Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society

Governance Policy (2021)

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Update History

No	History	Date	Major Changes	Remarks
1	Policy Initiated	July 2020		
2	Policy Reviewed	June 2021		**The policy was reviewed by ACBAR Twinning Program**
3	Next update	May 2022		

Acknowledgement:

This material was adopted as per the context where STARS performance and also as per the STARS objectives, program and projects. The policy is kept updated as per the progress made at the global and local level where appropriate and where needed.

Following approval by the board of directors of STARS the policy will be oriented, training will be provided where deemed necessary and implemented within the organization and also integrate with project implementations.

Introduction

The Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society (STARS) established in 1997 as a charitable, voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit and non-political charity, to attract humanitarian aids from national and international sources, and Reaching out to the Afghan community in emergencies, the matter of reconstruction and development without any prejudice. STARS works in full compliance with the provisions of the Constitution, NGOs law, and other applicable laws of the country and respects the United Nations Charter and the Convention on Human Rights and International Law.
STARS has a distinctive logo and symbol that it uses to carry out its activities and goals. The STARS logo is shaped like a blue and white circle and contains the establish year with five stars in yellow and stands for the English Language Institute (STARS).

Overview:

STRAS Governance policy will provide guidelines for governance process based on STARS principles, values, mandates and by-laws and also explains the democratic process for governing and leading the organization.

The STARS governance is composed of the following main elements:

1. Principles and Values (Principles, By-laws, Vision, Mission, and Strategic Objectives)
2. Leadership (General Assembly and Board of Trustees)
3. Management (Management Committee and Employees)

Principles and Values:

The STARS governance is based on the following principles and will ensure that the governance will result the achievement of these principles

Accountability:

- ✓ **Upward Accountability:** STARS is being accountable to funders, donors and government institutions. And answerable to donors and funders about how STARS will be utilizing their money.
- ✓ **Horizontal Accountability:** STARS is accountable for partners, peers, and related organizations to ensure enhancing partnerships and collaborations with other organizations and stakeholders.
- ✓ **Downward Accountability:** STARS as NGO is responsible for its beneficiaries and the target audience. By receiving funds from a donor for the upliftment and improvement of the lives of these beneficiaries and therefore to them. Along with being accountable to them STARS also involving them with the project implementation.

- ✓ **Internal Accountability:** Besides all these STARS is also accountable to its employees, organization mission and it means STARS have ethical standards and governance structures with justifying organization core values.

In addition, STARS focus is on; ensuring where the management is accountable to board? The board is accountable to stakeholders? And overall accountability for actions and use of resources to donors, legal authority, employees.

Integrity:

STARS is a non-profit, Non-Governmental, Organized, Voluntary, Independent and Self Governing organization.

Transparency:

STARS Governance will provide open leadership, Ensure timely and accurate disclosure on financial situation, performance, stewardship, and governance. And being *open and honest* toward the organization vision and mission, as well as towards financial transparency, quality of projects, staffing, utilizing the resources along with the donor goals and objectives.

Fairness:

STARS is committed to protect stakeholder's rights, treat all stakeholders equitably and provide redress for violations.

Responsibility:

STARS is committed to recognize stakeholders' rights, encourage cooperation in meeting NGO goals, ensure leadership is capable, responsible, representative, conscious of its obligations and ensure effectiveness and efficiency in the use of resources and in getting results.

Constitution

i. Mandates

- Child protection
- Women Empowerment

ii. Vision

Economically empowered society, especially the marginalized women who are the front-most vulnerable group of our society

iii. Mission

Supporting the vulnerable groups of the society especially the women leading to self-reliance through skills development, income-generating activities and public utility

Licensing and certification

Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society established in April 1997 and is registered with the Ministry of Planning as an Afghan Non-Governmental organization on 11/28/2002 or 10/21/2002 with a register number of 874.

STARS is registered with the Ministry of Economy and with following Afghanistan government ministries and other national and international networks such as:

- ✓ Women's Affairs,
- ✓ Public Health,
- ✓ Agriculture, Rural Rehabilitation Development
- ✓ MOLSA with close coordination and some other government provincial departments.
- ✓ STARS is a member of
- ✓ ACBAR
- ✓ Afghan Women Network (AWN)
- ✓ Child Protection Action Network (CPAN)
- ✓ Civil Society Empowerment Network (CEN) at the national level

STARS is the only female organization focusing on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and is an active member of the Asian Disaster Risk Reduction and Response Network (ADRRN) since 2006 at the international level.

In addition, STARS is the co-chair of the National Action Coordination Group (NACG) in Afghanistan since 2011.

STARS attended many South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC) meetings which are Apex body of SAARC.

Tax Requirement

STARS is Tax exempt, the letter stating that is obtained from the Afghanistan Government Finance Ministry, this letter is issued due to the NGO License obtained from ministry of Economy.

Tax

As per the law all NGOs has to pay income taxes of the relevant performances and activities, therefore STARS cuts and retains those taxes and deposits them to Afghanistan Government Treasury.

Obligation

STARS has obligation to report its activities on each 6 months to the Ministry of Economic.

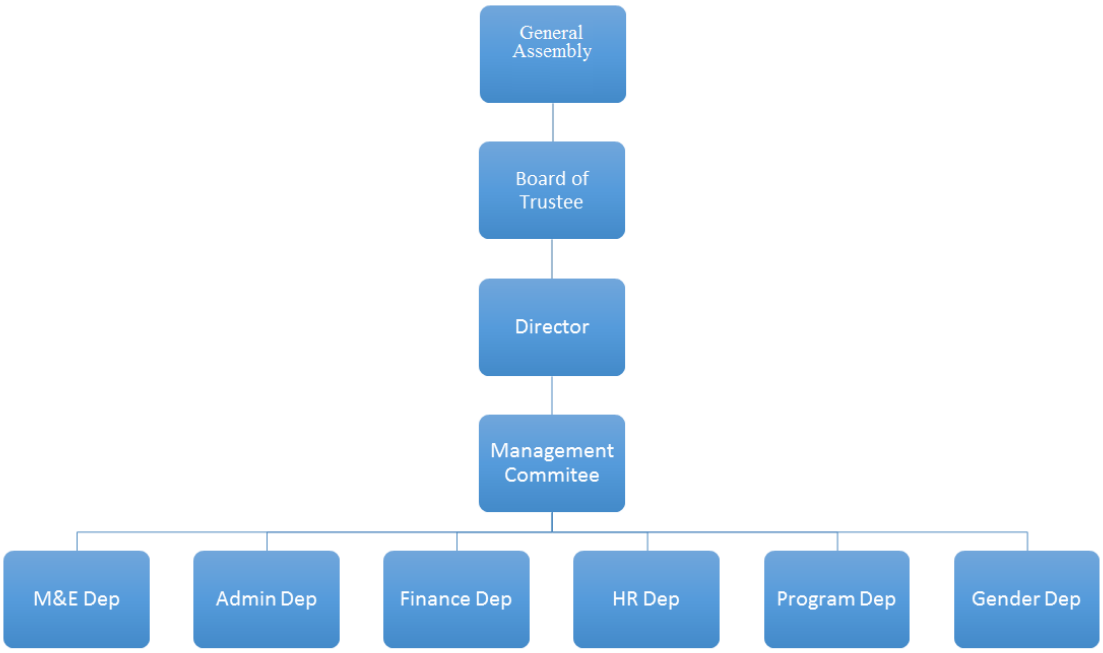
Offices

STARS main office is located in Pul-e-Surkh, Square,in front of Mohibzada center, House # 1676, Kabul, Afghanistan.
STARS will establish the offices on provinces based on the project duration.

Summary of code of conducts

The personal behavior of staff will not bring discredit to the Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society, to the work performed by the Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society or to fellow staff members.
Staff will protect and enhance the dignity and integrity of their work and the Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society Staff will distinguish clearly between statements and actions made as a private individual and as a representative of the Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society Staff will not exploit work relationships for professional gain or profit.
Staff will not exploit clients/customers for personal advantage, nor solicit attendees of the Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society for activities resulting in personal gain.
Staff will not practice, condone, facilitate or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status or other conditions or status.

Organizational Structure



General Assembly

The General Assembly of the Institute is the highest decision-making authority in the Institute (organization), consisting of members of the Board of Directors, the Management Committee (key members) of the organization, and representatives of the relevant Sectors Offices and Ministry of Economy at the General Assembly meetings, along with current and previous employees how have experience of 6 months working with STARS as observers.

Responsibilities:

- ✓ Listening to the report of the Board of Directors and the Management Committee of the NGO during its project activities and its revenues and expenditures.
- ✓ Making a decision on amendments to the Article of Association of the NGO.
- ✓ Approve the change on personality, dissolve, change in the name, and establishing the NGO's sub Office.
- ✓ Decisions on other items of the agenda which will discuss in the General Assembly.
- ✓ Attendance by each member of the board at least one time in three years.
- ✓ Keeping in touch with other members of the board, either officially or informally, throughout the year.
- ✓ The Board of Directors may invite representatives of the local community and funding authorities in its assemblies to comment and consult.
- ✓ Recommend the proposals and project requests for funding reference.

Authorities

- ✓ Approving the hiring of the auditors to inspect the year's financial reports.
- ✓ Approve the Institute's finances and work plan one month before the start of the fiscal year (January 31-December 31).
- ✓ Approve the NGO's annual budget and work plan.
- ✓ Modifying the Article of Association, the organizational structure, and creating procedures for the general assembly itself.
- ✓ Select and nominate proposed members of the Board of Directors.
- ✓ Revision and approval of the annual financial report.

Board of Directors

General Description of Board of Directors

The board of directors of STARS has the fundamental responsibility of providing oversight for the organization's fulfillment of its mission to the community. To this end, the board sets direction for the agency, provides financial oversight, establishes policy, and supports the agency's generation of adequate resources to carry out its mission.

This policy and practice manuals is designed to facilitate active and accountable governance at the STARS, as well as compliance with applicable legal requirement.

Role and function of the Board of Directors

- The Board of Directors of the Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society leads STARS in fulfilling its mission “ “

Core Function of the Board of Directors:

a. Fundraising and Development:
b. Strategic planning and performance evaluation
c. Fiscal oversight
d. Selection and support of Executive leadership
e. Board development
f. Policy Development

Nomination and Election of Directors of the Board

Number of Board members and summary of board terms

Board Director Expectation

- ✓ Embrace and articulate the STARS mission, values and program strategy.
- ✓ Make a generous and meaningful personal contribution to STARS and fully participate in cultivation and fundraising activities.
- ✓ Serve as an advocate and ambassador for STARS for funding, employment opportunities, community relation and new partnership and program development.
- ✓ Fully participate in board meetings and strategy sessions.
- ✓ Participate in at least one board committee, through active attendance, preparation, timely and substantiate questions and analysis, and special project and tasks.
- ✓ Provide technical assistance to STARS staff in areas of professional expertise.

Board Director Nominations and Election

The Board plans and manages the Board recruitment process with support from the Executive Director. The identification and ultimate election of Directors is a several-step process, usually conducted on an annual basis, although the STARS bylaws allow for filling Directors vacancies at any time as needed.

Annual Assessment of Board Composition

- Returning Board Members – The Board of directors confirms that Board members whose first and second 2-year term is expiring intend to run for re-election to the board.
- Strategic Board Planning- The Board of Directors, on an annual basis assesses the skills, connections and affiliations of current board members and analyzes gaps and then sets priorities for Board recruitment, to support STARS mission and current strategic goals.

Identification of Board Nominees

- The Board of Directors seeks to identify prospective Board members from the community at large, who possess the desired qualification and appear to be promising Directors.

Board Recruitment and Interview Process

- The Board chair and the Executive Director develops a list of potential Directors nominees for recruitment and send the list to the Board for vetting before contacting potential nominees.
- Members of Board and the Executive Director contact potential nominees to assess initial interest.
- Interested Potential nominees are interviewed by the Board President or/ Chair, or another Board member, description of Board practice and committee structure, and ask about professional and community experience, as well as the candidates' motivation for Board participation and ways to contribute.
- Potential nominees may be invited to attend the annual Board strategy session or other board meetings, as a way of meeting Board members and management staff and gaining exposure to STARS strategic issues and ways that issues are addressed.

Process of Election

- The Board of Directors prepares the slate of nominees at least 1 week before the GA meeting, with brief biographical information about each nomine, the GA votes on the slate of nominees at the Board meeting for 2-year terms beginning (right after GA meeting)
- Newly elected Board members are informed of their election within one week of the GA meeting at which the election took place, in a letter that also confirms:
  a. Dated of Board term
  b. Dates and plans for new Board orientation
  c. Dates for Board meetings for fiscal year
  d. Name of Board partner
  e. Expectation of Board partner role

Board Vacancies and Removal

Vacancies

- ✓ A vacancy in board of directors cause by (i) an increase in the number of authorized Directors; (ii) a Director death, illness, resignation, removal, or declaration of a vacancy by the Board base on a courts adjudication of the Director (a) to be of unsound mind, (b) as convicted of a felony, may be filled at any regular or special meeting of the board at which a quorum is present a majority vote of the Directors in attendance at the meeting.

Nomination and Election Process of Board President / Chair

The Chair of the Board of Directors is elected by the board members. The President or the Chair is elected for a term of two years. Each elected president can serve for two consecutive terms if elected.

Meetings Quorum

Scheduling

There will be regular, decision making and emergency meetings during the year. General Assembly will be held once a year for overall head and field staff seniors including board members and chairman according to STARS Article of Association. The decision makingBoT meetingsneeds at least three members of the board participation and will be held once per year, it should be gender balanced, agenda will be send by STARS administration to all members at least two days before the meeting the meeting will be presented by Executive Director. Regular meetings needs but not limited to two members of the board as per need. Emergency meetings will be held upon any urgent need of the organization at top level which the existing of director and chairman is assumednecessary.

Use of Board Planning Calendar

As part of its Board planning function, the Executive director, develops an annual Board planning calendar. The calendar reflects all Board meetings and aspects of Board governance that are to be addressed at Board meetings, either as a matter of legal or regulatory requirement or in connection with STARS Bylaws policy. This tool enables the Executive director to anticipate the year's Board meetings and plan agendas, ensuring that all aspects of Board governance and relevant Board education will be addressed through the year.

Notice, Timing, Email

- Although Board meetings are pre-scheduled for the year, STARS staff sends reminder notice to the Board vie e-mail approximately one month before the scheduled meeting, to confirm, among other things, attendance and the presence of a quorum.
- STARS staff sends meeting agendas, with supporting material to the Board members via e-mail at least one week before the scheduled meetings. Agenda items requiring a Board vote are highlighted. Appendix sample of agenda

Participation via Telephone or Video Conferencing

Board members may participate in meetings via telephone or video conferencing or other electronic communication equipment, and be considered present at the meeting provided:

- All Directors participating can hear one another and communicate concurrently with all other Directors during the meeting; and
- Each Director is provided with or has the means of participating in all matters before the Board, including the capacity to propose or to object to, action to be taken by the Board.

Action of the Board: Simple Majority Vote

Except in the situation described below, the vote of a majority of the Directors present at a meeting at which a quorum is present constitutes the action of the Board.

Situations Requiring Other than Simple Majority Vote

- Actions by Written Consent – Actions may be taken by the Board without a meeting provided all Directors then serving give written consent to such action. The bylaws authorize written consent to be effected by email.
- Appointment to Committees of the Board – Directors may be appointed to Committees of the Board (i.e. committees with authority of the Board) by a vote of a majority of the directors then in office.
- Action by Committees of the Boar – In order for action by Committees of the Board to constitute actions of the Board, the vote must be by a vote of two-third (2/3) of all of the voting members of such Committee of the Board.
- Removal of Director Without Cause – Directors may be removed without cause only by a vote of a majority of all of the Directors then in office.
- Board Resolution – The Board any adopt resolutions that require a vote of more than a majority of the Directors.

Voting by Proxy

Each Director may vote by one or more agents authorized by written proxy, provided the proxy specifies the nature of the specific matter for which such proxy is give and is signed by the person giving the prox. A proxy is deemed signed if the Director or the Directors duly authorized attorney-in-fact manually signs the proxy, or it is typewritten and it is sent by facsimile transmission, electronically or otherwise.

Minutes, Time Frame, Approval Process, Access to Minutes

- STARS staff forwards minute of Board meetings to Board members within a week after the Board meeting. Annex sample

Types of meeting

a. **Regular meeting**
    i. **Time and Place.** The Board shall hold regular monthly meetings at a time and place fixed by resolution of the Board. Maximum 5 members and minimum 4 board member's attendance are compulsory, as mentioned above the meeting can be held physically or on line.
    ii. **Adjourned Meetings.** Regular meetings may be adjourned to a specific time and place before the day of the next regular meeting. A meeting may be adjourned by the vote of the majority of Board members present, even in the absence of a quorum. A published notice of the time and place of an adjourned meeting is not required. Matters included on the agenda of the regular meeting that is adjourned to a later date need not be republished. New matters to be considered at the adjourned meeting shall be published in the same manner as the agenda for a regular meeting.
b. **Decision making meeting**

In case of decision making, a maximum 5 and a minimum 4 board members attendance are necessary.

c. Emergency meeting

In case of actual emergency, the Chair Person of the Board or any two of the directors may call emergency meetings. Notice as is appropriate to the circumstances shall be given. The minutes of emergency meetings shall describe the nature of the emergency justifying less than 24 hours' notice. Maximum 5 members and minimum 3 members of the board attendance are compulsory.

Emails Constitute Writings

Any notice, consent, proxy or other action or for that is required to be in writing may be given, taken or made by email electronic transmission (email), Provided (i) any email sent to an officer or Director is addressed to the officer of Director at his or her email address as it is shown on STARS records for purposes of notice; (ii) the recipient has consented to the use of email, (iii) STARS has implement reasonable measure to verify that the sender is the Chair or Directors sending the message (such as requesting the Chair or Directors (board's members) to provide their email address) (iv) the email creates a record that is capable of retention, retrieval, and review, that may later be rendered into clearly legible, tangible form, and (v) the email is not otherwise prohibited.

Records, Reports, Inspections, Access to Staff

- In accordance with the STARS Bylaws, copies of the Articles of Association and the Bylaws, as well as amendments, are kept at the STARS office and are available for inspection by any member of the STARS Board, or his or her agent, at any reasonable time.
- Similarly, accounting records ad minutes of proceedings of the Board are kept at the STARS office or in other location if designated by the Board. The accounting records and minutes may be kept in written form or in a form readily converted into tangible records.
- Any member of the STARS Board, may inspect the books, records, documents and property of STARS at any reasonable time. Board members may also copy or make extract of documents
- Members of the STARTS Board receive an Audit Report within 120 days after the close of the fiscal year. The repot may be transmitted electronically and includes the following information;

Access to staff

Effective partnership between the STARS Board and management rest on close and open communication. STARS Executive DirectorParticipation in all Board meetings and Management Committee meetings. Other STARS managers participate as needed and when invited, for presentations and relevant discussions.

Members composition

STARS Board of Trustees is consisting of 5 members and they are all committed to working voluntarily with the STARS organization for a period of Three years (3) as a member of the Board of Trustees. The Chair Person shall be elected by the Board of Directors for a term of two (2) years. During this period, members of the Board of Trustees will not expect any financial support but the organization has an obligation to pay for the reimbursements. The criteria for the Board of Trustees selection are as follow:

General qualifications:

i. Candidate should attain a minimum of twenty-one (21) years of age.
ii. Candidate should be a college graduate or have equivalent experience (work or program).
iii. Will contribute to the financial health of the organization through direct or indirect contribution.
iv. Knowledge of or interest in supporting the mission and vision of the organization.
v. Prior nonprofit board experience is desirable.
vi. Relevant experience / qualifications to assist the Board in executing its goals in the short and/or long term.
vii. Be able to work successfully with the seated Board and organization.
viii. Must have the ability to fulfill the tasks of a Board of Trustees member as stated in the BoT job description.
ix. May not be directly related to a current BoT member (e.g. spouse, domestic partner, parent, sibling, in-laws).
x. Candidate may not have been convicted or have had a judgment declared against him or her in a legal, criminal or ethical action that would compromise his or her position as a Trustee or representative of the organization.

NOTE: In addition to the qualifications for Board membership listed above, for each election the Board may specify qualities or specific skill sets it currently seeks in Board members. These qualities, or skill sets, will be posted in addition to the general qualifications.

Board of Trustees member's CV (*Please refer to the Annex 1***)**

Members MoU or protocol(*Please refer to the Annex 2***)**

Meeting quorums

The maximum participants for the Board of Trustees meetings is 5 (All the board members) and the minim is 4 members.

Management Committee

The Management committee is composed of head of departments/managers.

The Management Committee of the NGO consists of the Director, Finance, Program, Gender, HR and Administration Officers.

Responsibilities

- ✓ Reporting to the Board of Trustees on the activities, income, and expenditures.
- ✓ Arrange the job description for the NGO's departments.
- ✓ Prepare a work plan for all members of the Management committee and relevant departments of the NGO.

- ✓ Meetings of the Management Committee shall be convened once a month by the director of the NGO, in which the responsible members present their Executive Reports.
- ✓ Organizing meetings of the General Assembly.
- ✓ Implementation of all tasks, decisions, and resolutions of the General Assembly and the Board of Trustees.
- ✓ Approve of work plan and its implementation in a timely manner.

Conflict of Interest

None of the member of **STARS** Board of Trusteesor Staff shall derive any personal profit or gain, directly or indirectly, by reason of his or her participation with **STARS**. This shall also include the member's business or other nonprofit affiliations, family and/or significant other, employer, or close associates who may stand to receive a benefit or gain.The Head Deputies, Financial and Administrative Officer of the NGO may not be members of the same family. Each individual member of the Board of Trustees shall disclose to the Board Chair any actual or possible conflict ofinterests which he or she may have in any matter in relation to organization activities/formats. The chair and the board will make a decision about the level of conflict and the follow up process until that time he/she or the member associated with the conflict shall refrain from participation in any discussion or decision on such matter.
In addition, any member of **STAR'S** Board of Trusteesor Staff shall refrain from obtaining any list of clients or donors for personal or private solicitation purposes at any time during the term of their affiliation.

Any new member of the Board of Trusteesshall be given this policy at the time of their election onto the Board of Directors and the policy will be reviewed annually by the board at a regularly scheduled meeting.

We understand that the purposes of this policy are to protect the integrity of **STARS** and the organization's decision-making process as well as to enable our constituencies to have confidence in the integrity, intentions and actions of the officers, staff, board members and volunteers.

Annex .1

STARS Board Members MoU

As a member of the Board ofTrusteeof STARS, I Son/Daughter of Current employee of as a have legal and ethical responsibility to ensure that the organization does the best work possible in pursuit of its goals. I support the purpose and mission of the organization and pledge my commitment to assist in carrying out itswork.

As a board member, I will consistently act responsibly and prudently. I understand my duties to include:

1. Legal, fiscal and moral responsibility, along with my fellow board members, for the well-being of this organization. As such, it is my responsibilityto:

- ✓ Provide sustained advice to the Director and other members of the Management Committee for the purpose of fulfilling the decisions of the General Assembly and improving the performance of the NGO.
- ✓ Review the NGO's six-month and annual financial affairs (revenues and expenditures).
- ✓ Managing the request of staff at the NGO.
- ✓ Search for ways to get funds and funding the projects being surveyed.
- ✓ Provide communication with the coordination offices, civil society organizations, and government departments.
- ✓ Submit proposes to the General Assembly for amendments in the article of association.
- ✓ Approval of the Supervisory description proposed by the Management committee.
- ✓ Be familiar with organization budget and take an active part in the budget planning process.
- ✓ Know and approve all policies and programs and oversee theirimplementation.
- ✓ Take responsibility for making decisions on organization issues and board matters.
- ✓ Interpret the organization's work and values to the community, represent the organization and serve as aspokesperson.
- ✓ Keep up-to-date on the business of theorganization.

2. Attendance at board meetings when called. Should I be unable to attend a meeting, I will, if needed, be available for a telephone consultation. Additionally, I will serve on at least one boardcommittee.

3. Active participation in one or more fundraising activities. This may include individual and/or special event solicitation or direct mailappeals.

4. Working in good faith with my fellow board members and staff toward the achievement of the organization's goals.

5. I am committed to work voluntarily with the STARS organization for a period of three Years and for a number of 26 working days (annually) as a member of the Board of Trustees. During this period, I am not expecting any financial support except the organization obligation to pay for the reimbursements.

Should I fail to fulfill these commitments to the organization, I understand that the Chairman of the board will call upon me to discuss my responsibilities. Should there comes a time where I am no longer able to fulfill my obligations to the organization, it will be my responsibility to resign my position as a member of the Board of Trustees.

As a board member, I understand that the organization will be responsible to me in the following ways:

1. I will be sent, without request, quarterly financial reports and an update of organizational activities that allow me to meet the "prudent person" standards of the law. Further, I expect that I will have information about programs and policies, goals and objectives as appropriate.

2. Opportunities will be provided for me to discuss with the Executive Director and the Board Chair Person the organization's programs, goals, activities andstatus.

3. It is expected that board members and the Executive Director will respond in a straightforward fashion to questions that I feel are necessary to carry out my fiscal, legal and moral responsibilities to theorganization.

4. Board members and the Executive Director will work in good faith with me towards achievement of our goals.

5. If the organization does not fulfill its commitments to me, I may call upon the Board Chair Person and Executive Director to discuss the organization's responsibilities tome.

_____

Print Name - Board of Trustee Member

_____ _____

Signature – Board ofDirectorsMember Date

_____

Print Name - Board of Trustee Chair person

_____ _____

Signature – Board ofTrustee Chair Person Date

Names and signatures of people including STARS's Board of Trustees membership:

Dear Mahmooda Taqwa (Chief of Board)
Signature
.....

Ms. Maliha Safi (Board Member)
Signature
.....

Dear Tuba Azami (Board Member)
Signature
.....

Ms. Palwasha Zarifi (Board Member)
Signature
.....

Ms. Latifa Majidi (Board Member)
Signature
.....

This policy reviewed and approved by board of Trustees membership