

ACCO Governance Training

Workshop November 14th, 2026

PRESENTERS: **Jahna Cedar** – Consultant, trainer, facilitator

Jon Staley - Community Directors

VACCHO

KOORIE YOUTH COUNCIL

INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY DIRECTORS AUSTRALIA

▸Knowledge ▸Connections ▸Credentials

Acknowledgement of country



https://www.vacca.org/page/get-involved/cultural-hub/articles/indigenous-maps---showing-cultural-and-language-boundaries

VACCHO

KOORIE YOUTH COUNCIL

INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY DIRECTORS AUSTRALIA
▸Knowledge ▸Connections ▸Credentials

Knowledge Holders Group

Experienced current and former ACCO board members have helped ground the program in Community experience.

Culturally grounded governance
What ACCO governance training should look and feel like.

Practical board confidence
What people need to feel ready and supported to step into board roles.

Community realities
The governance issues, relationships and responsibilities that matter in Community.

Succession and future leadership
How training can support the next generation of ACCO board members.

With thanks to

The Knowledge Holders Group whose experience, stories and advice have helped shape the conversations, scenarios and tools we will work with today.

Massive thanks to VACCHO, KYC and Community Directors staff as well.

VACCHO

KOORIE YOUTH COUNCIL

INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY DIRECTORS AUSTRALIA
▸Knowledge ▸Connections ▸Credentials

What we will cover

Time	Session
10.00 – 10.30	**Welcome and setting the scene**
10.30 – 11.15	**Governance, leadership and the role of the board**
11.15 – 11.30	*Morning tea*
11.30 – 12.30	**Making good decisions together**
12.30 – 1.15	*Lunch*
1.15 – 2.30	**One Community, many roles, shared purpose**
2.30 – 2.45	*Afternoon tea*
2.45 – 3.45	**Legal duties, ethics and cultural integrity**
3.45 – 4.00	**Reflections and close**

A little about us



Jahna Cedar OAM

Consultant, Trainer, Facilitator

- 25 + years community leadership
- Former CEO
- Experienced board director/chair
- Blak Angel investor
- Keynote speaker



Jon Staley

Trainer, Community Directors

- 25 + years community leadership
- 10 + secondary/vocational teacher (Inc. Northland Sec Coll)
- Founder Youthworx (non-profit social enterprise)
- Filmmaker/writer
- Community board member

VACCHO

KOORIE YOUTH COUNCIL

INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY DIRECTORS AUSTRALIA
▸Knowledge ▸Connections ▸Credentials

What’s the story

INTRO
Breakout

In small groups



- Name, mob, where you’re from …
- Any board/committee/ACCO, experience
- What brings you here?
- Something you're excited about!

Governance & leadership

Healthy decision making



Role of the board

Governance

What is it?

‘Governance is how an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation holds its purpose, Culture, people and resources in trust for Community.

It is the way members, the board and management work together to make accountable decisions, protect Community control and strengthen the organisation for future generations.’

What does a good ACCO board decision need to consider?

- Does it serve **Community**?
- Have the **right voices** been heard?
- Does it align with our **purpose, values and Culture**?
- Is it **informed, fair and accountable**?
- Is it **legal** and **ethical?**
- Does it protect **Community control**?
- Will it strengthen the organisation **now and into the future**?

Different roles. Shared responsibility. One purpose

VACCHO

KOORIE YOUTH COUNCIL

INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY DIRECTORS AUSTRALIA
▸Knowledge ▸Connections ▸Credentials

Governance and Culture

Workplace (organisational) culture

Organisational culture is the way people work together and the feeling that creates within the ACCO.

It shows up in how people communicate, make decisions, handle challenges, support each other and build trust.

Cultural authority

Cultural authority comes from Community relationships, Kinship structures, shared history, Community trust.

It reflects recognised relationships, responsibilities, knowledge and standing within Community.

Cultural responsibility

Cultural responsibility is the obligation of the ACCO, its board and leadership to act in ways that respect Community authority, Cultural protocols, relationships and expectations.

This includes listening to Community and ensuring decisions are Culturally informed and accountable.

Culture is not something an ACCO governs. It's something an ACCO is accountable to. Governance is the mechanism, not the source, of that accountability.

BREAKOUT

Org/board decisions

WB

Jayden is a recently elected director of Community Connect, a Community Controlled Organisation providing health, family and wellbeing services in a regional Community. He joined the board because he wants to give back and help strengthen outcomes for local families.

At a recent board meeting, the directors considered a proposal from Youth Horizon, a mental health organisation seeking to co-locate services at Community Connect. Some directors believed the partnership would help address a gap in services, particularly for young men. Others questioned whether the organisation had built strong enough relationships with Community and whether the proposal aligned with Community Connect's values and long-term direction.

After a respectful and robust discussion, the board decided not to proceed with the partnership at this time. Although Jayden understood the reasoning, he had supported the proposal and was disappointed with the outcome.

The following Saturday, while watching his daughter's footy game, Jayden ran into a former Community Connect employee who now worked for Youth Horizon. Two Community Connect members were also nearby and mentioned they'd heard there had been a big discussion at the board meeting and that the proposal wasn't going ahead. During the conversation Jayden said,

I actually thought we should have gone ahead with it. A few of us were in favour, but most of the board were just too cautious. Karen and Michael were particularly against it. I don't think we made the right decision.

One of the Community members replied,

That's disappointing to hear. Maybe the board isn't really listening to what Community wants.

By Monday morning, different versions of the conversation had spread through the Community.

DISCUSS

1. Was this a healthy way for Jayden to handle the situation.
2. Is there another way Jayden should/could have handled this situation and if so, how?
3. What board/committee governance principles are at stake?
4. Have you seen/experienced a situation like this?

Respectful debate, united decisions

- Healthy **ACCO boards** value different perspectives and encourage respectful and robust discussion and debate before making decisions.
- Once the board has made a decision, it becomes the board's **collective decision** not an individual director's decision. Directors may have held different views during the discussion, but they share responsibility for the decision and for communicating it in a way that protects trust in the organisation.
- The organisation is legally recognised as **one body**. This means the board acts collectively in the **best interests** of the **organisation** and the **Community** it serves.

Jayden – version 2

Jayden is a recently elected director of Community Connect, a Community Controlled Organisation providing health, family and wellbeing services in a regional Community. He joined the board because he wants to give back and help strengthen outcomes for local families.

At a recent board meeting, the directors considered a proposal from Youth Horizon, a mental health organisation seeking to co-locate services at Community Connect. Some directors believed the partnership would help address a gap in services, particularly for young men. Others questioned whether the organisation had built strong enough relationships with Community and whether the proposal aligned with Community Connect's values and long-term direction.

After a respectful and robust discussion, the board decided not to proceed with the partnership at this time. Although Jayden had supported the proposal, he understood the board's reasoning and accepted the collective decision.

The following Saturday, while watching his daughter's footy game, Jayden ran into a former Community Connect employee who now worked for Youth Horizon. Two Community Connect members were also nearby and mentioned they'd heard there had been a big discussion at the board meeting and that the proposal wasn't going ahead.

During the conversation Jayden said,

'Yeah, we had a good discussion about that. There were a few different views around the table, which is healthy. We looked at it from a lot of different angles before making a decision. In the end, the board decided not to go ahead with it at this stage. Not everyone will agree with all the decisions we make, but our job is to work together to do what we think is best for Community Connect and the Community in the long run.'

1. How is this response different?
2. What does Jayden's communication protect this time?
3. What if someone keeps pressing Jayden for confidential information? How could he respond respectfully?

ACCOS
Governing within and for Community

In Community controlled governance everything is connected. Directors and Members are neighbours, relatives, clients, volunteers, and Community leaders — often all at once!






Photos courtesy of VACCHO

VACCHO

KOORIE YOUTH COUNCIL

INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY DIRECTORS AUSTRALIA
▸Knowledge ▸Connections ▸Credentials

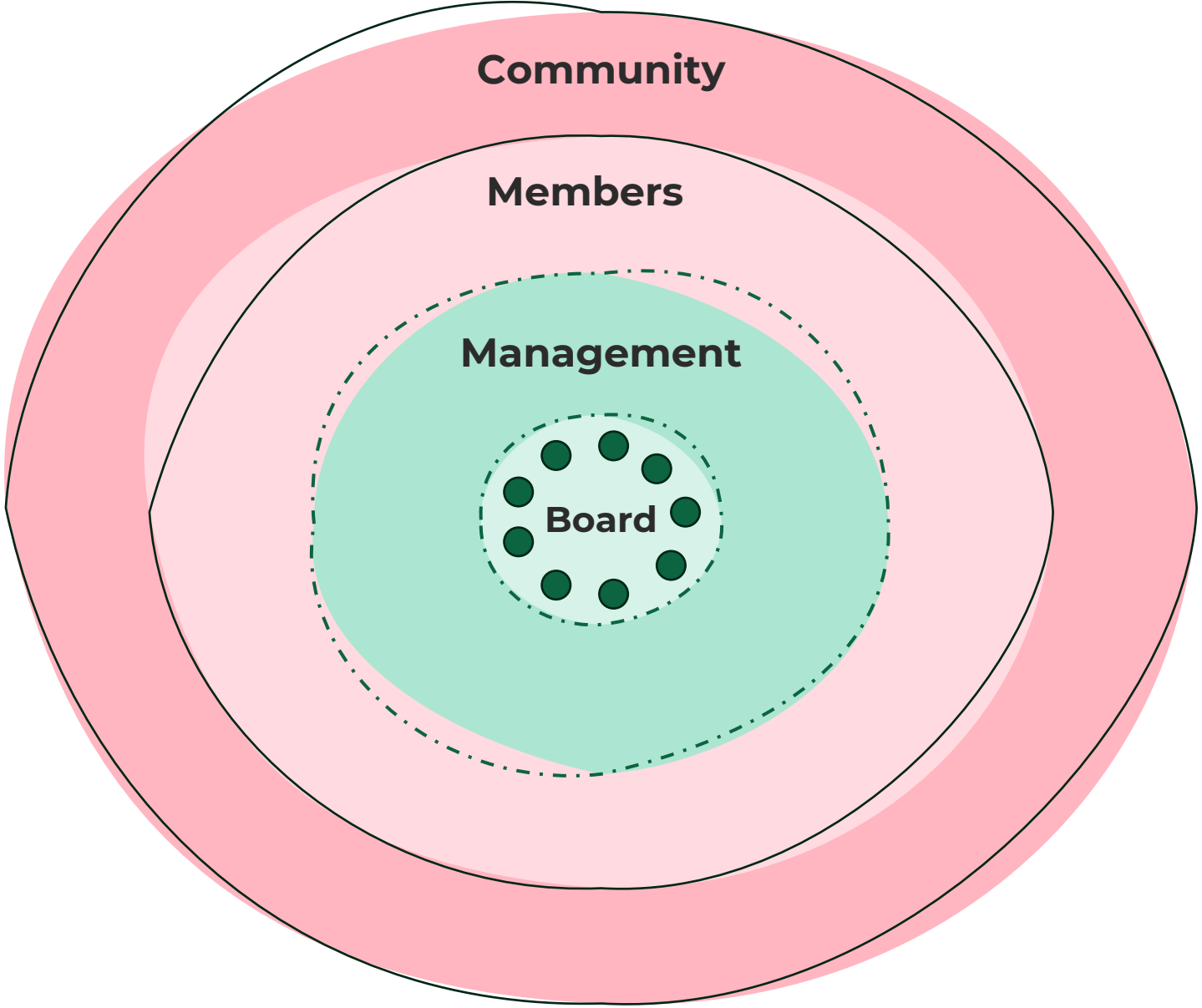
The quality of governance is reflected not only in the decisions the ACCO board makes but in how those decisions are made, communicated and lived within the Community.





Photos courtesy of VACCHO

ACCO governance ecosystem

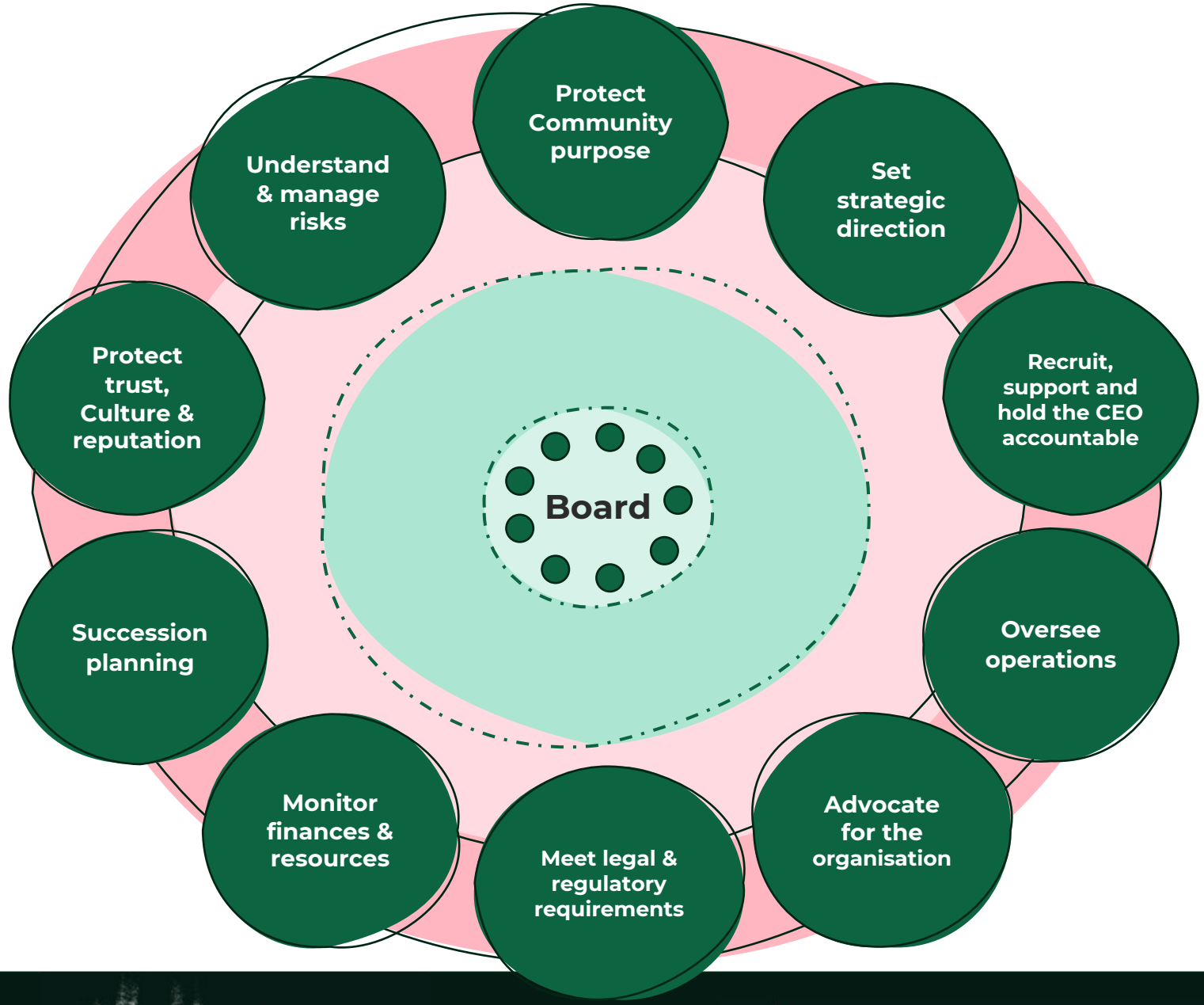


The role of the ACCO board



What do ACCO boards do?

How well does your board understand and carry these responsibilities together?




Morning Break
Grab a cuppa

Healthy decision making

What does the board need to balance?

Some governance language/terms your ACCO may use

People and roles:
- members
- directors
- executive
- board
- committee
- chair

Meeting preparation:
- agenda
- briefing papers
- rules or constitution

Making decisions:
- quorum
- majority
- motion
- amendment
- resolution

Recording and participation:
- minutes
- apologies
- general meetings
- in camera

Institute of Community Directors Australia | Glossary of board terms

Community Connect: Agenda Item 5.2

WB

You are a director of Community Connect, an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation providing health, family and wellbeing services across a regional Community. Today, your board is meeting to consider whether Community Connect should establish a new Youth Wellbeing and Cultural Connections Program, Strong Connections.

Over the past 12 months, directors have consistently heard from Community members, Elders, local schools and partner organisations about the growing need for more after-school activities and safe spaces for young people. Families have spoken about increasing concerns around youth wellbeing, social isolation and the importance of creating opportunities for young people to strengthen their connection to Culture, Community and positive role models. The proposal aligns strongly with Community Connect's purpose and strategic priorities.

The CEO has presented a discussion paper supporting the intent of the proposal but has also highlighted some important challenges.
Community Connect has modest financial reserves, enough to establish the program and operate it for approximately three months. However, there is no confirmed ongoing funding beyond that point.

Management has also advised that:

- existing staff are already operating close to capacity
- recruiting additional staff may take time
- using the organisation's reserves would reduce its ability to respond to future financial pressures
- there is no certainty that future funding applications will be successful.

Several directors have recently heard directly from families and Elders who hope the program can begin this year and are keen to see Community Connect respond to this growing need.

BOARD MEETING ACTIVITY

Meeting	**Board of Directors**
Agenda item	5.2
Subject	Strong Connections Youth Program
Author	Chief Executive Officer
Decision required	Board resolution

Community Connect

BOARD PAPER

Recommendation: The CEO recommends that the Board consider the proposal and determine whether the level of financial and operational risk associated with commencing the Strong Connections Youth Program at this time is acceptable, or whether an alternative approach should be pursued.

Purpose: Seek Board direction on a proposal to establish Strong Connections, a Community-led youth wellbeing program that strengthens young people's connection to Culture, Community and positive role models.

Strategic alignment ✓ Strategic Priority 2: Strengthen the wellbeing, resilience and Cultural connection of children and young people through Community-led and Culturally safe programs.

Background: Over the past year Community Connect has received consistent feedback from families, Elders, schools and partner organisations about the growing need for Culturally safe after-school opportunities for young people. Directors have also heard these concerns directly from Community.

Proposal: Management proposes a 12-month pilot program that would:

- Operate two afternoons each week during school terms.
- Support around 30 young people aged 12–18 each week.
- Provide Cultural activities, mentoring, wellbeing workshops, recreation and life skills.
- Engage Elders, Community members and partner organisations in delivery.

Financial snapshot

Item	Position
Annual operating budget	$3.2 million
Unrestricted reserves	$240,000 (approx. 4 months operating costs)
Reserve policy	Minimum 3 months operating costs
Annual program cost	$180,000
Establishment cost	$45,000
Ongoing monthly cost	Approx. $15,000
Confirmed funding	Nil
Grant applications	2 (outcomes expected in 4–6 months)

CEO assessment: Management believes the proposal strongly aligns with Community Connect's purpose and responds to a genuine Community need. Commencing the program now would, however, require drawing significantly on unrestricted reserves before ongoing funding is confirmed. If grant applications are unsuccessful, the Board may need to reconsider the program or identify alternative funding sources.

Key risks

Risk	Likelihood	Potential impact
Funding not secured	Medium	Program may need to be reduced or discontinued.
Reduction in reserves	Medium	Reduced financial flexibility.
Recruitment delays	Medium	Slower implementation and pressure on staff.
Community expectations	High	Reputational impacts if the program cannot continue.

Questions for Board discussion

- Does the proposal align with Community Connect's purpose and strategic priorities?
- What benefits could it deliver for Community?
- What level of financial and operational risk is the Board prepared to accept?
- What alternatives could achieve a similar outcome with less risk?
- What decision is in the best interests of Community Connect, now and for future generations?

Resolution

☐ Approve the proposal and begin implementing the program now.

☐ Delay implementation until sustainable funding is secured.

☐ Request further information or alternative options before making a final decision.


Cultural integrity
Community
Purpose
What did your ACCO board need to balance when making this decision?
Good governance means considering the whole picture before we decide together
Governance responsibilities
Sustainability
Risk
People

Governance consideration	Questions the board might ask
Community	What have we heard from Community and members? Who else needs to be heard?
Purpose	Does this help us fulfil why our ACCO exists?
Sustainability	What will this mean for the sustainability of our organisation, including our finances, infrastructure and capacity to serve Community into the future?
People	What impact will this have on our members, Community, staff and services?
Risk	What opportunities and risks are we balancing? What could happen if we act or don't act?
Governance responsibilities	Is this consistent with our Constitution, policies, legal duties and governance responsibilities?
Cultural integrity	Does this respect and strengthen our Cultural foundations, values and ways of working?

Where does legislated governance decision-making authority come from?

Three connected layers guide how an ACCO meets, decides and acts.

1 The law

The legislation your ACCO is registered under

- CATSI Act
- Corporations Act
- State or territory associations law
- National laws for cooperatives

Sets the legal framework and obligations

→

2 Rule book or constitution

How this ACCO is organised and governed

- Purpose and membership
- Board powers and responsibilities
- Meetings, voting and decisions

Usually changed by members through a special resolution

→

3 Policies and meeting rules

How the rules are put into everyday practice

- Code of conduct and conflicts
- Delegations and financial controls
- Standing orders and procedures

Usually approved and reviewed by the board

Policies must fit the rule book. **The rule book must fit the law.**

Under what structures do rule books/constitutions exist?

For some ACCOs this may be called a rule book; for others, a constitution.

Structure	Focus	Owners	Regulator
Unincorporated association	NFP	Individuals	None
Incorporated association	NFP	Members	State/territory government departments
Co-operative	NFP/Profit	Members	State/territory government departments
Company	Profit	Shareholders	ASIC
Company limited by guarantee	NFP	Members	ACNC / ASIC
Indigenous Corporation	NFP/Profit	Members/ shareholders	ORIC
Statutory organisation	NFP	Parliament (state/federal)	Parliament

What's in the rule book and how can it help us?

It gives the structure. People bring it to life through trust, Culture and good governance.

It usually sets out

1. **Purpose and objects**
2. **Members and Community control**
3. **General meetings and AGMs**
4. **Board roles and eligibility**
5. **Board meetings and decisions**
6. **Conflicts and related parties**
7. **Money, records and reporting**
8. **Complaints and disputes**
9. **Changing the rule book**
10. **Winding up or transferring assets**

Rule book / constitution

The organisation's main governance document

- Who belongs
- Who decides
- How meetings work
- What must be recorded
- How issues are handled

A living reference point for good decisions

The rule book is not:

- **A strategic plan**
- **A policy manual**
- **A substitute for good relationships**
- **A guarantee that people will follow it**

Policies, documents, and resources that support effective and ethical governance

- Constitution
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints policy
- Grievance and dispute policy
- Register of conflict of interest
- Risk management strategy
- Strategic plan
- Fundraising policy
- Annual report
- Financial audit
- Whistleblower policy
- Media relations policy
- Procurement policies and procedures
- Investment planning policy
- Communications strategy
- Privacy policy
- Conflict of interest register
- AI use and Indigenous Data Sovereignty



Does your organisation have these policies?

If not, find templates at https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools-resources/policy-bank

VACCHO Member boards can access VACCHO governance resources and supports at VACCHO Members portal


LUNCH

Understanding roles

Community governance ecosystem

BREAKOUT

Understanding roles – Board/CEO/Staff

WB

Janice has recently joined the board of **Community Connect**. With a background in business and strong ties to the local area, she is keen to make a positive contribution.
At a Community event, Janice meets **Darren**, Community Connect's Operations Manager, and they stop to have a yarn. During the conversation, Janice mentions that the organisation's Community program reporting and data systems seem outdated and inefficient. She tells Darren she knows someone who specialises in digital systems for Community organisations and suggests they could really help.

Darren explains that Community Connect is already working with an existing provider and that any changes would need to be considered through the organisation's normal processes. Janice replies that it couldn't hurt to have another conversation and offers to introduce her contact.
A few days later, Janice organises a meeting between Darren and her friend. During the meeting, her friend outlines how their business could improve Community Connect's systems and reporting and mentions they would be happy to offer a discounted rate because of their connection to the Community.

Towards the end of the meeting, Community Connect's CEO, **Marlene**, walks past and is introduced to Janice's friend. Darren briefly explains the meeting, creating an awkward moment.

In small groups discuss:

1. Why is the moment awkward?
2. What governance issues are at stake?
3. How could Janice's knowledge & connections better serve the organisation?
4. Have you seen/experienced a situation like this? What was the outcome?

How do ACCO boards and management work together?

How does your board build trust and a strong relationship with staff and management?

Board GOVERN
Without taking over management

Where does healthy governance end and healthy management begin?

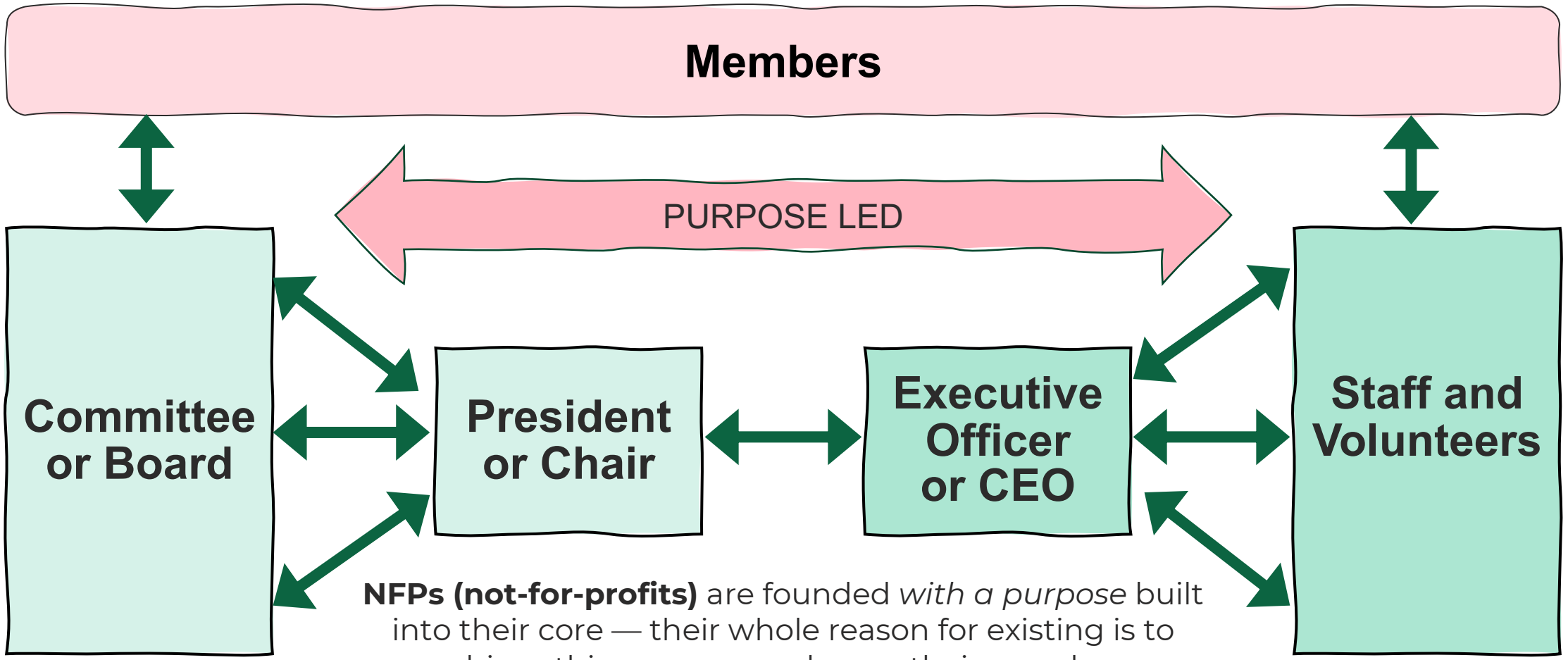
Different roles. Shared responsibility. One purpose

VACCHO

KOORIE YOUTH COUNCIL

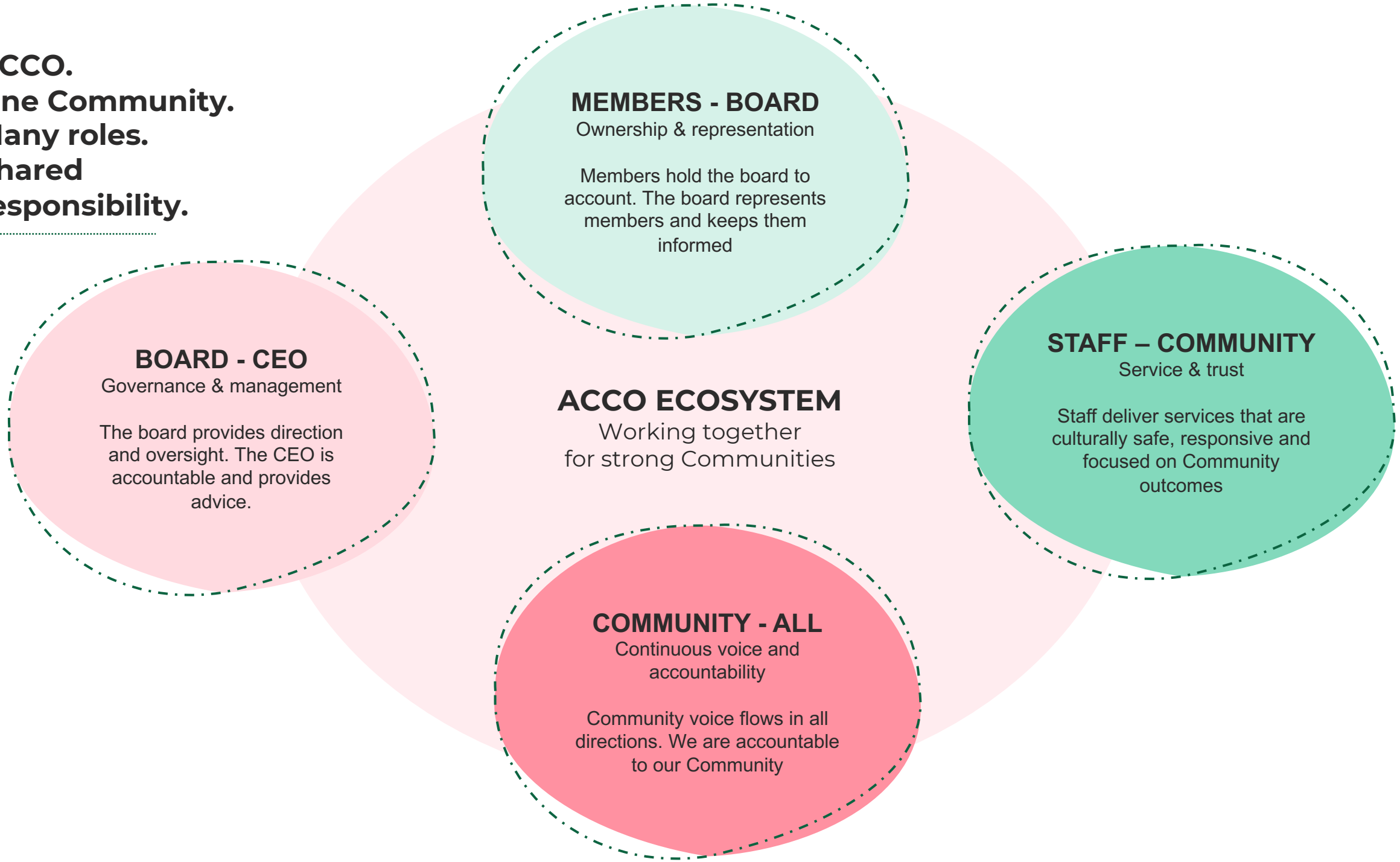
INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY DIRECTORS AUSTRALIA
▸Knowledge ▸Connections ▸Credentials

Community (nfp) boards



NFPs (not-for-profits) are founded *with a purpose* built into their core — their whole reason for existing is to achieve this **purpose** and serve their members

ACCO.
One Community.
Many roles.
Shared responsibility.



IN PAIRS

Decide **who should take the lead** for each responsibility. There may be more than one right answer. If you think a responsibility is shared, discuss **who should lead and why**. Be prepared to explain your reasoning.

WB

Responsibility	Members	Board	CEO	Staff	Shared
Elect directors	●	□	□	□	□
Recruit and appoint the CEO	□	●	□	□	□
Recruit staff	□	□	●	□	□
Develop the strategic plan	□	□	□	□	●
Approve the strategic plan	□	●	□	□	□
Approve the annual budget	□	●	□	□	□
Deliver programs and services	□	□	□	●	□
Monitor organisational performance	□	●	□	□	□
Manage organisational risks	□	□	□	□	●
Represent the organisation at Community events	□	□	□	□	●
Build relationships with Elders and Community	□	□	□	□	●
Respond to a complaint from a Community member	□	□	□	□	●
Develop a new youth program	□	□	□	□	●
Approve opening a new service in another Community	□	●	□	□	□
Ensure the organisation remains true to its purpose and Cultural foundations	□	●	□	□	□
Monitor the CEO's performance	□	●	□	□	□

ACCO Board – CEO Checklist 1.

1. Shared Understanding & Respect

☐ Board and CEO understand and respect their distinct roles and responsibilities
☐ CEO respects the Board's role in governance, Cultural leadership, and Community accountability
☐ Board respects the CEO's role in operational leadership and day-to-day management
☐ Cultural protocols and Community expectations are acknowledged and valued in decision-making

2. Strong Communication

☐ Regular, open, and honest communication is maintained between Board Chair and CEO
☐ Information is shared transparently – no surprises at meetings
☐ Key decisions are communicated clearly to the full Board and senior staff
☐ Difficult conversations are approached respectfully, not avoided

3. Alignment on Purpose & Strategy

☐ There is a shared vision for the organisation's direction and priorities
☐ The CEO's implementation aligns with the Board-approved strategy
☐ Progress on strategic goals is regularly reviewed together
☐ Both Board and CEO are committed to Community-led priorities and self-determination

ACCO Board – CEO Checklist 2.

4. Trust and Accountability

☐ The Board trusts the CEO to lead operations competently and with integrity
☐ The CEO trusts the Board to govern fairly and provide wise counsel
☐ Performance expectations for the CEO are clear, fair, and regularly reviewed
☐ The Board holds itself accountable to good governance practices

5. Support and Development

☐ The Board supports the CEO's professional development and wellbeing
☐ The CEO supports the Board in accessing governance training and Cultural development
☐ Conflict is addressed constructively, with external support if needed
☐ Both Board and CEO invest in building a positive, collaborative relationship

6. Cultural Safety and Community Voice

☐ The relationship is grounded in respect for Cultural ways of working and decision-making
☐ Community voices are central to strategic direction and program design
☐ The CEO actively listens to Community and Board input
☐ Elders and Cultural advisors are engaged appropriately to guide leadership and resolve tensions

Governance



Organisational culture
Values, behaviours, norms

Systems
Processes, tools, structures

Strategy
Direction, goals, priorities


Arvo Break
Grab a cuppa

Ethics

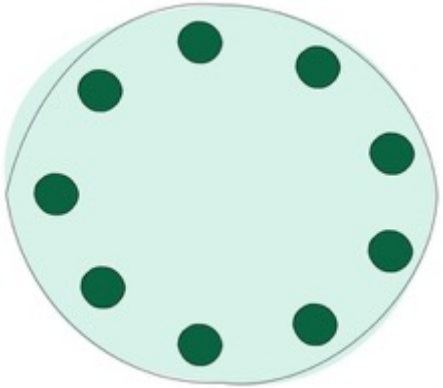
Legal duties

Cultural integrity

Aboriginal Cultural, ethical principles

Respect

Custodianship



Collective wellbeing

Relational Accountability

Legal duties

(of individual board directors - Corporations Act)

Legal duty	In everyday language
Duty to act *bona fide* in the best interests of the company	Act in the organisation's best interests
Duty to exercise powers for proper purposes	Use your powers for the right reasons
Duty to retain discretion	Make your own informed decisions
Duty to avoid conflicts of interest	Manage conflicts of interest
Duty to not improperly use your position	Don't misuse your position
Duty to treat confidential information properly	Keep confidential information confidential
Duty to treat related-party transactions properly	Be transparent about relationships and dealings
Duty to treat payments to directors properly	Only receive approved payments or benefits
Duty of care, skill and diligence	Be prepared, informed and thoughtful
Duty to prevent insolvent trading	Protect the organisation's financial health

Scenario – Wattle Creek

- Wattle Creek Community Corporation is a charity focused on Cultural preservation and economic development within a small rural Community. Given the close-knit nature of the Community, confidentiality is crucial for trust and fairness.
- During a board meeting, financial struggles and possible staff redundancies were discussed. Michael, a long-serving board member, was troubled, especially since his cousin worked for the organisation. After the meeting, he was upset and blurted out the possible layoffs to friends at the Community center.
- Word spread quickly, causing anxiety among employees and frustration among board members.

Discuss
How should the board address this breach/issue?

Duty to treat confidential information properly

Scenario – Jasmin/Treasurer

- Jasmin has recently been elected to the board of a Community-owned food cooperative. She has limited experience with financial reports, so she attends a training session to improve her understanding.
- At the next board meeting, Jasmin asks multiple questions about the co-op's financial statements and suggests that key figures be presented visually, such as in charts, to make them clearer for all members.
- The treasurer, feeling frustrated by the extra discussion, tells Jasmin that if she doesn't fully understand the financial reports, she should simply trust the more experienced board members to interpret them correctly, rather than taking up meeting time.

Discuss

How do you feel about Jasmin and the treasurer's actions?

Duty of care, skill and diligence

Scenario – Green Futures

- Green Futures Inc is a Community-led sustainability cooperative that provides affordable renewable energy solutions to its members.
- Sam has been the cooperative's treasurer for six years, carefully managing its finances and growing its reserves. Last year, Sam lost their job, and after a series of financial setbacks, they found themselves in serious debt.
- Struggling to cover their mortgage, Sam transfers money from the cooperative's funds into their personal account, intending to repay it. A few months later, they return the full amount with interest. However, during the annual financial review, the cooperative's auditors flag the transactions. When questioned, Sam admits to the Chair what they have done.

Discuss
What are the possible legal and ethical implications of Sam's actions?

Duty of good faith
(best interests of the org)

Scenario - Brayden

- Brayden has just joined the board of an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation and has just returned home from his first board meeting.
- On the train home, he happens to sit next to a family member who is very interested in what happened at the meeting.
- Brayden is keen to share as he's excited about the organisation's plans. However, he accidently shares some confidential information that, when shared more broadly, creates conflict within the broader Community.

Discuss
What policies and processes will help ensure this slip up doesn't happen again?

Policies
- Confidentiality
- Third party contact
- Privacy

Processes
- Reminders about what people CAN share outside the board meetings
- Regular chats about roles and responsibilities of individual board members

Scenario – Food for All

- Food for All, a charity providing meals to people experiencing homelessness, has lost a major government grant that covered 80% of its core funding. At the same time, demand for its services is rising, and supplier costs are increasing.
- In May, the organisation secures a new funding source that will begin payments in July. However, it only has enough funds to cover current liabilities until the end of May, leaving a critical gap.

Discuss

What should/could the board do?

Duty to not trade while insolvent

Scenario – Anita

- Anita is a director of a Community Controlled Organisation that operates a philanthropic fund supporting Community initiatives.

- One evening, her cousin comes over for dinner and mentions that the youth organisation she manages is planning to apply for one of the foundation's grants. She knows Anita serves on the board and asks whether the board is "looking for anything in particular" and whether Anita thinks the organisation has a good chance of being successful. She also asks if Anita would be willing to have a quick look over the draft application before it is submitted.

- Anita knows the organisation does excellent work and believes it would be a strong applicant. She also wants to support her cousin and the community. At the same time, she is aware of her responsibilities as a director and begins to wonder where the line is between helping family, supporting Community, and protecting the integrity of the grant process.

Discuss

What should Anita do?

Duty to avoid conflict of interest

BREAKOUT

Dilemma 1. Low morale

WB

Scenario

You are a director of Community Connect.
Over the past few months, several respected Community members have quietly approached you at different times to express concerns about increasing staff turnover and low morale. A former employee also mentions that staff are feeling overwhelmed and unsupported.
At each board meeting, however, the CEO reports that operations are running well and organisational performance remains on track. Nothing in the board papers suggests there is a significant issue.
You don't know whether these conversations reflect isolated concerns or something more widespread. You also don't want to rely on rumours or undermine the CEO.
The next board meeting is in two days.

Discuss

1. What would you do?
2. Would you raise the issue with the Chair before the meeting, during the meeting, or not at all?
3. What questions could you ask without relying on hearsay?
4. What additional information would you want before reaching any conclusions?
5. How do you balance your duty to exercise oversight with maintaining trust and respect?

BREAKOUT

Dilemma 2. Elder respect

WB

Scenario

Community Connect is considering a partnership with another Aboriginal organisation.
An Elder who sits on your board has publicly supported the proposal for many years and has encouraged directors to approve it.
You have enormous respect for the Elder and know many Community members expect you to support their view.
However, after reading the papers, you have concerns about the financial risks.

Discuss

1. Can Cultural authority create pressure?
2. How do you balance your respect for your Elder alongside your concerns in relation to risk?
3. What does acting in the organisation's best interests look like?

Ethical decision making checklist

Part 1.

- **Have we considered Cultural protocols, Cultural safety, and stakeholder consultation adequately?**
  (*Informed decision-making, respecting Traditional Owners and Communities.*)
- **Is this decision aligned with our legal and fiduciary duties?**
  (*Compliance with legislation, and organisations best interest)*
- **Does this decision uphold our board's values and ethical commitments?**
  (*Integrity, respect, transparency, service to Community.*)
- **Could this decision harm people, Country, Culture, or reputation?**
  (*Think beyond financial impact — what about Community trust?*)

Ethical decision making checklist

Part 2.

- **Have all conflicts of interest been declared and properly managed?**
  (*Including Kinship, Community, and perceived interests.*)
- **Have we allowed time for proper consultation and reflection?**
  (*Good governance is slow enough to be careful.*)
- **If this decision was made public tomorrow, would we be proud of it?**
  (*Public accountability — would Elders, families, or media understand and respect the decision?*)
- **Are we thinking for now — or for the next seven generations?**
  (*Long-term thinking is a principle of Cultural governance.*)

Mentoring circle

With Nicole Cassar

Tuesday 17th November, 6pm
(online)

Nicole Cassar
Managing Director, NICCAS
Cultural Infusion Services
ACCO Board Experience



Nicole Cassar

- AGM dilemma
- Ethical leadership & stakeholder trust
- Reflections

VACCHO

KOORIE YOUTH COUNCIL

INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY DIRECTORS AUSTRALIA
▸Knowledge ▸Connections ▸Credentials

Reflections

For those who are already board members what do you wish you'd known when you first joined a board?









Photos courtesy of VACCHO