

Operational Enhancement Initiative (OEI)



Report prepared for the Board of Directors and senior staff of Water Polo West

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Overview of Operational Effectiveness Initiative (OEI)

The OEI is a multi-year project with a goal of strengthening capacity and improving the sustainability of Designated Sport Organizations in BC. viaSport selected Sport Law to work alongside all 75 Designated Sport Organizations to modernize and strengthen existing governance structures and operations.

The sport system in Canada requires updated processes and approaches to support the increased legal standards required of not-for-profit organizations. Moreover, the current governance structure in most sport organizations is reliant on dedicated volunteers who do not necessarily have the required capacity or expertise to support the legal and leadership requirements. With a growing number of issues, scandals and failed expectations being downloaded onto primarily volunteer-run sport organizations, viaSport is investing in strengthening the capacity of Designated Sport Organizations, which are pivotal to support a thriving sport sector in BC.

The OEI focuses on four main components with each organization: Organizational Priorities, viaSport Standards of Practice, Leading Practices for Organizational Excellence, and the Provincial Sport Culture Index.

Organizational Priorities take into account those items and areas that each organization has defined as being important to them, as well as what they know they would like to work on to support a healthy and strong organization. These priorities, as defined by Water Polo West, have been included and incorporated in this report.

viaSport Standards of Practice are some of the foundational pieces of good governance and operational effectiveness that viaSport already requires Designated Sport Organizations to meet to remain eligible for funding through the *Designation Program Policy*. These standards of practice, in themselves, are required expectations to ensure effective business management.

Leading Practices for Organizational Excellence are those practices, policies, procedures or processes that an organization should have in place to enhance and strengthen their governance and internal operating systems. Current leading practices are informed by the successful application of policies, procedures and processes in other organizations and by the [Canadian Sport Governance Code](#).

Provincial Sport Culture Index (PSCI) is a novel and evidence-based assessment that quantifies culture in sport organizations. The PSCI measures 12 culture factors: accountability, clarity, mission/vision, impact, governance/leadership, improvement, psychological safety, belonging, values alignment, communication, learning, and integrity.

There are a number of elements that fall within the components of leading practices and the standards required by viaSport. Each of the following elements has several leading practices associated with it:

1. Legal Incorporation
2. Foundational Statements and Intentional Planning
3. Informed Governance (Good Governance)
4. Committee Structures
5. Human Resource Planning and Management
6. Financial Planning and Management
7. Risk Management
8. Safe and Inclusive Environments
9. Delivery of Programs and Services

In working with Water Polo West, Sport Law has been able to identify the strengths that the organization currently has related to those elements. There are also some areas that may be improved to enhance the governance and operational effectiveness of the organization.

Principles of Good Governance and Operational Effectiveness

Sport Law has prepared a set of Principles of Good Governance and Operational Effectiveness. Although it is not required that all organizations adopt all Principles listed, each organization should consider how these Principles could enhance how it governs its affairs.

Principle #1:

There is a clear distinction between the responsibilities of the Board and those of staff (when staff have been hired and are in place for an organization)

1. The Board possesses responsibilities that pertain to the governing of the organization. The Board:
 - a) Maintains an updated set of articles and bylaws that conform with existing laws and regulations
 - b) Develops a governance framework and processes, including governance policies, for the organization
 - c) Approves a strategic plan, which affirms the mission, vision, values and strategic priorities of the organization
 - d) Approves an annual operating plan and budget, prepared by staff, to facilitate completion of the strategic plan and human resources strategy
 - e) Develops processes for ongoing Board development (e.g., Board evaluation, recruitment, orientation, and training)
 - f) Monitors the organization's performance, including its financial affairs and the management of risks and opportunities
 - g) Selects, oversees, evaluates, and compensates the senior staff person
 - h) Develops a succession plan for the senior staff person

2. When an organization hires a senior staff person, they become responsible for the management of the operations of the organization. The senior staff person must:
 - a) Manage and administer finances, human resources, programs, program structures, services, stakeholder relations, and risk management
 - b) Develop operational structures, processes and policies that enact the organization's mission, reflect its values, and support the achievement of its strategic priorities
 - c) Prepare, for approval by the Board, an annual operating plan and budget based on the priorities of the strategic plan
 - d) Ensure that the operational requirements of the executive limitations are met (e.g., protection of assets, monitoring of financial processes, and management of stakeholder relationships)
 - e) Execute and implement Board policies and directives
 - f) Ensures that the Board has one employee, the senior staff person, and that all other staff report directly to the senior staff person instead of to the Board

Principle #2:

The organization has Board structures and processes that enable it to govern and oversee the growth of the sport in an effective and professional manner

1. The size of the Board facilitates a culture of participation, personal and shared responsibility, efficiency, common vision, cooperation, and effective decision-making.
2. The Board has the requisite skill set and knowledge to carry out its governing responsibilities.
3. The Board's composition reflects geographic, linguistic, gender and ethnic/cultural diversity.
4. Each Director carries out their fiduciary duties (duty of care, duty of due diligence, duty of loyalty, duty of obedience) as matters of personal responsibility, which cannot be delegated to any other person or organization.
5. In performing its responsibilities, the Board acts with a view to the best interests of the organization. The Board accounts for the impact of its decisions on Members, participants/registrants, and other stakeholders.
6. The Board provides *direction* and *control* of the organization by:
 - a) Ensuring that the agenda for meetings of the Board is structured according to the priorities of the strategic plan and annual operational plan
 - b) Ensuring that Board control does not lead to a focus on operational details or decisions but instead makes certain that:
 - i. The assets and resources of the organization are directed towards its strategic and annual priorities
 - ii. There is proper oversight of the organization utilizing standardized policies and processes (e.g., executive limitations, senior staff evaluation, risk registry, and succession planning)
7. To ensure that there is no conflict of loyalty, including with their fiduciary obligations, Directors of the organization may not simultaneously hold a Director position with another organization that is a member of the organization (like a club) or any organization that operates within the governance structure of the sport (like a league or the national organization).
8. The Board appoints committees of the Board to assist in performing its governing responsibilities. The Board establishes two types of committees: standing and ad-hoc. Standing committees assist the Board with financial oversight, strategic assessments, risk assessment, the development of governance processes, Board evaluation, and Board recruitment. Ad-hoc committees are struck on a temporary basis to examine Board-related issues not addressed by the standing committees.
9. The senior staff person may strike operational committees to assist with the organization's operations. The senior staff person appoints program committees composed of individuals

with skill sets and knowledge that are necessary to administer program structures and services. Operational committees act independently of the Board and report to the senior staff person.

10. Staff receive their direction from the senior staff person, who reports to the Board through the Chair.

Principle #3:

The organization's relationships with its Members, participants/registrants, and governing organizations reflect accountability, alignment, responsiveness, transparency, and clarity in communications

1. On governance-related matters, communication occurs between the Board's President/Chair or identified designates.
2. On operations-related matters, communication occurs between the senior staff person or identified designates.
3. The Board and staff are responsive, transparent, and clear in communicating information that involves, or has an impact on, other organizations.
4. Following a decision of the Board, each Director both supports and communicates the same message ensuring, where identified, that only the Board's designated spokesperson speaks on behalf of the organization.

Organizational Priorities

Water Polo West is a newly formed organization (2018) that gained recognition from Water Polo Canada in 2019. As such, the organization is still developing many of the policies, processes and procedures to effectively guide its work. Since its inception, Water Polo West has seen success in a number of areas including ensuring a solid foundation was put in place in 2018, a Board of Directors that is seeking to move in the direction of greater accountability, hiring of a coach for the national development centre, sending 5 teams to provincial nationals in Montreal, provincial championships represented by 20 teams

Water Polo West has identified several organizational priorities that they would like to focus on over the next couple of years. These include:

Building a strong board governance structure with systems in place that will allow for successful succession planning to ensure a continued strong foundation for Water Polo West. This would include strategies around board recruitment and board evaluation, solid governance policies, and effective committees with terms of reference. Succession planning for staff roles, including the Executive Director and “volunteer” registration coordinator.

Continuing to grow the membership and increasing access to facilities for both training and competition. Without access to facilities, growth of the sport cannot effectively occur.

Focus on policy development for Water Polo West. Ensuring all policies are solid and serve the organization into the future.

Finally, Water Polo West identified the importance of establishing and building trust with the water polo community.

In summary, Water Polo West would like to focus on:

1. Strong Governance, including solid policy development; and Succession Planning,
2. Growing the Membership
3. Continuing to build trust within the water polo community.

viaSport Standards of Practice

The following table outlines viaSport’s ‘Standards of Practice’ for Designated Sport Organizations. Per the *Designation Program Policy*, viaSport requires organizations to meet these standards in order to remain eligible for funding. Since all of the Designated Sport Organizations participating in the OEI received funding, it was assumed that each organization already met the standard described below. Regardless, each organization’s documents were reviewed to ensure they were aligned with the identified standards.

Element	Item	viaSport’s Standards of Practice
Legal Incorporation	Registered Society	Compliant with the <i>BC Societies Act</i> , including bylaws, meeting requirements, filing of annual requirements to maintain good standing.
		The organization has a constitution and bylaws that define the organization's governance structure and at a minimum addresses the following: organizational purpose; size and composition of the Board; procedures for election of Directors and corresponding terms; roles and duties of Directors and Officers; procedures for meetings of Directors and meetings of the Members; membership categories and voting rights; financial management.
Foundational Statements and Intentional Planning	Foundational Statements – Vision, Mission and Values	The organization has a Vision Statement, Mission Statement and Values in place that have been revisited and reviewed by the Board as part of the strategic planning process.
	Strategic Plan	The organization has a multi-year strategic plan that includes goals, actions and performance measures that have been approved by the Board.
Informed Governance	Conflict of Interest	A <i>Conflict of Interest Policy</i> has been adopted by the organization and approved by the Board.
Human Resources Planning and Management	Human Resources Policies	Human Resources Policies are in place.
Financial Planning and Management	Audit or Review Engagement	The Board is responsible for ensuring that an annual Audit, Review Engagement or Compilation Engagement

Element	Item	viaSport's Standards of Practice
		is conducted by a chartered professional accountant on an annual basis.
Risk Management	Insurance Coverage	The Board has reviewed and obtained appropriate insurance for the organization (minimum \$2 million General Liability).
Safe and Inclusive Environments	Safe Sport	The organization has adopted key safe sport policies, including a Code of Conduct and policies for Discipline and Complaints, Dispute Resolution, Appeals, Criminal Record Checks and Screening, Fair Play and Anti-Doping, and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access.
		A process is in place to ensure orientation of new Directors which includes completion of the Commit to Kids online training.
		Organizations are in a state of readiness to align with the BCUCC or UCCMS and to have complaints managed through a third party.

Leading Practices for Organizational Excellence and Related Findings

All organizations, regardless of their structure, have a set of functions that can be categorized as (1) governance and (2) management or operations.

Governance Functions are those elements or areas of the organization that are the responsibility of the Board. Generally, these functions cannot be delegated outside of the Board structure.

Management/Operational Functions are the non-governance elements or areas of the organization that are the responsibility of staff, committees, or volunteers. When a Board has hired a senior staff person, the management and operation functions become the responsibility of that individual (and then delegated to additional staff as required). When an organization does not employ a senior staff person some, or all, of these areas or elements may be performed by the Board, specific Directors, or committees. In this capacity, it is important to note that the Board, or the specific Director performing the function, is acting in a management or operational capacity and not in a governance role.

In collaboration with Water Polo West, Sport Law has reviewed key organizational documents, including policies, procedures and processes and has obtained through dialogue additional information to inform the findings below.

Leading Practices for the Sector – Legal Incorporation

Element	Legal Incorporation
<i>Item</i>	<i>Registered Society</i>
Governance Function	<p>The Board ensures that all required documents are filed annually with the government via Societies Online. These include a BC Society Annual Report, updated Director information, and any amendments to the bylaws (which have been approved by the Members).</p> <p>The bylaws conform to current leading governance practices related to Board Composition, Director Terms, Member Voting, a distinction between Members and registrants/participants, and the exclusion of policy and operational clauses.</p> <p>(NOTE: Standards and/or Leading Practices for this area are also contained in the Informed Governance area)</p>
Management Function	n/a

Findings – Legal Incorporation

As part of its adherence to the requirements of viaSport's *Designation Program Policy*, Water Polo West is required to submit its bylaws and other required documents to Societies Online.

Annually, this task has been completed by the President and will be completed by the Secretary in the ensuing year.

Members

Water Polo West's membership consists of any club, group, organization, or team that has applied for and been accepted by the Board as either a Voting Member or a Non-Voting Member.

Water Polo West's bylaws establish that an Authorized Representative shall represent a Voting Member at meetings of the Members, with each Voting Member to have one (1) vote.

The bylaws do not provide for any representation by Non-Voting Members at meetings of the Members, which is problematic in that non-voting members have the right to be heard at meetings of the members notwithstanding they do not have the right to vote at such meetings.

Individual participants are not Members. Water Polo West's bylaws refer to Athletes as being individuals insured to play water polo and registered with a Member for that purpose.

Board of Directors

Water Polo West's bylaws stipulate a Board of between three (3) and seven (7) Directors as determined by the Voting Members.

Directors serve a term of two (2) years.

There is a limit of two (2) terms of two (2) years each for a total of four (4) years, after which a Director is no longer eligible to serve on the Board for a cooling-off period of four (4) years.

No more than one-third (1/3) of the Directors can be "Affiliated" with any single Member, and no more than two-thirds (2/3) shall be "Affiliated" with any Member.

The Voting Members elect a President. The Board elects from among the Directors a Secretary and a Treasurer.

Governance Function

Water Polo West's bylaws appear to be generally compliant with the *Societies Act*.

Bylaws should only contain material related to the governance function of the organization. Content that is considered "policy" should not be located in the bylaws. Water Polo West's bylaws properly do not include policy matters. Additional governance material is contained in various documents, and individual policies are posted on Water Polo West's website with a separate section for policies related to safe sport.

Other

There are a few additional minor issues that need to be addressed (described in the 'Recommendations' section of this report).

Leading Practices for the Sector – Foundational Statements and Intentional Planning

Element	Foundational Statements and Intentional Planning
Item	Foundational Statements and Strategic Plan
Governance Function	The Board approves, and has a process to review, the Vision Statement, Mission Statement and Values of the organization. The organization has a multi-year strategic plan that includes goals, actions and performance measures that has been approved by the Board.
Management Function	n/a
Item	Operational Plan
Governance Function	n/a
Management Function	Management is responsible for creating an annual operational plan that is aligned with the strategic plan. The organization has a process to evaluate its progress in achieving the operational plan. Management is responsible for ensuring the human resources plan and annual operating budget are in alignment with the operational plan.

Findings - Foundational Statements and Intentional Planning

Foundational Statements and Strategic Plan

Water Polo West has an approved strategic plan for the period of 2023 – 2027. The strategic plan outlines the foundational statements of Vision, Mission and Values. The Vision is “*to facilitate a world-class and collaborative water polo community in British Columbia*”, with a Mission “*to support and grow the sport of water polo across British Columbia.*” Water Polo West had adopted four core values of Fair Plan, Inclusion, Accountability, and Excellence and further defines what each of these mean in the strategic plan.

The strategic plan outlines four strategic pillars (or large goals) that include Athlete Development, Coach Development, Officials Development and Capacity Development. Each of the pillars further identifies three to four strategic priorities that Water Polo West is looking to achieve.

Contained within the strategic plan is elements of the operational plan, with each of the strategic priorities listing activities or actions with a target date.

Operational Plan

Water Polo West does not have a stand-alone operational plan, but rather has incorporated the activities and targets within their strategic plan. The ability to have some flexibility with adding and removing these activities (actions) and further defining who is responsible for each activity would provide a more complete operational plan.

Overall, it would appear that Water Polo West has created a system and process for the implementation of the strategic plan that combines management and governance and is likely

aligned well to their structure and board type, based on staff resources. A status report was provided on the progress of each of the strategic priorities, that demonstrated an example of how the organization is working on achieving its strategic plan.

Leading Practices for the Sector – Informed Governance

Element	Informed Governance
Item	<i>Understanding the Role of the Board</i>
Governance Function	Roles of the Board and Staff are clearly defined and aligned to the type of Board in place.
	If the organization employs a senior staff person, an <i>Executive Limitations Policy</i> has been adopted by the Board.
	If the organization employs a senior staff person, a clear distinction between governance tasks and management/operations tasks is in place.
	The Board has clearly defined its role and accountabilities through a Board Policy or Board Charter.
Management Function	n/a
Item	<i>Meetings of the Members</i>
Governance Function	Members have the responsibility to vote on: Appointment of the Auditors, election of the Directors and amendments to the bylaws and not on any other matter.
Management Function	n/a
Item	<i>Conflict of Interest</i>
Governance Function	A <i>Conflict of Interest Policy</i> has been adopted by the organization and approved by the Board.
	The Board has adopted a process to declare conflicts on both an annual basis and at each Board meeting.
	The organization has a process to identify or declare potential conflicts of interest through the Board nomination process.
Management Function	n/a
Item	<i>Board Composition</i>
Governance Function	The organization's bylaws provide for an odd number of Directors and the size of the Board reflects the type of the Board that is in place (i.e., a larger Board is more appropriate when there are fewer staff and Directors must take on some operational responsibilities).
	The organization's bylaws outline term lengths and term limits. The preferred term lengths are 2 or 3 years with alternating elections and the preferred term limits are 8 - 9 years.
	The organization's bylaws indicate that the Members elect Directors and/or that the Directors to appoint* Directors to the Board. The Directors then elect or appoint the Officers of the

Element	Informed Governance
	Board (President/Chair, Secretary, Vice-President etc.). The organization's bylaws do not permit representative roles on the Board.
	*The organization's bylaws allow for the Board of Directors to appoint individuals to the Board ensure the Board is inclusive of gender, diversity, age, and independence relative to its size.
	Directors elected or appointed to the Board are independent and do not hold a position on a Board of any affiliated organization.
Management Function	n/a
Item	Meetings of the Board
Governance Function	The Board holds a sufficient number of meetings each year to properly ensure the appropriate direction and oversight of the organization. The Board ensures that it is holding the number of meetings as required in the bylaws.
	Minutes of Board meetings are recorded and retained.
Management Function	n/a
Item	Board Position Descriptions
Governance Function	The Board has adopted and approved position descriptions for Directors and a process to review position descriptions on a regular basis.
Management Function	n/a
Item	Board Recruitment
Governance Function	The Board establishes a Nominations Committee that is cleared of any conflict of interest. The Board has adopted and approved a Terms of Reference for the Nominations Committee.
	The Board has established and approved a recruitment and nominations process for Directors and this process has been shared with the membership. At a minimum, the process should include the use of a skills, diversity and attributes matrix.
	The Board has established an orientation process and/or orientation manual for all new Directors.
Management Function	n/a
Item	Board Development and Evaluation
Governance Function	The Board has established a process to do an annual review of the performance of Directors (individually) and the Board (collectively).
	The Board provides the opportunity for Directors to participate in development and learning opportunities.
Management Function	n/a

Element	Informed Governance
Item	Legal Compliance
Governance Function	The Board, or a standing committee of the Board, oversees the organization's compliance with its governing documents and all applicable laws and regulations.
Management Function	n/a
Item	Remuneration
Governance Function	The Board has adopted a policy that provides for Directors to be remunerated only for personal expenses (out of pocket). Directors receive no remuneration for their role.
Management Function	n/a

Findings - Informed Governance

Understanding Role of the Board

With the organization in its infancy, it is clear that it is still working on establishing and refining some of the structural pieces of the organization. As such, currently there is not a Board Policy (Charter or Mandate) that exists and describes the boards role outside of the bylaws. As Water Polo West is likely on the continuum between a Management Board and Full Governance Board with .8FT equivalent Executive Director, an Executive Limitations Policy has not been adopted and may not be warranted at this point for the organization. The organization’s bylaws specifically provide for the appointment of and delegation to a “Senior Manager.”

Meetings of the Members

Water Polo West provided Minutes for the 2024 and draft minutes for the 2025 Annual General Meeting. The minutes are in presentation format and would not be considered official minutes of the association. Water Polo West additionally provided a set of draft minutes for the 2025 AGM, that have been recorded in a manner that is typically seen in non-profit organizations, including capturing the attendance, as well as information as to who has made a motion, seconded a motion, and information as to whether the motion was approved or defeated. Water Polo West should continue to ensure that the minutes are recorded as would be expected for official corporate records.

Further, we note that Members do not approve financial statements, but only review and consider them in a discussion with staff and the Board. Members do, however, appoint the auditor retained to review or audit the financial statements.

Conflict of Interest

Water Polo West had not adopted a Conflict of Interest Policy.

The board meeting minutes do not demonstrate that Water Polo West is routinely declaring conflicts of interest as a standing item on the agenda.

Board Composition

As noted above, Water Polo West's bylaws stipulate a Board of between three (3) and seven (7) Directors as determined by the Voting Members.

Directors serve a term of two (2) years.

There is a limit of two (2) terms of two (2) years each for a total of four (4) years, after which a Director is no longer eligible to serve on the Board for a cooling-off period of four (4) years.

No more than one-third (1/3) of the Directors can be "Affiliated" with any single Member, and no more than two-thirds (2/3) shall be "Affiliated" with any Member..

The Voting Members elect a President. The Board elects from among the Directors a Secretary and a Treasurer.

The bylaws set out that the Board should consist of appropriate diversity of skill, experience, and culture.

Meetings of the Board

Water Polo West does not post the minutes of meetings of the Directors on its website.

The minutes do not indicate that there is a standing agenda item at the start of all Board meetings for Directors to list any conflicts they may have.

The bylaws do not set out a minimum number of Board meetings to be held each year.

Board Position Descriptions

Water Polo West does not have Board Position Descriptions for Directors or Officers in place, outside the high-level description provided in the bylaws.

Board Recruitment

The bylaws outline that potential Directors disclose their affiliation prior to any appointment or election to the Board. They further describe the period of time in which nominations may be received prior to the AGM, and outline desirable qualification and skills.

There is no formal nomination and recruitment process that has been approved by Water Polo West, nor a Nominations Committee with an approved terms of reference. Water Polo West did not provide any evidence of a skills, diversity and attributes matrix being utilized as part of the nomination and recruitment process.

Board Development and Evaluation

Water Polo West does not have a process in place to evaluate the Board, either collectively for the performance of the full board or by individual Director.

No formal board development opportunities are in place for the Board of Water Polo West.

Legal Compliance

A not-for-profit organization’s compliance with legislation is chiefly centred around its obligations to the applicable incorporation legislation as well as its adherence to its various financial, privacy, and employment legislative requirements.

We have previously discussed Water Polo West’s general compliance with the *BC Societies Act*.

The organization has a fulsome Privacy Policy.

Sport Law has not reviewed employment agreements. Water Polo West indicated that employment agreements were reviewed and drafted by an employment lawyer.

Remuneration

The bylaws confirm that no Director may be remunerated for being or acting as a Director but a Director may be reimbursed for all expenses necessarily and reasonably incurred while engaged in the business of the Society.

Leading Practices for the Sector – Committee Structure

Element	Committee Structure
Governance Function	There is a clear understanding of the distinction between governance and operational committees.
Management Function	There is a clear understanding of the distinction between governance and operational committees.
Item	<i>Committees of the Board</i>
Governance Function	At a minimum, the following standing committees of the Board are established: Nominations Committee, Audit and Finance Committee, and Governance Committee.
	The Board, through its committee structure, has ensured that the elements of Human Resources and Risk Management have been assigned to a committee. These may be separate committees of the Board.
	A process is in place that allows the Board to create Ad Hoc Committees of the Board to support other governance initiative or projects.
	Terms of Reference for each Committee of the Board are in place and there is a process to review the terms of reference on a regular basis (ideally every two to three years).
	A process is in place for Committees to report regularly to the Board.
Management Function	Staff may be assigned to attend meetings of Board committees in an administrative capacity.

Element	Committee Structure
<i>Item</i>	<i>Operational Committees</i>
Governance Function	n/a
Management Function	The senior staff person has the authority to establish Operational Committees. When a senior staff person does not exist within an organization, operational committees may be established by the Board.
	Terms of Reference for each Operational Committee are in place and a process to review the terms of reference on a regular basis has been established.
	A process is in place for each committee to report regularly to the senior staff person. When a senior staff role does not exist, operational committees report to a designated individual.
	Athlete Representation is considered when constituting the composition of operational committees OR the organization has an Athlete Council/Committee.

Findings - Committee Structure

As stated earlier in the report, Water Polo West is a newly formed organization and is in the process of establishing more formally some of the structures of the organization in alignment with leading practices, including its committee structure.

Committees of the Board

Water Polo West is in the process of formally establishing committees of the Board with approved terms of reference. These committees include a Finance Committee, Human Resources Committee, Governance Committee and Nominations Committee. The organization recently approved the terms of reference for the Finance Committee and Governance Committee (January 19, 2026) and the Finance Committee has had an initial meeting. Water Polo West indicated it is in the process of finalizing the terms of reference documents for the other two board committees.

The terms of reference documents provide are fairly basic and may benefit from more details as to duties and responsibilities. Many organizations also find it helpful to identify the policy oversight that each standing committee of the Board may be responsible for reviewing and ensuring updates are done in a timely manner.

Operational Committees

Water Polo West shared the following committees are in place and the Executive Director is currently working on developing the terms of reference for each committee: Events; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; High Performance; Fundraising; Community and Sport for Life; Facility Advocates. They also have an ad-hoc local organizing committee for the provincial championships.

Leading Practices for the Sector – Human Resources Planning and Management

Element	Human Resources Planning and Management
Item	<i>Recruitment, Support and Evaluation of the Senior Staff Person is in place</i>
Governance Function	<p>The Board is responsible for the recruitment and orientation of the most senior staff person.</p> <p>The senior staff person reports to the Board through the Chair and has a written job description.</p> <p>The Board is responsible for evaluating the performance of the senior staff person.</p> <p>The Board (or a committee of the Board) is responsible for annually approving the total compensation package of the senior staff person.</p> <p>The Board (or Committee of the Board) is responsible for reviewing the expenses of the senior staff person.</p> <p>The Board is responsible for ensuring a succession plan is in place for the senior staff person.</p> <p>If a senior staff person is in place, Executive Limitations have been established.</p>
Management Function	n/a
Item	<i>Human Resources Planning and Management of Staff</i>
Governance Function	Human Resources Roles demonstrate knowledge of the capacity of the organization to deliver on its strategic plan, support the effective delivery of programs and services and take into account the type of governance structure (Board type), and overall size of the organization.
Management Function	<p>Human Resources Roles demonstrate knowledge of the capacity of the organization to deliver on its strategic plan, support the effective delivery of programs and services, and take into account the type of governance structure (Board type), and overall size of the organization.</p> <p>A Human Resources Plan forms part of the operational plan/budget process and is in alignment with the strategic plan.</p> <p>Human Resources policies are in place and all staff have access to them.</p> <p>Position Descriptions are in place for all staff and are reviewed annually.</p> <p>Employees are recruited and selected through an objective, consistent process that complies with human rights legislation.</p> <p>An orientation and training process is in place for all new staff.</p> <p>An annual performance development process is in place that incorporates a performance review, objective setting and a development plan for each staff member.</p>

Element	Human Resources Planning and Management
	The organization provides the opportunity for employees to develop additional skills.
	The organization has a process to identify the type and nature of roles within the organization and the appropriate compensation.
	The organization has policies and procedures in place that define and support the involvement of volunteers, including leadership volunteers.

Findings - Human Resources Planning and Management

Recruitment, Support and Evaluation of the Senior Staff

Water Polo West employes a .8 FT Equivalent Executive Director who has been in their role since April of 2025. The Board was responsible for hiring the Executive Director and approving the total compensation.

The position description for the Executive Director is contained within the employment contract. Although not identified in the position description, the employment contract references the role reports to the President and Vice-President. Ideally, the Executive Director should report to the Board through the President.

With the Executive Director being recently hired (within the last year), a performance evaluation has not been conducted.

The expenses of the Executive Director are approved by the President, although this is not fully documented. The employment contract references travel and out of pocket expenses should be approved prior to be incurred.

Human Resources Planning and Management of Staff

Water Polo West is a small organization that utilizes both contract staff and volunteers to support the operational aspects of the organization. In addition to the Executive Director, Water Polo West has a contract with a part time High Performance Coach that works in partnership with the National Development Centre in BC. They also engage with a part time book-keeper and part time contracted coaches for Team BC activities. In addition to the contracted staff, Water Polo West engages a volunteer who has graciously given a large amount of time in the role of registrations and operations for the organization.

Position Description was provided for the High Perofrmance Coach, however position descriptions were not provided for any of the other contracted individuals or volunteer.

Due to the contract nature of the positions, a full human resource policy has not been approved by Water Polo West nor has it put in place annual performance development process at this time or have a documented process to match compensation to roles. With all roles being either

contracted or volunteer, this has not necessarily a priority for the organization so long as the contract adequately stipulates rights and responsibilities.

Leading Practices for the Sector – Financial Planning and Management

Element	Financial Planning and Management
Item	<i>Audit and Finance Committee</i>
Governance Function	The Board has established an Audit and Finance Committee that meets quarterly, at a minimum.
	The Board is responsible for approving and monitoring the annual operating budget.
	Financial Statements are reviewed monthly or quarterly by the Audit and Finance Committee and a report is shared with the Board.
Management Function	Management is responsible for developing the annual operating budget in alignment with the operational plan.
	A process is in place to monitor the annual operating budget and report any discrepancies to the Audit and Finance Committee or the Board.
Item	<i>Financial Management Policies</i>
Governance Function	The Board is responsible for approving the financial management policies of the organization.
	A minimum of two signing authorities are required for all payments and expenses.
Management Function	The Financial Management Policies are executed.
	An accounting system has been adopted by the organization and so has a process to ensure that the accounting of all funds (revenue and expenses) is done in a timely manner.
Item	<i>Tax Filings and Statutory Remittances</i>
Governance Function	The Board has a process to ensure that the organization’s tax return is completed and filed annually.
Management Function	On an annual or semi-annual basis, the senior staff person confirms that all statutory remittances have been filed and made.

Findings - Financial Planning and Management

Audit and Finance Committee

Water Polo West is in the process of establishing an Finance Committee and recently approved the terms of reference for the committee (January 19, 2026). No committee minutes were yet available for this review, as the committee has just had a single meeting.

Water Polo West indicated that the annual operating budget is developed by the Executive Director and approved by the Board annually.

The minutes of the board meeting demonstrate the Board is reviewing financial statements on regular basis and reporting on any discrepancies.

Financial Management Policies

Water Polo West does not have approved financial management policies or controls in place.

Water Polo West did indicate that all payments require two signing authorities, however this practice is not yet documented through policy.

Tax Filings and Statutory Remittances

Statutory remittances have been filed and made, however a process to notify the board of this task has not occurred. With the launch of the Finance Committee, Water Polo West has indicated that these reports will be provided to the finance committee and communicated to the Board on at least an annual basis.

Leading Practices for the Sector – Risk Management

Element	Risk Management
Item	Risk Management Policy
Governance Function	The Board has adopted and approved a <i>Risk Management Policy</i> .
	The organization has a process to identify its major strategic and operational risks. The organization also has a plan to minimize and mitigate those risks, and this plan is reviewed and approved by the Board at least once a year.
Management Function	Management is responsible for ensuring the <i>Risk Management Policy</i> is executed.
	Management has a process to ensure that operational risks are reported to the Board on a regular basis.
Item	Insurance Coverage
Governance Function	The Board has General Liability insurance and it is regularly reviewed. <i>Standard of Practice</i>
	The Board has Directors and Officers Liability Coverage
	The Board has reviewed and considered other insurance coverage such as Cyber Abuse, and Errors and Omissions.
Management Function	N /A
Item	Document and Data Management
Governance Function	The Board is responsible for ensuring that all Governance Documents (e.g., bylaws, approved policies, Board minutes etc.) are retained and accessible to current and future Boards.
Management Function	Management is responsible for ensuring that documents are stored in a manner that is secure and respects confidentiality

Element	Risk Management
	and privacy, while also ensuring that they are accessible to current and future staff.

Findings - Risk Management

Risk Management Policy

Water Polo West does not have an approved Risk Management Policy nor does it use a risk register or process to monitor risk on an ongoing basis.

Insurance Coverage

Insurance coverage is provided through Water Polo Canada, and meets the viaSport Designation Program Standards. The organization indicated that it does have Director’s and Officers Liability coverage.

Document and Data Management

Water Polo West utilizes Google Works for the storage of documents. Access to documents is restricted by role, as needed.

The organization utilizes the national registration system provided by Water Polo Canada (RAMP) for all registrations where personal information and data is stored as Privacy Policies.

Leading Practices for the Sector – Safe and Inclusive Environments

Element	Safe and Inclusive Environments
<i>Item</i>	<i>Safe Sport</i>
Governance Function	The organization has adopted key safe sport policies and adheres to any applicable Acts or legislation. <i>Standard of Practice</i>
	The Board is responsible for adopting a policy that provides for the ability of complaints to be managed through a third party. <i>Future Standard of Practice</i>
	The organization has adopted a policy on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. <i>Standard of Practice</i>
Management Function	The organization has adopted key safe sport policies. <i>Standard of Practice</i>
	Management has established the processes to ensure that relevant complaints through the BCUCC are referred to the established independent third party. <i>Future Standard of Practice</i>

Safe Sport Readiness

Since 2019, viaSport has been engaged in ensuring Designated Sport Organizations are prepared for new developments in safety in sport. This webpage describes recent updates: <https://viasport.ca/safety-in-sport-project-updates/>

One of the more recent developments, as of April 2024, is the pending creation of Sport Safeguarding BC which is an independent society that will maintain a complaint management system for amateur sport in BC. Per the above webpage, “SSBC will independently oversee complaint resolution services with clear and enforceable standards”.

viaSport has underscored how imperative it will be for Designated Sport Organizations to be ‘safe sport ready’ and prepare for onboarding with Sport Safeguarding BC at its launch.

Findings - Safe and Inclusive Environments

Water Polo West publicly confirms on its website that it is committed to safe sport, and it has adopted a Code of Conduct, Equality and Inclusion, and Screening Policy. The organization is in the process of setting out policies and protections for all participants to ensure appropriate compliance, discipline, and sanctioning in this area consistent with Water Polo West’s obligations as the governing body for the sport in the Province of BC and the entity recognized by Water Polo Canada.

Leading Practices for the Sector – Evaluation of Programs and Services

Element	Evaluation of Programs and Services
<i>Item</i>	<i>Program Evaluation</i>
Governance Function	n/a
Management Function	A process is in place to evaluate all programs and services to ensure they are meeting intended outcomes or impact for the organization.

Findings - Evaluation of Programs and Services

Water Polo West is in the process of defining how to evaluate programs and services. They currently use the strategic/operational plan to measure achievements and success against the approved plan. The organization also intends to utilize surveys to gather feedback from Members, stakeholders and the water polo community in BC.

Provincial Sport Culture Index Assessment

These findings have been shared in a separate document.

Recommendations

The following 28 recommendations have been developed for consideration by Water Polo West.

Leading Practice Recommendations

Legal Incorporation

1. Membership, Registrants, and Participants: Water Polo West’s Members are not individuals, but are instead clubs, groups, organizations, or teams. Organizations should regularly review their membership structure and all bylaws, rules, policies and procedures to ensure that their membership is sized and structured to facilitate effective and efficient governance. Organizations should be able to easily identify their Members and distinguish between Members and other individuals involved in the organization’s activities, whether registered in programs or non-registered participants. Organizations should ensure that their bylaws and other governance documents allow them to properly establish and enforce rules and discipline for all Members, Registrants, and other Participants, as well as any Clubs or Associations operating in the sport. To that end, Water Polo West should consider revisions to its bylaws to ensure that its governance documents properly capture its Members, and then delineate between those Members and the individual participants in the sport, including athletes and all others who contribute to the sport. Water Polo West is encouraged to amend its bylaws to remove the category of “Non-Voting Member” so that membership is comprised of the Voting Members.

Foundational Statements and Intentional Planning

Foundational Statements and Strategic Plan: No recommendations.

2. Operational Plan: To support enhancing accountability, Water Polo West may wish to consider including who is responsible for each of the actions identified within the strategic/operational plan.

Informed Governance

3. Understanding the Role of the Board: The division of responsibilities between the Board and the senior staff person needs to be clarified. One option would be to consider the development of an *Executive Limitations Policy* to clearly define the role of the senior staff person and provide a distinction between governance and operations. The other option would be to have a well defined Board Policy or Charter. A basic description of the Senior Manager (who is Water Polo West’s senior staff person) should also be added to the bylaws.
4. Meeting of the Members: Water Polo West should continue to maintain formal minutes of all Member Meetings that capture attendance, motions (including who moved the motion, seconded the motion, and if it was approved or defeated), and other pertinent business typically captured in Meeting Minutes.
5. Meetings of the Members – Member Voting: Generally, members of a not-for-profit organization are responsible for three main pieces: a) electing Directors, b) appointing the

auditor, and c) amending the bylaws. The organization should ensure that Members are not voting to approve financial statements, operational policies, membership fees, or any other things more properly left to the authority of the Directors, and that Members are voting to appoint the auditor.

6. Conflict of Interest: As with all organizations, Water Polo West should review annually the way in which the organization is identifying and resolving conflicts of interest. Water Polo West should implement a thorough *Conflict of Interest Policy* and update it annually to ensure that Water Polo West can effectively manage conflict of interest throughout the organization at all levels throughout the organization. A process to declare conflict of interest at all board meetings should be in place.
7. Board Composition – Eligibility: All organizations should take steps to ensure that term limits for Directors are appropriate and that their Directors are independent without potentially competing fiduciary duties. Water Polo West should take steps to ensure that its governing documents and nominations process promote Director independence and prevent real or potential conflicts of interest from arising, whether as a result of a direct or indirect (through a family member or other related party) involvement in an affiliated club or with the national organization. Leading practice would demonstrate that generally term limits of 8 – 10 years be in place and outlined in the bylaws.
8. Board Composition – Officers: All organizations should consider having their Members elect all Directors as “at-large” and then having the Board appoint, from amongst themselves, all of the Officer positions. In particular, leading governance practice suggests that the President should not be directly elected by the Members but rather appointed into the Officer position by the Board (after the Board determines the best individual, from amongst their number to exercise the duties of that position). Here, Water Polo West currently does this except for its President, who the Voting Members elect directly.
9. Board Composition – Diversity: Water Polo West should consider permitting the Board to appoint one or two Directors to align with any current or future *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy* and/or any Skills, Diversity and Attributes gaps identified by the Board.
10. Meetings of the Board – Number of Meetings: All organizations should consider setting out the minimum number of Board meetings in a given year should include in the bylaws. Creating a Board Planning Calendar outlining the dates of the meetings and the topics for discussion is an effective way for the Board to ensure it is performing all of its oversight functions.
11. Board Position Descriptions: Water Polo West should ensure that the position descriptions for each Officer and Director position are documented and available to all Directors so that there is no overlap between their duties (or with the duties of staff members). A process to review role descriptions on a regular basis (such as every other year) should be in place. The descriptions should set out the skills and attributes needed for each position, which will support the development over time of a skills-based Board.

12. Board Recruitment – Nominations Committee: All organizations should ensure that an appropriate process is in place for facilitating and vetting nominations to the Board, whether through a Nominations Committee with a current and approved terms of reference or, in situations where an organization has a very small Board, through the full Board itself. The role of the Nominations Committee is to identify and highlight (or endorse) the most qualified of the eligible candidates. A nomination process should be adopted by the Board and shared publicly with the membership and Director candidates. The nomination process should use a Board skills matrix (a listing of skill strengths, gaps, and diversity characteristics and attributes) developed in consultation with current Directors.
13. Board Development and Evaluation – Evaluations: Water Polo West should consider establishing a process for the Board to conduct an annual board evaluation. The Board evaluation has two components: (1) a collective evaluation on the performance of the Board; and (2) an individual self-evaluation to reflect on individual Director performance.
14. Board Development and Evaluation – Board Development: To ensure effective and efficient governance, all organizations should consider making ongoing Board education and development a priority. Water Polo West should consider taking steps to ensure all Directors have a solid understanding of good governance and their role as a Director, and Directors should be provided with opportunities to develop their Board skills in different ways wherever possible, such as through educational and training materials and professional development courses or training sessions.
15. Legal Compliance: Water Polo West appears to be operating in a legally compliant manner, but it should consider adopting a more fulsome set of governance policies outside of its bylaws to establish norms and procedures to enhance the likelihood of ongoing compliance, especially within the realm of safe sport.

Remuneration: No recommendations.

Committee Structure

16. Committees of the Board: All organizations are encouraged to ensure that the standing committees of the Board are established in three core areas: Finance, Governance, and Nominations. Organizations are free to have more committees as the Board may deem appropriate. All Board Committees should have clear terms of reference and should report to the Board. In the absence of standing committees of the Board, Water Polo West may also consider ensuring the Board is performing these important functions. The development and use of a Board planning calendar that captures the key oversight functions that would generally fall to a committee would support the Board in performing its oversight role.
17. Operational Committees: Organizations may also establish committees with operational, as opposed to governance, responsibilities. Any committee that has a purpose or function falling within the operations of Water Polo West should be considered an operational committee. Operational committees are advisory, and organizations should ensure that such committees do not interfere with the responsibilities of staff and the ultimate authority of the Board. All operational committees should have a current terms of reference, a review process, and a

process to report to the senior staff person on a regular basis, who is responsible for establishing the committee and ensuring terms of references are in place.

Human Resources Planning and Management

18. Recruitment, Support and Evaluation of the senior staff person (Executive Director): Water Polo West should consider having the position description for the Executive Director outside of the main employment contract, in addition to forming part of it. This allows others to see the role description, as may be needed, including staff, board etc. The position description should clearly state the Executive Director reports to the Board through the President.
19. Recruitment, Support and Evaluation of the Executive Director: Water Polo West should look to adopt a process to evaluate the performance of the Executive Director.
20. Human Resources Planning and Management of Staff: To assist with succession planning and accountability, Water Polo West should look to document and describe through written position descriptions the roles of all the contracted staff and key volunteer(s). The organization should also look to adopt a simple and effective performance evaluation process.

Financial Planning and Management

21. Audit and Finance Committee: Water Polo West should continue in its work to establish and utilize the Finance Committee to assist in providing financial oversight to the organization.
22. Financial Management Policies: Water Polo West should look to develop and adopt a Financial Management Policy with related controls, including the requirement for two signatories on all payments or cheques. The development and regular review of this policy may rest with the Finance Committee, however the Board, as a whole, should approve any policy.
23. Tax Filings and Statutory Remittances: A process should be in place to inform the board on an annual basis that all tax filings and statutory remittances have been files.

Risk Management

24. Risk Management Policy:
The Board should look to adopt and approve a Risk Management Policy. The policy should describe a process to identify major strategic and operational risks with a plan to minimize or mitigate those risks in a form of a risk register. This register should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis by both management and the Board.

Insurance Coverage: No recommendations.

Document and Data Management: No recommendations.

Safe and Inclusive Environments

25. Safe Sport Readiness – Registrants/Participants: All Designated Sports Organizations in British Columbia are required to facilitate the effective implementation of safe sport policies. Effective and efficient governance that provides for appropriate jurisdiction over Members, Registrants, and Participants is critical to safe sport compliance. The recommendations noted above are a part of what is required to provide a safe and inclusive environment. A key aspect of ensuring that Water Polo West has the appropriate authority to establish standards and, if necessary, initiate a disciplinary process is clarifying that Water Polo West has the clear jurisdiction over Members and participants. Both Members and registrants/participants must be clearly defined in the bylaws and the organization’s policies must apply to both groups. Having well-defined parameters for these categories in the bylaws minimizes the possibility of challenges down the road, particularly through the complaint process under Sport Safeguarding BC.
26. Safe Sport Readiness – Policies: Rules and procedures with respect to safe sport continue to evolve. All organizations should continually review and revise their bylaws, policies, rules, and procedures to ensure alignment with Water Polo Canada. Further, Water Polo West should ensure that it can meet requirements being established by Sport Safeguarding BC. Such ongoing review will include ensuring and understanding any jurisdictional requirements to align with the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS) and the Independent Third-Party Mechanism adopted at the provincial level. All updated policies should apply to everyone involved in Water Polo West’s activities, including all Members, registrants, and participants. Water Polo West has commenced thre process of ensuring compliance in this regard, recognizing the importance of governance with respect to safe sport.
27. Safe Sport Readiness – Screening: Screening procedures must be clear that representatives of the organization who coach or otherwise interact with minors must obtain a criminal record check. Here, Water Polo West requires screening at least every two (2) years.

Evaluation of Programs and Services

Program Evaluation: No recommendations.

Other Recommendations

28. Communication and Implementation: Water Polo West is encouraged to provide a copy of this report to its Members and other stakeholders by displaying it on the website and distributing it through other means of communication. The organization could also provide updates to the Members as the recommendations are adopted through the implementation process.

Provincial Sport Culture Index Considerations

Water Polo West had a 67% participation rate on the Provincial Sport Culture Index (PSCI) survey, which included full participation by staff, (2 out of 2), and strong participation of Directors (5 out of 6). In addition contracted facilitators (1 out of 3) and operational committee volunteers (0 out of 1) were also invited to participate.

Due to the small size of the organization and a minimum requirement of three participants per role, a full breakdown of the experience of individuals by roles was not able to be reported on, except for the role of Directors(Board).

Individuals who participated in the survey provided feedback to indicate that they experienced an environment that felt safe, where they felt included and had a good sense of well-being as demonstrated in the key outcomes of Well-Being, Inclusion and Safety.

Water Polo West is still in the early stages of the organization's life cycle and likely in the phase of storming, creating and forming much of its processes, procedures, and way of being.

There are no real notable differences between the responses of Directors and the other individuals that participated in the PSCI assessment.

As Water Polo West begins to put in place some of the recommendations outlined in this report, it is anticipated that their implementation may impact some of the culture factors revealed in the PSCI. Possible strategies may include:

- Individuals may experience greater *clarity* with well-defined role descriptions for both staff, board and volunteers. Additionally, greater *clarity* may be achieved for the Board through a well-defined *Board Charter*.
- The performance factor of *accountability* may increase with expanding on the operational plan's performance objectives to define who is responsible and identified timelines.
- Exploring ways to integrate more fully the values of Organization into the everyday decision making, programming and work the organization does may create a stronger alignment to the organization's values.

To facilitate the implementation of these strategies, Organization may wish to access additional assessment data from the PSCI to gain greater clarity.

Proposed Steps

1. Interim Report – Sport Law will provide Water Polo West with the Interim Report and schedule a meeting with Water Polo West’s leadership team. This meeting will be used to discuss any outstanding items or areas of the report that need clarification. Following the meeting, Water Polo West may be asked to provide additional documentation that may have been previously overlooked.
2. Final Report – A Final Report will be provided to the Water Polo West leadership team and to viaSport. In addition, Sport Law will work with the Water Polo West leadership team to determine how best to present the Final Report to the Board of Directors and/or Members. Sport Law may attend an information session hosted by the leadership team for the Board and/or for Members.
3. Implementation – Sport Law will co-create an implementation plan and work with Water Polo West to decide which Recommendations to adopt, the timeline to adopt priority items, and the individual(s) who will action the implementation plan (with Sport Law’s assistance, if desired).
4. Communicating Findings and Actions – Water Polo West is encouraged to share the final report with Members and other stakeholders, through the website and other means, and to provide updates to the Members and other stakeholders on the progress of any adopted recommendations and the implementation process.