

**‘PARTICIPATORY WORKING GROUPS’ & THE SELECTION
PROCESS OF THEIR MEMBERS**

Amended version approved by the Residents’ Assembly in December 2020



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INTRODUCTION

Auroville is a society based on universal values, governing itself with an evolving level of integrity based on living these very values. For this proposal, the 12 qualities / powers as represented in the Mother's symbol are chosen as basic values on which we all can agree.

Sincerity, Humility, Gratitude, Perseverance, Aspiration, Receptivity, Progress, Courage, Goodness, Generosity, Equality and Peace.

"The first eight concern the attitude towards the Divine, and the last four towards humanity." - The Mother

In essence ... the 12 powers are the vibrations that are necessary for the complete manifestation. It is the symbol of manifestation, double perfection, in essence and in manifestation, in the creation.
Sri Aurobindo

As long as you are for some and against others, you are necessarily outside the Truth. You should constantly keep goodwill and love in your heart and let them pour out on all with tranquillity and equality. The Mother

OVERALL VISION

The 'Participatory Working Group' system aims towards creating an organisation of which the above mentioned values are the elements; an organisation which fosters transparency, communication and participation, aligning its actions and goals with 'The Auroville Charter', 'A Dream', 'To Be A True Aurovilian' and other writings by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

The aim of this approach is to reinforce the involvement of the community in its day to day functioning and a sense of dedicated sharing of the work, while guaranteeing full membership of Working Groups throughout the year. The objective is to move from conventional governance to a self-organizing participatory model.

The mandated members of Working Groups (here termed as **members**) are selected during the Participatory Selection Process from registered residents of Auroville chosen for their experience, expertise, integrity and commitment to the ideals of Auroville. Skills of analysis, strategy, action planning, communication and a willingness to work towards unity and harmony are required.

WORKING GROUPS INCLUDED IN THESE GUIDELINES

- Working Committee (WCom)
- Auroville Council (AVC)
- Funds and Assets Management Committee (FAMC)
- L'avenir d'Auroville (L'avenir) (excluding Part 3. Selection Process)
- Entry Board

INCLUSION OF A RESOURCE POOL

In order to assist the Working Group members and to ensure efficient and transparent functioning of the groups, a resource pool is maintained by each working group, from which community members are chosen as required and according to the task. These are identified as **Resource Persons** of various expertise and skills, including facilitation.

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Resource persons are drawn from the community at large as well as from outside when needed, enabling swift access to the human resource required and an efficient, prompt functioning of the Working Groups.

A separate pool of Silent Presence Keepers is maintained. Members of the pool are given training specific to this work.

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PART 1. WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

“The conditions for being an organiser (it's not "governing", it's "organizing") should be as follows: no more desires, no more preferences, no more attractions, no more repulsions - a perfect equality for all. Sincere, naturally, but that goes without saying: wherever insincerity creeps in, it acts like a poison.” The Mother

The number of persons to be selected for each working group shall be according to their respective mandates.

Members hold the responsibility to work towards agreement, taking all aspects of an issue into account and are to arrive at decisions that are well-documented, underlined with clear motivation and aligned with the aims and ideals of Auroville.

Members must be registered residents of Auroville, selected for their experience, expertise, integrity and commitment to the ideals of Auroville. They are the official, signatory members of the working group. Members cannot be simultaneously a selected member more than one working group under PWG guidelines.

Members are responsible for the coordination, implementation and fulfilment of the task according to their mandate.

Motto: “I offer to serve the work in a committed and impartial way in a spirit of equanimity, inclusiveness, efficiency and generosity. I cooperate and contribute to enable the best outcome of the task in alignment with the ideals of Auroville.”

Functioning of Members in the working groups

- Members meet to study and respond to various issues and emergencies by prioritising long, medium and short term issues, making sure that none are left unattended.
- Subjects are distributed between the members so that each subject has one responsible member. A member may form a subgroup/task force team if required, with an adequate number of facilitators and Resource Persons, and together they see how to proceed with a specific subject and set a certain time frame for completion. There might be multiple facilitators if a task is divided, but each task or part of a task has only one facilitator responsible for its completion. Ultimate responsibility stays with the members.
- The Members of the working group together ensure effective monitoring of the work progress by tracking closures or extensions of projects at hand.

For the Working Committee (WCom), FAMC and L’avenir, a number of the Members must have experience in dealing with Officials of the Indian Government on all levels, Central as well as Regional and Local Government & Administration. The WCom will collaborate with the Auroville Council (AVC) or other Working Groups on issues where such contacts are required.

Subgroups formed by Working Groups

When a subgroup is formed, it consists of a member, one or more facilitators and the relevant Resource Persons.

- A member, when assigned a task, may call on one or more facilitators from the Resource Pool from the Auroville community at large or, when needed, on expertise from outside Auroville.

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Together, they select the resource persons with the experience, skill and knowledge needed to form a subgroup or task force.

- The subgroup consisting of members, facilitator/s and Resource Persons will in a timely manner arrive at a jointly proposed solution. They evaluate their solution with regard to the ideals and values of Auroville before finalising their conclusion. Regular reporting to the concerned working group(s) is required.
- The subgroup presents its solution to all members of the respective working group, who generally will abide by the solution, arrived at by the specific subgroup created for the purpose.
- In case the solution is found to be biased or incomplete, another member will be chosen to create a new subgroup and look into the task once more. Further suitably skilled, experienced and unbiased resource persons can be sought if needed.
- If the second round still does not find agreement among the members, the subject will be brought to the Residents Assembly via the Residents Assembly Service.

Process of Decision Making within the Working Group

Depending on the respective tasks of a working group, its Members identify the various types of decisions/validations to be made in categories like: routine tasks; day to day tasks; emergency cases; long term/ strategy issues; cases needing approval from the Residents Assembly. Members hold the trust to take decisions on behalf of the Residents Assembly in any of the above-mentioned types of decisions, unless:

- The subject involves the forming of a subgroup, in which case the subgroup will give a recommendation.
- The subject is of such a nature that it has to be referred to the Residents Assembly via the Residents Assembly Service

An appeals process is available for any member of the community to appeal against decisions of the WCom, AVC and FAMC. A copy of this process can be found on Auronet.

Communication responsibility

One Member is responsible for and in charge of internal and external communication. The working group is responsible to avail of communication tools or find relevant resource persons in order to establish a well-functioning system, such as:

- Create and maintain an online forum for the working group.
- Assure that the internal communication flow within subgroups/task groups is functioning well.
- Draft and publish a team membership list along with profiles with photos and the roles/functions of respective Members.
- Determine conditions to access to mailing lists, and assure that the agreed-on ethical code of conduct and confidentiality is followed in all group email/document exchanges.
- Draft monthly work reports to be approved by the other Members. These are published through Auronet, News & Notes, RAS and, in urgent cases, via mass mail.

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Individual and Group Assessments

- The Working Groups will conduct twice annually, an internal assessment regarding group dynamics and work output. The study group on organisation or the Auroville Council if so required may arrange expert facilitation for this.

In connection with the twice annual internal assessment exercise, the Working Groups will prepare an interactive Information Meeting with the community in collaboration with RAS.

Term, mandate and turnover

- Members are selected for a period of 3 years.
- Having completed 3 years, members can be selected by nomination or self-nomination for a second term through open participation in the Selection Process. After 2 terms, there has to be a time lapse of 2 years before a Member can again nominate herself/himself or be nominated for membership in the same working group.
- There will be a yearly selection process when approximately a third of the Members of a working group will be replaced. This will ensure continuity in the Working Groups with a system of staggered turnover.
- In the beginning of the yearly selection process, the Working Group informs the community via the Residents Assembly Service through News & Notes and Auronet which members will be replaced and which skills are needed from the new-to-be members.

For Working Groups not yet acquainted with it the staggered membership process, it is proposed to keep on 2 members from the earlier group for one year only. For the second year the shift can happen naturally by members choosing to resign. If this is not the case, the working group team will make the decision, if needed, in collaboration with the community through the Residents Assembly Service. After this period of transit, the staggering will take place naturally. (Some of the mandates of the Working Groups may have to be adjusted in order to function this way).

Resignation of Members

When a Member wants to resign during the term, s/he is requested to stay on until November and to make a proper handover of all her/his tasks. If this is not possible, the working group can ask a suitable individual from within the Resource Pool or the community at large to join as an interim solution and fill the role as a Member, but without decision making powers.

The interim person will stay on till the yearly selection process in November and can, if so wished, nominate her/himself or be nominated for the selection process.

Removal of Members during the term

To be Member of a working group implies effective participation, conscientious presence and teamwork. Members who are not executing their work as assigned by the group and/or turn out to be ill-matched with the team can – after all attempts of integration have failed – be asked by the

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Working Group to step out. For specific tasks they can serve the Group as a Resource Person. In a case like this, it will to be announced in the monthly working group report and through the RAS in a transparent, open way.

Commitment of members

Members of working groups are expected to commit to their term of office, or at least until the next selection process. If they are unable to make that commitment, then they should not accept nomination for the group. The exception would be circumstances outside their control.

Training and Education

New members should be integrated into the group according to the needs of the group and the individual. Specific training may be given according to the need, and joining the group as a Silent Presence Keeper is encouraged.

The aim is to create an organisation, which fosters transparency, communication and participation, consciously aligning its actions and goals with the ideals of Auroville. In this context Members are invited to foster a spirit of learning amongst themselves, and expand/refine their abilities through training in fields such as leadership, organisational and conflict resolution workshops according to need. Such training and education may be open for all Aurovilians who wish to prepare themselves to take up organisational work.

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PART 2. RESOURCE POOL OF VOLUNTARY SUPPORT PERSONS

Aurovilians can offer their skills as Facilitators, Resource Persons or Silent Presence Keepers to the Working Groups at any time either voluntarily or at the request/invitation of the Working Groups.

1) Facilitators

Facilitators are persons with the skills and experience needed to help facilitate subgroups created for specific topics.

- A Working Group Member, when creating a subgroup for a specific task, can invite one or more facilitators to participate. Together, they select resource persons with the needed experience and expertise from the Resource Pool, the Auroville community at large, including expertise from outside Auroville when needed. The team thus created takes responsibility to complete the assigned task in a timely manner, in alignment with the ideals of Auroville, taking all views and concerns into consideration.
- The facilitator/s keeps the Member informed of the status, outcome or any occurring problem. All team members of a subgroup have access to emails relevant to the task they are involved with.
- Required features: facilitation skills, team spirit, striving for equanimity and omni-partiality, collaboration and goal setting, in alignment with the ideals of Auroville.

Motto: "I offer my capacity to lead and bring people together to facilitate a given task for the team. I cooperate and contribute what it takes for the best outcome of the task in alignment with the ideals of Auroville."

2) Resource Persons

Resource persons are individuals, chosen from the Auroville pool of resource persons or, if needed, from outside, who have the experience, skill and knowledge to help a subgroup or task force in its fulfilment of a task.

- Resource persons are needed for all relevant fields of expertise and experience, including human relations and community experience.
- The time commitment of a resource person is need-based and thus allows flexibility to help the team according to her/his availability.
- Required features: knowledge, experience, expertise, integrity, equanimity, wisdom and awareness of the values and aims of Auroville.

Motto: "I offer my expertise and experience to complete a given task for the team. I cooperate and contribute towards the best outcome of the task in alignment with the ideals of Auroville."

3) Silent Presence Keeper

A Silent Presence Keeper offers her/his service as a silent observer of the working group in the spirit of a supportive presence of the community, holding a space of unity and harmony. Training is given by the Silent Present Keepers' group linked to the Auroville Council.

- Silent Presence Keepers are Aurovilians invited to be present during the meetings without participating in the discussion or giving comments/opinions on the topics, neither during nor any time after the meetings. In exceptional cases a non-Aurovilian may act as silent listener in agreement with the Working Group.

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- Silent Presence Keepers may be invited by Members to give their observations in a manner to be determined by the Working Group. The Working Group can invite 1-2 silent listeners to sit in on their activities/meetings.
- Required features: silent presence, learning, goodwill, restraint, equanimity, confidentiality.

Motto: “I offer myself as a Silent Presence Keeper as a wisdom presence enhancing the process of the Working Group, and aspire for the success of the task in alignment with the ideals of Auroville.”

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PART 3. SELECTION PROCESS FOR THE WORKING COMMITTEE, FAMC, AUROVILLE COUNCIL AND ENTRY BOARD

A. NOMINATION PROCESS

1) All Working Groups to provide information about their work and requirement.

All working groups will submit to the RAS their requirement for new member(s) and give information about the work of the Working Group and what it expects the new member(s) will be doing. The RAS will post this information in the News and Notes, the AuroNet and through its mass bulletin.

2) Nominations for working group membership.

- a) The RAS will invite all Auroville residents to submit nominations for the membership of any of the above mentioned working groups.
- b) An Auroville resident can either nominate him/herself or nominate another Auroville resident. If nominating someone else, the nominator will first confirm that the nominee is willing to serve if selected.
- c) For each nomination, a nomination form has to be filled in by the nominator and the nominee. The content of the nomination form is included at the end of this document.
- d) A person can only be nominated for one working group. If a person has been nominated for more than one working group, the RAS will contact the nominee for his/her decision in which working group s/he would like to serve.
- e) A person who was selected as a working group member in the interim selection process of February 2020 can, for the following selection process, be nominated for any working group including the one in which s/he has been serving since February 2020.

3) Rejected nominations.

- a) The RAS will reject the following nominations:
 - i) A nomination made on a nomination form that has not been properly filled in or is unsigned. Before rejecting the nomination, the RAS will give opportunity to the nominator and/or the nominee to amend the nomination form within two days after being notified by the RAS.
 - ii) The nomination of a person who is a close family member (husband, wife, brother, sister, partner, or child) of a member of the same working group.
 - iii) The nominations of two close family members (husband, wife, brother, sister, partner, or child) for the same working group. If this case, the RAS will contact both nominees for their decision who will withdraw their nomination.
 - iv) The nomination of a person who would be serving a third consecutive term in the working group for which he/she is nominated. Note: The period served by a person appointed through the interim selection process will not be counted.
 - v) The nomination of a person who owns immovable property in the City and Greenbelt areas of Auroville. This does not apply if the immovable property is family-owned as ancestral lands and the nominee’s family members are not residents of Auroville.

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4) Announcement of nominations and feedback.

- a) After the RAS has evaluated all nominations as specified in sections 2 and 3 above, the RAS will publish the list of confirmed nominees for each working group in the News and Notes, on the Auronet and in the mass bulletin, together with the filled-in nomination forms of all nominees.
- b) Residents can give their positive or negative feedback on a nominee in the comment section below each nomination form and send this to the RAS.
- c) Neither the Auronet nor the News and Notes will publish any feedback on a nominee.
- d) The RAS will share the feedback with the confirmed participants in the selection process only.

B. SELECTION PROCESS

- 1) After the publication of the list of confirmed nominees and the nomination forms, the Residents’ Assembly Service will invite all residents of Auroville and all nominees and the members of the concerned working groups to participate in the selection process.
- 2) The Aurovilians who have expressed to the RAS their willingness to participate in the selection process, the nominees and the members of the concerned working groups will jointly select the new members for the working groups, except as mentioned in section C.9 below.
- 3) The RAS will inform all participants in the selection process of the feedback it received on the nominees. The participants commit to treat all feedback as confidential and not publish or circulate it and only use this feedback for the selection of the confirmed participants. The feedback is only for individual information and reflection and will not be the basis of a discussion during the selection process.
- 4) Participants and nominees and the members of the concerned working groups commit to participate in the entire selection process. It is not possible to participate in part of the selection process only.
- 5) The selection process will be organised, monitored and concluded by the RAS. The RAS may decide to select one or more facilitators to guide the selection process.
- 6) The selection process for each working group will take half a day. The working group will present its mandate, its work, its challenges and its needs. Then, each of the nominees will make a personal presentation and answer any questions asked by the participants.
- 7) The selection will take place immediately after the nominees’ presentations. The process of selection will be as follows:
 - a) For each vacancy each participant in the selection (called the selector) gets one selection card, e.g. if there are three vacancies, each selector gets 3 cards.
 - b) Each selector can only use one card per candidate, or discard a card. EG, if there are 3 candidates, A, B, and C., the selector can submit one card for A, one for C, and deposit the third card in the discard box. The selector can also deposit all cards in the discard box in case the selector is of the opinion that none of the candidates are suitable to fill the vacancies.
 - c) To be selected, a candidate needs to have the trust of a minimum of 50% of the selectors. A candidate will not be selected, if this quorum has not been reached.
 - d) The cards in the discard box will not be counted.
- 8) If there are more vacancies and more than one candidate has passed the quorum, the

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candidate who gained the most trust will be selected, followed by the next etc.

- 9) The ongoing members of the working group for which new members are selected and the nominees for that specific working group cannot participate in the selection of members for that working group. They will leave the room when the selection takes place.
- 10) All those involved in the selection process will endeavour to ensure that at least 2/3rd of the members of each working group consist of persons who have been resident of Auroville for at least 5 years. e.g. if a working group's mandate specifies that the group will have 7 members, ideally 4 members should be resident of Auroville for at least five years; if the mandate specifies 9 members, ideally 6 members should be resident of Auroville for at least five years.
- 11) All those involved in the selection process will endeavour to ensure age and gender equality and a differentiation of nationality in each working group.
- 12) The RAS will immediately inform the community about the outcome of each selection process.
- 13) No feedback on any of the selected persons will be solicited.
- 14) The selected persons will immediately after the RAS announcement, join the working group for which they have been selected. (see Part 1 – Training and Education, Page 7)

Contents of the Nomination Form

To be filled in by the nominator:

- 1) The nominator's contact information
- 2) The nominee's contact information
- 3) The name of the Working Group for which the nominee is nominated
- 4) The nominator's signature, place, date.

To be filled in by the nominee:

- 1) Where are you working at present?
- 2) What is your work experience in Auroville?
- 3) Do you have knowledge and understanding of the task of the working group for which you are nominated? (A 'yes' or 'no' reply is not sufficient. Please explain.)
- 4) Do you consider that you are qualified and competent to participate in the work of the working group for which you are nominated? (A 'yes' or 'no' reply is not sufficient. Please explain.)
- 5) Do you consider that you can work in the team of the working group for which you are nominated? (A 'yes' or 'no' reply is not sufficient. Please explain.)
- 6) What do you think you will contribute to the work of the working group?
- 7) Are you interested to join the working group full-time or part-time?
- 8) Do you need a maintenance for your work in the working group?
- 9) Any additional relevant information you wish to share?
- 10) Signature, place, date.