



# FINAL REPORT

## A COMMUNITY-MINDED SOCIAL ENTERPRISE: AN INQUIRY FOR VIABILITY

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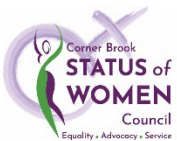
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A lack of transportation access impacts the ability to further access the diverse range of services and organizations that people interact with on a daily basis.

The Community Transit Enterprise grew out of the research project, “A Community-minded Social Enterprise: An Inquiry into Viability” organized by the Corner Brook Status of Women Council (CBSWC) that sought to explore the conditions necessary for the success of a social enterprise in the Crestview area of Corner Brook. The mission of the Community Transit Enterprise is to provide transportation where other public forms of transport services are not possible, reliable, appropriate or affordable. Its goals are to help people who do not have access to vehicles and have to rely on services they cannot afford, or that are inaccessible or not appropriate. By providing an alternative transit service, the Enterprise can help improve safety, accessibility and comfort, which will enable people to maintain independence and quality of life without jeopardizing other areas of their daily lives. It is not a viable solution in society to force people to decide priority between food, reaching their place of employment or transportation costs; and the Community Transit Enterprise seeks to create a sustainable model whereby people can use this system to gain greater freedoms, and the Enterprise can build up the community by reinvesting profits into the community.

The Community Transit Enterprise will seek to address the transport poverty that many people experience; and which causes stress, frustration, and a sense of isolation within their community. Studies have shown that when a community transit model is introduced, it can reduce issues of accessibility and mobility and increase access to resources and services, and increases direct employment and skills development. It improves physical and mental well-being for users as well as improving social inclusion and engagement. The benefits to individual users, as well as the community, are great improving all sectors of a community from healthcare, to businesses, to social gatherings and community events. By investing in the reduction of a barrier to engagement for a large portion of the community, the Community Transit Enterprise will provide a strong foundation to the community’s growth.


With several established players already in the transportation market in Corner Brook, it is important to address the gaps and create a niche that provides benefits. The Community Transit Enterprise will target past and present clients of community organizations, as well as youth, students and those who can avail of community services. It is essential that to address the transport disadvantage inherent in this city, that the Community Transit Enterprise focus its services on improving these, so users have the ability to improve other areas of their lives.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Community Transit Enterprise, undertaken by the Corner Brook Status of Women Council in partnership with Vine Place Community Centre, and funded by the Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Innovation Centre, is focused on creating positive change within the community to increase individual well-being, and community engagement. This project started out as a feasibility study to determine if a social enterprise in the Crestview area of Corner Brook would be viable and sustainable. Research was undertaken to determine what type of social enterprise would be welcomed by the population, and how this would be sustainable.

As outlined in the research proposal and continued through the research and surveys of the project, the residents of Crestview area of Corner Brook, encounter a variety of social problems that are a concern including lower literacy and graduation rates, lower income and government assisted, lower employment rates, and therefore lower socioeconomic status, a lack of transportation, and experiences of stigma and marginalization. The Crestview neighbourhood of Corner Brook has a large proportion of low-income families. The NL Stats agency shows that the rate of families living below the poverty threshold is rising in the Corner Brook area, and in 2015 it was 17.1% (NL Stats Agency) While the provincial school board shows an increase in overall graduation rates for students, with 94% having completed the requirements for graduation in 2014-2015 ([www.nlesd.ca](http://www.nlesd.ca)), overall literacy rates for the






province remain below the national average, with a rate of 43%. (Harris Centre, 2014)) According to Statistics Canada, 29 per cent of individuals with low literacy levels are from low-income households compared to eight per cent of individuals who are ranked in the highest two categories of literacy. This means that youth and children from the Crestview area have a higher probability of continuing the cycle of poverty. People living in poverty often encounter various forms of stigma, discrimination and bias. This can result in those living in poverty to feel excluded and ashamed. Feelings of inadequacy and lack of personal agency can serve to prolong poverty.

One main priority of the project was to be as inclusive as possible. This would be done through involvement in research and in the solutions that could come out of the research that would enable residents to increase their individual and collective sense of power and well-being. The focus of the project, whether as a physical storefront or now as the Community Transit Enterprise, has been on individuals from the Crestview neighbourhood who have traditionally been underemployed, experienced poverty, and/or homelessness. It has been a point of consideration through the project that, while any goods or services that arise from this venture may be utilized by the wider community, it is important that it also benefit those within the neighbourhood. The market viability of social enterprise options was explored and findings from information gleaned from residents indicated a focus toward transportation. This project also sought to discover the individual and collective barriers to establishing and maintaining employment, and identifying possible solutions to these issues. By acknowledging the barriers, and creatively working to provide solutions within a supportive work environment, the hope of the project has been to establish both part-time and full-time employment positions through the social enterprise, as well as skill building sessions that can help individuals gain income and be employed in work that has a meaningful impact in their community.

The initiative focused on community engagement. There is a community engagement continuum with low to high levels of involvement. The simplest breakdown divides the continuum of engagement into four levels: informing, consulting, collaborating and empowerment (McCue, 2011). The focus in this initiative is on involving those who are rarely consulted in meaningful, high level engagement. Research has shown that engagement in low-



income communities is effective when time is taken to develop leadership among citizens and local organizations, provide training and opportunities for peer learning, provide financial resources, and develop relationships and foster collaboration (Ohmer, 2008). The most important resources for success are the capacity of the neighbourhood, their collective knowledge and abilities, which we believe will feed into community identity and commitment (Birkholzer, 2009). By including tenants on the steering committee, seeking input from tenants from the neighbourhood to inform the development of our social enterprise and being attentive to the particular needs of those who participate, providing honorariums that honour the time and knowledge shared, and taking time to foster relationships with the community we believe this project meets the goal of community engagement. Citizen participation is effective in facilitating an individual and a collective sense of being able to achieve what you set out to do and a sense of community through collective action. That work is best done when there is a trust-building process and meaningful opportunities to voice ideas and opinions along with engagement in —small-scale projects that build competency and competencies. (Ohmer, 2007, p. 118) Engagement is linked to network development and relationship building, and the development of social capital. Through community participation there is potential for: an increased sense of belonging, willingness to contribute, helping others and welcoming strangers (MacKinnon, Stephens et al, 2008).

A major facet of community engagement is also the development of social capital. Social Capital is “considered a set of resources available to individuals and communities as a result of social networks. The value of social capital resides in the overall positive consequences resulting from the creation and maintenance of social contacts: flow of information, trust, reciprocity, co-operation, and productivity (Turcotte, 2015).”

The development of social capital is an overwhelming challenge for social enterprises to utilize and develop. Often times, social capital may be lacking in communities which causes an increase in crime, suspicion, lack of communication and information, lower health standards, few social facilities, poor physical environment as well as a lack of trust, cohesiveness, few social networks and social underdevelopment (Kay, 2006, 160-173). Therefore, the challenge for a social enterprise is to ingrain itself into the community it intends to work with; helping to

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create community leaders, and developing its “inclusive potential through a firm connection with the communities they serve if they are to make the most of” (Simmons, 2008, 278-301) their business and enact social change.

Building community trust and inclusiveness in the process is a major component to any successful social enterprise venture. Often times, there is a top-down approach that is adopted by government and organizations that set out to help a community. This is generally conducted with little involvement or feedback from communities. Leaving a community or specific population out of the efforts to positively change their lives is significant and means they are never truly a part of the process, and unable to be fully engaged in the growth of their area. Many community members may feel pushed aside, and that their lived experience in the community is not as valuable as that of external groups because they are not included. “In order to enrich their capabilities and build sustainable living, it is necessary that communities are in a position to take control over the initiatives that are meant to improve their living”(Kummitha, 2017).

In order to build social capital, it is necessary for any Social enterprise undertaking to activate a bottom-up approach where they engage communities in active decision-making and execution of endeavours that ultimately benefit them. The challenge of this is how to approach the communities and build trust as “trust creation is a necessary condition in order to build social capital”(Kummitha, 2017) so a Social enterprise needs to spend a significant portion of its time in the start-up phase engaging and building trust within the community it wants to serve. This could start with approaching community leaders, creating town halls or information sessions, giveaways tied to surveys of the community, committees with community members on it and a compassion and understanding of cultural/societal sensitivities, would all allow voices from the community to shape the creation of the Social enterprise. Continuous information sharing and updating is beneficial as well for communities to understand the process and feel able to speak their minds of what would be beneficial. If the Social enterprise can engage and incorporate community voices into its creation; “community members may feel more empowered and a more valued part of the process, leading to a more complete picture” (Christopher & Watts, 2008, 1398-1406) to work with. Gaining and maintaining trust through

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the cycle of development is probably the major stumbling block because without buy-in from the community, there cannot be sustainability.

Once trust is built, and communities are invested in the social enterprise, social capital can then be utilized to increase participation and further social capital in the community. Building upon existing informal and formal social networks, shared values and norms, and flow of information, a Social enterprise can benefit from these to generate further social capital and involvement. If a Social enterprise encourages forming social networks, strengthening community ownership, and fostering a sense of community, it can further generate social capital, which can increase usage of the Social enterprise, further the benefits that derive from it, and overall create positive impact. Results from various studies suggest that “social enterprises generate social capital in their area, mostly by using social capital” (Kay, 2006). Thus, building community trust and engagement leads to ownership and investment in the success of a social enterprise, and further promotes social capital and fostering of community engagement.

The mission, in undertaking a community transport model, is to help aid in the reduction of barriers to employment and everyday life that residents in the Crestview area encounter, providing the grounds for positive change socially and economically for a number of people. As a social enterprise, the Community Transport Enterprise is also mission-focused and has several purposes it hopes to achieve. These include an employment focus by providing direct employment and skills training, as well as a poverty reduction focus in that by providing access, it is addressing issues that keep people in a poverty cycle.

The mission of the Social Enterprise is supportive of the vision of both the Corner Brook Status of Women Council, and its partner Vine Place Community Centre, in providing access and opportunity to services and support for clients by increasing the sense of empowerment and self-determination as well as building capacity within the community to enact transformational change. By undertaking these activities, the Community Transit Enterprise would also be working toward the mission of equality, in general and specific to gender, and inclusion, which both organizations strongly advocate for.



## INITIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

The initial project that the Corner Brook Status of Women Council undertook was in determining what type of social enterprise would be accepted in the community, but also in whether or not this would be feasible to undertake. Findings indicated there was an acceptance by Crestview area residents as well as the greater community in having a social enterprise open. There were a wide range of wants and needs for a business that were put forth. Many of these centered on physical storefront locations including bakeries and cafes, arts and crafts stores, and thrift store concepts. Survey participants also provided recommendations and information around opening a business in the Corner Brook area and things to be aware of while developing the business.



Other research delved into the barriers people encountered in gaining employment, and what skills they thought were considered essential to being hired and being considered a “good employee”. The Social Enterprise Steering Committee examined the findings trying to come to a consensus on what the social enterprise would encapsulate and it was realized that the types of storefront businesses being discussed were already in existence in some form within the city. The issues many residents had, and outlined as a barrier to many everyday activities, was access. Survey data indicated most respondents found transportation to be a barrier to employment, healthcare, education and everyday activities.

Due to the recognition that transportation as a barrier to access was the defining point of contention for people, the project pivoted its focus to a Community Transit Enterprise concept, instead of another physical store, as a way to help minimize and alleviate those barriers; help improve the daily lives of residents by increasing access and engagement and creating sustainable positive change.

## ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

The Corner Brook Status of Women Council has been established in Corner Brook since 1974. It is a not-for-profit organization that works toward gender equality and equity. It has a reputation for community development and leadership because it believes it is responsible to, and must be responsive, to the larger community it services.

The organization's structure has several areas that it operates within. It oversees the Corner Brook Women's Centre, which is a drop-in office for people to come in. The Centre provides advocacy, support, outreach, education, and workshops, and resources and referrals for people. It also provides some administrative services including computer usage, resume help, phone and fax services. It allows for space to be booked by external groups for meetings, as well as for family and client meetings.

It also operates Vesta Place Supportive Housing, located in the upper level of the building. This provides accommodation for up to four women in a supportive, communal living environment at an affordable rate. Along with providing housing, the Centre works with the housing clients to address concerns they encounter to help them be able to navigate daily life outside of the housing space. This includes workshops like on self esteem and finances, and also works with other community organizations to help clients find future housing, supplies, or attend meetings and appointments.

The Corner Brook Status of Women Council has a Board of Directors who have three primary roles: to establish policies, to make significant and strategic decisions, and to oversee the organization's activities. The Council also have staff members that takes on the daily operations of the Council.

The Community Transit Enterprise will be structured internally to the parent organization. It will be structured as a program within the non-profit; essentially operating under the umbrella of the Corner Brook Status of Women Council. From a legal, financial, and governance perspective the enterprise is internal to its non-profit parent and everything is


integrated as one system. As the social enterprise becomes sustainable and scaled, there would be a necessary re-evaluation of the structure and integration of the social enterprise and parent organization to determine the most suitable structure at that time.

Since the Community Transit Enterprise will be structured internally to the CBSWC, it will follow current policies and procedures of the Corner Brook Status of Women Council. The goal is to have employees, including drivers and dispatch, who report daily to the Project Coordinator. This Project Coordinator oversees routes, schedules, customer service, marketing and coordination with various community organizations within the city. The Project Coordinator will report to the Executive Director of the Corner Brook Status of Women Council. The Project Coordinator will be another position within the Corner Brook Status of Women Council, and will be expected to report weekly on activities, and attend Board meetings, which is the same as current employees of CBSWC.

It would be beneficial to consider retaining an advisory committee comprised of members of the current Steering Committee, including Vine Place Community Centre representatives and other businesses and community organizations, to ensure issues are being addressed, and initiatives being undertaken to create sustainability and promote the social enterprise.

## **SURVEY FINDINGS**

Initially, the project was to have a focus group component as well as surveys; questions were created and interaction was being conducted with Crestview residents at events to gain trust and interest. When the COVID-19 pandemic became a factor for the project, the focus group component of the project was put on hold and eventually eliminated from the project due to concerns around safety procedures, locations for safe discussion, and resident involvement. It was not deemed productive to have virtual focus groups or one-on-one participation, partly due to Covid concerns but also because the group of potential participants



may either: not have access to internet; not have a confidential space in their home environment if they do have access; not have knowledge of technology required to do virtual groups; and have apprehension/suspicion about focus groups and one-on-one interaction in an academic/professional setting. Some may have the ability to use computers/phones but the knowledge to find and download required technology and then use it for zoom-type focus groups would be extremely challenging and may cause frustration for participants and less participation if it didn't work right away for them (Sevelius et al., 2020).

Throughout this project, there have been several surveys conducted in order to gain valuable insight into needs, barriers and concerns of residents in the Crestview area, as well as the greater Corner Brook area. The first survey conducted was about the type of social enterprise/business that would be useful to residents, as well as pointing out the barriers to employment and daily life that is experienced by this particular population. It was promoted two times, once directed solely at Crestview area residents, and once to the greater Corner Brook population. This survey was conducted and analyzed during the Summer of 2020.

The second survey conducted was about community transportation and occurred from December 2020- January 2021; it was directed as a general question to the Corner Brook population and then was sent out again specifically requesting those who did not have access to a personal vehicle to respond. It asked what kind of transportation was used, what disadvantages could occur if one did not have a personal vehicle and had to rely on other forms of transportation, and what things would make public transportation more accessible and easier to use.

A third survey was sent out to a number of community groups in the Corner Brook area that work with vulnerable populations. The goal of this survey was to determine how often community groups are able to help clients with transportation needs; and to gain insight on what these groups believe is essential to help with the transportation disadvantage their clients experience. This survey was conducted at the same time as the general transportation survey in Autumn 2020.

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The first series of surveys asked about potential business ideas, needs and wants for products and services, any potential obstacles to employment, and what skills would be useful to have in the social enterprise. The replies showed that there is potential for positive change through opening a social enterprise; that there are obstacles to overcome, but also that there is understanding and eagerness about having something that will help the community and those who live there. The roundup of survey results indicated that respondents wanted (top three answers for each question):

- a craft/hobby store, a café/bakery/coffee shop or a thrift store
- must be in a central location with good parking and higher quality items that are affordable
- the social enterprise would need a strong social media presence and great advertising, with convenient hours, good entry level positions and great customer service
- Potential employee skills that would be beneficial to have as an applicant were identified as:
  - Friendly/personable
  - Customer service
  - Responsibility
  - Work ethic
- Workforce training identified as important that the social enterprise engages in included soft skills, financial components, and digital literacy
- The main obstacles identified by respondents were transportation, childcare and education

The survey data analysis outlined that although there are similar and overlapping wants and needs between the Crestview neighbourhood and the greater Corner Brook community; there are some areas that were pinpointed in responses from the Crestview neighbourhood that lay bare residents desire to address social issues they are experiencing. A deeper dive in the survey responses indicated that although both Crestview and Corner Brook top responses were quite similar in wanting affordability in all their food choices, clothing, coffee and baked goods, thrift store, child and youth activities and arts and crafts; it was in the Crestview responses where an emphasis was placed on addressing and alleviating social issues. Responses included a food bank, men's aid centre, childcare, community kitchen, housing, a walk-in health clinic with physicians, mental health and other healthcare providers, and aid centres. There was also greater emphasis in the Crestview responses regarding gaining good employment, but

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having major barriers impede on this including transportation and childcare. These topics were not responses that the greater Corner Brook component mentioned in any survey responses.

Overall, it was determined that the business ideas of respondents were already in existence within the Corner Brook region. However, for residents in the Crestview area (and other housing areas in the city), they were not accessible due to location. The main areas of the city where shopping occurs at an affordable level is on the other side of town. This requires a personal vehicle, and if one does not have it, then cumbersome public transit or an expensive taxi fare occurs. This is where the decision to focus on a community transportation concept for a social enterprise came from. If this major barrier to employment and daily living is addressed and reduced, could it benefit the residents and push up to other levels of the community?

This brought the project coordinator to the development of the Community Transportation surveys. The data compiled through these surveys indicated that transportation for those without access to a personal vehicle is unreliable, inaccessible and expensive to manoeuvre. Many responses outlined public transit as unreliable and poorly run with poor routes, poor hours including no evening or weekends, long travel times, with poorly placed bus stops, and taxi cabs are expensive to use.

This lack of coordinated public transit for residents who use it the most has negative repercussions for respondents, which can impact on the community as a whole. Respondents indicated that this impacts them by:

- decreasing the ability for choice,
- has a negative effect on their mental health and makes them feel isolated
- Routes and schedules make it cumbersome and difficult to get out to do things
- Costs more to pay for groceries and other items because they shop closer to home at more expensive places, instead of spending more money on taxi to get to places selling cheaper items
- Affects work/school/medical and routines
- Is a time waster- have to wait long periods to return home using public transit

- People often still have to walk to get places because routes and schedules do not sync up

Many respondents felt there was potential for many improvements in transportation within the area starting with expanded routes and extended hours specifically evening and weekend service, offering more low-cost or free options for travel, have more stops, improve reliability and safety and provide accessibility options for those who have mobility issues or disabilities, and connector links for those just outside the immediate Corner Brook area.

With the survey sent out to community organizations, the responses were very similar in terms of the issues and recommendations for transportation. There was discussion of cost, accessibility, costly taxi fares, and poor schedules and routes for clients as barriers. The recommendations mainly focused on cost options, with many citing to keep it as low as possible and include payment options on a per ride/monthly/yearly basis along with the need for extended hours and better routes. The majority of these groups offer transportation sometimes or not at all. It was rare for these groups to always provide transportation to clients.

The results of these surveys confirmed to those involved in the research project that people were interested in a business enterprise that would both provide products but also invest in residents through employment and training. There is a desire outlined in the survey responses to have the ability to access the services similar to higher-income earning residents. For many low-income marginalized groups, a high percentage of their income is spent on transport methods like public transit and taxis, yet they still have the lowest quality transport systems available to them making them spend exorbitant amounts of time as well to achieve a sub par level of well-being compared to that of higher earning residents with personal vehicles have.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this report and previous research was to understand whether the implementation of a social enterprise would be viable, and contribute to the goals of the Corner Brook Status of Women Council, as well as provide employment and improvement to well-being for the residents of Crestview and their community. It is necessary in this process to identify ways that the business planning strategy can be created to reflect these goals, and create ways to sustain the social enterprise and community long-term. Through the survey, interactions with residents, information from Vine Place Community Centre colleagues, and extensive research, several recommendations have been revealed. These recommendations are for the next steps of the project; things to consider and encapsulate into business planning and development.



### Recommendation #1: Organizational Structure

Since the Community Transit Enterprise will be structured internally to the CBSWC, it will follow current policies and procedures of the Corner Brook Status of Women Council. The goal is to have employees, including drivers and dispatch, who report daily to the Project Coordinator. This Project Coordinator would oversee routes, schedules, customer service, marketing and coordination with various community organizations within the city. The Project Coordinator will report to the Executive Director of the Corner Brook Status of Women Council. The Project Coordinator will be another position within the Corner Brook Status of Women Council, and will be expected to report weekly on activities, and attend Board meetings, which is the same as current employees of CBSWC.

It would be beneficial to consider retaining an advisory committee comprised of members of the current Steering Committee, including Vine Place Community Centre representatives and other businesses and community organizations to help guide policy and procedures; to ensure issues are being addressed; and that initiatives are being undertaken to create sustainability and promote the social enterprise.



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## **Recommendation #2: Workforce Training and Skills Development**


Workforce development and skills training will need to focus primarily on soft skills development to ensure preparedness for employment. It will be necessary to undertake training development in preparation for employing individuals, many of who have encountered barriers to employment. The survey data indicated that for respondents, the most critical skills centered around soft skills training which is a combination of social skills, people skills, communication, writing, negotiation, critical thinking, and customer service type skills. In the development of training and workforce development, soft skills will have to be integrated as a priority in order to ensure a pathway to employment success and confidence for employees.

Initial development of training and skills development has been started. It is recommended that this continues, in collaboration with the Employment Facilitator at Vine Place Community Centre. The Employment Facilitator has been involved in this aspect from the start of the project, and will be able to provide advice and a trusted connection to potential employees from the Crestview area. The Employment Facilitator has expressed interest in continuing to help develop curriculum and implement the training for this social enterprise in collaboration with the Project Coordinator for the CBSWC.

To address the needs of the Community Transit Enterprise, extensive training for drivers and dispatch will need to occur in areas including driving in various driving conditions, emergency preparedness, first aid and awareness of various disabilities. The list being created by the Vine Place Employment Facilitator and CBSWC Research Project Coordinator are not exclusive and are foundational workshops for the enterprise that can be expanded as needed.

## **Recommendation #3: Stakeholder Engagement Strategy**

Engagement with stakeholders is integral to ensuring the successful launch and growth of the Community Transit Enterprise; it is essential to remember to employ this strategy continuously as it connects the enterprise to those who will support it. Forgetting to do this could spell disaster as the enterprise could lose touch with the needs of its stakeholders, resulting in decreased use and support.



Transportation is a sector where there is a number of different providers who work together to offer a complement of services to address transportation needs. These key stakeholders, both sector and regulatory, and their activities and concerns will always be relevant to providing a complementary and cohesive atmosphere for users of the Community Transit Enterprise. It is the belief of the project organization that creating a collaborative relationship with these stakeholders will always be a benefit to the organizational mission of the social enterprise as it minimizes competition and a restrictive environment. These sector and regulatory stakeholders include the City of Corner Brook and surrounding municipalities, private businesses, and other community organizations.

Another key population in developing stakeholder engagement is with the potential customers of the Community Transit Enterprise. Undertaking a responsive, interactive approach to potential customers is a necessity to ensure that their voices are heard throughout the project. There will be a number of different stakeholders with various needs so it will be hard to respond to all of them all of the time. As part of the engagement strategy, it will be important to prioritize stakeholders and their expectations in order to best serve them through the enterprise.

Since this is a social enterprise initiative, it would be beneficial to engage in a multi-format strategy that works toward investment, involvement and integration of community stakeholders (Network for Business Sustainability, 2012). With investment, it would entail creating clear, consistent information that is provided to stakeholders in a variety of formats using language that can be understood by the community, and in return being open to the feedback provided from the community. Essentially, it is a one-way approach in working to provide information about the project so that community stakeholders are able to formulate decisions and want to invest in the enterprise and its mission. Involvement is about two-way communication and would rely on repeated consultation and dialogue. This could be achieved through focus groups, surveys, and committees with representation. It is focused on involving stakeholders in the work and having them express their views on activities, bring up concerns and be able to participate in the process. Integration is the ultimate goal of the enterprise in that it is a joint venture between the organization and the community to manage the

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enterprise. It would focus on developing routines that engage the community in strategic planning while integrating ideas proposed by stakeholders into decision-making processes (Network for Business Sustainability, 2012, p.11). Investment and involvement are easily achieved strategies and should be conducted as part of the engagement strategy for this enterprise; integration can be more difficult for the start-up but should be part of the strategy for growth of the enterprise and as part of the foundation for other potential initiatives of the organization.

Overall, a good stakeholder engagement strategy should be a continuous one. While some projects or activities may finish or become dormant, community and stakeholder engagement in the overall process of the enterprise needs to continue. There needs to be constant learning, within the enterprise, and from external sources; there needs to be transparency and accountability to the community it wants to serve; there needs to be continual acknowledgement of stakeholders and their ideas, and the enterprise needs to be constantly learning in order to grow and sustain the community. These things will because “for successful engagement, it’s necessary to have continual improvement – and to share lessons learned, within and outside the company” (Network for Business Sustainability, 2012, p.12).

#### **Recommendation #4: Document Creation**

It will be necessary for policy and procedure creation and management for the Community Transit Enterprise. There will be a need for consistent policies that explain the business principles and vision, business process and safety measures, and which will help to guide the organization, the social enterprise and its employees in roles and responsibilities.

Some of these policies and procedures can be used in full, or adapted as necessary from current documents used by the Corner Brook Status of Women Council. These policies and procedures should be created within the first few months, as the setup of operations, marketing and business planning will coincide with what policies should be developed.

These policies and procedures include:

- Employee position descriptions: define the roles within the social enterprise, their levels of responsibility, amount of authority for decision-making and allows for monitoring performance
- Personnel policies: several of these policies will be able to be used and/or adapted from the Corner Brook Status of Women Council such as insurance/health benefits, sick leave, terms of employment and confidentiality.
- Safety documents: Due to the nature of the social enterprise, it will be necessary to follow industry best practices and relevant provincial and municipal laws to address safe behaviour by employees and customers; these would include types of equipment, how to report any safety hazards. These would also support employee training.
- COVID-19 related documents: Due to the nature of the social enterprise and the nature of our world, it will be necessary to include documents, for employees and customers, on expectations and activities in a COVID world. These would include: sanitation and hygiene, social distancing and mask wearing.

### **Recommendation #5: Evaluation**

In order to maintain the Community Transit Enterprise and enable it to flourish within the community, it is important to set up the tools and requirements for evaluation of the project. The creation of an evaluation framework is a necessary and important step in the development of a project. Without it, it can be very difficult to know if the project has actually achieved its goals, or where it needs to address needed changes to its format. Overall, an evaluation framework is a systematic examination of the working machinery of the project; and allows for refinement of it efficiently and effectively because it is ongoing.

It is recommended that an evaluation framework be created that collects and analyzes the data as it is generated. This will allow the organization to be able to analyze and learn from the data in real time as it is collected. On a larger scale, this will allow the Community Transit Enterprise to address any concerns quickly and adapt any procedures and activities to better navigate those concerns. It would be beneficial to look at a multi-method approach to help determine whether the goals and objectives for the enterprise are completed throughout the


course of its lifespan; and whether the project generates the desired changes for the organization and the community.

## PROJECT APPLICATIONS

The key consideration in determining how the research undertaken in this project can be applied to other sectors is in recognizing what a social enterprise is and how it does contribute to so many sectors. Despite a social enterprise being overtly a non-profit sector venture in most cases, social enterprises endeavour to undertake work in a variety of ways that impact on multiple sectors in multiple levels. A small social enterprise such as this one consists of a group of people or an organization coming together to develop a small-scale change to business that can impact positively on the community. This is a small part of the growing movement of people involved in social enterprises.

The overall goal of a social enterprise is in developing stronger local economies, by creating jobs directly and indirectly, providing added value through skills development, but also in the more expansive need to improve the quality of life of individuals and communities, and to help people work together for mutual benefit rather than private profit. In its own definition, the social enterprise's value is in how it can be applied to other sectors.

The research conducted through this project is no different. Its value is in how it has determined that people are interested in both personal growth and community benefit. The various elements and steps in this project can be applied to all sectors where its work impacts on vulnerable groups. The hope is that this research will also be a push for government levels, businesses and residents to recognize the barriers, both implicit and explicit, that impact on our communities most vulnerable people, and when developing procedures, events, or activities they pause and take into consideration how to enable all residents to engage in their civic responsibilities. It can be used within the transportation sector to recognize issues with mobility and try to address these concerns within the current systems.



These findings can also be used by other community organizations within the non-profit sector in the province. Despite the surveys looking at social enterprise and community transit, respondents acknowledged and voiced their concerns with the barriers they experience daily that hinder their access to services and ability to do better in their lives. Underlying issues including poverty, economic/social/cultural/political/educational marginalization, workforce development and skills, stigma and disengagement, social injustice, power imbalance, and inequality are all there within the research findings, and are being vocally addressed by the people within these marginalized groups; they are putting forward barriers they have daily that need to be undertaken and overcome.

It is essential that business, healthcare, government organizations and non-profit sectors recognize that the issues being brought up in this research project indicate there are still gaps to service for marginalized groups, and they know it and are more willing to speak up about it to enact change to their daily standard of living. Using these findings and the words of those experiencing these issues; a multitude of sectors can develop better policies and procedures, practice guidelines, and design educational programs and responsive strategies around poverty, education, employment readiness and accessibility, and many other barriers.

This project also shows how, despite setbacks, there are ways to engage marginalized communities, in providing input and leading discussion around issues of concern. This may involve multiple surveys and communication formats, multiple promotions, the provision of modest compensation or gift card giveaways, and added time for the formats to engage stakeholders; and there is needed patience and persistence and adherence to promoting communication and continuity. However, it is not impossible to include marginalized groups in the process by any sector whether it's developing a new product, opening a store, designing marketing. There is a feeling that many sectors and businesses do not engage because they believe these groups are either inaccessible or not knowledgeable enough; that it is a chore to find out their thoughts. However, this is missing a large segment of the population who have ideas and knowledge about many areas these sectors do not. It may be more difficult but it is not unattainable, and the benefits of new attitudes and new ideas can project these sectors into new levels of industry.

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Promoting a social enterprise platform that encourages connection and ownership by marginalized groups should be able to influence all other sectors that these groups avail of, to formulate more sustainable and interactive formats that will be inclusive. Many governments, business and industry sectors see areas such as Crestview as areas of inadequacies and of need, and believe they are unable to fund the areas they see as in need due to return on investment being low. However, this research project shows the municipal and provincial governments here, and adds to the voices of other social enterprises around the country, that if they shift their mindset and instead see these groups and community neighbourhoods as areas of untapped capacity and potential, it could open up more partnerships, more connection and tap into innovative means to excel.

The Social Enterprise realm provides strong return on investment and financial gains if supported, but also provides many non-tangible benefits such as social connection and capital, poverty reduction, self-sufficiency and dignity for people; all of which coalesce into costs savings to all levels of government and healthcare and leads to a multiplying effect on other community activities. Taking the findings of what barriers people are experiencing within their area, and developing more sustainable policies and procedures to address these, people are supported and connected, and able to avail of services in their community equally. This creates long term benefits to the individual, their family, and the community.

By using the structure of a social enterprise, and building the values of positive impact and using profit as a means to impact positive change and community benefits, many of the sectors that focus less on purpose and more on profits, need to pivot toward a social enterprise mindset, this will allow for people to work together collectively within the community, creating social capital and building confidence that can be applied to other community issues (Steinerowski, Artur A., et al, 2012).

Essentially, a lofty goal of how this project can be applied to other sectors is in utilizing the model of social enterprise itself. By building in sustainable, purpose-driven and community-minded values, companies within all sectors can allow for marginalized groups to have a vocal say in the industries around them; by opening up dialogue, sectors would enable new attitudes

to be implemented toward community growth (Lateh et al, 2018) allowing for innovative and positive changes.

## DISSEMINATION PLAN

The original intention with the final report for this research project was to print copies to distribute at the Vine Place Community Centre as well as to have on hand. It was also planned to bring together stakeholders in a physical setting to present the information and to have a discussion on next steps to fruition for the social enterprise. However, due to COVID, plans have again changed in how it will be disseminated.

To disseminate the findings of this research project, and to explain its purpose and relevance to the community, the belief is that the final report will be sent out, and any of the previous documents created can be requested if people would like further understanding.

The final report will be disseminated to the Corner Brook Status of Women Council Board and the Social Enterprise Steering Committee members, as well as the funding agent Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Innovation Centre (NLWIC) through use of email. The hope is that the members will allow for dissemination to their networks as well. It will also be sent to local community organizations and other local stakeholders who would find value in this project. The report will also be placed on the Corner Brook Status of Women Council website, and also placed as a link on our social media platforms. It will also be shared through social media to our various partners, including Vine Place Community Centre and NLWIC.

As well as disseminating the final report in its more academic format, an infographic will be created that can be displayed in our community partners locations to provide further information in a quick glance format, that will make it easier to absorb the key facts by residents and community members. This infographic and a link to the final report will also be placed in the monthly CBSWC newsletter, CBSWC social media and the website. Finally, a PowerPoint presentation (in video format) will be created that can allow for another format for



the information in this report to be accessed and utilized. It will be sent out as well to local stakeholders and community organizations, while simultaneously being placed on CBSWC social media platforms.

All of the formats developed for this final report on the project will be sent out to local stakeholders, as one informative email with attachments. These local stakeholders include the City of Corner Brook, other community organizations and CBSWC partner organizations, and the academic institutions in the city that would have a vested interest in the promotion and implementation of this project. The hope is that people in these organizations will find value in the project and promote it to their networks to gain traction in having it come to fruition.

There are no anticipated sensitivities in the dissemination of this final report for the project.

## DELIVERABLES

- Literature Review- Social Enterprise
  - This document sought to identify the factors that are involved in the creation of a social enterprise, how a social enterprise is formulated and how it impacts on community engagement and employment within a marginalized area. It was the defining document that enabled the project to consolidate information to be used moving forward.
- Literature Review- Barriers to Employment
  - This document sought to identify factors that affect employment access, attainment, and continuation for individuals, which could be used to inform the barriers experienced by Crestview area residents.
- Social Enterprise Survey Development and dissemination
  - The Social Enterprise survey was developed with a set of twelve (12) questions that asked what products and services people wanted to see in the Crestview area, what type of business would be useful, what barriers to employment people may experience and what skills are important to have as an employee. It was developed on Google Forms and disseminated through social media.

- CBSWC Social Enterprise Overview PowerPoint presentation for Steering Committee
  - This presentation was created as part of the introductory meeting of the Social Enterprise Steering Committee. It outlined the project details, roles and responsibilities of the Research Coordinator, and expectations of the roles of members of the Committee.
  
- Intro to Social Enterprise PowerPoint presentation
  - This presentation was developed to use in presentations at the Vine Place Community Centre for residents of the Crestview area. It was also created to show to identified stakeholders in the process. It is an overview presentation on Social Enterprises.
  
- Survey Analysis PowerPoint presentation on social enterprise results
  - This PowerPoint presentation outlined in detail the survey analysis process, as well as what outcomes and indicators were determined from the information provided by residents.
  
- Recommendations Report
  - This document outlined the recommendations for further development of a social enterprise, taking into consideration the survey results and research conducted up to this point.
  
- Community Transport Infographic sheet
  - The Community Transport infographic was created as a visual literature review conducted on community transport and coordinated services transit models. The Steering Committee had requested an overview of transportation models. This infographic provided an outline of the information gathered on the models, benefits, challenges and considerations for a Community Transport concept.
  
- Community Transport mind map for decision-making
  - This mind map sought to visually identify the general considerations that will be necessary in creating a Community Transport (Transit) social enterprise for the Steering Committee, and any potential stakeholders.
  
- Community Transport survey development and dissemination
  - The Community Transport survey was developed to identify transportation challenges currently experienced. It was developed as two separate surveys.

- The first survey was directed toward residents and had ten (10) questions asking about use of the current transportation options, any challenges faced, and any recommendations.
- The second survey was directed toward community organizations and had six (6) questions asking if organizations provided transportation, what challenges they and/or their clients have with transportation, any recommendations, and what their thoughts were on a community transit enterprise.
- Community Transport Survey analysis PowerPoint presentation
  - This PowerPoint presentation outlined in detail the community transport survey analysis process, as well as what outcomes and indicators were determined from what residents and community organizations saw as identifying issues and changes to implement.
- Community Organizations Transport Survey analysis PowerPoint presentation
  - This PowerPoint outlined the community transportation needs survey that was provided to community organizations to provide insight into needs of their clients and what challenges they encounter, and what benefits a transit enterprise could provide.
- Social Enterprise Newsletter article for CBSWC newsletter February 2021
  - This was an article written for the Corner Brook Status of Women Council monthly newsletter, and outlined the basics of a social enterprise and what the project has been working toward.
- CBSWC Community Transit Enterprise Business Plan
  - The Community Transit Enterprise Business Plan was created to identify and outline the next steps in the development of the social enterprise. Albeit, not a comprehensive document (not in-depth financial breakdowns), it does provide a guiding document for next steps extensively.
- Social Media:
  - Invitation to take survey mp4 video
  - Multiple Facebook posts to inform of the project and to gain participation in surveys
- CBC radio interview to promote the project
  - The CBC radio interview was conducted in January 2021. Melissa Feaver spoke with Bernice Hillier on CBC Newfoundland Morning about the project and the Community Transit enterprise.

- Final Report
  - The Final Report brings together the various research and document findings into an overview document outlining past steps and the process for moving forward with the Community Transit Enterprise.
- Final Report Infographic
  - This infographic provides information contained in the final report in a quick glance format that will enable residents and community members to understand the project and its findings in a concise format.
- Final Report PowerPoint presentation
  - This PowerPoint is to provide information contained in the final report in another format and as another access point to the final report and the project in order to enable it to be utilized by stakeholders and community organizations.

## FINAL INSIGHTS

To confidently execute the Community Transit Enterprise, it is important to keep in mind that this enterprise is a long-term strategy with intentions to enhance the goals of the parent organization; and to be a conduit to improved well-being, enhanced skills and resources for Corner Brook residents. The aim of the Community Transit Enterprise is to encourage community involvement to sustain the social enterprise, while simultaneously improving health, lifestyle, and social capital and decreasing a number of social concerns. By improving a number of social issues for residents, this would improve support issues for the organization and community partners.

It is recognized that a social enterprise model could contribute to creating a sustainable business for the Corner Brook Status of Women Council, and the community itself. The social enterprise commitment from the organization and external community is vital to integration and ownership within the community; getting the right mix of items, the right mix of location



and access, the right mix of advertising and involvement, the right mix of funding avenues, and the right mix of employees, are important to the lifespan of the Community Transit Enterprise.

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