

**Summary of
Member Responses to Questionnaire
on ACHP Organization and Member Engagement**

July 6, 2018

Note: Not all respondents answered every question. At the request of some members, responses were anonymized while still noting whether the respondent was an individual member or a representative of an agency or organization.

I. Business meetings.

The ACHP for many years met on a quarterly basis, but budget constraints a few years ago led to scaling back to three times a year, the current schedule. Meetings are currently a half-day, but in some periods were a full two days. Traditionally the ACHP would meet as often as every other meeting out of DC to address specific issues and engage with local communities. Pages 4-7 of the Operating Procedures pertain to Council meetings.

1. *What do you see as the optimum frequency of ACHP business meetings?*

Varied responses: Members are split on whether there should be two, three, or four meetings a year. A plurality of respondents would like to continue with three meetings annually, but there also is significant support for both two days and four days. Most of those who prefer two days are federal agency representatives, while most of those who suggest four days are individual members.

2. *How long should they last?*

Varied responses: Opinions on the optimum length of the meetings range widely from less than a half day to two days. However, a plurality of respondents prefer continuing with the current half day schedule. The next largest group supports expanding the meetings to a full day. There are two interesting comments regarding increasing member engagement. One agency representative suggests having more “closed” sessions where the entire membership could have in-depth, candid discussions about policy, controversial issues, and strategic direction. Another agency member, who supports full-day business meetings, suggests moving some topics off of committee agendas and onto the agenda of the full membership.

3. *Should the ACHP hold out-of-DC business meetings on a regular basis?*

Majority view: About two thirds of respondents support regularly scheduled meetings out of town, and several others support having such meetings on an ad hoc basis. However, potential constraints on travel for federal agency members are a concern.

4. *Should the ACHP explore videoconferencing or other technologies for business meetings?*

Majority view: Over two thirds of respondents support exploring new technological approaches for ACHP business meetings. That being said, a number of members feel that in-person attendance should still be encouraged even if new technological options are pursued.

5. *Are there any specific provisions of the Operating Procedures relating to business meetings that you think should be changed?*

Majority view: A slight majority of respondents don't believe that the Operating Procedures need to be changed regarding business meetings. The other half made a variety of recommendations. Some feel

that public participation at business meetings should be enhanced. Suggestions include having a 30-minute opportunity for public testimony at each meeting and increasing use of topical listening lessons. Several members note that business meeting videoconferencing could improve public involvement, but the Operating Procedures would need updating in Section III.B. Likewise, videoconferencing would require changing the quorum provisions of Section III.E. One agency member advocates empowering designated agency staff to sit at the table and vote on behalf of their agency in lieu of the official designee. Another agency member feels that the current provisions for agencies to abstain on legislation absent an Administration position are inadequate. Other suggestions include: address the role of the ACHP Foundation; ensure each committee reports at business meetings; and clarify the scope of member compensation.

6. *Do you have any suggestions for structuring the business meeting agenda?*

Varied responses: A majority view did not emerge from the responses, but a plurality desires agendas that encourage greater substantive discussion. Specific suggestions for accomplishing this include: have one topic per meeting that will be a focal point for discussion; free up time in business meeting by holding awards presentations and recognition ceremonies outside of the business meeting; break the members into smaller discussion groups during part of the business meeting; limit updates and reporting; focus on actionable items; replace committee chair verbal reports with one-page written summaries; hold longer business meetings that include a working lunch; and convene a once-a-year, four-hour committee of the whole workshop to address big-picture issues.

Other suggestions for structuring the business meeting agenda include: have a “policy roundup” explaining critical cases and votes; incorporate more public interaction and listening sessions; invite a special guest (a mayor, cabinet secretary, civic leader, etc.) to each meeting to make a presentation; and clarify the speaking roles so that the Executive Director runs the meeting while the Chairman presides.

7. *Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding business meetings and how they might change with the arrival of a full-time Chairman?*

Specific member comments:

- “I think the Chairman’s report will need to be a more substantial part of the meeting. We will need to have a good understanding of how they are spending their time.”
- “I imagine there might be more time for the Chair to share concerns or the specifics of a particular case with the membership. We should allow time for that.”
- “A full time Chairman could increase number of meetings and perhaps tailor 1-2 of the 4 quarterly to address emerging issues, hot topics, highlight successes and programs.”
- “The full-time Chairman should take full advantage of increased direct access to staff, files and equipment to implement any suggested changes, improvements or adjustment to Council specific issues either during the meetings or assign to staff immediately afterwards to address, flattening the organization by eliminating the need to inform the Executive Director who must subsequently delegate the actions to appropriate staff. The full-time Chairman can immediately begin to delegate responses and actions at the meeting and state for the record who and when to create more accountability. In addition, s/he would be best informed of the current workload of the staff and be able to inform the members what realistic responses/outcomes they can expect.”

- “Having a full-time Chair introduces opportunities for a very different dynamic between the Chair and Members, as well as between the Chair and the staff of the ACHP. The continuous presence of the Chair at the ACHP offices will allow for a much greater flow of information between Chair-Members-Staff. It will also enable decisions, tasks and assignments to be made and delegated out during business or committee meetings or in preparation for and follow-up from those meetings in a way that will increase the communication flow, and therefore the productivity of the members’ time they put to serving on the Council. Greater interaction between members and ACHP staff should be encouraged, as the current model often appears to have staff and members operating and focusing on completely separate issues/topics.”
- “Perhaps more guest speakers (preservation partners, eg. Civil War Trust) could be invited to speak.”
- “- Consider using the business meetings as an opportunity to plan an evening reception on the Hill with significant outreach to members of Congress.
- You have removed the question about the use of “unassembled” meetings, but that is a procedure that has been over-utilized in the past and should be kept to an absolute minimum.”
- “The full-time Chairman will be more involved in the regular work of the council and may have a different perspective on the need to review certain issues as part of the business meeting. It will be important to consider the difference between how a FTC experiences the issues vs the PT members.”
- “One concern I have as a Federal member is when the policies or actions diverge from Administration priorities or agenda. Holding votes make it extremely difficult and cause abstentions. I think when ACHP is going to express a position that is counter to an administration position, perhaps a way can be found to do that, but members that are there are representing a cabinet member and as such, are going to be holding to position that we know of or seeking advice on positions within the administration.”
- “1. A new organization chart for ACHP should indicate where the public at large falls under ACHP purview. This may be strengthened via re-boot of a Preserve America type program. What is the intended breakdown of effort?, aka, 30% public citizen property and education programs, 30% Federal Agency Policy engagement; 40% Funding and Legislative Initiatives? Currently more emphasis seems placed on interagency concerns. 2. Meetings tend to be reactory, Federal or representative comments made in response to stated ACHP concern or action. Based on new expectations set by the Chairperson, might there be a shift in content and proceedings? Just wondering what is possible. Federal Members to present examples of best practice collaboration, innovation, sponsoring of interns, funding of initiatives within their agencies, etc.”
- “With a full-time chair it will offer a much different dynamic relationship between the chair and members, but more importantly with staff. Decisions, tasks and assignments will be made from a policy perspective as supported by the membership to staff that should increase the communications. The chair will also have the time to call members, discuss relevant topics, policies and groom them for more interaction on the council. From [Agency 4]: Greater interaction between members and ACHP staff should be encouraged, as the current model often appears to have staff and members operating and focusing on completely separate issues/topics. Amen!”

II. Committees

The core of the current ACHP committee structure (Preservation Initiatives, Communications Education and Outreach, Federal Agency Programs, and Executive) was created in 2001 and expanded to include the Native American Committee in 2011. Previously the ACHP had an occasional standing committee (e.g., legislation) and functioned primarily through task-oriented working groups and task forces. These continue to be used for overseeing development of special projects and reports. The Operating Procedures address “Council Subgroups” on page 3 (a standing Credentials Committee is the only one specified).

1. *Is the concept of standing ACHP committees sound or is there a more desirable organizational model?*

General consensus: Respondents are almost unanimous that the concept of standing committees is sound. That being said, several members are concerned that the topics of the committees overlap (see also Question 3) and that the committees may need to be realigned to reflect the priorities of the Administration and the new Chairman. Other suggestions for improving the standing committee structure include: have monthly meetings; pare down committee agendas to emphasize discussion and reduce updates; consider establishing a legislative committee; and establish and implement yearly committee agendas.

2. *If the committee concept is retained, should the current committee structure be modified?*

Varied responses: Respondents are split almost evenly on whether modifying (or considering modifying) the current committee structure is necessary. Of those who feel changes may be needed, several note the importance of addressing current Administration priorities and emerging issues. Other members are concerned regarding a lack of definition in the roles of the committees, particularly in the PI Committee and the CEO Committee. Specific suggestions include: rename the PI Committee as the Policy and Legislation Committee; move away from the “catch-all” quality of the PI and CEO Committee issues; have the Executive Committee meet more regularly to be briefed by the Chairman; assess whether the PI Committee is needed absent its Preserve America functions and transfer legislative affairs responsibilities elsewhere in the agency; and sharpen committee focus and deliverables, particularly regarding social media in CEO.

3. *Are there overlaps in committee jurisdiction and subject matter that should be addressed?*

Majority view: A slight majority of respondents feel that there is overlap among the committees that could be addressed constructively. Overlaps in subject matter were identified between the PI and CEO Committees, the PI and FAP Committees, and the FAP and NAA Committees. Respondents who felt the overlaps were a problem suggested: use executive decision making to ensure that overlaps between the FAP and PI Committees don’t result in duplication of effort; consider moving Preserve America to the CEO Committee; and do away with the PI Committee by moving its legislative functions to elsewhere in the agency and rolling its other initiatives to the FAP or CEO Committees. Three agency members note an appropriate level of overlap between the FAP and NAA Committees, but suggest that those committees should not meet at the same time, should sometimes have partial joint meetings, and should better share agendas and discussion topics.

4. *Should the current approach to having committee meetings the day before the business meeting and committee conference calls halfway between business meetings be revised? If so, how?*

Majority view: A slight majority feel that change in the current approach is not needed. Of the remainder of respondents who have concerns, a few question the productivity of the interim conference calls. One respondent suggests they be scrapped and replaced by written briefings. A few also note that the overlap in the timing of committee meetings does not allow for participation in all the committees.

Other specific ideas for changes include: committees should meet monthly; the committees could meet in the morning and the full membership in the afternoon; and schedule the business meeting before the committee meetings so that the full membership can better direct committee assignments.

5. *Should the limited-term, task oriented working group system continue to be used? Do you see ways to improve it?*

General consensus: Respondents are nearly unanimous in their support for limited-term, task oriented working groups. However, a number of members note the need for more transparency in the work of such groups. Suggestions include: sometimes have working groups be subcommittees; ensure well-defined scope, deliverable, or target end-date for each group; improve communication from the groups and enhance the ability to track their progress; make it easier to identify current work groups and the members participating; and have a centralized way of accessing the reports or guidance developed by the groups.

6. *Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding committees and subgroups and how they might change with the arrival of a full-time Chairman?*

Specific member comments:

- “The full-time Chairman should continue outreach to the citizen appointees on issues facing the preservation community.”
- “If there isn’t a technology working group there probably should be, to address social media, web design, etc. ACHP deals every day with exciting subject matter, but the agency’s website and electronic communications couldn’t be more boring.”
- “I am pleased with the arrival of a full-time Chairman and believe it will provide increased continuity and transparency for the ACHP.”
- “It seems the Chairman may have priorities or approaches that should be considered that will provide insights into how & what the committees cover.”
- “After gaining an understanding of the workload and capacity of staff, the new Chairman will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of committees and sub-groups and determine appropriate work group compositions and deadlines.”
- “Recommend a holistic assessment of how the primary information exchange points (i.e. Business meeting, committee meetings, interim conference calls and work groups) communicate and inform each other towards the larger goals, mission and strategic plan of ACHP. Additional time should be spent evaluating the best way to integrate ACHP staff into the communication flow to ensure they are providing the most up-to-date information to members and, in turn, receiving timely guidance from members.”
- “As stated earlier, the ACHP [Foundation] could be a subgroup or perhaps even a committee. I would also consider having a dinner the night before the meeting with a speaker or special guest.”
- “I could see that the full-time Chairman might wish to implement additional committees or reduce some. At the risk of sounding incoherently bureaucratic, I might suggest a “task force on committees” to help guide any changes in the structure.”

- “I do wonder how the work of ACHP both respects the organic act of its creation as well as reflect key aspects of the administration’s priorities on a constructive way.”
- “The new Chairperson should convene a committee of the whole WORKSHOP to discuss next 50 years ACHP priorities. Committees should be organized per priorities. There was overlap in BAMIPP particularly between communications and PI. Believe there is a tendency to discuss issues per definition of Committees. This results in “Preserve America”, citizen focused efforts, be harder to administer and therefore easily falls through the cracks. Federal Programs is very interesting but more can be done to stimulate Federal participants to stronger action, perhaps by setting up expectations/goals for each year to accomplish.”
- “I’d like to figure out why it has been so difficult for me to keep engaged with the Federal Agency Programs committee work. I rely on direct contacts with Reid instead.” (*Agency II*)
- “As with most organizations with a full-time leader there should be an initial outreach to the members, staff and the public at large to gain a better understanding of what ACHP does best and those challenges of preservation. Too much emphasis is placed on process rather than preservation as the final outcome.”

III. Miscellaneous

1. *The Executive Committee currently comprises the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, the four committee chairs, and a policy-level federal agency member. It meets in person just before ACHP business meetings and occasionally by conference call. The members are also consulted periodically to advise the Chairman on specific issues. In recent times, the federal agency seat on the Executive Committee has been vacant, due to lack of policy-level appointees in the designated agency (Interior). On rare occasion, the Executive Committee has taken formal action on behalf of the membership, but its role has been primarily advisory to the Chairman.*

a. Should the Executive Committee be formalized in the Operating Procedures with a specific delineation of its powers and procedures?

Majority view: Over three quarters of the respondents agree that the Executive Committee should be formalized in the Operating Procedures.

b. Should the Executive Committee be authorized to take formal actions on behalf of the full membership?

Majority view: A slight majority of respondents believe that the Executive Committee should be authorized to take formal actions on behalf of the full membership, but most of this group feel that such authorization should only be in very limited situations. One citizen member notes that unassembled meetings have worked well for most instances where ACHP action is needed between business meetings, thus making it rare that there would be instances where the Executive Committee would have to act. Some members who advocate against empowering the Executive Committee to act believe doing so would inappropriately take away the authority of presidentially appointed members and members appointed by designated federal agencies.

c. Should the size or mix of members be changed?

Varied responses: Respondents who specifically answered yes or no are almost evenly split, while some members have no comment or feel the question can only be addressed after the current

committee structure is assessed. Some suggested changes include: have six members or a similar clear minimum number; periodically rotate members onto the Executive Committee to engage all members; consider adding the Executive Director and the ACHP Foundation; add more citizen members; increase diversity; and seek to enhance agency policy-level participation, particularly by DOI. One agency member feels that the Executive Committee currently is not sufficiently transparent and accountable.

d. Should the Executive Committee have a set meeting schedule or meet as needed (or both)?

Varied responses: A plurality of respondents feel that both scheduled and ad hoc meetings are appropriate. Specific suggestions for a set schedule include monthly conference calls and meeting every other month. Three federal agency members note the importance of the Executive Committee reporting out to the full membership following Executive Committee meetings.

2. ***The established ACHP procedure is to seat principals and primary policy-level designees at ACHP business meetings. Such members are also entitled to participate in committee meetings, but policy-level representatives of federal agencies rarely do. Is this a problem that requires attention and, if so, how might it be addressed? (Membership credentials are found in Appendix A of the Operating Procedures, pages 13-14)***

Majority view: About two thirds of respondents agree that the dearth of policy-level agency representatives at committee meetings poses a problem, however, about a third of them believe that fully solving the problem is unlikely given the demands and time constraints on policy-level designees. Those who offered possible solutions suggested: have the new chairman actively recruit policy-level participants and foster more personal connections; take full advantage of having policy-level designee attendance at out-of-town meetings to engage them in committee activity; invite policy-level representatives to certain committee meetings for discussion of specifics; craft more focused committee agendas with action items; and discuss at business meetings the importance of policy-level attendance at committee meetings. If policy-level representation is going to remain less than optimal, a number of members note the benefits of committee attendance by agency staff with a depth of knowledge and experience, and who are committed and active in ACHP activities.

3. ***The Delegation of Authority found in Appendix B of the Operating Procedures (pages 16-24) allocates specific responsibilities of the Section 106 regulations among the members, the Chairman, and the Executive Director (ACHP staff). Often ACHP members have an interest in an ongoing Section 106 review, but their participation needs to be consistent with their role as the ultimate decision-makers in the event of a termination and must also conform to ethics and conflicts of interest standards. Current guidelines for member involvement in cases that are pending before the staff or the Chairman are found on page 11. Do these need to be modified?***

Varied responses: A plurality of respondents don't believe that modifications are needed. The remaining members either had no opinion – in several cases due to a stated lack of knowledge about the issue – or think changes are needed. Suggested modifications include: provide greater clarity and make the guidelines for member involvement more understandable; enhance how staff should alert members to cases of potential interest; provide for direct member participation in cases (as representatives of the ACHP, not in their personal capacity); limit member requests to review cases when there are conflicts of interest; and increase the length of time for members to request consideration of a case.

4. ***The Operating Procedures on page 9 prescribe some methods of communication from the Executive Director to the members. Additionally, the members receive reports from committee meetings and conference calls. Do these need to be revised, with consideration given to the arrival of a full-time Chairman or any modifications in the role of the Executive Committee? If so, how?***

Majority view: A majority of respondents believe that the Operating Procedures will need revision regarding communications between the Chairman, Executive Director, and the members. Specific suggestions include: create a line of communication from the Chairman to the members separate from the Executive Director and ACHP staff; ensure that communication with members on matters directly affecting them and their participation on the ACHP comes from the Chairman; have more frequent communication between the Chairman and members between business meetings; maximize information exchange; establish a higher level of regular interaction with policy-level principals; and have the Chairman assume many of the Executive Director's current communication with members.. A few members note that it would be premature to make such changes quickly without time to review the communications protocols holistically.

5. *Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the ACHP organization and relationships among the members, the full-time Chairman, and the staff?*

Specific member comments:

- “I’ve been through several new chair appointments over the past decade in my own [organization], and I know how disruptive this can be. Each chair brings their own perspective and has a specific area of expertise that then becomes a priority for the agency. This can be a good thing, or not. The ED has the most frequent contact with the chair, and so ends up having to be the primary “trainer”. But that’s complicated because the ED answers to the chair. It’s important for the ED (and the chair) to know that the membership is there to provide guidance and support when necessary, and should help to focus the chair’s attention if the chair gets out of sync with the organization. And it’s very important for the membership to set an example for the chair with respect to how we communicate with each other, and how good service on the part of staff is recognized. I had a chair whose only public comments about the staff tended to be about how we can all do better, if we aren’t growing we’re dying, silo mentality is wasteful, etc. It was demoralizing. There are better ways to spur improvements, and the membership needs to watch for those opportunities and provide positive reinforcement.”
- “The ACHP organization is well organized, the staff is always available to respond to questions. The past [several] years representing [Agency 2] has been a rewarding experience, has increased my knowledge and passion for Historic Preservation. You provide an excellent service to the Federal government. Thank you!”
- “With a full-time chairman in DC, it seems there are opportunities to build more rapport among the members.”
- “I am wondering about the appropriate staff structure with a full-time Chair, particularly as it relates to the Executive Director position. Does the ED position become more like a Chief of Staff/Chief Operating Officer? This is probably the direction it should take, but I don’t know what typically occurs in the federal government in circumstances like this.”
- “The appointment of the ACHP’s first full-time, Senate confirmed Chair is a significant opportunity to revisit all aspects of how the ACHP operates, communicates and how the Chairman, Members and staff can most effectively work as a team to affect national preservation policy while maintaining a strong relationship informing Congress and the Administration.”
- “I recommend the full time Chairman make the objectives of the CEO Committee a priority and seek new opportunities for outreach.”

- “It might be good to have further discussion of these questions in person at the next meeting. I recognize that the point of asking now is to help prepare for the arrival of the Chairman, but there will definitely be structural questions that arise after the Chairman is in place. And, the questions about the committees might be easily discussed by everyone, possibly at lunch during the committee meeting day. Or not. I could see that maybe it would be best to get everything packaged up neatly to present to the incoming Chairman.”
- “Some of my comments are critical, but please understand I have great admiration for ACHP and its role in this country. It has a critical role and one I respect greatly respect.”
- “Two thoughts:
 1. That the Chair in making recommendations for future Presidential appointments to the Council, give careful consideration to candidates representing the nation’s cultural and geographical diversity.
 2. That the Chair continue and fully support the Chairman’s Award and the joint ACHP/HUD Award. (The presentation of these two awards for possible greater visibility might be presented during a business meeting. The CEO committee will review this option and provide a recommendation.”
- “One thought on a delicate subject: Chairman interaction with staff on a daily basis. The small agency size, coupled with the professional camaraderie of the staff makes ACHP a unique place to work. In many ways, it is like a big (and at times dysfunctional!) family. That comfortable, casual interaction can, however, add an element of “answering to many masters” for the staff. With a full time Chair present in the office daily, I can imagine that could intensify. This could especially be true as the Chairman “learns the ropes” and may seek information/assistance from any ready/willing source (and a number of the staff are highly knowledgeable and eager to share). Without appearing to censor information or contact, I imagine that “managing” information flow and input will be a delicate (and necessary) task.”
- “Believe under leadership of Chr. Donaldson, the organization, initiatives have been both very cooperative and functional. At this transition and juncture of 50 years of the Preservation Program, believe organizational consultants may be useful to assess what the ACHP opportunities are to accomplish goals, then to reorganize to most effectively accomplish the new directions for the next generation. This may affect how the budget is organized, types of initiatives endeavored.”
- “I’m concerned about succession planning at ACHP.”
- “This will be an incredible time for ACHP with a full-time chair. Her leadership will be paramount in the federal government and hopefully, raise ACHP to the proper level of respect and awareness from the general public. ACHP can do much more as an agency in working closely with the Administration, Congress as well as our preservation partners on a grand national scale for the preservation of our collective heritage.”