

SDIC LAND TRUST GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK

Stewardship Governance Framework

Purpose

The purpose of governance is not control.

The purpose of governance is to protect the health of the people, the land, the community, and future generations.

Governance exists to support stewardship.

Stewardship exists to support life.

Core Principle

No one owns the community.

No one controls the community.

No one carries the community alone.

Responsibility is distributed through stewardship.

Trust is earned through participation.

Leadership is recognized through service.

Governance Values

All governance decisions shall seek alignment with:

- Peace
- Love
- Unity
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Accountability
- Stewardship

- Reciprocity

When uncertainty arises, return to these values.

The Stewardship Circle Model

SDIC communities organize through stewardship circles.

A stewardship circle is a group responsible for a specific area of community life.

Each circle has authority within its area of responsibility.

No circle governs everything.

No individual governs everything.

Land Stewardship Circle

Purpose:

Care for the land.

Responsibilities:

- Forest health
- Watershed protection
- Trails
- Wildlife relationships
- Gardens
- Reforestation
- Fire safety
- Ecological restoration

Guiding Question:

How does this decision affect the land seven generations from now?

Community Stewardship Circle

Purpose:

Support healthy community culture.

Responsibilities:

- Onboarding
- Community agreements
- Stewardship orientation
- Resident support
- Community health reviews

Guiding Question:

Does this strengthen trust and belonging?

Food and Kitchen Circle

Purpose:

Support nourishment and food sovereignty.

Responsibilities:

- Community meals
- Food storage
- Outdoor kitchen systems
- Harvest coordination
- Compost systems
- Food safety

Guiding Question:

Does this nourish people while honoring resources?

Infrastructure Circle

Purpose:

Care for physical systems.

Responsibilities:

- Buildings
- Roads
- Water systems

- Solar systems
- Tools
- Equipment
- Construction projects

Guiding Question:

Will this still serve the community ten years from now?

Conflict Resolution Circle

Purpose:

Support restoration and healthy communication.

Responsibilities:

- Mediation
- Facilitated conversations
- Conflict support
- Agreement clarification

The purpose is restoration.

Not punishment.

Not winning.

Not blame.

Children's Wellbeing Circle

Purpose:

Support families and healthy community culture.

Responsibilities:

- Family support resources
- Child-safe spaces
- Community education
- Youth activities

Parents remain responsible for their children.

Community support occurs through explicit agreements.

Childcare is never assumed.

Bridge Builders Guild Circle

Purpose:

Connect community and world.

Responsibilities:

- Partnerships
- Fundraising
- Education
- Outreach
- Communications
- Volunteer coordination

Guiding Question:

How do we build bridges without losing our roots?

Steward Recognition

Stewards are recognized through participation.

Not elections.

Not popularity.

Not self-appointment.

Recognition may occur when a person consistently demonstrates:

- Reliability
- Follow-through
- Emotional maturity
- Respect for agreements
- Stewardship values

Trust grows through action.

Decision Making

The preferred process is:

1. Gather information.
2. Listen deeply.
3. Seek alignment.
4. Test small before scaling.
5. Review outcomes.

Whenever possible:

Consensus is preferred.

When consensus is unavailable:

The appropriate stewardship circle may make a decision within its area of responsibility.

Not every decision requires the whole community.

Community Stewardship Council

The Stewardship Council consists of representatives from each active stewardship circle.

The council exists to:

- Coordinate between circles
- Resolve overlapping concerns
- Protect community vision
- Support long-term continuity

The council is not a ruling body.

The council is a coordinating body.

Major Community Decisions

The following require broader community involvement:

- Changes to land trust structure
- Sale or transfer of land
- Significant financial commitments
- Major construction projects

- Amendments to core agreements

These decisions should include community dialogue and sufficient reflection time.

Transparency

Community information should be accessible whenever appropriate.

Stewards should communicate:

- Active projects
- Financial summaries
- Community priorities
- Important decisions

Trust grows where transparency exists.

Community Health Review

At least once each year the community conducts a stewardship review.

Questions include:

- Is the land healthier?
- Are relationships healthier?
- Are systems functioning?
- Are agreements working?
- What needs attention?
- What needs celebration?

The purpose is learning.

Not criticism.

Founder Transition Principle

Every SDIC community shall be designed to function beyond its founders.

Knowledge should be documented.

Responsibilities should be shared.

Leadership should be developed.

The goal is continuity.

Not dependency.

Closing Principle

We do not govern to gain power.

We govern to protect life.

We do not steward because we own.

We steward because we belong.

The land was here before us.

May it be healthier because we were here.