

Note: On December 9, 2025, Ana Ley made a motion via email to approve these minutes. It was seconded by Caresse Jackman and received 12-0 approval on December 12, 2025. No vote was submitted by Cindy Galli.

IRE Board of Directors

Board Meeting Agenda via Zoom

November 14, 2025 @ 9:00 a.m. CT

Board members in attendance: President Josh Hinkle, Vice President Kate Howard, Treasurer Mark Greenblatt, Secretary Ana Ley, At-Large Member Alejandra Cancino, Chair of the Board Brian Rosenthal, Marina Villeneuve, Mary Hudetz, Paroma Soni, Cindy Galli, Jodie Fleischer, Caresse Jackman

Hudetz joined at 9:04 a.m. and Fleischer joined at 9:05 a.m. before leaving and returning at 9:09 a.m. Andy Lehren did not attend the meeting. Galli left at 11:30 a.m. Villeneuve left at 11:46 a.m.

Staff members in attendance: Diana Fuentes, Adam Rhodes, Cody Winchester, Francisco Vara-Orta, Heather Feldmann Henry, Lauren Grandestaff, Chris Vachon and Amy Eaton.

Guests include: Mark Lagerkvist, Jon Schleuss, Howard Berke and Walter Smith Randolph.

President Josh Hinkle called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Central. Secretary Ana Ley called roll.

Executive Director's Report

- Executive Director Diana Fuentes updated the group on a timeline to update the website and said that a launch is tentatively scheduled for December 15, with a period of 48 hours of downtime before it goes live.
- She noted that the end-of-year giving campaign had raised \$37,000 (with a goal of \$75,000 by Dec. 31), and the fall member drive has renewed 40 lapsed members.
- She also said that she is working with Mizzou staff to come up with a plan to place an interim Director of Advancement (previously Director of Partnerships) and to put out a job listing in the next few weeks for a permanent hire.
- She said all that is left to collect of the \$1.5 million raised from the 50th Anniversary gala is \$120,000.
- Fuentes gave the group an update on training offerings for 2026, including a workshop in January at CUNY in New York and one in February in Oklahoma. She said there would be additional workshops in the first half of 2026, to be funded by proceeds from the 50th gala.
- She also noted that AccessFest registrations were up this year but revenue stayed flat because participants took advantage of the special \$50 lower rate.

Budget Presentation

Fuentes and Financial Officer Heather Feldmann Henry presented a revised mid-year budget. It had updated numbers that included actuals for IRE25 that showed a 9.6 percent increase in conference revenue overall, though the organization only raised 90 percent of its sponsorship goal of \$341,000.

Executive Session

Hinkle made a motion to enter executive session at 9:22 a.m. so the board could discuss portions of the budget revision that related to personnel. Vice President Kate Howard seconded, and the board voted in

favor by voice vote. Hinkle then moved to close executive session at 9:55 a.m. and Caresse Jackman seconded, with the board voting in favor by voice vote.

Budget Update Action Item

Treasurer Mark Greenblatt voted to approve the budget revision proposal based on the budget presentation and discussion, and At Large Member Alejandra Cancino seconded the motion, with the group voting in favor by voice vote.

Executive Session

Hinkle made a motion to enter executive session at 9:51 a.m. so the board could discuss the Executive Director's contract renewal. Howard seconded, and the board voted in favor by voice vote. Hinkle made a motion to leave executive session at 10:40 a.m. and Cancino seconded, with the group voting in favor by voice vote. The board voted without opposition in executive session to extend Fuentes's contract by one year beginning Sept. 1, 2026, pending University of Missouri review.

Other Action Items

[Awards Update Proposals](#)¹

Contest Committee Chair Walter Smith Randolph, Paroma Soni and Fuentes proposed a set of newly drafted divisions that the committee is putting together for a revamped slate of contests, with the goal of making the changes before IRE opens the 2026 contests. Soni made a motion to pass the proposals, and Ley seconded. Hinkle made a friendly amendment to take out a pair of suggestions at the bottom of the proposal to promote the contests to avoid burdening staff – but that Fuentes would work with staff and the conference committee to implement portions of those recommendations without a policy change. The group approved in favor by voice vote.

[Framework for Decisions on Public Statements Proposal](#)²

Howard presented a proposal from the Press Freedom Committee, which recommended that the board adopt a more modern framework for making decisions about joining public statements about press freedom statements. The change is intended to speed up decisions about joining coalition actions. Howard made a motion to pass the proposal and Hinkle seconded; the rest voted yes by voice vote.

[Press Freedom Action Policy Proposal](#)³

¹ **Awards Update Proposals:** Every year, IRE recognizes the best in investigative journalism from around the world. As the organization has grown and our industry has evolved, the awards categories have largely stayed the same. After last year's contest, longtime member Mark Lagerkvist spearheaded an effort to streamline the awards categories, expand opportunities for students, and bolster the promotion of the IRE awards. Two committees have carefully considered the language, names, and rules of the contest in an effort to streamline the contest while ensuring the integrity of the contest. We submit these proposed changes for your consideration, in hopes that this can take effect before we open the 2025 contest.

² **Framework for Decisions on Public Statements Proposal:** The Press Freedom Committee recommends the board adopt a new framework for decisions on public statements and add it to the policies and procedures manual. These questions are meant to document the shared values for IRE's board to guide decisions about press freedom statements, and speed up decisions about joining coalition actions.

³ **Press Freedom Action Policy Proposal:** The press freedom committee recommends the board formally adopt the framework for decisions on public statements and then adopt the following new policy, which seeks to speed up the process of joining in routine press freedom advocacy coalitions and ensure review and consensus before IRE undertakes more significant action.

Howard presented a companion proposal from the Press Freedom Committee which would create an updated policy for the group to sign on to press freedom statements which follows the group's newly adopted framework. Howard made a motion to pass the proposal and Hinkle seconded; the rest voted yes by voice vote.

[Committee Membership Policy Update Proposal](#) ⁴

Hinkle presented a proposal that sought to address staff and some committee chair concerns about volunteers who are serving on committees despite not being current IRE members. The proposal suggested that those volunteers who are not current IRE members would be encouraged to become an active member. The change would have made it so that IRE membership is not required to serve on a committee or task force, with the exception of five. Jodie Fleischer objected to the proposal because she said that no one should serve on a committee unless they are a member, while Chair of the Board Brian Rosenthal said that the organization should continue to allow non-members to join committees. Howard suggested finding a way to get non-members a comped membership or otherwise try to accommodate them if they would like to serve on a committee or task force. Rosenthal suggested taking the proposal to the Governance Committee for its consideration, and he made a motion to do so. Greenblatt seconded the motion and the rest of the group approved it by voice vote, with Hinkle and Hudetz dissenting.

Consent Action Items

Hinkle made a motion to approve three action items:

- A. [Executive Director Annual Review Timeline Policy Update Proposal](#) ⁵
- B. [Board Candidate Speeches/Meet-and-greet Proposal](#) ⁶

⁴ **Committee Membership Policy Update Proposal:** Hinkle proposed the following language to be added to IRE's policies and procedures manual: *The President and committee or task force chair will select the members of each committee — with input from the Executive Director. IRE membership is not required to serve on a committee or task force, with the exception of the following committees: executive, member services, governance, conference and contest. IRE membership should be verified by staff each board year for those five committees before September 1 (membership for volunteers should be current through December 1 of that board year). For non-members under consideration for those listed committees/task forces, staff and chairs may discuss/consider on a case-by-case basis a one-year comped membership free of charge. Other committees and task forces should have IRE members as a majority of their total membership, and non-IRE members serving on committees or task forces should be respectfully encouraged to join when appropriate by the President, chairs and staff.*

⁵ **Executive Director Annual Review Timeline Policy Update Proposal:** Motion to update the language surrounding the IRE executive director's annual evaluation/review in the Board's policies and procedures manual to reflect the timeline approved by the Board earlier this year for IRE staff evaluations to follow the University of Missouri's ePerformance system. Human resources says that requires moving this annual review deadline to Feb. 1.

⁶ **Board Candidate Speeches/Meet-and-greet Proposal:** Motion to pause IRE Board candidate in-person speeches and the meet-and-greet event at the IRE Conference in 2026. In the week following the candidate filing deadline, the executive director and staff will send a note to members and conference attendees about this update, including links to candidate profiles where candidates may include video statements. During the candidate filing period, this change should also be communicated to potential and declared candidates. Following the conference, staff and the Board should discuss any questions/concerns/requests about the event and decide if they should resume in 2027. (This comes after low to no attendance in the past few years for these events and at the suggestion of Board candidates, Board members and IRE staff. Staff also says canceling the events will free up space/time/resources at the conference. Staff may explore a live, virtual speech event after the candidate filing period but before the conference if there are requests for such a forum. If, after 2026, there is no desire to continue the events, the Board should update its policies and bylaws surrounding the matter.)

- C. [Approval of Minutes of Recent Emailed Votes](#)⁷ (Ley proposed to approve recently emailed votes)

Ley seconded the motion and the group approved by voice vote.

Committee/Task Force Reports

The group submitted nine committee and task force reports in writing:

- D. [Fundraising Task Force](#) (Rosenthal)
- E. [Affordability Task Force](#) (Rosenthal)
- F. [Academic Committee](#) (Chair Jodie Fleischer)
- G. Member Services Committee (Co-chairs Alejandra Cancino & Andy Lehren)
 - 1. [September Report](#)
 - 2. [November Report](#)
- H. [Website Improvement Task Force](#) (Cancino)
- I. [Conference Committee](#) (Chair Cindy Galli)
- J. [Employment & Career Advancement Task Force](#) (Galli)
- K. [Finance Committee](#) (Treasurer Mark Greenblatt)

II. Officer Reports

Treasurer's Report (Greenblatt)

Greenblatt said that the finance committee had spent the last quarter finishing a draft of a spending policy for IRE, checking in on the organization's investment allocations, identifying investment managers to solicit for bids in accordance with our new investment guidelines and reviewing a proposed budget revision. He said an immediate priority would be filling a current committee vacancy with a financial professional, which is allowed after a recent board vote.

[President's Report](#)

Hinkle submitted his report in writing and reminded the group about the board's goals and asked the group not to overwhelm staff with requests for information unless they are necessary and to use the board's request spreadsheet which is reviewed and prioritized by Fuentes

III. New Business

- A. Future Fundraising Gala Discussion
Rosenthal said he has been having a lot of conversations about whether and when and where and how we could do another Gala, and the consensus has been that for right now, it does not make sense to do a gala in 2026 because the organization does not have the bandwidth, especially because the organization does not have a fundraising director in place at the moment, and their role is crucial in putting an event together. Rosenthal said that the group was considering planning an event for Spring 2027.
- B. Spending Policy Discussion
Greenblatt said that the group should take the time to read a draft that the finance committee has worked to put together for a new spending policy. He said that the spending policy is a major policy for IRE, and he would next like to have it reviewed by

⁷ Between September 14, 2024 and October 6, 2025, the Board of Directors of Investigative Reporters and Editors held votes by email to decide whether the organization should sign on to statements in support of journalists who were being targeted by the government for their efforts to gather and distribute the news. These votes were cast in an expedited manner to keep up with a flurry of attacks on the press that has intensified in recent months. A list of the votes was provided to the board: *Cincinnati journalists facing charges, Demanding release of journalist Mario Guevara, Pentagon pledge, Changes to journalist visas, Attacks on independent journalists in Illinois*

IRE's auditor. It was unanimously recommended by the finance committee with the support of staff.

Hinkle made a motion to adjourn at 11:56 a.m. and Howard seconded. The group voted by voice vote without opposition to adjourn.