

Leading and Governing Our Sector, Together

*A collaborative web portal designed with and for
Ontario's Child Welfare Agency boards and their operational leaders.*

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the governing together “portal”?

The portal is an interactive website that is available to CAS board members and operational leaders (EDs/CEOs). It is designed to support child welfare agencies in fulfilling their governance accountabilities and to encourage a sector-wide approach to good governance. It helps board members and their EDs to better understand their roles in governing their organization by offering best practice information and tools. It connects agency governors to other governors in the sector so that together they can share ideas, information and best practices that can increase agency governance capacity and service delivery. The portal is sponsored by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) and is administered by an outside non-profit organization. The CAS portal is based on a pilot portal that was developed for health service provider boards in Ontario.

What's available in the portal?

The portal is divided into 4 sections, each having its own tools and resources.

- 1. Organizations:** here you can post, search for, find and learn about other CASs throughout Ontario. This section helps you to understand the full network of agencies that comprise our system and by doing so can assist in sharing and identifying opportunities for improved sharing, planning and collaboration.
- 2. Governors & Leaders:** here you can post, search for, find and learn about other CAS board members and operational leaders throughout Ontario. This section allows you and your board members to connect with board members and senior leaders across Ontario. This provides the opportunity for you and your board members to better understand and tap into the full and unique capacity that resides throughout the sector.
- 3. Events:** here you can post, search for, find and learn about your own and other board related meetings and events. Calendar functions allow you to tailor viewing and sharing of event information. If you are a smaller organization you can use the functionality to improve communication and scheduling of your own events. In posting and sharing your events you can improve engagement, planning and collaboration with other agency boards.
- 4. Good Governance Support:** this section provides you and your board members with access to strategic leadership and good governance resources, practices and tools. You can use these tools to develop individual board member knowledge and those of your board as a whole. It also allows you to share your own governance resources, practices and tools with other agencies and to exchange knowledge and success stories of good governance at work. The section also offers a message board style “forum” for on-line governor dialogue and contains a section where you and your board members can access current governance and sector related news and resource links.

Why should my agency and board participate in the portal?

The government and the public expect sector agencies to work more closely together to build a strong and sustainable child welfare “system”. Funding and accountability agreements also specify every agency's responsibility for enhanced coordination of services and strong stewardship of public resources. The portal helps CAS boards and their senior leaders to connect, learn from and collaborate with each other. It is an innovative new way for CAS boards of all sizes, locations and sophistication to network with one another and to share governance knowledge and tools in service to designing a child welfare system. The more that CASs contribute to the pool of wisdom that resides in the portal, the more that CASs will be able to extract value that can enhance their own performance.

What role does the CEO/ED have; How can a CEO/ED make best use of the portal with their boards?

Operational leaders are critical to a board’s success and thus have an equally important role in the portal. As “sole employees” of the board, the CEO/ED is expected to lead the organization to be successful in its mission. They are also expected to engage and harness the full contribution of the board in its stewardship role. Together, the board and CEO/ED are the “strategic leadership” of the organization.

Often as a CEO/ED you are the first to recognize that there is a need for your board to have further expertise in governance and good board practices. Moreover you want them to understand and implement those strategies that will ensure your organization is successful as sector-wide coordination moves forward. It is a delicate dance. The portal provides:

- Clarification of the unique roles and value that your board plays in their relationship with you.
- A good place for you to reference best practices and begin a neutral dialogue with your board members about how to best contribute at the governance level.
- Leverage to lead your board towards good governance information and tools without them feeling threatened by your own views and expertise.
- Knowledge and tools for ensuring a healthy balance between governance and operational responsibilities
- Increased confidence in your board by introducing them to new information and tools that will help them in their role
- Increased opportunity for your board to support your innovation and organizational changes that are part of moving the child welfare system forward in a way that has already proven to be valuable to other organizations
- Introductions to possibilities for working with other boards and agencies in planning services and programs in a more collaborative way
- Opportunities for easy spin offs and quick wins at the board level in support of those strategic opportunities you want to introduce and implement
- Education and knowledge to assist your board in increasing their understanding and awareness of what other boards in the sector are doing and what other significant activities are occurring so as to not be “left behind”.

How should I introduce this to my board?

As part of OACAS's investment in the sector, it has established secure access to the portal for all CASs in Ontario. A unique login ID and password has been set up for each CAS that enables you to set up login IDs and passwords for all of the board members and CEO/ED. The site is straight forward and self-explanatory. However, if you want help understanding the portal more fully or if you want to discuss options for orienting your board to the new tool simply contact support@governingtogether.ca and we will make arrangements to talk with you directly about your unique needs.

What's required to get the board members on the portal?

Most of the content and functionality of the portal is restricted for “authorized member” use. As mentioned above, each CAS has been established with an Organization Level username and password. This username and password is often held by the CEO/ED or his/her administrative assistant. With this access you can populate your organization’s details and assign each board member their own secure username and password so that they can access all of the portal’s tools. You can request your username and password by emailing support@governingtogether.ca or selecting the link from the website’s home page.

Is my contact information publicly available if I am a member of the portal ?

You control the amount of information you wish to share with other organizations and boards. Only other registered CAS members can view the organization and board member information located on the portal. In addition, the portal allows members to contact one another without revealing members’ personal email information.

Are there any fees to participate?

Individual agencies are not required to pay to access the portal. Initial funding has been provided by the OACAS as part of its goal to deliver relevant and valuable tools to the sector.

How do I provide feedback and input to future developments of the portal?

The portal development is guided by an advisory group comprised of OACAS leadership, volunteers from within the CAS network, and governance advisors *tng*. Feedback and input is welcome at any time as the portal is designed for users. Please submit any ideas or feedback to support@governingtogether.ca