

Revised Terms of Engagement for Community Action Networks

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval on the revised Terms of Engagement for the Community Action Networks (CANs). At the Finance and Administration Committee meeting of December 2015, Council directed staff to “work together with a team comprised of members of City Council, existing Community Action Networks and City staff to review and amend the Terms of Engagement for Community Action Networks and report back to Council with recommendations in February of 2016.” This report provides revised Terms of Engagement for approval (attached as separate documents to this report), as well as a summary of how the work was accomplished, key changes in the Terms of Engagement, and key opportunities in the relationship between the City and the CANs moving forward.

Background

CANs evolved from the Mayor’s Task Force on Volunteerism and Community Involvement in 2001 shortly after the amalgamation of area municipalities into the City of Greater Sudbury. CANs were seen as a method for citizens, Councillors and staff to work together as part of a collaborative approach to engagement and community building. As noted in the Finance and Administration Committee report of December 2015, “The concept was supported by the Healthy Community process which employed four key strategies: broad community participation, multisectoral involvement, local government commitment and the creation of healthy public policy.” The first CAN was established in Onaping Falls in 2003.

The importance of CANs was further reinforced in the 2007 Constellation City Report, “Building a Community of Communities in Greater Sudbury.” The initial Terms of Engagement for the CANs were a result of the recommendations made in the Constellation City report.

Until 2017, the City’s relationship with the CANs was managed primarily through the Community Development Department; however, a new organizational structure created an additional emphasis on community engagement with the establishment of a Communications and Community Engagement Division. The CANs are key partners in the City’s community engagement strategies and as such, since May 2017, responsibility for the CANs lies with the Communications and Community Engagement Division.

There are currently 15 active CANs in the City of Greater Sudbury. The CANs' primary point of contact with the City is the Community Engagement Coordinator who serves as a liaison to other City departments; however, CANs create and maintain relationships and partnerships with nearly all areas of the organization.

The Terms of Engagement for CANs brought forward to Council in 2007 were developed in consultation with members of CANs, members of City Council and City staff. As CANs continued to evolve, it became evident that a review and revision to the Terms of Engagement were required to ensure that CANs remained sustainable and successful, and to enable them to encourage broad participation and representation from the communities they serve.

Analysis – the New Terms of Engagement

The Terms of Engagement are aligned with other adopted frameworks

In 2008, the City adopted the International Association for Public Participation's Public Participation Framework. This is an international standard to promote public participation in relation to individuals, government, institutions, and other entities that affect the public interest. The framework outlines five pillars of engagement: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower

In 2014, the City conducted a community engagement review. The survey done as part of this project indicated that 89 percent of respondents wanted to be engaged in municipal affairs, but 70 percent did not feel engaged. The CANs are vital to their communities as they provide opportunities for individuals to become involved at a grassroots level and to work on projects and events which have direct impact on the neighbourhoods and communities where they live. CANs are also vital to the City's engagement efforts, as they have the ability to bring together groups of people to obtain information on and discuss topics of interest.

In 2015, City Council adopted a model of Open Government based on the principles of Open Information, Open Data, Open Dialogue and Open Doors. The themes of Open Government are:

- Open Dialogue: Working with and communicating to the public and involving citizens in decision-making.
- Open Information: Opening up and proactively releasing government information.
- Open Data: Making data a publically available tool or asset.

- Open Doors: Implementing measures or plans for accountability and oversight of government actions.

Open Government aims to strengthen governance by promoting greater transparency, accountability and citizen engagement. This means that the City will engage in two-way conversations and open dialogues that engage citizens in public debate and decision making on the development and delivery of municipal programs, services and policies. The unique structure of CANs make them ideally suited to help achieve this.

The new Terms of Engagement for the CANs incorporate the Public Participation Framework as well as the principles of Open Government, and are aligned with previous decisions, directions, and principles of City Council. The new Terms of Engagement clearly detail the expectations of all partners in fulfilling the vision of City Council.

A rigorous, inclusive, and consultative process was used to establish the new Terms of Engagement

Following the initial direction from Council in December 2015, a Terms of Engagement Review Committee was established. The Committee included five members of Council and seven members of Community Action Networks and met a number of times over 2016. At the meetings, participants discussed the framework for the terms of engagement, as well as challenges and opportunities.

With the change in corporate structure in 2017, staff from the Communications and Community Engagement met with the Executive or Chair of the CANs. The purpose of these meetings was to get a better understanding of each CAN, their priorities and working relationship with CGS. In addition, the meetings provided an opportunity for staff to discuss the Terms of Engagement and what was, and was not, working.

At the same time, staff reviewed best practice from a community engagement perspective. While other examples of neighbourhood associations, volunteer groups and other grassroots organizations exist in municipalities across Canada, the CANs are unique in their relationship to the City and the framework in which they operate. As such, staff have maintained Terms of Engagement that are unique to the CANs.

The new Terms of Engagement address opportunities identified by the City and CANs

A number of concerns and opportunities were identified as part of the discussions held during the review process. The following section outlines the key changes in the new

Terms of Engagement. These changes reflect as much as possible the feedback that has been received through the various consultations that have taken place as part of this review process.

1. Discussions with the CAN Chairs and comments provided by the Terms of Engagement Review Committee showed that there was a need to more clearly define the operation of CANs, different roles and responsibilities, and the unique relationship that CANs maintain with the City, in order to ensure their success and maximize their effectiveness in the community. Staff also heard that CANs wanted more simplified Terms of Engagement, and at the same time, were looking for more clarity on how they should function (such as details on eligible operating costs and liability/insurance coverage for CAN activities). In response to this feedback, the proposed Terms of Engagement are now divided into two parts:
 - Terms of engagement – an overarching charter to guide CANs, defining a broad view of CANs, their role and function, and the role of CGS, staff and Council. All administrative guidelines and supporting documents for the CANs and the City are separated into appendices to this charter, including financial and reporting requirements for the grant provided to the CANs.
 - Standard operating procedures – the framework in which CANs operate and intended primarily as a resource for CAN Chairs and CAN Executive members.
2. The City provides an annual grant of \$2,500 to each CAN to be used for administrative and promotional purposes. Based on feedback received from the CANs as well as City staff, a number of key changes are proposed in the administration of the grant as part of the new Terms of Engagement.
 - The terms of engagement review process identified a need for clarity around allowable expenses. The large majority of CANs expressed the desire to be able to spend some of the grant money on CAN projects like purchasing gravel for walking trails, or plants for community gardens. Under the new terms of engagement, staff are therefore proposing that CANs be permitted to spend up to 25 percent of the annual grant on such CAN projects.
 - Under the previous terms of engagement, there were no provisions around the ability for CANs to carry over grant money from one year to the next. CAN Chairs indicated that they wanted the flexibility of being able to carry over grant money for a specific purpose or project (ie, new website, significant project or campaign). As such, under the new terms of engagement, staff are recommending that CANs be permitted to carry over a maximum of 25 percent of the grant provided by the City for use in the next

year with prior CGS approval. Any grant money not spent beyond that amount would be deducted from the next year's grant.

- Under the new terms of engagement, CANs are not permitted to donate grant money received from the City to other groups or initiatives.
 - Annual reports are required from each CAN that receives a grant from the City. This requirement has been maintained in response to the value for money audit that was conducted at Council's direction in 2016. The new CAN terms of engagement provide a simple template for CANs to use. Submission of the annual report is required by January 30. This is in line with the City's end of year reporting requirements and is intended to streamline the reporting process for all parties.
3. There was a desire to review the roles and responsibilities of the City and of CANs as part of the new terms of engagement.
- The new terms more clearly outline the roles of the City, City staff, CANs, and Councillors.
 - There is a strong partnership between the City and CANs, and as such, the document reiterates the support of the City in several key areas:
 - Maintaining a single point of contact to ensure that there is an ongoing mechanism to communicate with, assist, and support CANs. Wherever possible, City staff will attend every second CAN meeting in addition to any special CAN meetings such as visioning or strategy sessions.
 - Maintaining the comprehensive liability coverage for all registered and approved CAN events, organizers and volunteers.
 - Maintaining the \$2,500 yearly operating grant, contingent on Council approval.
 - Maintaining and implementing new supportive programs and activities as determined in partnership with the CANs, including forums for networking and exchanging information like CAN summits; operational guidance; and other resources and initiatives that strengthen the CANs.
 - The document also clarifies what the City expects from CANs in order to be eligible for the \$2,500 grant:
 - Open, transparent, and accountable operating practices; and

- Inclusive community-building activities that expand the City's engagement reach and meet the City's and the CANs' goals of community participation and engagement.

The Terms reflect the potential for a stronger partnership between the City and CANs

Through the discussions that were held in developing the new Terms of Engagement, it was recognized that there was a need to highlight the potential for an even stronger partnership between the City and the CANs. More specifically, through collaborative processes, the City and the CANs can and should develop additional support mechanisms that are identified through mutual discussions, including enhancing communications and community engagement strategies and facilitating partnerships between individual CANs and between CANs and the broader community.

Beyond the Terms of Engagement

Beyond the new Terms of Engagement, opportunities exist for the City and the CANs to work with and learn from one another in different ways than in the past to achieve our respective objectives. Specifically:

- There are opportunities for the City to engage more broadly with the CANs and, through the CANs, with the community. Similarly, there are opportunities to more consistently support the work that the CANs do to create healthy and vibrant communities.
- Based on the discussions held to date, there is work that can begin immediately to assist in expanding the reach of the CANs. A communication and marketing plan will be developed and implemented in 2018 to promote what a CAN is, how residents can get involved, and the unique opportunities in volunteering with a CAN.
- There are opportunities to collaborate on training and mentoring to build capacity, enhance networks, expand skill sets, and engage more broadly, all of which will support the creation of resilient communities. This will align with mandatory requirements expected to take effect in the next few years for training for volunteer groups.
- The City will bring together CAN Chairs in the new year to collaborate on plans for 2018 and beyond.

Next Steps

Upon approval of the new Terms, staff will meet with the CANs to share the final documents. They will also be posted to the City's website as publicly available files.

Resources Cited

<http://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=agenda&action=navigator&id=847&itemid=10559&lang=en>

<http://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=agenda&action=navigator&id=1167&itemid=12444&lang=en>

<http://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=feed&action=file&attachment=13229.pdf>

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