

## Committees: The Advisory Council's Workshop

### Objectives:

- ✓ Participant will understand the efficiency of properly using committees.
- ✓ Participant will understand the important contributions committees can make.
- ✓ Participant will understand the types of committees and how to involve them.
- ✓ Participant will understand the requirements for good committee functioning.

### Advance Preparation:

- ✓ Review the background and abstract information.
- ✓ Copy the factsheet "*Committee Meetings: The Council's Workshop – How Do Council Meetings Differ from Committee Meetings?*" to distribute to participants.

### Materials Needed:

- ✓ A styrofoam cup for each participant
- ✓ Flipchart or white board with markers
- ✓ Laptop computer and projector

**Time Needed:**           **1 hour**

**BACKGROUND:** There is hardly an advisory member who has not attended a committee or a task force meeting. In fact, advisory council work can be accomplished through committees. Committees and task forces do the legwork for the council or digest comprehensive materials into a manageable format. Committees come in all shapes and sizes; this influences the manner in which meetings are conducted. Communication differs whether there are three people in the room or 20. The more committee members, the more structure is needed in order to avoid possible chaos.

A *committee* is generally part of the overall council structure, has a specific charge, and may be stipulated in the bylaws, e.g., membership committee, executive committee, and financial committees. A *task force* is organized to research a particular issue for later recommendation and debate by the council, or carry out a specific objective within a certain amount of time. Task forces are established on an as-needed basis, as opposed to standing committees, and allow for greater flexibility in the work of the council and its structure. An action committee, a committee that is primarily involved in the actual work of the organization (setting up special events, lobbying, making field visits), may possibly not work in a meeting room at all but rather find themselves carrying out specific tasks in the field.

Committee leadership sets the tone of the meeting and an experienced facilitator can help produce positive results. The level of formality is often influenced by the preference of a committee chair. As there are no legal guidelines to determine how a committee must function, the leadership impacts the processes, involvement of members, and overall effectiveness of the group. Some meetings follow a strict order; others resemble more of a social gathering.

Whether a committee keeps minutes or not is up to the group to decide. Like any group assigned with a task, it makes sense to take notes. These notes may resemble standard minutes or they may be organized in any other coherent manner. As long as they serve the purpose of recording important group decisions and communicating the accomplishments of the session, they add value.

The minutes of a committee meeting are not the same as the committee report prepared for council review. The larger council does not need to know how the committee meeting was structured but what the committee suggests for council action, what information the group must have at its disposal before it can proceed, and what other information is relevant for collective decision making. The report needs a format that eliminates unnecessary details and leaves behind a well-digested and comprehensive account of what the committee was to accomplish. If this issue is not clear to committee chairs, the council chair must ensure that proper education takes place.

Committees are charged with bringing recommendations to the advisory council and cannot make organizational decisions, no matter how profound their conclusions. **The council is not obligated to follow the committee's suggestions.** It hopefully is able to assess the committee reports' validity and totality and, after that, proceed to make a final decision. A competent committee may have non-members as expert advisors as well as council members in training who may provide out-of-the-ordinary questions and perspectives during discussion.

**INTEREST APPROACH:** "Two Heads are Bigger/Better than One" Styrofoam Cup Exercise – Ask participants to individually list in 30 seconds all the uses for a styrofoam cup that they can imagine. Next, ask them to compile their list with their neighbor(s) to see how the list expands. If time allows, compile a list by tables or groups of 4-5 to see how the list expands as we involve the experiences and creativity of others. A point could be made that if we added other tables (as collaborations), our list would no doubt grow. Gender differences, residence or occupational differences could be noted as well. Other points might include concepts like if we had not started small (grassroots, individuals, committees, program councils), some may have never shared their ideas and our product would look very different. Discuss other ways of getting small group participation. (*NOTE: Any object such as a paper clip, note card, etc., can be used to do this exercise*).

**LESSON:** (1 hour) Introduction – Use slide #1 from the PowerPoint presentation to introduce the need for using committees. Discuss slide #2 definitions and brainstorm characteristics of each type of committee defined here and experiences the audience may have had with each. (*See speaker notes*).

Lesson – Discuss remaining PowerPoint slides using speaker notes.

**APPLICATION:** Ask for feedback from members regarding action steps members might take with committees in which they are now involved. Discuss new committees they feel should be formed with their advisory groups.

#### **REFERENCES:**

BoardSource (formerly National Center for Nonprofit Boards, [www.boardsource.org](http://www.boardsource.org))

Kentucky Advisory Council System web site, <http://ces.ca.uky.edu/advisorycouncil/>, Ralph Prince, (270) 365-7541 Ext. 220, [ralph.prince@uky.edu](mailto:ralph.prince@uky.edu)

Nonprofit Leadership Initiative at the University of Kentucky, [www.kynonprofits.org](http://www.kynonprofits.org), [danielle.clore@uky.edu](mailto:danielle.clore@uky.edu), (859) 257-2542

**ATTACHMENT #1  
FACT SHEET  
Committee Meetings: The Council's Workshop**

**How Do Council Meetings Differ from Committee Meetings?**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Council Meetings</b>	<b>Committee Meetings</b>
Purpose	Make organizational and council-specific decisions	Draft recommendations for council action and carry out tasks assigned by the larger group
Composition	Council members	Council members; former council members; outside experts or organizational members; volunteers
Frequency	Determined by by-laws or need; special meetings possible	Determined by scope and purpose of task
Accountability	Council works with the organization	Committees work for the council
Attendance	Volunteer – longer term commitment	Volunteer commitment to share work load at extra meetings – shorter term commitment
Liability	Decisions become policy	Decisions are recommendations to the council
Structure	Some parliamentary order is necessary; by-laws and policies define details	Determined by the committee chair or by-laws
Reporting	Minutes are a historical document	Reporting is informational

## Committees: The Advisory Council's Workshop

Your help is needed in providing vital feedback on the **SEAL Curriculum** you have just completed. Please take a moment to complete this survey.

For each of the topics listed below, in the LEFT column, circle the ONE number that best reflects your LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING before the **SEAL Curriculum**. Then, in the RIGHT column, circle the ONE number that best reflects your LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING after the **SEAL Curriculum**.

### LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING

	Poor 1	Average 2	Good 3	Excellent 4				
Level of Understanding	<i>BEFORE</i> the Program		<i>AFTER</i> the Program					
Understand the efficiency of properly using committees.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Understand the important contributions committees can make.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Understand the types of committees and how to involve them.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Understand the requirements for good committee functioning.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Intentions.** For the following behaviors, check the box that describes what you plan to do as a result of the **SEAL Curriculum**.

Behavior Change	Yes	No
Will you create different types of committees based on county needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Satisfaction.** Check the box for the statement that best describes your thoughts concerning the program.

Satisfaction	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The subject matter was timely for me.				
The speakers were effective.				
The information was practical to me.				
I can go and use the information I learned today in my organization.				
Overall, this was a very educational program.				

**What is the most significant thing you will apply (feel free to list more than one)?**

**Do you feel like what you learned provides you the ability to lead more effectively? (Circle the best answer)**

YES

NO

- Please explain your answer or provide an example.

**Please provide any additional information on the back.**

*Thank you very much for your time!!!*