

## **NASBLA Engineering, Reporting & Analysis Committee (ERAC) Procedure** **Evaluating new and emerging issues/topics proposed for committee action**

### **BACKGROUND**

Each year, NASBLA policy committees are assigned charges that have been approved by the NASBLA Executive Board, and then, throughout the committee cycle, develop work products in response to those charges. The pool of potential charges is filled through various means, including: solicitation of the general NASBLA membership before the start of the cycle; topics generated by board members, current and incoming committee leadership and members, and NASBLA staff; and the carryover or redirection of specific charges from prior committee cycles. In making its decisions on committee activity, the board typically seeks input and recommendations from the individual committees regarding the content, scope, and feasibility of charges for the year.

However, recreational boating issues and critical events do not “stop at the door” of the annual process described above. Topics emerge and come to the committees’ attention throughout the cycle. They arise from various sources and in various forms such as informal conversations with or direct requests from NASBLA members, partnering organizations, and advocacy group representatives; meeting presentations, studies, and media reports that spark interest; and policy or regulatory actions taken by other agencies and that will affect NASBLA members.

Currently, there is no procedure in place to continuously and effectively identify and “triage” recreational boating issues and topics that emerge and are potentially within an individual committee’s sphere. “Triage” as used here refers to an organized, commonly-understood manner of handling and evaluating the priority of these issues and topics, and determining an appropriate course of action—whether that is immediate redirection of committee resources to address the issue or event, the deliberate postponement of further consideration until the next charge cycle, or something in between.

### **PURPOSE OF PROCEDURE**

This procedure is intended to guide the receipt, evaluation and disposition of new and emerging issues, topics and ideas that come to the attention of NASBLA’s Engineering, Reporting & Analysis Committee (ERAC). It is designed to enhance the committee’s ability to *determine the most appropriate responses* to such submissions.

While the impetus for developing this procedure is the need to more effectively manage and assess the urgency and importance of issues and topics that arise mid-committee cycle, the steps and questions can also be used to evaluate issues during the annual development of ERAC charge work.

## RECEIPT OF ISSUES/TOPICS/IDEAS FOR CONSIDERATION BY ERAC

Issues, topics and ideas for committee work have been and will continue to be identified and received throughout the year in various ways including, but not limited to: the formal, organizational solicitation and submission of charge topics from the general NASBLA membership before the start of a new committee cycle; formal and informal discussions with board members, current and incoming committee leadership and members, and NASBLA staff; examination of the content of current or recent past committee charges for possible continuation, expansion or redirection; informal conversations with or formal requests from individual NASBLA members, partnering organization representatives, and advocacy group representatives; review of the content of meeting presentations, studies, and media reports; and the issuance and announcement of policy or regulatory actions taken by other agencies that will affect NASBLA constituents.

Along with the paths described above, a component of the newly-established ERAC online forum, *The NASBLA Lighthouse*, will serve both as a place where issues and topics can be submitted year-round by NASBLA members and other recreational boating safety stakeholders, and where *all* submissions—*received from any source at any time during the year*—will be gathered up and held for consideration. All issues, topics, and ideas received or generated by ERAC leadership and members should be entered into the forum so that they can be held and considered by the ERAC “Triage Team” described below.

This online holding area of issues, topics and ideas will be monitored regularly by a designated ERAC member to ensure timely redirection of any submissions regarding health or safety issues that would need immediate attention by entities other than a NASBLA committee.

### ERAC “TRIAGE TEAM”

#### Composition

The Triage Team that will use this procedure to review and manage incoming issues, topics and ideas throughout the year will consist of the ERAC Chair, the ERAC Vice Chair (or Vice Chairs), the NASBLA Executive Board Liaison to ERAC, and a minimum of one additional at-large member of the committee appointed annually by the ERAC Chair. Committee staff will assist the work of this team.

#### Frequency of Team discussion of issues/topics

The Triage Team will convene by teleconference. The team will convene initially to vet issues, topics and ideas that have been received in time for consideration and recommendation as part of the annual committee charge development (late summer/fall). Thereafter, the team will meet, at minimum, on a quarterly basis to review submissions, with an option to increase or decrease the frequency based on need and experience with this process.

### **Participation in Team teleconferences**

In the interest of transparency and gaining additional perspectives, the Triage Team’s teleconferences will be conducted as open meetings and announced through the ERAC online forum, *The NASBLA Lighthouse*. Special invitation will be extended to the ERAC membership to participate.

Persons who submitted the issues and topics that will be under consideration will also be invited to participate on the teleconference so that they can answer questions and provide guidance on intent.

In advance of the scheduled teleconferences, the submissions to be considered and any other additional information about them will be shared with the invitees and posted to the online forum.

### **Team requests for clarification of submissions**

The issues and topics under consideration may require additional information from the submitter in advance of the scheduled teleconference. That will include, at a minimum, requests for the submitter to explain or clarify their intent and basic expectations in proposing the issue or topic.

Relevant questions will be posted to the ERAC online forum as guidance for submissions, and may include, among others: What action is being requested and why? What does the submitter hope will be accomplished by the committee in taking up the issue? Is there a deadline or timeframe or shelf-life associated with the issue? What are the data or information parameters associated with the issue and the potential project that would result? What kind of product might come from this work?

### **Team notification to submitters of the disposition of their issues**

Whether or not they participated in the Triage Team teleconference, the submitters of issues and topics that were under consideration will be informed of the disposition of their submission—in particular, whether their proposed issue/topic did or did not make it onto the ERAC agenda, and if it did not, whether the issue/topic was passed along to another NASBLA committee.

## **EVALUATING THE ISSUES**

### **Determine whether the issue/topic “fits” within NASBLA’s mission and strategic plan and the National RBS Strategic Plan**

The initial step in the Triage Team’s evaluation should be consideration of whether or not an issue or topic fits within the NASBLA strategic and implementation plans and the National RBS Strategic Plan. If it does, then “where it fits” within the plan(s) should be noted, and the issue should *automatically* be moved along in the process by the team.

However, if the issue or topic is not currently in or directly related to the plans, that should not immediately halt its consideration by the team. It could be an issue or topic—perhaps an early indicator of a trend—worthy of consideration and inclusion in the updates to those plans.

Consideration should also be given to whether the issue or topic is primarily local, regional or national in scope and impact. Given NASBLA’s mission and constituency, issues that are currently local or narrower in nature should be assessed to determine whether they have potential for broader applicability across the states.

### **Determine whether the issue/topic is “committee work”**

The next consideration by the Triage Team should be whether the issue or topic falls within the jurisdiction of any of the NASBLA policy committees based on their individual charters. As needed, the team should consult with other NASBLA committee chairs or staff liaisons to determine whether there is any potential crossover with their work or interests.

If the issue seems to have a better fit with a committee other than ERAC, then it should be forwarded to that committee (or committees) and the submitter of the issue/topic should be informed that their issue was reviewed and passed along (with contact information supplied). No promises can or should be made by the team that the issue will be acted upon by the other committee(s).

If the issue fits within ERAC’s charter, then it should move along in the evaluation process.

### **Determine whether the issue/topic falls within current ERAC charge work**

The Triage Team should consider whether the issue falls under any of the current ERAC charges (in the case of a mid-cycle submission of an idea); relates to work that was done in the past by ERAC or another NASBLA committee; or relates to or is very similar to work that has been done by another organization.

If the issue falls within a current or very recent past ERAC charge, then the team should determine whether it—or some aspect of it—would enhance the current charge work and not interrupt or otherwise hamper completion of the charge product(s) already underway.

If taking up the issue mid-cycle would interrupt completion of the original, related charge, then consideration should be given to whether the original charge needs to be redirected or whether the issue warrants initiation of a separate charge, either for the current cycle or an upcoming cycle.

### **Determine whether the issue/topic is “urgent” and “important”**

“Urgent” can mean different things in the scope of issues or topics that arise in recreational boating. Issues that are truly urgent from a health or safety standpoint will be passed along to other appropriate entities because the committee is not in a position to take such direct action.

For purposes of this procedure and the committee’s work, “urgency” relates to **how fast the committee would need to act** on an issue or topic **if** the Triage Team ultimately determines that it is an **important** issue or topic for committee work—that is, must the issue be taken up immediately (even if mid-cycle) and with a reallocation of current committee resources to it OR can the issue wait to be taken up in the next committee cycle (and remain pertinent)?

From the standpoint of the committee, its purpose and its work, the top two quadrants of the *urgent & important decision matrix* for compartmentalizing issues are most relevant:

Urgent/Important	Not Urgent/Important
Urgent/Not Important	Not Urgent/Not Important

A set of questions, including but not limited to those below, should be used to help determine where an issue or topic is slotted in terms of **URGENCY**:

- Does the issue or topic represent something so badly “broken” that it requires immediate fixing?
- What would be the effect of waiting to address the issue or topic until a charge can be chartered for the committee in the next committee cycle?
- Are there “political” ramifications to taking action? Not taking action? Delaying action?
- How quickly could an effective solution to the issue be created by the committee?
- And, as necessary, depending on the type of solution that is created, how quickly would such a solution be able to move from the committee to the NASBLA Executive Board for review and approval and then to the NASBLA membership?

A set of questions, including but not limited to those below, should be used to help determine where an issue or topic is slotted in terms of being **IMPORTANT**:

- What makes this issue or topic important to boating safety and NASBLA?
- Who is asking the question or bringing up the issue or topic?
- Who are the stakeholders for this issue or topic?
- What will happen if the committee takes no action?
- What can the committee improve by taking on this issue or topic? What is the intended outcome of taking on this issue or topic?

Other real life considerations, such as whether people are dying or being injured because of the issue or whether people are simply being inconvenienced because of it, could further drive whether or not the Triage Team determines the issue rises to a higher level of importance (even though, in the case of preventing deaths or injuries, the committee can only play an indirect role through its work).

**Determine the feasibility of and logistics involved in taking on the issue or topic**

If the Triage Team determines that the issue or topic is urgent and important (or not urgent, but important), then other organizational and resource considerations need to come into play.

A set of questions, including but not limited to those below, should be used to help determine the ability and capacity of the committee to effectively complete work on it:

- Does the committee have the types and amounts of resources—monetary, people, and time—that would need to be directed to the issue or topic?
- If the committee does not have the people resources or time to complete the work on its own, could the submitter be approached as a possible partner in accomplishing the work?
- If the issue is important—but not urgent—and would require resources beyond typical committee work, is there any possibility of seeking external funding for the project?
- What is the timeline for completing the work (or a portion of the work in the case of a longer-term issue/project)? Will the committee be able to work within that timeframe?
- Who else/what other organizations need to be involved in the committee’s work on the issue as a partner(s) or advisor(s)?

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**History**

\*Triage Team composition outlined in v10092014 version was amended by ERAC leadership, Jan. 9, 2015. Amendment allows for more than one at-large committee member to be appointed to team. Intent is to ensure odd number of members for voting purposes and enhanced diversity of perspectives.