

Community Action Network Terms of Engagement

Background

On June 10, 2001, City Council unanimously adopted recommendations from the Mayor's Task Force on Community Involvement and Volunteerism, including a recommendation to initiate Community Action Networks.

Community Action Networks bring people together to build a Healthy Community. Healthy Communities are strong and vibrant. They emerge from the collaborative efforts of citizens who care about where they live and want to make their neighbourhoods the best they can possibly be. Community Action Networks provide resources to make this happen.

Working in partnership with the Roundtable on Health, Economy and the Environment, the City of Greater Sudbury introduced Community Action Networks to help in the planning, budgeting and implementation of community initiatives.

Community Action Networks have also been identified as a valuable means of encouraging civic engagement within the Healthy Community Strategy and the Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development documentation.

Benefits of Community Action Networks

- They enhance the overall quality of life in Greater Sudbury in social, environmental, and economic sectors.
- They enable citizens to participate, appreciate, and fully understand the services offered by community organizations and groups.
- They help to identify community needs and establish co-operative working relationships.
- They promote democracy and inclusiveness by giving participants (Community, Council, City Staff) a unique vehicle to work in harmony towards common goals.
- They provide a mechanism for planning at the Ward level by identifying the different projects with which individual Community Action Networks will be involved.
- They provide a "win-win" experience for everyone involved.

What Community Action Networks are Not

- Ratepayers associations
- Groups focusing on a single issue or mandate
- Political entities
- Policy creators

The Need for Terms of Engagement

Since 2004, fourteen Community Action Networks have been created in the City of Greater Sudbury with the support of Council and staff from the Community Development Department. Each CAN is unique to the area that it represents. The manner in which CANs operate varies significantly from one CAN to the next.

The Constellation City Report (January 2007) called for the development of a Terms of Reference to better define the role of CANs and to detail their responsibilities to the communities they represent. The report noted that in developing a Terms of Reference for CANs, that *"the city risks losing the grassroots nature that has made the CANs a success to this point."*

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The revised Terms of Engagement are intended to accomplish the following:

- Reflect and embrace the grassroots nature of CANs and the unique communities that each represents.
- Provide a fluid framework that is more representative of how CANs develop and change over time.
- Set minimum eligibility criteria for a group to be considered a CAN.
- Allow individual CANs to decide how they will operate and how they are structured.
- Detail the expectations for CANs and their responsibilities to the community which they represent and to the City as a whole.
- Ensure that relationships between CANs, Council and city staff are mutually respectful.
- Outline the administrative and financial support for CANs from the City.
- Ensure that ultimate responsibility and decision making rests with the elected Council.

CAN Minimum Eligibility Requirements

- Community driven and lead
- Association must be non-profit in nature
- Open and transparent to the public
- Strive to represent the broad interests of the community or neighbourhood represented
- Encourage active participation from all residents
- Reflects the cultural diversity of the community or neighbourhood
- To actively take part in educational learning and training opportunities provided by CGS

How will Eligibility Be Measured?

- Each CAN will conduct a Visioning Session including assessing the communities strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This information will guide future direction and prioritize the work of each CAN
- Meetings will be advertised and open to the public
- The staff liaison will be informed of CAN activities
- Chair and any executive positions appointed/elected will be community members
- The CAN will seek community input and participation for projects and initiatives
- Each CAN will engage the various service clubs and associations within their respective community
- CAN will be represented at all educational learning and training opportunities

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Terms of Engagement for Community Action Networks

Using the City of Greater Sudbury's Public Participation Policy, the Terms of Engagement defines how Council and City staff will Inform, Consult, Involve and Collaborate with CANs.

Inform

- Provide a staff liaison who will regularly attend meetings and is the primary point of contact for the CAN
- Identify a directory of key contacts from all departments within the CGS
- Provide information about City programs, policy change and opportunities
- Respond to inquiries from CANs
- CANs assist to disseminate information to the local community
- CANs work with the CGS to increase compliance with regulations or participation in existing CGS programs
- Provide a forum for CANs to exchange information and best practices with one another (concept of a 'CAN summit')
- Provide educational learning opportunities to ensure that CANs are sustainable

Considerations:

This type of engagement is basic information sharing. It is important that all information provided is timely, clearly defined and easily understood as well appropriately targeted to CANs.

Consult

- Encourage feedback when considering policy change or developing new ways of doing business requiring community input
- Survey attitude of local communities through CANs
- Attendance at CAN meetings to discuss issues or projects relevant to the CAN

Considerations:

This type of engagement involves seeking community views regarding specific issues. The feedback is usually of a one-time nature.

Involve

- Work directly with CANs to understand concerns at the community level
- Cooperatively develop alternatives which will address the identified community needs
- Ensure CAN input is reflected in any alternatives chosen
- Communicate with CANs on how public input impacted final decisions

Considerations:

This type of engagement is more of a process than consultation and requires that all relevant groups and individuals within a community are involved. The CAN requires a high level of organization for involvement to be effective, which details how decisions are made and the roles of all involved.

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Collaborate

- Develop partnerships with CANs to deliver outcome based projects and programs
- Encourage partnerships with other community groups to nurture civic pride and engagement at the local level
- CAN is working in each of the four pillars of the Healthy Community Strategy (Active Living/Healthy Lifestyle, Civic Engagement/Social Capital, Natural Environment, Economic Growth)
- CANs reflect the cultural diversity of the community or neighbourhood they represent

Considerations:

To have successful collaboration, CANs must be truly representative of their communities. They should have representation from youth, seniors and the private sector. There should also be representatives from the majority of service clubs and associations from the community.

Administrative Support

Those CANs meeting the minimum eligibility requirements will receive the following administrative support from the City of Greater Sudbury:

- Meeting space
- Office space (as available)
- Mysudbury.ca website space and training
- Promotional space in Leisure Guide (general CAN info)
- Liability coverage for approved CAN activities

Funding Recommendations

In addition to the administrative support previously outlined, it is recommended that a request to Council be made to support each CAN in the amount of \$2500 per year. The funds are intended to cover costs associated with promotion of activities, photocopying, mailings, developing websites (other than mysudbury.ca sites), and other day-to-day expenses. CANs looking for financial support for outcome based projects have the option of requesting funds from their Council representative, working with community sponsors and submitting grant applications where eligible.

Currently, the City of Greater Sudbury supports Neighbourhood Associations in the amount of approximately \$1200 per year. The rationale for requesting \$2500 for each CAN for support is that the work of Community Action Networks is wider in scope than that of Neighbourhood Associations. Similar to the process already used for Neighbourhood Associations, each CAN will be required to submit an application for funds outlining past accomplishments, groups and associations the CAN is working with and planned projects in line with minimum requirements.

If approved, funding will come from the budget allocated for implementation of Community Solution Team report recommendations.

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Ensuring CANs are Sustainable

To help all CANs to become high functioning groups and ensuring that they sustain this level, it is proposed that a series of educational and training opportunities be organized and funded. CANs are expected to take part in these opportunities as part of their eligibility to be recognized as a CAN.

Topics to be addressed could include:

- Volunteer recruitment
- Facilitating group discussions and effective meetings
- Conflict resolution/Consensus building
- Engaging youth/seniors/private sector
- Strategic planning
- Special event organization
- Developing project proposals

Reporting back to Council

CANs have been providing updates to Council during Priorities Meetings scheduled in their respective communities. Should Priorities meetings continue to be held in various communities, it is recommended that each CAN be requested to present to Council during this cycle. Using the current schedule of Priorities meetings, this works out to a presentation by each CAN every two years. As with all community groups, CANs may request to speak before Council at other meetings if desired.

HOW THE CITY OF GREATER SUDBURY ENGAGES CANs (A VISUAL REPRESENTATION)

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Overview	To provide information to increase community's understanding of issues and decisions	To seek community level input regarding plans, policy and procedures	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the process and decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution
Staff/City Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to inquiries from CANs about policies and procedures • Provide information through brochures, media releases, public meetings, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey CANs regarding potential policy changes • Attend initial meetings with CANs to discuss plans and alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage CANs at the onset when considering changes to policies, procedures, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with CANs at all stages to realize outcome based projects (trails, parks, etc.)
CAN Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate information received to local community • Work with CGS to increase compliance with regulations • Work with CGS to increase participation in City programs (Clean Sweep, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide feedback which represents the broad community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead and mobilize community groups and members • Using visioning & Strengths-Weakness-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis to identify community priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve and engage existing local community associations • Explore external funding opportunities where feasible
CAN Stages of Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few active members • Informal operating structure • Narrow focus • Undeveloped ties with local associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loose structure (Co-Chairs) • One or two active projects • Some key community organizations involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some working committees • Working in multiple Healthy Community pillars but not all • Well organized with regular meetings and executive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth, senior and business representation • Community associations well represented • Functioning sub-committees and executive • Four Healthy Community pillars represented
CDC Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help navigate/guide • Provide information • Keep other departments/Council informed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animator • Keep other departments/Council informed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable • Facilitate • Keep other departments/Council informed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project support • Resources • Keep other departments/Council informed
Council Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To listen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To solicit feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To involve in decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use CAN as a community sounding board
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff leading process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key community champions identified and working with staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer of leadership to community • Executive in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truly community lead • CAN Executive developing new leaders