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**Guidelines  
for  
Area Planning Councils  
in Iowa**

**September, 1983**

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION  
Iowa State Building  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

The Career Education Division acknowledges with appreciation the commitment of time and effort provided by the authors of these guidelines: Mary Simpson Rose, Northern Tri-County Area Education Agency; Quentin Weidner, Iowa Central Community College; Wanda Wuppen, Area Education Agency 6; Steve Poff, Indian Hills Community College; and Ron Jarchow, Director, Instructional Services Section of our staff. Also, special thanks are due Jim Wolter, Heartland AEA, who assisted in planning for the guidelines, and reviewed all of the original drafts as an APC newcomer; and to George Lawry of the Federal Programs Staff, who synthesized the materials developed by the five participating area education agencies into a cohesive document.

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**GUIDELINES FOR  
AREA PLANNING COUNCILS**

It is the policy of the Iowa Department of Public Instruction not to discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sex, age and/or handicap. The Department of Public Instruction provides technical assistance pertaining to civil rights issues as they relate to educational programs. To the chief, Federal Programs Section, Department of Public Instruction.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Page

Iowa  
place to grow

This publication is the culmination of several years' planning and activity which have been directed toward the evolution of the area planning concept in Iowa. Many different individuals and groups have had varying degrees of involvement in the development of this concept, and all of these participants have contributed to the process of visualizing, initiating, and refining the components of the concept as it now exists.

Many of the newly-developing APC's have expressed the desire for some type of blueprints or guidelines to facilitate their planning process-based upon the experiences (trials and triumphs) of the four model councils. Accordingly, collaborative work sessions were conducted, plans were made for the contents of the guidelines documents, and the four model APC director/coordinators volunteered to author various sections of the publication.

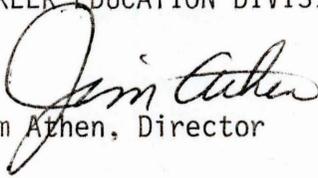
Paramount in the development of the area planning council concept to its present status of completion is the continuing search for improvement. To meet the Vocational Education Task Force's challenge to provide "...equal access to a diversity of quality programs"--continuous improvement based upon cooperative planning and sharing of limited available resources, must occur.

As the name implies, this document provides suggestions and alternatives for developing an effective area planning council--not a set of rigid blueprints which must be applied equally in each planning area. As the needs for career/vocational education programs, services and activities differ within each of the fifteen areas, and the resources available vary widely; so must the long-range, area-wide planning be designed specifically for the situation existing in that area.

Opportunities and challenges to provide equity of access to a diversity of quality educational programs that address directly the development of employability and job specific skills will rely heavily on our ability to use all resources efficiently. Hopefully, these suggested guidelines will provide assistance in reaching excellence in the educational delivery in your area.

Sincerely,

CAREER EDUCATION DIVISION

  
Jim Arhen, Director

/cls

GUIDELINES FOR  
TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

	<u>Page</u>
Overview . . . . .	i
Function and Purpose of the Area Planning Council. . . . .	1
Administration of the Area Planning Council. . . . .	3
Administrative Placement (Location). . . . .	3
Authority of the APC (rationale, authority, limitations) . . . . .	3
Duties of the APC Director/Coordinator . . . . .	4
Characteristics/Skills of an APC Director/Coordinator. . . . .	5
Organization of the Area Planning Council. . . . .	6
Identification of the Area Power Base. . . . .	6
Membership of Council. . . . .	6
Recruitment of Council Members . . . . .	7
Organizing APC Meetings. . . . .	7
Using an APC Advisory Committee (Optional) . . . . .	8
Initial Planning for APC Activities. . . . .	10
Suggested Planning Strategies. . . . .	10
Establishment of Critical Timelines. . . . .	11
Decision-Making Process. . . . .	12
Establishing Communication Links With Area Education Institutions. . . . .	13
Provision of Essential Definitions . . . . .	14
Suggested Actions To Avoid Pitfalls. . . . .	14
Expected Outcomes of APC Activities. . . . .	16
Comprehensive Multi-Year Plan. . . . .	16
Suggestions For the Plan's Content . . . . .	16
Identification of Resources Available To APC Planners. . . . .	17
Bibliography . . . . .	18

Recommendations from the third party evaluations were considered in preparing these guidelines, but primary input was furnished by the Director/Coordinators of the original four APC's (with review and criticism supplied by one of the new director/coordinators).

As the title implies, these "suggested guidelines" simply identify options and alternatives which have been successful, and point out possible pitfalls. Newly-developing APC's can draw upon these experiences and possibly avoid the "re-invention of the wheel".

GUIDELINES FOR  
AREA PLANNING COUNCILS IN IOWA

OVERVIEW

Impetus for considering the use of an area-based structure for planning for vocational education in Iowa originated in 1978 through recommendations from the initial State Plan Planning and Accountability Report Committee (SPPARC). Further reinforcement was provided in the Final Report of the Task Force on Vocational Education, pp. 59.

In May, 1980, the Department of Public Instruction issued a request for proposal (RFP) to develop model area planning councils (APC's) in Iowa. Proposal review and funding decisions resulted in four APC's being established--in Areas II, V, VI, and XV.

Each of the four model APC's operated independently--selecting different means of organizing their respective Councils, setting goals and objectives, and establishing implementation strategies.

Technical assistance was provided by the DPI, and by a third-party evaluation team from the National Center For Research in Vocational Education, Columbus, Ohio.

Recommendations from the third party evaluations were considered in preparing these guidelines, but primary input was furnished by the Director/Coordinators of the original four APC's (with review and reactions supplied by one of the new director/coordinators).

As the title implies, these "suggested guidelines" simply identify options and alternatives which have been successful, and point out possible pitfalls. Newly-developing APC's can draw upon these experiences and possibly avoid the "re-invention of the wheel".

## I. FUNCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE AREA PLANNING COUNCIL

Area Planning Councils in Iowa are established for the purpose of coordinating the planning efforts of the area to encourage the desired accessibility, and efficiency of operation of quality programs, services, and activities which contribute to the development of general employability and job specific skills of youth and adults.

The Councils exist to:

- A. Study the needs of youth and adults and the needs of business and industry which relate to the career development process and to include development of general employability and job specific skills by the comprehensive population to be served.
- B. Develop a long-range plan for the area which provides for the delivery of instructional programs, services and activities. The plan will identify and provide for the efficient utilization of resources in delivering those programs, services and activities most viable for the particular planning area.
- C. Identify objectives and activities that promote the articulation of programs which provide for efficient and effective learning by students as they develop the skills and knowledge necessary for successful employment and provide a vehicle for communication with the community and with participants.
- D. Provide activities which promote cooperation between agriculture, business, industry and health enterprises; labor; and education in providing instruction for vocational programs and in establishing effective linkages with all appropriate community interest groups and resources.

- E. Provide input to the State Plan For Vocational Education Within Career Education.
- F. Promote and assist in the implementation of the multi-year plan for the area. This technical assistance includes helping the eligible recipients in such areas as making application for programs, services and activities; evaluation; completing data reports, etc.

## II. ADMINISTRATION OF THE AREA PLANNING COUNCIL

### A. Administrative Placement (Location)

In the four model APC projects, two different types of agencies have served as APC administrative units--merged area schools and area education agencies. Factors to be considered when selecting the APC administrative unit include:

- Compatability between the goals of the proposed administrative unit and the APC
- Desire and ability to serve in a leadership role in improving vocational programs in the area
- Ability to provide funds beyond the state vocational aid allocation necessary to fulfill the APC mission
- Ability to provide support services such as fiscal management, secretarial assistance, information retrieval sources (ERIC, FORMS), and office space
- Location of administrative unit in relation to the geographic service area

### B. Authority of the APC (rationale, authority, limitations):

#### 1. Impact to Directly Affect Programming

The APC draws its power not from its assigned role, but from the people who are a part of it--their level of commitment to the APC mission, and their influence to initiate change. Without the commitment and participation of those who can implement changes, the APC becomes merely a group of interested persons who evaluate, advise, and recommend.

## 2. Ability to Influence Actions

The APC, in its present form is effective as an advocacy group for vocational/career education. This impact should not be ignored.

The APC can assist in developing a climate in which change can occur. Actions of the APC may provide encouragement for the improvement of vocational education programs, services, and activities.

## C. Duties of the APC Director/Coordinator:

- Meets with staff-members of the administrative unit within which the APC is located. Assists in setting the parameters of the position and of the framework within which the APC will function.
- Visits other education institutions in the area (K-12 schools, area colleges, area educational agency, proprietary schools, private sector training), becoming acquainted with the instructional education programs offered by each (if any) and with the administrators and staff members involved--specifically as these programs relate to the career development needs of the population.
- Develops a working relationship with the chief administrators' group within the area, and attempts to obtain an open invitation to attend future meetings.
- Consults knowledgeable staff members and other sources to elicit names of prospective APC members.
- Develops (with technical assistance from the DPI and other APC's) a preliminary outline of the APC's mission and broad objectives.
- Recruits APC members through personal visit to prospects. Provides orientation to APC concept, the role of APC members, and an indication of the time commitment involved.

- Initiates data collection/needs assessment process.
- Develops tentative agenda and conducts (or assists in conducting) meetings of the Council.
- Performs or coordinates such functions as preparing minutes of meetings, research, preparing news releases or other publicity, and preparing reports, planning drafts, and final drafts of the multi-year plan.

D. Characteristics/Skills of an APC Director/Coordinator

- Human relations--must be able to establish sound working relationships with a variety of individuals, many of whom may be skeptical of the APC concept.
- Coordinating ability--must be able to achieve cooperation among diverse groups and individuals.
- Analytical Skills--must be able to review many different (and sometimes contradictory) sources of potential planning data, determining their value, and prepare usable data summaries.
- Speaking/writing ability--must be skilled in self-expression, both oral and written, and be able to organize masses of data into a final useful, readable format.

### III. ORGANIZATION OF THE AREA PLANNING COUNCIL

Planning and sufficient time are two of the key words in organizing an Area Planning Council. The effectiveness of the organization process will greatly influence the Council's success. Locating and utilizing the expertise of resource people will facilitate getting the APC operating effectively in the shortest time possible. The following factors are involved in the APC's organization:

#### A. Identification of the Area Power Base:

- The person (or committee) drafting the APC proposal probably will have knowledge of some organizations and/or individuals within the area who might make a valuable contribution to the Area Planning Council.
- Representatives from area industries, agency boards, Private Industry Councils, and area Chamber of Commerce groups should be contacted for their input on the possible composition of the APC.
- Educational colleagues, especially those with long employment in the area, may be good sources in identifying potential APC members, since they have seen various individuals in the area function in a variety of situations.
- Identify business groups, organizations, and educational sources in the area who may provide suggestions about area needs and establishing an area planning council.

#### B. Membership of Council:

- Decide on areas of representation--then identify specific individuals from that segment. Consideration should be given to a diversity of representation, including such groups as the 4-H and community organizations.

- Refer to p. 65 of the Final Report of the Task Force on Vocational Education for a suggested APC representation (see Bibliography).
- Attempt to assemble a broad-based representation, but a group small enough to work effectively and reach a consensus on decision points.
- Contact leaders of the groups to be represented and ask that potential APC members be nominated from the group.
- Consider the backgrounds of potential APC members, as those with some knowledge, training or influence in vocational education will be able to make contributions sooner than those without such backgrounds.

C. Recruitment of Council Members:

- Plan a presentation to inform potential members of the purpose of the project, amount of time needed, and possible outcomes before attempting to obtain a definite commitment to serve on the Council.
- Outline an overview of the project, covering the following points: what needs to be accomplished; why that person was nominated; what he/she has to offer the project; expectations from APC members; time commitment involved.

D. Organizing APC Meetings:

- Emphasize that more time will be required early in the project than will be necessary later.
- Allow the group to decide on the most convenient time and attempt to stay with the time(s) most convenient for the majority.
- Initially, one 2-3 hour meeting per month may be sufficient, with the possibility of some sub-committee work in addition.
- Consider planning at least one all-day session in addition to the regular meetings when making recommendations for the multi-year plan.

- Contact project directors/coordinators from established APC's as resource people to determine what realistic time demands might be.
- Consider holding APC meetings in the late afternoon, as opposed to daytime or evening schedules--to promote better attendance.

E. Using an APC Advisory Committee (optional):

Some of the established APC's organized an advisory committee to supplement the work of the APC. Considerations involving the establishment of such a group include:

- The necessity for such a committee, i.e., what purpose it would serve; what duties it would perform; would the involvement of an advisory committee enhance the project; will additional people be necessary for the development of the project?
- If an advisory committee seems feasible, decisions must be made regarding who selects the council, size of group, etc., with the committee tailored to meet the needs of the area.
- Two possible uses of an APC advisory committee--(1) at the beginning of the project, when the director/coordinator is being hired and the APC is being established; a small advisory committee may be useful to give direction in the establishment process; (2) when the APC has become operational, the advisory committee may function as a support group, with a membership varying from that of the APC, e.g., service organizations, secondary/postsecondary students, and other government agencies.
- Possible roles of an advisory committee would include: reacting to APC decisions; providing additional input on decision points; serving as additional resource persons; considering how various agencies and service organizations may cooperate in providing student services and

avoiding duplication; and, relaying information to the APC concerning the contributions area business and organizations could make toward the improvement of vocational education.

#### IV. INITIAL PLANNING FOR APC ACTIVITIES

##### A. Suggested Planning Strategies:

- Recruit and employ a project director/coordinator who can establish rapport and credibility among the proposed membership of the APC.
- Recognize agencies and groups having vocational education concerns and include them in the planning at a sufficiently early point to gain their commitment or agreement.
- Determine the location of and/or gather all appropriate data involving the current and projected status of vocational education within the planning area. Explore thoroughly the data already available at the DPI.
- Identify the state, regional and national curriculum center/sources of information which may be useful in dispatching the responsibilities of the APC.
- Ensure that the sponsoring agency (administrative unit) accepts responsibility for the leadership and performance of all APC activities--using the Council's membership for advice and counsel whenever possible.
- Establish a cooperative relationship between the APC and the Private Industry Council early in the planning process.
- Conduct tours of existing small and large private sector business and industry firms; arrange visits with area organized labor leaders; and arrange visits to both rural and urban K-12 school systems, the area college and the AEA--to increase the awareness of each APC member and enhance the caliber of input.

B. Establishment of Critical Timelines:

<u>MONTHS</u>	<u>ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED</u>
First Month	Identify, recruit, and select the APC Director/Coordinator. Conduct orientation to APC activities and concept. Begin identifying APC membership and collecting data. Develop a mission statement and establish objectives to guide the APC during the initial planning phase.
Second Month	Continue to collect data on the status of vocational education in the planning area. Begin preparing for the initial meeting of the APC.
Third Month	Hold first meeting of the newly-formed Area Planning Council. Assess strengths and weaknesses of membership with current members. Determine frequency of meetings.
Fourth Month	Invite K-12 representatives; AEA and Area College personnel; and representatives from small and large private sector employers; organized labor; and other government agencies to gain their perspectives on the Area Planning Council Mission.
Fifth Month	Review the mission statement and objectives. Make revisions as necessary to reflect new information gained.

- Sixth Month Invite instructors from K-12 districts and from the area college to visit an APC meeting and review the vocational education programs currently in place within the area.
- Seventh Month Tour small vs. large, and rural vs. urban systems.
- Eighth Month Tour local community college and AEA facilities to better understand their role in vocational education in the merged planning area.
- Ninth Month Pause to determine current status and review proposed objectives once again with APC membership. Schedule a one-day meeting to obtain input for the multi-year plan from the APC members.
- Tenth Month Use the month to write a rough draft of the multi-year plan and to visit individually at length with the APC membership, one on one.
- Eleventh Month Mail the draft two weeks in advance of a meeting, to review the draft with the APC membership collectively.
- Twelfth Month Finalize the first year planning draft into a completed document, publish it and be prepared to enter the operational phase at this point.

### C. Decision-Making Process

- Allow ample time at each APC meeting for discussion. Debate constitutes necessary dialogue in support of good decision-making.

- Seek consensus whenever possible rather than voting, which tends to polarize viewpoints, rather than welding the group behind common objectives.
- Identify the responsibilities of the sponsoring agency at an early point. One organization should be responsible for APC activities and expenditures within the planning area.
- Encourage APC members to represent and speak for their respective constituencies, to facilitate good decision making.
- Train APC members in the decision-making process and establish definite procedures for making decisions.
- Consider assigning various tasks to sub-committees, with reports back to the full Council. Allow the APC to accept or reject the sub-committee's work.

D. Establishing Communication Links with Area Educational Institutions:

- Increase visibility of the APC and its concept by encouraging the APC Director/Coordinator to attend all monthly meetings of the chief administrators of educational institutions in the area.
- Encourage active participation of chief administrators through such actions as: (1) requesting that four or five chief administrators (small and large/rural and urban schools) be named to permanent status on the APC; (2) attempt to cultivate a relationship with the formal or informal leader of the chief administrators' group to facilitate access to the group.
- Request space in the monthly chief administrators' report to report on APC activities.

- Request that the APC Director/Coordinator be included on any retreat/planning sessions of the chief administrators in the planning area.

E. Provision of Essential Definitions:

Since many APC members may be unfamiliar with vocational education terminology, definitions (such as those listed in the State Plan for Vocational Education Within Career Education) should be provided.

Terms to be defined should include such essential concepts as: vocational education; exploratory/preparatory/supplementary instructional programs; State Board approval; funding procedures; reimbursed/non-reimbursed programs; and jointly-administered programs.

F. Suggested Actions To Avoid Pitfalls:

- Place the location of the APC with that agency in each planning area which has actively demonstrated leadership, and is willing to accept the responsibility.
- Attempt to ensure that the APC Director/Coordinator is at a level in whatever organization he/she represents to have both the responsibility and authority to see decisions through to fruition.
- Attempt to ensure the representation of all the agencies and groups necessary to facilitate the work of the APC. If key constituencies do not follow through on their responsibilities in vocational education, it becomes extremely difficult to implement the APC philosophy.
- Identify the relationship between the APC and the Private Industry Council--in order to avoid the potential for conflict. Both the APC and the PIC have responsibilities for education and training within very similar geographical areas. The PIC's primary mission is to

provide employment and training for disadvantaged persons, while vocational education also serves persons of all ages in career development, preparation for work, and in upgrading and retraining.

## V. EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF APC ACTIVITIES

### A. Comprehensive Multi-Year Plan:

- Should encompass a specified number of years--five as a recommendation.
- Should reflect the procedures that will be used to put it into action.
- Should identify the costs involved in implementing the Plan.
- Should identify objectives for each year of the planning period, indicating projected strategies, procedures, activities, and tentative timelines.
- Should provide for an evaluation of its progress on the effectiveness of its implementation.

### B. Suggestions For the Plan's Content:

#### 1. Status of vocational education in the planning area--secondary postsecondary and adult

- Number of vocational programs
- Student accessibility to the programs
- Diversity of vocational programs now available
- Existing delivery system(s)
- Quality of existing programs
- Involvement of community resources in existing vocational programs

#### 2. Needs Identification

- Career development needs of students
- Employment needs of business and industry
- Needs of other community resources

- Vertical and horizontal articulation of secondary and postsecondary vocational education instructional programs
- Needs determined by surveys, follow-up(s), and utilization of existing data
- Needs for achieving certain standards or requirements

### 3. Components of the Plan

- Goals and objectives to bridge the gap between what is--and what is needed
- Strategies, procedures/activities with a timeline that will meet those objectives
- Indication of LEA's personnel and community resources/responsibilities in meeting the objectives
- Establishment of an APC communication system
- Identification of the specific role of the APC
- Evaluation of each year's progress/effectiveness, according to the objectives of the Plan, and changes in the needs required or funding available

### C. Identification of Resources Available to APC Planners:

- Human resources (planners, support staff, etc.)
- Publications
- Surveys
- Data Resources
- Technical Assistance (from the DPI, other APC's and other sources)
- Agencies and institutions
- Business/industry/labor
- Audi-visual materials

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