

**Ontario Council for International Cooperation
Public Engagement Policy
Approved by the Board of Directors – April 2013**

1. Preamble

The Ontario Council for International Cooperation (OCIC) is a community of Ontario-based international cooperation and global education organizations and individual associates working globally for social justice. The OCIC vision, mission, mandate, development principles and strategic directions guide all activities of the Council. Mindfulness of the spirit and letter of these core directives is central to the integrity of OCIC, as is compliance with the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) Code of Ethics.

The OCIC Public Engagement Policy is a living document, reviewed and revised by the Programs Committee on a periodic basis. All changes must be approved by the Board of Directors.

2. Definitions

Within this policy, “public engagement” is defined as “the practice of inspiring, supporting and challenging people and groups in dynamic cycles of learning, reflection and action on global issues. Public engagement is a transformative process which works toward more equitable social, economic, environmental and political structures.”¹

3. Purpose

OCIC’s Public Engagement Policy is meant:

- to guide and strengthen understanding of the role of public engagement to the Council;
- to encourage consistent good practice in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting of public engagement efforts undertaken by the Council;
- to inform overarching financial and human resource decisions related to public engagement;
- to mitigate risk related to the public engagement efforts of the Council; and
- to encourage transparency and accountability for OCIC’s public engagement efforts to its stakeholders, including but not limited to its Board of Directors, employees, interns, volunteers, independent consultants, members, partners, funders, and the Canadian public.

4. Statement of Philosophy and Core Beliefs

OCIC understands that effectively engaging Canadians in the fight against global poverty, structural violence, environmental degradation and a range of other international issues is of fundamental importance in the search for sustainable solutions to the challenges faced by humanity.²

OCIC supports the use of “global citizenship” as an umbrella concept for the range of public engagement activities being carried out by civil society organizations (CSOs). Global citizenship suggests the

¹ MCIC KH Draft Revised Working Definition (2013)

² As noted in the Inter-Council Network (ICN) Public Engagement Position Paper (2010)

development of citizens who have the knowledge and capabilities to be actively involved in the world. Foundational knowledge of global citizenship includes understanding:

- that we share a common humanity with all others;
- that diversity is essential for life;
- that citizens have rights and responsibilities;
- that there are local and global implications of such citizenship;
- that we have agency and therefore power to make positive change; and
- the importance of multiple perspectives, and the ability to reflect critically on a diverse range of views and information.

Good public engagement is a key contributor to democratic citizenship and to the wider social justice commitments that millions of Canadians continue to enact in communities across the country. Through our collective efforts CSOs aspire to build an engaged public that understands that another world is possible, and that works towards achieving this. Global citizenship remains a powerful path toward democratic, inclusive citizenship by people committed to justice for the poor and marginalized throughout the world.³

Within OCIC public engagement programs, projects and activities, we believe in working to amplify the voices of the most marginalized, and in utilizing inclusive, cooperative and participatory processes that are accessible and accountable to all. We also believe that organizations, institutions, governments and others in leadership roles must make room for youth, in particular, to participate, not only as fundraisers for or beneficiaries of public engagement initiatives, but as global citizens with a stake in building sustainable societies.

5. Core Standards of Good Practice

The diversity of our population, ethnically, socially, culturally, religiously and linguistically across our varied geographies, necessitates multiple approaches to engage Canadians effectively. Public engagement efforts need to take these factors into account to ensure a broad spectrum of Canadians are engaged in the fight to reduce global poverty. Irrespective of the approach taken, all public engagement activities should:

- Raise awareness of global issues and offer models toward social justice;
- Enable change by helping individuals and groups understand that their choices and actions can have a positive impact on our world; and
- Encourage action by providing individuals or groups with the tools and resources they need to become active global citizens.

While the approaches to public engagement are multiple, the specific efforts of the Council should meet the following standards of good practice:

- *Clear and Measurable Purpose:* Clarity of purpose, target audience(s) and indicators for understanding impact, including those related to the gender dimensions of public engagement, should be established early in planning processes
- *Relevance:* Public engagement efforts should be pertinent and of interest to target participants. This is particularly important when reaching out to new and non-traditional audiences.

³ As noted in the Inter-Council Network (ICN) Public Engagement Position Paper (2010)

- *Diverse Participation and Partnership*: Canadians from a variety of sectors and locations (such as youth, the education sector, Diaspora groups, the women’s movement, the media and the private sector) should be considered as possible participants and partners.
- *Community Building*: Good public engagement is participatory and community-driven, and helps to build a sense of community
- *Collaborative Ownership through Participatory Planning*: Key stakeholders, including youth and other populations commonly under-represented in decision making processes, should be involved in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public engagement activities whenever possible.
- *Evaluative and Reflective*: Measures of impact and change, and mechanisms to reflect should be incorporated into public engagement activity design from the outset, so that success is gauged, lessons learned documented, and necessary adaptations incorporated into future activities.
- *Knowledge & Understanding that Promotes Critical Thinking*: Good PE increases knowledge and understanding of global issues, and encourages critical thinking.
- *Innovative, Creative and Universal Design*: The use of non-traditional means of engagement (such as new media, simulations, art, and popular education), and accessibility of methodologies, materials, physical space and venues should be considered and appropriate efforts taken to engage populations previously excluded from public engagement efforts.
- *Multiple Approaches*: Given the diversity of experience, education, levels of engagement and learning styles of possible participants, multiple approaches to public engagement should be considered.
- *Accuracy*: Messaging within public engagement efforts should be accurate and should not reinforce harmful stereotypes or mask the complexity of issues.
- *Motivation & Inspiration that Empowers Informed Action*: Good public engagement builds from individuals’ experience and provides clear messages, tools and steps to implement positive change.
- *Sustainable Behavioural Changes*: Good public engagement catalyzes changes in the behaviour and long-term lifestyle actions of individuals.
- *Policy Change*. Good public engagement that incorporates a political element translates into sound public policy that advances systemic change.
- *Sustained and Long-Term*: Public engagement activities are built over time, and learning is gleaned through experience and evaluation. Better results can be achieved through a strategy for engaging Canadians that is developed with multi-year timeframes.

6. Linkages to Other Policies

The OCIC Public Engagement Policy is one of several organizational policies that guide governance and operations of the Council and links most closely with the OCIC Anti-Oppression, Inclusion, Finance and Financial Controls, and Personnel Policies.⁴

7. Authority & Procedures

- The Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for the public engagement efforts of the Council.
- The Executive Director is responsible for the overall management of the public engagement efforts of the Council.
- Employees, interns, volunteers and independent consultants are responsible for managing and/or coordinating specific public engagement programs, projects or activities and their related expenses within approved parameters, reporting to the Executive Director on any significant variances, and the reasons for these variances.

The Board of Directors shall:

- Provide adequate orientation to all Directors to enable the fulfillment of their oversight role.
- Review Executive Director summary reports on public engagement results at quarterly Board meetings.

The Executive Director shall:

- Report to the Board of Directors on public engagement results at quarterly Board meetings.
- Adequately insure public engagement efforts of the Council against liability losses to the organization, its Board Directors, or employees of the organization.
- Ensure appropriate financial and human resources are mobilized to implement the public engagement efforts of the Council.
- Ensure the adequate orientation of all employees, interns, volunteers, independent consultants and members actively engaged in implementing the public engagement efforts of the Council to its Public Engagement Policy.
- Provide overarching direction and support to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting of all public engagement efforts of the Council.

Employees, interns, volunteers, independent consultants and members actively engaged in implementing the public engagement efforts of the Council shall:

- Report to the Executive Director or their designated representative on public engagement results at regular intervals, as pre-determined or requested.
- Adhere to the spirit and letter of the OCIC Public Engagement Policy in all related efforts undertaken in the name of the Council.
- Avoid actions that would expose the Council, its Board of Directors or its employees to claims of liability.
- Protect intellectual property, information and files from unauthorized access, tampering, loss, or significant damage.

⁴ Available on the OCIC website: www.ocic.on.ca