

# TRB POLICY AND ORGANIZATION GROUP

## Guidelines for Committee Strategic Planning and Evaluation

The reorganization of TRB committees conducted in 2003 reaffirmed the need for an evaluation process for all committees. In addition, the reorganization task force recommended that the evaluation information reported by a committee be directly connected to the committee's strategic planning efforts. This strategic planning and evaluation process is generally described in the *Technical Activities Division Leadership Guide* that was updated during the 2003 reorganization.

Each Group has its own methods for committees to follow in carrying out the planning and evaluation process generally described in the *Leadership Guide*. This document provides guidelines and processes for committees in the Policy and Organization Group. Each committee is responsible to produce an annual report of activities, a committee self-evaluation every three years, and a strategic review of committee goals and plans as part of that evaluation.

### Committee Strategic Planning

Committee strategic planning efforts provide a process for committees to define their purpose, plan for future activities, and assess their performance. Strategic planning also provides the chair a basis for creating subcommittees and assigning task leaders, and it produces important information that can help orient new members and friends.

An opportune time for an in-depth strategic planning effort is when a new chair has been appointed to lead the committee. Subsequent reviews of the committee's strategic directions should be completed in conjunction with the committee evaluation that is done every three years.

The results of strategic planning can vary by committee, but it is important to include in the plan activities that will generate information needed for the evaluation process described below. Two important references that provide strategic information for committees are the *TRB Strategic Plan* ([http://trb.org/publications/admin/2002\\_strategic\\_plan.pdf](http://trb.org/publications/admin/2002_strategic_plan.pdf)) and the *Technical Activities Division Leadership Guide* (<http://www4.trb.org/trb/activities.nsf>).

Guidelines for potential elements that can result from committee strategic planning efforts are as follows:

Mission. The mission of the committee can be based on the mission of TRB and on the committee roles found in the references noted above, e.g. "Promote innovations and progress in . . . "

Scope. The scope of the committee is extremely important and requires in-depth discussion by committee members. It describes the topics to be addressed through various committee activities. Section and Groups use scope statements to ensure that committees are distinct from each other. The scope should be reviewed frequently by the committee to make sure it reflects current issues.

Goals. Goals for the committee can be drawn from the references noted above, e.g. “To continuously foster and contribute to research, development, and implementation . . . “ and “To contribute significantly to improved communication and dissemination of research in . . . “

Strategies. Strategies could include the major roles of a TRB committee: defining research needs, soliciting papers, developing paper and conference sessions, disseminating information, sponsoring workshops, etc.

Action or Activity Plan. An action or activity plan, often organized by strategy, can be used to list the recurring annual activities conducted by the committee and the special activities planned for each year. The products of these activities feed directly into the reporting required for the committee evaluation described below.

This is a comprehensive list of elements that may not be needed for each committee, since items such as mission, goals, and strategies are related to information in other documents. A different strategic framework could also be used. But a thorough effort to develop and explicitly document these elements, at least every three years during the committee’s evaluation process, has many benefits. Examples of committee strategic plans are available on the TRB web site.

### **Committee Evaluation Process**

Each committee is required to critically re-evaluate itself every three years, using a Triennial Self Evaluation (TSE) process. The benefit of this process is that the committee chair and members can identify areas they may want to strengthen in the future. This effort assists the committee in making plans for developing future research problem statements, conference and paper sessions, workshops, communication tools, and other activities. In addition, the evaluation process provides the Group and Section Chairs with concise information on the relative health and relevancy of committees within the Group/Section. Committees in the Policy and Organization Group should use the POG Annual Report and TSE templates.

The Annual Report template provides a mechanism for the TRB staff person to provide information on annual basis from TRB databases to the committee chair on activities completed in the past year. The committee chair provides any additional information and submits this Annual report to the Section Chair by March 1 of each year. Section chairs should review these annual updates and provide feedback to the committee as needed. This annual collection of information from TRB databases reduces the amount of work previously required for the TSE.

When it is time for the committee to conduct its Triennial Self-Evaluation, the past three years of Annual Reports are attached to the completed pages of the TSE template, which are filled out by the chair and/or committee members. It is recommended that the committee also conduct a review of the committee's strategic plan during this TSE evaluation effort.

The committee should prepare and submit the TSE and its attachments to the Section Chair by March 1 of every third year. After any changes have been made in response to Section Chair feedback, a subcommittee of the Group Executive Committee will review the TSE. The subcommittee will provide feedback to the committee and submit a summary report to the Group Executive Committee. The objective of the review is to take a broad look at how the committee relates to other TRB committees and organizations, and the relative importance of the committee's scope of activities in addressing current and future transportation needs. Results are discussed as needed at Group Executive Committee and Technical Activities Council meetings.