Table F: Factors Contributing to Agency Success, Advice for Success, and Steps to Avoid

**Factors Contributing to Agency Success**
1. The well balanced, inclusive makeup of the commission membership.
2. Thorough, balanced research and well thought out non-partisan activities.
3. It basically has members from all political subdivisions.
4. Chairperson, members, and staff committed to succeeding.
5. Involvement of state municipal association and assignment of Senate staff to support commission.
6. Adaptability and flexibility.
7. Great staff, continuity of staff.
8. Support by local governments and local government associations.
9. We do good policy work on a few issues each year. Perceptions that there is a reasonable amount of value added given the little bit of funding that we have.

**Strategies and Tactics Most Critical to a Successful ACIR**
1. Limit partisan rhetoric and stay focused on the main goal.
2. Build solid relationships with key players in your community that have a demonstrated interest in intergovernmental issues.
3. Take on projects that are of importance to the larger community that you can work on. Use these to build awareness of the commission.
4. Membership should be for those that are truly interested.
5. Dedicated membership, adequate staff support, and funding as a budget unit.
6. Provide access to local government financial data bases. Reach out to local government associations to provide useful services and information.
7. Be responsive to requests by legislative leadership and staff.
8. Broad membership with some structural bi-partisanhip.
9. Establish some serial work. We have done a survey of local elected officials since 1997.

**Strategies and Tactics to Avoid**
1. Don’t burn bridges.
2. Instead of taking on an issue head to head that is likely to alienate supporters, try to work on educating individuals and entities on your perspective.
3. Most definitely avoid not marketing your work products and services.
4. Avoid controversial issues in a constructive fashion.
5. Listen to your stakeholders.
6. Avoid losing objectivity.
7. Find sufficient resources.

*Source: Richard Cole*

...opposed its own research council” that did much of the work that might have gone to the commission. Another said, “In our state, the comptroller, the legislature and the governor all developed very sophisticated information gathering and policy analysis capabilities that ACIR simply could not compete with.” Another said his/her state’s legislative council and departmental research units provided the type of information the commission would provide.

The most frequently cited reason for commission terminations was simply the failure of legislative and executive bodies and other state policymaking agencies—as well as commission members themselves—to take the commission, its mission, recommendations and body of work seriously. “We just faded away, we fell into disrepair, no one took us seriously,” one former director stated. “We were a fad, and when we finished [the two tasks that had been assigned by the legislature] it just made sense to get rid of us.”

Another said his state’s commission had problems getting a quorum. “We had difficulty finding times that were convenient and topics that were of sufficient interest to persuade many of our members to drive for hours to [the state’s capitol].” Another former director said, “We presented great things, there was never any criticism of the validity of our recommendations, but none were ever accepted.” The commission was a victim of “benign neglect,” another former director said, “we were never asked to do much; we were not very high on anyone’s priority list.” Two former directors interviewed said they, themselves, recommended commission termination.9

**Is There a Continued Role for State Commissions?**

There are few remaining commissions that were initiated in earlier decades and only one state commission initiated in the past decade. Not only have the majority of state commissions faded away, but so too has U.S. ACIR.10 It’s quite possibly the case that commissions belong to a bygone era, that they were fads whose times have come and gone.

In considering possible future roles of commissions, it’s helpful to recall the times when most of