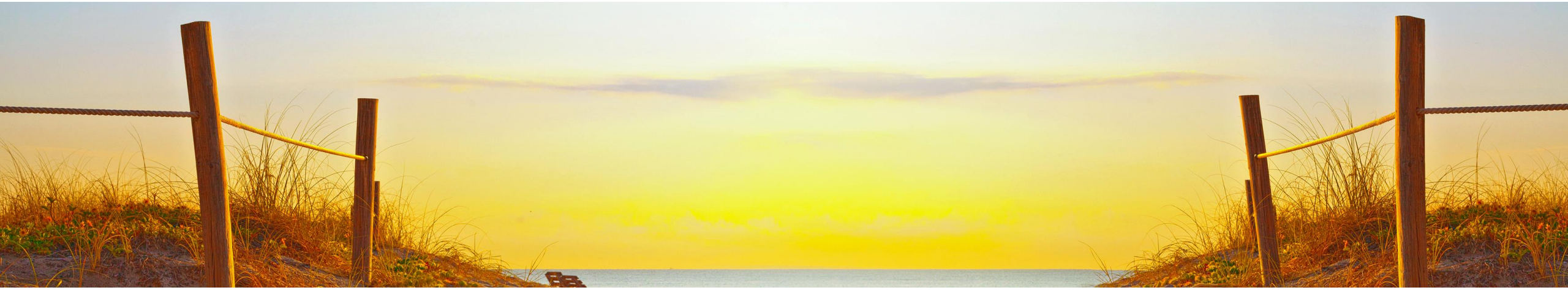
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Community Sector Secretaries

Session three: Inclusion, accessibility and onboarding

Nina Laitala, Institute of Community Directors Australia

Acknowledgement of Country

Kaylene Whiskey, *Dolly Flying to Iwantja*

2022, made on the lands of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara peoples, South Australia
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Program approach

- **Session 1:** Organisational compliance
- **Session 2:** Keeping the board on track
- **Session 3:** Supporting inclusion and accessibility

How will you stay connected?

Today's resources

Succession planning

Board succession Part 1: Finding new board members

Board succession Part 2: Recruiting new board members

Board succession Part 3: Selecting the right board members

10 questions to ask about succession planning

Induction

Developing an effective induction process

Induction Checklist

Board member Induction Policy

Tips on Board Manual Contents

Board diversity

Board effectiveness

Board composition checklist

Why and how to achieve diversity on your board

Attracting diverse talent to the board

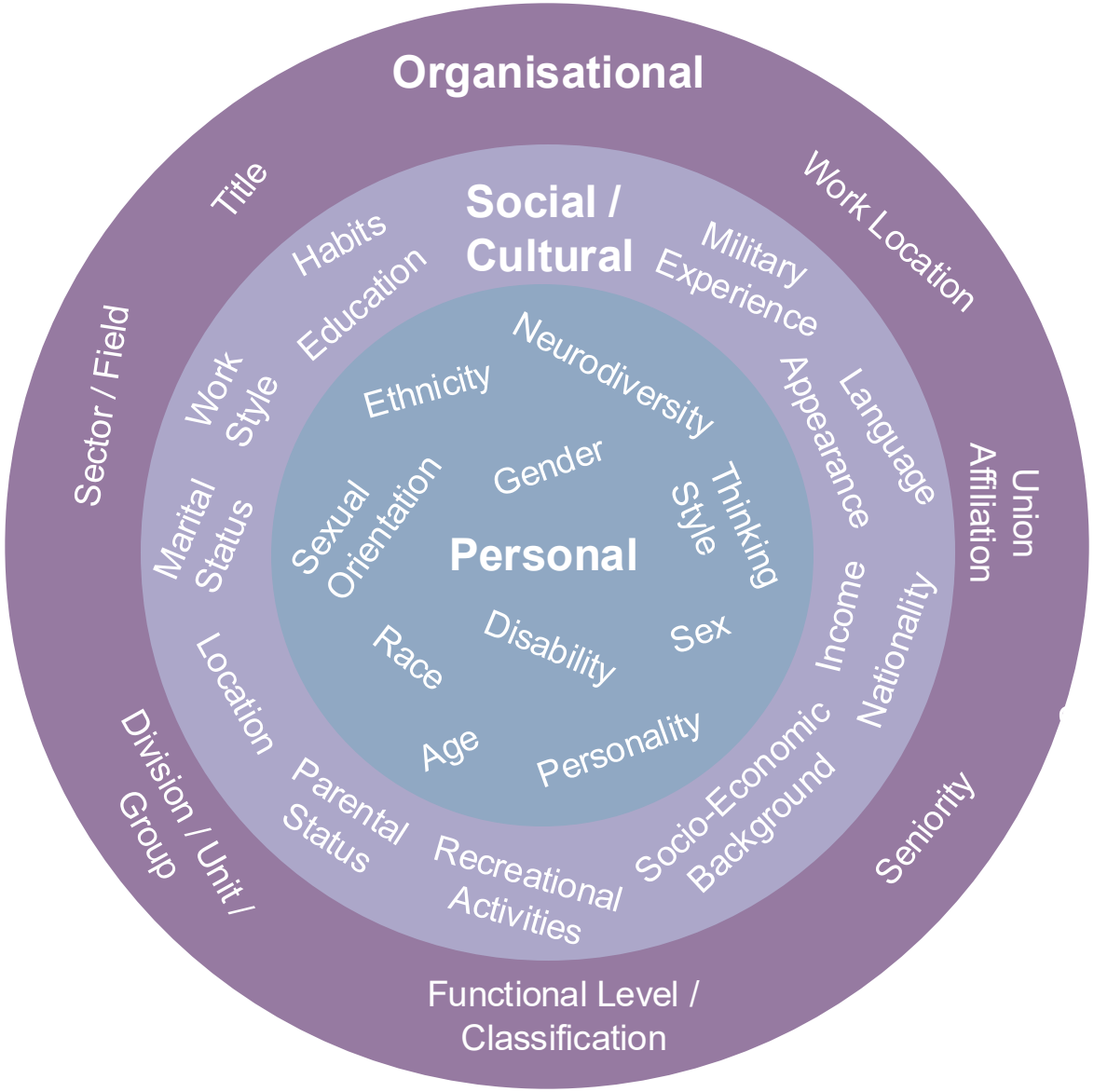
Youth on board

10 common mistakes in recruiting new board members

Harvard Implicit Bias Test

The diversity wheel

Adapted from Marilyn Loden



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What is inclusion?

Inclusion in governance means ensuring that all **board members**, **stakeholders** and **community** voices, regardless of **background, ability, identity** or **experience**, have **equitable access** to **information** and **decision-making**, feel they **belong**, and **share** in the organisation's **purpose and outcomes**



Diversity Council Australia, Inclusion Model, Sydney, DCA, 2025

Why?

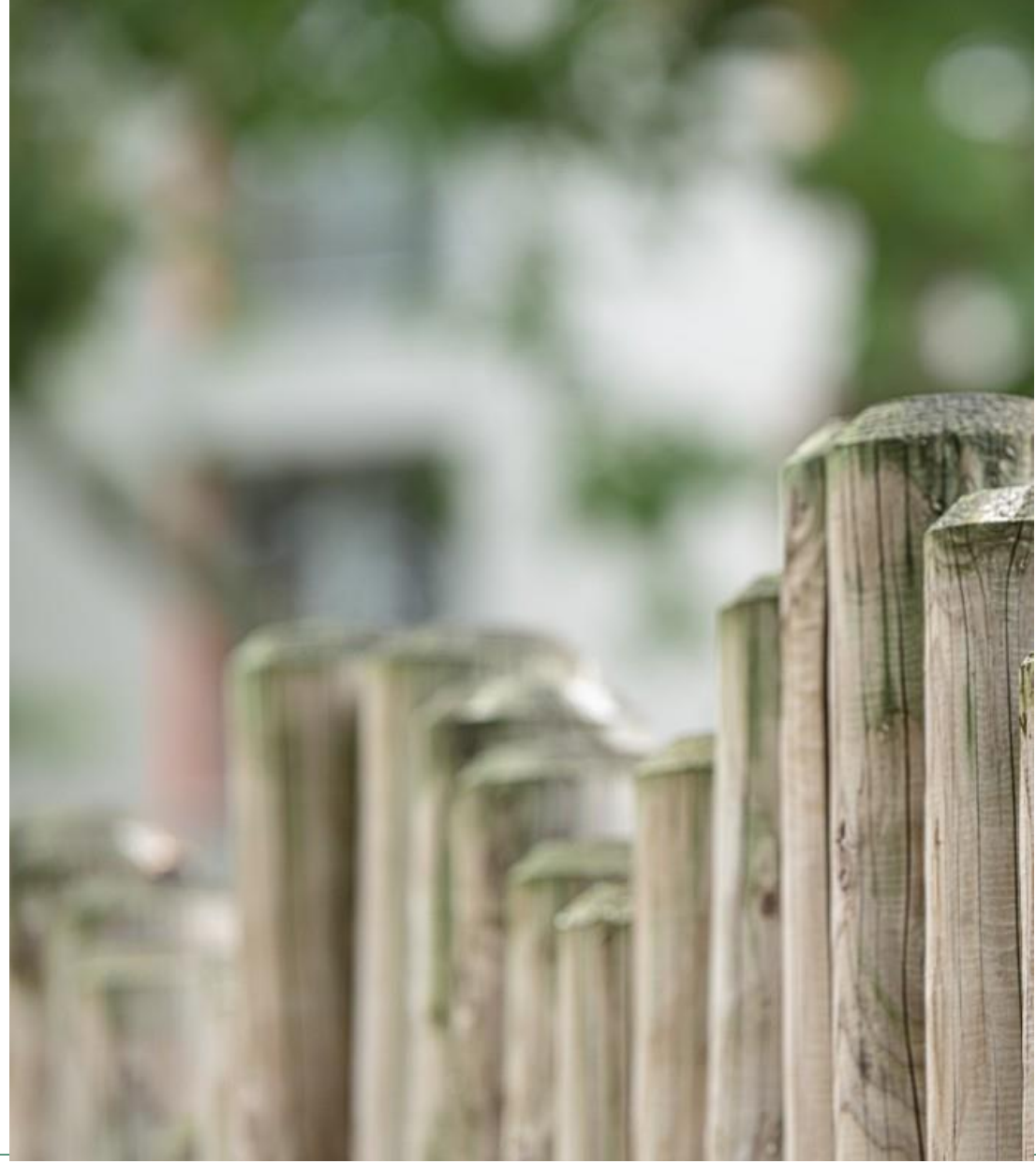
- It is the right thing to do!
- Stronger decision-making and problem-solving
- Different perspectives and experiences
- Increased innovation and creativity
- Stronger organisational performance
- Reflects the community
- Attracting and retaining talent
- Equity, inclusion and ethics
- Representation and visibility



The secretary's role in fostering inclusion

Through **communication**, **organisation**, and **record-keeping**, the secretary can:

- **Model** inclusive and respectful behaviour
- Identify and **remove** barriers to participation
- Ensure information and processes are **accessible**
- **Advocate** for continuous improvement and equity in governance



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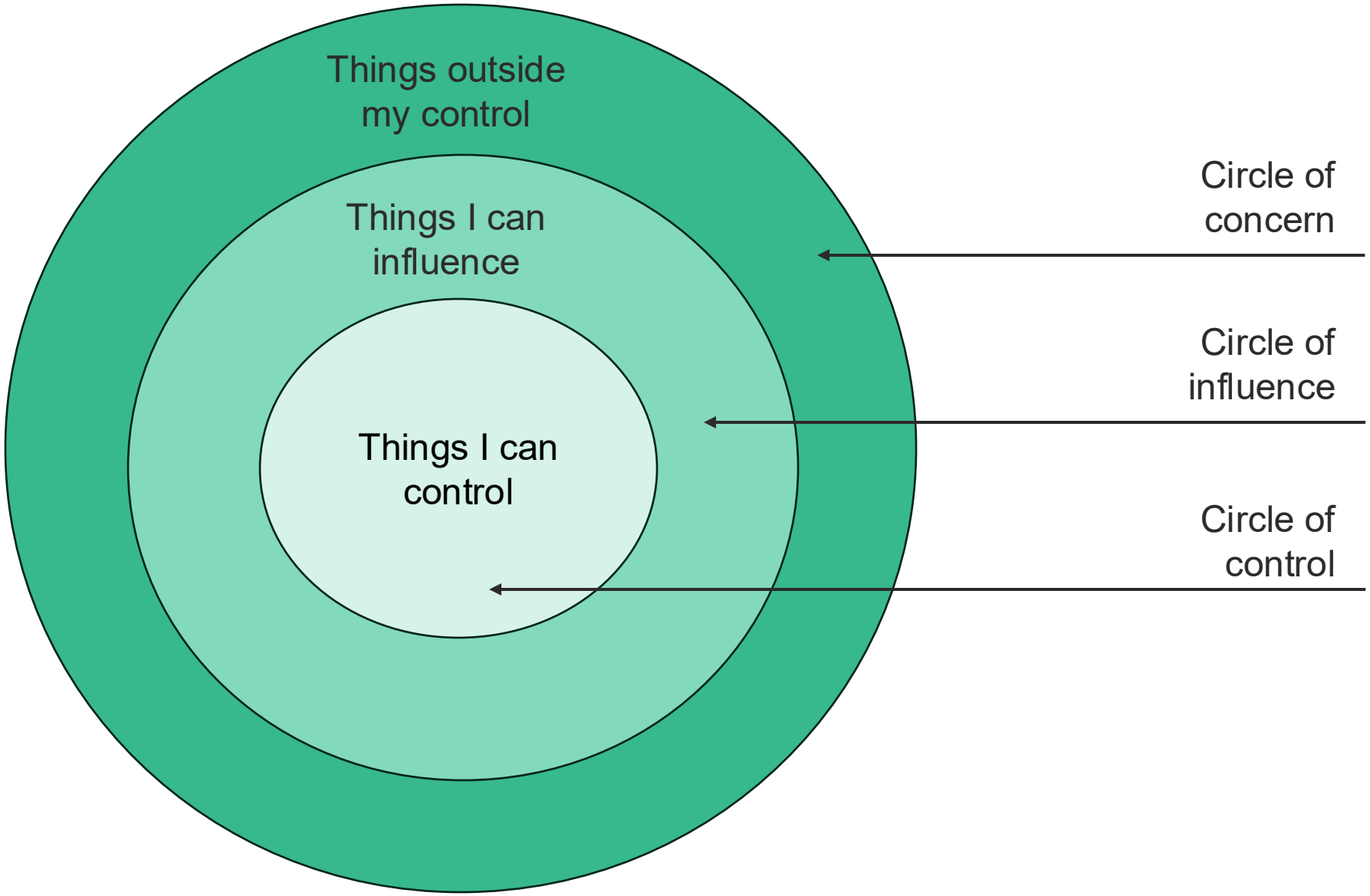
Breakout

1. How well does your board reflect the community you serve?
2. What inclusive practices are you/your board currently engaging in?
3. What are the biggest barriers your board faces around accessibility and inclusion?

Questions to ask yourself:

What can I do?

What is within my control or influence?



Looking inwards: inclusive foundations

- Review internal policies and procedures to embed inclusion and accessibility
- Use clear, jargon-free language in all communication
- Ensure venues and technology meet access needs
- Share meeting papers early and in accessible formats
- Support a safe, respectful culture and raise concerns if needed
- Keep accurate, respectful records that reflect all contributions

Gather feedback and suggest improvements

Looking outwards: embedding inclusion in board practice

- Ensure documents and communications are accessible and inclusive
- Advocate for fair and inclusive recruitment of board members
- Embed inclusion and equity goals in the strategic plan
- Include community voices or lived experience in decision-making
- Encourage consultation with diverse community groups
- Apply inclusive policies and procedures in governance and community engagement

Psychological safety

"The belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes, and the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking."

Dr Amy Edmonson

Indicators of psychological safety

- If you make a mistake on this team, it is not held against you.
- Members of this team can bring up problems and tough issues.
- People on this team sometimes accept others for being different.
- It is safe to take a risk on this team.
- It isn't difficult to ask other members of this team for help.
- No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
- Working with this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilised.

How would your board/executive respond?

Supporting psychological safety

- Actively invite input
- Show appreciation and humility
- Create warmth and informality
- Model constructive behaviour
- Ask before advocating
- Provide training and resources
- Reward challenges to the status quo
- Use humour and enthusiasm
- Give targeted and specific praise



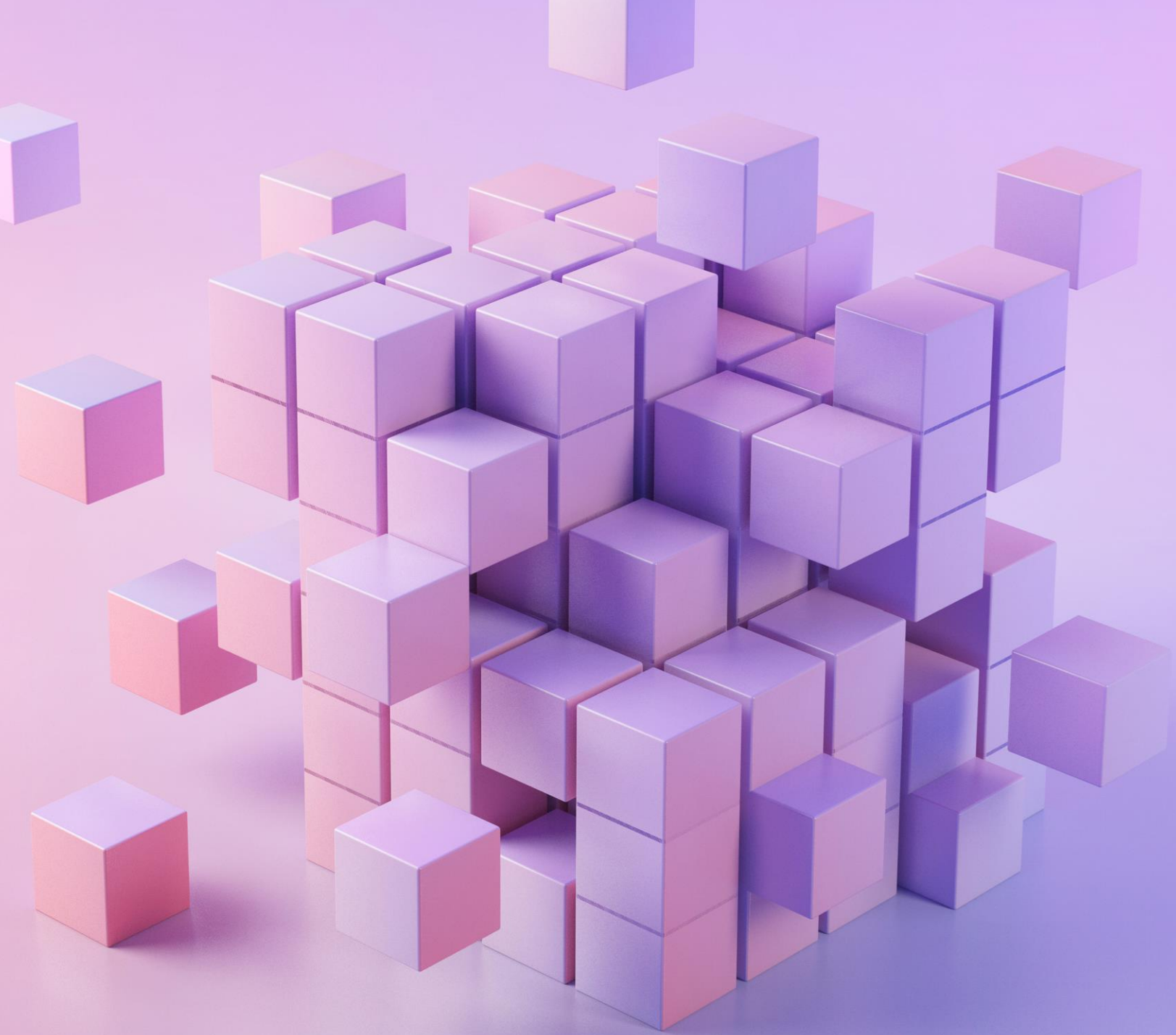
Break!



Inclusive recruitment, induction and succession planning

- Review board effectiveness
- Review the board composition
- Identify diversity gaps
- Recruit for diversity
- Design inclusive induction and mentoring
- Ongoing support and mentoring

What is unconscious bias? How can it impact boards?



Examples of unconscious bias



Confirmation bias

The tendency to search for information that confirms our preconceptions



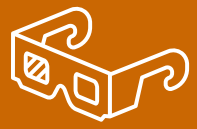
Attribution substitution

Using a simple attribute to make a complex judgment



Affinity bias

The tendency to favour people with similarities to ourself



Illusory correlation bias

Believing a relationship exists between two subjects, when in fact no relationship exists



Availability heuristic

Being influenced by things that come to mind easily



Intuition bias

The tendency to make decisions based on gut feelings rather than evidence or rational thinking

Breakout: Building an inclusive board culture

- What role can the secretary play in creating a psychologically safe board?
- How might unconscious bias show up on a board, and what can the secretary do to help address it?



Creating a healthy induction process

1: Get in contact

2: Create or update a board manual

3: Introductions to board and staff

4: Outline roles and responsibilities

5: Comprehensive, open-ended briefing

6: Provide a site tour

7: Mutual learning exchange

8: Ongoing feedback and improvement



What are the principles of an inclusive induction?

- **Personalised:** Recognise individual needs and preferences
- **Accessible:** Provide information in clear, usable formats
- **Welcoming:** Create psychological safety and belonging
- **Collaborative:** Two-way learning process
- **Continuous:** Improve based on feedback

Inclusive beginnings

From first contact through to introductions, ensure every step is **inclusive** and **flexible**.

Consider:

- Individual needs
- Accessible communication options
- Board culture and behaviour
- Clear expectations
- The board's roles and responsibilities



Board pack contents

Background information

- A bit about the background/history of the organisation

Official documents

- Object/purpose
- Strategic plan
- Relevant policies (conflict of interest, confidentiality, etc)
- Copy of any insurance policies (for board members or for the organisation)
- Current year's budget
- Most recent annual report and auditor's report.

The board

- Information about current board members (names, contact details and a short biography)
- A meeting schedule and a calendar of upcoming events
- Any board reviews, reports or evaluations
- A list of the board's current sub-committees, including terms of reference and details of chairs and members
- If there are several sub-committees, a chart showing how they fit together

Staff

- Organisational chart

Responsibilities

- Board members have a range of legal and ethical responsibilities, and it can be very useful to include some information about these in your board manual

Creating an inclusive board pack

- Include a statement on diversity and inclusion
- Provide accessible versions of key documents
- Add bios, pronouns, and contact details
- Explain accessibility features of meetings and venues



Building connection with new board members

- Support new board members to feel part of the team
- Provide a briefing on current issues and recent decisions
- Offer a tour and/or overview of programs
- Create opportunities for socialising and connection
- Make it a two-way learning exchange

Seek feedback to keep improving the induction experience



Building an inclusive and accessible board

Step 1: Lay the groundwork

- Review your policies, structure and practices with an inclusivity lens to make sure nothing unintentionally limits participation or diversity.
- Consider establishing a committee with a clear commitment to equity and inclusion
- Link diversity and inclusion to strategy and set goals for gender and other underrepresented groups

Step 2: Recruit with intention

- Assess existing skills, experience and diversity
- Actively succession plan
- Expand your recruitment pool
- Clearly define roles and expectations
- Follow your governance requirements while also providing members with clear information on nominees and the value they bring to the board

Step 3: Create pathways for participation

- Offer flexible meeting times, hybrid options
- Remove barriers to involvement, regardless of their circumstances
- Provide training and mentoring

Step 4: Welcome and support

- Provide a warm, inclusive induction
- Pair new members with a mentor who understands inclusive leadership
- Offer training and leadership opportunities to support progression into senior roles

Step 5: Build a culture that retains talent

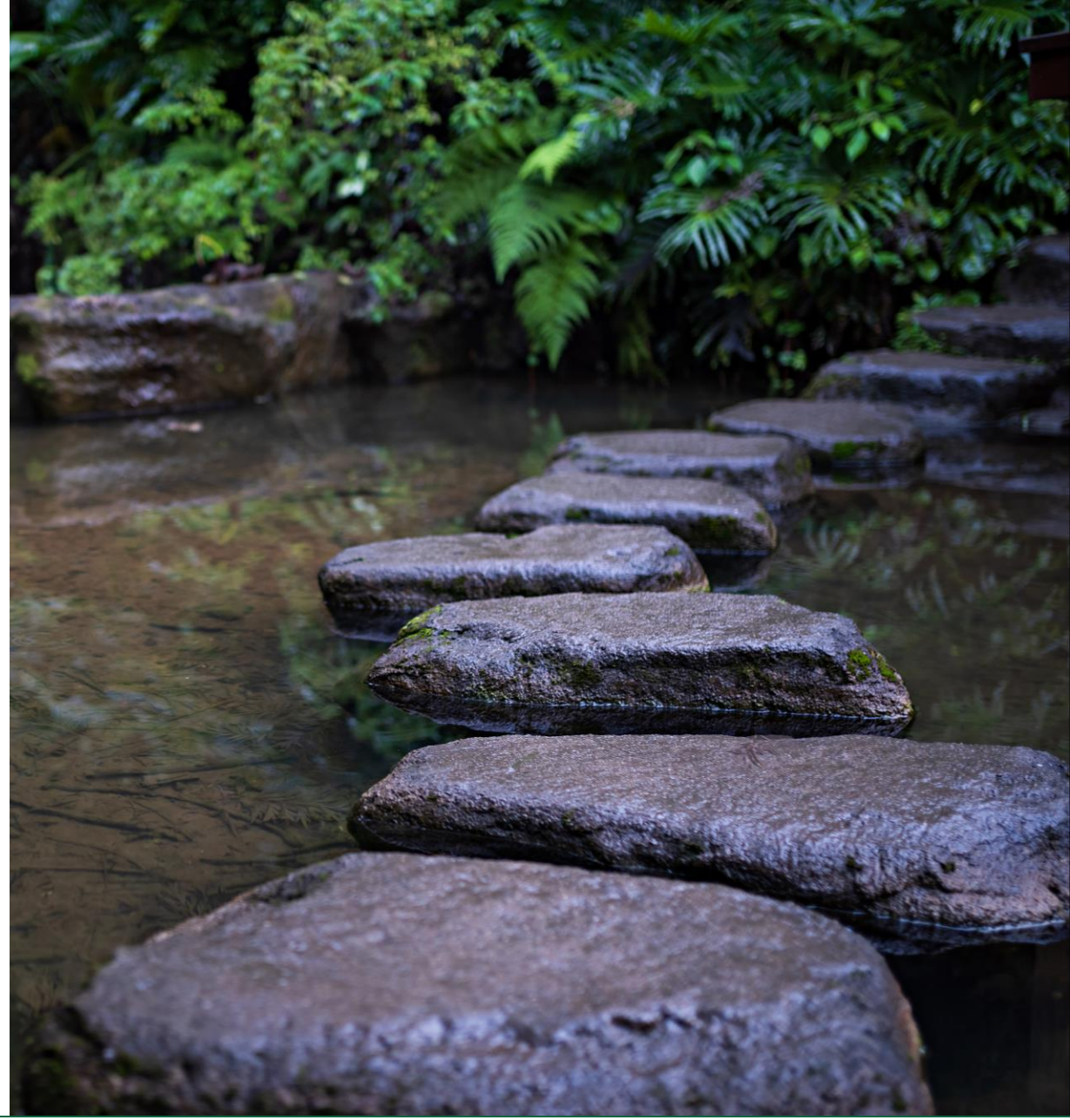
- Foster a respectful, inclusive culture where every voice is valued
- Promote psychological safety
- Actively identify and address instances or bias or exclusion
- Seek feedback and check in regularly to learn how you can keep improving

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Reflect and share

- What have you learned?
- What will you apply?
- What do next steps look like?



What next?

Set up a Community of Practice

Take your governance skills to the next level with the Diploma of Governance

Extend your leadership skills with our Leading for Transformation course

Consider tailored training for your board to increase your collective skills

Attend one of Community Director's upcoming training sessions

Find more information about all aspects of governance in Community Director's help sheets

Feedback

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2026secretaries

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Keep in touch and keep learning

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