

SETAC North America Committee Guidelines

Preamble

SETAC North America's [committees](#) are responsible for helping the board and staff execute much of the society's business. Committees support our science, networking, and professional development by handling recurring activities and putting new initiatives into action. They are also vital opportunities for member engagement. Being engaged in meaningful committee work is an excellent way to meet other SETAC members, contribute to the Society, and develop skills that you can apply in your professional life. While functions and processes are outlined in program- and committee-specific standard operating procedures (SOPs), typical committee responsibilities include 1) assisting the SETAC NA staff and the SETAC NA Board of Directors to advance the annual plan, 2) proposing ideas and initiatives, 3) following through on actions, and 4) communicating accomplishments and opportunities to join or volunteer with members, other committees, and Interest Groups.

Committees are part of a shared leadership structure. The [SETAC NA By-laws](#) give the Board of Directors responsibility for the formation and dissolution of committees. The SETAC NA President appoints a committee chair (typically based on a committee recommendation) and a liaison from the board to each committee. To foster collaboration between the SETAC NA Board of Directors and its committees, North America Committee Leader Roundtables - Meetings of all committee chairs, President, Vice President and Executive Director – are held. The purpose of these meetings is to provide a forum for committees to share their plans with the board, ensure alignment with the board's annual plan and to discuss any topics or ideas they want to bring to the table. Further, committees are invited to present their work and proposals at board meetings. Potential agenda items can be conveyed by the committees to the board by the board or staff liaison; ideally two weeks in advance of the Board meeting.

The by-laws do not provide guidance on committee-specific SOP content, so this document provides guidelines for committee SOPs and a universal template.

The guidelines for committee SOPs outline best practice and recommendations for regenerative committee functions and committee administrative tasks. It is recommended that committees separate guidelines for specific program and projects into appendices of their SOPs so they can be modified, throughout the project or program's life cycle and at its conclusion, to incorporate lessons learned. The guidelines contain a template that outlines components of a committee SOP.

Guidelines for Committee Organization and Committee SOPs

The following observations will help with committee SOP content. These are characteristics of well-functioning SETAC NA committees – best practices for leadership and communication for committees to consider as they develop or revise their SOPs

1. *Include the committee charge and purpose clearly* – context on why the committee exists can inspire members and help engender collective responsibility for achieving goals. The overall committee charge, as defined by the Board of Directors, should be provided, and include its main purpose, recurring duties, and objectives. The Board of Directors may add to the charge, as needed.

2. *Define a leadership structure* – the committee steering team should be composed of a minimum of three members and a maximum of around twelve members with defined leadership responsibilities.

The model of a leadership team with a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Past Chairperson helps with setting the overall tone and agenda, ensuring continuity, managing workload, and planning for leadership transitions. The model of a co-chairperson leadership team has worked well, too; a co-chairperson structure can facilitate members' stepping into leadership roles if they know they will have help with that new responsibility. A team of subcommittee chairs may also work as a steering team, depending on the committee. For example, this model might work well for a committee that has standing subcommittees (e.g., Awards and Fellowships) or stable ad hoc subcommittees (e.g., Career Development).

Chairs will be provided onboarding to ensure they are aware of SETAC policies and guidelines and best practices. Chairs are ultimately responsible for their committee.

Leaders should help identify and mentor those who will replace them when they move on to new challenges. How leadership transitions are made should be clear in the SOP. The Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Past Chairperson (one year in each position) model noted above works well.

3. *Compose and operate in a manner that that reflects and engages the larger membership* – committee members are expected to be SETAC members . These best practices make committees more inviting and the work more rewarding:
 - a. *Tripartite participation* – To reflect the Society's membership composition and to balance the interests of academia, business/consulting, and government, committee members should reflect these professional sectors as best possible.
 - b. *Inclusion of students* – Committee composition that invites student participation helps ensure we benefit from their perspectives, encourages student development and empowerment, and provides mutual networking benefits for professional development and Society membership.
 - c. *Diverse participation* – The committee should reflect the society's membership in terms of diversity in sector as described above and individual diversity. We recognize that diversity in certain areas is more intrinsic in some committees than in others (e.g., diversity of expertise in the science committee versus diversity in career levels in the career development committee).
 - d. *Defined terms of service* – A set period of committee service helps prospective members consider their volunteer commitment, respects their other obligations, and offers opportunities for more members to rotate in and out of the work. Three-year terms are used by some committees – this model provides continuity while giving new people opportunities to serve and those rotating off chances to serve SETAC elsewhere. Upper limits are often established to allow room for leadership development and to avoid burnout. Committee steering team terms can be renewed and have no strict limit, but if volunteers

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are identified to succeed sitting steering committee members, then succession is encouraged.

- e. *Subcommittees and work groups* – If the committee’s charge is extensive, subcommittees and work groups help focus committee resources, facilitate completion of tasks, and provide opportunities to engage more members.
4. *Describe recurring activities and procedures* – Each committee’s work is different. A committee SOP should clearly summarize the activities by subcommittee and work groups, if such organization exists, and establish approaches for achieving the objectives of those groups.
5. *Create an expectation of frequent planned communications* – Regularly scheduled recurring conference calls and meetings, including scheduled face-to-face meetings at SETAC NA annual conferences, increase participation and give new members more opportunities to learn the committee business. Establishing agendas at least four to seven days in advance and distributing post-meeting minutes with action items within a week is important to keep information flowing and should be standard procedure.
6. *Make annual work planning a standard operating procedure* – Committees can benefit from producing formal or informal work plans for the year -- the more specific ‘what’ for the year with success criteria as a complement to the SOP’s ‘who and how.’

This general guidance and the following template should facilitate committee-specific SOP development.

At any time, the SETAC NA Board of Directors can recommend existing committee SOPs as good examples for consideration when drafting or revising an SOP.

_____ COMMITTEE

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STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

I. CHARGE – the overall purpose and scope of the committee, along with objective(s) and a summary of major components / typical tasks, as provided but the board of directors.

II. GOVERNANCE – The SOP should include the Governance section (A, B, and C) verbatim. Any adjustments to the language must be approved by the SETAC NA Board.

A. Oversight: The SETAC NA Board of Directors has oversight for the committee and, if necessary, will offer guidance to ensure compliance with established policy.

B. Rules: All committee members should familiarize themselves with all [SETAC policies](#). Any material shared by the committee should adhere to the [SETAC Logo and Trademark Guidelines](#), [SETAC Social Media Guidelines](#), and [SETAC Privacy Policy](#). Moreover, all committee members should adhere to the [SETAC Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct](#). All policies are incorporated into this guidance by reference. All fundraising should be coordinated through the office. Committees do not represent SETAC, and as such should not insinuate that by issuing statements, unilaterally asking for funds, promising action from SETAC, or otherwise.

C. Budget: The committee does not have an operating budget. If the committee has a need for funding, they can work with the office and their board liaison to develop a proposal and a budget for board review and approval.

Note – Some committees execute programs on behalf of the Board of Directors that do necessitate a budget and in that case the budget is developed by the board (e.g., Award and Fellowships Committee or Training and Education Committee) and monitored by the office. Other committees, plan projects that also require a budget and, in that case, they work with the office and the board liaison to develop a proposal and a budget for board review and approval. Ideally, proposals for programs will be provided to the board of Directors in time for inclusion in the overall annual plan and budget for SETAC. Proposals for individual projects are accepted throughout the year though proposals for initiatives that are to be conducted in conjunction with the annual meeting are ideally provided five or six months prior to the meeting for planning purposes. Any fundraising activities are coordinated through the SETAC office to ensure compliance with financial and accounting best practices and to avoid donor fatigue.

III. MEMBERSHIP

A. Leadership structure – composition, how chairperson(s) and any other officers are determined, duration of service, and leadership transitions, roles, and responsibilities

Example language from other SOPs available for the committee to adopt: The Committee Steering Team is led by a tri-chair model consisting of a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Past Chairperson, each serving in their capacity for a 1/3 their term (total of *three* years of service to the committee). Membership in the Committee Steering Team will follow the basic SETAC guidelines and achieve balance with representation from academia, industry, and government.

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Diversity in geography or locale, career level, and gender, and inclusion of students in membership of the Committee Steering Team is recommended to the extent possible. The Committee Steering Team is comprised of no less than *three* and no more than 12 individuals.

The Committee Steering Team members serve a three-year term. The terms of the Committee Steering Team are tied to calendar years. The Committee Steering Team membership and leadership terms are staggered to insure a turnover of approximately one-third members per year.

In instances where a Committee Steering Team member must leave before completing their term, and when there are more than six months remaining in the term, the Committee Steering Team solicits from individuals from the departing member's sector to fulfill the term. Individuals are identified to the Committee Steering Team at least two weeks prior to the appointment of the replacement.

In instances where new Committee Steering Team members cannot be identified even after exhaustive queries to the whole membership, Committee Steering Team members may renew for a subsequent term.

If job changes among Committee Steering Team members lead to a change in sectors during their term, they are allowed to continue throughout their term. If sector balance is significantly altered (i.e., no representation from one sector), then new Committee Steering Team members are sought.

In September of each year, the chair announces the descriptions of the available vacancies in the Committee Steering Team (type of position and preferred sector, locale, place in career path [student, early career, expert], and gender) to the membership at least four (4) months prior to the appointment date (i.e., September announcement for appointment starting January).

Anyone who fits a vacancy description, has institutional or personal support, has expertise or interest in issue, and has a commitment to the mission and operating guidelines of the committee can express their interest in being considered for appointment to the Committee Steering Team.

Nominations are open for one month (i.e., 1–30 September). If there is a competition for any seat, a ballot is organized with assistance from the SETAC Office. Voting is open for one month (i.e., 1–31 Oct).

The new Committee Steering Team slate, including chairs, are provided to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors appoints the chairs of the committees within two months of the announcement of vacancies (i.e., November). This provides a two-month overlap with the out-going committee.

B. Committee composition – Members on Committee Steering Team should be SETAC members. This section should state how many members are on the full committee, how they are recruited or join, duration of service (number of years, if set terms of service are important to the committee), roles and responsibilities. Committee membership should strive for tripartite participation among the Society's industry/consulting, government, and academic sectors, inclusion of students, variation in career level, and individual diversity. Committee should be balanced in areas pertinent to the specific committee

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(e.g., diversity of expertise in the science committee versus diversity in career levels in the career development committee).

IV. OPERATING PROCEDURES

A. Structure – existing subcommittees or how they are formed if needed

Example 1: The committee currently includes the following permanent subcommittee: List.

Example 2: The committee currently does not include any ad-hoc or permanent subcommittee. If subcommittees are necessary, the committee steering team will form them.

B. Decision-making – operational procedures for how the group will function and how it will handle certain situations when they arise.

Example: The committee uses a consensus-based decision-making process.

C. Recurring Administrative Activities– how the committee is regenerated

PLANNING – Outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Committee, including reviewing and updating the SOP, identifying yearly goals for the committee based on the charge from the SETAC NA Board of Directors, and producing high-quality annual reports and workplans to the SETAC NA Board of Directors.

Example: The SETAC NA Board of Directors will appoint committee incoming committee chairs and provide the chair and the committee clear guidance and a charge at the end of a calendar year. The chair should use the first meeting of the calendar year to set and operationalize a plan to establish committee goals. Champions or project managers for each goal are identified from the committee membership. They are obligated to determine how best to meet the goals. The champions provide a status update on the goals during the recurring committee meetings. The goals are listed on the committee website and provided to the Board in the annual report.

COMMUNICATION– frequency and location of in person meetings and/or video conference calls; sharing meeting minutes

Example: When possible, the committee holds one face-to-face business meeting at the SETAC NA annual conference. The chair or their designee plans the committee meeting with assistance from the SETAC Office and in coordination with the Committee’s liaison from the SETAC NA Board of Directors.

At the start of each year, the chair queries the new Committee Steering Team and identifies a recurring committee video or teleconference meeting time. Calls for the year, once scheduled, are announced to the full committee.

The chair is responsible for preparing a brief agenda and sending it out at least one week and not more than two weeks prior to each committee meeting.

The vice chair or a designated member of the Committee Steering Team is responsible for taking minutes at the committee meetings, posting them on a committee site, and sending a link to them in an email to the committee members within one week of meeting.

PROGRESS REPORT AND WORKPLAN – preparation, review and submittal of annual progress report and work plan (activities of the previous year, tasks initiated and completed, plans for the coming year,

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membership, succession plan, and finance reports as required). The annual progress reports and workplans should be submitted to the SETAC Office by 1 October via a form forwarded to committee chairs. This timing builds momentum for a productive face-to-face business meeting in November and affords the SETAC NA Board of Directors and staff time to review workplans and consider for the annual plan for the following year.

Example: The vice chair prepares the annual report and workplan with assistance from the Committee Steering Team and submits it when prompted by the SETAC Office by the requested deadline.

VI. ACTIVITIES CALENDAR – Schedule for regular occurring activities during the year.

Examples:

January/February: committee kickoff, set committee monthly call, assign goals to individuals

May/June: Send proposals for any activities in conjunction with annual meeting (type of activity, logistical needs [e.g., room size and layout, AV, catering, preferred day and time, sign-up requirements] budget, nominated invited speakers [bios and support needed],...)

August/September: reserve room for committee administrative meeting if desired

September: Solicit interest for incoming Vice Chair and other meeting members. Submit annual report and workplan to SETAC Office and SNA Board of Directors.

October/November: Elections for vice-chair.

VII. GROUND RULES – Sets some ground rules for working within the Committee.

Examples:

Plan Inclusive Meeting

- Encourage but don't require camera usage
- Don't comment on appearance even if in compliment
- Encourage pronoun identification
- Suggest use of close captioning
- Make space – monitored raises hands and chat function

Conduct Inclusive Meeting

- Embody the SETAC values: transparent, integrity, diversity and inclusion, equity, sustainability, and civil dialogue
- Listen fully – Make time, take time
- Problem solve together
- Be tolerant of each other's perspective
- Respect confidentiality – Chatham House Rule
- Be mindful of conflict of interest
- Address Chair and comment on the issue not the presenter of the issue
- Work towards consensus
- Be kind and avoid judgment

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Conduct organized meetings

- Publicize meeting well ahead of time
- Utilize a written agenda (old business, new business, ongoing business)
- Publish agenda a week ahead of meeting
- Start and end meetings on time
- Come to meetings prepared - review pre-meeting reading materials
- Stay focused on the topic
- Publish minutes as soon as possible following meetings
- Add action items and person responsible in minutes

Operate effectively

- Follow the parliamentary procedures for meetings set out in the SETAC NA by-laws
- Assign champions or project managers to goals and action items
- Follow-through on meeting action items

Appendix

Guidelines for Committee-specific Projects and Tasks

Committee specific projects and tasks that are executed by the committee take careful planning and should be constantly revised to incorporate lessons learned and therefore are best as a standalone Appendix to the committee SOP. Task and project guidelines should contain linkage to the board, staff, and other committees as well as existing programs and policies. Such guidelines can be marinated as a living document so that decisions and lessons learned are incorporated as needed.

Example: A subgroup of this committee typically plans a special panel every year in conjunction of the annual meeting. The following guidelines can be used in planning:

January/February: subgroup lead is identified as well as others willing to volunteer

March/April: The group develops their plan identifies logistical needs, expected number of participants, The group leader presents updates at the committee call. The group can coordinate fundraising as needed with the office for pre-approved projects.

April/May: The group sends the proposal for the activity to the office (type of activity, logistical needs [e.g., room size and layout, AV, catering, preferred day/time, sign-up] budget.... Ideally nominated invited speakers [bios and support needed] will be provided to the board at this time.

May/June: Once the board provide feedback on the proposal, the group leader may begin to contact vendors, invited speakers, ... the group can coordinate fundraising as need with the office

August/September/October: continue to fine tune plans. Make sure event is being communicated and marketed by the office well. Amplify any communications about the event to your network to solicit participation (e.g., forward emails, like/share/tag in social media...

November: have a successful event