Guidelines for the Creation of Work Groups, Task Forces, and other ad hoc Committees

Ad hoc committees (hereafter referred to in this document as "work groups") play a crucial consultative and advisory role in the university's operations. These are non-permanent entities formed to address a specific issue and are commonly referred to by a variety of descriptions such as work groups, task forces, study committees, advisory councils, subcommittees, teams, and more. Examples of such groups range from the Task Force on the Future of Student Governance to the Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Work Group.

Sponsor - These work groups may be formed by anyone in a leadership role (the "sponsor") at any level within the university from a unit leader to the president of the university.

Function - These groups are charged by a university sponsor to develop a set of principles and/or recommendations and typically carry out functions such as:
- Identifying and clarifying underlying issues
- Conducting research such as gathering data, seeking input from relevant parties, and benchmarking practices at other relevant institutions.
- Writing draft policy recommendations or resolutions.

Guiding Principles –
- A consensus-based decision-making model is recommended due to the collaborative nature of a working group. *(Links to resources about consensus-based decision-making are included at the end of this document.)*
- Stakeholders should have strong input in the development of outcomes, methods, and core values of the work group.

Chair - Selection of the chair(s) of the group is the purview of the "sponsor." In selecting a chair(s), the sponsor should consider the following factors:
- Evidence of history or relationship with the issue at hand.
- Demonstrated ability to plan the work of a committee, set milestones, and complete the task within deadline.
- Demonstrated ability to manage a meeting and to ensure that all perspectives are heard.
- Experience with consensus-based decision making.

Composition of work group - Experience has shown that the most effective solutions are generated by work groups that include subject matter experts and meaningful levels of representation by stakeholders, and that have access to a resource team (see below). Before the membership of a work group is finalized, it may be useful to review the proposed membership with the Office for Equity and Accessibility or the Office for Inclusion and Diversity to help ensure that all relevant perspectives are reflected by the membership and there is a reasonable balance among stakeholders.

Stakeholders may include one or several of the following:
- The group that introduced the issue (if applicable)
- Representative bodies*, caucuses or other allies, end users, or any community of individuals that will be subject to or otherwise impacted directly or indirectly by the recommendations
- Subject matter experts
- Individuals/groups responsible for implementing and/or communicating recommendations or outcomes.

*Appointment of representatives - Each representative body is represented by a senate, which is intended to represent the collective voice of the group (e.g., Faculty Senate, Administrative and Professional Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, Graduate and Professional Student Senate, Undergraduate Student Senate). The sponsor should request recommendations for representatives from the relevant representative bodies. In putting forth recommendations, the senate or other representative body should ensure that their nominees are acceptable to the sponsor and consider factors such as an individual's subject matter expertise, work load, and ability to work collaboratively.

Resource team - Ideally, the sponsor would compile a list of resources that the working group can consult as necessary to obtain counsel regarding the legal landscape, levels of risk, financial and human resource policies and impacts, and internal and external communications. These resources can be included as part of the working group or consulted as needed. This list might include representatives from:
- Legal Counsel
- Office of Budget and Financial Planning (or departmental financial office)
- Human Resources (or departmental HR manager)
- Subject matter data experts
- Office of Audit, Risk, and Compliance
- University Relations
- Office of Policy and Governance

Member responsibilities – Individual members of the work group are expected to participate in good faith, interact collaboratively and respectfully with other members, prepare for meetings, follow through on assignments/commitments, and observe confidentiality when appropriate. Members who represent a particular constituent group are expected to share information with and seek input from their constituent group as appropriate based on the work group's charge and nature of their work.

Evolution into a permanent committee - Occasionally, as a work group carries out its charge, it may become evident that a permanent body is needed to continue the work on an ongoing basis. The creation of a new university standing committee would need to be proposed and approved through the governance system. In such instances, it is recommended that the senate/university commission responsible for drafting the resolution that will go through the governance system for creation of the committee consult the working group sponsor and membership as the charge and membership for the proposed permanent committee are being formulated. However, the University Council Constitution and Bylaws govern the process by which committees are created.

Announcement of work groups –
When a new work group is created, it may be useful to announce the creation through a campus notice in VTx or by other means. Additionally, when appropriate, sponsors are encouraged to provide the following information to the Office of Policy and Governance, which will post this listing on its website to enable members of the university community to see what work groups exist, thereby reducing the chance of duplicative efforts and facilitating opportunities for collaboration.
- Name of the work group and the chair
- Charge of the work group
- End product expected (e.g., report, policy draft, action plan, etc.)
- Deadline for completion

RESOURCES

Resources about consensus-based decision making (CBDM):
- American Heart Assn - Overview of CBDM
  Madden's Practical Guide to CBDM
- Handbook of Consensus Based Decision Making: Short and simple.
- Seeds for Change In-Depth Guide to CBDM

Resources for creating representative, meaningful, and diverse stakeholder groups:
- Participatory Action Research -- Defining participation and participants
- Action Project -- Stakeholders in Citizen Science
- IT Toolkit for Stakeholder Analysis
- Stakeholder Engagement and Location: Integration and Implementation Insights
- AHRQ Stakeholder + WG Structure

For further reading – additional research
- Stakeholder Tokens: A Constructive Method for VSD Stakeholder Analysis
- Making Publics Visible: Utilizing STS Knowledge for Public Identification and Engagement
- The Value of Social Conflicts. Critiquing Invited Participation in Energy Projects
- Five Pillars for Stakeholder Analyses in Sustainability Transformations: The Global Case of Phosphorus
- Institutional Mapping: A Guide for SPICOSA Scientists
- Institutional and Stakeholder Mapping: Frameworks for Policy Analysis and Institutional Change
- An Applied Methodology for Stakeholder Identification in Transdisciplinary Research
- Engaging Stakeholders on Complex and Potentially Contested, Science
- The Values of Stakeholder Mapping to Enhance Co-Creation in Citizen Science Initiatives