



International Policy Governance Association

Assessing Non-Compliance at Lower Levels – Impact on Assessments at Higher Levels

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1. Introduction/Background

The International Policy Governance Association (IPGA) Consistency Framework Committee advises the CEO to assure that IPGA members and enquirers have access to consistent and accurate information about Policy Governance.

The Committee has academic independence from IPGA's board and staff but consults on the development of the IPGA Consistency Framework with John Carver as creator of the Policy Governance system and Miriam Carver as leading Policy Governance theorist and teacher (whom, together, IPGA recognize as the current "Authoritative Source") and the IPGA Consistency Advisory Group

As part of its work, the Committee helps IPGA respond to questions regarding whether or not specific practices are consistent with the principles of Policy Governance using the IPGA Consistency Framework.

IPGA received a request to provide an opinion regarding the following:

If a delegate is non-compliant with a policy at a lower level, does that mean that the delegate is noncompliant with the upper level policy(ies) within the same policy chain?

2. Issue Description / Introduction

When using Policy Governance, boards develop policies in sizes. In each policy category they start with the broadest size policies that allow for a wide range of interpretation and then proceed, level by level, to create narrower sized policies which are each "contained" by the broader levels above them. Contained, narrower policies are the board's more specific definitions of the respective containing policy.

Each of the policies, regardless of size, is monitored by the board on a regular basis to determine policy compliance. Consequently, both contained and containing policies are monitored. The question that was asked points to the relationship between contained and containing policies. If the person or committee delegated authority to interpret and enact a policy is found to have been non-compliant with the policy, what are the implications for compliance with any policy that contains the subject policy? And what are the implications for any further containing policies that have been created at higher levels in the same policy chain?

3. Proposed Resolution(s)

a. Theoretical

When examining questions of consistency with the Policy Governance system, IPGA examines the principles of Policy Governance and, where helpful, the IPGA Policy Governance

Consistency Framework which provides potential further interpretations of each of the Policy Governance principles along with statements of potential criteria for judging consistency.

Policy Governance Principle 7 states:

The board decides its policies in each category first at the broadest, most inclusive level. It further defines each policy in descending levels of detail ...until reaching the level of detail at which it is willing to accept any reasonable interpretation by the applicable delegate of its words thus far. Ends, Executive Limitations, Governance Process, and Board-Management Delegation polices are exhaustive in that they establish control over the entire organization, both board and staff.

And Potential Lower Level Definition 2 states:

The more specific policies beneath, must logically fall within the scope of the one “above” it.

Therefore, more specific, subordinate policies are further definitions of their superior policies up the chain to the broadest (sometimes called "global") policy in the respective policy category. Consequently, if a delegate is non-compliant regarding a more specific policy, then the non-compliance regarding those criterion/criteria reaches to each of the upper level policies extending to and including the global policy.

b. Practical Application

From a practice perspective, although non-compliance at a lower level results in non-compliance for each of the higher level policies in the chain, it does not equate to non-compliance with everything in each of those superior policies. Consequently, boards and their CEOs will do well to be clear as to what specific parts of policies are non-compliant so that they may be assessed and corrected accordingly.

Because monitoring of policies is typically spread over several board meetings and because the global policy (highest level policy in each category) will likely be monitored at a different time than many of the subsequent, more specific policies in that category, for tracking purposes it can be helpful to “map” the delegate’s compliance with each of the policies under her/his authority. However, in addition to the mapping process, a closer examination of which policies are non-compliant including the level of non-compliance and the significance of those policies is critical to enabling a better understanding of the organization’s compliance status. In other words, the board should weigh the significance of noncompliance with a more specific policy against its total weight within the broader set of containing policies.

4. Results / Conclusion

The question asked was: *If a delegate is non-compliant with a policy at a lower level, does that mean that the delegate is noncompliant with the upper level policy(ies) within the same policy chain?*

The Committee's answer is: yes, the delegate cannot be fully compliant with any of the policies within the chain that contain the subject lower level policy. However, such non-compliance does not equate to complete non-compliance at the superior levels.

Appendix A: References

International Policy Governance Association. (2014, July). *Policy Governance® Principles and Model Consistency Framework document*. Retrieved from International Policy Governance Association: <http://www.policygovernanceassociation.org/assets/documents/principles-and-model-consistency-framework-2014.pdf>

Any Comments?

The IPGA Consistency Framework Committee welcomes comments on its reports. These will be considered in the committee's occasional reviews. Please submit comments to the IPGA CEO:

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More information about the work of the IPGA's Policy Governance Consistency Framework Committee can be found at:

<http://policygovernanceassociation.org/resources/consistency-framework-committee-news-15.html>