

**Canadian CED Network
Place Based Poverty Reduction**

**Peer Learning Network on CED Approach to Poverty Reduction
Summary of Minutes**

What is it?

A peer learning network made up of twenty-four member organizations of the Canadian CED Network.

What will we do?

Debate, critique and discuss effective CED strategies, tools and resources for poverty reduction and the best methods to measure and demonstrate their impact.

Why?

Increase our ability to make the case for CED as an effective strategy for poverty reduction.

When?

5 teleconferences, each 1.5 hours in length between June and December 2007.

Proposed Topics

1. Introduction to the Peer Learning Network and project	(June 21)
2. Measurement: effective indicators, multipliers & SRI	(September 20)
3. Creating a supportive policy environment	(November 2)
4. Scaling up the work & strategic alliances	(November 29)
5. Review of Final report, reflection on peer learning network outcomes	(December 13)

Confirmed Participants

1. Learning Enrichment Foundation, Toronto, ON
2. Greater Trail Community Skills Centre, Trail, BC
3. PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise, Thunder Bay, ON
4. ECOF, Trois-Rivières, QC
5. Storytellers' Foundation, Hazelton, BC
6. Momentum, Calgary, AB
7. SEED Winnipeg, MB
8. Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, AB
9. Kenjegin Teg Educational Institute, Manitoulin Island, ON
10. Northern Initiatives for Social Action, Sudbury, ON
11. Affirmative Industries Association of Nova Scotia, Dartmouth, NS
12. TEKDesk/ COIN, Peterborough, ON
13. Aboriginal Mother Centre Society, Vancouver, BC
14. Community Services, City of Edmonton
15. CCEDNet Policy Council
16. CCEDNet Practitioner & Sector Strengthening Committee
17. CCEDNet Research Committee
18. Algoma University College's Community Economic and Social Development Program/NORDIK Research Institute
19. Somerset West Community Health Centre, Ottawa, ON

Priorities Identified by the PBPR Learning Network

- Affordable housing and homelessness
- Low-income community consultation
- Human resources in the CED sector (staffing); providing sustainable employment

Income support and labour market policies:

- Policies that allow those on social assistance to benefit from IDA savings programs
- Benefits plans for mental health survivors that continue when people work
- Living wage
- Recognition of foreign credentials

Setting targets and evaluation frameworks:

- Need for consensus about measurement; evaluation frameworks- defining measurement for ourselves in a consistent way, not based on priorities of funders
- Setting targets for poverty reduction; setting our own goals
- Decrease silos of government and service providers; towards a place-based approach and overall poverty reduction strategy
- Poverty reduction focus for economic development programs; strategies around investment funds, labour market and CED tax credits

Minutes

June 21st 2007 Agenda:

Introduction to the Peer Learning Network and Project

1. Introduce the project (Paul Chamberlain)
2. Questions and Answers
3. Discussion
 - a. Share your name, your organization, your community
 - b. What does poverty look and feel like in your community?
 - c. What does your organization do that helps reduce poverty?
 - d. How do you know if you are affecting change?
4. What do you want to get out of the peer learning network?

Why? Members tell CCEDNet they know their CED efforts are having impacts in improving the lives of individuals as well as having impacts at a broader community level. However, practitioners are often unable to 'story tell' their success and fully document the qualitative and quantitative impact of their work. Therefore, this project aims to share with, and help each other, show how CED has an impact on poverty reduction.

How? Four main partners (LEF, ECOF, GTCSC and PARO) and approximately 20 Learning Network partners, will work together to identify the ways to demonstrate the impact of their work, with a particular emphasis on effective documenting of the synergies that occur through collaboration, partnership and inter-related programming. We want to identify indicators that reflect our work (ex.: social return on investment) and develop practical tools that we can use to leverage our work. In the long term, we want to identify the barriers to our work so we can outline a policy environment that would ramp up our work. We want to promote the replication of effective CED practices.

Members

Greater Trail Community Skills Centre

We focus on developing skills and training opportunities for community members. We are a rural community, and so the long-term goal of our work is to build community capacity by offering training and skill building, literacy, basic employment skills. We are trying to alleviate poverty in the community. We also run a social enterprise called “Right Stuff”, a partnership between the local press and GTCSC to employ local marginalized youth and build their basic life and employment skills.

Momentum, Calgary

There are the poorest poor people in Canada in one of the wealthiest cities in the country. Annually, we saw a 740% increase in homelessness – even though 70% of those homeless individuals are employed. We are a CED org that provides trade/skills training, small business development and micro-loans (we have given out 400-800 micro-loans per year) IDA’s for home buying, loans to immigrants, skills accreditation for newcomers, financial literacy/money management training, host vibrant communities Calgary, and youth entrepreneurship.

CCEDNet Policy Council and City of Edmonton

Edmonton faces similar challenges to those in Calgary: the depth of poverty is great, and more and more people are unable to participate in the ‘Alberta advantage’. The cost of living is very high and there has been a high increase in homeless population. We support women and people with chronic mental health illness through trade skill building, catering program, social enterprise fund, as hosts of Vibrant Communities Edmonton. We are especially interested in developing an effective policy environment for our work.

SEED Winnipeg

I am a business counselor, though SEED has different programs—business planning for low income individuals, IDA program for household, education, savings circle for household needs, CEDTAS offers technical assistance to community groups, social purchasing portal, aboriginal community program, asset building program.

LEF in west Toronto

LEF offers childcare (15 centers), kitchen training, social enterprise, trades training, language instruction and labour market services, partnerships for food security, land-use planning. Draw clients from all over the city (universal access principle) but mainly clients from the immediate area.

PARO

Our geographic area is very wide: from Wawa to Kenora and Thunder Bay, all outlying rural communities that are afflicted by economic/industrial restructuring. We find that women are generally much poorer than men. Our programs: peer lending circles, women-centered CED supports to help women reach a sustainable livelihood, business incubator (including coaching and subsidized access to expert support) employment program, value-added assessment learning, social enterprise (art and craft makers business), resource centre, new program is PARO on wheels, we want to expand our services into northern communities. Main challenge is geographic scope. We are currently working with Carleton student group to complete an evaluation that is a value-added and sustainable rural livelihoods assessment.

Algoma University College’s Community Economic and Social Development Program/ NORDIK Research INstitute

Algoma studies community-based and participatory action research, community resilience, internships, poverty in Sault Ste Marie—homelessness, single industry town, 2/3 of our poverty is women and 44% have degrees, working poor.

Somerset West—Centretown community health centre.

I’ve joined individually. In Ottawa the community developers work well together and we’re organizing a poverty forum: “Rethinking Poverty”. Health centers in Ottawa aren’t involved in CED but our health coalition of community developers wants to look at the approach to poverty reduction.

COIN

Fairly high homelessness and poverty rate, often people from Toronto coming to Peterborough transitionally high need immigrants, food venture, social enterprise for people with disabilities, accreditation program. Community-based research with Trent University, recent pressing public consultation, number of community partnerships.

What do you want to get out of the peer learning network?

-We need to come to a consensus on how we measure our success. Use this network by implementing an end product. It can be replicated and applied to different organizations across the network. It's about providing a model that can be replicated and have quantifiable impact that is significant for policy makers and bureaucrats.

Demonstrate that CED reduces poverty across the board. End result will be that the evaluation framework will be implemented by all participants.

- We need to focus on getting a better understanding about how we are reducing poverty on the community and neighbourhood level.

- We need business and economic groups on our side. Whatever metrics we create we need to think of business...

September 20th 2007 Agenda:

Measurement: effective indicators, multipliers & SRI

1. Bill Young, Director of Social Capital Partners; SPC's Measurement Philosophy
2. Rosalind Lockyer, Executive Director of PARO; Quantifying Social Assets
3. Rupert Downing, Executive Director of CCEDNet; Why effective indicators are important in the CED movement
4. SROI- What does it offer? What are its limits?
5. Sustainable Livelihoods Asset Mapping- What does it offer? What are the limits? How do we quantify SL indicators?
6. General discussion; what measurement tools have you effectively used?

Bill Young- SROI

-SROI looks at cost benefits to society in microeconomic changes

-Identifies cost to society before (shelters, social housing, government aid of any kind) and where are they after (are they paying taxes, receiving social services, etc.)

Example:

-Change in the numerator – Receiving \$10 000 in social assistance and two years later is paying \$10 000 in taxes – that would be \$20 000 cost benefit to society

-Denominator- what was cost of achieving those returns – this becomes a SROI equation

-If numerator is greater than denominator there is a net benefit

-If numerator is lesser than denominator there is a net cost

Now... we never look at SROI exclusively as a way of seeing social performance

-More important part is when we sit down with anyone we fund and fill out a common template

Common Template Has 3 Components:

- 1) What is the social mission and goals?
- 2) What are the methods of achieving these goals?
- 3) How do we measure what we are achieving?

-Look at SROI reports on website, for each SE report, there is their social mission standpoint, how they're going to do it, how they're going to measure it

-Great discipline for any organization – good to show to investors/funders, etc.

SROI also has benefits,

-If you have government funding, showing how government funding has a “good payback”. It is a great justification to convince them they're not wasting money and that there is in fact a benefit and here is quantitative proof

-Internal discussion for management of SE, comparing by how measuring and showing in a quantifiable way forms a basis of a discussion – how do we improve, are #s misleading us, ... great way to engage in discussion about achieving social mission and move forward in a consistent way

Challenges and Issues:

-Attribution: how can you attribute change to your particular intervention?

-May give bias towards quantitative. Different models have different results– some models show higher returns quantitatively– it will have a bias towards SE that is profitable– SROI shouldn't be used in an exclusive way

-May be biased towards those with fewer employment barriers. It takes longer to show a socioeconomic result with people with higher employment barriers

-Data collection issues- labour intensive process, it is difficult to collect data for all employees- there is an issue of crossing comfort barriers

Rosalind Lockyer- Sustainable Livelihoods

Sustainable Livelihoods is a good way of measuring our program delivery, if we are meeting our outcomes and delivering what we want. Second, it is a good self-assessment tool for individual women, and they do use it on a regular basis once they're learned how to do so. Thirdly, we use it within our organization, integrated into strategic planning; we can create a base and then check back in a few years. Great thing is it comes from an asset base... look at strength first and weaknesses afterwards... could be used at a community level.

Challenges:

For an individual:

Firstly, the individual must volunteer to participate presently, in 6 months and again in a year. We find that for many women the goal is to focus. There are so many challenges for women personally (roles, responsibilities), very hard to be focused and committed, but this tool can help them greatly move forward with their own goals.

For an organization:

Are we meeting outcomes in our work, it identifies where improvement is needed. It also shows what cannot be measured.

Getting to know more about what we already know, SRL in Africa.. can vary from culture to culture.

There is stuff that we know about women here: we found that personal assets were extremely important.

Self-confidence, drive, empowerment and motivation were extremely effective. If they didn't have strength in personal assets then it is hard to move forward with financial, human, etc.

This tool has strengths in both areas, qualitative and quantitative; you can make percentages out of 0-5, each number equal to 20%, so each time we interview the women they are moving hugely along. It is possible to report the % of improvement. You use the first interview as the base line, and then the next interview creates a % of improvement. It is easy to compare the successes over the years.

Q: I am curious that you are trying to use this for businesses as well; we are attempting to use it as a group in a business for coops and micro enterprises, exploring personal assets/self confidence as a group. How do we do this?

Roz: If I'm in a large group, I explain everything up front, and then I divide the group into asset areas, let them work with a flip chart. For personal assets they would talk about positioning, branding, marketing, their

confidence in the SE. For social assets they would talk about how they're camaraderie/interacting with each other, how they feel about coming to work each day, etc. It is important to define what will be in each asset area.

Rupert Downing- Importance of Measurement and Context

Our members always find that evaluation is important and they ask for assistance with evaluation. There are very little resources for longitudinal and long-term evaluation to demonstrate results and outcomes. There is a struggle to find performance indicators. There are four main reasons why effective indicators are important:

Firstly, it is important for organizations to be able to improve and develop their work, learn what is effective. Secondly, in terms of movement, in order to scale up our work. It is important to demonstrate to the public, nation and province that our work is effective. Public support is extremely important and we must demonstrate qualitative and quantitative results for funders and stakeholders. The movement and CCEDNet must share what works so we can scale up.

Thirdly, we can't influence policy by being nice and buddying with people... We must produce an evidence based result.

Forth, people are struggling in government with measurement systems and in philanthropic sector, we need to start developing tools that are meaningful to our work and appropriate to CED and empowerment, we need to be proactive about this or a measurement system may be imposed upon us.

Discussion:

- We found that monetary value was not coming from the asset mapping, but the interviews. We did retrospective evaluation, of what has economic value, of moving off of social assistance. Sustainable Livelihoods was a good tool to create the dialogue with women.

- When talking to woman working in Africa, social networks were key, but here they were more about personal assets... have to be very aware of what is critical within your region/culture/etc. This is culturally driven, we must use a cultural and gender specific lens.

- Right, like age, youth don't have maturity, all about how a particular person responds to a program... you have to apply different lenses to different clients you're working with...

November 2nd 2007 Agenda:

Creating a Supportive Policy Environment

What policy changes are needed to support the efforts of community economic development organizations to reduce poverty?

1. Rupert Downing, CCEDNet- ***Priorities for Eliminating Poverty in Canada***
2. Joe Valvasori, Learning Enrichment Foundation- ***How policy affects our work to reduce poverty at the community level***
3. What measures are you already taking to influence policy and make change that others can learn from and support?
4. What are specific policy recommendations would you make that would support your work locally?
5. How can you/your organization contribute to making poverty reduction a number one priority for all levels of government?

Rupert Downing, CCEDNet- *Priorities for Eliminating Poverty in Canada*

- Part of CCEDNet's role is to provide an opportunity for organizations to advocate for policies that respond to real issues people face in their community

- Gap between rich and poor is growing, these conditions mean that inequality and poverty is increasing
- Poverty reduction needs to be the major priority for the next government: CCEDNet is launching a campaign to harness this nationally and provincially
- An example of this action is CCEDNet's submission to the finance committee: this report outlines major changes that will work to reduce poverty, this includes changes to the tax system:
 - o Increase in income threshold
 - o Need comprehensive childcare program and shift in child tax benefits
 - o Need to look at how municipalities can partner with community organizations to create community specific support (share of gas tax revenue tagged to poverty reduction strategies)
 - o Corporate tax rates should be increased
 - o Increase investment in communities: RRSP eligible tax credit for investment in Social Enterprise
 - o Creation of a community investment capital fund (patient capital funds on reasonable terms for community organizations and Social Enterprises)
 - o Program investment in PBPR initiatives should be increased (ex. QC, MN, NS, NL)
 - o Comprehensive affordable housing program for low income families
 - o Procurement strategy is needed to create opportunities for disadvantaged communities
- Program investments are up for review now, important to pressure the federal government now

Joe Valvasori, The Learning Enrichment Foundation (LEF) (CCEDNet policy council, PBPR steering committee)- ***How policy affects our work to reduce poverty at the community level***

LEF Background- 30 year old charity located in high poverty area in Toronto, integrative model, multi service organization, leverages resources to provide services to those who may not be able access services otherwise.

LEF relates to policy through the government programs we are involved with, the programs we deliver. Programs are where policy is translated and implemented on the ground.

LEF programs include: childcare, language training, employment training... We offer integrative services. However, there is no specific government program that integrates services like this.

The current government strategies fail to acknowledge importance of place in poverty reduction. They are focused on an outcome based model that focuses on the individual.

We are uniquely placed as CED practitioners, we have a mandate, network and expertise to take advantage of local assets, in ways that people placed policies can't.

Increasing rigidity of output based funding commoditizes people and is a disincentive for inter-agency collaboration.

- Many people with multiple barriers are denied access due to funding structure
- Discourages program integration, interdisciplinary approach and knowledge sharing

We need to work to make the government realize that they should work with the community to solve problems and value holistic broad community based initiatives.

There is some indication that poverty reduction is on the political radar.

As a sector, we are well placed to provide solutions.

What measures are you already taking to influence policy and make change that others can learn from and support?

- Making personal connections with local MP's and MLA's and letting them know what we are doing and the policies that effect what we are doing is very important. It is important to make these long-term connections, not only in a time of crisis.

Vibrant Communities Calgary (VCC) is largely focused on policy initiatives.

- The United way engaged high level of leaders, strategic about policy work and poverty reduction. This has led to the Provincial Government funding individual development accounts (IDAs) for youth.
- VCC has a big push on policy for living wage. Getting city to sign on to ethical procurement policy. 10 years to end homelessness, getting corporate sector involved in policy development.
- There is an emerging Calgary CED network, have a document 'how do we connect?' We are mobilizing locally; sharing strategies. There is not enough capacity to develop policy documents. Being more strategic, have policy agenda (VCC, United Way) collaboration working together.
- Pushed revenue Canada for IDA matched savings to stay current and not be considered taxable

Atlantic caucus is meeting to discuss CED issues.

- Nova Scotia Cooperative Association hosts an annual wine and cheese for all levels of government; markets coop, credit union, social enterprise successes. Effective way to get government support.
- The Affirmative Industries building project is trying to develop an IDA: building has been supported by 3 levels of government, 8 out of 10 units rented.
- These types of models need to researched and marketed to government, show that they are beneficial.

What are specific policy recommendations would you make that would support your work locally?

Calgary, wages for people doing non-profit work. Wages are moving faster than project funding is increasing. Human resource crisis is a big problem. We need to look at how we keep and sustain people in our sector.

In Toronto economic development plan is in place, but it is enormous. It does not get micro enough to empower constituents and really engage communities in developing solutions for the local economy. So LEF is partnering with other organizations and the city for an economic development plan for West Toronto. Working with city planners, BIA and business groups to grow business at the community level. It is an appropriate vehicle to engage businesses.

In Edmonton there are revitalization projects targeted at specific areas. These projects will be given a CED lens. We have an advantage that we have not been amalgamated, planning is done city wide, but it is smaller.

Province of Manitoba has a CED lens in place; there are various programs that focus on poverty reduction.

How can you/your organization contribute to making poverty reduction a number one priority for all levels of government?

- Connecting with local government to push the development of a poverty reduction strategy that is based on a more integrated approach. This is happening in MN, QC and NL. A more integrated framework with a common goal will support collaboration between partners.

November 29th 2007 Agenda: Scaling Up the Work and Strategic Alliances

1. Norman Greenberg, Affirmative Industries. *Scaling-up in Nova Scotia*
2. Doug Donaldson, Storytellers' Foundation. *Joining and Leading Collaborative Efforts to Reduce Poverty*
3. Bruce Roxburgh and Linda Slavin, COIN. *Programming and Advocacy Alliances in Peterborough*
4. Marcia Tait, Community Services, City of Edmonton. *Building a Network of Networks in Alberta*
5. How can we use poverty reduction as a unifying issue for advocacy, programming and collaboration?
6. Is there work that we should be doing leading up to the release of the PBPR report to increase receptivity?
7. Scaling-up nationally, strategizing around the federal government as linked to the CCEDNet Communities Agenda campaign.

Norman Greenberg- Affirmative Industries and Connections Clubhouse Challenges with Scaling-up in Nova Scotia

Background: Affirmative Industries was created 15 years ago and I am still involved with them but now I work for Connections Clubhouse. Affirmative industries, initiated the 'building for independence' which offers affordable living for mental health survivors and is also working to create an asset model for people that are currently on welfare so that they can build an asset through living in the building. It is a saving plan that is formed by taking the rent paid, subtracting the operational costs and giving the remainder back to the renters. We are struggling with government to create policy to allow renters to have access to this asset without having deductions in their income support.

Connections Clubhouse supports those with serious mental illness by providing employment opportunities, an art gallery to display their work, business support and other services. Many of our members have serious financial challenges and we are trying to form collaborative partnerships with the pharmacare industry. Pharmacare issue: a person can work for a year with benefits and then benefits end. Many mental health survivors don't work, because they can't afford to not receive benefits (to pay their medical costs). The current policy means they can't afford to work. Policy should maintain benefits as people go back to work, for those that can't afford costs associated with mental health.

Doug Donaldson- Storytellers' Foundation Joining and Leading Collaborative Efforts to Reduce Poverty

Storytellers' Foundation is a very small non-profit which has been running for 13 years with 2 ½ staff. It is in Hazelton, 1000km north of Vancouver. It is a Gitksan community with 90% unemployment; it has resilience, like many remote communities, and an incredible connection to the land. Storytellers' Foundation is a community learning and popular education organization with a focus on literacy, health and action around food.

Recently there has been a CED hub formed in the Upper Skeena region, 'the hub' is an informal coalition of community organizations. It hosts lunches; representatives come together - mayor, Gitksan, other non-profits. Discuss creating new infrastructure. Storytellers look at learning going on. People need to learn how to work together and increase social inclusiveness. We document learning, reflect it back in newsletters, give information on collaboration. The hub is working on community kitchens, trail infrastructure, health, sustainable agriculture, peer learning networks on varied topics (informal workshops) promoting local food.

Municipality is involved. Hub is made up of citizens first, not 'representatives', focus is on what we can do to support each other to improve socio-economic conditions.

Linda Slavin & Bruce Roxburgh- COIN

Programming and Advocacy Alliances in Peterborough

Lots happening at a grassroots level in Peterborough. 1 in 5 kids are in poverty and there are lots of hungry people, started to organize around food. Food Not Bombs formed at city hall, working on a food network. Work is centred on involving low income people. New mayor decided to have a poverty reduction task force, we pushed to get community consultation and input from those with low income. Now a mayor's action committee is being formed: short term alleviation committee and long term policy committee. Community foundation is being developed. There is a strong identification of a need for community space. Goals are to get income security and raise minimum wage, and also to get the new provincial government to adopt a poverty reduction strategy.

COIN is a small organization, 15 years old, and a network of social enterprises having a regionally significant impact. We have links with researchers at the Trent Centre for Community Education. One of our social enterprises is Reboot, recycles computers; we also have a food venture. We have an alliance with New Canadian Centre of Peterborough, and piloted a new Canadians employment initiative - puts people in a supportive experience program in 4 social enterprises and gives an opportunity to use skills. They get Canadian experience and a reference. Accreditation is an issue. We also have a CED focused entrepreneurship program working with youth at risk and others that do not have traditional access to credit. We help them create business plans. There are many barriers for those that do not have access to capital.

A major barrier for those that do not have access to capital is that people with marginally OK credit and good business plan are not getting supported financially.

Marcia Tait- Community Services, City of Edmonton

Building a Network of Networks in Alberta

Background: very new group, last year there was a face to face meeting with those from across Alberta that are working in CED and similar areas. Talked about how we could work together, since then we have had 3 more meetings. From this we have developed an organization, originally it was a network of networks, but it is important to have people in poverty involved. We decided that there is a strong organization already looking at poverty from social determinants of health perspective, so our policy areas are: food security, affordable housing & homelessness and recognition of foreign credentials. We are at the meeting and planning stage, hopefully in the New Year we will have plans to make changes at 3 levels of government.

Discussion:

- There has been some discussion on measurement of projects, have these initiatives established formal or informal frameworks of measuring the effects of alleviating poverty; are they attached to individuals or indicators in the broader community?

- No, there is no overall poverty strategy in NS. Newfoundland has specific targets that are general, not individual.

- We have the most accurate information about program delivery and poverty reduction. How should we propose to set goals for poverty reduction? We need to set goals ourselves, not wait for the government to set them for us.

- Quebec set up a poverty reduction strategy that is now law. But the initiatives are coming to an end in March 2008. I'm with community credit fund, network of 20 orgs. Receive funding through provincial strategy.

Can help fund anti-poverty initiatives, but has not made a big difference. They are distributing minimal funding for initiatives. It is difficult to increase core funding.

- In Nova Scotia the coop credit union is getting stronger. Created coop credit union councils in the Maritimes; have investment fund for 205 orgs. There is a small failure rate, successful in generating funds. Coop, government fund & loan guarantee, money loaned to individuals or groups with business plan. Things are happening, but not with a focus, no focus on outcomes, usually not happening with the poor. There is a new micro-loan program, based on the Bangladesh model, no evaluation happening, no overall strategy of poverty reduction. Government is expecting to use a CED lens, but not being picked up by departments. Until there is an overall strategy, departments will work in isolation.

How can we use poverty reduction as a unifying issue, what should we do leading up to the release of the PBPR report?

- Labour market strategy- these initiatives are being done with an eye to poverty reduction. Use those to look at what changes in policy can help marginalized move out of poverty. Labour market agreements will have some impact, use for projects, but there is no overall strategy. Report can look at how these can be used.

Social enterprise is more on the radar screen as poverty increases, opportunity to put pressure on MP's. Locally, use a sustainable model and social, economic and environmental focus.

Scaling-up nationally, strategizing around the federal government as linked to the CCEDNet Communities Agenda campaign.

- We need to develop recommendations that provide the ability to take funds and modify to local needs. A cookie cutter approach won't work. Government programs lack the spatial component. Imagine how it would be different if the application was to the space –the community, rather than the individual. Poverty is a symptom of many things, how can the project address all of these things. Need community based targets.

- Yes, statistics and information collected change depending on the funder, but we need to look at the community as a whole, must define outcomes and success ourselves.

- Neighbourhoods Alive does a good job of looking at the whole community and many issues in Manitoba.

- Also, the empowerment zones in the US and UK.

Agenda

The four partner organizations for the Place Based Poverty Reduction Project (LEF, GTCSC, PARO & ECOF) will present the challenges and barriers they identified as part of their community profile.

Discussion will be around these questions:

1) Are there important challenges and barriers that you face that have not been mentioned?

2) How do these barriers link to the CCEDNet Communities Agenda policy recommendations? Are there other recommendations that should be included in the Place Based Poverty Reduction report?

3) What can be accomplished if these barriers are removed?

In work from 4 partners, there is a range of challenges and barriers. Categorizing them, barriers to individuals (self-esteem, ageism), issues for individuals that are more policy related (access to programs), organizational policy related issues (program silos, core funding, cookie cutter programming) and then there are community wide barriers. When we look at what was highlighted, ECOF was looking at the broader community, statistical unemployment, poverty. Other end of the spectrum, PARO documented individual physical and mental barriers. LEF focused more on the policies related to individuals: access to programs, loss of benefits and organizational issues like the silo approach to programming and that there is a lack of program funding for people that are not eligible for EI. Trail, more focus on organizational issues, core funding, competition between non-profits and cookie cutter programming. All of these barriers are probably relevant for all of the organizations, but this was just a difference in focus of answering the questions.

Joe Valvasori- LEF

Lack of access to labour market assistance programs is an issue here and across the country, specifically training and building community capital. Still working through LMDA, lots that provide job search assistance, few offer training and employability assistance. Under current LMDA the funds have been downloaded to the province. There was an article in the Toronto Star that stated that 75% of the unemployed people in Toronto don't qualify for EI and don't qualify for training. We have unemployment, but we have a bigger problem of underemployment. They're missing an essential component to a sustained poverty reduction approach. By providing job search services are we contributing to the problem. Need to emphasize skills and longer term approaches. OW focuses on shortest route to employment, focused on assisting people to leave welfare, not leave poverty. By the way it's structured there is a disincentive to offer services to those that need it most. Don't accept people that don't have expectation to be employed in a 4 month period. Single issue focus, silo approach, people based, does not allow collaboration and broad strategies. Reason place based poverty exists. Process excelled by federal and provincial outcome based funding. If outcomes are based on the shortest route to employment, they will not be aligned with the goals of an organization focused on reducing poverty. What would happen if barriers were removed? Result of barriers is there had been a split in the sector. Favour service based approach over community based approach. It is the easier way for organizations that rely heavily on government funding. There is an ongoing tension to meet the program goals and the broader based goals. There is no policy to specifically address place based poverty approaches. If the policy environment allowed to adjust programs and collaborate based on the community, results would happen. The Metcalf Foundation just released a report on the challenges of moving out of poverty, the United Way of Toronto also released a report, hopefully this report can tie into that and work to change the policy environment.

Michele Cherot- GTCSC

I'm going to add to Joe's presentation, we are also challenged by a lack of access to labour market assistance programs and single issue outcomes. But we have specific challenges because we are in a rural area in BC. We have isolation issues, adds to the difficulty of connecting with people, I come from a skills development learning perspective. There is a lack of access to learning opportunities. Literacy issue, people on social assistance are discouraged to increase financial, reading and writing literacy. Childcare spaces are not available. Bus transportation is inadequate, there are 3 communities within an hour of each other and employment and training is available, but there is no transportation to access it. This limits people to looking for jobs in Trail, and municipal transit is limited. There are restrictions to income assistance when entering the workforce, denied or restricted entering workforce because benefits are cut back. This creates a barrier for part time work. For people who are employed there is a challenge to access programs to upgrade skills, need to go to Vancouver or Kelowna for training to be competitive, not an option for many businesses. On an organizational level, we do not have core funding and this limits our ability to hire competitive staff. With project funding evaluation and tracking of projects is ignored and staff development is not funded. Also there is a cost for developing partnerships, and funding requires partnerships, but costs not covered. There is pressure to have private sector partnerships, but there is a myth that we have core funding and so the amount we can charge for the work we do is limited. Non-profits are forced to compete, but partnerships are encouraged. Governments are developing a template of services, we are concerned that when EI is moving to the province that it is large organizations that will be favoured and this will eliminate the community approach. There are limited funding opportunities, and it is time consuming to write proposals. We are not allowed to charge for writing proposals as they are in the private sector.

Roz Lockyer- PARO

I agree with previous speakers. I wonder if we are part of the problem. We have taken the stance that government programs have their own agenda and motivations that are more than likely detrimental to women. We try to piece together funding and address needs of women within that funding. Sometimes we're working for nothing, proposals, report writing, doing too much of this and trying to piece it together. We can

do this or address issue by policy advocacy. Doing work anyway if we get paid or not. How can we address problem. We also have to work with the given that there is a devaluation of women centred programs. Same devaluation when it comes to funding and targeting women through policies. Lack of communication is part of that. Need to change what is happening in organization to fit in. There is also the geographic demographic. Thunder Bay has more access to training, more than rural. We are working from Wawa to Kenora, lots of variance. Our challenges and barriers are based on women, women centred approach. This is the reason we focused on individuals, it is the women centred approach. The first problem is a lack of self confidence; we learned through sustainable livelihoods approach that there is a pattern. One needs to 1st concentrate on spirituality, drive, self confidence, needs to be the first place of strengthening. Next step, once confidence is increased individuals automatically, parallel develop social networks with family friends and community, and get rid of negative relationships. Then they are able to better financial assets, housing, health, increasing access to credit. See outline, ageism for example is a very big problem for women, for young and older women there are a huge amount of challenges. Successful women in the community talk to this issue. This is a real challenge. Next step is how we can address needs and issues of women, which is how we came to the kind of program we have: mentoring, access to childcare, clothing swap, youth internships, hiring young and old women. Major objective is microcredit and enterprise, but we still look at job creation and services. Thinking about the staff development issue, but we have to pick our fights. We have had huge challenges around staff development but our priorities must be clear. I have found that because of the confidence in an organization, our word is higher valued, must provide leadership in issues to make changes in sector.

Caroline Lachance- ECOF

We run a literacy program; people here live in poverty, there is a high level of unemployment and low literacy. There is trouble with accessing programs. People we work with have lack of confidence; we work with them to increase confidence. People we work with have been on welfare for more than 4 years and are less educated. They can't access EI because they can't meet requirement, not enough working hours. There is a problem with a lack of transportation. There is a lack of opportunities, organizations are less open to recruit people that are less educated, and if you don't have a grade 12 education it is very difficult to be employed. We need to make the organizations more aware of this issue. Most people have many skills and competence, but don't have grade 12. People have been employed before, years ago, have experience but don't have grade 12. If they had grade 12 doors would be open to employment. Another fact, those people are older, restriction to have access to EI. We suppose that the social enterprises are supposed to hire these people, but we are noticing that these social enterprises have requirements and need to meet goals, and restrict access to the unemployed. There is another fact, there are requirements to access day care, and people do not meet these requirements, so they can't have a job. Another issue, capacity building and training in the work place. In Trois Riviere there is a call centre that wanted to recruit ECOF's participants, but the tutorial was not in French. Many people do not have experience and access to internet.

Discussion:

Social enterprises have challenges because sometimes it is difficult to fulfill the social mission, meet the expectations of the clients and cover costs.

- Evas Phoenix print shop in Toronto restructured the operation to separate the training (for individuals with high needs) aspect from the business operations, but within the same facility
- The solidarity employment is funded in part by the government, for people that will never have access to the labour market but can't produce as high. Government pays 50% of the salary; social enterprise pays the other 50%. They can only work 20 hrs a week. Doing evaluation that this is better for the government and the people, it is better to pay 50% than full social assistance. This is a pilot project, not sure if it will be continued.

- We run a Dollar Store in Nova Scotia which needs job coaches to train people, the government provides the salary for the job coach and the store breaks even. People that start the program can't count money, when they leave they can work at retail. The government has a role to play.

- Have to have a social mission and cover cost, it is hard because the government doesn't recognize the social mission. They don't recognize social enterprises, but we know it's the way to reintegrate people.

'Creaming' or only accepting the top candidates of an eligible group is a problem. Those most in need that require more long-term support do not have access to programs.

Another problem is how accessing services effects income support. People don't access services because of it.

- PARO has found a local solution to 'creaming'. Women go to the mainstream programs, and they are turned away because they do not have a viable business plan or they are not considered a viable individual, they don't have skills or resources. PARO has approach that does not let people fall through the system. Women were calling us about not being accepted into programs, so we looked at ways we can address this. We encouraged women to call and ask why they were not accepted into the program. Then they asked why there was no support for PARO that would offer programs to them and give all the support needed. Gave solutions to local agencies, we have to give credit because they listened.

- There is a lot of similarity here, when I am listening to the challenges, this is all happening out east too. Connections need to be made between research nodes. Other commonalities, lack of confidence, organizational issues that are common, policy issues that are common across the country. Use this research to organize in a way so that when people read it they have idea of what to do. We discussed the lack of integration between government departments, and between federal, provincial and municipal governments. Where are successes, where are governments working together?