

Topic 6

EMERGE
Supporting Farmer Led Groups

A collaborative project between
TAS FARM INNOVATION HUB
RMCG

Inducting Members and Planning for Succession

Strong farmer groups do not leave participation or leadership transition to chance. A simple induction helps new members understand the group, how it works (including if committees are in place), contribute sooner and feel part of the team.

Succession planning then builds a pipeline of people who can step into greater responsibility over time.

1. Make induction part of how the group works

Induction is a process for introducing members of the group to their roles and responsibilities. It can be used for new members to welcome and introduce them to your group; introducing members to a new role they are taking on; or during a role changeover between office bearers.

Induction should be planned, practical and personal. Nominating a mentor or buddy, preparing an induction checklist, and seeking feedback afterwards is recommended.

For farmer groups, the depth of induction should match the role: *every member* requires context, connection and a clear way to contribute, while *committee members* also need governance and legal information.

Make the process inclusive: use plain language, explain acronyms and unwritten norms, check communication needs, and recognise the skills and experience each person already brings.

General Members

Help people understand why the group exists, what it offers and how they can participate.

- Welcome and introductions
- Purpose, priorities and current activities
- Key contacts and communication channels
- Events, meetings and ways to contribute
- Member benefits and expectations
- Communication or accessibility needs
- Skills, experience and interests they bring.

Office Bearers and Committee Members

Add role clarity, governance, decision-making, financial and legal responsibilities.

- Constitution, structure and strategic plan
- Terms of reference / governance agreement
- Role descriptions and responsibilities
- Recent minutes, actions and annual calendar
- Code of conduct and conflicts of interest
- Reporting, compliance and legal obligations
- Key partners, relationships and current commitment

2. Use a simple induction pathway

Use a simple induction pathway that everyone understands and can adopt. The following pathway is suggested:

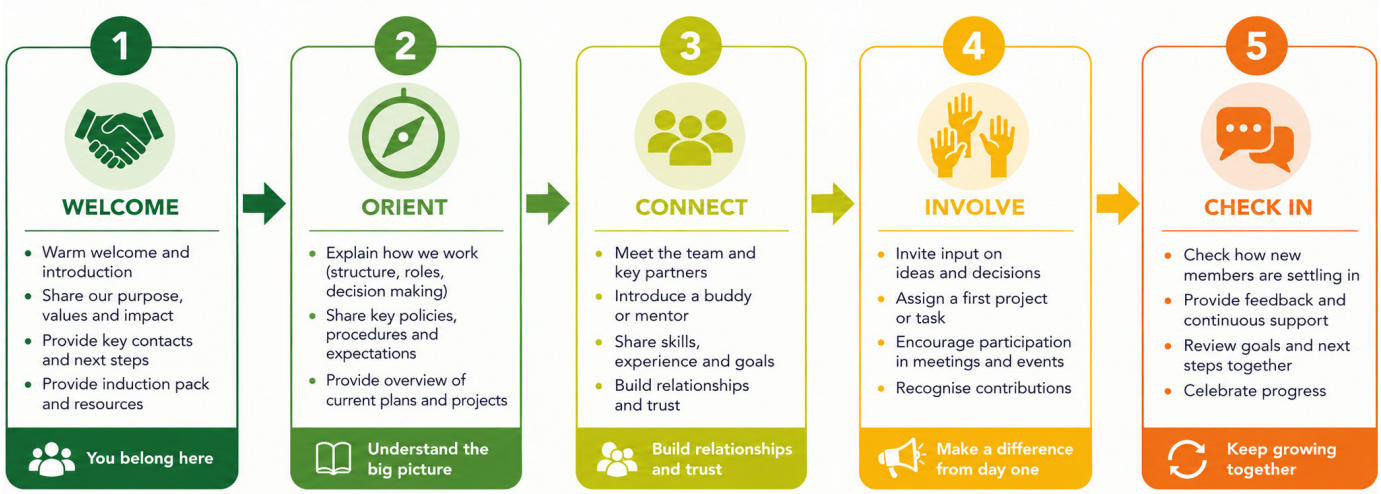


Figure 1 - Induction pathway steps

3. Give people a reason to stay involved

The first year of membership is important for retention. Keep new members connected through ongoing communication, member-to-member contact and visible opportunities to contribute. A buddy, mentoring or peer-support approach can help people build confidence and relationships.

Some people will get involved quickly; others may need a direct invitation or follow-up. Ask people who do not renew why and use the feedback to improve the group. An inclusive group also actively seeks ideas from members and values their input in decisions that affect them.

4. Treat succession as an ongoing pipeline, not an emergency

Succession is more than replacing the Chair or other office bearers when they leave. Succession is an ongoing system focused on the capabilities the group will need in future – it's not simply replacing like-for-like. The sustainability of the group is strengthened by preparing champions, providing mentoring, and planning early for transfer of responsibility, resources and knowledge.

Rotating leadership roles and deliberately developing the skills and knowledge to support successive Chairs or other key roles helps to ensure skills and motivation are maintained and expanded upon for the group's benefit. A suggested pathway for succession is as follows:



Figure 2 - Succession pathway steps

5. Create stepping stones from member to leader

Not every member wants a leadership role, and that is fine. The aim is to make pathways visible so interested people can build confidence and experience gradually. Useful entry points include helping with a field day, hosting a farm walk, joining a project working group or a committee, presenting at a meeting, or shadowing an office bearer.

What good looks like:

- *New people feel welcomed, informed, included and useful*
- *Leadership change is calm rather than disruptive*
- *Knowledge and relationships are shared*
- *Emerging leaders have opportunities to practise through mentoring and meaningful role*
- *The group and its committees have the mix of skills, representation and perspectives needed for what comes next.*

Quick checklist to support Induction and Transition steps

Induction

- Buddy / mentor nominated
- Welcome and introductions completed
- Role-appropriate information provided
- Early contribution or task agreed
- Follow-up / check-in scheduled.

Succession

- Future skills and roles discussed
- Potential successors / contributors identified
- Development opportunities offered
- Handover information kept current
- Handover / transition plan kept current.



Additional Resources

- **Grower Group Alliance, The Grower Group Toolkit for Effective Farmer Groups (2021)**

  https://www.gga.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Vol-4_April-2021-GGA-Toolkit.pdf

- **Australian Institute of Company Directors (2026)**

  https://www.aicd.com.au/board-of-directors/roles/appointment/six-steps-to-future-proof-your-board-succession-plan.html

How this resource came about

The Emerge project was funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund to support new, emerging and informal farmer groups to develop their skills and knowledge, and to create this set of resources for use by groups into the future. Groups participating in 2026 received coaching and additional learning opportunities to supplement the content of these resources.

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