

THE CULTURALLY CONSCIOUS BOARD

BOARD DEPTH SERIES

The Programs Review

A Tool to Help Boards Provide
Oversight for Programs.

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Programs Review Briefing

1. Programs Review Worksheet

Purpose: This tool helps the board reflect on whether the organization's programs align with mission, strategy, and resources. It is not about managing staff or operations, but about ensuring stewardship of impact, sustainability, and risk.

Portfolio Snapshot

- List of Programs: _____
- Populations Served: _____
- Scale/Reach (approximate): _____

Strategic Fit

- Which programs clearly advance our mission and strategy?
 Strong Fit Moderate Fit Weak Fit / Legacy Program

Notes: _____

Financial Snapshot

- Which programs are sustainable (cover costs)?
 - High-performing / revenue positive: _____
 - Break-even: _____
 - Subsidized (draw on unrestricted funds): _____

Reflection: Does this mix make sense for us?

Impact Snapshot

- What outcomes are reported? _____
- How do clients/communities experience the program?
- Are we improving, stable, or declining in results?

Capacity & Risk Scan

- Staffing and resources sufficient?
 Yes Some gaps Major concern
- Compliance/regulatory risks? _____
- Reputational or equity concerns? _____

Opportunities & Decisions

- Which programs might be ready to grow or innovate?
- Which might be candidates for sunseting or redesign?
- What questions should the board keep asking?

Next Steps

As a board, what action(s) or further inquiry will we pursue?

2. Red Flags for Program Oversight

Purpose: Boards are not managers of programs, but they are stewards of mission, impact, and reputation. These red flags highlight areas where oversight is essential.

Mission Alignment

- Programs continue out of habit, not mission.
- New initiatives lack clear connection to strategy.
- Donor/funder demands overshadow mission fidelity.

Financial Sustainability

- Programs routinely operate at a loss without rationale.
- High dependence on a single funder.
- Budget allocations misaligned with strategic priorities.

Impact & Evaluation

- Outcomes described only as activities (not results).
- Lack of community/client feedback.
- Declining results without board discussion.

Risk & Compliance

- Safety or compliance incidents discovered late.
- No clear policies around vulnerable populations.
- Partnerships introduce reputational exposure.

Reputation & Stakeholder Trust

- Stakeholders unclear about what the organization does.
- Media or community criticism around program design/delivery.
- Concerns from staff or beneficiaries not reaching the board.

Strategic Discipline

- Too many programs dilute focus.
- Legacy programs persist despite minimal demand.
- Resistance to sunseting outdated offerings.

Board Questions

- Which programs are drifting from mission or donor intent?
- Where might program activities create reputational risk?
- What outcomes justify continued investment?
- Are we prepared to sunset programs that no longer serve?