

MOVING TO ACTION

*An Action Plan for Edmonton's
Human Services Sector*

May 2013

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Preamble

Between June 2012 and March 2013 Mayor Stephen Mandel hosted a total of over 500 leaders from Edmonton's Human Services Sector in a series of 3 conversations - A Call to Action: the Mayor's Dialogue with the Human Services Sector. The purpose of these discussions was to explore ideas and actions to enhance effectiveness and collaboration across Edmonton's Human Services Sector. Participants identified priority actions within six (6) themes:

- 1** *Networks:* Enabling the coordinated visionary leadership and strategic action required to leverage collective impact.
- 2** *Board Leadership:* Building the strategic leadership capacity of Boards to foster effective, efficient outcomes-focused organizations and a sustainable human services sector.
- 3** *Executive Director Support:* Coordinating a more comprehensive approach to the development of existing senior leaders and emerging leaders in the sector, in order to equip it to address organizational effectiveness imperatives and succession planning pressures.
- 4** *Staff Training and Development:* Coordinating innovative approaches to sector-wide training and development, to enable cost-effective strategies, relationship building, and broader awareness across the sector.
- 5** *Shared Buildings, Processes, and Services:* Aligning interested organizations around shared systems or approaches, to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of these organizations.
- 6** *Client Centered Models:* Developing and applying emerging models of service delivery that focus on a holistic view of client needs, addressing root causes, and incorporating prevention and early intervention strategies.

The next consideration is: **“what will be accomplished as a result of these priority actions?”**

It is proposed that the priority actions will lead to outcomes in four general areas:

- Foster Networking – at multiple levels
- Build Capacity for Engagement
- Align Work Strategically
- Connect the Dots

Foster Networking - at multiple levels

OUTCOME: Networks are developed and broadened fostering strategic leadership, improved efficiency and effectiveness leading to greater possibilities for strategic partnerships and alignment.

PRIORITY: Intentional Networking Amongst Boards

Actions

- Host Board to Board networking events in November 2013 & May 2014 on themes of Strategic Relationships and Networking.
- Include opportunities for Board networking within existing events, gatherings, and meetings facilitated by ECVO and other partners.

PRIORITY : A Focused Conversation to Identify Needs and Opportunities for “Shared” Collaborations or Alliances

Actions

- Host a Collaborative to Collaborative networking event in October 2013 to raise awareness of what work is being done, share learning and identify possible linkages and/or alignments.
- Provide leadership and coordinate information and action (backbone supports) to facilitate a “shared approach” among organizations.
- Incorporate opportunities for Board networking and development of strategic relations into existing initiatives currently undertaken by ECVO and partners including; training seminars, workshops, and the annual Board Leadership Conference.

Build Capacity for Engagement

OUTCOME: Improved capacity of Human Service organization staff to engage in and benefit from partnerships and an improved ability to achieve individual, organizational, and sector impacts.

PRIORITY: Creating Communities of Practice

Actions

- Build upon existing Communities of Practice and sector collaborations to build knowledge and engagement around common issues/ concerns.

PRIORITY: Innovative Approaches to Mentoring By Peers and Leaders In the Sector; and Establish Networking Opportunities Together and Separately for Executive Directors and Emerging Leaders.

Actions

- Initiate an Executive Director Mentoring program to provide support, networking opportunities, and learning opportunities for human service organization Executive Directors.

PRIORITY: Establish Networking Opportunities for Executive Directors and Emerging Leaders for Skill Development and Capacity Building.

Actions

- Increase awareness of and access to training and professional development opportunities by building upon existing collaborative training efforts, improving existing training information platforms such as SpareSmarts, and utilizing technology aids (apps).

Align Work Strategically

OUTCOME: Improved opportunities and supports that encourage organizations to strategically align efforts in addressing priority community needs.

PRIORITY: Develop a Business Case for the Sector to Support Organizations in Developing a Strategic, Collective Vision for the Sector.

Actions

- Convene nonprofit leaders engaged in successful partnerships, networks, and coalitions to articulate what they are learning around the vision and “business case” for the sector in order to build upon Imagine Canada’s current “foundational narrative” initiative.

PRIORITY: Sector Champion(s) to Lead an Informed, Strategic, and Coordinated Approach to “Shared” Collaborations Within the Sector.

Actions

- Inform and recruit participants for at least 2 shared service initiatives to support increased organizational efficiencies, using existing research and learning about successes and challenges, shared service/outsourcing needs, and market preferences.
- Continue work to explore new and innovative options for “shared services”.
- Facilitate engagement with service providers (e.g. NPOZero, In-Kind Centre) to explore opportunities to improve organizational efficiency through shared services.

PRIORITY: A Demonstration Project By a Group of Agencies With a Common Purpose, Engaged in an Action Learning Process

Actions

- Engage a group of “ready” organizations in a facilitated and documented action learning process to improve alignment of activities and enable collective approaches to common issues.

Connect the Dots

OUTCOME : The Human Services nonprofit delivery system “sees itself” more strategically – staff and board members better understand the connections, linkages, and relationships between organizations and their strategies. Collaborative initiatives networks/ coalitions/ partnerships are more visible along with a shared understanding of respective contributions to addressing pressing needs and overarching outcomes.

PRIORITY: Coordinate Efforts to Enhance/ Develop a Comprehensive Directory of Organizations.

Actions

- Involve EC Map, 211, Inform Alberta, M.A.P.S. Alberta Capital Region, and other partners to determine ways of leveraging existing data that provides more comprehensive information to human service sector organizations that supports awareness, collaboration, and alignment.

PRIORITY: Create A Map of Natural Collaborators and Partners.

Actions

- Develop a web page associated with ECVO’s website to compile links, provide information on existing collaborations/ partnerships, and to promote data on best practices about effective networking and collaboration.
- Communicate information to the Human Services Sector about existing networks and relationships between networks using data from existing mapping initiatives and directories to support development of linkages and relationships.
- Support and promote opportunities for the expansion of existing partnerships/ collaborations and the creation of new partnerships/ collaborations.