Topic: Executive Committee Function

Background: Over the past decade, the YALSA Executive Committee has continued without much change, even though the rest of YALSA has evolved. As a result, the focus and work of the Committee may need to be reconsidered in order to better align that work with the current governance and membership needs of the association. Linda Braun and Sarah Hill reviewed the purpose and functions of the Committee in order to begin a discussion about current and future policies and practice.

Action Required: Discussion

Overall Executive Committee Framework
Sarah and Linda began by reviewing the YALSA Bylaws to better understand how the Executive Committee purpose and work is laid out by that foundational document. After reviewing the Bylaws, Linda and Sarah believe that the basic framework should remain in place. The document specifies that the Executive Committee meets during Annual Conference and Midwinter Meeting, but there are no other specific requirements for meetings (for example there is no requirement that the Executive Committee meets in the spring and the fall). Many of the directives for the Executive Committee in the Bylaws focus on the membership of the Committee and the leadership and strategic role the Committee plays along with the YALSA Board.

While it looks like no revisions to the Bylaws are necessary at this time, the new organizational plan offers us a great opportunity to rethink how and why the Executive Committee works.

Along with the YALSA Bylaws, the function statement for the Executive Committee ([www.ala.org/yalsa/workingwithyalsa/committees/exccommittee](http://www.ala.org/yalsa/workingwithyalsa/committees/exccommittee)) is fairly clear in the role of the Executive Committee:

- To act for the Board of Directors between Board meetings on items that require interim action; to review agendas for the Board meetings and to make recommendations to the Board regarding items reviewed and under consideration by the Board; to review YALSA activities and programs and recommend division priorities in relation to activities; to provide support and training for the Board of Directors and Chairs. YALSA’s Executive Committee may not: amend bylaws; elect or remove board members; hire or fire the executive director; approve or change the budget; make major structural decisions.
- Committee size: President, President-Elect, Immediate Past President, Fiscal Officer, Secretary, YALSA Division Councilor and Executive Director (ex-officio).
Current Practices
While policies for the committee have remained mostly unchanged over the past decade or so, practices have evolved. These practices perhaps offer the most opportunity to update and re-envision the work of this group so that it is well-positioned to support the current governance and membership needs of YALSA. Current activities of the committee include:

- Serving as the search committee for publication editors and blog managers
- Functioning as both an incubator and a feedback mechanism for board proposals
- Overseeing the orientation and on-boarding process for new board members
- Providing a contact point for ALA via individual committee member roles. For example, the Fiscal Officer liaises with YALSA’s representative on the ALA Budget Analysis and Review Committee (BARC)
- Represent YALSA at ALA meetings such as the BARC/Division Leaders’ Meeting and the ALA and Division Leaders’ Fall Executive Committee Meeting
- Co-plan and take turns leading the bi-annual AASL/ALSC/YALSA Joint Executive Committee Meeting
- Plan training for board members and chairs
- Review and update the Succession Plan, as needed (this is a new activity being implemented in 2016)
- Collect, review and discuss board member exit interviews
- Hold general discussions about the care and feeding of the board
- Hold general discussions about YALSA’s relationship with ALA
- Provide general support to the Executive Director and President

Re-assigning Practices
In looking at the above list and thinking about the new organizational plan, some of these activities would now be better suited for other groups. For example, these items would be a good fit for a re-envisioned Governance Nominating Committee that expands its focus beyond building a slate to overall board development:

- Overseeing the orientation and on-boarding process for new board members
- Plan training for board members and chairs
- Collect, review, share and discuss board member exit interviews with the board to inform board productivity and aid in development and recruitment
- Hold general discussions about the care and feeding of the board

These activities could be better situated for the full board:

- Functioning as both an incubator and a feedback mechanism for board proposals (especially Standing Board Committees)
- Review and update the Succession Plan, as needed (this is a new activity being implemented in 2016)
- Hold general discussions about board productivity, culture, board member needs, etc.
- Provide general support to the Executive Director and President

This task could be assigned to a taskforce comprised of members with relevant expertise

- Serving as the search committee for publication editors and blog managers

Possible Expanded Existing and New Roles

ALA/YALSA Relations
If the above tasks are reassigned, that leaves the Executive Committee with the following activities:

- Providing a contact point for ALA via individual committee member roles. For example, the Fiscal Officer liaises with YALSA’s representative on the ALA Budget Analysis and Review Committee (BARC)
- Represent YALSA at ALA meetings such as the BARC/Division Leaders’ Meeting and the ALA and Division Leaders’ Fall Executive Committee Meeting
- Co-plan and take turns leading the bi-annual AASL/ALSC/YALSA Joint Executive Committee Meeting

Having the Executive Committee expand its work in these three areas makes sense, as the Board has talked about a desire to build stronger ties with ALA in order to build capacity and advance its mission. With more time to focus on building YALSA’s relationship with ALA, YALSA could make strides in this area where before it has struggled.

**YALSA Financial Planning & Monitoring**

With a narrowed focus, the Executive Committee may also have time to help address another challenge within the association. Up to this point, the Executive Director and Fiscal Officer have taken on most of the responsibility for fiscal planning. However, over the past 10+ years, YALSA’s financial portfolio has more than doubled in size. In 2006, for example, YALSA’s operating budget was about $300,000, and YALSA had one endowment and no grants. Today, YALSA’s operating budget is over $500,000 and YALSA has three endowments and two grants.

The increased size and complexity of the budget has created a challenge for the Board as well as for staff. Board member surveys reveal that Board members are unsure about their role in fiscal matters and there is a general consensus for a need to increase the Board’s capacity to be actively engaged with financial planning and oversight.

One way to achieve this would be to create a new committee focused on financial planning and budgeting. As noted in the article, “The Finance Committee: What it is and What it Does” (link to full article in resource list below): A nonprofit finance committee may be tasked specifically with (1) working with the staff to develop an annual and/or multi-year operating budget, (2) setting long term financial goals for the organization, such as creating working capital or cash reserve funds, gross and net revenue targets, or creating a fund for maintaining or replacing equipment, and ensuring adherence to the budget and achievement of the adopted goals by monitoring and reporting the organization’s financial activity.

Nonprofit finance committees typically have responsibility for how endowment funds are invested; however, for ALA/YALSA this role is placed in the hands of the ALA Endowment Trustees. Nonprofit finance committees also typically work closely with an accountant to conduct an annual audit. In ALA/YALSA’s circumstance, this task is the responsibility of the ALA Finance Department. Since YALSA is not responsible for these two major tasks, creating a new committee that focuses on finance does not seem warranted. However, YALSA still needs to find a way to improve its ability to make long range fiscal plans and to monitor fiscal activity.

In lieu of an entirely new committee, the Executive Committee could be charged by the Board to provide support for fiscal planning. This excerpt from the “Creating a Finance and Audit
Committee” (see link to full article in resource list below) on managing finances states clearly the importance of this aspect of a financial committee’s work: “To act as the board's eyes and ears in the financial operation, relieving the whole board of having to struggle with the complexities of the organization's finances. The committee can "translate" the finances into ordinary language and simple numbers, so that board members who are not financially sophisticated can still understand clearly the organization's financial challenges and situation, and make informed decisions.”

By taking on this role (which focuses only on planning and not decision making), the Executive Committee can build YALSA’s capacity. The intention is not to take away or shift any existing fiscal responsibilities from the Board, but to create a mechanism in order to address the challenge of a more complex budget and to increase support the Board’s receives relating to understanding, interacting with, and supporting the fiscal health of the association.

Proposed Next Steps

- A sub group of the Board, perhaps the Fund and Partner Development Standing Committee, could rewrite the Executive Committee’s charge so that it is focused on the activities of relationship building with ALA and YALSA financial planning. The new function statement would then be presented to the Board for review, discussion, and adoption.
- The Board moves forward with the idea of expanding the role of the Governance Nominating Committee to a Board Development Committee and take on related tasks that the Executive Committee has been handling up to now.
- The Board agrees to take ownership of these tasks that the Executive Committee has been handling:
  - Functioning as both an incubator and a feedback mechanism for board proposals (especially Standing Board Committees)
  - Review and update the Succession Plan, as needed (this is a new activity being implemented in 2016)
  - Hold general discussions about the care and feeding of the board
  - Provide general support to the Executive Director and President
- The Board tasks the Executive Committee with creating a formal plan and related processes for expanding and strengthening its role as conduit between ALA and YALSA, which would then be presented to the Board for review, discussion, and adoption.
- The Board agrees to set a date to evaluate the success of the above changes in one year’s time and make adjustments as needed.

Additional Information:

- Working with YALSA Executive Committee
  [http://www.ala.org/yalsa/workingwithyalsa/committees/exccommittee](http://www.ala.org/yalsa/workingwithyalsa/committees/exccommittee)
  [http://www.ala.org/yalsa/workingwithyalsa/ec/ecmembers](http://www.ala.org/yalsa/workingwithyalsa/ec/ecmembers)
- YALSA Bylaws
• Make Good use of the Treasurer and the Finance Committee

• The Finance Committee: What it is and What it Does

• Creating a Financial and Audit Committee http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-ofcontents/finances/managing-finances/finance-committee/main