

## INTRODUCTION

Committees are the backbone of strong volunteer organizations. The effective use of volunteers in partnership with staff brings about needed programs. When committees understand their role, have a clearly defined direction, an enabling staff, and organized and experienced leadership, there are no limits to their effectiveness.

There are eight steps in accomplishing a successful subunit committee structure. The eight steps are:

1. Analyzing the Subunit's Needs
2. Writing Committee Guidelines
3. Committee Member Assignments
4. Recruiting the Right People
5. Planning/Accountability
6. Monitoring Accomplishments
7. Evaluations
8. Recognition

We've provided short narratives describing each step in the following section. There are many forms included to assist your subunit in beginning the process of developing strong committees.

Committees are only as good as the people and plans that guide them. This section of how to build an effective committee is designed to help you as a leader of your subunit to develop effective committees.

## **STEP 1**

### **ANALYZE THE SUBUNIT'S NEEDS**

1. Begin by listing the various tasks required to carry out the functions of the subunit.
2. List the committees with their assigned jobs and functions for these tasks. The purpose for doing this is to identify who does what (see attached form (Assessing Committee Functions)).
3. Be clear in direction to committees on the scope of their task.
4. Involve volunteers in identifying their own committee function (gives a greater sense of ownership and commitment).

## STEP II

### WRITING COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

1. To ensure clarity, all committees should have guidelines. Guidelines can be used to help people understand the work of the committee before signing on as a participant. They can also be used in orientation and training sessions to assist volunteers in understanding their task.
2. Guidelines should include the name of the committee, a general statement of its function, a list of tasks the committee performs and approximate time of year when those tasks are completed. You might also include: who the committee reports to; approximate size of the committee; the staff with whom the committee can expect to work with and the expected time commitment.
3. Effective means to creating the committee guidelines or revising old ones is to involve the committee in the process.
4. Periodic review of committee assignments is a way to ensure understanding and agreement about the job to be done.
5. A Committee Guidelines Worksheet (attached) is designed so that committee members and staff can work jointly to determine their task. It provides the basic outline of the committees work (see completed sample worksheet).
6. In addition to committee guidelines it is useful to have job descriptions for the chairperson and committee members. It is designed to give specific information about qualifications of committee members, the number of meetings per year, training available, and performance expectations for the chairperson and members. **Keep it short and to the point!** (see sample job description)

**COMMITTEE GUIDELINES  
WORKSHEET**

Committee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Function: \_\_\_\_\_

TASKS	DATES
1:	1:
2:	2:
3:	3:
4:	4:
5:	5:
6:	6:

Committee reports policy and procedural recommendations to:

Recommended committee size:

Assigned staff:

Time Commitment:

Other Information:

**SAMPLE COMPLETED COMMITTEE GUIDELINES WORKSHEET  
PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

Committee Name: Public Relations

Committee Function:

1. Review all publicity material
2. Assist in media contacts as needed
3. Develop new public relations campaigns to support programs
4. Evaluate public relations
5. Develop public relations guidelines

	TASKS		DATES
1:	Review all publications designed for the public for consistency and appropriateness	1:	As needed
2:	Assist staff in publicizing society/subunit events	2:	On a monthly basis
3:	Review annually public relations calendar with staff	3:	December
4:	Arrange for specialized publicity/news stories as needed	4:	N/A
5:	Arrange a process for committee members to assist other functional areas and/or committees of the society in their development of publicity	5:	N/A
6:	Develop yearly committee work plans in line with society goals	6:	January

Committee reports policy and procedural recommendations to:  
The Board of Directors

Recommended committee size: five to seven

Assigned staff: Director of Development

Time Commitment: 3 hours each month

**PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE  
COMMITTEE MEMBERS/CHAIRPERSON  
JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

Qualifications:

1. Committee members should have experience and/or high degree of personal interest in public relations.
2. Members should have a working knowledge of the mission, programs, volunteers, and staff of the organization.
3. Members should have a willingness to participate in publicity and public relations functions or work on behalf of the society.
4. Members must be willing to attend 6 to 8 committee meetings per year.
5. Chairperson should have one year previous experience on the committee and/or excellent working knowledge of media and/or the society and an interest in developing public relations skills.
6. Chairperson must be willing to meet with assigned staff to plan committee meeting on a regular basis.
7. Members of the committee must attend orientation and training sessions once per year.

Number of meetings per year: 6 to 8

Time commitment: 1 to 4 hours per month; approximately 25 hours per year

**STEP III**  
**COMMITTEE MEMBER ASSIGNMENTS:**  
**Is the Right Person on the Right Committee?**

1. It is not enough to know the jobs the various committees should be doing! You must also know who the people are that serve on those committees and what special talents and skills they bring to the subunit.
2. Do a current member assessment to see if skills/interests match the tasks to be accomplished by the committee. This will provide the data to see if individuals are appropriately placed on committees.
3. Use the Skill/Interest Assessment form (attached) to help you assess committee assignments. List committee needs and determine which members have those skills/interests.
4. The form can be completed by the EXCOM as you prepare committee assignments. It can also be done by the chairperson of the committee and staff.

**STEP IV**  
**RECRUITING THE RIGHT PEOPLE**

**PART I**

1. The most effective committees are those in which the function of the committee and its tasks are matched to the skills and interests of the members. Imagine a public relations committee without members experienced in writing press releases or producing public service announcements.
2. Develop a method in seeking the best committee members by developing a method of matching function to skill. Once completed, it clarifies which committees current volunteers might best serve.
3. Try using the "Who Should be Doing the Job" form (attached) to identify potential committee members. The function of the committee and its tasks are listed. Then the skills necessary to complete those tasks. By seeing functions and skills side by side,

it is easier to identify potential committee members.

4. The form can be used as a self-assessment. It is a means to identify lack of skills. For example, a public relations committee with individuals lacking press release writing skills could quickly see the deficiency. The form allows you some choices: 1) recruit a new member with those skills; 2) bring someone to the committee to train everyone; 3) have someone currently on the committee trained.

## **NOMINATIONS, SELECTION, APPOINTMENT**

### **PART II**

1. Methods of getting people to serve on committees are as varied as committees themselves.
2. Nominations: sometimes nominees are asked to apply for a committee, while other nominees are not contacted in advance about their committee choice. The most effective nomination process for volunteer committees is to give the potential candidate a choice.

Prepare a post card sized preference checklist to distribute to potential candidates. The card with an accompanying sheet describing, briefly, the functions of each committee is often sufficient to assist people making committee choices.

3. Selection: The most common method of recruiting committee members is their nomination by staff. This is limiting and dangerous. The best recruiters of volunteers are other volunteers. They understand the workings and demands of the committee.

Send a letter to potential committee members which would include guidelines, a job description sheet, and information about the society. Make a follow up telephone call to determine the person's interest. Studies show that the most effective recruiting technique is a volunteer asking someone to serve!

4. Appointment: an individual's appointment or election to a committee should be made official. This might include a formal letter of appointment or a telephone call from the chairperson. New committee members should receive guidelines and a job description.



**SAMPLE  
COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION**

**AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY**

The following are standing and special committees of our organization with a brief description.

**PUBLICITY:**

Review publicity and public relations material, contact news media for coverage of events, develop public relations campaigns, assist other committees, and evaluate public relations.

**NOMINATING:**

Prepares a slate of candidates for the Society offices of Second Vice-President, First Vice-President, and President-Elect.

**TIME AND PLACE:**

Generates competitive proposals for the site of the AFS meeting four years hence from which the Executive Committee shall choose one site.

**CONTINUING EDUCATION:**

Assesses the continuing educational and training needs of the fisheries profession and works in close coordination with the Society's Chapters, Sections and Divisions to develop a comprehensive continuing education program.

**RESOLUTIONS:**

The committee drafts resolutions, screens and edits resolutions submitted to it by officers, members, or subunits, and presents its slate of resolutions for vote at the Society's Annual Meeting. The two types of resolutions include internal resolutions, which relate entirely to AFS matters, and external resolutions, which relate to broad national or international issues outside of AFS.

**BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION:**

Certifies individuals as Certified Fisheries Scientists or Associate Fisheries Scientists under guidelines established by the Society; counsels those seeking certification on how to prepare for it.

More detailed information can be provided by calling 301/897-8616.

## STEP V

### PLANNING/ACCOUNTABILITY

1. A goal must be achievable, measurable, observable, flexible, and demanding.
2. Committee objectives and work plan should be tied to the established goals and objectives of the society.
3. Planning has three purposes:
  - a. It involves the volunteers in designing their own activities and develops a sense of ownership.
  - b. It provides a record of work; and
  - c. It provides a system of accountability.

#### Part I -- Setting Objectives

1. Objectives should have five characteristics:
  - a. measurability
  - b. achievability
  - c. flexibility
  - d. demanding
  - e. observable
2. Committee needs to understand the fundamentals of writing objectives before producing work plans.
  - i.e. Organizational goal: increase participation at training sessions by 15% by (date)  
  
Objective might be: increase budget for training expenses (transportation, materials, etc.) by 10% by (date)

## Part II -- Committee Work Plans

1. Translating good intentions into deeds is a challenge for most committees. Lack of productivity on the part of a committee can occur because people don't know how to begin.
2. Once the committee has clear goals from the EXCOM and has drafted objectives for each goal, work plans can be written.
3. The most common mistake a committee makes, when writing a work plan, is listing the details of how a project should be carried out. It is the responsibility of the committee to see that a task is completed and services delivered. For example, the committee has the responsibility of seeing that a crab feast is held, listing how many crabs needed is not part of the work plan. The committee's task is to see that the event occurs and to **delegate** detail decisions to the person organizing the event.
2. List the objectives, establish, and identify tasks needed to accomplish the objectives.
  - a. Example objective: Organizational goal is to increase membership by 10% over a two year period.
    1. Determine current level of participation (by date).
    2. Evaluate current recruitment effort (by date).
    3. Draft recruiting plan for target area (by date).
    4. Implement recruiting plan (by date).
    5. Evaluate quantity and quality of recruiting effort (by date).
3. Individual steps in the work plan should be assigned to a member of the committee. This doesn't mean the committee member does the work alone. It indicates the individual responsible for seeing that the work is done.

## PART III - Individual Work Plans

1. The work plan should be broken into smaller tasks and members of the committee agree to the tasks assigned.
2. Volunteer and staff work plans need to relate to the committee's work plans.

**Example:**

Committee objective: To increase membership by a certain date

Work plan: Gather current membership information and statistics by date.

Volunteer activity: Call AFS staff to get current membership figures  
(Individual)

3. Using a system like this insures the chairperson a more equitable distribution of work assignments.
4. Members can select those tasks in which they are interested. By accepting responsibility for individual tasks, members have a sense of ownership over the outcomes. They are more apt to be motivated to complete the tasks if they understand the need for their specific assignment.

**OBJECTIVES**

must be

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. measurable | 3. flexible  |
| 2. achievable | 4. demanding |
| 5. observable |              |

Write one to three objectives you would like to achieve in the next year. Be sure they meet all of the above criteria.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# COMMITTEE WORK PLANS

COMMITTEE NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Committee Objective:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Steps to accomplish this objective?**

**Assigned to:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Committee Objective:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Steps to accomplish this objective?**

**Assigned to:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Committee Objective:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Steps to accomplish this objective?**

**Assigned to:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## INDIVIDUAL WORK PLANS

**Committee Work Plan:** \_\_\_\_\_

**My Assignment**

**Due Date**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Committee Work Plan:** \_\_\_\_\_

**My Assignment**

**Due Date**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Committee Work Plan:** \_\_\_\_\_

**My Assignment**

**Due Date**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## STEP VI

### MONITORING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. A committee may not need formalized minutes, but a brief one page meeting summary can remind participants of work accomplished. It also helps absent committee members to stay informed.
2. Attach to the minutes or one page summary a list of items members volunteered to do. This becomes the record for the chairperson to monitor progress. It also is a reminder of the varied tasks accomplished by individual members.
3. Volunteers need to see the results of their efforts. It is recommended that the chairperson convey the importance of the work the committee does through monthly/bimonthly/quarterly reports. For example: a public relations committee would get a monthly report on all PR activities; a membership committee would receive up-to-date figures on membership.
4. The chairperson should prepare a report for the Mid-term and Annual EXCOM meetings.
5. To monitor work and give credit for accomplishments, the chairperson should review work plans and individual assignments at:
  - a. Each committee meeting; or
  - b. Each month by phone; or
  - c. By a written report.
6. All committees should have a starting point where work plans and individual activities are drafted, and an event to signify closure and accomplishment.
7. Remember: Volunteering is not just hard work, it should be fun!

### SAMPLE HIGHLIGHTED MEETING SUMMARY

Public Relations Committee  
May 18

1. Joe Salmon will contact the editor of the Herald to set up training on media relations for staff and volunteers.

2. Charles Pike and Dale Bluefin will conduct phone survey of local radio stations to see how they would use locally produced PSA.
3. Jack Flounder agreed to get publicity to the office by June 1 regarding the July 4 fund raising event in City Park.
4. Lee Chairperson will meet with Ray President and Paul Executive about getting committees to bring P.R. up-to-date sooner when planning events.
5. Next meeting is June 16

## COMMITTEE MONITORING PROCESS

### Checklist

		Yes	No	Comments
1.	Do people on my committee know what is expected of them?	_____	_____	_____
2.	Is a meeting summary sent to remind members of their commitments to work plans for activities?	_____	_____	_____
3.	Does the chairperson and/or staff have a conscious monitoring plan to keep the committee on task?	_____	_____	_____
4.	Are members expected to give reports regularly?	_____	_____	_____
5.	Is there a formal review of the committee's activities?	_____	_____	_____
6.	Are records kept from year to year and used to illustrate the progress a committee is making?	_____	_____	_____
7.	Are committee members publicly commended for their committee work?	_____	_____	_____



## STEP VII

### EVALUATIONS

The work of the committee of volunteers can be evaluated in two ways:

1. Accomplishments of the committee are measured against the original objectives and;
2. Committee members' performance is assessed.

Listed below are some techniques for evaluating committee objectives, work plans and activities:

1. Plan an evaluation meeting using a simple strategic plan.
2. At the evaluation meeting, have volunteers review each objective and work plan to determine if they have been completed.
3. The staff liaison should attend the evaluation meeting. Sometimes the staff liaison knows of activities by an individual volunteer that are unknown by the rest of the group. Communicating this information ensures that volunteers see their individual efforts as a part of the whole.
4. Help volunteers to understand that plans are only guidelines and not written in stone.

Here are some techniques for evaluating the work of the members assigned to the committee. THIS must be done with sensitivity.

1. At the same evaluation meeting, use techniques to help volunteers assess their own performance, i.e. self-diagnosis.
2. Have volunteers list those activities they agreed to complete. Have them indicate whether the task was complete or is still pending and to make comments. **This evaluation remains private.**
3. Give the opportunity for volunteers who might want to discuss incomplete or discontinued tasks with other committee members, soliciting their advice and/or assistance to complete the work.
4. Another technique for evaluation is a series of questions and discussion about individual assignments. This is an open evaluation process. It is most effective where the majority of members have worked together for a long period of time and there is well developed communication.

The purpose of these techniques is not to be harsh or judgmental. Committee volunteers work should be evaluated in such a manner that they determine their effectiveness to the organization. Volunteers appreciate being helped to analyze their work and make judgements about how to improve it. Loyalty to the Society is greater when volunteers have a sense of ownership over their own activities.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. What tasks have been completed to accomplish this objective?
2. What tasks have been abandoned? Why?
3. What tasks still need to be done? Why?
4. How could we plan better to complete tasks?
5. Do we need to organize the committee to complete the assignment on time?
6. Does someone need help with a specific assignment?
7. Have you recorded your efforts so someone can take over your job next year?
8. What would have helped you do your job more efficiently?

## STEP VIII

### RECOGNITION

Your final step is recognition. Volunteers who serve on committees should receive recognition for the work they do. Why do volunteers need recognition? Studies show that two of the strongest needs a volunteer has are the desire for status and positive reinforcement. By satisfying these needs with recognition, that volunteer will likely be more highly motivated to improve performance and self-esteem.

Recognition needs to be personal and specific. It doesn't have to be a plaque, trophy, formal letter or certificate -- it can be a simple, hand-written note or a firm handshake with a sincere "thank you".

Each person gives his or her time and effort to the Society for different reasons but all need the sense that they've undertaken a worthwhile project and accomplished something. Think of ways to give your volunteers what they need, and you'll find that working with volunteers really is worth the effort.