

Foundations for effective community chairs

Session 1: Governance and leadership

A three-session program
covering the essentials for
current and aspiring NFP chairs



Acknowledgement of Country

Join in via chat

*'Hi I'm Jon from Our
Community and I am
joining today from
Wurrundjeri woi-
wurrung country ...'*

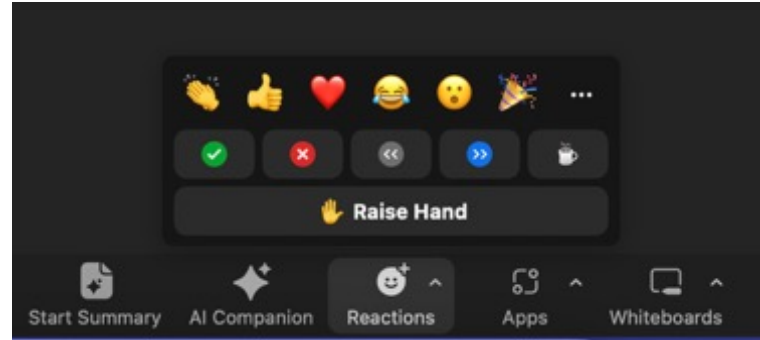
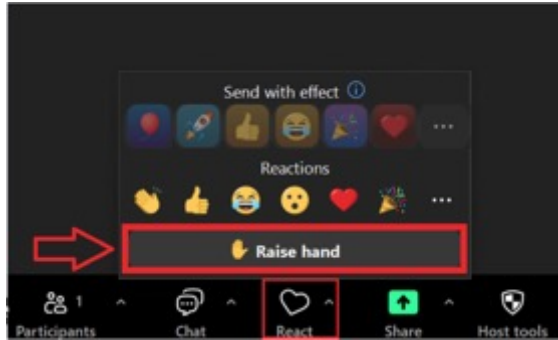
First languages interactive
map: <https://gambay.com.au/>

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Housekeeping

- When you'd like to share with the group on mic, please use the raise hand function.



- Chat function is for everyone to use. Feel free to share your experience and advice, respond to prompts and answer any questions that arise if possible.
- You will receive the slides and the recording via the email you registered with.
- Please don't use AI to summarise or record this session.
- Please mute yourself unless you are speaking to the group.

A little bit about me

**Jon
Staley**

ICDA Trainer Governance &
Community Leadership

- 20 + years community leadership
- 10 + secondary/vocational teacher
- Founder Youthworx (non-profit social enterprise)
- Filmmaker/writer
- Community board member



Course outline – The Chairs Role (in)

**Session
one:**

Governance
and
Leadership

**Session
two:**

Making
Healthy
Decisions

**Session
three:**

Beyond
Meetings

Introduce yourself

BREAKOUT 1.



- Your name, organisation and role
- Why you got involved with your organisation
- Something you love about chairing
- What do you find most challenging about chairing?

Chairing meetings – how far have we come?

Medieval warrior meetings

The war axe!

500 AD

Early Water Boards

The pub tab

1200 AD

Medieval religious councils

New agenda items – Day 4

630 AD

Guild meetings

Stick to the agenda or else

1450 AD

The ideal chair

Board culture and expectations

Effective board discussions

What are the
qualities of an
effective
chairperson?

Breakout 2

The board of the **Riverstone Arts Collective** is made up of passionate community members, but meetings are a little disjointed. Decisions are often pre-decided by a couple of long standing members who tend to be the most vocal during meetings. While there is a dot pointed agenda, circulated the day before the meeting, discussions often go round in circles or veer off topic. The Chair, Alan, while well-intentioned and polite avoids conflict and rarely challenges the status quo. New board members are expected to 'learn on the go' as those who came before them did and over the past few years there has been a relatively high board turnover.

The CEO feels unsupported, reluctant to raise key issues and tending to make decisions based on whatever the most immediate operational priority is.

Appoint a chair, a scribe and discuss in your group:

- What problems can you see in how the Chair is currently leading?
 - How is the board culture impacting effectiveness?
- What steps/actions could Alan as chair take to shape healthier meetings/governance?



An ideal chairperson

- Keeps the meeting focused on the governance context
- Leads by example and is a team builder
- Is fully informed and informs fully
- Gains the respect and trust of their board colleagues, staff and volunteers
- Knows how to achieve consensus and enables equitable discussion
- Achieves results by knowing when to exercise patience and when to push through change

Chairs Role – in a nutshell



Before (Prepare)	During (Host)	After (Follow up)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help prepare agenda• Work with & brief relevant stakeholders• (Work with the CEO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow agenda (keep everyone on track)• Facilitate discussions• Ensure everyone has a chance to contribute• Summarise & conclude discussions• Outline decisions made• Delegate forward actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure decisions are carried out• Represent group to the outside world• (Work with the CEO)

The governance context

Systems and culture

What is quorum for your board/committee to be able to officially meet?

Why is it important?

Where can you find out if you don't know?

How does your board currently make decisions?

Formal/informal?

Consensus/majority rule?

Casting vote?

Led by few?

All voices heard?

What structures are in place to support board members to understand their role?

Induction?

Board charter/manual?

Code of conduct?

Mentoring?

Training?

Break!



Governance & management

Understanding the board's role vs. CEO/staff

What are boards responsible for?

Breakout 3

Janet has recently become the Chair of a small non-profit, *Hillside Community Support Network*. She's enthusiastic, very hands-on and wants to support the CEO Asif. With these intentions she starts visiting the office frequently, introducing herself to everyone and organising one on one meetings with program leaders and giving advice to them based on her experience in the industry. She really wants to impart her knowledge and support the staff to do a better job

Soon, some other board members begin to follow her lead. One gives a staff member feedback on their social media posts, another asks the IT lead about the software being used and offers to show them some alternative possibilities. While this hands on engagement and interest from the board is initially welcomed by some of the staff some significant problems begin to emerge.

Appoint a chair, a scribe and discuss in your group:

- What sort of problems do you anticipate may emerge based on this approach by Janet etc?
- What does a healthy relationship between the chair and the operations team look like?

What should the board do?

GOVERN
not
MANAGE

How does your current board navigate the relationship between board members/staff?

'Noses in hands out'

Where is the line in your context?

Board

CHAIR

CEO

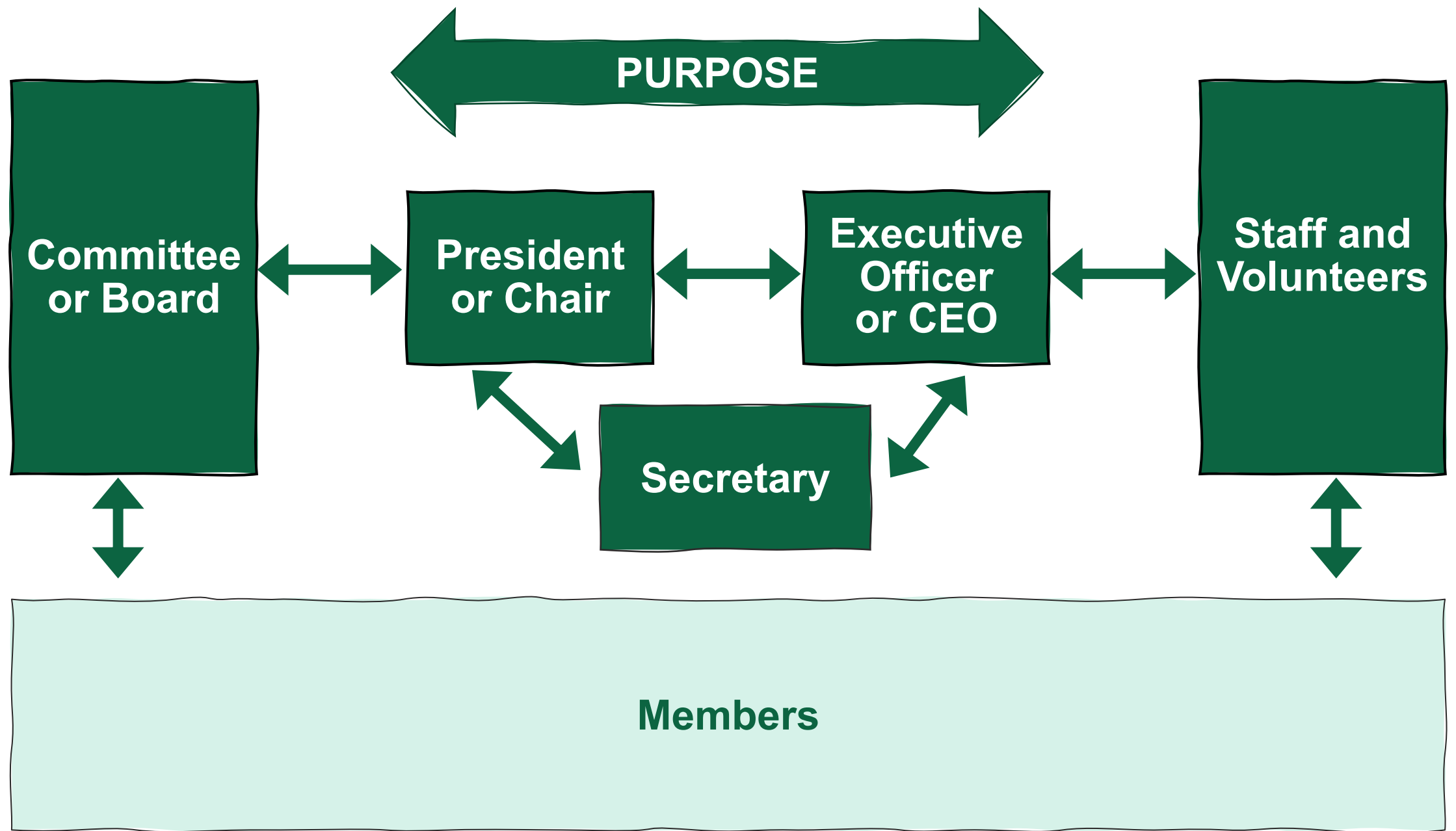
Mission &
purpose

Govern

CEO

Manage



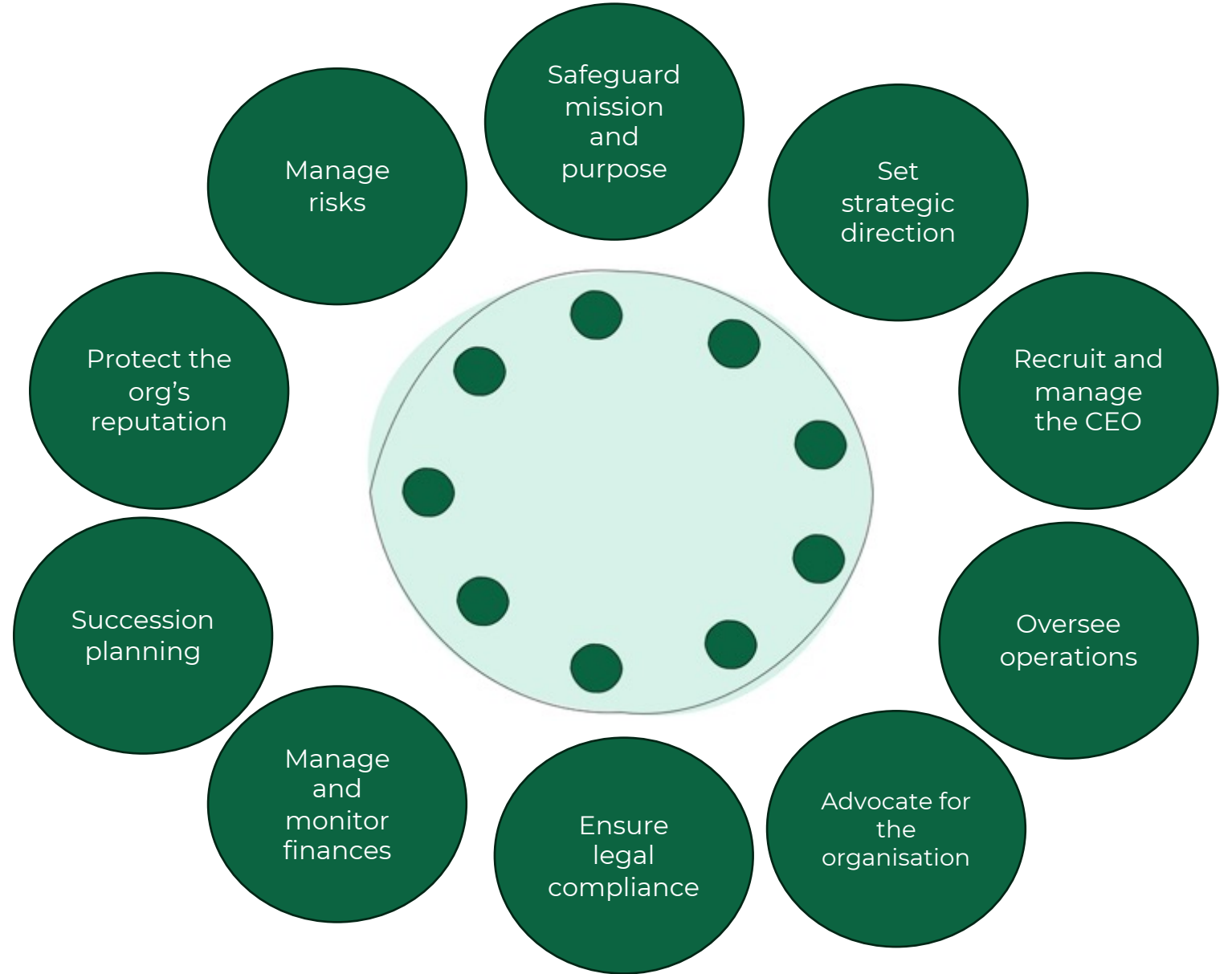


What do boards do?



What do boards do?

How clearly understood are these roles by your board?



Board dynamics

Managing diverse personalities and perspectives

Handling difficult conversations

Managing diverse personalities and perspectives

- Foster a culture of respect
- Know your board
- Leverage diversity as a strength
- Stay neutral and inclusive
- Use group agreements/code of conduct
- Invest in board knowledge, training, development

What could be some practical techniques to foster a culture of respect?

Handling difficult conversations within meetings

- Set the tone early
- Use clear, respectful language
- Name tension constructively
- Use process to defuse emotion
- Stick to roles and boundaries
- Know when to park the issue
- Stay neutral and steady
- Debrief afterwards

Reflections from today's workshop

- A key takeaway
- Next session

Reflective question (to contemplate)

What change in systems
and/or culture could help
our board govern more
effectively?