CLEAR COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference and Policies
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Appendix 1 – Service Agreement
SECTION 1:

Introduction
Purpose of Document

The purpose of this document is to outline the Terms of Reference for the CLEAR Committee in the context of the Agreement between McMaster University and the AIDS Bureau, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (OMOHLTC).

The History of CLEAR

After a request for proposals from the AIDS Bureau, the Community-Linked Evaluation AIDS Resource (CLEAR) was established by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, in September 1999, to carry out research and evaluation with community-based organizations receiving AIDS Bureau funding throughout the province.

At its inception, CLEAR comprised a Steering Committee and a Research Team. The Steering Committee was made up of ASO appointees, funding representatives and CLEAR Unit investigators. The CLEAR Unit comprises director(s), investigators and staff, almost all of whom were located at McMaster University.

As the CLEAR Unit and Steering Committee matured and reporting relationships were clarified, this structure was revised in 2003. The Steering Committee reviewed and changed its Terms of Reference in 2003 and is now called The CLEAR Committee. The CLEAR Committee comprises 12 community members representing Community-based AIDS Organizations and programs, funding representatives and CLEAR Unit Investigators.

A review and evaluation of the first three years of operation of CLEAR was undertaken by two external evaluators, Diana McConachy and Norman Booker from Australia.

Contractual Parameters

A legal Service Agreement governing the terms and conditions of CLEAR was signed January 15th, 2002 between the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and McMaster University represented by the CLEAR Unit Director.

The ministry provides the grant funding to CLEAR.

The Service Agreement specifies the obligations of CLEAR to provide the agreed upon services within the Financial Guidelines of the AIDS Bureau. Only the ministry has the authority to approve changes in budget categories and is entitled to impose such additional terms or conditions on the use of the grant, which it considers appropriate. Because of this contractual agreement, the Terms of Reference of the CLEAR Committee must be congruent with the terms and obligations as set out in the Service Agreement. See Appendix 1 for more details.
SECTION 1
Introduction

Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

It is the vision of CLEAR that Community-based AIDS Organizations (CBAOs) and HIV/AIDS programs fully value, embrace, and employ research and evaluation to guide their responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ontario.

Mission

Through community direction* and joint leadership, CLEAR will provide the opportunity for equitable access to evaluate services and expertise to increase the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of Community-based AIDS Organizations (CBAOs) and HIV/AIDS programs in their response to HIV/AIDS and, will promote the use of research and evaluation.

Values

CLEAR aims to model and practice its work through a values-based approach rooted in collaboration. CLEAR has at-heart a historical and ongoing commitment to stronger communities more able to respond to challenging and catastrophic circumstances of persons with HIV/AIDS and those conditions placing people at risk for HIV infection. CLEAR recognizes that this encompasses:

1. Creativity: To advance a vibrant learning environment, based upon ethical standards and strategic approaches that uses imagination and flexibility to foster risk taking, adventure, challenge, and maintains a confidence to conceive and put in place a better future.

2. Accountability: Through collaboration, partnership, respect and transparency ensure that information, decisions, planning and direction setting, and defined roles and responsibilities build trust and clarity to ensure the success of CLEAR.

3. Leadership: To be guided by the principles of equity, professionalism and academic rigour in order to ensure that cultural and community values determine the processes of research and community ownership of the outcomes of the research.

*Community Direction

CLEAR’s community is Ontario CBAOs and other community organizations conducting HIV/AIDS programs or delivering HIV/AIDS services. Priorities and perspectives of these organizations will give direction to the work of CLEAR at two levels: through representation on the CLEAR Committee; and, through direct contact between members of CLEAR (its CLEAR Committee and staff) and individual community organizations, as research is being planned, conducted and interpreted. CLEAR relies upon the organizations it serves and the CLEAR Committee membership to represent the priorities and perspectives of PHAs, and persons affected by or at risk for HIV/AIDS, while providing direction to CLEAR’s work.
SECTION 2:

Terms of Reference and Policies

Revised: May 15, 2003
Last Revision: May 16, 2001
SECTION 2
Terms of Reference and Policies

1.0 Mandate/Purpose

To provide strategic direction to the Community-Linked Evaluation AIDS Resource Unit (herein after referred to as “the Unit”) in evaluative studies of Ontario Community-based AIDS Organizations (CBAOs) and programs.

2.0 Membership of the CLEAR Committee includes:

2.1 The Community Members are composed of a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 12 non-remunerated members and are representatives of Community-based AIDS Organizations and relevant stakeholders in the field of HIV/AIDS research.

2.2 The Investigators are composed of a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 12 remunerated Researchers including the Director(s).

2.3 Additional Members include non-voting representatives from the AIDS Bureau, OMOHLTC, and AIDS Community Action Program (ACAP).

3.0 Role of the CLEAR Committee

1) Support the effectiveness of CLEAR
2) Work within the existing agreement between the AIDS Bureau, OMOHLTC and McMaster University
3) Bring the Ontario Community-based AIDS Organizations agenda forward
4) Blend research capacity and community knowledge
5) Promote CLEAR and its mission
6) Provide guidance on operations which includes: priority setting, strategic directions and program planning
7) Participate in reviewing research themes, monitoring projects and advising on the dissemination of findings
8) Monitor the implementation of the strategic directions and evaluate the activities of CLEAR

4.0 Appointment Process and Committee Operations

The AIDS Bureau, OMOHLTC, appoints community members to the CLEAR Committee. Consideration will be given to assembling a level of collective expertise in order to provide the necessary guidance and advice to the Unit from Ontario’s Community-based AIDS Organizations, consumers and other relevant stakeholders.
4.1 **Community Members**

Normally appointments of Community Members will be made for a three-year term with an option for reappointment for a further term. Appointments will be scheduled to ensure continuity as well as systematic rotation of membership. Community Members who leave their position, will be replaced as soon as possible (usually within three months) by the AIDS Bureau, OMOHLTC. Community Members who fail to attend two consecutive meetings without reasonable explanation will have their membership reviewed by the AIDS Bureau, OMOHLTC. Newly appointed Community Members to vacated seats will complete the term of the vacated member. The decision is left with the AIDS Bureau, OMOHLTC, to appoint, reappoint or remove the CLEAR Community Members.

4.2 **Chair(s)**

Co-Chairs are community members and are elected by the whole CLEAR Committee. The Co-Chairs will facilitate CLEAR Committee meetings.

Election to the Chair(s) position will be for two-year staggered terms. Optimally, Co-Chairs should not be from the same geographical region.

4.3 **Facilitating the Work of the CLEAR Committee**

The Co-Chairs and Director(s) will share responsibility for facilitating the work of the CLEAR Committee.

4.4 **Quorum**

Fifty percent of the Community Members and fifty percent of the Unit Investigators constitute a quorum.

4.5 **Decision Making**

The CLEAR Committee will operate on consensus, and when consensus cannot be reached, a 2/3 majority vote of the membership present will determine decisions.

4.6 **Timing of and Reimbursement for Attendance at Meetings**

The CLEAR Committee will meet at least four times a year and travel/accommodation expenses for members will be submitted on McMaster University forms.
5.0 Reporting Relationships and Structure

6.0 Conflict/Declaration of Interest

6.1 Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest could be possible when CLEAR Committee advice could have an impact on the benefits received by a CLEAR Committee member or their organization or other organizations partnered with or financially affiliated with the member’s organization. It is the responsibility of the CLEAR Committee members to recognize, disclose and deal with any potential conflict of interest.

Any member may declare or raise the issue of conflict of interest during CLEAR Committee meetings. Any members who perceive themselves to be in potential conflict must declare such conflict to the CLEAR Committee. When this occurs, the CLEAR Committee will discuss and recommend the appropriate steps to be taken based on the particular circumstances involved. These steps include deciding if a conflict of interest does exist, and allowing the Co-Chair(s) the ability to limit input, discussion, or participation in consensus building, of a CLEAR Committee member related to the conflict of interest.
A conflict of interest category will be included on the agenda for CLEAR Committee meetings and all conflict of interest discussions will be minuted and outcomes will be recorded.

6.2 Declaration of Interest

As part of their other university activities, the investigators of the CLEAR Unit may be working on provincial, national or international AIDS projects that have not been identified as deliverables for the CLEAR Unit. In the spirit of sharing and openness, all independent AIDS related research might be perceived as a CLEAR Unit activity. Investigators will declare these as investigator interests during a CLEAR Committee meeting.

7.0 Handling and Review of Research Data

The CLEAR Unit Director(s) are custodians of all research data and interpretive reports.

The CBAO investigators own all data and will approve the release of all reports for conference presentation and/or publication including media releases. Without the permission of the owners of the data and research reports, all CLEAR Committee members and guests must treat discussion of projects and research results at meetings as confidential.

7.1 Ethical Review of Evaluative Studies

The CLEAR Unit will adopt McMaster University’s ethics approval procedures. All evaluative studies to be conducted by the CLEAR Unit involving human subjects will be reviewed by the McMaster University Ethics Review Board. The commentaries and letters of approval/rejection from the McMaster University Ethics Review Board’s will be forwarded to CBAO investigators.

7.2 Obtaining Collaboration From Relevant Stakeholders

Each CLEAR Unit project proposal is available to the members of the CLEAR Committee to suggest relevant culturally sensitive and/or local stakeholders (agencies) as potential members of the investigative team.

7.3 Obtaining Approval of the Interpretation of Data (Project Report/Presentation) Prior to its Dissemination

The Study results must be vetted through participating CBAOs and they will not be presented to the CLEAR Committee unless and until CBAO investigators agree with the interpretation of the results. Any given CBAO study may involve a number of CLEAR investigators and CBAO
investigators. All investigators involved in a CBAO study will make decisions by consensus; e.g., generation of research questions, implementation of the study, dissemination of study results.

7.4 Authorship Policy (Authorship Policy on Abstracts, Working Papers, Presentations and Manuscripts)

CBAOs conducting their own studies receive authorship along with the principal investigators of the study. When the CBAO is asking the question they shall be listed as authors along with the principal investigators.

The CLEAR Committee will be acknowledged for their contribution in manuscripts about large projects involving 3 or more CBAOs because it is the CLEAR Committee that poses and focuses on the priority areas of research, poses the research questions, and helps interpret, analyze, and disseminate the data for CBAO collaborating with other CBAOs.

The CLEAR Committee means the entire committee as one entity, not individual members. As for CLEAR investigators, only those who worked on the study would be listed as an author.

7.5 Protocol for Invited Guests

Members of the CLEAR Committee, Investigators and Presenters can identify relevant interested potential guests. The request must be vetted through the Co-Chairs and the CLEAR Unit Director(s).

Consideration for approval to attend, will be based on the following:

- Work must be directly related to the study being presented
- Approval must be sought by the presenters attending the meeting
- Cost of participation must be considered

Invited guests are limited to a maximum of 8 people.

The CBAO who owns the research should be able to attend in order to present it.

8.0 Communication Policy

The key priorities of communication are to ensure:

1) The protection of the integrity of CLEAR
2) The dissemination of information accurately and efficiently to CBAOs
3) The consistent flow of information to staff, community and funders
4) To offer assistance in community development
The role of the Director(s) is to serve the Unit as the media contact person. The Director(s) in collaboration with the AIDS Bureau, OMOHLTC, the Co-Chairs of the CLEAR Committee, will handle all communication and press releases to the media.

The Director(s) of the Unit will be the respondent and will interact with the media on a case-by-case basis after seeking guidance from the AIDS Bureau, OMOHLTC. If the Director(s) is not present to respond to the media, the Director(s)’s designate will respond but must follow the process above. Neither the Director(s) or Investigators nor CLEAR Committee Co-Chairs will respond on behalf of CLEAR to issues that the AIDS Bureau, OMOHLTC, would determine as inappropriate.

CBAOs can release their own information to the media.

9.0 Terms of Reference Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed and approved by the CLEAR Committee and the AIDS Bureau, OMOHLTC, on an alternate year basis to ensure their ongoing relevance.
SECTION 3:

Appendix
Appendix 1
Service Agreement