

TRUSTEE Q&A

EMA IDOWU

TRUSTEE OF EXCHANGE HOUSE
IRELAND

CEO, THE KEBAM



EXCHANGE HOUSE IRELAND
National Travellers Service



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Why did you choose to take on a voluntary trusteeship?

My love of people, interests in exploring new ventures and desire to maintain skills acquired from many years of studies would be my main drive and reasons for volunteering in trusteeship.

After completing formal training with Board Match on Trusteeship, I appreciated more the opportunities and challenges, although I had worked on few small Trustees previously.

Recently I had started working with young people and found it interesting, we were also putting together our own board, so when the opportunity presented to work on Exchange House Ireland (EHI) Board, I naturally wanted to work on the board to learn and give back to the community.

What have you learnt by being on a board?

Quite a lot, I have learnt to get organised, prepare for meetings, importance of Governance to the organisation. There is much learning working on sub-committees; also organisation operations, fundraising, working on issues with other board members and staff.

How would you describe time management with respects to your day-job and voluntary board position?

I am in control of my time, so it is a matter of adjusting a few things around to accommodate volunteering on the board, except unavoidable issues arise, the board members are quite supportive, information is sent on time.

How important was teamwork and collaboration in relation to board effectiveness?

Teamwork is a most valuable component. Every member needs to feel respected and know they bring value to the board which is appreciated. It is nice to hear the Chair acknowledge and encourage the Board.

How has your board experience affected you personally?

It is a long travel to the city to attend meetings and sometimes sign off accounts and documents, I enjoy it any way. It is a pleasure to know the traveller community, their challenges and to know that decisions made on the Board have direct impact on stakeholders' experience of EHI.

My hope is to be a positive contributor making life better for Travellers.

My goal is to see myself in some way in a position to help this Ethnic minority have a voice, for them to develop leadership skills that put them in a better place, be recognised for who they are and their place in society be recognised as any other citizen of Ireland. I am not happy with some of their current living standards. They have a beautiful culture if not judged harshly, it needs to be understood from the inside.

What advice would you give to someone considering joining a charity board?

Joining a Charity Board in my opinion can be hard but rewarding. You need to have a heart to genuinely want to help, so you may want to consider that you select a board that match with your values, have the right attitude as if paid; that it offers you opportunities to learn new skills, contribute your skills and experience or use and develop skills you won't normally use at your day job.