

Working Together Initiative – Highlights of Past Reflection and Learning

April 2010

The following highlights of the WTI group's Past Reflection and Learning have been drawn from:

- Learning About Working Together Effectively – Draft for discussion, June 2008
- Working Together Initiative *“Learning about Working Together” Reflection Session and Next Steps.*” October 23, 2008.
- Working Together Initiative Shared Leadership Table meeting notes February 13, 2009
- Notes from the WTI Senior Leaders' Meeting – July 28, 2009

This summary documents our learnings and reflections over the length of the WTI and demonstrates the progress over time that has occurred through working together on specific “pilots” in communities and in generating knowledge. Results from the project ‘prototypes’ will be captured in a separate document.

In the beginning ...May 2007

Excitement was generated when 75 people from multiple departments, sport and physical activity sector leaders, NGOs and foundations came together in the room to explore how public policy and programs could be informed by what sport and physical activity had to offer. Since that time a range of federal and provincial government departments have come together with sport and physical activity sector leaders to learn how sport and physical activity can help meet diverse policy objectives.

About WTI (early description)

The impetus for Working Together Initiative (WTI) comes from the belief and evidence that sport and physical activity have an impact on health, the economy, a sense of community, national identity, and quality of life. At the same time, no single government or department is responsible for horizontal leadership and connecting to the “bigger picture” of how sport and physical activity does and can positively impact Canadian society. In addition, achieving policy objectives increasingly demands innovations that governments cannot develop on their own.

The WTI addresses this situation by bringing together government departments that have sport and physical activity mandates, and those that don't, with sport and physical activity sector leaders to learn how sport and physical activity can help meet diverse policy objectives. By working collaboratively, the initiative will provide valuable lessons on how to work together to meet these demands.

The WTI has four objectives. The first objective is project-oriented; the other three objectives are knowledge-focused. The WTI aims to:

- Develop, implement and assess a number of initiatives that address multiple policy outcomes through sport and physical activity;
- Assess the knowledge gaps of each initiative and determine how best to fill them;
- Increase our knowledge about sport and physical activity as a means to meet policy objectives; and
- Learn how to more effectively work together across departmental and sectoral boundaries and capture this knowledge so that others might benefit from what was learned.

| Theme | June 2008 | October 2008 | February 2009 |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Prototypes – Learning by Doing | Knowledge Framework Projects started | Shared leadership model allows for collective responsibility for the projects, and a ‘safe space’ for experimentation or prototyping Continuing success in the pilot projects could lead to the expansion of the initiative; first indication of success would be for the pilots to be resourced with more funds for a longer term. | Pilots gave us very different experiences and therefore great opportunity to learn |
| Contribution Principle | Time, expertise and funding all welcomed Flexibility of this approach makes it possible for a diverse group to participate at the level they are able to contribute | We can focus our energy, intelligence and resources around common interests By focusing on individual contributions, able to avoid the pitfalls of representing a particular organization (e.g. slowing decision-making down in order to consult internally, etc.) | Diversity is embedded in the initiative – every organization has their own form of commitment and ways of expressing commitment New commitments beyond active phase 1 participants |

| Theme | June 2008 | October 2008 | February 2009 |
|--------------------------|--|--|--|
| Shared Leadership | <p>No single organization has the over-all lead – leadership provided by collaboration</p> <p>Senior government policy and sport and physical activity leaders who invite others to join – open table to those interested in learning and contributing</p> <p>Desire to involve community leaders at some point</p> <p>Convenor to ‘hold space’ for group and to support focus on learning (PPF)</p> | <p>Recognizes leadership as a contribution in and of itself; leadership not viewed in the context of control</p> <p>Important difference in the group - some operating ‘below the radar’ and the ripening process provides time for good ideas to achieve buy-in from their ‘home group’; others operating ‘above the radar’ and have a great deal riding on the success of the pilots</p> <p>Having a convenor has given our individual contributions coherence; having a convenor does not mean handing over ownership; helpful to have convenor without vested interest in the content – Public Policy Forum has been able to “softly push” when required</p> | <p>If we didn’t have this platform (shared leadership table with PPF), we’d start to create it again</p> <p>4 models explored – Continuity and momentum plus model chosen (current model +pool resources with a stewardship group); other options considered – one NGO or government host/convenor; project management group with hired resource to support; leadership hub – expanded version of continuity and momentum with an ongoing community of practice and more robust support</p> <p>True Sport Foundation – a lead NGO for stewardship role</p> |
| Outreach | <p>In large part a communication challenge – we are testing a way of working together (social and public service innovation -not traditional focus or method)</p> | <p>Continuity of knowledge and people is a key condition for success</p> <p>How could/ should WTI expand to broaden its impact – sense that it’s important</p> | <p>Time to re-convene ADM group</p> |

| Topic | June 2008 | October 2008 | February 2009 |
|---------------------------|---|---|--|
| Emerging vision | Intentionally not defined | Intentionally not defined | Want to define going forward |
| Emerging questions | How to document and share learning – evaluation frameworks usually done ‘up front’; this requires developmental evaluation approach How to develop shared leadership and make timely progress? How to link work to existing mandates? How to replicate at the community level? | Engaging Newcomer Pilot: how do we make shared funding approach work? Process outcomes are important but not clear to those not at the table – how can we capture and share the value? What is the relationship between responsibility and accountability? Can we reframe the current approach to accountability? | Shared funding frameworks still a challenge Need to talk about goals for phase 2 , not just options and models |
| New ideas | Focus on possibility Let’s test whether we can pool funds to innovate through pilot projects | By starting some projects we have been able to learn and test whether we can effectively work together Phrase “shared accountability” sounds simple but is confusing in practice; opportunity to reframe accountability by exploring this in more detail. | Would help to have fewer peaks and troughs of attention Sense that individual contributors can align their own organization’s mandate with what we are doing in WTI |

In July 2009, senior leaders from the federal government were invited to hear about WTI progress to date and to reflect on the planned activity for the year ahead and relationship to their mandates and what opportunities this might provide . Offers to engage a wider group of senior leaders were made. WTI was encouraged to find ways to document successes and setbacks and to link the work to individual work plans of federal public servants who are involved. These leaders agreed that a theory of change would help in this documentation and make the case for “intelligent risk with rigour”.