

Best Practices for Agricultural Advisory Committees

- **Meetings:** Keep seasonal farming schedules in mind (e.g. less frequent meetings during peak farming; evening meetings).
- **Conflict of interest guidelines:** Where applicable follow the provincial *Community Charter* conflict of interest guidelines.
- **Regular contact:** A staff liaison should contact AAC members regularly; for example, through monthly emails.
- **Scope:** The AAC should address day-to-day issues and broader initiatives. Note: If the AAC is an official Advisory Planning Committee under section 898 of the *Local Government Act*, the AAC's activities need to be outlined in a bylaw. Additional activities need to be directed by the council or board.
- **Relationship:** Maintain transparent, effective communications between the AAC and council or regional board.
- **Connect:** Engage with the farming and ranching community beyond the AAC members.

Ways to Connect with Farm Community

- **Appoint** farm representatives to advisory planning commissions and other council/board committees.
- **Seek** the advice of farmers' institutes and commodity/industry groups and cooperatives.
- **Maintain** contact with staff at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Agricultural Land Commission.
- **Appoint** a member of the council or board as the farm/ranch liaison.
- **Designate** a staff person to focus on agricultural issues.
- **Coordinate** farm tours and workshops for government staff, politicians, and/or the public.



Provincial Support

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food supports local government AACs by making knowledgeable staff available and by sharing information.

- Ministry staff can attend AAC meetings as non-voting technical resource members, or as guest speakers.
- The Ministry's Strengthening Farming Program website has a number of resources including a model terms of reference, a sample volunteer's contract, an inventory of best practices, and a list of all active agricultural advisory committees in the province.
- Ministry staff host biennial AAC workshops. The overall objective of these workshops is to enable participants to provide effective advice and support to local councils and boards.

More information available: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/strengthening-farming/agricultural-advisory-committees

Get in touch with
knowledgeable staff
from anywhere in British Columbia:
Phone: 1-888-221-7141
Email: AgriServiceBC@gov.bc.ca
www.gov.bc.ca/agriservicebc

Agricultural Advisory Committees



Ministry of
Agriculture
and Food

Agricultural Advisory Committees — A Link to Your Farming Community



What is an Agricultural Advisory Committee?

Agricultural Advisory Committees (AACs) are an effective way for local governments to link with their farm and ranch communities. An AAC is appointed and functions similarly to other advisory committees of councils or regional boards. In BC, over 40 local governments have AACs to work with councils and regional boards. For a current list of AACs, visit: [Agricultural Advisory Committees - Province of BC \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://www.agriculturaladvisorycommittees.gov.bc.ca).

Agricultural Advisory Committees Activities

Local governments with AACs have access to the advice of knowledgeable members of the farm and ranch community on any issue that might affect agriculture. Although each AAC functions slightly differently, most advise local governments in two areas:

Day to Day Issues:

- Review proposed bylaws, official plans and rezoning applications
- Advise on applications under the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*
- Share insight on water supply and drainage issues
- Give feedback on the effectiveness of insect and weed control programs
- Provide input on land use proposals that impact agriculture, such as recreation or transportation plans
- Propose local government policies related to farming

Broader Initiatives:

- Steer agricultural studies, economic plans, and agricultural area plans to completion
- Assist with implementation of plans
- Assist with the development of agricultural edge policies to enhance land use compatibility
- Advise on the need for and appropriateness of farm bylaws
- Steer studies and reports on farm infrastructure needs
- Advise on drainage or irrigation issues
- Steer studies on the impacts of transportation and parks and recreation proposals
- Assist with farm tours and on-farm visits

How to Start an Agricultural Advisory Committee

First Steps

- Contact Ministry staff to discuss AAC formation.
- Research and speak to other jurisdictions with AACs.
- Assign staff to provide on-going support, ensure the AAC functions smoothly, and to transfer information between the AAC and council or board. Many communities assign a planner and administrative staff to work with the AAC.
- Develop a “terms of reference” for the AAC. Be sure to maintain a degree of flexibility so it can meet local needs. For a model terms of reference: [Agricultural Advisory Committees - Province of BC \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://www.agriculturaladvisorycommittees.gov.bc.ca).



Appointing Advisory Committee Members

- Contact agricultural groups – ideally, a broad-based agricultural group will nominate AAC members from its membership. If not, local agricultural groups could nominate most members and elected officials could appoint a few members.
- Ensure that a committed Chairperson is available to lead, and to encourage fruitful discussion and effective decision-making.
- At least two-thirds of the AAC members should be farmers/ranchers. Appointments should represent a cross-section of commodity types important in the community. If relevant, include representation from the food processing/distribution sector.
- Appoint a council or board member to stay apprised of the AAC's activities and report back to the council or board.
- Consider appointing a university representative involved with agricultural courses or research.
- If the local government area includes other major land uses such as rural residential, forestry or recreation, consider including some members that represent these interests, but ensure that farmers remain the majority of the membership.
- Where there are inter-related issues and a local government has several committees, consider having joint meetings or “cross-over” committee members. For example, there is often a strong relationship between agriculture and economic development. Members could be appointed to sit on both the AAC and economic development committee or commission. Other examples include environment, planning advisory, parks and recreation, or transportation committees.
- Non-voting AAC members could include local government planning staff and secretarial staff, Ministry staff, Agricultural Land Commission staff, and council or board members.
- Set term limits for AAC appointments and indicate the number of times an individual can be renewed. Jurisdictions with few farmers may want to choose longer term limits.

