



Australian Government

Land & Water Australia

Department of the Environment,
Water, Heritage and the Arts

Ongoing Advisory Panel

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Engagement & Planning Tool

When to use

Advisory panels can be useful in planning, implementation and review stages.

Other tools for similar situations

Steering Committees
Community Advisory Groups
Technical Panels
Expert Advisory Panels
Community Meetings
Consultation with existing groups

Companion Tools

Supporting Regional NRM Implementation Groups fact sheet
NRM practice change planning framework

Description

An advisory panel (or reference group, steering committee) is a group of individuals convened to meet on a regular basis, over time, to provide advice. The terms of reference, purpose, membership, roles, responsibilities and operation of the group can vary, but these characteristics of the group should be established from the outset. Advisory groups can be utilised for a range of purposes, from collecting or disseminating information through to making decisions. They can be a useful sounding board to test assumptions in the planning of a program or project, or can help inform the identification of priorities.

Benefits

Advisory groups can be an effective tool to build a sense of partnership and ownership within the community. They can provide information on community perspectives, provide a forum for resolving issues, and effectively channel information from diverse perspectives or on complex topics. They enable an organisation to draw on specialised skills and expertise.

Limitations

Advisory groups cannot replace broader public involvement or engagement. They can be resource intensive. They can lose a sense of purpose if not well focused. Expectations may be raised beyond what can be achieved/resourced.

What is required?

✓✓ Skills	Facilitation, coordination
✓ Resources	Staff time to establish, coordinate, prepare materials, attend and facilitate group meetings. Venues, catering, travel costs and/or sitting fees may be paid to members. Childcare may be provided if this enables participation.
✓✓ Information	The level of information required to support the activities of a group will depend on the purpose of the group and the nature of their decision making.

✓ = LOW LEVEL

✓✓ = MEDIUM LEVEL

✓✓✓ = HIGH LEVEL



CLIENTS|PEOPLE|PERFORMANCE

GHD Hassall

Making Successful Investments in NRM Practice Change

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How to Coordinate an Ongoing Advisory Panel

In establishing an Advisory Group, it is important to ensure that the purpose, membership, roles, responsibilities, rules for operations and processes for providing advice are established and well communicated from the outset. A key step is ensuring that the relationship with the decision maker is clear, to manage expectations.

The membership of the group could be designed to provide a balance of interests, organisations, geographic spread or demographic characteristics. Members may be appointed and the rules for turnover, attendance and substitution should be established. The roles and responsibilities of members should be articulated.

It may be that a chair or spokesperson for the group is selected (either by its members or the decision maker) and ground rules for the operation of the group developed (eg consensus or majority voting, meeting frequency and duration, or establishing sub-committees).

Processes for recording the meetings and communicating the advice of the group should be established.

For further information

This fact sheet is one of a series prepared for the Making Successful Investments in NRM Practice Change project.

For further fact sheets and information visit the NRM Practice Change website:

www.hassall.com.au/australian_division

REFERENCES & LINKS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- ▶ International Association of Public Participation (2005) "Techniques for Effective Public Participation" //www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/toolbox.pdf
- ▶ Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment (2005) "Effective Engagement: building relationships with community and other stakeholders Book 3 The Engagement Toolkit"

CONTACT

GHD Hassall project team

Sue Salvin

EMAIL sue.salvin@ghd.com.au

PHONE 0409 114 418

Ingrid Roth

EMAIL ingrid.roth@ghd.com.au

PHONE 0428 195 485

Social and Institutional Research Program

Land & Water Australia

GPO Box 2182

Canberra ACT 2601

PHONE 02 6263 6000

EMAIL enquiries@lwa.gov.au

WEB www.lwa.gov.au/sirp

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- ▶ GPO Box 2182, Canberra ACT 2601
- ▶ L1, The Phoenix, 86 Northbourne Ave, Braddon ACT
- ▶ **Telephone** 02 6263 6000

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