

How the Culture of Accountability Works

A Process That Works

Linda Mollenhauer and Ruth Armstrong have designed a process that can move your organization to higher levels of accountability. The pilot projects clearly demonstrated the value of using objective facilitators to guide a process of learning, reflecting, interpreting and then designing actions to strengthen accountability. The steps include:

Learn

Board and staff members gain a shared understanding about the key success factors that must be present to be a highly accountable organization. Participants have an opportunity to engage in a discussion using the key questions about accountability.

Reflect

Board and staff individually reflect on the extent to which the organization demonstrates the critical success factors. Using the specially designed online tool, your leadership team will gain honest feedback about accountability activities currently taking place within the organization.

Interpret

Board and staff members participate in a facilitated discussion using the feedback from the reflection tool as a starting point. Participants explore the accountability performance against the success factors and celebrate areas of strength and identify areas for improvement. You will have a consensus about what is working and areas for improvement and generate excitement about the potential for higher levels of accountability.

Design

Stakeholders create a realistic and practical action plan to celebrate success and move to higher levels of accountability. The leadership team identify specific goals to improve the levels of accountability and generate creative strategies and tactics based on best practices. You will be able to demonstrate to community partners and funders that the organization is committed to accountability.

For more information about this process or to organize an in-house workshop on *Culture of Accountability* contact the authors/facilitators Ruth Armstrong and Linda Mollenhauer at create@cultureofaccountability.ca or go to the website: www.cultureofaccountability.ca

Here is what representatives from the pilot projects and committee members had to say:

The Algoma Family Services Board of Directors and Management team participated in the pilot testing of the Culture of Accountability survey and guided discussion of our results. The tool itself was very thorough in the breadth and depth of elements considered, and certainly expanded our understanding of the factors involved in creating true accountability within our organization. We used the results of the process, led expertly by Ruth Armstrong and Linda Mollenhauer, to inform our strategic planning, as well as the development of Quality Standards for the organization. I would highly recommend this tool, and the reflective process.

Lynn Ryan MacKenzie, Executive Director, Algoma Family Services

Our willingness to participate in the test pilot was driven by both our interest as an organization to innovation, change and learning and by the timeliness of the process relative to our own Board retreat process, which took place shortly after completion of the pilot.

The 'Culture of Accountability' process was received by management staff and Board members with enthusiasm. The on-line questionnaire was relatively easy to use and the resulting report very thorough in its relaying of the information gathered. The feedback session provided by the two authors, Ruth Armstrong and Linda Mollenhauer, was insightful and clear. The report and the types of feedback which it provided to the Board and management group was confirming of the current strengths of the organization. Where the feedback included areas for growth, the Board was able to incorporate them into their deliberations at the Board retreat.

All in all, the process was easy to participate in and provided insightful feedback to the governance and accountability processes of our organization.

G.P. Alex Thomson, Executive Director, Lynwood Hall Child and Family Centre

Windsor Regional Children's Centre was a pilot site for the Culture of Accountability process developed by Linda Mollenhauer and Ruth Armstrong. Board committee members and senior management staff of the Centre responded by e-mail to the Accountability Survey and provided rating and commentary for each dimension in the model. Both Linda and Ruth then attended a Board meeting where the participants were engaged in a dialogue facilitated by Ruth and Linda regarding how Windsor Regional Children's Centre fared with respect to their Accountability model. All participants were very impressed with the process and the model. They were especially impressed in how the facilitators engaged participants in a dialogue regarding the feedback for each dimension. Participants felt that they had learned more about the organization and areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. The Board committee recommended that the process be repeated on an annual basis so that we could track our development in being an accountable organization. Ruth and Linda were outstanding in leading the organization along the accountability journey. It is an exception avenue for increasing organizational growth and development and based on our centre's experience, we would highly recommend that other organizations engage in this process.

Mary Broga, Executive Director, Windsor Regional Children's Centre

As a member of the CMHO Accountability Project Committee, I was pleased to participate in an active and often lively dialogue about the content of the resource document and the processes which underlie and define highly accountable organizations. It was reassuring to me that as an organization, we are on the right track. The flexibility in the way the resource may be used should be attractive to agencies who may be at various stages in this process of ensuring a culture of accountability.

Karen Engel, Executive Director, Yorktown Family Services