

## Five steps to success

**1 Prepare a job description outlining the expectations and conditions of the job** (including salary, accommodation and leave entitlements). The Registrar's office can help.

**ORA** ORIC RECRUITMENT ASSISTANCE

[www.oric.gov.au/corporation-jobs/oric-recruitment-assistance-ora](http://www.oric.gov.au/corporation-jobs/oric-recruitment-assistance-ora)

ORA is a free service that supports corporations through each step in the recruiting process, including:

- developing a job description package
- placing advertising\*
- assessing applicants
- setting up an interview process
- preparing a selection report.

\* corporations must meet their own advertising costs

All decisions are made by the corporation, including selecting the successful applicant and setting the salary.

A series of handy recruitment guides on such topics as 'how to draft selection criteria' and 'sample interview questions' are also available at [www.oric.gov.au/corporation-jobs/guides-corporation-recruitment](http://www.oric.gov.au/corporation-jobs/guides-corporation-recruitment).

**2 Set up a selection panel to assess applicants**—of those that look promising find out more about them. For example:

- Where have they worked before and where are they working now? What does their application say? Is it accurate? Does it outline the broad experience, skills and qualifications you're after?
- Have you or others heard of them? Does their reputation precede them? Ask around, use the bush telegraph and social media, such as Facebook.
- Carry out some background checks—go to previous employers and work colleagues, and do a police check.

**3 Conduct an interview**—ideally face to face but by phone/video (e.g. Skype) is also possible. Have a list of questions worked out. This is your chance to get a feel for the character of the applicants and how well they would fit in—and to delve further into their experience and suitability.

**4 Make a selection**—if appropriate. If no candidates are suitable don't just choose the best of a bad lot—readvertise the job.

However, once a selection has been made and an applicant is appointed, make sure that when they start they are welcomed and supported. An induction course in the cultural and social environment is often a very good idea as is offering a mentor—that is, someone who can help the new senior staff person settle in to the community while they adjust to their new responsibilities.

**5 Hold regular catch up meetings**—it's important for directors and senior staff to be in frequent touch. Regular discussions can also feed into more formalised performance reviews.



Australian Government  
Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations

# ORIC Oracle

## Selecting senior staff

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Everyone knows that able and reliable senior staff are crucial for a corporation's health and wellbeing. After all, if directors can't rely on good capable staff to implement their policies and manage the practical everyday tasks of running a corporation, chances are the corporation is headed for trouble.

For the vast majority of corporations the directors and senior staff work extremely well together—one group supports the work of the other and there is a mutual commitment to serving the best interests of the corporation, the members, and the community. This is how it should be.

Sometimes however, especially in corporations in remote communities, the wrong kind of people somehow find their way into positions of power and responsibility. They may even become the manager or CEO.

### It's never easy

Finding and keeping good senior staff is difficult for any organisation no matter what work it does or where it is, but for a corporation in regional and remote Australia it's particularly challenging. People must have a capacity to adapt to radically different conditions, cope with isolation and work through cross-cultural values. This can be demanding, stressful and may even get the better of many very good candidates. This is life. Not every new job works out.



Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC) directors Geraldine Naparurrla Dixon and Jimmy Japanangka Langdon with former CEO Susie Low. Photo: WYDAC

### WINNING TEAM

What's the secret? 'Very good communication between the management team and the board,' says Susie Low, and a commitment to board meetings.

But the CEO or general manager is not the boss. 'I see the CEO's role as bringing in management skills to facilitate achieving the goals of the organisation,' says Susie. 'Warlpiri decide on program priorities and direction. My role has been to share the journey.'

Modified extract from APONT Aboriginal Governance and Management Program strong governance story series <http://aboriginalgovernance.org.au/news-events/news>

WYDAC improves the lives and prospects of young people by redirecting them from harmful behaviours (such as petrol sniffing) and helping them to develop into strong community leaders. For more information see [www.mttheo.org.au](http://www.mttheo.org.au)

What's far more worrying is where these same factors can sometimes attract the wrong type of people to work in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations, particularly in remote communities. In worst case scenarios they can be dishonest people who deliberately set out to exploit a situation for their own personal benefit.

While this is the rare exception directors should, nevertheless, take the time to check out

applicants fully before they appoint them, and ensure their employment policies are up to date. As far as it's possible, directors want to choose the right person and protect against picking the wrong person! Sometimes people can look fine (i.e. qualified and reasonable) but turn out not to be a good fit or simply just not up to the job. Just a little more scrutiny could save a corporation a lot of unnecessary trouble.

## OVERDUE REPORTS?

Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (CATSI Act)  
General report

The Registrar may take legal action against your corporation if you don't lodge your reports. Make sure you are not on the [List of corporations in breach of 2014–15 reporting requirements](http://www.oric.gov.au) on [www.oric.gov.au](http://www.oric.gov.au).

Lodge online right now

<https://online.oric.gov.au>

If you need help with reports call 1800 622 431 (not free from mobiles).



## LawHelp

ORIC's free legal service can help draft or review your employment contracts

[www.oric.gov.au/free-services-through-oric/lawhelp](http://www.oric.gov.au/free-services-through-oric/lawhelp)

ICN 6111

ICN 4850

ICN 33

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**Protect  
against the  
wrong pick**

**Tips for directors**

Conduct a recruitment process and have a strong employment plan.

Check your corporation has proper employment systems, such as policies about expected standards of performance and behaviour. Strong structures can guide you and back you up should a circumstance with senior staff become difficult or turn nasty.

Strong and clear policies, procedures and delegations are important because they clarify matters for everyone—for example, they spell out the consequences if standards of behaviour or performance are not what they should be.

In your employment systems and guidelines include regular performance reviews. They're a helpful and effective way to hold your senior staff to account. Encourage an open discussion. It should be a two way street—directors want to know how senior staff are getting on and senior staff want to express their thoughts and concerns freely too. Think of questions you might ask.

Very importantly, if things aren't right and you're uneasy about what senior staff are doing—or not doing—take action! Don't ignore the situation so it festers and only gets worse. Inform the Registrar's office. In some cases where criminal activity is suspected it may be necessary to inform the police and initiate legal proceedings.

Employment guides and template contracts are on the Registrar's website: [www.oric.gov.au/corporation-jobs/employment-guides-and-template-contracts](http://www.oric.gov.au/corporation-jobs/employment-guides-and-template-contracts)

**Choose the  
right fit**



“We've all heard about “missionaries, mercenaries and misfits”. Corporations must have good systems to keep these people at arms-length. Real due diligence on senior staff in remote locations is a must. You might not get it right all of the time but if you put in safety mechanisms, such as probation periods and regular performance reviews, you can protect your corporation from the worst situations. ”

Independent director, Rick Callaghan