ENGAGING FOR CHANGE:
Practicing collaboration and planning in Guelph-Wellington
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UNIVERSITY of GUELPH
CHANGING LIVES IMPROVING LIFE

Agri-Food and Rural **Link**
A program of the OMAFRA – U of G Partnership
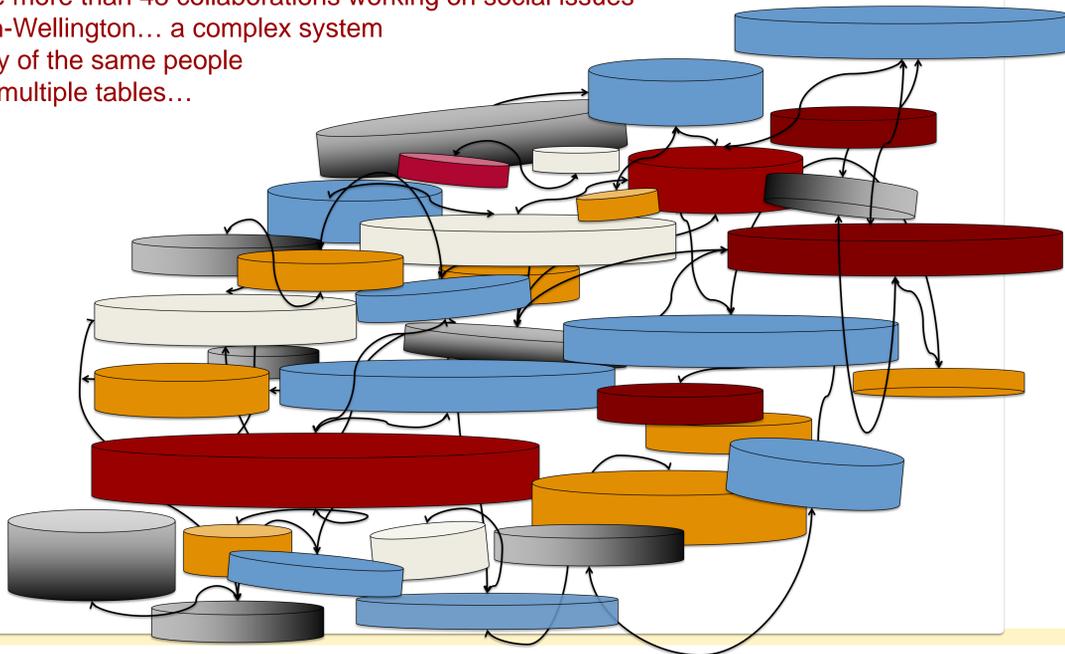Mobilizing Agri-Food and Rural Research Knowledge

The Idea

Social planning and decision-making in local communities is increasingly characterized by a complex networks of charities, not-for-profits, and non-governmental organizations. A variety of collaborative networks act to generate policy, deliver services and programs to the public, and influence citizen participation. Guelph-Wellington has seen the development of a large number of these collaborative networks with overlapping purposes, goals and scope. While there is evident commitment to engagement and collaboration at multiple levels, issues to be addressed include the complexity of dealing with the functionality and governance of collaborations, the capacity to engage widely, and the impact and outcomes of our work. Through a series of meetings and activities with broader stakeholders, a core group devised a program of activities, elicited support and participation from multiple more partners, and jointly applied for funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. Funding decisions in spring 2011 will determine the exact scope of each activity – the programme will start in March 2011.

There are more than 48 collaborations working on social issues in Guelph-Wellington… a complex system with many of the same people sitting at multiple tables…

Four objectives

• To expand and nurture a sustainable, flexible and functional partnership of social services agencies and networks, funders, the City of Guelph and the University of Guelph

• To advance the scholarship on collaboration and engagement strategies for social planning and community decision-making

• To "practice" partnership through new models of collaboration and social planning in Guelph-Wellington, using activities to advance emerging community initiatives and using scholarly research that leads to greater community impact

• To work to create a more complete community-university research agenda and set of relationships that incorporates contextual social and historical conditions of our region, and bridges the short-term needs of our partnership activities to longer-term opportunities and goals.

The programme:

Three areas of research and networking activity strike a balance between meeting community needs for practical products and processes, academic requirement for production of scholarly products, and a critical view of all of our work.

1. **Tools, practices, and policy**
2. **Expanding the understanding of local and regional collaboration & planning**
3. **A new framework for area collaborations**.

This proposed programme involves multiple academic and community partners (organizations) including the Volunteer Centre, the Guelph Community Health Centre, Immigrant Services, Community Resource Centre of North and Central Wellington, 10 Carden Shared Space Inc., Trellis Mental Health, and the area Funders Network (GW United Way, City of Guelph, Guelph Community Foundation, Trillium Foundation, Ministry of Immigration and Culture), Student Life, Cbase among others.

Steering Committee:

Belinda Leach, University of Guelph ✦ Barbara Powell, City of Guelph ✦ Byron Sheldrick, University of Guelph ✦ Sarah Haanstra, United Way of Guelph and Wellington ✦ Erin Harvey, Family and Children's Services ✦ Randalin Ellery, Poverty Elimination Task Force ✦ Linda Hawkins, Research Shop/University of Guelph

Please contact lhawkins@uoguelph.ca if you have questions or would like to become involved.

The projects are on:

⊙ Collating tools and practices on engaging/collaborating for multiple users
⊙ Ethnographic mapping of planning processes
⊙ Exploring tensions between advocacy and service provision
⊙ Examining effects of restructuring on local government and decision-making
⊙ Fostering board collaboration
⊙ Training community researchers
⊙ Conducting asset mapping of strengths
⊙ Developing data access protocols and community indicators for shared use
⊙ Contributing to youth resilience in the community through linking university and community programming
⊙ Developing a shared governance model, mechanisms for communication, and forms of accountability.

Partners

CITY OF **Guelph**
Making a Difference

POVERTY ELIMINATION
GUELPH & WELLINGTON TASK FORCE FOR

Family & Children's Services
of Guelph and Wellington County

United Way OF GUELPH & WELLINGTON

UNIVERSITY of GUELPH
CHANGING LIVES IMPROVING LIFE

Institute for **Community** Engaged **Scholarship** (ICES)
The **Research** Shop