

Ralph Thornton Centre ADVOCACY POLICY

Summary

RTCC is a space that welcomes, connects and engages the community in all its diversity. Advocating for the needs of our community is an important role of the Centre. RTCC sees its role as convening, supporting, or amplifying advocacy initiatives undertaken by partner organizations and community members that promote social and economic justice.

RTCC focuses its advocacy efforts on issues that are consistent with the Centre's values and have an impact on the local community and more specifically on the individuals who use RTCC services. RTCC may choose, when appropriate to focus on facilitating community dialogue rather than taking a position.

RTCC will look to align its advocacy efforts with other social service partners who have specialized expertise in the advocacy area e.g., Community Health Centres, housing providers, schools, other AOCCs and Neighbourhood Centres.

Policy

The Executive Director is empowered to make decisions regarding advocacy activities of the organization, provided that:

- The position taken is consistent with the values, foundational documents, mission, Relationships, Belonging & Anti-Oppression Charter and Decent Work Charter of the organization
- The position taken is aligned with an area of work that RTCC understands
- The position does not go against the interests of City Council
- The issue is not one that is polarizing in the community
- The campaign is also being championed and/or supported by existing community partners
- The campaign is not in violation of either the RTCC's or the City of Toronto's political activity policies.

The Board of Management must approve any advocacy activities undertaken by RTCC where:

- The position could be seen as going against the interests of City Council or the local Councillor
- The issue is one where there is a strong diversity of opinion in the community and RTCC wishes to take a specific stance
- No other community partners have endorsed the campaign
- The campaign is taking place during an election period or may appear to be targeting a particular political party/elected official.

In rare instances the Board of Management may be called upon to endorse an advocacy campaign as a Board. In this instance a unanimous decision of support among the appointed members of the board would be required from the Board.

All advocacy activities will be documented and reported publicly on the RTCC website.

Process

1. All requests of support for advocacy activities should be sent directly to the Executive Director, detailing the following:
 - a. What is the initiative about and why is it a fit for RTCC?
 - b. Where did the initiative originate / Who is leading it?
 - c. Who has already supported/endorsed the initiative?
 - d. What is the timeline for action?
2. The Executive Director will be responsible for an initial screening to determine if the activity is appropriate for the centre to support and whether or not it is within the purview of the Executive Director to approve or if it needs to go to the Board.
3. If approved by the Executive Director, RTCC's support for the initiative should be detailed in the next Board report, as well as on the RTCC website.
4. If approval from the Board is required, the initiative should be brought to the next Board meeting. If the initiative is time sensitive, the initiative can be presented to the Board via email for approval. A majority of the Board needs to approve support before an initiative should be considered approved. Further, a minimum of 48 hours must also be given to ensure that all Board members have the opportunity to comment/raise any concerns that they might have. Any initiatives that require Board approval, should be presented to the Board by the Executive Director along with the following information:
 - a. What is the initiative about and why is it a fit for RTCC?
 - b. Where did the initiative originate / Who is leading it?
 - c. Who has already supported/endorsed the initiative?
 - d. What is the timeline for action?
 - e. An assessment of the potential risks to supporting the initiative
5. In instances where an advocacy initiative is to be endorsed by the Board of Management, a decision can only be made during a full meeting of the board. The decision must be unanimous.

Related Policies

- Political Activity
- Code of Conduct, Roles and Responsibilities of Board Members
- Notes on Board Member Roles & Responsibilities
- Notes on Fiduciary Duty
- Relationship Framework for Board of Management of Community Centres

Policy to be review every 3 years.