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NorthWest Data Sharing Network

Governance

Final Report

March 31,2003

By Innovation Resource Centre

Executive Summary

Governance is a rising star in today's media since Enron, WorldCom, and Arthur Anderson collapsed from unethical leadership and lying to shareholders. In the GIS world, good governance has surfaced as the key to making data sharing possible.

While everyone seems to have a different opinion of what governance is, one writer has defined it as "ensuring that organizations achieve their goals and conduct themselves according to highest principles and ideals." That writer, Dr. John Carver, created the Policy Governance model, a framework for the Board to ensure that the organization achieves its board-stated goals and conduct itself with probity.

The fit between the Policy Governance model and the needs of a data sharing network is strong. The model creates the kind of environment that decades of practice have shown are required to capture the vision of a data sharing initiative and create the best results for the partners who share the data. The Board has a clear job to do that is not the staff's job with three deliverables:

- Maintain links to the owners of the society,
- Establish the four categories of written policies ("Ends," Executive Limitations, Board-Executive Relations, and Board Process), and,
- Assure the performance of their one employee, the Executive Director.

The Executive Director is given nearly complete freedom to get results for the owners, but are limited by Board policy which tells her/him where they may not go.

The benefits of the Policy Governance model are the reduction of:

- trivia
- committee work
- staff manipulation of the Board
- Board interference in administration
- unclear evaluation criteria
- role confusion

The next steps for implementing the Policy Governance model are given, including purchasing and reading additional materials and books moving into the model in one fell swoop and gain confidence through monitoring the Executive Director's compliance.

Finally, the first four sections of the draft NorthWest Data Sharing Network business plan are given:

- Vision ·
- Mission ·
- Market ·
- Products and Services

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There are many complexities to sharing data among competing interests. Thus, the proponents of the NorthWest Data Sharing Network are seeking information about governance as it is clearly the biggest barrier to creating a stable environment where the sharing partners gain benefits from belonging to the network. Governance has been identified in numerous venues, including seminars and workshops on data sharing.

His report outlines the research into governance in both the for-profit and non-profit organizations, available governance models, and benefits of using a model. It goes on to recommend one model of governance and describe it briefly, including its advantages and disadvantages.

Definition of Governance

In an article about governance, the author, Rajesh Tandon, explores the interpretation of governance and good governance.¹ As a concept the term *governance* has many interpretations and needs exploration to grasp the meaning and relevance of the term.

Tandon suggests that people equate it with government, governing, democracy and even the process and structure for determining the use of public resources.

In the facilitated discussion with the inaugural Board on March 24, 2003, we discussed what governance meant to the people in the room, as follows:

- Oversight
- Sets policy
- Sets direction
- Defines the Board's job as well as staff's
- Brings order to chaos
- Not about "doing"
- Continuity
- Dispute resolution

The research shows that other possible definitions include:

- Financial accountability
- Lines of authority & organizational structure (org charts)

The dictionary definition of *governance* is "the complex of institutions, laws, and customs through which the function of governing is carried out." In the case of John Carver, Ph.D., creator of policy governance, the definition is "ensuring that organizations achieve their goals and conduct themselves according to highest principles and ideals."²

¹ Tandon, Rajesh, "What is Good Governance?" Foreign Policy Magazine. Fall, 1999. The Gale Group. <<http://www.findarticles.com>>

² Carver, John. Boards that Make a Difference. Jossey-Bass, May 1997.

Medical Governance

In researching the non-profit governance literature, medical governance takes up over half of the results. It is included here to clarify the structures that govern results and ethical conduct.

Medical governance is similar to other non-profit governance and serves as an example of the need for formalized systems and ethical standards. “[Medical] governance is intended to improve standards of care and at the same time to protect the public from unacceptable care.”³

In BC, medical governance is organized under the Ministry of Health, with the BC Medical Association, hospital administrators, and health service worker unions, etc. participating. Issues that are always in discussion are highly visible in the media, including direction of health care, resource usage, distribution of assets, promoting evidence-based practices, protection of privacy, and protection of the disadvantaged. In the U.K. governance is seen as one of the keys to transforming and improving their medical system. Because the National Health System in the UK is similar to the Canadian medical system, the governance issues we see in BC show up in the *British Medical Journal*.⁴

Corporate Governance

Corporate governance is structurally different than governing a non-profit organization. The Board's is focusing more on short-term results than long-term policies. The Board's direction to the Chief Executive Officer (called the Executive Director in most non-profit organizations) is much more direct: create profit and increase the value of the company's shares. The CEO and the Board's Directors are motivated often by being remunerated in bonuses and share options in the company's stock. If share prices fall, the CEO's and Board members' personal portfolios drop too. This creates incentives to add value to the company, but when millions of dollars are at stake, it also creates incentives to lie to shareholders. Even corporate auditors, who are supposed to be impartial and ensure the shareholders see real results, did not go untouched by the incentive to ignore information or lie to keep their multi-million dollar auditing contracts. This is the governance crisis sparked by the collapse of Enron and WorldCom. Many companies responded to the news of this crisis by re-valuing their business to more honestly reflect the results of their activities.

As a of the governance issues in the corporate world there is now a bright spotlight on how Boards are established and audits are remunerated.

Available Governance Models

The Institute on Governance identifies a range of governance models, of which policy governance is just one. These models are summarized here. For a closer examination of these models, see the Institute on Governance website:⁵

³ Pringle, Mike. “Participating in clinical governance.” *British Medical Journal* Sept 23, 2000 The Gale Group. <<http://www.findarticles.com>>

⁴ Mccoll, Alastair and Martin Roland. “Knowledge and information for clinical governance.” *British Medical Journal* Oct 7, 2000: The Gale Group. <<http://www.findarticles.com>>

⁵ Institute on Governance. [Governance Models](http://www.iog.ca/boardgovernance/html/mod_the.html) <http://www.iog.ca/boardgovernance/html/mod_the.html>

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Operational

Board members do the work of the organization as well as governing it. Typical of founding stage boards or organizations without staff.

Collective

Board members and staff work together as a single team in all governance, management and other activities of the organization. Typical of emerging organizations and small organizations with a very strong commitment to a particular cause.

Management

Board members actively manage certain areas of operation, such as finances or service delivery, even though there are also paid staff. Board members often supervise staff, and lead committees and task forces.

Traditional

The board governs and oversees operations but delegates management functions to a senior staff member (Executive Director or equivalent). Board committees process information for the board, sometimes do the work of the board, and sometimes drift into operational matters. The Executive Director may report primarily to the Chair.

Policy governance

The board governs through policies. The Executive Director has very wide freedom to implement board policies, within limits set by the board. The board leads the organization and delegates all operational matters to the Executive Director.

Corporate/results oriented

The board's focus is more squarely on results than policies. The board monitors organizational performance rather than getting involved in it. The CEO is typically a non voting board member, with substantial influence over board decisions. Board committees are used for monitoring the performance of the board and the organization, for example an audit committee. Individual board members are typically selected for the profile or contacts they can give the organization, and may be actively involved in certain operational areas of their expertise.

Advisory

The board's principal role is to advise and support the Executive Director. The board is formally in control, but exercises this in a very hands off manner unless there is a crisis. This should not be confused with the advisory boards sometimes set up by public sector organizations, which have no formal governance role.

Representational

Board members are selected to represent constituents' interests. Board members face the challenge of balancing representational interests with the interests of the organization/board as a whole. The board has a mix of policy, management, advisory and operational roles. According to a recent report from the Institute, while these board models can be identified in theory, in practice most boards use a hybrid of various models.

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Danger Signs

No matter what model is chosen, the danger signs of a Board in trouble are:⁶

- lack of understanding of what good governance means
- disagreement about or lack of understanding of organization's mission
- unclear definition of roles for the board, Executive Director, individual board members, committees
- lack of orientation for new board members
- individual board members not pulling their weight
- poor attendance at board meetings
- low level of participation in board discussions
- small number of board members dominating most discussions
- over involvement/interference in operational matters
- over involvement in trivial matters, leaving insufficient time for important matters
- too much focus on reviewing the past or dealing with short term issues, leaving insufficient time to focus on the long term future
- poor communication within the board or between board and Executive Director
- unresolved conflicts on the board or between board and Executive Director
- factionalism on the board
- "underground" communication on the board, such as "corridor talk" outside meetings
- poorly managed board meetings, e.g. lack of focus, late papers, unprepared members
- board rubber stamping Executive Director decisions without meaningful debate
- no decision making
- inconsistent decision making
- individual board members or Executive Director circumventing board decisions
- failure to maintain financial viability
- unplanned or unmanaged deficits
- failure of board members to understand financial reports
- rapid turnover of Executive Director
- major turnover of board members
- difficulty recruiting appropriate board members
- burnout of staff and/or board
- community criticism
- poor communication with important stakeholders.

What a Non-Profit Board Should Do

The literature and personal interviews helped define what governance is seen to be and what a non-profit organization should do and what they should avoid.⁷ The advantages of a

⁶ Ibid

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Board working on the following areas are clear from a great deal of experience and expert advice. Some of what a Board should do is listed here:

- Create a vision,
- Create consistency, clarity, and continuity,
- Encourage leadership,
- Get results,
- Set policy,
- Define the roles and responsibilities of the people in the organization,
- Hire, monitor, and fire staff,
- Create financial accountability within the organization,
- Be accountable to the “ownership” for their money,
- Help and advise the staff,
- Be involved,
- Make decisions
- Rely on Robert’s Rules or other rules of order,
- Respect each other and foster respect with staff,
- Safeguard the history of the organization.

There are three approaches to creating and using a framework for addressing the above tasks and others that arise from time to time.

Blank paper approach

The Board can begin with nothing and build a framework that works specifically for them. While this is well tailored to fit the people at the Board table, it does have disadvantages.

- Many meetings needed to get to the launch of the society,
- It may not be completed as discussion draw out,
- The resulting document may not cover all contingencies, and,
- It is difficult to “re-invent the wheel”.

Photocopy other societies’ governance

Instead of building a governance document from scratch the board can bring together pieces from other societies and corporations and blend them into one document. While this is somewhat tailored to fit the people at the Board table and may be more complete than starting from scratch, there are also disadvantages to this approach:

- Many meeting to redraft the language,
- May adopt problematic language,
- Transport their governance problems into the new society,
- The resulting document may not cover all contingencies,
- It is difficult to see all contingencies and may not be complete, and
- Can be difficult to make the revisions needed if anything important is missed.

⁷ Storey, Vernon J. Guarding the Trust: Board Development and Self-Evaluation. Victoria, BC, 1994

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Policy Governance

I found only one model that can be used and adopted immediately at an inaugural meeting of the Board: the Policy Governance Model. Created by Dr. John Carver in 1990, it has become the de facto model for addressing the above list of tasks. There are disadvantages to this approach, however:

- Major effort must be made to use and learn policy governance,
- Discipline needed to follow the rules faithfully,
- Not tailored to fit the people at the Board table, but rather to create governance to last when the Board members change, and,
- Redrafting is needed often at first, but the changes are incremental because the model is complete and proven.

What is Policy Governance?

The Policy Governance model is a “complete theory of governance—a conceptually coherent paradigm of principles and concepts (not of structure). The model enables boards—as “servant-leaders” of shareholders, public, members (or other “ownership” equivalents)—to ensure that organizations achieve board-stated goals and conduct themselves with probity. Because it is a complete theory, it involves:

- board planning,
- mission,
- committee work,
- agenda control,
- budgeting,
- reporting,
- CEO evaluation,
- management relationships,
- fiduciary responsibility, and
- all other aspects of the board job.”⁸

One simple tenet we accept of Boards with true governing powers is that they have total authority and total accountability within the law. The board is where all authority resides until some is given away (delegated) to others.

The Policy Governance model begins with this assertion, then proceeds to develop other universally applicable principles. Logical and consistent principles demand major changes in governance as we know it, because these principles are applied to subject matter that has for many years been characterized by a hodgepodge of practices, whims of individuals, and capricious decision making.⁹

⁸Carver, John and Miriam Mayhew Carver [Policy Governance® Defined](http://www.carvergovernance.com/model.htm)
<http://www.carvergovernance.com/model.htm>

⁹ Ibid.

Policy Governance Principles:

Commitment to Policy

The Board governs through the policy it creates. The Board as a whole creates the policy and dedicates itself to only give direction to staff through the written word. This requires both discipline and debate on a diversity of opinion within the Board. No direction will be given until the Board can speak with one voice. Debate continues until the Board as a whole decides on how the policy shall read.

For example, if the Board was debating the use of the last 10% of the budget, debate would continue and the money would be unspent until the policy decision was spoken with one voice.

The problem of advice-giving is also addressed with a commitment to policy. Advice from the Board to the Executive Director is exactly that, advice. It is non-binding. Direction from the Board through written policy is binding and the Executive Director is evaluated upon adherence to that policy. Finally, it follows that the Executive Director answers to the Board as a whole, not any one individual on the Board (not even the Chair). This can make the commitment to policy difficult, but once it is tried, Boards have found it works very well.

The advantage of committing to policy rather than a traditional governance structure is a reduction in small 'p' politics between the Board or the Executive Committee of the Board, and the Executive Director. The other advantage is that the Board has complete control of its policy, creating as simple or as detailed policy as it feels it needs. This is often referred to as "nested" policy, like nested mixing bowls. When the Board comes across an issue, the broadest possible question (the largest mixing bowl) is "Is this Board work or staff work?" If it is Board work, then the Board examines broad specific policy and if the Board is comfortable with that policy, they stop creating more detail. If the Board is not comfortable with the level of detail, they will create more detailed policy until the policy is too restrictive. Then by backing up one step, they should have a policy that gives an appropriate level of direction.

For example, if the question arose in a meeting where a member of the Board asked "Is three weeks vacation for staff sufficient?" the Board would first ask if this is their work. Since they must make policy for their one employee, the Executive Director, then it may well be Board work. Then the discussion shifts to the next detailed policy layer. They debate the issue until they can agree that "Staff will receive vacation time and that vacation time will be fair." They are not comfortable leaving the Executive Director to decide what "fair" is, so they go to the next layer. "Vacation time will be based on performance." This seems detailed enough to them, but taking it to the next layer, they come up with "Performance evaluations will be done looking at productivity, team spirit and attendance." This seems obvious; they hired a good manager to be Executive Director to look after staff, so they feel they can back up one layer and hand off the vacation policy (i.e. vacation time will be based on performance) to Executive Director. However, they will create a detailed policy for the Executive Director's vacation time because **they** must supervise the Executive Director.

The Four Policy Governance Categories:

There are the four policy categories in the Policy Governance framework. It is important to emphasize that the framework does not dictate the level of detail in any one policy. This is the Board's work. The framework is as follows:

- **Ends**—the ultimate value the board seeks to provide for its audience. Ends policies are fashioned to address the toughest governance question a Board member will face: what benefits, for whom, at what cost?
- **Executive Limitations**—the latitude the board gives the Executive Director within which to operate. This feature of Policy Governance can establish absolute clarity of roles, eliminating much of the confusion and rancor that occurs between boards and staff.
- **Governance Process**—how the board will govern itself first, before attempting to govern the society. These value statements establish the culture of the board, stipulate how members will interact with each other, identify the primary focus of the board and disciplines for maintaining that focus, and in general establish the board's and board members' roles and commitments.
- **Board Staff Relationships**—how authority will be delegated by the board to its only employee, the Executive Director. These policies clarify the Board-Executive Director relationship, establish the Executive Director's job expectations, and specify the process for evaluating Executive Director performance.

Ends

Ends are critical and never delegated. As we have seen earlier, the Board has total authority and total accountability. While the board need not control everything, but it must control the definition of success, the Ends. It is possible to control too much, just as it is possible to control too little. It is possible to think you are in control when you are not. To avoid control issues and feeling out of control, the Policy Governance model calls for a narrow and careful definition of success: it consists of what (1) good for (2) which recipients at (3) what cost.

Let us define these more fully: Some decisions directly describe the intended consumer results of the organization, for example, reading skills, family harmony, knowledge, or shelter from the elements. Some decisions directly describe the intended recipients of such results, such as adolescents, persons with severe burns, or low income families. Some describe the worth of the intended results, such as in dollar cost or priority against other results.

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In Policy Governance, this triad of decisions is called “ends.” Ends are always about the changes for persons to be made outside the organization, along with their cost or priority. Ends never describe the organization itself or its activities. [emphasis added] For example, the professional and technical activities in which the organization engages are not Ends. In a school, for example, which students should acquire what knowledge at what cost are Ends issues. Ends are about the organization’s impact on the world (much like cost-benefit) that justify its existence.

Any decision that is not an ends decision is a “Means” decision. In that same school, the choice of reading program, teachers’ credentials, and classroom arrangement are means issues.¹⁰

The Board’s most important job is to devise a mission and mission-related statements which clearly set out what the desired results. How will the world be different as a result of the Society’s actions? Including, but not limited to the mission statement, Board-generated ends are further defined at all levels of organization.¹¹

Note: there is a set of draft Ends policies for the NorthWest Data Sharing Network on page 26.

Executive Limitations & Delegation to the Executive Director:

The Board delegates full control of the organization’s activities to the one staff member it supervises, the Executive Director, but limits the Executive Director’s activity with policy. This policy is written in negative language (*thou shalt not*). Paradoxically, this creates complete staff freedom to take ethical action to get results for the organization without the Board abdicating control of staff (e.g. rubber stamping decisions and policy). Once this authority for action is delegated, the Board monitors the Executive Director’s activity as often as they feel is necessary.

Governance Process

There are three deliverables a policy governance Board must produce for the organization.

1. systematic linkage between the organization and the ownership. This is not public relations. The Board connects with the ownership to ascertain the range of ownership values about the Ends of the organization. If the Board is to make Ends decisions on behalf of its “ownership,” it must know what the owners in all their diversity think.
2. The second deliverable is written governing policies in the four areas, using the principles we have described.

¹⁰ <http://www.carvergovernance.com/model.htm>

¹¹ <http://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/college/policies.htm>

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3. The third deliverable is the assurance of organizational performance, that is, performance which can be shown to be a reasonable interpretation of the board's Ends and Executive Limitations policies.

To bring these three deliverables to the organization, the Board must discipline itself to remain on-task and guarantee their three deliverables. The Board writes policy to ensure each Board member understands how governance is produced in the board room.

The policy will include:

- taking control of its own agenda, rather than allowing its agenda to be staff-driven;
- establishing its own job description;
- acting responsibly as a group of equals, since no one has authority over anyone else:
 - create the position of Chairperson—a first among equals—to help it stay on task
 - grant the Chair extra authority required to make rulings that keep the board on track
 - Chair acts as “servant-leader” of the board ¹²
 - Speak with one voice or not at all
 - create the position of Treasurer to assist the Board in making financial policy (not for evaluating the Executive Director)
- creating Board committees that report to the Board to help examine policy issues and refine policy over time - not evaluate or advise the Executive Director;
- taking seriously the assertion that boards be visionary and provide long term leadership:
 - *Note: many Policy Governance Boards agree that forming the ownership's values into clear policies is far harder than telling the staff how to do its job*
- recruiting Board members based on their having visionary and long view skills, rather than mirroring the skills of staff:
 - Board members should be able to welcome a diversity of opinions but abide by group decisions;
 - They must be able to speak on behalf of the ownership rather than merely from their own or some splinter group perspective;
 - They must place organizational accountability above personal gratification;
 - They must be able to view the board's task of assuring performance at arm's length—through setting expectations, delegating pointedly and monitoring.

¹² Carver, John. The Unique Double Servant-Leadership Role of the Board Chairperson. Voices of Servant-Leadership Series, No. 2. Indianapolis: The Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, 1999.

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Board-Staff Relationships

These policies clarify the Board-Executive Director relationship, establish the Executive Director's job expectations, and specify the process for evaluating Executive Director performance. These policies address the roles of the Board and Executive Director and the monitoring needs of the Board. By creating specific criteria for monitoring, the reports to the Board become very straightforward and transparent.

All Board-delegated authority to staff is delegated through the Executive Director. Thus, the Executive Director's performance will be considered to be synonymous with the Society's performance. However, not all information that could be given to the Board will assist in monitoring. Thus, the Board will create policy whereby only certain job contributions can be stated as performance. The policy limits reporting to only two areas:

1. Achievement of the Ends as defined by Board policy.
2. Operation of the Society within the boundaries of prudence and ethics established in Board policies on Executive Limitations.

In practice then, any evaluation of Executive Director's performance, formal or informal, may be derived only from monitoring criteria and data set out in the Board-Staff Relationships policy. The advantage to the Board is both transparent and quick monitoring, but also the elimination of the frustrations of either "poke and probing" a silent Executive Director for information or wading through reams of data that the Executive Director has placed in a report to block the truth about the organization.

Benefits of Policy Governance

While policy governance is complex at first, it delivers some key benefits to the organization. Policy governance simplifies governing by reducing:

- trivia
- committee work
- staff manipulation of the Board
- Board interference in administration
- unclear evaluation criteria
- role confusion

Also, all staff feel a balance of empowerment and connection with the Board's direction. They are motivated to do the right thing for the ownership of the society without being micromanaged. They can be as efficient and innovative as they like within financial limitations and work at reducing costs.

Board meetings are to-the-point, short, and infrequent once the Board's Ends policy is written and adopted. However, the Board can monitor Executive Director as often as necessary to create comfort with performance, even if it chooses to do so weekly (an extreme example).

Governance Advice from March 2002

In this final section of the governance research report, we will examine the advice from the US geospatial data sharing experience that was presented in March 2002 and reviewed briefly at the inaugural meeting of the NorthWest Data Sharing Network Board. Here the GEO Alliance's governance advice is repeated in summary form, but a description of how the Policy Governance model applies is added.

Advice from US Geo Alliance (www.geoall.net)

There are many complexities to sharing data among competing interests. Both the US experience and the experience of the Integrated Cadastral Information Society in Victoria show similar areas of concern. Creating a governance structure is supported by the principles published in the GEO Alliance, *Lessons from Practice: A Guidebook to Organizing and Sustaining Geodata Collaborations, September 2001*¹³ for sharing data networks can be summarized under the following five topic areas:

1. Formalize structure

Mutual trust is the key to successful cooperation, but supporting the sharing interactions with formal documentation, such as interorganizational agreements, MOUs, data licenses, contracts, and so forth, is wise. Documentation may enable a continued data exchange, even in cases where the other forms of interaction are discontinued.

Thus, a formal structure helps the organization stay on track by clarifying expectations and interactions.

Formalizing structure under Policy Governance

At the Board level societies frequently adopt a governance structure. Formalized structure, usually in the form of a constitution, bylaws and policy, helps all stakeholders understand the society's purpose, what is acceptable and what is not. Policy is made by the Board to set down a structure for how the work of the society is done. It is common to set financial policy, ethical policy and staff policies. However, pieces can be overlooked, especially policies governing the Board's behavior itself and Board-staff relations. This creates problems when individual Board members or staff operate outside commonly accepted behavior.

¹³ Geo Alliance, [Lesson From Practice](http://www.geoall.net/docs/lessons_from_practice.pdf) <http://www.geoall.net/docs/lessons_from_practice.pdf>

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“Our board and I suffered through one person’s insidious behaviors,” says [School Superintendent] Portscheller. “It could have torn us and the community apart if we hadn’t been able to constantly refer him back to our governance process policies privately and then in public board meetings. He was violating the policies he had agreed to support and the board didn’t allow him to get away with it. The staff and community saw what he was doing [because of the formalized structure] and a successful recall resulted.”

Dawson Linda J., “Clarifying Board and Superintendent Roles” School Administrator, March, 2000 <<http://www.findarticles.com>>

2. Determine and communicate control and ownership

As with any multiparty venture, participants need to feel empowered to plan, make decisions, and bring them to realization. They want to know they can control the process and make input, especially if their investment in the society is significant. The US experience shows the following in this regard:

- Voting rights and decision authority needs to be carefully determined and clearly defined [by the inaugural Board].
- They expected that partners would differ in their definitions of fairness and equity depending on their resources, power, and role in the partnership. However, by adhering to and communicating a pre-established policy, the organization’s initial start-up was not slowed or postponed while the Board debated the details of ownership.
- All parties must perceive the staff and their location as neutral (i.e., having no vested interest or commitment to any one agency or organization).

Thus, there is a need for a balance on the Board even if some owners use or contribute differently to meet their needs.

Control and Ownership under Policy Governance

Creating balance for the participants between the need for decision making (control) and the need for clear shared direction (ownership) is where policy governance excels. This system of governance has imbedded in it well-defined policy making to ensure adequate Board control over the activities and resources. Since participants in any interorganizational activities expect to be involved, the policy governance provides a system of harnessing their vision and connection to the participants while empowering staff to create results.

3. Provide board & project leadership

Leadership is a key success factor in governing an organization. It provides vision, support, and backing with resources. Perhaps the most important part of leadership is ensuring the set rules and policies are followed even when doing so is uncomfortable. This is true of the leadership of the Board. It is also true in project leadership where staff must ensure “enforcement” of common standards and commitments. As noted in the US experience, it is stability that characterizes effective leadership structures.

Leadership under Policy Governance

By creating a very clear job for the Board and educating all new Board members of the job they must do, the Policy Governance model creates stable leadership from within. The Board provides the “Ends” or vision and never abdicates that job to staff. The Board is empowered to seek out the organization’s ownership and ensure that their vision is aligned with the owners’ needs. Staff is then in charge of the “Means” of achieving the mission in their own way without destabilizing small ‘p’ politics absorbing time and effort. The staff is empowered to use their experience, best judgment and ideas to create a system for creating a new “good” in the world.

4. Define roles and responsibilities

Another key success factor is clarification of the roles and responsibilities of each participant. The following issues stem from the need to clarify roles:

- It is necessary to identify and secure support of the original data providers early in the coordination initiative so that data provision and update will be kept close to the source.
- The partners perceiving inequities in data maintenance commitments are prone to downgrade their own support of the system. In volunteer participation, without staffing, funding, equipment, or training provisions, the agencies assigned database maintenance responsibilities will fall behind in the timing and quality of database update. They also tend to depart from prescribed standards and procedures as another consequence of the inadequate support for database maintenance duties.

Thus, database development and maintenance responsibility is the life cord of interorganizational activities. To that end, additional resources and support infrastructure need to be provided to the units with accepted new roles and responsibilities (e.g., charged with maintaining the data), which incur additional workloads and expenses. Underfunding a critical activity will lead to poor results.

Also, assignment of roles and responsibilities is highly susceptible to fairness issues and concerns. If a few Board members are seen to controlling the organization’s activities, then those Board members without control will place little or no value on remaining in the organization. Thus, roles and responsibilities need to be defined upfront for a successful Data Sharing Network launch.

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Roles and Responsibilities under Policy Governance

The principles of policy governance ensure that control of the Board remains with the Board as a whole. The roles of the Executive Committee (Chair, Vice-chair, Secretary-Treasurer) are much reduced and their roles are prescribed in policy set by the Board as a whole. Board meetings remain on topic, and concentrate on the Board's three deliverables (see page13 for more details)¹⁴:

- Maintain links to the ownership,
- Establish the four categories of written policies (Ends, Executive Limitations, Board-Executive Relations, and Board Process), and,
- Assure executive performance.

The role of the Executive Director is made clear in policy. The Executive Director cannot favor one Board member over another because he/she works for the Board as a whole.

In Weld County, a [school] district with 1,509 students, [Superintendent] Disario says...the board will listen to one member's concerns, but doesn't allow entire meetings to stray to restatements and reiterations. The board stays focused now on the clear goals set out for the professional staff.

"The board asks itself at the very start of every new discussion, 'Is this the board's business?' and if they stray, [Disario is] free to say, 'No, that's my job' and their response is, 'Oh yeah, you're right,'" Disario says, "We have an empowered staff, allowed to develop operational strategies, under the strategic leadership of the board that knows its collective role and is committed to disciplining its own members, to the person, to stay within it."

5. Keep it simple

A data sharing project's complexity can increase "geometrically." This was a major concern for the Integrated Cadastral Information Society too. The more diverse the stakeholders, the more simplicity of expectations and outcomes is needed.

The interaction between organizations usually goes beyond data-related activities into further value added activity like new data purchases, project-driven joint data efforts, joint data acquisition, joint database development, and maintenance. Sometimes this involves joint system development, personnel, space, and applications. However, one partner is usually more practiced in GIS project development, creating a surge of projects that the other partners are not prepared to use or fund. Moving from data to applications, the interactions increase not only in their sophistication and complexity but also in the difficulty of making them functional for everyone.

¹⁴ Yukon College, [Yukon College Board Governance Policies](http://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/college/policies.htm) 2002
<<http://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/college/policies.htm>>

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Therefore, think big but start small; build gradually around the generic services of data-centered projects. If the organization moves beyond data-centered projects into shared or jointly supported application developments, things get much more challenging and resource intensive much more quickly.

Simplifying under Policy Governance

Under policy governance, many complexities associated with small 'p' politics are removed by making expectations clear. Committee work is simplified so that the Board creates its own committees and the staff can create theirs. Thus, there is no chance that the Executive Director will find themselves caught between a Board committee and the Board.

Communications are also simplified. With staff, advice from the Board is not binding. Policy from the Board is binding. Thus, a visit and discussions with a Board member are seen as friendly and informal and will never form a part of the Executive Director's performance evaluation.

With the general public, communications are also simplified. The Board speaks with one voice or not at all. It appoints its spokesperson. Under policy governance, it is clear that the Board as a whole will not tolerate Board members conflicting with each other in the media, nor a Board member going to the media to denigrate the Board.

Reporting lines are simplified. The Executive Director reports to the Board as a whole. All other staff report to the Executive Director. The Board accountable to the ownership, not the "public," not the staff, nor the staff's clients (if they are not the owners).

Finally, projects are simplified as staff is fully empowered to make them work at the lowest possible cost. There is no requirement to include the Board in every step of the project, but rather to make the ownership as satisfied with the results as staff can.

Conclusion:

The fit between the Policy Governance model and the needs of a data sharing network is strong. The model creates the kind of environment that decades of practice have shown are required to capture the vision of the initiative and create the best results for the partners who share data.

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APPENDIX 1: Personal Communications Research

Summary of Conversation with Donna Humphries, Integrated Cadastral Information Society (ICI)

A year ago, I contacted Donna Humphries to learn about the ICI's experiences creating a society to share cadastral data among local government, the Province, utility companies and associate members. The purpose of the society is to "develop, maintain and distribute a common province-wide cadastral fabric and other related data sets for the use of members of the Society." At that time the ICI had submitted its constitution, bylaws, and set policy, relying mainly on data sharing agreements. The ICI does not use policy governance.

This year, the ICI has a contractor acting as Executive Director and sharing has begun to a small degree. Her advice for a new Board starting out is that the Board should focus on policy early on and adopt it as more than a draft. Also, to stick to "your Board rules" and avoid ad hoc decisions and to guide the process and the people involved.

Summary of Conversation with Liz Osborne, Bulkley Valley Centre for Natural Resources Research and Management

The BV Centre is a brand new society that is doing research on natural resources such as wood fibre, fish, minerals, and agricultural products. The purpose of the Centre is to "advance scientific understanding of temperate, montane, and boreal ecosystems (terrestrial and aquatic), including the role of humans in their use and management, thereby providing a basis for achieving sustainability in its ecological, social, and economic dimensions."

They intentionally incorporated with the least amount of documentation to simplify the process and begin operations as quickly as possible. Ms. Osborne is the contractor who acts as the society's only staff person. While in its early stages, she sees the organization's devotion to its mission and vision as the key to governing the organization. A strong sense of the doing the right things helps avoid problems. She recommended creating a strong vision and taking a minimalist approach to the society's bylaws and constitution.

Summary of Conversation with Edel Toner-Rogala, (Chief Librarian) Prince George Public Library

The Prince George Public Library focuses on governance yet does not use a governance model per se. The Library has a 12 member Board and a full-time Chief Librarian (Executive Director). The Library "enriches the life of every person in the area by providing equal access to the world's ideas and information through books, programs, and other resources."

The governance structure is traditional and operational at the Prince George Public Library, using multiple committees which the Chief Librarian must attend and involve her managers. She likes having a hands-on Board who are involved in administration of the Library because, in her opinion, it creates closer bonds to the community it serves. It is readily apparent the organization has been successful largely because the Executive Director is a

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high functioning, highly energetic manager of nearly 100 dedicated staff (some have been there 25 years). She makes every attempt to disseminate information about her administration and involve the Board and public at every step.

Summary of Conversation with Bob Long, CEO, Fraser Fort George Regional District (FFGRD)

The FFGRD is the local government body that manages unincorporated areas near Prince George. I called him to discuss how regional districts create regional representation on their Boards. Each geographic region of the regional district elects a director that represents the residents of that area in Board and committee meetings. The system works reasonably well except that some areas veto the implementation of services in their area, creating a complex patchwork of policy, bylaws and infrastructure that staff must cope with.

In an interesting sidebar, the FFGRD is joining with others to start a sharing network of its own to share 911 dispatch services and GIS data. They are likely to form a non-profit corporation, selling equity in the corporation via shares. He believes this reduces “free rider problems” where some members of the organization get free services off the efforts of other members. However, Mr. Long is preparing to educate the members on voting structure which will be convoluted. He does, however, acknowledge that there will be an unbalanced power structure.

APPENDIX 2: Implementing Policy Governance Advise from ART Mission ¹⁵

1. Agree as a board to adopt the Policy Governance Model and follow the next steps.
2. Decide to purchase and read additional materials, books or Carverguides, or to obtain trained facilitation.
3. Set up a schedule of Board working sessions and timelines to develop and revise policies.
4. Follow steps in Chapter Nine: Implementation, in *Reinventing Your Board* (see page 21)
5. Make a starter set of agendas so the board will know how the meetings will be conducted.
6. Prepare “ownership”, distribute information about the Board’s choice.
7. Move in one fell swoop. Set a date when the model becomes effective, and pass a motion that on that date that all the new policies are in effect.
8. Gain confidence through data; monitor compliance to show the model is working.

¹⁵ The ART Mission, Implementing Policy Governance
<<http://www.reportdata.com/testmission/artmissionfiles/BoardofDirectors/Policies/PolicyGovernance/PolicyGovernanceoverview.htm>>

APPENDIX 3

Mission of the DSN

The mission of the NorthWest Data Sharing Network is timely, co-ordinated, co-operative, innovative and appropriate use of the geo-spatial datasets to reduce ownership data costs and improve decision-making about land use in our region.

The Ends of the DSN

The Northwest Data Sharing Network exists so that:

1. Owners can reduce costs of data management. Owners will have:
 - 1.1 centralized secure access to shared data sets from themselves and other Owners, including:
 - 1.1.1 both confidential and open source data sets

Northwest Data Sharing Network exists so that:

2. Owners can reduce costs of data stewardship. Owners will have:
 - 2.1 central storage of data sets
 - 2.1.1 especially data sets that may be lost due to infrequent use

Northwest Data Sharing Network exists so that:

3. Owners can improve decision of land use in our region. Owners will have:
 - 3.1 access to data sets within the Data Sharing Network region

Northwest Data Sharing Network exists so that:

4. Owners have greater opportunities to create cost savings through innovative co-operative projects. Owners will have:
 - 4.1 a community of like-minded data owners
 - 4.1.1 to create synergistic projects

APPENDIX 4: Glossary - Policy Governance Terms

Accountability -	subject to giving an explanation of the conduct of yourself and subordinates; related to <i>Monitoring</i> and <i>Responsibility</i>
Board -	a group of persons having total authority and total accountability for managerial and/or supervisory powers
Delegation -	the act of transferring accountability or responsibility to another; related to <i>Accountability</i> and <i>Responsibility</i>
Ends -	what results the organization must produce for its owners (i.e. what good for what audience at what cost?) ; related to <i>Means</i> and <i>Owners</i>
Executive Director -	the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who manages the Means of the organization and manages the staff.
General Executive Restraint -	the overall restraint of the Executive Director's actions in meeting the Ends of the organization through policy. <i>Example:</i> "The Executive Director shall not cause or allow any practice, activity, decision or organizational circumstance which is either unlawful, imprudent or in violation of commonly accepted business and professional ethics or in contravention of our statement of values."
Means -	how best to get the results the organization must produce for its owners
Monitoring -	ask for and receive an explanation of the conduct of another's activity; related to <i>Accountability</i> and <i>Responsibility</i>
Negative language policy -	policy describing what is <u>not</u> allowed. This limits the Executive Director's actions rather than prescribing it.
Nested Policy -	policy created by addressing the broadest values before progressing to narrower ones. By "nesting" policies, the board delegates details and concentrates on why those details matter; related to <i>Delegation</i>
One Voice Policy -	the Board's group decisions must be unambiguous, recorded in policy, and upheld by all the trustees. No member may speak for the board unless specifically authorized by the whole board.
Owners -	the "moral ownership" of the organization. The board is a subset of that group. The board is the communication link to the owners; related to <i>Board</i> and <i>Ends</i> .
Policy -	policy is a value or philosophically-based guide for discretionary action and serves to set out the Ends and limit the Means of action; related to <i>Nested Policy</i> , <i>One Voice Policy</i> , <i>General Executive Restraint</i> , and <i>Ends</i>

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Responsible -

subject to giving an explanation of the conduct of yourself only; related to *Monitoring* and *Accountability*

Trusteeship -

Board members act as trustees on behalf of a larger group (the owners).

As trustees, the board must (1) identify who that larger group is and (2) make certain that the organization achieves what that group wants it to achieve. This requires the board to communicate (link) with its owners; related to *Board, Owners, and Accountability*

APPENDIX 5

DRAFT Business Plan for NorthWest Data Sharing Network

Business Overview

The NorthWest Data Sharing Network is a geospatial data sharing network that provides access to a store of geospatial data that can be accessed by the NorthWest Data Sharing Network society ownership. This will allow the owners to reduce their data costs and make better land use decisions.

Business History

Started in 2001-02 by a group of forward thinking staff of the ownership, the NorthWest Data Sharing Network will now be incorporated as a society. The DSN is governed by a Board of Directors, initially composed of IFPA, MOF, MSRM, Bulkley TSA, First Nations and BC Timber Sales Program representatives.

Vision and Mission Statement

The Northwest Data Sharing Network exists so that:

1. Owners can reduce costs of data management.
2. Owners can reduce costs of data stewardship.
3. Owners can improve decision of land use in our region.
4. Owners have greater opportunities to create cost savings through innovative co-operative projects.

The mission of the NorthWest Data Sharing Network is timely, co-ordinated, co-operative, innovative and appropriate use of the geo-spatial datasets to reduce ownership data costs and improve decision-making about land use in our region. .

Business Objectives

The business objectives of this society are to:

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- allow owners 24 hour access to a significantly larger geospatial information fabric,
- create data standards among the owners,
- reduce the costs of the owners' GIS projects through lowered transaction costs, archiving and sharing expanded data sets,
- function as a data sorting service to ensure consistently appropriate data sets, and,
- strive for transaction and project simplicity.

Ownership

The IFPA, MOF, MSRM, Bulkley TSA, First Nations and BC Timber Sales Program are the Owners of the NorthWest Data Sharing Network society. They each pay a membership fee and have representatives elected to the Board.

Marketing

Market Overview

The NorthWest Data Sharing Network revenue model is simple. We provide low cost data sharing services to our owners. We sell value-added services to others who are not members.

Target Markets

Forest Licensees:

Needs:

- Need access to broader data fabric
 - New boundaries of data management
- Disseminate their data to others more easily
- Managing requests, permissions and copyright issues
 - Sharing management
 - Contract management

MSRM

Needs:

- Adds value to corporate data by updating more regularly
- Managing requests, permissions and copyright issues
 - Sharing management
 - Contract management
- Easier access to current local data

MOF

Needs:

- Managing requests, permissions and copyright issues
 - Sharing management
 - Contract management
- Easier access to current local data
- Enforcement and compliance more easily monitored

BC Timber Sales Program

Needs:

- Need access to broader data fabric
- Managing requests, permissions and copyright issues
 - Sharing management

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- Contract management

First Nations

Needs:

- Data needed for consultation process
- Data needed for land claims negotiations
- Data needed to augment cultural and traditions planning

New Markets and Partnerships to Explore

- Consulting firms
- Regional districts
- Other gov't agencies
 - Mines
 - WALP
 - Parks
- First Nations not presently owners of NWDSN
- Environmental NGOs

Projected Activity by Market Segment

We expect that the majority of activity will be with the forest licensees and the BC Timber Sales Program as we expect that they will want to begin sharing data as quickly as is practical.

Secondarily, each interaction that occurs or for each piece of data that is stored on the Data Sharing Network, the needs for the MSRM and MOF are met indirectly.

Direct Evidence of Customer Interest

There was strong attendance and participation at the inaugural Board meeting of the Data Sharing Network and those who attended committed to meeting again. Each person is taking a request for \$8000 back to their organization to fund the Data Sharing Network for its first year.

Current Status and Trends for the Forest Industry in BC

Softwood tariffs and duties dominate the industry this year. The pressure on forest licensees to reduce costs increases demand for projects like the Data Sharing Network. However, when cash flow is reduced by paying large tariffs, it reduces the forest licensees' ability to pay for that service.

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Technology usage in GIS is growing despite the technology melt-down in 2001. GIS is used more and more, being the planning tool of choice for land use planning and decision-making.

Governments are reducing service and this increases demand for projects like the Data Sharing Network, especially coupled with the movement towards self-regulation by forest licensees.

The environmental movement continues to hold the public's attention and both forest licensees and government are affected by the public relations activities of these groups. The move toward forest licensee certification thru an ISO-type certification body for environmental compliance also increases demand for projects like the Data Sharing Network as forest licensees and governments must show how they make land use decisions.

Meeting requirements of consulting with First Nations is increasing demand for projects like the Data Sharing Network

Competitors (Direct and Indirect)

As an innovative initiative, the NorthWest Data Sharing Network is unique in the Morice & Lakes area. There are no direct competitors.

It is possible that forest consultants might occasionally be competition for the society; however, it is far more likely that they will be clients.

Key Suppliers

MSRM is the supplier of servers to host the data fabric. The owners of the data provide it to the Data Sharing Network for inclusion in the shareable fabric. (A contractor may be engaged to supply all other services as Executive Director, including office space, telephone, etc.)

Addressing Barriers to Stability

The report on Governance prepared by the Innovation Resource Centre in March 2002 identified best practices for data sharing and the common barriers to it.

The Board of the NorthWest Data Sharing Network society has established appropriate governance structures to avoid one of these barriers, ineffective governance. Stable governance will help build an effective staff. Stable governance will also help attract and retain new owners to the Data Sharing Network and ameliorate the next barrier to stability, securing funding. If the ownership sees a stable organization that can reduce its costs, they will invest in the organization.

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One barrier that will need Board attention is local politics. By creating a strong Board members who know the ground rules of being on the Board, the Board can focus on their communication with the ownership and to the public as necessary. This will help the society cope with destructive politics that may arise in the local arena.

A final barrier to stability beyond the society's control will be legislative changes. Both the Board and staff will have to be watchful of legislation, and forest legislation in particular, and how it affects the society.

Economic Developments that Affect the Forest Industry

The main economic development before the owners of the society that will affect the Data Sharing Network is the US softwood dispute and the Provincial government's movement toward a market value forest policy to combat the tariffs. This may affect the ownership of the society and needs to be monitored, as mentioned above.

Other economic developments at the time of writing are the war in Iraq and the ongoing pressure from environmental agencies, both governmental and non- governmental.

The Role of Innovation and Technological Change

The role of innovation and technological change is going to affect the Data Sharing Network as great deal. The Data Sharing Network itself is an innovation that will have to be tested and proven before adopted fully. As it grows in acceptance, the technology it relies upon will continue to change. Data standards will be very important for both efficient and effective results as the world moves to more and more "webbed exchanges." Funding for these changes may be an issue that the Board will have to wrestle with to keep in step with the ownership's needs.

As the GIS industry flourishes, the Data Sharing Network will pursue projects to the next level, adding more opportunities to capitalize on sharing and the technology of sharing.

Products and Services

The key service of the NorthWest Data Sharing Network is the centralized exchange of geospatial data. Using large and powerful servers and the Internet, owners will be able to contribute to a geospatial fabric that all other owners can access. This saves the participating owners the cost of finding data, fielding data requests, and it adds valuable information to their decision-making processes. The Data Sharing Network will facilitate the providing of data in multiple formats or with a translator that can move the data from one format to another. One secondary benefit of the service is that the Data Sharing Network becomes a conduit for storing local data that might otherwise become lost in time.

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Budget

Item	Sub-Item	Annual \$
Revenue		
	• Inaugural Membership	\$70,000
	• User Fees/Consulting	unknown
Board Expenses		
	• Combined Insurance	\$1350
	• Audit	\$800
	• Board Training and Facilitation	\$950
	• Travel/Per Diems	\$950
Payroll		
	• Executive Director (half time contract)	\$65,000
	• Travel/Per Diems/Supplies	\$950
Total		\$70,000