

Attracting New Board Members

As highlighted in the Productivity Commission's 2010 Report Contribution of the Not-For-Profit Sector, changes to legislation and increased compliance requirements have added to the responsibilities of Boards of Management of non government organisations (NGOs). This, together with the increasing complexity of managing NGOs can adversely affect the recruitment of board members.

Most people who have had an association with NGOs are aware that attracting skilled people onto boards is never easy. The history of NGOs shows that individuals who are passionate about 'the cause' put up their hand first when it comes to volunteer their services. They may have the passion but not necessarily the professional skills required to effectively manage an incorporated organisation. In addition, while a board needs to reflect the diversity of the community it serves, it also requires the skills to meet the increasing governance and compliance requirements placed on it.

Court cases and research has made it apparent that boards need individuals who will ask questions, particularly those considered "dumb". It is often the "dumb" questions, seeking understanding or clarifications that help identify potential issues or the need for more assessable and comprehensible documentation. They may also lead to the questioning of established practices.

Getting the right balance may be hard to achieve, however a board that includes a mix of individuals:

- Who are passionate about "the cause"
- Have an understanding of the needs of the organisation's community
- Have relevant professional skills
- Are prepared to ask "dumb" questions

is likely to be one leading a sustainable and effective organisation.

Recruiting the required expertise:

Build up membership

Members of Incorporated Associations are the foundations of the organisation (see *Associations Incorporation Act 2009*). They elect board members from their ranks at the Annual General Meeting. Associations sometimes lose sight of the importance of their members. Building and maintaining a solid membership base which includes the active recruitment of members with relevant professional skills and knowledge of the community is not only an indication of a strong organisation, it also provides a source of future board members.

Plan to fill positions well in advance

Do not wait for the Annual General Meeting before attempting to find new board members. As an on-going exercise, keep a list of potential candidates. Even if they decline the offer to stand in a particular year, they may take up the offer later.

Identify the skills of current board members

Complete a skills and knowledge audit of the ideal board for your organisation. Record the skills and knowledge of the current board and compare against the ideal board and identifying gaps. When recruiting new members, where possible focus on individuals who possess these skills and knowledge.

Broaden the current board's skills by offering training to members with an emphasis on those areas which meet the board's immediate and potential needs. Provide opportunities to meet with the organisation's community to better understand their needs.

Be up-front in discussions with potential candidates.

Establish the time commitment that is expected of board members. Prepare a job description and circulate it to potential candidates. This would consist of the board's role and responsibilities and may be outlined in the organisation's policies and procedures manual.

Produce a prospectus

Develop a prospectus outlining the work of the organisation and circulate it to potential candidates.

Ask around your networks

Members of current advisory committees may be potential board members. Invite them to observe the organisation at functions and in the course of daily duties.

Advertise Board positions

A number of national and state peak bodies provide services to assist in the recruitment of volunteers, including board members. These services currently range from providing online job boards to matching skills of volunteers with the needs of the organisation. Some services have a fee and/or require membership of the peak body. Two services are listed under Resources.

Depending on the type of organisation or its location, advertising in professional journals, newsletters and local newspapers may also be useful.

Develop a promotional package

Provide potential candidates with the:

- board prospectus
- annual report
- business/strategic plan
- membership form (if not a current member)
- Board member's job description

Board Orientation

After the AGM, hold an orientation training day for new board members which could include training on reading financial statements and legal duties. An induction package could also be provided. This will assist in establishing an effective team, provide information on the culture of the organisation, the expectations of the board and promote a sense of pride in being a member of a board of management.

The induction package could include meeting dates, minutes for previous 6 months, Board job description, Conflict of Interest Declaration form, Code of Conduct, Constitution (or Rules of Association); Strategic and Operational Plans, relevant policies and procedures, etc.

Resources

NCOSS Sector Support

- [Templates and Resources](#)
 - [Good governance](#)
 - [Ethical Frameworks: Codes of ethics and codes of conduct](#)
 - [Roles and responsibilities of boards of management of NSW Incorporated Associations](#)
 - [Qualities for Good Leadership](#)

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

- [Governance for Good](#)
- [Guide for board members](#)
- [Responsible persons - board or committee members](#)

Institute of Community Directors Australia

- [Diversity of Boards](#)
- [Recruitment](#)
- [Induction](#)
- [Succession](#)
- [Developing an effective induction: Checklist](#)
- [Board member induction policy – Policy Bank](#)

Advertising services for Boards

- [Pro Bono Australia](#)
- [The Centre for Volunteering](#)

NB: The above websites were accessible on 2 Dec 2015. If the links do not work search on the title of the document or go directly to the organisation's website.