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Your people

Whether your group is formal or informal, incorporated, or unincorporated, at its core are people. These include directors, managers and staff members who each take on different governing roles and responsibilities. Ensuring diverse representation among your people is a key part of effective governance.

Your key players

The key players in your group may include:

- **Members**
- **The board of directors**
- **CEO or managers**
- **Staff**

Members

Members are the core of your group's governance. They ensure accountability and that the needs of members, beneficiaries and community are met. Members play a key role in governance by:

- **choosing representatives who will work fairly for the whole group's interests**
- **having their say in voting, selection or election processes**
- **asking leaders hard questions**
- **holding leaders accountable, using agreed standards**
- **backing their leaders to get the job done.**

Becoming a member involves meeting specific criteria outlined in an organisation's rule book or constitution. The application process often involves completing a membership form and awaiting approval from the board of directors.

Organisation member's rights include attending and voting at meetings, proposing resolutions, electing directors, and accessing certain documents.

Board of directors

A board is a group of people who make decisions and guide the organisation, community, or nation.

Board members are elected or selected based on their skills, knowledge, and commitment to the community.

Their role is to focus on the big picture and act as ethical, responsible leaders with legal and moral obligations.

Key role: Director

Directors contribute to the responsibilities and decisions of the board as a whole. They hold roles including chairperson, deputy chairperson, treasurer, secretary, and general board director.

Directors have duties in three areas: cultural duties, organisational duties, and legal duties. They must understand the group's business and actively participate in decision-making.

CEO and managers

Management is about using resources to achieve goals and follow policies and plans. Key areas of management include organising, planning, monitoring, and leading. The CEO and managers are responsible for these key areas.

Effective management leads to low staff turnover, high productivity, and clear communication with the board. Some groups adopt innovative approaches to management, such as contracting out roles to prioritise cultural and community development work.



Roles and responsibilities of a CEO

The CEO plays a vital role in your group achieving its goals. The board works with and delegates to the CEO, assessing performance annually to ensure alignment with organisational goals. Effective governance relies on mutual respect between the board and CEO.

Staff

Attracting and retaining talented staff is vital for effective governance. Ways to achieve this include recruiting respected community members, encouraging diversity, and thorough induction processes.

Prioritising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff facilitates community control, develops your local economy and creates networks and relationships.

It is important to invest in customised mentoring, study opportunities, and employment plans to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Cultural awareness training can also help staff work effectively in intercultural environments.



Ensure that your group cultivates a healthy organisational culture by valuing staff, providing training and support, and fostering teamwork. Aim to share decision-making and communicate with staff regularly, engage them early, and ensure broad representation.

Relationships

Relationships are vital in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance.

Types of relationships include cultural relationships (family, kinship networks, elders, and law leaders) and professional and strategic partnerships.

To build and maintain healthy relationships, your group should strengthen its trust, respect, open communication, understanding, and reciprocity with others.

It is also important to maintain relationships with your key networks and develop your partnerships. These include people and groups with similar interests or concerns who get together to work and support each other.

Allyship

First Nations groups and people who make up a minority across Australia may also benefit from effective allied relations. Allyship involves forming supportive alliances to advocate for and support marginalised groups, emphasising trust, respect, and shared values.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

Representation

Representation is about who within the collective has a voice. Diversity is the practice of including people who represent difference. For example, difference in gender, physical and mental abilities, age, educational background, sexuality, history or identity.

Equity is fostering fairness and justice in a way that encourages equal treatment of everyone. Inclusion is respecting and appreciating differences - it's the deliberate act of valuing diversity and equity.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are great tools for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups to improve representation.

Opportunities for representation:

There are various ways to increase representation:

1. Recognise unconscious bias
2. Communicate the importance of managing bias
3. Promote pay and role equity
4. Develop a strategic training program to educate and inform
5. Acknowledge and accommodate differences
6. Make sure everyone feels welcome
7. Mix up your teams



For more information,
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