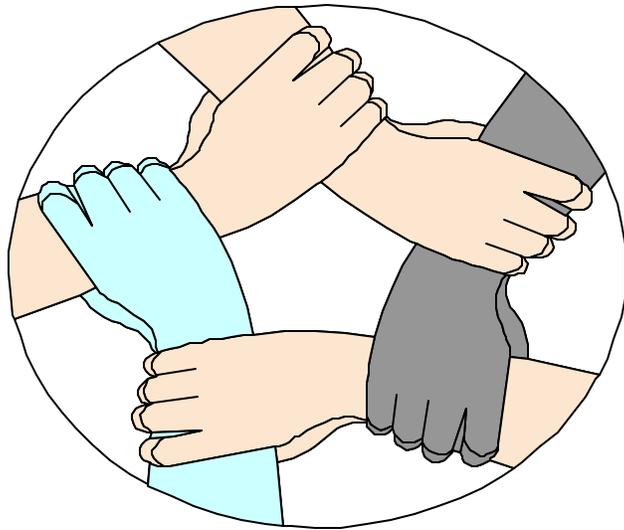# The Collaboration Roundtable
Phase II

Outreach to Small Organizations

Submitted to the Project Ad Hoc Committee:

- *City of Vancouver*
- *Department of Canadian Heritage*
- *Immigrant Services Society of B.C.*
- *Latin American Community Council*
- *Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration, Community Liaison Division*

- *M.O.S.A.I.C.*
- *Nisha Child and Family Services*
- *Pacific Immigrant Resources Society*
- *Self-Help Resources Association*
- *Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society*
- *United Way of the Lower Mainland*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Collaboration Roundtable** is a group of partner agencies and funders which have come together to foster the not-for-profit sector's opportunities for joint ventures. *Phase II* of the Collaboration Roundtable explores with fourteen small ethno-cultural organizations in B.C.'s Lower Mainland their experiences of partnerships, sponsorships, and collaboration.

Findings and observations

Organizations talked about six ways they worked in collaboration towards mutual goals: on shared activities; partnerships; co-location; coalitions; information networks; and sponsorships. Small organizations more frequently partner with organizations of similar size and ethnic background, but there is interest in partnering with large organizations.

♦ Interviewees indicated that in many ways, their experiences with collaboration had been very positive and beneficial and that they would willingly enter into future collaborative activities. The main reasons for collaboration were: strengthening of the small organization and of the broader community and the necessities of funding requirements.

♦ Aspects of collaboration considered difficult or not successful included: lack of resources; unequal relations between small and large groups; funders' perceived attitudes towards small groups; lack of cohesiveness within the community; and struggles around distinctiveness versus assimilation.

♦ Organizations described themselves as being at different levels of development, capacity and maturity. These require different challenges and levels of responsibility. Small groups want to sense that collaboration is based on equality, trust and mutual respect, that it fulfills their mandate and benefits organizational empowerment.

♦ Organizational capacity-building emerged as a fundamental need. It was clear that the culture and understanding of collaboration also needs discussion, clarification and joint stewardship.

Recommendations

The consultants recommend that the Collaboration Roundtable build upon the current interest and openness small organizations have toward collaboration. This can best be achieved by:

1. ***Inviting Small Organizations to Participate in Collaboration Discussions:*** Providing opportunities for both small and large organizations to jointly define collaboration within the service delivery context of the Lower Mainland and on the Collaboration Roundtable.

2. ***Facilitating Partnerships with Small Organizations:*** Neutral facilitation to build partnerships is key–both to identify/ link potential partners and to advise and guide them as necessary through the collaboration process. Possible existing services which facilitate collaboration should be investigated and/or an independent facilitator could help foster collaborative ventures.

3. ***Providing Capacity-building Opportunities and Increased Resources:*** Training in organizational capacity and education about the challenges and constraints facing small groups, funders and large organizations is fundamental. Professional development opportunities for and mentoring of small groups is also key. Mechanisms should be put in place to provide remuneration for the volunteer time given to the project by unpaid small organizations.

A number of opportunities for funders, large organizations and small organizations are specifically outlined in the Recommendations section and insights gained from *Phase II* are linked with those which emerged from *Phase I.*

1.0 <u>INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES</u>

1.1 Background

Not-for-profit agencies, funders and public institutions are increasingly engaging in collaborative initiatives, partnerships and sponsorships. In Vancouver's Lower Mainland, a **Collaboration Roundtable** has been formed with the goal of fostering the not-for-profit sector's opportunities for joint ventures.

The Roundtable's Ad Hoc Committee identified several key objectives towards developing a "culture of collaboration" among community agencies and funders. ***Phase I*** carried out in the spring of 1999, identified a number of objectives to investigate the nature of collaboration among not-for-profit organizations in the Lower Mainland. This culminated in a questionnaire and workshop designed to create an opportunity for dialogue between funders and community agencies to share knowledge and experience around partnerships, sponsorships, and collaboration. Issues which needed exploring were identified and steps were taken toward the collaborative development of strategies to address these issues.

As a result of ***Phase I*** of the Roundtable, seven key recommendations were made. The first of these was a suggestion that specific outreach strategies be identified to involve small, grassroots organizations in the ongoing work of the Roundtable and in the collaborative process. Noted in particular, was the importance of exploring with small ethno-specific organizations their experiences with and ideas about collaboration. In response to this particular recommendation, ***Phase II*** of the Roundtable was launched. This involved face-to-face meetings with smaller ethno-cultural organizations to gain a more in-depth understanding of their views on the collaboration process.

Phase II of the Collaboration Roundtable explores key themes and concerns pertaining to small ethno-cultural organizations and their experience of partnerships, sponsorships, and collaboration. The study examines opportunities and barriers within these processes and develops recommendations for the Ad Hoc Committee to help guide it in its goal of fostering joint ventures in the not-for-profit sector.

1.2 Project Purpose–Goals and Objectives

Five key objectives were identified for the ***Phase II*** study:

1. To explore with small ethno-cultural organizations and organizations their understanding of and experiences with partnerships/collaboration/sponsorships.

2. To discuss successful/unsuccessful experiences with these processes of partnership. Identify what worked/did not work, why, and what were the benefits to the organization/organization. Make recommendations regarding key themes for success.

3. To identify the main barriers to partnership/sponsorship/collaboration within the context of these organizations. Recommend key means/strategies to address these barriers.

4. To identify key target organizations (if applicable) where possible partnership opportunities exist.

5. To compare findings from ***Phase II*** with those outcomes from ***Phase I***.

2.0 <u>METHODOLOGY</u>

A list of twenty seven prospective organizations/interviewees was drafted in consultation with the Ad Hoc Committee and a letter was sent from the Roundtable to introduce the project to potential interviewees. Organizations were chosen from the *Directory of Ethno-cultural and Multicultural Immigrant Service Organizations* and suggestions from the Roundtable members.

Fifteen organizations were chosen, based on a number of criteria, to ensure a representative cross-section of small organizations across the Lower Mainland was interviewed. Organizations interviewed had to be registered as not-for-profit with a mandate to provide client/community services. Organizations were selected to represent a range of ethno-cultural backgrounds, size of agency, mandate, and length of time in existence. Three types of organizations were selected: those which had not engaged in collaboration; those which had and felt it has been successful; and those organizations which had tried collaboration and found it unsuccessful. Two organizations which were unable to participate in the *Phase I* workshop were contacted. Fourteen interviews were successfully carried out between September 21 and October 5, 1999.

We requested that a combination of an organization's Board members, volunteers, staff and management participate in the interview, in order to receive a varied and therefore more representative response. Given the difficulties of bringing together these people, most of whom are volunteers, in most cases we interviewed one or two people, usually the President or Chair of the Board who was most familiar with the history of the organization. Treasurers, Volunteers, Community Workers, Executive Directors, and Board members also acted as spokespeople for their organizations. We offered groups the services of an interpreter if desired. Interviews were approximately one hour in length and entirely confidential. In order to maintain this confidentiality, quotations made in this report are not ascribed to particular interviewees or organizations.

Interpretation of findings

While many insights can be gained from these findings, results should be viewed as exploratory and give a sense of the range of overall views only. Due to the qualitative nature of the interviews, the results are not statistically significant and may not entirely reflect the views of small organizations.

3.0 <u>DETAILED FINDINGS</u>

3.1 Overview of Small Organizations

Almost all of the organizations interviewed indicated their mandate was to support their ethnic community (both newcomers and established individuals). Cultural retention was also key for almost all organizations. Public education about issues in their community and culture was common to their mandate as well. Most of these groups acted as advocates for their community to varying degrees. Two of the groups acted as umbrella or "hub" organizations for their communities and one organization's goal was solely multicultural in its approach.

Services provided ranged, but groups commonly defined their activities as including a combination of the following:

♦ settlement assistance, orientation and referral
♦ cultural retention activities (celebrations, information, performances, etc.)
♦ translation/interpretation
♦ programming (health, women, men, families, youth, seniors, etc)
♦ public education
♦ research
♦ provision of resources
♦ information networking
♦ coordinating conferences, meetings and workshops
♦ advocacy
♦ overseas aid
♦ promoting unity, harmony and understanding among ethnic diversities and within ethnic groups

(**Note**: Throughout the report, direct quotations from interviewees are noted in quotation marks. Bullet points are ordered with the most frequently-mentioned point listed first and the least-mentioned point listed last).

In the attached profile, you will note a breakdown of data on the organizations interviewed. Organizations were all registered not-for-profit groups and length of activity ranged between one and 25 years. Interviewees estimated the number of members between 7 - 2,000 and the number of clients between 20 5,000 people. (Please note that in some cases the members and clients are the same. These data are self-disclosed estimates and may not be statistically accurate). Volunteers ranged in number between six and 300 people. Two organizations had staff, and the others were entirely volunteer-run. Two received core funding. Six of the groups received occasional project funding and the remainder had unsuccessfully applied for funding. Six organizations engaged in fund-raising activities, nine received membership fees and some received donations. All organizations possessed Boards which met regularly and communicated decisions to or consulted with members on a regular basis.

3.2 Profile of Groups
(broken down by number of groups)

Registered as a society	14/14
Ethno-specific	13/14
Paid staff	2/14

Regional Representation:	Asian	5
	African	3
	Middle East	2
	South Asian	1
	Latin American	1
	Caribbean	1
	Other	1

Years Since Started: 1 - 25 years

Funders and funding:

fundraising by members	donations
Casino/lottery	Credit Union
Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration	
City grants	Provincial Youth grant
United Way	Foundations
Health Canada	Status of Women Canada
Community Centres (in kind)	Neighborhood Houses (in kind)

(6 groups received funds only from fundraising efforts by members or casino/lottery.)

Number of members*:   7 - 2,000
Numbers of clients*:   20 - 5,000
Number of volunteers*:   6 (board members) - over 300

(* Please note that these data are self-disclosed and may not be statistically accurate. In some cases, members and clients are one and the same.)

Experienced collaboration: 13/14
Regular meetings/communication to members: 14/14

3.3   Defining Collaboration

Definitions

In general, organizations consistently described collaboration as "groups helping each other," "sharing," and "working in partnership as equals towards mutual goals and benefit." Examples included: large groups helping small, small groups helping each other and small groups helping groups in the very early process of development. (**Note**: While other definitions and examples of collaboration may exist, the purpose of this report is to explore how those small groups interviewed define this activity.)

Organizations talked about six ways they had worked in collaboration:

♦   ***Shared activities:*** The most common way was engaging in shared activities such as cultural events, overseas aid and public education of the greater community (information events, consultation, etc.) It is important to point out that organizations defined shared activities as collaboration, even though they may not have been involved in the planning of these events, but rather participated as one of several groups.

♦   ***Partnerships:*** Partnerships are distinguished from shared activities in that groups plan and carry out joint ventures *together*. Partnership activities were also very common, particularly between groups of the same cultural background. Research, social/cultural events, and services provided for new and established

immigrants, seniors, women and youth were cited as being activities carried out in partnership.

♦ ***Co-location:*** Co-location, or the sharing of meeting space, was often mentioned. In several cases, members of the organizations worked for Neighborhood Houses or Community Centres, which facilitated the provision of meeting space free of charge.

♦ ***Coalitions:*** Coalition work was also mentioned quite frequently, including mutual support between different kinds of human rights and community groups and national coalitions. Two of the groups interviewed acted as coalitions for their communities in the Lower Mainland.

♦ ***Information networks:*** Several of the organizations participated in information networks, usually information-sharing meetings held on a regular basis or by coordinating a shared resource centre.

♦ ***Sponsorship:*** A few of the groups collaborated by being sponsored by other organizations, either financially or with letters of support.

3.4   Experiences with Collaboration and Partners

Organizations collaborated most often with four types of groups:

♦ ***Small groups of similar ethnic background:*** The majority of organizations collaborated most often with groups of similar ethnic background. They said that similar culture, language, issues, needs and barriers were the reasons why this kind of collaboration made sense. They noted that together, they had a stronger voice as advocates for their community.

♦ ***Large organizations:*** A significant number of groups indicated that common collaborative partners were large organizations, including agencies which deliver settlement and community services, schools and universities, religious institutions, and professional associations. Reasons for this type of partnership included the need for professional support, the provision of meeting space or because funders stated that partnership with an established organization was the only way to receive funding.

♦ ***Small organizations:*** Groups interviewed mentioned that they partnered fairly regularly with small organizations from different ethnic or issue-based communities. They preferred collaboration with small groups because they could work together as equals, with less competition, equal power and mutual respect. Together, their skills complemented one another.

♦ ***Small groups in early development:*** A few organizations also mentioned that they partnered with small groups forming their own ethnic-based associations, as they felt expertise within their organization could be of support and assistance.

3.5   Reasons for Collaborating

The organizations mentioned two main reasons for collaborating:

♦ ***Part of broader community:*** One main reason for working with the community beyond their own organization, was the benefits they saw resulting from collaboration. They acknowledged the need for community support and felt they could learn from others and that others could learn from them. They believed their group was strengthened as a result and that collaboration was a "means to

an end". A few groups indicated that not only did their organization benefit from collaboration, but that working with shared purpose on issues of concern benefited the whole community.

> *"A bond is created when people work together. People get to know each other and there is potential for future cooperation."*

♦ **Feeling obliged to collaborate:** Equally frequently, organizations told us they felt they had to engage in collaborative activities in order to receive funding. The majority of funding sources for these groups require a collaborative approach to service delivery. Several groups felt that they could deliver these services as well or better as independent organizations.

> *"Collaboration is demanded by funders but we prefer collaboration to come voluntarily–it can't be forced."*

3.6 Expectations of Collaboration

Expectations of partners
When asked what they expected collaborative partners to do, organizations responded in two ways:

♦ **Provision of resources:** Small organizations often expected partners, particularly large organizations, to provide resources such as money, space, contacts, expertise, and services.

♦ **Share responsibilities as equals:** Almost as frequently, organizations responded that they expected their partners to share responsibilities with them as equals, including shared planning, mutual support and participation.

Most groups indicated these expectations were met and a few said they were not.

Expectations of own organization
Organizations also spoke of the role they expected to play in collaborative activities:

♦ **Working with others** to help *their own* group achieve its goals using its own resources.
♦ **Working together as equal partners** towards *mutual benefit*; and finally.
♦ **Learning and being supported with resources:** When asked if they fulfilled these expectations, all but one group responded that they did.

3.7 What Works?

Organizations interviewed indicated that in many ways, their experiences with collaboration had been very positive and had many benefits. Two main reasons were equally noted:

♦ **Small organization is strengthened**: The most common response to "what worked well?" was that the organization and its ethnic community were strengthened through collaborative efforts (both successful and non-successful). Organizations interviewed said that through collaboration they gained knowledge, confidence, and exchanged experiences which helped improve activities and increased the overall organizational capacity of the group. Several groups also mentioned they were more efficient because they could achieve more using less resources, and collaboration brought them external funding. They felt their

community gained recognition through collaboration and a few groups said that they could not survive without taking this approach.

> *"It is part of our strategy to collaborate and the only way to function effectively in this system. It also gives us the opportunity to learn from each other. We can't do it alone. We are young and have a lot to learn from those who have experience. We also want to be part of the larger community."*

♦ ***Broader community is strengthened***: Almost as frequently, organizations felt that the broader community was strengthened by collaboration. They indicated that the sharing of ideas and activities built trust, cooperation, a spirit of success and created bonds for future collaboration. Groups felt that through collaboration, the community became more informed and better able to celebrate its multicultural differences.

> *"Diversity brings a perspective where no one is bigger than the other–this is not a hierarchical structure but one which promotes respect and self-confidence."*

3.8   What doesn't Work?

When we asked organizations what aspects of collaboration were difficult or not successful, they mentioned five main reasons:

♦ ***Lack of resources:*** The most frequently mentioned difficulty was small groups' lack of resources. Almost all of the groups interviewed were entirely volunteer-run, and many groups mentioned the extraordinary time they spend doing unpaid work and the numerous out-of-pocket expenses. The fact that most of these volunteers work from 9:00-5:00, means that they are unable to participate in outreach activities or training during the day. Lack of staff, money and other resources, they said, results in organizational problems such as lack of confidence, proper planning and collaboration. Resentment was expressed by some groups who feel they do the same work as settlement agencies but are unpaid for this work.

> *"We must do everything for free and this is unfair. People offer[community] workshops for the love of the cause but, living in this society, people should be reimbursed for their after hours work."*

♦ ***Unequal power relations:*** The second aspect which made collaboration difficult and sometimes unsuccessful was unequal relations between small and large organizations. Organizations referred to power differences which did not allow for mutual respect and resulted in the small organizations' lack of independence. A number of organizations noted joint projects where funds and administration were entirely managed by the large organization. A number of groups felt that this does not allow for their professional development, doesn't empower them and does not foster a spirit of trust.

> *"This is not collaboration. Do we exercise the principles we believe in? Our independence is not maintained as an agency. The large organization administers the funds and manages us but we are supposed to maintain our equality. We feel we don't have integrity because of this. We spearheaded this initiative and it was passed on to the large organization. This is a paternalistic concept. We have maturity as a community, skills, and experience. We should be trusted to do this project on our own."*

Organizations perceived that once large organizations and funders had identified the level of a small organization's capacity, that they were forever "frozen" at this level in terms of attitudes and opportunities.

> *"We believe in uneven development–[we are always learning, changing and developing and therefore should be treated in changing manner]. One funder gave us funding without insisting we collaborate. This has been a very empowering and liberating experience. We have learned a lot because they trusted us. We have made some mistakes but through research we have gained experience with budgeting, proposal writing, meeting with funders, etc. This has strengthened us as a community."*

Many small organizations stated that large immigrant-serving agencies received the bulk of funding available, leaving little for small organizations. It was believed that the policies of the large organizations did not support small groups, that relations with ethnic community workers in these organizations were problematic and several small organizations spoke of large organizations' support being withdrawn after the beginning of collaborative projects. One group gave an example of sponsorship agreement which was subsequently forgotten, resulting in the loss of a successful funding application.

♦ **Funders' perceived attitudes:** A few organizations expressed the view that funders did not trust them, and only believed large organizations were capable of quality service delivery. A few groups also spoke of how funders perceive individuals of the same geographic region (ex: Asia, Africa, Latin America) as one, despite dramatic differences between countries and cultures.

> *"People from different European countries, [for example], are white but they are still considered separate groups. Because we are people of color we are forced to work with people who share our color [but have very different cultures]."*

Small organizations understood funders as wanting "single program delivery" and similar regional groups to "speak with one voice." It was felt that there was a lack of acceptance of minority group viewpoints and that funders were "barriers, not agents, of change."

> *"The philosophy of multiculturalism means that one community will have the same problems as another but this does not measure the specificity of groups. We need to empower ourselves first, break barriers and strengthen our community. But we are forced to take the multicultural approach which makes it no longer a project of our ownership. We haven't reached the first step yet. Why can't we have our own first step?"*

♦ **Lack of cohesiveness within community:** A few times interviewees talked about lack of agreement which results from attempts to collaborate. Differences of opinion about how to proceed or about money tended to take time to solve or cause the failure of collaborative activities. One person spoke of limiting attitudes and mindset within their community.

♦ **Distinctiveness versus assimilation:** Many groups mentioned the struggle they felt between maintaining their group's distinctiveness (language and cultural differences) and the fear of assimilation through collaboration. A few times interviewees mentioned language as a barrier to collaboration. One person expressed the view that language was one of the key factors uniting their

community and that collaboration necessitated working in English which weakened their group's strength.

> *"At this point in our community development we would choose to work on our own issues–not work together–and it is better for us to work in our own language. It took me 15 years to participate in English-speaking circles…why wait 15 years to be able to participate in one's community? Funders want more and more groups to work together and to do this we have to speak in English. We will have to sacrifice our language and culture in order to work with other ethnic groups.'*

> *"We need help to support our growing strength and efficiency…We want to collaborate but at the same time we want to be on our own–to have a say."*

How were these difficulties addressed?

When asked how they dealt with these difficulties, organizations replied that they responded three ways:

♦ ***Withdrawal:*** Most groups said they did not work in collaboration or with the organization again, volunteers became "burnt out" or "gave up on multiculturalism".

♦ ***Avoidance:*** The second most common way of dealing with problems was to avoid them or divert energies. Either the conflict was not discussed, avoidance techniques were devised or the organization looked for other avenues or new partners.

♦ ***Discussion:*** Only a few interviewees mentioned that they talked about the problems with their partners, evaluated the collaboration and tried to come up with joint solutions. Those who did, found this helped to build trust.

3.9   Future Collaboration

Despite the difficulties and challenges around collaboration, organizations overwhelmingly stated that they would enter into future collaborative activities, particularly if the activity was felt to be of mutual benefit and if philosophies and principles of equality were laid out at the start.

♦ ***Keen interest:*** Generally, groups felt their organization and the greater community were strengthened through collaboration, and that it was inevitable because we live in community and because the funding system takes a collaborative approach.

> *"It is important to challenge, make an effort and be part of the process."*

♦ ***Some hesitation:*** A few groups stated that collaboration would not be their first choice, but that they did so in order to receive funding. One group stated that their community's needs determined activities, not the priorities and stipulations of funding.

> *"We don't work with others just to get money. We know the needs of our community and if another organization can help us, then we work in collaboration."*

♦ ***No interest:*** One group stated that it did not want to engage in any collaborative activities and preferred to receive funding to work independently.

> *"We are not looking for partners. Our background is different as well as the activities we are interested in."*

Most likely partners and activities

The most likely partners which small groups would approach was equally divided between three groups:

♦ ***Similar ethnic organizations:*** Interviewees identified social/cultural events as the most likely collaborative activities they would engage in as well as joint programs for the ethnic community.

♦ ***Small organizations:*** Joint programming (especially for youth, seniors and public education), partnerships and shared activities around community support were most often mentioned. There was some reference to the fact that it was easier and safer to work with small organizations because of trust and equality, although some groups felt it would be of more benefit to organizational development if they worked with large organizations.

♦ ***Large organizations:*** Training in organizational capacity, provision of space, money, resources or letters of support were highlighted. Many groups pointed out that they felt it was the responsibility of large organizations to "make the first move" towards collaboration, due to their resources and strength in the community.

What would be done differently?

All the groups mentioned that with their next collaboration they would do more:

♦ ***Planning:*** Discuss joint goals, mutual benefits, expectations and organizational background with the partner.

♦ ***Research on collaboration:*** Learn more about the collaborative process itself– including pitfalls and solicit advice for success.

Training

When asked if training would be beneficial, two thirds of the groups said "yes" and one third said "no." Those which responded "no" said this was because they had no time or felt the training would not be useful. Of the organizations which indicated they would like to see training, three types were identified:

♦ ***Organizational capacity:*** This number one need identified a desire for training in: public relations, immigrant settlement knowledge, service information, how to hold meetings and take minutes, leadership, proposal-writing, management and budgeting.

♦ ***Education about partners:*** A quarter of the respondents mentioned the importance of funders and large organizations learning more about small organizations, and vice versa. Cross-cultural sensitization, networking meetings and the building of trust were all suggested.

♦ ***Training on the collaborative process:*** Step-by-step models, including facilitation and promotion were identified. Commitment by all parties to the collaborative process and a discussion of the philosophy of interdependence versus independence were mentioned.

Interest in the Collaboration Roundtable

All but two groups expressed an interest in being involved in the Collaboration Roundtable. A number expressed concern that they lacked time to participate but nonetheless wished to be invited to share their perspective and learn. There was a keen interest in having the voices of small ethnic organizations heard and reservations expressed due to participation in previous consultations which did not appear to result in change. Respondents expressed hope that the Roundtable would be successful in building collaboration. One organization noted that since the Roundtable had been formed it had already facilitated relationships between small and large organizations.

4.0 <u>CONCLUSIONS</u>

4.1 Observations

♦ ***Openness to collaboration:*** It was apparent from these interviews with small organizations that there was a general openness and hopefulness about working in collaboration. Collaboration is not, however, without its challenges and difficult history. Organizations saw many potential benefits to successful collaboration– both for their own group and for the greater community–but it was clear that collaboration must be perceived as of mutual benefit and must be "chosen" by organizations.

♦ ***Small organizations are more frequent partners but there is interest in partnering with large organizations:*** While small organizations naturally chose to collaborate with small groups which share similar interests and are perceived equals, this choice was made in some part because of familiarity. Many *wanted* partnerships with large organizations but expected them to do the outreach. While small organizations felt a lack of understanding and trust characterized their relationships with large organizations, it was evident that they felt they could benefit from partnerships with large organizations and vice-versa.

A sense of equality and mutual respect and trust is key to successful collaboration. This is currently lacking in many collaborative activities.

♦ ***Ambivalence about cultural distinctiveness versus assimilation, autonomy versus collaboration:*** There was ambivalence expressed around the issue of cultural distinctiveness versus assimilation. Organizations whose viewpoint was focused solely on their own ethnic community were frustrated by a funding approach which insists on cross-cultural programming.

Interviewees also expressed ambivalence about autonomy versus collaboration. Many groups acknowledged that they wanted help but desired their independence, too.

These two factors raise the observation that some small ethno-cultural groups will seriously consider whether they will engage in collaborative projects at all. In some cases, their overwhelming mandate is to preserve cultural roots and collaboration with other groups may be perceived as a threat to the purpose for the existence of the group.

♦ ***Different levels of development and capacity:*** Organizations described themselves as being at different levels of development and maturity. Some organizations interviewed were in their infancy while some had existed for over 25 years. Clearly this difference in capacity and experience requires different challenges and levels of responsibility. Groups need to sense that collaboration not only fulfills their mandate but benefits their overall organizational development and empowerment. Some groups believed that funders think only large immigrant-serving agencies are the best to deliver settlement services. A number of respondents questioned this assumption.

♦ ***Capacity-building and lack of resources:*** The need for capacity-building is fundamental to the future success of collaboration in the Lower Mainland. While training around the collaborative process is crucial, small organizations called out first, for more basic organizational training. This fundamental capacity-building must be the foundation before collaboration is possible.

The limitations caused by lack of resources are a strong barrier to collaboration. Volunteers who run their organization in spare time without funding will have difficulty working in partnership. Interviewees' perceptions that their organizations are capable of and indeed currently delivering settlement services for free while large organizations receive funding sets up resentment and inhibits collaboration.

♦ ***The need to define collaboration:*** The concept of collaboration itself is understood differently. Many groups perceived themselves to be collaborating when participating in training or events, even if they played no role in the planning or management of these. For some, collaboration is defined as cooperative leadership, and working in equal partnership to achieve a shared goal. The culture of collaboration needs discussion, clarification and joint stewardship.

♦ ***A broad movement towards collaboration:*** The growing emphasis on collaboration between agencies for the delivery of social services can be attributed to a number of factors. First, it often makes better sense for an agency to partner and share expertise and resources rather than attempt to serve a new clientele or implement a new program alone. Second, in the context of increasing government fiscal restraint, joint programme delivery and cost-sharing can often result in a more efficient use of resources. Third, government grant-giving programs are scrutinized by federal and provincial Treasury Boards to ensure that funds are used efficiently and efforts not duplicated. Fourth, contract reform spurs collaboration as governments increasingly rationalize a number of contracts into fewer contracts for fewer agencies. Finally, emphasis on community development approaches to meeting client needs also promote collaboration.

Overall, interviewees expressed the view that collaboration was beneficial and that they were keen to pursue activities which were of benefit to the whole community. It was apparent that despite the limited resources which many of the small organizations experience, they are rich with commitment, generosity wisdom and dedication to their communities. These resources are invaluable and a strong foundation on which to build collaboration.

4.2   New Recommendations

It is recommended by the consultants that the Collaboration Roundtable build upon the current interest and openness small organizations have toward collaboration. This can best be achieved by:

♦ ***Inviting small organizations to participate in Collaboration discussions:*** Providing opportunities for both small and large organizations to jointly define collaboration within the service delivery context of the Lower Mainland. This would involve inviting a broad representation of small groups–including those from outside Vancouver–to participate in Roundtable discussions. Models of collaboration and discussion should use a community development approach and work to develop respectful, understanding and mutually beneficial relationships between partners. The development of strategies to establish trust between small and large organizations and the building of capacity emerge as priorities. Future outreach strategies of the Roundtable should involve small organizations and work towards addressing the barriers facing small organizations.

♦ ***Facilitating partnerships with small organizations:*** Neutral facilitation to build partnerships is key–both to identify/ link potential partners and to advise and guide them as necessary through the collaboration process. Possible existing

services which facilitate collaboration should be investigated as to their appropriateness for small groups' needs. This role, however, would probably best be achieved by a contract facilitator or a person seconded from a funding organization that could work on a neutral basis with all groups for a period of time, in order to foster and provide education on collaborative ventures .

♦ ***Building capacity and increasing resources:*** Small organizations vary in their experience and knowledge and there is need for organizational capacity-building in areas such as public relations, immigrant-settlement and social service delivery, how to hold meetings and take minutes, leadership, proposal-writing, management and budgeting. Without these fundamental skills and financial resources, groups are unable to effectively engage in collaborative ventures. Small groups also need to know about the challenges and constraints facing funders and large organizations, contract reform and the realities of the service provision environment.

Professional development opportunities and mentoring are also essential for those more experienced groups ready to take on greater management responsibilities. Mechanisms need to be in place to measure the capacity and readiness of groups to take on more significant service delivery challenges and to provide remuneration for the volunteer time given to the project by unpaid small organization partners.

It is also critical that funders and large organizations outreach to small organizations in order to gain a concrete understanding of small organizations and the difficulties that their lack of staff, experience and financial constraints pose to collaboration.

Actions to support collaboration:

A.   Funders can support collaboration by:
  ♦ ensuring collaborative projects include mentoring of leadership within small organizations;
  ♦ checking compatibility of mandates between organizations before suggesting partnership;
  ♦ providing remuneration for the volunteer time given to the project by the unpaid members of the small organization;
  ♦ having a concrete understanding of small organizations' challenges;
  ♦ developing a communications strategy to address perceptions small groups have of funders;
  ♦ giving explanations and advice to small organizations whose proposal submissions are unsuccessful in order to increase the likelihood of their future success;
  ♦ understanding that small organizations have varying levels of capacity and exploring the possibility of service devolution to small groups in specific cases; and
  ♦ ensuring that funds are shared between large and small organizations.

B.   Large organizations can help support collaboration by:
  ♦ building capacity in small ethno-specific groups;
  ♦ valuing the volunteer time given by members of the organizations;
  ♦ understanding the constraints faced by an all-volunteer organization;
  ♦ reaching out to small organizations and proposing partnerships/collaboration;
  ♦ fostering the sharing of resources; and
  ♦ establishing collaborative ventures which work towards mutual benefit.

C.   Small ethno-cultural organizations can help support collaboration by:
  ♦ participating in discussions around collaboration and voicing the

perspective of small groups;

♦ taking part in capacity-building programs, where appropriate, to familiarize themselves with the service-delivery environment, existing services/opportunities for collaboration, and current constraints faced by funders and large organizations;

♦ demonstrating to funders their understanding of their role, responsibilities, capacity and mandate as registered societies;

♦ building capacity within the organization through participating in skills and governance-development; and

♦ by collaborating with organizations which have divergent mandates and cultures.

D. Linkage between *Phase I* and *Phase II*: *Phase I* of the Collaboration Roundtable generated seven recommendations to support collaboration in the Lower Mainland. They were the following:

4.3 Recommendations from *Phase I*

The stated goals of this process are to:

- create an opportunity for community agencies and funders to share knowledge and experience with respect to partnerships, sponsorships and collaborations;
- identify issues to be explored between agencies and funders; and
- collaboratively develop strategies to address these issues.

The following recommendations have been generated from this process to date, including the literature review, pre-workshop survey, the workshop and from the Ad Hoc Committee and Consulting Team:

1. It is recommended that specific outreach strategies be developed to involve small, grassroots organizations in the ongoing work of this initiative. This is particularly key for small ethno-specific organizations. At present, language, culture, isolation and lack of resources have combined to prevent the full participation of these groups in the collaboration discussion. It is vital that we get their experience with and ideas about collaboration before rapidly moving ahead with subsequent stages of this process.

2. It is recommended that ways be found to include community members—the people ultimately being 'served'—in the ongoing process. At present, discussions tend to be limited to funders and community organizations.

3. It is recommended that, in partnership with existing resources such as SPARC, Volunteer Vancouver, Langara College and the Community Development Institute, a workshop series be developed to promote dialogue and consensus on the range of issues impacting collaborative efforts. The series should be comprised of three streams:

    i) sessions for community organizations;
    ii) sessions for funders; and
    iii) combined sessions for both community organizations and funders.

    The workshops should contain both training components and a consensus building process so that the groups involved are building skills while developing a shared framework. Topic areas could include:

    - terminology;
    - method;
    - risk management;

- supports required;
- accountability;
- outcomes; and
- power dynamics.

Such training must be designed and delivered so that it is accessible to the grassroots level of community organizations, including community members. Training that becomes too academic or theoretical in nature will not address many of the concerns of such groups and individuals.

4. It is recommended that the possibility of developing a 'collaboration tool kit' be explored. The tool kit would be used to support non-profit agencies and funders in planning and implementing collaborative activities. It would include a particular focus on the needs of small non-profit agencies, which tend to have access to fewer resources to assist them with the collaborative process.

    The tool kit should include:

    - ideas for assessing the appropriateness of potential partnerships and projects;
    - a reference paper on legal issues;
    - discussion of the ethics of collaboration;
    - discussion of effective communication within collaborations;
    - an overview of risk management issues;
    - descriptions of models for collaboration; and
    - a step by step guide to building successful collaborative projects.

    The development stage of the tool kit should begin by investigating existing training resources to ensure that we do not duplicate efforts. Suitable pre-existing materials could be collected and incorporated into a more comprehensive training package.

5. It is recommended that collaboration assessment models be developed. These models must address the need for:

    - of that involvement on their own organizations and clients.

6. It is recommended that funders explore the feasibility of establishing an ongoing series of meetings to discuss their particular concerns and responsibilities regarding support for collaborative initiatives. At present, there is little consensus or common understanding amongst various funding bodies regarding the nature, value and mechanics of collaborative processes.

    These discussions should follow a defined process that will lead to joint sessions that include funders and community organizations coming together to discuss common concerns.

    - external evaluation of a collaboration; and
    - organizations involved in one or more collaborations to undertake internal reviews of the impact.

7. It is recommended that a collaboration roundtable involving representatives of funders and non-profit agencies meet on a scheduled basis to identify and discuss ongoing issues, with an annual workshop to report to all groups on the state of collaboration in the Lower Mainland.

Based on the insights gained from *Phase II*, the consultants include the following reflections to *Phase I* recommendations:

1. ***That specific outreach strategies involve small, grassroots organizations in this initiative*: *Phase II*** has been key in following up on this recommendation. The next step should involve the participation of small organizations on the Roundtable and outcomes from *Phase II* should inform future Roundtable and collaborative initiatives.

2. ***That community members be involved in this process:*** Participation and input of community members will be an important later action, but the active participation of small groups in collaboration discussions should precede this.

3. ***That a workshop series on collaboration be developed:*** A workshop series would provide an important opportunity for small groups to share their perspective and learn with others. The organizational development needs of many small groups, however, must be addressed first in order to provide them with the skills to engage in effective partnership and dialogue on this subject.

4. ***That a "collaboration tool kit" be developed:*** While the consultants acknowledge that a tool kit could be an important resource for large groups, we believe it would not be effectively used by small groups at the moment, due to the need for capacity-building. A neutral facilitator–referred to in *Phase II* recommendations–would more critically support small organizations in creating partnerships and engaging them in a culture of collaboration, followed by the use of a tool kit at a later date.

5. ***That assessment models be developed to evaluate collaboration:*** This would be an important follow-up to collaborative ventures and would best be carried out by the above-mentioned facilitator.

6. ***That ongoing funders' meetings take place:*** The exchange of information between funders could benefit their understanding of the constraints and capacity of small groups to provide services.

7. ***That Collaboration Roundtable discussions continue and an annual workshop be held:*** This recommendation is key if small groups' perspectives are heard and their participation in the Collaboration Roundtable is supported as suggested in recommendations above.

The consultants would like to express our appreciation to the members of the fourteen groups which voluntarily agreed to meet with us and share their insights and experiences. It was an honour to meet you and see the dedication which you bring to your work and communities.

Shary Bartlett   *Annie McKitrick*

5.0 <u>APPENDICES</u>

5.1 List of Groups Interviewed

Cambodian Community Family Support and Integration Program
Congolese Community of BC
Federation of African Communities
Greater Vancouver Vietnamese Women's Society
India Punjab Senior Citizen Society
Iranian Immigrant and Refugee Society of BC
Kalayaan Resource and Training Centre (Philippine Women)
Kurdistan-Canadian Information Centre
Latin American Community Council
Somali-Canadian Community Development Assn. of BC
Surrey Delta Chinese Community Society
Tonari Gumi (Japanese Community Volunteers' Association)
Trinidad and Tobago Cultural Society of BC
UNIDA (Unity in Diversity Association)

5.2   Questionnaire

<u>**Collaboration Roundtable *Phase II* – Small Organization Outreach**</u>

Interview questions

(The interviewer will provide a brief introduction to the Collaboration Roundtable project.)

1.   Can you tell me a bit about your organization?

    _____

    _____

3.   Can you tell me about any times that your organization has worked in collaboration with other groups before? (If organization has not worked in collaboration, proceed to question 6)

    _____

    _____

4.   What did you feel was successful about working in collaboration? (if applicable)

    _____

    _____

5.   What aspects of working in collaboration were difficult/not successful? (if applicable)

    _____

    _____

6.   Can you tell me a bit about why your organization has not worked in collaboration with other groups? (If applicable)

    _____

    _____

7.   Do you have any questions or other comments you would like to share?

    _____

    _____

8.   Do you have any interest in becoming involved in the Collaboration Roundtable?

    _____

    _____