



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

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PERSONNEL BULLETIN NO. 17-07

SUBJECT: Departmental Policy on Recognition Procedures and Departmental Support for Employee Organizations (Non-Labor)

1. Purpose. This Personnel Bulletin (PB) provides Departmental policy for, and the standards and procedures for recognition of and communication and consultation with, non-labor Employee Organizations within the Department of the Interior (DOI). (This policy does not address organizations or associations established outside of DOI, of which DOI employees may be members.) The purposes of consultation and communication are: the improvement of agency operations, personnel management, and employee effectiveness; the exchange of information (e.g., ideas, opinions, and proposals); and the establishment of policies that best serve the public interest in accomplishing the mission of DOI. The Department encourages participation in Employee Organizations that represent the diversity of the DOI's employees. Employee Organizations can serve as sounding boards around strategic diversity and inclusion matters, and provide a support system that offers employees a sense of community, camaraderie, and connection to the organization. They can also help introduce new employees to DOI's culture, and foster employee engagement and satisfaction. Performing the work of the Department and its bureaus/offices are the primary responsibilities of DOI employees, and performance of those duties must take priority over membership or participation in any Employee Organization.

2. Authorities.

- A. [5 C.F.R Part 251, Agency Relationships with Organizations Representing Federal Employees and Other Organizations](#)
- B. [5 C.F.R. 2635, Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch](#)
- C. [18 U.S.C 205, Activities of officers and employees in claims against and other matters affecting the Government](#)
- D. [18 U.S.C. 208, Acts affecting personal financial interests](#)
- E. [410 DM 2, Limited Personal Use of Government Office Equipment and Library Collections](#)
- F. [205 DM 15, Travel and Transportation](#)

3. Background. 5 C.F.R. Part 251 provides the framework for consulting and communicating with non-labor organizations representing Federal employees and with other organizations on matters related to agency operations and personnel management. An agency's consultation and communication with organizations representing Federal employees and with other organizations under this part may not take on the character of negotiations or consultations regarding

conditions of employment of bargaining unit employees, which is reserved exclusively to labor organizations as provided for in Chapter 71 of title 5 of the U.S. Code or comparable provisions of other laws. The regulations in this part do not authorize any actions inconsistent with Chapter 71 of the U.S. Code or comparable provisions of other laws.

4. Definitions.

A. *Employee Organization (EO)* means an organization other than a labor organization that can provide information, views, and services which will contribute to improved agency operations, personnel management, and employee effectiveness. EOs are not Federal entities, and employees are not performing official duties while engaged in strictly EO activities.

EOs include the following:

- (1) Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are employee-led groups with members who are drawn together by a common interest and work towards advancing relevancy, diversity, and inclusion throughout the organizations. ERGs have charters with specific goals and objectives the group aims to achieve.

ERGs are encouraged to identify a *Leadership Liaison (LL)*. An LL means a DOI manager (generally at the GS-15 level or above) who provides advice and counsel to guide the ERG's development, keeps the group focused on organizational goals, supports the group through communication and visibility, and keeps the ERG connected to DOI leadership. The LL serves in an advisory capacity and shall not lead or be an officer of the group.

- (2) Professional Associations are organizations seeking to further a particular profession(s), the interests of individuals engaged in that profession and the public interest.
- (3) Civic Groups and/or Networking Clubs are organizations consisting of employees whose interest is in implementing employee welfare and morale activities. They serve to help maintain a work environment that is inviting; provide support and/or social networks for employees; enhance opportunities for cross-organizational relationship building; and may serve as a resource to employees in providing personal and/or professional educational forums and promoting special social interests, and the like.

B. *Association of Management Officials and/or Supervisors* means an association comprised primarily of Federal management officials and/or supervisors, which is not eligible for recognition under Chapter 71 of title 5 of the U.S. Code or comparable provisions of other laws, and which is not affiliated with a labor organization or federation of labor organizations.

C. *Labor Organization* means an organization as defined in 5 U.S.C. 7103(a)(4), which is in compliance with 5 U.S.C. 7120, or as defined in comparable provisions of other laws.

5. Criteria.

EOs seeking recognition by the Department must:

- A.** be comprised of a majority of current employees of DOI in order to ensure the focus is on improvements to Departmental programs and activities;
- B.** be open to all employees and in all bureaus (unless membership is restricted, by charter, to employees with specific professional attributes, job positions, etc.);
- C.** be a lawful, nonprofit organization (i.e., is not established for the purpose of generating revenue) whose charter and/or constitution and bylaws indicate that it employs democratic principles in the nomination and election of officers. See 5 CFR 251.102(a);
- D.** not discriminate in terms of membership or treatment because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, sexual orientation or handicapping condition. See 5 CFR 251.102(b);
- E.** not assist or participate in a strike, work stoppage, or slowdown against the Government of the United States or any agency thereof or impose a duty or obligation to conduct, assist, or participate in such strike, work stoppage, or slowdown. See 5 CFR 102(c);
- F.** not advocate the overthrow of the constitutional form of Government of the United States. See 5 CFR 102(d); and
- G.** not have entered or enter into a contract or cooperative agreement with DOI or seek to receive a grant from DOI.

6. Recognition Procedures. Each EO seeking recognition under this PB, *including those previously recognized by the Department*, must follow the procedures in this section.

- A.** Previously Recognized EOs: All previous recognitions will be cancelled within 90-days of the effective date of this PB. *EOs which lose recognition will no longer be eligible to receive Departmental support (as described in Section 8) or participate in any Departmental outreach opportunities pending compliance with the recognition procedures.*
- B.** Newly Established EOs: Newly established EOs seeking recognition by the Department, including bureau-specific EOs, must file for recognition as soon as the documents required for recognition have been developed or are available. *New EOs will not be eligible to receive Departmental support (as described in Section 8) or participate in any Departmental outreach opportunities pending compliance with the recognition procedures.*
- C.** Any EO seeking recognition must furnish the following information to the DOI Office of Human Resources (OHR) via the forms found in Appendices A (Employee Organization

Recognition Form) and B (Employee Organization Certification Statement), the equivalent electronic forms located on the Human Capital Crossroads website (Employee tab), or memorandum:

1. The name of the organization;
2. Type of recognition sought, as defined in Section 4.A. (e.g., Employee Resource Group*, Professional Association, etc.);
3. Statement of purpose/mission;
4. Dated copy of the organization's charter/constitution and by-laws;
5. List of officers with full contact information;
6. Certification by an officer of the number of current members;
7. Affiliation with National Organization (if applicable);
8. Identification of Website and Domain Name (if applicable); and
9. Certification statement by an officer that a majority of members are current DOI employees.

**ERGs are also strongly encouraged to identify an LL (see Section 4.A(1)) An ERG in need of assistance identifying an appropriate LL may contact OHR for assistance.*

D. The Director, OHR, will review the submitted documents and initiate any follow-up action necessary to determine whether the conditions for recognition have been met.

E. Upon determining such conditions are met, the Director, OHR, will issue a memo to the President/Chairperson of the EO recognizing the group under this PB and 5 C.F.R. 251.

F. Recognized organizations must re-submit the documents described above within 30 days in the event of any change in officials or constitution and/or by-laws, and **every two years** following the date of initial recognition under this PB, in order to maintain recognition.

G. OHR shall maintain the current list of recognized EOs and provide this information to the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) and Bureau/Office Human Resources Officers. This information will also be made available on the OHR website.

7. Associations of Manager and/or Supervisors. The Department neither precludes nor discourages supervisory and/or management personnel from joining together in groups or associations as defined by this Bulletin and in accordance with the provisions of 5 C.F.R.251 (see Section 9(c)).

8. Departmental Support. The Department may support the efforts of EOs recognized under the requirements of this Bulletin, to the extent that the support provided will benefit organization members and the employees they represent and the Department. The mere provision of support to recognized EOs may not be construed as Federal sponsorship, sanction, or endorsement of the organization or its activities. The description of and/or criteria for Departmental support are as

follows:

A. Compliance with Law and Regulation. Any support provided must comply with applicable DOI policies and Federal regulations.

B. Use of Government Equipment. Members of recognized EO may reasonably use government telephone and internet services in the same manner as is allowed for all employees pursuant to applicable DOI policies. Use must not result in substantial cost to the government. Use of government equipment such as computers, printers, copiers and fax machines is limited to the preparation of papers to be presented at meetings, or for presentation to DOI management, and preparation of financial accountability documents as applicable.

EOs may use the e-mail system monthly to notify DOI employee members of meetings and information related to meetings. However, this does not include regular "all employee" broadcast e-mails. EOs wishing to share information with all employees to, for example, publicize information about an EO (e.g., the type of EO, mission of the EO, point-of-contact, etc.) should direct such requests, along with the proposed message, to the Director, OHR, for review and distribution as is deemed appropriate.

C. Attendance at Meetings/Conferences at Government Expense. Subject to Section 2.F., supervisors may, at their discretion, permit members/officers of recognized EOs to attend professional organization meetings and conferences at government expense when the attendance is for the purpose of employee development or directly concerned with agency functions or activities and the Department can derive benefits from employee attendance. This means that approval for payment of government funds for attendance is neither automatic nor mandatory. Further, approval in one fiscal year does not imply continued approval in subsequent fiscal years. Supervisors must obtain and review the agenda/syllabus for the requested conference to ensure that the employee's development and the Department's operations will directly benefit from the contents of the conference as described. Funding for attendance at such meetings and conference will come directly out of the operating budget of the affected office and is subject to availability.

Regardless of EO membership, employees who cannot be spared from the workplace due to workload requirements or mission requirements; or have a performance rating of minimally successful or unsatisfactory; or are under a formal leave restriction will not be eligible for attendance at such events. The exception to this is if the supervisor, in consultation with the servicing human resources office, determines that the event will have a direct remedial benefit on the employee's current performance and if listed as a development course formally identified in the employees Individual Development Plan (IDP). If an employee is currently under any medical restriction with regard to work, such as receiving workers' compensation, reasonable accommodation, etc., the servicing human resources office should be consulted prior to approval.

D. Leave for Attendance at Professional Meetings/Conferences. Employees may request personal leave to attend professional meetings at their own expense. Leave may be granted on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the attendance record of the requesting employee, his/her current work requirements and performance, and the office coverage needs of the work unit. All leave requests must be submitted and approved in advance in accordance with current time and attendance policy of the affected office.

E. Participation Time. Reasonable time (generally up to two hours per month of administrative leave with additional time for special events as appropriate) may be granted by supervisors, at their discretion and given workload considerations, to an employee(s) to manage, conduct or participate in programs/meetings of the employee organization. Individual members must obtain advance permission from their supervisors to be absent from their work station at the specific date and time of the scheduled meetings

F. Use of Departmental Facilities for Meetings. Recognized EOs normally may reserve and use Department facilities for meetings. The normal procedures for reserving specific space must be followed, and the EO may not displace other DOI reservations for any reason. The EO may be displaced from its reservation only when there is a mission need to do so. Funding will not be provided for member transportation to these meetings.

G. Use of "Department of the Interior" in the Organization Name. Use of the name "Department of the Interior" or the operating unit (if organization is at that level) is permitted as long as the EO is not presented as an official organization of the Department or its bureaus or offices and its use may not be construed as Federal sponsorship, sanction, or endorsement of the organization or its activities. EOs using "Department of the Interior" or operating units in the organization name will include a disclaimer in correspondence, promotional, and fund raising materials stating that it is a private organization and is not a part of and does not represent the Department of the Interior or the United States government.

H. Bulletin Boards/Social Media. Reasonable use of officially designated DOI or operating unit bulletin boards, including digital bulletin boards, by EOs is permitted as long as such use does not violate the terms of any collective bargaining agreement or other DOI policy. EOs are also permitted to establish presences on approved social media platforms, as long as such use does not violate the terms of any collective bargaining agreement or other DOI policy, and such use has been reviewed and approved by a designated management official. Please refer to the [DOI Social Media Policy](#) and [Digital Media Guide](#) for additional information.

9. Restrictions and Limitations. The activities of an EO may not be represented directly or indirectly as being official activities of DOI or any organizational component or official of the Department. The EO's name, membership cards, and publicity must avoid any misleading implications or connotations of this nature. In addition, the following restrictions and limitations apply:

A. Conflict of Interest or Position. DOI employees who are officials and members of an EO must ensure that the conduct of their duties and activities does not give rise to an actual or appearance of a conflict of interest, a misuse of position or discriminatory conduct. The Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch (see Section 2.B.) include, but are not limited to:

(1) A prohibition on soliciting or accepting a gift or anything of monetary value from a prohibited source, which is a person or entity that: (a) is seeking official action by DOI; (b) does or seeks contractual or other business or financial relations with the DOI; (c) conducts operations or activities that are regulated by the DOI; (d) has interests that may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the employee's official duties or by actions of DOI personnel; or (e) is an organization a majority of whose members are described in (a)

through (d) of this paragraph.

(2) A prohibition on acting as an agent or attorney for anyone other than the United States before a department, agency, or court of the United States where the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest. This includes a claim against the United States Government; a judicial or administrative proceeding in which the organization is a party; or a grant, contract or other agreement (including a request for any such grant, contract or agreement), providing for the disbursement of Federal funds to the organization or the organization's interests. A limited exception to this rule exists for representation of non-profit cooperative, voluntary, professional, recreational or similar organizations if a majority of the organizations members are current Federal employees. However, such representation is not part of an employee's official duties.

(3) Under the Federal conflict of interest statute, 18 U.S.C. 208 (see Section 2.D.), the financial interests of EOs are imputed to employees who serve as officers or on the board of directors of the EO as if they were the employee's personal financial interests. Employees who serve as officers or directors of EO may not participate in official matters that affect the financial interests of the EO (such as an action on requests for official support to an EO's event at Government expense).

(4) May not participate as a Government official in a matter in which one of the parties is, or is represented by, an organization in which the employee is an active participant, if such participation is likely to create an appearance of loss of impartiality, unless the employee has received approval for participation from an authorized official or ethics officer based upon the needs of the bureau/office.

(5) Fundraising. The only authorized charitable fundraising is the Combined Federal Campaign. The Department has not established policies and procedures applicable to solicitations conducted by employee organizations among their own members and for the benefit of welfare funds for their members under 5 CFR 950.102(e).

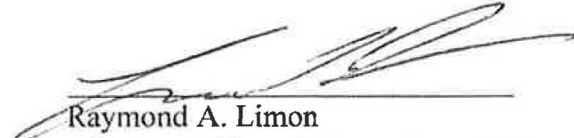
EO members and officials who are concerned about the ethical implications of their activities or who have additional questions should consult an ethics official in their bureau or office.

10. Employee Standards of Conduct. Employees who are members/officials of EOs are held to the same standards of conduct to which they are held as Federal employees. Membership in the EOs does not confer protection from appropriate disciplinary action for violation of conduct standards, ethical standards or any other applicable DOI policies and/or Federal laws, rules or regulations. Additionally, EOs, officers and members do not speak on behalf of or for DOI. (see Section 2.B.)

11. Effect on Memorandums or Prior Directives. This Personnel Bulletin supersedes and replaces Personnel Bulletin No. 10-11, Departmental Policy on Voluntary Employee Organizations (Non-Union) dated November 22, 2010.

Please direct any questions regarding this PB to doi_office_of_human_resources@ios.doi.gov. Frequently asked questions (FAQs) on Employee Organizations may be found on the [Human Capital Crossroads website \(Employees tab\)](#).

Attachments



Raymond A. Limon
Director, Office of Human Resources

Appendix A
U.S. Department of the Interior
Employee Organization Recognition Form

Employee organizations seeking recognition by the Department of the Interior (DOI) under Personnel Bulletin No. 17-07 and 5 C.F.R. 251, including bureaus specific Employee Organizations must furnish the following information to the DOI Office of Human Resources (OHR).

Name of Employee Organization:

This Employee Organization is applying for:

Initial Recognition

Recertification of Recognition

Type of recognition sought:

Employee Resource Group

Professional Association

Civic Group and/or Networking Club

Statement of purpose/mission:

Number of members:

Describe any affiliation with a national organization (if applicable):

What is the Employee Organization's website and/or domain name? (if applicable):

A dated copy of the organization's charter/constitution and by-laws and a list of officer with full contact information must accompany this form.

Submitted by: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B
U.S. Department of the Interior
Employee Organizations – Certification Statement

Name of Employee Organization:

This Certification Statement is submitted in accordance with Personnel Bulletin No. 17-07 and 5 C.F.R. 251, in fulfillment of requirements necessary to receive recognition by the Department of the Interior.

This Employee Organization:

- (A.) has provided a dated copy of the organization's charter/constitution and by-laws;
- (B.) has provided a list of officer with full contact information;
- (C.) is comprised of a majority of current employees of DOI in order to ensure the focus is on improvements to Departmental programs and activities.
- (D.) is open to all employees and in all bureaus (unless membership is restricted, by charter, to employees with specific professional attributes, job positions, etc.)
- (E.) is a lawful, nonprofit organization whose charter and/or constitution and bylaws indicate that it employs democratic principles in the nomination and election of officers;
- (F.) does not discriminate in terms of membership or treatment because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, sexual orientation or handicapping condition;
- (G.) does not assist or participate in a strike, work stoppage, or slowdown against the Government of the United States or any agency thereof or impose a duty or obligation to conduct, assist, or participate in such strike, work stoppage, or slowdown;
- (H.) does not advocate the overthrow of the constitutional form of Government of the United States.
- (I.) must not have entered or enter into a contract or cooperative agreement with DOI or seek to receive a grant from DOI.

President

Date

Contact Information: Name of President _____
Phone number _____
E-mail _____