

BC-Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA)
Partnership Development Project – Research on Social Economy,
Community Resilience and the Transition to Sustainability

Memorandum of Understanding for BALTA Partners

This research partnership is an extension, with an expanded and diversified membership, of the BALTA partnership and research program which has functioned since 2006. The new partnership also represents a reoriented research scope and methodology focused on the development of a new interdisciplinary research program as elaborated in the *Social Economy, Community Resilience and the Transition to Sustainability* Partnership Development Grant proposal to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The new partnership will function from 2012 to 2014 (subject to SSHRC funding support) and will gather and further develop expertise in a formalized collaboration working towards development of a longer term partnership and research program. The intent is that this partnership would then secure next-stage research funding, for example through a SSHRC Partnership Grant, in order to carry out the research program for several years beyond 2014.

This MOU reflects the lived experience of community-university, practitioner-academic research partnership that has evolved in BALTA since 2006 and the lessons that have been drawn from that experience about how to ensure effective partnership and co-construction and dissemination of research. The MOU summarizes important principles and understandings that will govern the research partnership. The MOU may be further elaborated during the partnership development process.

BALTA brings together a range of partner organizations, both formally through direct organizational partnership commitments and informally through the participation of individuals associated with specific organizations and sectors as co-investigators and collaborators in the research partnership. This MOU addresses the following aspects of the partnership:

- Roles and responsibilities of partners within BALTA;
- Contributions that partners make to the BALTA partnership; and
- Rights that partners have with respect to decision making, access to resources, etc.

1. Various forms of partnership exist within the BALTA model:
 - a. **Formal Partners** – Organizations that have formally agreed to be partner organizations and have committed in writing to this partnership. In addition to organizational commitments to support BALTA, formal partners generally have one or more individuals participating directly in the research program as co-investigators and/or collaborators.
 - b. **Collaborating Partners** – Most participating co-investigators and collaborators in BALTA bring an active organizational relationship to the BALTA partnership, even if that organization does not enter into formal partnership. Through their participation in the BALTA partnership, participants bring this organizational relationship to the table, and such informal partner organizations often become involved beyond the individual participant in partnering with BALTA on specific initiatives.
 - c. **Relational Associates** – Other organizations take a significant interest in BALTA, but are not formally associated either as partners or through participants. They do become involved in specific BALTA initiatives, particularly with respect to dissemination and mobilization of research.

BALTA and its steering committee will welcome input into our research planning and other activities from all its partners and we will employ a range of mechanisms to facilitate such input. However, only formal and collaborating partners have a direct say through their participant representatives in BALTA decision making.

2. Formal partners will participate in selecting the partner representative members of the steering committee who will serve in addition to the four co-leads. A balance of academic and non-academic representation will be maintained on the committee and in other management/governance roles.
3. All partners and their co-investigators and collaborators participating in BALTA agree to work within the aims and framework elaborated in the proposal to SSHRC.
4. Partners are expected to participate actively in BALTA and to contribute to the development of the partnership, including dissemination of existing research, and plans for the future research program. It is recognized that the level and type of participation will vary. Partner representatives participating as co-investigators will be expected to commit time to participate broadly in the planning of the research program and will likely adopt active roles in the future research program. Representatives participating as collaborators may participate around more limited areas of engagement relevant to their specific interests and to the areas where they can most meaningfully contribute.
5. Discussion and planning within BALTA will be structured to ensure input of community/practitioner and university/academic partners and perspectives. All partners commit to ensuring that decisions taken within BALTA balance the perspectives of the various constituencies and interests represented within the partnership, while continuing to ensure the strong BALTA commitment to producing research that is relevant to the needs of communities and practitioners.
6. As a reflection of the balance stated in #5, BALTA has sought to balance leadership within the partnership by having working groups or 'research clusters' that are established within BALTA being co-chaired by an academic and a practitioner member of BALTA. This practice will continue.
7. Decisions will be taken as much as possible by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, then the majority viewpoint will be adopted. It is recognized that the lead applicant/investigator and administering institution are accountable to SSHRC for the use of SSHRC funding and retain the right to veto decisions that could contravene the terms of SSHRC funding or expose them to risk.
8. Partners are expected to contribute relevant in-kind and/or cash resources to support BALTA's work, suitable to their capacity, and to provide other forms of support as relevant (e.g. some academic partners have an available pool of graduate students that can be recruited for research assistants).
9. Partners are expected to contribute towards and facilitate dissemination and mobilization of BALTA and other relevant partner research within their own sectors.
10. The partnership will develop the research framework and specific research initiatives that will comprise the future research program within a focused and integrated plan that will reflect the basic directions laid out in the Partnership Development proposal to SSHRC. Partners have the right to provide input into the shaping of the research priorities, framework and potential projects, and to have a voice in decision making about the research plans (as elaborated in #7 above). The final plans and proposal(s) to funder(s) will be finalized by the steering committee and then ratified by the partners. Individual partners will also have the right to decide whether to participate in the approved future research plan and funding proposals.
11. All partners will have direct input into evaluations related to this BALTA partnership.
12. The expenses for co-investigators and collaborators to participate in partnership meetings will be covered from the partnership budget to the extent that budget resources permit.