OCIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY
Approved by the Board of Directors June 2020

Preamble
OCIC's work, both internally and as a collective of members, is grounded in our shared vision of global social justice, human dignity and participation for all. Our policies are designed to meet OCIC's internal needs as an organization, however they are guided by ideals about anti-oppression, human rights, international cooperation, and the appropriate meeting of human needs articulated in a multitude of places by multilateral bodies, states and civil society groups.

All OCIC policies and activities are informed by our Vision, Mission, Mandate and Strategic Directions. Mindfulness of the spirit and letter of these documents is central to the integrity of the Council, as is compliance with the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) Code of Ethics, the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness, OCIC's Anti-Oppression Policy and OCIC's Women's Rights and Gender Equality Policy.

1. Definitions
For the purposes of this policy:

Communication practices include but are not limited to the creation, publication, dissemination of and response to information in any forms and via all media that is relevant to the Council and its stakeholders. This includes content that is not composed by OCIC but uses its network and/or platforms for dissemination.

Internal communications refer to the exchange of information between OCIC Board Directors, staff and interns, exchanged through interpersonal contact, email, phone and social media.

External communications refer to the exchange of information with those who are not OCIC Board Directors, staff and interns, including but not limited to reporting, opportunity posting, membership promotion, consultation, and email responses from an OCIC email or mailing address.

2. Purpose
The purpose of this policy is to ensure that OCIC's internal and external communications efforts are well coordinated and effectively managed; understood by OCIC stakeholders, including members, partners, funders and the public; and responsive to OCIC stakeholders' diverse information needs.

3. Review
As per OCIC's 3-year review policy, this policy is to be reviewed and/or updated by the Governance Committee by May 2023.

4. Application

This policy applies to OCIC Board Directors, staff, interns, consultants and volunteers. Accordingly, each of these stakeholders shall:

- adhere to the spirit and letter of this policy in all activities undertaken in the name of the Council;
- avoid actions that would expose the Council, its Board of Directors, staff, interns, consultants and volunteers to claims of liability;
- report to the Executive Director or their designated representative on communications results at regular intervals, as predetermined or requested; and
- protect intellectual property, information and files from unauthorized access, tampering, loss or significant damage.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

- The Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for the communications efforts of the Council.
- The Executive Director is responsible for administering this policy and ensuring compliance with procedures that have been approved by the Board of Directors.
- The Executive Director, with the support of the Director of Operations, is responsible for the overall direction and management of the Council's communications.
- The Communications Specialist, with the support of other OCIC staff, is responsible for coordinating specific communication programs, projects, initiatives or activities.

The Board of Directors shall:

- ensure adequate orientation and training of the Executive Director and other relevant Directors to enable the fulfillment of their administrative and management roles related to communications; and
- review reports on communications at quarterly Board meetings.

The Executive Director, with the support of the Director of Operations, shall:

- provide overarching direction to the design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of all communication efforts of the Council;
- ensure appropriate financial and human resources are mobilized to implement the communication efforts of the Council;
- ensure adequate orientation of all staff, interns, consultants and volunteers actively engaged in implementing the communication efforts of the Council, to its Communications Policy; and
- provide reports on communications at quarterly Board meetings.

6. Principles

All communication practices of the Council should adhere to the following principles:

6.1 Accessibility & Approachability: The content and media used in OCIC's communications should pose minimal informational barriers such as unnecessary jargon, complex and misleading language structures, as well as any unnecessary technical and financial requirements. OCIC communications should strive to

be compliant with the guidelines and norms established in the latest version of the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#).

6.2 Accuracy: All information shared and/or endorsed on OCIC's communication channels should be factual and based on reliable and verifiable sources. In the case of communication of false or misinformation or any other communication errors, acknowledgement and rectification of these errors should follow as soon as possible, and should be clarified with all involved and affected stakeholders. In order to avoid or minimize this risk any information to be publicly shared by OCIC through its website and e-Bulletin should be approved by the Executive Director or their designate prior to dissemination.

6.3 Alignment & Consistency: OCIC communications should be aligned to and consistent with the Council's vision, mission, mandate, strategic directions, policies, values and program priorities, and should primarily serve the purposes of raising awareness of and encouraging action towards universal sustainable development issues, amplifying the efforts of OCIC's members, and making space for those historically under-represented and systemically marginalized within the international cooperation sector.

6.4 Collaboration: OCIC communications practices should be grounded in a spirit of cooperation between the Council, its members, partners and other key stakeholders, including but not restricted to information-sharing activities and content co-creation.

6.5 Copyright and attribution: OCIC's communication outputs must not contain any content in violation of copyright or intellectual property right laws. When using open licensed content, proper attribution must be provided. Prior to using content produced and/or owned by members or partners, permission must be obtained, including for use of logos and for wording of acknowledgement and attribution. OCIC's communications practices must be compliant with the guidelines and norms established in the latest version of Canada's [Copyright Act](#).

6.6 Environmental sustainability: During the production of communication materials OCIC should take its ecological impact and carbon footprint into consideration. Wherever possible digital files should be prioritized over print, and OCIC should plan for and encourage videoconferencing and other telecommunication methods for disseminating information.

6.7 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: As per OCIC's intersectional approach and values articulated in OCIC's Public Engagement, Anti-Oppression and Women's Rights and Gender Equality Policies, the Council's communication channels must serve as platforms for equitable, diverse and inclusive participation in the Council's communication practices. This includes:

- making space for those historically under-represented and systemically marginalized within the international cooperation sector, including youth, Indigenous and diasporic voices, those working for Disability Inclusion, and other equity-seeking groups;
- including representations of diverse individuals and communities in OCIC's communication practices, such as the inclusion of people of different genders, ages, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation and abilities;

- using multiple media and modes of communication that help to engage people with and in diverse verbal and non-verbal forms of expression and learning styles; and
- ensuring that OCIC communication platforms serve as inclusive space, free from discrimination, in order to enable constructive dialogue, exchange of ideas and mutual learning.

OCIC values and respects differences in perspective and opinion, and the right to freedom of expression. This right is only valid under the premises of respect for human rights and dignity. Discriminatory, harmful and foul language will not be tolerated on any OCIC communication platform. The Council has the responsibility to monitor, issue warnings, and to take action if necessary to remove the said language, behavior and/or its originator(s) from the space.

6.8 Non-partisan: OCIC communications must be non-partisan and objective with regards to politics, and must not include any statements that indicate preference for or condemnation of a specific political institution, governance body or public figure, based on their political affiliation.

6.9 Participation: Whenever relevant and possible, communications practices should encourage participation in universal sustainable development. Communications should be 'actionable' by providing informational content, as well as ways people can contribute to the solutions. Methods and platforms should enable interactivity.

6.10 Privacy & Confidentiality: Unless otherwise specified, communication materials collected under and for OCIC programs and initiatives are to be disclosed and shared only within the Council. Exceptions apply if the content is explicitly produced for public awareness, engagement and dissemination purposes, and/or if consent has been given by the author(s)/producer(s). OCIC must obtain free and informed consent prior to collecting data for and about communication activities. This consent process should include providing individuals with choice and a clear explanation about the purpose, use, ownership and intended audience(s) that will have access to the collected data. Out of respect for people's privacy and time, only data that is explicitly relevant and necessary for the purposes of the specific program and OCIC should be collected. OCIC's communication practices must be compliant with the guidelines and norms established in the latest version of the Council's Confidentiality Agreement, and Canada's [Privacy Act.](#)

6.11 Respect for Human Rights & Dignity: All communications of the Council should uphold human rights and dignity. This includes but is not limited to avoiding any exploitative language and unnecessary sensationalization of a person(s) or living beings' suffering. OCIC should also practice 'responsible storytelling' by providing sufficient and unbiased context in its messages, and avoiding misrepresentation and/or generalization of certain groups, communities and countries. When profiling members and their partners in OCIC's own multimedia initiatives, OCIC should consult and obtain consent directly from the subjects of these stories, to ensure that they accurately reflect their reality and uphold their human rights and dignity.

6.12 Responsiveness: OCIC's communications should be responsive to the needs and interests of its members. Key decisions concerning the Council's stakeholders, including its members, partners and funders, should be communicated in a timely manner and within a reasonable timeline.

6.13 Sponsorship transparency: Sponsored messages should include a clear and noticeable disclaimer within the message to notify the audience of the sponsorship nature.

7. Policy Implementation:

7.1 Branding: OCIC's reputation and 'brand' is mainly determined by the quality of the programs, activities, events, services and experiences it offers to its members and the public. OCIC's logo and visual identity wordmark are key elements of that brand. The application of OCIC's visual identity wordmark is detailed in OCIC's Graphic and Style Guidelines. OCIC's identity wordmark must be applied to all communication products, including advertising, exhibition marketing, printed, audiovisual and digital material. Exceptions to the use of the OCIC visual identity standards must be approved by the Executive Director. When applicable, OCIC will acknowledge its funders and partners as agreed upon by all parties in the relevant funding and/or partnership agreement.

7.2 Promotion and Fundraising: All promotion materials will be consistent with OCIC's brand. In the interest of sustaining a consistent organizational image, no material will be released until approved by the Executive Director or their delegate.

7.3 Digital Platforms: OCIC's website, e-bulletin and social media channels are the digital platforms through which the Council provides information to the public including 'actionable communications' (ways to take action on global issues), and promotes members' work and engagement in the Council's activities. The website and other digital offerings connect visitors to the Council's programs and opportunities, and offer them content and learning experiences.

7.4 Copyright: OCIC's use of images in print and digital communication products, and their distribution to targeted audiences, will comply with [Canada's Copyright Act (1985)](). OCIC will ensure that the ownership rights associated with works subject to copyright are fully respected in its communications channels and products.

7.5 Media Relations: OCIC engages with diverse media actors, including print, broadcast and social media, as well as individual journalists and media producers, to communicate its programs, services and activities to the public. The Council engages with the media on all subjects, issues and questions relevant to the Council's mandate, so long as doing so does not contravene any legislative or privacy obligations. The Executive Director and Chair of the Board of Directors are the official spokespersons of the Council and have the authority to delegate additional authorized spokespersons for specific communications activities.

7.6 Crisis and Emergency Communications: If staff or volunteers witness or are made aware of a crisis or emergency situation that is relevant to the work of the Council they should report it immediately to their supervisor and the Executive Director. When and where relevant, the Executive Director and/or Chair of the Board of Directors may notify the Executive Committee or all Board Directors. The Executive Director and Board of Directors are ultimately responsible for determining whether the crisis or

emergency situation requires further internal or external communication, as well as the format, audience(s) and dissemination of any communications.

8. Linkages to Other Policies and Procedures

8.1 Internal: This policy is one of several organizational policies that guide governance and operations of the Council, publicly available on our website: www.ocic.on.ca. OCIC's internal Communications Procedural Guidelines provide more comprehensive guidance regarding ongoing communications-related procedures and risk management strategies.

8.2 External: This policy must comply with related government policies and guidelines, particularly [The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) (2005)](), Treasury Board guidelines for communications management which call for "prompt, courteous and impartial communication in a plain language" to the public, Canada's anti-spam legislation, [Copyright Act (1985)](), [Privacy Act (1985),]() and the [Communications Policy of the Government of Canada (2016)]().

References:

- [The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) (2005)]()
- [Canada's Copyright Act (1985)]()
- [Canada's Privacy Act (1985).]()
- [Communications Policy of the Government of Canada (2016)]()