

SOLVING THE COMPLEXITY CONUNDRUM

AN OPEN CONCEPT FRAMEWORK AND PROPOSAL
FOR EMPOWERING EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ACTION
ON CLIMATE CHANGE, SUSTAINABILITY, AND A BETTER FUTURE FOR CANADA

DECEMBER, 2015

INTRODUCTION

Let's face it. The social side of sustainability is complex and messy. We can legislate the important stuff, like carbon pricing and efficiency standards, and we can invest billions in public transit, but when it comes down to convincing people to make a voluntary change it's not easy and you need thousands of individual actions to match one big showcase act.

Is it any wonder that the social component of climate action and sustainability is given short shrift?

But hang on a sec. We can't get to a low-carbon economy or sustainable society without individual, voluntary and organic action. Transit lines aren't effective with low ridership. The stick of a carbon tax needs to be balanced with the carrot of incentives.

More important, we need build long term social support to ensure long-term political and economic leadership. A short-term social mandate gets us in the door, whereas social benefit will get us invited back in.

Messy or not, every government plan for a sustainable future - including climate action, energy conservation and renewable power, transportation alternatives, local food, green jobs, and sustainable urban development – will need to include efforts to promote and support individual, organic action.

Each government plan will have its own outreach and engagement component, but to be truly effective we need to look at combining forces through convergence, collaboration, and capacity building.

- **Convergence:** recognizing how each of our issues and programs contribute to our quality of life as well as reducing our environmental impact.
- **Collaboration:** working together to maximize community and individual engagement and action.
- **Capacity:** understanding how we can build local capacity to organize, engage and act in support of our common goals.

This is a major task, which is why we are proposing both an open concept framework as well as a specific proposal. An open concept means that anyone can add pieces to the proposed framework. The specific proposal is for an initial set of activities that will get the ball rolling.

The proposal seeks to develop an initial list of partners in the process, including Sponsoring , Lead, and Supporting Partners. All partners are equal, it just depends on who has a budget or can actively support the work.

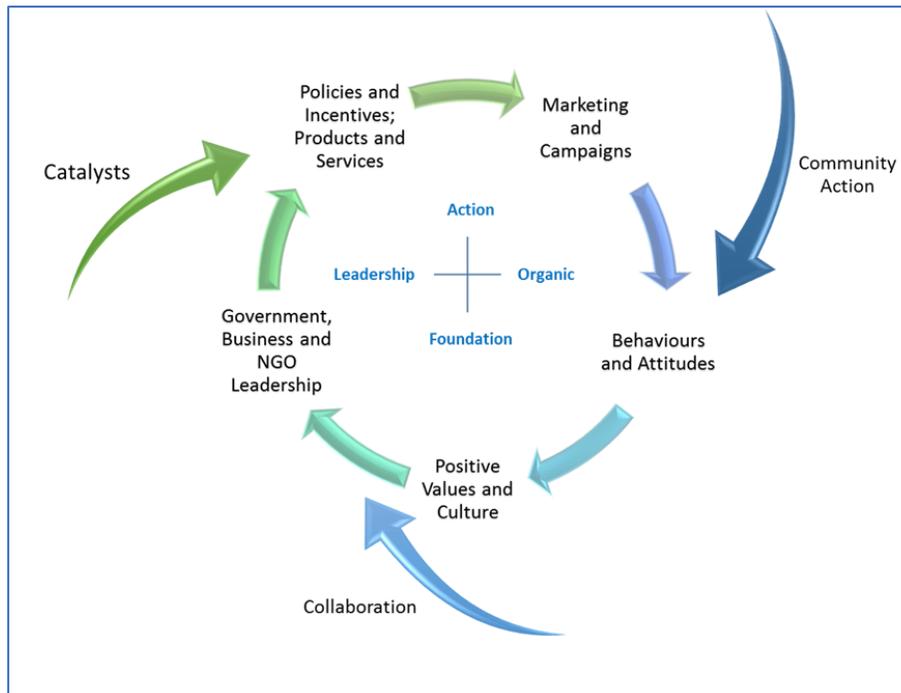
This is who we see as potential partners:

- Federal and Provincial ministries with responsibility for climate change, energy conservation, transportation alternatives, food and agriculture, local economies and job creation, and urban planning
- Municipal departments with similar mandates, plus community engagement coordinators
- Community networks and lead community engagement initiatives
- Foundations with a focus on community engagement around sustainability and quality of life
- Business leaders in community engagement and support
- Businesses and consulting firms working on community sustainability
- Key individual thought leaders

Our initial target is at least thirty diverse partners in the first six months of the project to help guide future directions.

AN OPEN CONCEPT FRAMEWORK

Our framework for promoting effective community engagement and action is based on a cycle of incremental change, where major initiatives support individual action, which builds deep cultural support for effective leadership, which in turn leads to new initiatives in support of deeper action.



This may seem complex, but in reality it is an organic and natural cycle. It is happening all around us.

There are many examples that highlight the connection between culture and change. Public interest in recreational and tourism cycling in Quebec translated into a provincial cycling network, “La Route Verte”. The interest in car-sharing in Toronto has given rise to three car-sharing businesses. The demand for electricity conservation fueled the development of fluorescent and now LED bulbs. In each case, there is a close relationship between public interest and the ability to introduce new initiatives, businesses, or technologies.

What we look for is the opportunities to nudge the process along a little faster and a little deeper. Beyond the simple program deliverables and results, we seek to build a deep culture of support for a conservator lifestyle and a healthy, sustainable future for Canada.

There are three main opportunities to influence, or “nudge” the cycle:

1. **Cultural Collaboration** (the expression of a cultural mandate, such as action on climate change which fosters leadership)
2. **Catalysts** (legislation, fiscal instruments, and innovations that pave the way for enhanced action)
3. **Community Action** (voluntary action by individuals for personal interest and benefit)

In this instance, we are looking specifically at ways to enhance community action.

SHIFTING FROM A LINEAR TO A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

Community action seeks to engage individuals and communities as active participants in a common cause. Most of the time, we look at communities in the geographic sense – a neighbourhood – but we can also include cultural, faith and any other definition of community as potential participants in a community action campaign.

The traditional linear or “column” approach to organizing community action is that each ministry or organization develops its own programs and outreach to communities and the public.

Many have a direct membership base, some have established community or school clubs, and others are connected directly with municipalities, schools or agencies as community leads to help promote or deliver their programs.

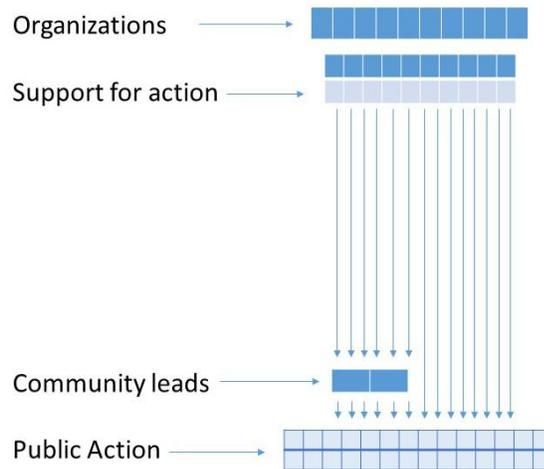
For established organizations, this method is an effective way of building a membership and funding base. Overall, it is an inefficient and ineffective way of delivering solutions.

A collaborative “hourglass” model is not intended to replace the personal connections and membership base of the linear model, it adds new opportunities for co-marketing and capacity building.

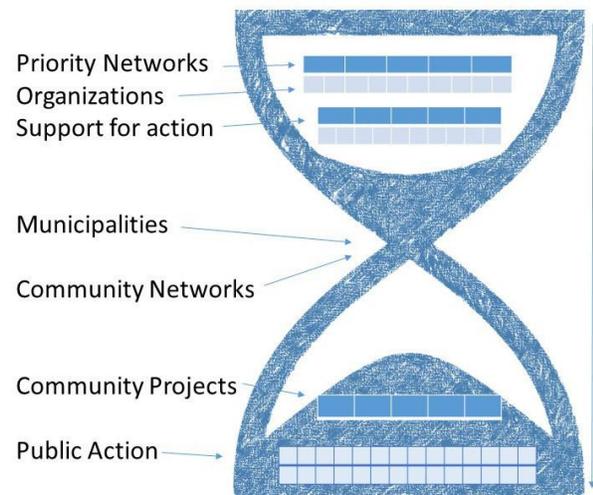
In this model, information on solutions is collected and distributed via municipalities (or lead cultural associations) and community networks. Where there is a match with community priorities and projects, a direct connection is made.

The end result is a greatly enhanced capacity to engage communities as an active component of provincial and national strategies on climate change, sustainability, or any other related priority.

Traditional Linear Organizing



Collaborative Organizing



The true value of a collaborative model lies not in working with those closest to you, but in understanding how the work of those furthest away from you can help you achieve your goals.

WHY IT MAKES SENSE

If we are truly concerned about achieving results, a collaborative model is the way to go.

However, it's not that simple. Our current model is competitive, and competition and collaboration mix like oil and water. At the top end, funding is limited, which leads to competition between solution providers. Corporate funding for community projects is increasingly being done through online competitions that are intended to provide profile and a marketing edge for the company. At the municipal level, most contracts for community engagement and planning are awarded through a competitive RFP process. Bidders form collaborations to compete with each other.

On the collaborative side, a number of foundations have introduced a collective impact model, and there are both networks and NGOs that work specifically on building local capacity and connecting people with appropriate solutions. Most organizations support collaboration, especially if it can help increase funding and support across the board. Within municipalities and the communities, there are dedicated, if not overworked, individuals who are helping organize and support community action and public outreach and engagement.

We all share the common goal of helping shift our society onto a sustainable path, and therein lies the desire for effective collaboration.

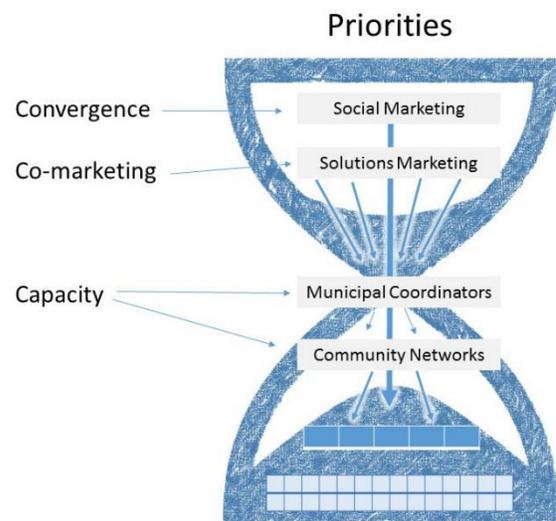
FOCUSING ON THE THREE C'S: CONVERGENCE, CO-MARKETING AND CAPACITY

We can introduce a collaborative model to community engagement organically over time. It will not replace or compete with any organization's relationships with municipalities or the public, rather it will add a much needed support service for organizations, municipalities, and community groups.

There are several areas where we need to focus on in order to develop the model:

1. **Convergence:** integration of provincial and national issues within a common goal
2. **Co-Marketing:** A national database of solutions and co-marketing to communities
3. **Capacity:** Community networks and action plans to organize local groups and volunteers

This is where the open concept comes in. There are many organizations and initiatives that address pieces of this puzzle. Our goal is not to recreate, or compete with existing collaborative and capacity building exercises, but to identify ways we can strengthen them.



On the next page, we propose specific activities for which we are seeking your support – ideas that will help build a community of practice for community action, and that will help to strengthen the role of community-based outreach and engagement in Canada's climate and sustainability strategies.

THE PROPOSAL: A CANADIAN PARTNERSHIP FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

The overall goal is to strengthen the cumulative impact of voluntary action to meeting Canada's goals for climate action and sustainability. We will achieve this goal through three levels of activity:

1. Organizing a community of practice for community action – connecting leaders at all levels and across all issues
2. Building capacity for community action – organizing for action in communities and in delivering solutions
3. Developing movement-based campaigns – collaborative approaches to moving the yardsticks

FOUNDATION: BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

Objectives

- 1. Identify partners interested in a collaborative model for community engagement**
- 2. Develop ideas and opportunities for improved collaboration**
- 3. Keep partners informed of new initiatives and opportunities**

We will seek partners at the federal, provincial and municipal levels, across issues, and across cultures in order to develop a broad base of support and involvement in collaboration.

We will meet with as many partners as possible to identify needs and opportunities with respect to capacity building, collaboration, and convergence. For logistical reasons, working from Toronto, we will concentrate initially on Ontario and southern Ontario municipalities. If there is interest and available funding, we will include travel to other provinces and municipalities.

We will identify major themes and opportunities and circulate to partners in a summary report.

We will host a partners meeting in April, 2016, to review the recommendations and discuss options building collaboration.

We will develop a Community Resources Database of support programs and services available to community groups.

- The initial research will compile information on resources into an online factsheet, similar to this one on [Food](#). We will prepare at least ten factsheets, ensuring that all partners are included in the appropriate factsheets.
- The research will be expanded to include funding sources for community projects and incentives for individual action where available.

We will publish a monthly e-newsletter highlighting new initiatives and a spotlight on an issue or practice.

We will continue to expand the network of community outreach and engagement practitioners, which will allow for constellations to form around common interests (e.g. climate, job creation, poverty, social marketing, fiscal incentives, community organizing, etc.).

CAPACITY: ORGANIZING FOR ACTION

Objectives

1. **Develop models and opportunities for community organizing**
2. **Develop networks and/or constellations for issues and solutions**
3. **Build a national directory of solutions and support**

We will compile a guide for municipal coordinators and other community coordinators on the models and support available to organize communities. In particular, we will focus on community action as a complementary activity to municipal climate plans and other local environmental and sustainability plans.

We will work with existing network organizations to develop opportunities for co-marketing solutions via municipal coordinators and community networks.

We will develop a national information website, where community animators and others can tailor the summaries of programs, projects, funding and incentives into factsheets for community meetings.

CAMPAIGNS: BUILDING A NATIONAL MOVEMENT

Objectives

1. **Foster a national vision.**
2. **Support movement-based social marketing campaigns**

We will work with the partners to develop a common national vision of the future we want, combining the urgency for action with a positive vision of a better future.

We will work with lead partners to create movement-based social marketing campaigns – messaging that can be picked up and used by municipalities and groups across the country to engage people in positive actions for a better future.

We will work with lead partners to develop national engagement tools, such as a national green card and a common rating program on green leadership.

THE TEAM

PROJECT LEAD: [CHRIS WINTER](#)

The project is led by Chris Winter. Chris has over thirty years' experience in collaboration, strategic planning, and community action. His latest initiative, [Canada Conserves](#), has focused on ways to improve the environmental and sustainability movements in Canada.

This project is a direct outflow of three years of [research](#), and it reflects the best path forward to implement recommendations in the research.

CHARITY LEAD: TO BE DETERMINED

The charity lead will be the formal host for the project and receive and administer all sponsorships and charitable contributions.

PARTNERS

This project will not be possible without partners – governments, organizations, businesses that share in the goal of a healthy and sustainable future for Canada.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PARTNER?

Collaboration should not mean endless meetings and dialogue. On the contrary, collaboration means understanding and supporting the work of others that is complementary and supportive of our overall goal.

To be a partner is to be active, positive, and curious. We are looking for partners who are at the front lines of developing and delivering solutions; who have a desire to help others; and who are curious about the possibilities of a collaborative approach to promoting voluntary action by individuals, communities, organizations, and businesses.

There is no formal commitment other than an open mind and a willingness to help. We believe the opportunities for collaboration and mutual benefit will present themselves as we proceed.

WHO SHOULD BE A PARTNER?

Everyone from the top down and the bottom up should be a partner in this process. We are all engaged in making positive change happen:

- Federal and Provincial ministries with responsibility for climate change, energy conservation, transportation alternatives, food and agriculture, local economies and job creation, and urban planning
- Municipal departments with similar mandates, plus community engagement coordinators
- Community networks and lead community engagement initiatives
- Cultural communities and lead organizations
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WHAT TYPES OF SUPPORT DO YOU NEED?

We are looking for three types of partners in this process:

1. **Sponsoring:** partners who can chip in \$10,000 to support the project
2. **Lead:** partners who can play a lead role in developing collaborative campaigns or common tools
3. **Supporting:** partners who are interested and keen to participate in a collaborative approach

BUDGET AND SPONSORSHIP

Our base budget for 2016 is just over \$100,000 for staff, local travel, workshops, and administration:

ITEM	EXPENSE
Staff	70,000
Travel	5,000
Workshops	10,000
Expenses	5,000
Administration	14,500
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Total	104,500

This budget will allow us to carry out the foundation activities of the project as well as develop the capacity section. Additional sponsorship revenue will be used to accelerate the development of a national collaboration.

Other collaborative projects and campaigns, including a national information website, will be developed as separate projects.