ONTARIO NONPROFIT NETWORK

Decent Work Checklist for the Nonprofit Sector

Decent work practices are not simply limited to financial rewards and benefits. Organizational practices and cultures are part of a decent work environment. This simple checklist can help you think about what decent work practices look like for your organization, and identify areas where you are achieving impressive decent work practices and areas where you would like to improve.

Ideas from the sector by the sector
Hard and fast industry standards in the area of decent work are not available for the nonprofit sector. *Use this tool to create dialogue within your organization, not as a formal evaluation tool.*

The checklist builds upon definitions and dimensions of "Decent Work" developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO). It comes from extensive focus group discussions with front-line, non-management and management staff, and board members in our local Toronto network of multi-service social-service organizations.

Make the checklist your own
Let's work together in our networks, and as a sector, to advocate for policy changes that allow us to implement decent work practices more fully.

We know there is no one-size-fits-all template that can reflect the diverse sizes and activities of nonprofit organizations. Feel free to revise and add to this list. Share what you add or change – we would love to see how you are using the checklist (email randall@theonn.ca).

This is a work in progress and we welcome your feedback. Thank you for helping to strengthen the sector, and the communities we serve, through decent work. Thank you to Toronto Neighbourhood Centres and other ONN supporters who helped us in developing and testing this checklist.

1) Decent Wages

Fair income is one common aspect of decent work. This involves not only salaries, but also income security: paid holiday, parental and sick leave, and steady work hours that allow for a predictable income. Support for fair income might mean promoting and adopting "living wage" policies or other standards that promote income fairness within, and between, workplaces.

Indicator A: Adequacy of lowest paid positions in our organization	Rating	Our organization	Comments
Government-mandated minimum wage	Basic ✓		
$15 hourly wage	Better ✓		
More than $15 an hour is required to live adequately in many cities in Ontario Visit Ontario Living Wage Network to see living wage rates in your region. ontariolivingwage.ca/living_wage_by_region	Best ✓		

Indicator B: Annual salary increases across position levels	Rating	Our organization	Comments
No staff salary increases have been granted over the past 2 years	Basic ✓		
A modest staff salary increase (below cost of living or approximately 2%)	Better ✓		
A staff salary increase at or above the cost of living	Best ✓		

Indicator C: Eliminating Gender Bias	Rating	Our Organization	Comments
Wage gaps between genders are identified (including within pay scales) at all levels and upward adjustments are made	Basic ✓		
Pay equity and pay transparency plans are in place with obligations being met as mandated	Better✓		
Pay scales for positions are provided in job postings. Note: In terms of bias, there is still opportunity to pay people less if they are not strong negotiators. Having a single pay amount is more transparent.	Better ✓		
There is an equitable and consistent stance on salary and contract negotiations across position levels	Best✓		

2) Decent Benefits

In addition to extended benefits (such as holiday pay, parental and sick leave, which are governed by the Employment Standards Act), retirement income security and access to essential healthcare are two of the most central elements of decent work. These are especially important to the nonprofit sector as a key driver of dignity in the workplace and making our sector an employer of choice.

Indicator A: FULL TIME STAFF key benefits	Rating	Our organization	Comments
Those mandated in Ontario's Employment Standards Act (ESA)	Basic ✓		
Paid sick leave	Better ✓		
Paid vacation time above ESA minimum	Better ✓		
Co-pay (by employer) or sole pay health and dental benefits	Best ✓		
Some kind of employer/employee pension or retirement savings plan	Best ✓		
Maternity benefits (EI) and parental leaves (ESA) are supplemented with a "top-up"	Best ✓		
Benefit plans are reviewed regularly	Best ✓		
Indicator B: PART TIME and/or CONTRACT STAFF Pro rated benefits (or wages in lieu of benefits	Rating	Our organization	Comments
Those mandated in the ESA	Basic ✓		
Paid sick leave	Better ✓		
Paid vacation time above ESA minimum	Better ✓		
Employee has the flexibility to extend maternity benefits (EI) and parental leave (ESA)	Better ✓		
Co-pay (by employer) or sole pay health and dental benefits	Best ✓		
Some kind of employer/employee pension or retirement savings plan	Best ✓		
Maternity and parental leaves are supplemented with a "top-up"	Best ✓		

Indicator C: Mental health support	Rating	Our organization	Comments
Staff are provided with mental health days counted as regular sick days.	Basic ✓		
Access to Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	Better ✓		
Access to supports to address workplace stresses	Best ✓		

3) Decent Contract Security

There is pressure in the labour market to increase the use of "precarious" part-time and limited-term job contracts to carry out work that used to be done by full-time permanent staff. In some instances, this is done to achieve flexibility, and is a necessary part of some staffing models (for example, with relief and emergency workers). However, this can also be a practice used to avoid the added costs associated with full-time and permanent contracts. The extent to which the nonprofit sector can resist these trends will determine whether or not we can continue to provide good jobs for many people in our workforce.

Indicator A: Ratio of part-time to full-time staff positions	Rating	Our organization	Comments
Part-time staff represent over one-third (33%) of our workforce	Basic ✓		
Part-time staff represent between 20% and 33% of our workforce	Better ✓		
Part-time staff represent less than 20% (one in five positions) of our workforce	Best ✓		Note: This indicator is tricky; some people choose part-time, and for them it is not a negative option. We cannot assume part-time work is always a problem, as it can provide choice and flexibility.
Indicator B: Over the past 10 years, the ratio of contract to permanent staff positions has:	Rating	Our organization	Comments
Increased. There are now a greater number of limited-term or contract positions relative to permanent positions at our organization	Basic ✓		
Stayed about the same	Better ✓		
Decreased. There are fewer limited-term or contract positions relative to permanent positions	Best ✓		

Indicator C: Do our part-time staff receive increased salary or pro-rated benefits to compensate for the lack of full-time hours?	Rating	Our organization	Comments
No	Basic ✓		
Yes, pro-rated benefits or pay in lieu of benefits are added to wages	Better ✓		
Yes, pro-rated benefits and higher wage levels are provided (ex: "living-wage" rates)	Best ✓		
Indicator D: Which contracts provide job security for project positions?	Rating	Our organization	Comments
Staff working on long-term projects are provided one-year contracts	Basic ✓		
Staff working on long-term projects are provided contracts for duration of project	Better ✓		
Staff working on long-term projects are given pathways to permanent employment when possible	Best ✓		

4) Decent Scheduling

Many programs in the nonprofit sector rely upon flexible and on-call scheduling to meet the needs of the people served. At the same time, the capacity of staff to plan their non-work activities, attend to personal and family needs, and attain a positive work-life balance depends on having reasonable ability to plan ahead. Efforts to provide advanced scheduling are critical.

Indicator A: For program models that require changing shifts and schedules for staff, we set these schedules:	Rating	Our organization	Comments
Weekly	Basic ✓		
Monthly	Better ✓		
Quarterly	Best ✓		
Indicator B: For flexible programs, part-time staff can stipulate the days they are available to work (this enables them to coordinate with another part-time job, if they wish)	Rating	Our organization	Comments
No	Basic ✓		
Sometimes	Better ✓		
Yes, all the time	Best ✓		

Indicator C: To support work-life balance, staff are allowed flexibility in their schedule, if it does not impact their work activities	Rating	Our organization	Comments
Not at all	Basic ✓		
Sometimes	Better ✓		
Yes	Best ✓		
Frequently/regularly	Best ✓		
Indicator D: If staff accumulate lieu time, it is tracked and they are able to use it in a timely manner			
Not at all	Basic ✓		
Sometimes	Better ✓		
Yes	Best ✓		

5) Decent Opportunities for Advancement

Decent work also means thinking about the opportunities available for training, learning, and advancement. This may include formal training and advancement opportunities, and having a workplace and sector culture that is focused on learning and the development of its employees.

Indicator A: Professional development and training opportunities are made available to staff, and we seek to spend a percentage of our organization's payroll budget on these opportunities (include PD funds plus time off for training).	Rating	Our organization	Comments
0.5% of payroll	Basic ✓		
1.0% of payroll	Better ✓		
1.5% of payroll	Best ✓		
Indicator B: If we surveyed our staff, what percentage do we think would agree with the statement: "My organization encourages me to take on new challenges and pursue opportunities for advancement within my organization and externally, and provide support to do so"?	Rating	Our organization	Comments

Less than 40%	Basic ✓		
40% to 70%	Better ✓		
Over 70%	Best ✓		
Indicator C: **Informal training sessions on various topics are offered in the organization (ex: brown bag lunch series)**	**Rating**	**Our organization**	**Comments**
Rarely	Basic ✓		
Sometimes	Better ✓		
Frequently/regularly	Best ✓		
Indicator D: **Management, senior leadership, and board positions are gender-balanced, and reflect the diversity of the community**		**Our organization**	**Comments**
An evaluation of positions is in process	Basic ✓		
Policies, plans, and targets are in place	Better ✓		
All position levels are gender-balanced and reflect the diversity of the community	Best ✓		

6) Decent Processes for Resolving Conflicts

An environment where people can express their concerns, participate equally and feel included and safe in the workplace underpins all aspects of decent work. This includes strong employment standards, establishing codes of conduct, developing proactive policies for diversity and inclusion, ensuring the safety of workers, respecting the mental and physical health of employees, and ensuring that employees understand they have the right to organize and speak up about workplace concerns.

Indicator A: **Does our organization have clear, accessible, and confidential grievance procedures, policies, and practices in place to support staff in addressing and resolving conflicts with co-workers and supervisors?**	**Rating**	**Our organization**	**Comments**
If not unionized: policies are in place, but are not often used or followed in practice	Basic ✓		
If not unionized: policies are in place, and are used to identify and address conflicts	Better ✓		

If not unionized: policies are in place, are regularly used, and staff have access to support or third party assistance as part of such processes	Best ✓		
Under our union collective agreement	Best ✓		
Policies and collective agreements are reviewed regularly	Best ✓		
Indicator B: Does our organization have policies to ensure the safety of workers? (For example, case workers are paired when going to see high-risk clients)	**Rating**	**Our organization**	**Comments**
There is a policy, but it is rarely followed	Basic ✓		
There is a policy and it is sometimes followed	Better ✓		
There is a policy and it is always followed	Best ✓		

7) Decent Workplace Culture of Participation

Effective leadership and a participatory work culture are crucial to decent work. The leadership norms and management styles practiced in workplaces impact the ability of workers to sustain their passion and commitment to work, and contribute their ideas and skills to advancing the broader mission of the organization. They also impact the ability of workers to balance work, family, and personal time. A participatory work culture also goes beyond compliance with human rights and accessibility legislation, and actively fosters inclusion and engagement.

Indicator A: How many joint worker-management committees does our organization have (such as health and safety, advocacy, equity and inclusion, anti-violence)? *	**Rating**	**Our organization**	**Comments**
No worker-management committees	Basic ✓		
One or two committees	Better ✓		
More than two committees (or for smaller organizations, a few committees that cover more than two areas of collaborative organizational planning)	Best ✓		
Indicator B: Does our organization have policies that focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion?	**Rating**	**Our organization**	**Comments**
There is no such policy	Basic ✓		
There is a policy, but it is not always followed.	Better ✓		
There is a policy and it is always followed.	Best ✓		
Indicator C: Have we surveyed our staff on issues of workplace culture and work satisfaction?	**Rating**	**Our organization**	**Comments**
No	Basic ✓		

Yes, but not in the last year	Better ✓		
Yes, within the last year	Best ✓		

Indicator D: Does our organization involve/consult staff when developing program/project proposals?	Rating	Our organization	Comments
Never	Basic ✓		
Sometimes	Better ✓		
Always	Best ✓		

* Note: The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) sets out roles and responsibilities of workplace parties with respect to workplace violence and workplace harassment, including developing and implementing policies and programs, and providing information and instruction on these. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) also sets out regulations for identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to employees with disabilities.

8) Strategies to Promote Decent Work

Nonprofits can face significant structural barriers to providing decent work. These can be a result of program models that require flexible, part-time or casual contracts, or funders that do not allow funds to be used for certain costs (for example, identifying pension contributions as an "ineligible" expense). In the case of government-funded organizations, there is often restraint and flatlining of program funds for years at a time. Some organizations may be able to overcome aspects of these barriers over time (for example, not accepting low-wage contracts). However, to make systemic change for government funders to include cost of living increases in their allocations, it will take concerted advocacy efforts collectively by our networks and the nonprofit sector as a whole.

Indicator A: Our organization has demonstrated achievements to sustain and/or expand decent work practices	Rating	Our organization	Comments
We are aware of some good decent work practices in our organization	Basic ✓		
We have documented case studies of our positive decent work practices, and have shared them with others	Better ✓		
We are actively engaged in collaborative efforts to promote the importance of decent work, and build our sector's capacity to champion these values and practices	Best ✓		

Indicator B: Our organization is aware of the pressures and challenges we face to sustain or expand decent work practices	Rating	Our organization	Comments
We have completed an assessment of our decent work practices (like this one)	Basic ✓		
We have identified key decent work challenges that as an organization we would like to address, and have developed a plan to tackle the ones within our control	Better ✓		
We have plans to address key challenges within our control, and are participating in collective efforts to advocate for the systemic changes that would remove some barriers our organization faces in providing decent work	Best ✓		
Indicator C: Our organization has been speaking with our funders, seeking modifications to funding restrictions.	Rating	Our organization	Comments
No, we have not discussed this with funders	Basic ✓		
We have discussed this with funders, but with limited success	Better ✓		
We have discussed this with funders and have been able to get some modifications	Best ✓		