

UNDERSTANDING AND INSIGHT

The role of the secretariat is essentially about communication. From this flows the ability to effectively manage work flows and produce practical results for the benefit of committee members and other stakeholders.

Administrative Excellence

Every committee requires seamless, efficient, timely and reliable delivery of services. The smooth functioning of the committee depends upon outstanding organisational skills, with an eye for detail that doesn't preclude an overview of the wider agenda.

Agendas need to be distributed early and minutes and other papers – prepared with accuracy and care – must be distributed promptly after clearance by the Chair. Indeed, the Chair needs particular support based on ongoing communication, thorough preparation and the consistent, reliable provision of services.

Building Relationships

The best secretariats serve as a vital point of connection. Regular liaison and communication with all committee members is vital to ensuring they are receiving the support they need. Ongoing interactions with other stakeholders provide valuable opportunities to learn about new issues, share information and disseminate committee findings. Clear channels of communication with stakeholders will also help to ensure that the advice received by committee members is high quality, relevant and timely.

Outstanding Communication Skills

Policy papers must be drafted so as to present complex issues in a clear and concise manner, at once accurate and readable. All such papers should be based on thorough and reliable research, ensuring that committee outputs are respected and valued. Similarly, internal documents – minutes, reports, briefing notes – must be clear, concise and relevant. Committee members have enough to do without wading through pages of waffle.

Organised and Efficient

To achieve its goals effectively, a committee needs a secretariat that actively monitors and manages fluctuating work flows. Inputs from a variety of stakeholders must be carefully co-ordinated and collated to ensure subsequent outputs are of the highest possible quality. Issues should be identified early and dealt with appropriately. A good secretariat has the ability to herd cats – to bring all the members together (physically and/or mentally) through the provision of excellent briefing and efficient management.