

Feminist Governance Toolkit

For boards of specialist gendered violence services in Queensland

Section 2: Board Capabilities and Effectiveness



WorkUp
QUEENSLAND

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Taking Care

This resource discusses domestic, family, and sexual violence.

It is important to understand that people working in the sector, including board members, may have lived experience of gendered violence and trauma and, at times, need support.

As you go through these materials, please take a break and access help if you need to.

Here are some expert organisations that offer both personal and professional support when you may need it:



WorkUP Queensland is the Sexual Violence, Women's Health and Wellbeing, and Domestic and Family Violence sector's partner in supporting a strong, skilled and engaged workforce.

We bring together The Healing Foundation's strong connection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and healing, backed by the expertise of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) in facilitating evidence-based policy and practice.

Informed and driven by frontline providers, WorkUP aims to address workforce-related challenges while taking opportunities to grow and equip the workforce and better support current and future workers.

Funded by the Queensland Government, we are proud to support the people who work in this sector who make such a significant, often pivotal impact in ending violence against women.

Together, WorkUP Queensland and the sector have created a plan to grow, retain, develop, support, connect, and sustain the workforce. This Feminist Governance Toolkit is one part of our important work. We hope that you may be able to use it to guide your thinking and complement your practices as a professional, diligent and compassionate board member.

Acknowledgment

The Feminist Governance Toolkit was developed by WorkUP Queensland in partnership with Inner Vision Consulting and Red Bandana Productions.

Representatives from the Domestic and Family Violence, Sexual Violence and Women's Health and Wellbeing sector contributed their ideas, knowledge, and practice wisdom to inform its development.

We thank everyone involved for their input and commitment to supporting good governance in the gendered violence sector.



Board Capabilities and Effectiveness



'Governance is the systems and processes that direct, manage and guide an organisation'.

This includes implementing systems and processes that ensure the organisation operates effectively and within ethical, funding, and legal requirements.

(Governance Institute of Australia, n.d.)

Effective not-for-profit governance provides consistent oversight, accountability, and checks and balances to ensure the organisation reaches its mission and goals and remains sustainable for the long term.

In this section, we explore what this looks like for boards of gendered violence services.



EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE



In the next few pages of this toolkit, we will delve into the key strategies, practices and relationships required for effective governance of gendered violence services that are guided by feminist frameworks.

Effective governance will enable services to enhance performance, better fulfill their purpose, mission and vision, and more effectively serve their communities.

Here are some overarching principles for effective governance. In the roles and responsibilities section on pages 39 we explore practices that a board may find useful to implement in their work in the gendered violence sector.

- > Clear purpose, mission and vision
- > Board composition, recruitment, orientation, training and succession planning
- > Culture monitoring and improvement
- > Board meetings and committees
- > Financial oversight
- > Fundraising and resource development
- > Risk management
- > Stakeholder engagement
- > Ethical and legal compliance
- > Performance, reporting and evaluation
- > Benchmarking and continuous improvement.



Jot down your thoughts

What potential or perceived conflicts of interest could arise for me in my role on the board?

.....

How did my induction to the board equip me to perform my board duties?

.....

How reflective of the community is our board?

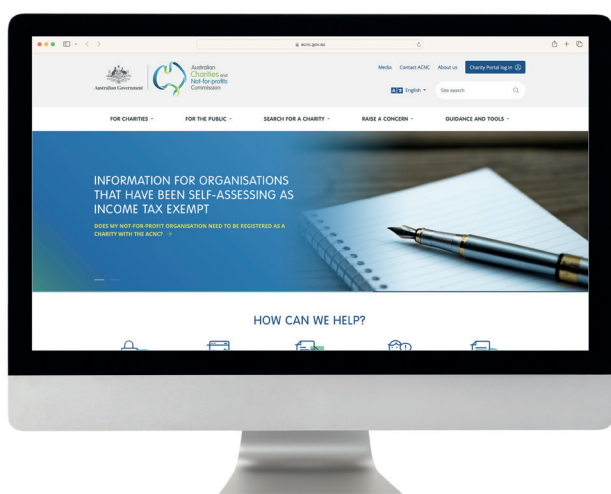
In addition to using this resource, we encourage board members to seek specialist governance training and have a look at other helpful resources to enable you to appropriately fulfill your obligations as a board member. Here are some useful materials and more are listed at the end of this workbook on pages 95.

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Governance Standards

The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) Governance Standards are a set of core, minimum standards that deal with how a NFP is run (including its processes, activities and relationships). The set of high-level principles are not precise rules, so a charity may decide how to comply or best use them in their own ways.

The ACNC provides more information about the standards and an evaluation tool to support services to assess if they are meeting their obligations, and to help identify any gaps that prevent them from doing so.



Find out more
about ACNC

CLICK HERE



Governance Principles

The Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD), in consultation with the not-for-profit sector, has created a Framework of Governance Principles to help services understand and achieve high-quality governance.

Like the ACNC Standards, these principles are not prescriptive but can be applied to meet the unique needs of the service size, structure and purpose.

The AICD notes '*all organisations can achieve good governance*' and the principles provide a handy resource to help us do so.



AICD
Governance Principles

CLICK HERE



Stepping onto a board comes with responsibility. It is important to understand the personal implications if the organisation is mis-managed financially. It is the responsibility of all board members to check the financial management of the organisation.

TIP

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

What a board guided by a feminist framework does and doesn't do

The distinction between delegated operational management and strategic governance is crucial for the effective functioning of a gendered violence service. Decisions we make may have serious unintended consequences and place victim-survivors at risk. In this section, we will explore the important things we must do as an effective board operating in the best interests of the service. We will also examine those we should avoid, with an emphasis on maintaining this important distinction.

In summary, an effective board will focus on strategic governance, setting high-level policy, providing oversight, and ensuring the organisation's mission is upheld. And, it will avoid getting entangled in day-to-day operations which can hinder efficiency and undermine the organisation's leadership structure. Clear communication and respect for the roles and responsibilities of both the board and operational staff is critical.

A good board:

- > Sets the policy of the organisation
- > Makes decisions that align with the service purpose and mission
- > Has a Chairperson who directs and manages the CEO
- > Enhances the organisation's public standing
- > Appoints a Public Officer (ATO)
- > Evaluates its performance on an annual basis
- > Regularly reviews strategy to ensure alignment with purpose and mission of the organisation
- > Identifies the association
- > Manages financial affairs
- > Oversees risk management
- > Reports to members and funding bodies
- > Lodges required reports
- > Acts for the association
- > Follows the association rules
- > Sets high standards for board reporting, including their own preparation and questioning
- > Bears ultimate responsibility, even on tasks that have been delegated to others and including on voluntary boards
- > Maintains appropriate boundaries with staff as well as between operational and strategic matters
- > Acts always in the best interests of the service.

What else?

A good board doesn't:

- > Perform day-to-day management tasks
- > Communicate directly with staff unless there is a significant complaint about the CEO/Manager
- > Get involved in individual cases and client matters
- > Disclose confidential information
- > Bully or harass each other or staff
- > Engage in human resource matters except appointment and performance evaluation of the CEO
- > Make operational decisions
- > Operate outside the service purpose and strategy
- > Ignore financial oversight
- > Neglect strategic planning
- > Engage in favouritism or nepotism
- > Avoid accountability for the organisation's performance
- > Make major decisions in isolation from input from relevant stakeholders.

What else?



Jot down your thoughts

How do I ensure I hold myself accountable for operating within the boundaries of my role?

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Governance vs Management

Understanding the difference between our governance role as a board and the operational role of management can help to ensure we operate effectively and enable the organisation to do so.

The following list provides some examples of the responsibilities that the board has delegated to management.

- > Implement the decisions made by the board and ensure functionality day-to-day
- > Implement and drive the strategic plan including developing an operational plan and keeping the board members informed
- > Ensure proper management of financials, detailed records, prepare budget, prepare financial reports for board review
- > Implement policies and risk appetite; report to the board via risk register
- > Manage HR matters and anything else related to staff
- > Provide accessible, non-judgemental, critical support
- > Provide services based on identified client needs sought through consultation and feedback
- > Educate, advocate and challenge harmful gender bias and discrimination that cause gendered violence
- > Work collaboratively to manage gendered violence risk and provide the most appropriate and safe support to clients
- > Employ suitable workforce who are aware of duties and best practice and complies with them
- > Act honestly and in the best interest of the clients based on their feedback
- > Exercise care, skill and diligence in carrying out their roles
- > Provide services that are sound, accountable and responsive
- > Provide sound financial management of funded services.

What else?



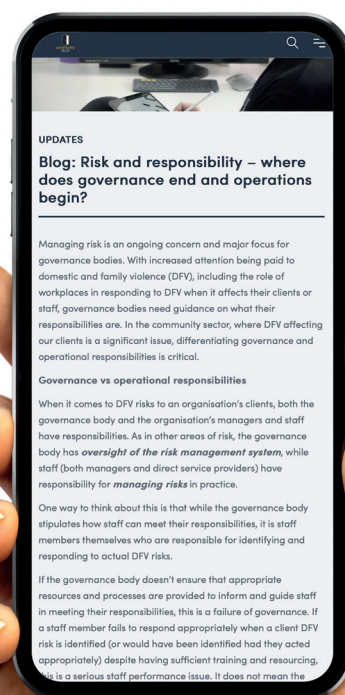
Not down your thoughts

Thinking about the list of management delegated responsibilities – are there times I have inadvertently stepped in?
What were the impacts?



Where does governance end and operations begin?

[CLICK HERE](#)



*Being a board member is a bit like being on a boat.
Be careful where you put your weight. Anonymous*





You recently stepped onto the board of a gender-based violence service as the Chairperson. You are semiretired and passionate about ending gender-based violence. You have managed a large for profit organisation and believe you contribute useful skills and experience. You have been trying to engage the CEO in some of the service delivery challenges she has mentioned including offering some great suggestions.

You have noticed she seems a bit annoyed when you interject during her verbal summary of her monthly report and feel confused. The CEO has a very different leadership style to yours but you feel your advice would help her. You are struggling to step back from trying to tell her what to do when she brings issues to the board.

At the last board meeting, she shared that she engaged a HR company to assist with a performance management process. You have tried to tell her that you think she is too soft with staff and a firmer approach is needed. The CEO shared she has been following the guidance of the HR company and also feels some important complexities such as the ongoing risk of burnout and vicarious trauma should be considered when managing staff in the gender-based violence sector. Your business-oriented background means you feel frustrated at what feels like a softly, softly approach.

How do you manage this considering the following:

- Value alignment/misalignment with the CEO
- How to approach a conversation with the CEO about your different ways of working
- Your contribution to a healthy and strong working relationship with the CEO
- How to check yourself when you feel the urge to step into the CEO role?
- Seeking feedback from the CEO and board and what do you do with it?
- Any other considerations to ensure you help rather than hinder the good work of the organisation
- Your approach to conflict.

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Roles and responsibilities

An effective board is clear about their roles, relationships, and responsibilities.

Typically, boards are comprised of:



We have provided some general information about these roles and encourage you to use other specialist governance resources to find out more about your board role based on information that reflects the structure of the service. For example, services operating under the Association Incorporation Act may have different role requirements than services that operate under the Corporations Act.

Overall, a general board member's primary responsibility is to ensure the organisation's success in achieving its mission while upholding its values and maintaining legal and ethical standards.

Active engagement, commitment, and a passion for the organisation's cause are essential attributes for an effective board member of a gender-based violence service.

The roles and responsibilities of board members aligned with the high-level principles for effective governance include:

1. Clear purpose, vision and mission

- > Co-create a clear and compelling vision and mission for the organisation
- > Understand and commit to the organisation's purpose and values
- > Co-create, oversee and review the organisation's strategic plan including adapting to changing circumstances and opportunities
- > Ensure the organisation's values are clear and are regularly reviewed.



2. Board composition, recruitment, orientation, training and succession planning

- > Aim for a balanced mix of skills, including leadership, financial, legal, fundraising, content expertise and lived experience
- > Support the organisation in identifying and preparing future board leaders
- > Provide a comprehensive induction and ongoing training for new and existing board members (including this resource) to ensure the gendered violence context is understood
- > Consider term limits in board roles and regular rotation of board members to bring in fresh perspectives and enable the building of skills and experience
- > Ensure all members understand expectations of their roles, responsibilities, and legal obligations
- > Select a capable board Chair or President to provide positive leadership, direction and chairing of board meetings
- > Be open to leadership roles within the board, such as committee Chair or board officer.

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

3. Culture

- > Define and model the desired organisational culture aligned with purpose, vision and mission
- > Work in solidarity by fostering a purpose-driven culture of collaboration and constructive dialogue
- > Maintain open, inclusive and transparent communication with all stakeholders
- > Co-create a culture that shares successes, challenges, and progress regularly
- > Ensure mechanisms are in place to support and measure organisational culture.



4. Board Meetings and Committees

- > Allocate sufficient time and resources to fulfill board duties effectively
- > Ensure agendas and materials for review are provided with adequate review time prior to the meeting
- > Hold regular and well-structured board meetings including centering the purpose of the organisation
- > Prepare for meetings by reviewing materials and agendas and completing tasks required prior to the meeting
- > Attend board meetings as scheduled, actively contribute to discussions and ask questions to ensure understanding
- > Vote on important organisational matters
- > Encourage active participation and engagement from all board members and establish clear consequences for no-shows or regular cancellations
- > Establish board sub-committees to focus on specific areas such as governance, finance, fundraising, and programs
- > Ensure sub-committees are productive and report back to the full board regularly. This can be done via a regular report template or a process that is decided upon by the board.



5. Financial Oversight

- > Review and approve the annual budget
- > Monitor the organisation's financial health and sustainability ensuring responsible financial management, including adherence to budgetary constraints
- > Establish a finance committee to oversee budgeting, financial reporting, and audit processes. Implement a monthly meeting between the finance manager of the organisation and Treasurer to review finance reports before the board meeting
- > Ensure transparency and accountability in financial management with clear reporting structures.

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

6. Fundraising and Resource Development

- > Support and participate in fundraising efforts including cultivating potential donors and funding opportunities
- > Work strategically to diversify funding sources and develop sustainable fundraising strategies.



7. Risk Management

- > Develop and maintain policies and procedures to ensure compliance with legal, auditing, funding, and ethical standards
- > Identify and mitigate potential risks that could impact the organisation – make risk management a standing agenda item for board meetings.



8. Stakeholder Engagement

- > Advocate for the organisation's interests at the local, regional, or national level, if applicable
- > Assist in public relations efforts to enhance the organisation's visibility and credibility
- > Foster positive relationships with the community, donors, volunteers, and other stakeholders by attending events and engaging with local and sectoral stakeholders, policy-makers and politicians
- > Participate in activities that support gender equality
- > Seek input and feedback from clients and the community to inform decision-making and program improvement and development.



9. Ethical and Legal Compliance and Program oversight

- > Understand the organisation's programs and services
- > Ensure the organisation operates within the boundaries of legal and regulatory obligations
- > Approve major policies, bylaws, and significant organisational decisions
- > Monitor program effectiveness and impact and provide input and guidance as required
- > Adhere to a code of ethics and/or a conflict of interest policy
- > Ensure the highest standards of ethical conduct within the organisation
- > Promote a positive culture that encourages and expects ethical behaviour and adherence to legal and duty of care requirements
- > Establish a code of ethics for board members ensuring there is a focus on aligned values and understanding of the complexity work in the gendered violence sector.



10. Performance and Evaluation

- > Participate in board self-assessment and evaluation processes
- > Seek opportunities for board and personal growth
- > Develop key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the organisation and the board's progress
- > Conduct regular evaluations of the board's performance as a whole and of individual members. For example, develop a performance appraisal process specially for the board use. This could include a 360 feedback process between board Chair and board members.



11. Continuous Improvement

- > Embrace a culture of continuous improvement and learning. This could include the provision of relevant client feedback to the board with recommended improvements
- > Be flexible and adapt board practices based on feedback, lessons learned and changing circumstances.



Adapted from

Australian Institute of Company Directors. (n.d.). Not-for-Profit Governance Principles. AICD. Retrieved from <https://www.aicd.com.au/tools-and-resources/not-for-profit-governance-principles.html>

Governance Institute of Australia. (n.d.). Good Governance Principles and Guidance for NFP Organisations. Governance Institute of Australia. Retrieved from <https://www.governanceinstitute.com.au/> (paid membership required)



Jot down your thoughts

What else from an intersectional feminist governance perspective?

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Additional responsibilities for particular roles might include:

President/Chairperson

- > Chairs the board meeting
- > Plays a key role in general meetings
- > Represents the organisation
- > Leads the board and the organisation
- > Takes initiative to resolve board-related issues
- > Provides line management supervision and support to the Manager/CEO.

Secretary

- > Maintains register of members
- > Manages correspondence including advice to President / Treasurer of matters arising
- > Takes nominations for the committee
- > Calls and convenes board and other meetings
- > Informs members about meetings (giving plenty of notice)
- > Arranges venue and logistics
- > Prepares agendas, gathering and presenting relevant documents
- > Takes and maintains minutes of meetings and provides to members
- > Maintains conflict of interest register
- > Provide reports to legislative bodies
- > Maintains register of critical documents such as those signed under Common Seal or the use of S127 requirements under the Corporations Act
- > Provides advice to the board on good governance
- > Arranges Annual General Meeting and ensures that all statutory obligations are met
- > Supports induction of new board members.

Treasurer

- > Keeps and maintains an asset register
- > Manages the petty cash balance
- > Oversees the petty cash book, keeping it up to date
- > Documents all payments made, including receipts, invoices and statements
- > Maintains all deposit and cheque books
- > Keeps all financial records in Queensland
- > Keeps track of payments received by using either consecutively numbered receipts or electronic record keeping system.



Jot down your thoughts

How clear am I about my role on the board? If I need more information, how will I access this?

.....

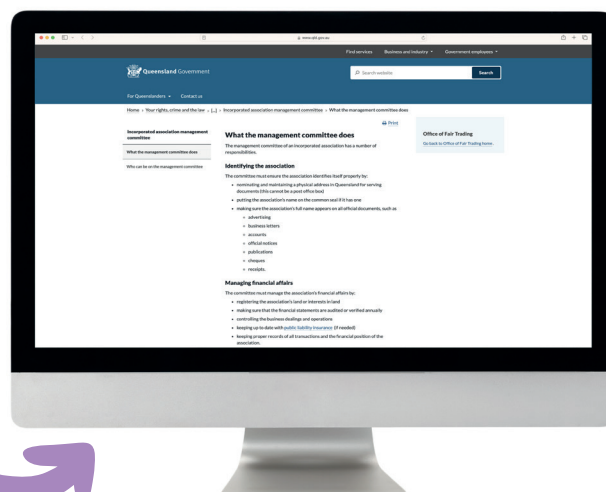
Do I have the time and commitment to fulfil the obligations of my role? How will I manage any constraints?

.....

Am I fulfilling the obligations of my role? Do I need any support or additional skills?

What the management committee does

CLICK HERE



EFFECTIVE PROCESSES



Effective governance processes are crucial for the success and impact of a gendered violence service. It is important to consider as a board how to identify indicators for improvement and review how you are tracking against these indicators. This will help ensure the board can better fulfill its role in supporting the organisation's purpose, mission and vision.

Here are eight key considerations for the governing of a gendered violence service:

1. Know and understand the context of the work
2. Know, understand, and apply values, vision and mission of the organisation
3. Know, understand and use the policies, procedures, guidelines and code of conduct of the organisation
4. Know, understand and have oversight of reporting requirements for funding received
5. Know, understand and have oversight of legal and regulatory obligations of the organisation, such as complying with the relevant laws, reporting on the financial and operational performance, and ensuring accountability and transparency
6. Ensure that the organisation will pass audits and comply with funding requirements
7. Ensure that the organisation engages client cohorts in feedback processes and service improvements
8. Know and understand the risks and challenges that the organisation may face, such as funding constraints, security threats, staff turnover, or reputational damage, and how to mitigate and manage them.

The board must be aware of the various dimensions of risk identification, assessment and mitigation present in a victim-survivor organisation. These are critical to effective decision-making in regard to organisational operations and service delivery. Louise



What the board needs from the CEO

Board reports keep board members informed about what's happening, bringing emerging opportunities to our attention and making us aware of risks that need to be mitigated.

Ensuring the information received from management is informative and accurate is a key responsibility of board members.

Services will have a report structure that works for them and it's up to the board to ask if additional information is required, or something is not understood. Important information recommended for inclusion as recommended by The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) includes:

- > **Executive Summary:** A brief overview of the main points and highlights of the report, such as the achievements, challenges, financial performance, compliance, risk management, human resources, stakeholder engagement, and plans of the organisation
- > **Achievements and Challenges:** A report on the progress and outcomes of the organisation in relation to its vision, mission, values, and goals, and the evidence, examples, analysis, and recommendations of the impact and value of the organisation's work

- > **Financial Performance and Position:** A presentation of the financial statements of the organisation, such as the income, expenses, assets, liabilities, and cash flow, and the explanation, comparison, assessment, and audit or review of the financial health and sustainability of the organisation
- > **Compliance and Risk Management:** A report on the compliance and risk management issues that the organisation faced or addressed, such as meeting the ACNC obligations, reporting to other regulators, adhering to the relevant laws and standards, and managing the potential risks and opportunities.



Gatekeepers Theory' suggests that information provided to boards may be filtered, e.g., oversimplified or sugar-coated.

TIP

EFFECTIVE PROCESSES

- > **Compliance and Risk Management:** A report on the compliance and risk management issues that the organisation faced or addressed, such as meeting the ACNC obligations, reporting to other regulators, adhering to the relevant laws and standards, and managing the potential risks and opportunities.
- > **Human Resources and Organisational Development:** A report on the human resources and organisational development matters that the organisation dealt with or implemented, such as staff and volunteer recruitment, retention, training, performance, wellbeing, diversity, and organisational structure, culture, policies, and procedures.
- > **Stakeholder Engagement and Communication:** A report on the stakeholder engagement and communication activities that the organisation conducted or participated in, such as fundraising, advocacy, collaboration, media, and feedback, and the outcomes and impacts of these activities on the clients and the community.
- > **Future Plans and Priorities:** A report on the future plans and priorities of the organisation for the next reporting period, such as the strategic directions, objectives, initiatives, and indicators, the budget and forecast, the opportunities and threats, and the projects and programs.
- > **Conclusion:** A summary of the main points and highlights of the report, an expression of gratitude and appreciation to the board, the staff, the volunteers, the clients, and the stakeholders, and an invitation for questions, comments, or suggestions from the board.



If we don't understand something or need to know more, it's our job to ask!

TIP



CEOs of gendered violence services have often been practitioners or specialists in their fields of expertise. They are highly skilled in these areas and may be developing their skills in broader strategic and governance skills. The best support a Board can provide is to fill the knowledge gaps around governance.

Rosie



As board members we are responsible for setting a high standard for management to report information. We need to be curious and make proper inquiries of the information provided.

TIP

EFFECTIVE PROCESSES



Working as a team

As board members, we play an important role in shaping the culture of the organisation.

We can have a positive impact on organisational culture by:

- > Working together in solidarity with the CEO
- > Centralising the service purpose and mission rather than following individual agendas
- > Holding ourselves and others on the board accountable
- > Having clear expectations of each other and what happens when these are not met
- > Ensuring conflict resolution policies and procedures in place and enacted
- > Representing the organisation and adherence to the code of conduct
- > Acting on code of conduct breaches at all levels.



Jot down your thoughts

What else can a board do from an intersectional feminist governance perspective?

Measuring the board's performance

As board members we carry responsibilities and have significant duties to uphold. It is important to be clear about how we measure and manage our performance and conduct to ensure we are helping and not hindering the organisation to achieve its purpose and strategy.

Some processes to consider are:

- > Setting clear expectations, objectives, and indicators for the board's governance
- > Evaluating and improving our skills, knowledge, and capabilities
- > Providing and receiving feedback, recognition, and support among the board members
- > Resolving any conflicts or disputes that may arise within the board
- > Fostering a culture of trust, respect, and collaboration among the board members.



Jot down your thoughts

How am I contributing to a positive working culture within the board?

.....

How can I raise issues of concern about matters that are or may impact the culture of the board?

.....

When the board is operating well as a team, what would I notice?

EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Working in solidarity

Working in solidarity with other people, organisations and community is a concept that is core to both feminist and union movements. It speaks not only to us working together but how to work together to centralise the cause of victim-survivors' rights and safety.

A feminist governance framework involves working in solidarity. It is important to explore what that looks like and how it is enacted at the governance level.

As we are developing our feminist governance frameworks and considering how we may best work in solidarity, it is important to have conversations about how we:

- > Are committed to eradicating gender-based violence
- > Centralise the cause of responding to and eradicating gender-based violence
- > Challenge political, economic, social and legal structures that oppress women
- > Work to redress structural inequities that exist on the basis of gender identity, race, sex, ability etc
- > Celebrate and notice the strengths of victim-survivors and ensure we are not assuming vulnerability
- > Ensure that victim-survivors are involved in and have a voice in the development of programs that impact them
- > Are accountable and responsive to women and victim-survivors in the community
- > Share power, knowledge and expertise with victim-survivors so they can advocate on their own behalf
- > Avoid colluding with gender stereotypes and continue to explore and eradicate internalised misogyny and racism
- > Commit to each other in solidarity.



Working in solidarity means maintaining a sustained and mutual commitment to a shared goal or mission and involves adopting a collaborative approach that actively avoids replicating or reinforcing systems of power and oppression in our methods and actions.

On our board, this principle was reflected in several practices, particularly the commitment to inclusion in decision-making processes and the centering of people with lived experience of intellectual disability and violence.

For example, new board members or those with less professional experience were actively encouraged to participate in discussions and voice any questions or concerns.

While a power imbalance inevitably existed, intentional steps were taken to mitigate it. Additionally, the board included a position specifically for a person with lived experience.

This member's needs were thoughtfully accommodated in terms of accessibility, input, and participation, ensuring their voice was equally valued and heard.

Hannah



COLLECTIVE CARE AND SOLIDARITY

'Our best resource for this work is each other. Our solidarity drew us to this work and it can foster our collective sustainability. A useful strategy is to build a Solidarity Team of people who shoulder you up in this work and have the moral courage to offer you critique and keep you connected to our collective ethics in resisting gender-based violence.' Vicky Reynolds

EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Important relationships and connections for intersectional feminist governance include:



Intersectional feminist governance means prioritising the experiences and voices of those most affected by intersecting forms of oppression. It involves recognising and addressing how different identities interact to create unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

Key practices of intersectional feminist governance in board operations are inclusive representation, equitable decision-making, transparent accountability, and allowing for feedback and critique from the communities served.

Anonymous



Co-create a board environment that encourages reflection on an individual and organisational level. Value opportunities to learn from successes as well as mistakes and work to ensure all voices have a place on your board.

TIP

EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS



Professional relationship with the CEO/Manager

A professional and clearly defined relationship with the CEO of the organisation is critical to the success of the organisation. Here are some tips for ensuring a positive and successful relationship.

Try to establish:

- > **Clear roles and expectations** for the board and the CEO and communicate them regularly
- > Clear and **measurable goals** and indicators for the CEO's performance, regular **feedback** and evaluation
- > **Support** for the CEO's professional development, recognition of their achievements, and **constructive criticism**
- > **Constructive** dialogue and debate, **respect** for a diversity of opinions and perspectives, while maintaining a shared vision, mission, values, and goals for the organisation
- > **Trust** and respect between the board and the CEO fostering a culture of **openness** and **transparency**
- > **Delegation** of authority and **responsibility** to the CEO, and avoidance of micromanaging or interfering with their work
- > **Collaboration** with the CEO on strategic issues, challenges, and opportunities
- > Supporting and **empowering** each other, and providing **guidance**, mentoring, and coaching to enhance the skills, knowledge, and capabilities of the CEO and the board
- > Maintaining a healthy **balance** between **support** and **oversight**, and between involvement and detachment
- > Resolving any conflicts or disputes in a **respectful** and **timely** manner and seeking mediation or arbitration if necessary.



The CEO and Board work together - lifting each other up.

Anonymous



EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Working relationship with the funding body

A positive working relationship with the funding body is critical to the organisation's success so it's important to understand our role as board members in this relationship. Here are some tips for ensuring a positive and successful relationship:

- > Clear delegations to the CEO/Manager as the voice of the organisation
- > Develop the organisations profile and voice through the CEO/Manager of the organisation and the Chairperson of the board where appropriate
- > Clear delegations around what can be communicated to the funding body including space for the CEO/Manager to advocate for change
- > Clear delegations and processes for potential new funding e.g., progressing tender applications to completion
- > Ensuring regular and transparent communication with the government funding body and the organisations' timely and accurate provision of information and feedback on the organisation's performance, challenges, and opportunities
- > Demonstration of the impact and value of the organisation's work with the clients and the community and provide evidence and examples of the outcomes and achievements of the funded programs and services
- > Seek and respond to the government funding body's input and advice on strategic, financial, operational, and risk management issues, and collaborate and consult on any changes or improvements that may affect the funding agreement or relationship
- > Acknowledge and appreciate the funding body's contribution and support to the organisation and recognise their role and expectations as a key stakeholder.

One of the important aspects of my role as CEO was to develop and maintain a positive working relationship with the funding body not just regionally but also with key people at the central office in Brisbane and the Minister at the time.

It felt daunting when I first started. The funding body has a lot of perceived as well as actual power and there can be a tendency to demonise them due to things like increasing demand, constant pressure to perform and not enough resources. I decided early on to focus on relationships and connect as a professional with a personal touch.

I found paying attention to the people working in the department and seeing them as people helped build that bridge across the power differentials and funding shortfalls.

We are all human beings and we work better together when we connect as such. The added bonus was growing a positive profile for the organisation and learning that there are some incredible people out there doing amazing work at all levels.

Gabrielle

EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Positive and professional board relationships

Creating a cohesive and effective board team is crucial for the success of a gendered violence service. Here are some key points to help us work well together, manage personality differences, handle internal conflicts, and address conflicts of interest.

Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities

- > Appoint Chairperson and Treasurer
- > Ensure board members are aware of the obligations of the role
- > Stay focussed on responsibilities such as preparing for board meetings and declaring conflicts of interest.

Strong Board Orientation and Training Provide

- > Policies and procedures around the board's obligations and processes
- > Ensure all board members are equipped for their role by encouraging them to complete NFP governance training.

Foster a Culture of Open Communication

- > Encourage open and honest communication among board members, creating an environment where diverse perspectives are valued and there is room for critical reflection
- > Co-create regular opportunities for board members to share their thoughts, concerns, and ideas during meetings and outside of them.

Define a Code of Conduct

- > Develop and adopt a board code of conduct that outlines expected behaviours, ethical standards, and guidelines that align with the values of the organisation and the behaviours you want to foster.

Emphasise Purpose, Mission, Vision and Values

- > Keep the organisation's purpose, mission, vision and values at the forefront of all discussions and decisions to maintain a shared sense of purpose and commitment among board members.

Diverse and Inclusive Board Composition

- > Recruit board members with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to open up space for a well-rounded decision-making process
- > Ensure processes are inclusive and actively encourage all voices to be heard and respected. Check dominant personalities and make room for people who may be quieter.

Conflict Resolution Protocols

- > Draft a clear conflict resolution protocol together as a board to address conflicts that may arise within the board and stick to them. This can include a designated individual or committee responsible for managing more formal disputes
- > Encourage constructive conflict resolution techniques, such as active listening, being curious about other perspectives, empathy, co-creation and compromise.

EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

External Mediation if Necessary

- > If it becomes hard to resolve conflict internally among board members or between the board and the CEO/Manager, bring in external support to help mediate. Don't wait till it is boiling over as this situation can have devastating results for individuals and the organisation.

Regular Self-Reflection

- > Encourage practice reflection as leaders and as board members that supports critical and reflective processes to openly address any interpersonal tension or conflict. Make sure people are taking responsibility for their own behaviours.

Commit to Collective Decision-Making

- > Ensure decisions are being made collectively by the board rather than being driven by individual preferences or agendas or dominant personalities. Encourage consensus-building and compromise when necessary.

Supportive Leadership

- > The board Chair or President should provide clear, ethical, values-based and inclusive leadership, facilitating positive and purposeful discussions and ensuring all board members have the opportunity to contribute.

Maintain Confidentiality

- > Establish clear ethical expectations of all board members in regard to confidentiality of sensitive matters discussed as a board whether at meetings or in-between meetings to build trust among members. This should be balanced with accountable levels of transparency.

Regular Team-Building Activities

- > Organise purposeful and content-specific team-building activities outside of formal meetings to foster stronger professional relationships and trust among board members.



Effective and positive working relationships among board members are imperative to good governance. Relationships are complicated at times and can be challenging. We all bring our whole selves to work regardless of how much of that we present externally. Boards are expected to operate as a team and make complex decisions but only spend a couple of hours with each other once a month or less. We developed an induction process for the board and made time after each AGM for a team process. Opportunities to connect and build on professional relationships helped to grow the team cohesiveness required for sound decision-making and a positive culture.

Gabrielle



EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Fundraising

Many gendered violence services will fundraise to support their work, raise their profile, and further their cause. A well-connected, committed and active board is greatly appreciated and can help by:

- > Identifying and cultivating potential donors, such as individuals, foundations, corporations, or government agencies
- > Assisting the organisation to develop and execute a fundraising plan that aligns with the organisation's mission, vision, and goals
- > Participating in fundraising activities, such as events, campaigns, appeals, or grant proposals
- > Introducing personal and professional contacts to the organisation and invite them to support its work
- > Educating the community and stakeholders about the organisation's value and impact
- > Overseeing the financial management and accountability of the organisation's fundraising efforts
- > Ensuring fundraising activities don't put unnecessary pressure on the staff and impact service delivery
- > Ensuring funds raised have a clearly defined purpose and continue to advocate to funding bodies to fully fund service needs and demand
- > Declaring and managing any potential conflict of interest that may arise due to fundraising activities.



Jot down your thoughts

How can I ensure key stakeholders are considered in our board decision-making and planning?

.....

What beneficial relationships can I facilitate to support the organisation's fundraising efforts?

.....

How can I actively contribute to raising the profile of the service and its cause?



I consider board service as an opportunity for learning and growth, both professionally and personally.

As a board member, learning about the work of a non-profit from the inside allows for that learning which goes beyond theory.

It provides opportunities to work with a cross-section of other people and professionals with different approaches to leading, communicating, and problem solving, given the diversity of skills and experience that each board member brings.

Hannah



Board Capabilities and Effectiveness



Key Take Aways

- > Clarity about the organisation's purpose and the value base that underpins services is critical
- > Effective governance requires continuous learning and commitment to improvement
- > Feminist governance is about working in solidarity to eradicate gender-based violence
- > The board is responsible for being aware of risks and how to manage them
- > The board is responsible for understanding their roles and responsibilities
- > All board members have responsibility for finances – don't just leave that to the Treasurer
- > Board members must understand the legal, ethical, and funding requirements of the organisation
- > A thorough induction for new board members is important as well as continuing to improve the induction process for new members
- > The board must be clear about its remit – what are the governance responsibilities and what are the delegated operational responsibilities of the CEO and staff?



The organisation will be stronger when there is a unified and positive leadership between the board and CEO that is characterised by mutual trust and respect.

TIP

Group Activity and Reflection



Develop an agreement to commit to working in solidarity

1. Discuss and document your shared commitment to implementing the concept of working in solidarity as a board
2. Reflect on how you are doing this well, and how you might like to make improvements
3. Make this commitment a guide for your work together to ensure you are always working together to centralise the cause of ending gendered violence
4. Make this commitment to begin every meeting along with an Acknowledgement of Country.



Working in solidarity to further the cause of ending gendered violence is part of the work. It takes time, effort and resources that should be factored into all relevant decisions.

TIP

Reflective Questions

- > What strategies do we have in place to ensure effective governance processes?
- > How do we ensure that we continue to improve our governance processes?
- > How do we ensure we have the right people at our board table?
- > How do we hold each other accountable?
- > How do we challenge inappropriate behaviour such as undermining the CEO or inappropriately sharing information with staff?
- > What conversations do we need to have about diversity and inclusion?
- > How well are our important stakeholder relationships functioning? Do we need to pay more attention to any? How?
- > Are any of our key relationships getting in the way of our work or the organisational purpose? How do we manage this?
- > How well are we supporting and empowering the CEO to fulfill their role?
- > How do we ensure we are adhering to the highest standards of ethics, integrity and accountability?
- > How do we foster a culture of respect and collaboration with the CEO recognising their role and expertise as a key stakeholder?
- > How are we contributing to a responsive rather than reactive organisation?
- > What contributions are we making as a board to the fundraising efforts of the service? What more do we need to do?
- > How do we show that we value and appreciate staff efforts and work in solidarity with them to further the cause?

Melissa - Board Story

I have a diverse background across NFPs and business at a leadership level including the provision of advisory services to Boards. I also have lived experience of gendered violence. I was approached at a speaking engagement about contributing to the board of a local service.

I met with the CEO and felt a positive connection and value alignment with her and the organisation. I believed I could bring a different perspective and contribute multi-disciplinary skills and experience to the vision for the service. This has, over time, equipped me for the role of Chair, Deputy Chair, and Treasurer.

The greatest lesson (and gift) these roles has given me is that every assumption I made about the sector was wrong! I very early on decided that I could only be of value and serve the organisation if I let go of judgments and preconceptions that, while not ill-intended, were possibly misguided. I learnt to identify, reflect on, and let go of all preconceptions.

This has enabled me to work well with the CEO and effectively serve the Board. It is essential as a board member to reflect critically. If board members can't do this, or are unwilling to do so, it can cause friction and may also lead to unsatisfactory experiences for board members or the service.

One of the strategies we've used to connect the board to the work of the organisation is to provide opportunities for direct experience of the work. The board has participated in a facilitated experiential workshop which helps us to understand the context of the work, to step back and take a 'birds eye view' of the work, and to appreciate what it takes to deliver services. It gave us a taste of lived experience and I encourage every board member to ensure they understand the programs delivered and how the system works.

The critical learning for me in participating in these experiences was clarity. The work and the sector are complex. The balance Board members need to find is between understanding the work for the purposes of governance, without intervening in the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

Being crystal clear on our roles is crucial in developing a trusting relationship with the CEO. Micromanaging and getting involved in operational matters is unhelpful and tells the CEO and leadership team they don't have the trust of the Board. The CEO needs to be confident the board supports her in leading the organisation and the team. The ability to have honest and robust conversations and manage professional boundaries is critical to this relationship.

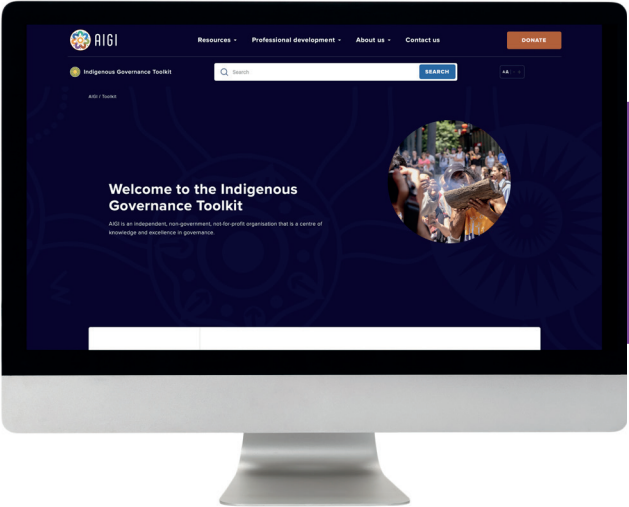
It's important to have a board with a diversity of skill sets and backgrounds. It also means there will be robust conversations with a range of perspectives. We operate on the basis that consensus doesn't require unanimity.

.....

We might not all share the same opinion, but once we arrive at a decision, we all support it. What is helpful is having a Board Chair who facilitates these conversations respectfully to enable effective decision making.

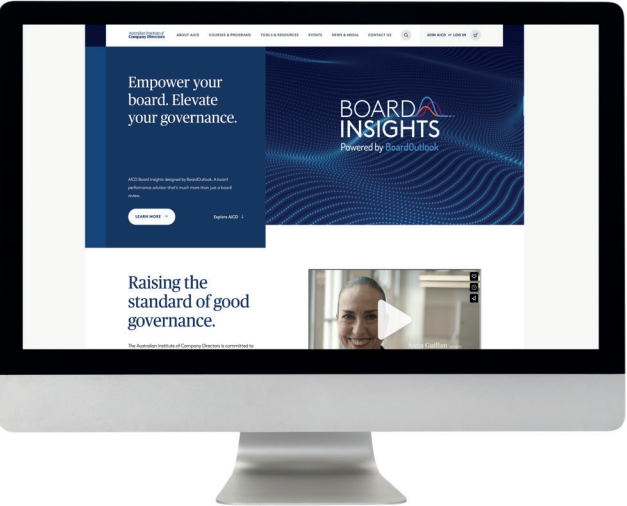
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



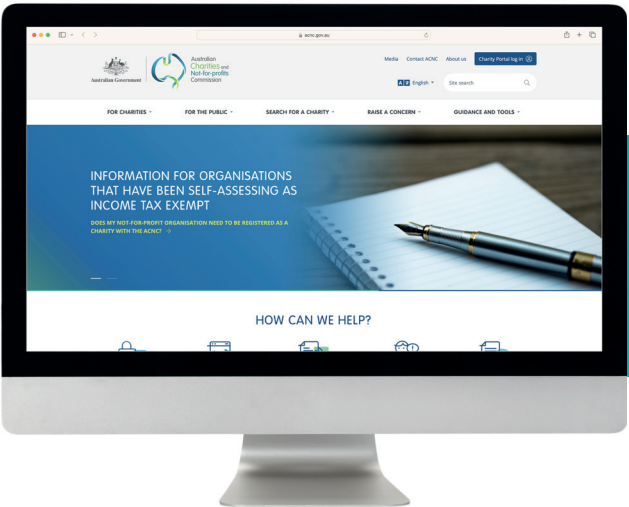
Indigenous Governance Toolkit

CLICK HERE



ACNC Governance Standards

CLICK HERE



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