An Active State

Better Board Recruitment

For South Australian
State Sporting Organisations

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Introduction

Welcome to Better Board Recruitment; a practical guide to help you to find and recruit better board members.

This guide is delivered in a workbook with accompanying resources available for download and utilisation online at: getonboardaustralia.com.au/better-board-recruitment-resources

Accessible resources available via this webpage will be marked with a star:

Towards Better Board Recruitment

The most effective and efficient boards have board members who are the right fit for the organisation, actively participate on the board, and genuinely work towards achieving the best outcomes for the organisation, and its members, athletes, and participants.

Effective board recruitment is available to all boards at all levels of sport and recreation. It's not only reserved for the 'big end of town'. For any organisation, there are three secrets to getting board recruitment right:

- **Being Prepared:** not waiting until the last minute to find candidates to nominate for board vacancies for the upcoming AGM.
- **Being Proactive:** creating a framework that enables you to undertake certain activities consistently over the long-term to ensure that great board candidates can be found and recruited onto the board or into the organisation via other means.
- **Being Intentional:** putting thought and consideration into curating a board that works best for the organisation in the short, medium, and long term.

"We can't find any people to join the board" and "There's no one suitable to join the board" will no longer be excuses if you follow these three 'secrets'.

As much as possible, a board should be a reflection of the society in which it operates. Boards that don't take advantage of the value of a diverse board do a disservice to the organisation and the broader community.

Diversity encompasses many factors: gender, ethnicity, age, socio-economic status, sexual preferences, ability/disability, religious following, etc. There are many opportunities and advantages to organisations that recognise and cater for these differences.

*"Customers in the modern day are not homogenous and **when organisations go out of their way to meet the needs of their diverse customers** – whether they are women, identify as LGBTIQ or have a disability – the research shows that these organisations **are rewarded** with stalwart supporters who return for repeat business and actively campaign with their communities on behalf of that organisation."*

- Missing Out. The business case for customer diversity. Deloitte Australia, Feb. 2017.

Your focus as leaders of significant community organisations should be away from diversity as a compliance initiative, and towards utilising it to design experiences for marginalised customers (or participants) to succeed in new markets, become more innovative, and accelerate customer centricity. Boards that can do this are more likely to be successful and sustainable.

For positive diversity outcomes, refer to:
- *Missing Out. The business case for customer diversity.* Deloitte Australia, February 2017.
- *Delivering Through Diversity*. McKinsey, January 2018.

Links to these reports are available on the online resources page at getonboardaustralia.com.au/better-board-recruitment-resources

Using this guide
This guide is divided into three sections:
- **Considerations before you start:** three things to get right to help set the right foundations and recruit the best candidates.
- **Setting the Right Foundations:** the underpinnings for your whole recruitment process. Get these bedded-down, and your recruitment will run efficiently and effectively.
- **Finding the Right Candidates:** how and where to source the best people for your board.

Each section contains practical exercises, activities, templates, and resources for you to begin taking positive steps towards building a positive board recruitment process and environment in your organisation.

Make use of these free resources. They will help you to expedite the process of creating a better board recruitment environment in your organisation.

Section One: Considerations before you Start

1. Consider your Constitution

Before you incorporate new board recruitment activities, you must review your constitution. You are primarily checking to see if it enables or precludes you from having a greater level of control over who is eligible to be a board member, how they are recruited onto the board, and how long they can stay.

Some other factors to review:
- **Quantity:** How many board members can you have?
- **Elected and appointed board members:** How do elections occur? Can the board appoint board members? How many? Can people move from appointed to elected? How? Can you have independent board members?
- **Composition:** Whom is the board made up of? Do you have the ability to have a skills-based board? Are there limitations on having certain people or groups of people on your board?
- **Term Limits:** Do you have term limits? How long are they for? Are terms staggered? Do you have maximum terms? How long can a person be on a board? This aligns with Key Principle 2.1 of the Governance Principles for SA State Sport Organisations.
- **Who can nominate to be a director:** Do they have to be a member of the organisation/club? How long do they have to be a member for before they can nominate?
- **Nomination process:** Do they fill out a form? Do they need a current member or board member to second their nomination? Can they apply online? Are there any extraneous nomination requirements?
- **Committees:** Can you form committees? How many? What types? Can you have non-board members on these committees?
- **Removal:** Can you remove board members? How is this done?

Many boards don't regularly review their constitution. Best practice recommends reviewing your constitution every year or two to make sure the document is working for the organisation and is in line with modern governance practices. A way to make sure this happens is to make this review an item on your board calendar.

Homework
Take the time to review your constitution and have the conversation with your board about changes that need to be made to modernise it and enable you to introduce recruitment processes that work for the board and organisation.

Begin the process of making updates where required following the procedure laid out within the constitution.

2. Consider Diversity

Research conducted by McKinsey* demonstrated that more diverse organisations were better able to secure top-talent employees, improve their customer focus, increase employee satisfaction, and improve decision making, leading to an ongoing cycle of increasing returns.

"*Diversity in age, sexual orientation, and experience (such as a global mind-set and cultural fluency) are likely to bring some level of competitive advantage for companies.*"

Making Diversity Happen

a. Make it a part of your broader selection criteria, supported by the board as a whole.
Have a conversation with your board about how it can become more strategic with its recruitment, begin to build diversity into its ethos, and understand what diversity would look like in action. Looking to your organisation's membership may indicate the diversity attributes you could be working towards.

b. Be intentional about seeking diverse candidates.
Diversity doesn't just happen; you probably won't find diverse candidates via traditional board recruitment methods. Start thinking outside of the box when it comes to finding new and diverse candidates. Alignment with Key Principle 2.6 of the Governance Principles for SA State Sport Organisations will help ensure a gender-balanced board.

c. Leverage diversity.
It's no use investing all of the effort, energy, and time on building a diverse board only to shun differences and disregard alternative perspectives and ideas. Find ways to draw out differences and use them to contribute positively to the organisation's performance and outcomes.

Techniques like mentoring and reverse-mentoring, idea jams and other creative strategic planning methods (see: bluesummitstrategy.com/creativity/creativity-in-strategic-planning/2007/) are great ways to tap into the collective wisdom of a diverse group. These techniques are available to all boards and don't cost any money. All it takes is an open and progressive mindset and intentional action.

Activity
How diverse is your board now? How can it be more diverse? Discuss with your board and set at least one diversity-focused objective connected with your board recruitment.

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* Full McKinsey article mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters

3. Consider Culture

Organisational and board culture shouldn't 'just happen'. Left up to chance, the culture in the boardroom will very likely become something unproductive and ineffective for the organisation.

Consider under-committed board members, chronic non-attendance at meetings, disruptive behaviours, and general lack of understanding of what it means to be on a board. These are all signs of a poor culture and one that was left to formulate on its own.

If your current board culture seems to leave much to be desired, perhaps it's a logical first step to work on improving this before pursuing new people to join your board. Great candidates will do extensive due diligence before joining a board; if they see signs of bad culture, they will remove themselves from the selection process and go elsewhere.

How to start setting the culture you want
- Define your values, standards, and acceptable behaviours that match and reinforce these. These can be reflected in a formal document such as a Board Charter.
- Articulate what a good culture looks like on your board, through the organisation, and out into your clubs, membership, and the broader community.
- Find ways to measure good culture and regularly measure it.
- Hold people accountable for cultural breaches.
- All board members should lead by example, particularly the Chair.

Activity
What is your board culture like? Do board members' actions reflect the values and standards you espouse? Write down what a good culture looks like to you (it could be what you currently have, or what you are currently desiring for your board). Have the conversation with your board and set some mutual goals around the culture you want.

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Section Two: Setting the Foundation

4. Conduct a Skills Audit

To know the skills and expertise required and desired from a new board candidate, the Board needs a clear picture of the collective skills, experience, expertise, knowledge and abilities of the board at a point in time.

This gives you a very clear idea of the type of person you should be seeking to fill your current and future vacancy / vacancies. This snapshot is usually referred to as a 'skills matrix' and ranks each Director's expertise (say, on a scale of 0 low expertise – 5 high expertise) across a range of factors.

What factors to choose?
The factors that you select to rank your board members' skills, experience, expertise, knowledge and abilities largely depend on the organisation's requirements at the time (looking at the present moment and into the future). This aligns with Key Principle 2.7 of the Governance Principles for SA State Sport Organisations.

Cues can be taken from the requirements of the board to form a conducive and constructive team – including diversity, the organisation's strategic plan and goals, any significant issues or changes on the horizon, key organisational dynamics (for example, networks into crucial funding bodies), and anything else that the board deems important.

Generic Factors
- Board / Governance Experience
- Strategy Planning
- Risk Management
- People and Talent Management
- Innovation and Creativity
- Commercial Management
- Legal Expertise
- Financial Expertise
- Marketing Expertise
- Stakeholder Engagement Expertise
- Workplace Health and Safety Expertise

Organisation-Specific Factors
- Experience from within the Sport (e.g. current or former elite athlete or coach)
- Grant Writing Expertise
- Sport / Not-For-Profit Governance Experience
- Government / Key Stakeholder Relations
- Fundraising Expertise
- Ethics Expertise
- Volunteer Management Expertise

Conducting the skills audit

Running the skills audit produces the skills matrix. The skills audit can be done manually via a paper survey (either digitally or with a hard-copy document) and then entered into an Excel Spreadsheet. Alternatively, it can be facilitated via an online survey tool such as SurveyMonkey (free), which automatically crunches the numbers for you and gives you an instant overview of your current board levels across each factor and highlights where the gaps are.

It's useful to have the data represented along each factor as an aggregate and along each board member as an aggregate. This way you can see the collective AND individual level of skills, experience, expertise, knowledge and abilities. This will help you to effectively succession plan for your board.

Activity

Brainstorm the key skills, experience, expertise, knowledge and abilities you want to measure with your board?

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Put this information into your board skills audit / skills matrix using the downloadable template (or into your SurveyMonkey survey). Visit getonboardaustralia.com.au/better-board-recruitment-resources for these templates.

5. Look to the Strategic Plan

Where is your organisation heading? What are its goals, desires, and requirements in the short, medium, and long term? Does your current board hold the requisite skills, experience, expertise, knowledge and abilities needed to get the organisation where it wants and/or needs to go?

Your strategic plan gives you clear guidance on the skills, experience, expertise, knowledge and abilities needed around the board table to support and steward the organisation towards achieving its goals, and identifying and capitalising on opportunities.

Broaden Your Perspective
Looking further afield, incorporate some diversity factors into your considerations around board composition and capabilities. This goes beyond gender balance to include diversity in age, cultural background, professional experience, language, potential for leadership, personal experience, religion, disability, LGBTIQ, and so on.

Activity
What strategic and diversity factors do you incorporate as part of your board candidate considerations? What does your organisation want to achieve over the next 3-5 years?

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6. Prepare a Position Description

Position descriptions for board members help to clarify their requirements and expectations. They assist board candidates to understand what is required and expected of them before joining the board, such as required expertise / skillset, the minimum number of meetings to attend, participation in sub-committees, attendance at community-facing events, clear indication of time investment required, etc.

Additionally, the position description also serves as a useful jumping-off point for you to prepare a board vacancy 'advertisement'.

Position descriptions will generally include the following information:
- Desired skillset / expertise
- Duties and responsibilities
- Expectations
- Code of Conduct
- Performance Metrics (KPIs)
- Any other necessary information

Activity
Start making notes on each position description section related to your board.

PD Element	Notes
Duties and Responsibilities	
Expectations	
Code of Conduct	
Performance Metrics (KPIs)	
Any Other Information	

Use the downloadable *Director Position Description* for guidance on preparing a final version of your director position description. Find this at getonboardaustralia.com.au/better-board-recruitment-resources

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7. Develop a Rigorous Screening and Interview Process

Having a robust screening and interview process enables you to assess all candidates objectively and increases the likelihood of securing a standout board candidate.

A nominations committee can help work through the applications, interviews, and shortlisting, culminating in recommending a candidate for appointment. The nominations committee can stand-alone and only meet when new candidates are required, or it can be incorporated into the functions of an existing committee, such as the Governance Committee. This aligns with Key Principle 2.2 of the Governance Principles for SA State Sport Organisations.

Having your screening and interview process documented will ensure a consistent approach that can easily be replicated and continue as board members change. It takes away the guesswork and provides an easy-to-follow process for the current board members to utilise.

Remember to ensure your appointment process meets the requirements in your constitution.

For inspiration, refer to the downloadable *Director Selection and Induction Process* available at getonboardaustralia.com.au/better-board-recruitment-resources

Activity

From the below lists, highlight the screening and interview process elements that you will include in your screening and interviewing process for your board.

Information on the *Candidate Screening and Interview Elements* can be found online on the resource page at getonboardaustralia.com.au/better-board-recruitment-resources

Screening Process	Interviewing Process
Nominations committee established to set the candidate criteria, search, interview, and recommend new candidate(s)	Initial interview with nominations committee
Review skills matrix: identify gaps and required skills, knowledge, and expertise	Interview with Chair and CEO/GM
Review current and future organisation requirements and strategy: identify desired and required candidate attributes	Interview with Chair
	Engage a professional recruitment consultant
Identify desired diversity characteristics	Perform reference checks
	Preferred candidates meet with full board
Candidate demonstrates that they understand what is expected of them and confirm that they are willing to make the necessary commitment	Preferred candidates sit in on a board meeting as observer
Candidate meets the requirements laid out in the constitution	
Candidate given relevant information to assist with initial enquiry (e.g. history, purpose, and overview of organisation; current strategic plan; current board members' profiles; funding overview; constitution)	
Candidate given relevant information to assist with their due diligence (e.g. past Annual Reports; Full board packs including minutes of past 3 board meetings; planned board and Committee meeting dates; Board calendar; Committee charters; Organisation chart; Board charter; Director position descriptions)	

8. Build an Effective Induction and On-boarding Process

First impressions count, so it's important that your induction and on-boarding process is authentic and makes a new board member feel welcome and that they've made a fantastic board choice.

Having a thorough process that sets your new board member(s) up for success enables them to start returning value to the organisation faster. It helps them make better-informed decisions, contribute more meaningfully to conversations around the board table, makes them feel part of the team, and fully understand the business, its marketplace, and strategic opportunities to pursue. It also aligns you with Key Principle 2.14 of the Governance Principles for SA State Sport Organisations.

Activity
In the table below, tick the elements of an induction and on-boarding process that could be incorporated into your board member recruitment process.

Information on the *Induction and On-Boarding Elements* can be found online on the resource page at getonboardaustralia.com.au/better-board-recruitment-resources

Induction and On-Boarding Elements
o Consent to act as a director, disclosure, and declaration of not being a disqualified person signed
o A Deed of access and indemnity to sign
o Welcome email / phone call from Chair
o Discussion about culture, expectations, and requirements
o Any necessary security clearance, passwords, and/or passes setup and given to new board member
o Email setup (if given an organisation-specific password)
o Email added to distribution list
o Contact information shared with board members
o Welcome pack: any necessary additional information not received in due diligence and interview phase (for example: board charter; all organisational and board policies; Letter of appointment; Position description; Contact details of staff and board)
o Notify community of new board member via newsletter and/or social media
o Review position description and expectations
o Discuss committee involvement and appoint new board member to committee(s)
o Introduction to other board members at first attended board meeting
o Provide bios of all other board members
o Board Buddy assigned
o Tour of offices / club / meeting venue
Continued over page…

- Discuss organisation structure and peoples' key responsibilities
- Introduction to staff and other key people (employees and volunteers)
- Send email to key staff and other stakeholders introducing new board member
- Access granted and inducted onto online board resources and other digital communication tools utilised by the board (for example, shared DropBox folders; online banking, etc.)
- Chair meeting to discuss style of leadership and how they run meetings
- Ensure new board members has all board meeting dates and other special event dates in their calendar
- Deliver feedback on performance after a few months on the board (or earlier if required)

Section Three: Finding New Board Candidates

9. Set up a Dedicated Board Opportunities Web Page

The first step all boards should do is set up a dedicated page on their organisation's website all about your board, what you look for from board candidates, your board member selection process, and how candidates can apply for, or register their interest in, joining your board.

Once you've decided on the content of this webpage, much of the candidate application process can be automated through plugins and/or simple coding (ask your website support person for help).

This webpage serves as your 'home base'; the place where you point everyone to for further information about the vacancy and instructions on how they apply if they meet the criteria and are interested.

Tennis SA does a wonderful job of this. You can find their dedicated *Board Nominations* web page at www.tennis.com.au/sa/about/board-nominations (the live web link is available online on the resource page at getonboardaustralia.com.au/better-board-recruitment-resources

Activity
Start brainstorming ideas about the information and online forms that you can include on your new webpage on your website (utilise the position description created in step 6 for ideas on what information to include). A tip is to refer to your constitution to see if there are certain criteria that candidates have to meet to be a board member and include these in your online form / recruitment process.

Homework
Consider adding the documents associated with an initial board enquiry (listed in the activity in 7. Develop a Rigorous Screening and Interview Process) on your board vacancy webpage.

10. Promotion

Now is the time to go to a wide audience to capture new and diverse candidates that may have been missed via other methods. These are virtually costless, however, will require a small time investment.

Advertise
A bit old-fashioned, but now with a modern twist that doesn't have to cost any money. Advertising allows you to promote your board vacancy through your website and social media channels, your print and digital newsletters, and through other relevant mediums (online and offline).

If your board consists of volunteer board members, organisations such as **Volunteering SA/NT**, **Seek Volunteer, Good Jobs** (by Our Community), and **Pro Bono Australia** provide free advertisement services to qualified not-for-profit organisations.

Social Media
Social media is a unique environment to be searching for board candidates, and doing it well requires a bit of effort on your part. However, it's a bit different and could open you up to a range of potential candidates that may have been 'un-findable' in the past.

LinkedIn allows people to list on their profile that they are seeking not-for-profit board positions (under their Volunteer section in their profile). People on **Twitter** can include their interest in boards in their profile. And I am sure that there is a range of other social media networks where people can share their board aspirations. Use the search function in each network to find "aspiring board members" or people "looking for board opportunities".

The great benefit of utilising social media as a board candidate search tool is that you can get a sense of the person's interests, skills, expertise, influence, and personal network before you reach out to them about potentially joining your board.

Additionally, utilise social media to widely promote your vacancy. The ability to share and tag people on social media posts means that your community can push out your vacancy to a wider audience (that means free marketing for you!).

Even if you don't use it to find candidates, social media should be part of your board candidate vetting process. If for nothing other than reputation control – you don't want a social media troll joining your board.

Activity
Start building a list of promotion places that you can use as part of your recruitment activities.

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11. Leverage Existing Board Members' Networks

Although it's highly beneficial to look beyond the usual colleague and friend circles of you and your current board members, there is additional benefit to be realised by utilising the 'network economy' in recruiting new board members. After all, current board members are positioned to understand the requirements of board members and can put forward individuals whom they believe will be able to fulfil those requirements.

The best boards avoid recruiting people 'just because they know them' or they are a 'friend of a friend'. They utilise the considerations and techniques covered in previous sections to inform their ideal candidate profile and use that to help broaden – and then narrow – their candidate search. If a board member does end up referring a friend, they make sure they declare this and ensure they are not the person to conduct or be involved in this candidate's interview to avoid any risk of a conflict of interest.

Activity
Consider the potential limitations from this approach to finding board candidates and find ways that you can overcome them. Write these down in the space below.

12. Utilise your Existing Candidate Database & Sub-Committees

Candidate Database

Much like employers of choice, great boards (lets call them 'boards of choice') should be consistently attracting potential future board members.

As an organisation and a board, be open to receiving 'cold calls' or approaches from prospective board candidates. If a position is not yet available on your board or in your committees, take their details and keep them on record (a simple spreadsheet works well). You can then utilise this 'database' to find your next board member when a vacancy becomes available.

You can download a *Sample Candidate Database* on the resource page at getonboardaustralia.com.au/better-board-recruitment-resources

Sub-Committees

Do you utilise committees to position and 'test out' future board members?

Committees are the perfect environment to engage interested board candidates if there are currently no positions available on the board, the candidate is not yet ready for the board, or their personality is better suited to a committee role rather than a board role.

You can then draw from your committee(s) when the instance arises for a new person to join the board.

*NB. Check your Constitution for your organisation's requirements and/or limitations for committees.

Activity

Start laying the foundations for your candidate database. What information would you want to gather from interested candidates?

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Bonus

For an advanced approach, have an embedded form on your website that captures your required candidate information, including area of expertise and other data, direct from the candidate and sends an automated email to a nominated person (e.g. the board Chair or relevant committee Chair).

13. Recruit at Networking Events

Any time you have a chance to meet people is an opportunity to find potential board candidates. Consider networking events across two main categories: general networking events and purpose-built networking events.

General networking events happen frequently and I'm sure that you attend many during the course of a year. Open your mind to finding board candidates at these events; you're there anyway, so why not?

Purpose-built networking events are usually set up like speed-dating events. Organisations who are seeking new board members are bought together with interested candidates in a setting geared towards matching a candidate with a board. They are worthwhile attending if you're looking for a different candidate or accessing a new candidate selection pool. There are many organisations that regularly run these types of events, The Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing being one of them.

Activity
Make a list of networking opportunities you have or can create over the next three months that may put you in front of your target market. Discuss these with your board and see if you can all play a part in accessing fresh candidates.

14. Leverage Board Registers and Connectors

Board Registers

Board candidate registers are becoming quite common and are facilitated by a range of organisations. Some registers are maintained centrally for specific use by affiliated organisations; for example, the **Premier's Women's Directory** is maintained by the South Australian Office for Women and to assists organisations to find female board candidates. Whereas **CBB Board Match** is managed by Community Business Bureau and is available for not-for-profit organisations to find both male and female board candidates.

If your organisation qualifies for access to any of the board registers on offer, I encourage you to utilise them for your candidate search.

More information about – and links to – Board Registers is available online on the resource page at getonboardaustralia.com.au/better-board-recruitment-resources

Connectors

Connectors are organisations and individuals who have access to a vast network of potential candidates. They can do some of the heavy lifting for you by promoting your vacancy to many people, can identify particular individuals that match your candidate criteria, or are usually called on by aspiring board members to help connect them with board opportunities.

Find out who these organisations and people are and reach out to them requesting their help. The more information you can give them about your ideal candidate, the better they will be able to help. For example, Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand can connect you with financially-skilled candidates, the Law Society can connect you with legally-skilled candidates, and so on.

Activity

Start to build a hit list of organisations and people you know that are well connected. Who can you ask to help connect you with the right people?

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Homework

Review available board registers using your search criteria to find potential new candidates.

Next Steps

Doing board recruitment right for your board requires being prepared, proactive, and intentional. Much of the activity you can do to have an effective and efficient board recruitment process is free or very low cost. This means that you don't have to be a large or resource-rich organisation to have a high-performing board full of smart, dedicated, and diverse individuals.

Use this workbook as a practical resource to start your work to better recruit for your board. The activities are designed to stimulate you and your board's thinking on how you recruit for your board and how improvements can be made to make this work better for the board and the organisation. Each section and activity builds on the others and sets you on the path to developing and instilling a modern board recruitment process and environment on your board.

You don't have to walk this path alone. The South Australian Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing are available to help you directly or suggest other individuals and organisations that can give you hands-on support with your board recruitment activities.

Best of luck with your future board recruitment activities.