

Municipal Government Representatives – How Municipalities/regions are evaluating their impact and communicating this to stakeholders

August 13, 2019

Attendees

1. Marc Todd, Niagara Prosperity Initiative
2. Linda Lalonde, Ottawa Poverty Reduction Network
3. Nora Landry, Durham Region
4. Ivan Sierralta, Enough for All Calgary
5. Tim Stiles, Federation of Canadian Municipalities
6. Elaine Capes, Dufferin County
7. Erin McKeown, City of Spruce Grove
8. Sarah Tanner, Northumberland County
9. Rachel
10. Elle Richards, Vibrant Communities
11. Alison Homer, Vibrant Communities
12. Hannah MacDonald, Vibrant Communities

Check-Ins

- Sarah
 - Beginning to look at how they share their impact with stakeholders
 - Trying to make sure that social media content is quicker, and more able to report things than the annual report
 - At the beginning of their journey of evaluating their work
- Elaine
 - In the process of creating an impact report through Getting to Impact
 - Excited to share what they have
- Ivan
 - Have been at this for 4.5 years. Have been communicating with stakeholders of the implementation, have tried to communicate to citizens at well, to mixed results
 - Also communicate to funders, a much less expensive way to communicate results
 - Biggest struggle has been to determine line of sight between programs and impact, which is also at the core of the GTI series
 - Will be sharing successes
- Tim Stiles
 - Work primarily on social policy
 - Don't work directly on the ground or with a single municipality. We don't have a formal evaluation for policy programs
- Nora Landry
 - Very new in the process
 - Evaluation for a very specific program – financial empowerment
 - Providing free tax filing throughout the year

- Doing this by tracking info from community partners around how many people are filing taxes.
 - Has collected and shared data back to community partners
- Erin
 - Don't have direct examples on how we have been using outcome measures.
 - Have done social return on investment previously in other areas, but not specific to poverty
- Linda
 - Don't have a lot of experience, looking at moving towards a new poverty reduction strategy

Presentation: Niagara Prosperity Initiative

- The Niagara Prosperity Initiative was established in 2008
- It is an annual investment of \$1.5 million to improve the quality of life for residents of Niagara. The money came from a program that was initially intended to provide support for children in the Niagara region. That program was uploaded to the provincial government, and instead, the NPI petitioned to use that money to fund other local projects. Each year, that funding is granted to NPI again.
- In 2007, Brock University published a report on poverty in Niagara. Money became available in 2008.
- IN 2011, the report was updated, but that was the last report on poverty in Niagara.
- NPI is a place-based strategy – when organizations apply for funding, they identify their neighbourhoods
- Goals
 - Create stronger and more prosperous neighbourhoods
 - Improve engagement of people living in poverty
 - Improve health for people living in poverty
 - Create greater economic prosperity for individuals and their communities
- NPI Approach
 - Use available data (poverty reports, mapping tool)
 - Listen to the community and use expert advice on how to address poverty, use the recommendation from the poverty reports
 - Recommendations in a Request for Proposal for the community to respond on how poverty will be addressed given funding
 - Funding is allocated through a place-based approach. Addressing poverty at the neighbourhood level
 - Has an independent review committee decide on who receives funding – committee is made up of residents of various ages, locations, etc. they provide recommendations on what should be funded
 - Niagara region contracts with a Secretariat to manage NPI contracts
 - Employ a convenor to assist collaboration efforts in the community
 - Complete short-term project evaluation to provide outcome data for ongoing investment.

- Projects are funded for 1 year or 2 years, and NPI tracks to the end of their funding term, not beyond that
 - Report on outcomes to Public Health and Social Services Committee
 - NPI funds new projects, or current projects that are looking to be enhanced (ie branching into different locations)
- NPI has funded 386 projects, from 87 different community agencies and groups
- Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
 - Measure improvements in terms of individual and household assets in 5 areas:
 - Personal Assets
 - Increased self-awareness
 - Enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence
 - Improved hope and motivation
 - Physical Assets
 - Emergency supports
 - Food
 - Housing
 - Transportation
 - Dependent care
 - Social Assets
 - Civic participation
 - Support networks
 - Human Assets
 - Health
 - Life skills
 - Financial Literacy
 - Education
 - Employment skills
 - Financial Assets
 - Employment income
 - Non-employment income
 - Savings and financial assets
 - Reduced debt/costs
 - We look to enhance household and individual assets in these 5 areas. In the application for funding, NPI asks which of those 5 areas programs or organizations hope to improve
 - When the projects are approved and they begin implementing them, NPI then asks that they provide testimonials from participants, using the most significant change template. They then have students go through the testimonials and pull out the outcomes from the project (e.g. enhanced life skill, enhanced personal support network).
 - NPI began using this approach in 2010
 - In general, greatest impact has been in social assets, and least impact has been financial assets

- Each project gets a dashboard that explains what the outcome of the project was, including the location, project, number served, amount in contract, highest assets impact, testimonial, and the final result.
- NPI reports their findings to Public Health and Social Services Committee and to Council
- In 2018, NPI obtained funding and were approved for \$500,000 for a 36 month project to write a new report on the state of poverty in Niagara. Part of the review by Brock will look at whether they should change how they are measuring their impact.
- Challenges
 - Indicators – that data is not always available
 - Also, NPI is just one aspect of the puzzle, there are many other factors
 - Measuring longterm assets is challenging, because we only measure to the end of our funding term
- The hope is that Brock will provide
 - Insights on impacts of NPI
 - How did NPI benefit/support users,
 - What are the effects, duration, and scope of the impact,
 - What other data should we collect,
 - What factors are helping people exit poverty, and is NPI addressing these factors,
 - And a recommendation for NPI.
- The report will be available in the first quarter of 2021

Discussion/Questions

- Linda
 - If the programs are collecting testimonials themselves and a certain number have to be submitted, is there a possibility that they will only pick the favourable ones? Is there an independent evaluation done of the individual projects and people served?
 - Yes. We know that not everyone will be happy. We are looking for those where it did make a difference, and what that difference is. We do get some that come back and say that the program was not helpful.
 - Unfortunately, we don't have any independent evaluation done with the people served.
- Sarah Tanner
 - is there any evaluation done with the asset, financial, capacity, knowledge impact and growth on the part of the delivery agencies too outside of the individual people served?
 - Not all the time – it depends on the project and on the group receiving funding. Some projects are short term, like offering a seminar. Some are long term
 - are they measuring the impacts on the agency? e.g increased funding, more trained staff, more sustainability.....
 - At this point, that is not something that we are evaluating. We are hopeful that that is something that Brock will be able to answer
- Elaine Capes
 - What is being done is highly commendable, and I know the challenge with our shorter experience. I hope that once you have had your report, that you'll come back and share that with the group.

Closing Announcements

- Next Call: Tuesday, October 15th 1-2pm ET Topic: What are effective strategies to engage municipal leaders that we can get our issue on the agenda?
- **WEBINAR | Mapping Ourselves: The Practice of Personal Science | August 22, 1-2 pm ET |**
Speaker: Rajiv Mehta | Rajiv Mehta, CEO of the non-profit Atlas of Caregiving, will describe their efforts to help people observe and create maps of their connections, activities, moods, etc. — to see the invisible community of care they live within — and to use this clarity to improve their lives. | [Click here](#) to learn more and register.
- **WEBINAR | Putting Community into Food Security | August 27, 12-1 pm ET |** Join us on this webinar to hear from Jill Umbach and her team from the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force discuss how they have transformed approaches to food security in the area through: food security conversations, a community food centre model and the use of a food charter as a policy tool. | [Click here](#) to learn more and register.
- **MEMBER GATHERING | October 8-10 | Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario |** Participate in interactive exercises, learn from exciting keynotes, and practice new skills:
 - Future Search – CRP 2020
 - Successes and failures
 - PiPs and workshops
 - Cultural experiences
 - 2-night accommodations covered

REGISTRATION NOW AVAILABLE Please check in with your Manager of Cities to learn more