

Typical Types of Board Committees

Adapted from original article by Carter McNamara

About Committees

1. Establish committees when it's apparent that issues are too complex and/or numerous to be handled by the entire board.
2. For ongoing, major activities establish standing committees; for short-term activities, establish ad hoc committees that cease when the activities are completed. Standing committees should be included in the by-laws.
3. Committees recommend policy for approval by the entire board.
4. Committees make full use of board members' expertise, time and commitment, and ensure diversity of opinions on the board.
5. They do not supplant responsibility of each board member; they operate at the board level and not the staff level.
6. 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 committees meet during the months between full board meetings.

Developing Committees

1. Ensure the committee has a specific charge or set of tasks to address, and ensure board members understand the committee's charge
2. Have at least two board members on each committee, preferably three
3. Don't have a member on more than two committees
4. In each board meeting, have each committee chair report the committee's work since the past board meeting
5. Consider having non-board volunteers as members of the committee (*mostly common to nonprofits*)
6. Consider having a relevant staff member as a member of the committee as well
7. Committee chairs are often appointed by the board chair; consider asking committees members for a volunteer for committee chair
8. If committee work is regularly effective and the executive committee has a strong relationship with the chief executive, consider having board meetings every other month and committee meetings between the board meeting
9. The chief executive should service *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)