



# **THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA**

## **MEMBERSHIP DELEGATE HANDBOOK**

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Revised by the 2015-2016 Membership Delegate Committee

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## OVERVIEW

The Herb Society of America (HSA) membership is divided into seven North American districts. A Membership Delegate, elected by the members of each district, represents each district on The Herb Society of America Board of Directors. The delegate:

- Acts as the members' advocate on the HSA Board of Directors
- Serves as a resource for the district members
- Conveys information from the board to the members of the district
- Responds to district concerns in a thoughtful, accurate, and sensitive manner
- Actively participates on the Board of Directors

The HSA Operating Manual includes a Membership Delegate job description. The job description explains in an abbreviated form the duties outlined in this handbook.

### Districts

The seven membership districts are listed below. In some cases, states may be split across districts and will appear more than once.

Central District: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

Great Lakes District: Michigan, Southern Ontario, Western New York, Western Pennsylvania, Ohio, and International members (excluding other Canada areas and Mexico).

Mid-Atlantic District: District of Columbia, Eastern Pennsylvania, Maryland, North Carolina, Southern New Jersey, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Northeast District: Connecticut, Delaware, Eastern Canada, Eastern New York, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Northern New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

South Central District: Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Southeast District: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

West District: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Mexico, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Western Canada, and Wyoming.

District boundaries reflect geography, membership distribution, and other factors, which are subject to changes reflecting the wishes of the membership by vote of the delegates and subsequent approval of the Board of Directors.

## ELECTION OF DELEGATES

Delegates are elected for a three-year term and are eligible to be re-elected for one consecutive term. ***Reference: Nomination for Board of Directors Guidelines and Nomination Form.***

Should a delegate be unable to fulfill a term, an interim delegate is appointed with approval of the Board of Directors. Upon approval, the interim delegate fulfills the vacated term of office. The interim delegate is eligible to stand for election for an upcoming full term and one consecutive term.

Delegates are encouraged to identify members who have expressed a desire to serve HSA, or who would be good candidates for future board positions. Delegates encourage members to participate in the nominating and election process for the district. Delegates describe the duties, time commitment involved, and the financial expectations to prospective nominees and supply a copy of the job description with a board application. Candidates are encouraged to speak at district gatherings about their talents, state their reasons for wanting to be a delegate, and introduce themselves to members.

Candidates may nominate themselves or be nominated by another district member after discussion with and approval of the nominee.

## **DISTRICT BUSINESS MEETING**

Recognizing that the district gathering is the primary place to conduct district business, it may be conducted at either the district gathering or during the HSA Annual Meeting of Members. The delegate may decide if both meetings are necessary. If a sufficient number of members are present during the HSA Annual Meeting of Members, then business of a time sensitive nature may be addressed at that meeting of district members.

In the case of business decisions regarding the use of district funds, all transactions voted upon must be reported in the following district newsletter and submitted to the executive director in written form for records.

## **DISTRICT FUNDS AND DELEGATE EXPENSES**

### District Funds

Each district has a district fund designated for district affairs. The primary sources of income for this fund are donations from individual district members, donations from district units, fund raisers conducted by the delegate, business support within the district, and surplus from district gatherings. Examples of activities supported by district funds are the district newsletter, office expenses, and delegate travel in the district.

The following formula establishes **“how much money is enough”** to retain in the district fund ensuring the district maintains an adequate balance to pay for activities of the district.

- 1) three (3) years of office expense (newsletter & office supplies)
- 2) one and one-half (1 1/2) years of in-district travel expense
- 3) 40% of the running average of the prior three (3) years of district gathering expenses

If the delegate determines the district's funds exceed the above formula, the delegate may recommend to district members that excess funds be released as a donation to support HSA activities approved by members. Such activities may include sponsorship of a speaker, or session

at EdCon, a donation to the National Herb Garden Intern Fund, travel for a speaker from the district, or any other fund raising activity supported by HSA.

The delegate promotes activities that ensure the financial health of the district. Units should be encouraged to budget a contribution to the district fund, the funds to be raised as each unit desires. Members at large should be encouraged to donate directly to the fund.

Delegates communicate information about the district activities to the members. An article in the district newsletter once a year explaining how district activities are funded and encouraging donations or home hospitality during district unit visits encourages funding participation.

Contributions to the district fund should be sent directly to headquarters, designated for the specific district.

### District Expenses

Reimbursement forms are available on the website. Original receipts for claimed expenses or other appropriate documentation must accompany the reimbursement request. Expense Reimbursement Request forms should be submitted promptly, within 60 days after the occurrence of the expense. Forms must contain travel expenses: the dates, mileage or airfare, hotel, meals and purpose of the trip within the district. Mileage and meal reimbursement is at a rate determined annually during budgeting by a vote of the Board of Directors. The executive director reimburses district expenses from the district fund after reviewing the submitted forms.

***Reference: Expense Reimbursement Policy***

### Board Meeting Expenses

National operating funds pay delegate expenses for lodging and transportation relating to a board meeting. Delegates who are members at large may request that travel expenses be paid from the Members at Large Fund.

The delegate may make a donation (tax deductible) to HSA to cover hotel and travel expenses paid from national funds. ***Reference: Expense Reimbursement Policy***

### District Budgets

Each delegate submits a budget annually to headquarters. Headquarters notifies the delegate of the due date and sends appropriate forms, if needed, for completion. ***Reference: Appendix 1 District Budget Worksheet***

The delegate submits an accurate budget which provides estimated costs to reference for members, future delegates, and headquarters. In turn, a delegate should make a maximum effort to keep expenses within budgetary guidelines.

## **DISTRICT STEERING COMMITTEE**

Each district has a steering committee made up of representatives which includes each unit chair (or a designee) and at least one member at large.

Members at large are encouraged to volunteer for the committee. Unit members may also volunteer to be on the committee. Accepting or declining volunteers is at the discretion of the delegate and must be handled with sensitivity to avoid conflicts. The number of committee members varies depending on the needs of the district. Ad hoc committees are appointed for specific needs.

Steering committee members are appointed by the delegate for one year and may be reappointed. One-year appointments allow the delegate to ensure participation at the desired level and harmony within the committee. A list of steering committee members is provided annually to the executive director.

The committee participates in decisions regarding gathering planning and advises the delegate on matters that affect the members either in the district or nationally. The committee assists in implementing gatherings, fund raising activities, and other activities that benefit the district members. The committee is also the “voice” of the district and encourages communication of district issues, concerns, and suggestions to the delegate. The delegate may also request input on various matters.

Communication between steering committee members is usually handled electronically. Committee meetings can occur from time to time at a location in the district during gatherings, or at HSA Annual Meetings of Members, or Educational Conferences.

Members of the committee may be candidates for service as future delegates, or on national committees, or on the Board of Directors.

## **DELEGATE TRAVEL**

### **Travel to Board Meetings**

Each delegate arranges travel to Board of Directors meetings, as well as the Annual Meeting of Members and/or Educational Conferences.

Committee meetings are often scheduled on the evening prior to the full board meeting so travel plans must accommodate the schedule.

The president notifies the delegates of the meeting sites and headquarters makes favorable rate agreements. Same sex room sharing is encouraged in order to reduce overall costs. Headquarters frequently has a list of board members seeking roommates.

Travel mode is at the discretion of the delegate, but should always be the most cost effective method.

Reimbursement for travel expenses is by a reimbursement request accompanied by appropriate documentation and original receipts. **Reference: *Expense Reimbursement Policy***

### **District Travel**

Delegates are responsible for making all travel arrangements. See “District Funds and Delegate Expense” and “Unit and Member at Large Visits” sections.

## Unit and Member at Large Visits

The objective of visiting units and groups of members at large is to establish rapport with them and to foster a connection among headquarters, other units, and members.

The delegate should be available to visit units upon invitation by the unit or scheduled by the delegate at a mutually convenient time.

Scheduling visits around fund raisers and helping with the fund raiser builds rapport and demonstrates that the delegate is helpful with and enthusiastic about the members' activities. Attending important events sponsored by units shows the delegate's support of these activities.

During unit visits the delegate is encouraged to meet with the chair, officers and members of their board, or the entire unit, or member at large group, if present.

It is important to foster an open exchange of thoughts and ideas. Complaints or concerns should be listened to uncritically and answered in a sensitive manner. Delegates are empowered to address and communicate these matters with appropriate individuals. For example, contact the membership chair if a member at large expresses interest in forming a unit or if a unit seems to be dissolving. It is important to get to know the issues while being supportive of HSA's mission and goals.

Delegates are often offered hospitality or area transportation by the unit or area members. This helps defray travel expenses.

## **MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS**

### District Newsletter

The delegate publishes a district newsletter three times annually, following each scheduled Board of Directors meeting. It is recommended that the district newsletter is produced within four to six weeks following the board meeting. This time frame ensures that all members of HSA are informed of the business of HSA on a time sensitive basis.

The newsletter must contain the board highlights which are compiled by the secretary and sent electronically to each delegate after each meeting. There may be other information that the delegate is requested to include as well. In addition, district news and schedules, member comments or articles, the district budget, acknowledgments of individual or unit donations without amounts to the district fund, and other material of interest to members may be included.

The official donation acknowledgement letter, for tax purposes, **MUST** come from headquarters for the nonprofit information to be recognized and collected for accounting purposes. A personal thank you note from the delegate is thoughtful and appreciated.

If the delegate chooses to have a delegate letter, it should be short and upbeat.

The district newsletter must include the HSA logo and mission statement. Upon request and with advance notice, headquarters personnel will prepare a masthead that includes these items.

Currently, district delegates send the district newsletter electronically to the Board of Directors and to the executive director at headquarters for posting on the website and for distribution to members who have valid, current e-mail addresses. The delegate is responsible for mailing black and white copies of the district newsletter to members who do not have e-mail addresses, or who prefer a hard copy. If a delegate is unable to do so, then upon request and with advance notice, headquarters personnel will copy and distribute newsletters to members without e-mail or who prefer a hard copy and charge expense to district accounts.

### Other District Communications

A letter from the delegate is included in all new member packets sent from headquarters. This is a form letter specific to each district. This letter serves to introduce the delegate and outline what the member can expect from their delegate. It may also list the states included in the district, information about past or future gatherings, and other district activities or information.

Headquarters sends periodic district membership report updates listing new, lapsed, or inactive members to each district delegate.

The delegate communicates with district members, individually or in groups, as often as possible.

## **DISTRICT GATHERING**

Beginning in 2015, district events are held on a biennial basis in the alternating years with no Educational Conference (EdCon).

The district's steering committee is encouraged to play an important role in planning the event. An ad hoc committee may be formed, and the chair of the event may be a member of the steering committee, with the delegate as coordinator/advisor.

Education is the primary purpose of the event. Member interaction and socializing are also important. Although a fund raiser for the district, the cost should not be so high that members would not be able to attend.

Scheduling the event should be coordinated with the president, vice president, and executive director. This should be done before scheduling speakers and finalizing the agenda. Other board members such as the membership chair may be invited also. The presence of executive board members or the executive director along with their interaction with district members reinforces the connection between headquarters and the membership.

The event includes a district meeting to last at least 30 minutes. ***Reference: District Gathering Handbook***

## **REPORTS AND ARTICLES FOR HEADQUARTERS**

Delegates write an interim report of delegate activities and outcomes prior to each board meeting and prepare an annual summary report of activities and outcomes for the Annual Meeting of Members. The delegate submits the report electronically in a timely manner. Board of Directors

meeting dates are published annually and the secretary notifies board members of approaching deadlines. Reports are sent electronically to the secretary and to headquarters. **Reference:** *Board Report Guidelines and Appendix 2 Checklist for Membership Delegate Board Reports*

## **HSA NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

The membership delegates form the HSA Nominating Committee, which is chaired by the immediate past president.

Delegates identify and submit member names with their qualifications to the nominating committee chair for inclusion in the candidate list. This is a broad listing of qualified members recommended for board positions and committee membership. **Reference:** *Nomination for the Board of Directors Guidelines and Nomination Form*

## **TRANSITION OF DUTIES**

At the end of the three-year term as delegate, or if a delegate is unable to complete the three-year term, all materials related to the operation of the district are provided to the next membership delegate. This includes but is not limited to all district files, notebooks, and e-mail lists.

The outgoing delegate is responsible for working with and mentoring the incoming delegate to ensure a smooth transition.