

Washington Group

Governance proposal

Preamble

Since its inception, there has been considerable interest in the work of the Washington Group (WG), whose main objectives are: 1) To guide the development of a small set(s) of general disability measures, suitable for use in censuses, sample based national surveys, or other statistical formats, which will provide basic necessary information on disability throughout the world; 2) To recommend one or more extended sets of survey items to measure disability (related to the general measures) or principles for their design, to be used as components of population surveys or as supplements to specialty surveys; and 3) To address methodological issues associated with the measurement of disability considered most pressing by WG participants. Interest in the Group's activities is reflected, in part, by the size of the membership which is much larger than most other City Groups. There is a pressing need for the information produced by the WG. Organizations external to the WG have already inquired about the completion date for development of an internationally comparable general measure of disability in order to plan their own activities. Thus, the WG needs to be effective in accomplishing specified objectives and producing tangible and useable end products in a timely manner. In accordance with United Nations guidelines, city groups determine their own individual mechanism of work.¹ It is timely for the WG to formalize such a working plan to govern its' structure and operation due to the size of the group, the need for the outcomes of the group's work, the external pressure to perform the work quickly, and the nature of the work. Therefore, a plan for the governance of the WG is proposed in this paper.

I. Membership

A. Composition

1. "City groups" are informal groups of experts primarily from national statistical agencies who meet to address selected problems in statistical methods.¹ Thus, the WG membership is comprised of representatives from national statistical agencies of nation-states belonging to the United Nations.
2. Members are selected by their national statistical agency.
3. Membership in the WG is voluntary.
4. Representation of each nation-state can include one or more individuals from the national statistical agency of that nation-state or a designated representative. If there is more than one representative per country, one of the representatives should be named as the primary representative.
5. When making decisions on issues, the WG will strive for consensus among participants. In the event that consensus is not possible and balloting is necessary for decision making, each member state will have one vote.
6. Well-recognized international organizations who have a formal relationship with national statistical agencies (WG member countries), such as UN affiliates, disability organizations, other statistical agencies (such as OECD), and organizations that represent national statistical agencies (such as Eurostat), are invited to participate in the activities of the WG, such as setting meeting agendas,

¹ <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/citygroup/index.htm>

participating in meeting discussions, and involvement in workgroup activities. However, they will not vote during decision-making processes.

B. Responsibilities

1. Members must contribute substantively to the work of the WG through workgroup participation, individual or group contribution of position papers or activity reports, formal commentary, or participation in other specific, product-oriented work identified by the WG. Attendance at annual meetings is encouraged.

2. Consistent with the UN guidelines, each representative is expected to fund his or her participation in the group. From time to time, limited funding may be available for a small number of members to attend the annual meeting. It is the member's responsibility to notify the secretariat of the need for funding well in advance of the annual meeting.

II. Operating principles

A. Content of annual meetings

1. The content of annual meetings will be organized around topical position papers and activity reports prepared by small working groups. Papers will include a list of discrete "next steps", with a plan and timeline for accomplishing those steps.

2. It is anticipated that major work topics will emanate from the work that is presented at annual meetings. In addition, WG members may suggest work topics that are clearly related to the objectives of the WG and have product-oriented and deliverable outcomes. Major work topics for the following year and future years will be identified at the annual meeting.

3. Workgroups will be designated around work topics.

4. Secretariat and steering committee members will be selected.

B. Communication

1. The primary means of communication with full membership will be through the WG website.

2. The membership list will be updated through annual email correspondence with WG members to determine who would like to continue to be contacted / involved.

3. The workgroup leaders will be responsible for communication among the work group members and with the secretariat.

C. Meeting schedule

1. The WG will meet annually, sufficiently in advance of the deadline for the report to the annual UN Statistical Commission meeting in March (report deadline is the preceding November).

2. Before each annual meeting, volunteers will be solicited by the secretariat to be potential meeting hosts for the following annual meeting.

III. Organizational structure

A. Executive secretariat and steering committee

1. Composition

a) The secretariat and steering committee positions are voluntary.

- b) For the immediate future, the secretariat will be a standing position in order to facilitate the continuity and consistency of communication within the WG and between the WG and external parties. This position can become a rotating position in the future if it better serves the needs of the WG at a later time.
 - c) Volunteers for the secretariat position will be accepted at the 3rd WG meeting (February 19-20, 2004) and will be selected by the full WG membership at that time.
 - d) The steering committee will be comprised of seven representatives of member nations. The committee will include planning committee chairs (hosts) from the last 3 major meetings and representatives from each major geographical region of the world.
 - e) Steering committee members will be selected / replaced at the annual WG meeting by the full membership.
 - f) Steering committee members will serve 3-year terms with the option to complete a second term if the committee members are in agreement.
 - g) In the interest of stability of the WG and continuity of the work, a rotating body (steering committee) will be established whereby no more than three participants of the group are replaced yearly. The first committee selected will have terms varying from 1-3 years that will be assigned randomly upon selection.
2. Responsibilities of executive secretariat:
- a) The executive secretariat serves as the central contact for timely communications with the full WG membership and addresses external inquiries. As such, the secretariat will maintain and regularly update the membership list.
 - b) The secretariat will maintain the WG website and will provide annual updates to the United Nations for the City Group website that they maintain.
 - c) The secretariat will draft annual and interim reports to the UN statistical commission for approval by the steering committee.
 - d) Prior to each annual meeting, the secretariat will solicit volunteers to host the annual meeting for the next year.
 - e) The secretariat will be the point-of-contact for the workgroups and will provide a semi-annual report of their progress to the steering committee.
 - f) The secretariat will maintain a list of opportunities for funding for members to attend annual meetings. The secretariat will also maintain a list of members requesting funding for each annual meeting.
3. Responsibilities of steering committee:
- a) The steering committee will select the annual meeting hosts, sites, and dates, and will establish the planning group for each annual meeting of the WG.
 - b) The steering committee will approve interim and annual reports to the UN.
 - c) The steering committee will act in an advisory capacity to workgroups to coordinate work between groups and provide recommendations about

timeframe for completion of work, the form and content of work products, etc.

d) Countries or organizations that provide funding for meeting attendance to WG members can select the recipients of the funds with input from the steering committee and information provided by the secretariat.

B. Workgroups

1. Composition

a) Membership on the workgroups is voluntary.

b) Workgroups will be self-selected based on interest and expertise in the topical work of the group.

c) Each workgroup will designate a leader who will be the primary contact for the workgroups members and the secretariat.

d) Persons external to the WG with recognized expertise in one of the work group topics can be invited on an ad hoc basis to participate in the workgroup by the group leader.

2. Formation and disbanding

a) Workgroups will be formed each time that a major work topic is identified and agreed upon at annual meetings.

b) When the specific task of the workgroup is completed, the group will disband and have the opportunity to participate in new topical areas.

3. Responsibilities

a) Workgroups will be responsible for preparing and presenting position papers and activity reports at annual meetings on previously agreed upon topics.

b) Workgroup leaders will solicit comments on position papers and activity reports from the full WG membership via the secretariat.

c) The workgroup leaders will provide a brief, semi-annual report of progress to the secretariat.

C. Meeting host and planning committee

1. Composition

a) The planning committee will be selected by the steering committee and will include the meeting host and leaders from the workgroups that will be participating in the meeting.

2. Responsibilities of the meeting host

a) The host will secure the meeting facilities.

b) The host will identify a meeting hotel or local hotels to assist the WG membership to make travel arrangements.

c) The host will provide a map of the local area, a list of local restaurants and attractions, and a list of transportation options to meeting participants.

d) The host will collect, copy, and distribute materials for presentation and discussion at the meeting (i.e. position papers, background papers, agenda, meeting schedule, etc.)

e) The host will moderate the meeting, provide introductory and summary statements, and will lead balloting according to standard rules of order for decision making.

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- f) The host will present the WG report at the annual United Nations Statistical Commission meeting in March if they will be attending the meeting. If they will not be attending the meeting, they will be responsible for designating another representative from the WG membership to present the report.
3. Joint responsibilities
- a) The planning committee and host will plan the meeting agenda and schedule, and assist in identifying potential commentators for scheduled presentations.