

Labor-Management Committee Basics

A Guide for
Establishing and
Maintaining Labor-
Management
Committees

NYS & CSEA Partnership

New York State managers and CSEA leaders have a long history of using the labor-management committee process to achieve mutual goals. These mutual goals include advancing the mission of their agencies, improving the quality of work-life, and enhancing labor and management relations.

The Labor-Management Committee Basics booklet is intended to provide readers with the fundamentals of committee operations. It can be used as a resource for those who are interested in forming labor-management committees and for those working to improve the effectiveness of their existing committees. We respect the fact that each committee is unique in its history, purpose, and membership. Using this guide is only one means toward achieving effective relations. It is our hope that Basics, complemented by experience and training, will help labor and management achieve their mutual goals in a collaborative manner.

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Partnership Mission:

Through labor-management cooperation, the NYS & CSEA Partnership for Education and Training provides programs and services for New York State employees and agencies that promote:

- Increased career mobility, workplace safety and health, and job satisfaction.
- A highly skilled, motivated, and productive workforce committed to excellence in public service.
- Effective labor-management relationships between State and CSEA representatives.

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Labor-Management Cooperation

History of Labor-Management Committees (LMCs)

Historically, the interests of labor and management have been different. In the early days of labor negotiations, agreements or contracts often followed lengthy, adversarial, and sometimes brutal confrontation. The portrayal of this early period in labor history has left an image in our minds of embattled and bitter relations between the two sides. Today, many still believe that labor and management are adversaries rather than allies.

While the parties' interests are not identical, labor and management increasingly recognize they have the ability and common desire to resolve many workplace issues in a non-adversarial manner, work hard to build strong relationships, and work together on common issues. This approach has played out in the State of New York for many years.

Important Milestones

In 1967, the Public Employee's Fair Employment Act, also known as the Taylor Law, was enacted in New York. While many people believe the Taylor Law was passed to ban strikes by public employees, its primary purpose was to grant most NYS public employees the right to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining. Its underlying principle is to promote harmonious and cooperative relationships between government and its employees. The law requires public employers to negotiate and enter into agreements (contracts) with unions regarding employees' working conditions such as salaries, health insurance, seniority, work hours, discipline, and others.

Four CSEA Bargaining Units

The Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) represents four bargaining units within NYS government:

- ASU Administrative Services Unit
- ISU Institutional Services Unit
- OSU Operational Services Unit
- DMNA Division of Military and Naval Affairs

Early on, both parties recognized the need to develop and promote cooperative approaches to resolving workplace issues. The authority for LMCs is established in Article 31 (ASU, ISU, and OSU) and Article 25 (DMNA) of the agreements between CSEA and NYS. These articles explicitly provide for the establishment and use of LMCs for the resolution of worksite issues.

The Office of Employee Relations (OER) was created in 1969 to negotiate with public employee unions in the Executive Branch of NYS government. NYS and CSEA have negotiated numerous contracts over the years.

Labor-Management Cooperation

What is an LMC?

An LMC is a group of representatives from labor and management who come together to address workplace issues in a cooperative, collaborative manner. LMCs were created based on the belief that lasting, meaningful improvements in the workplace can come from the joint efforts of labor and management. More than anything else, the success of an LMC depends on the willingness of both parties to work together cooperatively in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

As noted earlier, Article 31 (ASU, ISU, and OSU) and Article 25 (DMNA) of the NYS/CSEA Agreements provide “a forum to discuss and attempt to resolve matters of mutual concern.” This includes meetings between OER and CSEA representatives at the state level, meetings between management and CSEA representatives at the agency level, and meetings between management and CSEA local representatives at the facility level.

LMCs exist in most NYS agencies and facilities. These committees have been responsible for the development of significant innovative programs that enhance employees’ quality of work-life and worksite effectiveness. NYS agencies and facilities are complex, and each agency or facility may operate differently. Workplace composition and needs vary across agencies and facilities. An effective resolution of an issue for one agency or facility might be ineffective or even inappropriate for another. A strength of the joint committee process is that it enables both sides, at the appropriate level, to resolve issues in ways that reflect the unique interests and resources of a particular agency or facility.

LMC Contract References

LMCs may look upon the agreements as all-inclusive, and therefore, there is little that a committee might legitimately consider. However, there are many worksite issues that are within the purview of committees. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that the agreements themselves stipulate topics for which LMCs are regarded as the appropriate setting for discussion and resolution.

Two criteria determine what the committees can discuss: the parties must have the authority to resolve the issue at that level, and the resolution to which the parties agree cannot contravene (go against) the terms of the agreements.

The LMC Contract References table below highlights topics that are specifically noted for LMC discussion and resolution. It is important to note that the parties are free to bring a broad range of issues to the table for mutual discussion and resolution.

*LMC Contract References				
Topic/Issue	ASU	ISU	OSU	DMNA
Bulletin Boards	Art. 4.3(a)(b)	Art. 4.3(a)	Art. 4.3(a)	Art. 4.3(a)(b)
Vacation Scheduling		Art. 10.4(b)(c)	Art. 10.6	
Written Requests for Leave		Art. 10.12(b)		
Doctor s Certificate	Art. 10.16(c)			
Distribution of Overtime	Art. 27.1	Art. 27.1(b)(c)		Art. 19.1(a)
Labor-Management Meetings	Art. 31	Art. 31	Art. 31	Art. 25
Posting of Examination Announcements and Job Vacancies	Art. 45.1, 45.2, 45.3	Art. 45.5		
Safety and Health Local and Departmental Committees	Art. 15.3	Art. 15.3	Art. 15.3	Art. 15.3
Seniority	Art. 44.3, 44.4, 44.5	Art. 44.3, 44.4(a)(b)(c)		
Work Location, Shift and Pass Day Assignments			Art. 50	Art. 27.4
Workday/Workweek	Art. 32	Art. 32(a)	Art. 32.2(a)	
Work-Related Clothing			Art. 49.1(b)	
General Hospital Duty		Art. 51		
Mandatory Alternate Duty Policy	Appendix VIII (D)	Appendix VII (D)	Appendix VIII (D)	Appendix XI (D)
Voluntary Reduction in Work Schedule	Appendix XII (12)(d)	Appendix XII (12)(d)	Appendix XII (12)(d)	Appendix XI (12)(d)
Leave Adjustment for Part Time Annual Salaried Employees	Appendix XIII (Additional Issues)	Appendix XIII (Additional Issues)	Appendix XIII (Additional Issues)	Appendix XII (Additional Issues)

**References are to the 2016-2021 Agreements between CSEA and NYS and are provided for example only. Readers are advised to check subsequent Agreements for any changes.*

Labor-Management Cooperation

Why Should I Support LMCs?

As noted earlier, the contracts call for discussion of various topics in the LMC forum. However, labor and management are also able to discuss a broad range of issues that affect the parties in a collaborative manner. Here are some reasons to support LMCs:



Encourages Involvement

The best way to implement change is to give employees an opportunity to become involved in the process. Experienced managers know that most people are uncomfortable with change, especially if it is imposed from higher levels in the organization without their input. Dealing with change is much easier when employees are involved right from the start. LMCs are an excellent vehicle for this kind of involvement.



Creates a Forum

Neither management nor labor has a monopoly on good ideas. Experienced managers know that LMCs provide a forum for employees to present fresh approaches to workplace issues. Often the best ideas about these issues come from the people who are closest to workplace issues.



Develops Understanding

Labor representatives who have served on LMCs have also found these groups worthwhile. Their experience has given them a better understanding of the background behind management decisions. In addition, they have learned that management really is interested in working cooperatively with them on common concerns.



Nurtures Conversations

Being part of an LMC is an important way for labor to get a voice in the operations of the workplace. LMCs provide a formal, structured method for employees to bring their concerns to management's attention.



Builds Trust

One of the greatest benefits of LMCs is that they help build trust between labor and management. The longer both parties work together, the more likely they will begin to trust one another. But trust requires more than just getting better acquainted. Trust also requires that both parties accept responsibility and follow through on their commitments.

Committee Organization

Getting Started with Your LMC

An LMC can be initiated by labor or management, or jointly by both parties. Sometimes committees are formed because of challenges, disputes, and confrontations between labor and management. However, that is not always the case. Many committees are formed in agencies or facilities that have a history of strong labor-management relations.

What is important is that labor and management agree that a cooperative forum for resolving some workplace issues would be worth their investment of time and resources. Keep in mind: the parties do not have to “like each other,” but it is important that labor and management respect the legitimate role of each side and believe that cooperation is possible.

How are LMC members selected?

Depending on the committee level, the CSEA local president or their designee selects union members for service. Conversely, the appropriate management representative selects the management members to serve on the committee. To ensure a variety of viewpoints, both parties should choose people who represent a cross-section of the organization.

Types of LMCs

There are several types of LMCs. The structure of any committee depends on several factors, including the size, relative centralization of the agency or worksite, composition of the workforce that is represented, and scope.

The different types of NYS/CSEA LMCs include:



Committee Organization

Committee Composition

Depending on the type of LMC, a CSEA local president and a management representative serve as co-chairs of the committee. Many facility LMCs are co-chaired by the CSEA Local President and the Director of Human Resources at the worksite. The other management representatives are typically department heads or other managers who have the authority to make decisions. The co-chairs are equally responsible for organizing and facilitating committee meetings and ensuring that committee decisions are documented and carried out.

Committees should have a balanced number of labor and management representatives. Each side decides how representatives will be selected and what process they will use to select their representatives. At the local level, committees usually range in size from six to ten members. Agency and regional committees are usually larger. However, keep in mind that while committees should have adequate representation, the larger the group, the more difficult it may be to schedule meetings, share information, and reach consensus.

One question you want to ask is – who is missing at the labor-management table? This is especially important where employees are located across more than a single worksite or where there are multiple bargaining units represented in the workforce. Teams also need to decide what process they will use to solicit ideas from their employees or membership.

Once the parties agree to form an LMC, there are several matters that should be considered before the committee meets for the first time. Committees should discuss size and composition, frequency of meetings, agendas, and how committee decisions and actions will be recorded. Many of these issues should be incorporated into a committee operating agreement.

Operating Agreement

An Operating Agreement describes the committee's purpose and formalizes how the committee will function. It includes committee objectives and composition, co-chair responsibilities, agenda preparation, frequency of meetings, process for dispute resolution, ground rules, and more. The Operating Agreement must be signed by both co-chairs.

Operating Agreements provide consistency for LMCs and are a basis for accountability of committee members. They are also considered a public record. Other employees in the workplace are informed about agreed-upon LMC policies and procedures. [A Sample Operating Agreement is provided in Appendix A.](#)

It is important to note that Operating Agreements are unique to each agency/facility and should reflect the characteristics and culture of each agency or facility.

Committees will benefit from taking the time to create the Operating Agreement early in the process. Rules, objectives, and committee members may change over time. Therefore, it is important that committees periodically review and update their Operating Agreement.

**One Question to Ask –
Who is missing at the labor-
management table?
This is especially important
where employees are located
across more than a single
worksite or where there are
multiple bargaining units
represented in the workforce.**



Develop a Strong Structure: Essentials of LMC Processes

Responsibilities of the Parties Before, During, and After Meetings

When people think of LMCs, they usually focus their attention on the committee meeting. While the meeting is the central part of the process, it is more useful to think of the LMC as part of an ongoing process. Committee members have important responsibilities throughout this ongoing process — before, during, and after committee meetings. Without these responsibilities being conducted, meetings would quickly become ineffective and useless.

Co-chairs may wish to use the Committee Meeting Process table as a checklist of the basic tasks that should be completed during each stage of the process.

Committee Meeting Process		
Before the Meeting	During the Meeting	After the Meeting
Each team (CSEA and management) identifies legitimate agenda items for committee discussion.	Committee reviews old business agenda items.	Teams “debrief” by reviewing what worked, what could have gone better, and how to improve.
Teams review and research proposed agenda items.	Committee discusses new agenda items.	Co-chairs review, approve, and sign meeting notes for distribution.
Co-chairs meet to set agenda.	Committee records decisions, action items, person responsible for action items, and due dates in meeting notes.	Co-chairs distribute meeting notes to inform employees about committee decisions and agreements.
Each team holds a preparatory meeting.	Committee refers unresolved issues to other forums as appropriate.	Committee implements decisions and agreements.
		Committee monitors and evaluates actions.



To have successful meetings, committee members need to devote some time to preparation.

Agenda Development and Pre-Meeting Preparation

To have successful meetings, committee members need to devote some time to preparation. This involves developing an agenda and identifying legitimate agenda items. Legitimate agenda items are issues or initiatives that: affect both labor and management; affect a group of people (are not personal or individual issues); help advance the agency's ability to accomplish its mission; improve the quality of employee work-life; or enhance labor and management relations.

A Six-Step Agenda Development Process

The six-step process can be adapted to suit a committee's needs.

Step 1: Co-Chairs Set Deadline for Exchanging Agenda Items.

To allow time to review, screen, prioritize, exchange, and research agenda items, set a deadline three to four weeks prior to the meeting date. Allow flexibility for handling emergency issues.

Step 2: Co-Chairs and Committee Members Identify Agenda Items.

In addition to generating items on their own, co-chairs and committee members should encourage their constituents and colleagues (for example, members, stewards, operational managers, and supervisors) to make use of the LMC forum by suggesting agenda items. This will help increase the value of the LMC process.

Step 3: Review, Prioritize, and Research Agenda Items.

The committee co-chairs independently review their proposed agenda items and then prioritize them in the sequence desired for the agenda. Issues should be well-researched and documented.

Step 4: Co-Chairs Exchange Proposed Agenda Items and Discuss.

When the previous step has been completed, the co-chairs meet to exchange proposed agendas. This should occur at least two weeks prior to the meeting. It is during this meeting that the co-chairs have an opportunity to obtain any information deemed necessary. They also should agree on the format and order of agenda items. Old business from the previous meeting should be handled first, then new business.

Step 5: Finalize and Distribute Agenda to all LMC members.

A final joint agenda is shared by one of the parties as agreed upon and sent to all LMC members at least one week prior to the meeting. This helps ensure all LMC members are well informed in advance of meeting.

Step 6: Labor and Management Teams Prepare for Meeting.

Each team should get together in advance of the meeting to prepare for the presentation of the agenda (who, what, how, etc.). Each team should also review the other side's agenda items and prepare to ask questions, discuss their interests, and share any concerns.

All this preparation takes time, but it is essential to ensuring productive, focused meetings. [More information on the Agenda Development Process and Pre-Meeting Preparation is provided in Appendix B.](#)

Develop a Strong Structure: Essentials of LMC Processes

Committee Meetings

Attending committee meetings is one of the most important responsibilities of LMC members. By attending meetings and taking an active part in them, members show that they are committed to the LMC process and are willing to put in the effort needed to make it work.

In a sense, committee meetings are at the center of the LMC process. Members bring their concerns to meetings and take away plans and assignments for addressing these concerns. Meetings also provide an opportunity for members to take stock of what the committee has accomplished.

This principle requires the parties to avoid blindsiding the other side by raising issues that were not on the agenda or bringing an unexpected guest. There is nothing wrong with inviting guests to a meeting. However, their attendance should not come as a surprise to the other side. Informing the committee of the guest's attendance will allow the committee to modify the agenda (if needed) and give them time to prepare for possible questions they may ask. The other side will be prepared to give a thoughtful, well-informed response to the guest's questions or comments. You should also decide ahead of time what part of the meeting the guests will attend.

Springing surprises on the other side is a sign of disrespect. Surprise and secrecy are typical tools of adversaries, not partners. When one side is surprised, they feel betrayed, and may be less likely to trust the other side in the future. LMC relationships are based on a spirit of mutual trust.

Tips to Avoid Surprises

"No surprises" ensures that committee meetings are conducted in an atmosphere of open communication and mutual respect. It also ensures that meetings are not a waste of time. It is difficult to have a productive discussion if one side is not prepared to address an issue.

Labor and management can avoid surprises by using the following tips:

- **Maintain** frequent communications outside meetings.
- **Share** background information, objections, and reasons for supporting a particular proposal. When it is time for the committee meeting, both sides will be prepared to engage in meaningful discussions.
- **Notify** the other side in advance about meeting guests and issues they plan to address.

Develop a Strong Structure: Essentials of LMC Processes



Meeting Notes:

The meeting notes are a record of what happened and what actions the committee decided to take. Notes capture who was in attendance and what was important. They do not include everything that everyone said. Usually, the notes focus on the decisions the committee made and the actions it planned. There should be one set of official notes, rather than each side having its own.

Having a written record will clear up any confusion about who is responsible for what. Meeting notes are a great way to keep non-committee members informed about what their committee is doing for their agencies or facilities.

Recording Committee Decision

For each issue the committee intends to address, the notes should record:

- Decisions made by the committee.
- Specific action steps that will be taken.
- Individuals who will be responsible for each action step.
- Dates when each action step will be completed.

Approval Process

- 1 Note-taker provides a draft copy of the notes to the two co-chairs.
- 2 Co-chairs review, approve and sign the finalized notes.
- 3 A designee will distribute the finalized notes to all committee members and employees.

Develop Strong Relationships: Essential Skills

There are three essential skills needed at all stages of the LMC process:



Communication



Problem-Solving



Conflict Resolution

Communication refers to how we present issues and listen to the issues of the other side.

Problem-solving refers to the steps used to identify and analyze issues and proposed solutions.

Conflict resolution refers to the strategy or method used by committee members when there are differences.

Develop Strong Relationships: Essential Skills

Communication

Communication involves sending and receiving messages – in other words, presenting one’s own views and listening to the views of others. Presenting and listening skills take on special significance in LMCs. Effective communication is based on the ability to state clearly and concisely one’s own interests regarding agenda issues in a way others can accurately understand. Likewise, one must also be able to recognize and understand the interests of others. In the labor-management context, both parties need to understand and respect the legitimate role each party plays.

The Three “Ps” of Communication

Before, during, and after committee meetings, good communication techniques focus on:

- What is the *purpose* of the communication?
- Which *players* should be involved in the communication?
- What *processes* or methods should be used?

Before the Meeting

The primary purpose of communication at this stage is to decide what the issues are and to agree on a clear specific problem statement.

Ask who are the players? Everyone has a stake in identifying issues at this stage. Players are the co-chairs and team members, union members, managers, and supervisors who are affected by the issues being presented to the committee for resolution. The players may also include other work units in the agency or facility.

Ask what processes can or should be used to communicate issues? Initially, ideas for meeting are often obtained by word of mouth or casual conversation. However, “getting it in writing” will help promote a clearer and more consistent definition of the issue.

During the Meeting

The primary purpose of communication at this stage is to understand the needs or interests of all the parties in resolving the issue. This includes identifying, evaluating, and selecting the solution(s) that meet these needs.

The players include committee members and subject-matter experts or resource specialists, when appropriate.

After the Meeting

The primary purpose of communication at this stage is to document decisions and to inform appropriate individuals outside the committee of those decisions.

The players include all affected parties, such as employees, members, supervisors, regional or agency managers, and CSEA officials.

The process includes distributing committee meeting notes, formalizing agreements, holding small work group or employee meetings, disseminating newsletters, and posting notes.

Develop Strong Relationships: Essential Skills

Other Considerations

It is important to note that decisions made by the LMC can affect employees, members, supervisors, various division, regional or central office managers, and CSEA officials.

The LMC process includes distributing meeting notes, formalizing agreements made by the committee in the Operating Agreement or local agreements, creating subcommittees when needed, holding employee assemblies, and recruiting new members to serve on the LMC.

Speaking and listening are needed for effective communication. It has often been said, “But we have told them what we want, they just don’t hear us.” People choose to listen. It is important to set the stage, so they want to listen. Be sure to state the facts and be clear about what you are saying. Ask for feedback – what questions do you have? Have I communicated clearly? Do you need additional information? You want to be sure you have communicated in a way that gets labor and management engaged and interested in resolving the issue.

Learning to present agenda issues in terms of the interests or needs of the parties is not easy to do at first. After all, labor and management share a common history in which they regarded one another as adversaries and often “communicated” by way of demands. The shift away from adversarial to cooperative relations requires that everyone develop new skills in presenting and listening.

These new presenting skills mean that the parties’ interests and needs are incorporated in the way an issue is framed and presented. Similarly, new listening skills mean that the parties “hear” more than the facts surrounding an issue. The other side’s interests and needs as they relate to the problem being discussed are an integral component of the message.

Characteristics of a Good Communicator:

- Remain neutral. Do not give advice, criticize, or interrupt.
- Give your complete attention.
- Clarify what you hear.
- Ask “W” questions: who, what, when, where. Ask questions that make the other side go deeper or provide more detail. Ask for specific examples or explanations.
- Ask “suppose” questions to broaden discussion. For example, ask “Suppose we...?” or “What if...?”
- Put their feelings into words. This affirms the appropriateness of feelings and helps members moderate any inappropriate emotional outbursts.
- Seek mutual resolution or agreement. Summarize what you heard and attempt to agree on a common statement of the problem before considering next steps.



Being open and transparent helps build trust. Withholding information and not disclosing may cause tension and distrust.

It is important to note that there may be times when either labor or management will raise an issue that the other side is not able to discuss. Management may be in the process of working through some things or they may have been told not to discuss the issue at the present time. Whatever the case, be transparent and let the other side know. For example one could say, “We’re working through some things at the moment and are unable to discuss at this time.” Being open and transparent helps build trust. Withholding information and not disclosing may cause tension and distrust.

Before presenting your issue to the other side, ask yourself...

- What needs of labor or management would be met by resolving the issue? What’s in it for us? What’s in it for them? Are there mutual benefits for resolving the issue?
- Who are the key decision-makers? How will they respond to the issue as we present it?
- Have we clearly documented the problem so both sides can focus on the issues rather than the personalities?
- What are all the options and how does each meet the needs or interests of labor and management?
- Will the solution agreed upon affect the long-term relationship between labor and management? How?

Problem Solving

The second critical skill for committee members is problem solving. Problem solving is usually most effective when it is conducted in a series of steps. As a structured process, it is a skill anyone can learn and apply to a wide range of issues. Training and practice are important.

Six-Step Problem-Solving Process

1. Describe the problem
2. Identify the root causes of the problem
3. Brainstorm possible solutions
4. Select the best solutions
5. Implement the plan
6. Evaluate the plan

See page 32: Appendix C for details.

Effective LMCs can use the problem-solving process effectively. Initially, a new committee might find the steps cumbersome. When confronted with an issue, people often want to “fix” the problem as quickly as possible and then move on to other concerns. Beware of the quick fix! This is a process – and the process takes time. Take the time to really understand what the issue is and why it is happening.

Success in problem solving is not measured only by the number of problems solved or the speed with which issues are addressed. Lasting success is usually measured by the quality of the solutions and by the relationship of trust and cooperation that develops between labor and management. Appendix C provides a useful worksheet for the problem-solving steps. We encourage you to use the worksheet to resolve workplace issues.

Develop Strong Relationships: Essential Skills

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is natural, inevitable, and arises in every facet of life. LMCs are not exempt! Conflict can be a good thing. When committee members discuss conflicting views about a problem, they often develop a solution that is better than either side could have developed on its own. A conflict can be a roadblock, but it can also be a gateway to solving problems.

LMC members should be willing to give serious consideration to views that are different from their own.

When members take different opinions seriously, they accomplish several things:

- They present their own positions more effectively by showing they have taken opposing views into consideration. People are more willing to listen to opposing views if they believe that views are not based on a narrow-minded approach to an issue.
- They show respect for opposing views builds trust; trust is essential to the LMC process.
- They make their proposals stronger showing that what they are suggesting will benefit both labor and management.
- They demonstrate an understanding of the big picture by taking different opinions into consideration. This allows them to see how a proposed course of action will affect everyone in the organization.

Learning about different viewpoints takes some work. Before members can discuss an issue intelligently, they must understand not only the other side's position, but also the reasons behind it. In the long run, the work they put into learning about perspectives will pay off for everyone involved.

It is possible that committee members or an individual may become defensive because they feel they are being criticized. Committee members should focus on the problem – not the person. Members will be less likely to take things personally or feel criticized. Focusing on the goal of the committee – not the person, will allow the committee to work together toward a mutually beneficial resolution to problem(s).

Resolving conflicts effectively requires either full collaboration or some compromise. Both sides must be willing to have a dialogue about what is most important to them and what they may be willing to give up or change if needed to settle the disagreement. Sometimes members may need to accept a course of action that is best for the whole organization yet still meets their needs, even if it is not exactly what they would have preferred.

Committee members also need to realize that not all conflicts can be settled to everyone's satisfaction. There will be times when an issue may be too complex, or the differences too great for the committee to agree on a resolution of the problem. When this happens, the committee should engage in constructive disagreement. In other words, if a committee becomes deadlocked, the parties must "agree to disagree" so that they can move on to other issues.

Sometimes members must accept that a particular issue cannot be addressed through compromise. In those cases, the committee might decide to define the problem in a different way. Or they might decide that the LMC is not the appropriate place to address these issues. If an issue cannot be resolved after three consecutive meetings, it is recommended that the issue be put aside so the committee can move forward and focus on other issues.

Resolving conflicts effectively requires either full collaboration or some compromise. Both sides must be willing to have a dialogue about what is most important to them and what they may be willing to give up or change if needed to settle the disagreement.



Successful Committees

The success of LMCs is based on the quality of the relationship that exists between labor and management. Often labor-management interaction is evaluated solely in terms of outcomes: collective bargaining agreements reached, grievances won, local agreements made, court cases won, or legislation passed. While such outcomes are important, it is the underlying relationship between organizations and between individuals that affect the nature and substance of how successful an outcome will be. Therefore, it may be argued that it is the relationship that is paramount in the success of LMCs.

Characteristics of Successful LMCs

Successful LMC relationships typically possess the following characteristics:

Sincerity

LMCs require honesty and genuineness, as opposed to lying, deception, hypocrisy, and evasiveness. Saying one thing while doing another is a common indicator of insincerity. Truthfulness and the ability to stand by one's word are marks of sincerity.

Persistence

LMCs require ongoing and diligent attention. New LMCs often begin with a rush of enthusiasm and then die out. Maintaining a committee is hard work and successful LMCs "keep at it." Parties that remain committed to the LMC process find that as their relationship matures, they successfully handle more difficult and complex issues.

Patience

At times, one side or the other may be perceived as moving too slowly, too quickly, not at all, or in the "wrong" direction. Successful LMCs are tolerant and understand that mistakes and setbacks will occur. Patient LMC members ask for and grant forgiveness when appropriate.

Consideration

The basis for mutual trust and respect is the genuine recognition and care for the other party's welfare and needs. Consideration reflects a willingness to look beyond possible short-term gains. Successful LMCs weigh the impact of how an issue is handled on the long-term relationship between the parties.

LMC Reflections

LMCs provide a forum to resolve worksite issues. When guided by the principles and processes in this guide, LMCs can be highly effective.

Members of joint committees report that, over time, their relationship within the committee and the agency or worksite has improved. Labor and management agree that as cooperation and trust mature, they address problems at an earlier stage and begin to develop both reactive and proactive solutions to worksite problems.

Successful Committees



LMCs operate in the real world and are affected by external issues. Even in the best of committees, tempers occasionally flare, history may interfere with the process, difficult people may join the committee, and more significant work issues may create an environment that is not conducive to committee cooperation.

When things get tough, and they will, try to focus on the committee's objectives and the work that needs to be done for the agency or facility. Accepting this may help a committee gain a perspective that allows it to focus energy in areas where cooperation is possible and away from the irritating problems that seem insurmountable. This perspective is a good survival attitude for a committee, especially during tough times.

Resources and Training

Like people, committees mature over time. LMC resources and training can be helpful at all stages of development. Ultimately, it is the dedication of the committee members that will determine how successful a committee will be. The Partnership stands ready to support LMCs to help them achieve their mutual goals in a collaborative manner.

[See pages 20-35 for more information and resources on Labor-Management Process Training and more.](#)

Sample Operating Agreement

LABOR-MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

BETWEEN CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION (CSEA)

LOCAL ____ AND _____

INTRODUCTION

This document is intended to help labor and management work together with the goal of supporting and retaining a strong, creative, and motivated workforce.

Consistent with the provisions of Article 31 of the collective bargaining agreements between the State of New York and CSEA, labor-management meetings will be held to discuss and to attempt to resolve issues of mutual concern, including matters concerning implementation and administration of the Agreements which are local in nature.

The results of a labor-management meeting cannot contravene any term or provision of the Agreements or exceed the authority of either party. The continuing opportunity to exchange information and views serves to clarify the interests of the parties and foster solutions to identified problems.

CSEA Local ____ and the ____ have reached the following agreements with respect to the labor-management process:

LABOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES

The Labor-Management Committee (LMC) will work to: advance the agency's ability to accomplish its mission; improve the quality of employee work-life; and enhance the labor-management relations climate.

COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The LMC will have a minimum of ____ and a maximum of ____ representatives each from both CSEA and management. Each party will designate one representative to be its chair.

COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS' RESPONSIBILITIES

The co-chairs of the committee will serve as chief spokesperson for their team and may recognize other members of their team for the purposes of presentation and discussion of agenda topics. The co-chairs are responsible for the conduct and decorum of meetings.

Together, the co-chairs will determine the date, time, anticipated duration, and location of preparatory meetings and committee meetings. They will exchange and discuss agenda items at least two weeks in advance of a committee meeting and set the order of the agenda topics at that time. Additional topics for discussion may be added to the agenda later by mutual consent of the co-chairs.

The co-chairs will determine the method and person responsible for recording the committee meeting notes. The co-chairs will review, jointly approve, and sign the meeting notes. In addition, they will maintain open lines of communication between meetings to exchange information on new or developing issues, discuss the progress of committee business, and plan for forthcoming meetings.

The co-chairs will give new LMC members a copy of this Operating Agreement and will ask them to complete the Partnership's online LMC Basics course. The co-chairs will also provide copies of previous agendas, meeting notes, and local agreements. The co-chairs will meet with new members before their first meeting to brief them on current committee issues.

AGENDA PREPARATION

The parties will submit agenda items at least ____ two weeks prior to the meeting date. The agenda items will be provided in writing and will include a description of the issue, background, and suggested solutions.

PREPARATORY MEETINGS

CSEA and management representatives may have preparatory meetings to formulate agenda topics, discuss ongoing committee business, agree on responses to outstanding issues, and prepare for upcoming committee meetings. The respective co-chairs will agree on the number of attendees and the time frames.

LABOR-MANAGEMENT MEETINGS

There will be a minimum of four LMC meetings per year. Either party may request additional meetings, but both parties must agree to it. Meetings will follow the agenda developed in advance. A minimum of ___ committee members representing CSEA and a minimum of ___ committee members representing management must be in attendance to conduct a meeting.

LABOR-MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEES

Labor and management can establish other permanent or temporary labor-management subcommittees to work on specific or ongoing labor-management initiatives as needed.

MEETING NOTES

The meeting notes will summarize the discussion that occurred. Decisions reached at the meeting will be reflected in the notes and may form the basis of a memorandum of agreement between the parties, with the co-chairs' agreement. The notes will be produced and submitted for joint review and approval to the co-chairs within ___ business days after each meeting. The notes will include a list of action items, who is responsible for each action item, along with a due date for each action item.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

We will do everything we can to build trust and openly discuss the issues and pressures facing both sides. We agree to discuss items fully, to try to understand each other's perspective, and reach consensus. However, if we are unable to reach consensus after three honest attempts of discussion at our meetings, we will agree to disagree and will stop further discussion of the issue. The issue may be referred to another forum that is better suited for resolution.

GROUND RULES

We have agreed that the following ground rules will govern our work together (examples of ground rules include: treat each other with respect, keep each other well informed, use the "Principle of No Surprises," and meetings will start and end on time.)

TERMS OF THIS AGREEMENT

This agreement will be effective upon signature, replacing any previous agreement. It will remain in effect until, and unless, it is revoked by either party, or superseded by a future agreement between the parties, or until ____ (no later than the end of the current collective bargaining agreement).

Management Co-Chair

CSEA Co-Chair

Date

Date

Sample Operating Agreement Worksheet

1. Introduction: What is the purpose of your LMC?

2. Committee Composition: Who is on your LMC?

3. Co-Chairs' Responsibilities: What are the responsibilities of the Co-Chairs? What do other committee members do?

4. Labor-Management Meetings: How often do you meet? What if someone is absent?

Sample Operating Agreement Worksheet

5. Agenda Preparation: Who prepares the agenda and how? How long before the meeting will the agenda be distributed to both teams?

6. Minutes: Who records the minutes? How are they approved and distributed?

7. Ground Rules: What ground rules do you follow during your meeting?



Agenda Development and Pre-Meeting Preparation

1. Co-Chairs Set Deadline for Exchanging Agenda Items

To allow time to review, screen, prioritize, exchange, and research agenda items, set a deadline three to four weeks prior to the meeting date. Allow flexibility for handling emergency issues.

2. Co-Chairs and Committee Members Identify Agenda Items

In addition to generating items on their own, co-chairs and committee members should encourage their constituents and colleagues to make use of the Labor-Management Committee (LMC) by suggesting agenda items. This helps increase the value of the LMC process. LMCs may wish to use a proposed agenda item submission form for this purpose.

3. Review, Prioritize, and Research Agenda Items

The co-chairs independently review their proposed agenda items and then prioritize them in the sequence desired for the agenda. Issues should be well-researched and documented.

4. Co-Chairs Exchange Proposed Agenda Items and Discuss

When the previous step has been completed, the co-chairs meet to exchange proposed agendas. This should occur at least two weeks prior to the meeting. It is during this meeting that the co-chairs have an opportunity to obtain any information deemed necessary. They also should agree on the format and order of agenda items. Old business from the previous meeting should be handled first, then new business.

5. Finalize and Distribute Agenda to All LMC Members

A final joint agenda is shared with all LMC members at least one week prior to the meeting. This helps ensure all LMC members are well informed in advance of meeting.

6. Labor and Management Teams Prepare for Meeting

Each team should meet in advance of the committee meeting to prepare for the presentation of agenda topics (who, what, how, etc.). Each team should also review the other side's agenda items and prepare to ask questions, discuss their interests, and share any concerns.

Proposed Agenda Item Submission Form

1. Issue Statement: Describe specific events or behaviors that show what is happening and how, to whom, when, and where.

2. Background: Briefly describe why this is an issue, for whom, when, where, why, and how.

3. Describe attempts to resolve the issue (include names, titles, time frames, etc.).

4. What is the change that is desired? (That is, what is happening that you want stopped, or what would you like to happen that is not and why).

5. Why is it in your labor or management counterpart's best interest to support resolution of this issue?

Proposed Agenda Item Submission Form (continued)

Briefly describe as many options as possible for resolving or addressing the issue stated. Be creative!

Option 1:

Option 2:

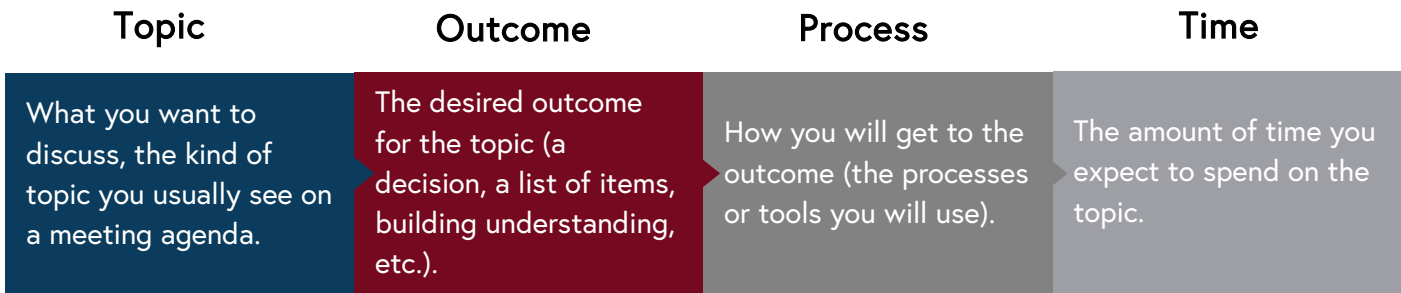
Option 3:

Submitted by: _____	Title: _____
Worksite: _____	Phone Number: _____
Representing: Labor <input type="checkbox"/> Management <input type="checkbox"/>	Date Submitted: _____

Agenda Format

The agenda format helps a group know and agree on what they want to accomplish in a meeting, how they will go about doing it, and how much time they can spend on each item.

The outcome section is particularly important because it helps people frame their thinking during the meeting and focus their attention on what you are trying to accomplish.



LMCs often work on issues that take several meetings to arrive at a mutually-agreeable outcome. An agenda topic could be the same for several meetings with different outcomes at each, all building toward the final outcome. For example, an agenda topic entitled "Improving Facility Morale" may appear on several consecutive meeting agendas.

At the first meeting, the desired outcomes may be agreement on the charge for a subcommittee and appointment of subcommittee members. At the next LMC meeting, the outcomes may be that the full committee is informed about the work of the subcommittee and that agreement has been reached on strategies to be implemented.

Standard Agenda Items

Get Organized:	Feedback & Closure:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review ground rules • Assign roles – facilitator, timekeeper, recorder • Review meeting agenda for understanding and agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review action items • Identify next steps • Identify strengths and improvement opportunities of the meeting

Sample Agenda

The following is an example of a typical agenda for an LMC meeting. Keep in mind that some of these topics could also appear on subsequent meeting agendas.

Topic	Outcome	Process	Time
Get organized	Agree on ground rules, roles, and agenda	Discussion	5 min.
Computer training	Agreement on selection criteria; plan for advertising the program	"I" time, go-around, list reduction, and discussion	40 min.
Improving morale	Agreement on charge for subcommittee and subcommittee members appointed	Brainstorming, list reduction, and discussion	30 min.
Security at facility	Members informed of specifics of issue, agreement on next steps	Presentation and discussion	25 min.
Feedback and closure	Action items reviewed; next steps identified; meeting strengths and improvement opportunities identified	Presentation by recorder, go around	5 min.

Labor-Management Committee Meeting Agenda

Date: _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Members Present: _____

Members Absent: _____

Special Guests: _____

Topic	Outcome	Process	Materials	Time
Get organized	Agree on ground rules, roles, and agenda	Discussion	Agenda	5 min.
Feedback and closure	Action items reviewed; next steps identified; meeting strengths and improvement opportunities identified	Review decisions and action items		5 min.

A hand is shown in the foreground, holding a wooden block. In the background, a line of wooden blocks is arranged in a row, with some blocks already falling, creating a domino effect. The scene is set on a dark surface, possibly a table, with a soft light source from the right, creating a warm glow.

Six-Step Problem Solving Process

Step 1: Describe the Problem

- What is the problem?
- When does it occur?
- Where does it occur most often?
- Is it ours, do we own it?
- Who tends to be involved with the problem most often?
- How do we know this? Keep in mind the problem may change in scope as you examine it more closely at each step. Work from data and not from assumptions or opinions.

Step 2: Identify the Root Causes of the Problem

- A method for identifying the root cause is to ask "why" five times for each suggested cause.
- After identifying the causes, you may need to redefine the problem statement. You may discover additional problems you were unaware of that may be addressed using this same process.

Step 3: Brainstorm Possible Solutions

- Keeping the data and root causes of the problem in mind, brainstorm potential solutions.
- Remember the basic rules of brainstorming: no discussion or evaluative comments, keep it moving quickly, work off each other's ideas, and have fun with it. Encourage creativity. Combine, refine, and build on ideas. Consider what other organizations in similar situations have done.

Step 4: Select the Best Solutions

- Establish criteria for selecting a solution.
- Evaluate the potential solutions against your criteria; consider advantages and disadvantages.
- Once solutions have been selected, ask: "What could possibly go wrong if we do this?" If there is no way to counter serious obstacles, the team may need to think of other more appropriate solutions.

Step 5: Implement the Plan

- Develop a work plan to implement the proposed solution, including goals and tasks, staff responsible, due dates, additional resources, and date completed; decide how to monitor progress.
- If approval is required, implement after approval is obtained. It may be better to implement on a trial basis or small scale at first.

Step 6: Evaluate the Plan

- Identify what worked, what didn't work, and what adjustments need to be made.
- Determine how you will study the effects of the changes; you need to plan to make improvements as needed.

Problem Solving Worksheet

1. Describe the problem (what is it, when does it occur, where does it occur most often, etc.):

2. Identify the root causes of the problem (ask why five times for each suggested cause):

3. Brainstorm possible solutions (remember the basic rules: no discussion or evaluative comments, keep it moving quickly, work off each other's ideas, and have fun with it):

4. Select the best solutions (establish criteria for selecting a solution, evaluate potential solutions against the criteria, consider advantages and disadvantages, ask: "what could possibly go wrong if we do this?"):

5. Implement the plan (develop a work plan to implement the proposed solution and to monitor progress):

Goal/Task	Staff Responsible	Due Date	Additional Resources	Date Completed

6. Evaluate the plan (what worked, what didn't work, what adjustments need to be made?):

Plan	What Worked	What Didn't Work	What Adjustments Need to be Made



For information on Labor-Management Committee training and other resources, visit www.nyscseapartnership.org

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