

Policy Type: Operational
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Policy Title **COLLECTIVE STRUCTURES POLICY**

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1. Introduction

Over many years, FCVic has established a range of collectives for its members. These are a key means of providing peer support to financial counselling professionals and developing a collective approach to advocacy issues. More fundamentally, they create processes and interactions that help keep FCVic member-focused and member-led.

The collectives assist financial counsellors to:

- maintain professional practice,
- engage in collective advocacy,
- obtain information relating to casework trends and issues,
- undertake reflective practice, and
- take part in relevant continuous professional development.

In December 2023, the FCVic Board commissioned a review of the collective structures of FCVic. The [final report](#) made a series of recommendations to ensure that the organisation's collective structures are fit-for-purpose, functional, appropriately supported, and continue to thrive in delivering systemic and strategic advocacy on key issues. These recommendations were accepted by the Board without reservation.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all members of FCVic and regulates the management of FCVic collectives. This policy does not apply to any committee created by the Board.

3. Definitions

Convenor is defined as a member who is appointed to act as the key contact and responsible person for a collective.

External collectives are defined as collectives that involve FCVic members but are managed by organisations other than FCVic.

FCVic member is a current and approved member of Financial Counselling Victoria.

Mailing list is defined as an email distribution system through which members can opt in and out of FCVic collectives.

Network is defined as a collective of FCVic members with a shared working context established pursuant to this policy.

Working group is defined as a subgroup of a network, established to lead on an advocacy issue under FCVic oversight pursuant to this policy.

4. Governance and administration

4.1 Governance

One of the Association's purposes, as set out in the FCVic Constitution, is to advocate for vulnerable people who are experiencing financial difficulty. FCVic achieves this through its work supporting financial counsellors and through stakeholder relationships to create systemic change.

The FCVic Board sets the strategic direction to drive the advocacy activities of FCVic and further this purpose. This policy provides a framework by which collective structures within FCVic are used and managed to support this strategic direction.

4.2 Management

The management of advocacy activities, including the management of FCVic collective structures covered by this policy, is delegated to the Executive Officer.

The Executive Officer is responsible for the creation, dissolution, and management of collectives, with consideration to the purpose, function, and viability of that collective.

The Executive Officer will:

- support members to participate in effective collective structures
- ensure that collective structures are suitably resourced
- guide collective advocacy efforts to align with Board strategic priorities
- approve and modify guidance on the processes regarding the management of collectives pursuant to this policy and must ensure that this is accessible to all members. This includes the Schedule to this policy.
- review collectives annually to determine relevance and viability
- report to the FCVic Board on the operation of the collectives, including the establishment and dissolution of any collectives

4.3 Collectives

The principal collective structure is a Network. Each Network shall have a clear purpose to orient the focus of the Network, terms of reference to guide its operation, and a convenor to provide it autonomous leadership.

The convenor is responsible for the general leadership and administration of their collective, including:

- Scheduling meeting dates
- Setting the agenda for meetings
- Acting as a chair for meetings
- Acting as liaison for the collective
- Circulating meeting minutes
- Preparing annual reports on collective activities for publication in the FCVic Annual Report

These responsibilities can be shared among members of the collective, including through the nomination of a collective secretary or other nominated roles, to help manage the workload of the collective.

The convenor is to be elected by the collective on an annual basis. The Executive Officer has the authority to appoint or remove a convenor to or from a collective, acting reasonably.

Each Network may request to the Executive Officer to create one or more Working Groups to focus on an advocacy activity relating to the Network’s purpose.

4.4 Membership

The Executive Officer will ensure that membership of collectives is open to all members unless this is incompatible with the purpose of the collective.

4.5 Meeting records

The decisions and actions of FCVic collectives must be recorded in meeting minutes. This does not include discussion, which may be included in the meeting minutes at a level of detail determined appropriate by the collective.

Meeting minutes shall be provided to all FCVic members in the manner determined by the Executive Officer. Unless otherwise determined by the Executive Officer, meeting minutes are to be treated as member-only content and not shared outside the FCVic membership.

Some networks function for the purpose of peer support and reflective practice only, and as such will not entail any decisions or actions by the collective. These networks can elect not to record meeting minutes but may choose to compile and share meeting notes at the discretion of the collective.

4.6 Communication

The Executive Officer will notify all members within a reasonable timeframe whenever a collective is created or dissolved.

For the sake of clarity, all members are entitled to contact the Board with feedback, comments, or suggestions about any matter, including matters arising from the operation of this policy.

4.7 Disputes and Grievances

Where a member is of the opinion that the rights afforded to them by this policy have been breached, they are entitled to review of any decision according to the Disputes and Grievances Policy.

5. Approved

Approved by the FCVic Board: 20 August 2024

Contacts

For questions about this policy, contact the FCVic Executive Officer.

RATIFIED: 20 August 2024

REVIEW: Biennially

MONITORING FREQUENCY: Biennially

MONITORING LEVEL: Executive Officer

Version History				
Version Number	Issue Date	Nature of Amendment	Developed by	Approved By
1	20 August 2024	Adoption	Zyl H-W	Board

SCHEDULE – PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

1. Collectives

1.1 Networks

A network is a collective of FCVic members with a shared working context, such as a particular geographic region or a particular area of practice, who meet for a stated purpose.

Networks are largely self-sufficient, aside from those networks which are established by FCVic to serve a specific function, such as FCVic project initiatives.

A network is available to any FCVic member interested in that region or area of practice, for the purpose of engaging in:

- Information sharing and practice updates
- Casework discussion
- Reflective practice
- Peer support
- Education

Networks are:

- Facilitated by a Convenor, who is a member of FCVic.
- Open to any FCVic members with an interest in that network. This may be for geographic reasons, subject matter expertise, casework discussion or peer support.
- An informal mechanism from which formalised systemic advocacy can be generated through the establishment of working groups.

1.2 Working Groups

A working group is formed to address a particular advocacy issue. It is a subgroup, comprised of experts from a relevant network, established to lead on an advocacy issue under oversight of the relevant network and the Executive Officer.

The formation of a working group is initiated by a network through an application to the Executive Officer with a project timeline, responsible people, and a clear objective. Approved working groups receive support and resourcing for the advocacy issue and actions required to promote it.

Working groups are:

- Time-limited subgroups formed to address a specific advocacy issue identified by a network, dissolving when their timeframe expires without extension or where the advocacy issue is satisfactorily complete.
- A key mechanism to link financial counselling advocacy to the work of FCVic.

Working groups may request an extension of time to the Executive Officer.

1.3 Advocacy Committee

The Advocacy Committee is convened by the Executive Officer, or their delegate, and brings together the convenors of the collectives for the purpose of establishing cross-structure communication on emerging advocacy matters and the progress of campaigns and advocacy activities.

The Advocacy Committee also functions as a key leadership and consultative forum for FCVic in processes such as advocacy planning.

The Advocacy Committee:

- Gathers insights and information for systemic work.
- Supports convenors in their roles.
- Is administered and supported by FCVic.

1.4 Agency Managers Network

FCVic facilitates the Agency Managers Network, which is designed to provide support and information to the managers of financial counselling programs.

The Agency Managers Network operates separately to the other FCVic member networks. Participation is open to all program managers and team leaders of financial counselling programs across Victoria.

The FCVic Executive Officer appoints a convenor from among the participants of the network and invites agencies to appoint a representative to the network.

1.5 External Collectives

FCVic recognises that there are many collectives involving FCVic members that do not sit within FCVic's governance structure. These collectives function as valuable opportunities for peer networking, information sharing and advocacy initiatives.

External collectives promoted by FCVic are subject to appraisal to ensure that the collective aligns with the values, vision and purpose of FCVic.

The involvement of external stakeholders in FCVic collectives can be beneficial in gaining different expertise and facilitating collaborative advocacy. Participation in collective activities from non-members only occurs on an invitational basis, with the consent of the group.

Non-members interested in participating in FCVic collectives should contact the convenor to request an invitation to participate.

2. Forming a new collective

2.1 Establishing a network

The establishment of a new formal network can be initiated by any FCVic member through an application to the Executive Officer, in the manner prescribed in the FCVic Members' Portal, that outlines the purpose and at least one convenor of the proposed network.

A process of informal gathering, exploration of formation, testing of interest and, sometimes, organising a collective response to specific issues, may precede the application process.

2.2 Establishing a working group

The establishment of a new working group is initiated by the relevant network convenor through an application to the Executive Officer, in the manner prescribed in the FCVic Members' Portal, that outlines the purpose and intended outcome of the working group activity.

Consideration is given to:

- Advocacy priority
- Resourcing demands and capability

- Viability

3. General Collective Supports

3.1 FCVic role

FCVic will:

- Provide training and support to enable convenors to carry out their roles effectively
- Provide access to video-conferencing facilities for the purposes of conducting meetings
- Advertise meetings to members through the FCVic website, newsletters and mailing lists
- Maintain a presence at collective meetings to provide an update on FCVic's work and activities, and gather information and feedback relevant to the FCVic team
- Report on the activities of the collectives to members through member communications, as well as the FCVic Annual Report
- Assist with the delivery of professional development to members, including scheduling CPD sessions alongside collective meetings, where possible
- Assist with venue hire, where possible
- Maintain the functionality of the mailing lists (see *7.3 Mailing lists*)

3.2 Convenors' pack

The convenor is a voluntary role, essential to the functioning of any collective.

FCVic ensures that all collective convenors have access to a 'convenors' pack' which shall contain resources, templates and information to enable them to effectively convene a collective.

This pack is available for convenors to access electronically, via the FCVic Members' Portal.

3.3 Mailing lists

Membership of the collectives is managed through electronic mailing lists to which FCVic members can subscribe and unsubscribe themselves. Each mailing list has a unique email address which distributes incoming emails and meeting invitations to all members subscribed.

FCVic members are responsible for maintaining their mailing list subscriptions and current contact information, which can be updated at any time via the FCVic Members' Portal.

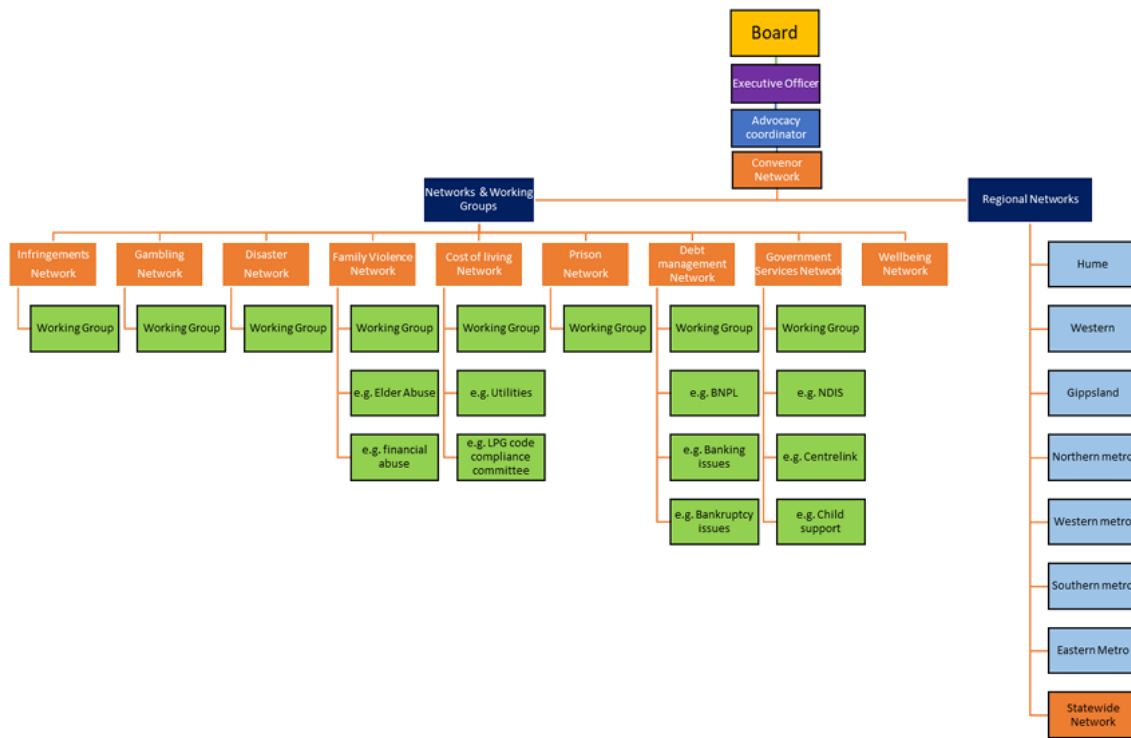
4. Dissolving a collective

The Executive Officer will dissolve a collective when:

- The collective formally requests to be dissolved;
- There are too few members of the collective;
- The purpose of the collective is better served through another collective;
- There is insufficient capacity to support the collective; or
- The collective no longer furthers the objectives of FCVic.

Collectives are reviewed annually and as needed to ensure relevance and viability.

5. Diagram of collectives within FCVic



NB: this diagram is still under review as part of ongoing conversations with the collectives established prior to this policy. This diagram will be updated as these conversations progress.

12.08.2024

Version History				
Version Number	Issue Date	Nature of Amendment	Developed by	Approved By
1	20 August 2024	Adoption	Zyl H-W	Zyl H-W