



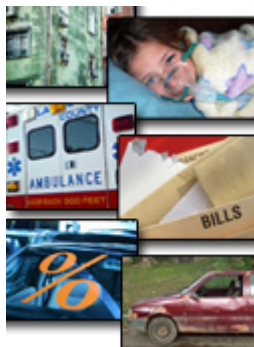
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Beautiful Thinking for May

A Poverty Compendium Tool Kit

By: Mark Cabaj

The complexity of poverty is well illustrated in an example by David Shipler in his book on the working poor in the United States. "Every problem," he says, "magnifies the impact of the others, and all are so tightly interlocked that one reversal can produce a chain reaction with results far distant from the original causes."



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For example, "a rundown apartment can exacerbate a child's asthma, which leads to a call for an ambulance, which generates a medical bill that cannot be paid, which ruins a credit record, which hikes the interest rate on an auto loan, which forces the purchase of an unreliable used car, which jeopardizes a mother's punctuality at work, which limits her promotions and earning capacity, which confines her to poor housing..."

Shipler goes on to say, "If problems are interlocking then so must solutions be [...] A job alone is not enough. Medical insurance alone is not enough. Good housing

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alone is not enough. Reliable transportation, careful family budgeting, effective parenting, effective schooling alone are not enough when each is achieved in isolation from the rest.” Given this complexity, how can communities most effectively respond to issues of poverty?

The desire to find answers to this question is what led the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation; the Caledon Institute of Social Policy; and, Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement to partner in the creation of Vibrant Communities in 2002. This unique initiative supports and links collaborations from more than a dozen urban centers from across Canada who are experimenting with comprehensive and collaborative approaches to reduce poverty.

The essence of Vibrant Communities’ work over the past seven years, and the tools and learning that it has generated, have now been beautifully synthesized by Garry Loewen in *A Compendium of Poverty Reduction Frameworks and Strategies*. This aide provides a rich resource to assist people and communities in developing more comprehensive approaches to addressing these interlocking issues.

The Compendium draws from the experiences of all members of the Vibrant Communities network. This includes community collaborations from Surrey, B.C.’s Capital Region, Abbotsford, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Waterloo, Hamilton, Niagara, Trois-Rivières, the Saint-Michel neighborhood in Montreal, Saint John and St. John’s.

The work of these dynamic collaborations has provided a valuable “learning lab” for creating, testing and refining an array of poverty reduction frameworks and strategies. Specifically, The Poverty Compendium highlights 147 different strategies that could be employed in a poverty reduction effort and describes several frameworks that local collaborations have used in their own unique poverty reduction campaigns.

Related Links:

- [Read *A Compendium of Poverty Reduction Strategies and Frameworks* by Garry Loewen](#)
- [Register here to join Garry and Mark for an upcoming conversation on the *Strategic Drivers for Comprehensive Approaches*](#)
- [Learn more about Vibrant Communities](#)

Building Comprehensive Community Initiatives: The Challenges of Scope, Scale and Sustainability By: Liz Weaver

Two related papers have recently been published highlighting lessons for building comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs). In *Comprehensive Strategies for Deep and Durable Outcomes*, Eric Leviten-Reid provides a model for considering comprehensiveness and identifies five distinct challenges that CCIs typically face including: completeness; coordination; robustness; governance, and innovation. Leviten-Reid describes each of these interlocked challenges in the paper and provides Canadian examples largely drawn from Vibrant Communities across Canada.



The article, *Scope, Scale and Sustainability: What it Takes to Create Lasting Community Change* by Tina R. Trent and David M. Chavis and published in The Foundation Review examines ten U.S.-based CCIs and identifies the critical cross-cutting success factors - including a single entity as broker; clear roles and responsibilities; alignment between goals, strategies, interests, resources and geography; meaningful community engagement; competent leadership and strategic connections with government.

Trent and Chavis share four lessons learned from their research which can help frame the evolving work of CCIs. These are:

- *Lesson 1: Plan, operate and evaluate based on a systems and community change framework* – Achieving community-level outcomes often requires policy change and systems reform. To do this effectively CCIs need staff and volunteers with the *systems knowledge* to uncover opportunities to, “streamline, integrate, restructure and redirect” how things are done and the *relationships* to “give life to these opportunities.”
- *Lesson 2: Choose focused and affordable strategies* – What are the right strategies that will produce the desired outcomes? To answer this question, CCIs need a “thoughtful process for considering issues of timing and sequencing.”

- *Lesson 3: Develop capacity for the strategic use of data* – Demographic data, program participation, service data and estimates of effectiveness based on best-practice information can provide benchmarks against which the feasibility of various strategies can be assessed and alternative strategies can be evaluated.
- *Lesson 4: Plan for change, conflicts and risks* – CCIs that include an assessment of community readiness and the establishment of systems to build long-term community capacity and cope with the risks and conflicts that inevitably emerge are much more likely to achieve community and organizational transformation.

Taken together, *Scope, Scale and Sustainability* and *Comprehensive Strategies for Deep and Durable Outcomes* provide a useful lens into the challenges of focusing community efforts around complex issues. The challenges or “cross-cutting success factors” identified in each paper offer a solid framework on which to build effective community collaborations. A bigger challenge for those of us implementing such approaches is to find the best ways to deal with the issues of scope, scale and sustainability given the need to find the best balance of short and long-term results.

Related Links:

- [Read the full article, *Comprehensive Strategies for Deep and Durable Outcomes* by Eric Leviten-Reid](#)
- [Read the full article of *Scope, Scale, and Sustainability: What It Takes to Create Lasting Community Change*](#)
- [Visit the Caledon Institute website](#)



Policy Innovation that Recognizes the Value of Place By: [Paul Born](#)

Neil Bradford's latest paper *Bringing Place In* explores recent shifts in Canadian social development policy towards a greater appreciation for how local assets can be leveraged to meet significant national policy challenges. The paper specifically examines a series of recent initiatives designed by the federal government toward more "place-based" approaches to social development and in turn, new programs that have emerged to allow communities greater control of their own destinies.

Using the categories of "municipal empowerment" and "community-building" to map new patterns, the article examines policy and program innovation and learning across federal and local scales. The article concludes that "Canadian governments have now joined a robust and evolving international conversation about leveraging local assets to meet significant national policy challenges, but that more work needs to be done to build high performing, durable multi-level partnerships." Be sure to follow through to the conclusion as Bradford calls for a series of "meeting places" required for advancing these social policy innovations. Important policy initiatives such as Vibrant Communities and Action for Neighborhood Change are mentioned.

Related Links:

- [Read Neil Bradford's full article: *Bringing Place In*](#)
- [Read *The Story in Place: How to Change Your City By Changing its Story* by Christina Baldwin](#)
- [More about place-based policy development in the Caledon Institute's *Community Roles in Policy*](#)
- [More resources on Multisectoral Collaboration](#)

How Do You Make Your Good Idea One That Sticks?

By: [Sylvia Cheuy](#)

Chip and Dan Heath, co-authors of *Made to Stick*, believe that great ideas are made, not born. Mark Twain's observation that "a lie can get halfway around the world before the truth can even get its boots on" was the "ah-ha" that inspired these brothers to begin an in-depth exploration of why some very important ideas struggle to thrive while urban legends and bogus health scares circulate the globe with virtually no real effort. Drawing from the work of psychologists, education researchers, and political scientists, this book identifies six traits that the Heaths have identified as common to all great ideas, from public policy to product designs.

If you want your idea to have traction, the key is "to take your idea, whatever it may be, and present it as a Simple, Unexpected, Concrete, Credible and Emotional Story. We were a little embarrassed when it turned out that we could summarize these six traits with the acronym SUCCESS," said Chip.

The challenge for any of us who have spent months, if not years, steeped in thinking about – and working with – a particular concept or idea is that the more we understand it, the harder it can be for us to explain. The Heaths call this the "Curse of Knowledge." When imagining an alternative to this "curse" they say, "think about proverbs...simple yet profound statements that pack a big nugget of wisdom and are useful in many situations." Proverbs are, as the author Cervantes observed, "short sentences drawn from long experience." The Heath's SUCCESS framework lays out a step-by-step guide for getting around the "curse of knowledge" and offers a powerful how-to guide for anyone with good ideas who wants to present them in ways that not only engage people, but "stick" with the kind of clarity that you can't get out of your head. After all, it is the "sticky idea" that will, most likely, be the one that's put into action in the world.

Related links:

- [Access the Heath's SUCCESSs framework](#)
- [Learn how to apply the SUCCESSs framework in your presentations](#)
- [Listen to the Heath's podcast *Learning from Urban Legends: Creating Ideas that Spread* \(note: large audio download - 12.3 MB\)](#)
- [Check out the Made to Stick website](#)
- [More resources on Innovative Ideas](#)

Bad News about Poverty in Canada By: Garry Loewen

How does Canada compare to other Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations with respect to poverty and income inequality? In a recent report entitled *Growing Unequal? – Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries*, the OECD makes the following observation about poverty rates in Canada: "After 20 years of continuous decline, both inequality and poverty rates have increased rapidly in the past 10 years, now reaching levels above the OECD average."

The OECD's study also found that "incomes are more equally distributed and fewer people are poor where social spending is high." In Nordic and western European countries such as Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands, social spending on people of working age was 7 - 8% of national income in 2005 and the share of working-age people in poverty was between 5% and 8%. In contrast, Korea, Mexico, Turkey and the United States spent 2% or less of national income on benefits and had 12 - 15% of the working age population in poverty."

Canada, the OECD says, "spends less on cash benefits such as unemployment and family benefits than most OECD countries." This partially explains why Canadian taxes and transfers do not reduce inequality by as much as in many other countries. Furthermore, the effect of these transfers on inequality has been declining over time.

Related Links:

- [Read a copy of the OECD report, *Growing Unequal? Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries*](#)
- [Click here for more information about income distribution, poverty and social spending for the OECD countries. \(This site lets you access a set of graphs where you can view and compare the interaction of two social indicators at a time or one or more countries at a time\)](#)
- [Read: *What is Canada's Poverty Rate?* and *Poverty and Inequality in OECD Countries*](#)
- [Visit the Canada Without Poverty website](#)
- [More resources on Policy Development](#)

Out of India By: Paul Born

I recently spent three weeks in India to renew my spirit and to discover the wisdom that this place of extremes might share with me. While there I had also hoped to study the Gandhian principle of Sarvodaya, and the movement that has built around it which proposes that "the good of the individual is contained in the good of all," for my new book *Seeking Community*.

India has captured my heart - I just love when this happens - when you enter a place so large and chaotic and it consumes you and brings out fear. Then over time it accepts you and you accept it. There is a calm knowing - a recognition that if you enter fully and give you will receive the friendship of the place. I will be back for sure to see more learn more etc. I have been bitten by the India bug. I kept a journal of my time there and offer you several excerpts.

Related Links:

- [Read excerpts from Paul's journal](#)
- [More about community life](#)

Engage!
to create vibrant communities

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