

# What is the Role of an *Executive Committee?*

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The executive committee is a small group, commonly with authority to act on behalf of the full board between meetings or in an urgent situation. Usually the executive committee includes the Board chair and other officers. Committee chairs may also sit on the executive committee, and the chief executive serves as an ex officio member. If the executive committee is allowed to act on behalf of the board, its membership, functions, and authority level must be specifically stated in the organizations bylaws. Not all nonprofits need an executive committee. Small boards and the boards of start-up organizations, for instance, rarely do, because all board members can be convened relatively easily and need to be involved in decision making. For large and/or geographically dispersed boards, the existence of an executive committee whose membership can be convened quickly and make decisions efficiently may prove critical in emergency situations.

## **Example Executive Committee Description #1:**

The Executive Committee meets monthly to discuss and make recommendations about the organizations finances, approve resolutions, discuss immediate issues, make decisions about finances and programmatic strategies. In general, the executive committee is empowered to act on behalf of the board between meetings.

## **Example Executive Committee Description #2:**

The Executive Committee is responsible for working in support of, or occasionally in place of, the full board. The work of the committee revolves around three and possibly five major areas.

- 1.) Handle urgent issues, resolving any emergency or organizational crisis
- 2.) Perform policy work, carrying out specific directions of the board, and taking action on policies when they affect the work of the executive committee or when the full board directs the committee to do so.
- 3.) Act as a liaison to the chief executive
  - a. Nurture the chief executive by providing counsel, feedback, and support when needed
  - b. Facilitate annual assessment of the chief executive by the board and report h results of the assessment to the chief executive
  - c. Review compensation and benefits for the chief executive
- 4.) Help develop a strategic plan
  - a. Initiate the board's involvement in establishing a strategic framework or direction
  - b. In organizations with no staff, lead the board's efforts in developing the strategic plan.

- 5.) Conduct executive searches
  - a. Assume the lead in the search for a new chief executive or delegate the responsibility to a task force.
  - b. Conduct the research necessary to determine an appropriate salary for the chief executive
  - c. Seek approval from the full board before hiring a new chief executive.