



Predictive Services Operating Principles and Guidelines

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Predictive Services Operating Principles and Guidelines

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The Purpose of this document is to provide general, consistent and uniform guidance for the Predictive Services organization for use in conducting business.

This document is applicable to, and for use by the Predictive Services organization, including the National Predictive Services Subcommittee (NPSS) and all units under NPSS.

This document adheres to the NWCG Operating Principles and Guidelines PMS 900.

1.2 Intent

The operating principles and guidelines presented in this document are intended to result in predictable and consistent organizational behavior. The principles and guidelines provide the foundation for repeatable business practices shared by all of Predictive Services, thus eliminating the inefficiencies of each group developing its own process.

This document will be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure the guidance is always timely and relevant to the operations of the Predictive Services organization.

1.3 Predictive Services Strategic Mission

The Predictive Services Program supports the wildland fire community and others with information and decision support products.

1.4 Predictive Services Guiding Principles

SAFETY – We promote the protection of the health and safety of employees and the lives, property, and natural resources of all people in the United States.

COOPERATION – We define our business practices by listening to our cooperators. We address our needs and the needs of others through collaboration.

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP – We value initiative and flexibility in leadership throughout all levels of our organization. We target our efforts toward the work that matters most.

INNOVATION – We respond to changing needs locally and nationally. We share information with each other and with our cooperators. We seek out, introduce, and evaluate new practices; both our successes and failures contribute to our professional expertise.

EMPOWERMENT – We support empowering individuals to achieve program goals.

INTEGRITY – We promote informed and credible decisions. We champion and strive to improve quality data, appropriate analysis, and well supported decision making.

EFFICIENCY – We strive to use science-based and appropriate methods to accomplish our goals. We support validation of our products and the use of standard practices to streamline operations.

PRIDE IN SERVICE – We take pride in our mission, our program, and the unique skills of each individual.



2.0 Organization Structure

2.1 National Predictive Services Subcommittee (NPSS)

The NPSS is a permanent body established through a charter under the Fire Environment Committee (FENC) through the authority of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group.

2.2 Subgroups

2.2.1 Units

A unit is a long-standing body of individuals organized to perform a specific set of business services or to maintain a specific set of products.

Units may be formed by NPSS with the concurrence of the Fire Environment Committee (FENC) Chair and the Equipment and Technology Branch Coordinator, by the FENC, or by the NWCG.

Units can be formed through a variety of mechanisms (memoranda of understanding (MOU), memoranda of agreement (MOA), service level agreements (SLA), charter, ect. to perform services or maintain products for one or more NWCG groups. A unit must have a designated Unit Leader and a Deputy Unit Leader. If workload demands, a unit may create task teams to perform specific tasks under its service offerings.

2.2.2 Task Teams

A task team is a body of individuals formed via a tasking agreement or project charter to accomplish a specific time-bounded undertaking for their sponsoring body.

A task team can be established by any NWCG group, in accordance to the NWCG Operating Principles and Guidelines PMS 900 and the NPSS charter. Task teams are not allowed to form any long-standing subordinate groups. Project teams are a type of task team, but are required to be created by a charter and must have a designated project manager.

2.3 Establishing Subgroups

All formal NWCG groups shall have some form of establishing documentation. Committees and subcommittees must be established through a charter. Other subgroup types may be established through various documents including, but not limited to, charters, MOUs, MOAs, SLAs, or tasking memoranda.

Establishing documents for all subgroups shall be approved and signed by the NPSS Chair with concurrence of the Fire Environment Committee Chair and the Equipment and Technology Branch Coordinator

2.3.1 Charter Amendments

NPSS and all NPSS subgroups will have their establishing documentation periodically reviewed by their respective parent groups to evaluate the continued relevance and need for the subgroups.

Changes to charters or other establishing documents for all subgroups must be approved by the NPSS Chair with concurrence of the Fire Environment Committee Chair and the Equipment and Technology Branch Coordinator.



3.0 **Members and Positions**

3.1 **NPSS Membership**

NPSS consists of a voting membership (primary members) and strives to achieve representation from all of the NWCG representative agencies. Members serve a minimum of two years, except the National Intelligence Program representative, National Fire Analyst representative, and the National Fire Weather Program representative who are permanent members.

The Subcommittee is comprised of 11 primary members representing:

- Geographic Area Center Managers
- Geographic Area Coordination Group Chairs (GACGAC)
- Operations and Support Unit
- Research and Development Unit
- Education and Outreach Unit
- National Fire Weather Program (NICC)
- NICC Intelligence
- NICC Fire Analysis
- State / NASF
- Field Level
- National Weather Service

3.1.1 **Primary Members**

Primary members are those representatives listed above and are considered the voting members of the NPSS. Primary members are responsible for:

- Drafting budget or IT requests for approval
- Drafting and submitting agenda requests
- Communicating NPSS decisions and activities to the constituent groups that each member represents
- Representing and communicating the interests of the constituent groups that each member represents to NPSS

3.1.2 **Liaisons**

The NPSS may confer liaisons (non-voting) to other groups or entities that have special skills, interests, or resources that may help the mission of Predictive Services. Liaisons are limited to one individual from each of those groups or entities.

Liaisons represent:

- National Wildfire Coordinating Group
- National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group
- Wildland Fire Decision Support System
- National Interagency Coordination Center

3.2 **NPSS Leadership**

NPSS leadership will consist of a two-person executive board including a Chair and Vice Chair. The Chair and Vice Chair shall hold national or regional level positions. The Chair shall be



recommended through a vote of primary members and approved by the Fire Environment Committee and NWCG. The Vice Chair shall be recommended through a vote of primary members and approved by the Chair. The Chair and Vice Chair are voting members of the Subcommittee and are part of the Subcommittee primary membership. The term of the Chair appointment will be 2 years and may be extended at the discretion of the Fire Environment Committee. The term of the Vice Chair will be 2 years and may be extended at the discretion of the chair.

3.2.1 NPSS Chair

The NPSS Chair is authorized to convene meetings, establish subgroups, negotiate work assignments, and make commitments on behalf of the subcommittee. In addition, the chair is responsible for:

- Managing the NPSS budget
- Submitting budget and IT requests to the FENC Chair and the NWCG Program Management Unit (PMU)
- Submitting reports to the FENC Chair and the NWCG PMU
- Representing NPSS in presenting recommendations or issues to FENC and/or NWCG
- Serve as the NPSS spokesperson when deemed appropriate – especially with outside individuals or groups
- Schedules and presides over meetings
- Works with the vice chair to plan meetings
- Recommends the need for further resources and/or authority to FENC and NWCG if necessary
- Assigns work for special projects for assignments
- Selects subject matter experts to assist the subcommittee when needed
- Solicits replacement team members or vacancies occur
- Prepares and signs correspondence

3.2.2 NPSS Vice Chair

The NPSS Vice Chair is responsible for serving as chair in the chair's absence and for performing delegated duties. When the chair is absent from a meeting or incapacitated, the vice chair assumes the full authority and responsibility of the chair. In addition, the vice chair is responsible for:

- Tracking on-going action items and the development and implementation of NPSS procedures
- Providing follow-up on projects assigned to units to ensure timely completion
- Works with the chair to plan meetings
- Sends meeting announcements, agenda items, etc. to NPSS members and others as needed
- Documenting all meeting agreements in the form of minutes in the executive secretary's absence
- Maintains a permanent file of NPSS activities
- Drafts annual accomplishment report



3.3 Unit Membership

Unit membership consists of voting members comprised of employees within the Predictive Services program (including the national office). Each employee in Predictive Services must choose to be a member of at least one unit, and may choose to be a member in up to three units. There is no set term for unit membership. An employee within Predictive Services may change/resign membership to a unit at any time as long as the employee retains membership in at least one unit at all times. Joining and resigning from units will require a notification to the appropriate unit leader. The process to change membership between units is to first join the new unit by notifying the respective unit leader, then resign from the old unit by notifying the respective unit leader. New employees in Predictive Services must become a member of a unit within 60 days of their start date.

Unit leadership may confer liaisons (non-voting) to other groups or entities that have special skills, interests, or resources that may help the mission of Predictive Services.

Unit members are expected to:

- Read unit correspondence
- Attend unit conference calls and meetings
- Provide feedback and input when requested
- Assist in accomplishing unit tasks
- Join project or task teams when requested, if able to do so

3.4 Unit Leadership

Predictive Services will elect, from the Predictive Services program, a unit leader and deputy unit leader for each unit to serve a term of one year. After the one year term, deputy unit leaders will automatically become the unit leaders (for their respective units) and serve an additional one year term. For each successive year, only deputy unit leaders will be elected.

The election process will consist of nominations (self nominations accepted), from within the Predictive Services program, to the current respective unit leader. The unit leader will host an election. Election results are determined by a simple majority of the votes submitted, with voting being open to all Predictive Services members. Elections will be held in October with new term of service beginning January 1.

3.4.1 Unit Leader

Unit leaders are authorized to convene conference calls /meetings, establish task or project teams, negotiate work assignments, and make commitments on behalf of the subcommittee. In addition, the unit leader is responsible for:

- Submitting budget and IT requests to the NPSS Chair
- Submitting reports to the NPSS Chair
- Keeping apprised of the status of various projects and tasks within the unit
- Representing the unit in presenting recommendations or issues to NPSS

- Serve as the unit spokesperson when deemed appropriate – especially with outside individuals or groups



- Schedules and presides over calls / meetings
- Works with the deputy unit leader to plan conference calls / meetings
- Recommends the need for further resources and/or authority to NPSS
- Assigns work for special projects for assignments
- Selects subject matter experts to assist the unit when needed
- Keeps track of, and posts, the current member roster
- Prepares and signs correspondence

3.4.2 Deputy Unit Leader

Deputy unit leaders are responsible for serving as unit leader in the unit leader's absence and for performing delegated duties. When the unit leader is absent from a meeting or incapacitated, the deputy unit leader assumes the full authority and responsibility of the unit leader. In addition, the deputy unit leader is responsible for:

- Tracking, and posting, of on-going action items and the development and implementation of procedures
- Providing follow-up on projects assigned to units to ensure timely completion
- Works with the unit leader to plan conference calls / meetings
- Sends call / meeting announcements, agenda items, etc. to unit members and others as needed
- Documenting all call / meeting agreements in the form of minutes or delegates this function
- Maintains a permanent file of the unit's activities.
- Drafts annual accomplishment report

3.4.3 Unit Representatives to NPSS

Unit representatives to NPSS will be appointed by the unit leader and confirmed by the NPSS chair. Although NICC Predictive Services members may serve in unit leadership positions, they may not serve as representatives to NPSS. It is a requirement that among the 3 unit representatives to NPSS, at least one representative must work in intelligence and at least one representative must work in meteorology.

3.5 NPSS Support

The NPSS Chair designates an executive secretary from outside the NPSS membership.

The executive secretary records the actions and decisions of the NPSS during NPSS meetings and submits the records to the NPSS Chair.

4.0 Coordination

Unit activities, products, or recommendations that may affect other units shall be coordinated with those units. The concurrence of the involved groups will be evident and documented prior to presentation to the NPSS for approval or implementation.



Unit leaders are encouraged to participate in calls / meetings of each of their respective units. The unit leaders will work closely with each other to ensure coordination among the units and to ensure interaction and communication among task / project teams, as necessary.

5.0 **Strategic Planning**

5.1 **Strategic Plan**

Through strategic planning, the NPSS sets the overall vision for the program and established measures to monitor progress. The units will develop key strategies to achieve the vision.

The strategic plan is executed through the activities, special projects, and tasks of the various units.

The strategic plan provides strategic direction by answering the question: *Where are we going?*

The NPSS Strategic Plan will contain the NPSS's vision of the future, mission statement, guiding principles and NPSS goals. Each of the identified goals will have a set of objectives, critical success factors, and barriers. The final component of the strategic plan is a set of prioritized strategies.

5.1.1 **Strategic Planning Principles**

The NPSS Strategic Plan is developed for a 5 year timeframe.

The NPSS Strategic Plan will be reviewed annually by the NPSS and the units for needed updates.

The following should be addressed during these updates:

- Identify new drivers which affect the interagency wildland fire community
- Validate vision, mission, goals and objectives
- Review and evaluate progress made against each objective
- Assumptions should be re-verified and validated
- Trends should be reviewed for relevance and impact on the plan,
- Strategies that have been completed are checked off and are evaluated for their actual impact on the vision wherever possible,
- Remaining strategies are corrected and/or replaced as needed, and
- Additional strategies can be added to the priority list as resources become available.

The NPSS will maintain the vision, mission, goals and guiding principles. The units will be responsible for managing the objectives, critical success factors, barriers and strategies (including prioritization) with the concurrence of NPSS.

5.1.2 **Strategic Plan Content**

The strategic plan contains the following:

- **Vision:** A picture of the “preferred future.” It is a statement that describes how the future will look if the organization achieves its aims.
- **Goals:** Broad, long-term aims that define accomplishment of the mission



- **Mission:** A statement of the overall purpose of an organization. The mission should state what you do, for whom you do it, and the benefit.
- **Objectives:** Specific, quantifiable, realistic targets that measure the accomplishment of a goal over a specified period.
- **Guiding Principles:** Provide a vehicle for “operationalizing” an organization’s values, beliefs, and traditions. They are general guidelines that set the foundation for how an organization will operate.
- **Critical Success Factors:** Are major items or issues that must go right to achieve one or more objectives.
- **Barriers:** Existing potential challenges that hinder the achievement of one or more objectives.
- **Strategies:** Broad activities required to achieve an objective, control a critical success factor, or overcome a barrier.

6.0 Meetings

All Predictive Services meetings are conducted in an environment of courtesy and mutual respect.

Common ground rules include:

- Attendees agree to treat each other with respect and courtesy.
- Attendees show respect when someone is speaking – remain quiet and listen.
- All members have the right to express their viewpoint and be heard.
- All members will strive to arrive at meetings on time and stay throughout the entirety of the meeting.

All meetings, whether face-to-face or virtual (i.e. teleconference or video conference) will be referred to herein as meeting(s).

6.1 General Meeting Information

6.1.1 Meeting Purpose

The primary purpose of any Predictive Services meeting is to utilize the skills and experience of group members for decision making based on the NPSS mission and strategic guiding principles. Administration and information sharing will be minimized during face-to-face meetings and, to the extent possible, will be done by other means such as a teleconference meeting.

6.1.2 Meeting Schedules and Calendar

6.1.2.1 NPSS Meeting Schedules and Calendar

NPSS will hold face-to-face meetings regularly two times a year in the fall and winter, with a virtual meeting held in the spring. Meeting dates and locations will be selected far enough in advance to facilitate planning.

Between regular subcommittee meetings, issues may arise that mandate meetings via teleconference or video conference. Teleconference and video conference meetings should be scheduled to accommodate members from all domestic time zones.

6.1.2.2 Unit Meeting Schedules and Calendar



Each NPSS unit will meet regularly via teleconference at least once every other month. Teleconference meetings should be scheduled to accommodate members from all domestic time zones. If issues arise between regular teleconference meetings, the unit leader may schedule an ad hoc teleconference.

Unit leaders will meet via conference call quarterly (at a minimum).

All of the NPSS units will meet face-to-face annually during the fall Predictive Services annual meeting. The host of the fall Predictive Services annual meeting will rotate through the Geographic Areas. The host of subsequent meetings will be selected as the previous year's meeting. The meeting dates and location will be selected by the meeting host. The meeting host is responsible for arranging facilities for the annual meetings.

6.1.3 Meeting Hosting & Logistics

The hosting agency or organization of the meeting is responsible for arranging facilities. The group's chair / leader is responsible for contacting and confirmation of all group members and invited attendees.

Face-to-Face meeting location and dates will be based on a balance of three criteria:

- Achieving maximum membership participation,
- Convenience (easy access to airports, suitable hotel and meeting rooms within an hour's drive), and
- Most economical (based on total travel costs).

A fourth criteria that may be considered, but should not be a predominant factor, is:

- Related purpose (conduct meetings in alternating regions or by alternating host agency, stakeholder for related business event, or site visit).

Travel

Salary, travel and incidental costs of representatives and committee members shall normally be borne by their respective agencies. Any extraordinary costs shall be covered by a written agreement among the agencies.

Travel costs (airfare, lodging, and per diem) for state representative members attending NPSS meetings may be covered by funds administered by the NASF through a grant from the U.S. Forest Service.

6.1.4 Meeting Attendees

Primary member who are unable to attend a group meeting should make every attempt to ensure that their (or their constituent group's) interest is represented with an alternate participant. The alternate must have the authority to make binding decisions on the regular member's behalf. If an alternate does not attend the meeting, the absent member forfeits their vote for decisions at the meeting, unless other arrangements have been made in advance.

An alternate should be fully briefed by the regular member to enable the alternate to fully participate in all discussions and to contribute to well informed decisions.



In general, NPSS and unit meetings are open to anyone who wishes to attend. However, the chair may restrict discussion to members and invited participants only.

6.1.5 Meeting Agendas

Meeting agendas should be distributed in advance to inform stakeholders of business to be conducted at upcoming meetings.

Agendas will be provided in advance to group members and the Fire Environment Committee Chair (for NPSS) or NPSS chair (for units).

Agenda items must originate from group members. The chair / unit leader will make the final decision to include or exclude agenda topics based on time constraints and business relevance. The preliminary agenda and all associated information for decisional items must be distributed to group members with adequate time for review prior to scheduled meetings. The chair may elect to add informational items to the agenda without prior notice.

All agenda items should be labeled in the agenda as informational or requiring decision or action.

6.1.6 Meeting Minutes

Historical records are a key reference component for the success of the NWCG and its subgroups. Vice chair / deputy unit leader have the responsibility to assure notes /minutes are taken during each meeting and properly finalized and posted. The minutes will serve as a permanent record of each proceeding; all documented decisions therein are considered final.

Minutes should not be a verbatim transcript, but must reflect the business conducted during the meeting. Minutes should be complete, coherent and accurate. Minutes must include the date, time and location of the meeting, names of attending members and guests, main topics of discussion, and all decisions made by the group. Minutes should also identify action items assigned, and any agenda items established for future meetings.

Meeting presenters should provide electronic copies of presentations to the vice chair, deputy unit leader, or executive secretary as appropriate so accurate and complete meeting notes can be maintained.

The minutes will be approved and released for general distribution no later than the subsequent scheduled group meeting.

Members are responsible for distributing meeting minutes to keep their respective constituent groups informed of NPSS and unit proceedings and decisions.

6.1.7 Action Items

Typically, group meetings are intended to be productive working sessions. During the course of meetings, certain efforts may be identified that require completion outside of



the meeting. These efforts are referred to as “action items” and must be documented to clearly describe the work to be accomplished, the person(s) responsible for completion, and the completion target date. Group members responsible for action item completion agree to apply due diligence to assigned activities and to make every effort to comply with due dates.

The group vice chair / deputy leader has the responsibility to assure that an action item list is maintained. Members are encouraged to periodically review this document to stay informed of individual assignments.

The group leadership has the responsibility to assure assigned activities are being addressed in a timely manner.

7.0 **Communication**

7.1 **Communication Protocols**

The intent of communication protocols is to enhance honest communication between all entities within the Predictive Services program in a timely manner. Predictive Services communication is a multi-dimensional flow of information which originates from a variety of sources.

NPSS:

- NPSS leadership communicates with its members to share and coordinate information to and from FENC, the Equipment and Technology Branch Coordinator, and NWCG, as well as any other NWCG group.
- NPSS members will communicate with their respective constituent groups to share and coordinate information to and from NPSS.
- NPSS meetings and conference calls will announced to NPSS members with enough lead time for NPSS members to distribute the announcement to their constituent groups to solicit agenda topics as well as for planning purposes for guests wishing to attend the meeting.
- NPSS will host portions of their meetings via conference call for guests to listen in and contribute, when appropriate.

Units:

- Unit leadership communicates with its members to share and coordinate information to and from NPSS.
- Unit members will communicate with employees in their respective GACC/NICC and in their respective work disciplines to share and coordinate information to and from the unit.
- Unit conference calls will announced to all of Predictive Services with enough lead time to solicit agenda topics as well as for planning purposes for guests wishing to attend the meeting.

8.0 **Decision Making Process**

Predictive Services will strive for consensus in all decision making though all of Predictive Services. If a consensus cannot be reached, the following decision making process will be employed:



Leadership in Decision Support Services

Decision making within all of Predictive Services (including NPSS and units) requires a quorum consisting of 50% +1 of NPSS, unit, or Predictive Services membership (depending on the governing body responsible for the decision). An affirming vote from a supermajority of two-thirds or more of those voting is required to pass a proposal and/or make a decision.

An exception to this rule is for face-to-face regularly scheduled meetings (i.e. NPSS meetings, Predictive Services annual meeting) in which members attending the meeting constitute a quorum, regardless of number in attendance.

Meeting minutes will provide a record for all decisions.

9.0 Issue Resolution

If an issue within Predictive Services is beyond the authority and/or scope of a unit, it should be brought before the NPSS by the respective unit leader for resolution.

If an issue within Predictive Services is beyond the authority and/or scope of NPSS, but is a critical issue to Predictive Services, the NPSS chair will elevate the issue through the appropriate channels for assistance / resolution. Issues being elevated to NWCG must first pass through the FENC Chair and the Equipment and Technology Branch Coordinator for coordination purposes.