

## Volunteer Resources

Region and County Governance Toolkit

### How to Access the Support of a Governance Professional



#### About this tool

In 2018 this was one of the top gaps in committee health checks, with more than half of Counties and Regions asking England Netball for support and guidance on how to recruit the support of a governance professional to their committee. Those committees who already had someone with governance expertise on their committee tended to have fewer governance gaps and be closer to compliance with Tier 1 of the Sport England [Code for Sports Governance](#).

*Governance* is simply the system of rules, practices and processes by which an organisation is led and risk managed. A governance professional is someone who has a strong understanding of the ideas and processes in this toolkit through their work or volunteering life. This could be a company secretary, CEO, trustee, director or governance advisor.

#### Why is it important?

The sports governance landscape is changing, and the public are more aware of the need for good governance in the organisations they use locally. Many of your members will be aware of the Sport England [Code for Sports Governance](#) and want to know if your organisation is compliant or not.

Recruiting someone with governance skills and knowledge to the committee increases your stakeholders' confidence in you, enables you to make the best governance decisions and will help you meet the code sooner. Inviting an expert to join the committee shows good leadership and is a chance for you to broaden the diversity of your group.

#### Top Tips

- We would recommend completing this step, along with your stakeholder engagement plan first, before you create your County or Regional plan. The governance professional can then lead on the development of governance from the beginning.
- If you're not sure how to recruit volunteers to your committee, please use the tool provided.
- Ask the England Netball Governance Manager for advice.
- Most local law and accountancy firms encourage their staff to volunteer on non-profit boards because it's good for their profile.
- Your local Active Partnerships will have a board and senior managers who could be approached.



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- If you do want to use digital channels think about how you are best going to reach people with this specialist set of professional skills? If you use Facebook you will only be reaching your friends – choose LinkedIn, Reach Volunteering, Women on Boards, Getting on Board or Join In instead.
- If you have serious governance gaps and are currently advertising for this role you could take an interim measure of paying for the services of a governance consultant to improve your governance as a project.

### **How does this link to the Governance Code?**

Having a governance professional on your committee is a key element of Mandatory Requirement 4 of Tier 1 of the [Code for Sports Governance](#).

*“In deciding who sits on its governing committee the organisation considers the skills and diversity required of its committee members.”*

This is because this is an essential set of skills for any committee. Once this is in place you will be able to tick the corresponding box on your Annual Governance Health Check.

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#### Case Study:



#### **Nigel Harrison – Chief Executive Officer of Yorkshire Sport Foundation**

Around six years ago, Pam Hoyle, the then Chair of Yorkshire Netball sent me a recruitment advert for Board Membership of the Yorkshire Netball Board to distribute. Pam said they were looking for someone from the sports development sector to join the Board so that its work can be connected into what is happening elsewhere.

As a County Sports Partnership it was easy for us to get the word out across development professionals in our area through our various communication channels such as newsletters and social media. I obviously did so but then thought a bit more about it and decided to apply myself. With another hat on I am Chair of a local leisure trust that operates sports facilities in my own town, however, I felt I had not had the experience of working on a Regional Sports Board. Netball was particularly appealing due to the obvious focus on women and girls where there are unacceptable gaps in participation rates. After discussion about my credentials at the board I was initially accepted as a co-opted member.

It wasn't long after joining that I was asked to lead the "Governance and Finance" group focussing on getting the strong foundations in place for the organisation – and there was me thinking my sports development may have been helpful! Nevertheless, I was able to bring some knowledge to the role through running a sports charity in its own right and before long we were knee deep in revising policies and procedures and getting financial procedures more in order.

We have recently revised the Board in line with the principles of the UK Code of Governance which are based on a common-sense approach to open and quality decision making. This has meant separating the "thinking" and the "doing" functions thought getting the right people with the right skills in the right place.

I am not a netballer, never have been and never will be although I am passionate about people playing sport. Neither do I spend huge amount of time on netball activity as I have other interests; I am often in awe at the amount of time my colleagues on the Board and others are giving to the sport to make sure people have the opportunity to play the sport. But that is not me. My role has been to bring any knowledge, skills and contacts to the table; to champion netball in the appropriate places; and to provide scrutiny and challenge to the way we do things. Whilst I attend all the meetings I tend to dip in and dip out when the need arises, and specific tasks arise.

Over the years I have got a huge amount of being on the board, not least of which has been the learning of how the sport operates at a Regional level through a voluntary structure. This has helped tremendously in the day job. There will be lots of sports development and other professionals who similarly will be keen to get involved in Boards to further their knowledge and experience. Don't expect them to give up their lives for the sport but they will be able to bring a lot to the table.