
Advisory Committee

Missouri State Law, Section 178.560, requires that an advisory committee be appointed in each district offering vocational subjects. The law states:

"The school board of any school district maintaining a pre-vocational or vocational school, department, or class receiving the benefit of state or federal monies under the provisions of Sections 178.420 to 178.580 as a condition of approval by the State Board of Education and State Commissioner of Education, shall appoint persons of experience in agriculture, industry, home economics and commerce to give advice and assistance to the school board in the establishment and maintenance of the schools, departments, and classes. The persons of experience shall serve without compensation."

Standard Thirteen in Missouri's document, *The Standards and Quality Indicators for Agriculture Program Improvement* states:

"Input from students, parents, staff members and community representatives is used to develop and implement the agriculture program's goals and objectives."

In addition, the National Quality Program Standards on Agricultural Education references Advisory Committees in Standard 4: School and Community Partnerships as follows:

Standard Statement: School and community partners are engaged in developing and supporting a quality program.

Quality Indicator #1

1. School, FFA Alumni and community partners are familiar with the goals, objectives, prerequisites, activities, and accomplishments of the agricultural education program.

When a school adds agricultural education programming, part of the formal application must include the names and occupations of the advisory committee members. In comprehensive high schools, there is typically a separate advisory committee for each career education program. However, in area technical school settings, there is usually an overall advisory committee providing guidance for the career education program as a whole, and then program specific committees representing each career education program within the school. It is common for one or two members of each program specific committee to be members of the overall technical school advisory committee.

An agriculture advisory committee consists of volunteers who are officially appointed by the governing board of the local education agency or institution. With members drawn primarily from the private sector of the community, with appropriate public sector representation, the principle purpose of the committee is to improve the quality and impact of instruction in programs that prepare students for the broad field of agriculture. The committee provides advice

in areas such as occupational performance competencies, instructional objectives, equipment selection, facility layout and modification, job requirements, credentials, program articulation, labor market needs as well as trends, career opportunities, instructor competencies and retraining strategies, and student recruitment and retention. However, it should be noted that committee activity is limited to suggestions, recommendations, and assistance. Authority does not include administrative or faculty control of the programs; these responsibilities are reserved for the local education agency or institution.

Because committee members have expert knowledge in the program field and because the council has chartered or constitutional authority granted by the governing board of the local education agency or institution, committee advice should be taken seriously by instructional program officials. Advisory committees are goal oriented toward program improvement. They promote constructive and necessary change within a program, generating and transmitting any ideas to the program from the employment community and from the program to the employment community.

Procedures for establishing an advisory committee, sample letters of invitation, and sample operational guidelines are included in the IML publication, *Partnerships and Advisory Groups: A Facilitator's Guide* and Section 18 of the Agriculture Teacher's Manual available from the National FFA or in the Local Program Success (LPS) Guide. Please refer to www.ffa.org for the LPS Guide.

Selection of Members

In order for the advisory committee to serve as a means of effective communication between vocational programs and the citizens to be served, the membership should be representative of the total school service area. Members may be selected to represent:

1. Geographical sections of the school district
2. All types of business and industry, particularly those predominant in the area
3. Both labor and management
4. Parents of agriculture students
5. Former students
6. Various age levels
7. Different educational levels
8. People of different gender, ethnicity and ability
9. School board members

This representation should enable the advisory committee to reflect the points of view of the various segments of the community being served by career and technical education. In addition, the agriculture instructor(s) and representative of the administration should serve as nonvoting consulting members. Although the administrative representative need not be present at all meetings, the agriculture instructor(s) should be in attendance at all meetings to provide information and to participate in discussion.

Size of the Committee

The size of the committee is a very important consideration. It will vary by size of the community, the scope of the agriculture offering, diversity of businesses and industries in the community, and the purpose of the committee. Effective advisory committees must be large enough to reflect diversity of the employment community, yet small enough to be managed effectively. Six to twelve members are recommended.

Term of Service

Staggered terms of service for advisory committee members ensure both committee continuity and ability to accommodate change. At a given time, the majority of members will have served at least one year on the committee, thus ensuring continuity. Change is accommodated as new members with new ideas are added to the committee each year.

A rotational, three-year term of service most easily allows for continuity and change. One-third of the total membership will be appointed beginning each year after the first year of operation. To establish this rotation with a new committee, the original members draw lots that set the length of their terms at one, two, or three years, with one-third of the committee in each category. Then new members are appointed as terms expire.

Relatively few effective committees reappoint members to successive terms, but require at least a one-year absence before reappointment. Establishing the length of term as policy will clarify the time demands for members at the outset.

Selection Process

Members may be elected or appointed, depending on the policy of the institution. A widely used procedure for nominating members is for the instructor(s) and the appropriate administrator to recommend a list of possible nominees to the governing board. Following acceptance of the invitation to serve, notice of appointment should be made by letter from the board stating the term for which appointment is made. The appointment should also be presented to the local media for publicity.

The following samples are provided to assist in setting up an advisory committee:

- Sample Authorization Statement
- Sample Advisory Committee Charter
- Sample Advisory Committee By-Laws

Sample Statement of Authorization

Authorization for the Establishment of a Agricultural Education Program
Advisory Committee for

(name of school district)

The Board of (local education agency or institution) hereby approves and authorizes the establishment of a citizens' advisory committee for the agricultural education program. The work of the committee will be limited to the legitimate concerns of the agricultural education program unless otherwise authorized by action of the Board. The committee will operate as prescribed by the Policy Statement. The Board reserves the right to terminate the services of any committee member at any time it believes that such action would be in the best interests of the school system.

Date _____

Sample Advisory Committee Charter

Charter for Agriculture Advisory Committee

I. The Committee will be called the (name of Committee). It is authorized by the (name of governing body) and will serve at the pleasure of the governing body.

II. Purposes

The Committee is created for the purpose of working with the (name of agriculture program) and shall limit its activities to advising on matters that directly concern the instructional program. The specific purposes of the Committee may include the following responsibilities:

- Assist in placing students at employment sites
- Determine necessary entry-level skills, attitude and knowledge competencies as well as performance levels for target occupations
- Facilitate cooperation and communication between the program and the community
- Assist in program evaluation and improvement by utilizing the Agriculture Standards
- Study number of workers needed by target occupation in the community
- Help recruit students into the program
- Assist the program in setting priorities, including participating in ongoing planning activities of the program
- Facilitate instructor inservice education through arranging exchanges with agricultural personnel

III. Relationship of Committee to Educational Governing Board

It is the role and sole prerogative of the Board to enact policy. The advisory committee is expected to offer recommendations for instructional programs and to provide information relevant to policy about the instructional program to the administration and instructors.

IV. Membership

Composition: The advisory committee shall consist of (number of) members. Members will be selected and appointed by the Board. Committee members will constitute a cross-section of the employment community, with special emphasis on private sector employees and employers. Moreover, at least 60 percent of the committee membership should be employees in the target jobs or supervisors of such employees. Membership shall include representation of diverse groups whose interests must be served in career and technical education.

Term: A term of membership shall last for three years, with one-third of the membership appointed each year. Terms shall not be renewable within 11 months after conclusion of an earlier term. Terms will begin on August 1.

V. Organizational Structure

Officers: The committee shall select a chair, vice chair, and secretary who are elected for one-year terms by the membership. Elections will be held at the first meeting of the new membership year.

VI. Procedural Rules

By-Laws: The committee will draft and adopt a set of written by-laws at the organizational meeting of the committee. The by-laws govern committee operation. By-laws require a two-thirds vote for adoption or change.

Meetings: The committee will meet at least (number of) times per year. Written notices of upcoming meetings will be mailed to members at least ten days before a meeting.

Minutes: Minutes of each meeting will be kept. Copies will be mailed to the board, local administrator(s), instructors, and committee membership within two weeks after a meeting.

Recommendations and Reports: Committee recommendations and reports will be submitted in writing to the board. Documents will include both suggested action and justification for suggestions. The board will respond/react to such recommendations/reports in writing.

Dismissal: Members who are absent without reasonable cause from three successive meetings will be considered to have resigned their seat. The committee will move to fill the position.

Public Announcements: While members are expected and encouraged to discuss the instructional program within the community, members shall not report opinions expressed in meetings, nor shall they report independently on committee action.

Sample of Advisory Committee By-Laws

(Name of committee)
(Name of local education agency or institution)
(date)

I. Committee Operation

- A. Meetings will be held at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday of September, January and June unless otherwise specified.
- B. At least three meetings will be held each school year. The exact number of meetings will be determined by the needs.
- C. The Executive Committee will develop an agenda for each meeting.
- D. Meeting sessions will be limited to approximately two hours.
- E. Discussion to obtain consensus will be the prevailing procedure used at meetings. Parliamentary procedure will be used when a decision is to be recorded and transmitted as a recommendation.
- F. A quorum will consist of a simple majority of appointed members.
- G. Meeting minutes will be recorded for each meeting. They will be distributed to each member and appropriate school officials.

II. Subcommittees

- A. Standing subcommittees will be established for the adult program, leadership component (FFA, PAS etc.), curriculum and equipment, and employment experiences (SAE, etc.).
- B. Subcommittees may be of any size, but will usually include three or four members.
- C. Subcommittees will elect their own chairs.

III. Officers

- A. Officers will be elected by a simple majority. Officers will serve a one year term and may be re-elected following a one-year lapse between terms.
- B. Officers will include a chair, vice chair, and a secretary.
- C. Officers will be elected at the first meeting of each new year.

IV. Member Responsibilities

- A. Each member is expected to attend meetings and to participate in committee activities.
- B. Each member is expected to study the issues or problems which come before the committee in order to contribute to the resolution process.