

FIELD MANUAL

for

IBEW VETERANS COMMITTEES



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

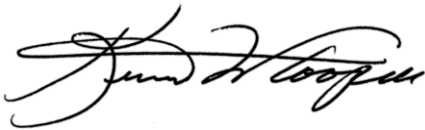
Congratulations for taking an important step in helping form veterans committees throughout the IBEW. Members like you, who have a true understanding of service and solidarity, are invaluable in advancing our organization.

The IBEW is proud that tens of thousands of members are veterans. We want to recruit even more and make sure the voices of those who have already joined are heard. That is why we created the IBEW Veterans Committee with representatives from each of the 11 districts and are encouraging the formation of veterans committees at the local union level. Whether it is organizing the local Veterans Day parade, sending care packages to troops overseas, or staffing a job fair booth at a nearby base, I want committees like yours to lead the way in your communities.

This manual is designed to help you create and grow a successful veterans committee at your local union. Within these pages you will find step-by-step instructions to start a new committee, guidelines for establishing an organizational structure, best practices to make your committee effective, tips for recruiting new members, and sample mission statements, bylaws, and letters to help you along the way.

Veterans like you play a huge role in helping the IBEW grow and achieve its goals. By forming a committee, you are demonstrating your commitment to your fellow veterans, your local union, and the IBEW as a whole. Thank you for your hard work and for your service. We are all better for it.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth W. Cooper". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "C".

Kenneth W. Cooper
International President

VISION STATEMENT

The IBEW Veterans Committee serves all those who have served, building community and strengthening veteran voices within the IBEW and throughout the entire electrical industry.

MISSION STATEMENT

Founded in 2018, the IBEW Veterans Committee was established to assist, provide guidance to, and support IBEW local unions in building veterans committees designed to mentor young veterans and bring veterans' issues to the forefront of the IBEW.

The efforts of this committee bring together the house of labor, the veteran community at large, IBEW members who are veterans, and local union leadership to improve lives in the community and livelihoods of the IBEW workforce.

The IBEW Veterans Committee seeks to organize individual local union committees in order to facilitate and connect national and community organizations with IBEW local unions to recruit and promote the hiring of veterans within the electrical industry.

Local union committees can provide the means for educational and social activities to strengthen the connections between military veteran IBEW members, encourage committee members to be more fully informed about economic and political issues that affect them, and foster their relationships with established union members and local union leadership.

NOTE FROM THE COMMITTEE

Thank you for serving and thank you for doing your part in forming your own local veterans committee. We appreciate your passion and hope that this document will help make your endeavor successful. Resources are also available through your district veterans committee chairperson and your International Vice President's office. We sincerely hope you will take this opportunity to promote and assist veterans in joining and becoming valued members of the IBEW.

STARTING A VETERANS COMMITTEE

Learning the framework of the IBEW and knowing how your local union functions is key in developing a local union veterans committee. Your committee should work within the IBEW Constitution, your local union collective bargaining agreement(s), and your local union bylaws. Each committee is approved and processed by the local union president and business manager. The term length of the committee officers are determined by your local union president or your local union bylaws.

FIRST STEPS

Gather consensus on building a veterans committee. Find out who in your local union is interested, their interest in taking on potential roles within the committee, and the group's commitment to follow through.

Once you have a sense of their interest and commitment level, approach your local union leadership about forming a veterans committee. Be prepared to present the advantages of a committee, including how it can assist members in understanding workplace issues and increase your union's visibility in the community, which makes for a great organizing tool for the IBEW. (You can find a sample letter to local union leadership in the "Resources" chapter.)

RECOGNITION

After the committee is established, ask your business manager to forward a letter requesting a Veterans Committee Certificate of Recognition to your International Vice President to ensure that the committee is officially recognized. (A sample letter can be found in the "Resources" chapter.) Including a few sentences detailing upcoming plans or the most recent work of the committee is always helpful.

Once your International Vice President receives the request, they will make a recommendation to the International President. Once approved, the certificate will be sent to the local union.

STRUCTURING YOUR COMMITTEE

You will have to decide how you want your committee to be structured. Although there are many different organizational models to consider, the nontraditional and traditional models are most commonly used within the IBEW. New groups often opt for the flexibility of a nontraditional committee, but as your group grows, it may be helpful to transition to a traditional model that fits within your local union's existing structure. Remember that there is no right or wrong way to organize your committee. What's most important is finding the model that allows you and your members to work best together.

MODEL 1: NONTRADITIONAL

The nontraditional committee-based model can be customized to best fit you and your members. This structure is predicated on finding out what your members are interested in and empowering them to take an active role on projects related to their interests. This kind of structure requires more consensus building, but its strength is

that everyone has a voice. Most groups have some sort of leadership team, whether there is a formal structure or not. Some have co-chairs, and others govern all matters by popular vote. The main thing to consider when using a nontraditional model is that there needs to be a designated person, or a small group of people, to plan the work around a shared vision and ensure that it gets done. Because nontraditional groups have a horizontal leadership structure, it is beneficial to divide tasks into subcommittees. This allows your committee to get a lot of work done while keeping people accountable for a manageable amount of work.

MODEL 2: TRADITIONAL

The traditional model closely reflects the existing union structure. This model lends itself to a group that has been established for some time and has enough members to fill the various leadership roles. It is defined by a hierarchical leadership structure, including an executive board, officers, and subcommittees. If your local union leans toward well-defined structure and relies heavily on rules, the traditional model can be an easier one to adopt and can help your group gain acceptance with the local union membership more quickly.

In this model, the executive board is composed of every elected officer, along with the chairpersons from each subcommittee. (For more on subcommittees, see the “Organizing the Work” section on page 7.) There also can be “at-large” executive board positions to include more opportunity for members to hold leadership roles. Typically the executive board meets monthly and the general membership meets quarterly. Subcommittees can also meet monthly—these committees are structured to address anticipated needs, including education and communications, organizing and mobilization, political action, events, and fundraising.

Questions for Your Committee

Answering these can help you decide which model best fits your local union:

- » How do actions get planned and who executes them?
- » Who gives the committee direction?
- » How do we work together for the greater good?

Under the traditional model, your committee should have a strong set of bylaws outlining the roles and responsibilities of your leadership and the overall governing structure of your group. Bylaws are written rules that control the internal affairs of an organization or group. Bylaws define details such as:

- @ Your group’s official name, purpose, and requirements for membership
- @ Officer titles and responsibilities, as well as how officers are to be assigned
- @ How meetings should be conducted
- @ How often meetings will be held

There are sample bylaws in the “Resources” chapter that are taken from existing groups and intended as a model. Some groups may want to begin with general bylaws that leave out the details and allow for flexibility, while more developed groups

may have a clearer idea of what works for them and want to include those details. Determining exactly how your group is going to operate and putting it down on paper can help keep things running smoothly, provide concrete answers to tough questions, and save time and deliberation.

DEVELOP YOUR MISSION STATEMENT

No matter which structure you choose, one of the first orders of business for your committee is to write a mission statement that establishes the committee's goals and objectives. The statement should briefly lay out your committee's purpose and plan. For examples of mission statements, see the "Resources" chapter.

FUNDING STRUCTURE

Any funding structure must adhere to the local union bylaws and the IBEW Constitution. Committee leaders should have clear communication with local union leadership to ensure a proper funding structure and accessible records that are organized from the outset. This includes a full set of records that should be collected and kept in one location, including minutes from regular meetings and subcommittee meetings and reports.

MEETINGS

Your first official meeting will determine how your group is going to operate and what your priorities as a committee will be. This is important to provide a purpose, keep interest, and establish stability. People will stop showing up if meetings are boring or seem like a waste of time. Make sure meetings are engaging experiences where issues are being discussed and decisions are being made. Do not use your meetings as a time for updates only—they should include actual work and discussion so that your leaders and members have a sense of ownership in the committee.

Schedule a Regular Meeting Time

Consistency is key to building a successful committee. Having a set meeting time and location can build commitment to the program by allowing members to plan in advance, which can help boost attendance. Meetings should not be scheduled so frequently that those involved feel burdened or overwhelmed, but they also should not take place too infrequently, since you need to meet often enough to keep the momentum going. One potential system is to rotate the days of the week for meetings, so those with obligations on specific days can still attend. In this way, people with obligations such as classes or work on a Monday night will still be able to attend some meetings.



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Create an Agenda


The chairperson or another designated individual should create an agenda to be sent out with a reminder notice at least one week before the veterans committee meeting. This keeps committee members in the loop and allows them to come prepared with materials or ideas they wish to discuss at the meeting. The agenda also helps keep the meeting on track. If meetings are not structured and don't have an agenda, members could lose interest and attendance could decrease.

Keep Minutes

The minutes from regular meetings and subcommittee meetings, reports, and publicity announcements should be kept accordingly. This includes hard copy documents and social media tracking. Collect them and keep them together in one location. There could be an official archivist for the group—someone who keeps records for future reference.

Assign Members to Committee Roles

It is important to elect or appoint a leadership team that will have specific roles. The term of the committee leadership may be the same as those of other standing committees of your local union or the terms may be different. The next section explains the various roles and subcommittees your members could take on.



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ORGANIZING THE WORK

Subcommittees and task forces can be useful to focus and distribute the work that needs to be done and allow more members to participate and feel included. The following are some types of roles to consider:

- @ **Communications** The communications group should be involved in informing members, community partners, and other unions about the work your committee is doing. Ideas include contributing to your local union newsletter, posting on a district IBEW website, or creating and maintaining electronic and social media accounts (like a Facebook page or group, a Twitter account, or a Google Group).
- @ **Organizing and Mobilization** Without a conscious effort to organize, people will not show up to events, meetings, or actions. This group may identify topics that would attract members, plan events, or create educational materials.
- @ **Community Service** Union members are known for community work. It is always important to connect with your community by helping others and building local allies. A community service group can devote time to addressing needs in your area.
- @ **Political Action and Civic Engagement** It is important for veterans to be aware of and get involved in their local, state, and national governments. Getting out the vote, volunteering for a political campaign, or speaking on behalf of working veterans with government officials are all important and worthwhile ways to engage your membership.

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE COMMITTEE

Once your veterans committee has started meeting, the following steps will help ensure continued success.

COMMUNICATE WITH UNION LEADERSHIP

Your veterans committee should give periodic reports to your local union business manager, president, or executive board on its activities and make recommendations when appropriate. Keeping the leaders of your local union informed about your activities and goals will open communication lines and increase your committee's visibility. Another way your committee can connect with your local union leadership is by working in close cooperation with other local union committees to advance policies and programs for the union, with the needs of veterans in mind. After your committee is up and running, please periodically send an email to the Civic and Community Engagement Department at civcommengage@ibew.org describing the work you are doing.

PLAN TRAINING SESSIONS AND GUEST SPEAKERS

To be effective, your committee must have a sound working knowledge of your local union collective bargaining agreement(s), the IBEW Constitution, your local union bylaws, and any other provisions that might affect your agenda. If necessary, set up some training sessions to familiarize your committee members with this essential information. Having guest speakers is also helpful in educating, informing, and empowering your committee members.

DIVIDE TASKS

It is important to build solidarity within your committee. No one person can build a committee on their own—it takes a commitment by many to make it successful. Dividing up tasks is an efficient way to research and obtain information before your committee takes action. When members feel they are part of the committee, they will have a vested interest in its success.

TAKE ACTION

The committee should discuss activities for your group to participate in outside your local union. These activities should be diversified so that as many people can participate as possible. Developing committee activities can be a conduit in building solidarity. Things like volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, clothing drives, or informative workshops on issues veterans face can give members an opportunity to come together and build bonds. Some activities you want to get involved in might already be taking place within your local labor movement, so try to communicate and collaborate with the broader union constituency when possible. One of the great advantages of your veterans' group is that you can bring new and creative ideas and perspectives to the movement as a whole.

FOSTER DIVERSITY

It is important to make sure that your committee is inclusive and represents your local union in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, age, and job classification. Having a diverse committee will help everyone to gain knowledge from people with different backgrounds and experiences as well as represent the local community. Keep in mind that your group is not a separate bargaining committee for workers who may experience discrimination. By participating in union activities that promote equality for all workers, your committee can become a valuable resource in unifying and strengthening your local union membership.

RECRUITING STRATEGIES

Recruiting is a fundamental element of building and sustaining a strong veterans committee. Recruiting for volunteer organizations requires a commitment of time, energy, and resources; however, the rewards can be highly satisfying. Developing a recruitment plan using the following tools can help to focus your efforts and improve results:

- @ **Find Your Targets** Determine strategies for recruiting and developing your veterans committee, such as using your local union's Facebook page, Twitter account, and website. Speak to all who might be interested in supporting or joining the committee.
- @ **Set Your Goals** Determine a recruitment goal and create a statement of purpose that will encourage local brothers and sisters to join the veterans committee.
- @ **Make Connections** Talk to members who are interested in getting involved with issues that affect veterans. Reach out to other committees in your local union and apprenticeship program (if one exists). See whether you can meet with new members to recruit them to join your veterans committee. You can build the membership of your committee by creating personal and working relationships with your fellow members.
- @ **Use a Personal Approach** Have one-on-one conversations with your union family about the veterans committee, invite them to a meeting, and stay in touch with them.
- @ **Be Available** Make sure the leaders of the committee are reachable and provide multiple ways for people to get in touch with them.
- @ **Variety Is Key** Meetings and events should cover diverse topics, which will in turn diversify the interest and knowledge of your members. Don't be afraid to embrace issues that are new or fall outside the realm of "union work."
- @ **Market the Committee** Consider developing a logo or a look for your committee's communications, within the acceptable use guidelines of the IBEW logos. This can help brand your committee and make an impression on potential members.

- @ **Communicate Success** People want to be part of something that gets things done. If your fellow members and potential recruits can see energy, commitment, and willingness to follow through, they will be more likely to join the cause.
- @ **Get Local Union Leadership Involved** Ask your local union leadership to send a letter to all the members who might be interested in getting involved in the veterans committee. As the committee's programs develop, ask local union leadership to attend to make connections with members.
- @ **Socialize** Meetings are important, but social events are also great opportunities for sharing what your committee is about and what you want to accomplish. Hosting meet-and-greets, potlucks, game nights, and sessions featuring prominent veterans in your community can get people in one place to check out your committee. Make sure people know that they don't have to be a committee member to attend these events.
- @ **Develop a Listserv** Build a list for sign-ups and email blasts to keep the members informed about committee activities and meetings. Be conscious about not abusing the list once it is established. A Google Group or the Action Network is a good way to get started.
- @ **Use Social Media** Start a group for your committee on Facebook and encourage members to join. Post relevant information and events as often as possible. You can publicize the committee through your district's social media sites as well as those of other IBEW and veterans' groups.
- @ **Forge Partnerships** Contact your district's IBEW Veterans Committee representative and veterans committees at nearby local unions. We are stronger together.

RESOURCES

SAMPLE LETTER: REQUEST TO FORM A VETERANS COMMITTEE

Dear Business Manager *[insert name]* and/or President *[insert name]*,

Resolutions 6 and 7, passed at the 39th IBEW Convention, urge local unions to support the promotion of Helmets to Hardhats and the Veterans Electrical Entry Program and that every effort be made to increase awareness within the IBEW. We believe that forming a group of members comprising veterans and allies would support these resolutions. Therefore, on behalf of the veterans of IBEW Local *[insert number]* we write to respectfully request your support for the establishment of a local union veterans committee. A veterans committee would offer an opportunity for more members to get involved with the local union and build greater solidarity. In addition, it would serve as a vehicle for you to speak with our veterans about your vision regarding the future of our organization.

We look forward to hearing from you and would like to engage you further on the establishment of a veterans committee.

In solidarity,

[Insert signatures]

[Insert member names and card numbers]

SAMPLE LETTER: REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

Dear International Vice President *[insert name]*,

I am requesting your support and approval to have an IBEW Veterans Committee Certificate of Recognition granted to IBEW Local *[insert number]*. Our veterans committee plans to/participated in *[insert planned or completed activities of committee. For example: "a number of local community service projects, the local union picnic, and political campaigns"]*. Our local union fully supports the work being done by our veterans committee and understands the importance of being inclusive of all members. We look forward to increased participation and leadership from this segment of our membership.

Thank you for your assistance in securing a certificate of recognition for our veterans committee.

In solidarity,

[Insert signature]

[Insert business manager name]

SAMPLE MISSION STATEMENT

Founded in *[insert year]*, the *[insert committee name]* was established to mentor all veterans and bring veterans' issues to the forefront of the IBEW.

The efforts of this committee bring together the house of labor, the veteran community at large, IBEW members who are veterans, and local union leadership to improve lives in the community and livelihoods of the IBEW workforce.

The *[insert committee name]* seeks to facilitate and connect with community organizations to recruit and promote the hiring of veterans within the electrical industry. Local union committees can provide the means for educational and social activities to strengthen the connections between military veteran IBEW members, encourage committee members to be more fully informed about economic and political issues that affect them, and foster their relationships with established union members and local union leadership.

SAMPLE BYLAWS

BYLAWS

[Insert committee name] IBEW Local Union *[insert number]*

ARTICLE I

Sec. 1. This organization shall be known as the IBEW Local *[insert number]* Veterans Committee.

Sec. 2. The purpose of this committee shall be to carry out the spirit of the Brotherhood; to aid and assist each other as necessary; and to promote the social, economic, health, and political welfare of its members.

Sec. 3. Nothing contained in these bylaws shall be interpreted or applied in any manner that is inconsistent with the bylaws of an IBEW local union in whose jurisdiction this committee is founded or the IBEW Constitution.

Sec. 4. The sponsoring local union shall maintain supervision over all committee transactions.

ARTICLE II

Sec. 1. The membership shall consist of any IBEW member in good standing in Local *[insert number]*.

ARTICLE III

Sec. 1. The officers of this committee shall be: 1) president, 2) vice president, 3) secretary-treasurer, 4) sergeant-at-arms, and 5) executive board.

Sec. 2. The terms of all officers shall be for two (2) years, or until their successors are qualified.

Sec. 3. The president shall preside over all meetings, appoint all committees, and act as the ex officio member of all such committees.

Sec. 4. The vice president shall assist the president in the discharge of stated duties and shall assume the duties of the president in case of absence or disability of the president.

Sec. 5. The secretary-treasurer shall keep accurate minutes of each meeting, receive all donations, and keep accurate records thereof. All sums of money shall be promptly deposited in a bank approved by the executive board.

Sec. 6. The sergeant-at-arms shall act under the direction of the president at all meetings and shall assist in maintaining order.

Sec. 7. The executive board shall consist of five (5) members who shall elect their own Chairperson. The secretary-treasurer of the committee shall act as secretary of the executive board, with a voice but no vote. The executive board shall meet at least once per month or at the call of the president or chairperson. A quorum of the board shall consist of a majority of its members. In the case of a vacancy of any office, such vacancy shall be filled by the executive board. In case of the failure of any officer to perform the assigned duties of office, such office shall be declared vacant by the president and the vacancy shall be filled by the board until the next regular election.

ARTICLE IV

Sec. 1. The donation to this committee shall be *[insert amount]* per month. However, no member shall be barred from attending the meetings of the committee due to an inability to contribute.

ARTICLE V

Sec. 1. Meetings of the committee shall be held on the *[insert number]* day of each month, at *[insert time]*. (Note: There can be more than one regular meeting each month.)

Sec. 2. Special meetings may be called by the president or chairperson of the executive board. No less than three (3) days written notice shall be given to all members prior to a special meeting.

Sec. 3. *[Insert number]* members shall constitute a quorum for a regular meeting.

ARTICLE VI

Sec. 1. No officer of this committee shall be paid any salary or other compensation whatsoever. However, the secretary-treasurer shall be reimbursed for any expenditure for supplies upon approval of the membership or the executive board.

ARTICLE VII

Sec. 1. When necessary, proceedings shall be governed by *Robert's Rules of Order*.

ARTICLE VIII

Sec. 1. These bylaws may be amended or changed by any such proposal not in conflict with Article I, Section 3, above, which shall be submitted in writing and signed by five (5) members, read at one meeting, and acted upon at the succeeding meeting.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The American Legion

<https://www.legion.org/>

Chartered by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans organization, the American Legion operates more than 13,000 posts across the world that focus on service to veterans, servicemembers, and their communities.

Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program (DoDTAP)

<https://www.dodtap.mil/>

The Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program provides information and training to prepare active-duty service members for their transition to civilian life.

Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

<https://www.dav.org/>

Disabled American Veterans is a nonprofit charity that provides support to veterans and their families through assistance in accessing federal benefits, advocacy for the interests of disabled veterans, and public education.

Helmets to Hardhats

<https://helmetstohardhats.org/>

Helmets to Hardhats connects “transitioning active-duty military service members, veterans, National Guard and Reservists with skilled training and quality career opportunities in the construction industry.”

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)

<https://iava.org/>

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America is a nonprofit organization that “fights to improve the lives of post-9/11 veterans” through advocacy and program services.

Suicide and Trauma Reduction Initiative for Veterans (STRIVE)

<https://medicine.osu.edu/departments/psychiatry-and-behavioral-health/strive>

The Suicide and Trauma Reduction Initiative for Veterans provides free psychological treatment for current service members and veterans experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder and suicidal thoughts and behaviors. STRIVE is a prominent research site for clinical studies on suicide treatment, prevention, and intervention.

Troops to Energy Jobs

<https://www.troopstoenergyjobs.com/>

Troops to Energy Jobs is an initiative “designed to help veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserves make a successful transition to a rewarding career in the energy industry.”

Union Veterans Council

<https://unionveterans.org/>

The AFL-CIO's Union Veterans Council unites working-class veterans to advocate for issues affecting them, including the "need for good jobs and a strong, fully funded and staffed VA."

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

<https://www.va.gov/>

The Department of Veterans Affairs is a federal agency that provides benefits and services to U.S. military veterans.

U.S. VETS (United States Veterans)

<https://usvets.org/>

U.S. VETS aims to end veteran homelessness in the United States by providing housing, mental health and wellness services, workforce development training, and individualized support to veterans.

Veteran's Electrical Entry Program (VEEP)

<https://in2veep.com/>

Designed by the electrical training ALLIANCE, the Veteran's Electrical Entry Program (VEEP) provides transitioning service members and veterans the opportunity to enter the civilian workforce as highly trained electricians.

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)

<https://www.vfw.org/>

Veterans of Foreign Wars is a nonprofit service organization whose membership includes eligible veterans and military service members who served in a war, campaign, or expedition on foreign soil or in hostile waters.

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)

<https://vva.org/>

Vietnam Veterans of America works "to promote and support the full range of issues important to Vietnam veterans, to create a new identity for this generation of veterans, and to change public perception of Vietnam veterans."

-Veterans Affairs Canada;

veterans.gc.ca

The department of the government of Canada with responsibility for pensions, benefits, and services for military veterans, former and current members of the Canadian Armed Forces and Royal Canadian Mounted Police and their families.

-Helmets to Hardhats Canada;

helmetstohardhats.ca

Supports Veterans, reservists, senior cadets, military family members and Afghan nationals with an enduring relationship to Canada in finding a meaningful second career in the unionized construction industry.

-Legion Canada;

legion.ca

To serve Veterans, including serving military and RCMP members and their families, to promote remembrance, and to serve our communities and our country.

-Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services;

cfmws.ca

In partnerships with bases, wings and units, the Canadian Armed Forces, retired and former members, Department of national defense employees and RCMP to receive the morale and welfare programs, services, and activities needed.

-Veterans Emergency Transition Services;

vetscanada.org

Seek out and help homeless and at-risk veterans with a view to helping reintegrate them into civilian life.

-Government of Canada;

canada.ca

VETERANS COMMITTEE

IBEW Construction and Maintenance Department
construction@ibew.org

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers®

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www.ibew.org