



Board of Directors Terms of Reference 2017

CommunityWise Overview

Introduction

CommunityWise is a nonprofit centre which means that we provide affordable office and meeting spaces and other backbone infrastructure (shared internet, office equipment, mailboxes), as well as collaborative capacity-building and programming supports to nonprofit member organizations. We support around 90 small nonprofit and grassroots organizations whose work spans a diverse spectrum of social, environmental, and cultural issues. About 30 of the members are physically co-located within our space as Tenants and the other 60 are known as Associate Members who access common spaces or other resources for their initiatives and events.

CommunityWise is defined not only by the building as a physical centre, but by the organizations, the communities, and the individuals who occupy it. The centre is comprised of immigrant community associations, LGBTQ community resources, arts and culture groups, counseling supports, youth-serving agencies, advocacy groups, and more. Member organizations' incredible diversity is what gives CommunityWise its strength.

History

When the YWCA moved out of the building in the early 1970s, the City of Calgary took possession and began renting rooms to grassroots organizations and various community groups. In 1979 the City of Calgary decided the building was more trouble than it was worth and scheduled it for demolition. The groups renting offices formed a Tenants Association to rescue the building and negotiated with the City to let them continue using the space, in exchange for fundraising to maintain the building. The same agreement remains in effect today. The history of the centre is a story of collective achievement, of community resilience and of hope for the future.

Leadership

CommunityWise employs a small Staff Collective of four with a horizontal leadership structure to collectively manage building and organization operations, organizational development, member support, programming, student supervision, and more. Its Board of Directors is made up of representatives from both member organizations and the broader community.

Vision

To achieve equitable social change through collaborative work.

Mission

To be a community hub, providing inclusive and affordable space and community development programs to support and strengthen diverse grassroots and non-profit members.

Values

COMMUNITY: cultivating relationship, connection, engagement and collaboration.

DIVERSITY: representing and championing voices, practices and cultures, individual uniqueness and collective wisdom.

SUSTAINABILITY: enriching human and environmental interrelationships to ensure a prosperous future of our communities, the next generations and the Earth.

SOCIAL JUSTICE: fostering an equitable society where all life is respected.

ACCESSIBILITY: providing barriers-reduced space and resources.

HERITAGE: promoting learning from the past, honoring cultures and traditions, and conserving historic space.

Theory of Change

A Theory of Change (TOC) is a tool for developing solutions to complex social problems. It explains how immediate and intermediate accomplishments set the stage for long-term outcomes. The CommunityWise TOC defines eight long-term outcomes for the organization:

- 1) CWRC has a strong member community
- 2) CWRC is a place people want to be
- 3) CWRC is a safe and inclusive space that fosters a sense of belonging
- 4) CWRS's building operations are rooted in the practice of stewardship
- 5) CWRC and Member Organizations have adequate resources to support their missions
- 6) CWRC uses evaluation and measurement to learn, adapt and improve operations
- 7) CWRC has presence, influence, credibility, and accountability
- 8) CWRC's Member Organizations are better able to reach their goals

Equity Framework and the Anti-Racist Organizational Change (AROC) Project

CommunityWise's current strategic focus is the creation of an Equity Framework, centered on anti-racism, to inform CommunityWise's governance, policies, and culture. Since March 2016, CommunityWise has been undertaking an extensive community engagement process that centers the voices of those most impacted by organizational racism in Calgary's non-profit sector - racialized and Indigenous individuals. At the core of this process is an Advisory Group composed of people from these impacted communities who are consulting on key opportunities and strategies for change. A broader Working Group, made up of people from CommunityWise's staff, board, and membership, as well as participants from the wider Calgary non-profit sector, has spent 250 people hours identifying priorities for AROC, designing changes in policy, and developing sharable resources

CommunityWise Board of Directors

The role of the CommunityWise Board of Directors is to represent the needs, interests and vision of the communities and organizations involved in the space, as well as to contribute to the governance of CommunityWise as a whole. The Board is accountable to the Theory of Change and Strategic Plan created and updated by the Board and Staff Collective in an ongoing process each year. As well, the Board is ultimately legally responsible for the organization.

Board Terms

A new term begins at the Annual General Meeting in May each year when some Board Members leave and new members join. This ensures continuity in knowledge and new perspectives for succession. When a person joins the board they commit to serving a three-year term. Under certain circumstances, people may

join the Board in the middle of a term. If a Board Member is unable to complete the three-year term for any reason they may resign at any time. Board Members may serve two consecutive three-year terms.

Decision making

The Board and Staff Collective use Consensus Process to foster leadership and participation in decision-making. The Board has an Executive Committee made up of three or four board members who share the facilitation role at meetings. Each year the board receives training in consensus decision making and facilitation skills.

Meetings

The CommunityWise Board meets once every other month on the same day of the month for a total of six meetings per year, in addition to one full-day Board Orientation in June and two full-day Board Retreats (one in Fall and one in Winter). Board Members are expected to attend each of these meetings, including the Annual General Meeting held in the third week of May.

Meetings are open to staff, practicum students, member and community representatives. The schedule for time and day of regular meetings are set by the Board collectively at the first regular meeting of the Board following the AGM.

Participation

Beyond attending regular Board meetings, CommunityWise Board members are invited to participate in one or more committees according to their skills and interests, and/or to contribute to the organization by volunteering their time at major community events such as a Community Forum, Open House, the Winter Party and the AGM.

New ideas for ways Board members can participate and contribute to the organization are welcome! CommunityWise understands that Board members may have busy lives and circumstances that prevent extra participation and there is no obligation to contribute this way.

Committees (subject to change)

Committees are open to anyone who is interested (members, community, public) and for all committees except Finance Committee, attendance is fluid and open so participants can drop in whenever they are able.

Committees that involve one or more board representative(s) are empowered to make consensus based decisions without full board approval. Any decisions made by committees are included in the committee report to the Board, reviewed in the “updates” section of each Board Meeting.

Programming Committee – the purpose of the Programming Committee is to build community and promote skill sharing by providing relevant programs, workshops and events for CommunityWise members and the general public. Anyone is welcome to participate in this committee, not limited to Board Members. The committee meets bi-monthly.

Finance Committee – the purpose of the Finance Committee is to review and approve the CommunityWise financial statements and to make recommendations to the Board about other financial decisions. The committee meets every other month, prior to the Board meeting, or more frequently as needed. Board Executive Committee members who are also signing authorities on bank accounts are required to participate in these meetings on a rotating basis.

Membership Committee – the purpose of the Membership Committee is to review and approve new member applications and to ensure CommunityWise members are represented in organizational decisions. The committee is open to any member and requires at least one Board Member. Most of the decisions are made through email and the committee meets infrequently as needed.

Human Resources Committee – the purpose of the Human Resources Committee is to support members of the Staff Collective in annual and ongoing staff evaluation processes and in hiring new temporary and permanent positions as needed.

Governance Committee – the purpose of the Governance Committee is to draft and update bylaws and policy to be approved by the Board according to the mission, vision, values, Theory of Change and Equity Framework of CommunityWise, to best serve all community members and general community. The committee is comprised of Board Members and Staff Collective Members and may occasionally have input from lawyers, community members, people with knowledge in the field and/or professional consultants. This committee meets as needed.

Anti-Racist Organizational Change (AROC) Advisory Group: an Advisory Group of those who identify as racialized or Indigenous (First Nations, Metis or Inuit) exists as a space to discuss racism in Calgary’s non-profit sector and directly inform the AROC project.

Anti-Racist Organizational Change (AROC) Working Group: involves representation from CommunityWise Staff Collective, Board, Member organizations, and the broader community to collaboratively develop a process for anti-racist organizational change at CommunityWise.

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Board of Directors Application Process

Application Deadline

The deadline for submitting an application to join the CommunityWise Board of Directors is *one month prior* to the Annual General Meeting held on the 3rd Thursday of May (applications are also accepted year round in the event that positions on the board become available).

Board Eligibility

Representatives of CommunityWise Tenant Member organizations and Associate Member organizations, as well as representatives of wider community are eligible to serve on the CommunityWise Board. As per CommunityWise’s bylaws, the Board of Directors shall consist of an even division between Tenant Members, Associate Members and Community representatives (up to a maximum of 15 Board Members). In cases where this is not possible priority will be given to Tenant Members.

The Board aims to represent the diversity of organizations, communities and individuals who share space at CommunityWise. CommunityWise values equity and recognizes barriers to joining a board, such as time commitment, child care, scheduling, language barriers and intimidating application processes. If you are interested in joining the board, we will do our best to work with you to overcome barriers.

Board Members must be willing to work within anti-racist and anti-oppressive frameworks and actively engage in ongoing learning about these frameworks alongside members of the Staff Collective and Board.

Application Procedure

Prospective Board Members are asked to provide written responses to the following questions, in addition to submitting a short written biography:

- 1) What is your interest in joining the board?**
- 2) What are your perspectives, skills, experience that you will bring to the Board?**
- 3) What group(s), organization(s) or community(ies) do you represent, participate in, or identify with?**
- 4) Anti-Racist Organizational Change is a current strategic focus of CommunityWise. What do you hope to contribute to this work? What do you hope to learn?**

Email to info@communitywise.net or deliver to CommunityWise admin office (room #101)

A member of the CommunityWise Staff Collective will follow-up.