HUMANA CORTEX ADVISORY GROUP

Is Your Board Mission-Ready?

A Board Health Checklist for Nonprofits Worldwide

How to use this checklist

Set aside 15–20 minutes, ideally with your executive director and board chair, and answer candidly. For each statement, choose:

> **Yes (2 points):** this is true and happens in practice
>
> **Partly (1 point):** sometimes, or only on paper
>
> **No / Don't know (0 points):**

"Don't know" counts as zero on purpose. Not knowing is itself useful information.

Terms: "Board" can mean directors, trustees or council. "Executive director" means your top staff leader. If you have no staff, read it as whoever runs the day-to-day work. "Governing document" means your bylaws, constitution or statutes.

Important: This checklist is built on general good-practice principles that apply almost everywhere. Laws and regulations for nonprofits vary widely between countries, regions and organization types. Treat the results as a starting point for conversation, not a legal or professional opinion.

1. Purpose and Direction

1.	Our mission is written down and current, and every director could explain it in a sentence.	■ Yes	■ Partly	■ No
2.	We have a strategic plan, or equivalent, that is still current.	■ Yes	■ Partly	■ No
3.	The board has reviewed our progress against the plan in the last 12 months.	■ Yes	■ Partly	■ No
4.	Our programs and activities clearly connect to our mission, and we've said no to things that don't.	■ Yes	■ Partly	■ No
5.	We know who our key stakeholders are (members, beneficiaries, funders, partners) and what they expect of us.	■ Yes	■ Partly	■ No

Section score: _____ / 10

2. Roles and Governance

1.	Our governing document is current, and directors know where to find it and what it says.	■ Yes	■ Partly	■ No
2.	The board and executive director have written roles, and everyone understands where governance ends and management begins.	■ Yes	■ Partly	■ No
3.	It's clear which decisions the board makes and which it delegates.	■ Yes	■ Partly	■ No

4. The board reviews the executive director's performance at least once a year. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No

5. We have a conflict-of-interest policy, and directors declare conflicts in practice. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No

Section score: _____ / 10

3. Board Capacity and Practice

1. New directors receive an orientation and understand their duties. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
2. We recruit directors deliberately for a range of skills, backgrounds and perspectives. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
3. We have a plan for renewal: term limits are respected, and the chair and other key roles change hands in an orderly way. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
4. Meetings have agendas and papers circulated in advance, and they produce clear, recorded decisions. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
5. The board reviews its own performance every year or two. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No

Section score: _____ / 10

4. Finances and Risk

1. The board receives understandable financial reports regularly and asks questions about them. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
2. We have a board-approved budget and compare actual results against it. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
3. We have basic financial controls, such as more than one person involved in approving and making payments. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
4. Our accounts are independently reviewed or audited, as required or appropriate for our size. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
5. The board has identified our biggest risks (financial, reputational, safety, legal, operational) and has considered appropriate insurance. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No

Section score: _____ / 10

5. Funding and Sustainability

1. We would survive losing our largest funder or source of income, or we have a plan for it. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
2. We know our funding sources, their renewal dates and their conditions for the next 12-24 months. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
3. We have a written funding or fundraising plan that the board has discussed. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No

4. We know the true cost of our programs, including overhead, and fund them accordingly. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No

5. We hold reserves, or have a policy and plan for building them. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No

Section score: _____ / 10

6. Accountability, Impact and Relationships

1. We can describe the results of our work, not just our activities, using a few simple indicators. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
2. We report to funders, members and other stakeholders on time, and in a way that's clear to them. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
3. We have a fair, clear process for complaints and concerns, and people know how to use it. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
4. We have current policies on key issues (such as conduct, protecting vulnerable people and data privacy), and we follow them in practice. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
5. We share decisions and information with members and stakeholders openly, as appropriate. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No

Section score: _____ / 10

7. Legal and Regulatory Basics

1. We know which laws and regulations apply to our type of organization and to the places where we operate (registration, reporting, tax, employment, data protection, fundraising). ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
2. We file required reports, returns and renewals on time. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
3. A qualified local professional has reviewed our governing document and practices in the last few years, or after any major change. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
4. We have access to local legal, accounting or audit advice whenever we need it. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No
5. If we work across borders, we understand the rules on moving money and working with partners in each country. ■ Yes ■ Partly ■ No

Section score: _____ / 10

Scoring

Each section (out of 10):

8–10	Strong. Keep it up, and review it regularly.
5–7	Developing. The foundations are there, with gaps worth closing.
0–4	Priority. This is where attention will have the biggest effect.

Overall (out of 70):

55–70	A strong foundation.
35–54	A solid base with some clear gaps.
0–34	Several priorities that deserve attention.

Look first at your "Don't know" answers. They show where your board lacks visibility, which often matters more than the score itself.

What your results may suggest

1. Purpose and Direction	A facilitated strategic planning process.
2. Roles and Governance	Board training, a governance and bylaw review, and role-clarity tools.
3. Board Capacity and Practice	Board orientation, renewal planning and a board self-assessment.
4. Finances and Risk	A health check on finances, controls and risk, with your accountant.
5. Funding and Sustainability	A funding strategy, and possibly income-generating or social enterprise options.
6. Accountability, Impact and Relationships	An impact framework, complaints procedures and key policies.
7. Legal and Regulatory Basics	A review with qualified local counsel, and a compliance check in our Health Check.

Three questions for your next board meeting

1. Which one section result surprised us most?
2. What is the single most important gap to close in the next 90 days?
3. Who will lead it, and what help do we need?

Next step

If your results raised questions, we'd be glad to talk them through.

Book a free 30-minute conversation at humanacortex.com/contact

Or write to hello@humanacortex.com

Disclaimer: This checklist provides general guidance based on good-practice principles. It is not legal, financial or professional advice and does not account for the laws of any particular country or region. Please consult qualified local professionals about the rules that apply to you.

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