

Recommended Liaison Committee Guidelines

1. Background

One of the main reasons for the existence of the CESA is to enhance the business interests of its members. Recognising that clients are of prime importance to us, liaison committees can fulfil a very important role in this regard. This guideline is therefore intended to facilitate the task of liaison committees.

Role of Liaison Committees

Liaison Committees are the point of contact between clients and the Association. In performing their functions, they should be seen to benefit clients as well as the Association. The role of liaison committees includes the following:

- Enhance the credibility of the Association and its members
- Improve the relationship between clients and the Association
- Foster communication between clients and the Association
- Enhance the business interests of Association members

Liaison Committee Benefits

For the liaison committees to be most effective they must aim to be mutually beneficial. The agenda of meetings should therefore be structured to satisfy this objective. The following list of benefits, which are not exhaustive, may help when preparing for meetings:

Benefits to clients

- Single point of contact for communication, to disseminate standard procedures and to be advised on changes within the client body
- Access to a large specialist resource base
- Access to useful standard documentation, e.g. Forms of Agreement, procurement procedures, Conditions of Contract
- Access to informed opinion
- Handling complaints
- Professional fee agreements

Benefits to CESA members

- Pressure group to lobby procurement procedures, conditions of appointment, fee negotiation, work flow etc.
- Keeping members informed of client related matters, e.g. changes in procedures, client structure and personnel

Meeting Frequency

The frequency of meetings will depend on many factors, but in most cases two meetings per year should suffice. Regular contact by telephone, or casual discussions, should also be encouraged.

Records

Action reports (**who** does **what** and by **when**) of all discussions should be compiled.

2. Process

Objectives

In the case of a client body, to create a cordial relationship between the consulting engineering fraternity and the particular client body.

In the case of a non-client organisation with mutual interests to those of the CESA, to exchange information which would be to the benefit of both parties?

To establish an awareness of the indispensability of consulting engineers.

To provide neutral contact for discussing members' problems and to provide guidance to clients in a non-partisan situation.

To ensure client satisfaction and develop a basis of trust between consulting engineers and client bodies.

To provide client bodies with a source of contact for queries, and to disseminate client information back to members.

To enhance the flow of information which the internal communication channels of clients may not always conduct efficiently.

To provide a person-to-person contact to encourage communication, and to diffuse developing conflict situations.

Target Groups

Client bodies utilising the services of more than one consulting engineer.

Regional offices of client organisations operating on a multi-regional basis, even those to whom decision making have not been delegated.

Organisations with a direct interest in the consulting engineering business, such as tertiary education engineering departments, engineering related research groups, funding institutions, contracting organisations and organised building professionals.

Target groups should be re-evaluated each year with a view to the establishment of new liaison committees or to evaluate the desirability of a particular committee.

Some organisations are divided into divisions, requiring more than one liaison committee.

Composition

The CESA to be represented by four or less people.

In the case of a client body, CESA representatives to be selected preferably from firms which have worked for the particular client.

Client bodies should be invited to make an input in the selection of committee members.

Consideration should be given to the replacement of one member annually, for purposes of succession.

National liaison should only be set up in cases where liaison cannot be conducted effectively at branch level.

National liaison committees should be compiled by the NLC Chairman (advised by the current committee convenor, if it is an existing committee).

Branch liaison committees should be compiled by the Branch Chairman (advised by the current committee if it is an existing committee).

Liaison committee convenors should be given discretion with regard to the appointment of corresponding members.

Operation

Convenor must be proactive in setting up meetings.

A minimum of one and preferably not more than three meetings per annum, to be convened.

Invite the relevant organisations to contribute to the agenda for a meeting, before the agenda is distributed.

CESA members should hold a preparatory discussion before each liaison meeting.

Follow-up actions from a previous meeting should receive priority attention in order to focus discussions on progress made.

Convenors should be furnished with support materials, such as guidelines, advisory notes, publications, model forms, list of members' benefits, action plans, statistics and all other relevant information which may assist the committee in "educating" the organisation concerned, about CESA philosophy, approach and policy matters.

For the benefit of all members, obtain the same from the relevant organisation, including future trends, problem areas, and general announcements.

Try to explain matters involved in the running of a consulting practice, to the officials concerned.

Depending on the nature of the organisation, and the personalities involved, a social function such as an after-meeting cocktail party or lunch could be conducive to more relaxed and spontaneous interaction.

The organisation in question should be invited to indicate a preference with regard to the venue for each particular meeting, either at its own premises, the convenor's office, or another suitable place.

Suggested structure of discussions

- Fee scales
- Conditions of appointment
- Future work load
- Internal capacity building versus use of external consultants
- Partnering
- CESA documents (Value Based Selection / Roster System, Empowerment, Appointment in Association)
- Monitoring of performance
- Etc

Reporting

The Convenor should take responsibility for distribution of action reports to everyone present at the liaison meeting, and the Branch Chairmen (or NLC Chairman in the case of national liaison).

Convenors should keep members informed by issuing of notices in Bulletin (or Forum, if matters are of a wider interest) that a meeting did take place, which significant topics were discussed, and where details of actions decided upon, are available.

An action reporting proforma for liaison committees is attached.