

# Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments

## By-Laws

### **PREAMBLE**

The Greater Bridgeport Planning Region was designated in 1960 under the direction of the Connecticut Development Commission. It is comprised of six (6) municipalities: Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford and Trumbull.

Over the years, the function and structure of the Regional Planning Organization (RPO) serving this geography has evolved and priority planning areas have changed. The regional planning process is directly related to the elected local decision and policy makers of member communities. To promote and expand this level of regionalism, the member municipalities of the Greater Bridgeport Planning Region have voluntarily decided to create and establish a Regional Council of Governments hereinafter referred to as the Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments (MetroCOG).

The MetroCOG will be the policy board of the region and provide guidance to staff responsible for performing the planning activities as directed by the MetroCOG.

### **ARTICLE 1 – Name**

The name of the organization is the Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments (MetroCOG).

### **ARTICLE 2 – Purpose**

**Section 1 – Purpose:** The purpose of the MetroCOG is to provide a continuing and official forum for contact and discussion of issues of mutual concern and regional interest among its members. The MetroCOG directly involves the chief elected officials and is the designated organization to consider such matters of a public nature common to two or more members as it deems appropriate. The purposes of the MetroCOG are:

- To provide the organizational framework to insure effective communication and coordination among governmental bodies.
- To promote cooperative arrangements among its members.
- To initiate and coordinate actions on a voluntary basis deemed to be of benefit to all or part of the Greater Bridgeport Planning Region.
- To coordinate comprehensive regional planning in the Greater Bridgeport Planning Region.

- To provide policy oversight and guidance to the Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency.
- To serve as the legislatively mandated Regional Roundtable on Responsible Growth.

## **ARTICLE 3 – Powers and Operations**

**Section 1 – Powers:** The MetroCOG shall serve as the Board of Directors for the GBRPA with all rights and authority subject to the responsibilities and duties granted and required of a Regional Council of Governments under the *General Statutes of the State of Connecticut*, Chapter 50, Section 4-124i through 4-124p, as amended, and/or by special acts of the Connecticut General Assembly.

**Section 2 – Membership Dues:** The MetroCOG is empowered to assess and collect membership dues from the member municipalities based on a predetermined and mutually agreeable formula and procedure, upon the advice and consultation with the GBRPA.

## **ARTICLE 4 – Membership**

**Section 1 – Membership:** Membership in the MetroCOG shall consist of the municipalities of the Greater Bridgeport Planning Region, as defined or redefined by the secretary of the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), or his/her designee, under provisions of CGS Chapter 295, Section 16a-4a.. To become a member, the legislative body of a municipality shall adopt an ordinance by its legislative body in accordance to Sections 4-124i through 4-124p of the Connecticut *General Statutes of the State of Connecticut*, as amended.

**Section 2 – Representatives:** Each member municipality shall be entitled to one voting representative on the MetroCOG. The chief elected official, as defined by the state Office of Policy and Management and specified by the ordinances of the member municipality, or their assigned alternate.

**Section 3 – Alternatives:** The chief elected official of any member municipality may appoint an alternate as representation at MetroCOG meetings. Within the requirements of Article 5, the designated representative of the MetroCOG and their alternate is encouraged to attend all duly called meetings. Alternates may not hold any MetroCOG office; however, they may be designated to chair or be a member of special or standing committees.

## **ARTICLE 5 - Meetings**

**Section 1 – Regular Meetings:** Regular meetings of the MetroCOG shall be held in congruence with regularly scheduled meetings of the Greater Bridgeport/Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (GBVMPO) at times and dates to be set each calendar year.

**Section 2 – Special Meetings:** Special Meetings may be called at anytime at the discretion of the Chairman of the GBRC or by petition to the Secretary of the MetroCOG from two or more municipalities of the Greater Bridgeport Planning Region.

**Section 3 – Annual Meeting:** Unless otherwise specified by resolution of the MetroCOG, the Annual Meeting shall be held in December. The meeting calendar for the subsequent year shall be adopted at the Annual Meeting.

**Section 4 – Call of Meetings:** Each member of the MetroCOG shall be sent electronic notices of regular meetings described in Sections 1, 2, and 3 above, at least seven days before the meeting date. An Agenda will be prepared by staff in consultation with the Chairman of the MetroCOG. The meeting notices shall include the place of meeting, the time of meeting, and a proposed agenda for the meeting. No item not included in the agenda shall be acted upon at such meeting other than routine ministerial or administrative matters, except by the unanimous consent of all members present and constituting a quorum. Meetings shall be conducted under Roberts Rules of Parliamentary Procedure.

**Section 5 – Quorum:** For the conduct of business of the MetroCOG, 51% of the membership of the GBRC shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

**Section 6 – Voting:** Each municipality participating in the MetroCOG shall have one vote exercised by its chief elected official or their duly appointed alternate. Action by the MetroCOG shall be a simple majority vote of those members of the MetroCOG’s entire membership present and voting.

**Section 7 – Teleconferencing:** If a quorum is not achieved at the commencement of any regular meeting with a sufficient number of members in person, other members shall be permitted to participate and vote via teleconference. Electronic voting shall only be permitted for items of administrative nature.

**Section 8 – Cancellation of Meetings:** The Chairman may cancel a meeting and members will be notified by mail, fax, or email.

**Section 9 - Public Participation:** The Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments (MetroCOG) welcomes the public to attend all Board meetings. The following guidelines are to assist any member of the public who wishes to speak during the Public Participation Session:

1. The Board welcomes all public participation but asks that all comments be limited to items listed on the meeting agenda.
2. Please state your name and address for the record prior beginning your comment.
3. The MetroCOG presiding officer will limit each comment to 3 minutes in order to accommodate all members of the public that wish to speak. The presiding officer may allow additional time at their discretion.

4. Written comments or statements on any topic within the purview of the body are always welcome and will be provided to all MetroCOG Board members.
5. Please be advised that immediate replies to questions/comments should not be expected.

## **ARTICLE 6 – Officers**

**Section 1 – Officers:** Officers of the MetroCOG shall include a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary.

**Section 2 – Method of Selection:** The officers shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of the MetroCOG by a majority vote of the members present at the meeting and shall serve until the next Annual Meeting. Nominations shall also be accepted from the floor.

**Section 3 – Vacancies:** In the event any vacancy occurs in any office during the year, a successor shall be elected to serve the unexpired term. The Chairman shall nominate a name for any vacancy among the officers at any regular or special meeting of the MetroCOG following notice of the vacancy. Nominations shall also be accepted from the floor. The election shall be by a majority vote of the members present at the meeting.

**Section 4 – Chairman:** The Chairman shall preside at all meetings of the MetroCOG except that in their absence the Vice-Chairman shall preside. When so directed by the MetroCOG, the Chairman shall affix their signature to all reports, plans, and publications which have been adopted by the MetroCOG and when so authorized shall sign contracts in the name of the MetroCOG. The Chairman may call Special Meetings of the MetroCOG, as specified in Article 5, Section 2. As a member of the MetroCOG, the Chairman shall have the right to vote on all matters which may come before the MetroCOG. The Chairman shall be a member of all standing and special committees, ex officio without vote, except in the case of tie votes or when required for a quorum.

**Section 5 – Vice-Chairman:** In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman shall assume the powers and duties of Chairman.

**Section 6 – Secretary:** The Secretary shall keep the official records of the MetroCOG, including the minutes of meetings and generally shall perform such duties as may be required by the MetroCOG. The Secretary shall also certify all resolutions adopted by the MetroCOG. Record keeping functions may be delegated to the Executive Director of the GBRPA.

## ARTICLE 7 – Regional Council of Governments

**Section 1 – Duties and Responsibilities:** The planning duties and responsibilities of the MetroCOG shall be carried out by agency staff. Agency staff shall act on behalf of and as a subdivision of the MetroCOG according to procedures as may be established by the MetroCOG.

**Section 2 – Operating Procedures and By-laws:** MetroCOG staff shall operate under the direction of the MetroCOG as provided by the *General Statutes of the State of Connecticut*, Chapter 50, Section 4-124i through 4-124p and follow the operating procedures contained in the *Employee Handbook for the Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments*, as amended.

**Section 3 – Preparation of Plans:** The MetroCOG shall instruct the GBRPA to prepare and keep up-to-date a regional plan of conservation and development (RPCD), to prepare reports, plans and policies, as required by law and by the *General Statutes of the State of Connecticut*, as amended, and to carry-out the regional planning program as detailed and contained in the *Unified Planning Work Program for the Greater Bridgeport Planning Region*. The MetroCOG may also instruct the GBRPA to prepare other plans and documents as the MetroCOG shall deem appropriate. Any such instructions of the MetroCOG shall specify the time period in which the GBRPA shall take the action required by such instructions.

**Section 4 Referrals:** As authorized by Sections 8-3b and 4-124n, the MetroCOG will serve as the Regional Planning Commission (RPC). All matters which by statutes or otherwise required to be referred to and considered by a RPC shall be referred to the GBRPA staff for the consideration of the matter's regional impact. Any matters that GBRPA staff finds to have a regional impact will be referred to the MetroCOG for comment and review. All referrals must be received by agency staff within the 30 day period prior to public hearing.

**Section 5 – Submittal of Reports, Plans, and Policies:** At the request of the MetroCOG, agency staff shall present reports, plans, and policies completed at the direction of MetroCOG or under the *Unified Planning Work Program* to MetroCOG for review, comment, amendment or adoption.

**Section 6 – Executive Director:** The Executive Director of the Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency shall serve and act as the chief operating and administrative officer of the MetroCOG and shall be responsible to the MetroCOG for the administration of affairs and implementing policy directives. Specific duties of the Executive Director are described in the *Employee Handbook for the Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments*.

## ARTICLE 8 – Committees

**Section 1– Standing Committees:** The MetroCOG may establish Standing Committees whenever deemed necessary to further the purpose of the MetroCOG. Standing Committees shall be formed and operate as follows:

1. Members shall be appointed by the MetroCOG Chairman to serve until the next Annual Meeting of the MetroCOG or until their successors have been appointed.
2. A quorum for a Standing Committee action shall be 51% of the committee membership.
3. Each Standing Committee may act for the MetroCOG in carrying out programs approved by the MetroCOG within its general area of responsibility.
4. Standing Committees will keep written records of meetings for submittal to the executive director and shall make regular progress reports to the MetroCOG.

**Section 2 – Special Committees:** The MetroCOG may establish, from time-to-time, such special, or ad hoc, committees as may be needed. Such committees shall serve such terms and perform such duties as the MetroCOG prescribes. Special Committees will keep written records of meeting for submittal to the executive director and shall make regular progress reports to the MetroCOG.

## **ARTICLE 9 – Amendments**

These by-laws may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the entire membership of the MetroCOG. Before adoption of these by-laws or an amendment thereto, they shall be considered at a previous meeting of the MetroCOG. Notice of adoption or amendment of the by-laws, stating the complete text, shall be sent to all members of the MetroCOG, as specified in Article 5.

These by-laws shall become effective immediately upon their adoption by a majority of the chief elected officials which have adopted the ordinance establishing a Regional Council of Governments of the Greater Bridgeport Planning Region, at the date of the meeting these By-laws are acted upon.

## **ARTICLE 10 – Withdrawal**

Any member city or town may withdraw from membership in the MetroCOG by the adoption of an ordinance of withdrawal by its legislative body.

## **MetroCOG Educational Assistance Program**

### **1. Eligibility.**

Full-time employees covered by MetroCOG's benefit programs and who are actively at work are eligible to use this program. An eligible employee is eligible to participate in the program after 6 months of full-time employment. The employee should discuss any desire to pursue educational assistance with MetroCOG's Executive Director in a timely manner so that budget considerations may be made. Employees on leaves of absence, and part-time, term contract, temporary and occasional employees are not eligible to participate

### **2. Qualification.**

a. An employee can qualify for benefits if he/she takes approved courses on his/her own time from an accredited educational institution, receives a satisfactory grade and follows the applicable guidelines of the Educational Assistance Program.

b. Accredited educational institutions: Accredited educational institutions include schools, colleges, universities, trade schools, associations, vocational schools, and professional societies – all of whom offer coursework at a post high school level. If application is made for approval of courses offered by an educational institution not readily recognized as accredited, the employee may be required to provide information concerning the institution. MetroCOG reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to make a final and binding determination of whether an educational institution is approved and accredited for purposes of the Educational Assistance Program.

c. Approved courses: Courses may be approved if:

- (i) they add to the employee's effectiveness on his/her present job assignment; or
- (ii) they contribute to the employees overall development in a way that is beneficial to both employee and MetroCOG; or (iii) they are required for the employee to obtain a degree – provided the degree satisfies either of the first two requirements above;

AND

- (iv) the expenses for such courses have been approved by the MetroCOG's Board of Directors within MetroCOG's budget for the applicable fiscal year; and
- (v) such courses have been approved by MetroCOG's Board of Directors as satisfying the criteria within Section 2c(i) herein.

### **3. Submitting Initial Application.**

Before an employee starts a course, an application, which shall be created and amended by The Executive Director ("Application"), should be submitted to the

Executive Director for approval. The Executive Director will review the applicability of the coursework to the employee's job and/or career with MetroGOG, and will review the availability of funds within the budget. The Executive Director shall then make a recommendation to the MetroCOG's Board of Directors concerning the Application. MetroCOG's Board, after reviewing the recommendation of the Executive Director, the details of the coursework and the applicability of the qualifications as set forth in Section 2 herein may approve or deny the Application. . The MetroCOG Board may also deny the application due to other work-related constraints of the Applicant.

When a coursework requires more than one semester or one quarter for completion, any approval of the application will only apply to the first year or any lesser period in which a definite part of the course will be completed. A separate application must be submitted and approved by the MetroCOG Board for each subsequent part of the course. The estimated completion date for the part of the course to be covered by the application must be shown on the application.

#### **4. Benefits.**

a. An employee will be reimbursed 100% percent of the cost of tuition, books and certain other fees as long as:

- (i) The participant is an employee of MetroCOG and actively at work at the time an approved course is completed;
- (ii) The course or courses is completed with a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.00 each semester or higher as proven by an official transcript;
- (iii) Itemized receipts for all reimbursable items are submitted;
- (iv) The application for refund – with supporting documentation – is made within 60 days after completion of the coursework; and
- (v) Funds are not duplicated through a federal or state government program or educational institution such as scholarships, fellowships, incentive awards, grants, etc . . .

b. Courses that exceed one year. In the case of a course or academic program that requires more than one year to complete, a receipt of the cost and statement of grades or verification of satisfactory progress must be provided during each calendar year to obtain reimbursement. Reimbursement will be calculated by proration of the total cost of the course.

c. Maximum benefit

The maximum benefit payable under this program shall be determined at the sole and absolute discretion of the MetroCOG Board. Such determination shall be reviewed and approved on a case by case basis.



## **5. Expenses.**

a. Reimbursable Items. The following expenses are considered eligible for reimbursement through the program:

- (i) Tuition;
- (ii) Required books;
- (iii) Required software;
- (iv) Printed course materials in lieu of textbooks;
- (v) Registration, laboratory and other fees which the institution requires the student to pay, such as cap and gown, unless otherwise excluded below;
- (vi) Nonresident fees;
- (vii) Matriculation fees;
- (viii) Examination and certification fees (as defined in the program); and (ix) late examination fees.

If any of these fees are not required by the institution and the employee elects to pay for them, they will not be reimbursed. An employee will not be reimbursed for expenses which may be waived or for which he/she is not responsible.

b. Non-reimbursable Items. Expenses for which reimbursement will not be made include, but are not necessarily limited to the following:

- (i) Equipment such as radio parts, drafting equipment and special laboratory equipment;
- (ii) Application for entrance into college;
- (iii) Class ring or pin;
- (iv) Deferred payment or installment charges, including cash discount forfeited by late payment;
- (v) Interest charged on loans from banks or credit associations to pay tuition;
- (vi) Late registration fees;
- (vii) Parking permit or parking fees;
- (viii) Travel-related expenses including those related to course work taken abroad;
- (ix) Program changes at the employee's request;
- (x) Room and board;
- (xi) Transfer of credits from one institution to another; (xii) transcript of credits; and
- (xiii) Fees associated with course work credit that does not require a proficiency examination, such as credit given for work experience.

## **6. How payment is made.**

MetroCOG shall reimburse the employee for all expenses within sixty (60) days of (i) completion of the course and (ii) approval of the expenses by the MetroCOG

Board Reimbursement for said approved expenses shall be processed and included in the next paycheck that is administratively possible within said timeframe.

**7. Taxability of payments.**

Reimbursements are considered taxable income unless otherwise exempted by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Effective January 1, 2002, undergraduate and graduate course work initiated on or after January 1, 2002, is considered tax-exempt up to an annual maximum of \$5,250. Coursework initiated prior to January 1, 2002 will be processed in accordance with IRS regulations in effect at that time. MetroCOG is not providing tax advice and all Applicants should seek the advice of independent Tax Professionals regarding the tax ramifications associated with any and all reimbursements pursuant to this program.

**8. Timely submission of documentation.**

If an employee fails to submit required documentation within 60 days after completion of a course, the initial application may be treated as though the course was not completed. If a delay in providing the required documentation cannot be avoided, the employee must notify the Executive Director in writing as soon as possible. An employee will not be reimbursed for any out-of-pocket eligible expenses if the employee withdraws from or fails to complete the course as set forth herein, or is unable to complete the course while an employee of MetroCOG.

**9. Repayment**

The employee agrees to repay any advance made by MetroCOG to the employee as set forth below:

(i) In the event the employee is no longer employed by MetroCOG on the first anniversary of the employee's completion of the course or courses for which reimbursement was made, then said employee shall reimburse MetroCOG One Hundred Percent (100%) of any and all expenses reimbursed to the employee for such course.

(ii) In the event the employee is no longer employed by MetroCOG on the second anniversary of the employee's completion of the course or courses for which reimbursement was made, then said employee shall reimburse MetroCOG Sixty Seven Percent (67%) of any and all expenses reimbursed to the employee for such course.

(iii) In the event the employee is no longer employed by MetroCOG on the third anniversary of the employee's completion of the course or courses for which reimbursement was made, then said employee shall reimburse MetroCOG Thirty Three (33%) of any and all expenses reimbursed to the employee for such course.

(iv) In the event the employee is reimbursed for expenses relating to an approved course or courses, and such employee fails to complete the course or courses with a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.00, then said employee shall reimburse MetroCOG One Hundred Percent (100%) of any and all expenses reimbursed to the employee for such course.

For the purposes of this Section 9, the employee's completion of the course or courses shall mean the last date in which the employee receives his or her grade for such course or courses.

Certified Copy of MetroCOG By-Laws - Signed February 25, 2022



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Matthew Fulda  
Executive Director