

2009 OPWG Employment Standards Committee Plan

“Outlining Avenues that Foster the Recruitment and Retention of a Professional, Equitably Employed, Workforce of Observers”

I. Background and Objectives:

In the context of the International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference (IFOMC) series, the Employment Standards Committee of the Observer Professionalism Working Group (OPWG) seek to review, assess and document the current best practices, expectations and possibilities in the areas of: Observer/Fisher working relationship rules, observer employee codes of conduct, observer hiring/recruitment eligibility and competency standards, observer employee retention, and observer training and debriefing.

With regards to the continued work of the OPWG Employment Standards Committee, there exist two quite fundamentally distinct elements to *Observer Professionalism*. The first is the professionalism of an observer program, how it is viewed by its peers, its stakeholders, NGO's and indeed the observers themselves. It also goes to the robustness of the design the objectivity and utility of the program's data product and how well it meets its design objectives. The second is the professionalism of the observer and, in this instance; it is the training, the technical competencies, the life skills, their demeanor both on the vessel and ashore and the core ethic that an individual observer brings to their work. This stage of information gathering is centered about conducting “Focused Interviews” designed to dig deep from within certain important Employment Standards topical areas, with the 2009 OPWG driving theme of *Outlining Avenues that Foster the Recruitment and Retention of a Professional, Equitably Employed, Workforce of Observers*.

With the intention of constructing a more solid foundation in regards to the *OPWG Employment Standards* area of study, this Committee hopes to gather more detailed yet broaden-scoped information during 2009. This Plan is primarily meant to act as a template for facilitating Committee interviews leading up to and to continue during the 6th IFOMC. Nevertheless, certain adjustments to this Plan may arise depending on the context of interviews conducted and as Committee work progresses.

II. Interview Target Topics:

Primary Target Topics: Following, are OPWG Employment Standards Committee *primary* target topics for Focused Interviews, to be conducted before and during the 6th IFOMC:

- 1. Observer/Fisher Working Relationship Standards** - Our goal with investigating this topic is to showcase how rules regarding Observer/Fisher Working Relationships are standardized for observer programs in particular areas of the world.
- 2. Observer Code of Conduct Standards** - Our goal with investigating this topic is to showcase how Codes of Conduct are standardized for observer programs in particular areas of the world.

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3. **Eligibility and Competency Standards** – Our goal with investigating this topic is to showcase how the Eligibility and Competency of observers who are recruited by observer programs in particular areas of the world are standardized.
4. **Employee Retention Standards** - Our goal with investigating this topic is to showcase how the retention of professional observers employees is evaluated and standardized for observer programs in particular areas of the world.

Secondary targets: The following are OPWG Employment Standards Committee *secondary* target topics for Focused Interviews to be conducted before and during the 6th IFOMC. Though these topics are important to the continued work of the OPWG Employment Standards, they are currently not our priority focus:

1. **Training Standards** – Our goal with investigating this topic is to showcase how observer trainings are standardized for observer programs in particular areas of the world.
2. **Debriefing (data accountability) Standards** - Our goal with investigating this topic is to showcase how debriefings (data accountability processes) are standardized for observer programs in particular areas of the world.

III. Interview Questions:

Interview questions listed here are meant to act as a template, though questions during actual interviews may vary.

Primary Interview Questions:

1. **Observer/Fisher Working Relationship Standards** –
 - a. Does the program(s) you work with have rules/standards that outline what observers can and cannot help fishers with (i.e. cleaning, cooking, wheel watches, fishing tasks, etc.)?
 - i. What exactly is allowable and what exactly isn't?
 - ii. Is this a standard for all programs in your nation?
 1. If not, how do these rules differ from program to program?
 - b. In your opinion, what are the differences when defining Fisher Self-Monitors (crew-member observing) vs. Fisheries Observers?
 - i. How can data from each of these sources be utilized?
 - ii. Can they ever fulfill the same data needs? How?
 - c. Are Observers ever directly paid by fishers in the program(s) in which you work?
 - i. If so, do you consider this a conflict of interest? Why or why not?
 - d. How do you feel Observer/Fisher Working Relationship Standards work towards the goal of fostering the recruitment and retention of professional observers? Explain.
2. **Observer Code of Conduct Standards** –
 - a. Does the program(s) you work with have rules/standards outlining a set Code of Conduct rules for observer employees?
 - i. What exactly make up (should make-up) this Code?
 - ii. Is this standard for all programs in your nation?
 1. If not, how do these rules differ from program to program?
 - b. How may adherence to this Code be evaluated best?

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- i. How often do evaluations occur?
- c. What sorts of repercussions exist if this Code is violated?
- d. How do you feel Observer Code of Conduct Standards work towards the goal of fostering the recruitment and retention of professional observers? Explain.

3. Eligibility and Competency Standards –

- a. Does the program(s) you work with have a set of Eligibility and Competency Standards for the recruitment of observers?
 - i. What exactly make up (should make-up) these standards?
 - ii. Is this a standard for all programs in your nation?
 - 1. If not, how do these rules differ from program to program/from observer provider to observer provider?
- b. Are there ever exceptions to these Standards (i.e. affirmative action/minority empowerment initiatives)?
 - i. If so, how do you see these exceptions affecting these standards?
- c. What are minimum educational standard for Observers in your program(s)?
 - i. Is this standard too low, too high, or just right? Explain.
- d. How do you feel Observer Eligibility and Competency Standards work towards the goal of fostering the recruitment and retention of professional observers? Explain.

4. Employee Retention Standards –

- a. Does the program(s) you work with have rules/standards for upholding the retention of experience among observers?
 - i. If so, what exactly is this standard based on (i.e. average experience per year, % of observers in a program who reach a certain experience threshold per year, other)? Explain.
 - ii. Is this a standard for all programs in your nation?
 - 1. If not, how do these rules differ from program to program/from observer provider to observer provider?
- b. How do you feel Employee Retention Standards may work towards the goal of fostering the recruitment and retention of professional observers? Explain.

Secondary Interview Questions:

1. Training Standards –

- a. Does the program(s) you work with have Training Standards for preparing observers for the work that they are tasked to do?
 - i. What exactly make up (should make-up) these standards?
 - ii. Are these standards the same for all programs in your nation?
 - 1. If not, how do they differ from program to program/from observer provider to observer provider?
- b. Are Training Standards harmonized with standards in other international programs and/or with the resources which have been outlined by the IFOMC mandated Observer Training Working Group?
 - i. What specific standards are harmonized and how?

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- c. How do you feel Training Standards may work towards the goal of fostering the recruitment and retention of professional observers? Explain.
- 2. Debriefing (data accountability) Standards –**
- a. Does the program(s) you work with have Debriefing (data accountability) Standards for evaluating the work observers have been tasked to do at the end of a deployment?
 - i. What exactly make up (should make-up) these standards?
 - ii. Are these standards the same for all programs in your nation?
 - 1. If not, how may they differ from program to program/from observer provider to observer provider?
 - b. Are Debriefing Standards harmonized with standards in other international programs and/or with the resources which have been outlined by the IFOMC mandated Observer Training Working Group?
 - iii. What specific standards are harmonized and how?
 - c. How do you feel Debriefing Standards may work towards the goal of fostering the recruitment and retention of professional observers? Explain.

IV. Scope of Interviewees:

The main focus group for OPWG Employment Standards Committee interviews are active and prior Fisheries Observers, though other stakeholders (i.e. management-agency personnel, observer provider/contractor personnel, Observer data end-users, Observer Union personnel, fishers, industry personnel, NGO's) may also be sought and included in this process. The Observer stratum may be divided by length of experience or multi-program experience criteria.

V. Interview Techniques:

1. This plan is available by way of the IFOMC website www.ifomc.com so that it may be referenced and considered prior to interviews.
2. The primary techniques used for conducting interviews will be via: in person, on-line correspondence, telephone, or post. Interviews may be digitally recorded.
3. Interviews may be conducted over multiple correspondences.

VI. 6th IFOMC Observer Professionalism Workshop Proceedings:

1. The OPWG-coordinated Observer Professionalism Workshop at the 6th IFOMC is scheduled to commence in the morning of the 3rd day of the conference – from 08:30am to 12:00 (noon/lunchtime) on Thursday, July 23rd.
2. This Workshop is being run currently with the plenary session and will be in a separate room than the main conference room- signs will be posted.
3. 08:30am to 09:00am: will consist of a brief orientation of the Workshop and an audience-participant discussion.
4. 09:30am to 12:00: The OPWG Workshop room will be arranged with separate stations for each of the four areas of study of the OPWG- Wages and Benefits, Support and Opportunities, Employment Standards, and Social Equity. This time is designated for OPWG Workshop participants to walk about to the station(s) of their choice, providing their feedback (via interviews) to the workings of those specific OPWG committees.

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5. If someone does not get a chance to participate or complete an interview at the Workshop and would like to participate, arrangements can be made to complete interviews either during the remainder of the conference or soon thereafter..
6. Plans are available on the IFOMC website and will be available at the 6th IFOMC.

VII. OPWG Focused Interview Outputs:

1. An overview of all OPWG work leading up to and at the 6th IFOMC will be published in the 6th IFOMC Proceedings document.
2. Complete findings from the OPWG's "Focused Interview" stage of information gathering will be available within a year following the 6th IFOMC. This will be a separate output from the 6th IFOMC Proceedings document.
3. The OPWG will also follow-up with all interview participants following the conference, ensuring that they have received these findings.

VIII. OPWG Support and Opportunities Committee Members:

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