

Policy Governance® Implementation

This Field Guide outlines the basic steps, timeline, and critical factors for successful implementation of Policy Governance (sometimes referred to herein as “PG”). When implementing Policy Governance, it is important to move forward relatively quickly in order to not lose momentum, while taking enough time to make thoughtful and informed decisions.

Main Steps for Implementing Policy Governance

1. **Investigate** – Learn about Policy Governance principles, approaches and foundations. (see [Resources](#) below)
2. **Decide** – The board makes an informed decision to implement PG and then agrees to the necessary effort and resources.
3. **Invest** – Get the support to help you through the process. Take advantage of the wisdom of those with experience and expertise.
4. **Develop Policies** – The best approach to develop your Policy Register is to start with a template and hold a day long intensive policy development session with an experienced facilitator working with your full board and general manager. At the end of the day most boards will have a 1st draft (except Ends) and a few follow-up items. Over the next 30-60 days, attend to the follow-up items, have a task group finalize format/grammar/wordsmithing, and conduct an administrative review (verify/cross-reference against bylaws, etc.). You will then be ready to approve your Policy Register just 1-2 months later. A drawn-out process will kill momentum and a phase-in approach can result in gaps, redundancy, and conflicting policies. (see [Resources](#) below)
5. **Develop Calendar** – Develop your annual calendar and agenda planning processes, determining the best time to monitor the different policies. (see [Resources](#) below)
6. **Act** – Don't agonize, FLIP THE SWITCH! Adopt the Policy Register and discard any old policies and processes that have been made obsolete (which should be almost everything!).
7. **Develop Ends** – Develop Ends Policies that will inspire your organization through a thoughtful, facilitated process. This can be done over a weekend along with the Policy development, or separately 6-12 months after. The co-op already has some guidance and direction, whether written as a Mission or elsewhere or even unspoken. Save Ends policies for last so that the rest of the systems can be working while the board takes sufficient time to deliberate Ends.
8. **Monitor** – Start the accountability process by monitoring the policies that guide the GM right away. It might take a year for that system to be fully functional, so get started. (see [Resources](#) below)
9. **Engage in strategic thinking** – Your board will probably undergo a shift as you learn and implement new ways to assure organizational accountability. The board's work may be more

structured than it's been in the past with a greater emphasis on an annual agenda. But perhaps the biggest shift will be in embracing its role setting strategic direction. To succeed in that role, the board will need to educate itself and make time for strategic thinking. (see [Resources](#) below)

10. **Perpetuate** – Ensure that your board has the necessary skills, tools, and support to maintain excellence over the long term. Invest time and resources in orientation, practice, and retraining as needed.

Time Line:

Policy Governance Implementation Plan (6-36 months)

STEP	TIME	SAMPLE CALENDAR
Investigate, understand, and decide to move forward	As much time as needed, usually 3-6 months	2011
Create first draft Policy Register (with placeholder Ends) in single day Policy development retreat	1 day retreat	January 2012
Refine and complete policies	1-2 months	January/February 2012
Develop monitoring schedule & annual calendar	1-2 months	January/February 2012
Bylaws and Administrative review (and legal if desired)	1-2 months	February/March 2012
Identify old policies, tools and processes for removal	1-2 months	February/March 2012
Adopt full policy register with placeholder ends	1 board meeting	April 2012
Begin GM monitoring		May 2012
Review & Discuss Policies that guide the board. (Sections C and D in the template) – take time at each board meeting to review 1-2 policies and talk about the new expectations, what it will look like when the board meets them, how it will differ from current practice, and what might help the board meet those expectations.	8-12 months	May-December 2012
Implement strategic leadership – study & engagement		June 2012
Develop Ends policies	1 day retreat	2 nd half of 2012
Refine Ends policies (if necessary)	1-2 months	2 nd half of 2012
Adopt Ends policies	1 board meeting	December 2012
Reflect on how it's going; identify opportunities for additional learning or improvements. Decide on Board self-monitoring methodology and begin.	1 board meeting	January 2013
Preliminary Ends report & monitoring		2013
Develop reporting & monitoring proficiency		2013 & 2014

Critical Factors of Successful Implementation

Getting started

- **Learning** – Understand the principles and paradigm shift. Invest in learning and continuous improvement.
- **Commitment** – Decision need not be unanimous but must be pursued as if it was.
- **Leadership** – Must have person(s) willing and able to provide leadership.

During transition

- **Process** – Develop (and stick to) an implementation plan and timeline.
- **Progress** (not perfection) – Willingness to let go of perfection. Don't get stuck in wording. Be willing to try something that can be changed later if needed.
- **Monitoring** – Set and adhere to a thorough monitoring schedule.
- **Let go** – Remove old tools and processes. Don't operate with two systems.

Ongoing

- **Perpetuation** – Recruit, support and retain those who will lead
- **Embrace Power** – A powerful & accountable executive + A powerful & effective board = A powerful & inspiring cooperative!
- **Continuous improvement** – Improve the policies as they are used and monitored.
- **Policy-focused** – Continuous referral to policy manual. Use the policies to guide every decision, agenda topic, and action. By proactively articulating values we don't have to start from scratch on each decision, topic, and action; so use the policies!
- **Strategic Leadership** – Implement strategic leadership through study and engagement.

Questions to consider:

1. What governance system do we currently use? What are the benefits and drawbacks of this system?
2. What benefits might our board (or our organization) realize with a shift to Policy Governance?
3. What will it take to build the level of commitment necessary to implement Policy Governance?
4. What kind of support might we need for education, planning, initial implementation, and peak performance?
5. What obstacles might our board face in implementing Policy Governance?
6. What kind of plan will we need to keep momentum moving forward and to assure that we have the necessary leadership through the implementation phase and beyond?

Resources:

Investigate

- [Taking Policy To Heart](#) – an easy-to-digest overview of the 10 principles of PG.
- [PG FAQ](#) – Frequently asked questions about Policy Governance.
- The [International Policy Governance Association's Policy Governance Source Document](#) – Looking for a precise description of the 10 principles of the Policy Governance model? This official document lays out what IS and IS NOT Policy Governance.
- *Boards That Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations* by John Carver (Jossey-Bass, 1990; 2nd edition, 1997; 3rd edition, 2006). From www.carvergovernance.com. This book is the single most inclusive text on the Policy Governance model as it relates to nonprofit and governmental boards.
- *Implementing Policy Governance and Staying on Track, a Carver Policy Governance Guide* by John Carver and Miriam Carver <http://www.carvergovernance.com/guides.htm>

Develop Policies

- [Sample set of policies](#)

Develop Calendar

- [Agenda Planning Field Guide](#)

Monitor

- [Sample set of Reports](#) – A look at how a GM could interpret and report on policies that match (or nearly match) the CBLD Policy template.
- [Monitoring Decision Tree](#) – This tool helps the board stay focused on organizational accountability by asking the appropriate and necessary questions.
- [Board self monitoring resources](#) – article on board approaches to holding themselves accountable.

Engage in Strategic Thinking

- [Thinking Strategically](#) – article on value of board study and engagement.
- [Cooperative Strategic Leadership](#) – Connections article on Cooperative Strategic Leadership

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The authoritative website for the Policy Governance model can be found at www.CarverGovernance.com