

Alberta Water Council Process Guidelines Reviewed in 2015

Approved by the AWC on October 29, 2015

Contents

1	Why Have Process Guidelines?	1
2	General Process Guidelines	3
2.1	Decision Making.....	3
2.2	AWC Participation Guidelines	4
2.3	Transparency and Confidentiality.....	5
3	Process Guidelines for the Board of Directors.....	6
3.1	Accountability, Authority and Reporting	6
3.2	Membership on the AWC and the Board of Directors	6
3.3	Selection of Directors and Alternates	7
3.4	Board Roles and Responsibilities	7
3.5	Executive Committee Roles and Responsibilities	9
3.6	Board Meetings.....	9
3.7	Committees	10
4	Process Guidelines for Working Groups and Project Teams.....	10
4.1	Working Groups to Scope New Projects	10
4.2	Project Teams	10
4.3	Membership on Project Teams and Working Groups	11
4.4	Roles and Responsibilities of Working Group and Project Team Members	11
4.5	Team Chairs.....	12
5	Conflict of Interest	12
6	Administrative Matters	12
6.1	Funding and Resources.....	12
6.2	Stakeholder Support.....	13
7	Alberta Water Council Staff	13
8	Communications	13
8.1	General Roles and Responsibilities in Working with the Media.....	14
8.2	Communications Support	14
8.3	Communications Guidance for Issues under Discussion.....	14
8.4	Communications Guidance for Product Releases.....	15
8.5	Document Distribution	16
	Appendix A: About the Alberta Water Council.....	17
	Appendix B: Responsibilities of Council Staff.....	19
	Executive Director	19
	Senior Manager.....	19
	Project Managers	19
	Administrative Staff.....	20

The following Alberta Water Council documents are referenced in these guidelines and are available on the AWC's website at www.awchome.ca or on request:

- Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation
- Stakeholder Support Policy
- AWC Operational Planning Process (includes Statement of Opportunity Guidelines)
- *Consensus Decision-Making Toolkit*
- AWC Consensus Document
- Roles, Responsibilities and Attributes of Directors and Alternates

1 Why Have Process Guidelines?

When the AWC affirmed its desire to incorporate as a not-for-profit society, it was agreed that process guidelines should be developed and adopted by the new organization. This document, a companion to the bylaws, describes the roles and responsibilities of the board, project teams, working groups, committees and staff. It also identifies the practices and procedures that AWC participants are expected to follow. In a few places, the process guidelines reiterate content in the bylaws to provide additional context and clarity. Although the AWC has been operating for several years, participants change and new teams are formed on a regular basis. These guidelines:

- Formally describe the AWC's practices and procedures, thus ensuring all participants have the same information.
- Help the AWC's Board of Directors, teams and staff understand their roles and responsibilities as well as the expectations of them.
- Provide the public and AWC stakeholders with an overview of AWC processes and practices.

The process guidelines are reviewed every three years.

Additional background information on the AWC, including its values, goals and objects can be found in Appendix A. The chart below describes the various groups and individuals involved with the AWC.

Understanding Who's Who with the Alberta Water Council Association:

Throughout this document, the following terms are used to refer to specific groups or individuals:

“AWC” or “Council”

The organization called the Alberta Water Council Association.

“Member”

An organization or group of organizations that have applied for membership on the Alberta Water Council Association and have had their request granted. A Member of the AWC may be a single organization or a group of organizations. For example, the eleven Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) form a single Member. In this case, the AWC Member is “WPACs” which includes all eleven organizations. Throughout the document, *Member* with an uppercase *M* is used to refer to Members of the Alberta Water Council Association.

“Directors” and “Alternates”

Each Member appoints a director to represent it on the AWC. An alternate can also be appointed to assume the role and responsibilities of the director in his/her absence.

“Board of Directors” or “Board”

The directors, who manage the affairs of the AWC, are called the *board of directors*, or the *board*.

“Sector”

Each Member speaks for a specific part of society that has an interest in water. The word *sector* refers to that part of society. For example, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (a Member of the AWC) represents the Oil and Gas *sector*.

“Broad Category”

Members are organized into four *broad categories*, based on similarities between their sectors. The four broad categories are: (1) industry, (2) government, (3) non-government organizations, and (4) the Government of Alberta and Provincial Authorities. The four broad categories are defined in the AWC's bylaws. The “government” category refers to all orders of government except the Government of Alberta, and includes municipal governments, the federal government, the Métis Settlements General Council, and First Nations.

“Participant”

In this document, the word *participant* is used to refer collectively to those who are directly involved in some aspect of the affairs of the AWC. *Participants* include Members, directors, alternates, and members of project teams, working groups and committees.

“Stakeholder”

In addition to those organizations that are Members, other groups and individuals may have an interest in the work of the AWC. Throughout this document, the term *stakeholder* is used to refer to those groups that are interested in the work of the AWC, but who may or may not participate directly in this work. Stakeholder groups with a specific interest in an AWC project or topic would likely be asked to participate on a project team considering that topic.

“Teams”

Except when discussing specific aspects related to committees, working groups and project teams, this document uses the term *team* to apply to all AWC committees, working groups and project teams.

2 General Process Guidelines

The AWC has established certain practices and procedures that apply to all aspects of its work and which all participants are expected to follow; these pertain to decision making and confidentiality. At its first meeting, each new team receives an overview on consensus decision making and other matters related to multi-stakeholder processes. New board members receive orientation from the executive director prior to their first board meeting. As part of their briefings, all new board and team members are provided with these Process Guidelines and asked to become familiar with them and agree to abide by them while contributing to the AWC's work.

2.1 Consensus Decision Making

The board and all its teams operate by consensus, a process in which participants work collaboratively to find solutions that are in the best interests of everyone. The AWC's consensus decision making document describes the process in more detail.

An implicit benefit of the consensus process is that mutual understanding and respect develop as people search together for solutions that meet the interests of all stakeholders. Participants focus on solving the problem and rely on the collective experience and knowledge of the group. The results are high quality, enduring decisions that are more easily implemented because all stakeholders agreed with them.¹

Consensus is reached when all participants agree they can live with the outcome. A consensus agreement meets each person's core interests. Those who have been part of the consensus process are expected to uphold those agreements, champion them to their sector stakeholders and others, and, where they have committed to do so, implement agreements.

Consensus is possible only when the conditions regarding a quorum are met. For board decisions, a quorum exists when 55% of directors or their alternates are present and all four broad categories are represented (industry, government, non-government organizations, and the Government of Alberta and Provincial Authorities). Further, when a decision that could significantly affect a particular sector is pending, a representative from that sector must be present when the decision is made.

Under normal circumstances, at least one representative from each of the four broad categories must be present for project teams, working groups and committees to have quorum. One or more representatives indicating a lack of support for a decision means that consensus is not reached.

In working toward consensus:

- All board and team members must have a reasonable opportunity to participate in discussions, make their interests and desired outcomes known, and propose options for resolving problems. Team members must also have the opportunity to review and comment on proposals and, in the event of non-consensus, to propose alternatives before a proposal is recommended to the board.

¹ Adapted from *Consensus Decision-Making Toolkit, a Martha Kostuch Legacy*, published in 2010 by the Clean Air Strategic Alliance and the Alberta Water Council; online at <http://www.awchome.ca/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=7IIxDsIzFkc%3d&tabid=59>

- Team members are responsible for bringing forward their sector’s perspective, including any potential concerns, as early in the process as possible, recognizing that other concerns may arise as the team begins to identify potential solutions.
- Team members may agree with the intent of specific recommendations as they work through the team’s tasks, but sometimes prefer to reserve final consensus until the full suite of possible options and recommendations is known.
- Those who are unable to support a particular direction or option are expected to explain what they cannot agree to, provide the rationale for disagreeing, and offer alternative solutions or changes that would make the idea acceptable. Team members should also work to help someone in this position find options that can meet his or her needs.

The chair of the board or team will lead the group in ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to be heard, and that silence is not taken as agreement. When consensus is reached, the agreement will be noted in the minutes.

2.2 AWC Participation Guidelines

All participants agree to adhere to the AWC’s participation guidelines, which describe how individuals will behave at meetings. Such guidelines (or “ground rules”) are an important foundation for consensus decision making. These are:

- Listen generously
- Speak straight
- Be “for” each other
- Honour commitments
- Acknowledge and appreciate others and their views
- Ensure those who need to be included are at the table
- Ensure alignment with the task, and that the views of stakeholders and sectors are reflected

Project teams can adapt the guidelines to meet their specific circumstances, but the basic spirit of collaborative interest-based dialogue is upheld.

2.2.1 When consensus is achieved

When a team reaches consensus, it submits a report to the board that outlines the team’s analysis and recommendations, and asks the board to formally approve the report. Team members are expected to brief their sector’s director and alternate to ensure they have a good understanding of the implications of the work and potential recommendations prior to any reports coming to the board for approval.

From time to time, minor edits to team reports such as wording changes and formatting adjustments may be necessary. Directors, or alternates who are attending in place of their director, may suggest these minor changes at the board meeting. If the board has consensus agreement to incorporate the suggested minor changes, a new version of the report will be prepared by AWC staff and the report will not be reviewed again by the board.

2.2.2 Dealing with non-consensus items

If a team is unable to reach consensus on all items and cannot resolve an issue, it will prepare a report to the board that contains the areas of consensus and the areas of non-consensus. This report will include the various perspectives and interests on the team regarding the non-consensus items, as well as the reasoning behind proposed alternative solutions that would

make an option acceptable. Using the team's input and drawing on its own knowledge and expertise, the board may find a solution and reach consensus on what was a non-consensus item in the team's report. The board might also ask the team to try again to reach consensus and, in so doing, should provide direction to the team to help resolve the issue.

When the Government of Alberta has asked the AWC for policy advice and the board is unable to reach agreement, a report will be forwarded to the Minister who requested the advice. This report will clearly describe the areas of consensus and the areas of non-consensus, specifically noting relevant sections of the report where options and rationale are presented.

2.2.3 Voting

Consensus is the usual way in which the board of directors makes decisions. When consensus is not achieved on administrative matters only, a vote will be taken and requires that a) there be quorum, and b) a majority of 2/3 of the directors support the decision. "Administrative matters" includes all approvals required to confirm the ongoing operations of the Council including, but not limited to:

- Approval of minutes, agendas and budgets
- Appointment of an auditor
- Addition of a Member to the Association
- Removal of a Member from the Association

2.3 Transparency and Confidentiality

To encourage and support open and candid dialogue, all AWC participants adhere to the following guidelines with respect to transparency and confidentiality:

- Participants are encouraged to speak frankly, respectfully, and openly at meetings to communicate their sectors' interests related to a topic.
- All discussions and decisions at meetings will be captured and recorded in the minutes without individual attribution, unless requested. Individuals making presentations to the board or a team that are associated with a specific agenda item will be identified in the minutes. For example, co-chairs presenting a team's final report to the board or those who provide technical or other informational presentations to the board or a team would be identified in the minutes.
- Participants will not attribute specific comments or positions to others in any discussions they may have outside meetings. However, when communicating back to their own stakeholders, it is incumbent on participants to convey the interests and perspectives of others and the options the team is considering, to ensure each sector is fully informed. Such transparency facilitates a robust exchange of information, builds a broader understanding of the issues, and enables stakeholders to make an informed decision.
- Participants must identify as such, confidential material they may wish to share with the board or team members and how it will be used, and the board or team must agree to accept the material as confidential.
- If interim or draft reports are to be shared with stakeholders who are not at the table, they will be clearly designated as drafts. The team may also decide to release a draft report to groups beyond the AWC membership to test broader response to the issue and proposed solutions. Teams should decide by consensus on the need for making interim or draft reports public.

Following board approval, minutes from board meetings are made available on the AWC's website.

3 Process Guidelines for the Board of Directors

3.1 Accountability, Authority and Reporting

The AWC is accountable, through its Members and partners, to the people of Alberta for its decisions. Accountability means that participants represent an identifiable constituency and are accountable to the sectors they represent, to each other, and to the process. As part of this accountability, board members must be familiar with and represent the views of their respective sectors and report back to their sectors on a regular basis. Board members are also expected to have the authority to negotiate and make decisions on behalf of their sectors at the board level.

Public reporting is an important function of the AWC and an annual report is published and distributed to all Members and other interested parties on request. Once approved by the board, reports and other documents are posted to the AWC's website. Occasionally, documents are prepared by third parties in response to a Council recommendation (e.g., the Water Research Strategy and the water conservation, efficiency and productivity plans prepared by major water-using sectors). The executive committee has overall responsibility for AWC communications activities and will decide on a case-by-case basis whether such third party documents will be posted to the AWC's website and under what conditions, such as providing a suitable disclaimer. AWC staff also work with Members to receive and publish updates to the implementation status of AWC recommendations on the website. This process is overseen by the executive committee.

3.2 Membership on the AWC and the Board of Directors

The AWC comprises Members from four broad categories, as specified in the bylaws (industry, government, non-government organizations, and Government of Alberta and Provincial Authorities).

3.2.1 Addition of Members to the Council

Any organization(s) wishing to join the AWC submit a letter of application to the secretary-treasurer (this is usually the executive director) outlining their interest in water and why they wish to join the AWC. The secretary-treasurer will review the application for completeness and arrange for it to be considered at a Members meeting. If the Members' representatives fail to reach consensus on the addition of the new Member, a vote can be taken as described in the bylaws.

3.2.2 Withdrawal of Members from the AWC

As described in the bylaws, any Member wishing to withdraw from the AWC may do so by giving written notice to the secretary-treasurer. Membership will end on the date requested in the letter or upon its earlier acceptance by the AWC.

3.2.3 Suspension or Expulsion of Members from the AWC

The board of directors may suspend or expel a Member of the AWC as described in the bylaws. This is expected to be extremely rare and will only occur after the executive director has reviewed the situation and put forward a recommendation to the board. Suspension or expulsion of a Member would be considered if the Member has failed to participate in good faith and has damaged the operation or credibility of the AWC.

3.3 Selection of Directors and Alternates

Each Member is responsible for appointing a director and, if desired, an alternate, to represent them on the AWC's board of directors. This self-selection process is an important aspect of consensus decision making and enables sectors to select individuals who can effectively take on the roles and responsibilities of an AWC director.

Each Member has its own process for selecting its director and alternate. Where the Member is a single organization, that organization is responsible for identifying and selecting their representatives through their own internal process. Where membership is shared by several organizations, these organizations will work together to select their representatives. The executive director can facilitate this process by convening a meeting or providing resources to bring the group together. Directors and alternates are expected to liaise with their Member to periodically confirm their ongoing representation, and representation is normally confirmed each year at the AWC's Annual General Meeting. The expectations for directors and alternates are listed in section 3.4 below, and Member organizations should consider these points when selecting their representatives.

In 2011, the AWC undertook a membership review to ensure the organization has appropriate and effective representation from the major water-related sectors in Alberta. Recommendations from that review resulted in the development of self-assessment criteria to help sectors select the Member organization to represent them, and to help Members identify and assess the effectiveness of directors and alternates. The criteria are based largely on the values that AWC directors and alternates are expected to share, as well as their roles and responsibilities described in section 3.4.

Directors and alternates do not have a specific term of office and serve at the pleasure of the Member they represent. Turnover is expected to occur through normal attrition. If a director or alternate steps down, the Member can fill the vacancy at any time through their selection process, following which they need to notify the executive director of their new representative.

3.4 Board Roles and Responsibilities

The board of directors has a number of duties, which are described in the bylaws, including understanding the AWC's organizational documents and activities, procedural rules, policies and decision-making processes. The board's fiduciary duty means that directors must act honestly and in good faith, with a view to the best interests of the organization. Directors also have responsibilities as prescribed by certain statutes. These include, but are not limited to, legislation related to employee source deductions, employment standards, goods and services tax, and environmental protection.

The executive director is responsible for briefing new directors and alternates, who are expected to make time for these important orientation sessions to ensure they are familiar with their duties and obligations. Directors and alternates must sign a declaration indicating their understanding of and intent to abide by the Council's *Process Guidelines*, including a commitment to consensus decision making, and the various documents referenced within them.

The director takes a lead role in attending and participating at board meetings. The alternate acts in place of the director if he or she is unavailable. Both the director and alternate are welcome to attend meetings and both are eligible for stakeholder support, as described in the *Stakeholder Support Policy*. However, if both are present at a board meeting, the director is expected to a) sit at the main board table (with the alternate sitting in the row behind or at a side table), and b) take the lead in participating in board discussions.

AWC directors are expected to:

- Be knowledgeable about water management issues, sector water use, water and watershed issues, and be fully informed and up to date about the subjects to be discussed at board meetings.
- Be empowered by their sector to speak for and make decisions on behalf of the sector at the board level. This includes being able to accurately represent the interests of their Member and sector while working creatively, constructively and respectfully with others towards a common goal.
- Adhere to the AWC's bylaws and other policies and procedures as adopted by the board.
- Support and engage in principled negotiation and adhere to the requirements of consensus decision making.
- Support consensus decisions made by the board and, if necessary, implement them.
- Not attribute the positions, opinions or suggestions of other directors in their communications with the media or the public.
- Be personally involved and interested in AWC activities. This means taking an active role in the work of the AWC by attending board meetings, participating on teams, championing AWC activities and otherwise promoting awareness of the AWC and its priorities as opportunities arise.
- Keep their organizations informed in a timely manner about the AWC's work and ensure that their sector has opportunities to provide input. This would include activities such as testing for consensus regarding decision sheets being presented at upcoming board meetings and requesting comments on, and approval of, draft team reports.
- Maintain communications and a good working relationship with their alternate.
- Have regular contact with their sector's representatives on any AWC project teams, working groups or committees to ensure a good understanding of the implications of the work and potential recommendations prior to any reports coming to the board for approval.

AWC alternates are expected to:

- Assume the roles and responsibilities of the director in his or her absence.
- Work with and communicate regularly with their director to represent the views of their sector and to keep each other informed about AWC business.
- Take an active role in the work of the AWC by participating on teams, championing AWC activities and otherwise promoting awareness of the AWC and its priorities as opportunities arise.
- Support and engage in principled negotiation and adhere to the requirements of consensus decision making.
- Attend at least one AWC meeting annually.

The board also has certain responsibilities as its own entity to:

- Set policies on direction and priorities, with a particular focus on the long term.
- Coordinate and commit resources in support of the AWC's work.
- Approve recommendations from teams.
- Ensure members understand their responsibilities particularly with regard to implementation of recommendations.
- Evaluate the results of its projects and the implementation success of its recommendations.
- Regularly assess progress and board functioning.

3.5 Executive Committee Roles and Responsibilities

The executive committee includes a president, three vice-presidents and a secretary-treasurer. The president and the three vice-presidents are chosen from among the board's directors and are appointed so that each broad category has a representative on the committee. Each broad category will use its own process to select its executive member and directors are encouraged to reach consensus on their selection. The four individuals selected by their respective broad categories decide which of them will serve as president.

The terms for the president and vice-presidents are two years. The board also appoints for a two-year term, a secretary-treasurer, who is usually the executive director. Specific duties for each executive member are noted in the bylaws. All terms can be renewed.

Decisions from executive committee meetings are summarized in the executive director's management report, which is part of the briefing materials for each board meeting. Approved executive committee meeting minutes are available to directors and alternates, on request to the executive director. The executive committee normally meets three times per year, prior to each regular board meeting; it monitors board adherence to policies and procedures on an ongoing basis.

In 2010, the board approved terms of reference for the executive committee; responsibilities include:

- Working with the executive director to set the board meeting agendas, review issues and coordinate reporting to the board;
- Chairing board meetings (the chairing duties are typically shared among two or three executive members at each board meeting);
- Leading strategic planning and communications planning exercises and evaluating the AWC's effectiveness in meeting the outcomes;
- Making interim decisions and acting on matters requiring AWC's attention between regularly scheduled meetings; and
- Hiring and reviewing the performance of the executive director. When the secretary-treasurer and executive director is the same person, he or she will not participate in reviewing the performance of the executive director.

As required, executive members liaise with Ministers, advocate for and promote the AWC, and communicate with the media.

3.6 Board Meetings

The board normally meets three times per year, with meeting dates for the upcoming calendar year determined at the last meeting of the previous year. Agendas are prepared by the executive committee. Directors and alternates may work through their executive committee member to bring items forward for consideration when agendas are being prepared. Other items may be added at the board meeting with consensus.

Briefing materials are distributed to the board at least two weeks prior to each board meeting to facilitate engagement between directors and their sector and informed decision making. Circulation of all or part of the briefing binder within sectors is encouraged to keep stakeholders informed and up to date.

Normally, the board will not make decisions on issues that have not been included in the pre-meeting briefing materials. If a director or alternate has an issue or concern that he or she wants to present to the board on short notice, the board may agree to hear the concern, but will not be expected to make any decision.

Project team, working group and committee members are welcome and encouraged to attend board meetings when their work is being discussed. Board meetings are not open to the media.

3.7 Committees

Committees may be struck to address specific ongoing issues or to address “corporate” AWC business. All committees follow the same multi-stakeholder consensus process as the board and are typically include directors or alternates.

4 Process Guidelines for Working Groups and Project Teams

Much of the AWC’s work is carried out by multi-stakeholder project teams or working groups, who report directly to the board and are supported by a project manager. At the first meeting of a new team or working group, members are given an overview of consensus decision making, their roles and responsibilities, guidelines for participating in AWC processes and other information to help them participate effectively.

4.1 Working Groups to Scope New Projects

When the board identifies an issue as a priority, it may form a working group to explore the issue in more detail and report back. New work is typically selected from among Statements of Opportunity (SOOs) presented to the board. Stakeholders wishing to submit an SOO for consideration should contact the executive director for details on the process.

A working group’s mandate is to scope and clarify the issues, propose a preliminary budget, and develop draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for board consideration and approval. Following approval of draft TOR, a project team is formed to conduct in-depth analysis and identify solutions. The membership of the working group should be broad enough to ensure that the issue can be adequately scoped.

4.2 Project Teams

Project teams are formed by the board following discussion and agreement concerning tasks, timelines, and funding, to address issues that have been identified as priorities and are important to meeting the AWC’s mandate.

Occasionally, a team may identify issues that fall outside the scope of its approved TOR. When this happens, the team has two options:

1. If team members believe they have the resources, time and ability to address the newly-identified issue(s), they can ask the board to amend their TOR. They would need to develop a clear rationale for such an amendment and make their case to the board along with proposed revisions to their TOR.
2. If they believe they are not the right group to address the issue but that it is important and within the Council’s scope of activity, they can recommend an approach for dealing with it in their final report.

Sometimes teams identify administrative areas in the TOR that need to be adjusted (e.g., timelines, budget) and can formally ask the board to amend the TOR accordingly. In rare circumstances, after approving a team's TOR, the board may determine that it could be in the overall interest of the AWC to amend the TOR. In such cases, the team would be consulted about the specific amendments and given an opportunity to discuss the implications. Both the team and the board must agree to TOR amendments, and a revised document is subsequently issued and posted to the website.

From time to time, teams may commission consultant reports to help them better understand an issue, learn how other jurisdictions have addressed the issue, or for other purposes related to fulfilling the team's terms of reference. Drafts of the consultant reports are shared internally with team members who may offer feedback and suggestions. When the team has completed its work, it may recommend to the executive committee that these reports, which are another type of third-party document, be posted to the Council's website with a suitable disclaimer.

Project teams, in collaboration with AWC staff, will develop a communications plan that proposes how the team's work should be communicated, both internally and to a wider external audience.

4.3 Membership on Project Teams and Working Groups

Membership on AWC teams should include all those that: a) have a stake in the outcome of the work, b) could block consensus on the recommendations, and c) are needed to implement the recommendations. Project teams and working groups are expected to include representation from the AWC's four broad categories, but exceptions can be made.

When the board forms a working group or project team, Members who wish to participate will select their representative using whatever process they have in place for naming their representatives. Generally, project teams do not have alternate team members, although there may be circumstances where the workload is such that alternates are needed.

Attendance and active participation at meetings is an important part of the consensus process and these demands and commitments on individuals should be kept in mind when sectors select their representatives.

4.4 Roles and Responsibilities of Working Group and Project Team Members

Working group and project team members are responsible for representing their sector's perspective and for negotiating solutions that are in their sector's interest. If members are unsure whether their sector will support items being discussed, they must acknowledge this to the group and then consult with their sector to test support for the proposal. Team members are also expected to bring forward ideas and proposals from their sectors for discussion by the team. When consensus is reached by the team, all sectors are expected to support the decision.

Working group and project team members are expected to:

- Represent a particular stakeholder organization or sector;
- Come prepared for meetings, which means reading pre-meeting material, completing homework assignments and being able to negotiate on behalf of their sector;
- Make constructive contributions that advance the team's goals and objectives, and help others to do the same;
- Report regularly to their sector;

- Brief their sector’s director regularly, including prior to the team’s report and recommendations being presented to the board;
- As appropriate, participate in briefing directors and alternates in their broad category;
- Liaise with their sector’s participants on the board and other AWC teams to maximize synergy, ensure coordination, and prevent duplication by keeping each other informed; and
- Follow the rules and principles of consensus decision making.

When a member has been replaced by a new representative, the new representative needs to get up to speed and come fully versed and prepared to participate. If necessary, the project manager and co-chairs can help a new team member understand the team’s work to date.

4.5 Team Chairs

Working groups and project teams usually have at least two co-chairs from different broad categories. Co-chairs are chosen by team consensus.

Co-chairs are expected to:

- Set a good example for effective meeting participation;
- Encourage the efforts of others on behalf of the group;
- Listen actively to the contributions of others;
- Summarize and test for consensus on group decisions;
- Work with the project manager to develop agendas and ensure assignment of responsibility for follow-up on decisions and actions from meetings;
- Keep the meeting on schedule to complete the agenda; and
- From time to time, request feedback on meeting process.

From time to time, co-chairs also liaise with the board on behalf of the team, such as when giving a presentation on the team’s work and responding to questions.

5 Conflict of Interest

Directors and alternates should consider whether they may be perceived as personally gaining from a potential outcome of AWC work. If so, they are expected to declare their potential conflict of interest and refrain from participating in any related discussions or decisions.

Team members should also consider whether they may be perceived as personally gaining from a potential outcome of AWC work. If so, they are expected to declare their potential conflict of interest and either remove themselves from the team or at least refrain from participating in any related discussions or decisions.

6 Administrative Matters

6.1 Funding and Resources

The AWC’s work is supported by all participants, whether they contribute time, money or other resources. In-kind contributions are an important part of the support the AWC receives, and are tracked and noted in the annual report. In-kind and other contributions come from all four broad categories.

The AWC's core funding comes from Government of Alberta grants. These funds cover internal costs approved by the board and managed by the executive director. They include staff salaries, office support, board and team meetings, and some stakeholder costs. Resourcing (funds, time, expertise, etc.) for specific project team work (i.e., costs approved by teams and managed by project managers) is typically provided by the sectors involved in the project team, or other stakeholders. These costs include, for example, hiring consultants, undertaking research, and sponsoring workshops or conferences.

6.2 Stakeholder Support

Stakeholder support is available to directors and alternates of the board and to working group, project team and committee participants who are:

1. designated to represent their sector or Member, and
2. requested by the AWC to participate.

The purpose of providing financial support is to ensure all stakeholders have an equal opportunity to participate, which is a key principle of consensus decision making.

Every six months, the board of directors will be given a list of individuals and groups who received stakeholder support (honoraria and/or expenses) from the AWC in the previous six months. This list will be included in the management report. The management report is part of board meeting briefing material, which is not intended to be public information.

7 Alberta Water Council Staff

AWC staff members provide support to the board and its teams. Staff members include an executive director, senior manager, project managers, and administrative staff. AWC staff have an overall coordination function, including organizing board meetings, team meetings and completing necessary administrative tasks. All staff remain neutral on all water issues to avoid favouring, or being seen to favour, any one sector. Staff members are committed to the collective good of the AWC and they act as custodians and facilitators of the consensus-based process. The executive director or other staff members may also communicate to external audiences on behalf of the AWC. More information on the responsibilities of staff is provided in Appendix B.

8 Communications

Generally, the AWC regards public and media interest in its activities as desirable, to the extent that it supports and respects its multi-stakeholder processes. Directors, alternates, and project team members represent the AWC collectively where consensus is reached on water issues, and they also represent the interests of their particular stakeholder organizations. AWC participants must ensure that their media relations activities respect the consensus based, multi-stakeholder nature of the process.

Communications guidelines assist the AWC in being accountable and transparent to the public through the media, while ensuring that appropriate levels of confidentiality and trust are respected throughout its processes. This section of the process guidelines defines roles and responsibilities for AWC participants with the aim of achieving an effective working relationship with the media.

Whenever possible, the AWC will coordinate media activity with sector partners to raise awareness of the AWC's role in providing leadership, expertise and sector knowledge to engage and empower

industry, non-government organizations, and governments to achieve the outcomes of the *Water for Life* strategy.

8.1 General Roles and Responsibilities in Working with the Media

When working with the media, AWC participants will:

- Act honestly and in good faith, considering the best interests of the AWC.
- Not discuss the positions or opinions of others in their communications with the media or the public.
- Not use disclosure to the media as a means of retribution or negotiation. This is of particular importance when issues of non-consensus arise.
- Consider the long-term reputation of the AWC in all their dealings with the media. Messaging should aim to position the AWC as a credible, trusted and respected organization by providing information that is objective and factual.

When approached by media for general information on the Council or its processes, participants will refer the request to the executive director, who will respond to the issue or identify another suitable spokesperson.

8.2 Communications Support

The following communications support services are provided by AWC staff:

- Work with project teams and the board to develop and distribute key messages and communications strategies in advance of anticipated media interest on particular initiatives or issues.
- Identify potential spokespersons for particular initiatives and ensure they are properly briefed and prepared with key messages prior to the release of AWC products or launch of AWC media events.
- Monitor press coverage looking at the volume of articles, the tone, whether the news releases are used, and other aspects as appropriate.
- When media or editorial content about the AWC is inaccurate, the executive director will consult with the executive committee to determine whether to submit a “letter to the editor” to correct the error. Letters representing the views of the AWC will be submitted by the executive director on behalf of the AWC. At all times consideration will be given as to how the correspondence may affect the reputation of the AWC.
- In collaboration with the executive committee, develop an emergency communications strategy in the event of an emerging media issue that will have a significant impact on the AWC, its directors, or stakeholders.

8.3 Communications Guidance for Issues under Discussion

It is understood that AWC participants will engage in media relations regarding issues being discussed by the AWC. Indeed, this is impossible to avoid as many participants regularly publish water-related information as part of their day-to-day operations. Because many AWC participants must speak for both their own sector and the AWC, the following guidance is provided to avoid confusion and conflicts of interest:

- It is expected that participants will clearly identify for whom they are speaking and that the views expressed are those of their own organization and not the collective views of the team or AWC.
- It is expected that participants will not discuss the positions or opinions of others.

- It is expected that participants will not disclose specific conversations on-going at the team or AWC table.
- It is expected that participants will not disclose information that has been shared in confidence or that they would not otherwise have had access to.
- Participants may speak about the work plan, Terms of Reference, goals, and intended outcomes of a particular team.
- It is expected that participants will notify the executive director when they have taken part in a broadcast interview or if they have been interviewed for a newspaper or other publication regarding AWC initiatives.
- Participants will direct the media to the executive director on specific questions related to AWC processes or operations.

8.4 Communications Guidance for Product Releases

Most reports coming forward for final approval by the AWC will be accompanied by a draft communication plan. This plan will recommend a schedule for each initiative including messaging, timelines and draft versions of the supporting materials. This process will allow for the strategic release of AWC communications materials and provide adequate time to format, print and prepare final materials prior to distribution. AWC staff will distribute the final materials to directors and alternates on the identified launch date, at which point they may forward these materials to their stakeholders.

During the product release phase of any project, directors and alternates have a responsibility to support the consensus-based communication plan by:

- Endorsing and enabling the communications strategies for both consensus and non-consensus documents, agreed to by AWC.
- Adhering to communication and product release protocols related to: (a) product launches, including media conferences, news releases, articles, etc.; and (b) media directives including key timing, key messages and identified spokespeople.
- Promptly contacting the AWC's executive director when approached by media for information about the Council or for comment on a particular AWC initiative.

Special care must be taken in the case of a report that does not have full consensus, to ensure positive relationships between stakeholders are maintained despite differences in opinion. With such reports, participants may speak to the media regarding the interests of their own organizations or sectors, as outlined and detailed in the report. In doing so, it is expected that participants will:

- Be clear that the views and opinions expressed are those of their own organization and not those of the AWC or the project team.
- Ensure that the release of these communications do not precede the release of the AWC's communications materials.
- Highlight areas of agreement and not focus solely on areas of disagreement.
- Speak positively of the multi-stakeholder process and the importance of the work of the AWC.
- Notify the AWC's executive director regarding the timing and content of these releases.
- Not discuss the positions or opinions of others.
- Not discuss the specific conversations that occurred at the project team table.

8.5 Document Distribution

The distribution and availability of AWC documents are described in several places in these process guidelines. This information is summarized here for convenience.

Document Type	Distribution Guideline	Section
Terms of Reference	Available to the public via the website, once approved by the AWC.	4.1
Project Team Minutes	Available to directors and alternates on request to the AWC.	4.2
Draft Reports	Circulation within sectors is encouraged for discussion, but the documents are not public. Infrequently, a sector may wish to use a team's interim work; such requests are accepted by the executive director and considered on a case-by-case basis.	2.3, 4.2
Public consultation materials	Workbooks, "What we Heard" summaries, information sheets and other public outreach documents will be available to the public via the website once approved by the board.	3.1
Board meeting briefing materials	Circulation within sectors is encouraged for discussion but the documents are not public.	3.6
Executive Committee Minutes	Available to directors and alternates, on request to the executive director, following approval of the minutes by the executive committee.	3.5
Board Meeting Minutes	Available to the public via the website, once approved by the board.	3.6
Annual Reports	Available to the public via the website, once approved by the board.	3.1
Final Reports	Available to the public via the website, once approved by the board and as described in its approved communication plan.	3.1
Third Party Documents	Available to the public via the website under conditions described in the text.	3.1, 4.2

Appendix A: About the Alberta Water Council

The Alberta Water Council (AWC) is a multi-stakeholder partnership with Members from governments, industry, and non-government organizations. All Members have a vested interest in water. The AWC was created in 2004 under Ministerial Order by Alberta's Minister of Environment. It is one of three types of partnerships established under the *Water for Life* strategy; the others are Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils, and Watershed Stewardship Groups. In November 2007, the AWC incorporated as a not-for-profit society under Alberta's *Societies Act*.

The AWC regularly reviews implementation of the *Water for Life* strategy and champions achievement of the strategy's goals. The structure of the renewed *Water for Life* strategy is based on a strong relationship between three goals:

- Safe, secure drinking water supply
- Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems
- Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy

and three key directions in water management practices that are intended to achieve these outcomes:

- Knowledge and research
- Partnerships
- Water conservation

The AWC also advises the Government of Alberta, stakeholders and the public on effective water management practices and solutions to water issues, as well as on priorities for water research. Where there is consensus, the AWC may advise on government policy and legislation. However, the Government of Alberta remains accountable for the implementation of the *Water for Life* strategy, and continues to administer water and watershed management activities throughout the province.

For more information on the AWC structure and mandate, consult the bylaws and the business plan, available online at www.awchome.ca.

Vision

Albertans work together to ensure safe, healthy and abundant water for future generations.

Mission

The Alberta Water Council is a multi-stakeholder partnership that provides leadership, expertise and sector knowledge to engage and empower industry, non-governmental organizations, and governments to achieve the outcomes of the *Water for Life* strategy.

Values

The AWC, individually and collectively, is guided in its activities by a desire to be:

- **Collaborative:** The AWC will work with individuals, organizations, industries and governments to build consensus.
- **Fair:** The AWC will not be biased toward any individual, organization, business or government.
- **Innovative:** The AWC will bring together expertise and experience to find the best solution to provincial water management issues.
- **Respectful:** The AWC will value all ideas and attitudes.
- **Timely:** The AWC will respond to issues in a timely fashion.
- **Transparent:** The AWC will be visible and accessible with established processes to bring issues forward and to communicate AWC activities.
- **Trustworthy:** The AWC will earn public trust as an independent advisory body to government and stakeholders, supported by credible data and information.

Goals

1. The implementation of the *Water for Life* strategy is reviewed in a timely and thorough manner.
2. The AWC's policy recommendations are timely, based on credible information, implementable, have consensus and support *Water for Life* goals and timelines.
3. The AWC has an effective process for sectors to discuss and resolve water management issues.

Objects

The objects of the Alberta Water Council Society are to:

- a) Develop, recommend and advise on policies to ensure integrated and comprehensive support for effective watershed management systems in Alberta;
- b) Advocate for and catalyze improvements to Alberta's watershed management systems;
- c) Identify priority water knowledge and research needs in Alberta and advocate that these needs be met;
- d) Support and enhance the effectiveness of local and regional watershed groups;
- e) Influence Albertans and sectors to improve their water management practices and performance;
- f) Guide, assess and report on the effectiveness of the implementation of the *Water for Life* strategy.
- g) Act in any capacity under any legislation, regulations or Ministerial Order delegating authority to the Society;
- h) Enter into any arrangements with any authorities, industry participants, or otherwise which are conducive to the attainment of the objects of the Society or any of them, and to obtain from any such authority any rights, privileges, and concessions which the Society determines is desirable to carry out, exercise and comply with such arrangements, rights, privileges and concessions;
- i) Receive, sell, manage, invest, lease, mortgage, dispose of or otherwise deal with the property of the Society.

Appendix B: Responsibilities of Council Staff

Executive Director

The executive director is responsible for managing the overall operations of the AWC. The executive director is an ex-officio member of the board. On a day-to-day basis, the executive director reports to the executive committee as represented by the president.

The executive director is responsible for:

- Managing staff;
- Hiring and assigning staff as required to meet the needs of the board and its teams;
- Working collaboratively as a member of the executive committee;
- Ensuring the agreed upon decision-making process is followed;
- Bringing important issues to the attention of the board;
- Providing regular updates and reports to the board;
- Briefing and orienting new directors and alternates on the AWC's mandate, operating procedures, and projects, and responding to their questions;
- Helping to maintain and improve the smooth functioning and group dynamics of the board;
- Implementing communication and consultation activities with the assistance of other staff;
- Coordinating and integrating resources across various teams;
- Advising the board with respect to its liability, as required for particular situations;
- Managing the fiscal resources of the AWC under the direction of the executive committee; and
- Undertaking other specific tasks and authorities as delegated by the board.

Senior Manager

The senior manager works closely with all AWC staff, ensuring smooth day-to-day operations and collaboration among staff, as required. This position reports to the executive director. The senior manager:

- Supervises and supports project management staff by identifying priorities and ensuring staff have the appropriate tools to do their work;
- Provides project management support to working groups, project teams and committees by overseeing project funding and engaging and managing consultants who provide a range of services to the AWC and its teams;
- Builds and maintains relationships with partners and stakeholders; and
- Supports the executive committee and the board in strategic planning, operations and communications.

Project Managers

A project manager is assigned to each team to provide logistical support and capacity to undertake work. Project managers are knowledgeable about all AWC processes and procedures and report to the executive director or senior manager.

Project managers are responsible for:

- Organizing team meetings;
- Working collaboratively with team co-chairs to advance the work of the team;

- Facilitating team meetings, as required (this may also be done by team co-chairs or a consultant);
- Ensuring that the team operates within the AWC's consensus process;
- Preparing meeting minutes;
- Ensuring the team operates within its Terms of Reference;
- Ensuring the team operates according to a work plan;
- Preparing information sheets, decision sheets, presentations, reports, summaries and other materials as required;
- Collecting and distributing contact information to the team; and
- Obtaining advice from the senior manager or the executive director as needed.

Administrative Staff

Administrative staff are responsible for a range of office duties to support the operation of the AWC. These include providing support to the executive director related to budget preparation, expenditure monitoring, forecasting and reporting; and managing the administrative systems of the office.