

BOARD RECRUITMENT

WHAT IS BOARD RECRUITMENT?

Board recruitment is the process of identifying, approaching, and electing new members for an organization's board of directors. It sounds simple, but it is critical for the organization to recruit board members who can effectively contribute to the board's governance and the organization's mission. This involves finding people with the right mix of skillsets, expertise, perspectives and networks who will:

- ▶ Align with the organization's current and future mission, vision and needs,
- ▶ Ensure organizational resources are protected and used appropriately, and
- ▶ Uphold the organization's reputation.

The board recruitment process involves establishing a committee or task force to lead the recruitment, undertaking a board needs analysis and self-assessment, developing and advertising the position(s), vetting and short-listing candidates, electing the new members, and onboarding them.

Effective board recruitment involves identifying, approaching and electing people with the right mix of skillsets, expertise, perspectives, and networks to contribute to the board's governance and the organization's mission.



“An inclusive board seeks information from multiple sources, demonstrates an awareness of the community and constituents that benefit from and contribute to the organization's services, and establishes policies and structures to foster stakeholder contributions.” – William A. Brown

BENEFITS OF HAVING A PROPER BOARD RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Spending time to properly develop a board recruitment process ensures all board members, new and ongoing, work together for the benefit of your organization. It allows the board to have a variety of thoughts and perspectives, thereby avoiding groupthink. This results in increased competitive advantage and better performance. Proper board recruitment processes also help your organization improve its board (and staff) diversity and inclusion practices. We have long known that an inclusive board allows information to be gathered from different sources, demonstrates the organization's awareness and openness to its members' and stakeholders' needs, and facilitates stakeholder contributions to the organization, which only serves to better its performance.

BOARD RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES

Non-profit sport organizations at all levels of the sport system face many challenges regarding board recruitment:

► HIGH BOARD MEMBER TURNOVER WITH A SMALL POOL OF CANDIDATES



Boards are seeing many of their members reach the end of their 2-term or 8-year mandates. These individuals must be replaced. But with whom? There are fewer volunteers remaining in the sport system, which means fewer people with the sport background to sit on a sport organization's board. Likewise, parents of sport participants are often balancing multiple commitments (including work, childcare and household responsibilities) that may limit their availability to serve on a board. At the national level, best practices for board governance suggest that boards should be skills-based more than representation-based. But where do you find people with the right skills who are passionate about (your) sport and willing to sit on your board as a volunteer?

► BOARD MEMBERS ARE SEEN AS IRREPLACEABLE



The organization, the board, or a particular board member may feel that no one can replace that member—no one else will have the knowledge or experience needed to effectively contribute to the board like they do. The board member may feel they have to stay, or the organization may say “you can't leave us because what will we do without you?” This attitude severely limits replacement options, as the organization will seek to find a carbon-copy of that individual, likely to no avail.

► DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION CONSIDERATIONS

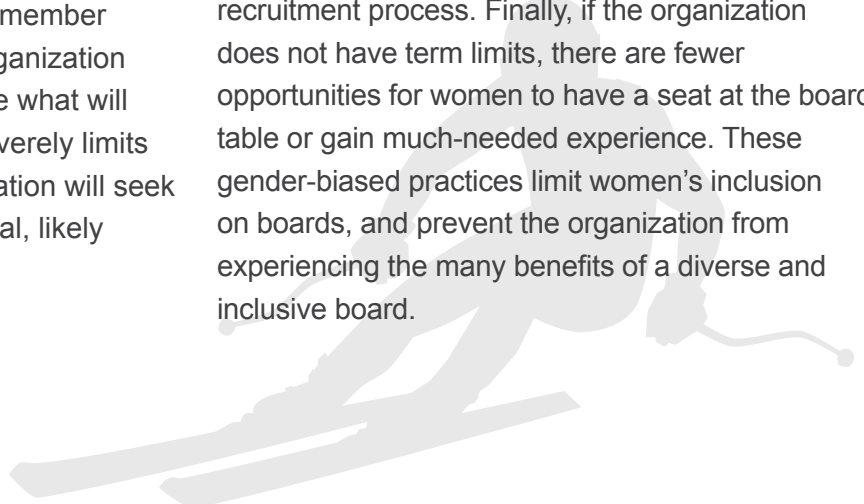


Diversity and inclusion are important in governance and board representation. Diversity describes the wide range of demographic characteristics that exist among board members. Examples of these characteristics include gender identity, race, ethnicity, LGBTQ+ status, and disability status, among others. In turn, inclusion refers to practices that make everyone in an organization, including members, staff, and board members, feel welcomed and have equal opportunities to contribute and grow. While a board can “be” diverse, it governs inclusion. However, boards may not know how to govern inclusion, or they may believe there are no appropriate candidates with sought-after skills or competencies who are also diverse.

► GENDER-BIASED RECRUITMENT PRACTICES



Despite desires to have gender-balanced boards, recruitment or selection processes continue to be gender-biased. People tend to hire others similar to them, and “good” or sought-after leadership qualities still tend toward masculine traits, as do senior management and leadership cultures. These tendencies perpetuate recruitment practices that favour men. Likewise, because men tend to have more leadership experience, they can be consciously or unconsciously favoured during a recruitment process. Finally, if the organization does not have term limits, there are fewer opportunities for women to have a seat at the board table or gain much-needed experience. These gender-biased practices limit women's inclusion on boards, and prevent the organization from experiencing the many benefits of a diverse and inclusive board.



BOARD RECRUITMENT STEPS

01 Establish a committee to lead the process. This committee is often called the nominations committee, but could also be the human resources (HR), governance, or recruitment committee.

02 Evaluate the board. Evaluate your board's performance to identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as the board's needs and resources. You can also identify ongoing board members' demographics, skills, competencies, experiences, and knowledge, and compare these characteristics to those needed for the overall board. These evaluations will point to characteristics, needs or areas of weakness that should be addressed by one or more new board members.

03 Establish other desired characteristics. For example, diversity or athlete representation.

04 Advertise the board positions publicly. Create and share a job posting widely with your organization's network and targeted stakeholder groups. Include an applicant information form or questionnaire that contains questions about candidates' qualities, competencies, skills, knowledge, experience and demographics (as appropriate) to show their fit with the job posting. Candidates should also be prompted to describe their leadership qualities and past experiences, as well as future goals and passions.

JOB POSTINGS SHOULD INCLUDE:

- ✓ Board member job description, including roles, responsibilities, and expectations (such as term limits and the time commitment)
- ✓ Desired and required qualities, competencies, skills, knowledge, experience, and demographics
- ✓ Information about the organization, such as the organization's mission, vision and values
- ✓ Information about the application process and deadlines, including a list of documents that the applicant will need to submit, such as an application form, questionnaire, or CV

05 Evaluate the potential candidates. The nominations committee should verify candidate eligibility, including the candidate's motivations and potential conflicts of interest, such as a parent wanting to be on the club's board to influence team selection in favour of their child. The committee should also assess the candidate's familiarity with its organization, sport, or a similar organization, sport, or cause. The candidate should be thoughtful and open to differing perspectives. The committee may also choose to review the candidate's social media accounts (if they have any) to get a sense of who they are as individuals. If a short-list is needed, the nominations committee should interview the candidates in person or via videoconference with a pre-determined list of questions.

06 Share candidate dossiers. Beyond presenting a resume or CV, candidates should position themselves according to the needs of your organization. This can be presented in written form (for example, answering a list of questions in a candidate information sheet) or in a presentation (in person or by video, live or pre-recorded). This information should be shared well in advance of your organization's annual general meeting (AGM) per your by-laws or constitution.

07 Elect the new board member(s) at the AGM.

08 Onboard the new board member(s). Learn more in SIRC's [Board Onboarding](#) trend report.

BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOARD RECRUITMENT

There are a number of ways that you can enhance and optimize the board recruitment process for your organization:

▶ ALIGN BOARD RECRUITMENT WITH STRATEGIC AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

- Make this process part of the organization's **succession planning** efforts and **start the process early**, ideally 6 to 18 months before you need a new board member to start.
- Cross-train and develop future leaders through **strategic leadership development** (see SIRC's [Succession Planning trend report](#)).

▶ COMMIT TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN YOUR BOARD RECRUITMENT PROCESS

- Have a **diversity, equity and inclusion task force or committee** to help increase your board's diversity through the recruitment process.
- Consider establishing board **quotas** for diversity-based representation in your by-laws, constitution, or articles to ensure representation.
- Address gender-biased recruitment practices by having a **gender (and diversity) equity champion** to drive the change toward more a balanced board.
- Ensure you have **stakeholder representation** on your board, including **athletes**.

▶ ADVERTISE WIDELY AND OPENLY

- Advertise job postings for new board positions **internally** with your members and athletes (current and past) and **externally** with your partners and sponsors.
- You can also advertise more broadly with **online job boards and platforms**. In sport, you have SIRC's online job platform, the premier job board for all types of positions in sport.
- Consider hiring a **recruitment agency, search firm** or **consultant**. Ensure they follow recruitment best practices regarding diversity and inclusion.
- Post your ad on **LinkedIn**, the premier social media platform for professionals.
- Approach **academics** with expertise in the areas you are seeking.
- **Think outside the box**. For instance, if you need a tech-savvy individual who knows social media, approach related associations and advertise on social media (which is good to do anyway).

BOARD POSTING AND MATCHING PLATFORMS:

- Altruvest's Boardmatch
- B3 Canada
- Centre d'action bénévole de Montréal
- Collège des administrateurs de sociétés
- ICD Directors Register
- SIRC's Job Board

▶ DO YOUR DUE DILIGENCE

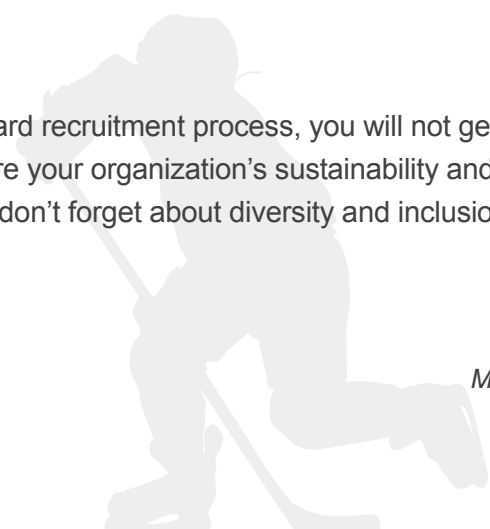
- Be **honest** about board member **expectations** and time commitments.
- Understand what **motivates** (potential) board members to volunteer, such as whether it is for altruistic versus egotistical reasons, and focus on this as part of the recruitment process.
- Do your **due diligence** regarding potential candidates by checking qualifications and references.
- Remember that new board members will not fix **dysfunctional boards or organizational cultures**. These need to be **addressed before** new members come onboard.

CONCLUSION

Without a proper board recruitment process, you will not get the best board for your organization to grow your sport and ensure your organization's sustainability and success. So plan early, follow the steps outlined above, and don't forget about diversity and inclusion practices.

Acknowledgments

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