

*"It's the trustees' responsibility to make sure that their organisation is governed well but it's the responsibility of the sector to ensure they have accessible support, training and resources to do that"*

- ROBERTSON TRUST

# GOVERNANCE MATTERS

**A Report Mapping the Governance Training and Support  
Provision for Boards of Trustees, Identifying Gaps and Making  
Recommendations for Improvement**



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# CONTENTS

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## About this Report

This study was commissioned by Scotland's Third Sector Governance Forum to map the governance training and support provision available for boards of trustees in Scotland. The study was undertaken over a 10-week period from August 2020 to October 2020.

It is intended that the data, trends and recommendations relayed in this report, will help governance training and support providers gain a greater understanding of the provision available; and assist them in directing future developments in their own governance training and support provision.

It is also hoped that the survey results and the subsequent recommendations reflect the voices and opinions of voluntary sector trustees, as the primary goal of this report is to improve the support offered to trustees in the incredible and invaluable work they provide.

## Study Method

Information was gathered through two primary research methods: a desk-based survey of voluntary sector governance training and support providers and an online survey distributed to voluntary sector trustees.

## Process

- *Online interviews conducted with 36 governance training and support providers, including representatives from national organisations (SCVO, ACOSVO, Inspiring Scotland etc.), Third Sector Interfaces, private providers (solicitors, consultants etc.) and funders.*
- *Trustee Survey distributed to over 300 trustees through the SCVO Trustee Bulletin and SCVO social media channels.*
- *Analysis of both primary research responses and discussion and recommendations formulated.*

## Terminology

This report details the governance support and training provision available to boards of trustees. For the purposes of this report, the terminology "governance" and "trustee" have been taken from the definitions used by Scotland's Third Sector Governance Forum.

The following extract from The Scottish Governance Code, created by Scotland's Third Sector Governance Forum, provides a definition of what the terminology "governance" and "trustees" entails:

"There are many different terms used to define governing bodies of third sector organisations,

such as: 'the board', 'the committee', 'the trustees' or 'the directors.'

The difference between these terms usually reflects the differing legal structure of organisations, and their history and culture. In the Scottish Governance Code, we use the terms 'the board' and 'the trustees' to mean the organisation's governing body – the group or body ultimately accountable for the organisation.

There are various definitions of governance. When we talk about governance here, we are referring to the work of the board, and we feel the five principles of this Code embody good governance."<sup>1</sup>

The Five Principles of the Scottish Governance Code are: Organisational Purpose, Leadership, Board Behaviour, Control and Effectiveness

<sup>1</sup>[goodgovernance.scot/governance-code/using-the-code/](https://goodgovernance.scot/governance-code/using-the-code/)

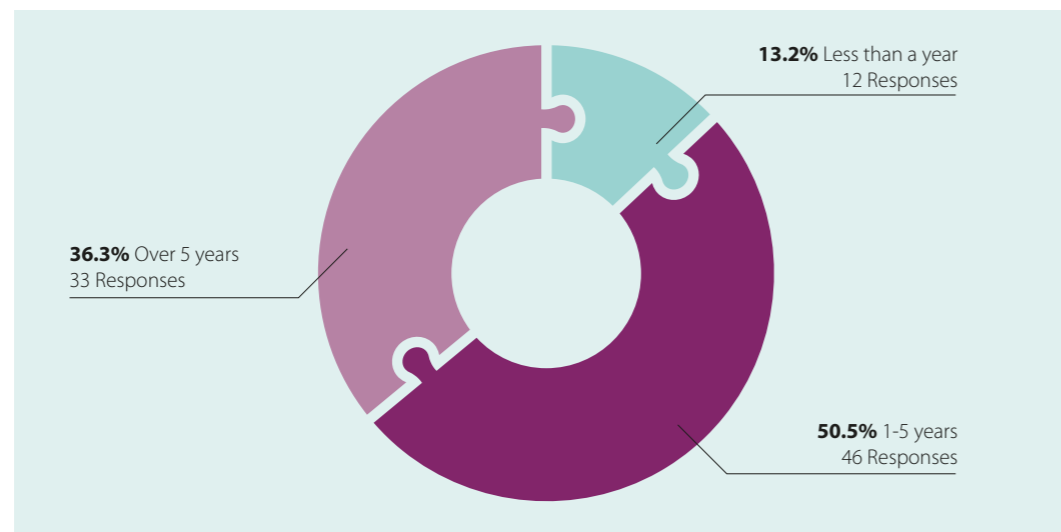
## 2 TRUSTEE SURVEY

This online survey was distributed through the SCVO Trustee Bulletin and social media to 341 trustees. The results have been collated and presented by the host platform, Survey Gizmo, and are accompanied by summarising notes by the author.

The primary purpose of this online survey was to gather information concerning how often trustees had accessed governance training and support, who had provided it, and how trustees would like to see third sector governance training and support developed.

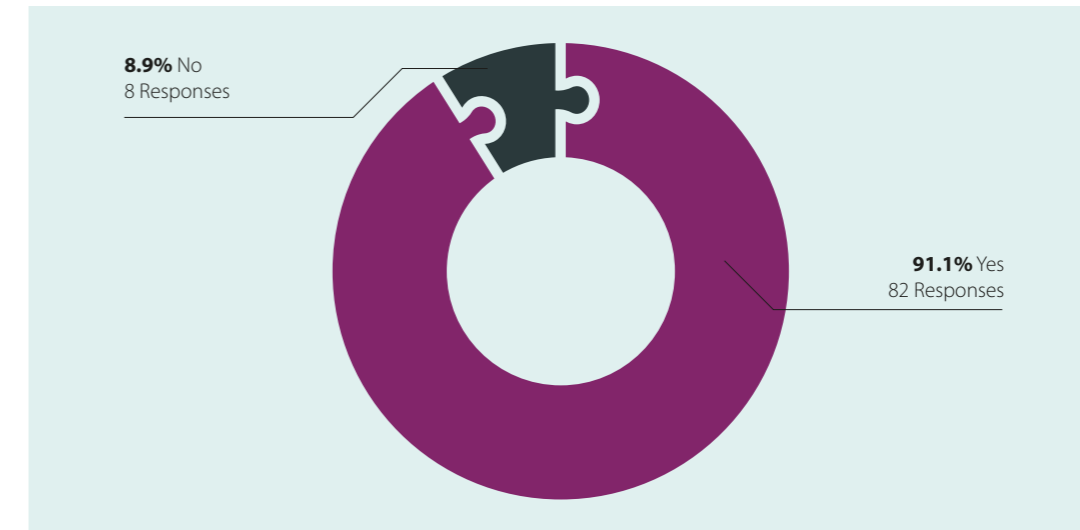
### 2.1 THE RESULTS

#### Question 1. How long have you been a trustee?



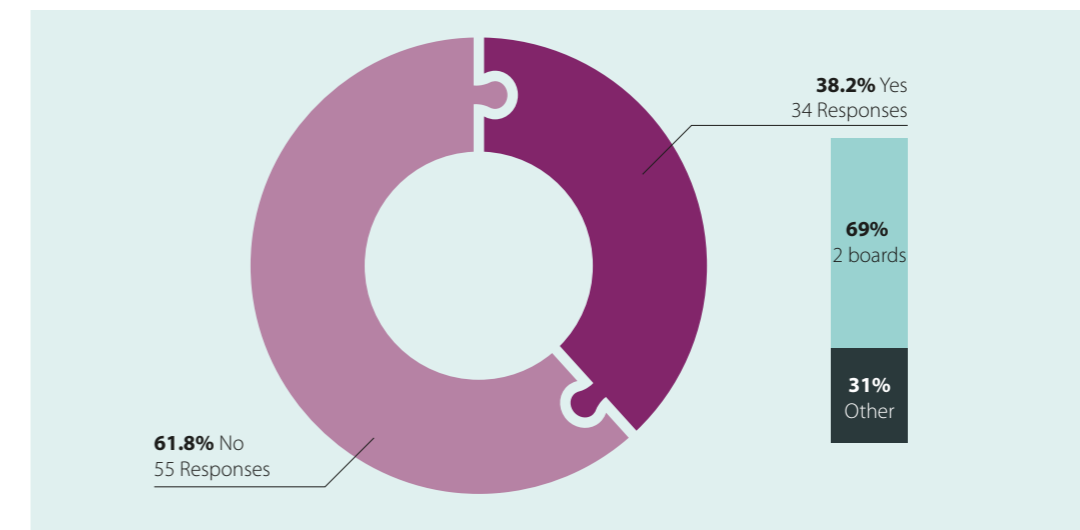
Over half of survey respondents have been a charity trustee for **1-5 years**.

#### Question 2. Does your organisation have paid staff?



The majority (91.1%) of survey respondents are trustees of charities **with paid staff**.

#### Question 3. Are you a trustee on any other committees or boards?

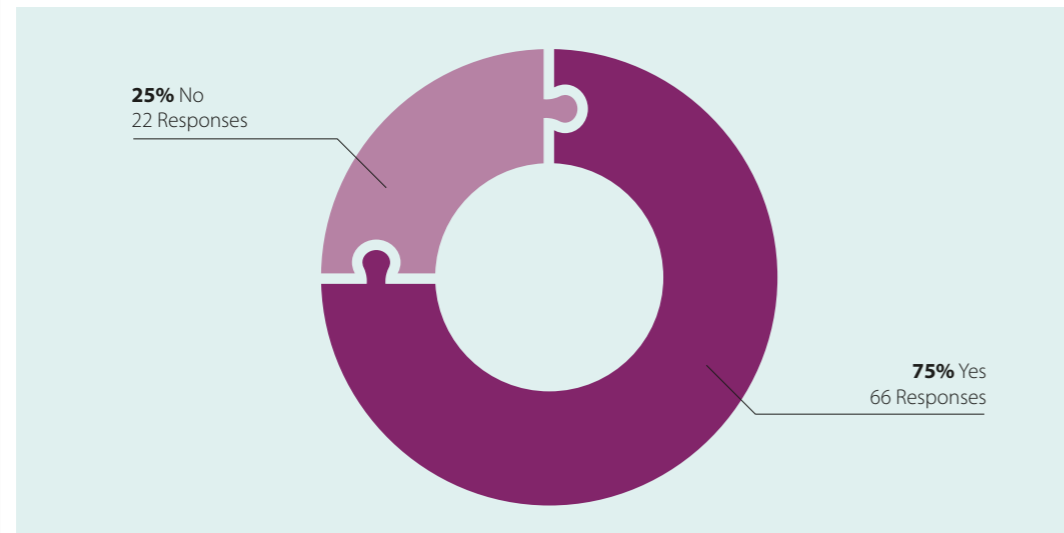


The majority (61.8%) of survey respondents are trustees on **only one board**.

#### Question 4. How many committees or boards are you a trustee of?

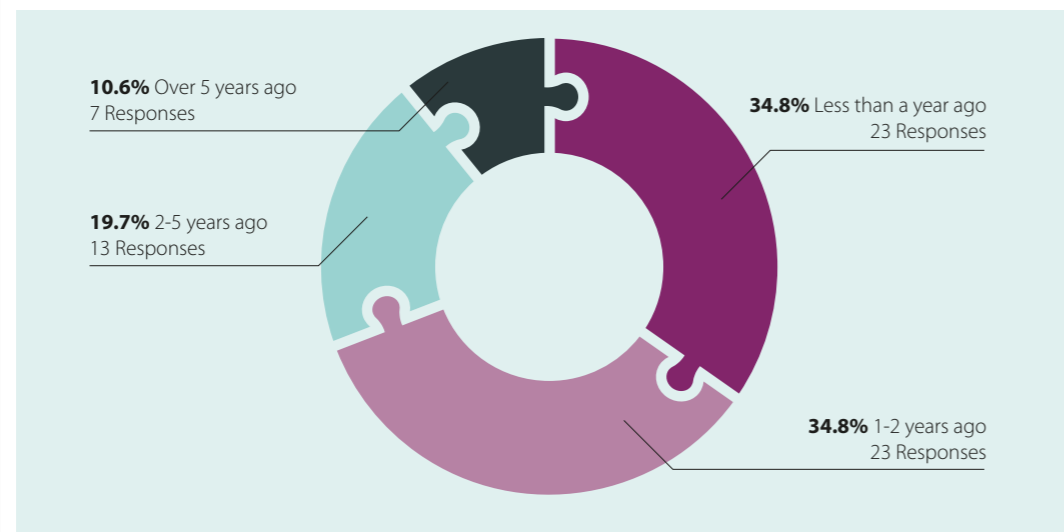
Of the 38% of trustees who responded 'Yes' to the question "Are you a trustee on any other committees or boards?", the majority (69%) were a member of **2 boards**.

Question 5. **Have you ever accessed any governance training or support?**



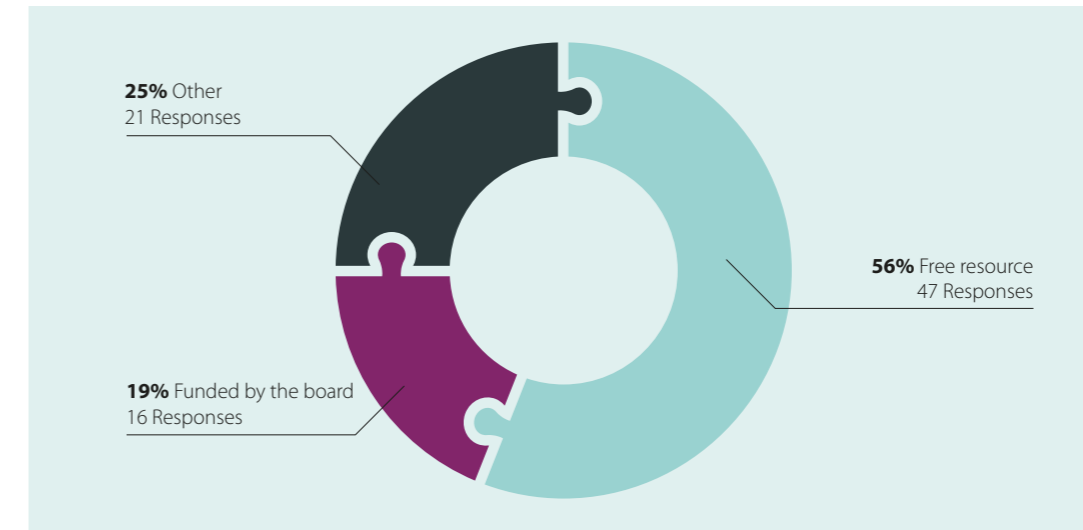
75% of respondents **had accessed** a form of governance training or support.

Question 6. **How recently did you receive this training/support?**



Of the 75% of respondents who had received governance training and support, most had accessed this training either **less than a year ago** (34.8%) or **1-2 years ago** (34.8%).

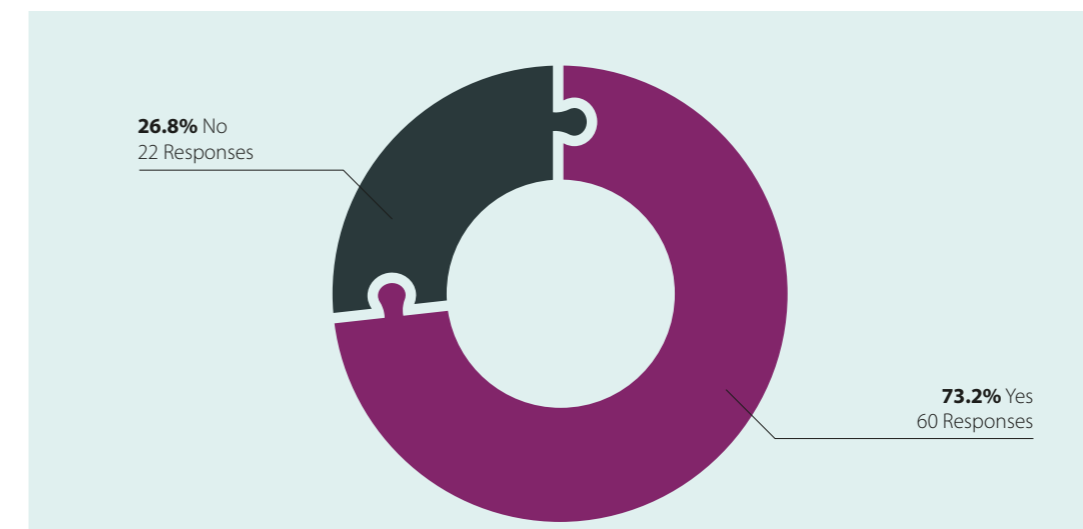
Question 7. **How was this training/support funded?**



The majority (56%) of trustees had utilised **free** governance support and training resources.

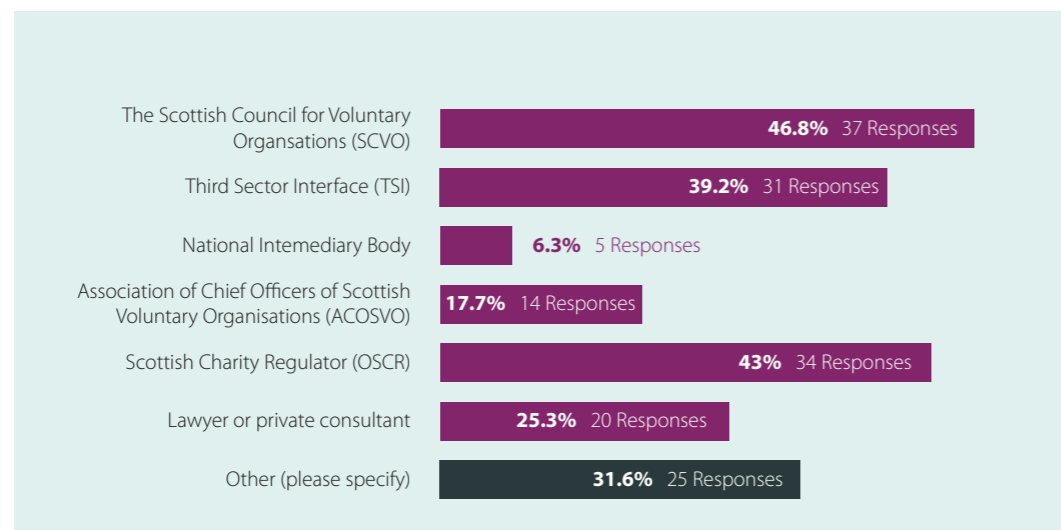
Of those who answered 'other', the majority **had not accessed any training** and responded 'N/A'. The second most popular 'other' answer was that trustees had accessed **both paid for and free** training and support.

Question 8. **Would your organisation be willing to pay for governance support and training for your board of trustees?**



Almost three quarters (73.2%) of respondents' organisations **would be willing to pay** for governance support and training.

Question 9. **Where do you go for governance training and support? (Please check all that apply)**



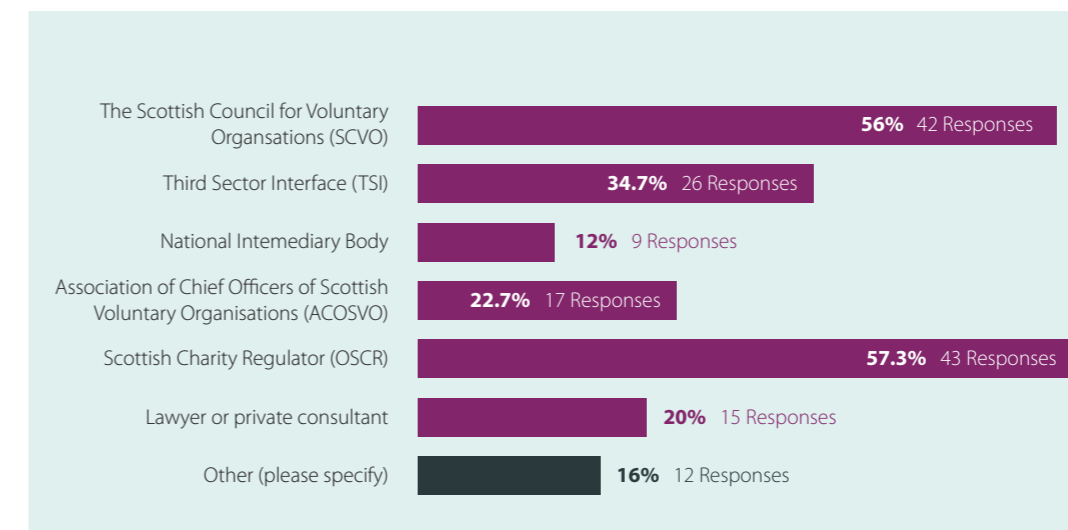
The provider which proved most popular for governance training and support was **SCVO** with 46.8%. Three of the “other responses” were TSI’s, making OSCR and the TSI network joint second with 43%.

Of the ‘other’ responses, **Inspiring Scotland** was most frequently mentioned.

Other organisations referenced in the ‘other’ section were (in alphabetical order):

- *Arts and Business Scotland*
- *Business Gateway*
- *Charity Commission*
- *Civil Society*
- *The Cranfield Trust*
- *ICAS*
- *Just Enterprise*
- *Local Chamber of Commerce*
- *National Homestart*

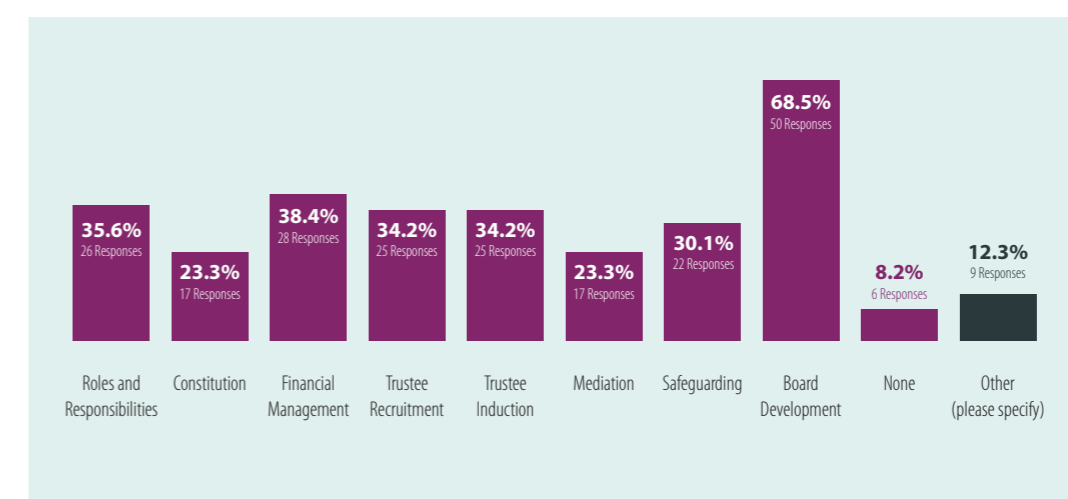
Question 10. **Which of these sources can you recommend to other trustees? (Please check all that apply)**



The most recommended provider for governance support and training was **OSCR** (57.3%), closely followed by **SCVO** (56%). The **TSI Network** was the third most popular, with 34.7% of respondents recommending them as a source of governance training and support.

Of the ‘other’ responses, **Inspiring Scotland** was the most recommended, with **Just Enterprise**, **Sports Scotland**, **The Cranfield Trust**, **ICAS** and **Business Gateway** also mentioned.

Question 11. **Are there any areas of governance that you would like to receive more training and support with? (Please check all that apply)**



‘**Board Development**’ proved to be the most popular area of governance that trustees would like to receive more training and support in, with 68.5% of respondents selecting that option.

Over a third of respondents selected “**Financial Management**” (38.4%), “**Roles and**

**Responsibilities"** (35.6%), **"Trustee Recruitment"** (34.2%), **"Trustee induction"** (34.2%) and **"Safeguarding"** (30.1%) as areas in which they would like to receive more training and support.

The areas trustees feel they need the least additional support in are the **"Constitution"** and **"Mediation"**.

Question 12. **Have you ever used the website and resources created by Scotland's Third Sector Governance Forum?**



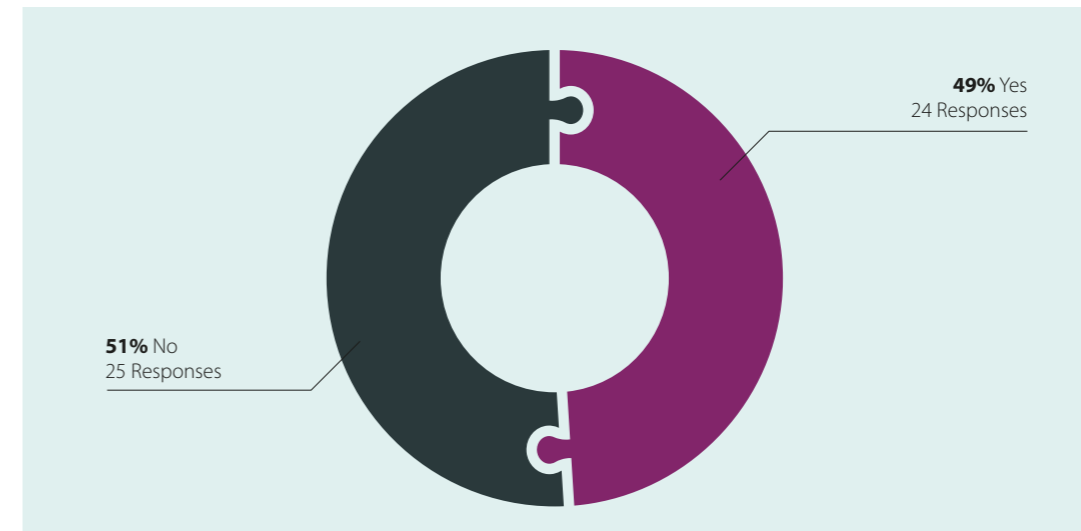
The majority of respondents (75.7%) **had not** used the website and resources created by Scotland's Third Sector Governance Forum.

Question 13. **Are you aware that there is a governance code for the Third Sector?**



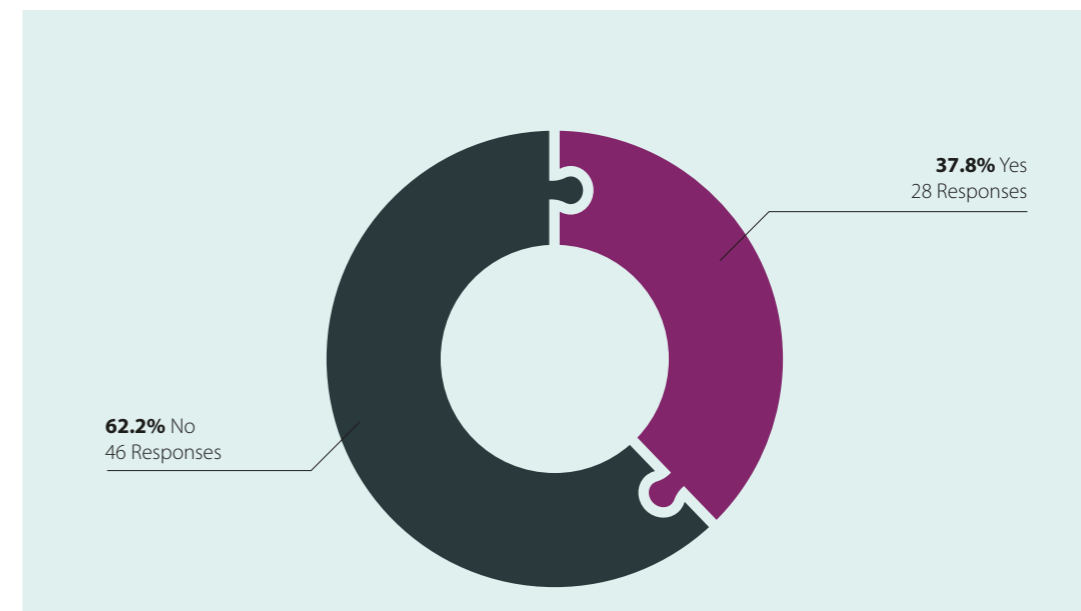
68.9% of respondents **were aware** that there is a Scottish Governance Code for the Third Sector.

Question 14. **Have you used the governance code with your own board?**



51% of respondents **had not** used the governance code with their own board.

Question 15. **Have you used the SCVO Good Governance Checkup?**



The majority of respondents **had not** used the SCVO Good Governance Check-Up.

### Question 16. How would you like to see governance support and training across the sector developed in the future? (eg. e-learning, one to one support etc.)

This offered trustees the opportunity to voice how they would like to see governance training and support provision develop across the third sector in their own words. Below is a summary of these responses.

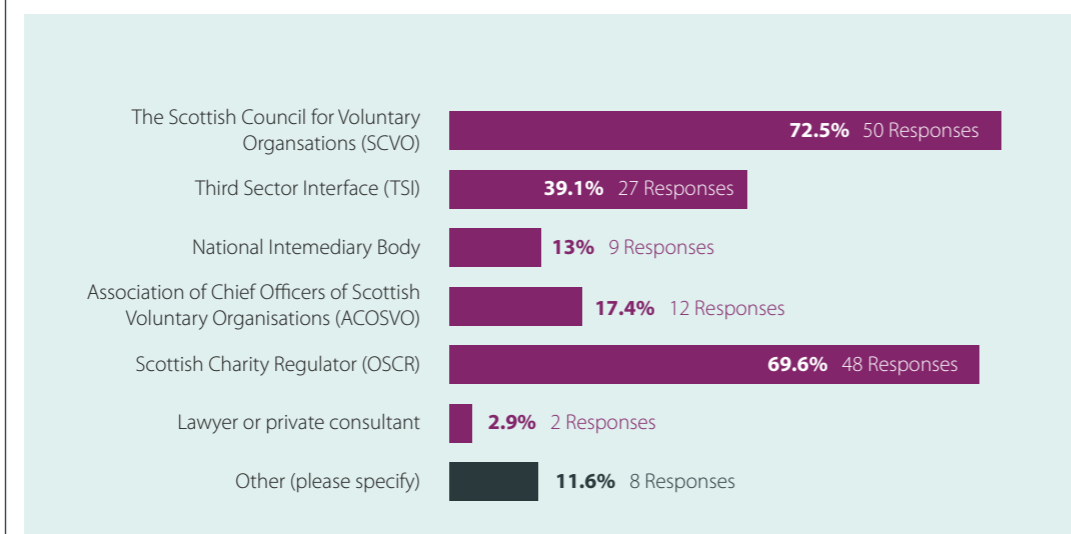
The most popular response to this question was an **increase in e-learning materials** with 53% of responses requesting this. This was primarily suggested due to its ability to accommodate diverse and busy trustee schedules. This survey was conducted during the Coronavirus pandemic and may be reflective of the social distancing rules.

The second most popular governance support and training development trustees outlined they would like was an **increase in peer networking opportunities**.

"Other" responses included:

- *Better signposting of the training and support resources available.*
- *More mentoring opportunities.*
- *Bespoke training for one board.*
- *The development of recognised accreditation so trustees can demonstrate they have completed the appropriate training.*
- *Longer term training courses with a more developmental focus which ensure the training has translated into good practice.*
- *The development of a platform on which trustee opportunities, including training/ support opportunities and trustee vacancies could be advertised.*

### Question 17. Who do you think should be responsible for these developments?



The majority of respondents suggested that **SCVO should be responsible** for the developments highlighted on the previous page (72.5%).

The second most popular answer was **OSCR** (69.6%).

Of the 'other' answers, the most popular response was that the responsibility for governance development should be **collaborative between multiple organisations** listed.

## 2.2 TRUSTEE SURVEY RESULTS DISCUSSION

### Engagement

Firstly, it is important to consider the response rate of the survey. The survey was distributed to over 300 trustees of voluntary sector organisations and received 118 responses. This equates to a response rate of around 30%, around 15% higher than the average response rate for external surveys<sup>2</sup>. This suggests a promising level of engagement with governance development from a trustee perspective. This suggestion is substantiated further when considered alongside the response to Question 8., "Would your organisation be willing to pay for governance support and training for your board of trustees?", with 73% of trustees answering "Yes". The willingness to invest in governance training and support demonstrates that the majority of organisations recognise the importance of good governance and are keen to develop both their individual knowledge and that of the board.

### Research Constraints

It is also important to address the survey's scope of representation. As outlined in Question 2., "Does your organisation have paid staff?", over 90% of survey respondents were from organisations with paid staff. According to research by SCVO, "under a third of Scottish charities employ paid staff"<sup>3</sup>. The majority of answers relayed in this survey therefore represent only a small section of trustees. It is important that this is considered when analysing the responses. The low engagement by non-staffed voluntary organisations may also be indicative that organisations that do not have paid staff are less connected to information, networking and governance training and support.

<sup>2</sup>[peoplepulse.com/resources/useful-articles/survey-response-rates/](https://peoplepulse.com/resources/useful-articles/survey-response-rates/)

<sup>3</sup>[app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNDY5YTg2MGltMjg1MC00ZDBkLThlMzYtYjc4MDhhNTJkYTZhliwidCjE6ImMyOTQ5NGY5LTNhY2EtNGE3MS05NWUyLWMM4ODBjNWE1ZThmOSIsImMiOiJh9](https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNDY5YTg2MGltMjg1MC00ZDBkLThlMzYtYjc4MDhhNTJkYTZhliwidCjE6ImMyOTQ5NGY5LTNhY2EtNGE3MS05NWUyLWMM4ODBjNWE1ZThmOSIsImMiOiJh9)

## Key Observations and Patterns

### Good Engagement with Governance Support/Training

Three quarters of trustees said they had undertaken some form of governance support. Whilst this is a promising figure, it is also important to consider that 25% of respondents, many of whom work in staffed voluntary sector organisations, have never received any governance training or support.

Most trustees had undertaken some form of governance support and/or training either under a year ago, or between 1-2 years ago.

### Area Trustees Would Like More Support In: Board Development

Board Development was the area of governance most trustees would like to receive more training and support in (68.5%). This suggests that trustees recognise the need for continuous improvement. It is important that the term “board development” is also scrutinised here, as it has been highlighted by members of Scotland's Third Sector Governance Forum that it's a “catch all” term and may be interpreted differently by different respondents. The response to this question also indicates that one off training is not fully sufficient, and trustees require continuous support and training from providers.

### Other Areas of Additional Support Requested: Roles and Responsibilities, Financial Management, Trustee Recruitment, Trustee Induction, Safeguarding

Aside from Board Development, Roles and Responsibilities, Financial Management, Safeguarding, Trustee Recruitment and Trustee Induction were all selected by around 35% of respondents. Closer analysis of the responses shows that most respondents selected all 4 options. This would suggest that trustees would like more training and support provision in governance generally, rather than one specific area.

### Least Requested Areas of Additional Support: Mediation and Constitution

Mediation and the constitution were the two areas trustees felt they needed the least additional support and training in.

### Most Utilised Governance Training and Support Provider: SCVO

SCVO was the organisation where most trustees would go to access governance training and support, closely followed by OSCR and the TSI network who were both second most popular. It is important to note that the survey was distributed through the SCVO Trustee Bulletin and is weighted accordingly.

### Most Recommended Governance Training and Support Provider: OSCR

The most highly recommended source of governance training and support was OSCR, with SCVO being the second most popular.

### Trustees Unaware of What Organisations are TSI's

An observation which can be deduced from the “other” responses to Q. 9 and 10 is that trustees are unaware of who/ what a TSI is. Despite it being listed as one of the options, many respondents placed their local TSI (eg. GCVS, EVOC) as an “other”. As the primary provider of most of localised support, especially for small voluntary sector organisations, this knowledge gap is notable.

### Resources Not Engaged With

Questions 12, 13, 14 and 15 indicate that, although there is an awareness of the resources listed by Scotland's Third Sector Governance Forum, they are not well engaged with. This may indicate that trustees need more encouragement and support on how to use the materials more practically in a board setting, and that the Forum needs to work on increasing its profile and visibility in the sector.

### Most Requested Development: E-Learning

The most requested development in governance training and support was an increase in E-Learning materials, with the primary justification being that they allow training and support to be more adaptable to busy schedules.

### 3 MAPPING

Over the course of eight weeks, 36 interviews were conducted with governance training and support providers. This included representatives from national organisations, independent consultants, Third Sector Interfaces, law firms and funders.

This mapping table has been composed from providers' responses to the question "what governance training and/or support provision do you or your organisation provide?"; alongside information taken from their websites.

The resources provided may have changed, especially in response to the Coronavirus pandemic.

#### \*TSI Network

Third Sector Interfaces provide a single point of access for support and advice for the third sector within local areas. The mapping table represents an overview of what the TSI network generally provide, however, the governance support and training provided by TSI's can differ according to local authority area.

Mapping interviews were conducted with representatives from seven Third Sector Interfaces – Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations, Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) Falkirk, Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council (EVOC), Dundee Voluntary Action, Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Services. (PKAVS), Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise and TSI Moray.

A full list of Scotland's Third Sector Interfaces, including contact details can be found at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/third-sector-interfaces-contact-details/>

The Robertson Trust is currently working with the Third Sector Interfaces to roll out a programme of long-term governance support with a focus upon governance, financial control and charity law.

#### \*\*Consultants

The governance training and support provision offered by independent consultants is also variable. Over the course of the mapping, interviews were conducted with consultants from a range of different professional backgrounds. Most consultants offered training and support in all areas of governance, but many also had their own specialisms and areas of expertise.

Mapping interviews were conducted with seven independent consultants:

Elaine Alsop, Miles Harrison, Kirstine Ferguson, Margaret Lynch, Shirley Otto, Susan Robertson and Joette Thomas.

### Additional Free Resources

#### E-Learning

##### SCOPE E-learning:

Developed by SCVO, and funded by ERASMUS+, the European Commission's programme for education, training, youth and sport, SCOPE is a new e-learning platform which houses five training modules providing entry level information and learning on important matters related to running a voluntary sector organisation. The five modules cover: Governance, Finance, Fundraising, Communications and Risk Management. On the completion of each module, trustees are awarded a digital badge. This allows learners to share their achievements with their peers and potential employers and will be useful on social networks that focus on professional networking and career development.

<https://scope-skills.eu/en-gb/>

#### Self-Evaluation Tool

##### Good Governance Check-Up, SCVO

SCVO have created a Good Governance Check-up tool to be used in conjunction with the Scottish Governance Code to help trustees regularly review their governance. Boards can use the check-up to identify areas for improvement and monitor and record their journey to good governance.

<https://scvo.org.uk/support/running-your-organisation/governance/scottish-governance-code-checkup>

#### Scotland's Third Sector Governance Forum Website

The Third Sector Governance Forum website houses Scotland's Third Sector Governance Code, a calendar of upcoming governance related events, and links to resources that trustees can use to improve and evaluate their governance practice.

<https://goodgovernance.scot/category/resources/>

	PROVIDER	GOVERNANCE TRAINING AND SUPPORT FORMAT						ACCESSIBILITY		AWARDS AND ACCREDITATIONS
		Face to Face	Online Resources	Networking Opportunities	Telephone Enquiries	Bespoke/Tailored Training Courses Designed According to Individual Board Requirement	General Training Courses	Free	Charged	
National	ACOSVO (Membership Required)	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
	Arts and Business Scotland	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓ (For charities funded by Creative Scotland)	✓	
	Changing the Chemistry (Membership Required)	✓		✓		✓				
	Evaluation Support Scotland	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	
	Get on Board	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓
	Inspiring Scotland	✓		✓		✓		✓		
	Institute of Fundraising	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓ (Through the TSI Network)	✓	
	OSCR		✓					✓		
	Pilot Light (Only for Eligible Organisations)	✓				✓		✓		
	Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓ (Through SCOPE E-Learning Course)
	The Social Enterprise Academy	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	
	Sports Scotland	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Local	Third Sector Interface (TSI) *	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ (Area dependent)
Private	Independent Consultants **	✓			✓	✓			✓	
	Burness Paull (Solicitor)	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	
	Brodies (Solicitor)	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	
	Gillespie Macandrew (Solicitor)	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	
	MacRoberts (Solicitor)	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	
	Turcan Connell (Solicitor)	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	

## 3.2 THEMES AND OBSERVATIONS IN THE MAPPING

### Engagement

I would like to thank all who shared their time and knowledge in the creation of this mapping exercise and to acknowledge the engagement, passion and enthusiasm demonstrated by all who participated in the interviews. This is demonstrative that there is an active interest and recognition across third sector organisations in the importance of governance and its need to be further developed.

### Research Constraints

Interviews were conducted with 36 third sector colleagues working in governance, including representatives from national organisations, Third Sector Interfaces, law firms, independent consultants, academics and funders. Although the research was comprehensive and includes a good range of professional backgrounds, it must be acknowledged that the interview responses and the mapping represent only a snapshot of a very diverse sector.

### Observations and Themes

#### Support and Training Provision is Reactive

A general theme which emerged during the interviews conducted with national, local and private governance providers, is that governance training and support for boards of trustees in the third sector is reactive. A notable number of providers from all categories voiced that training and support were often requested subsequent to an issue or complaint having already arisen. Consequentially, most governance support and training provided is tailored according to an individual board's requirements at that time. 'Generic' training and support sessions are offered by a small number of providers, however, the consensus across respondents is that 'generic' sessions are less well attended and, therefore, a less efficient use of resources. The reactive nature of support and training courses means that recognising any clear gaps in provision is challenging.

#### Most Commonly Addressed Governance Issues

When asked what areas of governance tended to be most recurrently addressed in the reactive support and training they provide, the most common response by providers was the understanding of trustee roles and responsibilities and, in staffed charities, support with defining and balancing the board of trustees and staff relationship.

#### Training and Support Provision Format

In terms of format, the most common delivery method for governance support and training is face to face sessions, between one individual board and a trainer(s). Since the Coronavirus pandemic, however, many of these sessions have transitioned to online, remote delivery. Providers have voiced that digitisation of provision should allow trustee location and time constraints to be less prohibitive to accessing support and training.

#### Training and Support Provision Expense

As is snapshotted in the table, the expense of provision is highly variable. General findings found much of the support and provision to be available at free or low cost, however this was often conditional to membership of the organisation providing the support and/or training, or available only through certain funding providers.

*"Too often I am called in when things are in a mess because of poor governance practice rather than being called in early to develop the systems to stop them getting into a mess."*

— CONSULTANT

## 4 MAPPING AND TRUSTEE SURVEY DATA COMPARISON

The text box below details the areas of potential improvement as identified by trustees in question 16 of the trustee survey (page 14). Many of the responses listed multiple areas of improvement (eg; face to face and more e-learning). The 'general sessions' encompasses e-learning, unless specified as tailored e-learning.

Face to face:	30%
Online Resources:	53%
Networking/ Peer Opportunities:	16%
Telephone Enquiries:	N/A
Bespoke/ Tailored Sessions:	10%
General Sessions:	47%
Opportunity for Award:	7%

Most responses highlighted that an increase in online resources and more generic training sessions are potential areas of development. This information complements the governance training and support mapping table on page 20, as most of the training and support currently offered by providers is face to face and bespoke.

Face to face and bespoke governance training and support were mentioned in 30% and 10% of trustee responses respectively. As the mapping table shows, most providers offer this style of support and training, but the fact that this was requested as an area of improvement by some responses indicates that trustees may be unaware of the governance training and support available to them.

16% of responses mentioned the need for more networking and peer opportunities, with a number of responses specifying the need for networking opportunities for all trustees and not exclusively chairs. As the mapping table shows, nine of the organisations interviewed during the mapping exercise offered networking opportunities, however, some of these were exclusive to chairs, or conditional upon membership to the organisation. The fact 16% of responses mentioned more networking could, again, indicate an unawareness of the support and training provision available; or highlight the need for more frequent and easily accessible networking opportunities for all trustees across Scotland.

7% of responses mentioned that accredited training could be a potential area of development. This was also mentioned by a large number of providers during the mapping interviews, however, as the mapping table shows, there is limited opportunity for this.

## 4.1 TRUSTEE SURVEY AND MAPPING COMPARATIVE DISCUSSION

### Difference Between What is Provided and Who are Considered the Main Providers

One clear observation which can be made when comparing the trustee survey results to the mapping table, is a disparity between *who* trustees consider the main providers to be and *what* is provided. When asked where trustees seek governance training and support (Question 9), 43% of respondents answered OSCR, the second most popular answer. OSCR were also the provider most trustees would recommend. As the charity regulator, OSCR provide the resources outlining the roles and responsibilities and legal obligations of charity trustees, but as representatives of OSCR outlined during the mapping interviews, although OSCR support other bodies in training, "it's not specifically [them] running the training". This raises multiple questions concerning both charity trustees' awareness of the support and training provision available, their knowledge of what the term governance fully encompasses, and also on the role of OSCR.

### Trustees Unaware of the Governance Support and Training Available

Many of the "other" responses to Question 16 requested bespoke, group training. As outlined on the mapping table, bespoke training for one board is the most popular format for governance support and training and is provided by multiple organisations. This substantiates the previous point that trustees are unaware of the wealth of governance training and support provision available.

### Similar Areas of Potential Improvement Identified by Trustees and Providers

The areas that trustees said they would like more support in – board development, roles and responsibilities, trustee induction, trustee recruitment and financial management – were generally in agreement with what providers identified as gaps in knowledge. Most providers stated that roles and responsibilities, trustee recruitment and trustee induction were areas of governance trustees were least knowledgeable on, and in their experience, caused most governance related problems.

### Mediation

Trustees did not identify mediation as an area in which they required more training and support. However, a large number of providers identified an inability to mediate conflict as a primary

source of issues arising on a board. This is perhaps due to trustees only realising they are unequipped to mediate difficult conflicts after they have arisen.

## E-Learning

E-Learning materials emerged as a clear gap in provision, being the most highly requested area of governance development by trustees but offered by a limited number of providers. It is worthwhile to note that the trustee survey was conducted during the Coronavirus pandemic and may be reflective of social distancing rules.

## Trustee Recruitment

Trustee recruitment support was identified as a gap area by both providers and trustees. Providers voiced that trustee recruitment was still primarily an 'informal' practice, limiting diversity on boards. When describing the support and training offered, few providers mentioned any focus on good recruitment practice during their sessions. Over a third of trustees also identified this as an area in which they would like more support.

## Trustee Inductions

Trustee inductions are another gap area indicated by the mapping interviews and the trustee survey. Inductions were recurrently mentioned by providers as an area which needed more focus. Most providers were not regularly asked by boards to provide induction sessions and voiced that the most recurring governance issues stemmed from a lack of basic foundational knowledge. Over a third of trustees also identified this as an area in which they would like more support.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations outlined below have been drawn from the information gathered from the mapping interviews with governance support and training providers, and the responses from the trustee survey.

### Trustee induction

As was outlined in 3.1, governance training and support provision within the third sector is primarily reactive, with the majority of providers voicing that their services were often delivered in response to a governance issue having already arisen. 'Generic' training and support sessions, such as trustee inductions, were offered by some providers, however, generally these were not widely available, with bespoke sessions being favoured.

When asked what governance problems providers most often reacted to, a misunderstanding of trustee roles and responsibilities was a recurring answer, especially when working with staffed organisations. This is suggestive of a gap in the foundational knowledge trustees should have and is perhaps symptomatic of the lack of induction training for new trustees.

One way in which this could be addressed is governance training and support providers offering more generic induction sessions for new trustees. Although some providers voiced that 'generic' sessions were not as efficient on resources, by establishing the foundational knowledge, this may prevent later problems and allow providers to be less crisis driven and reactive.

Providers voiced that inductions were not widely requested by trustees and suggested that any increase in induction sessions would need to be accompanied by active encouragement to ensure that trustees recognised the importance of induction and attended the sessions. The majority of interviewees identified OSCR as the best organisation to undertake this, due to their influence and their vital role in the inception of new charities.

### E-Learning

The most popular answer to Question 16 of the trustee survey, "How would you like to see governance support and training across the sector developed in the future?" was an increase in E-Learning materials. Most trustees outlined that they would prefer more, and be more likely to utilise, E-Learning resources as they allow learning to accommodate to their schedule. This could also encourage more frequent participation in governance training as trustees could access training and support outside of board meetings, which is when training sessions are usually administered.

The accessible nature of E-Learning materials may also encourage more people to pursue a role as a trustee as they could undertake independent learning which would help them feel equipped to volunteer for a board role.

*"I think more e-learning resources would be a useful improvement as people would be able to complete it in their own home at a time that suits them."*

— TRUSTEE  
(TAKEN FROM THE TRUSTEE SURVEY)

It is important to outline that many trustees wanted E-Learning resources to contribute to a blended learning approach and that face to face interaction was still deemed valuable.

It is also useful to note that the survey was distributed during the Coronavirus pandemic and may be reflective of social distancing guidelines.

### Peer Learning

More peer networking opportunities was the second most highly requested development in governance training and support provision by trustees. The mapping exercise revealed that there was a comprehensive amount of peer networking opportunities targeted at the chairs of boards through organisations such as ACOSVO and Arts and Business Scotland, however the opportunity for general trustee networking opportunities was more limited.

Increased opportunities for peer learning may ease some of the pressures faced by organisations, as trustees could share good practice and find mutual support.

An increase in peer learning opportunities may be especially beneficial in times of social distancing and the current move to online sessions. Many providers voiced that the discussion which emerged from training and support sessions was often the most valuable feature of a training session, however, personal experience and interviewee accounts have demonstrated that video sessions don't tend to facilitate a great amount of group discussion. The creation of a trustee network may allow a space to be created where trustees can learn from each other outside of the webinar/ online training session environment.

### Clearer Signposting

Comparison between the trustee survey and the mapping table revealed a clear need for governance support and training provision to be better signposted. As outlined in the comparative discussion, there was a major disparity between who trustees considered to be the main providers vs. the provision available to them.

Furthermore, in response to Question 16 in the trustee survey, many trustees voiced the need for bespoke, tailored training sessions. As the mapping table demonstrates, bespoke training sessions are the most popular format for governance support and training and are provided by multiple organisations, both free and charged. Trustees identifying this as an area of development suggests that they may be unaware of the training and support available to them.

During the mapping interviews, a number of providers voiced the need for a platform upon which trustee opportunities could be clearly advertised, including trustee vacancies and governance training and support providers. This recommendation was also made by some trustees in response to Question 16 of the trustee interview.

*"A good development would be the setting up of a single platform for the advertisement of trustee opportunities and signposting to trustee training resources. It is still incredibly difficult to find opportunities for trustees as there is no one place to go to look!"*

— TRUSTEE  
(TAKEN FROM THE TRUSTEE SURVEY)

## More Support and Training on Trustee Recruitment

Unsurprisingly, trustee recruitment was highlighted by the majority of providers and over a third of trustees as an area of governance in which trustees require more support and training. Many providers noted that trustee recruitment was still an informal practice, with trustees primarily recruiting from within their own social circles in a “tap on the shoulder” manner.

One way this gap could be addressed is for providers to incorporate more of a focus on good recruitment practice into their training sessions. This could include simple steps such as encouraging board members to consider how accessible their board is to people from different backgrounds (eg whether meeting times are accessible to students, carers etc.) and advising them on the best methods to advertise their vacancies to a diverse audience (via social media etc.).

A streamlined platform on which trustee vacancies could be advertised was also highly recommended by both providers and trustees.

## Accreditation

The introduction of accredited training courses was a suggested development in governance training and support provision voiced by both interviewees and trustees.

During the mapping interviews with governance support and training providers, it was recurrently acknowledged that if governance practice were to improve, a cultural shift on how governance is perceived is necessary. Currently, many providers stated that governance training and/ or support was still a form of “tick boxing exercise” for trustees, and that the desire for continual development was lacking. The trustee survey would tend to slightly disagree with this, with 68% of trustees requesting more support and training in board development, suggesting trustees recognise the need for continual improvement.

Due to this, governance accreditation which subscribes to a bronze, silver and gold model has been recommended as the most beneficial in ensuring trustees participate in continuous governance improvement.

The competency pathway created by The Get on Board programme at Napier University provides an example of such a training and development model. More information can be found here:

<https://www.napier.ac.uk/courses/browse-interests/business-and-languages/business-management/get-on-board#:~:text=The%20Get%20on%20Board%20Programme,a%20positive%20difference%20to%20communities>

This would not be an easy implementation with providers and trustees alike noting that any accreditation scheme would have to be nationally recognised for it to have a real impact. Both providers and trustees have identified OSCR, SCVO and, importantly, funders, as having the most influence and resource within the sector to lead on development of accreditation.

Registered charities are currently eligible to apply for the Good Governance Award through Dundee Voluntary Action, with fees differing according to income.

<https://goodgovernanceaward.org.uk/>

*“What would be good would be a qualification—something that gives that accreditation that, for example, you may not be a lawyer but that you’ve undergone sufficient training in charity law. It would create a level of clarity about base skills and knowledge.”*

— TSI

Sport Scotland are proactive in implementing practices which support sporting bodies to continuously develop their governance knowledge and their work may also be a useful resource to consult. For more information see:

<https://sportscotland.org.uk/media-imported/1480369/governance-framework-web-final-feb-2015.pdf>

## Staff and Board Integrated Training

During the mapping interviews, many providers voiced that conflicts between the board of trustees and the senior management team were a recurring problem which their bespoke board training sessions reacted to. As outlined in 3.1, the structure of most governance training and support provision is one board and a trainer(s). Although some providers, such as ACOSVO, do provide integrated training which consults the board and senior management teams, a recurring recommendation made by providers was to increase the amount of integrated board and staff training sessions. This could assist in trustees and staff having a greater understanding of their defined roles, resulting in less conflict, the most common root of governance issues according to most providers.

## Continuous Development

As outlined in the accreditation section, both providers and trustees acknowledged the need for more of a focus on *continual* development. Many providers noted they usually provide one off sessions which rarely give the opportunity for follow up, or follow up is not engaged in by trustees. As responses to question 11 of the trustee survey indicate, trustees are keen for training and support to be a process of development rather than one off sessions.

An increase in training and support with continuous follow up to ensure the learning has been embedded could be a welcome development in governance training and support provision. This would assist in the cultural shift of governance training from being a “tick boxing exercise” into a continuous journey of learning and development.

## Collaboration

Perhaps the most prominent theme which emerged from the mapping interviews and the trustee survey was that, in order for governance training and support to be developed across the third sector, there needs to be a collaborative effort which includes multiple national organisations, the TSI network and private providers.

*“In my experience conflict tends to be one of the main sources of difficulty on a board. It’s important trustees and staff understand the division of responsibilities and can work together but within their parameters”*

— SOLICITOR

## 6 WHO SHOULD BE TAKING THE LEAD ON THIS?

The research conducted during this project revealed a wealth of expert support and training provision across the voluntary and private sector and an identifiable engagement and recognition by both providers and trustees to see governance develop and improve.

One clear obstacle to overcome for governance training and support provision to be improved is the lack of cohesion and collaboration between providers. Much of the knowledge and resources necessary to implement many of the recommendations made in this report, and additional areas of potential development, already exist within the sector, and improved collaboration would be the most effective approach to achieve the sector's shared goal of improving governance practice on boards of trustees.

During the mapping interview, providers were asked who they felt should take the lead on developing and implementing improvements in third sector governance. The following are some of the most popular responses, accompanied by an explanation. It is hoped that this information will assist providers in recognising their role in governance development.

### SCVO

When asked which organisation should be responsible for the development of governance support and training provision in the third sector, SCVO was the most popular answer in the trustee survey. It is worth noting that the survey was distributed through the SCVO Trustee Bulletin and will be weighted accordingly. However, SCVO was also the most popular answer voiced by providers. One reason for this is their reputation. SCVO is a nationally recognised organisation who the trustee survey would suggest are already the top provider for governance training and support provision. Furthermore, many providers suggested that SCVO's pool of resources and national reach make them the most equipped organisation to lead on governance support and training developments.

### OSCR

Following SCVO, OSCR was the second most recommended organisation to take the lead on governance training and development by trustees. The interviews with providers, however, would indicate that OSCR's role differs from that of SCVO. As OSCR said themselves, they are not governance training providers. Instead they are the independent regulator and registrar of charities in Scotland. Providers therefore have suggested that OSCR could use their influence to ensure that charity trustees utilise the resources available to them across the voluntary sector and encourage continual learning and development for boards.

Many providers suggested that OSCR play a vital role in the signposting of governance training and support provision. The trustee survey shows that trustees incorrectly consider OSCR to be

one of the top providers of governance support and training. If trustees are using the OSCR website to source support and training provision, they have a good platform to signpost trustees seeking support and training towards the available provision. Although this is already provided at <https://www.oscr.org.uk/managing-a-charity/faqs/#where-to-get-help> the research would suggest that this may need to be more clearly highlighted. It is also important to note that trustees incorrectly identifying OSCR as the biggest support and training provider may also be indicative of a misunderstanding of the term governance, and work by all organisations must be done to ensure trustees have a full understanding of what governance encompasses.

The research would suggest that, aside from their own organisation and beneficiaries, OSCR is the body that boards of charity trustees feel most accountable to. Therefore, their support of governance development could be a powerful force in improving the governance practice across the charity sector in Scotland.

### TSI Network

The TSI network was also highly recommended by trustees as a potential lead on the development of support and training provision. As the top providers of localised support and training, TSIs have the most in depth understanding of the needs of the voluntary organisations within their area. They could therefore play an important role in shaping the design and direction of training and support provision.

The mapping interviews would also suggest that the TSI network have the best engagement with small charities and unregistered voluntary organisations. The response to the trustee survey and responses from providers would suggest that smaller organisations are less connected to information and networks which could direct them to governance training and support provision. TSI's have the reach to close this gap.

### Funders

Funders also play an important role in the development of governance training and support provision across the third sector.

Similar, to the role of OSCR, funders have an important influence over trustee's engagement in developing their governance practice. Like OSCR, it is suggested that trustees feel a level of accountability to funders and their voice and influence matters.

Funders are an important player in creating a cultural shift within the third sector where good governance is recognised as important, and continuous support and training is actively sought. Their support and investment in governance support and training through grant giving could have a powerful impact in improving the governance practice within boards of trustees across the third sector.

*"The one place we all have in common is OSCR, I think they have a huge role to play in governance development in terms of clearly defining best practice and starting important conversations for trustees and organisations"*

— CONSULTANT

*"I think if funders and commissioners started to place emphasis on governance, trustees would take more responsibility for governance within their organisation because it then becomes a requirement"*

— FUNDER

*"Being a trustee means working collaboratively and taking collective responsibility, that's the approach providers should adopt as well."*

— CONSULTANT

## Scotland's Third Sector Governance Forum

Scotland's Third Sector Governance Forum is a group of individuals and organisations with knowledge and expertise in governance issues and a shared passion in improving governance practice across Scottish voluntary organisations. This is a unique platform for collaboration and discussion between multiple national organisations, independents and members of the TSI network, and will be a vital resource in creating a framework for, and enabling a collaborative response to, developing and improving governance across the third sector. The Third Sector Governance Forum is well placed to build up and foster integrated, sustainable and comprehensive approaches to assist independent organisations, dedicated to social welfare and change, to commit to, and gain satisfaction from, the robust governance of their organisation.

## 7 LIST OF PROVIDERS

Thank you to all the governance training and support providers who participated in the mapping interviews. Your expertise, insight and, most importantly, passion, were wonderful to hear.

### TSI's

- *David Baker, DVA*
- *Steff Bell, EVOC*
- *Holly Byron-Staples, PKAVS*
- *Edward Fittell, TSI Moray*
- *Anne Knox, SVE*
- *Tariq Mahmood, CVS*
- *Sandy Mathers, ACVO*

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- *Elaine Alsop*
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- *Miles Harrison*
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- *Shirley Otto*
- *Susan Robertson*
- *Joette Thomas*

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- *Catherine Nisbet - The National Lottery Community Fund*

### National Organisations

- *Patricia Armstrong, ACOSVO*
- *Virginia Anderson, Institute of Fundraising*
- *Tracey Bird, SCVO*
- *Elaine Crichton, Inspiring Scotland*
- *Charlotte Lawley, Social Enterprise Scotland*
- *Paula Meise, OSCR*
- *Susan Menzies, SportsScotland*
- *Steven Marwick, Evaluation Support Scotland (via email)*
- *Steven Morton, SCVO*
- *Caroline Monk, Scottish Government*
- *Elaine Mowat, PilotLight*
- *Jody Rae, ACOSVO*
- *Catriona Reynolds, Arts and Business Scotland*
- *Ann Rowe, SCVO*
- *Jude Turbyne, OSCR*
- *Miles Weaver, Get on Board*

## 8 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My name is Thea Kellock and I am a 2020 graduate of the University of Edinburgh. During my undergraduate degree I was part of the Journey to Success scholarship programme run by The Robertson Trust. As part of their alumni support, they create and offer graduate internship projects, of which the research and creation of this report is one of them.

I was keen to undertake this project as I have a great admiration and interest in all the work voluntary sector organisations do and I am keen to one day continue my career in the third sector. The opportunity to meet so many people working within the sector, learn about what they do, and create a piece of work that will assist in their work has been a truly wonderful experience.

This project has cemented my desire to work in such a dynamic, welcoming and passionate sector, and even look into becoming a charity trustee myself!

Thank you again to everyone who participated in the making of this report.

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**Scotland's Third Sector  
Governance Forum**

