

TIPS FOR SETTING UP AND MANAGING BOARD COMMITTEES

- Establish committees when issues are too complex and/or numerous to be handled by the entire board.
- Establish standing committees for major activities; Standing committees should be included in the bylaws.
- For short-term activities, establish ad hoc committees
- Annually review the list of standing committees and re-consider whether all are necessary. Importance of specific topics does not imply the necessity of a standing committee. An ad hoc committee might be a better option.
- Design a committee to fill the board's needs and to help the association to realize its goals in an exciting and dynamic way. Avoid unnecessary committees.
- Be sure that a committee has written a terms of reference, which means a clear description of its purpose, time frame, authority and responsibilities.
- Require regular reports from standing committees so the board is up to date on the committee's work.
- Committee Reports should be short, maybe one page long, and should be circulated among board members well in advance of a meeting. A suggested outline includes: an Introduction (indicating committee status, issue, background), Research (overview of the work and options explored), and Recommendations (if requested).
- Consider the usefulness of having other people besides board members on a committee as they can provide an outside perspective on relevant topics.
- Ensure the committee has a specific charge or set of tasks to address, and ensure board members understand the committee's charge
- Have at least two board members on each committee, preferably three
- Don't have a member on more than two committees
- In each board meeting, have each committee chair report the committee's work since the past board meeting
- Consider having non-board volunteers as members of the committee (mostly common to nonprofits)
- Consider having a relevant staff member as a member of the committee as well
- Committee chairs are often members of the board and appointed by the board chair.
- The chief executive should serve as ex officio to the board and any relevant committees (some organizations might consider placing the chief executive as a member of the board -- this decision should be made very carefully)
- Committees may meet monthly (this is typical to new organizations, with working boards), every two months, or every three months; if meetings are not held monthly, attempt to have committee meetings during the months between full board meetings.
- Minutes should be recorded for all board meetings as well as for Executive Committee meetings if the bylaws indicate the Executive Committee can make decisions in place of the board when needed.

Source: Cf. Free Management Library "Typical Types of Board Committees", available at <http://www.managementhelp.org/boards/boards.htm#anchor579954>, and Board Development,