

TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, INCLUSION, AND PRIVACY POLICIES

SECTION 1 – PREAMBLE

SECTION 2 – ANNUAL COMMUNICATIONS SURVEY

SECTION 3 – CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

SECTION 4 – CONFLICT OF INTERESTS DISCLOSURE FORM

SECTION 5 – DOCUMENT ACCESS, RETENTION & DESTRUCTION

SECTION 6 – DOCUMENT USE & REPRODUCTION

SECTION 7 – DONOR PROTECTION

SECTION 8 – OPEN MEETINGS

SECTION 9 – REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

SECTION 10 – WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY

SECTION 1 – PREAMBLE

The Muse Collaborative is fully committed to open, honest, and transparent action in pursuit of its mission. Because we're very much a community organization, we want our work, the reasons for it, and the goals we're aiming for to be known and shaped by our neighbors.

Transparency increases our effectiveness and begins with an internal culture of honesty and unwavering dedication to our community. In order to be accountable to the public, our work, the information we share, and the ways we communicate must be accessible and understandable.

From the moment we begin planning to formal public review, The Muse Collaborative aims to work in ways our community is proud of. Inclusive decision making holds us accountable to the public and our programs and policies directly benefit when they're influenced by the wisdom and expertise of our community. If you ever find something that concerns you in our documents or you have ideas about how we could do our work better, please contact us.

Alongside our organizational commitments to transparency, accountability, and inclusion we are also dedicated to protecting individuals' right to privacy. Despite apparent contrast, both sets of values promote the same fundamental goal of serving the public interest. The Muse Collaborative will never knowingly reveal information that directly harms or exposes an individual to danger, or use information about an individual for the sole benefit of private interests.

We are committed to advancing society toward equality and because society is comprised not only of our greatest dreams but also our most serious failings, The Muse Collaborative orients its actions with moral obligation. Beyond legal requirements, we want our actions to align with, advocate for, empower, and protect those who are marginalized, disenfranchised, or otherwise have their human dignity and expression stifled.

Mistakes will be made as we develop and we will not hide or be ashamed of them. Any faults we have contribute to our progress, so rather than obscure them, deny them, or live in fear of them we will make sure they are discoverable and fixable, internally and externally. We will strive to improve ourselves and invite our community to assist us in that process.

The policies and actions in this packet demonstrate our commitment toward these ends. These policies are updated as needed and approved by the Board of Trustees.

SECTION 2 – ANNUAL COMMUNICATIONS SURVEY

Once a year, The Muse Collaborative will survey the general public regarding the best methods it can use for disseminating information. Emphasis will be given to hearing and incorporating the voices of Camden citizens – the primary stakeholders and beneficiaries of the organization. Topics of the survey may include but are not limited to: activities of the board, events, governance actions, organizational documents, and volunteer opportunities. A summary of the survey’s results will be published for the public.

SECTION 3 – CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

As an organization, The Muse Collaborative understands its officers, directors, trustees, employees, and volunteers bring their own ideologies and interests to bear in decision making. This diversity of individual perspective and wisdom is advantageous to the organization and the pursuit of its vision and mission; however, openness to independent action also lends itself to the possibility of decisions being made that may unduly benefit self interests. Acting in one’s personal interest is inevitable so rather than expect fully altruistic action in all situations, The Muse Collaborative’s Conflict of Interests policy provides oversight and helps us navigate situations where an individual’s pursuit of self-enrichment may come at the expense of the organization’s activities or the public it serves. All assets of The Muse Collaborative are directed toward its organizational goals and the benefit of the public and will not be used to enrich private interests at the expense of either.

Every year, officers, directors, trustees, and key employees of The Muse Collaborative are required to disclose personal interests which may create conflict. Individuals should consider entities, interests, relatives, and individuals to whom they themselves, current or former officers, directors, trustees, or key employees of The Muse Collaborative have commitments to, relationships with, or business transactions with. Individuals who have no potential conflicts to report must certify their lack of conflict. Failure to disclose personal interests will be addressed on a case-by-case basis by the Board of Trustees.

Vendors, businesses, organizations, individuals, or other groups with whom The Muse Collaborative has substantial financial dealings with may also be required to disclose information regarding personal or financial relationships they have with any of The Muse Collaborative’s officers, directors, trustees, key employees, or volunteers.

The Muse Collaborative’s Board of Trustees will regularly monitor and enforce compliance with its Conflict of Interests Policy. In the event that The Muse Collaborative uncovers or predicts certain activities might benefit an individual to the detriment of the organization’s pursuits or the public interest, uninvolved members of The Board of Trustees will convene to determine what, if any, other courses of action may negate the conflict. Individuals with whom a conflict rests cannot participate in decision making about how to avoid said conflict and cannot be present at any meeting where the conflict is discussed. If those Board members tasked with finding a solution determine no reasonable alternative exists that is more beneficial to the public or the organization's pursuit of its mission, the original option may still be chosen. Records of all deliberation and decisions made will be kept.

SECTION 4 – CONFLICT OF INTERESTS DISCLOSURE FORM

By signing this form, I certify that I've received, read, understand, and agree to abide by The Muse Collaborative's Conflict of Interests Policy, as well as the entirety of its Transparency, Accountability, Inclusion and Privacy Policies. Furthermore, I will make sure any changes in the information I provide in this disclosure and any additional, potential conflicts are reported in a timely manner.

I understand The Muse Collaborative is a not-for-profit organization and that it must not provide impermissible benefit to any individuals or entities in order to preserve its exempt status.

<The remainder of this section is still being written, edited, or reviewed>

SECTION 5 – DOCUMENT ACCESS, RETENTION & DESTRUCTION

In order to provide continued accountability to the public and identify internal issues in need of response, The Muse Collaborative preserves and makes many of its electronic and print documents open to the public. Documents that are burdensome to retain or whose preservation actively obscures more pertinent or useful documents will be destroyed in a manner that guarantees the privacy and safety of public individuals. In fulfillment of Federal and State requirements, The Muse Collaborative makes its governing documents, policies, and annual financial statements available to the public on its website. Public individuals can request additional information and documents by submitting a Request for Information to the organization.

The following list details the length of time The Muse Collaborative will preserve certain documents. All staff and board members of the organization are trained in identifying, protecting, and preserving documents that may be of interest to the public.

In the event of legal inquiry, relevant documents will never be destroyed and may be preserved past the guidelines listed below:

Permanent

- Checks (for substantial payments and purchases)
- Contracts, mortgages, notes, and leases (expired)
- Deeds and bills of sale
- Depreciation schedules
- Donor records
- Incorporation documents
- Independent audit reports
- Insurance records, accident reports, claims, and policies (active and expired)
- Legal correspondence (legal and important matters)
- Retirement and pension records
- Trademark registrations and copyrights
- Year-end financial statements

10 Years

- Accounts payable ledgers and schedules
- Conflict of Interest forms not covered elsewhere in this document
- Outdated bylaws
- Payroll records and summaries
- Personnel files for active and terminated employees
- Tax Withholding statements
- Vendor invoices

5 Years

- Bank statements
- Deposit slips
- Employment applications
- Internal audit reports

3 Years

- General correspondence
- General program documents

SECTION 6 – DOCUMENT USE & REPRODUCTION

All publically published documents are available for public use in accordance with Creative Commons Non-Commercial, Share Alike licensing. Additionally, source code published for public access is available under the GNU General Public License v3.0.

SECTION 7 – DONOR PROTECTION

The Muse Collaborative will never sell, share, or trade its donors' names or personal identifying information to another party or utilize its information resources for the sole benefit of private interests. In order to recognize the generosity of donors and provide financial transparency to the public, donors' names and the amounts of individual contributions may be made public. Individuals may request that their name be made anonymous in public acknowledgements.

Additionally, The Muse Collaborative will never knowingly accept a contribution which places a donor under financial duress.

SECTION 8 – OPEN MEETINGS

Regular meetings for the Board of Trustees will be open to the public. Any sensitive or confidential information scheduled for discussion which cannot be discussed in a public setting will be dealt with only after all public topics have been fully discussed. Agendas for regularly scheduled meetings will be made available to the public no less than a week beforehand and minutes for the meetings will be posted within two weeks of a meeting's conclusion.

Any time the board invites public comment, community members will have up to 10 minutes to discuss the matter at hand, unless an extension is requested and approved. Board meetings will place no prohibition on speech, so long as it comports with local, state, and federal law.

SECTION 9 – REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The Muse Collaborative will accommodate reasonable information requests from public individuals in a timely fashion, as long as such requests are consistent with the organization's privacy policies, other guiding policies/documents, and do not inhibit the daily work of the organization or impose undue burden on the staff. Depending on the scope and nature of the information request, The Muse Collaborative may scale its response in a manner that is within the financial, material, and staffing capabilities of the organization. Portions of certain documents may be redacted to preserve individual privacy and personal safety. The Muse Collaborative may also inform individuals their request for information cannot be fulfilled; however, in the event that information cannot be released, public record of the request and the reason(s) for withholding information will be generated. Requests that are made against the public interest or are fraudulent or disruptive in nature will not be fulfilled.

All requests for information will be acknowledged by a representative of The Muse Collaborative within a two week period of its receipt. If no response is received within this timeframe, the Executive Director will be required to submit a written explanation to both the Board of Trustees and the individual requesting information detailing the reasons for the delay and steps taken to prevent further failings. Requests that are made against the public interest or are fraudulent or disruptive in nature will still be acknowledged, though information will not be provided.

The Muse Collaborative will distribute information in a manner that it deems both accessible and understandable based on the nature of the content requested and the needs of the requester.

SECTION 10 – WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY

In order to encourage and enable a work environment free of corruption and illegal behavior, The Muse Collaborative will protect staff, board members, and other individuals who report actions inconsistent with the mission and vision, bylaws, and other guiding policies of The Muse Collaborative as well as applicable local, state, and federal laws. It is the responsibility of all agents of The Muse Collaborative to report both direct violations and incontrovertible complicity.

Under no circumstances will any other person acting in good faith who reports an ethics violation, a suspected violation of law, discrimination, or fraud experience any form of retaliation from any agent affiliated with The Muse Collaborative. Any individual who seeks to cause harm or succeeds in doing so in retaliation to a whistleblower will be subject to discipline, including termination of employment and/or affiliation with The Muse Collaborative.

Individuals attempting to report on suspect behavior should first contact and discuss the matter with their immediate supervisor. In the event that an individual feels uncomfortable doing so, they may bring the behavior in question to the Executive Director. If this also proves unsatisfactory, individuals may pursue an alternate path and contact any member of the Board of Trustees. Reports provided to the Board will then be anonymized and provided to the Executive Director so he or she can investigate and respond to the complaint. Reports of violations will be kept confidential to whatever extent is possible in pursuit of resolution in order to mitigate undue attention to the whistleblower.

If further anonymity is required because the whistleblower deems it prudent, reports can be provided in writing or digitally to either the Executive Director or the Board. In the event that an anonymous report is provided, all investigations into the origin of the document will be prohibited. Reports submitted anonymously must include a full and complete description of the situation, including what happened, what the violation was, who was involved, what their response was, who was affected, and any other details pertinent in pursuing resolution.

All complaints, regardless of how they are submitted, will be investigated by the Executive Director and a report of the inquiry and response will be provided to the Board of Trustees and any other relevant parties on an annual basis. In situations where investigation of the claim cannot reasonably include the Executive Director, the Board will generate its own report. Matters relating to the violation of corporate accounting practices, internal controls or auditing will be brought to the attention of the Board immediately and resolution will be collaborative pursued by both the Executive Director and the Board of Trustees.

The Muse Collaborative assumes all claims made are done so with the utmost propriety, an unwavering respect for the truth, and with tantamount respect for the public good. Any allegations that prove to be unsubstantiated and are knowingly false or malicious in intent will result in serious disciplinary offense.