Committee Best Practices

By Bob Harris, CAE

Common laments about committees are that they waste time, there are too many, and they are more of a liability than an asset. Committees can be very effective when best practices are in place. They exist to benefit the board; their work should advance the mission and goals of the organization.

Committee Strategies

- Inventory committees at the start of the president’s term and eliminate or suspend unnecessary committees.
- Every committee should have a purpose statement to define (and limit) scope of work.
- Charges are made by the incoming president; assigning work and performance measures to advance the strategic plan.
- Committees must understand limitations of authority to speak and contract for the organization.
- Committees keep minutes, a question emphasized on revised IRS Form 990.

- Maintain a working notebook of documents and achievements to be passed on to the next committee chair.
- Appoint a vice chair for sustainability if the chair has to resign.
- Board and staff members serve as liaisons to assist committees.
- Good meeting practices are encouraged, including meeting notices, agendas, room set up and reports.
- Committees are shown be depicted on the organizational chart to show the proper flow of information and authority.

Note: Bob Harris, CAE, provides association and chamber tips and templates at www.nonprofitcentr.com. He can be contacted at (850) 570-5000 or bob@rcheae.com.

COMMITTEE MINUTES

Name of Committee: __________________________
Date of Meeting: ____________________________

Chairman: __________________________________
Staff: ________________________________

Committee Members Present:

Committee Members Absent:

Meeting Minutes/Discussion:

Action Items/Motions:

Economic Impact/Funding Note: __________________________

Coordinate with Another Committee? ______ Yes ______ No

Signature of Chair or Vice Chair X ________________

Template for Committee Minutes

COMMITTEE NAMES

- Standing - identified in the bylaws.
- Ad Hoc and Task Forces - appointed as needed for special assignments.
- Creative Teams - a pleasant name for a motivated committee.
- Special Interest Groups - like-minded members working to benefit their interest.