



Introduction:

This report is a summary of the findings from the Communities Connecting Event held November 6th from 7-8:30PM in English and again on the 7th from 7-8:30 PM in French, 2013. This was a phone conference event that used a software program call “Maestroconference” that provided administrative controls, small group discussion and recording capabilities. Unfortunately, due to a malfunction the discussions were not recorded. Each participant was sent a link to survey monkey. As well, several individuals provided feedback through emails and phone calls.

This event was in direct response to the Summit for Healthy Aging and Care which had been held exactly one year prior to Communities Connecting. At the summit, the committee agreed that it had received a grassroots mandate to determine the next steps to support healthy aging and care in NB. In the months after the summit, several meetings were held by the planning committee to develop a concept that was responsive to what the summit participants offered as feedback during the event. One year later, the Communities Connecting Event was planned as a response to the 2012 Summit, to present the concept of a provincial collaborative that creates action at the strategic level and community based level.

Two different facilitators were used for the English and French language Communities Connecting events. Charles Holmes lead the call in English and Louise MacDonald lead the call in French. This brought continuity to the discussion from the Summit for Healthy Aging and Care held the previous year as both were facilitators during that event as well. In addition, key informants shared information on the concept of the collaborative, the Home First government initiative, and insights on a healthy aging experience.

Event Participants:

During the November 6th call, 142 individuals joined the call. On November 7th, 70 individuals joined the call for a total participant number of 212. Due to the malfunction in the session recording, participants were asked after the call to complete an on-line survey, call with comments or send an email. In all, 60 responses were documented, representing approximately a 30% response rate.

Discussion Questions:

Participants were asked to respond to two keys questions during the call: 1) How can government and communities work together in a balanced approach that supports a healthy aging experience? 2) What would enable you personally and /or your organization to take action and be involved in this initiative? From these two questions, responses can be organized into those that represent expressed needs and



those that express a desired action, either on the part of government, other stakeholders or seniors themselves.

Responses:

The nature of the responses provided were often highly personal, sighting many “lived” experiences. For this reason, a direct response to the question posed was often difficult to ascertain as comments were more generally expressed. As noted above, the responses were expressed as either a need or a desired action. From this, responses to the event discussion questions can be gleaned. In addition, comments were given about the use of the technology and the event design which also was summarized.

“Needs” Feedback Summary:

- communities must have adequate resources so the people are not burdened;
- seniors need services brought to them rather than the senior going to the service location;
- all initiatives need to collect and analyze data so we are making informed decisions;
- there is a great need for information in the form of education: ie: dementia and general aging issues;
- seniors need to have better access to rehabilitation care and services;
- seniors need more in-home interventions to support staying at home: ie: in-home assessments/ home medication
- informal caregivers need to be considered and cared for as much as the senior person.
- seniors need to be involved in initiatives and decisions so they are empowered to address their own needs;
- To remain at home, seniors need to have access to transportation/ day programs/ daily intervention activities.
- Seniors need to take responsibility to do what they can to maintain health.

“Action” Feedback Summary:

- Engage the schools to introduce a “community mindedness and responsibility” curriculum to impact culture;
- initiate a mass media campaign to create positive stories about the aging experience;
- use our existing resources better- ie: nursing homes could play a larger community role;



-hold community discussion sessions on the collaborative to understand assets and gaps and actions can be taken;

-use more direct communication strategies to out messages to seniors and the larger population- ie: put information inserts in the power bills/ put information in church bulletins/ put information on the counter at pharmacies and physician offices / etc...

-provide a monthly allowance for informal caregivers to support their continuation of informal care. The program cost would be far less than hospitalization and institutionalization cost;

There was also feedback expressed regarding the use of the Maestroconference program and the nature of the event itself:

-Wanted more time for discussion;

-the group discussions would have been better with a few more people- three was too small;

-the political speeches were not well received;

-very impressed that work has continued since the summit and the use of the technology was innovative;

-would have liked to have had the discussion questions in advance so they could have been better prepared to respond;

-in spite of the issues, many would be willing to participate in another maestroconference.

Analyses of feedback:

In review of the feedback received, a few key understandings emerged that must be considered as part of any go forward work for the collaborative, and would also suggest for government initiatives.

Key Understandings:

-there were expressions of “fear” or “uncertainty” about the future as the effects of demographic change are beginning to be felt in some communities more so than others with the per capita growth in the number of seniors verses youth. This lead to further expressions of fear and uncertainty as it was felt that no one wants to take on more responsibility.

-the feedback suggested that there is a disconnect between the expectations of the Communities Connecting participants and government programs and services for the future. If the concept of shared responsibility will become a reality, it will require an open dialogue to create share expectations for all



stakeholders. It was also clear that it is not well understood where Medicare ends and Long Term Care begins and how that relates to payment for services which is also an important aspect to educate on.

Next Steps:

Very little feedback was offered directly to the concept of a provincial collaborative or the Home First Initiative, but no opposition was expressed and there was nothing contained in the feedback that could be construed as contrary to this effort. It was noted by several people that they want to be involved and see something begin to happen at the community level.

Since the Communities Connecting event, ideas have been surfacing about potential prototypes and there is now a defined group of organizations who have formally expressed membership in the collaborative. With this, the creation of a formal action plan can begin to be developed, for both the structural development of the collaborative and the operational side with prototype initiatives.