

TOP TIPS for using Board Tools and Templates

(from the Workshop held in Perth and Karratha on 31 May/1 June 2017)

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- **Do a regular Board Self-Assessment and internal audit:** Ask - What are we doing well? What can we improve? What should we stop doing? ORIC has a Healthy Corporation Checklist which is very useful and can help pinpoint areas of Board governance that need improving. Here is the link to the checklist: <http://www.oric.gov.au/free-templates/healthy-corporation-checklist>
- **The Constitution (or Rule Book) of your organisation is not set in stone.** It can be reviewed and amended as necessary to meet the needs and goals of your organisation. If its not working, change it (in accordance with the Rules, of course!)
- **The keys to an effective meeting:** A clear and informative Agenda and Board Pack; Sufficient notice; A Code of Conduct for board members; Comprehensive Board inductions for all new board members; Healthy food and a sense of humour (seriously!).
- **Decision-making needs to be at the top of an Agenda:** Don't leave important decisions to the end of the meeting when everyone is tired and you are running out of time. Items for Resolution or Decision should be the first thing the Board deals with after acknowledging the previous Minutes.
- **Use a decision-making Tool checklist:** If you don't have good information, you don't make good decisions. Here is a link to an example Decision-Making Tool checklist: www.communitydirectors.com.au/decision-making-tool
- **The biggest single factor in effective Board decision-making is member behaviour.** Make sure you have the right people on your Board who understand their roles and responsibilities. This will lead to a committed group with a common cause who act on behalf of the organisation and community.
- **Keep Minutes of Meetings short and succinct.** As the ultimate record of a meeting, it does not need to repeat verbatim what every board member said in relation to a particular issue. Just summarise the discussion but be clear on the decision and person responsible for an action.
- **Use a separate Decision Register to record the exact votes made by members on each board decision.** This will make it easier to refer to decisions at a later date.
- **Consider using graphs, charts and pictures to present financial information to your board.** Not everyone on your board likes or understands a page of numbers. If you prefer other ways of receiving your financial information, make sure your financial officer provides it.
- **Regardless of how a board member voted (for, against, abstained or absent) in relation to a board decision, if the resolution or decision is passed, then the entire board is legally liable for that decision.** If you cannot live with a decision and cannot live with the potential outcome of that decision, then the only way you will not be held accountable is if you resign immediately from the Board.
- **All Board should have a set of Policies on governance and compliance issues.** When trouble happens, you will have a policy to help you deal with it. A great set of template policies (which you can easily amend to suit your own organisation) can be found at the Institute of Community Directors Policy Bank at this link: <https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/icda/policybank/>