

Organization Committee

Members Handbook

Who Needs an Organization?

The Main Street program is already organized, “so why have a committee?”, is a typical reaction of newcomers. But, the Organization Committee plays a key role in keeping the board, committees, staff, and program-of-work in *good shape* by attracting people and money to the organization.

To succeed, a committee must take responsibility for managing the financial and logistical aspects of a nonprofit organization by:

- **Raising Money** – for projects and administration, from donations and sponsorships;
- **Managing staff and volunteers** – by recruiting people, supervising them, and rewarding good-work;
- **Promoting the program** – to downtown interests and the public;
- **Managing finances** – by developing good accounting procedures.

If you think that this scope of work for a theoretical Organization Committee sounds like a lot, you’re right. That’s why these activities are sometimes spun off too separate subcommittees:

- Fund-Raising
- Nominations
- Communications
- Executive Committees

Fund Raising 101

Let's face it; few of us really *love* to raise money. Nothing else in a Main Street program generates more excuses or foot-dragging. But *everyone* knows that the program, to be successful, must have money . . . and lots of it. Overcome the inertia and take some basic steps by answering these questions:

What product are you selling?

You can't easily sell a program to funders, but you sell specific *projects*. A clear, well-thought-out work plan filled with useful projects will motivate both you and your "investors." You must work with the board and other committees to develop a good product to sell- and that is a dynamic work plan, with projects relevant to your investors.

Who has a stake in Main Street?

Resist the temptation to say "everyone" or "downtown businesses." Be specific, and match potential sources with planned projects. Rather than asking as investor to contribute to the program's general budget, request sponsorship for specific items. When seeking contributions, ask yourselves: "Who stands to lose if this enterprise fails?"

How do you make "the pitch"?

You will need to package your "product." That means producing an attractive information packet that includes your organization's goals, track record, specific plans, and participants. Then, you need to determine who is the best person(s) to approach each prospect—a peer business owner? A civic leader? And be prepared to answer the often unasked question: "What will this program do for me?"

To prepare for fund-raising, your committee will need to have on hand a variety of materials. Start off by preparing a good prospect file with profiles of:

- Potential business
- Building owners
- Investors
- Major companies that have an interest in the Main Street district

Note their products, services, key contacts, and any philanthropic history available.

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Develop a comprehensive *fund-raising plan*, which details every dollar you anticipate bringing in—and how you propose to raise that money. The plan should include your strategy for obtaining financial support from:

- City government
- Event revenues
- Dues
- Sponsorships

Make sure you answer the following questions:

- Who will be responsible for each component?
- What is the timetable for each element?
- And how much do you expect to raise?

Next, outline your annual membership campaign. Include specific plans for recruiting and training solicitor—volunteers and developing collateral materials such as sample letters, solicitation lists, and info packets. Be sure to draw up a schedule for soliciting memberships, following up with each prospect, and completing the campaign.

If all this seems a bit overwhelming, remember that fund0raising is a responsibility that should be shared with the board and can be delegated – in whole or in part – to a subcommittee to ensure a more manageable workload.

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Fund Raising Projects

Components of a Fund-Raising Plan	Examples of Committee Projects
General appeals: to solicit pledges for general program activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main Street information packet support from public and private sources• Fund-raising campaign plan
Sponsorships: to finance specific programs, projects, activities, typically from corporate sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prospect file, with profiles of each person or business• Project sponsorship plans
Memberships: to participate in a schedule of activities, often aimed at businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Membership campaign• List of Main Street “stakeholders”
Contract for services: to provide activities that would otherwise be left to another entity, such as city government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Contract” with city government
Special assessment districts: to assess property and business owners for public improvements or management of the district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Special assessment district development
Endowments: to provide long-term support of special projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foundation grant writing proposals

What do you need money for?

- Running an office, employing staff, and purchasing equipment
- Doing promotions and marketing
- Offering incentives for building improvements
- Creating plans for public improvements
- Hiring a designer for building renderings
- Producing a newsletter
- Analyzing the market
- Creating a business development program

Volunteer Management

Types of Volunteer Management	Examples of Committee Projects
Recruitment: Develop a campaign to attract members of civic clubs, business district “stakeholders,” and private citizens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request for Volunteers public relations campaign • Presentations to other civic clubs
Management: Create job descriptions, define roles, track amount of time volunteers participate, and evaluate performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer job descriptions • Volunteer work/skills files • Volunteer hours tracking forms • Volunteer annual evaluations
Rewards: Recognize hard work and achievements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition/awards programs • “Volunteer Achievement” certificates

Who’s The Boss?

Managing the Main Street program’s paid staff, usually just a single manager, can be tricky. While it is best to clearly designate the board chair as the person to whom the manager reports, staff management is still partially a responsibility of your committee. You may be involved in hiring and evaluating staff, unless you have a separate Executive Committee to handle this job.

Be sure to write a clear, comprehensive job description that can be used for periodic performance evaluations. All performance criteria should be discussed and mutually agreed upon by staff and your committee. Benefits and policies, including a system for rewarding good performance, should be spelled out in a procedures manual.

Tooting Your Own Horn

Promoting the Main Street *district* is the obvious task of the Promotion committee, but promoting the Main Street *program* is often a job for the Organization Committee. Don’t assume everyone will know, understand, and appreciate your work and mission. Believe it or not, more than a few successful mature Main Street programs have withered away from lack of self-promotion.

An obvious way to promote your efforts is through the mass media. Work with your local and regional newspapers, radio and television stations to place news stories and public service announcements. Timely, well-written media releases, put together by staff and volunteers, work best when combined with follow-up phone calls to the right contacts.

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Main Street newsletters, geared specifically to district businesses, building owners and investors are just as important. Using a desktop publishing system, put together a newsletter from the merchant's point of view. What is interesting and helpful to them? Keep the text brief, add graphics, and be sure to include useful contact information. Report on new business, interesting retail trends, local assistance programs, and upcoming promotional events.

Consider developing a customized Main Street presentation that you can take "on the road" and show to local civic clubs and organizations. Develop a "speakers' bureau," made up of committee members so that you can always send a "team" of volunteers and staff to co-present the case for Main Street.

Why do People Volunteer?

People are driven by a variety of motives. It helps to identify each person's primary reason for volunteering, such as:

- **Recognition** – seeking visibility and prestige in the community
- **Power** – seeking influence over programs and policies
- **Altruism** – seeking to promote ideal community values
- **Affiliation** – seeking camaraderie and connection with others
- **Achievement** – seeking successful completion of specific projects

Accounting: The Necessary Evil

If you take the time to set up a good finance and budgeting system, you will not only avoid possible legal trouble, but also help improve your program's efficiency, which in turn will build credibility with your investors.

Don't leave this work to staff. For a variety of reasons, the treasurer and/or your Organization Committee will want to handle the management of accounts and records. Often, a qualified professional can be recruited to serve on the board and handle this job; otherwise, you should contract with a professional for these services.

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Take the time to set up a double-entry accounting system, work with staff to project regular expenses and income, balance the books on a monthly basis, and report the status of the budget – in line item detail – to the board at each meeting. There are many excellent and affordable computer software programs that can simplify your bookkeeping tasks.

The staff should process all financial transactions; write and record all checks (with a limited spending/check-writing authority); maintain a petty cash fund in the office; and keep the books available.

The board and Executive Committee should handle general budget development, based on the program's goals and objectives; discuss all major bills and expenses with the staff; authorize at least two members to sign checks; and monitor monthly or quarterly financial statements for compliance with the budget, making any mid-course corrections required.

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Committee Projects

Categories of Staff Management	Examples of Committee Projects
Hiring: search, recruitment, and negotiation of the final offer Evaluation: annual, structured performance review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program manager job description• Personnel policies booklet• Applicant interviews• Performance evaluation form
Categories of Program Promotion	Examples of Committee Projects
Media: newspapers, radio, television, and direct mail Materials: for reporters and the public Presentations: to civic clubs, community leaders, and funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main Street newsletter (monthly)• Media Packets• Press releases• Signs for rehab projects• Public presentations
Areas of Financial Oversight	Examples of Committee Projects
Bookkeeping: of all financial transactions Budgeting: for program Reporting: to board, officers, and auditor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Double-entry accounting system• Chart of accounts• Treasurer's report (quarterly)

Committee Role

Committees are the backbone of a Main Street program, providing the workers who actually “roll up their sleeves” and get the work done, from planning to project implementation and the Organization Committee is no exception!

You will be juggling several different activities that will help bring resources of money and people to the commercial district revitalization program. On the Organization Committee, you will regularly find yourself:

- Holding meetings to identify community resources, develop strategies, and brainstorm ideas;
- Visiting business people – to solicit their support and update them on the program’s plans;
- Coordinating groups – to help launch fund-raising campaigns and volunteer recruitment;
- Meeting with board members to oversee development of financial budgeting and tracking systems

As you can see, your committee will need to be large and diverse! Even though you should count on volunteer help from all your Main Street committees and the board, you will still need to build an active, committed group for “organization” committee activities only.

*Note you may find that certain activities are too big and diverse for just one committee. An annual membership drive, for example, might be delegated to a special task force. A standing subcommittee might produce a monthly newsletter.

How Does the Organization Committee “Fit” in the Whole Program?

It’s good to remember that the board sets the organization’s direction; while committees make the projects happen. Thus, while the board may have some general ideas about fund-raising and volunteer recruitment, it should be looking to your committee for concrete work plans proposals that it will review and approve. Once proposals are approved, your group will need to pull together resources and complete the projects.

A good way to maintain two-way communication between the board and your committee is to have one committee member, often the committee chair, serve as a board member as well. A liaison member can report on the other group’s activities at each committee meeting and minimize confusion or duplication of efforts.

You as an Organization Committee Member

A minimum of five to seven people typically meet at least once a month to plan funding projects, produce the newsletter, train volunteers, or manage the financial system. While just about anyone with time and a sincere interest should be welcomed to serve on your committee, remember that a really productive and effective organization Committee member:

- Knows and supports the Main Street approach to volunteer nonprofit organizations;
- Has a genuine desire to serve on the committee;
- Expresses self clearly, yet eagerly exchanges ideas with others;
- Keeps an open mind about new ideas;
- Thinks about the “big picture,” yet also concentrates on the details;
- Knows when to be decisive and come to closure;
- Cooperates willingly in a team effort;
- Stays focused on the task at hand;

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- Has a basic understanding of the economic circumstances of small retailers;
- Rolls up sleeves willingly and pitches in to do the committee's work;
- Has skills or interest in finance, volunteer development, or fundraising;
- Carries out plans and projects in a timely and professional manner.

Who Serves on the Organization Committee?

Likely candidates are:

- Merchants
- Property owners
- Residents
- Civic group volunteers
- Accountants
- Media representative volunteer specialists

You as the Organization Committee Chairperson

The real “stars” of many Main Street programs are the committee chairs. Public recognition, leadership status, the ability to “make a difference” in the community, and the satisfaction of a job well done are all potential rewards. Accountability to the board for your committee's projects, responsibility for other volunteers, time demands, and the potential for failure are also part of the mix. As committee chair, you must understand these roles and responsibilities clearly.

As the Organization Committee Chair you will regularly find yourself:

- **Recruiting members** – organizing training/orientation, assigning and supervising tasks
- **Running meetings** – preparing agendas, notifying members and taking minutes

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- **Organizing work plans** – scheduling work, managing tasks, knowing “the buck stops here”
- **Forging consensus** – managing discussions, resolving conflicts, and moving ahead on issues
- **Representing the board** – explaining mission, clarifying policies, reporting on board activities
- **Representing the committee to board** – presenting work plans and reporting on projects;
- **Working with staff** – coordinating actions, scheduling projects, solving problems;
- **Doing the “paperwork”** – managing funds, negotiating contracts, and filing reports.

Your responsibilities are great, but you are not alone. Many of the activities listed above can be supported by, but not delegated to, the staff and board leadership.

What Are the Qualities of a Good Chair?

In addition to the qualities listed previously for committee members, an effective chair also:

- Understands – and routinely teaches others – about the Main Street approach to commercial district revitalization
- Has genuine desire to lead the committee and make great things happen
- Has strong organizational skills, for self and others’ work
- Enjoys leading and managing both people and projects
- Facilitates group discussion, making sure meeting agendas stay on track and are completed
- Maintains a positive attitude that encourages participation and enthusiasm by others
- Respects other people’s viewpoints and skills

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- Manages difficult personalities and conflicts to bring the group to consensus
- Communicates the committee's goals and progress to members and to the public
- Displays integrity, self-confidence, persuasiveness, decisiveness, and creativity

Choosing a Committee chair

While your committee will probably be asked to develop a list of potential chairpersons, it is ultimately the board of directors' responsibility to appoint that person. Where should you look for candidates? Good chairs are often drawn from the membership of that committee. Otherwise, your search might include outsiders with leadership experience or potential and unique skills or interests in finance, volunteer development, newsletter production, or fund-raising, such as those listed earlier as potential candidates for committee membership in general.

Staff Role in Committees

As a committee volunteer, you have great responsibilities, some of which can be supported by, but not delegated to, the staff – typically, a single program manager. It's important for you to understand what staff does – and does not do - for your committee. The manager participates in the committee's work in the following areas.

1. Committee Development
 - a. Helps committee and chair learn the mechanics of committee management, provides expert advice and concise information on revitalization and the Main Street approach
 - b. Collaborates with committee members and chair as a strategist/planner.

Does not have authority over the committee or its structure

2. Work Plans
 - a. Assists committee members in developing work plan documents
 - b. Helps committee members complete their projects, but doesn't assume responsibility for those activities
 - c. Integrates own work plan with the committee's work plan

Is not someone to whom volunteers delegate all their work

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3. Projects

- a. Coordinates fund-raising campaigns, newsletter production, volunteer communications, financial systems
- b. Helps members coordinate projects

Is not responsible for raising money directly, that is the job of the board and volunteers

4. Volunteer Management

- a. Helps chair develop good systems for recruitment, supervision, and reward of members
- b. Helps develop volunteer capacity of committees by participating in recruitment efforts

Does not become the volunteer's boss

5. Committee Meetings

- a. Attends most meetings to provide technical information and professional opinions
- b. Helps strategize and develop solutions
- c. Works with chair to assure that decisions and assignments are made and completed

Is not responsible for calling and running meetings or taking minutes

Committee Action Plans

As a busy committee member, you may feel that spending time creating documents such as a detailed committee work plan is a frivolous luxury, but it isn't. If you want to raise money for projects, motivate volunteers, get things done, and make the time you spend on the committee productive and enjoyable, a good work plan is a necessity.

Developing a Good Work Plan

Planning doesn't need to be painful, boring, or time-consuming. This handbook will outline a quick and effective process and give you a sample form to use, as well as examples of typical work plan activities. Below, we've suggested some important steps that can help you build a solid work plan for the organization committee.

1. Identify Resource Needs

ASK: How Much Money and How Many Volunteers Do We Need to Support the Program?

- a. Analyze board and committee proposals for annual projects and staffing to determine overall budget needs; solicit volunteer needs from each committee
- b. Identify potential sources for both money and people to determine the feasibility of proposed activities

2. Develop a Financial Strategy

ASK: How Will We Attract Funds?

- a. Identify business, institutions, and others who have a stake in the commercial district
- b. Develop an annual funding "game plan" to help you plan the activities and determine how many volunteers you will need
- c. With the board coordinate development of a program budget and accounting system

3. Evaluate public Relations Needs

ASK: What Do We Need to Tell the Public about Our Efforts?

- a. Identify what the public needs to be told about the program in order to attract their enthusiastic support
- b. Evaluate alternate methods of educations, such as monthly newsletters, media releases, displays, and presentations

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4. Draft Work Plan Proposal

ASK: How Can We Support the Work of the Organization?

- a. Develop a written work plan for 12 months, based on the resource needs of the entire organization.

5. Get Board Approval

ASK: How Does Your Plan Fit into the Organization?

- a. Present your plan to the board so it can be integrated with other work plans. The board will then set priorities and allocate resources.

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<p>TYPICAL ACTION PLAN PROJECTS</p>
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The Organization Committee will need to make your action plan as unique as your community. A typical organization committee action plan might include, but is not limited to, the following projects.

- ☆ Develop a comprehensive fund-raising plan
- ☆ Conduct a membership campaign
- ☆ Write a monthly newsletter for Main Street's constituents
- ☆ Set up a budgeting and accounting system
- ☆ Conduct orientation and "placement" sessions for volunteers
- ☆ Participate in staff performance evaluations
- ☆ Solicit sponsorships for specific projects
- ☆ Execute a contract for service with city hall