



A GUIDE TO AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEES

DEVELOPMENT, USES, AND TRANSITIONS

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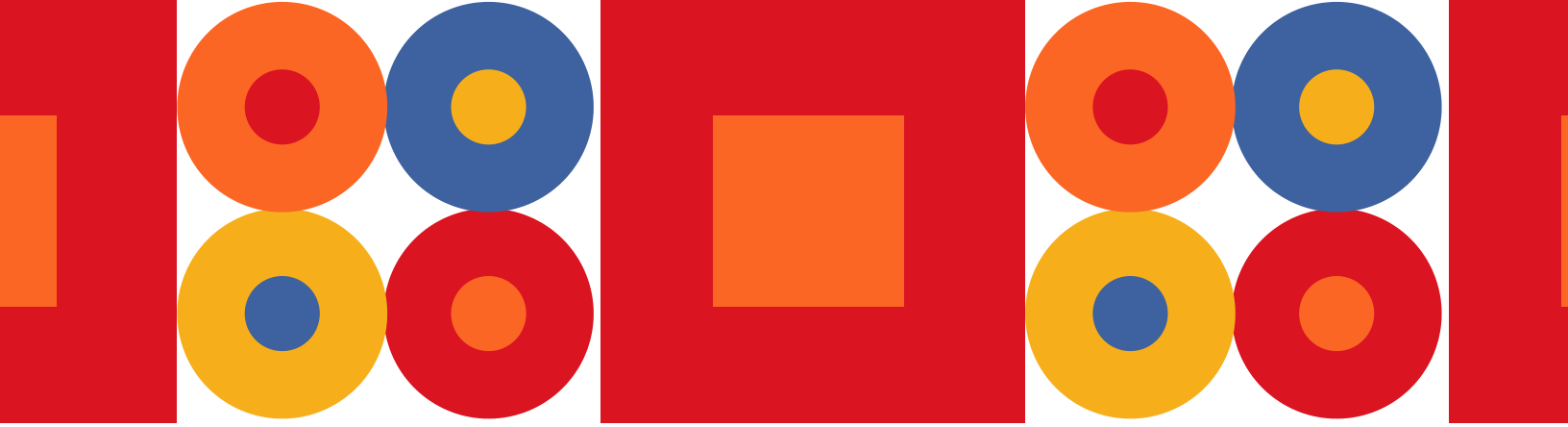




WHAT IS IT?

“An advisory committee is a group of business, industry, community and school-related people who help you keep your program on track. With appropriate management, it can provide both guidance and support. Use your committee and its members to help you develop, design and deliver a quality program.”

**-The Agriculture Teacher’s Resource
(The National Council for Agricultural Education and the
National Association of Agricultural Educators)**



INTRODUCTION



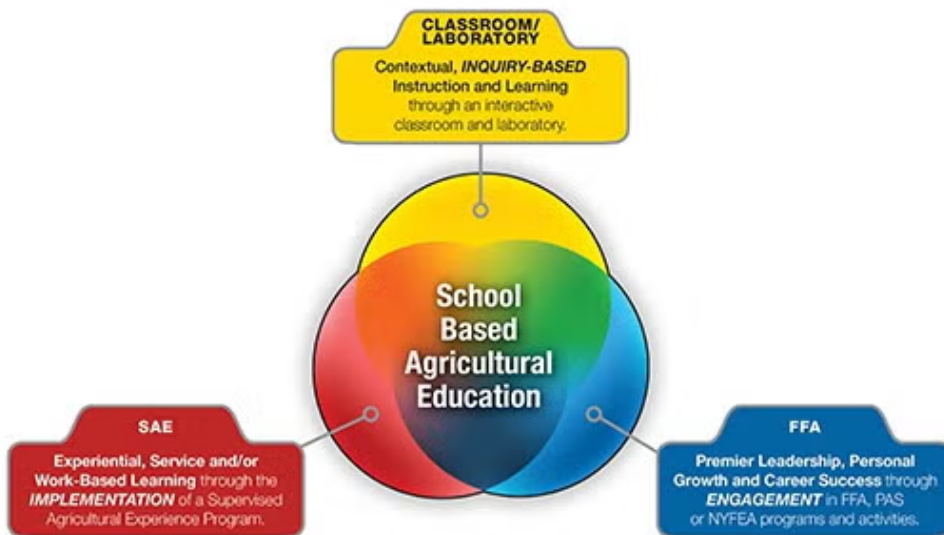
THE ROLE OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Agricultural Education programs thrive when they are connected to their communities. Advisory Committees serve as a bridge between the classroom and real-world agricultural needs.

Ag Teachers oversee all three components of Agriculture Education programs, with Advisory Committees providing valuable guidance.



Figure 1
Three Component Model of Ag Ed



Classroom/Lab

- Curriculum relevance
- Industry trends
- Equipment/facility input

SAE (Experiential Learning)

- Student placement opportunities
- Mentorship connections
- Real-world skill development

FFA

- Career development support
- Event judging/help
- Leadership opportunities

Note. Adapted from The National FFA Organization 2026,
<https://www.ffa.org/agricultural-education/>



SUPPORTING CAREER READINESS

“A career ready person capitalizes on personal strengths, talents, education and experiences to bring value to the workplace and the community through his/her performance, skill, diligence, ethics and responsible behavior.”

– Definition of career readiness adopted by the Nebraska State Board of Education on May 5, 2010.

Advisory Committees can directly support the Nebraska Career Readiness Standards for students, ensuring they graduate with relevant, employable skills. Advisory committees can enhance teacher and program credibility, strengthen community connections, and provide meaningful guidance for continuous improvement. They develop a strong workforce pipeline and offer a voice for industry in education. These contributions ensure agricultural education programs are preparing students for career, college, and lifelong success.

Figure 2
Nebraska Career Readiness Standards



Note. Adapted from the Nebraska State Board of Education adopted December 2011, <https://www.education.ne.gov/nce/careerreadinessstandards/>

THE ROLE OF AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

CHARACTERISTICS



Clear mission: Members understand their purpose and role.



Attendance: Consistent participation ensures continuity and progress.



Actionable Recommendations: Suggestions are realistic and can be implemented.



Follow-Through: Ideas lead to action, not just discussion.

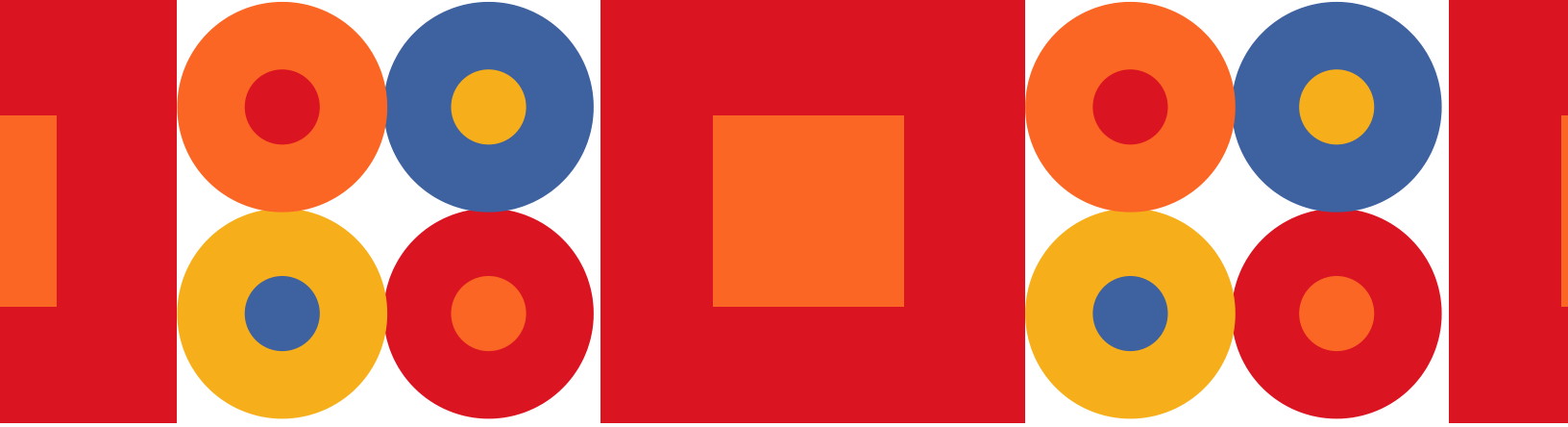


Member Engagement: All voices are heard and valued.

An Advisory Committee is...

...most effective when they focus on guidance, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

- NOT a decision-making board
- NOT a fundraising group
- NOT a complaint session
- NOT controlled by one individual
- NOT an Alumni/Booster group

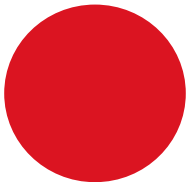


BUILDING 2

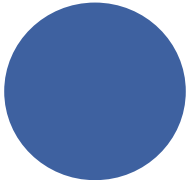


COMMITTEE SIZE

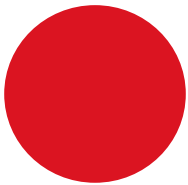
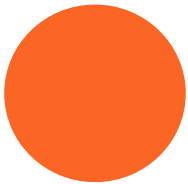
Keep it small.



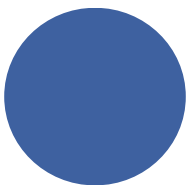
There is no required size for an advisory committee, but best practice suggests keeping the group between 6-12 members. Smaller committees are easier to coordinate and create space for meaningful discussion, where each member has the opportunity to contribute.



A well-structured committee does not need to be large to be effective. In fact, selecting members who are strongly connected within the community allows a smaller group to still represent a wide range of perspectives. The right individuals often serve as a voice for multiple sectors, extending the reach and impact of the committee beyond those seated at the table.



A smaller, well-connected group will often accomplish more than a larger, less engaged one.

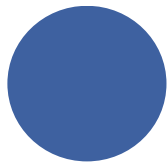


WHO SHOULD BE A COMMITTEE MEMBER?

An effective advisory committee represents a wide range of perspectives within agriculture and the local community. Members should reflect different industries, experiences, and backgrounds.



Agriculture producers, including farmers and ranchers



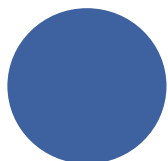
Agribusiness professionals



Community leaders



Ag Program Alumni



Parents



School counselors, CTE coordinators, or extension personnel

Note: Administrators should be connected to the advisory committee, but don't need to function as a regular member.

HOW TO SELECT MEMBERS

***Look for
people who
open doors for
your program.***

How to choose the right members?

Select individuals who are connected, respected, and willing to contribute. The best members are those who can represent multiple areas of the community and bring valuable insight to your program.

- Well-connected in the community
- Strong reputation
- Willing to participate and engage
- Able to represent multiple perspectives

Avoid building a committee based solely on familiarity or convenience. While it may be tempting to select friends or close supporters of the program, it is equally important to include individuals who will offer honest feedback and represent a broader perspective. A balance of support and constructive input leads to stronger decisions and a more impactful program.

START WHERE YOU ARE

Focus on progress, not perfection.

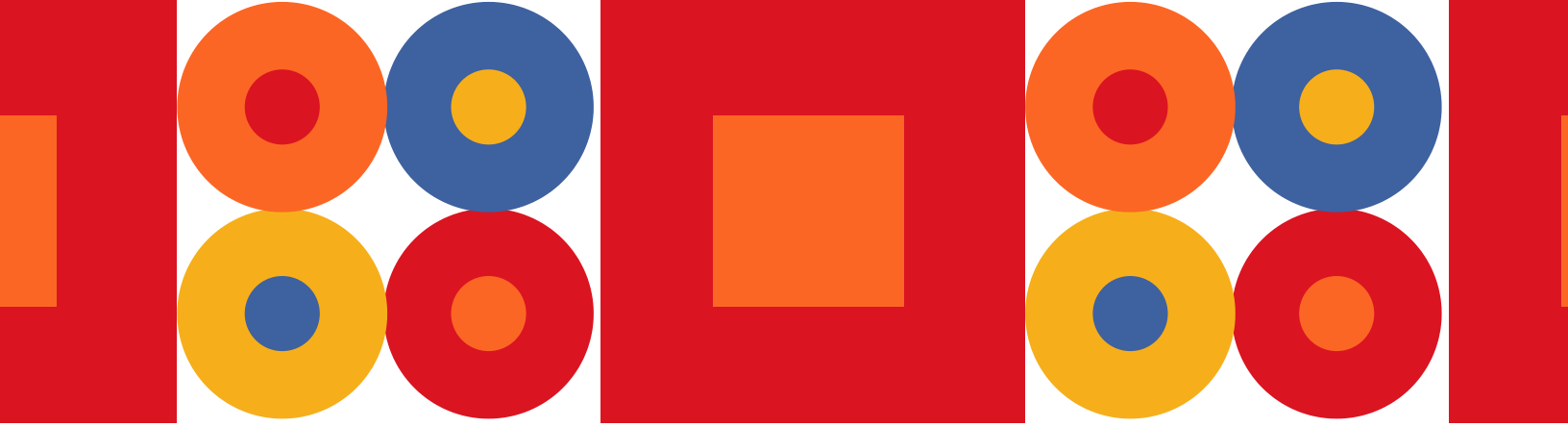
New Teacher + Existing Advisory Committee		Building a Committee from Scratch
Join as a partner. Listen, learn, and honor what's already in place. Build relationships and understand the "why" behind how things are done.	First Focus	Bring people together and begin forming a shared purpose. Find a few invested individuals who are willing to grow something with you.
<u>Members feel respected and continue showing up and contributing.</u> Ask about past successes and traditions. Observe how meetings run before suggesting anything. Follow through on what the group already values.	Early Success	<u>A small group begins to form with genuine interest and buy-in.</u> Personally invite individuals (not mass outreach). Start informal and keep expectations realistic. Clearly communicate the purpose and potential impact.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued attendance and participation - Members offering input or ideas - Feeling like part of the group, not separate from it 	Small Wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A few people consistently respond and attend - Someone contributes an idea - Conversations begin to build momentum
Trying to "fix" or overhaul the committee too quickly	Common Mistakes to Avoid	Trying to build a large or perfect committee right away

Long-term Goals and Pacing Reality: Trust and influence are built over time. It often takes years, not months. Growth may start slowly but strengthens with consistency. The goal is a sustainable, engaged partnership where decisions are shared and respected.

From the Field

At one point, completely dissolving the advisory committee and rebuilding seemed like the best solution. Instead, staying consistent and taking time to listen led to stronger relationships, increased trust, and far outweighed what a fresh start could have provided.





OPERATIONS



TERM LIMITS

Formal term limits are not necessary for most advisory committees. Continuity can be a strength, especially when members are engaged and contributing. Rather than rotating members on a strict timeline, focus on maintaining a group that remains active, responsive, and relevant to the program's needs.

This is especially important in small, rural communities, where the pool of available and qualified individuals may be limited. In these settings, it is often more valuable to retain dedicated, knowledgeable members than to replace them simply for the sake of rotation.

Committee size can also remain flexible. While a target range provides guidance, the group can grow or shrink as needed to reflect current participation and community connections. This allows programs to adapt without creating unnecessary tension or turnover.

As community and industry needs shift, membership can naturally evolve. This approach allows you to retain strong contributors while also creating space for new voices when the opportunity arises.

From the Field

A long-time advisory committee member remained on the roster even after becoming less active due to retirement and travel.

While his participation decreased, his presence still reflected a connection to the program and its history. Rather than removing him, another member was added to maintain balance and bring in new perspective. This allowed the committee to grow without creating unnecessary discomfort.



OFFICERS

Advisory committees do not require a complex officer structure. Because the group does not make formal decisions or manage funds, roles like treasurer are unnecessary. The purpose of the committee is discussion and input, rather than governance.

In some cases, having a secretary can be helpful for capturing key ideas, but formal minutes are not required. Notes should simply reflect the main points of discussion and any recommendations, rather than detailed records of motions or votes.

The most valuable leadership role within the committee is a chairperson. This individual helps guide the conversation, keeps the meeting moving, and ensures that all members have the opportunity to contribute. The role is not about authority, but about facilitation and flow.

As the committee becomes more established, transitioning from the agriculture teacher leading every meeting to the chairperson taking a more active role can strengthen the group. This shift helps build ownership among members and reinforces that the committee exists to support the program, not to be directed solely by the instructor.

Ag Teachers can support Chairpersons by...

- Share the agenda with the chairperson ahead of time and preview key discussion points.
- Begin by co-leading meetings, then gradually step back as the chair gains confidence.
- Physically position yourself as a participant, not at the head of the table.
- Redirect questions from members back to the chairperson when appropriate.
- Affirm the chairperson's role by allowing them to guide transitions and manage time.

TIMING OF MEETINGS

Meeting frequency should support engagement without becoming overwhelming. Quarterly meetings tend to work well, providing enough consistency to maintain momentum while respecting members' time. Monthly meetings are often too frequent and can lead to decreased attendance and participation.

It is important to consider the rhythm of both the agricultural industry and the school year. Scheduling meetings around busy seasons and production cycles shows respect for members' commitments and increases the likelihood of consistent involvement. At the same time, aligning meetings with the FFA calendar can be especially valuable. Planning ahead allows advisory members to provide input on upcoming events and, in some cases, offer support or connections that enhance those experiences.

Timing also matters when discussing larger program decisions. Significant changes, such as adding a new course or expanding program offerings, often need to be planned well in advance of the school year. Holding meetings early enough to gather input on these decisions ensures that the committee can provide meaningful guidance when it matters most.

Example Meeting Timeline

August

- kick off school year
- prior to community fundraising event (help in knowing who to invite and what to ask from them)

October

- recap community fundraising event (focus on relationships not dollars made)
- before LDEs (ideas for judges/coaches)
- check in on how courses are going

December

- input on 2nd semester course offerings/topics
- after National Convention
- before CDEs

February

- finalize courses/FFA activities for the next year
- prior to FFA State Convention
- invite to banquet



AGENDA

Sample

A clear and purposeful agenda helps ensure meetings are productive and focused. Agendas should prioritize updates, discussion, and opportunities for **meaningful input** rather than simply sharing information.

Agricultural Education Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda
[School Name]
[Date]
[Time]
[Location]

- I. **Welcome**
Brief welcome from the chairperson and introductions (if needed)
- II. **Program Updates**
Overview of current program activities and highlights
 - Classroom instruction
 - Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE)
 - FFA activities
- III. **Discussion Topics / Input Needed**
Focused questions or topics where advisory input is requested
 - [Insert topic or question]
 - [Insert topic or question]
 - [Insert topic or question]
- IV. **Industry and Community Updates**
Opportunity for members to share insights, trends, or opportunities from their sectors
- V. **Closing**
Summary of key takeaways and recommendations
Preview of upcoming events or needs
Confirm next meeting date





ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**Advisory
not
Authority**

Committee members provide insight, perspective, and connection to the agricultural community. Their role is to offer feedback, share industry trends, and suggest ideas that strengthen the program.

They are not responsible for making decisions or managing the program. Their value comes through discussion. They are helping ensure the program stays relevant and aligned with real-world needs.

The agriculture teacher serves as the connector for the advisory committee. This includes organizing meetings, communicating with members, and identifying areas where input is needed.

While the teacher guides the process, their role is not to control the conversation. Creating space for members to share ideas and perspectives is essential to the effectiveness of the group.

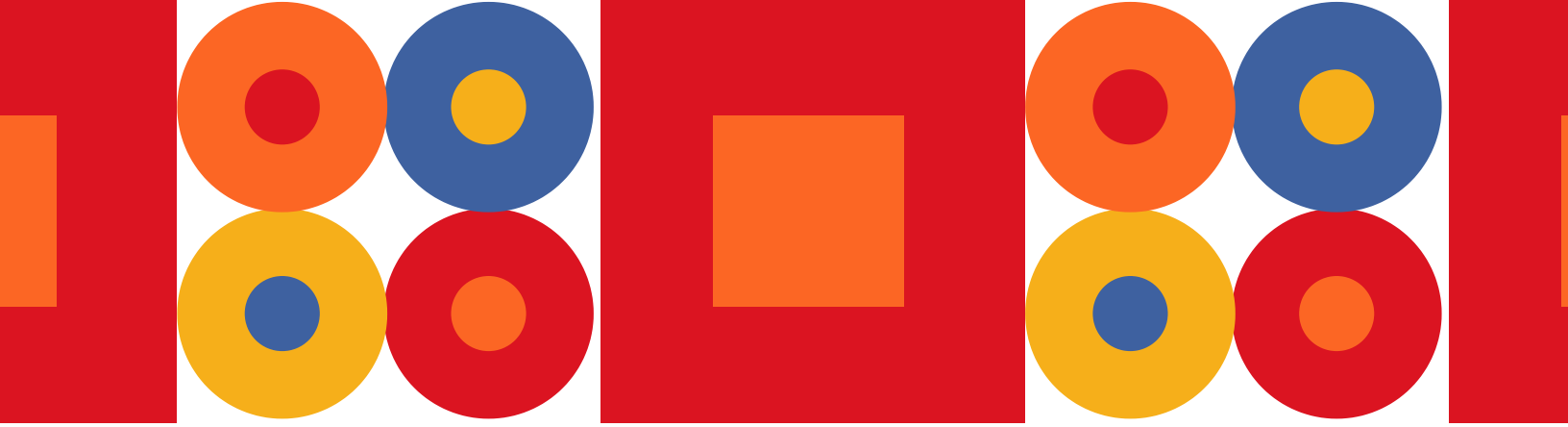
The teacher also plays a key role in translating advisory input into action, using recommendations to inform program decisions, curriculum development, and future planning.

Administrators provide support, context, and approval for program decisions. Their involvement is especially important when discussing curriculum changes, facilities, or equipment purchases.

Because they are often responsible for final approval, keeping them informed and involved increases the likelihood that recommendations can move forward.

ADMINISTRATORS

AG TEACHER



TIPS & TOOLS



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



Strong advisory committees take time to reflect, not just meet. Setting aside time each year to evaluate impact helps ensure the group stays purposeful and forward-thinking. Consider reflecting on what was accomplished, which recommendations were implemented, and what barriers prevented progress. These conversations should also revisit whether the program is aligned with current industry and community needs. The goal is to move from simply reporting updates to identifying meaningful improvements.

The most effective committees regularly ask...

What should we start, stop, and continue doing?

This simple framework often leads to the most honest and productive conversations.

Culture

An effective advisory committee is built on culture, not just scheduled meetings. While agendas and structure matter, relationships and shared purpose are what sustain long-term success. Members are more engaged when they feel their time is respected, their input is valued, and their ideas lead to action.

***If it could have
been an email,
members will
stop showing up.***

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Turnover is inevitable for both teachers and committee members. Planning for these transitions ensures the advisory committee remains effective over time.

Documentation and institutional knowledge play a critical role in continuity. While written records matter, the experience and memory of long-term advisory committee members are often just as valuable. These individuals provide context that cannot always be captured on paper.

Large projects, such as greenhouse construction, facility improvements, or major equipment purchases, often take years to develop. Advisory committees can help track how these projects began, how they were funded, and what decisions shaped their outcomes. This includes understanding where funding originated, how loans were structured or paid off, and what challenges or successes occurred along the way.

This historical perspective is critical when programs revisit similar ideas in the future. Without it, there is a risk of repeating past mistakes, overlooking successful strategies, or misjudging the level of effort required to complete large projects.

Advisory committees also provide continuity in community relationships. Members often understand the history of partnerships with local businesses and individuals. They know where challenges have occurred and how to approach different partners effectively. They can offer guidance on what types of support are appropriate to request and how to approach those conversations in a professional and productive way.

From the Field

A new agriculture teacher was introduced to the community by the advisory committee chairperson, who spent time taking them around town to meet local business owners and industry partners. Those early connections created a strong foundation for the program. Intentional onboarding and community relationships can make a significant difference in a teacher's success and the effectiveness of the advisory committee.

COMMON CHALLENGES & PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Even strong advisory committees face challenges. The difference lies in how they respond.

Low attendance or limited participation is often a result of unclear purpose or lack of connection. Scheduling meetings well in advance, personally inviting members, and clearly communicating the value of their input can improve consistency.

When the **teacher dominates the discussion**, it limits the effectiveness of the group. Shifting leadership to a chairperson, asking open-ended questions, and allowing space for silence can encourage more authentic participation.

Some committees become **overly supportive without offering meaningful feedback**. While encouragement is valuable, advisory groups should also be willing to challenge ideas and push innovation. Bringing real decisions or problems to the table encourages more thoughtful input.

Turnover in membership can disrupt progress, but ongoing recruitment and a balance of new and experienced members help maintain stability. Strong documentation also ensures knowledge is not lost.

Finally, when **administration is disengaged**, it can limit the implementation of recommendations. Keeping administrators informed, inviting them to key discussions, and aligning recommendations with school priorities increases the likelihood of support.



DISCUSSION IDEAS TO USE WITH YOUR COMMITTEE

Bring the committee questions that require experience and perspective.

Curriculum

- What skills do students need that we are not currently teaching?
- Where are students the least prepared when they enter your workplace or industry?
- What units or topics feel outdated or missing?

Facilities & Resources

- If we could improve one thing in our shop/classroom/greenhouse, what would have the biggest impact?
- Does our current equipment reflect what is used in industry today?
- What should we prioritize next: equipment, space, or technology?

Community Partnerships

- What opportunities exist locally that our students are not taking advantage of?
- How can we better connect students with local businesses?
- What is the best way to approach businesses for support?

Program Growth

- Where should this program be in 3-5 years?
- What are we known for? What should we be known for?
- If you could add one thing to this program (equipment, experience, skill, or opportunity) what would it be?

A common mistake is treating the committee like an audience rather than a resource.

Mindset Shift

Stop asking: "What should I tell them?"

Start asking: "What do I need their help thinking through?"

TOOLS TO PROMOTE DISCUSSION

Perkins V (CLNA / reVISION in Nebraska)

The Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA), required under Perkins V, is used to evaluate program performance and alignment with workforce needs. In Nebraska, this process is supported through reVISION. These tools are completed through state CTE systems and help identify program strengths, gaps, and priorities, making them a valuable resource for guiding advisory committee discussions and decisions.

National Quality Program Benchmarks (NCAE)


The National Quality Program Benchmarks, developed by the National Council for Agricultural Education (NCAE), outline key indicators of high-quality agricultural education programs across classroom instruction, FFA, and SAE. These benchmarks are publicly available through TheNCAE.org and provide a big-picture framework to help advisory committees assess program quality and identify areas for growth.

Local Data & School Improvement Goals

Local data includes information such as enrollment trends, course participation, FFA and SAE involvement, and graduate outcomes, along with broader school or district improvement goals. This information can be found through your student information system, school reports, and program records. Using local data helps ground advisory discussions in the reality of your program and ensures alignment with building and district priorities.

Using These Tools in a Meeting

Bring one focused piece of information, not the entire report!, and present it in a clear, simplified way. Ask members to react, share their perspective, and help identify priorities. The goal is not to review data, but to use it to guide meaningful discussion and determine next steps.



A strong advisory committee turns a teacher's program into a community-supported system.