

Board Effectiveness Self- Assessment Questionnaire 2025

Collated Board Member responses in assessing how effective the Board's collective performance to be against the statements.

4 = Strongly Agree	2 = Partly Disagree
3 = Partly Agree	1 = Strongly Disagree

Objectives, Strategy and Remit			
1	The board has a clear set of objectives that are independent of those for the organisation.	2	the board objectives appear to me to be the organisational objectives
		3	The objectives of the Board and the Organisation are not entirely independent, but do they need to be?
		3	The Board's objectives are the Strategic Objectives that are set for the organisation.
		3	No comment
		2	I'm not sure we do have specific Board objectives, however I do think the expectations of the Board, individually and collectively, what we are trying to achive and how we contribute are clear and well expressed in 1:1 conversations and Board meetings
		1	No - no separate objectives for the Board, but organisational objective are clearly set out in the corporate plan and in the in-year business plan, both of which are tracked at least on a quarterly plan at Board.
2	The board realistically assesses its performance against its objectives at regular intervals and at year-end.	3	assess against organisational objectives, however greater focus is on operational objectives
		3	This is more organisation focussed than Board
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	The process of reflection and review is undertaken regularly and appropriately
		1	No - no separate objectives for the Board, but organisational objective are clearly set out in the corporate plan and in the in-year business plan, both of which are tracked at least on a quarterly plan at Board.
3	The board has developed a strategy for the organisation that is central to the way it is directed.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	Yes, although the development of the strategy continues to be collaborative alongside the senior executive team and I think its appropriate to recognise that here too
		4	No comment
4	The strategy is well aligned to the organisation's remit and its capabilities, i.e. its people, assets, intellectual property, and financial and other resources.	4	No comment
		3	There is a concern that limited staffing and financial resources are in danger of not allowing the remit to be delivered
		3	Yes, although financial constraints require regular review of objectives.
		3	No comment
		4	I feel this is an area of strength in the organisation, with regular and realistic review
		3	Yes, although we have - along with the Executive team - been challenged, with the overall budgetary pressure facing the organisation.
5	The board devotes quality time to reviewing the implementation of the strategy.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	This is well supported by the cycle of papers from the excutive team
		4	No comment
6	The strategy is updated for any changes to the organisation's remit or the external environment.	3	strategy is long term and whilst regularly reviewed, should only be updated to accommodate significant changes
		3	The external environment is so fluid and fast changing that it may not always be practical. That said I'm confident that the Board and SMT are monitoring appropriately.
		3	Yes, there may be scope for this to be more robust with clear direction for any changes.
		4	No comment
		4	Diligent work done to ensure any such remit or external env changes are picked up and considered, strategy regularly considered in this context through business planning process
		3	Yes, although we have - along with the Executive team - been challenged, with the overall budgetary pressure facing the organisation.
7	Significant programmes and projects are clearly aligned to the strategy and fall within the organisation's remit.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	Discussions at Board regularly touch on this
		4	No comment

Performance Measurement			
8	Management regularly reports to the board on key outcomes and targets that flow directly from the strategy.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	Good alignment between strategy, planning process and performance review
		4	Yes – regular quarterly reporting.
9	Performance information is integrated with financial reporting.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	Financial reports and performace reports are provided as separate reports but discussed at the same meeting.
		4	No comment
		4	Strong continuous improvement on the perf. Info from the Executive team, this is critical in helping Board members focus their review and oversight role
10	The board gets early–warning signals of problems ahead that will adversely affect key outcomes, targets or financial performance.	4	No comment
		3	info included in board pack, however not aware of a process to pre–warn of issues if they arise independently of the board paper cycle
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	In terms of ways of working, the senior excecutive team demonstrates a culture of transparency and openness. I can think of a number of reports, verbal updates and other comms that demonstrate that Board has been given the information and opportunity to consider potential issues in a timely way
11	Management provides a thorough analysis of performance against budget, targets and key outcomes, and discusses any necessary remedial action.	3	No comment
		3	notes on remedial action could be improved
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	Current reporting mechanisms are good
12	The board has a good understanding of the performance of the organisation relative to other bodies, where appropriate.	4	No comment
		2	difficult to identify relevant bodies against which to compare
		3	This could be strengthened e.g. comparing key indicators to other relevant bodies
		4	No comment
		3	No comment
		3	H&S always been a strong area for this kind of analysis, and there have been other recent examples too. Evidence that Board members are able to enquire around this kind of analysis, and get good advice from Executive team on how to use comparative info (ie where the context for Canals might be similar or different to other orgs)
13	The board takes collective responsibility for the performance of the organisation.	2	No – limited benchmarking against other organisations (not no fault of the Exec here – the Board has not asked for this)
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	Strong sense of ownership and performance taken seriously by the Board members
14	Relations with the sponsor department are productive and supported by regular and open communication.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	A good approach with regular meetings at different seniority levels
		4	No comment
15	The sponsor department and Parliament consider the organisation is performing well, has a strong board and a good reputation.		I cannot speak on behalf of the sponsor dept or parliament and have not heard their opinion of SC expressed
		3	After a difficult few years we are well on the way to (re) establishing this.
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	Difficult to speak to the perceptions of the bodies noted here, but I am not aware of concerns about the board or organisation’s reputation being raised by either sponsor dept or Parliament
		3	Yes – post public audit committee the reputation of the organisation has improved, although precise views of Sponsor / Parliament of the Board & general organisational performance is more difficult to ascertain.

16	The board receives full reports whenever the chair or Accounting Officer/Chief Executive meets with Ministers, other key stakeholders and major funders. The reports include stakeholder perspectives on the organisation's performance, strengths and areas for development, where appropriate.	2	ad hoc reports have been shared, however I am not aware of a process that ensures the board is aware of all key stakeholder engagemnets, or an agreed list of the key stakeholders
		3	We receive reports but perhaps not full reports as descrtibed.
		4	No comment
		3	No comment
		4	Regular feedback received, at a depth appropriate to the meeting held
		4	Yes – usually at the following Board for any Ministerial activity or at least in the quarterly reporting (less relevant for major funders).
Propriety, Fraud and other Leakage			
17	The board is aware of, and annually approves, the scheme of delegation.	2	aware of it, but I don't recollect the annual aproval
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
18	The board receives regular reports on fraud and takes steps to address any failures or perceived weaknesses.	3	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	principally via ARC.
19	The board is satisfied that it receives full and timely notification of all significant losses, special payments or other leakage. The board takes appropriate action to address any weaknesses or failures.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	principally via ARC.
20	The board is always provided with advance notification of all proposed novel or contentious expenditure.	2	not aware of any "novel or contentious expenditure", but also not aware of a) what might qualify as novel or contentious [definition] or b) a process to flag if any payments have been retrospectively flagged as novel or contentious
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	Mostly – although there have been occasions when, towards the end of year, expenditure has had to be agreed rapidly between TS and the Exec.
Delivery Chain and Project Management			
21	The board receives regular updates on progress for all programmes and projects subject to the Gateway review process, and any others judged high risk by the organisation.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	Not all programmes and projects – however most are covered in the capital expenditure updates received regularly at Board with projects above the delegated authority requiring Board approval.
22	The board is provided with timely and robust post-evaluation reviews for all major projects and programmes, including an examination of whether all intended benefits were realised.	3	financial updates, yes, however delivery of all project benefits etc, less clear
		4	No comment
		3	There is opportunity to enhance reporting of benefit realisation.
		4	No comment
		3	This is an improving area of reporting and there are good examples of reporting which references original business cases etc. Discussions at Board between members and senior executive team often refers to original intended benefits
		2	This probably is a weakness – I cannot remember such a review coming to Board.
23	Where delivery is devolved to partner organisations, the board receives regular assurances over delivery, the operational effectiveness of partners' governance arrangements and the regularity of expenditure made on its behalf.	3	perhaps more detail from partner organisaions needed to fully meet these criteria
		4	No comment
			I am not sure that this is applicable to Scottish Canals.
		3	No comment
		3	I feel there is broadly appropriate oversight here but it could be an area for future consideration, particularly around joint ventures
		3	see above – mostly covered in capital expenditure updates to Board.

Risk Management			
24	The board is clear on its risk appetite.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	Yes but there is a need to ensure that this is fully reviewed on a regular basis.
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
25	The board has a sound process for identifying and regularly reviewing its principal risks, and makes the necessary amendments in the light of changes in the internal and external environment. This process involves all parts of the business.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	Yes, however there is little movement in the key areas of risk.
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
26	The board receives regular, insightful reports on the organisation's risk management and internal control systems that provide assurance over their operational effectiveness.	3	scored three as always room for improvement and different business areas will be more/less conversant with risk identification, however the framework works well.
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
27	The board takes full account of risk in its decisions, for example, in relation to proposed major projects and programmes.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
28	The board receives reliable projections of future cash flows for the medium as well as the short term, and is confident that the available funding will enable the organisation to develop and operate as planned.	4	No comment
		3	A regular medium term cashflow analysis would be helpful
		4	No comment
		3	No comment
		4	No comment
29	The board is satisfied there have been no problems with regulatory and similar requirements, and that sound health and safety, employment and other practices are implemented to protect the organisation against unnecessary litigation and reputation risk.	3	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	There have been problems but the Board is satisfied that these are clearly reported.
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
30	The board is aware of changing demand patterns and is confident that these can be met from the resources available and within the organisation's statutory remit.	3	There is a corporate risk that identifies risks around compliance across the business and there are mitigations underway - so cannot score this a 4.
		4	No comment
		3	Concern remains that financial and staffing resources are so tight that there is a risk of not being able to meet our statutory remit
		3	There may be an opportunity for better reporting of forecast demand rather than retrospective.
		3	No comment
		2	The Board is providing guidance to the organisation in a context where resources available may not be able to meet demand patterns (for example as reflected in operational costs) and statutory remit in the same way as they have been in previous years. The Board is well sighted on the strategic and tactical choices, my scoring reflects that in the context of tight public sector finances, its not straightforward to balance these matters. Awareness is high and scores strongly. Confidence in ability to meet demands with resources is more challenging!
31	The board monitors the political environment for potential changes to its remit and assesses the impact these will have on the strategy.	3	An established risk around the medium term financial sustainability is recognised by the Board as a key risk.
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	No comment
		4	No comment



32	The board is aware of the organisation's information needs. Any exceptions to best practice over data acquisition, usage, storage and destruction are reported.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
33	No substantial, unexpected problems have emerged which the board should have been aware of earlier.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	The Exec team have been candid about the risks facing the organisation.
The Audit Committee, Internal Audit and Corporate Reporting			
34	The audit committee has sufficient expertise, support, time, and access to key staff and information to enable it to discharge its monitoring and oversight role effectively.		not directly involved so can't comment
		3	I am not a member of the audit committee but my perception is that this statement is true
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	although will need to consider ARC succession planning.
35	There is a proper discussion (not just nodding through) by the board of reports from the audit committee, ensuring all members are aware of the issues discussed and their resolution.	3	scrutiny and detailed questioning takes place, can always be improved
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	Yes - there have been details discussions about risk appetite for example.
36	The internal audit function is independent of management, appropriately skilled, competent and complies with Government Internal Audit Standards.		I belive so, but I am not sufficiently involved to make this judgement
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
37	The board is satisfied that there is no evidence of aggressive or less than fully transparent accounting in the financial statements.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment

The Boardroom			
38	The board is cohesive and combines being supportive of management with providing appropriate challenge.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
39	A senior independent director role exists to strengthen the position of the non-executives.		not aware of who the senior independent director is
			This needs further explanation
		2	I don't think we have this position but equally am not aware that this is regularly used in the Scottish Public Sector.
		2	No comment
		1	I'm not aware of this approach being taken with this Board
		1	We do not have a SID and with a small Board and a deputy chair I do not think this necessary.
40	The Chair leads meetings well with a clear focus on the big issues facing the organisation and allows full and open discussion before major decisions are taken.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	No comment
		4	Strong approach to ensuring all Board members are invovled and have the chance to contribute to discussions/decisions
		4	No comment
41	Induction and development programmes ensure board members remain up-to-date throughout their time on the board.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	Yes but there may be scope of one or more Board development sessions throughout a calendar year.
		4	No comment
		4	Regular reminders and review happen, which is very helpful
		3	SG Board training has been launched during my tenure rather than at the start.
42	Working as a team, the board has the right blend of skills, expertise and personalities, and the appropriate degree of diversity, to enable it to face today's and tomorrow's challenges successfully. Appointments place significant emphasis on succession planning both with regard to independent and non-executive directors' positions.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	Good reflection on the skills mix / gaps prior to all rounds of recruitment
		4	No comment
43	The board constantly strives to improve its effectiveness by ensuring its own performance appraisal replicates good practice elsewhere.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	Board shows good appetite for this and commitment to reflection and learning. Its possible that additional opportunities to connect with other boards could strengthen this further
		4	No comment
44	The board draws up action plans following its performance evaluations. The actions include behavioural and qualitative aspects, where appropriate.	2	implicit, could be improved and formalised
		4	No comment
		3	No comment
		3	No comment
		3	Happens more informally than formally, although this feels sufficient and appropriate given that no significant issues have emerged from reviews
		2	We have not done this and perhaps should.
45	The board regularly reviews progress against its performance appraisal action plan.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	No comment
		2	No comment
		2	Again, this feels to me that is is happening more informally than the question seems to suggest, but that feels appropriate because regular reviews have not surfaced any areas of concern
		N/A	No comment

Organisational Culture			
46	The board recognises the potential of a strong and positive culture within the organisation.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
47	The board ensures that the organisational culture is aligned with the strategic plan and supports the achievement of organisational goals.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	No comment
		4	No comment
48	The board demonstrates an interest in employee well-being and engagement, and is there a culture that supports employee growth and development.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
49	The board recognises and celebrates achievements, and there is a culture of appreciation and positive reinforcement.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	It would be good to see an organisation wide staff celebration/staff award type event established.
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
50	The board encourages a culture of innovation and adaptability, enabling the organisation to respond effectively to change.	4	No comment
		4	No comment
		3	Yes but within the current financial climate.
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
		4	No comment
51	Please comment on any other issues that may be relevant to the performance of the board (especially any questions / issues that you expected to be raised, which were not).	good blend of skills on the board and I have experienced a very open and welcoming culture upon joining. willing to engage and listen to all prespectives	





















