

# Chapter 2. Organizing the Steering Committee

## Overview

This chapter is designed to assist with organizing a Steering Committee that will meet the needs of the community and maximize the chance that the site's strategy will succeed.

A step-by-step process for organizing the Steering Committee is presented, starting with a well-functioning and successful Steering Committee. The extent to which these steps are implemented will depend on the environment in which the site is operating. Circumstances will vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction; each site will need to take the path most suitable for it.

Weed and Seed is a collaborative effort among organizations and individuals who care about the designated community. This collaboration is reflected in the Steering Committee, which provides a structure for building a commitment to Weed and Seed, identifying areas of greatest community need, coordinating programs and services for local residents, and ensuring that everyone involved is working toward the same goals.

## Diverse Representation

The membership of the Steering Committee should be diverse, reflecting all segments of the community. Individuals from four key stakeholder groups must be included: the U.S. Attorney's Office, residents of the designated Weed and Seed area, city or county government, and local law enforcement. Additional committee members may include representatives of the district attorney and public defender offices;

federal, state, and tribal law enforcement agencies; social service agencies; housing organizations; park and recreation departments; employment agencies; schools; nonprofit and community organizations; faith-based institutions; foundations; and small businesses and corporations.

Community participation, a key principle of Weed and Seed, is reflected in the composition of the Steering Committee. The residents who serve on the Steering Committee play an important role in decisionmaking. They are grassroots representatives, unlike government employees and elected officials who may serve in official capacities.

Steering Committee members bring several qualities and skills to the Weed and Seed effort, including leadership, guidance, vision, direction, and management. Members also serve in positions of authority within the organizations they represent (e.g., managers in government agencies, community or tribal leaders, nonprofit directors). This level of authority enables them to commit and deliver resources that are required to effect real change in the designated area. These resources may be in the form of financial resources, staff support, volunteer help, and in-kind services.

The Steering Committee is the highest governing authority within the organizational structure of the Weed and Seed initiative. Other parts of the structure include subcommittees for the various component areas and stakeholders from local programs that complement and expand the site's mission, goals, and objectives. A coordinator and additional staff will be necessary to support the work.

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Initially, the Steering Committee meets at least monthly to develop a vision for the designated area, oversee development of the site's strategy, and establish a structural framework for operation. Hiring a full-time coordinator and adopting policies and procedures are among other important responsibilities for the Steering Committee in the first year.

As the process moves to implementing the strategy, the Steering Committee begins to focus on key areas of operational responsibility such as coordinating subcommittee activities, approving changes to the strategic plan, monitoring progress on goals and objectives, and providing leadership and advocacy for the Weed and Seed strategy. The day-to-day operational issues and concerns are addressed by the subcommittees within the four component areas: law enforcement; community policing; prevention, intervention, and treatment; and neighborhood restoration.

U.S. Attorneys play a central role in Weed and Seed—particularly in the organization of the Steering Committee. This involvement stems from their leadership role in coordinating federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement efforts; their role within their districts as the local representative for the U.S. Department of Justice; and their involvement in community issues and affairs.

## Role of the U.S. Attorney

U.S. Attorneys are involved in several ways in the early planning stages of Weed and Seed. First, the U.S. Attorney should meet with community leaders to discuss Weed and Seed, explain its strengths, and gain a commitment to the concept. Second, the U.S. Attorney can help create a core group of local officials to start the planning process, approve selection of the designated Weed and Seed area, and identify potential Steering Committee members. Third,

he or she must be a member of the Steering Committee.

A Weed and Seed initiative can be established in various ways. In some cases, local officials such as the mayor, tribal president, police chief, and city/tribal council members may start the process. In other cases, community leaders may want to bring Weed and Seed to a distressed neighborhood with particular needs. Regardless of how the process is initiated, discussions at the local level should include the U.S. Attorney, who can contact CCDO and take the first steps to organize the Steering Committee locally.

## Implementation Process

### Step 1: Meet With Local Officials and Community Leaders To Determine Their Commitment to Weed and Seed

It is vital to get support upfront from key local officials such as the mayor, tribal president, police chief, city/tribal council members, county executive, and the district attorney. The U.S. Attorney is in a good position to meet with these officials and hold initial discussions about Weed and Seed. The results of these discussions are important because they establish the direction, character, and framework for the entire initiative. The interest and support of neighborhood residents also must be gained. It is their



community, and they will be there after others have moved on to other projects. The following important issues must be emphasized:

- Weed and Seed requires coordinated efforts to revitalize high-crime and economically deprived communities. The locality should be willing to commit publicly to promoting the success of this complex undertaking.
- Selection of a specific community may mean that funds will be diverted from other sections of the area. Consequently, the mayor or other top official must set priorities for the allocation of resources according to the level of the problems identified throughout the area—a process that has political risks.
- Weed and Seed requires coordination among federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement efforts. An atmosphere of cooperation and trust among these groups must exist if the initiative is going to operate successfully.
- The city or Indian tribe must be willing to redirect or redeploy existing resources to assist law enforcement and restoration efforts in the designated community. This will require city or tribal departments to evaluate current plans, examine available resources, and revise operations.
- Community policing must be implemented in the designated area. Weed and Seed may augment current community policing efforts.
- Successful coordination and management of the Weed and Seed strategy require continuing staff resources.

## Role of the Grant Recipient

There are several models for managing these resources and administering grants. Weed and Seed can be administered by the local government or Indian tribe (as defined in 42 U.S.C. §

450b(e)), the local police department, or a local nonprofit agency. Whichever model is chosen, the person in charge (e.g., the mayor, tribal president/tribal council, police chief, nonprofit executive) must commit the resources of a staff person who is able to coordinate the activities of multiple agencies and who understands the processes associated with community restoration. If Weed and Seed funding is obtained, a portion of those funds can be used to support this staff person.

In all cases, the entity that administers the funding must understand its role as the fiscal agent for the Weed and Seed Steering Committee—not as the decisionmaking body.

These initial discussions should result in general agreement about the program's overall scope, the extent of the locality's commitment of resources, and the general membership and timing of the Steering Committee's formation. These and similar issues must be addressed in this initial stage of organizing the Steering Committee. The preliminary discussions should lead to agreements that frame the context, scope, foundation, and timelines on which the Weed and Seed strategy is implemented.

## Step 2: Create a Core Group of Individuals To Provide Leadership

A core group of local officials and community representatives can be assembled to begin the planning process for Weed and Seed. This group most often will evolve into the Steering Committee, adding members as needs are identified. Involving too many individuals in the initial Weed and Seed planning may slow down the work process instead of assisting it; therefore, it may be advisable to begin with a small group and expand. However, the people involved at each step should be selected for their skills and ability to complete a specific task rather than for the prestige of their position.

Once again, the U.S. Attorney is uniquely positioned to form such a group and provide the leadership to accomplish its tasks. The U.S. Attorney may initially convene the core group. Each participant should agree to help develop and implement the Weed and Seed strategy and should be considered a founder of and future participant in the business of the Steering Committee.

The core group should hold public meetings and attend meetings of existing community organizations in the designated neighborhood to fully explain Weed and Seed and attain grassroots support. This is best accomplished by including key community residents at the start of the planning process. Without their support, Weed and Seed will not succeed.

It is also the responsibility of the Steering Committee to conduct an initial needs assessment of the designated site to gather data on which to base the development of the strategy. This process will provide a common starting point for the newly formed Steering Committee.

### **Step 3: Select the Stakeholder Organizations and Individuals To Participate on the Steering Committee**

Steering Committee representatives should be able to provide resources that do not require funding. As stated earlier, representatives should be high-level managers so that decisions and commitments can be made at Steering Committee meetings. This qualification raises the issue of attendance at meetings. Representatives should commit to attending Steering Committee meetings—not sending alternates (alternates can impede decisionmaking). These two issues mean that the need to have executive-level officials (e.g., mayor, tribal president, police chief, school superintendent) on the Steering Committee must be balanced with the need to have

active members (e.g., residents and representatives of community-based organizations, tribal councils, and mid-level managers with direct authority over the designated area) who will attend meetings regularly and be knowledgeable about the designated area. This is a local decision that must be settled in the beginning of the Weed and Seed site operation.

#### **Committee size**

Size is also a local decision. Some Weed and Seed sites have a Steering Committee with 18 members; some have as many as 30. A total of 20–25 members is typical for a well-functioning Steering Committee. Although the committee must be inclusive, this requirement must be balanced with the fact that having a larger group may result in poor attendance at meetings and the inability to make decisions. Additional individuals can be included in planning and decisionmaking through the subcommittee structure.

#### **Resident representatives**

No set number of residents is required for the Steering Committee. However, citizen participation is a key premise of Weed and Seed, and residents must feel they have a voice on the Steering Committee and a substantial role in decisionmaking. Representation on the Steering Committee is one of the primary means for residents to be involved in policymaking and decisionmaking.

Another consideration is that residents serving on the Steering Committee should be grassroots representatives and not individuals serving in official capacities (e.g., government employees, tribal council members, legislators). If a resident who is serving in an official capacity is included, that individual should be identified as a representative of the organization for which he or she works rather than as a resident representative.

## Chairperson

The chairperson of the Steering Committee should be an effective, well-respected community leader. Some sites have cochair: one from the U.S. Attorney's Office and one from the community. The exact arrangement is a local decision and should respond to the community's needs and wishes. The most important considerations are the leadership qualities of the individuals and their levels of commitment. The chair and cochair should be individuals who can effectively lead, inspire, and motivate everyone involved.

## Step 4: Determine the Roles and Responsibilities of the Steering Committee

The core group should develop at least a rough sketch of the roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee. This information will be important during the selection process and when asking the selected individuals to serve on the Steering Committee. Once the Steering Committee is formed, members should revisit and finalize roles and responsibilities.

It should be clear from the outset that Steering Committee members are responsible for more than strategic planning, policy, and management—they must ensure that the organization they represent commits resources to the Weed and Seed

effort. These commitments may take the form of an agency reprogramming staff to provide services in the designated area or a community organization providing resident volunteers for Safe Haven activities. Whatever the commitments, they should be formally identified in a written memorandum of agreement so that each committee member is aware of them and followthrough can be monitored.

The initial responsibilities of Steering Committee members should differ from their permanent responsibilities during implementation of local strategies, programs, and activities. In the beginning, the committee will oversee development of the Weed and Seed strategy, focusing on vision development, needs assessment, goal setting, and the creation of subcommittees and workgroups.

Once the Weed and Seed strategy is developed and implementation is underway, the roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee will focus on policy, management, and advocacy. More specifically, the roles and responsibilities should include—

- Oversight and management of goals and objectives.
- Guidance on and resolution of implementation issues.
- Coordination of subcommittee activities.
- Development and integration of weeding and seeding policies.
- Approval of changes to the strategic plan.
- Approval of grant applications and adjustments.
- Approval of the hiring and management of the coordinator and other staff.



- Monitoring of progress on the evaluation and the effectiveness of the Weed and Seed strategy.
- Provision of leadership and advocacy for the Weed and Seed strategy.

### **Step 5: Develop Decisionmaking Processes To Govern the Weed and Seed Initiative**

Steering Committee members should define the decisionmaking processes that will enable them to govern Weed and Seed effectively. The committee should develop a set of written policies and procedures to address questions, such as how often will the Steering Committee meet? How will meeting agendas be established? Will decisions be made through consensus or majority rule? How and when will voting occur? In addition, policies and procedures will require regular updates and modification.

### **Step 6: Determine Initial Tasks of the Steering Committee**

The first major task of the Steering Committee is to develop and oversee the Weed and Seed strategy. The committee must undergo a systematic process for developing a multiyear strategic plan (which should cover at least 3–5 years). This process requires the Steering Committee to develop a future vision of the community, conduct an indepth needs assessment, establish priorities, develop goals and objectives, and create an implementation plan.

These are large responsibilities, which make it clear that Steering Committee members must be well informed about local issues and must also exhibit strong support and commitment for Weed and Seed.

## Exhibit 2–1. Inventory of Agency Support

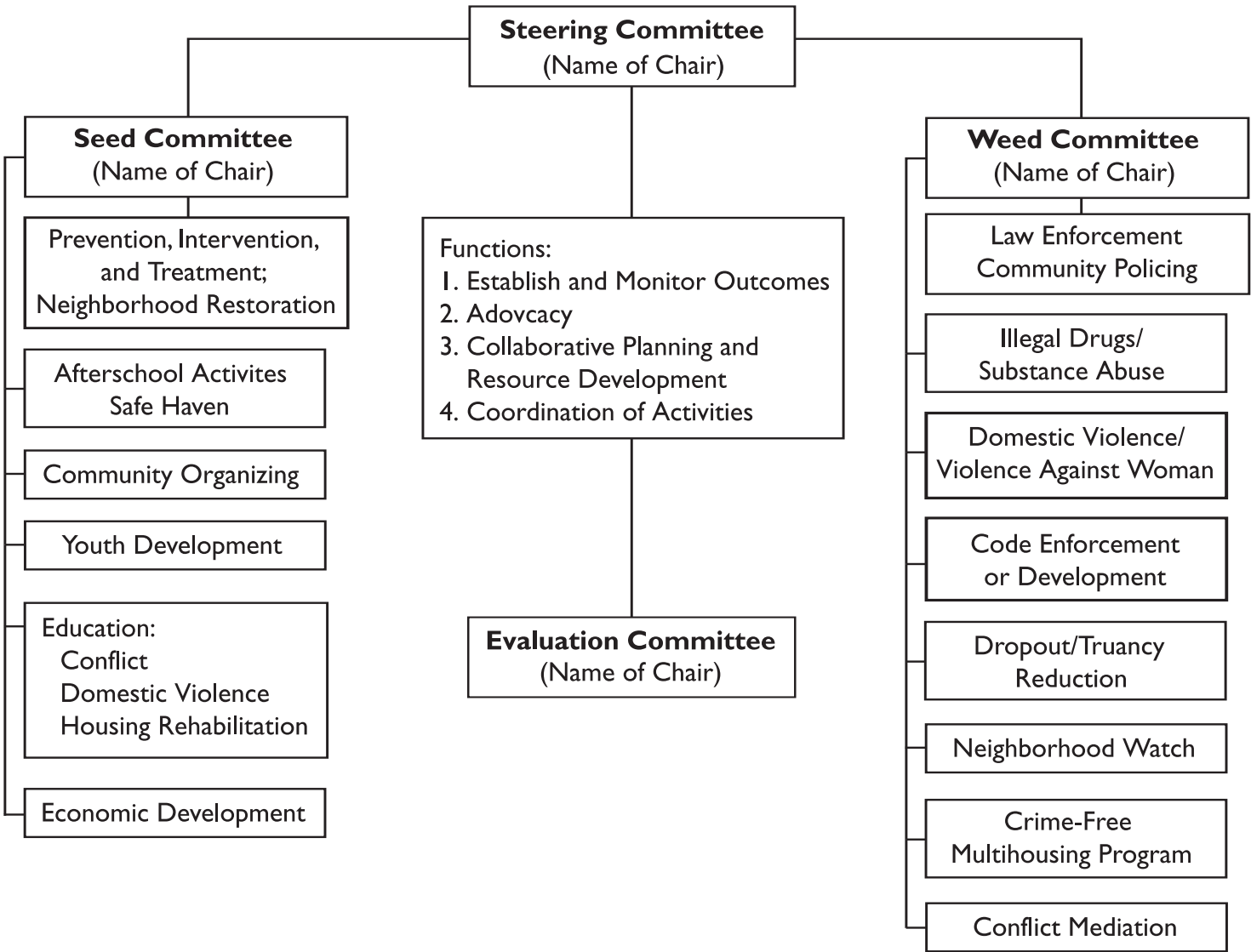
Weed and Seed City: \_\_\_\_\_ For Quarter Ending: \_\_\_\_\_

Key to Agency Type:

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|--|----------------------------|
| HA–Housing Authority                     | BE–Board of Education      |
| IT–Indian Tribe                          | HO–Hospital                |
| SS–Government Social Services Department | NP–Miscellaneous Nonprofit |
| HD–Government Health Department          | BS–Business                |
| PD–Police Department                     | OT–Other: Please Specify   |
| CT–Court/Juvenile Justice                |                            |

Full Name of Agency	Agency Type (see key)	Support Provided (check all that apply)			
		Repositioned Staff	On-Call Staff	Accept Referrals	Representatives on Advisory Committee/ Steering Committee

## Weed and Seed Strategy Organization Chart





## Exhibit 2–3. Weed and Seed Strategy Development Tool

### Definitions

Here are some definitions that can help Weed and Seed Steering Committees in formulating strategies for the Official Recognition (OR) application:

1. A **strategy** is a pattern of purposes, policies, programs, decisions, actions, and resource allocations that defines what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it.
2. **Critical issues** are areas of fundamental change affecting the Weed and Seed Steering Committee's mandates, programs or services, management, and structure.

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### Instructions

Based on the information collected from the community needs assessment component of the OR application, you should be able to take the general list of critical priorities identified by the community and incorporate them into strategic issues to be addressed by Weed and Seed. A strategic issue should be one in which Weed and Seed's partners can collectively do something that results in a positive outcome. Once you identify some critical priorities that may correspond to law enforcement; community policing; prevention, intervention, and treatment; and neighborhood restoration, you need to ask yourselves,

- Why is this an issue?
- How is it related to Weed and Seed's mission, mandates, programs and services, internal strengths and weaknesses, or external opportunities or threats?
- What are the consequences for not addressing this issue?

### What Are the Critical Priorities Affecting the Community?

Remember, they must correspond to the issues/needs identified in the community needs assessment section of the OR applications.

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|----|-----|
| 1. | 6.  |
| 2. | 7.  |
| 3. | 8.  |
| 4. | 9.  |
| 5. | 10. |

### Opportunity/Challenge Identification Exercise

Given the critical priorities/issues identified by the Steering Committee, address each of these priorities/issues by responding to the following questions as a team. Please have someone from your team record your answers. Also note that the **last question** is extremely important, as you must work to formulate a **goal** in addressing this issue. **This worksheet must be completed for each priority/issue identified under each of the four components.**

What is the critical priority or issue? Record it here.

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- How does this issue relate to Weed and Seed's mission, internal strengths and weaknesses, or external opportunities and threats?

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(continued)

## Exhibit 2–3. Weed and Seed Strategy Development Tool (continued)

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- Strengths—What are Weed and Seed's current strengths in responding to this issue? *Consider the contributions of each partner.*

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- Weaknesses—What are Weed and Seed's current weaknesses in responding to this issue? *Consider the contributions of each partner and the quality of the relationships.*

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- Opportunities—What are some opportunities that Weed and Seed can pursue in addressing this issue? *What are some programs or services currently being offered by the partners?*

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- Threats—What are some threats that Weed and Seed should be aware of in responding to this issue?

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- What are the consequences of not addressing this issue?

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- **What should be our goal in addressing this issue?** *What do you want to change/improve in the community?*

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### Strategy/Implementation Plan Development Exercise

In order to develop strategies for each of the four components of Weed and Seed, this exercise is designed to help you collectively address key factors in implementing these strategies. These factors draw from the previous exercise and include identifying the issues and working through the various steps in formulating goals, action steps, and timelines associated with the implementation of the overall strategies.

Please work in a team to address the following questions:

- What is the issue? Record from previous exercise.

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## Exhibit 2–3. Weed and Seed Strategy Development Tool (continued)

- What goals were identified to be achieved in addressing this issue? Record from previous exercise.

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- What are practical solutions we might pursue to address this issue and achieve our goal? *Is there an organization that is currently offering a solution that could be leveraged?*

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- What are some barriers to realizing these practical solutions? *No organization responding to issue? Lack of financial resources? No expertise represented on the Steering Committee?*

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- What major initiatives or actions might we propose to achieve these practical solutions directly or indirectly through overcoming these barriers?

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- How much time will be required to completely implement this strategy?

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- Who will be the lead for this strategy and what partners will also be involved in the implementation of this strategy?

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- How will you measure the success of the strategy?

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## Exhibit 2–4. Weed and Seed Steering Committee Survey

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1. What role/position do you have within the Steering Committee? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How long have you been in this role/position?

- Less than 1 month     6 months–1 year     1–2 years     2+ years

3. What do you believe are your primary responsibilities as a Steering Committee member?

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4. What positions do you hold *outside* of the Steering Committee?

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5. Do you have a firm understanding of Weed and Seed?     Yes     No

6. What personal strengths do you bring to the Weed and Seed Steering Committee?

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7. What strengths does your organization bring to the Steering Committee?

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8. What are some of the weaknesses you feel that you bring to the Steering Committee?

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## Exhibit 2–4. Weed and Seed Steering Committee Survey (continued)

9. Given your understanding of the Steering Committee's purpose and responsibility, how would you complete the following sentence? The Steering Committee should

Start:

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Continue:

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Stop:

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10. In general, what issues do you think the Steering Committee needs to address immediately?

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11. What should the Steering Committee strive to achieve during scheduled meetings?

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12. Are there any issues that are nonnegotiable (not open for discussion)?

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