



## The Observership Program

### A guide to creating a CV for board review

Welcome to The Observership Program's CV Guide. Creating a board-focused CV is a critical part of your application. This guide will help you develop a CV that showcases both your professional skills and the perspective you would bring to a boardroom. Your CV and your application summary both play a crucial role in the candidate selection and matching process.

#### What to include:

A CV for board positions differs significantly from a standard job application CV. Board CVs focus on transferable skills, strategic thinking you bring to a boardroom. Our host boards seek Observers who can contribute fresh viewpoints. They want to understand how you show up in the world, your core values and how you want to contribute to community. Rather than detailed career history, emphasise impact and outcomes. Your CV should highlight how your professional skills, personal background and lived experiences have shaped your values and perspective while offering insight into the difference you've made both professionally and in your day-to-day life.

This guide will help you create a distinctive, board-focused CV that stands out. Work through these steps.

#### Suggested CV Format

- **Maximum 2 pages** – Keep it succinct, focused on impact/outcomes
- **PDF format** preferred (or your accessible format requirement)
- **Single column layout** – Avoid multiple columns which can be difficult to read
- **Clear, readable font** (11-12pt) with consistent formatting
- **Standard margins** (minimum 2cm on all sides)
- Include a photo if desired – A thumbnail headshot is suitable

## 1. Contact Information

- Full name
- Email address
- Mobile number
- LinkedIn profile (optional)
- Current job title and organisation

## 2. A personal Statement

This is the most important section of your board CV and should appear at the top. It should tell a story about who you are and what you would bring to a boardroom. Your personal statement should be approximately 200-300 words (1-2 paragraphs) and serve as your "boardroom introduction."

Consider these components when writing your personal statement:

***Who you are:*** Share aspects of who you are, your upbringing and lived experiences you are comfortable sharing. This helps boards understand the perspective you can contribute as an Observer.

- Boards value diverse viewpoints – remember your background is an asset.

### ***Professional Value***

- Describe your professional skills and how they could assist with board work.
- Rather than listing job titles and tasks, explain how your experience enables you to contribute to strategic discussions. Consider the impact and outcomes of your work.
- Reflect on how you approach complex problems or decisions
- Reflect on your views about and approach to leadership

### ***Not-for-Profit and Community Connection***

- Detail your involvement in the not-for-profit sector, whether as a volunteer, donor, beneficiary or professional. Remember to include experiences like sitting on the management committee of your child's childcare centre, or a local sporting organisation and other contributions to community.

- Explain what draws you to causes you support – particularly if there is a connection through lived experience and reflect on how you might have already engaged with these causes
- Describe what impact you have made or would like to make through your application to this Program.

### ***Your Values and Motivation***

- Don't be afraid to address the Observership opportunity directly and detail why you want to be an Observer and what you want to contribute
- Detail how your values drive your decision making and what are you passionate about.

### **3. Key skills/Attributes**

- Listing up to four key professional skills or attributes helps the reader to quickly see what you bring to the board, shows how you meet their needs, makes you stand out and highlights the value you can add to a board

### **4. Professional Experience**

- Professional experience should be focused on outcomes and impact rather than heavily descriptive role responsibilities
- Please focus on the last 10 years of experience (unless earlier roles are particularly relevant)
- Remember the CV is a snapshot of you – the detail can be covered in an interview
- Avoid using company logos and keep descriptions succinct and relevant
- Emphasise any achievements and skills relevant to senior leadership and board governance

### **5. Education and Professional Development**

- List degrees, institutions and graduation years
- Include any relevant board governance training, certification or professional development
- Mention industry credentials or specialised training relevant to the not-for-profit sector

# Final Checklist

Before submitting your CV, ensure it:

- Is maximum two pages in PDF format (or your accessible format requirement)
- Opens with a compelling personal statement addressing all components
- Clearly separates volunteer/NFP experience from professional experience
- Focuses on governance-relevant skills and experiences
- Avoids job application language and detailed job descriptions
- Includes relevant personal background and lived experience
- Contains no spelling or grammatical errors
- Uses consistent formatting throughout

Remember, host boards will review your CV to assess not only what skills you offer but also the perspective you bring. Your lived experience and personal background are valuable assets that contribute to board diversity.

For additional guidance, contact [info@observership.com.au](mailto:info@observership.com.au)

## EXAMPLES AND COMMON MISTAKES

### Strong Personal Statement Example:

*"As a first-generation Australian born to Vietnamese refugee parents, I developed a deep appreciation for community support systems that enabled my family's integration. This experience has shaped my commitment to social inclusion, which I've applied throughout my 12-year career in financial analysis and risk management at Commonwealth Bank. My analytical skills allow me to quickly assess complex situations, while my background provides me with a distinctive lens on accessibility and inclusion. As a volunteer financial counsellor with Salvation Army for the past five years, I've seen firsthand how governance decisions impact service delivery to vulnerable communities. Beyond work, I'm an avid rock climber and mentor with the Australian Vietnamese Youth Association, roles that have strengthened my resilience and communication skills."*

## Common Mistakes to Avoid:

**Generic statements** – "I am a dedicated professional with strong integrity and communication skills"

**Specific details** – "My experience creating financial education programs for newly-arrived migrants has demonstrated how clear communication bridges cultural gaps"

**Focusing only on technical skills** – "Expert in Salesforce CRM implementation and API integration"

**Translating skills to governance** – "My expertise in digital systems including CRM implementation has equipped me to advise on technology governance and data privacy considerations"

**Listing job responsibilities** – "Managed a team of five analysts and produced monthly reports"

**Highlighting governance relevance** – "Led cross-functional teams through strategic planning processes, developing skills in stakeholder engagement and outcome measurement"

**Omitting lived experience** – Only including professional achievements  
**Incorporating personal perspective** – "Growing up in regional Australia with limited access to healthcare shaped my understanding of service gaps in rural communities"