



Guidelines for Cooperation Canada Working Groups

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What are Cooperation Canada Working Groups?

Cooperation Canada Working Groups are inclusive communities of practice where Cooperation Canada members work together, connect to share learnings, best practices, and maximize their collective influence, drawing on member diversity to attain joint objectives. **Working Groups are Cooperation Canada member-led and driven;** members set joint agendas, organize, and resource activities with support from Cooperation Canada.

Cooperation Canada provides backend resources to facilitate the work of working groups notably by hosting all working groups on the Cooperation Canada Members' Portal and promoting these on its website in-line with our commitment to inclusion and transparency. **Members can access the Members' Portal to engage in discussions, share information and organize meetings.**

Structure

Working groups

Working groups must be transparent, inclusive and accessible with clear information available about the group, its leaders and opportunities to engage for all Cooperation Canada members made available on Cooperation Canada's online members' portal.

- All working groups should identify their primary activities and at least one joint group objective.
- The Terms of Reference, key objectives, and chair's /co-chairs' name(s) must be available on the group's page on the Portal.
- A description of all working groups will also be maintained on the Cooperation Canada website.

Cooperation Canada Working groups are required to:

- Be committed to work on issues relevant to Cooperation Canada's mission and to its membership
- S/elect at least one chair to lead the group and/or a steering committee
- Hold meetings (face to face, phone or online) at least twice a year
- Develop Terms of Reference for the group
- Develop a simple work plan on an annual basis – to be shared with Cooperation Canada in order to facilitate planning and support by the Cooperation Canada team
- Report back to Cooperation Canada on the group activities and objectives on an annual basis
- Follow the [Cooperation Canada Code of Ethics](#)

We recommend groups generate a solid body of evidence before engaging in advocacy activities. Working groups are committed to informing Cooperation Canada of any material or formal communications which will use the Cooperation Canada name and logo.

Subgroups

Groups may wish to establish subgroups to work on specific areas or processes linked to their main activity and area of work. Subgroups must be accountable to the parent group and feed back to the main group on activities and outcomes.

Subgroups may wish to formalize their structure by selecting a chair and steering committee. Subgroups will also be provided a space on Cooperation Canada's online members' portal.

Establishing and closing groups

New groups should have a clear purpose and a unique focus which cannot be addressed by an existing group.

All Cooperation Canada members can suggest new working groups; however, Cooperation Canada must be informed of members' intention to establish any new working group. In exceptional circumstances, Cooperation Canada may refuse to allow the formation of a new working group.

To maximize their relevance, Cooperation Canada recommends that new groups aim for the broadest possible area of work (i.e. avoid areas that may be too specific and only of interest to a few Cooperation Canada members). Cooperation Canada requires that at least **three (3) member** organizations be interested in actively contributing to a group's activities to set up a new group. Members should express interest in forming a new group by submitting an email to Cooperation Canada, indicating the objective of the proposed group, and copying at least three (3) member organizations who have agreed to participate in the group.

The starting expectation is for the life-cycle of a Cooperation Canada group to be one year, after which the group will evaluate whether the group is still relevant or if the main activity of the group needs to shift.

Groups can exist for as long as their members wish them to exist. However, Cooperation Canada reserves the right to terminate groups that are identified as inactive over a period of more than six months. This will happen only after consultation.

Membership

Cooperation Canada groups are primarily for Cooperation Canada members. However, there is the option of inviting non-Cooperation Canada members (e.g. academics, independent consultants and business) if the need to access external expertise, or include key external stakeholders is expressed by group members. The objective of bringing in expertise and perspectives from

outside is to foster innovation and cross-sector partnerships. Non-members will be added to the online member portal by Cooperation Canada staff upon request of group (co)chairs.

Working groups may be:

- *Open*: any Cooperation Canada member can join.
- *Moderated*: new members need to be approved by the group chairs
- *Closed*: group chairs reserve the right to invite members based on their expertise

Membership requirements to join a group should be clearly explained on the Group online page. Because Cooperation Canada is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion, this is particularly important for moderated and invitation-only groups, which need to demonstrate clearly what criteria and rationale is used to select/reject participants.

Cooperation Canada role and support

Cooperation Canada maintains overall oversight of all groups and is committed to ensure a relevant, lively and engaged set of communities. The Cooperation Canada Community Engagement Coordinator is the first point of contact for groups in the Cooperation Canada Team.

Depending on capacity and budget Cooperation Canada can provide advice and support on:

- *Administration*, including supporting chair election process
- *Policy and advocacy*: Cooperation Canada is keen to work with groups to maximize the impact of their advocacy activity, ensuring that Cooperation Canada and its groups' advocacy is co-ordinated. If a group wants to work on advocacy, they should contact Cooperation Canada for advice from the policy team.
- *Members area (Portal)*: The online community platform on which groups can start discussions and share events. All group communication **must** be posted on this space to facilitate the communication between groups and with Cooperation Canada.
- *Promotion and networking*: Cooperation Canada can promote the work of groups through its public communication platforms and connecting to other groups
- *Blogs / news stories*: Cooperation Canada groups are invited to suggest ideas for blogs for the Cooperation Canada website. Cooperation Canada can provide some editorial support.
- *Events*: Cooperation Canada has capacity in-house to support event organization, should groups wish to organize events open to the public. Please contact Cooperation Canada well in advance to check availability.
- *Reports*: Cooperation Canada can support groups in producing reports, including design and publishing. Please contact Cooperation Canada as soon as possible to discuss ideas and suggestions.
- *Financial Services*: on a case by case basis, Cooperation Canada may provide financial services (banking, accounting, etc.) for WGs who wish to fundraise for a specific project. Examples where this might be appropriate could include a dedicated research project funded by voluntary contributions of WG members, or the funds for holding an event).

Governance

Chairs/co-chairs

Group chairs lead the direction of the group in consultation with its members. They are the lead people and the point of contact between the group, Cooperation Canada and key stakeholders. Depending on the group, the chair role may involve a personal commitment equivalent to take around 1 to 2 days per month.

Chair requirement:

- Someone who works for a Cooperation Canada member organization
- Someone who has substantial experience and expertise around the issue(s)

Chair(s) responsibilities

Communications

- Maintain regular communication with group members and ensure the space on the Cooperation Canada Member portal is up to date.
- Coordinate communications outputs such as official letters, submissions, reports, etc., with Cooperation Canada

Governance

- Oversee the life cycle of the group and ensure group activities are carried out
- Supervise the formal structures which the group has chosen to put in place
- Ensure that any subgroups are accountable to the main group, and share common principles and objectives.

Planning

- Organize and minute group meetings at least twice a year; and, if applicable, organize meetings with the steering committee.
- Plan and organize meetings with other key audiences as appropriate in collaboration with Cooperation Canada
- Produce annual work plan in consultation with the wider group and steering committee

Reporting

- Monitor and report progress to the wider group and to Cooperation Canada on a yearly basis.

S/election of chairs and co-chairs:

Group chairs and co-chairs must be s/elected on an annual basis and can be identified by:

- Selection, if the number of candidates equals number of chair roles.
- Election, if there are more candidates than chair roles. A representative from Cooperation Canada can facilitate the election process if required.

There is no maximum term.

ANNEX 1 : Template Working Group ToRs

Canadian Council for International Co-operation (Cooperation Canada)

Working Group [INSERT NAME]

Terms of Reference (ToRs)

Date reviewed: _____

Background

Cooperation Canada groups are communities of practice where Cooperation Canada members come together to connect with each other, share learning and maximise influence to jointly deliver their objectives. Groups are led by Cooperation Canada members: they are responsible for driving the group's agenda and organize their activities with some level of support from Cooperation Canada. All Cooperation Canada groups are hosted on an online space on the Cooperation Canada website, where members can share information, start discussions and organize meeting and events. All Cooperation Canada members can join any Cooperation Canada group, both online and in person.

These Terms of Reference (ToRs) serve to identify the objectives, operating terms, and membership criteria for the _____ Working Group.

Objectives for the Working Group

The _____ Working Group seeks to discuss, share best practice and advance the interests of the international development and humanitarian sector in the areas of _____

In particular the Working Group aims to:

-
-
-
-

Working Group Membership

The Working group is open to the staff persons of all members of Cooperation Canada.

OR, in unique cases:

The Working Group is moderated / closed¹. The following criteria are agreed by all group members to form the basis of membership requirements:

¹ See COOPERATION CANADA Working Group Guidelines for definition of "moderated" or "closed" groups

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Operating Terms for the Working Group:

In line with the “Cooperation Canada Working Group Guidelines”, the Working Group is committed to the following operating terms.

- Once a year, s/elect at least one chair to lead the group and a steering committee.
 - Name(s) of Chair or Co-Chairs: _____
 - Names(s) of Steering Committee members:

- Hold meetings (face to face, phone or online) at least 3 times a year
- Use the Cooperation Canada Members’ Portal to save group documents and ensure centralized access
- Produce at least one output (e.g. policy submissions, papers, events, blogs etc.)
- Complete an annual review of the Terms of Reference for the group
- Complete an annual work plan;
- Report back to Cooperation Canada on the group activities and objectives on an annual basis.

ANNEX 2 : Template Working Group Annual Plan

Cooperation Canada will work with the first Working Groups transitioning to create an Annual Plan.

This will serve as a template for Working Groups joining after to use when creating their Annual Plans.

Key considerations:

- Major planned activities for the year
- Responsible persons
- Signaling where Cooperation Canada team may be needed (ex. event, research, writing)
 - Confirmation Cooperation Canada has been consulted and confirmed
- Progress tracking

Cooperation Canada Working Group Annual Plan				
Name:				
Year:				
Activity	Responsible	Resources/Support of Cooperation Canada	Consulted Cooperation Canada	Status

ANNEX 3 : Questions and Answer

- ***Can we provide input on these guidelines?*** – yes Cooperation Canada members can provide feedback on these guidelines at any time. In Spring 2020, Cooperation Canada consulted on a first draft of the guidelines and invited feedback. Note it is expected that the guidelines will always exist as a ‘living document’, subject to modification as required by experiential learning and circumstances.
- ***Can non-Cooperation Canada members participate in Working Groups? Does this present a ‘free-loader’ issue where participation of non-members is ‘subsidized’ by paying members?*** – Cooperation Canada members in good standing have access to any working group they wish (some exceptions may exist). There is the option of inviting non-Cooperation Canada members (e.g. academics, independent consultants and business) if Working Group members identify the need to access external expertise or include key external stakeholders. The objective of bringing in expertise and perspectives from outside is to foster innovation and cross-sector partnerships. Non-members will be added to the online member portal by Cooperation Canada staff upon request of group (co)chairs. Working Group participation of non-Cooperation Canada members will need to be reconfirmed on an annual basis.
- ***Could working groups limit participation of Cooperation Canada members if this is deemed appropriate?*** – Fairness principles dictate that the point of departure should be one of openness for all Cooperation Canada members to participate in all working groups. However, some contexts may indeed justify an invitation-only model (ex. sensitive topics). If clear and objective parameters are provided and justified to Cooperation Canada, these will be considered. The Working Group guidelines presently allow for this possibility and further assessment will inevitably be required on a case-by-case basis. The reasons why an invitation-only group has been formed will need to be clearly explained in the online portal description of the group. The Cooperation Canada Board may be called upon to review decisions to create an invitation-only group and may choose to intervene if they feel it is required.
- ***Can working groups undertake policy and advocacy initiatives?*** – Yes, absolutely. The Working Group model leaves such initiative to the discretion of working groups. As in all things, balance and context will be required when Cooperation Canada considers supporting policy positions of individual working groups. Some cases may present real challenges in this regard, however. When policy positions are being taken, groups need to consult and update Cooperation Canada. While working groups can develop and discuss their own positions, they also represent Cooperation Canada, which means that policy and Government Relations initiatives must be coordinated. Any formal position taking (ex. letter

to a Minister) shared in the name of a Cooperation Canada Working Group must be reviewed and approved by Cooperation Canada.

- ***What if Cooperation Canada and Working Group members disagree on a policy tactic or position?*** It is possible that Cooperation Canada and the membership of a Working Group disagree on appropriate policy engagement steps, or messages. Any formal position taking (ex. letter to a Minister) shared in the name of a Cooperation Canada Working Group must be reviewed and approved by Cooperation Canada. However, individual member organizations are always free to act independently of Cooperation Canada and its formal Working Group structure.
- ***What support does the Cooperation Canada Community Engagement Coordinator provide?*** – This role provides support for the setting up of Working Groups and is the main point of contact between Cooperation Canada and the Working Groups.
- ***Will this completely change how the current Working Groups operate?*** This transition will allow for the working group members to take the lead in the discussions, convening and objectives of the working group. Before any group gets started, the Working Group will have to provide a signed and completed Terms of Reference form and basic Annual plan back to Cooperation Canada for approval.
- ***What is the timeline for launching the member portal and signing up to access it?*** Cooperation Canada is launching the beta testing of the portal September 17th 2020 by onboarding one working group. This group is an active participant in helping Cooperation Canada perfect the online experience. All pre-existing Cooperation Canada working groups will be have joined the member portal by January 1st 2021, at which point new groups will be invited to join Cooperation Canada.
- ***Will groups be provided with a video communication system to facilitate hosting meetings?*** Yes, Zoom will be integrated into the portal and groups will be able to convene on their own time and schedule.
- ***Will groups be provided with budgets to allow them to host events and activities?*** It is Cooperation Canada's longer term objective to provide a funding envelope to support the work of the Working Groups which could cover expenses related to report writing/publishing, translation and events. Such a provision is expressed in the WG Guidelines, however we do not yet have such funds available and will need to make do with offering WGs access to resources and events that are part of Cooperation Canada's ongoing operations.
- ***Will Cooperation Canada still provide support in connecting groups to Global Affairs Canada?*** Yes, Cooperation Canada will continue to work with the working groups in providing a connection with Global Affairs Canada where this is appropriate and called for.

Cooperation Canada has created a position of “Policy Analyst and GAC Liaison” that will be available to engage and support WGs in this area. Cooperation Canada may choose to channel WG engagements with GAC through some of its regular annual convenings (ex. conferences).

- ***Will there be opportunities for groups that are currently external to Cooperation Canada to become Cooperation Canada working groups?*** Yes. Cooperation Canada will have to ensure there are no groups currently formed on the same theme and will gladly discuss the potential for integrating work done through other networks into the online members platform and Cooperation Canada Working Group model.