

Addressing Drugs in Regina:

Best Practices on Collaborative
Partnerships from the Regina and
Area Drug Strategy

June 2006

Overview of the Regina and Area Drug Strategy	3
Purpose of the Guide.....	4
Using the Guide	4
Starting Out.....	5
The Challenge.....	5
A Champion is Available.....	5
Common Understanding	6
Desire to Make Change.....	6
Working Together is Positive.....	7
An Opportunity is At Hand.....	7
The Community.....	8
Defining the Community.....	8
Creating the Process.....	9
Building Commitment.....	9
Beginning the Process.....	9
Involving the Community	11
Consulting with the Community.....	11
Managing the Process.....	12
Deciding on Directions.....	13
Analyzing Information.....	13
Setting Priorities and Making Recommendations	13
Preparing the Report	15
Communicating the Results.....	15
Creating Collaborative Partnerships	17
Clarifying the Vision.....	17
Who Are Partners?.....	18
Finding Partners.....	19
How Many Partners?	20
Partners May Come and Go	21
How Formal does the Partnership Need to Be?	22
Making Decisions.....	23
The Organizing Structure.....	24
Leading the Partnership	26
Getting the Work Done	26
Plan Ahead to Deal with Success.....	27
Doing the Work.....	28
Moving to Action.....	29
Focus on Evaluation Early.....	34
Evaluating Collaborative Partnerships	35
Moving to the Future.....	36
Taking Time to Celebrate	36
Setting Directions for the Future	37
Attention to Details.....	38
Letting Go	40
Checklist – Elements for Leading a Collaborative Process	41
Resources	42

Overview of the Regina and Area Drug Strategy

The goal of the Regina and Area Drug Strategy is to improve the quality of life for all citizens and provide a healthier and safer community by reducing the impact of addictions. Currently, 21 community organizations and departments from all levels of government have joined together to reach this goal because they recognize the profound impact addictions have on communities, including Regina.

The Drug Strategy has been informed by community consultations and community focus group sessions. From this information the Regina and Area Drug Strategy Report was published, containing 22 key recommendations organized around the four strategic priority areas of Prevention, Healing Continuum, Capacity Building and Sustaining Relationships.

Five Working Groups were formed as part of the Implementation Plan. These groups prioritized the recommendations and developed action plans to address them.

The working groups are:

- ❖ Prevention,
- ❖ Healing Continuum,
- ❖ Harm Reduction,
- ❖ Community Justice, and
- ❖ Capacity Building.

Partners include:

- ❖ Aids Programs South Saskatchewan
- ❖ City of Regina
- ❖ Department of Corrections and Public Safety (Saskatchewan)
- ❖ File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council
- ❖ First Nation Inuit Health Branch
- ❖ Health Canada
- ❖ Service Canada
- ❖ Metis Addictions Council of Saskatchewan
- ❖ Qu'Appelle Valley School Division
- ❖ Regina Catholic Schools
- ❖ R.C.M.P.
- ❖ Regina Crime Prevention Commission
- ❖ Regina Intersectoral Committee
- ❖ Regina Police Service
- ❖ Regina Public Schools
- ❖ Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region
- ❖ Regina Treaty/Status Indian Services
- ❖ Saskatchewan Community Resources
- ❖ Saskatchewan Health
- ❖ Saskatchewan Justice
- ❖ United Way of Regina

Purpose of the Guide

This guide is intended to help other communities create sustainable inter-sectoral partnerships that can address the complex issues in their community.

With funding support from Communities of Tomorrow, an evaluation was done on the structure, processes, and results of the Regina and Area Drug Strategy. The evaluation, conducted during the spring of 2005, identified what was working well for the partnership and what issues still needed to be resolved or addressed.

This guide transfers the results of the evaluation to practical advice for other communities wishing to work collaboratively to address community issues and problems. While the guide is based on the work of a community partnership to address the harm caused by drugs, the best practices in the guide can be applied broadly. It is based on the realities of working with diverse organizations and individuals, within the constraints of organizational mandates, and a changing and evolving community.

The guide provides both general information on building partnerships as well as specific examples. As such, it is not a definitive guide, but rather uses the experiences of the Regina and Area Drug Strategy to share with other communities.

Using the Guide

There are three types of information in the guide:

1. Information that provides a narrative and explanation of principles of community development and partnerships.
2. Specific information that describes and discusses how the Regina and Area Drug Strategy organized and implemented its work. This information is contained in the text boxes
3. Additional resources that communities can use to help build their own partnerships are referenced at the end of the guide including a brief checklist of essential elements in a collaborative process.

Starting Out

Addressing a critical issue in a community, such as the impact of drug addictions, can begin anytime, anywhere, and by anyone.

Most community initiatives occur when:

1. the community is confronted with a challenge or problem;
2. a group, agency, or organization is willing to act as 'champions' for an initiative to address the problem;
3. there is common understanding/agreement around the causes of the problem;
4. there is a desire to make changes in the community which will address the problem;
5. working together is seen as a positive response; and
6. an opportunity is at hand.

While any one of these conditions can lead to a community taking action, the more conditions that can be leveraged to address the challenge will increase the success of any initiative. Now let's look at each of these in detail.

The Challenge

Challenges can be positive or negative. Examples of negative challenges may be loss of a major employer in the community or an increase in youth crime. A positive challenge could be a previous experience in working together in the community to solve a problem. In either case, there is a sense that the quality of life in a community can be improved and that the community is an integral element in setting the direction for making the improvement.

A Champion is Available

A 'champion', such as a group, agency or organization, which can commit to publicly supporting the initiative, is important. Without such a champion, it may be difficult for a community response

In the spring of 2001, the Regina Crime Prevention Commission recommended that the issue of addictions be prioritized for action. From this, a small committee was established to organize the Regina Forum on Alcohol and Other Drug Addictions.

to a problem to spread beyond a small group of individuals or organizations. Initiatives need to gain awareness in order to mobilize a broad and diverse community as well as secure the resources (both financial and human) required for making change in the community.

Common Understanding

Collaborative partnerships work best when there is some degree of common understanding around the underlying problems or issues that need to be addressed.

Initially, the community may need to work towards creating this common understanding. Various forums and options exist to do so, including:

- ❖ focus groups,
- ❖ town-hall meetings,
- ❖ discussion papers that provide an opportunity for response,
- ❖ questionnaires about community issues,
- ❖ interviewing individuals in leadership roles, and/or
- ❖ strategic planning workshops.

The Regina Forum on Alcohol and Other Drug Addictions, held in 2002, provided initial context and commitment in the community affirming that drug addiction was a substantial problem for the city.

The forum committed to the next step – to develop a multi-sectoral drug strategy. An initial partnership was formed to continue the work.

At this point, the community is developing a common understanding around the challenges it faces. Time is required; the process continues to identify dimensions to the challenge as well as options, directions and solutions.

Desire to Make Change

Responding to a challenge requires change. Doing things the same way they have always been done in the community will unlikely improve the quality of life. However, change is difficult and can lead to periods of uncertainty, doubtfulness, skepticism and, at times, mistrust.

The emphasis must be on *the desire to make change so that the quality of life in the community improves*. If so, change will be positive. Factors contributing to a positive change are:

- ◇ Consulting with the community (hearing and listening to what is said and wanted);
- ◇ Being inclusive and extending invitations to a broad and diverse range of individuals and organizations to participate; and
- ◇ Being transparent in both the process and the purpose for making change.

Working Together is Positive

Communities that have previous experiences working together to successfully address a community challenge will see their experiences as positive and be able to move forward faster than other communities.

The Regina and Area Drug Strategy (RDS) built on previous experiences that many of the partner organizations had in working together on other community initiatives projects in the community, such as KidsFirst.

However, all communities can learn to work together. As a community learns how to work together, it may initially be easier to address a specific and narrow problem.

An Opportunity is At Hand

Timing is critical for making any type of change.

Factors influencing timing can include:

- ◇ **Internal readiness** in the community; staff/volunteers in organizations recognize that different directions are needed to resolve the problem or that the community has reached a crisis.

Key stakeholders in Regina recognized that the impact of drugs in Regina was too large to address by any one stakeholder.

In most instances, individuals or organizations that have direct connections to those in the community who are affected by the problem will likely be the initial stakeholders.

- ◇ External factors, such as the availability of funding, or the emergence of other initiatives.

The City of Regina was able to access initial funding through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to become a pilot project for its Municipal Drug Strategy. This provided the RDS with the initial tools and framework to develop the community consultations.

The Community

For a community response to take root, several processes need to happen. These include committing to:

- ◇ consulting with a broad range of community members;
- ◇ a consultation process that expands understanding of the problem;
- ◇ a consultation process that is open and transparent; and
- ◇ an unbiased process that does not have pre-determined directions.

Defining the Community

A community can be defined by:

- ◇ Individuals who live or work in a defined area;
- ◇ Informal groups with common ethnicity, beliefs and interests;
- ◇ Organizations with special knowledge or interest in a problem, or
- ◇ Constituencies of government departments or agencies.

While the RDS held extensive consultations with groups and organizations throughout Regina and area, its primary focus was on organizations that could influence changes in the community that would lessen the impact of drug addiction.

At this stage in the consultation process, the aim is to keep the definition of community broad and inclusive in order to gather information and learn from many perspectives.

An extensive community consultation is critical when the community is faced with complex and difficult problems. For example, drug addiction impacts education, crime, health, social services and varied treatment interventions in a community.

The RDS consultations with the community ran over an eleven-month period and included consultations with a wide variety of sectors and interested organizations.

Creating the Process

Undertaking an extensive community consultation process is a difficult to plan, implement and manage.

A core group of individuals/agencies is required to:

- ◇ provide leadership to the consultations;
- ◇ outline the purpose and goals of the consultation;
- ◇ ensure that the consultations are moving forward towards the goal; and
- ◇ provide the “face” of the initiative to the community.

*RDS used a small group of individuals representing key stakeholders in the community to provide the overall direction for the consultations. The **Drug Strategy Reference Committee**, with smaller Working Committees, established the overall process and direction.*

Building Commitment

Getting ‘buy-in’, before starting community consultations, is an effective approach to building commitment. It allows the community to see that there is a significant problem in the community and that people and organizations are willing to address the problem.

In addition to the Regina Crime Prevention Committee, initial partners in the RDS included the City of Regina, Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, Saskatchewan Department of Community Resources, and the Regina Intersectoral Committee.

Beginning the Process

To begin, the organizing group needs to develop a framework to define:

- ◇ the current situation in the community – what are the community's strengths and weaknesses that will influence the results;
- ◇ the purpose of the consultations;
- ◇ how the consultations will be developed/ implemented;
- ◇ how the results of the consultations will be used to develop directions;

The RDS Working Committee designed a four-stage process for the Drug Strategy.

*The first stage, **Getting Ready**, set the overall process for designing the drug strategy and ensured that the initial partners were committed to the process and would be able to devote resources to the initiative.*

- ◆ who will be involved in the consultations and
- ◆ a vision that describes what is hoped for as a result of the process.

*The second stage developed the **vision**: To improve the quality of life for all citizens and provide a healthier and safer community by reducing the impact of addictions. It also identified the values of inclusiveness, sensitivity, acceptance, fairness, and cultural assurance to guide the process.*

Involving the Community

Solutions can be identified and created by:

- ◇ Governments (at any level);
- ◇ Stakeholders (people or organizations that have a special interest in the problem); and/or
- ◇ Individuals.

Depending on the extent of the problem, all may be involved.

Consulting with the Community

Successful efforts to change a situation or address a problem in a community are more likely to happen when the community recognizes and supports the need for action. This involves a combination of developing an understanding of the dimensions of the problem, what can be done, and listening to community perspectives on both the problem and potential solutions.

Community consultations can:

- ◇ bring forward information;
- ◇ stimulate buy-in and commitment;
- ◇ validate local conditions that could act as barriers to change or could support change;
- ◇ encourage consideration of the full range of strategies, actions and resources available;
- ◇ align solutions with the unique cultural values, attitudes and behaviors of target populations, and
- ◇ identify results that focus on specific issues, concerns, and targets.

*The third stage of the RDS was **Community Mobilization**. The community was involved in multiple ways including:*

- ◇ *Meetings with sector organizations to inform them of the initiative and solicit advice on the types of consultations needed;*
- ◇ *Multi-sector visioning exercise;*
- ◇ *11 individual sector consultations; and*
- ◇ *Seven focus groups.*

The consultation process involved over 400 individuals and 151 organizations.

Managing the Process

Community consultations can be an overwhelming process that:

- ◇ involves a deep commitment of time and effort;
- ◇ produces a great deal of information;
- ◇ raises expectations in the community that a solution will be created; and
- ◇ tests the resolve of those involved.

Because of the time and effort required to produce a comprehensive community consultation, designating one individual to coordinate the process is advisable. This can be a paid position supported through grants, an individual seconded from a supporting organization or a volunteer. In all cases, the commitment and workload required must be made explicit at the beginning.

*The RDS used money from a seed grant to hire a **Coordinator** to facilitate the community consultations. Although the Coordinator did not have a background in drug addiction; she did bring new energy and perspectives to the work of the committee and was valued as a voice independent of any of the partners.*

The advantage of assigning one individual to coordinate the community consultations is consistency in how the consultations are presented, how information is collected and analyzed, and finally how the results are reported.

The Coordinator pursued extensive opportunities to talk to new audiences during the consultations. Consequently, additional organizations and individuals provided foundation information to form the recommendations.

Deciding on Directions

While obtaining information directly from the community is an essential element in developing strategies, information alone will not solve the problem.

The next step involves:

- ◇ analyzing information generated from the consultations;
- ◇ setting priorities;
- ◇ making recommendations; and
- ◇ communicating the results and decisions.

The challenge in analyzing the information from community consultations is often overwhelming. Sufficient time needs to be built into the process to ensure that data can be thoroughly analyzed, priorities and recommendations reviewed, and the report written.

Analyzing Information

The information gathered from community consultations includes notes written on flip charts, transcripts from focus group session, written responses to questions, records of group discussions, and presentations by community groups.

The most common way to analyze this type of information is through content analysis – a two-step process. Step one of content analysis looks through the information for important themes, patterns and issues including common situations, results and experiences and comments on why the current situation exists. These themes and issues help define what is important to address through action.

In step two, after themes and issues are identified, background information about the issues can be described. This provides a narrative and holistic picture of the current situation, why the problem exists and why it needs to be addressed.

Setting Priorities and Making Recommendations

At the heart of any community initiative is the need to create a plan of action that will guide and direct how a

problem can be addressed. Turning the results of community consultations into priorities and recommendations provides focus for the initiative and defines “what matters” most to the community.

There are many factors affecting how priorities are set:

- ◇ availability of human, environmental and financial resources;
- ◇ external threats or pressures such as pending legislation;
- ◇ opportunities that present themselves;
- ◇ timing – some issues will need to be addressed over a period of time while others can be achieved quickly;
- ◇ likelihood of achieving results;
- ◇ links to or support of partner organizations’ priorities;
- ◇ balance of local needs with national/ provincial priorities;
- ◇ specific recommendations that lead to clear action;
- ◇ balancing the needs of different groups; and
- ◇ multi-sectoral perspectives.

*The fourth stage of the RDS established **priorities and recommendations** by examining how many sectors and Canada's Drug Strategy identified common needs. .*

As well, the RDS recognized that there were impending national developments, such as requests for proposals for Drug Treatment Courts that could move the work of the RDS forward.

Limiting the number of priorities/recommendations increases the chance for success – change is often achieved through doing fewer things well. However, all priorities and recommendations must emerge from the community consultations.

Only 22 recommendations for the RDS were made. They were divided amongst four strategic priorities (the four strategic priorities became five during implementation).

Effective recommendations have several key elements:

- ◇ advocate clear and specific action;
- ◇ describe the results of implementation;
- ◇ are supported by results from consultations; and
- ◇ can be achieved within a two to three-year time span.

RDS recommendations did not always provide a clear focus for implementation and action. However, the working groups assigned to implement the recommendations had the expertise required to develop appropriate actions and directions.

Preparing the Report

Preparing (writing and editing) the final report is a critical activity – not merely a by-product of the community consultations. The report becomes the main tool to communicate action plans to governments, stakeholders, and the community and acts as a guide to ensure that the activities planned relate to what is needed. It also becomes a reference for the work of the initiative in the future.

The Regina and Area Drug Strategy Report became a key reference document for the Working Groups, committees and partners of the RDS.

The report should accurately reflect what the community said and needs, the work done and the work yet to be done. The partners may need to recruit individuals who can take the information from the consultations and craft it into a report that will effectively communicate the directions planned.

Communicating the Results

The ultimate purpose of using a community development approach to solving problems and challenges is to involve the community. Gathering information directly from the community begins the process – the next step is to share the results of consultation with them.

Communication is essential to:

- ❖ create awareness of the work done to date;
- ❖ develop support and momentum to move towards action;
- ❖ involve more people and organizations in implementing the directions;
- ❖ validate the work that has been done to date;
- ❖ avoid misunderstanding or confusion about the purpose and directions recommended.

RDS released its report in June of 2003 at a press conference. Prior to the release, the committee brainstormed answers to potential queries. However, the report was well received; validating the process used to develop the Regina and Area Drug Strategy. Because the report was grounded in what the community said, it strengthened political will and served to keep all partners focused during implementation.

In addition to formal communication such as press releases, the report itself and other updates, informal avenues of communication should also be strongly considered. Within any group of individuals or organizations, the number of personal contacts can be extensive and provide an excellent route for one-on-one communication with the people and organizations that can influence and provide support for implementing recommendations.

RDS made use of informal communication systems – partner organizations had an extensive network of contacts throughout the community. These contacts were used to promote the work of RDS.

Creating Collaborative Partnerships

Meaningful partnerships amongst organizations can be a significant element in resolving complex community problems such as the impact of drugs and addictions. However, without careful planning to maintain the partnership, it may be a poor solution to addressing a community problem.

There are many types of partnerships, but all occur when two or more organizations share resources to reach a common goal. Resources can be expertise, staff/volunteers, clients, financial, facilities, or other items that have value to resolving the problem.

Clarifying the Vision

The vision for a community initiative is the guiding force for creating a sustainable partnership. The vision statement must be able to unite members of the partnership in:

- ◇ common interests and concerns;
- ◇ understanding the operating environment;
- ◇ understanding the partners' needs; and
- ◇ being open to doing things differently.

RDS' vision, "to improve the quality of life for all citizens and provide a healthier and safer community by reducing the impact of addictions," allowed the partners to work together by focusing on the health of the community and reducing impact.

It is not necessary for each and every partner organization to have the *same* perspective on the roots of the problem. Rather, it is important that they can commit to working together; creating solutions to the problem and bringing resources and expertise from their organization into the partnership.

The strength of collaborative partnerships is that they tend to address complex problems where the solutions need to be comprehensive and use multiple approaches. In this type of

RDS partners include the Regina Police Service and the RCMP along with community based organizations that advocated harm-reduction strategies. While these partners may have differing views on how drug problems should be addressed, all were willing to learn about the others' positions and commit to the need to reduce the harm caused by drugs in Regina.

situation, it is unlikely that agreement will be 100% on **all** of the activities undertaken by the strategy. The problems tackled will generally involve partners who see different aspects of the problem – this is what makes collaboration effective. A partnership vision ensures that all partners understand what the end result will be and how they can contribute to that result and move the initiative forward.

The critical balance in creating an effective and sustainable partnership is ensuring that partners understand and commit to the vision and purpose of the partnership, without having to abandon their own organization's mandate or mission.

Who Are Partners?

Deciding which organizations need to be active in the community strategy partnership involves several considerations, including:

- ❖ whether the organization can commit to the overall vision of the strategy;
- ❖ what the partner organization can contribute to the strategy – while human and financial resources are always welcome, more often the strategy will need organizations that have the authority or influence to 'act' in addressing the problem;
- ❖ the organization's access to specialized or unique information and the ability to contribute this information to the activities of the strategy; and
- ❖ representation of a specific sector or group that is central to achieving the vision.

A primary focus for the Regina and Area Drug Strategy was mobilizing the systems involved in all aspect of addressing the impact of drugs in Regina. Consequently, in selecting partners a primary criterion was how the organization could contribute to mobilizing systems for change. In some instances, the partners were part of the systems that had to be mobilized.

As important as the organizations involved in a partnership are the specific individuals assigned to represent the partner organizations. These individuals need specific qualities that contribute to the partnership achieving results. They include:

- ◇ an authority level in the organization which allows them to make decisions (such as commit resources) on behalf of the partner organization or access to the individuals that can make decisions;
- ◇ connections across sectors so that a broad range of views and perspectives can be presented for discussion;
- ◇ knowledge about the context and issues being addressed through the partnership;
- ◇ the ability to “sell” the work of the partnership to others within their organization as well as to the other organizations they are linked to; and
- ◇ the ability to commit time to the work of the partnership (having the same people attend meetings is critical to maintain consistency and clear links for communicating messages).

Individuals representing RDS partner organizations included those with functional and program responsibilities for decisions within their organizations. They were able to link the work of their programs to the directions of the RDS but also create new directions and influence change in their programs and organizations to support the directions of the RDS.

The relationship was mutually beneficial – the work of the RDS enhanced or supported the work of individual organizations. At the same time, the work of the RDS could not proceed without the expertise of the individuals and partner organizations involved.

Without these, the partnership may find that, while there is a lot of interest and participation, little action is taken and few results are accomplished.

Finding Partners

Finding partners is not difficult if the strategy has prepared the groundwork. The **first opportunity** to find partners is through the groups and organizations that initially came together to address the problem. Through these individuals and their organizations, potential partners can be identified. Strong personal relationships are a cornerstone of every effective partnership – this is the time to probe who knows who and which organizations can contribute to the vision and work of the partnership.

The **second opportunity** is during the initial work to involve the community. Through the consultation process, partner organizations can be identified.

The **third opportunity** is when the results of community consultations are released. At this point, momentum is building to move the strategy forward – partners may self-identify their desire to become involved.

The **fourth opportunity** is on-going – scanning the community to identify organizations that can contribute to the vision and results of the strategy. Providing these organizations with information that explains the purpose of the strategy, its activities and achievements to date is central to recruiting these organizations as partners.

How Many Partners?

The question of how many is difficult to answer. Having more partners generally indicates broader support for the strategy – this is always positive.

Initially the RDS had 18 partner organizations. Between releasing the report and implementing directions and recommendations, the number grew to 22. The partnership currently stands at 21 partners.

However, successful collaborative partnerships not only have the **right** partners, they also have **the right number** of partners.

Attempting to be inclusive can lead to a very large number of partners with unintended results:

- ◇ meetings that are unwieldy;
- ◇ decision-making that is difficult;
- ◇ communication that is unclear; and
- ◇ partners that inevitably become frustrated.

When recruiting partners for a strategy, it is important to be clear on **why** a potential partner organization is being asked to be part of the strategy. Specifically, what will be expected of the partner? One way to view the contribution of partners is by the type of contribution that can be made to the partnership.

RDS has both working partners and informational partners.

Working partners include school boards that can implement drug education programs and the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region that can make changes to delivery of addiction services.

Informational partners include Regina Intersectoral Committee and United Way of Regina that provided links to other sectors/agencies/organizations in the community.

Working partners are those that can effect system change in a

community, while **informational** partners serve to bring relevant links and information to and from the partnership (such as funding or developments at a community, provincial or national level).

Organizations do not need to become partners to become involved in the strategy. During the implementation stage of any community strategy, developing activities will require participation – this may be the appropriate place for other organizations to become involved.

To implement the RDS recommendations, five Working Groups were established, each focused on developing responses to specific recommendations. Participation in Working Groups extended to organizations beyond the partners.

Partners May Come and Go

Partnerships do not remain static. New partners may need to be added as the strategy begins to implement its actions or responds to new developments in the community. Usually adding partner organizations is not a problem, particularly if there are clear and purposeful reasons for adding the new organization.

Just as new partners may need to be added, existing partners may need to withdraw from the strategy for a variety of reasons. This could include positive reasons such as:

- ◆ the original purpose for participating may have been achieved (for example, the partner organization ensured that the problem was being addressed and action was being taken), or
- ◆ other community problems or issues have emerged that require the attention of the partner organization and it can no longer provide the required level of commitment to the vision of the partnership.

As the RDS moves into implementation, it is currently reviewing its partnership structure to ensure that current partners are the right mix for the next stage of the strategy.

If the reason for leaving the partnership is positive, there needs to be a process whereby the partner can leave or change their commitment to the strategy without it reflecting badly on the remaining partners.

The overall partnership and each partner should participate in an annual review that allows partners to either continue their commitment or opt out. **Partners withdrawing will not diminish a healthy and sustainable partnership.** When a partner does withdraw, their contribution should be acknowledged and communication with them should be maintained as a vital link to the remaining partners.

However, sometimes partners wish to withdraw from the partnership because of negative reasons, such as:

- ◇ conflict has arisen over the purpose or direction of the strategy;
- ◇ the contribution expected is not what was initially identified; or
- ◇ the workload of implementing the strategy is creating burnout with the staff/volunteers of the partner organization.

While negative, these are also opportunities to review the direction of the partnership, revise expectations, open lines of communication, and renew the commitment to solving the problem.

How Formal does the Partnership Need to Be?

Partnerships can be very formal structures, involving a written document or letter of understanding signed by all partners. The partnership agreement generally outlines the common understanding and commitment to the partnership, details specific roles each partner will fulfill and outlines the contributions (such as financial, staff or volunteers) the partner organizations will commit. Depending on the needs of the specific partner organizations, formal agreements may be required.

Collaborative partnerships can also function without a formal written agreement. Often partnership agreements are needed when there are barriers to maintaining the partnership – a formal agreement clarifies the how the partnership will work to address potential barriers. Barriers could include:

- ❖ turf issues (target populations and funding);
- ❖ bad history of working together;
- ❖ poor links to community;
- ❖ minimal organizational capacity;
- ❖ limited funding or funding which pushes the partnership into directions that were not initially planned;
- ❖ failure to provide leadership for the partnership; or
- ❖ the perceived cost of working together outweighs the benefits.

The RDS partners had already addressed many of the barriers typical to community partnerships. There was a good history of the partners working together on other community initiatives, there were few turf issues to address, each partner had strong organizational capacity, and funding was for projects identified by the partnership, not for individual partners.

More importantly, the original need to form the partnership – to address the impact of drugs in Regina, was too large a problem for any one of them to address alone. This was the 'glue' that moved the partnership through perceived barriers.

Making Decisions

In all partnerships the time will come when decisions have to be made. The partnership agreement may have outlined how and who makes decisions, but there should be discussion early in the strategy on the types of decisions that may be needed and how those decisions will be reached.

In a collaborative partnership, decision making is usually through discussion and consensus. However, there will be occasions, such as when a decision needs to be made quickly, that it cannot be made through consensus. The partnership needs to address how such issues will be dealt with.

The Organizing Structure

While considerable amount of work will have been done to identify the scope of the problem and potential solutions, unless there is a way to ensure that the solutions can be implemented, it is unlikely that the problem will be addressed.

At this point, the initial organizing group will have to **transform from** identifying the problem and possible solutions **towards** becoming focused on how to implement the solutions. For some initiatives, listening to the community and developing recommendations will be all that is required for the problem to be addressed by organizations responsible to do so (such as a government department which develops a new program to address the problem based on the community views).

However for most initiatives, the group will want to continue its work through to implementation.

If this is the case, an organizing structure is required. The specific organizing structure can vary, however it should align and represent the vision/values of the initiative. An organizing structure can:

- ◇ build leadership so that the initiative is sustainable;
- ◇ develop interventions;
- ◇ secure human and financial resources;
- ◇ increase participation so that people with diverse backgrounds and experience can work together;
- ◇ advocate for change;
- ◇ influence policy development;
- ◇ monitor implementation; and
- ◇ evaluate the initiative and results.

A key value of the RDS was inclusiveness – building partnerships to engage the whole community when implementing the strategy. A central structure in the RDS that supported this value was the Steering Committee that had representatives of all the partner organizations. It provided a forum for discussion, updates, monitoring progress and providing feedback to Working Groups and the Executive Committee.

Most organizing structures include:

- ◇ a central organizing group (such as Steering Committees, Coordinating Councils, Board of Directors)

responsible for leading the strategy and accountable for results, providing the overall direction for the strategy and functioning as an information hub;

- ◇ a smaller group of the central organizing group (such as Executive Committee, Executive Council) to provide day to day direction/feedback in the strategy;
- ◇ specific groups that focus on details of implementing the strategy (such as task forces, action committees, working groups, or advisory committees) that focus on developing specific actions to support the vision of the strategy;
- ◇ staff (which can include Executive Director, Coordinators, or Program Officers) that provide a variety of supports including direction, supervision, coordination, managing, and communications.

RDS organizing structure included:

- ◇ *Steering Committee (partner representatives);*
- ◇ *Executive Committee (which included the chairs of the Working Groups);*
- ◇ *Five Working Groups (Capacity Building, Harm Reduction, Healing Continuum, Prevention, and Community Justice); and*
- ◇ *Full-time DS Coordinator.*

Key elements that support organizing structures of collaborative partnerships include:

- ◇ dealing with issues quickly, rather than using delays to avoid hard decisions;
- ◇ freely sharing information and seeking feedback on options and directions;
- ◇ terms of reference that outline roles and responsibilities;
- ◇ avoiding 'power' politics to set the direction for the partnership; and
- ◇ being brief, keeping things simple and focused.

Key elements that supported the work of the RDS Steering Committee:

- ◇ *two-hour meetings that accomplished work - held four to five times a year;*
- ◇ *opportunity to work with others outside of their normal range of contacts;*
- ◇ *a strong chair/leader;*
- ◇ *an opportunity at the end of each meeting for each partner representative to speak and be listened to respectfully on any issue or concern;*
- ◇ *terms of reference; and*
- ◇ *structures that evolved as the RDS evolved.*

Leading the Partnership

Although collaborative partnerships share authority and responsibility, partnerships still require leadership. Effective leadership is critical to a successful collaborative partnership because it will:

- ◇ effectively communicate the vision of the partnership;
- ◇ focus energy on results and inclusion;
- ◇ remain positive throughout the process especially when obstacles require navigation;
- ◇ motivate individuals and partners to continue to act together;
- ◇ ensure continuity and succession; and
- ◇ develop effective processes to work together.

Leadership roles assumed throughout the RDS include:

- ◇ *Chair of the Steering Committee who brought experience and contacts throughout the systems that the RDS wished to influence,*
- ◇ *Chair of the Executive Committee, and*
- ◇ *Chairs/co-chairs of Working Groups.*

Getting the Work Done

Central to the organizing structure, as well as the collaborative partnership, is the need to get the work done – taking the recommendations from community consultations and turning them into action plans.

For most partnerships this involves establishing subgroups (such as task forces, action committees, advisory committees) that can:

- ◇ develop specific strategies to address the issue;
- ◇ secure funding/resources to address the issue;
- ◇ implement and/or monitor progress towards results; and/or
- ◇ implement the work.

When deciding what types of groups are required to get the work done, it is important to

The work of the RDS is done through five Working Groups; each assigned to develop directions and strategies for specific recommendations.

Each Working Group was linked to the Steering Committee and Executive Committee through their Chairs/Co-chairs.

Working Group members were from both partner organizations and non-partner organizations. In general, members of each Working Group came from a variety of sectors, ensuring that multiple views were considered when developing plans and that specific expertise was present.

identify what type of work is expected. In general,

- ◆ task forces have broad views of issues;
- ◆ advisory committees generally provide advice or directions to others; and
- ◆ action committees, as the name implies, develop specific actions that bring about changes in programs, policies and practices.

Plan Ahead to Deal with Success

While every partnership hopes for success, many do not plan to deal with success. Success may:

- ◆ lead to tensions, particularly if group dynamics change; or
- ◆ require different operating structures, such as the need to be accountable for funding received for specific projects or activities.

RDS achieved early success in mobilizing systems by establishing the 'Brief Detox Centre' and securing funding for a Drug Treatment Court.

The dilemma created was the lack of clarity on the continued involvement in these projects by the RDS; implementation would be through the government departments or agencies.

Doing the Work

Often community initiatives and partnerships flounder because the work needed cannot be done. There can be several reasons for this, including:

- ◇ not understanding the community and the problem;
- ◇ lack of financial and/or human resources;
- ◇ conflict;
- ◇ lack of process to move to action;
- ◇ unclear roles or responsibilities; or
- ◇ failure to evaluate progress and results.

How can these be addressed?

Understanding the community and the problem

As discussed previously, a comprehensive process of community consultations that includes a broad range of sectors, organizations and individuals providing varied perspectives and solutions will establish the basis for the work of the partnership. The information gathered from the community consultations needs to be systematically analyzed to arrive at solid, achievable recommendations that can be acted on and are relevant to the local community. The results and recommendations need to be shared publicly so that the process is transparent and open to all.

RDS community consultations were:

- ◇ extensive,
- ◇ broad-based,
- ◇ lead to recommendations and actions, and
- ◇ published in report format.

Financial/Human Resources

Depending on the recommendations, developing and implementing action will require some level of financial and/or human resources. At the very least, resources will be required to coordinate the work of the partnership. While partner organizations can contribute to the work through allocating staff or volunteers to spend time on the initiatives, it may unrealistic to expect partners to cover other costs.

RDS sought and received three year funding for the RDS Coordinator position; a partner organization provided office space for the position.

At the same time, the partnership will need to secure funding to implement specific directions. Skills in seeking and preparing funding requests will be needed to ensure success.

Some of the recommendations required Working Groups to seek funding – Working Groups recruited individuals who had expertise in the content and in preparing the requests.

Conflict

Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing – it can spur motivation and interest, and may lead to a broader understanding of different perspectives. Ultimately, a better solution to the problem may be developed. However, conflict is a problem when the partnership environment does not respect different opinions or when the vision does not allow varied perspectives.

RDS addressed potential conflict through multi-sector Working Groups as well as Steering Committee meetings.

Using traditions from First Nations and Metis culture, a permanent opportunity for all members to express opinions/concerns without debate was established. At the end of each meeting, a "rock" is passed around the meeting circle. Holding the rock allows the speaker to talk about what s/he wishes while the others listen respectfully.

Moving to Action

Having a process to move into action and to evaluate progress and results are closely integrated and critical to successful implementation.

Action requires that the partnership commit time and people to do the work that will lead to change and achieve the results identified by the community. Planning for action must include the following:

- ◆ organizing work;
- ◆ recruiting the right people to do the work;
- ◆ prioritizing and focusing efforts;
- ◆ maintaining momentum; and
- ◆ seeking outside expertise when required.

Organizing Work

A decision must be made on how the work will be accomplished. If action is expected, the most effective way to organize the work is to create sub-committees or action committees, each with assigned areas of responsibility.

Each committee must be linked to the overall partnership to ensure that communication is maintained, progress monitored and problems identified and solved early.

The number of committees will vary. Too many committees will be difficult to manage, while too few may lead to burnout if the workload is heavy.

*RDS created **Working Groups** – each were assigned a set of recommendations to develop options for implementation.*

Working Groups had a chair (later a co-chair was added to ensure continuity as well as to share the workload).

Working Group chairs were also on the Executive Committee.

Working Groups had between 10 and 16 members – membership was flexible which allowed Working Groups to respond to emerging issues.

The Right People

To bring about changes in a community that addresses the identified problems, recruiting the right people to work on specific aspects of the problem is essential.

Collectively, they should have a combination of skills and knowledge in:

- ❖ content expertise - knowledge of the problem, options and possible solutions (research skills);
- ❖ making changes to existing programs or creating new programs to address the problem (or have access to those that can);
- ❖ interpersonal skills (communication, problem-solving/conflict-resolution); and
- ❖ organizing and managing.

RDS established four Working Groups along with an existing community action group – this extended the DS beyond the partner organizations.

However, caution is needed as an existing community action group may have their own priorities that may not always fit with the strategy's overall direction.

Initially Working Group members were primarily staff from partner organizations. This allowed partners to extend their commitment to the work of RDS and also developed strong and cohesive relationships within Working Groups and in the partnership.

Many members of Working Groups were in senior positions in their organization and could implement changes in keeping with the recommendations.

Attracting individuals to work on committees can be done in various ways including:

- ❖ recruiting directly from partner organizations (this should be the first consideration);
- ❖ contacting specific individuals who have an interest in the problem and have the authority to initiate or make changes in their organization that can address the recommendations;
- ❖ soliciting individuals who participated in the community consultations; or
- ❖ making a public request.

Prioritize and Focus Efforts

While it is always tempting to try to address every recommendation that emerges from community consultations, such an approach often leads to confusion, unclear focus or roles, and initiatives that are not well planned and do not lead to results. This is particularly true when community problems are complex and require the cooperation of multiple levels of governments, agencies and organizations.

Once committees or working groups have been formed, their first task should be to outline options or strategies for implementing recommendations.

Each committee will need general guidelines so that there is a consistent approach to the recommendations and priorities can be established.

Guidelines could include:

- ❖ identifying concrete steps or tasks;
- ❖ determining resources needed to undertake the actions;
- ❖ identifying who needs to be involved;
- ❖ identifying who needs to take a lead role;
- ❖ estimating the timeframe required for completing the tasks;

Each Working Group was assigned specific recommendations to develop action plans.

Working Groups were provided a template document that requested

- ❖ *activities/tasks,*
- ❖ *progress milestones,*
- ❖ *key partners for collaboration, and*
- ❖ *evaluation/results.*

- ◊ identifying external factors which may influence tasks or priorities;
- ◊ identifying any decisions that need to be made before action can begin; and
- ◊ identifying results anticipated from the actions.

After each committee has completed their initial work in developing action plans, the plans need to be reviewed and integrated with the work of other committees so that duplication and gaps can be identified and priorities for the overall strategy established. This can be done in several ways including:

- ◊ using the organizing structure such as steering or executive committees;
- ◊ establishing a separate committee to review and establish priorities,
- ◊ involving all committees in reviewing each other's work.

Reviewing the plans of each committee ensures:

- ◊ clear action plans that relate to the partnership's purpose and can be accomplished;
- ◊ resources are available to complete the plans;
- ◊ plans are coordinated and responsibilities established (duplication and overlap are lessened); and
- ◊ all individuals associated with the partnership understand what has happened and are energized by seeing a clear path to what will happen and how their work fits and supports the work of the group.

RDS used a Strategic Planning Day to present the tentative plans of each Working Group.

The planning day, held about 8 months after Working Groups were formed, involved about 85 individuals from partner organizations and the community. Working Group Chairs presented their tentative plans followed by group discussion of directions, and feedback/ suggestions to Working Groups on their directions.

The day energized individuals and Working Groups as it reaffirmed the overall vision and reasons why the RDS was formed. It also confirmed that the plans were achievable.

The Strategic Planning Day provided an early feedback loop for Working Groups and partner organizations. It ensured that Working Group directions were linked to each other with few overlaps – this maximized the collaborative effort, ensured that planned activities and initiatives were integrated, work would focus on achieving those activities that were important.

At the end of the planning day, Working Groups had additional work to finalize their plans, but they did so with specific information from other Working Groups to guide them.

Maintaining Momentum

Creating action plans is often the easiest part of responding to recommendations emerging from community consultations. Action plans are the start but require on-going effort to implement. Maintaining momentum is critical at this point – frustration can easily set in if barriers are encountered in implementing plans, or if plans have to be changed because of external circumstances.

It is during the implementation of the action plans that many problems will likely be encountered. The role of the partnership organizing structure, such as a Steering Committee, is to act as a resource to aid in addressing barriers by providing feedback, new information, or alternatives.

The DS Coordinator played a key role in maintaining momentum – the position was the primary contact and conduit for information between Working Groups and in keeping them up-to-date on national and provincial developments.

One of the benefits of working in a partnership is that additional resources and contacts can be accessed to address a problem.

The partnership needs to recognize that the external operating environment will change – these changes may either support or create barriers to the action plans. Flexibility and willingness to change an established action plan is a must.

Two Working Groups had to re-focus their action plans:

- ❖ *The Capacity Building Working Group had completed initial work on recommendations, which were then assumed by other agencies to implement. This was a positive development as systems were mobilizing to implement change – part of the RDS purpose. The Working Group re-focused towards other recommendations.*
- ❖ *The Prevention Working Group decided that it needed to do additional research before working on their recommendations.*

While some committees will see quick results, others may require a longer time to see results. Not all committees will see progress at the same rate.

Seeking Outside Expertise

Not all expertise to address the problems will be found within the partnership. At times, the group may need to recruit outside expertise to help implement their plan.

Usually this expertise will be either:

- ◇ A specific individual recruited to join a committee; or
- ◇ Consultants hired to work on specific aspects of the action plan. Consultants bring expertise to the tasks and are effective when the scope and depth of the work would over commit members of the group, resulting in delay of the overall strategy. Recognize when it is appropriate to use external consultants.

Working Groups recruited staff from both partner organizations and other agencies – these individuals brought specific knowledge to the work of each group. For example, a staff person from Saskatchewan Justice was recruited by the Community Justice Working Group to work on the Drug Treatment Court proposal.

As well, consulting teams were hired to conduct research on:

- ◇ *Feasibility of the Brief Detox Centre,*
- ◇ *Evaluating the RDS*
- ◇ *Speaker's Series*
- ◇ *Developing Curriculum*

Focus on Evaluation Early

Evaluation should run parallel to the work of a collaborative partnership from the beginning. Evaluation serves multiple purposes including:

- ◇ defining success,
- ◇ monitoring progress,
- ◇ guiding decisions,
- ◇ enhancing communication, and
- ◇ providing focus and feedback to support continuous learning.

RDS contracted a consulting team to develop the evaluation in the first year of its operation. The consultants:

- ◇ *established a comprehensive evaluation framework;*
- ◇ *supported each Working Group to identify short, medium and long-term outcomes; and*
- ◇ *evaluated the RDS from its beginning in 2002 until 2005.*

Evaluation provides the opportunity to examine processes and procedures and to engage all partners to define how the collaborative partnership should work. Evaluation helps people re-think how work is being done and learn what is working and what may need to change. Evaluation also monitors progress and measures results - it is a tool that can assist the partnership in promoting its work to key stakeholders and the public.

A key indicator of success for the RDS was mobilizing systems to address the impact of drugs. The evaluation focused on progress towards the goals, and the processes used.

The evaluation showed the collective progress achieved by the RDS – this can often be missed as Working Groups focus on their specific activities.

If partners do not have the necessary expertise to engage in on-going evaluation of the strategy, external consultants should be engaged. At the same time, the partnership should build in learning opportunities around evaluation and plan for future sustainability.

The evaluation consultants supported each Working Group to guide them in identifying the outcomes for their work.

Evaluating Collaborative Partnerships

Evaluating collaborative partnerships can be difficult because partnerships:

- ◇ are usually dealing with complex problems with multiple issues and it is complicated to identify what is happening and why;
- ◇ have shared authority, meaning no individual partner is in control;
- ◇ must provide opportunities for multiple perspectives and consensus;
- ◇ evolve over time – members may change and bring new perspectives and roles;
- ◇ may change focus over time – implementation may never be complete and is difficult to track;
- ◇ they are dependant on 'synergy' – sometimes an elusive quality;
- ◇ are often mandated as a requirement for funding – interest in and commitment to evaluation will vary; and
- ◇ may exist for too short a time to see results.

*The first step in evaluating the RDS was to develop a **framework document** that identified what would be evaluated, potential outcomes and indicators. The document guided the evaluation by providing a comprehensive picture of:*

- ◇ *the community development process;*
- ◇ *the inner workings of the Drug Strategy; and*
- ◇ *the community impact.*

The framework was also a communication tool, providing all partners with information on the evaluation process.

The Evaluation Framework used an outcome model which accommodated short-term, medium-term and long-term outcomes.

Moving to the Future

At this point in working together in a partnership, major work has been accomplished, including:

- ◇ consulting with the community;
- ◇ forming recommendations;
- ◇ initiating the partnership;
- ◇ organizing the work;
- ◇ recruiting individuals to work on the recommendations;
- ◇ developing action and work plans; and
- ◇ initiating action to address the problem - short-term outcomes achieved.

Although the time frame for any community strategy will vary, RDS began to see results within three years:

- ◇ *Forum: February 2002*
- ◇ *Consultations: 2002/2003*
- ◇ *Report/recommendations released: June 2003*
- ◇ *Partnership/Working Groups formed: September 2003*
- ◇ *Planning day: May 2004*
- ◇ *Short term outcomes accomplished: May/June 2005.*

Taking Time to Celebrate

Although not all recommendations have been implemented or the problem solved, it is important for the partnership and those working on the action plans to acknowledge the accomplishments achieved to date.

Acknowledgement:

- ◇ motivates and energizes participants – it is often difficult for individuals to see progress when they are struggling with a narrow range of actions;
- ◇ provides your partnership's supporters, stakeholders and the public with information on what has been done to address the problems; and
- ◇ sustains the partnership's culture and supports cohesiveness by sharing experiences and successes.

In October 2005, RDS held a second planning day to:

- ◇ *review major accomplishments of the partnership;*
- ◇ *report on the progress of each Working Group in addressing specific recommendations and the next set of priorities each will focus on;*
- ◇ *discuss changes observed in the community around the impact of RDS;*
- ◇ *provide updates on national and provincial initiatives on drugs and addiction; and*
- ◇ *conduct an environmental scan on emerging issues and gaps that need to be addressed.*

Setting Directions for the Future

While a partnership is established to address specific concerns expressed in the community, it must also address the inevitable question of “what next?”

While a partnership may have made significant progress towards meeting the recommendations and expectations for the community and in resolving some of the root causes of the problem, other issues may emerge that need to be addressed. The partnership will need to ask:

- ❖ Is there still significant work to be done on the original problem/recommendations?
- ❖ Is it appropriate for the existing partnership to address emerging issues?
- ❖ What resources/expertise can the partnership bring to emerging issues?
- ❖ Will the efforts of the partnership be diluted if new directions are undertaken?
- ❖ Will a different combination of partners be required to address the emerging issues?
- ❖ Does the partnership need to hear from the community on these emerging issues or can the partnership lead the solutions?

RDS has begun to explore emerging issues, while it continues to pursue work on the original set of community recommendations.

Whenever a partnership or community strategy is successful, there are increasing demands to undertake new initiatives and/or directions. The partnership needs to be cautious in assuming new directions as this can lead to:

- ❖ burning out existing committees and participants with additional work that may not be central to the individuals' or their organizations' priorities;
- ❖ creating new tensions and conflicts if the purpose and vision is not clearly explored and stated;
- ❖ the addition of new partners to address the emerging issues, which also may add to tensions if they are not integrated into the existing work of the partnership;
- ❖ lessen the impact of the existing partnership as focus becomes diluted; or

- ◇ existing partners not recognizing the benefits in continuing to offer support and choosing to withdraw.

Each partner and the collective partnership will need to address these questions.

Attention to Details

Regardless of the future the partnership envisions – whether it focuses only on its original purpose, assumes new issues to respond to, or changes its purpose and direction, there are three tasks throughout all stages of the journey that it must continually address.

Internal communication systems serve multiple purposes, but the most important is maintaining contact with the partner organizations. As the work of the partnership picks up speed and more and more action plans are implemented, internal communication becomes critical to avoid misunderstandings and ensure all are aware of the status of projects and directions. Internal communication supports:

RDS used two primary communication systems:

- ◇ *Regular steering committee meetings with partner representatives to review the status of projects and current development; and*
- ◇ *the DS Coordinator who was ex-officio to all committees provided consistent information.*

- ◇ the information people require to do their work;
- ◇ the flow of information, ensuring all partners are aware of the issues that concern them;
- ◇ clear expectations of the work;
- ◇ constructive feedback;
- ◇ emotional support during difficult periods;
- ◇ new ideas about the work;
- ◇ understanding the partnership and its work and individual roles in that work; and
- ◇ maintaining a shared vision and a sense of ownership in the work of the partnership.

Planning/monitoring – as action plans are implemented, the planning cycle continues with a focus on monitoring results and ensuring the next steps are in place to continue

action. At the same time, planning/monitoring provides opportunities for the partnership to renew its vision and purpose, and to adjust its plans.

Promotion of results – Is there any sense in doing something important if no one is aware of it?

Depending on the purpose and needs of the partnership, promoting the work of the partnership may not be important. If the partner organizations are stable and do not need public recognition from the partnership, it may not be necessary to promote results. This issue will need to be reviewed on a continual basis to ensure there is agreement of the promotion strategy.

The RDS partnership decided to limit promotion of the work of the strategy – their focus was on mobilizing systems to address the harm caused by drugs in Regina. As such, there was less emphasis or need to publicly promote the work of the Regina and Area Drug Strategy.

Letting Go

All partnerships will reach a point when it is critical to ask:
Do we need to continue our work?

Knowing when to let go will be influenced by:

- ◇ the purpose of the partnership; and
- ◇ the evaluation system that informs the partnership of how it is doing (Has it achieved its purpose?).

Without a clear purpose that all partners are in agreement with, knowing when the work of the partnership is complete will be impossible.

Similarly, without an evaluation system that monitors how the partnership is achieving its work, it will be difficult to know when the purpose has been achieved.

It is quite possible that a partnership continues even after it has substantially achieved its purpose. In this situation the partnership may:

- ◇ re-focus on a different issue facing the community – the lessons learned and the working relationships developed can be applied to a new area; or
- ◇ change roles in addressing the problem (for example, changing from developing and implementing solutions to transferring the responsibility for implementing solutions to other organizations, such as a government department, monitoring its progress, and reporting the results.

If a partnership ends, attention should be given to the relationships that have developed between individuals and organization and the lessons learned from the partnership. It is important to let others outside of the partnership know why the partnership is ending and the successes – even if limited – that have been achieved.

Many of the recommendations that the RDS worked towards implementing involved influencing systems to address addictions through more comprehensive approaches. There has been success in accomplishing these recommendations.

The partnership continues, as there are additional recommendations from the original report to be addressed. However RDS' role is changing – RDS continues to work with its institutional partners to ensure that the initial success.

Checklist – Elements for Leading a Collaborative Process

The following is a quick checklist to help you identify if your collaborative process is heading in the right direction.

- ✓ Is there a common understanding of the problem?
- ✓ Have people, organizations and partners committed to working together to solve the problem?
- ✓ What types of partners are needed to make results happen?
- ✓ Has the community been consulted in ways that bring diverse and varied perspectives?
- ✓ Are priorities established?
- ✓ Have actions been identified?
- ✓ Is it clear what results will look like?
- ✓ Are directions and results being communicated to those who need to know?
- ✓ Is there leadership?
- ✓ Are resources available to get the work done?
- ✓ Are results being monitored and evaluated?
- ✓ Is outside expertise required?
- ✓ When and how will the collaborative process end?

Resources

Internet resources:

- ❖ Regina and Area Drug Strategy
www.reginadrugstrategy.ca
 - ✓ up-to-date information on the work of the RDS including reports and activities
- ❖ Communities of Tomorrow
www.communitiesoftomorrow.ca
 - ✓ overview of its purpose and projects it has supported
- ❖ Working in Partnership – Recipes for Success
www.cd.gov.ab.ca/building_communities/volunteer_community/resources/partnership_kit/
 - ✓ Developed by Alberta Community Development, the resource provides steps to assist organizations to partner effectively.

Print Resources:

The Nimble Collaborator; Karen Ray

Recreating the Work: A Practical Guide to Building Sustainable Communities; Michael Bopp and Judy Bopp

The Handbook for SMART School Teams; Anne Conzemius and Jan O'Neill

- ✓ While written for education it provides an excellent model for SMART goals

Building Communities from the Inside Out; John P. Kretzmann and John L McKnight

Presence an Exploration of Profound Change in People, Organizations, Society; Peter Senge, C. Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski, Betty Sue Flowers

The Partnership Handbook; Flo Frank and Anne Smith

The Tipping Point; Malcolm Gladwell