

news from around the IEEE

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Building a better IEEE: Organizational improvement plans explained

Building a better IEEE

Three alternatives described:

These include links to the full text of the task force reports on each plan. Graphics for the reports are available in hard copy by contacting [Henry Shein](#).

- [Traditional Model](#)
- [Federation Model](#)
- [Matrix Model](#)
- [The organizational improvement design requirements/specifications](#)

Each alternative is broken down into a simple chart:

- [The current IEEE structure](#)
- [A look at the Traditional Model](#)
- [A look at the Federation Model](#)
- [A look at the Matrix Model](#)

IEEE Organizational Improvement Survey

Milestones in the process

What do you think?

Building a better IEEE

A process begun three years ago to build a better IEEE continues this month with the presentation to members of three alternatives to the current volunteer structure.

Organizational improvement is one of the five primary goals adopted in "Strategies for the Future." The three models presented here are aimed at improving the Institute as a volunteer organization; the staff structure is to be addressed later.

Strategic planning and organization improvement have involved scores of volunteers in meetings and retreats to identify the IEEE's strengths and weaknesses and to develop scenarios for change. There is broad agreement that the existing complex, hierarchical structure of boards and committees with overlapping responsibilities is not serving our 320,000 members as well as it could. Analyses cited inefficient operations and decision processes that make poor use of

volunteers' time and talent, with little to show in improved services for members.

Fernando Aldana, chairman of the Strategic Planning Committee, said of the committee's role, "We simply managed the process. The proposed solutions came from the tireless effort of many individuals in the broadest possible spectrum of members, each with their own hands-on view of today's IEEE."

After organizational problems were identified by a retreat in Denver, Colo., USA last June, a task force named by the Strategic Planning Committee formulated a set of design specifications that could be used to develop a new organizational structure (see the Presidents' Column, The Institute, January 1995). At a three-day retreat at Marco Island, Fla., USA (The Institute, March 1995) volunteers in seven design teams sought to develop a comprehensive response. Afterward, three separate task forces merged and fleshed out the skeleton proposals and developed the alternatives now offered for further consideration.

The Strategic Planning Committee has now launched the next step, a broad outreach to IEEE societies, sections, boards, committees and individual members.

Fred Andrews, SPC vice chairman, said, "This is still a work in progress. Anything can happen, including staying with the present structure. Whatever structure is ultimately selected, you can be sure that the transition period will be determined by how radical the change will be."

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Traditional model

BY DONALD M. BOLLE

Vice Chair, Task Force 3

This proposal focuses on providing a volunteer structure that will meet the technical, professional and social needs of our members effectively and efficiently. In view of the members' diversity of interest and global distribution, it emphasizes decentralization and local decision making; seeks to empower the members and the volunteers by delegating the decision making to the level where programs are implemented; and recognizes the need to provide an environment in which there can be a sustained focus on providing support and service to members.

The Task Force 3 members are also persuaded, in putting forward this more traditional scenario, that organizational change is more effective in meeting strategic objectives when such change is evolutionary rather than revolutionary; where the best features of the current structure are retained and only those that have proven to be ineffective or unduly costly are eliminated or modified. Note that we do not propose any changes in the current structure or operations of societies and sections.

To increase effectiveness and reduce cost:

- The number of boards has been decreased;
- Board membership, where deemed appropriate, has been downsized;
- Support functions have been placed in a direct relationship to the activities they support, thus shortening the lines of communication and direction;
- Financial oversight and budgetary controls are simpler;
- Interaction between operational segments is improved.

The Task Force 3 proposal includes three operational boards; Technical, Geographic and Support Services. Each of the three boards would be chaired by a senior vice president, elected by the Assembly. In addition, a number of vice presidents elected by various interest clusters would provide further leadership and representation of their constituencies and activities on these boards. The Support Services Board differs in that its leadership is drawn from the Technical and Geographic Boards, thus ensuring integration of the support services with the operational activities of our Institute. The Institute Board of Directors consists of 16 elected members, four elected by the Technical Board, four elected by the

Geographic Board and eight elected at large by the Institute members.

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[See the full text of the report.](#)

Federation model

BY HENRY BACHMAN

Chair, Task Force 2

This is a member-driven federation model intended to provide local autonomy for member-based entities with minimal oversight. Its key features include:

- Federations of geographic and technical entities which may be joined by members at their option.
- General members will receive basic Institute-wide services for a "core" membership fee.
- A smaller Board of Directors with 12 at-large directors elected by members. The Board would set IEEE policy and elect vice presidents representing four major operational committees. It would be the ultimate body for conflict resolution among entities.
- A nine-member Executive Committee would implement policy, oversee staff operations and prepare budgets.
- A Congress, to include a representative from each technical and geographic entity, would meet annually to recommend policy and priorities for the IEEE; provide a forum for conflict resolution; and nominate candidates for the BoD. Voting by entity delegates would be proportional to entity membership.
- Operational committees for Standards, Career Enhancement, Products and Services and Global Membership that would provide services to the entities in an integrated way.

A key element of this plan is that IEEE members would pay a "core" fee for Institute-wide services, with the option of selecting services from geographic or technical entities at additional cost. This would serve to ensure that each entity offers and provides services consistent with the needs and desires of its constituent members. It will relieve the need for high general dues and the accompanying level of central control. It will contribute to the maintenance of a dynamic organization, responsive to members' needs and to changes in the environment.

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[See the full text of the report.](#)

Matrix model

BY H. TROY NAGLE

Chair, Task Force 1

This proposal integrates elements of a federation model and a matrix structure with the goal of improving balance and equity in representation while strengthening ties to the membership. Authority and responsibility for all activities in this scheme are placed at the lowest possible level. As a result, the opportunities for volunteer initiatives and programs, appropriately supported by staff, are greatly increased. Among the plan's features are:

- Members have the option to join a wide selection of technical, geographic and/or professional entities. These entities conduct activities such as conference organization, publication of journals and continuing education programs.
- A key element of this proposal is the Assembly matrix structure, which guarantees that every delegate will have at least two constituencies, assuring that each delegate will have a broader role as compared to the current IEEE structure.
- A larger Assembly directly elected by members in a two-dimensional matrix structure that represents alliances of technical, geographic and professional entities. Meeting annually, the Assembly elects nine at-large members of the Board of Directors and provides forums for coordination among technical, geographic and professional entities. The Assembly also provides a forum which represents the interests of IEEE members who don't join optional entities.
- A smaller Board of Directors focuses on Institute-wide issues and serves as ultimate authority in conflict resolution. The Board elects the executive director, secretary/treasurer and vice presidents of three operational boards. Six directors are elected directly by the largest entities.
- A smaller Executive Committee monitors staff operations, implements BoD projects and initiatives and coordinates committee activity, as well as prepares budgets.
- Three operational boards (Standards; Member Activities & Services; Products & Services) have representatives elected by the four annual Assembly forums, assuring entity influence in all IEEE programs, products and services.

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Milestones in the process

July 1992 -- Squaw Creek retreat provides impetus for organizational improvement.

June 1994 -- Denver retreat provides basis for design specifications leading to current plans.

Jan. 1995 -- Marco Island retreat develops concepts for new organizational models.

May-June 1995 -- Distribution of proposals to societies and sections.

June 1995 -- Publication in The Institute of proposed models.

June 1995 -- Present proposals to major boards.

June-Sept. 1995 -- Open comment period.

Nov. 1995 -- Present revised proposals to major boards.

Dec. 1995 -- Present revised proposals to Board of Directors.

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What do you think?

The Organizational Improvement Executive Committee and Strategic Planning Committee are asking IEEE members to comment on these plans. To obtain the full text of task force reports or to send comments, write to:

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You can access The Institute files through the pathway *Products, Services, and Information/Publishing Department*.

You may also voice your opinions by completing and returning the survey in this issue.

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