



Vibrant
COMMUNITIES
Saint John

| Evaluation Report
2010

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Introduction

Vibrant Communities Canada (VCC) is a pan-Canadian initiative through which 13 cities have experimented with new and innovative approaches to poverty reduction. These approaches emphasize collaboration across sectors, comprehensive thinking and action, building on community assets, and a long-term process of learning and change.

At the time of this report, Vibrant Communities Saint John (VCSJ) is six years into a mandate to weave together the numerous community and government efforts aimed at poverty reduction and community revitalization. VCSJ was envisioned as a way to strengthen poverty reduction efforts by:

- Using research to deepen understanding of the issues involved;
- Fostering multisectoral collaboration to develop solutions;
- Building public awareness and support;
- Enhancing public policies and investment; and
- Supporting ongoing evaluation and learning.

Vibrant Communities Saint John supports a Leadership Roundtable with over 35 members representing individuals living in poverty, three levels of government, the business community and non-profit organizations.

With the launch of Overcoming Poverty Together and the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (the New Brunswick poverty reduction strategy) there is an effort to mobilize poverty reduction efforts in communities across the province with an approach that mirrors several Vibrant Communities principles and approaches.

Throughout its mandate, VCSJ has invested in research and evaluation as a means to better understand the nature of poverty, identify learning that can shape efforts and strategies, and generate findings that can be shared with other communities interested in a comprehensive, place-based approach to poverty reduction.

VCSJ is making the transition from evaluating its own process and operations to measuring and reporting on the collective poverty reduction efforts in the greater Saint John area. This brief document provides highlights of poverty reduction efforts in the Greater Saint John area.

2010 Evaluation Process

The 2010 evaluation includes the tracking of several indicators that are reported as part of the national Vibrant Communities effort. In addition, the evaluation this year looked at four areas of focus:

- Developing and refining community targets for the four areas of focus (neighbourhoods, workforce participation, children & youth, single parent families) in addition to reporting on targets established for 2009/2010,
- Examining the experience of several individuals who have made gains towards workforce participation,
- Working with several local agencies to develop a mechanism for coordinated tracking of clients and shared learning, and
- Telling stories of neighbourhood success from the perspective of residents.

The community targets were developed by the Leadership Roundtable, the workforce success cases were developed by Leah Levac from UNB Fredericton, the coordinated tracking was facilitated by VCSJ staff in consultation with Ambir Solutions a local IT company, and the neighbourhood stories were contributed by residents and compiled by VCSJ staff.

In addition to this document, which summarizes evaluation results, an annual report (including detailed reporting of tracked activity and outcomes) is available.

Section One: Poverty Reduction Highlights: 2009-2010

The following section provides a snapshot of progress and activity:

Community Capacity for Poverty Reduction

- 5 priority neighbourhoods have resident committees/organizations and priorities
- City of Saint John commits \$150,000 annually for 5 years to priority neighbourhoods
- Tools developed to monitor and measure success across multiple service providers. Tool will enable tracking of transition to work programs to understand clientele and collective impact.

- Supporting the re-establishment of the Teen Pregnancy Committee (data and research support as well as planning for priorities and neighbourhood approach).
- Cumulative participation (since the start of VCSJ) from 55 local businesses, 38 government departments, 480 people who are living in poverty, 87 not-for-profit organizations, and 30 other interested individuals.

Programs and Initiatives

- 10 poverty reduction initiatives are complete, 9 are in progress, and 4 in planning
- Three annual Learn and Go, resident leadership training projects administered through funding from Irving Oil Ltd
- Five neighbourhoods and many partners created Saint John Votes, a project to increase voter turnout in priority neighbourhoods
- Exploring with the YMCA home based childcare for priority neighbourhoods
- Provided 5 tours to 42 residents to employers who are hiring
- Provided 6 workshops about working and training to 191 residents
- A new essential skills program being piloted for learners with very low literacy levels at the Saint John Learning Exchange began September 2010 with 8 learners.
- 151 youth engaged in leadership opportunities from priority neighbourhoods

Knowledge and Awareness

- Holding conversations with Extra Mural staff regarding poverty reduction efforts (information to share with patients and health concerns facing low income patients)
- Poverty Related articles in the Telegraph Journal 2008/ 2009- 385, 1st half of 2010 = 411 stories
- 14 Issues of Around the Block 9000 copies each
- Developed Poverty Reduction Video
- Developed Poverty Reduction Website

- Developed 2 poverty reduction newsletters
- Developed Saint John Votes strategy to improve access to voting and increase voter turnout in priority neighbourhoods
- Several communities are applying lessons from VCSJ including Waterloo, Ontario who recently hired 3 neighbourhood assistants to support their poverty reduction efforts.
- Information session related to substandard housing- ongoing committee established.

Systems and Policy

- Coordinating communication and recruitment with multiple programs (government and community)
- Developing a strategy to engage employers in transition to work programs, across many programs and organizations
- Coordinating meetings of all five Priority neighbourhoods working together.
- Coordinating Youth Serving Agencies Coalition.
- Coordinating Faith community working together (Committee and joint efforts).
- Coordinated series of workshops for Public Health, Community Health Centre, and neighbourhood partners explore health in priority neighbourhoods and begin building neighbourhood relationships.
- Hosting conversations with health partners to enhance access to health supports.

Outcomes for People Living in Poverty

- Since the start of VCSJ there has been over 19,000 poverty reducing efforts that benefitted people living in poverty in Saint John: 13,000 through the neighbourhood work, 1744 in workforce, and 3377 in children and youth.
- Vibrant Communities Saint John hired 17 individuals living in poverty over 2 years, 11 of whom went onto subsequent employment.
- 34 learners through TIES 2 Work- essential skills program 70% still working or gone on to further education.

Section Two: Tracking Workforce Outcomes

One of the challenges we face in defining targets for workforce is that there is little accessible data on how many people were supported to return to work. Government and not-for-profit agency efforts focus on one part of a larger continuum towards participating in the workforce. The transition to work is a series of pathways and these pathways are not well understood or documented.

While many organizations and departments support residents with valuable programs, there is a limited awareness of what others in the system are doing. There is a limited capacity to track and monitor the pathway and progress that people make towards employment.

Two approaches were taken in 2010 to measure workforce participation across a variety of groups and organizations. First a common database was developed to allow aggregate data to be compiled, providing a system for follow up.

Data were compiled for 181 individuals who participated in workforce programs in 2010 representing four organizations. Demographic profiles confirmed that programs are reaching a diverse population group, 97% of whom were identified as 'low income'. Less overlap among programs was revealed than anticipated (198 cases and 181 distinct individuals). Over half (55%) of the participants reside in priority neighbourhoods, therefore, groups are experience success engaging these socially isolated communities. More than half received social assistance and 15% received income from employment. The most common barriers to employment cited were disability (chronic disease, mental health, learning), transportation, drivers license, criminal record, and child care.

While partners were supportive of maintaining such a data base and appreciated the conversation that emerged through joint-analysis, organizations did not have the resources to absorb the added effort of populating the database and maintaining the momentum unaided. (Refer to Appendix B for additional details).

In order to better understand the system of supports, several local agencies identified individuals who have been successful in making progress towards employment. These individuals were interviewed to gather a deeper understanding of the kinds of experiences of people who have found success.¹ The experiences vary and the definition of success is different depending on the individual.

Better understanding the pathways to workforce success is important on two levels. First, it is a step towards understanding the ways in which people move forward towards meaningful employment. Second, it represents a way of thinking collectively about a highly

¹ Participant interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes. Conversations were free flowing and all participants responded to all questions. All but one participant agreed to being identified by real name, many often citing the fact that they want to help others if possible and so they are willing to own and share their stories.

complex issue. The ultimate outcomes are not owned by any one program, but are the result of collective efforts across a continuum of supports that vary for every individual.

This was reinforced by the finding that there is no identifiable order through which people access workforce related programs, with the exception that access to drug treatment/addiction recovery was a pre-requisite when addictions are part of someone's circumstances. Going forward, having longer term data, and more organizations part of collecting, sharing and interpreting the findings bears hope for finding new and more comprehensive solutions.

The references to the difficulty in finding programs, and how everyone was introduced to a program by a connection in her or his community support the importance of the neighbourhood focus within the design and promotion of workforce programs.

Interview participants consistently reported anxiety about the stability of their future. Participants described themselves as hard working and resourceful and passionate about their communities. Maintaining a balance of work and volunteerism was very important to participants: substantially increasing their incomes was not a significant motivator (important to recognize that this is a small sample). Participants reported programs in one's community as a significant way to engage and address access to information about what might help. Lastly, the additional financial burden of caring for children on one income were discussed. (see Appendix A for additional details)

Section Three: Stories of Change from Priority Neighbourhoods

The community input at Taking Poverty to the Next Level (September 17th 2010) confirmed the importance of a neighbourhood lens to mobilize poverty reduction efforts in Saint John. Participation of low income individuals in neighbourhood revitalization continues to grow.

There were 182 new residents (adult and youth) involved in 2010, plus sustained participation of most past volunteers. Each neighbourhood has a group of residents who are working to improve their communities, three with an explicit focus on poverty reduction.

Evaluation in 2010 included tracking neighbourhood involvement and capturing 4 stories from residents that represent for them the most significant changes they have experienced. To provide insight into the nature of neighbourhood work, Neighbourhood Assistants developed a story of change with the support of the Human Development Council Researcher. These stories are presented in Appendix C.

These stories from the neighbourhoods give us a perspective into the range of activities happening in Saint John's priority neighbourhoods. The opening of the West Side Wellness Centre and the South End Food Purchasing Club illustrate programmatic initiatives that are responding to the needs of residents.

The partnership in the Old North End between Lorne Middle School, the North End Community Centre (NECC), Main Street Baptist Church, and ONE Change shows us the kinds of institutional partnering and collaboration that is an important element to supporting change in a neighbourhood. Similarly, the re-emergence of the neighbourhood association and tenants association in Waterloo Village is a step in having formalized and consistent capacity to support the on-the-ground work in that neighbourhood.

The widespread interest and support for *Around the Block* shows the importance of information and awareness shared with the community on priority neighbourhoods and the pride of residents themselves.

In total, this sampling of cases demonstrates the multiple levels of effort that take place in neighbourhood change: new initiatives, strong partnerships, core capacity and communication and awareness building are all essential ingredients to supporting the efforts in Saint John's priority neighbourhood

Section Four: Community Targets for Poverty Reduction

Vibrant Communities Saint John is a key part of an expanded community capacity for Poverty Reduction that is now well established in this community. This capacity constitutes the efforts and focus of many other partners and organizations. The examples discussed in this report point to expanded programs and initiatives, increases in knowledge and awareness, and efforts directed at the larger systems that effect poverty. All of this translates into outcomes for people living in poverty. Over 19000 people have benefited from VC efforts since the 2004.

As a community, we have identified four key elements that serve as the framework for our poverty reduction strategy: neighbourhood revitalization, workforce participation, single parents, and children and youth.

As our community evolves, our focus and progress will reflect what is most relevant to our residents. We have a responsibility to regularly review and update our targets and to offer solutions and action plans based on feedback from the Greater Saint John community.

The Leadership Roundtable established targets in each of these areas in early 2010. In September 2010, VCSJ hosted a discussion between participants from various sectors of the community to review the targets and progress of the Greater Saint John Poverty Reduction Strategy and to reflect on the future of the strategy.

A summary of recommended changes were proposed to the Coordinating Committee of VCSJ who provided guidance for inclusion in a draft of revised targets presented to the November Leadership Roundtable. The Leadership Roundtable made revisions and the 2011, 2012 priorities and targets are presented below along with VCSJ's role and partner leads identified.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy for Saint John took a step forward in 2010 with the definition of targets for neighbourhood revitalization, workforce participation, single parents, and children and youth.

The following provides a summary of refinements to the Poverty Reduction Strategy targets and priorities. These changes are incorporated in the charts below.

Neighbourhood Revitalization

- Strategies for increasing resident engagement may be unique to each neighbourhood, particularly because of the differences in their stages of development. This evolving understanding affects process and implementation, as opposed to targets.
- Inclusion of reduction in sub-standard housing units. The previous version of the Targets focused primarily on increasing the number of new housing starts. In 2010, the Substandard Housing Sub-Committee re emerged with the mandate to address substandard housing issues. Data revealed Saint John and priority neighbourhoods house an over representation of buildings in need of major repair.
- Monitoring neighbourhood investments. The 2009 evaluation included a summary of investments that have been drawn towards priorities within the strategy. We will continue to monitor and track financial investments to ensure investments follow strategies.
- Inclusion of youth emergency housing solutions. An emerging identified need is a gap in service with regards to youth housing. A committee is in place to develop proposed solutions to this support gap.

Workforce

- Strengthen transition to work programs and supports and follow up procedures . With many programs emerging to support adult transitions to work, coordination is required to maximize the effectiveness of these resources.

Single Parent Families

- More attention to mental health and addictions. Mental Health and addictions have not been explicitly stated in previous strategies, however, stakeholders felt strongly that the cycle of poverty could not be broken without addressing these issues. Teen pregnancy and other challenges were felt to be closely linked to mental health.
- Embed policy barriers in context of single parents. Policy barriers to transitioning to work were moved from Workforce Participation to single parents, as many of the barriers faced are exacerbated within a single parent family.



GREATER SAINT JOHN POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY TARGETS AND ACTIONS 2011-2012

Workforce Participation

Target	Lead-Description	VCSJ's Role
50% of those who participate in workforce programs secure work / education for at least 6 months	VCSJ and HDC developed tool to monitor and track clients across multiple programs- follow up every 6 months for 2 years. Sustainability being explored.	VCSJ staff developing tool to assess impact across programs. Bringing groups together to identify opportunities for collaboration e.g., common intake questions
300 individuals per year participate in transition to work programs and events.	There are many programs that support transitions to work for many different groups. These programs vary from building capacity and skills (Power UP, Learn and Go, Key to Wellbeing), to training programs (John Howard workforce programs, SJ Learning Exchange TIES 2 Work) to programs that match or introduce prospective employees and employers (Job Bus, Partners for Workplace Inclusion)	Client numbers to include in the count: SJLE programs, (not CALPs), Job Buses, Catch the Wave to Work workshops, YMCA-YWCA - Opportunity Program, NBELT, Self-Employment Benefit program, John Howard workforce programs, Partners for Workplace inclusion, SJ Community Loan Fund (Enterprising Women), SJ Multicultural Newcomer Resource Centre workforce program
Priorities	Lead-Description	VCSJ's Role
Complete research to define living wage	<u>Human Development Council</u> will partner with others in province, continue to advocate for minimum wage increases, not support 2-tiered minimum wage	HDC- partner agency lead. VCSJ lend support
Engage 24 businesses/ employers to support employment of low-income individuals	Many programs recruit and work with employers to find employment for those with barriers. PETL, SJLE, ESJ, PWI, John Howard Society	staff working with business partners to identify leads. Staff working with programs to coordinate and make more efficient recruiting and engaging employers

* barriers to employment priorities can be found in the Single Parent Section

Neighbourhood Revitalization

	Lead-Description	VCSJ Role
100 new affordable housing units per year	BCAPI Housing Working Group is reviewing its priorities and will review specific numerical targets	Participate on Housing WG providing neighbourhood perspective
Reduction in number of substandard housing units **set target**	Substandard Housing Committee represents Social Development, Fire, Housing Alternative, VCSJ, CMHC, BCAPI, ONE Change, Homelessness Committee etc are exploring areas for action	Participating on committee when relevant, contributing data
Neighbourhoods with plans (monitoring plans in an ongoing fashion)	Neighbourhood groups and VCSJ staff. Many neighbourhoods have identified priorities and action plans.	VCSJ staff support neighbourhood groups, where required, to develop and implement and monitor neighbourhood priorities
100 new residents engaged per year (20 per neighbourhood).	Neighbourhood groups and VCSJ staff. Getting involved in neighbourhood can be a first step to opportunities. Neighbourhood groups and service providers also promote resident involvement.	VCSJ neighbourhood staff work with neighbourhoods to support resident engagement Develop an expert participation grant to encourage participation by residents to contribute within and outside their neighbourhoods.
150 Low-Income residents engaged in capacity building training and 30 assuming leadership roles	Neighbourhood groups and VCSJ staff. Neighbourhood changes are most effective when improvements are identified and driven by residents.	VCSJ Community Developer, Learn and Go, UCSN programs. enhance referrals and next step programs
Monitor investments in priority neighbourhoods over time.		VCSJ to monitor and report

Single Parents

Target	Lead and Description	VCSJ Role
Reduce Teen Pregnancy	Teen Pregnancy Committee reviewing stats and trends to identify actions. Increase visibility of issue.	Participate on the committee, providing data analysis, planning, and follow up support.
Priorities	Lead-Description	VCSJ's Role
Increased access to health, (including public health, mental health, and addictions) to residents in priority neighbourhoods.	St Joseph's Community Health Centre to lead an exploration to improve access to health and wellness services-supports	VCSJ staff support conversations within Health to identify how to better meet neighbourhood needs
Eliminate policy barriers to employment.	<p>The following barriers were identified by programs and individuals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * not having drivers license, first aid, birth certificate, social insurance number * wage exemption, * subsidized housing rent increases as income increases- how to support transitions off of Assistance? * childcare subsidy has to pay for real costs of childcare. * 100 youth in SJ area receive \$300 a month rate - learn more about, * prescription drug coverage- especially low wage earners * work with employers, HR departments re GED requirements 	<p>Convene groups to discuss drivers license and first aid barriers- coordinate efforts. Share information from front lines to policy reform. Gather data as required. UCSN Policy Advisory Committee meeting in early 2011 to identify priorities</p>

Children & Youth

Targets	Lead Description	VCSJ Role
High School completion rate increase in priority neighbourhoods	Refer to 1st priority below. Will require multiple organization to contribute.	VCSJ staff explore availability of data
Increase post secondary and 1st generation participation in priority neighbourhoods.	Address financial barriers (bursaries), increase awareness within neighbourhoods	VCSJ staff explore availability of data
50 trained youth leaders, 150 youth engaged from priority neighbourhoods.	TRC and neighbourhood outreach. Boys and Girls Club (developing a youth engagement strategy)	Co manage Teen Vibe (CV), support aggregation of information, convene youth serving organizations committee
Priorities	Lead-Description	VCSJ's Role
Expand number of child care spaces within priority neighbourhoods (especially infant).	YMCA/YWCA and BCAPL exploring with Social Development creative models to increase child care spaces, (especially infant). Plan to have model by late Spring 2011	supporting neighbourhood role and data-how many spaces currently- where located etc.
Develop a model to support high school completion.	TRC is lead with support of Committee exploring Pathways to Education, UNBSJ-HWSF partnership supporting transitions into high school, John Howard Quantum	Information sharing, participation on Committee as required.
Develop a partnership between the school district and community to respond to elementary children not in school.	TRC, Boys and Girls Club and the YMCA/YWCA are exploring a community response. Sistema NB is exploring an expansion of their program which is associated with improved attendance, academic and behaviour outcomes in schools.	Information sharing.
Sustain funding for youth programs with demonstrated success.	To explore: is there a common way to sustain proven programs- coordinated funding stream??	Lead Required
Plans in place for youth transition housing.	Youth Housing Subcommittee working with service providers and faith community to develop an option for youth housing	VCSJ staff supporting development and relationships
Explore mental health (eg. suicide) issues and supports for children and youth		VCSJ bring together stakeholders to discuss mental health issues- specific to children and youth

These targets are more defined in some areas, and are still being refined in others. These will no doubt evolve as the community makes progress in key areas, and learns about other elements that require attention.

Vibrant Communities is about to enter another transition period. The national Vibrant Communities initiative is transitioning into a new model and the provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy is moving into implementation. VCSJ will adjust, as it always has, to these new circumstances. There has been considerable progress in 2010 and these efforts will continue in 2011 shaped by the learning we have generated this year.

Appendix A: Workforce Success Stories

Name	Age Range	Gender	Organization
Julie	50s	Female	VC/Urban Core
Tammy	50s	Female	Urban Core
Stacey	40s	Female	Ridgewood/Coverdale
Michelle	20s – 30s	Female	Ridgewood/Coverdale/JHS
“John”	20s – 30s	Male	JHS
Beth	20s – 30s	Female	VC

Common Experiences

All participants described that the road into poverty may happen quickly, however the journey out is lengthy. All but one participant still feels that every day is a bit of a struggle (of varying degrees). No long-term certainty, and no sense that everything will continue to go well. There is some expressed anxiety about the future. One participant was very apprehensive about the future and refused to make future plans because of not trusting that those plans would/could be realized. This finding is linked closely to peoples' responses to any questions I asked with a future orientation (e.g., where do you see yourself in 5 years?). Everyone spoke about wanting some sort of stability in their lives, especially in terms of financial stability. They also want their children to be happy (in cases where there are children involved). Stability frequently included only basic necessities such as housing, food, and access to health care.

"I still dispatch taxi every Sunday even with my other job. As proud as I am of my job, it's still a contract, so it's been 6 months to 6 months; we're hoping for a year of security from common council. At least on social assistance you know what you're going to get from month to month. One year job security would be really good" (Julie).

Constructive Relationships that challenged individuals and trust were critical to success. All participants reference someone (often many individuals) who inspired or believed in them.

"She's a wealth of knowledge. She does a lot of work to empower women. She's just fantastic...She taught me different roles that you can play in a group besides being the leader, but that are just as important...how to engage people and listen carefully" (Julie).

Everyone was introduced to a program by a connection in her or his community. These connections were critical to beginning peoples' pathways. In general, it seemed largely luck that people ended up accessing any given program, but once that happened, they found it easier to connect to other programs. One example of this is that an extra-mural worker who was visiting Stacey following the death of her father identified Stacey as being in a depression and linked her to appropriate services.

Four people made reference to the fact that programs are hard to find and not a lot of people know about the various opportunities for programs that exist. Alternatively, people have misperceptions about the particular services that are provided by various organizations, or misperceptions about pre-requisites for accessing programs.

Challenging Assumptions . Interviewees made reference to some element of personal work ethic and determination as being an important part of their experience. They described working very hard (though rarely for money) and searching for a better place.

"There's always something; some kind of program and it's going to connect you to what you want. If you don't get what you want, keep trying and go somewhere else. And if you don't like it, try something new" (Michelle) "I've been working since before my son was born...I was pregnant when I graduated from high school but I've always been working or volunteering. I'm not lazy" (Michelle). A lot of people assume that we [people living in poverty] can't do it, but we can. I'm resourceful and I'll get the job done" (Beth).

The importance ascribed to volunteering and giving back to community is an important consideration as programs to support individuals (especially single parents) into full time employment. Success is defined in terms that are broader than the Low Income Cut Off.

“Success for me would be being heard. Getting the residents heard, not being heard and then being told why we’re wrong. All I want is my home and my school and my kids and have a healthy, happy home. I’m not a material person. Some day I’ll be able to achieve it” (Beth).

“Success would be to be able to work part time, do some volunteering, maintain being on the boards that I’ve already started, and to be happy with what I’m doing. It’s not a measure of money. For me it’s being happy with the way my life is going and the way I am in that life. I don’t want to go back to that addict again. And to find people of similar minds, which has been very hard actually. Because of my addiction, in the last 10 years, everyone I know has been an addict so to get out of that is extremely difficult. Even coming to this building, I see them every day and I’d say 50-75% are still using so it’s hard to get away from” (Stacey).

The following are some general gaps in program experiences that people identified:

- lack of access to child care (both in terms of availability and affordability); a lot of comments about it being very difficult to afford child care in order to work, and stories about trying to get children to a babysitter when transportation is an issue (means that you have to live, work, and have child care in very close proximity)
- lack of affordable things to do with kids (not a lot of stuff to do that doesn’t cost a lot of money, especially if you have more kids and therefore more expenses)
- lack of information about what programs exist and how to access them (until you get connected to the network of programs, you don’t really know about any of them and have no idea where to go to get information you need)
- programs are more likely to be accessed if they happen in peoples’ neighbourhoods, and further within particular areas in the neighbourhood; small groups are better because a lot of people are intimidated by talking in big groups

These six individuals confirm that there is no set pathway, though they do identify common experiences. They described the difficulty leaving poverty and becoming self-sufficient. They described their perseverance in the face of adversity. They also confirmed the importance of trusted relationships that challenged them to extend their comfort zone. They all began their journeys through a personal connection (referral) within their communities. Lastly, they challenge us to reconsider our definition of success to include community building.

Appendix B: Workforce Database

In addition, we worked with programs that support 'next steps' in order to identify common intake and follow up questions that would allow us to better understand individuals we work with, the pathways to employment, and our collective impact. Ambir Solutions, a local information technology firm, volunteered their time to work with us to develop a simple database. Participating groups began populating the database early Fall 2010. (see sample in Appendix B)

The following data represents 181 distinct individuals who participated in 8 programs offered by 4 partner organizations.

- Of the entries included, there was less overlap between participating organizations than anticipated. There were 198 entries and only 17 entries were duplicates- a few triplicates. Partners had anticipated more overlap among clients. There were groups who did not participate in this first phase who were thought to have significant overlap in the different programs .
- Over 50% of participants are in their 20s or 30s (50.8%) and 25% in 40s or 50s (18% did not have an age recorded)
- Just over 55% of program participants reside in a priority neighbourhood, another 33% reside within the City, outside of priority neighbourhoods.
- 82% of participants were women (one program with 19 participants is a woman's only program)
- 31% of participants are single custodial parents, 40 % are single adults (including those with adult children)
- 97% of participants were considered 'low income'. 54% received Social Assistance, and 15% had employment income
- 19% of participants lived in social housing,
- 43% of participants had less than high school education and 26% had high school or GED
- The most common barriers identified were disability (chronic disease, mental health, learning), transportation and drivers license, criminal record and childcare.

Based on the above data, partner groups confirmed that their programs were reaching the intended targets (low income, lower levels of education), while at the same time there is diversity within their collective participants (age, family type, income source, education level, residence).

The groups found the data sharing and analysis helpful and prompted a challenging discussion regarding barriers. Partners grappled with how to support those residents who appear to make significant strides but then who ‘freeze’ when they are so close to a new way of life. Less explicit barriers pose the most significant challenges for service providers and many challenges are not apparent until the person is in the program for some time and trust has been established. Entrenched poverty and associated cultural factors were identified as a key barrier for a subset of individuals.

While partner agencies found this data and dialogue helpful, it highlighted the challenges associated with institutional follow up (in sufficient resources and time). A coordinated process to follow up with residents post program was again identified as a critical missing piece to the comprehensiveness and ultimately effectiveness of program.

The group will explore simple methods to maintain the database that will prompt follow up, allowing for outcomes to be assessed across programs.

Appendix C: Neighbourhood Stories

Here is what residents have told us:

West Side Wellness Centre

The West Side Wellness Centre was a huge step for our priority neighbourhood. We celebrated its grand opening with 300 attendees in November 2009, and then again in February 2010 when the programming began. The centre enjoys a lot of traffic, which is still steadily increasing—now upwards of 100 people on its busiest days.

The centre offers programs and services four days a week, including evening programming when needed. Some of the services include blood collection and wound care, a food bank (moved from its home elsewhere on the West Side), and an employment counsellor and Social Development contact. I think it’s amazing that we now have these resources in our community. It is of particular benefit to residents living in poverty who would otherwise struggle to find transportation to access such services—now they do not have to go without. A number of partners made this possible, including: the Carleton Community Centre, Horizon Health Network, then-MLA Abel LeBlanc, Vibrant Communities Saint John, and Westside P.A.C.T. They are go-getters who take an idea and run with it until it’s completed. The community nurses (Community Health Centre) have also been instrumental in bringing programming to the centre.

The Food Bank really resonates with me. Before getting involved I had never been to a food bank—I've always managed to make ends meet. Some of the clients look like they shouldn't be at a food bank but when you hear their story, it's clear that they are supposed to be there just like anyone else. You don't know what anyone's circumstances are (be they illness, accidents, etc.) because poverty has so many different faces. Just because somebody lives in a nice home or drives a nice car, it doesn't mean that they don't suffer. You have to look past these things and look at the individual. The food bank has now expanded from its initial bare-bones offerings of canned goods to including fresh foods as well as supplies like diapers and formula. There are people that really need this service in our community and it's nice to know that they now have a place to get healthy choices when in need.

Partnerships in the Old North End

There's an amazing partnership in the Old North End between Lorne Middle School, the North End Community Centre (NECC), Main Street Baptist Church, and ONE Change.

The level of assistance that Main Street Baptist Church provides to people in our neighbourhood just amazes me. Residents trust them in a way that they don't trust anyone else. Main Street Baptist is in the process of building a new church and have ambitious goals for the old one, which will house the clothing closet, a food bank, and the diapers and formula program. It's really nice to see that Main Street Baptist has such a great relationship with the community and I'm glad I have been able to be part of it.

The changes that are coming to the NECC (through a complete renovation) are going to be phenomenal! Some features include turning an adjacent street into a pedestrian-friendly space, a new look for the front of the building, a space for social gatherings, yoga classes, and the relocation of the Adult E-Learning Centre there.

ONE Change is the hub of the community and its President, Scott Crawford, is the true champion of the neighbourhood. He is quite simply involved in everything (on much of his own time), and is especially passionate about youth issues. He just goes non-stop!

These four entities are strong on their own, but in my opinion are even more powerful together. Most recently a four-year partnership between them brought about the Youth Inclusion Program (YIP). This was a big point of celebration for our entire community. YIP is a federally funded program (\$945,000, over 4 years) that started in the spring of 2010. It has put additional resources into Lorne Middle School, including a new guidance counsellor/teacher and a social worker (which has upped parent engagement), and has brought ONE Change programming to the school. Now students who are having trouble in the classroom can spend time on-site with YIP, which often results in tremendous transformations. YIP has also equipped Lorne with a lounge (a computer and gaming zone)

and office space for four. The space boasts a chess club, cooking club, drop-in for homework assistance, and other after-school activities. All these offerings mean that kids are no longer out on the streets hanging with the “bad crowd.”

Everything keeps evolving in the Old North End—as soon as one thing gets going, it’s off to another!

South End Food Purchasing Club

The South End Food Purchasing Club not only provides much-needed produce to a priority neighbourhood without its own grocery store but is also one of our area’s biggest success stories—I think it’s a source of pride. We wanted to get a project going in the community because at the time there was a lot of conflict and no one had seen an idea come to fruition and sustain itself.

Each month 10 to 15 South End households, whether low income or not, purchase fresh fruits and vegetables through our buying club. And it’s getting bigger. We have served upwards of 50 families to date, and word continues to spread. This is quite a feat given the challenges around neighbourhood engagement, particularly for those living in poverty who are uneasy about parting with even \$10. Until people really see what they get, it’s hard to get them to buy into the concept.

The club was the first satellite operation of St. Joseph's Community Health Centre’s (CHC) food purchasing club, lead by dietician Martha MacLean, and has inspired the other priority neighbourhoods to follow suit. Each month our volunteers meet at the CHC to pack South End residents’ orders (often valued at double the cost), which are distributed from the Centenary-Queen Square United Church. As an added convenience, families of students from St. John the Baptist-King Edward School are able to place their orders on-site. Produce is sourced from two main distributors in the winter, and expands to include more local farmers and a wider variety in the warmer months. The hope is that our neighbourhood (along with others) will eventually be able to run the program entirely by ourselves.

The Waterloo Village’s Two Associations

Recently the Waterloo Village has had success in formalizing some of its structures. The Village Association has been reformed after a sojourn and for the first time officials were elected to their positions in spring 2010. I think the reorganizing has gone very well—those involved are so positive and have hit the road running. The Courtenay Bay area also formed a much anticipated tenants association in May 2010. As a result of this work, our neighbourhood has had a number of successful events and activities including: a

Christmas party and a float in the parade; an annual neighbourhood clean-up and BBQ on Earth Day, a Village Fair to introduce the various players in the neighbourhood; and a Village Expo at Prince Charles School where neighbourhood organizations like the YMCA - YWCA, The Resource Centre for Youth (TRC), and the Boys & Girls Club held information sessions on the resources available in our community. These associations are also working to change the perception of youth in the neighbourhood and provide more opportunities for youth engagement. I believe if we treat our youth fairly and with respect, we'll get that back from them in return!

Around the Block

Around the Block, the community newspaper for Saint John's priority neighbourhoods, keeps all the communities and its residents connected and informed. It has widespread appeal and has been instrumental in getting residents involved, whether as contributors or readers. Everybody likes to see themselves, their kids, or someone they know in the paper—they eagerly flip through each edition looking for familiar faces. Each priority neighbourhood has their own page, which the Neighbourhood Assistants (NAs) work hard to recruit content for. The paper also boasts pages focused on the community, partners, and youth.

Around the Block—started by various community partners including champion Vibrant Communities Saint John—just celebrated its 2-year anniversary under the guidance of its coordinator Juanita Black. The impact of the paper on the ground is significant. People are excited for it and wait with anticipation for each issue. Some even call their neighbourhood assistant looking for the paper before it has even been delivered. The biggest role the paper plays in poverty reduction is spreading knowledge. It lets residents know that it's not only their neighbourhood that faces obstacles. It shows them that poverty is everywhere, that there are options and resources that can help