

National Mental Health Consumer Organisation Establishment Project

Board Skills Matrix

Background

The NMHCO Board needs to be comprised of directors who collectively have the skills, knowledge and experience to effectively govern and direct the organisation.

The skills required of directors can be broadly categorised as:

- Behavioural skills – a description of personal attributes;
- Technical skills (that is, skills relevant to the industry or sector in which the organisation predominantly operates);
- Governance (director) skills (that is, skills directly relevant to performing the board’s key functions); and
- Diversity and non-skills based board attributes.

It is important to note that each individual director is not expected to hold all professional and industry skills. Rather, these skills should be held collectively by the board as a whole. All Directors of NMHCO should be expected to possess a majority of the required behavioural skills.

Diversity in the Board is also of paramount importance. The need for diversity in factors such as age, gender and cultural backgrounds is necessary.

Skill genre	Skill	Description	[C] collective [I] individual [M] majority
Behavioural The personal attributes enabling individual Directors to use their knowledge and skills to function well as team members and to interact with key stakeholders	Ethical	A commitment to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding and fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of a director, and maintaining knowledge in this regard through professional development • putting the Board’s interests before any personal interests • being transparent and declaring any activities and conduct that might be a potential conflict • maintaining board confidentiality 	I
	Communicator	The ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to, and constructively and appropriately debate, other people’s viewpoints • develop and deliver cogent arguments • communicate effectively with a broad range of stakeholders 	I
	Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A visible commitment to the purpose for which NMHCO has been established and operates, and its on-going success. • A commitment to the courageous expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice. 	I

Skill genre	Skill	Description	[C] collective [I] individual [M] majority
	Influencer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strives to understand and respect others before evaluating and responding. Ability to negotiate outcomes and influence others to agree with those outcomes, including an ability to gain stakeholder support for the board's decisions and respect the value and perspective of mental health consumers. 	I
	Critical and/or creative thinker	Ability to critically analyse complex and detailed information, readily distil key issues, and develop practical or creative approaches and solutions to problems.	C
	Constructive questioner	Preparedness to ask questions and challenge management and peer directors in a constructive and appropriate.	C
	Collegiate	Ability to work as part of a team, and demonstrate the passion and time to make a genuine and active contribution to the board and the NMHCO including the ability to endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective and tolerance of dissent to achieve informed and responsible decision making.	I
	Generous, humble and resilient	Demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a compelling modesty and determination; resilience in the face of adversity; and being motivated by generosity and altruistic drivers. 	I
	Community and stakeholder engagement	High level reputation which comes from an understanding and valuing the knowledge and perspective that comes with a lived experience of mental illness and networks in the local community including with community members (consumers including grassroots level) and organisations, local health professionals and funded community health providers, and the ability to effectively engage and communicate with those stakeholders.	M
Technical Technical/professional skills and specialist knowledge to assist with ongoing aspects of the Board role	Consumer perspective or experience	Identifies as a consumer or has experience in primary health care, for example, general practice, nursing, allied health, medical specialities, pharmacy, aged care, and state-funded community health service provision for consumers.	M
	Policy development	Ability to identify key issues for NMHCO and develop appropriate policies to define the parameters within which the organisation should operate.	C
	Information technology	Knowledge and experience in the strategic use and governance of information management and information technology.	C
	Risk and compliance	Ability to identify key risks to the organisation in a wide range of areas including legal and regulatory compliance, the monitoring risk and compliance management frameworks and systems and qualifications and experience in the law.	C
	Public relations/marketing	Knowledge and experience in public relations in the context of a philanthropic and fundraising focussed organisation which can include mass media; social media; market segmentation; stakeholder engagement; or campaign management.	C

Skill genre	Skill	Description	[C] collective [I] individual [M] majority
	Leader	Innate leadership skills including the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriately represent the organisation, • set appropriate board and organisational culture, • make and take responsibility for decisions and actions; and a track record of modelling and demonstrating leadership within the mental health sector.	C
Governance The essential governance knowledge and understanding all Directors should possess or develop if they are to be effective	Corporate governance	Knowledge and experience in good practice corporate governance structures, policies and processes (particularly in the not-for-profit context), and an ability to apply knowledge.	C
	Business and commercial skills	Experience at an executive level including the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appoint and evaluate the performance of the CEO and senior executive managers; • oversee strategic human resource management including workforce planning; and employee and industrial relations; and • oversee greenfield organisation. 	C
	Financial performance	Qualifications and experience in accounting and/or finance and the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse key financial statements • critically assess financial viability and performance • contribute to strategic financial planning • oversee budgets and the efficient use of resources • oversee funding arrangements and accountability 	I
	Previous board experience	The board should collectively comprise directors who have meaningful and relevant previous experience at board level and/or who have completed formal training in directorship/governance.	C
	Strategy	Ability to think strategically and identify and critically assess strategic opportunities and threats and develop effective strategies in the context of the strategic objectives of NMHCO.	C
	Conflicts of interest	It is important that directors have no actual or potential conflicts of interest or other affiliations such as would make their appointment inappropriate or hinder their effective contribution to the board.	C
Diversity The non-skills based criteria to enhance the governance performance of the Board	Gender Diversity	Relatively equal gender representation should be sought for the board to reflect gender diversity in the Australian population.	M
	Geographic and cultural diversity	Where possible, cultural diversity on the board should be reflective of the cultural diversity in the consumer community, for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island representation, LGBTI and people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.	C

Skill genre	Skill	Description	[C] collective [I] individual [M] majority
	Generational	Where possible, a generational diversity should be sought to for the board to reflect the various ages at which a person may experience a lack of mental wellness and to ensure that the board has an ability to connect with and communicate to various persons irrespective of age.	C

Legend:

[C] collective means that the board as a whole can demonstrate the skill or expertise described

[I] individual means that the skill or expertise described must be present in all individual board members

[M] majority means that the nominated skill or expertise described must be present in a majority of the board (i.e. half or more)