**Application Form**

**Q: What are the Key Dates for the 2023 Observership Program?**

A: All dates below refer to the Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney Programs

* **Applications Open:** 4 July 2022
* **Applications Close:** 31 July 2022
* **Matching and Board Interview Process:** October - December 2022
* **2023 Observership Placement Confirmed**: by 31 December 2022
* **2023 Observership Program Launch Event**: February 2023 (Dates tbc)
* **Training Session Dates**:
	+ Attendance at training sessions\* is mandatory for Observers.
	+ AICD and Ethics Centre Training sessions: March – May 2023
	+ Remaining training sessions: June, October and November 2023
	+ Additional training and networking events may be organised throughout the year

**Q: What are the 2023 Observership Program application opening dates?**

**A:** The 2023 Observership Program will open on **4 July 2022** for Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane Programs and close **Sunday 31 July 2022**.

Details of the application opening dates can be found on the Key Dates page of the website.

A sample of the 2023 Application form can be found [here](https://www.observership.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/2023-Application-form_Website-Sample.docx).

**Q: What should I include in my CV?**

**A:** You are not applying for a job. Your application is assessed by board members based on who you are as well as what you do, so your CV needs to provide the broadest possible picture of who you are.

* Your interest in the NFP sector is a key factor in a board’s choice of candidate;
* Express your values, interests, background and perspective, plus illustrate a genuine and proven interest in making a difference;
* Try to give equal weight to your personal values as to your professional skills and experience;
* Your CV should be no longer than 3 pages.

**Applications and Selection Process**

**Q: What are the key steps in the application process?**

**A:** Prior to the commencement of the Observership year, the Observership Program matches Observers with NFP boards. The right fit is paramount.

There is a competitive application process, which includes:

* A rigorous interview process by The Observership Program;
* Candidate CV reviews by NFPs;
* Candidate interviews by NFPs;
* Candidate ranking by NFPs; and
* Final matching by The Observership Program.

It is important to note that this is a highly competitive process and only the strongest candidates will progress through each stage to the next.

**Q: What is the role of the NFP in the selection process?**

**A:** On signing up as a Participating Board:

* the organisation will be asked to provide preferences for the profile, skills and experience they look for in an Observer. If a Board either does not specify or does not have any preferences, organisations will be offered the most suitable candidate.
* NFPs receive 2-4 candidate CVs to review and rank.
* NFPs interview at least 2 of the proposed candidates, with interviews organised by The Observership Program.
* NFPs provide post-interview feedback to The Observership Program which informs the final matching.
* NFPs are invited to attend the Program launch to meet The Observership Program community.

**Q: What are we looking for in an Observer?**

**A:** We are looking for talented, highly motivated, established professionals from a diversity of backgrounds, with strong credentials and most importantly with a passion for the NFP sector and a willingness to contribute. EQ is as important as intelligence and experience, as is an ability to conduct yourself appropriately and contribute to board discussions when invited to, in keeping with the culture of your board.

**Q: What can I expect from the Program if I am placed as an Observer?**

**A:** Observers can expect:

* High level training for not-for-profit directors delivered by AICD and The Ethics Centre;
* A year long program to build your experience and confidence in serving on a not-for-profit board;
* Access to experienced Board directors from both the not-for-profit and corporate sectors;
* Possible involvement in a strategic project or board subcommittee;
* Networking opportunities with fellow and former participants in the Program. The Observership Program will connect you with the previous year’s Observer on your organisation’s board; and
* A rewarding professional development experience that facilitates your contribution to society in a meaningful way.

**Q: How much does The Observership Program cost?**

**A:** For a general candidate (not a Corporate Partner candidate or someone with coupon code) the cost is a $50 non-refundable administration fee. If you are selected to be an Observer all that is required is a commitment of time for board meetings and training session attendance.

**Q: Does the Program welcome applications from all sections of community?**

**A:** Yes. The Observership Program is committed to diversity. We are looking for high level candidates with a passion for the NFP sector, from all sections of the community.

**Q: If I apply and identify as an applicant with a disability, will that impact negatively on my application?**

**A:** The Program actively encourages applicants with a disability to apply. Please contact Belinda Da Silva (belinda.dasilva@observership.com.au) - if you would like to discuss your situation or any adjustments you may need during the selection process or as an observer.

The Observership Program follows the social model of disability and acknowledges our obligation to ensure any environment, employment or service opportunity is inclusive of people with disability. Adjustments may include but are not limited to: support to complete the online application form, questions in advance of interviews, Auslan / captioning services, accessible meeting spaces.

**Q: If I have completed the Program before, can I do it again?**

**A:** Unfortunately, not. In an effort to encourage and develop a wide range of young professionals, the Program can only be completed once per person. If you would like to be referred to a not-for-profit organisation that is seeking new board candidates please contact us on info@observership.com.au

**Q: Do I get a say in what Board I’m matched with?**

**A:** To a limited extent. The matching process is driven by board preferences for the skills they are looking for in an Observer. Past Observers report getting more value from their Observership experience where their skills can be applied for the benefit of the organisation with which they are matched. Notwithstanding this process, each Observer is given an opportunity to indicate his/her cause preferences and we do our best to take areas of personal interest into account.

**Q: Who is Eligible to Apply for the Program?**

**A:** Applicants must be aged between 25 and 40 on the application closing date. Applicants must be resident in the state in which the Program operates and be either an Australian citizen or permanent resident.

**Q: What makes for a successful Observership experience?**

**A:** Contribution is key, while respecting the culture of the Board and gauging when it is appropriate to contribute. Exercising sound judgement about the level and nature of your involvement at board meetings is important, as is joining a board subcommittee or getting involved in a strategic project if possible. Observers get the most value from their experience when they attend all board meetings and training sessions and get involved with a board project.

**Candidate Categories**

**Q: What is a Corporate Candidate?**

**A:** A Corporate Candidate is an employee of one of the Program’s Corporate Partners who is nominated for the Program. For a list of Current Corporate partners please follow the link to the "Our Partners" page on this website.

**Q: What is a General Stream Candidate?**

**A:** General Stream candidates are those candidates who apply to the Program via the online application process. The Observership Program is open to everyone who meets the eligibility criteria. Applicants must be aged between 25 and 40 on the application closing date. Applicants must be a resident in the state in which the Program operates and be either an Australian citizen or permanent resident.

**Further Information**

**Q: Who are the Program’s Strategic Partners?**

**A:** Our valued partners play a consistent role in supporting and promoting the Program by providing important warm introductions to good governance boards and significant support and services to the Program.

They are the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD), The Ethics Centre, the JCA and Philanthropy Australia.

**Q: Who are the Program’s Corporate and Government Supporters?**

**A:** We are grateful to all our corporate partners. They are ASX, Boston Consulting Group, Gilbert + Tobin, Macquarie Capital, Macquarie Group, McKinsey and Company, Microsoft, Optus, PwC, Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), ShineWing, State Sports Centre Trust and UBS.

These organisations commit to putting their young leaders through the Program, providing high calibre candidates for selection as Observers.

The organisations also provide valuable support to the Program in other ways including the provision of venues for events and training sessions, as well as guest speakers and introductions to not-for-profit organisations.

**Q: Where can I find further information about the Program?**

**A:** The Program operates in NSW, VIC and QLD and runs on a calendar year. If you would like further information about participating in the Program please contact either:

* Cathy Robinson for the Sydney and Brisbane Programs:

cathy.robinson@observership.com.au; or

* Catherine Reiser for the Melbourne Program:

catherine.reiser@observership.com.au

* For all general inquiries, please contact Belinda Da Silva:
belinda.dasilva@observership.com.au.

**Not For Profit Organisations**

**Q: Can my organisation participate in the Program?**

**A:** We are always expanding the reach of the Program and welcome approaches from and introductions to suitable NFPs. Please contact Belinda Da Silva (belinda.dasilva@observership.com.au) at The Observership Program if you are

interested in participating in the Program.

**Q: Is the Board Liaison the same as a Mentor?**

**A:** A Board Liaison is not expected to act as an official mentor. However, offering informal mentoring can add a great deal to the Observers’ experience while on the Program. We recommend that Board Liaisons touch base with Observers prior to and after board meetings in circumstances where additional context to board deliberations may be helpful.

**Q: What are the Responsibilities of a Participating NFP Organisation?**

**A:** The NFP organisation invites its Observer onto the Board for a year and agrees to:

* Distribute board papers to Observers;
* Appoint a Board Liaison to serve as the primary point of contact for the Observer and The Observership Program. This liaison will ideally be a senior member of the Board and agrees to induct and introduce the Observer at the first board meeting and to encourage the Observer’s participation and involvement in Board meetings and to facilitate the Observer joining any relevant sub-committee and/or special project;
* Provide feedback to The Observership Program upon request;
* Provide The Observership Program with current logos for inclusion on all publicity and marketing platforms; and
* Inform the Program of any issues in relation to the Observer that may arise over the course of the Program that have not been able to be resolved directly.

**Q: What are NFP Boards looking for in an Observer?**

**A:** Boards participate in the Observership Program for a number of reasons and there are many different qualities and experience they may look for in an Observer. Many boards are simply looking for a talented, committed Observer who brings age diversity and a fresh perspective. Some boards have a particular project they want help with and are looking for an Observer with a particular skill set to assist. Others may have a noticeable skill set gap they might like to fill. Other boards may be looking to enhance gender diversity on their board. Some boards may be looking to strengthen succession planning options and are looking for an Observer who may be appropriate to step into the shoes of a departing director.

**Q: What are NFP Boards looking for in an Observer?**

**A:** The key to a successful Observership experience is contribution. Boards participate in the Program to support the development of the next generation of leaders and to gain access to a younger (25-40) and in some cases, more relevant perspective around the board table. Many boards look for specific skills and experience from their Observers, so there are often opportunities to assist with special projects and to sit on subcommittees in addition to attending board meetings.

**Q: What is the role of the Observer and NFP Boards in managing the Observership throughout the year?**

**A:** An open relationship between Observer and Board is essential to a successful Observership for both the organisation and the Observer. The Observership Program encourages direct communication between the Board and their Observer at all times and especially to clarify any issues or concerns that may arise. In the unlikely event of an issue arising which can’t be resolved, The Observership Program should be notified so that it can work with both parties to find a mutually satisfactory solution. The Observership Program undertakes a quarterly progress review with all NFPs and Observers to check that the relationship is functioning smoothly and both parties are benefiting from the experience. This takes the form of a scheduled phone call focused on the Observers’ contributions, and the organisations’ experience and provides an opportunity to identify and discuss any issues or concerns.

**Q: Is the benefit greater for the Observer or for the NFP?**

**A:** In the most effective Observerships, the benefits, although different for Observers and Organisations, are nevertheless mutual. Please refer to the FAQ outlining benefits for participating NFP organisations. Please refer to "What You Can Expect From the Program" in the "About the Program" section of the website to review the benefits of the Program to Observers.

**Q: What are the benefits to an NFP Board in participating in the Program?**

**A:** The Program provides a range of benefits to NFP organisations, including:

* Injecting the next generation’s perspective into the boardroom;
* Filling a particular skill set requirement on your board (e.g. social media, law, finance, digital, communications, marketing business planning etc.) with an emerging leader;
* Involving your Observer in a strategic project to deliver concrete benefits to the organisation;
* Participating in developing the next cohort of leaders in the non-for-profit and for-profit sectors;
* Strengthening a board’s renewal strategy with no ongoing commitment to retain the Observer at the end of the 12 month program; and
* Invitations to attend the Program launch and closing session events, with opportunities for informal networking and access to high profile guest speakers.

Click [here](https://www.observership.com.au/testimonials/) to review testimonials from our NFPs

**Q: What is the role of the Board Liaison?**

**A:** Each participating board allocates a Board Liaison person who is responsible for being the point of contact for the Observer. The role of the Board Liaison is to be a point of contact for Observers and to answer any questions about serving as an Observer on the board. The Board Liaison should ensure board meeting details and reading materials are sent to the Observer and that the Observer understands expectations around his/her contribution/participation and the general culture of the board.

**Program Conclusion**

**Q: What happens at the end of the 12-month Observership period?**

**A:** Any further relationship between the Observer and the NFP is by mutual agreement. There is no obligation on either party to continue the relationship.

**Program Locations**

**Q: Where can I participate in the Program?**

**A:** The Program operates in NSW, VIC and QLD. Although the majority of the participating boards are concentrated around central Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, some are further afield. If you are not able to travel to board meetings outside of these areas, you must alert the Program team at interview, or you may not be matched. All training sessions are held either online or in the CBD.

**Requirements of Observers**

**Q: What if I can’t make a scheduled board meeting or training session?**

**A:** Attendance at both board meetings and training sessions is critical. The Program is unique in Australia as it offers practical board experience alongside accredited training and exposure to high level directors on issues relevant to the sector. Accreditation is dependent on full attendance. We ask those with extenuating circumstances to provide as much notice as possible if you are unable to attend either a training session or a board meeting.

**Q: What are the Roles and Responsibilities of Observers?**

**A:** The following commitments are required of all Observers participating in the Program. Please consider these commitments carefully before deciding whether to submit an application to the Program. Observers must:

* Attend all board meetings, training, networking and guest speaker events. Observers are ambassadors for The Observership Program and failure to demonstrate adequate commitment jeopardises opportunities for future candidates.
* Treat all materials, discussions and activities associated with the Program and your organisation with strict confidentiality.
* Contribute to the board meeting discussions only when invited or appropriate.
* Engage with a board sub committee or strategic project if requested by your board.
* Ensure your employer is aware of your participation in the Program and understands you may need to leave the office early to attend training sessions or board meetings.

**Q: What are the time requirements for Observers while on the Program?**

**A:** Board meetings can be monthly, quarterly or bimonthly, held during lunchtimes or after hours, often with annual or occasional strategy weekends. There are nine training sessions during the year, held either online or in the CBD. Arrival for CBD-based training sessions is at 5.30pm for a 6.00pm start, finishing by 8.30pm. Online sessions begin at 6:00pm sharp and conclude by 7:30pm. Participation in the Program requires attendance at all training sessions, board and any other relevant meetings to which you have committed.

**Q: What confidentiality obligations will I be required to meet during the Observership year?**

**A:** All Observers sign a confidentiality agreement that provides detailed information about confidentiality obligations. This agreement is made available to NFPs on request. Some organisations may ask their Observers to sign another confidentiality agreement specific to their not-for-profit organisation.

**Training**

**Q: What kind of training materials can I expect?**

**A:** Online session links are provided by either AICD or the Program in advance of training sessions. Links to access session recordings are sent to Observers after each session. Observers are expected to attend all training sessions having completed any pre-work assigned for that session and forwarded to Observers prior to it.

**Q: Where are the training sessions held?**

**A:** All training sessions are held either online or in the Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane CBD.

**Q: What if I can’t make a training session?**

**A:** Attendance at both board meetings and training sessions is critical.  The Program is unique in Australia as it offers practical board experience alongside accredited training and exposure to high level directors on issues relevant to the sector. Accreditation is dependent on full attendance. We ask those with extenuating circumstances to provide as much notice as possible if you are unable to attend either a training session or a board meeting.

**Q: Is food provided at face-to-face Training Sessions?**

**A:** We recognise that Observers are coming straight from work and that sessions finish by 8.30pm. Catering is provided in the form of easy to eat finger food and considers all Observers’ dietary requirements. Non-alcoholic drinks are provided at all sessions except for Networking and the Final session, where alcohol is served alongside soft drinks.