

6 FAH-5 H-180 FINDING THE RIGHT ROLE FOR THE ICASS COUNCIL

*(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)
(Office of Origin: RM/ICASS)*

6 FAH-5 H-181 SEARCHING FOR THE PROPER BALANCE

*(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)*

Moribund post ICASS councils contribute little to the quality of service or potential cost reduction at a mission abroad. Hyperactive post ICASS councils that attempt to exert influence over every activity at a post can do more harm than good. The post ICASS council will want to be an active, strong and effective partner with service provider(s) and post management while allowing the service provider(s) and post management the latitude needed to implement policy. How does a post ICASS council find the right role?

6 FAH-5 H-182 EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

*(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)*

- a. Post ICASS councils have a responsibility to be aware of service-provision activities at post, to respond to service-recipient and bill-payer concerns about service quality or cost, to seek new methods of service provision that will increase quality or reduce cost and to represent the post community in its partnership and dialogue with the service provider. Post ICASS councils do not have the legal standing or authority to sign contracts or make other commitments of a legal nature. Post ICASS councils will be most effective when they exercise their influence on broad questions of post administrative support. What level of service can we afford? What are our realistic expectations of service provider performance and are those reflected in post's service standards? Are there areas where service could be better? What are the post's top priorities for improvement or investment in the coming year? What are our post-wide policies regarding service provision? Should the policies be

continued as is? If changes are needed, what might they be? How is the service-provider organization performing when compared with negotiated service standards? These are all examples of executive-level questions where a post ICASS council could exercise leadership and influence in a positive way.

- b. Post ICASS councils face a continuing trade-off. Post ICASS councils composed of the country team's senior members will tend to command the most influence with service recipients, bill payers and service-provider staff. Yet, these individuals also have the highest number of non-ICASS demands on their time. Working groups can play an effective role, staffing complex issues in ways that maximize use of scarce country-team time while preserving the most senior members' prerogatives as country members. Working groups can study issues and develop position papers and recommendations for presentation to the ICASS council for approval. If too many minor or insignificant questions are raised about issues involving small amounts of money, individual eccentricities or areas not consistent with a post ICASS council's role, it becomes less likely that senior members of the country team on a post ICASS council will have the time and inclination to fully participate in council issues. Some posts have found that councils can become moribund. Others found that council membership changed to include individuals with lower ranks. Preservation of the ICASS council's stature and leadership is something that the council chair, in particular, should concentrate on. Council chairs can play a critical role in ensuring that questions where the council should play a role receive a prominent place on meeting agendas. Council chairs can play often an equally critical role in helping those with questions that do not merit council attention to find other forums in which to deal with their issues.

6 FAH-5 H-183 AVOIDING MICROMANAGEMENT

(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

- a. Councils, and in collaboration with service providers, are expected to push administrative quality, competitiveness, and cost efficiencies to the maximum extent feasible for the benefit of all customers in the mission. However, councils should avoid micromanagement of service-provider activities. The council is not intended to serve as supervisor of the administrative service provider in the day-to-day details of operations. The council chairperson and ultimately the chief of mission (COM) have a particular responsibility to ensure that council authorities, empowerment and accountability do not divert the council from its principal focus, i.e.,

broad management issues.

- b. Mutually established performance standards are critical to the avoidance of micromanagement by a council. Customer satisfaction will be achieved if quality and responsiveness criteria established in the standards are regularly met by the provider. Although there should be continuous scrutiny of cost alternatives, carefully considered standards are key to establishing clear communication and collaboration between the council and the provider(s).
- c. Also, in dealing with workforce issues, post ICASS councils must remember that the service provider alone retains authority to establish salary and other hiring qualifications of authorized positions. ICASS councils do not make individual assignments either of career or local-hire staff. Internal controls and regulations of the service provider and customer agencies apply in the administration of cost centers.

6 FAH-5 H-184 REACHING A CONSENSUS

(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)

(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

A post with a strong ICASS team, including a positive relationship between the post ICASS council and service provider(s), will find it easier to reach a consensus on what issues and questions are appropriate for post ICASS council involvement. Without question, post ICASS councils must receive, discuss and approve the annual budgets and any new ICASS positions. It is also clear that service provider(s) must be able to fill existing positions and mediate disputes among service-provider staff without interference by the post ICASS council or individual council members. Operations at posts abroad involve many other activities and questions where roles and relationships are less clear. Councils and service provider(s), in recognition of the partnership they share, are well advised to develop local guidelines in advance that establish, given the unique circumstances at post, some reasonably clear definitions for the roles of the council, council chair and senior-service provider(s). Some of the exercises related to the section on team building in the exhibits for that section can help posts and service providers as they discuss role definition and work out a consensus on appropriate guidelines.

6 FAH-5 H-185 THROUGH H-189 UNASSIGNED