



RURAL HOSPITAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



Washington State
Hospital Association



ASSOCIATION of
WASHINGTON
PUBLIC HOSPITAL DISTRICTS

Using Board Evaluations to Strengthen Governance

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Today's Session – Board Evaluations

01

Learn how to assess, understand & improve board performance.

02

Learn guiding principles & best practices.

03

Create momentum to improve your board evaluation process - strengthen governance.



What are your leading indicators of governance failure or strength?

How do you know your board is strengthening their performance over time?

Board Evaluation Framework



- Structured process for assessing & improving board effectiveness, governance performance, leadership, & board-management relationships.
- Enhance board effectiveness & decision quality
- Strengthen governance practices
- Improve board dynamics & culture
- Identify development opportunities
- Support board succession & renewal
- Promote accountability & continuous improvement

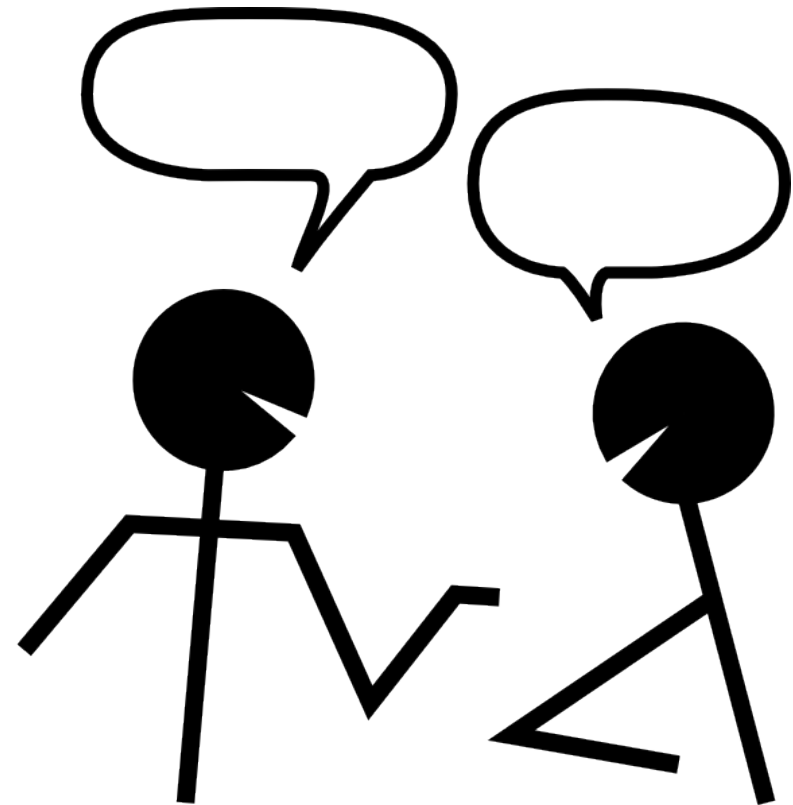
Why?



- Evaluation demonstrates Board's commitment to continuous improvement.
- Allows board members to better understand their roles/ responsibilities & how they can more effectively fulfill their obligations.
- Effectiveness is not static. Board must evolve with organization & world around it.
- Evaluation process can develop board team building skills, provide structure for problem solving, surface tension, increase accountability within organization.

Expected Output of Board Evaluation

- Strong board evaluation process is less about “rating performance” & more about improving board effectiveness, decision quality, group dynamics over time.
- Focus discussion among board members around governance activities that will result in greatest benefit for organization.



Quick Check

Who has participated in board evaluation process in last two years?

If I reviewed your summary report & development plan, what would I see?

What progress has been made?



High-performing boards define evaluation purpose explicitly

- Improve decision-making quality (not just assess behavior)
- Surface friction points early (role clarity, information flow, dynamics)
- Strengthen board–management alignment
- Identify capability gaps (skills, diversity, succession readiness)
- Low-performing boards treat evaluation as an annual formality;
high-performing boards treat it as strategic feedback system.

Boards fail to regularly assess governance performance & develop improvement plans.

- BoardSource's 2021 *Leading with Intent* survey notes that only 47% of boards have completed self-assessment in last 2 years, almost 1/3 have never completed self-assessment.
- BoardSource surveys over time show that boards that regularly self-assess perform better against key governance responsibilities than boards that do not.

How about hospital boards?

2025 National Governance Report

- Nearly 1/3 of respondents have not used any assessment in past three years.
- Use of full-board assessments & individual board member evaluations has declined over past 10 years.
- Most common individual board member performance criterion was “meets the board & committee attendance requirement”.
- In 2024, a higher percentage of systems (67%) reported they had conducted a full board assessment in past three years, as compared with system subsidiary hospital boards (47%) & freestanding hospital boards (45%).

AHA launching new board assessment tool

Who initiates process?

- Main initiators of board evaluation process are Chair & CEO. Chair may delegate responsibility to Governance Committee Chair (if role exists).
- Sometimes funding agencies or key stakeholders (usually in response to a perception of underlying governance problems).

Board Evaluation



Best practice is a layered approach rather than a single survey

- **Board-level assessment:** overall effectiveness, culture, governance processes
- **Committee-level reviews:** Quality, Finance, etc.
- **Individual board member evaluations:** contribution, preparedness, engagement
- **Chair evaluation:** facilitation quality, agenda control, inclusion of voices
- **Board–CEO interface review:** clarity, trust, escalation handling

Board Evaluation Approaches



Governance & operations audit/ review



Survey



Observation of board meetings



1:1 Interviews



Frequency – every 2-3 years

What Do We Evaluate - 5 Criteria – Strategic Lens

1. Strategic alignment & contribution.

Is Board truly shaping & stress-testing long-term strategy?

How effectively did Board contribute to development of & review implementation of strategy?

Does Board demonstrate role clarity?

Do board structure & governance practices support future?

What Do We Evaluate - 5 Criteria – Strategic Lens

2. Board composition & competency matrix.

Does Board have right mix of experience & skills to meet organization's evolving needs?

Does Board leadership have necessary skills, enthusiasm, energy & time to provide leadership to board?

Does Board have a succession plan?

What Do We Evaluate - 5 Criteria – Strategic Lens

3. Committee & meeting effectiveness.

Are committees operating with purpose & efficiency? Are they enablers?

Are meetings strategic, focused, inclusive & future-oriented rather than administrative or retrospective?

Are the board packets complete & meaningful?

What Do We Evaluate - 5 Criteria – Strategic Lens

4. Culture & dynamics.

Is there a culture of trust, respect, challenge & candor?

Are all voices encouraged & heard?

Is there a productive relationship between Board & CEO?

Are conflicts surfaced & resolved?

What Do We Evaluate - 5 Criteria – Strategic Lens

5. Management oversight & engagement.

Is board maintaining healthy balance of support & independence in its engagement with CEO & executive team?

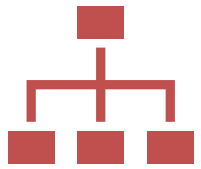
Calibrate for Board Stages & Context

Evaluation design should reflect maturity:

- **New boards:** focus on role clarity, trust-building, decision protocols
- **Stable boards:** focus on strategy challenge, succession, oversight depth
- **High-performing boards:** focus on crisis readiness, innovation oversight, quality of dialogue, leadership

One-size-fits-all instruments tend to reduce insight.

Process



Board evaluations typically based around members rating themselves & board as collective.



Rating is done with series of questions related to responsibilities & functions. 5-point scale.



Evaluate committees.



Results compiled & analyzed. Report delivered to full Board.

Process without Governance Committee



- Led by Board Chair & CEO (or external facilitator)
- Select tool
- Include space for narrative comments & examples
- Distribute & collect surveys
- Board Chair & CEO compile aggregated results & facilitate conversation at board meeting
- Ensure plan development & regular check-ins

Example: Committee Evaluation

assess committee contribution & oversight

	1	2	3	4	5
Committee's charter is clear & includes appropriate duties/ responsibilities (committee is charged with doing right work).					
Committee has right number of members.					
Committee is effectively performing following duties listed in committee's charter.					
Committee meets right number of times over year.					
Agenda for committee meetings includes what is important & allocation of time for agenda items is appropriate.					
There is sufficient time in meetings for discussion					

Example: Committee Evaluation

	1	2	3	4	5
Committee is receiving information it needs to fulfill its responsibilities, in easily understood formats.					
Management's reports to committee are effective in terms of length, context, timeliness, clarity.					
Information provided in advance of committee meetings is adequate & timely - enables me to prepare for/participate in committee discussions.					
Orientation & education sessions provide me with adequate information to serve on committee.					
Staffing & related support for committee meetings & functions is appropriate.					
Committee members listen to, consider/ respect each others' ideas & opinions (even when disagreeing with them).					

Example: Committee Evaluation

	1	2	3	4	5
When presented with proposals or recommendations, committee evaluates them by questioning premises/assumptions, consistency with organization's vision & key goals, analytical underpinnings, best/worse case outcomes.					
Chair keeps meetings on track.					
Chair works collaboratively with staff lead.					
Chair fairly reports committee's work to Board.					
Chair encourages participation & manages discussion.					
Any other comments?					
Are there particular topics or issues that you believe committee should focus on for coming fiscal year?					

Board Chair Evaluation

assess Chair effectiveness

Leadership	Provides effective leadership	Maintains governance focus	Encourages participation	Facilitation	Manages meetings effectively
Encourages healthy debate	Manages conflict constructively	Relationship Management	Maintains productive CEO relationship	Builds board cohesion	Supports member engagement
	Governance Stewardship	Ensures governance standards	Supports succession planning	Leads continuous improvement	

Individual/Peer Feedback

assess individual effectiveness

- Incorporate peer feedback on behaviors & contributions to board culture into regular evaluations. This provides invaluable insights into unspoken dynamics & holds individuals accountable for fostering environment where information flows freely.
- 2 questions : *What are his/her positive contributions & what areas does he/she need to improve?*
- Consider areas like effectiveness, preparedness, knowledge, skills & expertise, strategy, commitment, professionalism.

Individual/Peer Feedback



- Self-evaluation & personal leadership development (based on foundational behaviors of effective board members)
- Anonymous feedback for each member is compiled — shared individually.
- Once conversations are complete, board & governance chairs meet to discuss how feedback landed, confirm any follow-up actions & note any suggestions to improve process.

Process

- Scores are meant to provide general indication – “temperature” taking – of board’s performance, to identify “governance gaps” - potential areas for improvement.
- Committee level evaluation results summarized & shared with respective chairs who share results with their respective committees.

Watchout!

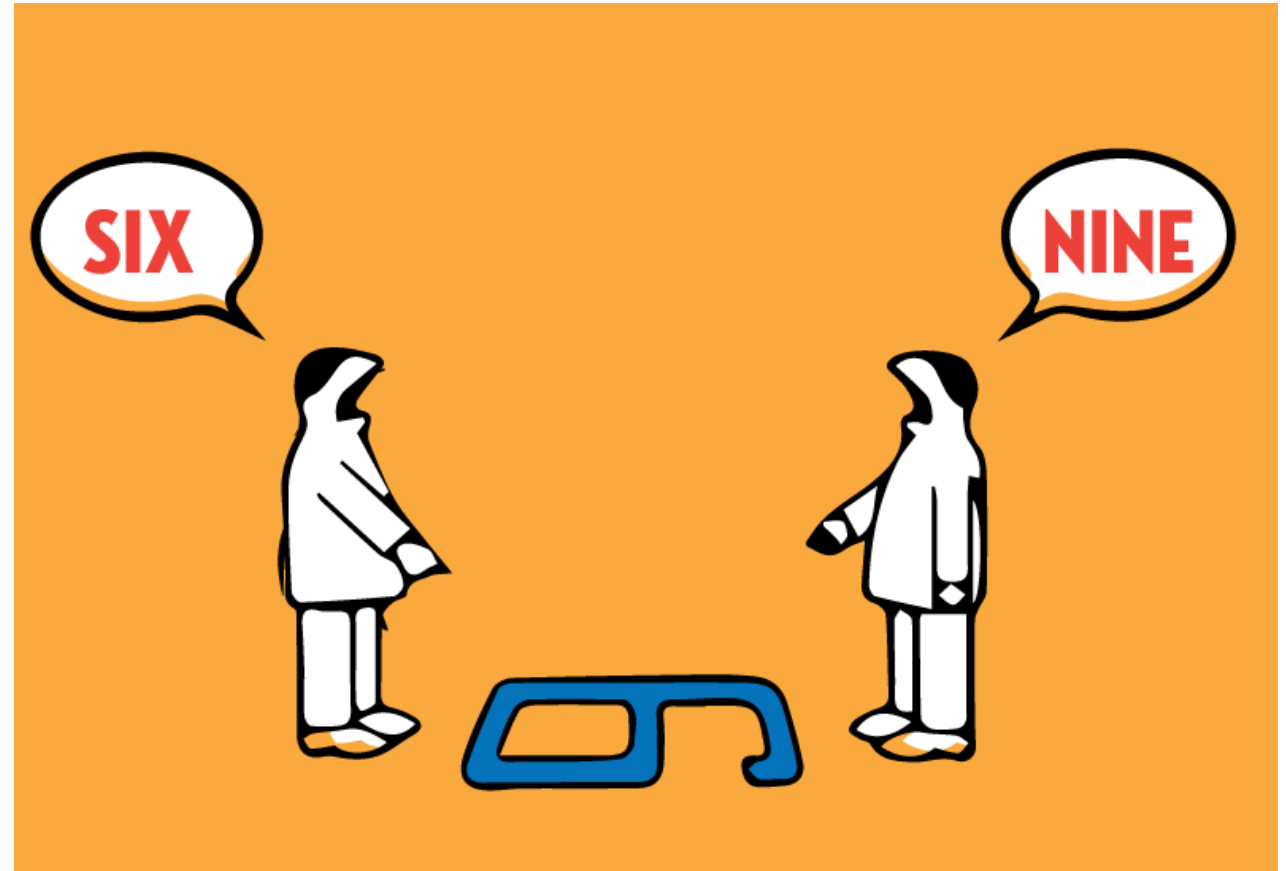
- Self-evaluation can lead to overinflation of scores, with no evidence to support rating!

- **Evaluation Question: Rating** average 4.6/5, range 4-5

“Yet... no evidence of strategic plan approved by board, strategic plan not embedded into agenda of Board, minutes don't reflect discussion & decisions around agreed strategies, staff reports don't reflect plan, CEO's evaluation doesn't reflect plan, annual report doesn't use plan as means of reporting accountability”

Analysis

- Areas of High-Performance
- Areas of Under-Performance
- Areas of Key Differences
- Issues, Priorities, Learning Needs

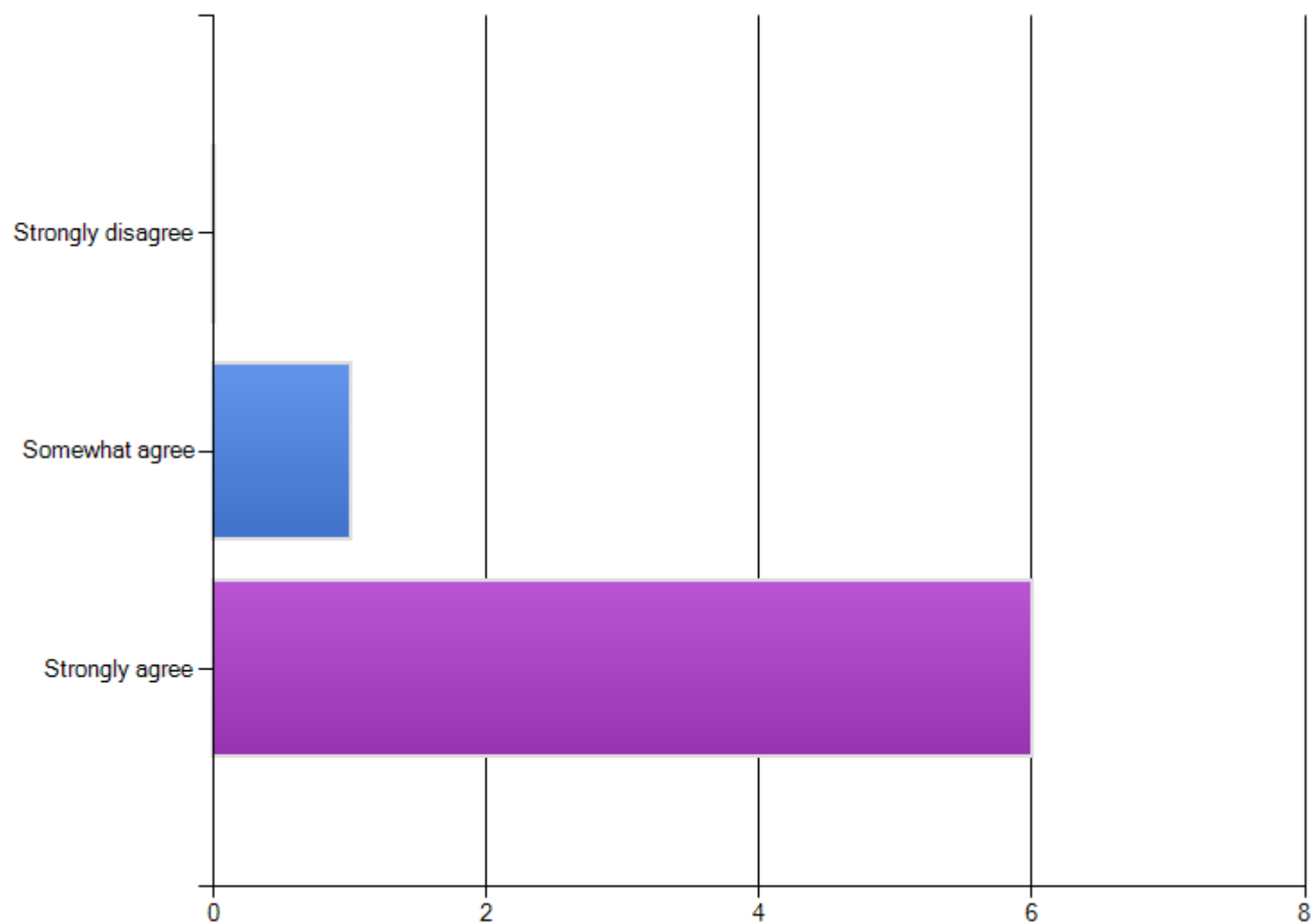


Process – Analyzing & Sharing Results

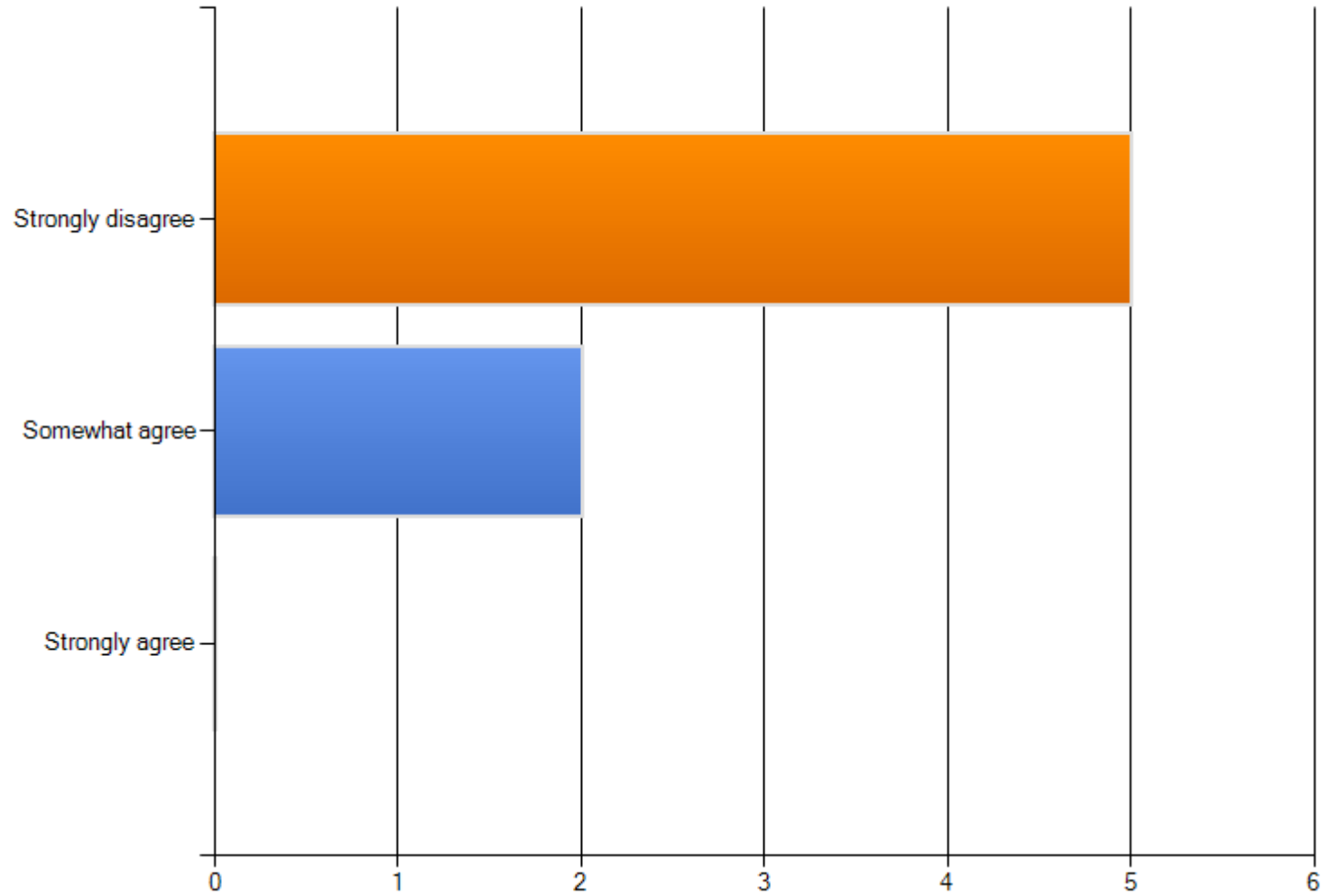


- Governance Committee reviews results first.
- Synthesize results & areas for potential improvement into themes – not quotes or raw feedback.
- Discuss themes with full board (no sugar coating).

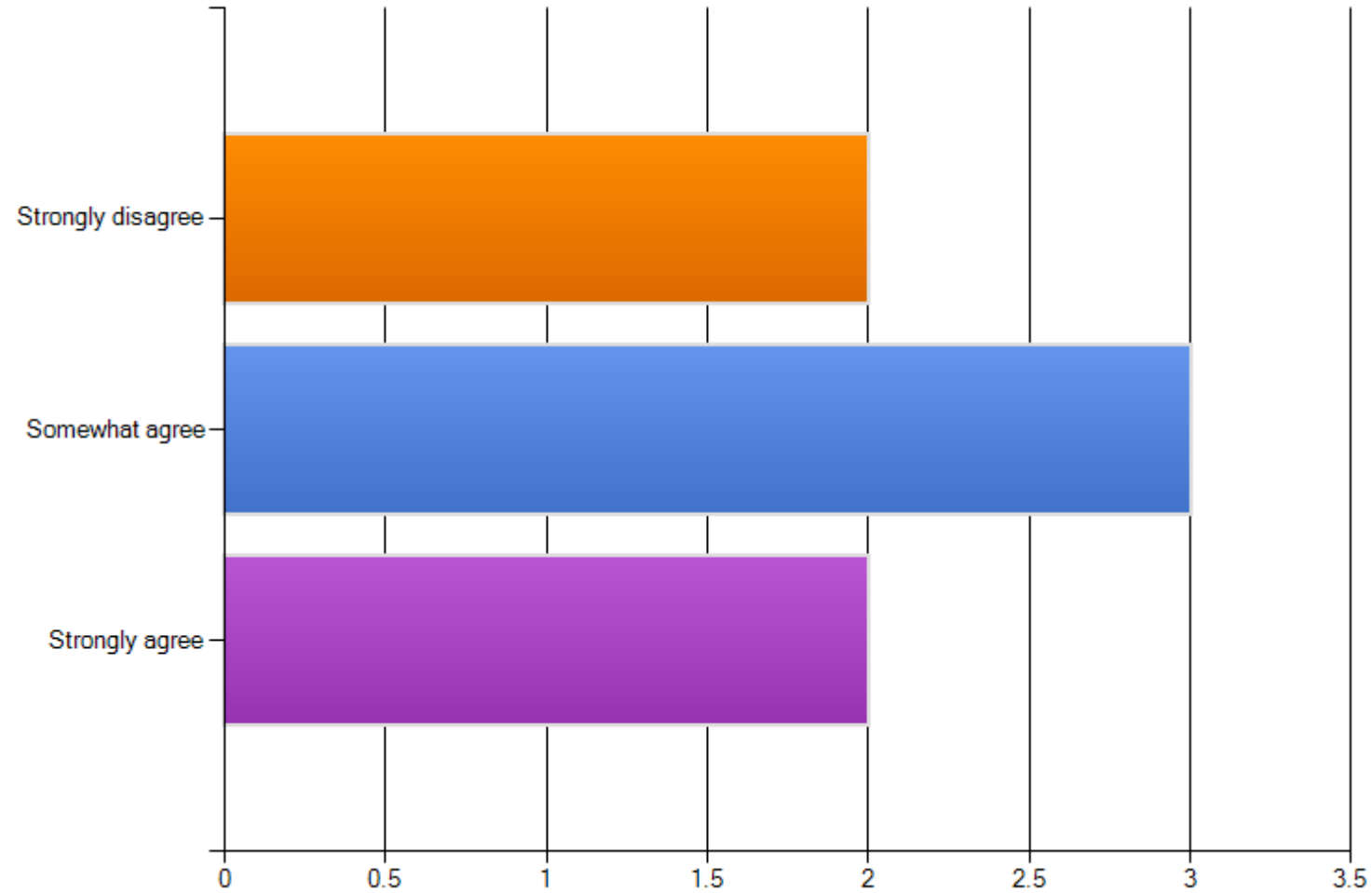
The Board President encourages participation and manages discussion.



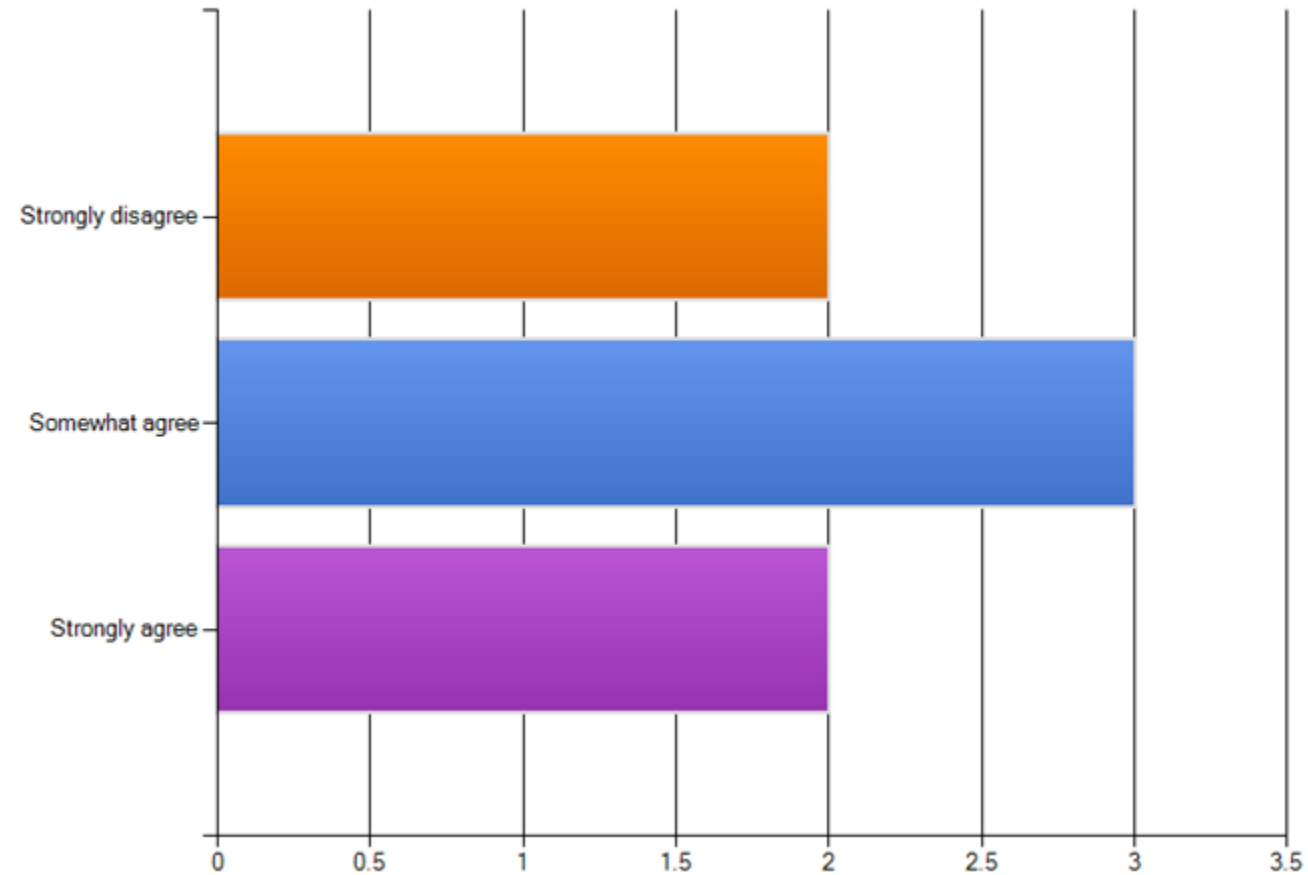
Meeting Content - The Board spends more than half of the meeting time discussing strategic issues as opposed to listening to reports.



Meeting Participation - Board members come well prepared, participate actively at Board meetings, raise constructive questions and offer pertinent guidance on matters of policy and strategy.



Management's reports to the Board are effective in terms of length, context, timeliness, and clarity.



Convert Findings Into Actionable Governance Changes

- Common failure point is “insight without implementation.”
- Translate findings into 3–6 priority improvement actions
- Assign accountable owners (often Chair or Governance Committee)
- Set measurable behavioral or process indicators (e.g., agenda redesign, consent agenda expansion, targeted education, leadership development)
- Track progress in subsequent board cycles
- Reassess whether changes actually improved governance

If nothing changes, the evaluation becomes performative

Sample Debrief Questions

- What, if any, changes are needed to our board & committee structures?
- What clarification is needed regarding roles, responsibilities & authority?
- Do we have correct composition of our board(s) & committees?
- Do any governance documents or policies need to be updated (e.g., bylaws, charters, conflict of interest policies)?
- What improvements could be made to our governance processes (e.g., recruitment, selection, orientation, education, re-appointment, goal-setting, evaluation)?
- How could we improve our meeting frequency, length, agendas to be more effective & efficient?

Board collectively owns governance improvement

- Agree on actions
- Assign ownership
- Create workplan
- Revisit quarterly



Turn insight into action!

Final Report



Executive Summary: overall effectiveness, key themes, major recommendations



Areas of strength: governance, leadership, cultural



Areas for improvement: governance gaps, capability needs, process improvements



Priority Actions: immediate, medium-term, long-term

How do you ensure evaluation process leads to real improvement?

- ✓ Robust, transparent, consistent process.
- ✓ Confidentiality & Transparency.
- ✓ Board Chair leadership/messaging...clarify “why?” & desired outcomes.
- ✓ Use multiple methods of evaluation....anonymous surveys to interviews to peer feedback.

How do you ensure evaluation process leads to real improvement?

- ✓ Create psychologically safe environment...ensure feedback is confidential, valued & used constructively — not punitively.
- ✓ Real engagement in discussing results. May need facilitation.
- ✓ Translate insights into 3-5 actionable objectives w/ownership.
- ✓ Apply evaluation findings to development & succession.

Key Takeaways

Board evaluation process should be viewed as governance improvement system that strengthens board performance, organizational oversight, & long-term value creation over time.

Not about passing judgment, airing grievances or yearly obligation “check in the box” activity — they’re about stewardship, improvement & ensuring greater good for organization.

Provide opportunity to pause, reflect & ask: *Are we evolving fast enough to meet the moment? Are we future-ready, not just compliant?*

Boards that thrive are those that embrace evaluation as strategic advantage — acting as a mirror that doesn’t just reflect performance but inspires it!

How will you improve your board evaluation process?



Thank you!

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