

Field Guide: Boards Acting on Ends Reports

Mark Goehring and Michael Healy

When a board receives an Ends monitoring report from their manager, a thoughtful process can transform the report from just another document to file away into a valuable resource that helps the board, the manager and the co-op's member-owners better understand the "story" of their co-op. The board wants to know: Does the report demonstrate reasonable accomplishment? Are we on track for multi-year goals/targets that are expressed in the GM's interpretations of the policy? Using a structured process like the one described here can help the board make the most of this important report.

A focused conversation on the Ends Report

Part 1: the Process

- ◆ Each director should receive and read the full Ends report well in advance of the board meeting. Come to the meeting prepared to act, specifically regarding question #4 (next page).
- ◆ In addition, each director should be assigned and focus on a specific section of the report. Use questions #1-#3 to help prepare your thoughts for a brief oral report. At the meeting, these reports should take no more than 2-3 minutes per section, so please give some thought as to what to share.
- ◆ Following the brief reports on each section, the whole group then walks through the process outlined in #4, culminating in a board decision regarding accepting the report as reasonable demonstration of progress.
- ◆ Finally, take time to hear everyone's thoughts on questions #5 and #6. You can do this immediately or at a follow-up meeting.

Part 2: the Questions

1. When you read the section, what stood out to you? What are the major points being made in this section? What parts really caught your attention?
2. What were your reactions to the section (and report)? What situations were you reminded of? What part of the report excited you? What part left you skeptical or frustrated?
3. What are the implications for us of the section you read? What relationships do you see between various parts of the report? What are the main points the report is making?
4. Decisional questions required to act on the Ends report (all directors, full report)
 1. Use the Decision Tree to answer
 - a. Are the operational definitions (or interpretations) reasonable?
 - i. How does the GM know if an expectation has been accomplished?
 - ii. What data will the GM use to demonstrate accomplishment of the board's expectations?
 - iii. Why that methodology and data? Is there support for this approach?
 - b. Is there adequate data?
 - i. Does the data directly relate to what is called for in the operational definitions?
 - c. Does the data demonstrate reasonable accomplishment?
 - i. Since we have data and a context for considering the data, this question should be straightforward.
 2. Directors are asked for a motion affirming the board's decision based on the above questions.
5. Decisional questions: member engagement

What part of the report might be useful to use for member engagement focused on...

 - ...exploring benefit and value produced on behalf of members?
 - ...exploring a shared vision of the future of the organization?
6. Decisional questions: Ongoing learning
 - a. What long term strategic questions come up for you based on information in the report?