



# Neighbourhoods Alive!

A new paradigm for community development in Manitoba

IPAC Award for Innovative Management 2015

BACKGROUND



# Neighbourhoods Alive!:

## A new paradigm for community development in Manitoba - Backgrounder

Established in 2000, Neighbourhoods Alive! (NA!) is the Manitoba Government's long term community development strategy. NA! represents a paradigm shift within the public sector. Rather than isolated programs being unilaterally administered to communities in distress, NA! uses a coordinated cross-departmental approach to address the complexity of community-defined priorities.

NA! provides "seed money" to innovative pilot projects and longer-term funding to projects demonstrating best practices. The success of NA! underscores the importance of meaningful community input and collaborative government – community partnerships.

### INNOVATION

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The NA! principles of community-led change and interdepartmental coordination are innovative and have set the standard for best practices in community development.

#### Community-led change

Community-led change is exemplified by the formation of Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations (NRCs) to represent the interests of residents and act as a catalyst for community change. Funding agreements of up to five years allow NRCs to engage residents in developing multi-year community renewal plans. Long term funding assists NRCs to maintain a consistent staff base and build relationships with residents.

*"The community-led model has enabled NA!, NRCs, and the communities with which they work, to contribute to positive neighbourhood change."*

*Institute of Urban Studies*

In 2000 NA! provided small grants directly to a residents' association wishing to engage in community-led connecting and renewal projects such as community gardens, street parties, and localized youth programming. These small grants were found to be so effective that they were adopted by all NRCs; NA! currently provides each NRC with an annual block grant to be distributed to local projects based on local plans and priorities.

Since 2000, NA! has provided communities with over \$5,000,000 to be administered through community-led decision making. Community renewal plans are developed by NRCs through extensive community consultations. NA! also solicits community input on funding requests from resident-based review committees. NA! has established unprecedented direct access to the Minister responsible for community development by creating a community renewal advisory committee that includes representatives from NRCs.

#### Cross-departmental Coordination

In 2000 NA! established an interdepartmental working group to optimize coordination of public funds, share information on cross-departmental initiatives relevant to community renewal, and review funding requests. Participants in this working group include government departments representing Aboriginal affairs, rural development, health, children and youth, seniors, cooperative development, education, employment training, and new Canadians.

### RELEVANCE

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NA! maintains a high degree of relevance to the diverse needs of communities by providing a comprehensive array of programs, being flexible, and evolving programs as needs change.





### **Diverse**

In bringing together government programs with complementary priorities and criteria, NA! is able to support large scale multi-stakeholder projects while still providing funding to small projects where no other funding is available. This diversity in funding programs allows communities to effectively address both immediate and long term goals.

### **Comprehensive**

NA! provides a continuum of funding through a comprehensive set of programs. This continuum enhances the government's ability to meet the needs of communities engaged in localized renewal efforts, allowing communities to address a full range of priorities including greening activities, economic development, employment training, housing, health promotion, recreation, cultural identity and crime prevention.

### **Flexible**

NA! is flexible to meet the changing needs of communities. In 2011, NA! established the Localized Improvement Fund for Tomorrow (LIFT). Combining elements of existing programs, LIFT provides scale-appropriate funding for pockets of need outside Winnipeg's inner city.

*"... key informants mention that capacity is built 'through an understanding that local efforts help people to grow in their own communities.' "*  
*Excerpt from NA! evaluation*

### **Evolving**

In recognition of the difficulty of building and maintaining a community based organization, NA! provides additional resource support as needed. NA! funds a human resource consultant position to assist NRCs with organizational development and management issues. This long term supportive relationship has allowed NRCs to mature into dynamic organizations and leaders of community revitalization.

In 2011, NA! replaced the open proposal process with an online application form in order to increase the efficiency and collaborative nature of the review process for funding requests as NA! staff work closely with applicants to develop viable community-led projects.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

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Over 15 years NA! has developed long-term partnerships with community based organizations, increasing opportunities for residents to engage in renewal efforts and influence public policy.

### **Community Partnerships**

Of the 44 organizations currently funded through NA!, 28 organizations have funding partnerships of seven years or more. The longevity of these relationships has significantly advanced the efforts of communities to create long-term positive change and compound the effects of community successes.

### **Community Renewal Legislation**

With the passing of The Community Renewal Act in Manitoba in 2012, the significance of NA! as an effective administrator of public funds for community renewal was confirmed. This act requires community priorities to be determined by the community and requires continued collaboration of NA! with other levels of government, residents and community stakeholders in coordinating community renewal.

## EFFECTIVENESS

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NA! has effectively leveraged community resources, assisted community members to access training, been progressively expanded, and has established a new standard for best practice in effective community development across Canada.

### Leverage

Unique to NA! is the acknowledgement of in-kind contributions as valid sources of project funding. Residents may provide volunteer hours to support project activities, and local businesses may provide in-kind resources to help revitalize their communities. Over a three year period this equated to \$1,984,867 in essential community participation by residents and businesses.

### Training

NA! training initiatives are highly effective in increasing the capacity and employability of underemployed populations. Funding of over \$4,600,000 has provided more than 390 graduates with training in a range of targeted employment fields.

### Expansion

The effectiveness of NA! has resulted in successive expansions in its programs and geographic scope. Currently NA! encompasses ten government programs, providing communities with a comprehensive continuum of funding options and resources.

### Best Practice

Successive evaluations of NA! confirm that the promotion of a community-led model of community renewal ensures that funding decisions and government priorities are supported by meaningful community input.

In 2011 the Manitoba Government announced a strategy to reduce red tape for non-profit organizations, in recognition that these organizations are inhibited by short-term funding. NA! agreements became the template for many of the four-year cross-departmental funding agreements, increasing organizational capacity to maintain the momentum of community change.

NA! principles of community-led change and cross-departmental coordination are innovative and have set the standard for best practices in effective community development across Manitoba and Canada.

*"... they've (Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation) done 'amazing' work, a lot for the community", "those working there are committed and familiar with the neighbourhood and there is a genuine effort in the work that they do"*

*Community member*



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