

How to form a committee

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www.enablingchange.com.au

Committees help spread the workload. At its simplest, a committee is simply a group of motivated people who meet regularly, at least one of whom acts as a convenor.

However, if you are forming an on-going group or handling money, you may want to want a more structured committee. Here are some steps to follow.

- 1) Find a location** for regular meetings. Community or neighbourhood centres are usually free and good to work with.
- 2) Call a public meeting on the issue** and, at the conclusion, ask for individuals to nominate to form a committee to carry forward the issue. This is the most effective method, as people are often highly focused and motivated at public meetings.
- 3) Do the rounds.** Talk to people or groups with similar interests, let them know about the new group, and let them know you're looking for people who really want to make a difference for children and parents.
- 4) Personally ask individuals** who you think have the skills you need. (Be persuasive: First say you've been looking for individuals who are recognized as having extraordinary skills and commitment in this area (or similar words), *then* ask them to join!)
- 5) At the first committee meeting, elect the following positions:** chair, deputy chair, secretary, and treasurer. You may also want to have other positions, like a publicity officer, an entertainment officer, a membership officer, or a fundraising officer.

The chair

Chairs meetings and usually acts as spokesperson

The deputy chair

Stands in if the chair is absent.

The secretary

Keep members informed of meetings; distributes the agenda; takes minutes; helps prepare the agenda with the chair; writes and receives correspondence; keeps membership records;

The treasurer

Looks after finances and accounts (see *Financial management*)

6) Give the officeholders a copy of a suitable guide so they understand their responsibilities (see *Resources* below).

7) Agree on the next meeting and/or a plan of action (see *Planning* sections).

Want to start an incorporated association?

If your group is handling money or entering into contracts (for instance to rent premises or equipment), then it's a good idea to become an incorporated association. Incorporation provides a degree of legal protection for members and also helps the group continue when membership changes.

If you want to start an incorporated association, the **Department of Fair Trading** has forms, guides and model rules you can download.

www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/About_us/Publications/Cooperatives_and_associations.html

Useful resources

A great guide to the roles of committee members (and practically everything you need to run a community organisation) is **A Guide for Effective Community Organisations**, downloadable from the South East NSW Area Consultative Committee website at www.weacc.org (If it doesn't download give them a call on (02) 6492 5688)

ourcommunity.com.au has a fantastic online resource centre with succinct help sheets on every aspect of being a committee or board member.

www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards/boards_article.jsp?articleId=1297

A detailed guide that focuses on planning processes and workplans, for organisations receiving DOCS funding, is **Management Resource Kit - A practical guide about service agreements and Management Committee responsibilities** produced by the Western Sydney Community Forum

www.wscf.org.au/uploads/File/Management%20Resource%20Kit.pdf