

GOVERNANCE RELATIONS SYSTEM EXAMPLE ©bridgegroupllc

The role of a Governing Board is often difficult to define. It is this lack of clarity within the roles of the Governing Board that results in a disconnect between the governing board and the chief executive. Ideally, the role of an elected public board is to develop policy. The implementation of that policy and responsibility for the day to day operations of the organization reside with the chief executive or city manager. What is missing?

The answer is, established expectations that the Board has for the executive or manager. The Governance Relations System (GRS) is designed to create a bridge between the Elected Board's expectations of their Chief Executive (City Manager) and the execution of the day to day operations of the organization. The GRS also sets expectations for the Board to support the success of the Chief Executive in executing their expectations.

"Governing boards have been known in one form or another for centuries. Yet throughout those many years there has been a baffling failure to develop a coherent or universally applicable understanding of just what a board is for."

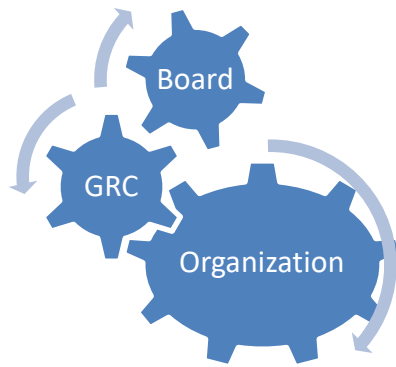
Carver's Policy Governance Model in Nonprofit Organizations

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The Governance Relations System includes FOUR areas:

1. The Expectations of the Organization
2. The Performance Expectation of the Chief Executive
3. The Expectations of the Elected Board
4. The Expectations of Customer Service/Civic Engagement

These areas provide an general guidleines for how the organization will be managed, the expected conduct of the Board, the manner in which services will be provided and opportunities for engagement with citizens. The key to making the GRS work is the partnership/collaboration between the Elected Board and Chief Executive to set clear expectations on how the organization will operate. The GRS can be viewed as a series of interconnected gears that drive the organization and its management and leadership priorities.



The Governance Relations System (GRS) is designed to improve the relationship and effectiveness between the Governing Board and Chief Executive. The expectations set benchmarks for annually evaluating the efforts of the Board and the Chief Executive. The expectations can be amended and adjusted over time to keep them relevant to the municipality. The bar is set high with these expectations, but the journey in the search for governance excellence is never easy. Each step forward or times when these expectations are not met, are all part of trying to be the best governed municipality for the organization's citizens and employees.

The Expectations of the Organization

Expectation	Description
Maintain an Integrated Strategic Planning System that is linked to the annual budget, strategic projects, employee evaluations and performance measures.	The integrated strategic management system will allow for strategic projects that require funding to be considered during the annual budget process. Current and new strategic projects and performance measures will also be reviewed and approved at this time.
Strive to be an “open book” organization for its employees.	“Open Book” means that all critical, not confidential, operational and financial information concerning the City will be shared and available to employees.
Executive Management Team is committed to the developing and empowering employees.	Employee development and involvement is a high priority for the Executive Leadership Team.
Continuously improve technology for internal and external services.	Continuous technology improvements are essential for the City to meet and exceed the expectations of its customers.
Strive to be a regional model for Board Governance.	Commitment for the City Council and City Manager to work collaboratively on continuously improving their Governance Relations.
Continuously improve internal processes and procedures.	Continuous internal process improvement is essential for efficiency and effectiveness of the City.
Be good stewards of the public’s money and trust.	Ensure processes, procedures and practices are in place to meet this commitment
Focus on developing a learning organization.	Commitment to provide training for employees to ensure that the City continues to have talented and well-trained employees providing leadership and operational response readiness.
Recognize internal stakeholders are customers too	Internal stakeholders should be treated equitably and with respect, as these stakeholder’s service timelines often are dependent upon the work of internal service providers.
Innovation	Employees are empowered to consider unique options along with industry inspired alternatives to solving problems and enhancing service delivery

Transparency	Citizens will have access to key financial and operational information.
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The Performance Expectations of the City Manager

Expectation	Description
Implementing strategic plan projects.	Annual evaluation will include progress on these projects.
Assist the City Council with their policy-making role.	Ensure that information is detailed, reliable and explained in a thorough manner. Include alternatives and recommendations.
Any written information provided to one City Council Member will be provided to all members.	Information shared with one City Council Member must be sent to all members.
Plan ahead, anticipate needs and recognize potential problems. Ensuring attention to detail to avoid error or things “slipping through the cracks”.	Seek input to ensure future plans are achievable and proactively communicate possible shortcomings to collaborate with the Board when necessary.
Implement City Council’s policy regarding expenditures through the use of standard financial management procedures.	Ensures that key information is shared with the Council and that the Council’s intent is followed.
Budget recommendations will provide rationale and alternatives for Council consideration. Projects will be integrated into the budget using the strategic plan.	Ensures that the City Council understands the basis for budget requests and how decisions were made in the final recommendations.
Respect the decisions of the City Council.	Implement Council’s policies by accurately interpreting direction given by the Council, carrying out their directives as a whole and supporting the actions of the Council after a decision has been made.
Practice “collaborative leadership”.	Strive to ensure that your leadership is inclusive and not exclusive. Involve citizens, employees and other stakeholders and partners where appropriate.
Ensure positive and supportive physical and emotional working conditions	Create and foster an environment that values employees and their contributions. Support an environment that assists employees in being successful in the positions that they hold. Ensure that personnel policies and practices are administered in an equitable manner.
Foster teamwork and high performing organizational characteristics.	Guide people as a team toward common objectives; select qualified and highly competent members of the Leadership

	Team to implement through the organization.
Recognize citizens are our customers	The Council expects that the public will be treated equitably, with dignity and respect. Assist the Council by resolving problems at administrative levels and not through City Council action. Value community perceptions and understand that customer satisfaction is important.
Agenda material	Staff will provide concise, accurate and meaningful agenda material for the Council's review to include the timely delivery of written/electronic materials.
Value intergovernmental relations	Effectively represent the City's interests when dealing with other agencies. Participate and cooperate in intergovernmental activities to have an impact on the region.
Communicate effectively	Provide information to the public in a timely fashion on matters, which will cause public reaction. Be candid and forthright in discussing City business matters with the Council through various methods that include one on one meetings with Council members. Be assessable to Council members.
Proactive Management Style	Show initiative and creativity in dealing with issues, problems and unusual situations while remaining open to new ideas and suggestions for change. Be adaptive to the changing expectations of local government and the impacts of state and national conditions.
Effective Leadership	Be enthusiastic. Command respect and performance from the Leadership Team while providing the tools necessary for effective service delivery. Support a positive work culture at all times.
Negotiate Effectively	In conjunction with the Legal Staff (when appropriate), always consider City Residents when determining negotiating positions or reaching agreement.
No Operational Surprises	Staff will keep the City Council informed on all critical operational issues.

The Expectations of the Governing Board

Expectation	Description
Value members' opinions.	You can disagree with each other, but provide the space for each member of the City Council to express their opinion.
Do your homework.	Before the meeting, read information sent by staff to be informed and prepared for discussion. If a meeting is missed, become informed of the decisions made or the information shared.
No surprises at meeting for staff.	If possible, contact staff prior to the meeting when you have a critical question that requires research.
Disagree with the vote, but do not undermine the will of the Council.	You can disagree with a vote and express your viewpoint on why you did not support an item, but understand that the Council has voted for the item and you are responsible, as a Council Member, for its successful implementation.
Practice civility.	As the elected representatives we will strive to be a model for our community and the region on how an elected body should work together for the public good.
Support the strategic plan.	City Council Members will support and require a Strategic Plan for the City.
No public criticism of staff at meetings.	No Council Member will criticize City staff at a public meeting. They can discuss their concerns with the City Manager privately.
No operational interference.	City Council Members will not direct the work of staff. If they have issues or questions related to operations, they will be directed to the City Manager or Designee.
Focus on outcomes not positions.	Before taking a position review the outcomes, potential benefits/results and relationship to the Strategic Plan of a policy or issue first.

The Expectations of Customer Service/Civic Engagement

Expectation	Description
Timely responses	Staff will strive to provide timely responses to citizens that are easily understood.
Civic engagement	Opportunities to increase citizen engagement with the City on a social and formal basis will be a priority.
Educate citizens on services	Staff will continuously develop strategies and systems to educate citizens on the services and processes of local government.
Accurate information	Staff will ensure information provided to citizens is accurate and written for clarity