

# Charities Healthcheck

(and the questions you should ask)

**A collaborative guide**

Part 6/6

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## Faith Groups

Prepared for the  
Christian Savings  
Conference 2023

**To go fast, go alone. To go far, go together.**

Thanks to every contributor of ideas listed here (alphabetically) - a truly collaborative effort to get input of so many ideas from so many, and I hope the start of many examples of coming together! Join us by sending your thoughts for future editions so it can always be improved and refined.

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# Cover Image: Braided River Reflection

Braided rivers in Aotearoa New Zealand are unique because they change often, moving along in the same general direction, but never ever staying exactly the same.

Trying to plan every aspect of your life means you'll miss out if you try to stay in one stream. A lot will come down simply to this: persistence, serendipity and the relationships you cultivate.

Then the magic ingredient to really see new opportunities, is that you have to be willing to also let directions shift, like a braided river, and go where the water of new opportunities are flowing.



*Image: The afternoon sun reflecting off the braided Rakaia River flowing out of Lake Coleridge, captured on a flight south to Queenstown.*

**Edited by Steven Moe**

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Additional thoughts? Send them to  
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# Introduction:

## Kia ora and welcome to this collaborative guide.

So what is a “collaborative guide”? I really just made that name up to represent that this only exists because so many have contributed to it.

I went out to ask for input on an initial draft of ideas and was overwhelmed by the response of so many who felt the same - that we want to ask the right questions to support charities and “for purpose” organisations to stay safe. Thanks to you all!

I’ve helped many hundreds of these groups and they consistently face the same issues. Those are refined down in this guide through a series of themes and then questions so that you can learn quickly what often only gets found out by trial and error.

Why not choose a theme and then ask just those questions at your next board meeting and consider the answers together? Even if you have run a charity for a long time, they will be good reflection points - we can all be constantly learning.

This Charities Healthcheck sets out the key legal risks that charities should know about, and could work to improve, to mitigate risks to Board members and the organisation.

This is not a textbook. It is not long. It is deliberately high level. It’s a guide - like when you are in another country and someone takes you on a tour of a local place, and you get more insight than if you walked around it on your own.

Hopefully this is also a project that evolves over time - and it will be updated each year based on feedback received.

The plan is to revise and reissue this next year, so we welcome comments ahead of 1 September 2024. So, if there are ideas you have to contribute, send them over to me and we can consider adding them - maybe different questions or expanded ones, other resources, different topic ideas.

Originally I called this 15 Key Issues Charities Face but now have split that into these parts of the guide so that you can focus on things by these themes:

- **Part 1: Overview**
- **Part 2: Governance**
- **Part 3: People**
- **Part 4: Assets**
- **Part 5: Policies**
- **Part 6: Faith Groups**

My role is to be a catalyst to solve your legal problems. With a team of lawyers focused on “for purpose” organisations and 80 staff across four offices, we are New Zealand’s leading law firm for charities, churches, companies and entrepreneurs who want to do things differently - with purpose and impact at your core.

This guide is just one example of supporting this area, so check out some others as well - these range from [Seeds Podcast](#) (350+ conversations), picture book [The Apple Tree](#), [the Reimagining Business book](#), the upcoming [Seeds Impact Conference](#) in October (just \$20 for a day with 27 change-making sessions) and guides like the [Charities in New Zealand: A Legal Handbook](#).



*Together, let's make things better.*

Ngā mihi,  
Steven Moe

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## Resources

## Resources

The Seeds Impact Conference will be held on 5 October 2023, with 27 sessions held over four zoom rooms and only \$20 to attend - more info and you can sign up here:

<https://seedsconference.nz/>



# Part VI: Charities

## Healthcheck: Faith groups

### 26. Faith groups

#### Why is this important?

There are unique dynamics when it comes to faith groups - this section focuses on churches but the principles would apply to any faith-based group.

Questions to provoke discussion	Your notes	Ranking (of 10)
What is the relationship between different groups within your organisation e.g. spiritual authority vs operational decisions vs strategy? Who has power in relation to each?		
Recognise the type of structure you have e.g. member-led vs apostolic-led. Do you have appropriate safeguards for both approaches or variations on them?		
What is the role of the Senior Pastor / Minister - who appoints them, for how long, and how are issues raised?		
What is the role of elders - are they Trustees? Or do they play a spiritual role only?		
Have you considered having external third-party spiritual advisers who are outside of your leadership but from other groups you respect?		
Is there a statement of belief for your organisation and what role does it play? Do those in governance need to sign to say that they agree with it?		
Consider having a “Safer Church Committee” to investigate incidents and report to trustees/Board. Safe churches is now a very important area Psychological safety, spiritual safety, sexual safety etc.		
What is the position of elder groups in your church - as in, the “buck stops here” people, whatever name they may have. Sometimes these people hold power but have the least knowledge about “governance” and little experience.		

Questions to provoke discussion	Your notes	Ranking (of 10)
This is because often there is “internal” shoulder-tapping rather than governance experience being the criteria. That can be fine - but how do you sensitively propose upskilling?		
What is “governance” in a local church? It is not a word that shows up in the New Testament although there were leaders of the Church.		
What risks have you identified and what are you doing to mitigate those risks?		
What is the role of elders in a church that is affiliated, as opposed to an independent church?		
Complaints - is there a well understood and easy complaints process?		
Finance - what finance procedures are in place in the church?		
What policies do you have? What are the top five or 10 policies a church should have? We are currently working on a list.		
But remember a policy is only as good as the procedure that goes with it as that really is the “how we will address or manage/mitigate something”.		
Safeguarding (child protection) and vulnerable adults - there is currently a multi-church working group working on safeguarding standards across churches, so be watching out for the results of that.		
Food safety - check basic compliance requirements if food is sold on a Sunday or at other times, and more so if also sold to general public and not just members.		
To what degree can or should elders decide on things they know little about? Especially when it comes to theological and pastoral issues.		
<p align="center"><b>Key resources:</b> <a href="#">Churches Handbook</a> and <a href="#">Faith Groups Info Hub</a> and <a href="#">7 Principles of Governance for Faith Based Groups</a></p>		



## Resources

Perhaps these Healthcheck Guides have got you excited for ensuring best practice and wanting more information!

If so, then check out these free resources as well:

### Written guides and resources

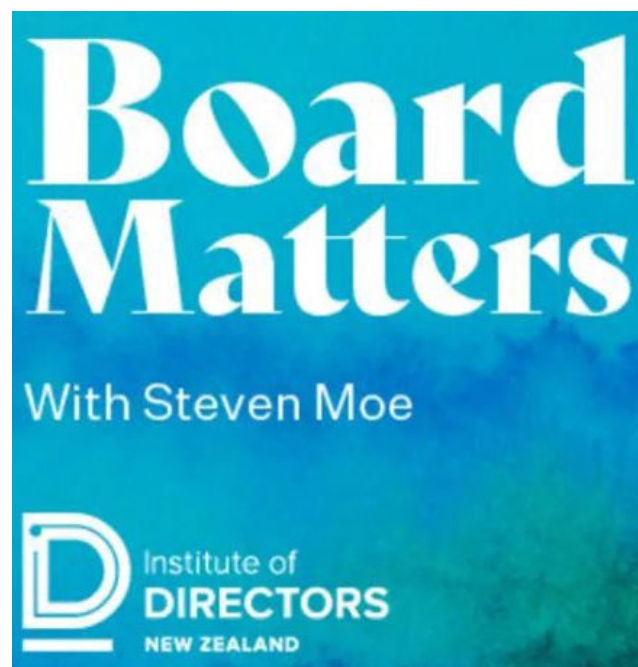
- [Charities in New Zealand: A Legal Handbook](#)
- [Governance Masterclass: 7 scenarios](#)
- [Governance essentials hub](#)
- [10 minutes on how to set up an impact driven organisation](#)
- [Social Enterprises in New Zealand: A Legal Handbook](#)
- [Health and Safety regarding volunteers](#)
- [Start-ups guide](#)
- [Governance podcast for IOD](#)
- [Impact Investing in NZ](#)
- [Reimagining Business Book](#)
- [Seeds podcast](#)
- [About privacy policies and what they should cover](#)
- [Capital Raising Guide](#)
- [Summary of two day IOD Leadership Conference](#)
- [Article on different types of roles: Volunteers, Employees, Contractors](#)
- [Trust control over other trusts article](#)
- [The Good Governance Code](#)

### Governance related videos

- [Chairing the Board](#)
- [Governance Masterclass - 7 scenarios](#)

### Other websites

- [Charities Services on types of tiers](#)
- [Charities Services guide for new board members](#)
- [NZ Navigator online charity assessment kit](#)
- [Community Governance Aotearoa](#)
- [IOD NFP site](#)
- [Community Networks Aotearoa: Tick for Governance course](#)
- [‘Better Banking’ report from CNA](#)
- [Christian Savings on long term maintenance plans](#)
- [Community Law Manual](#)
- [Questions on reputational risks](#)



*We hope this is helpful.*

*What else should we refer to in future editions?*