

Treatment of Subcommittees and Task Forces in New Technical Activities Structure

Version 2, August 2020

Subcommittees have been very effective in addressing important topics but their work has often been invisible to the larger community. This plan is intended to ensure that subcommittee formation, review, and sunseting are consistently conducted by committees, sections, and groups so that subcommittees’ work can be effectively supported and communicated.

There are currently about 350 “unofficial” subcommittees or joint subcommittees, which generally fall into two categories:

1. Subcommittees that carry out some portion of a committee’s work (such as drafting research needs statements or creating Annual Meeting sessions); these are sometimes referred to as administrative subcommittees.
2. Subcommittees at the group or section level which enable coordination functions for the group/section (e.g., young members, research).
3. Subcommittees or joint subcommittees that address a portion of a committee’s subject matter scope or an emerging issue within or closely associated with the scope of one or more committees. These are sometimes called subject matter subcommittees. There are approximately 250 of these subject matter subcommittees and joint subcommittees.

Going forward we will distinguish these two types of subcommittees as follows:

- Administrative subcommittees will be called administrative task forces because they address specific tasks of a committee.
- Group- or section-level subcommittees will continue to be called subcommittees.
- Subject matter subcommittees will continue to be called subcommittees.

In addition:

- The current use of “task force” to designate a “probationary committee” will be discontinued.
- All conference planning committees will be appointed by TRB (not by a standing committee), in keeping with the requirements of the National Academies.

Administrative Task Forces	Subcommittees
Structure, Number, and Scope	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A committee may establish any number of task forces to help carry out the committee’s work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A committee may establish any number of subcommittees. The parent committee will be expected to include the subcommittee’s activities in its Triennial Strategic Plan, so the number of subcommittees should be small enough for the committee to support, guide, and oversee its subcommittees’ work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scope of a task force is one or more tasks that support committee processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scope of a subcommittee should be a subject matter within or closely related to the scope of one or more committees.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task forces may be established at the Committee, Section, or Group level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcommittees are established under a parent committee. In the case of joint subcommittees, one of the cooperating committees serves as the parent committee.
<p>Appointment, Term, Membership</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task forces are not appointed by TRB but their establishment is approved within the committee/section/group structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcommittees are not appointed by TRB but their establishment is approved within the committee/section/group structure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The term of the task force itself (as opposed to the terms of the members) is determined by the committee based on the nature of the task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The term of a subcommittee is no more than 6 years and may be renewed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chair of a task force must be a current committee member. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chair of a subcommittee must be a current committee member.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the task force chair is not appointed, the committee should rotate the chair and some of the members at least once every 3 years to allow more volunteers to participate and develop leadership experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chair and members of subcommittee should be reviewed every 3 years as part of the Triennial Strategic Plan. The chair and some of the members should be rotated during this review to allow more volunteers to participate and develop leadership experience and to avoid the appearance of an individual “owning” a subcommittee.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both committee members and friends may be members of task forces; there is no limit to the number of task force members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both committee members and friends may be members of subcommittees; there is no limit to the number of subcommittee members.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task force chairs do not do not receive travel reimbursement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcommittee chairs do not do not receive travel reimbursement.
<p>Annual Meeting</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative task forces will not be provided separate meeting time at the Annual Meeting. They should report to their committee during the committee’s meeting time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcommittees may be provided with meeting time at the Annual Meeting if they request it through their parent committee and if there is space available.
<p>Strategic Planning, Reporting</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative task forces should be listed in a committee’s Triennial Strategic Plan but it is not necessary to describe their activities because they are typically ordinary committee activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcommittees must be addressed in a committee’s Triennial Strategic Plan to describe their scope and activities as they relate to achieving the committee’s strategic goals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task forces should be reviewed at least every 3 years during the Triennial Strategic Planning process by the committee to ensure that they are functioning well and to rotate the task force chair and some members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcommittees should be reviewed by the committee, section, and/or group every 3 years during the Triennial Strategic Planning process to determine if the subcommittee should be renewed. In order to keep subcommittees to a number that can be effectively overseen and guided by the committee, even well-functioning subcommittees may need to be sunsetted so that new priorities can be addressed.