

OPA Committee Guide

Overview of Committees

Oklahoma Press Association is governed by a volunteer board of directors. Committees are established to assist the OPA Board in governing the association. There are two types of committees: Standing Committees and Special Committees.

Standing Committees:

Standing Committees are designated to make policy recommendations to the board, undertake long-term assignments, and carry out the work of the association.

The six current standing OPA committees are:

- **Awards Committee**
- **Education Committee**
- **Government Relations Committee**
- **LSP (Legal Services Plan) Committee**
- **Marketing Committee**
- **Nominating Committee**

Special Committees:

Special committees include task forces and ad hoc committees to undertake specific charges and usually remain active only one to three years.

Establishment of Committees

Appointment Process:

Each year in May, the OPA president-elect appoints the leadership (chairpersons and board liaisons) of each standing and special committee. The president-elect sends a call for volunteers and consults with staff members and others in making committee selections.

The association strives for diversity in the makeup of its committees, taking into consideration geography, newspaper type and size, and special skills and talents of association members.

The term of service for a committee member is one year. The chairperson is usually selected from the board or previous year's committee membership and serves in this leadership for one year.

Purpose of Committees:

Associations are built on a system of committee actions, linking the association with the attitudes and the real world of its members.

Committees represent, involve, and serve members, as well as provide an important training ground for future leaders. It is rare for any OPA board member to be elected without having first served on or chaired several committees.

Committees are an effective work force for the association. They ensure group participation in problem solving and provide a forum for the many interests within the association. Committees function best when their members are selected appropriately and they have clearly defined missions, strong leadership, and competent staffing.

Timeline for Committee Work

May 15: President-elect appoints committee chair and board liaison.

June 1: President-elect calls for volunteers from the membership.

July: Staff sends letter to committee members announcing annual committee meeting schedule.

Committee Meeting Timeline:

Two weeks before: Chair and staff liaison develop committee agenda.

One week before: Staff liaison works with member services coordinator to draft agenda and supporting materials. Coordinator e-mails agenda and available supporting materials to committee members.

One week after: Member services coordinator sends draft meeting minutes to staff liaison for review. Coordinator then e-mails minutes to chair for review and approval.

Two weeks after: Member services coordinator e-mails meeting minutes to all committee members and prepares report for board of directors.

Committee Administration

Chair and Staff Liaison:

The committee chair and staff liaison, working in partnership, are responsible for facilitating the work of the committee, providing oversight, and ensuring timely communications within the committee, between other committees, and the board.

Board Liaison:

Each committee is assigned a board member who serves as its liaison to the board of directors. This person is a leadership resource for the committee chair and staff liaison and a resource to the board regarding the committee's activities. The board liaison can also serve as chairman of a committee.

Member Services Coordinator:

The member services coordinator serves all OPA committees in providing logistical support for conference calls and meetings.

The coordinator will:

- Distribute an agenda packet prepared by the staff liaison and chair to all committee members prior to each meeting.
- Report the minutes of each meeting, which must be approved by the committee's staff liaison and chair before being distributed to committee members.
- After each committee meeting, prepare and submit to the board of directors a report of the committee's decisions, motions and activities. The board liaison will report back to the committee chair and staff liaison after each board meeting in which the committee submitted recommendations for board approval.

Committee Responsibilities:

Committees are directly responsible to the board of directors through the office of the staff executive vice president. Committees may not commit to expenditure of funds and may not express or represent positions in the name of the association, unless specifically authorized by the board.

Meeting Expenses:

Oklahoma Press Association does not provide travel support for members to attend committee meetings. Therefore, OPA tries to keep physical meetings to a minimum and focus on conference calls and other forms of communication on a regular basis.

Conference Calls:

In an effort to improve communication and work between meetings committees will participate in scheduled conference calls throughout the year.

A phone number and access code will be provided in the meeting notice to all committee members prior to each conference call. Members will call the specified phone number at the assigned meeting time. Members outside the 405 area code may call toll-free, 1-888-657-2737 (1-888-OK-PAPER); within the 405 area code, members should call 499-0047. Enter the access code provided on the meeting notice when prompted to enter the conferencing area. Conference calls may be recorded for reporting purposes.

Canceling Meetings:

On rare occasions meetings must be cancelled. The two primary reasons for canceling a meeting are usually inclement weather or attendance has not been confirmed by a minimum number of committee members. The staff liaison, with consultation of the chair, has the authority to cancel a committee meeting.

Procedure for Canceling Meetings:

Staff will notify all committee members of the cancellation, including those not scheduled to attend. Committee members are required to acknowledge the cancellation of in-person meetings at OPA by confirming with the member services coordinator via e-mail or telephone message.

Preparing the Meeting Agenda

Before each committee meeting, the chair and staff liaison will develop a tentative agenda and supporting material. The member services coordinator will send an agenda packet to all committee members, the president, vice president and board liaison approximately one week before the meeting.

An agenda should include the following items:

- Beginning time of the meeting
- Meeting type and location when required
- Agenda of topics to be discussed or acted on

Background information, if available, should be provided on each agenda item. This can be supplied either on the agenda or as part of the supporting materials sent to committee members before the meeting.

Parliamentary Procedure

Committees are NOT required to operate using parliamentary procedure; however, the objectives and principles of parliamentary procedure should be employed.

Objectives of Parliamentary Procedure Include:

- Expediting business
- Maintaining order
- Ensuring justice and equity for all
- Accomplishing the objectives for which the group is organized

Principles of Parliamentary Procedure Include:

- Courtesy and justice to all
- Rule of the majority while respecting the rights of the minority
- Partiality to none
- Protection of the absentee
- Taking one item of business at a time

Committee Chair Description

Basic Function:

The committee chair guides the committee in its work as outlined by the scope of work and charge from the OPA president.

Responsibilities:

- Develop a work plan, with help from staff, that allows the committee to effectively and efficiently fulfill its responsibilities for the year.
- Develop meeting agendas, with help from staff, and conduct committee meetings.
- Review and approve minutes of committee meetings before their distribution.
- Work with staff to ensure that the work of the committee is carried out between meetings.
- On occasion, the chair may be asked by the board liaison or staff to speak at the next meeting of the board of directors.
- Where appropriate, the chair guides the committee in proposing ideas that will further the goals and objectives of the association.
- Where appropriate, the committee chair makes policy recommendations to the board of directors.

Presiding Over a Meeting

Starting the Meeting:

- Begin the meeting on time and introduce any visitors attending.

During the Meeting:

- Announce the business to be conducted.
- All motions for action and recommendation should follow parliamentary procedure.
- Recognize members who are entitled to talk; discourage breaking in.
- Following each discussion, announce the result of actions taken and explain the follow-through to be taken and by whom.
- Help expedite business. Don't let discussions drift or go on too long.
- Follow the agenda. If needed, seek the full committee's agreement to change the agenda once it has been announced.

Handling a motion:

1. A committee member makes a motion.
2. Another member seconds the motion.
3. The chair states the question on the motion.
4. Allow for any additional discussion or debate.
5. The chair puts the question to a vote of the committee members: "All in favor, say aye." "All opposed, say no."
6. The chair announces the vote.

Closing the Meeting:

- Before ending the meeting, the chair should quickly review accomplishments as well as assignments for committee members and staff.
- Announce the time of the next meeting if possible.
- Close the meeting on time or seek the committee's agreement to extend the time if necessary.

Chair's Role as Facilitator

- Be a facilitator of meetings; don't "hold court." The committee belongs to the association, not to the chair.
- Guide, mediate, probe, and stimulate discussions. Let others thrash out ideas; committees are not formed to validate the thinking of the chair or staff.
- Encourage a clash of ideas, but not of personalities. Good decisions are made when committees examine all sides of an issue, but don't let members personalize the debate. Emotional discussion of an idea is good, but an emotional reaction to a person is bad. When emotions are too high, return the floor to a neutral person, seek a purely factual answer, or take a break.
- Prevent one-sided discussions.
- Deal with dysfunctional behaviors. Don't let a person who is blocking constructive discussion ruin the committee meeting for everyone else. Strategies for dealing with this behavior include confronting the person privately in a caring manner, pointing out the effects of the behavior, and suggesting alternative behaviors.
- Keep discussions on track; periodically restate the issue and the goal of the discussion.
- Monitor participation; control talkative members and draw out silent members.
- Use well-placed questions. Seek points of information and clarification, and periodically summarize to keep the discussion focused.
- Be sensitive to the feelings of members. Look for visual and verbal clues to determine if a member is unhappy with the discussion, and then remedy it.
- Keep the group focused on the central question and moving toward a decision. Call first on the least senior members to express their views. Discussions tend to "close down" after senior members express strong views.
- Seek consensus, but unanimity is not required. Sometimes an idea is compromised by trying to get every last person to completely agree.
- Close the meeting by noting achievements.

Committee Member Description

Basic Function:

Reports to the committee chair and actively participates in the work of the committee.

Responsibilities:

- Reviews agenda and supplied material prior to committee meetings.
- Attends committee meetings and participates in conference calls. Makes thoughtful contributions and voices objective opinions on deliberations of the committee.
- Carries out individual assignments made by committee chair.
- Works as part of the committee and staff team to ensure that the committee proposes policies or develops products and services that help association members and staff who are responsible for the scope of interest of the committee.
- Works toward the best interests of the association, rather than on personal or hidden interests.
- Refrains from any discussions or activities that are in violation of antitrust laws.
- Discloses any actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

Board Liaison Description

Basic Function:

A member of the board of directors appointed by the OPA president. Serves as a leadership resource to the committee chair and staff liaison in understanding board policy and direction. Also serves as a resource to the board regarding committee activities. The board liaison can also serve as chairman of a committee.

Responsibilities:

- Attends all meetings of the committee.
- Reports to the board on committee actions and recommendations.
- Reports to committee chair and staff liaison on actions of the board.
- Reports to the committee on decisions of the board of directors that affect the committee's work or activities.
- Evaluates chair and members for increased responsibility on future committees or the board.

Staff Liaison Description

Basic Function:

Serves as an informed resource person to the chair and members of the committee. Assists the chair in facilitating committee discussions and activities that address the committee's mission.

Responsibilities:

- Provides thorough orientation for each new committee chair and assists the chair in providing orientation for new and continuing committee members each year.
- Works with the chair to develop a plan of work that will allow the committee to effectively and efficiently fulfill its responsibilities for the year.
- Works with the chair to develop meeting agendas and conduct effective committee meetings.
- Works with the member services coordinator to prepare agendas and supporting material for committee members. Reviews meeting minutes drafted by coordinator before distribution to committee.
- Works with the committee chair, other committee members, and association staff to ensure that the work of the committee is carried out between committee meetings.
- Facilitates communication of committee activities, including requests for action or proposed policies, to the staff executive vice president and board of directors.
- Reports to the committee on decisions of the board of directors or other association committees that impact the committee's activities.
- Communicates activities of the committee and actions of the board to the editor of the Oklahoma Publisher for reporting to the membership.

Member Services Coordinator Description

Basic Function:

Provides administrative support for execution of all committee meetings. Drafts meeting agendas, minutes and reports for review and approval by committee staff liaison and chair.

Responsibilities:

Write Meeting Minutes

- Include date, time, and place of meeting. Note the chairman's name, members present and absent, and other key people in attendance.
- Include a summary of discussions. Note all decisions reached, including motions passed and follow-up actions to be taken, with deadlines for implementation.

Distribution of Meeting Minutes

Member services coordinator should send meeting minutes to staff liaison for review within one week after meeting. Coordinator should then send minutes to the committee chair for review and approval.

Following approval, the member services coordinator distributes the minutes to all committee members, including those who did not attend, within two weeks of the meeting. Include a statement to contact the chair, staff liaison or coordinator if errors are noted.

Report to the Board of Directors

- Include date, time, and place of the meeting. Note chairman's and board liaison's names.
- Organize the report into three sections:
 1. **Board Recommendations** – requesting a vote of the board of directors
 2. **Committee Action** – decisions reached, motions passed, and assignments for committee members
 3. **Staff Action** – assignments for staff
- Summarize each discussion and action into one or two sentences each. The report should be no longer than one or two pages. Committee recommendations to the board should include text of the full motion and voting results from the meeting minutes.

Send report to staff liaison for review approximately two weeks prior to board meeting. Report must be approved at least one week prior to board meeting.