



Effective Governance Case Study 9

Refreshing the Board

Summary

This case study explains the processes used by one college when they wished to refresh their board membership.

Code of Good Governance

This case study underpins principal responsibility 9 – Effective Governance Structures.

Issue to be resolved

1. To determine the skills and expertise needed on the board.
2. To consider the steps to be taken when refreshing the board.

Context

A large college which merged with another college six years previously. The board was originally configured to have equal representatives from the boards of the two colleges that merged. Most governors had done six years and were about to step down, including the chair for whom there was no obvious successor.

Methodology

The clerk contacted the Association of Colleges (AoC) Governance Unit to discuss options. A National Leader of Governance (NLG) was designated to discuss what they wanted to do.

Process

1. The first task was to determine whether the board wanted to undertake this exercise themselves or out-source it to a recruitment company. The merits of going externally with a recruitment company and the benefits to the college of undertaking the search themselves were considered. It was agreed that, although time consuming for senior staff, the chair and the clerk, the long term benefits of building a one-to-one relationship with key people in the area outweighed any time constraints.
2. The clerk took a report to the board where it was agreed:
 - The board needed to be refreshed.



- To undertake the exercise themselves with a caveat that if the right candidates could not be found they would contract with an agency.
- To set up a small search committee which would report back and make recommendations to the full governing body.
- That any existing governors whose term was ending (and who wanted to be reconsidered) should write to the chair of the search committee.
- The principal and clerk would support the search committee.

Actions

Agreed Search Committee Work Plan

The search committee agreed a work plan - most of the drafting and preparation was done by the clerk.

1. Provide an overview of the skills that governors would need in the next few years and base the search on this appraisal. The areas identified were:
 - financial and budget accountability
 - strategic
 - governance
 - risk and audit
 - education quality
 - safeguarding
 - estates

They also identified the need to ensure:

- that the new board would be ethnically diverse. Therefore they would need to supplement their search by advertising in non-traditional places.
- good connections with employers and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

2. Using the required skills identified, undertake a skills and impact audit on present governors.
3. Put together a short pack of interesting information about a governor's role in the college. (They noted that some boards commissioned their students to do a short recruitment video but chose at this point not to commission a video).
4. Agreed to advertise through all networks including advisory groups, existing governors, MP, staff, students, business friends and partners of the college.



5. To ensure transparency, agreed to advertise in the local and trade papers and online, including Women on Boards, while simultaneously undertaking a network search.

Their network search included writing to business and employer industry groups, including the chair of the small business forum, Enterprise Agency, regional Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and British Chamber of Commerce (BCC) and others, and making personal contact with:

- Chief executives of large employers in the area including a large teaching hospital, Local Authorities, major retailers, uniformed services and a pharmaceutical company - concentrating on the employers that support student employment opportunities.
- The chair of the multi-faith church group.
- The chair of the largest Multiple Academies Trust.

The purpose of writing was twofold - asking them to advertise vacancies and to explain how the college connects and engages with them.

6. Agreed to determine a short list of prospective governors to meet with the principal and chair and take a tour of college.
7. Agreed to ask candidates to provide a CV, description relevant experience and a list of any possible conflicts of interest.
8. Run a safeguarding check on prospective candidates.
9. Search committee to interview and recommend candidates to the governing body.
10. Full governing body to agree membership.

The Search Committee also considered:

1. Ways to keep leaving governors engaged with the college through establishing a Governors Ambassador group, regular updates on college achievements and leaving dinners etc.
2. Induction mentorship and ongoing training for new governors. Clerk asked to recommend a training programme for new governors that included visiting the college and learning walks.

Results

The board was pleased with the rigour and pace of the search committee implementation plan.



Conclusions and next steps

They will be considering names at their Autumn Board meeting.

References and useful material

[Guidance Note: Diversity of the college governing body](#)

[Case Study: Using the School Governor One Stop Shop to recruit college business governors](#)

[Case Study: Developing a new strategy to recruit governors](#)

[More Effective Governance Structures resources](#)