



## **Code of Ethical Conduct**

### **Foreword**

Ladies Who Lead (LWL) Code of Ethical Conduct (the Code) consolidates LWL ethics, core values and professional conduct that guide our work on a daily basis. It also includes guidelines concerning conflicts of interest and sexual exploitation and abuse and a possible resolution when such situations arise. LWL is equally committed to providing an environment in which all feel welcomed and respected. Both the Code and LWL Constitution attach a great deal of importance on two-way communication at all levels. All members, employees, and individuals representing LWL are expected to openly discuss the issues described in this document (or those referred to) with the Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

### **Who does it apply to?**

This section applies to all employees, interns, volunteers, members, consultants, and any other individual who is traveling to a location on behalf of LWL and/or is reasonably considered a representative of LWL. All such individuals are herein referred to as Representatives.

## **Introduction**

### **Purpose**

LWL Code of Ethical Conduct sets out the expectations that guide and support the behaviour of LWL members, employees, volunteers, and representatives of LWL in their official activities. It will serve to promote and maintain a professional environment and preserve the trust of people and organizations with whom LWL interacts. LWL integrity and reputation for ethical practices are part of its most valued asset, are essential elements to its sustainability and ultimately depend on individual actions of each member of LWL.

## **Conduct**

### **Professional Conduct:**

Perform work with competence, excellence, efficiency, objectivity, and impartiality.

- All LWL Representatives, regardless of their position or experience, shall endeavour to attain high standards of conduct, competence, excellence and integrity in their work.

- LWL Representatives shall comply with the law.
- LWL ELT Members shall ensure the appropriate, effective, and efficient use of all funds and resources.
- The professional conduct of LWL Representatives shall be always above reproach. Unsatisfactory behavior reflects negatively on their membership.

### **Ethical Conduct:**

Act in such a way that preserves the trust of our colleagues, members, and partners.

- LWL Representatives are required to perform their official duties and organize their personal business in such a way that preserves the trust of our members and partners in terms of the integrity, independence, and objectivity of LWL.
- Integrity is an essential quality for all members, employees, and representatives of LWL

### **Conduct When Dealing with Others:**

Demonstrate respect, fairness and courtesy with colleagues, members and other LWL affiliations

- The exercise of authority and responsibility shall always be inspired by respect for human dignity and acknowledgement of each person's value.
- Openness, communication, and respect for diversity are fundamental values for LWL members, employees, and representatives of LWL.

### **Sexual exploitation and abuse:**

All Representatives of LWL are strictly prohibited from engaging in any of the following actions, behaviours, or activities. In addition, if any employee, member, or representative is aware of any such actions, behaviours or activities occurring on the part of another employee, member or representative, they are required to immediately report the information to ELT.

- Never exploit the vulnerability of a target group such as women and children or allow an individual or other representative to be put in a compromising situation.
- In line with international standards and Canadian legislation, never engage in sexual activity with persons under the age of 18, regardless of local legislation regarding the age of majority or consent. A lack of knowledge of the child's actual age cannot be used as a defense.
- Never exchange money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours. All forms of humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behaviour are unacceptable.
- Not engage in sexual relations with beneficiaries. It is prohibited because it is based on unequal power dynamics and such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of LWL.
- Ensure that all confidential information, including reports of violations of these standards by Representatives obtained from beneficiaries or other Representatives is handled properly and with the utmost confidentiality.
- Ensure that reports of violations of these standards are immediately provided to a Member of the ELT. Those who receive these reports will investigate immediately

## **Confidentiality**

All complaints shall be handled with diligence and complete discretion. The identity of anyone who makes a complaint or claim or who provides information shall remain confidential, except where the law or the court stipulates otherwise. No action shall be taken against anyone who invokes the complaints management procedure in good faith, even if it is determined that the complaint is unfounded.

## **Gifts, tokens of hospitality and other benefits**

Representatives shall not accept or solicit any personal gift, commission, reward, advantage, or benefit of any value from any person, firm or corporation which is interested directly or indirectly in any manner of business dealings with LWL, if they are not currently a service provider. Representatives shall not accept or solicit any gift, token of hospitality or other benefit that:

- is likely to have a real or apparent influence on the objectivity and impartiality of the employee, member, or representative in the performance of official duties; or
- that places the Representative in a situation of obligation toward the donor(s).

It will however be deemed acceptable to receive a gift, token of hospitality or other benefit if:

- The value is incidental (inexpensive promotional items, light meals, souvenirs of no monetary value);
- The offer occurs during an activity or event related to the performance of the official duties of the employee or representative in question;
- It complies with the rules or practices of courtesy, hospitality or protocol;
- It does not compromise or seem to compromise in any way the integrity of the Representative concerned or LWL as an organization.

Examples of acceptable gifts include occasional meals, tickets to events, gift baskets or candy. Repeated offers of gifts or offers of relatively substantial gifts shall be reported to the ELT

When a Representative feels it is impossible to refuse a gift, token of hospitality or other benefit that does not meet the aforementioned acceptability criteria, the Representative shall consult with ELT. The Representative will be notified if the item should be kept by LWL, donated, or whether it will be possible for the Representative to retain. Within the context of raising funds for charitable organizations on behalf of LWL, Representatives shall first obtain permission from the ELT. In order to solicit donations, prizes or contributions in kind from outside organizations or individuals. The activity may be required to be reduced, modified, or abandoned if it is determined there is a risk of a conflict of interest or create a situation that imposes an obligation towards the donor(s).

## **Refusal to grant preferential treatment**

During the recruitment process of members, employees, and representatives shall ensure they do not unduly influence the selection committee or grant any preferential treatment toward the hiring and/or approval decision of members of their family, household or their friends. During the decision-making process related to the awarding of financial benefits to outside parties, members, employees, and representatives shall ensure that they do not grant preferential treatment to members of their family, former LWL colleagues or to friends. Before signing any LWL contract, the Representatives creating the contract and the contracting individual have a shared responsibility to disclose the existence of direct or indirect shared personal interests. Conveying information that is easily accessible to the general public to family, friends or entities in which employees, members, Representatives or their families have an interest is not considered preferential treatment.

## **Discrimination, Harassment and Violence Prevention and Conduct**

To outline the preventative measures LWL will take in terms of discrimination, harassment, and violence. This policy will hold LWL accountable to ensure a fair and equitable association for all members. Our association strives to be a place where members feel comfortable and heard by one another.

### **Interpretation**

In this Code, the following definitions shall apply:

- “discrimination means, per the Canadian Human Rights Commission, an action or a decision that treats a person or a group badly for characteristics inherent to their personhood.
- “harassment means, per the Canadian Human Rights Commission, a form of discrimination that involves any action that constitutes or encourages unwanted physical or verbal behaviour that intimidates, offends, degrades, or humiliates a person, whether serial or isolated;
- “marginalization” means, per the Government of Ontario, a long-term, structural process of systemic discrimination that creates a class of disadvantaged minorities, who become permanently confined to the fringes of society. Their status is perpetuated through various dimensions of exclusion, particularly in the labour market, from full and meaningful participation in society;
- “violence” means The use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy [...] intense, turbulent, or furious and often destructive action or force;

This policy applies to all LWL spaces, including but not limited to: venues where meetings are held, in-person and online events/spaces, and applies to all LWL members including but not limited to ELT, employees, Representatives, and volunteers.

LWL denounces all forms of discrimination, harassment, and violence, including but not limited to homophobia; sexism; transphobia; ageism; racism; Islamophobia; antisemitism; and xenophobia, and the various intersections of these and other identities.

LWL stands for the fact that all members deserve equitable treatment regardless of their identity and the various intersections of their identities.

LWL recognizes that marginalization due to identity can impact individuals and communities differently.

### **Policy**

LWL commits to the upkeep of accessibility features of its spaces, including physical, virtual, events, services and programming.

LWL is committed to adapting its programming services to the present and evolving needs of all marginalized communities.

LWL commits to providing services, programming, resources and support to all members impacted by discrimination, harassment and violence.

LWL commits to maintaining a space where impacted members can have their voices heard and uplifted.

LWL commits to sharing information through appropriate avenues about how members can report incidents of discrimination, harassment and violence, and the appropriate channels through which to do so.

LWL commits to maintaining meaningful and positive relationships with impacted members by maintaining an open line of communication for feedback and concerns from students to ensure that LWL is doing its due diligence when it comes to discrimination, harassment, and violence prevention.

LWL commits to respecting religious days of importance by preventing the scheduling of events and services on said days.

Responsibilities of LWL employees, members, and representatives:

All LWL activities shall comply with this Code. For all questions related to the compliance of activities, Representatives of LWL will refer to the ELT, and with this Code is part of LWL conditions of Membership. At the time of accepting the membership or offer of employment, the individual acknowledges their conditions of membership/employment/affiliation, which also include the requirement to respect the confidentiality of internal documents, information, and communications. A Representative of LWL will be asked to acknowledge the conditions as outlined in this Code. It is the responsibility of all LWL Representatives to comply with this Code in the performance of their duties and in particular, to embody the Core Values of LWL in their actions and behaviour.

