

THE COMMITTEE BOOK

Tools and tips for Editors Canada national committees

3rd edition





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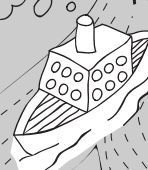
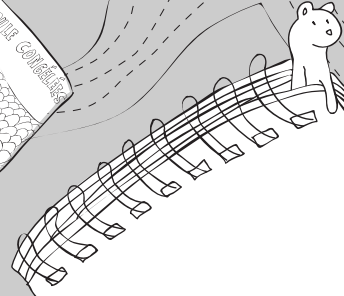
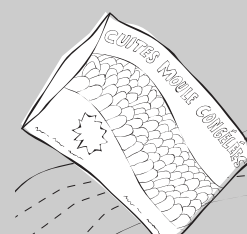
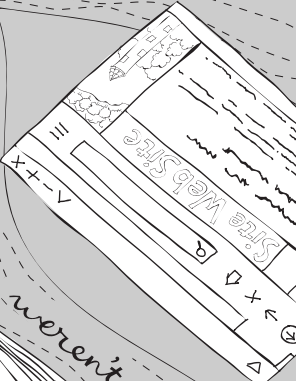
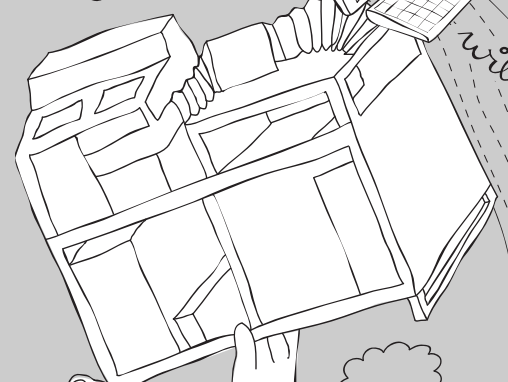
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GUITES MORE COMICS



The Committee Book

Tools and tips for Editors Canada national committees

Third edition

The Committee Book Third edition © 2020 by Editors' Association of Canada /
Association canadienne des réviseurs

Cover design and interior layout: Ambrose Li

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Typeset in *Lato*, a typeface designed by Łukasz Dziedzic, Poland. Speech bubble
icons typeset in *Saira*, a typeface designed by Héctor Gatti, Argentina.

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The big picture

Thank you for your commitment to the Editors' Association of Canada / Association canadienne des réviseurs. We're confident that your volunteer experience will be rewarding in many ways.

All along, volunteers have been the backbone of Editors Canada. The association includes members nationwide, with multiple branches and twigs, a full-time executive director and other national office staff. A vital element of the association is its national committee system. Without it, we couldn't accomplish many of our good works.

This book is intended to provide you with information and tools you'll find useful in carrying out your commitment as a national committee chair or committee member. The book is reviewed annually, so your feedback on what works and what doesn't will be invaluable.

We also know that a reference like this one can only help so much. If you lose your bearings or have questions not answered here, call or send an email to your director or the president.

Want the big picture of the association? Check the members' area of our website. It includes

- an overview of how the association is governed
- governance documents, including the bylaw, national policies, and procedures
- a history of the association since its founding in 1979

1.1 How to use this book

This book will

- explain the roles and responsibilities of committees within the association
- provide you with information and tools for chairing or participating in a committee
- enhance your volunteer experience
- help you develop new knowledge and skills

The first three sections (“The Big Picture,” “The Committee System” and “The Planning Framework”) are intended for everyone – committee members and committee chairs. The fourth section (“Making It Happen”) is especially important for chairs.

We don’t expect you to read this book from cover to cover. Consult it when you need it.

1.2 Contact information

English-language website: www.editors.ca

French-language website: www.reviseurs.ca

The national office:

Editors’ Association of Canada
1507-180 Dundas Street West
Toronto ON M5G 1Z8
416-975-1379
416-975-1637 (fax)

1-866-CAN-EDIT (toll-free)

1-866-226-3348 (toll-free)

Email: info@editors.ca

The executive director:

executivedirector@editors.ca

Contact information for members of the national executive council, branches and twigs is posted on the association website.

The committee system

In this section, you'll find out about the roles and responsibilities of the committee chairs and members. You'll learn about the relationships among committees, and about committees' relationships with the national executive council and the national office. And you'll be referred to online resources dealing with relevant association policies and procedures.

2.1 A common purpose

Committees may be

- standing or ad hoc (task forces)
- of the membership or of council
- led by a member-elected, council-appointed or committee-appointed chair

Descriptions of the committee mandates can be found on the association website. The website also lists the members of the national executive council and the committee chairs.

Although committees differ in origin, governance and mandate, they all share a common purpose: to carry out the work of the association at the national level, and to advise the national executive council on policy and opinion growing out of that work.

On occasion, task forces are struck to address specific issues or projects. Examples include the professional standards task force and the task force for improving access to member services.

2.2 Roles and responsibilities

The committee chair. All association committees are led by a committee chair. The chair manages the committee and oversees its member recruitment, organization, operation and reporting.

Other responsibilities of the chair include

- calling, developing agendas for and chairing committee meetings
- developing committee action plans and budgets
- supervising committee work and monitoring committee expenditures
- assisting committee members, especially when they encounter problems
- reporting in writing each quarter to the national executive council
- reporting in writing each year to the membership (in the annual report)
- ensuring that the committee fulfills its mandate and submits its completed products to the national

executive council and/or the national office

Committee members. The work of the committee is shared among its members. They research, monitor, mediate, consult, plan, advise, develop, write, edit and so on, according to the mandate of the committee. They meet with the chair (in person, by conference call, by web meeting or by email) and work together to help the committee fulfill its mandate.

Generally, only current association members and student affiliates may sit on an association committee. Why? Because volunteering is a benefit of membership.

2.3 Relationships

Establishing, maintaining and managing relationships among various association groups are important tasks of the committee chair.

Among committees. Other association committees may be at work on projects that will have an impact on your committee's work. Both the national executive council and the executive director watch for potential overlaps, synergies and conflicts, but committee chairs and members are responsible for doing so, too.



Committee chairs can use the committee email list to keep in touch with other chairs, the president and the executive director; to post their quarterly and annual reports; and to offer encouragement, support and expertise on on-going projects.

With the national executive council. Like other committees, the national executive council is made up of volunteers—in this case volunteers who are responsible for leadership as well as strategic planning and policy for the association as a whole. The other responsibilities of the council include

- ensuring the ethical, fiscal and legal accountability of the association
- providing direction and support to national committees and staff
- promoting effective communication among the council, branches and members

Some committees with high-priority and/or high-risk projects may be in regular contact with the executive director, specific members of the council or the council as a whole. Other committees may operate quite autonomously, and they will find their interaction with the national executive council is limited to quarterly reporting.

With the national office. The executive director is a professional staff member with responsibility for

- the day-to-day management and administration of the association
- the hiring and supervision of other employees
- the management of national projects

The executive director also helps committee chairs develop budgets and lends practical and moral support.

Not sure who to call or email? Start with your director.

2.4 Reporting

All committees report through their chair to the national executive council. In practice, reporting occurs through your director who sits on the national executive council. You can find out more in section 4.7, “Submitting a report.”

If you’re not clear about the reporting route for your committee, ask your director.

2.5 Policies

As a national committee chair or member, you must be familiar with national procedures and guidelines that relate to privacy, conflict of interest, members conduct and other matters.

You’ll find the association bylaw, policies, procedures and guidelines in the “policies” section in our website.

If you’re not sure how a policy would apply in a specific situation, contact your director.

The planning framework

In this section, you'll be introduced to a key association document and an approach to setting objectives.

3.1 The strategic plan

Every organization needs to plan in order to set and attain its goals. Editors Canada develops a strategic plan every five years.

Among other things, a strategic plan identifies which committees are involved in accomplishing specific goals. It serves as a useful overview of a broad range of association activities and shows you where your committee's work fits into the bigger planning future.

3.2 The SMART approach

The SMART approach is commonly used to assess objectives for strategic and tactical planning. In the association, that means committees are encouraged to set objectives that are *specific, measurable, achievable, realistic* and *timed*.

Specific *You define your objective clearly and*

Measurable *can quantify the outcomes –*

Attainable *plus you can do it*

Realistic *with the people and money available*

Timed *and within a stated time frame.*

The SMART approach can help committee chairs and members establish and agree on the details of what they are working toward together. Some committees have narrow mandates, and it's fairly straightforward for them to understand and work toward their goals. Other committees have broad mandates – even exploratory mandates – and they may benefit from formally structuring their work to avoid wheel-spinning and frustration.

Example: Recruiting potential members

Strategic goal = To better represent editors across the country ...

Tactical goal = ... by recruiting editors from regions under-represented in the association ...

SMART objective = ... you want to sign up 20 new members from Atlantic Canada by December 31.

This objective passes the SMART test. It's *specific* because it clearly defines what is to be achieved. It's *measurable* because the association can count any new memberships from Atlantic Canada. It's *attainable* in part because many editors in the region are not Editors Canada members. It's *realistic* because a small but effective team is dedicated to working toward the objective. And it's *timed* because it stipulates an end date.

Example: Diversifying revenue sources

Strategic goal = To strengthen the association's revenue base ...

Tactical goal = ... by developing revenue sources other than membership fees ...

SMART objective = ... you want to create and sell three new publications by December 31.

This objective doesn't pass the SMART test. Yes, it's specific, measurable and timed. But it's not attainable or realistic when you consider the time and effort required to conceive, develop, market and distribute three new publications.

If you're interested in using the SMART approach, these questions will help you get started.

- Is your objective in keeping with your committee's mandate and its priorities for the year?
- Is your objective well defined?
- Is it feasible? Is it realistic?
- Have you anticipated obstacles and ways to overcome obstacles?
- Will you see tangible results in a reasonable amount of time?
- Are any other committees also working on this objective?
- Will your committee be enthusiastic about this objective?
- Will it involve association members and have broad support?
- Will it lead to constructive action?
- Is it worth the effort?



Your director can help you to develop your action plans and schedules, and to see your committee work as part of the bigger planning picture.

A word of caution: Planning can lead to action, or planning can lead to more and more planning. Watch for paralysis by analysis: getting stuck spending too much time in the planning stage.

4

Making it happen

In this section, you'll learn more about how to work within the committee system in our volunteer-driven not-for-profit association. The section is intended primarily for chairs, but committee members will also benefit from reading it.

4.1 Getting oriented

If you're a newly elected or appointed committee chair, congratulations. If you're a continuing chair, thank you for renewing your commitment.

For most of you, in the month of June you'll have a sense of achievement but also anticlimax. Branch activities gear down. There may be little activity on the committee list. Summer holidays beckon. Continuing committee members may want a rest. New or prospective committee members may prefer to wait until September to start work, or they may be eager to get started.

For some committee chairs, summer is an ideal time to

- read over any documentation about their committee
- review the association website, especially the members' area
- get to know committee members without feeling the pressure to produce
- begin brainstorming for the coming year
- have a chat (by phone or in person) with their director and with the outgoing committee chair, if possible

For other committee chairs, they'll move directly into ongoing committee activities.

What's your situation? Because every committee has a different rhythm, you'll need to find out whether your committee is in reflective mode or must swing into high gear. Your preferences will come into play here, too.



As a chair, you have considerable autonomy and responsibility for your committee. Take the initiative to find out more about your volunteer job and your fellow committee members. Don't wait for someone to tell you what to do but do feel free to contact your director to discuss first steps.

4.2 Communicating

Because Editors Canada is a nationwide organization, most communication among committee members takes place via telephone, email and video conferen-

cing. Where possible, some face-to-face meetings are desirable; for example, if your committee members live in one branch city or region, get together. Face-to-face meetings are usually congenial and productive, especially for new committee chairs and members, but do check your committee's budget first.

First contact. For this face-to-face meeting or conference call, plan to

- spend some time getting to know each other
- discuss your committee's mandate
- identify any questions you have and who will follow up on them
- discuss your initial tasks and who will follow up on them

After the meeting, you or a designated committee member should summarize in writing the committee's decisions, questions and assigned tasks. For most committees, it's helpful to prepare a list of members' email addresses and other contact information. Make sure all committee members receive a copy of the meeting summary and contact list. You might also copy your director to keep them informed, especially if your first discussion has led to more questions than answers. Your director can also sit in on any or all of your meetings. Do whatever works best for you.

Committees with many members and complex operations might also consider

- establishing a regular meeting time
- developing a set of file-naming and storage conventions for documents in progress to help with version control

How to set up a conference call via Zoom (teleconferencing software): Contact the office at least a week ahead. State the committee name, an estimate of the time required and the date and proposed time for the call.



A conference call is not just a conversation among friends—it should have some structure and defined outcomes. As chair, your job is to moderate the conference call and keep it on track. Most chairs find it is useful to send out a written agenda three or four days ahead of the conference call. Make sure no single committee member monopolizes the discussion.

4.3 Preparing an agenda

An agenda is one way to help ensure every meeting has a purpose. Agendas vary from a few sketchy points of discussion to an itemized list of continuing and new business. Use your judgment to decide which type of agenda makes sense for your committee and its members.

Agendas that work usually

- are circulated to committee members at least three days before the meeting
- allow for input from participating members
- are updated and recirculated if they change significantly
- provide clear agenda items (if necessary, elaborate with a bulleted list of sub-items)
- include a time allocation, if the meeting time is limited
- identify the key speaker on each agenda item, if there is a key speaker
- prioritize items as essential or potential carryover items (for example, for subsequent email discussion if meeting time runs out)
- allow for any other business

Formal agendas include

- a clear title indicating the nature of the meeting
- the location, date and time of the meeting (an agenda should specify the relevant time zones for all committee members)
- a list of attendees, with the chair and recorder identified

4.4 Taking minutes

Without minutes—or their less-formal cousins, meeting notes—decisions may be forgotten or ignored, and necessary actions may not be carried out. Minutes provide a reminder of what the committee agreed to in meetings months or even years past. They should be sent out as soon as possible after the meeting so that every committee member has a clear record of the actions he

or she is responsible for.

Minutes should follow the order of the agenda, and they need not be complicated. They should record the main conclusions of the meeting: the decisions, the required actions, the responsible committee member(s) and any deadlines.

Ideally, the committee chair should not be the minute-taker. Some committees rotate this responsibility so that each member takes a turn; other committees elect a secretary to allow for greater continuity in record-keeping.

Remember that in three or four years, 100 % turnover of committee members is possible. So, it's not just important to record what Joe said; you may need to record who Joe is.

Example: A formal agenda for a committee with complex operations

Certification Steering Committee Agenda

Teleconference: Thursday, May 24, 20XX

1:30 p.m. PT/2:30 p.m. MT/4:30 p.m. ET/5:30 p.m. AT

Members: Violet Allen, Bob Boyce (recorder), Gavin Miller (chair), Robert Morris, Sheena Raines, Winifred Simms, Jessica Wong

1. Approval of minutes of last conference call (3 minutes)
 2. Next committee conference call (3 minutes)
 3. Changes to the marking sheet for the copy-editing test (10 minutes): Robert
 - Robert will circulate the old and the newly revised marking sheet two days before the conference call
 4. Certification presentation at the June conference (20 minutes): Gavin
 - Date and time of the presentation
 - Topic of the presentation
 - Who will speak and on what
 - Preparation of handouts
 5. Next *Active Voice* article (5 minutes)
 6. Preparation of the certification budget for 20XX (due November 20XX): (10 minutes)
 7. Other business (5 minutes)
-

Certification Steering Committee Teleconference Minutes
Thursday, May 24, 20XX 1:30 p.m. PT/2:30 p.m. MT/4:30 p.m. ET/5:30 p.m. AT

Present: Violet Allen, Bob Boyce (recorder), Gavin Miller (chair), Robert Morris, Sheena Raines, Jessica Wong

Regrets: Winifred Simms

1. **Approval of minutes of last teleconference.** The minutes were approved with one change. In item three, Robert will consult the marking committee, not the test- item writing team, about changes to the copy-editing test marking sheet.
2. **Next committee conference call.** The committee will convene by conference call on June 6 at 1:30 p.m. PT/2:30 p.m. MT/4:30 p.m. ET/5:30 p.m. AT to discuss details of the conference presentation. Bob will set up the conference call and inform committee members of the conference call number and code.
3. **Changes to the marking sheet for the copy-editing test.** Robert reviewed the problem of how to mark copy editing tests where the candidate introduced new errors into the piece. He then discussed the special section that has been introduced on the marking sheet to record such errors and the instructions for how such introduced errors are to affect the candidate's overall score and pass/fail status. The committee approved the changes to the marking sheet, including the instructions. Robert will incorporate the changes into the marking sheet before it is used to mark the copy-editing pilot tests.
4. **Certification presentation at the June conference**
 - Date and time of the presentation. The Editors Canada annual conference will take place at Victoria College, Toronto. Our session will be on Saturday, June 16, between 1:15 and 2:15 p.m. The committee members will meet a half hour before the session.
 - Topic of the presentation. The topic of the presentation is an overview of the four tests and the benefits of certification.
 - Who will speak and on what. The speakers and their topics are
 - a. Gavin will do a brief introduction that will outline the current status of certification and the next steps in the process (3-4 minutes).
 - b. Winifred will speak briefly about the proofreading test (3-4 minutes).
 - c. Sheena will speak briefly about the copy editing test (3-4 minutes).
 - d. Robert will speak briefly about the stylistic editing test (3-4 minutes).
 - e. Jessica will speak briefly about the structural editing test (3-4 minutes).
 - f. Robert will speak about the marking scheme for the exam (2-3 minutes).
 - g. Winifred will summarize the benefits of certification (3-4 minutes).
 - h. Gavin will moderate questions from the audience and speakers will answer questions (20-25 minutes).
 - Preparation of handouts. Bob will compile handouts for the session, which will consist of a one-page certification outline (which Gavin will write), the blueprint and some point-form notes outlining the next steps in the certification process. We estimate that we will need 50 copies of each. Bob will mock up and circulate these to the committee before the session.
 - Sheena proposed that the audience participate in some way. Jessica suggested asking the audience to raise their hands in a show of approval (at the end of the session) if they're seriously interested in certification. Asking the participants to submit questions was also suggested. We will decide on this matter when we meet before the session.
5. **Next *Active Voice* article.** The committee (Bob) will ask Mabel Smith to write notes from the session, which will be used In an *Active Voice* article.
6. **Preparation of the certification budget for 20XX (due October 20XX).** There was no time left to discuss this topic. The committee agreed that we will need a special meeting devoted to this topic alone. At our next conference call, we will schedule a meeting for early September to start working out the budget.
7. **Other business.** There was no other business.

Even if you're a committee of one member, it's a good idea to make and file occasional notes.

4.5 Making decisions

Your committee may face issues that require difficult decisions. It's important to discuss those issues thoroughly and with facts and directives at hand. Your job as chair is to ensure that each member is informed and encouraged to have a say. But you must also move the group toward a decision.

Occasionally, your committee members may not be able to reach consensus. They may need some time for reflection. Perhaps the issue should be revisited at the next meeting, or discussion continued by email.

If your committee members remain unable to reach consensus, then you may have to use voting. As chair, you'll need to shape and moderate the discussion. For example, you might express the issue in the form of a question answerable by *yes* or *no*. Alternatively, you could express the issue in the form of a statement so that committee members can respond with *I agree* or *I disagree*. If you are voting by email, provide a clear deadline in the subject line of the email.

As chair, you should not vote right away. However, if the committee has an even number of members and the group is evenly split, then it is your job to vote and break the tie.

Consensus decision-making is preferable to voting, but voting may be required when you can't move forward otherwise. Use voting cautiously because it may not contribute to an atmosphere of cooperation and collegiality.

4.6 Preparing an action plan

For complex tasks, an action plan is helpful in one sense and crucial in another. A plan is helpful because it offers a way to map out the tasks associated with one project, or with one set of objectives. It's crucial because it serves as an official record of who is expected to do what by which date. When you delegate—and remem-

ber, you can't do it all yourself—be sure to clearly communicate what needs to be done.

What is an action plan? Typically, it includes a brief objective (about 25 to 50 words), a task analysis, target date(s), designated responsibilities, a reporting timeline (if needed) and an estimate of the number of hours required. For some objectives, planning will be straightforward; for others, you may not know where to begin.

Keep in mind what you know about the interests and skills of your committee members. Ask them if they're production-oriented, get-it-done types, or abstract thinkers with experience in drafting policy. Do they have special skills, perhaps with a key computer application, or industry connections that may be useful? It's worthwhile to ask these questions when a new member joins the committee, but some skills and aptitudes don't emerge until a need arises.



Remember that your director can help you develop your action plan. They will also send you a template to help structure your plan.

Once your plan is drafted, circulate copies to committee members, and ask if the allocation of tasks and the dates are reasonable, and whether you've included all the steps and tasks for the project. Give your committee members an opportunity to say "Yes, I'll do that bit," or "I'm not so good at that. Can I swap tasks with someone else?" Even if they don't comment on the plan, ask them to respond in some way to your email. If the plan needs to be revised, circulate a final draft and request that they sign off on via email.

The plan shouldn't be about bogging your committee down in red tape; it's about making sure all committee members are clear about what's expected of them and by what date.

If you hit a snag, don't go underground. Snags are to be expected, but keep your committee colleagues informed. If you're going to be unavailable for extended periods, let your committee members know, and let them know you expect the same of them.

Staying on track. Keeping things moving forward requires active communication, timely feedback and follow-up, and rewards that will motivate volunteers to remain committed. For many volunteers, the reward is simple: if they can see good results from their work, they will be motivated to do more.

If your plan requires status reporting, remind your committee members when they'll be asked to check in. Your email may be just the reminder they need to finish up—or even start—their assigned tasks. If emails don't get their attention, a phone call might. It might feel socially awkward to nag adults, but you're doing what you must to keep the project moving.

Don't forget to express your appreciation of the work of your committee members. You'll find they'll reciprocate.

4.7 Submitting a report

Committee chairs report to the national executive council through their quarterly reports, and to the membership through their annual reports.

Quarterly reports. Every quarter you will be reminded by email when it's time to complete your committee report. Committee quarterly reports are due roughly three weeks before the meetings of the national executive council (usually held in September, November, February and June), and the committee annual report is due in January or February.

You will receive a template to complete. The template covers your priorities, activities in the preceding quarter and other items, including a section that asks if you have any requests, questions or suggestions for the national executive council.



Circulate your draft committee report to committee members for feedback and to ensure you share the same understandings of what you've accomplished and what remains to be done.

The executive director or secretary will collect and circulate committee reports to the committee chairs and members of the national executive council.

Quarterly reports are read by all council members and discussed, as needed, at the council's meetings. Most reports briefly summarize recent committee activities and are about a page long. If your committee is moving along with its work, your quarterly report may be the only information the council needs. But if your committee's projects are at a critical stage and require help, dir-

ection or additional funding beyond your annual allocation from the council, you may be asked to provide a more detailed report, to respond to some specific questions or to attend an upcoming council meeting.

These reports are not intended to be burdensome or call-on-the-carpet paperwork. They are supposed to help the national executive council assess whether you need additional help, direction or funding. If you have a problem with or concern about your committee, its operations or its project(s), it's to your advantage to be frank and accurate in your report.

If your committee requires a difficult decision, a motion or more funding, you would be wise to contact your director. Remember that your director can speak on your behalf at council.

Annual report. Every January the vice-president will remind you by email when it's time to submit your report to the membership.

You can read recent [annual committee reports](#) on the website.

4.8 Drafting a budget request



The association budget is traditionally developed and approved at the November meeting of the national executive council. Each committee is expected to submit a budget request in October for consideration at this meeting.

Some committees (such as the Certification Steering Committee and the Conference Committee) have complex budget requests in the tens of thousands, including expenses ranging from postage and courier costs to facility rentals and contract services. They may also include projected revenues from association activities. Most committees have small requests to allow for occasional incidental expenses.

The executive director will remind you when it's time to prepare your budget request and will help you, as needed, with developing the request itself.

4.9 Submitting expenses

The association reimburses national committee chairs and members for expenses covered by the committee's annual budget allocation.

The expense reimbursement procedure and form are available in the [volunteer resources](#) section of the website. As a chair, you'll be consulted on any expenses incurred by your committee members. You're expected to be aware of and to have pre-approved these expenses.

Receipts are normally required for audit purposes; in extraordinary circumstances, a full explanation of the expense may be accepted in lieu of a receipt.

To request reimbursement, complete the reimbursement form, attach all receipts and mail them to the national office. Reimbursement cheques are mailed out once a month.

4.10 Sharing records

The association keeps selected records of committee work.

As an outgoing committee chair, you're expected to share essential documents with the national office for archiving or use by future generations of your committee. Please submit documents (by email) at or soon after the June national annual general meeting or, for an ad hoc committee, when the committee is dissolved.

Essential documents may include

- agendas and minutes
- quarterly and annual reports
- products of the committee

4.11 Managing projects

This subsection offers advice on project management that you might also use in your day job.

Volunteering to lead an association committee is, for some, an opportunity to manage a publishing-related project for the first time. Many committee projects are

relatively small, making them a good training ground for novices. But the fact that you're managing volunteers poses special challenges related to initial motivation, accountability and rewards.

As a project manager, you should be able to

- influence without necessarily having authority
- pay attention to details without losing sight of the big picture
- establish an open, communicative environment while keeping to business
- track the difference between the plan and what's actually getting done/being spent
- hope for the best but plan for the worst



If you're leading a complex project, consider spending at least a few minutes on the project every day, even if you only read your project-related email and answer one or two messages.

Here are some questions you may find useful.

Resources

- Whose input do we need?
- Has the association or a similar organization done anything like this before?
- What successes can we hope to emulate?
- What mistakes can we avoid?
- What resources—people, money and equipment—do we have?
- What resources might we need?

Administration

- Who's accountable for the project's success?
- What are the lines of communication, within and outside the committee?
- What are the reporting methods within and outside the committee?
- Is an action plan needed?
- How often during the project will regrouping or reporting be needed?

- What people do we need? Will we need staff help and when? Occasional help from volunteers not on the committee?
- Are subcontractors needed?
- What skills are required on the project?
- Who in the group knows how to do those jobs?
- Are more skills needed, through either learning

- them or recruiting people who have them?
- If training is needed, from where?
- Who needs to be kept informed as the project unfolds?

Policy and legal issues

- Which association policies and procedures come into play? Are any needed before the project can be completed?
- Do any laws, such as the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act and its regulations, come into play?

Timelines

- What's the ultimate deadline, and what are the major milestones?
- Which external events or needs might affect the timelines?
- How will we monitor our progress? How does that reporting mechanism work?
- What might cause delays?

Quality

- Who will monitor the work for quality?
- Which standards will be used to measure quality?

Facilities, space and equipment

- Is special space required? Where will that space be?
- Beyond typical office hardware, is any special equipment needed?
- What software is needed? Who has it? Who knows how to use it?

Risk

- What's the worst thing that could happen to this project?
- What can we do to try to avoid it?
- If the worst happened, how would we recover?
- What are the costs of not doing this project?

4.12 Staying motivated

Keeping committee members – and yourself – interested and motivated is an issue that never stops.

Volunteers need to be treated with respect; they don't need to work for the association in the same way they must work for an employer or clients. They like to know what they're getting into, and what they can expect to get out of it.

New committee members need to be welcomed and integrated; the chair, or a designate, should take the time to brief new members, send them key background documents and answer their questions. Remember that the association has a complex structure, and new volunteers need background information to understand it all, and their place in it.

Volunteers like a clear picture of what they're expected to do and how, and to see how their work is helping the organization move forward. That's where your action plan can help. Get to know the kind of tasks committee members are good at and prefer doing and try to allocate the jobs accordingly.

Once committee members have agreed to their tasks, don't just cut them loose. Volunteers like to feel that there's a loop, and that they're in it. A monthly call or online chat, held at a set time, will help keep your committee's work front-of-mind.

If that sounds like more than is necessary, regular updates from you, the chair, can keep information flowing among members. Updates might discuss milestones reached by others on the committee, or news from other committees or from the national executive that may affect your committee's work. More subtly, a regular update reminds all of your committee members that others are working away at their tasks.

Sometimes, plain old nagging is the last resort for keeping members on track. If an email reminder of a passing deadline isn't answered, it's time to pick up the phone. If you've dangled the carrot by making everyone on the committee feel included and fired up about the job, you'll get better results when you must resort to the stick than you would with a stick-only approach.

Volunteers will appreciate your efforts to motivate them and keep them informed, and they'll be more likely to follow through with assigned tasks.

There are two aspects to appreciating volunteers: praising them for tasks accomplished and acknowledging them just for being there – for being “character guys,” as hockey players say.

Always acknowledge committee members when they come up with breakthrough ideas – creative initiatives or new ways of breaking through roadblocks. Tell other committee members who came up with the idea;

feel free to acknowledge the person to the president, your director and other association members, or in your quarterly report.

When the job is done, recognize everyone's efforts in a collective forum—either in a meeting, or in an email that is sent to every committee member.

4.13 Troubleshooting

We asked former national committee chairs for advice to help you through tough times. Here's what they have to say.

How am I going to get through all this work?

Delegating is crucial. It's tempting as a committee chair to feel you have to do everything, but that strategy rarely works. People have volunteered for your committee because they want to help out: they enjoy the work and they want to be a part of something. They'll be just as frustrated if you never call on them as you will be if you do all the work. You are a leader and organizer, not the guy or gal who does everything.

Your original motivation for chairing a committee might have been to learn about a new subject or pick up new skills. One of those skills might be how to delegate.

What's the best way to stay in touch with my committee?

Face-to-face meetings are ideal, but for committees with members scattered across the country, they're often difficult to manage. If it turns out that all your committee's members are going to be in the same place at the same time, don't pass up the opportunity to meet.

Conference calls can be effective: sometimes real-time conversation is the only way to resolve sticky issues. They're also a chance to get to know committee members, by listening to their style of speaking, vocal inflections and responses to others, in a way that email doesn't afford.

Remember that emotional issues don't fare well in email. Often, tensions can worsen because of misunderstandings in this nuance-poor environment. Use the phone or an in-person or video meeting if feelings are running high.

How often should I be in touch? I don't want to pester my committee members.

Setting up a regular time for communicating may be appropriate, especially for a complex, time-sensitive project such as organizing a conference. Having a conference call at a fixed time once a month or once a week can give your committee a sense of structure, of a deadline to work toward.

What if people are not available?

Encourage your committee members to be upfront about when they're available and when they're not, and when or how it's most convenient to communicate. Some in-house people like to receive email at the office; others prefer it at home. Block off your personal and family time, too. If your favourite niece is getting married in three months and you know the dates, tell your committee when you'll be unavailable.

I send my committee members email, and sometimes they don't respond. What can I do?

Give them deadlines to respond by when you're discussing something by email. Leaving the time open-ended just doesn't work.

Try not to leave discussions open-ended, either. If you're looking for opinions, you'll have better luck asking questions with a *yes/no* answer or two or three options. Instead of "How much should we charge for this seminar?" ask "Should we charge \$50, \$75, \$100 or another amount?" If members are pressed for time, or don't have strong opinions, they can simply respond with a "yes," "no" or "\$75 sounds right." If they want to explain their opinions, they still can, and they will.

Don't rely on email as your only mode of communication. If you need to talk with one committee member, pick up the phone. If you need to communicate with all committee members, arrange for a conference call. And get together in person when you can.

My own motivation is flagging. What can I do?

Popular self-help literature discusses the need for caregivers—parents of young children, adults taking care of aging parents—to take care of themselves as well. Just as it's good to tell and remind your committee mem-

bers why the project is important, and how their work furthers the goals of the association, don't forget to look in the mirror and say those same things. You'll get much more pleasure out of your volunteer experience if your mantra is "I want to see this project through because it's important and worthwhile," rather than "I just want to get this dangd work done." When your work is finished, be sure to reward yourself and reflect on how all or many members of the association will benefit from your committee's accomplishments.

How can I avoid conflict among committee members?

Hoping that conflict won't happen on your committee is sticking your head in the sand. But you can do a lot to foster an environment in which it can be either nipped in the bud or at least resolved to most committee members' satisfaction. Make it clear – especially to new committee members – that decisions are ordinarily made by consensus. This practice is especially important for policy-oriented committees.

Part of your role is to guide and moderate the discussion, especially during meetings and conference calls. Speak up occasionally, paraphrasing the general direction of the discussion by saying things such as "If I understand correctly, we are moving toward deciding to do x, rather than y. Is everyone happy with that?" Be sure that all members of the group, including the less talkative members, express themselves, especially on controversial issues. Sometimes individual members will have deep-seated objections to the initiative being discussed. Do what you can to find a compromise to keep that person within the circle of consensus.

It's also your job to intervene if one member of your committee becomes overly aggressive or even abusive toward another. State firmly that this sort of behaviour isn't tolerated in Editors Canada. For further guidance, refer to [bylaw 2.05, Discipline of Members](#), and [Editors Canada's harassment policy and harassment procedures](#).

If the going gets tough, you're not alone. For advice, rely on your director or talk to other committee chairs. There may also be another association member you know who has been in a similar situation.

Sometimes I feel overwhelmed in my role, and sometimes other parts of my life get in the way. What can I do?

See if you can delegate some more: ask yourself what

work is on your plate that might be handled by others on the committee. For example, if you know you'll be offline for several days or a couple of weeks, ask an experienced committee member to take your place temporarily.

Some committees also have co-chair leadership. Co-chairs can encourage each other to keep going. If one co-chair is too busy or just can't carry the load for other reasons, the other can pick up the slack.

Why do some volunteers burn out?

Some projects are genuinely very, very difficult, and it's hard to avoid burnout. But some volunteers also have difficulty saying no and setting boundaries. An Editors Canada project may push you beyond your comfort zone. Remember that you have choices about how you respond to that challenge.

I must quit. What do I do?

If you must resign because other priorities have emerged, advise – at a minimum – your director. If you've been working closely with your committee members, let them know, too.

Where your circumstances are personal and difficult, you should feel no need to provide a detailed explanation to anyone. The association is grateful for the volunteer work you were able to do.

My committee is doing shoddy written work. They're supposed to be editors! What can I do?

You may feel tempted to jump in and fix things. Slow down a little and check your judgment. Some people are strongly put off by errors that can be easily corrected. Is that what's going on? You also know how hard it can be to edit your own work, especially when you're struggling to get ideas clear. Is that what's going on? If you're in a time crunch and a lot depends on your committee's written products, contact your director for guidance. Remember the bigger picture.

Nothing's getting done. What can I do?

Don't automatically assume that you're at fault. Sometimes projects have distinct rhythms, and doing

nothing is exactly the right thing for the time. The project may need time to gel. Sometimes projects stall because staff time isn't available to move them forward according to your schedule, especially if you're running later than planned. Keep your director apprised of your timelines and the work required. If you simply expect staff to be available when you're ready to go, you may be surprised that other association work must take priority. And sometimes projects falter because they're ill-conceived and need a ground-up rethink.

There are lots of options. Always. Talk over the problem with your committee members, and your director.

Who's in charge? I can't figure that out.

Not-for-profit organizations, especially those that are largely volunteer-driven, often have loose lines of accountability. Who's in charge may depend on many things, including the stage of your committee work, its potential benefits or costs to the association, the personal styles of various volunteers and your demonstrated competence or need for support. But, ultimately, the national executive council and the executive director are accountable for the association.

When this question springs to mind, you might find it useful to recast it. What are you actually asking? Perhaps you need a faster turnaround on requests, or you want to sort through some conflicting recommendations.

Again, consult with your director if you have concerns about authority and accountability.



Acknowledgments

The association gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following people:

First edition: Susan Davis, Jennifer Latham, Lynne Massey, Peter Moskos, Maureen Nicholson, Michelle Ou and Tom Vradenburg

Second edition: Marta Horban, Michelle Ou, Moira White and Brendan Wild

Third edition: Magalie Allard, Marina Demetriou, Monica Laane-Fralick, Ambrose Li, Patricia MacDonald, Sophie Pallotta, Gael Spivak and Melissa Venditti



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