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BOARD FOR JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

March 3, 2014

Honorable Mary Fairhurst, Chair
Judicial Information System Committee
Washington State Supreme Court
PO Box 40929
Olympia, WA 98504-0929

Dear Justice Fairhurst:

In 2012, the Board for Judicial Administration (BJA) held a retreat to discuss issues of governance and allocation of Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) resources dedicated to supporting boards, commissions, committees, task forces, and workgroups. The BJA agreed to divide these issues between two workgroups. The BJA recently adopted recommendations made from the workgroup charged with looking at all judicial branch committees and identifying opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness by merging or restructuring some groups. The workgroup reviewed 205 committees of associations, boards and commissions. Although the BJA realizes that examining the efficiency and relevance of any committee is actually the responsibility of that organization and its own related committees, the BJA is undertaking the job of examining each of its own BJA committees and workgroups and is asking that every association, board or commission do the same.

This workgroup recommended, and the BJA adopted the following:

- Every BJA authorized entity shall review and assess their current committee structure and align their committees with the proposed standard for creating, managing, and reviewing committees.
- All committees will adopt a charter containing the following information: Committee title; authorization (court rule, court order, bylaw, statute or other); charge or purpose; AOC staff support required; policy area; other branch committees addressing the same topic; other branch committees to partner with; committee type: standing, subcommittee, workgroup; committee membership; term limit; duration/review date; budget; reporting requirements (i.e., quarterly to the BJA, the authorizing organization and/or other entities addressing same topic); and expected deliverables or recommendations.
- Create and adopt a standard for committees that would include an agreement on the following items: 1) committee types; 2) committee duration limit to two years unless specifically extended after review; 3) commitment to periodic review, including a reporting requirement on activities, decisions, and initiatives; 4) formal request for AOC staff support and resources.

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The BJA is currently re-examining and chartering our standing committees pursuant to this recommendation. We anticipate that the body will examine other committees, workgroups and task forces which were previously created by the BJA and determine whether they should continue in their current form or be incorporated into a standing committee.

The workgroup also focused on how the AOC uses its staff and resources, recognizing the need to prioritize requests for resources so the core work of the judicial branch can be done effectively. The demand for staff support and proliferation of committees and workgroups often create a strain on resources and result in limited support.

Recognizing the limited AOC staff and resources, the BJA requests that all judicial branch entities which operate committees under their authority using AOC staff or resources discuss and consider implementing the proposed chartering and committee standards. We hope these discussions will help define the core mission of the committees and possibly result in the merging or elimination of duplicative committees which require judicial and AOC resources.

If your organization has recently done work like this we encourage you to share the results. The BJA is interested in creating a central repository for charter documents so they are centrally located and can be accessible to others. This repository could function as a resource for all the judicial branch entities and staff and would facilitate collaboration and information sharing. If your organization has not done work like this recently, we urge you to adopt the recommendations of the BJA workgroup as outlined earlier in this letter. Staff will follow-up in June to determine whether you have any finalized documents that you can share.

If you would like a template for the committee charter, please contact Beth Flynn at beth.flynn@courts.wa.gov or (360) 357-2121.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Shannon Hinchcliffe at shannon.hinchcliffe@courts.wa.gov or (360) 705-5226.

Thank you for your consideration of this information.

Sincerely,

Barbara Madsen, Chair
Board for Judicial Administration

Kevin Ringus, Member Chair
Board for Judicial Administration

cc: Ms. Vonnie Diseth