

## **Forging Stronger Links Workshop, Halifax, Nova Scotia: Understanding the Voluntary Sector Accord and Codes of Good Practice Animators Report**

On March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2005, an interactive workshop on “Forging Stronger Links: Understanding the Voluntary Sector Accord and Codes of Good Practice” was held in Halifax, N.S. This workshop was co-facilitated by Margie MacDonald, Public Health Agency of Canada and Rick Hutchins, Policylink NB. The session agenda (Appendix A) and a summary of the evaluations received from the workshop participants (Appendix B) are included below.

### **Summary of Activities:**

There were 16 participants at this workshop. Four of these participants came from community organizations, including the Heart and Stroke Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Family Resource Centre, and the Health Association of African Canadians. Representatives from four additional groups were also invited to the workshop, but were unable to attend. Eleven Health Canada staff members attended, representing Policy and Communications Branch, Finance, Healthy Environments and Safe Communities Branch, Health Products and Food Branch, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, and the Regional Director General's Office. These participants provided a cross section of employees from management, program and administrative levels. The animation team represented both government (Regional Office of the Public Health Agency of Canada) and voluntary sector (Policy Link NB).

In general, the session went very well and the participants gained from the experience. The one-day format was more workable than the original two-day version, and is therefore recommended for future sessions. Government participants in the session had limited knowledge of the Accord and Codes and were very interested in learning about them. The Voluntary Sector participants were more aware of the Accord and Codes, but not so aware that they could not benefit from this session.

The nature of this session was very interesting, since relationships between government and the Voluntary Sector are generally limited to program officers and voluntary sector staff. As it turned out, a majority of these participants were meeting for the first time.

As regards Accord implementation issues, the participants agreed to work with the document but also recognized that this is a “guide,” and that not every best practice will be successfully implemented. Other parties are involved, and in some cases, departmental policy may not be consistent with the recommendations (especially on the funding codes).

In terms of successes, gaps, and opportunities for future work, the evaluations reflected a desire to move forward with the use of the Accord as a relationship-building tool, and as a guide for strengthening the collaboration between Government and the Voluntary Sector.

Report prepared for the Office of the Voluntary Sector, Public Health Agency of Canada  
By Rick Hutchins, Policylink NB, Fredericton, NB – April 12, 2005

## Appendix A: Evaluation Report Summary

March 21, 2005

Evaluation Summary (14 responses)

1. To what extent did today's session meet its objectives, which were to:

- Explore commitments in the Accord and Codes of Good Practice in a practical way that strengthens understanding and builds stronger relationships between Health Canada and the Voluntary Sector

Not at all  
1.....2.....3.....4(1).....5(8).....6(5) Totally

### **Comments:**

The comments reflected the high ratings. Three participants commented on the usefulness of the session. Two commented on the methodology. One person felt that an equal amount of time should have spent on the policy dialogue code as on the funding code.

Responses:

- *"I found this session "totally" useful and will definitely incorporate the learnings from today into my daily work"*
- *"absolutely useful"*
- *"in a way which provided me with the type of orientation for my job which I wish that I had had at the very beginning".*
- *"his clarified the roles and responsibilities of the Govt Project Manager and the Volunteer Sector"*
- *"too bad its only an accord"*
- *"very well done"*
- *"excellent facilitation"*
- *"location/ technology very good"*
- *"great idea to hold the forum and share the knowledge. These need to happen more often - intersectoral work"*
- *"more time on the policy dialogue code should be balanced against funding (evenly)"*
- *"I felt a little out of my depth at the beginning but I have learned quite a bit".*

## 2. What part of today's process did you find most useful?

Nine people said they found the networking/discussion aspects of the meeting the best - learning from one other, meeting people from the other sector, the enthusiasm - the most useful. Five people said they liked learning about the contents of the accord and codes the best.

Responses:

- *"Walking through the specific points in the codes"*
- *"Going through the code/ simplifying"*
- *"learning more about the accord and codes"*
- *"Good idea to take the time to go over every aspect"*
- *"introduction to the accord"*
- *"Meeting new people, especially having sector and govt people learn together"*
- *"perspective from individuals from the voluntary sector"*
- *"enthusiasm and willingness to learn from all"*
- *"excitement from sectors"*
- *"networking"*

- *“networking and learning about the realities on both sides”*
- *“seeing the government side, their commitments”*
- *“dialogue”*
- *“discussion”*
- *“better understanding of how the voluntary sector works through discussion with members of the voluntary sector”*
- *“recognizing the huge relationship HC has with the voluntary Sector”*
- *“everything”*
- *“all of it”*

### 3. What part of today’s process did you find least useful?

Five people couldn’t identify any parts which were not useful. Five people wanted to see more representation from the voluntary sector. One person felt the policy dialogue session was the least useful.

Responses:

- *“It was all useful”*
- *“n/a”*
- *“All was useful”*
- *“n/a”*
- *“n/a”*
- *“Not a good participation from the voluntary sector. More people needed to be at the session”*
- *“More representation from the voluntary sector, however, I understand that it is March”*
- *“would have been nice to see more voluntary sector groups”*
- *“would have been great to have even more voluntary sector members”*
- *“would have liked greater representation from the voluntary sector”*
- *“less broad representation at the table, across the sectors- both”*
- *“policy dialogue”*
- 

### 4. What is one thing you will do differently as a result of today’s workshop?

Six people said they would be using the accord and codes in their job. Four said they would share the information with others. Two said they would try to learn more about the issue.

Responses:

- *“I will be using this accord as a guide to doing my job”*
- *“Definitely start to refer to the policies good practice”*

## Appendix B: Agenda for One-day Training Session the Accord and Codes

### Forging Stronger Links: Understanding the Voluntary Sector Accord and Codes of Good Practice Inside Agenda

March 21, 2005

Learning Centre Plus, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor Maritime Centre

Set up: 3 tables of 5-6 people, sectors mixed; overhead projector for slides. Flip charts.

#### 9:00-9:45 - Welcome, Introductions, Workshop Objectives

*Margie: welcome, introduction of Margie and Rick*

- Review of objectives (overhead) and agenda (overhead)
- Reference to binder
- Washrooms location

*Rick: Icebreaker - form groups consisting of the following*

- a) Where do you work as an employee?
  - Government (Health Canada)
  - Voluntary Sector
  - Have worked in both during career
- b) Organizations who have seen their funding levels in the last few years:
  - Increase
  - Decrease
  - Remain stable
- c) How much do you work with the other sector?
  - Once a week
  - About 4 times a year (quarterly)
  - Seldom
- d) Do you have an issue you want to get on Health Canada's agenda? – raise your hand.
- e) How many of you have as individuals (inside work or out):
  - Written a letter to a Minister
  - Signed a petition
  - Marched
  - Tried to develop a working relationship with a policy maker

*Margie: Introductions*

Participants are asked to pair up with someone they don't know already and interview each other, and then to present their partner briefly (name, organization, where they are from and their expectation for the workshop).

The identified expectations should be written on a sticky note and posted on the piece of flipchart paper on the wall. The workshop moderator then indicates (where possible) whether or not the issue will be dealt with during the course of the workshop.

#### 9:45-10:30 - The Maturing Dialogue: The Relationship between the Voluntary Sector and the Government

*Margie: presentation - objective and slides on the history of the relationship.*

*Rick: Small Group Work* – ask participants, at their tables, to discuss some best practices they currently employ with the other sector. Participants should record these best practices on a sheet of paper

*Small Group Report Back* – have participants report back on their existing best practices. Note these best practices on a flip chart at the front of the room. Trainer should, as needed, add to the list generated by participants using the attached list. These best practices will be referred back to at several points during the course.

### **10:30-10:45 - break**

### **10:45-11:15 -A Look at the Two Players**

*Margie: presentation: objective of the session and information on the govt and the vol sector*

### **11:15-12:00 - An Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector**

*Rick: presentation: objectives of the session and a review of the Accord*

*Margie: small group work:*

Ask participants to review the list of best practices generated earlier in the day on the flipchart(s). Assign each table 2-3 of the best practices (depending on the number originally generated) and ask them, at their tables, to link the best practices to sections of the Accord (especially in terms of Commitments and Principles)

Have a representative of each table report back on the results, including reading the relevant paragraph for each best practice. Trainer should demonstrate additional links to the Accord using the list provided

### **12:00-12:45 - lunch**

### **12:45-2:00 - A Code of Good Practice on Funding**

*Rick: presentation on purpose of the session and the Code*

*Small group activity:*

Ask participants to review the Code, and then work together at their table to identify the 5 most critical points

*Report back to plenary*

### **2:00 -3:00 - A Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue**

*Margie: presentation on purpose of the session and the Code*

*Small group activity:*

*Rick: Ask participants to review the Code, and then work together at their table to identify the 5 most critical points*

*Report back to plenary*

**3:00 - 3:15 - break**

**3:15- 4:00 - Next Steps and Evaluation**

*Rick: In plenary, ask participants to identify how they will use this information further.*

**Completion of Evaluation form**

Comments received:

- *“be more sensitive to the challenges of the voluntary sector”*
- *“use this in grants, proposals etc. use it as a checklist”*
- *“keep the accord in mind on a go-forward basis”*
- *“Use the codes in discussion with other federal depts”*
- *“Share with my colleagues.”*
- *“share this code with co-workers”.*
- *“give the orgs that I know information about the Accord”*
- *“Share at a staff meeting”*
- *“Read the Accord and Codes in their entirety.”*
- *“I plan to research the subject more thoroughly”*
- *“seek out groups in voluntary sector as required for consultations, information sessions”*
- *“use other networks that I was not aware of - health promotion network and community health promotion network”*

**Other comments:**

Three people commented on the usefulness of the session. One person suggested the workshop should be two days. Another suggested monitoring follow-up to keep the momentum going.

Responses:

- *“very useful information”*
- *“This has definitely helped me - I can go back to my organization and move forward in this area”*
- *“thank you both for the best education of ‘how the work is to be done’ that I have ever had”*
- *“great session”*
- *“good facilitation”*
- *“it will be interesting to see any follow-up that emerges to maintain the momentum”*
- *“share the evaluations back to the participants”*
- *“Thanks”*
- *“make it two days”*