

An introduction to Committees

Introduction

All community organisations have management committees.

A committee is the group of people who have been elected and appointed to make decisions on behalf of everyone interested in the work of the group. Committee members are responsible for ensuring that the needs, ideas and projects of the group are properly discussed, along with any implications, before decisions are taken.

Composition

Management Committees come in all shapes and sizes. Committees need enough members to be able to show themselves to be representative and able to get the job done but not so large that it becomes unmanageable. Deciding on the right number of members on the committee partly depends on the size of the organisation, you are setting up, but generally an odd number in single figures, works best.

Making Decisions

The decisions, which the committee are allowed to make, are governed by rules. Firstly, the organisation's constitution will define its objects -its reason for existing. All actions taken by the committee must follow from, and not exceed, these objects. At almost every meeting, committees need to take decisions – to be able to do that, committee meetings need to be quorate. This means that the minimum number of committee members, needed are at the meeting. The number of members needed to make a meeting quorate is set down in the constitution or at an annual general meeting. Generally, a quorum will be over half and up to two-thirds of the full management committee. In the event of an equal vote on any decision, the Chairperson will generally have the casting vote. Check the constitution for the rules on this. If a quorum is not present, then no binding decisions can be taken, although the people present can discuss matters.

Committee Skills

Committees need to have members with a range of skills and experiences. Many organisations now try to ensure they have both community representatives and those who use their service users on their committee, in order to make it more accountable and effective. Membership of the committee should be open to different people to become involved, irrespective of gender, race, disability or any other unrelated factors. Management committees should strive to ensure they are representative of the community as a whole.

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