

## Creating Terms of Reference for a Health Committee or Board

### Description:

This tool provides and explains the key elements found in a Terms of Reference.

### How it can be used:

Terms of Reference describe the purpose, structure, scope, membership, roles and deliverables of a group, committee or project. Well-written Terms of Reference provide direction to ensure that committees and groups work under a common expectation and avoid getting off track. In essence, it is a road map that provides direction to the group about what needs to be achieved, by whom and by when.

Elements required for an effective Terms of Reference are explained below. Review all committees involved with your health centre to confirm that there are current Terms of Reference in place which reflect best practices. Productive committees review and update their Terms of Reference annually.

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### Committee Terms of Reference

#### Name

Official name of the committee or working group

#### Goals/Mandate

Primary Goal: What is your key mandate? What does this group wish to accomplish?

Secondary Goal: What is it and how is it aligned with your primary goal?

#### History

The history is not always included, but it can be helpful either to explain the need for a committee or group, or to provide key background information. It may be helpful to note if this is a revision of previous Terms of Reference.

#### Members

- Name
- Contact information
- Roles and responsibilities (e.g., chair, secretary, treasurer, secretariat, reporting to the Board, Health Committee, Health Councillor, etc.)
- Some Terms of Reference describe key attributes or functions of the members rather than the actual membership (e.g., representative from the education committee, representative from the housing committee, etc.)
- Are members allowed to send alternates? What is the protocol for alternates?
- How many meetings can members miss?
- How will members report back to their organizations?

#### Deliverables

What are the outputs required from the group? Describe these in as much detail as possible.

#### Scope/Jurisdiction

- What is the responsibility of the group?
- What authority does the group have?
- What is within the group's purview and what is outside its mandate?
- What can they make decisions about and upon what must they receive input?
- Is this an advisory group or a decision-making group?

- Are sub-committees required to address specific elements? If so, what is the composition of the sub-committee(s); committee members and/or subject experts? How and when do sub-committees report to the main committee?
- Are there any pre-existing conditions the group must consider (e.g., Organizational requirements for representation from specific community groups)? Are there related policies that have an impact on the group's work?
- What are the relationships with other relevant committees?

### **Governance**

- To whom does the group report? Under which authority is the group established?
- How are decisions made (e.g., consensus, majority vote, etc.)?
- Does the chair have a vote?
- Are there relationships of authority within the group and/or larger organization that must be considered?

### **Resources and Budget**

- Is there a budget for the committee?
- What equipment is required? What is available?
- Where will the committee meet?
- Where will shared information or resources be available?

### **Timelines**

- How long will the group be in existence? Is this an ongoing group or is it 'project-specific'?
- What is the schedule of meetings? How frequently will they be held?
- Are there deadlines for deliverables? Are there milestones?
- How long will each member sit on the group? Is there a limit to the length of time a member can participate?
- When will meeting summaries/minutes be circulated to members?
- When will the Terms of Reference be revisited and updated?