

## Acknowledgments

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## Introduction

Sport and recreation activities play an important part in community life. These activities do not just happen - they need to be organised. In most sport and recreation organisations, there is a structured system of administration and management that relies on the management committee. A stable, knowledgeable and well-functioning management committee is the key to an effective organisation.

Management committees exist to make decisions and are charged with the overall responsibility for organizational governance (see the Conducting Meetings module). Therefore, the committee management process is vital both to the smooth day-to-day operation and long-term future of most clubs.

### The purpose of this module is to:

- introduce the responsibilities, roles, structures and processes of committees
- highlight the attributes of effective committees and committee members
- emphasise the importance of committee accountability and evaluation
- introduce issues related to paid and unpaid staff relationships

## Governance – a key responsibility of committees

It is essentially a role of general oversight and control – usually termed governance. Governance can be defined as 'the overall guidance, direction and supervision of the organisation'.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore the committee is the key agent of strategic management and is responsible for steering the organisation through changing circumstances. This is the case regardless of whether there are paid staff or not.

## The responsibilities of committees

The committee has a responsibility to manage the club on behalf of the members. The committee should:

- conduct long-term planning of activities so that the aims and objectives of the club are fulfilled
- develop policy and procedures (see the Volunteer Management Policy module)
- manage external relations and advocacy issues
- obtain resources and ensure that all financial and legal matters are properly managed
- carry out the recommendations of members
- regularly communicate with, and provide information to members about the running of the club
- evaluate the performance of officials, employees, subcommittees and, importantly, itself
- provide detailed written records and job descriptions to a newly elected committee to facilitate transition into their roles
- Ensure that all members of the committee act as leadership role models.

### The role of the committee can be summarised into four main categories:

#### Plan

Examine alternatives for action and decide on appropriate directions according to the purpose, philosophy culture and budget of the club Determine relevant policies to guide the implementation of organisational plans.

## **Organise**

Ensure that plans are implemented, achievable objectives are agreed to, suitable strategies are designed to ensure satisfactory progress, and operational stages are implemented and evaluated. Ensure that resources (people, equipment, money) needed for these to be achieved are provided.

## **Lead**

Be enthusiastic and work from an informed and well-researched knowledge base which includes a subcommittee or working group structure, clear and concise reports and wide representation of stakeholder opinions. Regularly communicate both the vision and the detail to members and other relevant stakeholders.

## **Control**

Be responsible for defining expectations and requirements, and taking appropriate action to ensure that the outcomes are achieved.

In most sport and recreation organizations the committee will make decisions about a wide range of issues that may include policy, market research, planning, event organisation, staffing (including volunteers), coaching, budgeting and sponsorship. In recent years there have been increasing expectations that committees should be more proactive, particularly with respect to growing awareness of the individual legal responsibilities of committee members.

## **What makes an effective committee member?**

A committee should operate as a team, draw on the skills and talents of each member, and work toward common goals that will ensure the organisation's success. It is important to clarify the types of skills that may be required in a committee in order to identify potential committee members and also recognise gaps in skills and competencies that may require further development and training.

In more general terms however, effective committee members should have:

- a commitment to the mission of the club
- sufficient time to devote to the committee
- an understanding of the role of the committee
- enthusiasm and an interest in people
- leadership skills and willingness to accept responsibility
- tact, judgment, discretion and listening skills
- strategic vision
- dedication
- Good communication skills.

The specific tasks required of committee members will vary from organisation to organisation according to the actual plan of the organisation and the attributes of the volunteers. The committee should become aware of the various skills that members have and allocate tasks according to those skills. Such an approach however, may require more purposeful recruitment of committee members and the targeting of particular individuals because of their ability to contribute to the committee. Furthermore, it is important to have people on the committee not just because they 'want to get involved' but because they want to manage the organisation.

Effective committee members recognise that everyone on the committee must take responsibility for committee processes and should therefore be actively engaged in the process of committee management. In meetings they should ask questions and require satisfactory answers – especially in regard to financial management issues.

It is critical that committee members demonstrate regular and active involvement.

## Election of committees

The size and structure of a committee will vary according to the size, location, function and type of the organisation. However, the rules - as stated in the constitution – dictate how the committee should function, how it is elected or appointed, how often it should meet, how long members should serve, and who is eligible to serve.

In most sport and recreation organisations, committees are elected at the annual general meeting (AGM). Nominations should be called for and made in writing well in advance of the AGM. As indicated previously, this may also include 'head hunting' to get the right mix of motivations, skills and experiences represented on the committee.

The organisation should also consider how representative the committee is and try to ensure that the committee's composition is balanced in terms of age, gender, and ethnic and cultural background. Therefore, the election process must be carefully planned.

### Example of a suitable nomination form.

200__/200__	
We, the undersigned, wish to nominate the following person	
Name.....	
As.....(position title)	
.....	.....
(proposer)	(seconder)
I am willing to be so nominated .....	
	(nominee)
.....	

Make members aware of the importance of the election well in advance. Send out a newsletter outlining the positions available and the responsibilities each involves. Follow this up the week before the election if possible, to ensure maximum attendance.

- Target and contact individuals that seem suitable for the positions in question.
- Invite members interested in standing for office to attend open committee meetings so they can see how the organisation operates.
- Allow members to nominate themselves. This gives everyone a chance to stand regardless of whether they are asked.
- Keep track of the numbers of nominations in case it is necessary to approach suitable people who have, for whatever reason, not put their names forward.
- Set aside time for all candidates to talk for two to three minutes at the AGM. The talk should cover past experience and the candidate's vision for the organisation and any special skills/experience they might offer. If there is a postal ballot, written statements may be more suitable.

## Changing committees

How the committee is structured will determine how often it changes and the nature of that change. Such changes usually occur through the annual election cycle and resignations. Whatever the reason however, the resultant loss of management experience can be disruptive, although there are also positive aspects of alterations to committee personnel. For example, new committee members may inject the organisation with fresh enthusiasm, increased expertise and new ideas.

Some sport and recreation organizations operate a rolling committee structure in order to facilitate smooth transitions from election to election. In this approach, a designated number of committee members stand down after a set period to enable fresh input from newly elected members.

It is important for outgoing committee members to pass on as much knowledge as possible to the person replacing them. Via this process, new members can learn from past experiences, gain an understanding of how past successes were achieved and how to avoid potential problems. Such an approach emphasises the importance of keeping accurate and current records of all information relevant to particular roles. New members can also use previous minutes in order to become informed about past decisions of the committee.

An example of a rolling Committee				
Position	In	Out	In	out
President	2001	2002	2003	2005
Secretary	2001	2003	2004	2006
Volunteer Coordinator	2002	2004	2005	2007
Treasurer	2003	2005	2006	2008

### Handover Procedures

All new committee members should be informed through written job descriptions about their roles and responsibilities. Briefings from the previous office holder are important to clarify these issues.

- A senior official should brief the new committee about the club, its history and its plans for the future. This should be backed up with a written development plan.
- New committee members should be welcomed and encouraged to contribute. They need access to a past official who can answer any questions on how the organization works.
- New committee members need to know where all of the club's documents are filed and should have ready access to them.

## Subcommittees

Subcommittees are usually appointed by the management committee to do detailed investigations into specific topics. There are various types:

- **Standing committees** have permanent responsibilities. Examples include finance, fundraising, public relations, volunteer coordination, uniforms, selection panels, medical, coaching.
- **Short-term subcommittees** have the ability to make decisions over a predetermined period, although they must report to the management committee. A short-term subcommittee could be appointed to organise fundraising for a special event.
- **Task groups** have no authority to make decisions. They gather and assess information in regard to a specific issue over a relatively short time frame, then report recommendations back to the main committee. This

subcommittee might, for example, consider the advantages and disadvantages of building a new clubhouse or expanding the playing fields.

It is important that subcommittees are used in appropriate situations. They should not necessarily be established if an individual could 'handle the issue. To use subcommittees effectively the management committee should:

- provide a written brief outlining the tasks, responsibilities and reporting procedures to ensure subcommittee members understand their tasks and how long they have to perform them
- maintain the decision-making power at management committee level
- not appoint a subcommittee that has too many members as this will slow progress (3-4 is usually appropriate)
- ensure that the subcommittee consists of people with the necessary skills and who are capable of working together
- choose a leader who can get the best out of everyone while ensuring the discussion remains focused on the issue
- monitor the progress of the subcommittee through regular reports or meetings

There are advantages and disadvantages of making decisions as a subcommittee rather than as an individual. Some of these are: 5

Group Advantages	Group Disadvantages
More ideas and alternatives generated	Difficulty of getting everybody together and longer time
More complete information from different sources	Potential for conflict
More people to do the work	Minority domination
Increased legitimacy	Pressures to conform
Increased acceptance of the solution	Ambiguous responsibility

## Roles within a committee

The structure of committees and therefore roles within committees may vary according to their purpose and length of operation. The traditional structure includes the formalized tasks and roles of the President (usually the Committee Chairperson), Treasurer and Secretary, each with defined and distinctive roles. This structure might not necessarily suit all organisations. Sport and recreation organisations should be sufficiently flexible in their approach so that the committee can be structured around the plans of the organisation and the skills of its members.

### The Chairperson/President

The Chairperson (usually the President of the organisation) is the principal leader and has overall responsibility for the organisation's administration. From a strategic perspective, the Chairperson should set the overall annual committee 'agenda' (consistent with the views of members), help the committee prioritise its goals and then try to keep the committee on track by working within that overall framework.

The committee members should have a sense of what they are trying to achieve throughout the year rather than just 'muddling through' from one committee meeting to the next. At the operational level, the major function of the Chairperson is to facilitate effective management committee meetings.

The Chairperson/President should:

- be well informed of all organization activities
- be aware of the future directions and plans of members
- have a good working knowledge of the constitution, rules and the duties of all office holders and subcommittees
- manage committee and/or executive meetings
- manage the annual general meeting
- represent the organisation at local, regional and national levels

- be a supportive leader for all organization members
- act as a facilitator for organization activities
- ensure that planning and budgeting for the future is carried out in accordance with the wishes of the members

## Secretary

The Secretary is the chief administration officer of the organisation. This person provides the coordinating link between members, the management committee and outside agencies.

Ideally an effective Secretary is someone who can:

- communicate effectively
- think clearly and positively
- maintain confidentiality on relevant matters
- manage and supervise others (in relation to secretarial duties)
- organise and delegate tasks

(More information on the roles of the Chairperson and Secretary can be found in the *Conducting Meetings* module).

## Treasurer

The Treasurer is the chief financial management officer for the organisation. The Treasurer's tasks include preparing the annual budget, planning for the organisation's financial future, regularly monitoring revenue and expenditure and helping other committee functional areas with financial matters.

Members assisting in the area of financial management should have the necessary skills to complete the tasks. If not, the organisation must ensure that they are provided with training relevant to their area of responsibility.

The volume and nature of the work will depend on the size of the organisation, the activities in which the organisation is involved and whether the organisation owns facilities and/or employs staff. Generally larger organisations have a finance subcommittee to assist the Treasurer.

An effective Treasurer needs to be:

- well organised
- able to allocate regular time periods to maintain the books
- able to keep good records
- able to work in a logical orderly manner
- aware of information needing to be kept for the annual audit.

The three areas mentioned above can be described as 'key' areas in the functioning of any sport and recreation organisation. However, depending on the size and structure of the organisation and committee, there are a number of other administrative and leadership roles that may be represented on the committee. These may include:

- Coordinator of coaching
- Publicity/promotions
- Fundraising
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Club captain
- Registrar

## Committee records

In order for a sport and recreation organisation to run efficiently, it must keep records. Most records will be generated through the activities and decisions of the committee. All records should be accurate, current and readily accessible. The

person in the organisation with the task of maintaining records will vary from organisation to organisation but generally is the Secretary.

In a small organisation, all the filing for a year may fit into a single ringbinder divided into sections. At the end of each year, these can be transferred into a box file or filing cabinet and the ringbinder cleared for use the following year.

It is recommended that organisations retain records for 10 years, as some legislation requires that records be kept for a minimum period. Some records, such as rules and certificate of incorporation (if relevant), should be permanently filed.

A wide range of computer packages are available to help keep records. However, if the organisation does not have access to a computer or the appropriate programs, the following will be required:

- A book or a set of cards for the register of members.
- A minute book and notebook or pad for taking notes at meetings.
- A filing system suitable for keeping records
- Stationery - plain or letterhead with organisation's name, address and logo.
- A book to record assets and liabilities.
- Membership application forms and other standard forms (eg committee nominations).
- A calendar for recording dates of meetings, activities and deadlines.
- Accounting records - the Treasurer takes charge of these.
- A manual of procedures - this can be the organisation's most valuable asset.

Many tasks have to be completed at the same time each year and should be recorded in standard form.

## Board/Staff relationships

The context in which management committees operate is continually evolving. Although sport and recreation organizations have always and will continue to rely on volunteers, the speed and complexity of change and the time restrictions placed on voluntary administrators have resulted in the employment of paid staff. There is little doubt that the introduction of paid employees has a significant impact on voluntary organisations and nowhere is this impact felt more than in the relationship between volunteer and paid staff. The critical context of this relationship is the management committee.

Both parties should recognise that each has different types of skills, knowledge and competencies to contribute to the organisation and to the committee. Volunteer members should realise that paid staff are professional in their outlook and need to be given appropriate levels of professional responsibility and autonomy. On the other hand, paid staff should remember that the volunteers are usually dedicated, knowledgeable supporters who have much to contribute.

Paid staff should be aware of the effects of the professionalization process, not just on the organisation, but on themselves and individuals with whom they work.

## Committee accountability and evaluation

The prime responsibility of the committee is to ensure the effectiveness and future viability of the organisation. Therefore, because of this governance role, the committee is ultimately accountable to the organisation itself. At a more direct accountability level, committees are responsible for managing the organisation on behalf of the members (a fiduciary responsibility) and therefore are accountable for their actions to the membership (usually through the election process).

Committee members also have a legal responsibility and may incur legal liability because of their actions (or in some cases, inactions). As indicated above, those taking on a committee role have a responsibility to act on behalf of the members and in the best interests of the organisation. If this does not occur, and particularly if negligence is involved, legal liability may result. Director's liability insurance is available (see the Legal Issues and Risk Management module).



# Committee



While committees are responsible for the overall monitoring and evaluation of the organisation, they should also evaluate their own effectiveness. The following is a checklist for committee evaluation

	Yes	No	Action	Who	Date
<b>Meetings</b> Is the purpose of each agenda item clear? Are decisions clear and collective responsibility accepted? Is everyone clear about the actions to be taken?					
<b>Planning</b> Is there a clear and agreed development plan? Was the plan a cooperative effort? Does the plan make clear who is responsible for each action? Does the plan make clear the start and finish dates for action?					
<b>Finance</b> Do members understand their powers and responsibilities? Is the budget monitored regularly? Do members receive regular reports on finances? Does the budget reflect organizational priorities?					
<b>Employment</b> Does the committee follow an organized appointment procedure? Do all staff and volunteers have a current job description? Are staff inducted in to the organization? Is there an appraisal system?					
<b>Members and Participants</b> Is a complaints procedure communicated to all members and participants? Is there a clear health and safety policy? Is all documentation produced in clear and accessible language?					
<b>Committee Members</b> Do all members understand the mission/aims of the organization? Do all members understand the constitution? Do all members know the committee's procedure? Do all members understand their role in providing					

leadership?					
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## Managing external relations and working with stakeholders

Managing external relations and working with stakeholders is a major responsibility of the committee. Such functions are recognized as an essential component of the sport and recreation administrator's repertoire of skills. As the influence of government is so important in sport and recreation development, the nature and extent of lobbying and public relations behaviour by sport organisations is vital to influencing future resource allocation and public policy developments.

Sport and recreation organisations, through the actions of their members, need to establish themselves as organisations that are seen by decision makers as reliable and expert sources of advice on policy and funding matters.

It is critical that the management committee takes a strategic approach to this responsibility. Such an approach may include:

- developing and maintaining contacts in media and government
- documenting and disseminating information to key decision makers
- positioning and aligning the organization with their member association and Tennis Australia
- developing a good working knowledge of media and government.

The traditional view of lobbying presents it as a process dealing directly with the elite level of decision makers. However, an alternative view which may be more appropriate for sport and recreation organisations, is that it is a much broader community influence process. The assumption underlying this approach is that community views and opinions will gradually filter up to decision makers. Such a process recognises that there are many lobbying and public relations opportunities in the everyday activities in which committee and general members engage.

These may include, for example:

- service club involvement
- social and official functions
- other community group involvement
- personal and professional contacts

Recognising these opportunities allows the organisation to use more of the skills, knowledge and resources available within the membership itself. However, there is a need to coordinate these efforts to ensure that there is a consistent message communicated. Furthermore, it is important to encourage all members to see that lobbying and public relations on behalf of the organisation are every member's responsibility.

### Is your organisation treating your council as a major sponsor?

The provision of grounds, pavilions, car parks, ground preparation, rubbish clearing and a host of indirect services are usually taken for granted. These cost considerable sums in both capital and operating costs, which councils are now finding they need to identify to contain and reduce costs. Sport and recreation organisations may take for granted the supply of these facilities without truly realising the level to which the community is supporting them.

Many councils have introduced the 'user pays' principle and many sport and recreation organisations have been affected as a result. Costs of facilities are increasing and the provision of services is reducing, which both ultimately impact upon the users of the facilities - the people. So that the impact on sport and recreation organisations is kept at a minimum, it is important that they develop a strategy through which a solid relationship with the local council can be developed.

## The 10 Commandments of establishing a good relationship with your council

1. Get to know the council through councilors, senior officers and recreation and maintenance staff
2. Invite them to club functions, be hospitable, and ask them to present trophies and show appreciation for services they provide.
3. Understand the problems the council is having and help them with issues that affect your club.
4. Offer assistance in holiday programs etc.
5. Praise the council whenever possible, particularly in the media and any public arena.
6. Approach problems constructively and seek 'win-win' solutions.
7. Encourage ethnic groups to take an interest by inviting them to participate in club activities.
8. Insist on good behaviour, both on and off the field, exhibiting the elements of fair play and avoiding bad language.
9. Be on good relations with the neighbours adjacent to the ground (complaints to the council may tarnish the organisation's image).
10. Establish a positive public relations program by appointing a member to carry out defined tasks, such as liaison with the council.

## Summary

An effective well-functioning management committee is the key to an effective sport and recreation organisation. The management committee is responsible for the overall control and governance of the organisation. The committee management process must therefore be approached strategically by the key committee leaders in order to plan for the long-term future of the organisation, ensure a balanced and representative committee, facilitate smooth committee transitions, coordinate external relations and implement appropriate accountability procedures. This module has outlined the responsibilities, roles, structures and processes of committees, highlighted the attributes of effective committees and committee members and advocated an increased emphasis on external relations and accountability.

### Further Information

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## Glossary

**Annual General Meeting.** A meeting for all club/association members normally held every 12 months to report on the activities of the club or association during that period and to elect office bearers for the forthcoming 12 months.

**Committee accountability.** The prime responsibility of the committee is to ensure the effectiveness and future viability of the organisation. Therefore the committee is ultimately accountable to the organization itself.

**Committee handover.** As new members begin their term on the committee there must be a smooth transition from the outgoing to the new person. This involves verbal briefings, the use of written job descriptions and a handover of relevant documents.

**Committee member liability.** Committee members have a legal responsibility and may incur legal liability due to their actions or inactions. Those taking on a committee role have a fiduciary responsibility and if this is not fulfilled, legal liability may result.

**External relations.** Managing external relations and working with stakeholders is a major responsibility of the management committee. As the influence of government is so important in sport and recreation development, the nature and extent of lobbying and public relations behaviour by sport organisations is vital to influencing future resource allocation and public policy developments.

**Fiduciary responsibility.** A responsibility to act in the best interests of the organization on behalf those who elected the person to the position.

**Governance.** This is essentially role of general oversight and control and can be defined as the overall guidance, direction and supervision of the organisation.

**Management committee.** A structured system of administration and management relies on the management committee. Management committees exist to make decisions and are charged with the overall responsibility for organisational governance.

**Rolling committee.** A technique used to maintain corporate memory and continuity by having only some of the committee positions up for election each year. A designated number of committee members (but not all) stand down after a set period to enable fresh input from newly elected members. The following year the other members then stand down.

**Short-term subcommittees.** Have the ability to make decisions over a pre-determined period about specific issues, although they must report to the management committee.

**Standing committees.** Are committees with permanent responsibilities. Examples include finance, fundraising, public relations, volunteer coordination, uniforms, selection panels, medical, coaching.

**Subcommittee.** Subcommittees are usually appointed by the management committee to do detailed investigations into specific topics or oversee general operational areas. They include standing committees and task groups.

**Task groups.** Have no authority to make decisions. They gather and assess information in regard to a specific issue over a relatively short time frame, then report recommendations back to the management committee.