

TO AGM OR NOT TO AGM?

It is often assumed that every community & voluntary organisation holds an Annual General Meeting (AGM), and that the reasons for doing so are widely understood. However, there are many organisations that do not hold AGMs, and many more that hold them simply because they always have. Why is this?

AGMs are a legal requirement for any organisation that includes membership as part of its structure, and examples of these organisations can be found in the community & voluntary sector (incorporated societies), as well as in the public sector (city or district councils) & the private sector (ie; Fonterra). AGMs provide a variety of very important functions for community & voluntary agencies, and some not so immediately obvious opportunities. The provision for an AGM to be held is also one of the main differences between a Charitable Trust and an Incorporated Society. However, many Charitable Trusts now also hold AGMs, regardless of whether or not membership is part of their structure. AGMs are thus increasingly becoming part of good practice for the community & voluntary sector.

Whether or not your organisation is legally required by its founding document (Trust Deed or Constitution) to hold an AGM, consider the following reasons holding one might be a good idea. The AGM provides:

- The annual opportunity for the organisation's members to have a say in the running of the organisation;
 - o Trustee elections
 - o Presentation & adoption of annual accounts
 - o Presentation & adoption of annual reports from the Chairperson & Chief Executive
 - o Appointment of auditors for next financial year
 - o Membership fees
 - o Any changes to the Trust Deed or Constitution
- The opportunity for the organisation's stakeholders to engage with the people who are actively involved in it on an operational level – whether this be in a paid or voluntary capacity.
- A form of transparent accountability for the community in which the organisation operates
- A forum to introduce new members (ie; Trustees, staff or volunteers) to the stakeholders and community, and to induct new members into the organisation
- An opportunity to build relationships and networks with stakeholders
- A platform to publicly showcase the organisation, its work, and the sector within which it operates
- Direct fundraising via;
 - o Promoting membership
 - o Product sales
 - o Donations
- An opportunity to engage in social and team building activities
- An opportunity to bring in external information (ie; a guest speaker) to add experience, knowledge or stimulate discussion

Whatever your reasons for holding an AGM, its important to remember that the more we as a sector question our norms, the more robust we become. With this in mind, have a discussion with your board or committee about the points raised here, and think about reviewing what you've always done.

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."

Charles Darwin

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

The following information is taken directly from Section 10 of the Community Resource Kit. You can access this information and more from www.community.net.nz

AGENDAS

The basis of any meeting is the agenda. An agenda gives a meeting direction, structure and purpose. The responsibility for preparing the agenda lies ultimately with the secretary with some assistance from the chairperson (and treasurer) where appropriate.

The AGM agenda will depend on the legal structure of an organisation, how actively it's been operating over the last year and how much engagement the board is seeking from those using the services provided.

Regardless of which type of agenda is chosen, preparation is vital so that the meeting runs smoothly and achieves what's needed. The chair, in particular, needs to be well-briefed and prepared to manage the proceedings to meet its objectives.

(From *Annual General Meetings*, Te Puni Kokiri website).

A typical AGM agenda might look like this:

- welcome by chairperson
- apologies
- confirmation of minutes of the previous AGM
- business arising from the minutes
- correspondence
- chairperson's report
- treasurer's report and presentation of audited financial statement
- chairperson stands aside if required
- election of office bearers
- general business
- guest speaker
- date of next meeting
- close and refreshments.



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