

Decent Work Charter

[Your organization name] aims to support inclusive, healthy and equitable communities, and we know that the provision of decent work is central to creating the economic and social foundations that underpin individual and community well-being. We are therefore committed to championing decent work conditions and practices in our society, local communities and within our organization.

As an organization committed to social justice we are signing this charter to confirm our commitment to advancing policy reforms needed to improve working conditions for all.

As an employer we are signing this charter to confirm that we view decent work as an essential component of achieving our mission and intended impacts. And our understanding that the provision of decent work conditions in our organization in turn benefits the well-being of community members and volunteers that we work with each day.

As a leader in our community, we will champion local economic practices that promote and sustain decent work, and will join with community groups, sector networks, unions, and funders to generate collective actions that expand decent work conditions.

To guide our efforts, this charter will be based on the following value statements:

- Decent work is a central source of personal dignity, family stability, community cohesion, civic inclusion, economic vibrancy, and societal well-being
- Decent work is an essential means of furthering the mission and impacts of nonprofit organizations by attracting, developing and sustaining the passionate, dedicated and skilled people who work in our sector
- Decent work is complementary to our commitments to advance inclusion and diversity in our workplace, and to renew and support our sector's future leadership

In signing this charter we commit to advancing decent work in our workplace, communities, sector and society to address seven issue areas of:

- Employment opportunities
- Fair income
- Health and retirement benefits
- Stable employment
- Opportunities for development and advancement
- Equality and rights at work
- Culture and leadership

Signed:

Dated:

Charter Background and Action Plan

This section is where an organization can provide context and a better understanding of their commitment to decent work.

1) Rationale for Our Commitment to Decent Work

[Your organization name] aims to support inclusive, healthy and equitable communities, and we know that the provision of decent work is central to creating the economic and social opportunities that underpin individual and community well-being. [Your organization name] is therefore committed to championing decent work conditions and practices in our society, our local communities, and within our own organization.

Recent studies have documented the degradation of labour market conditions and their impact on people. Challenges associated with precarious work¹ contracts, inadequate and unenforced labour standards, underemployment, a lack of opportunity for advancement, and insecurity are affecting more and more people. A 2013 McMaster/United Way research report found that across the Greater Toronto Area barely half of those working today are in permanent, full-time positions that provide benefits and a degree of employment security. The report also noted that precarious employment has increased nearly 50% in the last 20 years.²

In Ontario, the nonprofit labour force is largely made up of women³, as high as 80%. Over the years research has documented well how women face barriers in the larger labour market (e.g., the gender wage gap, 'glass ceilings', and leaky leadership pipelines) and so ONN is applying a GBA+ lens ([gender based intersectional analysis](#)) to learn if and how those same barriers manifest and impact different women working particularly in the nonprofit sector. Thus far, what has come to the forefront is that although women make up a large part of the nonprofit labour force, in comparison to that share they are concentrated in lower position levels while men who make up a smaller part of the labour force, are concentrated in higher-level positions. Additionally, a glass ceiling exists for diverse women while racialized immigrant women are concentrated in the immigrant, settlement, and refugee services subsector. Moreover, women have lower compensation than men as their wages are impacted by the "care penalty" on nonprofit wages, as they move into leadership levels they are more likely to experience a gender wage gap, and there is limited access to critical benefits such as pension plans and maternity top-ups⁴. For this reason, adding a GBA+ lens to decent work in the sector is critical. Asking what does decent work for women look like highlights solutions that are gender specific and valuable in a women-majority sector.

As an organization committed to social justice we are signing this decent work charter to identify our commitment to the principles of decent work, and to inform our individual and collective advocacy efforts for policy reforms that aim to improve work conditions. This includes efforts to create stronger labour market standards, improved minimum wages, adequate benefits, and the provision of robust social supports that enable people's labour market participation, including affordable childcare, transit, unemployment insurance, pensions, and expanding healthcare to include pharmacare and dental care.

As employers we are signing this decent work charter to confirm that we view decent work as an essential component of achieving our organizations' missions and intended impacts. Ensuring that the passion, dedication

¹ We use a definition of precarious work as non-standard employment that is poorly paid, insecure and unprotected, and cannot support a household

² "It's More Than Poverty; Employment Precarity and Household Wellbeing: Summary", McMaster University Social Sciences and United Way Toronto, February 2013, pg 5

³ ONN uses an inclusive definition of women that recognizes and welcomes trans women, queer women and nonbinary people.

⁴ Decent Work for Women: A Literature Review of Women Working in Ontario's Nonprofit Sector, Ontario Nonprofit Network, 2018.

and skills of the people attracted to our sector are effectively appreciated, developed and sustained directly benefits the well-being of community members and volunteers that our staff work with every day.

As leaders in our local communities we will also use our decent work charter to guide our efforts to champion local economic practices that promote and sustain decent work. And we will work with other networks (e.g. Ontario Nonprofit Network) and key stakeholders (e.g. unions, local business associations) to generate collective actions that expand decent work conditions.

2) Defining "Decent Work"

Developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the premise of decent work "involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all."⁵

A core component of promoting a decent work vision is committing to developing high quality jobs and working collectively to ensure the structures, regulations and practices are in place to support organizations and individuals in pursuing them.

In pursuing a decent work agenda in our workplaces, communities, sector and society, [Your organization name] will seek to address seven key issue areas:

- **Employment opportunities:** The nonprofit sector is a significant employer in Ontario with approximately 1 million workers across the province. It is important to consider the quality of employment opportunities being offered by the sector. Moreover, with volunteer activities contributing to the work of nonprofit organizations, ensure volunteer opportunities also include a decent work lens.
- **Fair income:** One of the most commonly discussed aspects of decent work is the need to provide a fair income, through the adoption of minimum wage and living wage policies and standards that promote income fairness within and between workplaces. In Ontario, employers must comply with provincial rules about equal pay for all employees doing substantially the same work, regardless of differences in employment status (part-time, full-time or seasonal) and gender. The province also has legislated Pay Equity and Pay Transparency. Pay Equity that ensures that the pay for jobs usually done by women ("female class" jobs such as clerical, social work or nursing) is the same as the pay for jobs usually done by men ("male class" jobs such as construction, finance or technician) when compared in the same organization. As of January 1, 2019, the Pay Transparency Act will require employers to eliminate a gender bias in wages through various restrictions and increase the transparency of information regarding compensation and workforce composition.
- **Health and retirement benefits:** Health, retirement and other benefits are another critical element of decent work. These can include family-friendly benefits (such as maternity and parental leave top-up). Many see our ability to provide workers with these benefits as a key driver of dignity in the workplace and an essential part of making our nonprofit sector the site of a career path of choice. In one recent study, non profit employees with access to health and retirement benefits were significantly more likely to report themselves as being satisfied with their jobs and were less likely to report that they were searching for a new position outside of their organization⁶.

⁵ <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang-en/index.htm>

⁶ HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector, *Job Satisfaction and Employee Retention: What's the Connection?*, 2008, http://hrcouncil.ca/documents/LML_satisfaction_retention.pdf.

- **Stable employment:** Stability is another key factor for promoting decent work. This includes thinking about employment protections and specific policies and mechanisms that can be put in place to support sectors that are characterized by high turnover, seasonal or unpredictable work. Job loss has significant effects on both individuals and organizations⁷. For individuals it can mean increased stress and poor health outcomes, reduced retirement savings and benefits coverage, and if kept out of the job market for longer periods, loss of human capital and skills devaluation⁸. For organizations, it also means the loss of organizational knowledge and skills, weakened community networks and potential service interruptions.⁹
- **Opportunities for development and advancement:** Beyond structural requirements, decent work also requires thinking about the opportunities for training, learning and advancement that are available to workers. This may include formal training and advancement opportunities, but it also includes having a workplace and sector culture that is focused on learning and the development of its employees.
- **Equality and rights at work:** A decent work focus on equality and rights includes the ability for all employees to express their concerns, participate equally and feel included and safe in the workplace. This also includes strong employment standards, respecting the mental and physical health of employees, developing proactive policies for diversity and inclusion, and ensuring that employees have the right to organize and speak up about workplace concerns.
- **Respectful and inclusive work cultures:** Decent work involves fostering employment that draws on worker's passions, allows employees to balance work, family and a personal life is supported by effective, people-focused leaders. Investing in a work culture that focuses on values, fulfillment and organizational personal development can help achieve the vision of decent work.

3) Values to Guide Our Action

In promoting the five issue areas above, [Your organization name] will be guided by the following values statements:

- Decent work is a central source of personal dignity, family stability, community cohesion, civic inclusion, economic vibrancy, and societal well-being
- Decent work is an essential means of furthering the mission and impacts of nonprofit organizations by attracting, developing and sustaining the passionate, dedicated and skilled people who work in our sector
- Decent work is complementary to our commitments to advance inclusion and diversity in our workplaces, and to renew and support our sector's future leadership

4) Commitments and Actions

In pursuing our decent work agenda, [Your organization name] will act on two levels:

- A. Societal: working in collaborations with our sector colleagues, local communities, unions, funders and other stakeholders, to create the conditions needed to support decent work
- B. Individual organizational: identifying and expanding our decent work practices

A. In collaboration with sector partners and stakeholders, we will promote:

A1) Labour-Market Policies needed to support Decent Work in Ontario, including:

- Fair minimum wages and employment standards (including pay equity and pay transparency)
- Fostering greater inclusion and accessibility (including working with Ontario's Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act)

⁷ Richard Anker et al., *Measuring Decent Work with Statistical Indicators*, *International Labour Review*, vol. 142, 2003, 38.

⁸ *ibid.*, 142:34.

⁹ *Ibid.*; Donna Baines et al., "Not Profiting from Precarity: The Work of Nonprofit Service Delivery and the Creation of Precariousness 1," *Just Labour: Canadian Journal of Work and Society* 22, no. Autumn (2014): 74–93.

- Labour market legislation and enforcement needed to protect our most vulnerable workers
- Public pharmacare and dental care policies
- Expanded and accessible public retirement plans
- Increased access to and supports from Employment Insurance
- Improved training and retraining supports for displaced workers
- Affordable childcare
- Affordable and accessible transit

A2) Sector Funding Reforms: To ensure decent wage levels, benefits and cost of living increases, adequate administrative resources, more predictable and flexible funding contracts, and evaluation practices that strengthen our capacity for improving community wellbeing

A3) Improved Sector Profile:

- Championing our sector's capacity to promote and sustain decent work practices, as a "sector of choice" for prospective and current employees
- Raising the profile of our sector in ways that increases people's awareness of the value and impact of our sectors' day-to-day contributions to individual and community well-being

A4) Nonprofit Labour Market Data Collection: Advocating for systems to collect accurate labour force data, including comparable wage and benefit levels in our sector, to support the decision-making of individual organizations, as well as the development of sector-level strategies to support decent work practices.

A5) Sector-Level Solutions to Improve Benefits

- Working with ONN and other stakeholders to exploring the feasibility of a nonprofit sector retirement plan
- Strategies to expand access to EAP supports

B.[Your organization name] will strive to implement decent work practices that promote:

Employment Opportunities (for example by:)

- Providing quality employment and volunteer opportunities
- Assessing agency restructuring efforts (integrations, mergers, consolidations, contracting-out) using a decent work lens and resist actions that will generate more short-term and precarious employment conditions

Fair Income (for example by:)

- Providing [living wages](#) to ensure the wellbeing of people taking on our sectors' lowest-paid positions
- Containing ratios between the highest and lowest earners in our organizations so that they are competitive and sustainable, such as the 8:1 ratios promoted by [Wagemark](#)
- To the extent possible, assessing the purchasing of external goods and services using a decent work lens (e.g seek to contract with, and buy goods from companies paying living wages and fair benefits)

Good Benefits (for example by:)

- Providing good health benefits for staff. Consider options that could extend to all workers regardless of employment status
- Supporting retirement savings for staff. Set up a retirement savings for all workers regardless of employment status to contribute to the retirement health of your staff

Stable Employment (for example by):

- Addressing the challenges associated with temporary part-time contract positions by limiting the use of such contracts to short-term projects and initiatives that require them, and providing temporary, part-time employees fair wages and health/ extended benefits
- Addressing the challenges associated with multi-year programs supported by funding contracts that must be renewed/renewed each year by providing permanent employment contracts that are conditional on funding, rather than renewable year-to-year contracts

Opportunities for development and advancement (for example by):

- Linking internal hiring, training and promotion systems to external organizations in ways that will generate opportunities for advancement (i.e. job "ladders")
- Promoting pathways to stable employment by offering temporary, part-time employees training and networking opportunities

Equality at work and inclusive organizational cultures (for example by):

- Promoting communications, team-building, decision-making and staff appreciation practices that strengthen inclusive, creative, collaborative and safe work cultures
- Ensuring that accessible complaint and dispute resolution practices are clearly articulated and consistently implemented
- Ensuring that job descriptions within organizations are clear and consistent
- Sharing and popularizing effective HR practices and policies with others to promote decent work

Decent Work Practices in our Communities, Sector and Society (for example by):

- Publicly championing and promote decent work practices in our local communities, and with key stakeholders
- Endorsing and supporting relevant campaigns and initiatives striving for reforms that would promote decent work (e.g. minimum wage campaigns, employment standards reforms, pension plan and EI reforms, community benefit agreements, living-wage procurement policies)
- Supporting collaborative strategies with others to champion and expand decent work practices

5) Moving Forward - Our Decent Work Action Plan

In adopting this decent work charter we are starting a process by articulating their intentions to support a decent work agenda in our society, communities and organization. To move these charter commitments forward, we will now seek to:

- Ensure that [*Your organization name*] continues to engage with relevant stakeholders and policy process to advance collective efforts to promote decent work in our society
- Evaluate our decent work charter, action plans and efforts on a periodic basis to improve their clarity, respond to emerging challenges and opportunities, and evaluate the impacts of our individual and collective efforts to advance decent work practices
- Assemble a "*Decent Work Action Team*", composed of staff and board volunteers to help guide the implementation of our decent work commitments, and to pursue funding opportunities to support our ongoing networking and capacity-building efforts around our decent work agenda.