

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

“Process, Process, Process”

“The time for talk has passed - let’s get onto some action!!” This is a common sentiment of partners in an initiative. Assessing needs, talking, planning, negotiating, battling red tape and the calendar all at the same time, can sometimes make people feel like they are not making progress. Frustration and impatience can lead to mistakes being made. Thus it is critical at this stage to maintain proper process, and not rush through.

STAGE IV Moving From Words To Action

- Developing a framework for implementation
- Developing a recognized process
- Recording and monitoring progress
- Tips for success

Depending on the scope of the strategy, there will be many possible ways to organize and carry out the process of implementation, but it must be done within an articulated framework, the cornerstones of which are structure and process. You might choose one overall committee structure to guide and

monitor the implementation process or you may develop specific action groups. Whatever structure is chosen, process remains key; good process will ensure that action does take place, and that it is monitored and assessed for quality. For success, each component of the strategy will require:

- Leadership and co-ordination
- Cooperation and participation
- Resources
- Monitoring and evaluation

A **PROCESS** is needed for moving recommendations forward.

Although the process might vary, it must be guided by objectives with measurable outcomes.

At the same time, it must be flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances.

In some cases, requests may be better received if they come from the community.

Informal local networking structures are invaluable where it is likely that the response to a government request would be negative.

Developing a Recognized Process

Once the recommendations have been put forward, agreed upon, and organized into a workable strategy, the next step is to ask people to act upon them, but this is not quite as simple as it sounds. How do you achieve a curb cut, change a bus route, or develop policy for an Official Community Plan?

A **process** is needed for moving recommendations forward. Although the process might vary, it must be guided by objectives with measurable outcomes. At the same time, it must be flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances.

Some items will involve formal or informal requests to various agencies and organizations; some items will require communication with the community planner and/or permission from Council; some will have to be dealt with creatively to accommodate differing mandates, protocols and personalities.

For example, in the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD), safety audit reports are submitted to the Women's Safety Advisory Committee (WSAC), which then reviews them and makes recommendations to the

Board for actions. The WSAC may recommend that the Board take action ranging from directing its departments to act, to making formal requests to other levels of government. In this way, these requests come directly from the CVRD, on its letterhead, with the signature of the Chair of the Board. Many large municipalities have similar processes (see the References section).

In some cases, requests may be better received if they come from the community. Informal local networking structures are invaluable where it is likely that the response to a government request would be negative. Finally, if you are not having success in asking one way, try another. Find someone who knows someone who could ask, or take your goals to another group or committee and ask them for advice.

Recording and Monitoring Progress

A recording and monitoring system is needed to assess progress and outcomes. As information becomes available, progress can be recorded and tracked, allowing for periodic assessment of implementation.

It is important to check on how things are progressing through direct contact (phone, in-person, etc.). This may seem like an onerous task, but is essential. It can gently remind people that they are accountable to priorities set out by the community, and that assistance is available if they are encountering difficulties.

For example, a women's safety audit was done at a recreation centre that subsequently had a change of management. The new manager was busy getting familiar with his new position, starting programs, etc., and was unfamiliar with the general idea and recommendations of the audit.

The project coordinator contacted the new manager for a progress report, which of course was not available. However, the

contact resulted in a face-to-face meeting to talk about the report, to go over the recommendations, and to discuss some aspects of feasibility.

At this meeting, the project coordinator was able to explain the rationale for some of the recommendations and how they related to women's safety and access to recreation programs. At the same time, recreation centre management and staff were able to comment on potential challenges, and suggest alternative ideas where relevant.

Within a few months, the majority of recommendations were completed, and a year later, the manager contacted the project coordinator for information on grants to support provisions for enhanced accessibility.





Tips For Success

Begin with short-term achievable actions. This helps to create an atmosphere of success, establish momentum and give people evidence that their voices have been heard.

Trimming a hedge, repairing a light, fixing a sidewalk, painting over graffiti, printing an article, making a public statement of support, or making a formal referral with a request for action, are small but important first steps that can be taken.

Keep the bigger picture in mind. Although you will begin with short-term achievable actions, it is critical to keep the bigger picture in mind. Your integrated framework will help you to do this, with its components of short, medium, and long-term aims. For example, installing streetlights to deter

unwelcome nighttime activities may be a valid short-term action, but it must be accompanied by long-term social development strategies. In the short term, the added lighting may deter people from using a particular area, but you must address everyone's needs for safety. Why are they there? Where will they go? Will their safety be compromised? Without those answers, you will just shift the problem, not solve it.

We include a section on troubleshooting below, to give you suggestions for dealing with some of the challenges and obstacles that may arise – and they will.

STAGE V Sustainability

- Evaluating progress
- Making adjustments
- Maintaining momentum and sustaining the partnership
- Overcoming challenges and obstacles

At this point you need to assess whether or not you are doing what you said you would do, and whether changes made have been effective. The goals, objectives and activities that you articulated at the beginning of the process form the basis for

evaluating your progress. Use a range of methods and measurements such as user satisfaction surveys, process evaluations and before and after comparisons. At intervals, a comprehensive progress report should be prepared and shared widely.

Making Adjustments

Your evaluation will tell you whether or not your expectations were realistic and will enable the committee to make adjustments as necessary. For example, the Committee may decide to request

that Council revisit its public works budget to prioritize more of the recommendations for the immediate future, or that it develop policy that would enable other actions.

Maintaining Momentum and Sustaining the Partnership

Over time, it is not uncommon for staff and committees to lose energy and momentum. There may be many different reasons for this, including burnout, lack of success, feeling undervalued, or becoming disconnected. It is good practice to find creative ways to renew energy and commitment.

This can be done in many ways, including organizing a celebration of successes or doing a committee evaluation to gauge participants' satisfaction with the process and structure.

Some members may feel alienated (and subsequently drop out) if there is too much emphasis on one aspect of the

integrated strategy. For example, if some members feel there is too much emphasis on physical improvements and public works items while their interests in social development are being ignored, you will need to find ways to ensure balance.

Periodic evaluation of the partnership will provide you with essential information around how effective members feel, how satisfied they are with progress and the committee itself, including staff and leadership.

It is critical to ensure that this information is addressed, and that the committee be open to change.

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Overcoming Challenges and Obstacles

Challenges, obstacles, frustrations, and conflicts are all part of the process. They will occur. It is essential to expect them, anticipate what they might be, and create an atmosphere and structure within which they can be addressed.

Patience, creativity and determination are essential ingredients. It is important to view your experiences as a learning process – often, today's 'failure' will be followed by tomorrow's 'success'.

It is important not to get discouraged over short-term roadblocks, and long term 'mountains.'

What might not be accepted by the community today, may be embraced down the road.

There will likely be as many strategies for overcoming hurdles as there are hurdles. Working in the partnership setting is a tremendous help in moving through the challenges; for example different members will know different parts of the system, or people who can help you maneuver through the system, or people who can lend their collective voice to change the system.

Prioritize. It is a very good idea to be mindful of how much energy you have to invest in any particular issue or cause, and to set some priorities around what

you will and will not be able to tackle.

Strategize. It is important not to get discouraged over short-term roadblocks, and long term 'mountains.' What might not be accepted by the community today, may be embraced down the road. You may have to start much smaller or slower than you originally intended. You may have to look for middle ground and negotiate.

Ask yourself, "what IS possible?" Be ready and look for opportunities to build relationships that will foster your work.

Some of the challenges that you can anticipate around getting things done are:

- Jurisdictional complexities (approvals required from other levels of government, private interests, joint responsibility, etc.)
- "We're already doing that, we've addressed that"
- "We've tried that but it didn't work"
- "We don't have room for that in our budget"
- Rural versus urban values (and vice versa)
- Physical security versus social development solutions
- Not In My Backyard Issues

Struggles Around Implementation

The following illustrates a situation where the implementation of a set of recommendations was not possible until a change in policy was made.

Case Study - Cowichan Valley Regional District

Over the course of three years, safety audits in the Cowichan Valley Regional District resulted in a wide variety of recommendations. These included street lighting in some rural areas, in places where women and children gather, both in the early morning and evening hours (e.g. bus stops and community gathering places).

Initially, the installation of one or two streetlights in an area was not feasible under the provisions of the Municipal Act (now the Local Government Act), which laid out powers of regional districts. However, with a change in legislation and the hard work of CVRD staff, a local services policy was developed that provides for critical location street lighting services.

It was a great deal of work to create this mechanism, and lighting could easily have been viewed as too insignificant to focus so much time on. However, the political and staff support for women's safety made it possible.

A good resource for dealing with the implementation of safety audits is:

Woman's Action Centre Against Violence,
Safety Audit Implementation Guide, Ottawa, 1996.





Budget Priorities

Money is frequently an issue, particularly in a time of increasing fiscal restraint. It is important to acknowledge this and to ask if there is a way to work together to find solutions. Budget allocation reflects priorities and it is important to remind decision-

makers that the safety of women and other vulnerable groups has been given a high priority (through the consultation process) and that the recommendations are supported by the community. You can also:

- ask if some or all of the items can be included in next year's (or subsequent years') budget;
- ask if just one low cost item can be addressed now;
- ask if you can work together to look for other sources of funding; and
- point out cost savings that will be realized through certain actions (for example, policing costs, vandalism).

Rural Versus Urban Values

Sometimes, solutions identified can conflict with a community's rural values. Street lighting, for example, can be a controversial issue. It is important to respect different values, while ensuring that the personal security issues identified are

addressed. In the case of lighting, you can begin with small changes including: a 'porch light on' campaign in key areas; asking residents near bus stops to consider motion sensor lighting; and/or identifying one key location for a streetlight.

Physical Security Versus Social Development Solutions

People have different ideas about what solutions are needed to address crime, violence and fear. One person may be emphatic that a security guard is the solution – another may be just as emphatic that scarce dollars

should be spent on recreation programs. Both solutions may be 'right'. In the short term, security can help to make a place safer for the public, but over the long term, social development will be key for addressing root issues.

It is important to acknowledge people's desire for immediate measures to increase their sense of safety, while at the same time pointing out what the root causes are and ways in which these must be addressed. Stress that the primary objective is to

make communities safer for everyone, and present examples of research on 'what works'. One approach might be to implement both solutions simultaneously; another might be to implement each in a series of stages.

Partnership Struggles

By their very nature, partnerships encounter many challenges. While diversity is key to community processes, the reality of agency mandates and cultures, conflicting personalities, and different values, can impede the process.

Resistance to working in collaboration may stem from:

- threatened power or autonomy;
- doubts about the competency of another agency;
- clashes of interest, disputes about confidentiality, working cultures, values, principles, roles and standards;
- differential powers;
- issues of status; and
- attitudes about seniority.

A key factor in overcoming actual and potential conflicts will be the quality of leadership and coordination at the table. Strong facilitation and moderation are key skills. Building in committee development and training will help to move the group through difficult times, establish common goals, and find ways to overcome differences.

Funding

Funding is critical to the success of this work. Sustaining your efforts in this age of time-limited, project-oriented and uncertain funding is challenging, but not always impossible. Draw on the resources at the table; your committee will include individuals and organizations that have had great success in fundraising. Sponsorship and support of local government can also be key to

providing core needs; however, smaller municipalities may face greater challenges. Where local government does not have the structures or staff in place to support community safety work, it can still provide essential core support through in-kind assistance such as administrative support, meeting space, photocopying, and smaller grants.



THE LAST WORD

This resource book is not the last word on planning for women's safety. The work of building safer, healthier and more equitable communities for all citizens will always be evolving. We hope that the resource book will be a valuable tool, one of the many that you will use on your road to success.

In these pages, we have explored women's fear and experiences of violence, and looked at ways in which the physical, social and institutional structures of our communities can impact on women's lives. We have explored how local government works, and discussed the importance

of finding a process to insert women's voices into the local government arena.

We have looked at the integrated strategy offered by the safer communities approach to addressing women's safety, and the Women's Safety Audit Tool as a meaningful mechanism for change. With tried and tested exercises, tips and strategies, we have presented practical steps for local governments and women-serving organizations to develop partnerships that will not only be lasting, but fruitful for all.



All citizens, and all communities, are impoverished by violence against women. The inequality that has been built into the operation of the places in which we live contributes to this impoverishment. By working in partnership, local governments and women-serving organizations can contribute in critical ways to the complex solution that is needed to address this problem.

Remember, communities are not born, they are made. We are one of many groups across Canada and around the world, that have been working for years, small step by small step, to re-make them.

We have been building equitable access to, and creating innovation in, community planning. An integrated, feminist approach to community and social development has informed every aspect of our work – from research to community action, from training to community education.

You are now a part of this worldwide effort. We wish you well in the years ahead as you work to plan and organize your community – physically, socially and institutionally - in ways that create safer and healthier communities for women, and ultimately for us all.

