

# COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

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43 West Galena Boulevard  
Aurora, Illinois 60506  
(630) 256-3180

**CONNECT. GROW. INFLUENCE.**

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## Purpose

The information that follows in this handbook is designed to help orient you to your new responsibilities as an Aurora Regional Chamber of Commerce committee member. As a committee member, you are assuming considerable responsibility for the smooth functioning and the efficient and effective operation of the organization.

The various parts of this handbook form a type of advice for your future. For example, leadership is discussed to help you gain a better sense of your role in leading the committee's operations. Leading does not necessarily mean managing. The difference between the two is highlighted so that you can begin to separate, in your mind, the difference between your role as a member of a committee and the role of the Chamber's president and his/her staff. This distinction is important since you are not expected to actually oversee the day-to-day operations of the organization, but are responsible for assuring that the Chamber is well run.

## Your Chamber of Commerce

A chamber of commerce is an association of business, industrial and professional firms, and interested individuals working together to enhance the economic and socioeconomic health of the community. It is a non-profit mutual benefit corporation of voluntary membership that invests time and money to carry forward programs relevant to members' needs and that affect the orderly growth and development of the community. It is the catalytic agency that brings together all of the forces, both public and private, through which common goals can be resolved.

The purpose of the Chamber of Commerce is to promote a favorable business climate for our membership and community; to work on issues of community interest and provide business leadership for improvement of the economic, political environment and quality of life.

## Mission

The Aurora Regional Chamber of Commerce – a membership -driven organization – shall serve as a catalyst for business development in the greater Aurora region.

## Vision

The catalyst for business success in the Aurora and North Aurora region

## Tagline

Connect. Grow. Influence.

As it works to improve your community's economy and quality of life, your chamber keeps these broad objectives in mind:

- to help business prosper and grow;
- to increase job opportunities;
- to encourage an orderly expansion and development of all segments of the community;
- to contribute to the overall economic stability of the community; and,
- to encourage and promote the nation's private enterprise system of competitive marketing.

The essential ingredients for an effective chamber of commerce are:

- a sound organizational structure;
- a meaningful program of work;
- responsible volunteer and professional leadership; and,
- a sound financial basis.

The Chamber is not a social club, a charity, or the city. Although it is not for profit, the IRS code for mutual benefit organizations is 501 (c)6 not (c)3. Your chamber provides the means through which businesses can work together to the benefit of all.

## **CHAMBER GROUP DIFFERENTIATION**

### **Board Member**

The Board of Directors is the policy making body of the Chamber of Commerce. It represents a broad cross-section of the business and professional leadership of the community. It should be considered an honor to serve on the Board. Proven genuine unselfish interest in the Chamber and its objectives is the first requirement for a Board Member.

### **Committee Member**

The committee serves as the clearinghouse for all suggestions that are referred to it by the officers and the Board of Directors, members and others concerning priorities which are or should be receiving active attention of the Chamber. Suggestions are reviewed and acted on by the Board. Committees are action oriented.

### **Task Force**

From time to time, the Board may appoint a Task Force. This group is given a specific task to accomplish. When the task is finished, the committee is no longer active.

### **Staff**

The Chamber staff oversees the actions of the committee. They make sure that all chamber policies and procedures are being followed. The staff member organizes the committee and makes sure all pertinent information is available. The staff gives recognition to the committee. Staff, along with the committee chair, makes sure the budget is being followed. Staff is responsible for all expenditures and public relations for the committee. Staff is required to have a broad knowledge of the Chamber as a whole so that committees do not conflict with other committees and that their purpose coincides with the mission of the Chamber. Chamber staff is ultimately responsible for the outcome of the work of the committee.

# **LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

There is no doubt that a written record of the proceedings of meetings held by a chamber of commerce is vital. In an age when government agencies are much more active in overseeing the affairs of voluntary associations, it is necessary that minutes be accurate and that they be carefully maintained.

From a legal standpoint, it is not necessary that minutes be like legal transcripts in that virtually every word that is said is included. It is not essential that minutes be complete to the point that they record all information discussed or the personal positions taken by those who participate in the discussion. They should, instead, operate as a summary of the motions made and the action taken.

Brief minutes usually cause less potential harm when dealing with the IRS, or state or federal anti-trust divisions and, therefore, brevity will cut down risk.

Anti-trust violations now pose a real and present danger for any local chamber.

The Sherman Anti-Trust Act states that a “contract, combination, or conspiracy” in restraint of trade is illegal. By its very nature, a chamber of commerce is a combination of businesses that, in essence, compete with one another, and therefore, the local chamber falls within the “combination” purview of the Act.

Some of the specific issues raised under the Act can relate to the denial of admission to membership to certain businesses. Does the chamber, in fact, have a legal right to deny membership to businesses that are thought to be illegal or unethical? Anti-trust officials appear to conclude that most chambers and trade associations cannot operate as private clubs, i.e., they cannot automatically deny membership to any business. The anti-trust officials believe that the proper course is for the chamber to admit any firm to membership and, if the firm later violates the law, then the chamber is within its rights to expel it from its membership.

Another example of possible anti-trust violation occurs when a particular segment of a chamber decides what rules or regulations will govern. For example, a Merchants Division may decide that it will observe certain hours during a particular shopping season. This constitutes a **collective** action, and it could force the anti-trust laws into play. The advice of counsel, therefore, is most important when a decision on the part of a particular segment of the chamber membership is made.

## **COMMITTEES & TASK FORCES**

The heart of a good organization is a strong committee and task force structure whereby each group's purpose has been made a part of the Chamber's program of work and spelled out so that everyone knows what is expected.

While the Board is the policy-making body of the Chamber of Commerce, recommendations for new policies emanates from the committee and task force level. For this reason, the task force level, comprised of volunteer workers, is one of the most important segments of the chambers operations. You might say that it is the basic unit of the chamber endeavor. Neither committee nor task force members shall represent the chamber in advocacy of or opposition to any project without the specific consent of the Aurora Chamber's Board of Directors.

If a project is of an on-going nature that will carry over to future years, then the terminology committee is used. On the other hand, if the assignment is the accomplishment of a specific task that will be handled in a reasonably short period of time, after which the members will be dismissed to service on other projects, then the terminology task force or working group is used.

The President appoints task force and committee chairpersons, often with the concurrence of the Board of Directors. Together with the CEO and Board leadership, they outline and organize the assigned activities. The Board and CEO normally delegate the appointment of the committee or task force members to the chairperson and staff liaison.

Chairpersons are responsible for seeing that the activities assigned to their respective groups are carried out on time and on budget. They must evaluate their work and procedures as well as the progress of both the group as a whole, and its individual members. These results are regularly reported to the Board. They must be willing to give their time and energy in guiding and stimulating the group to produce.

### **Committee Chairperson**

The Committee Chairperson regularly reviews progress with the Chamber staff and evaluates the accomplishments of the committee. The Chairperson is to the Committee what the captain is to a ball team — his or her function is to explain the task, line up the team and advise and inspire them as they play moves from phase to phase.

The Chairperson studies the task, clarifying any points not thoroughly understood in cooperation with the President/CEO or staff. The Chairperson recruits individuals for committees whose skills will help and are needed.

The Committee meets only to utilize its members in accomplishing a goal. Meetings are to be held as needed, start and end on time, with all members having the opportunity to report, suggest and participate. The Chairperson keeps his/her eye on the objective and goals of the committee and keeps the discussion pertinent to the goal.

The Chairperson guides and stimulates the group to produce. The Chairperson must constantly evaluate his or her work and procedure and the progress of the Committee and its members.

The Chairperson has the authority to add members as needed and release others as their function is finished. The Chairperson does not have the authority to commit the Chamber financially to any project.

Each Committee Chairperson is directly accountable to the assigned Chamber staff member for coordination, performance or assistance. All committee meetings will require a Chamber staff person in attendance. Meeting notices will automatically be sent to all committee members in advance of the meeting. The Chairperson is responsible for letting the staff know if there has been any change in a regularly scheduled meeting.

Before any report of action taken by a committee is given to the news media, it must be cleared and approved by the Chamber CEO. At no time should a committee member release information on any Chamber program or event without the consent of the Chamber staff.

The staff member assigned will do everything possible to aid the Committee in achieving its goals. The Committee Chairman is asked to give ample notice for assignments. If staff is needed to work on a project it is requested that the Chairman and/or committee member make an appointment so that they receive the attention they deserve.

## **Committee Members**

Members in good standing are eligible as committee members for the Chamber. The Committee Chairperson will recruit members for the committee with the assistance from Chamber staff. Committee authority is delegated by the Board and action must have approval by the Board unless such action is specifically granted previously. Within the Committee, the authority lies with the Chairperson.

The Chairman of the Board of Directors leads, the Board sets policy, initiates and receives reports and advice from President/CEO, staff advises, coordinates

and implements the action taken. The members serving on the Committee do the work.

The Committee and its members serve as the clearinghouse for all suggestions which are referred to it by the officers, Board of Directors, members and other concerning priorities which are/or should be receiving active attention from the Chamber. Suggestions for the creation of special committees are reviewed and acted upon by the Board. A Committee is responsible for carrying out its assigned task as approved by the Board. Each member is responsible for his/her phase of the work as assigned by the Committee Chairperson.

Committees are action-oriented. They get the facts, face the facts, and take the action to get the job done. A successful Committee will:

- **Understand objectives:** Make sure you have a clear positive goal, study it and agree on exactly what is to be done. If there is disagreement, get clarification at once from the Chairperson.
- **Analyze problem or activity:** Understand all parts of the problem and determine the sequence to be followed.
- **Assign work:** Make specific assignments to members.
- **Gather facts:** Obtain the information required to intelligently work on the problem or activity. Avoid prejudices, previous opinions or beliefs.
- **Get outside help, if needed:** Use outsiders as advisors or consultants, but do not give them the responsibilities that the Committee is expected to assume.
- **Evaluate results:** Find out to what extent goals are being met, and to what extent each member of the Committee is doing his/her part.
- **Conclude its work:** When your task is finished and the goal is reached, you have completed your commitment to the Committee.

The Committee members are accountable to the Committee Chairperson. The Committee as a body is accountable to the Board of Directors through the Chairperson and the Chamber staff.

Committees will be continued as long as there is work to be done. From time to time, a Committee must consider a problem of which a member has a close personal financial interest. In these cases, the member is free to express his/her belief in the matter but then temporarily disqualify himself/herself as a member until this particular issue is settled.

Lack of interest in the task and its progress is considered adequate reason for dropping the member from the Committee. If a Committee member does not show up for three meetings in a row, with no notification to the Chamber, it will

be assumed that the person is no longer interested in serving on the Committee and they will be removed from the mailing list.

## **Successful Meetings**

Wide participation and free discussion are the criteria of a successful meeting. The ideas and opinions of individuals should be recognized and respected, even though they may be controversial. It is out of the sum total of the experience and ideas of the group that wise decisions will be made, and every member of the group must feel that they are a member of the "team," with an obligation to do their share in formulating a plan of action and making it work.

The function of the chairperson is to serve as a guide to the discussion...to keep it moving, and moving in the right direction. He or she must manage the group in a manner that will avoid friction, irritation, or conflicts of personalities.

The chairperson helps define the problem at start of the meeting, keeps the discussion pertinent to the subject, summarizes the discussion at key points and at the conclusion of the meeting, and assists the group in developing a plan of action to implement the decisions reached.

The better the chairperson knows the problem and the individuals who will participate in the discussion, the better prepared they are to lead a successful meeting. They should familiarize themselves with the subject and the objectives which may be achieved and then roughly outline the topics to be discussed with a time allotment for each.

It requires skill and tact to lead the discussion without dominating it. All participants at a meeting enjoy equal status for the purposes of the discussions, and they must be made to feel uninhibited. Rather than serving as an authority on the subject who seeks acceptance of one's own ideas, the chairperson stimulates the thinking and discussion of the participants. Instead of making positive statements, ask pertinent questions designed to draw out ideas and opinions. Try to create an atmosphere that is conducive to free expression.

The agenda for the meeting should be carefully worked out in advance. It may require merely a statement of the problem to be discussed, a list of topics, or a comprehensive outline. An outline serves the dual purpose of guiding the course of the meeting and as a time control.

# CHAMBER COMMITTEES

As identified in its strategic plan, the Aurora Regional Chamber of Commerce focuses on three divisions to support its mission: Organizational Development, Membership Development, and Economic Development. Each division has committees, councils, and task forces to implement action plans to achieve the organization's short-term and long-term goals.

## Organizational Development

**Accreditation Task Force:** This review and working group continues the member-driven culture by assisting the staff, reviewing recommendations made from the Accreditation process, and coordinating the completion of the re-accreditation process every five years.

**Annual Celebration Task Group:** This working group plans and helps organize the Annual Celebration of Membership each fall to recognize Board leadership, celebrate business award winners, and promote the upcoming program of work.

**Board Development Committee:** This committee comprised of members of the Chamber's Board of Directors annually identifies nominees to the Board and identifies opportunities for board development to create a high-functioning Board for the Chamber.

**Council on Legislative Affairs:** The Council monitors local, State and Federal government activities; alerts the membership of issues important to the business community; and provides recommendations to the Board for approval. They assist in alerting membership of issues important to them and provide opportunities for elected officials to meet business leaders and to discuss issues in an open forum.

**Executive Committee:** Comprised of officers of the Chamber's Board of Directors, the committee acts on behalf of, and exercises the power of, the Board of Directors between meetings on behalf of the full Board. Any actions taken, are reported to the full Board at the next meeting.

**Golf Classic Task Group:** Committee volunteers plan the annual Golf Classic – the Aurora region's largest business golf outing. The outing features area businesses competing against one another in a shotgun, scramble format.

**Holiday Celebration Task Group:** This working group assists in planning and organizing the annual Holiday Celebration for the community, elected officials,

business members, and their employees. Many businesses use this event as their holiday appreciation event for their employees. Collaborative partners include Aurora Hispanic and Quad County African American chambers of commerce, as well as Aurora Downtown and Women's Business Development Center.

**Membership Development:** The committee helps develop, implement, and assist with membership growth and retention efforts through outreach with existing and prospective members.

**State of the City Task Group:** Supports Chamber staff with planning, organizing, and promoting the largest event of the year and featuring the annual address by the City of Aurora Mayor.

## **Membership Development**

**Ambassadors:** Ambassadors positively promote new membership and networking opportunities to retain members and thus provide financing to support the Chamber's program of work. They provide assistance at key Chamber events and participate in ribbon cuttings and new member welcome calls.

**Aurora Area Young Professionals:** The network engages the diverse young professionals of the region by identifying and satisfying the needs of young professionals through networking, education, and community service.

**Business Development Leads Group(s):** A traditional, non-compete group of business representatives the meet and provide networking, viable leads, and relationship-building opportunities for group members.

**Diversity & Inclusion Network:** The Multi-cultural Networking Group provides bilingual networking opportunities for present as well as prospective chamber members.

**Fox Valley Networking Professionals®:** The group is specifically designed to bring business leaders together from the Fox Valley area. Topics chosen will introduce information that will be broad enough to appeal to every type of business in the Fox Valley. The goal is to create a positive atmosphere of collaboration, education and friendship that will help us all navigate the difficult waters of today's economy.

**Human Resources & Employers Network:** This Roundtable ensures that member businesses are kept up to date on the latest labor law developments, employee practices and member employee benefits through networking events and targeted Chamber communications.

**Industry Roundtables:** Roundtables are coordinated regularly between members with shared interests (e.g., manufacturing, hospitality) to discuss trends, ideas, and concerns. If the interest is strong, an individual group can be established and focused around that shared interest (e.g., NFP Alliance, Human Resources & Employers Network).

**Leadership Academy Task Group:** The purpose of the program is to help develop informed community leaders who will channel their experiences and ideas toward community resources, issues, and concerns to help direct the future of our region. This group of Academy alumni provides program oversight and mentoring to current participants.

**Not-For-Profit Alliance:** The Not-for-Profit Alliance promotes the development of not-for-profit member organizations through professional development, exchange of ideas, information and partnerships. Workshops and/or seminars focusing on the needs of not-for-profit organizations and special events are offered throughout the year.

**Retail Roundtable:** This roundtable supports members in the family-owned and/or small retail category of membership with networking opportunities, idea sharing, mentoring, and more. Potential campaigns are examined and created.

**Veterans Council:** In partnership with the Aurora Veterans Advisory Council, the council supports Veteran-owned and operated businesses.

## **Economic Development**

**Aurora First®:** Aurora First promotes and sustains an efficient and effective development process in the City of Aurora by building a strong foundation for dialogue between all stakeholders in the development industry and the City of Aurora. Aurora First is a group of developers, architects, attorneys and others interested in the economic development of the City, the group monitors implementation of the Blue Ribbon Task Force recommendations as well as reviews proposed development changes by the City of Aurora to offer feedback as well as recommendations for Board approval.

**AuroraWorks®:** The working group is a collaborative of Chamber members and resource organizations to promote resources available in the community to support employers, reduce duplication of services, and identify additional resources required by employers.

**Business Retention & Expansion Group:** Working with representatives of similar organizations (e.g., Invest Aurora, Women's Business Development Center), the group meets one-on-one with existing regional businesses to determine opportunities for expansion and to assist with any challenges to doing business in the region.

**Business-Education Partners:** The committee focuses on educating and preparing a qualified workforce through collaboration and the exchange of information. The committee's primary responsibilities are promoting linkages between member businesses and area public and private schools.

**Career Exploration Opportunities:** A task force of educators and employers that identify opportunities for a summer, career exploration week for high school students interested in careers in health sciences, advanced manufacturing, or information technology. The group also meets as needed when additional opportunities are identified.

**Disability Workforce Group:** The group works with local educational institutions and employers to support employment of persons with disabilities in our region.

**Manufacturers & Educators Alliance:** The Alliance is designed to proactively address the shortage of qualified employees for existing manufacturing positions, with the Chamber serving as the catalyst in the effort to define the issues and to begin the process of finding solutions.

**Pathways Leadership Council:** As the Intermediary organization for the Aurora Regional Pathways to Prosperity®, the Chamber coordinates the regular meetings of the CEOs of the City, Chamber, school districts, and community college to provide oversight of the collaborative and to facilitate conversation and planning for the effort.

**Youth Leadership Institute:** The purpose of the Institute is to promote our community to high school students and to increase their leadership skills. At the end of the series, students come away realizing their importance to our community.

## FAQs

## Questions about Committee Involvement

**Does a member of the committee have to be a member of the Chamber?** Yes, only members can serve on committees. At times it may be appropriate to bring in a guest as a reference or speaker but they are not to be added to committee rosters or become a regular part of the meeting.

**Does the staff or the Chairperson prepare the agenda?** The staff liaison is more than willing to prepare the agenda with the help of the chairperson. If the chairperson prefers to develop the agenda on their own it needs to be provided to the staff one week prior to the meeting. The staff will send out the meeting notices prior to the meeting.

**Is it necessary for staff to be at all committee meetings?** Yes. We require that staff be in attendance at any meeting regarding a chamber project or event.

**Is there an attendance policy for committee members?** In accordance with the Chamber's bylaws any person who misses three meetings consecutively will be removed from the committee. Staff will keep the chairperson informed of any attendance problems.

**How long should a meeting last?** Most meetings, unless otherwise noted, should be completed within one hour. It is important to begin on time and to keep non-pertinent discussions to a minimum. Chairpersons should not bring latecomers "up to speed" on what has been discussed until after the meeting is adjourned.

**Can non-members be solicited for sponsorships or gifts for events?** It is the Chamber's policy to only solicit members for events and activities if one is available.

**How does the committee work with the budget?** Typically the chairperson and the staff member will prepare a budget request to be incorporated into the overall Chamber budget it is then forwarded to the Board for final approval. Committees are expected to generate the revenues that they proposed and keep within the expense line they submitted. Committees cannot commit to spending money on behalf of the Chamber.

**Who develops press releases for the events/programs?** All press releases must be sent out from the Chamber office. If a committee member writes the press release, it should be e-mailed to the chamber. At no time should a press release be sent from a committee member's office.

## **NOTES**