

Board and CEO relationship check

This checklist can be used by the board and CEO together, or separately, to reflect on the health of the governance relationship. It may be useful during board reviews, CEO performance discussions, or governance workshops.

1. Shared understanding and respect

- ☐ Board and CEO understand and respect their distinct roles and responsibilities
- ☐ The CEO respects the board's role in governance, cultural leadership, and community accountability
- ☐ The board respects the CEO's responsibility for operational leadership and day-to-day management
- ☐ Cultural protocols and community expectations are acknowledged in decision-making

2. Strong communication

- ☐ Regular, open communication occurs between the Chair and CEO
- ☐ Information is shared transparently and early, with no surprises at board meetings
- ☐ Key decisions and updates are communicated clearly to the full board and senior staff
- ☐ Difficult conversations are addressed respectfully rather than avoided

3. Alignment on purpose and strategy

- ☐ There is a shared understanding of the organisation's vision and priorities
- ☐ The CEO's work aligns with the strategy approved by the board
- ☐ Progress toward strategic goals is regularly reviewed together
- ☐ Both board and CEO remain committed to community-led priorities and self-determination

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4. Trust and accountability

- ☐ The board trusts the CEO to lead the organisation competently and with integrity
- ☐ The CEO trusts the board to govern fairly and provide constructive advice
- ☐ CEO performance expectations are clear, fair, and reviewed regularly
- ☐ The board reflects on and strengthens its own governance practice

5. Support and development

- ☐ The board supports the CEO's professional development and wellbeing
- ☐ The CEO supports the board to access governance training and development
- ☐ Conflict is addressed constructively, with external support if needed
- ☐ Both board and CEO actively invest in building a positive working relationship

6. Cultural safety and community voice

- ☐ The relationship reflects respect for Aboriginal ways of working and decision-making
- ☐ Community voices influence strategic direction and program design
- ☐ The CEO demonstrates cultural humility and listens to community and board input
- ☐ Elders and cultural advisors are engaged appropriately to guide leadership and resolve tensions

Reflection questions:

After completing the checklist, ask:

1. What aspects of the relationship are working well?
2. Where could communication, trust, or clarity improve?
3. What practical steps could strengthen the relationship over the next 12 months?

Tool

