

NLN AFFILIATED CONSTITUENT LEAGUE

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*Reference & Resources*



**National League**  
*for* **Nursing**

# Guidelines for a Committee on Nominations

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## Function & Composition

*Get the right people on the bus. – Jim Collins, Good to Great*

The Nominations Committee holds the key to the league's future. This importance is acknowledged by the fact it is the only committee that has the majority or all of its members elected by the membership. The membership holds this committee responsible for assuring that the league has a strong leadership team – the officers; and an effective managerial body – the board of directors. The committee carries the responsibility for future league leadership by proposing nominees for the succeeding Committee on Nominations.

Briefly stated, specific functions of the committee are:

1. To identify the elected positions to be filled
2. To secure information about possible candidates
3. To select the best qualified candidates available and to secure their consent
4. To prepare the ballot and biographical material on the nominees
5. To carry out responsibilities for the conduction of the election as prescribed by the bylaws
6. To follow up after the election with the successful and unsuccessful candidates
7. To transmit records and other information to the next committee.

The committee usually has five members, all or a majority of whom have been elected by the membership. If all committee members are not elected by the membership, the board of directors is responsible for the appointment of the non-elected members. Consult league bylaws to determine the number of members and the method of selection. Bylaws will specify the terms of office and indicate whether the terms are staggered or all the members serve a concurrent term. Also, bylaws should specify how the chair is selected.

## Qualifications

**S**ince this committee holds the key to the league's future, those serving have a unique challenge and a special obligation. It is vital to the effective performance of the committee that its members are qualified to carry out their responsibility for securing the best nominees.

Qualifications for members of the Committee on Nominations include:

1. Individual member of the NLN.
2. An understanding and acceptance of the basic philosophy of the league as a broad-based, voluntary membership organization
3. Willingness to become familiar with the current goals, programs, and activities of the constituent league
4. Knowledge of work of the officers and board and of the qualifications needed for all elected positions
5. Stature in the league and a broad acquaintance with its membership
6. Willingness to participate actively as a member of the committee and to devote the time needed to complete responsibilities in accordance with a schedule established by the board and as provided in the bylaws
7. Ability to talk with prospective nominees and to fairly present the responsibilities, expectations, and time commitments involved
8. A talent for making prospective nominees feel honored to be asked
9. Sensitivity to people and gracefulness in accepting a "no" from a prospective nominee.
10. Skill in securing needed information about a prospective nominee and ability to evaluate this data
11. Ability to maintain confidentiality about deliberations and willingness to approach responsibilities without prejudice or bias.

## Relationship to the Board

**T**he Nominations Committee is elected totally or in part by the members, and is responsible to them. However, the membership also elects the officers and board to function on its behalf. The board and the president are responsible for the functioning of all segments of the league, including making certain that the Nominations Committee is functioning within the bylaws, policies, procedures, and budget of the league.

League bylaws usually state that the president is an ex-officio member of all committees except the Nominations Committee. The president is often responsible for calling the first committee meeting and for providing orientation. She also makes sure that members are informed about the current status of the league and about projected plans. If the committee chair is not a board member, the president may invite the chair to attend. In some leagues, provision is made for each committee member to attend at least one board meeting. This gives the members an opportunity to learn about the work of the board and to observe current officials in action.

Since the president has the opportunity to observe many of the league members in action, her advice and counsel to the committee will be invaluable. The president is aware of areas of weakness and has a perspective on the current as well as future needs of the league. The committee may also want to consult the president-elect for her opinion and ideas regarding future needs. In leagues where staff is employed, they can make available resource materials, such as membership lists, committee rosters, job descriptions and other information that would be helpful.

While the committee has available a wide range of resources to use, ultimately it becomes only the members of the committee who carry the responsibility of preparing the slate to present to the membership.

## Getting Organized

**A**fter their selection, the committee members should meet to be oriented, organize the work, and review the status of the league. This meeting should be planned and conducted by the president. Committee members should receive information about vacancies to be filled, terms of office, specific skills and qualifications needed, due dates that need to be considered in setting up a schedule, and funds allocated to cover expenses.

Committee members need a copy of the league bylaws in order to become familiar with the articles which relate to their work, the election process, and the functions of the board and duties of officers. The committee may find a review of the purpose and functions of the league helpful in putting their work in perspective. League bylaws are unique and knowing the provisions of the league bylaws is very important to the committee members.

Members should be familiar with the leagues goals, plans and budget. A member roster is another resource needed. A list of current officers, board members and Nominations Committee members and terms of office is vital. Members should be apprised of the board meeting dates, publication schedule for the newsletter and date of the next annual meeting. The president is responsible for seeing that the committee has the information needed.

During the orientation meeting, the committee should reach a consensus on its way of work. An issue to be dealt with is that of a possible conflict of interest arising from committee members nominating themselves. This issue was resolved for the NLN when Article X dealing with the Nominations Committee was revised to read "Members of this committee shall not be eligible for nomination." Some leagues take a similar position by either including a provision in their bylaws or by establishing as a procedure the practice of declaring members of the Nominations Committee ineligible for nomination. If there is no written policy or established practice, it would be well for the committee to come to consensus as to whether committee members should nominate each other for elective office or not.

A special note about past-presidents: *It is recommended that an immediate past-president who seeks to return to leadership be slated at the member-at-large level.*

Following are other ways of work on which agreement should be reached:

- The confidentiality of the work of the committee
- The method of recording committee proceedings
- The process to be used to make the membership aware of the positions to be filled and ways they can have input
- Method to be used to obtain information of prospective nominees or current officials who are eligible for re-election

- Ways committee members will familiarize themselves with the work of the board and officers as well as gaining insight into future plans
- How to handle sharing of information among members between meetings.

## Developing the Work Schedule

**T**he committee's work is a year round activity. It isn't completed until the next committee is installed. In order to fulfill the responsibilities, and to coordinate with other league activities, careful planning is vital. The committee needs to develop a schedule to which members will adhere. Much of the committee's work will be governed by the bylaws. The most important factor is the date established by the board for the league's annual meeting. As the committee begins its work it may not know the exact date, but preliminary planning can be done based on previous patterns.

The work schedule should include the scheduled meetings of the board. It's recommended that non-board members attend at least once. Publication dates of newsletters and the due date for submitting nominations information should be noted. League newsletters are frequently used to communicate with members and inform them of the vacancies to be filled and the qualifications required.

Committee meetings may also be included on the calendar. Leagues have found that a combination of meetings and conference calls are effective. Each league needs to determine the best plan for them but the committee should have at least one meeting so there is an opportunity for all members to get together for exchanging ideas and building rapport. This makes conference calls and written communication more effective later on.

In developing a schedule, consult the president or staff about technical aspects of conducting an election. Practice varies, so investigate what method is used, how the ballot is compiled and who sends it, so that the committee can plan its work in such a way that activities flow smoothly rather than having preparation of the ballot become a frantic, last minute operation. Once the work plan is developed, be sure to share them with the staff and any others who may be affected.

## Looking for Leaders

**B**efore the committee seeks nominees they must know what positions are to be filled, and what leadership qualities are needed to assure organizational growth. The committee should have records showing all the elected positions, terms of office, names of incumbents, and number of consecutive terms incumbents have served in an office. This information should be verified by the league's secretary or president.

Consult the bylaws to be certain what positions should be filled in even and odd years. Also note any bylaw restrictions regarding eligibility of various classes of membership to hold office. Also look at term expirations to make sure there is an even turnover on the board and not a mass exodus in any given year.

### ***Sources of Prospective Nominees***

Since the committee was elected by the membership to perform the nominating process on their behalf, they should let the membership know the committee is functioning and inform them of ways in which their input is needed. Periodic newsletter articles about the work of the committee are a good way to communicate. The membership should be knowledgeable about the positions to be filled, qualifications needed and be encouraged to submit their suggestions for nominees. Be sure to include information about where they can send their suggestions. Some committees develop a prospect online survey which can be run in the newsletter and distributed via email.

Another source for prospective nominees is the membership of league committees. The committee will also want to consider the officers and board members who are eligible for another term. The committee should review the qualifications of those in office as thoroughly as any other prospective nominee.

The search for nominees should not be limited to those suggested by the membership. The committee has a responsibility to consider all members who are eligible. The committee should have a current membership roster.

**Selection of Nominees**

The committee is now ready to select those who are to be invited to have their names placed in nomination. Selecting primary and secondary choices is recommended, since not everyone the committee will approach will find it possible to accept. Frequently committees like to make their selection for officer positions *first* and then select nominees for the board and Nominations Committee vacancies. Sometimes the secondary choice for an officer position may become the primary choice for a board position.

In making selections, committee members need to answer these questions:

- Is the individual an individual NLN member?
- Does the individual have an interest in the kinds of activities in carrying out the responsibilities of the position?
- Does the individual have a sense of belonging and commitment to the league?
- Is the individual willing to take the time, money, and energy which will be needed to carry the responsibilities of this position?
- How does the individual perform in similar volunteer positions?
- What strengths and weaknesses seem to be indicated and how might these affect performance?
- Does the individual have the knowledge, skills, and access to information needed to carry out this job?
- Can the individual be relied upon to complete the task?
- Has the individual demonstrated the ability to work with others?
- Does the individual have the experience and special aptitude needed for the particular job?
- Is the individual have the experience and special aptitude needed for the particular job?
- Is the individual already committed to other volunteer positions which might limit available time or present a conflict of interest?
- How will the individual contribute to the achievement of the goals of the league?

If the committee finds it does not have all the information it needs about the individual being considered, the committee may place this person's name on a deferred list until it can obtain more information.

Before the committee makes its decision, it needs to determine whether prospective nominees provide balance or are representative of the various segments of the league. The committee should also consider whether their list of prospective nominees is representative of the different geographic segments of the league's membership, and also whether their list of prospective nominees is representative of the league's diverse population, and also whether the prospective nominees are representative of different opinions on major nursing health issues. Consideration should also be given to varying types of agencies or institutions by which nominees are employed. The qualifications of the individuals are, of course, of primary importance.

Once a list of primary and secondary nominees has been prepared the committee members need to determine who will make the initial contact with each of the prospective nominees. In addition, it is important to determine the order in which contacts will be made. For example, if one of those who has been selected as the primary choice for office indicates she has not accept, but indicates a willingness to be considered for the board, the committee may want to exercise this option; therefore, the timing of approaches is very important.

***One word of caution***—No member of the committee should make a commitment to a prospective nominee for a position other than the one agreed upon by the committee. It is also important to establish a realistic timetable for making the contacts.

### ***Securing Consent and Biographical Data***

When a prospective nominee has agreed to have his or her name placed in nomination, a communication (letter or email) confirming this should be sent by the Nominations Committee chair. This communication should indicate the committee's pleasure that the nominee has agreed to run, and should state the specific office as well as the term. The communication should also state when the election results will be announced and when those elected will be installed.

Along with this communication, the chair should send a copy of the league's "Consent to Serve" form with instructions as to when and where it is to be returned. The Nominee should also be asked to supply biographical information. Many leagues use their own biographical information form. Having the information submitted on a standard form makes it much easier for the committee to prepare a biographical sketch to share with the membership. The importance of a prompt response should be emphasized. League's may want to use an online survey tool to capture this information.

### ***The Ballot and the Election***

League bylaws are usually very specific regarding how the election is to be conducted. Some specify who is responsible for sending out the ballots and counting them. The league president or staff person is a good source of information about how this was handled in the past, and can direct the committee to resources which can make the task easier.

The committee has the responsibility for preparation of the information as it is to appear on the ballot. Specific positions and their terms of office to be filled should be listed, followed by an alphabetical listing of the candidates. The number of candidates to be elected in each category should be indicated. Brief biographical data on each candidate should be available to the membership. In some leagues this is published in a newsletter, in others, it is included with the ballot. The committee is responsible for making sure that signed "Consent to Serve" forms are on file for each name on the

ballot. It is accepted practice that voting is by secret ballot. In many leagues it is customary that provision is made for write-in candidate. Instructions for marking the ballot and any special voting requirement such as the use of a specific envelope as well as the deadline for returning the ballot should be clearly stated.

League bylaws often specify the committee's responsibility for reporting to the board. Most report on the procedures to be followed in preparing for the ballot. This should not be interpreted to mean that the board is asked to approve a list of candidates. In some leagues it is customary for the committee chair to give a written or oral report at the annual meeting.

Occasionally league bylaws provide that the committee counts the votes or the president may appoint committee members to serve as tellers. Many leagues have the ballots counted several days prior to the annual meetings, so those who have been elected can be notified and also those who were not elected can be thanked and encouraged to continue their involvement. This helps insure that those who have been elected will present for events such as the installation ceremony or post-convention board meeting.

### ***Paving the Way for the Next Committee***

When the election results are announced and the new officers, board and Nominations Committee members installed, the work of the committee is nearly completed. The only task left is that of passing on the records and other relevant information to the next committee.

### ***For a Job Well Done***

Because the task of assuring that the league has a strong leadership team is a continuous process, the work your committee has just completed will be the foundation upon which the succeeding Committee on Nominations will build. As the committee prepares to turn over its work to the new committee, it is hoped that there will be a sense of satisfaction and pride in knowing that the future of the league is secure because of the way in which your committee carried out their responsibility.