BOARD COMMITTEES – PROGRAM COMMITTEE

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CPA CENTRE FOR PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY

OUTLINE OF GOVERNANCE TOOL BOX

Vol. I: Tools for identifying, recruiting and developing a Board

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Issue 2: What materials to be shared with the Board Members - Click here to download

Issue 3: Board Members commitment sheet (to be reviewed every year) - Click here to download

Issue 4:Areas to be covered in Board Orientation process - Click here to download

Issue 5: Board Diversity Matrix - Click here to download

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Issue 7: Source for Potential Board Members & Creating a support database - Click here to download

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PROGRAM COMMITTEE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Every organization has a vision and mission statement to direct it. Further, organizations plan various activities and programs in order to fulfill this mission. There is the Board and there is the Management team who provide oversight and supervision, respectively.

The Board may set up various sub-committees to effectively run the organization of which Program Committee is one. However, in case of small organizations, the Board may not form Committees and can be directly responsible. Generally, the Program Committee is a Standing Committee of the Board that works with the senior staff team (Chief Functionary and Head of Programs) to monitor various programs of the organization. Programs being the center of every organization, it can be said that Program Committee performs a key role in the governance of an organization.

2. THE NEED FOR PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The Program Committee usually comprises of both Board and non-Board members who have adequate knowledge to support various programmatic operations of the organization. However, in small organizations, the Board may oversee all program related activities directly without creating a sub-committee.

In case of medium or large organziations, it makes more sense to have a designated Program Committee to oversee the program activities on behalf of the Board. The Program Committees's responsibilities would include monitoring the quality of implementation, effectiveness of the planned activities and timely reporting to various stakeholders. The Program Committee especially ensures that the donor's program reporting compliances are being met.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The Program Committee members are expected to be specialists in the field of programs. The Program Committee of each organization comprises of thematic experts. At the larger level, the Board keeps an oversight of all the programs. The major responsibilities of the Program Committee are:-
- To oversee new program development

- To monitor and assess the performance of the existing programs and suggest improvements, at a strategic level
- To initiate and guide program evaluations
- To conduct independent reviews of programs and oversee discussions on program priorities for the organziation

4. MEMBERS OF PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The Program Committee should have a minimum of three members of whom two should be Board members. Apart from the two members, the Board can nominate one/two person's (who can be from outside the Board) to be co-opted based on the specialised skills in the areas of program/project management. Therefore, the following individuals constitutes the Program Committee:-

- Two members of the Board
- One/Two persons having expertise in non-profit Program management/related fields (from outside the Board) like Consultants, Project monitoring and evaluation experts and other persons with related experience
- Chief Functionary and Head of Program participates as invitees for inputs and consultation. (This practice ensures independent functioning of the Committee.) As can be seen from above, the size of the Program Committee should be between three and seven members (including Chief Functionary and Head of programs as invitees)

5. CREATING AND MANAGING PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The Board of NPOs comprises of individuals from diverse backgrounds. To ensure that the Board effectively stewards the organization, a formal mandate is adopted that distinctly sets out the functions of the Board and its various Committees among which the Program Committee is one.

5.1 Create a mandate

It is very important to clearly develop a Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Program Committee. The ToR/mandate of the Program Committee is determined by the Board. The mandate would depend upon the willingness of the Board to delegate the progammatic responsibilities. However, the ultimate responsibilty for the organization rests with the Board thus, strategic and critical decisions should not be delegated by the Board. The Program Committees should have more of supervisory and advisory role rather than a critical decision making role. A sample ToR for Program Committee is enclosed as per *Annexure A*.

5.2. Choose the members

There should be a clear guideline for choosing members of the Program Committee. The Board should select the Program Committee in its Annual General Meetings (AGM) every year. The composition of the members of the Program Committee should be a combination of Board members, staff, as well as certain subject matter experts. A broad combination of the Program Committee has been mentioned in **point no.4**.

5.3. Establishing processes

The Board should determine the number of times the Program Committee should meet. Generally, the Program Committee should meet three to four times a year. At least once every six months, the Committee members should make visits to field areas during the course of program implementation. The minutes of the meeting should be clearly recorded. During the Board meetings, report and updates on program activities should be shared with the Board members.

5.4. Induction plan

There should be a clear induction plan for the new members of the Program Committee.

For the induction process, the Chair of the Program Committee (chosen from among the Board) and the Chief Functionary should be involved. Certain key documents i.e. Program Policy, Human Resource Policy and other major policies, annual activity report and any other relevant papers need to be provided. The induction process should happen before the first meeting of the Program Committee.

6. ROLE OF CHAIR OF PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The Chairperson of the Program Committee is elected among the Board who is a veteran at programs and
is independent of the implementation of the programs of the organization. Therefore, the following roles are envisaged as the Chair of the Program Committee:

- Chairing the meetings
- Finalizing the agenda with the Chief Functionary and Head of Programs
- Ensuring that clear and proper minutes of the meetings are recorded
- Ensuring that decisions are implemented in appropriate time and reported back to the Committee
- Keeping the Board informed about the issues and decisions of the Program Committee, at periodic intervals

7. CONCLUSION

The Program Committee provides oversight on program related issues on behalf of the Board. The Program Committee is set up by the Board and is accountable to the Board. A Program Committee which is well-structured, well-informed and comprises of experts in programs is beneficial for the organization as the Committee is constantly involved in overseeing, mentoring and approving the programs and services of the organization, and in the process ensuring that all services reflect the organization's mission.

Annexure A

Terms of Reference (ToR) Template

Purpose

To ensure that the objectives of each program are achieved with delivery of qualitative results

Functions

1. **Handling strategic issues related to programs**
   - Understand and address issues that has major implications on program implementation
   - Ensure the program scope aligns with the requirements of key stakeholders
   - Provide guidance to those directly involved in the program
   - Oversee the feasibility study, implementation plan, monitoring and evaluation and exit plan of the program

2. **Approving change and documentation**
   The Program Committee has to discuss and approve (in consulatation with the Board) recommendations on the following issues:
   - Change in Program scope or activities
   - Budget and budget constraints
   - Program Schedules
   - Program Deliverables
   - Risk assessment and risk control strategies
   - Quality management

3. **Monitoring and reviewing activities related to programs**
   The Program Committee is responsible for the ongoing management of the Program, such as regular monitoring, reporting, providing feedbacks, following up if recommendations has been integrated or not, etc.

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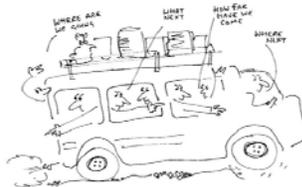
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