

# Chapter Governance Manual

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## Introduction

AACN chapters are comprised of dedicated acute and critical care nurses who voluntarily come together as an organized chapter to further the art and science of acute and critical care nursing within their community. Because chapter members work in the community they are serving, they are in the unique position to understand the needs of their fellow nurses. This understanding allows them to offer continuing education, networking, and recognition activities that address those specific needs. AACN is eternally grateful to you, the chapter leaders, for this work. It is invaluable to advancing our mission and vision.

When a chapter is formed, its members enter into a partnership with National AACN. As with any relationship, in order for the chapter-National partnership to be successful certain core values must be respected by both parties. The core values that are essential to the chapter-National partnership are:

- Loyalty to the mission of AACN
- Integrity in all actions
- Transparency
- Accountability to the members and to the agreements of the partnership
- Ongoing, forthright communication
- Commitment to good governance and chapter management

When these core values are embodied by the chapter and National, the chapter is highly successful. These chapters have a strong membership and a pool of future leaders. They are able to establish and achieve goals for each year, often with growth from year-to-year. Processes to maintain their reporting to and good standing with National are in place and being in compliance is not a burden for the chapter. They draw upon the resources from National to assist them in their work.

Resources, including programs and support structures to assist chapters in doing their work have been established by National as part of our commitment to chapters. These resources include the Chapter Advisory Team, Chapter Database, Education Room, Websites and more. One of the most significant benefits that National provides to chapters is chartering all chapters under National's 501(c)3 tax-exempt status. This tax status allows chapters to take advantage of all of the same tax benefits as National AACN, including not paying taxes on revenue generated from most, if not all, of your activities. With this benefit come important responsibilities that are aimed at protecting this status for National and all chapters. When entering into the chapter-National partnership, you agree to fulfill these responsibilities to ensure AACN complies with IRS regulations.

National understands that as volunteers your time is limited. Thus our goal is to make the management of your chapter as straightforward as possible, thereby enabling you to primarily focus on the programs and activities you plan for the nurses within your community. All chapters are governed by the AACN Bylaws, the Chapter Charter Agreement, and this Chapter Governance Manual.

The content of this Governance Manual has been organized to align with the five primary responsibilities that you have as chapter leaders, which are:

- Determining the chapter's purpose
- Ensuring effective chapter governance
- Planning, monitoring, and strengthening chapter programs

- Ensuring adequate resources and managing them effectively
- Recruiting and orienting new chapter leaders

AACN is committed to providing guidance and tools that promote healthy chapters and help define the responsibilities that you have as chapter leaders. Throughout the Governance Manual, and as you consider how to apply this information within your chapters, think about how these responsibilities correlate with the six standards for establishing and maintaining Healthy Work Environments. The standards represent evidence-based and relationship-centered principles of professional performance. Each standard is considered essential since studies show that effective and sustainable outcomes do not emerge when any standard is considered optional. You will find that the many facets of chapter management and operations cross over among the HWE standards. The six [Healthy Work Environment \(HWE\) Standards](#) are:

1. Authentic Leadership - Nurse leaders must fully embrace the imperative of a healthy work environment, authentically live it and engage others in its achievement.
2. Effective Decision Making - Nurses must be valued and committed partners in making policy, directing and evaluating clinical care and leading organizational operations.
3. Appropriate Staffing - Staffing must ensure the effective match between patient needs and nurse competencies.
4. Skilled Communication - Nurses must be as proficient in communication skills as they are in clinical skills.
5. True Collaboration - Nurses must be relentless in pursuing and fostering true collaboration.
6. Meaningful Recognition - Nurses must be recognized and must recognize others for the value each brings to the work of the organization.

(AACN, 2005)

This manual provides simple, easy to implement practices for your chapter that, if followed, will provide a strong foundation for your chapter's success. It is anticipated that this will be a dynamic document that will be refined as we continue to learn together. Therefore, please feel welcome to forward to us your questions and suggestions.

You can contact us at: [Chapters@aacn.org](mailto:Chapters@aacn.org) or 800-394-5995 extension 365, 338, or 313.

## CHAPTER LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY ONE: DETERMINING THE CHAPTER'S PURPOSE

Each chapter, whether brand new or in existence for many years, came together because, as individuals, you shared a common vision of how you could advance acute and critical care nursing within your community. The purpose of your chapter may be to educate nurses, assist nurses to become certified, provide service to your community, recognize excellence in nursing, network among your peers, or a combination of these and other reasons. Your chapter's purpose provides the foundation upon which the chapter operates.

### Chapter Purpose

A purpose statement captures succinctly why the chapter exists and what it does. It should be memorable enough so that everyone connected to the organization can remember it and use it. A solid purpose statement can be easily used as a benchmark for chapter decision-making and planning.

A chapter that focuses on networking and education of area nurses might have a purpose statement such as the following:

*"The purpose of the ABC Chapter is to network with area nurses on evidence-based practice and to provide education promoting certification."*

The chapter's purpose will help to guide its goals, objectives, and planning. If your chapter does not have a defined purpose, discuss it at a chapter meeting, including as many members as possible to develop a purpose statement for your chapter.

### Membership

As stated above, the chapter is made up of individuals with a common vision for improving acute and critical care nursing in their community. Your chapter should aim to be inclusive of and easily accessible by all nurses in your area. This will ensure the broadest audience for your programs and will assist you in achieving your goals.

All members of National AACN are eligible to become members of your chapter. It is the chapter's responsibility to ensure that your members hold a current National AACN membership. A web-based chapter database has been established to assist the chapter with this validation. It also provides tools for tracking and communicating with chapter members. Chapters should also consider providing each new member with a welcome letter or email, and introducing new members at each chapter meeting. Chapter membership cards are optional; the membership card template is available online at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > Forms.

Many chapters have a person in charge of keeping the membership database current. It may be a specific board position, the membership chair, or this responsibility may be part of another board position, such as the secretary. Refer to the Chapter Database section in this Manual for more information.

**Types of Membership:**

Each chapter can determine what types and lengths of membership they wish to offer. While some chapters choose to have multiple membership types (active, affiliate, emeritus, student, retired/disabled, honorary or international) and lengths (one-year, two-year, three-year, lifetime), it is strongly recommended that the chapter limit these options for ease of management. Another way to make membership management easier for the chapter is to have the same membership date for all chapter members. For instance, no matter when during the year someone might join your chapter, all chapter members might have the same membership date of July 1, which is also the start of the fiscal year. As a chapter, you will be better served by having a chapter member available to work on programs and projects rather than occupying all of his/her limited volunteer time with tracking and managing membership.

Student nurses may participate in chapters as members and on chapter committees, but may not serve as chapter officers or vote. We encourage chapters to welcome student nurses as guests to their chapter meetings and events. Doing so is an excellent way to introduce students to a professional nursing organization, and show them how it can benefit them in their nursing careers.

**Membership Dues:**

Each chapter may also establish its own membership dues, including the option of not charging membership dues. For most chapters, the dues typically range from \$10-\$25 per year, and may not exceed 75% of National AACN membership dues. The collection and accounting of chapter membership dues is the sole responsibility of the chapter. Thus, again, it is recommended that chapters establish a simple dues structure to allow for ease in collecting and accounting for dues payments. This will lessen the burden for both the Treasurer and individual(s) responsible for membership. Chapters may consider a 2 or 3-year membership dues structure as an option for chapter members. All chapter membership dues must be accounted for in the quarterly financial reports that are sent to National AACN. The chapter membership card template and instructions are available at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Forms](#) > [Downloadable Forms](#).



## CHAPTER LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY TWO: ENSURING EFFECTIVE CHAPTER GOVERNANCE

*The [HWE Standards](#) demonstrated in Chapter Governance include all 6 Standards of Authentic Leadership, Effective Decision Making, Appropriate Staffing, Skilled Communication, True Collaboration, and Meaningful Recognition.*

### Chapter Governance

Governance refers to the obligation of the board of directors to strengthen its organization and further its mission through active leadership. It requires that board members put the success and sustainability of the organization above any individual self-interest, and to be diligent in overseeing the achievement of the organization's goals and effective use of resources.

The chapter board ensures good governance in a number of ways that are described throughout this Governance Manual. Sound leadership structures, policies and procedures must be in place to ensure that the chapter's resources are effectively managed and that its current and future goals are achieved. Chapters should strive for simplicity, streamlining, and reducing complexity when developing its yearly plan to carry out the mission work, so that the overall volunteering experience is pleasurable and fun.

In whatever way the chapter chooses to structure its leadership team, that team is still considered the chapter governing body and thus is responsible for the chapter's success and ability to achieve its mission. The majority of chapters choose to implement the traditional roles of president, president-elect, secretary, treasurer, and treasurer-elect as their leadership team structure. This model is recommended because of its familiarity and since the majority of chapter resources and communications from National are developed according to this structure. The minimum chapter officers for compliance are the president and treasurer, as they are the two required check signers.

### Establishing Accountability of all Board Members

Imperative to the success of the chapter and its board of directors is establishing a strong and reliable governance foundation. The board is responsible for the oversight of the chapter and therefore when the chapter begins, and each year when the board of directors transitions, the board must dedicate time in discussion to review the [Chapter Charter Agreement](#) and the chapter's goals. The following discussion questions should be included and all decisions should be documented.

#### ***Management & Oversight Discussion Questions:***

- What are our accountabilities as the leadership of the chapter?
  - What are the future goals and annual objectives of the chapter?
  - How will we measure our progress towards these goals and objectives?
  - How will we make decisions?
  - Are we attempting to do too much in relation to our human and financial resources?

- What are the accountabilities of each officer?
  - Does each officer know their respective accountabilities for their particular job?
  - What are our accountabilities to each other as chapter officers?
- As the chapter leadership, we share accountability for the chapter's finances. What is our current financial situation? Is our chapter in Good Standing?
  - What is the chapter's budget? How will we establish and monitor the budget?
  - What financial controls are in place to ensure we are good stewards of the chapter's money?
  - What are the quarterly and annual reporting requirements to National? How will we review these reports?
  - How will we as the board support the Treasurer in monitoring and managing the chapter finances?
  - How will we keep the chapter apprised of our financial health?



***Authentic Leadership - Nurse leaders must fully embrace the imperative of a healthy work environment, authentically live it and engage others in its achievement.*** [\(AACN HWE, 2005\)](#)

***Effective Decision Making Discussion Questions:***

Authentic leaders must be skilled communicators, team builders, and agents for positive change committed to service, results oriented, and role models for collaborative practice, who have the trust and respect of the chapter members as they live the vision.

As chapter leaders, you have been entrusted by your fellow chapter members to manage the chapter in a way that will enable the chapter to fulfill its purpose. You honor their trust by always acting with integrity and communicating with full transparency to them about your work. This will be essential to your success. When making decisions and acting on behalf of the chapter you should always ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this action/decision in the best interest of the chapter? Will this action/decision move the chapter forward in achieving its vision?
- As the chapter leadership, did we fully explore our options and divergent opinions that were raised before making a final decision?
- Did we effectively use data (e.g., education evaluations, needs assessments, etc.) to make an informed decision?
- Does this decision align with our chapter's stated purpose?
- Is this a fiscally sound decision for our chapter?

- Is this decision/action in alignment with AACN’s mission, vision and values and the law?
- Is this decision/action free of any personal or group bias?
- Have we considered the resources that will be necessary to implement this decision? Are we prepared to delegate and work collaboratively within the chapter to complete the work?
- Can we, as the chapter leadership, comfortably stand before the chapter to explain the rationale and decision making process regarding this action/decision?
- As chapter leaders, are we open to feedback and challenges from the chapter regarding this action/decision? In cases where we may face opposition from the membership, are we committed to exploring the divergent opinions they bring forward, even if it means we may need to modify our decision or delay implementation?

**Communication Discussion Questions:**

- As a board, how do we want to communicate with one another? What norms do we want to establish for our communication?
- How will we address instances when accountabilities aren’t fulfilled or agreements are broken?
- What will we do if there is a conflict among board members? What if there is a conflict between the membership and the board or a board member?
- How often will we meet as a board? What will be essential for us to discuss at these meetings to ensure we are monitoring the health and progress of the chapter?
- How often will we meet as a full chapter? What will be essential for us to report to the chapter so they have a complete and clear picture of our work?
- How will we communicate with our Chapter Advisor and National about the ongoing progress of our chapter? Other than discussing our progress, in what other instances might we contact the Chapter Advisor or National?

**Evaluation Discussion Questions:**

- How will we evaluate our performance during the year? At the end of the year?
- How will each board member be able to evaluate their individual contribution to the board’s work?
- What mechanisms will be in place for seeking and providing feedback from one another and the chapter members regarding individual and board performance?

**Officer Accountabilities**

The following describes the accountabilities of the traditional officers of the board. Your chapter may choose to have a different leadership structure as long as all of these accountabilities are met. *It is required that two different people, the President and Treasurer, have oversight of the chapter finances and the signatures of both are required for all financial transactions.*

It is recommended that all officers serve a 1 or 2 year term. Staggering officer and board member terms will help maintain the chapter's cohesiveness and sustainability, as well. It is also recommended that the chapter set a limit on how many consecutive terms a person can serve in the same role. Chapters have reported that it has not served them well to have the same officers in the same roles for numerous consecutive years as this does not allow for the development of new chapter leaders.

***President:***

The chapter President's fundamental responsibility is to lead the board of directors in their governance of the chapter. Thus the President should be an active member of the chapter who has served the previous year as the President-elect. The President-elect year is a critical period which allows for learning about the role and governing the chapter before stepping into the Presidential position. Many chapters also find it beneficial to require that the President has previously served on the board of directors for a period of time. While this may be ideal, because all of the chapter members are volunteers, it is not always feasible. What is essential is that the President has strong leadership and communication skills and is knowledgeable about chapter governance.

The primary accountabilities of the President are:

- Oversee meetings of the board and chapter, including agenda development and meeting facilitation.
- In partnership with the board and committee chairs, develop the future goals and annual objectives for the chapter.
- Based on the annual objectives, formulate the annual budget for the chapter in partnership with the board and committee chairs.
- Provide for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of annual objectives.
- In partnership with the board, develop and maintain a viable succession plan for chapter officers.
- Along with the Treasurer, provide oversight for the chapter finances and ensure financial controls are in place to protect the chapter's finances from misuse or fraud.
- After approval from National, and in partnership with the Treasurer or appropriate chairperson, execute all contracts on behalf of the chapter.
- Ensure regular communication to the chapter regarding progress toward the annual objectives and the financial status of the chapter.
- Ensure regular communication with the Chapter Advisor and/or National.
- Along with the board, ensure the chapter meets all of the obligations to National that are set forth in the Chapter Charter Agreement.
- Working with the President-elect, annually provide for continuity of the chapter leadership and a board transition meeting.

Many chapters utilize the immediate past President as an official board position, with the person serving as an advisor for the new board.

**President-Elect:**

The President-elect serves alongside the President in order to become familiar with the duties of the position. This learning period is critical to his/her success when he/she steps into the presidential role. The President-elect should be an active member of the chapter. Many chapters find it beneficial to require that the President-elect has previously served on the board of directors for a period of time. While this may be ideal, because all of the chapter members are volunteers, it is not always feasible. What is essential is that the President-elect has strong leadership and communication skills and is knowledgeable about chapter governance.

The primary accountabilities of the President-elect are:

- Work collaboratively with the chapter President throughout his/her term to provide for continuity of leadership and a smooth transition for chapter leadership.
- In the absence of the President, fill in to ensure the accountabilities of the President are met, for example to facilitate a chapter meeting.

**Secretary:**

The Secretary is responsible for keeping the minutes and other records of the chapter.

The primary accountabilities of the Secretary are:

- Notify all board members and chapter members of meetings. Notice can be given via mail, telephone, or e-mail. It is strongly recommended that at least two weeks' notice be given to allow for as many chapter members to attend as possible.
- Maintain all chapter records, including the Chapter Charter, financial reports, minutes from board meetings, chapter meetings and committee meeting, and correspondence.
- Distribute board, chapter, or committee meeting minutes to members prior to the next meeting.
- Maintain chapter membership roster. It is strongly recommended that the Secretary use the chapter database available through the AACN website to track this information.

**Treasurer & Treasurer-Elect:**

The Treasurer is responsible for the ongoing management, accounting, and reporting of the chapter's finances. Overall accountability for the financial management of the chapter is the responsibility of the full board, thus the Treasurer must work in partnership with the board to ensure the appropriate management of the chapter finances. This includes developing the budget, ensuring reporting requirements to National are met and that the chapter finances are reported to the full membership on a regular basis. In order to protect both the chapter and the Treasurer, it is important that the board establishes financial controls that limit the authority that the Treasurer or any one person has to make financial decisions or spend chapter funds without the agreement of the board. As part of these controls all contracts and expenditures must have two signatures to execute. For contracts, the two signatures must be the chapter President and Treasurer, or the appropriate Chairperson.

The accountabilities of the Treasurer are fairly extensive and require a good working knowledge of basic financial management. For this reason, many chapters have chosen to have a Treasurer-elect position on their board, which is strongly recommended. This individual works with the Treasurer during the year to learn about the chapter's finances and reporting requirements. Chapters that have this position have been more successful with their transition and in maintaining good standing with National.

The primary accountabilities of the Treasurer are:

- Perform all accounting for the chapter, including managing cash receivables and expenses (inputs and outputs).
- Assist in preparing the chapter's annual budget.
- Prepare the quarterly financial reports for the chapter and present these reports to the chapter board, chapter membership, and AACN National.
- Prepare and submit online all financial reports required as part of the chapter's Charter Agreement with National.
- In partnership with the chapter President, negotiate and execute all chapter contracts after approval is obtained from National. Please note that sometimes it will be appropriate for the chapter President and the designated Chairperson, rather than the Treasurer, to execute certain contracts.
- Work collaboratively with the Treasurer-elect, to provide a smooth transition of the chapter financial management.

***Other Optional Positions:***

Chapters also frequently create additional committees or positions that align with their future goals. The purpose of these committees is to assist the chapter in completing the initiatives that have been outlined for the year. Often these positions or committee chairpersons sit on the board of directors. Common committees fall into two categories – operational and mission driven.

Examples of operation committees include:

- Membership
- Audit committee
- Industry relations
- Webmaster

Mission driven committees include:

- Certification
- Education
- Beacon committee

There is an excellent example of a detailed board structure provided by the Greater Rochester Area Finger Lakes Chapter in New York. It is located online at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Resource Library](#).

**Board of Directors:**

Following are the accountabilities for the Chapter Board of Directors which are modeled off of the national AACN Board of Director Accountabilities. It is possible that some chapters might not have the level of leadership to this extent, however, it is recommended that the accountabilities be followed as best as possible to help ensure the chapter's success and sustainability.

1. Ensure effective organizational planning based on AACN's vision, mission, and values.

The **Chapter Board as a Whole** will:

- Identify the chapter's purpose and develop a yearly plan to assure the chapter's direction in the next year or longer.
- Collaborate effectively with chapter members in setting the chapter's direction including developing an attainable and measurable yearly plan.
- Develop and evaluate measures that reflect attainment of chapter goals and objectives.
- Perform an annual evaluation of the chapter's yearly plan.
- Engage in skillful communication and dialogue to promote effective decision-making processes.

In order for the Chapter Board to achieve the above function, the **individual Chapter Board Member** will:

- Prepare for and participate in board meetings, and assess the chapter's progress on its yearly plan.
- Serve as a resource in areas of personal and professional expertise in order to achieve effective planning.

2. Ensure and effectively manage adequate resources.

The **Chapter Board as a Whole** will:

- Annually evaluate and approve the chapter's budget based on the chapter's priorities.
- Evaluate and assure appropriate chapter financial policies and protections.
- Track and monitor budget efficiency and approve adjustments as needed.
- Regularly review the chapter's Good Standing grid to ensure compliance.
- Be responsible for chapter compliance.

In order for the Chapter Board to achieve the above function, the **individual Chapter Board Member** will:

- Be knowledgeable of the chapter's budget and current available funds.
- Follow up with the treasurer and/or president with questions or comments.
- Demonstrate good stewardship relative to reimbursed expenses.

3. Determine, monitor and strengthen the chapter's programs and services.

The **Chapter Board as a Whole** will:

- Assure that the chapter's yearly plan is consistent with AACN's mission, vision, and values.
- Evaluate resources and assure priorities are reflected in the yearly plan.

- Foster trustworthy relationships with chapter members, the chapter advisor, and national staff in order to increase the effectiveness of chapter decisions and outcomes.

In order for the Chapter Board to achieve the above function, the **individual Chapter Board Member** will:

- Develop an understanding of how to ensure quality and cost-effective services and programs given the chapter's yearly plan and priorities.
- Analyze information and data about chapter goals and performance in order to evaluate linkage to mission, vision, and values.

4. Ensure legal and ethical integrity and maintain accountability.

The **Chapter Board as a Whole** will:

- Ensure integration of the association's values and ethics into all processes.
- Adhere to the Chapter Charter and Governance Manual.
- Negotiate Chapter Board communication norms on an annual basis.

In order for the Chapter Board to achieve the above function, the **individual Chapter Board Member** will:

- Recognize and identify potential conflict of interest situations in a timely fashion.
- Refrain from using their position to benefit self or a third party.
- Adhere to Chapter Board communication norms for team effectiveness.
- Participate in all processes of the Chapter Board to the best of their ability.

5. Recruit and orient new Chapter Board Members and assess Chapter Board performance.

The **Chapter Board as a Whole** will:

- Ensure Chapter Board succession by:
  - Actively identifying and mentoring chapter members for future chapter leadership positions.
  - Actively participating in the nomination process.
  - Assuring an effective and efficient orientation/transition process for new Chapter Board members.
  - Evaluate itself in a systematic way.

In order for the Chapter Board to achieve the above function, the **individual Chapter Board Member** will:

- Serve as a mentor to new Chapter Board Members.
- Serve as a Chapter Board Learning Partner to a new board member as directed by the president.
- Recruit and cultivate individuals as nominees for the Chapter Board committees.
- Complete the Nominating Committee requests for feedback.
- With skillful communication, give feedback to all Chapter Board members.



**Board Meetings:**

In addition to general chapter meetings, chapters need to have regularly scheduled chapter board meetings. These meetings provide an opportunity for the chapter leadership to fulfill its accountabilities for governing the chapter.

Many decisions are made by the chapter board based on the needs of the chapter. Sometimes, for various reasons, board members are unable to make board meetings where a vote is planned. No matter the reason for the absence, the majority of the board (51%) must be present for the vote or provide their proxy ahead of the vote for the vote to be valid.

**Board/Officer Transition**

In order for the chapter to be successful, it is essential that the outgoing board meet with the new board to complete the officer transition. A Chapter Transition Checklist tool has been developed for this purpose, and is located online at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Chapters](#) > [Resource Library under the sub-category Chapters Governance Resources](#). This tool should be used each year that board members change.

**Chapter Meetings**

Your chapter was founded by a group of individuals who wanted to come together to advance nursing in your community. To further this work and support one another, it is essential that the group come together on a regular basis.

Chapters are encouraged to utilize the AACN Meeting Norms, located at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Resource Library](#).

**General Chapter Meetings:**

It is recommended that you hold regularly scheduled chapter meetings not less than two times per year. These meetings should be separate from the educational programs and other events held by the chapter. Instead, these meetings should provide a forum for the chapter to work together in planning for future activities, reviewing the progress towards current goals, discussing the chapter's financial health, and networking with one another.

Frequently, chapters will get busy with the work at hand and these meetings will not occur. When this happens the chapter becomes vulnerable in many ways. Without these meetings, there is no forum for the chapter leaders and members to talk about progress and plan for the future. This leaves the members feeling disconnected and unmotivated to be actively involved which in turn results in the board perceiving that all the work is theirs to do. This becomes a vicious cycle that can lead to decreased membership, mistrust in the chapter leadership, poor succession planning, and burnout.

**Chapter Meeting Agenda:**

Each meeting should have an agenda, with estimated times allotted for each agenda item (5 mins, 10 mins, etc.) and someone to serve as timekeeper so the meeting starts and ends on time out of respect for all attendees. It is recommended that approximately 1-2 weeks before the meeting the

chapter put out a call for agenda items to the full membership to help encourage two-way agenda development and member engagement. A best practice is to include the following information on each chapter meeting agenda:

- Meeting date, time, location
- AACN Meeting Norms
  - Reviewed at each meeting to encourage positive interaction
- Introduction and Welcome of New Members
- Recognition of Newly Certified Members, Beacon, other professional accomplishments
- Old business
  - Items not yet completed or resolved from previous meetings
- Reports/updates on:
  - Chapter treasury
  - Chapter yearly/strategic plan
  - Chapter Good Standing – copy and paste the chapter’s current Good Standing grid onto the agenda
- New business
- Open discussion
- Meeting Evaluation
  - Ask all members the following about the meeting:
    - Did the team meet the expected outcomes?
    - What contributed to the effectiveness of the meeting?
    - What could have made the meeting more effective?
    - What was the impact of the team’s communications on the meeting outcomes?

Consistency and transparency at each chapter meeting will help instill trust and promote member engagement.

### ***Chapter Meeting Minutes:***

Each meeting should be documented with meeting minutes based on the agenda, and should include sections for discussion, actions, responsible (listing those members responsible for the actions and by when). Two best practices are to post your chapter meeting minutes on your chapter’s website so all members can read and refer to them, and, email a copy of your meeting minutes to your Chapter Advisor. Doing so helps to keep the Chapter Advisors connected, and they can anticipate where guidance or assistance might be needed and provide that for your chapter.

### ***Virtual Meetings:***

Virtual meetings make it more convenient for members to attend meetings. Many hospitals have video conferencing equipment that chapters can use for this purpose. Check with your hospital if that is a resource your chapter can use.

Other options are services such as Skype, GoToMeeting, Google Hangout, etc. Chapters should research their options and determine what would best meet their needs. These services are often available at no cost.

## CHAPTER LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY THREE: PLANNING, MONITORING, AND STRENGTHENING CHAPTER PROGRAMS

*The [HWE Standards](#) within Planning, Monitoring, and Strengthening Chapter Programs include all 6 Standards of Authentic Leadership, Effective Decision Making, Appropriate Staffing, Skilled Communication, True Collaboration, and Meaningful Recognition.*

### Yearly Planning

It is helpful for chapters to have a yearly plan to guide them in their activities. While a formal strategic plan is not required, some chapters choose to go through that process. Ultimately, it is up to the chapter to utilize the planning process that best fits their needs to develop their yearly plan. Regardless of which process is used, the plan must be communicated to and validated by the membership.

#### ***Yearly Action Planning Process Option:***

Based on the chapter's purpose and members' needs, the chapter board would come to consensus on goals for the chapter to achieve in the next 1-3 years. The goals should be measurable so the chapter can track their progress. Once the goals are established, the chapter would define an action plan of activities that would move them towards these goals during the coming 12 months. Each action plan should have defined targets and outcomes. The yearly action plan then becomes the basis for the chapter budget for the next year. Lastly, each plan needs to have an evaluation process to measure progress and inform the next year's planning cycle.

#### ***Strategic Planning Process Option:***

A strategic plan is a document used to communicate with the chapter the chapter's goals, the actions needed to achieve those goals, and all of the other critical elements developed during the planning exercise. Components of a strategic plan may include the chapter's purpose statement, needs assessment, SWOT analysis, objectives, strategies, and action plans. Those tools can be found on the website at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Resource Library](#).

The detailed one year plan is often called an annual operating plan or annual work plan. Its purpose is to identify, communicate and monitor progress on key priorities for the year that advance the chapter's strategic plan.

The annual operating plan is where the chapter establishes clear expectations and specific actions that the chapter is going to undertake during the year to move them closer to their 3-5 year goals and objectives. The annual operating plan should be kept as simple as possible, referred to often, using it as the basis for conversations on strategy, accountabilities, agreements, celebrations, etc. Each objective should be measurable so the chapter can see the impact that it has in relation to its goals. This operating/annual work plan then serves as the basis for the chapter budget for the year as the budget represents how the chapter is going to fund its operations.

Components of a formal annual work plan include:

- Summary of the long-range goals.
- Objectives/goals for the upcoming year.
- Detailed activities related to these objectives/goals.
- Plan for monitoring and evaluation.
- Annual budget.

Your annual work plan should be written in enough detail to give a clear picture of the activities planned for the year, when they will occur, the resources that will be required to complete them, the goals and objectives they meet, and the targets and outcome measures of the activities. Work plans can also include cost estimates for each activity; these can be helpful in preparing the annual budget. It is important to periodically review your objectives and make adjustments if necessary.

### ***Needs Assessment:***

With either option, it's important for the chapter to understand its members' needs. What are those things that will make them engaged and active in the chapter? What do they want to learn? How do they want to be involved? A chapter needs assessment will provide the chapter with those answers and help drive the chapter's plan and further AACN's mission and vision while fulfilling the specific needs of the nurses in their community. Sample needs assessments may be found on the website at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Resource Library](#) > [Best Practice Ideas - Needs Assessment](#).

The Chapter Advisor is an excellent resource and consultant for the chapter as they establish and annually update their yearly plan. Additionally, there are numerous resources for chapters on planning located on the AACN website at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Resource Library](#) > [Best Practices – Strategic Planning](#), as well as in the [Chapter Education Room > Effective Decision Making](#).

## **Financial Planning & Management**

As stated earlier, AACN operates on a Fiscal Year (FY) of July 1 thru June 30. For compliance with reporting requirements, it is highly recommended that chapters follow the same fiscal year. Doing so will make the accounting process simpler.

Chapters should develop an annual operating plan, to be approved by the board of directors each year. The operating budget is based on the yearly plan that is established by the Board.

The funds of the chapter should be used solely for activities that support the chapter's objectives and long term goals (if the chapter chooses the formal planning process). Income of the chapter should be reinvested into the chapter. Examples of how chapter funds are utilized include:

- Providing education events;
- Hosting recognition events for certified nurses, Beacon units and award recipients;
- Offering scholarships to nurses for continuing education or to attend NTI;
- Conducting community service and education programs;
- Purchasing educational resources for the chapter.

### ***Budget Planning:***

Budget planning is an important part of chapter management and should be addressed a few months *before* the beginning of the fiscal year. It allows the chapter to identify and plan for its financial needs for the upcoming year and provides a basis for financial measurement and evaluation of long and short-term outcomes.

Although a plan for the future, a budget is based on past chapter events and experiences and it should contain adequate, reasonable, attainable and reliable information. A review of the chapter's past goals and outcomes as well as membership lists, attendance records and reports from educational programs and community projects may indicate trends and provide historical information beneficial in budget planning.

Preparation of the budget is a combined group effort. The chapter's board of directors, officers and committee chairpersons should have direct input into the financial well-being of the chapter. There are many approaches to the budgetary process. It is best to start with a simple program and through use, review and revision, increase the level of budgetary sophistication.

Be sure to document your chapter's budgeting process with tasks, responsibility assignments and deadlines clearly stated. A good budgeting process also incorporates your yearly and/or strategic planning initiatives and stipulates that income is budgeted before expenses.

For in-depth information on managing your chapter finances, a Chapter Financial Workbook is available at [www.aacn.org/chapters> Resource Library > Chapter Finances](http://www.aacn.org/chapters> Resource Library > Chapter Finances). Chapter treasurer's and treasurer-elect's should refer to this important resource for maintaining the fiscal position of the chapter, as well as the instructional webinars in the [Chapter Education Room > Chapter Management and Operations](http://www.aacn.org/chapters> Chapter Education Room > Chapter Management and Operations).

### ***Contingency Planning:***

Even with the best planning, there are times when a program or activity won't be successful. This can be caused by any number of factors including the economy or other environmental factors that are beyond the control of the chapter.

Therefore as part of the financial planning process, chapters should factor in contingency planning by establishing benchmark goals to be achieved by certain dates in order to know when it is in the chapter's best financial interest to cancel an event or activity. For example, if the economy is bad, the probability may be higher that nurses will have less money available to travel and attend events. This could substantially affect the chapter financially, and may require that events be cancelled or postponed until it is determined the chapter would not incur a substantial monetary loss. Guidance is always available from your Chapter Advisor or National. There are also resources for chapters on financial planning located on the AACN website, [www.aacn.org/chapters > Resource Library > Chapter Finances](http://www.aacn.org/chapters > Resource Library > Chapter Finances).

## **Other Plans**

Based on your chapter's goals, the chapter might want to develop sub-plans, such as:

- Communication Plan
- Education Plan

- Recognition Plan
- Succession Plan

***Communication Plan:***

There are three aspects of a communication plan that chapters should address:

1. Communication among the chapter leadership team.
2. Communication between the chapter leadership team and the Chapter Advisor / National.
3. Communication among the chapter's membership.

Refer to the communication items in the [Resource Library](#) under Governance Resources.

- ***Communication among the chapter leadership team***

This topic is addressed under [Establishing Accountability of all Board Members](#).

- ***Communication between the chapter leadership team & the Chapter Advisor/National***

Communication among the chapter, Chapter Advisor, and National is vital to the success of the chapter. AACN provides a network of Chapter Advisors for communication, support and mentoring to chapter leaders ranging from coaching on leadership development and succession planning to problem solving challenging situations. AACN chapters that work together with their Chapter Advisors and National have the greatest success achieving their goals.

Chapter officers must maintain regular communication with the Chapter Advisor for the purpose of ensuring the continued success of the chapter. This includes but is not limited to, responding to emails and phone calls in a timely manner, and contacting the Chapter Advisor to discuss chapter needs or questions. Chapters must also maintain regular communications with the AACN Chapter Department as requested.

The majority of communications from Chapter Advisors and National is by email. Therefore, it is important for all chapter officers to maintain a current primary email address in their national member record so that they receive those communications. Please note that if a work email address is utilized as a primary email address, there is potential for it to be blocked by your organization's spam filter. Therefore, it is recommended that a non-work email address be used for each officer's primary email address.

Learn more about the role of Chapter Advisors in this Manual under [Chapter Advisory Team](#).

- ***Communication among the chapter's membership***

Regular, timely communication is vital to engaging chapter members, and to each chapter's success. Time should be spent by chapter leadership developing a communication plan that

identifies how and when information will be shared with members. The best time to develop your plan is in conjunction with your annual budgeting or yearly planning process.

From your yearly and operating plans, identify those things that the chapter will want to communicate to its members, and plan them out on a calendar for the year. Keep in mind that your communications need to be early enough so members can request time off from work or adjust their work schedules if needed. Start with the communication date and work backwards so you know when you'll need to work on the messaging to have it ready in time.

Think about how you will communicate – what methods you'll use for various communications such as:

- Email
- Physical mail
- Newsletters
- Blogs
- Facebook
- Chapter's website
- Twitter
- Posters / Flyers
- Word-of-Mouth
- At staff meetings
- Bulletin boards

Think about the frequency you want to communicate; if you'll need to schedule reminders, etc.

There are many communication plan templates available on the internet – use what will work best for your chapter, or create your own. Review your communication plan at regular board meetings, discuss what's coming up, and whether help or additional resources are needed to meet your deadlines.

Remember to refer to your resources in the [Chapter Resource Library](#) and the [Chapter Education Room](#) to help with communication planning.

### ***Education Plan:***

One of the primary activities undertaken by AACN chapters is that of providing clinical education for the nurses within the community. Providing education furthers the mission of AACN, meets a need within the community, and can provide revenue to the chapter. However, providing education is not required of chapters. It is acceptable for chapters to solely focus on networking or other activities.

- ***Educational Needs Assessment***

It is essential when planning education that chapters adhere to the standards for continuing education including conducting an educational needs assessment. The needs assessment allows the chapter to identify the learning needs of its members so that an education plan can be developed. Experience has shown that educational programs which are not based on a needs assessment often have lower attendance, lower evaluation scores, and do not fulfill a need within the community of nursing, thus do not further the AACN vision of a healthcare system that is driven by the needs of patients and families.

There are two primary approaches that a chapter can take in establishing its education plan for the year. The first approach is based on the needs assessment to select a single topic area, for



example sepsis, and develop a full curriculum on that topic that will be offered during the year until the chapter can be assured that all of the nurses in their community have received the full scope of education required on the topic. The chapter will be able to measure its success in meeting this goal through evaluating the learners and the programs offered as part of the curriculum.

The second approach is to review the results of the needs assessment and develop a series of educational offerings during the year that address the highest priority topics. With this approach, the chapter may not be able to give the in-depth education that a full curriculum allows, but will be able to touch on the various topics to meet the needs of the nursing community.

AACN encourages chapters to use free and low-cost educational resources developed by National as the basis for their educational programming. Doing so will significantly reduce the planning and costs related to providing education programs. These resources include:

- The [Acute and Critical Care Webinar Series](#) are free 30-minute webinars recorded live, and offer 0.5 contact hours of continuing nursing education credits (CNE). These webinars can be viewed and discussed at your chapter meetings to see how the information applies to your members' practice within your community. Other benefits include:
  - The webinar topics help members stay current on the latest evidence-based learning and clinical practices in acute and critical care.
  - The webinars provide direct access to leaders and experts in the critical care nursing field.
  - They offer practical education in a time-saving format, with options to participate live or review later.
  - Each webinar includes implementation tools to help put new practices in place in your unit.
  - The webinars help cut through information overload by focusing on the most relevant clinical topics in acute and critical care.
- The Online CE Center provides members:
  - Free CE activities to members.
  - Over 300 CE offerings.
  - A personal transcript record of all your completed online AACN CE activities and the ability to enter external or other CE events that you have attended or completed.
  - Continuous access to all of your CE certificates for each online AACN CE activity that you have completed, allowing you to reprint anytime.

Other educational ideas for chapters include:

- Journal Clubs – select journal articles to read and then discuss at chapter meetings. The AACN journals always include free CE articles that can be utilized for this purpose.
- Study Groups – chapter members already certified can help to lead study groups for those members preparing for their certification exams.

Consider collaborating with your organization’s clinical educators and work together to help nurses learn and prepare for their various competencies.

An array of resources on planning and evaluating educational programs are available on the AACN website at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Resource Library](#), and at [www.aacn.org/education](http://www.aacn.org/education) > [CE Program Approval > AACN Chapter](#). Chapter Advisors are also an excellent resource to assist you in conducting your chapter education needs assessment and developing a plan based on the results.

- ***Program Approval from AACN***

Chapters may submit their programs to AACN for continuing education approval. AACN’s CE Program Approval process verifies that courses meet professional education standards. Approval by AACN means a program has been reviewed and validated that it meets the requirements necessary for a sound educational experience. There are several resources available to assist with program planning and CE approval. Webinars are available in the Chapter Education Room ([www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters)> [Chapter Education Room > Effective Decision Making](#)).

All programs are eligible for CERPs, but not all programs are eligible for CEs. Learn more in the AACN Program Approval Policy for Chapters and the AACN Synergy CERPs brochure noted in the next paragraph.

Following are some helpful resources:

- AACN Program Approval Policy for Chapters located at [www.aacn.org](http://www.aacn.org) > [Education > CE Program Approval > AACN Chapter](#)
- AACN Synergy CERPs located at [www.aacn.org/Certification](http://www.aacn.org/Certification)
- General certification information at [www.aacn.org/Certification](http://www.aacn.org/Certification).
- Recertification information located at [www.aacn.org/Certification](http://www.aacn.org/Certification).
- Program Approval email help at [ProgramApproval@aacn.org](mailto:ProgramApproval@aacn.org).
- Program Approval help by phone at 800-394-5995, ext. 364.

Even if chapters do not plan to obtain CEs from AACN, they should review the website materials under [Continuing Education Program Approval for AACN Chapters](#) as there are many resources there to assist with education planning.

**Recognition Plan:**

Genuine recognition of chapter members and volunteers is vital for chapter success. Chapters with Healthy Work Environments demonstrate meaningful recognition by having a plan to recognize the accomplishments and contributions of chapter members, and celebrating chapter successes. Volunteering should be a fun experience!

***Meaningful Recognition – Chapter leaders must be recognized and must recognize others for the value each brings to the work of the chapter.***

[\(AACN HWE, 2005\)](#)

There are many simple and inexpensive ways to recognize your chapter leaders and members:

- Incorporate ideas on recognizing and training volunteers into your annual plan.
- Send a welcome letter to all new members and introduce them at chapter meetings.
- Highlight the work of a leader or member in a chapter newsletter, on your chapter's website, or chapter social media webpage.
- Allow conference planning committee members to attend chapter conferences at no expense.
- Nominate your chapter for the various [Circle of Excellence Awards](#).
- Send a letter to hospital administrators recognizing the contributions of individual chapter members and leaders.
- Provide a certificate of recognition to chapter members who volunteer their time by participating in chapter activities.
- Host recognition events that celebrate chapter achievements, member contributions, certified members, and units that have achieved the Beacon Award.
- Write letters and postcards of thanks.
- Offer personal praise where appropriate.
- Provide identification badges, chapter shirts.
- Publically acknowledge volunteers and present awards.
- Send holiday and birthday cards.
- Host an end of service party.
- Implement a life-long chapter membership.

Determining how chapter members define meaningful recognition can be as simple as talking directly with individuals or by conducting a chapter survey.

**Succession Plan:**

One of the most critical factors in ensuring the success and sustainability of chapters is investing in thoughtful, deliberate succession planning and board transition. For detailed information about

succession planning, including how to develop a succession plan, go to [Chapter Leadership Responsibility Five: Recruiting And Orienting New Chapter Leaders](#).

## **Collaboration**

To collaborate is to work with another person or group in order to achieve something. Collaboration naturally inspires a sense of community, and allows those collaborating to learn from each other. Oftentimes, collaboration is vital to chapter success. Teams can accomplish work more quickly, efficiently, and effectively than people taking on projects on their own, and collaborative work also keeps everyone accountable to each other, which increases motivation.

***True Collaboration – Nurses must be relentless in pursuing and fostering true collaboration.***

[\(AACN HWE, 2005\)](#)

A successful collaboration can help a chapter:

- save costs by sharing expenses
- strengthen programs
- expand the value proposition for both organizations
- improve efficiency
- tap complementary skills and abilities
- increase leadership skills

There are multitudes of ways in which AACN chapters can collaborate.

### ***AACN Ambassadors***

AACN Ambassadors serve a fundamental role in advancing the mission of AACN by advocating for professional practice and promoting excellence in acute and critical care nursing. They accomplish this by communicating the value of AACN and championing:

- Membership in the professional AACN community.
- Specialty certification for acute and critical care nurses.
- Evidence-based practice standards and protocols.
- Recognition of excellence through the Beacon unit excellence program.
- Engagement in educational opportunities including NTI, e-learning and the free CE center.
- Local AACN chapter involvement.

Just as chapter leaders are not required to be AACN Ambassadors, Ambassadors are not required to be chapter members. Chapters should locate area ambassadors, invite and include them in chapter meetings, and collaborate with them to help engage area nurses in chapter activities. Go to [www.aacn.org/Ambassadors](http://www.aacn.org/Ambassadors) > [Find an Ambassador](#).

### ***Other Chapters or Local Groups***

Chapters collaborating with other chapters or local groups is a long-standing tradition. For example, many of the New England area chapters collaborate to put on the Horizons Conference every other year.

Another example is in heavily populated areas or bigger cities where there are multiple chapters that might work together on events resulting in lower overall costs. Even rural chapters can collaborate with those in large cities using virtual options like Skype, GoToMeeting, Google Hangout, etc. The possibilities are endless.

### ***Regional Chapter Meetings***

Regional meetings are based on the needs of the region. Some regions have them; others don't. The Regional Meeting Guidelines located at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Resource Library](#) are an excellent resource.

Some regions work closely with their Chapter Advisor on regional meetings and the Chapter Advisor has meeting responsibilities, while other regions choose to fully plan and execute their regional meetings and simply keep the Chapter Advisor informed. Whatever your region decides should be negotiated among the chapters and the Chapter Advisor.

### ***Community Collaboration & Other Organizations***

Is there an effort in your community to educate people about healthcare? Perhaps hospitals, schools of nursing, doctors' offices, vendors, or other organizations coming together for health fairs, education, etc. — these are ideal opportunities for AACN chapters to collaborate within their local communities.

Other organizations offer collaborative opportunities as well. Consider the American Heart Association, the Emergency Nurses Association, Sigma Theta Tau, and the Society for Critical Care Medicine (SCCM), etc., during your chapter planning process.

## CHAPTER LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY FOUR: ENSURING ADEQUATE RESOURCES AND MANAGING THEM EFFECTIVELY

*The [HWE Standards](#) that apply to Ensuring Adequate Resources and Managing Them Effectively include Authentic Leadership, Effective Decision Making, Appropriate Staffing, Skilled Communication, and True Collaboration.*

The following information details the obligations that the chapter agreed to when you signed the [Chapter Charter Agreement](#). They are repeated here for your reference. The Chapter Charter Agreement should be reviewed each year with the new chapter board of directors.

AACN operates on a Fiscal Year (FY) of July through June. For compliance with reporting requirements, it is highly recommended that your chapter follow the same fiscal year. Doing so will make the accounting process simpler. Additional detailed information on Financial Planning & Management can be found under Chapter Leadership Responsibility Four: Planning, Monitoring, and Strengthening Chapter Programs.

It is required that chapter financial reporting is submitted on time, and contractual agreements in which the chapter intends to enter into are submitted in advance to National for review. This review ensures that both the Chapter and AACN are legally protected, and that AACN complies with government reporting requirements. It is the responsibility of all chapter officers and board members to regularly check their chapter's Good Standing grid on the Chapter Officers Home Page of the website to ensure the chapter is in full compliance at all times.

### Chapter Charter Agreement

Each chapter is required to sign and submit to National a Chapter Charter Agreement and charter dues. The purpose of the Charter Agreement is to clearly identify the expectations and obligations of both the Chapter and of AACN. The Charter Agreement covers a three-year period and the corresponding dues are \$120. All chapters are on the same charter cycle, with the current cycle running from July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2017. Any chapters that charter during this 3-year period will have a prorated dues amount based on the cycle year at the time of charter (1<sup>st</sup> year - \$120; 2<sup>nd</sup> year - \$80; 3<sup>rd</sup> year - \$40).

It is imperative that chapter leaders review the [Chapter Charter Agreement](#) as the full chapter board is held accountable for fulfilling expectations described within the agreement when making chapter decisions and managing the chapter during the fiscal year.

### Financial Reporting Requirements

We cannot stress enough the importance of timely chapter financial reporting. As stated in the Introduction section, one of the most significant benefits that National provides to chapters is chartering all chapters under its 501(c)3 tax-exempt status. This tax status allows chapters to take advantage of all the same tax benefits as National AACN, including not paying taxes on revenue generated from most, if not all, of your activities.

Chapters are required to submit financial reports on time so that AACN complies with government reporting requirements. It is the responsibility of all chapter officers and board members to regularly check their chapter's Good Standing grid on the Chapter Officers Home Page of the website to ensure the chapter is in full compliance at all times.

Each chapter must maintain "Good Standing" status as identified by the following requirements. Chapters not in compliance with the Good Standing requirements may have their charter revoked and be disbanded.

- Chapters agree to abide by the Charter Agreement as evidenced by the Chapter President's and Treasurer's signatures on the signature page of the Charter Agreement.
- The outgoing chapter officers will review the Charter Agreement with the incoming officers during their annual officer transition.
- Chapters will submit all financial reports by the specified deadlines:

Financials	Due Date
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter (July-September)	November 15
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter (October-December)	February 15
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter (January-March)	May 15
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter (April-June)	August 15

Chapters must include all of the following items in each quarterly report:

- Bank statements for the 3 month reporting period;
- Cash receipts records for the 3 month reporting period;
- Cash disbursement records for the 3 month reporting period;
- Bank reconciliation records for the 3 month reporting period

Chapters will complete the following annual items by the specified deadlines:

Annual Items	Due Date
Enter Chapter Officer List into the Chapter Database	June 1
Submit Check Signer Form (for the fiscal year that began July 1)	August 15
Chapter Audit Form (for the previous fiscal year which ended June 30)	August 15
Chapter Transition Checklist	August 15
Submit Non-Employee Compensation Form (for the calendar year just ending)	December 31

**Chapters that are habitually late submitting the reporting requirements may be disbanded at the discretion of the AACN Chapter Department.** Extenuating circumstances, such as natural disasters, will be taken into consideration when making a final determination on disbandment.

The chapter financial reporting forms and more information can be found at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Chapter Forms](#).

***Chapter Audit Form:***

One of the financial controls that must be implemented by each chapter is that of conducting an annual financial audit of the previous fiscal year (July 1-June 30). This audit allows for the review of financial

transactions and policies on a regular basis. These audits are important to ensure the chapter is operating in a fiscally responsible and legal manner. It is through these audits that the chapter can be transparent to the membership about its finances and it allows for an outside review of the financial transactions. These audits have at time uncovered misuse or embezzlement of chapter funds which, had the audit not been completed would have continued.

To conduct the audit, the chapter should convene an Audit Committee comprised of 3 chapter members who are not current officers of the chapter and do not have accountability for handling chapter financial matters such as program registration fees, chapter meeting revenue, etc.

To assist the chapter in completing their audit, a checklist has been developed. Each AACN chapter is required to complete and submit this checklist annually to National AACN by August 15. Go to [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Chapter Forms](#).

### ***Chapter Officer List:***

Each year by June 1<sup>st</sup>, the chapter is required to enter the names into the chapter database of those members that will hold chapter officer positions as of July 1<sup>st</sup> for the new fiscal year. It is important that those people be designated in the "Future Chpt Position" column of the chapter's database. Then, when the new fiscal year begins on July 1<sup>st</sup>, and the chapter database information rolls over on that day, those people that were entered in the Future Chpt Position will automatically appear in the "Current Chpt Position." This will also ensure that the chapter officers will continue to have access to their chapter information and not be locked out. Chapters must have at least a President and Treasurer designated in their chapter's database to be considered in compliance related to chapter officers. Chapter databases are accessed by logging onto the website at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters).

Additionally, if at any other time during the year the officers change, the chapter is required to update the database with this information. It is vital that National AACN have the most up-to-date listing of chapter officers so that National can communicate effectively with the chapter. Chapter correspondence is generally sent to the full chapter board (officers and board members) to ensure that everyone receives the information and that it is responded to in a timely manner. Maintaining updated officers in the database is a requirement of Good Standing. If a chapter fails to provide updated officers, they will not receive communication and may be at risk for disbandment.

For an informational webinar on utilizing the chapter database please go to [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters)> [Chapter Education Room > Chapter Management & Operations > Navigating the Chapter Database](#).

### ***Check Signer Form / ATM Cards / Credit Cards:***

One of the critical financial controls that your chapter is required to establish is dual signatures on all checks, drafts, orders for payment, contracts, and other evidence of indebtedness, issued in the name of the chapter. The signatures should be that of the President and the Treasurer.

To protect the chapter, the number of individuals authorized as signers is limited to the chapter President, President-elect, Treasurer, and Treasurer-elect. A [Check Signer Form](#) listing the names of chapter check signers must be sent annually to National, by August 15, as AACN bonds the check signers. Further, if the President or Treasurer changes during the year, the chapter must submit a new Check Signer Form for bonding purposes.



- **ATM Cards and Credit Cards:**

It has been our experience that the use of ATM cards or credit cards is not in the best interest of the chapter because these cards give an individual access to make financial transactions on behalf of the chapter without a second authorization. While it may seem like the benefits of convenience outweigh the risks, we can tell you that there have been numerous instances of misuse of funds and embezzlement of chapter funds through the use of these cards. **Based on these experiences and in an effort to protect your chapter, National prohibits the use of ATM cards or credit cards by its chapters.**

We understand that this policy may seem burdensome to you. Your Chapter Advisor and the National Chapter Specialist are available to discuss this with you in more detail and assist your chapter in establishing convenient ways of managing your deposits and payments without the use of ATM or credit cards, such as pre-paying or arranging for the chapter to be billed for services.

### **Non-Employee Compensation Form & W9 Forms:**

AACN issues IRS 1099 forms to any non-employee who has worked on behalf of the chapter during the calendar year. A 1099 reports wages to the Internal Revenue Service for contracted services of non-employees (similar to a W-2).

Additionally, an IRS W9 form must be completed by every non-employee who has worked on behalf of the chapter during the calendar year. Chapters should request the completed W9 form from each non-employee before any monies are paid to that person. Chapters are required to submit the information from the completed W9 forms on the [Non-Employee Compensation Form](#) at the end of each calendar year. Blank W9 forms are available on the website at [www.aacn.org/chapters > Chapter Forms](http://www.aacn.org/chapters > Chapter Forms).

National is responsible for ensuring this information is reported to the IRS. The chapter is responsible for providing the needed information on the Non-Employee Compensation form by December 31. Failure to do so jeopardizes National's non-profit tax status.

Review the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) on the website for examples.

## **Advertising Restrictions**

The IRS considers advertising to be a business that is unrelated to AACN's tax-exempt purpose and is therefore a taxable activity.

Therefore, chapters may not:

- solicit corporate advertising,
- sell advertising space in their publications, program materials, or on their Website,
- advertise jobs in their publications, program materials or on their Website,
- solicit state or federal funding.

Chapters may, **with the prior approval of National AACN:**

- solicit sponsorships,

- solicit financial support, funding or contributions from private individuals, private foundations, companies, and corporations.

Please contact the National office for specific questions on sponsorship solicitation at 800-394-5995, ext. 313 or [Chapters@aacn.org](mailto:Chapters@aacn.org).

## Contracts & Grants

AACN chapters are obligated to protect the chapter and AACN by ensuring there are written agreements with speakers, vendors, facilities, etc., when hosting an event. Chapters are part of AACN and are not required to be independently incorporated. Thus, National AACN is ultimately liable for all chapter contractual obligations. ***Therefore, before signing any agreement***, it must be reviewed and approved by the AACN Chapter Department according to the Chapter Contract & Grant Policy on the Chapter Contracts page of the AACN website. ***Failure to submit contracts for approval may result in the chapter's disbandment.***

Just as two signers are required for signing checks, **two signers are also required on all contracts** to which the chapter commits. **Those two contract signers are the chapter President, and chapter Treasurer or the appropriate Chairperson.** The chapter must be listed on contracts as “the X Chapter of the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (chapter acronym-AACN).”

If a speaker or company does not have its own contract, sample contracts are available that can be modified based on chapter negotiations at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [contracts](#). The following contracts must be submitted for review and approval before signing:

- Catering agreements – most caterers have their own agreements.
- Co-sponsored programs
- A "letter of agreement" is required for chapters collaborating on programs and special projects that outline each chapter's responsibilities and commitments.
- Exhibitor / Vendor Agreements
- Grants
- Hotel/Facility – all contracts with a financial obligation greater than \$5,000.
  - National AACN is available to review hotel/facility agreements of **any** amount if the chapter is unsure.
- Letters of Agreement
  - Chapters should have at least a letter of agreement when working with other parties, even if no monies are involved.
- Partnership Agreements
- Regional Meeting Agreements
- Speakers – all contracts with a financial obligation greater than \$1,000.
  - If a speaker or company does not have its own contract, sample contracts are available below that can be modified based on the negotiations.
- Support Agreements (formerly known as Sponsor Agreements)

- Temporary Employment Agency Agreements – agencies will have their own agreements.
- Any other contract or lease, including property or equipment leases.
- Any financial commitments, regardless of the amount, which obligate the chapter for longer than 1 year.

The contract review process may take up to ten (10) business days. If the contract does not need to be reviewed by national, it is recommended that the chapter conduct its own review, using the Chapter Contracts & Grants Policy located on the AACN website.

## Chapter Records

Chapters shall send AACN copies of appropriate records pertaining to the chapter's programs, activities, and operations as requested by AACN, and will retain for three (3) years all of the following records related to its operations, except where noted below:

- Business Records:
  - Meeting minutes from all Committee Meetings
  - Meeting minutes from all Chapter Board Meetings
  - Membership Records
- Financial Records:
  - Bank Statements
  - Cash Receipts Records
  - Cash Disbursement Records
  - Bank Reconciliation Statements
  - Quarterly Financial Reports
- Educational Records:
  - Educational records must be kept for **four (4) years** when AACN CEs and/or CERPs are provided to participants.
  - For events where AACN CEs and/or CERPs are not provided, educational records must be saved for **three (3) years**.
  - Please refer to the Continuing Education Program Approval for Chapters on the website for the AACN Chapter Policy.

Electronic saving of records is allowed, including utilizing cloud storage, provided the chapter has a back-up copy of the electronic records, the back-up copy is not stored on the same computer or flash drive, all chapter leaders know where the records are stored, where to locate cloud passwords, and this information is documented in the chapter's meeting minutes.

## Commercial (Vendor) Support of Education

Chapters often seek commercial support to assist them in offsetting the costs of providing educational programs to nurses within their community. The commercial support is most commonly obtained from medical device and pharmaceutical companies whose products are used by acute and critical care nurses. In recent years, the regulations regarding what these companies can and cannot provide funding

for have become increasingly stringent. These regulations have come from the groups that regulate these industries as well as the groups that accredit continuing medical and nursing education. This has increased the burden on both the chapters and the companies.

Please note that it is AACN's philosophy not to exclude any AACN members from chapter events. If this presents a problem for any exhibitors / vendors, please immediately contact the AACN Chapter Department to help reach a resolution.

To assist your chapter in navigating these regulations, a fact sheet on commercial support for education has been created and placed on the AACN website ([www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Resource Library](#) > [Chapter Events](#) > [Vendor – Commercial Support for Education](#)). This document is updated regularly as requirements change.

Additionally, the vendor contract templates located under Chapter Contracts ([www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Contracts](#) > [Contract Templates](#)) clearly identify whether CEs may be offered, depending on the financial agreement with the vendor.

As you plan your events, if you have questions about commercial support, please contact your Chapter Advisor or the National Chapter Specialist. They will be able to answer your questions and advise you in negotiating the best commercial support for your chapter.

## Employees

Federal regulations *prohibit AACN chapters from having any paid employees*, such as administrative/secretarial help. Chapters in need of administrative support may obtain that help through a local temporary employment agency, paying the agreed upon fees. A contract with the temporary employment agency is required and must be reviewed/approved by the AACN Chapter Department before signing.

## Merit Points

Many chapters develop merit point systems to recognize and award the contributions of their chapter members during the year. If the chapter establishes a merit point system, the points may only be used for registrations to conferences, reimbursement of expenses to educational conferences, educational materials, chapter dues, scholarships for members to attend AACN's National Teaching Institute and Critical Care Exposition (NTI), etc. ***Merit points may not be redeemed for cash as this is a violation of IRS regulations for non-profit organizations.*** An example of a merit point system can be found at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Resource Library](#).

## Public Policy Restrictions

AACN's tax-exempt status regulates our public policy activities. Therefore, National and chapters are prohibited from participating in, or contributing to political campaigns, on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. Chapters are also prohibited from lobbying on behalf of chapters or National AACN.

As a private citizen, chapter members have the right to make their voices heard in government. However, AACN, as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit association, must comply with restrictions placed on lobbying and on political activities. These IRS restrictions limit the association to an insubstantial amount of lobbying.

For more information on Public Policy Guidelines, refer to the Public Policy Handbook, available online at <http://www.aacn.org/WD/Practice/Content/PublicPolicy/healthpolicy.content?menu=Practice&lastmenu=> .

## Raffles

Each state has its own laws governing raffles, lotteries, and games of chance. Generally, AACN recommends that if a chapter is going to have a raffle or giveaway that the chance to win be available to every individual who is participating in (or paying) to attend the event where the prize will be given. It is also recommended that entry into the raffle be included in the price of the event and not be established as a separate fee.

If your chapter wishes to pursue other options for raffles, including using a raffle as a fundraiser, you must contact the AACN Chapter Specialist at [chapters@aacn.org](mailto:chapters@aacn.org) or 800-394-5995 ext. 313 for further consultation. Also, be advised, that you will need to research and abide by all raffle laws governing your state.

## Scholarships

Several chapters have their own scholarship programs to send members to NTI and/or other nursing education offerings. Refer to the AACN Scholarship area of the website at [www.aacn.org](http://www.aacn.org) > [About Us](#) > [Scholarships](#) as a resource for developing a chapter scholarship program.

## Speaking on Behalf of AACN

In addition to the Advertising and Public Policy restrictions, AACN chapters may not respond to requests from media, advocacy groups, or any other entity on behalf of AACN, unless specifically requested to do so by National AACN. Instead, AACN chapters should refer those requests to the National office Communications Department at 800-394-5995.

As a private citizen, chapter members have the right to make their voices heard, and may respond to requests as private citizens.

## Tax-Exempt Status

AACN and its chapters are incorporated in California under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Chapters use AACN's federal tax identification number, 95-2706905. Chapters must not make any separate applications for state or federal income tax exemptions and must not file tax returns with state or federal agencies. All necessary state and federal filings will be made by National AACN. Requests for chapters to make separate filings with any state or federal agency should be referred to National AACN.

AACN files annual consolidated tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service and a state unitary return on behalf of all chapters. It is imperative that AACN receives chapter financial reports on time for

inclusion in those filings. Incomplete or inaccurate tax returns can lead to significant penalties, including revocation of tax-exempt status.

Chapters may be eligible for state sales tax exemptions from their state agencies. Interested Chapters should contact their state tax department for further information. Chapters may also qualify for nonprofit bulk mail rates. Interested chapters should contact National for further information.

## **Chapter Resources**

Chapters receive support and benefits from National. Many of these resources will assist chapter leaders with managing its membership, as well as communicating with members. With proper notification AACN may change support if it deems it is in the best interest of the Chapter.

### ***AACN Chapter Department***

The role of the staff at the National office is to provide consultation and support to chapters to foster the continued success of chapters. They are responsible for implementing systems to ensure chapters comply with federal and state tax regulations. To contact the Chapters Department: [chapters@aacn.org](mailto:chapters@aacn.org) or 800-394-5995 at extensions 365, 338, or 313.

### ***Chapter Advisory Team***

AACN provides a network of Chapter Advisors to provide communication, support and mentoring to chapter leaders ranging from coaching on leadership development and succession planning to problem solving challenging situations. AACN chapters that work together with their Chapter Advisors and the National office have the greatest success achieving their goals. The Chapter Advisory Team functions as a vital link between chapters and the National office, ensuring effective communication among the AACN Board of Directors, National office and local chapters on pressing issues chapters face. Advisors are volunteers who have expert knowledge on chapter issues and trends in their regions of the country, and are well informed about what is happening at the National level and how that affects chapters.

Chapters are encouraged to contact their Chapter Advisor for assistance with various issues or concerns chapter leaders may encounter. Examples include:

- Resolve major unresolved conflict within the chapter.
- Clarify any program or contractual issue.
- Resolve financial issues that could negatively impact the chapter.
- When direction or support is needed.
- For assistance on how to implement key initiatives.
- Offer feedback regarding policies or procedures affecting chapters.

To contact your Chapter Advisor, go to [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Find a Chapter Advisor/Chapter Support](#). To request an on-site visit with your Chapter Advisor, please submit a Chapter Advisor On-Site Consultation Form: [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Forms](#).

**Chapter Database:**

AACN provides chapter officers with access to their chapter database for tracking of membership and chapter officers, communication to members, and to the chapter officer area of the AACN website for financial reporting. Chapter officers may access their chapter database from the Chapter Officers Home Page on the website. For information on utilizing and maintaining the chapter database, go to [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Resource Library](#) > [Chapter Website](#). An instructional webinar is located at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Chapter Education Room](#) > [Chapter Management and Operations](#).

**Chapter Education Room:**

The Chapter Education Room, located at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Chapter Education Room](#), contains on-demand instructional webinars for chapter officers and board members on various chapter management and operations topics to help better manage chapters.

The webinar topics were identified by chapters as those needed to comprehend the “nuts and bolts” of chapter leadership responsibilities. We hope you find the webinars useful, though they do not qualify for CNEs or CERPs. We encourage you to return to them as often as needed.

**Chapter Newsletters:**

Chapter newsletters are another way to provide chapter updates and communication about events such as meetings, community projects and educational offerings. Newsletters are also a way to make announcements and highlight chapter accomplishments and activities. Newsletters can be distributed to members in electronic or printed form, posted on bulletin boards, etc. There are sample newsletters located at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Resource Library](#).

**Chapter Website & Email Address:**

AACN provides each chapter with a complimentary email address and a basic website hosted by AACN. The chapter can either upload its own website, or utilize the template provided by AACN. AACN may, at its discretion, add pertinent information to the chapter’s website at any time. For additional information about chapter websites, go to [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Resource Library](#) > [Chapter Website](#). An instructional webinar is available at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Chapter Education Room](#) > [Chapter Management and Operations](#).

**Consultation:**

AACN makes available consultation and advisory support to the chapter to foster its success through, but not limited to, the Chapter Advisory Team (CAT) and National office staff. Go to [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Chapter Forms](#) > [Chapter Advisor On-Site Consultation Form](#).

**Free Event Promotion:**

AACN will provide chapter with free event promotion of the chapter's choosing on the AACN website, the AACN Certification website, in *AACN News*, the *American Journal of Critical Care*, and *Critical Care News* on a space-available basis. Complete the appropriate forms at:

- [www.aacn.org/chapters > Forms > Chapter Event Announcement Form](http://www.aacn.org/chapters > Forms > Chapter Event Announcement Form);
- [www.aacn.org/chapters > Events Calendar](http://www.aacn.org/chapters > Events Calendar);

To include events in *AACN News*, send an email to [aacnnews@aacn.org](mailto:aacnnews@aacn.org).

**Free Product Resources:**

AACN will make available to chapters free product resources for the chapter to promote AACN membership, certification, NTI, and other key initiatives. Complete and submit the form at [www.aacn.org/chapters > Forms > Chapter Free Resource Order Form](http://www.aacn.org/chapters > Forms > Chapter Free Resource Order Form).

**List Rental:**

AACN provides up to four (4) complimentary label orders per year (July 1 – June 30), as requested by the chapter to use for membership or event promotion. Additional lists beyond the four are available for purchase. Chapters will receive names and addresses only, for physical mailings. The policy is posted on the AACN website at [www.aacn.org/chapters > Forms > Chapter List Rental Request Form](http://www.aacn.org/chapters > Forms > Chapter List Rental Request Form) and states the following:

- Please keep in mind when you are requesting a List Rental that your list will intersect with other chapter members in the area.
- It is important that chapters use these lists appropriately – to invite other AACN members to events and to collaborate – not as a competition base to recruit new members from other chapters.
- You have a choice of receiving your list in one of two different formats:
  - Adhesive labels ready to apply to your mail piece.
  - Excel file to create your own labels.
- All orders must be submitted a minimum of 10 business days prior to the date the materials are needed.
  - If ordering printed labels, please allow an additional 5-7 business days for shipping.
- A maximum of a 100-mile radius can be selected for each List Rental request.
- Member lists include the following information only:
  - Member Name
  - Address
  - City, State, Zip Code



- Due to AACN’s Privacy Policy, and out of respect to our members, email addresses, telephone numbers, credentials, etc., cannot be included.

***Resource Library:***

AACN has developed a chapter library that contains valuable written resources to guide chapters in their governance and management. Information that can be found in the resource library includes: Best Practices, Conflict Resolution, Educational Planning, Healthy Work Environments, Membership, Needs Assessments, Strategic Planning, and Succession Planning; Chapter Finances, and Chapter Governance Resources. The Resource Library can be found on the Chapters home page at [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Resource Library](#).

***Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.):***

Many chapters have established Facebook groups and Twitter accounts as a method to communicate with their chapter members. These are excellent resources that, if used effectively with regular, timely communication, will help to engage chapter members. When creating social media accounts, it is a best practice to create them as “AACN-Chapter Name or Region.” This makes it easier when users are searching for your pages.

If your chapter has social media accounts, be sure to “like” the similar National AACN accounts so that the accounts automatically “link.” For more information, go to [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Resource Library](#) > [Chapter Website](#) and [www.aacn.org/chapters](http://www.aacn.org/chapters) > [Chapter Education Room](#) > [Skilled Communication](#).

## CHAPTER LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY FIVE: RECRUITING AND ORIENTING NEW CHAPTER LEADERS

*The [HWE Standards](#) that apply to Recruiting and Orienting New Chapter Leaders include all 6 Standards of Authentic Leadership, Effective Decision Making, Appropriate Staffing, Skilled Communication, True Collaboration, and Meaningful Recognition.*

### Succession Planning

Succession planning is vital to a chapter's success and sustainability. Each member of the board leadership, and in fact, every chapter member should be actively engaged in identifying and mentoring future leaders for the chapter. Succession planning is not something that can be discussed once or twice a year; rather it needs to be an ongoing activity to ensure there is a strong pipeline of future leaders.

Succession planning is a systematic approach to:

- Building a chapter leadership pipeline/talent pool to ensure leadership continuity.
- Developing potential successors in ways that best fit their strengths.
- Identifying the best candidates for categories of positions.
- Concentrating resources on the talent development process yielding a greater return on investment.

Effectively done, succession planning is critical to mission success and creates an effective process for recognizing, developing, and retaining top leadership talent.

There are several factors typically found in successful succession planning initiatives. For example:

- Chapter leaders are personally involved.
  - Chapter leaders hold themselves accountable for growing leaders.
  - Chapter members are committed to their own self-development.
  - Leadership competencies are identified and used for selection and development.
  - A pool of talent is identified and developed early for long-term needs.
  - Development is based on challenging and varied job-based experiences.
  - Succession planning addresses challenges such as diversity, recruitment, and retention.
- ***How to Develop a Succession Plan***  
The process boils down to six steps:
    1. Put a succession-planning team together.

Find the right balance of people in your chapter to participate in the succession-planning process. Select people who are process-oriented, effective communicators, knowledgeable

about job competencies and competency development, and connected throughout your chapter in ways that will help garner support for your plan.

2. Identify the main factors that will influence your plan.

Anticipate factors that may influence the success of your succession plan. For example, you may see changing trends occurring in healthcare that will require new competencies in key positions and/or lead to a more diverse generational and cultural membership that require new ways of developing internal talent.

3. Link your succession plan to your chapter's overall yearly plan.

Your yearly plan tells everyone what your chapter is all about, where it's going, and how it will get there. If your succession plan is out of sync with your yearly plan, your succession plan is doomed to failure from the start. You need to partner the two plans every step of the way. Your annual plan, along with the influential factors you identified in Step 2, will enable you to identify the key positions that your plan must cover.

4. Job Descriptions

Chapters should have a clear and realistic job description for each leadership position that outlines the duties, responsibilities and competencies (talents, skills, and knowledge) required for each position.

5. Shape action plans.

A succession plan by itself is useless. It needs to be translated into concrete action plans, with measurable goals, specified timelines, and people accountable for taking various actions or applying required processes. Plus, the implementation of your plan needs to be continuously monitored by your succession-planning team, evaluated on an ongoing basis, and adjusted for unexpected events in order to ensure its success.

- ***How to Ensure Smooth Job Transitions***

It is not enough to simply develop a succession plan and set it into motion. In addition to monitoring, evaluating, and adjusting it as necessary, there is one very important element that must be carefully thought out: ensuring a smooth transition process for the new chapter leader. You can have the best, most qualified member in the world to succeed a key position, but the transition still may be rocky because you haven't set up a process for transitioning that person.

Here are three helpful tips for ensuring a smooth transition of any new chapter leader:

1. **Introduce the new leader to all the individuals with whom he or she will be working.** Give them the chance to interact, get to know each other, and develop a level of comfort. Ideally, of course, the person will have been active within the chapter and knows many of the team.
2. **If possible, allow the new leader to shadow the person being replaced.** This will familiarize the person with the details of their new positions, the issues and problems that typically come up, and the knowledge needed to effectively carry out the job.

If shadowing isn't feasible, an orientation / on-boarding / precepting process is recommended to help the new leader learn their new role. Utilizing past chapter leaders as mentors to help in this regard is an excellent best practice. Take advantage of past leaders' skills by leveraging their experience and knowledge in mentoring the new leaders.

3. **Provide the new leader with as full a briefing as possible regarding the ins and outs of his or her new position.** Depending upon the position itself, this briefing should include information on chapter operations, accounting and financial reporting, and the yearly plan.

Some additional best practices regarding succession planning include:

- Having an "elect" position for each officer or chairperson role. This gives the individual who will be assuming the leadership position a year to learn about the position and accountabilities before stepping into the position. This also allows for the workload to be shared so it is less burdensome for each individual.
- Inviting new chapter members to serve on committees or as "co-chair" for a committee or event. This also allows for the workload to be shared so it is less burdensome for each individual.
- Inviting chapter members to attend board meetings so they can see how the board works. Some chapters have positions entitled "Board Learning Partners" that serve this purpose.
- Having each board member identify one person they are going to mentor during the year.
- Engaging past board members in identifying and mentoring future leaders.
- Consider job sharing or co-chairs.
- Utilize the "willingness to serve" documents for various positions located in the Resource Library.

Additional best practices regarding succession planning can be found on the chapter Website. Visit [www.aacn.org/chapters > Resource Library](http://www.aacn.org/chapters > Resource Library), and in the [Chapter Education Room > Effective Decision Making](#).

Having a succession plan in place will eliminate recycling of officers and help ensure your chapter's sustainability.

## Nominations and Election

As previously mentioned, when discussing the chapter leadership roles, each chapter leader serves for a specific term length. Usually the terms are either one or two years in length. Therefore, each year, the chapter members have the responsibility of selecting new individuals to lead and manage the chapter. By holding annual elections, chapter members have the opportunity to use their voice in determining the future direction of the chapter. Chapters may also consider job-sharing as a way to encourage more members to participate on committees, etc. You can gauge members' interest in chapter leadership positions by using the Willingness to Serve document located at [www.aacn.org/chapters > Resource Library](http://www.aacn.org/chapters > Resource Library).

As chapter leaders, you serve the chapter and are accountable to the membership. You have an obligation to the members to allow them to select their leaders. However, chapters have reported that the nomination and election process can often be extremely time consuming and complicated with few members participating in the voting. Below are some simple guidelines for conducting your nominations and election which are aimed at achieving the desired outcome while minimizing the work involved.

***Nominations:***

The first step in ensuring the membership has a voice in selecting its leaders is having an open call for nominations. This can easily be done by sending out a call for nominations via mail or e-mail approximately 30 days before the election will take place. This allows the members ample opportunity to review the responsibilities of each role and submit nominations. If the election will take place at a meeting, the chapter can also accept additional nominations onsite prior to voting. The call for nominations should include the following information:

- Title and description of each position for which nominations are being accepted, including any specific requirements for serving.
- Deadline for submitting nominations.
- Details regarding the election.

***Election:***

To ensure that all members have an opportunity to fulfill their responsibility to vote, notification of the election must be sent to all members 14 days in advance of the meeting at which the election will take place. Or in the case of a mail or electronic election, members must be given 14 days to cast their ballot.

Voting can occur at a face-to-face meeting, by mail, e-mail, or through an online voting service. What is essential is that each chapter documents their processes regarding how the votes will be secured, what controls will be in place to validate the voter is eligible and only votes once, who will be responsible for counting the votes and how the results will be recorded and reported to the membership. Due to these issues, most chapters have found it easiest to conduct voting either by mail or face-to-face. Online voting services also provide a great option to chapters, however the cost of these services are often prohibitive to chapters.

Since the leadership is selected by the membership, it is important that enough members participate in the election to ensure the results are representative of their desires. Therefore a “quorum” of chapter members must cast ballots in order for the election to be valid. Prior to the election, and as part of the chapter’s voting policy, the chapter board or leadership committee establishes a quorum. It is recommended that the quorum not be less than 5% and not more than 25% of the chapter membership. The candidate receiving the highest number of votes for the office shall be elected.

**Vacancy & Replacement of a Director or Officer**

At times, due to work and life situations, a chapter officer needs to vacate their position before their term is complete. When this occurs, the chapter has the flexibility to decide whether to appoint an interim officer to complete the term (this is recommended when the term is more than half over) or to hold an election to fill the vacancy. When holding an election, it will be necessary to determine if the

person elected will only complete the remainder of the term vacated or if they will complete the remainder of that term and then serve a full term in the position. If an election is to be conducted, the guidelines provided regarding Nominations and Elections should be followed.

The board is responsible for notifying the full membership when a position is vacated and the plan for filling this vacancy. Ideally this notification would take place within 14-30 days following the vacancy.

In rare instances, a board member may be unable to fulfill the obligations of their role and the chapter may determine it is necessary to ask the individual to step down from their position. These situations are very difficult for the chapter and individuals involved. Therefore, to ensure the best possible outcome for everyone, chapters should contact either the Chapter Advisor or the Chapter Specialist at National for consultation. National has experience with these situations and can provide assistance based on your unique situation.



National has experience with all types of chapter questions, ideas, situations, and concerns, and can provide assistance based on your unique needs. Let us know how we can help you. Contact us at [Chapters@aacn.org](mailto:Chapters@aacn.org) or toll free at 800-394-5995, x365, x338, and x313.

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