

# How Can an Advisory Group Serve a Community?



## Objectives

- Represent the ideas and attitudes of a community
- Make suggestions on policy or programs, monitoring and evaluation
- Generate new ideas for different community groups
- Make recommendations for building up the community in needed ways
- Carry out a specific task that community members have identified

**Advisory Groups can serve to represent the ideas and attitudes of a community in the process of assessing and addressing a community's needs. They bring diverse voices to a program and ensure stakeholders are represented.**

**Advisory Groups** are formed to carry out any of a number of possible functions that can serve community groups well. Because of the range of applications, advisory groups are formed in a variety of ways. With this in mind, there are a number of issues to consider before forming a group:

- What will the composition of the group be? Will it be made of experts, lay persons, or a combination thereof?
- Will the group be formed for the purpose of disseminating information, gathering information, planning, advising, creating public awareness, or problem solving?
- How long will the group be responsible for carrying out its responsibilities?
- Will there be regular or occasional meetings? Who will assume leadership and what will that look like?
- Is there a budget to cover member expenses?
- How will members be rewarded for their contributions?

After addressing these questions and deciding to form an advisory group and how it will operate, an advisory group could help to identify the appropriate method to be used for a need assessment, build community awareness, identify relevant stakeholders and give technical advice.

## Advantages

- The opportunity to involve a people of diverse backgrounds (professionals and lay persons).
- Local residents may have technical expertise or knowledge about the community that professionals don't have.
- It can take the pressure of the experts, as they do not need to know all the answers.
- Engaging with an advisory group usually results in more creative problem solving.

## Disadvantages

- It can be time consuming to maximize the skills of the group.
- It takes a skilled facilitator or leader to manage the group effectively.
- Depending on how they were selected, members may not represent all points to views in a community.
- The advisory group could threaten the work of decision makers, planning officials and others in formal organizational roles.

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