

Collaboration Charter

A collaboration charter defines the purpose of the interactions between the members of a project team and their primary stakeholders. (This group of stakeholders is often organized into some kind of advisory committee.) The charter defines roles and responsibilities; expectations for the collaboration; ground rules for working together, including communication frequency and methods; how decisions will be made; and how conflicts will be handled. It can also be used to define terms of service and policies for adding or replacing members.

The collaboration person on the team can draft the charter, but it's important for all team members and advisory committee members to have input and come to agreement on the terms. The advisory committee kick-off meeting is a good time to work through the charter draft. Co-development and use of a collaboration charter improves team/stakeholder cohesion and reduces confusion about direction and process.

Once edits have been incorporated, a final version should be read by, agreed upon, and distributed to all team and committee members. It should be considered a living document and should be present in some form at meetings. Whoever is leading or facilitating meetings should be very familiar with the charter and all members should feel empowered to refer to the charter if interactions become unproductive.

This "Collaboration Charter Template" was adapted from the *Our Coast, Our Future* project and may be used by any team interested in developing a written agreement among project staff and stakeholders. Edit the text in CAPITAL LETTERS and throughout to customize the charter to your project.

Advisory Committee Collaboration Charter

VERSION #, LAST UPDATED ON: DATE

I. Background

The overall goal of the PROJECT NAME is to OVERALL PROJECT GOAL in the GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION by creating PROJECT OUTPUT. To ensure that this project is useful to our intended users, we are employing a collaborative development process. The process will be largely defined and conducted through the Advisory Committee. This Charter describes the purpose, structure, principles, operations, and outputs of the Advisory Committee.

The PROJECT NAME Charter is:

- A living document to be maintained and modified by the Committee.
- A procedural guide, describing the operation of the project's collaborative work and how project staff and Committee members commit to interact constructively in good faith.
- An informal agreement among Committee members and project staff and does not have any legal standing.
- A public document, available for anyone to read and review. Comments about this document should be addressed to the Advisory Committee Coordinator.

II. Purpose of Advisory Committee

The Committee will meet with project staff on a periodic basis to assess project progress and act in an advisory capacity on a wide range of decisions and products, such as TYPE OF DATA INPUTS OR OUTPUTS, ASSUMPTIONS, GEOGRAPHIC OR SOCIOLOGICAL AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST, FEATURES OR FUNCTIONALITY OF FINAL PRODUCTS, INTEGRATION WITH SYNERGISTIC PROJECTS, COMMUNICATIONS PRODUCTS AND PLANS, OR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OR TRAINING PROGRAMS.

III. Committee Structure and Composition

The Advisory Committee is composed of individuals from several key user groups that represent a wide set of sectoral and geographic interests. PROJECT NAME staff is *ex officio* members of the Committee.

Advisory committee members:

FIRST AND LAST NAME, AFFILIATION, ROLE
FIRST AND LAST NAME, AFFILIATION, ROLE
FIRST AND LAST NAME, AFFILIATION, ROLE
FIRST AND LAST NAME, AFFILIATION, ROLE

Project team members:

FIRST AND LAST NAME, AFFILIATION, ROLE
FIRST AND LAST NAME, AFFILIATION, ROLE
FIRST AND LAST NAME, AFFILIATION, ROLE
FIRST AND LAST NAME, AFFILIATION, ROLE

Roles and Responsibilities

The Advisory Committee will be coordinated by the NAME AND ROLE OF PROJECT TEAM MEMBER, who will be responsible for convening and facilitating meetings; soliciting, researching, and summarizing end user needs and feedback; developing and disseminating PROJECT NAME-related materials; and other coordinating tasks as necessary.

Committee members will serve as the PROJECT NAME main point of contact to their respective organizations, gathering needs and suggestions from their organizations, keeping their organization informed of relevant PROJECT NAME activities; and bringing information and perspectives from their organization to bear on Advisory Committee business.

Committee members and PROJECT NAME staff are expected to read any meeting preparation materials before the meeting takes place and to attend all meetings, if possible. Use of alternates is discouraged, as this can interfere with the continuity of discussion.

Additional roles and tasks for individual Advisory Committee members may be identified and agreed upon by the Advisory Committee through the course of its work and will be appended to this document.

Meetings and Communications

Meetings will take place as frequently as the Committee decides is useful to advancing the goals of the project and ensuring a productive collaborative process. As of TODAY'S DATE, the anticipated

schedule is quarterly meetings of approximately 2 – 3 hours in length through PROJECT END DATE. All meetings will be held in locations convenient for the majority of the Committee, and distance participation will be made available upon request when possible.

Meeting minutes will be drafted by PROJECT STAFF PERSON and reviewed by the Advisory Committee before being considered a part of the project record or being published on the project website.

Each meeting will end with a brief, informal evaluation and dialogue to ensure that progress is being made and Committee members feel that their time is used wisely.

In addition to regularly scheduled meetings, Committee members may be asked from time to time to review documents, offer opinions, or consult individually or in groups with PROJECT NAME staff. NAME OF SOFTWARE PRODUCT OR COLLABORATION WEBSITE will be used to store and share documents, and all Charter signatories need to be comfortable with this platform.

Compensation

Members will be reimbursed for travel costs associated with participating in Advisory Committee activities. NOTE ANY ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION OR REIMBURSEMENT TERMS. No other monetary compensation will be provided.

IV. Operating Protocols

General Principles of Collaboration

Using the following general principles of collaboration, Committee members and PROJECT NAME staff agree to:

- Commit to expending the time, energy, and organizational resources necessary to meet the project objectives.
- Recognize the validity of differing points of view.
- Recognize the complexity involved in developing projections of local climate change impacts and strategies to address those impacts.
- Be prepared to listen intently to understand others' views.
- Regard disagreements as problems to be solved, not battles to be won.

Decision Making

The Advisory Committee and PROJECT NAME staff will strive for LEVEL OF AGREEMENT SOUGHT (I.E., CONSENSUS, MAJORITY, ETC.) in decision making on substantive issues and recommendations.

ADDITIONAL TEXT ABOUT THE DEFINITION OR FUNCTIONING OF THE LEVEL OF AGREEMENT SOUGHT OR THE DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS.

Conflict Resolution

Should disagreement arise among Committee members or PROJECT NAME staff (e.g., over data sources or interpretation, project outputs, etc.), the group will strive to first resolve the disagreement internally with the assistance of the PROJECT STAFF COLLABORATION LEAD and referencing the DOCUMENTS DETAILING HOW THE PROJECT WILL BE DEVELOPED (I.E., NEEDS ASSESSMENT, RESEARCH PLAN, ETC.) (described in Outputs section below). Should conflict

remain, the services of a professional facilitator may be retained to use a joint fact-finding process or other appropriate conflict resolution model.

V. Outputs

Meeting records

Meeting notes with action items, decisions, and recommendations will be published to LOCATION OF PROJECT DATA REPOSITORY. These notes will serve as one primary source of documentation for the collaborative process. The role of the Advisory Committee is to review and refine these notes before they are made public.

Needs Assessment

PROJECT NAME staff will gather input from Committee members and draft a concise needs assessment describing the PROJECT NAME niche, including the existing market, barriers, target audience, etc. The role of the Advisory Committee is to provide feedback and input on drafts, to agree that the document accurately reflects the state of ISSUE AREA in GEOGRAPHIC AREA, and to recommend to PROJECT NAME staff that findings from this needs assessment be incorporated into the next stage of product development.

Research or Product Plan

Details on activities in this area, as well as expected contributions by Committee members.

Technical assistance, training program, or outreach activities

Details on activities in this area, as well as expected contributions by Committee members.

Formal evaluation of collaborative process

Details on activities in this area, as well as expected contributions by Committee members.

VI. Project Timeline

General sequence of events and milestones, including when meetings will be held, when decisions will be made, and when information or products will be made available, and to whom.