

# Working Group Guidelines

Prepared by the Community Engagement Committee  
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These guidelines provide a consolidation and update and supersede all previous guidelines. The Community Engagement Committee acknowledges, with thanks, the work of previous committees for the following foundational documents:

- *Working Group Guidelines* – March, 2017
- *Community Participation in Civic Governance*, June, 2015
- *Community Engagement Guidelines* – April, 2013
- *Community Engagement Draft* - 2007

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

A basic principle of West Vancouver's municipal governance system is the active involvement of residents in civic decision-making processes. Working groups are an integral part of public involvement in the District's governance through the Community Engagement Committee.

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

Council established resident-led working groups in 2006 to address specific or complex issues through collaborative research that provides recommended solutions. This process:

- complies with the Community Charter's guiding principle of openness
- provides for effective community engagement
- addresses specific issues of importance to the District
- provides maximum flexibility and a minimum of rules and formality in carrying out assigned tasks

In 2007, Council established the Community Engagement Committee to provide oversight to the working group process. The Community Engagement Committee:

- works with staff to prepare comprehensive terms of reference;
- specifies the desired skills and experience of working group community members, and appoints those selected
- carries out periodic evaluations of the working group process based on feedback from Councillors, staff and working group community members
- is available to working groups to provide clarification, issue resolution or terms of reference review as necessary

## 2.0 STRUCTURE

Working groups are:

- initiated at any time during the year, generally with a view to completing their tasks within a one-year period
- advisory, with broad representation from the community
- voluntary, serving without remuneration
- disbanded upon completing their tasks

### 2.1 MANDATE

Every working group will have a terms of reference outlining the group's specific mandate and role.

## 2.2 APPOINTMENT

Candidates for working groups are reviewed and appointed by the voting members of the Community Engagement Committee, with support from the Staff Representative. Appointments reflect the diversity and experience of candidates and are reflective of the broad spectrum of the community.

## 2.3 TERM

Appointment to a working group is on average one year, or until the group completes its work, whichever is earlier.

An individual may serve for two consecutive years on any one working group, but not on more than two working groups simultaneously.

## 2.4 COMPOSITION

Members will be appointed on the basis of their experience, approach to consensus-building, expertise, ability to advance the work of the working group (not as formal representatives of particular organizations), and their availability.

A working group will consist of:

- One (1) Councillor (appointed by the Mayor)
- Six to ten (6-10) community members (appointed by the CEC)
- Two (2) staff members (Staff Representative & Administrative Support) (appointed by the CAO and/or Divisional Director)

The terms of reference will detail the precise composition of the working group.

The working group will select a Chair and a Vice-chair from among its community members at their first meeting, or the position can be held by two community members as Co-chairs of the working group.

## 2.5 SUB GROUPS

A basic principle of working groups is flexibility (meetings, discussions, and compiling/evaluating information) including the freedom to establish sub-groups for specific assigned tasks within the working group's mandate. The working group may establish sub-groups from within its membership as required to review or address specific tasks or issues as they arise.

If a meeting is held without staff, it will be self-recorded in lieu of formal meeting notes. The subgroup will provide a summary report at the next meeting of the working group which must occur within one month following the subgroup meeting. The summary report will be accepted in the working group's notes at that time.

## 3.0 ROLES

The role of working groups is to develop and evaluate options on specific issues, and make recommendations for Council's consideration. The roles of individual members are as follows:

### 3.1 COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- are committed to the working group process and to be prepared to dedicate substantial time and effort to the success of their working group
- listen with an open mind
- think critically
- build consensus
- work towards realistic solutions to the challenges of the issue
- advance the work of the working group in an unbiased way
- represent the diverse views and interests of West Vancouver residents over their personal interests, in contributing their expertise, experience and effort to their working group

### 3.2 CHAIR

- works directly with the Staff Representative to prepare agendas / meeting materials in advance of upcoming meetings
- is responsible for the orderly conduct of working group meetings and for any orderly, relevant input from observers at the end of meetings
- may expel any individual who disrupts or impedes a working group meeting from the meeting

### 3.3 COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE

- acts as liaison between Council, the Community Engagement Committee and the working group
- facilitates periodic status reports of working group progress or concerns to the Community Engagement Committee
- conveys the framework of general community concerns and is an active participant in the working group process, applying professional judgment without exercising undue influence upon the process

### 3.4 STAFF REPRESENTATIVE

- brings subject matter expertise to the working group
- assists the working group with facilitation and project management
- supports the chair and working group members in fostering and facilitating effective group functioning
- obtains information, facilitating contact with District departments and arranges for professional advice as required
- schedules working group meetings, assists in preparing agendas
- collaborates with the Chair in preparing reports to Council

### 3.5 ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

- takes meeting notes and maintains the files and logs of working group activity
- arranges working group meetings and communicates with working group members
- post meeting agendas, meeting notes, reference material, progress reports and any other material the working group wishes to be publicly available on the District's website

### 3.6 MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

- are welcome as observers, sitting at the periphery of the working group
- working groups may receive delegations and presentations, subject to prior arrangement with the Chair
- the Chair will provide opportunity for members of the public to ask questions and offer points of information at the end of meetings. Observers will also exercise good faith and respect, mindful that they are in a working environment, where ideas and findings are in development and are works in progress. Working group meetings are not a forum for lobbying, speeches or demonstrations

## 4.0 PROCESS

### 4.1 ORIENTATION

The working group will begin with at least one orientation session, led by the Staff and Council Representatives and one or two members of the Community Engagement Committee. During orientation, members will:

- get acquainted and discuss the subsequent selection process of a chair from among citizen members
- review the working group guidelines and the working group's terms of reference
- prepare an initial work plan and schedule of meetings

### 4.2 PROGRESS REPORT

A working group will prepare an interim progress report to Council. It will review its terms of reference with the Community Engagement Committee (CEC) to identify modifications in tasks and completion dates that may be necessary prior to completing the assignment, and/or where it is deemed appropriate by the working group Chair and Council Representative, the working group and Council may participate in an open, public workshop in order for Council and the community to gain a more complete understanding of the topic and proposed recommendations of the working group.

### 4.3 FINAL REPORT

Upon completion of its assignment, the working group will submit a report of its findings and recommendations to Council. The Staff Representative and Chair will collaborate on the preparation of the report. Following review by the working group, the report will be submitted to Council. The report will include:

- An understanding and analysis of the issues under consideration
- An overview of the work completed and the process involved
- The alternatives considered, including minority views
- An implementation and monitoring plan
- Recommendations and options for action by Council
- Potential financial implications of recommendation and options

Working groups are advisory to Council, and any actions resulting from their findings and recommendations are at the discretion of Council.

#### 4.5 FEEDBACK, EVALUATION & DEVELOPMENT

It is anticipated that these guidelines for working groups will evolve over time, in light of experience and changing circumstances. To this end, the Community Engagement Committee will collaborate with working groups to:

- obtain feedback regularly, as work progresses
- having finished its work, working group members will be asked to complete a short feedback questionnaire regarding its process and will have the opportunity to participate in a follow up discussion with the Community Engagement Committee to make suggestions for improvement

#### 5.0 DECISION MAKING APPROACH/FORMULATING RECOMMENDATIONS

Working groups are expected to build toward consensus in formulating and evaluating alternatives, and in making recommendations. Unanimity is not required, nor is voting.

In conducting their work, working groups:

- carry out the tasks required by their terms of reference within the time frames agreed. Both may be amended by the Community Engagement Committee in light of findings as work proceeds
- devise solutions and evaluate alternatives for the issues under consideration
- outline options and make recommendations for Council consideration
- function at arm's length from Council, working with great independence under the auspices of, and facilitated by, the Community Engagement Committee
- have the accountability of each member for the effectiveness of the group as a whole
- maintain a positive atmosphere of good faith, integrity, and mutual respect to provide for a free flow of ideas and constructive discussion

Council's intent is that working groups should have the freedom and flexibility to carry out their work. Working group activities could include compiling information, evaluating alternatives, holding public meetings, conducting discussions and seeking expert advice.

As appropriate, the working group will consult with stakeholders and the community to gain input on the issue in question. The District will assist in the preparation of a supporting engagement plan.

The working group will rely upon the Community Engagement Committee (CEC) for support or advice on procedure and community engagement.

## 6.0 WORKING GROUP MEETING FRAMEWORK

Working group meetings are normally held monthly and are open to all.

- a majority of the voting members is required to constitute a quorum
- working group meetings are conducted in a spirit of good faith and respect in order to foster a free flow of ideas among members and unconstrained development of options
- working groups must not hold any closed sessions
- meetings must be held in a municipal facility
- meeting agendas will be posted on the District website and notice boards a minimum of 48 hours in advance of the meeting start time
- public and/or press may attend meetings as observers
- the public and press shall similarly exercise good faith and respect, mindful that the proceedings are a “work in progress,” and not a forum for lobbying or decisions
- the Chair will provide opportunity for members of the public to ask questions, generally at the end of meetings; there will be no lobbying or speeches
- working groups may receive delegations and presentations, and may call for public input from time-to-time
- electronic recording of a working group’s discussions, decisions or activities may occur with the working group’s permission and as governed by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
- should anyone disrupt or impede a meeting, the Chair may expel that person
- any member who is absent from three (3) consecutive meetings of the working group without reason satisfactory to the working group may be removed from the working group

The above framework does not apply to subgroups. See section 2.5 for subgroup meeting framework.

### 6.1 PARTICIPATING IN MEETINGS REMOTELY

If the Chair requires, up to two members may participate in a working group meeting by electronic means.

The Chair must not participate electronically.



## 7.0 RECORDS

Good communication is essential for motivating and facilitating community participation. Working groups will maintain records on the District's website so that residents can easily review proceedings. The records will include:

- the date, time, place and agenda of full working group meetings on the working group's dedicated web page and notice boards
- the date, time place and agenda of sub-group meetings do not need to be posted on the notice board, but should be posted to the District's website. A sub group does not need to take meeting notes, but must provide a report on their activities at the next full working group meeting
- meeting dates will also be posted on the District's Community Calendar
- concise notes summarizing the key points and results of working group meetings
- progress reports, background papers and other relevant material

Working groups will operate in an accountable business-like manner, with the Chair and Staff Representative collaborating to maintain concise records of activities, including:

- a work plan outlining the tasks to be done, together with timelines
- a schedule of meetings set at the first working group meeting
- agendas prepared in advance of each meeting
- notes of formal and informal meetings, including the key points discussed and any conclusions or recommendations
- progress reports and relevant working papers

Any other records will be also posted on the District's website in a timely manner, with due attention to confidentiality and privacy.

Email communications among members involving working group matters should be copied to the Chair and conclusions reported in subsequent meetings.

## 8.0 CODE OF CONDUCT

**DECORUM AND DEBATE:** Working group members must devote the necessary time and effort to prepare for meetings, arrive at meetings on time, provide feedback in keeping with the working group mandate, and be respectful of others' thoughts and opinions.

**AUTHORITY AND REPORTING:** The working group and its members will not represent themselves as having any authority beyond that delegated in the Terms of Reference (ToR) approved by the Community Engagement Committee.

**MEDIA / SOCIAL MEDIA:** Members of the working group are not permitted to speak to the media or post to any social media platform as representatives of the working group unless authorized to do so by the Director of Community Relations & Communications.

**REPRESENTATION:** Working group members must strive to convey the public interest and remember that they represent the District of West Vancouver; this means that they must be consistent with the District's position on specific issues.

**PROFESSIONALISM:** Working group members who engage in activities regarding the District of West Vancouver or working group initiatives / projects and promotions are expected to maintain a respectful, constructive, professional tone that maintains the brand consistency of the District of West Vancouver.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** All new working group members are required to sign a copy of the "Volunteer Services Confidentiality Agreement" as part as their general orientation.

**RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT:** all working group volunteers must reside in the District of West Vancouver. In the event that a working group member's primary place of residence changes to another municipality during the term of an appointment, the member must notify the Chair and Staff Liaison regarding change of address.

Depending on the length of appointment term remaining, the working group member may be asked to step down, thus creating a vacancy. Vacancies will be filled through advertisement placed in local newspapers, social media and on the website; applications received will be reviewed by the Community Engagement Committee

## 9.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Conflict of Interest: Section 11 (Conflict of Interest) of the General Council Committees Policy applies to all working group members.

A conflict of interest exists if a working group member is a director, member or employee of an organization seeking to benefit from the District or if the working group member has a direct or indirect pecuniary (financial) interest in the outcome of working group deliberations. Working group members who have a conflict of interest with a topic being discussed must declare that they have a conflict of interest, describe the nature of the conflict and leave the room prior to any discussions and must refrain from voting thereon.

Working group members are not permitted to directly or indirectly benefit from their participation on the working group during their tenure.

Where an actual or potential conflict of interest exists, the working group member shall explain its nature to the group and the Chair shall submit the matter to the CEC for consideration.

## 10.0 SUPPORT / PROFESSIONAL SERVICES UTILIZED

The Staff Representative will arrange for professional advice if required.

## 11.0 BUDGET

The working group shall have a reasonable use of miscellaneous services such as clerical services, photocopying, office supplies, meeting areas, appropriate refreshments, and other requirements such as the advertising of engagement events. These are provided primarily through the Staff Representative and the applicable District Division. Any funds beyond this, including the provision of professional consultants, must be approved through the budget request process.

## 12.0 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY ACT

The District of West Vancouver (the District) is subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (the Act), as are all local governments, and most provincial public bodies. The Act ensures that public bodies are more accountable and open to the public. This is accomplished through a balance of the public's right to Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy.

Electronic recording of working group's discussions, decisions or activities is expressly prohibited except by the working group's administrative support.

## 13.0 AUTHORITY

Working groups do not have the authority to communicate with other levels of government, pledge the credit of the District of West Vancouver or authorize any expenditure to be charged against the Municipality. Members will not misrepresent themselves as having any authority beyond that delegated by Council.

Working groups will conduct their business in accordance with their terms of reference, and as directed by Council. They will complete their tasks within the time prescribed, or by any extension that may be provided and report their findings and recommendations to Council.