

coalition of **community**boards

Sunshine Coast

Notes made from Webinar workshop

Seeking and Keeping an Engaged Membership and Committee

- **Ways that your committee can engage and build relationships with existing and new members**
- **Strengthening your organisation by participation**
- **Explore the opportunity that governance offers for both your organisation and its members to grow and learn together**

Governance webinar series **Wednesday 8 Sept 6pm – 7:30pm**

With Carolyn Nolan and Mark Wischnat

What brought you to the committee in the first place? What was the groups heartbeat that drew you in?

- Passion for the “cause” / social justice and making a difference
- Be part of improving the group
- Want to be part of the group
- Alignment of my own personal values with the core values of the group
- Make a difference – the purpose of the group lined up with my own sense of purpose
- Wanted to get hands on and do stuff locally
- I wanted to support the community, specifically the community of people that were part of the group

Governance ‘practices’ to avoid as they may reduce the level of member engagement (group discussion to develop this list)

- 1 person monopolises the direction of the group or the agenda
- Non inclusive practices (members can’t input into decisions)
- Lack of communication or information to members

- Not reading prelim documents / notes – not respecting the work already done by others and doing the ‘homework’ outside of meetings to be able to productively discuss at committee meetings. Its disrespectful and also inefficient.
- Going off meetings agendas and taking the discussion on different paths
- Forming cliques / relationships that exclude rest of the committee or members
- Denying opportunities for everyone to participate
- Not giving members / committee a respectful amount of time to express themselves
- Not valuing everyone’s input; this can be detrimental because it can give the impression that there is only one way for people to get involved and strong groups / committees want to be able to provide multiple ways for people to get involved and contribute.

Governance ‘practices’ to enhance member engagement and potentially attract new participants (group discussion to develop this list)

- Have fun – don’t be 100% about the business. Fun and celebration attracts people
- Be clear around why we are all “here” – a strong clear message about purpose that is support by a chair who supports that purpose.
- Provide opportunities for channelling people’s passion
- Members feel valued
- Members can contribute in ways that work for them
- Place a key importance on building relationships
- Being able to recognise and understand why people are in the group / committee in the first place and then be able to respond to that.
- Be clear about level of “professionalism” (or in other words the expectations around how the group conducts its business) in meetings according to agenda and tasks so that people know what they are getting themselves into.
- When the business of the group is being discussed, focus on the issues and not individual friendships that might exist.
- Allow difference of opinions, respect difference of opinions
- New members support – offer Mentorship / Orientation / Buddies for new members to learn from peers. And as part of this work actively on Succession plans for all the committee roles
- Some groups constitution is set up in a way that builds succession planning into the organisation by having set time periods that committee members can function in roles. This can be useful to remind people that they are ultimately custodians of the organisation and doing their role with an eye on handing the role over can help with this mindset.

- Having an annual committee orientation session following on from the AGM is a really useful way to bring everyone onto the same page and give new members and good grounding in their role
- Learn collectively with the boards and committees of other or likeminded groups. Could source training or orientation opportunities together.
- Reach out to other groups / committees to learn from them. Ask for their help and advice.
- Ask experienced committee people to provide a session about sharing their learnings and knowledge with new members.
- Strategy that one group mentioned to get to know other groups and form new strategic connections – Include an “Expanding our bubble” segment into meetings in which a guest speaker is invited to address committee meetings, perhaps at the start / end of each meeting for 15 mins or maybe at lunch time or the like.
- Care for one another, look after one another as people as well as committee & group members
- Collaborate with other groups
- Seek people who you think will align with your group’s activities / values
- Develop document guides (or borrow and adapt from another organisation or a web template) to help committee to understand the ‘administration tasks’ of the group. Or put another way “I always call my paperwork my "in case I get hit by a bus" folder... I make sure it's laid out so anyone can follow it and take over...”.
- Provides a structured simple chart to help guide the work of the committee. Some groups develop an annual checklist (sometimes referred to as a ‘compliance calendar’) that lists the dates for all the legal / financial / risk items for a year and that is tabled and checked as a standing agenda item at committee meetings. This can be useful to demystify and take care of what are essentially regular ongoing governance matters, for example insurance renewals, funding acquittals, ATO and ACNC obligations etc.
- Timing and location of meetings can attract different age groups and cohorts of people to engage with your group / committee. Could rotate meeting times and days to see if it attracts different people
- Use technology in ways that work for your committee and members.
- Build relationships with other groups / bodies that align with your purpose and aspirations eg USC, TAFE, schools, other groups, this could also open up opportunities with local students seeking placements and experiences.
- Morning tea!!!
- Targeting places where people who share your vision hang out eg specific university departments or clubs or schools etc
- Developing strategic relationships with groups / organisations / businesses that could be mutually beneficial

- Use social media to recruit specific cohorts of people to your committee
- Have clear roles and responsibilities to help people know what they need to look after.

Challenges that were shared during the conversation

- Committee members can all be at different pace with their own levels of confidence, knowledge and experiences, this is perfectly fine and to be expected, but how do we balance the reality that we are all learning with the practical need of getting what needs to be done completed? Perhaps having a people focussed committee enables this delicate balance to be occur.
- Or put another way, we need to be aware that sometimes the need to ‘get stuff done’ is not conducive to providing opportunities for broader participation. Managing this can be tricky.

Participating groups and their representative

Coolum Women's shed	Nell
Bahai	Briar
Maleny Neighbourhood Centre	Jim
Sunshine Coast Council	Jane
YACDA	Kahren
Disability Advocate / Student	Linda
Yandina Eumundi RSL	Tracey
Sunshine Coast LDMG Community Sub-Group Mooloolah /Eudlo	Maree
Mooloolah River Waterwatch and Landcare Inc	Karen
Sunshine Coast Coalition of Community Boards	Carolyn Mark