

CAIN's Working Groups: Structure & Guiding Principles

Introduction

This document is intended to help facilitate productive dialogue and collaboration between members of the Working Groups, by establishing rules of conduct and accountability measures. Participating in a Working Group is a voluntary commitment available to all CAIN members.

A. Conduct & Values

Members of the Working Groups voluntarily give their time and resources with the understanding that we share the common mission of building out the CAIN ecosystem in a compliant, ethical and sustainable manner. Please review the below guiding principles:

- **Collaboration:** We believe in the innovation and creative abrasion possible with collaboration and diversity. A healthy approach to conflict is required, as healthy conflict is generative and productive when done with respect. When avoided, the conflict goes underground and is destructive to collaboration. When expressed without agreements and guidelines, conflict is also destructive to collaboration. Processes and guidelines are therefore needed to guide the Working Groups in its healthy collaboration.
- **Commitment** - All members are aligned around our shared vision big enough to “bring you to your knees.” This vision includes a commitment to continuously participate, and a willingness and commitment to discuss with compassion sensitive issues as they arise and to stay engaged - this is how we build up trust between members.
- **Relationships** - Healthy Working Groups prioritize relationships. In this Working Group, there is a desire to balance the content in the Working Group with the “process” (as in - attending to the relationships, to emotions, to the “how” in the Working Group things are done and decisions are made; everyone’s emotions are valued and engaged, people are respected).
- **Self-Responsibility** - Members are responsible for assessing their own capacity when agreeing to dates and deadlines, and commit to co-members that any changes will be communicated as soon as possible to the Working Group.

B. Commitments

- **Attendance** - Expectations will vary as the meeting cadence will be decided by and will differ for each Working Group. The expectation is that you attend all virtual meetings and if a conflict arises so you are unable to, please notify the Chair at least 48 hours in advance. Working Groups will meet at minimum once a quarter and our recommended cadence is between that and once per month. On occasion, meetings of all members of the Steering Committee, Working Groups and Facilitators may be requested.
 - **If you are unable to attend a meeting**, we recommend that you nominate an individual from your team to attend the meeting in your place. It will be your responsibility to inform the Chair and Facilitator at least 48 hours in advance if you choose to nominate another team member to attend. That new member will be required to sign the CAIN Working Groups Structure & Guiding Principles document prior to attending the meeting. Once the signed document is sent to the CAIN team, the individual will be invited to attend the meeting in your place.
- **Communication** - Members are expected to share any questions, concerns and updates with peers as they arise. Members agree to contribute and respond to requests for input in a timely fashion as much as possible, i.e. ideally within 2-3 days of receipt.

- **Input** - Members are expected to actively contribute to discussions, with sufficient preparation and understanding of the topics at hand based on requested reading, shared materials and prior discussions. Collaboration will occur over Zoom, Slack, and Google Drive. Your input will routinely be called on and expected.
- **Timing** - Members agree to meetings and deadlines on the basis of their own capacity, and commit to being held accountable once confirmed. Any following changes are to be communicated to the Working Group once known.

Members are expected to meet all agreed-upon commitments. In the event of adverse circumstances that prevent them from doing so, they are requested to communicate transparently with their peers in order to redistribute work and responsibilities proactively.

C. Supporting Information

- **Agendas** - Agendas will be drawn up and circulated prior to each meeting; they will consist of topics solicited from meeting attendees and other Working Groups. As such, it is crucial that all members consider and contribute relevant topics and talking points for their Working Group and others. Free-flowing discussion of other topics will be reserved until the agenda points have been fully covered.
- **Logistics** - The Working Groups will convene on a regular basis of at least **once per quarter**. The CAIN Operations Team will support in organizing times that best suit members as needed. Each meeting will have a designated Facilitator that will be supporting operations. The meeting minutes will be taken by the Facilitator and shared back with the participants. Any suggestions and questions between meetings will be sent to the Facilitator and filtered to the Chair as needed to reduce the Chair's workload.
- Occasionally, **external stakeholders and community partners** may be invited to the Working Group session based on each Working Group and CAIN's discretion. Prior notice will be given to all members. All members of a Working Group are welcome to suggest and share connections with external groups and individuals with the Chair and CAIN team.

D. The Role of the Chair, Vice-Chair, Steering Committee, and Facilitator

- The Chair and Facilitator for each Working Group will work together to ensure that the meeting flows well. The Chair will be leading the discussion topics and the Facilitator will be present during the meeting to record notes and contribute to the discussion as needed.
- **The Chair** commits to being present during the Working Group meetings, the Steering Committee meeting (once per quarter), and forming agenda points for review by CAIN's Executive Director and developed by the Facilitator in advance of each meeting.
- **The Facilitator** will be supporting the operational backend between meetings (i.e. sending out communication messages, invites, ensuring everything meets the project timelines). They also work alongside the Chair in preparing agendas and chasing action items and deliverables from Working Group members to drive accountability.
- **The Vice-Chair** is a volunteer in the Working Group that will step in for leading discussions in the meeting if the Chair is unable to be present. The Vice-Chair will assume Chair responsibilities and communicate with the CAIN Executive Director and the Facilitator prior to the meeting if they are stepping in.
- The Chair and Vice-Chair role is initially a 12-month commitment. Please note that for the launch of the Working Groups, an interim Chair for between 6 - 12 months will be pre-selected based on prior interest expressed to facilitate the initial launch.

- The **Steering Committee** will have CAIN leadership team members, Chairs, and Facilitators present. The Steering Committee will meet once per quarter to help guide strategy, support aligned activities between Working Groups, establish KPI measurements, and mobilize resources.
 - The meetings will be an opportunity for each Working Group to collaborate, share updates, receive and provide feedback. The length of the meeting is 2.5hrs and at the start of each meeting there will be a 15 minute introduction by CAIN. Then, each Working Group Chair will present an 8-15 minute update and receive feedback and guidance from others. The last 15 minutes will be spent on general closing discussions and alignment. To ensure transparency, meeting notes will be shared with all members of the Working Groups.
 - Occasionally, advisors will be invited to participate. We will be transparent on the advisor's role during the meeting and will have a code of conduct (i.e. advisors must be objective and not use the meeting as a sales pitch opportunity).

E. Working Group Size and Representation

- **Each Working Group will consist of 15-35 members.** If a larger interest is represented for a specific Working Group, that Working Group may split into sub-committees in a manner most suitable to drive meaningful conversation. There will be a Chair for each sub-committee, but only a single Chair for that whole Working Group will be represented on the Steering Committee.
- **Each organization can have one representative per Working Group**, this individual can be someone other than the primary or secondary contact for their organization, as long as they meet the requirements outlined in the Working Group 1-pagers.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** We aim to meet the following minimum requirements for each Working Group to the best of our abilities:
 - One representative from each of the following regions in Canada once a suitable candidate volunteers themself:
 - Ontario (2 seats)
 - Quebec (2 seats)
 - National (2 seats)
 - Prairies (2 seats)
 - Atlantic (2 seats)
 - West Coast (2 seats)
 - North (2 seats)
 - Minority group representation
 - 40% female-identified minimum

F. Collaborating and Conflict Management Process

In high-trust Working Groups, the essence of interaction is captured by collaboration. For a Working Group to flourish, it needs its own ecosystem, in harmony with the whole. This process offers a way to engage differences well:

1. Each person is responsible to bring up any issue, if someone has a different perspective. Differences are valued and welcomed. If there is an urge to talk about someone else not currently present from their Working Group, that can often be a signal that help is needed to bring the issue back to the person who can do something about it (the person not present).

2. Each person is also expected to welcome feedback and manage their own reactions (ie. to not take feedback or differences of opinion personally and to be “coachable”).
3. Whether bringing up an issue or receiving feedback, each person is expected to express their observations, thoughts, feelings and needs, as best they can, in a way that is as emotionally/psychologically safe for other Working Group members as possible. There are some key practices that help with this:
 - a. **Be Calm.** A strong sense of self-awareness is needed to notice if one might be feeling emotionally charged and needing to do some self-management either before or during a conversation which may feel uncomfortable. Often a “pause” is helpful. Those are the practices to be called upon to continue to work through crucial differing perspectives to find a joint new goal. Each party is understood to not leave the communication process “in a huff” and to remain in the communication process with the goal of resolution - and at the same time, to call for short-term space/time respectfully if needed by someone.
 - b. **Separate out the facts of a situation from a story about what happened.** This is a key communication tool, commonly used in communications training as varied as Non-Violent Communication to Landmark Worldwide. Everyone wanting to create collaborative conversational spaces must know the key distinction between a fact vs an evaluative comment about said fact.
 - c. **Listen deeply.** Once one person has expressed a difference, it is necessary for the other person to “prove” that they have not only heard the speaker, but have actually understood them. Understanding does not imply agreement. This is an important principle which can allow for more fulsome listening. So, before responding, the listener regurgitates and asks: “Did I get it?” and “Is there more?”
 - d. **Problem-solve from a place of understanding.** Only when the parties both feel understood, should the conversation turn to possible resolutions. That way, the actions arising would be based on a robust understanding of the perspectives.
4. In peaceful, collectivist cultures, if individuals cannot come to agreement, there is a willingness and understanding that conflict is every member’s concern for the success of the Working Group. Given that vision, this Working Group expects that individual tensions and conflict can also be brought to the collective Working Group for support by anyone involved.
5. If any disagreement cannot be resolved at the individual or group levels, parties are asked to communicate the matter directly to **the Chair or Executive Director.**

I hereby acknowledge and agree to the Structure & Guiding Principles for the Canadian Accelerator and Incubator Network (CAIN) Working Groups.

Full Name

_____, 2020
Date

Signature