

5

COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE PLANNING GUIDE

The Community and Health Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated May 18, 2010, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council endorse the *Community Collaborative Planning Guide: Weaving Collaboration into a Tapestry of Change* as a step-by-step educational tool for communities desiring to create collaborative groups/initiatives or advance existing collaborative endeavours as outlined in *Attachment 1*.
2. The *Community Collaborative Planning Guide* be distributed broadly to community stakeholders and local municipalities and posted on York Region's website.
3. The Regional Clerk forward this report to members of the Human Services Planning Board of York Region and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association for their information.

2. PURPOSE

This report presents for Council's endorsement a *Community Collaborative Planning Guide* that is intended to provide best practice information and guidance for other communities interested in bringing organizations together in an integrated collaborative way. The report also provides an overview of interviews and a research study that examined 14 models of government-community collaborative planning across Canada. This was used to inform the contents of the guide.

3. BACKGROUND

Research study helps inform structure of the new Human Services Planning Board of York Region

On November 19, 2009, Regional Council approved a proposal to create the new Human Services Planning Board of York Region (HSPB-YR) through the adoption of Clause No. 4 of Report No. 3 of the Community and Health Services Committee. To support the creation of the new Board, a jurisdictional review and best practices research study was conducted of other government-community collaborative groups/initiatives. The groups

that were studied included a range of organizational design features. Some were single and multi-issue focused and included a mix of public and private participation, while utilizing a variety of governance models. The study analyzed the experience of the collaborative groups, provided insight and made recommendations to inform the structure of the HSPB-YR.

At its April 22, 2010 meeting, Regional Council appointed members to the new Human Services Planning Board of York Region. The Board is Co-chaired by Regional Councillor Joyce Frustaglio and Susan LaRosa, Director of Education, York Catholic District School Board. This Board is comprised of 24 members including leaders and decision-makers from the Region's hospitals, school boards and police services, as well as a cross-section of individuals from other human service organizations and networks, community leaders and senior levels of government.

Research study focuses on 14 collaborative models across Canada

The study examined 14 government-community collaborative groups across Canada through a series of interviews and surveys. In addition, five in-depth case studies were conducted to understand the successes and challenges these groups faced and identified key best practices for establishing and sustaining effective collaborations.

Key findings for effective collaborations

The study identified five key areas to focus on when establishing a collaborative group/initiative:

1. Clearly defining the governance structure

Some key considerations that emerged when examining the governance structure of a collaborative group/ initiative included:

- Establishing a formal Terms of Reference that includes clear objectives and responsibilities.
- Keeping the size manageable, typically 16-25 members.
- Creating strategic partnerships with existing organizations in order to leverage resources and linkages.
- Creating distinct working groups on an as needed basis to oversee the various interests of the group.
- Choosing the right leader(s) and champions to lend credibility and legitimacy to the collaborative group. The co-chair model was seen as working more effectively within a larger group.

2. Mandate must be understood and agreed to by the group

A focused mandate with clearly defined, concrete, action oriented deliverables is critical to a collaborative group's success. Some examples of the types of activities included in the mandates reviewed were:

- Capacity building
- Supporting the community and sharing information among members
- Research and incubator of community initiatives
- Advocacy
- Building partnerships and encouraging collaboration
- Communication to raise awareness of issues

3. Strategic membership recruitment

The research study suggested that it is beneficial to involve various partners and to invite members strategically to be part of the collaborative group. Members should be high profile champions and leaders who understand how to make a difference on the issues. It is important for the members to have institutional support of their organizations and have some level of decision making authority. Municipal governments can play a leadership role in coordinating and supporting the core activities of the groups. Additionally, municipal governments add legitimacy to the collaboration and are often well positioned to raise awareness of the issues.

4. Community engagement needs to be a focus

Community engagement was an important component and key activity for the groups that were reviewed. The most common method of engaging the community was through public events such as town halls or neighbourhood forums. Other methods of community engagement included the use of champions, social networks and more focused one-on-one engagement with members.

5. Evaluating progress is necessary

A formal annual evaluation process was identified as a means of measuring the ongoing success of the collaborative group and a strong vehicle for communicating to the broader community about the work of the groups.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Collaborative groups see research as an asset to broader community

The research study provided information regarding promising 'best practices' in government-community collaborative planning across Canada while informing the new structure of the HSPB-YR. Many of the collaborative groups that were interviewed in the research study expressed an interest in receiving information about the study's findings and saw this research as an asset and educational tool for the broader community. The research findings were presented to the newly established HSPB-YR who also supported sharing this information more broadly. In an effort to facilitate the establishment of future

collaborative groups and build community capacity to plan collaboratively, it was subsequently recommended that the research findings be transferred into a collaborative planning guide to be shared more widely.

The *Community Collaborative Planning Guide* focuses on strengths of other collaborative groups

The *Community Collaborative Planning Guide* as included in *Council Attachment 1*, provides practical steps for the broader community wishing to bring a network of organizations together in an integrated way to address complex issues and those wishing to advance existing collaborative endeavours. As an education tool, the guide focuses on the strengths of other collaborative groups in order to educate and guide others in their collaborative efforts. Recognizing the diverse expertise that exists across communities, the guide includes various options based on promising ‘best practices’ allowing users to adapt the recommendations to their own unique context. The new HSPB-YR supports the release of this guide and will also use it to advance their mandate of community capacity building, strategic partnerships and in establishing future action groups and sub-committees.

The *Community Collaborative Planning Guide* includes twelve steps for building a collaborative group

At a basic level, the guide provides a broad understanding of government-community collaboration on human services policy decision making. It outlines the key elements required to collaborate and the related benefits. Other key highlights include:

1. How to design a collaborative group and define its purpose.
2. Articulating the goals, mandate and structure in a formal Terms of Reference.
3. How to create a Terms of Reference.
4. Choosing the members, leaders and champions.
5. Creating strong innovative partnerships and linkages amongst members.
6. Fostering positive relationships.
7. Choosing a decision making structure.
8. Creating an evaluation framework.
9. Monitoring the policy environment.
10. Securing funding, ensuring sustainability and momentum.
11. Marketing, communicating, educating and building community capacity.
12. Common challenges and lessons learned in collaborative work.

The guide also includes: a summary checklist for establishing and maintaining effective collaborations; examples of organizational structures; and testimonials and advice from individuals who were involved in the collaborative models reviewed.

Next Steps

Pending Regional Council's endorsement of the new *Community Collaborative Planning Guide*, the next steps would include posting the guide online through the new HSPB-YR dedicated website and distribution of the printed guide to the broader community and local municipalities.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report. The costs to conduct the research study and develop the *Community Collaborative Planning Guide* are within the Community and Health Services Department existing operating budget. Printing and distribution costs are minimal and contained within the departmental operating budget.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The positive impacts of the *Community Collaborative Planning Guide* will accrue to the local municipalities and its residents as agencies and future collaborative groups will be better positioned to work more effectively together to develop locally based solutions.

7. CONCLUSION

The principles of collaboration, participation and community engagement are recognized as necessary steps in addressing complex issues amongst human services sector partners. It is important to recognize that a single template or blueprint for local collaboration and coordination of efforts does not exist. Today, collaborative approaches and collective leadership are required to address the challenges and opportunities that go beyond the ability of a single organization. The *Community Collaborative Planning Guide* is a valuable tool that will be used to support the HSPB-YR's mandate of building community capacity and to support existing and future collaborative endeavours within the community.

For more information on this report, please contact Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Managing Director, Strategic Service Integration and Policy Branch at Extension 2150.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)

Community Collaborative Planning Guide
Weaving Collaboration into a Tapestry of Change

June 9, 2010

(Final Version to be graphically designed to Corporate standards for distribution)

DRAFT

Message from Regional Council to be inserted here



Co-Chair of the HSPB-YR
Joyce Frustaglio, Regional Councillor



Co-Chair of the HSPB-YR
Susan LaRosa

Message from Human Services Planning Board of York Region Co-chairs

York Region is one of Canada's fastest growing municipalities. Along with this growth has come economic and demographic changes that are placing increased demands on current models of human service delivery and call for a new way for governments to do business. Federal, provincial and municipal governments are recognizing they cannot work alone to create solutions to today's complex social challenges. Many are engaging in much more collaborative approaches which involve working with the community sector to develop local solutions. We believe that local collaborative partnerships are an ideal way to develop local solutions which meet local needs.

York Region has been a leader in this area – charting the course and setting the bar high in this kind of work. Before collaboration was in fashion, York Region established a Human Services Planning Coalition (HSPC) over 10 years ago. We have learned a lot from 10 years of experience with the HSPC. The HSPC was the impetus and foundation for the work being done today as York Region begins work on the new Human Services Planning Board of York Region (HSPB-YR).

A large part of the success of collaborative initiatives is their flexibility and ability to adapt to changing contexts and circumstances. The best ones are open to the possibilities that emerge during the creative process. We commend York Region for evolving throughout the cycles of collaboration and know that this new endeavour will be successful.

Extensive research into best practices was conducted to form the foundation for the HSPB-YR's work and to inform York Region's direction. York Region is on the cutting edge of collaborative planning initiatives and we want to share what we have learned. We want you to benefit from the Region's research so that we all can be more successful in our collaborative change endeavours and as we weave a tapestry of change.

We recognize that a single template for local collaboration does not exist. We have put together this guide to share an understanding of best practices regarding what is involved in establishing and maintaining a collaborative group. The guide showcases the strengths of other collaborative groups/initiatives, presents options and discusses how to overcome common pitfalls. We believe this is a powerful way to convey what others have learned and give others credit for the work they are doing in their communities.

We appreciate the initiative York Region has taken in championing this work.



Joyce Frustaglio, Regional Councillor,
City of Vaughan



Susan LaRosa, Director of Education,
York Catholic District School Board

Acknowledgements

The Human Services Planning Board of York Region (HSPB-YR) Co-chairs and York Regional Council would like to thank the many people who contributed and participated in the development of the '*Community Collaborative Planning Guide Weaving Collaboration into a Tapestry of Change*'.

The successful development of this guide was made possible by many people from jurisdictions across Canada who gave their time and expertise in human services collaborative planning, including the research team and Regional staff who were involved in the creation of this guide.

The commitment and support of all of these people is greatly valued. Individuals involved in the development of the Community Collaborative Planning Guide include:

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Note:

This material has been prepared for specific use by The Regional Municipality of York.

Organizations wishing to use any portion of the *Community Collaborative Planning Guide* are requested to:

Contact the *Office of the Commissioner, York Region Community & Health Services Department*, regarding the purpose for which this material will be used.

Use the following citation when referencing this document:

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Acknowledge that The Regional Municipality of York is providing a copy of its material for reference purposes only.

When information is shared it opens people's minds to the possibilities that exist instead of being constrained by what they think is possible.

Katie Black, Manager, Family and Community Support Services, Calgary

When you bring the right people together to commit to work together in a spirit of dialogue and towards a common purpose, provide them the necessary information and training in a safe space that values their unique contributions and allows them freedom to be creative, give them the power to be co-creators of knowledge and able make decisions, innovative solutions can be created that cannot be created alone.

We can weave collaboration into a tapestry of change.

The opportunities are endless

Michelle P. Goldberg, PhD, OISE/UT, PinPoint Research
With research assistance provided by Sarah V. Wayland, PhD and Randal Schnoor, PhD
June 9, 2010

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	10
Background.....	11
Purpose.....	11
Who will find this guide useful?.....	12
How to get started.....	12
Understanding Collaboration.....	13
What is Collaboration?.....	13
Why Collaborate?.....	17
Collaboration Step by Step - Steps to success.....	18
1. Design the collaborative group/initiative – Choose a pattern/design for the tapestry.....	18
What should the collaborative group look like?.....	18
What should the collaborative group/initiative be called?.....	20
What size should it be?.....	20
2. Define your Goals, Values and Mandate.....	21
Establish shared core values.....	21
Define your mandate.....	21
What kinds of activities should you strive for?.....	22
3. Articulate the goals, mandate, structure, objectives and responsibilities of members in a formal Terms of Reference.....	23
What is a Terms of Reference?.....	23
How do I create a Terms of Reference?.....	24
4. Choose the right leader(s) and champions.....	25
Who would make a good leader?.....	25
Who to choose?.....	26
5. Who to invite and how?.....	28
6. Create strong, innovative partnerships and links among members.....	29
Who makes a good partner?.....	29
7. Foster positive relationships among members.....	32
8. Choose a decision making structure.....	34
9. Create an evaluation framework.....	34
10. Monitor the policy environment and its influence.....	37
11. Secure funding, ensure sustainability and momentum.....	38
12. Market, Communicate, Educate, and Build Community Capacity.....	39
Challenges not to get “snagged” by.....	40
Lessons Learned.....	41
Checklist - Keys to weaving a tight tapestry.....	42
Appendix A: Examples of Organizational Structures.....	45
List of participating collaborative initiatives.....	47
Short stories about collaborative initiatives.....	48
1. Jobs Prosperity Collaborative (Hamilton).....	49
2. Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC).....	51
3. Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction (HRPR).....	54
4. Toronto City Summit Alliance (the Alliance).....	56
5. Family and Community Support Services, Calgary.....	59
References.....	63
Evaluation Resources.....	65

Community Collaborative Planning Guide

Weaving Collaboration into a Tapestry of Change

Introduction

Governments around the world cannot work alone to create solutions to today's complex social problems (Caledon Institute of Social Policy, 2009; Goldberg, 2003). Traditional decision making approaches are being infused with principles of collaboration, participation, community engagement, place-based and neighbourhood strategic planning. Newer approaches are based on the premise that locally developed collaborative solutions can produce more innovative results. While there are challenges, when properly thought out and executed, collaborative initiatives can work more effectively and result in richer products and services. As communities, cities and regions best understand the issues in their own local context. They are well-equipped to bring their own stakeholders together as partners and develop appropriate solutions and strategies to meet their own needs. Local collaborative partnerships are an ideal means of developing local solutions which meet local needs.

“For complex social issues it is critical to balance local/regional perspective with a global one, so that solutions can be practical, realistic and relevant to local needs” (Jason Luan, Social Planner with Family and Community Support Services, Calgary).

The growing appeal of these approaches stems from current trends that both support and necessitate the need for a collaborative approach. Economic and demographic changes in our communities are changing the way governments must do business and are giving rise to an increased role for the community sector. Regions across Canada are examining ways to deal more effectively with these changes that are placing increased demands on current models of human service delivery. The increased rate of population growth in certain urban centres, increases in ethnic and linguistic diversity, an aging population and increasing income polarization all call for a renewed collaborative approach based on community strengths. The current policy context is also ripe for these expanding collaborative efforts. Formal bilateral agreements such as the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement are officially recognizing the role of the municipal government, lending legitimacy and authority to municipalities to focus on local efforts that can create solutions to issues that are reflective of their communities.

One example is the collaborative Human Services Planning Board of York Region. In November 2009, The Regional Municipality of York adopted a proposal to create a collaborative body that will build on the strengths of the former Human Services Planning Coalition. Faced with pressures and trends no different than those described above, York Region is moving toward establishing an integrated and collaborative network of human service organizations. These organizations can work together to address the unique and changing socio-economic characteristics of the residents and communities of York Region. This guide presents the culmination of research that was conducted to inform the establishment of the Human Services Planning Board of York Region. The objective of this guide is to share this research with others who are interested in doing something similar.

The new Human Services Planning Board demonstrates York Region's commitment to a strategic and collaborative approach when addressing the growing demands and pressures that our human services sector continues to face. It will serve as a united voice at Queen's Park and Ottawa as we seek to address the human services funding inequities in York Region (York Region Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch).

Background

In the summer of 2009, research was conducted to inform the direction for the new body that would replace the former York Region Human Services Planning Coalition that was retired on June 15, 2009. The research examined other government-community collaborative groups/initiatives across Canada and uncovered how others navigated successes and challenges in their collaborative work. The objective was to examine models of human service collaborative planning, to see what is possible and to learn from others as York Region moved forward. Fourteen collaborative models were examined and five case studies were written (for a list of participants, see Appendix B). The results of the research are woven throughout this guide in the voices of those interviewed. We chose to highlight their voices as we believe this is a powerful way to convey what others have learned and give them credit for the work they are doing in their communities.

The 2009 study was also based on the background research that was conducted when the Human Services Planning Coalition (Stanton, 2000) was established and an evaluation of the previous Human Services Planning Coalition (HSPC) that existed from 2001-2009. A comprehensive survey and face-to-face interviews were conducted of current and past HSPC members (along with three non-members that had past involvement with the HSPC). A total of 26 surveys and 17 follow-up face-to-face interviews were conducted. This study also identified both the strengths and challenges of the HSPC and was also the basis for identifying the promising practices for the 2009 study.

The research was extremely helpful in learning about what works and for informing the direction of the new Human Services Planning Board. We want to share what we learned in this guide so that we can all be more successful in our collaborative change endeavours and as we weave a tapestry of change.

Purpose

This guide gives you what you need to start a collaborative group or if you already have an established group, to help keep you on the right path and avoid challenges faced by other groups. Focusing on the strengths of other collaborative groups/initiatives, it highlights what we can learn from them, presents options for other groups and also discusses how to overcome common pitfalls. The key to a successful collaborative group/initiative is being able to evolve as you move forward. This guide provides key points for you to keep in mind as you embark on that path to success.

When information is shared it opens people's minds to the possibilities that exist instead of being constrained by what they think is possible (Katie Black, Manager, Family and Community Support Services, Calgary).

It is important to recognize that “a single template or blueprint for local coordination does not exist” (Wayland, 2007: 9). Any group initiating a collaborative process should analyze its own specific context and consider how the practices and options outlined in this guide might apply to their own unique situations. Our advice to you is to be aware of how your own context is influenced by your local environment. Timing is the key to success, so explore the options presented here, adapt them to your own unique situation and seize the moment when the right opportunities present themselves. The possibilities are endless.

Who will find this guide useful?

We see this practical step-by-step guide as an educational tool for communities involved in establishing or that have already established collaborative groups or initiatives. It can help you in planning, monitoring, evaluating, revising and improving your group/initiative. The research conducted for this project was used directly to inform York Region’s Human Services Planning Board. Our hope is to share this information widely so that it will be useful to anyone bringing a network of organizations together in an integrated and collaborative way to address complex 21st century issues.

This guide is intended for a broad audience and recognizes the diverse experiences, resources and expertise that exist across communities. This guide presents options based on the promising practices uncovered and analyzed in past research so that you can be aware of what exists and learn from others while adapting strategies that are unique to your own context, issue and situation.

How to get started

Picking up this guide is a great first step. The guide takes you step by step through the process of establishing a collaborative group/initiative. If you already have an established initiative/group, you may not need to follow it step by step but jump directly to the sections of interest. It can help you take stock of where you are at, acknowledge your own strengths and assist you in moving forward in areas where you may be experiencing some challenges.

We compare the process of establishing a collaborative to weaving a tapestry. We chose this metaphor for various reasons. Those working as weavers also believe in endless possibilities, the ability to “transcend the immediate function of fabric” (Rea-Menzies) and in the comparison of weaving to everyday lives:

The architectural process of building the tapestry, actually constructing the fabric and image together so that the two are physically and visually inseparable, relates very strongly to the process of constructing and building our lives and our living and working spaces (Rea-Menzies).

Similar to a weaver designing a tapestry, you need to begin by choosing a pattern or design and then selecting your fabrics and threads. The weaver must be highly skilled in choosing the vision, creating an enabling environment, bringing the right materials together to blend colours and cross the threads, staying on task and sustaining momentum. It requires time, dedication and resources. If the weaver continually evaluates their progress and showcases its successes regularly it can be a very positive endeavour. The possibilities are endless if the weaver is not afraid to be creative and experiment with ideas that have never been tried or that may seem impossible.

Understanding Collaboration

What is Collaboration?

Collaboration involves “a mutually beneficial relationship between two or more parties who work toward common goals by sharing responsibility, authority and accountability for achieving results. It is more than simply sharing knowledge and information (communication), and more than a relationship that helps each party achieve its own goals (cooperation and coordination). The purpose of collaboration is to create a shared vision and joint strategies to address concerns that go beyond the purview of any particular party” (Chrislip & Larson, 2004: 5).

The key to collaboration is that there is joint action among parties whose agendas have equal importance and that they “produce an outcome that none could produce through their singular efforts” (Smith, 2003: 5).

Collaboration is a broad concept that can encompass varying roles of partners, for various purposes, following various processes and resulting in various outcomes. The type of collaboration written about in this guide refers to government-community collaboration on human services policy decision making (but this information can be applied to any type of collaboration for any purpose).

“Human services refers to those programs and services that support a safe, healthy, inclusive community and maintain and promote its quality of life. Among others they include child care, long term care, education, emergency medical services, health services, affordable housing, transit, police services, immigrant services, recreation, culture, employment and income support, social services, and other community services (York Region, 2009: 5).

The policies in human services are complex and transcend various government departments, ministries and community service providers. The complex issues of human services in today’s environment calls for the integration of services. Solutions in this area demand that various players be involved. Following such a collaborative approach can help generate relevant, innovative, and novel ideas. The willingness to get things done things is also stronger when people on the ground participate in designing solutions to problems that affect their lives. We agree with Neil Bradford, that the aim of collaboration is both better government policy and more community capacity (Bradford, 2005: 8).

By complementing the knowledge of the community, by the community for the community with technical expertise it can maximize the co-ordination of the efforts of many partners, including both governments and community agencies in creating solutions to complex issues (Bradford, 2005: 6).

The foundation for a collaborative approach to policy development emerges from several bodies of knowledge. To illustrate the approach to government-community collaboration endorsed in this guide, a brief description of the theoretical concepts employed follows below. It will help you understand the foundation upon which this guide is based.

Place-based Policy Approaches

Place-based policy approaches (also called neighbourhood or local strategies) are gaining in popularity. Place-based strategies “seek to achieve a desired objective through interventions in the neighbourhoods and communities where people live” (Caledon Institute of Social Policy, 2009: 1).

According to Neil Bradford, a leader in this field, place-based strategies are “constructed with knowledge of the particular circumstances in communities, and delivered through collaborations crossing functional boundaries and departmental silos” (Bradford, 2005: 4). Place-based policy interventions are being endorsed as a way to use the combined insights and actions of multiple actors, create links and solve complex social problems. The key component of these approaches is the desire to bring a variety of players, specifically those with direct “on the ground” knowledge, together to tap local knowledge and create local solutions.

“Place-based policy targets specific neighbourhoods or communities for integrated interventions that respond to location-specific challenges and engage fully the ideas and resources of residents” (Bradford, 2005: 8).

To be successful, Bradford calls for three building blocks for success: “tapping local knowledge, investing in community capacity, and recognizing and resourcing local governments, thereby enabling them to be creative civic leaders *and* strong policy partners” (Bradford, 2005: 59). The goal is to bring local people together, learn about what works in particular places, and create unique, creative solutions to local issues.

Municipal governments play an important role in place-based approaches. Municipal governments are well positioned to bring the right people together. However, they must be acknowledged as leaders in this regard and be given the proper resources to do this work. Gruet (2008) refers to the “institutionalization of the spaces devoted to stakeholder involvement in public policy making” in this way as well when he suggests that the state has a key role to play in setting up these spaces.

Communities of Practice

When groups of individuals who share a concern come together regularly to discuss and plan solutions for complex problems, or better ways of doing things, they are creating a community of practice (for an example of a community in practice on government-community collaboration see Caledon Institute, 2009). The goal of a community of practice is for members to learn from each other and to take action within their communities.

“A Community of Practice provides a forum to support learning, share knowledge about effective practice, explore solutions and foster innovation with the goal of improving practice and outcomes. As it evolves, a Community of Practice becomes a network of informed, interconnected colleagues and a repository for resources and promising practices. Members have access to information and people that can help to make their work easier and more effective” (United Way, 2010).

Policy Dialogue

When communities come together, they share information and engage in a policy dialogue. A policy dialogue is a deliberate attempt to foster a genuine sharing of perspectives between policymakers and practitioners. This form of authentic participation in decision making goes

beyond consultation to solicit stakeholder opinions and participation in roundtables on specific issues. It requires a formal space of “dialogue and negotiation” (Gruet, 2008, p. 9). A safe place where “in-depth exploration of views, perceptions and interests” can occur (Smith, 2003: 37).

A “policy dialogue provides a forum for collaborative problem solving, which clearly moves beyond the simple sharing of information. The joint resolution of problems can enable deliberative discussions in which various departments work together to tackle difficult issues” (Torjman, 2005).

The goal of a policy dialogue is to reach a shared understanding among participants. To work, it involves a definite shift in perspectives. This approach rejects traditional “top down” decision making and instead favours “bottom up” participatory strategies (Gruet, 2008). Under this view, policy analysts/government must give up the position of ‘expert’ and differ to community experts who are valued and respected.

Policy dialogue has an “emphasis on listening and achieving mutual understanding; exploration of values; and in some situations, working toward consensus. It involves in-depth deliberation and dialogue, the focus on finding common ground, greater time commitments and has the potential to build civic capacity” (Smith, 2003: 37).

The concept of policy dialogue is informed by the dialogue literature in two ways (Goldberg, 2003). In one way, the field draws upon the definition of dialogue conceived of as a discussion “guided by a spirit of discovery and strategies of exploration and interrogation; it is through such practices that those who partake in them seek to achieve meaningful understandings and agreements” (Ryan, 1999: 4). In this way, it gives voice to people traditionally not heard from, helping them become controlling agents of their own lives (Friere, 1970).

This perspective also draws on the body of literature that specifically views policy as dialogue. In this sense, policy is conceptualized as “establishing connections between people by developing communication horizontally across communities as well as vertically between community and the levels of the bureaucracy” (Blackmore, 1995: 308). Dialogue is key in this environment, as discussion is necessary to reach common goals and purposes. By conceptualizing policy in this way, policy dialogues enhance the quality of democracy by bringing together people from different backgrounds, in a spirit of toleration, respect, trust and social and political engagement’ (Rimmerman, 1997; as cited in Thomas, 1999: 84).

“The process of dialogue is itself critical to the success of such meetings. A decision emanating from a real dialogue is the result of the interactions between dialogue participants and therefore belongs to each of them. When successfully carried out, policy dialogues have an impact on the balance of social power and allow for better accountability and information sharing” (Gruet, 2008: 57).

To summarize, a policy dialogue involves long term engagement on concrete issues that are important to communities. It can take from two days to two years, but commonly it takes two days per month for three to 12 months (Smith, 2003: 68). This type of authentic collaboration is not easy, but possible with the right mindset in place, the right players at the table, and most importantly, the formal “institutionalization” of spaces for these types of dialogues (Gruet, 2008).

Citizen Engagement/Participatory Policy Analysis

The field of Participatory Policy Analysis (PPA) has largely developed out of the work of policy researchers interested in democratizing the policy process. PPA describes a variety of approaches used to increase participation in decision-making. It has been defined as “a practical discipline which contributes to policy [decision] making by designing policy-analytical forums, providing favourable conditions for participation and facilitating and supporting the relevant debate and argumentation within this forum” (Mayer, 1997; as cited in Batenburg and Bongers 1999: 1). Participatory policy analysis attempts to create a forum for sustained dialogue where relationships and trust can be built. DeLeon notes that the basic idea behind participatory policy analysis is that “panels composed of citizens at large are empowered to participate in deliberations over public policy issues over an extended period of time” (1997: 111).

Building on the citizen engagement literature, this perspective stresses that citizens should be engaged in decisions that affect their lives. Similar to place-based approaches, it is about giving people a voice on issues that matter to them and that will have an impact on their lives. This form of collaboration encourages in-depth discussion, reflection and learning, promoting a focus on the common good. It also advocates for a dialogic process where there is two way interaction between decision-making bodies (often governments) and people affected by those decisions.

The term authentic participation has been used frequently in this field. Contrasted with “consultation” or worse “insultation”, the term indicates “genuine participation, and not mere presence, indicated by, inter alia, community members’ roles in designing, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and maintaining the project; sharing of information and contribution of ideas; and contributions to decision making” (Bowen, 2006: 5).

Empowerment

When groups participate authentically in policy dialogues and are valued for their views and perspectives, they can become empowered by their own participation.

“Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes” (Gruet, 2008: 27).

“Empowerment is about the confidence and capacity that comes with training and the ability to learn formally and informally from each other and develop trust” (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1994).

A focus on empowerment and engagement reminds us to take into account issues of power and social location as they might affect an individual’s or a group’s ability to participate effectively (Joshee, 2000). Only when this focus is recognized, can a much more inclusive and truly collaborative process occur.

Community groups often feel distant from the policy making process, may know little about what is involved or not consider it an area where they can have influence (Leviten-Reid, 2006). However, when spaces for authentic participation in policy dialogues are created within an “enabling environment” (Bowen, 2006), communities can gain power/control of the conditions that influence their lives. The key is that these spaces must be based in a foundation of

community engagement, capacity building and education. Furthermore, appropriate resources must be dedicated to the task and people must be committed to the process.

To become involved in truly collaborative initiatives requires sufficient background knowledge of the issues at hand. This educational process is not simply that individuals learn new facts. “It means learn[ing] how and when to challenge the validity of the asserted facts...and how the kinds of policy questions being asked influence the type of data they seek. Perhaps more important...[it] means being able to challenge the formulation of the problem itself” (Laird, 1993: 354). To some, like Laird, the process is at least as important as the policy outcomes themselves. It involves a two-way education process, where governments/policy makers learn from the community and the community learns from government.

Summary

Above we summarized the key bodies of knowledge drawn upon to inform the collaborative approach advocated for in this report.

Based on this literature, we argue that collaboration requires:

- Authentic participation – participation that goes beyond consultation to a place where mutual understanding and real decision making can occur.
- The institutionalization of spaces for two-way dialogue and negotiation where diverse community perspectives are valued and power issues are addressed.
- Long term commitment, engagement and two-way dialogue on concrete issues that are important to communities.
- A component of capacity building, education and empowering the community to come together as a united voice on issues that affect their lives.
- A variety of diverse players from across communities and governments who are committed to the issues and learning from each other and are willing to come together to build relationships, connections and trust (community of practice).
- Appropriate resources and commitment to the process.

Why Collaborate?

The benefits of using a collaborative approach have been documented in the literature. They include¹:

- Enhanced understanding of community issues
- Increased mutual understanding of others perspectives.
- Shared responsibility over complex problems.
- Reduced blame, adversarial competitive environments while more collegial and collaborative trusting relationships are formed: “*acknowledgment that we are all part of the problem and part of the solution*” (Liz Weaver, Director, Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction).
- Developing “a sense of the common good to complement private interests” (Laird, 1993: 346) in people.
- Better relationships between groups.

¹ The following benefits have been adapted from Pelletier, Kraak, McCullum, Uusitalo and Rich, 1999; Batenburg & Bongers, 1999; and Chrislip, 2002).

- Increased ownership of ideas.
- Improved quality of decision making - increased knowledge base for decisions by incorporating input from a variety of stakeholders and new and broader perspectives.
- Better and more innovative solutions that meet local needs.
- Maximum use of rich expertise for problem solving.
- Policies that are more likely the product of a common and shared vision.
- Increasing likelihood of stakeholder compliance and support. If stakeholders participate they are more likely to accept an outcome that is different from one based on their own interests.
- Strengthening the democratic legitimacy of public policies.
- Development of an engaged community empowered to participate in decisions that affect their lives.
- Strong collective voice.
- Possible financial savings due to pooling of resources.

We advocate for such a collaborative approach while recognizing it is not easy. There are issues of legitimacy, intersectoriality and accountability, just to name a few (Gruet, 2008). It can take longer and be difficult to manage. However, there are many things you can do to make it work. By examining how others have negotiated challenges they faced, we can learn from them and be more successful as we move forward on this very exciting path. As a start, we have learned that effective collaboration requires an infrastructure or a key group of individuals who are committed to sustaining the process. The following guide sets out options of what that infrastructure could look like and what the key individuals in the process can do to help it be successful.

Collaboration Step by Step - Steps to success

1. Design the collaborative group/initiative – Choose a pattern/design for the tapestry

What should the collaborative group look like?

When you start out to create a collaborative group or initiative there are many questions to ask yourself: What should the group look like? What should its structure be? How many people should we invite? What should we call ourselves? How often should we meet, where, when and how? The answers to these questions really depend on your purpose and goals and while we provide some suggestions below, it is important to recognize that the structure should really reflect the results that you intend to achieve.

Start by creating a new collaborative group

A new collaborative group/initiative creates energy and excitement. Make sure you create links with existing organizations. This helps leverage resources from others. Once a collaborative group/initiative loses momentum it is hard to reenergize the group, therefore, a new group has more potential to succeed.

“For each critical point of critical investment, the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction (HRPR) created a link to another collaborative or umbrella organization with a specific focus on

that area. For example, for the Early Years Program, the link was with the Best Start Network which contains more than 50 organizational members. For employment, the link is with the Jobs Prosperity Collaborative. Creating linkages was a crucial step for the Roundtable and helped it to gain leverage quickly in the community” (Liz Weaver, Director, Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction).

Create working groups

While the opportunities for organizational design are endless, most groups make use of the subcommittee structure. The use of subcommittees or working groups is one effective strategy for dividing up the work of the larger group, allowing members to focus on their interest and use their strengths. Typically groups/initiatives design subcommittees for various tasks which are grouped by priority areas. A small management team, such as an Executive Committee or Steering Committee, is also used to provide overarching strategic direction. Some groups also establish groups to focus on the process of the collaborative group/initiative (e.g., a communication committee). The important thing to keep in mind is that there must be an effective communication system between the groups and the executive committee and a system of monitoring performance and providing feedback – a system of checks and balances to assure that performance meets expectations (Center for Effective Public Policy, 2005).

Using subcommittees is also a way to bring in additional persons or ad hoc members who can provide resources and directional advice to the group. In this way, subcommittees can be an excellent way to bring diverse groups on board, include a wide range of interested individuals in various tasks, capitalize on individuals’ strengths, build loyalty to, and get people to better identify with the collaborative group/initiative. For an example of what an organizational structure with several working groups looks like, see organizational charts in Appendix A. The Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction’s and the Human Services Planning Board of York Region are just two examples.

In the beginning, a co-convenor group met every two weeks and provided vision for the Roundtable. It consisted of two representatives from the Hamilton Community Foundation, two representatives from the City of Hamilton Public Health and Community Services, and Mark Chamberlain who is President of HRPR. Over the past year, the co-convenors have stopped meeting as a group and have released control of the Operational steering committee or executive committee. We also have working groups. Each working group consists of three to five Roundtable members, plus additional resource persons drawn from the community. These groups meet monthly. Each year they also meet to review their terms of reference. In addition to the working groups, there is an Operational Steering Committee. The Operational Steering Committee meets monthly and focuses on overall operations including budgetary issues. It has about ten members, including the CEO of Hamilton Community Foundation, the Director of City of Hamilton Public Health and Community Services, and a citizen representative (Liz Weaver, Director, Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction).

There are many advantages to a committee structure:

- Working groups can meet as needed to achieve their goals.
- Creating distinct groups is effective in managing different interests. For example, process oriented individuals can join strategic advisory groups that work on governance documents, while action oriented individuals can join implementation groups.

- Committee structures also permit individuals to participate on an as needed basis as groups can be established and disbanded as required.
- Additional ad hoc individuals can be brought in to provide additional resources, direction and to raise awareness of the collaborative group/initiative.

Keep the group in the loop

An effective communication strategy is essential when using working groups. The chair of the collaborative group/initiative should always be aware of what committees are doing, and groups must also be aware of what each other are doing so that they can see how their work is related to, and impacts the efforts of other teams. Committees need to “keep the group in the loop”. Some groups found that committee chairs had too much leeway and did not report back often enough to the larger group. In this instance, committees ended up working on their own initiatives and did not bring the entire collaborative group/initiative along. Once the committee was too far along in their initiative/project, it was too difficult to steer their direction. To avoid fragmentation and maintain the coherent group, there should be a regular reporting and approval mechanisms in place.

What should the collaborative group/initiative be called?

Choose a desirable/marketable brand

Choosing a name may seem insignificant but it can be one of your most important steps to success. The right name should be catchy and be used effectively in your communication and outreach strategy. The Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) was very successful in creating a desirable brand; it was promoted so well that individuals in the community were very keen to join.

“A good name will sell the intent of the goal” (Joyce Frustaglio, Co-Chair, York Region Human Services Planning Board).

What size should it be?

In the beginning it might be easy to keep the size manageable, typically 16-25 members. While there are advantages to larger groups in that larger numbers can add resources and legitimacy, if it is too large it can become difficult to manage diverse interests and work toward common goals. However, the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) and the Toronto City Summit Alliance (the Alliance) were both very successful with 55 members on their councils.

If you keep the group small you may consider using working groups to bring in additional individuals on board who are not formal members of the group but participate on an as needed basis (see working group options above). For example, the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction had 35 people on its full Roundtable but as many as 75 individuals from all levels of government involved in their group. Liz Weaver the Director of the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction (HRPR) stated “this was a strategic decision. The idea behind this was to say ‘you are our roundtable’ and to get civic leaders to take ownership of the roundtable”.

2. Define your Goals, Values and Mandate

Establish shared core values

Before any kind of substantive work can begin, the group must establish the values of the collaborative group/initiative and set the ground rules for working together. Unfortunately, the term collaboration has been used so often, its meaning has been diluted overtime. As such, members may not be clear on how your group will be operating. Right from the beginning, time should be invested to establish a set of shared core values that are clearly laid out and agreed upon. When new members join the group they should be informed of the principles and agree to them as well. The principles should also be articulated to those outside the group so that everyone can understand and have clear expectations on how the group/initiative will work.

Ground rules should be developed as a full team during one of its initial work sessions together. These rules are a written agreement for how team members will conduct themselves and work together as a group. They will provide not only a framework for future interactions, but also a way to help you create the kind of environment that members want to work in (Center for Effective Public Policy, 2005).

This process is very important in collaborative groups/initiatives because working together in a truly collaborative way requires a different way of doing business. It requires people to overcome old habits and work differently. You must build this capacity upfront. It does require discussion and bringing people along together to ensure they are working from the same approach. It requires a mind shift. The group should abandon the competitive nature ingrained in today's society, avoid territorialism and work toward the greater good. The group should agree that working together entails an "all in this together" mentality where a "win for one is a win for all". The group should agree that the issues to be tackled must be larger than their own. Principles such as trust, unity, respect and honesty are some core principles that should be agreed upon. The Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction indicated that they had five core principles, called cultural shifts, which were used to guide its work. One principle was the commitment to work collaboratively across sectors. Another important one was to "abandon blame and acknowledge we are all part of the problem and part of the solution. The "no blame" principle was important in that it helped the Roundtable move forward rather than revisit disappointments from the past" (Liz Weaver, Director, Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction).

Define your mandate

The biggest challenge facing collaborative groups/initiatives is to have clearly defined goals and expectations.

In addition to your vision and values, groups must have clearly defined goals and realistic expectations. A focused mandate with clear, concrete, action-oriented deliverables is key to a collaborative group/initiative's success. Ideas should be solution-oriented, practical, tangible, realistic and concrete. The first activity the group must engage in is creating a mandate, vision and work plan. When a mandate is created from group members themselves rather than top down it can build ownership, unity and commitment and is indicative of a commitment to a truly collaborative process. Often groups are brought together after a plan has been made.

When freedom is given to the group to establish its own direction they are more inclined to be committed to the process of collaboration, feel that their input matters and are more committed to work hard to achieve it.

When goals are action-oriented and concrete, members will be able to see ideas moving along and being implemented. Small successes can be celebrated. Furthermore, it helps with sustaining direction of the group, momentum and commitment.

Drawing on the motto of the Toronto City Summit Alliance, “Enough Talk, Time for Action” exemplifies TRIEC’s core principle of focusing on “crisp decision making action oriented outcomes” (Elizabeth McIsaac, Executive Director, TRIEC).

An example of a mandate: [Our group] will convene and collaborate with partners, creating opportunities that help the community build their networks, make new links, secure funding and build their profile so that they can secure funding from other agencies.

Liz Weaver, the Director of the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction recommends when you create your plan to “operate in three to five year chunks. The local and wider landscapes change, so it is difficult to do effective longer-term planning”.

What kinds of activities should you strive for?

Decide on your activities.

Some activities conducted by various collaborative groups/initiatives include:

- Capacity building
- Supporting the community
- Research
- Incubating community initiatives
- Advocacy
- Building partnerships/relationships
- Encouraging/facilitating collaboration
- Communication to raise awareness of issues
- Information sharing among members

Many of these activities above are self explanatory. For example, the collaborative group/initiative brings people together to create initiatives that could not be done alone. By fostering links between groups and building new partnerships, resources can be pooled and brainpower harnessed into developing innovative ideas. The collaborative group/initiative can fund capacity building such as education and training opportunities. They can also fund research to support their cause and to raise awareness.

The group/initiative should not fund program delivery. The collaborative group should avoid being a service provider although many of the members of the collaborative group/initiative may be service providers themselves. The collaborative group/initiative can help groups work together to share information about funding opportunities and work together to secure funding from other sources to establish innovative, intersectoral and creative programs. It can be an asset for the community by supporting leadership development, capacity building, knowledge sharing

and connecting the right types of people to the right organizations. In this way, they do not duplicate services but support the communities by doing collaborative work and advocating for change.

“Avoid being a service provider when the goal is systemic-level change” (Liz Weaver, Director Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction)

An effective role for collaborative groups/initiatives is to be an “incubator of initiatives” or a catalyst for new groups/initiatives. In this way, an idea which is the vision of the community can be created within the collaborative group/initiative. It can be designed and fostered as it is established and resourced, but then once it is mature enough, it can be set free as a separate group/initiative helping it remain true to the original intent.

As an example, the Toronto City Summit Alliance (the Alliance) models this role of capacity builder and incubator of initiatives. They have developed and launched initiatives which became free-standing and self-sustaining. They provided the initial training, acquired resources for organizations and provided ongoing strategic support where necessary. The Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) was one such group developed by TSCA and is now a self-standing incorporated council.

3. Articulate the goals, mandate, structure, objectives and responsibilities of members in a formal Terms of Reference.

A pattern or template needs to be chosen at the onset to guide the tapestry, a skilled weaver however, will not be limited by the initial ideas or spend too much time planning and designing the template in order to be open to the possibilities that emerge during the creative process.

What is a Terms of Reference?

A Terms of Reference is a formal document outlining the mandate, structure, objectives and responsibilities of members. A formal Terms of Reference can be extremely valuable, if not necessary. Formalization adds legitimacy to the group and respect and commitment for members. It is effective if the roles of its members are clearly laid out in the Terms of Reference so that when members join they have a clear understanding and agreement on exactly what they are signing on to do.

Members of collaborative groups/initiatives need clear understanding and agreement about the role of the group/initiative and their roles and responsibilities within it. They should sign on to commit support for the goals of the collaborative group/initiative.

The Terms of Reference can be most helpful to you if the document can be both flexible and vague enough, while also outlining clear objectives and responsibilities. It should be flexible enough to respond to opportunities that arise.

Fluidity is required in dealing with complex social and economic problems. One must be open to changing course as circumstances change (Julia Deans, CEO Toronto City Summit Alliance).

The trick to creating a Terms of Reference is to balance the time it takes to create the document with providing members space to conduct the innovative work that needs to be done. Within every group there are individuals with different strengths. The Jobs Prosperity Collaborative found a clear distinction between process oriented and action oriented individuals. Writing the Terms of Reference can be a good activity for a working group composed of many process oriented individuals (see How do I create a Terms of Reference? below).

Our research revealed that it is possible to begin such collaborative group/initiatives without a formal Terms of Reference. Some informal groups do not have the time or resources to develop such a document. They also feel it can be restrictive for innovative work. The lack of bureaucracy or bylaws and structures can give collaborative group/initiatives flexibility by allowing creativity and avoiding tedious time consuming reporting, especially at the beginning when momentum is building. They feel that the lack of a formal document can allow for more innovation, enthusiasm and innovative partnerships. That said, the advantages of having a structure and rules for engagement and a clear purpose cannot be overstated. For example, the Terms of Reference can help the group make decisions on setting priorities and keeping the group on track. If challenges come up as the group progresses, the Terms of Reference can be returned to as a map or guide for the group.

How do I create a Terms of Reference?

The Terms of Reference does not have to be created consultatively. While there are advantages in terms of buy in and commitment, it is time consuming. The benefits may not outweigh the costs. It may be just as effective to have an executive committee do it, but then bring the document back to the whole group for input, discussion and buy-in.

Important discussion questions:

The following are some discussion questions you can use when developing a Terms of Reference:

1. What is the purpose of the collaborative group/initiative?
2. What is the group's structure?
3. How will we recruit members?
4. How many members should we have? Should we invite ex-officio/ ad hoc members?
5. What should be the roles and responsibilities of our members?
6. How long will the term of membership be (if any)?
7. Will we offer any kind of remuneration to members?
8. What benefits can members expect?
9. What kinds of skills and attributes are needed by our members?
10. What kind of reporting or accountability structure should be put in place to our funders/to the region/to the community?
11. How will decisions be made within the group?
12. What kinds of ground rules will guide the collaborative group/initiative and its meetings?
13. How often should the group (and or its subcommittees) meet - when, where, and how?
14. What kind of orientation, education and/or training will be offered to members?
15. What kind of accommodations can be made to ensure participation from diverse groups?
16. How will the collaborative group secure funding for itself and its' initiatives?
17. How will we evaluate/monitor our success?

4. Choose the right leader(s) and champions

The leader is like the designer of the tapestry. They search out and collect the right colours, fabrics and threads and blend them together in an intricate crossing and blending technique. They must be an expert weaver not necessarily an expert in the image depicted in the tapestry.

The right leader is key to the collaborative group/initiative's success. Getting the right leader who can act as a champion is essential. A champion who is charismatic and well connected can bring great passion and leadership to the cause helping to raise the profile of the group/initiative. The right leader also helps recruit other influential champions and brings the right organizations together to create a community of practice by actively cultivating relationships and using personal and professional networks to their maximum value. They would need to be strategic and innovative.

The effectiveness of the leader lies in his or her ability to stimulate energy and excitement for the group/initiative, use his/her personal and professional networks to recruit other interest, build momentum, create legitimacy for the group and its mandate, and leverage other resources.

Ideally, the leader is the foundation to the group/initiative. The leader guides the process, promotes the vision and keeps everyone on track. They must be exceptional at running meetings with diverse groups of individuals. They must articulate clear outcomes and consistent vision at the beginning and guide the group through it. The role of the leader is to ensure that everyone is on the same page, balance diverse interests and get everyone working towards the same goal.

The prominence of respected leaders lends credibility and legitimacy to the collaborative group/initiative and serves as an important leverage for resources. When the leaders are some of the city's most influential personalities who are well connected, they are able to champion the cause, add legitimacy and acquire the necessary resources for success.

"When corporate leaders champion a cause, other employers become interested" (Wayland, 2007: 9).

Who would make a good leader?

A leader should have expertise in bringing groups together. They should be well respected champions that lend credibility and legitimacy to the group. Their role is not necessarily to be the expert in the area, but to recognize that the expertise lies in the participants. Their role as process guides for the partnership and for the community may be more important than their content knowledge (Chrislip, 2004). Their role is to facilitate a dialogue about the issues (see dialogic leadership below). The leader needs to be well connected so that they can help recruit members and actively cultivate relationships by leveraging their personal and professional networks.

"Collaborations must strive to get everyone on the same page, and working for the same goal. It is the role of the leader to ensure that this is done" (Katie Black, Manager FCSS Calgary).

When choosing a leader, look for someone who portrays a collaborative and shared leadership style, as opposed to a competitive one. The style that works best for a collaborative group/initiative is participatory, inclusive and consultative. The leader should value and respect the diverse perspectives of the community and provide opportunities for non-traditional voices to

be heard. Basically, this type of leader has trust in others. They must be able to give discretion to others to lead and withdraw functionally from some roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, they must be good relationship builders and communicators to open up and promote honest dialogue. They also must be good capacity builders to encourage a learning community/community of practice. This leader must be visionary; one who is able to look for alternatives from traditional/dominant ways of doing things. In this way, they can attempt to rid the notion of the “expert culture” of policy analysts/decisions makers by examining problems from the perspective of those affected or involved in the issue, and acknowledging their ‘ordinary’ knowledge as primary.

Goldberg labels this kind of leader a dialogic leader. “A dialogic leader acts as an empowered and empowering facilitator of a dialogic approach that holds the potential to improve decision making by making it more democratic, collaborative and socially just” (2003: 129).

David Chrislip also advocates for collaborative leadership. He describes it as a “process-oriented leadership that energizes and facilitates collaborative engagements”. Collaborative leaders are credible convenors and catalysts for collaboration. They energize the group and sustain its progress.

Look for a leader with the following characteristics:

- Well respected champion, has credibility in the field
- Passionate about the issue
- Well connected
- Facilitator
- Collaborative
- Enthusiastic, energizer, motivator
- Influential
- Willing to leverage personal and professional networks
- Knows when and how to take risks
- Charismatic

Who to choose?

A leaders’ strength lies in their reputation as a neutral third party that would rely on the expertise of the group members. Government could also act as this kind of facilitative/dialogic leader. A dialogic leader has the expertise in bringing the group together and facilitating the dialogue while they recognize that the expertise lies in the participants. This is not a model of distributed leadership or leadership devolved to all. A leader must exist to guide the process. They must be an individual who knows when and how to take risks, engage actors not traditionally involved in these types of activities and draw on their contacts and networks to build a strong team. They must also be able to bring knowledge and learnings in from elsewhere to share with the group.

Anyone who has legitimacy or is well respected in the community can be chosen as the leader for the collaborative group/initiative. For example, the mayor, a business CEO, a community leader or a community agency Executive Director.

Many larger or more sophisticated groups choose to use a co-chair model and even enlist the help of a vice-chair. Typically with a co-chair model, the two chairs are made up of one

Executive Officer or designate from the community and municipal government. If you choose to follow a co-chair model, clear roles and responsibilities of each chair needs to be spelled out so that each can be accountable for their own activities. With a co-chair model, Bill Hogarth suggests that the two chairs meet every three to six months to share information, plan and strategize (Co-chair of the York Region Human Services Planning Coalition). Smaller groups or community initiatives may opt to have one chair, use a management group and staff secretariat. In this case, soliciting a neutral third-party as the leader works well (e.g., the United Way) as it can help prevent tensions that might arise if any one group were seen as promoting its own agenda in the collaboration.

The chair(s) would lead the group through its process and remove obstacles along the way. They would articulate a clear outcome and consistent vision up front. They would ensure there is agreement and buy-in at all stages of the group's process, keeping them on track, working toward the same goals and keeping everyone on the same page. They would build a climate of trust, balance diverse interests and help the group to achieve tangible results. Glen Bowen calls this "creating an enabling environment" (2006). It is a safe place for an honest dialogue to take place. They would be responsible for bringing organizations together to help them learn from each other; motivating, inspiring and mobilizing them for the cause.

Effective team leaders draw together the team's vision, a belief in the opportunity for change, and the ability to meaningfully involve others. Effective leaders establish a vision of the future; enlist others to embrace the vision; create change; and unleash the energy and talent of contributing members (Center for Effective Public Policy, 2005).

Some roles and responsibilities of chairs/leaders outlined by the Centre for Effective Public policy include:

- Keeping key stakeholders at the table through periods of frustration and skepticism.
- Acknowledging small, but important, successes throughout the life of the team.
- Assisting members to negotiate and reach consensus on difficult and contentious issues.
- Unearthing the energy and talents of members and channeling them into the pursuit of the team's vision, mission and goals.
- Facilitating productive, ongoing communication among team members.
- Ensuring that all participants are active contributors to the work of the team.
- Monitoring and enforcing the operating norms and ground rules developed by the team.

Risk takers

Often we hear that good leaders are risk takers. Yet the term is very elusive. Furthermore, in today's risk averse environment with high stakes accountability structures, it is hard to find true risk takers. Keeping that in mind, it is important that leaders be the kind of people willing to take a chance, not be afraid to try new things and create a safe environment where ideas can be discussed freely among members and real decisions can be made. They should inspire this behaviour in others as well and give permission to do what needs to get done. The key might be in the notion of balance. A good leader will know when and how to take risks, have the ability to reflect on their direction and not be afraid to admit they might be going the wrong way and turn the group around as necessary. They also must be able to give the group power to decide and implement (Chrislip & Larson, 1994)

Collaboration needs to be viewed as occupying the space so others can join you. Often, what happens is that the government wants to be the sole decision maker. However, this is ineffective. The leader must let the collaborative make their own decisions (Liz Weaver, Director, Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction).

5. Who to invite and how?

When you create a tapestry the fabric should all be of the same strength. You can use different textures, shapes, and types of fabric and threads, but if one overpowers the others, it could be a challenge to build a uniform tapestry. It is the job of the weaver to ensure the fabrics work together harmoniously.

Members should be high profile champions and leaders - key people who understand how to make a difference on the issue. They should know when and how to take action, have the institutional support of their organizations and have decision making authority. For example, The Toronto City Summit Alliance (the Alliance) was able to attract corporate CEOs, politicians (including three former Premiers of the Province of Ontario), presidents of universities and foundations, and community leaders from ethnocultural organizations and community organizations.

Members and others can play different roles in the collaborative group/initiative. As discussed above, the use of subcommittees can be an excellent way for the group to capitalize on resources in the community, business and governments. Groups often invite ex-officio/ad hoc members who play an advisory nonvoting role on the group. These members may not necessarily attend meetings but provide advice and guidance from the organizations they represent. For example, these members can help the group connect with the right people and give them ideas about funding opportunities.

A useful approach to soliciting group members is to invite members strategically. This way you can invite those who share the same values and approach to working collaboratively. It should be primarily the responsibility of the Chair/Co-chairs to recruit members by leveraging their own personal and professional networks. This strategic recruitment process can be very effective as a way to tap into the “unusual suspects” and solicit members traditionally not heard from. Not everyone has to be invited every time. Instead of hearing from the same overworked people, new voices can be heard from. This strategic inviting of new voices can be time consuming; in fact, it may take one on one personal contact to gain a partner’s trust, support, commitment and backing. TRIEC employs three managers of corporate and stakeholder relations to enlist partners and build a personal connection.

Another option to strategic recruitment is self identified volunteers. In some cases, groups can make a formal call for volunteers or use the snowball technique to recruit members.

Key things to keep in mind when inviting members:

- Participation must meet the needs of its members as well as that of the collaborative group/initiative.
- Involving these partners is a way to ensure they take ownership over the ideas and activities and make a difference.

- Terms of membership should be clearly set out in the terms of reference so members understand roles and responsibilities.
- Invite those members committed to the issues, not those who participate because it looks good on them.
- Inviting individuals with a personal connection or passion for the issues is extremely important as they are more likely to act as “risk takers” and take action to help advance the group’s activities.

“The greatest partners are those who have a genuine passion to contribute, rather than those who want to be involved simply because “it looks good on them” (Julia Deans, CEO, Toronto City Summit Alliance).

6. Create strong, innovative partnerships and links among members.

Weaving Connections – the under-over supportive stitching creates solid connections and reinforces the fabric so that it can sustain resistance.

Today’s social issues are complex; one group cannot be the sole owner of the solutions. Many players must be involved and links between them created to produce integrated solutions. In this way, their combined insights can be brought together and harnessed in creative and innovative ways. Involving partners authentically as co-constructors of knowledge is a great way to ensure that they take ownership over the ideas, activities and solutions. Furthermore, creating links with existing organizations can also help you leverage existing resources quickly and effectively.

“Solutions depend on the work of many players” (Liz Weaver, Director, Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction).

“The success of the summit was driven by the energy and resources contributed by several key community partners that leveraged their positions as business leaders to recruit interest and participation” (FOCUS Kingston’s Steering Committee).

Who makes a good partner?

Foundations

Foundations can be champions or funders. United Way for example is often a good partner. Their role of advocate, connector, convener, facilitator, fundraiser and champion of social change make them excellent partners and even (co-)chairs of collaborative groups/initiatives.

Different Levels of Government

Getting different levels of government together is not an easy task. Overcoming their different mandates, cultures and the “silo” mentality are challenges. However, when you can reach the right person; one whose current work is aligned with the goals of the collaborative group, it can be a success.

TRIEC’s Inter-Governmental Relations Committee (IGRC) is a unique example that serves as a useful model. It is a neutral space where all levels of government can come together as equals to work across silos and collaborate on immigrant employment issues. Representatives from all departments and ministries in all three levels of government that have an interest in the issue of immigrant integration are members. This is an excellent example of how creating an

environment that facilitates trust and builds commitment of all levels of government can be achieved. The trust, however, takes time to build. Ensuring the group upholds a neutral non partisan approach was a means for creating a safe place for government to participate.

Strengths of TRIECs Intergovernmental Relations Committee (IGRC)

First, it was convened by a perceived neutral third party, Maytree. Meetings were neither called nor hosted by any one order of government, and therefore not owned by them. Second, members were not asked to make commitments or decisions. Policy recommendations that have come from this committee belong to TRIEC and no one on the committee signs off on them or formally endorses them. The value to them is an articulated recommendation that they can take back with them to use as they may need. The value of the IGRC is the information exchange, the open dialogue and the fact that this is not a mandated committee with publicly recorded minutes.

Private Sector

Involving the private sector can be a major advantage to the collaborative group/initiative. They add legitimacy and can provide funding or in kind support. While desirable, not many collaborative groups/initiatives have been successful in doing so. Some ways to be more successful include recognizing the private sector's constraints and culture (asking "what's in it for them?"). The Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction found that when engaging the private sector efforts need to be specific and meet their needs. The Toronto City Summit Alliance's success in engaging the private sector can be attributed to the Alliance focusing on advancing issues that matter to business quickly, and by the Alliance's careful use of business leaders' time, including providing brief, concise background documents followed by short meetings that end on time (Julia Deans, CEO, Toronto City Summit Alliance).

"Experience has shown that employers in particular need to see results in order to stay affiliated in the long run - otherwise you have drop-off, or worse, a lack of credibility" (Elizabeth McIsaac, Executive Director, TRIEC).

Community

The authentic participation of the community is vital to the success of the group. Members need to be recognized and valued for their local knowledge and expertise. The difficulty is that all communities may not have the capacity including the time, resources and skills to participate in collaborative groups/initiatives. The group as a whole must recognize the challenges facing community participants in making accommodations. There should also be an education/training component built into the collaborative process to ensure all members can participate to their full abilities.

The benefit of community participation works both ways. The obvious knowledge and first hand experiences that the community brings to the table cannot be overstated. In addition, the community can benefit from participation in building its networks, capacity, and sharing of resources. Participation should be a mechanism of empowerment, such that with the right resources and efforts communities can develop the competence and capacity for truly collaborative efforts.

"From the beginning, the Roundtable viewed community solutions as being aligned with its work rather than in competition with it. Community organizations were affiliated with the Roundtable, and they were invited to all activities, including annual learning sessions. Community members

have been profiled in HRPR documents and HRPR assists them in building their networks and making new links that may secure funding” (Liz Weaver, Director, Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction).

Public and Higher Education Institutions

Public and higher education institutions are typically overlooked as members but are good resources as well. Higher education institutions can be great partners when conducting research for evaluation purposes or providing background research on best practises from other jurisdictions. They can provide advice on how groups have worked together, facilitate education or orientation sessions, and help us learn from the challenges and solutions that other groups have faced in their endeavours. Public and higher education institutions are also great partners in the communication process helping to raise awareness of the group and its causes.

Role of Municipal Government

The municipal government is like the glue or stitching that brings and holds all the fabrics and threads together.

Municipal government is typically the co-ordinator of the collaborative group/initiative. The municipal government can give credibility to a coalition/group even if they do not provide formal funding. The government can play a leadership role since the “government has the power and capacity to bring together all players in the community” (Private/Voluntary Sector Forum, 2004: 14). The municipal government can mediate between government expectations, departmental protocols, and community practices, creating new opportunities for dialogue (Bradford, 2005: 6).

According to Mike Bulthuis, a Policy Development Officer with Vibrant Communities, “the local government can seek to foster social capital and act as a bridge among neighbourhoods, diverse organizations and social institutions, including the provincial and federal governments, encouraging the broader building of a social vision” (Bulthuis, 2007: 5).

There are several roles the municipal government can play in your group/initiative either on their own or with others.

- Leader
 - Offer the vision and plan
 - Help the group reach the vision in a “win-win” situation
- Champion
 - Add legitimacy and raise awareness of the issues
- Ex-officio/ Ad hoc member
 - Play an advisory non-voting role
- Government advisor and resource member
 - Provide advice to the group on funding opportunities and policy developments from the offices and ministries they represent
 - Provide access to networks
- Strategic member
- Funder
- Partner
- Convener

- Facilitator
- Co-ordinator
- Advocate for the cause with other levels of government
- Communicator
- Cultural broker
 - Balance diverse interests (see below)
- Staff secretariat

Challenges to involving members

“Collaboration will not work well if there are too many different interests at stake” (Katie Black, Manager, Family and Community Support Services). Partners must be willing to understand each other’s perspectives. They need to understand the culture of the partners and adapt to their way of doing business. For example, the private sector is driven by results and one must understand and adapt to their culture and way of doing business in order to engage to them in a collaborative initiative

When many diverse partners come together to work on one task, it can be a challenge to balance diverse interests. A true multisectoral collaborative process requires a need to understand different perspectives and work cultures. For example, the private sector tends to be more concerned with achieving quicker outcomes.

Each party believes they have the answer, but they are all right and all wrong. They each have part of the answer (Liz Weaver, Director, Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction).

The Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction has learned that part of their role as a leader is to act as “cultural interpreters” in helping groups understand others’ perspectives. The trick is to help everyone understand the benefits of working together and that a collaborative solution can produce better initiatives when each group brings their perspective to the solution.

7. Foster positive relationships among members

The ability for team members to trust one another is the foundation of a collaborative climate (Center for Effective Public Policy, 2005).

Healthy relationships built on trust and shared goals are essential to your collaborative group/initiative’s success. Often these relationships have to be nurtured on a one-to-one basis. While time consuming, there is no substitute for a solid partnership.

Open and respectful communication is vital in maintaining buy-in and active engagement among diverse stakeholders (Julia Deans, CEO, Toronto City Summit Alliance).

To build these relationships, a neutral space must be created where players feel valued for their contributions, are true co-constructors of knowledge and feel comfortable participating. It is a space where open, honest two way communication between partners can occur. It is an atmosphere of collegiality and respect (Center for Effective Public Policy, 2005). To create this space, members must recognize the culture of the distinct players and value their unique

contributions. A positive relationship can create a sense of shared ownership and commitment to the group. The leader plays an important role in this process.

The Alliance takes great care in building trust, open communication and positive relationships between people involved in its initiatives. David Pecaut was a particularly skilful chair of meetings, known for his ability to “wrap up”, to summarize and “pull together” central points by acknowledging the contributions of the various constituents who participated in the discussion and lay the groundwork for moving forward” (Julia Deans, CEO, Toronto City Summit Alliance).

In addition to relationships among members in the group, members should be well connected to decision makers outside the group and have good regular communication with government staff. These kinds of relationships cannot be forced. Members must buy-in to the approach. Furthermore, positive relationships do not just appear. A strong relationship needs to be actively cultivated.

“[stakeholder involvement] doesn’t get done on its own. One meeting to get buy-in and then to rely on meetings is not enough. As well, turnover with stakeholders is high, and so just to keep the organization effectively in the loop takes personal connection and time” (Elizabeth McIsaac, Executive Director, TRIEC).

What is a positive relationship between members?

- A relationship built on trust where each member takes care in building that trust.
- Honesty between members (i.e., integrity and truthfulness).
- Respect (i.e., treating people with dignity and fairness).
- Group members who avoid territorialism.
- Open communication where the contribution of each member is valued.
- A relationship that promotes a sense of shared ownership.
- Members open and willing to share and receive new information.

How do I foster positive relationships?

- Have all members collectively define the problem.
- Develop a common fact base in which all stakeholders buy-in.
- Help partners feel like co-constructors of knowledge so that they can feel valued for their contributions.
- Balance and accommodate diverse perspectives.
- Do not ignore any “elephants in the room” - address them right away instead of avoiding problems.

“As a leader, I am always conscientious about giving balance to differing perspectives at our meetings. I put any concerns right on the table; I am very direct about acknowledging them. It is important to be aware of different perspectives and to recognize them. This is at the heart of the collaborative process. Accommodating these differences is labour-intensive, but it strengthens the final product and brings more people on board” (Tim Dobbie, Jobs Prosperity Collaborative Hamilton).

Team members must be willing to be honest with one another. Being honest translates into being forthcoming, forgoing exaggerations, demonstrating personal integrity, being willing to accept and not to cover up or minimize mistakes, and possibly most important, not ignoring any “elephants” that may be in the room. In other words, being open with one another is a critical component to establishing trust. Team members will appreciate honest observations that are shared in a respectful way. Ignoring problems that may be unspoken, but that are obvious to anyone in the room, is a critical mistake that teams often make. It is preferable to address issues that are affecting any member of the team, rather than simply avoiding the problem and hoping it will resolve itself in time (Center for Effective Public Policy, 2005)².

8. Choose a decision making structure

“The Alliance excels in collaborative planning and ensuring that all voices are heard. This is done by building consensus first by collectively ‘defining the problem’ and then developing a ‘common fact-base’ which all stake-holders buy into” (Julia Deans, CEO, Toronto City Summit Alliance).

Decisions in the group should ideally be made by consensus. This does not mean unanimity, but it means that the entire group can be heard and participates in decision making. The aim is mutual agreement. At the heart of consensus lies mutual understanding, trust and willingness to compromise. In addition to consensus, voting is always another acceptable option for decision making.

9. Create an evaluation framework

The weaver must constantly evaluate their progress, ensuring they are on time and communicate successes to its partners and the public, showcasing its work regularly.

Formal annual evaluations are necessary to the success and sustainability of your group/initiative. We need to learn from each other’s experience by demonstrating our successes and highlighting how we overcome challenges. Set targets and monitor your progress in an evaluation framework. The framework must be flexible and adaptable, relevant to your particular situation and integrated into the ongoing nature of your work (Abelson and Gauvin, 2006). Dividing your evaluation into short-term, mid-term and long-term indicators can be a more manageable way to tackle what may seem like an insurmountable task.

The challenge is that most of us are already too busy, strapped for time and resources, and often fear the traditional high stakes evaluation processes currently used by so many to report to funders, and account for our resources. However, if we can “take back the evaluation process”, i.e., integrate it into our own ongoing work, we can be in a position to have a “better grasp of the outcomes of our efforts, improvements to our work, and a heightened awareness of priorities” (Perry, as cited in Cabaj, 2000). Kathryn Church recommends that we “take control of the evaluation to foster the necessary capacity to critically analyze our practice by and for ourselves”

² For more ideas on how to create an environment of trust, see the Center for Effective Public Policy: <http://www.collaborativejustice.org/how/climate.htm>

(2000: 22). Using a participatory approach with the objective of building long-term capacity for members to conduct their own evaluations is the aim (Church, 2000). We can partner with external consultants, such as academic and research communities because they can be excellent supports to help with evaluation processes. However, we need to increase our participation in and control over evaluation processes. As an example, an organization could direct and guide the evaluation through a reference group. Church sees evaluation as a community building process with long term benefits. As she indicates:

“Use the evaluation as an opportunity to educate your members and develop and sustain their leadership...become familiar with emerging alternative frameworks and methods and to apply them to our own practice” (Church, 2000: 25-6)

Evaluating this type of collaborative work is not easy. Objectives such as systemic change, building awareness or capacity building are hard to operationalize and measure. Other challenges include the lack of complexity of the issues, the demand for instant results, time, resources, expertise, lack of commitment to evaluation from senior management and the difficulty of building evaluation capacity within your collaborative group/initiative. Furthermore, there are so many methods and no consensus on evaluation indicators.

To effectively evaluate, you should use a diverse range of evaluation measures and various approaches and indicators (both direct and indirect). A recent report released by Canadian Policy Research Networks conducted by Ableson and Gauvin (2006) attempts to shed some light on this challenge. These authors recommend that evaluation include various dimensions of evaluation including: context evaluation (public policy process), process evaluation (participation process) and outcome evaluation (public policy, decision makers and participants/general public). Their argument is that you need to evaluate both the *process* and the *outcome* of the collaborative and make use of multiple disciplinary perspectives and methods. For example, they recommend the use of interviews, surveys, documentation and observation.

The literature also discusses developmental evaluation as a process of ongoing evaluation. The key to developmental evaluation is that it is not done at the end of the project or initiative – indicators are constantly being modified as your group/initiative progresses and it is incorporated into your ongoing activities. The benefit is that it can inform your work as it is being conducted. An interesting point that is raised in the developmental evaluation literature is to ensure you evaluate both intended and unintended outcomes of evaluation, to cast your net widely to examine a broad range of indicators of success, and most importantly to continually refine and modify the evaluation process and your initiative as it is being done³.

The Caledon Institute of Social Policy’s manual “Collaboration on Policy” also offers a model of developmental evaluation. They define evaluation as “a continual process of goal setting, learning, readjusting and shifting to reflect increased understanding” (2009). They showcase a “one thing I learned” approach which is “a practice of continually evaluating learning sessions with the goal of using experiences to enrich or change current work practices and thinking, and then share these with significant partners or coworkers” (Caledon Institute, 2009: A).

³ For more information on developmental evaluation, see J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, *Sustaining Social Innovation: Developmental Evaluation*: <http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca/default.aspx?page=1395>

Kathryn Church discusses an evaluation process which makes use of recorded stories about a community endeavour. The process involves transcribing stories into “tales” about each initiative “sticking closely as possible to what people said” (2000). After the stories were written they were sent back to the individuals for comment. When the feedback was incorporated and a final version was agreed upon, the stories were compiled into a book. In this way, the stories are shared publically to help people understand what truly goes on in organizations and help us learn from each others’ experiences. This example of a story telling approach to evaluation indicates once again that there is no limit to the ways evaluation can be done. Use your creativity and develop an evaluation approach that meets your needs⁴.

How do I evaluate the hard to measure?

How do you evaluate a process which can take many years and may be difficult to disentangle from other events? How do you determine how much credence to give to the collaborative itself, and how do you go beyond participant satisfaction measures (Abelson and Gauvin, 2006)? How do we move beyond the pressure for immediate results?

The research today is moving toward “indicators” and indexes. The important thing to keep in mind is to make it relevant to the specific objectives or your group/initiative. It is very difficult to create a generic model for all evaluation processes; it should be customized to your particular situation. In that vein, we attempt to help by providing a list of preliminary questions you can ask yourself to help guide you through the process of designing your evaluation. Just remember your own context, history and values will help inform, focus and modify the questions. Have individuals in your group help design the questions and indicators to maximize input from those in your organizations and those receiving programs as a result of your initiative.

Guiding questions to inform your evaluation:

Context

1. To what extent have we raised awareness and understanding of our issues among, policy makers, program providers, wider community?
2. To what extent do our own group members understand the issues that affect them?
3. Have any perspectives or opinions been changed?
4. Have any new opportunities have been provided in this area?
5. Have any new partnerships initiatives been established as a result of this collaborative group/initiative?
6. To what extent can we observe greater engagement of the wider community on these issues?
7. To what extent were we able to communicate our successes and share with others our group’s initiatives?
8. How much investment has been added to the group/initiative by others?

Process

1. Were the right people brought in as partners in the collaborative group/initiative?

⁴ The options for evaluation are too vast to be discussed in depth here. See the resources at the end of this guide for more information about evaluation.

2. Were they all given enough information and training to be part of the decision making structure and create solutions?
3. What new relationships were created as a result of our collaboration?
4. Have I learned anything new about the policy issue/context?
5. Have I changed my understanding of the issues?
6. Has being part of this collaborative group/initiative helped me achieve any goals for my organization?
7. To what extent do any of our members feel more engaged or empowered as a result of their participation in this group, i.e., to what extent do participants feel they have improved their skills, knowledge and confidence as a result of participation in this group/initiative?
8. To what extent do people feel they have a real say in the direction and activities of this group/initiative (influence and control over decision making)?
9. Is there a balance of power in the collaborative group/initiative?
10. What barriers to involvement existed and what progress did we make in removing them?
11. How well was the group/initiative able to overcome mistrust and skepticism, if any?
12. How well do participants in the group feel they can work with one another effectively and efficiently?
13. To what extent are members of the group working toward the collective goals of the overall group/initiative?
14. How effective is the leadership in creating a safe place for authentic dialogue, sustaining momentum, interest, support, a consistent vision and progress on the group/initiative?

Outcome

1. Were any new programs/policies created?
2. Were any new resources dedicated to the issue at hand?
3. What are some of the impacts of our initiatives/programs?
4. Were there any unintended impacts of our group's activities/initiatives?
5. What were some of our tangible results?
6. How accessible was our program/initiative?
7. How satisfied are we with our progress?

10. Monitor the policy environment and its influence

The weaver should be constantly aware of the loom and space constraints within which they are working. Furthermore, while it is important to follow the template of the tapestry's design/pattern, be open to possible creative opportunities along the way.

To maximize timing opportunities you need to actively monitor the local context, policy environment and history of collaborative approaches so that you can capitalize on what you learn and respond instantly when needed. Timing is so important!

If your collaborative group/initiative's focus accords with government priorities, it may be able to "ride the coat tails" of an issue.

Hamilton's Poverty Roundtable preceded the provincial government's anti-poverty initiative, but it helped draw attention to an issue that was soon championed by the McGuinty government. The provincial initiative reinforced the focus of the roundtable and added importance to its work.

Liz Weaver, the Director of the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction discusses some of the contextual issues that provided it with a competitive advantage. For example, the size of Hamilton, its single tier government, early leadership on poverty reduction, media support, and timing. *"The Ontario Government took on poverty as an issue; this was partly due to what was happening in Hamilton. This, in turn, helped HRPR to build a profile around poverty"* (Liz Weaver, Director, Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction).

11. Secure funding, ensure sustainability and momentum

Sufficient time and money for materials allows the luxury to focus. If the design is interesting and manageable, the weaver and its crew will remain dedicated.

Adequate core funding from the various stakeholders is necessary to support and sustain the complex activities of collaborative groups/initiatives. While it is not the only ingredient of success it is a very important component. To do this kind of work, groups need to be well resourced both with human and financial resources.

Having dedicated staff is crucial to any collaborative effort, and HRPR has three (Liz Weaver, Director, Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction).

If groups are concerned about funding and are constantly in need of applying and reporting for project based funding, they have little time or energy left to carry out the work they should be doing. Current funding structures are an inhibitor to collaborative groups/initiatives. The lack of core funding and the need to constantly apply for project funding which comes with the constant reporting on how funds were spent takes considerable time away from actually being able to do the work. Finally, lack of funding makes a collaborative group/initiative vulnerable, as does relying exclusively on government money which makes your group vulnerable to political winds of change.

The municipal government could provide financial and human resource support for core activities. Advocating for better funding structures, sharing information about funding sources and working together for grants could be activities your group/initiative could engage in. To ensure sustainability and maintain momentum, while critical, other things besides funding, are needed. Hamilton's Roundtable on Poverty Reduction recommends the following (City of Hamilton, 2008):

- Build commitment and political support
 - Find multiple champions and prime movers
 - Develop support from power holders
 - Build constituent support and advocacy coalitions
 - Mobilize and allocate resources

- Institutionalize cooperative behaviour

- Create enabling mechanisms and action vehicles
- Support self-organizing groups
- Develop an outcome-based information system
- Maintain focus on desired outcomes
- Develop and nurture relationships
- Seek small wins and strategic opportunities - celebrate along the way
- Maintain a commitment to learning

12. Market, Communicate, Educate, and Build Community Capacity

Showcase your successes.

The need to showcase your successes, while essential for sustaining the momentum of your collaborative group/initiative, is key to securing external support and recognition (Center for Effective Public Policy, 2005). The method you choose, however, will be unique to your own situation, context and initiative. Part of this process definitely involves face-to-face meetings and regular communication among members, but the use of the media and communications professionals can be used to communicate and educate the larger community.

“Communicate regularly and consistently with your members. Things can be very busy on the inside, but this is often not readily apparent to those outside the inner core of decision-making. Keep them informed of the work” (Tim Dobbie, Director, Jobs Prosperity Collaborative Hamilton).

How do I showcase my success, and also engage and build community capacity?

1. Consider hosting public events, such as town halls or neighbourhood forums.

The Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction (HRPR) has an annual report to the community event that draws hundreds of people each year. It is an opportunity for the Roundtable to report on the work it has done over the past year and is viewed as a capacity building exercise for the wider community. As such, it usually contains a learning session on a topic of importance, such as the inadequacy of social assistance rates or the impact of economic downturn. Other community-oriented events have included the 2008 community conversation around the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy. The goal of this event was to generate some local strategies. The Roundtable also had its annual report published as an insert in *The Hamilton Spectator*. This was a great way to communicate its successes and raise awareness of their group.

Tim Dobbie, the Director of the Jobs Prosperity Collaborative stresses how important it is to communicate regularly and consistently with your members to keep them informed of the work. As part of their community engagement plan they have a community engagement catalog, a twitter site and host free public lectures and events including a Mayor’s Luncheon Series.

2. Make an effective use of the media to raise awareness of your issues. Consider hiring dedicated communications professionals to build relationships with media.

Stronger relationships with the media are a useful strategy to keep the community informed and engaged in your work. This is not a job to be taken lightly. Nearly one quarter of TRIEC’s

budget was spent on advertising (\$1M). While not everyone has the capacity or resources to do so, it is more effective to rely on trained marketing and communications professionals who are dedicated to this job. TRIEC is fortunate to have three full-time communications professionals trained in marketing, communications and media relations. These individuals can mount public awareness campaigns, actively cultivate relationships with the local media, assist your collaborative group/initiative, showcase its successes and create a desirable branding strategy.

3. Showcase interim and also small successes followed by larger ones. This is an excellent way to sustain interest, motivation and momentum.

4. Other strategies include connecting with innovation think tanks and academic and public institutions to help showcase your group (e.g., Vibrant Communities, Caledon Institute of Social Policy) (City of Hamilton, 2008).

Community capacity building

Providing education/training to members is an important identified need. To succeed, it is important to learn from other jurisdictions.

One example is the partnership between Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative (RPNI) and East End Literacy (with funding from the Metcalfe Foundation) which provided **Community Animator/Community Leadership Training**. The goal of this project was to equip participating residents to engage with other community members in their own languages and within their own cultural milieu to facilitate better access to the activities, initiatives and decision-making in Regent Park (RPNI, 2006: 21). Its strength lay in its ability to help “community leaders from ethnocultural communities to strengthen their leadership skills through formal learning and direct actions to meet the needs of their communities” (Towards an Inclusive Society Project, 2006).

Challenges not to get “snagged” by

Most commonly reported challenges (in order):

- Managing the expectations, cultural orientations and interests of each stakeholder/partner.
- Balancing power differences among members.
- Ensuring everyone is working from a common understanding base and working towards the same goal.
 - If there is a lack of common interest and agreement on purpose, it is very difficult for a group to sustain members and achieve its goals. Having too many partners can be a challenge in developing this common understanding. As well, if there are too many large goals or too wide or ambitious of a focus it can be difficult to obtain agreement.
- Working within an authentically collaborative mindset. Encouraging an “all in this together” mentality and overcoming territorialism and competition.
 - Having groups let go of controlling the work and outcomes and not solely owning the group/initiative.
- Lack of appropriate funding.

- Project funding inhibits sustainability and good work. Reporting and funding constraints are time consuming and take time away from good work.
- Lack of human resources/staff.
- Working in partnership with others without the power to legislate change makes it difficult to get other groups to work with you.
- Engaging risk takers. This kind of collaborative work requires unconventional risk takers; however this behaviour is typically discouraged in organizations.
- If collaboration is forced, it breeds suspicion and mistrust among potential partners, and suspicion compromises collaboration.
- Sustaining momentum is a challenge, especially due to high turn-over rates in the field. It takes time to bring new members up to speed. Once momentum declines it may be difficult to reenergize stakeholders.
- Capacity, competence and credibility.

Lessons Learned

In summary, the following are key ingredients for successful collaborative groups/initiatives:

- Healthy relationships between members built on trust and shared goals. Often these are nurtured on a one-to-one basis; while time consuming, there is no substitute for a solid partnership that recognizes the culture of the distinct players and values their unique contributions, balances diverse interests and creates a sense of shared ownership and commitment to the group.
- It is essential to create a neutral/safe space where players feel comfortable being honest and participating in authentic dialogue.
- Partners with a genuine passion to contribute, rather than those who are involved because “it looks good on them” are the greatest ones to have. Individuals with a personal connection or passion for the issues are more likely to act as “risk takers” and take action to help advance the group’s activities.
- Establish ground rules for the way the group will operate upfront in a collaborative fashion.
- Have members buy-in to the mindset and values of your collaborative.
- A clearly articulated mandate that focuses on action-oriented solutions is essential to ensuring all members are working towards the same goal. It also must be adaptable and flexible.
- Clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of members is need to sustain action and momentum and keeps groups moving forward on the same page.
- Engaged diverse groups are productive if different interests and cultures are balanced and they work toward a common goal which they were involved in designing.
- Choosing a name may seem insignificant but it can be one of your most important steps to success.
- Incubate activities and know when to set them free to be self sustaining.
- Community leaders, champions or key people in the right places.
- Targeted members who participate as organizational representatives and have institutional support for joining the group.
- Collaborative leaders who are well respected champions, committed to the cause and willing to leverage their resources and networks.

- A group that is well staffed, funded, resourced and has the capacity to carry out its mandate or scope.
- Spend time on education, training and capacity building to empower members.
- A group that understands the influence of the current policy context and takes advantage of it. Recognize that timing is extremely important. Be open to capitalize on opportunities as they arise.
- Communicate your successes no matter how small.
- Integrate a diverse range of evaluation mechanisms into your ongoing work.

Checklist – Keys to weaving a tight tapestry

- 1. Choose a design/pattern/template to guide you while remaining open to possibilities**
 1. Follow the template of the tapestry’s design/pattern but be open to possible creative opportunities.
 2. Create a new collaborative group.
 3. Create working groups to deal with different tasks.
 4. Keep the group in the loop. Create an effective communication strategy so the chair and other teams are aware of what everyone is doing.
 5. Choose a marketable name and branding strategy.
 6. Be focused but remain adaptable and flexible.
 7. Be open to changing course as circumstances change.
- 2. Define your goals, values and mandate**
 1. Establish shared core values.
 2. Focus on action-oriented solutions and a clear, concrete and manageable mandate and objectives.
 3. Set ground rules for group participation and ensure there is buy-in.
 4. Define your mandate.
 5. Decide on your activities.
- 3. Articulate the goals, mandate, structure, objectives and responsibilities of members in a formal Terms of Reference**
 1. Create a Terms of Reference and work plan. Articulate the goals, mandate, structure, objectives and responsibilities of members and have members sign on so that they are clear about their roles and responsibilities and the direction/objectives of the group/initiative.
- 4. Choose the right leader(s) and champions**
 1. Select an expert weaver/designer of the tapestry who can create an enabling environment.
 2. Choose the right leader who can act as a champion for the group/initiative. They should be charismatic, visionary, well connected, respected, credible, passionate, influential, strategic and innovative.
 3. Choose an individual who portrays a collaborative, participatory, inclusive and dialogic style.
 4. Choose a neutral third party who can rely on the expertise of the group.
 5. Decide if you want to use a co-chair model.

6. Establish a neutral/safe space where members feel comfortable participating honestly.
 7. Ensure everyone is working toward shared goals and from a common understanding of the issues.
- 5. Choose various threads and fabrics that add texture and colour but work well together – Who to invite and how**
1. Strategically invite members. Target the “unusual suspects”.
 2. Choose members as organizational representatives with institutional support and decision making authority.
 3. Choose partners with a genuine passion to contribute, who are committed to the issues and are able to leverage their resources and networks for change.
 4. Ensure membership meets the needs of its members and the group.
 5. Keep the size manageable (approximately 16-25 members).
- 6. Create strong innovative partnerships and links among members. Reinforce the fabric so it can sustain resistance.**
1. Involve various players.
 2. Combine their strengths.
 3. Involve partners as co-constructors of knowledge.
 4. Create linkages with existing organizations to leverage resources.
 5. Seek out the involvement of the private sector while assessing and capitalizing on the real purpose of why they are invited. Ask “what’s in it for them?”
 6. Public and higher education institutions are typically overlooked as members but are good resources as well.
 7. Recognize the culture of different groups and value their unique contributions.
 8. Balance and accommodate diverse interests.
- 7. Foster positive relationships among members**
1. Build strong relationships and effective partnerships among members.
 2. Cultivate and nurture relationships, often one-on-one, built on trust and respect.
 3. Do not ignore any “elephants in the room”. Address them right away instead of avoiding problems.
 4. Foster open two-way communication and genuine dialogue between partners.
 5. Create a sense of shared ownership and commitment to the group. Foster a sense of common good and an “all in this together” mentality by avoiding competition and territorialism.
- 8. Choose a decision making structure**
1. Ideally, make decisions by consensus. The aim is not unanimity but mutual understanding and agreement.
 2. Voting is an option as well.
- 9. Create an evaluation framework**
1. Evaluate your progress, ensure you are on time and communicate success to partners and the public, showcasing your work regularly.
 2. Learn from past experiences.
 3. Ensure the framework is flexible, adaptable, relevant to your particular situation and integrated into the ongoing nature of your work.

4. Use a participatory approach.
5. Develop internal capacity to integrate evaluation into your ongoing work.
6. Use a diverse range of evaluation measures, approaches and indicators.
7. Examine the context, process and outcome of your group/initiative.

10. Monitor the policy environment and its influence

1. Be aware of the space constraints within which you are working. Be open to creative opportunities along the way.
2. Monitor the local context, policy environment and history of collaborative approaches involving particular groups and timing so that you can capitalize on what you learn and respond instantly when needed.
3. Ride the coat-tails of other issues.
4. Recognize that timing is important.

11. Secure funding, ensure sustainability and momentum

1. Sufficient time and money for materials allows the luxury to focus. Create an interesting and manageable design to help the weaver and crew remain dedicated.
2. Seek out and leverage various resources.
3. Do not rely solely on government funding.
4. Capitalize on members' resources and networks.
5. Showcase/communicate/advertise your successes to sustain momentum but also to build external support and recognition.
6. Build commitment and political support.
7. Institutionalize cooperative behaviour.
8. Sustain momentum by keeping the work exciting and fresh.

12. Market, communicate, educate and build community capacity

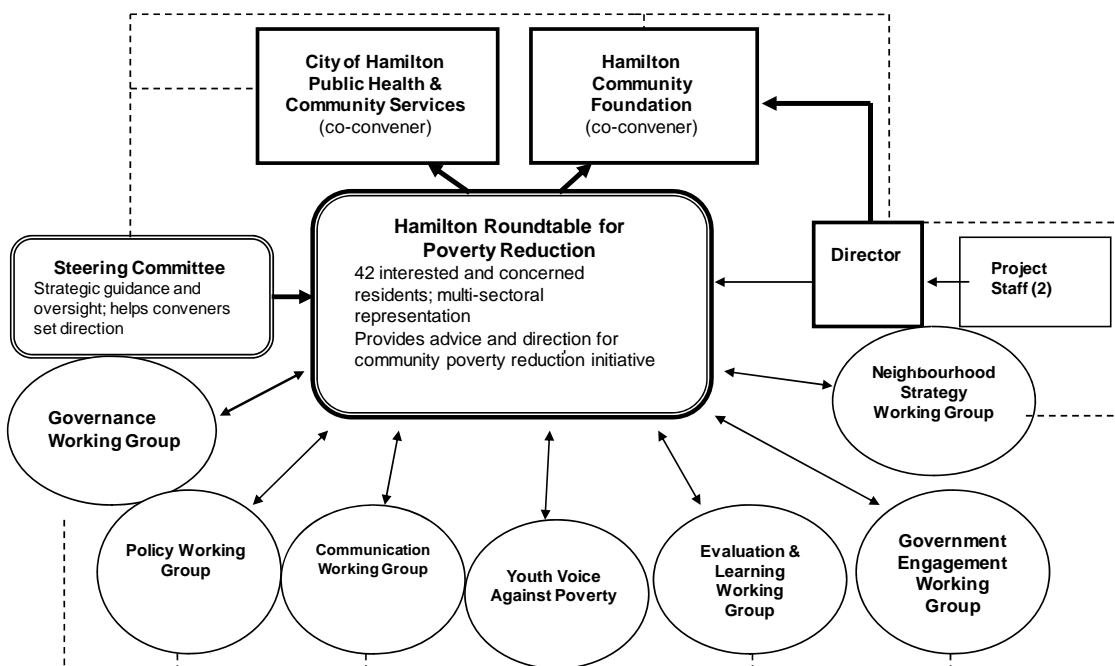
1. Ensure there is an education and training component for members.
2. Celebrate and showcase your successes.
3. Hold a public event.
4. Develop a good relationship with the media.
5. Hire a communications/marketing professional if resources allow.
6. Showcase interim successes.
7. Have face-to-face meetings and regular communication with members/partners and the public.
8. Connect with innovation think tanks and academic and public institutions to help showcase your initiative/group.

The possibilities are endless. Don't be afraid to be creative as you weave a tapestry of change.

Appendix A

Examples of Organizational Structures:

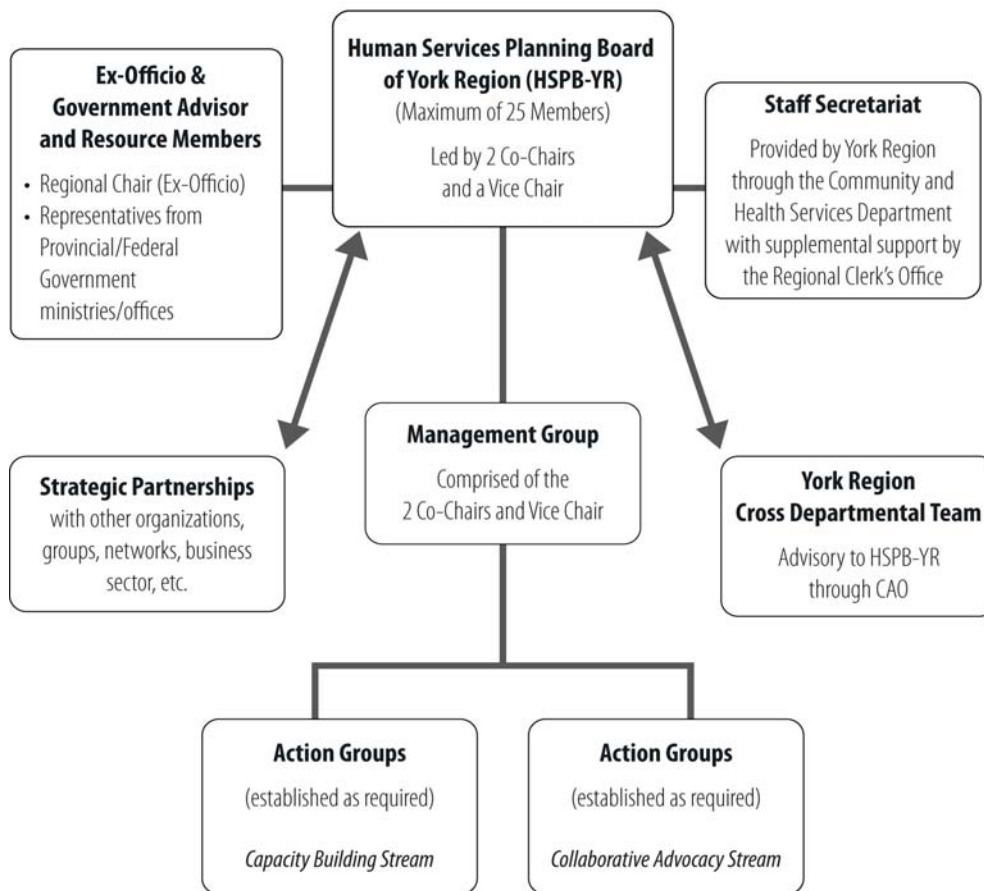
Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction – Organization Structure



30

Human Services Planning Board of York Region

ORGANIZATIONAL *Structure*



Appendix B

List of participating collaborative initiatives

Interviews:

City of Toronto: Toronto City Summit Alliance	the Alliance
City of Hamilton: The Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction	HRPR
Jobs Prosperity Collaborative Hamilton	HJPC
The City of Calgary: Family and Community Support Services	FCSS
Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council	TRIEC
City of Toronto: Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative	RPNI
City of Vancouver: Community Services, Social Planning	VSP
The Regional Municipality of York: Human Services Planning Coalition (2001-2009)	HSPC

Surveys:

The City of Calgary: Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary	ISCC
City of Toronto: Toronto Social Development Plan	TSDP
City of Kingston: FOCUS Kingston's Steering Committee	FKSC
Regional Municipality of Peel: Peel Newcomer Strategy Group	PNSG
City of London: Welcoming Cultural Diversity in London	WCDL
Community Development Council Durham	CDCD
Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition	TBCCC

Short stories about collaborative initiatives

- 1. Jobs Prosperity Collaborative Hamilton (HJPC)**
www.jpchamilton.ca
- 2. Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC)**
www.triec.ca
- 3. The Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction (HRPR)**
<http://www.hamiltonpoverty.ca/>
- 4. Toronto City Summit Alliance (the Alliance)**
www.torontoalliance.ca
- 5. Family and Community Support Services, Calgary (FCSS)**
www.calgary.ca/fcss

1. Jobs Prosperity Collaborative (Hamilton) ⁵

The Jobs Prosperity Collaborative (JPC) consists of 70 people who are committed to promoting Hamilton's prosperity through job creation and retention. Members of the JPC include leaders from all sectors including government, business, labour, education, environment, social services, not-for-profit organizations, healthcare, and others. The JPC formed out of the Hamilton Civic Coalition, a group of local leaders who met regularly to discuss various issues. Tim Dobbie is the Director of the JPC. He is a consultant and former Manager of the City of Burlington. The JPC is co-convened by Tim McCabe of the City of Hamilton and Rob McIsaac, President of Mohawk College.

The Terms of Reference for the JPC is laid out in *The Framework for Action on Jobs*. The document was produced by a small team that included Tim Dobbie and representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and the City of Hamilton's Planning and Economic Development Department. The framework identifies seven priority areas for collaborative work in Hamilton: Innovation and Learning, Hamilton's Image, Quality of Life, Immigration, Commercial Land and Infrastructure, Supportive Planning Process and Economic Portfolio. A working group made up of JPC members and supportive partners was created for each of these priority areas. The working groups meet to review best practices, understand the specifics of the Hamilton context and to develop strategic goals, actions and evaluation metrics to advance each priority. To help set priorities they identified three tasks to pursue. They also hired a consultant to write a paper and carry out some objectives (e.g., communications strategy). There is also an Economic Development Advisory Committee subgroup made up of twelve hand-picked individuals to help provide direction for the collaborative.

The JPC provides an annual written report to City Council. It does not answer to City Council, but its members wish to keep Council informed of its work. One City Councillor is also a member of the JPC.

Core funding of \$100,000 per year comes from the City of Hamilton and another \$99,000 came from the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) in 2008. In 2009, MTCU increased its funding to \$234,000. In addition, members from the private sector are asked to contribute \$5,000 if they are able to do so. In-kind donations are received from the various members who give of their time and offer meeting space around the city. In Tim Dobbie's view, the collaborative nature of the JPC has helped it to receive funding. The broad-based support is impressive to funders.

The challenges to collaboration they face are related to balancing diverse interests and managing varying expectations (self interests) of the members (including private vs. public sector ways of doing business). Tim Dobbie explained that he needs to balance both sides. All meeting agendas include items focused on both process and action, and he is conscientious about giving balance to differing perspectives at their meetings. He stated that it is very important to acknowledge,

⁵ Original case study prepared by Sarah V. Wayland, August 2009. Sources: JPC website: <http://www.jpchamilton.ca>; *JPC: A Framework for Action on Jobs* (November 2008); Interview with Tim Dobbie (22 July 2009).

recognize and listen to different perspectives. While accommodating these differences is labour-intensive, it strengthens the final product and brings more people on board.

The JPC recognizes the importance of communication. They stress how important it is to communicate regularly and consistently with your members to keep them informed of the work. They also plan to have a stronger relationship with the media to keep the community informed and engaged in their work. As part of their community engagement plan they have a community engagement catalog, a twitter site, and host free public lectures and events including a Mayor's Luncheon Series. For example, they hosted a free community event on May 3, 2010 as part of the Hamilton Revolution and Proud Hamilton Campaign Launch. It featured Alex Steffen, Executive Director of Worldchanging as the keynote speaker.

2. Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC)⁶

The Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) was launched in September 2003 as an initiative of Toronto City Summit Alliance (the Alliance) with backing from the Maytree Foundation. TRIEC began as an informal organization, but by December 2008 it was formally incorporated with its own Executive Director, Elizabeth McIsaac. Elizabeth feels this formalization creates better accountability and fits the operational norms of its members. Today, TRIEC has more than 55 Council members representing various organizations such as employers, labour, occupational regulatory bodies, post-secondary institutions, assessment service providers, community organizations and all three levels of government. The Council meets once a year face-to-face and engages in a two-way dialogue among members.

TRIEC can be described as a multi-sectoral single issue approach. TRIEC facilitates collaboration among diverse groups of stakeholders to identify and implement local, practical solutions that lead to more effective and efficient meaningful employment for skilled immigrants in the Toronto region. It fosters collaboration, identifies priorities and links, and communicates results. To achieve this goal, the Council focuses on three objectives:

1. To convene and collaborate with partners, creating opportunities for skilled immigrants to connect to the local labour market.
2. To work with key stakeholders, particularly employers, building the awareness and capacity to better integrate skilled immigrants into the workforce.
3. To work with all levels of government, enhancing coordination and effecting more responsive policy and programs for skilled immigrants.

TRIEC demonstrates the success of local partnerships that develop local solutions which meet local needs. TRIEC's multi-stakeholder approach values the contribution of each member and promotes a sense of shared ownership on joint concrete initiatives. There are several things that have contributed to TRIEC's success. This short story outlines some of them. They include strong leadership/champions, committed members from diverse organizations and backgrounds who were invited to champion the cause and who have developed strong positive relationships, and a clear Terms of Reference which outlines a narrow mandate and a focus on action-oriented deliverables. TRIEC is well funded, has the capacity and respect of the community and has a good relationship with the media which they rely on to communicate success and promote a very successful branding strategy.

At the first level, the support from Maytree was instrumental in initiating the Council. Maytree's Executive Director, Ratna Omidvar championed the cause and leveraged her networks to build the initiative/collaborative group. The strength of such backing added the legitimacy, credibility and authority to position TRIEC as an expert in the area. It was so well done that individuals were contacting TRIEC asking to become members. TRIEC recruited influential champions from the private sector, community and government and cultivated relationships among members, often one-on-one in the initial developmental stage to gain support, commitment and backing. These champions are some of the city's most influential personalities. TRIEC was very successful in capitalizing on strong champions who can engage a full range of partners and sustain their energy and momentum.

⁶ Original case study prepared by Michelle Goldberg, July, 2009. Sources: Key Informant: Elizabeth McIsaac, Executive Director, TRIEC; Wayland, S.V. (2007). Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council - TRIEC: A Model for Local Solutions, TRIEC Learning Exchange.

A strength of TRIEC lies in its ability to engage key bureaucrats who are willing to take action. Involving key people who understand how to make a difference on the issue is foundational to their success. TRIEC was successful in creating a desirable brand. Its champions were able to create, nurture and sustain a positive reputation over the years through the effective use of the media and personal/professional networks. They are known for their ability to convene a broad cross-section of stakeholders and sustain their interest, involvement and momentum. By engaging prominent corporate leaders and unusual suspects, TRIEC has been able to sustain commitment and engagement on the issue for nearly seven years. One reason it is successful is that TRIEC reaches out to new organizations as well as the “usual suspects,” who tend to be the same overworked people.

TRIEC’s Council membership is organization-based and by invitation only. The members can only participate with a high level of institutional support from their individual organizations which facilitate a commitment on the issue and enables action-oriented behaviour. The responsibilities of its members are clearly laid out in its Terms of Reference. It specifies both what is required of them but also how TRIEC membership can meet their needs as well. It clearly states that members must provide *institutional support* for participation in TRIEC, be an *ambassador* by publically endorsing the activities of TRIEC, *champion* its cause and act as an *advisor* on new directions and activities. In return, membership provides opportunities for networking and for being seen as a leader in immigrant employment issues. This model is successful because members are clear as to their roles and responsibilities and membership meets their needs as well as TRIEC’s.

Part of TRIEC’s success can also be attributed to its narrow mandate and focus on concrete deliverables. TRIEC’s collaborative approach worked because it focused on implementing ideas that are solution-oriented, practical, tangible and concrete. Drawing on the motto of the Toronto City Summit Alliance, “*Enough Talk, Time for Action*” exemplifies its core principle of focusing on “crisp decision making action-oriented outcomes”. It has the capacity, competence and credibility to “over deliver on its promises”.

TRIEC has received financial support from the Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Government of Canada Foreign Credential Recognition Program, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Maytree Foundation, Ontario Trillium Foundation, TD Bank Financial Group, Manulife Financial and RBC Financial Group. Its budget in 2008 was \$4.1 million, with half coming from the Federal Government and \$1.5 million coming from the Provincial Government. Only \$214,500 came from corporate donations and sponsorships. In that particular year, nearly one million dollars of TRIEC’s budget was spent on advertising. Obtaining more funding from the private sector would help avoid the vulnerability that comes with a reliance on government funding.

TRIEC is well funded and employs three full-time communications professionals who are trained in marketing, communications and media relations. TRIEC does an excellent job showcasing and communicating its successes by using public awareness campaigns. Using the media was a key ingredient of TRIEC’s success and it was successful in building positive media relations. Using the media to its full advantage, TRIEC was able to advance its desirable brand and encourage a broad base of support and investment in its ideas and initiatives.

Membership and Stakeholder Engagement

Private Sector: The involvement of the private sector is both unique and essential to TRIEC's successes (Wayland, 2007). Its success in engaging the private sector can be attributed to meeting their needs, sticking to short meetings conducted early in the morning and always running on time. TRIEC invited champions who were willing to leverage their relationships, that is, use their business and personal networks to further the cause of TRIEC.

Government: The Intergovernmental Relations Committee (IGR) is a unique group convened by TRIEC. The IGR explores opportunities for collaboration and new mechanisms for funding and policy making. Members include representatives from all departments and ministries in all three levels of government that have an interest in the issue of immigrant integration. It is a neutral space where all levels of government can come together as equals to work across silos and collaborate on immigrant employment issues. It is chaired by Naomi Alboim, a respected leader who has experience in government as the Deputy Minister of then Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. The advantage of the committee being convened by TRIEC is that it facilitates trust and builds commitment from all levels of government. TRIEC's non-partisan reputation encourages all levels of government to get involved. A study about TRIEC's success with this committee indicated that its strengths include: "a strong chair, support from the secretariat, meetings that run on time, tangible agenda items with information distributed in advance of meetings, and respect for the views of everyone present. Participants feel that their input matters; they can see ideas moving along and being implemented" (Wayland, 2007).

Role of Municipal Governments: The municipal and regional governments are actively engaged in TRIEC, particularly through the Intergovernmental Relations Committee. They are collaborative and collegial. In addition, many are coming to the table as employers. For example, the City of Toronto is one of the top five corporate partners participating in the Mentoring Partnership program.

Other Success Factors

Finally, part of the success of TRIEC's activities can be attributed to contextual factors such as timing. Timing worked in favour of the creation of TRIEC. While the groundwork for TRIEC was laid by the Maytree Foundation before the Toronto City Summit Alliance (the Alliance) meetings, it capitalized on the momentum of the Alliance, the Canada-Ontario Agreement and Labour Market Development Agreement discussions. While these activities ripened the environment for TRIEC, the ability to monitor the policy environment and be ready to capitalize and respond instantly when appropriate opportunities appear were strengths that led to its success.

3. Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction (HRPR) ⁷

The Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction or Poverty Roundtable was formed in 2005 out of ongoing concerns in Hamilton related to 20% of the population living in poverty. Poverty is a huge issue, so one group cannot be the sole owner of the solutions. By engaging so many community players up front, the message was that solutions depend on the work of many players - a collaborative approach was the way to go. The mandate of the HRPR is to understand Hamilton's high poverty levels, focus the wider community's attention on poverty, and begin to find solutions. In 2006, the Roundtable announced a strategy focused on children and youth. The Roundtable adopted a model that looked at a child's progression through five critical points of investment. For each critical point, HRPR created a link to another collaborative or umbrella organization with a specific focus on that area. For example, for the Early Years Initiative, the link is with the Best Start Network which contains more than 50 organizational members. According to Liz Weaver, the Director of the HRPR, creating these links was a crucial step for the Roundtable and this strategy helped it to gain leverage quickly in the community.

From the beginning, the Roundtable viewed community solutions as being aligned with its work rather than in competition with it. Community organizations were affiliated with the Roundtable and they were invited to all activities, including annual learning sessions. Community members have been profiled in HRPR documents and HRPR helps them build their networks and make new links that may secure funding.

This approach fit with five core principles, called cultural shifts, used by HRPR to guide its work. One principle is the commitment to work collaboratively across sectors. Another important one is to "abandon blame and acknowledge we are all part of the problem and part of the solution." The "no blame" principle was important because it helped the Roundtable move forward rather than revisit disappointments from the past.

The full Roundtable meets every other month, has approximately 35 members and employs a working group model. Each working group consists of three to five Roundtable members, plus additional resource persons drawn from the community. These groups meet monthly. They also meet once a year to review their Terms of Reference. For example, working groups focus on actions in the following areas: government engagement, policy, evaluation and learning and neighbourhoods. In addition to the working groups, there is an Operational Steering Committee who meets monthly and focuses on overall operations including budgetary issues. It has about ten members, including the CEO of Hamilton Community Foundation, the Director of City of Hamilton Public Health and Community Services, and a citizen representative. Terms of Reference exist for HRPR and for each committee. These were developed by a small co-convenor group at the beginning which met every two weeks to provide the vision for the Roundtable.

⁷ Original case study prepared by Sarah V. Wayland, August 2009. Sources: HRPR website: <http://www.hamiltonpoverty.ca/>; HRPR, *Leadership and Lessons 2005-2007*; HRPR, *Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child: A Change Framework for Poverty Reduction*; HRPR Terms of Reference; Interview with Liz Weaver, Director (22 July 2009). Note: Liz Weaver left HRPR to work with Vibrant Communities.

HRPR has both a formal and informal relationship with Council. HRPR reports to the Hamilton Community Foundation's board, City Council and the Mayor of Hamilton. Roundtable staff meet with individual Council members and the City's senior management team, and a Councillor sits on the Roundtable. According to Liz Weaver, 75 persons from all levels of government are involved in HRPR. Again, this was a strategic decision. The idea behind this was to say "you are our Roundtable", to get civic leaders to take ownership of the Roundtable.

One success of the Roundtable has been with the media. HRPR has an excellent relationship with *The Hamilton Spectator* and other media outlets to help raise awareness of their issues. HRPR has a website and uses email to communicate to members and the broader community. It also has the "no excuses" poverty blog on the web page of *The Hamilton Spectator*. Lastly, the Roundtable works on education and community building by writing up stories of experiences for various foundations and community interest publications (see: Caledon Institute of Social Policy Vibrant Communities Community Stories) (Bulthuis, 2007).

Funding

Funding comes from the City of Hamilton, Hamilton Community Foundation, the JW McConnell Foundation and Vibrant Communities (Tamarack Institute). Hamilton Community Foundation is the fiscal sponsor. HRPR has also received small pots of project funding and a small evaluation grant. There is no membership fee and most events are free. The Roundtable receives in-kind contributions in terms of some staffing and research. The relationships built with its members and the media were helpful in having its annual report published as an insert in *The Hamilton Spectator* and financed in part by advertising sales. This idea was also a great way to communicate its successes and raise awareness of their group. The funding structure has been an advantage in short term. Having dedicated staff is crucial to any collaborative effort, and HRPR has three. The core funders know that it takes time to build something and they have let the Roundtable take the time to do that.

Challenges of collaboration

A major challenge in collaborative processes is balancing diverse interests. A true multisectoral collaborative process requires a need to understand different perspectives and work cultures. For example, the private sector tends to be more concerned with achieving quicker outcomes. HRPR, in turn, has learned lessons about engaging with business, namely that efforts need to be specific and meet their needs and that part of their role is to act as "cultural interpreters" in helping groups understand others' perspectives. The trick is to help everyone understand the benefits of working together and that a collaborative solution, while more challenging, can produce better initiatives when each group brings their perspective to the solution. "Each party believes they have the answer, but they are all right and all wrong. They each have part of the answer" (Liz Weaver, Director, HRPR). Collaboration needs to be viewed as occupying the space so others can join you. Often what happens is that the government wants to be the sole decision maker. However, this is ineffective. The leader must let the collaborative make their own decisions.

According to Liz Weaver, the Roundtable has enjoyed some competitive advantages: size of Hamilton, single tier government, early leadership on poverty reduction, media support and timing. The Ontario Government took on poverty as an issue; this was partly due to what was happening in Hamilton. This, in turn, helped HRPR to build a profile around poverty.

4. Toronto City Summit Alliance (TCSA)⁸

The Toronto City Summit Alliance (the Alliance) is a not-for-profit, non-partisan group formed to address social, economic and environmental challenges in the Greater Toronto Area. The Alliance facilitates collaboration among diverse groups of stakeholders to identify and implement practical solutions to challenges facing the Toronto region. It provides a neutral platform for all sectors of civil society to convene, consider problems, and launch solutions such as connecting emerging leaders, promoting arts and culture, reforming income security, expanding research-driven industry, integrating skilled immigrants, engaging youth and strengthening our neighbourhoods.

The Alliance was created following a 2002 summit meeting of Toronto business and community leaders. David Pecaut, who was a senior partner of The Boston Consulting Group, addressed the meeting and then chaired a steering committee to closely examine the challenges facing Toronto. The Alliance was incorporated as a non-profit and has since developed and supported numerous initiatives addressing issues critical to the future health and wealth of the Toronto region.

The Alliance's organizational structure reflects its cross-sectoral, multiple issue approach. The Alliance convenes leaders from the non-profit, business, labour, education, and government sectors to work together in a spirit of consensus to tackle a variety of social and economic challenges. Over 6,000 people in the Toronto region have been involved in Alliance-initiated projects.

The Alliance Steering Committee, which serves as a non-partisan advisory council, meets twice a year. It is composed of 55 high-ranking leaders from various sectors in the Greater Toronto Area. These leaders include CEOs in the corporate world, politicians (including three former Premiers of the Province of Ontario), and presidents of universities, foundations, cultural organizations, among others. The prominence of these leaders lends credibility to the Alliance and allows it to leverage substantial resources.

A board of directors (11 members) forms a sub-set of the Steering Committee and manages the day-to-day strategic decision making of the Alliance. This board meets four to five times a year. David Pecaut, founding chair of this Board, served as a high-profile champion and brought great passion and leadership to the cause⁹. Each initiative is led by a group of 25-40 people. The strength of these groups is the heterogeneous nature of their membership: the Alliance facilitates face-to-face meetings of people who normally do not sit at the same table. The core of the funding for the Alliance comes from corporate leaders such as RBC Financial Group, TD Bank Financial Group, and General Electric Canada, among many others. All three levels of government have funded specific initiatives. Many companies, such as Environics Communications, Trajectory, Torsy LLP and Stikeman Elliott LLP offer in-kind services.

The Alliance is involved in three successful collaborative action-oriented projects: The **Emerging Leaders Network (ELN)**, a project connecting emerging Toronto Region city-

⁸ Original case study prepared by Randal Schnoor August 2009. Sources: the Alliance website: <http://www.torontoalliance.ca/>; Alliance briefing note, received July 30/09; Key Informant: Julia Deans, CEO of Toronto City Summit Alliance, July 29/09.

⁹ David Pecaut died in December, 2009. Businessman and former politician John Tory became Chair in 2010.

builders; **DiverseCity: The Greater Toronto Leadership Project** and **Greening Greater Toronto**. To describe one as an example, **DiverseCity: The Greater Toronto Leadership Project** was launched by the Alliance in collaboration with the Maytree Foundation. The project is comprised of eight practical initiatives that together are helping to make the Toronto region's leadership landscape as diverse as its population. Launched in November 2008, activities include: increasing public awareness about the economic and social benefits of diverse leadership, facilitating diverse appointments to agencies, boards and commissions, networking established leaders across business and other communities, improving electoral engagement, creating a speakers bureau of diverse experts for media use, measuring the diversity of our leadership and a fellows program to equip and connect the next cohort of civic leaders.

In addition to managing their own initiatives, the Alliance also excels at capacity building to develop and launch initiatives which can become free-standing and self-sustaining. Mechanisms for this involve initial training, acquiring resources for organizations and ongoing strategic support from the Alliance where necessary. Three initiatives were developed by the Alliance and are now self-standing not-for-profit/charitable organizations. They are 1) **Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC)**, which works to improve the employment outcomes of skilled immigrants in the Toronto region; 2) **Toronto Region Research Alliance (TRRA)** which brings public and private institutions in the Toronto region together to build research excellence; 3) **Luminato**, the Toronto Festival of Arts and Creativity, is a unique partnership between the arts and the culturally diverse city of Toronto that showcases the best of Canadian and international artists. The Alliance leaves a legacy of strong organizations by building capacity for other bodies to carry on the initiatives at hand.

The Alliance excels at bringing groups and constituencies that have different interests to the same table to work as partners in solving social and economic problems. One of its strengths is the ability to build positive relationships between members. The Alliance takes great care in building trust and open communication in its collaborative planning by ensuring that all voices are heard. This is done by building consensus by collectively “defining the problem” and developing a “common fact-base” in which all stake-holders buy-in. David Pecaut was a particularly skillful chair of meetings, known for his ability to “wrap up”, to summarize and “pull together” central points by acknowledging the contributions of the various constituents who participated in the discussion and laid the groundwork for moving forward.

The Alliance has been particularly successful at convening a broad cross-section of stakeholders and keeping them invested in their work they are doing. For example:

Private Sector: The private sector, in particular, has been played a significant role in Alliance initiatives. The Alliance's success in engaging the private sector can be attributed to the Alliance focusing on advancing issues that matter to business quickly and by the Alliance's careful use of business leaders' time, including providing brief, concise background documents followed by short meetings that end on time. Alliance leadership has been successful in articulating to business leaders the importance of healthy social and environmental conditions as a pre-condition to a successful economy. Beyond purely economic concerns, the Alliance has fostered an environment where the majority of corporate leaders involved have developed a genuine passion for working on Alliance initiatives.

Government: The Alliance works closely with all levels of government to form collaborative partnerships. Significant attention is devoted to meeting with political leaders and bureaucrats to find ways to compliment, rather than duplicate the work of government. For example, the Paul Martin Liberal government worked closely with the Alliance’s Task Force on Income Security to develop public policy on this issue. The bulk of the expertise of the Alliance is in “influencing influencers.”

Role of Municipal Government: The Alliance works to involve GTA politicians and bureaucrats in all of its initiatives. For example, City of Toronto Mayor Miller appointed his top climate change advisor to sit on the Greening Greater Toronto Task Force. Mayor Miller himself was on the board of the Toronto Region Research Alliance initiative and the City of Toronto has been an active supporter of Luminato.

Evaluation mechanisms are considered essential and built into the strategic design of Alliance initiatives. The Luminato festival, for example, is evaluated with various financial benchmarks, numerical benchmarks (attendance level) and surveying of satisfaction level of participants, volunteers and funders. The DiverseCity initiative is evaluated by the number of appointments of visible minorities the project has mobilized into positions of leadership (e.g. onto non-profit boards, registered in a city “speakers bureau” to serve as “expert” spokespeople to the media, participated in emerging city leader training and development programs, expanded networks and contacts, etc.).

The Alliance has demonstrated expertise in convening, facilitating, and moving forward a collaborative process effectively and quickly. The Alliance has been able to create an extensive network of city leaders from across many sectors and convenes them to “get things done” and has many successful concrete initiatives to demonstrate its success. The challenges of working with diverse groups across sectors was overcome as they convened diverse stakeholders and kept them invested in the work they were doing by building positive relationships between members, building trust and open communication and by ensuring that all voices are heard. They demonstrated that open and respectful communication is vital in maintaining buy-in and active engagement among diverse stakeholders. The strength of connecting the right types of people to the right organizations also worked very well. Finally, they demonstrated that the greatest partners are those for whom you have helped develop a genuine passion to contribute, rather than those who are involved because “it looks good on them”.

5. Family and Community Support Services, Calgary¹⁰

FCSS has been around for 40 years. It has funded 207 programs and reached into 317 municipalities/Metis settlements. It truly is a collaborative. FCSS is a collaboration between the provincial and municipal governments, it partners with non-profit/community agencies and its projects may also be collaborations between organizations. The philosophy of the organization is that more effective work can be done collaboratively, as collaboration can provide richer products/services. It may not be more cost effective or efficient in the short term, but in the long term better outcomes can be achieved because more people can be reached with collaborative structures. Over the years, the organization has evolved and learned from their experiences. They learned that collaboration for collaboration's sake does not work. It is more about the product than the process. Sector specific, local initiatives led by good leaders with clear, concrete objectives have a better chance at success.

The mandate of the FCSS is: "The FCSS Program is a joint municipal/provincial program established to develop, support and fund preventive social services throughout Alberta" (FCSS Fact Sheet, 2009). The FCSS is governed by The Family & Community Support Services Act and Regulation (1981). Its emphasis is on preventive social services, voluntarism, 80-20 cost sharing between the provincial and municipal partners, and enhanced local autonomy. Although each FCSS program in an Alberta municipality is unique, in Calgary the FCSS provides maximum three year grants to NGOs so they can deliver preventive social services, often through collaborative activities. FCSS Calgary sometimes funds collaborative processes. FCSS will also fund consultants to evaluate collaborative activities, for example, the sector reviews (see: Evaluation below).

Katie Black, the Manager of FCSS Calgary believes that charters work best for this kind of work. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is more for the initiatives. Katie does not believe that a charter needs to be developed collaboratively. Her view is that a small group can write it and then bring it back to the larger group to review, provide input and approval. A Terms of Reference can be useful to an organization at the beginning, but it is more important to see how it plays out. They are usually sufficiently vague to get what needs to be done. Her caution is to be careful not to focus too much on process because a focus on products/outcomes is more important.

Funding

In Calgary, FCSS is a Municipal Division that funds community agencies directly. They also receive money from the provincial government. In each municipality, the money is pooled in a maximum- 80%: minimum - 20% split. The total provincial FCSS budget for 2009/10 is \$74.5M. The total allocation to the FCSS Program in Alberta, counting both the provincial and municipal contributions is \$93M. Provincial FCSS funding allocated to Calgary for 2008 was \$20.9M, and \$21.8M for 2009. The City's contribution was \$7.2M in 2009. The City of Calgary currently contributes about 25% of Calgary's total FCSS program (FCSS Fact Sheet, 2009).

In terms of funding, Katie recognizes that the one-time project funding model inhibits good work in NGOs. She feels a three year grant to do collaborative work is an advantage of her

¹⁰ Original case study prepared by Michelle Goldberg, July, 2009. Sources: Key Informant: Katie Black, Manager, FCSS; FCSS Fact Sheet 2009.

organization. A collaborative initiative cannot be an add-on to the non-governmental organization's (NGO's) work, but can be integrated into their existing work. The FCSS believes if an organization can be sustainably funded, they can engage in collaborative work which will better meet the needs of vulnerable people in Calgary.

One of the FCSS's successful initiatives is the **Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary (ISCC)**. The ISCC aims to facilitate timely and equitable integration and settlement of all immigrants in Calgary, by being the voice to address needs and concerns of immigrants. Their objective is to influence community attitudes and public policy to reflect and value the enriched environment provided by diverse community. It is a multi-stakeholder partnership that receives funding from the federal, provincial and municipal governments. They meet once every two months and have subcommittees which meet throughout the year.

The ISCC is governed by ISCC Council, made up of 20 organizations, with two co-chairs and three staff members to manage the operation and its many projects. An ISCC executive committee, made up of five members, serves as the key decision making body on behalf of the Council. ISCC Council makes key decisions regarding directions and priorities of the Council, incorporated in the ISCC Strategic Plan and work plan.

FCSS Calgary provides annual funding of \$40,000 for operation of ISCC, which leveraged an additional \$268,000 funding from other sources. FCSS Calgary and United Way of Calgary provide the core funding. The ISCC 2009 budget reached \$308,000, supporting three full-time equivalent staff and many projects under ISCC. The projects include: a Conference in 2008 - *Connect, Share and Celebrate* (in order to develop increased public knowledge of issues and opportunities in the immigrant sector), Immigrant Sector H/R Compensation Review (to provide increased funding level for staff salary for immigrant serving agencies) and an Immigrant Employment Partnership - City of Calgary and ISCC (to provide an increased opportunities for immigrants to be employed by the City).

The ICSS has a Terms of Reference which was developed when it was first formed. An annual survey is conducted to evaluate the work of the ISCC, annual program reports are produced to ISCC members and funders, and ISCC established its own sector logic model and program outcomes.

The ICSS is a very unique partnership that sees funders and agencies working side by side to tackle complex system and policy issues that are beyond the capacity of any single organization or order of government to resolve. While the process was time consuming and they do find it a challenge to manage the different interests of all the groups and have all stakeholders move into the same direction at times, they have been able to provide a strong collective voice and rich expertise related to immigration issues.

Leadership

Katie envisions the leader of a collaborative to act like an engineer or architect (a baker) of the process. This individual should be charismatic (able to get others excited about the collaborative's potential) and be an expert in discerning the key ingredients for success. They would be hired for their expertise in bringing the right people together and be able to evaluate whether the correct ingredients are in place for success. Ideally this leader could be a foundation; their strength would lie in their reputation as a neutral third party that would rely on the expertise

of the group members. However, government could also act as this kind of facilitative/dialogic leader. A dialogic leader has the expertise in bringing the group together and facilitating the dialogue while they recognize that the expertise lies in the participants. This is not a model of distributed leadership or leadership devolved to all. A leader must exist to guide the process. They must be willing to take risks, engage actors not traditionally involved in these types of activities and draw on their contacts and networks to build a strong team. They must also be able to bring knowledge and learnings in from elsewhere to share with the group and educate them. Community leaders are key to the initiative's success. The leader is a champion for the initiative and articulates clear outcomes and consistent vision articulated up front. They bring organizations together to help them learn from each other.

A strength of the FCSS is its focus on concrete collaborative initiatives. She suggests groups organize themselves around concrete tangible outcomes and ensure there is agreement on them. While collaboration may take more time, better results emerge. Katie also suggest that forced collaboration does not work well. If it is not the organization's idea they feel there are alternative motives. It breeds suspicion and mistrust. Suspicion compromises collaboration. As such, she suggests that trust between partners is essential for a collaboration to work. Furthermore, Katie suggests that collaboration will not work well if there are too many different interests at stake. Partners must be willing to understand each other's perspectives. They need to understand the culture of the other partners and adapt to their way of doing business. For example, the private sector is driven by results and one must understand and adapt to their culture and way of doing business in order to engage to them in a collaborative initiative. Collaborations must strive to get everyone on the same page, and working for the same goal.

Some other components of their success are outlined below:

Capacity Building/Education

To succeed, Katie claims that we need to draw on what other jurisdictions have learned. "When new information is shared with organizations, it opens their mind to the possibilities that exist, instead of being constrained by what they think is possible. Information can be the catalyst for change".

Relationships

A good relationship is essential. Partners should avoid territorialism and be willing to work together for the same goal. Katie believes relationships work better when they are between equals (e.g., between NGOs) as there are less power issues at stake to interfere. Following through on her construction metaphor, it is easier to build a building with similar materials than attempting to fuse different matter together.

Membership, Recruitment and Stakeholder Engagement

Be strategic with who is invited to be part of the collaborative. Everyone does not have to be invited every time. Look for the unusual suspects. Tap into networks or use the snowball technique to recruit members. Use community leaders and respected leaders as champions (e.g. Mayor, CEOs). Have them draw on their networks. It may take longer to bring the non-traditional participants along at the beginning, but using education can help. All people do not need to be involved in all parts of the process. The role of the leader is to recruit people with the needed expertise and use them at the right time.

Private Sector:

The private sector is not traditionally seen as a partner in Calgary's social service collaborative initiatives. If they are called upon, it is typically for their expertise in a given area or for funding. The FCSS gets no money from the private sector. The private sector is driven by results and one must understand and adapt to their culture and way of doing business in order to engage with them in a collaborative initiative.

Government (Public Sector):

The FCSS is funded by government. Government can be leader if they recognize they do not necessarily have the expertise.

Community (NGO):

They must be recognized for their expertise on issues.

Evaluation

The FCSS has conducted sector reviews to inform their process. This is a good model for evaluation as it is less threatening than agency reviews. Consultants were hired to evaluate with agencies from a similar sector. These evaluations are available online.

FCSS is working on a new evaluation framework and logic model. They are developing indicators that would be adapted by all organizations. The objective is to get all organizations to speak the same language and evaluate the outcome of the collaborations, not only the process of collaboration.

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