

INNER NORTH  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION

# BOARD ASSOCIATE PROGRAM

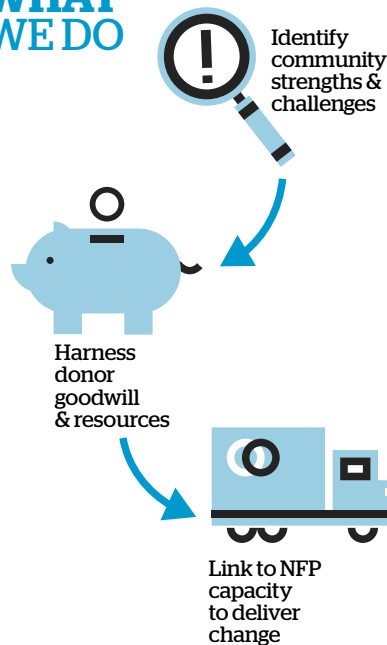
Creating space at the table:  
**good governance through  
diversity**

# ABOUT US

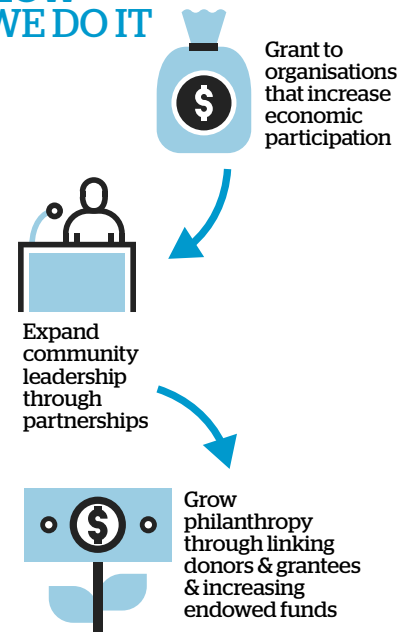
The Foundation was established in 2007 as an initiative of IntoWork and is supported by the three local Councils, Moreland, Yarra and Darebin.

The Foundation manages philanthropic dollars to provide funds for projects that create prosperous, connected, and cohesive communities in Melbourne's Inner North, particularly encouraging pathways to employment.

## WHAT WE DO



## HOW WE DO IT




## OUR VISION

Prosperous, connected, cohesive communities in Melbourne's Inner North.

## OUR MISSION

To increase economic participation, strengthen people's networks, and promote social inclusion through partnerships and philanthropy.



Directors at the Inner North Community Foundation are recruited for their specific skills, and connection to the local area.

During the last director recruitment process, 18 quality applications were received to fill a single volunteer role. The Foundation established the Board Associate program as a way of engaging some of these candidates with the work of the Foundation, and increasing diversity around the board table.

Three candidates were invited to become Board Associates during the pilot year 2015–2016.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Community organisations need to ensure that staff, volunteers and directors are a reflection of the community in which they serve, and the Board Associate program has made this even more possible for the Foundation.

The Inner North Community Foundation recruited three young women of diverse backgrounds to observe board meetings and contribute their time and talent, while learning about good governance.

The Board Associate Program had the following elements:


- Design and endorsement: articulating aims and objectives, director approval to conduct a program, confirmation of process;
- Recruitment: attracting and screening candidates;
- Participation: activity of Board Associates;
- Ongoing benefit: evaluation of the program and next steps



### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

The Inner North Community Foundation acknowledges the traditional owners of the land where we work, live, study and volunteer, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their elders past and present.

We recognise the contributions of other first nations people in our community, especially elders.



# DESIGN

“It makes sense for the demography of the board to reflect the demography of the organisation’s stakeholders, including clients, staff and donors.

The average age of NFP board members is over 50 and developing our next generation of board members is an important task for us all.

– Susan Pascoe,  
ACNC Commissioner

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

The Board Associate Program aimed to:

- Build strengths and capacity of local people to serve on not-for-profit boards
- Broaden the diversity of backgrounds of people involved with the Inner North Community Foundation
- Build a pool of potential candidates for future Inner North Community Foundation director positions, while balancing expectations about a pathway to how future vacancies are filled
- Engage people in the development of a suitable program

## DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DIRECTORS AND BOARD ASSOCIATES

A key identified risk was potential governance risk of Associates being seen as de facto Directors. To guard against this, the table below illustrates the differences and similarities of the responsibility of each role.

		
Act in good faith and best interests of the organisation, to act for a proper purpose, not to misuse the position or information, to avoid conflicts of interest, retain discretions and to disclose material personal interests	✓	✓
Duty to act with reasonable care and diligence that a reasonable person would expect	✓	✓
Deemed to be a Director of the Company within the meaning of the Corporations Act or of the Constitution	✓	✗
Deemed to be an ‘Officer’ of the Company / Corporation within the meaning of the Corporations Act, the Constitution or other legislation	✓	✗
Recognised in a quorum	✓	✗
Attend Board Meetings as observers and at the invitation of the Chair participate in discussion or debate	✓	✓
Actively participate in decision making processes	✓	✗
Vote on or seek to influence any matter to be determined by the Board	✓	✗
Appointed for a 12-month term		✓

The Board Associate Program was a 12-month pilot program.

# RECRUITMENT

The Inner North Community Foundation has term limits for Directors, with the majority of vacancies filled through a public recruitment process.

Finding local people who want to volunteer on a local board has been relatively straight forward.

## THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

- The announcement for volunteer directors was sent to supporters of the Foundation, and promoted through Women on Boards, and social media. Word of mouth was also used to identify potential candidates.
- 18 people submitted applications to participate in a volunteer role – an embarrassment of riches! Seven people interviewed, with one person nominated as director.
- Other people expressed interest in volunteer roles with the Foundation, and the Board Associate program was suggested as a way to engage more people with the Foundation.

## POSITION DESCRIPTION FOR BOARD ASSOCIATE

A position description, modified from the Board Director PD, was created. The Inner North Community Foundation is particularly interested supporting diversity. The following statement was included in recruitment documentation:

*The Inner North Community Foundation is committed to equal opportunity, and to engaging people of all ages and cultural backgrounds. To ensure that the Board is broadly representative of the community the Board is keen to attract applications from women, people under 40 years of age and people from diverse cultural backgrounds.*



# PARTICIPATION

Once the three Board Associates were recruited, they participated in different activities. Associates developed and negotiated an agreement on how they will be involved. This included tasks, levels of engagement and participation.

## FORMAL ACTIVITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Between October 2015 and November 2016, three workshops were organised for Board Associates, covering:

- Board induction and orientation to good governance
- Basics of not for profits
- Basics of the foundation
- Role of chair & values
- Board Associate skills audit – develop & match Associates with Directors
- Granting principles and law around Developing Grant Rights (?)

Workshops were facilitated by a former Director, an established leader in her field. Initially workshops were scheduled to run after board meetings, but this was found to be too long an evening, and so were rescheduled for another time. Pre-reading was always circulated to ensure everybody was prepared.

Board Associates attended all board meetings and strategy sessions, to observe and provide input as appropriate.

Board Associates were also engaged at a committee level, including supporting the annual grants assessment process, including the assessment panel for the 2016 Pathways to Employment Grant Round

## INFORMAL ACTIVITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the formal meetings, Board Associates were engaged on an ad-hoc way. They:

- Networked with board members and local groups
- Attended philanthropic events and local community celebrations.
- Participated in fundraising activities like the annual Fun Run and Christmas Crowdfunding Campaign.

“ Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Board Associate pilot program for 2016.

I don't believe that there could have been a better board to observe. You have all certainly set the standard high for my expectation of any further board or committee that I will be part of.

*- Amy-Lou Cowdroy-Ling,  
Board Associate*

▼L-R: Amy Lou Cowdroy-Ling,  
Michelle Cheah ,Mi-Lin  
Chen Yi Mei



# EVALUATION & FEEDBACK

Board Associates and Directors were asked for feedback on how the program was run. Overall they indicate that benefits for the Foundation include:

- Better links to different communities, keeping people interested and involved in the Foundation
- An empowered model of volunteering that gives deeper connection to the Foundation.
- Stronger internal champions within local organisations, for promoting activities of the Foundation.
- Opportunity for people to give a diversity of perspectives



## Directors' comments

### What worked?

- A meaningful development opportunity for Associates, who provided positive insights and contributions to Board and Committee Meetings.
- Exposing the Foundation's Board to input from younger professionals
- The hard work and additional contribution which was evident from the associates
- New perspectives
- A highly valuable program which seemed well worth the effort (staff time) and cost
- Contact with different generations of professionals and was inspiring to see their dedication and hard work
- Ability to capture fresh thinking



## Board Associates' comments

### What could be improved?

- Increase clarity on Associate role in Board meetings and discuss whether the Board should meet without Associates from time to time
- Not sure how much was dependent on the exact right people who were the first associates for the program
- Having a Board member as a mentor
- Scheduling Board Associate workshops in alternate weeks with Board meetings
- An opportunity to contribute to the Inner North Community Foundation through a Board Associate project/event with the aim of expanding corpus
- Other opportunities to contribute to the Inner North Community Foundation
- Exploring possibilities if a certificate can be linked to the program



“ Giving people opportunity is fundamental to what we do. This was a simple experiment in deepening our connections with community, and of improving both the capacity of our own organisation and the individuals around the table. It was resoundingly successful.

– Christopher Baker, Chair  
Inner North Community

Foundation

## NEXT STEPS

While the 12-month pilot has finished, Associates are well placed to make meaningful contribution to the Foundation through other projects that expand the corpus and progress the aims of the organisation, and remain involved with the Foundation. Learnings from the Board Associate pilot program for the Inner North Community Foundation include:

- It brought depth to conversations and activities taking place within the Foundation, reflecting local diversity of age, gender and cultural background
- The time commitment for Associates was one year rather than the nine years required of Directors, which was realistic for those involved
- It balanced the legal need for Directors to be a majority of responsible persons, with the inherent value of diverse perspectives
- It was simple and effective
- The experience of group volunteering was positive


The Inner North Community Foundation is likely to repeat the program in line with a public application process for a future Director vacancy.

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