Board inductions – bringing on a new board member



Legal information for community organisations

This fact sheet covers:

- Why is board induction important?
- Who is responsible for board inductions?
- What should happen before an appointment to the board?
- What should be covered in a board induction?
- Performance and development of board members
- A checklist to support the board induction process, and
- Related resources.

This fact sheet provides general information about the process for inducting people to the governing body (the board or committee of management) of a community organisation.

A properly-functioning board is vital to the success and longevity of any community organisation. The effective operation of a board largely depends on the free exchange of information and ideas between its members. Ensuring new board members are quickly brought up to speed with the organisation (including its strategy and the environment within which it operates) is an important aspect of every board's role.

This fact sheet uses the words 'board' and 'board member'. These words have been used in a generic sense to refer to and identify the decision-making body of an organisation, the people that form the decision-making body, and the group of stakeholders that the decision-making body serves.

In this fact sheet we use	The equivalent name used by your organisation might be
Board	Committee, Committee of Management, Council
Board member	Committee member, Director, Councillor
Rules	Rule book, Constitution, Governing document

1. Why is board induction important?

There are many different roles and people involved in running a community organisation. It is important that board members understand the role of a board generally, their specific role on the board and how their role differs to the roles of other people in the organisation. Taking the time to establish a good board induction process is a prudent investment in any community organisation's future.

A person invited to join the board of a community organisation may have an extensive background in the not-for-profit sector and board experience. Equally, a new board member may be volunteering their services for the first time, have no previous board experience and no detailed knowledge of the sector or the organisation.

In either scenario, ensuring that an effective board induction process is established and implemented is an important way of ensuring that new board members:

- quickly develop a clear understanding of the organisation and its expectations of them as board members
- understand the legal obligations, duties and liabilities that accompany the role, and
- are equipped with the information they need to hit the ground running and make a meaningful contribution to the work of the board.

More broadly, an effective board induction is a useful way to establish and promote a good board culture and governance generally within the organisation.

2. Who is responsible for board inductions?

The responsibility for conducting board inductions is ideally shared between the board itself, senior management of the organisation it oversees and the new board member.

The board chair, or another senior person within the organisation, will often play a pivotal role in the induction process for new board members. It is important to ensure that the process is overseen by a person who knows the organisation 'inside out' so that the necessary information can be shared with the new board member and any questions can be answered in an appropriate manner.

The person who assumes responsibility for overseeing the induction process should be supported by other board members and senior management. For instance, the organisation's CEO may be involved in the process: introducing the new board member to key members of the management team, conducting a briefing on the challenges and opportunities facing the organisation and conducting a tour of the organisation's premises or operations.

A new board member also needs to make himself or herself available to participate actively in the process.

3. What should happen before a person is appointed to the board?

Before a person is appointed to the board and induction takes place, there are a number steps an organisation should take to ensure the appointment is both legal and sustainable. The following questions should be considered.

1. Does the person meet the organisation's requirements? Are you selecting the right person?

Board members should have a range (or be able to quickly gain) of skills and traits, including:

enthusiasm for, and knowledge of, the organisation and its mission

- adequate time for the task
- basic understanding of the role of a board and an interest in board work
- good working relationships with other people involved in managing the organisation
- reliability and good organisational skills, and
- strong communication skills.

TIP

There are websites where you can post free notices for board vacancies, such as on OurCommunity's Board Matching Service, Pro Bono Australia's Volunteer Match and Volunteering Australia's GoVolunteer.

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You may also be required (and where not required, choose) to conduct relevant screening checks, such as police checks, reference checks and working with children checks, where appropriate. For more information about screening procedures, see Not-for-profit Law's Screening Checks Guides on the Information Hub at www.nfplaw.org.au/recruitment.

2. Does the person meet the legal requirements for appointment to the board?

Your organisation may set out requirements in its rules in relation to the appointment of board members. For example, that the person be a member of the organisation before they can be appointed or that they must be 18 years of age.

There are also certain legal requirements for the appointment of board members and for specific roles, such as the 'secretary' or 'public officer' (people who hold these roles are typically responsible for reporting to the regulator), that must be met in addition to anything set out in your rules.

For more information about positions in an incorporated association in your jurisdiction and in CLGs, go to the Running the Organisation page on the Information Hub at www.nfplaw.org.au/whoruns.

The requirements for appointment are different in each jurisdiction and for the different legal structures available to not-for-profit groups. We have provided a high level overview below for the two most common legal structures. This is not exhaustive and if you are involved in board appointments, you should refer to the legislation governing your organisation and familiarise yourself with the specific requirements that apply to your board members. If you are uncertain about the requirements, contact your regulator, or seek legal advice.

NOTE

In particular circumstances, a person will automatically cease to be a board member, for example, in Victoria a person automatically vacates their position on the committee of management if they become insolvent under administration.



Companies limited by guarantee

If your organisation is incorporated as a **company limited by guarantee (CLG)** under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) (**Corporations Act**), a board member (referred to as a 'director') of the CLG must:

consent to the appointment

- be at least 18 years old
- not have been convicted of various offences such as fraud or offences under the Corporations Act (and certain time limits apply from the time of conviction or release from imprisonment)
- not be an undischarged bankrupt or have executed a personal insolvency agreement, and
- not be the subject of a court disqualification order.

Note that at least two directors of a CLG must ordinarily reside in Australia. CLGs must also appoint a "Company Secretary" that may, but does not have to be a director of the CLG, but they must meet similar legal requirements for appointment to the directors. They must also provide their consent **prior** to being appointed. Further information about companies, their directors and secretary's duties, is on the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (**ASIC**) website here.

Incorporated associations

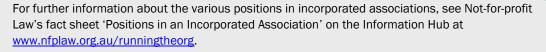
Organisations that are **incorporated under state incorporations laws** will need to ensure they meet any specified requirements set out in those laws. The table below outlines these requirements. However, you should refer to the legislation to make sure that you are clear about the requirements and that the person your organisation is appointing meets those requirements. Note in the table below we have used the term 'management commitment' rather than 'board', as that is the term you will find in the legislation.

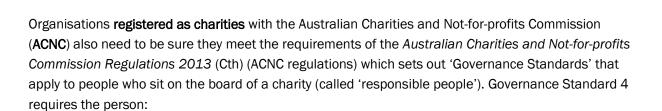
Jurisdiction	Requirements
Victoria No specific requirements for general management committee positions exist unlegislation, however, a person will automatically cease to be a committee memb certain situations including if they have been disqualified from holding office as director of a company, indigenous corporation or a co-operative. This in effect m such persons should not be appointed to the position.	
	In Victoria, the secretary of an incorporated association must:
Sections 72 and 73(3)	consent to the appointment to the position
	be at least 18 years old, and
	be a resident of Australia.
	A secretary of a Victorian incorporated association may, but does not have to be a member of the management committee. Further information is here .
New South Wales	All members of the management committee must be adults.
	In New South Wales, the 'Public Officer' of an incorporated association must be:
Associations	a person who is aged 18 years or more, and
Incorporation Act 2009	ordinarily resides in New South Wales.
Sections 28, 34	A public officer of a NSW incorporated association may, but does not have to be a committee member. Further information is here .

Jurisdiction	Requirements
Queensland	All members of the management committee must be adults. Further, a person is not eligible to be elected to the management committee if the person:
Associations Incorporation Act 1981	has a conviction and the rehabilitation period in relation to the conviction has not expired
	is an undischarged bankrupt, or
Sections 61, 61A, 65	has entered into certain arrangements due to bankruptcy.
and 66(1)	In Queensland, the secretary of an incorporated association must:
	reside in Queensland, or
	reside in another state but no more than 65km from the Queensland border.
	The secretary of a QLD incorporated association may, but does not have to be a committee member (they can be elected by the association or be appointed by the management committee). Further information is here .
Northern Territory	A person cannot be a member of the management committee if:
Associations Act 2003	they are an "insolvent under administration", or "a disqualified person" (this means a person the NT Commissioner of Police has made a declaration about), or
Sections 4, 30 and 40	 have been convicted of certain offences (such as those involving fraud or dishonesty, or in relation to the promotion, formation or management of a body corporate)
	unless they have applied for, and have been granted leave from the Commissioner (NT Consumer Affairs).
	In the Northern Territory, the ' Public Officer' of an incorporated association must be resident in the NT, over the age of 18 years and a member or employee of the organisation. The public officer of a NT incorporated association may (subject to the rules of the organisation) hold any other position on the management committee in addition to that of the public officer. Further information is here .
Tasmania	There are no specific requirements for general board positions.
	In Tasmania, the 'Public Officer' of an incorporated association must:
Associations	be a person who is aged 18 years or more, and
Incorporation Act 1964	is a resident in Tasmania.
Section 14	The public officer of a Tasmanian incorporated association may or may not be a member of the management committee. They can hold any other office (subject to the rules of the organisation), except the office of auditor.
Western Australia	A person cannot be a member of the management committee if:
	they are a bankrupt, or
• their affairs are under certain insolvency arrangements, or	
Incorporation Act 2015	 they have been convicted of certain offences (such as those involving fraud or dishonesty),
Sections 39 and 40	unless they have successfully applied to the Commission (Consumer Protection) to accept an appointment or act as a member of the committee of an association.
	The legislation does not specify certain positions (or specific requirements).

Jurisdiction	Requirements	
South Australia Associations	A person cannot be a member of the management committee or be in any way (whether directly or indirectly) concerned in or take part in the management of an incorporated association if:	
Incorporation Act 1985	they are an "insolvent under administration", or	
Section 30	 have been convicted of certain offences (such as those involving fraud or dishonesty or under the SA incorporated organisation's law), 	
	unless they have successfully applied to the Commission (Consumer and Business Affairs, South Australia) to be a member of the committee.	
	In South Australia, the 'Public Officer' of an incorporated association must:	
	be a person who is aged 18 years or more, and	
	is resident in South Australia.	
	A public officer of a South Australian incorporated association may or may not be a member of the management committee. More information on this role is <a administration",="" href="https://example.com/html/>html</td></tr><tr><td colspan=2>Australian Capital A person cannot be a member of the management committee, or a public of incorporated association if:</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>they are an " insolvent="" or<="" td="" under="">	
Associations Incorporation Act 1991	 have been convicted of certain offences (such as those involving fraud or dishonesty, or in relation to the promotion, formation or management of a body corporate), 	
Sections 57 and 63	unless they have successfully applied to the Supreme Court for leave to accept an appointment or to act as the public officer or a member of the committee of an association.	
	In the ACT, the 'Public Officer' of an incorporated association must:	
	be a person who is aged 18 years or more, and	
	be resident in the ACT.	
	The public officer of an ACT incorporated association may, subject to the rules of the organisation, hold any other office, in addition to that of the public officer.	

RELATED RESOURCES





- not be disqualified from managing a corporation under the Corporations Act, and
- not be disqualified by the ACNC within the preceding 12 months.

FURTHER READING

For more information about governance requirements for registered charities see the ACNC website at www.acnc.gov.au. The ACNC also has template document that you could provide to a potential board member (so you have the person's declaration in relation to these matters).



TIP

In addition to satisfying itself that the potential board member meets the above legal requirements for appointment, your organisation could also ask the person to sign a letter (a sample letter is available on the <u>ACNC website</u> for organisations registered as charities) in which they declare they:

- agree to the appointment
- satisfy the legal requirements (under the relevant law), and
- · agree to notify the organisation if any of these matters, or their contact details, change.

3. Does the chosen board member understand the legal obligations and liabilities that apply to their role?

The organisation should provide an overview of the position, including the legal obligations that they must comply with. The legal obligations come from a number of sources including legislation, common law (judge-made law), the organisation's governing document and any associated policies.

There are four main legal duties all board members must comply with and understand:

- duty to act in good faith and for proper purpose
- duty to act with care, skill and diligence (includes the duty to prevent insolvent trading)
- · duty not to dishonestly use position or information, and
- · duty to avoid conflicts of interest.

While board members are typically not personally liable (that is, legally responsible) for the debts or consequences arising from an organisation's actions or decisions, there are some circumstances where a board member will be personally liable for their organisation's debts and/or may be subject to regulatory action.

A board member may be subject to penalties as a result of their own actions (breach of a legal duty), and they may also be held liable for the actions of the organisation they govern, where that organisation has breached a law. For example, if the organisation fails to pay certain income tax instalments (eg. on salary and wages paid to employees) or superannuation guarantee payments (for employees), board members may be personally liable for these amounts. Potential board members need to understand both the legal obligations and the potential liabilities so they can make an informed decision as to whether they consent to becoming a board member.

RELATED RESOURCES

Not-for-profit Law has published a number of resources that your organisation could provide to its new board members explaining their legal obligations and potential liabilities, including 'Introduction to the role of the board members' and 'Legal Duties of board members' on the Not-for-profit Law Information Hub at www.nfplaw.org.au/governance.

4. Have you followed the proper process for appointment of the board member?

Organisations must follow their governing document (rules or constitution) in relation to the appointment (and removal) of a person on their board. This will usually be by election of members at an Annual General Meeting, or direct appointment by the Board (for example, the filling of a casual vacancy), which may or may not need a resolution at the next meeting of the organisation.

Upon appointment of a board member, organisations must notify their relevant regulators. For example:

- CLGs will be required to inform the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) See
 the ASIC website at www.asic.gov.au.
- Incorporated associations must notify their state or territory-based regulator (there may be some exceptions for incorporated associations in some states who are also regulated by the ACNC).
- CLGs and IAs that are registered as charities will need to inform the ACNC. See the ACNC website (www.acnc.gov.au) for further information (you can make changes through the Charity Portal).

Usually there are time limits for notification, so your organisation must make notification a priority.

4. What should be covered in a board induction?

The main reason for a board induction is to ensure a new board member receives key information about the organisation and their role. In addition, the induction process can be used to collect information required from the board member.

The nature and extent of the information provided to the new board member will, to a degree, be informed by the size and type of the organisation (eg. multi-million dollar disability provider compared with a small maternal health support group), the person's background and experience, as well as the information shared with them prior to their appointment being formalised.

In saying that, the process should, as much as possible, be conducted in a consistent manner so that each new board member receives consistent information. The induction process will often include:

- the chair and / or CEO (some boards allocate a mentor that is another member of the board)
 meeting with the new board member (to introduce the organisation and invite questions) and
 meeting other board members and senior management
- a tour of the organisation's premises and operations (if applicable)
- provision of a board induction pack (see section below 'What documents and information do board members need to be provided with?')
- specific training or professional development in relation to the role, and
- completion and return by the board member of any outstanding appointment-related documents, such as the consent, appointment letter, declaration of interests forms etc.

A "Board Induction" pack

A board induction pack should be produced and provided to each new board member at, or as soon as possible after, the time their appointment is confirmed. The following information about the person's role, the board and the organisation, is often included in a board induction pack.

Th	ne board member's role
	A letter or document setting out the 'terms and conditions' of appointment (a sample letter is available at the <u>ACNC website</u> (for organisations registered as charities).
	A letter or document setting out their specific 'roles and responsibillies', including as member of a sub-committee (the job description).
	Any policies or procedures specific to board members or related documents like insurance details
	Information about key legal duties and potential liabilities (see, for example, Not-for-profit Law's Legal Duties guide at www.nfplaw.org.au/governance .
	Any handover notes, key contacts, regulator details and key compliance and board dates.

NOTE

Both the organisation and individual board members should understand the basis on which the board member is appointed (volunteer or employee basis). This is important as there are laws that apply differently to volunteers, or some laws that do not apply at all and, as a result, different legal entitlements apply. The letter of appointment and induction process should be clear and consistent about whether or not the board role is voluntary in nature. For more information, see Not-for-profit Law's fact sheet 'Volunteer, employee or independent contractor' on the Information Hub at www.nfplaw.org.au/volunteers.

The board

The structure of the board (positions held, and roles and responsibilities of those positions).
A list of all board members and their contact details (biographies, if available).
A calendar, or schedule of forthcoming board meetings (date, time and location including whether electronic meetings) and other significant events.
Details of any subcommittees (and their roles, responsibilities and reporting lines).
Details on how the board operates in practice (for example, how documents are circulated, amended, and stored).
Previous minutes of board meetings (the last six to twelve months are likely to be most useful).
Any specific board policies and procedures (such as attendance policy, disputes, delegations, confidentiality.

The organisation

The organisation's governing document (rules or constitution)
Financial information (including the financial statements for previous years and audit reports, where applicable)
Annual report
Planning documentation (such as a corporate plan, strategic plan and financial plans)
Risk Assessment information (such as a copy of the organisation's risk register)
Organisations policies and procedures (for example, its code of conduct, health and safety policies social media policy)

5. Performance and development of board members

In addition to ensuring that an effective board induction process is implemented, community organisations should encourage and support their board members to complete appropriate training to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and skills to properly perform their responsibilities.

Boards often receive training/professional development in the following areas:

Financial literacy

All members of a community organisation's board should possess at least basic financial literacy skills to enable them to understand and participate effectively in board discussions concerning the organisation's financial reports. A board member cannot simply rely on the opinions and financial expertise of the treasurer. Every board member has legal duties, which in order to meet, means they need to understand the organisation's financial position and contribute to its proper financial management.

A board member who does not have adequate financial literary skills and knowledge to interpret financial statements, or who would benefit from refresher training, should be supported to attend appropriate financial literacy training.

Directors' duties and governance

As already discussed, board members have a number of legal obligations or 'duties' that must be understood and complied with. The source and nature of those duties, and the potential consequences of a failure to comply with them, will differ depending on the nature of the particular organisation.

A new board member should be informed at the time of their appointment of the duties to which they will be subject to, including



For more information about legal duties of board members, go to the Duties Guide on the Not-for-profit Low Information Link of

profit Law Information Hub at www.nfplaw.org.au/governance.

those under the Corporations Act, the ACNC governance standards or incorporated associations legislation (where applicable).

Whilst these duties may seem be daunting for some new board members, it is important to reassure them that these duties are essentially a common sense approach to good governance and there are supports available to help them understand the duties and how they can be met. New (and existing) board members should also be encouraged and supported to attend governance training, as required.

Regulatory compliance

Particularly for community organisations operating in highly-regulated environments, consideration should be given to facilitating board members' attendance at training sessions covering key regulatory issues and risks affecting the organisation. For example, if your organisation holds public events the board may benefit from training on how to identify and manage key risks, occupational health and safety/work health and safety (**OHS/WHS**) and negligence laws, and the types of insurance and protection available.

Your board may want to consider having regular discussions about the skills and knowledge that each member brings and discuss if are any gaps, where training would be beneficial. The board may also want to give consideration to an annual review of the performance of all its board members, similar to performance assessments you might undertake with staff (if applicable). This is another good way of identifying gaps in skill or knowledge.

The following areas may be considered in these discussions and reviews:

Industry knowledge	Board of director experience	CEO succession planning	Community affiliation / Access
Financial skills	Fundraising	Government relations	Human resources
Leadership	Legal	Lobbying	Marketing / PR
Organisation management	Risk management	Strategic planning	Technology / IT

Induction Checklist

We suggest completing an induction checklist for each new board member. The following checklist is an example only, is not exhaustive and should be tailored to your particular organisation and the board member role.

Steps	Discussion
Before appointing the board member	 Provide the person with an overview of the position, including the legal obligations and potential liabilities that come with being a board member so the board member can make an informed decision as to whether they consent to becoming a board member. Conduct screening checks, where appropriate (if they have contact with children or

Steps	Discussion
	other vulnerable people, some checks will be mandatory)
	☐ Ensure the person meets all the legal requirements (eg. age, not bankrupt, Australian resident)
	☐ Collect relevant information from the person including:
	 Their consent to act as a board member (if required). The ACNC has a <u>sample consent letter</u> that could be used to appoint a person to the board of a registered charity. If your organisation is not a charity, and does not otherwise have a consent letter it may want to consider this document and adopting it as appropriate.
	 A declaration of any conflicts of interest (potential or actual), which should be included on the organisation's risk register. The ACNC has a <u>sample</u> template conflict of interest policy and a template risk register. If your organisation is not a charity, and does not otherwise documents relating to conflicts of interest, it may want to consider them (and adopt as appropriate)
	Personal contact details
	 Any other requirements relevant to your organisation. For example, directors involved with a community organisation in Victoria that has a fundraising, or is seeking a fundraising licence, may need to complete a 'Criminal Record and Personal Insolvency Declaration'.
	☐ Ensure the person has information relevant to the role:
	 the 'terms and conditions' of appointment/appointment letter. This is likely to include: the term of appointment, circumstances where they cease to be a board member, key duties, time commitment, information about disclosure of conflicts, insurance and any travel and reimbursement details, or remuneration
	the expectations and specific responsibitlies, and
	o any policies or procedures specific to directors.
Appointing the board member	☐ Follow the governing document of the organisation (rules or constitution) to appoint the board member (eg. this will usually be election of members at an Annual General Meeting, or direct appointment by the Board to fulfil a casual vacancy).
Notifying relevant regulators	☐ Promptly notify relevant regulators upon a person becoming a member of the Board. For example:
	 CLGs will be required to inform ASIC (unless they are registered with the ACNC). See <u>here</u> for further information
	 organisations registered as charities with the ACNC will will need to inform the ACNC. See <u>here</u> for further information, and

Steps	Discussion
	 organisations that are incorporated under state law (for example, the Associations Incorportation Act 1999 (NSW)) will usually be required to notify their regulator (for example, New South Wales Fair Trading).
	Note that timeframes apply and fees can be charged if notification is not given with the timeframes.
Completing the induction process	☐ Meet with the new board member to introduce the organisation and invite questions (and receive relevant documents from the board member if not already taken place prior to appointment (the declaration of meeting legal requirements, and declaration of interest's form)).
	☐ Introduce the new board member to other board members (and senior management).
	\square Arrange visits to the organisation's premises and operations (if applicable).
	☐ Discuss the new board members' needs (for example, training).
	☐ Provide a board induction pack.

Resources

Related Not-for-profit Law Resources

Running the organisation - www.nfplaw.org.au/runningtheorg

This section features resources on positions in companies limited by guarantee and incorporated associations, governance, rules or constitutions, holding meetings and keeping documents and records.

The people involved – www.nfplaw.org.au/people

Check out this section for further information on the people involved in not-for-profit organisations, including employees, volunteers, clients and members.

Other Resources

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

Guide to Governance Standards

▼ Governance Institute of Australia

Appointment of a director and Issues when developing director induction processes

Australia Institute of Company Directors

Issues to consider when developing board induction processes

Legislation

- Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)
- Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic)
- Associations Incorporation Act 2009 (NSW)
- Associations Incorporation Act 1981 (QLD)
- Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA)
- Associations Incorporation Act 1985 (SA)
- Associations Act (NT)
- Associations Incorporation Act 1991 (ACT)
- Associations Incorporation Act (TAS)

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