



Establishing an Advisory Group

An advisory group provides strategic oversight and advice for those aiming to stay ahead in a rapidly changing landscape. By bringing together experts, leaders and stakeholders from various industries across the region, these groups provide valuable insights that can guide decision-making, shape policy and drive innovation.

Key Benefits:

- **Informed decision-making:** Advisory groups offer a wealth of knowledge and experience, helping to make well-informed decisions based on region and industry trends and real-world data.
- **Strategic alignment:** They ensure that initiatives and policies are aligned with the region's priorities and industry needs, enhancing the relevance and impact of workforce planning, economic development and other strategic goals.
- **Networking and collaboration:** The group fosters collaboration among different sectors, encouraging partnerships that can lead to new opportunities and solutions to common challenges.
- **Responsive and adaptive:** With input from industry experts, advisory groups can quickly identify emerging trends and challenges, allowing organisations to adapt strategies and stay competitive.

Creating an advisory group is a proactive step towards building a resilient, future-ready region that can navigate challenges and capitalise on opportunities.





Setting up an Advisory Group



Purpose

Define the purpose: Clearly articulate the purpose of the advisory group. Is it to provide region and industry insights, support strategic planning or to advise on specific projects?

Identify the goals: Set specific, measurable objectives for what the group should achieve.



Members

Identify key stakeholders: Include representatives from local industries, education and government.

Diversity: Aim for a mix of backgrounds, expertise and viewpoints to ensure well-rounded advice.

Size: Keep the group manageable, usually between 8-12 members, depending on the scope of the project/s.



Roles and responsibilities

Chairperson: Select a chairperson to lead meetings and coordinate activities.

Members: Outline the role of members, including expectations for participation, contribution and commitment.

Secretariat: Assign someone to handle the administrative tasks such as scheduling meetings (including agendas), taking minutes and action items and communication.

Proxy: To ensure the continuity of the project, it is important to appoint a proxy for key roles, especially the chairperson or other critical stakeholders. The proxy should be someone who is well-informed about the project's objectives, scope and progress, allowing them to step in seamlessly when needed.



Governance and structure

Terms of Reference (ToR): Develop a ToR that outlines the group’s purpose, membership criteria, meeting frequency and decision-making processes. The ToR should reflect the region of focus and workforce objectives. Please see page 4 for an example of a ToR.

Meeting schedule: Determine how often the group will meet and establish a regular schedule.

Decision making process: Establish clear procedures for how decisions are made, whether through consensus or voting. Determine if observers can participate in the advisory group but should not have voting rights.

Code of conduct: Set guidelines for professional behaviour, confidentiality and conflict of interest.



Communication

Internal communication: Establish a method for regular communication between members (e.g. email, MS Teams).

External communication: Decide how the advisory group will communicate with the broader industry if and as necessary. It is a good idea to develop a communication plan to support these activities and provide protocols to all advisory group members.



Meetings

Agenda preparation: Create a clear and focused agenda for each meeting, shared in advance with all members.

Minutes: Ensure that minutes are detailed, highlighting key discussions and agreed actions. Follow-up on these actions between meetings to maintain momentum.

Member engagement: Keep members engaged by ensuring that their contributions lead to tangible outcomes.



Sustaining the group: transition to implementation

Member refresh: Review the membership composition to determine if members are the most relevant for implementing actions.

Building partnerships: Strengthen relationships with local educational institutions, training providers, government enablers and industry bodies to support ongoing workforce development initiatives.



Example Terms of Reference

The below is an example only. You may change aspects of the document to suit your own project, region and situation.

Background

- 1.1 The Advisory Group (AG) and its members are committed to working together in a spirit of collaboration, respectfully and in good faith for the advancement of the [region/industry].
- 1.2 The AG will collaborate with [insert your organisation's name] or its representative to deliver an improved and sustainable workforce through the development of a region and industry-led workforce plan that will provide a blueprint for the industry to address workforce challenges into the future.

Purpose

- 2.1 The primary objective of the AG will be to provide [insert your organisation's name] or its representative with advice to help guide the project so that needs and expectations of the [industry/region] are met.
- 2.2 The AG will provide [insert your organisation's name] or its representative with access to their networks, so consultation is maximised.

Scope

The scope of this project will include:

Geographical coverage

- 3.1 This project will be focused on the region/industry.

Industry exposure

- 3.2 Industry exposure will cover [region/industry] as defined through agreement between [insert your organisation's name] and the AG members.

Out of scope

- 3.3 [All areas out of scope for the project e.g. industrial relations] are out of scope for this project.



Function

Function of [insert your organisation's name]

- 4.1 Oversee and guide the overall project
- 4.2 Provide advice and expertise to inform the [region/industry] snapshot/labour market profile/environmental scan that will underpin the development and successful delivery of the workforce plan.
- 4.3 Provide access to developed workforce tools, additional expertise, information, and networks that may guide and support the work.
- 4.4 Provide advice on mechanisms and strategies for undertaking effective stakeholder communication and engagement to support and inform the project.
- 4.5 [Insert your organisation's name] may appoint a 3rd party to assist with the project and administration obligations where such an appointment may improve the outcomes of the project.

Membership

AG membership

- 5.1 Membership of the AG wherever possible, will include the following composition:
 - gender balanced
 - culturally diverse
 - representatives from the industry within the geographical confines of the region
 - employers representing small, medium and large enterprises
 - the industry's associations and peak bodies.
- 5.2 This approach will ensure that expert advice on community, industry and region's needs and issues is represented.

Chair

- 5.3 Both the Chair and (optional) Deputy Chair will be an appointment from the membership.
- 5.4 The Chair and (optional) Deputy Chair must be non-politically aligned and invested in workforce development for the industry.
- 5.5 Should the Chair be absent from a meeting, the Deputy Chair member will chair the meeting. If the Deputy Chair is not in attendance or one not appointed, the standing members of the AG that are present have the authority to choose one of those present to be Chair for the meeting.



- 5.6 Where there is an occasion that the on-going AG Chair position is/becomes vacant, the Deputy Chair will be appointed until such time that an on-going AG Chair is elected.
- 5.7 The Chair must ensure:
 - 5.7.1 All meetings have a formal agenda issued as a minimum 24 hours in advance.
 - 5.7.2 Prior to the meeting, all AG members are given the opportunity to contribute items to the agenda and present background papers.
 - 5.7.3 Accurate minutes of each meeting are formalised and presented to the AG at the next meeting for endorsement as a true and accurate copy of the proceedings.
 - 5.7.4 Minutes from the previous meeting are distributed to all AG members and the [insert your organisation's name] project lead before the next meeting is held.
- 5.8 Expert guest speakers may be invited to attend a meeting at the discretion of the Chair to provide strategic advice or industry expertise on specific topics directly related to the project.

Quorum

- 5.9 Where a decision needs to be made by the AG, a quorum will comprise of half the AG members, including the Chair plus one.

Proxy

- 5.10 Members of the AG have been identified both to represent their organisation/sector as well as for their individual expertise. Where a member wishes for a proxy to attend an AG meeting on their behalf, this will require agreement from the Chair.
- 5.11 Nominated proxies should be consistent (if attending more than one meeting), have relevant expertise and be well-briefed so as to actively participate in discussions and have the authority to act on behalf of the member.



Governance

- 6.1 A preference is for decisions to be made through consensus. Where this is unable to be achieved, the decision will be made following standing members present voting. The outcome of the vote will be determined in accordance with the quorum as outlined in para 5.9.
- 6.2 Intellectual property created through collective work undertaken by the AG or by other means will remain within the ownership of [insert your organisation's name].
- 6.3 All members have the same access to information as it relates to the role of the AG.

Frequency of meetings

- 7.1 A schedule of meetings will be agreed in advance.
- 7.2 Additional meetings may be called by the Chair as necessary to address any matters referred to the AG or in respect of matters the AG wishes to pursue within its Terms of Reference.
- 7.3 Meetings will be conducted at a place determined by the Chair.

Confidentiality

- 8.1 AG members will not be authorised to make statements on behalf of the project, publish or discuss information obtained during their participation with media outlets or, share or make public statements regarding the content of any documents provided to them as part of their participation in the AG.
- 8.2 All information and discussions are to be treated as confidential, and not suitable for the public domain unless authorised by the Chair and [insert your organisation's name] to do so.

Conflict of interest

- 9.1 AG members who have or acquire, directly or indirectly a personal or pecuniary interest in a matter decided or under consideration by the AG or the collaboration with [insert your organisation's name] must:
 - 9.1.1 As soon as reasonably practicable, prior to AG meetings, disclose to the Chair full and accurate details of the interest.
 - 9.1.2 Not take part in any discussion by the AG relating to the matter.
 - 9.1.3 Be absent from the room or teleconference/video link when any such discussion is taking place.



- 9.1.4 Not have access to information in relation to the matter in which he or she has the conflict.
 - 9.1.5 Not seek, directly or indirectly, to influence the outcome of any deliberations by the AG in relation to any matter to which he or she may have a conflict.
 - 9.1.6 Disclose interests in contracts and potential conflicts arising from offices or property held by the member or his/her family members.
- 9.2 Disclosure of this information will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting of the AG and recorded in a register as soon as possible after the meeting.

Signed by the AG member and returned to the AG Chair to acknowledge acceptance of the Terms of Reference stated above:

Signature of Representative: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____

Representative Organisation: _____

Chair of AG Name: _____

Signature of Chair: _____ Date: _____