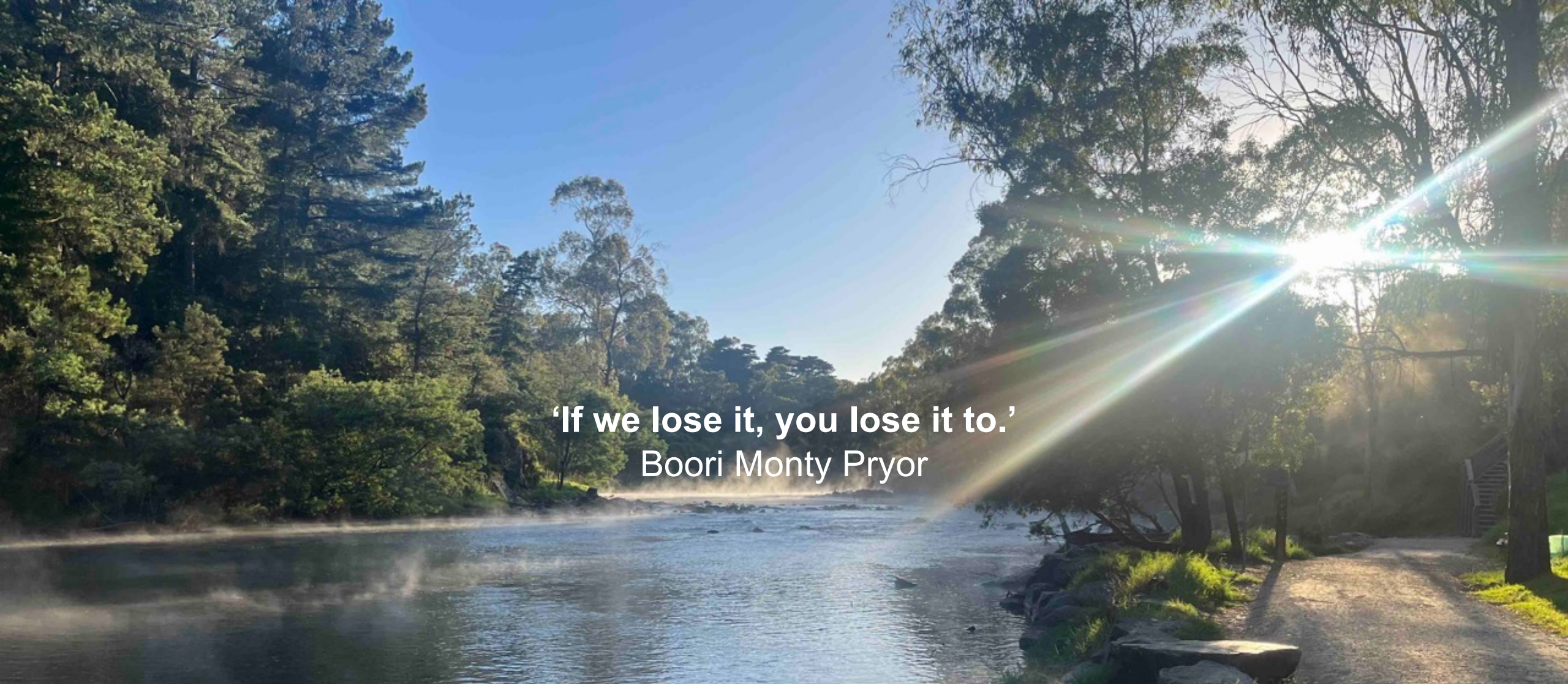


Foundations for effective community chairs

Session 3: Leading Beyond Meetings The Chair's Role.

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





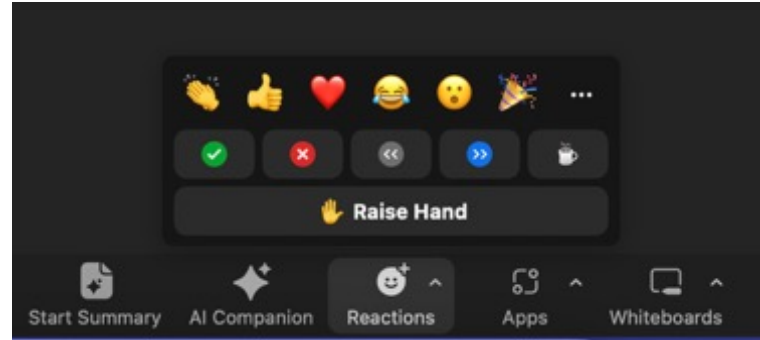
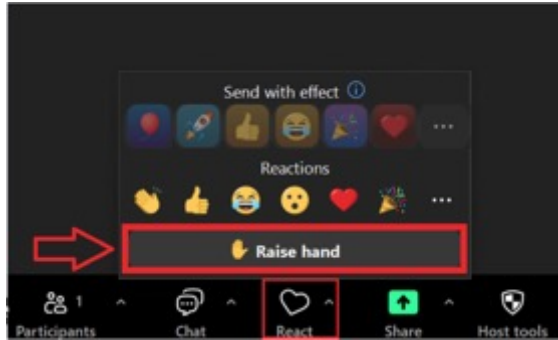
'If we lose it, you lose it to.'
Boori Monty Pryor

Acknowledgement of Country



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.

Course outline – The Chairs Role (in)

**Session
one:**

Governance
and
Leadership

**Session
two:**

Making
Healthy
Decisions

**Session
three:**

Beyond
Meetings

Recap from Session 2

Reflective question (to contemplate)

Choose a governance risk
your board is facing ...
what is one thing you
could do toward
addressing this risk?

The chair and CEO relationship

- Supporting and managing the CEO

Breakout 1

Heather, the Chair of **Health Connect**, a mid-sized community health not-for-profit has built a strong, long-standing relationship/friendship with Jeremy the CEO. Known for being a steady and supportive presence, Heather often defends the Jeremy's actions and decisions in board meetings and praises their dedication. However, some issues for concern have recently emerged—staff turnover is increasing, key reports are overdue, and some strategic goals are being missed.

Despite these issues, Heather continues to reassure the board that Jeremy is simply under too much pressure, and suggests the board “rally behind them” rather than “pile on more stress.” Other board members begin to feel that questions are being deflected and that they cannot exercise proper oversight. Tensions rise as accountability is quietly eroded, and performance issues remain unaddressed.

Discuss:

- What are the risks to the board and the organisation if this pattern continues?
- What could the Chair do differently to reset the balance without undermining trust?
 - How could the board collectively reinforce both support and accountability?
- What systems or processes could help prevent this type of imbalance from developing?

Board Chair–CEO Relationship Checklist

Strategic Alignment

- ☐ We have a shared understanding of the mission and strategic priorities.
- ☐ There is clarity about the respective roles of the board and CEO.
- ☐ We regularly check in to ensure we're aligned on organisational direction.

Communication (& Trust)

- ☐ We have regular, open, and honest communication.
- ☐ The CEO feels safe raising concerns or uncertainties.
- ☐ I offer feedback that is timely, constructive, and respectful.
- ☐ We have agreed on how and when to communicate (e.g. frequency, format, issues to raise).

Support & Development

- ☐ I understand what support the CEO needs from me as Chair.
- ☐ I check in periodically about the CEO's wellbeing and workload.
- ☐ I encourage and support the CEO's professional development.
- ☐ I offer support in navigating difficult board or stakeholder relationships.

Reflect on these in relation to your CEO relationship

Accountability & Performance

- ☐ We have clear, measurable goals/KPIs linked to the strategic plan.
- ☐ The CEO performance review process is regular and fair.
- ☐ Performance issues, when they arise, are addressed constructively.
- ☐ We celebrate achievements and reflect on learnings.

Reflection

- ☐ We are able to name and address any tensions or assumptions.
- ☐ I reflect on my own leadership style and how it impacts our relationship.

Succession & Sustainability

- ☐ We've discussed CEO succession planning.
- ☐ There is a contingency plan if the CEO becomes unavailable.
- ☐ We are actively building leadership capacity beyond the CEO.

Board–CEO Interface

- ☐ I help set a culture where the board both supports and challenges the CEO.
- ☐ The board avoids micromanaging while still maintaining oversight.
- ☐ I act as a bridge—not a gatekeeper—between the board and CEO.
- ☐ We model a productive, respectful board-executive relationship.

Reflect on these in relation to your CEO relationship

Stakeholder engagement and advocacy

- Building board cohesion and accountability
- Representing the organisation externally

Representing your organisation

At a national community sector conference, a board member of a mid-sized mental health NFP unexpectedly takes the stage during a panel Q&A and criticises government funding priorities, stating that the organisation is "actively shifting away from partnerships with public services that no longer align with its values."

While the board had been discussing potential advocacy directions, no such position had been formally agreed upon.

Discuss:

- You are the chair of this org and are also at the conference.
 - What do you do short term and longer term?

Break!



Breakout 2

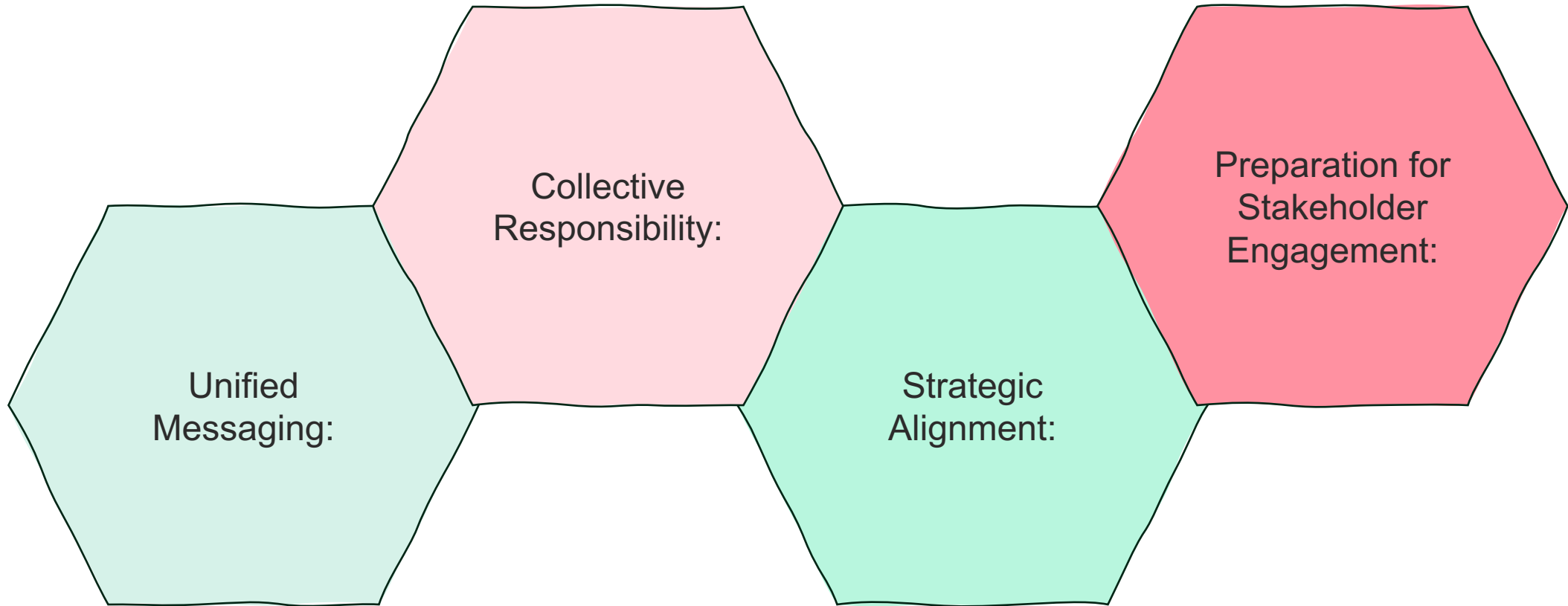
You are the chair of **MindReach**, a not-for-profit delivering vital mental health support services in regional communities. Over the past 12 months, service demand has surged — particularly among young people and rural families — but core funding has not kept pace. The CEO has requested greater board involvement in advocacy efforts, especially in preparing for upcoming government consultations and a local health sector forum.

Meanwhile, board meetings have revealed a lack of shared understanding about the board's role in stakeholder engagement. Some directors prefer to stay behind the scenes, while others are keen but unsure how to contribute effectively. You recognise that stronger board cohesion and clearer external messaging will be essential if MindReach is to have influence and secure sustainable support.

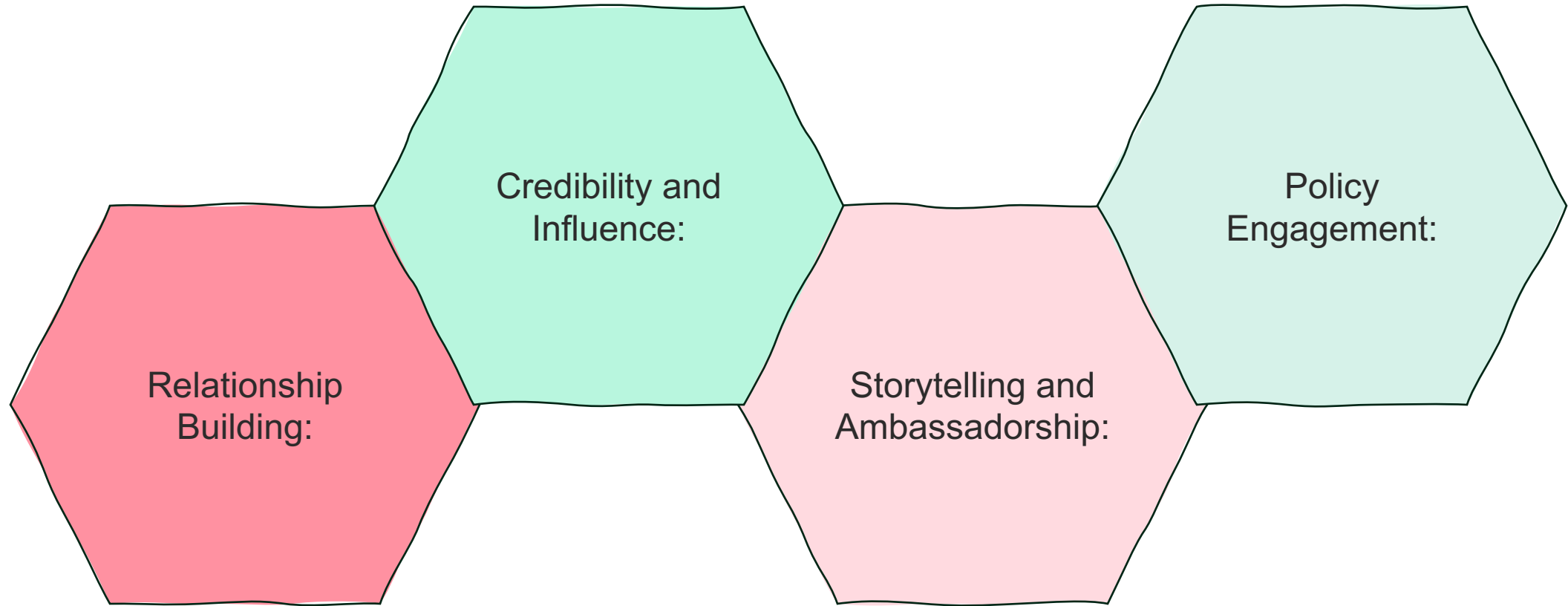
Appoint a chair, a scribe and discuss in your group:

- How can you, as chair, help build board cohesion and a shared advocacy voice?
- What could help the board stay on track and work together toward the organisation's goals?
- What risks or tensions can arise when representing the organisation publicly, and how might these be navigated?
- How can the board support — not duplicate — the CEO's advocacy work?

Building Board Cohesion and Accountability



Representing the Organisation Externally



Succession Planning & Board Development

- Ensuring continuity in leadership
- Recruiting and onboarding new board members
- Ongoing training & development for board members

Committee culture & inclusion

Amina had always been an active volunteer at the Greenvalley Community Sports Club, so when she was invited to join the committee as part of an effort to better engage the club's culturally diverse community, she was excited to contribute. However, from her very first meeting, she noticed that key decisions had seemed to be already made in informal conversations before the committee meetings. When she suggested ways to make the club more welcoming—such as providing translated materials or celebrating cultural holidays—her ideas were brushed aside as “too complicated” or “not really relevant to most people.”

The meetings were long and unstructured, often filled with inside jokes and casual banter that made it hard for newer members to participate. When she and another new committee member, Bilal, proposed a multicultural family day, they were met with polite nods but no follow-up—then told later, “We tried something like that once, and no one came.” Despite her initial enthusiasm, Amina felt she couldn't make a meaningful contribution. After a year of feeling overlooked and dismissed, she resigned—disillusioned, and hesitant to put her hand up for another committee if this was what inclusion looked like.

What are the issues here? Discuss and list them all.
What could have made this experience better for Amina?

Succession planning – what's that?

Have we got the right mix of people/skills on our board?

What will we do if our chair/treasurer/secretary retires?

'Good succession planning is about the healthy handover of collective wisdom thereby ensuring the continuity and evolution of organisational knowledge and purpose'

How can we pass on our knowledge?

Who are the next custodians of our organisation?

<https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/10-questions-succession>

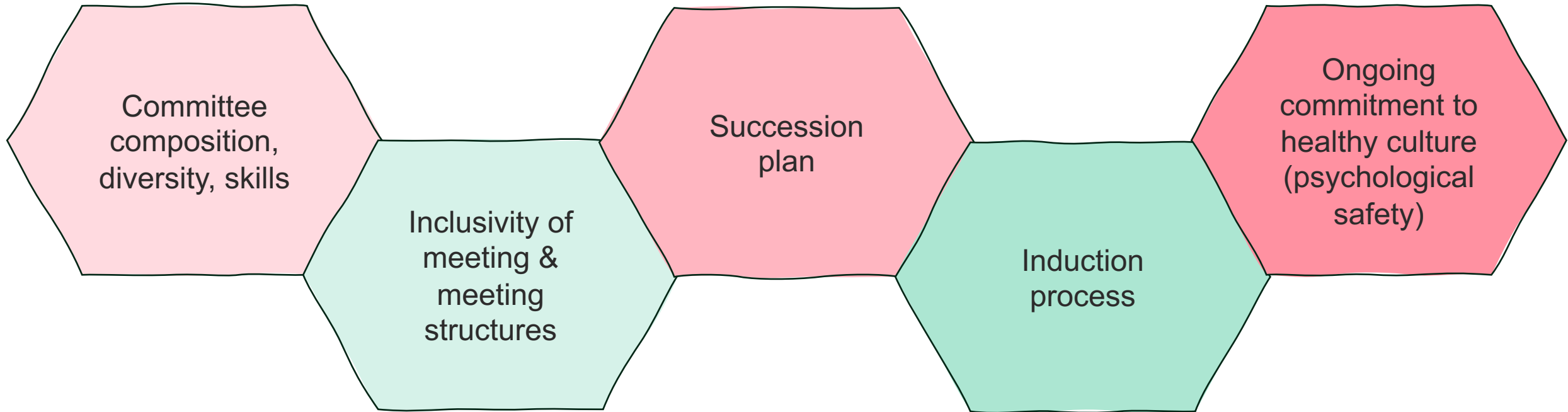
Board renewal

Maria has recently stepped into the role of Chair for a **Connect Up** a small-to-medium-sized not-for-profit that delivers family and youth services in a rapidly growing outer suburban area. The organisation has a committed but aging board—several directors have been involved for over a decade, and two have signalled they may step down within the next 12 months. There's no clear succession plan, no term limits, and little board renewal in recent years.

Maria quickly realises that while the board culture is friendly and collaborative, strategic conversations about the organisation's future direction and governance capability are lacking. Meanwhile, the community the organisation serves is changing fast—becoming younger, more culturally diverse, and digitally engaged. Maria wants to ensure the board is well-positioned for the future, but isn't sure how to start raising issues of renewal, accountability, and future leadership without unsettling long-serving members.

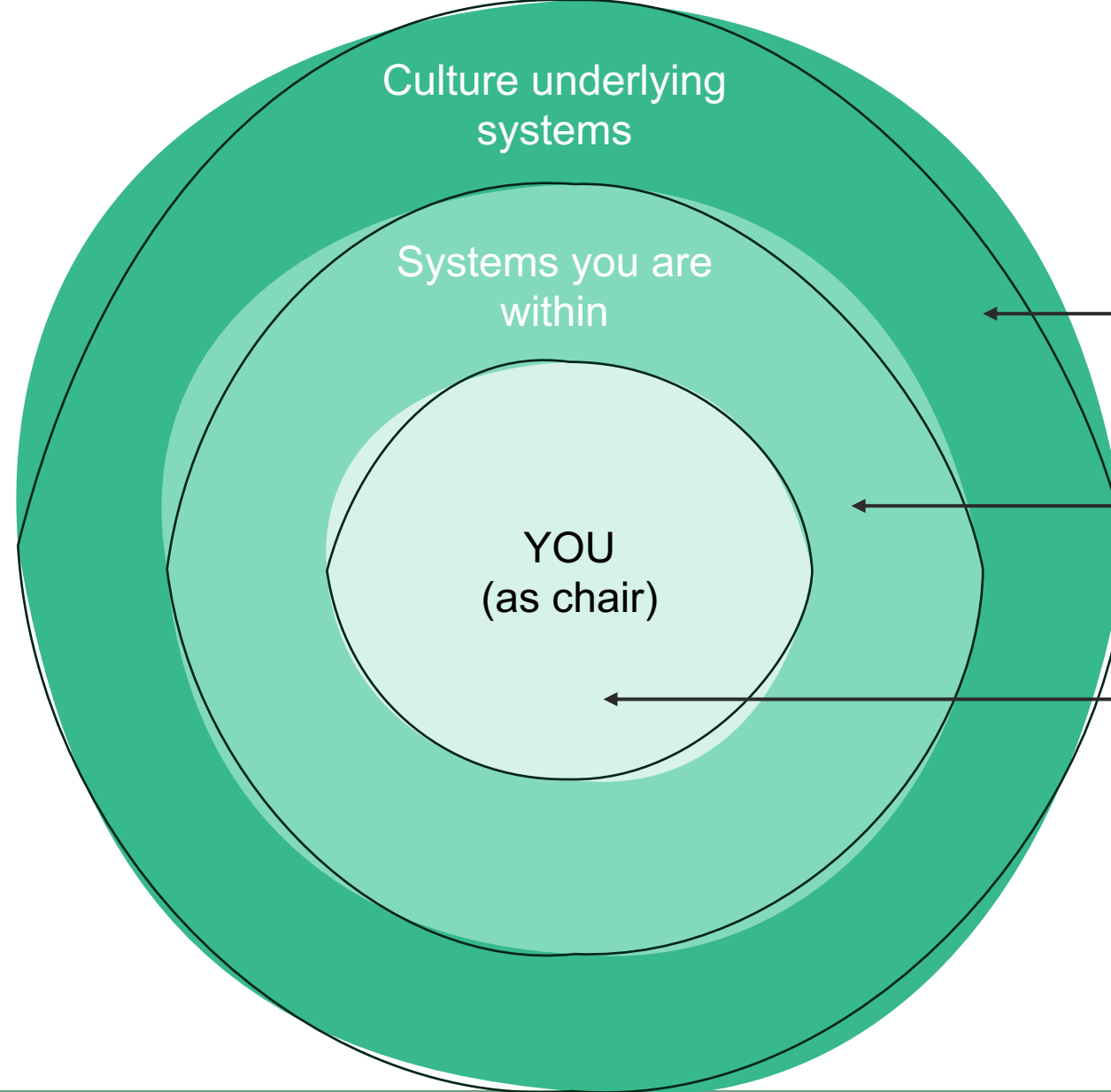
1. What are some respectful and constructive ways Maria could begin conversations about board renewal and succession planning, especially with long-standing directors?
2. How might the board's current composition and lack of renewal affect its ability to respond to the evolving needs of the community it serves?
3. What steps could the board take in the short and longer term to build a more future-focused, diverse, and sustainable leadership structure?

Review governance practices



Welcome to the ICDA Board diversity, experience and skills matrix.

<https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools/board-skills-and-experience-matrix>



Are the systems, culture you are within healthy – what is your capacity to draw on, influence, change etc?

What is the culture, beneath, within the systems?

What are the systems, structures?

You - within an ecosystem

Reflections from this short course

Discussions

Scenarios

**Session
one:**

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Tools

Frameworks

Advanced Leadership for Chairs

The course consists of five sessions of two hours each that have been designed to build knowledge, skills and confidence in the chairs of community organisations. It is suitable for leaders who are already serving in the role of chair, as well as those who aspire to the position.

The sessions will cover:

1. Visionary leadership - ensuring your vision and purpose are at the centre of governance
2. Backstage and front of house: using both to make good decisions
3. The chair's relationship with the CEO
4. Strategic funding: Developing your case for support
5. Ethical board leadership

Participants will learn alongside other community sector leaders, in sessions designed to enable them to connect and network with their community sector peers.

Participants who complete all five sessions will receive a **Certificate in Advanced Leadership for Community Chairs**, a micro-credential accredited by the Institute of Community Directors Australia.

This course costs \$720.00 inc GST.

Register now!

People who did this course will be eligible for a **10% discount** on the upcoming **October** enrolment – you will be emailed closer to the event

Community Sector Chairs - Feedback



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2025CSChairs>