

# BUSINESS SENSE

Next Level Tools for Entrepreneurs & Small Business Owners



## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE SERIES

### SAMPLE: Advisory Board Charter

*Here is an example of an Advisory Board Charter. Feel free to customize to your business' needs and requirements.*

#### **Company Background:**

*Insert description of company history, ownership, business type, etc. here.*

Company is owned by (company owners). We want to grow the company to thrive, and we are establishing an advisory board to help us manage the company with the benefit of a broader range of experience than we have ourselves. We have recently completed a one-year engagement with the VSJF Business Coaching Program, have recruited a strong leadership team, and have a three-year strategic plan with a clear execution plan for year one. We view the advisory board as the third leg of a support structure that includes the internal leadership team and other staff, and our external professional advisors (e.g., names of legal, accounting, financial advisors, if any).

#### **Scope:**

The scope of the advisory board includes the following: evaluating the performance of the company; regular mentoring for the owners and managers; occasional mentoring for leadership team members; strategic planning including legacy and succession planning; emergency continuity of operations support; and other matters as they may come up.

We commit to the following: honesty, transparency, and access so that you can be fully informed to provide your best opinion. We want to be able to use our time together for discussion, not information. Therefore, we will distribute a full board packet a week before each scheduled meeting. It will include an agenda, minutes of the previous meeting, a summary report from the CEO highlighting major events, updated financials and a summary report identifying notable financial items, updated dashboard reflecting performance across departments, and an update of the annual operating plan related to strategic projects from all of the leadership team members.

We ask that you commit to the following: candor, reviewing the board packet before each meeting, being available by email and telephone between meetings and maintaining confidentiality of our core business operations. We

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understand that schedules can change but we ask that you attend at least three of the four quarterly meetings and prioritize the annual retreat. Of course, we will work to reschedule meetings as necessary to accommodate everyone's schedule and remain flexible.

To be clear, this is an advisory board not a governance board. We are not asking you to take on any fiduciary liability. We are looking for a deliberative board that will ask hard questions and help us and our leadership team maintain the discipline to work "on" the business instead of "in" the business regularly and support the continued professionalization of the organization. The company owner(s) take full responsibility for the decisions that come from this deliberation in balance with the other internal and external supports.

We plan quarterly half-day meetings from [pick a time] in [location], on the [pick a day] of the second month of each quarter, with the \_\_\_ quarter meeting being a full day retreat with the leadership team. There will be coffee and snacks available, and lunch will be provided.

Consideration: We value your time, energy, and commitment. Not to quantify your participation, but to express our appreciation, we will pay \$\_\_\_ per quarterly meeting and \$\_\_\_ for the annual meeting. We will also provide [additional benefits]! Advisory board members will also receive employee discounts at (our business location for purchase of products) and are invited to attend staff parties and major company events as part of the team.

Because each of our advisors is recruited for their skills and experience there may be times when it makes sense for us to mutually agree with an individual advisory board member to work on a special project with the company in addition to their board service. In those cases, we will exchange emails confirming scope of work and pay \$\_\_\_/hour unless otherwise agreed. Your term of service on the Advisory Board will be [length of service].

Additional advisory board resources available here: <https://www.vsjf.org/programs/vermont-farm-to-plate-investment-program/vermont-advisory-boards/>

Business Sense is a no-fluff source of information that gets right to the heart of what small business owners need: essential tools and informational resources to help their businesses grow. Written by our team of business coaches, this series shares their decades of experience in areas such as financials, operations, sales and marketing, human resources, leadership, and governance. Business Sense is designed to provide entrepreneurs and small business owners in various sectors, including agriculture, forestry, waste management, renewable energy, and environmental technology, with recommendations and practical advice to help their businesses not only survive but thrive.

Our business management coaching and Business Sense Resource Guide are designed to accelerate the growth of the enterprises we work with and expand the leadership capacity of the entrepreneurs who own and manage these businesses.

### Let Us Help You and Your Business

The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund provides tailored business management coaching, entrepreneurial support, and training to position Vermont-based entrepreneurs and small business owners in our designated market sectors for growth and long-term success. We partner with state government, private sector businesses and nonprofit organizations to build a thriving economic, social and ecological future for Vermont. Learn more at [VSJF.org](https://www.vsjf.org)



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