



Board member Handbook

A helpful guide for board members on their governance journey.



REGIONAL
VICTORIANS
OF COLOUR

Acknowledgment of Country

Regional Victorians of Colour acknowledge that we live and work on the stolen lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung, Djab Wurrung and Jardwadjali peoples. We acknowledge Traditional Custodians across the continent and their continuing connection to the land, sea and community. We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. This was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Welcome to the Board!

Who we are

We are a collective of people of colour living in regional Victoria who are building stronger communities and having fun while doing it!

Our vision is that people of colour belong, are valued and can contribute to regional communities. Through our initiatives, we advocate for inclusion and social cohesion, centring the aspirations of newly arrived communities in regional and rural Victoria.

At the core of our work is self-determination, advocacy and placemaking: the shaping of meaningful grassroots communities where newly arrived community members can gather, celebrate, and fully express their identities.

In Bendigo, [The Old Church on the Hill](#) is home to Regional Victorians of Colour.

How we govern

At RVOC we do things a bit differently. We're not big fans of traditional modes of leadership or power. We believe in giving everyone a go and working together to achieve great things. We apply this thinking to both the work we do in the community and how we run our organisation.

As an organisation made up entirely of people of colour, we have set out to ensure that we are always self-governed by people of colour. You don't have to be an expert in governance to join our Board. Whilst many not-for-profits (NFPs) look for senior-level professionals to join their boards, RVOC is more interested in people with lived experience – this means, first and foremost, we want to work with people who share our values and know what it means to be a person of colour living in regional Victoria.

Given we are a grassroots community organisation, we also want to make sure that those making decisions about the community, understand the community. This is why all of our board members are community members themselves. Unlike many other organisations, we encourage our board members to get involved in RVOC events and activities as much as possible. So as a board member you can expect plenty of mentorship, professional development and ongoing support... even after you finish in your role!

Our purpose

RVOC's purpose is to promote respect, tolerance and social inclusion of people of colour in regional Victoria by:

- Undertaking initiatives that create opportunities for cross-cultural connection between people from different cultural and religious backgrounds
- Undertaking initiatives that centre the aspirations of newly arrived communities

- Supporting communities, government and other organisations to take actions that reduce racism and promote equality.

As a Board, our role is to provide leadership and direction to the organisation, making sure RVOOC is successful, accountable and fulfilling its purpose.

Our values

RVOOC's values are at the heart of everything we do. They guide our decisions and actions and highlight what we stand for:

Self-determination

Regional and rural people of colour are the narrators of our own stories, on our own terms. Our participation in decision making regarding our communities' happiness, health and wellbeing is essential. We advocate for greater inclusion of people of colour in leadership and decision making positions across all sectors of society.

Inclusion

Inclusion is key to achieving our purpose. Everyone, regardless of their background, identity, or differences, should be respected, have their perspectives considered, and be able to contribute fully to society. Through our initiatives, we practice inclusion and support others to do the same.

Connection

Connection is key to building strong, inclusive, welcoming communities. We recognise connection to ourselves, each other, each other's cultures, histories, communities, land and environments as important to our wellbeing. We believe in the strength of cross-cultural connections and working together to learn, grow, and make positive change.

Celebration

Multicultural communities are vibrant and strong. We recognise and celebrate what it means to be regional and rural people of colour, and the intergenerational strengths and capacities of newly arrived communities.

Who's on the Board

The Board is a mix of 'Office Bearers' and general board members. The Office Bearers are the Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary. These people have specific jobs that they're responsible for in addition to general board member duties.

Generally speaking:

- The Chairperson manages and chairs meetings and represents RVOOC at public events
- The Treasurer oversees the financial affairs of the organisation and delivers Financial reports and updates
- The Secretary takes care of administrative tasks, like meeting minutes and filing important documents, and helps to improve governance processes

At any given time, we also have up to 5 general board members. One of these board members will always be the Director of Operations – Community Engagement. This is because we want our board to be informed about what is happening in the community, whilst making decision that impact the community. The Director of Operations – Community Engagement brings this awareness and knowledge to our board.

Regardless of your role, all board members are responsible for representing RVOC at various events and forums, participating in board meetings and subcommittees, sharing feedback on reports, and collective decision making with other board members.

While we have a preference for board members to live regionally, we know that this might not always be the case. If you decide to move to a metro area, don't worry, it won't affect your position on the board... but do keep us in the loop so that we can make sure we maintain strong representation of regionally-based members too!

Meetings

Our board gathers every three months for quarterly meetings. Sometimes you'll be required to attend an extra meeting or two throughout the year, depending on the needs of the organisation. We have a mix of online and in-person meetings but like to gather in person at least twice a year. This gives us a chance to properly catch up and nurture our connection to regional places, community and each other.

It's really important that all board members do their best to attend the majority of quarterly meetings (at least 3 out of 4), as this is when we make important decisions about the direction of the organisation. As a board member, your contribution to meetings and decision-making is important.

Membership terms

All board members (except the Director of Operations – Community Engagement) are elected to the Board for a minimum of 3 years with the option to extend to a maximum of 9 years.

Three years is the minimum term because it gives board members enough time to learn about the organisation, develop governance skills and make a difference. While we hope that all board members will be with us for at least 3 years, we understand that things change and life can blow you in different directions – if that's the case, you can resign from your position at any time by writing to the Secretary. Before finishing up in your role, we appreciate your support with recruiting and onboarding someone new to fill your position.

Don't forget – it's your responsibility to disclose any conflicts of interest with your employers. As an organisation that stands up for people of colour, RVOC openly challenges systems that disempower. As a board member, it's important that you share RVOC's vision and purpose, and proudly represent the organisation in public.

A good place to start

If you're feeling a little bit confused about your role as a board member and not quite sure where to start, don't worry! Remember that you are here for a reason - we value your experience, perspectives and what you bring to the team. As a small grassroots organisation,

we're also pretty new to this. We're excited to grow together, learn from each other, and will always provide mentorship and support along the way.

Below is a basic list of things that are expected of you as a board member, and will help you get started in your role:

- Familiarise yourself with RVOC's vision and values
- Have a good read of the website and scroll through and 'like' our Facebook page
- Read over RVOC's Rules (also known as our Constitution) – *it's important that all board members understand and agree to these Rules*
- Go through the list of 'important questions' below, and have a chat to a fellow board member about the answers
- Go through the 'useful language' guide below and familiarise yourself with key terms
- Learn more about governance standards in Australia by researching [ACNC Governance Standards](#) and [AICD Not-for-profit Governance Principles](#)

Still unsure?

Sometimes it might feel like you're not doing much. That's because the Board's workload ebbs and flows, meaning sometimes it will be busy and sometimes it will be quiet. If you feel like you have the capacity and want to contribute more, speak to the Director of Operations – Community Engagement and find out ways you can be more involved in the organisation.

Another great way to get more involved is put your hand up to complete action items at the end of board meetings. In some cases, there may also be subcommittees where we could really use the extra help!

In between meetings where there is more down-time, you can support the organisation by researching funding opportunities, building connections with local organisations, and highlighting community achievements and challenges with the Board and Director of Operations – Community Engagement.

Important questions

While you don't need to be an expert in governance to be on our board, it's important that you approach your position with a duty of care. Being on any board comes with specific legal and financial obligations and RVOC is no different. Below you will find some questions that first-time board members should be asking to help grasp their roles and responsibilities better:

- What is the financial situation of the organisation?
- What are the key issues or challenges that the organisation faces?
- When should I practice confidentially?
- When should I make disclosures?
- Where can I find the organisation's policies and Rules?
- What if I don't understand something in the Rules or on the financial report?
- What if something looks strange to me in the Rules or on the financial report?
- What should I do if I suspect or am aware of something unethical happening among staff or board members?

- What are my legal responsibilities as a board member?
- What will happen if I don't act responsibly or in line with RVOC's Rules?
- Who can I go to if I need to debrief or ask for help?

Useful language

While we're not big fans of complex language and industry buzz words, below are some governance terms that you might hear during your time on the Board:

Term	Meaning
Action	Another word for 'do'. E.g. when dealing with a problem, the Board needs to take action (i.e. do something about it)
Action items	Like 'to-do' tasks that need to happen. Usually action items are assigned to certain people to get done within a set time
Agenda	A plan for what's going to happen in a meeting (shared before the meeting starts)
Annual general meeting (AGM)	A one-a-year gathering for members and those who are stakeholders of the organisation
Board meeting	Regular get-togethers for board members
Committee	Just another word for 'the Board'
Committee member	Yep, that's the same as a 'board member'
Compliance	Playing by the rules, either the law or the organisation's Rules/expectations
Conflict of interest	When someone's personal interests (for example, personal and professional relationships, business partnerships, current employer) could potentially affect their ability to make the best choices for an organisation
Constitution	A set of Rules that explain how the organisation runs, like a set of directions
Liability	Being legally responsible for something
Meeting minutes	Step-by-step notes of what happened during a meeting and record of who was there. Minutes are a legal document – this is why everyone at a board meeting has to agree to what is represented in them.
Motion	Usually a topic or idea brought up in a meeting that needs action. If a motion gets agreed upon, it's called a resolution
Move	When someone brings up a motion for action in a meeting
Not-for-profit (NFP)	An organisation that's all about helping people and the community, not just making money
Proxy	When someone gets the power to act for someone else (e.g. if a board member can't attend a meeting, they will choose a proxy to vote for them)
Resolution	The decision that comes from a motion, like the outcome
Second	In order to show support for a motion, another person has to agree with it (second it) before it's decided upon

Get in touch

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