



Public Policy Profile

POLICY: CED Policy Framework

DATE INTRODUCED: Implemented in 2001

JURISDICTION: Manitoba

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The Community and Economic Development of Cabinet (CEDC) is responsible for overseeing the community and economic development policy and activity of the provincial government. There is also a CED interdepartmental working group that has recently been focusing work on developing strategic plans in six priority areas: social and community enterprise, housing, CED procurement, CED 'infrastructure', employment and training, and green energy. In addition, the provincial government has adopted a CED Policy Framework that outlines a series of CED goals and principles, adapted from the CED principles developed by the worker-owners of the locally based Neechi Foods Cooperative, Ltd. The CED Lens is designed to assist the civil service to understand and implement the government's CED policy. The lens takes the form of a questionnaire that is provided to departments so that they can review their policy decisions and actions to better align them with the goals and principles of the CED Policy framework. Taken together, these components: a political structure, a policy framework and lens, and a funding program represent a significant commitment by government to the importance of CED.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO A PEOPLE- CENTRED ECONOMY

According to Brendan Reimer of CCEDNet, the CED policy framework is important because "governments have become too departmentalized and too singularly focused on the economic bottom line to effectively support what is really needed in communities – that being holistic and multi-dimensional approaches to community renewal. What these types of policy initiatives do is remind us, as practitioners and decision-makers, that life is holistic and that we therefore need to deal with communities in a holistic way". Further, this can remind government about the importance of "paying attention to the individuals who live in different neighbourhoods, particularly those who live in poverty and experience social exclusion, and to local neighbourhoods themselves", an important reminder since governments often look to "macro or mega-development" solutions to development issues.

For Anna Rothney of the CEDC Secretariat, CED is about building people's capacity to benefit from their own efforts. It recognizes that development is more equitable and sustainable when it is driven by community.

WHAT WORKS? WHAT CAN WE IMPROVE? WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The CED structure and supporting policy framework and lens were created shortly after the 1999 election of the NDP government. The creation of the CEDC was a reflection of a desire on the part of the new government to 'broaden the focus' of provincial economic development efforts. With the election, many prominent local community activists were recruited to key positions in government while many others continued to be involved in the Social Economy as activists, researchers, and practitioners. The constellation of the election of a supportive provincial government, a network of activists with strong relationships, and a burgeoning national movement with connections to Manitoba likely supported the adoption of a CED policy framework in Manitoba.

The adoption of the CED structure, policy framework and lens have been significant in raising the level of awareness of CED and its possibilities among higher level government staff. In the words of Reimer, the CED policy framework has created a "legacy of awareness and support that can be leveraged" in support of the Social Economy. This idea was also reflected by Rothney, who notes that civil servants "can now be heard talking about CED and asking questions about how we can incorporate these principles into their work." For Rothney, the strength of the policy framework is found in the fact that a CED lens can be integrated into the activities of almost any department in government. The challenge is to ensure that those in government have the knowledge and skills to recognize these possibilities.

However, the impact of the CED policy has been hampered by a number of factors. Reimer and Rothney noted that the sheer number of policies and strategies developed by government can leave staff feeling overwhelmed with different lenses and policy objectives. Both agree that where the policy has been most effective has been when it is seen as a general re-orientation in philosophy and not simply as a new set of reporting requirements or procedures. This has happened most often where there have been supportive senior level staff on side. Indeed, the need for a policy 'lead' or 'champion' was articulated

by both parties. Looking to the example of poverty reduction plans in other jurisdictions, some have argued that a shortcoming of the policy framework is that it does not identify CED goals or targets for departments to work towards. MacKinnon (2006) reflects this in saying "the limitation of this model is that CED becomes the interest of everyone, but the responsibility of no one...The absence of an identified leader and minimal resources to move the initiative forward is a critical flaw in the Manitoba model".¹

A recent cabinet shuffle has resulted in the creation of a new Department of Housing and Community Development that may provide the focus and dedicated champion that are needed to move the policy to the next level. Rothney spoke about the need for a "balancing act" between having dedicated a departmental champion and ensuring that the policy remains high level enough so it compliments the work of other departments and other areas. The goal is to have CED recognized as the overriding strategy that unites diverse foci. The maintenance of the CED interdepartmental working group is seen as integral to keeping this broad focus.

The limitations of the policy have also been heightened by the government's own reticence to champion its policy. Neither the CEDC nor the policy or lens are found on the government website. Among practitioners this has meant the original excitement and support of the policy has dimmed. As practitioners in the CED movement have left, newer practitioners are sometimes not aware of the policy's existence. Rothney also acknowledges the need to constantly work to ensure that those in government are aware of, and continue to support, the policy. This is important so that the CED policy framework can achieve its intended goal of changing the culture of government, a change that will ensure the legacy of the initiative beyond any one government.

1 MacKinnon, S. (2006). The Social Economy in Manitoba: Designing Public Policy for Social Inclusion. Horizons (8)2. Ottawa: Government of Canada Policy Research Initiative. Retrieved from: http://policyresearch.gc.ca/doclib/HOR_v8n2_200602_e.pdfHOR2

REPLICABILITY

Overarching policy statements, like what is in place in Manitoba are easily replicable across jurisdictions and at all levels of government. For them to be successful, it is important that they have the support of government (senior staff and key politicians), a horizontal (inter-departmental) structure of support, and adequate staffing capacity to follow through. High level policy initiatives that emphasize the importance of relocalizing economies resonate with people of all social and political stripes. However, to maximize the usefulness of these types of policies, policy makers and practitioners should root efforts in the unique local history and culture that make CED and the Social Economy meaningful in that region.

Citing other policy realms, such as the interest in the social determinants of health, and sustainable development initiatives in other jurisdictions, Reimer points out that even where policies explicitly supporting the Social Economy or CED are not in place, there may be related policy initiatives that can provide a 'foot in the door'. The challenge is to find areas of resonance between Social Economy approaches and other policy realms.

INTERVIEWS

Brendan Reimer, Regional Coordinator, CCEDNet; and Anna Rothney, Director, Community and Economic Development Committee of Cabinet, Government of Manitoba

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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May, 2010