Committee Charters: Why and How to Write

A Committee Charter helps make committees more effective by ensuring that they have a clear scope and purpose, authority and operating principles. Stating these items clearly helps to avoid confusion, disagreement, or loss of energy. It also ensures that once a committee has met its purpose, it doesn't continue meeting out of habit alone!

A charter can be a short- a single page document (here is a sample from www.BoardEffect.com), that includes the following:

- What is the **purpose** of the Committee?
  - Is it a standing committee or an ad-hoc/temporary one? If temporary, how long is it expected to be active?
- What are the **key functions** of the Committee?
- What are the Committee's **specific responsibilities and current year goals**? Update this part of the Charter annually.
- What is the **composition of the Committee**? (keep in mind that at least one Board member should generally serve on each committee)
  - Minimum and maximum number of committee members?
  - How does someone become a committee member? Who appoints the members?
  - Is membership open to people who are not on the Board?
  - Are all members able to vote?
  - Who selects the Chairperson? How long is the Chair's term? How many times are terms renewable?
  - Is there a Vice-Chair, so that the burden of leadership is shared?
  - Can other people attend committee meetings?
- **How often** does the Committee meet? Is there a minimum number of meetings annually? Is there a particularly busy season?
- What **authority**, if any has the Board delegated to this committee?
  - How does the Committee coordinate its work with the Board?

Be sure to check that the Committee Charter does not conflict with anything in the organization's bylaws, where applicable. Once drafted, the Committee Charters are subject to review and approval of the Board.