

GUIDELINES FOR SETAC ADVISORY AND DIALOGUE GROUPS

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines were developed to help clarify the types, roles, and responsibilities of Advisory Groups (AGs) and Dialogue Groups (DGs) entities within SETAC's global organization. There are several such groups active in SETAC at this time and it is anticipated that others will be proposed in the future by either champions from the membership, by the Geographic Units (GUs) or by the SETAC World Council (SWC). These guidelines define both Advisory and Dialogue Groups, compare and contrast their characteristics, define their responsibilities, and describe their operations. This document is intended to be used by those considering planning to form a Group, as well as by the GUs and SWC in reviewing proposals and making decisions about the formation of new AGs or DGs and in their evaluation of existing Groups practices and progress.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AGs and DGs are authorized and formally recognized entities within SETAC having accountability to a GU or to the SWC. Each Group is self-managed by a Steering Committee but is accountable through its charter and operating guidelines to adhere in its actions to SETAC principles (i.e., based on sound science, being multidisciplinary, having multi-sector and multinational representation [each as appropriate]). The establishment of the Groups is based on defined needs, including advancing the science and increasing the use of sound science in decision-making. Participation in a Group does not require membership in SETAC. There are two types of formal groups to date, Advisory Groups and Dialogue Groups. There may also be working groups, discussion groups, or task forces that are designated as subgroups within an AG or DG.

DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN ADVISORY GROUPS AND DIALOGUE GROUPS INCLUDE:

Advisory Groups have open-ended time frames of operation, are relatively broad in scope, and will manage a process(es) to advance the science and application of a specific topic. (For example, the Life-Cycle Assessment Advisory Group [global] has had an active and ongoing role for more than 10 years in the development of LCA as both a paradigm and a methodology.)

Dialogue Groups have a relatively short operational time-frame and are more focused on a specific issue or question that SETAC wants to address. A final product or products (e.g., a report, a workshop with proceedings, a public forum, etc.) are defined at the outset. For example, the Aquatic Model Ecosystem Dialogue Group (North America) was established to provide a forum for expert discussion of scientific and regulatory issues related to appropriate uses of model ecosystems for aquatic risk assessment. After about two years, the Group was inactivated (having provided a valuable forum) after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency re-evaluated the utility of aquatic mesocosms as part of its pesticides regulatory program.

CRITERIA THAT ARE COMMON TO BOTH ADVISORY AND DIALOGUE GROUPS INCLUDE:

1. Approval of formation granted by the GU or SWC, which reserves the right to sunset a Group. (Formation requires development of 2 and 3 below);
2. Clearly stated purpose and scope that articulate the “needs” that will be met relevant to SETAC and to the science, including consideration of what other entities, if any, are actively working the same or a closely related issue/topic, and whether a joint effort is a viable option, plus having a champion that is a SETAC member;
3. Written operating guidelines that cover, at a minimum, membership, governance, finances, and a statement of adherence to SETAC principles;
4. Progress reports and updates of activities and plans at least annually to the appropriate governing body;
5. No significant and overt overlap in scope and activities of Groups without conscious decision and agreement among the Groups (the GU or SWC serves as arbitrator as needed); and
6. Coordination with and/or inform the appropriate SETAC Office on all Group activities.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA FOR ADVISORY GROUPS:

1. To have as its overall goal to:
 - a. Have the Group be recognized as an authoritative expert;
 - b. Identify and “train the teachers” of those who would use the information developed by the Group; and
 - c. Identify and communicate with the thought leaders, decision-makers, and other interested parties who would/could apply the information.

(Initial focus may be a, b, or c, but long-term plan should include all three goals.)

2. To facilitate, coordinate, and provide advice or to otherwise advise user-groups¹ in a defined area of science or science-policy.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA FOR DIALOGUE GROUPS:

1. To establish a forum for the discussion, advancement, and communication of a specific and focused science or science-policy topic or issue.

GUIDANCE ON OPERATIONS

To be successful, an AG needs both “organizers” and “participants.”

- The “organizers” are a small group of “doers” including the Group’s champion(s) who are generally also experts. This group is the Steering Committee and its membership should reflect (and balance) the interest of the Group’s participants. The majority of the members of the Steering Committee, as well as the Chairperson, must be SETAC members. The Steering Committee is responsible for the Group’s strategy and planning, coordination and oversight, and reports to the appropriate governing body. The Steering Committee should strive to achieve balance between members from different sectors (government, academia, and industry). The Chairperson is appointed by the President of the GU or the President of SETAC, whichever has oversight of the AG.
- The “participants” include experts as well as representatives of user-groups¹. They are active in the technical work and make up working groups, workshop participants, etc.

Whatever operating guidelines are established, they must adhere to SETAC principles and should include specifics on governance (i.e., terms, roles, responsibilities, how decision are made, principle form of communication) and should include an annual meeting of the Group and an annual review by the Steering Committee of operations against the guidelines, and of progress against goals. Once established, the operating guidelines will remain in effect for a period of five years, at which time they must be re-approved by the Group.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GROUP

- Develop and follow operating guidelines (consult operating guidelines of existing Groups).
- Seek GU or SWC approval for activities such as workshops, conferences, distribution of educational materials, etc.
- Communicate through a written annual (at a minimum) report to the appropriate governing body.
- Conduct a formal annual activity (short course, platform or poster session, symposium, etc.)
- Coordinate with SETAC Standing Committees as appropriate.
- Coordinate with parallel SETAC Groups.
- Maintain network system for communication (e.g., mailing list, Home Page hot key, database).
- Refrain from going public with a “SETAC position” without GU or SWC review and approval.

¹ “User-Groups” are organizations (whole or part of a larger organization) which might use the results of the Advisory Group activities to improve decision-making.

- Identify external communications that are made outside the consensus of the Group as personal opinions.
- Communicate and/or coordinate all activities with the SETAC Office.
- To the extent possible, sources of outside funds should reflect the multi-sector element to show across-the-board financial support.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GU OR SWC

- Identify a liaison to each Group who can bring issues/progress to the governing body and who will communicate back to the Group.
- Ensure that outside funds secured for the Group's activities (e.g., for a workshop) are used to support its activities, and that sources of outside funds reflect the multi-sector element to the extent that this is possible and practical.
- Explore/encourage international participation in Groups by consulting with all GUs and the SWC as to topic applicability and level of interest during the establishment of a Group.
- Provide opportunities to showcase the success of the Group (e.g., Newsletter, Annual Meeting, Home Page).
- Encourage/facilitate Chairs of Groups to get together to learn from, and to support, each other.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SETAC OFFICES

- Serve as a source of information to the Groups.
- Disseminate information on Group activities.
- Archive materials.
- Provide other service and support, based on pre-approved budget.

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