



WATER BUREAU POLICY AND PROCEDURES

NUMBER:	WB-007	
SUBJECT:	Participation of Employees in Professional Organizations and Other Committees or Work Groups	
EFFECTIVE DATE:	FEBRUARY 12, 2007	PAGE: 1 OF 7
REVISION DATE:	(5-YEAR REVIEW FREQUENCY)	

ISSUE:

Professional organizations often seek the participation of Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) employees in their business meetings and work groups due to the considerable technical expertise MDEQ employees possess. MDEQ participation with professional organizations is beneficial because it can provide for a greater understanding of how MDEQ functions in implementing the many laws and rules MDEQ operates under, it may open lines of communication to allow for problem resolution, and it provides for a more personal side to dealing with the MDEQ. While employee participation in these organizations can be beneficial to both the employee and the MDEQ, such participation also has the potential to require significant amounts of employee time and divert employee efforts away from MDEQ priorities. Additionally, since the employee is representing the MDEQ, the employee needs to keep Water Bureau (WB) management apprised of the issues being discussed, and understand and represent the position of the WB in these discussions.

Similarly, employees are often asked to participate on interagency committees, on WB committees, or with temporary committees/work groups. Each of these types of committees or work groups has the potential to require a significant amount of an employee's time and require direction from WB management. This policy also addresses those activities.

AUTHORITY:

Not applicable.

DEFINITIONS:

"Professional organization" means an organization that exists to provide professional development, information exchange, career opportunities, relationship-building, and training in a specific career area for its members. Examples of professional organizations include American Water Works Association, Michigan Water Environment Association, etc.

"Interagency committee" means a long-term committee or work group comprised of staff from an MDEQ division/office/bureau, another state or federal agency, or other governmental agencies. The public may also participate on the committee. Examples of interagency committees include watershed groups, MDEQ/Michigan Department of Agriculture and Environmental Committee, Toxics Steering Group, Michigan Association of Local Public Health, Michigan Agricultural Environment Assurance Program, Great Lakes--Upper Mississippi River Board of State and Provincial Public Health and Environmental Managers, etc.

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“Participation” means attending meetings on a regular basis in the official capacity of representing the WB or MDEQ.

“WB committee” means a standing committee that is based on a specific WB program area, involving staff from multiple work units. The list of WB committees is maintained by the WB chief’s secretary.

Temporary MDEQ or WB committees/work groups are often formed to address specific issues within a limited time period (generally several weeks or months). Examples of these committees include the WB *E. Coli* Work group, Field Operations Division Enforcement Streamlining Work group, training committees, etc.

POLICY:

Approval for Participation in Professional Organizations

The MDEQ supports appropriate employee participation in professional organizations during working hours that provides tangible benefits for the employee and the MDEQ, and at the same time minimizes the amount of employee time spent on such activity and costs incurred in doing so. In accordance with MDEQ Policy 01-005, “Participation of Employees in Professional Organizations,” employees shall request, through chain of command, division chief approval to attend or participate in a professional organization business meeting, work group, or committee during paid work hours. MDEQ Policy 01-005 discusses several aspects of employee participation in a professional organization, including MDEQ payment of fee for membership in a local, state, national, or international professional organization; MDEQ approval to attend or participate in a professional organization business meeting, work group, or committee during paid work hours; and MDEQ approval to become an officer in a professional organization. Nothing in this WB Policy contradicts the MDEQ policy.

Prior to receiving division chief approval to attend or participate in a professional organization business meeting, work group, or committee during paid work hours, the employee shall describe the issues that the professional organization are likely to address, estimate the anticipated level of participation (hours/month) by the employee, and describe the role of the employee in the professional organization’s meetings, work group, or committee. Attached is the WB form that will be used to obtain the appropriate approval. Supervisors in the chain of command between the employee and division chief shall provide their recommendation to approve or deny the request.

Approval for Interagency Committees

Employees are often asked by WB management to participate on an interagency committee. Additionally, the employee may be approached by others to participate or has a personal interest in participating on the interagency committee. If the employee is asked by someone other than WB management to participate or has a personal interest, then prior to section chief approval, the employee shall describe the issues that the interagency committee is likely to address, estimate the anticipated level of participation (hours/month) by the employee, and describe the role of the employee on the interagency committee. The division chief shall be notified of such approvals. Attached is the WB form that will be used to obtain the appropriate approval and to notify the division

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chief. The form will be completed by the employee even when WB management initiates the employee's participation (similar to how training requests are handled). Supervisors in the chain of command between the employee and section chief shall provide their recommendation to approve or deny the request.

Employee participation in professional organizations and interagency committees will be tracked in a WB database. The list will be reviewed annually to determine whether previous approvals shall be continued.

Employee participation in WB committees and temporary MDEQ or WB committees/work groups will require approval by the employee's supervisor. Notification to the division chief is not required, nor will this information be tracked in the WB database.

Employee participation in professional organizations or on interagency committees in a nontechnical function (such as social, registration, or membership committees) during working hours will not be approved.

Employees attending meetings of professional organizations or interagency committees for the purpose of training shall seek supervisor approval in accordance with WB procedures.

WB staff that are asked to be a guest speaker at a meeting of a professional organization or interagency committee will not be subject to this procedure for that activity. DEQ Policy 01-002, "Speaking at Conferences," should be referenced for obtaining appropriate approvals.

WB Employee's Responsibilities

If a WB employee's participation in the professional organization or interagency committee is approved, then the employee shall do the following:

- Obtain agendas prior to meetings and share them with his/her supervisor and others within the WB that have program responsibilities for the issues being discussed (for example, section chief, division chief, WB committee chairperson, etc.). This activity applies to all professional organization meetings and those interagency committees that have been identified in the approval process.
- Distribute minutes or summary of the meeting to those individuals identified above.
- Represent the WB in all discussions. If the professional organization or the interagency committee seeks MDEQ input on an issue that is outside the employee's area of job expertise or that has the potential to impact WB programs, the employee should discuss the issue with his/her immediate supervisor to determine how best to handle the situation (some issues may need input from WB management). The employee shall not provide personal opinions that contradict those of the MDEQ or provide opinions outside of his/her area of expertise.
- The employee shall not participate in voting on professional organization procedures or strategies that are of a political or legislative nature.

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- The employee should not volunteer or accept significant work assignments from the professional organization or the interagency committee without approval of the employee's supervisor. The supervisor shall determine the definition of significant work assignments based on discussions with WB management and convey this to the employee.

Chairpersons of the WB committees shall share agendas and minutes of meetings with appropriate supervisors (generally section chief involved in the program area, and district supervisors if district staff are committee members). Committee members shall discuss committee assignments with their supervisor.

Temporary MDEQ or WB work groups are often formed to address specific issues within a limited time period. The employee shall seek input from the supervisor or others as appropriate.

This policy does not include interactions with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) in USEPA's program oversight role or with other Region 5 states in program coordination that are integral to the performance of the employee's job duties. However, formal work groups with these entities are subject to the requirements of this policy.

Participation in union-related committees or activities is not subject to this policy, but shall be in accordance with the union contracts.

Nothing in the policy impacts the employee's participation in professional organizations during nonwork hours. In these cases, the employee should make it clear that they are not representing the MDEQ.

METHOD OF DISTRIBUTION:

Intranet and e-mail distribution.

PROCEDURE:

Responsibility

Action

For Professional Organizations

Employee

Prior to participation in a professional organization during work hours, obtain division chief approval of such participation.

Chain of Command Supervisors

Recommend approval or denial.

Division Chief

Approve or deny such requests and notify the employee of the decision.

For Interagency Committees

Employee

Prior to participation in an interagency committee during work hours, obtain section chief approval

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Chain of Command Supervisors	of such participation. Recommend approval or denial.
Section Chief	Approve or deny such requests and notify the employee of the decision. Notify the division chief of approvals.
Employee	After approval to participate in a professional organization or interagency committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Obtain agendas prior to meetings and share them with his/her supervisor and others within the MDEQ that have program responsibilities for the issues being discussed.○ Distribute minutes or summary of the meeting to those individuals identified above.○ Represent the MDEQ in all discussions. If the committee needs MDEQ input into an issue, the employee should discuss the issue with his/her immediate supervisor to determine how best to handle the situation (some issues may need input from WB management). The employee shall not provide personal opinions that contradict those of the MDEQ or provide opinions outside of his/her area of expertise.○ The employee shall not participate in voting on professional organization procedures or strategies that are of a political or legislative nature.○ The employee should not volunteer or accept work assignments from the committee without approval of his/her supervisor.

APPROVED: 
Richard A. Powers, Chief
Water Bureau

DATE: 2/12/07

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LAST REVIEWED BY: _____
Name
Title

DATE: _____



Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
Water Bureau

COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION REQUEST

Completion and signed approval of this form is required prior to any participation on a committee.

EMPLOYEE AND COMMITTEE INFORMATION

DATE	EMPLOYEE NAME	SECTION/UNIT/DISTRICT
COMMITTEE NAME AND SPONSORING ORGANIZATION		
APPROX. LENGTH OF TIME EXPECTED TO SERVE ON COMMITTEE (i.e., number of months, years, indefinitely, etc.)	APPROX. HOURS A MONTH ATTENDING MEETINGS AND FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY	
LIST AGENCIES, DIVISIONS, AND/OR GROUPS INVOLVED IN THE COMMITTEE		
PURPOSE OF THE COMMITTEE		
ROLE OF PARTICIPATING EMPLOYEE ON COMMITTEE		
LIST WATER BUREAU STAFF TO GET COPIES OF AGENDAS AND MINUTES		

SUPERVISOR APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL

Signature Employee		Date
<input type="checkbox"/> RECOMMENDED	Signature Immediate Supervisor	Date
<input type="checkbox"/> NOT RECOMMENDED		
<input type="checkbox"/> APPROVAL	Signature Section Chief	Date
<input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVAL (if professional organization)		
<input type="checkbox"/> APPROVAL	Signature Division Chief	Date
<input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVAL (if professional organization)		

COMMENTS: (Disapproval Explanation, etc.)

AFTER SUPERVISOR'S APPROVAL, PLEASE SUBMIT FORM TO YOUR APPROPRIATE DIVISION CHIEF FOR SIGNATURE.

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