

Delegating to Staff and Volunteers

As an organisation grows, the majority of its activities will be carried out by paid staff or volunteers. Indeed, most organisations find that delegation to individuals beyond the management committee is necessary in order for all the work of their organisation to be completed.

However, it is the management committee that will be held ultimately accountable for the organisation's activities. They therefore need to ensure that responsibilities are clearly delegated, with effective controls and regular reporting, in order to protect the interests of the organisation and its beneficiaries.

Effective delegation

Effective delegation to staff and volunteers should be based on clear consideration and communication of the following elements.

Collectively they provide clear parameters for both the staff/volunteers and the wider management committee and provide the basis for effective [monitoring](#).

1. Clear delegated lines of authority

Where there is a senior staff member generally all delegation to other staff and volunteers will be done through this person. It is one of the key aspects of that person's job to ensure that the committee's intentions are clearly communicated to other staff and volunteers and that regular and detailed reports on progress are made back to the committee.

As with other aspects of delegation there should be a clear written record of limits of delegation with details of the thresholds for decision making and reporting mechanisms. This can be part of committee minutes, organisational policies or even job or role descriptions.

Where an organisation does not have any paid staff, delegating to volunteers should be done following the same principles of a clear written outline of the parameters of the delegation and the reporting mechanism.

2. Job or role descriptions

Effective delegation to staff should be based on clarity and consistency regarding their respective roles and responsibilities. Whether a volunteer or paid staff member, this should be described in writing to ensure clarity regarding expectations and the limits to their role and authority.

3. Effective policies and procedures

The organisation should have written policies and procedures for areas such as:

- financial controls (e.g., expenses, bookkeeping, cash handling, salaries)
- human resources (e.g., recruitment, disciplinary matters, contract terms & conditions)
- staff support and supervision
- operational planning and reporting

The management committee are responsible for:

- ensuring these policies and procedures are in place and approving their content. In small organisations, they may be required to develop the policies themselves.
Download: [How to Develop Policy & Procedures Help Sheet](#)

- receiving and scrutinising regular reports against these policies and procedures. This is generally done through the most senior member of staff, however on occasions other staff may give reports directly to the Committee on specific pieces of work

4. Regular support and supervision of all staff and volunteers

Good management of staff through regular support and supervision, enables the organisation to maximise effective use of their staff/volunteer resources. The regular reporting ensures senior management and the management committee remain informed and in control of the use of delegated authority and ensures early detection of problem areas.

The management committee are responsible for providing direct management of the most senior staff member. Often the Chairperson carries out this support and supervision, but it remains the responsibility of all committee members. Download: [Managing the Senior Staff Member](#).

5. Training and development

The committee should ensure that the staff and volunteers are sufficiently well trained and supported to carry out the delegated tasks. This can be done through sound recruitment and selection, induction, training and development and supervision.

6. Two-way communication

There should be regular reports to the management committee about the use of delegated authority. This is generally done through the most senior member of staff, however on occasions other staff may give reports directly to the Committee on specific pieces of work.

Generally, there should be a written report which should also be accompanied by the opportunity for the committee to discuss any issues or ask questions. No staff member or volunteer should feel that their work is not open to question by the committee, which is responsible for all aspects of the running of an organisation.

The management committee must ensure that their objectives, priorities, and decisions are effectively communicated to all who act on behalf of the organisation, thereby ensuring that all are working towards the same goals. This can be done through strategic and operational planning. On an ongoing basis, it is the responsibility of the most senior staff member to ensure that the committee's intentions are clearly communicated to other staff and volunteers.