

## **Guidelines for Lateral Root Network**

### Purpose

The Lateral Root Network brings together stakeholders from across the local food community in Manitoba to help guide Fireweed Food Hub as it grows, and help it fulfill its goal of connecting local producers with local markets and making local food more accessible for all.

As well as providing guidance to the Food Hub, the LRN is also a broader space to have conversations about growing and strengthening the local food system in Manitoba.

Inspired by our namesake plant, the fireweed, we wish to extend our roots as an organization to build stronger connections within our community to fuel the ongoing work we are all engaging in creating positive change in our food systems!

### Membership

The Lateral Root Network will be made up of the following sectoral groups:

- Producers (preference for Food Hub suppliers) - 3-4 reps
- Food service businesses (preference for Food Hub Customers) - 3-4 reps
- Food security advocates - 3-4 reps
- Fireweed Food Co-op - 2-3 reps

Anyone belonging to one of the above groups is invited to apply. Members will be selected by a committee made up of board members and staff on the basis of balanced representation between and within each sectoral group, the applicant's involvement in the local food system, and the applicant's relationship to Fireweed. Preference will also be given to applicants with lived experience of food insecurity.

Members are asked to commit to the LRN for one year, after which they may choose whether to renew their commitment for another year. After two years we ask members to take at least a one year break so as to make room for new voices in the group.

LRN members must also become [members](#) of Fireweed Food Co-op, if they are not already. If purchasing a membership is a barrier, Fireweed will provide an honorary one.

### Schedule

The LRN will meet four times a year--once with each sectoral group, and once as a whole. The commitment for each member will therefore be two meetings a year. There will be opportunities for voluntary communication and networking between meetings via a private Facebook group.

## Remuneration

If our budget allows, LRN members who are not a board or staff member of Fireweed Food Coop may be offered a small honorarium. The honorarium is intended to compensate members who are participating in the LRN on their own time, and to address barriers to participation some members might face. While it will be offered to all members, its acceptance is optional. Please note, however, that our budget is limited and will depend on available funds.

## Structure

Every meeting of the LRN will include the opportunity to generate one or more recommendations pertaining to the Food Hub's activities. LRN recommendations are generated in the spirit of consensus, with opportunity for discussion and disagreement.

These recommendations, as well as meeting minutes, will be shared with the Fireweed Food Co-op board and discussed at the next board meeting, where a response, and if applicable, follow-up actions for board and/or staff will be decided. A Fireweed board or staff member will share the results of the board's discussion with the LRN in a timely manner.

Examples of areas the LRN might provide recommendations on include (but are not limited to) Food Hub producer relationships and production method standards, buyer or customer relationships and marketing, and food security actions.

A summary of every LRN meeting will also be sent to participants, and there will be a final report given to co-op members about the LRN at each Annual General Meeting.

## Facilitation & Communication

Fireweed staff will be responsible for communication with LRN members, including arranging meetings, though board members may also play a role. All meetings will be facilitated by an experienced staff member.

Between meetings, LRN members will be encouraged to join a private messenger group for the purpose of staying connected, and having opportunities to share ideas and network with one another. This will also be a great place for informal feedback opportunities on various topics related to operations.

## Confidentiality Agreement

We are dedicated to building a food system of cooperation over competition. We ask that any information or topics discussed during meetings about Fireweed's business or activities be kept confidential, and not be shared with competitors or used in a spirit of competition.

## Feedback & Evaluation

The LRN is an unfolding experiment, and Fireweed Food Hub Committee and staff will be reflecting on and re-evaluating the LRN on an ongoing basis. We welcome thoughts and suggestions at any time on how to ensure the LRN is fulfilling its purpose and is a meaningful and useful endeavour for all members.