

Waterloo Region Community Homelessness

Community Advisory Board Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative for Youth Homelessness

Conflict of Interest Guidelines

November 30, 2001

As for all committees established by the Waterloo Region Community Homelessness Working Group (Working Group) the Community Advisory Board (CAB) for SCPI Youth Homelessness Initiative has a serious responsibility in regards to responding to homelessness issues in Waterloo Region. The CAB will be allocating funds from the Federal Government Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative on Youth Homeless to meet the needs of homeless and at risk youth between the ages of 15 and 30 of Waterloo Region. The Working Group and all related committees, including the CAB are ad-hoc community based groups and care must be taken to ensure that decision-making processes are transparent and not negatively effected by conflict of interest and related issues.

Conflict of Interest guidelines have been developed in recognition of the active community lives of members of the various committees established for addressing homelessness in Waterloo Region. In various capacities, members of these committees serve and interact with the same community from which projects will be developed and in which these projects will be implemented. It should be expected that conflict of interest issues arise as part of the normal course of doing business. Dealing with potential conflicts of interest in a prompt, honest and open manner can prevent serious problems including insupportable decisions, loss of confidence in committees established to do the work, loss of funds and resources to support the community and even lawsuits.

Defining Conflict of Interest

A Conflict of Interest exists when an individual has, or is perceived to have, the opportunity to advance or protect their own interest, or the interests of others with whom they have a relationship, in a way detrimental to the interests of the community or committee as a whole, or potentially harmful to the integrity or mission of the Working Group, generally and the Community Advisory Board, in particular.

Potential Conflict of Interest could be exerting influence on the discussion or, voting on decisions relating to funding proposals to the advantage of an individual/organization with whom the member has a direct, current relationship.

Inappropriate Use of Working Group Personnel or Resources would arise if such personnel or resources were used to carry out work not authorized by the Working Group or the Community Advisory Board. This situation could also exist if the Working Group and Community Advisory Board materials are used for purposes not authorized by the Working Group, aside from material in the public domain intended for publication.

Inappropriate Use of Information is using, for personal gain or other unauthorized purposes, privileged information, acquired as a result of the individual's association with the Community Advisory Board, or disseminating information acquired through the Community Advisory Board to select organizations, to the detriment of other organizations or segments of the community or to give an unfair advantage for groups or community.

Conflict of Interest Policy

Each member of the Community Advisory Board is expected to serve the best interests of the homeless persons in Waterloo Region, and not any one part or group, notwithstanding the limits that may be imposed by any requirements established for a funding program or by the Working Group. This accountability to all homeless persons supersedes any conflicting loyalty such as that to one particular organization, community or group of homeless persons.

Each member shall consider that her/his primary accountability and allegiance in the conduct of the Community Advisory Board business shall be to the Working Group and its declared mission and HRDC. If a member's relationship with another organization would materially affect his/her judgment on an item before the Community Advisory Board, such member shall be considered to be in conflict of interest on that item and should openly declare the conflict.

Guidelines

The Community Advisory Board is accountable to the Working Group and Human Resources Development Canada, that sets the terms of reference and selection criteria for the Community Advisory Board. The Community Advisory Board membership has been elected by the Working Group to decrease conflict of interest. However, the Community Advisory Board, may need to address conflict of interest during the course of its work and has the authority and is expected to use its discretion to address these issues when they arise.

Individual members are expected to avoid conflict of interest with respect to their responsibilities as a member of the Community Advisory Board. Where conflict of interest does arise, the member shall immediately disclose all real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest to the Community Advisory Board. The Community Advisory Board reserves the right to request this conflict of interest in writing from the member.

Knowingly acting and/or persisting in a conflict of interest is unethical. In the case of a conflict of interest the Community Advisory Board will require the member to absent him/herself without comments from not only the vote on the issue, but also from any deliberations on the issue presenting the conflict. The Community Advisory Board may request the individual not be part of any deliberations for the period of time in which the issue is being dealt.

A conflict of interest should not prevent an individual from servicing on the Community Advisory Board unless that interest is so significant as to influence the majority of decisions.

Guidelines for Confidentiality

Members of the CAB shall not discuss any proposal, outside of the committee structure and reporting relationship with the Working Group and HRDC. Members of the CAB will not release any information gathered through their membership that may cause unfair advantage to one group over another in the competition for funds, due to inequitable access to information.

General Conflict of Interest With Respect to Funding Allocations

During the first stage of the SCPI Youth Homelessness allocations, all submissions will be reviewed by the Community Advisory Board. The Community Advisory Board will be independent of the Working Group and HRDC and will not communicate directly with the Working Group. Letters of Interest will be reviewed against pre-established criteria and guidelines approved by the Working Group and based on the Community Plan and the Federal Government SCPI Youth Homelessness program.

In regards to the SCPI Youth Homelessness program, the Human Resources Development Canada Kitchener office representative and the Working Group representative will liaison between the Community Advisory Board and the Working Group. Written reports will be brought to the Working Group with the Community Advisory Board recommendations and rationale after Minister Bradshaw has announced project approvals. The Working Group will receive these reports for information only and will not make decisions about specific projects.

No Community Advisory Board member, especially those who have declared a conflict of interest, will use or ask for information pertaining to any proposal or competing proposals, or any information which, the Working Group views as providing unfair advantage of one proposal over another.

The Community Advisory Board will follow procedures established by the Working Group for reviewing and selecting projects. In regards to SCPI Youth program, this will include:

1. Reviewing Letters of Interest using set criteria, in keeping with the purpose of the SCPI Youth Homelessness program, and in meeting priorities identified in the Waterloo Region Community Plan on Homelessness and any other related criteria as set by the Working Group to meet our particular community needs.
2. An opportunity to question each applicant directly at an open meeting where all applicants will share/present information on their proposal.
3. Assessing all applications as a) fitting the SCPI Youth Homelessness program, or b) not meeting criteria and not recommended. Those applications meeting criteria will be prioritized in order of highest to lowest listing specific recommended funding levels. If there are more projects recommended than budget to support them the Community Advisory Board will propose funding allocation to the maximum budget available.
4. Communicate with the HRDC or Working Group representative for clarification or gathering of additional information, if needed on a specific project application or regarding clarification of criteria.
5. Present through HRDC or Working Group representative a written report on proposal priority ranking and budget recommendations and include a copy of a master evaluation/assessment form for each project. A brief decision rationale must be included. The Chair of the Community Advisory Board may request to make this presentation to the Working Group at the recommendation of the Board members.

Based on the recommendations of the CAB, HRDC will contact those with the highest priority to complete an application form, until the full budget has been committed. The work of the Community Advisory Board is complete once the approval announcements have been made and the report presented to the Working Group.