

## **Background information on the Cluster Project**

In the Speech from the Throne 2005, Government made a commitment to

- Strengthen the relationship between government and the voluntary sector
- Improve the grants process
- Identify opportunities for collaboration.

To begin to respond to these directives it is proposed to develop an area-based model which brings together clusters of voluntary sector leaders and community-based groups across clusters of communities. The clusters will develop links with institutions and government departments to strengthen relationships and collaboration.

### **PILOT PROJECT**

The overall long term goal is to build a series of strong networks of voluntary, community-based organizations in different areas of the province. These networks, with dedicated support, could play a significant role in strengthening relationships around a variety of matters from identifying community needs, to service delivery, to grant making. The Clusters project will in 2008-09 support the development of a strong network of community-based organizations in one area of the province.<sup>1</sup> The underlying assumption is that voluntary sector infrastructure can be strengthened through collective undertakings at a local level. The Community Services Council Newfoundland and Labrador is the facilitating organization.

From a community-based perspective this approach should provide greater opportunities for organizations to come together to identify common issues and identify specific ways in which they can share resources through rational regional collaborations.

From government's perspective there could also be an advantage in having "go to" people in a region to convene organizations around policy and program priorities.

By building strong partnerships across organizations and communities and with government, the expected outcomes might be:

- organizations with similar objectives working together
- sharing resources and information across organizations
- improved ability to recruit, match, and retain volunteers especially where there is a declining pool of volunteers

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<sup>1</sup> It is intended to add other cluster areas in Year Two based on research and planning in Year One.

- better support for volunteer leadership and management
- building expertise in area planning, policy engagement, human resource development and social enterprise growth
- improved approaches for funding community undertakings.

## **Goals**

1. To explore the potential for cluster development within the voluntary sector in order to provide support to a variety of organizations within an area-based context.
2. To provide generic support which will enable groups and communities to work more effectively together in areas of mutual interest.
3. To lay the foundation for a pilot project in a selected region which would test the potential to support collaboration and collective action around pressing challenges confronting voluntary organizations, volunteer leaders and communities, including:
  - volunteer recruitment (especially new and younger volunteers), retention and succession
  - organizational development including tailored training and skills enhancement, partnership development and collaboration strategies
  - attracting and building new leadership
  - organizational management and accountability
  - human resource issues
  - funding acquisition and competition
  - financial instability of organizations
  - new responses to community needs
  - numerous organizations with same interest working in isolation
  - planning for the future.
4. To review the model from the pilot project for potential adaptation in other areas