

Essential guide

recruiting a chair, trustees and chief executive

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The purpose of this report is to provide a basic, practical guide for civil society organisations in recruiting a chair, trustee, or chief executive.

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Welcome

Vicky Browning,

CEO, ACEVO



The last year has been one of the most challenging years in recent memory for civil society. Reduced income and increased demand combined with the blurring of boundaries between home and the office has led many of us to reflect on how and where we want to work.

It is not yet clear exactly how Covid-19 will impact the recruitment sphere in the long-term, but in a context of rising unemployment, increased inequality and shifting perspectives on work-life balance, changes in the way we recruit are likely to be essential.

Recruiting for a CEO, chair or board trustees can be a difficult process, but it has never been more important than now, when good leadership is vital to help communities and organisations recover. This guide, written by Kai Adams from Green Park, provides practical guidance on designing and running a recruitment process for charity leaders. It covers some common quandaries of recruitment; planning for unexpected resignations; creating strong succession plans; and shortlisting, longlisting, assessment and onboarding processes.

We know from ACEVO's Pay and Equalities survey that representation

of Black, Asian and minoritized ethnic leaders in civil society is poor; that there is a disability pay gap; and that despite a gradual increase in the number of white female CEOs a gender pay gap persists. Recruitment is a key opportunity to start forming inclusive processes and practices that will help sustain inclusive organisational cultures.

Building back better as a sector, in a radically different world, will undoubtedly involve reviewing ways of working which we are accustomed to, and exploring how they can be fairer and more robust. I hope this guide will provide a solid foundation for designing your next recruitment rounds and support you through those processes.

I would like to thank Green Park for their support and work on this guide, and their time authoring the report.

Vicky Browning CEO, ACEVO



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Foreword

Kai Adams, Managing Partner, Green Park



We at Green Park are delighted to have worked closely with Vicky Browning and her brilliant team at ACEVO on this report and are grateful the many across the sector who contributed with ideas and encouragement to this practical guide to the appointment of civil society leaders, specifically chairs, trustees, and chief executives.

Leadership is not a static concept. It changes and evolves. Governance is not a rigid set of rules. It is an adaptive set of principles. Inspirational leadership and enabling governance require individuals to do more than know the theory or follow the playbook. They require individuals to scan the horizon, understand and interpret the environment, judge what is required in response, identify and collaborate with other actors, and apply their experience and insight to situations in which, more often than not, they are dealing with incomplete or ambiguous information. Leaders require vision, creativity, resilience and intellectual as well as cultural dexterity.

In her introduction, Vicky talks about the blurring of boundaries between home and work, to which we would add the blurring of boundaries between the public, private and voluntary sectors, those between the media or the public and our institutions, or those between civil society organisations and their many stakeholders – funders, donors, supports, volunteers, staff, and those with lived expertise to name a few. Such porosity requires a more fluid, more agile way of leading. It places huge demands on Boards and Leadership Teams whose every decision is increasingly likely to be scrutinised and subject to commentary. Leaders today are more exposed than ever before. More is demanded of them.



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That means the processes by which they are recruited should be more thorough than ever before. They should be more exacting and explore the many facets of leadership in different ways. They should also be more equitable. We need to start recognising our blueprint for leadership, and the systems by which we codify leadership, need adjustments. Too often, and for too long, recruitment processes have relied on leadership styles and concepts that are decades old. With leadership becoming more inclusive, more representative, more about the system than the individual, the processes by which we hire need tweaking. Improving. If we are to respond

to the many societal challenges – and, yes, opportunities – that have existed for a long time and which have been thrown into sharper, harder-edged relief by the pandemic, we will need to ensure our ability to attract, assess, secure and retain the very best and broadest talent is enhanced and that the processes by which we do this are deliberately, intentionally, and authentically robust, open and inclusive.

Together with ACEVO, we very much hope that this guide provides a solid foundation on which to build.

Kai Adams Managing Partner,
Civil Society & Government, Green Park



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Introduction

If you are reading this, it is likely that you are or at some point will be involved in the appointment of a new chair, trustee or chief executive. You may yourself hold one of these positions and may have experienced the good, the bad and the ugly with regards to recruitment. And you might be finding yourself on the other side of the table for the first time.

The marketplace is never static. Many factors influence it, from the social, the political, to the economic. The candidate pool is never the same. Enter the market only a few months apart and you are likely to find different talent on each occasion. Leadership and governance themselves are changing rapidly and this too has an effect on what organisations look for, the qualities they recruit for, and the cultures they want to establish. Recruitment practices evolve, executive search firms engage in different ways. And because we are all dealing with people who can change their minds, even the best laid plans have to be adapted quickly and constantly. To recruit and

appoint successfully, you will have to get used to a degree of ambiguity and risk to secure the kind of game-changing talent that is out there.

So while it remains true that the success of any organisation depends on the quality of its leadership, manifested (at least for the purposes of this report) in the chair, board of trustees, and chief executive, how that leadership is defined and enacted will have different connotations at different times.

The purpose of this report is to provide a basic, practical guide for civil society organisations in recruiting a chair, trustee, or chief executive.



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These appointments really matter. A well-led board will always ask the right questions and provide the requisite levels of rigour and reflection required for the organisation to grow, develop, and improve. It is the board's ability to adopt and debate a variety of perspectives and options which will foster greater engagement and support, and which will ensure the organisation remains representative of and connected to the people who use, commission, fund, support or deliver its services.

It is at board level where there should be insight and challenge, ownership and accountability. It is the board which must recognise the potential gaps between what the organisation says and what it does, and at board level where difficult questions should be being asked and addressed.

Chair

The chair sets the tone for the culture of the board.

Their role is to nudge the board forward on difficult, complex decisions, especially where consensus is hard to find.

Their role is to achieve, if not consensus, then consent. The chair must enable the wisdom in the room to be heard – including the dissenting voices – while synthesising views and outlining the direction of travel.

An effective chair will bring a high degree of emotional intelligence, diplomacy, and soft power. They must also possess judgement, courage and resilience.

Being able to keep an ear to the ground, to use time between meetings to influence, nudge or cajole, and to act as wise counsel are all vital characteristics.

Trustees

We see the board as a networked system, a complex, interlinking entity in which the pieces are in motion and which changes with each piece placed. Each time someone leaves or joins, it is, in effect, a different board. You will almost certainly be looking for individuals who can create the conditions for different conversations, while talking insightfully about how they have balanced the breadth of your portfolio with good governance, risk management and careful scrutiny. Working out how to complement and enrich the array of skills and perspectives within the group requires time and effort. Creating and sustaining that dynamic group, ensuring it is representative of the audience, demographic, or community you serve without becoming siloed by that very expertise, guaranteeing that it meets the requirements of good governance and regulatory compliance is incredibly demanding. Any appointment exercise, therefore, must be carried out with care.

The board holds the values of the organisation, and this is an important dimension in choosing the right people. Do they understand this, how do they live out their values, do they align with yours? Beware of 'do they fit the culture?' – more important is what can they add.

For all non-executive roles, whether chair or trustee, it is important to find candidates who have thought carefully about their availability, their motivation, their commitment to the cause, especially at a time where voluntary roles – especially chair roles – are proving harder and harder to fill due to increased scrutiny and liability, is all important.



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Additionally, the time commitment roles of this kind require often means that many of those that would otherwise be of interest to you are unable to commit as the additional responsibility of taking on a new role can destabilise other fragile parts of their portfolio.

Chief executive

In the executive sphere, we are witnessing significant changes in leadership style. Where before the chief executive displayed a more presidential, directive, 'heroic' way of operating, the current generation tends to act differently, in a manner which is more distributed and more humble. We are seeing a move towards greater followership, with a consequent emphasis on storytelling, the creation of a shared vision and mission, and a (relatively speaking!) smaller ego. This can be seen across both the internally and the externally facing dimensions of the position.

In this age of social media, chief executives need to be more accessible and transparent than ever before. The corollary is that they will also need to be even more robust and resilient. They need to be not only adept at looking

to the horizon and spotting trends before they become reality but also capable of demonstrating the capacity and willingness to bring others into the debate, to join them in discussions that are already taking place elsewhere, or to step aside on the occasions when that might lead to greater and different impact.

A good, modern chief executive will demonstrate well-developed managerial skills and, in the current marketplace, will typically need to offer greater autonomy and responsibility to their senior leadership cadre, creating an organisation in which leadership is distributed and decision-making better devolved.

Whether facing inward or outward at any given point of their mandate, we imagine the next chief executive cohort will choose to operate more within an 'eco-system' than an 'ego-system'. They will see themselves as part of a much bigger picture and understand their responsibilities to a wide and diverse audience.

There is more on the of skillsets of contemporary leaders here acevo.org.uk/skills/leadership-competencies



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We believe that to fill these high calibre, demanding roles it has become critical to focus on more than just previously gained commercial and organisational leadership or knowledge of the functional attributes or sectors you require – though these are important.

Recruiters should also consider transferable skills, a demonstrable track record of adaptability (illustrated by some variety of organisation or sector within their career), keen, clear judgement, the ability to engage with and influence a wide range of stakeholders and evidence of where they have actively promoted a more representative, forward-looking, inclusive approach.

In today's world, most senior individuals with the kind of profile and abilities you will be looking for are more easily identifiable than ever and – relatively speaking – accessible, thanks to platforms such as LinkedIn or Twitter. Of course, that means they are

accessible to everyone else too.

How you appeal to their sense of purpose, their desire for a challenge, their need to have an impact, is key. Eliminating the things which reduce their motivation is all important.

For that reason, we believe that the 'approach' will be key. Whether you are doing this alone or in partnership with an executive search firm, you will want to consider an approach that is tailored, thoughtful and personal. The way in which individuals are engaged will make all the difference: something that feels informed, nuanced, open and transparent. Something that feels as if it directed at them.



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Getting ahead of the curve

Often you will be entering the market at short notice, usually because your chief executive, chair or trustee has stood down earlier than expected. This kind of ‘distressed purchase’ is challenging and can increase the risk of making decisions which can negatively affect the outcome of your search. To mitigate this risk it might be worth considering an interim arrangement for a CEO or a chair, to ensure continuity, and also create some breathing space, so you can consider what you really need for your organisation’s next steps.

Thankfully, at other times you will have a little more time to plan, especially if you have already done some thinking about succession plans. Knowing the tenure of your board, for example, or ensuring the skills of that group are regularly audited are important pieces of good governance housekeeping, while acting as soon as the chief executive has resigned and getting out to market for their replacement during their notice period

(thereby cutting down on an interregnum period and increasing the chances of a handover) is sensible.

Ideally, you will already have a good sense of what you need in advance of going to market. If not, getting your stakeholders together to test this is an important early step. So too is agreeing the project timeline. Appointment processes are always stressful and



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will add to the already full to do list of any leader, executive or non-executive. The instinct will be to dust off whatever you have with regards to a role description and person specification, draft an advert, put something out on social media, and get going. Get it done as fast as possible. Prioritising speed and efficiency over quality, though, seldom leads to the best results. Allowing time for a proper recruitment campaign – usually something in the order of 12 to 14 weeks and broken down into different stages – is advisable.

Whether you are carrying out the recruitment yourself or using a trusted professional partner, it is worth remembering that you are dealing with people, and that people need time for important decisions, and frequently change their mind. Having flexibility in the process, allowing space for discussions between you (or your executive search partner) and any interested parties, delivering a positive candidate experience are all vital. If doing this for yourselves, have you allowed for the administrative burden of receiving, reviewing, and responding to applications? Have you considered how you will deliver feedback? Do you have someone to arrange the diaries for interview? Have you got everyone else on board? Most importantly, whether you do this on your own or with help, have you thought very carefully about creating a process which is genuinely inclusive?

Diversity and intentional inclusion

Creating an inclusive recruitment process is something you should aim to deliver every time. By itself it doesn't create an inclusive culture but properly carried out it should deliver a more diverse, more representative field of candidates. A process should be the instrument, not the end game. Creating such a process is not easy. It requires a lot of thought and hard work. It requires the gap between what is said and what is done to be narrowed and eliminated. It's an active decision. You can't just want the process. You have to want the result. In other words, you have to be deliberate and purposeful in looking to attract a wider, more diverse group of people.

Being inclusive is an active decision. A way of being. It's shuffling up to allow space for others, sharing your place, sharing your power. It's bringing other voices into the discussion. It's about actively listening to opinions and experiences other than your own. About being open – genuinely open – to changing your mind. Recognising you might need to do things differently. Being challenged. Getting uncomfortable. Not all of this is going to feel easy, comfortable or (at certain points) worth the extra effort. To get the best results, though, you have to be intentional. The real, deep, honest thinking must happen up front.



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Common quandaries

Speed, quality, cost

It is possible to achieve two of these things together, but never all three. One of the major hurdles in the recruitment of senior executive and non-executive leaders is organisations prioritising speed and efficiency over quality of process. The pressure to get things done fast – understandable as that is – and to cut corners to reduce the cost or timeframe usually leads to a less thorough exploration of the marketplace, a less positive candidate experience, and a less comprehensive examination of a candidate's qualities.

The question of fit

The habit of recruiting in our own image is well-documented. Appointing for 'fit' is not always helpful. Hiring a CEO who already thinks and acts like the organisation or bringing in a plug-and-play chair or trustees can lead to issues of group-think, a reduction in creativity, or a perpetuation of structural or cultural issues that already exist. Rather than looking for those who 'are like us' look for those who will add something different to your culture, who complement what exists, and enhance it. Bringing in those who are able to look at your context, your organisation, or your mission, vision, and

values and offer something fresh and new may not always feel natural, can sometimes take some getting used to, but is liable to be more rewarding in the long run.

The burden of responsibility

Organisations often hire leaders with the tacit expectation that the candidate do most if not all of the running. These senior individuals are expected to jump through a variety of hoops during the process, typically at short notice and with little feedback. Once they have landed, they are expected to quickly adapt themselves to the shape and style of the organisation. This is especially marked when candidates from less orthodox or more diverse backgrounds are hired. They are expected to assimilate and integrate. The burden for change rests entirely on their shoulders.

The priority paradox

'Diversity is important, but not as important as X, Y, or Z.' This debate surfaces periodically. It manifests itself in the apparently binary idea that you are either senior, experienced, talented, a 'good fit', or you are 'diverse'. This is a dangerous logical fallacy. Diversity is not



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a separate challenge or priority – it is part of the solution to the many challenges and priorities you face.

The missing piece of the puzzle

It is easy to think of the recruitment of a chair, trustee or chief executive – arguably the most fundamental leadership components of your organisation – in isolation: an individual to be replaced, a gap to be filled, a piece of the puzzle to be found. Trying to recruit to fill the gap can be limiting. It relies on a narrow set of parameters. Thinking instead about the collective, about how other board trustees or senior leadership team members can ‘shuffle up’, take on different responsibilities, or play in a different formation can broaden your prospective talent pool and help you get more from the marketplace. Think ‘team’ rather than ‘individual’.

Approach avoidance

It is easy to begin any process with a stated aim to be bold, creative, broad and diverse. Carrying through on that ambition is harder if the real thinking hasn't been done regarding how the process will deliver and how you will manage the outcomes accordingly. What tends to happen is that the bravery and risk-taking with which you started out dissipates once people start to look and sound different to what you or your stakeholders really envisaged. Over time, the external market will realise you are not being authentic, that there is a gap between what you say and what you do, and it will become harder to recruit the best and most innovative talent.

Outsourcing judgement

If using a partner, it is worth noting that while they have vast expertise in recruiting and appointing senior leaders and should be stewarding you with good advice at every stage, the decision on who to meet, who to interview, who to stand down, and who to appoint, rests with you. Your partner should provide you with as much material as possible to help inform your choices, but the responsibility lies with you to read a candidate's expression of interest, to listen closely to their answers at interview, to check they meet the criteria you and your colleagues agreed upon at the outset of the process. You are in charge and should ensure you are getting the steer you need so that you can make the best decision available to you.

The diverse appointment

This is an increasingly common request and a laudable – if often naïvely articulated - aim. Unless you have done work already to make your organisation attractive and, ideally, inclusive; unless you run a transparent, equitable process; unless you address the conscious and unconscious biases you hold, this is challenging. If you are doing this yourselves, what have you done to reach a wider audience and how will you accommodate a broader array of talent than usual? What story can you tell about your strategy for becoming a more inclusive organisation? How will you widen the gates without lowering the bar? If you are working with a partner, what is their track record of successfully diverse and inclusive recruitment? Over what period?



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Create a robust process

A robust process will comprise a thorough planning phase, an extended period in the market (using a combination of advertising, social media, and/or executive search), a longlist phase (if you are working with a partner) during which the executive search consultants will interview candidates on your behalf, a shortlist, and the final assessment. With luck, this will lead to an offer being made and accepted. Most search firms will argue this takes approximately 12-14 weeks. Below we outline things to consider during each tranche.

The process needs to be time-bound, with dates for applications closing, and for shortlisting, clear to candidates so the process is transparent. Interview dates need to be nailed into diaries right at the start. And it needs to be long enough – the more different you

want your candidate pool to be, the more time you will want to have in the market: those with less orthodox or more diverse careers and backgrounds may need greater encouragement to overcome any latent scepticism or doubt.



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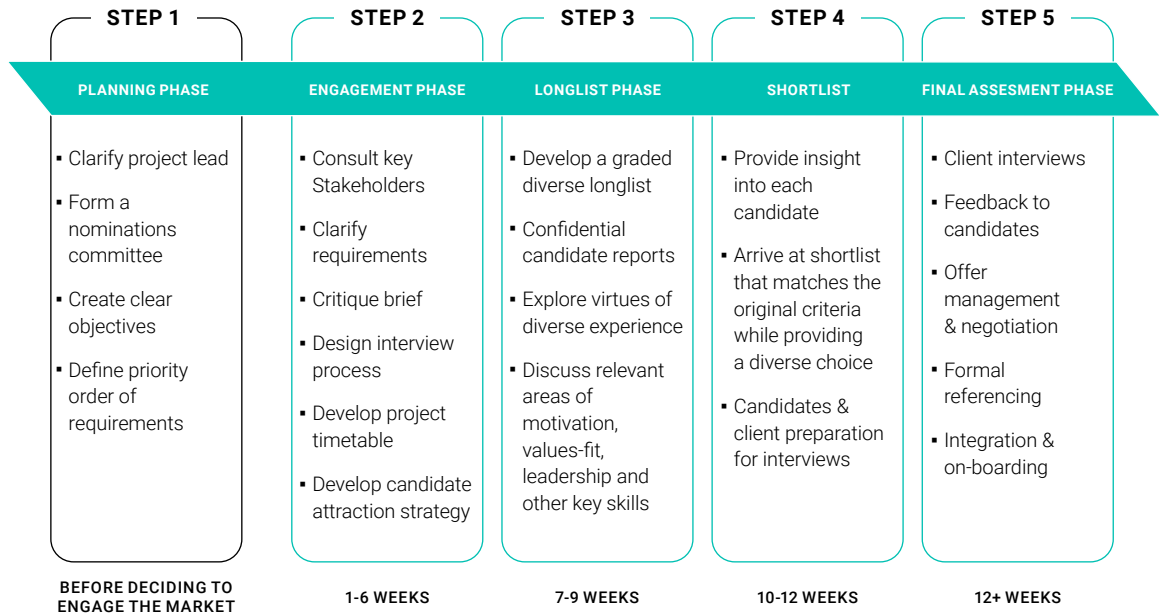
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Planning phase

The first question to ask is who will lead the process.

This might be a decision on whether you are going to embark on the recruitment round yourselves or hire professional support from an executive search firm. Almost regardless of this, it would be advisable to constitute a nominations committee (in whom decision-making powers are vested).

For the appointment of a chair, the chair of such a committee or panel may be the vice or deputy chair or similarly senior trustee. It may also be someone with HR or recruitment experience. Ideally, the panel will constitute between three and five individuals who represent a variety of protected characteristics as well as different styles. If it is impossible to create a diverse panel, you should consider bringing in an independent panel member to assist during the process. This may be a senior volunteer, a leader from a similar organisation, or someone who knows the organisation well.

Too often the appointment of chair or trustees ends up being led by the chief executive. This is not good practice and can lead to problems later. However, a 'chemistry test' meeting for the final candidates with the CEO is important – an informal chat to ensure the relationship will be constructive.

For the appointment of trustees, the panel should be led by the chair. When new trustees are needed the same attention should be paid to getting the candidate profile right as with a chair or chief executive appointment. A similar recruitment process should be put in place. Increasingly, organisations are looking to appoint multiple trustees at one time. Ensuring you are clear about the mix of skills and styles you want around the table is important. Take time to create a matrix against which you can measure candidates; one that includes not just functional expertise such as financial, legal or commercial track record, but also softer skills.



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You will want to include both essential requirements and – handy in the event of needing to decide between two good candidates – desirable ones. As with the chair appointment, a small nominations committee will act to ensure everything is kept on track.

Recruiting a chief executive is one of the most important roles for a board of trustees and its chair. Without question, the chair should lead this appointment. The key to a successful outcome is to produce a fresh, clear and agreed role description and person specification at the outset (not just dust off the old ones) and agree a robust, auditable process

and timeline. An appointment such as this will require real investment of time, energy, and emotion.

Plan in from the beginning what the final stages will look like – will there be a panel of SLT members (for CEOs)? Will you involve service users? How will their feedback be included, and is it clear to them if they have a voice, a vote or a veto?

For any search the key decision-makers should be involved throughout the search, to ensure they are fully sighted on the candidates and hear feedback from the market.

During this planning phase, consider the following:

- What are you really looking to achieve with this appointment?
- What are your non-negotiables? Why? How would you prioritise them?
- What skills, experience, or style do you need?
- Do you need interim arrangements in place?
- What do you really mean by 'diversity'?
- How will you assess your candidates (this will be different for executive and non-executive roles) and at what stages?
- How will you involve your key stakeholders and at what stage? Whose input will you include?
- What channels, platforms and networks are you going to use to proactively target the widest audience possible?
- Is what you are looking for achievable?
- Are you really up for change? Have you thought about how the organisation will feel different? How will everyone 'budge up' to make room for change?



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Engagement phase

Once you have agreed your answers to the above and have a commonality of definition and approach, you will be ready to finalise the role description and person specification. It is essential for this document to be clear and compelling. It is tempting to re-use what you already have and tinker around the edges. Where possible, it is better to re-write for your up-to-date needs. Check that the language is inclusive and bias-free. If you are working with a partner, have them work on this alongside you, informed by the briefings you provide. Use this thinking to ensure your advertisements are authentically inclusive, using asset-based language – focus on what candidates bring, not what they lack. The key is to create a connection with your audience. Similarly, agree and encourage social media activity from your Comms team and via the personal accounts of your key stakeholders.

Make sure your values are front and centre. Too often one advert looks nearly identical to another, and you want to encourage applications which really respond to your identity. One way to do this is to use a values-based application process. For this you ask your candidates to respond to three or four questions linked to your values or strategy, for example, or have them articulate their motivation via a short video rather than a written document. This reduces the

risk of 'cut-and-paste' applications, and creates more distinctiveness between applications.

If you are running the search yourselves, it is likely you will be relying on advertising, social media, networking, and word of mouth. If you are working with a partner, they will be carrying out active research and engaging with the market on your behalf. The inclination is to outsource everything to them. We advise working in closer partnership, with both you and the executive search firm amplifying one another's social media activity, for example, and catching up weekly for a short progress report. For more challenging roles – organisations that are less visible, which operate with tough or unpopular remits, where there has been a troubled history, or with a large time commitment (with chair roles especially) – it is likely that only five percent of those with whom you (or your partner) speak will become candidates.

We strongly advise that you show the salary (for the chief executive role) and time commitment (for the chair and trustees positions) clearly on all material. Acevo supports the 'Show the Salary' campaign, which creates greater transparency. The campaign also encourages signatories not to ask for qualifications, unless these are really necessary.



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The following questions may be helpful:

- Have you been clear about your mission, vision, and purpose?
- Have you been clear about the mandate?
- Have you been honest about your challenges and what you are doing to tackle them?
- How will you assess how this person addresses and enhances your values?
- Are you prepared to listen to unpopular feedback?
- Have you given yourselves the licence and flexibility to adapt if there are things stopping candidates from applying?
- Are you listening and not just broadcasting?
- Are you being thoughtful about how you can support candidates in their development areas?
- Is your imagery, language, process and activity inclusive and accessible?

Do include in your candidate pack whether you're open to flexible working and what this could look like – this is inviting, opens up the conversation at an early stage and will encourage a wider

field. If it matters to you do includes in your person spec something about a track record in shifting the dial on diversity, so you can talk about this through your interview process.



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Longlist phase

This is a part of the process which chiefly exists if you are working with a partner. They will provide a graded pack of all individuals who have applied for your role via any and all channels available. This leads to a guided discussion, led by the executive search consultants, the outcome of which is a number of people you want them to meet on your behalf.

If the role is the chief executive, you should expect your partner to carry out a structured, comprehensive competency and values-based interview, usually lasting between an hour and 90 minutes.

This will focus on their experience, skills and style against your key criteria.

If the role is that of chair or trustee, rather than an interview *per se*, they will carry out a broader, more exploratory conversation in which they will look to understand not so much whether the individual can carry out the role, but how they do it. A non-executive discussion will focus on things like influencing skills, convening and collaborating, decision-making, discernment and judgement.

From these conversations, the search firm will report back at the shortlist meeting.

During this and subsequent phases, consider the following:

- the possibility that those with a different background or diverse experience may need more tailored support
- the virtues of diverse experience rather than the shortfalls
- unconscious bias that may exist in your decision-making around cultural or behavioural mores
- the fact your long-held beliefs may well be challenged



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Shortlist phase

If you are doing this yourself, this will be the first opportunity to look at the candidate pool 'in the round'. Look to assess each candidate against your pre-agreed matrix of skills and experience, accepting that at this stage it is very difficult to appraise style. If you have asked people to respond to a series of values-based questions, how closely do they match your model answers? How much thinking do they provoke? Where might they provide a perspective that could be additive?

Simply judging a CV by where a person has worked, the brands with which they're associated, or their role titles is reductive. Look for how they articulate how they meet your brief. Remember

that those with most experience of going through such processes are likely to be able to pull together more accomplished documentation but that doesn't mean they're the best candidate. Look at all their paperwork in the round. Do some basic due diligence – check social media and do an internet search for some extra cover.

If you are working with a partner, at this point they will be able to give you an update on their interviews/conversations with candidates. They will draw out the salient points to inform your decision-making and respond to any questions or concerns you have. The decision, though, remains yours.

During this stage, make sure you:

- focus on quality and variety, not on the number of applications
- are clear on the mandate and haven't moved away from your original brief
- understand that no candidate will be the perfect fit and know where you are happy to compromise and where you cannot
- have a list of questions you want to ask candidates being taken forward
- are not taking candidates forward disingenuously to fulfil some misguided quota or sense of propriety
- get a real sense of what drives and motivates candidates – personality is as important as track record
- can offer feedback to those not being taken forward (either directly or via a partner)
- ensure everyone leaves the process with a positive sense of you as an organisation



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Final assessment phase

Assessment is as much art as it is science, and it is, at best, an imperfect way to hire. Interviews, for example, tend to only predict future performance with about 25% accuracy. Psychometric assessment similarly. This is why it is important – as long as you take into account the candidate's experience and do not ask them to jump through too many hoops unnecessarily – to use different methods to assess individuals. Coming at the role from several angles, including diverse stakeholders, and using different methods will give you a more rounded picture.

Assessment is not usually used in non-Executive appointments but can be extremely useful when properly used for executive recruitment. Using two or three different instruments to explore leadership preferences, personality traits, or how candidates respond to stress, can be illuminating. As they are expensive, we recommend they are only used on the final shortlist, only as part of a suite

of factors, and only to give you questions with which to test candidates.

You may want to put candidates through two or three different rounds of interview with diverse audiences. The insight of service user panels can be particularly illuminating. However, although these can be helpful in providing you with multiple perspectives the amount of data can be daunting and, on occasion, conflicting. Ultimately, you will still have to apply careful judgement. It is easy to forget that the candidate is as likely to be assessing you as you are assessing them. Creating the conditions for a constructive exchange is critical. You will want to start each interview with a round of introductions and a little scene-setting and leave time at the end for candidate questions. More than five interviews in a day can be tiring and the final candidate is unlikely to get the best from you unless you give yourselves regular breaks. Look to do all your shortlist interviews in one day wherever possible.

During the interviews, consider:

- Who will chair each panel?
- How will feedback be recorded in auditable fashion?
- Who comprises each panel and how does each panel complement the rest?
- What are you looking to explore with each panel?
- Is each panel suitably diverse and representative?
- Which panels have a voice and which have a vote?
- Would you benefit from having someone independent on your panels?
- Is the interview setting conducive to a positive discussion?
- Do you need to provide any reasonable adjustments?



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Post appointment phase

If you are doing this yourselves, you will now want to make an offer. Ideally by this stage you will have already dealt with push and pull factors, eliminated blockers to the candidate accepting, and be in a position to close the deal. With the chief executive role, you will have already articulated a salary level. It is unwise to 'low-ball' the offer, though many organisations do. It can cause ill will and lead to the candidate rejecting the offer. Be clear not just about the salary but also the wider package details – flexibility, annual leave, pension, all these can be more important to candidates than you think and give you more room to adapt in different directions. Look to create a total package that works best for both sides. If the role is unremunerated (as it usually is with chair or trustee roles), you will have already tested conflicts of interest and the capacity your preferred candidate has to take on the time commitment. Reiterate these.

Do not stand other candidates down until you have secured your preferred candidates. As this can sometimes take a couple of days, ensure you have

managed everyone's expectations by telling them at the final interview stage when they can expect to hear from you, allowing yourself a little extra time than you might in fact need.

You will want to provide as much feedback as possible to unsuccessful candidates at this stage. They have invested a great deal of time and effort in your organisation. Personalising this is important. If you are working with a partner, get them to make the offer and broker the deal. Asking them to stand unsuccessful candidates down and deliver the feedback is also sensible. Feedback should be as honest and developmental as possible in order for unsuccessful candidates to benefit, so it's important to articulate reasons. It can be genuinely helpful, if painful, for a candidate to hear that they were too generic, or talked too much, or didn't give enough specifics in their examples, or sounded defensive on a particular topic. It's also important to start any feedback by thanking the candidate for the time and effort they have given the process.



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General questions

- Where would people say they saw your values in your life/work?
- Why this, why now?
- Where (or when) have you been particularly successful in driving greater collaboration between individuals and/or organisations?
- What has been the most difficult people-focused challenge of your leadership?
- What was your greatest leadership challenge to date? What did you learn and what would you do differently next time?
- How do you evaluate the contribution you've made?
- How do you assess your own judgements or those of other people?
- What experience do you have of creating a diverse and inclusive team?
- What prior experience, knowledge, awareness or understanding would you bring to the role and our mission and work?
- What questions do you typically ask on arrival in a new organisation? Why?
- Where have you created coalitions or led collaborative processes to deliver a mutually beneficial agenda internally and externally?
- Can you give us an example of when you have demonstrated a personal commitment to promoting equality, embracing diversity and supporting inclusion?
- What skills/experience would you look for in your team to supplement your own?
- Where have you demonstrated the creative thinking and organisational leadership that led to the kind of change which resulted in your organisation working in a more impact-driven way? What, if any, were the unanticipated consequences of this transformation?
- If you were to be offered this role, what would be the biggest obstacle to you accepting?



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Questions for chief executives

- Describe a situation where you have taken over a team, inspiring a confident and positive organisational culture.
- What do you do to understand your business better?
- Can you tell us why you consider yourself to be an inclusive leader?

Questions for chairs/trustees

- What, to your mind, are the attributes or behaviours of an effective board and what do you believe is the chair's role in ensuring board effectiveness?
- What do you believe to be the key components of an effective chair/chief executive relationship?



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Further reading

- Look Before You Leap
acevocommunity.force.com/s/store#/store/browse/detail/a303z000002zGt3AAE
- Diversity Leadership Principles
acevo.org.uk/eight-principles-to-address-the-diversity-deficit-in-charity-leadership
- Charity Governance Code
charitygovernancecode.org/en/front-page
- The pros, cons and principles of trustee remuneration (member-only content)
acevo.org.uk/member_briefings/principles-of-trustee-remuneration



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acevo

ACEVO's vision is to see civil society leaders making the biggest possible difference. Together with our network, we inspire and support civil society leaders by providing connections, advocacy and skills.

Our leaders drive positive change in their organisations and in their communities, and our peer-to-peer network supports and encourages them at every step of their career.

We offer our members exclusive access to personal development opportunities and mentoring tailored to senior leadership

roles; networking and learning events; business helplines for immediate expert advice; discounted professional services delivered by our partners and advice and support when it is needed most.

Through our policy work, we represent our members' interests in key areas of importance to civil society and our members' work.

Membership is open to charity and social enterprise chief executives and to ambitious senior directors.

acevo.org.uk
[@acevo](https://twitter.com/acevo)

green park

Since our inception in 2006, Green Park has become one of Europe's fastest growing suppliers of leadership recruitment and consultancy services across the Private, Public and Third sectors. We are dedicated to delivering sustainable business value through our executive search, interim management, managed services and leadership and diversity consultancy practices.

Our mission is to change the face of leadership by helping organisations think differently about talent. We believe diverse, complementary teams deliver the best results for everyone and are integral to meeting the demands of today's and tomorrow's changing marketplace. We strive to provide talent

that is reflective of the communities they represent.

Our Civil Society and Government practice works across non-profits, local and central government, the NHS and arms' length bodies to help our clients

create teams that are innovative, rigorous and more than the sum of their parts. People like working with us because we are thoughtful, values-driven and are able to evidence an outstanding, market-leading track record on delivering diversity.

Contact us now to see how we can add value to your organisation.

green-park.co.uk
[@Green Park](https://twitter.com/GreenPark)



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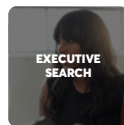
AWARD-WINNING PROVIDER OF BOARD & EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TALENT ACROSS THE CIVIL SOCIETY & GOVERNMENT SECTORS

Since January 2020 the world has changed. The coronavirus pandemic has changed the way the world works and Black Lives Matter protests have changed the way the world thinks. Fortunately, at Green Park, change is what we do.

Against a rapidly transforming backdrop, the Green Park Charities and Social Enterprise team has first-hand experience of helping clients navigate the changing landscape of the sector and address the numerous challenges associated with third sector leadership.



RECRUITMENT & CONSULTANCY EXPERTISE



Championing diversity and inclusion since their inception, Green Park is changing the face of leadership by helping organisations think differently about talent in the UK's top boardrooms.

Named Recruitment Agency of the Year 2020, Green Park has grown from a challenger brand to one of Europe's fastest growing suppliers of leadership talent, building a reputation for outstanding customer care and raising industry standards for ethical, inclusive, fair and transparent practices.

RECRUITMENT AGENCY OF THE YEAR WINNER



*A true partner of talent for
diversity and inclusion.*
- 2020 Recruiter Awards Judges

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Reach relevant candidates with our senior leadership and trustee job board

More than a membership organisation, we are a community of charity leaders, and we know the importance of good leadership.

ACEVO supports civil society leaders to make the biggest possible impact in other people's lives, from their staff to the communities they serve.

Whether recruiting directly or via a search firm, find your organisation's next senior leader, CEO, and trustees with ACEVO Jobs.

Advertise paid roles from £300 and trustee roles from £100, or sign-up for an annual unlimited job posting subscription from £125/month.

Get in touch to find out more

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