



Taking Stock:

*communities and governments working together for
community safety and well-being*

Building Successful Community-Government Collaborations

*This report is drawn from the full research report that was written by
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Introduction

The goal of the Taking Stock project is to move towards making Prince Edward Island a safer place by addressing the root causes of crime through social change. The Taking Stock project has three research pieces and this report looks at successful efforts of government and the community to work together.

What is Collaboration?

‘Collaboration’ is defined as a long-term, well defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to reach common goals. There are some factors that are common to working together in any successful collaboration, but there are also barriers to working together. We looked at the studies that have been published, as well as ten PEI projects where government and the community have worked together. What conditions helped these projects to be successful and what barriers had to be overcome?

Governments have usually dealt with social problems through the old method of using experts. This is often described as the “decide-announce-defend” model. In this model, programs are developed with only a small amount of advice from the community. This model has been shown to be not very useful in dealing with complex problems.

It is now clear that everyone needs to work together so that communities take an active role to help develop policy and programs to solve problems. It is an opportunity to link community experience to public policy. The responsibility for change is shared amongst government, citizens, private sector businesses and non-profit organizations. It is assumed that:

- Complex issues require a broader response than one department can give, and
- Solutions must involve everyone who will live with the results.



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What makes working together successful?

While we tend to focus on the inputs and results that are tangible (the things we can hold in our hands like money and reports), the main elements of success are largely intangible (things we can not touch or hold), like trust and integrity:

Inclusion means bringing in everyone who should play an active role or give advice. It is important to bring in a wide range of interests, knowledge, skill, ideas and ways of looking at an issue rather than working with just one 'layer'.

Integrity is being open, fair and honest and showing respect for differences. It means sticking to commitments and allowing people to see how the system works. The research shows that groups cannot work together without integrity.

Commitment is strongest in those projects which came from the community or grassroots. This is where the problems as well as the solutions are most strongly felt, and where there is some passion and perhaps even pain about an issue.

When **trust** is present, people are more likely to open their minds to new ideas and to risk new ways of doing things. It also helps them to change what they first saw as most important and to support the overall good instead.

Many people spoke of the importance of **relationships** which are built over time and which are the glue that hold projects together in spite of challenges.

Leadership is a key factor for success. Leaders need to know a lot about the issues and have good connections with other people. They are committed and trusted and are able to bring people together.

There must be **clarity** to work together successfully. The goals and the work have to be clear as well as why this direction is being taken. It is important to have a clear vision of what is to be done, what the roles are and who is to do what.

Structures are needed for working smoothly and good organization helps to make the best use of everyone's time and work. However, the structure can vary over time due to changes in such things as new members and the amount of money and other resources.





Skills are a key factor to achieve success and include:

- Helping people to work together
- Running meetings
- Getting information to everyone
- Managing people with respect
- Resolving conflict, and
- Running an organization.

Resources alone do not make working together successful. However, money, people and other resources are necessary, especially a skillful coordinator and space in which to work. A major barrier to success is a lack of funding on a long term basis.

Every project needs to develop a base of **knowledge** to which everyone has agreed. This helps to define issues so people can agree on goals and priorities. It also helps to know the strengths and assets that everyone brings to the table.

Processes, or ways of doing things, should be set up so that they work well. For success, systems are needed for managing money, information, staff and volunteers.

Planning must take an overall approach. It needs feedback loops, and a variety of tools such as building of assets, running workshops, carrying out surveys and focus groups and action planning.

Communications, getting information back and forth, is important. The research showed this is an area of weakness for many groups trying to work together, but successful projects communicate often and well.

Evaluation is almost always seen as something that must occur. If there is a lack of attention to watching what happens and to reporting the results, problems can arise and could lead to the breakdown of working together.





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The two most important things for success are *inclusion*, and *integrity*. Inclusion leads to *commitment* and passion, while integrity fosters *trust*. Commitment and trust form the basis of good *relationships* which are important to everyone who is involved for working together successfully. Commitment and trust also encourage the rise of effective *leadership* and a shared purpose. This is shown as *clarity* of what the group wants to do; the ways of doing things, in what order; and roles and responsibilities of each player. These all make the organization stronger for setting up good *structures* to manage programs. They also help to get *resources* with which to gather *knowledge*, to develop *skills* and to put in place *processes* to work toward the objectives.



Conclusion

It has been proven that working together gets the best results when everyone is included and the community plays a strong role. This kind of cooperation is needed to get at the root causes of complex social issues. However, the success is shown only over the long term and is difficult to prove. Processes that are based in the community are the most likely to respond to local needs, and also tend to get the commitment that is needed to work across sectors, cultures, professions and socio-economic differences. Success happens when people put a lot of effort into making sure the key factors are there to allow everyone to work together for our future well-being.

To view the full research document, or the French version,
go to the website address: <http://www.cliapei.ca>

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