

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

Revised Project Plan & Proposal – Project C10-2007
(Revised June 2009)

A. Project Title

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OF THE SOCIAL ECONOMY SECTOR

B. Brief description of project

This research project was developed to explore municipal government support of the social economy sector in a Canadian context, with an emphasis on BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario. The project is a collaboration between the BC/AB (BALTA) and SK/MB/NWO nodes of the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships (CSERP) with conceptual support for the research from CCEDNet. The research is intended to address the following objectives:

- To explore and analyse municipal government support for the social economy sector in a Canadian context, with emphasis upon the identified provinces and focusing on involvement in specific sectors (affordable housing, green/sustainable cities, social enterprise development, training and employment, financing, etc.).
- To identify innovative examples of municipal support for the social economy from the research and any identifiable factors that contributed to the success or strengthening of municipal government support for the social economy
- To explore the issue of scale by comparing the role of local government in supporting the social economy in larger urban contexts and in rural or rural municipal contexts.
- To make recommendations for advancing support of the social economy sector at a municipal level.
- To explore co-ordinating and co-designing research across more than one node in CSERP.

C. Project developments to date

The original timeframe for this project was May 2007 to April 2008. Due to delays in decision making and a range of capacity and other issues, the project was not completed during this timeframe, though significant research was done in 2008 by one student (Emma Sharkey) employed by BALTA.

While Emma's original contract and role with the project has finished, it is strongly agreed by the project team that the project would benefit from Emma's continued involvement once the other project participants have completed their data gathering and research analysis, synthesis and writing takes place. This revised plan and proposal includes budget resources for that to take place. It also defines revised timelines, somewhat scaled down objectives, outputs and outcomes, and a plan to complete the project by September 2008. Two individuals – Dr. Peter Hall (academic advisor and co-lead) and Stuart Wulff (management support), have also joined the project team

D. Brief description of project and project objectives, outputs and proposed outcomes

The original project objectives and intended outputs and outcomes were very ambitious, even before the various implementation difficulties were encountered. As the research methodology was developed, some aspects of the original aims, notably with respect to gathering data and analyzing key success factors related to best practice, were not incorporated into the survey methodology. The objectives, outputs and outcomes have been scaled back somewhat to make them achievable within the current situation.

This research project will explore municipal government support of the social economy sector in a Canadian context, with an emphasis on BC, Alberta and the Prairies and Northern Ontario. This is a collaboration between the BC-AB node and the Prairie node of the Canadian Social Economy Hub with conceptual support for the research from CCEDNet.

We plan to use networks of CED activists, practitioners and consultants to identify key informants in municipal government (employees, elected officials, senior administrators, and the provincial association boards) to elicit a range of possibilities for policy/municipal actions.

This will require initial fleshing out of the actual scope of municipal decision-making as policy specialists often downplay the municipal level because of its sub-ordinate relationship to provincial government. Yet, the scope of services delivered at the municipal level has increased during neo-liberalism with provincial government downloading of responsibilities in human services, health care, seniors care, emergency services and heritage preservation. The political struggle between provinces and cities over resources to fund these responsibilities could create openings for SE initiatives.

Likewise, the new direct relationship between cities and the federal government has resulted in the transfer of federal funds to the municipal level (GST rebate, gas tax, green infrastructure funds, and some heritage and cultural funding). Together these structural changes have increased the scope of municipal control and opened up opportunities to reinvest in SE activities (instead of business as usual).

We anticipate a telephone survey of representatives in all the major cities (over 50,000) and a representative sample from smaller communities. We will be working with the mapping and case study people in both nodes to pre-identify likely examples of good SE/municipal cooperation and contacts for case studies.

Project Timeline

- The project began November 2007 and be completed by September 2009.

Project Objectives

- To explore and analyse municipal government support for the social economy sector in a Canadian context, with emphasis upon BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Northern Ontario, including key areas of involvement in specific sectors (affordable housing, green/sustainable cities, social enterprise development, training and employment, financing, etc.).

- To identify innovative municipal support for the social economy from the research and any readily identifiable factors that contributed to the success or strengthening of municipal government support for the social economy.
- To explore the issue of scale by comparing the role of local government in supporting social economy in larger urban contexts and a rural or rural municipal contexts.
- To make recommendations for advancing support of the social economy sector at a municipal level.
- To explore co-ordinating and co-designing research across more than one node in the Canadian Social Economy Hub.

Project Outputs

- Research report providing some analysis of municipal support for the social economy, including discussion of generalisability across the two nodes and more widely.
- PowerPoint presentation on the research findings including what the research intentions were and key learnings. To be presented at BALTA's next symposium anticipated for Fall 2009 and in other relevant venues (federations of municipalities, etc.).
- Report and analysis of the municipal research disseminated through BALTA website and the CCEDNET website.
- Document outlining:
 - key learnings and summary recommendations of what interested municipalities could do to advance support of the social economy
 - opportunities for advancing support of the social economy through provincial municipal and County federations (AUMA and UBCM) and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

Project Outcomes

- Increased understanding of the role municipal government plays in the social economy sector.
- Increased knowledge of municipal support of the social economy sector and some specific examples.
- Increased understanding of next steps in engaging municipal government in supporting the social economy sector.
- Cross node discussion about definitions and development of policy alternatives.

E. Purpose and significance of the study, including congruence of the proposed research with the over-all strategic research objectives identified for the SERC and BALTA

The purpose of this study is to research the current state of municipal government involvement in and support of the social economy sector. The social economy sector can offer innovative responses to the complex social and economic challenges that municipalities face.

As the level of government closest to people and communities, municipal governments can play a lead role in supporting the social economy sector. This research into the role of municipal government in the social economy will help us to understand their intermediary role, and identify opportunities for strengthening this role.

In the current political context in Canada, Alberta and B.C., municipalities appear to be demonstrating considerably greater openness to engagement with the social economy than other levels of government. Thus this project can represent a strategic opportunity to both advance the positioning of the sector with municipal governments and to ultimately form alliances with municipal governments in promoting the social economy to other levels of government.

We also propose to engage AUMA and UBCM in discussions about how best to advance our research findings through their respective organizations to further engage interested municipalities in the Social Economy. If cross provincial findings appear significant, we would also engage in similar discussions with FCM.

F. Will this project be led and managed by a SERC member or members or will it require a request for proposals?

This is a SERC 3 project, but it has been led and managed by a BALTA member from SERC 1 due to the specific expertise and relationships she brings to the project. The project lead will liaise with the co-chairs of SERC 3.

G. Lead researcher, organization name and contact information (when known)

This is a joint project with the SK/MB/NWOnt Node however from a BALTA perspective the project will be co-led by:

Jenny Kain, Senior Planner, Policy and Research, Community Services, City of Edmonton – jenny.kain@edmonton.ca
Peter Hall, Professor, Urban Studies and Center for Sustainable Community Development, Simon Fraser University – pvhall@sfu.ca

H. Names of other researchers and organizations involved (when known)

On behalf of SK/MB/NWOnt Node – Brendan Reimer – Project C-10 Research Advisor , Manitoba Research Alliance on Community Economic Development - breimer@ccednet-rcdec.ca

I. Will the project involve hiring one or more student researchers? Will they need to be recruited or have they already been identified?

Two students and Jenny Kain, the project co-lead are involved in the research process. Student Robyn Webb's role is being supported from the SK/MB/NWOnt node. The BALTA employed student, Emma Sharkey, has completed her original contract. This revised plan includes a proposal to hire Emma for a modest additional number of hours to participate in the analysis/synthesis and writing stages of the project completion.

J. Brief description of project roles and responsibilities for project participants (lead researcher, other researchers, student researchers, partner organizations).

Lead Researcher – The BALTA project co-leads will split responsibilities as follows:

Peter Hall – supervising the BALTA employed student, supporting and advising the project team.

Jenny Kain – supporting and advising the project team, completing research component on municipalities over 500,000, assisting with networking and municipal contact information to support the research and coordinating fulfillment of project aims

Stuart Wulff - overseeing the budget for the research and ensuring budget compliance and coordinating fulfillment of project aims and reporting to BALTA. BALTA Coordinator will also be providing support to student contracting for this project.

Brendan Reimer – the SK/MB/NWOnt node lead contact is responsible for supervising their student, Robyn Webb as well as supporting and advising the project team and coordinating fulfillment of project aims.

Other Researchers will:

- Assist with networking and providing contact info for other potential stakeholders
- Assist with assessment of student researchers
- Provide project input and feedback as requested
- Provide feedback on draft reports

Student researchers will:

- Complete research as per the description above (survey, analysis)
- Prepare draft reports for review by the research team
- Prepare final research reports

All will

The co-leads will work collaboratively, with the students, to co-author the research paper and ppt presentation, the document on opportunities for advancing support, and the summary of learning about collaborative research.

Implementation timeline:

April-June	Completion of data gathering
June-July	Analysis and synthesis of research data Drafting of initial research reports
August	Finalizing of basic research reports Preparation of other project outputs
September	Wrap-up of the project

K. Indicative Budget

Category	Requested of BALTA	Other Contributions
Student salaries	\$2,250	
Student benefits	\$236	
Researcher Release Time		Significant time will be contributed by Kain and Reimer with lesser time contributions by others
Research Support Costs	\$150 – mileage, phone calls, publication/research materials, supplies	
Knowledge Dissemination	\$150 - printing	
Travel	\$2,500 – Travel for a project team meeting	
TOTALS	\$5,286	In-kind time contributions

Explanation of budget items:

Most of the items were in the original project budget and are unspent. The new items are as follows:

Student – Payment for Emma Sharkey to continue involvement with the project. Actual payment would be based on hours worked to a maximum of 90 hours at \$25/hr.

Travel – To allow for a face-to-face project team meeting in Winnipeg or Vancouver at an appropriate time for project analysis/synthesis. Travel costs would potentially support 3 BALTA participants. This was omitted from the initial project proposal, a significant handicap for BALTA's only project of co-research with another node.