

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

Annex A – Project A4-2007 (revised 25 June 2007)

A. Project Title: Role of Faith Based Organizations in the Social Economy

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

The goal of this project is to document the role faith-based organizations play in the social economy in Alberta and B.C., and to investigate ways in which this role can be strengthened and expanded in the future. This will be done through identifying and analyzing innovative approaches and best practices presently being used in Alberta/B.C. and in other jurisdictions in Canada and beyond.

Phases:

1. April 2007- June 2008 Conduct initial literature review and on-line searches on FBOs and the social economy.
Research value convergence between selected faith traditions and SE approaches.
Identify case examples of potential interest through communications within academic, social economy and faith-based networks.
(Student to assist with lit review and online search.)
2. June 2008-Sept. 2009 Conduct in-depth studies of relevant examples based on information surfaced in Phase I.
Identify distinct models of FBO involvement.
Prepare project descriptions and case studies of initiatives that illustrate best practices.
Document trends in FBO involvement and possibilities for growth and expansion in the social economy.
Produce research outputs appropriate for academic, SE and faith sectors.
3. Sept 2009-August 2010 Develop an action strategy for strengthening FBO involvement in the social economy.
Identify potential collaborators in faith groups and other sectors.
Develop distinctive educational and animational resources for use in faith constituencies and non-faith SE constituencies.
Identify financial, human and organizational resources potentially available for an animation strategy.
Develop and launch an education/animation initiative of whatever scope that resources permit.
Evaluate - shut down, go big, be opportunistic.

Project Outputs:

- progress report at end of Phase 1 for SERC 1 and BALTA;
- at end of Phase II – BALTA research publication, academic articles and conference presentations within different academic societies of the Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences;
- selected articles and conference presentations within the faith sectors (at a more popular level);
- selected articles and conference presentations within the SE sector;
- possible action/animation sectoral plans for Phase III.

Project Outcomes

- knowledge and greater awareness of the role faith communities have played and can continue to play within the SE sector;
- increased willingness of SE players to widen the community base of their practice by more intentionally involving faith based organizations in their practice;
- increased willingness and capacity of faith based organizations to be significant players in SE initiatives in their milieu;
- Animation/Action strategy developed to strengthen the social economy in B.C./Alberta through greater faith based organization engagement.

C. 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

In my CED practice over the last thirty years, many of the successful social economy initiatives in the Edmonton region have had significant FBO involvement. This involvement has happened in different ways and is not widely recognized. The history of the SE movement in Canada shows significant faith community engagement (e.g. Antigonish movement, caisse populaire). This continues to the present day (e.g. the United Church Moderator's Consultation on Faith and the Economy, the national ecumenical justice coalitions' Moral Economy Project). Faith based funding groups such as the Canadian Alternative Investment Co-op (CAIC) and the Interchurch Social Justice Fund (PLURA) have been significant SE players. This is a changing environment with risks and opportunities for the SE sector in Canada (e.g. the decline of RC religious orders and the growth of non-Christian faith communities). Relevant research and information dissemination on these concerns can contribute to the future growth of the Canadian SE sector.

I am asked to make presentations on the social economy to religious constituencies and to make presentations on faith community engagement to SE constituencies. I have seen real interest on both sides of these conversations. International examples, especially in the US, show new and innovative models for this type of engagement.

This is being presented as a BALTA (B.C./Alberta) project. However, it quite likely may find resonance with BALTA sister organizations in the different regions of

Canada. There is a distinct possibility of multi-regional collaboration at certain points in this project. If these research goals are achieved, there is also a realistic possibility of raising additional funding and collaborators beyond the present BALTA constituency.

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

The project will be lead and managed by a SERC 1 member.

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

Bob McKeon, Vice Dean and Professor, Newman Theological College, Edmonton
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F. Names of other researchers and organizations involved (when known)

Martin Garber Conrad, CEO, Edmonton Community Foundation
Tel: 780-426-0015, Ext. 115
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Other members of SERC 1 and the wider BALATA membership are also expected to provide advice and assistance at different points of this study.

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

There will be student support in Fall 2007. Recruiting will be by BALTA student recruiting notice in June/July 2007. Research to start in Sept. 2007. Student recruitment is likely in phase 2 and would be presented as part of SERC 1's 2008-2009 workplanning.

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

The project lead researcher will be the lead researcher with student support during phase 1. Bob McKeon has limited time available during Phase I – thus relatively modest goals and expectations. He will have a 12 month sabbatical during phase 2 and will ramp up activity during that phase, including possible recruitment and supervision of a student research assistant.

Other researchers, SERC members, etc., will have input to the project at relevant points.

I. Indicative Budget

Phase I funding for student support is \$2500 (Sept-Dec 2007). In phase 2, a request for some support is likely, including student support in Summer 2008, Fall-Winter 2007-2008 or Summer 2009 and possibly some travel assistance. Some support for publishing (print/electronic) and disseminating research information may also be requested in phase 2. Phase 3 would likely go beyond BALTA's mandate and would require non-BALTA resources which could potentially be raised from a variety of sources.

Bob McKeon's professional time would be fully covered from his academic institution as an in-kind contribution to the project.