

Introduction/Background

Purpose of this Study

One of the goals of Holland City Council is to have all City boards, commissions, and committees (BCCs) review their intent/purpose and self-reflect on their work. In addition, ongoing review and reflection of board performance and dynamics is a best practice for organizational, board, and individual board member improvement.

City and County Partnership

The City of Holland partnered with the Ottawa County Planning and Performance Improvement Department (PPID) on this pilot project to ensure the results were meaningful, robust and protected the confidentiality of individual board member responses.



Ottawa County
Where You Belong

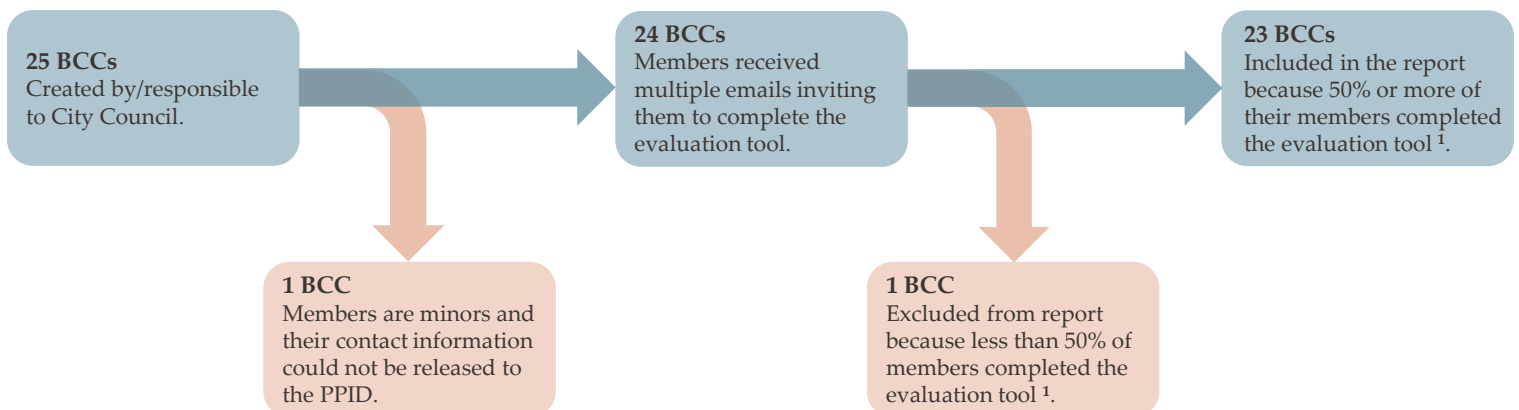
Methodology/Process

The Evaluation Tools

Two evaluation tools were developed for this study through a collaborative process between PPID and the City of Holland. No existing evaluation tools for assessing general government BCCs could be located during PPID's research. However, existing evaluation tools for nonprofit and higher education boards provided quality measures to assess characteristics of effective board functioning for BCCs. The remaining evaluation tool questions were original to this study.

Boards, Commissions, Committees

Holland City has over 30 BCCs. Some of these BCCs were created by and are responsible to City Council. Other BCCs were not created by City Council or are not responsible to City Council in the same way. Data from 23 of the 25 BCCs that were created by and are responsible to City Council are included in this report.



1. The PPID set a minimum 50% response rate in order for a BCC's data to be assessed and included in the report. This minimum, which was determined from the following sources, was set in order to reduce nonresponse bias: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2384218/>; https://cirt.gcu.edu/research/developmentresources/research_ready/designing_surveys/response_rates; <http://help.5-essentials.org/customer/en/portal/articles/94155-how-to-interpret-response-rates>

Methodology/Process (cont.)



Getting the Word Out

The PPID created a short video to introduce the project and explain its purpose and process. The Holland City Manager shared the video with staff liaisons to BCCs. The staff liaisons, in turn, shared the video with their respective BCC members.

Data Collection and Analysis

A two-step data collection process was utilized to collect data about each BCC. Data was collected through Survey Monkey and by email.



Step 1: Collect data from each BCC's staff liaison.

Staff liaisons provided data about operating rules, collaboration with other BCCs, annual goals, specifics about the BCC (e.g. date established, size of the BCC), as well as the name and email address of each BCC member.

Step 2: Collect data from each BCC member.

BCC members provided data about characteristics of effective BCC functioning, collaboration with other BCCs, annual goals, major accomplishments, and issues faced by the BCC.

Step 3: Analyze data and compile into reports.

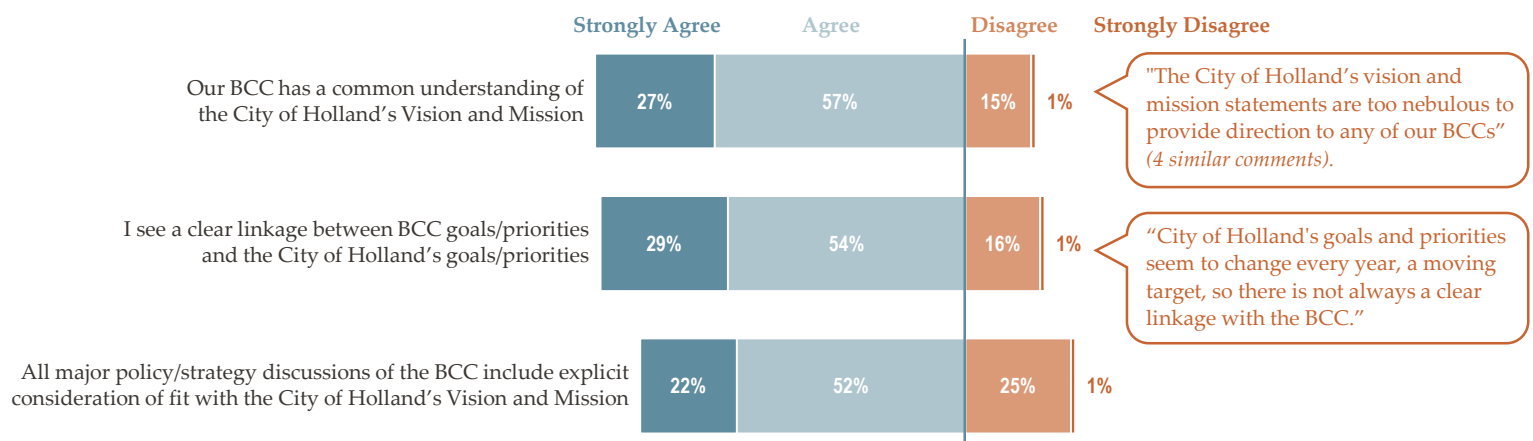
PPID cleaned, analyzed, and formatted the data into individual BCC reports. The results are presented around themes (strengths and opportunities) reported by two or more members.

The Results

The following are a summary of survey results from Holland City BCC staff liaisons and members¹.

Vision/Mission of the City of Holland

74% or more of BCC members **Strongly Agree** or **Agree** that their BCC has a common understanding of the City of Holland's Vision and Mission, see a clear linkage between the BCCs and the City of Holland's goals and priorities, and explicitly considers the City's Vision and Mission during all major policy/strategy discussions.

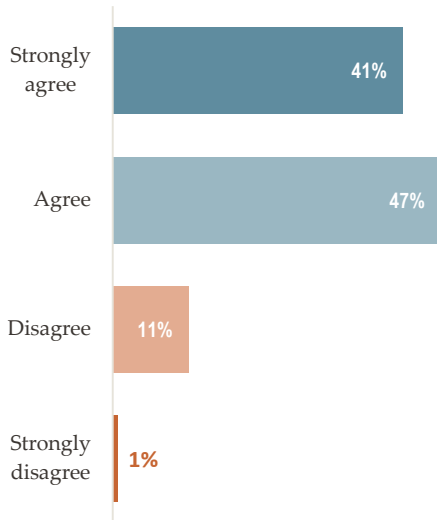


1. 147 out of 201 members from 23 BCCs responded to the survey.

The Results (cont.)

Mission of the BCCs

88% of BCC members **Strongly Agree** or **Agree** that their BCC's current mission is still aligned with the original intent/purpose.

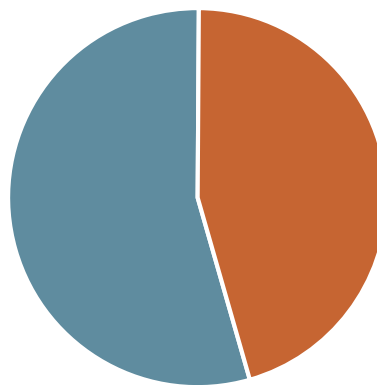


27% of members **Strongly Agree** or **Agree** that their BCC is asked to assist with projects outside its scope.

52% of members indicate their BCC is actively working to fulfill its mission/purpose and has fulfilled/completed its mission/purpose. These conflicting responses may be an indication that the BCC's mission/purpose is unclear and/or that the survey questions required further clarity.

Goals, Accomplishments and Value Added

52% of staff liaisons report that their BCC sets annual goals.



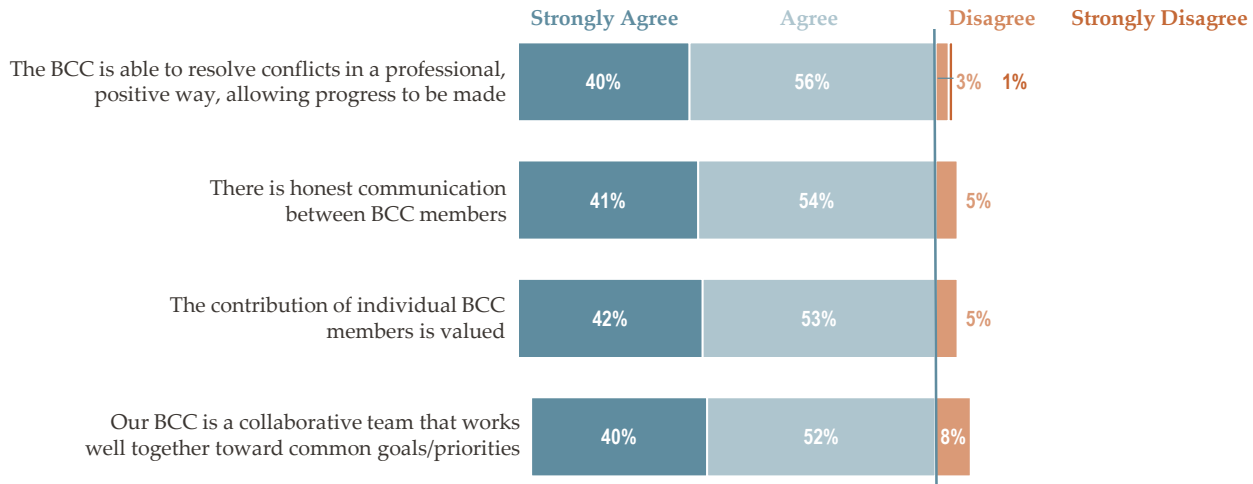
Of the **11 BCCs** who do not have annual goals:

- Members from **8 BCCs** reported major accomplishments.
- **2 BCCs** do not meet regularly, and therefore do not set goals.
- **1 BCC** reported no major accomplishments in the past year. This BCC appears to have regularly scheduled meetings; however, BCC members report that meeting attendance is an issue.

The Results (cont.)

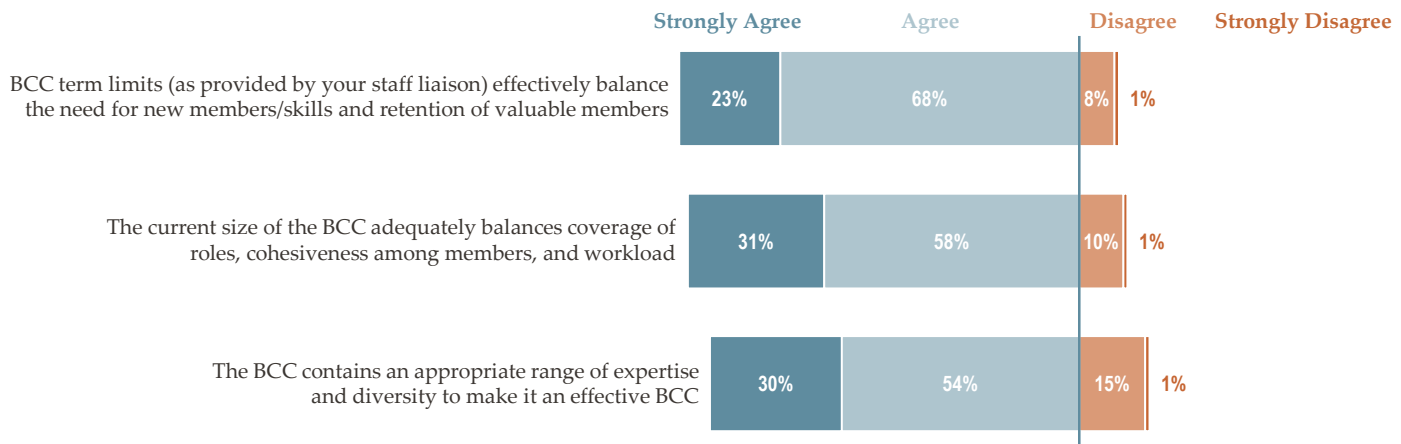
Culture of the BCCs

92% or more of BCC members **Strongly Agree** or **Agree** that the culture of their BCC is strong.



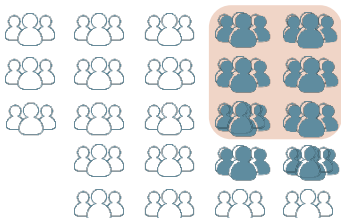
Composition/Structure of the BCCs

91% of BCC members **Strongly Agree** or **Agree** that term limits are effective for board functioning. 89% of members **Strongly Agree** or **Agree** that the current size of their BCC is adequate.



Collaboration

According to their staff liaisons, 8 of 23 BCCs collaborate with other BCCs.



At least one member from **6 of these 8** BCCs report being unaware of any collaboration. **5 of these 6** BCCs do not appear to have an orientation process based on member responses.

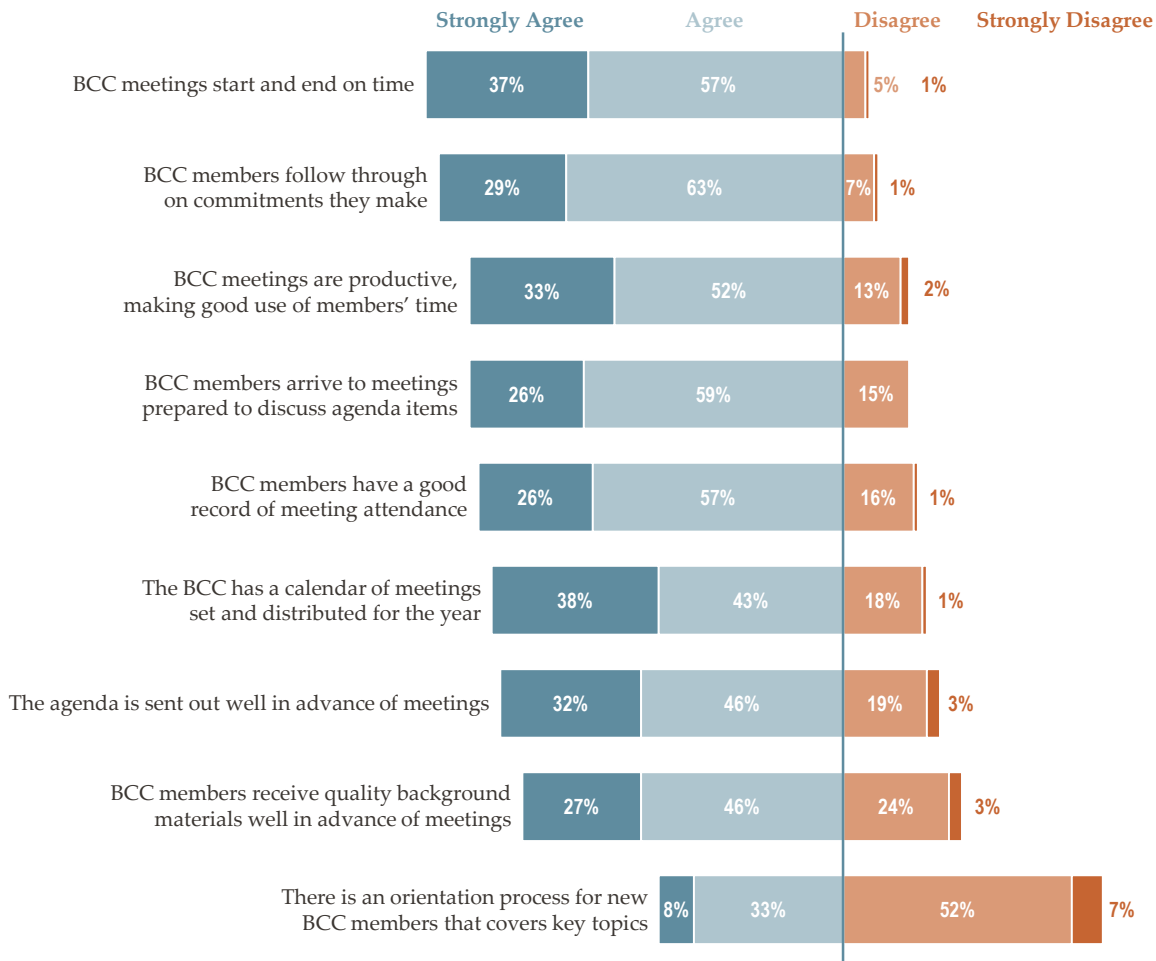
“There needs to be better direction from council and improved communication between council and the BCCs” (4 similar comments).

The Results (cont.)

Processes/Procedures of the BCCs

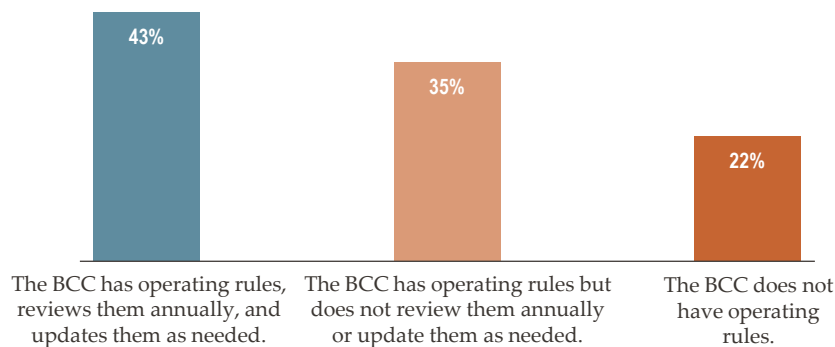
Overall, BCC members report that their BCCs function effectively with respect to most processes and procedures. However, 59% of members **Strongly Disagree** or **Disagree** that there is an orientation process for new members.

27% of BCC members **Strongly Disagree** or **Disagree** that they receive quality background materials well in advance of meetings.



Operating Rules

43% of BCCs have operating rules, review them annually, and update them as needed.



Strengths

Mission

88% of BCC members Strongly Agree or Agree that their BCC’s current mission is still aligned with the original intent/purpose.

Culture

92% or more of BCC members Strongly Agree or Agree that their BCC’s culture is strong with members able to work professionally, resolve conflicts, communicate honestly, and value individual contributions.

Size and Term Limits

89% of BCC members Strongly Agree or Agree that their BCC’s size balances coverage of roles, cohesiveness, and workload. 91% of BCC members Strongly Agree or Agree that term limits are an effective tool for creating balance.

Productivity and Commitment

85% or more of BCC members Strongly Agree or Agree that meetings are productive, with individuals prepared to discuss agenda items and following through on commitments they make.



Opportunities to Improve – Citywide BCC opportunities

Consider evaluating the process of appointments/reappointments to BCCs.

16% of BCC members Strongly Disagree or Disagree that their BCC contains an appropriate range of expertise and diversity to make it effective. As part of the evaluation process, consider a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) lens; which might examine language, identify affinity bias and how diversity is communicated when recruiting, referring or identifying appointments. This can also be applied to the application process and life cycle in its entirety (i.e. how applicants are reviewed, their experience of the interview and how formal appointments are determined).

Consider holding a training session(s) for existing BCC members.

16% of BCC members Strongly Disagree or Disagree that their BCC has a common understanding of the City’s Vision and Mission. Furthermore, 26% of BCC members Strongly Disagree or Disagree that all major policy/strategy discussions include explicit consideration of fit with the City of Holland’s Vision and Mission. As part of the proposed training session consider including the following topics: The City of Holland’s Vision and Mission, the City’s Strategic Plan & Business Plan, how DEI supports or informs the City of Holland’s Strategic Plan & Business Plan, communication between City Council and BCCs, and the importance of an orientation process for new BCC members.

Consider defining the role of City Council liaisons to BCCs in communicating the City’s Vision & Mission, as well as the Strategic Plan & Business Plan to BCCs.

Several BCC members commented that the City of Holland’s Vision and Mission statements are too nebulous to provide direction to many of the BCCs. This may explain why 16% of BCC members Strongly Disagree or Disagree that their BCC has a common understanding of the City’s Vision and Mission as well as why 26% of BCC members Strongly Disagree or Disagree that all major policy/strategy discussions include explicit consideration of fit with the City of Holland’s Vision and Mission.



Opportunities to Improve – Individual BCC opportunities



Consider reviewing your BCC's individual data report as well as the other opportunities included on this page.

As part of this review, consider the following questions: In which areas can your BCC improve (e.g. mission, goals, DEI, processes and procedures)? Would your BCC benefit from collaborating with other BCCs?

Consider examining your BCC's mission.

52% of members indicate that their BCC is actively working to fulfill its mission/purpose and has fulfilled/completed its mission/purpose. These conflicting responses may be an indication that the BCC's mission/purpose is unclear and/or that the survey questions required further clarity. In addition, 27% of members Strongly Agree or Agree that their BCC is asked to assist with projects outside its scope. As part of the examination process, consider revisiting the original intent/purpose of the BCC, setting the mission/purpose of the BCC to advance the City's Strategic Plan & Business Plan, clearly defining the scope of the BCC, as well as considering how your BCC's mission relates to DEI efforts.

Consider setting annual goals for your BCC that align with the goals of the City.

48% of BCCs included in this report do not set annual goals. 17% of BCC members report they Strongly Disagree or Disagree about seeing a clear linkage to the City of Holland's goals/priorities. While setting annual goals, consider adding goals that advance the City's Strategic Plan & Business Plan as well as measure impact around DEI.

Consider implementing an orientation process for all new BCC members.

59% of BCC members Strongly Disagree or Disagree that their BCC has an orientation process for new members that covers key topics. 16% of BCC members Strongly Disagree or Disagree that their BCC has a common understanding of the City's Vision and Mission. Furthermore, 26% of BCC members Strongly Disagree or Disagree that all major policy/strategy discussions include explicit consideration of fit with the City of Holland's Vision and Mission. As part of the orientation process, consider including the following topics: City of Holland's Vision and Mission, City's Strategic Plan & Business Plan, DEI, inclusive leadership, implicit bias in policy, programming, strategy and decision-making processes, communication between City Council and BCCs, specifics about the BCC (e.g. mission, goals, processes and procedures).

Consider evaluating your BCC's meeting schedule, distribution of materials, and attendance protocols.

19% or more of BCC members Strongly Disagree or Disagree that a calendar of meetings is set/distributed for the year as well as that agenda and background materials are sent out well in advance of meetings. In addition, 17% of BCC members Strongly Disagree or Disagree that members have a good record of meeting attendance.

Consider creating operating rules for your BCC as well as reviewing them annually and updating them as needed.

22% of BCCs do not have operating rules such as bylaws. In addition, 35% of BCCs have operating rules but do not review them annually or update them as needed. Consider ensuring current or new operating rules/bylaws are inclusive, both in language and accessibility for all.