

# How to recruit the right trustee

Trustees are important in building the skills, knowledge and expertise of any community organisation or charity. Trustees are volunteers, but can have a deeper or wider range of skills and experience, often gained in professional or public and private sector environments. However, recruiting the right trustee can be time consuming and is by its very nature a competitive business.

There are over 180,000 registered charities within the UK, most of who are seeking new trustees at some point in time.

This guide will provide you with information which may help in your search for the right trustee, a person with the suitable personal and organisational characteristics to bring fresh energy, expertise and knowledge to your board.

## Diversity on your board?

Diverse boards are much more accountable in the public eye, but also increase public confidence in what your organisation is and does. A diverse board ensures that your organisation has a wide variety of different skills and abilities, characteristics which can help in overcoming development challenges or the building of strength and resilience.

- Analyse the skills and experience you need.
- Do you need specific skills in certain disciplines?
- Is this a short or long term trustee position?
- Do you wish to recruit from your local community or beyond its boundaries?
- Do you need to modify the ethnic and cultural mix of your board?
- What commitment do you need from your trustees?

## Are you ready to recruit?

Before you recruit, some basic thought needs to be given to:

- the organisational Governing Document – this should identify who is eligible to be a trustee and how they should be recruited. Support Cambridgeshire can assist in examining your Governing Document with support and advice. Simply contact [info@supportcambridgeshire.org.uk](mailto:info@supportcambridgeshire.org.uk).
- the role descriptor – make sure you prepare a detailed role profile based upon skills, knowledge and accountabilities. Examine role descriptors from other organisations. These are a source of information and expertise.
- trustees may in some cases be required to adhere or pass certain protocols and regulations. Make sure you are aware of these before you recruit.
- the willingness or otherwise to involve new and different people with differing ideas and perspectives.
- focus on your organizational USP (Unique Selling Proposition). This will help to attract the right trustee with the right blend of skills and experience.
- tell your organizational story – this will motivate potential trustees to join the cause.

## Planning the process

Appointing new trustees can take several weeks, depending upon their availability. Always devise a schedule plan focusing on induction, training, personal development and organizational insight. The more the trustee knows about the organisation, the more able they are to make early and important strategic decisions based upon knowledge and expertise.

## Attracting new trustees

Be sure to advertise the role in the right place. If you are looking for a trustee with financial planning or business skills, consider the business or corporate press, rather than local community magazines or papers. If you want a local trustee who lives in the community, consider local avenues for advertising, including shops, community centres or church halls.

- Always gear your recruitment method to the type of skills and experience you require.
- Highlight the benefits of becoming a trustee.
- Prepare some organizational literature about the organization and the role.
- Be available to answer any questions on the role or the organization.
- Potential trustees may wish to meet – make sure you afford them the time to ask questions about the organisation, their role and their responsibilities.

## Choosing your ideal trustee

- Have a very clear procedure in interviewing and appointing your trustee.
- Ensure that you have checked the eligibility of your new trustee, and where relevant, undertake the appropriate DBS check.
- Ensure that the trustee has signed a relevant declaration that they are willing and able to serve.
- Inform the new trustee of relevant policies, procedures and Governing Documents. Ensure they have copies at their disposal.
- Plan the induction process. This is the first time your new trustee will experience how your board works. A well planned welcome process can help a new trustee feel supported.

## What next?

Recruiting a trustee is one component aspect of the development of a board.

- Continually evaluate the skills mix of your board, and its ethnic and cultural balance.
- Understand and measure the skills you need, and think about how to obtain them.
- Work with your board members in developing new trustees.
- Give your trustees time and space to understand their role.