

NWCG Executive Board Standard Operating Procedures

The following Standard Operating Procedures support the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Charter ([eb-nwcg-charter.pdf](#)).

NWCG VISION

To be the trusted leaders in the wildland fire community by developing innovative training and standards.

NWCG MISSION/OBJECTIVES

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group provides national leadership to enable interoperable wildland fire coordination among federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial partners. See Primary Objectives at www.nwcg.gov.

DECISION MAKING

Issues requiring discussion/decision may be brought to the Executive Board by the Chair, Vice-Chair, Primary Member, NWCG Program Manager (or NWCG Staff with concurrence of the NWCG Program Manager), or a NWCG Committee (through the Committee's respective NWCG Coordinator). Whoever is sponsoring the agenda item (Executive Board Member, NWCG Program Manager or NWCG Staff) is responsible for compiling the associated reference and background materials a week in advance of the Executive Board meeting and sending to the Executive Secretary for distribution.

Members are expected to come to the meetings having reviewed the material, fully vetted issues with their agencies/organizations, as appropriate, and be prepared to make a decision. Members are responsible for participating in active dialogue and constructive debate leading up to a decision. Based on the complexity of a decision, additional time may be needed prior to making a decision. At the completion of the discussion, the facilitator will assist the group in determining if a decision can be reached or if more time is needed to gather additional information or conduct additional briefing up the chain of command. If a decision is deferred, a deadline will be set by the Chair for revisiting the decision topic and captured in the meeting notes.

Typically, NWCG decisions must be implemented by each member agency/organization to be effective; therefore, time should be allowed during the decision making for due deliberation by the agencies/organizations up through the appropriate chain of command. When possible, it is best to bring a topic forward one month as informational, and follow-up the next month with a decision. However, issues requiring more urgent decisions, such as security, safety, and/or health issues will be expedited by the Executive Board.

Issues requiring decision should be documented and presented via briefing. All presenters must provide appropriate reference and background material (memos, past memos, summary of changes, new publications, etc.) to the Executive Board seven days prior to a meeting. The meeting materials will be routed through the Executive Secretary. Requests to establish new publications need to have the full publication included in the Executive Board meeting binder. Changes to existing standards should include a summary of changes. Executive Board members should continue to be briefed by agency/organization committee members as new publications are in development for agency/organization vetting. Final review of new publications by the EB should be focused solely on

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"fatal flaws" and glaring errors that would prevent an agency/organization from implementing the set-forth publication.

Decision making by NWCG groups is by consensus of the primary membership. Decisions will be based on a consensus of those members present. A quorum of two-thirds of the primary members is required to carry a decision. At the beginning of the meeting, the facilitator will announce if there are enough members present for a quorum. All decisions will be recorded in the meeting notes. The facilitator will facilitate the consensus process.

Consensus decision making does not require unanimous agreement by members but does require participation by all primary members. Consensus requires every member be willing to support the decision. During the decision-making process, each member takes responsibility to share their opinions for group consideration and deliberation, and to provide an alternative solution where there is disagreement. Rather than abstaining, a participant can express a neutral position yet must still be involved and able to support the decision.

A decision is considered final when agreed upon at the meeting. Once approved, the meeting minutes will document the decision. Not receiving a reply from a primary member to edit the notes by the meeting minute review deadline implies agreement and support of the minutes by members. Once a decision has been made, all members agree to actively support the decision.

In some cases, member agencies/organizations may find it necessary to adapt implementation of the decision to fit within their respective rules and regulations while still meeting the intent of the decision. On rare occasions a decision may need to be revisited based on significant new information or direction. The primary members will determine if revisiting a decision is valid prior to reconsideration. Reconsideration of a decision should be coordinated with the Executive Board Chair.

If a primary member feels strongly that agreement is unattainable, the issue may be tabled until the next meeting or until a more acceptable decision can be attained.

All proposed taskings to NWCG Committees need prior Executive Board approval (e.g., serious accident investigation, external groups, agencies, program reviews).

MEETING MANAGEMENT

Executive Board meetings will follow NWCG Meeting Standards. (<https://www.nwcg.gov/committee-roles-membership-information#MS>)

Executive Board monthly meetings are generally scheduled on the third Wednesday of each month and are typically held in Boise, Idaho. Meeting dates/locations may be changed with consensus by the Executive Board. Primary members should attend all monthly meetings. Those unable to attend a meeting should arrange for an alternate to represent their agency/organization. The alternate should be fully briefed and must have the authority to make decisions on the primary member's behalf. Alternates will be announced to the Chair the Executive Secretary, the NWCG Program Manager and the facilitator prior to the meeting.

Meetings may be held in-person or virtually. When a meeting is held in-person, a virtual option will be established for members that cannot attend in-person. If an in-person meeting is planned away from Boise, additional time will be required for the Executive Secretary and facilitator to make the arrangements. Active and full participation is critical to meeting success. For members participating remotely, turning on cameras is expected during the meeting.

Executive Session

Members may request an executive session through the Chair and/or Program Manager. Additional time will be added to the agenda for an executive session if requested or a separate meeting may be scheduled as appropriate. If a separate meeting is scheduled, the Executive Secretary will review calendars and send Executive Board Members options via email prior to scheduling a meeting. These sessions are typically for controversial, sensitive, or time sensitive topics. An ad hoc executive session may be added the day of meeting with Executive Board consensus.

Executive session participation will be based on the topic, as determined by the Chair and/or Program Manager. Subject matter experts and invited guests may be included in executive sessions upon request by the Chair and/or Program Manager.

Information or handouts necessary to prepare for the executive session should be sent to the members prior to the discussion.

No notes will be taken for executive sessions.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Chair

- Is designated by rotation schedule and serves a two-year term that begins in January on even years (see Transition and Onboarding below for NMAC, NWCG & FMB Chair rotation schedule).
- Directs NWCG actions and activities in support of the NWCG mission, in coordination with the Executive Board primary members.
- Negotiates consensus when possible.
- Resolves differences when appropriate. Maintains open communication with the NWCG Program Manager.
- Schedules meetings as necessary to carry out the NWCG's responsibilities.
- Disseminates information as needed to the Executive Board.
- Signs NWCG correspondence.
- Approves meeting agendas and final meeting minutes.
- Coordinates representation for NWCG at meetings and events as appropriate (e.g., FMB, FEC, NASF, ITC, WUI).

Vice-Chair

- Is designated by rotation schedule and serves a two-year term that begins in January on even years.
- Performs the duties of the Chair when the Chair is not available or as requested by the Chair.

Members

- Responsible for representing their agency/organization during NWCG decision-making processes and for ensuring that proposed NWCG standards are reviewed by pertinent agency/organization personnel prior to release by the NWCG.
- Establishes the vision and sets priorities for NWCG.

- Contribute to the development of meeting agendas and review of meeting minutes and correspondence.
- Attend all meetings or designate a representative to attend meetings on their behalf; representative will be fully briefed and have authority to make decisions.
- Communicate with committee representatives to understand context of decisions prior to the meetings.
- Actively participate in discussions.
- Attempt to reach consensus.
- Provide alternate agency representation in case of member absence.
- Communicate the activities of the NWCG to their agencies/organizations.
- Brief agency Fire Management Board and National Multi-Agency Coordination representatives on relevant issues (over-communicate vs under-communicate).
- Cognizant of the functions and activities of NWCG, including committees on which the member has representation.
- Remain open to real time feedback from the NWCG Program Manager and NWCG Staff on workload, staffing concerns, etc.

NWCG Program Manager

- Serves as administrator for the NWCG Staff in support of the Executive Board.
- Works in partnership with the Chair.
- Keeps Chair apprised of any issues that arise; Chair will brief Executive Board as appropriate (no surprises).
- In coordination with the Chair, represents NWCG at meetings and events as appropriate (e.g., FMB, FEC, NASF, ITC, WUI).
- Provides updates to the Executive Board on large efforts (Executive Board will determine what needs to be routed to the Fire Management Board).
- Maintains open communication and check-ins with Executive Board, serving as the conduit for any issues that may arise.
- Determines what information is relevant to the Executive Board, ensuring adequate staff work has been performed and topics have been thoroughly vetted amongst the agencies/organizations prior to being brought forward to the Executive Board.
- Determines when topics are ready for Executive Board discussion/decision (don't get in front of topics). Ideally allow for a topic to be briefed a month in advance, prior to requesting a decision, especially for controversial or complex topics as time allows. Coordinators or committees' members can brief out as schedules allow.
- Formulates long and short-term strategies to meet NWCG objectives, with the NWCG Executive Board.
- Supervises and manages workload of the NWCG Staff and manages business operations.
- Reviews and approves agenda prior to each meeting; ensures adequate time is allotted for topics that require decision.
- Hosts informal sessions with the Executive Board, (generally right after monthly Executive Board meetings) to discuss any concerns and/or to receive/provide feedback to/from the Executive Board.
- In coordination with the Executive Board Chair, disseminates information as needed to the Executive Board.

NWCG Deputy Program Manager

- In addition to the duties listed below, performs the duties of the NWCG Program Manager when they are not available or as requested.
- Provides oversight, guidance, and direction related to the NWCG budgets, and coordinates with Agency Budget Leads and the NWCG Executive Board as appropriate.
- Provides oversight and assistance with NWCG contracts and agreements.
- Focuses on internal NWCG operations/business management, strategic planning, and developing efficiencies.

Executive Secretary

- Develops meeting agendas in coordination with coordinators and Program Manager.
- Responsible for meeting logistics.
- Documents the NWCG Executive Board's decisions and actions.
- Distributes and communicates agendas and binder material, minutes, memos, taskings, and other relevant information about NWCG.
- Maintains records and facilitates archive searches.
- Finalizes all formal NWCG official correspondence.
- Takes the lead on scheduling meeting calls.
- Monitors the NWCG Executive Board inbox.

Facilitator

- Assigned by the NWCG Program Manager to facilitate Executive Board meetings.
- Reviews agenda with participants at the beginning of the meeting.
- Sets the meeting expectations (cameras on as outlined above and raise hand feature for decision making when remote).
- Determines and announces whether a quorum is present.
- Introduces topics.
- Ensures adherence to the agenda and good time management.
- Recaps each topic.
- Polls members when a decision is on the table and determining if/when consensus has been reached or if additional time will be required before a decision can be reached.
- Maintains a bin for issues that warrant discussion but are not on the agenda (to be discussed if time allows or added to future agenda).
- Facilitates the round robin lightening round at the end of each meeting.

Information on committee roles, responsibilities and membership can be found at <https://www.nwcg.gov/committee-roles-membership-information>.

TRANSITION AND ONBOARDING

The NWCG Chair and Vice-Chair transitions are on a set rotation amongst the primary members. Prior to that transition, the current Chair, Vice Chair and NWCG Program Manager will schedule time to discuss current issues, hot topics, roles and responsibilities, and expectations with the incoming Chair and Vice-Chair.

When an agency/organization makes a change to their membership, the outgoing member should transition with incoming member, and meet with the Chair, Program Manager and NWCG Staff as appropriate. The Chair, Program Manager and NWCG Staff should make themselves available to provide briefings, answer questions, and assist with the transition.

NMAC, NWCG, AND FMB ROTATION SCHEDULE

Past, current, and future chair rotation is as follows:

| <u>YEAR</u> | <u>NMAC</u> | <u>NWCG</u> | <u>FMB</u> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 2002 & 2003 | NPS | | |
| 2004 & 2005 | NASF | | |
| 2006 & 2007 | BLM | | |
| 2008 & 2009 | BIA | FWS | |
| 2010 & 2011 | USFS | NPS | |
| 2012 & 2013 | FWS | USFA | |
| 2014 & 2015 | USFA | NASF | NPS |
| 2016 & 2017 | NPS | BLM | USFS |
| 2018 & 2019 | NASF | BIA | BLM |
| 2020 & 2021 | BIA | USFS | BIA |
| 2022 & 2023 | BLM | FWS | DOI |
| 2024 & 2025 | USFS | USFA | FWS |
| 2026 & 2027 | FWS | IAFC | USFS |
| 2028 & 2029 | USFA | DoD | BIA |
| 2030 & 2031 | NPS | ITC | USFA |
| 2032 & 2033 | NASF | BLM | NPS |
| 2034 & 2035 | BIA | NPS | BLM |

NWCG EXECUTIVE BOARD AWARDS

The Executive Board appreciates the efforts made by individuals and/or committees that support the NWCG mission and believe they should be recognized and awarded. As such, annually, the Executive Board will select a NWCG member/committee/staff to be recognized based on one of the three award categories below. The Executive Board does withhold the option to select more than one nominee.

1. Creativity and Innovation

- Exhibiting innovation, initiative, and adaptability, such as embracing change; overcoming barriers; or proactively assuming responsibilities beyond the standard.
- Modeling peer-to-peer communications, such as collaborations between NWCG committees/subgroups or with other member agency groups to accomplish projects.

2. Achieving Results

- Accountability, such as exceeding performance expectations on a tasking or NWCG project.
- Problem solving and decision-making, such as transforming a decision into a specific plan of action and/or executing that plan.

3. Outstanding Support of the NWCG Mission

- Dedicating a significant amount of time in service to NWCG.

- Exhibiting outstanding leadership qualities, such as professional conduct, developing relationships, or effectively managing change.

The process and timeline for nominating an NWCG member/committee/staff include:

- During the December NWCG Executive Board Meeting, NWCG Staff and the Executive Board will come prepared to verbally discuss potential nominees.
- Based on those discussions, the Executive Board will vote and select a nominee for recognition.
- The Executive Board Chair will present the award at the NWCG Annual Meeting in February.

CRITERIA FOR JOINING NWCG

The Executive Board may accept an organization as either a primary member or associate member. The Executive Board may confer membership to organizations with expertise, interests, or resources critical to related and relevant decision-making. Non-member organizations and agencies may be brought in to advise or consult NWCG groups without being conferred as members with approval of the Executive Board.

In general, the following will be considered when any organization requests NWCG membership:

- Is the requesting organization a governmental agency or a nationally recognized association representing federal, state, local, or non-governmental responders?
- Does the requesting organization have fire response/fire management responsibilities as per law, statute, or legislation on lands in the United States?
- If the requesting organization does not have fire response/fire management responsibilities on U.S. lands, is the requesting organization authorized/required by law to participate in wildland fire activities by providing responders or other services?
- Is there mutual benefit to adding the requesting organization to the NWCG?
- What representation on NWCG boards or committees, subcommittees is requested?
- What financial and administrative impacts will result with the inclusion of the requesting organization?
- Are NWCG's parent groups (Fire Executive Council, National Association of State Foresters, Department of Defense, International Association of Fire Chiefs, and Intertribal Timber Council) and cooperating groups (e.g., National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group, Fire Management Board) in support, or have concerns been adequately addressed?

When a request to join NWCG occurs, the requesting party will be asked to complete the NWCG Request for Consideration form ([nwcg-membership-request-for-consideration.pdf](#)). Once the form is completed, the NWCG Program Manager and Executive Board Chair will meet with the requesting party to discuss membership. The requesting party may be asked to provide a more formal briefing to the Executive Board at a later date.

Primary Member - Participates in consensus decision-making as a voting member. Primary membership can be considered based upon the following conditions:

- Existing primary member of NWCG.
- Federal agency that has significant workforce of wildland and/or wildland urban interface responders, or a significant fire response or land management responsibilities.
- Nationally or internationally recognized association representing federal, state, local, or non-governmental responders that are otherwise not represented by a primary member of NWCG.

Associate Member - Participates in discussions but not engaged in consensus decision-making, not a voting member. Associate membership can be considered based upon the following conditions:

- Existing associate member of NWCG.
- Federal agency that has expertise, interests, or resources critical to NWCG mission.
- Nationally or internationally recognized association representing federal, state, local, or non-governmental responders that are otherwise not represented by a primary or associate member of NWCG.
- Private, non-profit, or educational organization with no perceived conflict of interest that is determined to have expertise, interests, or resources significant to NWCG mission by the NWCG Executive Board, and otherwise not represented by a current member organization.

Liaison or Advisor to Committees – Participates in committee or subgroup level discussions but is not a voting member of the committee/subgroup. Facilitates a close working relationship and coordinates information exchange between two or more NWCG committees/subgroups or other stakeholders.

RESEARCH TO OPERATIONS PROPOSALS

This process provides equitable opportunity for all agencies to be made aware of impactful new science in wildland fire and establishes clarity of approach for NWCG to act, as appropriate, on new science. Outside of NWCG, it will also provide an example on how research is integrated into wildland fire operations and establish a two-way connection between research and operations that will benefit all parties.

1. New science (anticipated to have implications for wildland fire) is submitted to the NWCG Executive Board (EB) in the format of a short briefing paper (i.e., 1-2 pages) explaining its pertinence by a sponsoring committee.
2. If the NWCG EB determines that the new science requires further investigation for a potential action, the EB will task the sponsoring committee or subgroup to be the steward for this new science and responsible for its evaluation.
3. The scientist(s) presents the new science to the steward committee and subcommittee. This briefing could include other pertinent committees or subgroups. The presentation should be recorded and accessible for others to view afterwards as to not overburden the scientist with further briefings.
4. Avenues for feedback should be provided then the steward committee should consolidate feedback before delivering to the scientist(s) for a response. A subsequent briefing or meeting with the scientist(s) may be required for responding to questions or concern.
5. The steward committee or subgroup will recommend to the NWCG Executive Board what action, if any, the committee, or subgroup recommends. This could be a recommendation for the development or change to a standard or the need to develop or update training material.
6. NWCG Executive Board will make a final decision. If the Board approves, the steward committee or subcommittee will work with the pertinent NWCG personnel to develop a transition plan to integrate the science properly into standards, training, and curricula as appropriate.

ANNUAL OFF-SITE MEETINGS

To build team cohesion, the Executive Board and NWCG Staff will strive to meet once per year either in April or May at an off-site location. The lead determines the location, and this meeting can be combined with a staff ride or training. Members will pay for their own travel and NWCG staff can help the

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designated lead coordinate as needed.

| NWCG EB Off-Site Meeting Lead | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Agency Lead | FY |
| USFA | 2024 |
| NPS | 2025 |
| NASF | 2026 |
| BLM | 2027 |
| BIA | 2028 |
| USFS | 2029 |
| IAFC | 2030 |
| DoD | 2031 |
| ITC | 2032 |
| USFS RD&A | 2033 |
| NWCG Program Manager | 2034 |