

# DEVELOPING AND MANAGING AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

*An advisory committee is a group of business, industry, community and school-related people who help you keep your program on track. With appropriate management, it can provide both guidance and support. Use your committee and its members to help you develop, design and deliver a quality program.*

## STEPS TO SUCCESS

1. Gain an understanding of advisory committee functions and operations. Talk with experienced agricultural educators and, if possible, observe other programs' committees.
2. Set up your advisory committee using a step-by-step process for advisory committee implementation. Even if your program's advisory committee is already established, review the steps to ensure everything has been covered.
3. Ensure success with your advisory committee through clear communication, effective management and meaningful involvement.

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# ADVISORY COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

*Members of your agricultural education advisory committee play an important and necessary role in the development of a successful agricultural education program. Members must also understand from the beginning that the committee has no administrative policy-making or legislative authority.*

- A well-functioning advisory committee will
- Evaluate the current agricultural education program to determine if it is providing realistic and current preparation and training for students.
- Review all features of the program—goals, competencies, curriculum, lesson plans and classroom and lab formats—and evaluate overall program effectiveness.
- Assist in conducting surveys and interpreting survey data as well as research and recommend changes in agricultural education programs.
- Identify the most recent educational and employment trends in agricultural businesses and industries, and determine those agricultural education programs needed to provide preparation for jobs in the community.
- Provide advice on the establishment and maintenance of a realistic agricultural education program.
- Provide advice about curricula content, training techniques and equipment.
- Investigate the types of facilities and equipment currently used in business and industry.
- Research and explain technical information.
- Inform school personnel of changes in the labor market.
- Act as a change agent to increase the agricultural education program's relevance.
- Follow up on recommendations made to agricultural education coordinators, instructors, administrators, and the local board of education.
- Help secure training stations, assist with the development of student placement programs, and assist in the placement of program graduates.
- Identify places and policies for internships and cooperative work experiences and assist and counsel students preparing to enter the job market.
- Assist in implementing procedures to provide students release time for part-time jobs.
- Suggest and support local, state and national action regarding agricultural education programs: attend legislative meetings, write letters, promote agricultural education programs.
- Provide financial assistance to agricultural education programs: arrange for donations, establish student scholarships and awards.
- Act as a communications link to assist in the development of community understanding of and support for the agricultural education program.

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

- Encourage cooperation and a better understanding of agricultural education programs among employers, students and the general public.
- Develop plans for recognizing outstanding students.
- Recommend resource personnel, guest speakers and instructors for agricultural education programs.
- Serve as judges for local awards and contests.
- Help plan special events: Career and Technical Education Week, National FFA Week, career development events, banquets and other social activities.

*Source: Shinn, L. (1988). Advisory Committees: A Guide for Organization and Use. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western Publishing.\**

# STEP-BY-STEP ADVISORY COMMITTEE IMPLEMENTATION

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Advisory committees are required for every program. To learn more about federal and state code in regards to advisory committees, reach out to your state ag ed staff.
- Determine what policies or procedures are in place in regards to advisory committees at your school or district. Seek answers from nearby ag teachers, CTE directors or teachers, administration, etc. Explain the function of an advisory committee to administrators. Point out the local need for and advantages of the advisory committee. Provide examples of schools where advisory committees are successfully operating.
- Show how an advisory committee will be an asset to administrators, the school, and yourself.
- Ask for administrators' assistance in preparing final plans for presentation to the board of education.
- Present plans to the board of education.
- Outline specific purposes of the advisory committee. Point out that it is not a pressure or lobby group, but merely addresses problems.
- Explain that the board of education may designate a member to sit in on all committee meetings.

Determine if your school has an existing Advisory Committee

If you are coming into an existing program you may already have an established advisory committee or an inactive advisory committee.

To determine if you have an advisory committee ask your administration, co-teacher, CTE director, other CTE teachers, or the previous teacher.

If you find out that your program has an advisory committee, then reach out to the members and ask if they want to continue to serve.

## STEP-BY-STEP ADVISORY COMMITTEE IMPLEMENTATION

### SELECT AND CONTACT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Prepare a list of people from which committee members will be selected. Work with the superintendent and/or the board of education to make the final selection.
- Be sure to include representatives from the following groups:
  - business or industry
  - community
  - school-related
  - parents
  - “nonusers”—people who have not had close ties to your program in the past.
- Contact selected members and determine whether they are interested in serving.
- Visit all members who accept a position on the committee. Answer their questions about the overall program. Check on possible times to hold the first meeting.
- Arrange for the secretary of the board of education to write personal letters of notification, signed by the board president, to each newly selected committee member.

### CALL THE FIRST MEETING

- Avoid time conflicts as much as possible.
- Stress the importance of attendance.
- Email reminders to committee members, and call them the day before the meeting.
- See page 108 for a sample agenda.

*Source: Shinn, L. (1988). Advisory Committees: A Guide for Organization and Use. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western Publishing.*

# POINTERS FOR SUCCESS WITH YOUR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- Send a letter to each new committee member, signed by the highest possible school official, appointing the representative to the committee.
- Provide biographical information about the chairperson and other members of the committee to each new member.
- Communicate your program's purpose and goals so committee members can provide on-target advice and guidance.
- Tell committee members exactly what is expected of them in the way of advice, assistance, cooperation, and time. Provide a written position description.
- Familiarize committee members with education staff and the school environment.
- Continually provide committee members with information concerning educational developments at the local, state and national levels.
- Occasionally invite committee members to attend school functions, board of education meetings, or state board meetings.
- Inform committee members of happenings in other schools and school systems.
- Demonstrate your enthusiasm for and commitment to the committee's role in improving your program.
- Invite committee members to the school and be willing to spend some time with them.
- Provide opportunities for representatives to meet with students several times during the school year.
- Select a representative from each graduating class to serve as an ex-officio member for one year to help determine the effectiveness of committee action.
- Form sub-committees of three to four members to address specific issues and accomplish specific tasks.
- Schedule meetings at a convenient time, preferably at the school.
- Notify committee members of meetings at least two weeks in advance.
- Keep meetings within a reasonable time limit. Industry and business representatives are accustomed to crisp, business-like procedures.
- Before each meeting, provide members with an agenda containing a brief background statement of the problems to be discussed and possible solutions for each.
- Provide recognition in newspaper articles, presentations, your program's annual report and at the annual FFA chapter banquet.

Sources: Hutt, R. (1979, October). "Get the Most Out of Marketing and D.E. Advisory Committees," *The Balance Sheet*, pp. 58-62. Shinn, L. (1988).

*Advisory Committees: A Guide for Organization and Use.* Cincinnati, OH: South-Western Publishing Co.\*

# ADVISORY COMMITTEE AGENDA — FIRST MEETING

1. Welcome and opening remarks by school personnel.
2. Introduction of and biographical information about committee members.
3. Statement of the role of the committee and how it is expected to be of assistance to the school.
4. Names and brief biographical information of key school officials and teachers.
5. A brief sketch of the history and background of the school.
6. The objectives of the school as a whole.
7. The nature and objectives of the specific agricultural education program.
8. A brief outline of problems in the school and in the specific agricultural education program.
9. Future plans for expansion of the school or specific program.
10. Standards specified in federal acts for agricultural education and the state plan for agricultural education.
11. Discussion/input from committee members about what they need from and envision for the local agricultural education program.
12. Organization of the committee—selection of chairperson and secretary; selection of dates and times for meetings.
13. Discussion of upcoming events and input on how to proceed.
14. Other items.
15. Adjournment.

*Source: Shinn, L. (1988). Advisory Committees: A Guide for Organization and Use. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western Publishing.\**