

The Supreme Court of Ohio

GUIDELINES FOR SUPREME COURT TASK FORCES

These guidelines are issued by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and apply to the creation, organization, and operation of task forces that may be established by the Chief Justice to assist the Court in exercising the authority granted pursuant to Article IV of the Ohio Constitution.

These guidelines are intended to establish consistent standards and expectations in implementing this authority. While these guidelines may impose specific duties upon other persons, the Court may waive compliance with any guidelines to assist the exercise of that discretion.

These guidelines have not been adopted as rules pursuant to Article IV, Section 5 of the Ohio Constitution and should not be construed as requiring adoption.

SECTION 1.0. GENERAL GUIDELINES.

1.1. Creation.

The creation of a task force may be authorized only by the Chief Justice upon notice to the Court.

1.2. Purpose.

The purpose of a task force is to review a specific issue or topic involving the law, courts, the legal profession, the judicial system, or the administration of justice and issue a final report of its findings, conclusions, and recommendations on that issue or topic within a time period established by the Chief Justice. When creating a task force, the Chief Justice shall indicate the purpose for which the task force is created and the expectations upon the task force in meeting that purpose.

1.3. Authority.

A task force shall not have independent policy-setting authority.

SECTION 2.0. TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP.

2.1. Appointments.

A task force should consist of approximately ten to twenty-five members. The Chief Justice shall appoint all task force members. However, the task force and other interested parties may recommend to the Chief Justice persons for appointment who they believe will serve the purpose for which the task force was created.

Membership should be broad based and multi-disciplinary when required to represent a cross section of interests related to the subject matter of the task force. The membership should include judges, attorneys representing the various perspectives of the bar, and court professionals, including court administrators and clerks. When appropriate, the membership should also include representatives of appropriate funding authorities, representatives from executive branch agencies, recognized professionals in the subject matter, and lay persons.

Membership should represent the gender, racial, ethnic, political, and geographic diversity of the state.

2.2. Terms.

A task force member's term shall extend through the issuance of a final report by the task force.

2.3. Chairperson; Vice-Chairperson.

The Chief Justice shall appoint one task force member to serve as the chairperson and one member to serve as the vice-chairperson. The Chief Justice may appoint co-chairpersons if appropriate.

SECTION 3.0. TASK FORCE MEETINGS.

3.1. Meetings.

A task force shall meet as often as required to complete the work of the task force in the time period established by the Chief Justice. All meetings of the task force shall be open to the public, except in circumstances where the topic or issues being considered concern issues of the safety of judges and court personnel or the security of courts and courthouses.

Public notice of all meetings of a task force shall be provided on the Court's Web site. Meetings shall be scheduled for a time and place so as to minimize costs to the Court and to be accessible to task force members, Court staff, and members of the public.

3.2. Attendance.

A task force member shall make a good faith effort to attend each task force meeting. Should a task force member miss three consecutive meetings, the task force or the Court employee who staffs the task force may recommend to the Chief Justice the member relinquish the member's position on the task force.

A task force member who is unable to attend a meeting may request the chairperson allow the member to participate by telephone, video, Web conference, or other method

available to the Court. A task force member participating in this manner shall be considered present for meeting attendance purposes. However, task force members should be strongly urged to participate in person for a fully effective task force.

A task force member may occasionally designate a replacement for participation in meetings.

3.3. Quorum.

There shall be a quorum present for the work of a task force when a majority of task force members is present for the meeting, including those members who participate by telephone, video, Web conference, or other method.

3.4. Voting.

At any meeting of a task force at which a quorum is present or has been declared, the task force members may take action by affirmative vote of a majority of the members in attendance. Proxy votes shall not be permitted.

3.5. Minutes.

Minutes shall be kept at every meeting of a task force and distributed to the task force members for review prior to and approval at the next meeting.

SECTION 4.0. MISCELLANEOUS GUIDELINES.

4.1. Subcommittees.

A task force may form such subcommittees it believes necessary to complete the work of the task force. A subcommittee should consist of select task force members and such other persons who the chairperson of the task force believes will assist in a full exploration of the issue under the review of the subcommittee.

Subcommittees should remain relatively small in size, generally not exceeding eight to twelve members, and have a ratio of task force members to non-task force members not exceeding one to three.

Guidelines 3.2 through 3.4, 4.2, and 4.4 through 4.8 shall also apply to the work of subcommittees.

4.2. Work Product.

The work product of a task force is the property of the Court.

4.3. Progress Report; Draft Report.

A task force may issue a progress or draft report as it believes necessary to facilitate the work of the task force and to communicate the nature of its work to the public and various constituencies of the Court.

4.4. Staff Support.

A task force shall receive staff support from one or more Court employees, to be assigned by the Administrative Director, as may be necessary for the completion of task force's purpose. The Court employee shall assist the task force as necessary, but shall at all times be considered an employee of the Court.

4.5. Budget.

The budget of a task force shall be set by the Court through its annual budget process and as implemented by the office or section through which the task force operates. The task force shall have no authority to set its own budget.

4.6. Reimbursement of Expenses.

A task force member shall be reimbursed for travel and meal expenses incurred in service to the task force as permitted by the Guidelines for Travel by Court Appointees.

4.7. Code of Ethics.

The appointment letter for a task force member shall include a copy of the Code of Ethics for Court Appointees.

4.8. Dissolution.

A task force shall dissolve following issuance of its final report. Additionally, the Chief Justice may dissolve a task force at any time solely upon the discretion of the Chief Justice or upon the recommendation of the Administrative Director or the task force indicating the task force is no longer productive.

4.9. Operating Guidelines.

Every task force established by the Chief Justice shall operate under operating guidelines as promulgated by the Chief Justice, which shall be in a format substantially similar to these guidelines.

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