PolyColumbus
Committee Structures

Last updated December 8, 2015

Background

PolyColumbus is governed by a board of directors who collaboratively discuss and vote upon matters of importance to the organization. Given the size of the board and logistical concerns, the board meets in-person only a few times per year. Between meetings, PolyColumbus uses various committees to carry out the work of the organization, consistent with higher-level decisions made by the board of directors. The board of directors retains the authority to overrule committees on any given matter, although such overrides should be relatively rare.

Committee Structure Generally

PolyColumbus uses four committees: Events, Outreach, Finance & Membership, and Governance. Each committee has a Chair, and the Chair may create a Co-Chair or Vice Chair if desired. Each person may, at most, chair one committee and vice or co-chair a second committee. All board members are allowed to join any committee(s) that interest them. Non-board members that the committee's Chair invites onto the committee are referred to as "staff." The committee's Chair can remove staff or other board members from their committee if the Chair feels that fit is lacking. Co- or Vice Chairs may be staff, but Chairs must be board members. In the absence of a contrary board resolution, Chairs may freely choose their Co- or Vice Chair (if any).

The committees are designed for a strong Chair, with the other members of the committee supporting the Chair's vision. The committee Chair may request advisory votes from the committee members, voting themselves if desired, but such votes are non-binding. The committee Chair may — indeed, should! — delegate tasks or empower committee members in a manner appropriate to the skills and trust held by the committee member.

In the committee Chair's absence or unavailability, the Co- or Vice Chair exercises the powers and meets the responsibilities of the Chair. In the absence or unavailability of the committee Chair and any Co- or Vice Chair, power and responsibility flows to the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, and then to committee members at large. Said another way, if a committee member has an unanswered question pertaining to their committee, they should seek out an answer from the committee's Chair, Co- / Vice Chair, the Executive Director, and

the Deputy Executive Director (in that order) before making a decision on their own authority. For most situations, the committee Chair will have shared expectations ahead of time so that committee members can keep the organization running smoothly without needing to clear every minor question.

Committee Chairs may create subcommittees germane to their committee, filling that subcommittee as appropriate. For example, the Events Committee could create a Parents Subcommittee that works to ensure our events meet the needs of those who have children. The relevant chair is responsible for updating the full board on (sub)committee activities.

The Events Committee

The Executive Director generally chairs the Events Committee.

All events occurring within PolyColumbus-controlled spaces and bearing the PolyColumbus name (including co-branded events) fall under the Events Committee, regardless whether their focus is discussion, education, socializing, or otherwise. Events may be held in-person, online, or through a hybrid structure.

The Events Committee also determines what events will be promoted by PolyColumbus, even if the events are "unofficial" or "community" events with no formal sponsor. The promotion of events formally sponsored by an outside organization falls under the Outreach Committee.

The Outreach Committee

The Deputy Executive Director generally chairs the Outreach Committee.

The Outreach Committee handles guest speaking opportunities, interviews, and interactions with other organizations. The Outreach Committee also handles our website and social media, as well as general questions of marketing. The Outreach Committee sets policy regarding promotion of our own events (e.g. events created on our Meetup page) consistent with decisions made by the Events Committee regarding what type of events will take place.

If PolyColumbus is entering another organization's "space" in a formalized manner (e.g. applying to table at Pride), then Outreach has power and responsibility over the event, including whether to hold the event or not. Events that are simply hosted by a third-party vendor on the same terms as any other group (e.g. Coffee-amory at a coffee shop) remain under the Events Committee, although Outreach may help promote the event.

A recurring audio or video podcast that we produce would fall under Events if participation is open to the PolyColumbus community at large and Outreach if produced exclusively by board and staff.

The Finance & Membership Committee

The Treasurer generally chairs the Finance and Membership Committee. It is suggested that the Secretary co- or vice chair the committee.

The Finance & Membership Committee oversees our budget by suggesting it for full board approval, taking the lead on raising the funds to meet it, and updating the full board on our progress as the year goes on. The Events Committee may set suggested or required donations to participate in particular events, but all other monetary questions should flow through Finance and Membership. The full board must approve material deviations to the budget.

Maintaining a Membership Roster (including Members who are not yet financial supporters) is the responsibility of the Finance & Membership Committee. The Finance and Membership Committee also handles the email newsletter that updates our Members on a regular basis.

The Governance Committee

The Board Chair generally chairs the Governance Committee.

The Governance Committee handles all matters pertaining to the organization's behind-the-scenes functioning. The primary work of recruiting and reviewing board members and Advisory Board members falls under Governance, although final votes remain within the power of the full board. The Governance Committee is also responsible for developing policies, training, etc. that are applicable to all staff (as opposed to Committee-specific).

The Governance Committee manages our policies, and updates prior board-approved policies when subsequent decisions by the board modify those policies (e.g. an older policy referencing a committee that has been subsumed into a different committee). Policies that are initially drafted by other committees should generally be reviewed by Governance (if only for interactions with other policies) prior to proposal to the full board. Committee-level policies or guides that only affect a single committee do not need Governance review.

The Governance Committee is also responsible for doing the primary work of implementing our inclusivity policies (e.g. the Community Conduct Policy), including investigating major concerns and drafting suggested updates. As noted in the Community Conduct Policy, individual board members and staff members working an event are empowered to remove participants from a relevant space if needed, and the Executive Director may issue a temporary ban on a participant pending board resolution. The full board must vote to approve any changes to the Community Conduct Policy, is kept informed of any alleged violations, and must approve any permanent bans.

The Governance Committee also assigns a matter to a particular committee when it is unclear which committee should take the lead.

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for Committee Structures

The core of the PolyColumbus Mission is empowering individuals that either self-identify as polyamorous, open, or ethically non-monogamous, or are exploring such possibilities. Part of this empowerment comes from serving organizations with similar goals by documenting best practices and creating other resources for successfully running such an organization.

Good policies and related documents facilitate the orderly and sustainable growth of communities and events that advance the PolyColumbus Mission, whether in the Columbus, Ohio area or elsewhere.

PolyColumbus does not claim a monopoly on wisdom. What we do claim is fifteen years (and counting) as an organization, and leadership with relevant and valuable education, experience, and training. We have confidence in the documents we draft, as well as the humility to revise them when necessary in light of experience.

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Please contact our board of directors at board@polycolumbus.org with any questions or comments on using our documents.