



## 2025 Club Board Perspectives

# Where Effective Governance Begins: Strengthening the Club Nominating Process

Decisions made about the Nominating Committee may be among the most important governance decisions your board makes. Our latest research reveals how structure, independence, and strategy can shape everything from board alignment to long-term club performance.

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### Key Insights

- Clubs have overwhelmingly adopted the best practice of having a Nominating Committee, although significant differences exist in perceived success, structure, and length of service.
- The formation of Nominating Committees varies across clubs, reflecting a range of practices, from board appointments to member-driven or hybrid selection processes.
- Clubs that adopt both skill-based nominations and non-contested elections report a substantial increase in effectiveness ratings for their Nominating Committees.

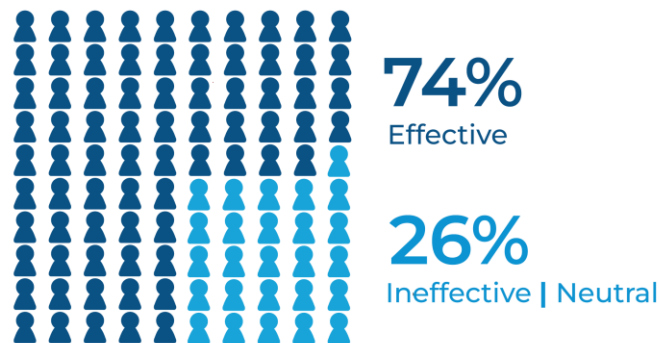
What if the most important decision your club makes each year isn't about the budget but about who serves on the board? Increasingly, club leaders recognize that effective governance isn't left to chance—it requires intentional design and planning. At the core of this process is a well-structured and independent Nominating Committee, where clubs move beyond tradition toward intentional, skills-based board recruitment, reflecting a growing consensus on the changes needed to stay competitive, member-focused, and strategically sound.

Our 2025 *Club Board Perspectives* research, which surveyed board members from private clubs across North America and was conducted in partnership with the National Club Association, offers a comprehensive review of the nominating process, committee structure, and overall governance effectiveness. The research highlights how clubs are aligning themselves with best practices and identifies areas where opportunities for improvement exist.

## Nominating Committee Effectiveness and Structure

The most effective clubs recognize the Nominating Committee as a cornerstone of strong governance. Survey results confirm this practice, with 94% of clubs reporting a Nominating Committee in place, signaling the broad adoption of this best practice. Overall, clubs rated the effectiveness of their Nominating Committees at 3.9/5, with nearly three-quarters (74%) describing them as effective or very effective.

**Figure 1. Nominating Committee Effectiveness**



Note: Respondents who indicated their club had a Nominating Committee were asked to rate the committee's overall success, with '1' indicating 'not at all successful' and '5' indicating 'extremely successful'.

Analyzing the effectiveness data shows minimal differences in club size, gender, and respondent age. However, notable variations in committee term structures were observed based on revenue levels, as shown in Figure 2. Clubs with lower revenue tend to prefer shorter terms, while larger clubs are more likely to have longer, multi-year terms. Overall, 42% of clubs reported using a 3-year term, and 38% reported a 1-year term, with higher-revenue clubs preferring longer terms. This suggests that governance continuity planning is linked to the organization's size.

**Figure 2. Nominating Committee Length of Term**

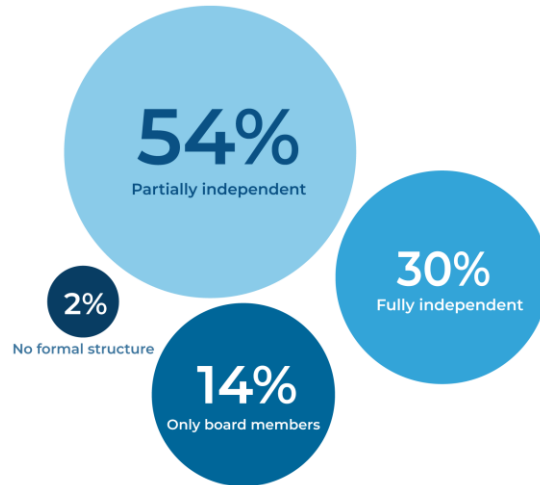
Committee Term	Total	Total Revenue				
		<\$5M	\$5M - \$10M	\$10M - \$15M	\$15M - \$20M	>\$20M
1 Year	38%	45%	44%	32%	29%	22%
3 Years	42%	38%	34%	53%	43%	48%

Note: Respondents who indicated the Nominating Committee was a standing committee of the Board were asked to indicate the length of the committee's term, ranging from 1 year to more than 3 years. Data from those who selected 2 years was removed from the data, given the limited number of responses.

## Composition of the Nominating Committee

The composition of the Nominating Committee plays a significant role in its overall effectiveness. Respondents reported varying degrees of independence, with many clubs recognizing the risks associated with having a committee composed entirely of current board members, as only 14% reported this structure (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Nominating Committee Composition**



Note: Respondents were asked to identify which of the above options best describes the committee composition.

More importantly, results indicate that 84% of clubs were at least partially, if not fully, independent from board participation. This suggests that many clubs are well-positioned to prioritize skill-based recruitment, which contributes to high-performing boards.

With half of the respondents (55%) indicating committee participation was determined through an appointment from the board, the remaining participants varied in their approach to committee participation. For instance, only 8% were elected by members, current committee members selected 12%, and the remaining 25% used a mixed approach, including:

- Bylaws or constitutional mandate (e.g., the last five past presidents)
- Presidential appointment or selection
- Past president or chair-led selection (e.g., committee lead of individually selected)
- Board involvement (e.g., selection approved by the board or recommendations provided)
- Volunteer call and application process, with random draw or some degree of appointment
- Random or lottery-based selection of eligible applicants

While flexibility is important, significant deviations from best practices are currently present in the nominating committee process. Effective governance depends on a structured approach, strategic alignment, and an objective evaluation of board candidates. Best practices emphasize skill-based appointments by a Board-approved group, but these varied approaches can hinder achieving this goal.

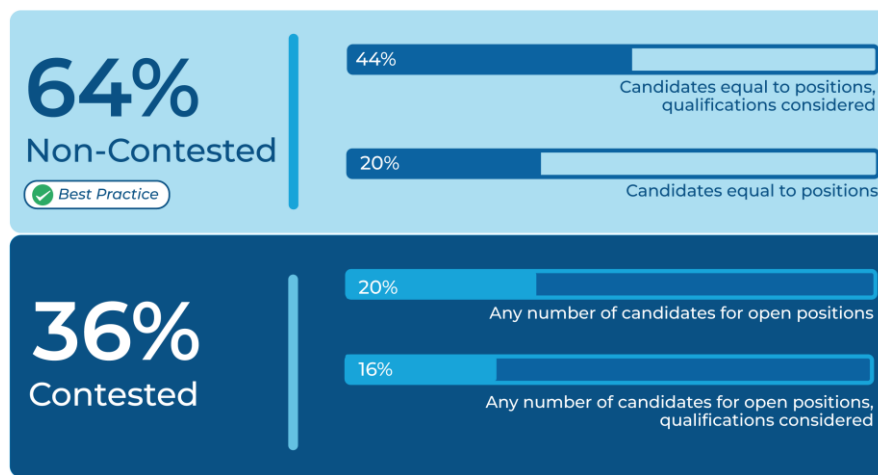
### Strategic Considerations

Effective governance requires intentional design. Combining skill-based nominations with a non-contested election process significantly enhances the effectiveness of the Nominating Committee. Clubs should also ensure committee independence to enhance objectivity, foster diverse perspectives, and recruit the skills needed to guide the club's strategic direction.

### Supporting the Non-Contested Election Best Practice

The format of board elections remains one of the most actively discussed governance topics in private clubs. According to the results in Figure 4, 64% of clubs utilize a non-contested election format, while 36% continue to rely on contested elections.

**Figure 4. Use of Non-Contested Elections as a Best Practice**



Note: Respondents were asked to identify which of the above options best describes the board member election process.

The non-contested model—where the number of candidates presented matches the number of open board seats—enables clubs to vet applicants and supports consistency, reduces the risk of misalignment, and fosters a more cohesive board dynamic. In contrast, contested elections introduce greater uncertainty. Clubs employing this approach face increased risks when selecting directors, which may result in conflicting agendas and potential governance issues.

### Club Leaders Opportunity

This research reveals a clear link between the effectiveness of the Nominating Committee and the use of best practices. Clubs that adopted both skill-based nominations and non-contested elections reported significantly higher effectiveness ratings, up to **15% higher** than those using neither of these methods. These results reinforce a key message: effective governance doesn't happen by chance—it's the result of intentional, well-structured processes. To increase governance effectiveness, boards can:

1. **Formalize and Structure the Nominating Committee:** Establish the Nominating Committee as a standing committee with clear authority, appropriate term lengths, and alignment with your club's succession needs.
2. **Enhance Committee Independence and Objectivity:** Strengthen the integrity of the nomination process by reducing board reliance and fostering unbiased, skills-based decision-making.
3. **Adopt a Non-Contested Election Model:** Utilize a board skills matrix to inform candidate selection and transition towards non-contested elections that align with the club's long-term priorities and industry best practices.
4. **Promote Transparency and Continuous Governance Evaluation:** Educate members about governance practices and regularly evaluate board effectiveness through structured self-assessments or third-party reviews.

Our findings continue to reinforce the connection between the quality of the Nominating Committee and overall board effectiveness. Simply put: strong nomination processes create stronger boards, which in turn lead to better governance.

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