

Women in Water Directors Network

2024 Next Generation Program

Background

The Victorian Government has demonstrated significant leadership in achieving gender balance on Victorian water sector boards. The Women in Water Directors Network (WWDN) was initially established to create a positive and enabling environment, so women directors can thrive and be successful in the Victorian water industry.

WWDN first launched a mentoring program in 2018, which has since been expanded into a “Next Generation” program that can contribute to developing talent within the Victorian water industry and is consistent with our industry values. This program is not designed as a mentor/mentee program but instead designed to be a 360-degree relationship so participants can learn from each other and grow in their roles.

The Next Generation program welcomes people from Victorian water corporations and Victorian catchment management authorities. At the heart of the program is building relationships based upon respect and mutual benefit.

The program recognises that all directors, managing directors/ CEOs, and executives within the Victorian water sector bring a diversity of experience, skills and knowledge from which participants may benefit.

It is expected that the program will:

- Allow participants from within the Victorian water industry to grow professionally and personally from their peers.
- Support leaders who have the knowledge, skills, and abilities the water industry needs to succeed into the future.
- Build relationships between directors and executive leadership across the sector.
- Foster environments which enhance outcomes in the board room through structured 360-degree conversations
- Bring together directors, managing directors/ CEOs, and executives to learn from each other by sharing knowledge, expertise, and skills.
- Provide an opportunity to build knowledge and connections whilst fostering collaboration.
- Allow participants to share valuable insights, advice, and guidance with each other.
- Improve professional development, foster collaboration, and drive succession opportunities.
- Promote and encourage leadership through networking and peer support.

How does the Next Generation Program work?

- The next round of the WWDN Next Generation Program opens in March 2024 with a call for Expressions of Interest from those interested in participating.
- Participants will complete an Expression of Interest Form for the program to help match them with a suitable partner based on what they seek to gain from the program.
- The WWDN Committee will match partners based on responses to the Expression of Interest forms received.
- Throughout the year, it is recommended that partners connect 4-6 times, to be arranged between the partners. Participants are encouraged to meet more frequently if it suits both parties and can be as informal or as formal as participants prefer.
- Meetings can be scheduled face to face or by phone or video links within work hours, or during lunch times or after hours depending on mutual availability.

- During an initial meeting, participants should get to know each other and understand what each would like to achieve from the relationship. Open communications regarding participants' expectations are encouraged to ensure both parties mutually benefit from the relationship while being respectful of each other's time and other commitments.
- A WWDN event will be held during the program for participants to come together.
- VicWater will conduct a survey in or around November 2024 to understand how effective and valuable the program has been and gather suggestions for improvements.

Laying the foundations and getting it right – guidelines for success

- All conversations between partners are considered to be confidential.
- Align on mutual expectations early and establish what success means.
- Establish communication protocols and individual styles of operating.
- Be open to listening and learning from each other.
- Share best practices and learnings.
- Have fun!

Want to be involved?

Please complete the [Expression of Interest form](#) by COB **Wednesday 17 April 2024**.

The WWDN Committee will undertake a matching process and be in touch with the participants.

Please note: all requests will be reviewed, and every effort will be made to place all participants with a suitable partner.

Women in Water Directors Network 2024 Next Generation Program

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

1. What is the objective of the Next Generation program?

The WWDN Next Generation program aims to create a positive and enabling environment, so the next generation of leaders in the water sector can thrive and be successful in the Victorian water industry.

2. How is the Next Generation program different to traditional programs?

The Next Generation program recognises that all directors, managing directors and CEOs and executives in the Victorian water industry bring a diversity of experience, skills and knowledge from which everyone may benefit. It is inclusive and designed to facilitate the creation of network and relationships across all water corporations and catchment management authorities.

3. How do I nominate to be part of the program?

Please complete the [Expression of Interest form](#) by COB **Wednesday 17 April 2024**. If you have any questions or have any issues accessing the form, please contact Tara Daniel at VicWater (tara.daniel@vicwater.org.au)

4. Who can apply to be on the program?

Any person who is a director, managing director/ CEO or an executive and is employed by a Victorian water corporation or catchment management authority (including the VEWH) may apply.

5. I participated in previous Peer Programs, can I participate again and be matched with a new partner?

Yes, you are very welcome to submit an Expression of Interest to be matched with a new partner.

6. Who will I be paired with?

You will be asked if you have a preference to be paired with a current NED or an MD/ CEO or an executive. Depending on numbers interested, you may not be paired with your preference. You will not be paired with anyone from your organisation.

7. I am an Executive, what should I expect from this program?

As an executive, there is an element of reverse mentoring expected. You are invited to share with your skills and knowledge with your partner.

8. What are the timeframes for the submission to participate in the program?

Expression of Interest forms to participate in the Peer Program need to be submitted by COB **Wednesday 17 April 2024**. The program will be over a 12-month period commencing May 2024 to April 2025. At the end of this period, partners have the option of extending the relationship if they wish.

9. How will I be connected with my partner?

The WWDN Committee will aim to match individuals based on responses to the Expression of Interest forms and communicate these introductions/matchings via email. It will then be up to participants to initiate the first meeting or conversation with their peer.

10. Once I am connected with my partner, what are the next steps?

Have a call and arrange a meeting (in person or virtual). At this meeting, partners should discuss the parameters of the relationship, boundaries, expectations, clarity around confidentiality, willingness for contact outside of pre-agreed meetings and feedback.

Participants are encouraged to get to know each other and understand what each participant hopes to achieve from the relationship.

As a guide, 4-6 meetings over the year is recommended. Participants are encouraged to meet more frequently if it suits both parties.

11. What should I expect from this relationship?

This relationship should be based upon respect and be of mutual benefit. It is an opportunity to share and learn from each other or provide advice. The relationship is not a space for negative feedback about other individuals or organisations, rather an opportunity to share and learn from each other and provide positive advice.

Discussion topics may range from

- governance discussions including board processes, culture and dynamics. Dealing with difficult issues, evolving governance issues, powerful questions.
- sharing of board experiences or advice on board room situations
 - For Managing Directors/CEOs/Executives this may be sharing what you find helpful from directors in the board room when presenting topics
 - for directors, this may be about board room presence.
- industry topics,
 - For Managing Directors/CEOs/ Executives this may be understanding what keeps directors up at night.
 - for directors, this may be learning more about specific topics or issues facing the sector
- initiatives to improve board expertise or
- sharing of expertise and insights
- Celebration of each other's successes.

The relationship should be mutually beneficial while being respectful of each other's time and commitments and respectful of the confidentiality of discussions.

12. How long is the relationship expected to continue?

The program will be over a 12-month period commencing May 2024 to April 2025. Beyond April 2025, it will be up to you and your peer if you want to continue meeting.

13. How do I give feedback on the Next Generation Program?

A survey to all participants will also be sent out by VicWater in or around November 2024 to gather feedback and incorporate the feedback into future program adjustments.