

International Advisory Boards for World Cities and Regions

As large cities and metropolitan areas tackle the challenges and opportunities of a globalising world, many find it useful to initiate an international advisory board or committee. Such a board draws together a range of senior international perspectives to offer a synthesised advisory platform for local leaders to draw insights and wisdom from. Because the advice and guidance is immediate, global in perspective, wise, up to date, and honed through real life management of cities, and execution of complex interventions, it has great validity and value for the hosting cities.

When

'International Advisory Boards' have been created by **Auckland, Barcelona, Moscow, New York, Oslo, Salvador, São Paulo, Singapore, Shanghai, Vienna**, and many others. For these cities, a good time to create an International Advisory Board is:

- When a new cycle of long term planning is about to begin.
- When the city/region is facing governance changes or other major reforms.
- When a major opportunity or programme of investment needs to be leveraged.
- When there is a major crisis or challenge.

Focus on key questions

An International Advisory Board dedicates its attention to two or three critical questions the hosting city wishes to answer. These questions may relate to international city promotion and positioning; metropolitan and regional governance; investment tools and development systems; spatial strategy; sector specialisation and diversification; major development sites or infrastructure projects, social and demand challenges associated with growth; and many other areas. The Board provides prompt and distilled insight about what works, what is important, and how to implement successfully.

Value added

An International Advisory Board provides value added for cities because it can:

- i. Convene practitioner experts whose know-how is rarely procurable.
- ii. Offer an independent forum to debate challenges and build confidence.
- iii. Propose alternative courses of action and the ingredients for full implementation.
- iv. Supply accurate case studies of relevant practices that are successful elsewhere, as well as potential mistakes to avoid.
- v. Facilitate global connections and introductions to possible partners, allies, investors, and solutions providers.
- vi. Boost the strategic case for policies or projects that may be contentious.
- vii. Enhance the profile and visibility for government initiatives by offering 'informed third party' endorsement.

Membership

An International Advisory Board brings in expertise from 4-8 cities with relevant lessons and experience, as well as 2-3 advisers with relevant expertise. The Board is small in size to allow detailed work to be undertaken, and its members typically include:

- current and recent ministers for urban development
- senior urban and metropolitan planners

- heads of independent business and civic city leadership organisations
- chief urban designers
- international scholars on city competitiveness
- national urban policy advisers
- investors in urban development

The effective functioning of an International Advisory Board requires a skilled chairman/woman (or co-chairs if a local leader is also to chair). The work of the board also benefits from the work of an experienced rapporteur who leads the drafting of reports and recommendations.

Follow Up

An International Advisory Board provides ongoing support to the city's process of change and reform. It meets up to four times over an initial two year period, and also provides advice in between meetings. The first meeting takes place over 3-4 days and incorporates detailed site visits. This initial meeting is underpinned by the preparation of a detailed background report, which members of the Board contribute to and help to develop. Subsequent meetings take place over two days. Throughout the process, the Board offers a critical friend and advocacy function for the changes desired.

Costs

Total costs for the International Advisory Board are highly competitive for the service provided. A typical budget for each meeting will cover the travel, hotel and hospitality for each Board member, plus a small stipend where it is required. It will also cover a fee for the Chairman to lead the process and take responsibility for outcomes, and a fee for the rapporteur to prepare the advance assessment and recommendations report. The costs for the longer first meeting and its setup are typically in the region of \$130,000, and for each subsequent shorter meeting approximately \$100,000. It is advisable that some budget be retained to ask for additional advice from members as it becomes clear what is needed.

Partner Team

Prof Greg Clark and Dr Tim Moonen have recently helped lead advisory committees for New York's 4th Regional Plan, São Paulo's Strategic Plan, Oslo Brand Strategy, the Strategic Plan of Turin, and Moscow's Urban Development. Prof Clark has over 15 years of experience as chairman of advisory boards and strategic reviews for city leadership organisations. Among other roles he is currently Chairman of the OECD LEED Forum on Local Development and Investment Strategies in Paris, and co-Chairman of the City Leadership Initiative Advisory Board at University College London. Dr Moonen is an experienced rapporteur for global city advisory committees, and has authored keynote reports for OECD, Brookings Institution and Moscow Urban Forum.

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