



## **JOAG Committee Chairs Guidance Document** **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **Introduction**

This document was created by the JOAG Membership Committee with the purpose of orienting voting members (incoming and returning) to the role of the JOAG committee chair. As chair of a committee, you are ultimately responsible for all activities under the purview of the committee. This document will help you answer some basic questions that you might have when starting in this role. This document is meant to be a fluid document and feedback and additional questions are always welcome.

In addition to the **JOAG Committee Chair FAQ** document, all committee chairs should be familiar with the JOAG governing documents (i.e., JOAG Charter, JOAG Bylaws, and the JOAG General SOP) [See Q.1]. Since the JOAG General SOP relates to the functions and procedures that apply to all JOAG committees, it is **especially important** that all committee chairs read over this document before the beginning of their term as committee chair. You should also refer to the JOAG General SOP as needed throughout your term as Chair.

If at any time you have any questions about your role as chair or as a JOAG voting member, please feel free to reach out to any member of the Executive Committee.

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## **JOAG Committee Chairs Guidance Document Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **I. Policies and Procedures**

#### **1. What are the Junior Office Advisory Group (JOAG) Charter, JOAG Bylaws, JOAG General Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), and JOAG Strategic Plan?**

These documents describe the purpose, structure, procedures and policies as related to the JOAG. Every effort should be made to read these documents before the beginning of voting member's term (01 October). It is also suggested that returning voting members read through these documents at the beginning of the operational year, and as needed, throughout the term.

**JOAG Charter** - The original charter was created by the Junior Officer Ad-Hoc Advisory Group (JOAHAG) in 1999. On 07 December 2001, VADM David Satcher, Surgeon General, officially chartered JOAG as a Commissioned Corps entity under the Office of the Surgeon General (OSG). The JOAG Charter is the governing document that defines the purpose and structure of the JOAG. In addition, it also contains JOAG's mission and objective statements.

**JOAG Bylaws** - The Bylaws provide internal guidance for the operations, policies, and procedures of the organization as a whole. The Bylaws provide specific guidance on matters not addressed by the Surgeon General's JOAG Charter.

**JOAG General Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)** - The General SOP establishes procedures to be followed in carrying out a given committee task. The JOAG General SOP provides internal guidance for the operations and procedures of all JOAG committees and workgroups.

**JOAG Strategic Plan** - The Strategic Plan provides a plan for what JOAG hopes to achieve over a certain period of time through broad and specific goals and objectives. This document provides a plan to guide JOAG into the future.

#### **Where can I find these documents?**

These documents can be found under the "About JOAG – Governing Documents" section of the JOAG website at:

[http://www.usphs.gov/corpslinks/joag/index\\_files/About\\_JOAG\\_GovDocs.htm](http://www.usphs.gov/corpslinks/joag/index_files/About_JOAG_GovDocs.htm)

#### **2. What is the procedure for assigning committee chairs to the various JOAG committees?**

The JOAG Chair-Elect (i.e., the incoming JOAG Chair) is responsible for the selecting the incoming committee chairs. These assignments will primarily be based on the needs

of the organization and secondly on the preferences of the returning and new voting members. Existing committee chairs will be given the option to retain their position for the subsequent operational year. Every attempt will be made to assign each voting member to a committee chair position when possible.

The JOAG Chair-Elect will notify the outgoing and incoming/returning committee chairs of the final selection.

**3. What is the procedure for transitioning committee information (e.g., ongoing activities, action items, etc.) between the outgoing and incoming committee chair?**

Before the beginning of the JOAG operational year (01 October) and after the selection of the committee chairs for the subsequent term (see Q.2), the incoming committee chair will be responsible for reaching out to the existing committee chair(s).

Although the incoming chair's term doesn't officially start until 01 October, it is to his or her advantage to make every effort to attend the August and September Committee meetings. This will help the incoming chair get oriented to the committee's activities.

The outgoing/returning committee chair should share the last committee SOP with the incoming committee chair. In addition to the committee SOP, the incoming chair should also review and become familiar with the JOAG General SOP, as this documents detail the general procedures for all JOAG committees (See Q.1).

When possible, the outgoing chair will remain available after the transition has occurred, provide a historical perspective for decisions, and be readily available to answer questions from the incoming Chair. *Also see Article VIII of the JOAG General SOP.*

**4. How are funds obtained for a committee?**

Funds shall only be used for JOAG related activities. Committee participants must first complete and submit a funding request form via email to the JOAG Financial Liaison, through the committee chair. The funding request will be reviewed by the Financial Liaison to determine appropriateness of the request. For expenses that do not occur annually, the Financial Liaison will consult with the Executive Committee. The committee chair and participant will be notified by email if the request is approved or declined. *Also see Article IX, Section 1 of the JOAG General SOP.*

**5. After a JOAG voting member's initial term concludes, what are the options for continuing as a voting member?**

Each voting membership term of appointment is for two years. A member completing his/her first term as a JOAG voting member is eligible for reappointment for one (1) additional two-year term, not to exceed four years of service. Those seeking reappointment must reapply and go through the same application process as all other candidates. *Also see Article VII, Sections 1-3 of the JOAG Bylaws.*

## II. Executive Committee

### 6. Who is eligible to apply for a position on the Executive Committee (EC)?

The Executive Committee is comprised of voting members. The EC elections occur toward the end of the operational year after the incoming voting membership has been selected. All returning and incoming voting members are eligible to apply for all positions on the Executive Committee with the exception of Chair. This position is served by the previous year's Chair-Elect. With the exception of the Chair-Elect position, which is a two-year position (i.e., one year as Chair-Elect, one year as Chair), all EC positions are one-year in length. Those wishing to run for Chair-Elect must not exceed four years of service as a voting member to JOAG by the time their term as Chair is over. In other words, a voting member who has served for three years is ineligible to apply for the Chair-Elect position. *Also see Article IV of the JOAG Bylaws.*

### 7. What is the role of an EC liaison and what kinds of tasks and projects require EC approval?

The EC Liaison is a member of the EC and serves as the go-between for the committees and the EC. The EC Liaison also serves as an advisor to his or her assigned committee. All committee documents that need EC approval shall be reviewed by the EC Liaison before being sent to the remaining EC members/JOAG Chair. New projects and ideas must also be approved by the EC through the EC Liaison. *Also see Article V, Section 2 of the JOAG General SOP.*

### 8. What is the process for submitting a new project idea or proposal to the Executive Committee?

If the project idea is from a committee member, the committee member should first discuss the idea with the committee chair. If the committee chair concurs, the committee member should put together a brief one-page proposal/concept paper, with the input from the committee chair (or designee). If necessary, the committee chair should communicate new project idea to the EC Liaison for initial response/feedback. The proposal should then be sent to the EC, through the EC Liaison and committee chair. *Also see Article V, Section 5 of the JOAG General SOP.*

### 9. If an idea or project pertains to the mission of multiple committees, how is it determined which committee will take the lead?

The pertinent committee chairs will submit a proposal to the JOAG Executive Committee (EC) to discuss the project and where it seems to fit best. Ultimately, the JOAG Chair will make the decision as to which committee leads a project.

### 10. What is the process for distributing new documents outside of a JOAG Committee or to the general JOAG membership?

All new committee documents must be reviewed by the JOAG EC, or its designee, usually the EC Liaison, and must be approved by the JOAG Chair (or designee) prior to dissemination outside of the committee or to the general JOAG membership. The committee chair (or designee) will send a request for document review via email to the committee's EC Liaison. The request should include all pertinent deadlines so that the EC can prioritize the review. The committee's EC Liaison will review the document in its entirety before a) sending it back to the Committee for further revisions or b) sending it to the Executive Committee.

After final review of the document by the EC members, the JOAG Chair (or designee) will be the final approving authority. The JOAG Chair will then email the final approved document to the EC Liaison and committee chair. *Also see Article V, Section 7 of the JOAG General SOP.*

**11. How long does it take the Executive Committee to provide feedback for a new idea or proposal?**

The timeframe for Executive Committee feedback for a new idea or proposal is dependant upon the scope and complexity of the materials that need to be reviewed. The EC meets via conference call monthly, but documents may be reviewed via email in between meetings. Generally, a committee can expect a turnaround no shorter than two weeks except in time-sensitive situations.

### **III. Committee Reports**

**12. What are the requirements for submitting committee reports? When should reports be submitted? To whom should reports be sent?**

Committee Chairs are required to submit their committee reports to the JOAG Executive Secretary on the months when the General Membership Meetings take place (i.e., Oct, Dec, Feb, April, June, Aug). Reports should include pertinent information on the committee (e.g., current projects, initiatives, subcommittee updates). The report should be used to update the JOAG Chair and inform the general membership of the committee's activities. Reports should reflect committee activities since the last report and include information on all active, ongoing and future activities. Reports are typically due one week prior to the JOAG General Membership meeting.

**13. What should be contained in the initial and subsequent committee reports for the JOAG General Membership meeting? Should these reports contain subcommittee updates?**

For the first meeting of a new operational year (October), reports should provide an introduction and a summary of committee activities that have occurred in the previous operational year as well as establish the tone for the coming term. Reports should also include the Chair(s) and meeting/call in information. Subsequent reports should contain

committee updates and highlight activities that have occurred in the preceding month. Reports should contain information on all subcommittees.

#### **IV. Committee Meetings**

##### **14. How often should committee meetings be held?**

JOAG committee meetings should be held at least once every other month; however, depending on the size of the committee monthly meetings might be required.

##### **15. Is there a standard format or agenda for committee meetings?**

No, the committee chair prepare(s) a written agenda with input from the committee participants. Sufficient time must be allocated in the committee meetings for each topic noted in the agenda. Items not previously on an agenda should be saved for new business at the end of the meeting. Additionally, committee chair(s) are encouraged to use the JOAG General Meeting format as an example. The EC has created Agenda and Meeting Minutes templates that each committee is encouraged to use. If a committee plans on posting their meeting minutes on the JOAG website, the above templates must be used.

#### **V. Committee Membership/Involvement**

##### **16. Are there particular qualifications for committee volunteers?**

A committee volunteer should be an active duty or reserve officer at the temporary rank of O-4 or below in the USPHS Commissioned Corps. The following are the expected characteristics and responsibilities of all committee participants:

1. Possesses a willingness and ability to give the necessary time to attend meetings and perform duties.
2. Participates actively in discussions and willingly listens to and respects other viewpoints.
3. Possesses the ability to accept and follow through on assignments.

Officers who are involved with the committee and pin-on O-5 in July, are allowed to continue participating until the end of the operational year (September 30<sup>th</sup>). *Also see Article VI and Article VII of the JOAG General SOP.*

##### **17. How many members should a committee have?**

The size of each committee should be adapted to meet its mission, as determined by the committee Chair and the committee's SOP.

**18. What is the difference between an active committee “participant” and a committee “observer”? How should this be communicated to committee members?**

Active committee “**participants**” meet the following standards and receive a letter of appreciation from the committee chair to be placed in their eOPF at the end of the operational year.

Minimum standards for committee “**participants**” include:

1. Attend at least half of the eligible meetings during since joining the committee.
2. Active participation in at least one project during the operational year.
3. Active participation in meeting discussions and providing input to committee chair or co-chair solicitations.

A committee “**observer**” is an officer who wishes to maintain awareness of committee issues, but is under no obligation or requirement to participate, maintain a minimum level of attendance or responsibility. Committee “**observers**” do not have the committee’s approval to list their participation in the JOAG committee on their curriculum vitae (CV) and do not receive a letter of appreciation from the committee chair.

Each committee chair should discuss these differences with members at the beginning of the operational year and should reiterate this distinction half way through the operational year. *Also see Article VI of the JOAG General SOP.*

**19. What is the best way to facilitate active participation by committee members in projects and meetings?**

A committee chair should be organized and prepared for both committee meetings and subcommittee projects and clearly communicate the desired direction or outcome of the meeting or project. The members who make up your committee have competing duties and respect for their time is needed; they are volunteers.

To increase meeting participation committee chairs should consider:

- Emailing committee members the agenda the week before the meeting; this will also serve as a reminder and increase the number of participants.
- Setting up a recurring meeting and sending a meeting calendar invite through Outlook.
- Reaching out directly to committee participants; emailing a committee participant and asking them if they are available to volunteer for a given subcommittee or project tends to increase the likelihood that the participant will volunteer.
- Allowing the committee participant to report/update the committee during the meeting tends to engage and increase participation.

Committee Chairs tend to have a better response from committee participants when the chair takes the time to reach out to committee participants individually to encourage participation in specific projects. Send requests for involvement out over email. It is more likely people will respond to an email request by hitting reply than actually taking the time to write the committee chair. *Committee chairs must be active in this process.*

If desired committee participation is not achieved, the committee chair should contact their EC Liaison about sending out a call for volunteer over the JOAG Listserv. *Also see Article V, Section 10 of the JOAG General SOP.*

**20. How do I get subcommittee leads or other appointed officers (e.g., non-voting members, co-chairs, secretaries) to fulfill their duties?**

Make sure expectations and timelines for projects are established when assignments are made. Monitor progress by communicating regularly with committee participants to keep them focused and productive. Address performance issues when necessary. Allow them to update the committee during the meeting and submit the Subcommittee report for the overall Committee report. Also see Q.19. *Also see Article V, Section 10 of the JOAG General SOP.*

**21. How should a committee Chair deal with a committee participant who is not fulfilling his or her duties?**

Communicate with the participant and determine the issue(s) resulting in duties not being fulfilled. Consider if there may be an alternative project better suited for the participant. If, after first contact, the situation does not improve, the committee chair needs to document and consider asking the participant to step down. Be sure you are clear about not penalizing the participant. Keep all communications professional. Remember, they are volunteers. *Also see Article V, Section 10 of the JOAG General SOP.*

**22. How can JOAG voting members and committee members become involved in decisions that affect the Commissioned Corps as a whole?**

The JOAG Chair will send out announcements requesting volunteers to assist with projects affecting the entire Corps throughout the year. Committee Chairs should ensure their members are aware of these opportunities.

## **VI. Miscellaneous**

**23. How should committee member information be collected for letters of appreciation at the end of an operational year? How should these letters be distributed?**

At the beginning of the operational year, and as new members join the committee, the committee chair should inform all members of the requirement to receive a letter of appreciation that may be placed in an officer's eOPF. Committee members should keep track of their participation and committee accomplishments throughout the year. At the

end of the operational year and after the Awards Committee has sent out the letter of appreciation template, the committee chair(s) should ask each committee participant to submit that year's list of accomplishments. The committee chair (or designee) should use this list to write a personalized letter of appreciation, suitable for inclusion in the officer's eOPF. A JOAG letter of appreciation should only be given to officers who met the criteria listed in Q.16 and "participant" status in Q.18. *Also see Article VI of the JOAG General SOP.*

**24. Are voting members eligible for a Special Assignment Service Award (SAA)? If so, what are the requirements for nomination?**

JOAG voting members are eligible for the PHS Special Assignment Award as long as they meet eligibility requirements as outlined in Commissioned Corps Policy, *CCC 27.1.1 sec d.3*

The JOAG Awards Committee is responsible for putting together the JOAG Voting Membership SAA packets and will contact each voting member at the beginning of his or her term with instructions. *Also see Article III, Section 12 of the JOAG Bylaws.*

**25. Does JOAG nominate members for Corps-level honor awards?**

JOAG does not nominate members for PHS-level honor awards. An officer's supervisor or peer may include work done with JOAG in a PHS-level award, but the award should not be solely for activities done in JOAG. JOAG members are recognized with letters of appreciations and/or JOAG certificates when appropriate. If a JOAG activity was done for another group (i.e. DCCR, OCCO, OSG, etc.), that group may put in participants for a PHS level award. This will be done at the discretion of that group, and not JOAG.

The policies and exceptions are addressed in the JOAG Bylaws, *Article III, Section 12 (Recognition of JOAG voting members) and Article V, Section 6 (Recognition of JOAG Committee Contributions and Participation).*

*Article III, Section 12. Recognition of JOAG voting members: JOAG voting members are eligible for the PHS Special Assignment Award (SAA) as long as they meet the eligibility requirements as outlined in Commissioned Corps Policy, CC27.1.1 sec d.3 (See Awards Committee's SOP). The JOAG Senior Advisor, with concurrence from the JOAG Chair, may, at his/her discretion, nominate JOAG voting members for individual PHS awards if deemed appropriate. (Also see Article V, Section 6).*

*Article V, Section 6. Recognition of JOAG Committee Contributions and Participation: Officers may self-nominate and/or be nominated for JOAG-sponsored awards, including, but not limited to, the JOAG Junior Officer of the Year, JOAG Excellence Award, and VADM Richard H. Carmona Inspiration Award. Recognition for individual contributions and participation in JOAG activities, committees and workgroups will be recognized with certificates and/or letters of appreciation as deemed appropriate by committee chairs. JOAG and its committee chairs and voting members do not nominate officers for Corps-level awards, such as PHS Unit Commendation, PHS Citation and PHS Achievement awards. However, accomplishments and activities with JOAG may be included in nominations for Corps-level awards submitted by an officer's supervisor or peers.*

26. **How can committee Chair(s) and committee members share documents with one another?** **Forthcoming.**

27. **What is *SurveyMonkey* and when would it be helpful? What are basic instructions for accessing and using this system?**

JOAG uses SurveyMonkey for all of its surveys. SurveyMonkey is a web-based tool that allows JOAG to create online surveys. SurveyMonkey can be used for collecting information from a wide range of individuals (e.g., JOAG general members, committee participants, voting members, creation of rosters, votes)

With prior approval from the EC Liaison/JOAG Chair, a committee chair can request access to the SurveyMonkey tool. Upon approval, the Executive Secretary will grant access to the committee so they can build the necessary survey. Final review and approval of the questionnaire must be obtained by the EC prior to distribution of the survey. *Also see Article IX, Section 2 of the JOAG General SOP.*