

# Fact sheet # 16

## Governance Tip: Choosing a new Board Member

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Choosing a new member for your governing body (e.g. board or committee) is one of the most important decisions your charity can make.

It's important that board members share a commitment to your charity's purpose and between them have the right mix of skills and experience to support the work of your charity.

### **What to do**

- Check your rules and any legislation that applies to your charity to find out the process for how to appoint a new member. There is probably a process you have to follow, possibly rules about who is eligible and whether you have to hold an election or if the existing board members can appoint someone to fill the vacancy.
- Consider your current members, and the skills and experience they have. Think about any gaps and what a new member could bring to help your charity achieve its purpose. You may want to form a sub-committee to manage the process.
- Think about how you might find a candidate. Look at

your volunteers, your networks or consider placing a public advertisement. There are websites where you can post free notices for board vacancies such as OurCommunity's Board Matching Service, Pro Bono Australia's Volunteer Match and Volunteering Australia's Go Volunteer.

- Make sure candidates are aware of the expectations of the role including any legal obligations. Some charities interview candidates so they can explain what they are expecting and answer questions from the candidate. Once they accept the role, it is a good idea to give them a 'letter of appointment'. This letter should outline the meeting times, expectations (including key duties and responsibilities) and any other relevant information.
- Have a plan for inducting new members. They may need training and support to be successful in their roles and a strong induction processes can help them contribute more quickly. Consider preparing an induction pack including information such as a copy of your charity's rules, current and previous financial statements, minutes, reports...and ACNC factsheets. A 'buddy' system may help them settle in quickly.

- If you appoint or elect a new member, [notify the ACNC if that member is a 'responsible entity' under the ACNC Act](#) (and, if required, your [incorporating regulator](#)). If you do this on time, there is no fee to pay to the ACNC.

### **What not to do**

- Don't make assumptions about a person's experience or expertise – get to know them and check that they feel confident in their ability to fill the role before they make a commitment.
- Don't try to play down the commitment required to be a board member. This is a serious responsibility and candidates should be aware of the expectations the charity will have of them.
- Don't rush it! Selecting a board member is an important decision and can take time. Make sure you take the time to conduct a thorough, transparent and merit-based selection process. If your board members are appointed by an election, you may like to consider speaking with candidates well in advance so that they understand what process and what the commitment involves.

(Source: ACNC, 2013)