

2025

Institute of Community Directors Australia

Impact Report



INSTITUTE OF
COMMUNITY DIRECTORS
AUSTRALIA
► Knowledge ► Connections ► Credentials



an enterprise of:
ourcommunity.com.au
Where not-for-profits go for help

Acknowledgement of Country

The authors and publishers of this report acknowledge and offer our deep respects to the traditional owners of the lands on which we live, work, play and learn. Sovereignty was never ceded.

We support the reforms outlined in the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Treaty, Justice, Truth.

From the Executive Director

2025 was a year of balance for the Institute of Community Directors Australia.

We launched *Radical Moderate: Leading with boldness & balance*, a publication comprising 20 articles by thought leaders in higher education, advocacy, school education, research, communications, fundraising, international development and migration services, reflecting on what the concept of the radical moderate might mean in their sector in Australia.

We delivered training on how to implement AI integration, on the one hand, and on how to consider appropriate guardrails to balance innovation with protection from harm, on the other. We also published an innovation guide and various policy templates to support risk mitigation.

We balanced a strong focus on the digital realm of artificial intelligence with efforts to build and strengthen community connections among our members. These connections spanned groups of treasurers, secretaries, chairs, First Nations board members, and emerging leaders. Relationships are central to our work, and we collaborated with many valued partners to provide not-for-profits with access to online board portal tools, coaching, advocacy and pitching.

We recognise the need for organisations to balance board members' commitment to their cause with their own wellbeing, so that they remain fresh and effective in their roles. To this end, we published the *2025 Australian Community Boards Wellbeing Report*.

2025 also marked the year we expanded our reach into New Zealand through the Certified Community Directors course,

delivered in partnership with Community Governance Aotearoa. We also launched a strategic partnership with Auckland-based board portal provider BoardPro.

We strongly value our relationships with the community organisations we work with across Australia, and we are proud to support their skills, knowledge, confidence and ethics development. So I took particular delight in reading this quote from a Not-for-profit Leadership Certificate graduate, which beautifully encapsulates the way we seek to work: "[The most useful things were] the collaboration with others and the intuitive, personal, non-corporate approach of the facilitators – they obviously understand the community sector."

As the year wrapped up, on 14 December 2025, Australia faced the worst massacre since Port Arthur in 1996. The Bondi terrorist attack targeted a Jewish cultural celebration. We recognise that tragedies of this kind profoundly affect community organisations – both those that organise public events like the one targeted, and also those that take on a leadership role in the aftermath. This includes organisations involved in emergency services, victim support, and the long-term work of fostering cultural safety for all Australians and residents of Australia.

We believe that a stronger community sector will make a stronger Australia and we remain committed to that vision.



Adele Stowe-Lindner
Executive Director

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Mission and vision

The Institute of Community Directors Australia exists for the community sector. As the governance and leadership experts, we provide training, resources and sector news for not-for-profits and community organisations of all sizes.

The Community Directors team shares your world: real, hard, messy and vital. We believe stronger community organisations help build stronger communities.

Having spent over two decades serving the not-for-profit sector, we're the organisation you can rely on to help make the work you do easier.

We believe the keys to achieving this lie in:

- the development of a strong, inclusive, inspirational, ethical and diverse pool of sector and community leaders
- the experience and promotion of greater cultural and psychological safety by board members and community leaders

- diversity of thought and experience being heard and seen in the sector
- thought leadership and advocacy to government and community.

These conditions will be created through board directors and those who report to them increasing their governance and leadership knowledge, skills, confidence and connections and enhancing their ethical understanding.

We play our part by providing:

- training for government and community boards
- public education
- information and publications
- educational resources
- adaptable policy and process templates
- services including a board position online portal, and membership
- public acknowledgement through awards.

We value:



Integrity

"We do what's right, not just what is required."



Curiosity

"We keep asking. We keep learning. We keep evolving."



Expertise

"We know our stuff, and we bring it to life."



Peer learning

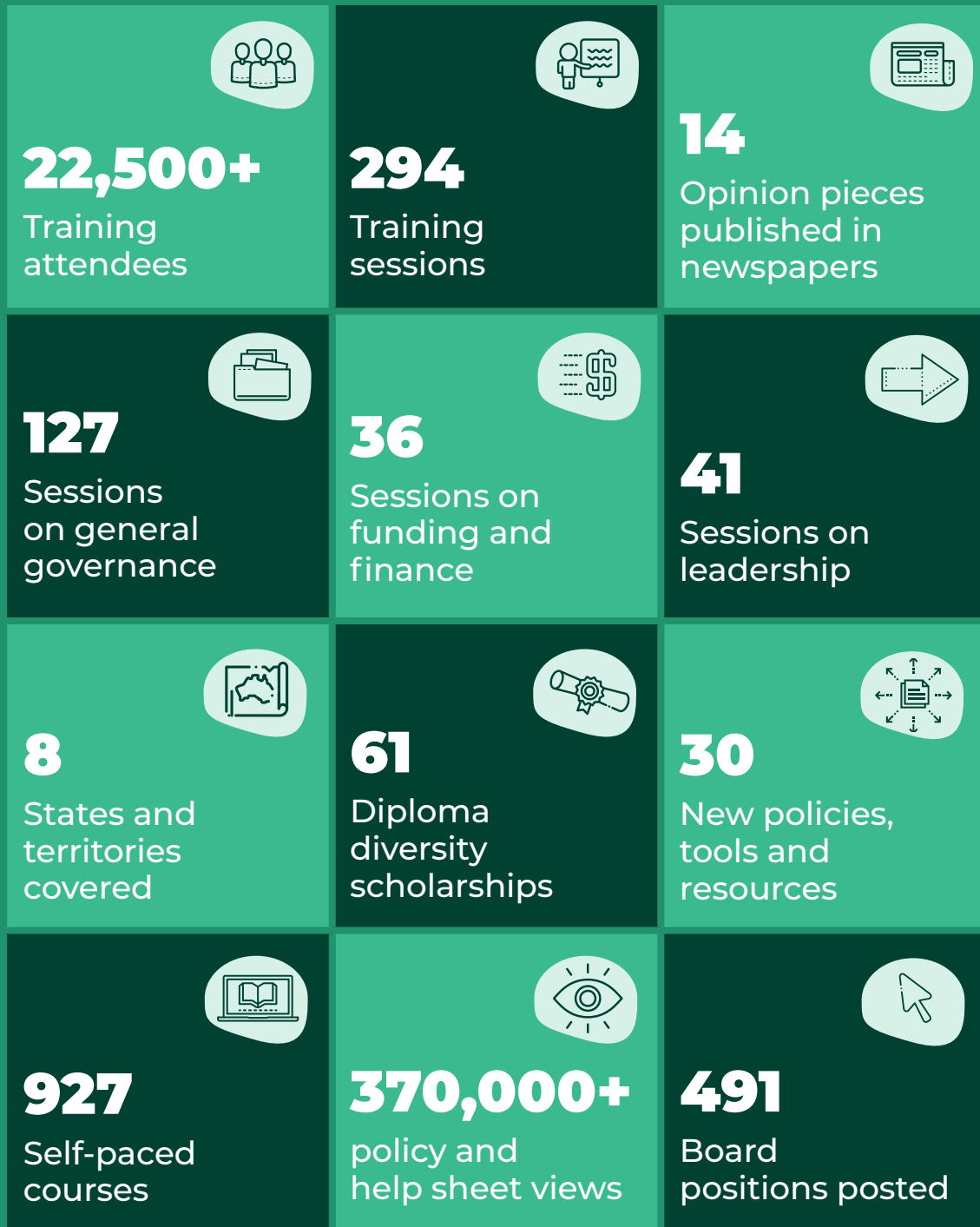
"We make it easy for people to learn from each other."



Practicality

"We focus on what matters, and what works."

2025 in numbers



Program delivery in 2025

In 2025, Community Directors provided courses for government boards, specialty programs for specific board roles and leaders, one-hour webinars, longer in-depth public courses, inhouse training for full boards, self-paced training, and the 12-month Diploma of Governance. In total, **22,724** people underwent training through Community Directors in 2025, an increase from 2024.

A cohort of 60 First Nations board members completed the Victorian Public Sector Commission First Nations Governance course and a cohort of 39 completed the Victorian Government Joan Kirner Emerging Leaders course. Two cohorts of women completed the Diploma of Governance through the Australian Institute of Sport.

The Board Positions Service continued to offer a free online noticeboard where NFP organisations can advertise board roles.

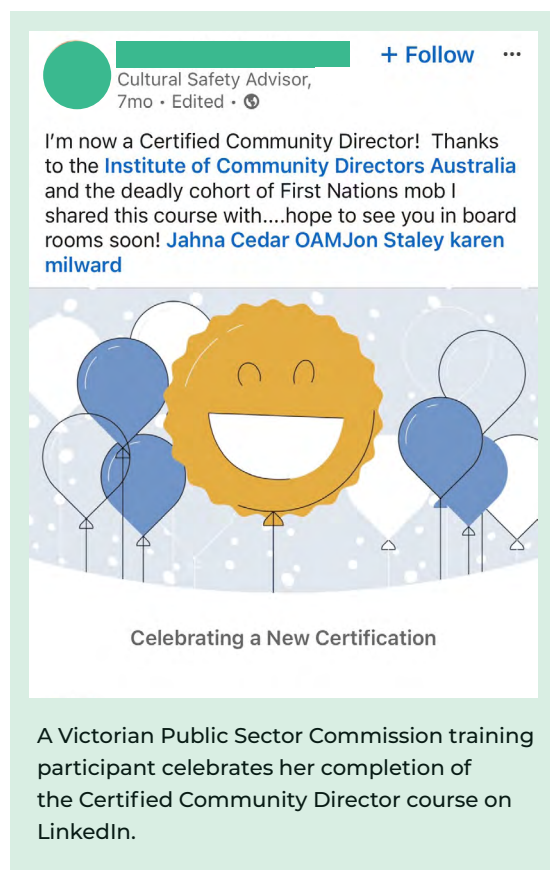
In 2025, we remained committed to delivering practical training alongside tools and resources that can be used easily and immediately to increase good governance. One participant in the online self-paced Certified Community Director course commented, “my favourite aspect was learning via scenarios and accessing resources and templates throughout the course to cement learnings”, and another said, “the templates are excellent and the questions to take back to the board for discussion.”

Government boards and programs

Community Directors partnered with four government departments to deliver substantial programming to **600** participants from specialist groups.

Together with the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, we delivered governance training to 443 Cemetery Trust board members in 56 sessions. The training is spread across two days. Partnering with the Victorian Public Sector Commission, we delivered governance training to 68 First Nations board members spread over six days. Still in Victoria, in partnership with the Office for Women we delivered the Joan Kirner Emerging Leaders program to 39 participants in five days.

In partnership with the Queensland Department of Primary Industries, we delivered governance in biosecurity training to 50 participants over four days. These participants worked in the areas of flora, fauna and water, through industry, peak bodies and government.



Specialty programs

In 2025, **542** participants took part in in-depth specialty programs delivered over multiple weeks. The NFP Leadership Certificate is delivered to a capped cohort over four weeks of three sessions per week. The Advanced Leadership for Community Chairs course, now in its fourth year, consists of five evenings of two hours per session. Both courses deliver skills, knowledge, confidence and ethics with a strong emphasis on connections between people in similar positions in the community sector all over Australia.

Commencing in 2025, we now offer specialty courses for the three key board roles: secretary, treasurer and chair. The Community Treasurers course and the Community Chairs course are both new additions in 2026, in recognition of the practical skills and knowledge board members require to be able to step confidently stepping into these roles.

Festival of Community Directors

The year-long 2025 Festival of Community Directors program featured 46 one-hour webinars attended by **16,909** people. It included these sessions and more:

- Public speaking for community organisations
- Questions your board should ask about finances
- AI in fundraising
- Cyber safety trends and the board's role.

Festival themes arise in response to sector and global trends and changes as well as requests from Community Directors members. Community Directors works with its partners to deliver specialty content; partners include AON for NFP Insurance Week, Maddocks for a law series, and Tanck for a focus on advocacy. The most popular sessions in 2025, with over 1000 attendees per theme, were those on finance, human resources, leadership, sector news, communications and marketing, insurance, strategy, and cybersecurity and artificial intelligence.

Standard training

Community Directors' standard training program features in-depth three-hour webinars on building basic governance capacity by enhancing skills and knowledge. In 2025, Community Directors delivered 14 sessions to **793** participants and covered finding funding, understanding fundraising, impact evaluation, project management, strategic planning and more.

In-house training

Inhouse training is delivered in person and online throughout Australia to full boards. In 2025, our trainers provided 86 sessions to **1806** participants. One session was delivered in the ACT, one in Tasmania, 41 were delivered in Victoria, 13 in New South Wales, seven in the Northern Territory, six in Queensland, five in South Australia and three in Western Australia. In addition, nine sessions were delivered online to boards with members across multiple states.

Training topics included communication, general governance and succession planning, understanding finances, fundraising, leadership, project management and impact evaluation, strategic planning, AI, cybersecurity and risk, and running effective meetings.

Self-paced courses

Community Directors has designed a range of self-paced courses to suit the needs of not-for-profit board members and leaders who require a flexible timetable. In 2025, a total of **927** people accessed online learning courses through Community Directors. These courses included Certified Community Director (seven modules) and Advanced Financial Governance (three modules) along with shorter courses such as Leadership for Chairs.

We can adapt our online courses to suit the needs of specific customers. This type of partnership enables us to provide tailored content suited to, for example, youth or people with intellectual disability.

In 2025 we worked on:

- Step In, Step Up: a course adapted for Victoria's Country Fire Authority (in progress)
- Certified Community Director: a course adapted to suit a New Zealand audience for Community Governance Aotearoa.

Board Positions Service

Community Directors offers a free online Board Positions Service, which attracted **499** listings in 2025, an increase from 2024. These came from not-for-profits of many sizes, incomes and numbers of staff. Of all the listings in 2025, 10% offered paid roles, 23% offered reimbursement of expenses, and 67% were voluntary positions without reimbursement.

In terms of board size, 8% of listings were for boards with three or fewer board members, just over half (54%) were for organisations with four to seven board members, just over a third (36%) were for organisations with eight to 12 board members and 2% of the listed roles were for organisations with more than 12 board members.

Skills and experience in high demand include governance (36%), accounting or finance (31%), fundraising (24%) and advocacy and government relations (16%). To this end, we offer role-specific training for secretaries and treasurers. We have formed a partnership

with Tanck to deliver webinars on advocacy, and we work with Catherine Brooks of Equitable Philanthropy to deliver a new Pitch to Impact program.

Overall, there is significant diversity in skills sought by organisations seeking board members, so community members who wish to support causes that are important to them should not hesitate to contact not-for-profits that interest them.

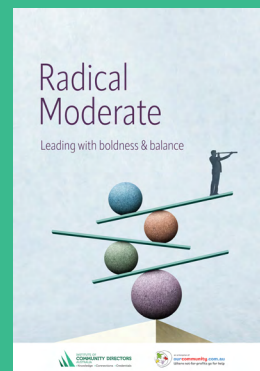
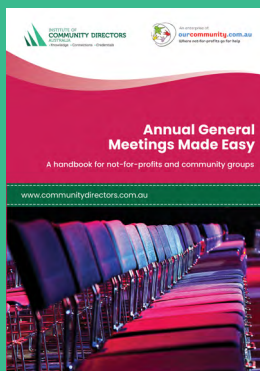
New products launched

In response to community requests, Community Directors developed new policies, resources, training, publications and news products in 2025.

Publications

- *Annual General Meetings Made Easy: A handbook for not-for-profits and community groups*
- *Not-for-profit Innovation on a Shoestring: A path to sustainability*
- *Radical Moderate: Leading with boldness & balance*
- *2025 Community Board Wellbeing Report*
- Governance Guru column in *Community Directors Intelligence* newsletter

New publications in 2025



Courses

- Community Sector Chairs, a three-week webinar series
- Community Sector Treasurers, a three-week webinar series
- Leadership for Chairs self-paced course
- Board Bootcamp
- Pitch to Impact

Policies and help sheets

Board code of conduct	<u>www.communitydirectors.com.au/policies/board-code-of-conduct</u>
Responsible use of computers	<u>www.communitydirectors.com.au/policies/responsible-computer-use-policy</u>
Financial obligations for NFPs	<u>www.communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/financial-obligations-for-not-for-profit-organisations-across-australia</u>
Developing an AI governance framework	<u>www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools/developing-an-ai-governance-framework-at-your-organisation</u>
Writing funding applications with AI: opportunities and pitfalls	<u>www.communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/writing-funding-applications-with-ai-opportunities-and-pitfalls</u>
Terms of reference template	<u>www.communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/terms-of-reference-template</u>
Shared decision making framework	<u>www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools/shared-decision-making-framework</u>
Advocacy plan template	<u>www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools/advocacy-plan-template</u>
NFP innovation on a shoestring	<u>www.communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/nfp-innovation-on-a-shoe-string</u>
The board's role in promoting social cohesion	<u>www.communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/ten-questions-a-board-should-ask-about-its-role-in-promoting-social-cohesion</u>
AGM compliance checklist	<u>www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools/agm-compliance-checklist-tool</u>
Policy review schedule template	<u>www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools/policy-review-schedule-template</u>

Mental health & wellbeing policy	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/policies/mental-health-and-wellbeing-policy
Board wellbeing reporting pack	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools/board-wellbeing-reporting-pack
Wellbeing strategy template	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools/wellbeing-strategy-template
Wellbeing governance guide	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/wellbeing-governance-guide
Procurement policy	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/policies/procurement-policy
Exit interview template	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools/exit-interview-template
Religious leave policy	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/policies/religious-leave-policy
Media engagement checklist	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/media-engagement-checklist
How to keep disagreement productive	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/how-to-keep-disagreement-productive-a-guide-for-chairs-leaders-and-other-facilitators
De-escalation language prompts	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/de-escalation-language-prompts
How to reduce the heat in your meetings	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/how-to-reduce-the-heat-in-your-meetings
Experiment tracker	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/experiment-tracker
A values-based deliberation process	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/a--values-based-deliberation-process
Workplace gender equity checklist	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools/workplace-gender-equity-policy-checklist
Change implementation plan: Embedding gender equity initiatives	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools/change-implementation-plan-embedding-gender-equity-initiatives
Embedding gender equity into organisational documents	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/embedding-gender-equity-into-organisational-documents
Intellectual property policy template	https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/policies/intellectual-property-policy

Growth in New Zealand

In 2025, Community Directors worked alongside Community Governance Aotearoa and BoardPro to support community directors in New Zealand. This has been very successful, and we look forward to continuing the partnerships in 2026. We adapted the Certified Community Director course to a New Zealand context and the response has been very positive, with one course participant telling us, “Loved all the modules and thanks again for bringing this to Aotearoa. Interested in the advanced course too.” Another described the course as “Comprehensive without being overwhelming.” It was gratifying to note that the New Zealand contextualisation worked well, with one commenter saying, “The case study was an excellent learning tool for relating the subject to a real-world situation.”



B.Soc.Sci/LL.B | Strategic Leader
3mo • Edited •

I have recently completed the Certified Community Directors Course through [Community Governance Aotearoa](#), backed by [Institute of Community Directors Australia](#).

I highly recommend the course, 7 modules, online and at your own pace. I thought the financial module was excellent and it is great to have a course in governance tailored for the NZ NFP sector being led by the NZ NFP provider.

Ka mau te wehi! Looking forward to your next offering [Rose Hiha-Agnew](#) and [Community Governance Aotearoa](#)!

[#governance](#) [#directors](#) [#aotearoa](#) [#newzealand](#)

Feedback from a New Zealand course participant.



Loved all the modules and thanks again for bringing this to Aotearoa.”

Certified Community Directors,
New Zealand participant

Publications

Under the banner of Succession Media, Community Directors publishes the monthly Community Directors Intelligence and the weekly Community Advocate.

The circulation of Community Directors Intelligence grew to 64,000 in 2025, with each issue providing in-depth analysis on a timely theme:

February: NFP trends

March: Government relations

April: The sector Blueprint

May: The future

June: Finances

July: Leadership

August: Wellbeing

September: Artificial intelligence

October: Fundraising

November: The Radical Moderate

December: Board wellbeing

The top five most-read articles were:

1. [Forty-three examples of NFPs and charities using artificial intelligence](#)
2. [Leading with purpose: the ICDA leadership white paper](#)
3. [Federal government lays out NFP sector reform agenda](#)
4. [Clarity the key to winning grants](#)
5. [Introducing Radical Moderate: Leading with boldness & balance](#)

At the same time, the circulation of our weekly news publication the *Community Advocate* grew to over **19,000** in 2025. At Community Directors, we pride ourselves on being close to our members and on listening to what they tell us about their wishes and worries so we can produce information and training to help.

Each week, several of the top five most-read articles in the *Community Advocate* were about finances, so we know that

worries our subscribers. Our coverage of the ACNC's changes to self-reporting rules also attracted big numbers all year. Likewise, the debate about making giving funds (formerly private ancillary funds) distribute more of their capital, the government's slashing of money for mental health services, and sector roundtable news and information from Canberra were popular stories.

Articles on artificial intelligence were popular all year, particularly those that offered help in understanding it and ideas on regarding how to incorporate it into mainstream work.

The year's top five from the *Community Advocate*:

1. January 22: [Call to fix 'outdated' charities financial framework](#)
2. July 9: [ATO poised to swoop on non-compliant NFPs](#)
3. October 8: [Disbanded, dormant or defunct? Why the ACNC needs your charity's Annual Information Statement regardless](#)
4. April 9: [ATO uses carrot and stick approach on self-review laggards](#)
5. October 29: [Australia gets a 'driver's manual' for safe and responsible use of AI](#)

In addition to publishing regular news and analysis, Community Directors produces policy templates, tools and help sheets. The most popular resources in 2025 were the following:

Top 5 help sheets by views

1. [Legal requirements for AGMs](#)
2. [The role of the treasurer](#)
3. [Board members and what they do](#)
4. [DGR status](#)
5. [The CEO and the board](#)

Top 5 tools by views

1. [Template minutes](#)
2. [Template agenda](#)
3. [Board self-assessment tool](#)
4. [Template appointment of proxy form](#)
5. [CEO annual review template](#)

Top 5 policies by views

1. [Use of artificial intelligence policy](#)
2. [Code of conduct](#)
3. [Delegations policy](#)
4. [Cyber security policy](#)
5. [Financial controls policy](#)

Top 5 articles by views

1. [Forty-three examples of NFPs and charities using AI](#)
2. [Australia Day debate far from over](#)
3. [Great leadership starts with listening, even when you don't like what you're hearing](#)
4. [Younger donors want their voices to be heard](#)
5. [Podcast: Not-for-profits can influence agenda this election, says political trailblazer](#)



Stories from the field

Artificial intelligence (AI) and governance

After publishing a book on artificial intelligence in 2023 and a podcast on the topic in 2024, Community Directors continued in 2025 to help the community sector to engage with artificial intelligence confidently and safely for the benefit of community organisations and individual beneficiaries.

We were invited to attend the intimate National AI Centre roundtable, representing the community sector. We also partnered with Infoxchange on AI material. We delivered two sessions on AI, leadership and governance, and we published the AI helpsheets “Developing an AI governance framework” and “Writing funding applications with AI: Opportunities and pitfalls”. Our article in the September issue of *Community Directors Intelligence* describing **43 NFP use cases for AI** received a lot of attention on socials as well as being the most clicked-on article in 2025, which suggests a strong appetite for more such examples.

In 2025, we integrated AI into many webinar topics in addition to running standalone sessions on AI and governance. While over a thousand people attended webinars about AI, there were a few conscientious objectors in the mix, which is important to highlight in the community sector where activism, climate and social justice considerations are key. One participant commented in a survey, “I would love to see a session on AI and ethics, specifically looking at the environmental impact of AI and how that works in an NFP that’s meant to care for others.”

One ICDA trainer reflected, “I prepared a couple of AI prompt activities for a grant writing workshop yesterday and one participant let me know that she would not be participating because she refused to use AI for any reason. I explained that I would be

talking about the risks and opportunities of AI and she said she was happy to listen but wouldn’t engage in the activity.” This type of engagement is interesting: the activity of conscientious objectors working and volunteering in community organisations may pose challenges for organisational implementation of AI initiatives.

A participant in one of our webinars about governance, AI and the federal government’s new national AI guardrails wrote afterwards: “I thought it was terrific how the presenter linked the development and implementation of AI gov back to existing governance principles and practices to reinforce those principles and practices as well. Excellent adult learning approach supporting the consistent use of the principles and practices is pivotal to corporate governance.”

In 2026, we will continue to lead community sector work regarding safe and productive use of artificial intelligence to champion human voices, human connection and human ideas, to maximise human and planetary benefit.

In-house training

Throughout the year, Community Directors worked with a diverse range of partners across the health sector, First Nations organisations, regional and rural communities, local government, women’s leadership, sport and the arts. Each engagement reflected our mission to strengthen governance and leadership in the Australian community sector. Below, is a selection of case studies of work we have delivered in partnership with organisations from a wide range of sectors.

Health

Community Directors partnered with organisations from all corners of the health sector, including a palliative care network, a hepatitis peak body, an Aboriginal

Community Controlled Health Organisation, and a gynaecological oncology group. Through tailored workshops, participants strengthened their governance and impact evaluation capabilities, gaining practical tools to measure outcomes, enhance accountability, and clearly demonstrate the value of their work to community members, providers, funders, consumers and partners. The sessions also helped improve oversight and risk management, ensuring that programs and services continue to meet genuine community needs.

First Nations

Community Directors worked alongside an Aboriginal Corporation to facilitate a series of culturally safe community information sessions, native title authorisation meetings, and general meetings. Our facilitator chaired each meeting, guiding respectful discussion, supporting informed decision-making, and maintaining inclusive dialogue. The process balanced cultural protocols with governance best practice, ensuring community voices were heard and decisions recorded transparently in preparation for the Traditional Owners group to file its native title claim with the Federal Court and seek formal recognition of its connection to Country.

Regional and rural

In partnership with one of Australia's largest volunteer emergency service organisations, Community Directors developed a bespoke version of the Step In, Step Up self-paced short course. The tailored program equips fire brigade managers and volunteers with governance, leadership, and communication skills to strengthen local brigades and enhance community safety. Designed for the realities of emergency service work, the course provides flexible, practical learning that improves governance effectiveness for volunteers serving on community boards and committees, reflecting a shared commitment to safer, more resilient communities.

Local councils

This year Community Directors partnered with local councils including Orange, Boroon-dara, Hume, Greater Shepparton, South Gippsland, Campbelltown and Townsville to build capacity among volunteers with local not-for-profit and community groups. Workshops on innovation, grant writing and multicultural engagement provided participants with practical tools they can use to access funding, design inclusive programs, and drive positive change within their communities.



Victorian Public Sector Commission First Nations Board Governance Training Program, June 2025

Women

We deepened our commitment to gender equity in leadership through a range of initiatives helping women to take on governance and decision-making roles. Our partnerships with YWCA and CALD2LEAD helped more women take their place on boards. The Joan Kirner Emerging Leaders Program, funded by the Victorian Government's Office for Women, helped 39 women and gender-diverse people from diverse backgrounds to build leadership confidence and capability. The Women in Sport Diploma of Governance, now in its second year and supported by the Australian Sports Commission, empowered 16 women serving on national sporting organisation boards to strengthen their governance and strategic influence.

Sport

Community Directors delivered a capacity-building program for leaders within the

community football club network across Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT. The program covered topics such as leading with impact, effective meetings, conflict resolution, change management and project management, using scenario-based learning to strengthen governance and leadership capability. Club administrators left better equipped to manage change, resolve challenges, and foster sustainable, thriving sporting communities.

Arts

Through the Creative Australia Company Director Capability Fund, Community Directors worked with several arts boards to strengthen leadership capacity. Training focused on governance, strategy, finance and succession planning, helping boards clarify their strategic direction and enhance financial oversight. The program supported creative organisations in building resilience and positioning themselves for long-term success in a dynamic and evolving sector.



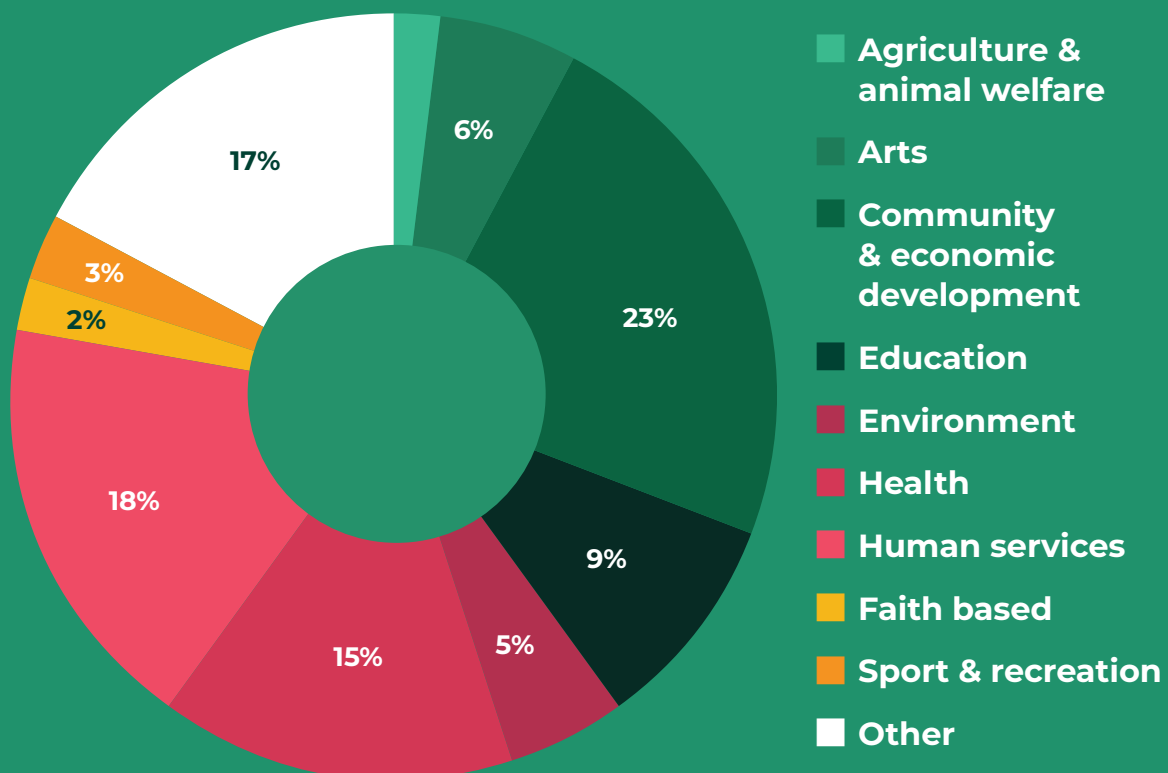
Participant Adele Thielke and the Victorian Minister for Women, Natalie Hutchins, at the Joan Kirner Emerging Leaders Program graduation, November 2025

Who do we work with?

Community Directors uses the SmartyGrants CLASSIE system to classify community organisations into sub-sectors. Participants nominate their sector when they complete surveys after participating in sessions and programs.

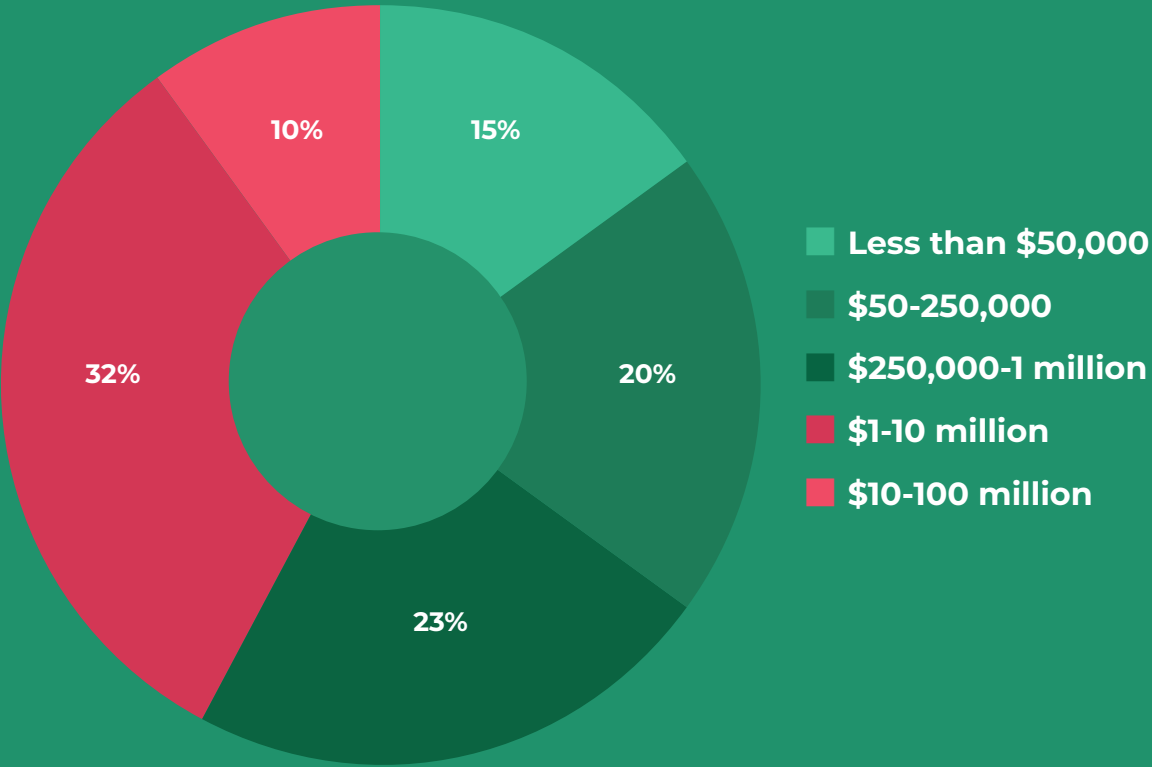
From survey responses, we know that almost a quarter (23%) of our participants are from community and economic development organisations. Human services (18%) and health (15%) make up the next most significant sectors. The other 45% of participants are distributed throughout the diverse subsectors that make up the entire community sector, including agriculture, faith, sport, education, arts and environment. We deliver practical training and resources on governance and leadership principles that can be applied across all of these domains.

Program participants by sector



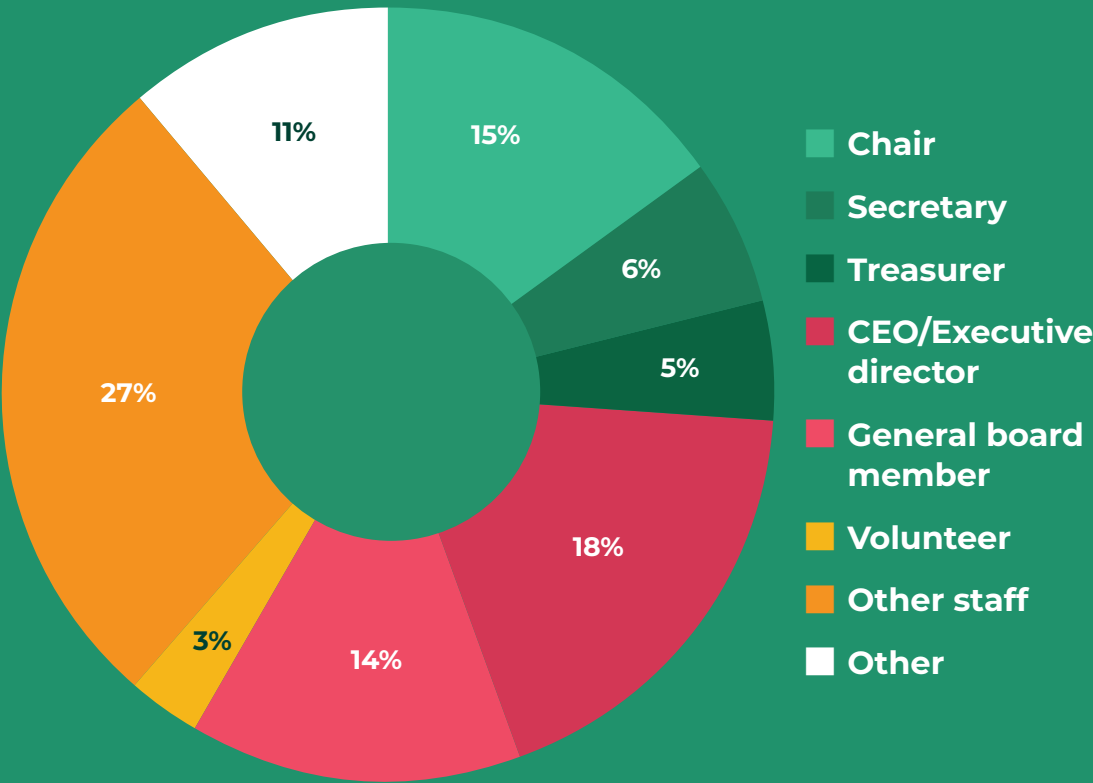
Community Directors works with a diverse range of organisation sizes. Some of these organisations ask us to provide training inhouse, so it is delivered directly and only to them, while many others send representatives to attend public training. We use CLASSIE to classify the size of participants' organisations based on annual income. Just over a third of the organisations we work with (35%) are tiny organisations with under \$250,000 annual income. At the other end, almost a third (32%) of the organisations we work with are mid-sized, with \$1 million–\$10 million income annually. Almost a quarter (23%) are smaller organisations of \$250,000–\$1 million annual income. Very large organisations account for 10% of those accessing our training; they receive \$10 million–\$100 million in annual income.

Program participants by organisation size



Participants attending training occupy a range of executive and non-executive roles, which means that often, board members and CEOs or senior leaders can learn from one another in our sessions. Just over a quarter (26%) of training attendees are in board leadership positions such as chair, treasurer or secretary. Just under a fifth of attendees (18%) are CEOs or executive directors, so they report to the board and usually attend board meetings. Many attendees tell us that they are a CEO, senior leader or staff member in one NFP and a board member in another. Just over a quarter of attendees say they are in “other staff” roles. 14% of attendees are general board members.

Program participants by role



Impact

The Community Directors outcomes framework aims to increase the **skills, knowledge, confidence and ethical decision making** of board members and those who report to them. It also aims to facilitate **connections** between those leaders.

We believe that all five outcomes are crucial to improve community sector governance. An increase in knowledge is not impactful unless board members and senior staff have the skills to implement what they have learnt and the confidence to instigate change. Similarly, without a consideration of ethics, there is a risk that important questions will go unasked in the boardroom, or that boards will not hold themselves accountable.

Community Directors values feedback: this is how we remain innovative as a learning organisation. We survey participants to gauge their satisfaction level and their views on impact after every program we deliver. When asked the likelihood that they would recommend a Community Directors course to a friend or colleague, participants across all our programs gave an average net promoter score of 8.8 out of 10 in 2025. One participant in the NFP Leadership Certificate captured the overall response, saying, “The session was super interesting and presented in a very accessible way...”.

Community Directors delivers a range of programming both free and paid, recognising that achieving great governance in the community sector requires a realistic understanding of the varied income levels of the 600,000 not-for-profits in Australia. One participant’s survey response highlighted the importance of our intimate understanding of the sector: “The most useful thing was collaboration with others and the intuitive,

personal, non-corporate approach of the facilitators – they obviously understand the community sector.”

With five trainers delivering training online and in person across Australia, Community Directors is proud of the expertise of our staff and partners. This is clearly reflected in participants’ feedback, which includes comments such as “Presenter was really good. Very clear communicator, very intelligent so all information was delivered with conviction and clarity.”

We combine theoretical governance and leadership material with practical skill development in an inclusive way, ensuring we are accessible to people with a variety of learning preferences. We respect the knowledge and experience already present in the sector and seek to facilitate peer learning. This year, several attendees remarked that the flexible structure of the training and the diversity of participants deepened the richness of their learning, making comments such as “The flexibility of the program is amazing. The other participants were fantastic in learning from each other.” Cross-pollination of ideas throughout multiple sectors within the community helped many to embed knowledge in ways that virtually guarantee it will be put into practice.

Community Directors works with participants yet to step onto a board as well as highly experienced chairs, from organisations of all sizes. We are proud to be able to cater to this diverse range of experiences with courses pitched to different levels. A board member who completed the online self-paced Certified Community Director course told us, “Though I have been on community boards for 15 years, I found this extremely helpful as there were areas to consider that I was unaware of.”

Skills

Not-for-profit board members and those who report to them are expected to learn and execute a variety of skills. Governance and leadership skills include writing a strategy, navigating finance documents, delivering evaluations, writing minutes and carrying out CEO annual reviews, to name a few.

Acknowledging the immense value of bringing together those with similar roles to learn together from facilitators and from one another, in 2025, we expanded our specialty training options to now include:

- Community Sector Secretaries
- Community Sector Treasurers
- Community Sector Chairs
- Advanced Leadership for Community Chairs.

This year we saw skill development across the wide range of our training programs. In rating the skills they learned in training sessions in 2025, participants applied an average net promoter satisfaction score of 8.8 out of 10 across the Diploma program, the Festival of Community Directors, the

NFP Leadership Certificate, inhouse training, standard training and the Community Sector Secretaries course.

Course participants consistently noted they were able to apply their learning immediately, from mastering strategic planning frameworks to applying financial oversight tools. One participant from Leadership Week said, “I have put what I learnt into practice within an hour of the session ending.” Another said, “The most productive hour I have spent this week.” After a three-hour standard training session, a participant reflected, “I feel that this course covered the essential information in a way that was in-depth enough to actually use it immediately, which was great.” Another commented on the value of templates, saying they offered “good practical steps to follow, sharing of the templates in a simple and easy-to-follow form for people who are not expert in the field as well as equipping me to ask the right questions.” These responses show that participants were equipped with specific, practical techniques that directly support their governance roles over and above purely theoretical information.

Percentage of participants who felt more able to do the things they had learnt



Diploma of Governance students who said the course helped them identify actions they could apply at their organisation



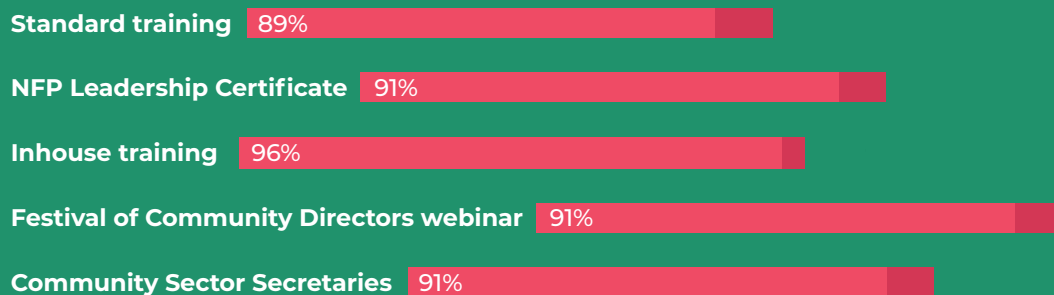
Knowledge

Knowledge involves understanding governance and leadership theory and frameworks, knowing where to go for help and support when required, and knowing how to put learning into action. This can have a critical impact on boards and not-for-profit organisations.

Community Directors seeks to alter the course topics on offer in response to trends and changes in the wider world, enabling organisations to apply governance skills to any situation.

This year we helped people move from general understanding to specific, role-relevant expertise. Our Diploma of Governance participants described a broad and integrated learning experience. One graduate reflected that “Gaining a deeper understanding of the roles and responsibilities of board members in practice, and the linkages between each of these” was particularly useful. Another noted that the “breadth of topics covered was excellent” and that the course offered insights applicable to both their workplace and stakeholders. A third said they now had a “better understanding of my role and responsibilities as a board member, and how important it is to respectfully question and debate decisions made.”

Percentage of participants that said after attending the session, they knew more about the topic at hand



Diploma of Governance participants who said the presentations were interesting, easily understood and easily remembered



Certified Community Director participants who said after doing the course, they understood more about the skills involved



Participants in other programs echoed these sentiments. Following a standard training program session, one participant reflected, “[the session] gave me understanding (and therefore confidence) in reading and understanding financial documents.” Another said, “It was in-depth. I thought I wanted to learn more about the actual figures than the governance side but have come out feeling that the governance aspects are key to my understanding, and to helping my board know what to do.” Following the Advanced Leadership for Community Chairs course, one participant summed up the experience by saying, “The sessions have been highly informative, engaging, and extremely valuable in supporting both my role on the board and as a CEO.” A participant in the NFP Leadership Certificate said the most valuable aspect of the program was “the collaboration with others and the intuitive, personal, non-corporate approach of the facilitators – they obviously understand the community sector.”

The message we heard across programs was that learning felt relevant, respectful of participants’ starting points, and well-matched to the real challenges they face.

Confidence

Confidence in navigating boardroom conversations, questioning decisions and even deciding to join a board in the first place varies between participants. Confidence in the boardroom is important as a motivator to speak up. A person who completed the Certified Community Director course in 2025 reflected, “I feel more confident in the skills I have and some skills have been filled out a little more.”

Confidence entails putting oneself forward for a board or leadership role, as well as speaking up in the boardroom, and taking risks. Participants value completing programs with tools at their disposal, so they understand how to achieve the changes they are seeking. For example, one participant in the NFP Leadership Certificate wrote, “The most useful thing was learning different tools of leadership that will enhance my leadership role in my organisation and clarity to apply them effectively with my team and organisation.”

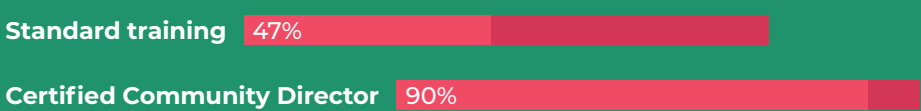
We saw a clear increase in confidence among participants throughout the programs, particularly those stepping into or solidifying leadership roles. One Diploma of Governance graduate told us, “It has helped me so much to step into this role with confidence.” Another said the course had helped them to put themselves forward for and take on the role of company secretary. We can see from the Board Positions online listings just how many boards are seeking people, so we know this is an important impact. And from the inhouse training sessions, one group noted, “So many of our committee members came away feeling motivated and excited to take on their roles... you made everything so easy to understand and truly relatable.”

“ I’ve learnt how to pause before reacting, lead with clarity instead of pressure, and trust that I actually do know what I’m doing.”

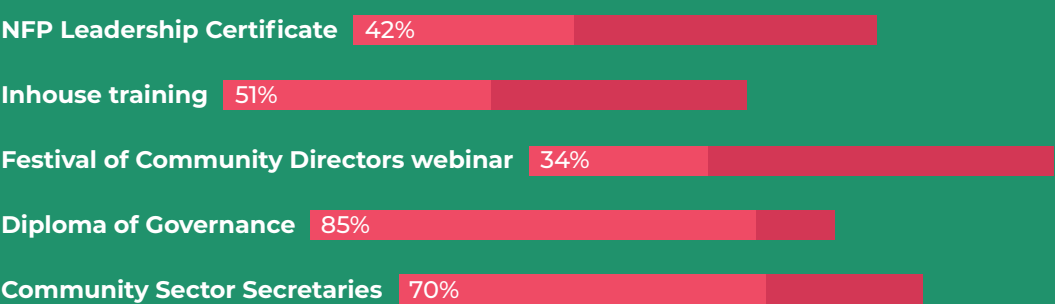
Joan Kirner Emerging Leaders Program participant

A participant from the NFP Leadership Certificate captured the energy of that program in saying, “This was amazing! I am ready to lead the planet!!!” A participant in Advanced Training for Community Chairs reflected on learning how to listen to all board voices and encourage engagement from everyone, writing, “Fantastic information and food for thought. Great challenge in terms of thinking about the Chair I need to be, particularly as it relates to hearing all the voices on the Board and encouraging engagement from everyone.” A graduate of the Joan Kirner Emerging Leaders Program said, “I’ve learnt how to pause before reacting, lead with clarity instead of pressure, and trust that I actually do know what I’m doing.” Another from the same program said, “I’ve genuinely come out of this program feeling different – in the best ways possible... stretched, challenged, and pushed to look at myself as a leader with much more honesty and confidence.” One participant from the NFP Leadership Certificate found that “the self-care aspect made me realise that I am doing OK in my job and the best I can, but to look after my health and not burn out.” Participants gained confidence through gaining role clarity, awareness of their own potential, preparedness and self-awareness.

Percentage of standard training participants who said they were more confident working with the topic



Percentage of participants who said they were more likely to nominate themselves for a board or chair position



Connections

In 2025, participants connected well with their peers in training, whether in face-to-face sessions, in breakout rooms online, in leadership pods or through the chat function in webinars. One Strategic Planning training participant commented, “great session and small group chats were really useful and a good way to share knowledge.”

Building meaningful connections stood out across many of our programs. The Joan Kirner Emerging Leaders Program created a strong sense of community. One graduate said, “Leadership can be lonely. But now? I’ve got around 35 new strategic minds and hype machines walking alongside me.” Another said, “a highlight of this experience has been the opportunity to connect with and learn from so many incredible women and gender-diverse folks.” A participant in the same program reflected, “Over the past six weeks, I didn’t just learn about leadership. I learned about followership ... how leadership is ultimately a team sport, not an individual pursuit.”

It was pleasing that online live formats did not impede connection between participants. The NFP Leadership Certificate, delivered live online, was described as a forum where “peer support and conversations with others across the community sector” made a lasting impact. Another participant from that course said, “Meeting other leaders from different levels of leadership but with similar passion and challenges” was particularly valuable. We intend that these relationships will continue to serve as resources and support long after the program concludes.

The value of connection for those who attended specialty courses related to their roles cannot be underestimated, particularly because the Australia-wide nature of the courses meant the organisations represented were not in competition, and participants found themselves commiserating and collaborating. A participant in the Advanced Leadership for Community Chairs course wrote, “It was wonderful connecting with participants in the breakout rooms across the five sessions and gaining so many valuable insights and practical ideas on becoming a more effective Chair.” Similarly, a participant in the three-week Community Secretaries course reflected that the most useful thing was “having the opportunity to talk with other secretaries and people from all sorts of different organisations.”

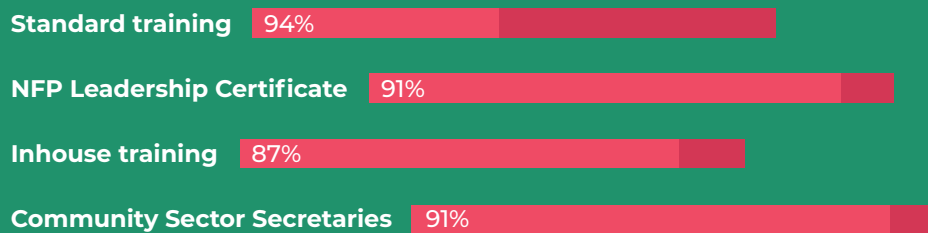
Community Directors uses technology (e.g. breakout rooms in longer sessions and the chat function in shorter webinars) to foster connections and conversations between online participants. This benefits those who live great distances from cities and from one another. A participant in the Community Sector Secretaries course commented, “The breakout rooms were great! It was good to gain information and ideas from others in the role.”



It was wonderful connecting with participants in the breakout rooms across the five sessions and gaining so many valuable insights and practical ideas on becoming a more effective Chair.”

Kim Waraich, Orange College,
Advanced Leadership for Community Chairs participant

Percentage of participants who said they communicated with others during this session



Percentage of Festival of Community Directors participants who said they learnt from others during the session



Percentage of Diploma of Governance participants who said they had enough opportunities to interact with peers during the course



Integrity and ethics

Ethical leadership is a central component of our theory of change, so it is built into all our medium and long programs. In 2025, Community Directors partnered with the Cranlana Centre for Ethical Leadership to offer accessible information on ethics to the community sector. A participant in the Joan Kirner Emerging Leaders Program said the program “strengthened my understanding of ethical leadership and sharpened my people-management skills.” A participant in the Diploma of Governance highlighted the importance of questioning decisions respectfully and with care, reflecting that they now had a “better understanding of my role and responsibilities as a board member, and how important it is to respectfully question and debate decisions made.” From the Joan Kirner program, another graduate said, “These past few months have been transformative ... they asked me to reflect deeply on the type of leader I want to be and gave me the tools, confidence, and community to grow into that vision.” Another said, “One of the most powerful lessons was learning to solve workplace challenges by going beyond the surface, by asking ‘why?’ and seeking the true root causes.”

Certain marks of ethical leadership, such as curiosity before making decisions, and acting out of responsibility rather than convenience, can be found in a striking example of feedback from the Joan Kirner program, after which a graduate said, “I’ve been surprised by the ways I’ve grown, often in ways I didn’t see coming. I’m more intentional, more self-aware, and more willing to step into tough conversations instead of avoiding them.”

Percentage of participants who said the session impacted their approach to integrity



*Percentage of participants who said the session impacted their approach to integrity and ethics



Reflections shared via the chat function after Advanced Leadership for Community Chairs

Photo Album



Victorian Government Joan Kirner Emerging Leaders Program, September 2025



Representing Community Directors: executive director Adele Stowe-Lindner (top) and business development lead Maroushka Saldanha at the Third Sector Leaders Forum, Sydney, September 2025



Victorian Public Sector Commission First Nations Board Governance Training Program, June 2025



Journalists Greg Thom and Matthew Schultz at the National Press Club, Canberra, April 2025

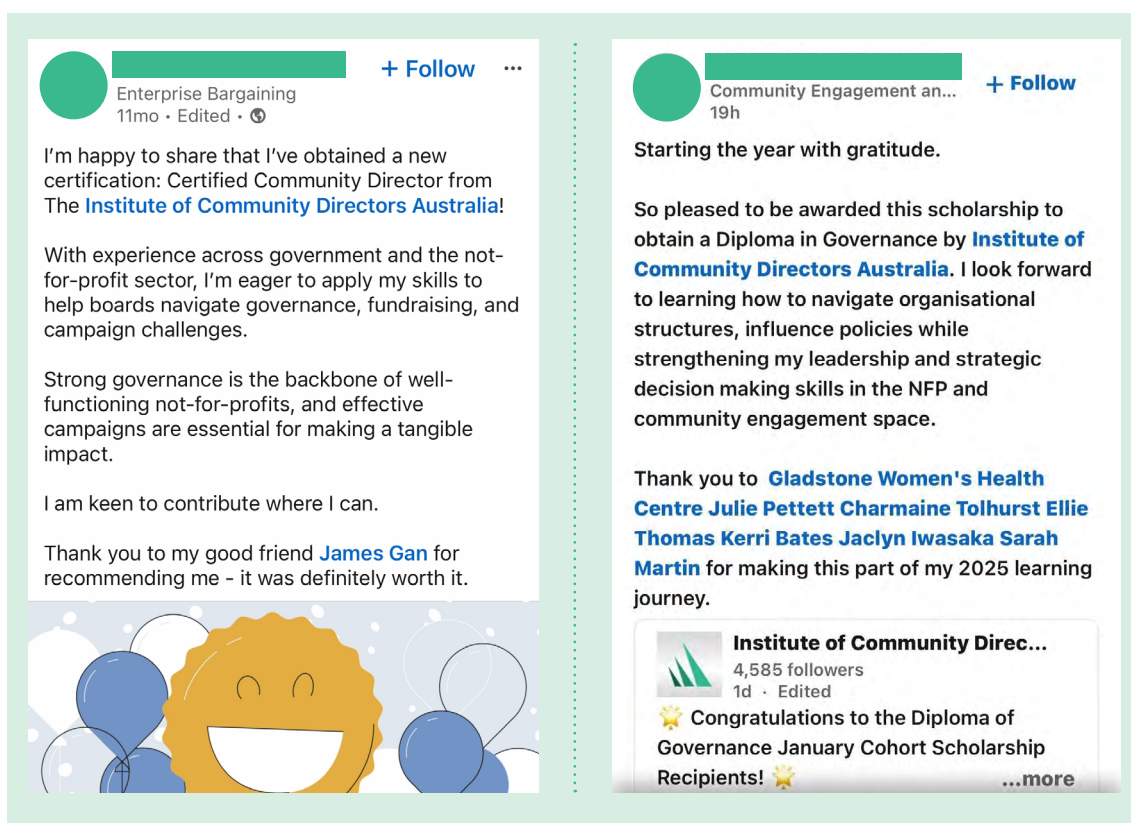


November 2025: Community Directors trainer Nina Laitala travelled to Warrnambool, Victoria, to provide Deakin University Student Union Student Council members with governance and financial literacy training.

What did our community say online?

On social media, the Community Directors community is highly engaged and generates substantial positive interaction. Our follower numbers on LinkedIn, in particular, grew substantially in 2025 to over **6000**.

Many shared their course completions with pride, making observations that will help others engage in good governance.



Partnerships

We at Community Directors extend our gratitude to our partners, who share our vision that not-for-profits in Australia should have access to high quality training and materials to enable them to maximise their impact on Australian society. In 2025 those partners were:

- AON
- Australian Institute of Sport
- BoardPro
- BoardSurveys
- CALD2LEAD
- Cranlana Centre for Ethical Leadership
- Digital Ninjas
- First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria
- 4Walls
- Hootville
- Maddocks
- McKinsey & Company
- Moore Australia
- Playful Thinking
- Tanck
- Total Mindset Coaching

Thank you

Community Directors exists exclusively for the benefit and development of the community sector in Australia, identifying needs and advocating for solutions. We respond directly to sector and partner requests so we can support and challenge the sector in an accessible and inspiring way. We look forward to working with you in 2026.

Thank you to all on the Community Directors Council who provide their wisdom so generously – lending support, expertise, introductions, writings and webinars – so that we at Community Directors can collectively be our best. The Council's members are Susan Pascoe AM, Emeritus Professor Myles McGregor-Lowndes OAM, Professor Emerita Cynthia Mitchell AO, Jahna Cedar OAM, Dr Sonja Hood AM, Jodi Kennedy, Sheena Boughen OAM, Catherine Brooks, Adjunct Professor Anne Cross AM and Gemma Purcell.

Thanks to the team at Community Directors: Adele Stowe-Lindner, Annabel Rattigan, Amy Johannsohn, Bella Drimer, Chris Borthwick, Emilie Cobbold, Fiona Bramham, Jon Staley, Kate James, Kerryn Burgess, Lachlan Pollock, Maroushka Saldanha, Matt Schultz, Meg Singleton, Nick Place and Nina Laitala.





ourcommunity.com.au
Where not-for-profits go for help

OurCommunity.com.au

Our Community is a world-leading social enterprise that provides advice, connections, training and easy-to-use tech tools for people and organisations working to build stronger communities.

The Our Community group of enterprises are:



INSTITUTE OF
COMMUNITY DIRECTORS
AUSTRALIA
Knowledge • Connections • Credentials

CommunityDirectors.com.au

The Institute of Community Directors Australia is the leading governance and leadership network for members of Australian not-for-profit and government boards, and their senior staff.



Funding Centre
Where not-for-profits go for money

FundingCentre.com.au

The Funding Centre is Australia's smartest grants database and fundraising capacity building website.



GiveNow
for your community

GiveNow.com.au

GiveNow is Australia's first and best giving platform, providing donations, ticketing and membership services for Australian not-for-profits.



SmartyGrants
Software, data science & grantmaking intelligence

SmartyGrants.com.au

SmartyGrants delivers software, data science and grantmaking intelligence for funders.



OUR COMMUNITY
—HOUSE—

OCHouse.com.au

Our Community House is a green and creative co-working space for the social sector in Melbourne, Victoria.



SmartyFile
Store it, share it, use it

SmartyFile.com.au

SmartyFile is a red tape-busting data-storage and data-sharing tool for not-for-profits and other grant applicants.



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**Succession
Media**

Succession Media

A news service for Australia's not-for-profit sector including *The Community Advocate*.



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INTERNATIONAL

Our Community International

Taking the Australian-born grantmaking revolution to the UK, Europe and beyond.