

Quality of Life CHALLENGE Inclusion Policy and Procedures



©
**Quality of Life
CHALLENGE**

Quality of Life CHALLENGE Goal Statement

Create ways for people who are experiencing the priority issues first hand and who are living on low incomes to participate in and influence Quality of Life CHALLENGE decision-making and activities.

Quality of Life CHALLENGE Working Principle

Inclusion: including those who are experiencing the issues first hand.

The purpose behind the Inclusion Policy and Procedures is to facilitate equal participation of people who have experience living on low, limited or fixed income in the Quality of Life CHALLENGE and to value their input and contributions.

1. Self identification of low income status

Asking people to prove their low income status in order to qualify for services can result in people not accessing supports intended to help them.

- Income status is based on self-identification, and this information will be kept confidential by the staff and/or the appropriate Chair of working groups.
- It will be left to each individual if they wish to discuss their experience or income status with other members of working groups or the public.

2. Respecting individual differences

Services and supports vary based on each individual's needs.

- Where possible, the CHALLENGE will provide services which allow for an individual's unique needs.



Quality of Life CHALLENGE is diverse community partners working together to generate long-lasting solutions that prevent and reduce poverty in BC's Capital Region.

2-3948 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC V8X 1J6
Tel: 250-383-6166 Fax: 250-479-9411
Email: info@qolchallenge.ca
Website: www.qolchallenge.ca

3. Responsibility to ensure inclusion

Sharing the responsibility to ensure inclusion between staff and Chairs of working groups helps to build a relationship between the Chair and any members living on low or limited income, and build awareness of the importance of inclusion. All working group members share the responsibility to create an inclusive space across sectors, income levels, gender, ethnicity and other diverse backgrounds.

3.1 Reimbursement procedure

- At each working group meeting, transportation and child care costs are covered for people living on low or limited income.
- The cost of these reimbursements is included in the organization budget. Staff are responsible for preparing the reimbursements.
- Chairs of the working groups are asked to be responsible for physically handing these reimbursements to members.

3.2 A.U. (Acronym Use)

- Working group members are asked to use full names of organizations rather than acronyms in meeting discussions as this helps working group members who may not be familiar with different community organizations to stay in the loop.

3.3 Raising awareness about the Inclusion Policy

- Chairs are asked to include a brief reminder about the Inclusion Policy on working group agendas every three months.
- The Chair may wish to speak to working group members who self identify as living on low or limited income ahead of time to see if they wish to speak to the importance of the policy.

3.4 Working Group Member Orientation

- As each new member joins a working group, staff (who usually conduct the orientation) will provide a copy of the Inclusion Policy to all new members, regardless of assumptions on their income level.
- Staff are responsible for providing an orientation package to all new working group members with background information on the CHALLENGE and any information specific to the working group.
- As all new members join working groups, another member of the working group will be asked by staff to volunteer as their “buddy.” Buddies will be responsible for sitting beside new members through the first few meetings to help answer questions.

4. Food at CHALLENGE meetings

Eating meals together helps to build community. Food gives people a common point to talk about, so where the participants are feeling a bit nervous or out of their element, food can be a focal point. A small, nutritious snack can go a long way in creating an inclusive space. Food security is a major problem for many people living on low or limited incomes. For many people there are days, especially near the end of the month, where there isn't enough money for three meals in a day. It is hard to fully participate in a meeting when you haven't had enough to eat. To ensure equal participation, the CHALLENGE will try to provide snacks or reimbursement for food costs at meetings, depending on timing and budget.

Even if the meeting is not being held over a meal hour, participants living on low income may not have eaten enough that day to fully participate. Snacks are often provided at meetings, but tend towards sweet carbohydrate treats, rather than nutritious snacks. These types of snacks are often given out as day olds at food banks, donated by local grocery stores and bakeries. When people living on low or limited incomes are relying on food banks as the mainstay of their diets, these snacks at meetings do not help them to get the energy they need to participate in the meeting. As well, these snacks are often not edible by diabetics.

4.1 Snacks provided

- For CHALLENGE meetings not scheduled over a meal hour, i.e. mid morning or afternoon, healthy snacks will be provided for all members. This will contribute to members eating together, and building community while sharing food.
- Hosts of CHALLENGE meetings will be encouraged to provide healthy alternatives (i.e. fruit, vegetables) along with sweet treat snacks. Suggested possibilities include carrots, tomatoes, apples, bananas. When inviting participants to events staff will ask new members about special dietary needs.

4.2 Cash reimbursement

- For meetings scheduled over a meal hour i.e. early morning (7-9am), noon (11:30-1pm), or dinner meetings (5-6:30pm), and a meal or healthy snacks are NOT provided an honorarium of \$10 will be offered.
- Participants in the meetings living on low incomes will be made aware in advance that the honorarium will be available at the meeting, or if needed, can be provided ahead of time so participants can purchase a meal to bring to the table.

5. Transportation

Getting to and from meetings involves a substantial cost. As transit fares and gas prices rise, many people living on low incomes may find that they are unable to participate in a meeting simply because they are unable to afford to get there.

5.1 Parking

- Meetings should, whenever possible, be located where parking is free, nearby (within one block) and guaranteed for the length of time of the meeting, or with a scheduled break in the meeting to move vehicles.
- If parking has a cost to it, participants living on low or limited incomes will have their parking costs reimbursed, and should know ahead of time that the money will be given to them at the meeting.

5.2 Public Transit

- Transportation will be reimbursed at \$6.
- Participants should know in advance that the money will be given to them at the meeting, or if necessary can be mailed to them ahead of time. If the only option is for the person to pick up reimbursement at the office, an addition \$5 be given to cover their transportation cost.
- All posters and formal invitations to events will include a note offering assistance with transportation costs as well as indicating what bus route goes to an event.

5.3 Mileage

- For all participants living on low or limited income who drive to CHALLENGE events and meetings, mileage will be reimbursed at \$6 (linked to the cost of bus fare).

6. Child care

For many parents, the lack of affordable reliable childcare continues to be a barrier to full participation in society.

- Childcare will be reimbursed at \$10 an hour for the length of the meeting and travel time.
- All posters and formal invitations to events will include a note offering assistance with childcare costs.
- During RSVPs, staff will offer childcare and transportation to everyone (including the Mayor) to help raise the profile of the Inclusion Policy. This will also ensure that staff can prepare reimbursements in advance.

7. Honoraria

Many people engaged in the CHALLENGE are supported by their employers to attend and participate on paid time. For those who are volunteering and living on low income honoraria are offered to support participation.

- For completion of tasks an honorarium, or where necessary a non-refundable cash equivalent, may be provided recognizing participants' time. Completion of tasks may include attendance at events where people living on low income are being specifically asked to speak or contribute. For example, an honoraria would not be offered for attendance at a party (i.e. the Community Roundtable BBQ) but would be offered at a community dialogue when it is important that all sectors be represented in the discussions (i.e. the 2004 Celebration and Dialogue)
- Staff will be explicit when inviting Community Action Team members, the CAT facilitator, or people on low or limited income to events or asking them to complete tasks as to whether or not it has an honorarium attached. For example, at the 2004 Celebration and Dialogue, where at least one person living on limited or low incomes was needed to participate in each of the 10 small group discussions, staff would offer 10 people living on low income an honoraria to attend. Should other people living on low income attend (if it is an open invitation event) transportation and child care would be covered but no honoraria would be provided for them.
- Honoraria will be \$25 for a half-day commitment of time or less, and \$50 for a full-day commitment.
- As the Community Action Team grows and staff and Chairs is considering who to offer particular tasks to, they should consider both sharing leadership and who is best suited to the task.
- Where appropriate leadership development opportunities arise i.e. facilitation of meetings, these should be offered to the whole Community Action Team at the same time and the first person to come forward will be chosen.

8. Meeting times

Scheduling of working group meetings during traditional work hours can make participation difficult for many people. Many of the CHALLENGE working group members would equally be unable to attend meetings in the evenings outside of work hours.

- Chairs and working groups can consider alternating meeting times, confirming the suitability of meeting times with members, and regularly considering who isn't represented at the table and if the time of meeting may be impacting that.
- When scheduling meetings where parking time is limited (ie. 1 to 2 hours) book meetings for 2.5 hours and have a regulated 15 minute break where everyone – at the same time – can move their vehicles. This allows for equal participation and less disruption.
- If scheduling a meeting from 4 to 6 pm – consider 4:15 to 6:15 allowing participants who are parking in 2 hours zones to arrive a little early and know they will not receive a parking ticket.
- To increase the participation of waged poor people, the CHALLENGE may want to ask businesses with low wage employees to take up the CHALLENGE by paying for their staff to attend CHALLENGE meetings during the work day to broaden the diversity of those participating in the decision making.

9. Working group member lists

Individuals and organizations contribute invaluablely to the work of the CHALLENGE. When listing volunteers, it can be intimidating for people who are not linked with organizations to be surrounded by names, titles and organizational credentials.

- Working group member names will be listed as individuals, with a separate line identifying organizations which are represented at the table.
- It often falls to Chairs of working groups to introduce members of working groups, and so Chairs will discuss with each person on the working group how they wish to be introduced.

10. Communications

People who have experience living on low income provide valuable input in reviewing communications tools for content and tone.

- As part of the editing process, all major communications will be edited by a person living on low or limited income. An honorarium will be provided for this work.

11. Membership Fees

For many living on low and limited incomes, membership fees are a deterrent to participating or volunteering with organizations.

- Membership fees will be reduced or waived for those living on low and limited incomes. For example The Community Social Planning Council's membership fee structure is \$50 for business or organizations, \$25 for an individual and \$3 for a person living on low or limited incomes.

April 2007