



association of family
health teams of ontario

SKILLS-BASED BOARD TOOLKIT for FHTs and NPLCs

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Prepared by Collaborative Solutions

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Table of Contents

A. Introduction	3
1. Purpose of this Toolkit	3
2. Skills-Based Board Requirements in New FHT Contract	4
B. Background/Context	5
1. Why Board Skills are Increasingly Important	5
2. Clarifying Terms: Board Membership versus Board Composition	6
3. Common Concerns About a “Skills-Based” Board	7
4. Other Considerations Related to Board Composition	9
C. Developing an Enhanced Skills Matrix	10
1. A Four-Part Approach to Board Composition	10
2. Developing or Enhancing Your Board’s Composition Matrix	11
D. Enhancing the Skills-Based Capacity of the Board	13
Step 1. Assess and Identify Skills Gaps	13
Step 2. Develop a Plan to Enhance Board Skills	14
Step 3. Focus Recruitment to Address Gaps	16
Step 4. Enhance Board Skills Through Education	16
E. Using This Toolkit	17
APPENDIX A – MOHLTC-FHT Contract Schedule A – Appendix 2	18
APPENDIX B – Sample Board Composition Planning Tool	19
APPENDIX B – Sample Board Composition Planning Tool (continued)	20
APPENDIX C – Sample Four-Part Board Skills Matrix	21
APPENDIX D – Sample Board Recruitment Letter (External)	22
APPENDIX E – Sample Board Recruitment Letter (Internal)	23

SKILLS BASED BOARD TOOLKIT FOR FHTs and NPLCs

A. Introduction

1. Purpose of this Toolkit

In March 2018, Family Health Teams (FHT) in Ontario entered into a new four-year funding agreement with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). The contract sets specific Governance Requirements to be integrated into each FHT's written governance structure. One of these requirements identifies a set of specific skills that a FHT must have on the Board through its Board membership or have access to through other means as it performs its governance role. As a condition of continued funding, each FHT must attest annually that this skills requirement is met.

The primary purpose of this toolkit is to support FHTs in meeting the skills-based Board requirements in the new contract. The toolkit provides an overview of current thinking about Board skills and skills-based Boards as well as practical tools and tips for enhancing the skills capacity of any Board. In this way, the toolkit is intended also to be of use by those FHTs that already meet the Board skills requirements of the new contract and by Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics (NPLC) in considering the skills and composition of their Boards.

In creating the toolkit, it was understood that Ontario's FHTs have one of three governance models - provider-based, community-based, or mixed community/provider-based - while all NPLCs have a mixed provider-community model. A provider-based governance model has a Board comprised only of providers (likely physicians within the FHT) whereas a community-based governance model has a Board comprised of individuals from the broader community. A mixed community/provider-based governance model has a Board comprised of both providers and members of the broader community. It is important to note that these three terms refer directly to the *membership of the Board* and not to the broader membership of the FHT or NPLC corporation as defined in its Bylaw.

Regardless of governance model, every FHT and NPLC Board has the same accountability for effective governance and relies on a high level of skill, knowledge and experience amongst its Board members to meet that requirement. This toolkit is designed therefore to be informative for and adaptable by all FHT and NPLC Boards regardless of your governance model. Where there are specific considerations or tips for one particular model mentioned in the toolkit, they are clearly identified in the text.

Finally, this toolkit is intended to align with and enhance the governance resources already available to AFHTO members, including the AFHTO [Fundamentals of Governance](#) handbook and its accompanying document [Fundamentals of Governance: Tools, Examples and Templates](#).

2. Skills-Based Board Requirements in New FHT Contract

Schedule A – Appendix 1 of the new FHT contract outlines certain Governance Requirements to be integrated into each FHT’s written governance structure. One of these is a set of skills that a Board must have access to, either amongst its Board members or through other mechanisms, as the Board fulfills its governance role. As part of continued funding, a FHT must demonstrate annually that it is making best efforts to meet this requirement¹. The contract states:

“The [FHT] shall use its best efforts to ensure that its board of directors possess skills in the following areas: strategic planning, clinical skills, program development, adequate finance, risk management, human resources, and planning. If the [FHT] has identified gaps in these skills, it shall make best efforts to address gaps through education or by retaining external expertise. The [FHT] shall provide an updated attestation in the form attached as Schedule A – Appendix 2 with each Annual Financial Report”. (MOHLTC/FHT Funding Agreement, Schedule A, Appendix 1)

The form in Schedule A - Appendix 2, titled “*Skills-Based Board Matrix*”, offers further clarification of the required skills as well as confirmation that the Board can acquire these skills in ways other than Board membership. The form (provided as Appendix A in this toolkit for easy reference) includes:

- **Nine categories of required Board knowledge/skill/experience** for the Board: Strategic Planning, Clinical Skills, Program Development, Human Resources Management, Financial Management/Audit, Risk Management, Quality Improvement, Performance Measurement, and Governance/Accountability Management.
- **Space to identify additional “optional” skills** such as Legal, Dispute Resolution, Conflict of Interest, Public Complaints, IT, Community Relations, and Capital Planning.

Where the FHT’s own assessment shows that a listed skills category is not currently found on the Board, the form provides space to describe how the FHT plans to acquire this skill in other ways, such as through community members/external resources on Board committees, or special advisors to support the Board.

Each year the FHT is required to submit the form following its assessment of the knowledge/skills/experience of each Board member in the nine categories (plus optional skills if included by the FHT).

¹ MOHLTC has confirmed that the requirement to make best efforts to ensure the FHT’s Board of Directors possesses the skills described in Appendix 1 will be enforced one (1) year from the effective date of the FHT Agreement.

B. Background/Context

1. Why Board Skills are Increasingly Important

An effective and skilled Board is an essential part of a high performing organization². The Board's ability to fulfill its role with a high degree of skill and competence has a direct impact on the success of the organization it governs:

“Good governance, combined with strong management and a committed staff team can: be a positive force for change and innovation, provide leadership (within the organization and outside), build social capital, and ensure the organization achieves its goals and purpose, and uses its resources wisely and effectively. A poorly governed organization will rarely achieve success in meeting its performance goals. A high performing Board will provide the leadership, stewardship and oversight that will guide and enable organizational success” .
(AFHTO *Fundamentals of Governance*, p. 19)

The Board's role, and the resulting skills required of its members, naturally evolve over time as the organization matures. The Board of a new entity may focus largely on its fiduciary duties (ensuring the organization meets its legal and financial obligations, and overseeing organizational performance) while over time it will find it easier to fulfill those duties and spend more time on larger, more strategic and future-focused matters.

The Board's capacity to provide effective governance leadership must evolve as the organization itself evolves in response to new opportunities and stakeholder requirements, such as funders. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Ontario healthcare where ongoing health system transformation includes new roles and accountabilities for health provider organizations and increased expectations for Boards to provide strong governance leadership for both their own organization and the health system as a whole. Specifically, health provider Boards are now expected to:

- Demonstrate they have the skills and processes necessary for key governance functions such as financial oversight, strategic planning, risk management and performance management of the ED/CEO.
- Be knowledgeable about quality and play a direct leadership role in quality improvement.

² There are many articles in the published literature identifying Board skills and a skills-based approach to Board composition as essential for a high performing Board. One such article is: “Creating a High Performance Board”, Harvard Business Review, available at <https://johnspence.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/HBR-High-Performance-Boards.pdf>

- Understand the profile and needs of the population their organization serves as well as the profile and needs of the broader community.
- Be aware of marginalized populations and the barriers they face in accessing and using healthcare services, and ensure the organization takes a health equity approach in planning and delivering health services.
- Ensure the organization engages patients, families and caregivers and take their input into account in the Board's own planning, priority setting and oversight of the organization.
- Report to funders on governance practices and fulfillment of key governance standards such as managing conflicts of interest.
- Contribute to greater integration and collaboration across the health system, including building relationships with Boards of other healthcare organizations.

All of these developments are causing Boards across the health system to look closely at the skills, knowledge and expertise that they need around their Board tables. For FHTs, these expectations are clearly reflected in the governance requirements outlined in the new FHT contract and in the specific list of Board skills that FHTs are required to demonstrate that the Board either has amongst its membership or has access to through other arrangements.

2. Clarifying Terms: Board Membership versus Board Composition

There are two components to the make-up of any Board – 1) the group of people who sit around the Board table and 2) the combination individual characteristics that each person in the group brings to the Board. It is important to be clear which component you are talking about when discussing a skills-based Board. For the purpose of this toolkit:

- **“Board membership”** refers to the **group of individuals** who sit around the Board table. Board membership is defined by the rules set out in the organization's Bylaw, including who is eligible to be a Board member, the process for election to the Board by the organization's members, and whether certain seats on the Board are designated for a person or persons elected by a certain group of the organization's members.
- **“Board composition”** refers to the **combination of individual skills, experience, qualifications and personal characteristics** that all Board members together bring to the Board. Board composition tends not to be defined in the organization/corporation's Bylaw but rather in Board policy and related tools such as a Board skills matrix.

Talking about a skills-based Board is clearly about Board composition not Board membership but the two are inextricably linked. If the Bylaw defining who is eligible to sit on the Board limits Board membership to those belonging to a group of people with highly similar skills and experience, it is more challenging to achieve the diversity of skills and experience needed for effective functioning of a Board.

The new FHT contract does not require FHTs to change their Board membership but some FHTs, especially those with a provider-based model, may be challenged to meet the new skills requirements without also considering expanding who is eligible to sit on the Board. Where the FHT’s Board membership is defined in its Bylaw, a Bylaw change will be needed following the process outlined in the Bylaw.

3. Common Concerns About a “Skills-Based” Board

There are several common concerns that people think of when they hear the term “skills-based Board”. Many of these can be addressed by a clearer differentiation between Board membership and Board composition, a different approach to the skills matrix, and clear processes for using identified skills gaps to inform recruitment and ongoing Board skills development.

The following is a summary of common concerns and how the approaches and tools discussed in the remainder of this toolkit address them.

CONCERN	HOW IT IS ADDRESSED
The board will be populated by people who have professional qualifications (such as legal, accounting) but are disconnected from our membership and our organization’s purpose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Every Board member, regardless of background and how they came to the Board, must <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o act in the best interests of the organization and its membership o be committed to the Mission of the organization. - It is the Board’s and organization’s responsibility to ensure proper orientation of new Board members and ongoing education of Directors so they take the membership, priorities, programs and community into account in all decisions.
We would need a very large Board to have all the skills listed on our skills matrix sitting around the Board table.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each Board member brings a range of experiences, skills, knowledge and personal characteristics. - Existing Board members can develop new expertise to fill a Board gap (i.e. a Board member taking courses on quality to become the Board’s quality expert).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The recruitment process needs to be robust enough to identify candidates with the desired profiles – these people exist, the challenge is finding them. This includes reaching beyond the personal contacts of existing Board members. - Each skill listed on the matrix is not necessarily needed on the Board all the times (i.e. capital planning expertise). - The Board can access specific expertise in other ways if/when needed (i.e. hiring a lawyer to advise the Board, or having an IT expert join a Board committee).
<p>We don't control who volunteers for the Board so we cannot predict or control the makeup of the Board.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Composition of the Board is a core responsibility of the Board and it needs to be proactive about recruiting and managing the makeup of the Board. - Unsolicited candidate applications should always be welcome but there must also be a focused recruitment effort when specific skills gaps exist. - Recruitment communications can clearly state the specific experience or characteristics the Board is looking for (see Appendix D and E).
<p>We don't want to lose a really good candidate because they don't fill the one skills gap we need to fill this year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Judgement is needed in assessing every candidate. If a candidate brings important experience to the Board but not the one particular skill the Board needs now, consider different options, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o bring them on the Board anyway and fill that skill gap next year (only if not urgent and you are sure there will be further vacancies next year) o invite them to join a Board committee to engage them until another Board vacancy opens up.
<p>There is no way to have a representative of every community or every sub-population in our community on our Board.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - While people come to the Board from certain groups, once around the table they cannot "represent" the interests of one group over another - they must act in the interests of the organization as a whole. - The goal is to have a range of backgrounds and perspectives to "reflect" the diversity of the community, not to have people "represent" every specific group.
<p>Skills such as HR and IT are the purview of management – it is their job to provide this expertise and the Board shouldn't be doing management's job.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is true that most of the specific skills areas considered important for the Board are also needed by management. - The distinction is that Boards need this knowledge not to do (or re-do) management's work but rather to properly assess management's recommendations and make informed decisions based on, but independent of, information provided by management.

4. Other Considerations Related to Board Composition

There are several other aspects of governance to consider when implementing a skills-based approach to Board composition.

- **Size of the Board** – The number of Board positions directly impacts how easy or hard it is to achieve a desired level of diversity around the Board table. The fewer Board positions, the greater need to attract individuals with a wider variety of skills, experience and personal attributes and these people can often be most difficult to identify.

- **Organizational capacity to support a highly skilled Board** – A highly skilled governance Board relies on an equally high level of organizational support and staff expertise to do its work. Governance and organizational policies, management support and reporting to the Board, and governance processes such as committee work and recruitment all need to function at a higher level to support the Board. Smaller organizations can be challenged to provide the staff expertise and the organizational resources required to support the Board.

- **Alignment of governance model with new skills requirements and organizational accountabilities** – This toolkit focuses on enhancing the skills-based capacity of the Board *within* the FHT/NPLC’s current governance model. For some FHTs, however, the new Board skills requirements and increased expectations to align with community and health system goals may cause a FHT to assess whether its current governance model needs to evolve. This would require the following steps³:
 - Review/revise existing Bylaw requirements related to Board eligibility, nomination and election process, Board size and composition.
 - Identify changes needed, if any, to membership of the corporation (the people who elect the Board) and identify/discuss options.
 - Consult with existing corporation members about options and support for a future direction. Their support will be needed if a change of Bylaw is required.
 - Develop a step by step process for member communications and approval, including calling a special meeting of the members if required.

³ These steps are intended only as examples. Any FHT considering changes to their governance model should be guided by their Bylaw and unique circumstances. AFHTO will provide advice and support if requested. A webinar describing one FHT’s experience moving from a provider-based to a mixed provider/community-based model is available on the AFHTO website ([Strategies for Building and Maintaining an Effective Board](#)).

C. Developing an Enhanced Skills Matrix

1. A Four-Part Approach to Board Composition

A high functioning Board is comprised of individuals with the range of knowledge, expertise, experience and personal attributes that, put together, enables the Board to fulfill its role on behalf of the FHT/NPLC's Members and other stakeholders.

When thinking about the Board composition there are multiple factors to consider - Bylaw requirements for Board membership, key skills and knowledge for governance leadership, and diversity of individual skills and perspectives to reflect the people and community served. Yet very often a Board skills matrix focuses only on a small subset of these – the professional qualifications or skills.

This toolkit presents a more holistic approach to thinking about Board composition that includes, but is not limited to, those skills. It provides a framework for thinking about the different aspects of Board composition through four sequential filters:



Each filter is described in detail below and a sample Board Composition Planning tool using the four filters is found in Appendix B.

There are several points to keep in mind when looking at the composition planning tool in relation to your FHT/NPLC Board:

- Many FHTs and NPLCs already take this broader approach when thinking about Board composition – Appendix B is a suggested approach to document this thinking.

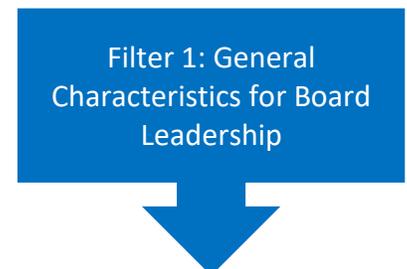
- There is no “one-size fits all” approach to the make-up of a Board. The tool is a guide and each FHT/NPLC can customize the content of each filter.
- The tool is not intended as a checklist of equally important characteristics. Some are “must-haves” (i.e. the skills required by MOHLTC in the new FHT contract) while others may be “nice to have but optional”.
- The complete list of “must-have” and “optional” characteristics of a Board may change over time depending on the FHT/NPLC’s priorities and circumstances. For example, if the FHT/NPLC is undertaking a significant capital project, the desire to have someone on the Board with capital planning or capital financing expertise could be moved from “optional” to a “must have” governance skill for at least the period of the capital project.
- Once the Board composition planning tool is developed for your own Board, it becomes a reference for the Board’s annual recruitment efforts and its use can be integrated into existing Board policies on Board recruitment and nomination/election.

2. Developing or Enhancing Your Board’s Composition Matrix

This section provides a step-by-step discussion of how to develop or enhance your FHT/NPLC’s Board skills matrix. A sample tool is included as Appendix B.

Filter 1: General Characteristics for Board Leadership

This filter confirms the expectation that **every Board member** will demonstrate a commitment to the FHT/NPLC and certain leadership characteristics required of every Board member. It establishes a common foundation of commitment and performance across the Board and addresses the often-heard criticism that a skills-based Board results in a group of highly skilled professionals but with no commitment to the organization. This filter could include the following:



- that the Board member is, or will become, a member of the corporation (likely required in your FHT/NPLC Bylaw).
- that they are committed to the FHT/NPLC Mission.
- the general leadership skills expected of each Board member such as working collaboratively and willing to commit the time required.
- that each Board member commits to following the FHT/NPLC’s conflict of interest rules.
- any other requirements of Board members stated in the Bylaw or identified by the FHT/NPLC.

Filter 2: Characteristics to Reflect the Membership and Mission

This filter sets out the desired profile **of the Board as a whole** to reflect the FHT/NPLC membership and its Mission. It provides a place to document any Board membership or composition requirements set out in the Bylaw and to establish any other characteristics your FHT/NPLC feels are essential to reflect the members or Mission at the Board table. It could include:

- different geographic areas if your FHT/NPLC covers a large and/or diverse geographic area and it is important to have Board members from different regions.
- different FHT/NPLC programs (such as mental health, addictions, geriatrics) if there is a desire to have Board members with knowledge of various programs across the organization.
- (if your FHT membership includes physicians and/or there are physicians on the Board) a cross-section of physician characteristics including practice area, stage of practice, practice setting and practice type.
- a variety of physician services group types if there are multiple in your FHT.
- any other characteristic deemed important to reflect your FHT/NPLC membership and Mission.

Filter 2: Characteristics to
Reflect the Members and
Mission



Filter 3: Skills and Expertise for Effective Governance

This filter focuses on the skills and expertise required **on the Board as a whole**. A skill may be held by one or more individuals on the Board but it is expected that at least one person will have more than a general level of knowledge. For FHTs, this filter would include at minimum the skills listed in the new FHT contract.

- skills considered essential for at least one person to have on the Board to support the Board's governance role and responsibilities, including:
 - o Clinical/Program Management
 - o Human Resources Management
 - o Financial Management/Audit
 - o Risk Management
 - o Strategic Planning
 - o Quality Improvement
 - o Performance Measurement
 - o Governance/Accountability Management

Filter 3: Skills and
Expertise for Effective
Governance



- other skills such as Legal, Dispute Resolution, Conflict of Interest, Public Complaints, IT, Community Relations, Capital Planning.

Filter 4: Individual Characteristics to Reflect Our Community

This final filter provides a place for the FHT/NPLC to identify the extent to which the **Board as a whole** should reflect the diversity of the community. Some Boards consider this a priority given their membership and Mission and make extra effort to reach out and attract qualified Board members from many different parts of the community. It is up to your FHT/NPLC to determine your own approach and whether certain characteristics are more important given your membership, your patient population and your community. This filter could include:

- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Language
- Specific ethnic/racialized/cultural groups
- Other populations or groups in the community.

Filter 4: Individual
Characteristics to Reflect
Our Community



D. Enhancing the Skills-Based Capacity of the Board

This section outlines four steps to enhancing the skills-based capacity of the Board building on the approach to Board composition described above. On many Boards, the actions described below are delegated to a nominating or governance committee but for ease of reading, they are described here as actions of the Board.

Step 1. Assess and Identify Skills Gaps

Some Boards review their Board makeup annually while others do it infrequently or as vacancies occur. It is governance best practice to assess the Board's composition annually to ensure it has the skills needed to fulfill its governance role. The assessment also helps to inform skills priorities for future recruitment and ongoing Board discussions about succession planning on the Board. The FHT contract requirement that FHTs review their Board skills annually is in line with this practice.

The skills matrix is a key tool for assessing the overall makeup of the Board and each Board can create a matrix to reflect the complete set of characteristics, skills and experience desired on the Board.

Appendix A is a copy of the skills matrix required by MOHLTC and it focuses on required skills and experience to be found on the Board, or accessible to the Board through other means. Appendix C is a sample of a broader skills matrix built upon the four filters of the Board composition tool on Appendix B, with the MOHLTC skills requirements included within.

The matrix is filled in with profiles of each Board member. Often each Board member completes their own profile and these are compiled into a single matrix for the Board. Once a Board member's profile is completed the first time, they can simply update it in subsequent years. For example, a Board member who has recently completed a course in risk management may now rate their risk management skills as a "3" rather than a "1" as identified in the past.

Once there is a composite picture of the Board's current makeup, the Board can then assess whether there are certain characteristics or skills missing on the Board that need to be filled through future recruitment, Board education or by accessing the expertise in other ways.

There are a few other things to keep in mind when assessing your Board's current composition:

- Some skills gaps are most easily identified (such as whether there is a financial or legal expert on the Board) but identifying gaps in other aspects of Board makeup, such as whether the Board adequately reflects an appropriate cross-section of the physician membership is more of a judgement call by those doing the assessment.
- It is not uncommon for some individuals filling in a Board skills matrix to rate their own skills more highly than others might. This is not an exact science and the Board must use its own judgement in assessing whether additional expertise is needed by the Board.
- Having someone on the Board with a specific qualification or high level of skill enhances Board discussions but does not make that person solely responsible for that area of Board decision making. Decisions are made by the Board as a whole and every Board member is responsible to ensure they feel properly informed and understand the issues before making a decision.
- Underlying any assessment of Board skills is the assumption that the Board is supported by an effective and experienced management team. Assessing the Board's composition is about determining the optimal makeup of the Board to fulfill its fiduciary, strategic and oversight responsibilities, not to take the place of or to re-do the work of management.

Step 2. Develop a Plan to Enhance Board Skills

The main goal of building a skills-based Board is always to achieve the most highly skilled and experienced group of people as possible around the Board table. While the surest way to achieve this is to recruit skilled people to the Board, there are other approaches to bringing needed skills and expertise to the Board. The following are strengths and challenges of various common approaches.

APPROACH	STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES
Recruit someone to the Board with specific skills/expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brings the expertise right onto the Board where it is part of part of all Board deliberations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be challenging to find and recruit a suitable candidate.
Support the education of one or several Board members interested in a specific subject or skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brings the expertise right onto the Board where it is part of part of all Board deliberations. - Provides a benefit to the volunteer Board member. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cost of Board education programs and courses. - Additional time commitment for the volunteer Board member.
Increase the whole Board's knowledge of a key area of Board responsibility (such as quality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Up-skills the whole Board which improves overall Board functioning in a subject area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some areas (such as financial, legal) require a higher level of expertise than the whole Board is likely to develop.
Hire an expert to advise the Board on specific topics or Board matters (such as legal or IT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides the Board with specialized expertise when needed. - Engaging the same expert over time ensures their familiarity with the organization, its priorities and stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be costly. - Expertise is often topic specific and time limited. - Expertise is not integrated into ongoing Board deliberations and decision-making.
Establish an advisory group to the Board with processes that ensure its advice directly informs Board decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engages a broader group of stakeholders to inform Board decisions. - Purpose of the advisory group can be topic-specific (such as a Community Advisory Committee during strategic planning) or have an ongoing and general focus (such as a standing Patient and Family Advisory Council). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruiting and supporting a volunteer advisory group (in addition to the Board) requires resources. - Additional Board time required for advisory group meetings. - The Board must seriously consider the advice (not window dressing) and demonstrate that the advice impacted Board decisions.
Recruit experts to Board committees (rather than the Board)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expertise is integrated into committee deliberations and recommendations to the Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advice is one step removed from the Board and not available during Board discussion and decisions.

Step 3. Focus Recruitment to Address Gaps

Some Boards will have a systematic Board recruitment process while other Boards will take a much less formal approach to recruiting individuals to the Board. Regardless of your process, the essential element to building a skills-based Board is to put the skills and experience you want at the centre of the recruitment. The following are some common ways to bring a skills-based focus to Board recruitment:

- **Create a recruitment announcement or letter highlighting the desired skills** – A sample letter for recruiting external community members is provided in Appendix D. A sample letter for recruiting candidates from within the FHT/NPLC is provided in Appendix E.
- **Target communications to places where you are likely to find suitable candidates** – For example, if you are looking for individuals with knowledge of health care and prior Board experience ask other local health organizations (hospitals, community health centres, community service agencies etc.) to distribute your recruitment notice.
- **Ask people to submit a brief statement of interest** – Ask candidates to describe their interest in volunteering on the Board and their background/qualifications including how they meet any specific skills or experience the Board is looking for.
- **Review applications for fit** with your Board needs and skills matrix.
- **Interview a short list of candidates** who meet your needs as well as those who have excellent qualifications overall.

On some Boards, certain Board seats are designed for election by a subset of the organization's membership. While it can be more challenging to find candidates with specific qualifications the smaller the candidate pool becomes, it is still advisable to communicate the Board's needs to the subgroup of members and encourage them to take these needs into consideration when electing individuals for their designated Board seat(s).

Step 4. Enhance Board Skills Through Education

Much of the discussion thus far has focused on building Board skills through recruitment but a focused and ongoing Board education program is equally important to building a highly skilled Board. The following are approaches to enhance your Board's skills through education and training:

- **Orientation of new Board members** – Orientation is essential for new Board members to become active contributors at the Board table. Orientation should provide a solid overview of the FHT/NPLC (including Mission, programs and services, finances, strategic plan etc.), its patients and other stakeholders, and the Board's role and important governance processes such as how conflicts of interest are managed. Orientation for new members should be held before

their first Board meeting and can be open to existing Board members who would like to attend as a refresher.

- **Ongoing Board education** – Many Boards set aside a certain amount of time in the Board calendar for education. Topics should be identified with the Board’s input and focus on addressing identified knowledge gaps (i.e. strategic planning, risk management), topics of Board interest (i.e. community consultation feedback) or background for a specific strategic issue coming later to the Board for decision.
- **Skills development for individual Board members** – As resources permit, Board members should be encouraged to enhance their own governance skills. This could include taking courses on a specific skills area needed on the Board, such as quality.

E. Using This Toolkit

All AFHTO members are encouraged to review this toolkit and adapt its contents to your needs. If you have any feedback on this toolkit or would like further support in creating or enhancing your skills-based Board, please contact:

Bryn Hamilton
Provincial Lead, Governance and Leadership Program
Direct Phone: 705-321-7580
Email: bryn.hamilton@afhto.ca

APPENDIX A – MOHLTC-FHT Contract Schedule A – Appendix 2

NOTE: Below is a copy of the Contract Schedule A – Appendix 2 form. It is provided here only as reference. The actual form to be completed and submitted is provided by the Ministry in Excel format.

Board Members	Board Member 1	Board Member 2	Board Member 3	Board Member 4	Board Member 5	Board Member 6	Board Member 7
Name							
Current Position on FHT Board							
Years on FHT Board							
Knowledge, Skills, Experience	Board Member 1	Board Member 2	Board Member 3	Board Member 4	Board Member 5	Board Member 6	Board Member 7
Indicate your knowledge, skills and experience for each category: • Advanced = 3 • Good = 2 • Fair = 1 • None = 0							
Strategic Planning							
Clinical Skills*							
Program Development							
Human Resources Management							
Financial Management/Audit							
Risk Management							
Quality Improvement							
Performance Measurement							
Governance/Accountability Management							
Other** (specify)							
Other** (specify)							
Other** (specify)							
Comments (optional)							

* Clinical skills could come from clinicians affiliated with the FHT or from somewhere else in the community

**Other categories can include Legal, Dispute Resolution, Conflict of Interest, Public Complaints, IT, Community Relations, Capital Planning

Where there are gaps in the categories above (i.e. score of 0 or 1 for all board members), how does the organization plan to acquire these skills in other ways? E.g. community members/external resources on board committees, or special advisors to support the board.

APPENDIX B – Sample Board Composition Planning Tool

NOTE: This tool is intended as a guide and can be adapted by a FHT/NPLC to suit your own Board composition requirements and preferences.

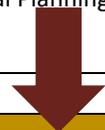
FILTER 1: GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR BOARD LEADERSHIP	
PURPOSE	INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS
Establishes a desired profile of every individual on the Board. Any person with these characteristics is eligible to be considered for a Board position.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Member of FHT/NPLC (or becomes a Member within a period of time defined in Board policy) - Commitment to the FHT/NPLC including its Mission, Vision, Values - Demonstrated leadership skills (consensus builder, change agent, able to work effectively as part of a team) - Commitment to identify and manage conflicts of interest - Ability to commit the time and effort required of the position
FILTER 2: CHARACTERISTICS TO REFLECT THE MEMBERS AND MISSION	
PURPOSE	CHARACTERISTICS
<p>Membership of the Board as a whole should reflect the variety of characteristics of the FHT/NPLC, its members and mission. The goal is a diversity of characteristics, not a check beside each one.</p> <p>Where there are <i>ex officio</i> Board member positions or other Bylaw requirements for a Board member to be elected on behalf of a group of members those are included in this filter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Characteristics of the FHT/NPLC such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - geographic areas/sub-LHIN regions the FHT/NPLC serves - different FHT/NPLC programs (i.e. primary care, mental health, addictions, prenatal, etc.) - Patient populations served - Characteristics of Physician Membership, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stage of practice (0-5 years, 5-10 years, 10-20 years, over 20 years) - Practice setting (remote, rural, town, urban, suburban, inner city) - Practice type (solo, group/non-academic, group/academic, etc.) - Physician Services Group type(s) within the FHT (i.e. FHNs, FHOs, Rural and Northern Physician Group) - Characteristics of Non-Physician Membership (if applicable), such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inter-professional practice - Other? - Characteristics to reflect community members of the FHT/NPLC - Experience in or connection to other health care sectors and organizations, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Health Integration Network(s) - Hospital(s) - Community Health Centre(s) - Long-term Care home(s) - Community services/Homecare - Community mental health and/or addictions services

APPENDIX B – Sample Board Composition Planning Tool (continued)



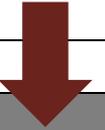
FILTER 3: SKILLS AND EXPERTISE FOR EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

PURPOSE	AREA OF EXPERTISE
<p>To provide quality governance, exercise due diligence on behalf of the Members and meet MOHLTC contract requirements, certain skills are required to support Board decision-making.</p> <p>A skill may be held by one or more Board member. If a skill is not held by at least one person, the Board can acquire it in other ways, such as through education or retaining external expertise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills listed in the 2018-2022 MOHLTC/FHT contract: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clinical/Program Management - Human Resources Management - Financial Management/Audit - Risk Management - Strategic Planning - Quality Improvement - Performance Measurement - Governance/Accountability Management - Other skills and expertise to consider per the 2018-2020 contract: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal, Dispute Resolution, Conflict of Interest, Public Complaints, IT, Community Relations, Capital Planning



FILTER 4: INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS TO REFLECT THE COMMUNITY SERVED

PURPOSE	CHARACTERISTICS
<p>A diversity of these characteristics across the Board as a whole strengthens the Board's ability to reflect and understand the needs of the community the FHT/NPLC serves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A range of personal characteristics found in the community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender - Language - Francophone/Other Language in the community - Cultural Background - Sexual orientation - Other populations or characteristics in the community that are important to the FHT/NPLC



FHT/NPLC BOARD

APPENDIX C – Sample Four-Part Board Skills Matrix

NOTE: This matrix can be adapted by a FHT/NPLC to suit your own Board composition requirements and preferences. It is not to be submitted to MOHLTC.

Board Members	Board Member 1	Board Member 2	Board Member 3	Board Member 4	Board Member 5
Name	Dr. Josie Rossi	Dr. Bob Jones	Marc La Fontaine		
Current Position on the Board/Years on the Board	Treasurer/5	Member/10	Community Member/2		
General Characteristics for Board Leadership (required)					
- Member of FHT/NPLC	Yes	Yes	Yes		
- Commitment to Vision, Mission, Values Priorities	Yes	Yes	Yes		
- Commitment to identify/manage conflicts of interest	Yes	Yes	Yes		
- Leadership skills required of all Board members	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Characteristics to Reflect the Mission and Members					
- Geographic area	Northeast	South	South		
- FHT programs associated with	Prenatal		N/A		
- Stage of Practice	5-10 years	Over 20 years	N/A		
- Current Practice Setting	Suburban	Rural	N/A		
- Practice Type	Group-academic	Solo	N/A		
- Experience/connections with other sectors	N/A	Hospital	Long-term care, CCAC		
Skills and Experience for Effective Governance					
- Clinical/Program Management	3	3	0		
- Human Resources Management	0	0	0		
- Financial Management/ Audit	1	2	3 Chartered Accountant		
- Risk Management	1	0	2		
- Strategic Planning	0	3	3		
- Quality Improvement	1	1	1		
- Performance Measurement	3	2	1		
- Governance/Accountability Management	1	3	3		
- Community Relations (optional)	2	2	3		
- Legal (optional)	0	0	0		
Individual Characteristics to Reflect the Community Served					
- Gender/Sexual orientation (optional)	F	M	LGBTQ		
- Language(s)	English, Italian	English	English, French		
- Cultural background/community (optional)	English, Italian	English, Irish	Algerian		

APPENDIX D – Sample Board Recruitment Letter (External)

NOTE: This letter can be adapted by a FHT/NPLC to suit your own Board recruitment process and needs.

SAMPLE LETTER:

Dear _____,

(FHT/NPLC Name) is recruiting volunteers to serve as Directors on our Board (optional addition: or as members of Board Standing Committees). We welcome applications from individuals who are passionate about primary care and embrace our Vision and Mission. Our skills-based Board is a reflection of our membership and diverse community and we welcome applicants with a broad range of backgrounds, perspectives and experiences. At this time, we are particularly interested in candidates with any of the following (adapt list as needed):

- strong business acumen
- quality improvement experience in a healthcare setting
- governance experience including prior experience on other Boards or Board committees
- backgrounds and relationships in the various geographic and ethno-cultural communities that our FHT/NPLS serves.

The culture of our Board is very positive – striving for excellence and innovation through openness, mutual respect, healthy debate and strategic thinking. We pride ourselves on our ability to work effectively with each other, as well as with management and external stakeholders. We are committed to providing the best care for our patients and contributing to a stronger health care system in our community. Candidates should be driven by the same goals and priorities.

(add short description of the FHT/NPLC as an organization, its services, strategic plan etc.)

If you are interested in helping to shape the future of our organization, please contact (insert name and contact information) to request information about the application process. The deadline for receipt of applications is (insert date).

Sincerely,

(Chair of Board or Nominating Committee)

APPENDIX E – Sample Board Recruitment Letter (Internal)

NOTE: This letter can be adapted by a FHT/NPLC to suit your own Board recruitment process and needs.

SAMPLE LETTER:

Dear colleagues,

(FHT/NPLC Name) is recruiting volunteers to serve as Directors on our Board (optional addition: or as members of Board Standing Committees). As part of our organization you play an important role in our FHT/NPLC achieving our collective Vision and Mission. We are looking for colleagues who are interested in furthering their commitment to our Mission through a leadership role on the Board/Board committee. Our skills-based Board is a reflection of our membership and our diverse community and we welcome applicants with a broad range of backgrounds, perspectives and experiences. At this time, we are particularly interested in candidates with any of the following (adapt list as needed):

- strong business acumen
- quality improvement experience in a healthcare setting
- governance experience including prior experience on other Boards or Board committees
- backgrounds and relationships in the various geographic and ethno-cultural communities that our FHT/NPLS serves

The culture of our Board is very positive – striving for excellence and innovation through openness, mutual respect, healthy debate and strategic thinking. We pride ourselves on our ability to work effectively with each other, as well as with management and external stakeholders. We are committed to providing the best care for our patients and contributing to a stronger health care system in our community. Candidates should be driven by the same goals and priorities.

If you are interested in helping to shape the future of our organization through a leadership position on the Board, please contact (insert name and contact information) to request information about the application process. The deadline for receipt of applications is (insert date).

Sincerely,

(Chair of Board or Nominating Committee)