

SRLP Collective Member Handbook

SRLP Collective Member Welcome

Dear New Collective Member,

Thank you so much for your interest in being a collective member at Sylvia Rivera Law Project. The attached information will introduce you, in detail, to our structure, so that you can have a full understanding of how we operate. We want all of our collective members to have equal decision-making power and voice, and we recognize that the best way to achieve that is to have each person be fully informed about how we work, what is going on, and how to be heard. We hope that you will tell us what other information we can provide or clarify to help you understand how we work.

Please read this manual carefully and speak with your SRLP "buddy" about questions you have before signing the Collective Member Agreement. We're really delighted by your interest, and look forward to working closely with you.

Sincerely,

Collective Development Team

SRLP Collective Member Handbook

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Mission

The Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP) works to guarantee that all people are free to self-determine their gender identity and expression, regardless of income or race, and without facing harassment, discrimination, or violence. SRLP is a collective organization founded on the understanding that gender self determination is inextricably intertwined with racial, social and economic justice. Therefore, we seek to increase the political voice and visibility of people of color and low-income people who are transgender, intersex, or gender non-conforming. We believe that in order to create meaningful political participation and leadership, we must have access to basic means of survival and safety from violence.

Organizational Goals

- ⇨ To provide access to free, quality, respectful, affirming legal services for low-income transgender, intersex, and gender non-conforming people.

- ⇨ To use training, public education, policy reform, and precedent-setting lawsuits to end state sanctioned and institutional discrimination, violence, and coercion on the basis of gender identity and expression, which we understand as inextricably related to race and class.

- ⇨ To build a non-hierarchical collective organization that internally practices what we're struggling for by developing the leadership of low-income transgender, intersex, and gender non-conforming people of color.

- ⇨ To participate in the larger movement for racial, social, and economic justice that includes gender liberation and prioritizes the issues of those most affected by the systems of oppression under which we live.

Why a Collective?

SRLP functions as a multi-racial, inter-generational collective of people committed to a broad understanding of gender self-determination. As a collective, we recognize that it is essential to create structures that model our vision of a more just society. We believe that in the struggle for social justice too often change is perceived as a product and not a process. We seek to use a non-hierarchical structure to support work that aims to redistribute power and wealth for a more just society. We also strongly believe that our community-based structure, which maximizes community involvement, will support the sustainability of our work and the accountability of SRLP to its constituency.

We have developed an organizational structure with six equally important teams working together on a shared vision and mission. Each team is made up of (at least one) staff person and several non-staff volunteers:

- ***Direct Services Team*** (DST) runs our legal clinic, makes determinations about how to take and handle cases, and, with the Organizing Support Team, advocates for policy reform within institutions that impact our community.

- ***Public Education Team*** (PET) creates and implements our trainings for other groups and organizations, creates and distributes our public education materials, develops and maintains our website, and creates and implements SRLP's media advocacy work.

- ***Fundraising and Finance Team*** (FFT) is responsible for raising money for our operations, coordinating our budget-planning process, maintaining relationships with our donor base, coordinating fundraising events, and administering our financial systems.

- ***Collective Development Team*** (CDT) is responsible for coordinating our volunteers and collective members, for creating policies and programs regarding SRLP's anti-oppression values, and for organizing our retreats and evaluations.

- ***Organizing Support Team*** (OST) works to build leadership in our client base while supporting the efforts of community-based organizations working within low-income and trans communities of color.

- ***Board Team*** (Board) works in partnership with the entire collective to oversee the legal, ethical, and moral responsibilities of the organization and its financial health.

See section 1.5 for details on the work of each team.

By creating an organization that functions as a collective, SRLP is developing a structure where people committed to gender self-determination, and trans, intersex, and gender non-conforming people can take powerful leadership roles in transforming their own lives as well as their community and the world.

Core Values/Vision

The following core values provide the basis of SRLP's work. It is the responsibility of all collective members to recognize and promote these values in all actions taken in SRLP's name.

1. We can't just work to reform the system. The system itself is the problem.

2. SRLP recognizes that our communities need to be empowered with the skills and vision to fight for our own liberation. This includes taking reasonable steps to provide necessary training and resources.

3. All oppressed people need to work together in solidarity to end all forms of oppression. For this reason, SRLP values coalition work with organizations whose stated missions reflect our organizational values.

4. We believe that the struggle for gender self-determination will in the end be fought by our whole communities, and it will win liberation for all of our people.

5. It is critical that transgender, intersex, and gender non-conforming people and people of color, especially low-income people, youth, and people with disabilities, take leadership in our work. Furthermore, SRLP as an organization must actively work to realize this goal.

6. SRLP strives to maintain meaningful gender representation at all levels of the organization.

7. SRLP believes that the working environment of an organization shapes the work, and for this reason we strive to create an environment that is non-hierarchical in structure and operates by consensus.

Diversity Goals

SRLP is committed to maintaining a collective body that is diverse in terms of age, race, economic status, class, ability, size, education, citizenship, national origin, ancestry, sexuality, employment status, religion, and gender. It is vitally important that the collective body reflects the communities it serves. To this end, the majority of the collective should be comprised of people of color, people of trans, intersex and gender non-conforming experience, and low-income people. SRLP also strives to maintain youth, people with disabilities, and low-income people in leadership positions. These goals should inform all decisions made with respect to staffing, recruitment, programming, policy, service provision, outreach and education.

Anti-Oppression Practices

We are committed to anti-oppression. This includes reflecting on our own privilege, being open to hearing that we have work to do to address internalized oppressive values or dynamics, redistributing power and leadership away from ourselves when it benefits the collective and the community, participating in ongoing training and learning throughout our lives to address these persistent dynamics, communicating clearly, and supporting other's communication.

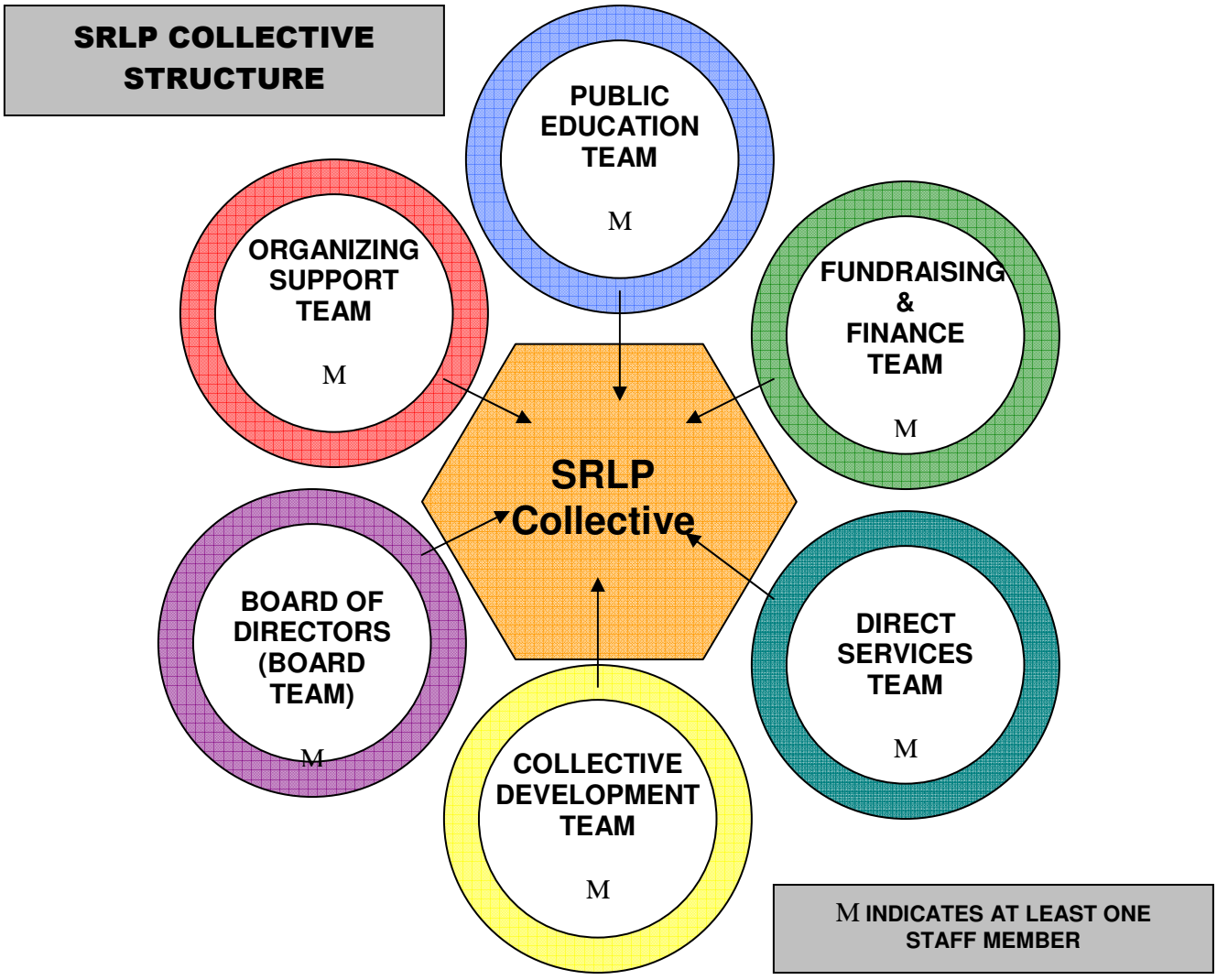
In order to create and maintain an atmosphere of anti-oppression beliefs and practices, SRLP affirms the following values and steps:

1. SRLP will absolutely not tolerate discrimination and prejudice based on any of the designators listed in section 1.5 of the Employee Handbook ("Non-Discrimination Clause").

2. SRLP strives to maintain a structure in which all decision-making bodies shall be comprised of a radical majority transgender, gender non-conforming and intersex people, and a radical majority people of color.
3. SRLP recognizes that low-income people, as part of its stated constituency, play an absolutely crucial role in the work of the organization, and that these interests must be represented in decision-making processes. However, we also recognize that low-income people often face barriers which would prevent them from regularly attending meetings, maintaining regular e-mail or telephone communication, etc. As such, SRLP strives to provide extra support for these people to attend meetings or become otherwise involved. Concrete steps may take the form of follow-up phone calls, providing metrocards, etc.
4. SRLP strives for equity in representation across gender spectrums, including people who are experiencing different levels or forms of transition or gender presentation.
5. SRLP recognizes that in many anti-gender oppression movements, intersex people are often paid lip service. SRLP strives to go beyond this false inclusion and make a genuine and meaningful commitment by working in coalition with intersex organizations, striving to include intersex people in leadership roles and decision-making, and being visibly and respectfully outspoken on intersex issues.
6. SRLP encourages youth to take leadership roles, and will provide appropriate training and leadership development measures to ensure that youth have ample opportunity to acquire the necessary skills.
7. SRLP recognizes that often people with disabilities have been excluded from involvement in gender self-determination movements. SRLP strives to include people with disabilities in leadership roles and decision-making. SRLP also strives to take initiative with regard to making spaces and events accessible in all ways; this includes physical accessibility and the promotion of respectful attitudes and language.
8. In addition to simply recruiting transgender, intersex, and gender non-conforming people, people of color, working class and low-income people, and people with disabilities, SRLP as an organization will use strategies of recruitment, training, and leadership building to support members of these groups.
9. Instead of veiling oppression behind empty claims of “diversity,” SRLP is committed to taking concrete actions around naming and dismantling white supremacy, patriarchy, ableism, heterosexism, and any other form of prejudice and discrimination in contravention of our Non-Discrimination Clause, as stated in section 1.5 of the Employee Handbook.
10. SRLP shall employ strategies of recruitment and training if at any point the organization is not meeting its stated representation goals.
11. All collective members shall participate in regular multi-issue anti-oppression trainings, which shall be held annually.
12. SRLP recognizes and affirms that there is not one “correct” way to do things, and values diverse ways of being productive.

SRLP's Structure and its Operation

There are two major structures that guide the direction and support the operations of SRLP. They are: 1) The Collective, comprised of Teams and Ad Hoc Committees and 2) The Staff, comprised of collective members who are paid to carry out key day-to-day functions of SRLP. These structures offer opportunities to members of SRLP's community to contribute to the leadership of this organization. Together the people who join SRLP's Collective and those who serve as staff constitute SRLP.



In addition, SRLP welcomes the energies of people who wish to contribute their time or expertise to the organization in more limited ways. These volunteers are recruited, supported and integrated into the life of SRLP by Teams and/or on an as-needed basis.

The following section describes the structure of the Collective in greater detail, including the roles and responsibilities of collective members.

1.1 Teams

SRLP has six teams (described in section 1.5) as well as occasional ad-hoc teams constructed to accomplish a specific, time-limited goal (such as our Independence Team which facilitated our move out of the Urban Justice Center and into our new space). Teams are generally composed of a minimum of three persons. Each team meets at least once a month, or more frequently as their work requires. The work of each Team is guided by a work plan that it develops annually and is approved by the entire Collective.

1.2 Monthly Collective Meetings

To coordinate work across the organization, the entire collective meets once a month at a pre-designated, regularly occurring time. These all-collective meetings will provide a space for members to give Team and Committee updates and to discuss collective matters. These meetings are an opportunity for the Teams to keep up on the work of each other, to communicate needs that one team may have of another and to coordinate or leverage one another's efforts. Any major decisions made by any of the teams or by staff will be reported at these meetings.

Facilitation of these meetings rotates among all collective members. The facilitator is responsible for soliciting agenda items, preparing the agenda based on the template (in the Appendix) and sending out a meeting reminder.

1.3 Retreats

All team members, including the Board Team, meet twice annually with the full staff at our Collective Retreats. These retreats are used to engage in planning for the organization as well as for team-building and personal development.

1.4 The Staff

Staff members are employees who work more than 20 hours per week. They carry out key day-to-day functions of the organization. They are hired by hiring committees which are formed by the Board as described in the Employee Handbook, which describes staff policies and procedures in detail. Staff performance is reviewed

according to the procedures laid out in the Employee Handbook. Specific responsibilities and expectations for various staff positions are outlined in job descriptions which are created by hiring committees and approved by the Collective. Staff members who fill these roles are paid according to what is laid out in the Employee Handbook. Staff members are automatically Collective members.

Staff members meet bi-weekly to plan and coordinate the work of the organization. Each staff member is also a member of the Team or Team(s) that are most closely related to their job. In addition to their roles as team members, they also serve on those teams as Staff Liaisons to ensure that other team members have access to any information that may come from being at SRLP on a regular basis. .

One staff person will serve as the official Staff Liaison to the Board to manage the affairs of the Board. This is a one-year term commitment and rotates among staff members. That staff person will have the specific responsibility to schedule the Board meetings, handle all logistics for the Board meetings, develop an agenda, prepare meeting materials, document decisions made in the meeting, circulate and file minutes, communicate with members of the Collective about the meeting as needed and generally serve as official staff and Team liaison to the Board.

1.5 The Board Team

The SRLP Board Team is the body legally responsible for the organization. The Board works in partnership with the full Collective to carry out its responsibilities. Its members are fully integrated into the Collective.

The Board is charged with acquiring and managing resources that support the sustainability of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project. In these central roles, the Board is responsible for oversight and leadership for organizational development tasks including ensuring that there exists an articulated vision and mission, annual planning, program monitoring and evaluation, systems for staff hiring and performance review, oversight of and engagement in fiscal management and fund development, and engaging in self-assessment with the full collective.

The Board will also have a role in cross-collective committees on topics of staff hiring/review and grievance whose specific membership will be fluid:

When necessary, the Board will designate a Personnel Committee, which shall include at least one Board member and one non-Board member from the Collective Development Team. When necessary, the Personnel Committee may be expanded to include members of affected teams and other relevant parties.

The Personnel Committee shall exercise three functions: Hiring, Terminations (including lay-offs) and Grievances.

The Personnel Committee of the Board is responsible for drafting employment policies and for making recommendations for revisions for approval by the Board, including policies around compensation and benefits, staff development, work environment, and mediation/conflict (grievance),.

The Personnel Committee is directly accountable to the Board.

- The grievance process: The Board has the responsibility of being involved in hearing and deciding grievances as needed according to the grievance procedure in section 6. Involved Board members, if any, would be recused from this task.

The Board of Directors includes up to ten members of the community. At least one member of the Board is a staff member, but no more than two staff members will be on the Board. Board members can also serve as volunteers, consultants, and resources to other Teams. Members of the Board will serve a term of two years. A maximum of two consecutive terms may be served. Staff members who serve on the Board are limited to a one-year term.

To carry out its functions, the Board meets at least four times each year and its members also participate in the monthly meetings and twice yearly collective retreats. Any collective member can attend a Board meeting. Note that the Board has the right to call a closed meeting as needed, particularly when dealing with sensitive issues regarding conflict, staff performance, or termination of a collective member or staff member.

Board meeting topics will include: Team Updates and problem-solving, Budget Review and Approval, Work Plan Review and Approval, Fundraising Planning, and review of special initiatives as needed.

The Board will elect their own Board Chair who will be responsible for coordinating meetings and communicating with staff and collective members. This person can work in conjunction with the Staff Liaison to the Board (described in section 1.3) There is also a finance committee of the Board that is responsible for the oversight of the financial health of the organization. The finance committee of the Board will also be responsible for coordinating Board fundraising plans and activities.

1.6 Team Job Descriptions

Fundraising and Finance Team (FFT)

Responsible for grant writing, managing individual donors, planning, goal-setting, developing relationships with both institutional and individual donors, research, house parties, events, major donor campaigns, newsletter, creating the budget, cash-flow, maintaining the financial books, making sure everyone gets paid (staff, vendors, insurance, taxes), processing checks and reimbursements.

Ideal Qualifications: grant writing, excitement about newsletter, graphics, editing and research, experience planning events, data entry/mailings, budgeting sensibilities, knowledge of Quick Books, database comfort, File Maker Pro, PageMaker (those who already know/do this, as well as those with energy and high interest)

Public Education Team (PET)

Responsible for creating training curricula, implementing trainings, organizing speaking engagements and screenings, provide vision and development of brochures, videos, website, and distributing these materials. Also works on media strategy and press relations.

Ideal Qualifications: HTML skills, graphic design, experienced trainers, public speakers, people with film experiences and connections, coalition and university connections (those who already do this, as well as those with energy and high interest), fluency in language(s) other than English.

Direct Services Team (DST)

Responsible for running the legal clinic, deciding what cases to take, developing referral lists, guide books about how to do the work and resource guides. Creating text for brochures that are about services and programmatic work, hiring and supervising the legal interns, assess the client services and run these services, evaluate and report about this work. Maintain connections to other service providers and agencies.

Ideal Qualifications: advocacy skills, case management or legal skills, time during the day, high client engagement skills, people with connections to good referral sources (who can call in favors), experience in court.

Collective Development Team (CDT)

Internal: Responsible for creating policies and handbooks for the Collective including – accountability systems, organizational culture, organizational structure, making decisions about inter-collective team member appointments, coordinating retreats and organizing all-collective meetings and trainings.

External: Responsible for volunteer coordination, including outreach, training, support and dealing with conflict. Responsible for identifying diversity needs of collective and coming up with creative strategies for maintaining diversity. Creating and implementing Collective Orientations, Retreats and Meetings. Coordinates integration of new collective members, connects them with buddies. Coordinates evaluation system for collective members. .

Ideal Qualifications: experience with personnel policies, research skills, conflict mediation, well-connected in the community - know a lot of people or worked in a lot of nonprofits, strong understanding of anti-oppression, people/volunteer management expertise/experience, writing skills, organizational development skills or experience.

Organizing Support Team

Responsible for building strong supportive and collaborative relationships with projects engaged in organizing transgender, intersex and gender non-conforming low-income people of color. With DST, works on advocacy and organizing for policy reform. Coordinates Leadership Development of Clients, including connecting clients and community members with our allied organizations.

Ideal Qualifications: good communicators, good at getting folks to turn out, good at working in groups, good at building connections to allied organizations and folks in policy groups, past community organizing, policy or reform experience, strategic thinking skills, writers, folks with history in NYC.

2. Joining the SRLP Collective

SRLP's collective recruitment, retention, and support are a deliberate process designed to support our goals of community leadership development, organizational accountability and sustainability, positive organizational culture, and community empowerment. Our goal is to create a supportive environment for dedicated activists to work together on projects we are passionate about, and achieve goals that will increase the well being and political power of our communities.

SRLP's commitment to maintaining a collective body that is diverse, our commitment to developing new leadership and under-heard voices in our community, and our commitment to creating teams staffed by people who have sufficient time to commit to team work, may sometimes result in a determination that an applicant is not suitable for membership at this time. However, there are many roles that community members and allies can take in SRLP's work, as volunteers and resources to our various teams that can be an appropriate alternative to collective membership. SRLP is committed to communicating clearly with our community about our recruitment and retention goals and strategies, and working to make sure that the voices of those affected by and interested in our work are heard.

SRLP seeks to bring on collective members who:

- Are committed to gender self-determination, economic justice, racial justice, and an end to ableism, xenophobia, sexism, ageism and all other forms of oppression;
- Are excited about the mission and work of SRLP;
- Have direct experience with the communities effected by the injustices SRLP seeks to remedy;

- Are committed allies to anti-oppression work for communities of which they are not a part;
- Learn from others and work well on teams;
- Are willing to actively support the building of leadership among people traditionally marginalized in social and political movements;
- Understand and are committed to our collective process (meaning they value the importance of collective work, recognize the challenges, and understand that SRLP will really depend on them to follow through and be accountable);
- Can commit to at least 1 year of involvement (teams may increase time commitments for team membership depending on current workload and strategy);
- Are willing to ask for help when they need it, be realistic about their time commitments, and support other members in doing so;
- Are willing to be self-reflective and self-aware and engage in efforts to evaluate and improve team functioning and individual performance

The Collective recruitment process is designed to help SRLP identify committed activists who can give a significant time commitment to join an SRLP team and work concertedly on our goals. We hope that this process maximizes accountability, efficiency, and support for our collective members. Below are the basic steps to becoming a collective member.

1) People interested in getting involved with SRLP first submit a Volunteer Application and attend a Volunteer Orientation, currently held on the second Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. CDT will review the application and discuss with the volunteer their interests and capacity. Following an Orientations, Volunteers will be invited to attend a Monthly Meeting (currently on the second Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m.) to see the Collective in action. While Volunteers are welcome to participate in discussions and give input when appropriate, only Collective Members will participate in decision-making.

2) If the Volunteer is interested in getting involved with a specific team, CDT will introduce that Volunteer to current Team members. The Volunteer will be invited to participate at Team Meetings.

3) A Volunteer is eligible for Collective Membership once they have attended three (3) meetings. This is to ensure that Volunteers have had enough experience working with Collective Members to ascertain whether or not it is a good fit before making a commitment.

4) Any current Collective Member can propose that the eligible Volunteer become a Collective Member. Factors to be considered in deciding whether or not to nominate the Volunteer.are listed above. This should be done verbally or in writing to either CDT or the person who is facilitating the next Monthly Meeting.

5) When apprised of a potential nomination, the Facilitator for the next Monthly Meeting will schedule a "Closed Meeting" at the end of the next Monthly Meeting. All non-collective members will be asked to leave before the "Closed Meeting." All Collective Members will then have an opportunity to consense on the New Member or address any concerns that may exist.

6) CDT, or the directly affected Team, will then contact the Volunteer to see if they wish to become a Collective Member. If so, CDT will assign a Buddy to the New Member

7) The Buddy will meet with the new Member to go over the Collective Handbook discuss SRLP's structure and operations, and answer any questions ze might have.

8) The potential collective member decides to make the commitment to join the SRLP Collective, and signs the Collective Member Agreement.

9) The "buddy" works to support and help orient the new member. The Buddy will also formally "introduce" the new Collective Member to the Collective.

3. Orientation

3.1 Introduction to the Collective

All volunteers who are interested in working closely with SRLP will receive a thorough orientation to the collective facilitated by the CDT prior to beginning any team or collective work. In this orientation they will learn about SRLP's history, structures, procedures, and work. They will also learn about SRLP racial justice priorities, anti-oppression practices and consensus decision-making. Volunteers may choose to contribute on an as-needed basis and will be added to the Volunteer listserv to receive notifications of upcoming volunteer opportunities.

Volunteers who are interested in becoming collective members and/or are interested in becoming more deeply involved in the work of SRLP are encouraged to attend the Monthly Meetings, so that they can learn more about the work of the organization and the structure.

New Collective Members will also receive a Collective Member Orientation where they will review the Collective Handbook and read over the consensus materials.

3.3 Buddy System

In an effort to support the new collective member, SRLP will identify one person on the new collective member's team who will be a buddy to hir. The goal of the buddy is to check in with the new member regarding hir goals for membership, any need ze

might have for information or support to do hir work, and to be a resource in terms of skills and knowledge. The buddy will help the collective member develop a support plan and will be one of the people on the check-in/evaluation team for that collective member.

3.4 Check-In/Evaluation

After the first three months of working with the collective, the member's buddy will meet with the member to check-in about hir participation with the collective. The goal of the session is to dialogue with the new member about how things are going:

- How are they doing?
- Are there areas where they can identify that they need support?
- Who can offer them this support?
- Are there questions/concerns they want to raise?
- Is there feedback that can be offered to the new collective member in terms of strengths/areas for improvement?
- Does the new member feel appreciated in the organization for the work they are doing?

After the initial 3-month check-in, all collective members can expect to engage in a formal review around the time of the Winter Collective Retreat, or earlier if requested or thought necessary by peers on the team. The Collective Development Team is responsible for initiating the 3 month check-in meeting and designing the annual review process. The review process will include identifying members of the review team, preparing or updating review tools including a self-assessment tool for Team members, and clarifying expectations on both sides for the review.

3.5 Limits

Since we strive to create a culture of healthy and sustainable work collective members should be realistic about their commitment levels. As such, each member is limited to being on no more than two teams and one committee at a time.

If a collective member wishes to be on additional teams or committees, or is interested in changing to another team, that request is brought to the Collective Development Team. CDT will work with the collective member determine whether it makes sense for that collective member to serve on additional teams or committees,

4. Accountability

Several accountability structures will enable SRLP to manage its work:

- At an ***annual retreat***, all members of the collective meet to review obligations and to develop an overall organization direction, yearly goals for program and organizational development and associated tasks for the coming year for SRLP.
- Based on work at the retreat, each Team develops drafts of ***work plans*** that specify how their Team will achieve the goals/tasks named for it at the retreat. Work plans include action steps, Team member assignments and time lines. The work plans are designed to enable SRLP to achieve the direction, goals and obligations outlined by the collective.
- The ***Teams will review and comment upon one another's plans*** prior to a review and comment on the work plans at a Collective Meeting or retreat. The entire Collective reviews and approves the annual work plans developed by the Teams.
- On a day to day level, Team members use ***task sheets*** to manage progress on work plans. These task sheets are filled out by Team members and put in a binder. Teams then refer to these sheets in their next meeting to assess what has been accomplished. [See appendix for sample form.]
- ***Teams periodically assess their progress*** (monthly or every 2 months) against their Team work plan. Team members use Team time to problem-solve and trouble-shoot about elements of the work plan.
- ***Team members report on their Team's progress*** to the Collective ***at regular monthly meetings***. Each staff member will also fill out the staff reporting form every month.
- SRLP is committed to the principle of ***strategic planning***. Every three to five years, the collective will engage in a full strategic planning process to ensure that the organization is positioned well to achieve its vision and carry out its mission.

5. Decision Making

While all of our collective members have equal decision-making power and voice, we recognize that certain people and teams in the collective are better positioned to make certain decisions than others and full-collective decision making can be a logistical nightmare. Since all decisions will be made according to consensus principles (please refer to consensus training materials in the appendix.) and based on our core values and mission, we do not anticipate much conflict. In order to be really clear about what decisions are made by whom, there will be a decision making chart (see appendix) outlining which teams are responsible for making which decisions. Most day-to-day decisions will be made in staff meetings, team meetings, and cross-team meetings. Organizational decisions will be made at monthly meetings and retreats. All decisions will be reported at the monthly meetings and in Staff reporting Forms. The reporting forms will allow us to maintain accountability. These procedures can and should be revisited if conflicts arise.

6. Grievance Procedure

SRLP recognizes that at times, members of the collective or clients will have grievances about the manner in which work is handled. The Collective Development

Team is the primary body responsible for addressing grievances and overseeing their resolution. The Board Team is the secondary body responsible for addressing grievances, as described below. It is anticipated that the Teams will evaluate the efficacy of the proposed process and recommend improvements over time. Currently, SRLP's system for handling grievances, whether about the quality or pacing of work or about the professional manner of colleagues, is as follows:

All collective members are encouraged to resolve problems and differences, work-related or otherwise, with each other. Should the parties wish to pursue mediation, they should consult the Collective Development Team. If informal advice and conflict resolution processes fail, the formal route may be pursued:

The aggrieved person should state the complaint in writing, and direct it to the Collective Development Team within 2 weeks of an incident or acquirement of information giving rise to the complaint. The Collective Development Team will be responsible for notifying the person against whom there is a grievance of the process. Throughout, the Collective Development Team shall aim to strike a balance between confidentiality and transparency. The Collective Development Team shall conduct a thorough investigation and attempt to resolve the problem within 2 weeks if possible.

a. Investigation

If the grievance is with a member of the Collective Development Team or the Personnel Committee, the person against whom there is a grievance shall not take part in any of the investigative or decision-making processes. If the grievance is with an entire team or committee, the aggrieved should issue a grievance with the Board. The Board will then appoint an *ad hoc* committee of three Board members to attempt to resolve the grievance. The aggrieved employee should submit the grievance in writing to the Board within 2 weeks of the incident or acquirement of information giving rise to the complaint. The Board or Board committee will attempt to resolve the problem within 2 weeks.

In all cases, investigative and decision-making bodies should never include people who are biased against the filer. All biased parties should recuse themselves. In addition, both aggrieved and person or team against whom there is a grievance can voice concern with any perceived bias.

During investigation, the investigating body shall take care to hear and consider the statements and perspectives of all involved bodies. The investigating body shall also take care to avoid any unnecessary or unwarranted harm or discomfort to the parties involved.

The identity of the individual making a report will be protected as much as is practical. In order to maintain workplace safety and the integrity of its investigation, SRLP may suspend employees, collective or Board members, interns, or volunteers, wither with or without pay, pending investigation. The proceedings and results of all investigations must be documented in written form.

b. Resolution
Once a grievance investigation has been concluded, the decision-making body (most often the Collective Development Team) shall take steps to resolve the situation. The resulting actions may or may not be developed with the input of the person or team against whom there is a grievance and the aggrieved, depending on the nature of the offence. If necessary, the Collective Development Team and the aggrieved may involve a mutually agreed-upon neutral third party in a meeting to try to resolve the situation.

c. Discipline
SRLP maintains a "just cause" philosophy regarding any necessary disciplinary action that might result from a grievance investigation. Toward this end, SRLP collective members will be notified about problems and given a chance to correct them; allegations of misconduct will be fairly investigated; disciplinary action will be based on proof of misconduct; policies and procedures will be enforced fairly; and any disciplinary action will be appropriate to the misconduct.

The Collective Development team shall maintain initial responsibility for disciplinary proceedings, and will abide by the following procedures:
1. Verbal warnings
2. Written warnings
3. Probation: the probation plan will include a timetable, and a summary of the review meetings shall be given to the collective member employee.
4. Involuntary Termination of employment or collective membership (See Section 7.2).

The filer will be notified of the outcome of the grievance.

d. Appeals
If not resolved to the aggrieved person's satisfaction, ze may appeal in writing, within 2 weeks of the response, to the Personnel Committee, which shall be appointed by the Board as necessary. The Board should be cc-ed. The Personnel Committee should designate a person who will take responsibility for distributing the grievance among the committee and making sure that the grievance is handled swiftly and fairly. The Personnel Committee should attempt to resolve any grievances within two weeks. The decision of the Personnel Committee will be the final step in the grievance process.

If the grievance is not resolved to the filer's satisfaction, SRLP will give the filer information for contacting any appropriate government agencies when applicable (as in the case of sexual or other forms of harassment).

Only full members of the collective, active volunteers in good standing or clients can bring grievances.

7. Leaving the Collective

7.1 Leave of Absences

There may be the occasion when members of the collective will need to take a leave of absence. The Collective Development Team will consider requests for leaves of absence. Requests will be considered in cases of personal or family health or care issues; changed circumstances in arenas of employment, education or housing; or other unexpected personal emergencies or challenging circumstances.

Collective members should make their requests in writing to the Collective Development Team at least two weeks prior to the leave. Requests that meet the criteria can be granted for lengths of time no greater than six months. If a member of the collective must withdraw from the collective for a period greater than six months, they will need to re-apply for collective membership before their return. Staff Members should refer to the Employee Handbook for additional details regarding leave.

7.2 Involuntary Termination of Membership

SRLP strives to make a cooperative, open and honest environment for our work. The accountability policies outlined in this handbook provide multiple forums to meet these aims. SRLP considers termination of membership as the last step to dealing with serious concerns or situations. Even so, we understand that the occasion for termination of membership may be necessary.

When a grievance has been brought against a collective member, after a full grievance process is complete, the board can make a determination to terminate the collective member's membership. Termination of membership may result because of un-resolvable issues of work quality or pacing or untenable inter-personal conflicts. To arrive at a judgment about termination of membership in the collective, responsible Team members would follow steps that directly parallel those in bringing a grievance. In cases of issues about work quality or pacing, the grievance process would also incorporate elements of a formal performance review including review of expectations for performance and performance objectives as outlined in a work plan or other relevant materials and progress against those expectations and objections.

7.3 Member Initiated Departure

Any collective member who will be leaving hir role must be proactive about that leaving process. At a team gathering, she must introduce a clearly outlined transition plan, including dates. This can be flushed out with the support of her team and the Collective Development Team, especially those most impacted by hir leaving. Members are encouraged to inform everyone of their plans to depart as soon as possible, but no later than 1 month before they plan to end their membership. Working with their team and the Collective Development Team, they should outline a plan to pass on things they have been responsible for:

- Projects
- Systems of operation
- Paperwork/documents

- Relationships to individuals/organizations in the community that are important to SRLP. This includes introducing another SRLP member to the community member or organization to help establish contact to sustain the relationship.

In the interest of creating a smooth and supportive transition, there should be a closing gathering. The goal of this time is to have a supportive/friendly dialogue between everyone about why the member is leaving. Everyone who can attend is encouraged to. It is a chance to ask questions and facilitate the transition. It is also a chance to clearly communicate to everyone the role that the outgoing member will be assuming in relation to SRLP and answer some of the following questions:

- Will they remain active in SRLP in a new role (volunteer, contact, resource)?
- Will they be around or are they moving?
- How can we stay in contact?

8. SRLP Office Policies

8.1 Confidentiality

All collective members must keep client information confidential in accordance with all relevant laws and professional rules, as well as in keeping with SRLP's respect for clients' right to control the disclosure of their personal information. It is the responsibility of collective members to ensure that any volunteers, consultants, interns, or others they work with understand the necessity of maintaining client confidentiality.

8.2 E-mail

Every employee, intern, and collective member can have an SRLP e-mail account upon request. SRLP e-mail accounts can be accessed at www.mayfirst.org/webmail SRLP email accounts may not be used for lobbying or electioneering purposes as defined under relevant federal and state statutes. This includes, but is not limited to, any form of advocacy for political candidates.

8.3 Personal use of office resources

Keeping in mind SRLP's limited funds, collective members should keep their personal use of office resources to a minimum. If a collective member does make significant personal use of office resources (for example, places a long-distance personal phone call), ze should inform the finance team and reimburse SRLP.

8.4 Expenses

Prior to any fiscal year (SRLP's fiscal year runs from July 1 – June 30), FFT will conduct a Budget training. Each team will develop their own budget for each fiscal year with guidance from FFT. These budgets must then be approved by the entire Collective. Each team is responsible for monitoring their own budget according to the

quarterly reports sent out by FFT. Any revisions to a team's budget must go through FFT. Any major revisions that will affect the organization's overall budget and fundraising plan must be approved by the Collective.

All members should be conscientious about keeping spending for SRLP as low as they can without sacrificing the quality of their work. Agreed upon expenses can be paid in advance by SRLP whenever possible with SRLP's credit card.

If a Collective Member pays for a budgeted expense out of their own money they should submit a check request form and an accompanying receipt, mileage log, or other form of support. Requests should be made as soon as possible (to assist the fiscal process), but no later than two (2) months after the expenses were incurred.

8.4 Community supported agriculture

SRLP may pay for a share of the Chelsea community supported agriculture (CSA) project during the growing season. Collective members (as well as clients) may take as much of the weekly share of fresh, locally-grown fruits or vegetables as they like. For more information about the program, see http://www.chelseacsa.org/. Staff members will also share certain responsibilities related to CSA (see the Employee Handbook for more information on Staff Member responsibility).

8.5 Travel Policy

Each team will set their own travel and conference budgets for each fiscal year. Each Team will decide who attends conferences and how to allocate their travel budget. SRLP's leadership development values and goals should be a guide to the decision-making process. The travel budget should include transportation costs, lodging, conference registration fees and a per diem for meals.

.

Travel expenses for an agreed upon SRLP-related purpose will be reimbursed on the following basis:

1. Air, train, or bus fare for economy class to and from the location. Collective Members should seek low fares.
2. Lodging at moderately priced hotels or similar accommodations. Collective Members are encouraged to stay with friends when they can.
3. Up to $20 per day to cover meals, less any days the employee continues to travel beyond what is necessary for the SRLP-related purpose.
4. Costs for ground transportation for SRLP-related purposes, including shuttles, public transportation, rental of an economy or compact car, use of one's own car, and/or taxi fare. Collective Members should use shuttles and public transportation, or the least expensive other mode of transportation, and avoid more expensive methods like rental cars and taxis whenever possible. If an employee uses zir own car, ze will be reimbursed for mileage at the IRS rate, plus tolls. The reimbursement rate for 2004 is 37.5 cents/mile.

5. Necessary registration fees for agreed upon SRLP-related conferences and events

8.6 Handbook Revision

All changes to this Handbook will be initiated by the Collective Development Team. Any policy changes must be sent to the Board for approval. Suggestions for changes by staff and leaders can be forwarded to the Collective Development Team at any time

SRLP Collective Member Agreement

The Collective Handbook describes important information about becoming a collective member at SRLP. I acknowledge that I have read this handbook, and discussed my questions and concerns with other collective members on my team or on the Collective Development Team. I am committed to the mission of SRLP, and have decided to become a collective member. I can commit to work for at least a year on one of the SRLP teams, and agree to follow the principles and procedures outlined in this Handbook, and work respectfully and collectively with my team members and the rest of the collective.

Date: _____

_____ signature of New Member

_____ name (printed)

_____ signature of Existing Member

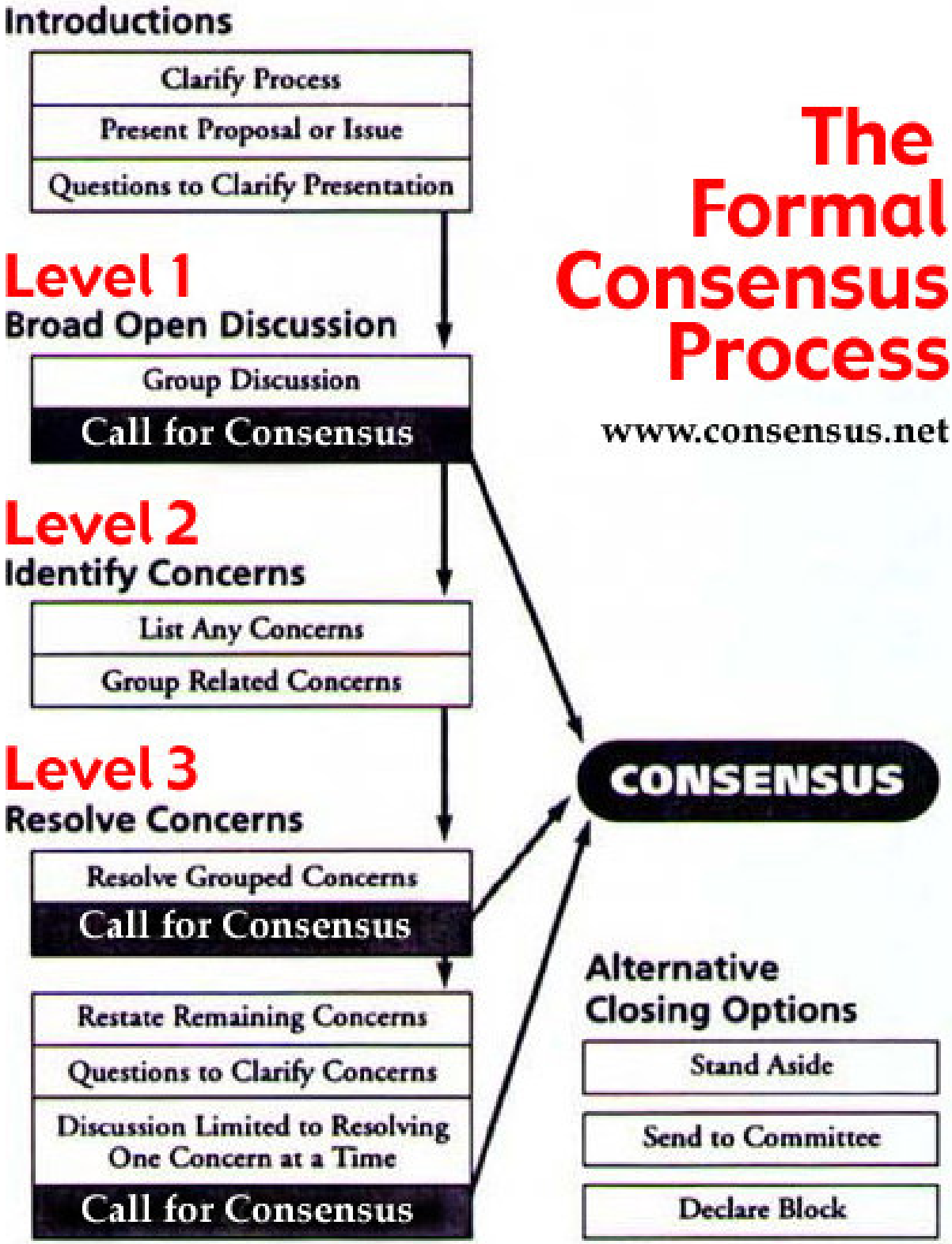
_____ name (printed)

Appendix

- Consensus Flowchart
- Collective Member Self-Evaluation Tool
- Team Self-Evaluation Tool
- Task Sheets
- Sample Team Meeting Agenda
- Sample All-Collective Meeting Agenda
- Volunteer Application Form
- Staff reporting form
- Decision making chart

The Formal Consensus Process

www.consensus.net



Collective Member Self-Evaluation Tool

Name _____
Team _____
Date I Became a Member _____
Date of Last Evaluation (if any) _____
Today's Date _____
Name of "Buddy" _____

A. (If first evaluation only, if not, skip to C) What was it like to become a part of your team? What was easy or difficult about adjusting to the team and becoming an active participant?

B. Was it easy to get caught up on the team's work when you joined? If there were difficulties, what would you attribute them to?

C. Do you feel you have been an active participant in your team in the last evaluation period?

D. Have you been able to attend team meetings regularly?

E. Have you had good communication with your team members? What, if any, obstacles have there been to communication with team members?

F. How would you like to improve your communication with your team members?

G. Have you been able to complete your tasks on the schedule you and your team members have agreed to? What obstacles, if any, have there been to successful completion of your work?

H. How would you like to improve your accountability to your team for work you are collaborating on?

I. Have you felt supported by your buddy? What has worked or not worked about the buddy system for you?

J. Have you been able to attend retreats and other all-collective gatherings? What obstacles, if any, have there been to your attendance and participation?

K. How would you like to improve your relationship with the entire SRLP collective?

L. What changes would you like to see in the way your team operates?

M. What changes would you like to see in the way the whole collective operates?

N. What changes would you like to see in your participation or interaction with your team or the collective as a whole?

O. Overall, how would you describe your experience as an SRLP collective member over the last evaluation period?

Team Self-Evaluation Tool

Team _____
Date of Last Evaluation (if any) _____
Today's Date _____
People Participating in Evaluation _____
_____

A. Staffing the Team: Retention, Diversity, Sufficiency of Staff Numbers

B. Meeting: Scheduling, Attendance, Length of Meetings, Efficiency, Use of Consensus Process, use of accountability sheets, consistency between meetings, facilitation

C. Relationships/Dynamics: Conflict Resolution, Fun, Support of New Team Members

D. Work plan: Was it Realistic? Did we follow it? Are we on track? Have we revised when necessary?

E. Communication with other teams: have we attended the point people meetings, have we participated, are we collaborating with other teams when appropriate, are we attending the retreats

F. What improvements would we make in each of the above categories?

SRLP MEETING TASK SHEET

TEAM: _____

MEETING DATE: _____

NEXT MEETING: _____

WHAT: _____

WHO: _____

DEADLINE: _____

WHAT: _____

WHO: _____

DEADLINE: _____

WHAT: _____

WHO: _____

DEADLINE: _____

WHAT: _____

WHO: _____

DEADLINE: _____

WHAT: _____

WHO: _____

DEADLINE: _____

WHAT: _____

WHO: _____

DEADLINE: _____

WHAT: _____

WHO: _____

DEADLINE: _____

WHAT: _____

WHO: _____

DEADLINE: _____

Team/Committee Meeting <u>Agenda</u>

Date: _____ **Time:** _____ to _____

Team: _____

Facilitator: _____

- Check-in (_____ minutes)
- Assign note-taker and task-master (_____ minutes)
- Agenda review (_____ minutes)
- Follow-Up on past items/tasks
  - Review task sheet from last meeting (_____ minutes)
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
- New Items
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
- Next meeting (_____ minutes)
  - Set Date and Time
  - Choose facilitator
  - Choose meeting reminder person
- Review tasks (_____ minutes)
- Check out (_____ minutes)
- CLEAN UP
- Put notes & task sheet in meeting binder

All-Collective Meeting Agenda

Date: _____ **Time:** 7:00 – 9:00

Facilitator: _____

- Check-in (5 minutes)
- Assign note-taker and task-master (2 minutes)
- Review task sheet from last meeting (_____ minutes)
- Committee Reportbacks
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
- Discussion Items
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
  - _____ (_____ minutes)
- Next meeting (2 minutes)
  - Date, Time and Facilitation Reminder.
    - Facilitator will ask for agenda items and send out a meeting reminder and announce agenda items prior to meeting.
- Review tasks (5 minutes)
- Check out (5 minutes)
- CLEAN UP
- Put notes & task sheet in meeting binder

Sylvia Rivera Law Project
322 8th Avenue, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10001

www.srlp.org
212-337-8550

Volunteer Application

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with The Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP). We are always in search of community members and allies to help us accomplish our mission. We greatly appreciate your offer to be a volunteer. Please complete this volunteer application and return it to the Sylvia Rivera Law Project. Once received an interview may be arranged. If you are accepted as an SRLP volunteer, you may be required to attend a 2 hour volunteer training. The information on this form will only be used in connection with volunteering at The Sylvia Rivera Law Project and will be accessible only to designated staff and volunteers. Because SRLP's needs are constantly changing, application submission does not guarantee acceptance into SRLP's volunteer program.

Date_____

First Name_____ Last Name_____

Street Address _____

City_____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

E-mail_____

May we call during business hours?_____ Yes _____ No

Should any messages we leave be confidential? ____Yes _____No

In case of emergency whom should we contact?

First Name_____ Last Name_____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Relationship to you_____

How did you hear about the Sylvia Rivera Law Project?

__ Self
__ Family
__ Friend
__ Website
__ Media
__ Organization/Service Provider, please specify _____
__ I was a client and/or received legal services at SRLP
__ Other, please specify _____

Why do you want to volunteer with SRLP?

Please check the areas in which YOU HAVE SKILLS OR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE:

__ Material Distribution
__ Fundraising
__ Web site development, maintenance, etc.
__ Office work (computer data entry, photocopying, faxing, filing, etc.)
__ Planning Special Events
__ Community Organizing
__ Facilitating meetings/retreats
__ Financial Management
__ Institution Building
__ Legal/Litigation
__ Media/Press
__ Public Speaking
__ Translation
__ Research
__ Writing – (pen pal programs, grant writing, etc.)
__ Baking/Cooking for Large Groups
__ Graphic Design
__ Film and Media
__ Art: poetry, drawing, etc.
__ Outreach
__ Editing
__ Whatever is needed
__ Other:

Please check the areas in which YOU ARE INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING AT SRLP:

__ Material Distribution
__ Fundraising
__ Web site development, maintenance, etc.
__ Office work (computer data entry, photocopying, faxing, filing, etc.)
__ Planning Special Events
__ Community Organizing
__ Facilitating meetings/retreats
__ Financial Management
__ Institution Building
__ Legal/Litigation
__ Media/Press
__ Public Speaking
__ Translation
__ Research
__ Writing – (pen pal programs, grant writing, etc.)
__ Baking/Cooking for Large Groups
__ Graphic Design
__ Film and Media
__ Art: poetry, drawing, etc.
__ Outreach
__ Editing
__ Whatever is needed
__ Other:

Briefly, describe any previous or current volunteer work you have done.

Do you want to accomplish anything in particular while volunteering at SRLP?

Are there any limitations or other commitments that would restrict or prevent you from making a commitment to SRLP?

Please list any licenses or clinical certifications that you hold.

What languages do you speak? (Include American Sign Language)

_____ __Native Speaker __2nd Language __Translator __Teacher __Interpreter

_____ __Native Speaker __2nd Language __Translator __Teacher __Interpreter

_____ __Native Speaker __2nd Language __Translator __Teacher __Interpreter

Specify what times you are available to volunteer. (Check all that apply):

__ Mondays: __ 10am-2pm __ 2pm-6pm __ Evenings 6pm-9pm
__ Tuesdays: __ 10am-2pm __ 2pm-6pm __ Evenings 6pm-9pm
__ Wednesdays: __ 10am-2pm __ 2pm-6pm __ Evenings 6pm-9pm
__ Thursdays: __ 10am-2pm __ 2pm-6pm __ Evenings 6pm-9pm
__ Fridays: __ 10am-2pm __ 2pm-6pm __ Evenings 6pm-9pm
__ Saturdays: __ 10am-2pm __ 2pm-6pm __ Evenings 6pm-9pm
__ Sundays: __ 10am-2pm __ 2pm-6pm __ Evenings 6pm-9pm
__ Once a Week __ Once a Month __ Special Events

In which boroughs are you able to volunteer?

__ Brooklyn __ Queens __ Bronx __ Staten Island __ Manhattan

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?

Optional: The following information will be used for statistical purposes only.

Country of Birth _____Date of Birth_____

Gender Identity.

_____

Sexual Orientation

_____

Race/Ethnicity

_____

A Special Note to White Allies: SRLP is primarily led by and for trans people of color, but does not discriminate on the basis of race. While SRLP welcomes the support of white allies, we expect white allies who would like to volunteer to have a basic grasp of anti-racist principles and practice, and respect the importance of leadership by trans people of color.

Submission Instructions

Please submit this application form to: SRLP Volunteer Program, The Sylvia Rivera Law Project, 322 8th Avenue, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10001 or via fax, 212-337-1972 or via email: volunteer@srlp.org. If you have any questions, please call us at 212-337-8550 or email us at info@srlp.org.

SRLP STAFF REPORTING FORM

To be completed by all staff members and presented monthly to the collective.

DATE:
MONTH REPORTING:
STAFF MEMBER:
TEAM(S):

- ⇨ **PLEASE LIST MAJOR NEW ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND/OR UPDATES:**

- ⇨ **PLEASE LIST MAJOR NEW DECISIONS MADE:**

- ⇨ **PLEASE LIST MAJOR NEW CHALLENGES AND/OR SET BACKS:**

- ⇨ **ARE YOU ON TRACK WITH YOUR WORK PLAN DEADLINES & TASKS?**

- ⇨ **IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT THE COLLECTIVE TO KNOW?**

- ⇨ **PLEASE LIST AREAS WHERE YOU NEED SUPPORT (IF ANY) AND WHICH TEAM OR STAFF CAN BEST SUPPORT YOU:**

SRLP DECISION-MAKING CHART

TASKS OR FUNCTIONS	DECISION-MAKING ROLE			
	Who's **Responsible** For Initiating This Action?	Whom Should They **Consult** Before Acting?	Who Should Finally **Approve**?	Who Do They Need to **Tell** about the Action?
⇨ **Position Development, Messaging and Communications**				
Keeping/Refining Mission/Vision/Values	Collective Development Team	Total Collective	Total Collective @ retreat	Total Collective @ retreat
Deciding to Take a Position on a issue	Staff	Board	Board	Total Collective
Messaging and Preparing Written Communication Products **(where fast turnaround is needed)**	Public Education Team	Staff	Staff	Total Collective
Communications Strategy Implementation **(external)**	Public Education Team	Staff	Public Education Team	Total Collective
Communications Strategy Development (internal)	Collective Development Team	Staff	Collective Development Team @ retreat	Total Collective
⇨ **Organizational Goal-Setting and Planning**				
Develop organizational Goal-Setting and Program Planning Process	Collective Development Team	Staff	Total Collective @ retreat	Total Collective
Teams Work Plan Development	Teams	Team Members	Total Collective @ retreat	Total Collective
⇨ **Financial Planning**				
Implementation of a Fundraising Strategy	Fundraising and Finance Team	Staff and Collective @ point people meeting	Board	Total Collective
Monitoring and	Fundraising and	Staff	Board	Total Collective

Reporting about Financial Situation	Finance Team			
Developing Organizational Budget	Fundraising and Finance Team	Staff	Board	Total Collective
Developing Fundraising Strategy	Fundraising and Finance Team	Staff	Board	Total Collective
Responding to a Cash Flow Problem	Fundraising and Finance Team	Staff	Board	Total Collective
Deficit/Shortfall Planning	Fundraising and Finance Team	Staff	Board	Total Collective
TASKS OR FUNCTIONS	**DECISION-MAKING ROLE**			
	Who's **Responsible** For Initiating This Action?	Whom Should They **Consult** Before Acting?	Who Should Finally **Approve**?	Who Do They Need to **Tell** about the Action?
⇨ **Planning and Care of Human Resources**				
Personnel Policies Development/Changes	Collective Development Team	Staff and Attorney	Board	Total Collective
Collective Handbook Development/Changes	Collective Development Team	Staff and Attorney	Board	Total Collective
Evaluating Staff Performance	Collective Development Team		Board	
Hiring & Termination	Personnel Committee	Collective Development Team	Board	Total Collective
Resolving Organizational Conflicts	Collective Development Team	Staff Board as needed	Staff Board as needed	Total Collective
Board Development and Board Care	Board	Staff and Total Collective	Board	Total Collective
⇨ **Program-Level Decisions**				
Giving Support to Other Organizations ***(e.g., financial endorsements of allies, offering labor)***	Staff	Fundraising and Finance Team **(if over $50*)***	Staff	Total Collective
Choosing Partners for the Work	Staff or relevant teams		Staff	Total Collective