

National Wildfire Coordinating Group

Wildland Fire Education Working Team



Wildland Fire Education Working Team Operating Principles

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This document is a publication of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Wildland Fire Education Working Team (WFEWT). Questions or comments regarding this document should be directed to:

Maureen Brooks, Chair WFEWT
Fire and Aviation Management
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
Telephone: 610-557-4146
Fax: 610-557-4154
Cell: 610-742-7614
Email: mtbrooks@fs.fed.us

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National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG)
Wildland Fire Education Working Team (WFEWT)
Operating Principles

1.0 Introduction

The WFEWT was established in 1992 by charter by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG). The NWCG was established by Memorandum of Understanding, signed by the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior on March 16, 1976..

This document describes the operating principles of the NWCG's Wildland Fire Education Working Team (hereinafter referred to as WFEWT). It provides flexible and efficient protocols for conducting WFEWT business while fully recognizing the autonomy of each member agency.

The Operating Principles are complemented by the following team documents:

- The Charter for the NWCG WFEWT
- The NWCG WFEWT Strategic Plan
- The Team Handbook for the WFEWT

These documents, along with additional information about the WFEWT are available at:

<http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/wfewt/wfewt.htm>

1.1 WFEWT Vision

All people understand and overwhelmingly support the role of fire in ecosystems.

1.2 WFEWT Mission

To provide leadership in the development, implementation, and continuity of national level wildland fire education programs.

1.3 WFEWT Mission Goals

1. The team has all the resources it needs to function in an effective manner.
2. The public is aware of the role of fire in ecosystems.
3. Fire prevention and education teams are fully integrated into the fire organization.
4. Team products and services are timely, effective and used.
5. Develop and implement a comprehensive system to measure the effectiveness of our missions accomplishment

2.0 Organization

2.1 Main Body

The WFEWT is under the direction of the NWCGroup and is composed of core members and strategic partners. A member of NWCG is assigned as a liaison for the team's activities.

The WFEWT leadership consists of a chair and vice chair. The Chair of the WFEWT is appointed by the NWCG facilitated by the NWCG liaison.

2.2 Task groups

Designated task groups operate under the direction of the WFEWT. Task groups may establish a charter delineating key team and field individuals involved. Documentation of the task group's purpose, objectives, outcome and close-out of the group may also occur via the team's notes. All team members will be invited to provide feedback to task groups. Upon sunset of task groups, all team members will be responsible for carrying out the original objective(s).

3.0 Membership

3.1 Primary Members (Cross reference WFEWT Charter.)

- The number of members of the Team shall not exceed ten, including the Team Chair.
- Team membership will reflect a mix of people who are knowledgeable about wildland fire education, prevention and public affairs and who are from NWCG member agencies and organizations. With NWCG approval, agencies or organizations that are not NWCG members may be selected for Team membership.
- The appointment of a team member is facilitated and approved by the NWCG Liaison, NWCG Agency Representative and the Team Chair.
- Team members from federal NWCG members shall be appointed by their agency.
- Team members from state agencies shall be appointed by the National Association of State Foresters representative to the NWCG and shall represent a balance of different geographic areas.
- Team members from agencies or organizations that are not NWCG members may be appointed by the NWCG liaison.
- Team members from federal NWCG members shall facilitate purchasing and contracting efforts needed to accomplish approved Team projects.

4.0 Decision Making

The WFEWT serves as an empowered group which makes decisions and advocates their decisions to the parent group. Issues requiring decision by the WFEWT should be presented to other team members prior to a WFEWT meeting. A quorum of six WFEWT members must be represented in all decisions.

Issues requiring decision by the WFEWT will be by consensus. Each WFEWT member shall be responsible to express their level of consent on issues before them and the group shall determine the consensus solution. The chair will facilitate the consensus process. Members with concerns should offer an alternate proposal/solution. In rare cases, members may find it necessary to vary the decision to fit within their agency's rules and regulations. Once a concurrence has been reached, all members agree to support the group's decision. If consensus still cannot be achieved, an issue paper will be created and presented to the NWCG parent group.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 General

Administration of the WFEWT consists of:

- Chair
- Vice-Chair
- Designated team member to serve as note taker, rotated from meeting to meeting
- Designated team member to serve as facilitator, rotated within meetings
- NWCG Liaison - Wildland Fire Agency Fire Director

All Team Members Shall:

- Abide by the principles of interagency cooperation.
- Actively participate in Team meetings and projects.
- Attend all WFEWT meetings, or send an empowered alternate representative.
- Represent the expertise, policies and positions of their agency or organization.
- Have authority to speak for their organization or user community.
- Actively engage (both listening and speaking) in WFEWT discussions.
- Actively participate in tasks and activities in order to distribute the workload among all team members.
- Complete all assigned tasks within agreed-upon timeframes.
- Read and be prepared to comment on all pre-meeting materials.
- Actively support and promote NWCG strategies, decisions, concepts, and efforts.
- Actively support and promote WFEWT strategies, decisions, concepts, and efforts.
- Keep their respective organization informed of WFEWT proceedings and decisions.

- Seek assistance from the member's organizations to obtain resources when needed.
- Annually review the WFEWT Charter, Operating Principles and Strategic Plan.
- Participate in preparing and finalizing annual accomplishment reports to NWCG prior to September 15th each year.

5.2 WFEWT Work Tasks

Chair

The Chair of the WFEWT assumes the following duties and responsibilities:

- Conduct all meetings of the WFEWT (regularly scheduled meetings, conference calls, and special sessions).
- Represent the Working Team at all required NWCG meetings and participate on additional working teams as designated by the NWCG Chair.
- Make assignments of other Working Team members to Task Groups and special projects.
- Keep and report attendance of Working Team members at each meeting.
- Facilitate development of working team meeting agendas.
- Submit a 3 year strategic plan to NWCG Executive Secretary.
- Submit an annual strategic plan update each year according to NWCG guidance.
- Submits annual accomplishment report each year according to NWCG guidance.
- Serves as the team's spokesperson as needed.
- Accountable for achieving meeting objectives.
- Assigns or charters standing committees and/or task groups.
- Assigns work for special projects or assignments.
- Selects ad hoc subject matter experts to assist in issue resolution.
- Prepares and signs correspondence approved by the members.
- Solicits replacement team members as vacancies occur.
- Strives to achieve NWCG agency representation on WFEWT.

Vice-Chair

Although not recognized as an official position by the NWCG Working Team structure, the WFEWT's Vice-Chair assumes the following duties and responsibilities:

- Assist the chair in all responsibilities and duties as requested.
- Conduct team meetings in absence of Chair.
- Manage Task Group assignments of working team members.
- Facilitates or provide reports to working team members from each Task Group at regular working team meetings or as requested by the Chair.

Working Team Members

The Members of the WFEWT Team assume the following duties and responsibilities:

- Provide long term direction and support to the Working Team.
- Attend all Working Team meetings (non-attendance at three consecutive meetings will result in a request for replacement of representation by the respective organization).
- Send an alternate in the case of not being able to attend a meeting and or assign a proxy.
- Attend and represent the Working Team at other meetings, as requested. (With concurrence from the Chair.)
- Disseminate timely and accurately information through their respective agencies on projects and accomplishments of the WFEWT.
- Serve on Working Team Task Groups as appointed by the Chair.
- Serve as the Working Team liaison to that Task Group, as appointed by the Chair, and in that capacity, report on the progress of that Task Group to the Chair/Vice Chair before each meeting of the Working Team.

Overall Tasks for the Group and Individual Members:

- Draft program of work and budget proposals.
- Adjust annual work schedule and/or team organization based on the NWCG-approved budget.
- Sets agenda for regularly scheduled meetings and telephone conferences.
- Provide background information relating to agenda items to the meeting coordinator prior to the scheduled meeting according to the established deadline.
- Solicit issues and agenda items from the constituents they represent for inclusion in the Team meeting agenda
- Attend and engage in all regularly scheduled meetings/conference calls. In the rare occasion that a member cannot attend, all efforts will be made to provide an alternate who will fully represent the absent team member.
- Accountable for documenting meeting proceedings and decisions in accordance with NWCG standards and guidelines.
- The chair or a team member designated by the chair will provide key documents to the NWCG Webmaster for posting on the team page.
- Maintain a permanent file of the group activity. (Post on NWCG webpage.)
- Accept and complete work assigned by the chair in a timely manner.
- Disseminate information to constituents and agencies.

5.4 NWCG Liaison

The WFEWT liaison shall:

- Be a standing member of the NWCG parent group.
- Receive assignments for the WFEWT from the NWCG Chair.
- Provide assistance to the WFEWT for NWCG reviews.
- Participate in at least one WFEWT meeting per year.
- Actively engage (both listening and speaking) in WFEWT discussions.
- Provide advice for budgets, projects, and strategic planning.
- Keep the WFEWT informed of NWCG parent group deliberations and direction.
- Keep the NWCG parent group informed of WFEWT deliberations and direction.
- Provide guidance and have final responsibility for appropriateness of WFEWT meeting agendas and meeting sites.

6.0 Meetings

6.1 General

The primary purpose of any WFEWT meeting is to fulfill the WFEWT mission. Generally three meetings will be scheduled annually, one of which will be designated to prioritize work, update strategic plans, prepare annual operation plans, and establish budget requirements. Meeting locations and times will be established six to twelve months in advance. Agendas will be provided in advance to WFEWT members and their NWCG liaison. The liaison will provide guidance and have final responsibility for appropriateness of agenda and meeting sites. Inter-committee coordination will also be determined.

A designated WFEWT member will have responsibility for setting up meeting logistics and pre-meeting communications.

Meeting duration will be limited to three days. Locations for meetings will be based on a balance of three criteria:

- Achieving appropriate participation (based on agenda).
- Most economical (based on total travel costs).
- Related purpose (demonstrations, site visits, IT conferences, etcetera).

Between regular meetings, issues may arise that mandate meetings via teleconference. Duration of teleconference meetings will be limited to two hours maximum and will be scheduled to accommodate members from their respective time zones.

6.2 Attendees

In general, WFEWT meetings are open. If seating is limited, priority will be given to WFEWT members. Depending on specific agenda topics, the WFEWT Chair reserves the authority to restrict attendance for all or part of WFEWT meetings. When appropriate, individuals from outside the WFEWT membership may be requested to participate to provide needed expertise.

6.3 Agenda

Agenda items must originate from WFEWT membership or the NWCG parent group. Agenda items from task-groups or others will be coordinated through the WFEWT chair. The WFEWT Chair will make the final decision to include or exclude agenda topics based on time constraints. The preliminary agenda and all associated information for decision items should be distributed to WFEWT members at least five working days prior to scheduled meetings and as rapidly as possible prior to teleconference calls. The WFEWT Chair may add informational items to the agenda without prior notice.

Presentations made to the WFEWT should be relevant and concise. Once a presentation is concluded and issues clarified or questions answered, only the WFEWT members will discuss the issue and make any related decisions.

Informational materials may be distributed at the meeting. Presenters should provide printed copies for all attendees.

Presenters must provide electronic copies of presentations prior to their presentation so that accurate meeting notes can be maintained.

Individuals requested to present at a team meeting will be requested to submit an Agenda Request Form which is available at: <http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/wfewt/documents.htm>

6.4 Meeting Notes

Historical records are a key reference component for the success of the WFEWT. The WFEWT has the responsibility to assure that notes are taken during each meeting.

Notes need not be verbatim but must be complete, concise, coherent, and accurate. They must include the date, time, and location of the meeting, names of attending members and guests, main topics of discussion, and all decisions and actions items defined by the group. Draft versions of meeting notes will be distributed to all WFEWT members within two weeks of each meeting. WFEWT members will have one week to review the notes and provide corrections or additions. Conflicts will be resolved via email or conference call, and the final version of the notes will then be posted on the WFEWT website within 60 days. The notes will serve as a permanent record of each proceeding.

6.5 Action Items

WFEWT meetings are intended to be working sessions. During the course of meetings, certain tasks may be identified that require completion outside of meeting timeframes. These tasks are referred to as “action items” and must clearly describe the task to be accomplished, the person(s) responsible for task completion, and the completion target date. WFEWT members responsible

for action item completion agree to apply due diligence to assigned tasks and to make every effort to comply with due dates.

The WFEWT has the responsibility to assure that an action item list is maintained. This list will be reviewed and updated before, during and after the meeting as designated by the Chair. Prior to the end of each meeting, any resulting new action items will be reviewed and added to this list.

7.0 Accountability

All WFEWT members will be held accountable for their roles and responsibilities. This implies appropriate participation in WFEWT meetings, support of WFEWT decisions, completion of action item assignments, and fulfillment of task group liaison responsibilities. Performance issues that cannot be resolved by the WFEWT Chair will be escalated to the NWCG parent group for resolution.

8.0 Reports

Special findings and reports will be appropriately published after being approved by the NWCG. Work plans will be submitted to the NWCG liaison annually. Meeting schedules, financial considerations, recommended areas of investigation, work schedules, and work area descriptions will be submitted with work plans.

9.0 Communication

9.1 Protocols

Communication to and from the NWCG will be channeled by the chair through the NWCG liaison. It is expected that most issues originating from the WFEWT can be resolved at the team level. Communication to and from the organizations represented in the WFEWT will be channeled and coordinated through that organization's representative(s).

9.2 Information sharing

Basic public information about the WFEWT will be posted on the WFEWT's section of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group website:

<http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/WFEWT/WFEWT.htm>.

9.3 Email

WFEWT directed correspondence should use the official WFEWT team list posted on the WFEWT website. Members should use the latest version of this dynamic list. In general, email involving any activities of the WFEWT should be sent to the entire group. Limited distribution may be appropriate for discussions between WFEWT Members who have been assigned specific tasks or action items.