

Engineer's Guide to

Community Service

get involved

Volunteer



fice

elected officers

Committees

Introduction

The 2005 Florida Engineering Leadership Institute's goal is for Florida's professional engineers to become an influential force in community-based and government organizations such as homeowner associations, chambers of commerce, public planning boards and advisory committees, and appointed boards. These entities offer great venues for FES/FICE members to be a voice in the community.

The Institute also encourages professional engineers to represent their peers in appointed and elected offices.

The *Engineer's Guide to Community Service* plots the course for you to engage in community-based service all the way to elected office. The guide includes:

- Opportunities to get involved
- Strategies on how to get involved
- Testimonials and tips from your peers who have made it all the way to elected office

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How to Use This Guide

As an active member of FES/FICE, you know local committees and boards have real needs that can be filled with someone who can take a fresh look at challenges from an engineering perspective. At the same time, you may have wondered how you can get involved and make a difference.

This guide has been set up in sections that represent increasing levels of involvement and commitment. You can start with *local community involvement*... move on to *volunteering on local boards*... get a formal *appointment to a board*... and finally, *enter elected office*. It may seem daunting, but it is a process that requires only a few simple first steps.

Whether you are considering or actually making the leap, the Florida Engineering Leadership Institute has developed a mentoring program to assist. The mentors are your peers who are active in the community and are invested in making a difference. In Section 5 of this guide are several Florida professional engineers who have successfully entered public office. They are ready, willing, and able to guide you on your new path to involvement.

1 Community Involvement

SECTION

Simply volunteering can be the first step to actively participating in your community, and it is often a selfless way of giving something back to it.

People volunteer for a variety of reasons, but it is also OK to get something back from your volunteer efforts. Some people are uncomfortable with the notion that a volunteer “benefits” from doing volunteer work. Volunteering can be seen solely as a form of charity, based on altruism and selflessness. The best volunteering does accomplish these goals, but this does not exclude you from gaining an understanding of your community and connecting with others in the fabric of your community.

Finding the Right Volunteer Activity

Being sure that you have found the right volunteer activity for you will help make the experience the best it can be. Altruism is one thing, but volunteering for a cause that interests you is the key to sustained involvement.



- Research brochures and websites to find the organization's mission statement.
- Ask how volunteers help the organization work towards its mission.
- Ask about written volunteer job descriptions and length of commitment, or inquire about training opportunities.
- Expect to be interviewed by agency representatives who are responsible for determining the appropriateness of potential volunteers.

- Don't over commit— Remember you will be expected to complete the assignment you have accepted and perform the job to the best of your ability.
- Investigate how the activities are performed—as a team, small group, or as individuals.
- Be patient—your first volunteer activity may not be the right fit. While one particular job may not be ideal for you, dozens of other volunteer assignments may meet your needs and expectations.

Resources

So, how do I actually find a group volunteering activity?

Good places and ways to look include:

- Contacting your local volunteer center.
- Looking for events by local nonprofit organizations, non-governmental organizations and schools (charitable performances, science fairs, and other one-time events often need volunteers to help).
- Contacting nonprofit organizations you may have a relationship with or with a mission you are particularly attracted to, and asking about potential group volunteering activities.
- Searching the internet—A few websites to consider:
 - www.volunteermatch.org
 - www.volunteersolutions.org
 - www.bbbsa.org
 - www.redcross.org/services/volunteer
- Phoning 211 for volunteer opportunities.



2 Community Advisory Boards and Committees

SECTION

"Citizen participation is vital to a democratic government."

–Volusia County Citizen Advisory Board

City and county governments rely on the grassroots, voluntary support of their citizens to participate on advisory boards and committees in local government. These boards serve an essential service to government, are open to those who express interest, and are comprised of citizen volunteers.

These non-elected boards and committees are the ground floor of government, but also a launching pad for high-impact, sustained roles in the community. In general, advisory boards and committees provide input to elected bodies, require the time commitment for regularly scheduled monthly or bi-weekly meetings as well as preparation, and are open to qualified citizens in a community.

As professional engineers, we are uniquely qualified to join advisory boards. Criteria for selecting board members usually include:

- The expertise to accomplish the board's objectives
- A reputation for integrity
- Desire to serve the community
- An interest in the board's mission



There is no better fit than an engineer for boards such as:

- Parks and Recreation
- Site Plan Review and Appearance
- Zoning
- Community Appearance
- Housing Authority
- Building Trade
- Planning and Land Development Regulation

How do you get involved?

Investigate – A call to the city or county clerk will provide you with a list of the advisory boards for an agency. Most community advisory boards are also listed on the city or county's website. The information provided by either source should give a description of active boards in your area, as well as some descriptive information. You will often find a brief abstract, the membership composition of the board, duration of appointment, and details how the board is appointed.

Choose – Of the board opportunities available, it is important to find a board of personal interest to you in order to maintain your satisfaction and involvement. One should compare the board options with one's personal experience and look for a match. Again, professional engineers find that they are uniquely qualified for these types of groups.

Express Interest – The city clerk can point any prospective board member to the appropriate contact person, who is generally an employee of the city or county. A direct conversation with the staff contact helps to lay the groundwork for appointment.

Apply – Most cities and counties have an application process. The application is available from the city/county clerk's office and is often found online. The applications typically offer you an opportunity to describe your qualifications, area of expertise, and skills.

GET APPOINTED! – Depending on the ordinance or resolution that originally created an advisory board, an appointment could be based on just expressing interest, or by a decision by staff or an elected body.

3 Appointed Office

SECTION

There are several different types of appointed offices throughout the state. The most widely recognized are gubernatorial appointments, but local governments also have the authority to appoint qualified individuals to certain boards and positions. Appointed offices can be either compensated or non-compensated, and both require strong leadership and reasoning skills.

If you are interested in serving as a governor appointee, then you should view the vacant position report at the Governor's Appointments Office website for more information located at:
www.flgov.com/2007_boards_commissions.

The vacancy report is updated monthly, and there is a simple eight (8) page questionnaire to complete. This is downloadable in PDF format on the same website, or in Word format at:

www.flailc.org/docs/governor's%20appointment%20questionnaire.doc.

The board positions range from judicial appointments to state agency heads, Regional Planning Councils, every board regulated by the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, including our very own Board of Professional Engineers.

Local governments also appoint individuals to a wide array of board positions, including Regional Planning Councils, Regional Transportation Authorities, and Water Control Districts, among others. For more information on local government appointments, please refer to the previous section in this handbook.

4 Elected Office

SECTION

The information contained in this publication is intended as a quick reference guide only. The following publications produced by the Florida Department of State, Division of Elections should be reviewed for further information regarding candidates and committees:

- *Federal Qualifying Handbook*
- *Committee and Campaign Treasurer Handbook*
- *Handbook on Filing Campaign Reports*
- *Election Cycle Calendar of Reporting Date for Candidates, Political Committees and Committees of Continuous Existence*
- *Election Cycle Calendar of Reporting Dates for Political Party Executive Committees*

All forms and publications listed above are available online at: election.dos.state.fl.us, or you can call your county supervisor of elections, or the Florida Department of State, Division of Elections at 850-245-6240.

Becoming a Candidate

Candidate Defined

As per Florida Statutes, Section 106.011(16), a candidate is a person who:

- Seeks to qualify for nomination or election by means of the petitioning process.
- Seeks to qualify for election as a write-in candidate.
- Receives contributions or makes expenditures, or consents for any other person to receive contributions or make expenditures, with a view to bring his or her nomination or election to, or retention in, public office.
- Appoints a treasurer and designates a primary depository.
- Files qualification papers and subscribes to a candidate's oath as required by law.



What to File

Form DS-DE 9, Appointment of Campaign Treasurer and Designation of Campaign Depository for Candidates. This is the first document that needs to be filed with the filing officer to become a candidate.

- It shall be filed with the filing officer prior to opening the campaign account.
- It is NOT effective until the campaign treasurer signs it and it is filed with the filing officer.
- It is NOT considered “filed” upon mailing.
- For offices not voted upon statewide, a copy shall be filed with the supervisor of elections in the county in which the candidate resides at the same time it is filed with the Division of Elections.
- It shall be on file with the filing officer prior to the candidate accepting any contributions or making expenditures, or authorizing another to accept contributions or make expenditures on the person’s behalf.

Form DS-DE 84, Statement of Candidate. Must be filed within ten (10) days after filing Form DS-DE 9.

- This form states that the candidate has received, read, and understands the requirements of Chapter 106 of the Florida Statutes.

Form DS-DE 83, Statement of Candidate for Judicial Office.

- This form is for candidates running for judicial offices only.
- The filing officer is the person before whom the candidate qualifies:
 - Division of Elections—state, multi-county, district, and judicial offices
 - Supervisor of Elections—county-wide and district offices
 - Municipal Clerk—municipal offices

Other Bases to Cover

In addition to the required forms, there are other items that a candidate needs to be aware of, most of which are finance-related:

- Prohibited acts of a candidate
- Campaign treasurer laws
- Campaign depositories
- Contributions
- Expenditures
- Political advertising
- Fund raisers
- Solicitation
- Filing campaign reports (what, where, when, how)
- Termination report
- Office accounts
- Record keeping, receipt, and inspection requirements

5 Success Stories

SECTION

On the following pages are stories of Florida professional engineers who have successfully joined various community-based organizations or have been elected to public office.



Steve Precourt, PE

Position Held: *Florida House of Representatives*

Steve Precourt, PE began his technical career in 1983 after graduating from the University of Florida with a degree in civil engineering. Steve joined Dyer, Riddle, Mills & Precourt, Inc (DRMP), a leading multidisciplinary engineering firm, in 1989 after spending six years gaining experience at the Florida Department of Transportation and other central Florida planning and engineering firms. Today, he is a Principal at DRMP, which has grown to over 500 employees with 16 office locations throughout Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas.

Steve undertook a new aspiration, to run for public office, and won the 2006 election to serve as the Florida House Representative, District 41. During his term, he plans to initiate a strong, principled, conservative leadership in Tallahassee, and bring an engineer's presence and perspective to the legislature.

He has always been an active member of professional engineering organizations. He believes this participation aids him in staying abreast of the ever-changing trends in the role engineers play in the development of infrastructure for the modern world. These organizations include: American Society of Civil Engineers, Institute of Transportation Engineers, Florida Engineering Society, and National Society of Professional Engineers.

By paving the way, Steve hopes that more professional engineers will be encouraged to participate in civic service at the legislative level. He feels the engineering profession should continue to become increasingly involved in ensuring responsible legislation and should have a stronger presence in civic service. "As professional engineers, we deal with decision-making on a daily basis and must always keep in mind that direct impacts do occur to the community-at-large. Another thing going for professional engineers is that we tend to be basically good people, and are capable of making the right decision

rather than the expedient or easy decision. By applying these principles, professional engineers have the qualifications and experience to serve their communities in a significant way in any public office capacity, and I strongly encourage other professional engineers to get involved in the political process."



Trudi Williams, PE

Position Held: *Florida House of Representatives*

Trudi Williams began her career in 1981 with a degree in civil and environmental engineering. After working for a local engineering firm for several years, she started TKW Consulting Engineers, Inc as a one-person operation in 1989.

She is now CEO of one of the premier civil, structural, and environmental engineering firms in Southwest Florida, employing a staff of 50 with headquarters in Fort Myers and a branch office in Orlando.

Her involvement in public office and leadership began in the 1990s, and she has served on numerous boards and advisory committees. Most recently, she was elected to the Florida House of Representatives for District 75. For five years prior to her election, she served on the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board, a gubernatorial appointment. Her numerous other appointments include the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta's Small Business, Agriculture, and Labor Advisory Council, and the American Red Cross Board.

She decided to run for office at the urging of friends and members of the community, and out of a belief that she could use her leadership and engineering skills to promote the best legislation possible for her district, region, and state as a whole. Years on the SFWMD Board gave her a deep understanding of how to balance competing interests. As a woman founder of an engineering firm in the 1980s, she is familiar with obstacles and entrenched views. "Some people have their mind made up about an issue without considering all the facts, and nothing will change their perception. As a legislator, it is my responsibility to listen to all sides and come up with positive, balanced solutions that benefit the whole community," she recently noted.



Pegeen Hanrahan, PE, CHMM

Position Held: *Mayor of Gainesville, Florida*

Pegeen Hanrahan is a registered professional engineer and certified hazardous materials manager at the master's level. In addition to her public responsibilities, Pegeen consults for the Trust for Public Land, and serves as Senior Vice President of Terra-Com Environmental Consulting, Inc.

She holds bachelor's and master's degrees in environmental engineering from the University of Florida, as well as a bachelor's in sociology, also from the University of Florida. She is married to Tony Malone, a civil engineer with the firm of Brown and Cullen, also in Gainesville.

“As I was finishing my master's of engineering degree at the University of Florida, the chairman of my department, Joe Delfino, asked me what I was planning to do after graduation. When I told him that I hoped to work as a consulting engineer, he shook his head. ‘You should go to law school.’ This was stunning; Joe was one of my heroes, and it was clear to me, and to him, I was sure, that the world needed one more engineer more than it needed one more lawyer. ‘True,’ he said. ‘But what the world really needs is more people in charge who understand engineering. In our culture, it's the lawyers making the rules.’

“That stuck with me, and in the intervening thirteen years, although I've done my time as a consultant, as a design engineer, and as a supervising professional engineer, ultimately my engineering background has been most useful in my public policy work. This month marks the end of my seventh year in public office, first as a city commissioner, and most recently as Gainesville's Mayor. While certainly burdened with having made my share of imperfect decisions, more often than not I've felt good about my ability to contribute to Gainesville's progress in cleaning up a major brownfield site, in repowering our downtown power plant, in upgrading our stormwater system and road network, and in encouraging more strategic urban infill.

“When I have the opportunity to talk to young engineers, typically in civil or environmental classes at UF, or during the annual induction to Tau Beta Pi, the engineering honor society, I give them advice similar to Joe Delfino's guidance to me: consider going into public policy. The world needs more people in charge who understand engineering.”



Lake G. Ray III, PE

Position Held: *City of Jacksonville Councilman*

Lake Ray's goals are to connect people within the community and ensure governmental fiscal responsibility. Lake serves on the city council's Land Use and Zoning Committee; the Transportation, Environment and Energy (TEE) Committee; and the Military Affairs and International Development Committee. He is also the city council's liaison to the Jacksonville Transportation Authority, and chairs both the Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Duval County Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board. In previous council years, Lake has been the Chair of the TEE Committee, Chair of the Waterways Commission, Vice-Chair of the Rules Committee, Liaison to the Jacksonville Sister Cities Association, and City Council Chaplain.

Active in community service, his experience involves the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (City of Jacksonville), Exchange Club (Past President), Greater Arlington Civic Council, Jacksonville Maritime Museum Society, Southside Businessman's Club, Northside Business Leaders Club, Arlington Rotary Club, Executive Association of Jacksonville, Florida Engineering Society, National Society of Professional Engineers, and Boy Scouts (Eagle Scout).

Lake says, "The best way we can make a difference is to get involved in our communities and government. I have always had an interest in the process of government. I love American history and our system of government. We are a blessed nation that enables us to be involved in the process and make a difference in our communities and nation. Serving as an elected official is the highest honor and responsibility that your community could bestow upon you."

Campaigning can be a lot of fun, as long as you keep everything in perspective. He asked himself, "How am I going to raise the money that I will need to run a campaign?" It is very expensive. The first thing you should do is start with friends and associates, and explain to them why they should support you. Identify other people who might support you, then figure how to inform them to vote for you. Organize a campaign committee with the election day in mind. Meet people in your societies, organizations, churches or places of worship. As you are raising money, do not spend any of it until later on in the campaign. Remember—most people really don't pay attention to the elections until two weeks out. Create a look for your campaign. Knock on doors to meet the people who might support you, and leave literature. Raise money and spend some in order to get your message out. Have fun! Raise money! Win!

Lake obtained a bachelor's in civil engineering from the University of Florida in 1981, and became a professional engineer in the state of Florida in 1987. He is President of Harbor Engineering Company in Jacksonville. Lake, married for over 20 years, has three sons.

6 Mentoring Program

SECTION

Every problem that the country faces is being solved in some community by some group or some individual. The question is how to get connected so that the whole nation can solve problems.

— George H. W. Bush

Mentoring programs offer the support of professional engineers currently involved in all levels of community service. Connecting with a professional engineer already involved in community service provides the opportunity to learn not only successes, but also challenges in the community involvement process. An FES/FICE mentor provides real-life guidance to those seeking to become more involved in their communities—all for the betterment of the individual, the engineering profession, and the community.

Each chapter is encouraged to seek out individuals willing to serve as mentors. The mentor is expected to promote an ongoing relationship with the protégé and to actively challenge and engage the protégé to become involved. Mentors share personal stories, anecdotes, and case examples that offer valuable insight into the seemingly daunting role of community involvement. The mentor also provides an avenue by which to become "networked" with community leaders and elected officials.

If you are already a seasoned community leader who wants to foster a relationship with someone looking to become more involved, you are encouraged to contact your chapter president and express your desire to serve. Furthermore, if using your engineering background to serve your community appeals to you but you are afraid to take that first step, connecting with a mentor in your local chapter can make the process easier and less daunting.

7 Conclusion

SECTION

The 2005 Florida Engineering Leadership Institute class optimistically believes that this guide will be useful in assisting with your pursuit for greater public service. The experience, insight, and integrity of many of Florida's professional engineers offers a great human resource that should influence and be integrated into the numerous decisions affecting each of our communities and the state of Florida.



This document was brought to you by
the members of the 2005 Class of the
Florida Engineering Leadership Institute.