



THE PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

LEARN. IMPROVE. REPEAT.

PRINCIPLES & PROOF POINTS

PILLAR 5

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Developed collaboratively by the
LEAP OF REASON
AMBASSADORS COMMUNITY

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Principle 5.1: The board, management, and staff **understand the organization’s mission and desired results and review them periodically** to ensure that they are still relevant.

5.1.1: My organization’s leaders revisit our mission every three to five years to determine whether it needs to be revised.

5.1.2: My organization’s leaders periodically review and revise our organization’s goals.

Principle 5.2: The board, management, and staff **continually seek to do even better for the people or causes they serve.**

5.2.1: My organization’s leaders create frequent opportunities for people at all levels to reflect on our results and processes and how we can continually improve them. Examples include soliciting staff and target population/target audience feedback; devoting time and space to analyzing and interpreting data; reflecting in staff meetings on successes and failures and using data to review progress on organizational and individual goals.

5.2.2: My organization sets “stretch” goals to push us out of our comfort zone and to help us keep improving our people, processes, and results.

5.2.3: My organization can point to recent examples in which we made major changes to a program, service, and/or process after we learned that we were not as effective as we had hoped.

Principle 5.3: My organization’s board, management, and staff are **open and transparent about their results**—whether the results are positive or negative—to fuel learning and improvement.

5.3.1: My organization devotes time and space to sharing and discussing with relevant staff and board members the implications of results.

5.3.2: My organization communicates relevant results to stakeholders and solicits their feedback.

Principle 5.4: People in all parts of the organization have **high expectations of themselves** and of their peers.

5.4.1: My organization can cite recruitment and staff-development practices that nurture a culture in which individuals at all levels are motivated to do high-quality work and to keep improving over time.

5.4.2: My organization uses staff meetings, orientation sessions, and/or other opportunities to showcase and celebrate exemplary staff performance.

5.4.3: My organization promotes excellence as the norm. We aim to constantly raise the bar and improve in every aspect of our work by training and motivating our people, reviewing and iterating our practices, and learning and documenting how to deliver better results.

Principle 5.5: The board, management, and staff **take on the challenge of collecting and using information**, not because it’s a good marketing tool, and not because a funder said they have to. They believe it is integral to ensuring material, measurable, and sustainable good for the people or causes they serve.

5.5.1: My organization collects and uses data to determine if we're on course to achieve our desired results and help us learn and improve. A secondary purpose is external—to demonstrate to our stakeholders that we are worthy of support.

Principle 5.6: The board, management, and staff recognize they can't fully understand the needs of those they serve unless they **listen to and learn from constituents in formal and informal ways**.

5.6.1: My organization seeks feedback in appropriate ways to understand the experiences and preferences of our target population or target audience.

Principle 5.7: The board, management, and staff take the time to **benchmark themselves against, and learn from, peer organizations** that are at the top of their field.

5.7.1: My organization studies research, case studies, and news articles to help us learn from other organizations. We're interested in gleaning insights not only for improving our programs but also for strengthening any of the PI's seven organizational pillars.

5.7.2: My organization's *board* regularly engages in discussions with peer organizations to share lessons learned and experiences. We also participate in relevant professional associations and learning networks that help us compare our processes and results with similar organizations.

5.7.3: My organization's *management and staff* regularly engage in discussions with peer organizations to share lessons learned and experiences. We also participate in relevant professional associations and learning networks that help us compare our processes and results with similar organizations.

5.7.4: My organization can cite specific examples in which we have studied other organizations and then incorporated what we have learned to develop people, refine processes, and improve performance.

Principle 5.8: Senior management leads by example and encourages people throughout the organization to **be curious, ask questions, and push each other's thinking** by being appropriately and respectfully challenging. High-performance cultures are innovative cultures, mindful that every program and process eventually becomes dated, even obsolete.

5.8.1: My organization's leaders are open to—and do not punish or ignore—respectful pushback.

5.8.2: My organization allocates time in key meetings for questioning and encourages staff to challenge the status quo.

5.8.3: My organization can cite examples of learning and/or changes in practice that stemmed from staff and stakeholder input.

Principle 5.9: Senior management creates an environment in which staff members **feel safe acknowledging when there are problems**. They use what others might deem “failures” as an opportunity to listen, learn, and improve.

5.9.1: My organization's leaders model self-reflection and humility by acknowledging their own shortcomings and use “failures” as opportunities for learning.

5.9.2: My organization's staff bring problems to the attention of leaders and managers. When they do, leaders and managers take the concerns seriously and seek solutions.

5.9.3: My organization can cite an example of a "failure" that sparked reflection, analysis, and improvement—not recrimination.

Principle 5.10: Even the busiest leaders, managers, and staff members **carve out formal and informal opportunities to step back, take stock, and reflect.**

5.10.1: Because the urgent often squeezes out the important, my organization's leaders, managers, and staff members periodically set aside uninterrupted time on their calendars to read and think. They use this time to reflect on their own performance and on our people, processes, culture, and results.

5.10.2: My organization periodically affords staff an opportunity to step outside their daily demands of email and meetings (e.g., through retreats, professional development sessions, or even on a nature walk).

5.10.3: My organization's senior leaders have an open, honest conversation at least once a year about the level of effort that will be required as individuals and as a leadership team to hit our goals. Each leader does a "gut check" to ensure that he or she is on board and committed to the organization's success.

Now that you've had a chance to carefully work your way through each proof point, we encourage you to take a **step back and reflect** on your organization's overall progress on **Pillar 5**.

Where are you excelling? Where are you falling short of your own expectations? What two or three actions could you take in the next 12 months to lead to the biggest improvement on your Pillar 5 self-assessment the next time around?

Given the importance of human capital for making progress on Pillar 5 do you have the "right people in the right seats" in the words of *Good to Great* author Jim Collins? What more could you do to develop the talent you have and find the additional talent you need? What talent actions would likely lead to the greatest improvements on your Pillar 5 self-assessment the next time around?

What additional resources or support do you need?