

The Board's Governance Calendar

by E. Grant MacDonald



A board calendar is a wonderfully easy to create and useful multi-purpose tool. It is a yearly plan of items that need the board's attention, including its own responsibilities. It can play a key role in board meeting agenda planning. A calendar such as this can help ensure that a board addresses its fiduciary (oversight) and strategic roles. It has no downside.

For boards that meet monthly a calendar could be table with 12 boxes each representing a board meeting and /or other board activity. Most boards that meet "monthly", typically 9 or 10 times a year, so in some months it might indicate "no board meeting". A table, rather than just a list, is more visually interesting.

The items on the calendar become items for the board agenda in the month they are scheduled. Some might appear in more than one meeting. The usual items would include:

- Date of each board meeting
- Approval of budget for following fiscal year
- Midyear or quarterly review of financial performance (revised budget, YTD figures, etc.)
- Board orientation session
- Board self-evaluation process
- Evaluation of executive director or CEO (review one month, report to board the next)
- Review and acceptance of auditor's report/Report of Audit Committee
- Board recruitment/nominations (perhaps candidate review)
- Annual general meeting (AGM)
- Review of specific policies – new or updated ones
- Review of by-laws (every other year?)
- Review of progress on strategic goals (suggest one goal per meeting)

If you like, reoccurring items like the executive director's report and the financial report can be included. Routine items like the approval of the minutes of the previous board meeting need not be. Other items that are useful to include in a board calendar are:

- Committee meeting dates and reports
- Special fundraising events
- Board-staff planning retreat
- Board-staff BBQ

Annual Board Planning Calendar (Calendar Year Example)

<p>January</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Board Meeting January 25 ◆ Recruitment Committee Report ◆ Financial Report 	<p>February</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Board Meeting February 22 ◆ Financial Management Policy Review ◆ Nominations Committee Report ◆ Goal # 3 update 	<p>March</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Board Meeting March 28 ◆ Executive Director Evaluation ◆ Review of By-Laws ◆ Budget Approval (Next Fiscal Year) 	<p>April</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Board Meeting April 25 ◆ Auditor’s Report on past fiscal year ◆ Financial Report ◆ Nominations Cmtt Report ◆ Goal #1 update
<p>May</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Board Meeting May 23 ◆ Fundraising Report ◆ Board Nominations Report (Final) ◆ Bi-Annual Stakeholder Consultation 	<p>June</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Annual Meeting Preparation (AGM Team) ◆ Annual General Meeting June 27 	<p>July</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>No Board Meeting</i> 	<p>August</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>No Board Meeting</i> ◆ <i>Governance Committee meets</i> ◆ Board-Staff BBQ
<p>September</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Board Meeting September 26 ◆ <i>Board Orientation-September 19</i> ◆ Board Self-Evaluation Exercise ◆ Financial Report 	<p>October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ No Board Meeting ◆ Strategic Planning Retreat – Sunday, October 23, 9-5 	<p>November</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Board Meeting, November 28 ◆ Incorporation/Charity Renewal ◆ Financial Report ◆ HR Policy Review ◆ Risk Analysis (Risk Working Group) ◆ Goal # 4 update 	<p>December</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ No Board Meeting ◆ Governance Committee Meets ◆ Holiday Party

The calendar depicted above includes attention, in some months, to a review of progress on specific strategic goals. It also reflects a board that has moved to quarterly rather than monthly financial reports.

A board calendar is easily drafted by the chair or board secretary or by the executive director. It can be distributed for input and formally adopted by the board, ideally at its first meeting of a new fiscal year. It is a plan, not a policy, so it need not be approved. Then it can be taken up by the chair and the executive director, or the executive committee, depending on who is responsible for meeting agenda planning.

Board meetings once underway can easily depart from the agenda. So, when things change for one meeting, the whole calendar can be revised. Items get pushed ahead. The chair, secretary and executive director should keep their eyes on it. It's a dynamic resource.

Given that it depicts the year ahead the calendar is a valuable board orientation resource as well.