



# Ohio

## Business Advisory Councils in Ohio Schools

DEVELOPED BY THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND  
THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION

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## Foreword

In today's economy, it is critical that Ohio schools prepare all students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in future learning, careers and life. Parents, educators and the business community want to prepare students for successful career paths, whether those include college degrees, industry credentials, apprenticeships, military enlistment or a combination of these.

Businesses are important partners who can help shape the educational experiences of all students in Ohio schools. Businesses can partner with schools to share news about job trends and opportunities, as well as economic changes that will affect jobs. They can play a role in district curriculum development and help create new opportunities for students, such as work-based learning experiences.

To help build relationships between businesses and schools, Ohio law (Ohio Revised Code section 3313.82) requires every school district and educational service center (ESC) to have a business advisory council. Recently, the Ohio General Assembly enacted Ohio Revised Code (ORC) section 3313.821 (as part of Am. Sub H.B. 49) which directs the superintendent of public instruction, in consultation with the governor's executive workforce board, to develop **standards for the operation of business advisory councils** established by the boards of education of school districts or the governing boards of ESCs throughout the state.

## Duties of Business Advisory Councils

### PURPOSE OF A BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Business advisory councils foster cooperation among schools, businesses and the communities they serve. This work ensures that the work of educators aligns with the needs of businesses. This cooperation can make a local education system more aware of the local labor market; promote work-based experiences within businesses; and help students prepare for successful learning and employment opportunities.

Business advisory councils include regional business leaders who are familiar with business and industry needs. Members partner with district leaders to plan and carry out the council's work.

### ROLES OF A BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL

1. To *advise* local school districts on changes in the economy and job market and the area in which future jobs are most likely to be available;
2. To *advocate* for the employment skills most critical to business and industry and the development of curriculum to teach these skills;
3. To *aid and support* local school districts by offering suggestions for developing a working relationship among businesses, labor organizations and educators.

## Establishing a Business Advisory Council

Business advisory councils can provide benefits for every Ohio school district. These councils can point out new and emerging careers; offer districts recommendations on needed knowledge, skills and competencies; advocate for effective curriculum; offer work-based learning opportunities; and make recommendations on the facilities and equipment a district needs to teach work-based skills.

Under Ohio law, each school district board of education must have a business advisory council. The law allows a district to enter an agreement with an educational service center (ESC) to have the ESC's business advisory council represent the businesses of the district. However, because students, schools and a community can enjoy many positive effects from a well-operated business advisory council, the Ohio Department of Education recommends that districts have their own councils whenever possible.

If the district chooses to use an ESC business advisory council, it should make sure members of the district's board of education receive regular updates from that council. The ESC business advisory council also should invite members of the local school district board to its meetings.

Each board of education should periodically review its decisions on a business advisory council. The review could include these questions:

1. Does the board have a business advisory council? If so, does the business advisory council meet the requirements of Ohio law? If not, what steps are needed to meet the requirements?
2. If the board does not have its own business advisory council, is there an agreement with an ESC for the center's business advisory council to serve as the district's advisory council? If so, does the board want to maintain that agreement or set up its own business advisory council?

## Bylaws and Organization of a Business Advisory Council

Each school district board should decide how to best form and operate its business advisory council. There is no required configuration. Some districts have small business advisory councils, while others form large groups. Still others complement the business advisory council membership with representatives from local government agencies and community organizations. Some districts choose to operate councils informally, and others will prefer a more formalized approach.

Though Ohio law does not require it, each business advisory council should consider documenting its practices in a set of bylaws. These bylaws describe the council's purpose and guide its management by outlining the council's responsibilities and limitations as well as expectations for its members. A business advisory council should draft its bylaws to meet the needs of the local district board of education and community, or the governing board of its ESC and the community encompassed by the ESC. As part of the operating process, a business advisory council should review its bylaws each year.

Bylaws are written descriptions of how a business advisory council works, although there is no specified format for these. Councils should consider these elements for inclusion in their bylaws.

1. Mission statement
2. Member appointment and terms of service

3. Appointment of officers and responsibilities of each office
4. Council's meeting schedule
5. Process the council will use to provide public notice of all meetings
6. Process for taking and recording minutes of each council meeting
7. Procedures for appointment of council subcommittees, if applicable
8. Parliamentary procedure to be practiced during council meetings
9. Process for reporting to the board of education on a quarterly basis
10. Schedule for review and revision of bylaws

## SELECTION OF MEMBERS

The school district board of education or governing board of an ESC must appoint the business advisory council members or authorize district administrators to appoint those members. School board or governing board members or authorized administrators can identify potential business advisory council members, or they can ask local businesses, business organizations, labor unions or other appropriate organizations to recommend members.

Business advisory council membership should cover the entire district or ESC service area. Priority for membership to the business advisory council should go to individuals who come from in-demand industries, including large and small employers in both existing and growing industries. Those who make membership decisions might consider selecting one or two representatives from each in-demand industry. Other issues to consider when nominating members is their experience, availability for meetings and activities and level of interest. Members may be from:

1. Local or regional businesses and industries (this should be the majority of members);
2. Workforce development or economic development groups or organizations;
3. Local chambers of commerce;
4. Local business or industry associations;
5. Other organizations with unique knowledge of the local economy or business environment, such as higher education institutions;
6. The appointing board of education or ESC governing board (at least one member); and
7. School district leadership teams.

The appointing authority should duly approve the appointments and document them in a written communication to the appointee.

Those appointing members also should consider the following areas and include provisions for them in the council bylaws:

### Conflicts of interest

The school board or ESC governing board should consider how to avoid conflicts of interest or other potential ethical concerns when selecting business advisory council members. Boards or administrators making appointments should consult with district legal counsels on how to avoid conflicts of interest.

## Size of the business advisory council

Effective business advisory councils should be large enough to reflect the diversity of the community, yet small enough for effective management. Business advisory councils with fewer than five members may have a limited perspective and information on career fields. Advisory councils with 20 members or more could face challenges performing effectively.

## Terms of service

There is no statutory requirement for member terms of service. However, boards of education or ESC governing boards should consider rotational, three-year terms, which allow for both continuity and change. They can set up a rotation of new business advisory council members by having one-third of the total membership change each year. To set up this rotation with a new business advisory council, members can draw for one-year, two-year or three-year terms, with one-third of council members being in each category. New members can be appointed as terms expire.

Boards of education or ESC governing boards should avoid appointing members to successive terms and consider at least a one-year absence before reappointment of its members. However, these considerations are dependent on the unique circumstances of the community supporting each school board or ESC governing board.

## OPERATING A BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Each business advisory council should consider the degree of formality with which it conducts its work. Here are several considerations for operating procedures:

### District point of contact

Each school district board or administration should identify who will serve as the district's primary contact to the council. In many cases this could be the district superintendent.

### Officers – selection and duties

Business advisory councils that prefer a formal structure might consider choosing officers to serve in leadership positions. Election of officers can take place each year. Business advisory councils should consider holding officer elections for the next school year during the last meeting of the current year. Officers, then, are more likely to be experienced members and can use the summer to plan for the next year. The business advisory council may then reserve the first meeting of the year for orienting new members and building its plan for the coming academic year.

The various roles adopted by each business advisory council will vary based on unique circumstances, such as size, available participants and community interest. Officers could include roles such as chairperson, vice chairperson and secretary.

### Sunshine laws

Ohio's public records and open meetings laws, collectively known as the "Sunshine Laws," give Ohioans access to government meetings and records. Business advisory councils are public bodies and are subject to both Ohio public records law and the open meetings laws. Districts should consult with their legal counsel for training and guidance on both the Ohio public records law and open meetings laws. Districts also should seek appropriate ethics training for members of the business advisory council.

## Orientation for members

New members should receive training on their roles on the business advisory council as well as how Ohio's ethics laws and "Sunshine Laws" work. New members should have access to current information on curriculum offered by the district or ESC region. Here are ways districts and ESCs can help council members become fully informed:

1. Review Ohio's Learning Standards;
2. Facilitate interviews and discussions with teachers;
3. Offer tours of school facilities;
4. Review curriculum materials; and
5. Offer opportunities to talk with students and parents.

## Council Activity

The district contact, working with the officers of the business advisory council, should decide the manner in which meetings are conducted, the way decisions are recorded, the process for developing the required plan and joint statement, and other activities of the business advisory council.

## Frequency of meetings

Ohio law requires each business advisory council to meet at least once per quarter.

## Subcommittees

Each business advisory council may create subcommittees to facilitate the council's work. Subcommittees are a subdivision of the larger business advisory council, created to work on specific issues or activities. When a subcommittee's work is completed, it should report to the full business advisory council. Business advisory councils should consider how these processes will work when writing their bylaws.

## Amendment of bylaws

From time to time, business advisory councils may need to change their bylaws. When writing bylaws for the first time, business advisory council members should identify a process by which they can later amend the bylaws.

# Developing a Business Advisory Council Plan

State law requires each business advisory council to work with its board of education or ESC governing board to develop a written plan. The plan should be revised and updated annually. At minimum, the plan must address how the business advisory council will make recommendations to the board of education or ESC governing board on these items:

1. Delineating employment skills and developing curriculum to instill these skills.
2. Changes in the economy and job market, and the types of employment in which future jobs are most likely to be available.
3. Developing a working relationship among business, labor and education personnel.

State law does not identify specific events, activities or programs required to meet those objectives. However, the Ohio Department of Education encourages business advisory councils to consider incorporating these elements into their plans:

1. The schedule of required joint meetings of the school board and the business advisory council for the year. (State law requires meetings between the council and the board at least quarterly.)
2. A schedule, as determined appropriate, of additional meetings of the business advisory council or of council subcommittees.
3. Data analysis or other information that describes changes in the economy and job market and the types of employment in which future jobs are most likely to be available. Data may also focus on student skills or deficiencies and other information that informs the plan.
4. A needs assessment, based on data analysis, that identifies business community needs as well as students' educational needs. The latter includes the academic, nonacademic, and employment skills and knowledge students must have to succeed in higher education and careers. Needs might include such things as improving awareness of job opportunities, and improving certain skills among students.
5. A schedule and description of events, activities or programs conducted by the business advisory council to address the identified business or student needs. While the law does not prescribe specific events, activities or programs may include:
  - **Job Fairs or Conferences:** A gathering of business representatives and employees in a location that allows students and families to learn about business activities and job opportunities in the school district or region.
  - **Job Shadowing:** Organized opportunities through which students can shadow employees of businesses to understand the nature of the business and job.
  - **Internships, cooperative training, work-based learning opportunities or employment for students:** Organized opportunities through which students perform work over an extended time in a business setting to fully understand the nature of a job and how to do it. This can include unpaid as well as paid work; including full-time, part-time or summer employment.
  - **Mentoring and tutoring programs for students:** Programs through which employers provide opportunities for employees to serve as mentors and tutors to students, helping improve academic skills as well as social, emotional, and workplace and employability skills.
  - **Career Counseling and Exploration:** This can include helping students learn to use the **OhioMeansJobs** suite of tools and services. It could also include other career exploration activities or training for district employees on career counseling strategies.
  - **Promoting student commitment to being drug free.** This could include activities that raise awareness for students not only about the dangers of drug and alcohol use, but also how the use of drugs and alcohol negatively impacts workplace safety and productivity. Focus on how the commitment to remain drug free is a win-win situation for both employers and employees. If possible, provide examples to illustrate the point.

- **Promoting the use of the OhioMeansJobs Readiness Seal.** This could include activities that raise awareness by employers and students of the seal and help students gain and demonstrate competencies included as part of the seal. It could also include training for employers on how to rate students on the various competencies required for the seal.
- **Informing curriculum design and development:** This could include any of the following:
  - Reviewing curriculum materials for technical content accuracy
  - Identifying knowledge or skill competency levels and performance standards in both technical and academic courses
  - Helping the district obtain instructional materials
  - Identifying employability skills
  - Donating or otherwise helping the district acquire equipment or facilities for specialized training needs
  - Encouraging and promoting secondary and postsecondary connections
  - Recommending technical resource personnel
  - Using OhioMeansJobs K-12 to show desired employability skills for in-demand jobs
  - Supporting a school's application for STEM designation
  - Offering recommendations to implement career pathways
- **Engaging educators:** This could include activities that provide teachers and other district personnel with information and experiences relative to the businesses in the community. It could include activities like teacher externships and other learning opportunities for educators.

6. **Publicizing and communicating local economy and job information:** This would include activities designed to inform students, educators and the community about changes to the local economy and which jobs will be most in demand. Activities could include:

- Developing and implementing a local marketing plan for in-demand careers
- Arranging for meetings between chambers of commerce or business roundtables to discuss economic development in the area
- Preparing and sharing reports and information on employment trends from the U.S. and Ohio Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Inviting representatives from postsecondary and the workforce development community to meetings to discuss the future of jobs in the area
- Using OhioMeansJobs K-12 to show in-demand jobs both throughout Ohio and in the local community

7. **Fostering collaboration, beyond the Council, among business, labor and education personnel.** Activities could include:

- Broadly engaging local businesses to support the community's education system and participate in activities specified in the plan
- Soliciting input from businesses on the work of the business advisory council

**State law requires that annual plans be filed with the Ohio Department of Education. The Department will coordinate the submission of annual plans through its Security Application for Enterprise (SAFE) web portal.**

## Submitting a Joint Statement

According to state law, the advisory council and its district board or ESC governing board should issue a joint statement by March 1 each year. This statement should report progress on work they outlined in the council's plan for that year, summarize actions taken and actions pending, and specify how the council and board have fulfilled their respective responsibilities under the law.

At a minimum, the joint statement should reference:

- Meetings conducted by the council;
- The council's plan and implementation progress;
- Brief summaries of specific activities the council conducted;
- The nature of the council's advice and recommendations, if any, on needed employment skills and curriculum development to instill those skills;
- The nature of the council's advice and recommendations, if any, on economic and job market changes and the types of employment in which future jobs are most likely to be available; and
- The nature of the council's advice and suggestions, if any, for developing working relationships among businesses, labor organizations and educational personnel.

A school district board or ESC governing board might consider creating a webpage dedicated to the business advisory council's work. The page would be an ideal location to post the joint statement on how the business advisory council has fulfilled its responsibilities, as well as a place to share the business advisory council information and its recommendations to the board, students, staff and community.

## Additional Resources

For additional information and resources, visit [education.ohio.gov](http://education.ohio.gov) and search keywords: *Career Connections*. Contact the Career Connections team at [CareerConnections@education.ohio.gov](mailto:CareerConnections@education.ohio.gov).

The Department is always interested in hearing stories about the success of strong business-education partnerships. We welcome submissions of success stories to the same email address.