

Task 7: Establish roles, responsibilities, and decision-making channels

Developing an Effective Advisory Council

An **advisory council** is a strategically selected group that provides feedback, suggestions, and ideas to help lead diversity or other organizational objectives.

Developing an Effective Advisory Council

- 1. Establish the purpose of the group.** When thinking about setting up an advisory council, you must first define why it is being established and what you want out of it. Clarifying the advisory council's purpose will ensure that it will be structured to maximize its contribution to the success of your strategic plan. The following questions may help you define your group's purpose and structure:
 - Do you want an advisory council that can advocate for your strategic plan and increase buy-in and visibility both internally and across departments?
 - Do you want a working council that can take on specific tasks to support the creation of your strategic plan or an advisory group that can provide informed input as you develop your strategic plan?
 - Is the main function of your advisory council to keep stakeholders informed and engaged, or would it be helpful to have a small group of people with specific skills and connections to help you get things done?
 - What decisions will this group make? How will you act on or consider their recommendations?
 - Will this group provide input and feedback throughout the process, from planning through implementation?
- 2. Establish group processes and expectations.** After you determine the purpose of your advisory council, you need to think about how the business of the group should be conducted. The following items should be addressed:
 - **Charge.** Articulate the purpose and responsibilities of the group. Think about who delivers the charge, as this is a great way to build interest in the group. If the dean or other high-ranking official is charging the group, this carries quite a bit of clout with faculty and administrators.
 - **Size.** There is no ideal size, but advisory councils generally contain between 10 and 15 people. Factors to consider include the following:

- Manageability. Think about meeting space, administration, and communication.
 - Sustainability. Be careful not to overtax potential members.
 - Diversity. Consider the variety of backgrounds and perspectives.
 - Responsibility. Make sure that the group is big enough to comfortably complete the work but not so big that responsibilities can be deferred to others.
 - **Meeting frequency.** Consider your time line for completing the strategic plan and the number of times you would like input from the council.
 - **Coordinator.** Ideally, this should be someone who has good organization, communication, and time-management skills. The coordinator should have access to administrative support.
 - **Mutuality.** Understand the motivations of your council members and how your team can ensure that the work is mutually beneficial.
3. **Recruit members who fit with the group's purpose.** As you begin to develop the advisory council's membership, reach beyond your base of supporters. Think strategically about individuals you want to serve on your council and the skills they will need. Consider the following when thinking about potential members:
- Diversity of opinions
 - Diversity of experience
 - Balance of identities, including but not limited to culture, race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, etc.
 - Student representation
 - Representation across departments

Adapted from the following:

- [U.S. Department of Education](#), Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools
- Enactus, [Business Advisory Board Best Practice Guide](#)
- [Ivey Business Journal](#), The Role and Value of an Effective Advisory Board