

# **Citizens Advisory Boards and Task Forces**

**A Self-Study Guide**

**November 2002**

**Development Alternatives, Inc.  
Headquarters  
7520 Woodmont Avenue  
Bethesda, Md. 20814**

**SLGRP  
Osmana Djikica 3  
Belegrade**

## Table of contents

1.	Introduction.....	3
2.	Description of the technique.....	3
3.	Advantages and Disadvantages.....	3
	Advantages:.....	3
	Disadvantages:.....	3
4.	Basic principles: .....	4
5.	Detailed description.....	4
	CABs/TF established to give popularity type advice .....	4
	CABs/TF established to give content type advice.....	4
	CABs/TF established to serve as a watch dog .....	5
	CABs/TF established to de-polarize interests and build consensus among CAC members ....	5
	CABs/TF established to coordinate work of municipality and institutions and individuals members of CABs/TF .....	5
6.	How to establish CAB/TF .....	6
7.	When to use CABs and TF as a method for citizens involvement.....	8
	Attachement: Sample Statute of CAB	

## **1. Introduction**

Citizens' advisory boards (CAB) and task forces (TF) are important and one of the most effective tools for getting citizens impute in decision-making of local government, involving citizens in its activities, generating support from the citizens for its actions and insuring a transparency of its decisions. These tools are often used in number of variations depending on immediate objective or task. In Serbia municipalities and decision-makers are not required by law to establish CABs or TF. However the Law on Local Government allows city assembly to establish its working bodies.

Both these techniques, and especially CAB, take time and require more investment and longer commitment in terms of money and human resources from municipality. It is therefore important to think carefully about decision to create of CAB and TF and about its goals, membership, structure and design.

## **2. Description of the technique**

CAB and TF are working groups of citizens, which are working on specific issue. Their activities may include analyzing evidence and arguments, preparing recommendations for decision-maker/local government or also taking action itself. CABs are permanent or long-term boards, usually with more formal structure and system of work. TF are short term working groups, set up to deal with one specific project/problem and once the project is finished or problem solved TF is terminated.

CAB is usually formalized, in Serbia municipality can create CAB for example as a working group of municipal assembly based on law on local government or as an advisory body to mayor or city council.

## **3. Advantages and Disadvantages**

### **Advantages:**

- CABs and TFs can consider issues in detail and help participating citizens understand the decision-making process and the complexities involved.
- Acts as a intermediary between decision-maker or municipality and citizens and promotes a feeling of trust between municipality and citizens
- Can provide decision-maker or municipality with additional resources – information, volunteers, projects, outreach to community etc.

### **Disadvantages:**

- Not all interests may be represented
- Requires relatively high commitment from members of CAB or TF
- It is a longer-term process requiring more resources and commitment from municipality.
- It divides community to insiders (members of CABs/TFs) and outsiders

#### 4. Basic principles:

- Purpose of the CAB/TF is clearly defined including extent of the work, its rights and responsibilities,
- Relations of municipality with CAB/TF and level of commitment municipality to respect its recommendations is clear,
- Membership of CAB and TF corresponds with purpose of CAB or TF,
- CAB/TF is provided with resources for its work e.g. administrative support, financial resources, etc.,
- Meetings of CAB/TF are open for citizens and its reports are publicly available.



#### 5. Detailed description

Types of CABs/TF according to their function/aim:

##### **CABs/TF established to give popularity type advice**

###### **members:**

- sociologically representative sample of target group (e.g. sample of ....
- randomly selected members
- open invitation for citizens

**activities:** project is presented to the group and group provide feedback which indicates reaction of citizens or specific target group. *The meetings may be recorded on video to allow detailed analysis of reactions of participants including their body language after the meeting.*

###### **example:**

TF established in order to review municipality plan to increase payments for services. CAB established to provide feedback to municipality on their PR and informational activities.

##### **CABs/TF established to give content type advice**

###### **members:**

- representatives of interest groups and experts
- randomly selected citizens
- open invitation for citizens

###### **activities:**

facilitated discussions of members, inviting experts to provide evidence and arguments, preparation - or hiring experts to prepare - analysis and studies, organize additional consultations with citizens (e.g. public hearing), At the end CAB/TF agrees on common position and prepare recommendations for decision-maker or municipality.

###### **example:**

CAB established to deal with problem of stray dogs and dogs excrements in center of the city.

## **CABs/TF established to serve as a watch dog**

### **members:**

- open invitation for citizens
- representatives of all interest groups

### **activities:**

review of materials, site visits to institution, observation of activities, reporting to citizens, municipality or communal enterprise.

### **example:**

Municipality establish CAB to oversee procurement process.

## **CABs/TF established to de-polarize interests and build consensus among CAC members**

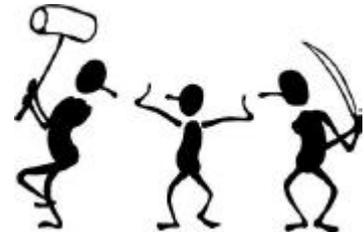
### **members:**

Representatives of all interest groups

### **activities:**

Series of facilitated meetings, gathering information about needs and expectations of community (e.g. surveys, interviews or meetings).

**example:** It is necessary to decide about reconstruction of immediate surrounding of the blocks of flat – there are two main interests – new parking lot or children sport field. For municipality is not important which of those two projects will be carried on only if the reconstruction will be done and local people will not complain and criticize it. The TF is established to agree on common solution.



## **CABs/TF established to coordinate work of municipality and institutions and individuals members of CABs/TF**

### **members:**

Representatives of all interest groups

### **activities:**

Series of meetings of CAB/TF members, preparation of action plan, coordination of activities, implementation of activities, communication with media etc.

### **example:**

TF established to organize celebration of 700-year anniversary of the city foundation. CAB established to develop and implement coordinated system of care for refugees where municipality, NGOs and state institutions participate.



## **6. How to establish CAB/TF**

### **6.1. Membership**

#### **Recruitment of members**

Membership recruitment and appointment for CAB/TF may be done through number of ways. Further there are listed several possible approaches.

#### Representatives of interest groups:

If CAB/TF should consist of interest groups it is necessary that all interests are represented or members are agreed/approved by all interest group. For example if CAB/TF should recommend municipality optimal variant of highway round belt around the city there should be representatives of proponents as well as opponents of individual alternatives, local citizens, etc.

#### Open invitation for citizens

If CAB should consist of lay citizens it is necessary to inform citizens about possibility to participate and invite them. For this it is possible to put advertisement in media with invitation for participation or organize public hearing where the issue is explained and citizens invited to participate. If Municipality decides for open invitation for citizens it needs very clearly describe: i) nature of work, ii) required skills or characteristics of members if there are such (e.g. with financial background, residents of specific part of the city, representatives of minority group etc.), iii) responsibilities of members.

#### Randomly selected citizens

Random selection of citizens for CAB/TF can be done for example by soliciting names from voter registers. This method however has disadvantages – identified citizens may not be interested in participating in CAB/TF or may be too passive members, which will significantly influence work of CAB/TF.

#### Appointees by members of city council

Each member of city council appoints one member of CAB/TF. However it is important to have on mind that when membership appointing is done this way the political opposition will not be involved in the CAB/TF and thus very likely will oppose its activities, decisions and recommendations. This may seriously limit impacts of CAB/TF work. Local government should consider that and should make sure that opposition is involved in CAB/TF.

#### **Renewal of members**

No matter how members of CAB/TF are recruited it is important that there is a way to replace non-active members or members who do not any more possess characteristics for which they were invited to participate (e.g. change of the position, employment, etc.). Members may be removed by decision of establishing authority (e.g. city council, or department) but also CAB or TF itself should be able to suggest or to decide on cancellation of membership.

### **training of members**

Composition of CAB/TF is very varied in terms of background, experience, knowledge of the members as well as their communication skills and working habits. Very often CAB/TF are the first opportunity for their members to meet and work together. The diversity of membership is an important CAB/TF characteristic, which significantly strengthens impacts of its work. At the same time this variability creates difficulties, which need to be overcome. It is very important to ensure that all members feel comfortable working with the rest of the group and ensure that their personal interests in participation are fulfilled. Each TF/CAB should invest in building of personal relations and trust between the members as well as in teambuilding and building members communication skills. Especially CABs with long term tasks should consider undergo training or mentoring program.



CAB/TF may find out that their members need also training focused on gaining specific expertise or information, which they need in order to fulfill their tasks. For example training on process of development of municipal budget or structure of the city administration. CAB/TF should have resources to organize such training or establishing institution should provide it if needed.

### **6.2. functioning/structure/work principles**

Following recommendations needs to be always adjusted to extent of the work expected from CAB/TF, its size, nature etc. *For example for CABs/TF established to build consensus among CAB/TF members is involvement of external facilitator very helpful, but for short term small TF this may not need to be necessary.*

#### **Statute:**

Each CAB/TF should have its statute. It includes mandate given by municipality and operational rules agreed by CAB. Although it should be as simple as possible it should:

- state name and acronym of CAB/TF
- state purpose of the CAB/TF (given by establishing institution – city council, municipal department)
- include information on CAB/TF rights on access to necessary background material, information, grant CAB/TF independent budget (if relevant) or access to other resources (e.g. use of copy machine or other administrative support)
- define how results and recommendations from CAB/TF will be used by municipality
- define the membership and way how new members are recruited
- declare openness and transparency of CAB/TF and identify how this will be ensured (meetings opened to public, minutes from meetings publicly accessible, reporting to public through public hearings, etc.)
- define structure, officials (chair, vice chair, secretary) and decision-making procedures

Statute may be either completely developed by municipality or TF/CAB may be given opportunity to develop parts of the statute itself.

### **Facilitation, secretary, contact person**

CAB/TF should have a secretary responsible for sending out invitations, preparation of minutes from meetings etc. Municipality usually provides secretariat or can hire an NGO to provide the secretariat. CAB/TF meetings are lead either by chairperson or by external facilitator hired by municipality or by CAB/TF from its budget.



### **Budget**

Most often resources necessary for CAB/TF activities are provided within budget of specific municipal department that is deciding about allocation of finances for expenses identified by CAB/TF. Better approach however is to allocate CAB/TF separate budget. If CAB/TF is allocated with financial resources it must be deciding independently about its spending including e.g. hiring external experts. Size of the budget of course depends on work CAB/TF is expected to accomplish. Especially if CAB/TF is expected to provide expert recommendation it should have means for preparation of analysis and studies.

### **media relations**

CAB/TF created by municipality are often addressed by media and asked to provide information on their finding or activities. It is necessary that CAB/TF is aware of importance of providing correct and appropriate information. CAB/TF should decide about its strategy towards media and agree on it with municipality. The strategy should include: a type of information CAB/TF is allowed to give to media, way of consultation of information for press with municipality, media contact person, etc.

## **7. When to use CABs and TF as a method for citizens involvement**

CAB and TF is an excellent tool to be used for complicated decisions, elaboration of complex plans or co-ordination of actions. CAB and TF allow time and resources for in depth analysis, detailed discussion and negotiations between participants and between concerned groups. CABs further allow long term overseeing of some process or institution. CAB/TF can be used by any local government institution (city assembly, mayor, city department etc.) as well as by any private company or individual.

**S T A T U T**  
**of**  
**Citizens Advisory Board**  
**for Reconstruction of Public Park Jižní Svahy**

**I. Introductory information**

1. Municipality of Zlin established the Citizens Advisory Board for reconstruction of public park Jižní Svahy (CAB) with aim to advise Department of Environment on development and decision about optimal alternative of reconstruction of public park Jižní Svahy.
2. CAB role is mainly to initiate, provide recommendations and provide advises.
3. CAB reports to City Council.
4. CAB co-operates in its activities with City Council, City Assembly, Municipal Department of Environment and other departments and institutions as well as with public.

**II. Membership**

1. Member of CAB is physical person or delegated representative of legal person.
2. New individuals or institutions express their interest to become members to Head of Municipal Department of Environment who communicates that to members of CAB and City Council. CAB may recommend new members to City Council.
3. Membership is decided by decision of City Council. Membership is terminated by decision of City Council. CAB may recommend termination of membership to City Council.
4. Citizens who do not want to become formal members of CAB can participate at CAB meetings as observers. Observers do not have right to vote, however they have right to provide their impute in specified time of the meeting or participate in discussion based on the decision of the CAB.

**III. Rights and Responsibilities of CAB**

1. CAB has the right to access all documents and information related to **public park Jižní Svahy** owned by municipality and all its institutions and departments.
2. CAB has right to invite external experts, representatives of relevant institutions or municipal departments for its meetings.

3. CAB is expected to provide written suggestions, recommendations and comments to City Council, City Assembly, Municipal Department of Environment. CAB is further providing comments to relevant materials discussed by City Council, City Assembly, when asked.
4. City Council, City Assembly are required to respond in writing to suggestions recommendations and comments provided by CAB no later than in 20 days.

#### **IV. Operations of CAB**

1. CAB is called up by delegated member of CAB.
2. Meeting agenda is developed at preceding CAB meeting and modified according needs.
3. CAB meets as needed, but at least 5 times a year. Dates of the meetings are agreed preceding CAB meeting or decided by delegated member of CAB.
4. Decisions of CAB are adopted preferably by consensus of all members. If necessary CAB decides by majority of all present members.
5. CAB is able to adopt decision only if more than 50% of members are present.
6. Minutes are recorded from each meeting which includes list of attendance, tasks and responsibilities. The minutes are recorded by secretary of the CAB. Minutes are available in the office Secretary and placed on municipal web site.

#### **V. Technical support**

1. Technical and administrative support for CAB activities is provided by Municipal Department of Environment.
2. Secretary of the CAB is and employee of Municipal Department of Environment. Secretary is responsible for all administrative, organizational and technical tasks related to CAB work.

in Zlin 20.6.2000

-----  
Petr Novak  
Mayor

-----  
Jiri Svoboda  
Head  
Dep. of Environment

