

Snowsport England Board Evaluation

Interim summary

1. Introduction

In May 2021, Snowsport England (SE) conducted an External Board Evaluation process, funded by Sport England. This is an external evaluation of the Board that is expected to be completed every 4 years, as a Tier 3 requirement of Sport England's Code for Sports Governance. This is not a compliance check, it is designed to provide an evaluation of the current governance position and systems to enable Snowsport England to build on opportunities to become stronger.

This interim summary of the full Board Evaluation has been created to share key recommendations with the wider sport and key stakeholders, and to lay out the steps that Snowsport England will be working towards to progress Board effectiveness.

It is important to note that this review was conducted remotely and in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, which had a dramatic impact across sporting organisations. For Snowsport England, this focused on 'battening down the hatches' and survival – furloughing, shorter weeks, reducing expenditure etc. – and concentration on short-term matters. This survival mode impacted the kinds of strategic conversations the Board could have and halted the drive to develop some planned elements, including more robust performance management. A new Chair and Board members were also on-boarded during this time, and the induction process was not as straightforward as it might have been for them.

2. Recommendations

There were 5 key recommendations generated by the report for the SE Board to action. Each recommendation is set out below:

- **Recommendation 1:** Board and staff to develop a longer-term strategy for SE, with clear measures of success
 - There is a need to move away from short-term thinking and have a clear strategy for the longer term, establishing ambitions and priorities whilst revisiting the vision and mission to confirm the strategic objectives
 - As well as allowing the Board to have a grip on objectives and strategic risks, this would allow the operational staff to be held to account on performance and delivery to those objectives
 - Update: A five-to-ten-year strategic plan has been written. The focus over the initial 12 months will be to ensure that this is implemented in line with the Year 1 priorities and objectives.
- **Recommendation 2:** SE needs to address effective leadership, including clarity of role expectations and performance from: the Board collectively, and on an individual Board member level; the Executive; the Chair; the CEO; and the rest of the staff team.
 - The Board and Executive need training about good governance and its role
 - Performance thresholds need to be set for the Board, so each individual can be clear on the commitment, contribution, support and investment required



- A skills matrix for the Board should be agreed, with an audit of all members to identify key strengths and weaknesses in expertise and learning
- A formalised appraisal process for Board, including the Chair, and staff should be conducted annually, with Board effectiveness also discussed annually
- Update: Leadership is one of the strategic priorities of the organisation and much of this area will be picked up in the implementation plan. In addition, the Board is currently undergoing a “skills audit” to assist with future development and appointments.
- **Recommendation 3:** Improve the conduct of Board business
 - This recommendation relates to operational areas to assist in the improvement of Board business, including, but not limited to:
 - Development of current template papers and board pack (i.e. items labelled as ‘for decision/action/reference’ and circulated in a timely manner)
 - Agendas that provide the opportunity for Board input
 - Clarity of decision making from meetings
 - Improving finance and risk management
 - Update: In progress
- **Recommendation 4:** Relationship building needs to take place: within the Board, with the Executive and with operational staff
 - With a number of new non-executives on the Board, this is an important outcome for building rapport and pulling together as a coherent unit with a collective voice and a shared sense of priorities
 - The Board should plan in person opportunities to build internal relationships and share perspectives on significant topics such as the new Sport England strategy
 - More informal opportunities for Board members to connect and understand their backgrounds and experiences should be implemented, to build individual confidence to contribute to meetings. This should extend to the operational staff
 - Update: Once the new operational team and additional board members are in place this work will be undertaken.
- **Recommendation 5:** Create a stronger architecture around the relationship with committees – which should be tied to different aspects of landing the SE Strategy, with collective understanding about respective roles
 - It is important for committees to be clear about their ‘commission’ from the Board, so they are not operating in silos or with the absence of a strategic framework. This will help maximise effectiveness, as will confirming which decisions the Board and the committees respectively own
 - The Board should periodically receive brief reports from committee chairs and/or the CEO should include committee matters in his overview reports
 - Consideration should be given to an annual meeting of committee Chairs with the Chair of the Board, to ensure cross-working. Committee Chairs could be included in relevant Board training, particularly around, for example, diversity and inclusion
 - Committee chairs invited annually to attend one board meeting
 - Update: Outstanding