2025
REALTORS® ASSOCIATION MODELS
PLANNING TOOL: MODELS CHART

The core purpose of the REALTOR® organization is to help shape a strong and supportive business environment for its members.

Each REALTOR® association is responsible for delivering meaningful value while meeting NAR's Core Standards. How an association operates will vary based on its structure, size, resources, and member needs—there's no one-size-fits-all model.

The three models presented—**Administrative, Management, and Leadership**—represent different stages or approaches to association operations. Most associations will find themselves combining elements from multiple models depending on the function or service. For example, an association may operate primarily within the Administrative Model while taking a more strategic approach in its governance.

This tool is designed to help volunteer and staff leaders assess where they are today, identify where they want to go, and explore how partnerships can help expand member services. Success comes when association leaders use this resource collaboratively to align operations with their mission and member expectations.

DISCLAIMER
This assessment is a planning aid designed to guide the delivery of services, programs, and member value. It should be used as one of several tools to inform expectations and responsibilities for association staff and volunteers. Final decisions should incorporate board input, market context, and strategic priorities.

REALTORS® are members of the National Association of REALTORS®.

I. GOVERNANCE, PLANNING, AND ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATIONS

CATEGORY	ADMINISTRATIVE MODEL	MANAGEMENT MODEL	LEADERSHIP MODEL
STRATEGIC VISION & GOAL DEVELOPMENT	Goals are determined by elected leaders and supported administratively by staff. Volunteers lead implementation. Strategy is often broad and operational.	Elected leaders set strategic vision; staff co-develop and manage goal execution. Plans align with mission and involve more analysis.	Staff and leaders co-create strategic vision and goals. Staff designs operational objectives and measures, integrating them across departments.
DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY	Board holds most authority; staff executes. Operational decisions require board input or approval.	Board manages strategic decisions; staff have operational autonomy within defined boundaries.	Decision-making is shared, AE leads operations with strategic input from board. Staff have latitude for innovation and responsiveness.
COMMITTEE STRUCTURE	Volunteer-led committees with staff assistance. Structure is fixed, and roles remain consistent.	Committees align with goals and are staff-supported; structure changes infrequently based on needs.	Committees are flexible, evolve with strategy, and are guided by expert staff liaisons who support planning and outcomes.
GOVERNING DOCUMENTS	Primarily used to cover only required compliance. Updated infrequently unless required by NAR, state law or prompted by requests from volunteer leaders. Policy may not define staff roles or responsibilities.	Reviewed on a semi-regular basis by staff and volunteers for possible updates based on evolving issues and trends. Policies guide implementation and structure and define staff responsibilities.	Flexible, multi-tiered policies that are reviewed regularly by staff to address evolving issues, trends and support strategic responsiveness. Staff recommend proposed changes to elected leaders. Staff operates under defined authority with adaptive protocols.
STRATEGIC PLAN & BUDGET ALIGNMENT	Broad strategic plan; budget based on prior-year spending and financial capacity.	Budget and plan align; staff track progress and adjust operations accordingly.	Integrated budget and strategic plan; both are fluid, regularly updated, and guide daily operations and investments.
FACILITIES & EQUIPMENT	Basic office space; classrooms minimal or rented. Equipment may be outdated or minimal.	Dedicated facility with meeting spaces; technology and furnishings updated as needed.	Strategic facility with hybrid capabilities and member-focused spaces such as retail, training centers, or flexible hubs.
TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY	Technology meets Core Standards; vendors provide support. Few staff have tech expertise.	Tech supports hybrid ops; managed by staff with external help. IT planning is semi-regular.	In-house tech innovation; staff-led platform development and early adoption of emerging tools. Tech is part of strategic planning.
NON-DUES REVENUE	Primarily dues-funded; limited event-based revenue. May rely heavily on member participation to generate revenue.	Some diversification; programs and partnerships contribute revenue. Non-dues income supports core services.	Broad, strategic non-dues revenue streams support reserves, growth, and innovation. Includes subsidiaries, investments, and sponsorships.
DISASTER/CRISIS PLANNING	No formal plan; basic backup systems in place. Association responds reactively.	Internal crisis plan exists; staff and leadership collaborate on response. Some planning for continuity.	Comprehensive crisis plan led by staff; includes internal and public communications, charitable response funds, and scenario planning.

II. STAFF COMPETENCIES

CATEGORY	ADMINISTRATIVE MODEL	MANAGEMENT MODEL	LEADERSHIP MODEL
STAFF STRUCTURE	AE manages office with volunteer help and outsourcing. Staff roles are limited and general.	AE oversees small team of support or mid-level staff. May include clerical and part-time roles.	AE manages senior team with departmental leadership. Roles are specialized and strategically aligned.
STAFF COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS	Locally competitive pay; limited or no benefits. May struggle with retention or recruiting.	Regionally competitive; partial benefits (e.g., health or retirement) offered to attract talent.	Nationally competitive; includes full benefits and incentives to attract top professionals.
STAFF DEVELOPMENT	AE completes NAR education; other staff not funded. Training is limited or ad hoc.	AE and managers receive funded development. Some staff may access learning resources.	All staff are encouraged and funded to pursue professional development. Development is part of performance culture.
CHIEF STAFF EXECUTIVE ROLE	AE handles admin; depends heavily on volunteers. Role is reactive and execution focused.	AE manages operations, partners with volunteers on goals. Focus is on management and implementation.	AE is visionary; leads strategy, manages senior team, and cultivates innovation and industry leadership.
HR PRACTICES	AE manages manual, compliance, payroll, and evaluations. Practices are basic and manual.	AE develops job descriptions, oversees compliance, payroll, evaluations, and compensation. Org chart exists.	Dedicated HR staff manage lifecycle: onboarding, training, compliance, benefits, and whistleblower protections. Tools and metrics are in use.

III. MEMBER SERVICES

CATEGORY	ADMINISTRATIVE MODEL	MANAGEMENT MODEL	LEADERSHIP MODEL
MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS	Internal emails and website; volunteers are spokespeople. Messaging is operational or informational.	Targeted multi-channel communication; CEO may speak publicly. Communications support strategic priorities.	Strategic digital engagement; CEO and volunteers co-lead messaging. Uses engagement tools and analytics.
RECRUITMENT & ORIENTATION	Volunteer-led; relies on national/local materials. Orientation is infrequent or passive.	Staff-led with volunteer input; standardized and consistent program.	Innovative, multi-channel outreach to diverse audiences with targeted onboarding and member touchpoints.
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS	Staff or volunteers follow NAR guidelines; may outsource. Participation in cooperative agreements is limited.	Certified staff manage; cooperative agreements and best practices used.	Regional leader; supports other associations, uses citation and ombudsman programs, promotes high ethical standards.
EDUCATION & TRAINING	Basic CE promoted; largely external content. Internal planning is minimal.	CE, ethics, and fair housing offered; content developed by staff or in partnership.	Trend-based content created in-house; uses multiple platforms *(webinars, podcasts, virtual classrooms).*
BUSINESS TOOLS	Limited offerings; third-party tools promoted. Cost fully borne by members.	Some tools subsidized; selected tools provided through vendors or partners.	In-house development and proactive tool delivery based on member research. Member costs often subsidized.
INDUSTRY TRENDS & DECISION-MAKING	Trends noted by volunteers via state/national updates. Decisions are reactive.	Trends assessed jointly by staff and leadership; responses are planned collaboratively.	Staff forecast trends; association develops response strategies with vendors and advisors.
NETWORKING & EVENTS	Member-led via committees. Staff provide logistical help.	Jointly managed by staff and volunteers for engagement and development.	Fully staff-led, strategic events with emphasis on outcomes *(career, business growth, leadership).*
BUSINESS SPECIALTIES SUPPORT	Refers to outside providers for designation courses. Little internal specialty support.	Staff-supported specialty committees; occasional classes or forums.	Strategic specialty councils with member engagement, dedicated programming, and staff leadership.

IV. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

CATEGORY	ADMINISTRATIVE MODEL	MANAGEMENT MODEL	LEADERSHIP MODEL
STAFF LEADERSHIP	AE manages operations with minimal staff. Few formal roles or leadership layers.	AE leads a team with delegated responsibility; some managers/specialists in place.	AE is strategic leader; staff structure includes succession plans and senior staff decision-making.
VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT	Volunteers recruit new leaders with staff help. No formal leadership pipeline.	Staff and volunteers co-recruit future leaders. Informal mentoring may exist.	Comprehensive leadership development plan; proactive identification and cultivation of leaders.
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES LEGAL/CPA	Used as needed by board direction. Limited interaction with staff.	Retained services report to AE; used regularly.	CPA and attorney are ongoing advisors; roles are defined and strategic. They engage with counterparts.
SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT	Used sporadically; minimal strategy or engagement.	Used for member communication and internal collaboration.	Fully integrated into communications, public relations, and event strategy. Managed strategically with analytics.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	Volunteers lead minimum Core Standards outreach. Activities are episodic.	Staff and volunteers maintain regular relationships with stakeholders.	Recognized as a community leader; collaborates across sectors; provides data and insight.
PUBLIC POLICY ENGAGEMENT	Shares legal info; limited local advocacy or member mobilization.	Supports state/national efforts; participates in Calls to Action.	Frames public policy issues, mobilizes members, and takes leadership in advocacy campaigns.
POLITICAL ACTION *RPAC, ETC.*	Includes voluntary dues billing; minimal promotion.	Supports state/national goals; includes RPAC messaging in communications.	Leads local and regional political initiatives, fundraising, and candidate engagement.
GOVERNMENT ADVOCACY	Supports national/state efforts; some local Calls to Action.	Active in local advocacy and responsive to state/national campaigns.	Leads advocacy initiatives, builds coalitions, and shapes policy agendas.

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