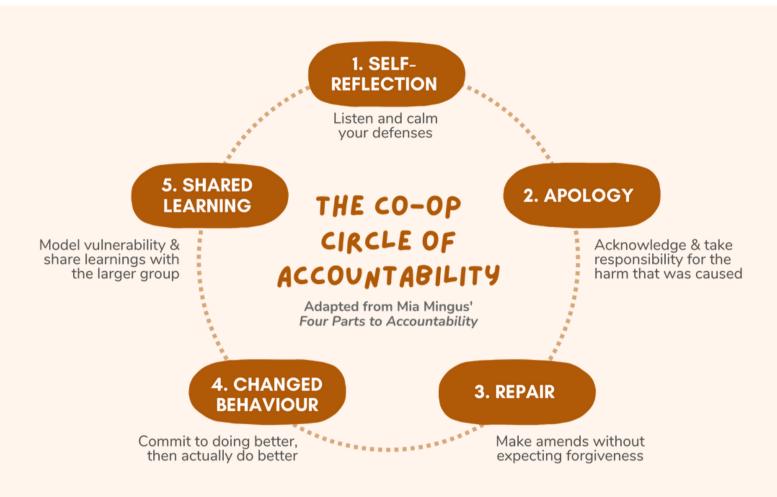# Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Toolkit for Co-ops:
ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES

A guide on how to take accountability for harm, repair and do better in the future

THE CO-OP CIRCLE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Adapted from Mia Mingus' *Four Parts to Accountability*

1. SELF-REFLECTION
Listen and calm your defenses

2. APOLOGY
Acknowledge & take responsibility for the harm that was caused

3. REPAIR
Make amends without expecting forgiveness

4. CHANGED BEHAVIOUR
Commit to doing better, then actually do better

5. SHARED LEARNING
Model vulnerability & share learnings with the larger group

Why do we need to practice accountability?

Sometimes we get called out/called into a conversation. It could be for something (well-intentioned yet harmful) we said in a meeting, an external announcement that damaged trust from an equity-deserving community or an organizational process that is exclusionary. Being called in/out can be difficult and may result in defence reactions. Through practicing accountability, you may realize that these "call-outs" are invitations to learn - someone believes in our ability to do better. Thank them for their feedback! By modelling gratitude for constructive feedback and welcoming honesty without penalty, you can help nurture a culture of psychological safety. This will help build an environment where equity-deserving groups and those with limited power feel safe enough to share valuable feedback.

For the co-op as a whole, accountability practices serve as an opportunity to demonstrate our values and solidarity to our members and other stakeholders. It's an opportunity for course-correcting, transforming and building a culture where all of us feel safe and valued. Practicing accountability goes hand-in-hand with co-operative values and principles such as Self-responsibility, Openness, and Concern for Community.

This guide intends to support you on your accountability journey and work as a starting point for co-ops to embed accountability into your culture, systems and structures.

ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES

1. Self Reflection

Listen and calm your defences. Engage in self-reflection to understand that harm has been done.

- Listen to understand, not to respond.
- Manage your defence reactions - minimize the risk of causing more harm.
- Engage in reflection & self-education; don't ask who's harmed for the additional emotional labour of explaining or educating you on the topic.
- Intention ≠ impact: we are accountable for harm even if it wasn't intended.
- Take accountability as an organization for what happened. Most often, harmful behaviour isn't simply due to the shortcomings of a single person but is highly affected by the culture.

What in our organizational culture, systems or structures may leverage harmful behaviour?

2. Apologize

Acknowledge and take responsibility for the harm that was caused. Genuine apology helps practice vulnerability and build trust.

(It's OK to ask for time to reflect first)
- Demonstrate that impact is understood; minimizing or dismissing may cause more harm.
- Apologize clearly and sincerely and without dilution such as "but" or "if".
- De-center yourself - focus on how the people who were harmed were affected, not your own feelings.
- Communicate specific actions you will take to do better in the future.
- Note that the situation will not be magically solved by one well-worded apology.

Does the degree and type of harm prompt an officially stated apology by leadership? What procedures do we have in place for apologizing (interpersonally, internally and externally)?

3. Repair

Make amends without expecting forgiveness.

- Repair includes making amends and rebuilding trust. Amends needed to repair broken trust will differ depending on the degree and type of harm.
- Understand the desires and needs of the person/group that was harmed.
- Repair isn't linear nor follows a set path. It requires consistency and can take a long time.

How will the co-op center the needs and desires of the group that was harmed? Does the harmed group feel safe to engage in dialogue to express their needs in resolution?

4. Changed Behaviour

Commit to doing better, then actually do better

- Communicate a plan of action beyond the present moment. Follow through!
- Transforming behaviour is hard work; have self-compassion and get support for yourself.
- Changed behaviour is the hardest part of accountability and has deeper roots in trauma that require some level of healing. Commit to the journey and practice, practice, practice!

What specific changes to organizational behaviour (culture, norms, processes etc.) are needed to rebuild trust and mitigate future harm? How will we sustain this change and hold ourselves accountable?

5. Shared Learning

Model vulnerability and share the learnings with the larger group

- Move from fault-finding and who's wrong to a solution-focused approach that focuses on what's wrong and how we can all do better.
- Talk about mistakes instead of hiding them; sharing your learnings with others can help prevent future harm caused by someone else.
- Note: Only share learnings if it's OK to do so and it won't risk the safety or well-being of the people who were harmed. Share what was learned but leave situational details out of it.

What in our organizational culture & structure dis- or encourages people to be honest about their mistakes? How can we move from blame to accountability?

Sources:
- Framework is adapted from Mia Mingus' Four Parts to Accountability
- Excerpts from The Wake Up: Closing the Gap between Good Intentions and Real Change, Michelle MiJung Kim
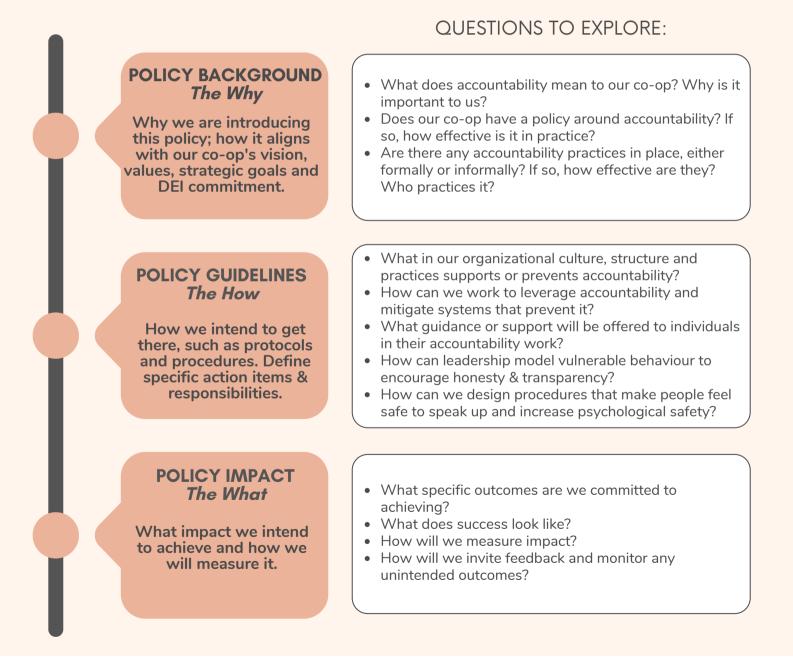
BCcoop

ACCA
ALBERTA COMMUNITY & CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATION

WEC
Women's Economic Council | Le conseil économique des femmes

ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES

FRAMEWORK TO DEVELOP AN ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY

An Accountability Policy may serve as a guiding protocol on how to self-reflect, apologize, repair trust, and do better in the future. The policy cannot be passive and must be accompanied with active effort from the leadership as well as time and resources allocated towards educating and practicing accountability co-op-wide. When developing your accountability policy, make sure to gather insights from across your co-op including staff, members and other stakeholders.

The infographic below covers three important pillars of an effective and outcome-oriented accountability policy. It may be used as a guideline for developing your own policy.

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE:

POLICY BACKGROUND
The Why

Why we are introducing this policy; how it aligns with our co-op's vision, values, strategic goals and DEI commitment.

- What does accountability mean to our co-op? Why is it important to us?
- Does our co-op have a policy around accountability? If so, how effective is it in practice?
- Are there any accountability practices in place, either formally or informally? If so, how effective are they? Who practices it?

POLICY GUIDELINES
The How

How we intend to get there, such as protocols and procedures. Define specific action items & responsibilities.

- What in our organizational culture, structure and practices supports or prevents accountability?
- How can we work to leverage accountability and mitigate systems that prevent it?
- What guidance or support will be offered to individuals in their accountability work?
- How can leadership model vulnerable behaviour to encourage honesty & transparency?
- How can we design procedures that make people feel safe to speak up and increase psychological safety?

POLICY IMPACT
The What

What impact we intend to achieve and how we will measure it.

- What specific outcomes are we committed to achieving?
- What does success look like?
- How will we measure impact?
- How will we invite feedback and monitor any unintended outcomes?