

# Evaluation Report

for Employment and Social Development Canada

Of the **Micro-Financing Initiative for Seniors**  
2013 – 14

Micro-grants to  
Volunteer-Led Ethno-cultural Organizations  
Through the Social Planning Council of Ottawa,  
Serving As The Centralized Agency for Delivery

Report Written by  
Social Planning Council of Ottawa  
June 2014

## Acknowledgements

This evaluation was carried out by the Social Planning Council in partnership with participating ethno-cultural organizations. We express our sincere thanks to Employment and Social Development Canada for its generous support of this initiative.

The “Micro-Financing Initiative for Seniors” was a success due to the diligent work of the volunteer-led ethno-cultural organizations, as the main links to communities across Ottawa. Through their participation and partnership they have made the project come to life and become successful. We hope that the evaluation findings and the recommendations presented in this report are useful to others.

We offer sincere thanks to:  
Employment and Social Development Canada  
for its generous support of this initiative.

The opinions in this report are solely those of the author.

# Confidential Micro-Grants Project Evaluation

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## Summary

Overall the Micro-Financing Initiative for Seniors was a great success.

- It effectively tested an innovative funding model and demonstrated the great value of this model of funding delivery – through a centralized agency to a range of volunteer-led organizations.
- It was an effective and efficient way to provide small grants to ethno-cultural groups and most recipients leveraged their allocation very effectively with their considerable volunteer resources, to provide significant services to their communities.
- It demonstrated the tremendous value for money of providing small grants to grassroots community groups through a non-burdensome process
- The primary achievement of the project was the degree to which it enabled grassroots ethno-cultural groups more effectively to serve their communities, including 54 activities for seniors and other vulnerable community members in ethno-cultural communities

## Objectives

The project achieved the two planned objectives of:

- Testing a model of application and funding which was innovative, cost-effective and streamlined. Specifically we applied the model with two Coalitions of grassroots ethno-cultural groups, which has enabled us to draw important lessons from the two experiences, and
- Addressing the needs of seniors and other vulnerable populations in ethno-cultural communities through volunteer-based ethno-cultural organizations delivering “on-the-ground” results and outcomes. The ethno-cultural organizations who received the micro-grants delivered an extensive and impactful program, with significant variation in focus based on the unique needs of their community.

## Activities

The project also fully achieved the activities:

### *Planned Activity 1:*

We facilitated the collaborative process to determine the uses and process for the grant with the two Coalitions of ethno-cultural groups which we support. The micro-grant money was divided equally between the two Coalitions, and each Coalition was tasked with determining the uses, criteria and process for the micro-grants, within the parameters of the funding agreement. Each Coalition had extensive discussions about the uses and processes associated with the micro-grants. These were very important debates, in which the members challenged each other on a whole range of criteria and concepts. One Coalition finalized their approach and application form in May. The second Coalition finalized its approach and the application form in August. In the end, both Coalitions decided on similar criteria, but with important nuances which related to their view about the value of the partnership.

A significant development was that both Coalitions decided that for their portion (\$24,000 each), 70% would be used for micro-grants to the individual member groups and 30% would be used for infrastructure which would support the capacity of the collective and, hence, of all the groups.

*Planned Activity 2: Award between 16 and 24 micro-grants*

The SPC distributed micro-grants to 21 organizations, specifically 19 individual volunteer led ethno-cultural groups plus grants to each of the two Coalitions. Some organizations received more than one micro-grant, as per the criteria and process established by the two Coalitions. A total of \$48,255.43 was distributed in micro-grants.

*Planned Activity 3: Evaluate results for both the delivery model and the service outcomes for organizations receiving grants*

We completed an evaluation of both the delivery model and the service outcomes. This evaluation included the results of individual evaluation processes by most of the micro-grant recipients, along with additional data gathering.

## **Achievements**

The primary achievements of the project included:

### Outputs

- Negotiation of a model of funding distribution, with two coalitions of grassroots ethno-cultural groups
- Application process and application form developed
- Evaluation tools developed
- 21 ethno-cultural groups awarded micro-grants
- Numerous projects undertaken with the micro-grants, including 54 activities (health promotion workshops, discussion groups on community challenges (e.g. domestic violence), social activities and outings, community festivals, leadership training for youth, arts-based recreational activities, culturally based arts presentations, community based research through a youth employment initiative)
- Evaluation with respect to the delivery model and the service outcomes

### Outcomes

- an innovative funding model was tested and evaluated
- as a result of the 54 activities, ethno-cultural seniors, youth and families in Ottawa were less isolated and more engaged in community life, which evidence has found contributes to better health
- the project achieved a measurable increase in capacity for ethno-cultural groups, including more volunteers, increased infrastructure and expanded programs
  - 21 groups had increased resource capacity (i.e. the micro-grants)
  - 12 groups had increased organizational capacity
  - 18 groups had increased programming capacity
  - 3 groups had increased networking capacity (including 3 new partnerships)
  - 2 groups had increased capacity to represent and communicate the issues affecting their communities

## Reaching The Target Group:

The initiative had excellent results reaching and benefiting the target populations, specifically:

- Volunteer led ethno-cultural groups (with respect to the micro-grants)  
The target in the agreement was for between 16 and 24 groups to benefit from the micro-grants. 21 groups received the micro-grants, 19 of which were volunteer led ethno-cultural groups and 2 of which were the two Coalitions of those groups.
- Seniors and other vulnerable populations in ethno-cultural communities (with respect to the activities)  
A minimum of 3,026 people from ethno-cultural groups participated in the activities. All of the activities were for ethno-cultural community members. 56% of the activities (30) were targeted for ethno-cultural seniors, 35% of the activities (19) were designed to be inter-generational, and 9% of the activities (5) were targeted for ethno-cultural youth. In addition, some recipient groups engaged additional participants in on-going activities which pre-existed, but were enhanced by, the micro-grants. The counts for these are not included here.
- Government of Canada (with respect to the delivery model)  
The grant demonstrated excellent value for money for the government. By leveraging the commitment, knowledge and capacity of the volunteer-based ethno-cultural organizations, a broad range of services and supports were provided to seniors and other vulnerable members of ethno-cultural communities (i.e. residents in need who are often difficult to reach), at a cost of only \$15.95 per person.

## Lasting Benefits

- 357 volunteers participated, providing a total of 2,997 hours. 105 were new volunteers
- For every \$1 of funding provided by EHDC for micro-grants, the project leveraged \$1.01 in cash (\$48,702.96) plus 0.99 of goods and volunteer hours in-kind (with volunteer hours valued at \$15/hr.)
- Several groups acquired infrastructure resources (e.g. presentation materials, etc.) which they will use for years to come, and which many of the groups are sharing with each other
- Many of the activities organized (including health promotion workshops, discussion groups on community challenges (e.g. domestic violence) and leadership training for youth) will have lasting impact after the grant through healthier seniors, community members better able to address the challenges in their lives, and both youth and seniors getting more involved as volunteers and leaders.

<b>Objectives</b>		<b>Achieved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To test an innovative, cost-effective and streamlined model of micro-grant application and funding that is based upon partnerships, leveraging of resources, devolved decision-making and tangible “on the ground” outcomes</li> </ul>		☑
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To address the needs of seniors and other vulnerable populations in ethno-cultural communities – by leveraging the commitment, knowledge and capacity of volunteer-based ethno-cultural organizations to meet the needs of their clientele</li> </ul>		☑
<b>Key Successes</b>		
<u>Outputs</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negotiation of a model of funding distribution with two Coalitions of ethno-cultural groups</li> <li>21 ethno-cultural groups awarded micro-grants</li> <li>Numerous projects undertaken including 54 activities relevant to the specific communities and benefiting seniors and other vulnerable community members</li> <li>Evaluation with respect to the delivery model and the service outcomes</li> </ul>	<u>Outcomes</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an innovative funding model was tested and evaluated</li> <li>ethno-cultural seniors, youth and families in Ottawa were less isolated and more engaged in community life, which evidence has found contributes to better health</li> <li>volunteer-led ethno-cultural groups achieved a measurable increase in capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21 groups had increased resource capacity</li> <li>12 groups had increased organizational capacity</li> <li>18 groups had increased programming capacity</li> <li>3 groups had increased networking capacity (including 3 new partnerships)</li> <li>2 groups had increased capacity to represent and communicate the issues affecting their communities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Key Factors</b>		
<b>Volunteer Engagement and Community Leadership</b>  Success in achievement of objectives through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong leadership from key volunteers in ethno-cultural groups</li> <li>Strategic resources for infrastructure resulting in excellent leveraging of volunteer engagement for service delivery</li> <li>Important lessons re collaborative decision making</li> </ul>	<b>Capacity Building</b>  Investment from ESDC was critical since, without resources, the groups cannot effectively serve their communities because of growing infrastructure costs (rent, insurance etc.)  Staffing of the project was critical to support the decision-making process, the management of the distribution, the partnership development within the Coalition / between coalition members and mainstream organizations, and to undertake the evaluation.	<b>Focus on Results</b>  <u>Efficient</u> -not bureaucratic for the recipients  <u>Effective</u> -groups able to access the funding and focus on serving their communities  <u>Impactful / Lasting Results</u> -volunteer-led groups have the ability to reach and involve marginalized residents who face barriers to connecting to other services -resulted in increased capacity across 5 domains, for members of the two Coalitions, and for one of the two Coalitions.

## Challenges

### Internal:

- Conditions for collaborative decision-making did not exist in one of the Coalitions. This created significant difficulties with the model as applied, including an inefficiency in issuing a portion of the micro-grants, and a deterioration in the relationships among partners in that Coalition.

### External:

- Limited funding sources for the work of the groups significantly hampered the ability of the groups to leverage this funding strategically and to continue their work in general.
- Inequity in partnerships is a growing and serious problem for grassroots groups, who can be taken advantage of, and for funders/policy makers who encourage this strategy but rely on good-faith in the partnerships

## Roles and Responsibilities for the Lead Agency

Responsibilities	Achievements	Areas to Improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Support capacity of local initiatives including leveraging resources</li><li>▪ Supporting inclusion of marginalized community groups</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Useful Role</li><li>▪ Effectiveness</li><li>▪ Equity – Mitigating trend of centralization (haves and “have-nots”)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ More engagement to resolve conflicts</li><li>▪ Timely overall evaluation</li></ul>

## Lessons Learned

- Reinforced previous research and anecdotal experience, that grassroots ethno-cultural groups serve a vital service delivery role in the spectrum of community services and civic engagement
- Delegated and de-centralized decision making can lead to better results where participants are at an organizational stage to be collaborative and strategic, but can result in lost opportunities when group does not have the building blocks or conditions for collaboration/problem-solving/conflict resolution

## Primary Areas for Improvement

- Better assessment of the capacity of the Coalitions to effectively make collaborative decisions
- Mitigate the challenges created as a result of the one Coalition not having the conditions for effective collaborative decision making by:
  - Not asking the one Coalition to establish the criteria for micro-grants, given that the capacity did not exist to address this, or
  - Increasing the staffing resources for coordination and conflict resolution to better assist the one Coalition to come to effective decisions

## Introduction

This report summarizes the evaluation of the Micro-Funding Initiative for Seniors (MFIS).

### Background of the Micro-Funding Initiative for Seniors (MFIS)

The Micro-Funding Initiative for Seniors (MFIS) was funded by Employment and Social Development Canada from May 2013 to March 2014 to test a new delivery model to provide a cost-effective and critical “on the ground” culturally sensitive services to seniors and other vulnerable populations within ethno-cultural communities in Ottawa. The model used an established not-for-profit as a central granting agency through which to channel funds to small ethno-cultural organizations with less organizational capacity. The project was to help address the needs and challenges facing ethno-cultural organizations serving community residents including seniors, in ways that were cost-effective and consequential, including the provision of micro-funding to allow these organizations to better mobilize and retain volunteers, obtain operational space, exploit technology, build partnerships and access expertise to better serve seniors in their communities.

The objectives of the MFIS were:

- To test an innovative, cost-effective and streamlined model of micro-grant application and funding that is based upon partnerships, leveraging of resources, devolved decision-making and tangible “on the ground” outcomes;
- To address the needs of seniors and other vulnerable populations in ethno-cultural communities – by leveraging the commitment, knowledge and capacity of volunteer-based ethno-cultural organizations to meet the needs of their clientele.

### Evaluation Scope and Methodology

The evaluation addressed both the delivery model and the service outcomes for organizations receiving grants. It examined four key areas:

- relevance
- performance (effectiveness and efficiency and cost-effectiveness)
- lessons learned, and
- impacts and sustainability.

Qualitative and quantitative data was gathered through a combination of methods including:

- Review of the project documents including:
  - minutes of two Coalitions who played a decision-making role in the criteria for the micro-grants
  - analysis of the financial records of the project
  - micro-grant application documents
  - written evaluations from the recipient ethno-cultural groups, including in some cases, written evaluations by community members participating in the activities;
- Observations
- Discussions with the two Coalitions of ethno-cultural groups

- Key informant interviews with
  - Project staff to gather information on the efficiency and effectiveness of the program
  - Volunteers/ key leaders within the participating ethno-cultural groups to gather information on the impact of the project.
  - Participants in the project activities organized by participating ethno-cultural groups to gather information on the benefits and impacts of the activities (normally as structured group interviews)
  - Selected funders who also provide grants of comparable scale (\$2,000 - \$5,000)
- A case study of one project element

The project evaluation and performance measurement framework (see Appendices) sets out, in an explicit and measurable way, how the project outputs and outcomes were expected to contribute to achieving its objectives. The evaluation and performance framework (including a predefined and agreed set of indicators) facilitated satisfactory evaluation to be undertaken. The project evaluation and performance measurement framework as a formalized process of reporting is an important strength because it aligns with a best practice or the focus on Managing for Results.

The Social Planning Council of Ottawa, as the lead organization (central granting organization), conducted the evaluation.

# Findings

## 1. Relevance of MFIS

### 1.1 Useful role in service delivery by ethno-cultural groups?

Evaluation Question:

Did the MFIS play a useful role in helping to improve service delivery by ethno-cultural groups?

Findings:

The initiative was developed in response to previous work and research<sup>i</sup> by the partners which had:

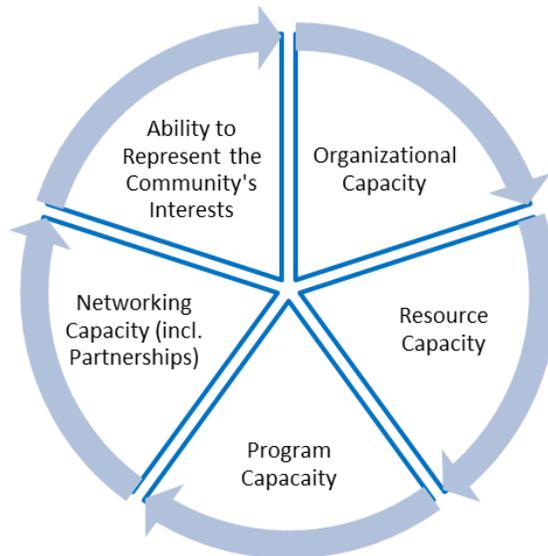
- documented the important role of volunteer-led ethnocultural groups in the spectrum of services and supports in civil society, and
- highlighted the growing challenges for them to effectively continue their historic role in the face of increasing costs for space, insurance, taxes and related core costs.

The previous research had recommended supporting these core costs as a cost effective way to enable the groups to provide impactful supports to their communities, through strong community connections and the leveraging of volunteers, in-kind contributions and partners.

Through the MFIS initiative, the SPC distributed \$48,255.43 in micro-grants to 21 organizations, specifically 19 individual volunteer led ethno-cultural groups plus grants to each of the two ethno-cultural Coalitions participating in the project. Micro-grants were intended to increase the capacity of the groups, not just cover activity costs.

To monitor improvements in the capacity for service delivery, we used a model which considers capacity across 5 domains<sup>ii</sup>. See graphic below. The project achieved a measurable increase in capacity for ethno-cultural groups, across all five areas, including:

- more volunteers
- increased infrastructure
- expanded programming.



The table below summarizes the extent to which the project increased capacity in each domain. The MFIS significantly increased resource, programmatic and organizational capacity. It was less successful in increasing partnership capacity and the ability of the groups to represent and communicate the issues affecting their community members.

<b>Summary of capacity improvements for ethno-cultural groups</b>		
Capacity Categories	Number of Ethno-cultural Groups	% of Recipient Groups
Increased resource capacity (incl. micro grants)	21	100%
Increased programming capacity	18	86%
Increased organizational capacity	12	57%
Increased networking capacity (partnerships)	3	15%
Increased ability to represent interests of their community members	2	10%

*Focus on Organizational Capacity*

\$33,242.00 representing 69% of the total micro-grants (\$48,255) was paid out for increased organizational capacity. The groups who increased their organizational capacity through the micro-grants used the resources for a variety of purposes, as listed in the table below. The table also sets out the amounts spent per item and the percent. The balance of the micro-grants was spent on activity costs.

Item	Amount	% of total micro-grants (\$48K)
Rent for office or activity space	19,503.00	40.4
Insurance	1,145.00	2.4
Updating financial records and building financial skills	2,591.00	5.4
Renovations to improve activity space	1,700.00	3.5
Equipment (computers, recreation equipment, sound equipment, catering equipment)	6,223.00	12.9
Presentation and communications materials	1,080.00	2.2
Consulting or staffing re grant-writing, co-ordination or communications	1,000.00	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,242.00</b>	<b>68.9</b>

In addition, a key objective of the MFIS was to increase volunteering. Through the micro-grants, the initiative involved 357 volunteers, providing a total of 2,997 hours. 105 of the volunteers (29%) were new in this period.

For more details on increased capacity for the other domains:

- re programming capacity see section 1.2
- re networking capacity see sections 2.1
- re resource capacity see section 2.2
- for a story on increasing the capacity to represent community interests see page 13

## What Does the Evaluation Data Tell Us?

- The MFIS played a very useful role in helping to improve service delivery by ethno-cultural groups.
- The MFIS provided strategic resources to volunteer-led ethno-cultural groups which enabled them to increase their capacity in 5 domains and thereby, to deliver an impressive level of important services and supports for seniors and other vulnerable community members.
- In response to the identified needs for increased support for organizational capacity, the initiative enabled a total of \$33,242.00 to be provided to the groups to cover infrastructure costs and increase organizational capacity.
- Results indicate that the project goal of empowering senior-ethno-cultural organizations to better mobilize and retain volunteers, obtain operational space, exploit technology, build partnerships and access expertise to better serve seniors in their communities was achieved.
- The initiative was very successful in leveraging existing and new volunteering, including 105 new volunteers.

Increasing the capacity to represent the interests of members

*The event to raise the profile of one of the Coalitions and its' members had a great turnout, reaching about 200 people who now have an increased understanding of the work of the groups, attracting dozens of new volunteers to support the work of the Coalition (in the short term), and even raising almost \$1,400 (despite the fact that there was no admission fee).*

## Lessons Learned

- Some groups had difficulty understanding the distinction between program costs and infrastructure costs. This was not critical to the implementation of the initiative, as some costs overlap (especially space). However, it meant some groups did not use the funding in the most strategic manner in relation to their longer term sustainability. If this distinction were to matter in future initiatives, it would be useful to find clear ways of communicating the difference between operating and infrastructure costs.
- In the current competitive funding environment in the voluntary sector, investments in organizational capacity which are intended to increase revenues often do not pay off. For example, where groups are obliged to purchase insurance in order to apply for funding and then do not receive the funding, this is wasted resources if they are unable to provide any programs without the funding. Consideration could be given for groups to demonstrate insurance coverage once approved, but before resources are paid out.
- The cost of renting space is a growing problem for the groups, as community spaces which were previously free are increasingly charging fees.

## Promising Practices and Success Stories

- By providing small grants for infrastructure costs in a non-burdensome way, the MFIS addressed some of the organizational challenges impeding their work. It enabled the groups to focus on their core business – which is providing services to their respective communities, largely relying on volunteerism.
- Several groups acquired infrastructure resources (e.g. presentation materials, equipment etc.) which they will use for years to come. Much of the equipment purchased through the micro-grants is now being shared between volunteer-led ethno-cultural groups. In addition, the groups identified equipment they already had which they are willing to share with other groups. In this way,

partnerships have been enhanced, and the on-going costs of providing services is more cost-efficient.

*“With the grant we acquired some equipment which is essential for social evenings and activities to help the seniors integrate.” Volunteer leader of Ethno-cultural Group*

### **Success Story**

*“The work accomplished by this grant is of great benefit to the seniors participating in the programs offered by our association. Having had a kitchenette built inside our quarters, hot and cold water included plus enough storage space to keep our perishables and cutlery and other chattels organized, has immensely improved the quality of our operation in the sense that:*

- *seniors don't need to walk to the bathroom every time they need water (fall prevention)*
- *more importantly, they don't need anymore to go all the way to the bathroom, hand full, carrying all the stuff to be "cleaned" in the small, unsanitary SINK (more comfortable)*
- *we now have drinkable water at hand (important, of course)*
- *counter-top space for coffee and tea preparation (accessibility).”*

*Volunteer leader of Ethno-cultural Group*

**Bonus: The tradesman donated the labour!**

## 1.2 Met priority needs of groups?

### Evaluation Question:

To what extent did the MFIS project meet the priority needs of the target community groups?

### Findings:

#### *Focus on Programming Capacity*

A strength of the project was its' ability to be flexible so that groups could request funds for activities which would build on the unique strengths and be responsive to the distinct needs of their community and organization. The project ensured a strong link between the MFIS project and the priority needs of the target community groups by having the groups set out in the application form how their initiative would address needs in their community.

#### i) Priority Issues / Needs

Groups identified one or more priorities which the funding would support. The table below summarizes the needs/priorities identified across all applications, which were addressed by the micro-grants distributed:

<b>Summary of needs and priorities identified by ethno-cultural groups and for which they received a micro-grant</b>		
<b>Needs / Priorities Identified by Ethno-cultural Groups in Their Request for Funds</b>	<b>Number of Ethno-cultural Groups Identifying This Priority (multiple responses N=21)</b>	<b>% of Recipient Groups Identifying This Priority</b>
<b>Needs of Community Members</b>		
Community building / cultural activities	13	62%
Reducing isolation for seniors	11	52%
Social activities	10	48%
Supports to volunteering	6	29%
Building community or youth leadership	6	29%
Health promotion / encouraging physical activity	6	29%
Navigating the Canadian system / services / values	5	24%
Skills training (e.g. computers)	4	19%
Increasing involvement in community arts	4	19%
Improving employment of community members	2	10%
Inter-generational activities	2	10%
<b>Needs of the Ethno-cultural Group</b>		
Increasing resources / funding	6	29%
Building bridges between the community and Canadian society	6	29%
Improving financial systems	2	10%

## ii) Target Populations

The initiative had excellent results reaching and benefiting the target populations, specifically seniors and other vulnerable populations in ethno-cultural communities. A minimum of 3,026 people from ethno-cultural groups participated in the activities.<sup>1</sup>

All of the activities were for ethno-cultural community members.

- 56% of the activities (30) were targeted for ethno-cultural seniors,
- 35% of the activities (19) were designed to be inter-generational, and
- 9% of the activities (5) were targeted for ethno-cultural youth.

## iii) Projects and Activities

Numerous projects were undertaken with the micro-grants, including 54 activities, specifically:

- health promotion workshops
- discussion groups on community challenges (e.g. domestic violence)
- social activities and outings
- community festivals
- leadership training for youth
- arts-based recreational activities
- culturally based arts presentations
- community based research project on youth unemployment and under-employment

## iv) Outcomes

Satisfaction by community members was gauged through qualitative data gathering – written evaluations, group discussions with participants, and individual feedback. Not all groups gathered this information, but from those who did<sup>2</sup>, it was clear that community members were very pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the activities enabled through the micro-grants and the work of the groups. Excerpts from the feedback are found throughout this report.

### What Does the Evaluation Data Tell Us?

- There was a very strong link between the community groups' priorities and the MFIS objective of "addressing the needs of seniors and other vulnerable populations in ethno-cultural communities through volunteer-based ethno-cultural organizations delivering "on-the-ground" results and outcomes." The ethno-cultural organizations who received the micro-grants delivered an extensive and impactful program, with the significant variation in focus based on 11 different priorities for their respective communities (identified in the table of needs, above).

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<sup>1</sup> A few groups did not provide a count of the number of participants or provided it after the analysis of the evaluation results.. As well, we have not included in this figure the number of community residents participating in activities that were on-going, for example, where the group used the funds for renovations. Therefore, the number reported here under-reports the number of people actually participating in and reached by the project.

<sup>2</sup> 14 groups provided an evaluation (64%). 29% of those were new to evaluation

- Ethno-cultural community members who experience barriers to participating in many aspect of community life benefited very directly from the activities, and had the opportunity for their unique needs to be addressed through culturally appropriate services and supports.
- Volunteer-led ethno-cultural groups have the ability to connect with community members who are isolated or face barriers to accessing or participating in mainstream programs and services.

### Lessons Learned

- Many of the participating ethno-cultural groups used participant feedback tools questionnaires, focus groups, etc. to gauge satisfaction and/or impact. The evaluation resources in the project (\$3,000) focused on the overall evaluation of the model and the service outcomes overall (broad impact), and were not adequate to also increase the evaluation capacity of the individual groups, which was a separate level of evaluation. However, the Coalitions provide a good opportunity for the groups to share their evaluation tools and strategies with each other, even when there are not additional resources to formally support evaluation.
- The connection between social inclusion and recreation activities on the one hand and improved health outcomes for seniors and youth on the other is well established through literature, and does not need to be “re-proven” within every funded initiative, so long as groups can demonstrate that community members who experience exclusion participated in their social/recreational activities.

“An opinion poll was distributed at our event – level of satisfaction was 87%, based on a response rate of 80%.”

### Promising Practices and Success Stories

- The MFIS played a very useful role in helping to address identified community needs.
- The primary achievement of the project was the degree to which it enabled grassroots ethno-cultural groups more effectively to serve their communities and specifically, to organize numerous activities responsive to the unique priorities of their respective communities.
- It resulted in concrete improvements in the quality of life and the conditions for healthy living for seniors and youth in ethno-cultural communities, who experience many barriers to participating equally in all aspects of community life. As a result of the 54 activities, ethno-cultural seniors, youth and families in Ottawa were less isolated and more engaged in community life, which an extensive body of literature has found contributes to better health

### **Success Story**

*“80 seniors were delighted to participate. Activities of this type, including excursions, are not available to all. Their ability to get around and their finances are barriers. They need this type of stimulation (visiting new places) to help them know and love their new country. One participant said, “Outings like this cut the winter in half!” They hope the government thinks about the isolation of vulnerable people and contributes to them being happier.”*

Volunteer leader of Ethno-cultural Group

# Performance of MFIS

## 2.1 Effectiveness

### Evaluation Questions and Findings:

Q. 2.1.1 Was the MFIS design suitable for effective project coordination?

21 groups received micro-grants, and an additional 4 groups benefited from the overall project (the joint event and/or the sharing of resources and expertise). This report has already described the great success of the project in effectively achieving the intended results and outcomes of increased volunteers and volunteering, and increased culturally appropriate services and supports to the target populations of seniors and other vulnerable residents in ethno-cultural communities. The role and performance of the SPCO in project coordination is addressed below at item 4.

Q. 2.1.2 To what extent was the MFIS efficient in the results achieved?

The measures of efficiency are addressed below at item 2.2.

Q. 2.1.3 To what extent did the MFIS project achieve the intended outcomes?

Other sections have highlighted the significant outcomes achieved with respect to the intended outcome of greater service delivery. Therefore, this section will focus on the degree to which the initiative was effective in achieving the intended outcomes with respect to increased partnerships (i.e. networking capacity).

### *Focus on Networking Capacity*

Only 3 of the groups identified an increase in their partnerships (i.e. networking capacity) i.e. 15% of those who received micro-grants.

- One member group of one of the Coalitions linked with another volunteer led ethno-cultural group, to deliver their activities within the grant as shared program activities, in order to more effectively serve their respective communities;
- The SPC assisted one member group to join a partnership initiative with a large settlement agency, to support the capacity of the grassroots group and to increase the capacity of the larger agency to serve members of the specific community;
- A new collaboration was developed between one grassroots ethno-cultural group and the Social Planning Council, with the objective of increasing the capacity of the grass-roots group to serve its' membership.

In addition, the collaboration between members of one of the participating Coalitions was strengthened by this grant.

### What Does the Evaluation Data Tell Us?

As indicated above, at section 1.2, the MFIS design ensured a strong link between the project activities and the intended outcomes. A key success factor was having a central granting body (the Social

Planning Council of Ottawa) managing the coordination of the project and the on-going link to the intended outcomes, and ensuring that the micro-grants went to qualified groups through a non-burdensome process. By the SPC fulfilling these roles, the groups were enabled to focus on their core competencies – i.e. serving their respective communities.

The findings indicate that the MFIS project design and delivery mechanisms and processes were very effective and efficient with respect to

- enhancing service delivery,
- leveraging and increasing volunteers and
- achieving impact for community residents.

The MFIS project was not as successful in increasing partnerships. The MFIS initiative, per se, did not create conditions for the groups which either improved or worsened their ability to form effective partnerships. The ability to form partnerships was impacted more by issues extraneous to the MFIS, as discussed under lessons learned, below.

### Lessons Learned

The project has been significantly impacted by the difficulty in navigating partnerships between volunteer-led ethno-cultural groups and more established agencies. Our experience, through this project and others, is that equitable partnership development is becoming increasingly challenging, as organizations large and small try to address every expanding needs within a very challenging funding environment.

### Promising Practices and Success Stories

#### **Success Story**

*“Thanks to the grant, we were able to have more complementary tickets for the audience [for our artistic representation], especially seniors and youth. That proved to be greatly appreciated and opened an interest in volunteering and active engagement with our organization. Through the grant we had increased opportunities ... to connect and collaborate, as well as to support development of the broader initiatives and partnership.”*

## 2.2 Efficiency and Cost Effectiveness

### Evaluation Questions and Findings:

#### Q. 2.2.1 Were MFIS project activities implemented effectively, and within allocated budget?

Through the MFIS initiative, the Social Planning Council of Ottawa received \$48,000 to distribute in micro-grants to volunteer led ethno-cultural groups serving seniors and other vulnerable community members. The target in the contribution agreement was for between 16 and 24 groups to benefit from the micro-grants, receiving between \$2,000 to \$5,000 each. 21 groups received the micro-grants, 19 of which were volunteer led ethno-cultural groups and 2 of which were the two Coalitions of those groups. Some organizations received more than one micro-grant, as per the criteria and process established by the two Coalitions. Micro-grants ranged between \$132.00 and \$4,600.00, with most at either \$1,700 or \$2,100, depending on which Coalition the groups was associated with. A total of \$48,255.43 was distributed in micro-grants. The SPC contributed 255.43 from the administration costs of \$1,480, resulting in admin costs of \$1,224.57.

Most grants were disbursed by early January 2014, so the groups could complete their activities in time to be included in the evaluation of the process and the outcomes. All grants were disbursed by the end of March 2014. All of the initiatives for which micro-grants were disbursed were completed by the end of March 2014. One of the Coalitions partnering in the project had planned to use \$7,000 of micro-funding for joint activities to build the capacity of the Coalition members, including a joint event and incorporation. These activities were not on track to be completed effectively by the end of March 2014, so that portion of the micro-grant was allocated in alternate micro-grants. With this course correction in the final quarter, the full allocation of micro-grants was disbursed and the related projects successfully implemented within the required time period.

*“The seniors attended the rehearsal three times a month for three months. The seniors stated that they felt happy to meet with friends and rehearsal the operas that they were familiar with. The project increased the opportunity for seniors to socialize in an artistic setting and reduced their isolation.”*

Volunteer led ethno-cultural group

The evaluation of the outcomes and processes was also a requirement of the contribution agreement. The evaluation was the responsibility of the Social Planning Council of Ottawa, for which it received \$3,000 in the grant, on top of the funds for the micro-grants. The evaluation was completed, but the SPCO was 8 weeks late on this deliverable.

The portion of the project which was contributed by EHDC (micro-grants, evaluation, plus admin costs of \$1,480) was delivered on budget. The portion of the project which was contributed by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa for the staffing, coordination and partnership developed was roughly double the anticipated amount, and is discussed in more detail below in the context of the role of the SPCO and in the case study re the collaborative decision making.

The degree to which the project improved resource access for community members has been dealt with above at section 1.2. The degree to which it improved access to financial resources is addressed in the discussion of leveraged resources, in the next section.

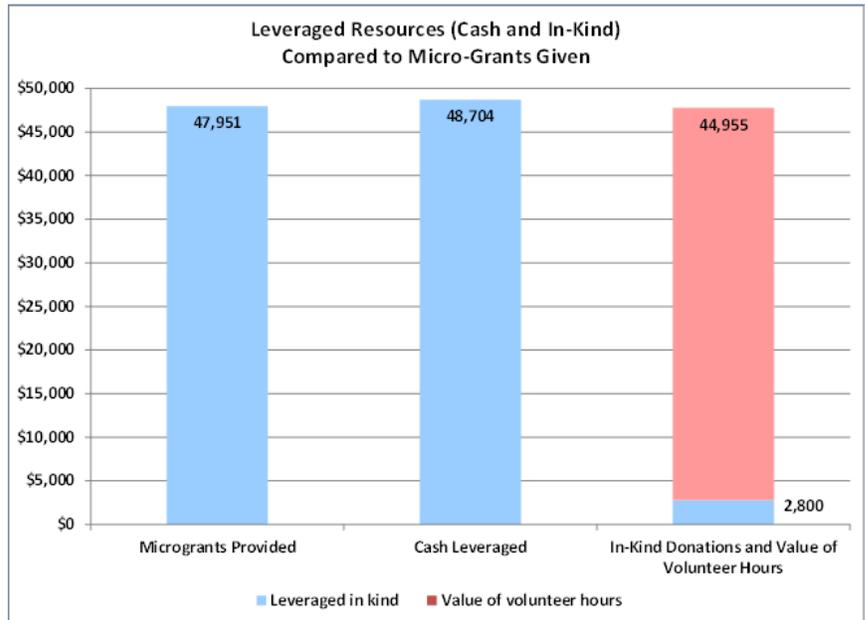
Q. 2.2.2 Did the MFIS project prove to be cost-effective in relation to other comparable grants and contributions delivery modes?

The evaluation examined two aspect of this question:

- The level of value added to community service delivery through the MFIS model, and
- The MFIS compared to alternative delivery models, particularly cost-effectiveness

*Focus on Resource Capacity*

To assess the value added, the evaluation analyzed the degree to which the model was able to leverage resources. The project was quite successful in leveraging funds. For every \$1.00 from EHDC for micro-grants, the groups leveraged 1.02 in cash plus 0.99 of goods and volunteer hours in-kind.<sup>3</sup>



Of the \$48,703 in cash which was leveraged

- 59.1% (\$28,790.10 ) was from charitable funders and private foundations;
- 30.2% (\$14,705.86) was from fundraising and corporate sponsorships;
- 9.6% (\$4,667.00) was from other Federal government departments;
- 1.1% (\$540.00) was from user fees.

In addition, the project leveraged 0.99 of goods and volunteer hours in kind (with volunteer hours valued at \$15/hr.)

*Comparison to Other Funding Models and Streams*

The MFIS model of application and funding was cost-effective, streamlined and efficient for the groups.<sup>4</sup>

Participating ethno-cultural organizations were able to compare their experience with the MFIS model to their experience with three other grant streams/processes of comparable scale (\$2,000 - \$5,000) and to larger grants through government or other traditional philanthropic funders. The beneficiaries felt that the MFIS initiative was simple and accessible to them. The application process was not difficult, the need to demonstrate infrastructure capacity was eliminated, as this was required only of the lead (granting) agency and funds were distributed very quickly after a request, thereby relieving cash flow challenges which arise with some other grants.

<sup>3</sup> Volunteer hours valued at \$15.00 per hour.

<sup>4</sup> With the caveat discussed later in this report, in relation to the collaborative decision-making.

The application and payment process and evaluation expectations were comparable to two other small grant options (Community Action Grants and small Community Foundation Grants), although many could not qualify for the Community Action Grants stream which is neighbourhood-based. Some of the groups were able to compare to a similar collaborative initiative with micro-grants in which they were a partner, and found the MFIS process to be very significantly more accessible and proportionate in effort to the amount received, compared to this other initiative. In addition, the efficiency of payment to the groups via this MFIS at the start of their project enabled them to undertake their projects whereas the other collaboration created financial hardship and cash-flow difficulties on the groups and their volunteer leaders by providing the micro-grant after the fact.

In comparison to any other government funding, the MFIS process/application/evaluation was very significantly more accessible to the groups. These other funding streams involve more complicated proposals and in many cases, more stringent capacity requirements are completely beyond the capacity of the groups, despite the fact that they may be providing quality services. In particular, compared to the traditional federal Gs and Cs (grants and contributions) models, the MFIS successfully channeled institutional resources in a cost-effective way, and greatly simplified accessibility procedures.

### **Comparison of Micro Grant Model and Other Funding Models**

As part of the evaluation, we conducted key informant interviews with three organizations providing grants of comparable size (\$2,000 - \$5,000).

#### Application Process and Development of Funding Agreements:

Two provided comparably simple models with respect to the application process and development of funding agreements. In these two other models, grants could be provided to volunteer-led groups which might not have the traditional infrastructure in place (financial statements etc.), by requiring the application to come from a mainstream agency who would manage the funds. The ability of the groups to apply was dependent on them finding a mainstream agency willing to apply. The application was relatively easy and efficient for the recipient groups, although some of the groups in the Coalition had had experience with these grants and had found them too difficult to complete on their own. As well, one of the streams was difficult to access for the ethno-cultural groups, as it was neighbourhood based.

The funders reported that these grant streams were relatively efficient for them as funders, although they did have to administer multiple small grants in these portfolios. One of the fund streams, which had had a continuous intake, modified the timing to quarterly intake, in order to create a greater efficiency in their administration with respect to the requests.

#### Timing of the Funds:

For two of the comparable funding streams, funds were provided at the start of the project rather than the end, which accommodated the cash flow challenges of small groups.

#### Evaluation and Impact:

For one funding stream, there was excellent compliance with modest evaluation / reporting the recipients. Ethno-cultural groups who had accessed this funding stream found it very straightforward. The responsibility rested on the funder, however, to consider the reports from the various projects and aggregate that into a portrait of the impact of the funding. For the second funding stream, there was variable success with respect to evaluation / reporting and this was acknowledged as a challenge.

In the current MFIS model, the impact of the grant as a whole can be identified, and the responsibility to gather and communicate that impact is a designated responsibility of the lead granting agency. Some resources are necessary for this function (\$3,000 in the current grant), whereas in the other two examples, there is no cash outlay for the funder with respect to the evaluation.

#### Q. 2.2.3 Did the MFIS project provide value for the federal dollars spent?

The grant demonstrated excellent value for money for the government. By leveraging the commitment, knowledge and capacity of the volunteer-based ethno-cultural organizations, a broad range of services and supports were provided to seniors and other vulnerable members of ethno-cultural communities (i.e. residents in need who are often difficult to reach), at a cost of only \$15.95 per person during the life of the grant, and on-going benefit with continuing impact.

#### What Does the Evaluation Data Tell Us?

As indicated above, at section 1.2, the MFIS design ensured a strong link between the project activities and the intended outcomes. A key success factor was having a central granting body (the Social Planning Council of Ottawa) managing the coordination of the project and the on-going link to the intended outcomes, and ensuring that the micro-grants went to qualified groups through a non-burdensome process, so they could focus on their core competencies – i.e. serving their respective communities.

The findings indicate that the MFIS project design and delivery mechanisms and processes were very effective and efficient with respect to

- enhancing service delivery,
- leveraging and increasing volunteers and
- achieving impact for community residents.

The MFIS project was not as successful in increasing partnerships. The MFIS initiative, per se, did not create conditions for the groups which either improved or worsened their ability to form effective partnerships. The ability to form partnerships was impacted more by issues extraneous to the MFIS, as discussed under lessons learned, below.

The Micro Grant project had a positive effect by streamlining the process for accessing and managing community project funding.

#### Lessons Learned

It has become exceedingly difficult to get resources for the activities of community led ethno-cultural groups. Overall, there are fairly limited funding options for most of the groups, but this was an effective model to increase accessibility and scope (groups benefiting). This is further discussed below under “Constraints” (section 3.3).

The MFIS project proved to be a great model for providing critical and efficient financial support for the groups, which the partners further leveraged to increase the ability to deliver services. The key success factors re the success in leveraging resources were:

- the central granting agency having a commitment to and being able to leverage the concept and the collaborative nature of the whole MFIS, in order to attract funds to the groups as a collective;
- a few groups serving larger numbers of residents being able to attract funds and donations to their projects;
- all the groups effectively leveraging their in-kind and volunteer resources.

The model was a very efficient and effective way to deliver high-impact support to marginalized groups, although the efficiency of the model depends on carefully and properly assessing and managing the partnerships and collaborative activities, including decision-making processes. (Discussed in detail below with respect to the role of the granting agency and under the case study re collaborative decision making.)

The micro-grants were efficient and effective for the scale of grants they provided (\$1,000 - \$5,000). However, it is important to note that not all activities by volunteer-led ethno-cultural groups can be delivered with grants of this scale. Many activities and program models would require grants of larger amounts. The MFIS is a great model as part of a spectrum of funding options which need to be available to groups.

### Promising Practices and Success Stories

The MFIS project itself proved to be both a best practice and a success story. The delivery mechanisms and processes were very efficient for the groups, and the initiative was very effective in leveraging cash and in-kind resources. The MFIS model was an effective and efficient way to provide small grants to ethno-cultural groups and most recipients leveraged their allocation very effectively with their considerable volunteer resources, to provide significant services to their communities.

#### **Success Story**

*The funding was an asset for us to be able to hire someone to write applications and to work on our website. We received a small funding from one of the applications. In addition, due to the work of the website, we were able to attract many visitors to our website. It resulted in a very successful Chinese New Year Event. Even if it is not big funding, grants like this help small organizations like ours. We appreciate it very much.*

Volunteer leader of ethno-cultural group



## 2. Impacts and Sustainability

### 3.1 Positive and negative impacts

#### Findings

##### *Positive impact*

The primary positive impact was the degree to which it enabled grassroots ethno-cultural groups more effectively to serve their communities, including 54 activities for seniors and other vulnerable community members in ethno-cultural communities.

As a result of the 54 activities, ethno-cultural seniors, youth and families in Ottawa were less isolated and more engaged in community life, which evidence has found contributes to better health

As well, the project achieved a measurable increase in capacity for ethno-cultural groups, including more volunteers, increased infrastructure and expanded partnerships

- 21 groups had increased resource capacity (i.e. the micro-grants)
- 12 groups had increased organizational capacity
- 18 groups had increased programming capacity
- 3 groups had increased networking capacity (including 3 new partnerships)
- 2 groups had increased capacity to represent and communicate the issues affecting their communities

##### *Negative impact*

The primary negative impact was the de-stabilizing effect of the collaborative decision-making on one of the Coalitions. A planned activity in the project was for the lead granting agency to facilitate a collaborative process to determine the uses and process for the grant. To operationalize this, the SPCO delegated responsibility to decide the criteria and uses for the micro-grants funding to two Coalitions of ethno-cultural groups which we support. We did not do an assessment of the capacity of each group to effectively undertake collaborative decision-making. The collaborative decision-making re criteria and uses of the funding enhanced the relationships and partnerships for one of the Coalitions, but significantly deteriorated the partnerships and relationships in the second Coalition. Individual member groups who received grants via either Coalition achieved the same great levels of success in terms of service to their communities, leveraged resources and increased capacity, including partnerships. However, the project did not work well for the second Coalition as a *collective* – distinct from the individual members. The conditions did not exist in the second Coalition to support effective collaborative decision making. Therefore, the joint decision making to determine the uses and process was not a positive experience for

##### *“Impact of our project on seniors:*

- *This project enabled the seniors to be intellectually stimulated and physically active*
- *The inter-generational connections we provided were a place for sharing and learning for seniors and youth.*

##### *Impact of our project on our organization:*

- *A portion of our infrastructure costs were financed*
- *We were able to purchase presentation and workshop materials that enabled the seniors to make their presentations*
- *12 seniors participated in the story-telling with the children*
- *We engaged 16 volunteers.”*

Volunteer led Ethno-cultural Group

the group. Without the conditions for effective collaborative decision making, the Coalition could not arrive at a resolution, and it resulted in inefficiency for all involved (i.e. a disproportionate number of meetings), lost opportunities which could have benefited the groups, and – with respect to partnerships - a deterioration of many of the relationships. (See the section on management of the project and lessons learned for more details)

The increased work in relation to the collaborative decision-making process with the one Coalition resulted in wasted time of volunteers in the one Coalition. It had a negative impact on the budget of the Social Planning Council of Ottawa, as we had to raise and contribute an additional \$11,300.00 in staffing resources to try to resolve the issues.

As well, the Social Planning Council of Ottawa experienced an increase in our own infrastructure costs. The project significantly contributed to a 15% increase in our insurance costs. This increase was solely and specifically tied to our role of supporting volunteer ethno-cultural groups, as the insurance company felt this increased our exposure (risk). The negative impact, therefore, was triggered first by our relationship to the groups, and secondly by this grant (which was under discussion at the time of the insurance increase). So, the grant was not solely responsible for the increase, but it was a significant contribution factor in the insurer's assessment of our risk level, particularly given the fact that we were in discussions with the government to undertake this project, increasing our fiduciary role on behalf of the groups. As the time the application for the MFIS was formally submitted, the SPCO had been notified by the insurer of the pending increase, so this had been anticipated in the project budget and ultimately approved. However, the increased insurance cost will continue in perpetuity, so the SPCO will bear the additional insurance costs with no corresponding compensation.

### Lessons Learned

In practice, the management of the project was costly in time and money for the Social Planning Council and for the members of the Coalition which had difficulty with the collaborative decision making. An important lesson learned is that this model is an efficient and effective model for delivering high impact services to and with vulnerable communities, when a proper assessment has been made as to the appropriate degree of collaboration for each decision, based on an understanding of the existence of the conditions for effective collaborative decision making.

### Promising Practices and Success Stories

#### **Success Story**

*An important success and positive impact was that collaboration and partnership development between member groups within one of the Coalitions was enhanced by the project. This was partly related to the stage of development of the Coalition, and the conditions of some of the groups, but the enhancement in relationships within the Coalition was triggered by the extensive discussion about the uses and application/eligibility process for the grants.*

For one of the Coalitions, the collaborative decision-making process was very positive, generating very healthy debates, in which the members challenged each other on a whole range of criteria and concepts. At the heart were differing opinions on the role of government funding in relation to the needs of their community members, the infrastructure of volunteer led groups, and concepts of sustainability. The Coalition decided that:

- 30% of the funds for their Coalition (i.e. 50% of the \$24,000 in micro-grants for their coalition) should be used for infrastructure expenditures which would benefit the collective. (The strategy to use the collective funds is discussed under section 5), and
- a criteria for an individual group to receive a micro-grant was that they be a member in good standing of the Coalition, i.e. had demonstrated a commitment to the collective.

This reflected the fact that, through the debates, the groups determined that their capacity was strengthened by the collaboration, and therefore, some of the capacity support should enhance that collectivity. The Coalition decided to use the 30% of “collective” funding to raise the profile of their collective and individual work, and for some equipment which would be shared between the groups to support their activities going forward. They put a tremendous amount of volunteer work and energy into the two strategies.

- To raise the profile of the Coalition and its’ member groups, they held a community event and developed a modest suite of communications materials for that event. It was a great experience for the members and was an exceptional display of group participation and cooperation. The groups learned a lot from each other and from the process of working together to organize the event. It also increased understanding and trust between the leaders of the groups.
- With respect to the shared equipment, they started by generating a list of what would be most useful, and began working on a plan for a social enterprise so the initiative would be self-sustaining. Through the discussions, they realized that between them they already had quite a few of the items most commonly needed by the groups, so they agreed to share existing equipment between the groups. What remained was catering equipment and sound equipment. They needed the catering equipment for the joint public event, so acquired that (which they are now sharing). Then they costed the sound equipment – purchase and rental – and determined that it was much more cost effective to set up a rental account which they could all access. The process and result (sharing of existing equipment) is a significant enhancement of the collective capacity and the partnerships, and will benefit the groups beyond the life of the grant.

*“The project helped community seniors to be less isolated, to integrate into the Canadian system, to reduce their stress through social activities, and to improve their living conditions through connecting to mainstream services.”*

### 3.2 Tangible and lasting results for the groups and for seniors

#### Findings

There are tangible and lasting results for the groups, who will continue to serve seniors and other vulnerable community members, and for seniors:

- Many of the activities organized (including health promotion workshops, discussion groups on community challenges (e.g. domestic violence) and leadership training for youth) will have lasting impact after the grant through healthier seniors, community members better able to address the challenges in their lives, and both youth and seniors getting more involved as volunteers and leaders
- Several groups acquired infrastructure resources (e.g. presentation materials, etc.) which they will use for years

*“This grant gave us an opportunity to get display boards for an exhibit of distinguished Canadians from our community to showcase to Canadian audiences. The exhibit was shown in Toronto and Ottawa. The sign-boards will permit us to display different exhibits in future. They will be available for all our community for different purposes.”*

to come, and which many of the groups are sharing with each other

- 357 volunteers participated, providing a total of 2,997 hours. 105 were new volunteers

### What Does the Evaluation Data Tell Us?

Many recipient organizations, including one of the Coalitions, effectively used the micro-grants to enhance the sustainability of their work going forward. These groups are in a better position to continue to provide services to their communities as a result of:

- the increased volunteer engagement and enhanced partnerships;
- the modest communications materials developed (business cards, promotional brochure and updates to the website) to enhance their profile(s);
- the modest resources raised for the Coalition's on-going activities, and
- acquisition of necessary equipment or amenities in their space (e.g. running water)
- shared equipment for activities. Since the end of the project, several of the groups have already accessed the shared equipment – for free.

### Lessons Learned

Grassroots ethno-cultural groups play a critical role in supporting healthy living, engagement, and civic participation of individuals who face barriers of participating equally. Micro-grants such as these are strategically important to address some of the growing infrastructure costs imposed on the groups (such as rent, insurance, etc.).

### **Success Story**

*“We had been helping community members individually and referring them to services, to address some of these issues on an individual level which are seriously affecting our community [domestic violence, mental health and post-traumatic stress, poverty, etc.]. With this project, we were able to discuss in groups so that more people in the community would become aware of issues that are important. Discussion in groups also enabled community members to become aware of the problems and ask for help. We have asked people who came to let their family and friends who did not attend the session know. We will continue with this project after the grant as the community has realized how important it is for their well-being.”*

Volunteer leader of ethno-cultural group

### 3.3 Constraints and opportunities to avoid constraints

#### *The challenge of funding*

The primary constraint was the lack of programmatic funding available to the groups, to complement the micro-grants and to enable them to continue their work in the future.

Just before the start of this project, the municipal government cancelled the entire funding stream which volunteer-led ethno-cultural groups had accessed as a critical support to community based programming. There was another micro-grant stream called Community Action Grants, with 50% contributed from the City and 50% from United Way. This was successfully accessed by one ethno-cultural group in this period. However, as of mid-year 2014, that funding stream is no longer available either. None of the groups were successful in accessing Provincial funding during this period. With few doors open to City funding and no resources from the Province for their work, the demand on the local charitable funders has been considerable.

During this period, as part of the collective capacity building, the Social Planning Council of Ottawa and volunteer led ethno-cultural groups participating in the project submitted numerous applications to enhance and continue the activities of the groups:

- At least thirteen applications were submitted to a variety of funders – government and non-government – as part of the capacity building related to this project. 7 of those were declined. This is a significantly poorer success ratio than in previous years.
- Of those that were successful, 2 were from Community Foundation of Ottawa, 1 was from a private foundation, and one was from the joint City/UW grant identified above.
- 2 were submitted to the Ontario Trillium Foundation and are still in the decision making process
- One of the Coalitions had coordination resources in this period through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, which pre-existed this grant. The other Coalition has not had any funding for coordination since March 2013, but has been supported and resourced by the Social Planning Council.

#### The growing cost of renting space, and the phenomenon of volunteer-led groups flowing resources between levels of government

Further exacerbating the situation for the groups, is the fact that their costs of delivering supports/services and programs have been increasing, even if they are provided fully with volunteer time. In particular, rental costs for their activities have been going up, with both the City and the school boards increasingly charging for community groups to use their space for activities. A significant portion of the micro-grants provided under this MFIS grant from ESDC, were paid by the recipient ethno-cultural groups to a variety of organizations (community organizations, churches, universities, school boards and the City). Many groups paid additional rental costs on top of the amount provided through the micro-grant. For example, one group received a grant of \$1,700.00 but their rental costs alone were 2,388.24. They had to fundraise the remainder, along with all the other costs of their initiative.

The micro-grants and the additional monies paid directly by the volunteer-led groups for activity spaces were not the total of rents paid. For example, in 2013, from grants managed by the SPC from various government and philanthropic funders in support of the activities delivered by volunteer-led ethno-cultural groups, in addition to the micro-grants funding, the SPC paid:

- \$3,917.93 in rental costs directly to the City, plus
- \$400.00 in rental costs directly to a philanthropic funder, plus
- \$4,527.10 in rental costs directly to other entities (such as churches).

The amount paid in rental to the City and the philanthropic funder represent almost 10% of the entire micro-grant pot within this grant.

This highlights that, when considering the “contribution” of other governments and funders to an initiative such as this, it is important to consider both the funds paid in by, and the funds paid out to, those same governments/funders through rental and related (janitorial) fees. This initiative highlights that many of the funds which are understood to be contributions to the voluntary sector are, in fact, transfers of funds through rental fees from one funder/government directly to the City, quasi-government entities such as school boards, and occasionally to other funders.

### Lessons Learned

The SPC and many of the member groups continue to seek funding, based on the demonstrated track record of success – through this grant and other initiatives. However, the amount of time, resources and effort invested to try to get some basic resources to enable the groups to continue their very effective supports for vulnerable community members has been steadily increasing, and having poor success.

The SPC is modifying its’ resource development strategy on behalf of the groups, focusing less on the Coalitions per se, and more on strategic partnerships between members from the two Coalitions where synergy and opportunities exist.

The federal government’s New Horizons for Seniors program has been an extremely important source of funding for several of the groups which serve seniors. Several of the groups received individual grants through that funding stream during this period.

Finally, a critical factor in sustainability for the work is a policy solution with respect to equitable access to space by volunteer-led groups. The SPC is working with other stakeholders in the City to bring this issue forward to decision makers and “space-holders” (those who have spaces which could be used by these and other community groups).

### 3. Role and Performance of the Central Grant-Maker Organization

#### 4.1 Effectiveness of the central grant-making organization

##### Roles

ESDC provided the grant to the Social Planning Council of Ottawa, as the central grant delivery agency. The SPCO was to facilitate a collaborative process to determine the uses and process for the grant with the two Coalitions of ethno-cultural groups which we support. The SPC applied the model with two Coalitions of grassroots ethno-cultural groups, which enabled us to draw important lessons from the two experiences.

The SPCO divided the micro-grant money equally between the two Coalitions (\$24,000 each). The SPCO decided to operationalize the collaborative process by tasking each Coalition with determining the uses, criteria and process for its' portion of the micro-grants, within the parameters of the funding agreement. This was an important decision which was not necessarily essential to the functioning of the micro-financing initiative, but which reflected the SPCO's values.

Each Coalition had extensive discussions about the uses and processes associated with the micro-grants. One Coalition finalized their approach and application form in May. The second Coalition finalized their approach and the application form in August. In the end, both Coalitions decided on similar criteria, but with important nuances which related to their view about the value of the partnership (i.e. the value of the Coalition). Each Coalition decided that 30% of their portion of the micro-grants would be used for micro-financing for the Coalition, i.e. the collective, in order to strengthen the Coalition as a vehicle to support the on-going capacity of the member groups after the life of the initiative. The balance (\$17,000 for each Coalition) they determined would be distributed to individual groups which met the criteria they had set for the individual grants. One Coalition prioritized membership and engagement in the Coalition as a key criteria. The second Coalition did not.

Once the Coalitions decided the criteria, groups were able to complete a simple application form which had been created. If they met the criteria, the SPC issued a cheque for their micro-grant within ten days of receiving the application.

The two Coalitions then began discussing the use of the "collective" micro-grant. In the end, one of the Coalitions could not come to agreement about the use of the funds within the time period set by the funder. Therefore, the SPCO notified the groups that the funds were no longer available for collective activities and re-distributed those funds to individual volunteer-led ethnocultural groups based on requests which had come to the SPCO in the interim.

The Project Agreement identified a target between 16 and 24 groups to benefit from the micro-grants. The SPC distributed micro-grants to 21 organizations, specifically 19 individual volunteer led ethno-cultural groups plus grants to each of the two Coalitions. Some organizations received more than one micro-grant, as per the criteria and process established by the two Coalitions. A total of \$48,255.43 was distributed in micro-grants.

All the micro-grant funds were disbursed in time for the groups to finish their activities or capacity building and participate in the evaluation. The SPCO undertook the evaluation, with the support of the coordinators of the two Coalitions and the collaboration of most of the grant recipients. The evaluation

included both the delivery model and the service outcomes. This evaluation included the results of individual evaluation processes by most of the micro-grant recipients, along with additional data gathering.

The Social Planning Council was responsible for:

- Meeting the organizational capacity requirements of the Federal funder (re financial systems, Board governance, etc.)
- distributing the grants according to the criteria and process set by the Coalitions, and consistent with the letter and intent of the funders' requirements;
- maintaining proper financial records for the project as verified by our annual audit;
- contributing the equivalent of a day a week of salary time for a co-ordinator for the Coalition(s), to support the groups in serving their community members and building the capacity of their organization. (In fact the SPCO had to contribute twice that amount of salary time for co-ordinators for the Coalitions);
- designing and implementing the evaluation, including helping the groups with their evaluation if they wished;
- writing up the evaluation, addressing the service outcomes and the delivery model.

Each Coalition was responsible for:

- determining the criteria and process for allocating 50% of the micro-grants (\$24,000 each);
- ensuring the criteria and process were consistent with the letter and intent of the funders' requirements;
- participating in the success, promotion and the evaluation of the initiative – whether or not they received a micro-grant.

Ethno-cultural groups who received micro-grants under the project were responsible for:

- completing the project for which they received the micro-grant
- submitting an evaluation of their project, including the outputs and outcomes. 16 of 21 groups provided an evaluation within the required time.

#### Level of satisfaction by project participants

Most participants in the two Coalitions were quite satisfied with the initiative and with the role of the SPCO acting as the central grant agency. There were three exceptions:

Three members of one of the Coalitions had been active volunteers in the community and the Coalition for many years, but either were not affiliated with, or did not represent, a volunteer-led ethno-cultural group. They were very dissatisfied with the criteria decided - that the grants were to go to groups - and that they were disqualified as a consequence.

Three different members of the same Coalition expressed dissatisfaction with the SPCO not ending the debates in the one Coalition about the criteria for the micro-grants. They were frustrated that an excessive amount of their time was in debates about the criteria.

Two members of the same Coalition were dissatisfied with the SPCO for not making certain issues clear enough, particularly the timelines for the stages of the project (the date by which activities had to be completed) and the differences between infrastructure and program costs.

## What the evaluation data tells us re the key success factors

Most of the groups found the initiative to be very successful and the SPCO's role to be efficient and effective. The key success factors were :

- only the lead agency was required to meet the government's screening with respect to financial and governance capacity. This meant that the participating groups were not burdened with demands for expensive or disproportionate infrastructure. They could qualify for the grant based on basic criteria and a demonstrated commitment of providing services to their community
- a non-bureaucratic and non-burdensome application process
- prompt payment of the micro-grants once an application was received
- support for the evaluation, if groups desired

## Lessons Learned

The SPCO's decision to have the two Coalitions set the criteria had the potential to provide a significant added-value (ownership, understanding of competing interests, awareness of need for due diligence). However, we did not properly assess the conditions for this added value to be realized. This worked well, and was extremely positive for the Coalition and for the outcomes of the grant, where the Coalition had the capacity for effective collaborative decision making, especially conflict resolution. The collaborative decision making process was a detriment where these pre-conditions to collaborative decision making did not exist.

The partnership development portion of the project took a great deal of effort, significantly beyond the resources anticipated, particularly in relation to the Coalition which did not have the capacity effectively to undertake collaborative decision making. The SPC had committed to contribute .2 FTE to the coordination of the project, through a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. We contributed twice that, but had to raise the additional resources for the staffing from fundraising. 80% to 90% of that .4 FTE was for partnership development and enhancement – primarily within the Coalitions but to some degree also with mainstream potential partners.

The piloted model is highly dependent on the capacity of the centralized agency who is delivering the program. Therefore, if there are not enough resources within the project to accommodate coordination challenges, it will impact the deliverables.

Had the SPCO properly assessed the capacity of the one Coalition effectively to make collaborative decisions, and had not given it the task to set the criteria, the initiative would not have been financially burdensome to the SPCO, beyond the increase in insurance costs identified above. The delegated collaborative decision making was not essential to the functioning of the grant (although it provided considerable value-added in the case where it worked). Without that complication, the original estimation of .2 FTE for co-ordination would have been sufficient, and the evaluation could likely have been done on time and within the resources provided. This particular grant did not provide the coordination resources – as they were part of the SPCO's contribution to the project in order to secure the grant. However, in replicating the model, it would be critical to have this .2 FTE resources by some means.

The SPC was late delivering the Evaluation Report, reflecting the extra effort the SPC contributed with respect to partnership development, resource development, and endeavouring to support the second

Coalition without co-ordination dollars – which collectively strained the resources of the SPC. These factors are not identified by way of an excuse, as the evaluation was the sole responsibility of the SPC. However, they are relevant from the point of view of lessons learned. Specifically, this situation highlights that the piloted model is highly dependent on the capacity of the centralized agency who is delivering the program, and that if there are not enough resources within the project to accommodate coordination challenges, it will impact the deliverables.

### Success Story

The initiative successfully tested and evaluated an innovative funding model. The initiative had excellent results reaching and benefiting the target populations, and doing so in a manner that was non-burdensome and enhanced the capacity of most of the groups. Due diligence and accountability was efficiently and effectively managed through the central granting agency.

#### **4.2 Should central grant-making organization continue to provide intermediary assistance?**

The evaluation has demonstrated that the micro-financing model, delivered through a central granting agency, streamlines the funding process through simplified procedures and quality control and management processes together with a strong coordination structure.

The role of the central grant-making organization should continue, providing intermediary assistance, for the following reasons:

- By meeting the infrastructure criteria for the whole project, and by ensuring due diligence in the project, the central grant making organization enables a wide range of groups to access resources and focus on their core work of supporting their community members
- By delivering the grants through a central grant-making organization, the Federal government significantly reduced its' own administration costs
- Grants for infrastructure are critical for groups, but it can be challenging for funders to “make the case” with respect to impact. However, by delivering infrastructure grants through a collective approach, this facilitates making that case. The lead agency is responsible for, and resourced to, ensure the evaluation can identify the impact. This fits with current best practices thinking with respect to collective impact strategies and the role of the “back-bone” organization.

## **4. Lessons Learned**

### **5.1 Lessons learned**

Each section of this evaluation has identified lessons learned. In addition, there are a couple of additional lessons learned which were not previously mentioned or which warrant elaboration:

- The grassroots groups cannot be expected to continue to fill their critical role in the spectrum of services and supports, without financial support, including support in amounts larger than these micro-grants. That is, micro-grants are an important and strategic model of funding to meet aspects of the needs of the groups in serving their role, but micro-grants are complimentary to, not a substitute for a robust range of funding streams and models.

- Partnership development and maintenance takes considerable time and effort, and in the current funding and policy environment, is not always beneficial to the smaller organizations.
- A collaborative governance model is an important part of ensuring that micro-grants effectively meet the needs of diverse communities. In principle, situating the decision making with the coalitions and keeping the management (administration) was an excellent balance of due diligence, devolved decision making to those most affected by issues and enabling each partner to focus on their core roles (for the groups – their work in the community and for the SPC the administration). In practice, the management of the project was costly in time and money for the Social Planning Council and for the members of the Coalition which had difficulty with the collaborative decision making. An important lesson learned is that this model is an efficient and effective model for delivering high impact services to and with vulnerable communities, when a proper assessment has been made as to the appropriate degree of collaboration for each decision, based on an understanding of the existence of the conditions for effective collaborative decision making.

## **5.2 Opportunities for increasing value of the MFIS**

The primary opportunity for increasing the value of the MFIS would be with respect to continuation and expansion. The project was very successful and is recommended for continuation. The model could be equally successful target to a wider target population and/or sector of the non-profit community (e.g. youth, arts/cultural activities etc.). Also, it has the potential to support collective impact strategies, if the other conditions for collective impact are in place.<sup>iii</sup>

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Project Evaluation and Performance Measurement Framework

Evaluation Issues	Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods
a) <b>Relevance of MFIS</b>	1.1 Did the MFIS play a useful role in helping to improve service delivery by ethno-cultural groups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Views on connection between MFIS community needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project participants</li> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document review</li> <li>Stakeholder &amp; partner interviews</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	1.2 To what extent did the MFIS project meet the priority needs of the target community groups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of community group satisfaction with the MFIS project</li> <li>Linkage between MFIS objectives and community group priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project participants</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Stakeholders &amp; Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Stakeholder &amp; partner interviews</li> </ul>
<b>b) Performance of MFIS</b>  <b>a) Effectiveness</b>	2.1 Was the MFIS design suitable for effective project coordination ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linkage between project activities and intended outcomes</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project files</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Stakeholders</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document review</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	2.2 To what extent did the MFIS project achieve the intended outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of community groups who participated in the project</li> <li># of partnerships established</li> <li># of volunteers mobilized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document review</li> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Case studies</li> </ul>

	2.3 To what extent was the MFIS efficient in the results achieved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of new partnerships created</li> <li>• Level of improved service delivery</li> <li>• % of improved resource access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project documents</li> <li>• Project staff</li> <li>• Stakeholders &amp; Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document Review</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> <li>• Case Studies</li> </ul>
<b>b) Efficiency and Cost - effectiveness</b>	2.4 Were MFIS project activities implemented effectively, and within allocated budget?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of activities implemented successfully</li> <li>• % of allocated budget used or saved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project documents</li> <li>• Stakeholders &amp; Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial analysis</li> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Stakeholder &amp; Partner interviews</li> </ul>
	2.5 Did the MFIS project prove to be cost-effective in relation to other comparable grants and contributions delivery modes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of MFIS success compared to alternative models</li> <li>• Level of value added to community service delivery through the MFIS model compared to similar models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project documents</li> <li>• Stakeholders &amp; Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial analysis</li> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Stakeholder &amp; Partner interviews</li> </ul>
	2.6 Did the MFIS project provide value for the federal dollars spent?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Views on whether good value was obtained with respect to the use of public funds</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document Review</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> <li>• Case Studies</li> </ul>
<b>c) Lessons Learned</b>	3.1 What were the lessons learned from the experience of the MFIS project one (1) cycle?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified strengths and best practices / innovations</li> <li>• Identified areas of improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project reports</li> <li>• Project staff</li> <li>• Stakeholders &amp; Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document Review</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> </ul>

	3.2 Were there opportunities for increasing the value of MFIS (e.g. through areas considered successful by funders and beneficiary community groups)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project participants</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Stakeholders &amp; Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Focus groups</li> </ul>
	3.3 What were the main barriers or challenges to implementation ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified challenges and constraints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project participants</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Stakeholders &amp; Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Focus groups</li> </ul>
<b>d) MFIS Impacts and Sustainability</b>	<b>4.1</b> What were the positive and negative impacts of the MFIS project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified positive impacts</li> <li>Identified negative impacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project participants</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Stakeholders &amp; Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document review</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	<b>4.2</b> Did the MFIS project lead to tangible and lasting results for the target community groups and well-being of seniors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified tangible and lasting results in target communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project participants</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Stakeholders &amp; Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Focus group</li> </ul>
	Were there particular constraints faced by the Ethno-cultural groups which may have prevented them from taking full advantage of the MFIS? How can these constraints be addressed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified constraints</li> <li>Identified mitigation strategies to address constraints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project participants</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Stakeholders &amp; Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Focus groups</li> <li>Case studies</li> </ul>
<b>5. Role and Performance of Central Grant-</b>	<b>5.1</b> How effective has the Central Grant-Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified key success factors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project participants</li> <li>Project staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Focus groups</li> </ul>

<p><b>Maker Organization</b></p>	<p>Organization?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of project participant and Partners satisfaction with the role and responsibilities of the Central Grant-Making Organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholders &amp; Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case studies</li> </ul>
	<p>5.2 Should a Central Grant-Making Organization continue to provide Intermediary assistance in the long term or should the strategy be changed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified continued need and role for a Central Grant-Making organization serving small community-based groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project participants</li> <li>• Project staff</li> <li>• Stakeholders &amp; Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Case studies</li> </ul>

**Appendix 2: Form to Request Micro-grant (English and French)**

**PROPOSAL FOR FUNDING**

**Grant: Social Development Partnerships Program Children and Families Component (HRSDC)**

Date of submission: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Name of Applicant Group:</b>	
<b>Name of Project:</b>	
<b>Primary Contact:</b>	<b>Secondary Contact:</b>
<b>Mailing Address:</b>	<b>Mailing Address:</b>
<b>Telephone number:</b>	<b>Telephone number:</b>
<b>Email address:</b>	<b>Email address:</b>



**Please describe how your project will address the needs of seniors within your community:**

**Please describe how you will measure the effectiveness of your program:**

**Proposed Budget:**

COST DESCRIPTION	TOTAL
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
TOTAL ( <i>amount may not exceed \$1,700.00</i> )	\$

Please send a proposal by: <insert date>, <insert time>

**Applications can be submitted by:**

E-mail to: \_\_\_\_\_, or

Fax to: \_\_\_\_\_, or

Mail or drop off to:

## PROPOSITION DE FINANCEMENT

**Subvention : Volet pour les enfants et les familles du Programme de partenariats pour le développement social ou PPDS (Ressources humaines et Développement des compétences Canada ou RHDCC)**

Date de la demande : \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Nom du groupe candidat :</b>	
<b>Nom du projet :</b>	
<b>Personne-ressource principale :</b>	<b>Personne-ressource secondaire :</b>
<b>Adresse postale :</b>	<b>Adresse postale :</b>
<b>Téléphone :</b>	<b>Téléphone :</b>
<b>Courriel :</b>	<b>Courriel :</b>

**LISTE DE CONTRÔLE DES EXIGENCES :**

Avant de remplir la demande suivante, veuillez vous assurer que votre proposition satisfait aux exigences suivantes :

- Votre projet répondra aux besoins des aînés et des autres populations vulnérables dans votre milieu.
- Votre projet sera achevé au plus tard en mars 2014.
- Votre groupe a la capacité de conserver des registres suffisants de toutes les activités, de toutes les factures, de tous les reçus et de tous les bordereaux des dépenses admissibles liés au projet.
- Votre groupe est apte et disposé à participer à une évaluation du projet dès son achèvement.

**DESCRIPTION DU PROJET :**

**Veuillez décrire comment votre groupe utiliserait les fonds offerts :**

**Veillez décrire comment votre projet répondra aux besoins des aînés dans votre milieu :**

**Veillez décrire comment vous mesurerez l'efficacité de votre programme :**

**Budget proposé :**

DESCRIPTION DES COÛTS	TOTAL
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
TOTAL (la somme ne peut dépasser 2 100 \$)	\$

Veillez envoyer une proposition au plus tard le : (date), à (heure)

**Les demandes peuvent être présentées par l'un ou l'autre des modes suivants :**

par courriel, à ou  
par télécopieur, au ou  
par la poste ou en personne, à l'adresse suivante

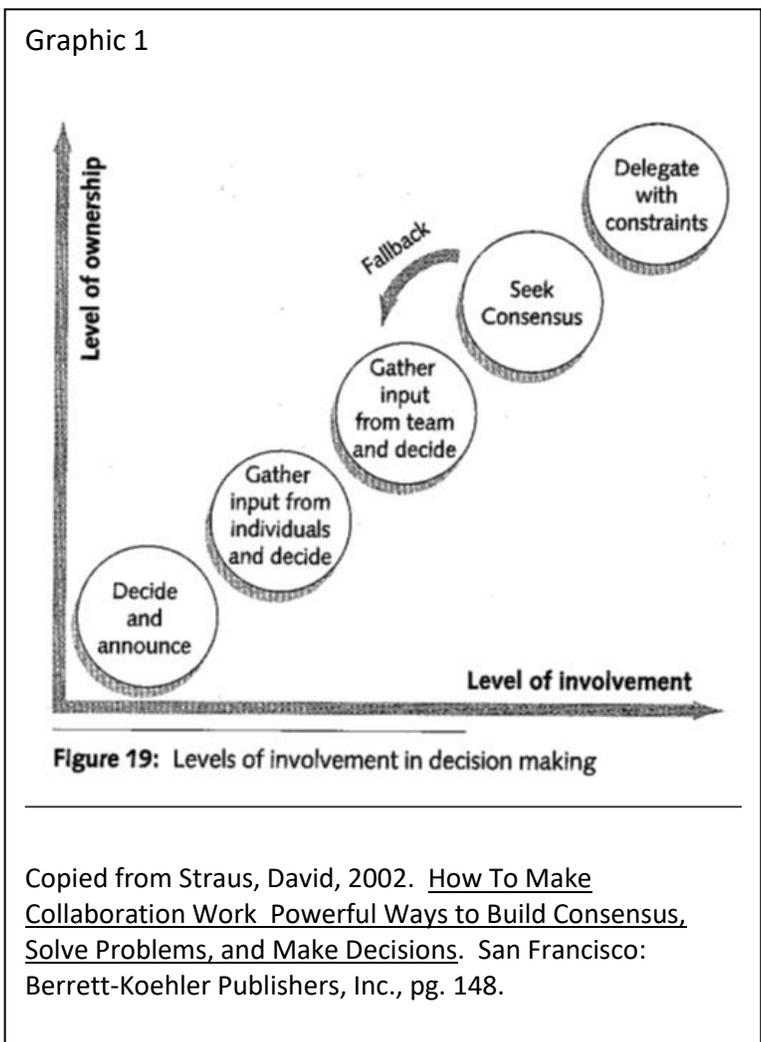
### Appendix 3: Case Study on the Impact of Delegated Decision Making on the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Micro-Finance for Seniors Initiative

The SPC was responsible for the overall management of the grants and for the evaluation. A planned activity of the project was to create a collaborative process for determining the uses and process for the micro-grants. The SPC had a pre-existing relationship with two Coalitions of volunteer-led ethno-cultural groups. The SPCO made the decision to delegate responsibility to each of the two Coalitions to determine the criteria and processes for the allocation of 50% of the micro-grants, within the parameters of the Contribution Agreement, and within a set time period (\$24,000 each). (Governance/management process at this point = delegate with constraints). We did not assess the capacity of each group to effectively undertake collaborative decision-making.

Each Coalition was supported in their discussions re the criteria and processes by a Coalition co-ordinator. The co-ordinator for one Coalition was the staff of the SPC, and the co-ordinator for the other Coalition was the staff of the Coalition. The ED of the SPC was asked to participate in the discussions of one of the Coalitions several times in order to help the group come to a decision, and did so on three occasions.

- One Coalition came to agreement within the parameters set (i.e. funder requirements and time period for the decision). In this case the collaborative leadership model of “Delegate with constraints” worked effectively, and this Coalition served a decision making role.

- The other Coalition could not reach agreement within the parameters set, but nominally decided on the same criteria and processes as the first Coalition when the SPC gave an ultimatum re the timeline for the decision. Following that, the debates continued (indicating the group had not had consensus on the decision they had made), and the group was unable to reach any further consensus to work collaboratively to implement a plan for the 30% of the micro-grants which were for the collaborative, in a manner that was consistent with the timelines and the funder requirements. In this case the collaborative leadership model of “Delegate with constraints” did not work effectively, and the governance/management model moved through the “fall-back” processes in Graphic 1. The ultimate governance/management process with the second Coalition evolved to the model of “Gather input from individuals and decide”, and therefore, the members of this Coalition served an advisory role in the project.



One Coalition decided the micro-grants were to be available to members in good standing, with “members in good standing” having been defined two years previously, and referring to attendance at and contribution to the Coalition. They set this as a primary criteria, as an attempt to incentivize groups to participate and contribute to the collaboration, even when there is not funding available. Among members in good standing (of which there were 10), those which further meet the criteria related to the funding agreement (i.e. serve seniors, can demonstrate an infrastructure need, will participate in the evaluation and can keep appropriate financial records) can submit their request, based on need, up to a maximum of \$1,700 (16,800/10 potential recipients i.e. members in good standing). If a group was a member in good standing of the Coalition but did not meet one of the core criteria under the funding agreement, they had the opportunity to establish a partnership to enable them to meet the criteria. If, in the end, less than 10 groups apply (alone or in partnership), then the balance of the 70% would be put back into the pot for the first round of applicants to meet other additional needs they might identify (i.e. they might be able to receive more than \$1,700).

The second Coalition also decided that 70% would be available to groups that could demonstrate they serve seniors, have an organization (some members attended as individuals active in the community, but were not representing a group), have an infrastructure need, and can meet the evaluation/financial records commitment. The group had to have had some involvement in the Coalition, even if it was sporadic. In this way the second Coalition prioritized the record of the group in relation to seniors in the community rather than the record of the group in relation to the collective. There were potentially 8 groups who met the first set of criteria, so those groups could apply for a maximum of \$2,100 (16,800/8) – based on need. If not all the 8 ultimately met the criteria or needed the full \$2,100 of infrastructure needs, the remaining funds from the 70% would be put back into the pot for the groups to request additional support on the same criteria. Member groups in the Coalition who did not meet the criteria would benefit from the collective capacity building through the 30%, but would not be given a micro-grant even if they partnered.

Once the criteria and processes for the micro-grants were established, the individual groups were provided the application form to apply for the micro-grants. The forms were given to the Coalition co-ordinators, who forwarded them to the SPC. If they met the criteria and processes established, the SPC issued a cheque to the group within a week of receipt. A few applications were not funded, as they did not meet the criteria set (i.e. were not from an organization). The SPC made this assessment, and communicated the decision to the applicant, via the Coalition co-ordinator. Further, the number of groups potentially eligible for the first round through each Coalition was not the same, so the amount of the initial allocation for groups in one Coalition was \$1,700 per group and for the other Coalition was \$2,100 per group.

The Coalition co-ordinators worked with all the Coalition members to design and implement the collective activities (related to the 30% of micro-grant funds set aside by each Coalition for collective capacity building).

- One Coalition implemented their planned collective activities but did not use all the money. The remaining funds from their Coalition went back into the “pot” for a second round of distribution via micro-grants to individual groups, consistent with the original decision.
- The other Coalition did not implement the collective activities within the required timeline, so the remaining funds also went back into the “pot” for a second round of distribution via micro-grants to individual groups, consistent with the original decision. This was a decision by the SPC and was poorly received by some of the Coalition members.

By the time we were able to determine how much micro-grant funding was left over from the first round and the collective activities it was very late in the project (Jan for one of the Coalitions and mid-February for the second Coalition). Therefore, the SPC decided the allocation of the remaining micro-grants based on information previously received from the groups (i.e. inquiries for additional support which had come to the SPC

from the groups after the initial allocation). The SPC assessed the options for these subsequent micro-grants against the original criteria – particularly on the degree to which the grant fit the required timelines (i.e. could be implemented and be evaluated within the time) and were consistent with the programmatic objectives of the funder. The governance/management process for the second round of grants was the model of “Gather input from individuals and decide”, although it was informed by the previous framework decided by the Coalitions.

## Conclusions

The collaborative decision-making re criteria and uses of the funding enhanced the relationships and partnerships for one of the Coalitions, but significantly deteriorated the partnerships and relationships in the second Coalition. Individual member groups who received grants via either Coalition achieved the same great levels of success in terms of service to their communities, leveraged resources and increased capacity, including partnerships. However, the project did not work well for the second Coalition as a *collective* – distinct from the individual members. The conditions did not exist in the second Coalition to support effective collaborative decision making. Therefore, the joint decision making to determine the uses and process was not a positive experience for the group. Without the conditions for effective collaborative decision making, the Coalition could not arrive at a resolution, and it resulted in inefficiency for all involved (i.e. a disproportionate number of meetings), lost opportunities which could have benefited the groups, and – with respect to partnerships - a deterioration of many of the relationships.

Delegated and de-centralized decision making can lead to better results where participants are at an organizational stage to be collaborative and strategic, but can result in lost opportunities when group does not have the building blocks or conditions for collaboration/problem-solving/conflict resolution

As the lead granting agency responsible for the project, the SPCO could have mitigate the challenges created as a result of the one Coalition not having the conditions for effective collaborative decision making by:

- Assessing the capacity of the Coalitions for collaborative decision making to situate appropriate types and levels of decisions to delegate,
- Not asking the one Coalition to establish the criteria for micro-grants, given that the capacity did not exist to address this, or
- Increasing the staffing resources for coordination and conflict resolution to better assist the one Coalition to come to effective decisions

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<sup>i</sup> Social Planning Council of Ottawa, December 2010. Best Practices in Supporting the Integration of Immigrant Families Through Small Ethno-cultural Organizations. Ottawa: author.

<sup>ii</sup> Glickman, Norman J. et al, “More Than Bricks and Sticks” accessed at [http://www.knowledgeplex.org/kp/text\\_document\\_summary/article/refiles/hff\\_0103\\_glickman.html](http://www.knowledgeplex.org/kp/text_document_summary/article/refiles/hff_0103_glickman.html)

<sup>iii</sup> The five conditions for collective impact are: Common Agenda, Shared Measurement System, Mutually Reinforcing Activities, Continuous Communication, Backbone Support Organization., from John Kania & Mark Kramer, “Collective Impact”, in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, 69, Winter 2011, accessed at [http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective\\_impact](http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact).