**TO:**  PLA Board of Directors

**RE:** PLA Committees Alignment

**DATE:**  November 2, 2023

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:**Discussion, Action

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:** Mary Hirsh, Deputy Director

**DRAFT OF MOTION:**It is hereby resolved that:

1. The PLA Board approves reducing the number of standing committees from 13 to 8.
   1. 8 standing committees that directly support the goals of the strategic plan remain standing committees.
   2. 5 standing committees are transitioned to advisory groups for the 2024-2025 governance year to clarify roles and tasks, reduce meeting obligations, and reduce staff time.
2. The PLA Board will consider future use of task forces to meet emergent needs or address critical issues.

**Background**

Beginning in governance year 2021-2022, the PLA board has periodically discussed taking action on refining committee-related processes and alignments. This timing aligned with onboarding a new PLA Executive Director, launching a revised PLA strategic plan, and ongoing pandemic impacts on membership and library capacities. The main themes to emerge were: better alignment between goals of the association as determined by the board, work of committees, and staff roles and responsibilities.

In 2023 the PLA Executive Committee requested analysis and recommendation of changes to committee structure that will result in better alignment with PLA strategic goals and organizational efficiencies.

**Overview**

PLA has three categories of volunteer roles that are appointed by the president-elect: Standing Committees, Advisory Groups, and Task Forces. There are 155 volunteer slots available for service on these groups (not including the Board and Nominating committees, which are populated by different processes). In 2023, PLA also collected names of 46 people willing to volunteer for specific activities, such as scholarship or grant applications review.

**Current Structure**

While all three types of groups provide avenues for critical member input into PLA strategies, programs, and services, there are nuances between the groups.

**Standing committees** are established to carry on the continuing work of the Association, with detailed charges.

The 13 current committees are supported by 12 staff.

* [Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships Committee](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/pla-tflegadv)
* [Annual Conference 2024 Program Subcommittee](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/pla-cfacprog1)
* [Board of Directors](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/PLA-BD)\*\*
* [Budget and Finance Committee](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/pla-bf)\*\*
* [Digital Literacy Committee](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/pla-digilit)
* [Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/pla-tfedi)
* [Committee on Family Engagement](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/pla-tffameng)
* [Leadership Development Committee](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/pla-tfleader)
* [Measurement, Evaluation and Assessment Committee](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/pla-meac)
* [Nominating Committee](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/pla-nm2024)\*\*
* [PLA 2024 Conference Committee](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/pla-nc2024)
* [PLA 2024 Conference Program Subcommittee](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/pla-ncprog2024)
* PLA 2024 Conference Local Arrangements Subcommittee
* [*Public Libraries* Advisory Committee](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/pla-publibs)
* [Technology Committee](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/pla-tech)

*\*\**These committees cannot be dissolved or altered at any time.

**Advisory groups** advise the Board of Directors on areas of expertise or practice. Advisory groups meet less frequently and carry out specific, time-limited tasks. Two staff support the two current advisory groups:

* [Continuing Education Advisory Group](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/pla-tfceadv)
* [Membership Advisory Group](https://www.ala.org/pla/about/people/committees/pla-tfmbradv)

The two advisory groups have well-defined work products and outputs, meet no more than quarterly, and require minimal staff attention to function effectively.

**Taskforces** perform limited project-based functions. Currently, there are no active PLA taskforces. An example of a past taskforce is the Leadership taskforce, which developed the PLA leadership model and eventual Leadership Academy. A second iteration was convened to revise the model.

All members of Committees, Advisory Groups, and Taskforces are appointed by the president-elect from a pool of member volunteers. Standing, committees, advisory groups and task forces are authorized by resolution of the Board of Directors and may be dissolved in the same manner. Special committees may be authorized by the president to meet emergency needs. New committees can be recommended by the PLA Board of Directors or any PLA member.

Committees that directly support a lever of the strategic plan include:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strategic Plan Goal | EDISJ | Transformation | Professional Growth | Advocacy & Awareness | Organizational Excellence |
| Relevant Committees | -EDISJ | -Annual Conference Program Subcommittee | -Leadership\*  -PLA Conference Committees | -Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships | -Board\*\*  -B&F\*\*  -Nominating\*\* |

\*Leadership Development will require a name change and charge update to reflect the evolution of the Professional Growth goal

\*\*These committees cannot be dissolved without a change to the bylaws.

Committees that do not directly support a lever of the strategic plan include:

* Digital Literacy Committee
* Committee on Family Engagement
* Measurement, Evaluation, and Assessment Committee
* Public Libraries Advisory Committee
* Technology Committee

**Key Issues**

**Strategic Alignment:** While some committees have very specific charges that directly support areas of work articulated in the strategic plan, other committees are less specific. While committees have been encouraged to consider framing their work to support revenue generation and membership growth, this intersection is not always obvious to chairs and members.

**Work Plans and Products**: Committees that do not have clearly defined expectations (i.e.: conference program subcommittee vs. digital literacy committee) often struggle to find a project or purpose that is relevant and sustainable, while requiring a great deal of staff time and attention. There is little consistency between activity level, outputs or outcomes between all standing committees.

**Staff Roles and Responsibilities**: Staff liaisons have historically been drawn from manager and above positions, some staff liaise to more than 1 committee, and up to 4 committees. Prior to 2020, most committees met in person at Midwinter and Annual and virtually two other times over the course of the committee year. Since 2020, with the advent of online meetings, many committees have opted to meet more frequently, many meet once per month. Committee management and related work is an increasing drain on staff time.

**The Opportunity**

Since 2020, PLA has made logistical adjustments to improve the overall committee process and experience, including: starting the appointment process earlier, hosting an annual chair orientation, and realigning committee reporting schedules to better reflect governance year flow. There is a further opportunity to implement more outward-facing change to more closely align the priorities of the board, the work of committees, and the capacities of staff. Doing so would bring efficiency to all aspects of committee work.

How might we continue to refine the committee structure and experience so that it:

* Provides opportunities for meaningful member engagement?
* Advances PLA goals in alignment with Board goals and priorities?
* Is manageable for PLA staff?

PLA staff have identified a path that aligns to the bylaws, retains the existing number of member volunteer slots while reducing burden on staff time.

* The 8 standing committees that support the levers of the strategic plan, as described in the table above, will remain standing committees. Committees will continue to meet at the discretion of the chair(s) and develop work plans that align with board goals and under staff advisement. The relevancy of committees will be reviewed each time the strategic plan is updated.
* The 5 remaining committees will become advisory groups. These new groups will meet no more than four times per year and carry out specific staff-directed tasks. The relevancy of advisory groups will be reviewed every two years, per the bylaws.
* The board will consider activating task forces more frequently to look at emergent needs or address critical issues.