

**Elgin St. Thomas Coalition to End Poverty  
Steering Committee**

**Terms of Reference**

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**1.0 Background**

The **Elgin St. Thomas Coalition to End Poverty** formed as a result of conversations within Bridges out of Poverty St. Thomas Elgin. Bridges Out of Poverty St. Thomas Elgin is a group of committed community leaders and volunteers whose mission is to eliminate poverty by uniting the strengths and passions of those living in St. Thomas & Elgin County. Since 2010, this group had been passionate about reducing poverty in St. Thomas & Elgin County through the tools set out in Bridges Out of Poverty. In 2015, Bridges out of Poverty St. Thomas Elgin appointed a small working group to further investigate interest in a comprehensive poverty coalition to tackle the root causes of poverty and commit towards eliminating poverty entirely.

In October 2016, planning tables of community leaders across St. Thomas Elgin were invited to come together to talk further about what could be done. Subsequently, a group of about 25 agencies and community citizens met two additional times, December 2016 and January 2017 to establish and inform a Steering Committee. The local YWCA and Public Health Unit agreed to provide backbone services and the Steering Committee met for the first time officially on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

**2.0 Purpose of the Steering Committee**

1. Establish and monitor the effectiveness of Coalition governance structure and procedures.
2. Establish and, at least annually, review, in January of every calendar year the strategic direction of the Coalition.
3. Annually determine, approve, manage and review quarterly the annual Coalition budget and SC work plan.
4. Anticipate opportunities and challenges, with a specific emphasis on securing resources to address Coalition sustainability.
5. Embrace a coordination role for the Coalition by approving the annual work plans for each Coalition sub-group.
6. Provide leadership to the Coalition meetings by developing the Agenda and Chairing the meetings.
7. Regularly review the proceedings of the Coalition in order to support its coordination and to monitor progress towards work plan goals and objectives.
8. Regularly identify and plan for opportunities to address system transformation by advocating for needed change at all three levels of government in Elgin St. Thomas.
9. Produce and circulate documents on an as-needed basis to support the work of the Coalition.
10. Be the official voice of the Coalition, in conjunction with other Coalition members, as needed.

**3.0 Membership of the Steering Committee**

It was determined that a group of representatives, most of whom had provided leadership to the development of the Coalition, would form the initial SC. Other members would be recruited in a fluid and organic manner as needed for the work at hand. The initial SC members are representatives from:

- Bridges Out of Poverty
- City of St. Thomas
- Community-at-Large Champion
- Destination Church
- Elgin County
- Elgin St. Thomas Public Health

- Family and Children’s Services of St. Thomas & Elgin
- Ontario Works
- West Elgin Community Health Centre
- YWCA St. Thomas Elgin

#### **4.0 Roles & Responsibilities of the Steering Committee**

Two representatives will become Co-Chairs, each with the support of their organization to provide this as a contribution-in-kind as backbone support to the Coalition. They will determine how to divvy up the leadership tasks. For the first term of office beginning in 2017, the responsibilities would be assigned as per below, and would include alternating chairing and recording of the Steering Committee meetings.

##### **4.1 Co Chair 1 (YWCA – Lindsay Rice)**

- Backbone Support: financial management
- Liaison for System Transformation lens to all Coalition work
- “Point of contact” on behalf of the Coalition (phone number, email, mailing address)
- Develop the SC and Coalition Agendas, in conjunction with the other Co-Chair

##### **4.2 Co Chair 2 (Elgin St. Thomas Public Health – Laryssa Thompson)**

- Backbone Support: Steering Committee information management (i.e., Agendas, Minutes, correspondence,)
- Liaison to the Affordable Transportation area
- Develop the SC and Coalition Agendas, in conjunction with the other Co-Chair
- Lead on the connection to the relevant research and work of other communities through participation, in part, with Vibrant Communities

##### **4.3 Responsibilities of Overall Steering Committee**

In addition to the items listed under Section 2.0 regarding the Purpose of the SC:

- Each SC member will be the liaison to one of the Coalition sub-groups. For the initial term of office, there were determined to be:
  - Research and Knowledge – Derrick Drouillard (with quarterly updates from Erica Arnett at Public Health regarding the Data aspects from the Community Leaders Cabinet)
  - Public Awareness/Communication – Cathy Grondin
    - Speakers Bureau – Jennifer Wissink
  - Community Engagement – Jennifer Wissink
  - Food Security – Barry Fellingner
  - Financial Empowerment – Heather Sheridan
  - Safe & Affordable Housing – Beth Fellingner
- Prepare for and attend Steering Committee meetings and provide advance notice to a Co-Chair if unable to attend
- Identify, recruit, appoint, select, elect sub- group representatives as necessary
- Lead or support the process to secure Coalition funds (e.g., grant writing, “Making the Case” to potential sponsors)
- Participate in the development and implementation of an accountability framework for the Coalition’s strategic plan
- Actively support the work of the Coalition in the community
- Identify the training and development needs for the Coalition and support addressing these

## **5.0 Terms of Office**

**5.1** Coalition Co-Chairs will serve a three-year term that can be renewed.

**5.2** All other SC members will serve two-year terms that can be renewed. For the first term beginning in 2017, half the SC members will have two year terms and the other half will have three year terms so not everyone is replaced at once.

## **6.0 Accountability**

The Steering Committee is accountable to the Coalition and will bring forward recommendations to them.

## **7.0 Funding**

The fiscal year for the Coalition will run from January 1 through December 31.

Each Steering Committee member is required to pay an annual membership fee in accordance with the approved fee scale. For 2017, each will be asked to contribute \$250.00 annually for organizations and \$10 for individuals.

As outlined in the purpose statements in Section 2.0, the SC will anticipate opportunities and challenges, with a specific emphasis on securing resources to address Coalition sustainability.

## **8.0 Meetings**

The SC will meet monthly or at the call of one of the Co-Chairs as needed.

Members may join by teleconference or in person.

The SC members will also attend the full Coalition meetings, which will likely occur quarterly.

The location of SC meetings will be based on available and convenient spaces.

## **9.0 Decision Making**

The SC will use the consensus process as the primary decision-making process for all issues or choices presented. If a time-sensitive decision is required between SC meetings, input will be solicited by electronic or telephone means.

Consensus decision-making does not mean total agreement. It does, however, require individual members to examine two factors: (1) Is the decision part of the solution? (2) Can I live with the decision? If the answer to either of these questions is no, then the member should withhold consensus.

The final approval of work plans including priority setting and decision-making related to the work of the Coalition lies with the Steering Committee in order that coordinated approaches are in place. However, the sub-groups are responsible for determining their own priorities, with input from the community and their members.

In developing the overall strategic direction and annual workplans, the SC will provide opportunities for the relevant sectors of the community to have input into and provide feedback on the direction.

## **10.0 Conflict of Interest Guidelines**

Steering Committee members have a duty to avoid being in conflict between the Committee and/or Coalition's interests and their agencies' or personal interests. Whenever a Committee member has a pecuniary interest in the same subject

matter as the Committee, a conflict of interest arises. Conflict of interest must be disclosed to the Committee when it first becomes known.

#### **11.0 Confidentiality**

Members of the Steering Committee will abide by confidentiality protocols in the event that information of a personal and private nature (related to staff or Coalition initiatives) is disclosed.

#### **12.0 Review:**

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually in January.