

2009 OPWG Wages and Benefits 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 work of the Wages and Benefits Committee of the Observer professionalism Working Group (OPWG) addresses topics such as remuneration policies, reimbursable items, and initiatives set to foster the health and general welfare of observers.

With regards to the continued work of the OPWG Wages and Benefits Committee, certain important Observer professionalism topics have been highlighted as focus areas to investigate further. The retention of experience, the existence of health benefits, the availability of employment, and the transferability of experience among the Observer profession continue to all be important topics in the workings of this Committee. This stage of information gathering is centered about conducting “Focused Interviews” designed to dig deep from within these important Wages and Benefits 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 Wages and Benefits* 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 Wages and Benefits Committee *primary* target topics for Focused Interviews to be conducted before and during the 6th IFOMC:

- 1. Experience-based compensation** – Our goal with investigating this topic is to showcase in detail the examined observer compensation systems in order to gain some insight into the systems that may work well for retaining professional experience within the Observer profession.
- 2. Paid trainings, briefings, and debriefings** – Our goal with investigating this topic is to see if and how the presence or absence of “Paid trainings and debriefings” has bearing on the livelihood of Observers and retention of a professional Observer workforce.
- 3. Health Insurance** – Our goal with investigating this topic is to exhibit various observer health benefits systems, from a variety of programs, to see if and how each health benefit system has bearing on the livelihood of Observers and retention of a professional Observer workforce.

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Secondary targets: The following are OPWG Wages and Benefits 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 Wages and Benefits Committee, they are currently not our priority focus:

1. **Experience transferability** – Our goal with investigating this topic is to see if and how Observer experience transfers from one region to another and to further understand why some experience may transfer while other experience may not.
2. **Year-round employment** - Our goal with investigating this topic is to see how various observer programs may foster the retention of a professional Observer workforce in finding a balance of availability of employment to their observers on a year-round basis. Since many fisheries are seasonal, an important aspect of this topic would be to dig out how programs may cooperate with other regions and fisheries with the intention of keeping professional Observers employed.

III. Interview Questions:

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

Primary (*Experience Retention*) Interview Questions:

1. Experience-based compensation:

- a. Please detail the compensation structure of the program(s) you work (have worked) in. Provide information on multiple programs separately.
 - i. What about this compensation structure works well or does not work well?
 - ii. Please explain how experience is accounted for (experience based compensation) in your program(s).
 - iii. How do you think experience based compensation affects retention in your program(s)?
- b. If not currently a part of your programs compensation structure, how do you see experienced based compensation working in your program?
 - i. How do you think experience based compensation would affect retention in your program(s)?

2. Paid trainings, briefings, and debriefings:

- a. Please explain how trainings/briefings/debriefings are compensated for in your program(s).
- b. How much of a role do paid trainings/briefings/debriefings play in your decision to participate in a specific program? (For example, if you knew in advance that you would not be compensated for trainings or debriefings, would this deter you from accepting an employment position?). Explain.

3. Observer Benefits:

- a. In order of priority to you, please list the fringe benefits which are offered in the program(s) you have worked in?
- b. In order of priority to you, please list the fringe benefits that you desire to be offered in your program.
Examples of fringe benefits

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- Dental Insurance
 - Disability and Sick Leave
 - Health Insurance
 - Life Insurance
 - Paid Vacation and Holidays
 - Retirement Plan
- c. How much of a role do (would) fringe benefits play in your decision to participate in a program? Prioritize your list numerical (#1 being of most importance).

4. Health Insurance:

- a. Is Health Insurance provided for or compensated for (if you had your own)?
- i. If yes - please explain in detail to the best of your knowledge what health insurance benefits include.
 - ii. If yes - are these benefits only provided for while working on a contract? Do you have access to these benefits when not under contract? Please explain.
 - iii. If yes - have you had experience with utilizing these benefits? Please explain.
 - iv. If no – would offering Health Insurance be an incentive to continue with a program/contractor for the long-term? Please explain.
- b. Should Health Insurance transfer from one fishery/program/region/country to another? For example, would a sort of "traveler's insurance" be beneficial to you if you tend to observe in various fisheries/programs/regions/countries throughout the year?
- i. How would the transferability of insurance from one program to another affect your decision to participate in a program?

Secondary (*Employment Availability and Transferability*) Interview Questions:

1. Experience transferability:

- a. In your observing career, how has your work experience transferred from one fishery/gear-type/program/region/country to another?
 - i. Is experience for one fishery/gear type/program/region/country equal to experience in another? Please explain.
 - ii. If you work under an experience-based compensation system in one program, is compensation affected by amount of experience you have in other programs?
- b. In your experience what influence do professionalism standards and the objectives of an observer program have on experience transferability?
- c. With consideration to your specific situation, what factors would you consider before taking a position with a different provider or in a different region?

2. Year-round employment:

- a. How many months per year do you work in your program(s)?
- b. Within a year period, do you have available all of the work you desire/need? Please explain.
- c. Is work outside your present program/region/observer contractor an option?
 - i. How are these opportunities made available to you?
 - ii. What work opportunities are made available to you?
- d. What mechanisms would you suggest could help to obtain year-round employment for a professional observer workforce?
- e. In your opinion what benefits would year-round employment provide to an observer program overall?
 - i. What benefits would year-round employment bring to observers?
 - ii. ... to program personnel?
- f. What challenges might an observer face trying to secure year-round employment?
- g. What challenges might a program manager face trying to secure year-round employment for observers?

IV. Scope of Interviewees:

The main focus group for OPWG Wages and Benefits 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 segregated 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

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their choice, providing their feedback (via interviews) to the workings of those specific OPWG committees.

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 Wages and Benefits Committee Members:

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