

COMMITTEE “BEST PRACTICES” OUTLINE

This “Best Practices” outline is designed to provide new Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs with suggestions for identifying and managing their responsibilities as leaders of a Committee. This outline is not intended to be comprehensive, but merely to provide helpful suggestions to those persons new to Committee leadership.

I. GETTING STARTED

A. RESOURCES

1. As soon as you are named Chair or Vice Chair (usually by early summer), contact the outgoing Chair/Vice Chair and talk to them. Ask what they saw as real issues/projects, what was left on their “to do” list, and what works or doesn’t work. Ask for a “data dump” regarding the Committee’s current projects, Subcommittees, active members (including Subcommittee Chairs/Vice Chairs), on-going/long-term projects, if any, and for helpful tips for taking charge of the Committee. Ask for their files and email lists and any other documents (or copies of the foregoing) that would help provide continuity for your term. In particular, ask for the following documents/lists from the past year:
 - a. Committee reports
 - b. Reports to the Board
 - c. Current projects
 - d. Resolutions, finalized or in progress
 - e. Email surveys/questions to Committee members and summary of replies
 - f. Issues voted on by Committee members and results of vote
 - g. Liaison list

B. GET IN TOUCH WITH THE COMMITTEE LEADERS

1. Contact the Board Liaison for your Committee. Find out what projects the Board might have in mind for your Committee for the upcoming year and prepare your own ideas.
2. Discuss the role and participation of each of the Subcommittee Chairs/Vice Chairs with the outgoing Chair/Vice Chair to determine their level of commitment and effectiveness. Ask for recommendations to replace ineffective Subcommittee leaders.
3. Contact each of the Subcommittee Chairs/Vice Chairs that will be reappointed and reconfirm their commitment to serve. Discuss Subcommittee’s projects, progress-to-date, and plans for the year.
4. Contact candidates for vacant Subcommittee leadership positions to determine their willingness and ability to serve.

5. The Women in IP Law, New Lawyers, Diversity in IP Law, and Corporate Practice Committees (the “Target Committees”) each appoint Liaisons to the various Substantive Committees. If your Committee is a Substantive Committee, discuss the role and participation of each of the Liaisons from each Target Committee with the outgoing Chair/Vice Chair to determine the level of commitment and effectiveness of the Liaisons. Ask for recommendations to replace ineffective Liaisons.
6. Contact outgoing Chairs/Vice Chairs of each Target Committee for recommendations to replace ineffective Liaisons.
7. Contact each of the Liaisons and reconfirm their commitment to serve.
8. Contact candidates for vacant Liaison positions to determine their willingness and ability to serve.
9. Try to have Subcommittee leadership and Liaisons in place and ready to work by the upcoming Annual Meeting.

C. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING AS CHAIR

1. If the outgoing Chair has not made plans for the upcoming Annual Meeting, take on this responsibility and immediately begin planning for the Committee meeting. If the outgoing Chair has made plans, offer to assist with implementation.
 - a. Confer with the outgoing Chair to determine what old and new business should be discussed.
 - b. Pick a topic for the upcoming Committee meeting and publicize it frequently by email with the cooperation of the outgoing Chair/Vice Chair.
 - c. Use the Committee’s webpage and email list to encourage members to attend the Committee meeting, meet the new Committee leadership, solicit new ideas and topics, and volunteer for Subcommittee leadership positions.
 - d. Try to arrange to have a short “changing of the guard ceremony” by the outgoing Chair/Vice Chair, if appropriate.
 - e. This will be the first meeting you Chair, so come prepared.

II. DURING YOUR TERM

A. STATED MEETINGS

1. Plan to attend each stated meeting, if at all possible. It is very important to the success of your Committee that you lead each meeting and attend each Board/Committee Leadership meeting. At the very least, either the Chair or the Vice Chair should be in attendance at each stated meeting.
2. It is up to you to keep the members of your Committee informed. The Committee webpage and email list is the best way to communicate with the members. Learn how to use the webpage and email list. Contact Randy Sagara at AIPLA Headquarters if you need assistance.
3. If at all possible, coordinate the topics of your upcoming Committee meetings with the themes chosen for the upcoming stated meetings. Contact the Chair of the Professional Programs Committee to find out the themes of the upcoming stated meetings.
4. Prepare for meetings:
 - a. Prepare meeting agendas well before each meeting and distribute them to Committee members prior to the meeting. Work with Subcommittee Chairs on developing the agenda in advance.
NOTE: All Committee meetings are to be one hour in length unless you join up with one or more other Committees or otherwise plan to provide CLE credit. See the Timeline for Obtaining CLE Credit for reference.
 - b. Circulate drafts or reports of non-controversial matters before the meeting. Unless there are comments, changes or additions, there is no need for face-to-face discussions of these items.
 - c. Go the extra mile in lining up interesting speakers and giving coverage to hot topics at Committee meetings.
Please be aware of the AIPLA policy that speakers for Committee meetings are responsible for their own expenses unless an exception is approved in advance by the Officer-in-Charge.
 - d. If you plan on having speakers at your Committee meetings and need badges or tent cards, please notify AIPLA Headquarters no later than two weeks before the meeting. If you are planning to invite officials from a governmental agency, please be sure to alert the Executive Director's Office with enough time to submit a formal request. Also, speaker forms must be completed by your speakers in a timely fashion—be sure to follow up with them until all forms are completed and turned into AIPLA Headquarters.

- e. Keep track of dates and keep reminding Subcommittee Chairs and other Committee members of the deadlines to ensure that Committee projects are completed on schedule.
 - f. It is absolutely critical that you advise AIPLA Headquarters staff regarding your Audio/Visual needs by the requested deadline. They can only guarantee what you need if you respond by the deadline! Not all AV requests are granted.
5. Conducting Meetings:
- a. Start the meeting on time and end on time. Another Committee may be scheduled to meet in your room immediately after your meeting and members may plan to attend other Committee meetings.
 - b. Leave time during the meeting for discussion of matters of interest to the members or matters which require input from members.
 - c. Assign tasks to Subcommittees. Give Subcommittees meaningful work to accomplish.
 - d. Try to actively involve Committee members in Subcommittees.
 - e. Always give credit where credit is due and be generous with praise.
 - f. Schedule the next meeting/conference call while everyone is in attendance. This helps avoid scheduling conflicts.
 - g. Keep good notes.
6. Post Meeting Tasks:
- a. Prepare and submit your Committee report to AIPLA Headquarters within the time limits set to ensure its publication online and in the eBulletin. Report deadlines are circulated in advance of each stated meeting.
 - b. Distribute your notes to Committee members and Subcommittee Chairs immediately after the meeting. Make certain everyone agrees that your notes correctly reflect the decisions made at the meeting and the tasks assigned. Get a response by email from each person who has been assigned a task acknowledging responsibility for the task and the deadline for completion.
 - c. Try to hold a virtual meeting with each of your Subcommittee Chairs once a month to keep in touch with them, provide them with any updates, and check on progress with their assignments.

B. WORKING WITH AIPLA STAFF

1. Please respond promptly to AIPLA Headquarters Staff communications and respect the deadlines they set.
2. Get your Committee meeting descriptions in on time for the stated meetings.
3. Be certain to RSVP by the requested deadline for attendance at the Board/Committee Leadership Meeting and the Board/Committee Leadership Dinner. If you RSVP that you will attend but are unable to, please notify AIPLA Headquarters as soon as possible.
4. Please immediately notify AIPLA Headquarters if you have a change of postal address, phone or fax number, or email address.
5. Register for the stated meetings sufficiently in advance to ensure that your name can be included on the participation list and that your badge will be ready to print when you arrive.
6. Please follow the recommended format when submitting Resolutions to the Board and be sure to list the votes of all Committee members eligible to vote. Keep in mind that Board materials are made available to Board members approximately 10 days prior to each stated Board of Directors Meeting (dates can be found on the AIPLA Home Page) and any item projected for discussion at a Board Meeting should be received at Headquarters no later than two weeks prior to the scheduled Board Meeting.

C. WORK WITH YOUR BOARD LIAISON

1. Your Board Liaison is the person who can help get items on the Board Agenda. This is important if you want or need AIPLA to spend money or take official positions.
2. Most Board members have served as Committee Chairs, sometimes of more than one Committee. They can be a good sounding board and resource. Use them.
3. Your Board Liaison probably also has a longer relationship with the AIPLA staff. Don't hesitate to call them in to smooth over problems or resolve confusion.
4. The AIPLA Staff, Officers, and Board work very hard to identify matters that need attention. These include issues and concerns regarding intellectual property laws, practices, procedures, rules, and other matters and possible improvements to those laws and practices. They cannot, however, identify all possible issues. Furthermore, some important issues affect only a few AIPLA members, and those can easily slip by undetected until it's too late. Many times, the most important issues initially were identified by only one or two individual members.

Therefore, it is important that you and your Committee members identify issues that are of interest or require attention. Once identified, you can bring them to the attention of the AIPLA Board (through your Liaison) or staff, but as a Committee Chair or Vice Chair you also can start working on them yourself. If a Committee believes issues are sufficiently important to warrant action, the concerns and possible solutions are addressed in the form of resolutions which, once endorsed by a Committee, are considered by the Board of Directors.

We encourage as many members as possible to identify concerns which they believe warrant action by AIPLA and, more importantly, to bring those concerns to the appropriate Committee. We ask all Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs to encourage members, either through emails to Committee members, or during Committee meetings, to identify issues and problems which they believe AIPLA should address. Please remain conscious of this portion of AIPLA's purpose and actively seek out concerns and improvements to laws and procedures AIPLA can promote to help AIPLA fulfill its purpose.

III. END OF TERM

A. IDENTIFY CANDIDATES FOR COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP

1. Provide your Board Liaison with a summary of the persons in your Committee that you believe are well suited for leadership roles. List their responsibilities, achievements, and personal characteristics that would make them good leadership candidates.
2. Make a recommendation to the incoming President regarding who should be appointed as Chair and Vice Chair for the next term. Provide reasons why you believe these persons are best qualified to assume leadership of the Committee. Remember, the final decision is made by the incoming President.

B. MAKE YOUR SUCCESSOR'S LIFE EASIER

1. Once your successor has been appointed and has accepted the position of Chair, meet with them and provide them with a summary of the Committee's activities during your term. If your Vice Chair succeeds you as Chair, make certain they have all the documents, files, contacts that you have at your disposal.
2. Provide a list of all Subcommittees, Subcommittee Chairs, and the activity level of each. Provide a list of all Committee/Subcommittee projects in progress and completed during your term.
3. Provide a copy of all Committee Reports submitted during your term. These are also posted online.

4. Provide a copy of all Committee Meetings/Committee Educational Sessions speakers, topics, and panel discussions during your term.
5. Provide a list of all current TSC Liaisons and indicate the activity levels of each.
6. Offer to provide transitional assistance with planning for the upcoming Annual Meeting and the first Committee meeting for the incoming Chair. Offer to introduce the incoming Chair at their first Committee meeting.
7. Maintain your membership in the Committee and continue to actively participate. Offer to take on assignments.