have a clear understanding of their role and accountabilities and the roles of other key participants in the scheme					
We have an effective structure in place to regularly monitor delegated activities					
Our trustee board has the relevant skills to manage the scheme and is committed to continual development					
We have clear strategic objectives which inform all that we do					
We regularly review our business strategy and monitor progress against objectives					
We have enough time and resource to effectively manage the scheme					
We meet as frequently as we need to in order to manage the business of the scheme					
Board papers are timely, relevant and focused on priorities					
Meeting minutes are accurate and record decisions made and actions agreed					
We are fully briefed on the agenda of meetings and prepared to discuss each item					
Our trustee board maintains an appropriate open, transparent and constructive relationship with scheme employers					
We have effective processes for the employer to provide information to the scheme					
We have an effective selection process for appointing advisers and service providers					
We understand the value added by our advisers and services providers and are clear on the standards against which we measure their performance					

Board effectiveness ctd	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
We have a documented process for periodically reviewing our advisers and service providers					
We regularly assess and openly discuss the performance of advisers and service providers against clear objectives and service level agreements					
We are clear on our risk appetite (and the employers risk appetite/capacity for DB schemes) and take full account of risk in our decision-making					
We maintain and regularly review a risk register to formally log risks, evaluation of likelihood and impact, and steps taken to manage or mitigate them					
We regularly review our schemes exposure to new and existing risks					
We maintain a documented process for managing conflicts of interest including a register of interests					
Our advisers and service providers have a documented process for managing conflicts of interest which we have reviewed					
All conflicts of our advisers and service providers are declared					
All conflicts of the board are declared and managed in line with our policy					
We maintain an effective process for assessing the fitness and propriety of new trustees					
We have a diverse membership on our board which includes different backgrounds, experience, skills and demographics					

Behaviours	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Don't know
Our board has effective leadership					
Discussions are facilitated to allow all to contribute in order to seek opinion and develop ideas					
We actively listen without ulterior motive or judgement and respond appropriately					
We work collaboratively to develop good working relationships					
We communicate clearly and openly to ensure understanding					
We take responsibility for our actions					
We have an effective process for managing conflict resolution					
We are able to have difficult conversations and challenge each other constructively					
We are not afraid to ask the obvious or simple questions to ensure collective understanding					
Our decisions are not unduly influenced by someone's experience or expertise					
Any decisions to take no action are informed and consciously made					
We are aware of our own strengths and weaknesses and undertake continual learning and development					
We are motivated and devote time and effort to our duties and responsibilities as trustees					
We understand and are each committed to the objectives of the scheme					
We act with transparency and integrity, declaring and managing any personal conflicts of interest					

Trustee knowledge and understanding	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
We maintain and regularly review our process for training new trustees within 6 months					
We have access to appropriate learning and development resources to ensure our knowledge and understanding is maintained					
We have access to training which is linked to the scheme's business plan to enable informed decision-making					
All trustees have completed the Trustee toolkit or equivalent training					
We regularly assess our knowledge and understanding to inform our individual learning and development plans					
We maintain and regularly review a board skills matrix to ensure we have or have access to the appropriate skills to meet the objectives in our business plan					
Skills gaps are identified and appropriately managed through training, access to advisers and/or co-opting resources					

How to contact us

www.tpr.gov.uk

www.trusteetoolkit.com
Free online learning for trustees

www.pensionseducationportal.com
Free online learning for those running public service schemes

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