



YWCA  
CANBERRA

# **BOARD TRAINEESHIP**

2025 INFORMATION PACK



## YWCA Canberra

YWCA Canberra is a feminist not-for-profit organisation that has provided community services and represented women's issues in Canberra since 1929.

Our mission is 'Gender equity by strengthening communities and empowering girls and women through our services and advocacy.' and our vision is 'Girls and women thriving'.

We provide essential, quality services for women, girls and families in the ACT and surrounding regions. We work in the areas of children's services, community development, homelessness and affordable housing, domestic and family violence, youth services, personal and professional training, women's leadership and advocacy.

Through our national Affiliate Association with YWCA Australia, we are part of the World YWCA network, which connects over 100 countries across the globe.

## Our Governance

YWCA Canberra operates under a strong governance model and is governed by a board of up to 12 company directors who define the strategic goals of the organisation.

At YWCA Canberra, we have forged a culture of strong governance that values the contribution and talents of our diverse board members.

All Australian YWCAs are bound by a quota whereby 30 per cent of board members must be women aged 30 years or younger. This requirement was established in a time when the YWCA had an aging leadership, and it was decided that (given the organisation's vision and values around young women's leadership) this could not be left unchallenged.

YWCA Canberra utilises several strategies to develop the necessary skills and knowledge of young women in the Canberra community to have a pipeline of board ready young women.

These include a series of She Leads professional development workshops, the Great Ydeas Micro Grants Program, and the Board Traineeship program.

## Board Traineeship Program

Our commitment to supporting women's leadership begins in the boardroom.

There is an increasing emphasis on having skilled and professional not-for-profit boards to provide strong leadership, long-term strategic direction and sound advice on issues of governance and financial management. YWCA Canberra aims to inspire other organisations to

view this challenge as an opportunity to develop a 'leadership-rich' community with a strong pool of board candidates.

To support and nurture the leadership potential of women in the Canberra community, YWCA Canberra offers an annual Board Traineeship program.

This 12-month program offers women in Canberra the opportunity to develop their leadership and governance skills by participating in discussions and observing the decisions of Board our Governance, without the legal and financial responsibility borne by Directors. Each year, YWCA

Canberra offers two to four Board Trainee positions. YWCA Canberra's Board Traineeship program has run in a formal capacity since 2002, and to date has supported 73 women. These include a series of She Leads professional development workshops, the Great Ydeas Micro Grants Program, and the Board Traineeship program.

Many of these women have progressed from a traineeship position to an official board director position within the organisation, or another board role. A notable example is Jude Burger, who was a trainee in 2005 and went on to become a board director and the President of YWCA Canberra from 2016 to 2019.

## **Expectation of Board Trainees**

- attendance and active participation at all board meetings for the 12 months (including reading the board papers beforehand)–approximately ten meetings, including the AGM.
- participation at the annual Strategic Planning Day in February, which provides a strong sense of the vision that the organisation is working towards.
- participation at the annual board induction day in November, which provides an introduction to the board and an overview of the constitution and strategic directions participation in our governance and finance workshops (free of charge).
- involvement in an informal mentoring process with a board director.
- participation on a Board Sub-Committee, including attendance at the four sub-committee meetings held each year
- attendance at a minimum of three YWCA Canberra Member events during the calendar year
- professional and courteous conduct, and confidential treatment of information shared within board meetings.
- must meet the board conflict of interest policy.

## **Benefits to Board Trainees**

- increased knowledge and skills development in governance, business, financial management, project management, and leadership
- development of strong and collaborative networks and relationships the opportunity to work closely with a mentor
- an increased profile in the Canberra community.

## **Benefits to the organisation and board**

- fresh perspectives and contributions to discussions and decision-making
- increased membership and broader community engagement and interest in our work
- an opportunity to develop and learn from young women's leadership.

## **Challenges**

- ensuring that the Board has a strong mix of skills and experience to enhance learning opportunities for Board Trainees
- professional and courteous conduct, and confidential treatment of information shared within board meetings.

## **Lessons learned**

- the importance of building a culture of support, expectations and benefits the utility of programs that combine formal and informal components
- combining practical learning in addition to 'classroom' based teaching tends to work particularly well with young people
- mentoring is vital: young women need to adequately supported when they are provided with opportunities
- the value of regular evaluation and review based on participants' feedback.

## Monitoring and evaluation

At the end of the program, the Board Trainees complete an evaluation.

## Application & assessment process

In August/September each year, applications to Board Traineeship program open. The application and assessment process will be announced at the AGM. Applicants are required to provide personal details, information about their education and/or employment, community and volunteer experience and their relationship with the YWCA. They must also undertake a policy background check and provide a written statement outlining why they want to be a Board Trainee.

- Applications are reviewed by an assessment panel, comprised of the following members:
  - Chief Executive Officer (ex-officio capacity) President (ex-officio capacity)
  - Nominations Committee members (Chaired by a current Board Director)
  - The Chief Executive Officer and President contribute to discussions but do not assess and rank the applications. In this capacity they can also overrule a panel decision if they believe it is not in accordance with the organisation's values.
- Short listed candidates will be interviewed.

Please refer to the application form for assessment details.

## Promotion

Promotion of the program is essential to attract a broad range of applicants. Promotion is conducted through YWCA Canberra channels (website, social media, ENews), the community sector, and via media engagement and public relations.

