

Agency Relationships with Non-labor Organizations Representing Federal Employees

5 C.F.R. Part 251

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has long recognized the benefits associated with federal agencies communicating and consulting with non-labor organizations that represent the interests of Federal employees. Specifically, OPM's governing regulations suggest to agencies that while they are not expressly required to communicate and consult with employee advocacy groups as is the case with labor organizations, it may in fact be in their best interest to do so. The regulations note that such dealings can be mutually beneficial to both the agency and the employees who are members of the organization through (1) the improvement of agency operations, personnel management and employee effectiveness, (2) the exchange of information (ideas, opinions, and proposals), and (3) the establishment of policies that best serve the public interest in accomplishing the mission of the agency. See 5 C.F.R. Part 251.101

OPM's regulations also address agency provided support and services to employee advocacy groups. The regulations provide guidance for agencies to provide support services and resources to an organization when the agency determines that such action would benefit agency programs or would be warranted as a service to employees who are members of the organization. Examples of such support services include permitting employees to use agency equipment or administrative support to prepare papers to be presented at conferences and using agency authority under 5 U.S.C. 4109 and 4110 (related to expenses for training and attendance at meetings) to pay expenses to attend professional organization meetings. The regulations also state that agencies may provide government resources support to organizations such as space in government facilities for meeting purposes and the use of agency bulletin boards, internal agency mail distribution systems, electronic bulletin boards, and other means of informing agency employees about meetings and activities. See 5 C.F.R. Part 251.202

In short, the OPM regulations provide a strong foundation for establishing and maintaining agency relationships. By showing that our organization's advocacy efforts have the clear capacity to improve both agency operations and employee effectiveness, we also show that it is indeed in the agency's best interest to consult and communicate with our organization.

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