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**Introduction**

This guide is designed for program advisory committees at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. It is intended for use by new and existing committees providing suggestions on how a local advisory committee can be organized and maintained to function effectively. The most important ingredient for success, however, is the willingness and commitment of the school's administration and the advisory committee members to have an effective committee.

The needs of every program are unique and they must be adjusted to meet the individual needs of the employers in the community. The enclosed materials are based on best practices and may be used as a program advisory committee guide.

**Purpose**

The main purpose of a program advisory committee is to strengthen the career and technical education program of a school or college. The committee provides valuable advice to the program, plans, implements or supports activities to aid the program, and helps to promote the program in the community.

A well run meeting will allow the school to present a detailed overview of the program and seek feedback on what changes could be incorporated to improve the program and employment opportunities for its graduates.
It must be emphasized that local advisory committees are advisory bodies only. They do not have administrative or governing authority; nevertheless, their work is important to the effective operation of a career and technical education program. Career and technical education programs that have a close association and function in cooperation with an advisory committee are generally more successful than those which do not have such an association.

Occupational advisory committees are organized to provide specific advice for a single occupational area, such as HVACR, or for related programs in an occupational cluster, such as Building Construction Trades.

Who Should Attend
In addition to institutional faculty, administration, and staff, the committee should ideally consist of a blend of the following: local and national employers, program graduates, manufacturers, distributors, technicians, contractors, industry leaders, and representation from apprenticeship programs that can provide additional training to graduates.

Program Advisory Committee Activities
Local advisory committee can enhance the education program and become a vital, positive force for career and technical education. The time and energy devoted by advisory committee members helps increase their knowledge about the career and technical program and provides data and recommendations to teachers and administrators about the job market, employer needs, and community opportunities.

The local advisory committee has several major goals:

- Provide information to update, modify, expand and improve the quality of career and technical education programs.
- Support and strengthen the relationship between business, industry, the community, and education.
- Make recommendations to strengthen and expand the curriculum, and provide assistance in implementing these recommendations.
- Assist in identifying needs, determining priorities, and reviewing and evaluating programs.
- Articulate long-term goals and objectives of the career and technical education program to parents, employers, and the community.

To achieve these goals, members may provide valuable services in areas such as student recruitment, student placement, curriculum development, facilities and equipment, staff development, public relations, community needs, legislative and financial support, and career and technical student organizations.

Suggested activities for each of these areas are.

Student Recruitment
- Speak at student orientation meetings.
- Participate in school and community career fairs.
- Help conduct events recognizing students, employers or others active in career and technical education.
- Assist in the development of admissions criteria for career and technical education programs.

Student Placement
- Identify the retained knowledge and skills, necessary to compete in the job market.
- Identify student training stations and activities.
- Review and modify training plans.
- Place students in part-time jobs during the school year or summer months.
- Conduct mock interviews with students.
- Help program graduates secure jobs.
- Provide work-based learning opportunities to assist in the transition from school to work.
**Curriculum Development**

- Review the career and technical education program's philosophy, mission statement, and goals.
- Work with occupational advisory committees as needed to assure curriculum, course content, student competencies and safety procedures are current.
- Recommend new course offerings as needed.
- Participate in evaluations conducted by outside agencies.
- Give classroom presentations/demonstrations.
- Promote and host student visits to worksites in the community.
- Provide supplies (such as raw materials, finished products, charts or posters) for exhibit or instructional purposes.
- Assist in shadowing and career exploration educational activities and professional observation days.
- Promote and host graduates as candidates for higher education.
- Assess student performance on skill tests (for example, Employment Ready by HVAC Excellence).

**Facilities and Equipment**

- Identify facility and equipment needs.
- Help to obtain needed equipment and supplies on loan through donations or at special prices.

**Staff Development**

- Arrange industry site visits for teachers to upgrade their knowledge and skills.
- Offer industry training programs for teachers.
- Identify community resource persons to assist career & technical teachers in the classroom.
- Foster communications amongst teachers and employers to establish cooperative relationships between education and industry.
- Help teachers find summer employment or internships related to their teaching assignment.

**Public Relations**

- Foster positive communication between the school and community.
- Distribute information describing the career and technical education program.
- Communicate with the local Boards of Education about the impact of the career and technical education programs on the community.
- Recommend effective ways to communicate with parents and provide them with information on career and technical education and resulting career opportunities.
- Develop public service announcements to inform the community about career and technical education programs.
• Post information on bulletin boards, social media, submit news articles to local media, and place brochures in pay envelopes that advertise career and technical education opportunities.

• Publicly commend businesses, employers, unions or other organizations making significant contributions/donations to the career and technical school/students.

Community Needs

• Assess student interest and community support for career and technical education.

• Identify the social, economic and cultural needs of the community.

• Evaluate the career and technical education program with respect to employer requirements and individual graduates’ career accomplishments.

• Conduct surveys to identify present employer needs and job availability.

• Represent the business community in the strategic planning process.

Legislative and Financial Support

• Support the adoption and implementation of state and federal legislation that strengthens career and technical education.

• Establish scholarships or other financial assistance for outstanding graduates who wish to continue their education/training.

The Administrator’s Role in Successful Program Advisory Committees

The attitude and conduct of the administrator toward the local advisory committee is a major determinant of the benefits derived from the committee. School staff, administrators, and board members should look upon advisory committees as a valuable resource, composed of community volunteers dedicated to building a quality career and technical education program. The administrator must encourage and channel the enthusiasm community members normally feel when asked to assist in the community’s education program. When working with a local advisory committee, the administrator should work with the committee chair to expedite the work of the committee and maximize its effectiveness. The administrator should assist the committee by:

• Providing an overview of career and technical education, including its philosophy and goals.

• Informing the committee about the laws, rules, regulations and policies governing local advisory committees.

• Advising the committee of its functions and responsibilities.

• Providing background information on the institution and its programs.

• Facilitating the physical arrangements for meetings, assuring invitations are mailed, disseminating publicity and attending to related details.

• Assuring committee members are properly introduced and made to feel welcome.

• Developing meeting agendas and focusing the work of the committee on items to strengthen the career and technical education program, effectively using the time and talents of committee members.

• Assuring advisory committee members are properly recognized for their service.

• Provide a culture that encourages open dialogue and meaningful input.

Local advisory committee meetings are not intended solely to be a means for career and technical education personnel to inform the community of what is happening in the career and technical education program. School personnel should provide assistance and leadership, but should not dictate the agenda or dominate the discussion of advisory committee meetings. The purpose of local advisory committees is to enable community members to lend their expertise to career and technical education personnel in an organized and directed fashion.
Terms of Membership
Terms of membership will be determined by several factors, including the availability of individuals to serve on the committee. The suggested term of membership is three years. Thus, membership does not become unnecessarily burdensome to any one person, and other individuals who may have an interest in the program can have an opportunity to serve on the committee. For the first year of committee operation, appointments should be made for one, two or three-year terms. In succeeding years, members should be appointed to three-year terms to assure both continuity and the inclusion of new people and new ideas.

Chairperson
The chairperson's ability to guide the work of the committee will, to a large extent, determine the effectiveness of the committee. The chairperson has responsibilities of:

- Establishing meeting dates, in consultation with the administration and other committee members, and calling committee meetings.
- Preparing the meeting agendas and assuring that each member receives a copy of the agenda prior to each meeting.
- Assuring reports and background information are prepared and made available as necessary and calling on consultants for advice on specific problems.
- Presiding at meetings and maintaining contact with members, school representatives and governing boards.
- Appointing an executive committee (if committee size warrants it), standing committees and, if needed, ad hoc committees.

Qualifications of the Chairperson
The ability and personality of the chairperson are critical to the success of the committee. Great care should be taken in his/her selection. Characteristics essential for a successful chairperson include:

- Approaches matters constructively with an appreciation for the contributions of others.
- Works with others in a non-confrontational manner.
- Motivates others to address objectives and tasks.
- Remains calm, balanced, and in control of meetings and discussions.
- Demonstrates responsible citizenship and actively participates with other community endeavors.
- Possesses good communication and human relations skills.
- Demonstrates a working knowledge of Robert's Rules of Order.

Secretary
The secretary may be selected from the committee membership, or a school administrator or other school personnel may serve in this capacity. The secretary is primarily responsible for:

- Maintaining communication with committee members on meetings, agendas, special events and other activities.
- Keeping minutes of all meetings and distributing copies to members, the board or committee president, the chief school/college administrator and the governing board.
The school/college should offer to provide clerical help for these and other committee functions.

**Local Program Evaluation**

Evaluation is one of the most important activities for program advisory committees. Objective evaluations make possible the development of sound committee recommendations for the program(s) being advised.

When evaluating, it should be remembered that career and technical education is intended to prepare students for work that leads to high wages, advanced skills and to meet career goals and human resource needs for today’s and tomorrow’s global high tech economy. It serves as a link between individuals and employment. Many possibilities exist concerning appropriate areas for evaluation. Committees should select a limited number of significant items for evaluation and be thorough, rather than attempt to evaluate all aspects of the program at once.

Suggested areas for evaluation are:

**Precision of program objectives**

- Are program objectives well-defined?
- Are program objectives measurable?
- Are program outcomes measured?

**Program content**

- Are programs offered which meet the community’s labor needs?
- Are there significant occupational areas not served by career and technical education?
- Is attention given in each program area to:
  - All aspects of the industry
  - Technical/theoretical knowledge and skills
  - Manipulative skills
  - Work habits
  - Communication skills
  - Human relations skills
  - Integrated academic courses
  - Appropriate equipment (tools, instructional materials, etc.)
  - Applied academic skills

**Availability**

- Is a career and technical education program available to all people in the community who desire it?

**Curriculum**

- Is the curriculum performance-based?
- Does the curriculum accommodate variations in students’ abilities and interests?
- Are programs developed and maintained with the advice of individuals employed in that occupation?
- Is academic and technical instruction integrated?
- Are there articulation agreements with post-secondary institutions where appropriate?

**Instruction**

- Is instruction provided in a realistic setting?
- Is hands-on instruction provided?
- Is related academic instruction provided?
- Is individualized instruction available to all students when appropriate or needed?
- Is performance-based instruction used in the career and technical program(s)?
- Are adequate and appropriate reference materials and other learning resources available?
- Is safety emphasized?
- Does staff maintain contact with employers and former students?
• Are cooperative education programs available to students?

Facilities/Equipment

• Do students with disabilities have access to facilities, classrooms, shops and laboratories? Is equipment modified where necessary?

• Is the size of the building and its classrooms adequate?

• Are the equipment and tools sufficient in quantity and quality and current with those used in the workplace?

• Are the classrooms, equipment, tools and other materials safe and safely used?

• Is the classroom and laboratory area safe for students and staff?

Advisory Committee Recommendations

Some DOs and DON’Ts for an effective advisory committee.

As a representative of the educational institution,

DO . . .

• Invite committee members to visit classrooms and laboratories while in session and in the company of school/college personnel.

• Ask the committee to report periodically to the school board, joint operating committee, or board of trustees.

• Share professional publications and information about conferences with committee members.

• Give the committee a follow-up on all advice and recommendations.

• Be honest and candid.

• Make meetings worthwhile by discussing problems and concerns, presenting appropriate information and responding frankly to questions and suggestion.

• Provide background information about activities and programs of the institution.

• Keep committee members informed about activities and programs of the institution.

DON’T . . .

• Underestimate the intelligence of committee members or their interest in educational matters.

• Hesitate to request committee advice and support on problems confronting the program.

• Ignore committee suggestions and recommendations or exhibit a complacent attitude in your relationship with the committee.

• Ask the committee for advice or approval after a decision or action has already been made, or without providing supporting evidence.

• Alienate those members with opinions that do not always agree with yours.

• Manipulate committee members into providing support without full understanding of the circumstances in which a decision is being made.
As a local advisory committee member,

**DO . . .**

- Allow yourself enough time in your work and personal schedule for committee activities.
- Attend meetings regularly and let your colleagues on the job know about committee activities.
- Remember that the only local body with authority for the school or college is the elected school board, joint operating committee, or board of trustees and their employees.
- Examine material presented to you prior to voting on issues, making recommendations, and taking other actions.
- Familiarize yourself with the way schools and/or colleges are organized, governed, and financed so that advice is realistic.
- Serve enthusiastically and take pride in your achievements and those of the committee.

**DON’T . . .**

- Complain, involve personalities, use pressure tactics or criticize without offering constructive alternatives.
- Set too broad a scope of objectives for the committee.
- Lose interest in the school/college when your term on the committee expires.
- Deal with issues outside the purview of the committee.
- Disseminate privileged or confidential information.
- Meet for the sake of meeting.
- Sit back and let others assume all the responsibility for committee work.

**Suggestions for Running a Program Advisory Meeting**

When members arrive, make certain that school staff is present to greet them and guide them to where the meeting is being held.

The meeting room should have three tables near the entrance:

- One table displays the books and materials used in the program.
- One table displays the student tool kit.
- The third table provides food/snacks/beverages that the attendees can enjoy while reviewing all of the materials you provided them with.

The meeting room should be setup in a horseshoe format to promote conversation amongst attendees.

Make certain that a staff member is on hand to take the notes of the meeting. This individual should ideally be someone from the department, such as an office support staff member, but should not be someone who is actively participating in the meeting's discussions.

Prepare name tags, “table tents”, or both for all attendees. This will allow attendees to easily identify the other committee members.

Ask that all attendees bring with them a number of business cards. The number of cards will be determined by the number of attendees. Before the meeting starts, have a staff member collect the cards and sort them into sets. The staff member will provide each attendee a set of cards at the conclusion of the meeting.

If the purpose of the meeting is to seek advice on how to improve the program, its imperative members fully understand the program they are evaluating.

A packet should be placed at each seat which contains:

- Program Advisory Meeting Agenda containing a timetable and the purpose of the meeting.
- Mission of the program.
- A list of courses offered with their stated objectives.
- A list of the text books and training manuals used in the program.
- A list of student outcome assessments and entry level certifications used to validate student readiness for employment in the HVACR industry.
• Testing procedures.
• A sample lab assignment.
• A complete list of equipment available in the lab.
• A list of the tools and instruments available for student use.
• The contents of student tool kits.
• Program cost.
• The number of contact hours in the program.
• Current program enrollment.
• The number of students that recently completed the program.
• The number of students that were placed in the HVACR industry.
• Program recruitment materials.
• A sample graduate resume.
• A copy of the present annual program budget.
• A list of present program faculty, including a brief overview of the credentials and work history for each teacher.
• A wish list for future program purchases or donations.
• A detailed program evaluation sheet.

While time will not allow discussion of every item listed above, it will allow attendees to leave with a complete overview of the program.

The HVACR program chair should welcome everyone and ask them to review the packet while enjoying their meal. After everyone has had the opportunity to review the materials, the HVACR program chair should review the program, in detail, and the contents of the packet. Only through a complete understanding of the program can Program Advisory Members provide useful feedback on how to improve the program.

Program Advisory Members should be asked to evaluate the program and its stated outcomes. The HVACR program chair should seek feedback to find out if there are areas not currently being covered in the program that should be added. If so, what areas of the program should be removed to keep the program hours constant. Ask if there are areas of the curriculum that should be removed or revised. Inquire if any of the members have hired a program graduate and, if so, are there areas where the student could have been better prepared for the workforce.

A pivotal part of the meeting is a tour of the lab where members can see the equipment, tools and test instruments used in the program. If the program is not currently using certain types of equipment or instrumentation that make the graduates more valuable to employ, this is an opportunity for Program Advisory Committee members to donate these resources to the school. Employers will benefit from these donations as students will graduate with training on the equipment and tools used by the employer.

Prior to concluding the meeting, take a group photo to share on social media and with local HVACR news sources. This will allow more potential employers to see who was there and given them a further reason to participate in the future.

HVACR faculty should take the time to let everyone know their time was appreciated. A follow up call is a good way to promote continued conversations.
pertaining to the recruitment of new students, the hiring of program graduates, the donating of equipment, and any other relevant areas.

Why Join an Advisory Committee?
The United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics tracks over 700 occupations in 300 industries. Their estimates for a ten-year span show the HVACR industry will grow by nearly 35% compared to 14% for all of the occupations they track. During this same period, over 30% of the HVACR workforce is expected to retire and needs to be replaced. In summary, two thirds of the people in the HVACR industry ten years from now are not in the industry today.

The role of recruiting the next generation of HVACR technicians will fall upon everyone in the industry, not just the schools that train them. The traditional newspaper advertisement for employment of the 1980’s will not work in connecting with generation Z.

Thousands of HVACR students are enrolled in HVACR programs across the United States. These students have shown an interest in the HVACR industry and invested their own time and money in educating themselves. Unfortunately, many employers miss the opportunity to employ these graduates as a small group of companies hire them prior to their graduation. The majority of the companies that are in the know and have the opportunity to evaluate and hire these students prior to graduation are represented at the school’s HVACR Program Advisory Meetings.

Participating in a Program Advisory Meeting provides employers a front row seat to see if students are a good fit for their organization before considering them for a position. If they are, they have an opportunity to recruit them before graduation. Those who participate in a Program Advisory Meeting are able to see future technicians in action where they can evaluate talent, temperament, and work ethic before graduation. This involvement saves employers time and money in hiring the right people.

Those who participate in these meetings are given an opportunity to provide feedback on ways to improve the training which can influence program outcomes. This can strengthen their businesses as graduates are better trained to meet the needs of their businesses.

When members fully understand the benefits of participating, they become ambassadors of the program that can drive recruitment and help the program grow.

When to Hold a Meeting
Program Advisory Members are guests who volunteer their time to help the program. Therefore, it is imperative that meetings are held at a time that minimizes conflicts with them performing their job.

A midday meeting may be convenient for the school, but it means the representatives you seek to participate have to choose between making the service calls that keep them in business, or volunteering their time for your meeting. Be flexible by meeting the needs of those who are there to help you.

The list of employers interested in hiring your graduates goes beyond those who can participate in person. Technology services like Free Conference Call or WebEx allow you to broadcast your meeting where more employers can participate online or by phone.

After the Meeting
At the conclusion of the meeting be sure to thank all participants for attending. In addition, here are some additional suggestions:

- Post a thank you on social media to let everyone know that the meeting was held and a brief overview of the meeting details.
- Provide all Program Advisory Members (whether they attended or not) a copy of the meeting minutes for their review.
- Be sure place a follow-up phone call to address any unfinished items.
- Send an e-mail thanking them for their participation. In this e-mail, include the date for the next meeting.
- Make certain that all promises are acted on to ensure that the attendees know that their suggestions are appreciated and valuable.