

Friends/Leadership Structure Survey

January 2010

In a joint effort to better serve the public radio system, DEI and USA sought benchmarks regarding stations' efforts to establish friends groups and leadership structures. Through a survey sent to the public radio system, the USA and DEI gathered information about the types of groups assisting or advising university-licensed stations. (University is a generic title that includes colleges, school systems, and state agencies.) Managers indicated whether they had a station friends/leadership structure.

92 Stations Responded

Which best describes the friends/leadership structure assisting or advising your station?

Respondents could select more than one structure. **34%** of university, college, school system, or state-licensed station managers responded that they **do not have a friends/leadership structure**. **17%** indicated they have a **Community Advisory Board/Committee** – a group mostly focusing on programming.

12% have a **Friends Board/Committee** - a fully incorporated 501 (c)(3) charitable organization through which funds raised for the station flow to the station. **Three percent** have a **Foundation** – a fully incorporated staffed, 501 (c)(3) that raises funds for the station.

An equal number of managers, **10%**, have a **Friends Group** (an informally organized group of volunteers to assist the station) or a **Friends Board/Committee** (a formally organized, incorporated group with bylaws, etc.) Another **10%** have **Leadership Councils**, an informally organized group of community leaders with access to philanthropists and corporate foundations that assist station management with community engagement and strategic planning, especially relating to revenue and future vision.

9% of managers responded using the “**Other**” category using the follow descriptions: Foundation, Radio/TV Advisory Council, Community Advisory Board (unfocused), College of Arts & Humanities, Capital Campaign Advisory Committee, Formally-appointed “Leadership Council”, a CA/AB, and a Community Advisory Board.

Definitions

Leadership Council an informally organized group of community leaders with access to philanthropists and corporate foundations that assist station management with community engagement and strategic planning, especially relating to revenue and future vision.

Friends Group – an informally organized group of volunteers to assist the station in many ways.

Friends Board/Committee (A) – a fully incorporated 501 (c)(3) charitable organization through which funds raised for the station flow to the station.

Friends Board/Committee (B) – a formally organized, incorporated group with bylaws, etc.

Community Advisory Board/Committee – a group mostly focusing on programming

Foundation – a fully incorporated staffed, 501 (c)(3) that raises funds for the station.

I plan to create or I am in the process of adding? (See Definitions Above)

44% of the managers said they do not have plans to create or add a friends group.

19% said they are planning a **Leadership Council**.

16% indicated plans to create or add a **Friends Group**.

9% replied that their plans include a **Friends Board/Committee (A)**.

4% are working on creating a **Friends Board/Committee (B)**.

5% will form a **Community Advisory Board/Committee**.

0% have plans for a **Foundation**.

9% will form a **Development Board or a Development Advisory Council**.

Is a friends group, committee, council, foundation and/or board helpful?

The question measured the strength of agreement to the statement on a 1-to-5 scale. **1 = Strongly Disagree 5 = Strongly Agree.**

The **Overall Rating Score of 3.5** put the sum of all weighted ratings between Neutral and Moderately Agree. Breaking the responses down further revealed the following:

- 23% Strongly Agree
- 27% Moderately Agree
- 33% Neutral
- 11% Moderately Disagree
- 4% Strongly Disagree

If I could, I would eliminate my friends group, committee, council, foundation, and/or board.

The **Overall Rating Score of 2.0** put the sum of all weighted ratings at Moderately Disagree. Here are the responses by agreement rating:

- 5% Strongly Agree
- 7% Moderately Agree
- 11% Neutral
- 10% Moderately Disagree
- 55% Strongly Disagree

Summation

The message seems to be that managers who have station friends/leadership structures have mixed reviews on their actual helpfulness, but generally speaking, they do not want to eliminate them.

One-third of station managers do not have a friends/leadership structure.

Four-out-of-ten managers do not have plans to create or add a friends/leadership structure. This may be because their existing friends/leadership structure (if they have one) is enough. In some settings, a board, a friends/leadership structure, or even an advisory group is restricted by the licensee or by statute from engaging in some activities such as fiduciary control, fundraising, or oversight.

Approximately 60% of the station managers said they have plans to create or are in the process of adding some form of friends/leadership structure.

Managers' comments ranged from "I think the CPB and Congressional mandate is anachronistic ... It doesn't make sense to have another board (*FCC licenses are typically issued to the university governing body*), especially for small organizations with limited staff and very limited funding for organizing and conducting meetings," to "The friends group has provided significant funding to the station, especially during the economic downturn," to "...Generally, we spend more time planning for their meeting than we do having any useful activities accomplished. The CAB part has been somewhat of a joke wherever I've been..." to "Great to have a group of important people who care about the station in the manager's back pocket to pull out if needed..."

SURVEY PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

Which best describes the friends/leadership structure assisting or advising your station? - Comments

Does NOT focus on programming. Focus is on advising management on best practices.

We are reassessing and will change membership and focus within the next six months or so.

Our "Leadership Council" (we call it a Board of Representatives) is as described above, but is a formal group with bylaws.

Community Advocacy/Advisory Board - This group is recently formed to replace a defunct CAB. They wish to help do grass roots

The group is formally organized with bylaws, but is not officially incorporated.

Our advisory committee helped us raise \$1.5million in the two years of its existence. They worked with us from Oct. 2007-Oct.

My committee is somewhere between a CAB and a Leadership Council. It is informal - no officers, no reports, no regular meeting schedule - meets as required, which is infrequent. I work directly with committee members on specific issues where they can help the station achieve some goal. One of their primary responsibilities is to advocate for the station, especially when the University has a change of presidents.

Operating agreement with University.

Our membership and underwriting funds are held in the university's foundation, which is fully incorporated, 501 (c) (3) etc (like #5 above) -- but it also houses funds from other campus entities.

XX.X Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization, but due to initial pushback from the university, it serves more as an advisory board than a fundraising mechanism.

We report to the College of Arts & Humanities at the university - specifically to the Assistant Dean - who, along with the Dean serve as the main advisory panel on behalf of our university license holder. We do not have a specific friends group of non-university persons however.

We have been titling our effort as a Community Advisory Council, which is broad enough to include programming, fund raising and other efforts. We have recently focused a new title in the senior manager group to specifically court and manage the meetings and activities for this group in hopes of stronger candidates and more consistent participation.

We have a CAB, but it has struggled to define itself and circumstances have made it difficult to work closely with them. A foundation exists through our licensee, but there are trust issues that affect the station's willingness to use it. A second, established, independent - but unused - foundation was recently unearthed. The issues surrounding putting it to use must be handled with great care, though. Our licensee may object.

I have used Friends' groups, incorporated and not incorporated, along with advisory boards in other stations. However, the station I am currently with has no experience with such groups in three decades of service to the community.

We've recently developed job descriptions to help focus the group's activities more toward fundraising. It's called a community advisory board. We're trying to make the group more diverse and also more engaged in actively helping us raise money too.

This is a committee comprised of College Foundation members and community members under the formal structure/umbrella of the College's 501 (c)(3) Foundation. Funds raised from the Council's activities & events flow through to the station.

Our Advisory Board also functions in a Friends Group capacity and assists in many ways, including fundraising and special events.

We have 3 licensees in our network and the CAB has a little more clout than usual, in that it is the main place where the representatives of the 2 non-operating licensees meet with the operating partner. It is still an advisory group, but I take it more seriously as a manager.

Minimum advocacy on behalf of the station by the Foundation, but working on establishing a WXXX Friends Group to assist with fundraising. I could use some assistance in this area.

We have a 501 c 3 for our television network and a separate one for our radio network. Employees of the networks serve as staff to the boards of each of these organizations.

It went reasonably well for a few years--then nothing.

One of our stations has the group checked above; another of our stations has an advisory board/committee focused mostly on programming.

Our Friends Group is not active at this time, but we intend to try to restart this activity some time in 2010.

Patrons Board here is trying to be a Leadership Council.

We're a community licensee. So as part of our CPB requirements we DO have an Advisory Board. However, we see it as focused more on longer-term issues than the nuts and bolts of programming.

The Association for Community Broadcasting has as its primary purpose raising funds (major gifts and philanthropic support) for KXXX Radio and KXXX Television. It has its own 501 (c)(3) designation and a formal support agreement signed with the stations' university license holder, a state institution that does NOT provide financial support to either station.

The WXXX Foundation Board, Inc. is a combination of the above. They advise station management on all matters concerning the station and 45%-50% of the station's annual budget is reviewed, approved and flows through them. They are also conducting our capital campaign. Through an outsource company all of our underwriting reps. are hired. Technically, a portion of our chief financial officer is "paid" for by the Foundation. As far as F.C.C. rules apply they do have employees. The IRS says no.

I plan to create or I am in the process of adding – Comments

This group should be in place within a couple of months.

We have been working on this for some time, but the college hasn't given us permission to move forward.

It would be great to do all of these.

WXXX is in the running to acquire and locate to a theatre, a historic theater in the city. I will be a \$5-ish million project and has a rather complicated governance structure. Should this move forward, we'll be in major giving over-drive.

We are preparing for a major fund-raising campaign and have assembled a group to assist with this.

It is hoped that the CAB and station will clarify their relationship and be more productive/on-the-same-page. If the licensee allows the independent foundation to flourish, the picture could change considerably. Again, this is a delicate issue and the licensee may resist.

We are in the early planning stage of convening a group to help with fundraising. Expect that it would be formally organized, with bylaws.

We've had a separate leadership council as well that helped with a capitol campaign, but we've haven't utilized this group recently and we may just end it.

I'm working to make the one I have be more than just an advisory group and take advantage of their 501(c)(3) ability to do fundraising and play more of a leadership council too...

Our Leadership Council may become or be born out of a subset of the Friends Board

Our group is fully set up, and no changes are anticipated.

The Friends group has an ad hoc committee studying the potential of creating a 501 (c)(3) organization.

We intend to move to a model where each of our stations/markets has a "chapter" of the Friends.

A Leadership Council is a good long-term strategy, but it's not something we have time to create and manage properly at this time.

The Friends of WXXX, Inc. has evolved over time to become the WXXX Foundation, Inc. I cannot urge "University" licensed stations enough to pursue this path.

My friends group, committee, council, foundation and/or board is helpful. – Comments

Great to have a group of important people who care about the station in the manager's back pocket to pull out if needed.

They are a very engaged advisory group.

Not established yet.

One is brand new and while I'm optimistic, I don't know if they'll be helpful. The other is not yet formed.

They are pretty benign, actually.

The friends group has provided significant funding to the station especially during the economic downturn.

It has been VERY helpful as a political advocate with the University and in raising station's awareness/profile in the community. But it has often been difficult to keep them engaged, when station is not in "crisis" mode.

Still organizing a new model of the Community Advisory Council/Friends Group to start up this spring. Trying to make sure the organization will have interest in staying active and can make a difference in matters of fund raising and community outreach for station initiatives.

It's not due to lack of desire. The time to develop the CAB/station relationship simply hasn't been available. Too many other issues have kept this relationship from flourishing and growing and the CAB is in no position to help solve these issues.

We had such a group some years ago when they were required. In a rural area with a coverage area that covers half of the State, we had trouble getting the group together, and found it was not worth the effort. When no longer required, we stopped trying.

Certain members in particular have been helpful. A few really pushed to start making budget cuts early last year and they were right; it really helped us. As noted earlier, as a group they could be more active. A few rarely show for meetings, so our new job description calls for attendance at 75-percent of meetings.

The reason it is not "Strongly Agree" is due to lack of stewardship on our part not lack of willingness on their part. I look forward to marking strongly agree in the future.

The board group comes in as fans. I wish they all had a better understanding of the totality of what we do.

They are not focused on our customers. They are focused on tweaking policies and internal procedures.

Doesn't really apply since we don't have one.

Helpful in limited way with fundraising and advocacy efforts primarily.

Of the 27 members only a very few are financially helpful. The board has primarily a fiduciary responsibility but is not as successful at raising money as it should be

Their work continues to evolve, particularly in the advocacy arena. They are integral to our fund development work, particularly as it relates to major giving.

In both instances noted in #1 above. The members are or have access to major donors.

The Friends Group was established to aid with fundraising, but quickly veered off into programming issues. No actual fundraising was ever done by the group.

Second meeting today.

They struggle as well as we struggle, trying to identify a role for them, since they are not staff, thereby doing operations, or board, doing policy and strategy.

They are still trying to find their way and expand the Board Membership to bring more active participation in fundraising.

We could not be doing what we've done and plan to do without this group.

If I could, I would eliminate my friends group, committee, council, foundation, and/or board. - Comments

Can serve as a heat shield between station and university. Can't have too much of that.

Board development takes an incredible amount of time, particularly for smaller stations with limited resources and staff. I'd like to have a more proactive board that could help me open doors with potential major donors, but am a long way from accomplishing this goal. It is more realistic that I will whittle down my existing advisory board and recruit some new members to form a small group of seven or less that is willing to help in the area of revenue generation.

Generally, we spend more time planning for their meeting than we do having any useful activities accomplished. The CAB part has been somewhat of a joke wherever I've been. The CAB has no control, no authority and is a real waste of time. The Advocacy Group may be more useful. The Major Donor Council may be very useful.

Quite tempting. I don't feel we get the return on our investment in THEM from them.

We want to continue building upon its efforts.

We are in the process of doing this now as there have been myriad problems with the Friends BOD which I won't go into here.

No, even if they do very "little", just the fact that we have such a group keeps both the University administration AND the staff constantly aware that the station IS a very visible part of the community.

My surmise is that short of a formally organized board that has authority/control and real imprint on the direction of the operation, it is difficult to keep volunteers engaged for extended periods.

This has been discussed...both by the licensee and members of CAB. If an adequate amount of relevance and direction is not achieved between the CAB and station management, this could be the result. I'm currently ambivalent about the outcome, simply because there are so many other pressing issues. My gut tells me it would not be a good thing - in the long run - for the CAB to lie fallow or disband.

Not a good idea, the ones who are active are quite helpful and their feedback is quite valuable. Several are among are biggest donors as well.

No way. Need them now more than ever.

I would reorganize the group into a more formal 501 (c)(3) organization.

I would reconstitute a Friends group with limited and useful mission. The bureaucratic nightmare of achieving this makes it an unthinkable chore.

An important conduit to the community at large.

I have a real problem with the inequities of board governance across the system. Having suffered with an advisory board and having watched friends suffer career ending firings by community volunteers, I believe our system suffers greatly under CPB's wishes. You would not let a volunteer fly a 747, why let them run our business into the ground?

I would change out a large number of board members, replacing them with more members who can more easily raise money.

Don't have friends group. Board does not help much with fundraising - but they are the governing board for the 501 c 3, so they can't be eliminated

We hope to strengthen our connection with our communities through expansion of our Friends organization.

I think the CPB and congressional mandate is anachronistic. Community licensees ARE subject to community input and guidance---rigorously at that. It doesn't make sense to have another board, especially for small organizations with limited staff and very limited funded for organizing and conducting meetings.

The USA is a grassroots organization founded in 2001 to assist university-licensed stations with the challenges and opportunities associated with their licensees. University-licensed stations make-up 63-percent of the public radio system.

DEI, public radio's fundraising and marketing service organization, serves over 270 member stations.

We wish to thank all the station managers who took the time to respond to the survey.

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