

Guelph
Sustainable Neighbourhood
Engagement Framework

Purpose

Operational review initiated by Community Services Department

- City's role supporting neighbourhood groups
- Potential elimination of Community Development Workers

Summary of Consultations

Consultations Conducted:

- 30 Interviews
- 5 Focus Groups
- 6 Feedback Sessions

People Consulted:

- Neighbourhood Groups
- City Staff
- Community Engagement Coordinators
- Program Coordinators
- City Councillors
- F&CS Staff
- Funders and Partners
- County Staff
- Provincial Staff

Summary of Consultations

- Across-the-board enthusiasm for the work of neighbourhood groups
- Neighbourhoods groups are effective, responsive: benefit communities
- Tensions because groups are informal and City is formal: creates constraints on the work
- Neighbourhood groups separate from the City, but City still plays a significant role
- Need for more clarity: of vision, supports, and staffing
- Neighbourhood groups could benefit from more transparency and accountability
- Enthusiasm from range of people and organizations to contribute resources and supports

Framework Overview

- **Common Ground:** Vision, 4 Common Principles, Activities
- **Structure and Support:** NSC Structure, Governance, Resources and Supports, Allocation of Funding
- **Criteria:** Specific criteria and accountability mechanisms

Vision

The City of Guelph's vision statement of the Sustainable Neighbourhood Engagement Framework, shared by communities and partners, describes the desired future of Guelph's neighbourhood group system:

Engaged neighbourhoods make a positive difference to the health and well being of the people who live in them.
Every neighbourhood in Guelph should be a welcoming, inclusive place that engages its residents and involves them, in large ways and in small ways, in the shared activities that impact the circumstances, aspirations and opportunities of all who live there.

Principles

- Key rules for effective community development
 - Facilitate social capital via bonding current participants
 - Also bridge out to new communities
- All neighbourhood groups must pursue these to receive city supports and resources

Principles

Four principles describe the work and underlying goals:

- Inclusive
- Engaging
- Belonging
- Responsive

Activities

- Neighbourhood groups currently undertake a range of different activities
- There are specific types of activity that most effectively meet the vision and principles and are consistent with effective engagement
- Groups choose to undertake at least one type of activity
- Groups will decide which activities are best suited to local needs and the group's capacities

Activity Categories

- Delivering accessible services
- Delivering responsive services
- Basic engagement
- Creating a sense of belonging
- Providing a voice for the community on issues

Neighbourhood Support Coalition

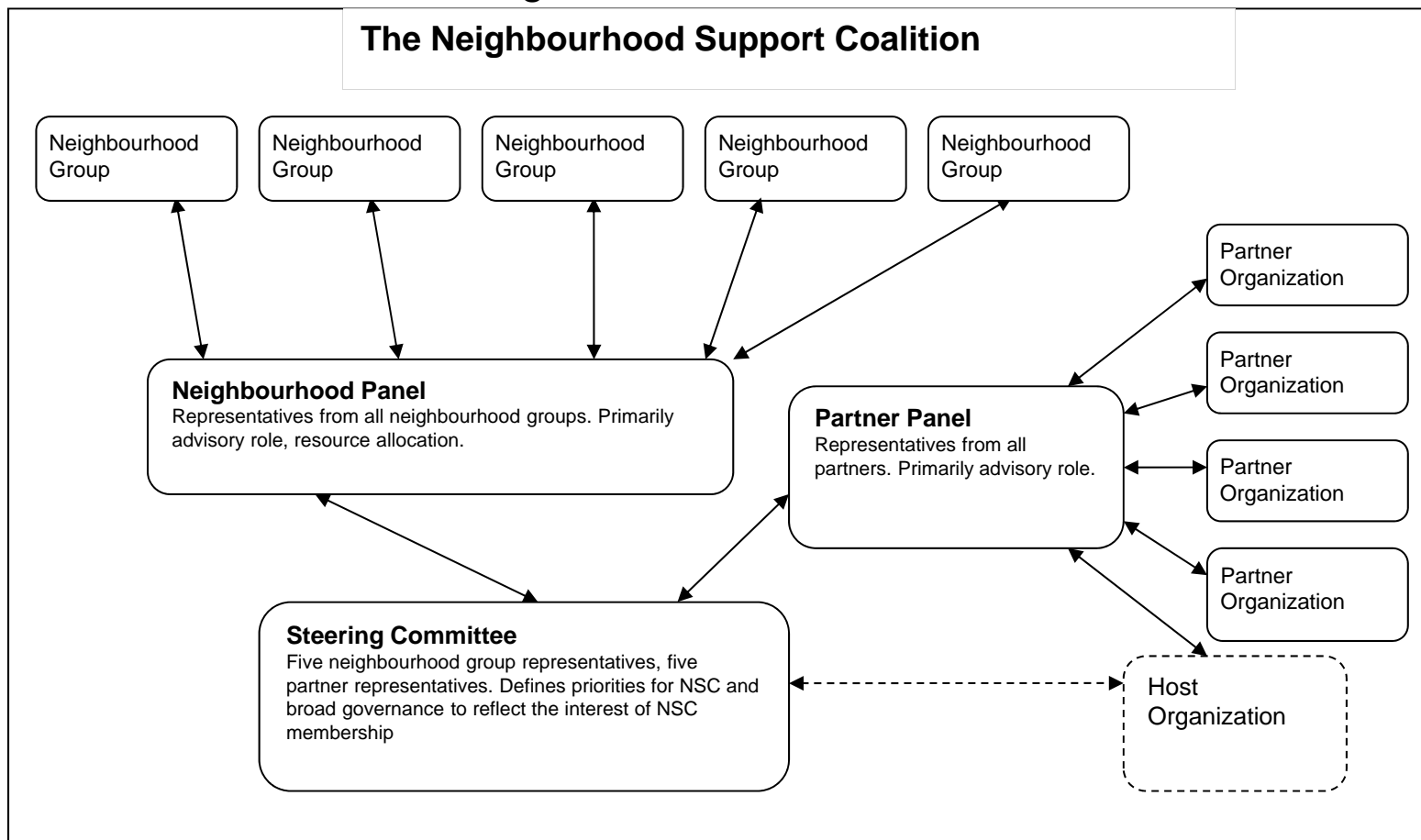
- Build on its existing foundation and strengths
- Bring together partners and neighbourhood groups
- Coordinate partner-provided resources and supports to neighbourhood groups
- Support new groups where there is a demand and where the criteria can be met
- Build capacity among neighbourhood groups – work towards ensuring equity
- Provide more autonomy for the Neighbourhood Support Coalition
- Will require greater internal capacity, including new staff

NSC – CD Workers

- Address loss of Community Development Workers (currently supported by Family and Children Services)
- Coordinate resources for CDW-like staff at NSC, able to work with those neighbourhoods in greatest need, and report to the Coordinator of the NSC

NSC Governance Structure

- Several governance models were reviewed and the following model was determined as working best



NSC Structure

Partner Panel

- Representatives from neighbourhood group partners – that have at least a city-wide mandate.
- The City would chair and lead the partner panel through the transition period and perhaps longer

Neighbourhood Panel

- All neighbourhood groups must sit on the neighbourhood panel.
- Coordinates the participatory budgeting allocation process.

NSC Structure

Steering Committee/Board

- 5 elected representatives from neighbourhood panel.
- 5 elected representatives from partner panel.

Host Organization

- During the initial transition period to an incorporated non-profit, there will need to be a host organization to house and resource the NSC.

Resources

- The Framework recognizes that all stakeholders contribute different critical resources and supports – not just funding
- Many already in place, informally or ad hoc
- Should be formalized in the framework
- NSC can act as a resource centre and allocations body, well placed to coordinate the flow of some of these resources and supports

Resources

Resource	Details
Access to City Hall	Ensuring that NGs face minimal barriers accessing appropriate departments/staff/systems and services.
Permits/fast track for municipal services	Related to above – City provides permits for community events, fast track for safety audits and other service requests from NGs
Space	Office space, meeting space, program space, storage space
Insurance	Covers liability for staff and programs
Staff	For guidance, programming support, organizational development
Human resource help	Hiring committees, policies, conflict resolution, problem solving
Charitable host	To allow NGs to apply for grants in transition to incorporation
Audit/bookkeeping/financial services	Supports to NGs to develop capacity
Templates/guidelines	Simple tools for financial management, planning, program design, by-laws
Training/mentoring	Skills development for volunteers and staff
Organizational development	Staff to support NGs with specific challenges and development strategies (outreach/engagement/ board/committee development etc.)
Research/information	Demographic information, service inventories, system navigation info
Communications	Newsletters/flyers/translation, web-site development
Special projects	Joint fundraising, engagement with city-wide initiatives

Funding Allocation

- Current process is a good example of grassroots democratic practice for distributing funds
- Accountability, transparency issues
- The new allocation model works to maintain values and benefits of participatory budgeting while addressing the current challenges of the process

Funding Allocation

- All funds allocated through the participatory budgeting
- Multiple funding streams, based on donor priorities
- Greater disclosure from each group
 - Report on accomplishments in the last year
 - Budget (costs and functions)
 - Summary of current accounts
 - Action Plan that justifies programs for the coming year
 - Size and boundaries of catchment area
 - Additional information to funder eligibility

Funding Allocation

City Funding Stream:

- Prioritization based on how resources serve vision and principles
- Funds distributed help neighbourhood groups develop through volunteer building, outreach, engagement, or program development
- Neighbourhood groups are actively growing their programs and finding ways to make those programs more self-sufficient, when they are able
- Fundraising by groups is expected as a way to support ongoing activities

Criteria

- Under the framework, neighbourhood groups must be members of the NSC to receive funds
- To be eligible for membership, groups have to meet key criteria.
- These criteria help the neighbourhood groups by ensuring they are accountable to both funders and partners, as well as residents.
- Two key components of this accountability are ***transparency*** and ***clearly stated goals***.

1. Following the Principles

Neighbourhood groups will be required to show how their activities further the core principles annually.	
Criteria	What it includes
Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Activities that the NG will undertake (i.e. special events, programming, services, etc.) •Description of how these activities relate to the core principles.
Inclusion and Outreach Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Outreach activities that the NG plans to undertake •Description of how the NG will ensure that it's activities and operations are inclusive

2. Participation in the NSC

The effectiveness of the NSC as an organization depends on the participation of neighbourhood groups. Neighbourhood groups will be required to participate in the NSC via the Neighbourhood Panel and work with each other to provide support and mentorship.

Criteria	What it includes
Representation on NSC neighbourhood panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every neighbourhood group elects one representative to sit on NSC neighbourhood panel. • Attendance requirements. • Voluntary representation on task forces and ad hoc committees. • Fundraising collaboration

3. Governance and Membership

In order to remain accountable to their residents, neighbourhood groups will operate under a not-for-profit governance model.

Criteria	What it includes
Elected Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Annual elections. •Outreach and inclusion to build membership •Open eligibility requirements.
Bylaws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bylaws filed with the NSC and available on group websites.
Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Groups will make publicly available the minutes of their meetings.
Boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Groups will define the geographic areas they serve in their bylaws. •When new groups form, they will work with the NSC+ to establish the boundaries of the area they will serve. •The NSC Steering Committee will have final approval over boundaries.

4. Ongoing Reporting

Neighbourhood groups will produce annual reports about the types of activities they offered and some of the successes of these programs. As well, neighbourhood groups will make available information about their finances. Both reports will be made publicly available by a specified date determined by the NSC Steering Committee.

Criteria	What it includes
Annual report made publicly available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Community impact activities that the NG undertook. •Number of participants served. •Number of volunteer hours. •Stories that highlight the success of how the neighbourhood group contributes to the principles.
Annual financial report made publicly available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Information about how previous year funds were spent or saved. •Report on any fundraising activities.

Implementation Plan

Goal: for the NSC to become an autonomous organization capable of coordinating and supporting new and existing neighbourhood groups in Guelph.

Two Sets of Actions:

- **Building the NSC Structure and securing a host organization**
- **Neighbourhood Groups Meet the New Criteria**

Building the NSC Structure

Bringing Panels Together and Finding a Host Organization

Approximate Timeline: June 2010 to February 2011

- Current NSC Board becomes the Neighbourhood Panel
- Establish the Partnership Panel
- Host a founding meeting to elect members to the NSC Steering Committee
- Secure a host organization

Building the NSC Structure

Planning the NSC

Timeline: February 2011 to February 2012

- Revise implementation plan as needed for first two years of NSC in conjunction with the host organization
- Develop a budget for the NSC in conjunction with the host organization
- Start to flow financial resources to the host organization for the NSC's operating budget
- Transfer City's role as transfer agent of resources to the host organization
- Hire the NSC coordinator

Building the NSC Structure

New NSC Functions

Timeline: February 2011 to February 2012

- Take over insurance provision for groups
- Resources continue to flow from the City and other Partners
- Hire CEC and CDW-like positions
- Enter into partnership agreements with various partners for resources (i.e. space)
- Implement and oversee allocation process
- Make a decision about NSC becoming a stand-alone organization or hosted

Meeting the Criteria

General Membership Criteria

- Determine benchmarks of participation and attendance to continue to sit on Neighbourhood Panel and receive NSC supports and resources
- Develop templates and guidelines to support neighbourhood group governance

Meeting the Criteria

Past Activity Reports (to be used in the allocation process)

- Develop templates based on existing activity reporting mechanisms
- Develop templates based on existing financial reporting mechanisms

Upcoming Activity Reports

- Develop Action Plan template
- Develop Inclusion and Outreach Plan template