BuildingPolicy4 the Social Economy

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Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network
Partenariat sur l'économie sociale et la durabilité
Bridging, Bonding, and Building / Renforcement des liens et des capacités

Policy Implications and National Recommendations: Maternity and Parental Leave

Michelle MacCallum, Women's Network PEI
Kim D'Ambrgio, Student Researcher
Irene Novaczek, Institute of Island Studies

Purpose of Study
❖ Was Women's Network effective at communicating policy recommendations on improving access to maternity and parental benefits for Canadians?
❖ Was Women's Network able to influence public policy?

Method
▪ Student researcher conducted interviews with key informants and project staff. Interviews were transcribed, coded, compiled, and analyzed.
▪ Project communications and reports were reviewed.
▪ Record of post-project activities served as indicators of the impact of the project on policy advocacy and reform.
▪ Project interventions were analyzed for effectiveness and areas for further/future work identified.

Findings
❖ Following a strategic and tailored process of engagement for separate stakeholders – community, decision-makers, academics, general public – is key to successful communications and uptake of policy recommendations.
❖ Having a dedicated team of partners working collaboratively meant the project's network and capacity had further reach thus ensuring more uptake.
❖ Policy work needs to be supported by a skilled and dedicated lead organization. A flexible and supportive funder (SWC) was essential to this project's success.

Process for Policy Engagement
Issue identified by Board of Directors of Women's Network PEI (2001)
Pregnant Board member unable to access benefits because she is self-employed leads staff to look into access issues

Community based research conducted in Phase I (2002-2003).

- *Atlantic Wide consultations with parents and women's groups were held as well as a review of existing legislation.*
- *Research was disseminated as part of a community validation process and then edited as needed.*

Policy recommendations developed in Phase II (2004-2005)

- *Guiding principles for policy recommendations developed by stakeholders*
- *Long term and short term recommendations developed using guiding principles*

Communications of Policy Recommendations (2006-2008)

- *Communications training and strategy adopted by Advisory Committee*
- *Recommendations communicated to Members of Parliament and Senate, Service Canada Beaurocracy, Provincial Ministers Responsible for Status of Women, National Policy organizations working on similar issues, Academics, general public*
- *Follow up meetings and information exchange and sharing as requested*

Policy Implications and Recommendations

- ❖ Policy projects need to be funded by supportive and flexible government departments and/or private foundations
- ❖ Consensus building approach adopted by an effective and determined advisory committee is useful for decision making and strategy building
- ❖ Strategic communications informed by "insiders" within stakeholder communities makes for better uptake of messages
- ❖ Community groups must be nimble and bold with communications and lobby efforts and strive to maintain a collaborative approach with decision makers

Was the Project Effective in Changing Policy?

- ❖ Lack of ongoing funding means that Women's Network has become a monitor of progress rather than an instigator
- ❖ Uptake of policy recommendations by national policy orgs
- ❖ Senate Inquiry
- ❖ Provincial ministers responsible for Status of Women currently supporting policy change at FPT level
- ❖ Some champions amongst Members of Parliament

So…..yes it was effective in raising awareness
and no…..not much has moved forward in legislation
"Timing is to policy as location is to real estate"
Things can change quickly if the right decision-makers see the benefit and see the desire amongst the public. Policy changes can be adopted as election platforms or legacies.
There is willingness building to make the needed changes.