

IDENTIFYING EXISTING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS:

Developing the right mix of skills and expertise on a board or committee is an essential factor in determining the effectiveness of that entity. Consideration of the mix of skills and expertise, as well as the personal qualities of existing board or committee members can assist with succession planning and ensure that the board or committee is equipped to meet both the current and future challenges of the overarching organisation.

A 'Skills Matrix' is a useful means of identifying the skills, competencies and expertise required by a board or committee to fulfil its role. It can also be used to identify gaps in skills that may occur when there is a change in the composition of the board or committee or when there is a change in strategic direction.

While the selection and appointment of board members to public sector entities is usually the responsibility of the relevant Minister(s), a board or committee evaluation enables identification of particular skills that will increase the effectiveness of the entity and provide an opportunity for the board or committee to advise the relevant minister(s) on renewal and succession planning.

Creating a 'Skills Matrix'

There are a number of approaches that can be employed to create a skills matrix; the following methods have been provided as a guide:

- The chair may review the competencies and experience of each member in accordance with any governing legislation, and make an initial assessment of the existing skills for review by the board or committee.
- Each board or committee member may be supplied with a questionnaire asking them to self-assess and identify their competencies, skills and experience.
- The nomination committee or responsible administrative unit may review and assess the competencies and skills of each board or committee member, either following completion of a questionnaire or by some other method. The nomination committee could then be charged with ongoing oversight of the process of board composition and renewal in consultation with the chairperson of the board or committee as required.
- The board or committee as a whole may review and assess the competencies of members, either following completion of a questionnaire by each member or as part of an overall collaborative approach to assessing skills.

What is the right skills mix?

Achieving the right skills mix for a particular board or committee will depend upon the specific context and circumstances of each board or committee. In general however, boards or committees should consist of members with varied skills, attributes and expertise. In some cases, specific skills, expertise or qualification criteria will be mandated by the entity's Terms of Reference or constituting legislation.

Key skills or areas of expertise that can be considered include:

- Executive and non-executive experience
- Industry or sector specific knowledge
- Leadership
- Governance
- Strategic Thinking
- Desired behavioural competencies
- Subject matter expertise
 - Risk management
 - Legal
 - Accounting
 - Capital management
 - Community relations
 - Information Technology
 - Public Policy and Government Relations
 - Environment and Sustainability

Whilst far from exhaustive, this list provides an overview of the types of skills each board or committee should consider when determining their desired composition. To develop a deeper understanding of member's skills, a board may also decide to apply a weighting system to the experience, knowledge or expertise of key members. This may take the form of a 'High,' 'Medium,' or, 'Low' rating to assess relevant skill or experience gaps.