

Labor-Management Partnerships, Forums, and Committees

Note: Although these partnerships are referred to differently across the country and across sectors, they effectively differ in name only. For simplicity in this document, we refer to them as Forums.

What is a Labor-Management Forum?

A Labor-Management Forum (LMF) is a tool used by labor and management, acting together, to jointly improve their workplace. An LMF is composed of union members and managers who meet periodically to identify, discuss, and resolve issues or problems that are not typically covered under their collective bargaining agreement. Labor and management must be mutually committed to the success of the LMF.



More specifically, an LMF is:

- A collaborative process between labor and management
- Jointly determined by labor and management
- An attempt to improve the labor-management relationship
- A way of dealing with workplace problems directly and effectively
- An ongoing commitment to collaborative processes

However, an LMF is not:

- A substitute for collective bargaining or the grievance procedure
- Unilaterally implemented
- A quick fix for workplace problems
- The solution to all workplace challenges
- Meant to work overnight



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Why should we create an LMF?

- To improve overall communications between labor and management;
- It is an effective way to (1) address problems that may fall outside the scope of the collective bargaining contract and (2) avoid the need for some grievances and/or unfair labor practice allegations;
- It is a great way to review new or changing employer practices, improve working conditions, increase morale, and solicit positive and/or timely feedback from each respective constituency;
- A high-functioning LMF will undoubtedly create a positive image for both labor and management and demonstrate collaborative leadership in action; and
- It creates a foundation for effective and respectful communication, even during tough collective bargaining negotiations and necessary grievances.

When should we form a LMF and who should be a part of the team?

- An LMF can be formed at any time, regardless of whether or not it is explicitly referenced in the collective bargaining agreement.
- The ideal LMF team is comprised of leadership from both labor and management.
- Labor representatives may include: President and/or Vice-President, Board Officers, and Stewards.
- Management representatives may include: High ranking officials with decision-making authority, Director of Labor Relations, and key supervisors or department heads.



What should we expect?

- First, in order to have a successful LMF, all participants, facilitators, and committee members must have realistic expectations of what an LMF is and how it can be used to improve the labor-management relationship;
- Both sides should expect to work diligently and cooperatively towards their collective goals and towards the success of the LMF;
- Both sides should expect to have difficult and/or challenging conversations that may not always end in agreement; and
- You should expect to resolve tough issues if both labor and management stay the course and avoid well-defined pitfalls that may impact the success of the forum.

How do we get started?

- Contact your local FMCS mediator to learn more about initiative your LMF process, planning, and training;
- Recognize that your labor-management relationship could use improvement, whether large or small;
- Develop a willingness to better your labor-management relationship and to resolve issues in a non-adversarial or power-based manner; and
- Bring an open mind about how to build a more collaborative, high-functioning labor-management partnership.

For additional information or to request FMCS services, [contact your local FMCS mediator](#) or visit our website to learn more about [initial contract services](#) and [skills development training](#).

Useful links from other federal agencies:

- Department of Labor – <https://www.worker.gov> and <https://www.employer.gov>
- National Labor Relations Board – <https://www.nlr.gov>
- Federal Labor Relations Authority – <https://www.flra.gov>