

Board Committee Guidelines

This template is not intended as legal advice. Your organizational goals, purpose, values, and bylaws should drive the creation of this document.

The points below can guide you in developing the activities of a task force or ad hoc committee:

- 1) Look at all the options related to a specific topic.
- 2) Narrow down the choices to make one to two recommendations to the full board for a final decision.
- 3) Make a formal recommendation to the full board.

Once a decision has been made, the committee can either disband and a new committee can form to execute the decision, or the committee can stay together to champion the work.

The points below can guide you in developing the activities of the chair of a task force or ad hoc committee:

- 1) Make sure the right people are in the room.*
- 2) Make sure someone is taking notes.*
- 3) Hold a space for wisdom and sharing.
- 4) Keep the group on track with discussion and logistics.*
- 5) Present to the whole board the recommendation of the group.

*Work with staff as appropriate.

Rules for a task force or ad hoc committee:

- 1) If it is not a legal or financial decision and no one wants to chair or be on the committee, don't do it. Wait until there is enough energy to think through the ideas.
- 2) If it is a financial issue, send it to the finance committee. If it is a legal issue, send it to the board chair and the executive director.
- 3) Committees are not created to let everyone off the hook. They are a group of people who are willing to delve into the issues and make some thoughtful recommendations to the whole organization.
- 4) Task forces should be created when the "work" of the board is happening at a board meeting. Creating a task force can help the organization and the meeting move forward. Task forces can also be created as a result of annual or strategic goals.
- 5) Each board member should walk with their feet to discussions/meetings. The time to question and look into every option is at the committee.
- 6) Put non-board members on your committees – those with wisdom to add to the discussion. This is a great board recruitment tool and a wonderful way to spread the additional workload.

Ideas for staff and committee report presentations:

- 1) Instead of saying what you did, say why you did it. What difference did it make?
- 2) Connect the report to strategic and/or annual goals of the organization.
- 3) Connect the report to outcome statements previously embraced by organization.
- 4) Write 1-2 open-ended questions either at the beginning or at the end of the report to get the board to think about the bigger picture. They may never answer these questions as a group, but it will help provide context for your report.
- 5) Ask to be included in the agenda when the committee is ready for the board to make a decision on a recommendation; when the committee is stuck or needs direction and a board discussion will be helpful; or when the committee assesses that the board needs some education so that they will be able to make an informed decision in the future. If the committee is simply writing its process, then there is generally no reason to be on the agenda.
- 6) Use bullets to highlight the important points.

The whole board packet should take no more than a half-hour to read – assuming the organization is meeting monthly.

Rules of committee reports when using a consent agenda:

- 1) Send out the board packet in advance including committee and staff reports.
- 2) During approval of the minutes, all the reports will be included for approval unless a board member asks for an idea or specific issue to be removed for discussion. A specific place on the agenda should be assigned for this issue with a designated amount of time. If an issue starts to take over the meeting, it is a sign that it needs to go back to the committee or task force for further discussion. The person with the questions should be encouraged to attend the task force meeting.