

## SHARING THE WORKLOAD

Many hands make light work, or too many bosses and not enough workers are both long-standing idioms that can relate to committees and the role they can play in your organization and governance structure.

There is no doubt that both of these can be true. Properly structured and organized, committees can help to lighten the workload of the entire Board of an organization. By the same token, poorly structured and organized committees can seriously damage or impede the work of the Board. It would be very uncommon to find a Board that doesn't have at least one committee. The skill is in establishing them so the reality becomes "many hands make light work".

### Types of Committees

A **committee** is a type of small deliberative assembly that is usually subordinate to another, larger deliberative assembly (the Board). *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

**Standing Committee** – is a subunit of the Board established in a permanent fashion to aid the Board in accomplishing its duties. Standing Committees are usually defined within the bylaws of the organization. A standing committee is usually granted jurisdiction over a particular area.

**Advisory Committee** – is a group of individuals that come together to provide advice and support to the Board and Organization.

**Ad-Hoc** – a committee established and convened by the Board to accomplish a goal and then cease to exist. There is a trend in nonprofits to move towards more ad hoc committees rather than standing committees. According to the GinComGroup part of this movement is as a result of volunteers becoming disillusioned with committee service. It is usually easier to recruit a volunteer for a specific time limited task; a task that when it ends can leave the volunteer with a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment.

### Are Board Members the only ones allowed to serve on a committee?

A common misconception is that only Board Members may sit on a committee. Committee membership is determined by the Board (or in certain cases the Bylaws). Committees, especially ad-hoc, may be a good place to involve a volunteer to expose them to your organization and give them a chance to learn more about it while serving a valuable role; providing their expertise. In the case of advisory committees, by their very nature and purpose, the bulk of the members will usually be from outside the Board, and in fact may be from outside the organization itself.

Committee involvement can be a stepping stone to someone getting involved with an organization at the Board level. It can be a great source for recruitment.

## ESSENTIALS FOR COMMITTEES

Committees should be established when:

- a) they are required by the bylaws
- b) when it's apparent that issues are too complex and/or numerous to be handled by the entire board
- c) when the Board requires advice on a specific issue

**A committee's role is to recommend policy. The Board's role remains as the approver of policy.**

To help ensure committees help to lighten the load, the following, adapted from Association Xpertise Inc. are some key considerations when establishing a committee:

- The name – yes, it will be called all different names, this is the formal name
- The description of the purpose of the committee
- The tasks of the committee which can be written as goals, with measurable outcomes
- The beginning and ending of the work of the committee
- The people involved in the committee and how they relate to each other
- Any requirement for Executive Director or other staff time
- Any financial requirements
- Regular and final reporting obligations.

When the discussion is complete and all the assumptions have been aired about the committee, it is good to decide by motion or at least by writing these committee details down

Other considerations:

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 a relevant staff member as a member of the committee as well

Committee chairs are often appointed by the board chair; consider asking committees members for a volunteer for committee chair

The chief executive should service *ex officio* to the board and any relevant committees

## LAST POINTS

“One way to organize, focus and activate Committees is by associating a work plan with each. A work plan usually includes specific goals, objectives and deadlines for achievement. Keeping good committee members requires they have something to do, and the best way to get rid of “bad” Board members is to give them something to do. Implementation of a work plan gives them something to do.” (Carter McNamara)

Visit these sites for more resources:

[www.managementhelp.org](http://www.managementhelp.org)

[www.compasspoint.org/boardcafe](http://www.compasspoint.org/boardcafe)

[www.boardsource.org](http://www.boardsource.org)

[www.axi.ca](http://www.axi.ca)

[www.gincomm.com](http://www.gincomm.com)

[www.npgoodpractice.org](http://www.npgoodpractice.org)

## Publication of the PSO Unit

Contacts: Janet McMahon: [mcmahon@sport.mb.ca](mailto:mcmahon@sport.mb.ca) Fred Schneider: [schneider@sport.mb.ca](mailto:schneider@sport.mb.ca)  
Brenda Wiwcharyk: [wiwchar@sport.mb.ca](mailto:wiwchar@sport.mb.ca)

For further information, please contact a member of the PSO Unit.