

The background of the slide is a photograph of a city skyline, likely Halifax, with several tall buildings and a sailboat on the water in the foreground. The text is overlaid on this image.

COMMUNITY-LED LIBRARIES: THE WORKING TOGETHER PROJECT

Metropolitan Libraries Conference

May 12, 2009 - Brisbane

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CEO, Halifax Public Libraries

Project Genesis

- Dominant belief is that libraries are inclusive and serve everyone.
- Statistics indicate that the whole community is not using the public library.
- In Halifax, 47% of the population use the Library.

**Who doesn't and why and what can we do to
develop inclusive public libraries?**

Working Together

- A project of Vancouver, Regina, Toronto and Halifax Public Libraries.
- Funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada from 2004 to 2008.
- Explored social inclusion, connection to communities, service barriers.
- Created a new service model for inclusive community libraries.

Who are the Socially Excluded?

- People who are poor or living in poverty
- The unemployed or underemployed working poor
- Ethnic or cultural minorities
 - New immigrants
 - Refugees
 - African Nova Scotians
 - First Nations people
- Alienated due to political, social, economic or cultural differences from mainstream society
- Excluded due to drug addiction, mental illness, homelessness, disability or low literacy

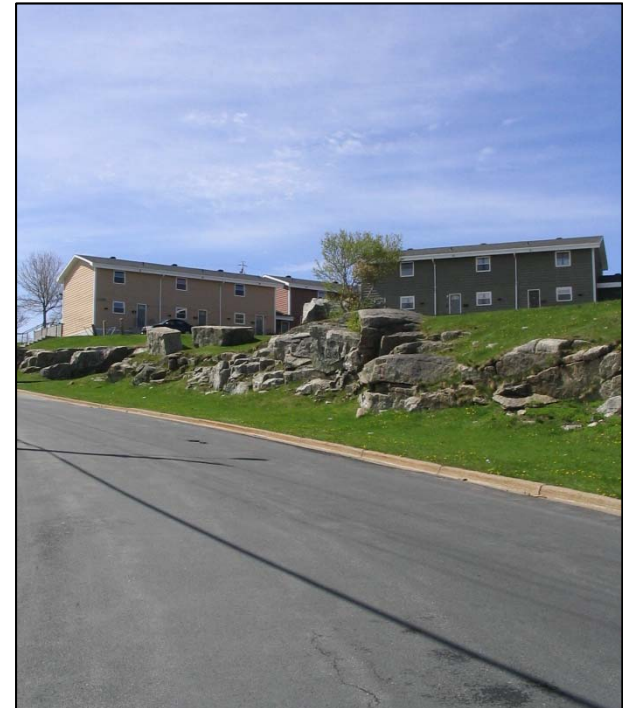
Goal of Working Together Project

1. Work collaboratively with socially excluded communities to articulate and respond to their library service wants and needs
2. Identify and examine systemic barriers to library use and make policy and procedural changes.



Goal of Working Together Project

- To provide effective Public Library service to marginal communities and their residents
- Marginal communities are defined as those who are generally not making extensive use of the resources as a result of barriers to service including cultural, educational and geographical barriers, or issues of poverty



Working Together Methodology

- Select community/library
- Complete and document an inventory of community learning assets to establish the assets and gaps within the community
- Establish a seven member Community Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from both the library and the target community
- Deliver and test models of service within the target community
- Develop and implement a toolkit to transfer service models and skills to all Canadian Libraries

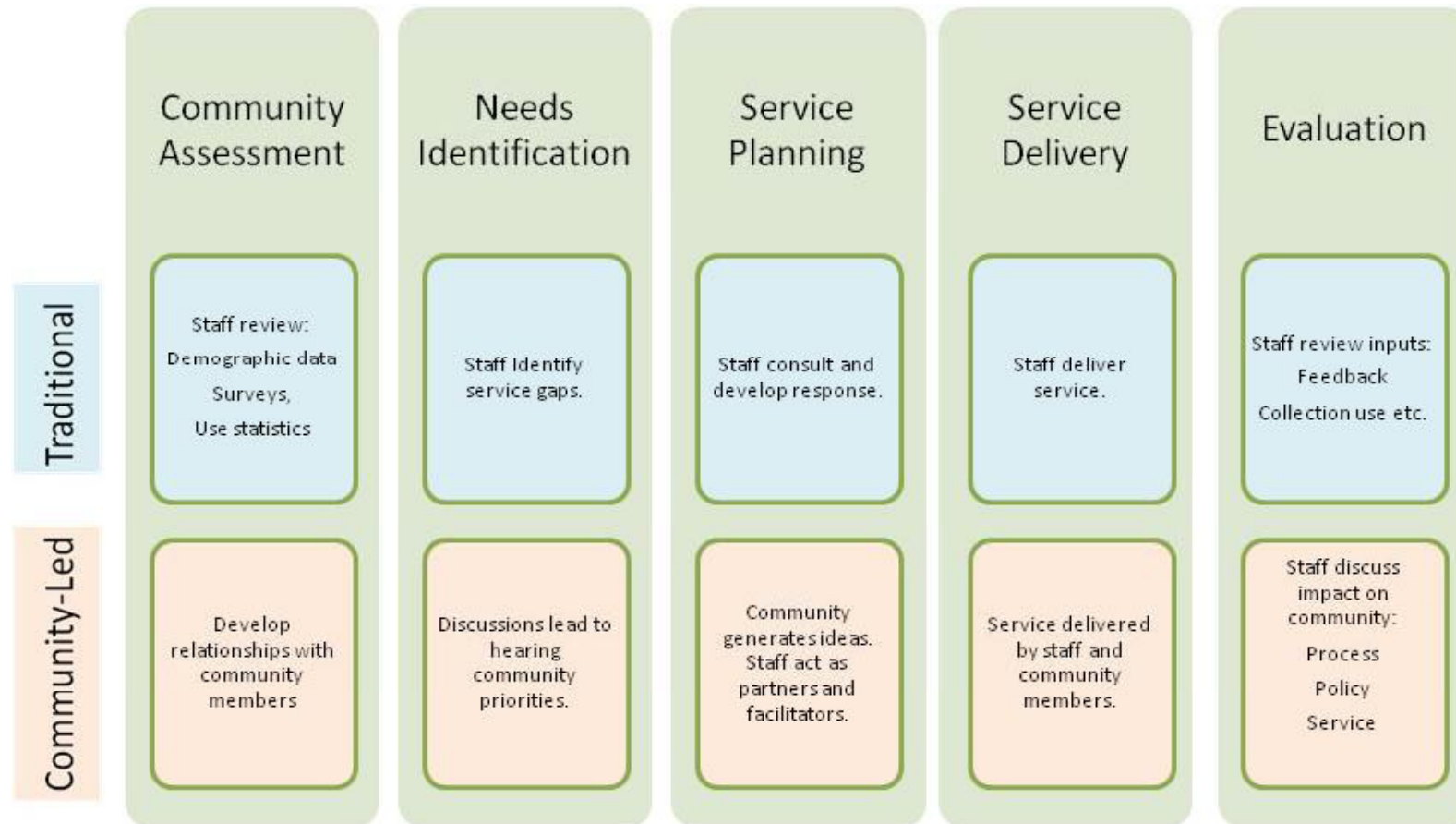
Traditional Library Service Model

- Planning programs and services done in the library by staff.
- Library activities used multiple times in all communities.
- Talking with people about the library, but not listening to people's needs.
- Transaction rather than people-focused.

Community-Led Library Service Model

- Listen to people talk about their library needs (based on life experiences).
- Planning completed with community collaboration.
- Collaborative community activity changed or modified based on community input.

Library Service Planning



Community Selection

Community characteristics considered:

- People living below poverty level
- Low income community
- New Canadian community
- Disabled persons
- Single parents
- Adults with low literacy
- Seniors
- Employment levels (under-employment)
- Geography of community
- HRM resources available to community

Community Selection

Library considerations:

- Can the models developed be used in other branches?
- Can the technology for this project be duplicated in other branches?
- What is the potential for attracting service partners?
- What is the potential for sustainability?
- What is the potential for leveraging complementary funding?
- Will the project address a current service barrier?
- What is the ability of the selected branch to support the project? (staffing, space, material resources, time of Branch Manager)

Community Selection

Final decision was the selection of the Captain William Spry branch in Spryfield, focusing on the Greystone Heights housing project.



Greystone / 500 Block



Captain William Spry Public Library

- Community Branch
- Approximately 26 staff members (FT/PT)
- Recent History of community involvement
 - Children based programs and outreach activities
- Clear expectations
 - Well defined roles in the branch
- Branch Layout
 - First Floor: Children's section and circulation desk
 - Second floor: Adult section and information desk

Library-Based Community Development

- Listen to people's life stories – building relationships with community members
- Taking those messages to build a more inclusive and accessible community library

Project Activities:

Community Entry

Asset mapping

- 2004

Development of Formal/Informal Partnerships



- Indigo
- Halifax Community Learning Network etc...
 - Utilize partnerships to gain access to socially excluded community members


Project Activities: Hired Locally / Community Newsletter

Working Together
Library-Community Connections

A Project of the
**Captain William Spry
Public Library**

This project has been made possible through funding from
Human Resources and Social Development Canada

 Human Resources and Social Development Canada  Ressources humaines et Développement social Canada


Working Together

KEN **CALUM** **MARLENE** **SUZANNE**

Hello. My name is Ken Williment.
I'm the new Community Librarian at the Captain William Spry Library, and part of the Working Together Project Team.

Our goal is simple. We want to know what types of programs and services you'd like the library to provide.

Thanks to feedback from the community, we've already developed several free new programs that may interest you.

We can help you:

- + upgrade your education,
- + learn computer skills,
- + improve your reading skills, and
- + improve your English skills.

Project Activities: Staff Training Sessions

1. Introduction – Staff Concept of Working Together
2. Community Profile / Serving our Community
3. Community Speakers / Diversity Exposure
4. Current Branch Operations and Transition



Project Activities: Engaging Staff

Staff Engagement with community

- Participation in community events
- Involvement with community members through 'partners'
- Involvement in focus groups / circulation questionnaire
- IT training
- Asset map updating



Project Activities:

IT Training – Digital Divide

Traditional Model

- 6+ participants
- Classes
 - Standard content
 - Limited Enrollment/Time
- Limited flexibility
- Self reported user needs

One-on-One Model

- Begins with an individual assessment
 - Sets baseline / connect with services / personal issues
- One or two participants
- Needs and wants
- 3 separate skill levels
- Flexibility

Project Activities: Engaging Community

- Discussed and addressed barriers to service
- Introduced socially excluded to staff and their branch
 - Maintained community -led partnerships with local service providers and their clients
 - ‘instead of linking people to books, we linked people to staff’



Project Activities: Engaging Community

- Community led art group
 - Building sense of community
 - Self sustaining / facilitation
- IT Training
 - Started with small group
 - Moved towards 1:1 model
 - Came to branch for computer training but expanded to other library based activities



Project Activities: Community Consultation

Example: Catalogue Guide

- Librarian generated vs. community-led and developed catalogue guide



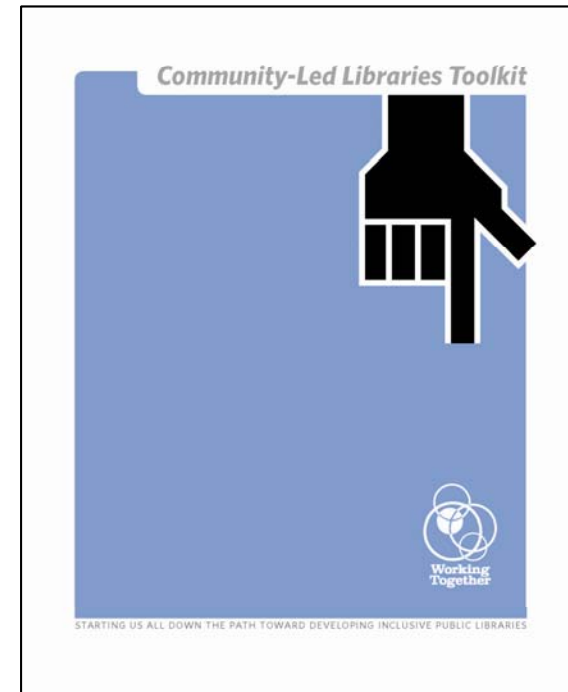
Skills Development

- Link to literacy and language skill classes (ESL)
- Research/study skills
- Computer skills
- Job search skills
- Social skills
- Self-esteem and self confidence
- Help accessing government information

Project Outcomes:

Toolkit

- Captured major project learnings at each site (anecdote, key points, theory, etc...)
 - Example: Community entry, Community Mapping, Relationship Building, Partnerships, etc
 - Disseminated to public libraries and library schools across Canada



Key Learnings within the Library System

- We need to allow time for the community to identify their needs as opposed to staff defining.
- Libraries as a public space are not accessible to all, and not everyone should be served identically. Understanding this can be a challenge for staff.
- Different communities have different needs. Equal does not mean equitable for all.
- Implement, evaluate, modify, and sustain.



Key Learnings from the Community

- Community trust is based upon taking time to get to know individuals.
- First we need to talk, listen and build relationships, then offer programs and services
- Socially excluded people will not visit a library until they feel their library issues are resolved (i.e. fines or lost books)
- Physical environment, staff interactions, and community dynamics all impact socially excluded peoples abilities to access library services.



"I met all these people [at the library] and my life changed, because I know there are people like me out there that never went to school and never had a chance. I am just glad that this place is here for us"

- Focus Group Participant

Key Learnings from the Community

- Anticipate and address barriers
- Be accommodating: provide reassurance and rescheduling
- Think sustainability. If unlikely, at least document needs.



“One thing that keeps me away is navigating the library...The lady at the counter is checking people out, the other lady is sorting books. A lot of people won’t ask [for help] because they think that the person [staff] will think they are stupid. I really don’t know how to use the library.”

*- Focus Group
Participant Non-Library user*

Sustainability has required:

- Recognizing this is a paradigm shift for how libraries provide service
- Creating a knowledge base and learnings which have a synergism with other projects in the system
- Recognizing there will be changes to roles and competencies of library staff

Implementation at Halifax Public Libraries

- Created a Community Development Manager position
- Piloting the community development process at two Branches, one rural and one sub-urban. This process involved:
 1. Facilitating staff session regarding their understanding of the local community;

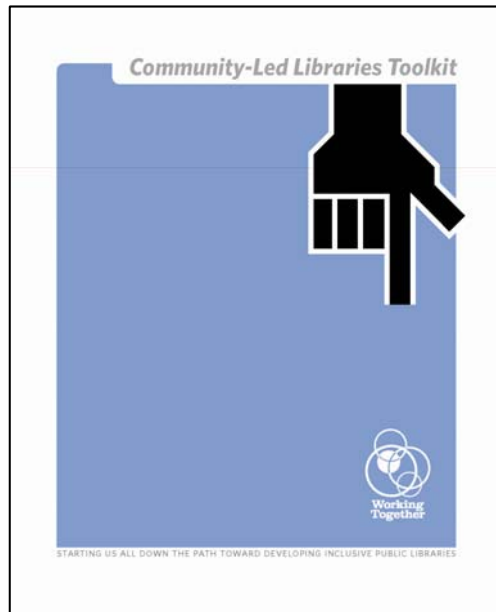
Implementation at Halifax Public Libraries (con't)

2. Developing and implementing staff training
 - a. Ten community development based training modules,
 - b. Staff involvement and input lead to staff buy-in
3. Identifying target groups
 - a. In-branch and outside branch engagement
4. Building community relationships through asset mapping process
 - a. Allowing for identification of communities assets, needs, and potential partnerships

Implementation at Halifax Public Libraries (con't)

- Developing New Procedures
 - Asset Mapping
 - Staff work in the Community (Door-to-Door)
- Developing New Teams
 - Asset Mapping Database Team
 - Exploring a Community Development Advisory Team
- Adjusting job descriptions for staff working in the community
- Exploring the application of Community Development within regional public service development and delivery.

Download the Community-Led Libraries Toolkit



www.librariesincommunities.ca