

West Neighbourhood House	
Policy Title:	Policy on Policies
Approved by:	West Neighbourhood House Board of Directors
Approval date:	February 2014
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Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide overall guidelines for the development, approval, review, and application of policies and procedures in West Neighbourhood House.

Applicability

- Board members
- All staff

General Principles

1. All West Neighbourhood House policies and procedures shall comply with municipal, provincial and federal laws and regulations, contracts, formal agreements, professional responsibilities, and ethical behaviour.
2. Policies are intended to guide appropriate responses in common or expected situations. Policies should be read through the lens of reason, good judgement, common sense, ethical considerations and integrity.
3. When there is no policy in place to address a specific situation, or if a policy is ambiguous, staff are expected to:
 - consult with their supervisor or any management team member, and
 - use reason, good judgment ,common sense, ethical considerations and integrity.

Unique situations can arise that require an exception to one or more policies. These situations require the exercise of reason and good judgment by the staff most responsible and accountable for the outcome, including consideration of the potential for setting a precedent. The Executive Director must approve recommended exceptions to any policy and review these exceptions on a case by case basis before approving them.

Development and approval of policies

New policies are developed when an identified need arises, such as new legislative requirements or when a new ongoing problems emerge. It is a good practice to research and compare policies with other organizations. Input is welcome from staff, volunteers,

participants and others who may be affected.

Many policies overlap. Policies should describe the overlaps or links to other policies.

Some policies may require a sign-off by staff or Board members, acknowledging that they have read and understood the policy. This should generally be limited to policies that are required by law or regulation.

West Neighbourhood House acknowledges that there cannot be a policy for every situation.

Policies are not intended to replace the continued use of good judgment and common sense.

The Board of Directors approves policies that affect the overall impact of West Neighbourhood House in the community or the organization's governance, as per the Board's role. The Board's Governance Committee has primary responsibility for developing new policies as needed and for regularly reviewing and revising policies that require Board approval. Other Board Committees may, from time to time, develop or review a policy that requires Board approval. It is recommended, as often as possible, that other Board Committee policies be reviewed by the Governance Committee before going to the Board in order to maintain a centrally coordinated set of policies.

The Executive Director, or designate, is responsible for developing and approving operational policies and procedures and ensuring that they are in place and regularly reviewed with staff.

Unit Directors and Managers, or their designate(s), are responsible for developing and approving program-specific policies and procedures.

The management team is responsible for ensuring that program and House policies and procedures are coordinated and complementary.

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that appropriate orientation of new staff and regular training of staff takes place.

Changes to existing policies

It is good practice for those responsible for an existing policy to regularly review it and related procedures, to assess its continued effectiveness, relevancy and appropriateness. West Neighbourhood House will review policies every three years unless legislative or regulatory require otherwise or unless there is significant need for change.

Suggestions for changes to existing policies should be directed to the Executive Director with the exception of program-specific policy and procedure changes that are within the mandate of the Unit Director. In addition, any unique situations not covered by an existing policy should be included at the time the most applicable policy is being reviewed and revised.

Application of policies

All staff, volunteers and Board members are responsible for understanding and adhering to West Neighbourhood House policies. Staff members are responsible for providing orientation to volunteers on existing and new policies.

When staff or volunteers are unclear about what to do or which policy applies, they must ask for clarification or direction from their team members, supervisors or management team members. It is particularly important for staff and volunteers to discuss potential problems with their supervisors as soon as possible so that there is transparent and shared problem-solving.

If staff or volunteers cannot reach a supervisor or management team member when needed, the staff or volunteers must apply reason, good judgment, common sense, ethical considerations and integrity to the situation and follow up with their supervisor as soon as possible.