

Complaints and Feedback Policy

GNCA'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 GNCA'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.

1. Purpose

Good Neighbors Canada (GNCA) seeks feedback, both positive and negative, from all our stakeholders as an opportunity to maintain and improve the quality of our services and our work with partners and donors. We seek feedback from:

- Donors
- Funders
- Volunteers
- People in countries where we deliver international development projects
- People participating in our events
- Partners and others affected by our work

We view feedback and complaints as learning opportunities, and we will reassure individuals making a complaint that the service they receive will not be affected by the fact that they have made a complaint.

Complaints and feedback will be documented and responded to swiftly. GNCA will apply the lessons and insights brought forward by complaints and feedback where necessary to improve operations and strategy.

2. Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all staff, volunteers and external consultants hired by GNCA.

3. Definitions

Complaint: A comment from any party about the actions or lack thereof, either by GNCA as an entire organization, or by an employee, board member or volunteer of GNCA. This may include,

- Going against organizational policies or procedures;
- Failure to act in an agreed way;
- Staff errors;
- Organizational structures that uphold inequalities;
- Discriminatory or prejudiced behaviour by staff.

Anyone personally affected can complain and their complaint will be reviewed in accordance with this procedure.

4. Guiding principles

The principles by which GNCA will respond to complaints and feedback are as follows:

- **Responsiveness** – GNCA will ensure complaints are handled in a timely manner, meeting stated standards of response, and with clear communication to individuals placing complaints on what they can expect in our complaint resolution process.
- **Accountability** – Where GNCA has failed to provide service or response to the standards of Good Neighbors, we will take ownership of the errors or failures.
- **Visibility** - GNCA will ensure the visibility of complaint mechanisms within our communications.
- **Transparency** – Our commitment to these guiding principles will be upheld in visible ways, in our processes and procedures and in our strategic decisions.
- **Accessibility** – GNCA will accept complaints and feedback in ways that are safe and friendly to individuals with concerns.
- **Fairness** – Review of complaints and feedback will be handled in a manner that ensures fairness, impartiality and respect for all parties.
- **Proactive Approaches** – GNCA will proactively design and deliver opportunities for feedback and complaints to prevent the need for complaints.
- **Continual Improvement** – GNCA will view complaints and feedback as an opportunity to be accountable to our mission and to our stakeholders, and an opportunity to strengthen our strategies and processes.

5. Procedures

5.1. Responsiveness

Principle: GNCA will ensure complaints are handled in a timely manner, meeting stated standards of response, and with clear communication to individuals placing complaints on what they can expect in our complaint resolution process.

Our approach: We respond to complaints in a fair, efficient and timely manner. Complaints will be received in a manner that welcomes discussion and comments about the quality of service and care that we provide.

Process: Feedback and complaints can be received verbally or in writing. Where complaints are made verbally, staff will ensure that the complaint is documented and contains all the information the complainant wishes to provide.

Complaints can be made to:

The Project Manager, Rachel Morrison: rachel.morrison@gncanada.ca | 833-614-4663 ext 705
The Executive Director, Hyang Cho: h.cho@gncanada.ca | 833-614-4663 ext 700

The staff member receiving a complaint will complete a report written in line with the whistle blower and refer the matter to their manager or supervisor who will ensure it is reported to the Executive Director within 1 business day. The manager responsible will contact the complainant on the day the complaint is received and:

- if appropriate, express regret for the person's poor experience
- undertake to investigate the matter
- let the person know when they will be contacted again (see *Accountability*, below)

As necessary,

- advice will be sought from a senior member of staff
- the complaint will be managed in line with whistleblowing procedures.

A written complaint addressed to the CEO, will be acknowledged by the CEO in writing within 3 working days, confirming the timeframe for resolution of the complaint.

Managers and staff receiving feedback directly, face to face, or through phone calls, letters, email or complaint forms are required to note the feedback received and forward it, including scanned copies of documents received, to the email account rachel.morrison@gncanada.ca. This email account is checked daily by the Project Manager to ensure that any complaints/feedback are forwarded to the relevant manager or supervisor and addressed in accordance with the Whistleblowing Policy.

5.2. Accountability

Principle: Where GNCA has failed to provide service or response to the standards of Good Neighbors, we will take ownership of errors or failures.

Our Approach: We ensure accountability for and reporting on the actions and decisions with respect to complaint handling by establishing clear roles and responsibilities.

Process: Where appropriate, the complainant will be contacted at each stage of the resolution of the complaint, not just at the beginning when they lodge the complaint, and at the end when they are informed what has been decided. The response to complaints will be as follows:

- establish the complainant's expected outcomes
- offer accessibility supports to facilitate the placement of the complaint or feedback, if needed
- make an initial assessment of the severity of the complaint and the urgency of action
- clearly explain how the issues raised will be addressed and whether and how the complaint will be investigated
- give an estimated timeframe for action or a commitment to keeping the complainant informed

Following the investigation:

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- provide assurance that lessons have been learned
- explain the changes that have been made to prevent a repeat
- follow up where necessary and monitor whether the complainant is satisfied.

5.3. Visibility

Principle: GNCA will ensure the visibility of complaint mechanisms within our communications.

Our Approach: We clearly publicize information about how and where to submit feedback or lodge a complaint.

Processes:

Canadian operations

Information about providing feedback or making a complaint is made available to all those participating in GNCA events, activities. Contact information for providing feedback or lodging a complaint is included in the GNCA Annual Report. GNCA ensures that making a complaint is as easy as possible. All relevant communications explain this and explain our procedures for handling complaints, including:

- where or to whom complaints can be made
- information to be provided by the complainant
- the process for handling complaints
- time periods associated with various stages in the process
- the complainant's options for remedy, including external means
- how the complainant can obtain feedback on the status of the complaint

GNCA acknowledges that promoting our willingness to receive complaints makes clear our preparedness to work hard to continually improve our performance.

International Development

GNCA is a partner of Good Neighbors International (GNI), and as such, must abide by GNI's Code of Conduct and other policies such as Good Neighbors Global Partnership Center Whistleblower Policy, Good Neighbors Partnership Policy and Good Neighbors Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy & Guideline.

GNCA is also a member of the Ontario Council for International Cooperation (OCIC) and a signatory to its Code of Conduct and OCIC's Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy. These obligations will be communicated

In our effort to meet our mission, GNCA may work in partnership with government and non-government organizations, including Good Neighbors field country partners, to strengthen communities worldwide. We aim to build the capacity of communities and local partners to engage in a transparent and ethical manner, adopt a rights-based approach, support child protection, promote workplace health and safety, address bullying and harassment and respond to complaints.

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Good Neighbors' international development projects in Canada and worldwide are subject to rigorous evaluation in line with our policy framework to ensure meeting mission statements. Feedback from project participants is sought on all aspects of the project. There are many ways individuals involved can provide feedback and complaints regarding international development projects including:

- *Formal evaluation of projects. As part of this process, information sheets are provided to all participants identifying a local contact to provide written or verbal feedback regarding project activities and participants will be asked specific questions regarding their satisfaction with the project based on GPC guidelines.*
- *Evaluation of community projects activities delivered as part of the project*
- *Submitting a written complaint via letter or email to the local community partner*
- *Submitting a written complaint via email to GNCA or by the GNCA website*

For partners in field countries, information about how to lodge a complaint is included:

- In the memorandum of understanding signed with the local country partner. This includes the contact details of the Executive Director at GNCA, at Good Neighbors International in the event of alleged breaches of codes or policies.
- on the GNCA website
- in the GNCA Annual Report. This includes the contact details of GPC, Good Neighbors International in the event of alleged breaches of codes or policies.

Complaints can be made to:

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Where complaints are made by project beneficiaries, staff of partner agencies will ensure that the complaint is documented and contains all the information the complainant wishes to provide. GNCA's Project Manager will assist individuals in countries where we deliver international development projects to lodge complaints as necessary. Complaints will be managed in line with GNCA's procedures and guiding principles will apply.

GNCA is committed to providing a safe and friendly environment. This includes having a complaint system that supports beneficiaries, children and those in need of accessibility tools.

5.4. Transparency

Principle: Our commitment to these guiding principles will be upheld in visible ways, in our processes and procedures and in our strategic decisions.

Approach: While we aim to uphold confidentiality in sensitive matters (see *Fairness* below), our commitment to our guiding principles should be visible.

Processes: GNCA will clearly communicate the complaint process to individuals making a complaint and ensure we communicate our response and/or decisions.

The Board of Directors will receive a report yearly summarizing complaints and feedback and staff response.

5.5. Accessibility

Principle: GNCA will accept complaints and feedback in ways that are safe and friendly to individuals with concerns.

Our Approach: We will ensure our complaints and feedback process is as easy and accessible as we can practically make it to all complainants, available in accessible formats.

Processes: GNCA ensures that options for submitting feedback or complaints will be readily accessed (see *Visibility* above) and available in accessible formats. Our processes will be aligned with the guidelines of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Limited financial means should not prevent an individual from placing a complaint or submitting feedback. In the spirit of open communication, costs to the complainant will be minimised where possible.

5.6. Fairness

Principle: Review of complaints and feedback will be handled in a manner that ensures fairness, impartiality and respect for all parties

Our Approach: We address all complaints in an equitable, fair and unbiased manner using evidence submitted by both the complainant and our staff through the complaint handling process. The interests of our stakeholders/beneficiaries are foremost in our approach to complaint handling.

Process: Information about a complaint will be available only to those directly involved in resolving the complaint. We will not reveal a complainant's name or personal details to anyone in or outside our organization without obtaining the complainant's permission. Anonymous complaints may be received, but it must be understood that anonymity may compromise our ability to investigate the complaint and respond in the most appropriate way.

GNCA will ensure that a complainant is not required to express their complaint to a person implicated in their complaint. We will also ensure that a person implicated in a complaint is not involved in any way with the handling of that complaint. Any staff member who is the subject of a complaint must not communicate directly with the complainant unless directed to do so. Staff members who are the subject of a complaint will be supported and kept informed throughout the investigation process.

In recognition of the difficult [emotions?] that lead to a complaint and result from complaints, in circumstances where individuals involved feel they cannot participate in the complaint resolution that upholds this principle, alternatives will be sought out by a senior staff member or Board member.

5.7. Proactive Approaches

Principle: GNCA will proactively design and deliver opportunities for feedback and complaints to prevent the need for complaints.

Our approach: GNCA will intentionally build feedback and evaluation opportunities into projects, events and communications so that stakeholders can communicate concerns or ask questions.

Process: Such processes will be guided by code of conduct, our risk assessment policy and the evaluation framework of GNI.

5.8. Continual Improvement

Principle: GNCA will view complaints and feedback as an opportunity to be accountable to our mission and to our stakeholders, and an opportunity to strengthen our strategies and processes.

Approach: GNCA will retain documentation of complaint and feedback to be used in planning and strategic decisions.

Process: In order to continually improve the complaint handling process we:

- maintain the Incident Report Register which includes documentation of complaints received and action taken to resolve complaints
- review the Register yearly to identify trends and improve services
- undertake specific training and retraining of staff to foster a consumer/client-focused approach and better complaint handling practices

We will communicate complaints and the responses to our Board of Directors yearly and, as necessary, to relevant partners and stakeholders.

6. Appendix

- [Whistleblowing Policy](#)

Policy adopted by Good Neighbors Canada

Date: May 18th, 2023

Approved by Chair of Board of Directors: Ms Beth Leigh Zener

Date of next review: May 2025