

Building a Stronger AsMA – Best Practices for Committee Chairs, Deputies, and Members

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The mission of the Aerospace Medical Association is "to apply and advance scientific knowledge to promote and enhance the health, safety and performance of those involved in aerospace and related activities." Our Annual Scientific Meeting, to be held at the Hyatt Regency in Atlanta from June 1-6, 2025, contributes most strongly to our mission. The next most important contributor is our committee structure. Why is this the case?

A well-functioning committee structure is crucial for several reasons. First, it provides you and other AsMA members with a way to actively participate in AsMA's activities and decision-making processes. AsMA needs your participation and input. Second, AsMA members are more diverse than most medical associations, in expertise, occupation, and nationality. One third of our membership is international. We bring varied viewpoints to the table, and this can lead to more comprehensive and effective ideas for the solution of problems, often leading to the development of resolutions to be considered by AsMA's Executive Committee, Council, and Resolutions Committee members before going to AsMA's membership for review and decision.

Committees, Constituent Organizations, and some Affiliate Organizations also contribute strongly to our Annual Scientific Program by suggesting and managing panels related to their

committee's purpose. Every committee should brainstorm on future panels at least once a year, and assign one or more committee members to develop, chair, and designate speakers for them. Finally, AsMA does not have a formal leadership development program, though we have a rich informal one. Serving on committees allows members to develop leadership skills and to gain experience in management, leadership, and motivation. This can help identify and prepare future leaders for the association and help you with your career development.

AsMA is an unusually inclusive organization. While an optimal committee size is 5–9 members to allow for a diverse range of perspectives while still being small enough to facilitate effective communication and decision-making, there has never been a limit on the number of committee members. Some, including AsMA's Council, have more than 40 members, while others are much smaller. Every AsMA Standing Committee is required to have a Deputy Chair (occasionally there are two Deputies). The Chair of large committees (>10–12) should consider creating a small leadership committee to work with the Chair and Deputy on panels, reports, and resolutions during the year. Committee



Both photos above depict the Scientific Program Committee at work this past November, finalizing the review process and building the program for the 2025 Annual Scientific Meeting.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3357/AMHP.963PP.2025>

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Chairs should communicate with members of this smaller group every month or two as panels, reports, and resolutions are developed. The Chair should also encourage committee members to publish articles and letters related to their committee's terms of reference in *Aerospace Medicine and Human Performance*.

Overall, a well-structured committee system enhances the functionality, inclusivity, and effectiveness of a medical association, ensuring it can meet its goals and serve its members well. AsMA's Standing Committee structure is defined in our Bylaws and Policies and Procedures Manual. Committee chairs are appointed for a period of 3 years, though in exceptional cases this may be extended. It is important for every committee to have a Deputy, who is expected to be the next Committee Chair, though exceptions are again allowed.

Each committee reports to one of the five AsMA Vice Presidents, who should be apprised periodically during the year of the committee's plans. A formal written report is also expected from each committee, to be submitted to the AsMA Executive Director at least 2 weeks prior to the start of the Annual Scientific Meeting, and two weeks prior to the AsMA Council and Scientific Program Committees in the latter part of November.

Information on AsMA's committees is available on the AsMA website, asma.org, if you click on the tab "About AsMA," then click on "Committees" in the left-hand column. AsMA has four Vice Presidents, VP for Representation and Advocacy Anthony Wagstaff, VP for Education and Research Fred Bonato, VP for Member Services Susan Fondy, and VP for International Services Rowena Christiansen. President Elect Warren Silberman also serves as the VP for Governance.

Here are AsMA's Standing and Ad Hoc Committees and leaders:

- Aerospace Human Performance Committee (Chair K. Ruskin, Deputy TBA, VP F. Bonato)
- Aerospace Safety Committee (Chair D. Boyd, Deputy M. Cooper, VP S. Fondy)
- Air Transport Medicine Committee (Chair B. Johnston, Deputy TBA, VP A. Wagstaff)
- Arrangements Committee (Chair J. Barson, Deputy G. Vanichkachorn, VP F. Bonato)
- Awards Committee (Chair M. Sheehan, Deputy J. Benincasa, VP S. Fondy)
- Bylaws Committee (Chair E. Boudreau, Deputy TBA, President Elect W. Silberman)

- Communications Committee (Chair D. Garcia, Deputy C. Morris, VP A. Wagstaff)
- Corporate and Sustaining Membership Committee (Chair G. Pinnell, Deputy TBA, VP S. Fondy)
- Education and Training Committee (Chair A. Kreykes, Deputy B. Johnson, VP F. Bonato)
- Finance Committee (Chair C. Pruett, Deputy TBA, President Elect/VP W. Silberman)
- History and Archives Committee (Chair W. Dalitsch, Deputy TBA, VP F. Bonato)
- Global Liaison and Outreach Committee (GLOC) (Chair F. Porras, Deputy TBA, VP R. Christiansen)
- Membership Committee (Chair W. Matthews, Deputy T. Toole, VP S. Fondy)
- Nominating Committee (Chair Past President S. Northrup, Deputy Past President J. Dervay)
- Registration Committee (Chair N. Johnson, Deputies C. Jarrett and W. Laslie, VP F. Bonato)
- Resolutions Committee (Chair L. Rivero, Deputy TBA, VP F. Bonato)
- Science and Technology Committee (Chair R. Mayes, Deputy TBA, VP F. Bonato)
- Scientific Program Committee (Chair A. Lippert, Deputy A. Sirek, VP F. Bonato)
- Ad Hoc Committee on Aerospace Medicine Mental Health (Chair Q. Snyder)
- Ad Hoc Committee on Commercial Space Flight (Chair K. Klingenberg)
- Ad Hoc Committee on Social Media (Chair D. Garcia)
- Special Committee on the Emergency Medical Kit (Co-Chairs J. DeVoll and P. Alves)

Now that you have reviewed AsMA's Standing and Ad Hoc Committees, consider attending one during our Annual Scientific Meeting in Atlanta. It would be best if you were to advise the Chair of your intention to do so for large committees as space may be limited. Attendance is particularly welcome at smaller committees such as Bylaws and Resolutions. If you have an interest in these areas, are responsible for Bylaws and/or Resolutions in a Constituent or Affiliate Organization, or plan to bring Bylaws changes or Resolutions forward for consideration, you should attend.

Many thanks to our President Elect, Vice Presidents, Committee Chairs, committee members, Executive Director, and staff for your hard work and your role in building a stronger AsMA!

AsMA is a family. No one belongs there more than you!