

# DRAFT: Committee System Proposal

## Why do we need this?

Recent downsizing from 3 full-time to 1 full-time staff has made it challenging to accomplish the work we need to do at the Boston Shambhala Center.

### Paid staff vs Volunteers

- **Paid staff** has been the largest expense of the Boston Shambhala Center. Maintaining three full-time staff has been expensive for our community in the last 10 years. Yet having only two (or fewer) staff significantly limits the revenue-generating programming that we can run.
- **Volunteers** Historically our community (and Shambhala at large) has depended on very inspired and engaged 'hero' volunteers to hold roles that carry outsized responsibility. Even those in paid positions are asked to do and hold more than is sustainable. Such concentrated workloads lead to decreased engagement with the community, lack of transparency, burnout, difficulty training replacements, and long and important gaps when someone leaves a role.

***Our community needs a better way*** to maintain programming, communications, and organizational support to run programs, generate revenue and also support the needs of the community.

## What will this achieve?

Moving away from the 'hero' model to more collaborative, group leadership at all levels will help build trust, transparency, support, and continuity in the ongoing work of the center. The purpose of this proposal is to:

- Create a basic structure for groups to organize, work together, communicate with the broader community, and advocate within the community for what they need.
- Make volunteering easier and more clear - to join different groups based on interest and availability, step into a role well and step down cleanly at the end.
- Make it clearer which people are involved in making which decisions, and who to contact to get involved in topics you care about.

## What are the guiding principles?

Group support & individual responsibility - Results are better when groups, especially groups with different experience, work together. Groups provide both accountability and support for the work of individuals. However we all know the challenges of a group where no one is clear about who is responsible for what. Each working group will have to find its own balance clarifying what decisions or actions belong to which people at the beginning. Within a circle of support and accountability, the individual has the autonomy to do the work the best way they know how. This way one person still has the ability to get things done smoothly and quickly, but we are less often left with a situation where one person is the only one doing a certain kind of work for the community.

Step in clearly, stepping out cleanly - Accepting a role is a commitment to the welfare of others. Like taking a vow, one should be clear about what one is committing to, and know how to end the commitment well when it's done. Calibrating expectations of how much work is involved in a role at the beginning is a start, how long someone is committing take on the role, and how one will step out of the role will help avoid confusion and ultimately burnout.

Managing energy as a resource - like any resource, managing the energy of volunteers takes thought and care. And if our members and volunteers have low lungta, it will drain the energy of all of our programming. We need to develop energy management in the community as intentionally as we develop financial management. Like with financial contributions, there's a wide range of what time, skills and energy people have to volunteer. As people's inspiration, availability change, we can allow them to step into and out of roles well.

Self-direction and self-organization for individuals and groups - Each person can choose what groups, and how many groups they want to be a part of. In most cases working groups will direct the way they do their work, and how the group operates. Groups will organize their own leadership, change the commitments and responsibilities of their members, and collaborate with other groups.

Communication is the nervous system of the community - Each group needs clear and transparent means to communicate with the wider organization. When someone has a question about the domain of a group, they should know whom to speak with (so the director is not the switchboard for communication). At the beginning, each group should have representatives from the Board of Directors, but *more work is needed to develop good communication practices*.

Incremental improvement - We aren't trying to get it perfect from the start, and we're not changing everything all at once. Hopefully this is a step better, just enough structure to work better, and also give us a framework to improve.

## The Basic Concept

Establish a system of working groups (both ad-hoc “Task Forces”, and ongoing “Committees”) through which the work of our community is distributed. This will help the community organize according to the experience, skill, interest and energy of volunteers.

Each group will have defined roles, with clear commitments and requirements for their group members, so volunteers can self-select if they are up for joining a particular group. Each group will choose a facilitator as one of its roles, who will organize the activities of the group (though they may not be the primary decision maker for the group).

Each individual can identify which Task Forces or Committees they want to join. and commit to do that work for a defined period. They can also step away or change roles as needed.

If community members have questions about the work of that group, they know who to contact.

## What are the challenges?

What are our limiting beliefs which could hold us back, or get in the way of this being a success?

- Especially at the beginning, there will be confusing overlaps of what work or decision falls to which committee or task force.
- Some roles will be invitation-only where others are open to anyone. This lack of clarity will conflict with the value for transparency.
- Without continual adjustment, decision making and other power dynamics within groups will have a tendency to revert back to older ways of doing things.
- Without some explicit mechanisms for feedback and mentorship, volunteers still might not feel an opportunity to grow into the work
- There will be a mismatch between what people identify as their interests vs the skills needed to push topics forward.

## How are they structured?

### Committees

Exist indefinitely to serve ongoing needs, or run ongoing programs in the community. Committee members join for a period of time defined by the group (usually 3 months - 1 year), hopefully overlapping with other new members to pass on what they have gained when they leave. Committees can assign tasks to their members, develop projects or initiatives, collaborate with other committees or task forces, and oversee the smooth accomplishment of the group's purpose.

Each Committee should at the outset clarify their purpose and scope in writing, along with their responsibilities and objectives, although with the knowledge that this scope and purpose may change with time.

Examples include: Program Planning, Teacher selection and development, End of Life Care, Finance, Gateway or Affinity groups, Ikebana, Marketing, Program Staffing, practice groups such as Ashe Society

### Task Forces/Project Team

Short-term (with a defined end) and outcome driven. The outcome of a Task Force/Project Team is defined at the beginning, and once completed the group dissolves. Task forces will usually report to a designated Board Member or the Director.

Examples include: Care and Conduct Policy review, Director Search, even staff for a program are a sort of Task Force.

### Group Roles

Member - We believe that these groups will work best if participants know at the outset the commitment they are getting into, and uphold that commitment. Different topic areas will require differing amounts of commitment, but we aspire to have that be clear at the outset.

Facilitator - Each group should appoint a facilitator. Facilitator can be any group member, ideally someone who has some experience with the workings of the group. The Facilitator doesn't need to be the most senior, or be the link to any other groups (eg Board Member, Teacher, etc.). The facilitator's role is to help organize the meetings and other group work of the committee or task force, to make sure everyone's voice is heard. A new facilitator can be elected for each cycle.

### Nomination & Appointment

Some groups can accommodate anyone who would like to join. For other groups - either to limit the size, or because of skill-based or other requirements - there will need to be a structured nomination process by which potential new group members are nominated, vetted and appointed. A Nominating Committee would be tasked with running a merit based selection process for such groups.

For example - group such as the Director Search Committee or Task Force on Harm Prevention would post an opening with requirements. Applications would go to the nomination committee (as a 3rd party to avoid conflicts of interest) whose job would be to make recommendations to find the best people for those roles.

# Appendix

## Examples of Task Forces

Below are drafts and proposals for what Task Forces might exist and how they might be structured. This has been a way of imagining what groups might

### Director Search Planning Task Force

Purpose: Create the process for hiring the next director. This is a different group than the search committee, but will overlap and help get the Director Search Task Force a good start.

Outcomes: The Director Search Planning Committee will create a process and a schedule for welcoming a new Executive Director by Shambhala Day 2020. The committee will identify who the stakeholders are for our community, will work with the community to identify the most important criteria for our next Director, and draft a hiring process supported by the community.

Timeline & time commitment: 6 month commitment. Estimated 5-10 hours/month with monthly hour-long meetings, plus other committee projects as agreed by the committee.

Members - 4-6 members including at least one Board member

Communication - The board representative to this task force will share monthly updates on progress, obstacles, etc. with other board members. This TF will be in regular contact with the wider community through the Members and Community Updates email lists.

Nomination and Appointment - Nominations by the nomination Committee and appointment by Board of Directors

### Local Task Force on Harm Prevention and Resilience/Community Care

View/Mission: This task force will review the current policies and practices for harm prevention and community care, and make recommendations to the Board of Directors for a long term structure.

Objectives:

- Review our current policy on reporting harm and processes of remediation
- Recommend what the long term structure should be for a committee or group to hold this work going forward
- Gather information and discuss with the community about what local policies should be
- Help recommend further trainings that would be helpful for our local community

Members: 4-6 members,

- Rusung Sarah Kimball (link to Governing Board)

Decision making: consensus

Timeline & time commitment: 6 month commitment. Monthly 90 minute meetings, plus other work as agreed by the committee.

## Examples of Committees

Below are drafts and proposals for what Committees might exist and how they might be structured.

### Finance Committee

View/Mission: A group familiar with accounting and/or finance who help assure the long-term financial viability of the center. Understanding and oversight of the center finances.

Time commitment: One hour meeting/month, plus other committee projects as agreed by the committee.

#### Members

- Executive Director
- Treasurer
- Finance Coordinator
- Community Member
- Community Member

#### Duties:

- Monthly review financial statements,
- Compiling annual report
- Maintaining Program expense spreadsheet: "Program Planning, Budget: Projections vs Actuals"
- Maintain monthly finance report for board "BSC Monthly Recap and Plan"
- Review and refine financial processes as needed

### Program Planning Committee

View/Mission: Plan and schedule the arc of programming at the Boston Shambhala Center which supports practitioners of all levels, brings in revenue, and supports the development of local teachers and leaders.

Time commitment: One to two hour meeting each month, plus other committee projects as agreed by the committee. Periodic open meetings to solicit community input.

#### Members

- Executive Director
- Director of Practice and Education
- Shastri and/or senior teacher
- Community Member
- Community Member

#### Duties:

- Schedule programming

- Document what factors make programming successful (teaching team, marketing, etc.)
- Review program evaluations and suggest improvements to how we choose and run programs over time.
- Solicit feedback from the community about what programming is most helpful

## Program Operations Committee

*View: Overseeing the lifecycle of programming at the Boston Shambhala Center, the Program Team connects the vision of the teachings to the logistics of getting a program running.*

*Running programs is a major activity of our center. Programs are opportunities for people to learn and practice the Shambhala Dharma, and they are a significant source of financial revenue for our community, and also an opportunity in themselves to manifest Enlightened Society. When a program is run smoothly from conception to close, everyone involved is able to connect to the teachings more deeply and to the goodness in each other more directly.*

Members:

- Head of Practice & Education \*
- Shastri(s) \*
- Center Director \*
- 3-5 Program Liaison(s)
- Registrar & Website update

Commitment: 6 month commitment of monthly 45 minute meetings, plus 2-4 hours/week (varies depending on role for upcoming programs). Each member will oversee ~ 4 programs as liaison.

Meetings include - Monthly review and preview of programs. Quarterly review of bigger trends.

Responsibilities

- Plan and organize upcoming programs from program approval through handoff to coordinator's and wrap-up of finances, feedback.
- Support teachers in connecting to the resources of the center.
- Cultivate coordinators and staff
- Inviting visiting teachers

## Shrine Keeping Committee

Maintain the shrines and ritual elements of the center as landing pads for the dralas. Regularly cleaning and refreshing the offerings on the various shrines at the center.

## Ikebana Practice Committee

To practice and train in the art of Ikebana, organizing arrangements for programs at the BSC.

## Marketing and Communications Committee

Creating enticing marketing material and communicating it to the appropriate audiences to get people to attend the programs that are most interesting and valuable to them. Communicate with the community about board activities, celebrations, open meetings, view of what the center is doing, upcoming initiatives, etc.

### Duties

- With program director and program selection committee, help craft the program description for the website, fliers, social media, etc.
- Schedule pacing of communication
- Ensure consistency of imagery, descriptions and program details across email, website and social media
- Maybe drafting newsletters and blog posts to increase communication in general

## Educator / Teacher Development Committee

Maintain and support a group of teachers constantly learning and training to better offer the teachings. Connected with regional teachers to learn and add variety to our offerings.

Member: Shastri

Member: AD Coordinator - [adcoordinator@shambhalaboston.org](mailto:adcoordinator@shambhalaboston.org)

Members: Teaching Circle, Directors, Teachers, ADs, SPIMs,

## Nominating Committee

View/Mission: A group composed of members appointed by a variety of sources (gateway leaders, senior teachers, Center Director, Board of Directors, etc.) who review applications and make merit-based recommendations to fill vacancies in groups which need such a process.

Time commitment: One hour meeting/month, plus other committee projects as agreed by the committee.

Members - the nominating committee should be composed of members appointed from a variety of sources, and broadly based with diverse backgrounds.

- Executive Director
- Board Member



- Community Member
- Community Member
- Community Member

Duties: Nomination committee would accept nominations for a position posted by a group requiring some merit-based selection criteria. Those Members with a conflict of interest in a given process may recuse themselves.

## Facilities Committee

View: Our building is the home for our community. To keep it maintained well takes a variety of different skills and experience. The Facilities Committee would work with the center staff (namely the Director) to make sure our building is always in good shape, and help make any recommendations or changes that are needed.

Duties: Working with the Director on fixing the HVAC issues, preparing the center for seasonal changes, replacing light bulbs, coordinating neutral day activities

## Celebrations and Community committee

Building a sense of community, and joy through events, parties, pot lucks, nyida day celebrations.

## Welcoming Committee

View/Mission: A group to focus on how to make our community as welcoming, friendly, supportive, and easy to join as possible. Possibly offering orientations, working on printed material, reaching out to local schools, hospitals, etc. to make connections.

## End of Life Care Committee

[endoflifecare@shambhalaboston.org](mailto:endoflifecare@shambhalaboston.org)

End of Life Committee view statement

The Boston Shambhala Center's End of Life committee helps and encourages community members to explore their spiritual wishes around the end of life, and to do what we can to honor those wishes before, during and after the time of death.

## Accessibility Committee

To make sure what we offer is available to all those who want to participate, regardless of barriers and limitations. Making recommendations for training, practice and technology. Helping to educate the teachers, staff and community about how to be more inclusive.