

BC-Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA)

Project Proposal – Project B1 (2007-2008) **Understanding the Role of the Social Economy in Advancing Rural Revitalization and Development**

A. Title of project:

Understanding the role of the social economy in advancing rural revitalization and development.

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

This project will build upon the broad literature review currently being conducted for SERC II, and will focus on the role that social enterprises in specific resource sectors play in sustaining and revitalizing rural communities.

This project will consist of two scoping studies – one in each province. Two graduate level students (one from each province), will work with four identified project leads for an initial term of 4 months and, provided their initial work is satisfactory, followed by a further 8 months to complete the scoping studies. Recognizing that we will be researching different sectors over the period of the project, these first studies will look specifically at the following areas:

- non-timber forest products;
- local and organic food systems;
- eco-tourism;
- fisheries; and
- renewable energy (including biofuels from agricultural crops, forestry and industrial and household waste, wind, small-scale hydro, solar, tidal).

Project Objectives

- To frame these resource sectors from a social economy perspective...
- To identify and examine social economy models being utilized within the various sectors
- To conduct a current state analysis of resource-based social economy initiatives underway across Canada and internationally.
- To identify success factors for application in the Canadian, and specifically Alberta and B.C., contexts.
- To understand how the policy environments in BC and Alberta affect and could potentially increase the development of resource-based social economy enterprises in each province.

Outputs

- A research report outlining these findings will be produced and disseminated through the BALTA network and web site.
- A research paper will be published in either or both of an academic journal and a practitioner targeted publication.
- A short 'research note' targeting a broad audience will also be prepared summarizing the findings.
- A presentation or presentations will likely be made, based on the above paper, including either or both of an academic conference or tele-seminar, municipal and provincial meetings/conferences.

Outcomes

- Increased understanding of how social economy and resource management linkages can contribute to the development of more sustainable rural communities.
- Increased knowledge of successful examples of resource-based social enterprises in a rural context.
- Increased knowledge of the barriers associated with social enterprise development in rural communities.
- Increased knowledge of the role of government policy in supporting and promoting resource-based social enterprises in rural communities.

Timeline

The project will begin in April 2007 and end March 31, 2008.

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

During the January meeting, SERC II re-branded the focus and intent of our group to better understand and advance the role of "The Social Economy in Rural Revitalization and Development." This organizing concept provides both a purpose and roadmap for understanding how our work can progress over the next five years. These initial scoping studies (combined with the broad literature overview currently being conducted) will be grounded in an understanding of sustainable rural development and rural revitalization, yet provide insights into the social economy specifics of different resource sectors. Put differently, our *focus* is on over-all community development but with specific 'chapters' on sectors/enterprises.

The studies will also play an important role in linking our SERC II focus and objectives with the mapping project. The research team will gain a better understanding of the sectors, make connections with any sector-based associations or other research entities, and feed this information to the mapping team.

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

The project will be lead and managed by SERC members.

E. Lead researcher, organization name and contact information

Lead Researcher	Organization Name	Contact Information
Mary Beckie	University of Alberta	mary.beckie@ualberta.ca (780) 492-5153
Michele Aasgard	Alberta Community and Co-operative Association	maasgard@acca.coop (780) 451-5959
Sean Markey	Simon Fraser University	spmarkey@sfu.ca (778) 782-7608
Sandy Lockhart	Canadian Centre for Community Renewal	ralock@shaw.ca (250) 655-3190

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

We began to identify additional potential partner organizations during the SERC meetings in January. The identification process will continue in the initial stages of the project and we anticipate having a number of partner organizations involved in the research.

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

We will recruit and hire two graduate student researchers for the scoping studies. This will be an open posting based upon the model used for the initial literature reviews.

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

The lead researchers will oversee student researcher recruitment, develop project parameters, supervise student researchers, ensure budget compliance and assess and monitor work of student researchers.

Other researchers will provide background documents, suggestions for case studies for future research, assistance with assessment of student researcher, and project input and feedback where applicable.

Student researchers will identify projects to be examined, collect data on case studies, assess success factors in B.C. and Alberta, and prepare draft and final research reports.

The research paper will be a collaboration of the lead researcher, the student and potentially other researchers. Ideally, much of the writing will be done by the student, with student involvement in presentations as well.

I. Indicative Budget

Category	Requested of BALTA	Other Contributions
Student salaries & benefits	\$24,000	
Researcher Release Time	No additional funds required beyond those already allocated to SERC 2 participant researchers	Funds may become available from the University of Alberta to support this research project, but this remains to be confirmed.
Research Support Costs		
Knowledge Dissemination	Support of staff to assist with publication preparation as required; no additional funds required.	
Travel	\$3,000 (Maximum \$1,500 per student)	
TOTALS	\$27,000	