



Excellence Exchange Corner

Q: What is the leader's role in supporting shared governance councils?

A: A well-enculturated shared governance model requires continuous evaluation, support, and improvement. Both leaders and staff serve distinct and important roles in this process to ensure the success of shared governance.

The leader's role is to set and communicate clear guidelines around council decisions (Responsibility, Authority, and Accountability), coach and mentor council members, and foster a culture of accountability. Leaders help councils function effectively without taking charge.

Fundamental roles for leaders in shared governance include:

- Serve as a resource for clinical staff
- Inspire and affirm council work
- Coach and mentor council members
- Ensure paid, protected time for council work
- Support chairs in agenda development
- Provide tools to complete projects
- Manage conflict
- **Clearly articulate expectations**

If council decisions are not supported, pause to reflect on the following questions:

- ***Was the decision within the scope of the council?*** (practice, the practice environment, or professional practice)
- ***Were the guidelines of the decision clearly articulated?*** For example, if the council is asked to select a new bed alarm, budget and vendor parameters must be clearly articulated and understood.
- ***If not, did the council ask for this information before making a decision?***

It is important for leaders to clearly articulate the responsibility, authority, and accountability for decisions of the council. If the council does not receive clear information, it is the responsibility of the council to ask for it. If boundaries are not clearly defined it leads to confusion as to who makes what decisions, which discourages and derails shared decision-making. If decisions are made within the articulated boundaries, the leader's role is then to support the decision. It is important to provide education for both leaders and staff regarding their role and expectations in shared governance.

Q: What is the difference between a charter and bylaws?

A: Bylaws serve as the "rules" or "blueprint" of shared governance in your organization. At a minimum, one set of bylaws oversee the shared governance model. The bylaws outline the purpose of shared governance, the purpose of each council and the function of the councils. Bylaws include membership (roles, not names), term limits, expectations, meeting times, ground rules, and the decision-making model.

The charter is a set of guidelines based on the bylaws that states the individual council's purpose, membership, guiding principles, responsibilities, and goals. Some organizations choose to combine these

into one document; some may use different terminology. Keep in mind that shared governance is not a one-size-fits-all approach and should be tailored to meet the unique needs of the organization.

Both bylaws and charters should be reviewed annually and amended, as necessary.

Please contact Gen Guanci gguanci@chcm.com, Marky Medeiros mmedeiros@chcm.com, or Amber Orton aorton@chcm.com for more information about shared governance. Keep the questions coming!