EMERGING DIRECTORS PROGRAM 2027

APPLICANT GUIDE

Practical, goal oriented, mentoring and board experience

The Emerging Directors Program is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people early in governance.

Over ten months, you learn how boards work. You practise with an experienced First Nations mentor and observe real board meetings. You finish with the knowledge, experience and connections to take your next step.

What you get

Every participant receives:

- Attendance at a two-day in-person launch and closing event.
- Ten online learning sessions on how boards decide, govern money, manage risk and stay accountable.
- Six sessions with a matched mentor who is an experienced First Nations director.
- Observation of at least two board meetings, with preparation before and reflection after.
- Travel and accommodation for in-person events.
- A named AIGI contact and cultural support throughout.
- Recognition of completion and membership of the alumni network.

Sessions are practical. You work through real governance situations, talk them over with your cohort and take part in mock board meetings. There are no exams or graded assignments.

There is no fee to take part.

Who can apply

You can apply if you:

- identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- are 18 or older by the Program Launch date
- live in Australia, in a city or a regional, rural, remote or very remote community
- have no board role yet, or have been a board director for less than 12 months
- can attend the key dates, in person and online.

You do not need formal governance experience. If you have been a director for more than a year, this program is not designed for you. AIGI offers other governance training that may suit you better.

How the program is delivered

The program runs in eight phases from application to alumni, (November 2026 – November 2027). Figure 1 shows what happens in each stage.

Figure 1. The 2027 program phases



Important dates

This table outlines the important dates you'll need to know and agree to for the Emerging Directors Program in 2027.

Table 1. Important dates

What	When
Applications open	6 November 2026
Applications close	30 November 2026 (12:00pm AEDT)
Outcomes announced	18 December 2026
Accept your place	By 8 January 2027
Onboarding and pre-program information session	3 February 2027

Launch event, two days	3 to 4 March 2027
Online learning sessions, ten	March to June 2027
Midway event, meet your mentor	28 July 2027
Mentoring and board observations	July to November 2027
Closing event and graduation, two days	24 to 25 November 2027

AIGI is responsible for travel arrangements and costs for in person events.

How to apply

Apply online at Emerging Directors Program 2027 - Application Form by midday 30 November 2026 (12:00pm AEDT Australian Eastern Daylight Savings Time).

Table 2. Three steps

Step	What you do
1. Tell us about you	Your name, contact details, year of birth, postcode, and any board experience. Confirm you can attend the key dates.
2. Answer four selection questions	Each answer is up to 150 words in writing, or up to 60 seconds by video or voice recording. Choose the format that suits you.
3. Submit before the closing date	We confirm receipt by email.

Help with your application

- If you cannot use the online form or have questions, contact us on edp@aigi.org.au
- Tell us about any access needs. We adjust the process where we can.

Nominated by a sponsor organisation?

Some organisations sponsor a place and nominate a person from their organisation or community. If you have been nominated, apply through the same form and answer the same questions. Nomination does not guarantee a place. AIGI makes every selection decision.

What we look for

We assess every application against four criteria.

You do not need formal experience. We want to understand your motivation, your potential, your connection to community and what you already bring.

Table 3. Selection criteria

Criterion	What to tell us
1. Motivation: Real interest in Indigenous governance	Why the program appeals to you, what you hope to gain and how it fits your goals.

Criterion	What to tell us
2. **Leadership potential:** The difference you want to make	Where you want to use governance skills, now or in future. The change you want to see in your community, organisation or sector.
3. **Community:** Involvement in community, culture or Country	How you take part. Volunteering, cultural activities, helping others or being a role model all count. What you are proud of.
4. **Skills and experience:** Foundations to build on	Skills from work, study, family or community life. Communication, teamwork, problem solving, listening and cultural knowledge all count.

Tips for strong answers

- Answer the question asked. Specific examples beat general statements.
- Use your own words. We are not assessing your writing.
- Keep to the limit. 150 words or 60 seconds is enough.
- Video and voice answers are assessed in the same way as written answers.

How we choose the cohort

Table 4. Selection process

Step	What happens
1. **Eligibility check**	We confirm your application is complete and you meet the criteria.
2. **Assessment**	A panel of AIGI staff scores each application against the four criteria. Reviewers do not see your name.
3. **Cohort balance**	We build a cohort that reflects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia. Living in a regional, remote or very remote area, or being under-represented among applicants, counts in your favour. It never counts against you.
4. **Confirmation**	AIGI may ask you to confirm your Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity before making an offer. A letter from a community organisation is one way to do this.
5. **Outcome**	Everyone hears by 18 December 2026. If you are offered a place, you have two weeks to accept. We hold a reserve list in case places become available.

We share general feedback with all applicants. We cannot give individual feedback on every application.

What you commit to

The program works when you take part fully. If selected, you agree to:

- attend both in-person events
- attend at least 80 per cent of online sessions and AIGI check-ins
- complete six sessions with your mentor
- observe at least two board meetings
- take part in program evaluation, including surveys and feedback
- keep confidential what you see and hear in board meetings and sessions, and follow host board requirements
- respect cultural protocols and the experiences of others.

If your circumstances change, tell your AIGI contact early. Deferral to a later cohort may be possible.

Travel and support

- AIGI books and pays for flights and accommodation for the in-person events.
- Regional, remote and very remote travel may need extra days or connecting flights. Tell us early and we plan for it.
- Tell us about access, cultural or family needs at any point. We adjust where we can.
- Your named AIGI contact supports you throughout the program.

Questions

Email edp@aigi.org.au or contact Kendal Fairweather, Project Officer, on 0475 780 460.

More information is at aigi.org.au/emerging-directors-program.