

Section 4 Using the Code to carry out an assessment or governance review

The Code of Governance is designed in such a way that your organisation can use it to review its governance arrangements. You can then assess how far your organisation complies with the Code. This section suggests three practical ways you can do this.

The first method involves reviewing your governance arrangements against the summary principles in the Code. You may be a smaller organisation which doesn't find the detailed Code appropriate, or you may prefer to conduct a shorter review.

The second method involves working through the Code's detail and assessing how your organisation compares or "complies" with its details. This will take you through a variety of stages, from preparing for the assessment to completion and review.

The third method uses the Code's companion publication, *Learning to Fly*, which has been designed specifically for small community groups. This method allows you to review your governance arrangements using *Learning to Fly*.

Method 1: An assessment using the Summary Code of Governance

The following assessment exercises are designed to gain a greater understanding of the main principles of good governance. They use the summary principles only in the Code rather than the detailed statements. The summary principles have been published as a separate document which can be used for the exercises below. The summary can be downloaded from the Governance Hub website.



Think of the Code as a series of three levels:

Level 1 consists of the heading for each Code area (B-H), each described by a key principle

Level 2 consists of the supporting principles, between 2 and 6 statements of best practice to support each main principle

Level 3 consists of the individual, detailed clauses in the Code

Exercise 1 *Group assessment with the Code summary*



How to:

1. Circulate the Code Summary to the board in advance of a meeting.
2. In small groups, each take one or two areas from the Code (B-H). For each area, look at the supporting principles and discuss:
How do we currently carry this out?
How could we improve this area?
How important is it for us to carry out more work on this? (try scoring each area of improvement as – critical, need to do soon, desirable, we're doing well)
3. Report back. As a group, put the list of Code areas (B-H) into priority order (you could 'vote' using sticky labels).
4. At future meetings, put one topic on the agenda at each meeting. Look at the exercises in section 3 for ideas on how to cover the topic at the meeting.

Exercise 2 *Self-assessment exercise*



In this exercise the board is asked to complete a self-assessment questionnaire based on the Summary Code of Governance. A version of the Code, formatted into a questionnaire, is available to **download** from the Governance Hub website.



How to:

1. **Review the summary Code questionnaire**, making any amendments to suit your organisation's circumstances (e.g. use of terminology, statements that are not relevant).
2. **Circulate the questionnaire** to each board member who then "scores" how they feel the organisation meets each principle, writing down any action points. Ask relevant staff to complete the questionnaire too.
3. **Ask for the questionnaires to be returned.**
4. **Collate the responses** (collate staff responses separately to compare and contrast with board responses). Identify the three Code areas that scored lowest. For each of these areas, pick out up to three specific points raised by board members.
5. **Hold a dedicated meeting** or away day to discuss in detail the points raised. Working in small groups on the day can help ensure everyone has the opportunity to contribute in detail.