

## FOR HOST BOARDS

This information is intended as a helpful summary of what's involved for a board participating in The Program. It also offers ways of maximising the value of participation for organisations and extending learning and development for Observers based on the experiences of boards participating in The Program over a number of years. We hope you find it useful.

### ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

- Organisations are paired with Observers for a 12-month period. Observers are selected and carefully matched with organisations, based on nominated skills, profiles and interests.
- The Observership begins with the first board meeting of the year and finishes with the last.
- As part of the application, Observers agree to the Program's confidentiality terms. Organisations are at liberty to request a copy of the terms and/or to ask Observers to sign the organisation's own confidentiality agreement.
- All Observers undergo a Police Check, and are advised that organisations may require additional screening such as Working with Children Checks.
- During the Observership year, organisations facilitate Observers attending all board and any relevant subcommittee meetings as non-voting members so they can both contribute and learn about fundamental principles and functions of board members, the decision-making process and governance priorities.
- Where board meetings move between cities and or countries and board members are supported to attend these meetings in-person, we request that Observer attendance is facilitated and supported by the host organisations.
- Observers participate in a training program alongside their board Observership. AICD facilitates four sessions and The Ethics Centre, one session. Further training sessions are facilitated by The Program and feature keynote speakers. Opportunities for networking among Observers and peer-to-peer learning are provided via the in-person sessions. All training sessions are mandatory. Please refer to page 10 for an outline of the training program.

### HINTS FOR ENGAGING OBSERVERS

Here are some examples of best practice and ways boards and Observers can maximise their contribution and governance learning throughout the Observership year.

- The Chair/Board Liaison meets their Observer prior to the first board meeting to induct the Observer into the organisation and the operations of the board;
  - If a board induction pack is available, do share with the Observer. A formal or informal induction, advising on both your board culture and expectations of your Observer's participation in meetings prior to the first board meeting is essential for learning and engagement;
  - Please discuss areas of potential contribution either prior to, or in the early stages of the Observership to set expectations and lay the foundations for the best possible Observership experience for all parties;
  - Joining a sub-committee and/or special strategic project at the beginning of the year provides an opportunity for the Observer to engage with meaningful work undertaken by the board and supports their engagement with and contribution to the organisation.

- It is at the board's discretion to solicit input from the Observers during meetings. All Observers are briefed to contribute once invited to do so on the terms provided by the organisation. These could include:
  - As and when invited to do so by the Chair;
  - As and when the Observer feels they have something to offer;
  - Some boards set aside time at the end of the meeting for the Observer to reflect on discussions and to share perspectives.

### THE PROGRAM STIPULATES THAT:

- Board minutes note that Observers are present in the capacity as Observers and not as directors. When a vote is taken, please make clear that Observers do not vote;
- Where a training session clashes with a board meeting, Observers are advised to prioritise Board meetings;
- Feedback calls with Observers take place early in the Program cycle to check everything is on track;
- A call will be scheduled with the Board Liaison for feedback on your Observer and to ascertain ongoing participation of your board in the next year's Program;
- Board Liaisons are asked to contact The Program if any issues arise, including any non-attendance other than due to extenuating circumstances for which an apology is received.

### BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:

- Participate in developing the next generation of leaders in the not-for-profit and government board sectors;
- Inject a younger, diverse perspective into the boardroom;
- Looking at the year ahead, strategically select an Observer with a particular skill set eg: new technology, data analytics, digital marketing/communications, social media, law, finance, government policy etc. to assist with specific areas of board work;
- Engage through the "matching process" with a diverse pool of emerging leaders with a view to addressing any areas of board underrepresentation;
- Involve your Observer in a hands-on strategic project to deliver concrete benefits to the organisation;
- Invite your Observer to contribute in areas relating to their skill set through subcommittee involvement;
- Strengthen your board renewal strategy with no ongoing commitment to retain the Observer at the end of the 12-month Program;
- Retain the option to invite your Observer to join the board at the end of the 12-month period and/or invite them to stay on in an advisory or voluntary capacity;
- Recruit from the Program's 1,400+ alumni pool who are actively seeking ongoing and meaningful engagement with the not-for-profit and government board sectors;
- Use The Program as a tool to develop the organisation's own leadership stream by encouraging emerging leaders from within the organisation to apply to be placed with other not-for-profit boards.

**Please contact The Observership Program to become a participating Host Board via the link below:**

<https://www.observership.com.au/nfp-request-form/>