# NINE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR A BOARD

**This is a set of quick prompts to check core governance functions are being adequately addressed.**

These questions could be asked once a year, form part of a strategic review or provide a selection of topics to be added occasionally to meetings during the year. However they are used, the questions are central to a board’s effective functioning. Uncertainty in any area should lead to a deeper discussion around the table, which can be supported by resources and references from among the Sport NZ online materials.

This is not a formal assessment of board processes. The wider Sport NZ governance evaluation system fills that role and many of these issues are explored in detail using that tool.

## Should we stay in business?

* Do we know (and are agreed among ourselves) what we are trying to achieve (our core purpose)?
* Can we express that to others clearly and succinctly?
* Are we clear about who we are accountable to for the organisation’s performance?

## Is the role of the board clear?

* Do the board and management have a common and agreed view of our role and the value it adds?
* Do we measure and hold ourselves accountable for our performance as a board?
* Do we include a governance section in our annual report providing information on the board and its performance during the year (more than just a list of board biographies)?
See [Governance in the annual report](http://www.sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/attachments/managing-sport/strong-organisations/Governance-in-the-annual-report.pdf).

## Have we made our expectations of management clear?

* Have we set out clear policies, expectations and delegations together with requirements for
reporting and decision making?
* Is there any reason our chief executive would not be absolutely clear (and up to date) on the board’s view of his/her effectiveness?

## Are we on track?

* Is the strategic plan expressed and reported on in a way that allows the board to measure progress easily?
* Is the plan focused on outcomes and deliverable results rather than processes and ‘doing’?
* Does the reporting provide a basis for clear monitoring of the CEO?
* Are we fully confident that we understand the financial position now and into the medium term?

## Is the money on the business?

* Does our application of resources (financial and human) align with the priorities expressed in the strategic plan?
* Can we prove that to ourselves and others?
* Are our products and business regularly assessed for relevance and fit, and discontinued if necessary?

## Do we have a future perspective?

* Do we spend the majority of our time considering the future and what it might hold for the organisation?
* Do we receive the necessary information to support that discussion?
* Is the business model sustainable and how do we know?
* Could we achieve our goals more effectively by working with others, as part of a merger or in partnership?

## Do we do good work?

* How do we know?
* Are our services a good match for the needs of our customers – how do we know?
* How is the organisation viewed by our key stakeholders?
* Are stakeholders clear about, and supportive of, what we are trying to achieve?

## Do we have the right people around the table?

* Do we have active succession planning?
* Does our board have the right mix of skills, diversity and backgrounds to provide effective and credible leadership?

## Is our time well spent?

* Is the time we spend in the boardroom used to maximum benefit?
* Do we leave the room frustrated or satisfied with how the meeting went?

See also the Good Governance article ‘Putting the board to the [10 minute test](http://www.sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/attachments/managing-sport/strong-organisations/ten-minute-board-review.pdf)’.