



Stronger Together

Principles for Organizational Collaboration

Introduction:

Principles for Organizational Collaboration (Principle or ‘Principles’) serves as an agreement between CNIB Foundation (“CNIB”) and Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada (“VLRC”). VLRC was established by CNIB to separate the essential government funded services of vision loss rehabilitation from the charitable programs offered by CNIB and to better position it as a member of the health service provider continuum across Canada.

This agreement sets forth general terms and arrangements as a framework for the relationship described herein.

Purpose:

The purpose of this agreement is to establish a framework for the ongoing and mutually beneficial collaboration between CNIB and VLRC, in recognition of the two organization’s shared interests and history. It has been created to ensure:

- The best interest of the individuals and families we serve is at the center of all decision making.
- Cooperation and collaboration between CNIB and VLRC foster innovative practices, builds capacity within the sector and, most importantly, leads to best possible outcomes for the people we serve.
- Frequent and comprehensive sharing of information that will facilitate opportunities and mitigate risks for both organizations.
- The expertise of both organizations is leveraged equally.
- Neither organization will inadvertently erode the quality of the other’s programs nor worsen conditions for those whom we serve.

Framework for Collaboration

CEO and leadership team collaboration:

The organizations' respective CEOs shall meet frequently to optimize each organization's effectiveness and to realize opportunities for collaboration.

- The Executive Leadership Teams of both organizations will meet periodically to facilitate the exchange of ideas, to share information about programs and services, and to discuss and review strategic priorities.

Strategic planning:

It is recognized that CNIB and VLRC are independent organizations with their own vision, mission, and values; and, whose strategic plans will reflect each individual organization's mission, supported by distinct goals and initiatives. It is further recognized that the two organizations' strategic plans should be compatible with each other's, with elements of shared language and common purpose.

In the spirit of optimizing each organizations' effectiveness as they chart their paths forward, VLRC and CNIB will continue to support and participate in strategic planning activities, including:

- Conducting joint community consultations and sharing of findings.
- Facilitating exchanges of ideas and best practices between staff groups.
- Identifying opportunities for complementary programming and better service transitions for individuals between organizations.
- Conducting joint research (where appropriate) and sharing of research findings.

Programs and services:

CNIB and VLRC have shared objectives to support the independence, quality of life and well-being of Canadians who are blind and partially sighted so they can live the lives they choose.

- The two organizations will make every effort to support the development and delivery of innovative and complementary programs and services which promote positive social and health outcomes.
- The two organizations will promote seamless and uncomplicated transitions for individuals between each organization's program offerings.
- The organizations will proceed with the shared objective that operating independently will not inadvertently create obstacles for individuals to access services.
- The two organizations will leverage their assets such as physical locations, systems and, websites to enhance each other's programs.

Stakeholder relations and advocacy:

VLRC and CNIB will both independently engage in government relations and stakeholder outreach to support their respective missions.

- The two organizations will make regular disclosures about their dealings with stakeholder groups and their advocacy objectives, with the spirit of avoiding conflicts and/or inadvertently interfering with efforts.
- Where-ever possible and appropriate, the two organizations will support advocacy efforts through endorsements, information sharing, and coordinated campaigns.

Disclosures:

CNIB and VLRC will make all reasonable efforts to disclose in a timely manner information and decisions which have the potential to affect the orderly operation of both organizations. Examples include:

- Decision with respect to programs and facilities which are frequently used by individuals served by the other organization.
- Introducing programs which are either like those provided by the other organization, or where there is an opportunity for making two-way referrals.
- Conducting media campaigns, so both organizations understand key messages and are prepared for directing inquiries appropriately.
- Notifying of emerging Issues with potential for generating media coverage.
- Notifying one another of initiatives where both organizations are stakeholders, particularly if there is potential that both organizations may be meeting with the same people and departments.

Data sharing:

CNIB and VLRC maintain independent databases which store personal information about the people they serve. Maintaining the privacy and security of individuals' personal information is at the heart of all considerations and decisions pertaining to sharing of data.

- The organizations will not share any individual's personal information without their express and informed consent.
- From time to time, VLRC and CNIB will enter into data sharing agreements to conduct research, and or support program evaluation and business decision-making. Data sharing will be restricted to initiatives which are intended to improve knowledge about Canada's population of blind and partially sighted citizens, and/or which enhance the services and programs supporting this population.

Capacity building:

CNIB and VLRC share commitments to building industry capacity and growing the workforce dedicated to serving Canadians who are blind or partially sighted.

- The organizations will work together on initiatives which promote professional development and innovative practices, including certification and training programs for new and existing staff.
- Both organizations recognize the benefits of maintaining appropriate representation of blind and partially sighted employees and will continue to act as preferred employers for this group.

Leading industry Innovation:

VLRC and CNIB are both positioned as industry leaders for supporting the development and deployment of new and innovative products, especially in the area of assistive technology. Wherever possible, the two organization will share information and coordinate on initiatives which bring beneficial products and services to market.

- Both organizations will leverage agreements with vendors, and other research and development partners, where it is permitted and makes sense. For example, sharing preferred rates to purchase technology that benefit all parties.
- Both parties will share technology training and professional expertise among staff groups.
- Research and development findings about the benefits of emerging technologies will be shared inter-organizationally.
- Where possible, the organizations will work harmoniously to roll out innovative programmatic activity.
- Information about advancements in stem-cell therapies, bionics, genetics and drug therapies which are deemed by Canadian health authorities to benefit vision health will be shared expeditiously.

Business opportunities:

Both organizations undertake agreements with industry partners, vendors and third-party customers. From time to time, external organizations may approach CNIB and VLRC separately for services which the other organization provides.

- VLRC and CNIB will refer opportunities to the other organization whenever the other organization is the more appropriate provider. On occasions where it is unclear which organization should lead, and the work order is significant, management will pre-consult with the objective of resolving any perceived conflicts.
- When subcontracting work that is within scope of the two organizations' respective fields, both organizations will treat the other as the preferred vendor.
- CNIB and VLRC will work collaboratively in the application process for client claims that involve provincial or third-party.

Seeking and securing funding opportunities:

CNIB and VLRC recognize that each organization is reliant upon revenue achieved from specific sectors. CNIB from charitable donations, sponsorship, foundations, government grants, social enterprise, etc.; VLRC from government contracts and fees gained from rehabilitation service provision. In principle, the two organizations will avoid competing for the same revenue.

- Where new revenue opportunities exist, and where it is unclear which organization is the appropriate applicant, the organizations will pre-consult prior to submitting letters of intent.
- On occasions where an opportunity may benefit both parties, the organization will evaluate the opportunity with the objective of gaining maximum benefit for Canadians who are blind and partially sighted. Examples of criteria for determining a lead organization include likelihood for success, magnitude of the request, and organizational readiness. Cooperation on a single, or joint, application will be a preferred approach.
- Otherwise, where opportunities exist, the two organizations will support each other's applications through various additional means (information sharing, letters of endorsement, partnerships in programming).

Communication to community we serve:

CNIB and VLRC maintain regular communications with the communities they serve, comprised of significant numbers of individuals in common to both groups.

- Clear communication is the goal for both organizations and outreach from each organization will be identified as such. Where possible, both organizations will coordinate with each other on communications about common topics, such as promoting research, concessions and programs.
- Where possible, both organizations will provide prior notice about mass communications to consumers.
- The two organizations may request consent from individuals to opt in to receive information about programs and services from the other organization.

Employee orientation:

VLRC and CNIB have separate and independent workforces, with no employees in common working for both organizations. The performance of both organizations improves when both workforces are knowledgeable about the continuum of services available.

- Both organizations will provide comprehensive information about the other organization in the orientation for all new employees.
- Shared orientation will focus on programs and services offered by each organization. Orientation will aid employee understanding of services and programs available in the community, and how the individuals we serve can access all services.
- Orientation will also provide clarity about the mission and roles of each organization.

Employee communication:

CNIB and VLRC have separate and independent workforces, with no employees in common working for both organizations. While the vast majority of all employee communication is directed independently for each organization there are a number of areas where coordination will add value. Examples of this include but are not limited to:

- Communication of Statutory Holiday Schedule.
- Communication of location specific closure such as snow days.
- Communication of changes to benefit offerings shared in benefit plans.