

2021 Board of Health Self-Evaluation

Date: November 22, 2021

To: Board of Health

From: Medical Officer of Health

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The Minister of Health publishes the [Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services and Accountability \(OPHS\)](#) as per Section 7 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act. The Standards identify the minimum expectations for public health programs and services to be delivered by Ontario's 34 boards of health. Boards of health are accountable for implementing the Standards, including the requirement to have a self-evaluation process of its governance practices and outcomes.

This report contains the results of the self-evaluation of Toronto's Board of Health (BOH), conducted in October and November 2021. Overall, the BOH self-evaluation survey results were positive, including:

- Verifying that there is strong governance on the BOH and that members understand their roles and responsibilities;
- Highlighting effective relationships and informed decision-making, including in the current virtual meeting environment; and
- Identifying that the BOH is responsive to the immediate and long-term public health needs of the community.

In addition to the positive results, some opportunities and next steps were identified, including:

- Strengthening representation and participation in the BOH by members of communities most impacted by health inequities;
- Taking steps to improve board members' comfort in raising issues;
- Exploring and clarifying measures of success; and
- Increasing public participation in virtual Board of Health meetings.

At present, Toronto Public Health (TPH) remains focused on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the majority of staff redeployed for this purpose. As capacity and

resourcing permit, TPH will work with the City Clerk's Office and the Chair of the BOH to explore opportunities to address feedback provided through the 2021 BOH self-evaluation over the course of the current and upcoming terms of the BOH.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. The Board of Health receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendation in this report.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of November 16, 2020, the Board of Health adopted Item HL23.7 2020 Board of Health Self-Evaluation and requested the Medical Officer of Health to conduct a Board of Health self-evaluation in 2021 and report by the end of 2021 with the results of the self-evaluation.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.HL23.7>

COMMENTS

The Minister of Health publishes the [Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services and Accountability](#) as per *Section 7 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act*. The Standards identify the minimum expectations for public health programs and services to be delivered by Ontario's 34 boards of health. Boards of health are accountable for implementing the Standards including the protocols and guidelines that are referenced therein.

The Standards have a section entitled: *Good Governance and Management Practices Domain*. The organizational requirements within this domain support the use of recommended best practices in governance and organizational processes. By adhering to these practices, boards of health are able to improve the quality and effectiveness of programs and services, prioritize the allocation of resources, improve efficiency, and strive for resiliency in their organizational culture. This section requires each board of health to have a self-evaluation process of its governance practices and outcomes to be completed at least every other year.

Overview of the 2020 Board of Health Self-Evaluation

The last City of Toronto Board of Health (BOH) self-evaluation was conducted in October and November 2021. An email was sent from the BOH Chair to all board members outlining the process and requesting their participation in a survey. Participation was not mandatory, but strongly encouraged. Seven of the 13 board members participated in the survey. Overall, the BOH self-evaluation had positive results and verified that there is strong governance, effective relationships, and informed decision-making at the BOH.

Self-Evaluation Survey

The BOH self-evaluation is done through an online and anonymous survey developed by TPH staff. The survey uses self-evaluation best practice tools from other local public health units in Ontario and from Accreditation Canada's Governance Functioning Tool. The survey is reviewed regularly to ensure it is up-to-date and is used to measure feedback over time. It includes over 40 questions, including some open-ended questions to encourage board members to provide additional comments and/or context for their responses. In recognition of the shift to virtual Board of Health meetings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 iteration of the survey included a specific question to gauge members' perspectives on the Board's performance in a virtual setting.

Findings from the Self-Evaluation

The following is a summary of the findings of the BOH's self-evaluation. The full survey and results can be found in Attachment 1.

Topic: BOH Roles and Responsibilities

The majority of board members who responded to the survey reported that they have a strong and common understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the scope, mandate and authority of the BOH. They reported that there is an appropriate structure and procedures to contribute to effective governance and leadership, and shared that they are familiar with the legislation, standards, and bylaws that apply to the BOH.

Topic: BOH Information Sharing and BOH Relations

A majority of respondents consistently reported indicated that as board members they receive adequate and timely information in order to make informed decisions. They shared that TPH staff are very supportive and that the BOH Chair conducts meetings well and in a way that moves the business forward. The majority of respondents also stated that they feel that they are adequately supported to interpret, analyze, and assess BOH reports, proposals, and financial information, and agreed or strongly agreed that decisions made are informed by accurate, timely and scientific information.

Topic: BOH Planning

All respondents reported that they are familiar with the Medical Officer of Health's annual report and annual performance measures and reporting requirements. In

addition, all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that board members receive adequate and timely budgetary information. The self-evaluation also revealed that the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the BOH is responsive to the immediate and long-term health trends and public health needs of the community.

Topic: Board of Health effectiveness during COVID-19

Respondents expressed that the Board of Health continued to function effectively following the shift to virtual meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some respondents shared a perception of decreased public participation in virtual meetings, relative to in-person meetings, and identified an opportunity to bolster efforts to inform the public of opportunities to participate in virtual meetings.

Topic: Opportunities

Respondents indicated that there are opportunities for improvement on the following subjects:

- Ensuring representation on the BOH by members of communities most impacted by health inequities;
- Facilitating opportunities for community members to participate in BOH planning;
- Taking steps to improve board members' comfort in taking initiative and raising issues at the BOH;
- Clarifying board members' roles and responsibilities when considering items that implicate City divisions other than TPH;
- Further review and consideration of measures of success for Toronto Public Health and the Medical Officer of Health, including consideration of the BOH's accountability for these outcomes; and
- Providing board members with opportunities to observe TPH service provisions (e.g. through site visits).

Next Steps

Currently, Toronto Public Health remains focused on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Contingent on resourcing and staff capacity, TPH will work with the City Clerk's Office and the Chair of the BOH to explore opportunities to address feedback provided through the 2021 BOH self-evaluation over the course of the current and upcoming terms of the BOH.

The OPHS requires the Board of Health to complete a self-evaluation at least every other year. To align with this requirement, Toronto Public Health anticipates completing the next Board of Health self-evaluation in late 2023.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Dr. Eileen de Villa
Medical Officer of Health

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: 2021 Board of Health Self-Evaluation Survey and Results