

Incomes and Livelihood Working Group Notes

August 10, 2016

In Attendance: Elizabeth Ballantyne, (DTES Neighbourhood House), Sean Condan (Megaphone), Matt Smedley (Mission Possible), Anna Godefry (Binnners' Project), Wes Regan (City of Vancouver), Tom Wanklin (City of Vancouver), Sharon Belli (Carnegie/Urban Core) Kiri Bird (LEDlab), Alisha Maxfield (CEDSAC)

Guests: Marleen Morris, Krystin St. Jean from Community Development Institute of UNBC

Regrets: Hendrik Buene (Village Vancouver), Davin Boutang (Binnners' Project)

1. Welcome and Acknowledgement:

Acknowledged the coast salish land that we are meeting on
Did a round of intros
Kiri mentioned guests from CD

2. Approval of Agenda:

Updates instead of report, made change to that so it can be more of a quick update.
Was asked if there were any additions to agenda: no one commented

3. Approval of Previous Meeting Notes:

Comment: It would be helpful to bring meeting notes to the community when we're meeting with people.

Everyone was happy with previous meeting notes, and appreciated the details.

4. CED Planner Update:

Basic Guaranteed Annual Income Pilot:

Wes asked for a meeting with Mike McGee (CoV staff) regarding Guaranteed Annual Income pilot.

There have been a number of cities talking about how an urban strategy is needed in Canada with regards to a Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI) program. The cities are trying to figure out how to work together and avoid constitutional crisis. There have been questions about whether money flows through the provinces, or if there will be a tripartite agreement. They are not sure how GAI is going to get off the ground at this time.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development is interested in GAI pilot.

Would be best for the Incomes and Livelihoods group to have questions and concerns as to how the GAI is going to be done. Jean is concerned that it is a top down process, and that the community would not necessarily be driving the project.

Question: Would sending in recommendations and questions to CoV regarding GAI be getting ahead of the game?

The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition was in touch with Wes and Kelty Craig, whom agreed to stay in touch with both of them, and it was also mentioned that they want input from the community on GAI pilot.

The draft CED strategy report can be a useful document to give to those involved in GAI pilot.

Action Item: Wes needs input from this working group committee on the multi-city poverty reduction report, with regards to the advocacy component.

Question: Is there anyone within the Provincial government that Wes is talking to about the GAI pilot?

There are aspirational ideas that the Federal government and the city will work together with regards to GAI pilot, however, there is gap, which is the involvement of the Provincial government. The Federal government has ideas about what needs to be done, but the Provincial government is in a tight spot.

A meeting was held in Carnegie with the Mayor of Vancouver, VANDU, Chinatown, Black Canadian group, CCAP regarding social housing and GAI pilot. Mayor said we need to make GAI pilot happen as soon as possible, specifically because elections are coming up. May be a good idea to check with Mayor's office and ask who is involved and if the Incomes and Livelihoods group can work with a small group from that office to bring up the process of a GAI pilot to Victoria.

Mayor came with an open mind and ears and heard what the issues were about GAI and the Mayor suggested that there be a committee that can work out the details of GAI. The general idea of the meeting was that everyone agreed on wanting better outcomes for the DTES, whether it is advocacy about income assistance and/or housing.

Comment: CEDSAC/ Incomes and Livelihoods group needs to be ready with a response to any senior government who comes to find out what the city and the organizations in the community can do to help the GAI pilot/advocacy happen.

Action Item: We would like more comment from this committee on the advocacy piece of the draft CED strategy.

Comment: We need to make sure we have residents who are of low income be a part of these committees to suggest how GAI would happen.

Action Item: The working group will partner with city to convene a roundtable discussion regarding the draft CED strategy advocacy component with specific consideration to the GAI pilot.

5. Update on Lux RFP meeting:

Colin informed committee about the meeting and that the RFP will be coming out shortly (September).

The general idea is that the Lux would provide a space with its' primary focus being employment support, but many people along with the CoV agree that other connections with services like mental health and housing need to be in the space as well.

CoV will be having an open house with the RFP in September and people will have about 6 weeks to submit comments, questions, and applications.

The CoV is looking for more suggestions from the community about the space and how it will operate.

Context was provided to the CDI guests about the Lux space, mainly that there is a big gap in employment services and the Lux space is a collective response to that gap.

Question: Is it a more broad approach to employment so that once someone walks in the door at the Lux they can be connected to several services with regards to employment and beyond.

One committee member commented that the Lux space would be similar to the Red Hook model in New York (Centre for Core innovation).

Feedback from Hendrick: a new resource is being created in an appropriate spot, COV having trouble dealing with it, workers are cleaning the streets . need structure with people vending on the streets outside of the markets.

Urban Core will host a service design workshop around October 20th, which will look at an integrated employment service delivery model and identifying the clients and the process.

Action Item: Kiri will invite the working group to the Urban Core/LEDLab workshop tentatively scheduled on October 20th.

Question: Would it be helpful for people who are not seeking employment opportunities to go into the Lux for health and wellness services only?

Yes that is the model that the CoV is looking for. It's a place that can connect people to services of all kinds. Such as assistance with medical needs, ID, income assistance, etc.

Comment: We need to discuss the more near term objectives for the Lux space such as training for employment, and then the other services that we would be provided in the Lux space can be long term goals.

Comment: Many DTES residents are depressed and have a lot of crises to deal with so at times an employment training program is not the first thing they need, so it may be helpful to have some of the health services available more immediately in the Lux space.

Comment: The interior of the Lux space will need renovations to make it suitable as it is just a shell, therefore it will not be quick to get up and going. The hope is that it will be operating by spring 2017.

6. Update on vendor cart meeting:

Question: Are there any additional updates to the meeting or can we file this as a resource for the committee?

The Binnars Project is in process of submitting an application to get funding to the COV through CEDSAC to get a cart program going, it is very complex. The application has not been sent. Anna said people could ask her if anyone would like to see the application.

Comment: The cart program is not just about binnars but it would be for anyone who needs a cart to operate their service, such as vendors, artists, window cleaners, etc.

The Carnegie cart project hired a coordinator for the cart project (Ali from the Carnegie homeless outreach team). Carnegie will complete their part of the project by October.

Comment: The cart project is also about being a permit program for vending and not just the cart design issue.

Comment: The key is how do we collaborate and work together to make these programs successful with regards to carts, storage, licensing, employment infrastructure, etc?

Comment: The discussion is about the cart and different organizations working on that, but there is an entrepreneurial idea for skills on logistics of the program to grow the program so that is it more than just the cart design, but rather brings other employment pieces to play in it.

Action Item: Carnegie and the Binnerns Project will meet again to further work on development of the cart program, and Sharon will be sure to invite Davin to this meeting.

7. CED Coordinator Update:

The CED Coordinator informed the working group that she has engaged with 10 organizations and approximately 20 DTES residents regarding their needs for the community and obtained feedback on the CED strategy recommendations.

Question: How are you engaging with people?

CED Coordinator is doing informal pop up engagements at community events, and scheduling meetings with people one to one or with groups of residents that are involved with different organizations, such as the DTES St Market.

Comment: Carnegie has space to provide smaller meetings to bring several residents and organizations in one room to discuss all recommendations together.

Davin would like to be involved in the community engagement piece along with CED Coordinator.

Suggestion: CED Coordinator attend meetings that are already happening in order to engage with many people at once.

Action Item: The CED Coordinator will make arrangements to attend a Binnerns Project meeting as a guest speaker.

Action Item: CED Coordinator to connect with folks at Mission Possible.

Action Item: Anna will share working group and committee meeting notes with the Binnerns' Project staff.

Action Item: Sharon said she could share meeting notes on the Carnegie bulletin board and spread it more widely throughout Carnegie.

Comment: Pete Fry talked about there being a travelling road show and asked if CED Coordinator is doing this to engage?

Yes, this is what the CED Coordinator has somewhat been doing with regards to pop up engagements at events.

Comment: Our meeting notes are not very accessible to the community, perhaps they can be submitted as a narrative in Megaphone and include images, thoughts about the community. There can be a poster as well.

Action Item: Hendrick will ask Megaphone if the committee's notes can be added to the magazine in a more narrative format.

Comment: The stories submitted to Megaphone and elsewhere in the community could be about the 4 different areas of the CED strategy.

Action Item: Wes will add the committee meeting notes on the CoV website so that people can obtain updates from there as well.

Suggestion: Meeting notes can go up on community bulletin boards or on a community TV screen. A consistent place so that community members can be sure to obtain monthly updates.

There are TVs at Carnegie and Potluck Cafe that could be used. There are community bulletin boards in Chinatown, Strathcona, and Carnegie as well.

Comment: Spreading/posting meeting notes throughout the DTES could be an entrepreneurial job for a resident in the community.

8. Great Beginnings -Low Income Entrepreneur Needs Assessment Study:

The plan is to organize a program or space to support the informal economy that exists in the DTES, which will include artists, window cleaners, vendors, binners, and any other self-employment activity. Essentially support low income entrepreneurs and self employment opportunities in the DTES.

Anna from the Binners' Project is asking for 3 months funding via CEDSAC funds to pay a part time coordinator and community outreach person to do a needs assessment to understand what the organization would look like if it was created; what would be the model, the structure, etc.

Comment: There are many women working from home making crafts, sewn goods and hosting as AirBnB locations within the Strathcona area. If a study occurs it would be important to capture the entire DTES neighbourhood, not just the central area of the DTES.

The funding request is for \$8500.00. Therefore, this request would take more than 50% of the leftover of CEDSAC funds (\$15000). CEDSAC could support this idea if all members of CEDSAC agree.

Need to make sure that funding for this idea happens for the whole DTES area, so that people do not see it as funding only going to one area of the DTES. A conversation needs to be had about funding this.

Question: Does the committee want to create and support an opportunity for more organization that are dealing with different components of the economy to participate in

the informal work program idea in order to have a more integrated and collaborative approach?

Yes. This is why the research needs to happen to decide how the informal work program will be organized. This conversation needs to be shared with other and we need to understand other organizations' and individuals' motivation behind this idea.

A conversation should be had as to how this should be achieved, make sure the study is not too narrow in developing this program.

Action Item: Anna will rephrase what the outcomes for the needs assessment study would be.

Comment: The focus of the study should be on self employment in different economies, or as an entrepreneur, regardless of informal or formal.

Comment: The working group's name should be "Incomes and Livelihoods", rather than "Livelihood" as there are many livelihoods in this community, not just one. Everyone agreed to same.

Action Item: CED Coordinator will make changes to previous documents with regards to the working group's name.

Action Item: Kiri will connect Tom, Anna, Sean, Johann, and Hendrick with people from RayCam (Our Place) and Strathcona community members who are doing work on self employment in the community.

Comment: As an outcome from this, it would be limiting to see it as a single organization, it may need to be several entities.

Suggestion: There is a lot of expertise and support for this initiative outside of the DTES, such as the Women Entrepreneurs of BC, it would be good to get information from such groups for this project idea/study.

Action Item: Elizabeth recommends that the working group look at other models such as the Women Entrepreneurs of BC, Small Business BC to gain insight and information for the September working group meeting.

Comment: The information from this needs assessment study could be useful all over the province and beyond, it could be a ground breaking model.

Comment: Kiri has done some reading on social franchise models which could be a potential part of this project.

Comment: A lot of the focus is on the informal economy, perhaps the project can be tagged as “entrepreneurial endeavours”, there are many people who can be put at risk, as it’s risky to be an entrepreneur, it would be good to include how we’re helping people to bridge into the formal economy as well. There is a questions about how sustainable this is for the longterm, is it just supplementing their income, will it be a new formal employment piece for an individual, what is the spectrum of employment, is it a social enterprise, is it transitional employment, supported employment, etc? It would be good to look at the spectrum and journey of the types of employment someone may achieve through this. If we are considering low income people, there is a spectrum of abilities, and we need to look at more than just the informal economy.

Question: What is classified as an informal economy and a formal economy?

A formal economy is someone who works for a business or operates a business that is registered with the CRA, has a business license, provides employees pay stubs etc. The informal economy is growing here in the DTES, and it includes such things as survival vending, or selling art on the streets, binning etc.

Krystin from CDI uses the term “home based business” to classify people who operate businesses in an informal way. It was mentioned that perhaps this could be a useful term for the committee to use.

Comment: To bridge the two economies together, a tactic could be to provide space for safe vending. There is a large spectrum of employment that exists in the DTES, a lot of the focus in the past has been with regards to the formal economy, thus the gap in the informal economy needs to be addressed. It is important to keep the door open between the two economies and how people can flow between them so that is it not too narrow.

Comment: Kiri discovered a loophole in the income assistance system through a project with her LEDLab work. She found that an individual on income assistance who is employment obligated can only earn \$200 in individual income. However, that individual may be able to claim the rest of the income made as “business income” and can keep this in a business account, separate from their individual earnings.

Comment: the Ministry of Social Development (income assistance) could catch onto this and find ways to take the business income away to keep people in poverty. We need to advocate that MSD does not claw back people’s earned income and instead support people in their employment.

Action Item: Potluck Cafe and LEDLab have a report that will assist Wes with writing the advocacy piece to Ministry of Social Development about earning exemptions.

Comment: A member highlighted that Hendrick has been very consistent for years with regards to addressing the need for MSD and others to support the informal economy within

the DTES.

Comment: This informal work program study can capture people who are in the informal economy and who have a drive to do more with their work. The program could also provide other supports such as people who have a solid understanding and knowledge as to how a business operates, the legalities of a business and how to become a successful entrepreneur.

Comment: A larger discussion about this informal work program idea is needed at the August 17th CEDSAC meeting. This could be a key study that is suggested to city council for funding in order to make it happen.

Comment: A committee member is worried that people may be concerned about the income to fund this program idea.

Comment: At this time there is a collection of quick start projects that need more funding in order to do research and feasibility studies.

Question: Would this program idea still be considered a Great Beginnings funding initiative if additional funds were received from CEDSAC?

The program study could be both Capital Grants funding along with Great Beginnings grant funds.

Suggestion: A committee member reminded everyone that when they do their personal shopping to consider buying their goods from members of the DTES community who are participating in the informal economy as a means of support.

9. Final Discussion on Draft Recommendations:

The group read through the Incomes and Livelihoods recommendations together.

Advocacy recommendation:

“Annualizing other forms for exemptions” should be mentioned in the Advocacy section.

Action Item: There should be a line in the advocacy section of the recommendations that “Council approved the DTES Local Area Plan in March 2014, and instructed staff to prepare an advocacy strategy”. Also, that in July 2016, Mayor Gregor Robertson called for a community coalition around advocacy.

Comment: State that CEDSAC is willing to be the voice in the coalition along with the Mayor’s office, and that CEDSAC can broaden the intent of income assistance advocacy to get more broader support.

Action Item: The CED Coordinators can help find the appropriate language and circulate this to the committee.

Wes commented that some of the recommendations within the CED draft strategy report are what CEDSAC can do, and other recommendations are for the CoV. Wes did his best to make it as clear as possible as to who is performing the work for each recommendation. Wes also highlighted in the CED Draft strategy report that the recommendations are not solely for CEDSAC and CoV to implement, but that they are also the responsibility of the community as a whole.

Question: Does everyone on the Incomes and Livelihoods committee approve of the recommendations? Formatting and wordsmithing of these recommendations can happen at a later date.

Everyone agreed with nods around the table to the Incomes and Livelihoods working group recommendations.

Wes informed the group that the CED strategy report is going to be an appendix to his council report. There will also be “coles notes” of what is happening in the community with regards to different projects and details will be referred to as appendixes.

Comment: This is community owned, written in the community’s voice and will be folded into the strategy document in a more formal manner.

The report is about asking what the needs are to complete research, and get funding for further research to happen.

Infrastructure for the informal economy recommendation:

Question: Does everyone agree with the language “low income entrepreneur”?

Comment: Feel that it separates people and provides a mindset of “us vs them”. Also, people’s dignity should not be defined by their income.

Comment: How about using “grey market economy” and/or “home based business” language?

A couple of members mentioned that they do not feel the term “low income entrepreneur” is stigmatizing, as it is the truth about what is currently happening on the streets of the DTES.

Comment: With regards to the “home based business” language there could be someone who makes \$35,000 a year with their “home based business” wanting in on the benefits of this program and that’s not necessarily the intention.

The working group agreed to keep the language “low income entrepreneur”.

Action Item: Kiri asked that everyone from the working group read the recommendations online and provide their feedback on language within the next two days.

10. Next Meeting and Next Steps:

Next meeting TBD:

Meeting adjourned at 12:06pm