

ESAL

Engineers & Scientists Acting Locally

Playbook Guide - ESAL Playbook: Join a Board or Commission

Purpose

- Provide input and advice to your city, county, or state government about an area of policy through service on a formal, standing body

Ideal Outcomes

- Substantive impact on policy decisions related to your advisory body's charter

Auxiliary Benefits

- Deeper understanding of your community and its values
- Establishing relationships with government officials and elected representatives
- Practical knowledge of how your government operates and the complex range of issues that inform decisions

Step-by-Step Guide

- 1. Identify which advisory body you would like to serve on.**
 - Your government website is a great place to learn more about what advisory bodies exist and which have current openings.
 - If you are already engaged in volunteer or advocacy efforts, the people or organizations you work with may have ideas on which advisory bodies work on issues related to your interest.
- 2. Research how the advisory body operates.**
 - Read minutes and stream video (if available) from past meetings and try to attend one in person. This will give you an idea of what types of topics the body considers, which issues are current priorities, and how it manages discussions.
- 3. Apply for or request to be nominated to the advisory body.**
 - The selection process for advisory bodies varies. Common processes include nomination by an elected representative or open solicitations for applications. Your government website is the best starting point for information specific to the body you want to join.

Tip: Do not feel shy about asking your elected representative to nominate you for a position. They appreciate members of the community who want to make a difference

- 4. Prepare for your interview.**
 - Most jurisdictions will have an interview with elected officials as part of the selection process. It may be with the individual who represents your district or with the entire governing body at-large. To prepare, we suggest:

- *Think about why you want to serve.* Do you have specific issues you want to tackle or positions you want to advocate? Are you interested in being a more engaged citizen?
- *Consider how you would handle issues the body has recently tackled.* Do you agree with what the body decided? Are there additional considerations you would have raised?
- *Research the views of your interviewers.* Have they made public statements on issues relevant to the advisory body? If you are interviewing with a panel, consider requesting a coffee meeting with individual representatives beforehand to learn their views.

5. Prepare to serve.

- *Familiarize yourself with the basics of parliamentary procedure.* Most advisory bodies use procedures based on [Robert's Rules of Order](#).
- *Decide how you want to contribute to your advisory body.* Taking a consistent approach in discussions can help you build credibility and also make you an attractive ally, since others know what you stand for.

Tip: Research Roger Pielke, Jr's "Honest Broker" which lays out a framework of roles for scientists participating in policy.

6. Make a difference!

- *Treat your colleagues with respect and approach discussions with an open mind.* Governments appoint advisory bodies to receive advice that reflects a broad range of community values. Scientific thinking and evidence are one of many inputs. You can have the most impact by building common-cause with members of your community who may prioritize other factors in decision-making.

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