

JUTE Theatre Company Board Observer Program

Introduction

JUTE Theatre Company is committed to fostering leadership and governance skills in our community, aligning with our strategic vision to create moments for connection and change through theatre. To support this mission, JUTE Theatre Company is offering a Board Observer opportunity August 2025/2026. This is a unique opportunity for those wishing to gain hands-on experience on a not-for-profit board and contributing to our company focus areas of culture, powerful theatre, unheard voices, tenacity and rigour, and audacity with courage.

The JUTE Board Observer Program offers substantial value for our not-for-profit board and the observers. For our board, it brings fresh perspectives, potential future members, and additional support. For observers, it offers hands-on professional development, networking opportunities, and a pathway to impactful board roles. This mutually beneficial arrangement strengthens the governance and leadership capacities of not-for-profit organisations while fostering the growth of emerging leaders.

JUTE Theatre Company invites a diverse range of individuals to apply for The JUTE Board Observer Program. We especially encourage applications from First Nations people, individuals from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds, young people (minimum age: 20) and people with disabilities. This program aims to enhance participants' leadership skills and contribute to the not-for-profit sector, supporting our mission to create a fearless world of empathy and compassion through the transformative power of theatre.

Board observers at JUTE Theatre Company will be required to adhere to all established policies and procedures of the board. Additionally, all observers must sign a confidentiality agreement prior to being accepted into the program. This ensures that they understand and commit to maintaining the privacy and integrity of board discussions and sensitive information throughout their tenure.

The observer will be asked to research a topic over the twelve-month period relevant to not-for-profit regulation, not-for-profit board responsibilities, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) impact, audience engagement or diversifying audiences or another agreed topic with a view to delivering a short presentation to the Board towards the end of the role.

Alignment with JUTE's Strategic Plan

Participating in the JUTE Board Observer Program directly supports JUTE Theatre Company's strategic goals for 2025-2028:

- *Culture and Place: By fostering leadership skills, we ensure that our commitment to our diverse region is supported by skilled governance.*
- *Powerful Theatre: The program helps build a network of leaders who can advocate for and support the creation of impactful theatre that resonates with our communities.*
- *Unheard Voices: Enhancing board capacity ensures that the voices of underrepresented communities are championed and heard.*
- *Tenacity and Rigour: The JUTE Board Observer Program's commitment align with our strategic focus on tenacity and long-term capacity building.*
- *Audacity with Courage: Empowering emerging leaders to take on governance roles supports our aim to create life-changing experiences through theatre.*

Why JUTE Theatre Company values the Board Observer Program:

1. Fresh Perspectives and Ideas:

- *Board observers often bring new and innovative ideas to the table. Their diverse backgrounds and experiences can introduce fresh perspectives on strategic issues, enhancing the board's decision-making process.*

2. Talent Pipeline:

- *Observers serve as a pipeline for future board members. By observing and participating in board activities, they become familiar with the organisation's mission, operations, and governance, making them well-prepared for eventual full board membership.*

3. Enhanced Governance:

- *Observers are usually selected for their skills, their diversity and potential. Their presence can enhance the board's overall governance by contributing to discussions and providing insights, particularly in areas where they have expertise.*

4. Networking Opportunities:

- *Not-for-profits can benefit from the networks of their board observers. These connections can lead to new partnerships, funding opportunities, and other resources that support the organisation's goals.*

5. Support for Initiatives:

- *Observers will undertake a strategic project, bringing additional capacity to the board. This support can be invaluable, especially for initiatives requiring focused attention or specialised knowledge.*

6. Mentorship and Development:

- The presence of observers allows for a mentorship dynamic, where experienced board members can guide and develop the next generation of leaders, not only for JUTE Theatre Company but for other theatre organisations, ensuring skilled leadership for JUTE and other organisations.

Why would you want to become a JUTE Theatre Company Board Observer

1. Professional Development:

- Participation in board meetings provides hands-on experience in governance, strategic planning, and high-level decision-making, which are invaluable skills for career advancement.

2. Understanding Governance:

- Observers gain a deep understanding of the fundamental principles and functions of not-for-profit boards, including the roles and responsibilities of board members, governance priorities, and decision-making processes.

3. Leadership Skills:

- The experience enhances leadership skills, particularly in strategic thinking, collaboration, and ethical decision-making. Observers learn from seasoned directors and apply these skills in their professional lives and to other arts organisations.

4. Networking:

- Observers build networks with board members and other stakeholders, which can open up new career opportunities and professional relationships.

5. Contribution to the Community:

- By participating in the governance of a not-for-profit, observers contribute to meaningful outcomes and make a positive impact on the community, aligning with personal values and goals.

6. Mentorship Opportunities:

- Observers have the chance to be mentored by experienced board directors, gaining insights and advice that can significantly benefit their personal and professional development.

7. Pathway to Board Membership:

- The program often serves as a stepping stone to full board membership. Observers may transition to board positions, leveraging their experience to contribute more significantly to JUTE or other not-for-profit organisations.

8. Recognition and Credibility:

- Being selected as a board observer is a mark of distinction. It adds to the observer's professional credibility and demonstrates a commitment to leadership and community service.

Observers are required to:

- Participate fully in the Board Observer role for one year.
- Attend all JUTE board meetings (monthly – online meetings)
- Attend the annual Strategic Planning Weekend (In Person - generally a Sat & Sun in February)
- Identify and undertake a strategic project during the 12- month program.

Application Process

Prospective Observers must complete an application form and undergo a competitive selection process. Key dates are:

- Applications Open: Wednesday, 12 July 2024
- Applications Close: COB Monday 15 July 2024

Link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BoardObserverEOI>

Required Documents:

- CV (maximum of two pages) highlighting professional skills, values, and experience.
- Responses to essay questions covering motivations, experiences, and achievements.

Questions – Complete Online EOI

Applicants must answer the following questions:

1. Why would you like to participate in the JUTE Board Observer program? (Max 150 words)
2. What can you learn from and contribute to a not-for-profit arts board? (Max 250 words)
3. Why is theatre important to the world and in this region? (Max 250 words)

4. Do you have any suggested topics for a board observer strategic project relevant to not-for-profit regulation, not-for-profit board responsibilities, or any other aspect of JUTE's governance activities which may be of interest to the Board?
5. Outline an example of where you have committed to and completed a long-term project and provide the 2-3 key outcomes of the project you achieved. (Max 250 words)
6. Detail any voluntary involvement in the not-for-profit sector. (Max 100 words)

Link:

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Selection Process

The board will review all applications at the July Board meeting. The Chair and the AD/CEO will arrange to meet with the prospective board observers and the final decision will be made at the August board meeting.

The successful board observers (maximum of 2 will be selected) will be matched with a 'board buddy' and will attend the September board meeting.

Contact Information

For any questions regarding the application, contact Suellen Maunder, Artistic Director/CEO at suellen@jute.com.au