

# BETTER GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

## TOWARD BETTER GOVERNANCE

Governance is a broad and multi-dimensional concept. It's about oversight, steering, and directing, which can occur in 3 different spheres:

### ► ORGANIZATIONAL:

how sport organizations direct and manage the allocation of resources as well as their financial and non-financial profits and losses through ethically informed standards, norms and values

### ► SYSTEMIC:

how organizations interact (for example, mutual adjustments, competition and cooperation) within a given system like the Canadian sport system

### ► POLITICAL:

how governing bodies and governments steer sport organizations

**Better sport governance is an ethically informed steering of a sport organization or system's structures and practices. This includes overseeing management, making decisions, allocating resources, integrating stakeholder voices, and rendering accounts.**

At the organizational level, good governance is of particular interest. This is especially the case given the governance issues seen at national

and international levels (for example, corruption, conflicts of interest, and match fixing). Good governance has its roots in the corporate world. It considers who has power, who makes decisions, how stakeholders' voices are included, and how accounts are rendered.

Although good governance is still a popular term, it leads to the idea of "good" versus "bad" governance. Instead, there's a trend to replace the term with better or improved governance to acknowledge that all (sport) organizations can do better in terms of their governance. Better governance means following ethically informed standards.

**Table 1. Examples of governance principles from around the world**

SOURCE	PRINCIPLES
Australian Sports Commission (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values-driven culture and behaviours</li> <li>• Aligning sport through collaborative governance</li> <li>• Clear vision to inform strategy</li> <li>• Diverse board for considered decision-making</li> <li>• Documents outlining duties, powers, roles, and responsibilities</li> <li>• Board processes for accountability and transparency</li> <li>• System to ensure integrity</li> <li>• Systems of internal review for continuous improvement</li> </ul>
Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Integrity</li> <li>• Stewardship</li> <li>• Transparency</li> </ul>
Chappelet and Mrkonjic (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparency and public communication</li> <li>• Democratic processes</li> <li>• Checks and balances</li> <li>• Solidarity</li> </ul>
De Waegeneer and Willem (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory</li> <li>• Consensus oriented</li> <li>• Accountable</li> <li>• Transparent</li> <li>• Responsive</li> <li>• Effective and efficient</li> <li>• Equitable and inclusive</li> <li>• Following rules of the game</li> </ul>
International Olympic Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision, mission, and strategy</li> <li>• Structures, regulations, and democratic process</li> <li>• Highest level of competence, integrity, and ethical standards</li> <li>• Accountability, transparency, and control</li> <li>• Solidarity and development</li> <li>• Athlete involvement, participation, and care</li> <li>• Harmonious relations with governments while preserving autonomy</li> </ul>
Play the Game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Democracy</li> <li>• Internal accountability and control</li> <li>• Societal responsibility</li> </ul>
Sport and Recreation Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased trust</li> <li>• Funding access</li> <li>• Leadership direction</li> <li>• Better decisions</li> <li>• Managing risk</li> <li>• Increased transparency</li> <li>• Growing potential</li> </ul>
United Nations Development Program (UNDP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legitimacy and voice</li> <li>• Direction</li> <li>• Performance</li> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Fairness</li> </ul>
Zintz and Gérard (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrity</li> <li>• Autonomy and accountability</li> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Democracy, participation, and inclusivity</li> </ul>



When looking to improve your governance, include structures, practices, processes, and outcomes, such as:

<p>▶▶ <b>STRUCTURES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board structure and composition</li> <li>• Board and organizational commissions</li> <li>• Constitution and by-laws</li> <li>• Organizational structure</li> <li>• Delegation and separation of powers</li> </ul>	<p>▶▶ <b>PRACTICES AND PROCESSES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Control</li> <li>• Compliance</li> <li>• Autonomy</li> <li>• Board processes</li> <li>• Democracy and decision making</li> <li>• Integrity</li> <li>• Stakeholder engagement</li> <li>• Strategic focus</li> <li>• Sustainability</li> <li>• Transparency</li> </ul>	<p>▶▶ <b>OUTCOMES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate social responsibility</li> <li>• Effectiveness</li> <li>• Efficiency</li> <li>• Equality and inclusivity</li> <li>• Organizational resilience</li> </ul>
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At a minimum, consider adopting the following: **transparency, accountability**, and **democracy**. Finally, funders, government, and governing bodies should align their governance expectations with organizations’ capacities.

Table 2. Definitions and examples of key better governance principles.

DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
<p>▶▶ <b>TRANSPARENCY</b> refers to the accurate and timely disclosure of all materials, whether financial, performance or other, for the organization as a whole or a particular decision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reporting decision-making processes and outcomes in an open and accurate manner.</li> </ul>
<p>▶▶ <b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b> can take many forms. Internally, it can be administrative or financial. Externally, it can be legal, professional, personal or political/electoral in nature. Accountability and transparency are often discussed together, whereby transparency helps an organization be accountable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accurately reporting financial statements in a timely manner.</li> <li>- Having a governing body oversee budgetary matters and organizational performance.</li> <li>- Reporting to members who elect you.</li> </ul>
<p>▶▶ <b>DEMOCRACY</b> refers to an organization having electoral processes in place as well as to the participation of stakeholders in an organization’s decision-making processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Having a regular (annual) general meeting where members of the governing body are elected.</li> <li>- Having stakeholders or partners be involved in strategic planning and other key organizational decisions and processes.</li> </ul>

*This report was prepared for SIRC by Milena M. Parent. It is based on the research paper:*

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## Key resources for further reading on better governance

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