

INVITATION TO JOIN THE GCBR BOARD

April 2019

Joining the Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve (GCBR) Board is one of the most valued local voluntary commitments someone can make. It is a special gift to society that you and your family can be proud of today and for future generations. Active membership of the GCBR and its Board can enrich your legacy to life.

Taking on this role brings your experience to the heart of the organisation's thinking, decisions and work. In turn, you will be exposed to ideas and initiatives that make the GCBR a place of **world recognition** for learning about how people and nature can live in harmony in our local ecology.

The following questions and answers bring together information about the Board. The hyperlinks included lead to greater detail. This invitation tells what you need to know about putting yourself forward as a Board member.

Q. What is the GCBR?

Legally, the GCBR is a Non Profit Company (NPC). Members are the 'owners', equivalent to shareholders. Organisationally, the GCBR is the 'managing entity' of a UNESCO declared Biosphere Reserve. Currently, South Africa has 10 Biosphere Reserves, while the world has close to [700](#). Obviously, the GCBR cannot 'manage' the 3.1 million hectares that make up the reserve. What can be 'managed' is the GCBR as a champion of the UNESCO Man and Biosphere (MAB) principles.

Q. What does the GCBR do?

The GCBR applies the MAB principles in more than one way. Central is an integrated programme of practical, multi-year projects. The GCBR also does many other things. Examples are: running stalls at Agricultural shows, compiling media broadcasts; inviting newspaper articles; communicating through an active web presence as well as with social media outreach; co-sponsoring eco-events such as cycle tours; providing micro-finance for local eco-initiatives; presenting at international conferences and [more](#). The present programme pays a lot of attention to those who are unemployed.

Because it is a responsive organisation, you will continually hear about exciting ideas and initiatives that may need to be 'tested' for their relevance to the GCBR mission, affordability, risk, reputation and other issues that governing involves.

Q. Who is the GCBR for?

A short answer is that the GCBR is for everyone of the Biosphere Reserve area and the ecology they live within. Guided by the Board, the GCBR prioritises its work in terms of the importance of the MAB issue, the stakeholders it can serve, the geography it can cover and the resources it can raise. It does so knowing that the ecosystem is a stakeholder with a 'voice' that also needs to be heard.

Q. How is the GCBR organised?

With a new office in Riversdale, the GCBR is run by a lean professional team of five people. They work with professional managers of diverse projects that the GCBR implements directly. In addition, some projects are implemented by other organisations.

Q. How is the GCBR financed?

Over the years, the GCBR has raised money from many sources for many types of activity. Prospecting for new sources will never stop - Board networks can be a major asset in this. A substantial grant is a spur to reducing dependency in the longer term. To diversify income, the GCBR has established and owns a for-profit company; Gouritz Enterprises (GE).

Dedicated effort and investment will be needed to move this initiative forward, where there are opportunities for Board membership, especially for people with a business background.

Q. How is the GCBR governed?

Companies are governed by the Companies Act. A special section applies to NPCs. Each NPC has its own Memorandum of Incorporation (MoI), filling in the specific rules that the organisation will live by to fulfil its objectives. Board members ensure that the organisation complies with these legal requirements.

The GCBR's Board is mandated by members. They periodically elect directors who are ultimately responsible for what the organisation does. Directors serve for a term of three years, with no limits as to how often they can be re-elected. The chairperson is directly elected by members, not by the other directors. Currently, there are six Board meetings a year, many in George, Western Cape. Travel costs are reimbursed.

Q. What is the Board (not) for?

A Board is there to govern, not to manage. An effective NPC Board finds the best balance between sharing governance-related tasks with management and staff and avoiding micro-interference in how the organisation is run day by day.

The Board's tasks are to:

1. ensure legal compliance;
2. provide oversight/ be guardians of the public interest and reputation;
3. provide strategic direction to and with management;
4. offer professional advice, guidance and connection to networks and contacts which help management and staff to do their work;
5. monitor performance;
6. recruit and appoint the Chief Executive; and
7. understand the finances and approve the accounts.

The Board makes decisions about many issues which set the path, tone, style and standards for the quality of governance. In consultation with management, the Board decides what information it needs to discharge its responsibilities.

Q. As a Board member, what is my role?

A Board of Directors fulfils diverse functions.

1. approve and enter into contracts with individuals, staff and other organisations;
2. approve investments, strategies, projects, budgets, expenditures and audits;
3. raise funds in the organisation's name;
4. represent the organisation in public;
5. speak on its behalf;
6. establish binding policies,
7. set and monitor performance measures and standards; and
8. delegate authority to management.

The Board composition we are currently working towards has seven members bringing complementary ranges of experience and expertise:

Chair: an apolitical figure, with a reputation for probity.

Treasurer: a professional qualified to oversee audits, assess sustainability strategies and interface with Gourittz Enterprises on economic issues.

Five other directors without specific portfolios, but with preferred skill sets:

- Scientific knowledge/ interpretation relevant to the field
- Marketing and Public Relations
- Rural community/ peri-urban development
- Social economy and entrepreneurship
- Performance assessment/ evaluation and learning

This profile is not set in stone. The Board needs to evolve. If you think that you can contribute to the GCBR as a Board member let us know via admin@gouritz.com and the Chairman will get in touch.

Similarly, if you think that joining the Board of Gouritz Enterprises is a better fit with what you can bring to what the GCBR stands for and is trying to do, please let us know.

This is a very exciting time to be a Board member. With so much to be crafted and agreed, your contribution will shape how the GCBR and the environment we live in and rely on develops in the years to come. The next generation will thank you!

Welcome!

