

Document Number 6.4	TITLE <b>W+ Advisory Council and Standard Sub-Committee TOR</b>	
DOCUMENT MANAGER W+ Standard Coordinator		ORIGINAL DATE 2015
APPROVAL W+ AC/Standard Committee	FILE LOCATION(S) W+/Advisory Council/TORs/AC-SSC TORs Final 2017, and www.wplus.org	REVISION DATE 27 July 2017

## The W+ Advisory Council and Standard Review Sub-Committee

### Terms of Reference

**Background**

The W+ is a program of WOCAN (Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management); an international women-led non-governmental organization. The W+ Standard is a framework to quantify women’s empowerment benefits in six domains: Time, Health, Food Security, Income/Assets, Knowledge/Learning and Leadership. Project implementers apply the W+ Standard, implement project activities, and measure outcomes.

The staff activities involved in the ongoing development, implementation and management of the W+ program include:

- Developing organizational policies, document templates, protocols and systems for project registration, review, verification and certification and their as-needed or periodic review and revision for improved efficiency.
- Promotion of the W+ Standard to a broad range of stakeholders, including: potential project developers and investors, including: gender/women’s empowerment social investment and related ‘impact investing’, ecosystem services, climate change mitigation and adaptation, carbon and international development communities, foundations, international development agencies and corporations with aligned Corporate Social Responsibility and internal policy commitments.

Successful implementation of the W+ requires a wide range of professional skills and diverse professional networks. Staff roles will focus on the practical elements of operations and ongoing development. Advisory Council members bring complementary experience and perspectives.

The objectives of the Advisory Council are to:

- Provide objective input on strategy and political landscapes, including on the following issues:
  - Potential risks and unintended consequences to the integrity of the W+ to women, projects and to project communities,
  - Barriers to success and operational risks for the W+,
  - Relationships to support the success of W+ such as partnerships and collaborations
- Conduct a review of the W+ Standard and Methods and associated program documents not less often than once every five years, and optimally once in three years (see the W+ Standard Setting Procedure),
- Assist in communicating about the W+ through their professional networks and relationships, and

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- Provide connections to their diverse, international professional networks reflecting each member’s unique professional expertise and geographic area.

**Role of the Advisory Council Members**

Basic Conditions: The Advisory Council members are invited to participate on a volunteer basis. Their role is advisory and non-governing.

Members of the Advisory Council will be called upon to:

- Participate in quarterly calls to stay informed on WOCAN's activities and share their input - ~2hrs per quarter.
- Receive and review the W+ program Impact Report and comment as they deem appropriate - ~15 min per quarter.
- Respond to requests for introductions to members of their network as their time permits - ~once per quarter.
- Respond to requests for advice on policy and program implementation as their time permits - ~ twice per year.
- Participate as a speaker or expert panelist if they are interested and as appropriate opportunities arise – tbd.
- Contribute (or share existing) content or material for publication on the WOCAN website appropriate to the W+ program - ~ once per year, and if applicable or appropriate.
- Review and comment annually on the performance of the W+ Standard Coordinator - ~ 30min once per year.

Advisory Council’s Standard Review Sub-Committee: Some Members of the Advisory Council, and possibly other experts from outside the Advisory Council, will form a Standard Review Sub-Committee. This sub-committee will convene and communicate electronically, at a frequency determined by need. The Standard sub-committee will review the W+ Standard and associated program documents, not less often than once in five years.

The Standard Review Sub-Committee’s responsibilities include:

- Periodic and as-needed high-level reviews of the W+ Standard and associated W+ program documents and standard-setting procedure
- Periodic and as-needed high-level reviews of the W+ Methods and the processes by which those Methods are established
- Periodic and as-needed high-level reviews of the potential risks and unintended consequences of the W+ program overall
- Review of WOCAN and W+ Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems

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In addition to the above responsibilities, the Advisory Council and Standard Review Sub-Committee will review staff’s reports regarding integration of women’s empowerment regulatory requirements where and if they occur and are relevant to the W+. These include but are not limited to implementation of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the United Nation’s Global Compact, and relevant nation-specific goals for women’s inclusion, empowerment and investment.

Advisory Council Membership: The composition of the Advisory Council strives to represent diverse stakeholders and may include, but is not limited to representatives from: women’s groups, women’s advocates, social and environmental standards development, complementary non-governmental organizations, women’s empowerment leaders, economic development experts, social and environmental impact measurement professionals, finance and investment professionals, experts in natural resources management, natural resource management project participants, philanthropists, supply chain interests, and corporate social responsibility leaders. WOCAN acknowledges that who constitutes a W+ ‘stakeholder’ is an evolving group. WOCAN also strives for diversity of geographic, racial, age and gender representation on the Advisory Council.

Membership in the Advisory Council is by invitation. WOCAN leadership or staff identify a prospective Advisory Council member via their professional connections or recommendation. After an initial inquiry to determine interest, availability and an absence of any conflict of interest, a prospective member’s qualifications are presented to the existing members of the Advisory Council. Absent a majority dissent, the prospective Council member is accepted.

Meetings: Advisory Council members may meet in person, if there are convenient opportunities to do so. Otherwise, the group will be convened via Skype, conference call, webinar, or similar web-based communications tools, at times most convenient to the majority of those necessary for consultation (which will vary by geography or issue). Meetings will be scheduled quarterly. Meetings will be scheduled to accommodate the schedules of as many AC members as possible, given the wide range of geographic locations. Meetings are typically less than two hours long.

Operating Principles: Advisory Council members are expected to communicate and participate. If a member of the Council fails to communicate or participate for a period of one year, they will be deemed to have resigned and will be removed from the roster of members. There is no limit to the number of Advisory Council members. There are no terms or term limits.

When Advisory Council members are asked to act by vote, those actions or votes will be: taken by voice if on a call or via email within the period defined (generally one week), require a quorum of the members (one half the group plus one) for a successful vote, and a majority of the quorum will carry the vote. The W+ Advisory Council provides guidance and reviews the language and revisions of the Standard. Decision-making by consensus is the default. If the group is faced with conflicting views for

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new or revised requirements in the Standard, and consensus is not possible, a vote of the majority determines the decision.

Time and Duration Commitment:

It is understood that most members of the Advisory Council will have many other obligations for their time and as such the expectation for time commitment will be minimal – not more than 2 hours/month. To support continuity, the expected minimum duration of an Advisory Council member’s commitment would be for a period of one year. There shall be a proactive renewal at the anniversary of each Advisory Council member’s tenure through a request by WOCAN and a reply from the member as to their willingness to continue service.

**Stakeholder Input to Advisory Council Terms of Reference Concurrently with Standard Reviews**

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Advisory Council and its Standard Review Sub-Committee will be presented for stakeholder input concurrently with any review and update of the W+ Standard. The AC TOR may be updated more frequently at the discretion of the W+ AC. Any updates will be published on the W+ website.

During the stakeholder comment period, the Advisory Council will continue to conduct its work as described. Comments received will be incorporated into the Advisory Council TOR where appropriate.

**Benefits of Participation as a Volunteer Advisory Council member**

We recognize that WOCAN will benefit from the association of the members who choose to participate in the Advisory Council. It is WOCAN’s goal to acknowledge and provide appropriate value in return for the Advisory Council members’ service.

Benefits of volunteering as an Advisory Council member include:

- An opportunity to contribute personally to a progressive and innovative program that could potentially create a new asset class and lead to significant positive impacts for women’s empowerment.
- Recognition on the W+ website, and other social media platforms as they are developed
- Opportunities to participate in high-level meetings and dialogs with international experts, business leaders, and other leaders working on associated issues on a regional, national or global scale
- Inclusion in special delegations (such as those of the UNFCCC, Corporate Social Responsibility, Impact Investing, climate change and women’s empowerment related conferences)
- Speaking engagements on webinars, at conferences, etc. as opportunities arise

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**Advisory Council, Standard sub-committee, and W+ administrative points of contact**

For more information, interested stakeholders and members of the public should contact either of the following:

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Revision History		
#	Date	Description
1	2015	Original
2	27 July 2017	Edits per public comment period. Clarification of roles, scope, nomenclature. Edits for consistency with other program documents and per ISEAL guidance.
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