

GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

1. Introduction and Background

The Toronto HIV/AIDS Network (THN) includes AIDS Service Organizations, HIV-related programs, people living with HIV/AIDS, community members, and broader organizations that have an impact upon the lives of people living with and at risk of HIV/AIDS. The organization emerged out of a planning process in 2007-2008 (Toronto Community Planning Initiative) and was guided by an initial report, priority recommendations and accountability structures. Since its inception, THN's activities have been guided by the initial [TCPI Report](#), and have been instrumental in supporting many community planning projects, ongoing working groups, and information-sharing processes and projects. In 2015/2016, the THN completed a new [strategic plan](#) to guide the organizations work through 2020.

2. Mission Statement

The Toronto HIV/AIDS Network (THN) facilitates HIV/AIDS planning, collaboration, engagement and innovation to improve access to programs and services for people from diverse communities living with and most affected by HIV/AIDS.

3. Strategic Goals & Objectives

Ontario HIV/AIDS Strategy Goals supported by THN:

Goal 1: Improve the health and well-being of populations most affected by HIV.

Goal 4: Improve the health, longevity, and quality of life for people living with HIV

Goal 5: Ensure the quality, consistency, and effectiveness of all provincially funded HIV programs and services

THN Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives (2016-2020)

By end of March 2020:

- Goal #1: THN will have taken a more strategic leadership role in facilitating member organizations/ programs to collaborate and share information for more consistent and effective programs and services;

Objective #1: THN will identify and implement one project at a time that our membership identifies as its priority to improve the engagement, health, longevity and quality of life of priority populations living with and most affected by HIV/AIDS.

Objective #2: THN will improve inter-agency and cross-sectoral engagement through activities that simplify the exchange and dissemination of relevant information.

- Goal #2: THN will have improved its organizational capacity to address and prioritize needs, to manage workload and to create meaningful engagement opportunities for people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs).

Objective #1: THN will develop and implement a framework for assessing and prioritizing current and new projects and initiatives.

Objective #2: THN will increase PHA engagement and will have met annual targets for PHA volunteer and mentorship opportunities in the office, in coordination activities, in deputations; and for PHA participation on the Steering Committee and in working groups.

4. Guiding Values

- Greater Involvement and Meaningful Engagement of People Living With and Affected by HIV/AIDS (GIPA/MEPA principles)
- Driven by documented and expressed needs
- Inclusion
- Harm reduction
- Respect and integrity
- A social justice and anti-oppression approach
- Integration of services
- Accountability

5. Vision: key features of a future HIV/AIDS system

The following were identified as desired features of a future system, set out as goals toward which we will strive:

- Situated within the prevention, engagement and care cascade
- Client-directed services
- Needs driven
- Comprehensive and responsive
- Accessible
- Culturally competent and grounded in an anti-racist, anti-oppression framework
- Coordinated and collaborative
- A focus on ongoing system quality improvement
- Efficient and effective

6. Recommended Priorities

THN engages in regular strategic planning processes informed by the AIDS and Hepatitis C Programs, MOHLTC, to identify and set priorities and implementation activities. In addition, THN monitors and responds appropriately to emerging needs and opportunities within the sector.

7. Membership

THN is organization based and is open to new Member participation. The member organizations (Members) determine who from their organization participates.

Invitations to new Members may be initiated by individual organizations, through existing Working Group, Steering Committee (SC) or Member agency recommendations. Invitations will be linked to priorities and issues - to assist with gaps and implementation of current recommendations and new priorities established in future planning discussions and to increase diverse perspectives and lived experiences. New member organizations and programs will be relevant to the needs of people living with and most affected by HIV/AIDS and will support the Mission and Values of THN. If any disputes arise regarding membership, SC will bring to the Members

The Members' list will be updated annually by e-mail in conjunction with the spring Members' meeting. The e-mail invitation to the meeting will also reiterate the purpose of THN, its Mission and Values and organizations will be asked to explicitly

confirm organizational Membership and review/update their organizational contact(s) and participation in any Working Groups or THN activities.

Working Groups may include organizational participants AND individuals who are not delegated by member organizations, at the discretion of the Working Groups' Co-Chairs and THN staff. There may also be a role for time limited 'guest' participants to bring expertise on specific tasks.

Consensus is the preferred method of decision-making. Votes will not often be needed. Voting will be used for election of Steering Committee members - one vote per organization.

- 8. GIPA/MEPA principle** - Greater Involvement and Meaningful Engagement of People Living With and Affected by HIV/AIDS (GIPA/MEPA)
Develop/use mechanisms to engage PHA involvement and input into the work of the Steering Committee and Working Groups.

9. Steering Committee

a. Steering Committee Composition:

The SC will be supported by the THN Director who reports to two co-chairs, one of whom will be from PWA who acts as the Trustee for the organization.

THN will strive for the following composition on its Steering Committee

A minimum of:

- People living with HIV/AIDS (one-third)
- from ethno-cultural agencies/programs
- from Aboriginal agency (one-third from ethno-cultural and Aboriginal)
- from AIDS focused agencies (simple majority)
- from broader, health and social services, may have Local Health Integration Network (regional health planner and funder) experience

Two (2) Community members – *appointed by the SC*

And consideration of:

- Vulnerable populations and emerging groups affected by HIV/AIDS
- Gender
- Continuum of Services (includes from HIV prevention and health promotion to palliative care)
- Working Groups cross-representation

b. Size of the Steering Committee:

Minimum of nine (9) and maximum of eleven (11).

c. Steering Committee Members' Terms:

SC members' terms are three years and are staggered

d. Steering Committee Terms of Reference (attached)

e. Community members on the Steering Committee:

The Steering Committee will have two Community members who are to be recruited and appointed by the Steering Committee.

Criteria:

- Consistent with THN commitment to GIPA/MEPA principles, the Community member representatives will be people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Has knowledge of HIV community and services; is currently or has in the past accessed services.
- Brings an independent voice - not on staff at an ASO or HIV specific program; open to volunteers.
- Preference for demonstrated development in leadership, for example, Ontario AIDS Network (OAN) PHA Leadership Development Training or other PHA capacity-building program, and/or committee experience.
- Criteria in common with other SC members such as taking on the role and responsibilities in the Terms of Reference and supporting THN Mission and Values.

Recruitment process:

The Steering Committee will use a variety of strategies to reach potential candidates including: posting sent to Member organizations/programs and Working Groups, posting at Member organizations, on Member web-sites, and newsletters accessed by clients and volunteers.

Selection: Governance sub-committee – made up of members of SC, may involve additional THN members - will review applications, meet with candidates, review references and make recommendations to the Steering Committee.

f. Steering Committee – Annual election of organizational members

Steering Committee Role

- Steering Committee responsibility to ensure an inclusive, open, engaging process that encourages people to come forward for available seats.
- SC will not put forward a recommended slate.
- SC role is to help ensure candidates are available in keeping with the composition that THN agrees it strives for. May include active encouragement.

Process:

- SC members, who are not running for election, to identify priorities and gaps in desired SC composition. Includes creating a chart that shows perspectives and skills that continuing SC members bring and compares with the desired composition that THN strives for.
- Open call to Member organizations – with composition THN strives for and above information.
- THN is organization based. Nominees must have support of the nominee's member organization and be empowered to vote.
- Candidates are asked to provide information on how they help fulfill the desired composition in their short bio and/or at the Members' Meeting.

- Some of the SC members will volunteer to make themselves available to talk to any candidate about the role and expectations as an SC member.

Election at Members' Meeting

- Nominations can also be made from the floor at Members' Meeting.
- Members may vote by motion and holding up ballots.
- Member(s) may request secret vote by ballots. Volunteers from organizations without a candidate will assist to count the ballots.
- Member(s) may direct the destruction of the ballots.

g. Steering Committee Vacancies (not including Community members)

Vacancies may occur between SC elections when a SC member resigns from the SC or is no longer a part of a Member organization. When a vacancy occurs the Steering Committee may do one of the following:

- 1) Approach the Member organization to discuss if a replacement with similar commitment is feasible to complete the term.
- 2) Recruit a replacement from one of the Member organizations.
- 3) Leave a vacancy until the next Steering Committee election, depending upon how close the vacancy is to the next SC election at a Members' Meeting.

Guiding consideration in both 1) and 2) will be the Composition of the Steering Committee (9.a.).

10. Relationship between the Working Groups and Steering Committee

Working Groups report to the Steering Committee. Each Working Group will have a Terms of Reference to be clear on mandate and a workplan and will make decisions within that framework. New directions and priorities will involve consultation with the Steering Committee.

Terms of Reference will include:

- develop workplan (review annually or when activities are changing, to adjust as needed)
- provide reports (twice a year)
- how are you achieving the recommendations
- progress on workplan, challenges
- identify emerging issues and priorities
- coordinate any funding proposals with the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will:

- approve Terms of Reference, budget, and workplan (using the Plan and its Priorities/Recommendations as a flexible framework)
- receive reports
- look for synergy between Working Groups
- provide a mechanism for fast consultation with SC as needed

Working Groups representation:

- Seek cross-representation between Working Groups and Steering Committee.
- Working Group member on the Steering Committee does not have to be a Working Group Co-Chair (do not place an automatic double commitment on Working Group Co-Chairs)
- If a Working Group does not have a member on the Steering Committee, then a Steering Committee member may join the Working Group
- THN staff will assist in providing links between Working Groups and with the SC

Similar principles of composition for Working Groups:

- Working Groups are encouraged to discuss adaptation of similar principles of composition as the Steering Committee.

11. Other:

THN support for funding proposals:

Criteria for Co-Chairs to respond to requests for support letters.

Process:

1. The THN Director and Co-Chairs are delegated to review requests for support letters and make a decision if no conflict of interest exists, if the requested letter has a clear link to the THN mission shares THN values, and addresses THN priorities.
2. Transparency – The THN Director will inform SC of requests and share letters of support through regular updates.
3. Where there is a conflict of interest (real, potential or perceived), or concerns, including about funder requirements or about lack of connection to THN, its mission, values and priorities, the full SC will discuss and determine if THN is able to provide a support letter.

Letters on Advocacy Issues will follow a similar process.

Changes to the Governance Framework: General updates to ensure current and accurate information may be completed by the THN Director and approved by the Steering Committee. Changes to structure and accountability may be recommended by the SC to the Membership for approval.