



<b>SOP TITLE</b>	<b>Obligations of Participants in TNI Activities</b>
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## 1.0 Purpose and Applicability

This SOP establishes the basic obligations of Participants in TNI activities and contains general ethical principles based on Policy 1-129.

The mission of TNI is to foster the generation of reliable environmental data through an open, inclusive, and transparent process that is responsive to the needs of the community.

This SOP applies to any TNI activity as defined in Section 4.0, but does not apply to actions of individuals who are TNI members who are engaged in their normal business activities for example, as laboratory personnel, laboratory assessors, accreditation body employees, or proficiency test provider personnel.

## 2.0 Summary

This SOP outlines the general principles that are the basis for the conduct of all participants, including members of the TNI Board of Directors, committees, subcommittees, and task forces, any person employed by or acting as a contractor to TNI, and attendees to TNI events or meetings who are not TNI members. TNI programs may augment this SOP with additional provisions but may not supersede any part of it.

## 3.0 Related Documents

POL-1-110, Open Meetings  
POL-1-128, Non-Discrimination and Non-Harassment in TNI Programs and Activities  
SOP-1-102, Voting Rules for TNI Committees

## 4.0 Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Participant</b>	An individual who participates in a TNI activity, independent of their TNI membership status.
<b>TNI Activity</b>	Any event sponsored by TNI, including, but not limited to, TNI committee meetings, conferences, conclaves, training courses, and workshops, whether virtual or in-person.

## 5.0 Obligations of TNI Members

5.1 A TNI Member must not:

- 5.1.1 Authorize the use of or use for the benefit or advantage of any person, the name, logos, marks, endorsement, services, or property of TNI, except in conformance with TNI policy.
- 5.1.2 Publicly use any TNI affiliation in connection with the promotion of partisan politics, religious matters, or positions on any issue not in conformity with TNI's mission or the official position of TNI.
- 5.1.3 Within the restrictions that may be imposed by government bodies, disclose or use any information that is classified as confidential and/or protected that is available solely as a result of the member's affiliation with TNI to any person not authorized to receive such information, or use to the disadvantage of TNI any such confidential information, without the express authorization of TNI.
- 5.1.4 Knowingly take any action or make any statement intended to influence the conduct of TNI in such a way as to confer any financial benefit on any person, corporation, or entity in which the individual has a significant interest or affiliation.

5.1.5 Operate or act in any manner that is contrary to the best interests of TNI.

The principles above must be agreed upon by any individual who joins TNI as a member or Affiliate member as defined in SOP 1-101. See Appendix A.

5.2 TNI members must:

- 5.2.1 Act honestly and in good faith with a view to TNI's best interests. Although TNI recognizes that legitimate differences of opinion can exist on individual issues, participants should support and promote the defined broad objectives of TNI.
- 5.2.2 Encourage and facilitate the full and open dissemination of all information necessary to enable complete and fair consideration of all points of view.
- 5.2.3 Explain the rationale for their views and 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.
- 5.2.4 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.
- 5.2.5 Not use or authorize any TNI symbol, except in conformance with TNI Policy 1-103.
- 5.2.6 Not use any TNI affiliation in connection with the promotion of positions on any issue not in conformity with TNI's mission or the official position of TNI.
- 5.2.7 Not disclose or use any information that is classified as confidential and/or protected that is available solely as a result of the member's affiliation with TNI to any person not authorized to receive such information or use to the disadvantage of TNI any such confidential information, without the express authorization of TNI.
- 5.2.8 Not knowingly take any action or make any statement intended to influence the conduct of TNI in such a way as to confer any financial benefit on any person, corporation, or entity in which the individual has a significant interest or affiliation.
- 5.2.9 Not operate or act in any manner that is contrary to the best interests of TNI.
- 5.2.10 Not attempt to withhold or prohibit information or points of view from being disseminated, particularly when a participant disagrees 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 its expression.
- 5.2.11 Endeavor to make known their business, commercial, organizational, or other affiliations that might affect their interests or points of view (see POL-1-101).
- 5.2.12 Confine comments in all discussions, debates, and deliberations to the merits of the scientific, technical, and procedural issues under review. Although members may strongly advocate for their views or positions, they should be respectful of the positions of others.
- 5.2.13 Respect and observe the confidentiality of executive sessions.

## 6.0 Additional Obligations Applicable to Committee Members

For TNI committees to operate fairly and effectively, it is necessary that committee members conduct themselves appropriately.

- 6.1 Members have an affirmative and continuing obligation to provide TNI with timely, accurate, and complete information concerning their qualifications and interest classification.
- 6.2 Members should maintain an appropriate level of knowledge and competency in the areas of interest or expertise related to their activities within TNI.
- 6.3 Members should actively and diligently perform all duties required of them by their committee. This includes fully preparing for and consistently attending meetings and reading and becoming familiar with issues relating to public comments on which their committees will act.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 Members should adhere to Robert's Rules of Order as covered in committee member training.
- 6.6 Members must treat all persons having dealings with their committee with respect and fairness and must not offer or appear to offer preferential treatment to any person or group.
- 6.7 Members must 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.

## **7.0 Additional Obligations Applicable to Committee Chairs**

Committee Chairs must:

- 7.1 Act in an impartial manner in the performance of their duties.
- 7.2 Disclose to all members of their committee, any 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.
- 7.3 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 an undisclosed conflict of interest arises for a member.
- 7.4 Avoid potential conflicts of interest in the appointment of all Subcommittee Chairs.
- 7.5 Exercise care and diligence in the appointment of subcommittees. Although subcommittees need not be balanced, Chairs should attempt to include any interested committee member or others who could usefully contribute to the work of the subcommittee.
- 7.6 Chairs should ensure that the work of subcommittees is thoroughly reviewed and considered by the full committee.
- 7.7 Be consistent when conducting meetings and respect participation from members and non-members, as applicable.
- 7.8 Endeavor to stimulate participation from all committee members.
- 7.9 Remove a participant from a meeting for not maintaining decorum.

## **8.0 Additional Obligations Applicable to Individuals Acting on Behalf of TNI**

This section applies to individuals who write official documents, provide presentations, conduct public meetings, and provide training courses. Such individuals:

- 8.1 Must not allow financial interests to conflict with the performance of their duties.

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- 8.2 Must not engage in financial transactions using private TNI information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
- 8.3 Must follow all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity to all persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability.
- 8.4 Must not solicit or accept any gift or other item of nominal value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by TNI, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of a TNI agent.
- 8.5 Must put forth an honest effort in the performance of their duties.
- 8.6 Must not knowingly make unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the Institute, or any party acting on behalf of TNI.
- 8.7 Must not use their position or authority within TNI for private gain.
- 8.8 Must act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any organization or individual.
- 8.9 Must protect and conserve TNI property and must only use it for authorized activities.
- 8.10 Must not seek or negotiate employment, while they are acting on behalf of TNI which would conflict with their duties and responsibilities within TNI.

**9.0 Obligations Applicable to Participants in TNI Activities**

- 9.1 All attendees must conduct themselves at all times in a professional and respectful manner and must respect all rulings of the presiding officer. They should express their views through the making of appropriate comments and through participation in the meeting process. See Appendix B.
- 9.2 Vendors must abide by the Terms and Conditions as part of their contract to exhibit at a public meeting. See Appendix C.

**10.0 Obligations for Individuals Taking Tests or Exams**

- 10.1 Individuals must:
  - 10.1.1 Maintain the confidentiality of the test/exam items.
  - 10.1.2 Not record or attempt to recreate test/exam items, whether for financial gain or not.
  - 10.1.3 Avoid any practices such as cheating and/or breach of confidentiality/security or any attempt to subvert the test or exam.
- 10.2 Individuals taking TNI Tests or Exams must agree to the above principles by checking a box. See Appendix D.

**11.0 Additional Obligations 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 must:

- 11.1 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.
- 11.2 Facilitate full, fair, and effective participation in committee work by all attendees and present all relevant information and viewpoints accurately.

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- 11.3 Strive to ensure that the work of their assigned committees is carried out in accordance with TNI policies and procedures.
- 11.4 Counsel and advise the committee concerning established policies and procedures related to operations. Staff must also provide timely and accurate information concerning the scheduling of meetings, committee reports, and other necessary information.
- 11.5 Conduct themselves in a manner that preserves and enhances the trust and confidence of participants as well as the public.
- 11.6 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.
- 11.7 Provide any technical information, standards development history, feedback from users, and other material that may assist a committee in the course of its work.
- 11.8 Share their technical expertise with their committees and, if appropriate, express an expert opinion. In expressing opinions, 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.
- 11.9 While serving as committee facilitators, refrain from voting on any matter before a committee or acting as chair of a committee.

## **12.0 Additional Obligations for a TNI Certified Professional or Specialist**

Individuals who hold or are seeking TNI issued credentials must protect the integrity of such credentials and of the processes by which those credentials are earned and awarded. Please see Section 5.0 of the TNI Certified Professional Handbook for information.

## **13.0 Remedies**

### 13.1 TNI Members

Failure to abide by this SOP may result in the TNI Board of Directors taking action such as suspending or terminating membership in TNI or participation on TNI committees.

### 13.2 Other Participants

Breaches of this policy by any participant, irrespective of membership status, may result in actions such as, but not limited to, private reprimand, revocation of certification, denial of eligibility for certification or recertification, and/or other actions deemed appropriate by TNI.

### 13.3 Notification

Any affected individual will be notified in writing by any actions taken by TNI.

## **14.0 References**

POL 1-103, Use of TNI Symbols  
POL-1-129, Obligations of TNI Participants in TNI Activities  
SOP-1-101, Operations of TNI Committees  
SOP 1-129, Development of Tests and Exams  
TNI Certified Professional Handbook

## **15.0 SOP Approved Changes**

Note: This SOP began by moving Sections III – XI from Policy 1-129 into sections 5.0 – 12.0 of this document and renumbering all text into SOP format. Then, additional edits were made to address comments by the TNI Board at their January 5, 2024 meeting.

<b>Revision No.</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>	<b>Description of Change</b>
0	2/2/24	New Document.



### **Appendix A: Member Sign-up Code of Ethics**

All members of The NELAC Institute must agree to the following code of ethics:

No member shall:

1. Authorize the use of or use for the benefit or advantage of any person, the name, logos, marks, endorsement, services, or property of TNI, except in conformance with TNI policy.
2. Publicly use any TNI affiliation in connection with the promotion of partisan politics, religious matters, or positions on any issue not in conformity with TNI's mission or the official position of TNI.
3. Within the restrictions that may be imposed by government bodies, disclose or use any information that is classified as confidential and/or protected that is available solely as a result of the member's affiliation with TNI to any person not authorized to receive such information, or use to the disadvantage of TNI any such confidential information, without the express authorization of TNI.
4. Knowingly take any action or make any statement intended to influence the conduct of TNI in such a way as to confer any financial benefit on any person, corporation, or entity in which the individual has a significant interest or affiliation.
5. Operate or act in any manner that is contrary to the best interests of TNI.



By checking this box, I have read and agree to the Membership Code of Ethics.

## **Appendix B: Guidelines for Attendees at TNI Conferences**

### **Meeting Preparation**

Before you attend a conference, you should do some research and planning to make the most of your time and resources. Find out the theme, agenda, speakers, and attendees of the conference, and identify your goals and expectations. Register early and book your travel and accommodation, review the schedule, choose the sessions you want to join, and prepare some questions and comments.

### **Meeting Decorum**

Follow any health and safety measures. Participate in all events using professional decorum. While attending the conference:

- Be respectful of the session moderators, speakers, and the other attendees.
- Arrive on time, turn off your phone or put it on silent mode, and avoid distractions.
- Listen attentively, take notes, and ask relevant and concise questions.
- Do not interrupt, heckle, have side bar conversations, or dominate the discussion.
- Avoid comments that are personal or inappropriate.
- Respect the boundaries, preferences, and privacy of others.



By checking this box, I have read and agree to guidelines stated above.

### Appendix C: Exhibitor Terms and Conditions

These Terms and Conditions exist to ensure that all exhibitors are given an equal opportunity to present their products and/or services in an effective manner. Exhibit space is made available for the exclusive purpose of imparting useful information to attendees about the available products and services in their respective fields of interest. Any exceptions or alterations to the restrictions and boundaries described herein must meet with the approval of the TNI Executive Director.

1. **CONTRACT FOR SPACE.** By submitting an Application, the Exhibitor agrees to abide by these terms and conditions, the "Contract." Acceptance of an Exhibitor's application does not imply endorsement by The NELAC Institute (TNI) of the applicant's products or services, nor does rejection imply lack of merit of the product, service or company. The conference Steering Committee has the sole right to determine eligibility of any company, product or service for inclusion in the exhibit program and retains the right to cancel the Contract anytime if the exhibit is deemed to be contrary to the best interests of the conference.
2. **SPACE ASSIGNMENT.** Exhibit location will be assigned according to the order in which payment is received from exhibitors. Exhibit space will not be held or reserved until payment is received.
3. **EXHIBIT SPACE.** The Symposium will supply a 3 foot by 6-foot table that can be used for display purposes and two chairs. Adequate space next to this table can allow for the use of a banner stand or similar display as long as the total length does not exceed 8 feet. **Ten-foot pop-up booths are not allowed.** (Exceptions to this policy are allowed for those exhibitors that have 2 or more spaces.)
4. **USE OF EXHIBIT SPACE.** The purpose of the exhibit program is to inform and educate attendees regarding characteristics and uses of the products and services of the organizations who are exhibiting.
5. **CANCELLATION.** Exhibitor agrees that TNI will sustain certain losses if Exhibitor cancels this Contract after Exhibitor has been assigned exhibit space. Because of the difficulty of determining and proving such losses, Exhibitor agrees to pay liquidated damages and not as a penalty in the event Exhibitor cancels all or part of its exhibit space according to a schedule determined by TNI.
6. **PROPER CONTENT.** Exhibitor's content must be such as not to offend even the most critical attendee. Any breach of this rule may result in Exhibitor being removed. If the Steering Committee decides an Exhibitor is engaged in any activities or is displaying any goods or services contrary to the best interests of the conference, the Steering Committee may, in its absolute discretion, rearrange or remove such goods or services or cancel entirely any allocation of space, without liability for refund and without liability for any other damages caused by such action.

TNI is the owner of certain logos, trademarks, and intellectual property (the "Marks") including but not limited to the names "Environmental Measurement Symposium", "National Environmental Monitoring Conference" and "Forum on Environmental Accreditation" and their associated logos. Exhibitor may not use any of the Marks without the prior written consent of the Steering Committee. If an Exhibitor wishes to use any of the Marks on its advertising or other materials, the Exhibitor will first submit a copy of the proposed material for review and approval by the Steering Committee.

Exhibitor is required to maintain its booth so as to be clean and presentable at all times. All supplies, handouts, literature and samples must be confined to the booth space and not behind it. Packing crates and boxes are not permitted in booths during show hours. Exhibitor may not serve or provide food or alcoholic beverages in its exhibit space without the prior written consent of the Steering Committee. This provision is not intended to restrict the free distribution of small quantities of pre-packaged food items such as candies.

The times of the exhibit are the only times that public and sales activities can be provided during the week of the conference. Exhibitors and sponsors may display only informational literature, product samples and/or related materials (such as small promotional items) at their own booth. Vendors and other individuals who have not purchased booth space or sponsorship may not distribute their literature or goods at the meeting. Any activity within the exhibits must conform to the professional nature and character of the conference. The Steering Committee reserves the right to prohibit and require immediate cessation of any activity or distribution which does

not conform. To avoid any problems, the Steering Committee will provide advance approval of activities and items upon request of an Exhibitor. Canvassing or distributing advertising matter outside the exhibitor's own pace is not permitted. Contests, lotteries, raffles or giveaways are highly discouraged and must have the express written and personal consent of the Steering Committee.

7. **ATTENDEES.** TNI will provide each exhibit coordinator with a list of all registered attendees, including those included as exhibitors. TNI expects each organization to review the list of attendees from their organization and provide any corrections. TNI's personal data protection policy allows attendees to uncheck a box informing them that TNI plans to make their contact information available to registered attendees. TNI will identify any individual who unchecked this box and expects vendors registered as exhibitors to honor this request. All exhibitor attendees will be added to the attendee list automatically.

8. **CONFLICTING MEETINGS AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES.** The Steering Committee ensures that a number of venues exist for vendors to promote their organization through sponsorship of various events and activities held in conjunction with the Symposium. These organized events are announced in an Exhibitor Prospectus and are available to any organization. In the interest of the success of the entire conference, the Exhibitor agrees not to extend invitations, call meetings, or otherwise encourage the absence of attendees from the conference during official hours.

Vendors may choose to host their own event, not in conjunction with the conference. However, any such event held at the host hotel for the conference must be approved by the Steering Committee. Such approval is not needed for events held in other locations; however, TNI would prefer to partner with any such organization to ensure minimal disruption to organized events of the conference.

If a vendor decides to promote some activity and would like the activity to be mentioned in official documents (printed and electronic) developed for the conference, the activity must be approved by the Steering Committee.

TNI will not support any vendor sponsored event that promotes a vendor product and that involves required attendance by all attendees (e.g., a vendor-sponsored luncheon).

9. **RESTRICTION OF ACTIVITIES.** All exhibitors' activities must be confined to the contracted exhibit space. No solicitation or distribution of materials outside of exhibit space will be allowed without written permission from the TNI Executive Director.

10. **HEALTH AND SAFETY.** All exhibitors and their representatives must conform to the health and safety measures that have been put in place by hotel, TNI, and federal, state, and local governments in general.

### **Appendix D: ATTENDEE STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING**

Any individual taking an examination provided by TNI or a TNI contractor, must agree to the following statement:

Conduct that violates principles detailed in this Statement of Understanding may result in invalidation of test results.

1. The test is confidential. The test questions are the property of TNI. Unauthorized disclosure of the test questions is prohibited under copyright laws. By signing this statement of understanding, you agree to maintain the confidentiality of the test items. You must therefore:
  - a. Keep the test content confidential, even after the examination. This also includes not discussing the content with anyone who has been administered the test before you, with you, or who has not yet taken the examination.
  - b. Not record or attempt to recreate test items, whether for financial gain or not.
2. Any cheating and/or breach of confidentiality/security or any attempt to subvert the process by any candidate violates the purpose and principles of the test.



By checking this box, I agree to abide by the principles stated above.