Functions of Committees in Non Profit Organizations

Within many successful non-profit organizations the board of directors accomplish their work and goals through committees. The goal of the committee is to focus efforts and break the work at hand into meaningful and controllable chunks. Committees are work units of the organization, and make full use of the time, expertise and commitment of its board members to address issues and achieve goals. While some committee boards may last for years, others will only exist for a matter of weeks or months, depending on the requirements of the task. They will, however, all be dissolved once the task they were originally convened for has been completed and a final report on the subject matter submitted to the organization’s board of directors.

Types of Committees in Non Profit Organizations

Committees are formed to deal with issues that fall outside of the normal business experience of the non-profit's board. As such, they can take on many forms but will usually fall into one of two types: A standing committee—also known as a permanent committee or operating committee—will often be formed to deal with ongoing, major activities within the organization. Standing committees may become a permanent feature of the non-profit. For short-term issues, the board will establish a group known as an ad hoc committee.

Examples of Standing Committees

Executive

1. When a board of directors is overly large or geographically scattered, often a smaller group of board members, called the executive committee, is delegated certain powers and in particular circumstances can act on behalf of the full board. They are often called "officers" of the board.

Finance

2. The board treasurer usually leads the finance committee which is charged with overseeing the budget, financial controls, investments and grants. In larger organizations, there might be an additional audit committee that works with outside auditors to maintain the organization's accounting and financial reporting controls.

Fundraising

3. It is the job of the fundraising committee to create a plan that will guide the organization in seeking out and securing funding from an array of outside sources. The committee must identify and communicate with potential donors to support the work of the organization.
Marketing

4. The marketing committee develops and implements a marketing plan that identifies the needs of its target audience and how to meet those needs with the products, services and programs of the nonprofit.

Membership

5. The membership committee creates and implements recruitment and retention programs to increase and maintain membership.

Strategic Planning

6. Strategic planning committee members are responsible for the development or updating of the organization’s strategic plan.

Ethics

7. An ethics committee develops and implements guidelines for ensuring and resolving ethical disputes.

Examples of Ad Hoc Committees

Audit

2. Audit committees are charged with selecting the organization’s outside auditor, and oversee the audit process,

Capital Campaign

3. A Capital campaign committee’s goal is to identify and raise funds for the organization, sometimes with the assistance of the finance committee.

By-laws

4. A bylaws committee reviews a non-profit’s current operational practices, comparing them to the organization's bylaws before recommending any changes,
Duties of Members

- Committee members must attend scheduled meetings, participate in discussions and share the workload. Each member’s expertise, whether a skill or knowledge, contributes to the committee’s success. When assigned a task, it becomes each member's duty to complete the task and report back to the committee.

Chairmanship Duties

- Each committee has a chairperson to lead meetings. Some organizations appoint a chairperson responsible for recruiting members, but more commonly, all committee members serve by appointment and the group elects a chairperson from its ranks. The chairperson serves as the committee's manager, responsible for setting a meeting schedule, arranging a meeting place, preparing agendas and keeping minutes to record discussions and actions taken at all meetings. The responsibility of reporting progress, project completion, or providing committee recommendations also falls to the chairperson, but the chair can delegate any of these duties to other members.

Six Suggestions for effective committees:

1. Have a well defined objective that is clearly conveyed to the committee members
2. Meet bi-monthly
3. Consist of a minimum of two or 3 members,
4. Committee chairpersons are most effective when they volunteer rather than be appointed
5. Chairpersons should report the groups progress at every board of directors meeting
6. A chief executive should serve only in an ex-officio position to the committee

References: Carter McNamara, in an article for Free Management Library, Caroline Tamer, eHow Contributor