

UNDERSTANDING A GOVERNING BODY

❖ What is Governance?

Think of governance as being about how people choose to collectively organize themselves to manage their own affairs, share power and responsibilities, decide for themselves what kind of society they want for their future, and implement those decisions. Governance gives a group, community or organization the ways and means to achieve the goals and objectives that matter to them.

Governance helps ensure:

- The welfare and human rights of citizens are protected
- Resources are managed
- Rules, policies and laws are created and enforced
- Essential programs and services are prioritized and delivered
- Goals are set and achieved
- Relationships with external parties are negotiated

❖ What is a Governing Body?

A governing body is the group of people given the power and authority to form policy and steer the overall direction of an organization. Individuals on the governing body may be selected or elected because of their special cultural knowledge, age or gender, or because of their position in their community. These individuals are said to act as ‘representatives’. Importantly, a governing body acts as a collective unit; it is not any single individual.

❖ Roles and Responsibilities

The primary job of the governing body is to protect the rights, interests and well-being of all the members on whose behalf the organization is working.

The governing body does this by making sure the organization runs smoothly and can achieve the goals and objectives it has promised to deliver to its members.



Governing Roles	Governing Responsibilities
1. Lead	Represent all members and make sure they can participate and be heard; create vision; advocate, negotiate and maximize self-determination.
2. Plan	Set overall direction, purpose, future strategies, goals, ethics and values.
3. Organize	Develop polices and governance arrangements; interact with management; steer relationships, alliances and collaborations with the public and community partners.
4. Regulate	Ensure the organization is accountable, legal and financially stable; support and oversee the performance of the top manager; monitor overall outcomes.

A governing body is concerned with the ‘big picture’ aspects of these roles, not the day-to-day management of the organization.

❖ Your Rights as a Governing Body Member

You have the right to:

- Attend and participate fully and equally in meetings of the governing body.
- Raise issues and make motions to pass decisions.
- Speak and debate issues.
- Vote or come to consensus decisions on issues.
- Advocate the rights and interests of those who selected or elected them.
- Be free from intimidation and threats.
- Be fully and accurately informed.
- Raise and promote issues of legitimacy and downward accountability to their members.
- Speak clearly for or against a decision being considered by your governing body.
- Act in good faith.
- Declare any conflicts of interest.

