



Information for Prospective Board Members 2020-2022

Thank you for your interest in running for the National Association of Science Writers Board. With only one staff member, it really is the volunteers that keep NASW going, and we appreciate your willingness to get involved. Serving on the NASW Board provides an incredible service to the organization and to the field of science writing.

Please read the following information to help understand the responsibilities of an elected Board member. After reading this information, please let us know if you have any questions or how we can improve this packet by adding further tidbits in the future.

[BOARD MEMBERS' RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS](#)

[Meeting Attendance](#)

[Governance](#)

[Fundraising.... just kidding!](#)

[OFFICER ROLES](#)

[ELECTIONS](#)

[POLICIES](#)

[Appendix 1: NASW Travel Reimbursement Policy](#)

[Appendix 2: Candidate Attestation](#)

BOARD MEMBERS' RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Meeting Attendance

- Attend full day in-person Board meeting
- Attend monthly conference calls and occasional (rare) additional calls
- Participate in online discussions

The National Association of Science Writers runs on volunteer power, and Board members are expected to be active and engaged. Board members can expect to spend about one to two hours per week engaged in discussions, leading projects, etc. Officers will spend more time.

Each Board member is expected to contribute to discussions of NASW business and actively participate in at least one NASW committee or active working group.

Elected Board members participate in online Board group discussions and one, 60- to 75-minute Board conference call each month.

Technology provides myriad ways to connect, but we feel that there is no substitute for face-to-face, and some of the best work comes when we are together. For that reason, Board members **MUST** attend the annual in-person Board meeting and membership meeting. The Board typically meets for a full day on the Friday of the ScienceWriters conference. The membership meeting, which Board members must also attend, happens on the following Monday.

For the upcoming term, the ScienceWriters meeting dates are:

- [October 9-13, 2020 in Boulder, Colorado](#) (Board meeting likely Fri., Oct. 9; Membership meeting Mon., Oct. 12)
- **October 23-27, 2021 in Memphis, Tennessee** (*Dates are tentative*)

In order that finances do not prevent a barrier to Board service, travel reimbursement is possible. See travel reimbursement policy at the end. Please contact director@nasw.org for any other accessibility concerns regarding this requirement.

Governance

- Provide oversight
- Do your homework
- Know what's going on; ask good questions

The programs and projects that help NASW fulfill its mission to forward the field of science writing, like the Idea Grants or the annual conference, are crucial, and Board members often find great reward in starting new programs and supporting existing ones. Equally important, but less visible, is involvement in, and a base level of understanding of, how NASW operates. It is a non-profit corporation, and the Board is its governing body.

We can provide tools and resources for Board members to understand the requirements that NASW faces, and no special skills are required. As a science writer, you no doubt already have

a keen sense of observation, inherent skepticism, and the ability to ask good questions, which are pretty much all you need to begin to understand an organizational budget, for instance.

The 15-member Board (4 officers and 11 at-large members) is responsible for oversight of all key aspects of the organization's operation. Even though NASW is small in terms of staff, it still has to abide by laws for all non-profits. NASW is a 501c6 non-profit corporation operating under the laws of the State of New York, the state in which it's incorporated. Following those laws is why, for instance, all Board votes must be taken either in person or via conference call, and not by email.

Ultimately, the Board ensures viability of the organization by providing oversight in these areas:

- Is the organization fulfilling its mission?
- In what direction should it head?
- How do we provide continuity of leadership?
- Is the organization financially sound?
- Does it adhere to all legal frameworks?

An individual Board member has no legal authority except as a part of the Board, but Board actions are held to three legal principles that rely on **each** individual's actions:

- Duty of Care: Show up, participate, come prepared
- Duty of Loyalty: Put the organization's needs before individual gain (see [Conflict of Interest policy](#) for elaboration); respect confidentiality; and realize the weight of your words — even though individual Board members may not be speaking for the organization, people may naturally assume that they are.
- Duty of Obedience: Satisfy that which has to be done, such as ensuring that taxes and other forms are filed and knowing essential budget details, even if you are not on the finance committee.

Governance need not take up the Board's entire energy or all of its time, but it is critically important.

Fundraising.... just kidding!

Many nonprofits rely on their Board members to contribute financially and drive fundraising, but NASW will not require you to fundraise. We don't pay our Board members, board members are still expected to pay dues and conference fees, and we can't always underwrite as many of your travel costs as volunteers deserve, but we don't hit you up for large donations, either.

As a 501c6 whose membership includes journalists, we

- Can't offer a charitable deduction for any donations (we are not a 501c3 charity).

- Generally shy away from any fundraising due to potential conflicts of interests unique to journalists.

NASW relies primarily on member dues and Authors Coalition income.

OFFICER ROLES

The four NASW officers—the President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary—constitute the Executive Committee. The NASW Bylaws delineate the roles and requirements, including the stipulation that “a substantial majority of an officer’s science-writing activities shall be journalism. Officers may not write press releases or otherwise act on behalf of an institution or company to affect media coverage while they serve in office.” Visit the About section of nasw.org for [NASW’s Bylaws](#).

President

The President is expected to:

- Work with the Board and Executive Committee to set the strategic priorities for the organization at annual meetings, and work with Executive Director to implement priorities
- Preside over the annual Board meeting and annual business meeting, and over monthly board meetings.
- Represent NASW in person or in writing, as available
- Submit President’s Letter twice per year to Editor of *ScienceWriters*™
- Work with the Executive Director via weekly phone calls of approximately 30 to 60 minutes
- Oversee operations of the Board and address any needed replacements
- Designate new committees and fold defunct committees as needed in support of NASW activities
- Serve on the Finance Committee, along with the Treasurer. This ensures that the President develops familiarity with the finances and financial procedures of the organization.
- Coordinate and undertake an annual review of the Executive Director according to the existing policy.

Vice President

The Vice President, as President-elect, will become President when the current two-year term is over. The Vice President is expected to:

- Assume the functions of the President if for any reason the President is unable to perform those functions or chooses to delegate them.
- Serve as chair of the Program Committee, which decides content for the annual *ScienceWriters* meeting. As chair, the Vice President leads the committee in discussions, submits chosen proposals to the Workshops Coordinator by a given date and develops any ancillary events in conjunction with committee and coordinator.

Currently the bulk of this work falls in March and April via e-mail discussion list or conference calls.

Treasurer

The Treasurer is expected to:

- Chair the Finance Committee and convene regular conference calls with committee, usually every month for about one hour each.
- Plan budget for next fiscal year in conjunction with Executive Director and Finance Committee.
- Present budget to the Board for approval prior to the start of the new fiscal year on July 1. Transmit budget to membership, usually through publication in the fall issue of *ScienceWriters*[™].
- Oversee the annual audit, along with the rest of the Finance Committee, and present audited financials to the Board.
- Request budget information on behalf of the Executive Committee or Board as needed.

Secretary

The Secretary is expected to:

- Take minutes at the annual Board meeting
- Take minutes at the annual membership meeting and publish these for membership, typically through NASW-Announce, website, and *ScienceWriters*[™].
- Provide membership with periodic updates on activities of NASW, Board, Executive Committee, and any other relevant information.
- Keep record of decisions made by the Executive Committee or Board not made at meetings. Submit a short summary of the decision to the Executive Director as needed.

ELECTIONS

Board membership is open to any regular NASW member in good standing and is not subject to specific term limits, although it is expected that Board members will actively volunteer on behalf of NASW and assist the Executive Committee in ensuring a reasonable turnover.

The Nominating Committee, appointed by the President and consisting of at least 4 NASW members, may recruit candidates during the winter quarter preceding elections, or candidates may collect signatures to run by petition.

All regular members of NASW are eligible to vote.

There are two ways to join the list of candidates:

- The Nominating Committee, working from submissions of interest and recruiting candidates, compiles a list of candidates during the spring preceding elections. The role

of the Nominating Committee, a collaborative working group, is dictated by the [Bylaws](#) and explained further [online here](#). **Interested candidates should send a 500 -word statement of interest/bio to nomcom@nasw.org no later than the end of the day, March 15 in the year of an election.**

OR

- Candidates may collect signatures to run by petition. The [NASW Bylaws](#) provide details.

Election Year Timeline 2020

March 15: Interested candidates should send a statement of interest to nomcom@nasw.org no later than the end of the day. Would-be candidates should review this nominee packet and be comfortable with all requirements.

April 9, 2020 (6 months prior to annual ScienceWriters meeting): Candidate list is finalized. Nominations of all types close.

July: Officer and Candidate bios available.

August/September: Elections. All regular members of NASW are eligible to vote. Specific date and location TBA; Proxies will be available for easy online submission as well.

October 9, 2020: First meeting of new board in Boulder, CO.

POLICIES

Board members are expected to be familiar with, and adhere to, all NASW policies and governing statements, including the [Code of Ethics](#), [Operating Principles](#), [Conference and Meeting Code of Conduct](#), and others.

We currently use DropBox as the Board library. Minutes, policies, and other document copies are available at any time for Board members to review. Many of these can also be found at nasw.org/otherpolicies

Board members are required to submit an annual Conflict of Interest filing per [NASW's Conflict of Interest policy](#).

In addition, candidates will be required to sign an attestation statement (see Appendix 2).

Appendix 1: NASW Travel Reimbursement Policy

Adopted 11.12.09

Whenever possible, Board members are expected to bear all travel-related costs associated with attending Board meetings, committee meetings, or discharging any other governance responsibilities assigned by the Board chair. When a Board member is unable to bear such costs, in whole or in part, appropriate receipts should be submitted, along with an itemized and totaled cover sheet, to the executive director of the National Association of Science Writers, Inc. (“the Association”) for reimbursement by the Association.

Reimbursement requests not received or completed within four weeks of costs incurred are subject to non-reimbursement.

Members of the Board, committees, special committees, staff, and authorized representatives or invited guests of the Association shall be reimbursed for expenses incurred while on pre-approved Association business. The Association will reimburse members traveling on official Association business the cost of round-trip coach-class travel, housing cost, and meals up to a maximum of \$40 per day. Guest travel, housing, and meals are generally not reimbursable. The Association will reimburse travel expenses on an actual basis provided that the amount is reasonable and receipts are attached. Specific funding caps may apply in certain instances, such as speaker travel.

The Association’s travel mileage reimbursement shall be equal to the mileage earned, and compensation for denied Boarding awarded to the traveler while on Association business is the property of the traveler and may be used at the traveler’s discretion. Luggage charges in excess of one (1) checked bag, rebooking fees, or other airline fees not related to the initial ticket purchase are not reimbursable and are the responsibility of the traveler.

The Association does not offer travel advances. In the rare case of travel advances given for extenuating circumstances, if the recipient is unable to attend the engagement, he or she must reimburse the Association the full amount of the advance within fourteen days.

Annual meeting reimbursement for Board members, if required, will include the following:

Round-trip airfare for the Association’s Board member up to a maximum of economy coach class or reimbursement of actual miles driven; local transportation to and from the airport; lodging and including reasonable meal expenses only during travel to and from the meeting up to a total of \$1,000.00 per year per Board member.

Non-reimbursable expenditures that apply to all travel

- First-class or other upgrades in air travel.
- When lodging accommodations have been arranged by the Association or other hosting organization and the traveler elects to stay elsewhere, reimbursement is made at an amount no higher than the rate negotiated by the Association, and reimbursement is not made for transportation between the alternate lodging and meeting site.
- Entertainment costs including movies, liquor, or bar costs
- Meals when opportunity is provided by meeting or conference

Appendix 2: Candidate Attestation

DISCLOSURE FORM

The National Association of Science Writers carries a long history of recognizing, supporting, and encouraging excellence in the field of science writing. Ethical professional conduct is an inherent component of excellence.

As a candidate for an NASW board position, please complete this Disclosure Form and return a signed copy to director@nasw.org no later than Thursday, April 2.

Have you been the subject of a filed allegation, complaint, investigation, sanction, or other legal, civil or institutional proceeding, where there was a finding of misconduct; or, are you currently the subject of such an allegation, complaint, or investigation in which your professional conduct is at issue?

_____ No

_____ Yes [If yes, you will be contacted for a confidential discussion of the details of the complaint.]

By signing this document, I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the above response and all information provided by me related to this Disclosure Form are truthful, accurate, and complete, and I agree to notify NASW promptly of any material changes required in my responses to the above question. I acknowledge that failure to comply with NASW policy - including but not limited to NASW's Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct, and Operating Principles - may result in my ineligibility to serve on the NASW board or stand for election.

Signed _____

Name: _____

Email address: _____

Phone: _____