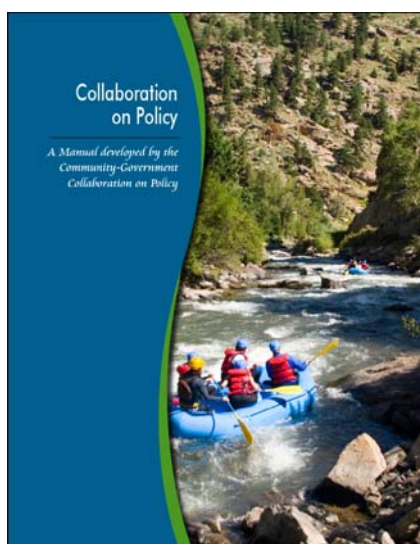


# *Collaboration on Policy: A Student Companion*



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# *Community-Government Collaboration on Policy Community of Practice: Backgrounder*

Between March 2008 and March 2009, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy hosted a community of practice on community-government collaboration on policy. The community of practice was set up in response to a call by the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, which was supporting a handful of social innovation projects throughout the country.

Caledon formed the community of practice by securing representation from the City of Red Deer Social Planning Department, Community-University Institute for Social Research (Saskatoon), Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, *Santropol Roulant* (Montréal) and the Community Services Council Newfoundland and Labrador (St. John's). The group also included university professors from the Kroeger College of Public Affairs at Carleton University and the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Ottawa as well as occasional participation from students at University of Ottawa, McMaster University and Concordia University. The number of participants was kept to a reasonable level so that members could gel as a group in the project's short time frame.

The central activities of the project included two face-to-face meetings, seven teleconferences with learning sessions shaped by members of the community of practice, and the development of a policy monitoring instrument and collaborative practices manual.

All members of the community of practice were encouraged to view their respective experiences of collaboration as a mini laboratory from which they could select key lessons that others could apply to their local circumstances. The lens of poverty reduction was used to frame the experience of collaboration, but participants understood that they were co-creating knowledge around community-government collaboration more generally. The lessons learned were equally applicable to other complex problems.

There has been growing interest in recent years in place-based interventions and their unique contribution to tackling complex issues. Place-based strategies seek to achieve a desired objective through interventions in the neighbourhoods and communities where people live. Increasingly, however, place-based interventions are also trying to influence relevant public policies. The policy monitoring work and manual were developed to help guide community practitioners and government officials who are working to design policy solutions to complex problems.

Four of the five community of practice members also worked individually with Caledon to produce a 'community story' that described local efforts to address issues of poverty through collaboration with various levels of government.

## ***Overview: The five community partners in the Collaboration***

*The following are brief descriptions of 'community stories' developed by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy and community partners. Visit <http://www.caledoninst.org> to read the full story.*

### ***Newfoundland and Labrador: Innovative Strategies in Government-Community Collaboration***

Fran Locke, Penelope Rowe and Anne Makhoul, April 2009

The Newfoundland/Labrador government's 2006 decision to develop a poverty reduction strategy was partly the result of more than 30 years of relationship building and continued encouragement from community organizations. This story describes the path by which the province's eventual strategy came to be developed.

The Community Services Council Newfoundland and Labrador (CSC – <http://www.envision.ca/>) was founded in 1976 to identify unmet social needs, lay the foundation for new social programs and policies, encourage greater cooperation between the voluntary sector and governments, and support citizen participation. Pressure from CSC and others for integration of social and economic policies and inclusion of community-based groups in policy discussions led to a Strategic Social Plan (SSP) in 1998.

The SSP, dismantled in 2004 by a new administration, left a considerable legacy and laid the foundation for the Rural Secretariat. The concepts espoused in the SSP of linking social and economic development and engaging citizens in formulation of policy and programs have had considerable influence on the way government works. The SSP experience also greatly increased cross-departmental activity within government itself around key initiatives such as the Poverty Reduction Action Plan. Both the SSP and the Rural Secretariat were founded on prescribed regional and provincial structures created explicitly to encourage collaboration. The notion that communities should direct self-improvement initiatives led, under the SSP, to the creation of a world class social auditing system through which the public can access socioeconomic data, housed at [www.communityaccounts.ca](http://www.communityaccounts.ca).

*Sample CSC lessons shared with the community of practice:*

- Community issues tend to run into a policy wall. Only through dialogue between community members and policy-makers can local knowledge contribute to policy development.
- Collaboration doesn't mean that everyone agrees all the time. In fact, waiting for full consensus can be detrimental. Bringing likely opponents and people

affected directly by policy decisions into the work early on introduces a necessary edginess which can help ensure that good policy – rather than comfortable relationships – are the outcome.

### *Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction: Setting the Table for Change*

Liz Weaver and Anne Makhoul, March 2009

The City of Hamilton went through a significant economic downturn in the late 1990s and became one of the first municipalities in Canada to attempt to plan its way to a social and economic recovery. Unfortunately, the municipality's efforts to reduce poverty had had little effect, but a determined City Manager and the Executive Director of the Hamilton Community Foundation were determined to create an organization for change. Engaging a third, well-respected business partner in their leadership trio and building on Hamilton's history of community involvement and relationships, they instituted the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction (HRPR).

From its inception in May 2005, the HRPR has been identifying a range of policy issues which affect children and their families living in poverty. The Roundtable has strategically engaged elected officials from all three orders of government, providing them with information about the impact of poverty on Hamilton and through the development and distribution of policy briefs, strived to inform policy decisions. The Roundtable monitors policy developments, convenes local stakeholders to dialogue about major concerns and engages with partners to develop policy briefs. Supporting the policy focus of the Roundtable is an active Policy Working Group and a Government Engagement Working Group composed of senior public officials from all three levels of government. The Roundtable also connects with provincial and national organizations to share information, identify resources and discuss policy positions.

*Sample HRPR lessons shared with the community of practice:*

- Set clear guidelines and guiding principles for the collaborative work
- If low-income representatives are invited into the process after a first round of collaboration-building, find ways to include them in committee or other aspects of the work where they feel they can make a meaningful contribution.
- Be smart about collecting important evidence, such as short-term results which leverage long-term interest and investments; reflect how individual contributions help the change agenda; link to any larger existing agendas; ensure briefs and policy approaches are shared with key representatives and partners.

### *Alberta's Seven Cities Partnership*

Scott Cameron and Anne Makhoul, March 2009

In 2001, representatives from seven Alberta communities were invited to discussions with federal officials to work out the details of the new National Homelessness Initiative. From those first meetings, the Seven Cities Partnership was formed and, over its seven-year history, has influenced provincial policy and programs around affordable housing and homelessness. Red Deer and Calgary both released 10-year plans for ending homelessness in early 2008 and Edmonton followed suit in January 2009. The Government of Alberta is in the process of developing a 10-year homelessness strategy.

*Sample Seven Cities lessons shared with the community of practice:*

- Government departments are often looking for good ideas and may appreciate input from the community. Collaborations need to find ways to link the two sides and find common framing for an issue, thereby making it easier for public officials to communicate objectives with their colleagues and elected officials, where appropriate.
- Track changes as they occur, have a circulation plan to share evidence with partners and ask for their feedback.
- Be prepared to ask for policy changes that represent “One Big Thing” or many small ones, as the circumstances require.

### *The Station 20 West Project Keeps on Chugging*

Anne Makhoul, March 2009

Over the last several decades, the City of Saskatoon's older, central neighbourhoods have experienced a gradual fading away of retail and service outlets, deteriorating housing stock and rising numbers of lower income residents. As stores, medical clinics, libraries and other community services have relocated to the more affluent suburbs, community organizations worked to develop a core neighbourhood revitalization plan. Unfortunately, relationship and political issues led to the collapse of the planning work, but there was a deep sense that core neighbourhood residents were entitled to a sustainable, rich quality of life, no matter what their financial circumstances.

In March 2008, Saskatchewan's newly-elected provincial government withdrew \$8 million from Station 20 West – an \$11.5 million community-based project located in the core neighbourhoods. The money had been promised to help build Station 20 West's service-rich Community Enterprise Centre in a part of the city poorly served by businesses and services.

Between March and December 2008, corporate donors and community organizations contributed a total of \$975,000 to the project. Since the removal of provincial funding, organizers have reduced their building plans from 45,000 to 19,000 square feet. Station 20 West's construction began in May 2009 – proving the value of fostering relationships around the work and raising awareness about the objectives of the project (<http://station20west.org/index.html>).

*Sample Station 20 West lessons shared with the community of practice:*

- Write clear statements of objectives and convene regular check-ins with partners.
- Try to align the work, where feasible and appropriate, with departmental or ministry priorities.
- Know when to engage with staff and when to engage with elected officials – both need to be included to move forward in particular areas and to ensure optimal participation.

### ***Santropol Roulant***

*Note: There is no accompanying Caledon story for this partner.*

*Santropol Roulant* – a small nonprofit organization that provides meal services to seniors in downtown Montreal, using young people on bicycles as the primary delivery agents. Operating since 1995, *Santropol Roulant* uses food as a vehicle to create trust and build bridges between individuals in a city where isolation among the elderly is the highest in Canada.

When Caledon began forming its community of practice in the fall of 2006, *Santropol Roulant* members were just beginning to appreciate the importance of developing a policy perspective in their work. In the summer of 2009, its members released a brief guide for front-line community organizations that receive funding through the *Programme de Soutien aux Organismes Communautaires* (PSOC) – a complex program administered by a labyrinthine government structure.

*Sample Santropol Roulant lessons shared with the community of practice:*

- Shared recognition of the importance of collaboration enables the development of powerful, effective and often informal relationships.
- Be smart about collecting important evidence, such as short-term results which leverage long-term interest and investments; reflect how individual

contributions help the change agenda; link to any larger existing agendas; ensure briefs and policy approaches are shared with key representatives and partners.

- Collaborators should embed learning into their considerations of impact and accountability and ask questions such as: To whom are we – the members of the collaborative – accountable? For what are we accountable? What have we learned? What has been successful? If we had it to do again, what would we do differently? What can we learn together as a community?

# *Discussion Paper: Considering Canadian Federalism and Community*

## **Learning Objective:**

- To reflect on the nature of community collaboration as it occurs within the context of the Canadian institutional framework.

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## *Community Collaboration and Canadian Federalism*

Students of politics in Canada become well versed on Section 91 and 92 of the *Constitution Act*; the sections which outline the division of responsibilities between the provinces and the federal government of Canada. This division of powers, as it was established in 1867, forms the basis of our federal state. Provinces were given exclusive control over cities and other municipalities. Of course, Canada's social and geographical landscape looks fundamentally different today than when intergovernmental frameworks were first formalized in a Constitution. Today, 80 percent of Canadians live in cities, for example; double the figure of 100 years ago. Many of these changes are linked to processes of globalization. Global flows of people and commerce affect local places in ways that were unforeseeable when the divisions of power were first conceived. Amidst this flurry of change, people have struggled all the more to define the places in which they live, work, and play. These local needs rest largely upon financial and institutional structures of governance that are often inadequate to respond.

Students who then go on to work in the community sector are often surprised to learn that the realities of their day are very different than the neatly summarized list of provincial and federal responsibilities they memorized years before. Much of this surprise stems from the fact that the analysis of the governance of local places – traditionally the domain of scholars in the fields of municipal public policy, municipal administration, and to a lesser extent federalism – has been found wanting.

The study of municipal policy and municipal administration has often focused narrowly on municipalities, with little concern for the intergovernmental contexts within which they operate. Conversely, studies in Canadian federalism have frequently presented a dichotomous relationship of the national and provincial dynamic, rarely considering the problems of provincial-local relations and, more rarely still, employing a tri-level analysis which includes the municipality. The realities for those attempting to shape their local context do not seem to be well captured in these frameworks of analysis. Often the success of these activities depends upon forging relationships across traditional institutional boundaries.

An emerging set of scholarship on multi-level rescaling, however, has become particularly helpful in this regard. While rooted in macro political economy, this multidisciplinary literature transcends some of the limitations of traditional approaches and offers a more integrated method of analysis. John Agnew has defined scale as “the level of geographic resolution at which a given phenomenon is thought of, acted upon or studied,” or “the focal setting at which spatial boundaries are defined for a specific social claim, activity or behavior” [Agnew 1997:100].

Mahon (2007) outlines three shared assumptions among scale theorists: First, scales do not exist ‘in nature’ but are socially constructed. New scales can be created, just as the meaning of old ones can be altered. Second, scalar configurations reflect and contribute to the construction of power relations – that is, they are articulated with class, gender, race ethnic social relations. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, scales have to be understood in relational terms [Mahon 2007].

These three assumptions help move our understanding of “federalism as rigid structure” to one of “federalism as process.” Courchene argues that a conception of “federalism as process” as opposed to “federalism as structure” better describes the creative and flexible manner in which Canadians have historically managed their federal system [Courchene 1995:3]. Here, he cites examples such as the Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP), Core Area Initiative in Winnipeg, followed by the Winnipeg Development Agreements and the Vancouver Agreement, as well as the Urban Development Corporation (i.e., Harbourfront in Toronto, Canada Harbour Place in Vancouver, *Le Vieux Port de Montréal* and de Quebec, and the Forks and North Portage corporations in Winnipeg). According to Courchene: “Canadians have displayed a rare genius in accommodating their political structures to emerging internal and external forces... These innovations were the result, however, of process, not structure, although in many cases they were tantamount to a de facto alteration of the division of powers in the federations” [Courchene 1995:11]. Conversely, Leo’s explanation for the failure of the City of Toronto’s Charter Movement rests in its demand for a radical structural change in intergovernmental affairs. Its provisions would entail a revocation or a voluntary renunciation of the constitutional authority of provinces over municipal affairs” [Leo 2006:485]. According to Leo, these efforts are still premised on a hierarchical view of intergovernmental affairs where moving forward rests upon solving longstanding constitutional dilemmas.

In a more “procedural” understanding of intergovernmental affairs, the objective is not to debate federal-provincial relations but to give worth to innovative ideas and practices that join the three levels of government in ways that are sufficiently flexible to respect provincial and local differences. The shift in language from “government” to “governance” is emblematic of this change. Governance processes find ways to leverage ideas, coordinate collective resources, and use new tools and techniques to inspire and steer decision-making. Rather than acting alone or resorting to jurisdictional claims, governments work with one another and through

civil society partnerships for joint problem-solving [Saint-Martin 2004]. Neil Bradford outlines the central features of a “place-based governance model” and notes how its organizational logic, design principles, delivery mechanism, policy goals, policy discourse, policy knowledge, policy skills, evaluation frames, and learning dynamic each differ from traditional government administration [Bradford 2009:15].

Underlying many of these changes, however, is the need for community and policy actors to be flexible and creative as they collaborate towards a common goal. The recent External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities dedicates the final chapter of its report to addressing this same need [External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities 2006]. Most important, the report explains, is the creative mindset, which provides the necessary grounds for collaboration and flexibility.

### *Questions for Consideration:*

1. It is clear that the Canadian federation presents a particular set of challenges for community. How might the community agenda play out differently in a unitary state such as the United Kingdom, where the central government can reorganize its institutional landscape at will?
2. While the Canadian federation presents particular challenges, what reasons might have contributed to the decision to incorporate this institutional framework? For example, what benefits might a federal union offer? In what kinds of social, economic and geographical landscapes might this type of system be most relevant and beneficial?
3. While municipalities were deemed to be “creatures” of the provinces, are there particular policy fields that have emerged as particularly significant at the local level? In which policy areas might there be more tension or a need for collaboration between local actors and those operating at higher levels of government?

# *Discussion Paper: Considering Collaboration, Considering Advocacy*

## **Learning Objectives:**

- To reflect on the nature of collaboration and what may distinguish it from advocacy
- To begin to assess under what scenarios one or another (or both) may be desirable

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## *Collaboration and Advocacy*

The *Community-Government Collaboration on Policy* was the coming together of various organizations to “build a robust understanding of how communities and government can collaborate on policy” [Manual 2009:11]. With collaboration at its centre, the project identified **collaborative policy development** as that which happens

when people from different organizations or units within the same organization produce something together through joint effort, resources and decision-making and share ownership of the final product or service” [Manual 2009:21, cf Linden 2002].

Collaboration is premised on the notion that a diversity of sectors working together can be more effective in reaching desired outcomes – particularly with regards to complex policy files; there is a greater likelihood that the requisite knowledge, experience and tools will be present to solve these complex problems (see Manual Section B: ‘Collaboration Basics’). Collaboration, then, is a means to an end – *the development of sound policy, in this case* – and may look different from one scenario to another, possibly being formal or informal, task- or goal-oriented, one-time or ongoing or marked by various kinds of relationships.

Given the intention to leverage resources towards the development of particular policy outcomes, how is collaboration on policy different from advocacy on policy?

**Advocacy** might also be understood as a means to an end. Key to understanding advocacy is understanding the intention to influence a particular system – commonly political – in order to create change. A commonly used definition of advocacy was developed by the Government of Canada/Voluntary Sector Joint Initiative in 1999, defining it as

the act of speaking or of disseminating information intended to influence individual behavior or opinion, corporate conduct or public policy and law [Government of Canada Joint Voluntary Sector Initiative 1999].

## *Collaboration versus Advocacy?*

While both collaboration and advocacy might serve as a means to policy change, their approach may be markedly different. For example, the principles of collaboration (noted in Manual, p75) include, among others, adopting a 'no blame' principle, respecting partners' needs vis-à-vis public relations and valuing the contributions of different partners. These principles might appear contrary to certain advocacy efforts, which may be premised upon targeting for change a particular system (making the creation of a 'no blame' table problematic). The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, through the *Income Tax Act*, also differentiates between the two, stipulating that a registered charity may only allocate 10 percent of its resources to political (advocacy) activities – while excluding discussions with elected officials and bureaucrats (a form of policy dialogue or collaboration?) from this limitation.

Whereas collaboration is understood as a 'working together,' advocacy may be seen as a 'working against,' or at least in clear distinction from government or another body (recognizing alternative interpretations of advocacy might also be offered). Various success factors, however, may be similar. Actors external to – but wishing to collaborate with – government in the development of policy will be in a stronger position if they are familiar with government policy priorities. Such familiarity (or monitoring) may enable the identification of common ground and may even facilitate the participation of government representatives dependent on objectivity or constrained by a corporate culture. Of course, one might imagine that advocacy efforts will also be strengthened by a sound knowledge of the policy landscape, as alternatives brought forward may be more credible if backed by evidence or demonstration of feasibility. In reflecting on the state of advocacy in Canada today, Sean Moore writes:

...while the distinction between *public-policy development* and *public-policy advocacy* is important to note, it's also imperative to emphasize that a nuanced understanding of the former is essential to the effectiveness of the latter – and that this needs to be reflected in whatever approaches are taken to improving the [non-profit] sector's ability to influence decisions of government. In other words ... for any organization to be effective in its advocacy, it is vital that it first consider the issues that it's dealing with and the propositions it intends to put forward through the political and policy lens of those whom one is trying to influence [Moore 2006].

More than simply knowing government policy priorities, however, it has been suggested that "collaborations need to find ways to link...and find common framing for an issue, thereby making it easier for public officials to communicate objectives with their colleagues and elected officials, where appropriate" [Manual 2009:44]. Could this common framing result in a certain tension, leaving advocates constrained in their own abilities to identify needed change. Is there a trade-off that is made?

The *Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector* [<http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/CP32-75-2001E.pdf>] identified a number of principles guiding their relationship, including that of independence, noting that “advocacy is inherent to debate and change in a democratic society and, subject to [the above-mentioned] principles, it should not affect any funding relationship that might exist.”

It may be likely that securing the involvement of a public servant or politician in any policy collaboration requires a softening of language or (constructive) critique towards a policy or program currently in existence. Given particular power relations, collaborative efforts might also demand a coalescence around particular processes (languages, cultures of engagement) – more or less foreign to one or another partner in a collaboration. With these possibilities in mind, critics may suggest that a community partner is ‘selling out’ by participating in a collaborative policy development exercise.

However, on the other hand, the compromises required by collaboration and the courage required in finding potential areas for synergy are time and labour-intensive. These compromises may require a ‘give-and-take’ relationship involving all partners – a kind of relationship inherent to, or at least requisite of, communal decision-making. And, such time and resource intensive processes require patience; the ‘quick wins’ that might sustain an advocacy campaign could be challenging to identify.

### *Collaboration or Advocacy?*

Whether you meet with the Deputy Minister’s office or get 10,000 people to join you in the street – it’s all part of the endeavor to participate in the public policy making process [Volunteer Canada 2003].

Perhaps it isn’t one or the other. Collaborations can, of course, take on different shapes, as noted on the ‘Working Together Continuum’ found on page 25. Advocates can work in collaboration, joined together by their desire for change. And while the capacity to leverage may vary with one approach versus another, the pursuit of a goal could involve varied efforts at different points or in varied contexts. While poverty reduction may be a policy priority increasingly identified by political parties and governments alike, collaboration towards poverty reduction strategies may not have been as likely without the efforts of advocates ensuring poverty reduction surfaced on the political agenda.

In this sense, perhaps advocacy and collaboration could be characterized as different points along a policy change cycle. Perhaps – and this could simply be a hypothesis – the need to solve complex problems can be identified through advocacy or a rich (collaborative) dialogue, while the search for solutions is best undertaken collaboratively, combining community knowledge and experience with formal policy development processes in a more holistic, system-wide approach. And of course, advocacy and collaboration may not be mutually exclusive – each may complement the other.

Regardless, attention to the critiques of collaboration are yet important. Advocates need to know the 'way in' to collaborations. The requisite political capital and other resources (such as that needed to carry out research) required for participation in collaborations perhaps also ought to be available to the many in order to ensure an inclusive and collaborative approach.

*Questions for Consideration:*

1. Does collaboration, or even the co-production of policy, necessitate an 'alignment' of interests that could be detrimental to the authentic expression of community partners or actually serve as a way of regulating their participation [Somerville 2004; DeFelippis et al 2006]?
2. Within the CCRA, activities oriented towards informing (education) are charitable and those to persuasion (advocacy) are not. What does this mean for collaborative policy development?
3. Does collaborative policy development effectively de-politicize the articulation of policy objectives, shifting 'politics' from a more traditional P/political sphere to the policy development process itself?
4. Are there situations, in your view, where advocacy might still take precedence over collaboration in the development of policy?

## *Exercises*

The following three exercises could each be adapted for a variety of educational and/or group settings involving individuals wishing to experience some of the challenges and opportunities involved in collaboration and policy development pertaining to complex files.

### **(1) *Role Play: Bringing diverse stakeholders around a common table for a common purpose***

***Context:*** Working collaboratively necessitates the coming together of diverse community stakeholders. Even when a desired policy outcome is known and shared, the actual balancing of each participant's interests and organizational mandates adds complexity.

***Objective:*** To recognize the importance in collaborations of respecting diverse interests and of finding common ground in order to make concrete progress towards shared objectives.

***Activity:*** Students will adopt one specific policy objective towards which collaboration has been convened. For example, students could work towards a policy framework and action plan that will reduce the numbers of homeless individuals dependent on emergency shelter beds. Other examples could also be pursued.

In this exercise - which could be adapted to last one hour or one day - each student will be assigned, in advance, one specific role or character (such as an organizational representative) to play in a mock community roundtable. Suggested roles towards the example above are identified below. Each student needs to fully respect and pursue the vision and mission of the organization which they are representing, recognizing that while joined together by a common objective, each also seeks maximum impact for their own discrete organizational objectives. Ideally, the student will have been informed of his/her role ahead of time, enabling opportunity to develop familiarity with the organization's positions and objectives.

A facilitator will serve as broker/facilitator, instructed with the role of convening this community conversation - and managing the varied approaches, and potentially, tensions. The facilitator's objective is to ensure that each stakeholder stays at the table; it is possible that this could involve needing to frame the common objective in different ways to different stakeholders, ensuring relevance to each is maintained at all times.

The gathering could serve as a one-time gathering, from which a concrete, time-specific plan emerges. Alternatively, the gathering could serve as a conversation establishing a foundation for more ongoing collaboration towards the desired objective.

In order to develop an action plan that will reduce the numbers of homeless individuals dependent on emergency shelter beds, the following roles could be assigned to participants (these are only suggestions, others could be added while some could be taken away):

- Local elected Councilor / Alderman
- Provincial Senior Policy Advisor with responsibility for Housing
- Municipal Planner
- Executive Director of local association representing private landlords
- President of a small non-profit housing provider
- Executive Director of the local Business Improvement Area
- Two residents, including one living in a local condominium tower recently established in the downtown core, and another residing in an outer suburb
- Individual citizen currently residing in transitional housing
- University research associate
- The president of a local retail company
- Program Manager with the Government of Canada's employment skills-training program

*Additional Considerations / Ideas:*

- During this fictitious dialogue, the external environment could change; an election may bring a new government to power, representing an alternative policy platform, or the business executive of the local retail company may change, introducing a new personality to the table. What are the implications?
- Reorganization inside any office could mean a representative needs to withdraw from the collaboration – without advance knowledge.
- The exercise could be pursued with respect to any complex policy issue, including those addressed or named by the five participating sites in the Community-Government Collaboration on Policy
- In the final presentation, noting details of the policy framework or action plan that has been developed, guests representing those roles played by individuals could be invited to offer feedback.

## (2) Simulation: Discerning the landscape and navigating towards success

### **Context:**

*The challenge for evaluators, and for problem solvers, is that not all problems are bounded, have optimal solutions, or occur within stable parameters. These kinds of problems – called complex or ‘wicked’ – are difficult to define. This is the place where innovators often find themselves... [Manual 2009:E5]*

A recurring theme that emerges in the stories of policy-focused collaborations is one around variation and context-specificity. As also noted, “Collaborators outside of government must stay current with their local policy context. Having a detailed understanding of the development and direction of policy initiatives helps identify possible entry points and contacts through which relationships and collaborative initiatives may begin” [Manual 2009:B4]. The experiences of communities working with the Collaboration on Policy demonstrate the importance of knowing the local context – that is, knowing where relationships are strong, where leadership resides, where change levers can be found, where time and resources are located and where public attention is most focused (among other aspects). Determining the pathway to reach an objective can be difficult; as Section D of the Manual makes clear, various options must be taken into account in terms of pursuing a particular policy approach, with important questions considered, including: Who benefits? Who might be negatively affected? What kind of time is required or available to implement a solution? What are the associated costs and financing? What are the policy complexities? (See Manual, Section D.)

**Objective:** To assess various options, based on knowledge of the local policy and program context, towards a desired policy objective.

**Activity:** The Commission on Social Determinants of Health was set up by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2005 to aid in understanding what needs to be done to promote healthy equity. According to the WHO,

*The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, including the health system. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels, which are themselves influenced by policy choices. The social determinants of health are mostly responsible for health inequities - the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries. [[http://www.who.int/social\\_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/social_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/en/index.html)]*

The Commission on Social Determinants of Health issued its final report in 2008, entitled: *Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health* [Commission 2008]. In order to close health gaps within a generation, the Commission makes a number of recommendations, including those pertaining to fostering “healthy places, healthy people.” The report notes that “within cities, new models of governance are required to plan cities that are designed in such a way that the physical, social and natural environments prevent and ameliorate the new urban health risks, ensuring the equitable inclusion of all city dwellers in the

processes by which urban policies are formed” [Commission, 2008:63]. As such, the Commission recommends that: “Local government and civil society, backed by national government, establish local participatory governance mechanisms that enable communities and local government to partner in building healthier and safer cities” [Commission, 2008:63].

Working as a group, for this exercise you have been asked to give advice, in the form of three options, to one particular City (your choice). Where should this City begin (e.g., where to intervene) in implementing the above recommendation? In other words, how might the City go about establishing local participatory governance mechanisms enabling partnerships towards healthier and safer cities? How might the City best frame its work? It is important that you consider the actual context within which you are working (current federal, provincial and local governments, public opinion, business climate, etc.).

You will present three options towards creating and implementing a strategy / plan towards this end. Each strategy may begin differently. For example, you may find that elsewhere, collaborative governance mechanisms have been led by community safety officials interested in crime prevention; in others, residents have been convened under the auspices of a local housing provider in order to improve neighbourhood cohesion. Each may have resulted in local participatory governance mechanisms enabling healthy and safe cities, but each was resourced differently and responded to varied priorities. Each was also dependent on differing community leadership structures. Indeed, initial interventions in the policy and legislative process could differ.

In this exercise, you’ll need to consider the broader political, economic, social and cultural context within which this City is located to consider the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in pursuing a strategy towards implementation of the recommendation. The following questions are included so as to draw attention to various aspects of this context:

- What are the policy and program priorities, as already outlined, of various governments (federal, provincial, local, Aboriginal) and their respective departments / agencies? These may be helpful for knowing how to frame your policy pathway.
- Which office / organization (government department, agency or private sector organization) has expressed a strong interest in this objective – or a significant openness to working with the public? How might you generate community interest or interest from government?
- Where might it be easier to secure representatives from organizations that you believe should be involved? Where might impact be greatest?
- What key relationships are needed to make progress, and what relationships are already in place on which to draw?

- How might the public perceive of an issue, and where might their concerns be greatest?
- Where is the evidence to support the effectiveness of a particular strategy, and how will this evidence be received by governments, other stakeholders, the public?
- How might you incorporate long-term objectives into short-term actions? How could you best secure quick wins towards this end?
- Should one organization / department be assigned to take a 'lead' role?

### (3) Tracing up the Line (aka 'Identifying the Spin')

**Context:** Policy monitoring – the creation of policy indices – was a focus of the Collaboration on Policy. This activity took the shape of monitoring policy developments across provincial jurisdictions. As noted in the Manual, when monitoring policy developments, one must “[b]e careful when tracking major changes introduced in government budgets or strategies; official government websites often re-package and re-announce various policy measures” [Manual 2009:A3].

**Objective:** To identify first-hand the (potential) multiple announcements and iterations of a particular policy or program along the pathway from first announcement to on-the-ground delivery and implementation.

**Activity:** Students will begin by identifying a local community project that has benefited from public (government) funds. The project could be a local pilot initiative, an infrastructure project, or a new program intended to achieve a particular objective.

For this project, the student will identify the program or policy envelope from which public funding originated (e.g., a specific federal jobs creation program, or a specific provincial infrastructure program, etc.).

Having recognized the specific envelope (policy or program) from which the funding was made available, the student will look back in time to the original (high-level) announcement informing citizens of this new policy or program. This step could involve reviewing Budgets, press releases and press conferences, strategy or Throne speeches, amongst other communiqués. Any subsequent announcements or iterations with regards to this policy or program will be identified – including all those leading up to the announcement of this specific, local community project.

In so doing, the student will pay particular attention to how the policy or program evolves, if at all, and how the policy or program is contextualized. Have the objectives changed? Have government priorities shifted? Has the local organization adapted its own mission and vision to ensure its activities fit within the policy or program funding envelope? The activity could be supplemented with interviews to track more fully the changes that may have occurred in program objectives / terms since initial announcements. For example, what were the initial objectives of the funding envelope? Have these evolved? How did the project proponent access the funds?

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