

PARTNERSHIPS TO PROMOTE HEALTHY LIVING: PROMISING PRACTICES

AN ADMN 502A SCOPING REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This Scoping Review explores promising practices and lessons learned for creating and maintaining partnerships to promote healthy living. It contains two main parts: a review of literature on partnerships, and a cross jurisdictional analysis of healthy living partnerships in action.

By looking at jurisdictions from across Canada (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Québec and Saskatchewan) and around the world (United Kingdom and Australia) the Review's discussion section identifies important practices for government departments in creating and maintaining partnerships. Findings indicate that partnerships, whether they include internal or external partners, must possess attributes of mutual trust, clarity, and accountability. Understanding the abilities and expectations of all parties as well as developing methods for resolving disputes are also found to be critical in facilitating partnership synergy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The promotion of healthy living is increasingly being recognized by government as a core function of public healthcare. Because the promotion of healthy living crosses departmental mandates and requires community buy-in for its success, jurisdictions in Canada and around the world have been experimenting with the development of healthy living partnerships. This Scoping Review examines ways in which government departments can interact with internal and external partners to successfully deliver healthy living initiatives. Through a literature review and an examination of practical examples of healthy living partnerships, this Review identifies a number of promising practices in building and sustaining partnerships. Of course, the applicability of each promising practice must be understood in the context of a given partnership.

Promising practices in the creation and maintenance of partnerships to promote healthy living include:

- *Understanding Expectations and Assets:* Understanding what you expect from and can offer to a partnership can aid in both designing the desired partnership model and in recruiting other partners. Incentives that government departments can offer to encourage partnership include funding, the provision of knowledge, networking opportunities, credibility, skill-building and access to resources.
- *Knowing your partners:* Determining your partners' ability to contribute to the partnership and providing related flexibility is critical. Some partners will have limited time or fiscal resources to support a partnership; others may only be able to contribute practical knowledge and experience. Regardless of the type of resources partners may contribute, it is also critical that all parties feel they are active participants in the partnership process, from the outset.
- *Creating manageable objectives:* Establishing and maintaining trust is an essential element of a partnership, and it can be challenging to achieve. Creating a series of small, easy-to-obtain goals can be instrumental in establishing a basis for trust. An effective method for creating manageable goals is to break a task into smaller objectives and then to divide members into working groups tasked with addressing a single objective.
- *Providing for accountability:* Accountability is a challenging issue in most partnerships because tasks and responsibilities are often spread across a variety of individuals and agencies. A common way to help provide accountability is through formal or informal contracts that are created in consultation with all partners. Aspects such as partnership intentions, goals, expectations, roles and a mechanism for dispute resolution are often included in a contract.
- *Creating mechanisms for recognition:* Most partnerships to promote healthy living thrive on the devoted and tireless efforts of their members, many whom are volunteers. Recognizing and showing appreciation for contributions and innovation is an effective way to boost morale, enhance group solidarity, and provide incentive for continued engagement.

in the partnership. Award ceremonies, annual conferences and appreciation dinners have all been shown to be effective forms of recognition.

- *Ensuring effective communication:* Effective communication is not only important to the maintenance of a partnership, it is also an essential element which allows partnerships to grow, adapt, and develop. Communication both within a partnership, and with those affected by a partnership, can keep stakeholders apprised of current information as well as provide critical feedback.
- *Providing for flexibility:* Many partnerships are dynamic in nature and subject to shifting stakeholder demands. Having an element of flexibility in a partnership can allow a partnership to adapt to feedback from partners and end users. Partnerships which have been able to do this often benefit from improved community and citizen participation.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 ISSUE

The promotion of healthy living “is a core function of public health and a cornerstone of primary health care. It is both effective and cost effective and the links between health, health promotion and human and economic development are increasingly recognized” (Tang, Beaglehole & O’Byrne, 2005, p.884). Through its partnerships with external stakeholders, as well as across government, ActNow BC has made enormous progress in promoting healthy living initiatives and improving the lives of citizens across the province.

Partnerships are used because they have the potential to achieve better program delivery than any non-partnered body operating alone. Despite this potential, partnerships are often complex entities that can be difficult to sustain. This Scoping Review has been conducted for the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport to provide insights on methods of enhancing existing and future partnerships. By presenting both a survey of theoretical literature on partnerships and the results of case studies from jurisdictions across Canada and around the world, this Scoping Review provides promising practices and lessons learned respecting both the creation and maintenance of partnerships to promote healthy living initiatives.

1.2 SCOPE

The intent of this Scoping Review is to provide a brief analysis of methods of creating and sustaining successful internal and external partnerships to support healthy living initiatives. To do so, this Scoping Review provides a literature review and a cross jurisdictional analysis. No primary research was conducted.

The literature review attempts to provide the following:

- Definitions and frameworks of partnership models, and;
- General considerations for the creating and sustaining of partnerships which can be applied to partnerships to promote healthy living initiatives.

The cross jurisdictional analysis discusses successful healthy living partnerships in key provincial jurisdictions across Canada as well as in the United Kingdom and Australia. The discussion is split into two main sections:

- Examples of positive healthy living partnerships in practice; and
- Promising practices derived from presented examples.

The conclusion provides the Government of British Columbia with key considerations for developing successful partnerships to promote healthy living initiatives.

This project’s analysis draws from research released in the field over the last 15 years. The thorough, but not exhaustive research process involved acquiring available national and

provincial government documents, recent journal articles, books and relevant websites. Canadian jurisdictions were contacted in order to find successful examples in healthy living initiatives. In the international context, research is restricted to countries who share similar political structures and official languages.

2 DEFINITIONS

Concession Model of Partnership:

A concession model of partnership occurs when a department concedes virtually all responsibility for a program to another entity.

Alliance Method of Partnership:

The alliance method is a complex method of partnership that involves a mutual exchange and collaboration amongst partners. This may include sharing risk, accountability, responsibilities and rewards together.

Project Management Method:

The project management method of partnership emphasizes the end results of a project, dividing the project into predefined, predictable phases until the end of the project is reached.

Process Management Method:

The process management method of partnership stresses the procedure of building and maintaining a partnership, with less emphasis placed on the results of the partnerships.

Ladder of Participation:

Differentiates the amount and depth of member participation in a partnership. Member's participation can range from minimal levels to meaningful control and decision-making power.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 DEFINING PARTNERSHIPS

Defining partnerships can be a challenging task. The recent proliferation of collaboration models has created an array of different partnership types. To add to the challenge of defining partnerships, interchangeable terms are used for ‘partnerships’ such as coalition, coordination, alliance and collaboration (Jones & Thomas, 2007; & Diamond, 2008). Definitional terms also change depending on context, time, space and policy. For the purpose of the following scoping Review, partnerships will be defined using the criteria laid out by *Managing Collaborative Arrangements: A Guide for Regional Managers*:

An arrangement between a government institution and one or more parties (inside or outside government) where there is an explicit agreement to work cooperatively to achieve public policy objectives and where there is:

- Delineation of authority and responsibility among partners
- Joint investment of resources (such as time, funding, expertise)
- Allocation of risk among partners
- Mutual or complimentary benefits (Canada, 2003)

3.2 PARTNERSHIP MODELS

A partnership model is a guide which defines the type and parameters of partnership functioning. This includes aspects such as degrees of mutual responsibility, acceptance of risks, accountability, as well as other considerations. Edelenbos and Teisman (2008) explain that a department may concede virtually all responsibility for a program to an NGO or other private entity. This is often referred to as the *concession model* of partnership (p. 616). Note that the concession model is different from privatization, which involves complete public sector disengagement. In a concession partnership, a department still remains accountable for an overall project but transfers many individual responsibilities, such as program delivery, to the partner (Koppenjan, 2005). Concession models make extensive use of contracts which explicitly define the parameters and time frame of the partnership, and generally are not flexible to changes in circumstance or partnership need.

An alternative partnership model is often referred to as the *alliance model*. Compared to the concession model of delegation and transference, the alliance model is more complex as it involves a mutual exchange and collaboration amongst partners (Edelenbos & Teisman, 2008). Most commonly, the government and its partner will share predetermined levels of risk factors, accountability, responsibilities, and rewards together. The borders in an alliance relationship are generally more malleable and loosely defined than in a concession model. One of the principle advantages of this model is its enhanced ability to bring together a diverse spectrum of skills, expertise and funding.

Given the inherent complexity of any alliance type of collaboration, a question arises: How can an alliance model best function in a partnership? Edelenbos and Tiesman (2008) identify a dual part theoretical framework in which alliance methods can operate. One focuses primarily on goal achievement, and is referred to as the *project management* method. This method arranges the project into successive phases which are predefined along with the end goal of the project. Generally, the project management model is not overly tolerant of changes in circumstance, although it has the distinct advantage of being predictable and time efficient (Edelenbos & Tiesman, 2008). Alternatively, a partnership can engage the *process management* method. This method places less emphasis on the end goal but rather pays more attention to the process of building and maintaining a partnership. Collaboration, an examination of process issues, sensitivity to changing circumstances, and a focus on how to best maintain the health and effectiveness of the relationship are greater considerations (Edelenbos & Tiesman, 2008). The process management method is often more effective at ensuring participant satisfaction, however emphasis on process as opposed to a goal usually compromises efficiency.

3.3 CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CREATING PARTNERSHIPS

Successful partnerships often require citizen and community engagement, attention to funding, accountability, and the development of strategies for dispute resolution. The following section will discuss these elements in further detail.

3.3.1 Community Partnerships: Engaging Citizens

Community organizations can be critical partners for government departments because they frequently recognize the diverse needs of given populations and create frameworks for addressing gaps in program delivery. By ensuring that members of the community and non-profit organizations play an active role in government initiatives, institutions can benefit from the vast amount of knowledge the community holds (Hardy, Phillips & Lawrence, 2003). Effective partnerships with community organizations are also beneficial to the organizations themselves because the partnership potentially supplies financial sustainability for non-profit agencies (Austin, 2000; Hall & Reed, 2003).

Despite their positive potential, partnerships with community groups also present significant challenges. For example, under-represented groups in communities will often be overlooked in the creation and decision-making processes of partnerships (Munro, Roberts & Skelcher, 2008). Further, community groups and government departments often have different capacities, scales, procedures and values (Pal, 2005). Communication strategies are valuable for addressing the multiple interests at stake.

In addition, when government moves from direct program delivery, to delivery in partnership with community organizations, the role of government often changes dramatically from provider to supervisor. As a result, government must provide avenues for ensuring accountability and transparency for the supported initiatives and programs. In addition, community-based organizations must be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation stages in order to develop an essential sense of trust in the partnership process (Pal, 2005).

3.3.2 Funding

One of the basic necessities for any partnership or initiative to run is a stable, adequate flow of fiscal resources. Different initiatives obviously require different levels and durations of funding. Regardless, the demands of the administrative structure, the program delivery, as well as overhead costs must be determined and agreed upon to help ensure the success of a partnership. By ensuring appropriate agreements for funding, partnerships have the fiscal capacity to produce successful and measurable deliverables. Brandstetter et.al. (2006) state, “An absolute prerequisite to the successful operation of partnerships is a stable funding structure, covering the operational budget as well as overheads” (p. 17).

Funding any initiative can be a complex process which requires the thorough understanding of the nature, scope, and purpose of the partnership. Because of the vast array and types of partnerships, there are many ways in which funding can occur. The Canada’s publication *Managing Collaborative Arrangements* (2003) presents some basic questions pertaining to funding:

- Collaboration – What type of partnership is being proposed? For example, interdepartmental partnerships will have different requirements than public-private partnerships.
- Private sector needs – If the collaboration is with a private entity, what are their financial objectives, needs, and limitations? Are they compatible with the objectives, needs and limitations of the government?
- Incentives, contributions – What financial incentives could encourage a prospective partner? What resources, financial or experiential, do they offer?
- Not-for-profit needs – What degree of financial support will the NPO need? How may its non-monetary contributions achieve the partnership objectives?
- Allocation of funding: What type of funding (grants, contributions or loans) will be required to create and sustain the partnership?

It is important to note that in any funding arrangement, a clear understanding of intended partnership outcomes, mechanisms for measuring performance, and ways to ensure accountability should also be in place (Austin, 2000).

3.3.3 Accountability

Available literature indicates that accountability is a fundamental aspect of partnerships (Canada, 2003). However, accountability in partnerships can be notoriously difficult to achieve, and instances of failure in partnership accountability have caused some to attack the very concept of partnerships (Benner & Witte, 2006). Consequently, partnerships involving the joint efforts of the public and private sectors must have a clearly defined framework in place from the outset.

Managing Collaborative Arrangements identifies a concept referred to as dual accountability (Canada, 2003). This describes a system in which partners are accountable to not only their own organization, but also to the partnership’s governing body. While the application of dual

accountability will differ from one partnership to the next, the necessity of having a method of accountability cannot be understated.

Given the resources which are put into partnerships and their ultimate objectives, the ability to determine the initiative's effectiveness is also critical. Performance measures, which are ways in which a partnership can quantitatively measure program results versus initial expectations, are useful for this. Performance measurement provides an aspect of accountability both to the initiative as well as stakeholders, as the tangible benefits and areas of concern become identifiable. In addition to this, problem areas can be isolated and a resolution becomes more likely. Heinrich (2002) elaborates:

By simultaneously monitoring program processes and documenting management and program changes in diverse settings and across multiple levels of government, federal managers might use the performance data more effectively to evaluate the effects of different policies and approaches to managing and delivering government services (p. 721).

3.3.4 Dispute Resolution

Given the enormous complexities inherent in a partnership, even the most carefully planned initiative is liable to encounter disputes. While most of these disputes are minor questions of process and implementation, there can be other issues which can be large enough to compromise or even derail a partnership arrangement. For this reason, Ter-Minassian (2006) identifies the creation of dispute resolution mechanisms as being one of the key aspects of successful partnerships (p. 5).

While the field of dispute resolution is saturated with literature on how to best respond to conflict, having a predetermined set of rules and procedures dealing with contractual, process, and relationship disputes is the most basic premise described. In many cases, a public administrator can assume the role of an arbiter, and they may be internal or external to the project. In other cases a third party, such as a mediator can be used. In extreme cases, litigation can be an option, but given the time and expense involved in this, it is generally not recommended (Mohr, 2004).

3.4 CONDITIONS FOR POSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Estimates suggest that up to half of all new partnerships do not survive their first year, and of those which do survive, most tend to falter in their initial plans or objectives (Kreuter & Lezin, 1998; Kreuter, Lezin & Young, 2000). Research into the dynamics and effects of partnerships indicate that many partnerships fail early in the collaborative process because the participants are generally ill prepared to deal with the complexities which accompany such an endeavour (Weiss, Anderson & Lasker, 2002, Wettenhall, 2003, Johnson, 2009). The following section provides key considerations to help navigate these complexities and foster a productive partnership environment (Johnson, 2009).

3.4.1 Key Considerations

Clear Objectives: Partnerships are more likely to thrive when the aims of the different partners are similar and compatible, both in their views as well as their objectives (Austin, 2000; Ansell & Gash, 2007; Canada, 2003).

Effective Strategic Plan: Understandable expectations paired with strategic work plans give clarity to partnerships. The agreed arrangement must allow for flexibility so that stakeholders can negotiate positions within partnerships smoothly (Johnson, 2009). However, it is crucial to carefully outline a strong dispute resolution strategy to ensure accountability and transparency (Canada, 2003).

Strong Leadership: Engaging community leaders and government officials provides partnership mechanisms for mobilizing political power and respect from the participating communities (Stiefvater, 2001). Effective leadership requires commitment from high ranking public officials (NCPPP, 2005; Johnson, 2009). Leadership also requires stakeholders to take ownership, responsibility and accountability for the initiatives, projects and programming (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Canada, 2003).

Stakeholder Selection: Successful collaboration requires the selection of the right partners who provide the right resources. Partnerships must be aware of each stakeholder's values, expectations, and capacities before committing to various levels of an initiative (Stiefvater, 2001; Canada, 2003).

Knowledge-transfer: Knowledge sharing allows for innovation and the creation of new strategies. The amalgamation of many ideas and experiences can lead to new and novel ways of dealing with a particular policy issue, and can enable a more complete analysis of a problem (Hardy, Phillips & Lawrence, 2003).

Monitoring Performance: Collaborative agreements require strong accountability strategies that ensure transparency and clarity. Clear expectations and effective performance measures can alleviate the tendency for fragmentation of accountability (Boase, 2000).

Effective and Honest Communication: If partnerships do not uphold the values and standards each stakeholder requires, mistrust and miscommunication will hinder the initiative or program's performance (Ansell & Gash, 2007). Effective communication strategies move beyond jargon and speak to all levels of stakeholders (Stiefvater, 2001; Johnson, 2009). Stakeholders develop trust within a partnership if they are active participants within all levels of the decision-making and planning process (Canada, 2003).

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 POSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS IN PRACTICE

Having laid out the theoretical framework for creating and sustaining partnerships above, this section identifies specific examples of positive partnerships used to promote healthy living initiatives. Practices from a number of jurisdictions in Canada and abroad are each analyzed to identify specific conditions which contributed to their success.

4.1.1 Nova Scotia: Tobacco Strategy

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/tobaccocontrol.html>

<http://www.smokefreens.ca/>

In 2001, the Government of Nova Scotia launched a comprehensive Tobacco Strategy in collaboration with various stakeholders. Since that time Nova Scotia went from having the highest rate of smokers between the ages of 15-19 in Canada to the lowest as of 2007 (Nova Scotia, 2008). Although a number of factors were integral to the project's success, strong external and internal partnerships have been identified as significant preconditions.

One of the Tobacco Strategy's strongest external partnerships is with an organization called *Smoke Free Nova Scotia* (SFNS). SFNS is a longstanding provincial coalition representing health care providers, community groups, District Health Authorities and non-governmental health organizations. SFNS has worked closely with the N.S. government to support various initiatives and proposed legislation (Rhymes, 2007). In addressing how the SFNS partnership was successfully created and maintained, the group cites three main pre-conditions: structure, focus and credibility.

First, SFNS is structured to bring together like minded organizations with similar goals (i.e. all members have a common interest in tobacco reduction). Further, SFNS's organizational structure allows for in-kind funding. Many SFNS members are able to participate in the organization as part of their paid work responsibilities and can occasionally draw upon additional resources within their sponsoring agencies (Rhymes, 2007).

Second, SFNS also notes that sharpening its focus improved the organizations efficacy and rejuvenated its membership. In 2001, SFNS members identified advocacy as the central goal of the organization. In 2005, this focus was further narrowed by identifying specific legislation it wished to have implemented. SFNS feels the narrowing of scope allowed the organization to produce strong, consistent messaging around areas of greatest importance to the group. SFNS also contends increased focus allowed it to create a more effective governance structure with fewer meetings and more issue-based working groups (Rhymes, 2007).

Finally, SFNS feels it is seen as a credible organization partly because it has partners from well recognized organizations such as the Canadian Cancer Society. SFNS also feels it gains credibility because of the responsible manner in which it approaches its advocacy efforts and

because SFNS's goals, including encouraging youth to stay smoke free, are supported by the majority of the population (Rhymes, 2007).

A second success story in supporting the Tobacco Strategy involves internal government partnerships. Through internal partnerships, the Department of Health Promotion and Protection (HPP) has been able to effectively enforce one of the Tobacco Strategy's key pieces of legislation (The *Smoke Free Places Act*) as well as provide an effective mechanism for looking forward.

Put into force January 2003, the *Smoke Free Places Act* required that all indoor work and public places be smoke-free by December 1, 2006. Although HPP was responsible for the Act, it was decided that, rather than building its own large enforcement team, HPP would partner with other departments to use pre-existing compliance officers to enforce the *Smoke Free Places Act* in most settings (i.e. restaurants, bars and office buildings) (S. Machat, personal communication, October 23, 2008).

An interdepartmental Tobacco Working Group has also been identified as an internal partnership contributing to the success of Nova Scotia's Tobacco Strategy. Composed of HPP, Service Nova Scotia, the Department of Finance and the Department of Justice, the Tobacco Working Group focuses on issues of contraband tobacco and access to the tobacco market in Nova Scotia. The working group allows the four agencies to exchange information, develop common messaging for interaction with other levels of government and coordinate activities. The group was brought together because HPP saw a potential synergy between individual departmental goals and the group has stayed together because of a positive, results-oriented working environment. The group has learned to recognize one another's goals as their own and has agreed not to disparage or discount the work of others in the group. A continuing challenge to the partnership is mediating between process oriented and non-process oriented cultures of different departments. Some departments prefer to have partnerships remain informal while others would like codified terms of reference (S. Machat, personal communication, October 23, 2008).

4.1.2 Nova Scotia: Workplace Wellness

<http://www.thrivingworkplaces.ns.ca/index.shtml>

A second area in which Nova Scotia has had success in establishing and sustaining healthy living partnerships is in the area of workplace wellness. In early 2003, Health Canada, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection and the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with numerous other stakeholders in the business community, worked to create and implement the "HealthWorks" program (M. MacDonald, personal communications, November 4, 2008). HealthWorks sought to engage local employers in wellness campaigns by providing a local business case for workplace wellness. The HealthWorks project chose three local businesses to participate in pilot projects. The pilot projects involved assessing the health status of participating employees and developing and implementing wellness programs tailored to the individual needs of the diverse companies. After implementing the wellness programs, the effectiveness of the pilot projects were evaluated. The positive business outcomes (employee retention, reduced sick time) were then promoted in

order to encourage other businesses to partner with the Halifax Chamber of Commerce to establish their own workplace wellness initiatives (Conference Board of Canada, 2008).

Assessments of the HealthWorks initiative have found that the partnership was extremely successful in achieving its objective of encouraging business to promote healthy workplaces (Conference Board of Canada, 2008). This success has been largely attributed to the partnership's ability to bring diverse stakeholders, including end users, to the table early in the development of the partnership. A second determinate of success identified was that partners were clear about what they could bring to the table (i.e. Health Canada offered funding and accountability measures but did not attend regular meetings, and the Chamber of Commerce brought connections to the business community). Communication was also a key to the project's success. Regular communication by phone and email as well as monthly meetings allowed for constant monitoring of the project's development (M. MacDonald, personal communications, November 4, 2008).

In 2007, to further encourage businesses to partner with the Chamber, the Halifax Chamber of Commerce also instituted a "Healthy Business Awards" ceremony. The Healthy Business Awards are ongoing and are designed to recognize successful wellness initiatives as well as to provide a forum for companies to share their individual experiences with health promotion in the workplace (Halifax Chamber of Commerce, 2008).

As shown above, the HealthWorks project created and sustained interest in the partnership in three main ways. First, the project provided a strong business case for partnership. Second, it identified the resources multiple partners could bring to the table. Third it continues to encourage sustained participation by holding the annual Healthy Business Awards ceremony.

4.1.3 New Brunswick: New Brunswick Anti-Tobacco Coalition

<http://www.nbatc.ca/home.shtml>

In early 1999, the Canadian Cancer Society of New Brunswick, in partnership with the provincial Department of Health and Wellness, began consultations with stakeholders regarding the development of a New Brunswick Anti-Tobacco Strategy¹. Through the development of the strategy, key objectives were identified and concerned individuals offered to coordinate their implementation. From this process, the New Brunswick Anti-Tobacco Coalition (NBATC) was formed. Nine years later, the developed partnership remains strong and dynamic (J. Dupuis, personal communication, October 31, 2008).

One of NBATC's key strengths is its structure, as it both encourages constant development of new partnerships and facilitates the retention of existing membership. NBATC's structure allows for four levels of partner involvement requiring differing degrees of contribution and

¹ NB: The Tobacco-Free Living portfolio has since been moved to the newly created Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport

commitment: the implementation committee, working groups, networks and community action participants. At the top of the organizational hierarchy is the implementation committee. The implementation committee is comprised of activity leads tasked with coordinating key objectives within the broader goal of tobacco reduction. Each lead is also encouraged to develop their own working group. The development of these working groups often engages partners outside of the NBATC membership and thus increases the coalition's profile and support. Working groups are further encouraged to engage with networks (community level groups or individuals working on, or interested in, a similar issue) so as to share experiences, knowledge or common practices. Finally, NBATC's organizational structure allows for community action participants, defined as groups or individuals who are involved in anti-tobacco measures but do not have the time or ability to commit to regular meetings or activities. Community action participants primarily support NBATC through responding to surveys on anti-tobacco activities, receiving and responding to NBATC correspondence and through attending annual forums. By allowing for such a diverse range of partner involvement, NBATC is able to attract and retain a large and diverse number of partners (New Brunswick Anti-Tobacco Coalition, n.d. b).

A second component for success identified by NBATC is their focus on implementation principles. Before beginning a project, activity leads must complete an "Implementation Principles Checklist" (see Appendix A) explaining how the project meets NBATC goals such as using established resources and building on existing opportunities. During this activity, project leads are also asked to consider how their proposed activity furthers the NB Anti-Tobacco Strategy's stated goals and objectives. By being clear on the organizations goals and expectations from the outset, as well as providing a framework to hold partners accountable, NBATC aims to create positive and successful relations with their partners.

Finally, the NBATC sees their focus on knowledge exchange as vital in sustaining its partnerships. A challenge faced by the group is keeping the issue of tobacco control fresh and new as well as fighting the perception that there is no longer any need for work on tobacco control. By continually keeping members informed about tobacco statistics and studies, NBATC seeks to show members that the issue is still urgent. Further, NBATC holds an annual forum open to both members and non-members. The forum is meant to help partners share knowledge of anti-tobacco initiatives and activities, recognize the work of committee members and remind all participants of the continued work necessary in the area of tobacco control (J. Dupuis, personal communication, October 31, 2008).

4.1.4 Québec: Kino-Québec

<http://www.kino-quebec.qc.ca/>

In 1978, the Government of Québec launched the Kino-Québec program. Managed and financed jointly by the Québec Ministry of Health and Social Services, 17 regional health authorities and the Leisure and Sport Secretariat, the goal of the program was to facilitate partnerships for the promotion of active living (LeMay, 2008). Thirty years later, the organization has grown considerably and continues to work in tandem with numerous stakeholders on various projects to promote physical activity.

The success of the Kino-Québec program has largely been attributed to its decentralized structure (LeMay, 2008). Kino-Québec acts as a central body which provides support, ideas and information to groups wishing to promote active living in their communities. Programs undertaken by Kino-Québec include helping municipalities coordinate free-skates and providing promotional materials for active living events. By providing information and ideas but allowing each of its partners to implement programs according to their unique circumstances, Kino-Québec is able to engage numerous organizations. Kino-Québec's primary partners include school boards, municipalities and community groups; however, the organization is also open to working with representatives from diverse sectors such as tourism, transportation and early childhood development (Québec, 2005).

Further, through its engagement with numerous stakeholders, Kino Québec seeks to consolidate human and financial resources so as to optimize their use in the promotion of active lifestyles. In essence, Kino-Québec sees the development of a large network of diverse partners who come together to share resources and coordinate action as the key to building and maintaining successful partnerships (Québec, 2005).

4.1.5 Ontario: The Highfield Community Enrichment Project

<http://bbbf.queensu.ca/pub.html#partnership>

The Highfield Community Enrichment Project in Toronto was started in 1991 and is supported by various ministries and community groups, including those involved in social services, health, and education. The project is designed to enhance the health of children and families in the Highfield community. The Highfield project is an exemplar belonging to a larger initiative called the “Better Beginnings, Better Futures Project”, a longitudinal, community-driven promotion/prevention project operating across eight Ontario communities. The following section looks at an analysis of the partnership done by G. Nelson et al. (2005) to examine how the partnership was created and maintained.

One of the reasons that the Highfield Project is considered an exemplar is because it utilizes value driven partnerships emphasizing the active participation of the community's residents. Value-driven partnerships are created when program goals, activities and methods of evaluation are decided upon by all partners. This type of partnership encourages community control, emphasizes the strengths of the community, and provides opportunities for participants to take leadership positions and help themselves. Further, using the value-driven partnership model creates a sense of ownership which encourages residents to volunteer for, and participate in the Highfield Project.

Another successful method employed by the Highfield Project is allowing residents to vary their levels of participation within the project. In the Highfield exemplar, residents take on varying degrees of responsibility, leadership and decision-making. This *ladder of participation* allows residents with differing time and financial resources to contribute to their maximum potential.

The Highfield Project is a robust example of how a partnership program can empower its partners and participants. By increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strengths of individuals and communities, it not only engages the community at a deeper level, but also aids

in the development of individuals' confidence in their own capacities. For instance, as the residents of Highfield became more involved in the project, they became more vocal about what they believed was needed to make the project successful. Some residents moved from participants to partners in the program, eventually taking on leadership and administrative roles.

As resident participation is considered crucial to the success of the project, members sought to ensure that meetings were as accessible as possible. To address this, Highfield Project organizers used strategies such as increasing community outreach, providing translation services, hiring staff from different cultures, and providing parents with child care.

Recognition is also an important part in maintaining the sustainability of the Highfield project. The project relies heavily on volunteer partners to assist with administration of the program. Due to the burden of the workload, volunteers have a tendency to burn out. One of the ways to address volunteer burnout is through the use of recognition ceremonies, which can include dinner, dancing and small tokens of gratitude given to the volunteers (Nelson et al., 2005).

4.1.6 Saskatchewan: Regina Partners for Healthy Living

In 1991, the Medical Health Officer (MHO) of the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region saw the need to address cardiovascular disease by developing a partnership between the Health Region and various community organizations. As a result, Regina Partners for Healthy Living (RPHL) was established. RPHL is a community based partnership that focuses on addressing the four main risk factors common to a number of chronic diseases: physical activity, tobacco, healthy food choices, and stress. Initially, RPHL worked on raising awareness and then progressed to individual skill building. Now, RPHL works on creating supportive environments, strengthening community action, and developing healthy public policy (R. Coss, personal communication, October 30, 2008).

RHPL attributes its success to its focus on equality, the exchange of skills and resources between partners, its emphasis on frequent communication, and its ability to overcome the challenges it faces. In regards to equality, all members of the RPHL are treated as equals and valued for their contributions. This was evident from the outset when each member contributed to the development of the goals and objectives of the partnership, resulting in shared and common goals.

RHPL also facilitates the exchange of partnership skills and resources. By bringing together skills and resources from different sectors, RHPL is able to create the capacity to address issues that individual members would be unable to address alone. For example, large institutions partnered with RPHL provide resources such as office space, financial accounting expertise and equipment that the smaller community organizations do not possess. Reciprocally, the community organizations provided professional grass roots experience that the larger organizations would not normally have access to without the partnership (R. Coss, personal communication, October 30, 2008).

Like many other partnerships, RPHL provides a medium for networking and information sharing. Members from all over the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region come together to share ideas on healthy living and discuss new approaches to health promotion. As a result of

information sharing and networking, new programs are developed, existing ones are modified and members create new partnerships external to the RPHL (R. Coxs, personal communication, October 30, 2008).

Frequent communication between members of the RPHL is another reason for its success. Large quarter-annual meetings and weekly contact with the program coordinator are effective in enhancing information sharing and keeping stakeholders apprised of current circumstances. By maintaining a line of communication, partners feel that they are up-to-date and involved with what is happening within the organization (R. Coxs, personal communication, October 30, 2008).

Success is also created out of the challenges that the RPHL faces. For example, one challenge facing the RPHL is dealing with the differing priorities of partners. At times partners express the belief that their own primary prevention area is more important than their fellow partners. To reduce conflict, programs are developed that involve more than one primary prevention area. For example, workplace wellness encompasses healthy food choices, physical activity, work family balance, tobacco control, supportive environments, healthy public policy and strengthening community action. Developing programming where partners with different but complimentary priorities must work together helps the partners to realize each other's value (R. Coxs, personal communication, October 30, 2008).

4.1.7 United Kingdom: Durham County Agenda 21

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/durhamcc/usp/pws/la21+--+issues+and+progress>

Local Agenda 21 is a United Nations created health and ecological sustainability initiative, which has seen widespread use and adaptation in Western Europe. The program functions as an interface framework which allows various local, regional, and national bodies to coordinate and achieve a common purpose. Different regions have implemented Agenda 21 initiatives to varying degrees and levels of success, though in this review, a focus will be made on one of the more successful cases.

Durham County Council, a local government serving 500,000 people in northern England, has a developed and highly successful set of programs using the Agenda 21 framework. Referred to as the County Durham Local Agenda 21 Partnership, it has engaged many different partners and addressed a wide variety of topics relating to human health and sustainability.

One of the main aspects of the partnership's success relates to its extensive use of roundtables. Roundtables are separate, individual committees which are each designed to fulfill a particular partnership goal, as opposed to a singular system where one large committee attempts to achieve multiple goals. Each table is also comprised of subgroups, which perform increasingly specific tasks. For example, their transportation roundtable has subgroups devoted to healthy living initiatives such as cycling and walking.

Another aspect of the success is the extensive use of consultative forums, which are quarter-monthly meetings where various stakeholders discuss the status of their respective partnership

relationships. These meetings offer an ideal opportunity for networking and the exchange of promising practices, as well as encouraging local participation and community empowerment.

Finally, through its successful implementation of the Agenda 21 partnership model, the County Durham example shows how broad models for creating and sustaining partnerships can be customized to apply to the needs of a very specific population.

4.1.8 Australia: GutBuster Program

In 1991, the Department of Health in New South Wales (NSW) developed the *GutBuster* program. Initially designed to target working class men in New Castle, NSW, the program's modification for and implementation by the Torres Strait Aboriginal People provides some valuable insights into creating and maintaining partnerships. Before implementing the program, the Queensland Department of Health spent four years creating the preconditions for a successful partnership. Their work included reaching out to members of Torres Strait communities to generate interest in partnering with the Department of Health. As a result of this work, 22 male community representatives and elders, as well as Indigenous male health workers in the region were identified as partners. Originally, these partners were trained to independently run the program in their respective communities. However, in practice, it was found that the continued involvement of partners outside the community was desired by participants and thus a more gradual approach to creating community ownership was adopted (Egger et al., 1999).

Studies of the program found that the partnership was successfully created and maintained for four main reasons. First, the program brought partners together to respond to an expressed need (i.e. improving eating habits). Second, the program spent a lot of time in the creation stage ensuring prominent members from the targeted communities became partners in the project. Third, these partners were encouraged to make the program their own from the outset and fourth, the program was flexible enough to respond to the varying demands of partners (NSW Centre for Overweight and Obesity, 2005).

4.2 PROMISING PRACTICES

The above examples identify partnerships with varying degrees of government involvement. In some of the case studies government's role has been more supervisory, (the HealthWorks project) in others, government entities were the sole members of a partnership (interdepartmental Tobacco Working Group). Yet all cases provide valuable information for government departments in creating and sustaining future partnerships. This section summarizes both the theoretical and practical information provided in this Scoping Review by outlining a number of promising practices for the development of partnerships to promote healthy living. The following promising practices are not intended as a rigid template for the formation of a partnership. Different elements of the promising practices will apply to different partnerships. It is up to the discretion of a project coordinator to decide which practices are necessary for the successful implementation of their desired partnership.

4.2.1 Understand Your Expectations and Assets

Before partners are sought out, it is valuable to have a clear understanding of how one sees the partnership contributing to a given objective. An extremely specific understanding of expectations for the partnership is not necessary, but having a general sense of direction will help one seek out appropriate partners and communicate the degree of commitment expected. It can also help to determine the desired level of government involvement in a partnership. Options include choosing a limited, more supervisory role (concession model) or choosing to be actively involved in the partnership (alliance model). That said, it is difficult to find literature describing how expectations for healthy living partnerships may be set.

Once partnership expectations are understood, it is also important to understand what one has to offer to the partnership. The theoretical literature, as well as case studies provided in this Scoping Review offer a number of examples of potential assets that government departments could offer. Such incentives include funding, the provision of knowledge, networking opportunities, credibility, skill building and access to resources. When looking to partner with the business sector, the development of a strong business case that shows bottom line gains of participation is often an asset.

4.2.2 Know Your Partners

Understanding one's partners is essential to creating a sustainable partnership model. Understanding partners' differing abilities to commit to a partnership can allow for the creation of differing levels of partnership involvement. By creating a "ladder of commitment", the power to attract partners can be greatly enhanced. Most partnerships to promote healthy living discussed in this Scoping Review rely heavily on volunteer partners. By creating opportunities that allow partners to contribute in various ways and commit varying degrees of time and resources, volunteer partnerships can be maximized. Such a system can also prevent partner burnout by allowing partners to shift their level of responsibility.

As noted in the literature review, when engaging with community groups it is particularly important to ensure they feel they are active participants in a partnership and not simple "token" partners. Further, conversations with multiple non-governmental partners working to promote healthy living initiatives revealed a general sense of frustration with their governmental partners. This frustration resulted from what was felt to be a lack of government effort to properly involve outside actors in the planning stages of the partnership. Understanding the expectations of non-governmental partners is an important method of combating this sense of alienation that can be extremely harmful to the development of partnerships.

Understanding partners' needs is also important for determining whether the focus of the partnership should be on project or process management. As described in the literature review, a project management model will focus on the end goal of a project. By comparison, a process management model focuses on the partners themselves and how to bring and keep them together. As group dynamics will dictate which of these models works best for a partnership, it is impossible to provide definitive advice about which model works in which situation. However, typically when partners come primarily from the business sector, a project management method

will be preferred (HealthWorks). Conversely, community groups often prefer a more process oriented model (Highfield Project).

4.2.3 Creating Manageable Objectives

A recurrent theme in partnership literature is that trust is essential to maintaining a partnership. Ansell and Gash (2007) have stated, “...trust building often becomes the most prominent aspect of the collaborative process and can be quite difficult to cultivate” (p. 558). An effective way to build trust amongst partners is through the successful completion of tasks or projects. Thus, to build trust early in the development of partnerships a smart practice is to begin with smaller, easily attained goals and measurable deliverables before embarking on larger, more ambitious projects.

Another promising practice is to make large initiatives more manageable through the creation of working groups or round tables. For example, rather than tackle the large issue of tobacco cessation as a whole, NBATC chose to break the project into smaller goals such as increasing the number of New Brunswickers who stay tobacco free and increasing the number of smoke free spaces (New Brunswick Anti-Tobacco Coalition, n.d. a). A corollary practice is to narrow the vision of the partnership itself. As was illustrated in the case of SFNS, by narrowing the partnership’s goals to that of advocacy, the group was able to improve the organization’s efficacy and rejuvenate its membership.

When creating manageable objectives, it is important to include all partners in the process. Working together to create objectives clarifies the partnership’s vision and gives those involved a sense of ownership. Where appropriate, end users of programs should be invited to the partnership to ensure they have a voice in the creation of objectives.

4.2.4 Accountability Procedures

Accountability procedures provide mechanisms to monitor, measure and report on the work of a partnership. They also clarify the roles and responsibilities of partners and provides performance expectations. For these reasons they are a critical element of a partnership and deserves significant attention.

To be clear on what each partner is accountable for a partnership contract can be created. These contracts can range in formality depending on the goals, objectives and members of the partnership. Formal contracts are valuable because they can be used to hold partners legally accountable for their actions. However, as contracts become more formal, they become difficult and costly to administer. Less formal contracts can address these issues; however, as contracts become less formal, there is a loss of accountability. To improve accountability in less formal contracts, partners should develop shared goals and values. This creates a sense of ownership, and when partners feel ownership, they are more likely to hold themselves accountable thereby negating the need for a formal contract. Although there is a general lack of literature on the topic, Michael Goodstadt and Barbara Kahan have developed a number of informative materials which can help in the creation of common values and goals for healthy living partnerships (see Appendix B).

Successful contracts, be they formal or informal, typically include a description of the respective roles and responsibilities of partners involved, mechanisms for decision making and descriptions of accountability and performance measures. There are several resources designed to help project managers design contracts. The Treasury Board Secretariat has created a particularly useful and comprehensive guide (see Appendix B). Further, when creating accountability and performance measures, partners should work to ensure frameworks do not impose undue reporting burdens on any of the partners (S. Machat, personal communication, October 23, 2008).

One final, but important benefit of contracts is that they can be instruments for mitigating disputes between partners. Contracts provide clarity on the roles of partners and therefore reduce confusion which can lead to disputes. Contracts can also include dispute resolution mechanisms and termination clauses. These features can provide partners with methods of addressing differences and setting preconditions for an amicable split.

4.2.5 Recognition

Since many healthy living initiatives rely heavily on volunteers and passionately devoted staff, creating mechanisms to ensure that partners feel their efforts are recognized and appreciated can be an important element of a partnership. In addition, promoting public sector innovation requires incentives for all stakeholders to remain engaged. Joint-initiatives such as the *American Government Awards* program could provide a model for a similar structure in Canada. The program identifies the innovative public sector programs that are sustainable, replicable and results-based. The awards program recognizes programs that are simple in concept, inexpensive and apolitical (Walkers, 2001). The *Institute of Public Administration of Canada* (IPAC) additionally offers incentives for programs to excel in public service (IPAC, 2008). Apart from awards, examples of successful recognition efforts found in case studies also included dinners and ceremonies and in the case of NBATC, the opportunity to present work at annual general meetings.

4.2.6 Communication

Another tool used to improve accountability and sustain partnerships is communication. Continuous communication between partners helps to disseminate information on performance, lessons learned, and to identify difficulties. Communication keeps partners informed and creates feelings of equality that help to sustain the partnership.

Communication is not limited to within partnerships. Communication can go beyond partnerships to the communities and the recipients of programs. The information received from recipients can provide enlightened feedback respecting the effects of programs on the community. This information can then be communicated back to the partners so that improvements can be made.

As evidenced by the RPHL case study, effective communication does not necessarily require regular meetings but can occur through simple procedures such as regular emails or phone conversations by a project coordinator.

4.2.7 Flexibility

Flexibility is often an important element of a partnership. A flexible partnership allows for timely decision making, quicker reaction times to problems and better adaptability to changing circumstances. Partnerships must constantly be evaluating their performance and be willing to change course if project objectives are not being met. For instance, in the GutBuster program, flexibility allowed partners to vary the program according to the demands of the community. This improved community participation, helping to facilitate its successful outcome.

The partner organizations themselves must also be flexible when participating in partnerships. Partnerships are dynamic in nature and thus partner organizations must be able to adapt to change. If organizations are unwilling or unable to alter their structure to allow for changes in partnership, the partnership will not be able to respond to innovation and opportunities.

CONCLUSION

As the case studies provided in this Scoping Review show, partnerships to promote healthy living initiatives can deliver positive outcomes. Health promotion crosses many boundaries and cannot be addressed by one department alone. However, to achieve positive results, strategic thinking must be applied to both the creation and maintenance of partnerships. Given possible variety in scope, aim and type of partnerships, each partnership will be unique and therefore, no set formula can be created to ensure their success. This Scoping Review has identified a number of general practices for government departments to follow in the development and maintenance of partnerships to promoting healthy living initiatives:

- Understand what all partners can bring to and gain from a partnership
- Provide opportunities for different levels of involvement and responsibility
- Set attainable, shared and well defined goals to create success, trust and ownership
- Work with partners to build accountability measures into the partnership
- Create mechanisms to recognize the work and innovation of partners
- Maintain continuous and open communication among partners
- Provide opportunities to receive and respond to feedback

In conducting research on partnerships to promote healthy living, it was discovered that while there was much literature on partnerships in general, very little focused specifically on the development of partnerships to promote healthy living. Further, much information on healthy living partnerships exists but such literature focuses on describing the partnership's results and not on addressing the conditions that allowed the partnership to be created and maintained. To gather information, the researchers had to interview key stakeholders or search for information within documents created with alternate focuses. Information gained from this process, however provided some very useful insights. The development and maintenance of partnerships to promote healthy living remains a key area for further study.

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APPENDIX A – EXAMPLE OF IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST



Implementation Principles Checklist

The New Brunswick Anti-Tobacco Coalition is committed to “braiding” our efforts utilizing partnerships and evidence-based information to maximize impact and sustainability. To attain an effective, coordinated, and integrated New Brunswick Anti-Tobacco Strategy, the Activity Leads must demonstrate concurrence with the implementation principles by briefly describing how each principle has been fulfilled. If you are developing an activity that you would lead, it is recommended that you review the NB Anti-Tobacco Strategy at www.nbatc.ca and consider how your activity meets the Strategy’s goal/s, objective/s, and implementation principles.

Anti-Tobacco Activity: _____

Activity Lead: _____

Goal Selected: _____

Objective Selected: _____

☐ Base relationships on partnership principles, where parties agree to work cooperatively towards shared/compatible objectives. In a partnership there is:

- Shared authority, responsibility and management;
- Shared investment of resources; such as time, work, funding, material, expertise, and information;
- Acknowledgement/respect for any or all contributions of partners;
- Shared risk-taking and accountability;
- Collaboration; and
- Mutual benefits, for example, commitment, maximized resources, and sustained effort.

Comments: _____

☐ Involve those affected to obtain input and buy-in: i.e., smokers, youth, parents, business owners, etc.

Comments: _____

☐ Recognize that one of the best way to reach children and youth is to change the social environment in which adults smoke, therefore, strategies should focus on multiple issues, and not just youth.

Comments: _____

☐ Use existing materials/programs that have been positively evaluated wherever possible.

Comments: _____

1/2

Implementation Principles Checklist

- ☐ Develop a coordinated, comprehensive approach incorporating effective anti-tobacco actions that support and enhance each other and utilize the strategic directions of:

- Policy and Legislation;
- Programs and Initiatives;
- Industry Accountability;
- Research; and
- Building and Supporting Capacity for Action

Comments: _____

- ☐ Utilize a community development approach to:
- Build capacity among a wide range of individuals and organizations to take action on tobacco control,
 - Broaden public understanding of the serious nature of tobacco products/industry to increase support for action.

Comments: _____

- ☐ Prepare for opposition – develop solid counter arguments for new initiatives to help pave the way for public/private support.

Comments: _____

- ☐ Focus energy on achievable actions that are realistic and build onto existing opportunities by linking new actions with existing programs or activities whenever possible.

Comments: _____

- ☐ Recognize the need to demonstrate “better practices” without overlooking the value of creativity and innovation.

Comments: _____

- ☐ Evaluate progress utilizing recognized assessment tools, e.g. Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey, AC Neilson Survey, NB Annual Compliance Monitoring; or promoting the development of mechanisms to address data gaps, e.g. inventory of smoke-free places.

Comments: _____

2/2

Source: New Brunswick Anti-Tobacco Coalition. (n.d.). Implementation principles check list. Retrieved October 28, 2008, from http://www.nbatc.ca/documents/Implementationprincipleschecklist_pdf.pdf

APPENDIX B – RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

The following section provides links to websites that provide helpful materials for the creation and sustaining of partnerships:

1. Materials for use in the building of common values, goals and strategic objectives:
<http://www.idmbestpractices.ca/idm.php?content=resources-idm#checkin>
2. Materials useful for managing collaborative agreements:
<http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/fcer-cfre/documents/mca-gec/mca-gec-eng.asp>
3. Materials helpful in the design of contracts/creation of accountability measures
http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/eval/tools_outils/comp-acc_e.asp