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Planetary Health North American Regional Hub Governance Model

North American Hub Council 'Living' Terms of Reference

This Terms of Reference is a 'living document' for the North American Hub of the Planetary Health Alliance (PHA). It was developed based on the mission of PHA, which is "to promote, mobilize, and lead an inclusive, transdisciplinary field of Planetary Health and its diverse science, stories, solutions, and communities to achieve the Great Transition, a comprehensive shift in how human beings interact with each other and Nature."

This Terms of Reference is subject to revisions as needed (i.e., at minimum, through an annual review of its contents by the membership) and outlines the key provisions and principles that will govern the relationships between the Planetary Health North American Regional Hub and PHA Secretariat. The Planetary Health North American Regional Hub currently includes Canada and the United States. Mexico is considered part of the Planetary Health Latin America Regional Hub.

Land Acknowledgement

The vast landscape that the members of the North American Hub reside on has been stolen from Indigenous Peoples by settlers of mainly British, French, and Spanish descent, and this land is now also home to im/migrants, forcibly emplaced peoples, and refugees from around the world. The autochthonous peoples of this land, who are still here today, are Indigenous Peoples: First Nations, Inuit, Métis peoples, Alaskan Natives, Native Americans, and Kānaka 'Ōiwi. How we enact our governance and activities is part of our collective obligation as a Regional Hub to examine our responsibilities to this land and the Indigenous Peoples who have stewarded it since time immemorial. These responsibilities include and extend beyond our Regional Hub meetings to the places where we conduct our Planetary Health research, teaching, practice, and policy-making. By making this Land Acknowledgement and enshrining it into the governance structure of the Regional Hub, we are hereby committing to disrupting and dismantling white supremacy, settler colonialism, and anti-Indigenous racism in our research, teaching, professional practice, policy-making, and everyday lives.

Mission of the North American Hub



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Our mission is to inspire, coalesce, and connect North Americans, in solidarity with all beings, to empower bold, transformative action through the pursuit of knowledge, accountability, integrity, and empathy, centering interconnection within nature and embracing Indigenous Knowledge Systems to restore Planetary Health.

Objectives of the North American Hub

The objectives of the North American Hub are to (1) cultivate a culturally safe community of practice; (2) create welcoming spaces for learning about Planetary Health; (3) support the development of Planetary Health policies, processes, curricula, research, and events; (4) recruit and retain members; (5) promote opportunities for action on shared areas of interest; and (6) routinely monitor, evaluate, and report on our collective progress on these objectives.

To this end, the Steering Council will lead, facilitate, and promote engagement with HUB-wide and PHA Secretariat activities aimed at promoting, mobilizing, and leading an inclusive, transdisciplinary field of Planetary Health and its diverse sciences, stories, solutions, and communities.

Mandate of the North American Hub

1. Establish annual goals and a strategic framework to achieve these goals and the six objectives noted above.
2. Routinely monitor and publicly report on the Hub's activities and progress towards our goals to the Hub's membership and PHA Secretariat.
3. Provide a platform for Indigenous-led Planetary Health scholarship, and create safe spaces for Indigenous students, scholars, and practitioners of Planetary Health in virtual and physical spheres of the Hub.
4. Create safe space for racialized communities to come together to amplify their leadership in Planetary Health.
5. Motivate and uplift the Next Generation of North American Planetary Health leaders in all sectors.
6. Support the work of the PHA Secretariat to ensure alignment with goals and objectives.
7. Inform the Hub's membership about Planetary Health training and resources available to the membership through Hylo and the website.
8. Facilitate webinars on Planetary Health so that the general public can learn, contribute, listen, and respond effectively to Planetary Health matters.
9. Contribute to the dissemination of the work done by Hub members.
10. Act as an instrument and identify opportunities for members to access funding to address North American Hub priorities at scale.



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11. Link the Planetary Health community to North American & Global policy and business sectors as well as civil society and academic institutions.
12. Activate the North American Hub community around specific projects, initiatives, and policy issues.
13. Convene an annual gathering; alternating between a virtual gathering (i.e., academic conference-style) and a land-based, participatory action gathering to learn about the complexities of science that advances environmental justice and Indigenous-led Planetary Health science, find community, seek solutions, and build skills for action and change in the region.

North American Hub Council Composition

The North American Hub will have a collaborative leadership Council model that will have Directors, at least one of whom will serve for two consecutive years to ensure continuity as new Directors are nominated from the membership. Directors can serve with or without their organizational or institutional affiliation (i.e., in public-facing documents, directors can be listed as representatives of their organization or can be listed without an affiliation). No Council Director shall serve for more than three consecutive one-year terms. Council Directors will be invited to self-identify their interest or nominate others (with their permission) in serving on the Council.

The Council will be comprised of the following eleven Directors:

- Co-Strategic Directors: one from Canada & one from the United States
- Operations Director
- Communications Director
- Co-Youth Directors: one from Canada & one from the United States
- Co-Education Directors: one from Canada & one from the United States
- Research & Scholarship Director
- Philanthropic Director
- Policy & Advocacy Director

***Inaugural Council (effective June 10, 2025)**

- Co-Strategic Directors: Heather Castleden (CA), Kent Boyd (US)
- Operations Director: Johannah Bjorgaard
- Communications Director: Megan Miller
- Co-Youth Directors: Amaan Thawer (CA), Yvonne Mongare (US)
- Co-Education Directors: Ashley Aimone (CA), Stefan Wheat (US)
- Research & Scholarship Director: Angelica Walton
- Philanthropic Director: vacant
- Policy & Advocacy Director: Mark Terry



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Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Approach to Council Directors:

The Council will take an equity, diversity, and inclusion approach to its composition. Diversity means the practice of including the many communities, disciplines, knowledge systems, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of the people, including underserved communities. Directors will actively seek to increase the diversity of the composition of the Council.

Council Directors will:

- Have an interest in and/or some knowledge of Indigenous cosmologies, epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies of Planetary Health;
- Participate in scheduled meetings, review minutes, actions, and business arising, and actively contribute to implementing decisions;
- Be available to listen to Hub members who have ideas, concerns or suggestions, and bring this information forward to the Council.

Council Director Accountability:

If any Director misses more than two consecutive meetings, they will be asked to consider stepping down, to allow another Hub member to take on the role, in order to maintain continuity and momentum. If there is no response or action taken, after the third missed meeting, they will be provided with a concluding letter of appreciation - signed by the Co-Strategic and Operations Directors, or the Communications Director if one of the aforementioned Directors is being removed - for their service and a replacement will be immediately sought from the Hub's membership via Hylo or another similar platform.

Frequency and Process:

- The Council will meet at least six times per year. The Co-Strategic and Operations Directors will set the meeting calendar annually, in August.
 - Meetings may vary in length but are expected to range between 30 minutes to 90 minutes.
- The Council will arrange quarterly meetings of the membership. The Co-Strategic and Operations Directors will set the meeting calendar annually, in August. During the first year, every third meeting will be open to membership.
- All meetings will begin with a territorial acknowledgement by a Director on a rotating basis.
- The Communications Director will review the agenda, seek approval of previous minutes, and call for additional agenda items or new business.
- Discussions will take place in Circle Format to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak on an item before the Communications Director moves to the next speaker. If a Director wishes to pass, they may do so. Once everyone has had a chance to comment on the item, a [consensus decision making model](#) will apply. The Communication Director will act as a facilitator for the meeting. Robert's Rules of Orders may apply if a consensus decision cannot be reached.



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- Council meetings shall be open to the entire Hub membership. However, only the eleven Directors will be eligible to vote on Council items. A quorum of six Council Directors is needed for decisions to be taken.

North American Hub Council Directors' Roles and Responsibilities

Note: Ideally, one Strategic Director, the Operations Director, and Communications Director are located at the same institution.

- **Co-Strategic Directors:** Responsible for developing and charting the ongoing, short-, medium-, and long-term organizational processes that define the Hub's objectives and documenting its intended directions. In close consultation with the Council Directors, plan annual Hub gatherings as well as regional events on Planetary Health education, research, and policy so that the general public can learn, contribute, listen, and respond effectively to Planetary Health matters.

- **Operations Director:** In close consultation with the Strategic Directors, the Operations Director is responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the Hub to ensure objectives are being met, connecting with the Council Directors and supporting their needs. Responsible for setting council meetings, drafting and circulating Council agendas, attending and setting chair rotation for Council meetings.

****Either one of the Co-Strategic Directors or Council Delegate will be the Regional Hub representative to the quarterly Inter-Regional Hub Meetings (per PHA's Terms of Reference). These directors will also be the main points of contact for collaboration efforts with other Planetary Health Regional Hubs.***

- **Communications Director:** Responsible for external communications including but not limited to; developing a Hub newsletter, running and maintaining social media platforms (LinkedIn, Instagram, website), member engagement, and other external communications.

- **Co-Youth Directors (honoraria provided** for participation at hybrid and in-person meetings):** Responsible for witnessing the work of the Hub to ensure accountability, offering perspectives and critiques of strategic, education, research, and policy/advocacy work, sharing Planetary Health stories, and organizing (with other Directors) youth-led and/or youth-focused Planetary Health engagements.

- **Co-Education Directors:** Responsible for supporting/elevating knowledge exchange, curriculum development, teaching, pedagogy, and professional development on transdisciplinary Planetary Health from primary to post-secondary schools. Facilitate connections across existing planetary health education efforts (e.g. through co-branding).



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- **Research & Scholarship Director:** Responsible for identifying research and scholarship priorities for the Hub, and linking Hub members to each other to pursue large-scale multidisciplinary projects. Coordinate processes and pathways for early career researchers, BIPOC and other marginalized scholars to disseminate and develop partnerships.
- **Philanthropic Director:** Responsible for identifying funding and philanthropic opportunities.
- **Policy & Advocacy Director:** Link the Planetary Health community to North American government and business sectors, and motivate the Hub community around specific policy issues. Support policy evaluation and dissemination/implementation as well.

In addition to these roles, the Council has the ability to create other ad-hoc roles as needed. Examples of this could include creating a programming committee for Annual gatherings.

*Youth is defined as between the ages of 13-35 years old.

**Honoraria may be provided to other directors who have a need.

Strategic Decision Making Dictum:

- Encourage equal and unrestricted participation of all Directors and Attendees at Meetings.
- Be transparent, consistent and clear in our mission, objectives, and mandate, striving for consensus, and turning to the Hub's membership for guidance when consensus cannot be achieved (i.e., electronic vote).
- Provide alternative avenues for Directors to contribute to the decision-making process when absent from Council Meetings (e.g., electronic communication).
- When decisions need to be made, Directors who remain silent (i.e., no reply) within an established time frame, will be interpreted by the Council as in favour of the decision on the table.
- If Directors or Hub members-at-large have comments or concerns about the activities of the Hub, this is a platform to express them; that is, the Council is to welcome such expressions and engage in respectful, honest, thoughtful, and meaningful debate and resolution.

Data Storage:

All agendas and minutes will be filed on the Hub's Hylo or similar platform (e.g., google drive) and with the PHA Secretariat.

Examples of Expected Short & Long-Term Outputs:

These example outputs are based off of other Planetary Health Regional Hubs. They will be adjusted and finalized by the directors once the council is formed.

Short Term:



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- Set up and seek funding for a North America hub through creating a database of possible funding sources and proposals
- Establish Hub mission, vision, priorities agreed on by all Hub members
- Agree on the organizational structure and culture for the Hub including the roles and responsibilities of the Hub executive committee and Hub members, and processes and procedures to accomplish goals
- Create an up-to-date and accessible list of all North American members with contact details and specialties to drive transdisciplinary collaboration and partnership
- Map and prioritize critical North American stakeholders
- Establish working group leads, themes, and advisory committees (e.g., around education, policy, engagement of health professionals, etc.)
- Update and maintain the Planetary Health North America Regional Hub webpage on PHA's website

Long Term:

- Publish a 5-year strategy for Hub activities and priorities.
- Develop a clear advocacy position, as well as complete a stakeholder analysis of who we want to prioritize engagement with, and what the options for processes of engagement look like. What changes do we want to see in North America at leadership level and at citizen / community level, and what would success look like for us?
- Develop and maintain a well-populated calendar of activities with at least four formal meetings per year. Encourage members to submit posters, papers, and workshop proposals to relevant meetings
- Host informal satellite social/networking meetings as well as webinars
- Regularly convene working group leads
- Track working group meetings and outcomes