

US WILPF Committee Guidelines, Best Practices & Information

January 2022

Introduction

Standing, ad hoc, and issue committees perform the core work of WILPF at our national level and are venues for leadership training, member decision-making, and the practice of good process. In addition to our branches, these national committees are the foundation of WILPF's organizational strength.

In the interest of informing WILPF members about standards for WILPF US committee functioning, the 2022 Board offers these "Committee Guidelines, Best Practices & Information." They seek to strengthen individual member participation by making WILPF procedures and structures clearer. In this way, this document supports the Poor People's Campaign Principle 2: "We are committed to lifting up and deepening the leadership of those most affected by systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation and to building unity across lines of division."

This is an important principle. In alignment with that principle, this 2021 revision is made to be intentionally anti-racist. It is based on various values that distinguish these guidelines from white supremacy culture, including collegiality, transparency, democracy, and clarity.

Because WILPF US is a living entity and continually changing, parts of these guidelines will likely become outdated as circumstances change. WILPF members and future boards should be alert to the need for periodic updates.

WILPF US Committee Guidelines, Best Practices & Information

These guidelines address only the ongoing functioning of committees. For information about the use of WILPF resources, such as the zoom account or the eNews, contact the President, the Secretary, or another appropriate Board member.

1) Committee members must be current members of WILPF.

2) The committee membership selection process and composition varies by the type of committee. It is helpful that the member selection process be clear and understood.

Board standing committees are defined in the US WILPF Bylaws; the chairs of the standing committees appoint members to their committees, subject to the approval of the Board. Members interested in more information about or possible membership in a standing committee may contact the relevant Committee Chair.

Board ad hoc committees, as stated in the Bylaws, are formed and appointed by the President in consultation with the Board Steering Committee. WILPF members interested in appointment to an ad hoc committee may inquire with the President or the chair of the specific committee. Members interested in more information about ad hoc committees may inquire with the President or the Membership Development Committee Chair.

Program issue committees – which help to plan national work on issues, projects, and campaigns – welcome all interested WILPF US members to participate. Only in very unusual cases, which must be individually presented to and ruled on by the Board, might a WILPF member be excluded.

3) All committees have (a) convener(s) or (co)chair who is/are responsible for convening meetings and collecting minutes and who may act as liaison to other WILPF entities, such as the Board or other committees.

National Board members chair their respective standing committees. They (or some other WILPF member) may be appointed to chair an ad hoc committee.

Issue committees democratically select their chair(s) or conveners. See the Issue Committee Benefits and Guidelines for Standards (<https://wilpfus.org/our-work/wilpf-us-takes-action-justice-peace-and-other-issues-through-initiatives-and-actions-our#members>) for further information.

4) It is helpful for a committee to have a written purpose and/or mission statement.

5) Good committee process involves listening, problem-solving, and shared responsibility.

6) It is highly desirable for committees to be able to discuss and synthesize ideas and proposals until there is a shared agreement. In the past, WILPF US used consensus to make decisions. However, in the widely varied organization that is today's WILPF US, making decisions by consensus means that a small minority can prevent a large majority from choosing to act.

Consequently, committees now make decisions based on a majority vote (50% +1) by committee members. Any substantive committee decisions require that the meeting have a quorum (at least 50% + 1 of the number, on average, of "active" committee members, i.e., those who generally attend the meetings).

Remember: A decision without an implementation plan is not a good decision!

7) Committees should hold regular and/or scheduled meetings. Committee functioning is usually enhanced by having a note taker take minutes (or notes) at each meeting and having the committee accept or approve those notes (including by *default* when the minutes

are distributed to committee members and no objections or corrections raised at the next regular meeting). (See item 13 e for more on notes/minutes.)

Draft committee documents may need to be confidential, comparably to draft minutes. When a draft document is submitted to a committee, it is helpful to clearly state, "Not for Distribution" when the nature of the document makes that instruction important.

The convener/(co)-chair(s) should save the notes and submit them to the Secretary of the Board when requested, to be sent to the Swarthmore Peace Collection archives.

8) In addition to note taking, other important components of a productive meeting are an agenda, good facilitation, timekeeping, and "vibes watching". To help spread responsibility and learning, it is highly recommended that these tasks be rotated.

Also, all meetings benefit from being carried out in a respectful way.

9) Committees with listserves are strongly encouraged to use them, as this practice facilitates inclusiveness.

Committee listserves are intended for publicizing and discussing committee and related activities or actions. Language in listserve emails (or posts) should be civil and consistent with the WILPF International principles and Code of Conduct. Listserve posts should not attack or insult WILPF members.

WILPF listserves have the capacity to be set to preserve the confidentiality of the email addresses of those posting; such confidentiality protection is consistent with WILPF US privacy protocols. Committee members should not be required to share their email addresses (beyond with the convener/chair/national liaison, as needed to be added to the committee listserve) in order to receive information about committee meetings and other committee information.

At the same time, periodic sharing lists of committee or subcommittee members with their respective groups can be helpful; personal contact is an important facet of organizing. Committee and subcommittee chairs/conveners may want to share the list of member emails with the established WILPF group. In such cases, advance consideration should be given to the possible privacy desires of members; refrain from sharing information for any member who objects.

In any case, no personal contact information shall be released **outside** of the committee or outside of WILPF, and WILPF member information may be used only for WILPF purposes. For event and other announcements, the personal contact details for someone who can offer more information should be stated only with specific permission from the individual(s) involved.

10) It may be helpful for any WILPF committee handling funds (e.g. WILPF funds or outside grants) to have a treasurer to track the committee's account and receive semi-annual statements from the national office. In any case, committees handling funds must keep a record of funds received and disbursed, as well as the basis (such as the date and record of the decision) for disbursement.

11) In order to simplify and facilitate clear communications with the WILPF US website staff (or "web weaver"), committees wishing to post to the website are requested to try to designate one consistent liaison to WILPF's web weaver.

12) Committee protocols, recommendations to the Board, and expenditures must be approved by at least a majority vote (50% +1) from a quorum (at least 50% + 1 of the "active" committee members, as described above).

Requests for expenditure reimbursements (or, in certain cases, payments or advances) should be made formally to the appropriate Board or staff member and accompanied by the approved committee minutes or notes that record the approval. For information regarding reimbursements, please see WILPF's Reimbursement Policy.

13) Additional committee agreements may vary in appropriateness depending on the committee, but the following are highly recommended.

- a) Agree on a written "job description" – for both members and (co-)chairs – to help everyone understand the responsibilities entailed in being a committee member and leader.
- b) Ask potential members to commit to agree to being active participants, outlining expectations, e.g. respond to emails, be available for meetings, be willing to assume some committee tasks, etc.
- c) At the same time, some committees – especially program issue committees – may choose to encourage understanding and discussion of committee topics by including in their listserves WILPF members who are *not* active in the committee and are non-voting.

For sensitive board committees, special agreements may be appropriate, including the following:

- d) Maintain confidentiality of listserve emails.
- e) Do not disseminate minutes beyond the committee until approved by the committee. (In this case, it is recommended that draft minutes be sent out for comment/correction as soon as possible following a meeting and that they be approved at the next meeting, if not before.)

14) Committee size should be appropriate to the scope of the committee mandate:

Smaller committees – especially with time-bound work – can often work more effectively.

Issue committees want to encourage broad involvement, but an issue committee may find that having a “core leadership” group with an outer circle of interested, possibly inactive, members is more productive. To preserve democratic and transparent functioning, the leadership group should be at least five people and remains inclusive in process by using the committee’s listserve.

15) Committees are encouraged to invite “consultants” to their meetings to provide needed information. Such specialists may be invited for a specific slot in the agenda, if they’re not needed for the entire meeting.

Currently, WILPF staff are part-time, paid by the hour. So, generally, WILPF staff members would not be committee consultants. Staff usually are not expected to be part of a meeting that is not specifically within their job description.

If a committee does have to request the participation of any staff members, they should be given a minimum of five days notice if the meeting/conference call falls outside their usual work hours, per WILPF Personnel Policy.

These guidelines may be modified by Board approval, as experience teaches us, so that they may continue to be helpful to our committees.