



Innovation and Collaboration:
Learning and Changing Together

Final Report

*Conference: Innovation and Collaboration:
Learning and Changing Together*

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In partnership with Rural Secretariat, Labrador Grenfell Health

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Preface

The Conference: Innovation and Collaboration: *Learning and Changing Together* was a joint Partnership Project of four regional organizations: Violence Prevention Labrador, Labrador Grenfell Health's Primary Health and Health Promotion, and the Rural Secretariat.

The following report provides participants, stakeholders and funding partners with the rationale and outcomes associated with the Conference. The report is based on input from the Conference Planning Team (listed above), and results from the Visioning/Next Steps Strategy carried out by the facilitating team, Rural Secretariat Regional Planner and Labrador Grenfell's Health and Wellness Coordinator which encompasses participant feedback and input from activities that were carried out throughout the two-day Conference.

The Conference was hosted in a central location within Labrador, Happy Valley Goose Bay. Acknowledging Labrador's unique circumstances and challenges of bringing participants together, travel funding was imperative. Funding was available for up to 50 participants for travel from all over the region. Funding for the Conference was provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada [Community Development Program, Building Rural and Northern Partnerships], Human Resource Labor and Employment [Poverty Reduction Strategy] and Department of Innovation Trade and Rural Development [Poverty Reduction Capacity Building Program]. Community Partner, Labrador North Chamber of Commerce committed time to assist with logistical planning and development.



Introduction

Violence Prevention Labrador, the Rural Secretariat and Labrador Grenfell Health's Primary Health and Health Promotion have been working together to learn more about the various issues and needs for fostering healthy, violence free, Labrador communities.

Having good social health in community means recognizing the important role that policies, programs, and services such as social housing, education, health, income security and social services play. But we also acknowledge that a broad range of social, economic and physical environment factors interact and contribute to overall health.

It has been identified throughout the various regions of Labrador, that there is overlap or gaps in services, because of lack of communication and ability for partnering. Often times there is disconnect between government, development agencies and community. Many of these gaps stem from Labradors' geographic challenges, demographics, and limited human resources.

Fostering partnerships and collaborative networks between communities, government and resource agencies can build more efficiency in services and increase community capacity to address issues. Building these partnerships and collaboratives, however, can be challenging in a region as large and diverse as ours and requires innovative approaches.

The Innovation and Collaboration Conference concept evolved from the need to better connect service providers, community, government and multi-sector agencies for the purpose of building collaborative approaches for addressing issues. After much consideration, the first logical step was to bring together stakeholders from throughout the region to learn, share and highlight best practices on innovative ways to break down geographic barriers to partnering and collaboration throughout the region. Through networking and discussion, begin to explore roles and how to build partnerships and collaborate across sectors toward common goals. We also wanted to learn about and highlight best practices on engaging communities and stakeholders in meaningful ways to continue to build capacity.

Recognizing the value of having stakeholders together, the Conference was also planned to build action. A large component of the conference was to create a consensus and vision for next steps together.

The Conference took place over two days and incorporated 9 sessions covering 3 main themes: Innovation and Communication, Collaboration and Partnerships and Building Resiliency and Community Capacity. Concurrent Sessions included local, provincial and National speakers. It brought together participants from all over the Labrador Region representing Government Departments, Aboriginal Governments, Organizations representing Municipalities, Community based Service Providers and Agencies.



Conference Goals and Objectives

Labrador is a resource based, northern region, rich in natural resources with a great diversity of peoples and cultures but experiences challenges in terms of geography and human resources. A region such as this requires innovative ways to partner and collaborate to build healthy, safe and sustainable communities. It requires a common vision, committed community engagement and a culture of partnerships to support local solutions to local challenges.

The goal of the conference Innovation and Collaboration: Learning and Changing Together was to enhance the capacity of communities and region through regional collaboration and partnership highlighting three main objectives:

To share knowledge and best practices related to innovation and communication, collaboration and partnership, and community capacity-building.

The conference program focused on presentation of and dialogue about local, provincial, national best practices and lessons learned and included opportunities to explore multi sector collaborative strategies.

Keynote address included Liz Weaver and Eric Leviten-Reid of the Tamarack Institute. (*Tamarack is a dynamic organization that develops and supports collaborative strategies that engage citizens and institutions to solve major community challenges, and to learn from and share these experiences.*) The keynote addresses explored the background theory, research, experience and practice of Comprehensive, and Collaborative Initiatives.





The Concurrent Sessions focused on three main themes:

Innovation and Communication

These sessions highlighted innovative tools which enable us to effectively work together beyond geographic barriers, to identify and address gaps, and share knowledge. Speakers provided specific examples of Tools that can ease communication within our vast geographic area, while providing examples of successful partnerships built by using these tools in our region or regions with similar geographic barriers.

Collaboration and Partnerships

These sessions highlighted innovative partnerships. Working across sectors and within community beyond the limitations of Labrador's geography to build healthy, sustainable and resilient Communities. Speakers used examples of how needs and issues were identified and multi-sector and community based partnerships were used to address them.

Building Resiliency and Community Capacity

Speakers focused on highlighting the results of successful partnerships and innovative tools beyond borders and how these successes have increased community capacity, fostered resiliency and increased competitiveness of a region.



Appendix A: Refer to Final Agenda/ Speaker Bios and Presentations

To build a regional consensus on actions required to increase capacity and competitiveness of communities and the region.

Labrador is diverse both geographically and culturally. The Labrador region is approximately 295,000 square kilometers, and is geographically is the largest region in the Province. There are 32 communities with a total population of approximately 26,631, spread out over the entire region with many coastal communities not accessible by road.

Labrador's cultural background is equally diverse with 3 prominent aboriginal groups and settlers spread out throughout the region. Demographics vary throughout the region with rising birthrates in Nunatsiavut



and First Nation Communities while Aging population and outmigration influence the needs of the South Coast and Straits communities. Western Labrador has very unique needs relating to industry/boom towns while Central Labrador is the Service Hub for the region and is a “melting pot” of many cultures from the entire region.

Regional/Multi-sector Representation:

To achieve a true “Regional” discussion and consensus toward common goals for the region, efforts were made to be inclusive and make accessible the opportunity for multi sector representatives from all regions of Labrador to actively participate in the Conference.

Understanding it could be challenging to engage sectors outside the social development sector, steps were taken in efforts to address this. Partners were engaged through local/ Provincial Governments and Community based development agencies to assist with promotion and recruitment of participants from other sectors.

Travel within the region is costly and often not an option for community based, grass roots organizations, a key target participant for the Conference. Travel Subsidy funding was made available for up to 50 participants to travel and participate in the Conference from outside of Happy Valley Goose Bay.

Promotional efforts included dissemination of information through email networks by partner regional and community based organizations, personal mail-out invitations to Government and department representatives, Post Card invites to all identified potential participants and large ads in three Regional Newspapers.

Strategic consensus building activities were developed and facilitated throughout the two day Conference.



To develop a preliminary plan for the implementation of the consensus reached.

Building consensus regarding the need to work more effectively and efficiently through a collaborative approach was a priority for the Conference. In a region with distinct challenges and limited human resources, commitment to this is critical.

Visioning/Next Steps:

A comprehensive visioning/next steps strategy was developed and delivered by Conference Partners, Rural Secretariat Regional Planner and Labrador Grenfell Health's- Health Promotion and Wellness Co-ordinator.

Activities were facilitated over the period of the two days to pull together participant input and discussion from sessions and group activities. Tools were used to capture important data, which was referred back to in the final afternoon group "Next Steps" activity.

Throughout this process, participants were given opportunities to provide feedback on sessions, engage in partnership building activities and provide input into community and regional challenges, as well as identifying levels of participation for future next steps based on organizational roles and mandates.





Conference Results

The following is an executive summary of the conference outcomes and represents the action-oriented discussion that occurred throughout the conference sessions and visioning activities. This piece outlines some of the conference findings, provides concrete ideas for the development of new initiatives and identifies existing and emerging issues to be addressed as well as directions for collaborative solutions. This information is a direct analysis of the data compiled in the Raw Data Report submitted by the facilitating team.

Appendix B: Facilitator Logic Model and Raw Data Report

Participants

The conference was open for up to 60 participants. Final registration numbers were 76 registered participants from 14 communities, representing:

Community based organizations (*including but not limited to: Mokami Status of Women Center, Shelters, MCC NL and the Labrador Friendship Center*)

Municipal, First Nation, Territorial and Provincial Governments and their affiliate departments (*including but not limited to: Innu Development Limited Partnership, Ananaukatiget Tuningit, Dept. of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, Status of Women/Nunatsiavut Government, Labrador Grenfell Health, Town of Happy Valley Goose Bay*)

Regional organizations (*including but not limited to: SmartLabrador Inc., Combined Councils of Labrador, Community Youth Network, Labrador Institute, Labrador Aboriginal Legal Services, and College of the North Atlantic*)

Federal Agencies (*including the RCMP, Canada Post Corporation, Canadian Paraplegic Association and Canadian Red Cross*)

Of the 76 registered, 55 participated in the Conference. 13 speakers, and 8 volunteer community partners also worked with the Planning committee throughout the two days.

Identified Challenges and Moving Forward

Facilitated Group Activities refined group consensus on identifying key regional challenges that impact on many sectors, across communities and beyond cultural barriers. While a number of sub-regional and community issues were identified, there were prominent regional challenges relating to transportation, infrastructure, availability and accessibility to programming and services to address social and health issues such as substance abuse, violence, supports for persons with disabilities and housing as well as food security.

Knowledge and information shared in concurrent sessions facilitated further discussion and thinking in terms of tools available to ease and develop multi-sector/ regional partnerships and collaborative approaches to addressing issues. Best practices and highlights shared by local, provincial and national speakers provided concrete, grass roots examples of successful multi-sector partnerships and innovative



collaborative approaches to meeting needs in communities and throughout the region.

Consensus was reached, identifying the need for continued and increased communication, partnership and collaborative approaches to addressing regional issues.

Participants identified the need for accessible regional communication tool/network to connect and share information across sectors, leading to increased knowledge of available services, programs, supports and resources as well as highlighting success and preventing overlap.

Further to this, is a vision for a working group participants described as a “Regional Advisory Panel” modeled after the “Community Advisory Panel” currently existing on a community level. This multi-sector, multi-community collaborative network would work in sub-committee capacity or collectively toward common goals, leading to increased multi-sector partnerships, more efficiency in services, and increased capacity for addressing issues.

Participants identified key challenges for implementation would be related to; Human resources, a champion to plan, develop and follow through with the vision. Multi-sector commitment can be challenging, as well as foresight of some reluctance in terms of regional collaboration as there is often competition related to funding and the need to be recognized for sustainability.

Lessons Learned

Initiating regional, multi-sector collaborative opportunities requires planning and engagement of key partners and stakeholders from the concept development stage. The four primary planning partners were committed which resulted in a successful, well-planned event. While the registered participants were diverse and extensive, there could have been a larger compilation representing multiple sectors. Most participants represented organizations related to, in some capacity, the social sector. In retrospect, and following lessons learned from speakers at the conference, key multi-sector partners should be engaged and “buy-in” should be established from the very beginning. Moving forward, these partners would better connect with and facilitate commitment from others within their sector. Therefore, a larger planning/advisory committee should be established.

Community Capacity Building and building collaborative approaches is crucial to addressing issues, whether they be social issues relating to violence or health, or economic development issues related to industry or resource development. We understand that issues like accessible, affordable transportation affects the ability for a woman to leave domestic violence, but also impacts a businesses ability to be competitive. We know the links exist between sectors, across the region and within community. It is sometimes difficult to commit as organizations, to a broad approach such as this, to addressing issues when the same organizations have very specific mandates to fulfill, and are limited in terms of resources. Partners, participants and stakeholders will need to commit in very real ways to move forward.



Closing Remarks

The conference concept, keynote/concurrent session content and facilitated group activities were well received and notably a success according to conference evaluations and follow up by participants post event.

The purpose of this event was to be an introduction of what the regional organization partners hope will be a series of steps toward building comprehensive, multi-sector, collaborative approaches to addressing regional needs, issues and challenges.

This event was successful in bringing together participants from all over the region, from various backgrounds to highlight tools for building and concrete examples of, successful, multi-sector collaborative approaches. The results of which have impacted some of the most vulnerable in society, whether that be through Housing and Homelessness initiatives, wrap around support services for mental health needs of remote communities, or addressing social issues through multi-sector partnerships which impact industry as well as community.

There was strong commitment by participants to support and be a part of future initiatives building toward the next step as outlined above. Some participants left with real concrete local, community action for future partnerships while others look forward to the next regional step. The challenge from here is to convert ideas into action.



Appendix A

Conference Agenda: www.vplabrador.ca/home/70

Speaker Bios: www.vplabrador.ca/home/69

Concurrent Session Presentations: www.vplabrador.ca/home/74

