



## Landscape of Grand Pré Inc. – Le Paysage de Grand-Pré inc.

### Orientation for New Directors

#### 1. Introduction

Board orientation will help new directors contribute fully, and as early in their tenure as possible, to the governing work of the Board. The following guide outlines the objectives and the process for a successful orientation program for new directors. As a result of their orientation new directors should:

- a) Understand their roles, responsibilities and time commitment to governance work around the Board and standing committee table and away from it;
- b) Be aware of the current goals, opportunities and challenges facing the organization;
- c) Be aware of who the organization's main stakeholders are including members, funders, clients, partners, the public, as well as staff, volunteers and contractors;
- d) Have some sense of how their own background, knowledge, experience and skills will contribute to the current work of the Board and the goals of the organization;
- e) Appreciate the background, knowledge, experience and skills of each of the other directors;
- f) Know how Board meetings are run, decisions are made and what formal governing policies and practices exist;
- g) Appreciate how this Board functions similarly or differently than other Boards they have served on or are serving on.

#### 2. Director recruitment, application and selection

There are two recruitment streams:

- a) A new director is nominated by a member organization to replace a director whose term of office has been completed or who wishes to resign from the Board;
- b) A new director is nominated by the Board of Directors.

At least three months before the term of office of a director nominated by a member organization comes to an end, the Executive Director (ED) will inform the member organization of the need to nominate a director. If the nomination consists of a potential new director, the ED will offer to assist the member organization in ensuring that the new director has a good understanding of their responsibilities.

In situations where the Board is seeking to nominate a new director, orientation will begin when a person is being considered as a potential director of the Board. At the very least, the recruitment and application process should assist a potential new director in understanding:

- a) Why their expertise and skills, and which ones in particular, are assets to the Board and to the Corporation;
- b) Some of the current challenges and opportunities facing the Corporation;
- c) The time commitment required of them;
- d) That the Corporation is competently run, including sound financial management;
- e) And if they are relatively new to Board and governance work then further information should be provided on:
  - Their roles and responsibilities as a director of the Board;
  - Any special roles and responsibilities associated with being a representative of a particular stakeholder or constituency.

### **3. Next steps**

Once the election of a new director has been confirmed by the Members of the Corporation, the next step involves a more thorough orientation. This will include:

- a) Providing new directors with a complete Board orientation package;
- b) Organizing a special orientation session;
- c) Meeting with the Chair of the Board;
- d) Meeting with the ED and including an on-site visit if possible.

### **4. Responsibility for Board orientation**

- a) The Governance and Nominating Committee

The Governance and Nominating Committee will oversee the Board orientation process with the support of the Chair of the Board and the Executive Director.

## b) Chair of the Board

The Chair of the Board will play a significant role in the Board orientation process for new directors. This could include:

- Helping author and sign a letter of invitation to prospective new directors of the Board;
- Contacting new directors of the Board by telephone or email to personally welcome them to the Board;
- Leading the portion of the orientation on the Board's role, decision-making, standing committees and communications. The Chair should be the one to talk to new directors about the culture of the Board and its unwritten rules and practices.

## c) The Executive Director

The ED will be responsible for orienting new directors on those matters over which she/he is responsible. This will include summarizing the Strategic Plan and key initiatives of the Corporation, financial management, the budgeting process, core policies and procedures.

## d) The whole Board

The whole Board has responsibilities that include welcoming new directors to the Board, showing up at an orientation session, and most importantly, mentoring new directors.

## 5. List of topics which should be covered in the orientation of new directors

- a) Mission and vision, history and distinguishing features of the Corporation;
- b) Overview of key stakeholders (members, funders, government) and relationships to them;
- c) Strategic priorities or plans, goals and current challenges (tourism trends, environmental scan, public policy environment);
- d) Legal, fundraising, ethical and advocacy responsibilities of the Board, including responsibilities associated with the Corporation's charitable status;
- e) Type of Board, the Board's role, Board decision procedures, Board culture and Board standing committees;
- f) Summary of programs and services, program level objectives, community and client outcome;
- g) ED and staff roles and human resource practises;
- h) Revenues, expenses, reserves, fundraising costs, financial management, and the Board role in budgeting process;
- i) By-laws and other policies and procedures in place; review practises.

## 6. Orientation package for new directors

New directors will be provided with access to a digital Board orientation package which will include:

- Strategic Plan
- Board director job description
- Incorporation by-laws
- Code of conduct
- Communication policy
- Financial management and procurement policy
- Travel and expense claim policy and procedures
- Standing committee's terms of reference
- Volunteer policy
- Board calendar
- Annual report and audited financial statements
- Current budget
- Board meeting agenda and minutes (several examples)
- Executive Director policy and ED job description
- Recent newsletter

## 7. Evaluation

The last stage of orientation is assessing the effectiveness of the orientation process itself. Approximately 8-12 weeks after new directors have completed the orientation program, the Chair of the Board or the Governance and Nominating Committee Chair should follow up with new directors to seek feedback on what worked well and to gather suggestions for improvement. The orientation process could also be assessed as part of an annual Board self-evaluation with a rating question such as “how useful did you find your Board orientation” or an open-ended question like: “given what know now about the work of the Board, what would you have liked to have known when you started as a director?”

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