

Development Wheel Project

Strengthening Access to and Quality of Technical Assistance: Report on the Re-Profile Objectives in BC

I. Background

As a result of losing two of the three regional sites/intermediaries in BC, and stimulated by a Discussion Paper on Technical Assistance in the UK¹ and a Follow Up Survey of CBO's² from early workshops, the PSG and the RS agreed to taking a different approach to project delivery in BC. This approach was approved in January 2007 and was implemented throughout that calendar year.

In essence, the approach was to deliver workshops and technical assistance (by CCE project staff) within two target regions of BC. Further, to integrate our workshop delivery and the grant fund with the existing Enterprising Non-Profits (ENP) work in order to support scaling up of their rural outreach and SE grant capacity. Finally, that as part of this new approach we would undertake a variety of additional activities to understand and strengthen access to and quality of technical assistance for SE, (such as Discussion Groups, work with CFDCs and piloting approaches to TA).

It is important to recall that while this particular approach targeted two regions in BC, the project continued to support our one regional intermediary – Fraser Valley Centre for Social Enterprise (FVCSE). FVCSE also delivered workshops and provided in person technical assistance to a range of SE's in that region. The FVCSE staff participated in all TA Discussion Groups, and the centre's host, South Fraser CFDC, participated in the CFDC meetings and activities.

II. The Goal

The goal of this “project within the project” is to design and implement a B.C. strategy for systematically enhancing the accessibility and quality of technical assistance relevant to the development and expansion of social enterprise.

III. The Objectives, Activities and Outcomes

1. Early Stage Promotion and Training

To increase the access to technical assistance for groups and organizations at the very early stages (phases 1 and 2 within the Development Wheel framework) and assess the impacts of its availability, at no or low cost, on social enterprise formation.

- a. CCE staff worked with Enterprising Non-Profits (ENP) to integrate our respective workshops so that delivery in two target regions (Okanagan and Vancouver Island) could be made more efficient.

¹ Discussion Paper on Technical Assistance in UK & BC, November 2006, Mike Lewis

² CBO Fall Survey Final, January 2007

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- b. Three workshops were delivered in each region, with one Okanagan workshop delivered early in 2008 (and not included in the data for which the cut off date was Dec. 31/07). There were 59 participants representing 40 organizations attending Okanagan sessions and 69 participants representing 43 organizations attending Vancouver Island sessions. Of these 83 organizations, 57 (69%) were prepared to advance their SE development work after the workshop.
- c. Simultaneously, effort was made to connect with both regional organizations that could support SE in their regions, and with individual consultants. Three CFDCs have responded with some degree of commitment and are now more aware of the resources available for SE development in their areas. The Nanaimo CFDC has continued to host workshops and to provide business counselling for several SE's. In addition, one consultant in the Okanagan was identified and is now working with SE's as a Regional Coach.
- d. Many workshop participants expressed difficulty in translating the workshop and workbook content for their boards and staff after the workshop. They also indicated that they wanted a short description or introduction to SE they could use with other stakeholders in their community. This led to the development of an Introduction to SE Resource Kit being developed and distributed.

There is no doubt that this objective was achieved in BC. PSG members have all identified the increased rural outreach (through workshops) as a significant outcome that has elevated awareness of SE, and increased the ability of community organizations to explore this particular tool in an informed way. For ENP in particular, the collaboration has given them a rural presence and increased demand, which has resulted in some additional support for ongoing rural workshop delivery.

The integrated ENP/DW workshop curriculum utilized the DW checklist/tool, but also provided the ENP guide/checklists to participants. Evidence from Ontario³ suggests there was high value in the consistent use of the DW tool there from the point of view of community organizations who were exposed to it in workshops, by regional intermediaries providing TA and by funders. They report that the tool shifted their approach to SE, and created a strong collective foundation for advancing their work within their organizations and in some cases more broadly within their communities. The tool itself did not get this kind of feedback from community organizations in BC.

2. Later Stage Start-Up Technical Assistance

To design, using an action research approach, a strategic and coordinated strategy to provide and/or broker high quality technical assistance at reasonable costs. Within the Development Wheel framework this relates to some phase 2 tasks and most phase 3 and 4 tasks.

- a. CCE staff offered up to one day of free technical assistance to workshop participants who determined they were ready for SE development. On

³ See Ontario CBO Survey Report Jan 2008 & Ontario PSG Final Survey Report Feb 2008

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Vancouver Island, 3 organizations out of a possible 27 took advantage of this offer. In the Okanagan, 6 organizations out of a possible 22⁴ took advantage of this offer. Combined, this is an 18% response rate. Given proximity and the low levels of uptake, some of this TA was provided on site, but a great deal of it was delivered by distance.

- b. In the Fraser Valley site, the regional intermediary worked closely with 13 clients in 2007, up from 8 in 2006. See Appendix One for the summary table of regional site activities. Out of a total of 44 organizations that attended three workshops in this region, 32 decided they were ready for next steps. Of these 32, 65% took advantage of TA services through FVCSE. This is a much higher level of uptake than what CCE staff had in the other two regions, where they had no physical/site presence and fewer prior relationships. Of those that the FV site worked with, about half were already known to staff, and the other half came directly from workshops.

It is also interesting that the FV site provided more later stage, fee for service work for these clients, while in the two regions being served at a distance by CCE staff, there was a much higher rate of referrals being brokered. While it is critical to link CBO's to appropriate resources, there is also trust, organizational knowledge and efficiency that results from proximity and longer term relationships.

The CBO surveys⁵ told us that while clients are very pleased to have the support, and that there is evidence of higher quality SE development work being done, there seems to be a benefit to having TA services located within the region being served. This is the case for both access (more took up the free TA offer in FV) and for the quality of TA over time given the relationships in FV will continue, while those in the other two regions are not as likely to.

We learned that distance TA is better than none at all, but that there is a great advantage to having regional capacity to support SE. This is supported by findings in Ontario, where RDEE staff are beginning to weave SE into their overall regional development strategies, to target particular populations and sectors, and to adapt and apply the tool accordingly. This integration and innovation does not happen as readily when the TA expertise is accessed short term and has no stake in the region itself.

We also know from surveys that CBO's did not take advantage of the free early stage TA for a number of reasons: they had access to local or previously engaged TA providers; they had challenges in making progress linked to loss of their SE champion; they determined they could NOT proceed with SE development at this time.

⁴ Of the three workshops delivered in the Okanagan region, one was held in early 2008 and the data from this workshop is not included in these numbers. For purposes of completing project reporting by March of 2008, the cut off for all data collection was December 2007.

⁵ See BC CBO Survey Report January 2008

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There has been no research to compare the nature or quality of TA provided by individuals from outside of the project as compared to project related TA. It is also too early to evaluate the longer term impacts of this pro-active TA service among those who received it; we don't know if or how it might contribute to more successful SE's.

- c. Four TA Discussion Groups were convened with representation from both TA Providers and CBO's (Fall 2006, June and December 2007, and January 2008) to identify the most significant factors related to quality TA for SE, and the most significant issues facing CBO's. There are a number of reports that document these discussions. A summary of the conclusions about the quality of TA are found in Appendix Two: TA Attributes. Participants in several of these groups also participated in the evaluation of the Regional Coach pilot (see d. below) and in a cost benefit analysis of TA delivery (see 4 below).

Among the key conclusions was that T.A. providers are critical links to SE start-ups and expansions, as a link and advocate to funding sources, as contributors to policy analysis and advocacy. In other words, they are the glue that connects development work in communities, to other necessary functions such as finance, promotion and policy that are often delivered by provincial level organizations. It also became clear that T.A. providers committed to this work provide a significant investment of time into work that does not have a financial return, and that they are largely isolated.

- d. Working with ENP, the project was able to design and test a Regional Coach model as a means of strengthening access to TA and the quality of TA related to ENP grant recipient projects. The pilot targeted coaches in lower mainland, Kootenays, Fraser Valley, Okanagan and Vancouver Island. This pilot approach, with some minor modifications, has been adopted by ENP as a requirement for all grant recipients to work with a coach in the early stages of their project. Additional coaches will be recruited over time.

The findings suggest that community organizations benefited from the proactive support for early work planning, orienting their boards and brokering of other resources. Their overall approach to using the grant funds became more thoughtful and they report being better informed and connected. It seems clear that the interventions contributed to better quality planning and SE development, but it is too early to know if or how it might contribute to higher quality/more successful social enterprises. TA providers involved in this pilot report learning and increased effectiveness as well, and attribute this to the shared examples, and analysis of approaches and impacts.

- e. The project convened and facilitated multiple meetings and workshops directed at CFDCs in BC. In addition to a workshop at their provincial conference, there were 10 – 12 CF Managers participating in additional meetings with us to identify opportunities for SE in their regions, and build their capacity to respond to SE requests. This work led to two specific projects: the development of an Introduction to SE Resources Kit (see 1.d.) and a Business Retention and Succession Research Project. The business retention research led to CFs requesting training for staff on the use of SE and co-ops for succession purposes. This workshop was accepted for delivery at their spring training event,

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but was later cancelled due to objections posed by some CFDCs and WED project officers.

In the end, it is reasonable to say that we have six or seven CFDCs in BC who are interested in building their SE capacity and responsiveness, about half of whom have tangibly demonstrated this commitment to date. It is too early to know if this effort will translate into a lasting commitment to and capacity for SE development. The lack of support for SE from WED is a tremendous political and practical barrier that may thwart longer term commitment to SE as a tool for rural development among CFDCs.

There are now five Regional Coaches working to increase the quality of SE development being funded by ENP. In addition, there are three CFDCs, and one private consultant that are actively engaged and demonstrating commitment to SE development. Two of the CFDCs are in northern or remote areas (Haida Gwaii and Prince George). The core group of TA providers convened to support these project activities report learning about the readiness of organizations, the nature and role of TA provision as it relates to key organizational challenges, and have seen first hand the positive impacts that come from proactive interventions and collaboration.

Without the resources to support this collaboration (outside of ENP Coaches), to connect CFDCs with others doing this work, to promote SE tools and build capacity, to broker relationships, and to formally feed the TA providers experiences into decisions on the finance and policy side, it is unlikely that this effort will translate into a lasting TA system or network or a more comprehensive development system.

3. TA Fund Expansion

To work with key stakeholders to develop a provincial, rural social enterprise grant fund that will compliment and expand opportunities for longer term leveraging of funds by ENP and others in this field.

\$50,000 was contributed from the project budget to the ENP provincial grant pool for SE. The project funds were dedicated to applications in Fraser Valley, Okanagan and Vancouver Island regions, and to those who had attended a DW workshop.

Region	Number of Applicants	Number of Grants Approved	Grant Value Requested	Funding Granted
ENP Grants: Spring 2007				
Island	11	8	\$99,690	\$49,500
Okanagan	4	3	\$39,520	\$24,920
Fraser Valley	5	2	\$40,500	\$15,000
Sub Total:	20	13	\$179,710	\$89,420
ENP Grants: Winter 2007				
Island	9	2	\$74,000	\$12,500
Okanagan	10	6	\$87,500	\$26,500
Fraser Valley	1	0	\$7,000	0

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Sub Total:	20	8	\$168,500	\$39,000
TOTAL:	40	21	\$348,210	\$128,420

In 2006 ENP received 8 applications from the Island, 1 from Fraser Valley and none from the Okanagan region. Of these 9 applications, 5 received funding. The 2007 results above indicate an increase in applications and approved grants in the target regions. This is a reflection of increased workshop delivery and the additional grant funds.

4. Recommendations for Sustainability

Based on the results that emerge from these three components and the strategy outlined in this proposal, and the work in the Fraser Valley site, make recommendations that could realize a sustainable, high quality technical assistance system for social enterprise development in B.C.

There were eight TA Providers surveyed as part of this research. Five are connected to organizations and three are independent consultants. While the sample size seems small, this group represents the core TA providers that are actively engaged in social enterprise development in BC as a specific area of expertise and focus. (As opposed to consultants that are tied to a sector, such as food, and work occasionally with social enterprise formats, but are more focused on strengthening the sector, than SE specifically.) The findings of the TA Cost Benefit Analysis are as follows:

- a. TA rates range from \$1500 to \$400 per day depending on the nature of the work and the client ability to pay. The higher fees cover some overhead time, but the lower end fees do not. The higher fees allow providers to undertake some work at lower fees.
- b. TA provider's primary sources of revenue from social enterprise assignments (through clients or government funded project) are government funding, such as the Co-op Development Initiative, (44% of all fees) and ENP via clients (at 37% of all fees).
- c. TA providers are spending an average of 50% of their SE related time in fee-for-service work and 50% in volunteer activities in support of social enterprise. Almost half of these volunteer services (about 40%) are made up of free after-care and follow-up with SEs in their post-start up period.
- d. In the last 2 years the DW and FVCSE funding has supported a great deal of additional collaboration, research, learning and innovation among the group of TA providers and the PSG members, particularly ENP. Interviews suggest approximately 40% of the volunteer investment made by TA providers in the last year has been supported, coordinated and expenses covered (travel) by the DW.
- e. Is it not reasonable to expect that this work can continue after March 2008. "Every day I spend working on policy or planning an event for SE, I lose revenue for my organization. That's not sustainable." Likewise, for those TA providers where their organization is covering these overhead time costs, there are limits: "My organization has been very supportive, but unless there are clear benefits I can take back to my region, I can't sustain this time commitment."

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Those surveyed were “cautiously interested” in a fee-based network of TA providers given that it had practical benefits for their knowledge and work. It seems that among these TA providers there is a willingness, and to varying degrees an ability even, to contribute time to strengthening TA quality and the development system overall. This commitment however, is predicated on reciprocity: they need to know their contribution is making a difference, to see tangible outcomes and to be learning and strengthening relationships that increase their ability to do this work in exchange for their contribution of voluntary time. Those outside of the lower mainland cannot participate without travel costs being paid.

The existing commitment of ENP to convene the Regional Coaches once a year for evaluation and learning is important. There are two concerns however: it does not include all those who can contribute to advancing SE (eg: there is one CF at the table only) and it does not deal with the existing situation of TA provider volunteer time that goes to promotion, training, after-care, etc. Regional organizations with core funding are stretched to support the time required to promote SE in their communities.

IV. Summary: What Did We Learn?

- a. That the dynamics and challenges of inserting a business model into a non-profit setting require assistance from TA providers and coaches with particular social enterprise experience and skills. Further, that this assistance needs to be pro-active and oriented around building capacity, ongoing coaching and brokering of additional resources and relationships.
- b. That providing the very early stage supports (such as work planning) at a distance is efficient and effective, but that on site TA is essential at various stages of social enterprise development and ideally there will be longer term relationships established for ongoing (and on site) coaching and support.
- c. That those who are working in communities to provide TA are ideally situated to play this brokering role on behalf of the community organization, but also more broadly by linking issues and opportunities at the local level to regional and provincial level functions around training, finance, research and policy development.
- d. That this work is only 50% supported by fee-for-service TA, and requires additional time and resources in order to take advantage of the opportunities for promotion, additional capacity building, linking between functions, etc.
- e. That these findings imply the need for regional organizational capacity with a commitment to social enterprise development. This model looks much like that of the existing CFDC network: a combination of free and fee-for-service training, coaching and enterprise development services that is linked to a broader network of others for the purpose of advancing finance and other mechanisms efficiently. That the opportunity to apply social enterprise more concretely as a solution to local problems is best served by an organization with a broader stake in and knowledge of that region, long term relationships they can bring to bear, and the ability to draw on additional outside expertise when it is required.
- f. That if we are to establish a more supportive environment for social enterprise in BC, it will require a collaborative approach among all the actors from the community level to the provincial and national, and that there is currently no resources to continue to build on the collaboration established through the project.

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APPENDIX ONE: FVCSE Training and TA Activity 2005 - 2007			
Activity	Dec 2007	Dec 2006	Dec 2005 Pre-project
# Workshops delivered	1 full day DW; (referrals to surrey) 1 venture selection	2 full day; 2 intro	2 forums
# participants	18 + 6 = 24	58	190
# other presentations* (relevant to SE)	10 (includes 2 out of province, 3 more to Chamber)	6 (Chamber, Bolivia, Pan Can. CF Conf.)	0
# promoted/hosted sessions (other)	4 (includes Coast Helper Series SE workshop)	unknown	unknown
Inquiries	10 (5 out of DW)	unknown	unknown
TA Clients and Services			
# clients (100%)	13	8	2
% related to DW project	62% (8)	38% (3)	0
% new SED	70% (9)	100% (8)	50%
% expansion SE	30% (4)	0	0
% enterprise dev.	70% (9)	50% (4)	100%
% org. workshops/pres.	23% (3)	25% (2)	0
% grant/fund support	39% (5)	50%	100%
% decision-making	23% (3)	50%	unknown
% comm. part./network	23% (3)	25%	unknown
% coach/mentor	100%	50%	100%
% using workbook/tools	0	38%	0
Nature of client orgs			
% non-profits	86%	75%	0
% co-ops	7% (1)	13%	50%
% other: business	7% (1)	13%	50%
Other Activities/Data			
average days: clients	50%	50% Sept - Dec	15%
average days: training	10%	25% Jan - June	0
Research related to SE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inmate housing • Collaborative practices: social services 	0	0
Policy Development and Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uk legal structures for SE • CRA tax exempt non-profit coop • Inmate business • Min. wage in SE/disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRA tax exempt coop 	0
Earned Revenue	\$31,000 from 4 clients (all research & feasibility work)	\$0	\$10,000 from conference
Prof. Development	2 courses; 1 conference	unknown	unknown
Biggest challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking the business and nno-profit sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • free legal • procurement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • human resources

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APPENDIX TWO: The Attributes of Quality Technical Assistance for SE

This summary is intended to document what has been learned from discussions with community organizations/SE's, with TA providers (including CFDCs), with both together, and from several pilots where approaches to TA were tested. These activities took place largely during the latter part of 2006 and throughout 2007 in BC. Our objective was to improve the quality and accessibility of Technical Assistance (TA) for Social Enterprise (SE), with a particular focus on rural communities where access to TA is limited, and more costly (due to travel). Ultimately, our goal is to strengthen the social values embedded in economic life in communities. Social Enterprise is one way of doing that, (but not the only way by any means). Higher quality SE's mean more impacts in communities, more opportunities to expand the markets and develop a supportive policy environment, which then supports more high quality SE's and stronger benefits for communities.

Four types of tasks involved in SE development: (not a linear process)

- Organizational readiness and development tasks
- Enterprise development tasks
- Strategic networking and community participation
- Appropriate use of outside technical assistance

While this summary focuses on the attributes of TA, those attributes clearly reflect a need to understand and consider the nature of decisions and activities required in each task area.

Themes that emerged:

- Learning and capacity building: for whom, about what or for what.
- Business/enterprise expertise and non-profit/organizational development experience: which is needed, at what stage, attending to both.
- Connecting, referring and linking within the field, the sector, the geography, (both consultants and organizations indicated a sense of isolation and a desire for connectivity beyond their own SE/organization; linked to learning as well).
- Focus on social/environmental/cultural return on investment (ROI) as well as the economic ROI – the blend and the balance.
- Community organizations don't know what they don't know.
- Consultants don't know what they don't know.

Attributes of quality TA:

This is a comprehensive description of findings, but clearly there are considerations for some organizations/SE's that are not relevant to others. The nature of technical assistance for a new SE for example may need to be quite different than TA for an existing SE looking at a particular problem or opportunity. The list is intended as a menu to facilitate your own thinking and planning, rather than as definitive.

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The list also implies that on the one hand, organizations/SE's need to have a good understanding of the stages and steps in SE development, and their own organizational capacity and goals related to SE before they can recruit and appropriately manage TA services. On the other hand however, there are implications for TA providers to be aware of the limits of the organizations knowledge and to make efforts to assess needs and build capacity. While this seems like a chicken and egg situation (which comes first), the reality is that each situation is completely unique and usually somewhere in the middle. We need to work at both ends: to increase organizational acumen related to SE, and to increase the extent to which TA providers are "covenanted" around these attributes:

1. Early stage development in particular requires consultants to have good business development skills and a solid grounding in enterprise within a non-profit environment. Consultants need to understand the potential for culture clashes, for management and governance challenges etc. and be prepared to suggest options for dealing with these during the development process. Being a good "business developer" (or retail expert, etc.) is not enough.
2. There are however, situations where the organization staff or other leadership have experience (with SE) that can contribute on the organizational development side. If these people are part of a team doing the development work, it is possible to hire very specialized "business" expertise and bring the non-profit experience to bear in other ways. An example of this might be hiring specific expertise in recycling, or in food processing, and having to compliment that with organizational development expertise specific to SE – either internally or through an additional outside consultant. In these cases it is important that consultants understand they are part of a team, and what their particular role is, or that the organization is clear about what they are hiring for, and where additional internal knowledge might be required.
3. Good TA includes an assessment of where the organization is at that digs deeper than what the particular contract is for/job is. Every organization is at a different place in their development and understanding of SE. This means there could be assumptions made early on that are driving the SE work. For example, a group wanting to form a co-op needs to have this decision checked out. Why a co-op; were other forms considered; what do you hope it will accomplish for you; etc. Good consultants "push back" and check out decisions in order to confirm full consideration and future direction. Sometimes this is not what the organization wants to hear, or what they expected. Sometimes this probing can lead to a different task than what the consultant was hired for, and the need to go back to planning.
4. In some cases, consultants need a good understanding of the community or neighbourhood the SE is situated in. This broader environment is an important factor that needs to be assessed for potential challenges, opportunities and supports both related to markets and to potential partners or networks. This is information the organization may or may not have gathered or be aware of.
5. Consultants need to be good coaches or mentors. They should be oriented around "democratizing information and tools" in a way that will be meaningful to the

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organizations context now and potentially in the future. Helping organizations to understand and use the language of the field is an important part of this (eg: feasibility, social return on investment, etc.). They should be able to work with others in the organization to pass on skills or knowledge or to share their tools and resources.

6. Consultants should work to connect the organization/SE with others: linking them with others who are doing similar work (within BC but also beyond that), with potential resources and encouraging strategic networking within their own community. This means that ideally, consultants will be familiar with and have relationships with key organizations who are giving leadership in areas of finance, grants, public policy, etc. If the organization is hiring a specialist in a particular field, they should be connected with others in that field and the organization will need to make efforts to build their own networks and resources within SE more broadly.
7. There are efficiencies and quality of service benefits from having a TA provider, or coach, that is familiar with the community and the organization; that has a relationship established. Organizations benefit from this relationship in terms of ongoing feedback and support from someone who does not need time to “get oriented” to them, or their SE work. Much of this support is informal however, or happens above and beyond any fee for service work. This begs the question of sustainability, and suggests the need for organizations to be able to provide this SE support, in much the same way that CFDCs currently provide it to small business in their communities. TA provider surveys suggest this is particularly the case for after-care services, once the SE is operational.
8. Consultants should have a sense of how challenging this work is in general, and a sense of excitement about the possibilities. They should demonstrate a commitment to their own ongoing learning about this field, and this work (or their particular area of expertise). This is partially related to their networks, but also includes an attitude of curiosity and an ability to be frank about their own limitations.