

CANADIAN PURPOSE GOVERNANCE EDUCATION

Introduction

Purpose governance is increasingly being integrated into Canada's leading governance education programs.

Governance education shapes how boards and governance professionals understand their roles and responsibilities and helps establish standards for effective corporate governance. Boards and their advisors can now access practical training and resources to embed purpose into boardroom practice, driving long-term value creation for the business and society.

Over 2023–2026, the Canadian Purpose Economy Project (CPEP) partnered with five leading governance education and professional organizations – Governance Professionals of Canada (GPC), Chartered Governance Institute of Canada (CGIC), The Directors College, Canadian Bar Association In-House Lawyers, and Competent Boards – to integrate purpose governance into director and governance professional education across Canada.

The Purpose Governance Collaboration resulted in a number of joint initiatives, including:

- Endorsement of the [Purpose Governance Guidelines](#) in principle, signaling support for their integration into governance education
- Research into the [State of Purpose Governance in Canada](#) (2024)
- Two collaborative webinars involving all five organizations, approved for professional development credits by GPC, Law Societies across Canada, and CGIC:
 - [What is the State of Purpose Governance in Canada?](#) (2024) (Login required – free account)
 - [Purpose in the Boardroom: Lessons from Canada's Top Companies and Governance Leaders](#) (2025) (Login required – free account)

The *State of Purpose Governance in Canada* report identified several knowledge gaps among directors and corporate secretaries, highlighting the need for strengthened education. These gaps include how boards embed purpose into strategy, risk oversight, culture, metrics, and disclosure.

The following sections outline how the participating organizations, along with the Institute of Corporate Directors (ICD) and ISO 37000 Certification Training, are incorporating aspects of purpose governance into governance education, events, and resources.

Purpose Governance Education in Canadian Governance Organizations

Governance Professionals of Canada

The Governance Professionals of Canada (GPC) is a national association representing governance professionals across public, private, crown, and not-for-profit sectors in Canada. GPC offers professional education and credentialing programs designed to strengthen governance leadership and practice.

Governance Professionals of Canada Designation (GPC.D)

GPC offers the Governance Professionals of Canada Education Program (GPC-EP), including the Governance in Practice Program leading to the Governance Professionals of Canada Designation (GPC.D). The program enhances governance professionals' skills through three 2.5-day courses: *Foundations of Governance*, *Applied Governance*, and *Strategic Governance*.

In 2026, GPC updated its course materials to integrate purpose governance across all of its modules, including:

Purpose Governance

Purpose governance refers to the board of directors' formal role in overseeing and stewarding the company's organizational purpose – why it exists and the value it delivers to society beyond profit.

- Foundations of Governance: Establishes organizational purpose as the foundation of corporate governance, shaping the structures, processes, oversight, and decision-making through which value is created.
- Strategic Governance and Ethics: Positions purpose and values as the foundation for ethical decision-making and behaviour across the organization.
- Board Strategy: Frames advancing the organization's purpose, mission, or mandate as a core responsibility of the board, demonstrating how purpose informs vision, strategy, strategic planning, and long-term organizational sustainability.
- Risk Management: Distinguishes ESG risk from social purpose risk, explains how to embed purpose into corporate strategy, and demonstrates how purpose risk management can address corporate risks, risks to fulfilling the organization's purpose, and risks arising from the organization's purpose.
- Governance and Participation: Identifies purpose and values alignment as a leading indicator of decision integrity.
- ESG, Purpose and the Role of the Board: Defines purpose and social purpose, distinguishes them from mission and vision, and provides guidance on board oversight of purpose.

Ivey-GPC Governance Leadership Program

In 2026, GPC collaborated with Ivey Business School at Western University to launch the *Ivey-GPC Governance Leadership Program* for senior-level governance professionals. The Program includes a module on purpose governance, using a case study approach to explore how boards and management operationalize purpose within organizations.

Conferences

GPC's Annual Corporate Governance Conference has featured purpose governance discussions every year since 2020. Recent examples include:

- *Purpose-Led Governance: The Critical Role of Governance Professionals in Turbulent Times (2025)*
- *Purpose at the Top: Board Oversight, Accountability, and Impact (2026)*

Courses

GPC periodically offers courses that include an embedded focus on purpose governance or are explicitly dedicated to it. Examples:

- *Governing with Purpose: Insights for Credit Unions and Co-operatives*, featured at GPC's 2025 Co-op and Credit Union Governance Summit
- *Purpose and Stakeholder Oversight: New Frontiers in Governance*, offered in 2024 as part of GPC's ESG Certification program.
- *Purpose-Driven Governance*, delivered as part of the 2026 Ivey-GPC Governance Leadership Program

Library Resources

GPC's members-only library includes publications and guidance on purpose governance, such as:

- [TSX 60 Social Purpose Report Card](#)
- [State of Purpose Governance Amongst the TSX 60](#)
- [Purpose Governance Guidelines for Boards](#)
- [Purpose and Stakeholder Governance Best Practices: Literature Review and Guidance on the Board's Role in Purpose and Stakeholder Oversight](#)
- [Enhancing Risk Management Practices: A How-to Guide for Social Purpose Companies](#)

Podcasts

GPC has hosted members-only podcasts on purpose governance, including:

- [Introduction to Purpose Governance](#) (2022) (downloaded 172 times)
- [Stakeholders and Purpose: A New Governance Era](#) (2024) (downloaded 176 times)

Publications

GPC published a number of reports distilling insights from GPC conference panel discussions focused on purpose including:

- [Purpose Governance: A New Role for Boards, 2020](#)
- [Purpose Governance: The Role of the Board in Developing and Overseeing the Purpose of the Organization, 2021](#)
- [The Purpose Imperative: Why and How Boards are Embracing Purpose Governance to Drive Value, 2022](#)

Annual Governance Survey

GPC's annual *Corporate Governance Best Practices Report* has included questions on purpose governance practices every year since 2022. The survey provides insights into adoption trends and emerging practices in Canadian boardrooms, including approaches to purpose governance. The report is available to GPC members only.

Purpose Governance Award

GPC includes purpose governance in its Sustainability/ESG and Purpose Award in the annual Excellence in Governance Awards. Award criteria cover:

- Board adoption and oversight of corporate purpose
- Committee purpose roles
- Purpose in executive incentive plans and performance objectives
- Succession planning
- Corporate strategy and governance policies

To date, no organization has received the award for purpose governance practices, reflecting the emerging nature of this field in Canada. The awards program is currently being refreshed, with awards expected to resume in 2027.

Chapter Meetings

In 2025 GPC's BC Chapter hosted a discussion on *Defining Our Value: The Evolving Role and Influence of the Governance Professional*, which highlighted purpose governance and purpose disclosures.

Chartered Governance Institute of Canada

The Chartered Governance Institute of Canada (CGIC) is the Canadian division of The Chartered Governance Institute and is a professional organization that supports governance professionals, corporate secretaries, directors, and organizational leaders across Canada through education, credentialing, and professional development.

Directors' Education and Accreditation Program

The **Accredited Director (Acc.Dir.)** designation is earned through CGIC's Directors' Education and Accreditation Program (DEAP), an intensive three-day program that equips current and aspiring board directors with the competencies required for effective governance, financial oversight, and strategic and risk leadership.

A defining feature of DEAP is its explicit integration of **purpose governance** – not as an abstract concept, but as a practical governance discipline that informs board decision-making, strategy, and oversight.

Across the curriculum, participants learn how organizational purpose anchors long-term value creation, strengthens resilience, and builds stakeholder trust. The program examines how purpose interacts with mission, vision, values, strategy, and risk, and how boards use purpose to guide organizational direction, performance, and culture.

In the **Governance for Directors** module, participants explore purpose as a foundational governance principle, drawing on the *ISO 37000 Guidelines for the Governance of Organizations*. The module demonstrates how purpose establishes a social licence to operate, shapes ethical behaviour, and supports sustainable performance in complex environments.

In the **Strategy and Risk for Directors** module, participants examine purpose as a catalyst for strategy – understanding how a clearly articulated social purpose strengthens strategic coherence, informs risk oversight,

and enhances organizational adaptability. The module reinforces how purpose should be embedded in guiding statements and used to align strategic choices with stakeholder expectations.

To deepen learning, DEAP participants also receive curated supplementary resources that extend their understanding of purpose governance and its application in contemporary board practice.

CGI Global International Qualifying Programme

The **Chartered Governance Professional** and **Chartered Secretary (ACG, FCG)** designations are earned through the International Qualifying Programme (IQP), a globally recognised pathway that equips governance professionals to advise boards, safeguard organisational integrity, and support high-quality decision making across all sectors.

In **2027**, a fully modernised IQP syllabus will launch – designed to meet the governance challenges of the next decade. The new programme strengthens the integration of **purpose governance** across all modules, ensuring alignment with global governance standards, emerging regulatory expectations, and the evolving realities of digital, social, and sustainability-driven transformation.

The modernised curriculum teaches learners how to align an organisation's reason for existing with its governance structures, strategy, values, culture, risk appetite, and accountability to shareholders and stakeholders. Purpose is treated as a practical organising principle that shapes board decision making, resource allocation, and long-term value creation. Students learn how purpose informs governing body duties, governance frameworks, strategic objectives, and assessments of ethical, responsible, and sustainable conduct.

Purpose governance is woven throughout the new syllabus:

- **Governance, Sustainability and Value Creation module:** Learners explore how governance enables long-term success, resilience, market confidence, and stakeholder accountability – and how boards align strategy with purpose while considering environmental, social, and economic impacts.
- **Boardroom Dynamics and Effectiveness module:** Learners examine the board's role in defining purpose, values, and long-term vision, and in ensuring that strategy, risk appetite, executive performance, remuneration, and culture remain aligned with that purpose.
- **Legal and Regulatory Frameworks module:** Content reinforces that purpose must operate within directors' duties, disclosure obligations, shareholder rights, and stakeholder protections.
- **Resources, Reporting and Assurance module:** Demonstrates how purpose is evidenced through credible disclosures, integrated thinking, sustainability reporting, and transparent performance measures.

A distinctive strength of the modernised IQP is its treatment of purpose governance as both a **board responsibility** and a **professional practice**. Learners examine how governance professionals and company secretaries translate purpose into board mandates, committee terms of reference, codes of ethics, stakeholder engagement processes, risk registers, reporting controls, and meeting practices. This includes advising on whether strategic proposals align with organisational purpose, surfacing material stakeholder interests and conflicts of interest, and supporting board and committee processes that produce clear, well-documented, and accountable decisions.

The programme's global framework and localised delivery further enhance purpose governance capability. Core content establishes a common international standard, while localisation enables Divisions to apply purpose governance within different legal systems, ownership models, cultures, and regulatory environments. Learners come to understand that purpose must be meaningful in context – reflected in how an organisation balances shareholder and stakeholder interests, manages sustainability and resilience risks, uses data and digital technology responsibly, communicates with investors and communities, and demonstrates accountability through reporting and assurance.

Through this integrated, future-ready approach, the modernised IQP prepares governance professionals to help boards move beyond compliance and toward purposeful, ethical, and sustainable governance practice.

Other Educational Offerings

CGIC continues to monitor emerging governance trends and evolving governance frameworks to ensure its educational offerings remain current, globally aligned, and professionally rigorous. As part of this work, CGIC is

preparing to integrate concepts from *ISO 37000: Governance of Organizations* into upcoming educational and professional development offerings. ISO 37000 identifies purpose as a foundational governance principle and provides guidance on the relationship between purpose, strategy, culture, stakeholder interests, and long-term value creation.

CGIC is also advancing a **modernized education and credentialing portfolio** that will support governance professionals and directors throughout their careers. New and emerging topics – including purpose governance, stakeholder governance, organizational culture, and long-term value creation – are being incorporated into forthcoming professional development offerings and evolving credential pathways. These enhancements will begin rolling out as part of CGIC's next phase of educational modernization.

The Directors College

The Directors College at the DeGroote School of Business (McMaster University) offers the university-accredited designation of Chartered Director (C.Dir.), a comprehensive certification for current and aspiring board directors of public and private companies, not-for-profit organizations and crown corporations. The program is delivered through an intensive multi-module course that equips participants with essential knowledge in governance, strategic leadership, and risk-informed decision-making, along with the tools to read and interpret financial statements and other key performance information for effective board oversight.

Directors Code of Conduct

The *Directors College Code of Ethical Conduct* is a code for all directors that provides guidance on fulfilling their fiduciary and ethical responsibilities. In 2025 it was updated to integrate explicit references to purpose, emphasizing that directors' ethical judgment and fiduciary oversight should ensure that board decisions, strategy, and culture advance the organization's purpose as part of their duty to act with integrity and in the public interest.

Director Certification

The Chartered Director Program introduces participants to purpose governance across several modules, including board roles and responsibilities, strategy, sustainability and ethics.

The *Leadership and Strategy* module was updated to explicitly position purpose as an essential framework for the board's strategic deliberations and monitoring, thereby shaping how the board defines, approves, and tracks organizational strategy and success. This update anchored purpose as a core consideration throughout the board's leadership role in strategy development and oversight. The reading list for this module includes the [TSX 60 Social Purpose Report Card](#), which has a section detailing how nine boards provide oversight of purpose.

The *Effective Board: Roles, Responsibilities, Accountabilities and Culture* module was updated to explicitly position purpose as central to board duties, oversight, and culture. This update anchors purpose in directors' fiduciary and ethical responsibilities, guiding supervision of management, board composition, decision-making, and stakeholder engagement, ensuring that board actions, values, and performance consistently reflect the organization's purpose. The reading list for this module includes [Charting the Future of Canadian Governance](#), a report that repeatedly calls on boards to align strategy with purpose, approve adjustments to purpose, ensure resource allocation supports purpose, oversee metrics that measure purpose, and ensure disclosure reflects whether the company is delivering on purpose.

The *Environmental, Social, and Governance Imperative* module introduces purpose governance as an emerging governance trend, and introduces the concept of social purpose, which is a purpose to create a better world. It positions purpose as a central framework for organizational oversight, clarifies how it differs from mission and vision and highlights key governance questions for embedding purpose in the strategy, culture and CEO responsibilities. The reading list for this module also includes the [TSX 60 Social Purpose Report Card](#), which has a section detailing how nine boards provide oversight of purpose.

The *Ethical Imperative* module references the *Directors College Code of Ethical Conduct* and the purpose elements within it, particularly: Discernment: Critical thinking and purpose alignment; Decision: Challenge group think, focus on shared purpose; Due Diligence: Influence follow up, check outcomes against purpose. The group exercise

encourages participants to consider how decisions align with the purpose. One of the course readings presents purpose as a core element of corporate integrity, requiring organizations to pursue a “worthwhile” purpose that guides decisions, shapes relationships, and aligns corporate conduct with civic norms and the broader public interest.

Canadian Bar Association In-House Lawyers

The Canadian Bar Association (CBA) In-House Lawyers is a national professional association representing corporate counsel across Canada and provides professional development on emerging governance and legal issues. As part of its accredited continuing professional development offerings, the organization has introduced programming on purpose governance for general counsel:

In 2024, it presented the webinar [*The Rise of Purpose Governance in Canada: What is the Role of Boards and General Counsel?*](#), which explored the responsibilities of directors and legal counsel in embedding organizational purpose into governance structures and decision-making. In 2025, it followed with [*Embedding Purpose in Corporate Governance: A Panel Discussion with In-House Counsel*](#), offering practical insights on how in-house lawyers can help boards and executives integrate purpose into oversight, strategy, and corporate governance practices.

Both webinars, along with the report [*State of Purpose Governance in Canada*](#), are now available as on-demand resources for students in the self-paced online modules of the Certified In-House Counsel (CIC.C) designation offered through the CBA's *Business Leadership Program for In-House Counsel*. The recordings qualify for 1 hour of CPD by Law Societies across Canada.

Competent Boards

Competent Boards, now part of Board Intelligence, is a global professional organization based in Canada that enhances boardroom effectiveness through specialized education in environmental, social, and governance (ESG) matters. It offers comprehensive training programs, including the Global Competent Boards Designation (GCB.D), designed to equip board directors, senior executives, investors, and advisors with the skills needed to navigate complex sustainability challenges and opportunities.

Purpose is a central theme throughout the GCB.D program, with participants guided to embed their organization's purpose into board deliberations, strategic decisions, and organizational culture, ensuring that purpose drives sustainable performance and long-term impact.

Institute of Corporate Directors

The Institute of Corporate Directors (ICD) is a national organization that supports directors and boards across Canada through education, resources, and professional development. It offers the Directors Education Program (DEP), an intensive multi-module program delivered in partnership with Canadian business schools, that equips current and aspiring board directors with essential knowledge in governance, financial reporting, and strategy and risk management. The program leads to the ICD.D designation. The ICD also participates in the Global Network of Director Institutes, connecting Canadian directors with governance peers and learning from institutes around the world.

The Directors Education Program addresses the social purpose of organizations in two of its sessions, introducing the concept and its relevance for boards, reinforcing that it is an ongoing board responsibility and should be on their agenda on a regular basis. The program also includes information on the Canadian Purpose Economy Project as a resource for further learning.

ISO 37000 Certification Training

FluidRock Governance Academy offers ISO 37000 Certification Training, the only globally accredited training program on ISO 37000 *Governance of Organizations*. The program is available to Canadian governance professionals and is based on the first international standard on organizational governance released by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The Standard consists of 11 principles that reflect the latest thought leadership on governance and provides an international benchmark for putting purpose at the centre of governance to direct organizations ethically, responsibly, and effectively.

As purpose is the core principle within the Standard, the course explores what purpose means to an organization in terms of the positive impact it creates and its relationship to other principles, including strategy, stakeholder governance, and sustainability. It also examines the relationship between a clearly defined purpose and corporate culture, values, behaviours, and the long-term viability of the organization.

About the Canadian Purpose Economy Project

The Canadian Purpose Economy Project exists to accelerate the transition to the purpose economy. It engages national ecosystem actors to enable social purpose businesses to start, transition, thrive, and grow. The Project convenes, connects, and collaborates to advance social purpose business in Canada and support an economy where purpose is embedded in strategy, decision-making, and long-term value creation.

The Canadian Purpose Economy Project is a project of the Canadian Business for Social Responsibility Education Foundation. Coast Capital is the Founding Purpose Champion. Sign up for our newsletters at: purposeeconomy.ca.