Alberta Water Council

Process Guidelines

Approved October 2024

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

- Bylaws and Process Guidelines
- *Consensus Decision-Making Toolkit*
- *Defining Consensus*

1.0 Introduction

When the Alberta Water Council (AWC) affirmed its desire to incorporate as a not-for-profit society in 2007, it was agreed process guidelines should be developed and adopted by the organization. These guidelines are a companion to the *bylaws,* and describe the roles and responsibilities of the board, executive committee, ad hoc groups, committees, working groups, project teams, and staff. Additionally, it 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.

These guidelines:
- Formally describe the AWC's practices and procedures, thus ensuring participants have the same information.
- Help the AWC's Board of Directors, teams, and staff understand their roles, responsibilities, and the expectations for participants on the AWC and its teams.
- Provide the public and AWC participants with an overview of Council processes and practices.

The process guidelines are reviewed every three years. Additional background information on the Council and its work may be found on the AWC website.

AWC Participant Terminology

The following terms are used to refer to specific groups or individuals within the context of the AWC's work:

AWC or Council

Refers to the registered not-for-profit organization formally called the Alberta Water Council Association (AWC).

Board of Directors or Board

The directors set the direction of the AWC and are collectively referred to as the board of directors, or the board.

Member

An organization or group of organizations that have successfully joined the AWC. A Member of the AWC may be a single organization or a group of organizations and represents a sector. For example, the 11 Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) form a single Member. In this case, the AWC Member is "Alberta WPACs" which includes all 11 organizations. "Member" with an uppercase *M* is used to refer to Members of the AWC.

Sector

Each Member represents a distinct segment of civil society that has an interest or responsibility in managing water. The word "sector" refers to that part of society. For example, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (a Member of the AWC) is expected to represent the interests of the upstream Oil and Gas sector in Alberta.

Sector Groups

Members are organized into four groups based on similarities between their sectors. The four sector groups are: 1) industry, 2) government, 3) non-government organizations (NGOs), and 4) the Government of Alberta and Provincial Authorities (GoA and PA). The four sector groups are defined in the AWC's *bylaws*. While industry, NGOs, and GoA and PA are self-explanatory, the *bylaws* describe the government sector group as including any Federal, Indigenous, and Municipal Government or associated department, agency, or organization with an interest in water management in Alberta. The original model for including Indigenous representation on AWC's board has not been successful and more effort is needed to bridge this gap. There has been some success at working with Indigenous Peoples at a project level, but further work is needed.

Directors and Alternates

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

Partner
The term "partner" refers to an individual who is directly involved in AWC activities. The AWC is an inclusive organization that strives to bring all relevant groups together in the spirit of advancing water management in Alberta within our governance structure as appropriate. Participants may include:
- Directors, alternates, or anyone else designated by a Member to represent their sector.
- An individual who would like to represent their sector, organization, Indigenous group, or other relevant interest but is not affiliated with one of AWC's Member organizations (e.g., individuals from the Samson Cree Nation Nipi (water) Committee, First Nations Technical Services Advisory Group, and North American Waterfowl Management Program have participated on project teams to represent their interests without formal representation on the board).

Participant
The term "participants" refers to individuals or groups who have an interest in AWC's work and may support the work but are not directly involved in a representative capacity. For example, participants may include Albertans who are asked to complete surveys that inform the AWC's work, individuals supporting a Member-adjacent group, or a corresponding project team participant rather than a direct participant.

Teams
Except when discussing specific aspects related to ad hoc groups, committees, working groups, and project teams, the term "team(s)" generally applies to AWC ad hoc groups, committees, working groups, and project teams.

Executive Committee
The executive committee (EC) provides leadership to the board to ensure the Council operates effectively and achieves its vision, mission, and goals. Each sector group names a representative to the EC, and the members of the EC select the president from amongst their ranks. The other sector group representatives serve as vice-presidents. The executive director serves as the secretary-treasurer. The board-approved terms of reference (ToR) outline the responsibilities of the executive committee, which includes the responsibilities of the AWC's finance and communications committees.

Executive Director
The executive director is responsible for managing the administration of the AWC. The executive director is an ex-officio member of the board and acts as the secretary-treasurer of the organization. The executive director reports to the executive committee as represented by the president.

Industry
- 8 Sectors
- 10 Members
- 8 Directors
- 7 Alternates

Non-Government Organizations
- 7 Sectors
- 7 Members
- 7 Directors
- 4 Alternates

Government
- 4 Sectors
- 5 Members
- 4 Directors
- 2 Alternates

Government of Alberta and Provincial Authorities
- 4 Sectors
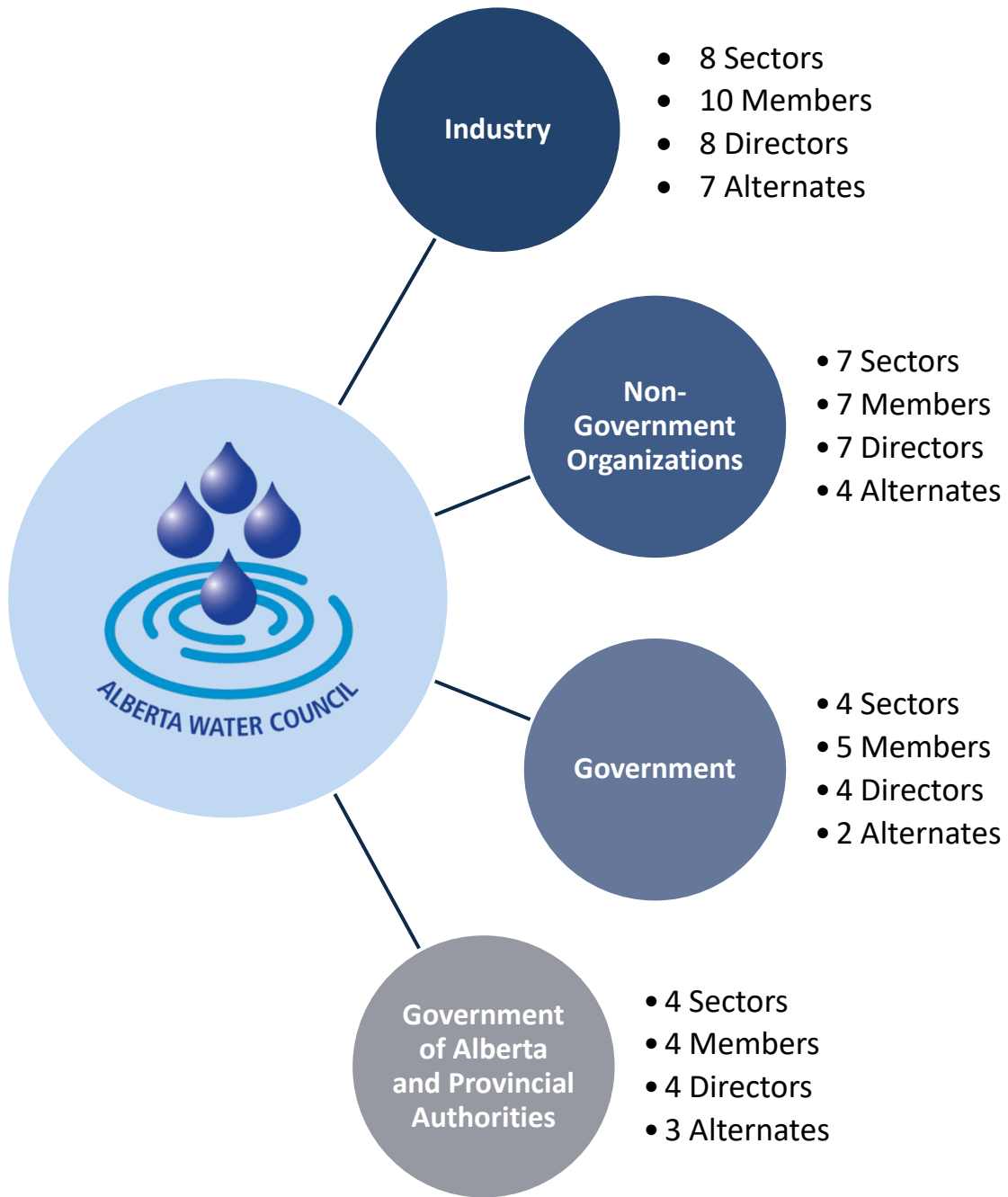- 4 Members
- 4 Directors
- 3 Alternates

Figure 1: Structure of the Alberta Water Council

2.0 General Process Guidelines

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

2.1 Consensus Decision Making

The board and its teams operate by consensus, a process where participants work collaboratively to find solutions that are in the best interests of everyone. The document Defining Consensus 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 participants. 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 participants 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 participants and others, and, where they have committed to do so, implement agreements. One or more representatives indicating a lack of support for a decision (blocking) means that consensus is not reached. There are fall-back mechanisms in the case of non-consensus.

Quorum must be achieved for board and project teams decisions to be valid. For board decisions, quorum exists when 55% of directors or their alternates are present and all sector groups are represented (i.e., industry, government, NGOs, and the GoA and PA). 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. Quorum for teams requires at least 55% of the team be present with one representative from each of the sector groups that is participating on the team. Although most decisions are made board or

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[1] Adapted from *Consensus Decision-Making Toolkit, a Martha Kostuch Legacy*, published in 2010 by the Alberta Water Council and Clean Air Strategic Alliance; online at https://www.awchome.ca/uploads/source/Publications/CDM_Toolkit.pdf

project teams meetings, this can be complemented or replaced by other offline means, such as electronic methods, if quorum can be achieved. Decisions made offline are noted in the following meeting to keep a record of the decision.

In working toward consensus:

- 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.

- 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 their needs.

The meeting Chair will lead the group in ensuring 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

Participants agree to adhere to the AWC's participation guidelines, which describe appropriate behaviour during meetings. Such guidelines (or "ground rules") are an important foundation for consensus decision making. These are:

- listen generously and actively
- clearly communicate interests
- 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 participants 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 or another deliverable (e.g., summary report, discussion paper, perspectives document, event proceedings) to the board that, in most instances, outline the team's analysis and recommendations and asks the board to formally approve the report. Depending on the nature of project work, recommendations are not made but perspectives could be presented to the board for their information. In most cases, Members generally approve final documents at a board meeting; however, approval can be granted between board meetings in circumstances when there is a shared interest to release the deliverables promptly. Decisions made between board meetings are confirmed at the next board meeting to ensure all decisions are recorded in the context of a board meeting. Electronic approvals are typically used when projects are high priority or on an expedited timeline, as described in section 4.0. Team members are expected to brief their sectors' board members to ensure they understand 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 after they have been approved by the board. Directors, or alternates who are attending in place of their director, may suggest these minor changes at the board meeting. If the board reaches consensus to incorporate the suggested minor changes, a revised version of the report will be prepared by staff, and it 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. If the board decides not to continue to pursue consensus on an element of a report, the areas of non-consensus as recorded in the report will be provided to implementers for their consideration but will not be a formal AWC recommendation.

2.2.3 Voting

Consensus is the usual way 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 is quorum, and b) at least two-thirds 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:

- approving minutes, agendas, and budgets
- appointing an auditor
- adding a Member or sector to the Association
- removing a Member or sector from the Association

2.3 Transparency and Confidentiality

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

- Participants are encouraged to be open and candid at meetings to communicate their sectors' interests related to a topic.

- 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 participants and participants, it is incumbent on participants to convey the interests and perspectives of others and the options the team is considering ensuring each sector is fully informed. Such transparency facilitates a robust exchange of information, builds a broader understanding of the issues, and enables participants to make an informed decision.

- Confidential material participants may wish to share with the board or team members must be identified as such, along with how it will be used. The board or team must agree to accept the material as confidential.

- If interim or draft reports are to be shared with participants and participants 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, particularly if those groups are identified in the report as a partner or as a group that could support implementation of a recommendation. 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](#).

3.0 Process Guidelines for the Board of Directors

The section describes the board's roles and responsibilities, accountability, authority, and approach to reporting, as well as details about membership, and relationship with the executive committee and executive director.

3.1 Accountability, Authority, and Reporting

The AWC is accountable, through its Members and participants, 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 them on a regular basis. Board members are 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 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 or a project task (e.g., consultant reports that inform a team's work, or the water conservation, efficiency, and productivity plans prepared by major water-using sectors). Once these consultant reports are approved as having met the scope of work in the contract, they are published on the AWC's website. 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 website and under what conditions, such as providing a suitable disclaimer. 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 sector groups, as specified in the *bylaws* (i.e., industry, government, non-government organizations, and GoA and PA).

3.2.1 Addition of Members to the Council

Any organization(s) wishing to join the AWC must submit a letter of application to 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 executive director. 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 made a recommendation to the executive committee, who could then bring a recommendation to the board. Suspension or expulsion would be considered in situations including, but not limited to, where a Member: a) fails or refuses to adhere to the process guidelines, b) does not participate in good faith, or c) 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 Members to periodically confirm their ongoing representation, and representation is normally confirmed each year at the AWC's Annual General Meeting. Directors and alternates do not have a specific term of office and serve at the pleasure of the Member they represent. Members can identify their representatives at any time. They must notify the executive director of any representative change by email or in writing, which will in turn be shared with the board.

The expectations for directors and alternates are listed in section 3.4 below, and Member organizations should consider these points when selecting their representatives.

3.4 Board Roles and Responsibilities

The board of directors has several duties as 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 and alternates must act honestly and in good faith, with a view to the best interests of the organization. Directors and alternates 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.

Directors and alternates new to the board are provided with an orientation by AWC staff. The directors and alternates 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 these process guidelines.

Both the director and alternate are welcome to attend meetings and are eligible for stakeholder support, as described in the *AWC's Stakeholder Support Policy.* However, if both are present at a board meeting, the director is expected to: a) sit at the main or inner ring of the 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. Directors and alternates are encouraged to speak in one voice when sharing their sector's interests at the AWC table. Table 1 details the roles and responsibilities of Directors and Alternates:

Table 1: List of AWC Director and Alternate Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and Responsibilities	
Directors	**Alternates**
• 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.	• Assume the roles and responsibilities of the director in their absence. • Work with and communicate regularly with their director to represent the views of their sector and keep each other informed about AWC business. • Take an active role in the work of the AWC by participating on teams, champion AWC activities, and otherwise promote awareness of the AWC and its priorities as opportunities arise, as appropriate. • Support and engage in principled negotiation and adhere to the requirements of consensus decision making.

• 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 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. • Keep the AWC Board apprised of relevant sector activities, highlights, events, and other news through various means (e.g., written sector updates, information presentations at board meetings, webinars, others). • Maintain communications and a good working relationship with their alternate. • Have regular contact with their sector's representatives on any	• Attend at least one AWC meeting annually.

AWC ad hoc groups, committees, working groups, and project teams to ensure a good understanding of the implications of the work and potential recommendations prior to any reports or other type of deliverables coming to the board for approval.	

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 (i.e., data, information, in-kind hours, or funding) in support of the AWC's work.
- Review and approve team reports and recommendations, as well as other types of project deliverables.
- Ensure Members understand their responsibilities particularly regarding implementation of recommendations.
- Evaluate the results of its projects and the implementation success of its recommendations.
- Regularly assess progress and board functioning through surveys and other means.
- Participate in relevant training opportunities to enhance the board's functioning as they arise (e.g., consensus decision making, conflict resolution, negotiation, governance, and others).

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 each sector group has a representative on the committee. The board has appointed the executive director to be the secretary-treasurer. Each sector group will use its own process to select its executive member and directors are encouraged to reach consensus on their selection.

The terms for the executive committee members are two years and are tied to the sector group rather than the individual serving on behalf of their sector group. At the last meeting of each calendar year, two executive committee members are selected to represent their respective sector groups. The sector groups alternate in pairs so that the same two sector groups are up for selection every year (i.e., 2024 will see the NGOs and Government name their executive committee members, 2025 will see the GoA & PA and Industry name their executive committee members, and so forth). This approach provides overlap of new members with existing ones.

There is no limit to serving consecutive terms, if the member has the support of his or her sector group.

The four individuals selected to serve on the executive committee decide which of them will serve as president, and the other three are vice-presidents of their respective sector groups. The term of the presidency is also two years. The president is expected to provide leadership to the executive committee and ensure the committee fulfils its responsibilities for the governance and success of the organization. The President works with the executive committee and executive director to maintain key relationships within and outside the committee and the AWC Board. To date, the role of AWC's President has been held by the Deputy Minister (DM) of Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (EPA), who also serves as the director representing EPA. Due to scheduling challenges with the DM's availability, the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) of EPA has been acting on behalf of the DM on the executive committee. However, any member of the executive committee can be selected as president.

The executive committee meets prior to each regular board meeting and as needed. It monitors board adherence to policies and procedures on an ongoing basis. Decisions from executive committee meetings are summarized in the executive director's management report, which is provided at each board meeting. Executive committee meeting minutes are available to directors and alternates, on request to the executive director.

In 2010, the board approved ToR for the executive committee. Its responsibilities include:
- Working with the executive director to set the board meeting agendas, review any issues, and coordinate reporting to the board on business activities, project work, and other matters of interest.
- Chairing board meetings.
- 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.
- Hiring and reviewing the performance of the executive director.

Specific duties for executive members are noted in the *bylaws*.

3.6 Executive Director Roles and Responsibilities

The executive director is responsible for:
- Managing staff resources 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 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 engagement activities with the assistance of staff.
- Coordinating and integrating resources across various teams.
- Advising the board with respect to its liability as required.
- Cultivating and maintaining strategic relationships with Members, Indigenous Peoples, participants, and other relevant parties (e.g., research groups, academia).
- Managing the fiscal resources of the AWC under the direction of the executive committee.
- Undertaking other specific tasks and authorities as delegated by the board.

3.7 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. Meetings occur in person with a remote attendance option available, alternating between Edmonton and Calgary. The last board meeting of the year is typically preceded by an annual recognition event for Members, staff, and other guests.

Agendas are prepared by the executive committee. Board members 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 among directors, alternates, and their sector and inform decision making. Circulating briefing materials within sectors is encouraged to keep participants informed and up to date; however, the briefing material is not intended to be made broadly available to the public.

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 they want 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.

Members of ad hoc groups, working groups, committees, and project teams, along with selected guests, are welcome to attend board meetings when their work is being discussed. Support staff are welcome to observe the meetings. Board meetings are not open to the media.

3.8 Committees

Committees may be struck to address specific ongoing issues or "corporate" AWC business. All committees follow the same multi-stakeholder consensus process as the board and typically include directors or alternates. For example, the *Water for Life* Implementation Review Committee has a standing ToR and is periodically struck to review progress of the strategy. In the past, a special committee was struck to oversee hiring a new executive director.

4.0 Process Guidelines for Ad Hoc, Working Groups, and Project Teams

Much of the AWC's work is carried out by multi-stakeholder ad hoc groups, committees, working groups, and project teams who report directly to the board and are supported by project managers. At the first meeting of a new team, 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.

Typical ad hoc groups, committees, working groups, and project teams kick off with in-person meetings to foster team building and promote wider inter-sector relationships, and end in the same fashion. In-person meetings rotate primarily between Edmonton and Calgary but may be held at other locations as required. Meetings following group kick-off may be in person, remote, or take a hybrid approach, dependent on the meeting's intent and purpose, the project tasks, and member preferences.

In-person meetings are typically a full day in length and other than to start or end a project, are usually held when there are potentially contentious topics for discussion, important decision points to be made, or when the group would benefit from in-person interaction. Remote meetings are typically a half-day long and take place as needed to move the project forward, being considerate of participants' needs. Both in-person and remote meetings adhere to a project work plan and timeline for completion.

Potential new work for the AWC is brought to the board's attention through:

Table 2: Avenues for new AWC work

Avenue	Background
Statements of opportunity	Following a template, a project proponent (in most cases an AWC Member) can submit a SoO to the executive director. The executive director reviews the SoO to ensure it is appropriate for the AWC to consider. If the SoO meets all criteria and is deemed appropriate, the executive director will guide the process for the board to consider the SoO. If there are multiple SoOs to consider, a project selection process is held for members to prioritize work.
Member areas of emerging priority	Members may bring attention to an emerging area of concern or priority at a board meeting without having a

	SoO prepared. In this instance, an ad hoc group may be established to flesh out whether there is a SoO for the board to consider.
Ministerial or departmental request	Occasionally, high priority work requested from the Minister (usually of Environment and Protected Areas) or deputy minister might be brought to the immediate attention of the AWC. In this case, urgent action is required from the board and staff to move forward in an agile fashion. For example, a short, expedited project team may be struck to take on priority tasks as described in 4.3.

4.1 Ad Hoc Groups to Draft Statements of Opportunity

As noted in the table above, a Member(s) (i.e., the project champion) may bring awareness about a water management challenge or opportunity to the board without presenting a formal SoO. The board may create an ad hoc group to investigate if a feasible project idea(s) exists. If the ad hoc group determines the project idea should be examined more closely, they can develop a SoO for the executive director and the board to consider. Statements of Opportunity can also be developed by a single Member, but involving other sectors typically results in an SoO that considers the needs of, and has more support from more Members, with a better chance of being chosen by the board, and the process typically takes less time.

Following approval of the SoO by the board, a working group can be struck to scope Terms of Reference (ToR) for this work (see section 4.2). Quorum is desirable for the ad hoc group but not compulsory. Unlike AWC committees, working groups, and project teams where staff lead the initiative, ad hoc groups are primarily driven by the project champion with support from other Members and staff as required.

4.2 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. Typically, a working group's mandate is to scope and clarify the issue, and develop a draft ToR, including a preliminary budget and timeline, for the board to consider and approve. The membership of the working group should be broad enough to ensure the issue can be adequately scoped. If the board approves the draft ToR, a project team may be formed to conduct in-depth analysis and identify solutions, or the board may decide the project should be a compact or expedited one, as described below in section 4.3. In some cases, a working group will determine the issue is not appropriate to continue to the project team step and recommend the board dissolve the working group without further action.

4.3 Project Teams

Project teams are formed by the board following discussion and agreement on tasks, timelines, and funding to address issues identified as priorities and support meeting the AWC's mandate. Project teams can fall under the following types, based primarily on the duration of the project:

Table 3: Types of AWC Projects, Deliverables, and Timelines

Project Type	Deliverable and Timeline
Standard	Timeframes for completing project work range from one to two years with extensive research required and/or event planning depending on its scope. Deliverables can range from policy guidance and recommendations to a symposium, workshop, or event proceedings.
Compact	Timeframes for completing project work range from three months to one year. Deliverables can range from a perspectives report to a workshop. The project does not have an accelerated timeline but a smaller task that can be completed within a shorter time frame.
Expedited	Timeframes for completing project work operate at an accelerated, shorter rate of around six months. Deliverables tend to range from a perspectives report to a discussion paper. This type of project team is best suited when taking on priority work. The project idea would have a proponent(s), designated funding if any, and well-defined scope. As the expedited process is time and resource intensive, the project idea would be scrutinized by the executive director, the executive committee, and the board before it is approved.

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 the project's 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 the 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. After approving a team's ToR the board may determine 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. The board must agree to ToR amendments, and a revised document is subsequently issued and posted to the website. Approval of final documents by the board can occur between board meetings with decisions being confirmed at the next board meeting. For example, expedited project teams may require speedy approval of final documents instead of waiting for the next board meeting.

Project teams may need to commission consultant reports or host engagement events (e.g., workshops, webinars) 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. These tasks are completed with project-specific funding that must be secured before project work begins. There is an expectation that when the AWC approves a project budget including project-specific funding that members will engage their sectors to determine if funding is available, and support the AWC's fundraising efforts.

Drafts of consultant reports are shared internally with team members who may offer feedback and suggestions, or with subject matter experts who are part of team member organizations. When the team has completed its work, it may recommend to the executive committee that these third-party reports be posted to the AWC website with a suitable disclaimer.

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

4.4 Membership on Ad Hoc, Working Groups, and Project Teams

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) may be needed to implement recommendations. Membership should also strive to include participants who are not represented by a Member on the AWC board as necessary (e.g., research institutions, academia, or other organizations, depending on the project topic). Working groups and project teams are expected to include representation from the AWC's four sector groups. As they are exploratory in nature, ad hoc groups do not require quorum, however it is encouraged where possible.

When the board forms an ad hoc group, working group, or project team, Members who wish to participate will select their representative using their unique process.

Attendance and active participation at meetings are an important part of the consensus process. There can be a substantial amount of material to review between meetings as well. These

demands and commitments on individuals should be kept in mind when sectors select their representatives.

4.5 Roles and Responsibilities of Ad Hoc, Working Group, and Project Team Members

Ad hoc group, working group, and project team members are responsible for representing their sectors' perspective and for negotiating solutions in their sectors' 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. Team members should consider establishing a support team within their sector to facilitate timely input and review of materials. When consensus is reached by the team, sectors are expected to support the decision.

Ad hoc group, working group, and project team members, and in some instances, observers are expected to:
- Represent a particular organization or sector.
- Come prepared for meetings, which means reading pre-meeting material, completing homework assignments, and being able to speak 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 sector groups.
- 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.
- Follow the rules and principles of consensus decision making.

When a team member has been replaced by a new representative, the new team member is expected to become fully versed on the team's work and be prepared to participate. If necessary, the project manager and co-chairs can help a new team member understand the team's work to date.

4.6 Champions and Co-Chairs

Ad hoc groups have at least one project champion who brings forward an idea that requires further discussion among AWC Members. The ad hoc group process determines if a SoO can be drafted for the board to consider. A project champion(s) self-identifies when they propose an idea to the board. On the other hand, working groups and project teams usually have at least two

co-chairs from different sector group that are chosen by consensus. The roles and responsibilities of these roles are detailed in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Roles and Responsibilities of Champions and Co-Chairs

Roles and Responsibilities	
Ad Hoc Champion	**Team Co-chairs**
- Articulate the project idea with the board and subsequently the ad hoc group when it is assembled. - Bring supporting information (where available) on the topic to present. - Lead discussions around the table with support from project managers. - Work with project managers to develop agendas and ensure assignment of responsibility for follow-up on decisions and actions from meetings. - Take the first run at drafting the SoO with support from project managers and input from the rest of the ad hoc group. - Present the SoO and updates to the board.	- 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 project managers 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. - From time to time, request feedback on meeting process. - Present draft documents and updates to the board.

4.7 Project Managers' Roles and Responsibilities

Project managers who are AWC staff are responsible for:
- Organizing team meetings, including development of meeting agendas.
- Working collaboratively with team co-chairs or project champions to advance the work of the team.
- Facilitating team meetings (this may also be done by team co-chairs or a consultant).
- Ensuring the team operates within the AWC's consensus process.
- Preparing meeting minutes.
- Ensuring the team operates within its ToR.
- 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.

- Obtaining advice from the operations manager or the executive director as needed.

If the project requires hiring a consultant, managing the RFP and proposal processes and contract management, including contract negotiations, and tracking objective progression, timelines, and budgets.

5.0 Conflict of Interest

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

6.0 Administrative Matters

6.1 Funding and Resources

The AWC's work is supported by 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. The AWC's core operational funding typically comes from GoA grants administered by EPA. These funds cover core operations costs approved by the board and managed by the executive director. They include staff salaries, office support, hosting board and team meetings, some stakeholder and partner costs, and communication activities.

Some projects require additional project-specific expertise or support to accomplish their objectives. Resourcing for specific project teams is listed in the ToR with the expectation that AWC sectors will contribute funds or expertise as required to support that work. Some examples include hiring consultants, undertaking extra research, and sponsoring workshops or conferences.

6.2 Stakeholder Support

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

- designated to represent their sector or Member
- requested by the AWC to participate but not necessarily represented on the board

The purpose of providing financial support is to ensure participants have an equal opportunity to participate, which is a key principle of consensus decision making. Travel expenses and stakeholder support is available according to our stakeholder support policy.

7.0 Alberta Water Council Staff

AWC staff members provide strategic planning, operations, communications, program, and project support to the board, the executive committee, and its teams. AWC staff have an overall coordination function, including organizing board meetings, team meetings, and completing necessary administrative tasks.

Staff members are committed to the collective good of the AWC. They are the custodians and facilitators of the consensus process. Staff remain neutral on water management challenges and opportunities to avoid favouring any one sector over another.

A memorandum of understanding with the AWC's partner organization, the Clean Air Strategic Alliance, was signed in 2017 and outlines how the staff complement is dedicated to supporting both organizations.

The executive director or other staff members may communicate to external audiences on behalf of the AWC. Staff typically comment on project work, board approved decisions, and processes.

8.0 Communications

Generally, the AWC regards public and media interest in its activities as desirable, to the extent it supports and respects its multi-stakeholder processes. Directors, alternates, and team members are expected to represent the AWC collectively where consensus is reached on water management issues, and they also represent the interests of their particular organizations. Additionally, the board and its Members play a key role in creating awareness about the AWC and its projects and distributing recent work within their sectors as well as communicating their activities back to other Council sectors. AWC participants must ensure any media or public relations activities respect the consensus based, multi-stakeholder principles of the process.

Communications guidelines assist the AWC in being accountable and transparent to the public through the media, while ensuring appropriate levels of confidentiality and trust are respected throughout its processes.

Whenever possible, the AWC will coordinate media activity with sector participants 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 objective and factual information.
- Not share draft AWC documents and materials with the media without staff approval.

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

8.2 Communications Support

Staff provide the following communications support:

- Work with project teams and the board to develop communication plans with associated strategies and distribute key messages in advance of anticipated media interest.
- Identify potential spokespersons for particular initiatives and ensure they are properly briefed and prepared prior to the release of AWC products or launch of media events.
- Monitor press coverage looking at the volume of articles, the tone, what media channels 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 how to correct the error. Correspondence representing the views of the AWC will be submitted by the executive director on behalf of the organization, the chair, or the executive committee, as appropriate. At all times consideration will be given to how the correspondence may affect the reputation of the AWC.
- Identification of emerging issues that may have an impact on the AWC and its areas of interests, and the development of communications strategies to respond to those issues.

8.3 Communications Guidance for Issues under Discussion

It is understood AWC participants may engage in media relations regarding issues being discussed by the AWC. Many AWC participants regularly publish water-related information as part of their daily operations, and this may include information about the AWC. Because these participants are speaking for their own sector, the following guidance is provided to avoid confusion and conflicts of interest, it is expected 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.
- not discuss the positions or opinions of others.
- not disclose specific on-going conversations at the team or AWC table.
- not disclose information shared in confidence or that they would not otherwise have had access to.
- speak about the work plan, ToR, goals, and intended outcomes of a particular team. The findings in draft AWC or third-party reports should be treated, and represented, as such until they have been approved by the board.
- notify the executive director when they have been interviewed by the media regarding AWC initiatives.
- direct media enquiries to the executive director on specific questions related to AWC processes or operations.

8.4 Communications Guidance for Product Releases

Most project reports coming forward for final approval by the AWC will be accompanied by a draft communication plan. This plan will recommend target audiences, communication tools and channels, messaging, and timelines. The timelines proposed will allow for 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 participants.

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 the communications plan as it relates 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 among participants. The collegial relationship, candid views, and sector interests of AWC members and participants should be maintained despite any 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. 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 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 in Table 5 for convenience.

Table 5: AWC Document Distribution

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 upon request to the AWC.	4.3
Draft Reports and other types of documents	Circulating among 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. Documents, if approved, can be posted to the AWC's Board SharePoint page.	2.3, 4.3
Public engagement 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	Circulating among sectors is encouraged for discussion, but the documents are not public. Documents are posted to the AWC's Board SharePoint page.	3.7
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. Documents are posted to the AWC's Board SharePoint page.	3.7
Annual Reports	Available to the public via the website, once approved by the board.	3.1
Final Reports and other project deliverables	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, 4.3

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