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## The Canadian CED Network Youth Mentorship Initiative\*

### What is the Youth Mentorship Initiative?

As part of its youth strategy, the Canadian CED Network is conducting a national initiative to strengthen engagement of youth in CED through their voluntary involvement and mentorship with younger members of their communities. This initiative is being developed in partnership with four primary partners who will be supported in developing and documenting CED approaches to youth mentorship. Our four partners, representing different typologies of population and setting, are:

- FINALLY, St John, Newfoundland
- Learning Enrichment Foundation, Toronto, Ontario
- Core Neighbourhood Youth Coop Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
- Multi-cultural Health Brokers Cooperative, Edmonton, Alberta

The project is funded by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program to help local organizations to be better able to serve the needs of disadvantaged and at risk children and their families.

### The Partners Demonstration Projects

Four demonstration projects are engaging youth in activities providing support and mentoring for children and teens involved in existing local community programs. This civic engagement process is providing the opportunity for the youth to learn mentoring skills and receive a basic grounding in Community Economic Development principles and methods while enhancing the existing child and teen programs with CED activities. Working with our four partner organizations, the youth volunteers from local community programs, high schools, colleges or universities are involved in designing and implementing a range of program activities that link them in a mentoring role with children and teens.

The young mentors will develop a wide range of relationship and organizational skills and an understanding of CED and community development based in local needs and opportunities. This approach will inform the relationships and activities they develop with their younger partners. The younger children and teens will be supported in their academic and social development and will benefit from developing relationships with youth who will be mentors and role models to them.

Each partner will be documenting the practices they develop in engaging the youth mentors and will be working together with the CCEDNet project team who will provide support and resources around CED principles and methodology.

### Learning Network and Advisory Committee

Up to twenty additional organizations are participating in a pan-Canadian Learning Network/Advisory Committee of CCEDNet members with experience or interest in CED approaches to youth mentoring. This group is facilitating broad input into the design and

development of the work as well as providing an effective vehicle for dissemination of the knowledge gained throughout the process. The Learning Network/Advisory Committee is the primary consultative group for dialogue and deliberation around the Youth Mentorship Initiative. Members also provide critical feedback on tools and resources to support CCEDNet's membership in replicating these approaches. Through these tele-learning sessions participants will learn together by exploring specific strategies, tools and issues in developing and supporting youth mentors using a CED approach which fosters citizenship and furthers social change.

### **Other Learning Tools**

Youth from all demonstration projects will share their challenges and their learnings through a journaling and on-line 'blogging' process.

The CCENET National Conference in May of 2008 will provide an in-person opportunity for partners and the Learning Network to share their experiences more broadly.

### **Deliverables**

Documentation of the models with a toolbox that includes program designs, templates and tools such as promotion materials, contracts (with schools, youth mentors child-youth mentor pairs), youth engagement strategies, youth training plans, evaluation forms. Information will be available on-line and in print. This report also needs to document changes in behaviour and attitude with both the youth mentors and the children and teens being mentored.

This project will run until March 2009.

### **Community Development Service Learning**

Given that the Youth Mentorship and the **Community Development Service Learning project** share the goals of fostering youth civic engagement, there is some natural convergence. The core partners in the Youth Mentorship project are participating in the Community Development Service Learning Network Advisory Committee.

\* Note: the legal name for the Youth Mentorship Project is "Youth Volunteers Supporting Children and Families"