

DATA GOVERNANCE FOUNDATIONS FOR BOARDS:

Checklist for SME and NFP Boards

MAY 2025

PRINCIPLE 1:

Key organisational data is a strategic asset

Understand what is the current, and future, key organisational data that will move the needle for the organisation and customers/clients.

Form a view on the capability of the organisation, including staff, to effectively use data.

Identify where improvements in data collection and use can be made, including through the use of low-cost and accessible data analytics tools.

Support strategic investments and initiatives to build data capability, including the capacity of staff/volunteers to use analytical methods.

PRINCIPLE 2:

Define clear data governance accountability

Ensure there is a senior manager with responsibility for key elements of data governance.

Consider whether a director, or group of directors, should have a more active role in data management and cyber security oversight.

Identify key digital providers and understand their data management and handling practices and controls.

Work with management to develop a targeted number of metrics on data use and data risk controls.



PRINCIPLE 3:

The data lifecycle and effective risk management

Map key data flows and datasets and identify where this data is stored and who has access to it.

Where possible, invest in cyber security enhancements, such as storing key data and systems with reputable cloud providers or migrating key functions to software as a service (SaaS) providers.

Use secured devices for collection and storage of data, rather than rely on individual's personal devices.

Minimise the collection of sensitive personal information and promptly delete it when no longer required.

PRINCIPLE 4:

Empower a data-driven organisational culture

Invest in basic data literacy training for all staff, and volunteers where appropriate, focusing on practical applications rather than technical complexity.

Identify data champions who can advocate for data solutions, monitor risk settings and support their colleagues.

Create visible wins by selecting one business challenge to solve through data, demonstrating tangible benefits that build enthusiasm.

Lead by example through asking for data analysis and reference data in decision making.

Celebrate and recognise employees and volunteers who use data effectively to improve processes or outcomes.

PRINCIPLE 5:

Enable effective data incident response and recovery

Prepare a Response Plan that covers critical cyber security and data incidents.

Conduct a simulation exercise, war game or hypothetical exercise to test various scenarios against the Response Plan.

Communicate honestly, clearly and empathetically with impacted stakeholders.

Consider whether compensation, such as product or service discounts, for impacted customers/clients may assist in rebuilding reputation.

Learn from the incident and take practical steps to improve data governance practices.

Data Governance Foundations for Boards includes a case study on how a board of a charity has overseen data governance improvements.

Fitted For Work – How data is central to demonstrating impact and securing financial stability.

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