
YouthBuild Policy Committee Handbook



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Preface

This handbook is divided into two sections. The first section contains basic background pieces, training formats, and concrete “how to” information for staff and directors. The second section includes basic expectations and guidelines for the youth members.

It is strongly suggested that each staff member read the entire contents of the handbook, and then review it together and digest it a section at a time. This is not a rule book, but rather a set of guidelines based on the large goals and specific experience of Youthbuild programs. The better the whole staff understands the purpose, scope, and functioning of the Policy Committee, the more support they will give it. A serious attempt to practice what this handbook offers will bring good results.

The *YouthBuild Policy Committee Handbook* was written by John Bell, director of Leadership Development at YouthBuild USA, who drew on the experience of many Youthbuild directors regarding the operation of their Policy Committees and on the content of the *Handbook for Leadership Development* written by Dorothy Stoneman, based on her 10 years of experience with Policy Committees at the Youth Action Program—the original Youthbuild program.

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Section I

Information for Directors and Staff

Introduction

In a Youthbuild program, the participants, staff, director, and board all make decisions. Decisions are being made continuously, both formally and informally, individually, and in groups.

In a Youthbuild program, part of the role of the director and staff is to work with the youth participants in a formal decision-making structure, commonly called a Policy Committee. Each program designs its own Policy Committee. Typically it includes six to ten elected youth, the director, and a staff representative. It has both defined consultative and decision-making powers.

There are many important potential benefits of having young people involved in this key decision-making committee. The Policy Committee can:

- Be the place where the most intense leadership development takes place
- Help the young people believe that they have more ownership of the program
- Become a group that sets the tone for the entire program
- Present good solutions to pressing problems
- Be a source of good thinking and support for the decisions that weigh on the director
- Make the program more responsive to the real needs and successes of the young people
- Assist the young people to counteract the experience of often having been excluded from decisions that affect them
- Allow young people to learn how an organization works
- Be the training ground for young leaders who can take what they learn on the Policy Committee and apply it out in the community

A successful Policy Committee does not happen by itself. Years of experience with Policy Committees, first at the Youth Action Program in East Harlem, the originator of Youthbuild, and then at Youthbuild sites around the country, show that an effective Policy Committee requires the following:

- A director who has deep faith in the capability of young people to make good decisions given adequate information and take responsibility for the program. A director should respect the young people by bringing to the Policy Committee the most important issues facing the program and should understand that sharing governance does not mean abdicating his or her own leadership responsibilities. A director should be willing to

meet consistently and develop the group.

- A staff that agrees with and supports the concept of sharing governance with young people.
- A structure and good group process that draws out the best in the young people.
- Serious and ongoing training in the leadership skills needed on the Policy Committee.

The Youthbuild Policy Committee: A Sample Description

Each Youthbuild program should tailor its Policy Committee to fit its own organization. The Policy Committee—usually composed of the Youthbuild director, one staff representative, and six to ten young people elected through a secret ballot by their peers—is a governing center of a Youthbuild program. The responsibilities of the Policy Committee, as a whole, may include any or all of the following:

- Participating in the hiring of staff
- Recommending improvements in program management and services
- Consulting on program design, policies, and changes
- Reviewing the annual budget, where appropriate
- Consulting on evaluations of staff
- Participating in decision making affecting all aspects of the program
- Reporting to and consulting with the rest of the program
- Planning events
- Solving problems as needed

The board of directors of the local Youthbuild or sponsoring agency has final responsibility for all aspects of the program and has the authority to override the decisions of the Policy Committee if necessary. In practice, however, this is rarely necessary.

The responsibility of each member of the Policy Committee is to think about the welfare of the whole program, not just special interests. Each person's leadership pledge is to make sure "things go right" in the program. Each member must attend the meetings and report back to the participants and the staff on a regular basis.

Qualifications of the youth members of the Policy Committee are determined by the program, including the young people, but each youth member must be:

- A positive role model in attendance and attitudes, in school, and on the worksite
- A generally responsible person
- Able to represent the interests of everyone and the program

The term of office can vary according to the design of each program. Shorter terms (four to six months) involve more people in the decision making over the

course of the program and can provide greater stability of attendance to the Policy Committee, since it is sometimes difficult for some young people to sustain their commitment for a whole year. Longer terms (one year) allow for deeper development of the individual members and greater continuity and maturity of the Policy Committee.

Questions for a Staff Formulating Its Own Policy Committee

For a new Youthbuild program, it is best to engage the entire staff in determining the composition, scope of responsibilities, structures, procedures, preparation, and training of the Policy Committee. This should be done before the program begins. The description must be in writing. The Policy Committee should be something all staff can and will support. Once the staff and the young people have some experience with operating a Policy Committee, changes may be in order.

Below are specific questions staff should ask when formulating its Policy Committee.

Composition

- How many people will be on the Policy Committee? (Experience indicates that a Policy Committee larger than 10 to 12 is unwieldy and inefficient.)
- How many young people will be on the Policy Committee? If there is more than one group or crew, do you want representatives from all groups?
- What are the qualifications for office? Are there standards of attendance, performance, or attitude?
- How many staff representatives will be on the Policy Committee? The principle to remember is that the voice of the young people should be dominant. If there are more than two staff members, the staff will tend to dominate.

Scope of Responsibilities

On what issues will the Policy Committee make final decisions? On what issues will its role be limited to consultation? Will it:

- Hire future staff?
- Evaluate staff?
- Change the trainee contract?
- Review the yearly budget?
- Be involved in the firing of staff, and if so, how?
- Evaluate the success of the program?
- Mediate conflicts?

- Have other responsibilities?

Structures and Procedures

- How long will the terms of the Policy Committee members be?
- How will vacancies be filled?
- Who will form the agenda?
- Who will chair the meetings? Will the chair rotate? If so, how often?
- Is a quorum required to meet, or just to make decisions?
- How often will it meet? Where—in a private space? When—during or after program hours?
- Will the Policy Committee be paid or unpaid?
- When will the Policy Committee members have the opportunity to report back to their constituent groups?
- Will there be joint meetings between the Policy Committee and the staff?
- Will there be periodic meetings between the Policy Committee and the Board of Directors?
- Who will act as the administrative staff person to help carry out the business of the Policy Committee?
- How will the Policy Committee evaluate its own functioning?

Preparation and Training

- How and when will the staff introduce the idea of the Policy Committee to the group?
- How will the staff prepare the group for the election of members?
- When will elections be held?
- Will there be a temporary Policy Committee before the permanent one is elected?
- What kinds of training will be built into the first several months of the Policy Committee? These might include training the young people to chair meetings, use good group process, interview job candidates, read a budget, use the phone, write a business letter, and make consensus decisions.
 - In what sequence will these trainings occur?
 - Who will do these trainings?
- Will there be a special retreat for the Policy Committee?

Staff Agreement and Support for the Policy Committee

Including young people in the governing core of a program, with major policy responsibilities, will be a new and possibly threatening prospect for some staff members. It is important that the staff fully understand and support the role of the Policy Committee. Thorough discussion and agreement with each new staff person is crucial; otherwise, staff can undermine the effectiveness of the committee. Support for a well-functioning Policy Committee should be a condition upon which each staff member is hired. There are several key points to emphasize:

- The Policy Committee is a partnership among the young people, the staff, and the director. It is not an adversarial relationship such as “us” against “them.” It is a vehicle for building consensus and unity in the program. The committee's role is to think about the best interests of the program as a whole.
- The director is ultimately responsible for seeing that the program runs well, and he or she will not abdicate that responsibility to a Policy Committee.
- The Youthbuild philosophy emphasizes mutual respect between all program participants, staff, and youth. When respect prevails, coercion on the part of staff or the director fades as a method of handling conflict, and gives way to cooperative decision making. When respect prevails, rarely does a Policy Committee advocate decisions that conflict with the best interests of the program. Members learn to take responsibility to see that the program runs as it should.
- The Policy Committee will not just work on its own. The members need training, good leadership, and constant nurturing.

When first forming such a decision-making group, the staff should be given a written description of the Policy Committee and understand its role. It must fit your organization and staff.

If the Policy Committee has no real responsibility, the young people will realize that immediately. If they are left to flounder by themselves, or if they are not taken seriously and only decide unimportant matters, then they will be disillusioned, disappointed, and will lose respect for the Policy Committee.

The Role of the Director

To develop fully, a Policy Committee needs a lot of attention from the director.

The director needs to meet regularly and consistently with the group. It is crucial that the young people believe they are meeting with the most powerful person in the organization. This is a basic structural respect. If they meet with the program manager or the counselor, they may think: “We’re not important enough for the director to meet with us; we know that whatever we decide here will still have to be approved by the director.”

Directors often mistakenly think that the Policy Committee just deals with issues that the young people bring up. The young people’s concerns are certainly important and part of the business of the Policy Committee, but it is usually up to the director to broaden the scope, to bring to the table the other important issues facing the program.

Nurturing the Policy Committee is not easy. The director needs to plan well, train the young people, set the tone and expectations of the group, and teach its members how to form an agenda and run a meeting. The director also needs to follow up and implement the decisions of the group. In the meetings, the director needs to balance:

- Giving full information as a background for good decisions
- Raising concerns other than those raised by the young people
- Monitoring the group dynamics so that all members get to participate
- Consulting without biasing the thinking process of the group
- Guiding decisions so that the judgment of the young people becomes increasingly sound
- Hanging back enough to avoid being the dominant force
- Being directive and firm when necessary

The basic attitude of the adult needs to be something like this: “It is my job and my responsibility to make this program run right, and I can’t go along with decisions that I am convinced will undermine the program. However, I know the program will run better if I have the benefit of the young people’s best thinking about all the issues facing us, and I know we as a program will reach better decisions if we think together. Whenever possible, I will implement the decisions of the young people. When I believe it is impossible or counterproductive, I will thoroughly explain and discuss the reasons why with the young people. In some cases, I know they will persuade me that we should try it their way. In other cases, they will at least understand why I have to do it a different way. In most cases we will come up with something different and better than I could have figured out alone.”

Be prepared for difficulty. Working to build a solid Policy Committee is a constant challenge. It will be unorganized, frustrating, and difficult at times. There will be many obstacles to face such as:

- The press of decisions that tend to crowd out the training
- Misunderstandings about how to exert leadership, with patterns of

dominance or pretense substituting for leadership and requiring gentle correction

- Personal crises that affect attendance
- Boredom, discontent, or disappointment because the job is not often exciting
- The internalized feelings that may make the young people doubt themselves, feel vulnerable in their leadership role, attack each other, or want to give up
- Policy Committee members' potentially disruptive bad habits
- Unconscious disrespect toward the young people on the part of the director, which may be challenged by the youth
- Resentment or criticism of the Policy Committee from staff or other youth

Careful attention to building a strong Policy Committee, however, will bring many benefits.

Special Note: If your Youthbuild program is embedded in a larger organization, it is essential that the executive director of your organization support the committee and that he or she meet with the group at the outset, honor the group's role by posing certain questions, and check back with them on a regular and planned basis to hear what they have to say and to pose additional questions.

Types of Issues that Young People Involved in Governance May Handle

One key role of the adult leader is to pose to the young people the most relevant questions facing the organization.

In some cases, the young people will have final jurisdiction; in other cases the director will simply be seeking their advice and input. The issues may be discussed by a governing committee by all the young people in the program, in small groups, or at a general meeting. Whether or not the young people have the final authority, they will benefit from discussing the most important and the most controversial issues, and the director (and sometimes the board of directors) will benefit from their input. Traditionally, adults offer young people the chance to make decisions about how to entertain or control each other—for example, letting the young people organize a dance or set consequences for bad behavior. We recommend a much broader involvement in the issues adults usually reserve for themselves—for example, future planning, the policies affecting adults, or the decisions that determine the future of the organization. Below are sample issues that Youthbuild Policy Committees could address.

Program Management Issues

- What are the basic values, principles, and ideas you want the organization to stand for?
- How shall we evaluate staff performance?
- What role does the Policy Committee want to play in reviewing proposals?
- Should we hire people with an eye toward the balance of staff composition in terms of race, gender, nationality, class background, educational background? Should it matter whether or not people grew up in the community? What sort of balance would be best for the program?
- How shall we manage or enforce the “trainee contract” and not end up terminating most people?
- What policy should we make regarding pulling trainees from the classroom or the site for counseling?
- Should potential volunteers who want to be tutors or mentors be interviewed by the Policy Committee or just by the program director?

Conflict and Personnel Issues

- A Policy Committee member has cursed out a staff member. What shall we do?
- Young people have complained that a staff member is encouraging young people to lie on job applications in order to get jobs. How shall we handle this?
- The board of directors has overruled the director's and Policy Committee's decision about the firing of a construction manager who was accused of sexual harassment of three young women on the construction site. How shall we respond?
- Many young people have asked the Policy Committee to deal with a staff person who they feel consistently disrespects them. How shall we handle this?
- After agreeing to have a program camping trip, the staff is backing out because they do not want to be in the role of policing the young people all weekend. What proposals should we make to respond to staff concerns?
- The director thinks the counselor should be fired because he has been acting unprofessionally, and does not seem to have the proper training to deal with the problems of the trainees. However, he or she has made good relationships with many of the young people. They like him and don't want him fired. What should we do?
- How shall we handle rumors in the program?

Community Issues for Discussion, Learning, and Clarifying Values

- Students have identified improvements they believe need to be made in the community. The list includes: more after-school and recreation programs for children and youth; clean-ups of empty lots; repairing playgrounds with broken equipment; and replanting and cleaning-up parks that are in poor condition. Which of these improvements could be made through Youthbuild community service projects? Which could best be made by people in the community working together? What is the role of the town or city in addressing these issues?
- Students have determined that they want to help care for elderly neighborhood residents. What are the important issues or problems facing community elders? How will students contact the elders to learn about their needs? What kinds of help can Youthbuild students provide?
- Gang activity and violence is a big problem in the neighborhood. What positive steps can Youthbuild students take to help solve these problems? How can the Youthbuild program collaborate with community

groups working on this issue?

- There are other organizations in the community besides Youthbuild constructing affordable housing. What is the process for developing affordable housing in the area? Should Youthbuild and the other organizations form a partnership? What role can students play in this process?
- A vacant piece of land in the neighborhood near the Youthbuild program will soon be developed. How can students inform themselves about the development process in the city (or town, or county)? Will hearings or public meetings be held to gather input from community residents? How would Youthbuild students like to see this land be used? How would other residents like to see the land be used?

The Roles of the Director and the Policy Committee in Hiring Staff: A Balance of Powers

The Policy Committee's role in hiring staff is a good illustration of the balance of powers between the director and the Policy Committee. It is a central function of the director to build a strong staff. It would be inappropriate for a director to delegate that function to the Policy Committee. The director can't be put in a position of trying to run a program with staff he or she doesn't think can do the job and do it well. However, the director will actually build a stronger staff if he or she shares the power of selection with the young people who will actually benefit or suffer from the staff member's work. The process is as follows.

The director, or somebody delegated by the director, screens all applicants. The director does a full interview of any candidate who is seriously being considered for the job.

The director should thoroughly check the references of all serious candidates, talking to the last three supervisors and taking down their comments word for word to show to the Policy Committee along with the résumé. If possible, the director should consult with individuals who were not listed as references but who are in a position to know the quality of the candidate's work.

It is important to check references before the candidate is interviewed by the Policy Committee, because you want their decision to be final. You don't want to come back a week later and say "Sorry, we can't hire that person after all because his references are bad." Checking references also helps impress upon the young people the importance of reputation.

When the director has at least two candidates who would be acceptable, these candidates are interviewed by the Policy Committee, according to the process described in a later section of this handbook. (See "Guidelines on Interviewing Job Candidates.") The Policy Committee makes the final decision.

In some cases, the director only can find one acceptable candidate. In this case, he or she consults with the Policy Committee about what to do: have them interview the one and say "yea" or "nay," keep searching, or have them interview the acceptable one plus another candidate, whom the director did not think was qualified, in order to get a sense of what the director's criteria for selection have been.

The interview with the young people is important and has many positive effects. It weeds out candidates who show their discomfort with youth decision

making only when interviewed by a group of young people. This rarely happens, because you will have attracted adults who believe in the Youthbuild philosophy. More frequently, it leaves the candidate extremely impressed with the seriousness and intelligence of the young people, and they therefore enter the program with a first-hand positive impression of the involvement of young people in governance.

Another good effect is that the members of the Policy Committee experience the seriousness of their role. Selecting the adults who are to work with them has real and symbolic significance in reversing their feeling of having no voice in the institutions that affect them. There is nothing so exhilarating as being able to interview and select the adults whom the program is going to pay to work with the young people.

In summary, the Policy Committee cannot hire someone whom the director does not judge to be a good candidate; and the director cannot hire someone whom the Policy Committee does not judge to be suited for the job.

By sharing the power with the young people, a program will build a stronger, better staff. The process will not only orient the staff in a way that could not be done with words alone, but it will ensure that each new staff member feels confident that he or she was chosen by the young people and therefore belongs in the program. The rest of the young people will tend to welcome the adult with greater positive expectations, knowing that he or she has come through the Policy Committee.

This example of sharing power in a thoughtful way, while not abdicating the director's central responsibilities, is meant to demonstrate the art of involving the young people in real governance while not pretending that the adults in charge are going to give up their own responsibility for making the program "go right." This same delicate balance applies to other decisions.

An Effective Election Process

Many Youthbuild programs have found it beneficial to have a leadership retreat for all young people and staff four to six weeks into the program. This is often a good time to elect the Policy Committee. By this time, the young people have become familiar with each other, and know who the most serious leaders are.

The process outlined below is intended to create a supportive atmosphere for electing the best leaders from the group. You are encouraged to follow the order listed. Explain each step as fully as needed. Be sure to have people applaud each other at each step. All the candidates, whether they put themselves forward or accept nominations, are taking a risk. They all deserve respect and support. Here are a few technical notes:

- Decide ahead of time how many members will be elected. If you have more than one crew or group, be sure to designate that there will be, for example, four from group A and four from group B.
- Decide ahead of time who votes for whom. Some programs allow everyone to vote for any of the candidates, no matter which group they represent, while other programs allow young people to vote only for candidates from their group. Some programs allow staff to vote for the youth candidates and young people to vote for the staff candidates, since they will be making decisions affecting everyone; other programs keep it a constituency-based election.
- Also decide if the group is electing any alternates. Some Youthbuild programs elect two alternates. The alternates come to the meetings, learning and participating without voting, so that they will be prepared to take the place of a member if needed. At the time of the election, the whole group votes for however many members will be on the committee, plus two. The persons with the most votes are members, the next two highest are alternates.
- Try to get twice as many candidates as slots. This gives many people some public exposure and lets the group know that there is a lot of leadership in the whole group. Be sure to get a roughly equal number from each group.
- Pass out one ballot to each person. A 3" x 5" card is handy. Have some pencils available. Ask each person to write down their choices on the ballot. Be sure they understand how many from each group they should vote for.

Special Note: Some Youthbuild programs have found it useful to elect an

Advisory Committee at the end of orientation to serve as a temporary group with whom the director can consult until the Policy Committee is elected. There are many decisions to be made and problems that arise during the first four to six weeks. The organized input from a group of young people can be crucial. The same election process is used for the Advisory Committee.

Youthbuild Policy Committee Election Process

- Go over the job description of a Policy Committee member. Have the group read a brief, written description.
- From the group, draw the qualities they want in their Policy Committee representatives. Write them up on newsprint. Be sure the list includes “Acting as a role model with high standards whom the others can look up to.”
- Ask for volunteers first. Value the impulse to lead.
- Ask for a supporting statement for each volunteer. “Who would like to say why they think X would make a good Policy Committee member?” Encourage applause at every step.
- Ask for nominations next and a support statement by the nominator.
- Ask each nominee whether he or she accepts the nomination. Again, enthusiastic applause!
- Ask the whole group to look at the range of candidates to see if all backgrounds and constituencies are represented—genders, racial groups, age groups, different crews or teams, and so on.
- Ask for any other nominations to make the field of candidates even more representative.
- Have each candidate come to the front of the group and give a one-minute speech. Applaud each candidate.
- Have an election by secret ballot.
- Have two people count the votes so no one will think the results were fixed.
- Praise all the candidates and announce the names of those elected in random order. Never make the numerical results known.

The Suggested First Meeting of the Policy Committee

Allow enough time at your first meeting to set expectations and determine the group processes that you will use.

One-Day Retreat

Some programs have found it best to have an all-day Policy Committee retreat within a few days of the election. During this retreat you might do many of the following:

- Do long introductions or life stories, to get to know each other better
- Read this handbook
- Go over the organizational chart, accountability/decision-making structure, and the Policy Committee's place in it
- Train committee members to form an agenda and run a meeting
- Brainstorm to generate a list of concerns and issues the committee would like to deal with over the next few months
- Eat a nice lunch

Here is a sample agenda for a one-day retreat, to be held within a week of the election. The details in some of the sections are spelled out below, following the sample agenda for a two-hour meeting.

Morning Session

- Read the letter from the president of YouthBuild USA and the follow-up sections, (included in this handbook) and discuss
- Ask a series of questions to elicit the members' thoughts about leadership
 - What is good about being a leader?
 - What is hard about being a leader?
 - How are you a good leader now?
 - Where do you need to grow to be a better leader?
- Explain the structure and terminology of the Policy Committee
 - What is an agenda?
 - What is the difference between a chairperson and a facilitator?

- What are minutes? Who takes them? What should be in them? How do they get typed, copied, and distributed?
- How and when do we gather the concerns of other young people and report back our decisions or proposals?

Lunch

Afternoon Session

- Brainstorm about issues to address over the next few months
- Organize the list of issues
- Evaluate and appreciate the day and each other

Two-Hour Meeting

We strongly recommend beginning with a retreat, but if you can only have a meeting the first time, the following agenda may be useful.

Preparation

For each member, have a copy of “Information for Youth Members” (Part II of this handbook). Have newsprint or a chalkboard available. Have snacks available. Write up the agenda, with time allotments, as follows:

Sample Policy Committee Agenda

- 4:00 Introductions
- 4:10 Appoint recorder
- 4:12 Review agenda
- 4:15 Read letter from president of YouthBuild USA and the Youth Members Handbook for the Policy Committee
- 4:55 Discuss: “What We Want the Policy Committee to Stand For”
- 5:25 Go over organizational chart
- 5:40 Agree on time and place for next meeting
Items: Training on running good meetings
Review budget, funding sources
- 5:45 Do brief evaluation
- 5:50 Appreciate each other
- 6:00 Adjourn

Introductions

Ask each member to say his or her name and explain why he or she is glad to be on the Policy Committee. Ask someone to serve as a recorder for this meeting to write down the important decisions or points. Then go over the agenda, so they know what to expect. Explain that you, as director, are going to chair these first few meetings to set the tone and demonstrate a good meeting process, but eventually each Policy Committee member will have the opportunity to plan the agenda and chair meetings.

Read Letter

Ask them to take turns reading the letter from YouthBuild USA President Dorothy Stoneman (included in this handbook) and its attachments: “Basic Expectations of a Policy Committee Member,” “Some Serious Mistakes You Should Avoid,” and “Your Main Role As A Policy Committee”. These outline ten years of lessons learned by Policy Committees at the Youth Action Program, the original Youthbuild program, and at other Youthbuild programs around the country. The practice of reading out loud with the young people ensures that everybody is hearing the same thing. Of course, anybody has the right to pass if they don’t choose to read. Encourage the young people to discuss things as they read.

Discuss Standards

Pose the question, “What do we want the Policy Committee and the program to stand for?” This begins the process of having the young people set their own standards. Normally, they want to be part of something that is legitimate and honest and expects a lot of them.

Explain Organizational Structure

Draw a chart illustrating the structure of the entire organization, the titles and names, the lines of accountability, and the Policy Committee’s place in it. It is best if you can construct the organizational chart by asking the young people what they already know about the structure, while filling in what they might not know. Providing this kind of information is a basic courtesy to the young people—they need the whole picture in order to function well.

Decide on Time and Agenda Items for Next Meeting

Explain that this was a full plate for the Policy Committee’s first meeting, but as director you wanted to list important items for the next meeting. By listing priorities such as “Training in Leading Meetings” and “Review of Budget and Funding,” you are communicating that the Policy Committee is about serious

business. Make sure the members agree to and commit to the next meeting time.

Demonstrate a Brief Evaluation Process

Ask members, “What went well today? Are there any improvements we should make next time?” This should only take about five minutes.

Do Appreciations

Be sure to structure it so that each person is appreciated: for example, appreciate something you like about the person on your right (or left, or both). Build this practice into each meeting to help build closeness and self-esteem. (See “Group Process Techniques” to learn how to do appreciations. Use your imagination to keep appreciations from becoming routine and meaningless.)

Things to Include in the First Five to Ten Meetings

You are trying to build a solid group, and create conditions conducive to good thinking and decision making. The first five to ten meetings of the Policy Committee should include:

- Life stories of members, followed by questions from the group (ten minutes for each person, with two to five minutes for questions)
- Review of the guidelines (if you have them) or a simple statement of purpose of the Policy Committee
- Review of overall structure, main program goals, philosophy, and funding of the organization itself
- Training in good group process and leading meetings
- Some challenging and interesting decisions to be made—hiring of staff members is often a good choice
- Appreciation—a lot of it
- Development of the group’s concept of good leadership.
- Review of the organization’s expectations of individual members and central ideas about their role in the organization as leaders
- Some sort of event that brings people close—a weekend training, a dinner together at the home of the adult guide, a dinner at the program, a movie or a play, or whatever the group would like
- Meeting with the whole staff for introductions and setting a tone of partnership between youth leaders and adult leaders on behalf of total organization
- Food at all meetings

Policy Committee Training on Meeting Facilitation

The purpose of this 90-minute training is to teach participants to lead an effective meeting, using much of the group's own thinking. Group members will memorize a simple ten-step meeting agenda formula. Before you get started, make sure you have newsprint and markers or a chalkboard and some chalk, copies of "How to Run a Good Meeting" (included in this handbook), and a written agenda that can either be posted or passed out. The following is a suggested format for the workshop facilitator to follow.

- Introductions or an opening appropriate to the group (5 minutes)
- Review the purpose and agenda. (2 minutes)
- Explain that different kinds of meeting styles and decision-making processes are needed for different kinds of tasks:
 - Explain that some tasks or goals require top-down authority. Ask for examples—responses might include a military campaign or an operating room.
 - Explain that some tasks or goals work well with parliamentary procedure. Ask members for a definition of parliamentary procedure, and examples of where it is used.
 - Explain that some tasks or goals require group consensus and maximum participation in decisions. Ask for examples—when you want people to "own" what they are doing, when you need all points of view, when you want to create unity and solidarity in your group. (5 minutes)
- State that Youthbuild is interested in involving as many people as possible in leadership. The model we prefer uses consensus decision making and includes each person. (1 minute)
- Ask: "What does a good meeting accomplish"? Write up a list drawn from participants suggestions, and include the following if they have not been suggested:
 - Communicates information
 - Results in decisions being made
 - Assigns tasks and responsibilities
 - Creates a good spirit
 - Helps build the organization or the group
- Have people memorize this and repeat it to each other in pairs. Cover up the list.

- Have several people repeat the list to the whole group. (10 minutes)
- Ask: “What steps would you take to have a successful meeting?” Draw responses from the members and list on newsprint their ideas about group process. Our experience shows that most groups will come up with a list that includes most of the items below.
 - Name a facilitator or chairperson
 - Plan ahead
 - Post agenda, get agreement, and estimate times
 - Go over old business and review assignments
 - Discuss new business
 - Reach a decision
 - Assign responsibilities
 - Evaluate meeting
 - Appreciate people (5 minutes)
- Ask: “If you were the facilitator, what things would you do?”
 - Open with personal sharing, song, or good news
 - Set a positive tone
 - Encourage the participation of all
 - Set an example by keeping comments brief
 - Do not allow attacks on people
 - Use pairings or small groups to ensure participation by all and defuse tension
 - Change the pace to handle work more efficiently
 - Call for a break, “energizer,” or stretch
 - Keep to the agreed upon agenda and times
 - Point out areas of agreement on controversial issues
 - Help define areas to be resolved
 - Ask for proposals for change, not just complaints
 - Close meeting with appreciations and a hopeful note (5 minutes)
- Ask: “What are the parts and order of a good agenda?” Draw suggestions from the group by asking “What would you do first?” and so on, while you put them in order, like the following sample.
 - Ten-Step Meeting Agenda
 1. Touch base
 2. Review and amend agenda
 3. Review and amend minutes
 4. Have reports and check on assignments
 5. Finish old business

6. Discuss new business
 7. Make decisions
 8. Assign responsibilities
 9. Evaluate the meeting
 10. Appreciate each other
- Have the group memorize the agenda and repeat it to each other in pairs
 - Cover up the list, then have several people repeat the list to the whole group (10 minutes)
 - Take turns reading “How to Run a Good Meeting” aloud and discuss in the group (20 minutes)
 - Evaluate the meeting by asking the group what they learned, what went well about this meeting, and what could be improved (5 minutes)
 - Appreciate the person next to you (5 minutes)
 - Adjourn

Consensus Decision Making

Three common decision-making styles are command, majority rule, and consensus. This section will briefly explain each kind of decision making, then describe how consensus differs from other decision-making methods and why it is the preferred method to use with a Youthbuild Policy Committee.

Command Model

Different goals require different decision-making processes. If you are in a hospital operating room, you cannot debate which surgical instrument to use. The head surgeon is in charge. Period. The same is true in a military operation. The commanding officer gives orders. With high stakes, decisiveness is necessary. Similarly, sports teams have coaches who make the crucial decisions on personnel, game plan, and timing. This style of decision making is referred to as command, top down, or hierarchical. It is not democratic. The decision-making process does not usually involve those being led. It is sometimes absolutely necessary.

Majority Rule Model

Most people who grew up in this country learned how to vote in order to decide things. We were taught that voting on issues, with one vote per person, is the essence of democracy. We hold fast to the idea of majority rule.

Majority rule includes more people in the decision-making process than the command model does. It is necessary when there is great disagreement within a group, and when a group needs to end debate and make a decision. Requiring the minority to go along with the majority decision prevents much chaos and conflict.

However, majority rule can result in vested and contrary interests blocking each other or paralyzing the best interests of the whole. Using simple majority rule as the primary means of making decisions in a Youthbuild Policy Committee may mirror the divisiveness of the wider society.

Majority rule voting is often accompanied by parliamentary procedure (codified in “Robert’s Rules of Order”). We believe this is a useful tool. Without a working understanding of the complex “Robert’s Rules of Order,” an ordinary person (especially a young person) is bound to feel lost and powerless to join the process, and thus is effectively excluded from decision making. Learning how to use parliamentary procedure can prepare us to participate more effectively in decision-making forums.

Consensus Model

The leadership tasks of a Youthbuild Policy Committee are broad. They include making decisions that will best benefit the program and building unity and understanding among the members. These tasks call for a decision-making method that is inclusive and unifying.

Consensus decision making is a way to elicit the best thinking from all the members. Everyone is encouraged to listen respectfully to each person, express their reservations or disagreements, and stand up for different points of view, even if no one else holds that view. Unanimity is not necessarily the goal. The facilitator reaches for the overwhelming sense of the group. If those who hold minority opinions believe that they have been heard and treated fairly—perhaps with some of their points being integrated into the accepted proposal—they are often more likely to change their position or go along with the sense of the group without feeling railroaded or manipulated.

If, after a thorough discussion, most of the group favors a particular decision, but one or two are still not persuaded, the facilitator can say to them something like, “Most of the group wants to go down this road. I know you still disagree, but because we have to make a decision here so we won’t be paralyzed, can you agree to go down this road with the group for, say, two months, to see what the results are? At the end of two months, we can revisit the decision. Could you go along with that?” Usually, they will.

We want the Policy Committee to learn that it is almost always possible to reach agreement if people really try to understand each other’s points of view and if you have enough time; that it is possible to disagree and still respect each other; that a decision is stronger when everyone owns it; that listening and persuasion are very effective means of solving conflict.

Realistically, the consensus process is more time-consuming. Sometimes the press of decisions that need to be made will force us to pay less attention to this more involved process. But for anything of major significance, it is worth the time.

The type of decision making model you practice will have repercussions in the rest of the program.

Group Process Techniques

As a quick reference, here are some group process tools you can use and teach to the Policy Committee members.

Brainstorming

Most of us are familiar with this tool for generating a lot of ideas in a short time. But sometimes you will need to teach the process to the young people. The rules are simple:

- Express whatever comes to your mind about the topic
- Do not censor yourself
- Do not comment on other people’s ideas
- Put all ideas up on newsprint—no matter how seemingly wild or weird
- Encourage people to think fast
- Build on what others say
- Take turns—use the “twice-once rule” (see below)
- Limit the time
- Have fun

Equal Time

On a controversial issue use the “equal time” method, where each person gets to speak for a limited but equal number of minutes on the topic before there is open discussion. Often the group as a whole will put out all the pros and cons in an impressive way through this process, so no one has to feel it is up to him or her to say everything.

Go-Arounds

Things may get heated and the meeting can become a dialogue between two or three people. This leaves everyone else out but also creates tension. If this happens, call for a “go-around.” Ask for a volunteer or pick a person to start, then go around the room to give each person a chance to speak on the topic. If you are limited in time, then use an equal time go-around. This accomplishes several positive things. It gives everyone a chance to be heard, not just the dominant ones. It allows the heated ones to cool off while they listen to other people’s thinking. It

allows everyone to relax and listen more since they know they will get their turn. In addition, it usually produces a higher quality discussion than an emotionally charged process does.

The Twice-Once Rule

You can sometimes use a simple discussion rule: “No one speaks twice before everyone else has spoken once, and nobody speaks four times before everyone else has spoken twice.” Explain that everyone has important things to say, and the group needs a structure that allows everyone’s thinking to be heard without having to jump in or interrupt. With practice, the group members begin to monitor each other, reminding each other when they have already spoken.

Time-Outs for Selected Groups

Group dynamics often mirror the culture of the outside world. If, for example, you notice that the males have been doing most of the talking, suggest that “For the next 10 minutes, let’s have the men listen, while the women have the full floor.” The same is often true in youth-adult groups, or people of color-white groups: the adults or the whites dominate the discussion. As subtly as possible, simply reverse it. Or, whenever someone has been very quiet, ask if he or she has anything to add or any thoughts to share on the subject. Many times people will speak when asked, when otherwise they would consider their thoughts unimportant.

Varied Format

Since different people learn in different ways, try to employ a variety of formats in meetings. For example, have people break up into pairs or small groups of ten. Have small groups report back. Use “energizers” and games to increase the energy level or demonstrate certain ideas. Use visual aids such as wall charts. Use role-playing to help people understand different points of view.

Appreciations

A consistent practice of appreciation in Policy Committee meetings helps build a positive environment in which young people can learn better, feel supported, and make better decisions.

Below are some suggested methods of doing appreciations. These are public and done one at a time so everybody can hear what is said to each person. Variations include:

- Say one thing you like about the person on your left (right, two people to your left or right, directly across from you).
- What did so-and-so do today that helped the meeting?

- What do you respect or admire about so-and-so?
- What makes so-and-so a valuable part of the Policy Committee?
- How have you seen so-and-so grow in the last few months?
- How has so-and-so been a good leader (this week, or lately)?

Potential Pitfalls for Adults in Relation to the Policy Committee

Adults with skills and the best intentions are still prone to make mistakes in guiding the development of the Policy Committee. Here is a list of pitfalls. It might be helpful for the adults on the Policy Committee to scan this list periodically in order to be aware of them.

Adults should avoid being:

- Overly controlling or scared
- Condescending
- Boring or overly talkative
- Critical and scolding
- Afraid to teach values
- Irresponsible (being habitually late, not honoring commitments)

They should also avoid:

- Assigning insignificant or peripheral tasks
- Providing too little guidance, leaving the young people too much on their own
- Emphasizing rhetoric about power
- Setting up adversarial relationships with other people in power
- Treating the Policy Committee as less than a top priority
- Not really listening to people or not taking them seriously
- Teaching dishonesty (by saying, for example, “You’ve got to lie in order to deal with unfair bureaucrats or oppressive policies or racism”)
- Feeling powerless and therefore not carrying youth involvement to its logical level of impact on the larger community
- Failing to ensure that the young people don't feel used
- Neglecting good group process
- Ignoring issues of abuse of power—letting things slide and just get worse
- Allowing the Policy Committee to become isolated from the rest of the young people and not supported by the staff
- Empowering young people while disempowering staff, ending up with a staff that resents the Policy Committee

Section II

Information for Youth Members

A Letter from the President of YouthBuild USA

Dear Elected Member of the Youthbuild Policy Committee:

CONGRATULATIONS! Your friends and coworkers have chosen you as their representative on the Policy Committee of your Youthbuild program. This is a great compliment and an honor. They trust and respect you, believe you are smart, and believe that you care. In my experience, young people in these elections make very good choices and have a very good sense of who will make good representatives. They have seen something special in you.

This leadership role is not always easy. Each committee and each committee member usually go through some changes figuring out how to do it right. Based on my ten years of working with Policy Committees at the Youth Action Program in New York City, the originator of Youthbuild, and because the first year at Youthbuild Boston was so full of ups and downs, I wrote the following pages as a letter to future committee members, to help them avoid some of the mistakes we had seen. The Youthbuild Boston Policy Committee reviewed these pages and enthusiastically recommended that all future Policy Committees get them at the beginning and read them together.

So I hope your committee will read the “Basic Expectations of a Policy Committee Member,” and “Some Serious Mistakes You Should Avoid” and discuss them. Hopefully your own committee will talk a lot and decide how you want to work together and how to work with the rest of the students and staff in order to do the best job possible.

We at YouthBuild USA deeply appreciate your willingness to take on the extra responsibility of helping the director make wise decisions about your program. Your contribution to strengthening your own program will make the whole national movement stronger, and that will help thousands of young people have better opportunities for jobs, training and education, leadership, and community service.

Thanks for caring and for working at it. As a result, we care about you and hope you will contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Best wishes for your success in every venture.

Dorothy Stoneman
President, YouthBuild USA

Basic Expectations of a Policy Committee Member

1. **Come to every meeting on time.** If you can't, be sure to let somebody know in advance. Your presence makes a difference to the other members. The strength of a group depends on the reliability of each member.
2. **Listen respectfully to everyone's opinion about every subject.** Even when you disagree with most of it, you can usually agree with part of what someone else is saying. The best decisions include the best thinking of all the members, so listen for the best parts of what other people are saying instead of just disagreeing with the worst parts.
3. **Express your own opinions even when you're not sure of them.** It's part of the thinking process. It's important that you and everyone else feel comfortable sharing your ideas, because only through sharing ideas will a group be able to reach the best possible decisions.
4. **Be careful not to dominate the discussion with your own ideas.** Often, we are incorrectly taught that being a leader means forcefully pushing one's own ideas. Actually, being a good leader means encouraging others to speak; respecting what they say, even when they disagree with you; expressing your own ideas; and listening for ways to combine all the good ideas. If you are too pushy about your own ideas, no matter how good they are, other people will stop talking, stop liking the way you treat them, or even stop coming to meetings.
5. **Remember that your job is to make decisions that benefit the entire program.** As a committee member you will start to think like the director or a board member, because you will have an influence on how good the program is for all its members and staff, now and in the future.
6. **Remember that other program members will be watching to see if they have chosen the right people to represent them.** Your general performance in the program will be part of the answer. Your attendance and level of responsibility should be high, because now you represent the Policy Committee and the members want to be proud of their committee.
7. **Also remember that communicating with the rest of the program members and the staff is part of your job.** Make sure that meeting minutes are distributed to everybody. Allot time every week to report to the rest of the program members and get their input on subjects you are discussing in committee meetings. This way the Policy Committee can serve as the backbone of the program, holding the parts together and keeping the program strong.
8. **Keep finding ways for other members of the program to develop their leadership skills and commitment also.**

- Add new members to the committee as you go along
- Form other committees—a social committee, a community service committee—to deal with specific issues
- Include everyone who wants to be included in the Policy Committee training
- Have other trainees do public speaking when the opportunity arises
- Hold general meetings in which other members lead small discussion groups

You'll think of more ways. The community and the world needs all the good and caring leaders it can get. It's the job of every leader to help create other leaders—the more the better.

Some Serious Mistakes You Should Avoid

Here are some of the worst things we have seen happen. Please take this as a warning of *what not to do*, and what *not to allow* other members of your committee to do.

1. Sometimes committee members think they have special privileges and start to act as if they don't have to follow the basic rules of the program. This will make everyone mad and might turn people against your committee.
2. Sometimes committee members, because they are involved in hiring and evaluating staff, treat staff members disrespectfully. We've even had cases of Policy Committee members cursing at staff or threatening them with remarks like, "Wait until the Policy Committee meets." This makes individual staff members upset and causes the entire staff to distrust and even disapprove of the role of the Policy Committee.
3. Sometimes individual members are so good at public speaking that they are overwhelmed with invitations to represent the program. Outside engagements become too distracting, and they start to forget about good attendance and performance in the basic program. Other people will resent this, and eventually the person may become isolated and criticized.
4. Sometimes individuals get so pushy about their own ideas that other people no longer want them to be leaders, because they seem to have stopped respecting the group.
5. Sometimes members get very scared because they are being so successful and they are not used to it. Success is scary. Sometimes it leads to acting out, and sometimes it leads to pulling back. Sometimes you don't even know why you're feeling so scared. It's because you are stepping out of the familiar position you have been used to. You're taking more risks. You're more visible. You're afraid you might not be able to keep it up. You're afraid other people might not want you to keep it up. You're afraid you might get ahead of your family or your friends and they might not like it. You're afraid you're going to fail in the end anyway. These are some of the feelings people get, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously. But don't be surprised if you or other members of the committee feel afraid or start to act out and you don't understand why. This happens to many people when they start to do better than they are used to doing. It's a good idea to talk about it.

6. Sometimes members choose a chairperson who hasn't had much experience but who takes the responsibility very seriously. As chairperson, he or she gets frustrated and mad at the group for not being serious enough. He or she scolds the group, or takes over for the group, or pushes his or her own opinions on the group. The result is that the group doesn't work, the chairperson becomes isolated and unhappy, and soon quits or is removed. Be careful not to let this happen to any of your members. If it starts to happen, talk to the director immediately and decide what to do. A serious chairperson is a precious and wonderful resource; he or she should be helped to do the kind of job that strengthens the committee rather than weakens it. It's not easy. Some groups have decided to start by giving everyone a chance to serve as chairperson. This way everybody gets experience and training, and no one person has too much pressure, responsibility, or power.

Your Role as a Policy Committee

1. To reach the best possible decisions for the benefit of other young people in the program, the program as a whole, the community, and, as appropriate, for the city, state, and country.
2. To become the best possible leaders, able to make good decisions, communicate ideas well, take responsibility to improve every situation you're in, and help other leaders develop.
3. To be good role models for other young people and to build the credibility of the committee. You and the committee will be judged by how you treat others, how responsible you are, and how consistent your behavior is with your rhetoric and leadership role.
4. To help build unity in the program by not being publicly negative about committee meetings, maintaining confidentiality, and bringing people together as you see needed.
5. To support the development of other leaders.
6. To be accountable to the rest of the young people by reporting back to them, getting their ideas, involving them, and thinking about how things affect them.
7. To hold the director accountable, and keep the director informed of what is going on and what issues need to be addressed. Make sure the director makes good decisions.
8. To carry out the following possible responsibilities:
 - Participation in the hiring of staff
 - Recommending improvements in program management and services
 - Consultation on program design, policies, and changes
 - Review of yearly budget, where appropriate
 - Consultation on firing of staff (although the director has final authority)
 - Participation in decision making affecting all aspects of the program
 - Reporting to and consulting with the rest of the program
 - Planning events
 - Solving problems as needed

How to Run a Good Meeting

A group can succeed or fail by the process it uses to conduct meetings, involve the members, and build morale. Here are some suggestions for how your group can run its meetings. Over time, you can train the youth chairperson to use these guidelines. Soon the whole group will internalize a good process.

- **Set a regular meeting time and place**—e.g., every Tuesday in the Conference Room from 3:00–4:30. Once a week is best. This way, if a member cannot make it this week, he or she knows that it will be there next week. “If it’s Tuesday, it must be Policy Committee day!”
- **Notify everyone of the meeting** as personally as is necessary to get them there. Know who is expected and who is not.
- **Limit the time to one and a half or two hours.** Begin on time and end on time, thereby respecting people’s other commitments. If you make a habit of beginning on time, then people will tend to arrive on time.
- **Have a youth chairperson for each meeting.** Leadership is necessary. Over time, things don’t work well with only committees. There needs to be an overall chairperson for a term of time—three months or less. The group selects the chair, defines the responsibilities, and periodically reviews the chairperson’s performance. Alternating chairpersons is good because it develops leadership skills among many people, thereby strengthening your group. However, do not change the chairperson too frequently because you will not have someone thinking about how the group is doing over a period of time.
- **Make sure everyone knows everyone.** Don’t start a meeting without being sure everyone at least has a chance to know each other’s name.
- **Start with people making personal contact.** Each person might take a turn saying what’s new or what’s good since the last meeting. Sometimes someone is upset and needs a few minutes to talk about it so he or she can function better in the meeting.
- **Welcome latecomers,** introduce them if they are new to the group, and explain to them what you are doing at the moment.
- **Inform the group why the absent people could not come.** This establishes that they are still part of the group. It also establishes the expectation that people contact you if they have to be absent.
- **Have a planned, visible agenda with important content.** If people feel the chairperson is using their time purposefully, they tend to be more responsible in their own use of the meeting’s time. Allow for input from

the group to shape the agenda.

- **Post the estimated time for each agenda item so people know when to move on.** If something unexpectedly emerges as very important, people can then decide whether to postpone other agenda items, stay late, or call another meeting.
- **Include in your agenda a review of every specific responsibility that has been previously assigned and is still hanging.** If someone volunteered to do something, see if it was done. If it was not done, see what help is needed. If it was done, give the person a chance to report and then have the group appreciate him. The group needs to know that everything is being moved forward and that responsibilities are not dropped.
- **On every important decision make sure every person speaks fully.** Every person has important things to say. Let nobody dominate the discussion and let nobody be overlooked. A healthy group listens to the thinking of all of its members—or ends up losing the ones who have not been heard.
- **On every important decision try to reach consensus.** Discuss until all important objections to the dominant view have been shared and explored. Discuss until the minority who disagree have been thoroughly heard and taken seriously.
- **Make progress on all fronts.** Make sure that, over time, no important area of concern is repeatedly dropped. Even if your resources force you to make slower progress on some fronts than others, this should be stated explicitly and a plan should be followed for when and how the concern will be handled. Otherwise morale will be lowered by the feeling that the group, or the leader, is inadequate to handle its whole task. As a result, your other excellent work may be eroded by the weakness that develops from continually putting aside less urgent but nonetheless important concerns.
- **Encourage laughter in your meetings.** Serious discussions can get boring or tense. Jokes and lightheartedness lift the spirits and bring people together. The work goes faster when people are more relaxed and tuned in.
- **At the close of every meeting take a few minutes for evaluation and appreciations.** Even a sentence from each person on how the meeting went—what she liked and what could be improved—will do. This gives valuable information for planning. No one has to leave wondering how the others felt. Also include appreciations for the chairperson and others in the group who played a leadership role. Appreciating the person next to you always lifts the tone of the group. No one ever gets enough appreciation. Make it a regular practice.

- **Keep good notes of the meetings and make sure to get them to the absent members and to people who have reason to know of your progress.** Much good work is wasted by not communicating it to the people who care.
- **Use part of your meeting for support groups as often as possible.** This is rarely included because of the press of program issues. Perhaps 30 minutes every other week could be used for a support group—a time of giving full, warm attention to each person in turn (in groups of four to six) for personal, emotional support. It deepens relationships and helps people with specific difficulties, which in all probability interfere with their leadership.

Guidelines on Interviewing Job Candidates

One of the key responsibilities of a Policy Committee is to interview and participate in the hiring of future staff. Before interviewing, the Committee members need to learn how to interview. Below is a training that has been used in Youthbuild programs.

Before the Interview

- Review and understand the job description.
- List the qualities and qualifications for this position.
- Write down questions that address these qualities and qualifications. Put each person's question on a 3" x 5" card for use in the actual interview.
- Devise a possible role play situation: think of a situation or problem a person in this position would be likely to handle; decide who will play which parts in relation to the candidate; decide on a time limit for the role play.
- Look at the candidate's résumé and references. Generate questions from it.
- Decide on the format of the interview and the roles of the committee members: Who will welcome the person and outline the process and moderate, who will be the first three to ask their questions, who will introduce and set up the role play, who will thank the candidate?
- Decide whether the decision must be unanimous or by overwhelming majority. You do not want to use a simple majority vote, since you want most, if not all, of the people to agree. It's not a win/lose, jockeying-for-my-choice situation, but one of building unity.

During the Interview

- The moderator welcomes the candidate and asks each member of the group to introduce himself or herself.
- The moderator asks the candidate to tell the group about himself or herself and why she is interested in this job.
- Committee members give the person their best attention, always look-

ing at him or her, not communicating any disapproval, not giggling or chewing gum or distracting the group, and giving the candidate respect.

- Committee members begin asking their questions in the prearranged order. After that, members should ask any and all questions that come to their minds.
- When the time feels right, explain and set up the role play.
- Don't drag the interview out. Toward the end of the time allotted, ask the candidate if he or she has any further questions for the committee about the program or the job.
- Thank the person for his or her interest and explain the hiring process and timeline—for example, "You are one of three final candidates who we are interviewing today. We hope to make a decision within a few days. We will call you by the end of the week."

After the Interview

- When the candidate is out of the room, have a quick first go-around, asking each member, "Would you hire this person? Yes, no, or maybe." Do not ask people to give reasons. This gives everybody a quick reading of first impressions, before anyone has a chance to be persuasive.
- Go around again, this time with each person giving all their reasons. Each person should be listened to fully and respectfully. People should be encouraged to express all their doubts and concerns. This is an important decision.
- Discuss thoroughly until consensus is reached or the next step is determined—e.g., check more references or interview the person again. (Note: References should always include the candidates' last three supervisors, not just friends or people who speak favorably.)
- Decide who will inform the candidate of the decision and when.
- Appreciate each other for an important job well done.

