

Resilient Blue Mountains

Governance Handbook

The Blue Mountains area is the unceded traditional country of the Gundungurra and Darug First Nations people. We acknowledge the Elders, past and present and we acknowledge all Aboriginal people who have been working with us and graciously sharing their wisdom. We centre Indigenous leadership and knowledge in the process of building a resilient Blue Mountains.

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Introduction

Resilient Blue Mountains (RBM) is a community led network, for collaborative, community action on creating a resilient and sustainable future. This is a *developing* document that contains our vision, values, principles and governance frameworks. This document has been initially drafted by the members of the Governance group - a subgroup of the RBM Anchor Group. It has been endorsed for wider consultation by the Anchor Group.

We want to hear what you think, and we hope to keep building on this foundation with you.

Governance Foundations

What we are (currently)

We are a community-led network of community members, climate change activists, sustainability and environment groups in the Blue Mountains. We are building pathways for people to get involved in local actions that help create a resilient and sustainable future. We are run entirely by volunteers. Blue Mountains City Council has partnered with us, signed an MOU with RBM, and their staff attend our meetings and engage with us actively on solutions. This partnership includes the Festival of Resilience, for which BMCC raised seed funding through Bushfire Recovery Funding.

Vision (our tomorrow)

A connected, vibrant, and resilient community caring for a healthy, sustainable Blue Mountains.

Mission (what we will do to get there)

To connect and inspire the Blue Mountains community to build our resilience together while caring for Country.

In response to feedback we will add a few case studies here of what RBM has done in carrying out this mission.

Strategies (how we will carry out our mission)

1. To showcase and promote local people, initiatives and organisations acting to achieve a resilient, sustainable Blue Mountains.
2. To provide pathways for communities and neighbourhoods to connect and act together for more resilient and sustainable neighbourhoods.
3. To support collaborative themed working groups (e.g. renewable energy, children & education, low carbon living etc.) that gather data, build awareness and advocacy, develop resources and practical initiatives for people and communities to participate in (e.g. community-owned batteries).

4. To develop ‘lighthouse’ projects that inspire people and groups to collaborate on significant outcomes that contribute towards our vision.
5. To source funding to support the organisations collaborating across Resilient Blue Mountains and to establish new projects where needed.
6. To raise awareness, advocate for and spread knowledge of the best approaches to mitigate and adapt.

The approach we will take in implementing these strategies is that of a regenerative culture.

A regenerative culture is a culture that is consciously building the capacity of everybody in a particular place to respond and change and accepts transformation as something that life just “does”. [Daniel Christian Wahl](#)

Values (how we will treat each other as we get there)

In implementing these values, we acknowledge First Nations Knowledge systems, particularly the Gundungurra and Darug people in caring for Country over thousands of years, as a foundation for a resilient and regenerative future.

Respect	We treat each other with respect. In recognising diversity of opinion and values that cannot always be reconciled, we treat each other with respect. We show respect to those with whom we interact as well as those we don’t.
Trust and collaboration	We work collaboratively together and work to build and maintain trust.
Inclusiveness	We are inclusive and welcoming of all abilities, cultures, ages and backgrounds.
Care	We care about our community (and beyond) and we work together to keep each other safe from harm (including physical and psychological harm).
Learning	We acknowledge that we don’t hold all the knowledge required, and we will be open to learn and adapt how we work together.
Determined optimism	We recognise there are many challenges, but we focus on what we can do and what we can change.
Acknowledge contributions	We give credit to the work of others and we acknowledge the work of those around us.
Collective responsibility	We focus on what has been achieved and what can be improved. We avoid blaming individuals and communities.

Principles (how we will operate and choose what we work on)

1. We seek to acknowledge and learn from First Nations knowledge systems and support First Nations elders and leaders in Caring for Country in all its many levels of meaning.
2. We recognise the science of climate change and promote mitigation where we can.
3. We follow evidence-based and lived experience approaches to our work.
4. We seek to build a regenerative culture within Resilient Blue Mountains, and aim to have a regenerative impact on our community and environment.
5. We recognise our responsibilities towards future generations.
6. We are a grassroots network and promote citizen participation.
7. We are collaborative, non-hierarchical and take a participatory approach to decision making, preferably by consensus with voting if necessary.
8. We adhere to the principles of responsibility, accountability and transparency in governance.
9. We seek to increase employment and investment in the Blue Mountains in ways that are sustainable and regenerative.
10. We choose to partner with organisations that are aligned with our vision, mission, values and principles. We may choose not to partner with an organisation if we disagree with the direction, actions or principles of that entity or if we believe that they are not contributing towards building a resilient, sustainable community.
11. We are non-partisan (not supporting one political party or group over another), however we will partner with those who are aligned with our vision, mission, values and principles.
12. We uphold shared decision making and seek consensus where possible, or use voting when required. One vote per person after any conflicts of interest have been declared.

Review

This document will be reviewed annually and member suggestions are welcome at any time.

- Annual review by the Anchor Group - as we grow and gather experience in working together it will be good to check that the Handbook still meets our needs or if it needs any additions or changes.
- Members can suggest additions or changes throughout the year. High priority changes will be considered on a case by case basis, and others will be considered in the annual review.

Code of Ethics

Resilient Blue Mountains encourages ethical participation in building community resilience. Our ethics are built upon **values** (our shared beliefs and ideals), **principles** (our important ethical responsibilities) and practices (personal attributes we bring to our participation). The Values and Principles are listed above.

The full [Code of Ethics](#) can be found in Appendix 1.

Code of Conduct – Expected behaviours

<p>When participating within RBM we ask that everybody</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be kind and courteous - Treat everyone with respect. Debate is healthy, but kindness is required. 2. Act in a collaborative and cooperative manner. 3. Not discriminate against, bully, or harass any person. 4. Maintain confidentiality and privacy where appropriate 5. No spam, including commercial or party political content. 6. Where differences arise, seek to resolve them in good faith through internal processes rather than raising them with people external to RBM.
<p>When engaging with members of the community we ask that everybody</p>	<p>All of the above, plus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Be mindful, when participating in public RBM events that you will be perceived as representing RBM. 8. When attending non RBM events, provide your up-to-date RBM affiliation and other appropriate details. 9. Ensure you have the author's permission before copying and using presented materials and ideas. 10. Respect the rules and policies of the meeting venue. 11. Be accountable: If we as organisers or participants fail to meet these guidelines, work together to identify problems and adjust policy and practice together. 12. In all of the above, ensure that your words and actions do not bring RBM into disrepute.

Key Roles and Responsibilities of the Anchor Group

Group Coordinator (currently filled by Serena Joyner)

- Primary responsibility for group organising
- Planning/ strategies for group sustainability
- Convenes group meetings
- Coordinates venues/ times to maximise attendance
- Prepares meeting Agenda with Secretary
- Maintains group focus on strategy, timelines, meetings & events
- Identifies and develops other key roles
- Identifies and transitions members into key roles
- Builds relationships with like-minded organisations
- Participates in, and coordinates other members to participate in, relevant professional and community networks
- Reports and gives feedback to the group at each meeting
- Takes all relevant information to the Anchor Group for decision making

Secretary (currently supported by BMCC)

- Prepares the Agenda with Group Coordinator and sends out before meetings
- Takes the Minutes at meetings
- Prepares and sends the Minutes after meetings
- Keeps updated record of Actions List
- Passes on relevant information to the Group Coordinator
- Reports and gives feedback to the group at each meeting

Meeting Facilitator (currently filled by David Christie)

- Follows the Meeting Agenda to ensure meetings run efficiently and to time
- Ensures there is a balance within the meetings of members needs and group needs to make timely and practical decisions and actions
- Ensures the communications within the meetings are healthy and respectful
- Encourages members to participate in discussions fairly to promote a healthy group culture

Working Group Coordinator*

- Maintains communication with the Working Group Conveners
- Oversees the process of introducing new members to working groups
- Coordinates the combined Working Group Meetups
- Supports Working Groups, responding to requests for practical help (e.g. zoom access, venues, email lists)
- Channels communications between Working Group Conveners and Anchor Group
- Facilitates introductions to organisations and people across the RBM network (including Council) depending on WG needs
- Reports and gives feedback to the group at each meeting

Membership/ Recruitment Coordinator (currently filled by Lyn Sinclair)

- Welcomes new group members with email/ newsletter
- Keeps updated Membership List
- Builds relationships with group members with a view to recruitment and retention, together with Group Coordinator/ Communications Coordinator
- Reports and gives feedback to the group at each meeting

Communications /Social Media Coordinator*

- Manages FB Page/ Administrator (jointly with others)
- Manages Website (jointly with others)
- Sends out emails/ newsletter to group members
- Builds relationships with group members with a view to recruitment and retention, together with Membership/ Recruitment Coordinator & Group Coordinator
- Reports and gives feedback to the group at each meeting

Collaboration Technologist (currently filled by David Taylor)

- Manages and monitors IT required for RBM-internal collaboration, including Slack channels and email groups

Newsletter Publisher*

- Liaises with the Group Coordinator, Communications Coordinator, Festival Coordinator and Working Group Coordinator to identify stories and event items for promotion
- Collects relevant events, surveys, campaigns and stories from partners and associate members for publishing
- Prepares regular Newsletter content and layout for distribution to members
- Prepares and publishes short alerts when required
- Formats newsletter (with some html editing) using Action Network. Tests, targets and schedules newsletter for sending out.

Treasurer (currently filled by Laurie Facer)

- Oversee income/ expenses for the group
- Maintains a simple balance sheet of income and expenses
- Tables the balance sheet /reports to the group at each meeting

Events Coordinator*

- Ensures effective planning and delivery of the group's events
- Informs/ updates the group of current events and progress
- Develops Events and Events projects or sub groups as required
- Publishes events on Action Network and Facebook
- Promotes events to appropriate audiences
- Reports and gives feedback to the Anchor group at each meeting

Festival of Resilience Coordinator*(could be 2 co-coordinators)

- Ensures effective planning and delivery of the Annual Festival of Resilience Event
- Convenes and coordinates the Festival Working Group
- Informs/ updates the Festival Working Group of current events and progress
- Develops roles, projects or sub groups as required
- Maintains group focus on strategy, timelines, meetings & events
- Identifies and transitions members into key roles (Events coordinators, PR/social media, Sponsorship, Community and volunteers)
- Oversees the Festival communications and promotion strategy with the relevant
- Liaises with BMCC over strategy and budget
- Builds relationships with like-minded organisations and events
- Reports and gives feedback to the Anchor group at each meeting

Media/ Publicity Coordinator*

- Writes and lodges articles for local papers for upcoming group events
- Facilitates local radio coverage for RBM speakers
- Ensures there is sufficient coverage and promotion of upcoming events in local media, social media channels, and other appropriate outlets
- Where posters are required to advertise and promote an event, obtains printing quotes and ensures adequate time to oversee distribution throughout area
- Reports and gives feedback to the group at each meeting

Core Member

- Attends meetings and events regularly
- Actively participates in meetings and promotes a healthy group culture
- Plays an active role in group planning
- Contributes to Anchor/working groups
- May or may not be in a defined role

Working Group Convener*

- Coordinate meetings for their working group
- Maintain contact details of working group membership
- Ensure members are connected by email or other method, for the purposes of sharing information and meeting notifications
- Liaises with the Working Group Coordinator regularly on updates, any support needed, working group plans and activity
- Reports and gives feedback to the Anchor group when required

RBM works collaboratively and supportively; however, the role of Group Coordinator in particular requires feedback from each of the other key organisers in order to oversee the general direction and sustainability of the group.

We acknowledge that we are all volunteers, fitting these roles into our busy lives. It is important that we provide assistance and support where needed within the group.

If at any stage after taking on a role, you are feeling overwhelmed and/or unable to continue, please let our Group Coordinator know and we will do all we can to support you and/or find an alternative person to pick up the duties.

Term

People are appointed to roles for one year with an opportunity to renew, with roles being appointed (in general) for the financial year.

***Denotes this role is currently vacant or is being recruited**

Membership Framework

This section outlines the way membership of Resilient Blue Mountains (RBM) works. It covers different forms of possible membership and the responsibilities and opportunities associated with each. It also covers the opportunities for participation through different types of groups or projects.

Guiding Principles

When constructing this framework the following guiding principles were used:

- RBM is a platform for individuals and groups to collaborate on areas of interest that contribute to creating social and environmental resilience in the Blue Mountains
- Opportunities for involvement are provided by:
 - Participation in community forums and events
 - Participating in working groups and projects
 - Undertaking roles in RBM
- Adoption of the relevant section of the RBM Code of Ethics

RBM Collaborative Model

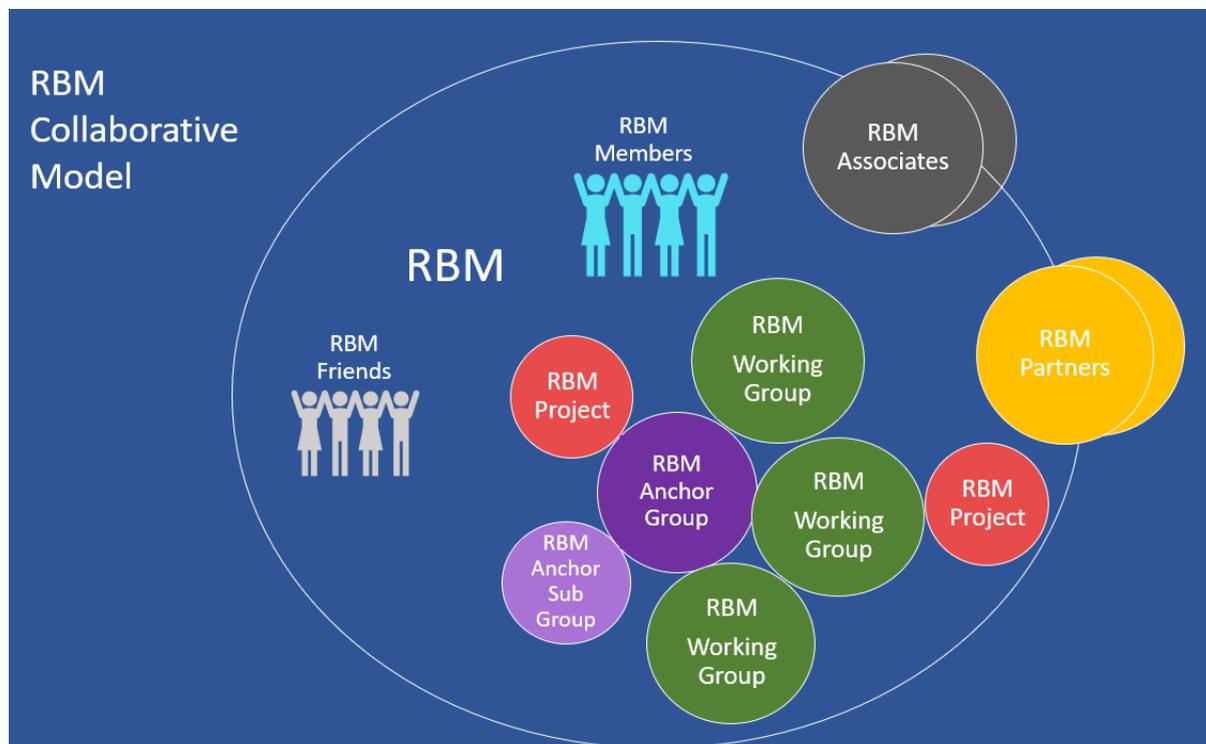
There are multiple ways in which individuals and groups can be involved with RBM:

- RBM Friend: A member of the community who would like to be informed about and possibly participate in RBM activities
- RBM Member: A member of the community who wishes to actively engage in RBM working groups, projects, and roles
- RBM Associate: An organisation or local group that wishes to join the RBM network, actively engage in an RBM working group and/or participate in RBM activities
- RBM Partner: An organisation or group that wishes to enter into an agreement on formal participation in RBM activities

Additionally, there are different groups and roles within RBM with which community individuals and groups can engage:

- RBM Working Group: A group focused on a particular area of interest and working towards community wide outcomes
- RBM Project Team: A group focused on specific short and medium-term outcomes. An RBM Project is linked to a Working Group
- RBM Anchor Group: The coordinating group within RBM that is focused on facilitating RBM activities and fostering collaboration between working groups, project teams, RBM partners and associates.

- **RBM Anchor Subgroup:** A group with a defined area of responsibility to assist the efforts of the Anchor group
- **RBM Members Forum:** At least one members forum will be held each year to allow general reporting of progress, appointments to roles and setting directions. Members forums will be a platform for raising any new ideas, opportunities, issues or concerns.



Community Participation

Membership governance is defined in the following terms:

- **Participation category:** The name of the membership type
- **Participation opportunities:** What a membership category can expect from RBM
- **Participation responsibilities:** The responsibilities associated with the type of membership
- **Participation processes:** The processes involved in becoming a member

RBM Friend

Participation Category

Individuals from the local community or beyond, interested in RBM activities but not wanting to actively participate in groups or roles.

Participation Opportunities

- Receive invitations to RBM forums and events
- Receive RBM updates
- Has the opportunity to become an RBM member

Participation Responsibilities

When accepting invitations to forums and other RBM activities, to agree to adhere to the RBM code of conduct for participation (“Expected Behaviours”).

Participation Process

Accept RBM invitations and agree to adhere to the RBM Expected Behaviours (Code of Conduct points 1-6)).

RBM Member

Participation Category

The RBM member category is for individuals living within the local community who wish to actively participate in RBM activities, roles, and groups. (In some cases, with a good reason, people from outside the Blue Mountains will be accepted as RBM Members.)

Participation Opportunities

- Participation in community forums and events
- Receive RBM updates
- Have access to agendas and minutes from Anchor Group meetings
- Opportunities to join or create working groups
- Opportunity to join or create projects
- Opportunities to undertake RBM roles

Participation Responsibilities

Participation is free but the individual must agree to the adherence to RBM values and to the RBM code of ethics in all RBM activities.

Participation Process

The participation process is via an application that has required and optional information:

- Required
 - Acceptance of RBM Code of Ethics (Values, Principles, and Code of Conduct)
 - Contact details
- Optional
 - Areas of interest
 - Expertise

RBM Associates

Participation Category

An RBM Associate can be an existing organisation or group that has its own governance rules but wishes to contribute to the RBM network and collaborate to pursue an area of interest.

Participation Opportunities

- Belong to an RBM working group and tap into RBM facilitation opportunities
- Participate in RBM forums and events

- Receive RBM updates
- Contribute suitable events and campaigns to RBM updates

Participation Responsibilities

- Acceptance of RBM code of ethics when engaged in RBM activities
- Participation in RBM activities e.g. working group or project

Participation Process

- Nominate representatives to join working group
- Identify area of interest and desired shared outcomes
- Acceptance of RBM Code of Ethics

RBM Partner

Participation Category

An RBM Partner is an existing organisation that has entered into a formal agreement with RBM for the purpose of achieving identified outcomes.

In most cases organisations will become associates. Where funding is involved or formally agreed outcomes, a partnership should be considered.

Participation Opportunities

- Participate in RBM forums and events
- Receive RBM updates
- Opportunities to belong to RBM working groups
- Opportunity for representation on RBM Anchor group

Participation Responsibilities

- Adherence to formal agreement with RBM

Participation Process

- Formal agreement with RBM
- Acceptance of RBM Code of Ethics
- Nominate representatives to join working groups
- Nominate representative to join RBM Anchor Group

RBM Groups

RBM Working Group

An RBM working group consists of a group of RBM members, associates, and partner representatives wishing to pursue outcomes in an area of interest.

Participants

- RBM members
- Associate representatives
- Partner representatives

Group Opportunities

- Opportunity to work with others to achieve outcomes in an area of interest
- Promotion of activities via the RBM network
- Host RBM projects
- Draw upon experience of others in the RBM network
- Access to RBM contacts (government and non-government)
- Grant application assistance
- Bank account facilities (through MCRN trust account)
- Participation in RBM forums and events
- Access to RBM Governance guidelines

Group Responsibilities

- Progress updates to the RBM Anchor Group
- Adherence to RBM code of ethics
- Be inclusive and open to new members

Participation Process

- Provide a profile of area of interest and possible outcomes
- Maintain list of participants
- Statement of intended governance processes

RBM Project

A small group working together over a limited timeframe on targeted and defined outcomes on behalf of the Anchor group or a Working Group.

Participants

- RBM members
- Associate representatives
- Partner representatives

Group Opportunities

- Address a specific set of objectives
- Assist in meeting goals of Working Group or Anchor Group

Group Responsibilities

- Adherence to RBM Code of Ethics
- Provide updates to the relevant Working Group or Anchor Group

Process

- RBM member nominates a project, and the Anchor Group or a Working Group adopts the project, OR
- Anchor Group or Working Group nominates a project
- Anchor Group or Working Group agree outcomes with project team
- Anchor group or Working Group request individuals to participate

Anchor Group

The Anchor Group is the facilitating and coordinating group within RBM that is responsible for governance and entering into and monitoring adherence to agreements with external parties.

Participants

- RBM Member performing an RBM role
- RBM Working Group representatives
- RBM Partner representative

Group Responsibilities

- Development of pathways to achieve outcomes
- Honour commitments made to third parties
- Convene community forums and events
- Communications to the community
- Governance
- Hosting RBM projects not associated with Working Groups

Process

- Anchor Group membership consists of:
 - RBM Members performing a role
 - Working Group representatives
 - Partner representatives
- Roles are filled by:
 - Communication of all RBM roles annually to RBM Members
 - Where more than one candidate, a small team can share the role. If necessary a vote can be held.
 - Volunteer to perform role if vacated during the year
 - There are two exceptions - the RBM Group Coordinator and Festival Working Group Coordinator. These will be filled by expression of interest, with the Anchor Group making the selection. These roles can be filled by two people as Co-Coordinators.

Anchor Sub-Group

Anchor Sub-Groups perform the function of administering a set of responsibilities allocated by the Anchor Group. Sub-groups can be formed and folded as needs arise.

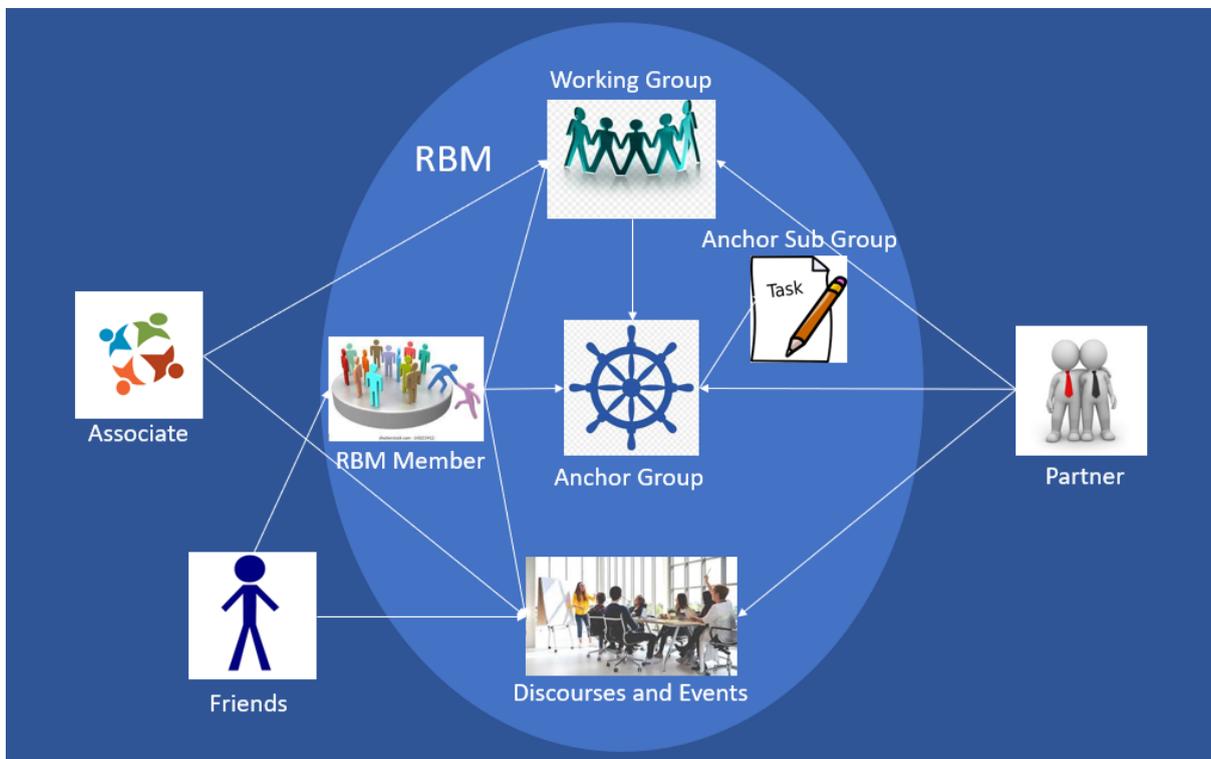
Participants

- Volunteers from RBM Membership, Associates, and Partners

Group Responsibilities

- Administration of specific area of responsibilities
- Make recommendations to the Anchor Group

Overview



Financial Procedure

1. Resilient Blue Mountains (RBM) does not have its own bank accounts and depends upon the auspice or services of other organisations for the management of funds. Specifically, RBM is an auspicee of Mountains Community Resource Network (MCRN) and is currently a party to a grant obtained and managed by the Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC).
2. RBM represents a network of groups and from time to time may obtain funds for activities undertaken by those groups and enter funding arrangements on behalf of one or more groups. In such circumstances the RBM Anchor Group has responsibility for acting on behalf of RBM with external parties and undertaking the management of funds.
3. When funding is obtained directly by RBM, the funding will be managed under the auspice arrangements with MCRN.
4. The RBM Anchor Group Treasurer is responsible for ensuring that RBM is aware of funds at its disposal and that funds are used appropriately and in accordance with the specific funding arrangement. To undertake this responsibility, the Treasurer:
 - a. Will liaise with the entity holding the funds for the purpose of ensuring the fulfillment of obligations
 - b. Will document the conditions of funding and the procedures for reporting fund balances, for expending monies, and for receipt of monies.
 - c. Where appropriate, will delegate authority to the groups for which the funding is intended but will still have ultimate responsibility in meeting the funding arrangement conditions and overseeing the required procedures for managing the funding.
 - d. When authority is delegated, will:
 - i. Seek approval from the RBM Anchor Group
 - ii. Report the decision in writing (eg a copy of the Anchor Group Minutes where the decision was approved) to the entity holding the funds
 - iii. Document procedures that need to be followed by the delegates
 - iv. Provide monthly reports to the RBM Anchor Group and entity holding the funds
 - v. Ensure that the conditions of the funding and auspice arrangement are adhered to.

Dispute Resolution Process

- Before initiating the dispute resolution process, RBM members are encouraged to seek to resolve the matter first through speaking directly with the parties involved, if it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- Three members of the Anchor Group may be nominated as go-to people for receiving information regarding a dispute. The matter may be submitted to any one of these three people.
- The matter is to remain confidential at all times.
- In discussion with the applicant the following should be decided:
 - Does the matter have the potential to harm any person or a group belonging to RBM? If it does, the application will then be progressed. (Note: If the matter is a reportable offence, it should be immediately reported and processed in the appropriate manner).
- If it is to be processed internally, the following steps should be taken:
 - The other party or parties involved in the matter should be notified of the details.
 - A suitable person should be selected to act as moderator (Note: This can be any person agreed to by both parties, whether or not a member of RBM).
 - Each party may nominate a support person to be present for the discussion.
 - The applicant and other parties discuss the issue under the guidance of the moderator with the objective of achieving a resolution.
 - If a resolution cannot be achieved, the applicant then has the opportunity to raise the matter with the Anchor Group.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Code of Ethics

September 2021

https://docs.google.com/document/d/172q5Xt0z9_zlKrqBdM7dMYlz0MRSxSTb/edit?usp=sharing&oid=106880765283904619554&rtpof=true&sd=true

Appendix 2

Resilient Blue Mountains - A Community Led Response to Climate Crisis

October 2020

Google Document link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WvX5P_BwisjRLB5X7wnleGCPEnOL48D-/view?usp=sharing

Appendix 3

Auspice Agreement between Mountains Community Resource Network Inc and Resilient Blue Mountains

May 2021

Google Document link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ltSTc9bTb-Bzpy-kop1d-lu2IKLWSez4/view?usp=sharing>

Appendix 4

Memorandum Of Understanding Between Blue Mountains City Council And Resilient Blue Mountains

July 2021

Google Document link: [link to be updated to signed pdf once final and signed]

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nucbCDt4Kyx9mLDI2c6Co1dFJMBUJOxA/edit>