

## **B.C.- Alberta Research Alliance on the Social Economy (BALTA)**

### **Annex A – Project C10-2007**

#### **A. Project Title**

##### **MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OF THE SOCIAL ECONOMY SECTOR**

#### **B. Brief description of project and project objectives, outputs and proposed outcomes**

This research project will explore municipal government support of the social economy sector in a Canadian context, with an emphasis on BC, Alberta and the Prairies and Northern Ontario. This is a collaboration between the BC-AB node and the Prairie node of the Canadian Social Economy Hub with conceptual support for the research from CCEDNet. The research will:

- Take into account the working definitions of the social economy in both nodes and CCEDNet to arrive at one that is effective for research across both research groups and understandable to the municipalities;
- Take into account the larger literature scan on municipal aspects of SE being developed by Dr. Mendell's research group at Concordia;
- Take into account the classification framework relevant to policy research in the fields of CED and the social economy being developed by SERC 3; and
- Take into account the examples of municipal participation that turn up in the mapping processes being developed in both nodes.

We plan to use networks of CED activists, practitioners and consultants to identify key informants in municipal government (employees, elected officials, senior administrators, and the provincial association boards) to elicit a range of possibilities for policy/ municipal actions.

This will require initial fleshing out of the actual scope of municipal decision-making as policy specialists often downplay the municipal level because of its sub-ordinate relationship to provincial government. Yet, the scope of services delivered at the municipal level has increased during neo-liberalism with provincial government downloading of responsibilities in human services, health care, seniors care, emergency services and heritage preservation. The political struggle between provinces and cities over resources to fund these responsibilities could create openings for SE initiatives.

Likewise, the new direct relationship between cities and the federal government has resulted in the transfer of federal funds to the municipal level (GST rebate, gas tax, green infrastructure funds, and some heritage and cultural funding). Together these structural changes have increased the scope of municipal control and opened up opportunities to reinvest in SE activities (instead of business as usual).

We anticipate a telephone survey of representatives in all the major cities (over 50,000) and a representative sample from smaller communities. We will be working with the mapping and case study people in both nodes to pre-identify likely examples of good SE/municipal cooperation and contacts for case studies.

### **Project Timeline**

- The project will begin May 2007 and end before April 30, 2008

### **Project Objectives**

- To explore and analyse municipal government support for the social economy sector in a Canadian context, with emphasis upon B.C. and Alberta including key areas of involvement in specific sectors (affordable housing, green/sustainable cities, social enterprise development, training and employment, financing, etc.). A similar exploration would occur in and the Prairies node (which includes Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Northern Ontario node).
- To identify examples of best practise in municipal support for the social economy and key success factors for strengthening municipal government support for the social economy (a typology of actual and what is possible).
- To explore the issue of scale by comparing the role of local government in supporting social economy in different geographic regions, and in larger urban contexts and a rural or rural municipal contexts.
- To make recommendations for advancing support of the social economy sector at a municipal level.
- To explore co-ordinating and co-designing research across more than one node in the Canadian Social Economy Hub.

### **Project Outputs**

- Research report analyzing municipal support for the social economy, including discussion of generalisability across the two nodes and more widely.
- PowerPoint presentation on 3-4 best practices in municipal support of the social economy (sector by sector) including analysis of key success factors and main areas of municipal involvement.
- Report and analysis of municipal survey results disseminated through BALTA website, CCEDNET website, and Federations of Municipalities and Counties in all five provinces.
- Policy paper recommending municipal engagement strategies.
- Plan outlining strategies for advancing support of the social economy through provincial federations (AUMA and UBCM) and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.
- A summary of learning about the co-ordination/co-design of research across nodes in the CSE Hub.

### **Project Outcomes**

- Increased understanding of the role municipal government plays in the social economy sector.
- Increased knowledge of best practice in municipal support of the social economy sector.
- Increased awareness of how to further engage municipal government in supporting the social economy sector.
- Cross node discussions about definitions and development of policy alternatives.

**C. Purpose and significance of the study, including congruence of the proposed research with the over-all strategic research objectives identified for the SERC and BALTA**

The purpose of this study is to research the current state of municipal government involvement in and support of the social economy sector. The social economy sector can offer innovative responses to the complex social and economic challenges that municipalities face.

As the level of government closest to people and communities, municipal governments can play a lead role in supporting the social economy sector. This research into the role of municipal government in the social economy will help us to understand their intermediary role, and identify opportunities for strengthening this role.

In the current political context in Canada, Alberta and B.C., municipalities appear to be demonstrating considerably greater openness to engagement with the social economy than other levels of government. Thus this project can represent a strategic opportunity to both advance the positioning of the sector with municipal governments and to ultimately form alliances with municipal governments in promoting the social economy to other levels of government.

For practical political reasons we propose to present our work provincially to the Executives of the AUMA and UBCM as these are meetings where mayors, councils, CAOs and senior staff of all municipalities in each respective province come together for professional development. If cross provincial findings appear significant, we would also strategize to present our work at a future FCM conference.

**D. Will this project be led and managed by a SERC member or members or will it require a request for proposals?**

This is a SERC 3 project, but it will be lead and managed by two BALTA members from SERC 1 and 2 due to the specific expertise and relationships they bring to the project. The project leads will liaise with the co-chairs of SERC 3.

**E. Lead researcher, organization name and contact information (when known)**

This project will be co-led by:

Mike Gismondi, Professor and Director, Master of Arts – Integrated Studies,  
Athabasca University – [mikeg@athabascau.ca](mailto:mikeg@athabascau.ca)  
Jenny Kain, Social Planner, Research and Innovation, Community Services, City of  
Edmonton – [jenny.kain@edmonton.ca](mailto:jenny.kain@edmonton.ca)  
Brendan Reimer – Manitoba Research Alliance on Community Economic  
Development - [breimer@ccednet-rcdec.ca](mailto:breimer@ccednet-rcdec.ca)

**F. Names of other researchers and organizations involved (when known)**

Mary Beckie - Assistant Professor of Government Studies in the Faculty of Extension,  
University of Alberta.

Rupert Downing – Executive Director, Canadian CED Network

Jean Marc-Fontan, Professeur titulaire, Sociologie, Université du Québec à Montréal

**G. Will the project involve hiring one or more student researchers? Will they need to be recruited or have they already been identified?**

Yes, this collaborative research project (BALTA and Prairie nodes) will require one main student researcher – based in either BALTA or Prairies – for coordinating the methodology, survey and research analysis across provinces. A second student will be hired by the other partner, out of their budget, to assist with the survey and analysis of findings. The student researchers will be recruited.

**H. Brief description of project roles and responsibilities for project participants (lead researcher, other researchers, student researchers, partner organizations).**

**Lead Researchers** – The lead researchers will oversee student researcher recruitment, develop project parameters, support and supervise the student researchers, maintain co-ordination between the nodes and ensure a connection between the students and other researchers and other partnering organizations. In addition, the lead researchers will oversee the budget for the research and ensure budget compliance.

**Other Researchers will:**

- assist in developing project parameters
- Provide information on current research that they are familiar with
- Assist with networking and providing contact info for other potential stakeholders
- Assist with assessment of student researchers
- Provide feedback on draft reports
- Provide project input and feedback as requested

**Student researchers will:**

- Complete research as per the description above (methodology, survey, analysis)
- Prepare draft reports for review by the research team
- Prepare final research reports

The co-chairs will work collaboratively, with the students, to co-author the policy paper, the plan for advancing support, and the summary of learning about collaborative research.

**I. Indicative Budget (Information can be both dollar figures and anecdotal.)**

We see this as a BALTA wide project and would be asking for assistance that draws from the unallocated budget for centrally supported projects (outside the SERCs). Mike Gismondi is proposing to use his research assistance funds to match BALTA dollars contributed to this research. Based on an estimate of \$12,000 for a Masters Student this would mean a contribution of 50 percent support for wages and expenses from BALTA in 2007-8.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Requested of BALTA</b>	<b>Other Contributions</b>
Student salaries & benefits	<b>\$6,000</b>	<b>\$6,000</b> – Mike Gismondi RA fund – Athabasca University
Researcher Release Time		Significant time will be contributed by Kain, Gismondi and Reimer with lesser time contributions by others
Research Support Costs	<b>\$400</b> – mileage, phone calls, publication/research materials, supplies	\$400 – same
Knowledge Dissemination	\$250	\$250 – There may be some contribution from Research and Innovation, City of Edmonton
Travel	<b>\$500</b> – Travel to provincial federation mtgs of AUMA and UBCM	\$500 – same
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$7,150</b>	<b>\$7,150 plus in-kind time contributions</b>