



Quick Reference Handout 9.8: Effective Committees

Overview: Function and Benefits of PC/PB Committees

Committees are responsible for most of the information gathering and preparatory work for implementing Planning Council/Planning Body (PC/PBs) duties. Committee structures, membership, leadership, work plans, and operations all require ongoing attention from PC/PB members and support staff.¹

PC/PBs benefit from committees because they allow for sharing of legislative responsibilities and do the essential groundwork for PC/PB decision making. Committees provide opportunities for public input from people with HIV, providers, and other outside experts and can schedule time for in-depth review and discussion of reports and data. After considering issues and options, they make recommendations to the full PC/PB, usually through the Executive Committee. This process allows full PC/PB meetings to focus on review and decision making, new information, and big-picture issues. PC/PB meetings can be more focused and efficient when committees provide clear, data-based recommendations. In addition, PC/PB members – especially new members – who may feel uncomfortable speaking in full PC/PB meetings often participate actively in committees, which involve fewer people and may seem less formal. Many PC/PBs allow non-PC/PB members to join and vote in committees, engaging more people, including individuals with lived experience, and serving as a training ground for potential PC/PB members.

The Health Resources and Services Administration's HIV/AIDS Bureau (HRSA HAB) expects PC/PBs to adopt a committee structure that helps them meet their legislative responsibilities, and to support effective committee work in ways such as the following:

- Describe the PC/PB's committee structure and roles in new member orientation.
- Require representation of people with HIV, including clients of Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) services, on all committees.
- Consider allowing and encouraging non-PC/PB members including people with HIV to serve on some committees; these non-members generally serve on planning committees but not those responsible for governance, like the Membership and Executive Committees.
- Share committee minutes and other materials with all PC/PB members, to increase their depth of knowledge of the various issues addressed in committee.
- Provide training and support for committees and for their chairs or co-chairs.

Types of Committees

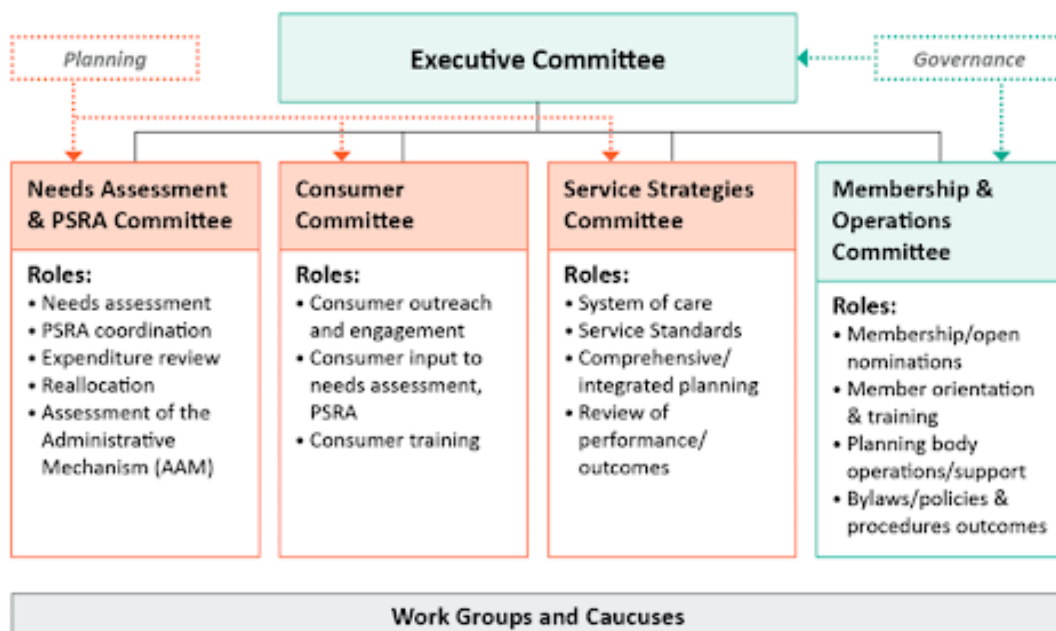
PC/PBs generally have two types of committees:

- Governance committees**, responsible for coordination of PC/PB tasks and other committees and for internal operations such as membership/open nominations, member training, Bylaws, policies and procedures, and development and updating of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the recipient. Typically, PC/PBs' governance committees include the Executive Committee and the Membership or Governance Committee.
- Planning committees**, responsible for legislatively defined duties like needs assessment, integrated/comprehensive planning, priority setting and resource allocation (PSRA), improving the system of care, and assessment of the efficiency of the administrative mechanism, and ensuring active involvement of people with HIV in planning. PC/PBs often have planning committees, such as Needs Assessment Committee, PSRA Committee, Service Strategies Committee, and Consumer Committee.

Committee Structure

Committee structure is determined by each PC/PB. Ideally, your PC/PB should have enough committees to share the work, but not so many that members are expected to serve on more than one committee or PC/PB support staff are overloaded. Usually that means an Executive Committee plus 3-4 others, as shown in the Sample Committee Structure below. The PC/PB can add work groups or ad hoc committees to take on time-limited tasks or use caucuses to engage different subpopulations of people with HIV.

Sample Committee Structure



Choosing or revising the committee structure for your PC/PB requires consideration of both legislative responsibilities and local factors. A primary consideration is the PC/PB's duties – legislative roles and any additional local duties, which may include planning responsibility for prevention as well as care and treatment. Among the important local factors to consider in setting up your PC/PB's committee structure are the following:

- **Dividing the work:** This includes both the amount and timing of tasks. The same committee can take on several roles if they have different timelines, such as needs assessment and PSRA.
- **Number of members and minimum desired committee size:** The more committees your PC/PB has, the smaller each committee is likely to be. PC/PBs with smaller membership – e.g., 25-30 – may need non-PC members to serve on some committees in order to avoid asking members to serve on multiple committees. Committee Chairs usually serve on the Executive Committee, so they generally have two committee assignments.
- **Resources including staff:** PC/PB support (PCS) staff spend much of their time planning and managing meetings, materials, and minutes, and each committee meeting involves logistics, staff time, and costs. Committees charged with specific planning tasks typically have recipient staff that attend regularly as well. Jurisdictions that have larger administrative budgets and more PC/PB support staff may be able to support more committees than those with more limited resources.
- **PC/PB "culture":** PC/PBs vary in the level of expected individual member involvement, work styles, leadership roles, and recipient participation in their committee work.

Staff Support for Committees

PC/PB staff support for committees involves preparation for meetings, attendance at meetings, and meeting follow-up. Before a committee meeting, PCS staff typically work with the Chair or Co-Chairs on the agenda, gather or help prepare materials and send them out several days or a week ahead, post required meeting announcements, contact members to determine attendance, and make meeting arrangements. At committee meetings, they handle logistics, project information onto screens, manage a remote platform if hybrid meetings are permitted, take notes and often record the meeting, provide content input, and locate any additional materials needed during meetings. After the meeting, they usually prepare minutes for Chair or Co-Chair review, and they develop or revise reports and recommendations from the committee for review by the Executive Committee and action by the full PC/PB. Sometimes follow-up with the recipient or other entities is required. If the PC/PB has a small staff, committee and full PC/PB meetings may leave them little time for other roles like coordination, member training, and technical support for planning tasks like needs assessment.

PC/PBs with limited staff can help avoid staff overload by making sure all committees are necessary and considering mergers to limit the number of standing committees. For example, it may be feasible to combine Needs Assessment with Priority Setting and Resource Allocation (PSRA) into a single committee, and merge Care Strategies/System of Care with Integrated/Comprehensive

Planning. Many PC/PBs have one committee responsible for all governance functions including membership, Bylaws/policies and procedures, and other operations.

Other time-and-effort savers include the following:

- Modify the PC/PB’s annual calendar to “space out” major tasks. For example, implement needs assessment in the fall and winter and PSRA in spring and summer.
- Consistently use well-defined processes and tasks that increase efficiency; for example, committee leaders can take responsibility for preparing their own committee agendas using an agreed-upon format.
- Have two officers for each committee, either Co-Chairs or a Chair and Vice Chair, so they can share the leadership work.
- Agree on a summary approach to minutes and provide a template for committee leaders, so they can draft their own minutes for committees other than Executive, or for meetings that do not involve complex decision-making.²
- Consider use of a consensus model of decision-making in committees other than Executive, or in meetings requiring major decisions like PSRA, to simplify both the process and the minutes. This works well for committees that take votes only a few times a year, when they complete a major project and have recommendations to send to the PC/PB.
- Develop relationships with local universities and bring in work-study students or interns to assist staff with committee support tasks, before, during, and after the meetings.

Committee Collaboration

Working across committees can make the individual and combined efforts of PC/PB committees more informed and effective. Committees are often closely linked, and one committee may need to complete its tasks before another committee can begin its work, or provide the second committee data for its decision-making. For example, needs assessment data must be available before the committee responsible for PSRA can recommend priorities or resource allocations. Some tasks are jointly implemented. For example, directives are often jointly developed by the committees responsible for Needs Assessment, which identifies barriers to care overall, for particular subpopulations, or in certain geographic locations, and the System of Care/Care Strategies Committee, which identifies ways to address these barriers through new or more focused strategies and service models. The Membership/Governance and Consumer Committees may work together to recruit members with lived experience who receive RWHAP Part A services, and the Consumer Committee is often asked by the Needs Assessment Committee to review survey or focus group questions for obtaining information from people with HIV.

Tips for Effective Committees

Success factors for committees include the following:

1. Be sure each committee has a clear, specific purpose or “charge” and responsibilities that are agreed upon and written down.

2. Define membership size (or state a minimum required number of members) and composition, including whether non-PC/PB members may serve, the need for members who receive RWHAP Part A services, and specific types of needed expertise.
3. Develop a written annual work plan that includes committee objectives, tasks, planned products, a timeline for the work and its completion, and links to or coordination with other committees.
4. Choose committee leaders carefully to be sure they are committed, informed, and able to spend the time necessary to plan as well as chair meetings; ideally this means Co-Chairs or a Chair and Vice Chair, one of them a person with HIV who receives RWHAP Part A services.
5. Arrange for necessary support, including data, staff support, and recipient participation where needed. The committees involved in legislatively defined planning tasks (Needs Assessment, PSRA, etc.) generally need a recipient staff member who regularly attends. Such involvement may not be needed by the Consumer Committee and is generally not requested for Membership and Governance.

Characteristics of effective committee meetings include the following:³

1. They are well planned, with preparations led by the Chair or Co-Chairs and supported by PC/PB staff.
2. The agenda and materials are sent out at least 3-5 days in advance, and members are expected to review them before the meeting.
3. Meetings are held at a convenient location that is accessible by public transportation and at a time that works for members – which may mean before or after work if many of the members are employed in jobs unrelated to their PC/PB involvement.
4. The agenda provides time for in-depth discussion of key issues before development of recommendations to the full PC/PB.
5. Regular attendance – in person or remote where permitted – is expected, and attendance requirements are enforced.
6. The Chair or Co-Chairs manage and facilitate the meeting; they set a positive tone, encourage active participation by all members, and consistently enforce a Code of Conduct.
7. Established procedures are used to manage discussion and make decisions. This may be traditional or simplified Robert's Rules of Order or another model, and members should understand the rules.
8. Meetings provide opportunities for community input to deliberations, both formal and informal, and leaders ensure that meetings are open, accessible, and welcoming to the public.
9. PC/PB support staff provide both logistical and content support during meetings, which includes ensuring that materials which may be needed for reference are readily available.
10. Members and leaders have access to needed recipient-supplied data and staff expertise.

End Notes

¹This resource is based on *Training Guide* Module 9, PowerPoint 9.1 slides 9-19, Activity 9.1: Supporting Committee Operations with a Small PC/PB Support Staff, and Quick Reference Handout 9.1: Preparing Minutes of PC/PB and Committee Meetings—Do’s and Don’ts.

²For a suggested committee minutes template, see *Training Guide* Module 9, Example of a Committee Meeting Summary, on the last page of Quick Reference Handout 9.1: Preparing Minutes of PC/PB and Committee Meetings—Do’s and Don’ts.

³For more information on effective committee and PC/PB meetings, see *Training Guide* Module 9, Quick Reference Handout 9.2: Effective Meetings—Tips for PC/PB and Committee Chairs/Co-Chairs.