



MWEA Committee Chair Handbook

MWEA is a committee driven organization. By accepting a position as Committee Chair (CC) you have accepted one of the most important positions in the organization.

THANK YOU very much.

The following materials are intended to be of assistance as you travel down this path of organizational contribution and hopefully one of career development and advancement.

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Important Information on the Website

The MWEA website is a reference library for virtually all the important information you may need to perform your committee chair duties. Taking a few minutes right away to familiarizing yourself with the website may save you large amounts of time in the future.

- MWEA website – www.mi-wea.org
- MWEA office
517.641.7377
Fax 517.641.7388
mwea@mi-wea.org
Mailing address: P O BOX 397, Bath MI 48808
Shipping address: 5815 Clark Road, Suite F, Bath, MI 48808
- Being able to contact other leaders when necessary in a timely basis is essential for the most efficient use of your valuable time. The quickest way to obtain the most up-to-date contact information is to go to the MWEA website.

- ◆ Board of Directors: Click on “About us,” then click on “Board of Directors” on the Home Page
- ◆ MWEA staff: Click “About us” on the Home Page, then click on “Office Staff”.
- ◆ Statements of Policy: Click “About Us” on the Home Page, then click on “Statements of Policy”
- ◆ Constitution & Bylaws: Click on “About Us” on the Home Page, then click on “Constitution & Bylaws”
- ◆ Strategic Plan: Click on “About Us,” then click “Strategic Plan”
- ◆ Committee Chairs: Click on “Committees,” then click on the “Committees” submenu.
Click on each committee’s name to find the committee’s Mission Statement (if applicable), Chairperson contact information, committee documents and links to Committee webpages.
“Committee resources” lists several documents including one to show who the Board Liaison is for each committee.

◆ Seminar Presentations and Committee Documents:

Click on “Past Presentations” on the Home Page, and select a committee. Here you will find the committee’s Mission Statement or description, Chairperson contact information and presentations from past seminars (if any) or meeting agendas/minutes. To get committee documents onto the website, such as meeting agenda’s & minutes, email the WORD document to mwea@mi-wea.org. To get links to other websites onto the committee page, email your request to mwea@mi-wea.org.

Important Financial Documents

To access the forms below, go to the MWEA website and click on “Committees” and click “committees” again. “Committee Resources” lists the following documents:

- Reimbursement Request Form – this form is for reimbursement of a committee expense such as a lunch meeting. Fill out the form and fax, mail or email it to MWEA. The request will need to be approved by the Treasurer before a check is printed. This process can take up to 2 weeks. A copy of this form is found on the MWEA Website on the Committees Tab.
- MWEA Tax Exemption Form, call the MWEA office

MWEA Conference Calling System

- This system should only be used when necessary. Face to face meetings are always best.
- Call or email the MWEA office to see if the conference line is available on the desired date and time
- Email the 800 number and Access Code to all committee members (see below)
- The Committee Chairperson who is “hosting” the meeting should call in 5 minutes prior to the start of the meeting.
- The Committee Chairperson will need the 800 number and Access Code when calling in, as well as the Passcode.
- MWEA has 2 conference lines available. The MWEA office will let you know which line you can use when you make that initial contact with them to schedule the call.

Call the MWEA Office at 517-641-7377 for the conference calling numbers.

Awards

If there is an award that pertains to your committee’s focus, the Board of Directors encourages nominations directly from the committee. If nominations are submitted from MWEA members they can be passed along to the committees for consideration and recommendation. If the committee does not wish to consider or nominate anyone for their committee award, it is the obligation of the Awards Committee to nominate and award a recipient if desired. For a complete list of awards that committees are responsible for nominating each year, go to the Committee page on the MWEA website.

Seminars

- **Responsibilities of Standing Committees – Educational and Financial**
As stated in the Statements of Policy: “all of the member education and much of the Association’s Annual Operating revenue is a direct result of the efforts of our standing committees and their volunteers. Committees are the backbone of the organization and the organizations potential for success lies squarely on the shoulders of our many Committee volunteers.”
- **Seminar Planning Timeline** – A copy of this form is found on the MWEA Website on the Committee Page. It will explain the tasks required for the administration of a seminar. Help is always available from the MWEA office.

Understanding the Committee Chair / Liaison Relationship

The importance of the relationship (and quality of communication) between the Committee Chair and the committee’s Liaison with the Board of Directors (BoD) cannot be overstated. MWEA is a committee driven organization. The BoD is the body that sets policy and provides overall leadership for MWEA. The connection between the committees and the BoD must be strong for MWEA to be the best organization it can be.

Each MWEA committee will be assigned a liaison with the BoD. This liaison shall be a member of the BoD. Each member of the BoD is assigned three to five committees for which she or he is responsible to perform the duties of liaison. It can be a great help to these BoD members if the chairs of these committees understand her or his duties and do their part in facilitating the completion of those duties.

The responsibilities of the BoD member liaisons are:

- Attend as many committee meetings as possible, but no less than one each year.
- Communicate on a regular basis with the committee chairs (phone calls, email, etc.)
- Attend seminars or programs of committees whenever possible.
- Receive all committee communications (distributed emails, etc.)
- Report at BoD meetings on committee status, (programs, progress, problems, concerns, etc.)
- Assist each chair with scheduling a visit to a BoD meeting at least once a year.
- Be part of the progression of leadership on your designated committee.
- Offer assistance from the BoD and staff whenever appropriate.
- Communicate all new policies and directives from the BoD to Committee Chairs.
- Offer assistance however possible.

Please find out who your liaison is as soon as you assume your position as Chair. Liaison assignments are often changed at the time of Annual Conference. You need not wait until your liaison makes contact with you. Take the initiative yourself to start this vital communication process.

You share half of the responsibility for good communication with your liaison and the BoD. Doing your best to keep your liaison well informed will contribute greatly to the quality of your experience as Committee Chair and to the contribution of your committee to the success of MWEA.

Preparing for leadership in MWEA

Again, thank you for accepting the vital position of MWEA Committee Chair. Committee activity is the lifeblood of this and most organizations such as ours. You have taken on a big responsibility that will help you (like so many others before you) contribute to:

- the success of MWEA and the betterment of our industry
- the water quality and therefore the health of Michigan's residents
- the ecological sustainability of Michigan's environment
- your own professional and career development.

Serving as a Committee Chair is only one step removed from serving on the Board of Directors. Being recognized as one who has worked in a position of leadership in MWEA indicates your dedication, passion, vision, organizational abilities and communication skills. Countless individuals have reaped significant boosts to their careers through the contacts made and opportunities to showcase their skills and abilities while performing the duties of their MWEA positions.

Much like obtaining a formal education, these benefits do not come without a cost. Accomplishing your tasks for MWEA takes time and effort. Making the time for this work is an important part of your planning process and most certainly will contribute to your self-management skills. Assuming you will be able to complete all your duties while at work is a path to failure. Similarly, you probably wouldn't expect to do course work on company time.

Much of your time may need to be spent reading, corresponding and preparing for meetings. Your knowledge of MWEA governing rules and methodology is of paramount importance.

◆ **Being a great communicator** is a characteristic of all great leaders. Getting started quickly will demonstrate to your committee members that you are a skilled organizer who will keep them informed.

- Make immediate contact with your Board of Directors liaison
- Establish a plan of communication with your liaison
- Secure current contact information from your committee members
- Get your email distribution list formed quickly (include your liaison)
- Send out a message and ask for confirmation of receipt, telephone numbers and confirmation of their desire to be a member of your committee – this will also give you insight as to the interest and responsiveness of each committee member
- Next, send out a message outlining basic plans for the committee and ask for input regarding the plans, and meetings dates and times – be certain to convey that you are open to and need input at all times
- Schedule meetings as far out as possible
- Send out at least two reminders
- Include an advance agenda in one of the reminders and ask for comments
- Provide your own feedback that demonstrates you are listening

◆ **Running good meetings**

- Send out an advance agenda, ask for additional items
- Decide if your meeting will be “in person” or a “conference call meeting”. Call the MWEA Office to schedule the conference calling line and to get conference calling numbers.
- Ask for RSVPs
- Request that members bring their own copies of the agenda to the meeting
- Ask that attendees arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled starting time so that the social pleasantries don't extend the overall length of the meeting
- Start precisely on time (you may wish to use odd times, i.e., 9:52 vs 10:00 to emphasize the importance of timeliness). Starting on time and ending on time will create a better experience for your committee members.
- Have someone take very brief minutes
- Follow your agenda
- Stay on topic
- Put items that stray from the agenda in a Parking Lot (a list of items to be returned to when possible)
- When the horse is dead horse, it's time to dismount – when a topic has been covered thoroughly, move on

- Facilitate inclusion of all committee members present at meetings – ask individuals for opinions if necessary
- Identify tasks and assign responsibility for completion
- Set deadlines
- Review job assignments at the end of the meeting
- Confirm the next meeting date, time and location
- Thank everyone for their time and efforts
- Get the minutes back out to everyone within a few days (no more than a week)
- If you want the minutes posted to the MWEA Website, email the Word or PDF document to mwea@mi-wea.org.

◆ **Getting tasks completed**

- Make clearly defined assignments
- Be certain the necessary resources are available to those who need them
- Set reasonable deadlines (for both the workload and the need of completion)
- Set short term, intermediate deadlines
- Follow up in advance – check progress so that if things are not going well, help can be offered and/or changes in the plan can be made on a timely basis
- Keep committee members informed of progress – this is a form of recognition for those who are working on the task
- Announce the completion of the task (it's like checking off an item on a to-do list, it feels good and in this case it feels good for everyone)

◆ **Being a good steward for your committee**

- One of your goals should be to leave the committee better off than it was when you took over as Chair
- Keep the Vice Chair and Secretary positions filled and busy
- Delegating duties will prepare others for leadership positions
- Recruitment of new committee members is a never ending job
- Enlist help for recruitment of committee members from others on the committee, your liaison, etc.
- Leading your committee in a professional manner (excellent communication, starting and ending meetings on time, timely follow-up and completion of tasks, having a positive and enthusiastic demeanor when leading meetings, etc.) will set the tone for how your committee operates. This will encourage who are committed to excellence to remain with the committee (and possibly consider a leadership role).
- Write at least one article per year for publication in our Matters magazine. This will keep your committee in front of the membership and possibly attract potential committee members who are interested in your group's area of focus.