

# Northern Food Distribution Network

## Terms of Reference

### 1.1 Objective

The Network works in collaboration with communities across Northern Ontario to improve the efficiency, resilience and accessibility of Northern Ontario food value chains.

### 1.2 Principles and Values

- All Network members value food security and self-determination as a foundation for community and individual health and economic development.
- The Network's work will aim to benefit, complement, leverage and/or expand on, rather than duplicate, the efforts of Northern Ontario communities, initiatives, organizations and municipal governments
- Network Partners will work with communities, enterprises and each other in an open, collaborative, respectful fashion towards the objective of the NFDN.
- The NFDN values community consultation processes and the input from all peoples
- The Network will work within its means to ensure that sound consultation is conducted on its present and future activities.
- The Network commits to conducting its work without discrimination by gender, culture, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status or geography.
- The Network will make internal decisions by consensus as much as possible, with individual members encouraging input from all partners.
- The NFDN respects the traditional territories, cultures and traditions of all Indigenous peoples
- All NFDN projects or activities that will significantly impact the food systems of First Nations shall secure the free, prior and informed consent of affected communities in advance of implementation
- The Network is accountable to Northern Ontario communities, and will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that its work supports the needs of those it represents

### 1.3 Scope Statement

The Network is founded to address the observation that a) Northern Ontario distribution/transportation assets or networks are often inefficient, redundant or inaccessible, and b) that high food prices for consumers in Northern Ontario are a significant factor creating poverty and poor health at a population level.

This network is focused on developing sustainable food distribution solutions across all of Northern Ontario, including any type of food while recognizing the value of regional, local and traditional foods and their benefit on health, communities, the environment and the economy.

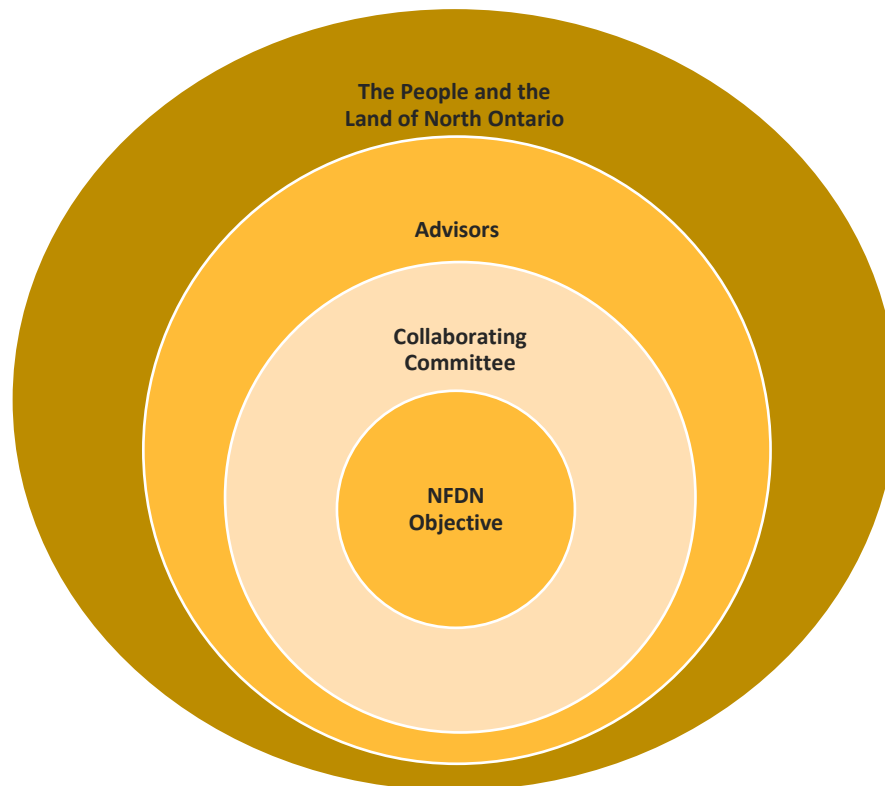
## 1.4 Planning Framework

NFDN activities will be determined by:

1. Collaborative Committee agreements and recommendations; and
2. Through the collaborative creation and review of prospective action and work plans by all Network Members, ensuring that work plans address the needs of NFDN members and communities, while avoiding wasteful inefficiency or duplication.

Before commencing strategic projects, NFDN will develop clear and measurable outcomes and an evaluation plan.

## 1.5 Composition



The NFDN's purpose is to bring together community advisors, advocates and food system actors to address challenges to the food distribution system. Through the development of shared goals, and action plans that are developed through a community consultation process, the NFDN will execute long-term collaborative projects to address challenges in Northern Ontario food distribution.

The NFDN is composed of 2 types of Network Partners:

- Community Advisors represent communities, stakeholder groups and businesses involved in food distribution. Community Advisors are consulted on project specific details and encouraged to provide input on project design and implementation to optimize the desired meaningful outcomes of Network activities. Community Advisors also undertake to transfer or communicate information about NFDN initiatives from and to their external networks and communities on initiatives related to food distribution or improving systems for food distribution in Northern Ontario
- Collaborative Committee members are responsible for leading, executing and evaluating projects as defined by Collaborative Agreements, and the NFDN action plan.

## 1.6 Criteria for representation:

### 1.6.1.1 *Community Advisors:*

In recruiting Community Advisors, the Network Committee shall strive to ensure that Advisor membership include:

- A minimum of one Indigenous community advisor
- A minimum of one remote, fly-in Ontario community advisor, when possible
- A diversity of advisors from across North Eastern, North Western and Far Northern Ontario wherein no more than 2/3rds of advisors are should be from any one of the forestated regions
- A balance of participation from women and men
- There should be a balance of advisors from the following sectors when possible, with a goal of a minimum of two (2) Advisors from each sector:
  - Logistics and Transportation (e.g. freight, airlines, trucking, shipping)
  - Distribution
  - Agriculture and Primary Production
  - Community Organizations with a mandate around food and/or agriculture
  - Food Processing
  - Food Retail
  - Food Access Programs (food banks, pantry programs etc.)
  - Economic Development
  - Funding Agencies
  - Provincial and Federal Government
  - Public Health
  - Education
  - Local government

### 1.6.1.2 *Collaborative Committee (a minimum of 5 to a maximum of 11 people)*

- Appointed representatives of organizations participating as leading or otherwise identified as key partners in projects being executed by the NFDN
- One representative of the lead funding organization, when applicable
- A minimum of one indigenous representative, with preference given to those that can speak for more than one community.

## 1.7 Chairs/ Co-Chair

The members of the Collaborative Committee will select from its membership Co-Chairs, one of which will be from North Eastern Ontario, and one from North Western Ontario.

In addition to general expectations, the Co-Chairs are expected to:

- Build meeting agendas and facilitate meetings
- Facilitate dialogue between members at meetings
- Work with members to ensure that NFDN projects, timelines and workplans are being met
- Liaise with lead funders, when applicable
- Act as public spokesperson for the NFDN, as required

## 1.8 Committee Membership

Organizations desiring to become members, will be subject to approval by consensus of the NFDN. Upon acceptance, the organization will sign this Terms of Reference, though it is not legally binding, to express their intent to participate in and support the efforts of the Network.

## 1.9 Expectations for Participation

All members are expected to

- Respect the principles, values and objectives of the network as described in this Terms of Reference
- Attend meetings to contribute expertise and gather information about food system issues
- Review and provide feedback on background research, issues and gaps analysis
- Participate in Network evaluation processes
- Work collaboratively,
- Strive for consensus
- Be open to considering the views of people from all across the food system

## 1.10 Term of Membership

The Network will be ongoing until determined otherwise by the NFDN

## 1.11 Changes to Membership

- I. Community Advisors may resign at any time by giving written notice to the Collaborative Committee.
- II. Failure by Committee Members to attend three consecutive Committee meetings without giving Co-Chair notice within 24 hours of the time of the meeting shall be equivalent to a resignation.
- III. Recommendations to fill vacancies can be submitted to the Collaborative Committee.

## 1.12 Funding

To complete actions or projects identified through its consultation processes, the NFDN and/or Collaborative Committee members shall from time to time seek grants and/or investment to fund its work. As the NFDN is an un-incorporated entity, a lead agency shall be selected as the umbrella organization by which funding be administered, at which time a collaborative agreement between the lead agency and the NFDN Collaborative Committee members must be signed.

The NFDN will adhere to the obligations of third party agreements.

Any contracts above \$25,000 will be solicited through an Request for Proposal Process. Prior to dispersal of funding, a formal review and evaluation process will be conducted by a review committee as appointed by the NFDN. Conflict of interest must be declared during the review process where applicable.

### 1.13 Accountability

Each member of the group will contribute and share information as they are able, and as directed by their respective authorities. The NFDN is an independent collaborative committee; it does not report to any individual organizational board or council.

### 1.14 Decision Making

The NFDN operates and makes recommendations by consensus. (see Appendix for Consensus Guide)

### 1.15 Meetings

The NFDN will normally hold quarterly meetings with all Advisors, either in person or via video conference, ensuring opportunities for participation for Advisors and Committee Members unable to attend in person. These meetings give all Advisors and Committee members a means to update the Network on projects, and to gather input on project execution and other food system programming underway throughout Northern Ontario

The Collaborative Committee will normally meet a minimum of 8 times per year, via teleconference or video conference.

When feasible, the NFDN shall meet a minimum of once per year in person.

### 1.16 Review of Terms of Reference

This is a living document. The NFDN will review the terms of reference annually to ensure it meets the needs of the Network.

### 1.17 Communications

As a network that connects people and organizations from all across Northern Ontario, it is recognized that ongoing and quality communications is critical for the success of the NFDN and continued engagement of the existing and future members. A full communications plan should be part of the NFDN workplan, which should include at a minimum:

- Active recording of project progress is imperative for members and partner agencies to see the on-going progress
- Quarterly newsletters should be issued after the quarterly NFDN meetings to provide updates on project progress to date, as well as other work underway across the region by partner agencies and communities.
- Annual Reports should be issued, with the intent to share with the organizations and agencies that the members of the NFDN represent, as a method to raise awareness and buy-in on the value of the work, and to provide gratitude for the efforts put in by all those involved.

The NFDN will follow all communications obligations as outlined in third party agreements (funding etc.)

## 2 Appendix:

### 2.1 Consensus Based Decisions Making:

#### **Consensus Decision Making**

This method encourages deep discussion and healthy debate, and also is more aligned with Indigenous methods than a voting approach. See below for the basic principles of Consensus Decision Making.

#### **Inclusive & Participatory:**

All group members are included and encouraged to participate. Group members can opt out of some discussions or processes based on their availability and interest.

#### **Agreement Seeking:**

We will seek wide-spread or full agreement, committing ourselves to generating as much agreement as possible.

#### **Process Oriented:**

We will highlight the process of making decisions, not just the result. All participants are respected and their contributions are welcome. Power leveraging, adversarial positioning, and other group manipulation tactics are specifically discouraged. The way in which the decision is made is as important as the resulting decision.

#### **Collaborative:**

Consensus decision-making is a collaborative process. All members of the group contribute to a shared proposal and shape it into a decision that meets all the concerns of group members as much as possible. This is distinctly different from an adversarial process wherein participants compete for the group's support, and the concerns of the losing parties are not addressed by the winning proposal.

#### **Relationship Building:**

Consensus decision-making has an over-arching goal of building group relationships through discussion. The effort to gain widespread agreement and include all perspectives is intended to support positive relationships between participants. The resulting shared ownership of decisions and increased group cohesion can make implementation of decisions and future discussions proceed in an atmosphere of trust and cooperation.

#### **Whole Group Thinking:**

Consensus decision-making places value on individuals thinking about the good of the whole group. Participants are encouraged to voice their personal perspectives fully so that the group benefits from hearing all points of view. But participants are also expected to pay attention to the needs of the whole group. Ultimately, personal preferences are less important than a broader understanding of how to work together to help the group succeed.

Source: [www.consensusdecisionmaking.org](http://www.consensusdecisionmaking.org)