

## **How to Become a Committee Member**

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In everyone's career, the opportunity will come to serve on a committee. It may be a departmental, institutional, or national committee or just a committee for a local organization to which you belong.

You will be asked to serve on many committees during your career. The first rule is to make sure you are selecting the committee with which you want to be involved because it is of interest to you and not because you are forced to serve on it. You need to learn to say, "No," when you do not have the time to serve responsibly.

### **Things to think about when considering volunteering to serve on a committee**

- What are your present commitments?
- How much time can you give to the committee and its activities?
- Will the time you have be enough to allow you to be a valuable and productive member of the committee?
- What skills, experiences, or expertise do you bring to a committee?
- What would you have to give up serving on a committee?
- Will there be any financial costs to serving on a committee (travel or out-of-pocket expenses)? If so, are you prepared to commit those funds?
- What committees are available and are any of them of interest you?

### **Benefits to committee service**

- Provide service to the department/organization
- Contribute in a meaningful way with new ideas/projects
- Gain networking opportunities/Meet new people
- Gain new skills and experiences
- Earn recognition

### **Things to think about when considering a specific committee**

- What is the committee's purpose?
- How many committee members are there?
- What type of representation does the committee seek to have (gender, affiliation, age, interest, etc.)?
- What is the process for committee member appointment?  
What are the committee's activities?
- What skills, experiences, or expertise will you bring to the committee?
- What is the time commitment?
  - How long will you serve?
  - How often does the committee meet?
  - What is the timing of meetings? (evening, whole day, weekend),
  - What other commitments will there be? (work in sub-groups, representation to other committees or bodies)
  - How much work is a committee member expected to do?
- Are you being asked to represent a particular group on the committee?
  - If so, what would they expect of you in terms of being a conduit for information to and from the committee, speaking on behalf of the group, coordinating action from the group?

### **Resources to check when considering a specific committee**

- Copies of minutes from past committee meetings
- Examples of the reports made by the committee
- Activities sponsored by and carried out by the committee
- Contact past or current committee members about their service on the committee
- Staff support for committee activities

### **Applying for a committee**

- Identify the committee(s) of interest
- What information is needed to apply?
- Is there an application process?
- Are there deadlines for applying for committee membership?
- If you are applying from a specific group, what are their requirements?