

Introduction

This report is to serve as the primary summary of results from the board performance self-assessment. Based upon the results as presented here in summary form as well as through evaluation of the detailed reports, Sumter Players, Inc. should be able to formulate and begin to execute a plan for improving the effectiveness of their governance processes.

General Information

Of the sixteen active members of the eighteen member board of directors, twelve directors completed the online assessment survey. (There are currently two unfilled vacancies on the board, but this is consistent with their bylaws allowance for flexible board size.) Therefore, with a 75% participation rate, the results of the survey are deemed to be a statistically valid representation of board sentiment.

Additional background information for this report was gathered during two monthly board meetings in observing the governance process. Individual board members casually shared thoughts regarding the governance of the organization both before and after these meetings.

This is a working board of directors and there is no paid chief staff officer or any employees of the organization. Therefore, some of the results were slightly skewed due to answers being populated for questions regarding the evaluation and effectiveness of CEO and other interactions with an individual in such a position. The appropriate choice would have been "Does Not Apply", however some respondents chose to agree or disagree with the statements provided. Therefore, conclusions related to interaction of the board with a CEO have not been included within this report.

Although the respondents' submissions are anonymous, it is noteworthy that roughly half of the members of this governing body have more than five years of service to this board, the other half have less than five years of service. This may be a consideration when evaluating responses where roughly half of the respondents "agreed" to some extent and the other half "disagreed" to some extent.

Results

With a total average score of 193.66, the sentiment of the Sumter Players Board of Directors is that they are a moderately effective governing body. There are opportunities for change and growth within the organization. Interestingly, there were many areas

where this group was evenly divided between agreeing and disagreeing with particular symptoms as they were presented in the survey.

Areas of improvement have been identified as follows with brief recommendations and supporting information in order to begin the process of evaluating performance.

Mission and Vision: The sentiment of the respondents is that the organization lacks clarity in its overall mission and vision. As the board moves forward in assessing its role in planning, it should begin by committing to the development of a strategic plan that is right for the organization and its future. Difficulties that the SPI board may face are both a lack of understanding of the planning process as well as a lack of time. Observations during the two board meetings tend to indicate that the “board does not contain enough members who have experience in strategic planning or who have not been provided with the opportunity to learn about it”. (Harrison & Murray, 2014) Additionally, as reinforced within the course text, there are “meeting agendas that are too full of ‘routine’ matters or short-term ‘firefighting’ issues that do not allow the board to step back and look at the big picture”. (Harrison & Murray, 2014)

Board Member Recruitment, Retention, and Training: Responses indicate that the directors are not satisfied in the diversity of the board when compared to the community interests that the organization represents. Recruitment of new members is seen as a challenge. Additionally, it is indicated that the organizations bylaws should be reviewed and updated. Further, there is no director resource material available for training new and existing members as to their duties and responsibilities. Harrison and Murray underscore the importance of utilizing a board manual with their statement, “(t)his important document is invaluable for new board members to orient them to the governance role and how the board works but it is also crucial in resolving occasional disputes over how the board should handle various matters.” (Harrison & Murray, 2014)

Meetings: There is an indication that board meetings are thought to be too long and are sometimes dominated by a few very vocal members. This tends to bring into question the effectiveness of meetings. This may also discourage attendance of members who feel that their input is not valued. Meetings should “focus on issues that have implications for the strategic direction of the organization or that create understanding about an issue or situation the organization is facing.” (Harrison & Murray, 2014)

Conclusion

While there are other minor issues that are of note within the report, these three key issues should be of the highest priority for Sumter Players’ board. By setting a clear

mission that is visible to all internal and external stakeholders, the board of directors can begin to refresh and realign the activities of the organization. As a working board, SPI's board of directors does face challenges surrounding a lack of staff and administrative support to execute their strategic plans.

The effectiveness of working boards is addressed within the course text.

“All that is needed to create an effective working board is to make sure that everybody is clear about who can make which decisions and who is going to do what. There should also be a basic agreement about what things are the most important (priorities). In general, whole-board meetings of working boards should still focus on governance issues – planning for the future, setting broad objectives, setting priorities and assessing performance. “(Harrison & Murray, 2014)

With a renewed focus on broad-based goals and strategies, Sumter Players, Inc. will be poised for another sixty years of success in providing community theater opportunities for Southwest Georgia.

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Murray, Vic and Harrison, Yvonne (2012). Guidelines for Reviewing Board Performance and Processing Board Check-Up Results. Authors.