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| Recruitment toolkit |
| Class B cemetery trusts |
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# Introduction

Class B cemetery trust member appointments are Victorian Government board appointments made in accordance with the *Appointment and remuneration guidelines* issued by the Department of Premier and Cabinet. This document requires appointments to Victorian Government entities to reflect the diversity of the Victorian community as far as practicable.

In early 2022, the Department of Premier and Cabinet published the *Diversity on Victorian Government board guidelines* to provide advice to government departments about diversity and inclusion in recruitment and appointment processes. This document is a companion document to the *Appointment and remuneration guidelines*. Both documents are available on the [Department of Premier and Cabinet website](https://www.vic.gov.au/guidelines-appointment-remuneration) <https://www.vic.gov.au/guidelines-appointment-remuneration>.

As Class B cemetery trusts lead the trust member recruitment process, the Department of Health has developed a recruitment toolkit to assist trusts and provide information about diversity and how to embed diversity considerations into recruitment processes.

The toolkit contains practical advice to support trusts and ensure the trust member appointment process meets government guidelines.

# Diversity on boards

## What is diversity?

Diversity is the range of human differences including, but not limited to, age, gender (including gender diversity and non-binary), location, Aboriginality, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, faith, culture and disability status.

People with different lived experiences have diverse skills, expertise and perspectives. In Victoria:

* around 20 per cent of Victorians identify as a person with disability
* over half of Victoria’s population are women
* young people aged 12 to 25 make up approximately 18 per cent of the Victorian population
* nearly 50 per cent of Victorians were born overseas or had at least one parent born overseas
* 26 per cent of households speak a language other than English at home.[[1]](#footnote-1)

## Why is diversity on boards important?

Diversity of skills and expertise, and the perspectives and lived experiences of people from different backgrounds, contribute to good governance. It is important for government boards to reflect the diversity of the communities they serve because government boards are responsible for making decisions in the best interests of their communities.

Diverse boards make better decisions because the decisions are made by board members with a wide range of skills, expertise, perspectives and lived experiences. Diverse boards also have more credibility within their communities, which encourages community engagement and participation, and, in turn, supports greater community satisfaction.

## Recruitment and diversity

An open and fair recruitment process provides the opportunity to increase diversity on boards.

Valuing diverse perspectives and lived experience can remove barriers to taking part in the recruitment process. Barriers to participation include prejudice and discrimination, physical barriers, unconscious bias and non-inclusive organisational cultures.

Class B cemetery trusts are responsible for managing the recruitment process and addressing barriers to participation. The recruitment toolkit provides advice to support trusts to embed diversity considerations in each step of the recruitment process.

# Unconscious bias in recruitment

## What is unconscious bias?

Unconscious bias refers to the unsupported stereotypes, assumptions, beliefs and attitudes we hold outside our conscious awareness and control about different groups of people.

We tend to organise our social environments by categorising people and making quick judgements without being aware we are doing so. Everyone holds unconscious biases.

One of the most well known examples of unconscious bias is a study of the audition process for symphony orchestras in America. In 1970, the top five orchestras in America comprised fewer than 5 per cent women. In the 1970s and 1980s orchestras began to hold blind auditions where candidates were concealed behind a screen to play for a jury that could not see them. The study found that blind auditions made it 50 per cent more likely that a woman would advance to the finals and increased the proportion of women in symphony orchestras.[[2]](#footnote-2)

## Unconscious bias in the recruitment process

Unconscious bias can have a significant impact on the recruitment process. Acknowledging unconscious bias is the first step towards identifying and challenging our assumptions.

Trust members should take the time to reflect honestly on their own biases and how they may influence their decision making. Evaluating and challenging assumptions can help address bias in recruitment and result in a fairer process.

Cemetery trusts are encouraged to consider formal training about diversity, inclusion and unconscious bias. There are many training providers that run programs on these topics. Cemetery trusts may wish to apply for a grant through the Cemetery Grants Program to fund training sessions.

More information about the Cemetery Grants Program is available on the [department's website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/cemetery-grants) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/cemetery-grants>.

## The merit myth

It is sometimes suggested that only the ‘merit’ of an applicant is relevant to the recruitment process and that diversity should not be taken into consideration. This view assumes there is only one way to do a job, which in turn implies there is only one type of person who can do that job.

This concept is referred to as the merit myth. It appears to be a fair and unbiased approach to recruitment, when in fact it perpetuates the status quo, suppresses innovation and excludes participation from the broader community. In effect, the merit myth is rooted in unconscious bias.

# Cultural change in organisations

## What is organisational culture?

An organisation’s culture is the beliefs and behaviours that influence how members within the organisation act. Culture is intangible, and it is the shared perception of ‘how things are done’. The perception may or may not vary from the documented policies, processes or values of the organisation.

Organisational culture encompasses several elements that can affect each other such as values, goals, processes, roles, practices, communications and attitudes. Managing an organisation’s culture can be difficult, especially where there is a need for cultural change.

Each cemetery trust is responsible for envisioning, implementing and managing the trust’s culture.

## Organisational culture and diversity

Organisational culture can have a significant impact on the diversity of an organisation. It is important to understand this link because it will help cemetery trusts identify cultural barriers to diversity. Organisational cultures that support diversity value and respect people with different experiences and perspectives, acknowledge unconscious bias and are open to change.

## What is cultural change?

Cultural change is changing an organisation’s principles in order to change the environment of the organisation.

Cultural change requires careful consideration of an organisation’s strategy, planning, approach and values. The cultural change process typically includes the following steps:

1. Identify areas for improvement or areas of concern
2. Identify areas that are working well that could be improved on
3. Identify any gaps that haven’t been considered to date
4. Envision a new culture for the organisation
5. Set goals for cultural change
6. Evaluate the culture as it changes

This process must involve collaboration and clear communication.

## Do we need cultural change?

Cemetery trusts may recognise a need for cultural change for a number of reasons including:

* lack of diversity on the trust’s board
* changing needs of the local community – for example, cultural and faith groups
* changes in leadership
* lack of engagement among trust members
* poor attitudes among trust members
* resistance to modernising business practices
* creating a safe cultural environment for cemetery trust members.

## Why is cultural change important?

The population, environment, economy and technology are changing every day. Cemetery trusts that do not embrace change can become out of touch with their communities’ needs. This will ultimately have an impact on their ability to deliver services and meet statutory obligations.

Change gives trust members the opportunity to develop new skills and engage all sections of the community.

## Resistance to change

Some trust members may not agree with or welcome proposed changes to the trust’s culture due to a lack of time, lack of ownership or a belief that change is unnecessary.

Some trust members may find it difficult to invest time in making cultural changes because they are balancing their trust member responsibilities with other personal and professional responsibilities and time pressures.

Some trust members may feel they are not responsible for, or cannot, influence changes in the trust’s culture. Newly appointed trust members in particular may experience this.

Some trust members may be used to the ways things have always been done and not see a need for change. It is possible that members who have been on the trust for many years may see proposed changes as a criticism of the way the trust has operated in the past.

Some trust members may feel unsupported to implement the proposed changes and may not have confidence in their ability to adapt to new processes.

## Influencing successful cultural change

Communication and collaboration are key to influencing successful cultural change. It is important for trusts to have open and honest conversations about trust culture and give all trust members the opportunity to share their views.

It is also important that trust members understand the change process and how cultural change will benefit the trust and local community. Trusts should develop a collective vision for cultural change and clear expectations. Managing expectations and accepting feedback will strengthen engagement in the process and support successful cultural change.

## Organisational culture worksheet

  
A worksheet is provided at **Appendix A** to help trust members prepare for discussions about cultural change.

# Position descriptions

A position description outlines the roles and responsibilities of a position and relevant skills and experience needed to perform effectively in that position.

Cemetery trusts should develop a position description for the role of trust member tailored specifically to their trust.

The position description can be referred to by current trust members and be made available during the recruitment process. This will ensure applicants have a clear understanding of the role they are applying for and realistic expectations for what the position will entail.

## Internet outlinePosition description templates

Position description templates for trust members, chairpersons and secretaries are available on the [department’s website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/recruitment-and-advertising) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/recruitment-and-advertising>. They can be used as a starting point for developing a position description tailored specifically to your trust.

## Developing a position description

Trusts should review the position description templates and add specific information about their trust including details about the time commitment of the role and support provided.

Additional information may include:

* the frequency and duration of trust meetings
* trust meeting locations, facilities and accessibility
* options for taking part in trust meetings remotely – for example, via telephone or online meeting platforms
* trust events such as open days, tours, working bees and school visits
* the likely time commitment outside of trust meetings
* induction processes
* available training, including free training provided by the department
* trust contact details.

If distributing a position description via email or making the document available online, it must be available in an accessible Microsoft Word format.[[3]](#footnote-3)

## Inclusive language

When developing a position description, trusts should ensure the document uses inclusive language and does not deter community members with diverse skills, experience and perspectives from applying.

Tips for using inclusive language:

* Use plain English.
* Avoid jargon and acronyms.
* Use a logical structure and clear headings.
* Avoid gendered language – for example, ‘groundsman’ (preferred: groundskeeper) or ‘chairman’ (preferred: chairperson).
* Avoid ‘nice to haves’ when specifying relevant skills and experience for the position.
* Include information about accessibility, support and adjustments available to trust members.

# Skills matrix

Trust chairpersons are required to maintain a skills matrix to identify the mix of skills, experience and perspectives on the trust in accordance with the Premier’s Circular No. 2015/02 on Good Board Governance. Class B cemetery trusts should refer to their skills matrix when planning a recruitment process to identify potential skill gaps.

Trusts should keep a copy of the skills matrix in its records and ensure it is updated to reflect changes in trust membership.

## Categories

A skills matrix may cover a range of categories including:

* Local community member
* Governance experience
* Community board/committee experience
* Sector knowledge
* Lived experience
* Culturally or linguistically diverse
* Knowledge of cultural/faith groups
* Clerical/administration skills
* Groundskeeping skills
* Facility management skills
* Financial management skills
* Information technology skills
* Stakeholder engagement skills
* Planning and strategy skills

## Internet outlineSkills matrix template

A skills matrix template is available on the [department’s website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/recruitment-and-advertising) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/recruitment-and-advertising>.

The chairperson completes the template by listing all current trust members and putting a tick in the corresponding box under each relevant category. Please note the categories included in the template are for illustrative purposes only and can be altered to meet the trust’s needs.

# Selection criteria

Class B trusts are responsible for setting selection criteria for each vacancy to ensure the trust has an appropriate mix of skills, experience and diversity of perspectives. The trust should refer to its skills matrix in the first instance to identify potential skill gaps. Trusts may also wish to consider professional qualifications and practical skills that could benefit the trust.

Selection criteria must be clearly communicated to prospective applicants.

Trusts should keep records of the decision making process for setting selection criteria for a vacancy, including consideration of diversity and addressing barriers to participation.

## Diversity

When setting selection criteria, trusts should consider the diversity of the existing membership and whether it represents the communities it serves. Recruitment processes provide an opportunity for trusts to expand the diversity of perspectives and lived experience on the board.

Trusts also need to be mindful of potential barriers to participation linked to selection criteria. For example, if a trust includes information technology skills in the selection criteria for a vacancy, the trust may offer to provide screen readers, screen magnifiers and braille keyboards to remove barriers for people who are vision impaired.

## Sample selection criteria

Based on existing skill gaps, the trust should agree on a list of selection criteria relevant to vacant positions. The department recommends identifying a maximum of five criteria per selection process. A trust may choose criteria from the list below and/or develop its own criteria.

* Member of the local area who wants to make a contribution to the community
* Governance – experience on boards and committees
* Clerical/administrative – experience working in an administrative environment, record keeping, legal skills
* Customer service skills – experience in a customer focused environment
* Knowledge of different cultures/faiths
* Lived experience
* Financial management skills – accounting or bookkeeping, experience as a treasurer for a committee or board
* Qualified tradesperson – horticulture, landscaper, plumber, electrician, arborist, builder, engineer, conservation
* Groundskeeping experience – fencing, weed/pest control, using tractors, mowers, chainsaws
* Business management – experience managing a business, people, strategy, planning, budgets
* Information technology skills – experience with computers, the internet and social media
* Knowledge of the sector – experience working in cemeteries or the funeral industry
* Experience communicating with people who are grieving, stressed, confused by processes
* Marketing, advertising and/or media skills
* Experience working with government agencies, legislation, regulations
* Planning, strategy and policy making skills

# Advertising vacancies

Vacancies on Class B cemetery trusts, including those that arise due to resignation, death or expiry of a member’s term of appointment, should be publicly advertised. Advertising vacant trust positions is essential for an open and fair recruitment process.

## Department advertising

Class B cemetery trusts and individual members are notified approximately six months before terms of appointment are due to expire.

At this time, the department may arrange for advertisements to be published in the trust’s preferred publication. A list of the preferred publications for each Class B cemetery trust is available on the [department's website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/recruitment-and-advertising) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/recruitment-and-advertising>.

Advertisements arranged by the department include standard text about trust member appointments and contact details specific to the trust. All advertisements include a diversity statement advising of the Victorian Government’s commitment to ensuring government boards and committees reflect the rich diversity of the Victorian community.

## Trust advertising

Trusts may wish to arrange their own advertising in addition to the department’s advertising. This gives trusts the opportunity to advertise specific information about their trust including details about the time commitment of the role and the selection criteria for the recruitment process.

Trusts may wish to use trust funds for paid advertising or consider free advertising opportunities within their communities. Community notice boards are an ideal place to display trust advertisements. Notice boards are often located in public places – for example, shopping centres, libraries, town halls and local government offices. Trusts may also place advertisements in local newsletters or other community publications.

## Reaching a diverse audience

To reach a diverse audience, trusts can advertise through a range of channels in addition to traditional print media. More information is provided in the recruitment toolkit fact sheets about community networking, recruiting volunteers online and social media.

A list of advertising channels is provided in Appendix 2 of the [*Diversity on Victorian Government board guidelines*](https://www.vic.gov.au/diversity-victorian-government-board-guidelines) <https://www.vic.gov.au/diversity-victorian-government-board-guidelines>.

## Internet outlineAdvertisement template

An advertisement template is available on the [department’s website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/recruitment-and-advertising) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/recruitment-and-advertising>. The template can be altered to meet the trust’s needs, including adding extra information.

# Community networking

Cemetery trusts are essential to the communities they serve, and it is important for cemetery trusts to engage with their local communities. Community engagement enables cemetery trusts to understand the needs of their communities and to deliver services to meet those needs.

Community engagement also provides opportunities to build a cemetery trust’s profile within the community and to reach a diverse audience when recruiting trust members.

## Community groups

Cemetery trusts are encouraged to build connections with other local community groups. Examples of community groups include:

* historical societies
* genealogical societies
* local government programs
* Rotary, Probus
* University of the Third Age
* Country Women’s Association
* primary and secondary school committees
* sporting associations
* environment conservation groups
* Girl Guides and Scouts
* religious and cultural groups
* special interest groups.

Trusts may wish to invite community groups to cemetery trust events such as open days, tours and working bees. This will enable trusts to show community members what the trust does and encourage applications for appointment from different sections of the community.

Trusts can also seek out opportunities to build connections with community groups through proactive engagement. Trusts may wish to:

* volunteer to give presentations about the cemetery trust at community group meetings
* provide information about the cemetery trust to be included in community group newsletters and other communication materials
* identify common activities and goals with community groups and work together on projects – for example, documenting local history, school projects, protecting native vegetation, award badges for Girl Guides and Scouts
* connect to and communicate with community groups via social media.

## Community events

Community events – such as markets, fetes, open days, fundraisers, sporting events and festivals – provide valuable opportunities for cemetery trusts to engage with community members.

While some members of the community will have experience volunteering with a community group, others may not have had the opportunity to join a volunteer board before. This may be because they have been excluded from recruitment processes or they are unsure if they will be able to make a contribution.

Trusts are encouraged to attend community events to make connections with people with a diversity of skills and expertise, perspectives and lived experiences. By doing so, trusts can remove barriers to participation and encourage people from all sections of the community to apply for appointment to the trust.

## Key messages

Community networking gives trusts the opportunity to support the recruitment process by promoting the trust and providing information about why being a trust member is worthwhile and rewarding. Key messages may include the following:

* Relationship building
  + Trust members build social and community connections
* Professional development
  + Trust members gain new skills through experience and training
  + Skills include strategic thinking, leadership, communication, governance, problem solving, risk management, financial skills, stakeholder management and community engagement
  + The department provides free governance training for all trust members
  + Trust members develop governance skills that are transferrable to other government boards, including paid boards
* Community service
  + Trust members provide an essential service to the community
  + Trust members support community members who are going through a difficult period of grieving
* Personal development
  + Being a trust member builds social skills and self-esteem
  + Being a trust member gives an enhanced sense of purpose
* History and heritage
  + Trust members play an important role in preserving cemeteries and local history for future generations

Trusts are encouraged to add to this list by identifying key messages specific to the trust and the experiences of its members.

# Recruiting volunteers online

Online recruitment is a popular and effective recruitment method that reaches a wide audience. Cemetery trusts are encouraged to consider online recruitment as part of the trust member recruitment process.

The key online platform for recruiting volunteers is SEEK Volunteer. SEEK Volunteer has been developed for not-for-profit organisations and is free and easy to use.

## How does online recruitment work?

By registering with SEEK Volunteer, cemetery trusts can publish information about the trust and advertise trust member vacancies on the [SEEK Volunteer website](https://www.volunteer.com.au) <https://www.volunteer.com.au>. Trusts can then continue to manage and update this information as necessary.

Advertisements for trust member vacancies can be accessed by community members who use the SEEK Volunteer website to search for opportunities by location and keywords. Thousands of people visit the SEEK Volunteer website every week looking for volunteering opportunities.

SEEK Volunteer also works in partnership with Volunteering Australia, the national peak body for volunteering, to support the [GoVolunteer website](https://govolunteer.com.au) <https://govolunteer.com.au>. Advertisements published through SEEK Volunteer by trusts will automatically be linked with the GoVolunteer website, meaning the advertisements can be accessed by users of both websites.

If a community member is interested in a position advertised on the SEEK Volunteer or GoVolunteer website, they can apply to the trust directly through the website. Information about the applicant, including their contact details and interests, skills and qualifications, is then made available to the trust.

## Registering with SEEK Volunteer

Cemetery trusts can register by clicking the ‘Begin registration’ button on the [online registration webpage](https://admin.volunteer.com.au/register) <https://admin.volunteer.com.au/register>. Information about the trust will need to be entered into the registration form, including contact details, the trust’s ABN and a description of the trust.

If the trust does not have an ABN, it should follow the steps outlined in Topic 26. Financial management in the [*Manual for Victorian Class B cemetery trusts*](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/class-b-cemetery-trust-governance) to register for an ABN with the Australian Tax Office <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/class-b-cemetery-trust-governance>.

The trust should select one person to be the contact person and administrator of the trust’s SEEK Volunteer account – for example, the secretary or the chairperson. This person must have an email address and be responsible for actively monitoring the account. It is recommended that the trust’s central email address is used rather than a personal email address.

Note: Only one email address can be linked to the account.

SEEK Volunteer will then review the trust’s registration form and activate the account.

## Insurance

To register with SEEK Volunteer, an organisation must have public liability and personal accident insurance for volunteers.

All cemetery trusts have public liability and personal accident insurance for volunteers under the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA) Cemetery Trusts Insurance Program. More information is available on the [VMIA website](https://www.vmia.vic.gov.au/insurance/policies-and-cover/cemetery-trusts) <https://www.vmia.vic.gov.au/insurance/policies-and-cover/cemetery-trusts>.

## Support and resources

There is a range of support available to help trusts recruit volunteers online.

### Volunteering centres

Volunteering Australia leads a network of volunteering centres throughout Australia. Volunteering centres can provide advice to trusts about online recruitment and may be able to help with the registration and advertising process.

There are more than 25 volunteering centres across Victoria. Locations and contact details are available on the [GoVolunteer website](https://govolunteer.com.au/about-volunteering/volunteering-centres) <https://govolunteer.com.au/about-volunteering/volunteering-centres>.

### Volunteering resource hub

The [Volunteering resource hub website](https://volunteeringhub.org.au) <https://volunteeringhub.org.au> is an initiative of Volunteering Australia. It provides useful resources for effective volunteer management, including recruitment and selection.

# Social media

Social media provides cemetery trusts with an opportunity to develop an online profile and connect with the community through online platforms. Social media is a valuable tool that can help trusts engage with a wide audience.

Social media is internet-based technology that allows users to form virtual networks, communicate and share content. Popular social media platforms include [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com) <https://www.facebook.com>, [Twitter](https://twitter.com) <https://twitter.com>, [LinkedIn](https://au.linkedin.com) <https://au.linkedin.com> and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com) <https://www.instagram.com>.

## Developing an online profile

To use a social media platform the trust will need to create an account via the platform website and log in. Each website includes instructions on how to use the platform and information about its privacy and safety policies.

When creating a profile, trusts can include information about what the trust does and upload photos or videos of cemeteries. The trust can post information about the trust on its profile covering a range of topics including upcoming events, the history of the trust, significant memorials, trust projects and achievements, community consultation, policies, and trust member vacancies.

## Forming virtual networks

Once the trust has set up its online profile, it can connect with other users of the platform (including individuals and groups). The trust can use the search function on the platform to find and connect with other groups and organisations within the local community. To connect with other users on a platform you can ‘follow’ or ‘like’ their profile, send messages and respond to posts.

A useful function of social media platforms is the ability to re-post (or ‘share’) information across different accounts. This means that if your trust posts an expression of interest for trust member vacancies, other groups can re-post the information and it will reach broader groups of users.

## Security and privacy

When creating an account, trusts should carefully read the platform’s security and privacy policies. In the account settings, the trust will be able to set the parameters for the account, including making the trust’s profile open to all users or restricting access. The security and privacy settings adopted should be agreed by all trust members.

## Social media policy

Trusts must be aware that the online platform represents the trust as a whole and is not a place for individuals to express personal views or share private information.

Trusts are encouraged to develop a social media policy to outline the expectations of trust members when using social media and ensure use of social media platforms is professional and respectful.

A social media policy template is available on the [Institute of Community Directors Australia website](https://communitydirectors.com.au/policies/social-media-policy) <https://communitydirectors.com.au/policies/social-media-policy>. Trusts can edit this template to suit their needs.

# Interviews

The interview process provides trusts with an opportunity to assess applicants against the selection criteria that has been set by the trust. The interview process must be transparent, accessible and equitable.

All applicants – including existing trust members who are applying for reappointment – must be interviewed. Reappointment to the trust is not guaranteed, and all interested members of the community should be given the chance to become a trust member.

## Establishing an interview panel

If the trust has more than four appointed members, it is recommended that a small number of trust members form an interview panel that reports back to the trust on the process. While all trust members may wish to attend interviews, it can be confronting for an applicant to be faced with a large group in an interview setting. For this reason, the department recommends a maximum of four people on the interview panel.

Trusts should consider diversity when establishing the interview panel (including gender, ethnicity and other characteristics) and may wish to include an independent person (ideally, this would be a person from another sector who has no existing relationship with the trust) on the panel.

Note: An independent interview panel member can provide feedback on the interview outcomes to the trust but cannot participate in the trust’s decision-making process.

If possible, there should be a balance of men and women on the interview panel.

## Conducting interviews

Trusts should hold interviews at a time that suits the applicant and allows enough time for the applicant to prepare. Trusts must ask applicants about their access requirements and any support needed to ensure they have a fair and equitable opportunity to take part in the interview process.

Find an interview venue that is free from interruptions and without observers. It is important to ensure the applicant is comfortable and made to feel welcome. Interviews can also be conducted remotely via an online meeting platform – for example, Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Applicants should be advised that cemetery trust members are eligible to be reimbursed for reasonable expenses as approved by the trust. This may help address potential barriers to participation.

## Tips for a successful interview process

* Ask applicants if they need any supports or reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process – for example, a rest break during the interview, an interpreter or written materials in an accessible format.
* Give applicants at least five days’ notice of the date, time, venue and structure of the interview.
* Plan the interview structure, including preparing a list of questions and deciding who will ask questions and who will take notes (the interview questions and structure should be the same for all applicants). If a formal interview approach limits the ability of some applicants to fully take part, consider a less structured approach.
* If appropriate, consider providing a copy of the interview questions to applicants 24 hours before the interview to give applicants the opportunity to prepare.
* When the applicant arrives, introduce the members of the panel. Panel members may wish to introduce themselves using their preferred pronouns (for example, she/her, he/him, they/them) and invite interviewees to do the same if they feel comfortable to do so.
* Provide the applicant with a glass of water, pen and paper.
* Begin with a brief explanation of what the trust does and the roles and responsibilities of trust members.
* Ask questions in a clear voice and repeat questions if requested by the applicant. The applicant may also request to see the questions in writing to help them consider how to answer.
* Allow the applicant to ask questions of the interview panel during and at the conclusion of the formal questions.
* Confirm contact details for referees.
* Explain the next steps in the process and expected timeframes (it can take up to five months for an appointment to be finalised).
* Thank the applicant for taking the time to attend the interview.

## What to avoid for a successful interview process

* Don’t ask questions that could potentially be construed as discriminatory.
* Don’t assume the applicant cannot contribute as a trust member because they have disclosed a disability.
* Don’t ask leading questions – the applicant may think a particular response is expected and become stressed if they don’t have an immediate answer.
* Don’t interrupt the applicant – it can cut off a person’s train of thought and they may forget part of their answer.
* Don’t ask complex questions – they can be confusing and result in only part of the question being answered.
* Don’t ask trick questions – they can cause a loss of confidence.

## Sample interview questions

Interview questions should align with the selection criteria agreed by the trust at the beginning of the recruitment process. Questions should be behaviour-based and should only address matters that are relevant to the position of trust member.

When interviewing multiple applicants, the same set of interview questions must be used for all interviews conducted for that recruitment process. A trust may use a selection of questions from the list below and/or develop its own interview questions:

* Why are you interested in joining this cemetery trust? Are you able to meet the time commitment?
* What skills/experiences do you have that you think might benefit the trust?
* What types of community activities have you contributed to in the past?
* What does good customer service mean to you?
* Have you had any experience dealing with people who are highly emotional and/or stressed?
* Give an example of when you explained something difficult to someone. How did you handle the conversation?
* When you are faced with a problem, how do you go about solving it?
* What are some of your strengths?
* What are the characteristics of a successful team?
* What qualities do you have that make you an effective team player?
* Can you tell us about a time when you had to consider long-term consequences when making a decision?
* How would you describe your awareness of different cultures?
* Do you represent or have an understanding of groups in the community with particular cultural or religious needs related to cemetery services?
* Tell us about a time you had to consider someone's abilities or cultural perspective when communicating.
* What type of people do you work best with?
* How would you describe your communication style?
* Sometimes we come across people we don’t particularly like, but we still need to treat them professionally. Tell us how you would manage such a situation.

## Record keeping

Notes should be taken during interviews to record the applicant’s responses and following the interview to document the panel’s comments and assessment. As with all steps in the trust member selection process, records should be managed appropriately to protect the privacy of the applicant.

## What happens if the trust chooses not to endorse an application following the interview?

When interviews are finalised, it is the trust’s responsibility to decide whether to endorse an application for appointment.

If, following an applicant’s interview, the trust is sure it does not wish to endorse the application, the trust can remove the application from consideration and does not need to conduct referee checks. The trust is required to document the reasons for its decision and notify the unsuccessful applicant of these reasons in writing as soon as practicable.

When advising an unsuccessful applicant why their application has not been endorsed, trusts should use clear and professional language and frame the response around the selection criteria (for example, not all selection criteria were met), skills (for example, skills do not fill existing skill gaps or are overrepresented on the trust), diversity (for example, the trust is seeking to broaden the diversity of perspectives and lived experience on the board) and long-term conflicts of interest (see below).

If a trust is unsure whether an applicant is right for the position, it should conduct referee checks to confirm and verify information gathered during the interview and then reconsider if it wishes to endorse the application.

### Long-term conflicts that negatively impact the trust

In some cases, a conflict of interest may have a negative impact on the trust despite efforts to manage the conflict. Negative impacts may include ongoing disruptions to trust operations and the inability of the trust to realise plans and strategies in place to ensure it can meet community needs into the future.

If a trust member with a conflict of interest that has negatively impacted the trust seeks reappointment, the ongoing impact of the conflict must be taken into consideration.

If, after going through an interview process, a trust decides **not** to endorse an application for reappointment due to concerns about the impacts of a long-term conflict of interest, the trust must advise the department in writing outlining its concerns and justifications for its decision.

If a trust **does** endorse an application for reappointment where the department has identified concerns about the impacts of a long-term conflict of interest, the application for reappointment may not be supported by the department.

## Internet outlineInterview template

An interview template is available on the [department’s website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/recruitment-and-advertising) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/recruitment-and-advertising>. Please note the questions included in the template are for illustrative purposes only and can be altered to meet the cemetery trust’s needs.

# Referee checks

Referee checks are an important part of the selection process. The purpose of referee checks is to provide trusts with an opportunity to confirm and verify information gathered during interviews.

It is mandatory for trusts to conduct at least one referee check for all new applicants who have not been appointed to the trust before, and for former members who are seeking reappointment more than 18 months since their previous term of appointment ended.

Referee checks are not mandatory for current or former trust members applying for reappointment within 18 months of the end of their term of appointment.

## Conducting a referee check

Referee checks should be conducted via telephone, an online meeting platform or face to face. Questions can be emailed to a referee for a written response, but this method should only be used if a verbal discussion is not possible.

Referee checks can be conducted by one or more selection panel members. Those who conduct the referee checks are responsible for taking notes and reporting outcomes back to the rest of the panel. If multiple panel members wish to take part in a referee check via telephone, teleconferencing facilities or a speaker phone can enable this.

Note: Contact should not be made with any referee without the applicant’s permission.

When conducting a referee check it is important to take notes as a record of the conversation. As with all steps in the trust member selection process, records should be managed appropriately to protect the privacy of the applicant.

## Sample referee check questions

A trust may use questions from the list below and/or develop its own questions for referees.

Questions should be behaviour-based and should only address matters that are relevant to the position of trust member. Referee check questions should be the same for all applicants.

* What is your relationship to the applicant?
* How long have you known the applicant?
* What skills and competencies would the applicant bring to the trust?
* Are you aware if the applicant has any experience on a community board, panel or committee?
  + If yes, how did they perform?
  + If no, how do you think they would perform?
* Can you describe how the applicant works with others?
* Can you describe the applicant’s communication style?
* Is the applicant engaged in the local community?
* Are you aware of any issues that the trust should consider regarding the applicant?
* Is there anything else you would like to add about the applicant?

## Internet outlineReferee check template

A referee check template is available on the [department’s website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/recruitment-and-advertising) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/recruitment-and-advertising>. Please note the questions included in the template are for illustrative purposes only and can be altered to suit the cemetery trust’s needs.

# Appendix A: Cultural change in organisations

What words would you use to describe the organisational culture within your trust?

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Where would you rank your trust’s organisational culture on the following scales?

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| Exclusive |  | Inclusive |
| Traditional |  | Contemporary |
| Inflexible |  | Flexible |
| Restrictive |  | Empowering |

What are some positive characteristics of the organisational culture within your trust?

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In what areas could the organisational culture within your trust be improved?

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1. Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2022, *Diversity on Victorian Government board guidelines*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Goldin C, Rouse C 2000, ‘Orchestrating impartiality: the impact of “blind” auditions on female musicians’, *American Economic Review*, vol. 90, no. 4, pp. 715–741. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Accessible documents are those that can be accessed by people with low vision or those using screen-reader software. Contact the department for more information about creating accessible documents. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)