



Building An Inclusive Board – Moving Forward

A VISION FOR ACCOLA IN 2031

Picture the Accola board five years from now. The table is wider, and the voices around it represent the breadth of communities Accola serves. A majority of board members bring lived expertise from those communities, alongside directors whose professional skills — legal, financial, clinical, organizational — sharpen the board's governance. The leaders who founded Accola, carrying forward the governance tradition of CSJ Ministries Foundation, remain central to this story, doing the work of evolving the board they built into the board Accola needs.

The work at the table feels different too. With professional staff carrying programmatic expertise, the board spends its time on the questions only a board can answer. Is Accola serving the right people? Are we measuring what communities themselves say matters? Are our resources and our influence stewarded with the compassion and justice our founding Sisters named? The conversations are sharper because the people closest to the work hold real authority in the room.

The network of relationships Accola can draw on has widened. Community-based giving, faith-based philanthropy, equity-focused funders, and grassroots fundraising are established pillars alongside the generous donor relationships Accola inherited from CSJ Ministries Foundation and continues to nurture. Board members open doors to neighborhoods, congregations, schools, and movements that the early Accola board was just beginning to reach in 2026.

The character of the organization is unmistakably Accola — humble, bold, and grounded in the tradition of courage and compassion that began with the Sisters of St. Joseph. What was once a promise — that Accola would belong to the communities it serves — has become the structure of the organization itself.

What it takes to get there: This vision is the product of a deliberate, multi-year shift in how the board defines itself, recruits, and stewards Accola. The rest of this document describes that shift — the purpose, the posture, and the practical work of the Nominations & Governance Committee over the next two years.

PURPOSE

To build a board whose leadership, relationships, and decision-making are grounded in and accountable to the communities Accola serves — with the full range of skills required to govern the organization well.

Accola is a new organization, building on the legacy of CSJ Ministries Foundation. The board's current composition and governance practices were inherited from that predecessor and have served

Accola well in its earliest days. The work ahead is to evolve that inheritance so that lived expertise from communities of color shapes how Accola sets direction, stewards resources, and measures impact — alongside the professional skills every nonprofit board requires.

THE SHIFT WE ARE MAKING

Accola is at the beginning of its own story. The board is ready to define what that story will look like, and is choosing to do that work intentionally rather than letting it happen by default.

- **Where we begin.** Today, the Accola board reflects the composition and recruiting patterns of CSJ Ministries Foundation. It is predominantly white, and most of its members were drawn from the relationships and networks the predecessor cultivated. This is the natural starting point for a board in transition.
- **What we are choosing.** We honor the inheritance from CSJ Ministries Foundation by extending it. The members who carried that work into Accola continue to serve with care and generosity. Accola's mission is different in scope and audience, and the board is choosing to widen the foundation it inherited — drawing the next chapter of board leadership from a fuller set of relationships, skills, and communities.
- **Where Accola is going.** A board whose center of gravity reflects and is accountable to the communities Accola serves, with leaders of color bringing the specific governance skills the organization needs.

This is a change in posture as much as in headcount. It asks the committee to do the patient, intentional work of building relationships with leaders Accola has not yet recruited from — and to give that work the time it requires.

WHY THIS IS A GOVERNANCE REQUIREMENT

BoardSource reminds us that homogeneous boards have impaired decision-making and can inadvertently reinforce the very inequities a mission-driven organization intends to address. For an organization serving communities of color, that concern is concrete. A board that does not yet include leaders from the communities Accola serves cannot fully govern an organization whose purpose is to serve those communities. Community-grounded leadership is a condition of mature governance. Strategy, fiduciary judgment, and resource decisions all sharpen when the people closest to the work hold real authority in the room.

BoardSource also cautions against a checklist approach that reduces candidates to a demographic profile. The discipline this asks of the committee is to recruit multi-faceted leaders of color whose skills, experience, and community standing fit Accola's specific governance needs — leaders the board would seek for any seat.

ACCOLA HAS PROFESSIONAL STAFF — AND THAT CHANGES THE BOARD'S ROLE

Under the CSJ Ministries Foundation governance model, boards often carried operational and subject-matter expertise directly. Accola is a different kind of organization, with a professional staff in place from its earliest days. Staff bring the programmatic expertise; the board provides strategy, oversight, fiduciary care, and accountability.

This frees recruitment to focus on what boards most need.

- **Specialized professional skills are valuable** where they complement, rather than duplicate, staff expertise. The board does not need to fill the same expert seats it once did.

- **What boards need most:** governance maturity, strategic judgment, fiduciary discipline, community standing, and the relationships that keep Accola accountable to the people it serves.
- **This widens the recruiting pool.** Leaders whose expertise lives in lived experience, community organizing, faith communities, small business, education, or grassroots philanthropy are exactly the kind of board members a staffed organization is well-positioned to recruit — and the kind Accola is intentionally building relationships with.

A useful test for every candidate: Does this person bring a skill, perspective, or community accountability the board — distinct from the staff — will draw on? When a candidate's most obvious strengths are personal generosity and proximity to current members, the question to sit with is what additional skill or community connection they bring that the board will need over the next five years.

HOW TO RECRUIT THE RIGHT BOARD COMPOSITION

According to [Leading with Intent](#), the most effective boards are thoughtfully composed across skill sets, leadership styles, and diversity of experience, thought, and background. They recruit for the leadership the organization will need over the next five years, which often requires the committee to extend its reach beyond the relationships immediately at hand.

With professional staff, Accola's board should focus its work on strategy, oversight, resource stewardship, and accountability — deploying the full range of [modes of governance](#) and a [purpose-driven framework](#).

NOMINATION & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE'S SCOPE OF WORK

The committee's work is to translate the shift above into a disciplined, multi-year recruitment plan. The composition criteria below intentionally lead with community-grounded leadership and broaden what "philanthropic spirit" means in a board whose job is to hold Accola accountable to the people it serves.

1. Develop an ideal Accola board composition. Criteria include:

Community leadership and accountability

- Leaders of color whose standing, relationships, and lived expertise connect the board to the communities Accola serves.
- Authentic ties to neighborhoods, congregations, schools, and community-based organizations, alongside connections to philanthropic and professional circles.
- Active commitment to racial equity, as presented and described by candidates.

Governance skills the board needs

- Strategic judgment and experience setting direction for mission-driven organizations.
- Fiduciary and financial stewardship; comfort reading nonprofit financials and probing assumptions.
- Prior nonprofit board service, or the willingness and capacity to learn governance quickly through a structured onboarding.
- Specialized professional skills — legal, HR, real estate, technology, clinical, or organizational development — that complement Accola's professional staff.
- Experience with similarly sized nonprofits and with organizations in a comparable stage of growth.

Resource development, broadly defined

- A philanthropic spirit that includes access to community-based giving networks, faith-based giving, grassroots fundraising, and relationships with funders who prioritize equity, alongside personal philanthropic capacity.
- Willingness to open doors, host conversations, and introduce Accola to networks the board is in the process of building.

Standard guardrails

- No conflicts of interest (family members of staff or other directors, material business conflicts).
- No members under age eighteen.
- **Consistency in evaluation.** Each candidate is evaluated against the same composition criteria — the skills and perspectives they bring to the board, and the way their service strengthens Accola's accountability to the communities it serves.

2. Review current board composition and identify the gaps. Map race, community ties, skill mix, and the networks the current board reaches and is still building. The gap analysis is the committee's accountability tool and should be shared with the full board.

3. Use the Impact Breakfast, and other Accola gatherings, as long-term relationship-building opportunities. Identify leaders the committee wants to begin a longer conversation with, with particular intention around leaders of color whose work aligns with Accola's mission.

4. Develop a one-page Board Recruitment brief that communicates Accola's direction, the skills and perspectives being sought, and what board service actually requires.

5. Develop a 2026–2027 Board Recruitment Plan that includes:

- A board skills and attributes matrix that holds community-grounded leadership as a core column.
- Recruitment focus for the coming cycles.
- Board size and term limits through 2027, 2028, and 2029, including planned rotations that open seats for new leadership.
- A recruitment list that names candidates, who is cultivating each relationship, and the next step.

6. Present the 2026-2027 Board Recruitment Strategy and Plan for the Board to review and approve.

7. Develop, implement, and manage a Board Onboarding Program that includes purpose, annual goals, responsible parties, and accountability. Onboarding is where new directors are welcomed into the Accola Board the committee is intentionally building — the moment the board's direction becomes concrete for each new member.

We believe in the transformative power of compassion in action. The board Accola is building is one whose composition, relationships, and judgment are shaped by the communities it serves, and whose skills match the responsibilities of governing a staffed, growing organization. Both are required, and the committee's work over the next two years is the path to both.