



governancehub

The Trustee Standards Itinerary

A Guide to Using
the Trustee Standards
for Smaller Organisations

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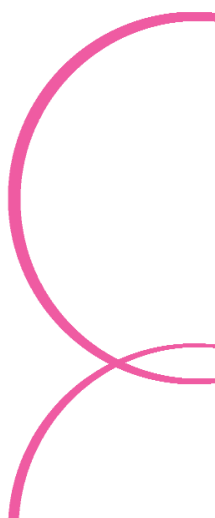
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The Trustee Standards Itinerary

A Guide to Using the Trustee Standards for Smaller Organisations

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Introduction

About this guide

If you are the trustee of a small charity, a local community organisation or a frontline organisation, this leaflet about the National Occupational Standards for Trustees and Management Committee Members (we'll refer to them as the 'Trustee Standards' or 'Standards' for short) is for you. Think of it as a travel guide. You probably have a clear vision of what a well-run organisation looks like. The destination is on the horizon, but there are turning points and pathways along the way where you have to make choices. In the same way that you might read up on travel tips for a journey, and use a map or route guide for navigation, the Standards help you to make sure that your processes are sound and moving you in the right direction. This booklet will take you to different signposts and suggest possible routes that you may wish to explore.

What are the Trustee Standards and what is in them?

The Trustee Standards describe what an individual needs to do, know and understand in order to carry out a particular job role or function. The Trustee Standards are for anyone who is a member of a governing body of a voluntary or community organisation (VCO). They focus specifically on the role of governance. By applying them to different aspects of your work, they help you locate where you are in terms of skills or performance and how much further you may have to travel, whether as an individual trustee or as a board.

The Standards are outcomes based, focusing on what needs to be done, rather than on how you should do it.

The four units that make up the Trustee Standards

Unit one	Unit two
Safeguard and promote the values and mission of the organisation	Determine the structure and strategy of the organisation
Unit three	Unit four
Ensure the organisation operates in an effective, responsible and accountable manner	Ensure the effective functioning of the board

Each set of occupational standards is made up of units. The Trustee Standards have four units, each with four elements: a brief explanation, the responsibilities trustees have in that area, what they need to know and understand, and what they need to have read.

Accreditation and quality

The Standards are approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the recognised regulatory body in England, and its equivalents in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This means that they can be used as a base for developing training and learning that is accredited and can form part of a recognised qualification. The Governance and Workforce Hubs are working with the Open College Network to develop accreditation for a course based on the Standards. Over time, other pathways to a qualification in governance are likely to develop. This means that trustees can both extend their knowledge and skills, based on nationally recognised standards, and gain recognition for their learning, if they so wish.

The Trustee Standards can also be used as a quality tool. There are several quality systems for smaller organisations. Each involves self-assessment exercises to help you determine how well you meet best practice, and to work out where there is room for improvement. You may be familiar with PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations), for example, which was written specifically for smaller voluntary sector organisations, or with the VISIBLE Communities™ framework, which asks community associations and other similar organisations to assess themselves against each letter of the VISIBLE acronym. The Trustee Standards can fit in when you are making action plans arising from assessments.

Snapshots: who should use the Standards?

Below are some brief snapshots of how you might use the Trustee Standards to improve your work.

Existing trustee	New or potential trustee	Board or management committee	Staff member of a VCO who works with boards and trustees	Advisor
To assess your own learning needs	To understand your role and responsibilities	To strengthen recruitment, selection, induction, learning and development for individual trustees or for boards and management committees as a whole	Consider offering specific sessions on the Standards when appropriate	Incorporate the Standards into training, mentoring and consultancy work you do with boards and trustees
Communally to assess the learning needs of a board	Review how well you are doing as a trustee and identify strengths and challenges		When drawing up role descriptions for trustees and other tools such as an induction pack	Use the Standards to prepare factsheets or other briefings
Support or mentor newer trustees	Ensure that you get the right information to perform your role		Offer the Standards and self-assessment of learning tools to your board and its members	Use the Standards as a reference point in advising local organisations and encourage trustees to become familiar with them
Sign up for a training course based on the Standards			Encourage your committee members to try out a learning resource or enrol in a programme	

The top ten travel tips

The top ten travel tips which follow explore in greater detail the practical application of the Standards. You should use these tips alongside a copy of the Standards themselves.

1. Starting point

Know thyself: It can be daunting knowing which route to choose. Before you start travelling, you need to work out where you are starting from. If you are new to the Standards, start exploring on a small scale. Those with more experience can be wide-ranging in applying them and could take a more strategic approach.

Starting on a small scale: Use them at individual or team level to support personal development. This helps to familiarise you with the language and structure and understand how they may benefit your work. You can use them to identify your competences and areas for development. It helps if you have someone with whom to compare your self-assessment in the light of the Standards, review the progress you are making and identify further support to help you develop your skills.

2. Planning your route – how to use the Standards effectively as a group tour

Aim and outcome: If as a board or management committee you wish to improve your governance or effectiveness, you can devise an action plan that sets out how the Standards might help you in this process.

Pack your bag: Good planning is essential to using the Standards effectively. Whether as an individual or as a board or committee, you need to spend some time thinking about how to introduce them. Make sure you have the right equipment for your journey. Think about what you are presenting and how. Think about how you will record points that emerge from your discussion: should you minute the discussion or should you use flipcharts that get written up afterwards?

Using the Standards with the entire board: Work out how to encourage the board to begin using the Standards. You could ask the Chair for 20 minutes' time on the next agenda, and prepare a brief introduction and proposals.

Be prepared: Get copies of the pocket version of the Standards for all the board members. Make sure you know what else will be needed for any of the proposals you make.

Taking the next steps: Ask for a small group to work with you to carry out any steps agreed by the board. Set some objectives about what you want to get from this experience. Put together a clear action plan, including a timetable and any practical resources you need.

3. Planning your route – how to use the Standards effectively as a solo traveller

Aim and outcome: It is natural and desirable that you wish to improve your competency as a trustee. The Standards can help you to draw up a learning plan to improve your knowledge and experience.

Using the Standards as an individual: Set aside time to read the Standards and reflect on your own experience as a trustee. Make your own notes of the questions you have and any actions you intend to take. Find out who else is using the Standards, either on your board or ask around any contacts you might have in other organisations, and explore whether a chat or an exchange of e-mails might help you both make progress.

Next steps: Using the information from your reading, choose several priorities on which to focus. Think how to build your knowledge through, for example, new reading, a briefing from the organisation or for the whole board, meeting key people or stakeholders, having a mentor, attending training, a board away day, and so on.

A learning plan: Look through the knowledge statements for each unit. Identify what you need to learn about most urgently and what you would benefit from learning later on. Consider the support that you need for the urgent points. Gather all of this into a one-page learning plan, covering what, how, when and where you will extend your knowledge or experience.

4. Taking others with you – using the Standards in recruitment

Attracting others: Selecting the right trustees for your board is hugely important. It can be difficult to attract and recruit new ones. Common problems include only using word of mouth to find people, a lack of transparency in the recruitment process, under-representation of certain groups and lack of board diversity, and the absence of guidance for new trustees on their role and responsibilities. All of these issues do not marry well with good governance.

Aim and outcome: Creating an introduction pack that covers the key things that new or potential trustees should know about your organisation will help you and them be very clear about your charity's purpose and aims. The Standards are an ideal tool for helping you to understand your broader duties and responsibilities as trustees and enabling you to explain to new trustees what is expected of them.

Make a list: Use the Standards to compile a list of key things that you and a potential trustee need to know about your organisation, for example, vision, mission, potential conflicts of interest. You might choose to adapt this list for the trustee induction pack. In reading the Standards, make a list of the questions you would ask if you were a new trustee. Prioritise what needs to be known by a new recruit and when.

Summarising: Compile a single page of key information about governance in your organisation to give to any potential new trustee. Include all four areas of the Standards, practical information about meetings, and 'motivational' information about values.

5. Assembling the right team to walk the course – assessing your skills

Aim and outcome: You can use the Standards as a benchmark to help you identify what skills are missing from the board by carrying out a ‘skills audit’. You can find a sample skills audit on the Governance Hub website or in the governance section of National Council for Voluntary Organisation’s (NCVO) website. Adapt this to the needs and circumstances of your organisation. You can then plan to fill those gaps either through training or through recruiting new members.

The path ahead: Think about changes to your organisation’s circumstances. Have its financial structures become more complex? Is it looking to raise its profile with government? Does it need to collaborate more closely with other organisations or expand into new areas?

Succession planning: Think about the terms of office of existing trustees and the need to plan ahead for when people with key skills leave. What skills might need to be replaced in the next year or two? There are some practical exercises in the Governance Hub’s Trustee Recruitment Toolkit you could use – the toolkit is downloadable from the website.

Summarising: Prioritise your list. This process will highlight any additional skills required by the board to perform effectively. The results will feed into your recruitment process.

6. Fit for purpose – developing role descriptions and person specifications

Defining expectations: The responsibilities, knowledge and qualities set out in the Standards are an ideal starting point for writing role descriptions (covering responsibilities) and person specifications (covering the skills and experience needed). Preparing your own role description and person specification can help you to recruit the most suitable trustees or committee members. They also provide prospective trustees with clear information about what the role demands and what is expected of them. Role descriptions and person specifications can be used for recruitment, induction, in a review, for reference and to clarify the role.

Aim and outcome: Identify the key roles, responsibilities and qualities required of a potential or existing trustee or committee member for your organisation.

Research: Find out if your organisation already has any of this material for existing trustees. If it does, obtain copies and put them alongside the Standards. Look at what is missing or needs updating or re-wording. Think about anything specific to your organisation, for example, what particular kinds of experience or understanding are most relevant? Consider whether to structure the role description around the four headings of the Standards.

Target audience: Think about the language that you use and how readers will feel when they read the role description or person specifications. Look at trustee role descriptions used by other charities or similar organisations to help you. You could also look at trustee advertisements in newspapers or on other charity websites. Don’t forget to think about diversity too, such as attracting younger board members or trustees with different cultural backgrounds. You could try testing the role description with a few external people to get their views.

7. Set off on the right foot – planning induction

Aim and outcome: Induction must introduce trustees to all the information and documents they need to carry out governance. The objective is to build an effective trustee induction programme using the Standards and produce an induction checklist and/or pack to aid new trustees.

Assembling a pack: Each unit of the Standards sets out what trustees should have read and have access to in order to perform their role in that area competently. Each organisation needs to compile its own list as part of an induction pack. Think about what needs to be added too, such as relevant documents from the Charity Commission. Look at the list as a whole. Think of how these documents could be made easily accessible and understood, for example, placed in a special trustee area on a website.

Plan the tour: Use the responsibilities section in each unit to shape the induction programme. You might want to organise a tour of the buildings or projects or activities, or arrange buddy or peer support from an experienced board member, for example.

Keeping the team together: Ensure that the induction programme has someone who leads it or keeps in touch with new trustees as they move through the programme. You could use the Standards to review the programme after six months and use a list of unclear information or responsibilities to make an action plan for further development.

8. Walking at different speeds – identifying your needs and drawing up a learning plan

Trustees as learners: The Standards recognise that trustees have to learn to be effective; they don't arrive 'ready made'. This learning continues as trustees and boards grow and develop with their organisations, facing up to challenges and even crises.

Aim and outcome: Use the Standards to identify the knowledge and training gaps on the board by asking trustees to each list five or six areas each where they would like to learn more. Part of a board meeting can be spent discussing the results, including thinking about what knowledge may be required in the future. Trustees can then prioritise those areas needing attention. For example, in reflecting on Unit three of the Standards, 'ensure the organisation operates in an effective, responsible and accountable manner', trustees might create a chart that looks like this:

This unit requires...	Future challenges?	Covered or needs attention	How is it covered? How can it be covered?
Knowledge of employment requirements	Age discrimination legislation	Needs attention	Organise a briefing from a human resources advisor

This information (sometimes called a training needs analysis) can then be worked up into a detailed plan setting out the learning the board will undertake.

Establishing a framework: For each learning need, agree on: a time frame, the method of learning (for example, teacher or distance learning, during an away day, within a board meeting etc.), whether it is an individual/group need, how you will decide whether the learning was successful, and any costs involved.

Reporting where you are: Appoint a pair of trustees (perhaps with relevant experience) to manage the board learning plan project. This will give other trustees a focus and they can provide regular progress updates on any learning undertaken.

9. Maintaining momentum – reviewing and developing policies

Aim and outcome: Effective organisations have a regular system of review for their policies and procedures. This helps to ensure that the policies remain relevant to the organisation and change as legal requirements change. Trustees are responsible for the efficient and responsible operation of the organisation, and therefore for identifying, establishing and reviewing policies and procedures, as necessary. The Standards can be used to help trustees create a table of the policies their organisation ought to have in place and whether these policies require initial development or review.

Locating where you are: To get the process started you could devote some time at a board meeting to establishing the organisation's starting point. The board meeting would require careful preparation. If your organisation employs staff, for example, the board or management committee might want that an external person be organised to brief them about the demands of current employment and health and safety legislation and how those demands translate into policies.

Doing your homework: As background work for the meeting, trustees could be given plenty of warning to read through the Standards before the scheduled meeting and make a list of all the policy areas for which they would expect to have guidelines in place, such as equality and diversity, or the functioning and responsibilities of the board, or malpractice and misconduct. A member of staff or a trustee could also be tasked with compiling a list of all the policies already in existence and when they were last reviewed.

Making plans: Trustees could use the meeting to identify a composite list of policies that exist and a composite list of policies that require development. The information about existing policies could be put into a table with headings such as the name of the policy, any applicable legislation, the author or 'owner' of the policy, and the date when it is due for review. The information about 'missing' policies could be put into a table that identified the actions for developing a policy, such as whether further information or advice was needed, who would be responsible for writing the policy, the date by which it would need to be in place and the board or committee meeting at which it would be submitted for approval.

10. Measuring how far there is still to travel – assessing the board's performance

Aim and outcome: Taking time out to reflect on and assess your performance as a board or committee is important. It can sometimes be difficult to think strategically in the normal course of your work, so this kind of activity lends itself well to away days or other specially allotted periods of time. You should aim to produce action points during this time for improving and measuring your performance.

Steps: Allocate time as a group to working through the Standards. It might help to have a facilitator for this exercise to help you apply the following questions to each unit and fully explore the answers. What are we doing well? What are we not doing at all or not doing well? What else could we be doing? How will we address any failures or gaps? How will we measure our progress?

An example: You might choose to apply these questions to Unit one, 'Safeguard and promote the values and mission of the voluntary or community organisation'. In asking 'What else could we be doing?', for example, you might recognise that there are new opportunities to work with other organisations to promote your values or that you could engage donors and other stakeholders in a review of your values and mission. You might measure your success through greater public awareness of or interest in your activities, or through having carried out an extensive consultation exercise on your mission and values and having completed a review by a certain date.

Healthcheck: Think about building this self-appraisal process into your cycle of work, perhaps as an annual check and reflection on the journey of your organisation and how effectively you are steering it in the right direction.

Travelling further

This guide draws ideas from the *Trustee & Management Committee Members National Occupational Standards Toolkit*. The toolkit is designed to provide trustees and others with the practical tools and signposting needed to use the Trustee Standards. There is a resources section at the end of the toolkit. It is available in hard copy for £15 from the Governance Hub or as a free download from the Hub website, www.governancehub.org.uk

The toolkit refers to the full text of the *National Occupational Standards for Trustees and Management Committee Members*, which is published separately but should be used in conjunction with the toolkit. The text of the Standards is available as a PDF download on the Workforce Hub website, www.ukworkforcehub.org.uk. The Standards are also available in hard copy from the Workforce Hub. The pocket size edition of the Standards costs £1 from either Hub.

For details of other resources relating to the Trustee Standards, visit the pages about the Standards on both Hub websites.

For help using the Standards with your board or committee, you could contact your local council for voluntary services (CVS).

Resources that can help: websites and publications

Trusteeship and governance

Governance Hub

www.governancehub.org.uk

National Council for Voluntary Organisations

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/askncvo

The Charity Commission

www.charity-commission.gov.uk

Directory of Social Change

www.dsc.org.uk

Other websites with useful resources include:

Bromley Community Links

www.communitylinksbromley.org.uk

NAVCA

www.navca.org.uk

Islington Voluntary Action Council

www.ivac.org.uk

Governance magazine

www.charitygovernance.co.uk

Support and networking for trustees

Charity Trustee Networks

www.trusteenetworks.org.uk

e-learning for trustees

'Learning to drive'

www.savo-elearning.org

Community Matters: The National Federation of Community Organisations
www.visiblecommunities.org.uk

Good Governance: A Code for the Voluntary and Community Sector
www.governancehub.org.uk

The Good Trustee Guide, Peter Dyer, NCVO, 2004

The Good Governance Action Plan, Sandy Adirondack, NCVO, 2002

The Good Governance Action Plan Workbook, Tesse Akpeki, NCVO, 2005

CC3: The Essential Trustee, Charity Commission, 2005

CC60: The Hallmarks of an Effective Charity, Charity Commission, 2004

The Trustee Pathway, CD-Rom

SAVO (Suffolk Association of Voluntary Organisations) www.savo.co.uk

The Charity Trustee's Handbook, Mike Eastwood, DSC Publications, 2001

Tending your Board: A seasonal guide to improving the way your board works,
Bassac/Governance Hub, 2005

Trust Youth: What being a trustee means for children and young people and how to recruit them,
BYC, CRAE and the Governance Hub, 2006

The National Occupational Standards for Trustees and Management Committee Members
www.ukworkforcehub.org.uk

*How are you doing? Using National Occupational Standards to enable people to achieve professional
and personal goals*, NCVO, 2004
www.ukworkforcehub.org.uk

National Occupational Standards (NOS)

Further resources to assist you to use the NOS for trustees are available from the
Governance Hub website www.governancehub.org.uk

Workforce Hub

www.workforcehub.org.uk

Skills for Business

www.ukstandards.org

Quality standards

The Charities Evaluation Services
www.ces-vol.org.uk

This guide provides advice for small charities, local community organisations and frontline organisations on using the **National Occupational Standards for Trustee and Management Committee Members**.

The **Trustee Standards Itinerary** is produced by the Governance Hub and provides a useful introduction to using the National Occupational Standards to improve governance within smaller organisations.

The Governance Hub exists to improve governance within the voluntary and community sector in England by:

- increasing the supply of trustees
- enhancing trustee learning and development
- strengthening and extending support services for trustees.

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