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# BOARD PIONEER RESOURCE PACK



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## Board Pioneers - Overview

### - Introduction

The need for an initiative like Stellar Quines' Board Pioneer programme was highlighted in 2017's [Taken on Trust](#) report, which showed that the average age of charity trustees is 60-62, that 64% are male and 92% white. For small charities, the average age was even higher with trustees likely to be aged 65 - 74. While this research was based on trustees in England and Wales, there is no reason to believe that the statistics in Scotland would be significantly different.

Experience shows that organisations that prioritise equalities, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are more successful creatively, more economically viable and sustainable, indeed that EDI is one of Creative Scotland's few 'connecting themes' emphasises its importance in Scotland's arts sector. By recruiting, supporting and empowering young women to experience board membership, this programme aims to bring new, unheard voices to the boardroom. Ultimately this diversification of governance is for the benefit of the organisation, stakeholders, partners and audiences.

Stellar Quines' mission is to celebrate the value and diversity of women and girls by making brilliant theatre, provoking change, nurturing artists and empowering participation. As the mission and the vision of the company specifically address both women<sup>1</sup> and girls, it was particularly important for the Board of Stellar Quines to invite younger voices to contribute at the highest level of the company (where young<sup>2</sup> women were underrepresented). Thus, the Board Pioneer role was created.<sup>3</sup>

***Working with Stellar Quines was a fantastic experience. They were so enthusiastic about what we do at GWL and their support meant that our Drama Queens now have four fabulous shelves of plays by women to choose from! Their focus on gender and their role in encouraging women and girls in all aspects of Scottish theatre is inspirational.***

- Donna Moore, Adult Literacy & Numeracy Development Worker,  
Glasgow Women's Library

Following a successful pilot year and considerable interest from across the creative industries, Stellar Quines is publishing this resource pack to assist other companies to begin their own Board Pioneer programme.

### - What is a Board Pioneer?

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<sup>1</sup> Where this document refers to 'women' it refers to all women including trans, cis and intersex women as well as non-binary and gender fluid people who identify in a significant way as women, femme or female

<sup>2</sup> This document defines 'young' as being less than 30 years old. Given the average age of a charity trustee is over 60, a person of half this age could safely be considered 'young' in this context. This age limit was not established as a 'hard line' so as not to exclude those very near the age limit.

<sup>3</sup> Stellar Quines' Board as of July 2019 is 88% Women, 75% aged 30-49, 25% BAME, 12.5% LGBTQIA+.

A Board Pioneer is a voluntary position where the participant attends and contributes to board activity as a development and learning opportunity. Board Pioneers have none of the legal or voting responsibilities of a full Board member. In governance terms, the position is purely observational – the Board Pioneer has no liability. While that is the official and legal structure that the role sits within, the Pioneer is welcomed to the Board as an equal – their voice will be heard as it would with than any other member. The tenure for a Board Pioneer at Stellar Quines is one year.

A single member of the board is given responsibility over the pioneer programme and is the first contact for the Board Pioneer should they have any questions. They are, effectively, the board mentor of the pioneer. Board Pioneers are also given additional support and development from members of the board to ensure that they are fully supported in their learning goals during their tenure

### - Why have a Board Pioneer?

In addition to the aforementioned benefits of increasing diversity, a Board Pioneers programme offers a significant career development opportunity. The benefit is not in one direction – having different voices added to the conversation at governance level enables companies to better serve its stakeholders and audiences. By developing the governance potential of Board Pioneers, Stellar Quines aims to contribute a cohort of young, female potential board members to the sector.

## Recruitment Process

Stellar Quines has created a simple application form (Toolkit Item 1) for recruitment. An application form was chosen in order to facilitate like for like comparisons and to support the applicants to provide relevant information.

A panel of two Board members, the Artistic Director / CEO and Company Producer based on the competencies outlined in the advertisement and job description.

The board member responsible for the programme then meets with the pioneer individually before their first board meeting as a form of welcome and introduction. This meeting offers the pioneer an opportunity to hear more about current company activity and priorities, as well as outlining their own interests and learning ambitions.

## Criteria for Stellar Quines Board Pioneer

*Why keep going to the theatre if you seldom see yourself reflected there?*

- Lyn Gardner, The Guardian on gender in theatre

In addition to age, Stellar Quines has prioritised candidates from other under-represented groups which has further diversified the voices at our board meetings. The following list of protected characteristics as determined by the Equalities Act are useful for identifying constituencies or themes you might want to focus on:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race / ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Sex / gender
- Sexual orientation

For organisations funded by Creative Scotland: Creative Scotland has also added its own characteristic of socio-economic deprivation which covers such areas as poverty, crime, rural isolation, low economic activity/unemployment and poor educational attainment.

### Essential

- young person
- passionate about theatre
- interested in how a board works
- cares about the voices of women

### Desirable

- from a traditionally under represented group on boards (BAME, LGBTQIA+)

## Requirement of the Board Pioneer

- Reading all relevant reports and board papers in order to contribute to meetings
- Attending approximately all 4 board meetings and an AGM over 12 months
- The option to attend 3-4 meetings of any sub-committees that they join (automatically offered attendance of Finance and Audit committee)
- Contributing to the decision-making process and the strategic direction of the company
- Being a champion of the company and their work (including seeing the company's work)
- Discretion – all board discussions are confidential

## Benefits to the Pioneer

- Gain a deep understanding of the company, its vision and mission, its structure and its work
- Learn about the duties of a board, the responsibilities and structures of governance and how the company and the board work together to achieve the company's mission
- Be fully supported to develop your role on the board
- Gain transferable skills and experience to add to your CV
- Have the chance to make an impact on an organisation
- Be reimbursed for all reasonable travel expenses

## Board Pioneer – Now what?

Once a Board Pioneer is recruited, it is the responsibility of the whole board to make the pioneer feel welcome, comfortable and heard.

The board member leading on the pioneer programme should ideally meet the new Board Pioneer before their first board meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Put the Board Pioneer at ease
- Explain a bit about how the meeting will work and to invite their contribution
- Cover the practicalities of the meetings (dates, locations, access, attendance)
- Discuss the pioneer's interests and aspirations and what they hope to learn from their time as Board Pioneer
- Consider any known opportunities and training programmes
- Invite the pioneer onto any sub-committees that may be helpful for their development

At the Pioneer's first board meeting, care is taken to introduce them and everyone in attendance and to welcome them to the company.

Following this meeting, the pioneer is included in all normal board activity and correspondence. The board member leading on the pioneer programme should also check in with the pioneer on a regular basis to ensure that they are gaining as much as possible from the experience and in order to jointly identify further learning opportunities. Stellar Quines is committed to funding and securing appropriate training for the Board Pioneer.

At the end of the Board Pioneer's tenure, a debrief session with one or more board members is recommended for the benefit of everyone involved and the ongoing improvement of the programme.

*Bursting with wit, intelligence and energy, Stellar Quines brings new vigour to Scottish theatre .*

- The Scotsman

## Statement from previous Board Pioneers

*“I thought being a Board Pioneer might give me insight into the infrastructure and day to day running (or governance as I might call it now!) of a well-established company. I was also curious how the board of a company and the company itself would fit into the wider Scottish theatre and arts sector. Finally, I admired Stellar Quines work and was therefore keen to learn anything I could about how they make that work, particularly the areas out with the creative process and rehearsals room which is where my experience lay. I felt very welcome from the start.*

*Being a Board Pioneer helped me to understand more about the things I had been curious about: what a board does, how a company is governed and who has responsibilities for different aspects. I also gained insight into the kinds of challenges that many companies face currently e.g. how to market yourself, the balance of work produced, fundraising, and managing personnel especially where they have freelance commitments. This is all invaluable as I move forward with my own career, but it is also somewhat reassuring to know that the problem solving skills and smaller scale issue I deal with in my own work will remain useful as those skill sets are applicable at a much higher level.*

*I think being a pioneer could be of benefit to women from a range of backgrounds and interests across the arts and arts management.”*

– Shilpa T-Hyland, Board Pioneer 2017 – 2018.

*“Stellar Quines was a company that I had followed with great interest for many years - its work and ethos combines two of my passions – promoting women (their visibility and creativity) and making theatre. When I saw the advertisement to be their Board Pioneer, I was delighted, even more so when I was offered the position (alongside another, brilliant pioneer). I had been interested in joining a board for a number of years but there aren't positions available for younger professionals at earlier stages of their career.*

*During my time as a Board Pioneer, I learnt about theatre company governance and I was able to meet and connect to many inspiring women. Prior to being a Board Pioneer, I didn't have the confidence to apply to join a board. The year of experience that I gained observing and contributing to the Stellar Quines board changed that. I now sit on the board as a full member and know that it wouldn't have been possible without the pioneer programme.*

*Being a board pioneer and then board member for Stellar Quines has also been incredibly important to me on a personal level. It has allowed me to stay involved with my industry in the most supportive atmosphere during pregnancy and early motherhood. My baby has been warmly welcomed at every turn which has allowed me to continue to serve on the board comfortably and with confidence. This is yet another example of Stellar Quines' exemplary record for Equalities, Diversity and Inclusivity.”*

– Jackie Crichton, Board Pioneer 2017 – 2018.

## Toolkit

This toolkit is simply the materials that we created in order to recruit for the programme. We are sharing them so as to remove some of the 'legwork' from other organisations in the hope that this will incentivise you to adopt this programme (or a similar one). These materials are based on our knowledge and experience of our own company and you should seek your own legal advice on the material or process you design.

### - Board Pioneer Advertisement

Below is a sample of the advertisement that Stellar Quines used in the latest recruitment process. This was hosted on the company website, shared across all Stellar Quines Social Media channels and posted as an opportunity on the Creative Scotland Opportunities portal. Stellar Quines also targeted organisations with a specific EDI focus. If it is a priority to recruit outside your sector, you may consider advertising more widely. In the first round of Board Pioneer recruitment, Stellar Quines additionally targeted groups linked to volunteering and young people as well as colleges and universities. However, there were very few applicants from these sources and it was not deemed time efficient to repeat this targeting.

#### **Board Pioneer Advertisement - Sample**

Following a successful pilot programme, Stellar Quines is recruiting for a new Board Pioneer. We are excited to offer this unique opportunity to help develop the skills and experience of someone in the early stages of their career. The role of the board is to ensure good governance and financial management, whilst also supporting and championing the work of the company. We meet four times a year and provide brilliant snacks!

Stellar Quines' vision is to be Scotland's leading touring theatre company, inspiring excellence in women & girls supported by our mission to celebrate the value and diversity of women and girls by making brilliant theatre, provoking change, nurturing artists and empowering participation. In line with our vision, mission and charitable purpose, we are committed to representing a diversity of voices on our board. In particular, young women or girls (a key focus in our vision) are currently under-represented on our Board. Therefore, while not exclusive in any way, we are especially keen to find candidates who are most likely to be somewhere in the age range 18-30, or close to it, to help us to address this gap. Additionally, we are interested in receiving applications from those who also come from other traditionally underrepresented groups such as BAME, LGBTQIA+.

### **What will the role involve?**

- Reading all relevant reports and board papers in order to contribute to meetings
- Attending approximately 4 board meetings and an AGM over 12 months (meeting in the evening between 6pm–8pm)
- The option to attend 3-4 meetings of the Finance and Audit subcommittee
- You will be encouraged to contribute to the decision making process and the strategic direction of the company.
- Being a champion of the company and their work (including seeing the company's work!)
- Discretion – all board discussions are confidential

### **Who are we looking for?**

We are looking for a pioneer who is

- from a traditionally under represented group on boards (women, BAME, LGBTQIA+)
- passionate about theatre
- interested in how a board works
- cares about the voices of women

### **In return you will...**

- Learn about the company and duties of a board
- Be fully supported to develop your role on the board
- Gain transferable skills and experience to add to your CV
- Have the chance to make an impact on a small but vital organisation
- Be reimbursed for all reasonable travel expenses.

### **Interested?**

No qualifications are needed, other than a commitment to the aims of the company.

To apply, please complete this short online form by Monday 15 April at noon. If you require the application form in any other format, please get in touch using the email below.

If you would like to ask questions or have an informal chat with us please contact [hello@stellarquines.co.uk](mailto:hello@stellarquines.co.uk) to arrange an appointment

## - Application Form

The application questions are designed to be simple and accessible. A clear method of contacting the company was provided, as was the offer of the application form in alternative formats. Stellar Quines used Google Forms but there are other suitable online platforms or it could be a pdf or word document to be downloaded and completed. Stellar Quines' normal Equal Opportunities Monitoring questions were included.

### Board Pioneer Application Form - Sample

Name

Email

Tell us a little bit about yourself and your experience to date

What interests you about Stellar Quines?

What do you hope to learn from being a Board Pioneer?

Please tick any dates below that you ARE available for:

- dd/mm/yy
- dd/mm/yy
- dd/mm/yy

## - Shortlisting Process (including information sheet)

You can organise this however suits your organisation. Best practice would be to use a simple scoring system, to anonymise candidates as far as possible and to account for conflicts of interest. Most importantly, you should do a simple, common sense 'fairness' check at every stage. A brief information sheet was circulated to the shortlisting panel. This was designed to be clear and concise and to ensure that the process was as fair as possible. This included a scoring matrix to aid with the shortlisting process.

### Sample Process

1. Applications are batched so that each candidate is reviewed by two different panel members. Panellists review and score each candidate that their initials are marked against.
2. Scores are collated and a shortlist of approximately 6 is generated.
3. Shortlist is read by entire panel and each panellist puts forward 2 'picks' (while still referencing criteria).
4. Discussion of picks and possible input from Artistic Director (can be over email, phone or in person).
5. Appointment made and candidates notified.

### Shortlisting Information Sheet - Sample

This info sheet aims to ensure that the panel reviews the applications in a fair and consistent manner. We are shortlisting against the criteria that we stated in the advert:

- from a traditionally under represented group on boards (women, BAME, LGBTQI)
- passionate about theatre
- interested in how a board works
- cares about the voices of women

Please also consider whether:

- being Stellar Quines' Board Pioneer will benefit the candidate's development (personal, creative, professional or otherwise).

**Criteria Scoring** – please score each candidate using this scoring system.

Criteria Not Met = **0**

Criteria Somewhat Met = **1**

Criteria Met = **2**

Criteria Perfectly Met = **3**

**Please notify of any potential conflicts of interest should they arise.**

## FAQs

The Board Pioneers programme was a first of its kind in Scotland and we learned a lot from the process of introducing it – here are some of the questions which we have asked ourselves, or others have asked us, and which might be helpful to you in developing your own programme.

### - Is it really ok - legally - to recruit on the basis of age?

Normally, it is definitely illegal! However, you can target people who possess any particular ‘protected characteristic’ if that characteristic is needed and is under-represented in the area to which you are recruiting.

You do, however, need to be careful how you present the information in your recruitment material. Some of the ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ are set out further down this page. This is based on our knowledge and experience of our own company and you should seek your own legal advice on the material or process you design.

### - But this isn’t employment. Is it the same for Boards?

Yes, it is the same – except that it is important to remember, and to stress, that these are extra positions, and the successful candidates will not be full voting members – so by appointing a Pioneer, you are not excluding anyone else from a Board position.

Boards of any organisation often want to have a younger voice in Board meetings but, naturally, it is hard to find when the skills and abilities sought in full Board members will usually reflect considerable experience, often professional, gained over years. This programme was designed to get that young voice ‘on Board’ without the risk of competing with, or diminishing, those essential governance roles. Although it is important to emphasise the parity of esteem and contribution, it is also important to be clear about the differences. For this reason, as well as for other reasons, it is important that the period of office is not that of a regular Board member – ideally a year and, we would suggest, not more than eighteen months at most (and without renewal).

### - How do we advertise a Pioneer position in a way that reflects good diversity practice?

Always include a clear statement about the fact that the ‘particular characteristic’ is under-represented in your Board/organisation and that this is relevant and important – and if possible, why. For Stellar Quines, ‘girls’ as well as ‘women’, are a specified target group in the company mission. For others, it may be highly relevant to gain a youthful voice in order to build audiences and participation in the organisation. For all in the sector, it will be able developing future leaders in the arts.

For Board Pioneers, don’t use any very specific age range. That is definitely not good practice. And apart from anything else, you don’t want to exclude a good candidate just because they are six months outside any ‘limit’ (and whatever you say

in the recruitment material you must stick to). If you do want to illustrate what you mean by 'young' than go no further than something like:

*“The successful candidate is most likely to be in a x to y age range, or close to that.”*

Another way to do this is to be very clear that you are seeking candidates who have a definite interest in the sector but have not had time to develop any management or governance skills. The whole point of the programme is to up-skill future talent not to offer experience to people new to the sector but who might already have acquired relevant experience in other areas. Useful as those transferable skills are, that it is not the point of this programme. Something like the following would reflect this:

*“This programme is aimed specifically at providing new knowledge and skills to future leaders in our sector. It is targeted specifically at those in the earliest stages of their careers who have not yet had any opportunity to gain an insight into company management or governance skills (in this or any other sector).”*

Every company's mission is different, so you do need to seek your own legal advice which is relevant to your specific circumstances. Here we are aiming to help you to develop a clear rationale and a draft for them to look at.

### - What about the recruitment process itself?

The process may be a simple one – and much simpler than an employment process, for example, but the standards of fairness as you undertake the actual process itself are the same, as is the need to avoid any form of discrimination. That simply means that you take the usual care to avoid any bias, conscious or unconscious, as you consider applications, and follow the usual 'do's and don'ts' for that - just as you would in making any decision. You should also ensure that your records are clear, consistent and relevant.

### - Do you have to interview?

The decision of whether or not to interview can be left to the organisation. Stellar Quines elected not to invite candidates to interview for two reasons: the potential for introducing bias and not wanting to make the application for a voluntary, relatively short position overly onerous.

### - Do we need to give feedback to unsuccessful applicants?

It is good practice, and helpful to applicants, to provide feedback on request. However, this may not be practicable if you have a large number of applicants (and in our experience, this is likely) so you need to be careful not to promise something you may not be able to deliver. It may be best to say nothing about feedback until you reach the stage of notifying the results. An alternative would be to provide all applicants – after completion of the process – with a simple information sheet providing general guidance that may help in the future. As the Board Pioneer programme gains traction in the arts sector in Scotland (as we hope it will), the need for this from specific companies may decline as the general aims and objectives

become better known. Possibly, sector-wide information and workshops might also be introduced! After the first recruitment process, Stellar Quines organised a group feedback/information session open to all applicants that included talks from the industry about governance. This alternative method of feedback was well received and could be replicated on a smaller scale.

***This information pack was written by Jackie Crichton, Board Member and Pioneer, 2017-18. Stellar Quines would like to thank Lisa Sangster, Board member 2011-18, for creating, delivering and championing the original Board Pioneer programme.***