



## Status Update #1

# Advisory Bodies Enhancement Project



July 2025

## Office of Community & Civic Life Engagement Officer Amanda Garcia-Snell

Tuesday, July 22, 2025

### City of Portland

Office of the  
City Administrator  
1221 SW 4th Ave. # 110  
Portland, OR, 97204

Status Update #1: Advisory Bodies Enhancement Project

**Dear Honorable Portland City Councilors and Portlanders,**

I am pleased to share our first status update for the Advisory Bodies Enhancement Project.

The transition into the new form of government requires updates to the City's approach to appointed boards, commissions, and committees (ABCs) to gain clarity, consistency and better coordination between the executive and legislative branches of government.

Portlanders were introduced to this project in the [June 24 Rose City Connection newsletter](#). The project team will inform Portlanders of our progress using the citywide newsletter. Portlanders are invited to offer feedback on our work, including those who served on and staffed advisory bodies.

Future status updates will include the project team's most current and upcoming work activities and showcase our progress. Additional status updates are slated for August and September 2025. A final report will be issued when the project is completed at the end of the year. Our work and ongoing updates will also be maintained on our website:

[Portland.Gov/AdvisoryEnhancementProject](https://Portland.Gov/AdvisoryEnhancementProject).

Thank you, and we look forward to providing you with additional updates.



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## **INTRODUCTION**

This is the first status update for the Advisory Bodies Enhancement Project. The update is available on the project’s website at [portland.gov/AdvisoryEnhancementProject](https://portland.gov/AdvisoryEnhancementProject).

A note on vocabulary. The term “ABCs” is used throughout this document to refer to all City-appointed boards, commissions, committees, etc. It is a term used by some other jurisdictions to be catchall that is broader than the term “advisory bodies” and recognizes that not all ABCs are advisory; in fact, some ABCs have independent decision-making powers.

The draft project deliverables in this update include:

1. Establish a Citywide purpose statement
2. Update the classification system
3. Establish creation guidelines
4. Provide for periodic review
5. Establish dissolution guidelines

Feedback on the content of this update and the overall project is invited and can be sent to [advisorybodies@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:advisorybodies@portlandoregon.gov). The project team also created a [project feedback form](#) to collect public comments through late 2025.

## **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

### **Background**

The significant charter reforms passed by voters in November 2022 raised questions about what the changes meant for the Advisory Body Program, and the need for clarity and coordination between the executive and legislative branches in advisory body processes.

In early 2024, an internal Restructuring Advisory Bodies Workgroup formed to create a proposal to restructure the advisory bodies program. The Workgroup was paused in June 2024 to await the hiring of the City’s first engagement officer and to focus on creating an [inventory of the City’s ABCs](#). Workgroup members discussed streamlining ABCs while improving community engagement and the efficacy of the program.

On March 31, 2025, the new engagement officer presented [an outline of a project to review and enhance the Advisory Body Program](#) to council’s Governance Committee. The Governance Committee approved the project moving ahead.

## Goals

The project goals are to:

- Align the ABC program with Portland's new form of government including its new checks and balances and district-based representation;
- Create a shared understanding of the overall goal and intent of advisory bodies;
- Standardize equity-centered practices for appointments, operations, and volunteer and staff experience;
- Promote better resourced and more empowered, meaningful, and integrated ABCs;
- Ensure existing ABCs are continuing to address an identified need or goal of the City and ensure meaningful participation by those serving; and
- Expand the availability of information about ABCs so Portlanders know how to find and engage with their work.

## Timeline: April to December 2025

April	Project begins
May	Project goals and workplan developed
June	Draft project deliverables: purpose statement and classification system Review of existing ABCs begins
July	Draft project deliverables: creation of new ABCs; periodic review of ABCs; and dissolution of ABCs Status Update #1 released
August	Draft project deliverables: recruitment to application closure; vetting to appointment; appointment to confirmation; and diversity of applicants and members Review of existing ABCs completed Status Update #2 released
September	Draft project deliverables: service expectations; service restrictions; volunteer supports; bylaws and meetings; relationship to City leadership; and post-service

Inventory of existing ABCs by service area or office, class, and council policy committee

Status Update #3 released

October Project report with recommendations released

November Report to city council with implementation plan

December Implementation begins

The timeline may evolve as the project progresses.

## **Key Deliverables**

The key project deliverables are:

- A purpose statement for ABCs at the City;
- A classification system and common vocabulary for ABCs;
- Guidelines for the lifecycle of ABCs including creation of new advisory bodies, periodic review of existing advisory bodies, and dissolution of advisory bodies;
- Standard, equitable practices for operations and volunteer/staff experiences including guidelines from recruitment to confirmation, increasing diversity of applicants and members, service expectations, service restrictions, volunteer supports, bylaws and meetings, relationship to City leadership, and post-service;
- A review of existing advisory bodies with recommendations for any changes;
- An accurate inventory of current advisory bodies by service area or office, class, and council committee with an understanding of staffing and resources required to maintain those bodies;
- Defined roles and responsibilities; and
- An implementation plan.

## **Inputs**

Portland's transition into its new form of government is the catalyst for the City to review and enhance its Advisory Body Program; however there were preexisting inconsistencies in how ABCs are managed and known sentiments Portlanders have provided to the City about their varying experiences when volunteering on an ABC. The most significant inputs to date include:

- **Existing City materials.** The City has many available materials that inform this project including the City's new charter, current and historic records and

practices of the Advisory Bodies Program, previous feedback from ABC volunteers including feedback gathered by the Government Transition Advisory Committee when studying the City's community engagement structure, and existing ABCs and their enabling legislation.

- **Council direction.** The current council has shared many perspectives from the dais about ABCs particularly when the creation of new ABCs and confirmation of ABC appointments have come before council. These perspectives informed the draft project deliverables. In addition, the Governance Committee and its leadership has provided guidance throughout the project.
- **Staff expertise.** City staff have invaluable knowledge to inform this work. Monthly meetings are held with staff liaisons to ABCs to provide project updates and receive feedback on draft project deliverables. The project team plans to meet one-on-one with staff.
- **Peer city research and local jurisdiction review.** Peer city research has included Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Denver City and County, Fresno, Minneapolis, Sacramento, and San Antonio. In addition, the project is considering local practices from jurisdictions such as Multnomah and Washington Counties and Metro. There are no standard best practices for ABCs commonly used by jurisdictions in the Portland metro region or across the country.

The best and most comprehensive model available is from the City of Minneapolis. In 2023, Minneapolis proposed a series of reforms that is currently being implemented. You can learn about their reform effort [here](#). For this update, Minneapolis' work was particularly helpful in proposing creation legislation requirements, periodic review, and dissolution guidelines.

### **Role of Internal Workgroup**

An internal workgroup is being formed to provide thought partnership. The workgroup will include a council representative (Councilor Kanal), the engagement officer, a city attorney, a representative from the Office of Equity & Human Rights, and one representative from each of the four service areas (city operations, community and economic development, public safety, and public works).

### **Review of Existing Advisory Bodies**

An important component of this project is to review and assess existing ABCs at the City. There may not be a right number of ABCs for the City. The appropriate number may vary based on the perspectives the City needs to do its work. Existing bodies

should address an identified goal or need of the City and ensure meaningful participation of those serving.

Guidelines were sent to the service areas for the review and assessment. The purpose is to:

- Ensure an accurate inventory of existing advisory bodies;
- Assess current supports such as staffing and resources;
- Identify inactive, outdated, or redundant ABCs;
- Consider sunset clauses for ongoing bodies that may not have a long-term need; and
- Recommend any changes to existing ABCs.

Service area reviews are due Aug. 26, 2025 to the engagement officer and the findings and recommendations will be included in the report to city council in fall 2025.

An inventory of existing ABCs by service area or office, class, and council policy committee will be available in September 2025.

### **Draft Project Deliverables**

The draft project deliverables in this update include:

- 1. Establish a Citywide purpose statement**
- 2. Update the classification system**
- 3. Establish creation guidelines**
- 4. Provide for periodic review**
- 5. Establish dissolution guidelines**

Please note these are drafts that we anticipate evolving as additional feedback is received.

Feedback on draft deliverables can be sent to [advisorybodies@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:advisorybodies@portlandoregon.gov).

## **FOUNDATIONAL WORK**

### **Draft Project Deliverable #1: Establish a Citywide purpose statement**

*Note: The following purpose statement is based on existing bodies' purpose descriptions, language from the [2017 resolution](#) creating the Advisory Body Program at the City, statements from current councilors from the dais about advisory bodies, and feedback from staff.*

## **Preamble**

The City of Portland prioritizes public participation in City processes. One of the most important forums for such public participation is through service on appointed advisory boards, commissions, and committees (ABCs). The primary purpose of ABCs is to ensure public perspective is incorporated into City functions and actions.

For ABCs to be empowered, effective, and integrated into City governance, there must be shared understanding among City leadership, staff, and volunteers about their purpose. This statement is grounded in two core tenets:

1. The importance of aligning with and advancing the City's core values of anti-racism, equity, transparency, communication, collaboration, and fiscal responsibility; and
2. The broad range and diversity of ABCs – each with unique functions, yet all playing a role in promoting community-centered governance.

This purpose statement outlines the essential contributions of ABCs to building a City government that is made with the community, for the community.

**ABCs contribute to good City governance that is made with the community, for the community** in that ABCs:

1. **Increase accountability in government actions.** Monitor and evaluate City processes, decisions, and outcomes to ensure they reflect community priorities. Provide constructive critique to ensure City leaders are answerable to the public. Maintain feedback loops between the City and the community.
2. **Improve City policies and operations.** Serve as a conduit to community priorities and perspectives to ensure government better reflects collective needs and delivers more effective, efficient, and just outcomes. Offer expertise and guidance that challenges the status quo and support informed City decision-making by providing specialized knowledge and public input.
3. **Enhance public trust and legitimacy.** Build trust in City processes through openness, responsiveness, and consistent community engagement. Improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of government actions by grounding them in community input.
4. **Promote inclusive and collaborative governance.** Inform policy and decision-making with a broad, diverse cross-section of Portlanders' perspectives – not just the well-connected – and the City. Promote the greatest diversity by removing barriers to participation.

5. **Strengthen civic engagement and representation.** Provide meaningful ways for a broad spectrum of community interests to contribute to civic life and decision-making by creating accessible forums for discussion, input, and feedback on City policies and actions. Foster civic learning, empowerment, and shared leadership between the community and City leadership.
6. **Advance racial justice and equity.** Repair historic and current-day lack of access to arenas that impact City decisions. Ensure systemically excluded and institutionally oppressed Portland communities are a part of the policy- and decision-making processes contributing to more equitable outcomes.

**Draft Project Deliverable #2: Update the classification system**

*Note: The City’s existing classification system<sup>1</sup> doesn’t capture the broad range and diversity of ABCs and the City lacks common nomenclature for ABCs.*

Class	Sub-Class
<b>ABCs for which the City doesn’t have sole authority to modify or dissolve their functions or bodies</b>  <i>Nomenclature: “boards” “commissions” “oversight committees”</i>	<b>“Independent” charter bodies</b> often make independent decisions or provide oversight within a specific area of City policy or operations. They may also make recommendations to council. These bodies exist in charter and can only be changed by a vote of Portlanders. Some periodically convene. <i>Ex. Independent District Commission</i>
	<b>Ballot measure oversight bodies</b> review and oversee implementation and expenditure of City funds. These bodies are required by voter-approved ballot measures. Most of these bodies automatically sunset at the end of the body or levy. <i>Ex. Arts Access Fund Oversight Committee</i>
	<b>Bodies that fulfill State or Federal law required functions</b> include (1) appeal boards that interpret City code, review decisions of City officials, and hear appeals. They are permanent bodies but may convene on an as-needed basis. Board actions are often not

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<sup>1</sup> The October 2017 resolution defined three high-level types of ABCs: Type 1 (Bona fide governing body of a public body. Collective cull of ideas to advise council by a designated group of individuals. Ongoing); Type II: (Bona fide governing body of a public body. Collective cull of ideas to advise Council by a designated group of individuals. Limited duration / issue specific); and Type III: (Before bringing an idea to council or implementing at bureau level, bureau staff to gather input from a variety of designated constituencies and incorporate ideas into final product or proposal to council. City staff members do the work of gathering the ideas shared and turning them into a proposal or policy. These bodies are exempt from public meetings law.)

	<p>appealable to council. Includes associated bodies, e.g., Structural Engineering Advisory Committee advises the Appeals Board; (2) entities that are the City’s way of complying with State law: Design, Historic Landmarks and Planning Commissions, and the Development Review Advisory Committee; and (3) entities that perform duties required by Federal law: Deferred Compensation Committee. <i>Ex. Building Code Board of Appeal</i></p>
	<p><b>Intergovernmental bodies</b> provide advice and guidance to multiple jurisdictions based on a particular constituency or over a particular area. They get their authority from intergovernmental agreements. <i>Ex. Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission</i></p>
	<p><b>Court mandated bodies</b> are those required by court order. <i>Ex. Behavioral Health Unit Advisory Committee</i></p>
<p><b>ABCs for which the City has sole authority to modify or dissolve their functions or bodies</b></p> <p><i>Nomenclature for ongoing: “advisory committees” And for limited: “workgroups” or “taskforces”</i></p>	<p><b>Ongoing advisory bodies</b> provide guidance on the development, maintenance, review and/or update of specific City plans, policies, rates and/or codes. They may advise one or more bureaus and may advise either or both the executive and legislative branches. They may gather information, generate proposals, receive public input; and provide advice and recommendations to the City on limited, specific subjects. Some may convene infrequently, e.g., the Portland Permitting and Development Financial Advisory Committee meets twice per year. This class also includes ongoing bodies that cannot make decisions for or recommendations to a public body, but that advise City staff or an individual official. <i>Ex. Portland Parks and Recreation Board</i></p> <p><b>Time- or action-limited advisory bodies</b> are the same as ongoing advisory bodies but are designed to sunset at a specific time or action. This class also includes time- or action-limited advisory bodies that make recommendations to and report to an individual if that single individual lacks authority to act on the body’s recommendations and must pass those recommendations on unchanged to a public body. <i>Ex. Renewable Fuel Standard Technical Advisory Committee</i></p>

Additional entities that may not be subject to all guidelines of the Advisory Bodies Enhancement Project:

- **Time- or action-limited bodies exempt from public meetings law.** These are bodies that provide avenues to solicit input and ideas from various designated constituencies and may make recommendations to and report to an individual official or City staff. City staff or elected officials do the work of turning the input and ideas into a proposal or policy. These bodies often advise staff on a specific time- or action-limited project and may not have ties to City leadership. These bodies are exempt from public meetings law because they cannot make decisions for or recommendations to a public body.
- **Informal sounding boards or community consultations** are often one-offs or a short series of opportunities for the public to provide input into City work and may also receive informal reports from the City that participants bring back to their communities.
- **Bodies comprised solely of City employees.**
- **Interagency bodies where the City has only elected representation.**

## *LIFECYCLE OF ABCs*

### **Draft Project Deliverable #3: Establish creation guidelines**

#### **Goals**

- Achieve greater standardization and consistency in the creation of ABCs and align the practices to the new form of government's roles and responsibilities.
- Ensure that any ongoing ABC has a clear mandate that is broad enough to meet ongoing, long-term needs of the City. To the extent possible, the preference is for the formation of time- or action-limited ABCs to address non-ongoing needs or issues.

#### **Charter Language**

- The Council may establish such boards and commissions as it may deem necessary in addition to boards and commissions established by this charter, and the Council may abolish or alter from time to time any boards or commissions it has established or may establish. All powers and duties of abolished boards and commissions shall be exercised and performed by the Council. Charter Section 2-103.
- The Mayor may establish such advisory boards and advisory commissions as the Mayor deems necessary, and the Mayor may abolish or alter from time to time any advisory boards or advisory commissions the Mayor has established or may establish. Charter Section 2-103.
- The Council may delegate any of its quasi-judicial functions or powers to subordinate officers, boards or commissions as it may find appropriate. The Mayor may delegate any of the Mayor's executive or administrative functions or powers to subordinate officers, boards or commissions as the Mayor may

find appointment. The Council must not exercise any of the executive and administrative powers granted to the Mayor by this charter. Charter Section 2-104.

- The Mayor appoints members of boards and commissions subject to council confirmation. Charter Section 2-601.

### **Creation Manner & Authority**

<b>Sub-class</b>	<b>Manner of creation</b>	<b>Authority to create</b>
“Independent” charter bodies	Ballot measure	Portlanders
Ballot measure oversight bodies	Ballot measure	Portlanders
Bodies that fulfill State or Federal law required functions	Ordinance or Mayoral action	Council or Mayor
Intergovernmental bodies	Intergovernmental agreement	Mayor
Court mandated	Court order	Court
Ongoing advisory bodies	Resolution or Mayoral action or individual City official action	Council or Mayor or individual City official
Time- or action-limited advisory bodies	Resolution or Mayoral action or individual City official action	Council or Mayor or individual City official

### **Review Prior to Creation**

Prior to completing a creation form, the sponsor of the proposed ABC will share the intended purpose, duties, and responsibilities with the engagement officer. The engagement officer will assist the sponsor in reviewing existing ABCs to ensure there aren’t other bodies with the same or similar purpose, duties, and functions.

The engagement officer should provide a written analysis to the sponsor on any possible duplications or conflicts with other existing bodies. This analysis should also identify if an existing body could absorb the duties and functions anticipated for the new ABC.

### **Creation Considerations**

- Balance flexibility with specificity.
  - Do not name a specific council policy committee that the ABC may relate to or the specific staff names who support the ABC because these may change over time.
  - Number of meetings: provide a minimum number of meetings per year for the body to remain active but don’t include a specific number of meetings per year.

- Number of seats: consider whether to set the number of seats, a maximum, or a range. Setting the number of seats means staff can predict the size and nature of the conversation and makes a guarantee to the public that the City will strike to achieve the number.
- Define purpose and powers.
  - Ensure the body has sufficient authority to impact the City's work by clearly defining the purpose in advance of recruitment.
  - Define the ABC's purpose and powers in advance of recruitment to prevent mission creep. Do not enumerate all the powers to allow discretion which is appropriate for the ABCs that are an extension of the administrative side of government.
  - Identify one or more City goals, or needs, that the ABC is tied to and include development of outcomes to advance that goal or need. The ABC is then responsible for identifying actions to reach those outcomes.
  - Distinguish between what should be in the creation form vs. bylaws. See the City's guidance in the bylaws template. Ask what is within the ABC's power to change and what isn't.

## **Creation Forms**

To facilitate the process of creating ABCs, the engagement officer, in consultation with the City Attorney's Office and other key staff, will prepare creation templates (including ordinance and resolution templates) for staff.

Creation forms will include the following minimum elements:

1. Official name of the body.
2. The classification of the body.
3. The body's purpose, powers, functions and responsibilities, all stated with reasonable specificity.
4. Whom the body advises.
5. The number of seats on the body, whether qualified or unqualified, and the appointing authority for each seat.
6. Whether alternates and/or reserve alternates will be appointed and, if so, why. Alternates may be helpful when delayed work is deeply problematic because alternates step in quickly to fill a vacancy. Include the City official who can decide who will best make a representative body from the alternates when someone leaves – can be a bureau director or someone similar (removed from the direct staff but still knowledgeable).
7. The length of each term and whether terms are staggered.
8. Meeting attendance requirements to retain membership, if any.

9. Limitations on reappointment, if any.
10. Any compensation or privileges that members will receive and when and how applicable.
11. The quorum required for the body's meetings.
12. The City's bureau that will be assigned, under the mayor's direction, to assist the body in its work; or council operations.
13. Resource requirements to be provided for the body's work, including budget and staffing needs, if any.
14. Reporting requirements in addition to those for the annual workplan and annual report.
15. When the body will cease to exist, if applicable.
16. A statement that the legislation becomes ineffective if the ABC is found by the mayor or council, depending upon the creation authority, to be inactive or outdated.

The creation form will travel with a fiscal and budget analysis, an economic and real estate development analysis, and the engagement officer's review outlined above.

#### **Draft Project Deliverable #4: Provide for periodic review**

Goal: Provide for periodic review of existing ABCs to ensure they are continuing to address an identified need or goal of the City and to ensure meaningful participation by those serving.

The engagement officer provides a recurring four-year standard review process in which 25% of the total number of the City's ABCs are evaluated each year and a report submitted, including any recommendations, to the city council and mayor.

The review should consider whether any ABCs are:

- **Inactive.** Meaning it has failed to convene any meeting for a continuous period of eighteen months.
- **Outdated.** Meaning it no longer fulfills or addresses an identified goal or need of the City. It no longer ensures the City gets the perspectives needed to do the work of the City. The City no longer needs the advice.
  - If an outdated ABC helps Portlanders get good information about what the City is doing, then the City should consider other ways it can get the information to community.
- **Duplicative or conflicting.** Meaning its purpose, duties, and responsibilities could be combined with another ABC with similar purpose, duties, and functions.
- **Ongoing but could be time- or action-limited.** Meaning the ABCs is ongoing but doesn't have a long-term need and a sunset (either a date or event) could be added.

The review should collect all reports and workplans for the reviewed ABCs, ensuring that every ABC has, at minimum, an annual report and annual workplan.

ABCs whose work is entirely dependent on external submittals are exempt from annual workplans. However, the relevant service area or bureau should submit a high-level overview of what they will bring and when to the ABC so that the City has a way to assess the demand to confirm the advisement is needed.

In addition, the review should assess the capacity of the City to well-resource the list of reviewed ABCs. “Well-resourced” refers to the City’s ability to stay up to date with appointments, provide adequate staffing, budgeting to maintain their work, access to information for volunteers, and integrate the work of the ABCs into the City’s work.

### **Draft Project Deliverable #5: Establish dissolution guidelines**

Goal: Achieve greater standardization and consistency in the dissolution of ABCs.

ABCs are dissolved in the following manners:

- Some ABCs automatically dissolve upon the completion of their assigned task or at the time set in the enabling legislation.
- ABCs created by ordinance and resolution would be dissolved in the same manner in which they were created.

In addition, the engagement officer will periodically review existing ABCs to assess whether any are inactive, outdated, duplicative, or ongoing but could be time- or action-limited. The review will also assess the overall capacity of the City to well-resource existing ABCs. “Well-resourced” refers to the City’s ability to stay up to date with appointments, provide adequate staffing and access to information for volunteers, and integrate the work of the ABCs into the City’s work. The engagement officer will make recommendations to the mayor and council.

### **STAY ENGAGED & FUTURE UPDATES**

Feedback on the content of this update and the overall project is invited and can be sent to [advisorybodies@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:advisorybodies@portlandoregon.gov).

The webpage for the Advisory Bodies Enhancement Project is [Portland.Gov/AdvisoryEnhancementProject](https://Portland.Gov/AdvisoryEnhancementProject).

The project team also created a [project feedback form](#) to collect public comments through late 2025.

Status Update #2 (anticipated August 2025) will include updated versions of the project deliverables contained in this update and new draft project deliverables related to composition, including:

- Recruitment to application closure;
- Vetting to appointment;
- Appointment to confirmation; and
- Diversity of applicants and members.

Status Update #3 (anticipated September 2025) will include updated versions of the project deliverables contained in the first two updates and new draft project deliverables related to volunteer experience and expectations, including:

- Service expectations;
- Service restrictions;
- Volunteer supports;
- Bylaws and meetings;
- Relationship to City leadership; and
- Post-service.

An inventory of existing ABCs by service area or office, class, and council policy committee will be included in the September status update.