



# Vibrant COMMUNITIES

## **Vibrant Communities Government Learning Circle (GLC)**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **Why the Government Learning Circle?**

The GLC allows government learners from all levels and portfolios interested in Vibrant Communities to come together to learn how they can play a key role in helping to reduce poverty through collaboration with business, the voluntary sector and citizens at the local level. The GLC provides an open forum where participants can talk openly about government-related issues and learn from government leaders, from experts and from each other's best practices in order to grow the impact of poverty reduction work in local communities and in Canada.

Vibrant Communities has active relationships with all levels of government. Vibrant Communities is a dynamic process that brings together community leaders from people living in poverty, business, government and the voluntary sector to collectively create a vision and deliver actions necessary to significantly reduce poverty. Vibrant Communities has formed a Pan-Canadian Learning Community (PCLC) to help communities to share best practices and brainstorm new solutions for poverty reduction. In addition, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy has led a policy dialogue and research component of the initiative which has focused specifically on ways to enhance government/community collaboration for poverty reduction.

#### **Learning Together**

The experience of the PCLC in Vibrant Communities has been that when diverse actors learn together, they can not only better understand each other, but also can create new knowledge and broaden their practice.

Bringing local, provincial and national learners together in a learning community provides the opportunity to share how we are advancing community-based ideas, to grow our understanding of how the work is done in other jurisdictions, and to learn how other people are thinking about community issues. These things allow us to develop a forum to create new knowledge.

#### **Chair:**

As a long-time "champion" for place-based, social development initiatives, Susan Scotti, Assistant Deputy Minister, Social Development Sectors Branch, Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) will host and chair the GLC Speakers Series.

As Chair, Susan will help to promote practitioner reflection and lessons learned for the role of government in support of Vibrant Communities' efforts to reduce poverty.

**Members:**

The Vibrant Communities GLC is open to representatives from all levels of government currently involved in local efforts in the 14 Vibrant Communities. Government employees who are interested in Vibrant Communities, but not involved as yet, can participate in the GLC as guests, rather than as members.

**Benefits of Participation:**

The GLC will offer government participants opportunities to:

- be involved in a national network of government 'actors' interested in better understanding community-building and poverty reduction through a community 'lens'
- access a neutral forum where ideas and experiences can be exchanged openly
- talk with one another and learn together about the challenges and 'what works' in collaborating for community change, and
- learn together about best practices in forming new, high-impact relationships between and amongst government, business and community leaders.

**Points of Discussion:**

The scope of the discussions will depend on the activities, accomplishments and interests of GLC members. In addition to covering specific, on-the-ground initiatives, topics likely to be explored through the roundtable include:

- the power and limits of Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs)
- key strategies for strengthening the role of government 'actor' and in improving horizontal and vertical work on the ground
- how to acquire evidence about longer-term outcomes or sustainability of government contributions to community-led efforts, and
- bringing coherence to governments' role in community change.

**How we Envision the GLC Unfolding**

The Vibrant Communities GLC will provide three interrelated opportunities for participation. In its broadest form, a Web site will capture best practices, ideas, and recorded tele-learning sessions, developing a body of practice that is useful and accessible to people at large. Our invitation to join the Vibrant Communities GLC includes two more components – first, a series of tele-learning events (and a potential face-to-face meeting) hosted by Susan Scotti, Assistant Deputy Minister for HRSDC. The Speakers Series will be convened by Vibrant Communities four times a year, as tele-learning events. For those who want to learn more and can give more time, we will be developing a community of practice group which will tele-conference periodically to share experiences and best practices.

