

# **COASTAL COMMUNITIES NETWORK**

## **“A LARGE VOICE FOR RURAL NOVA SCOTIA”**



**Report: Building A Solid Foundation....The Steps Along The Way**  
**Friday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005**



On October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005 Coastal Communities Network held its annual workshop event, **Building A Solid Foundation...The Steps Along The Way.** This was held at the Howard Johnson Hotel in Truro, Nova Scotia. This was an all day event with two workshops offered in the morning and two workshops in the afternoon. We had a total of 27 participants representing various groups across Nova Scotia.

You will find in this report a brief overview of the workshops that were offered.

## **Board Development**

The Board Development workshop was presented by Jim Campbell; Regional Developer (Fundy Region) for NS Health Promotion. Jim spoke about the evolution of an organization and how the effectiveness of a group will be determined. Organizational principles were discussed as well as tips on assessing our organizations. Jim recommended that every organization should do periodic assessments of how they were operating. This assessment helps to test assumptions we may be making about our fellow Board members. It helps you to get to underlying reasons why people are operating in a certain way. This can alleviate tension on a Board. The following effective practices were explained and discussed.

- Decision Making
- Effective Meetings
- Delegating Authority/Sharing Responsibility
- Planning
- Managing For Results

Worksheets were given out, so that each participant could relate it to their organization.

- ❖ Our activities (an “end” or a “means to an end”)
- ❖ My past involvement & experience
- ❖ Your personal capacity

This workshop was 2.5 hours and feedback was very favourable. Participants felt that they received a lot of valuable information. It was suggested that this workshop be scheduled for an entire day, as there is so many topics to cover.

## **Difficult Conversations**

Annette Strug, President of AMS Mediation Associates facilitated this workshop. Discussion points in this workshop were:

- How to start a difficult conversation
- How to avoid confrontation
- How to avoid laying blame
- How to try to understand others viewpoints.

During this workshop, the participants had an opportunity to role play in different conversations and have discussions within their groups around the topic of what is a difficult conversation. Participants learned why some conversations are so difficult and communication skills for

managing these difficult conversations. Trigger points were also explained, as well as how to listen and problem solve. Some tips of how to handle a difficult conversation are: Always try to see where the other person is coming from don't look at it just from your point of view, never assume anything until you have all the facts, listen do not formulate an answer until you hear everything they have to say and then give your response, when you're going to deal with something make sure you're doing it in an area that's appropriate for all parties concerned, be polite, don't lay blame, if feelings aren't acknowledged then the person(s) may become even more upset and she couldn't stress enough the fact to be FACTUAL. Empathy will defuse the path to the conversation, let the other person speak before you do.

This workshop was 2.5 hours and feedback was extremely positive – very casual workshop, relaxing atmosphere, informative and fun. Participants also enjoyed the interaction with each other within this workshop.

## **Funding Tips**

Presenters for this workshop were:

- Susan Sanford; Health Canada
- Paula Belliveau; The Rural Secretariat
- Darlene Stevenson; ACOA

They spoke on what makes a good proposal opposed to one that does not make the grade. After speaking on tips from their perspective, each offered an overview of their funding programs.

Tips included:

#1 The top tip, repeated often is.... Check out whether you fit the criteria. Call the funders and discuss your idea. The funder will understand that not all details are flushed out yet, but they can tell you what angle will work for them. This means asking what their priorities are; what they want achieved with this funding etc.

#2 Check to see how much funding they can give. Does it need matching funds?

#3 Be concise and simple.

#4 Once your proposal is finished, get someone to read it over, who does not know anything about your project. Did they understand it?

#5. Solidly show the need for your project. This can be done through surveys, needs assessments, facts that you get from databases.

#6 Include letters of support

#7. Have clear, obtainable objectives for the project. What do you hope to achieve?

#8 Make your budget realistic. Funders have a really good sense of when a budget has been padded and this turns them off.

- Health Canada has a Population Health Fund that provides \$25,000 per year for up to three years. Goal: “To increase community capacity for action on or across the determinants of health” with a focus on healthy public policy. Determinants of health include many aspects of life including employment, social and environmental issues, gender, health services, culture etc.
- The Rural Secretariat has funding for Learning Events and Partnerships. It is a small fund but can provide assistance for conferences, workshops etc.

- ACOA has a new program called Community Innovation Fund that provides grants for projects that benefit the economy of the region, leads to sustainable and viable economic activities. ACOA's objective is to invest in projects that enhance rural communities' capacity to overcome economic challenges and take advantage of their strengths, assets and opportunities.

This workshop was 2 hours long and participants found the information provided very informative. They also felt that this information could be taken back and utilized by their organizations.

## **Board Liability**

Board Liability was presented by Gary Richard, a partner with Burchell MacDougall Law Firm in Truro, Nova Scotia. Gary reviewed how a board could protect themselves in a civil liability claim against the organization and also the liability of individual board members. Gary spoke on the Volunteer Protection Act, which states that a volunteer of a NPO, acting within the scope of the volunteer's responsibilities, is immune from damages claims, subject to certain exemptions. A "volunteer" would include any board member who is not compensated beyond expenses and a maximum \$500.00 per year honorarium. Other topics that were discussed included:

- Gross negligence
- How to avoid liability
- Risk management
- Insurance

This was a 2 hour workshop. Participants evaluated this workshop as having great content and information. They thought that this workshop was straightforward and that they were provided with useful information. It was also felt that this workshop could have been expanded upon if there would have been a larger time slot.

## **Overview**

Overall, this event went very well and participants were pleased with the information that they received. Information was very valuable and participants felt that they could take their new knowledge back to their organizations and put it to good use. Participants felt that the information that they received from our workshops far outweighed our minimal attendance cost. They also enjoyed the opportunities to network with people from a vast array of organizations across Nova Scotia.