

Board of Directors Building a Learning Community

Since March 2016, the SLA Board has been involved in a variety of learning opportunities to support their work in governance. In March, Gloria DiSantis from the U of R presented an overview of governance by Boards, and different types of governance. In April the Board took in 3 webinars related to diversity and governance. At the August retreat, an in depth discussion was held to synthesize the learning and recommended changes to the way SLA operates. One of the big questions was related to evaluation, which was addressed in the September webinar on Board, CEO, Staff, and Volunteer Evaluation. At the October board meeting, held in LaRonge, the Sunday evening discussion focused on the last webinar with the following results suggestions to two questions:

Impact on the way SLA Currently Works:

- Measuring what you are looking for – does the strategic plan say what we are looking for as impact and what are the indicators.
- We don't take the time to reflect on impact of the activities.
- Need to make time to discuss the strategic plan (e.g. summer retreat, share with committees, mid-point review).
- To be mindful that the organization and procedures of the association may differ from your own workplace.
- Risk analysis and emergency preparedness need to be considered. **NOTE:** SLA's current investment strategy is to have 6 months operating expenses plus funds in restricted funds in the event of a withdrawal of SaskCulture funding.
- Need to be positioned to respond to trends and issues.

Recommended Changes to Current Practice:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of meetings.
- Evaluate the number (and location) of meetings.
- Board needs to be conscious of need for coaching at committee level. There was significant feedback on the value of participation in various SLA activities and committees and how these levels of learning can better prepare membership for board roles and to ease apprehension.
- Board needs to evaluate its own work.
- Input from members in a "scrum" type conference event can provide feedback on the strategic plan, board effectiveness, etc.
- Staff and board appraisals need to be simplified

After the meeting, Board members were asked to fill in a short survey indicating how they felt about learning together about their governance work; on the whole the response to the past events was favourable with a continued interest in being involved in other events. In answer to the question of why this has been a useful activity, the board provided the following comments:

- Vital for board members to see bigger picture of serving on a board besides just attending meetings and doing committee work.
- Learn more about how SLA functions with having a staff, board, and practicing good governance.

- Revisiting the strat plan in summer retreat has worked well and also a chance for people to bond socially.
- Renewed membership for the Executive Director in the Canadian Society of Association Executives (CSAE) is likely needed to have continue to have access to webinars and training opportunities.