Board Governance Checklist

A practical self-assessment for stronger, more effective boards

Good governance is not a one-time exercise. It requires clear responsibilities, reliable information, strategic focus and regular review. Use this checklist to assess your board's current governance practices, identify areas for improvement and understand where your board sits on the governance maturity journey.

How to Use This Checklist

Work through each statement and score your board based on how consistently the practice is demonstrated.

Score	What It Means
0	Not in place
1	Partly in place or inconsistent
2	Clearly in place and consistently followed

1. Purpose and Strategic Direction

Assessment Statement	Score (0–2)	Notes / Actions
Our board has a shared understanding of the organisation's purpose and mission.		
We have a current strategic plan with clear priorities and measurable outcomes.		
Board agendas regularly include meaningful discussion about future direction and strategic priorities.		
Major board decisions are considered in the context of the organisation's purpose and strategy.		
The board regularly reviews whether assumptions, priorities or external conditions have changed.		

Section score: ________ / 10

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Assessment Statement	Score (0–2)	Notes / Actions
Directors clearly understand their governance responsibilities and legal duties.		
There is a clear distinction between board and management responsibilities.		
Matters reserved for the board are documented and understood.		
Delegations of authority are documented, appropriate and regularly reviewed.		
The responsibilities of the chair, directors, committees and CEO are clearly defined.		

Section score: ________ / 10

3. Board Composition and Capability

Assessment Statement	Score (0–2)	Notes / Actions
Our board has the right mix of skills and experience for the organisation's current needs.		
We consider the skills and capabilities the organisation will need over the next three to five years.		
We use a skills matrix or similar process to identify strengths and gaps.		
Board recruitment considers diversity of experience, background and thought.		
New directors complete a structured induction process.		
Directors have opportunities for ongoing governance and professional development.		

Section score: ________ / 12

4. Board Culture and Relationships

Assessment Statement	Score (0–2)	Notes / Actions
Directors can challenge ideas and ask difficult questions respectfully.		
The board supports healthy debate while acting collectively once decisions are made.		
The relationship between the board and management allows for openness and constructive challenge.		
The chair creates an environment where all directors can contribute effectively.		
Important stakeholder relationships are understood and appropriately managed.		

Section score: ________ / 10

5. Meetings and Decision Making

Assessment Statement	Score (0–2)	Notes / Actions
Board agendas prioritise strategic and governance matters over operational detail.		
Directors receive board papers early enough to prepare properly.		
Board papers clearly explain the purpose, context, risks and decision required.		
Meetings allow enough time for meaningful discussion of important issues.		
Decisions, resolutions and agreed actions are clearly recorded.		
Actions are assigned to a responsible person and followed up between meetings.		

Section score: ________ / 12

6. Performance and Accountability

Assessment Statement	Score (0–2)	Notes / Actions
The board has agreed on meaningful measures linked to strategic objectives.		
Reporting clearly shows whether the organisation is on track.		
Significant variances and trends are explained rather than simply reported.		
The board receives an appropriate balance of financial and non-financial information.		
The board regularly reviews the performance and support needs of the CEO or executive leader.		
The board evaluates its own effectiveness regularly.		

Section score: ________ / 12

7. Risk and Compliance

Assessment Statement	Score (0–2)	Notes / Actions
The board understands the organisation's most significant risks.		
Our risk appetite is clear and connected to strategy and decision making.		
Significant risks are reviewed regularly at board level.		
Emerging risks are actively discussed, not only risks already on the register.		
The board has appropriate oversight of cybersecurity, privacy and information security.		
Compliance obligations and significant control issues are reported clearly to the board.		

Section score: ________ / 12

8. Information, Systems and Governance Records

Assessment Statement	Score (0–2)	Notes / Actions
Directors can securely access current board information when they need it.		
Sensitive board information is stored and shared through appropriate secure systems.		
Directors can easily locate current policies, minutes and historical board records.		
Version control is clear and directors can identify the current board papers.		
Governance policies and key documents are reviewed on a planned schedule.		
Board records provide a reliable history of decisions and governance activity.		

Section score: ________ / 12

Your Governance Maturity Score

Add your scores from all eight sections. The maximum possible score is 94. Use the ranges below as a practical guide rather than a formal governance rating.

Score	Governance Stage	What This May Mean
0–37	Developing	Governance processes may be informal, reactive or dependent on individuals. Focus first on role clarity, core policies, strategic priorities, risk oversight and reliable board information.
38–70	Established	Core governance structures are in place, but some practices may be inconsistent. Focus on improving reporting, board effectiveness, succession planning, risk conversations and follow-through.
71–94	High Performing	Governance practices are well established and consistently applied. Focus on continuous improvement, emerging risks, board development, strategic foresight and ensuring systems continue to support the board as the organisation evolves.

My total score: ________ / 94

Identify Your Three Priority Actions

Governance improvement does not require changing everything at once. Review your lowest-scoring areas and choose three practical improvements that would make the greatest difference over the next 6–12 months.

Priority 1

What needs to improve? ____

What action will we take? ____

Who is responsible? ______________________ Target date: ______________________

How will we know it has improved? ____

Priority 2

What needs to improve? ______________________________

What action will we take? ______________________________

Who is responsible? ______________________________ Target date: ______________________________

How will we know it has improved? ______________________________

Priority 3

What needs to improve? ______________________________

What action will we take? ______________________________

Who is responsible? ______________________________ Target date: ______________________________

How will we know it has improved? ______________________________

Questions for Your Next Board Discussion

- What are we spending too much board time on?
- What important strategic issue are we not discussing enough?
- Where are responsibilities between the board and management unclear?
- Are we receiving the right information for good decisions?
- What risk has changed most significantly in the past 12 months?
- What capability will our board need in the next three to five years?
- Which governance process creates unnecessary friction or administration?
- What one improvement would most strengthen our board's effectiveness?

A Final Note

Strong governance is built through clarity, good information, constructive relationships and a commitment to continuous improvement. Use this checklist as a starting point for board discussion, then revisit it periodically to measure progress and identify new priorities.

Stellar Board helps modern boards securely manage board information, streamline meeting preparation, maintain governance records and support clearer, more consistent board processes.