

Committee recruitment

Background

One of the biggest challenges facing many committees as the AGM approaches is that of recruiting new committee members. With some careful consideration and planning, committees should see this as an opportunity to recruit people with fresh ideas and a range of skills that complement those who may be staying on or seeking re-election.

It may be timely to review the size and composition of your committee. For example, if your committee is too small, the workload may be too onerous and lead to burnout; other association members may also see it as a power clique. If it is too large, positions may be difficult to fill, and members may not feel that their skills are being used or that they are having an opportunity to contribute. It is also difficult to maintain confidentiality within a large group of people. There is no ideal size, but try to balance according to the size of your organisation and the workload. Maximise effectiveness by trying to ensure that members have more than one skill. One option is to spread the workload and utilise a wider range of skills by creating specific subcommittees. Involvement on a subcommittee may also be a good training ground for future involvement on the management committee.

Overview

Good governance includes succession planning for the members of the committee. It is important to start thinking about recruitment needs and strategies well before the AGM. It may be helpful to hand over some of this responsibility to a subcommittee or a specific committee member.

Legal requirements

Committees will need to check their constitution to clarify each of the following:

- The requirements for membership and eligibility for election—often members of the community can be a member once they have paid a fee and been approved by the committee for membership. Committees may need to develop an application form and process for considering the application
- The number of committee members and what positions may be required
- The terms of office—in most cases, committee members are elected for a period of one year; however, some constitutions enable two-year terms
- If there is a limit to how many years a person can serve on the committee either as a member or as an office bearer
- The nomination process.

Information to gather

Prospective committee members need to be provided with the following information:

- Committee roles and responsibilities (refer to CommitteeBasics, which can be downloaded from www.kpv.org.au)
- Job descriptions
- Nomination forms that have been prepared in accordance with the organisation's constitutional guidelines.

PROGRAM PARTNERS



Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development



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Recruitment pack

Readily available packs of relevant information for prospective committee members will be very useful. These should include:

- A nomination form and information about the nomination process, which should be very clear and provide dates, contact details and information about moving and seconding a nomination, where the nomination form should be sent to and by what date
- A short history of the organisation
- A description of the management structure
- Details of the current children's program, any proposed changes for next year and long-term plans
- The organisation's philosophy and/or vision
- An outline of committee responsibilities—be honest about the potential workload (it may seem overwhelming, but people will appreciate your honesty rather than be suspicious of promises that there is not really much work involved)
- Information about insurance cover provided for committee members
- An outline of individual job descriptions
- A brief outline of their legal responsibilities, which may include licensing, management, employment (refer to CommitteeBasics, which can be downloaded from www.kpv.org.au)
- A list of resources and support available to the committee
- The benefits of being on the committee (short and long term)
- Contact details of any current committee members willing to discuss/answer any questions.

Strategies to consider

Every committee needs a sufficient range of skills to fulfil all of its responsibilities. Therefore, it is important to spend some time considering your committee's needs. If your organisation has some specific long-term goals or plans, consider the types of expertise that may assist those projects. For example, if you are planning a playground redevelopment, someone with gardening/landscaping experience would be useful on the committee.

Committees should also plan for diversity—age, backgrounds, expertise—when recruiting new members. Diversity can bring new perspectives and new ideas to an organisation.

Traditionally, parents of children attending the early childhood service are elected on to the committee of management. If your constitution provides for interested members of the public to join the organisation, why not look outside the centre's community to fill potential skill gaps. Consider approaching other organisations—such as Rotary, Lions Club, Toastmasters, Apex, Our Community, unsuccessful candidates from local/state elections, members of the community—to join your organisation and the committee of management.

Where possible, if potential candidates are not known to any current members, develop a simple process of screening to ensure their suitability to your organisation.

The most useful tools for recruiting new members are enthusiasm and the personal approach. People are more likely want to be involved in something that is enjoyable and provides benefits either to themselves or to something or someone they have an interest in. Even if it has been a difficult or challenging year, be honest but also mention how valuable the experience has been,

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what you have learnt, the friends you have made, networks developed and the difference you have been able to make to the organisation and its members.

To assist getting this message across, committees could consider the following:

- Organise some social functions for people to meet the current committee and discuss the role of the committee, any expectations and so on.
- Invite potential members to attend a committee meeting—however, plan the agenda carefully to maintain confidentiality—to show them how the committee operates and to allow them to get a feel for the responsibility of the committee.
- Be prepared to answer any questions and provide information that may be requested (have recruitment packs readily available).

Compliance

- Your organisation's constitution or the Model Rules

Where to get more information

- KPV Employer Management Manual, Section 3.9
- CommitteeBasics, which can be downloaded from www.kpv.org.au
- Use the free board matching service offered at Our Community: www.ourcommunity.com.au/boardmatch
- An information sheet can be downloaded from Our Community: www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards/boards_article.jsp?articleId=1300

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