



**Aboriginal Health Council**  
of South Australia Inc.

**'Our health, our choice, our way.'**

RECRUITING TO THE BOARD: A resource kit for Board members and CEOs

How can Boards of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services make sure they recruit the right people? What tools can they use to assess the skills and knowledge of candidates? How can your Board be best positioned to ensure quality governance?

AHCSA would like to acknowledge the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) as the owners of this document and thank them for sharing their Intellectual Property as part of the Governance Project to assist the AHCSA Members in South Australia.



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## RECRUITING TO THE BOARD

### A resource kit for Board members and CEOs

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## PRINCIPLES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

The AHCSA endorsed National Principles & Guidelines for Good Governance (NPG's) set out concepts that help guide the way Aboriginal Community controlled Boards do business. These principles state that;

*The board will provide good governance and leadership by;*

- 1. Implementing community control;*
- 2. Understanding their role;*
- 3. Working effectively both as individuals and as a team;*
- 4. Exercising effective control;*
- 5. Behaving with integrity;*
- 6. Being open and accountable.*

In order to live out these Principles it is important that our Members are able to recruit community members to be support effective community control and promote the AHCSA creed: Our Health, Our Choices, Our Way.

This resource kit is aimed at helping AHCSA Members to consider how they go about recruiting Board members and provides some supporting tools for developing Board Skills.

The AHCSA Member Support staff are able to respond to Members needs in addition to this resource and welcomes and queries or requests for advice and/or support. A full copy of the NPG's are available from AHCSA Member Support Staff.

## CREATING A STRATEGIC RECRUITMENT PLAN

An effective board is generally one which is able to generate a clear idea of what their ACCHO is trying to achieve, and can direct through a CEO, the actions which meet those targets.

Good Boards mostly do not happen to develop by themselves. All ACCHOS's will benefit from thinking about how they can get the best Board for their needs. This includes Board development as well as planning for succession.

Developing an effective Board should mean having a planned approach, as we do when hiring most employees. Like any recruiting for an AHW or Counselor there needs to be;

- A clear purpose for having the position,
- Clear roles and responsibilities and clear actions that will ensure the right person ends up in the job.

Some of the key steps to consider in recruiting Board members include:

- Determining the overall needs of the organisation in relationship to the realisation of its vision.
- Defining the specific jobs that must be done to meet those needs and the skill sets and characteristics required to do those jobs.
- Specifying your expectations of those you will recruit to the board (e.g. Attendance at meetings, involvement on committees, Board culture expectations)
- Creating Board Charter to outline expectations
- Brainstorming the types of people that might want to take on these jobs, where you would be most likely to find them and how you can best connect with them.
- Thinking about what you can offer people who agree to serve. Be sure you can answer the question, "Why is your organisation worthy of their support?"
- Determining how you can cultivate these individuals so that they will be responsive to your invitation.
- Considering how you will approach "the task" to ensure that when one accepts a role on the board that he/she meets the responsibility at the level you require.

This kit is intended to help you to determine what type of person your Board needs and to give you some ideas and tools to help you recruit people who will contribute to the success of your organisation.

It is very valuable to consider formalizing this planning into a 'Board Recruitment Strategy' document of some sort.

## WHERE DO WE FIND POTENTIAL BOARD MEMBERS?

Most Boards rely on nominations from community at AGM time. But, it can be valuable to be proactive in recruiting good candidates for your Board, rather than simply relying on expressions of interest from individuals. This approach supports good succession planning and can help ensure that a Board has the right mix of Competencies and Characteristics to serve the community best.

Using your Board Skills Analysis, where might you find the best people? You might think about;

1. People that are known and well regarded in your community
2. Talk to those who sit on other boards and committees in your area and see who they would recommend.
3. Meet with board members from other organisations with similar purposes to see who is rotating off that might be good.
4. Advertise
5. Professionals in law or accounting firms, Chamber of Commerce, etc
6. Through real estate agents (e.g. new people moving into the area)
7. Universities (e.g. for people with high level knowledge and subject expertise)
8. Talk to government officials and the media to find out who they go to for information related to your mission.
9. Relevant industry magazines/media
10. Blogs
11. Corporate community affairs offices
12. In our virtual world, do they need to live locally?

Whenever you meet someone who might be right, capture the information (Use the Board Referral form) and the Board can target them with discussion or send them out a Board nomination pack.

## KEY COMPETENCIES & CHARACTERISTICS FOR BOARD MEMBERS SERVING IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED HEALTH ORGANISATIONS.

Board members require as specific skills, knowledge and experience in order to enable them to provide good leadership to their organisation. These specific skills, knowledge and experience are often expressed as **Competencies** and relate to a particular setting, such ACCHO.

In addition there are key personal **Characteristics** that add to a person's ability to be an effective Board Member.

It is not necessary for all board members to have all competencies and characteristics described here, but it is important that as a group the Board can demonstrate strong and effective leadership.

This section looks at both the Competencies and the key Characteristics.

### DESIRABLE BOARD COMPETENCIES

There are different types of competencies<sup>1</sup> that support good Board practice. They can be described in the broad categories of:



**Strategic** Competencies refer to the 'big picture' running of an organisation. It includes;

- Understanding the difference between governance (Board) and management (operational) issues,
- Recognising the wider societal, political and economic factors influencing the purpose of the organisation,
- Recognising and responding to the need for change,
- Recognising strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and opportunities and threats for organisational development,

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<sup>1</sup> (Source: based on <http://www.boardsense.com/Competencies.html>)

- Understanding how service delivery, budgets and business plans are linked to organisational vision and broad strategy, &
- Having a capacity to identify risks to the organisation and to contribute to managing that risk.

**Sector** Competencies refers to being knowledgeable about the sector (or environment) the organisation is in. For example this includes;

- Demonstrable experience within the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector (i.e. having worked as a AHW or SEWB counsellor etc.) &
- Understands effective service delivery models within the sector, &
- Other Professional expertise in the sector, such as health specific management.

**Knowledge** Competencies include having experience that ensures a person;

- Understands responsibilities as a director,
- Is aware of “best practice” for business and management functions in the organisation,
- Understands the roles, processes and relationships of the Board and its members,
- Identifies the key performance indicators of the organisation and its senior management,
- Understands legal, accounting, and regulatory requirements affecting the organisation, &
- Takes personal responsibility for continuing formal and informal learning in order to carry out Board duties

**Analytical** Competencies include the skills and experience required to;

- Be able to read and interpret financial reports,
- Be able to think critically and challenge proposals,
- Understand issues from different perspectives, &
- Be able to make informed judgements/assessments

**Personal** Competencies refer to the ability to work alongside others and particularly include high level communication skills that allows people to:

- Interact with other board members in a group setting, both contributing to, and valuing the contributions of all members,
- To listen, process and understand key points
- Articulate thoughts, opinions, rationales, and points in a clear, concise and logical manner
- Be flexible and willing to change stances when necessary or appropriate
- To relate to a wide range of people and establish quality relationships
- Influence and persuade others

- Be able to use the Internet and email
- Have a cultural awareness and an understanding and appreciation of different cultural needs

### DESIREABLE PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Personal characteristics are not the same thing as competencies. Personal characteristics refer to the attributes or behaviour of a person. It is suggested that the characteristics of an effective Board member would include:

- Having a professional attitude, including:
  - *Thinking in the long term for the organisation – i.e. what it will be in 5 years' time, not just for now*
  - *Can be objective at all times about what is best for the organisation, not just considering the individual or their families interests*
  - *Is willing to act on and remain accountable for board decisions as part of the group.*
  - *Prepares well for board meetings – reads papers, seeks answers*
- Emotional maturity
  - *Is honest and reliable*
  - *Has an independent mind and is inquisitive*
  - *Courage to pursue personal convictions*
- Social intelligence
  - *Respect for others*
  - *A good sense of humour*
  - *Ability to act as a team player*



When a Board is able to combine these competencies and characteristics amongst its membership the result is usually a high functioning body in which all the parts work together well and is able to support its organisation to achieve its aims and objectives.

### **ASSESSING BOARD COMPETANCIES AND CHARACTERISTICS**

It is vital that Boards take the opportunity on a regular basis to identify the competencies and characteristics they have, and those they want to develop. This can be done in many ways, but it is useful to look at the competencies of the individuals that make up the Board and then compare them across the group to see if there are any common areas that can be developed as a priority.

A Board may also choose to do this to help them identify where they need to target skills in potential new Members. If there is a need to have more clinical specific knowledge then a Board may look for an ex-AHW to be on the Board. Likewise, a Board that has a gap in finance skills may look for someone with experience in accounting to fill a vacancy (or ask them to nominate). This is also where the role of independent, or specialist directors can be useful to add to Board capacity.

The next few pages contain individual and group assessment tools that can be used for this purpose. Boards can choose to have these exercises facilitated or they can manage the process amongst themselves if they feel that is the best approach. AHCSA staff are able to support this process at the Boards request.



**BOARD SKILLS ANALYSIS – INDIVIDUAL**

This grid on the next page can be used to assess the skills and knowledge of potential Board members or as a reflective instrument for existing Board members.

Existing and potential Board members should rank their personal view of their characteristics. This can give you a guide regarding people's sense of their own skills and knowledge and can help you to decide which areas people might need further training and development.

Characteristics	Excellent	Very good	Average	Fair	Poor
Understands the broad role of the organisation within the local Aboriginal community					
Sees how the organisation fits in to the wider service delivery system					
Supports the long term strategic vision for the organisation					
Can see the 'big picture' rather than focusses on specific issues					
Is familiar with funding and reporting processes in the health/social services sector					
Understands the difference between 'governance' and 'management' issues					
Has the capacity to see possible risks to the organisation and can help to reduce negative impact					
Understands the role of Board member and the relationship with the community					
Has the capacity to understand the legal, financial and regulatory requirements affecting the organisation					
Has the ability to read and interpret financial reports					
Ability to be a team player, both contributing to and valuing the contributions of all Board members					
Can communicate thoughts, ideas and opinions clearly					
Has the ability to listen, process and understand key information					
Has a professional approach to being a Board member (e.g. attends meetings regularly and on time, reads required materials before meetings)					
Is prepared to participate in professional development activities to improve their performance as a Board member					

**Summary comments/recommendations:**

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**BOARD SKILLS ANALYSIS – ORGANISATIONAL**

A review of the Board may include consideration of the mix of skills, knowledge and experience of the range of individuals at the table. The table on the next page highlights a number of the key areas Boards may wish to analyse to identify areas of Board development than can be undertaken.

Board Skills Analysis	Current Board Skills	Desired Skills (based on gaps or strategic plan requirements)
<b>Skills</b>		
Organisational and financial management		
Special program focus (eg. disability)		
Strategic planning		
Finance-accounting, investments		
Fundraising		
Government regulations/law		
Government representation		
Marketing/PR		
Risk		
Personnel		
<b>Representation</b>		
Age		
Gender		
Race/ethnic background		
Geographic location		
Organisational nominee		
<b>Life Skills</b>		
Self employed		
Salaried		
Other boards/committees		
Member		
Consumer of services		
Other		
<b>Personal Attributes</b>		
Networks		
Business experience		
Organisational awareness		

**EXPECTATIONS WORKSHEET**

If you want board members to meet your organisations expectations you must be clear about what those expectations are. To help you articulate them, use this worksheet to think through those behaviours that would demonstrate the desired performance and result in the best functioning board possible. Where possible, state your expectations in measurable terms – e.g. Board members are expected to be at all board meetings. Don't hesitate to list something out of fear that people won't give the time or energy to follow through. People live up (or down!) to our expectations.

Area of Board Practice	The Board Shared Expectation
<b>Commitment to this mission:</b>	
<b>Attendance</b>	
<b>Preparation for meetings:</b>	
<b>Participation in meetings</b>	
<b>Involvement at meetings</b>	
<b>Planning</b>	
<b>Financial management</b>	
<b>Leadership development</b>	

<b>Personal giving</b>	
<b>Advocacy</b>	
<b>Putting the organisation before personal benefit</b>	
<b>Involvement on committees</b>	

**STANDARDS COMMITMENT LETTER**

A Board may also consider how it can agree and maintain the right behaviour that gives it the best chance of meeting its aims and objectives for the organisation.

To support this, a Board may want to think about how it could agree to meet the standards it sets out for itself. The table on the next page sets out some standards and looks for actions that could help Board Members meet those standards.

Each Director recognises and agrees to uphold the following standards of behaviour	Action
<b>S1. To take personal responsibility for contributing impartially to the decisions of the Board, with no thought given to personal gain.</b>	
<b>S2. To actively seek adequate knowledge about the business of the organisation.</b>	
<b>S3. To provide positive input into the development of organisational policy.</b>	
<b>S4. To provide strong support for the long term strategies of the organisation.</b>	
<b>S5. To accept the need to sufficiently prepare for Board meetings and decisions, and to insist on sufficient information to enable informed debate and decision making.</b>	
<b>S6. To perform the assignments delegated by the Board.</b>	
<b>S7. To delineate and state personal positions vs organisational positions on controversial matters to better enable the Board to make informed decisions for the betterment of the organisation.</b>	
<b>S8. To devote sufficient time to the duties of the Director.</b>	
<b>S9. To uphold high ethical standards at the Board level.</b>	
<b>S10. To tender a resignation if unable to uphold any of the above Standards of Behaviour.</b>	

**BOARD REFERRAL FORM**

(Details of Potential Board members)

<b>Name</b>					
<b>Home Phone</b>		<b>Work Phone</b>		<b>Mobile Phone</b>	
<b>Home Address</b>					
<b>Business Address</b>					
<b>Profession</b>					
<b>Knowledge/Interest in the organisation</b>					
<b>Special skills</b>					
<b>Community Involvement past and present</b>					
<b>Represents Group (s)</b>					
<b>Other reasons for considering</b>					
<b>Referred by</b>					
<b>Phone</b>		<b>Date</b>		<b>Use my name</b>	Yes / No

**For Board Development Committee Use Only**

<b>Contact date</b>	
<b>Interest level</b>	
<b>Further action recommended</b>	
<b>Action taken</b>	

## EXAMPLE BOARD NOMINATION PACK

To support your organisation in its Board recruitment the following pages contain include a number of forms you might consider providing to prospective Board members.

Please feel free to amend them to meet the needs of your organisations as you see fit.

The forms include:

- A pro forma cover letter
- A Nomination Form
- A Key Selection application form
- A copy of the Individual Skills Analysis form

*(Name and Address of Nominee)*

*Insert date*

THE SECRETARY

XXX Aboriginal Corporation

Address 1

Address 2

Post code

Dear Secretary,

Please find enclosed completed and signed Nomination Form and Attachments to support my nomination of for the position of Director on the XXX Aboriginal Corporation Board, to be elected at the Annual General Meeting in

\_\_\_\_\_.

I confirm that I am an Aboriginal person over the age of 18 years and a member of the XXX Aboriginal Corporation, as per the Model Rules under section (X).

For further information regarding this application, I can be contacted on \_\_\_\_\_.

*(phone number)*

Yours sincerely

*(Name)*



**XXX ABORIGINAL CORPORATION BOARD NOMINATION FORM**

To: The Secretary, XXX Aboriginal Corporation Board of Directors

I, \_\_\_\_\_  
 (nominee name)

hereby nominate for a position on the XXX Aboriginal Corporation Board of Directors and confirm the following (tick which box applies):

- I have read and understood the XXX Aboriginal Corporation Board induction manual and I understand I can demonstrate that I have the competencies required of XXX Aboriginal Corporation Board members in the manual should I be successful.

or

- I have read and understood the XXX Aboriginal Corporation Board induction manual and I agree to take responsibility for ensuring I develop the competencies required of XXX Aboriginal Corporation Board members over the coming 12 months should I be successful.

and

- I acknowledge that the nominating information in both Attachments 1 and 2 will be used by the Chair of the Board in developing my training and development plan should I be successful and;
- I acknowledge that under the requirements for XXX Aboriginal Corporation to inform members of nominating parties, the first three items of Attachment 1 may be used to advise members of my reasons and capabilities to be a Board member as part of the election process

Full name: <b>(Nominee)</b>			
Signature:		Date:	
Full name: <b>(Witness)</b>			
Signature:		Date:	

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**CLOSING DATE FOR NOMINATIONS IS CLOSE OF BUSINESS \_\_\_\_\_ 2012**

PLEASE FORWARD COMPLETED NOMINATION FORMS ENCLOSED WITH COVERING LETTER TO

XXX ABORIGINAL CORPORATION INC  
 ADDRESS 1  
 ADDRESS 2

**Attachment 1**

**KEY SELECTION CRITERIA FOR BOARD POSITION FORM**

<p>1. What has motivated you to want to be on the Board?</p>	
<p>2. What would you bring to the Board and what do you see as the major benefits for XXX Aboriginal Corporation should you become a Board member?</p>	

3. What do you see as the major challenges for you if you become a Board member?	
4. What do you want to learn/hope to gain from being on the Board?	
5. What training do you think would help develop your existing skills related to being a Board member of an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health	

Organisation?	
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Is prepared to participate in professional development activities to improve their performance as a Board member					

**Summary comments/recommendations:** *(to be completed by Chairperson)*

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