

1 **Traits of Effective SETAC North America Committees and Guidance for Developing SOPs**

2 SETAC North America's [standing committees](#) are responsible for much of the business of SETAC NA.
3 They handle recurring activities that support our science, networking, and professional development
4 and put new initiatives into action. Our committees are also vital opportunities for member
5 engagement. Being engaged in meaningful committee work is an excellent way to meet other SETACers,
6 give back to the Society, and get more out of your SETAC membership. While functions and processes
7 are outlined in committee-specific standard operating procedures (SOPs), typical committee
8 responsibilities include 1) working and communicating with SETAC NA staff and the SETAC NA Board of
9 Directors, 2) proposing ideas and initiatives, 3) following through on actions, and 4) communicating with
10 members, other committees and Interest Groups on actions, opportunities to join or assist, and
11 accomplishments.

12 The standing committees are part of a shared leadership structure. The [SETAC NA By-laws](#) give the
13 Board of Directors responsibility for the formation and dissolution of committees, and the SETAC NA
14 President appoints a committee chair (typically based on a committee recommendation) and a liaison to
15 each committee from the SETAC NA Board of Directors. The by-laws do not provide guidance on
16 committee-specific SOP content, so this document provides a universal template. The template outlines
17 components of an SOP, and the following observations will help with content. These are characteristics
18 of well-functioning SETAC NA committees – best practices for leadership and communication for
19 committees to consider as they develop, or from time-to-time revise, their SOPs.

- 20 1. *Include a clear committee charge and purpose* – context on why the committee exists can
21 inspire members and help engender collective responsibility for achieving goals. A summary of
22 the committee's charge should be provided that includes its purpose, duties and objectives.
- 23 2. *Define a leadership structure* – the committee steering team should be composed of a minimum
24 of three members and a maximum of around twelve members with defined leadership
25 responsibilities.

26 The model of a leadership team with a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Past Chairperson
27 helps with setting the overall tone and agenda, ensuring continuity, managing workload, and
28 planning for leadership transitions. The model of a co-chairperson leadership team has worked
29 well too; a co-chairperson structure can facilitate members' stepping into leadership roles if
30 they know they will have help with that new responsibility. A team of subcommittee chairs may
31 also work as a steering team, depending on the committee. For example, this model might work
32 well for a committee that has standing subcommittees (e.g., Awards and Fellowships) or stable
33 ad hoc subcommittees (e.g., Career Development).

34 Leaders should help identify and mentor those who will replace them when they move on to
35 new challenges. How leadership transitions are made should be clear in the SOP. The
36 Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Past Chairperson (one year in each position) model noted
37 above works well.

- 38 3. *Compose and operate in a manner that that reflects and engages the larger membership* –
39 committee members are expected to be SETAC members of good standing. These best practices
40 make committees more inviting and the work more rewarding:
- 41 a. *Tripartite participation* – To reflect the Society’s membership composition and to balance
42 the interests of academia, business/consulting, and government, committee members
43 should reflect these professional sectors as best possible.
- 44 b. *Inclusion of students* – Committee composition that overtly includes students helps ensure
45 we benefit from their participation, encourages student development and empowerment,
46 and provides mutual networking benefits for professional development and Society
47 membership.
- 48 c. *Diverse Participation* – To reflect the society’s membership in terms of geographical
49 representation, gender variety, and career level balance as well as diversity in expertise.
- 50 d. *Defined terms of service* – A set period of committee service helps prospective members
51 consider their volunteer commitment, respects their other obligations, and offers
52 opportunities for more members to rotate in and out of the work of SETAC. 3-year terms are
53 used by some committees – that keeps good continuity while giving new people
54 opportunities to serve and those rotating off chances to serve SETAC elsewhere. Upper
55 limits are often established to allow room for leadership development and to avoid burnout.
56 Committee steering team terms can be renewed and have no strict limit, but if volunteers
57 are identified to succeed sitting steering committee members, then succession is
58 encouraged.
- 59 e. *Subcommittees and work groups* – If the committee’s charge is extensive, subcommittees
60 and work groups help focus committee resources, facilitate completion of tasks, and provide
61 opportunities to engage more members.
- 62 4. *Describe recurring activities and procedures* – Each committee’s work is different. A committee
63 SOP should clearly summarize the activities by subcommittee and work groups, if such
64 organization exists, and establish approaches for achieving the objectives of those groups.
- 65 5. *Create an expectation of frequent planned communications* – Regularly scheduled recurring
66 conference calls and meetings, including scheduled face-to-face meetings at SNA annual
67 conferences, increase participation and give new members more opportunities to learn the
68 committee business. Establishing agendas at least 4 to 7-days in advance and distributing post-
69 meeting minutes with action items within a week is important to keep information flowing and
70 should be standard procedure. Maintaining committee websites lets prospective members learn
71 more about the work of our committees (so the committee must work with the SETAC Office to
72 keep websites current).
- 73 6. *Make annual work planning a standard operating procedure* – Committees can benefit from
74 producing formal or informal work plans for the year -- the more specific ‘what’ for the year
75 with success criteria as a compliment to the SOP’s ‘who and how’.

76 This general guidance and the following template should facilitate committee-specific SOP development.
77 At any time, the SETAC NA Board of Directors can recommend existing committee SOPs as good
78 examples for consideration in drafting an SOP.

79 Header for every page: SNA _____ Committee SOP Date

80 _____ COMMITTEE

81 SETAC North America

82 STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

83

84 **I. CHARGE** – the purpose and scope of the committee, along with objective(s) and a summary of major
85 components / typical tasks.

86 **II. GOVERNANCE**

87 **A. Oversight** – Identifies the SETAC governing entity that will provide oversight for the committee and, if
88 necessary, will offer guidance to ensure compliance with established policy.

89 Example: The SETAC NA Board of Directors has oversight for the committee and, if necessary,
90 will offer guidance to ensure compliance with established policy.

91 **B. Rules** – Specifies some of the SETAC policies that the committee is expected to adhere to.

92 Example: The dissemination of committee deliberations adheres to the SETAC [Public Outreach](#)
93 [Policy](#). Any material shared by the committee or posted on the committee webpage should
94 adhere to the [SETAC Communities Rules of Conduct](#), [SETAC Logo and Trademark Guidelines](#),
95 [SETAC Social Media Guidelines](#), and [SETAC Privacy Policy](#). Moreover, all committee members
96 should adhere to the [SETAC Code of Ethics](#). These materials are incorporated into this guidance
97 by reference.

98 **C. Budget** – Note that most committees do not have an operating budget. In rare instances where a
99 committee needs resources, this section should state that an annual budget be prepared and submitted
100 for inclusion in the overall annual budget for SETAC and that any fundraising activities are coordinated
101 through the SETAC Office.

102 **III. MEMBERSHIP**

103 **A. Leadership structure** – composition, how chairperson(s) and any other officers are determined,
104 duration of service, and leadership transitions, roles and responsibilities

105 Example: The Committee Steering Team is led by a tri-chair model consisting of a Chairperson,
106 Vice-Chairperson, and Past Chairperson, each serving in their capacity for a 1/3 their term (total
107 of *three* years of service to the committee). Membership in the Committee Steering Team will
108 follow the basic SETAC guidelines and achieve balance with representation from academia,
109 industry, government. Diversity in geography or locale, career level, and gender, and inclusion of
110 students in membership of the Committee Steering Team is recommended to the extent
111 possible. The Committee Steering Team is comprised of no less than *three* and no more than
112 *twelve* individuals.

113 The Committee Steering Team members serve a three-year term. The terms of the Committee
114 Steering Team are tied to calendar years. The Committee Steering Team membership and
115 leadership terms are staggered to insure a turnover of approximately one-third members per
116 year.

117 In instances where a Committee Steering Team member must leave before completing their
118 term, and when there are more than six months remaining in the term, the Committee Steering
119 Team solicits from for individuals from the departing member's sector to fulfill the term.
120 Individuals are identified to the Committee Steering Team at least two weeks prior to the
121 appointment of the replacement.

122 In instances where new Committee Steering Team members cannot be identified even after
123 exhaustive queries to the whole membership, Committee Steering Team members may renew
124 for a subsequent term.

125 If job changes among Committee Steering Team members lead to a change in sectors during
126 their term, they are allowed to continue throughout their term. If sector balance is significantly
127 altered (i.e., no representation from one sector), then new Committee Steering Team members
128 are sought.

129 In September of each year, the chair announces the descriptions of the available vacancies in
130 the Committee Steering Team (type of position and preferred sector, locale, place in career path
131 [student, early career, expert], and gender) to the membership at least four (4) months prior to
132 the appointment date (i.e., September announcement for appointment starting January).

133 Anyone who fits a vacancy description, has institutional or personal support, has expertise or
134 interest in issue, and has a commitment to the mission and operating guidelines of the
135 committee can express their interest in being considered for appointment to the Committee
136 Steering Team.

137 Nominations are open for one month (i.e., September 1st to September 30th). If there is a
138 competition for any seat, a ballot is organized with assistance from the SETAC Office. Voting is
139 open for one month (i.e., Oct 1st to Oct 31st).

140 The new Committee Steering Team slate, including chairs, are provided to the Board of
141 Directors. The Board of Directors appoints the chairs of the committees within two months of
142 the announcement of vacancies (i.e., November). This provides a two-month overlap with the
143 out-going committee.

144 **B. Committee composition** – Members on Committee Steering Team should be SETAC members in good
145 standing. This section should state how many members are on the full committee, how they are
146 recruited or join, duration of service (number of years, if set terms of service are important to the
147 committee), roles and responsibilities. Committee membership should include tripartite participation
148 among the Society's industry/consulting, government, and academic sectors. Inclusion of students,
149 variation in career level, and diversity in career-level and expertise, nationality (i.e., Canada, Mexico, and
150 USA) and gender are encouraged.

151 **IV. OPERATING PROCEDURES**

152 **A. Structure** – existing subcommittees or how they are formed if needed

153 Example 1: The committee currently includes the following permanent subcommittee: List.

154 Example 2: The committee currently does not include any ad-hoc or permanent subcommittee.

155 If subcommittees are necessary, the committee steering team will form them.

156

157 **B. Decision-making** – operational procedures for how the group will function and how it will handle
158 certain situations when they arise.

159 Example: The committee is a consensus-based group, and uses a consensus-based decision-
160 making process.

161 **C. Recurring Activities and Procedures** – how the work gets done; important linkages to other
162 committees, staff; cross reference any relevant SOPs as needed

163 **PLANNING** – Outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Committee, including reviewing and updating
164 the SOP and the long-range strategic plan every three years, identifying yearly goals for the committee
165 in consultation with the SETAC NA Board of Directors, and producing high quality annual reports to the
166 SETAC NA Board of Directors.

167 Example: The yearly goal(s) of the committee are set by the Committee Steering Team during
168 preparation of the annual report in September, updated to incorporate feedback from the
169 SETAC NA Board of Directors prior to the SETAC NA annual meeting, and
170 reinforced/operationalized during the first meeting of the operating year (typically at the SETAC
171 NA annual meeting). Champions or project managers for each goal are identified from the
172 committee membership. They are obligated to determine how best to meet the goals. The
173 champions provide a status update on the goals during the recurring committee meetings. The
174 goals are listed on the committee website and provided to the Board in the annual report.

175 **SPECIFIC COMMITTEE TASKS** – the procedures for this specific committee’s work.

176 **V. COMMUNICATIONS**

177 **A. Meetings** – frequency and location of in person meetings and/or conference calls; sharing meeting
178 minutes

179 Example: The committee holds one face-to-face business meeting at the SETAC NA annual
180 conference. The chair or designee plans the committee meeting with assistance from the SETAC
181 Office and in coordination with the Committee’s liaison from the SETAC NA Board of Directors.

182 At each SETAC NA annual meeting, the chair queries the new Committee Steering Team and
183 identifies a recurring committee teleconference meeting time. The SETAC NA office can supply a
184 meeting phone or internet line, if needed. Calls for the year, once scheduled, are announced to
185 the full committee.

186 The chair prepares a brief agenda and sends it out at least one week and not more than two
187 weeks prior to each committee meeting.

188 The vice chair or a designated member of the Committee Steering Team takes minutes at the
189 committee meetings, posts them on group page, and sends them in an email to the committee
190 members within one week of meeting.

191 **B. Website** – process for ensuring the committee’s internal Your Membership group page and external
192 committee page are current and accurate.

193 Example: A member of the committee is designated as webpage administrator with help from
194 the SETAC Office. Duties of the webpage administrator include, but are not limited to insuring
195 that the most up to date committee SOP, current year Committee Steering Team, current year
196 goals, and past year annual report are listed on the webpage.

197 **C. Reports** – preparation, review and submittal of annual report (activities of the previous year, tasks
198 initiated and completed, plans for the coming year, membership, succession plan, and finance reports as
199 required). Annual reports should be submitted to the SETAC Office by October 1 and include the
200 previous year’s accomplishments and the next year’s priority goals. This timing builds momentum for a
201 productive face-to-face business meeting in November and affords the SETAC NA Board of Directors and
202 staff time to review reports prior to those face-to-face committee meetings.

203 Example: The vice chair writes the annual report with assistance from the Committee Steering
204 Team. The annual report will be sent to the SETAC Office and to the committee’s liaison SETAC
205 NA Board of Directors by October 1.

206 **VI. ACTIVITIES CALENDAR** – Schedule for regular occurring activities during the year.

207 **VII. GROUND RULES** – Sets some ground rules for working within the Committee.

208 Examples:

209 Maintain Respect for People

- 210 • Listen fully
- 211 • Problem solve together
- 212 • Be tolerant of each other's perspective
- 213 • Respect confidentiality
- 214 • Be mindful of the complexities presented by conference calls
- 215 • Work to be inclusive of the full membership
- 216

217 Conduct organized meetings

- 218 • Publicize meeting well ahead of time
- 219 • Utilize a written agenda (old business, new business, ongoing business)
- 220 • Publish agenda a week ahead of meeting
- 221 • Start and end meetings on time
- 222 • Come to meetings prepared - review pre-meeting reading materials
- 223 • Stay focused on the topic
- 224 • Publish minutes as soon as possible following meetings
- 225 • Add action items and person responsible in minutes
- 226

227 Operate effectively

- 228 • Follow the parliamentary procedures for meetings set out in the SETAC NA by-laws
- 229 • Assign champions or project managers to goals and action items
- 230 • Follow-through on meeting action items