



Welcome to The Governance Institute's Governance Notes!

This newsletter provides governance support professionals with information and expert opinions in the area of hospital and health system governance and gives updates on services and events at The Governance Institute.

Working Together as a Team: C-Suite, Board, and Governance Support

Providence Southwest Washington, a region of Providence Health & Services, built a culture of trust among leadership and implemented smart governance practices that have led to high board performance. At The Governance Institute's Governance Support Conference in July, Medrice Coluccio, Regional Chief Executive; Daidre West, RN, Board Chair of the Providence St. Peter Hospital board; and Pam Arledge, Director, Governance and Executive Services, shared the fundamental pieces that have helped their board be successful, including clear accountabilities, great roadmapping, agenda management, and dedicated board members and support staff.

Clear Accountability throughout the System

Providence Health & Services is the third largest not-for-profit health system in the United States, operating 34 hospitals, 475 physician clinics, 22 long-term care facilities, 19 hospice and home health programs, and 693 supportive housing units. It provides care for communities in Alaska, California, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. Providence Southwest Washington includes two of those hospitals, Providence Centralia Hospital and Providence St. Peter Hospital, as well as Providence Medical Group.

At Providence, everyone is guided by the mission, core values, and vision statement. Throughout the system, there are 15 boards and each community board is given clear accountabilities that are related to accomplishing the system's mission and vision (as outlined in **Exhibit 1**). This ensures that they know exactly what their duties are when it comes to everything from physician engagement to community relations and advocacy to development of local quality goals. All of these responsibilities

are mirrored after the system strategic plan and the pillars of that plan:

- Inspire and develop our people.
- Build enduring relationships with consumers.
- Create alignment with clinicians and care teams.
- Develop and thrive under new care delivery and economic models.
- Grow by optimizing expert-to-expert capabilities.

[Click here](#) to view **Exhibit 1: CMB Accountabilities for System Strategic Plan.**

"I look at governance as a sacred trust, and being good stewards of that trust. This means ensuring that our healthcare organizations truly optimize excellence in service to the communities we serve."
—Medrice Coluccio

The community boards within Providence Health & Services all have a roadmap the system has provided them with delegated and shared accountabilities. The Providence St. Peter Hospital board's delegated accountabilities include:

- **Mission inspired:** The board is responsible for mission integration and effectiveness. One way this board accomplishes this is by asking the leaders and hospital managers how mission accountability is embedded into their goals each year. The board then monitors that and checks in to see how they have accomplished those goals. The board also ensures that a community needs assessment is done about every three years. For the last assessment, it did a deep dive to determine the greatest

community needs and identified childhood obesity and end-of-life care. To address these needs, Providence St. Peter Hospital is now partnering with a local school district to provide activity trackers for fifth graders to help change lifestyle habits early, and it is starting an end-of-life care project to help those providing palliative care better communicate and have difficult conversations with patients and families.

- **People centered:** Inspiring and building employees is very important at Providence. The board monitors employee engagement scores on a semi-annual basis through the quality and credentials committee. It is also working on learning more about physician satisfaction and engagement.
- **Quality focused:** The board is focused on quality and patient safety. The hospital developed a quality pyramid tool that identifies annual quality priorities. The tool is considered a best practice within Providence. This model helps the board monitor quality indicators, such as whether a patient is readmitted to the hospital within 30 days. The board also reviews information on patient and employee satisfaction and medical staff affairs and credentialing.

- **Service oriented:** The board is dedicated to service excellence and monitoring/improving the HCAHPs scores.

The accountabilities that the Providence St. Peter Hospital board shares with the system board include:

- **Mission inspired:** They work together on community relations and advocacy efforts.
- **People centered:** The board is able to provide local input on executive evaluations. It has created a detailed process for evaluating the CEO. It is also highly involved in board recruitment efforts.
- **Financially responsible:** While it is not a fiduciary board, it still watches budget performance and goes over long-range financial plans.
- **Growing to serve:** The system and community board collectively decide on strategic plans and significant projects, and the board has a strategic planning committee.

In addition, the community board roadmap has a list of priority areas for the upcoming years and the timing for each (see **Exhibit 2**).

Exhibit 2: Community Board Roadmap: High-Level Timing for CB Priority Areas

Priority Area	2014				2015			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Common Board Operating Systems								
System-Wide Monthly Updates	[Bar spanning all quarters]							
Executive Performance Review				[Bar]				[Bar]
Board Performance Review/Self-Assessment	[Bar]			[Bar]				[Bar]
Annual Quality Report				[Bar]				[Bar]
Conflict-of-Interest Survey	[Bar]				[Bar]			
Community Board Development								
Shared Governance Annual Refresher	[Bar]				[Bar]			
Governance Conference	[Bar]				[Bar]			
Annual Chair Meeting			[Bar]				[Bar]	
Advisory Group	[Bar spanning all quarters]							
Ongoing Communications								
ChairPoint Site Collaboration Tool	[Bar spanning all quarters]							
Quarterly "Governance In-Touch"	[Bar spanning all quarters]							
IRS Form 990 Conference Call		[Bar]				[Bar]		

The Keys to Success: Communication and Synergy

The Providence St. Peter Hospital board has 19 members, including three nurses, three physicians, and members with various jobs throughout the community such as a community college president, the owner of a marketing design firm, and a retired city manager. It also has six different committees. (See **Exhibit 3** for the detailed board structure.)

During the presentation, West explained that the “secret sauce” to this board’s success is made up of two essential ingredients:

1. **Communication:** Leadership has a strong communication plan that works well and allows them to know and understand what is going on with governance at all times. They plan board meetings a year out so that everything is organized and on the calendar. West and Arledge meet at least twice a month and have a one- to two-hour meeting where they work on upcoming board agendas and logistics and go over the roadmap. West also meets with Coluccio once a month to plan and talk about anything top of mind. Even if they are very busy, it is important to them to take the time to stop and talk about how everything is going and what needs to be done.
2. **Synergy:** Leadership has created a culture of trust, transparency, and alignment that helps everything flow smoothly. For example, the current chair always mentors the new incoming chair for about a year so that person is up to

speed and ready for the job. They also believe that planning for a crisis is extremely important so that they know what to do when an unlikely event occurs. Knowing who is going to communicate what, when, and how is something they truly value.

“One board member asked to shadow in the emergency department and he said it made his work feel more valuable because he saw the risks they were taking and the patient population. It is a whole different view from the boardroom.” —Pam Arledge

The CEO, board chair, and executive office manager have many other best practices they use to ensure that board members are informed and strong communication is always taking place. It is important that new board members are educated and ready to perform highly on the board, so when they come onto the board, West pairs them with a more tenured member that can mentor them. New board members are also required to spend their first year on the quality committee to help them better understand the language of healthcare. Leadership invites all board members to shadow care providers in any department they wish as well. This is a great way for board members to learn what is really happening in the hospital from staff and patient perspectives.

Exhibit 3: Board Structure



Providing Efficient Board Support

Arledge's role is positioned so that other support staff within the region report directly to her. She is the hub of communication and she does everything from hiring support staff to scheduling events and training. The Providence Medical Group board's governance, finance, quality and credentials, and strategic planning committees are all supported by C-suite assistants. For example, the finance committee is supported by the CFO's assistant and the quality and credentials committee is supported by the vice president of quality's assistant. Then Arledge supports the full board, nominating committee, and executive committee.

All of the support staff are in the same suite and work closely so that everything is consistent and streamlined. They have standard workflows, including:

- **Uniform bylaws:** The Providence system board provides them with uniform bylaws so that they are the same system-wide.
- **Local board policies and procedures to define how bylaws are carried out:** They use their policies to define each board/committee. For example, for the nominating committee, the policies define what the expectations are, when an action is taken, when it goes to the full board, when it goes to the executive committee, etc. Then within that committee, they also have a competency matrix to assess the skills of current board members and look for gaps.
- **Annual compliance education, annual conflict-of-interest, and educational events:** Arledge is empowered to take care of this without having to ask leadership. Through working with her staff and system colleagues she is able to move forward with all education in a timely, efficient manner.
- **Nominations/new board member orientation and onboarding:** Before members can be presented to the board for approval, they always do a background check to make sure nothing comes up. Arledge also works with new board members making sure they have everything they need and uses many Governance Institute resources to onboard members.
- **WWWs (who, what, when) format:** During board meetings, they put a chart on the wall with these three sections. So, for example, if during the meeting someone said they wanted to sign up to attend a Governance Institute

conference, Arledge would write down who needs to take care of that, what it is, and by when. At the end of the meeting, she types those up and includes them in the minutes. Then each meeting, the board chair opens with a review of that to make sure there are no outstanding items.

- **Agenda planning:** They have a standard agenda template where they start with announcements and the consent agenda. Then the medical staff president discusses anything important (such as changes in policies and procedures, new appointments, or current activities) and the CEO also provides necessary updates. Lastly, they do an open mic where board members can share anything they want, such as something they might want to hear more about in the future, a rumor in the community, or a patient story. This is the foundation of their agenda and then they add on from there. (See **Exhibit 4** for a sample agenda planner.)

[Click here](#) to view **Exhibit 4: Agenda Planner**.

"The work we do behind the scenes is kind of like doing the dishes. If you do them, nobody really notices, but if you don't do them, everyone notices the minute they walk in. It is like that with the board. If you don't do all the behind the scenes work, it would be very noticeable." —Pam Arledge

The board support staff from all 15 boards also meet together quarterly to share best practices, documents, and different ways they work and to get reminders about things that are coming up. This allows them to share knowledge with one another and ensures that they never have to reinvent the wheel.

Having clear, consistent processes throughout the system has helped set the Providence St. Peter Hospital board up for success. In addition, executives, the board, and governance support staff have created an environment that is all about teamwork. By doing this they now have a culture of trust and transparency that allows everyone to work together seamlessly.

The Governance Institute thanks Medrice Coluccio, Daidre West, RN, and Pam Arledge for presenting at the Governance Support Conference in Portland, Oregon, on July 27–29, 2014.