

INTRODUCTION

BNRF chapters are comprised of dedicated nurses who voluntarily come together as an organized chapter to work within their community. Because chapter members work in the community they are serving, they are in the unique position to understand the needs of their fellow nurses. This understanding allows them to offer continuing education, networking, and recognition activities that address those specific needs. BNRF is eternally grateful to you, the chapter leaders, for this work. It is invaluable to advancing our mission and vision.

When a chapter is formed, its members enter into a partnership with National Black Nurses Rock. As with any relationship, in order for the chapter-National partnership to be successful certain core values must be respected by both parties. The core values that are essential to the chapter-National partnership are:

- Loyalty to the mission of BNRF
- Integrity in all actions
- Transparency
- Accountability to the members and to the agreements of the partnership
- Ongoing, forthright communication
- Commitment to good governance and chapter management

When these core values are embodied by the chapter and BNRF National, the chapter is highly successful. These chapters have a strong membership and a pool of future leaders. They are able to establish and achieve goals for each year, often with growth from year-to-year. They know the processes to maintain their reporting to National and being in compliance is not a burden for the chapter. They draw upon the resources from National to assist them in their work.

The BNRF National Office understands that as volunteers, your time is limited. Thus, our goal is to make the management of your chapter as straightforward as possible, thereby enabling you to primarily focus on the programs and activities you plan for the nurses within your community. **All chapters are governed by the BNRF Bylaws, the Chapter Charter Agreement, and this Chapter Governance Manual.**

The content of this Governance Manual has been organized to align with the five primary responsibilities that you have as chapter leaders, which are:

- Determining the chapter's purpose
- Ensuring effective chapter governance
- Planning, monitoring, and strengthening chapter programs
- Ensuring adequate resources and managing them effectively
- Recruiting and orienting new chapter leaders

BNRF is committed to providing guidance and tools that promote healthy chapters and help define the responsibilities that you have as chapter leaders. Throughout the Governance Manual, and as you consider how to apply this information within your chapters.

This manual provides simple, easy to implement practices for your chapter that, if followed, will provide a strong foundation for your chapter's success. It is anticipated that this will be a dynamic document that will be refined as we continue to learn together. Contact us at: chapters@blacknursesrock.net.

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY ONE: DETERMINING THE CHAPTER'S PURPOSE

Each chapter, whether brand new or in existence for many years, came together because, as individuals, you shared a common vision of how you could advance acute and critical care nursing within your community. The purpose of your chapter may be to educate nurses, host health promotional events, provide service to your community, recognize excellence in nursing, network among your peers, or a combination of these and other reasons. Your chapter's purpose provides the foundation upon which the chapter operates.

Chapter Purpose

A purpose statement captures succinctly why the chapter exists and what it does. It should be memorable enough so that everyone connected to the organization can remember it and use it. A solid purpose statement can be easily used as a benchmark for chapter decision-making and planning.

A chapter that focuses on networking and education of area nurses might have a purpose statement such as the following:

"The purpose of the ____ Chapter is to network with area nurses on evidence- based practice and to provide educational events for our community."

The chapter's purpose will help to guide its goals, objectives, and planning. If your chapter does not have a defined purpose, discuss it at a chapter meeting, including as many members as possible to develop a purpose statement for your chapter.

Membership

As stated above, the chapter is made up of individuals with a common vision to inspire and empower innovative leaders that will serve and educate vulnerable communities. Your chapter should aim to be inclusive of and easily accessible by all nurses in your area. This will ensure the broadest audience for your programs and will assist you in achieving your goals.

All members of National BNRF are eligible to become members of your chapter. It is the chapter's responsibility to ensure that your members hold a current National BNRF membership. You can check with the national office to confirm national membership. Facebook does NOT constitute membership for Black Nurses Rock. Chapters should also consider providing each new member with a welcome letter or email and introducing new members at each chapter meeting. Chapter membership cards are optional; the membership card template available upon request.

Many chapters have a person in charge of keeping the membership database current. It may be a specific board position, the membership chair, or this responsibility may be part of another board position, such as the secretary.

Types of Membership

Another way to make membership management easier for the chapter is to have the same membership date for all chapter members. For instance, no matter when during the year someone might join your chapter, all chapter members might have the same membership date of July 1, which is also the start of the fiscal year. As a chapter, you will be better served by having a chapter member available to work on

programs and projects rather than occupying all of his/her limited volunteer time with tracking and managing membership.

Student nurses may participate in chapters as members and on chapter committees but may not serve as chapter officers or vote. We encourage chapters to welcome student nurses as guests to their chapter meetings and events. Doing so is an excellent way to introduce students to a professional nursing organization and show them how it can benefit them in their nursing careers.

Membership Dues

Each chapter may also establish its own membership dues, including the option of not charging local chapter membership dues. For most chapters, the dues typically range from \$10-\$50 per year and may not exceed 75% of National BNRF membership dues. The collection and accounting of chapter membership dues is the sole responsibility of the chapter. Thus, again, it is recommended that chapters establish a simple dues structure to allow for ease in collecting and accounting for dues payments. This will lessen the burden for both the Treasurer and individual(s) responsible for membership. Chapters may consider a 2 or 3-year membership dues structure as an option for chapter members. All chapter membership dues must be accounted for in the quarterly financial reports that are sent to National BNRF.

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY TWO: ENSURING EFFECTIVE CHAPTER GOVERNANCE

Chapter Governance

Governance refers to the obligation of the board of directors to strengthen its organization and further its mission through active leadership. It requires that board members put the success and sustainability of the organization above any individual self-interest, and to be diligent in overseeing the achievement of the organization's goals and effective use of resources.

The chapter board ensures good governance in a number of ways that are described throughout this Governance Manual. Sound leadership structures, policies and procedures must be in place to ensure that the chapter's resources are effectively managed, and that its current and future goals are achieved. Chapters should strive for simplicity, streamlining, and reducing complexity when developing its yearly plan to carry out the mission work, so that the overall volunteering experience is pleasurable and fun.

In whatever way the chapter chooses to structure its leadership team, that team is still considered the chapter governing body and thus is responsible for the chapter's success and ability to achieve its mission. The majority of chapters choose to implement the traditional roles of president, president-

elect, secretary, treasurer, and treasurer-elect as their leadership team structure. This model is recommended because of its familiarity and since the majority of chapter resources and communications from National are developed according to this structure. The minimum chapter officers for compliance are the president and treasurer, as they are the two required check signers.

Establishing Accountability of all Board Members

Imperative to the success of the chapter and its board of directors is establishing a strong and reliable governance foundation. The board is responsible for the oversight of the chapter and therefore when

the chapter begins, and each year when the board of directors transitions, the board must dedicate time in discussion to review the BNRF Chapter Charter Agreement and the chapter's goals. The following discussion questions should be included, and all decisions should be documented.

Management & Oversight Discussion Questions:

- What are our accountabilities as the leadership of the chapter?
 - What are the future goals and annual objectives of the chapter?
 - How will we measure our progress towards these goals and objectives?
 - How will we make decisions?
 - Are we attempting to do too much in relation to our human and financial resources?
- What are the accountabilities of each officer?
 - Does each officer know their respective accountabilities for their particular job?
 - What are our accountabilities to each other as chapter officers?
- As the chapter leadership, we share accountability for the chapter's finances. What is our current financial situation? Is our chapter in Good Standing?
 - What is the chapter's budget? How will we establish and monitor the budget?
 - What financial controls are in place to ensure we are good stewards of the chapter's money?
 - What are the quarterly and annual reporting requirements to National? How will we review these reports?
 - How will we as the board support the Treasurer in monitoring and managing the chapter finances?
 - How will we keep the chapter apprised of our financial health?

Effective Decision-Making Discussion Questions:

Authentic leaders must be skilled communicators, team builders, and agents for positive change committed to service, results oriented, and role models for collaborative practice, who have the trust and respect of the chapter members as they live the vision.

As chapter leaders, you have been entrusted by your fellow chapter members to manage the chapter in a way that will enable the chapter to fulfill its purpose. You honor their trust by always acting with integrity and communicating with full transparency to them about your work. This will be essential to your success. When making decisions and acting on behalf of the chapter you should always ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this action/decision in the best interest of the chapter? Will this action/decision move the chapter forward in achieving its vision?
- As the chapter leadership, did we fully explore our options and divergent opinions that were raised before making a final decision?
- Did we effectively use data (e.g., education evaluations, needs assessments, etc.) to make an informed decision?

- Does this decision align with our chapter's stated purpose?
- Is this a fiscally sound decision for our chapter?
- Is this decision/action in alignment with BNRF's mission, vision and values and the law?
- Is this decision/action free of any personal or group bias?
- Have we considered the resources that will be necessary to implement this decision? Are we prepared to delegate and work collaboratively within the chapter to complete the work?
- Can we, as the chapter leadership, comfortably stand before the chapter to explain the rationale and decision-making process regarding this action/decision?
- As chapter leaders, are we open to feedback and challenges from the chapter regarding this action/decision? In cases where we may face opposition from the membership, are we committed to exploring the divergent opinions they bring forward, even if it means we may need to modify our decision or delay implementation?

Communication Discussion Questions:

- As a board, how do we want to communicate with one another? What norms do we want to establish for our communication?
- How will we address instances when accountabilities aren't fulfilled, or agreements are broken?
- What will we do if there is a conflict among board members? What if there is a conflict between the membership and the board or a board member?
- How often will we meet as a board? What will be essential for us to discuss at these meetings to ensure we are monitoring the health and progress of the chapter?
- How often will we meet as a full chapter? What will be essential for us to report to the chapter, so they have a complete and clear picture of our work?
- How will we communicate with our Chapter Advisor and National about the ongoing progress of our chapter? Other than discussing our progress, in what other instances might we contact the Chapter Advisor or National?

Evaluation Discussion Questions:

- How will we evaluate our performance during the year? At the end of the year?
- How will each board member be able to evaluate their individual contribution to the board's work?
- What mechanisms will be in place for seeking and providing feedback from one another and the chapter members regarding individual and board performance?

Chapter Officer Accountabilities

The following describes the accountabilities of the traditional officers of the board. Your chapter may choose to have a different leadership structure as long as all of these accountabilities are met. *It is required that two different people, the President and Treasurer, have oversight of the chapter finances and the signatures of both are required for all financial transactions.*

It is recommended that all officers serve a 1 or 2 year term. Staggering officer and board member terms will help maintain the chapter's cohesiveness and sustainability, as well. It is also recommended that the chapter set a limit on how many consecutive terms a person can serve in the same role. Chapters have reported that it has not served them well to have the same officers in the same roles for numerous consecutive years as this does not allow for the development of new chapter leaders.

President:

The chapter President's fundamental responsibility is to lead the board of directors in their governance of the chapter. The President should be an active member of the chapter who has served the previous year as the President-elect. The President-elect year is a critical period which allows for learning about the role and governing the chapter before stepping into the Presidential position. Many chapters also find it beneficial to require that the President has previously served on the board of directors for a period of time. While this may be ideal, because all of the chapter members are volunteers, it is not always feasible. What is essential is that the President has strong leadership and communication skills and is knowledgeable about chapter governance.

The primary accountabilities of the President are:

- Oversee meetings of the board and chapter, including agenda development and meeting facilitation.
- In partnership with the board and committee chairs, develop the future goals and annual objectives for the chapter.
- Based on the annual objectives, formulate the annual budget for the chapter in partnership with the board and committee chairs.
- Provide for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of annual objectives.
- In partnership with the board, develop and maintain a viable succession plan for chapter officers.
- Along with the Treasurer, provide oversight for the chapter finances and ensure financial controls are in place to protect the chapter's finances from misuse or fraud.
- After approval from National, and in partnership with the Treasurer or appropriate chairperson, execute all contracts on behalf of the chapter.
- Ensure regular communication to the chapter regarding progress toward the annual objectives and the financial status of the chapter.
- Ensure regular communication with the Chapter Advisor and/or National.
- Along with the board, ensure the chapter meets all of the obligations to National that are set forth in the Chapter Charter Agreement.
- Working with the President-elect, annually provide for continuity of the chapter leadership and a board transition meeting.

Many chapters utilize the immediate past President as an official board position, with the person serving as an advisor for the new board.

President-Elect:

The President-elect serves alongside the President in order to become familiar with the duties of the position. This learning period is critical to his/her success when he/she steps into the presidential role. The President-elect should be an active member of the chapter. Many chapters find it beneficial to require that the President-elect has previously served on the board of directors for a period of time. While this may be ideal, because all of the chapter members are volunteers, it is not always feasible. What is essential is that the President-elect has strong leadership and communication skills and is knowledgeable about chapter governance.

The primary accountabilities of the President-elect are:

- Work collaboratively with the chapter President throughout his/her term to provide for continuity of leadership and a smooth transition for chapter leadership.
- In the absence of the President, fill in to ensure the accountabilities of the President are met, for example to facilitate a chapter meeting.

Secretary:

The Secretary is responsible for keeping the minutes and other records of the chapter.

The primary accountabilities of the Secretary are:

- Notify all board members and chapter members of meetings. Notice can be given via mail, telephone, or e-mail. It is strongly recommended that at least two weeks' notice be given to allow for as many chapter members to attend as possible.
- Maintain all chapter records, including the Chapter Charter, financial reports, minutes from board meetings, chapter meetings and committee meeting, and correspondence.
- Distribute board, chapter, or committee meeting minutes to members prior to the next meeting.
- Maintain chapter membership roster. It is strongly recommended that the Secretary use the chapter database available through the BNRF website to track this information.

Treasurer & Treasurer-Elect:

The Treasurer is responsible for the ongoing management, accounting, and reporting of the chapter's finances. *Overall accountability for the financial management of the chapter is the responsibility of the full board*, thus the Treasurer must work in partnership with the board to ensure the appropriate

management of the chapter finances. This includes developing the budget, ensuring reporting requirements to National are met and that the chapter finances are reported to the full membership on a regular basis. In order to protect both the chapter and the Treasurer, it is important that the board establishes financial controls that limit the authority that the Treasurer or any one person has to make financial decisions or spend chapter funds without the agreement of the board. As part of these controls *all contracts and expenditures must have two signatures to execute*. For contracts, the two signatures must be the chapter President and Treasurer, or the appropriate Chairperson.

The accountabilities of the Treasurer are fairly extensive and require a good working knowledge of basic financial management. For this reason, many chapters have chosen to have a Treasurer-elect position

on their board, which is strongly recommended. This individual works with the Treasurer during the year to learn about the chapter's finances and reporting requirements. Chapters that have this position have been more successful with their transition and in maintaining good standing with National.

The primary accountabilities of the Treasurer are:

- Perform all accounting for the chapter, including managing cash receivables and expenses (inputs and outputs).
- Assist in preparing the chapter's annual budget.
- Prepare the quarterly financial reports for the chapter and present these reports to the chapter board, chapter membership, and BNRF National.
- Prepare and submit online all financial reports required as part of the chapter's Charter Agreement with National.
- In partnership with the chapter President, negotiate and execute all chapter contracts after approval is obtained from National. Please note that sometimes it will be appropriate for the chapter President and the designated Chairperson, rather than the Treasurer, to execute certain contracts.
- Work collaboratively with the Treasurer-elect, to provide a smooth transition of the chapter financial management.

Other Optional Positions:

Chapters also frequently create additional committees or positions that align with their future goals. The purpose of these committees is to assist the chapter in completing the initiatives that have been outlined for the year. Often these positions or committee chairpersons sit on the board of directors. Common committees fall into two categories – operational and mission driven.

Examples of operation committees include:

- Membership
- Audit committee
- Webmaster

Mission driven committees include:

- Networking
- Education
- Health and Wellness

Board of Directors:

Following are the accountabilities for the Chapter Board of Directors which are modeled off of the national BNRF Board of Director Accountabilities. It is possible that some chapters might not have the level of leadership to this extent, however, it is recommended that the accountabilities be followed as best as possible to help ensure the chapter's success and sustainability.

1. Ensure effective organizational planning based on BNRF's vision, mission, and values. The **Chapter Board as a whole will:**
 - Identify the chapter's purpose and develop a yearly plan to assure the chapter's direction in

the next year or longer.

- Collaborate effectively with chapter members in setting the chapter's direction including developing an attainable and measurable yearly plan.
- Develop and evaluate measures that reflect attainment of chapter goals and objectives.
- Perform an annual evaluation of the chapter's yearly plan.
- Engage in skillful communication and dialogue to promote effective decision-making processes.

For the Chapter Board to achieve the above function, the **individual Chapter Board Member** will:

- Prepare for and participate in board meetings and assess the chapter's progress on its yearly plan.
- Serve as a resource in areas of personal and professional expertise to achieve effective planning.

2. Ensure and effectively manage adequate resources. The **Chapter Board as a whole will:**

- Annually evaluate and approve the chapter's budget based on the chapter's priorities.
- Evaluate and assure appropriate chapter financial policies and protections.
- Track and monitor budget efficiency and approve adjustments as needed.
- Regularly review the chapter's Good Standing grid to ensure compliance.
- Be responsible for chapter compliance.

For the Chapter Board to achieve the above function, the **individual Chapter Board Member** will:

- Be knowledgeable of the chapter's budget and current available funds.
- Follow up with the treasurer and/or president with questions or comments.
- Demonstrate good stewardship relative to reimbursed expenses.

3. Determine, monitor, and strengthen the chapter's programs and services. The **Chapter Board as a whole will:**

- Assure that the chapter's yearly plan is consistent with BNRF's mission, vision, and values.
- Evaluate resources and assure priorities are reflected in the yearly plan.
- Foster trustworthy relationships with chapter members, the chapter advisor, and national staff in order to increase the effectiveness of chapter decisions and outcomes.

For the Chapter Board to achieve the above function, the **individual Chapter Board Member** will:

- Develop an understanding of how to ensure quality and cost-effective services and programs given the chapter's yearly plan and priorities.
- Analyze information and data about chapter goals and performance to evaluate linkage to mission, vision, and values.

4. Ensure legal and ethical integrity and maintain accountability. The **Chapter Board as a whole will:**

- Ensure integration of the association's values and ethics into all processes.
- Adhere to the Chapter Charter and Governance Manual.
- Negotiate Chapter Board communication norms on an annual basis.

For the Chapter Board to achieve the above function, the **individual Chapter Board Member will:**

- Recognize and identify potential conflict of interest situations in a timely fashion.
- Refrain from using their position to benefit self or a third party.
- Adhere to Chapter Board communication norms for team effectiveness.
- Participate in all processes of the Chapter Board to the best of their ability.

5. Recruit and orient new Chapter Board Members and assess Chapter Board performance. The **Chapter Board as a whole will:**

- Ensure Chapter Board succession by:
 - Actively identifying and mentoring chapter members for future chapter leadership positions.
 - Actively participating in the nomination process.
 - Assuring an effective and efficient orientation/transition process for new Chapter Board members.
 - Evaluate itself in a systematic way.

For the Chapter Board to achieve the above function, the **individual Chapter Board Member will:**

- Serve as a mentor to new Chapter Board Members.
- Serve as a Chapter Board Learning Partner to a new board member as directed by the president.
- Recruit and cultivate individuals as nominees for the Chapter Board committees.
- Complete the Nominating Committee requests for feedback.
- With skillful communication, give feedback to all Chapter Board members.

Board Meetings:

In addition to general chapter meetings, chapters need to have regularly scheduled chapter board meetings. These meetings provide an opportunity for the chapter leadership to fulfill its accountabilities for governing the chapter.

Many decisions are made by the chapter board based on the needs of the chapter. Sometimes, for various reasons, board members are unable to make board meetings where a vote is planned.

No matter the reason for the absence, most of the board (51%) must be present for the vote or provide their proxy ahead of the vote for the vote to be valid.

Board/Officer Transition

For the chapter to be successful, it is essential that the outgoing board meet with the new board to complete the officer transition.

Chapter Meetings

Your chapter was founded by a group of individuals who wanted to come together to advance nursing in your community. To further this work and support one another, it is essential that the group come together on a regular basis.

General Chapter Meetings:

It is recommended that you hold regularly scheduled chapter meetings not less than two times per year. These meetings should be separate from the educational programs and other events held by the chapter. Instead, these meetings should provide a forum for the chapter to work together in planning for future activities, reviewing the progress towards current goals, discussing the chapter's financial health, and networking with one another.

Frequently, chapters will get busy with the work at hand and these meetings will not occur. When this happens, the chapter becomes vulnerable in many ways. Without these meetings, there is no forum for the chapter leaders and members to talk about progress and plan for the future of the chapter. This leaves the members feeling disconnected and unmotivated to be actively involved which in turn results in the board perceiving that all the work is theirs to do. This becomes a vicious cycle that can lead to decreased membership, mistrust in the chapter leadership, poor succession planning, and burnout.

Chapter Meeting Agenda:

Each meeting should have an agenda, with estimated times allotted for each agenda item (5 mins, 10 mins, etc.) and someone to serve as timekeeper so the meeting starts and ends on time out of respect for all attendees. It is recommended that approximately 1-2 weeks before the meeting, the chapter put out a call for agenda items to the full membership to help encourage two-way agenda development and member engagement. A best practice is to include the following information on each chapter meeting agenda:

- Meeting date, time, location
- BNRF Meeting Norms
 - Reviewed at each meeting to encourage positive interaction
- Introduction and Welcome of New Members
- Recognition of professional accomplishments
- Old business
 - Items not yet completed or resolved from previous meetings
- Reports/updates on:
 - Chapter treasury
 - Chapter yearly/strategic plan
 - Chapter Good Standing – copy and paste the chapter's current Good Standing grid onto the agenda
- New business
- Open discussion
- Meeting Evaluation

- Ask all members the following about the meeting:
 - Did the team meet the expected outcomes?
 - What contributed to the effectiveness of the meeting?
 - What could have made the meeting more effective?
 - What was the impact of the team's communications on the meeting outcomes?

Consistency and transparency at each chapter meeting will help instill trust and promote member engagement.

Chapter Meeting Minutes:

Each meeting should be documented with meeting minutes based on the agenda, and should include sections for discussion, actions, responsible (listing those members responsible for the actions and by when). Two best practices are to post your chapter meeting minutes on your chapter's website so all members can read and refer to them and email a copy of your meeting minutes to your Chapter Advisor. Doing so helps to keep the Chapter Advisors connected, and they can anticipate where guidance or assistance might be needed and provide that for your chapter.

Virtual Meetings:

Virtual meetings make it more convenient for members to attend meetings. You may setup your own video/phone conference lines through numerous free services such as FreeConferenceCall, Zoom, and UberConference, etc.

Other options are services such as Skype, GoToMeeting, Google Hangout, etc. Chapters should research their options and determine what would best meet their needs. These services are often available at no cost.

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY THREE: PLANNING, MONITORING, AND STRENGTHENING CHAPTER PROGRAMS**Yearly Planning**

It is helpful for chapters to have a yearly plan to guide them in their activities. While a formal strategic plan is not required, some chapters choose to go through that process. Ultimately, it is up to the chapter to utilize the planning process that best fits their needs to develop their yearly plan. Regardless of which process is used, the plan must be communicated to and validated by the membership.

Yearly Action Planning Process Option:

Based on the chapter's purpose and members' needs, the chapter board would come to consensus on goals for the chapter to achieve in the next 1-3 years. The goals should be measurable so the chapter can track their progress. Once the goals are established, the chapter would define an action plan of activities that would move them towards these goals during the coming 12 months. Each action plan should have defined targets and outcomes. The yearly action plan then becomes the basis for the chapter budget for the next year. Lastly, each plan needs to have an evaluation process to measure progress and inform the next year's planning cycle.

Strategic Planning Process Option:

A strategic plan is a document used to communicate with the chapter the chapter's goals, the actions needed to achieve those goals, and all of the other critical elements developed during the planning

exercise. Components of a strategic plan may include the chapter's purpose statement, needs assessment, SWOT analysis, objectives, strategies, and action plans.

The detailed one-year plan is often called an annual operating plan or annual work plan. Its purpose is to identify, communicate and monitor progress on key priorities for the year that advance the chapter's strategic plan.

The annual operating plan is where the chapter establishes clear expectations and specific actions that the chapter is going to undertake during the year to move them closer to their 3-5-year goals and objectives. The annual operating plan should be kept as simple as possible, referred to often, using it as the basis for conversations on strategy, accountabilities, agreements, celebrations, etc. Each objective should be measurable so the chapter can see the impact that it has in relation to its goals. This operating/annual work plan then serves as the basis for the chapter budget for the year as the budget represents how the chapter is going to fund its operations.

Other Plans

Based on your chapter's goals, the chapter might want to develop sub-plans, such as:

- Communication Plan
- Education Plan
- Recognition Plan
- Succession Plan

Communication Plan:

There are three aspects of a communication plan that chapters should address:

1. Communication among the chapter leadership team.
2. Communication between the chapter leadership team and the Chapter Advisor / National.
3. Communication among the chapter's membership.

Communication between the chapter leadership team & the Chapter Advisor/National

Communication among the chapter, Chapter Advisor, and National is vital to the success of the chapter. BNRF provides a network of Chapter Advisors for communication, support and mentoring to chapter leaders ranging from coaching on leadership development and succession planning to problem solving challenging situations. BNRF chapters that work together with their Chapter Advisors and National have the greatest success achieving their goals.

Chapter officers must maintain regular communication with the Chapter Advisor for the purpose of ensuring the continued success of the chapter. This includes but is not limited to, responding to emails and phone calls in a timely manner, and contacting the Chapter Advisor to discuss chapter needs or questions. Chapters must also maintain regular communications with the BNRF Chapter Department as requested.

Most communications from Chapter Advisors and National is by email. Therefore, it is important for all chapter officers to maintain a current primary email address in their national member record so that they receive those communications. Please note that if a work email address is utilized as a primary email address, there is potential for it to be blocked by your organization's spam filter. Therefore, it is recommended that a non-work email be used for each officer's primary email address.

Communication among the chapter's membership

Regular, timely communication is vital to engaging chapter members, and to each chapter's success. Time should be spent by chapter leadership developing a communication plan that identifies how and when information will be shared with members. The best time to develop your plan is in conjunction with your annual budgeting or yearly planning process.

From your yearly and operating plans, identify those things that the chapter will want to communicate to its members, and plan them out on a calendar for the year. Keep in mind that your communications need to be early enough so members can request time off from work or adjust their work schedules if needed. Start with the communication date and work backwards so you know when you'll need to work on the messaging to have it ready in time.

Think about how you will communicate – what methods you'll use for various communications such as:

- Email
- Physical mail
- Newsletters
- Blogs
- Facebook
- Chapter's website
- Twitter
- Posters / Flyers
- Word-of-Mouth
- At staff meetings
- Bulletin boards

Think about the frequency you want to communicate; if you'll need to schedule reminders, etc. There are many communication plan templates available on the internet – use what will work best for your chapter, or create your own. Review your communication plan at regular board meetings, discuss what's coming up, and whether help or additional resources are needed to meet your deadlines.

Education Plan:

One of the primary activities undertaken by BNRF chapters is that of providing clinical education for the nurses within the community. Providing education furthers the mission of BNRF, meets a need within the community, and can provide revenue to the chapter. However, providing education is not required of chapters. It is acceptable for chapters to solely focus on networking or other activities.

Educational Needs Assessment

It is essential when planning education that chapters adhere to the standards for continuing education including conducting an educational needs assessment. The needs assessment allows the chapter to identify the learning needs of its members so that an education plan can be developed. Experience has shown that educational programs which are not based on a needs assessment often have lower attendance, lower evaluation scores, and do not fulfill a need within the community of nursing, thus do not further the BNRF vision of a healthcare system that is driven by the needs of patients and families.

There are two primary approaches that a chapter can take in establishing its education plan for the year. The first approach is based on the needs assessment to select a single topic area, for example sepsis, and develop a full curriculum on that topic that will be offered during the year until the chapter can be assured that all of the nurses in their community have received the full scope of education required on the topic. The chapter will be able to measure its success in meeting this goal through evaluating the learners and the programs offered as part of the curriculum.

The second approach is to review the results of the needs assessment and develop a series of educational offerings during the year that address the highest priority topics. With this approach, the chapter may not be able to give the in-depth education that a full curriculum allows but will be able to touch on the various topics to meet the needs of the nursing community.

BNRF encourages chapters to use free and low-cost educational resources developed by National as the basis for their educational programming. Doing so will significantly reduce the planning and costs related to providing education programs.

Other educational ideas for chapters include:

- Journal Clubs – select journal articles to read and then discuss at chapter meetings. BNRF is a CE Provider and can provide credit with approved applications.
- Study Groups – chapter members can help to lead study groups for those members preparing for their certification exams, etc.

Consider collaborating with your organization's clinical educators and work together to help nurses learn and prepare for their various competencies.

Program Approval from BNRF

Chapters may submit their programs to BNRF for continuing education approval. BNRF's CE Program Approval process verifies that courses meet professional education standards.

Approval by BNRF means a program has been reviewed and validated that it meets the requirements necessary for a sound educational experience. There are several resources available to assist with program planning and CE approval.

Recognition Plan:

Genuine recognition of chapter members and volunteers is vital for chapter success. Chapters with Healthy Work Environments demonstrate meaningful recognition by having a plan to recognize the accomplishments and contributions of chapter members, and celebrating chapter successes. Volunteering should be a fun experience!

Meaningful Recognition – Chapter leaders must be recognized and must recognize others for the value each brings to the work of the chapter.

There are many simple and inexpensive ways to recognize your chapter leaders and members:

- Incorporate ideas on recognizing and training volunteers into your annual plan.
- Send a welcome letter to all new members and introduce them at chapter meetings.
- Highlight the work of a leader or member in a chapter newsletter, on your chapter's website, or chapter social media webpage.
- Allow conference planning committee members to attend chapter conferences at no expense.
- Nominate your chapter for the BNRF Awards
- Send a letter to hospital administrators recognizing the contributions of individual chapter members and leaders.

- Host recognition events that celebrate chapter achievements, member contributions, certified members, and units that have achieved the Beacon Award.
- Write letters and postcards of thanks.
- Offer personal praise where appropriate.
- Provide identification badges, chapter shirts.
- Publicly acknowledge volunteers and present awards.
- Send holiday and birthday cards.
- Host an end of service party.

Determining how chapter members define meaningful recognition can be as simple as talking directly with individuals or by conducting a chapter survey.

Succession Plan:

One of the most critical factors in ensuring the success and sustainability of chapters is investing in thoughtful, deliberate succession planning and board transition.

Collaboration

To collaborate is to work with another person or group to achieve something. Collaboration naturally inspires a sense of community and allows those collaborating to learn from each other.

Oftentimes, collaboration is vital to chapter success. Teams can accomplish work more quickly, efficiently, and effectively than people taking on projects on their own, and collaborative work also keeps everyone accountable to each other, which increases motivation.

A successful collaboration can help a chapter:

- save costs by sharing expenses
- strengthen programs
- expand the value proposition for both organizations
- improve efficiency
- tap complementary skills and abilities
- increase leadership skills

There are multitudes of ways in which BNRF chapters can collaborate.

BNRF Ambassadors

BNRF Ambassadors serve a fundamental role in advancing the mission of BNRF by advocating for professional practice and promoting excellence in acute and critical care nursing. They accomplish this by communicating the value of BNRF and championing:

- Membership in the professional BNRF community.
- Evidence-based practice standards and protocols.
- Local BNRF chapter involvement.

Just as chapter leaders are not required to be BNRF Ambassadors, Ambassadors are not required to be chapter members. Chapters should locate area ambassadors, invite and include them in chapter meetings, and collaborate with them to help engage area nurses in chapter activities.

Other Chapters or Local Groups

Another example is in heavily populated areas or bigger cities where there are multiple chapters that might work together on events resulting in lower overall costs. Even rural chapters can collaborate with those in large cities using virtual options like Skype, GoToMeeting, Google Hangout, etc. The possibilities are endless.

Community Collaboration & Other Organizations

Is there an effort in your community to educate people about healthcare? Perhaps hospitals, schools of nursing, doctors' offices, vendors, or other organizations coming together for health fairs, education, etc. — these are ideal opportunities for BNRF chapters to collaborate within their local communities.

Other organizations offer collaborative opportunities as well. Consider the American Heart Association, Sigma Theta Tau, etc., during your chapter planning process.

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY FOUR: ENSURING ADEQUATE RESOURCES AND MANAGING THEM EFFECTIVELY

The following information details the obligations that the chapter agreed to when you signed the Chapter Charter Agreement. They are repeated here for your reference. The Chapter Charter Agreement should be reviewed each year with the new chapter board of directors.

BNRF operates on a Fiscal Year (FY) of July through December. For compliance with reporting requirements, it is highly recommended that your chapter follow the same fiscal year. Doing so will make the accounting process simpler. Additional detailed information on Financial Planning & Management can be found under Chapter Leadership Responsibility Four: Planning, Monitoring, and Strengthening Chapter Programs.

It is required that chapter financial reporting is submitted on time, and contractual agreements in which the chapter intends to enter are submitted in advance to National for review. This review ensures that both the Chapter and BNRF are legally protected, and that BNRF complies with government reporting requirements.

Chapter Charter Agreement

All BNRF chapter officers are required to sign the Chapter Charter agreement and send the signed copy to the BNRF National Office. The chapter is also responsible for paying their yearly dues to National. The purpose of the Charter Agreement is to clearly identify the expectations and obligations of both the Chapter and of the BNRF National Office. BNRF National Charter dues are **\$150 for each year** and will be due on April 15th every year.

It is imperative that all chapter leaders review the Chapter Charter Agreement as the full chapter board is held accountable for fulfilling expectations described within the agreement when making chapter decisions and managing the chapter during the fiscal year.

Financial Reporting Requirements

BNRF operates on a fiscal year (FY) of July through December. For compliance with reporting requirements, it is highly recommended that chapters follow the same fiscal year.

It is important that the chapter financial reports are submitted by the required deadlines. Active chapters are required to purchase through a discounted price and must use the APLOS online accounting software provided by the BNRF Website to submit the financial reports.

Doing so provides the chapter with an immediate confirmation and confirming email with a copy of the submission, allows BNRF to trace reports if lost, and allows for faster processing so that national BNRF can meet its reporting deadlines to the government.

The chapter will submit all financial reports online by the specified deadlines:

Financials	Due Date
End-Year Financial Report (Jan-Dec of previous year)	March 1st
Submit National Charter Dues	April 1st
Chapter Audit Form (for previous fiscal year)	August 15 th
Mid-Year Financial Report (January - June)	September 1st
Proposed Budget for Upcoming Year	November 1st

Each financial report must include **all of the following items:**

- Bank statements for the reporting period.
- Cash receipts records for the reporting period.
- Cash disbursement records for the reporting period.
- Bank reconciliation records for the reporting period

The chapter will submit the following annual items to the BNRF National Office by the specified deadlines:

Annual Items	Due Date
Updated Chapter Officer Roster	February 15 th
Updated Chapter Membership Roster	February 15 th
Chapter Contact Form	February 15 th
Filing of Articles of Incorporation	March 15 th
Filing of the 990E Card	May 15 th
Filing of State and Local Taxes	May 15th

Chapters that are habitually late submitting the reporting requirements may be disbanded at the discretion of the BNRF National Board of Directors. Extenuating circumstances, such as natural disasters, will be taken into consideration when making a final determination on disbandment.

Chapter Audit Form:

One of the financial controls that must be implemented by each chapter is that of conducting an annual financial audit of the previous fiscal year. This audit allows for the review of financial transactions and policies on a regular basis. These audits are important to ensure the chapter is operating in a fiscally responsible and legal manner. It is through these audits that the chapter can be transparent to the

membership about its finances and it allows for an outside review of the financial transactions. These audits can uncover misuse or embezzlement of chapter funds which, had the audit not been completed would have continued.

To conduct the audit, the chapter should convene an Audit Committee comprised of 3 chapter members who are not current officers of the chapter and do not have accountability for handling chapter financial matters such as program registration fees, chapter meeting revenue, etc.

To assist the chapter in completing their audit, a checklist has been developed. Each BNRF chapter is required to complete and submit this checklist annually to the BNRF National Office **by August 15**.

Chapter Officer List:

Each year by February 15th, the chapter is required to send an updated chapter officer roster to the BNRF National Office for the new fiscal year. It is important that those people be designated in the BNRF membership portal and have access to chapter leader resources. Chapters must have at least four-chapter officers designated in their chapter's database to be considered in compliance related to chapter officers.

Additionally, if at any other time during the year the officers change, the chapter is required to update their chapter roster and submit it to the BNRF National Office. It is vital that the BNRF National Office have the most up-to-date listing of chapter officers so that National can communicate effectively with the chapter. Chapter correspondence is generally sent to the full chapter board (officers and board members) to ensure that everyone receives the information and that it is responded to in a timely manner. Maintaining updated officers in the database is a requirement of Good Standing.

Check Signer Form / ATM Cards / Credit Cards:

One of the critical financial controls that your chapter is required to establish is dual signatures on all checks, drafts, orders for payment, contracts, and other evidence of indebtedness, issued in the name of the chapter. The signatures should be that of the President and the Treasurer.

Advertising Restrictions

Simply put, a chapter can receive sponsorships from an entity but cannot advertise for an entity. The IRS considers advertising to be a business that is unrelated to BNRF's tax-exempt purpose and is therefore a taxable activity. [To learn more, read this information on the IRS website.](#)

Therefore, chapters may not:

- solicit corporate advertising,
- sell advertising space in their publications, program materials, or on their Website,
- advertise jobs in their publications, program materials or on their Website,
- solicit state or federal funding.

Chapters may, with the prior approval of National BNRF:

- solicit sponsorships,
- solicit financial support, funding or contributions from private individuals, private foundations, companies, and corporations.

Contracts & Grants

BNRF chapters are obligated to protect the chapter and BNRF by ensuring there are written agreements with speakers, vendors, facilities, etc., when hosting an event. Chapters are part of BNRF and are not required to be independently incorporated. Thus, National BNRF is ultimately liable for all chapter contractual obligations. ***Therefore, before signing any agreement***, it must be reviewed and approved by the BNRF Chapter Department according to the Chapter Contract & Grant Guidelines. **Failure to submit contracts for approval may result in the chapter's disbandment.**

Just as two signers are required for signing checks, **two signers are also required on all contracts** to which the chapter commits. **Those two contract signers are the chapter President, and chapter Treasurer or the appropriate Chairperson.** The chapter must be listed on contracts as "the X Chapter of the Black Nurses Rock (chapter acronym-BNRF)."

It is highly recommended for all chapter leaders to review the Chapter Contract and Guidelines document. Please contact the BNRF National Office for a copy of this document to be emailed to you.

Chapter Records

Chapters shall send BNRF copies of appropriate records pertaining to the chapter's programs, activities, and operations as requested by BNRF, and will retain for three (3) years all of the following records related to its operations, except where noted below:

- Business Records:
 - Meeting minutes from all Committee Meetings
 - Meeting minutes from all Chapter Board Meetings
 - Membership Records
- Financial Records:
 - Bank Statements
 - Cash Receipts Records
 - Cash Disbursement Records
 - Bank Reconciliation Statements
 - Quarterly Financial Reports
- Educational Records:
 - Educational records must be kept for **four (4) years** when BNRF CE's and/or contact hours are provided to participants.
 - For events where BNRF CE's and/or contact hours are not provided, educational records must be saved for **three (3) years**.

Electronic saving of records is allowed, including utilizing cloud storage, provided the chapter has a back-up copy of the electronic records, the back-up copy is not stored on the same computer or flash drive, all chapter leaders know where the records are stored, where to locate cloud passwords, and this information is documented in the chapter's meeting minutes.

Commercial (Vendor) Support of Education

Chapters often seek commercial support to assist them in offsetting the costs of providing educational programs to nurses within their community. The commercial support is most commonly obtained from medical device and pharmaceutical companies whose products are used by acute and critical care nurses. In recent years, the regulations regarding what these companies can and cannot provide funding for have become increasingly stringent. These regulations have come from the groups that regulate these industries as well as the groups that accredit continuing medical and nursing education. This has increased the burden on both the chapters and the companies.

Please note that it is BNRF's philosophy not to exclude any BNRF members from chapter events. If this presents a problem for any exhibitors / vendors, please immediately contact the BNRF Chapter Department to help reach a resolution.

As you plan your events, if you have questions about commercial support, please contact your Chapter Advisor or the National Chapter Specialist. They will be able to answer your questions and advise you in negotiating the best commercial support for your chapter.

Employees

Federal regulations prohibit BNRF chapters from having any paid employees, such as administrative/secretarial help. Chapters in need of administrative support may obtain that help through a local temporary employment agency, paying the agreed upon fees. A contract with the temporary employment agency is required and must be reviewed/approved by the BNRF Chapter Department before signing.

Public Policy Restrictions

BNRF's tax-exempt status regulates our public policy activities. Therefore, National and chapters are prohibited from participating in, or contributing to political campaigns, on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. Chapters are also prohibited from lobbying on behalf of chapters or National BNRF.

As a private citizen, chapter members have the right to make their voices heard in government. However, BNRF, as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit association, must comply with restrictions placed on lobbying and on political activities. These IRS restrictions limit the association to an insubstantial amount of lobbying.

Raffles

Each state has its own laws governing raffles, lotteries, and games of chance. Generally, BNRF recommends that if a chapter is going to have a raffle or giveaway that the chance to win be available to every individual who is participating in (or paying) to attend the event where the prize will be given. It is also recommended that entry into the raffle be included in the price of the event and not be established as a separate fee. Also, be advised, that you will need to research and abide by all raffle laws governing your state.

Scholarships

Several chapters have their own scholarship programs. Please see your chapter advisor for more information.

Speaking on Behalf of BNRF

In addition to the Advertising and Public Policy restrictions, BNRF chapters may not respond to requests from media, advocacy groups, or any other entity on behalf of BNRF, unless specifically requested to do so by National BNRF. Instead, BNRF chapters should refer those requests to the National office Communications Department. As a private citizen, chapter members have the right to make their voices heard and may respond to requests as private citizens.

Tax-Exempt Status.

Applicable only to U.S. chapters: Each chapter is granted to apply for their own tax-exempt status. Each new chapter has 1 year to obtain their status.

- Chapters under the probationary period will fall under the BNRF Organization Incorporation 501(c)3 status.
- Chapters that have obtained their 501(c)3 status will follow the exemption requirements of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Chapter Resources

Chapters receive support and benefits from the BNRF National Office. Many of these resources will assist chapter leaders with managing its membership, as well as communicating with members. With proper notification BNRF may change support if it deems it is in the best interest of the Chapter.

Chapter Newsletters

Chapter newsletters are another way to provide chapter updates and communication about events such as meetings, community projects and educational offerings. Newsletters are also a way to make announcements and highlight chapter accomplishments and activities. Newsletters can be distributed to members in electronic or printed form, posted on bulletin boards, etc.

The BNRF National Office

The role of the staff at the National office is to provide consultation and support to chapters to foster the continued success of chapters. They are responsible for implementing systems to ensure chapters comply with federal and state tax regulations.

Chapter Advisory Team

BNRF provides a network of Chapter Advisors to provide communication, support and mentoring to chapter leaders ranging from coaching on leadership development and succession planning to problem solving challenging situations. BNRF chapters that work together with their Chapter Advisors and the National office have the greatest success achieving their goals. The Chapter Advisory Team functions as a vital link between chapters and the National office, ensuring effective communication among the BNRF Board of Directors, National office and local chapters on pressing issues chapters face. Advisors are volunteers who have expert knowledge on chapter issues and trends in their regions of the country and are well informed about what is happening at the National level and how that affects chapters.

Chapters are encouraged to contact their Chapter Advisor for assistance with various issues or concerns chapter leaders may encounter. Examples include:

- Resolve major unresolved conflict within the chapter.
- Clarify any program or contractual issue.

- Resolve financial issues that could negatively impact the chapter.
- When direction or support is needed.
- For assistance on how to implement key initiatives.
- Offer feedback regarding policies or procedures affecting chapters.

To contact your Chapter Advisor, go to chapters@blacknursesrock.net.

Consultation

BNRF will make available consultation and advisory support to the chapter to foster its success through, but not limited to, the BNRF National Office or Director of Chapter Development.

Free Event Promotion

BNRF will provide the chapter with free event promotion of the chapter's choosing on the BNRF website, the BNRF e-blast mailing list and Social Media outlets.

Free Product Resources

BNRF will make available to the chapter free product resources for the chapter to promote BNRF membership, certification, brochures, and other key initiatives.

Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

Each Chapter is encouraged to have a Social Media platform to engage members more intimately and to get a wealth of information to masses of people at the same time. These are excellent resources that, if used effectively with regular, timely communication, will help to engage chapter members. BNRF has a standard and professional look when starting a Social Media page.

1. Facebook:

- a. Name your Facebook group in the format: *"Black Nurses Rock: YourCity, YourState Chapter"*
- b. Once your Facebook group page is created, you must send an email to the National Chapter Services Director and allow them to join the group with administrator access.

2. Instagram:

- a. Name the Instagram group in the format: *"Black Nurses Rock: YourCity, YourState"*
- b. Please follow @officialblacknursesrock

If your chapter has social media accounts, be sure to "like" the similar National BNRF accounts so that the accounts automatically "link."

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY FIVE: RECRUITING AND ORIENTING NEW CHAPTER LEADERS

Succession Planning

Succession planning is vital to a chapter's success and sustainability. Each member of the board leadership, and in fact, every chapter member should be actively engaged in identifying and mentoring future leaders for the chapter. Succession planning is not something that can be discussed once or twice a year; rather it needs to be an ongoing activity to ensure there is a strong pipeline of future leaders.

Succession planning is a systematic approach to:

- Building a chapter leadership pipeline/talent pool to ensure leadership continuity.
- Developing potential successors in ways that best fit their strengths.
- Identifying the best candidates for categories of positions.
- Concentrating resources on the talent development process yielding a greater return on investment.

Effectively done, succession planning is critical to mission success and creates an effective process for recognizing, developing, and retaining top leadership talent.

There are several factors typically found in successful succession planning initiatives. For example:

- Chapter leaders are personally involved.
- Chapter leaders hold themselves accountable for growing leaders.
- Chapter members are committed to their own self-development.
- Leadership competencies are identified and used for selection and development.
- A pool of talent is identified and developed early for long-term needs.
- Development is based on challenging and varied job-based experiences.
- Succession planning addresses challenges such as diversity, recruitment, and retention.

How to Develop a Succession Plan

The process boils down to six steps:

1. Put a succession-planning team together.
 - a. Find the right balance of people in your chapter to participate in the succession-planning process. Select people who are process-oriented, effective communicators, knowledgeable about job competencies and competency development, and connected throughout your chapter in ways that will help garner support for your plan.
2. Identify the main factors that will influence your plan.
 - a. Anticipate factors that may influence the success of your succession plan. For example, you may see changing trends occurring in healthcare that will require new competencies in key positions and/or lead to a more diverse generational and cultural membership that require new ways of developing internal talent.

3. Link your succession plan to your chapter's overall yearly plan.
 - a. Your yearly plan tells everyone what your chapter is all about, where it's going, and how it will get there. If your succession plan is out of sync with your yearly plan, your succession plan is doomed to failure from the start. You need to partner the two plans every step of the way. Your annual plan, along with the influential factors you identified in Step 2, will enable you to identify the key positions that your plan must cover.
4. Job Descriptions
 - a. Chapters should have a clear and realistic job description for each leadership position that outlines the duties, responsibilities, and competencies (talents, skills, and knowledge) required for each position.
5. Shape action plans.
 - a. A succession plan by itself is useless. It needs to be translated into concrete action plans, with measurable goals, specified timelines, and people accountable for taking various actions or applying required processes. Plus, the implementation of your plan needs to be continuously monitored by your succession-planning team, evaluated on an ongoing basis, and adjusted for unexpected events to ensure its success.

How to Ensure Smooth Job Transitions

It is not enough to simply develop a succession plan and set it into motion. In addition to monitoring, evaluating, and adjusting it as necessary, there is one very important element that must be carefully thought out: ensuring a smooth transition process for the new chapter leader. You can have the best, most qualified member in the world to succeed a key position, but the transition still may be rocky because you haven't set up a process for transitioning that person.

Here are three helpful tips for ensuring a smooth transition of any new chapter leader:

1. **Introduce the new leader to all the individuals with whom he or she will be working.** Give them the chance to interact, get to know each other, and develop a level of comfort. Ideally, of course, the person will have been active within the chapter and knows many of the team.
2. **If possible, allow the new leader to shadow the person being replaced.** This will familiarize the person with the details of their new positions, the issues and problems that typically come up, and the knowledge needed to effectively carry out the job.

If shadowing isn't feasible, an orientation / on-boarding / precepting process is recommended to help the new leader learn their new role. Utilizing past chapter leaders as mentors to help in this regard is an excellent best practice. Take advantage of past leaders' skills by leveraging their experience and knowledge in mentoring the new leaders.

3. **Provide the new leader with as full a briefing as possible regarding the ins and outs of his or her new position.** Depending upon the position itself, this briefing should include information on chapter operations, accounting and financial reporting, and the yearly plan.

Some additional best practices regarding succession planning include:

- Having an “elect” position for each officer or chairperson role. This gives the individual who will be assuming the leadership position a year to learn about the position and accountabilities before stepping into the position. This also allows for the workload to be shared so it is less burdensome for each individual.
- Inviting new chapter members to serve on committees or as “co-chair” for a committee or event. This also allows for the workload to be shared so it is less burdensome for each individual.
- Inviting chapter members to attend board meetings so they can see how the board works. Some chapters have positions entitled “Board Learning Partners” that serve this purpose.
- Having each board member identify one person they are going to mentor during the year.
- Engaging past board members in identifying and mentoring future leaders.
- Consider job sharing or co-chairs.
- Utilize the “willingness to serve” documents for various positions located in the Resource Library.

Having a succession plan in place will eliminate recycling of officers and help ensure your chapter’s sustainability.

Nominations and Election

As previously mentioned, when discussing the chapter leadership roles, each chapter leader serves for a specific term length. Usually the terms are either one or two years in length. Therefore, each year, the chapter members have the responsibility of selecting new individuals to lead and manage the chapter. By holding annual elections, chapter members can use their voice in determining the future direction of the chapter. Chapters may also consider job-sharing to encourage more members to participate on committees, etc.

As chapter leaders, you serve the chapter and are accountable to the membership. You have an obligation to the members to allow them to select their leaders. However, chapters have reported that the nomination and election process can often be extremely time consuming and complicated with few members participating in the voting. Below are some simple guidelines for conducting your nominations and election which are aimed at achieving the desired outcome while minimizing the work involved.

Nominations:

The first step in ensuring the membership has a voice in selecting its leaders is having an open call for nominations. This can easily be done by sending out a call for nominations via mail or e-mail approximately 30 days before the election will take place. This allows the members ample opportunity to review the responsibilities of each role and submit nominations. If the election will take place at a meeting, the chapter can also accept additional nominations onsite prior to voting. The call for nominations should include the following information:

- Title and description of each position for which nominations are being accepted, including any specific requirements for serving.
- Deadline for submitting nominations.
- Details regarding the election.

Election:

To ensure that all members have an opportunity to fulfill their responsibility to vote, notification of the election must be sent to all members 14 days in advance of the meeting at which the election will take place. Or in the case of a mail or electronic election, members must be given 14 days to cast their ballot.

Voting can occur at a face-to-face meeting, by mail, e-mail, or through an online voting service. What is essential is that each chapter documents their processes regarding how the votes will be secured, what controls will be in place to validate the voter is eligible and only votes once, who will be responsible for counting the votes and how the results will be recorded and reported to the membership. Due to these issues, most chapters have found it easiest to conduct voting either by mail or face-to-face. Online voting services also provide a great option to chapters, however the cost of these services is often prohibitive to chapters.

Since the leadership is selected by the membership, it is important that enough members participate in the election to ensure the results are representative of their desires. Therefore a “quorum” of chapter members must cast ballots for the election to be valid. Prior to the election, and as part of the chapter’s voting policy, the chapter board or leadership committee establishes a quorum. It is recommended that the quorum not be less than 5% and not more than 25% of the chapter membership. The candidate receiving the highest number of votes for the office shall be elected.

Vacancy & Replacement of a Director or Officer

At times, due to work and life situations, a chapter officer needs to vacate their position before their term is complete. When this occurs, the chapter has the flexibility to decide whether to appoint an interim officer to complete the term (this is recommended when the term is more than half over) or to hold an election to fill the vacancy. When holding an election, it will be necessary to determine if the person elected will only complete the remainder of the term vacated or if they will complete the remainder of that term and then serve a full term in the position. If an election is to be conducted, the guidelines provided regarding Nominations and Elections should be followed.

The board is responsible for notifying the full membership when a position is vacated and the plan for filling this vacancy. Ideally this notification would take place within 14-30 days following the vacancy.

In rare instances, a board member may be unable to fulfill the obligations of their role and the chapter may determine it is necessary to ask the individual to step down from their position. These situations are very difficult for the chapter and individuals involved. Therefore, to ensure the best possible outcome for everyone, chapters should contact either the Chapter Advisor or the Chapter Specialist at National for consultation. National has experience with these situations and can aid based on your unique situation.

The BNRF National Office has experience with all types of chapter questions, ideas, situations, and concerns, and can help based on your unique needs. Let us know how we can help!