

The logo for the New York City Bar, featuring the text "NEW YORK CITY BAR" in a serif font, centered between two horizontal blue bars.

NEW YORK CITY BAR

POLICY DEPARTMENT

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND MEMBER BEST PRACTICES

Create Dedicated Subcommittees to Promote and Further Your Committee's Agenda

Assigning members to specific tasks and responsibilities each year will help ensure your committee has a robust agenda, is making full use of the resources the City Bar provides and keeps members engaged. Some subcommittees and member assignments we recommend include:

- ❖ **Legislative Subcommittee.** Coordinates with the Policy Department, helps with the tracking of legislation of interest and vets legislative policy issues to bring before the full committee.
- ❖ **Reports Subcommittee.** Reviews and updates past reports as needed. In particular, when advocating for a legislative change, it is important that committee reports reflect the most recent bill information and any amendments that may have been made since the report was issued. Legislative reports that are out of date are not recirculated to legislators. To help with this process, we recommend that committees save all completed committee reports to their [City Bar Central](#) pages so you have a compendium of past work easily accessible in Word and PDF format.
- ❖ **Communications Subcommittee.** Helps with communication efforts by drafting press releases, blog posts, event recaps, etc. that the Communications Department can include on the City Bar's website and/or in various City Bar publications. This group could also monitor social media accounts and City Bar publications for relevant updates and coordinate social media efforts to promote committee work.
- ❖ **Advocacy Subcommittee.** Engages in advocacy beyond the issuing of a report. For examples of what this could entail, review our guide "[Your Committee Issued a Report...Now What?](#)". If you have proposed legislation, then this subcommittee is particularly important.

Involve Us Early

- ❖ Inform us of issues that interest your committee. We can keep an eye out for relevant updates and related legislation or rules that address those topic areas and send you updates that come to our attention.
- ❖ Contact us when you are planning to write a report so we can monitor the issue and related legislation and keep you apprised of any developments. We may identify other committees that likely would need to review your report before it gets issued so that you can reach out early and collaborate.

- ❖ If you are proposing legislation, we can research whether any similar proposals already exist in the legislature, coordinate with you on timing and strategy, and help you find appropriate sponsors for the legislation.

Consider the Best Vehicle for Your Ideas

- ❖ There are many avenues a policy recommendation can take and committees should consider all possible approaches. Examples include: drafting new legislation; commenting on or suggesting regulatory changes; drafting a ‘white paper’; developing educational materials that can be distributed through schools, agencies, etc.; drafting an Executive Order; or suggesting policy changes by writing directly to high-level public officials.

Pay Attention to the Timing of Your Reports

- ❖ **State Legislation.** When commenting on state legislation, aim to have reports submitted in the early months of session (the NYS legislative session runs from January to June). This gives us more time to advocate for your position and to respond to issues that may arise, including bill amendments.
- ❖ **City or Federal issues.** Reports on city or federal issues can be submitted whenever the committee is able to complete them, as those sessions are year-round. However, once bills begin to move, particularly in the City Council, they tend to move quickly—so it’s best to submit a report as soon as it’s ready rather than waiting for legislative action. It is also important to keep an eye out for upcoming votes, hearings or committee meetings on the issue.
- ❖ **Additional Timing Considerations.** If there are any external deadlines for your report, please take into consideration that your report will have to be reviewed and approved by the City Bar’s President before it can be finalized. Depending on the issue, your report may also need to be shared with other committees that have overlapping jurisdiction. Please make all efforts to submit your reports with sufficient time for review.

You will be asked about any time constraints when you submit the draft report via our online [Intake Form](#). Please be sure to include all relevant information.

Think Beyond the Report

Your policy recommendations don’t have to end with a written report - committees are encouraged to think of other creative ways to convey their ideas and undertake advocacy efforts.

- ❖ **Promote your work!** The City Bar will distribute your reports, post them on our website and feature them in our various social media accounts, newsletters and publications as appropriate. In addition, committee members should share final reports with interested stakeholders, promote them on social media accounts, and circulate them through list serves, etc. The more attention we are able to garner for your reports, the greater impact they will have.
- ❖ **Press and Publicity.** Consider working with our Communications Department to draft and issue press releases, blog pieces or op-eds that highlight your report after it has been issued to raise support and awareness of the topic. Let our communications staff know if there are publications, reporters or other media sources that should receive such materials so your work is getting to the right audience. You will be asked about this on the Intake Form as well.

- ❖ **Programs, CLEs and Events.** Plan CLE courses or educational events that highlight the topics in your report. Creating a public forum where experts, advocates and other interested parties can have an open dialogue on an issue or newly enacted legislation provides an excellent opportunity to educate the profession and public and create interest in the topic. If you are interested in hosting an event at the City Bar, contact our Programs Department.
- ❖ **Direct Advocacy.** Join us for lobby visits. Particularly when you've proposed legislation, we need committee members to meet with potential sponsors, explain the proposal and answer technical questions. We can also organize lobby trips where committee members can meet with key legislators to discuss particular bills.

Stay Informed

Keep up on issues of interest to your committee so you are aware of developments and new topics:

- ❖ Follow news reports and relevant blogs; tap into resources offered by other organizations that do targeted work in your area of interest; or consult the NYS Office of Court Administration's Advisory Committee reports, which lay out the agency's proposed legislation for each year. Many of these resources are available on our website.
- ❖ Conduct your own online bill searches to review the status of pending legislation. Our guide, "[Tracking State and City Legislation: Tips](#)", can help you get started.
- ❖ Keep an eye on what other committees are working on. This will prevent overlap and give you ideas for collaboration. The City Bar's weekly 44th Street eNews provides information on all recently issued reports and upcoming events. Committees should consider assigning a member to review the eNews and other City Bar news publications and report any relevant information back to the committee.
- ❖ Follow us on social media.

You're the Experts

- ❖ Be prepared to work with us to answer questions about your reports from legislators, the media and other organizations. When you submit your draft report, you will be asked to identify a point person as the primary contact for answering questions related to the report. Please provide this and the other information requested on the Intake Form when you submit draft reports. This is particularly important when you are proposing legislation because we must take the lead on advocacy.

Use the City Bar's Website as a Resource

Our website has a number of resources for those interested in policy and provides the latest updates on your policy positions:

- ❖ **[Report Postings](#).** Our website includes summary pages for committee reports that feature an overview of the report, links to any related bill or rule information, and any available outcome information. If you need the most recent version of a bill you've commented on or its status, you can find that information on our website.

- ❖ [Resources and Links](#). Our resource page has links to helpful websites, a Frequently Asked Questions section, and information aimed at maximizing your policy work.
- ❖ [Committee Handbook](#). This resource offers detailed guidance on the City Bar’s process for reviewing and approving committee reports and other written policy work.

We Are Your Partners - Stay in Touch with Us

- ❖ While we can’t always attend committee meetings, we are happy to hear about your policy goals and projects. It is especially helpful for us to know if you plan to have legislators or other public officials at your meetings so that we can try to attend.
- ❖ After you issue a report, assign a member or subcommittee to follow the issue and keep the Policy Department informed of any developments; we love to share with our membership when your work has a positive impact!
- ❖ Feel free to contact us with questions or for advice on your policy work as a City Bar committee member. We’re here to help!

Contact the Policy Department

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