

# Sample charter of best practice for women in decision making

## Attachment 2

### 1. Principles

To improve the representation of women in decision making, organisations should:

- a) Embrace an inclusive organisational culture which values and protects women's diversity, including:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women;
  - women with a disability;
  - rural and isolated women;
  - women from non-English speaking backgrounds;
  - women in transition and other special groups.
- b) Formally acknowledge and affirm the value of women in decision making and use inclusive practices that value difference.
- c) Set realistic and measurable goals to monitor board performance in a context of the organisation's vision.
- d) Recognise that organisational effectiveness and client services will be enhanced by balanced representation at decision making levels.
- e) Identify generalist and specialist skills and expertise required to achieve a skills balance.
- f) Adopt policies for inclusive selection or recruitment processes for the representation of women throughout the organisation, including:
  - compilation of job descriptions or duty statements that define roles and responsibilities;
  - provision of orientation/induction and development activities to consolidate skills, knowledge and expertise, including in-service training to all members on women's issues;
  - adoption of meeting procedures that encourage the participation of all members.
- g) Ensure that members have up-to-date and comprehensive information.
- h) Use processes to affirm and reinforce rather than those that may alienate.

### 2. Processes

#### 2.1 Recruitment and selection

Processes for the recruitment and selection of members should:

- a) Establish clear and documented recruitment criteria and selection processes, and make these available to prospective applicants.
- b) Ensure gender balance in all selection and recruitment processes.
- c) Identify and publicise the skills and knowledge mix required.
- d) Recognise competencies and prior skills derived from other work and community experience.
- e) Liaise and network with relevant women's groups.
- f) Use women role models in the process of seeking women candidates.
- g) Recognise that formal and informal factors influence the filling of positions.

## 2.2 Representing women's interests

To assist all members to represent women's interests organisations should:

- a) Maintain contact with women's organisations and networks.
- b) Nominate mentors for women.
- c) Ensure that training is relevant, accessible and suitable for all women.
- d) Promote women as role models and decision makers.
- e) Identify and eliminate stereotypical and outmoded assumptions and attitudes about women's roles.

## 2.3 Creating support structures

Support for women to carry out their roles and responsibilities could include:

- a) Provision of professional advice and training to support the roles and responsibilities, and policy and advisory functions of members in relation to:
  - expectations;
  - policies, procedures and protocol—including meeting procedures and standing orders;
  - compliance;
  - public speaking skills.
- b) Maintaining contact with networks representing women's interests.
- c) Setting meeting dates and times that take account of the personal and professional responsibilities of members.
- d) Reimbursement for all expenses incurred, including child care and travel.
- e) Adherence to meeting times via timely and comprehensive agendas and firm chairing.
- f) Creation of a culture that supports the formal raising of concerns as agenda items.

## 2.4 Professional development

Professional development for members makes sound business sense, develops expertise and enhances quality. Activities could include:

- a) Programs which focus on a skills mix/balance that is directly relevant to the needs of the organisation. For example:

- chairing of meetings;
- leadership;
- consultative decision making;
- networking;
- mentoring;
- negotiation and consultation;
- lobbying.

- b) Seminars on technology and communications.
- c) Forums on vocational education and training, business/industry and community issues.
- d) Note: The voluntary status of members and geographical location should be a consideration when planning professional development activities.

## 3. Moving forward

Establishing a clear and concise plan of action to improve the representation of women could include:

- a) Endorsing the Charter of Best Practice.
- b) Setting realistic performance goals and monitoring and reviewing performance regularly with a view to adopting different strategies if necessary.
- c) Seeking support (speakers, functions and awards) from community partners.
- d) Tapping the expertise of organisations that have a record of 'best practice'.
- e) Indicating the availability of all members to speak to community groups.
- f) Using 'observer' status as a means of introducing women to decision making forums.
- g) Using the media to promote women as decision makers/role models.
- h) Expanding networks to tap the expertise of wider groups of women.

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