

B.C.- Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA)

Project Proposal – Project D10-2009

A. Title of project:

Advancing the Social Economy Through Networks and Collaboration

B. With which BALTA SERC Is this project associated? Or is it a cross cutting project?

Although an earlier version of this proposal was submitted to SERC 3, this substantially revised version is now clearly a cross-cutting project.

C. Lead researcher, organization name and contact information:

Mark Roseland, roseland@sfu.ca

D. Names of other researchers and organizations involved:

BALTA Steering Committee and others (to be determined later) as project advisory committee

E. Description of project, including objectives, outputs and intended outcomes:

The purpose of this research is to determine the organizational form that BALTA may assume and the roles it may be able to play in the future in relation to the evolution of the social economy in Canada. This research will examine researcher-practitioner networks and other networks as appropriate, in order to identify best practice models, assess how each of them functions, and why they are successful. This information will contribute to a proposed model for how BALTA may be structured and operate in the future.

The first four months of this research will explore existing literature on networks, in order to build a theoretical understanding of how networks function and to understand and identify particular characteristics and features which make collaborative models successful. Although the literature review will focus on research-practitioner networks in particular, it is anticipated that the broader literature on network theory and other collaborative models will also be of relevance. A report will be produced which will outline the key findings from the literature review as well as a compendium of best practice models identified during the literature review.

The final four months of the research will involve interviewing members of both BALTA and the CSEHub in order to determine possible legacy outcomes, activities, interests, and a vision for how BALTA may continue after SSHRC funding has ended. The findings of these interviews, combined with the findings from the literature review will inform a proposed model for a strengthened social economy community and network. A

final report will contain a set of recommendations of the future activities and structure of BALTA and the strategic direction it might take in order to advance the social economy in Canada.

Project Objectives:

- 1) Through a literature review, understand the various ways that academic-practitioner networks and other relevant collaborative models are structured, organized, and how they function.
- 2) Identify best practice collaborative models and understand how each operates and sets out to accomplish its stated objectives and goals.
- 3) Develop a model of the kinds of (post-SSHRC funding) future activities BALTA may be able to undertake, based upon the findings in the literature review and interviews conducted with BALTA and CSEHub members.

Project Outputs:

- 1) A literature review summarizing the research on what makes networks effective.
- 2) A compendium of best practice collaborative models and networks for dissemination to BALTA.
- 3) A report containing research findings, including recommendations and potential strategies for BALTA's future.
- 4) Presentation of final report and research findings at the 2010 BALTA symposium and other meetings as appropriate, (e.g., CCED-Net conference or Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences).

Project Outcomes:

- 1) Strategies and recommendations for strengthening BALTA's ability to advance and strengthen local social economies.
- 2) A conceptualization of how BALTA and CSEHub members imagine the future of the social economy in Canada and the future role of BALTA.
- 3) A foundation for BALTA to discuss legacy issues in its final SSHRC-funded year.

F. Purpose and significance of the research, including congruence with the strategic research objectives identified for the SERC and BALTA. Why should this project be approved, given BALTA's limited resources? [Refer to the project criteria in the BALTA Workplans and Project Proposals Policy.]

This project seeks to strengthen the role of BALTA beyond its SSHRC-funded mandate in terms of advancing and scaling up the social economy in BC, Alberta, and more widely in Canada; it will also provide a foundation for the BALTA network to discuss legacy issues in its final SSHRC-funded year. As is evident from the work of the social economy regional research nodes across Canada, networks represent a promising approach for improving and scaling up actions in the pursuit of constructing strong local social economies through sharing best practices, ideas, and strategies between communities, regions, and across borders. This research hypothesizes that network collaboration may also lead to new ways of theorizing and framing the social economy and new assessments of the potential for the social economy to revitalize and strengthen local communities.

G. Will the project involve student researchers in a paid or unpaid capacity? If yes, will they need to be recruited or have they already been identified? Briefly describe the roles and responsibilities of students involved in the research project, the skills/experience they will acquire, and how this will complement their academic training. Explain as well how adequate supervision and support of the student will be ensured.

Freya Kristensen, a PhD researcher at the Centre for Sustainable Community Development and the Department of Geography at Simon Fraser University, will be the paid student researcher. Freya's interests are tied closely to the proposed research, and include the role of networks in building local sustainable communities. Before commencing her PhD, Freya worked for the Columbia Institute Centre for Civic Governance, and in 2007 edited a volume in their Going for Green Leadership Series.

H. Research activities, plan of work and timetable:

1) Literature review: Months 1-3

The literature review will reveal key characteristics and components of academic-practitioner networks (and other models of collaboration as appropriate) as well as provide an understanding of network theory. The literature review will answer questions about the importance of networks, tangible results of networks, the importance of their size and structure, and what makes them effective. The literature review will also reveal ideal case study networks, based on criteria in the literature about what makes a network effective.

2) Writing up literature review findings: Month 4

A report will be produced which will detail the findings from the literature review and will include a compendium of best practice models identified in the literature. An inventory of the goals, values, and mission of each best practice model will be developed, including past and current projects, initiatives, and plans. It is likely that background calls will be made in order to collect the required information that may not be available on the internet.

3) Develop interview script and carry out interviews with BALTA and CSEHub members: Months 5-7

4) Writing up interview findings; synthesize research findings into proposed model for the future role of BALTA; preparation of conference paper: Month 8

The results of this research will be compiled into a report for dissemination to BALTA members and presentation at the 2010 BALTA symposium. A conference paper will be produced for CCED-Net or the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, or others as appropriate.

I. Describe plans for communicating research results within the academic community. Indicate audience and specific output(s) i.e., refereed journal articles, conference presentations or other appropriate channels.

Plans for communicating research results include:

- Preparing a report for BALTA;
- Presentations at conferences and meetings as appropriate.

J. Describe plans for communicating research results outside the academic community to practitioners, policy makers, and other people for whom the research results could be significant. Indicate audience and specific output(s).

- Presentations at BALTA meetings and other meetings as appropriate (e.g., CCED-Net’s annual conference);
- A report with a summary of the research findings will be prepared for dissemination to interested networks.

K. Describe your plans for monitoring and evaluating your research project. Feel free to consult with BALTA’s Coordinator on designing possible approaches. (Note that monitoring and evaluation are extremely important both for ensuring the success of the project as well as satisfying reporting to SSHRC.)

The project will be evaluated both quarterly and at the end of each research activity phase (see H above).

L. What are the research tools you propose to use in your project?

NOTE: If your research involves human subjects, you **MUST** provide copies of your proposed research tools (as well as your research plan) prior to commencing research. Please see the document “*BALTA Ethical Review Process – Simplified*” for information about ethical review requirements.

A literature review as well as internet research on specific networks will be the main research tools to be used in the project. Background calls to network staff will likely be required in order to obtain necessary information to develop each case study. The interview script will be developed in month 5 and will be submitted for ethical review at this time.

M. Budget and Contributions

Information can be both dollar figures and anecdotal, including in-kind contributions and requests for BALTA support (eg. staff support for dissemination).

Category	Requested of BALTA	Other Contributions
Student salaries	\$12,000	
Student benefits/overhead costs (if the student will be a CCCR hire, add 10.5% of the student salaries amount; if the student will be employed by another	\$1260	

institution, add the relevant amount)		
Researcher Release Time	N/A	
Research Support Costs (e.g. supplies, communication costs)	\$250	In-kind contribution, CSCD-SFU
Knowledge Dissemination		
Travel		
TOTALS	\$13,510	

Budget explanation

Student salaries & benefits

\$25/hour x 60 hours per month x 8 months = \$12,000

Research Support Costs

Primarily for long-distance telephone expenses.