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**Social Enterprises
Knowledgeable Economies
and Sustainable Communities**

Understanding and Promoting Effective Partnerships for CED

A Case Study of SEED Winnipeg's Partnerships

Gaelene Askeland and Kirit Patel

Réseaux Connaissances Synergies

**Entreprises sociales
économies intelligentes
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What Makes Partnerships Effective?

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (CED) is an approach that recognizes that economic, environmental, and social challenges are interdependent, complex, and ever changing. CED promotes development from the "inside," starting with the premise that people in a community are the "authors, architects and builders of their development" (Silver and Loxley 2008). The interdependency of agencies — both government and nongovernment (NGO) — communities, and individuals is acknowledged and incorporated into CED's holistic framework.

This interconnectedness is evident in Winnipeg, where networks abound, created through affiliation with a variety of funding agencies including the United Way and the Province of Manitoba. Supporting Employment and Economic Development (SEED) Winnipeg is one of the agencies within this network. Formed as the dream of a small group of CED practitioners on a shoestring budget in the late 1980s, SEED has grown and developed into an organization with more than twenty full-time employees and a myriad of poverty-alleviation programs. SEED Winnipeg seeks to reduce poverty and promote community renewal primarily in Winnipeg's inner city. Working within a community economic development model, SEED operates a business development and an asset-building program. These programs provide financial training and access to capital and also foster individual and collective capacity through the creation and support of small enterprises, co-operatives, and healthy households and communities.

CED organizations work in partnership with others to maximize funds, build capacity in each other, and develop new ways to provide services to their client groups. SEED Winnipeg has formed partnerships with close to forty organizations that take a variety of forms, including:

1. **Fee-for-service contracts,** which provide training to another organization or materials for a course to be taught by others

2. **Program adaptation partnerships,** which modify successful SEED programs to make them more relevant and user-friendly for a group of people with particular life experiences; examples include the Build-a-Business program adaptations for Metis and Aboriginal people

3. **Reach extension partnerships,** which provide services or opportunities to underserved groups that are better engaged through other organizations with which they already have strong relationships; the Asset Building Program and the network created to extend it is a prime example

4. **New venture development,** which involves initiating innovative projects with stakeholders outside the typical program partnerships; one of the best examples is The Diversity Foods Project, a for-profit subsidiary operated in conjunction with the University of Winnipeg Community Renewal Corporation

5. **Project-based collaborations,** which are smaller partnerships that enable organizations to get to know one another prior to engaging in higher risk or heavier commitment engagements together

The vast majority of these partnerships are successful and mutually beneficial. SEED Winnipeg continually works to improve its effectiveness. As a result, the organization is on the leading edge of CED methodology and programming. Its network of partner organizations benefits greatly from this effort.

This report provides the outcomes of a study undertaken by SEED Winnipeg's Research Committee, whose members wished to identify the factors that contribute to successful partnerships so they could use them to improve future relationships. The project identifies a number of these factors and concludes that they can indeed be used to guide partner selection and development processes to improve the quality of partnerships for all actors.

The committee secured funding for this project through the Winnipeg Inner-City Research Alliance; its intention was to share the outcomes with Winnipeg's wider CED community.

This report includes a literature review, sections on research methodology, data management, and research results, and a conclusion that provides a practical path for moving forward with the information gained from the project.

Literature Review

T HIS PROJECT BEGAN with a search for current literature on the nature of partnerships. There is a considerable body of recent research on the nature of public-private partnerships in North America and Europe, as well as on North-South partnerships among NGOs. There has been much less academic scrutiny of partnerships among lateral organizations in the Canadian CED environment. As most community-based organizations are nonprofit entities with characteristics that set them apart from more competitive corporate bodies (Mulroy 2001), this type of research requires a unique analytical framework that evaluates these characteristics in a holistic fashion.

We sought literature through online academic databases such as Academic Search Premier, Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe, Sage Journals Online, and Google Scholar, using keywords such as "partnership," "nonprofit," and "inter-organizational." A number of articles that were not entirely relevant nevertheless provided citations of others that were more useful.

This project and research done by others show that there are clear, identifiable factors that precipitate the success of inter-organizational partnerships, including reasons for entering into partnership, the approach taken to choosing partners, a shared vision, and committed, highly competent personnel. SEED Winnipeg's partnerships vary in type of partner, level of resources committed, and length of partnership, but the majority of them reflect these commonalities.

There are many reasons for entering inter-organizational relationships, including a wish to attract government funding (Hughes and Carmichael 1998), pressure to partner from existing funders, an interest in reducing duplication of expenses (Mattessich *et al.* 2001;

Osborne and Murray 2000), a desire to collaborate on community-based goals (Mulroy 2001), and the extension of current services to new client groups.

When partnership occurs primarily to attract government funding, it may be on a less stable footing (Hughes and Carmichael 1998), subject to the shifting priorities of government allegiances. The purpose can greatly influence the success of outcomes and it is clear from the literature that successful partnerships begin with a clearly articulated purpose common to all partners (Pope and Lewis 2008; Atkinson 2005).

Shared vision on a project leads to the sharing of resources and the possibility of developing resource dependency, which in this context means that "organizations establish links with other organizations to reduce environmental uncertainty and manage their dependence" (Tsasis 2009). Two community-based, nonprofit entities that enter into a partnership may have different client bases, funding sources, board structures, and leadership styles. Working together may be the most logical path to mitigating the impacts of short-term funding cycles and changing funder/government objectives. This dependency can be the impetus for staying in a partnership and making it work, despite challenging situations, which might otherwise cause the relationship to dissolve.

Partnership networks include three or more organizations that enable linkages and supportive structures and can create interdependency among all of the actors, providing even more stability than a partnership of two. Networks can be more difficult to examine due to the number of actors, but there is research in the area. Boje and Whetten (1981) looked at centrality and attributions of influence in inter-organizational networks. They suggest that a higher level of influence is attributed to the organization in the centre of the network because its interactions with each member cause them to believe that the group at the centre has more influence than those on the periphery.

Power imbalance due to resource dependence can also inhibit the information flow and the exchange of ideas that foster successful partnership activities (Casciaro and Piskorski 2005).[1] A mutual understanding of and open communication about the dependence and/or imbalance can be useful in preventing the relationship from disintegrating.

Managing the boundaries between organizations in a partnership can be challenging,

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1. The authors here revise previous resource dependence theory in an effort to reduce the ambiguity that undermines its plausibility. While their research looks at public companies in the US, the discussion of power imbalance and mutual dependence are still relevant for the not-for-profit sector.

particularly if there is a higher level of dependence of one organization on another. Individuals who possess qualities that encourage relationships and help overcome initial reservations or distrust, particularly when there are power imbalances or differences in status, are key to the success of those partnerships (Dorado *et al.* 2009).[2] Variously identified as "conveners" (Dorado *et al.* 2009), "boundary-spanners" (Tsasis 2009), and "brokers or facilitators" (Pope and Lewis 2008), they are consistently understood to be those who foster trust and co-operation, navigate skillfully through bureaucracy, and communicate clearly within and among organizations.

Although personal interactions are crucial, institutional forces and organizational links are also extremely important in shaping the nature of the relationship among the partners (Marchington and Vincent 2004). The characteristics of each organization and how it operates internally and in relationship with others may vary overall, but effective partnerships consistently include good leadership, effective processes, shared vision, and good communication (Atkinson 2005; Pope and Lewis 2008; Holman 2008; Provan *et al.* 2005). Lister (2000) indicates that a high level of mutual respect, complementary strengths, reciprocal accountability, and a willingness to negotiate are also important factors. All these characteristics have been found to be aspects of successful partnerships in our research as well.

Research into partnerships is challenging because the meaning and implications of the term and the methodology for evaluating it can vary widely among actors (Riggin *et al.* 1998). The term itself can be interchangeable with collaboration, joint venture, and alliance. Partnership and collaboration are the terms most frequently used in the CED environment. Analytical frameworks to assess or evaluate partnerships are rare. The most useful for this project was Atkinson's Evaluation Framework for Partnership Working (2005), which included seven dimensions:

- **Impact** — the extent to which the partnership has added value and achieved greater impact than had it not existed

    Sub-dimensions: quality; innovation; integrated service delivery; changes to existing services; resources and efficiency

- **Vision and leadership** — the extent to which the partnership has been able to develop a shared and cohesive vision as an outcome of effective leadership

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2. This article provides an interesting theoretical model for studying cross-sector partnerships that include drivers and enablers. Drivers being the factors that motivate the development of partnerships and enablers are the factors that enable the formation, maintenance and development of partnerships beyond the parties' initial engagement.

Sub-dimensions: future orientation; making it happen; creating opportunities to lead

- **Partnership dynamics** — the extent to which the partnership has developed appropriate structures, processes, resources, and a culture conducive to collaboration

    Sub-dimensions: structure and processes; trust; commitment to an ethos of collaborative working; communication; learning; and evidence-based questions for the partnership

- **Strategy and performance measurement** — the extent to which processes for strategic and performance measurement have been embedded within the partnership and the degree to which they are effective

    Sub-dimensions: developing a strategic vision; setting objectives and performance targets; formulating a plan to achieve those objectives and performance targets; implementing and executing this plan; and evaluating performance and reformulating the strategic plan and/or its implementation

- **Influence** — the extent to which the creation of the partnership has enhanced the joint understanding of the political, organizational, and funding context in which the partnership operates, and how effectively it wields influence at different levels to bring about change

    Sub-dimensions: influencing government departments/funders; influencing partner organizations; and influencing other relevant partnerships/initiatives

- **Participation** — the extent to which the partnership actively promotes the involvement of participants/beneficiaries and their communities as stakeholders in collaborative action

    Sub-dimensions: membership; community development; consultation with users; communication; generating evidence and knowledge; reduction in social exclusion

We did not use Atkinson's seventh dimension — cost effectiveness — in this research.

Atkinson's work focussed on evaluating a public-private partnership in its totality, including outputs and outcomes. That was not the intention of this project, which is focussed strictly on understanding the relationships among partners. In addition, Atkinson's work looks at a partnership of relative equals in a government-mandated collaborative effort, so he has not included an assessment of power imbalances or looked at how partnerships begin. Our framework includes these considerations, which will enable a more in-depth look at the diverse partnerships involved with SEED Winnipeg.

While most of the research into partnerships has been qualitative in nature, Mohr and

Spekman (1994) took a more quantitative look at private sector vertical partnerships and concluded that there are clear characteristics of success: communication quality and participation; partnership attributes of commitment, co-ordination, and trust; and conflict resolution methods that involve joint problem solving.

Hastings (1999) suggests that there is value in conducting discourse analysis when looking at power dynamics in partnerships, and we have incorporated some analysis of different terms used by the participants. Lister (2000) provides a further discussion of power, including a look at the role that individuals play in the success of partnerships; we made use of his work as well.

The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation produced a significant body of work in the mid-1990s and then again in 2001 that provides a comprehensive look at what makes collaboration operate successfully among social service agencies in the state of Minnesota (Mattessich *et al.* 2001). In addition to a literature review, the authors published handbooks that provide guidance to not-for-profits on how to improve partnerships as well as an inventory tool to assist organizations in assessing their own collaborations.

Osborne and Murray (2000) conducted an examination of collaborative ventures among nonprofit organizations in Canada. They posit that successful collaborations are the result of a multi-phase process, and the probability of success is based on four factors: the type of collaboration sought; the characteristics of the organizations entering into the collaboration; the process of developing and implementing the collaborative process; and the environmental and contextual factors impinging on the collaboration. This article was useful in identifying the importance of a pre-contact phase, although it is difficult to gather information on this aspect of the process, partly because when key staff move on or into different roles, the institutional memory about early conversations and interactions about the collaboration can be lost. This also makes it challenging to make use of the learnings going forward.

The literature gave us a solid basis upon which to design our instruments and methodology. While it did not focus exclusively on CED organizations, there was enough content that could be extrapolated into this context to be helpful.

R E S E A R C H   M E T H O D O L O G Y

T HIS CASE STUDY used a randomized, stratified sampling method to se-
lect partners. It produced a set of relationships that are more than a year
old and are not a strictly contractual/fee-for-service arrangement. In addition to SEED itself,
we included ten partnerships in the sample, chosen from categories including small, medium,
or large size; corporate or not-for-profit social-service organizational structure; relationship at
least one year old; relationship from three to five years old; or a mature relationship of many
years. The sample also includes former partnerships that fit these categories.

For four of the ten organizations in the sample, we conducted two interviews, one with
the person in the organization who spent the most time on the partnership program/output
activities, and the other with the executive director or most senior person responsible for en-
tering into and completing the partnership development process.

The research also included respondents from SEED Winnipeg, where we conducted in-
terviews with the executive director and the most senior people involved with the partner-
ships included in the study.

It should be noted that SEED is the co-ordinator of the Asset Building Partnership (ABP),
which is, categorically, a network of reach extension partnerships. This puts it at the centre
of the network that includes other service agencies, the United Way Winnipeg, and Assini-
boine Credit Union. The development of this membership network was a deliberate, co-or-
dinated effort by the original stakeholders; its growth to include new members has been
relatively slow, but steady. As the co-ordinator of this network, SEED has relationships with
each of the partner organizations. It is these relationships that this report analyzes, not the
network as a whole.

All participants were provided with a written consent form (see Appendix C) that had been approved by Menno Simons College, Canadian Mennonite University. Each was provided with a copy to keep; the signed copy is maintained on file with the rest of the research documentation.

Table 1: Characteristics of partner organizations selected in the study

Organizational characteristics		No. of organizations
Duration of partnership	More than 6 years	2
	3–5 years	4
	1–2 years	4
Type of organization	Corporation	3
	Service sector	5
	Nonprofit	2
Client group of organization	Aboriginal	3
	General	3
	Low income and youth	4
Activities involved in partnership	Program adaptation	3
	Reach extension	4
	New venture	3

DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

THE INTERVIEWS FOR THIS PROJECT were recorded digitally and transcribed into written format. The digital files were saved with file numbers that correspond to a list kept in a separate electronic file of names of organizations and participants. All files are maintained on a non-networked computer that permits no outside or secondary access. All documentation and audio files will be maintained in a secure location for one year after the conclusion of the project.

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the framework. The draft report was shared with SEED's research committee and revisions were made upon their recommendations.

The questionnaires used for partners and SEED staff are included in the report as Appendix A.

R E S E A R C H   R E S U L T S

F INDINGS ARE PRESENTED HERE under the headings for each dimension of our framework. The key messages from each dimension are listed numerically below, with further discussion following.

- **Impact** — the extent to which the partnership has added value and achieved greater impact than had it not existed

    1. Most partners valued the opportunities to build or improve relationships with other agencies and funders and to provide more or better services to clients.

    2. Most organizations find that partnership with SEED enables them to achieve social service goals that contribute to their organization's sense of purpose.

Pope and Lewis (2008) note that partnerships make it possible to undertake activities that go beyond what can be achieved independently; they also point out that a successful partnership leads to better decision making. SEED's partners echoed these sentiments. One stated, "The partnership with SEED is more dynamic and has better relationships than the other one(s) we are in." And the nature of most of SEED's poverty-alleviation and business-creation partnerships reflect Mulroy's (2000) finding that collaboration can be a means of achieving community-based goals. Although sharing success stories with stakeholders is a common thread throughout SEED and its partners, it is mentioned rarely in the literature, with only a passing comment in Pope and Lewis's (2008) findings.

- **Vision and leadership** — the extent to which the partnership has been able to develop a shared and cohesive vision as an outcome of effective leadership

    1. Larger organizations predominantly valued innovation and risk taking, and strong, capable leaders.

2. Most ABP partners valued relaxed, inclusive interactions where everyone has the opportunity to be heard.

Each of the partners interviewed for this study indicated that having a shared vision or purpose was important to them. Each of them also indicated that they did have a shared vision with SEED that was developed at an early stage of the relationship through regular, structured meetings. These results are reinforced by Lister (2000), Provan *et al.* (2005), and Atkinson (2005). What the literature does not address is how different organizational natures contribute to what they look for in a partner. According to our research results, organizations that operate in a business-like manner rather than taking a typical nonprofit approach are attracted to SEED because it takes a business-like approach to managing its programs. At the same time, nonprofit agencies value the fact that SEED maintains its focus on poverty-alleviation programming and endeavours to keep its client-centred orientation.

While Provan *et al.*(2005) indicate that agency leaders have a responsibility to work at sustaining partnership relationships, Tsasis (2009) points out that although it may be the responsibility of the leader, it is often the boundary-spanner, who may not be the leader, who is the key contributor to the development and maintenance of the relationship. We observed that many of the relationships in SEED's partnerships are supported and encouraged by the leaders of the organizations, with the strength of the partnership driven by the boundary-spanners, who may not even be managers. Affirming this notion, one partner commented, "Organizations drive partnerships; people have relationships." As will be explored further in the next section on partnership dynamics, competent, committed people are crucial to the success of a partnership.

Hughes and Carmichael (1998) suggest that partnerships predicated solely on attracting government funding are not likely to survive the shifting priorities of those funders. Interestingly, SEED tends to innovate and attracts funding from sources that can support the purpose of a given project and its outcomes. This is the risk-taking behaviour noted in the results above, which contributes greatly to SEED's positive reputation in the community and provides the basis for attracting other organizations to partnership opportunities.

- **Partnership dynamics** — the extent to which the partnership has developed appropriate structures, processes, resources, and a culture conducive to collaboration

  1. ABP partners value proactive, people-powered, and empowerment-based partners

  2. Non-ABP partners value capable, knowledgeable staff and good reputation

  3. Most partners indicated that at least some commonality in mission, vision, culture,

etc. was important for a partnership to be successful. Differences are acceptable as long as they don't undermine the purpose of the collaboration.

4. All those interviewed expressed the opinion that having the right, committed, talented people involved in the partnership, preferably for the duration of the relationship, is an important key to success.

SEED has a number of "conveners" who have passion for what they do and put great effort into building relationships internally and with partners. A number of interviewees mentioned staffing or "convener" changes in a partner organization or at SEED, and noted that the impact on the relationship was significant, and generally, although not always, negative. High staff turnover can lead to a loss of institutional memory and experience, a need to train new people, and time to rebuild the relationship. On the other hand, when there is a lack of personal connection or tension among employees, those who proactively manage those relationships through redeployment or direct conversation are able to continue the partnership more successfully.

SEED recognizes that it is a central player in the network and that it can be perceived to have more power than other agencies that offer asset building to their client group. Although ABP is a relatively small component of the services most participating organizations provide for their clients, they are dependent upon SEED to support them, report for them, and ensure the continuity of the program with the funders. The larger groups have independent relationships with some of the organizations, but not all, so SEED sometimes acts as an intermediary. SEED clearly has a significant level of influence within the partnerships due to the relationships it has with each participating organization.

The majority of the interviewees believe their partnership to be reciprocal, if not all the time, enough of the time to feel balanced overall. Whether it is labelled give-and-take, reciprocal, mutually beneficial, or otherwise, the import is the same. What they get from the relationship balances what they give to it. Almost all partners noted this as a characteristic of a successful partnership. As one of the partners commented: "There is no greater example of a strong, healthy partnership than the one we have with SEED."

Interestingly, only Lister (2000) and Mohr and Spekman (1994) list a conflict resolution process as a major factor in the success of partnerships. Mohr and Spekman found that participation, joint problem solving, and avoiding "smoothing-over problems" tactics and harsh/severe resolution methods were significant in predicting the success of partnerships. Staff interviews indicated that SEED's approach to problem solving is pragmatic and stems

from the pervasive belief that conflict is healthy and can be an energizer for new ideas. Respecting partners enough to welcome their critical feedback and act on it is one of the key factors in SEED's successful partnerships.

The collaborative nature of these partnerships is underscored here in the partnership dynamics and participation sections. As Osborne and Murray (2000) indicate, collaboration occurs through a multi-phase process: pre-contact, preliminary contact, negotiation, implementation, and evaluation. In the context of this research, the pre-contact phase was difficult to document due to the length of time that has passed since the majority of these partnerships began. SEED staff indicate that the preliminary contact phase is critical to its decision-making process for partnership development. The length of time, energy, and resources vary according to the level of risk involved and the overall resources being invested. During the negotiation and implementation phases, collaborative decision-making processes set the tone for the partnership's lifecycle. For the partnerships included in our study that have ended, there were significant differences in the level and frequency of subsequent engagement. As there was no documentation of the evaluation phase of these partnerships except for anecdotal information from the interviews, there was insufficient information to draw clear inferences between the length and depth of the preliminary contact phase and the evaluation phase.

- **Strategy and performance management** — the extent to which processes for strategic and performance measurement have been embedded within the partnership and the degree to which they are effective

  1. Understanding the value of good quality reporting and committing the resources it takes to do it well is crucial. SEED makes it easier for partners in its programs to do reporting through high-level support, which enables them to provide quality reporting to funders and other stakeholders.

As Riggin *et al.* (1992) indicate in their research, the availability, accessibility, and validity of data on project outcomes are barriers to the systematic evaluation of a partnership. It can be difficult to establish evaluation parameters for long-standing partnerships. The ABP has regular reporting built into the operating processes, and funders require regular reporting as well. SEED excels in this area. Most partners appreciated the combination of formal and informal interactions.

SEED has not established a standardized way to evaluate all of its partnerships. In terms of monitoring the health and success of the relationships themselves, there is little documentation to indicate that deliberate assessment of each relationship is made on any regular

basis. A few partners expressed a desire for more interaction with SEED staff and commented that as SEED has increased and diversified its programming, the relationship has become less close. While this is not unexpected after a period of growth, refocussing and re-engaging with each partner in a deliberate and open-ended way may be useful for rekindling the fires.

- **Influence** — the extent to which the creation of the partnership has enhanced the joint understanding of the political, organizational, and funding context in which the partnership operates, and how effectively it wields influence at different levels to bring about change

  1. A small number of partners commented that partnership enables a sense of solidarity, which can contribute to wider influence in the community.

While most people acknowledged that their partnership with SEED was successful, there were varied responses to the question that addressed communicating about the partnership with stakeholders. The larger organizations tend to benefit greatly from being affiliated with SEED because of its reputation and success, communicating broadly about the partnership to make the best use of the affiliation. For most others, the partnership programs make up a valuable but small component of their overall programming. Their stakeholders are more interested in their own organization's success than the specifics of the partnerships.

- **Participation** — the extent to which the partnership actively promotes the involvement of participants/beneficiaries and their communities as stakeholders in collaborative action

  1. Although SEED is sometimes perceived to have more power in its partnerships with other social service organizations of similar size and mandate, the relationship is balanced because SEED makes efforts to empower its partners. This builds respect and trust, contributing to a strong relationship.

  2. SEED's relationships with partner organizations perceived to have more power are balanced by the respect it earns from being competent, transparent, and committed to quality. SEED is able to have more influence with the larger partners due to this level of respect and trust.

SEED's partners indicate that the organization has done a good job of maintaining a reflective attitude with its powerful co-ordination role, regularly soliciting feedback and input, both positive and negative, and responding to it gracefully and proactively. This inclusive, participatory approach to decision making ensures that power is shared amongst all of the participants. The larger organizations, while not requiring SEED's assistance in the same way as the other partners, recognize SEED's critical role and value its contributions. As Casciaro

and Piskorski (2005) point out, it is difficult for partners to foster the sort of information flow that is the hallmark of successful partnership when there is a power imbalance. SEED, for the most part, has been able to overcome the power imbalances on all sides, ensuring the free flow of information.

This collaborative approach to decision making is part of SEED's operating ethos and is incorporated into each of its partnerships. Collaboration is understood to be the most effective way to do business and is modeled as a desired behaviour by the leadership team as well as the rest of the staff.

Analyzing the terminologies used by participants in this study, we found little use of words such as power and influence. Much more common were terms such as welcoming, inclusive, sharing, and collaboration. As Hastings (1999) suggests, discourse analysis can give us insight into interviewees' underlying beliefs about their position in the partnership and also that of SEED. It seems unlikely that the level of consistency we encountered is mere rhetoric being offered to a researcher; it is more likely to be a pervasive belief set amongst the participants in the study.

Conclusion: Lessons Learned

SEED WINNIPEG makes concerted, deliberate efforts to be a good partner to other organizations, and according to SEED and its partners, the vast majority of these relationships are, indeed, successful. This research shows that success results from good planning, appropriate due diligence prior to engaging in partnership with an organization, making good choices in partners, and putting in the effort and resources required to make the relationships work well.

These research results were similar to findings in the literature review. The majority of successful partnerships can be described as good people doing work they are good at and feel strongly about, supported by highly competent managers and leaders who enable them to build strong relationships.

As with most relationships, there are peaks and valleys, but for these partnerships, the shared vision carries them through and keeps them working together over the longer term.

There were some limitations to the work conducted in this research project. First, there were few examples to choose from of SEED partnerships that had been deemed unsuccessful. Second, most of the partnerships included in the study were ongoing, so there was less potential for critical commentary than there might otherwise have been.

The results of this research project may be helpful to a variety of organizations that are considering entering into a partnership or assessing the partnerships they currently have.

1. Adopt an attitude of curiosity about conflict. Internalizing the notion that conflict is healthy would be a positive way to approach partnership. Train staff to do the same.

2. Be trustworthy and respectable; seek out partners who are the same.

3. Take as much time as necessary to feel comfortable with the organization and its representatives before entering into a moderate to high-risk enterprise with them.

4. Use success with small ventures to guide your choices of partners for larger ventures.

5. Work collaboratively in word and deed. Being transparent and honest is a critical component of building strong relationships.

6. Choose good, highly skilled people to work with your organization, and then let them do what they do best. Create a workplace that makes them want to stay for the long term.

Below are a few key questions that may be useful for any organization contemplating entering into a partnership (pre-contact and preliminary contact phases); during the partnership (negotiation and implementation phases); and after a partnership ends (evaluation phase). It is not an exhaustive list, but may contribute to a reflective process that adds value to the relationship.

Partnership Negotiation

1. Have we worked together before? How did that go?

2. Does the organization share our vision for this program/project? How do we know for sure?

3. Is it an organization with a stable staff and board? Do they care for their staff as well as their organizational objectives?

4. What will each of us get out of being in partnership together?

5. Can we bear the costs (training time, resources, relationship-building) if something significant happens to their organization once the partnership is underway?

6. Are they open to discussing conflict resolution processes and ground rules prior to entering into a formal relationship?

Partnership in Progress

1. Do they put aside their organizational objectives when necessary to make sure the project works?

2. Do they communicate with us about issues and concerns? Do they share successes and positive achievements? Do they actively solicit feedback? Do they act on that feedback?

3. Are they meeting their goals and objectives within the partnership? Are they contributing to the extent to which they had committed?

Towards the End of the Partnership

1. Did we meet our objectives in this partnership? What could we have done differently to make it more successful? What would we have liked our partner to do differently?

2. Would we partner with this group again? Why or why not?

3. Did the front-line people responsible for the partnership develop a good relationship? Why or why not?

Appendix A — Partner Questionnaire

1. How long have you been working for this organization? Full-time/part-time?

2. How long have you been working with this partnership project?

3. What is your role in the partnership project(s) involving SEED Winnipeg?

4. How did this partnership evolve?

5. What was the original vision for it and who were the key players?

6. At the very early stages of this evolutionary process, were there steps (meetings, conversations, etc.) that were particularly helpful or were a hindrance to building the relationship?

7. What are the strengths of the different partners involved in this partnership project

8. Do you think that SEED Winnipeg fits with your organizational ethos and culture (synergies in mission, ideology, and work ethic, etc.)? Does the fit matter to you? Explain.

9. How do you define a successful partnership?

10. How does your organization monitor the progress of the partnership in terms of achieving set targets (outputs and outcome)? Has that monitoring or feedback loop process changed within the last three years?

11. How has the partnership itself changed over the past two to three years? Improved, declined, or stayed steady? Explain.

12. What do you think have been the key factors contributing to these changes?

13. What is the resource-sharing arrangement within this partnership? I.e., finances, electronic/hard copy resources, person-hours?

14. What do you think about that arrangement? If you had the option to renegotiate the agreement, how would you change it?

15. How does the decision-making process work? (one way (top-down), two way (consultative or collaborative))

16. How do you feel about the existing decision-making process? Any comments/ suggestions?

17. What kind of mechanism is used for dispute resolution? Can you give an example of how it has been used?

18. Can you tell me about a time within this partnership when you have had to adapt to an unexpected circumstance and work through it with your SEED counterpart?

19. What factors (internal and external) do you think are creating stress (or are a source of potential stress) in the context of the partnership, in your organization and/or staff?

20. How have individuals (yourself and/or other colleagues, including board members) played a personal role in the evolution and maintenance (e.g., dispute resolution or renegotiation, etc.) of the partnership?

21. How does your organization communicate information about this partnership to other key stakeholders of your organization (board members, community, etc.)? What has been the response so far?

22. What added value has this partnership brought to your organization (beyond this collaborative project) that would have been missing had you not entered into it?

23. What opportunities have been created through the partnership for the agencies to learn from each others' experiences and strategic strengths?

24. Does your organization work in partnership with other organizations besides SEED? Have you worked in a partnership project before in another organization?

25. If yes, how have those relationships impacted the one with the SEED?

26. Going back to your definition of a successful partnership, do you consider this partnership to be successful? Summarize in one sentence.

Appendix B — SEED Staff Questionnaire

1. How long have you worked at SEED?

2. How long with this/these partnerships?

3. When you are the inviting organization, what are the steps that you go through to build a new partnership?

   a. Are they consistent across SEED? Have they changed through the years?

4. How do you assess fit and appropriateness *prior* to inviting them to participate?

5. What steps were taken to learn about the cultural differences between SEED and these partners?

6. Are there one or two organizations that come to mind that were a particularly good fit right off the bat? What made them that way?

7. How do you know that there is a shared vision for the partnership?

8. At what point do you begin to document relationships with MOUs?

9. What is your understanding of reciprocity within a partnership?

10. Do you think that SEED's partnerships are reciprocal? How do you maintain it?

11. Do you ever have partnerships where you feel taken advantage of?

   a. How you do handle those situations?

12. What was the original vision for this partnership?

13. How would you describe the amount of effort that SEED puts into building and maintaining the relationships in this partnership?

14. As the partnership has grown and will continue to grow, how do you/will you maintain the level and quality of support that each organization has become accustomed to?

15. What approach does SEED take to enabling or permitting the modification of the program to suit the partner's client group?

a. How do you decide where to draw the line with modifications?

16. Can you describe a situation where you have had to adapt to an unexpected circumstance with a partner organization?

17. What are the stress factors on you and your organization as a result of working in partnerships?

18. Do the individual personalities at the table impact how the partnerships work? Explain.

19. Do you think there are any power imbalances between yourselves and your partners? How do you restrain the power when there is funding attached to the partnership?

20. SEED is known to be highly collaborative in its decision-making processes. What is the driving force behind that commitment to collaboration?

21. What opportunities have been created for the partners to share learnings and strategic strengths?

22. Does the monitoring that is done for each partnership help the relationships?

23. What added value does SEED get from engaging in partnerships?

24. Have there been surprises in how any of the relationships have come together?

25. SEED seems to be skilled at managing potential conflicts before they arise. How has that been ingrained into the way your team works?

26. Mutual trust has been a recurring theme throughout the interviews so far; the other organizations feel as if there is a sense of mutual trust. What do you do to build trust?

27. Has the perception of the role of "partnership" changed over the last few years?

28. What is the greatest benefit SEED gets from this partnership?

29. What does a successful partnership look like to you?

APPENDIX C — CONSENT FORM

I UNDERSTAND THAT I HAVE BEEN INVITED to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Kirit Patel of the International Development Studies Department of Menno Simons College at the University of Winnipeg. The study will investigate what constitutes and promotes effective partnerships between community economic development actors in Winnipeg through interviews with senior managers, interviews and focus groups with staff of partner organizations, reviews of source documents, and a full literature review of current best partnership practices within the community economic development (CED) sector. There is minimal risk to participants in interviews or focus groups.

I understand that the results of the research will be used by SEED Winnipeg internally to influence their own organizational effectiveness. Additionally, the outcomes of the research may be made public to add value to and build capacity in other CED organizations. The research may also be used in scholarly or popular articles and postsecondary teaching materials.

I understand that to encourage truthful and unbiased responses to the questions, my personal and organizational anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the data collection process. My name and that of my organization will not be recorded on research tools. I recognize that any questionnaires and/or notes made in focus groups and interviews will be retained by the university, and any information that may identify a response as coming from a particular organization will be edited during processing to protect my confidentiality.

This project will be completed by October 2010. Data collected will be stored at Menno Simons College for twenty-four months post-completion and will be disposed of via docu-

ment shredding. Project-related electronic documents will be kept in a secure archive for up to five years.

Should I have any concerns about the way this study is conducted, I am free to contact Earl Davey, Vice-President Academic, Menno Simons College at 204–953–3866. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may refuse to answer any question(s) and am free to stop participating in the study at any time before project completion without consequence. If I have any questions about the research and/or wish to receive a summary of the study's results, I will contact Dr. Kirit Patel at 204–953–3852.

Name (please print):

_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Principal Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. Thank you for your consideration.

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