

## SHARED GOVERNANCE

The definition of shared governance involves the experience of unified sharing between council/group/committee members to improve the quality of their mission/purpose. It involves sharing ideas, concerns, and recommendations for enhancing long-term goals.

United We Stand—Divided We Fall: This phrase promotes unity and strength. The words encourage and inspire; being alone is harder and encourages failure. One of Aesop's fables says the lion pursued a bunch of oxen without success in overtaking an ox. Then, when the pack of oxen dispersed and each went their way—the lion caught his ox. It indicates the importance of "United We Stand—Divided We Fall!"

Shared governance is used universally in many endeavors, from marriages to the most important and complicated businesses and educational efforts. It is a significant part of leadership/administration for the survival of the fittest by working together. No one claims that sharing in an organization is easy, as many involved people have strong personalities and opinions; however, this effort of collective and shared communication has its rewards.

Shared governance councils/groups/committees have documented standards to measure expected and competent outcomes. They are:

Council/Group/Committee Title – The title represents a general category of concern.

Philosophy – The belief system related to the need—start the paragraph with "We believe."

Goals – The end-point(s) to be attained—start with action verbs related to cognitive (intellectual), psychomotor (doing), and affective (attitudes). (Refer to Bloom's Taxonomy for suggestions)

Purpose/Mission – The intended "good" to be accomplished—start with the word "To."

Policies – The "rules" keep entropy (movement of all universal things and happenings toward randomness and deterioration) under control.

Rule of Three Concept – The uneven number of participants helps to result in voting determinations. A majority vote determines the best options if the number of participants represents an even number. If an even number of participants result in a voting tie, the leader's vote breaks the tie.

Leadership Expectations Related to Shared Governance:

1. Know the difference between leadership and management. Leadership involves others in problem-solving, and management tells others what to do. Shared Governance is leadership!
2. Know the concept of entropy and how this natural universal movement toward randomness and deterioration can alter councils/groups/committees intended standards (expectations by which a council's/group's success is measured.)
3. Determine, document, and update shared governance standards.
4. Involve and know people by name, title, and the council/group/committee leader.
5. Incorporate and maintain shared governance principles into everyday work.
6. Perform council/group/committee member evaluations of their job descriptions.
7. Understand the potential good, problems, challenges, and concerns related to implementing and maintaining shared governance.
8. Perform in a manner to be legally accountable.

9. Know where the “BUCK STOPS”—and it stops with the leader and the LAW. The job descriptions and expectations of a shared government will help prevent litigation and increase leadership prowess.

Benefits of Shared Governance:

1. Improves outcomes and safety.
2. Encourages employee partnership, equity, accountability, and ownership of results.
3. Optimizes efficiency of standards.
4. Improves employee retention.
5. Improves teamwork.
6. Energizes employees resulting in a feeling of making a positive difference.

What has been presented in this article might not be what your organization needs as you pursue your shared governance quest with your employees. Make up your own council/group/committee titles, standards, and participants that best suit your needs. You will benefit by using your designed shared governance counsels/groups/committees to collect previously unspoken or shared thoughts and behaviors. Then, you will truly understand the meaning of “Together We Stand.”

Carolyn Taylor, Ed.D. M.N.