



Australian Government



## Guide to Board Recruitment and Induction

**This is a general guide for arts and cultural organisations on board recruitment and induction processes. It includes considerations for attracting qualified and committed individuals who align with the organisation’s vision and mission, and for ensuring new board members are effectively integrated into governance activities.**

*This guide may assist boards and board members of all arts organisations to engage in better practice and meet their legal obligations. All organisations should check relevant state, territory and federal legislation for any specific legal requirements.*

Establishing and maintaining a strong and effective board is essential for the success and sustainability of any organisation. Developing strong board recruitment and induction processes enables organisations to access diverse expertise, align strategic goals, maintain good governance, facilitate continuity and provide a strong foundation for board members to contribute meaningfully to the organisation’s success.

### Who is responsible?

Recruitment and induction of new board members is the responsibility of the board and executive leadership. Depending on the size of the organisation, the board chair may lead this. For smaller organisations, this work is often the responsibility of the CEO or artistic director, or may be a collaborative process between the CEO or artistic director and board chair. Larger organisations may have a dedicated selection committee in addition to involvement from the executive director and board.

Irrespective of size and resources, having systems and processes in place for board recruitment and induction helps organisations expand beyond a networking-based approach. This can lead from recruiting representatives with similar life experience to an approach that promotes access to a broader and more diverse pool of candidates and perspectives.

## Board recruitment

### Identify the required skills and experience

Define necessary and ideal skills, expertise, lived experience or perspectives that new board members need to effectively support your organisation. This is usually done via the creation of a 'skills and diversity matrix' that aligns with the organisation's strategic goals. Identifying any gaps in skills, expertise or perspectives within the current board membership can help identify who or what is needed.

#### Action:

- **Create a skills and diversity matrix:** Identify the key skills, expertise and perspectives needed on the board to support the organisation's strategic goals. For guidance, see Creative Australia's *Guide to Using the Board Skills and Diversity Matrix Template* and supporting *skills and Diversity Matrix Template*.

### Develop a recruitment strategy

Often, board recruitment relies heavily on existing board members' networks. While this can hold incredible value and benefit, it can also be limiting by sourcing board members with similar backgrounds or experiences.

A well-designed recruitment strategy is essential for reaching broader channels and should be supported with transparency and consistency in the selection process.

#### Actions:

- **Identify sources and pathways for potential candidates.** This should include personal, professional and community networks, as well as considering what broader advertising or promotional opportunities may open new avenues of recruitment.
- **Establish a process for reaching potential candidates.** Include the use of targeted communications and networking opportunities. You might also consider asking potential candidates to attend a board meeting so they can learn more about the organisation and what the board members' roles are.

## Selection and screening

Thorough selection and screening processes protect the organisation's interests and ensure board members have the necessary qualifications and integrity. Detailed information on the legal requirements for board members can be found on Not-for-profit Law's website [here](#).

For smaller organisations, screening might include reference and due diligence checks (for example, police checks), while larger organisations might have established nomination and selection committees to support more comprehensive evaluations. Consider screening candidates based on knowledge and involvement within the specific community or art form as well as their alignment with the organisation's core mission.

#### Actions:

- **Check the organisation's constitution** for rules on how board members can be appointed.
- **Identify how information about candidates will be gathered.** For example, will relevant information about their qualifications and interests be gathered via an EOI process, application, initial phone call, an online application, checklist, etc.
- **Establish who will consider or review applications.** Established organisations might conduct formal interviews and assess candidates against the defined board member profile and selection criteria. Smaller organisations may use a more informal process of meeting with the chair or CEO. Regardless of the scale of the organisation, best practice is to document this process and its outcome for future process improvement opportunities.
- **Conduct due-diligence checks,** such as reference checks and background screenings, to ensure the suitability and integrity of potential board members.

## Board induction

### Board member induction

Effective induction programs familiarise new board members with the organisation's mission, values and priorities. This might include comprehensive onboarding materials and training resources or more informal hands-on orientation with a board mentor to leverage existing expertise and knowledge of the organisation.

#### Actions:

- **Provide a letter of appointment to the incoming board member.** This should outline key responsibilities, expectations, terms and conditions of appointment, length of tenure and request a declaration of any conflicts of interest. Ensure this is signed and returned.
- **Provide a board induction pack.** See below for a checklist.
- **Support new board members and provide guidance on board processes and expectations.** Support during their initial period may be through a dedicated mentor, board member buddy system or inviting them to observe a board meeting prior to their appointment.
- **Arrange meetings with key stakeholders.** This includes staff, fellow board members and external partners, to foster relationships and deepen understanding of the organisation's operations.
- **Provide training opportunities and resources.** These should enhance board members' knowledge and skills in areas such as governance, finance, fundraising and key regulatory issues and risks affecting the organisation. As a minimum, board members should complete basic governance training if they have not already done so or have not done so recently.
- **Check in.** Consider tasking the board chair or a seasoned board member with checking in with new board members after an appropriate time, to see how they are doing and assist in resolving any issues or filling knowledge gaps.

### An induction pack should include:

- governing document (constitution or rules of association)
- financial statements
- strategic and annual plans
- previous board meeting minutes
- relevant policies
- any handover notes from previous board members
- regulator details and key compliance and board dates
- biographical and contact information about board members, and staff (if appropriate)
- meeting schedule and calendar of upcoming events
- an introduction to the board's operational and committee structure.

Further detailed information about board induction processes can be found in Not-for-profit Law's factsheet: [Board inductions – bringing on a new board member](#).

### Integration into the organisation

Active involvement of new board members fosters diversity of thought, collective decision-making and effective governance. Consider involving new board members in community events or artistic programs related to the organisation's art form or community of interest from the time of their appointment.

#### Action:

- **Facilitate opportunities for new board members to be involved in the organisation outside of board meetings.** Build buy-in and successful integration into the organisation through opportunities for new board members to experience what the organisation does and how it operates. For example, opportunities to attend events or to tour the organisation's venue or key sites.

## Ongoing engagement and evaluation

Ongoing engagement and evaluation of board members contributes to effective governance. Regular communication ensures a close working relationship with board members, especially for smaller organisations.

### Actions:

- **Provide opportunities for board members to offer feedback** on board processes, meetings and governance practices.
- **Conduct periodic evaluations** to assess the effectiveness and performance of individual board members and the whole board. See Creative Australia's *Guide to Developing a Board Review and Evaluation Policy* for more information.
- **Continuously evaluate and provide feedback** to new board members to support their growth and development within their roles.

## Resources

### Institute of Community Directors: Board Member Recruitment Policy

A template for developing a board member recruitment policy.

### Institute of Community Directors: Developing an Effective Induction Process

A practical guide and steps on effective board member induction.

### Cultural Governance Alliance: How do you recruit Board Members?

A practical guide and resources on board recruitment from a UK-based organisation specialising in governance of cultural organisations.