

Coalition of Federal Ombuds (COFO)

Executive Committee Charter

Enacted February 19, 2024

Article I. Executive Committee Charter

Section 1.01 This charter outlines the roles, responsibilities and governance structure for the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is the overarching governing body of the Coalition of Federal Ombuds (COFO) and its composition is laid out in COFO Charter Article V, Section 5.01. This document in conjunction with the COFO Charter provides guidance and sets standards for operating in an Executive Committee position.

Article II. Purpose

Section 2.01 The purpose of the Executive Committee is to provide guidance, advice, structure and organization for COFO. All Executive Committee members must be voting members and must practice in adherence to the values laid out in Article III of the COFO Charter. Executive Committee members should operate according to the Charter and work collaboratively in service to the betterment of COFO.

Article III. Roles and Responsibilities

Section 3.01 The Executive Committee members shall collaboratively govern and conduct necessary business for and on behalf of The Coalition. All positions on the committee, except for that of the chair, may be filled by up to two ombuds, an arrangement which is preferred and recommended. If positions are held by two ombuds, each will have equal responsibility and authority and the position's workload will be balanced between them.

Section 3.02 There shall be no financial compensation from COFO for serving in an Executive Committee position.

Section 3.03 The responsibilities of the Chair shall be to:

- (a) convene and preside over meetings; oversee the administrative and business functions of The Coalition,
- (b) serve as ex-officio member of all committees or designate a member of the Executive Committee to do so, as needed,
- (c) appoint committee members and chairs for committees or workgroups,
- (d) appoint special committees as necessary, with confirmation by majority vote of the Executive Committee,
- (e) serve as the official spokesperson for the Coalition, including serving as the primary point of contact to members of the public, federal and state agencies, and other professional organizations,
- (f) prepare and transmit written correspondence on behalf of the Coalition,

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- (g) serve as the ultimate appellate authority on all appropriate Coalition matters, and
- (h) perform any other specific functions assigned by the Executive Committee.

Section 3.04 The responsibilities of the Vice Chair shall be to:

- (a) assist the Chair in carrying out the functions of the Coalition and act in the absence of the chair,
- (b) fulfill the term of the Chair if the Chair cannot fulfill their term,
- (c) act or serve at the specific request of the Chair,
- (d) serve as the default Executive Committee point of contact for peer review committees, though another Executive Committee member should be chosen if they have experience on a prior peer review committee and the Vice Chair(s) do not,
- (e) provide administrative oversight for the planning of the conference/annual meeting,
- (f) provide administrative oversight over all committees, and
- (g) perform any other specific functions assigned by the Executive Committee.

Section 3.05 The responsibilities of the Secretary shall be to:

- (a) prepare minutes of all COFO meetings
- (b) maintain the official records of the Coalition, including meeting attendance, minutes, and
- (c) tally votes not cast by the showing of hands, including secret ballots and any electronic votes (except for the Executive Committee elections).

Section 3.06 The responsibilities of the Coordinator shall be to:

- (a) maintain and update membership lists,
- (b) organize the membership meetings, including the physical location of and/or technical platform used for each meeting
- (c) manage RSVPs and attendance to membership meetings
- (d) conduct appropriate outreach to members, potential members, and agencies interested in starting an ombuds program,
- (e) maintain and manage the Coalition's website (including empowerment to empanel a website committee to assist with this task),
- (f) provide official notice to membership as required, and
- (g) provide documentation to the Secretary.

Article IV. Rotation of Executive Committee Members

Section 4.01 Executive Committee members shall be elected by the voting membership:

- (a) Preceding Executive Committee elections, the Chair shall appoint an Elections Committee (see COFO Charter) of no less than three and no more than five persons.

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- (b) At the monthly meeting following the committee's appointment, the committee shall present a slate of candidates.
- (c) Immediately following the meeting at which the slate of candidates was presented, the coordinator shall post the candidates by email with a reminder that new Executive Committee members will be elected prior to the expiration of the current term.

Section 4.02 The term of office for Executive Committee members shall be two years. Each member shall be eligible to succeed themselves. Any deviations of term will be reviewed and decided upon by the Executive Committee.

Section 4.03 Any Executive Committee position that becomes vacant between election cycles may be filled by someone appointed by unanimous vote by the Executive Committee.

Section 4.04 Any member of the voting membership may be removed or expelled by unanimous vote of the Executive Committee. If expelled, a record (without a detailed explanation) shall be prepared by the Secretary, a copy thereof shall be served upon the expelled member and shall be maintained by the Secretary in the official records of the Coalition. Such report shall serve as notice that said person is no longer a member of the Coalition

Section 4.05 Any officer of the Executive Committee may be removed or expelled by unanimous vote of the other executive officers. If more than one Executive Committee member is up for removal or expulsion at the same time, a two-thirds majority vote is required by the eligible voting membership at any meeting called for that purpose. Notice of such meeting shall be provided at least 14 days prior, shall state the purpose for which the meeting was called, and shall be provided to the officer or member being proposed for removal. If expelled, a record (without a detailed explanation summarizing reasons for such expulsion) shall be prepared by the Secretary, a copy thereof shall be served upon the expelled member and shall be maintained by the Secretary in the official records of the Coalition. Such report shall serve as notice that said person is no longer a member of the Coalition.

Article V. Executive Committee Charter Amendments

Section 5.01 After 30 days' notice, the Executive Committee membership may amend the Executive Committee Charter, in whole or in part, with a quorum present, by a majority vote. Amending the organization Charter is a different process. See the organizational Charter for instructions.

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APPENDIX

Meetings

(a) Executive Committee Meetings

- (i) Regular Meetings of the Executive Committee shall be held at least quarterly, or more frequently at the discretion of the Chair.
- (ii) Special Meetings of the Executive Committee may be called by the Chair, with concurrence of the officers, or must be called when a majority of the Executive Committee requests same
- (iii) In order for decisions of the Executive Committee to be acted upon during its meetings, there must be a quorum present (in person, telephone, or videoconference). A quorum for the Executive Committee officers exists if the number of officers plus authorized substitutes for absent voting members (as discussed below) equals two-thirds of the number of Executive Committee members.
- (iv) Decisions of the Executive Committee will be made by consensus to the maximum extent possible. When consensus is not possible, any Executive Committee officer may call for a vote on an issue. For a vote to be considered decided, it must have the agreement of a majority of the Executive Committee officers constituting a quorum and participating in person, by phone, or by other electronic means.

Focus Areas

General topics of interest for which members may participate include but are not limited to the following areas

- (a) Collaboration/External Liaison: Identify mechanisms for coalition members to obtain technical and professional support and advice necessary for their office. Explore the feasibility of shared services (e.g. databases) that may be obtained by Ombuds that do not have the resources to otherwise perform these services. Maintain partnerships with traditional groups (such as but not necessarily limited to the Interagency Alternative Dispute Resolution Working Group, International Ombuds Association, United States Ombudsman Association, American Bar Association, and Association for Conflict Resolution), and other partners in government, academia, and industry.

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- (b) Communications: Develop a communications strategy. Maintain an internet website and other electronic systems for the benefit of the voting membership as determined to be necessary or desirable. Functions may include supervising web content; doing projects to improve the website’s functionality, appearance, scope, and utility; recommending communications strategies to the Executive Committee; ensuring communications comply with federal standards; providing timely information and news using a variety of communications vehicles as appropriate; exploring new media tools for outreach and internal coordination of information, including new social media websites and other new technologies with careful consideration of information security, legal, and privacy issues.
- (c) Conference: Collaboratively develop events providing educational value to COFO members, including the annual conference.
- (d) Resource Clearinghouse: Serve as a clearinghouse for best practices to assist COFO members and stakeholders establishing new ombuds offices.
- (e) Professional Development: Promote professional development and help improve the capacity of COFO members to deliver world-class ombuds services. Communicate educational opportunities for COFO members. Solicit input from Coalition members on the training and the development needs of the federal ombuds community. Seek opportunities to improve training methods, enhance the development of ombuds staff, and establish training to meet continuing educational requirements.
- (f) Legal and Legislation: Keep abreast of matters in the Congressional arena and legal matters that are of interest to the ombuds community.