



Australian Government



# Guide to Using the Board Skills and Diversity Matrix Template

A skills and diversity matrix is a tool used to assess and document the skills, knowledge, competencies and diversity of board members. It provides a structured overview of the collective expertise and backgrounds of board members, and helps identify gaps and opportunities for improving the board's composition.

This factsheet is a guide on how to use Creative Australia's *Board Skills and Diversity Matrix Template*, along with tips and further reading about improving board diversity.

*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.*

For arts and cultural organisations, a skills matrix helps to ensure the right mix of decision-makers are on the board and supports more relevant and robust governance practice. It can assist organisations to appoint a board that supports the organisation's core purpose, including any art form or community specific requirements.

Organisations should understand the requirements set out by their relevant state or national authorities for appointment of board members when developing a board skills and diversity matrix. These can vary depending on the legal structure of your organisation or company. For example, there may be minimum requirements for company directors or board appointments for organisations registered under the Corporations Act 2001, depending on the type and scale of organisation.

At a minimum, it is recommended that the boards of all arts and cultural organisations include both financial and legal expertise specific to the organisation's context for it to carry out its fiduciary duties.

## Designing a fit for purpose skills and diversity matrix

Creative Australia's *Board Skills and Diversity Matrix Template* has been designed to be adapted by organisations as needed to align with specific board objectives, and the mission and purpose of the organisation. The template can be found [here](#).

Skill and diversity matrices are designed to be used and reviewed frequently by the board and CEO. They can spark discussions about what is important for an organisation's governance and support the ongoing development of board members, as well as recruitment and succession planning. They should not be considered a one-off survey. [Note: See Creative Australia's *Guide to Board Recruitment and Induction* and *Guide to Board and Organisation Succession Planning*.]

A matrix can also supplement any review or evaluation of the board to help ensure its overall effectiveness in fulfilling its fiduciary and governance responsibilities. See Creative Australia *Guide to Developing a Board Review and Evaluation Policy*.

When using this matrix, an organisation might choose to give more weight to different skills or experiences to align with the organisation's purpose, or might expand certain categories or add further detail and specificity. For example, you may choose to add specific skills or experiences under suggested categories or detail what level of skill or experience the organisation needs. This is particularly valuable when it comes to recruiting new board positions or developing existing members, as it helps show where the board may have under-representation or gaps in particular knowledge or skills.

More detailed skills matrices may set out specific skills or markers of experience that directly relate to strategic objectives. These might include anything from negotiation or facilitating skills, to specific financial, legal or risk management skills, or membership of a particular community of interest.

For further reading, see Creative Australia's case studies on how other organisations approach diversity and succession planning [here](#).

## Guide for adapting the matrix

- Work out who will manage and maintain the skills and diversity matrix and when it should be reviewed.
- Using your strategic plan as a guide, delete or add any key characteristics to make the matrix specific to your organisation's mission.
- Decide if your organisation wants to add further details such as member terms or a rating scale for the level of experience of a skill held by board members.
- If relevant to your organisation, you can add additional skills or attributes to the matrix, including those that are community specific, industry specific or art form specific (see examples below).
- Add any additional detail to capture the specific relationship between your organisation's strategic objectives and the skills, knowledge or attributes needed to strengthen governance or support diversity (see examples below). This may be a key focus, or need for a specific skill or diversity marker.
- Ensure you have considered privacy principles relevant to the collection of sensitive personal information from current or prospective board members. Also consider whether there are any specific provisions in anti-discrimination legislation relevant to identified board member positions you may wish to create.

## Identifying specific needs

Within the categories of **Community**, **Industry** and **Sector**, organisations can identify and add a specific skill, expertise or lived experience to the matrix.

### Community specific

This refers to expertise and experience specific to a community or communities that the organisation works with.

#### Community specific examples:

An organisation with a strategic focus on providing a platform for people from a specific cultural background should include multiple people from this background on their board. A prospective board member's identity or lived experience should not be the only reason they are considered as a board member, as they will have a range of other skills, knowledge and expertise which should be valued as part of their contribution. It is also important they are not invited onto the board as a representative of all people of that identity.

A non-First Nations-led organisation that programs or engages with First Nations content or communities should consider having one or more First Nations board members with deep experience engaging with First Nations communities and cultures.

An organisation whose mission is to champion artists with disability should have representation of artists with this lived experience on their board, as well as board members with expertise in disability inclusion, accessibility and the rights of persons with disabilities.

### Cultural and creative industry specific

This refers to expertise and experience specific to the art form, type of arts and cultural organisation, or type of work the organisation produces or presents. For example, an organisation that creates or presents performance with emerging artists might decide it is important to include an emerging artist or a representative from an education institute that runs courses for performance or theatre studies students on its board.

#### Industry specific examples:

- **Art form expertise:** Having board members with in-depth knowledge and experience in the specific art forms the organisation focuses on, such as visual arts, literature, music, theatre, dance, etc.
- **Curatorial and artistic direction:** Having board members with a background in curatorial practices or artistic direction to support the organisation's programming and/or exhibition decisions.
- **Arts education and outreach:** Having board members with experience in arts education and outreach programs or specific expertise in community engagement and learning initiatives.
- **Creative entrepreneurship:** Having board members with experience in entrepreneurship, innovation and business development to foster sustainable growth and revenue generation for the organisation.
- **Digital and technological expertise:** Having board members with expertise in digital technologies may be particularly relevant for organisations embracing digital transformation.

## Skills to strengthen governance

Outside the legal and financial skills required to support fiduciary duties, there are a range of other skills that support good governance within arts and cultural organisations. For example, an artist-run initiative that exhibits works to the public may decide it is important to have a minimum amount of board members who have experience managing volunteers.

### Examples of skills to strengthen governance:

- **Fundraising and philanthropy:** Having board members with a strong background in fundraising, donor relations and philanthropic networks to support the organisation's financial sustainability.
- **Governance expertise:** Having board members with legal and governance expertise to help ensure compliance with laws and regulations and maintain good governance practices.
- **Arts policy and advocacy:** Having board members with experience in arts policy development and advocacy to help navigate relevant policy issues and promote the organisation and sector's interests.
- **Marketing and communications:** Having board members with expertise in marketing, communications, and public relations to help guide the organisation's marketing and engagement activities.
- **Research and evaluation:** Having board members with experience in research and evaluation methods, particularly if the organisation seeks to develop capacity to measure its impact and outcomes effectively.

## Supporting diversity

Achieving greater diversity and inclusion on the board often requires tailored approaches or support structures to attract potential candidates and ensure all perspectives can contribute meaningfully. This may involve providing additional assistance or alternative modes of engagement for board members from a range of backgrounds or who experience barriers to engagement. This can help ensure boards are equitable, safe and inclusive.

Boards may consider a variety of strategies to build diversity, including establishing advisory committees, remuneration for people where relevant (for example, gig workers or people in disadvantaged positions), observership programs to build governance capacity in individuals from target community groups, offering mentorships or peer support services and additional governance-specific training. Other strategies could include considering how board papers are distributed, written and communicated or adapting the timing and location of meetings so that people with different lifestyles or circumstances can participate.

### Examples of strategies to support diversity on boards:

- **Paid positions:** Remunerating individuals with industry or arts and culture expertise for their advice, even without a full board position, can help attract talent and address barriers to participation.
- **Flexibility:** Allowing flexible meeting format for representatives with other commitments supports consistent involvement.
- **Capacity building:** Tailored support programs can help community-specific members develop governance skills or can be as simple as providing opportunities to be a board observer for a period of time. Providing mentorship and peer support can also help first time board members navigate the complexity of the role.
- **Training:** Mandatory training for all board members (for example, on cultural capability or anti-racism) can help ensure safe spaces that foster open discussions.
- **Different formats:** Considering different access needs in the way information is presented can help remove barriers to engagement.
- **Advisory committees:** Establishing advisory committees can provide a mechanism for boards to access the expertise and perspectives of key organisational stakeholders or communities, offering valuable insights and inclusivity without the commitments of serving on a board.

## Templates and examples

See Creative Australia's *Board Skills and Diversity Matrix Template*.

### Resources

#### **Diversity Arts Australia: Shifting the Balance**

A report by Diversity Arts Australia with key findings and recommendations for diverse cultural leadership.

#### **Creative Equity Toolkit: Develop Diverse and Inclusive Leadership**

A suite of resources including articles, toolkits, checklists and case studies to support organisations to develop diverse, inclusive leadership.

#### **Institute of Community Directors: Ten Questions Every Board Director Needs to Ask About Diversity**

Aspects for all board directors to address regarding diversity across the organisation.

#### **Australian Institute of Company Directors: How to Build a Skills Matrix**

A discussion of the challenges and benefits of building a skills matrix with case study examples.

#### **Medium: Respectful Collection of Demographic Data**

A quick overview of best practice data collection forms and methods.