



# HANDBOOK FOR COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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Prepared by the Leadership Development Committee and the HFES Central Office

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## Contents

<b>PREFACE.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS USED.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR THE OPERATION OF HFES COMMITTEES.....</b>	<b>3</b>

Guidelines for Successful Committee Leadership ..... 3  
Accomplished Chairs Consistently ..... 4  
Best Practices for Committee Meeting Procedures ..... 4  
Best Practices for Documenting the Committee’s Work ..... 5  
**APPENDIX A – CONTACT INFORMATION..... 6**  
**APPENDIX B – HFES BASICS..... 7**  
**APPENDIX C – SAMPLE AGENDA ..... 9**  
**APPENDIX D – STRUCTURE FOR DOCUMENTING COMMITTEE’S WORK ..... 10**  
**APPENDIX E – HANDOFF TEMPLATE ..... 11**

## Preface

Congratulations on your selection as the Chair of an HFES Committee!! We hope you enjoy your term. This handbook is designed to provide information that we believe will help you in your role as chair.

Suggestions for changes to this edition, as well as questions and comments, may be sent to the HFES central office (see [Appendix A](#), Contact Information).

## Abbreviations Used

EC	Executive Council
HFES	Human Factors and Ergonomics Society
ORs	Operating Rules

## General Guidance for the Operation of HFES Committees

Committees serve as the operational backbone of any association, engaging members in service development and delivery, advocating for member perspectives in decision-making processes, and facilitating interaction to address member needs. They provide a platform for collaborative problem-solving and encourage the presentation of diverse viewpoints. Additionally, committees play a crucial role in nurturing future leaders by offering opportunities for skill development and refinement. Therefore, the effectiveness of committees is paramount to the seamless functioning of chapters. Some background material on how HFES functions and how committees fit into the overall structure of the Society can be found in [Appendix B](#).

### Guidelines for Successful Committee Leadership

Effective chairpersons must be well-versed in their committee's specific charter, as outlined in the HFES Operating Rules (found [here](#)), while also remaining open to learning and growth as they navigate their responsibilities. Success in chairing relies heavily on effective communication skills, encompassing active listening, clear articulation, and adept organization.

The Executive Council recommends that all leaders within HFES take part in an Allyship training program to become more aware of how to be an ally to all members of our Society. At this time, we are recommending two possible courses: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n26sJwoC\\_IY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n26sJwoC_IY) or “Becoming an Ally to All” on LinkedIn Learning: <https://www.linkedin.com/learning/topics/allyship> (which requires that your organization provide access to this resource).

### **Accomplished Chairs Consistently**

- Maintain regular communication with committee members.
- Clearly convey all relevant information regarding committee activities and expectations.
- Ensure prompt follow-up on all requests, clarifying specifics to facilitate understanding.
- Foster inclusivity by engaging as many members as possible through various communication channels.
- Respond promptly to all correspondence.
- Acknowledge and commend members' contributions both in writing and verbally during meetings.

### **Best Practices for Committee Meeting Procedures**

1. Punctuality and Agenda Setting: Commence meetings on time without recapping for latecomers. Announce the meeting's end time at the outset.
2. Agenda Preparation: Distribute agendas in advance and appoint someone to record and circulate meeting minutes promptly. Ensure minutes detail actionable items, responsible parties, and deadlines. See [Appendix C](#) for a sample agenda.
3. Effective Meeting Dynamics: Focus discussions, discourage distractions, and redirect conversations back to the agenda as needed.
4. Encouraging Preparation: Urge members to review materials beforehand and actively engage in discussions.
5. Preventing Overburden: Avoid overwhelming individual members with excessive responsibilities to prevent burnout.
6. Addressing Non-Participation: Replace inactive members to uphold committee morale and productivity.
7. Cultivating a Productive Environment: Address logistical issues to create a conducive meeting space.
8. Ensuring Follow-Up: Assign clear action items, track progress, and ensure decisions are implemented.
9. Soliciting Feedback: Regularly seek input from members to improve meeting effectiveness through anonymous surveys.
10. Recording Meeting Minutes: While formal minutes are not mandatory, your well-organized notes or minutes should capture significant discussions, decisions, and action items. Include attendee lists, decisions made and agreed-upon follow-up actions. Emphasize the meeting's direction over individual attributions. Share minutes via the HFES Google Workspace or email them to HFES staff at [info@hfes.org](mailto:info@hfes.org).

### **Best Practices for Documenting the Committee's Work**

1. Maintain an archive (e.g., using HFES Google Workspace) that houses all of the committee work (see [Appendix D](#)). HFES is working on releasing a workspace for all committees on an HFES Google drive (as of 2024). Committee chairs will be notified when this workspace is available for use. In the meantime, use of a shared Google Drive or Sharepoint site is recommended.
2. Complete bi-annual reports to the Executive Council describing the committee's work. These are typically due in February and August. Until such time as the HFES Google Workspace is rolled out, the Central Office should be able to provide a copy of the last report submitted if you cannot find one.
3. Complete annual requests for budget (when needed). This is typically due in August. Budget requests should provide detailed justification for the expenditures, including how they will support HFES' strategic goals.
4. Ensure a smooth transition to the new chair by meeting with them to ensure they have copies of all relevant documents (See [Appendix E](#)).

By adhering to these guidelines, committees can optimize their effectiveness, foster collaboration, innovation, and leadership development.

## APPENDIX A – Contact Information

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For a list of the HFES staff and their functional areas of responsibility, please visit <https://www.hfes.org/About/Leadership-and-Administration>

Mailing Address:

HFES  
2001 K Street NW, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor North  
Washington, DC 20006

HFES Website: <http://hfes.org>

Main Email Address:

[Info@hfes.org](mailto:Info@hfes.org)

Tel. + 1 (202) 367-1114

Fax: + 1 (202) 367-2114

## APPENDIX B – HFES Basics

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HFES operates through a partnership between paid staff and HFES members who volunteer their time.

On the volunteer side, HFES is run by a group of HFES members called the Executive Council (EC). The EC is composed of 12 individuals, each of whom serves a 3-year term. Each year, HFES members elect 4 individuals: A president, a secretary-treasurer, and two members at large. The individuals elected as president and secretary-treasurer serve one year as “elect” (e.g., president-elect), a second year in the role (e.g., president) and the third year as “immediate past” (e.g., immediate past president). At-large members also serve three-year terms, and so two are in their first year, two are in their second, and two are in their third. The role of the EC is to develop strategic goals for HFES and establish mechanisms to achieve those objectives (typically through committees, technical groups, task forces, etc.). The current composition of the EC can be found [here](#).

On the staff side, HFES is headed by an Executive Director, whose role is to implement the policies and procedures established by the Executive Council under the direction of the President and the Secretary-Treasurer. The Executive Director is supported by staff members who have defined areas of expertise. Information on the current Executive Director and areas of expertise for individual staff members can be found [here](#). The primary staff members who support HFES are located in Washington, DC and that office is often called the “Central Office.”

The Executive Council meets with HFES staff members on a monthly basis (virtually) and twice a year in person (for two days each time). Those meetings are where HFES leadership makes decisions about our annual activities and budget and where they make plans for the upcoming year.

In addition to the Executive Council and staff, the activities of HFES are organized into Divisions: Scientific Publications, Technical Standards, Internal Affairs, Education, and Outreach. The organizational chart showing the activities governed by the EC and by the Divisions can be found under “Additional Resources” on the HFES [home page](#). In this chart, you should be able to see the Division to which your committee belongs. The role of the Division Chair is to communicate with the committees/activities under its purview the current strategic priorities that have been developed by the EC, and to see how the committees can contribute to those priorities.

The roles and responsibilities of employees of HFES and members serving on any committee/task force/etc. within HFES are governed by two documents: Society Bylaws and Operating Rules (ORs). These can both be found under “Additional Resources” on the HFES [home page](#).

Bylaws are the rules and regulations that govern the Society. They were initially written when the Society was established and have been amended over the years by a vote from all of the membership. Bylaws provide the ultimate rules governing the Society.

Operating Rules provide guidance on how things are typically done within the Society. They must follow the Bylaws and are useful as they provide more detailed information about how the Society runs. Operating rules can be amended by an Executive Council vote, and they should be adhered to by individuals and committees operating within the Society.

In your role, the ORs will be more relevant to you as they outline the rules for how your committee should operate.



## APPENDIX C – Sample Agenda

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### Sample Agenda XYZ Committee

**Time:** DATE @ XX Pacific Time (US and Canada) [XX CT; XX ET]

**Join Zoom Meeting:** ZOOM INFO

Topic	Relevant Materials	Time Allocated
Check-in		5 minutes
Link to Notes/Summary of Meetings	Appendix A	0 minutes
Update on Action items from last meeting	Appendix B	15 minutes
Item of Business 1	Appendix C	20 minutes
Item of Business 2		10 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Next steps/Action Items</li></ul>		5 minutes
Schedule next meeting		5 minutes
Adjourn	<b>Total:</b>	<b>60 minutes</b>

**Committee Charge, Leadership Development Committee:** The *XYZ Committee* shall...

**Committee Members:** Listing of Chair, Members

**Appendix A:**

Meeting Notes/List of Action Items for Next Meeting

Link to Document

**Appendix B:**

Link to Document

**Appendix C:**

Link to Document

## APPENDIX D – Structure for Documenting Committee’s Work

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We recommend creating a cloud archive of materials relevant to your committee’s operations, if one does not already exist. This would typically be done through Google (HFES is working to establish a Google Workspace site for this information). Specifically, we recommend one folder that contains “evergreen” information about the committee. Then, we recommend a separate folder for each year that the committee operates, as shown below.

Committee Name

Folder 1: Background Information

- Committee Charter
- Link to current HFES Operating Rules
- Link to HFES Bylaws (if relevant to this committee’s work)
- List of positions (if any) that exist within this committee beyond the Chair and responsibilities associated with those roles
- Information on how to request reimbursement for expenditures (if relevant to this committee)
- Listing of any reports/requests required by HFES and generally when they are due

Folders 2-x: YEAR X (create one folder for each year)

- List of committee members
- Meeting Agendas
- Meeting Minutes
- Actual Activity Reports (bi-annual updates to EC and budget requests, if applicable)
- Handoff Template ([Appendix E](#))

## APPENDIX E – Handoff Template

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The following should be completed each year, submitted to the Executive Director, and handed off from the current Committee Chair to the incoming Committee chair.

### Handoff Template Information

1. Committee Name
2. Committee Purpose
3. Committee Members, Position, responsibilities, and affiliations with other HFES committees
4. Meeting Frequency and date of last meeting
5. Committee Initiatives
  - a. Completed
    - i. Brief description of purpose and link to committee goals
    - ii. Roles & responsibilities
    - iii. Any issues or comments
  - b. Ongoing
    - i. Brief description of purpose and link to committee goals
    - ii. Timeline
    - iii. Roles & responsibilities
    - iv. Status
  - c. Planned
    - i. Brief description of purpose and link to committee goals
    - ii. Expected Timeline
    - iii. Roles & responsibilities
6. Other notable activities
7. Notes