

COMMITTEES

We've all said it and heard it: everybody wants to "pound nails" and we can't find anyone to serve on committees. Yet, without strong, well functioning committees no affiliate can sustain a long term house building and community building effort.

The committee process is very important to the long-term health and viability of an affiliate. Consider the "wheel" diagram (below). **It is clear that if even one spoke of the wheel is weak or non-existent the affiliate's ministry will stall and may even breakdown. Boards of Directors tend to incorporate that committee's work into its board meetings rather than developing or re-building the committee. This enabling often leads to increased burnout and frustration.**

The committee life cycles are very fluid, as in our modern society, changes in people's lives are in high gear. Affiliates who are successful set up structures, processes and provisions to establish a documented "memory of decisions" so people can move in and out of the work with minimal disruption.

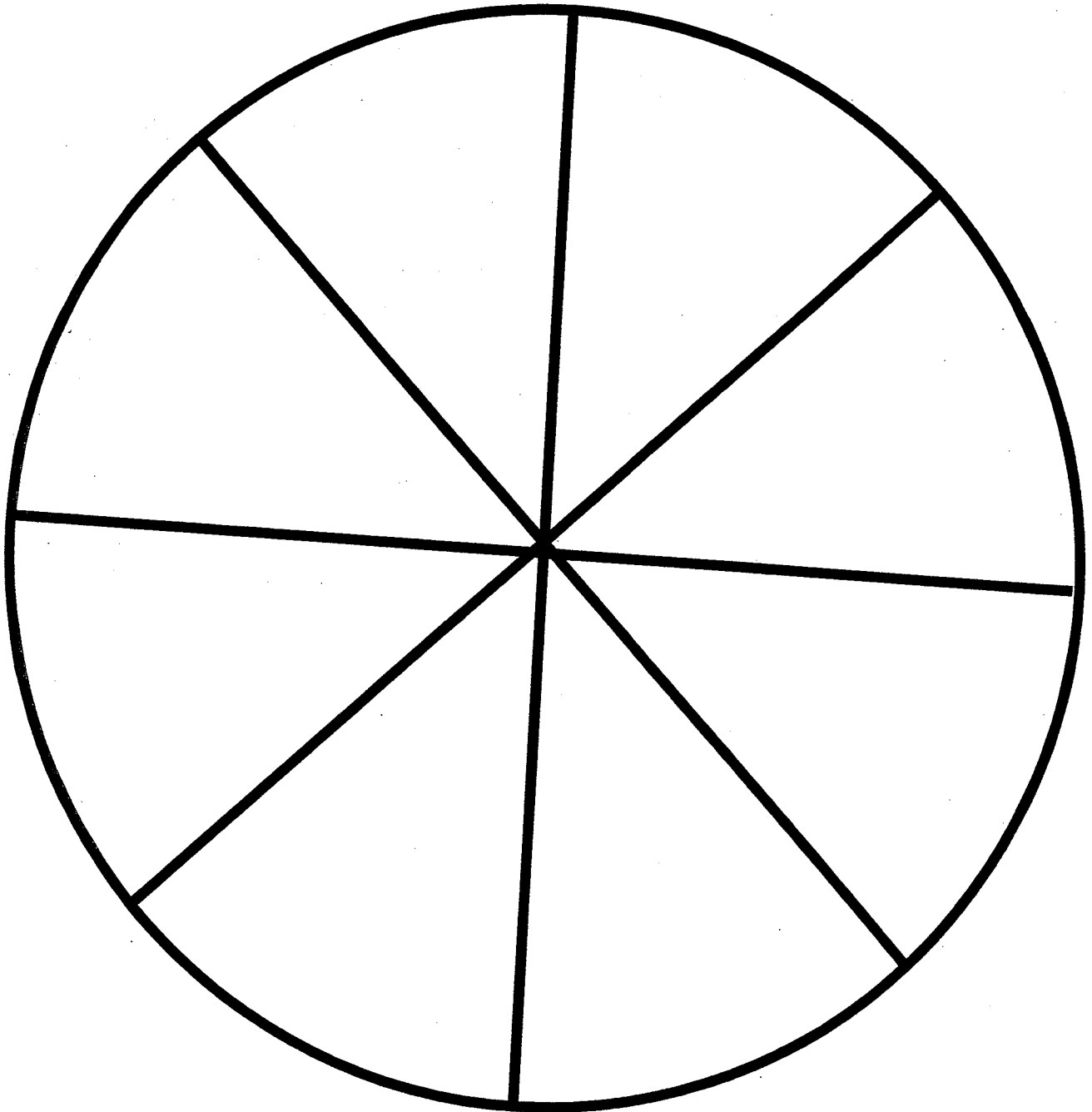
A Habitat for Humanity affiliate carries out its work through operating committees appointed to perform the various tasks of the organization. Each affiliate should have six basic operating committees, though some affiliates will have more. The six basic operating committees are: (1) Fund Development and Public Relations Committee, (2) Family Selection Committee, (3) Family Support Committee, (4) Site Selection Committee, and (5) Building or Construction Committee (either "building" or "construction" are used to define this committee), and (6) Volunteer/Church Relations. Some affiliates separate Public Relations and Fund Development into two separate committees and some affiliates have a Church Relations Committee and a Volunteer Relations Committee. Other affiliates reduce demands on the Executive Committee by having separate Finance, Personnel, Legal, Delinquency Payment, and Long-range Planning Committees.

The work of each of the operating committees is covered in detail in their respective sections of the Affiliate Operations Manual. In addition to the operating committees, an affiliate should have a Nominating Committee and an Executive Committee. Other committees to consider are: Human Resources, Strategic and Long-Range Planning, and Finance and Budget. These functions, however, can be handled initially by the Executive Committee. See "Choosing a Board," in Chapter 5 and "Legal Issues," AOM Volume 2.

Committee members may be drawn from directors, advisors, and other actively interested individuals—including homeowners and potential homeowners. The committee members can be appointed by the Board of Directors, referred or recommended by the committee chairperson or, in some cases, the chairperson finds and nominates the committee members. Having only one or two board members on any committee is advisable to ensure that committees are staffed by people who can give priority to their appointed responsibility and to involve more people. The chairperson of the committee need not be a board member, but they will need to report to the board on the committee's activities. Other duties of a committee chairperson are listed below.

Not enough can be said about the importance of identifying and properly orienting chairpersons to facilitate each committee.

AFFILIATE COMMITTEE WHEEL



At a minimum, an Affiliate needs six (6) operational committees and two (2) administrative committees.

DUTIES OF A COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

One of the most important jobs of the Board's Chair or President is to ensure that the Nominating Committee is providing the affiliate with the following caliber of chairperson for each committee, who is diligently and honestly recruited and **trained** to meet her or his responsibilities.

1. Consult with the board of directors and past chairpersons in choosing members for the committee. **Recruit a diverse membership to serve and train them** in committee duties.
2. Review **the committee's responsibilities** and have a mandate approved by the full board.
3. Understand, promote and **interpret the overall goals of the affiliate** to the committee.
4. **Develop goals** to match the board's annual plan, and lead your group in accomplishing them.
5. **Schedule committee meetings** (if there is no set time and place); notify members.
6. **Prepare a written agenda** for each meeting with input from members.
7. Facilitate a *guided* discussion.
 - **Encourage Participant Involvement**
 - ✓ **Ask open-ended questions** to draw people out. Give credit and recognition for accomplishments.
 - ✓ **Refer questions back** to the group, if appropriate, when they are directed toward the chair.
 - ✓ Specify that no person may talk a second time until every one has talked at least once.
 - ✓ Use active listening techniques: paraphrase and summarize frequently during discussion
 - **Deal with Counterproductive Behavior**
 - ✓ **Cut-off all unrelated discussions** and long-winded speeches. **If someone talks overly long**, interrupt by saying, "I'm losing the point you are making. Can you state it briefly?"
 - ✓ Focus on the idea rather than the person.
 - ✓ Stress cooperation, not conflict. If needed, take a break for a one-on-one discussion.
 - ✓ Watch the pacing – keep it moving. Maintain a "laundry list" of important, but irrelevant items.
 - **Wrap Up with Summary and Assignments**
 - ✓ Ask for consensus approval of decisions.
 - ✓ At the end of EACH agenda item, summarize what was accomplished and decided. Check for clarity, agreement and consensus.
 - ✓ Guide the meeting from problem to solution: assign tasks, delegate responsibilities, note deadlines. Do this as the meeting progresses and summarize at the end.
9. **Delegate and divide responsibilities** among committee members. Coordinate committee work and ensure that it is completed.
8. Ensure that detailed committee proceedings are **recorded, transcribed and distributed** to members.
10. **Prepare concise written reports** and give copies to the board secretary immediately after your meetings. Reports include progress updates on action steps and goals, announcements, decisions and recommendations. [Consult with the board chairperson for time on the agenda if needed.]
11. **Communicate with other committee chairs** and ensure coordination of actions.
12. **Write an annual report** of all committee activities, with recommendations for next year.
13. **Recruit and train successor**, transfer records, files, minutes, etc.