

Report

Orchestrating Partnerships Workshop

Bank of Montreal, Institute for Learning, Toronto, ON

January 24 to 26, 2003

Introduction

Partnerships are increasingly important for not-for-profit organizations, if we are to maximize our limited resources. Health Canada's Voluntary Sector Unit recognized this need and agreed to provide funds for a workshop aimed at national health charities. The Institute of Genetics, CIHR supplemented the initial funding. Suzanne Lawson, Executive Director of ALS Society of Canada agreed to chair a planning team comprised of representatives from ALS Society of Canada, Canadian Hemophilia Society, Lupus Canada, Institute of Genetics-Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), and Osteoporosis Society of Canada. Health Canada representatives also participated in the planning.

Process

The planning team conducted a survey of health charities to determine the needs. The workshop agenda (Appendix xx) was developed based on that input. Promotional material was distributed via the Health Charities Council of Canada (HCCC) listserv. It was decided to provide background information about partnerships; hold discussions based on participant's expressed needs via the Open Space technology approach to meetings; and enable the participant teams to develop plans to be implemented in their own national organization. Participants also made recommendations for submission to Health Canada.

Resource Material

The planning team acquired a wealth of resource material to provide to participants. (Appendix xx) It also arranged for the overnight printing of reports from the group discussions. The Health Charities Council of Canada agreed to host a section on partnerships on its website to carry the resource material, workshop reports, and subsequent resources.

Location

The workshop was held at the Bank of Montreal, Institute for Learning (IFL) in east end Toronto. This facility contributed to the overall ambiance and success of the workshop. IFL combines accommodation, function rooms, social space, dining space and exercise facilities.

Topics Identified as Priorities

Of the 13 topics discussed during Open Space, the following were identified as priorities to be forwarded as recommendations to Health Canada as sector needs.

1. Continued provision of funding for sector development
2. Enabling the sector to communicate with French communities
3. Growing internal organizational partnerships
4. Developing and nurturing trust

Organizational Initiatives

- Organizational teams met on Day One to identify their learning objectives and on Day Three to identify organizational initiatives. Their commitments include:
- Look at the opportunities for partnerships with corporate sponsors re annual conference.
- Refine fundraiser using partnership concepts with artist and corporate sponsors.
- Review/revise membership agreement and change to memorandum of understanding.
- Improve corporate collaboration, ie, recognize that current partnerships have potential to be enhanced, ie, seek volunteers and in-kind services as well as funds.
- Develop a report to the Board containing learnings from this workshop.
- Encourage the full loop of communication, ie, hear what membership says and encourage Board to explain decisions to develop trust.
- Seek ways for Board to be more visible to membership.
- Ensure that we allow time to develop good relationships that will lead to fruitful outcomes.
- Ensure that the Board structure reflects what is required for effective partnerships.
- Increase collaboration and invest time to develop trusting partnerships.
- Develop effective partnership agreements.
- Use Open Space as a way to enable effective planning.
- Encourage Executive Directors to meet, using Open Space approach, to agree on priorities, which will then be reflected in future budgets.
- Include responsibility for developing partnerships in all Executive Directors' job descriptions.

- Set up an Intranet to communicate with volunteers and staff.
- Define organization's understanding of partnerships.
- Develop guidelines and achieve consensus around partnerships and potential partners.

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Funded by

Health Canada, Voluntary Sector Unit

Institute of Genetics, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)

Planning Team

Lead organization: ALS Society of Canada

Chair: Suzanne Lawson, ALS Society of Canada

Clare Cecchini, Canadian Hemophilia Society

Judi Farrell, Lupus Canada

Sibyl Frei, ALS Society of Canada

Joyce Gordon, Osteoporosis Society of Canada

Jennifer Jennings, Institute of Genetics, CIHR

Coordinator, Carole Elliott, Consultant

Participant Organizations

ALS Society of Canada

Allergy/Asthma Information Association

Canadian Breast Cancer Network

Canadian Hemophilia Society

Canadian Institutes of Health Research

La Leche League Canada

Lupus Canada

SIDS Foundation

Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus Association of Canada

Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada

Guests

Health Charities Council of Canada

National Secretariat on Homelessness

Facilitator/Speaker

Larry Peterson, Open Space Facilitator

Yves Savoie, Speaker

Evaluation

Forty volunteers and staff people from 10 organizations participated in the Orchestrating Partnerships Workshop. The 24 registrants who completed evaluations indicated major support for the approach and the venue. (Appendix xx)

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