

Water Monitoring Standardisation Technical Committee.

Guidelines and standards endorsement process

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Version Status

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1 Purpose and scope

This document describes the protocol by which the Water Monitoring Standardisation Technical Committee (WaMSTeC) will review and endorse guidelines and standards, including National Industry Guidelines.

Endorsement of guidelines or standards is a principle function of WaMSTeC. WaMSTeC endorsement is a decision reached by a majority of WaMSTeC members to approve and give support to a standard or guideline developed in accordance with the WaMSTeC endorsement process. Endorsement signifies that the standard or guideline aligns with industry recommended practice. The guidelines and standards endorsement process clearly defines the approach to reaching WaMSTeC agreement on an endorsement decision.

Note that the term 'guideline' has been used throughout this document. The first documents to have progressed through the endorsement process are a series of National Industry Guidelines for hydrometric monitoring that were endorsed by the Forum in May 2013. The process described within this protocol applies equally to standards, should WaMSTeC consider endorsing these in the future.

2 Background

The first guidelines and standards endorsement process was developed by the Water Information Standards Business Forum (the Forum) in 2012. The Forum ceased to operate in October 2014, and its primary functions and activities were transitioned to WaMSTeC. Each of the Forum foundation documents, including the endorsement process, were adopted by WaMSTeC and updated accordingly.

3 Key players and roles within the endorsement process

Sponsor

Anyone who submits a draft guideline to be endorsed by WaMSTeC. The sponsor plays a key role in coordinating the passage of a guideline throughout the endorsement process, and championing guideline development and review stages. The sponsor will typically be an individual who has the backing of their organisation to undertake the sponsor role.

WaMSTeC

Representatives of WaMSTeC member organisations provide input and make recommendations at various stages of the endorsement process. WaMSTeC makes the final decision to endorse a guideline.

WaMSTeC chairperson

The role of committee chair (and secretariat) will be shared between member organisations and will rotate from one meeting to the next. At each meeting, committee members will agree which organisation will fill these roles for the next 6 month period. The chairperson has a decision making role in the initial review step, and also assists WaMSTeC in reaching the final decision to endorse a guideline.

WaMSTeC secretariat

The role of committee secretariat (and chair) will be shared between member organisations and will rotate from one meeting to the next. At each meeting, committee members will agree which organisation will fill these roles for the next 6 month period. The WaMSTeC secretariat has a facilitation role in the endorsement process and supports the sponsor, the WaMSTeC representatives and the industry throughout the review, consultation, revision, endorsement, publication and promotion stages. The secretariat also contributes to the WaMSTeC Govdex community website and updates the Activities Register.

Industry

Members of the practicing community to which the guideline is applicable, including organisations named in the Water Regulations, private service providers and software developers. Collectively, they are the expertise within the domain. Industry members are targeted in the guideline review stages to provide comment and input, either individually or through an industry representative body.

Industry representative body

A recognised body with a membership which represents domain expertise and practitioners across a particular industry. This could include professional or non-profit organisations. As an example, the Australian Hydrographers Association is considered an industry representative body in the field of hydrography and hydrometric monitoring. Similarly, a professional body such as the Australian Water Association may be considered to represent water quality industry expertise.

4 WaMSTeC endorsement process

The WaMSTeC endorsement process follows a series of five steps:

- Step 1 – Registration of a draft guideline;
- Step 2 – Initial WaMSTeC review and decision to proceed;
- Step 3 – Industry consultation and detailed technical review;
- Step 4 – WaMSTeC endorsement; and
- Step 5 – Publication and promotion.

Steps 1 to 3 are the review, consultation and revision stages in the development of a guideline. Steps 4 and 5 cover WaMSTeC endorsement, publication and promotion of the guideline for industry access and use. These steps are represented in the flow diagram in Figure 1.

Depending on the complexity of the guideline, a reasonable time period to reach endorsement and publication would be between 12 to 24 months.

4.1 Step 1: Registration of a draft guideline

In the first instance a sponsor presents a draft guideline to the WaMSTeC secretariat for registration in the endorsement process. The sponsor is also required to submit an accompanying context document. The purpose of the context document is to state the benefit of the guideline and give context in relation to any existing similar guidelines or standards.

The primary audience of the context document is the WaMSTeC membership. Areas to be covered in the document shall include:

- a statement of the benefit of the proposed guideline to the Australian water information community;
- a description of any existing similar national and international guidelines or standards, along with perceived gaps and needs which the proposed guideline will address.

The WaMSTeC secretariat registers the draft guideline and accompanying context document on the WaMSTeC Govdex website and Activities Register and alerts the WaMSTeC representatives.

The draft guideline is **registered** at this point.

4.2 Step 2: Initial WaMSTeC review and decision to proceed

In this step, the WaMSTeC undertakes initial review and assessment of the guideline and decides whether or not the guideline will continue through the WaMSTeC endorsement process.

The WaMSTeC secretariat calls for nominations from WaMSTeC representatives with relevant expertise to undertake the initial review of a registered draft guideline and context document. The initial review is undertaken out of session by a sub-committee comprising a minimum of three WaMSTeC representatives plus the WaMSTeC secretariat.

The initial review is conducted against defined criteria. As a minimum, the registered draft guideline shall:

- address a defined purpose;
- be of net benefit to the Australian water information community;
- satisfy the WaMSTeC definition of a guideline;
- seek to re-use and/or align with existing core standards or guidelines;
- allow for flexibility and ensure functionality; and
- be a technically sound starting point.

Initial WaMSTeC review should be completed within 2 months of registration of the draft guideline. On completion of the review, the WaMSTeC sub-committee reports to the WaMSTeC chairperson on the extent to which the draft guideline satisfies the review criteria. The report will contain a recommendation that the chairperson either

- allow the draft guideline to proceed to the next step of the endorsement process, or
- request further work by the sponsor before proceeding.

If the recommendation is to proceed, the sub-committee report shall also discuss the nature of the technical input which should take place in the next step of the process, including involvement of particular industry representative bodies or expertise.

If the recommendation is to not proceed, the sub-committee report shall contain a log of issues which need to be resolved by the sponsor, and proposed solutions.

The chairperson makes a decision to either accept the recommendation or request more input from the sub-committee. The WaMSTeC secretariat communicates the decision to the sponsor and the rest of the WaMSTeC representatives. The outcomes of the initial review are posted on the WaMSTeC Govdex community website and tabled at the next WaMSTeC meeting.

In the case that the decision is to not proceed, the sponsor may choose to address the issues identified in the sub-committee report and re-register the guideline. Alternatively the sponsor may elect to withdraw the guideline from the endorsement process.

4.3 Step 3: Industry consultation and detailed technical review

The purpose of this step is to involve relevant industry experts in the detailed review and drafting of the guideline. The outcome is to revise and improve the draft guideline to a point where it is generally accepted by industry as technically sound, fit for purpose and able to be feasibly implemented. This is a vital step in ensuring industry stakeholder support and acceptance for the draft guideline. The WaMSTeC will rely heavily on the integrity of this step when making the final endorsement decision.

Key points in the industry consultation and technical review step are as follows;

- Relevant industry representative bodies are to be strongly engaged throughout this step.

- The sponsor, with support of the WaMSTeC secretariat, will liaise with industry representative bodies and coordinate a call for comment on the draft guideline. Input to the draft will be invited during a defined consultation period of no less than 10 weeks.
- The consultation process will use an online review forum (such as Govdex) to which any registered participant can contribute comment. Participation will be open to all.
- The sponsor and the industry representative bodies, with support of the WaMSTeC secretariat, will promote the consultation process, and may solicit targeted comment and review from particular experts and practitioners.
- Questions the consultation will seek to address include:
 - how applicable is the guideline to activities undertaken by your organisation?
 - do your current practices conform (or can they be modified to conform) with the guideline?
 - would changes be required to the guideline before your organisation could adopt them and, if so, what are those changes?
 - do you consider that any sections within the guideline are too prescriptive and should be more flexible?
 - do you consider that any sections within the guideline are too subjective or broad, and need to be more prescriptive?
 - do you consider that the guideline represents current industry recommended practice?
- At the end of the defined consultation period the sponsor, with support of the WaMSTeC secretariat, will collate comment and undertake a revision of the draft guideline. All comment registered throughout the consultation process will be addressed in development of a revised draft.
- At least two iterations of this consultation and re-drafting process will be undertaken. The sponsor and the industry representative bodies may convene specialist Technical Reference Groups to focus the review and technical input during one or more of these iterations. At the conclusion of each iteration, the draft guideline will be published and the next round of consultation called. Each revised draft guideline will be clearly versioned.

The consultation and review process will conclude once the guideline is generally agreed upon by industry representative bodies, and major issues raised during the process have been satisfactorily resolved. Wherever possible, industry agreement should be formally communicated to the WaMSTeC. This may take the form of a statement from members of the industry representative body or Technical Reference Group involved in the consultation and review process recommending that the draft guideline be submitted to the WaMSTeC for endorsement.

Completion of this step concludes the drafting stage of the guideline.

4.4 Step 4: WaMSTeC endorsement.

The reviewed draft guideline is submitted to the WaMSTeC along with a Basis for Endorsement (BFE) document. The purpose of this document is to clearly state the rationale for endorsement of the guideline and provide WaMSTeC members with sufficient supporting information to make an informed decision. The primary audience of the BFE document is the WaMSTeC representatives. Note that once endorsement is achieved, the BFE document will be published along with the endorsed guideline. Areas to be covered in the BFE are listed in section 6 of this document.

The draft guideline and accompanying BFE document shall be made available to all WaMSTeC representatives no less than four weeks before the scheduled WaMSTeC meeting at which it is to be considered for endorsement. The sponsor will present to the WaMSTeC meeting the case for endorsement. In accordance with the process described in the “Membership, representation and decision making” WaMSTeC protocol, the WaMSTeC reaches a decision in the meeting to either:

- endorse the guideline; or

- not endorse the guideline in its current form. In this instance, the WaMSTeC secretariat documents the log of issues raised by WaMSTeC representatives, and proposed solutions. The sponsor will be required to address these prior to re-entering the guideline into the endorsement process.

In the case that the WaMSTeC chairperson acknowledges endorsement of the guideline, the WaMSTeC secretariat (with support of the Bureau) will complete any pre-publication checks to ensure consistency of format and term usage. The guideline is assigned a unique identifier to allow appropriate referencing (refer to the “Numbering of National Industry Guidelines” WaMSTeC protocol).

4.5 Step 5. Publication and promotion

Guideline publication and promotion is part of the ongoing governance of the guideline and should be managed in accordance with the WaMSTeC “Governance protocol for endorsed guidelines”.

5 Periodic status review

The status of all endorsed guidelines shall be periodically reviewed by the WaMSTeC at intervals of no greater than five years. The periodic review is conducted against defined criteria. The purpose of the periodic review is to ensure that the endorsed guideline continues to meet all stated requirements, remains technically sound and is up to date with technological advancements.

Refer to the WaMSTeC “Governance protocol for endorsed guidelines” for details about the periodic review process including roles and responsibilities.

6 Explanatory notes

The Basis for Endorsement (BFE) document is drafted by the sponsor, with support of the WaMSTeC secretariat, for submission to the WaMSTeC as part of step 4 of the endorsement process. The document will contain:

- an executive summary of the guideline;
- the history of the guideline, including dates at which the guideline was registered for endorsement and passed initial WaMSTeC review;
- a re-statement of details covered in the context document (step 1), with consideration of any changes following industry consultation and re-drafting;
- the extent to which the guideline aligns with international best practice;
- the extent to which consultation has occurred. This will include an overview of industry members who contributed comment, involvement of industry representative bodies, the extent to which comment was representative of the broader industry and the degree of industry support for the final draft; and
- details of any significantly different viewpoints identified through the industry consultation step which were in contrast to the general majority view and how these were resolved in development of the draft guideline.

The WaMSTeC Govdex website

The WaMSTeC operates a Govdex community website to encourage and facilitate collaboration between all organisation representatives. It is not publically accessible, but all organisation representatives are registered and others can be invited to join as required. The Bureau administers the Govdex community, and ongoing updates to the webpages are the responsibility of the WaMSTeC membership with support of the secretariat.

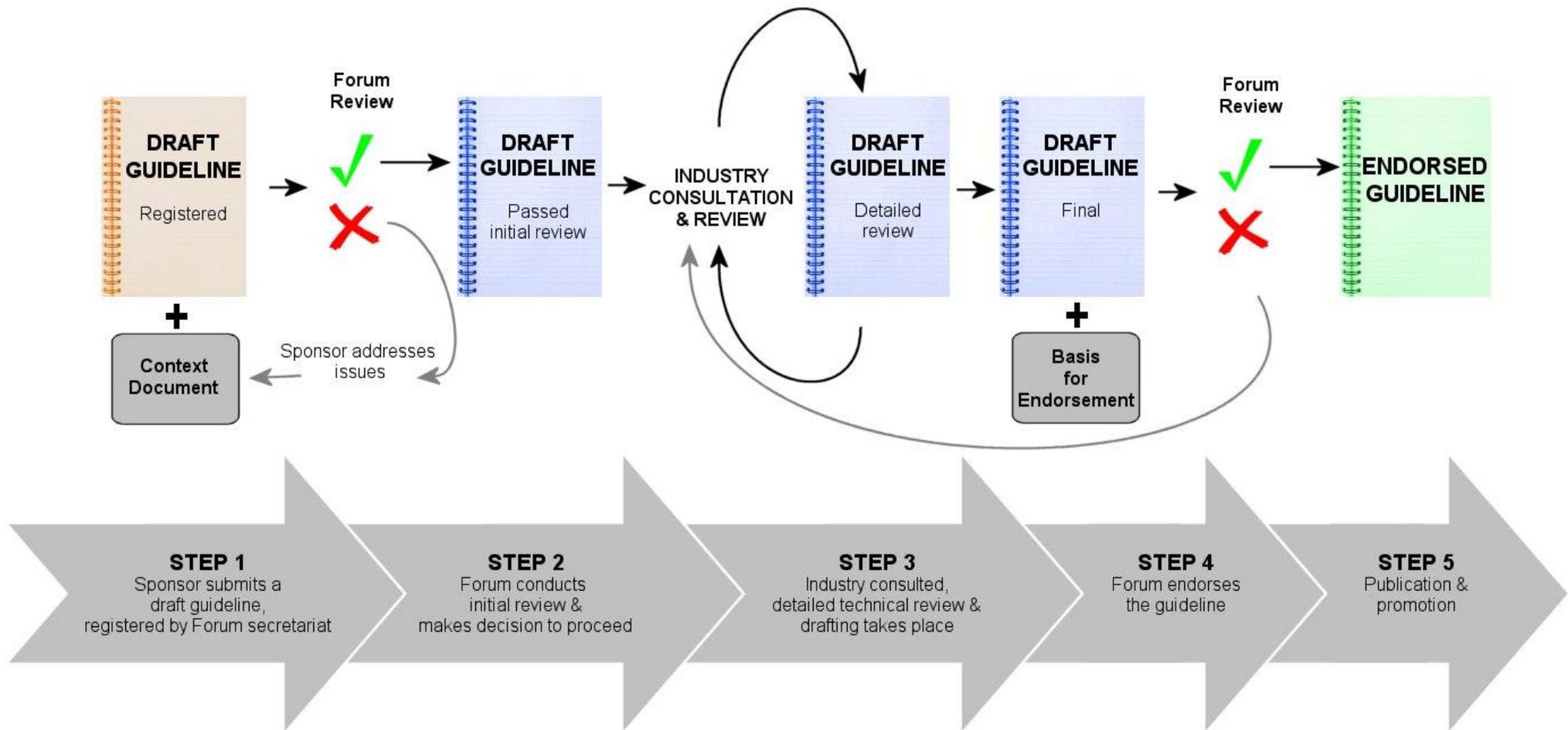


Figure 1. Flow diagram showing WaMSTeC endorsement process steps