

# **GUIDE FOR THE CONDUCT OF PARTICIPANTS IN TNI COMMITTEES**

**July 26, 2013**

## **Introduction and Purpose**

The mission of TNI is to foster the generation of environmental data of known and documented quality through an open, inclusive, and transparent process that is responsive to the needs of the community. TNI's committees are fundamental to fulfilling TNI's mission.

The guide includes general principles that should be the basis for all conduct, followed by guidelines offering more specific guidance for committee participants and TNI staff.

## **General Principles**

The Bylaws, policies, and standard operating procedures (SOP) endorsed by the TNI Board of Directors specify the basic structure and operation of TNI committees. In fulfilling the roles and obligations described in those documents, participants should adhere to the following general principles:

- Promote and support TNI's mission.
- Maintain processes that are open, honest, and fair to all.
- Strive to develop consensus through broad and balanced participation of a variety of interests and full airing and discussion of all points of view.
- Adhere, both in letter and in spirit, to all procedures and policies governing TNI committees.

## **Conduct Guidelines for Participants**

Although all participants serve the same overall TNI mission and are expected to promote the purposes and goals stated in this guide and its General Principles, different roles may carry differing responsibilities and obligations. Because no single set of guidelines can address every possible situation, participants should attempt, even when the guidelines do not specifically address a situation, to act in a manner which is consistent with the spirit of this guide. Questions on the interpretation or the intent of any of the provisions contained in this guide should be referred to the TNI Policy Committee.

## **Guidelines Applicable to All Participants**

- All participants should read, become familiar with, and adhere to the policies and procedures related to the TNI committees in which they participate. These include:
  - POL-1-102 Ethical Conduct of TNI Members
  - POL-1-104 Management of Records
  - POL-1-107 Membership Code of Ethics
  - POL-1-108 TNI Complaints
  - POL-1-109 Whistleblower Protection
  - POL-1-110 Open Meetings
  - SOP-1-100 Format Guidelines for Standard Operating Procedures (SOPS) of TNI
  - SOP-1-101 Operations of TNI Committees

- SOP-1-102 Decision-Making Rules for TNI Committees and Board
  - SOP-1-104 Control of TNI Documents
  - SOP-1-106 General Complaint Resolution Process
  - SOP-1-108 Nominations to TNI Board
  - SOP-1-112 Content and Format of Program Reports
  - SOP-2-100 Procedures Governing Standards Development
  - SOP-2-101 Procedures for Expert Committee Operations
  - SOP-3-100 NELAP Accreditation Council General Operation Procedures
  - SOP-3-101 NELAP Voting Procedure
  - SOP-4-103 PT Executive Committee Operation
  - SOP-4-105 PT Executive Committee Voting Process
  - SOP-5-101 NEFAP General Operating Procedures
  - SOP-5-102 NEFAP Voting Procedure
  - SOP-5-103 NEFAP Nominating Committee Procedure
  - SOP-5-104 NEFAP Dispute Resolution Procedure
- Participants should act honestly and in good faith with a view to TNI's best interest. Although TNI recognizes that legitimate differences of opinion can exist on individual issues, participants should support and promote the defined broad objectives of TNI. Unless a participant addresses or makes reference to another participant by name, participants should consider comments made to be non-personal.
  - Participants should stay current with all committee activities in which they are directly or indirectly involved. Participants should encourage and facilitate the full and open dissemination of all information necessary to enable complete and fair consideration of all points of view.
  - No participant should ever attempt to withhold or prohibit information or points of view from being disseminated, particularly when a participant is in disagreement with the information or points of view. Disagreements should be addressed and resolved through full presentation and discussion of all information and points of view, not through suppressing information or preventing expression.
  - To allow participants to accurately evaluate the points of view and information others contribute, participants should always endeavor to make known their business, commercial, organizational, or other affiliations that might affect their interests or points of view.
  - In all discussion, debate, and deliberation, participants should confine their comments to the merits of the scientific, technical, and procedural issues under review. Although participants may strongly advocate for their views or positions, they should be candid and forthcoming about any weaknesses in their views or positions and refrain from forcefully imposing their opinions on others.
  - Participants should explain the rationale for their views, and should not engage in debate and discussion which is disrespectful or unprofessional in tone, or which is unduly personalized or damaging to the overall goal of achieving consensus.
  - Participants should take appropriate steps to ensure that any public statements, either

written or oral, which are not official statements of TNI, are properly portrayed as the opinion or position of the person making the statement. Care should be taken to ensure that the public is not misled by such statements.

In circumstances where policies and procedures permit deliberations to take place in executive session, participants should respect and observe the confidentiality of those sessions.

### **Additional Guidelines Applicable to Participation in TNI Forums and Symposiums**

Participants should conduct themselves at all times in a professional and respectful manner, and shall respect all rulings of the chair. They should express their views through the making of appropriate motions and through participation in the formal debate on motions.

### **Additional Guidelines Applicable to Committee Members**

For TNI committees to operate fairly and effectively, it is necessary that committees represent a variety of interests and that those interests be balanced within the committees. To ensure the necessary balance of interest, members have an affirmative and continuing obligation to provide TNI with timely, accurate, and complete information concerning their qualifications and interest classification.

- Members should maintain a high level of knowledge and competency in the areas of interest or expertise related to their activities within TNI.
- Members should actively and diligently perform all duties required of them by their committee work. This includes fully preparing for and consistently attending all meetings, and reading and becoming familiar with all issues relating to public comments on which their committees will act.

TNI recognizes that those who are willing and competent to participate in committee activities often have outside business, commercial, or other interests. It is for this reason that committees are required to be balanced by including in their membership persons of varying interests. Although members are categorized according to their interest classification for the purpose of achieving balance, members are not appointed to committees for the purpose of furthering their business, commercial, or other outside interests. Members are expected to and should base all advocacy, voting, and other standards development activities on sound technical and scientific bases and should act in the interest of TNI's goals.

Members frequently receive funding from their employers, organizations, or other sources for their participation in TNI. Apart from those sources of funding, members should not solicit or accept gifts, hospitality, or transfers of economic benefit, other than incidental gifts or other benefits of nominal value, from persons, groups, or organizations having dealings with their committee or under any circumstances in which the benefit would be or would appear to be bestowed or accepted for the purposes of influencing the members' activities.

- Members should treat all persons having dealings with their committee with respect and fairness and should not offer or appear to offer preferential treatment to any person or group.
- Members should refrain from disseminating false or misleading information or from withholding information necessary to a full, fair, and complete consideration of the issues before their committee.

## **Additional Guidelines Applicable to Committee Chairs**

Chairs should:

- Act in an impartial manner in the performance of their duties.
- Disclose to all members of their committee all known or potential conflicts of interest or other circumstances that could influence their impartiality on a particular matter and must not preside during the committee's consideration of that matter.
- Advise the TNI Executive Director and seek direction as to whether a member may continue to serve in a specific role, if the Chair discovers that a conflict of interest arises for a member and the matter is likely to involve a major activity of the committee or to continue over a considerable period of time.
- Avoid potential conflicts of interest in the appointment of all Subcommittee Chairs. If, in the opinion of the Chair, an individual has a known or potential conflict of interest, or other circumstances that could influence the individual's impartiality, that individual should not be appointed to Chair a subcommittee.
- Exercise care and diligence in the appointment of subcommittees. Although subcommittees need not be fully balanced, Chairs should attempt to include, to the extent practicable, any interested committee member or others who could usefully contribute to the work of the subcommittee. Chairs should avoid constituting a subcommittee in such a way as to unfairly exclude participation of any interest desiring and qualified to participate.
- Identify participating subcommittee members when presenting subcommittee reports to the committee for review and action. Chairs should ensure that the work of subcommittees is thoroughly reviewed and considered by the parent committee.
- Be consistent in the conduct of meetings and in particular should be consistent with respect to participation by non-members.
- Endeavor to stimulate participation from all committee members.

## **Additional Guidelines for TNI Staff**

TNI staff participate in committees primarily as facilitators. Their role is vital to the fair, open, and efficient operation of TNI committees. In fulfilling their roles and obligations, all TNI staff should also observe the following guidelines:

- Promptly and diligently perform all of the advisory, organizational, clerical, and other duties assigned by the Executive Director and by all other policies and procedures related to the TNI committees they facilitate.
- Encourage and facilitate full and effective participation in committee work by all members presenting all relevant information and viewpoints accurately.
- Strive to ensure that the work of their assigned committees is carried out in accordance with TNI policies and procedures.
- Counsel and advise the committee concerning established policies and procedures related

to operations. Staff should also provide timely and accurate information concerning the scheduling of meetings, committee reports, and other necessary information.

- Conduct themselves in a manner that preserves and enhances the trust and confidence of participants as well as the public in the integrity and efficacy of TNI.
- Present themselves in a manner that reflects their facilitative and advisory role, taking care that they neither act nor could be perceived to be acting on behalf of or in order to further the interests of any group or individual.
- Provide any technical information, standards development history, feedback from users, and other material that may assist a committee in the course of its work.
- Share their technical expertise with their committees and, if appropriate, express an expert opinion. In expressing opinions, however, staff should clearly identify their opinions as personal ones and not necessarily that of TNI or any committee. Staff should also express those opinions with brevity, dispassion, and fairness to the opinions of others, and avoid adopting an argumentative or adversarial posture.
- Refrain from both, voting on any matter before a committee or acting as chair of a committee, while serving as committee facilitators.