

Association Executive Services

Association Excellence Award Questions

Governance

Associations that demonstrate business excellence need to get their governance right in the first place. This is not about compliance but more importantly, a board that has diversity of skills and work in a harmonious manner. In describing excellence in your association consider:

- What induction policies and process do you have in place for board members?
- How effective are your board meetings – are they outcomes driven?
- How have you implemented a succession planning strategy in your association?

Strategic Planning

A strategic plan is essential for all associations not only for the board but as a tool to communicate the direction of the organisation to staff, members, community, and stakeholders. A strategic plan used by an association should be a working document with the strategies reviewed on a regular basis.

- Have you reviewed your vision and mission statements in the last three years?
- Do you refer to your strategic plan in all your Board meetings?
- How have you introduced KPIs for your staff (paid and volunteer) and how do you measure performance?
- How have you created your goals and strategy looking ahead for the next 12 months?

Leadership

Associations need strong leadership to ensure their organisation can adapt to changing environments such as COVID or membership needs.

- What professional development opportunities have you introduced to your organisation over the last 36 months?
- What performance measures do you/your CEO use to measure their performance along with the board?

Management Systems

Associations not only must be changing to meet the needs and expectations of their members/ stakeholders – they must have robust documented systems and processes in place to ensure they are able to deliver their services in the most efficient manner.

- How have you developed a culture of continuous improvement in your association?
- How are your processes and systems documented - are all systems end focused on ensuring the quality of service to members, clients or stakeholders?

People

Successful associations are managed by professional staff who have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are supported by strong leaders. In this section consider the following:

- What recognition rewards programs do you have to acknowledge outstanding performance and care in your association? Provide evidence.

- How do you support diversity and equality within your association?
- Do you provide regular review meetings with your paid employees/board and volunteer job descriptions?

Volunteers & Committees

Many associations rely on volunteers for certain operational elements of the business where paid staff are either not available or have limited staff numbers to complete the work needed such as events, customer service, committee members.

- Are roles and responsibilities of volunteers and board/committee members clearly communicated to new and existing staff? Provide evidence.
- Are you reviewing the policies and procedures when engaging and on-boarding volunteers?
- What reward and recognition process do you have in place for those who work as volunteers in your association?

Financial Performance

The financial performance of all not-for-profit organisations should be constantly monitored at all levels of the organisation. The focus on financial sustainability and understanding that the term not-for-profit does not mean associations should refrain from making profit, should encourage associations to invest in the development of their organisation and improve the delivery of services to members.

- What financial reports do you use to measure the performance of your association?
- How do you use financial reports to ensure the Board and staff can make the right financial decisions?
- Does your organisation regularly review all your products and services to ensure they are generating surplus or are at break-even?

Risk Management

Association Leaders are constantly being made aware of the potential risks to their organisation. Here are some key questions you may wish to respond to in your submission:

- Do you have policies and procedures that reduce any potential risk to the association? These may include policies for engaging suppliers, social media, IP and media policies.
- Are these policies understood by those in your association?
- Is there a risk committee formed to assess all potential risks to the association?

Members/clients/community

Most associations exist for the purposes of delivering services to their members. However other associations may have small member numbers, but their focus could be on delivering services to clients or members of the community. Overall members are the lifeblood of the association.

- What processes do you have in place to grow your membership?
- How do you determine the membership value proposition?
- How are you onboarding new members?
- What engagement strategy do you have with all members?

- How do you measure the effectiveness of your services to members?

Information Technology

Over the last 20 years, advancement in information technology has enabled Association leaders to communicate and engage with members with speed and efficiency. Websites and Association Management systems are becoming more cost effective and easier to use.

- What technology are you using to communicate with your members?
- How do you know your association management platform is working well for your organisation?
- What policies and procedures do you have in place to prevent cyber-attacks?