

Standard Bylaws Template for District Advisory Bodies

Introduction

Policy BDF(Local) was adopted by the AISD Board of Trustees on June 27, 2011. According to policy, bylaws are required for all standing advisory bodies, and the Coordinator of District Advisory Bodies, who is designated by the Superintendent, shall develop a standard template for bylaws. Further, the Coordinator of District Advisory Bodies shall consult with appropriate staff in developing and revising bylaws.

Standard Template

Language that is to be provided by the Board or Superintendent, and language that is to be worked out by the Coordinator of District Advisory bodies and applicable support staff, is highlighted in yellow. Explanatory comments are highlighted in blue.

Article I: Establishment

Section One. Policy [and Statute, if applicable]. Under provisions of district policy BDF(Local), the [Board or Superintendent] establishes the [name] as an advisory body of the Austin Independent School District.

Section Two. Limitations. The [name] shall serve to provide guidance and counsel to the district regarding [subject]. The [name] shall have no power to expend public funds, enter into contracts, or otherwise place obligation or liability upon the district.

Section Three. Bylaws. It shall be the responsibility of the Coordinator of District Advisory Bodies, upon the advice and counsel of [designated support staff], to establish and amend the [name] bylaws. The [name] shall adopt the bylaws to acknowledge their content and to commit to following the bylaws.

Section Four. Sunset. Under provisions of district policy BDF(Local), the [name] shall be subject to a biennial sunset review process, to identify any areas for improvement and to determine whether the [name] continues to serve as an advisory body of the district.

Section Four is not applicable to district advisory bodies that are required by statute except for identifying any areas for improvement.

Article II: Charge

The purpose of the [name] is to ...

The [name] shall have the following responsibilities ...

Article III: Meetings

Section One. Regular [and Other] Meetings.

This section is discretionary to the advisory body, but must address such matters as number of required meetings, meeting dates and times, meeting locations, etc. Also, language may be added to address subcommittees, special meetings, work sessions, retreats, etc. Subcommittees may include non-members for the purpose of advice and assistance, but such persons shall have no membership standing.

Section Two. Open Meetings. All regular meetings of the [name] shall be open to the public, as well as any other plenary meetings in which voting may occur, and the public shall have a reasonable opportunity to provide comment. The presiding officer may limit the time given to speakers. The [name] shall apply guidelines for citizens communications and visitors as provided by the Coordinator of District Advisory Bodies.

The above language is required but, at the discretion of the advisory body, language may be added to stipulate that subcommittee meetings are not open to the public.

Section Three. Quorum. For all [name] meetings, a quorum shall be the majority of the current voting membership. Meetings may still be held without a quorum for purposes of presentations or discussion. However, no actions or voting may take place without a quorum.

Section Four. Attendance. Member attendance shall be monitored by the [chair or co-chairs], who shall work with members to try and resolve any attendance problems. Members with three consecutive absences will be contacted and given an opportunity to indicate their willingness to continue to participate. More than three absences within a one-year period may result in dismissal as determined by the [Chair or Co-chairs].

Section Five. Decision-Making. Members shall attempt to reach decisions by consensus. However, if a clear consensus cannot be obtained, decisions shall be reached by a majority vote. Absentee voting or voting by proxy is not allowed. Email voting is not allowed.

Section Six. Agendas. Agendas shall be prepared for all regular meetings in the format provided by the Coordinator of District Advisory Bodies. Agendas shall be posted on the [name] website, and at a location accessible to the public, at least 72 hours in advance of meetings. During a posted meeting, deliberation shall not take place on any item not included on the posted agenda. Agenda items shall normally be determined by [as explained under Article V or VI]. However, a majority of the [name] may place an item on a future agenda. In addition, items of an urgent nature determined by the district may be placed on the agenda by the assigned senior support staff in consultation with the [Chair or Co-chairs].

Section Seven. Minutes. For all plenary meetings of the [name], minutes shall be prepared by designated support staff. Minutes shall include the location of the meeting, times for call to order and adjournment, member and other attendance, a record of any formal vote or action, and summary highlights of the meeting proceedings. Upon approval by the [name], minutes shall be posted on the [name] website.

The above language is required, but at the discretion of the advisory body language may be added to require that minutes be kept for other types of meetings.

Article IV: Membership

Section One. Membership Criteria.

This section must include any legal or policy requirements, and include an expectation for membership diversity.

Section Two. Membership Selection.

Section Three. Term of Service.

Section Four. Vacancies.

Section Five. Change in Member Status.

Section Six. Conflict of Interest. No individual shall be nominated for or hold a position on the [name] if that individual has a direct pecuniary interest in the recommendations of that committee and decisions made by the [name]. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest should be avoided if at all possible. A lone agenda item shall not be cause for the elimination of an individual's membership; however, any such individual shall refrain from participation in the decisions and voting as to that issue.

Section Seven. Conduct. [Name] members shall conduct themselves at all times with courtesy and respect to other members and district staff. Members are encouraged to speak freely during meetings, but must provide other members with the same opportunity. Unless otherwise authorized by the [name], members shall not speak for the [name]; and, unless otherwise authorized by the administration, members shall not speak for the district. Violation of this code of conduct may result in dismissal by the [Chair or Co-chairs].

Section Eight. Undue Advantage. [Name] members shall not use their position to gain or attempt to gain an undue advantage for themselves or anyone else. Violation of this requirement may result in termination of membership by the [Chair or Co-chairs].(As examples, it would be considered an undue advantage if a person included his or her membership in the [name] in the reasoning for allowing a student transfer or for allowing a student entry into a particular program; however it would not be considered an undue advantage for a person to include [name] membership on his or her resume.)

Article V: Chair [or Co-chairs]

Section One. Eligibility.

It is highly recommended that members have at least one year of service to be eligible to serve as a Chair or Co-chair. For newly formed advisory bodies, this will obviously not be the case.

Section Two. Selection.

Section Three. Term of Service.

Section Four. Responsibilities. The responsibilities of the [Chair or Co-chairs] shall include:

1. Presiding at all regular meetings.
2. Enforcing commonly accepted parliamentary procedure (i.e., the latest version of Robert's Rules of Order), or delegating this responsibility to a member to serve as parliamentarian.
3. Signing all letters, reports, and other communications on behalf of the [name].
4. Performing other responsibilities as may be prescribed by the [Board or Superintendent].

If the Chair or Co-chairs are responsible for setting agendas, then add applicable provisions under this Section.

Article VI: Executive Committee [or Other Name] [Optional]

This Article is optional, based on the individual advisory body. An Executive Committee, or similar committee, is normally used to set the agenda for the full advisory body. An Executive Committee may also be used to review problems with member attendance and conduct. In some cases, advisory bodies may defer certain work to an Executive Committee, similar to a subcommittee. If an Executive Committee is used, then the following Sections are required.

Section One. Membership.

Section Two. Selection.

Section Three. Term of Service.

Section Three. Meetings.

Section Five. Responsibilities.

Article VII [or VI]: Staff Support

Section One. Designated Support Staff.

Identify the executive and/or senior staff members, by title, designated by the Superintendent to provide primary support for the advisory body. Also identify any staff members who shall serve as ex officio members of the advisory body.

Section Two. Responsibilities of Support Staff. The designated support staff shall serve to coordinate the [name]. Responsibilities of support staff shall include:

1. Ensuring that adequate facilities arrangements and staff support are secured for all meetings.
2. Providing members and applicable staff with agendas and background materials prior to meetings.
3. Serving as custodian of all [name] records.
4. [Name] website maintenance.
5. Keeping minutes of plenary [and other] meetings.
6. Ensuring that agendas and approved minutes are appropriately posted.
7. Ensuring that orientation information is provided to new members.
8. Informing the [Chair or Co-chairs] of member attendance and conduct problems.
9. Scheduling urgent agenda items as necessary, in consultation with the [Chair or Co-chairs].

10. Preparing any recommendations, findings, or reports of the [name] and communicating them as appropriate to the district administration, Superintendent, and Board of Trustees.
11. Consulting with the Coordinator of District Advisory Bodies regarding membership applications and any bylaws revisions.

Additional responsibilities may be added as appropriate.