

Associate membership: is it right for you?

What the BID Policy says

Associate membership - the business association may consider associate members (business entities outside the BID programme targeted rate area) to join, by way of paying a subscription to the business association.

Associate members are not entitled to stand for election to the association board but may be appointed if there is a vacancy. An associate member is not entitled to vote on any matters relating to the BID programme and BID programme targeted rate income and expenditure.

Associate membership must not hold the majority over full membership of the association.



When considering whether to offer associate membership, you should first think about your existing members and your strategic direction – not just the lure of extra income.

Several BID-operating business associations currently offer associate membership to businesses operating outside their BID programme targeted rate area.

For some it's become a lucrative source of additional income, however that was not the prime motivation.

As Claire Siddens says, it all starts with determining whether associate membership meets your (business association) strategic direction and is possible within the rules of the society (constitution).

“There may also be a clause in your constitution that associate memberships must be approved by the board in the first instance,” Claire says.

“A BID’s strategic plan should clearly set that direction and spell out what is it that the BID programme is there to achieve and for whom.

“Your existing full members and BID affiliates always come first, and you should consider whether any associate member ‘outsiders’ will complement or compete with those currently within the BID boundary.”

“Another key question to ask yourself is ‘*what do we have to offer?*’ Which services or programmes could you extend to associates?”

- **Sponsorship is something else to consider as an alternative to associate membership and we’ll talk about sponsorship in a future newsletter.**

“For some BIDs, offering associate membership has proved a useful opportunity to explore the possibility of expanding their programme targeted rate area. Not always successful, it nevertheless tests the waters so to speak and provides potential BID affiliates with a sample of what a BID can do for them,” says Claire.

Business North Harbour, which has successfully expanded its BID boundary twice within fast growing Albany, has set itself a target of increasing its associate membership year-on-year.

“It can be a good money-maker but in North Harbour’s case, it is the strength and popularity of its events and services that attracts a growing number of businesses to sign up as associates,” says Claire.

- **What Business North Harbour offers associate members**

Finally, the importance of good process and clarity around where new associates come from cannot be understated.

“Sourcing associate members should never be indiscriminate,” says Claire. “At the end of the day, you want an engaged, discerning membership that enhances your BID programme.”