

## **Board Meets Board February 28, 2012**

Thirty- three people (board directors and executive directors) from thirteen different community based social service agencies gathered to hear from Doug Hayman, Secretariat for the Board Voice Society of BC, regarding an environmental scan of current trends affecting the social service sector. The presentation can be found in the Board Meets Board section of the Volunteer Cowichan website.

### **Process**

Following Doug's presentation, the evening provided an opportunity for people to join in a number of conversations. In response to the following question, folks were asked to identify a number of opportunities/issues:

Given that social innovation and collaboration are directions coming from the provincial and federal governments for social service agencies, what opportunities/issues come to mind for you, as a board director, in relation to the health and well-being of the our community?

Next, ideas were grouped according to themes and using a conversation café approach, people joined in conversation to explore the following three questions:

Question 1: What's the smallest change that could have the largest impact?

Question 2: Recognizing the skills and assets of board members, how might we work together?

Question 3: In what ways might we serve the interests of our separate agencies through collective effort?

A plenary session was held and a next steps discussion took place.

Finally, the question "What would make the next gathering even better?" was posed.

### **Outcomes**

Details of responses to questions and ideas for moving forward follow.

1. Verbatim Responses to the Focus Question/Identified Themes

Given that social innovation and collaboration are directions coming from the provincial and federal governments for social service agencies, what opportunities/issues come to mind for you, as a board director, in relation to the health and well-being of the our community?

<b>Opportunity/Issue</b>	<b>Theme</b>
Different definitions of collaboration	Collaboration
Relationships – who partners? Definition of partner; formal structure to participate – without it relationships will not develop	Collaboration
Collaborate for advocacy	Collaboration
Cooperation between agencies	Collaboration
How do we as agencies work collaboratively in order to better meet the needs of our common clients? E.g. teen pregnancies	Collaboration
Collaboration – rewards will be greater than the risks	Collaboration
Trust	Blocks
Fear	Blocks
Transparency of taxes going to services. We are the stretchers of the bucks? Is this our role?	Blocks
Time	Blocks
1980s all over again – been there, done that	Blocks
Difficult to get collaborative efforts off the ground due to time constraints	Blocks
Increased demand for services with reduced or stagnating resources	Blocks
Wide range of knowledge	Resources
Expertise	Resources
Reaching out to each other	Resources
Agencies coming together to see how they can share resources Eg. Human resources, buying in bulk, sharing space and expertise	Resources
Commitment	Resources
Community minded	Resources
Service rationalization in the community to ensure efficient use of resources. Eg. Avoid duplication	Possible approaches

Central response unit (phone) manned by people who know and liaise with all similar service providers to act as the initial point of contact for person requesting service and the service that meets their needs. The provider would refer them to the most appropriate agency and then follow through with "client" and the agency referred to, to make sure there is a fit; and the person is getting the assistance they have requested. "The Portal". Eg. "my teenager ran away " - where does person start to get help?	Possible approaches
Continuum of services	Possible approaches
Operation vs. governance	Governance
Vision – speaking not only to the vision of the agency, but also to the overall community	Governance
Leadership	Governance
Why – what is the why	Governance
What type of governance model do our organizations now need to embrace in order to support the transformational change that social innovation will bring?	Governance
Important issues brought to board to share	Governance
Funding	Funding
Funding	Funding
Social enterprise becoming a necessity	Funding
Poverty	Overarching concerns
Homelessness	Overarching concerns
Adequate housing	Overarching concerns

2. Verbatim responses to Conversation Café Questions

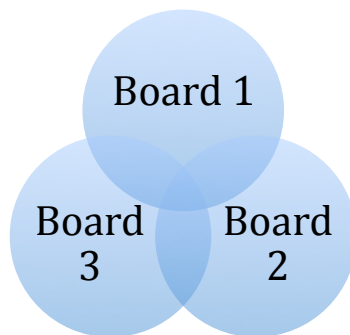
Question 1: What's the smallest change that could have the largest impact?

Accepting that other agencies are as important as ours
Service providers come together by service stream (e.g. youth) to examine the efficiencies and expectations of service delivery and to seek opportunities to optimize resources
Getting to know your community
Using your resources eg. The expertise of your members
Consulting with other agencies about grants when available
Responding to community needs
Look at your organization and focus on its biggest obstacle and need (WIG)
Cooperation
Sharing
Recognize that we are a community
Transparency
Perserverance
Respect
Funding from federal government
Full collaboration with other agencies
Media involvement
More seniors involved
Communication and partnerships
Shared vision and outcomes
Support the causes of other agencies
Identify what matters
Put something on the table
Relationship with communities

Question 2: Recognizing the skills and assets of board members, how might we work together?

Firstly, getting to know what are assets are: how do we identify them; sharing – can we share members/governors based on identified assets
Communication between agencies – How? What?
Governance; skills of boards (culture of) vs. skills of staff (culture of)
Cooperation – transparency, understanding, respect
Development of assets
Challenging towards development
Knowledge of where we are on the continuum of governance
Seeing the ED as an asset. Board needs to be “astute” enough to know their ED is indeed “on board with the board”
Vision/Mission - Client Community
Data base – sharing; articulation of assets
Knowledge of community
What’s in it for me as a board governor?
Why – it has to feed the board members
Where the juice is – finding ways of meeting the needs of clients
Easy things – paper, janitors
Process of maturation – board development towards governance model

Harvest the wisdom of boards coming together:



Question 3: In what ways might we serve the interests of our separate agencies through collective effort?

Maybe it's the wrong question: In what ways might we serve the interests of our community through collective effort?
Demonstrating value is necessary
Increased visibility could leverage funds
Solidarity
Communication
Advocates
Share expertise
Cost saving
Joint fundraisers
Trust
Transparency
IT systems
Process improvement
Shared services – human resources, finance, shared resources
Benefits without as much work
Shared skills
It feels good
Shared resources – staff, administration, materials, services such as janitorial, buy bulk, public spaces, technology
Shared training – elder care example
Shared funding of projects – including staff, volunteers, training Mother Goose – Success by 6, School District 79, VIHA, Cowichan Family Life, Cowichan Tribes, library. This is one program together for many
Shared funding sources “social enterprise_ for all
Sharing expertise of professionals
More heads are better than one
Pressure groups – political
Getting the information about each agency's services easily accessible by the community

## **Plenary Session and Next Steps**

Ideas that were brought forward included:

- Planning collaboration – outline a process for moving the community forward on collaboration
- Governance training – the demand is there
- Repeat Collaboration Skill Training – not everyone was able to participate
- CARF for Dummies

## **What Would Make the Next Gathering Even Better**

More time for supper

Everyone bring someone else

Don't schedule on a board meeting night