

Chapter 10: Engage in Networks

Overview

Exchanging experiences and know-how with other local governments and civil society groups can enable huge returns, therefore it is important for Oxford County to **form and engage in local and regional level networks. Participating in national and international networks** will serve to support and foster constructive knowledge exchange as well as cooperation.

Oxford County considers itself allies and partners both locally and around the world and will continue to work with national and international networks. We will share best practices, progress and accomplishments with our networking community to ensure progress towards elimination of poverty continues at a rapid pace.

Form and Engage in Local and Regional Networks

Oxford County Poverty Groups

Chapter 4 of this plan highlights the depth of both public and private sector commitment that is evident in Oxford County. This cross-sectional and diverse group of volunteer committees and assorted agencies will provide significant support as we establish a broader network outside of Oxford County, the province of Ontario and Canada. The below lists are a more encompassing look at our regional, national and international networks.

Cities Reducing Poverty – Vibrant Communities Canada

Cities Reducing Poverty is a collective impact movement aimed at reducing poverty for 1 million Canadians through the efforts of local multi-sector roundtables and the alignment of poverty reduction strategies at the municipal, provincial and federal levels.

Launched in 2002 by Tamarack, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and Caledon Institute of Social Policy, Vibrant Communities Canada originally invited 13 cities to build multi-sector leadership roundtables with the goal of reducing poverty. Between 2002 and 2012, this group of Vibrant Communities trail builders undertook an action-learning experiment to see if a place-based approach could move the needle on poverty. The results were significant, with a number of cities reporting a 10% reduction in poverty impacting the lives of 202,931 low income Canadians.

Building on this success of these 13 cities, a movement has emerged with more than 50 additional cities joining the network. While the poverty reduction effort is customized to the local context, these cross-sector community leaders have been working on poverty reduction strategies such as increasing access to affordable transit, living wage campaigns, increasing access to affordable housing, focusing on priority neighborhoods, and advocating for evidence-based social assistance.

Community Health Links

Community Health Links are part of Ontario's plan to transform the health care system. Community Health Links provide coordinated, efficient and effective care to patients with complex needs. Five per cent of patients account for two-thirds of health care costs and are most often patients with multiple complex conditions. Providers design a care plan for each patient and work together to ensure they receive the care they need. In Ontario, there are currently 82 approved Health Links across 14 Local Health Integrated Networks.

The Mowat Centre

The Mowat Centre is an independent public policy think tank and Ontario's non-partisan, evidence-based voice on public policy. They undertake collaborative, applied policy research, propose innovative research-driven recommendations and engage in public dialogue on Canada's most important national issues. The Mowat Centre seeks to inform and revitalize Canada's public policy agenda from the Ontario perspective. Their research focuses on the federal policy frameworks and strategies that will most strongly affect Ontarian's prosperity and quality of life in the next century.

Tamarack Institute

Founded in 2001, the Tamarack Institute develops and supports learning communities to help people collaborate and to co-generate knowledge to solve complex community challenges. Tamarack offers the latest thinking, resources and interactive online practices to help leaders and practitioners grow their knowledge, expand their networks and inspire innovation and collaboration. In addition to Vibrant Communities, Tamarack sponsors two other Learning Communities that host extensive resources and publications:

- **Communities Collaborating for Impact** is a learning community for collaborative leaders and innovators utilizing a multi-sector approach to solve complex community challenges.
- **Deepening Community** is a learning community focused on becoming a national space for ongoing dialogue and networking to foster people's engagement within their local neighbourhoods, working together with institutions and policy-makers to address common aspirations that improve community life.

Wellesley Institute

The Wellesley Institute is a registered non-profit charity that works in research and policy to improve health and health equity in the GTA through action on the social determinants of health. Topics for advancing urban health include housing, building health communities, economic inequality, and health equity.

Youth for Oxford

This is a group of Oxford County youth working together to make change and to better serve their communities. With roots established in Tillsonburg, the group is hoping to spread out into the rest of Oxford County. Aimed at youth between the ages of 13-29, this group is looking to give back to their communities by helping others both inside and outside of the group. This is not only to benefit the members' own generation but the generations preceding and proceeding them.

The group's first event took place in April of 2018, where the group held a "Partici-clean" at Tillsonburg's Participark in which members cleaned up a local park. In May of 2018, they will be hosting a "Survive the Night" event which focuses on the realities of youth homelessness. Participants will be staying overnight outside with only a blanket and a small meal to simulate homelessness. The event will be followed by a fundraiser for the Canadian Youth Homelessness Initiative in June. Future initiatives include food and supply drives, social activities and awareness events. The group, in its early stages, has partnered with the Tillsonburg and Area Optimist Club, the Salvation Army, Tim Horton's and the Tillsonburg Multi-Service Centre and is well on its way to becoming a community champion.

Key Point

Engaging with groups such as **Youth for Oxford** will be key to making sustainable change in our community. Next steps with this group could include the promotion of a youth contest asking for ideas on how to eliminate poverty in our county. The creation of the hashtag **#OYAP** (Oxford Youth Against Poverty) should start to be generated on social media and within the youth networks.

Participate in National and International Networks

Canada Without Poverty

Canada Without Poverty is a federally incorporated, non-partisan, not-for-profit and charitable organization dedicated to the elimination of poverty in Canada. Since their inception in 1971, they have always been governed by people with direct, personal experience of living in poverty, whether in childhood or as adults. This lived experience informs and helps to guide their work. Acting from a belief that poverty is a violation of human rights and that poverty elimination is a human rights obligation, their work includes raising awareness about poverty, participating in research to generate new knowledge about poverty, and striving to demonstrate the connection between poverty and human rights.

Community Foundations of Canada

Community Foundations is a Canadian movement for community vitality together with 191 community foundations across the country. They are connected by a national network to help Canadians invest in building strong and resilient places to live, work and play. Vital Signs is a national program led by community foundations and coordinated by Community Foundations of

Canada that leverages local knowledge to measure the vitality of our communities and support action towards improving our collective quality of life.

Federation of Canadian Municipalities

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) is the national voice for Canada's local governments and works on behalf of its members to increase sustainability and to enhance the quality of life of citizens. FCM programs address green initiatives, affordable housing, climate protection, partnering with First Nations communities and women in government. The FCM feels strongly that local government is the key to improving the quality of life in both Canada and abroad

Food Secure Canada

Food Secure Canada is a Canadian alliance of organizations and individuals working together to advance food security and food sovereignty through three interlocking goals: zero hunger, healthy and safe food and sustainable food systems. Their website includes links to policy and advocacy, members, networks and research.

Harwood Institute

The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation teaches, coaches and inspires people and organizations to solve pressing problems and change how communities work together. Harwood aims to strengthen communities, through a network of trained professionals who have the skills, tools and support to make change. Founded in 1988, the institute partners with some of the world's largest nonprofits and their tools and frameworks have spread across to the U.S. and beyond.

Homeless Hub

The Homeless Hub is a web-based research library and information centre representing an innovative step forward in the use of technology to enhance knowledge mobilization. Building on the success of the Canadian Conference on Homelessness (2005), The Homeless Hub was created to address the need for a single place to find homelessness information from across Canada.

Living Wage Canada

Communities across Canada are responding to the increasingly high levels of low wages and poverty. They are advocating that families should earn an income sufficient for them to pay for the basic necessities of life, so they can live with dignity and participate as active citizens in our society. They are advocating for a living wage. Living Wage Canada is a site/portal to facilitate learning and information-sharing among communities to help build a national living wage movement. It includes details about the Canadian Living Wage Framework which provides a consistent living wage definition, calculation methodology and strategy for recognizing corporate and community leaders who commit to pass a living wage policy.

Maytree

Maytree is a private Canadian charitable foundation that has been dedicated to creating solutions to poverty since it was founded in 1982. Maytree listens to the voices of communities and then works with governments at all levels to help create equality and prosperity. Maytree collaborates with civil society organizations, policy advisors, employers and major institutions to build stronger, vital communities. Maytree is committed to advancing systemic solutions to poverty and strengthening civic communities. They believe that the most enduring way to fix the systems that create poverty is to have economic and social rights safeguarded for all people living in Canada. Maytree's *Stories of Change*, highlight what organizations and individuals are doing to reduce poverty and strengthen their communities, as well as how and why they do the work that they do.

McConnell Foundation

The McConnell Foundation is a private Canadian foundation that develops and applies innovative approaches to social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges. They do this by providing grants and investments, capacity building, convening and co-creation with grantees, partners and the public. They envision a Canada in which the economy and social systems advance the well-being of all people, and in which the natural environment is stewarded for future generations. Their mission is to engage Canadians in building a society that is inclusive, reconciled, sustainable and resilient and that advances progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The Poverty Alliance

The Poverty Alliance was formally established in 1992, growing out of an informal network of groups and individuals active since the mid 1980's. This group acts as the anti-poverty network in Scotland, working with voluntary organizations, policy makers and politicians at Scottish, UK and European levels. Their vision is a sustainable Scotland based on social and economic justice, with dignity for all, where poverty and inequalities are not tolerated and are challenged.

Prosper Canada

Founded in 1986, Prosper Canada is a national charity dedicated to expanding economic opportunity for Canadians living in poverty through program and policy innovation. Prosper Canada is Canada's leading national champion of financial empowerment. They work with governments, businesses, and community groups to develop and promote financial policies, programs and resources that transform lives and foster the prosperity of all Canadians.

Canada Learning Bond - Smartsaver.org

The Canada Learning Bond (CLB) is a federal program that provides up to \$2000 to Registered Education Saving Plan (RESP) accounts for children of low-income parents, improving their families' opportunities for post-secondary education. In partnership with BMO, Meridian, RBC, Scotiabank, TD and Vancity, all usual bank fees and minimum contributions are waived to ensure lower income families

can open RESP's and access the CLB. The SmartSAVER.org websites provides interactive learning resources for both parents and community organizers to promote and encourage access to the Canada Learning Bond, a RESP and other education funding opportunities.

What Works Centres UK

The What Works Network was created in 2013 to ensure that the best available evidence on “what works” is available to people who make decisions surrounding public services. Five years later, there are ten centres in the UK, where policymakers, public servants and the wider public can access the best available knowledge about what works.

Key Priorities

All over our country, communities are working collaboratively to develop local approaches to eradicate poverty. This is happening in an unparalleled manner and at a rapid pace. The Tamarack Institute has identified that more than 175 cities in Canada have, or are developing, community plans that are designed to engage governments, business, not-for-profits and citizens with lived/living experiences of poverty to work together to implement strategies to eliminate poverty. This is clearly a unique moment in history in which cities, provinces, and the federal government are all uniting with independent, yet interconnected, poverty reduction strategies. This moment must be capitalized upon and networking should be both thoughtful and deliberate.

From an international perspective, pooling of expertise will create new knowledge and generate innovation and sharing, providing outcomes that will benefit everyone with a vested interest. We can look to other countries to see the success that they have had with living wage and basic income strategies and share successful measurements amongst ourselves.