



Vibrant Abbotsford

Reclaim Our Humanity - Transform Our Community.

Terms of Reference 2007

Vibrant Abbotsford –

Part One: Objectives of Vibrant Abbotsford:

Vibrant Abbotsford exists to encourage and facilitate collaborative efforts to reduce poverty through systemic change to community conditions, thereby enhancing the quality of life for all who call Abbotsford home. To this end, we will focus our efforts toward building and utilizing our collaborative partnership with the Tamarack Institute and the Pan-Canadian Learning Community. We will attract and use local, regional, and national assets and knowledge resources. We will promote interest in community-based poverty reduction activities in our community, and work diligently to increase their effectiveness.

Poverty reduction in a long term and sustainable manner is our ultimate objective. There are four key objectives for long term poverty reduction. They are:

- meeting basic needs,
- removing barriers that create or sustain poverty,
- building skills, and
- promoting economic development.

Part Two: Provision to Modify

Vibrant Abbotsford will review this document at least annually and modify it as required through consensus-based processes as is necessary to accommodate the emergent, complex and evolutionary progress of the initiative and the community it serves.

Part Three: Core Values of Vibrant Abbotsford:

The following values and principles have been identified and adopted as best practices through the Pan-Canadian Vibrant Communities movement. As such, they will also guide the work of the people committed to Vibrant Abbotsford.

1. We are rooted in a commitment to learn, model and apply the strategies of comprehensive thinking and action, multi-sector collaboration, community asset building and community learning.
2. We are *comprehensive*: we are broad in scope and working with umbrella issues. We collaborate on projects that are interconnected. We intervene at several levels, from systemic to individual, and work beyond service provision to asset building. We empower neighborhoods and communities. Our work results in changes to the broader social and economic context.
3. We are *holistic*: we break down artificial boundaries (silos) to identify links between various issues and engage diverse sectors.
4. We are *multisectoral*: we encourage partnering and collaborative work and recognize the value of contributions from diverse backgrounds, networks and areas of expertise. We believe this brings new value in terms of resources, insights and expertise. In order to embrace this concept, we are governed by coordinating mechanisms that encompass and emphasize our plurality.

5. We are *inclusive*, not just with issues but also in membership.
6. We are prepared to commit resources and focus on ongoing learning and improvement
7. We will act through consensus and provide a safe forum for speaking our minds in a spirit of trust, appreciation and generosity, where all ideas and perspectives are open for discussion and idea exchange is critical for our success.
8. We focus on the *strengths and assets* of communities rather than their deficits. We can create increased credibility, capacity and capital for the entire field of community poverty reduction by working together. Celebrating our community and building a sense of hope and optimism is as important as understanding what needs to change and working towards those changes.
9. We focus on the reduction of poverty as a fundamental goal. It is more important to eliminate the root causes of poverty than to provide relief from the conditions of poverty.
10. We recognize that process and product are equally valued as measures of accomplishment.
11. We strive to build trust and credibility through transparency of our actions and communications.
12. We are prepared to take risks, be creative and innovative in our work.
13. Engaging our community is a vital component of success and participation by all stakeholders is critical.
14. We are accountable for agreements we make with our stakeholders and for commitments we make to each other.
15. We will make mistakes and learn from them as we go. We will learn from each other and from what has worked elsewhere. However, we recognize that Abbotsford is unique, and our learning, strategies and solutions will be our own.

Part Four: Operating Principles

We understand that poverty reduction initiatives in communities require acceptance of change within the context of complex adaptive systems. The following principles will guide our thinking, strategy and action undertaken by all members of Vibrant Abbotsford, being fundamental to how we will work together.

Principles of Collaborative Leadership¹:

Vibrant Abbotsford operates under the principles of “Collaborative Leadership”, which may be explained as an open style and approach to decision making, problem solving, and creating relationships to further its ends. Generally speaking, collaborative leadership is the leadership of process, rather than people.

There are two ways to define collaborative leadership.

Collaborative leadership: leadership of a collaborative effort. This definition refers to taking a leadership role in a coalition, organization, or other enterprise where everyone is on an equal footing and working together to solve a problem, create something new, or run an organization

¹ David D. Chrislip and Carl E. Larson - *Collaborative Leadership: How Citizens and Civic Leaders Can Make a Difference*. Jossey-Bass Inc., 1994

or initiative. The leader is not in control of the group, but has responsibility for guiding and coordinating the process by which the group decides upon and carries out actions to accomplish its goals.

Leading collaboratively: leadership as a collaborative effort. In this case - usually in an organizational rather than a coalition or community setting - leadership may shift, by group decision, from one person to another as different talents or abilities are called for, or (more often) leadership is permanently shared by all, or several, members of the group. Here, there is no one leader: the group functions as a true collaborative, and guides itself.

While it can be practiced in a number of ways, collaborative leadership is almost always characterized by specific traits. Among the most important:

1. *Collaborative problem-solving and decision-making.* It's not the leader's job to decide what to do and then tell the group. Rather, the group considers the problem, decides what to do, and counts on the leader to help them focus their effort.
2. *Open process.* Collaborative leadership means that the process of decision-making is truly collaborative, and has no set end-point when it begins. The end result is worked out among all the participants.
3. *Leadership of the process, rather than the group.* The purpose of collaborative leadership is to help the collaborative process work, rather than to lead the people involved toward something - to a particular decision, for instance, or in a particular direction.

Part Five: Consensus Decision Making Framework

The following shall be a general guide to Vibrant Abbotsford for making decisions together. This applies to all Vibrant Abbotsford groups, including the Vibrant Abbotsford Community Forum, the Vibrant Abbotsford Leadership Table (VALT), the Vibrant Abbotsford Executive Committee, and ACTION Committees (see Part Seven).

1. Presentation and discussion of the item.
2. Formation of a recommendation.
3. Call for consensus of members present in specific group.
4. Options that individuals may choose in making their decision:
 - o **Consensus (without or with reservations)**

Each member of the group must actively state their agreement with the recommendation, by using either a hand or verbal indication. This avoids the group from interpreting silence or inaction as agreement.

Group members who are willing to let a recommendation pass but desire to register their concerns with the group may choose to "declare reservations." If there are significant reservations about a recommendation, the decision-making body may choose to modify or re-word the recommendation to address the concerns.
 - o **Standing Aside**

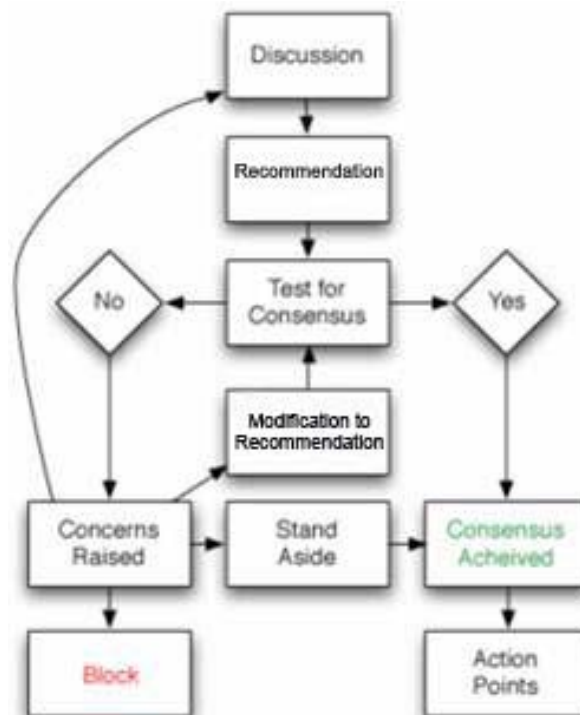
"Standing aside" may be registered by a group member who has a "serious personal disagreement" with a recommendation, but is willing to let the recommendation pass. Although stand asides do not halt a recommendation, it is often regarded as a strong "nay

vote" and the concerns of several group members standing aside may be addressed by modifications to the recommendation. Stand asides may also be registered by members who feel they are incapable of adequately understanding or participating in the decision.

- o **Block**

Blocks are generally considered to be an extreme measure, only used when a member feels a decision is morally wrong, or "endanger[s] the organization or its participants, or violate[s] the values or mission of the organization". A block must be accompanied with an explanation of the concerns. As well, the member(s) opposing the decision must work with the group to find a solution that will work for everyone.

5. Identification of concerns / reservations presented.
6. Modification of the recommendation.
7. In order to hold any meeting and achieve consensus a minimum of 50% of the existing group members must be present. In the case that insufficient members are present to achieve consensus the discussion and decision will be deferred to the next meeting. The division will be rounded down to the next whole number.
8. In the event that consensus cannot be reached, a 75% vote of members may be recommended by the Chair, in which case a vote must be taken to determine if voting is the only option remaining on a blocked item. The division will be rounded down to the next whole number.
9. In the event of inadequate membership present, decisions are deferred to the next meeting of adequate consensus representation.
10. Decisions or votes may be made in person or through electronic methods (i.e. email), providing full consensus procedures as outlined are observed.



Part Six: Vibrant Abbotsford's Definition of Poverty:

Subject to further identification of more specific, unique contributing factors that deepen our understanding of poverty in Abbotsford, as outlined in Phase One: Learning and Exploration Plan, Vibrant Abbotsford's working definition of poverty is:

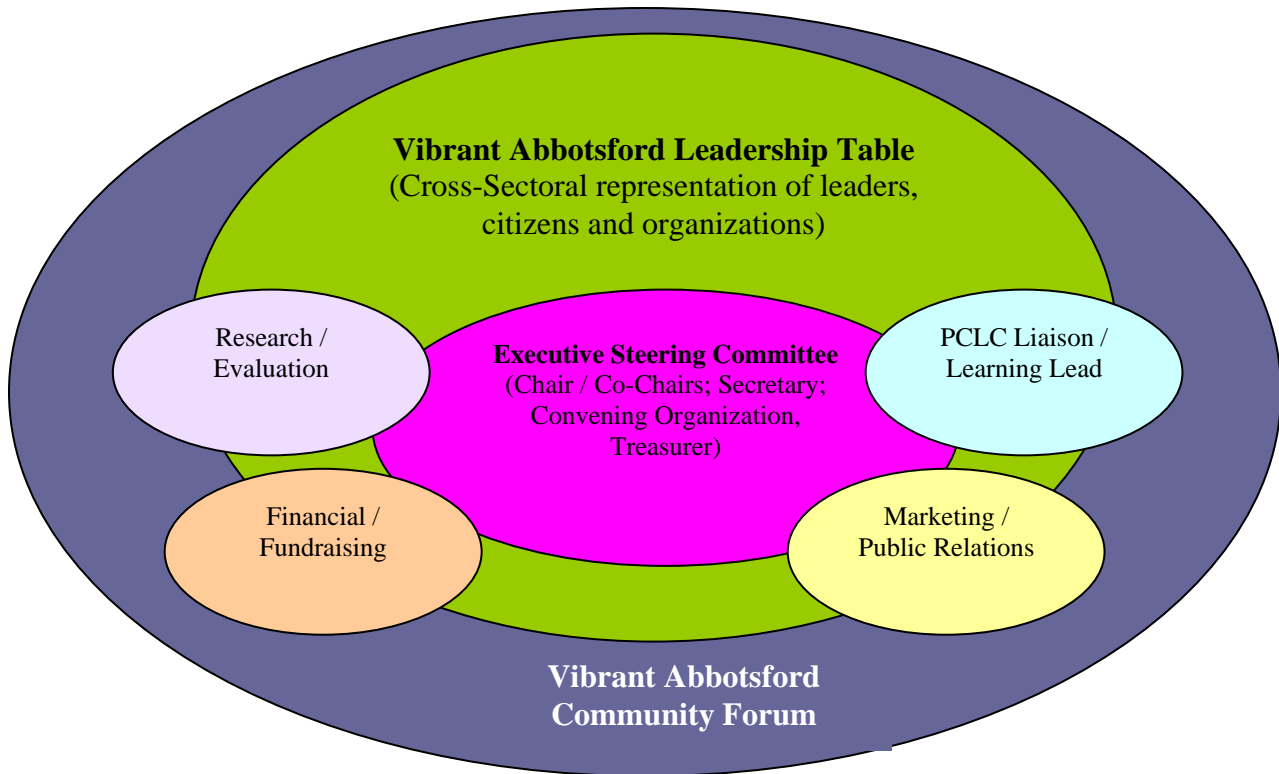
Poverty is the condition of a person who does not have sufficient social and economic resources to achieve holistic well-being, and live with dignity, choices, and power which support full participation in society.

Poverty is more than just a lack of income. It is a pervasive and complex reality featuring a number of dimensions. We know that a variety of factors falling outside of the control of individuals contribute to poverty: these include age, gender, ethnicity, migration, household size, health, physical and developmental ability, sustainable incomes, etc.

To reduce or eliminate poverty, we need to affect factors that can influence the incidence of poverty in Abbotsford by establishing healthy dimensions in our community. These include safe and affordable housing, fair access to education, a feeling of hope for the future, active participation in community building, generation of financial assets, etc.

Poverty reduction depends on the community's understanding of and concern for its causes, conditions and consequences. To effect systemic, durable changes to poverty levels, the complexity of the issue must be acknowledged. Mostly short-term, surface solutions can only result without this acknowledgement.

Part Seven: Vibrant Abbotsford Structure



In the broadest sense, Vibrant Abbotsford is open to any individual or organization that shares the values, principles and vision of Abbotsford as a “Vibrant” community which is actively engaged in eliminating the causes and consequences of poverty for all who live, work and play in Abbotsford.

While Vibrant Abbotsford represents the community as a whole, there are three levels of engagement, each with basic roles and responsibilities:

1. Vibrant Abbotsford Community Forum (VACF):

Vibrant Abbotsford Community Forum is a citizens’ table open to all sectors including business, labour, non-profit, residents and all levels of government. Members of Vibrant Abbotsford Community Forum may participate by choice at self-determined levels of capacity and interest, with the goal of increasing community capacity, and building economic and social opportunities for the purpose of enhancing quality of life and reducing poverty in Abbotsford.

In addition to subscribing to and supporting the vision, mission, and values of Vibrant Abbotsford, fundamental roles of VA Community Forum may include input, support or assistance for:

- i. Participation in identifying issues, priorities and strategies related to poverty and poverty reduction;
- ii. Participation in determining measurable targets of community change;
- iii. Participation in partnership on specific collaborative initiatives / strategies;
- iv. Building supportive relationships and partnerships with community organizations, businesses and low-income leaders;

- v. Participation in various processes of continuous improvement driven by quality research, strategic action and ongoing evaluation.

Any member of the Community Forum may seek to participate on the VALT, upon agreement to the related policies and responsibilities attached.

2. Vibrant Abbotsford Leadership Table (VALT):

- i. VALT is the convening committee for Vibrant Abbotsford, and is composed of members representing the diverse facets of the community, and who are committed as catalysts of change by providing overall direction, support and leadership to the initiative. VALT members specifically facilitate the community development process, and provide administrative support to the Vibrant Abbotsford initiative at all levels.
- ii. In addition to subscribing to and exhibiting exemplary leadership of the values, principles, policies and vision of Vibrant Abbotsford, VALT members:
 - ❖ Design and facilitate processes for the identification of poverty-related issues, priorities and strategies related to poverty and poverty reduction;
 - ❖ Determine and implement strategic goals and functions;
 - ❖ Determine and implement various processes of continuous improvement driven by generative learning, quality research, strategic action and ongoing evaluation;
 - ❖ Determine and uphold appropriate structure and policy, as necessary;
 - ❖ Determine measurable targets of community change;
 - ❖ Facilitate and define the vision and purpose of Vibrant Abbotsford;
 - ❖ Facilitate partnerships and liaise with various community groups and individuals as necessary to further the success of specific collaborative initiatives / strategies;
 - ❖ Generate supportive relationships with community organizations, businesses and low-income leaders;
 - ❖ Oversee all human resources, including hiring, termination, and supervision of paid or non-paid support staff (as funding enables);
 - ❖ Provide fiscal management, including budget development and financial reporting procedures;
 - ❖ Provide governance and operational leadership to the initiative;
 - ❖ Provide leadership to standing committees of VALT (ACTION Committees);
 - ❖ Recruit others to Vibrant Abbotsford; and
 - ❖ Sustain leadership through mentor-focused succession planning.
- iii. VALT shall meet at regularly scheduled meetings, annually at a special extended planning session, and at such other times as may be required due to special circumstances.
- iv. VALT may fulfill its responsibilities directly and/or through ACTION Committees as established by the members for such purposes.
- v. The VALT shall sustain accountability through transparency by reporting its activities and progress to the Vibrant Abbotsford Community Forum, to its partners and stakeholders on a regular basis.

- vi. VALT shall ideally consist of no less than twelve (12) members.
- vii. The chairperson or the designate of various committees of VALT (ACTION Committees), and representatives from appropriate bodies closely linked to the work of Vibrant Abbotsford may participate in an ex officio capacity (i.e. advisory).
- viii. There shall be no limits set on length of service on VALT; however, no member of VALT shall serve in an executive capacity for more than 4 consecutive years.
- ix. Each member of VALT agrees to support the succession of leadership by either mentoring a replacement, or making an appropriate recommendation of a replacement upon leaving the VALT.
- x. The VALT may, by consensus of those present at a duly convened meeting, expel or suspend any member when the conduct of such member is calculated to contravene the policies, values or vision of Vibrant Abbotsford, or to defeating of its purposes. Notice of expulsion or suspension will be served in written form with explanation of causal issues. Any member served with a notice of expulsion or suspension shall be given an opportunity to be heard for appeal by the VALT at a meeting to be called for such purpose. Final decisions on appeal are binding.

3. Vibrant Abbotsford Executive Committee:

The Executive Committee is a core group of VALT members who are assigned with oversight of governance, financial and structural obligations of the Vibrant Abbotsford Leadership Table and its sub-committees.

- i. The composition of the Executive Committee shall include:
 - ❖ Chair / Co-Chairs (preside as meeting facilitator, spokesperson)
 - ❖ Vice-Chair (if no co-chair / act in Chair absence / succession to Chair)
 - ❖ Secretariat (meeting and membership records, communications, logistics)
 - ❖ Treasurer (financial tracking and reporting)
 - ❖ Vibrant Community Liaison / PCLC Convener (liaison with Tamarack and Vibrant Communities).
- ii. Functions of the VALT Executive Committee include:
 - ❖ Convening and coordinating all regular and extra-ordinary meetings of the VALT as necessary;
 - ❖ Establishing VALT meeting agendas;
 - ❖ Facilitating open and consistent communications to all members of Vibrant Abbotsford;
 - ❖ Oversight and authorization of all financial acquisitions, allocations and related fiscal matters, including membership and fund agreement requirements;
 - ❖ Providing mentorship to succession leaders;
 - ❖ Recommending, developing and enforcing policy and procedure;
 - ❖ Recording and distributing proceedings of VALT meetings; and
 - ❖ Responding to urgent matters directly related to VALT and its mandates.
- iii. Each member of the Executive Committee shall serve a minimum term of 2 years, and a maximum of 4 consecutive years.

- iv. The Executive Committee shall be established by nomination and consensus vote of the VALT membership.

4. ACTION Committees:


- i. The following are standing working committees of VALT:
 - a. Budgets / Resource Development
 - b. Vibrant Communities Liaison / Learning Lead
 - c. Research / Evaluation
 - d. Marketing / Public Relations
- ii. ACTION Committees, standing or ad hoc, may be initiated as necessary in order to carry out the work of VALT effectively and efficiently.
- iii. In addition to accepting the roles and responsibilities of VALT, each VALT member further agrees to serve (and report back to VALT) on at least one of the ACTION Committees.
- iv. ACTION Committees may seek the input of individuals who are not necessarily members of VALT, but bring specific expertise or assets to the work of the committee and Vibrant Abbotsford.
- v. Each ACTION Committee will develop terms of reference outlining purposes, responsibilities, composition, resource requirements, and reporting frameworks.
- vi. ACTION Committees have authority to conduct their work autonomously; however, any expenditure requirements (i.e. project budgets) must be presented to and approved by VALT.

5. Staff / Administrative Support:

- i. Based on the availability of funds, staff may be recruited to support the operations and administration Vibrant Abbotsford. This may or may not include a paid senior staff officer and / or administrative support staff. Staff positions are to be determined and appointed by VALT, and may include such activities required including fiscal management, record keeping, membership, communications, point of contact with PC Vibrant Communities, arranging logistics of committee and community meetings and responding to general enquiries from the community.
- ii. To avert conflict of interest, any individual member of Vibrant Abbotsford who seeks or assumes a “paid position” with Vibrant Abbotsford, either full or part time, should immediately remove themselves from Vibrant Abbotsford membership, or be deemed “ex officio” until circumstances occur in which the related conflict no longer exists.

1st Reading _____ July 24, 2007 _____ 2nd Reading ___ August 8, 2007 _____

VALT Approved: __ September 17, 2007 _____ Review: _____ September 2008 _____

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