

# VitalSigns®

## ***Community Foundations of Canada 2011 Vital Signs Program Report***

***2011 Debrief Meeting, Nov 14<sup>th</sup> 2011***

### **National Training, Support and Leadership**

**Program Growth:** This year the number of community foundations that published reports on Oct 4<sup>th</sup> grew from 15 in 2010 to 22. The overall number of participating community foundations has grown to 31. The newly participating communities were: Golden, Grande Prairie, North Okanagan (Vernon), Nova Scotia, Powell River, South Okanagan (Penticton), Squamish, Mississauga, and York Region. As in past years, several foundations that had previously published reports did not- the largest of these being Vancouver, Ottawa and Waterloo Region.

**Training:** As in previous years we conducted an *Orientation* webinar in December followed by 5 training webinars between February and June: *Using Basecamp, Getting Started, Data and Indicators, Marketing and Communications, and Grading and Survey Strategies*. These were well attended by CFs participating for the first time and by new staff and volunteers from previous participants.

In September, we also held a webinar about launching *Vital Signs* during an election with Toronto Community Foundation presenting their experiences, as well as a webinar to preview CFC's national communications strategy and messages.

In the coming months, CFC would like to create and deliver a 6<sup>th</sup> webinar titled *Integrating Vital Signs into your Work and Evaluation*.

**Rural Secretariat Project:** As we shared in February, CFC obtained a grant from the Government of Canada's Rural and Cooperatives Secretariat to implement a project titled *Building Vitality in Rural Communities- A Vital Signs Toolkit*. Taking place over the next two and a half years, the key objective of this project is to develop new learning and template resources that will assist small community foundations to start effective and high impact *Vital Signs* programs.

Working with five small foundations in British Columbia, as well as Vancouver Foundation, the Victoria Foundation and the Columbia Basin Trust, CFC has been working to create and launch new web based guides around community engagement, data and research, collaboration, integration into other foundation work, and special reports such as on youth.

Most of these resources are already available in draft form and will be revised with the input of users so that other CFC members may use them in 2012 and beyond.

Through this project we were also able to create an updated version of the *Vital Signs* report design/publication template.

**Vital Signs Internationally:** We have continued to receive regular interest from community foundations around the world. In the past 12 months we have provided assistance to community foundations in the US: Erie and Pittsburgh, and we are in the early stages of work with two foundations in the United Kingdom. The Community Foundation Network in the UK is interested in growing VS in the UK and is auditing the work with an eye towards acting as a training and sharing hub, as CFC has done.

**Program Sponsorship:** Starting in 2011 and ramping up into 2012, CFC has launched efforts to find sponsors for the national program. We are hoping to build long-term relationships with national companies, who we would showcase in our Globe insert, special topical research reports, and website and social media campaign. Financial pressures on the national program have been significant in the past few years and we see this as the most viable way to raise revenue and allow us to grow and innovate.

**Research and Data:** 2011 was largely business as usual in terms of research and data. For the fifth year in a row we contracted with Andrew Sharpe and the Centre for the Study of Living Standards (CSLS) to provide research support to all participating CFs and to our national report and communications.

Eight new indicators were added for 2011: in the health issue area, assessment of availability and quality of health care (Ontario only), and perceived life stress; in the arts and culture issue area, government spending on recreation and culture; in the environment issue area, Green buildings and household food security status; in the work issue area, average actual hours worked per week; in the getting around issue area, transit spending; and in the economic issue area, revenue sources for municipalities.

There are currently 179 tables in the *Vital Signs* data base, of which about 25% were not updated for 2011 due to a lack of new data. Of the 133 tables that were updated, two thirds (76) were updated in early June, an additional 39 were updated in early July and the remaining 18, for which data only comes available in late July, were updated at the beginning of August.

There were some minor data accuracy issues this year but overall given the volume of figures, places and sources, the work was well done this year. In 2011 the CSLS provided detailed written comments on draft reports for 13 foundations, up from 6 in 2010.

There is an ongoing challenge around data for smaller communities, a product of sample size for many government surveys. This year CFC spent about \$5,000 on data. We did not update the ratio of the 90<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> percentile for household income because the data were prohibitively expensive to access. Additionally, data for several indicators in the environment issue area were not available until after the final release date.

The cancellation of the mandatory census remains a challenge to the *Vital Signs* program. The voluntary National Household Survey was conducted in the spring and early buzz is that response rate was very high. Whether this will result in reliable and comparable data remains to be seen, particularly for smaller communities. Under normal circumstances 2011 census data would become available starting in 2013 so the full impact of the change will not hit us till then, in the meantime we will continue to explore alternatives such as tax data.

As was discussed at the 2010 Vital Signs Peer Gathering, there is certainly interest in reducing or eliminating the core indicators moving forward. In 2011 we did not make any major changes here but our experience re-confirmed that this should be on the table as a direction for 2012.

**Communications:** We distributed two national media advisories and a national news release via Canada News Wire. We also distributed three promotional pieces to our electronic mailing list: one a week before Vital Signs, one on the day of and a final promo piece the day of the Globe insert.

**Media coverage:** National media coverage this year included: CBC National Radio News, CBC News Network, CBC National TV News, and print coverage by columnists and Postmedia news which appeared in newspapers in from Vancouver to Moncton, NB. The obesity issue was blogged about in Maclean's magazine and on a number of online forums.

At last year's Peer Gathering the group agreed that the media clippings service provided by Cision was extremely expensive and not providing value for the thousands of dollars it required.

All community foundations participating in Vital Signs are asked to provide media clipping numbers to CFC so we can compile a program total. Please send your totals for the following types of media coverage to Anne-Marie at [amcelrone@cfc-fcc.ca](mailto:amcelrone@cfc-fcc.ca).

<b>Clipping Type</b>	<b>Coverage total</b>
----------------------	-----------------------

- Print
- Radio
- TV
- Online

**Globe & Mail supplement:** The Globe and Mail insert took the same form as last year, but with a new sponsor. We've had several suggestions for next year:

- explore ways to print even more CF stories, either by expanding the size of the supplement or changing it to a different type of publication (magazine format)
- letting CFs know in advance which communities would be featured and which would not
- change the name from Giving Guide, which isn't exactly accurate
- consider that product sponsors may not be a good fit for this type of supplement

**National Website:** The national website portal continues to funnel visitors to local VS sites. The Local Reports page of the website is the most visited section of the website (after the Vital Signs home page). The vast majority of visitors go right to a local site afterwards, so the portal is

serving a good part of its intended purpose. Website numbers are similar to last year with more than 4,000 website hits in October and 10,000 page views. We had more foundations tweeting this year than ever before with almost 30 tweeting about Vital Signs before, during and after launch day.

Last year's peer gathering was clear – we all agree that redesigning the national Vital Signs website portal is a priority. CFC is working on funding for this project. We have approached a web-social-mobile firm about a partnership that would include some pro bono work. If you have firms in your community that would be interested in taking on a national project like this, please let us know.

We're interested in projects like a Vital Signs app and digital storytelling, but we would like to hear your ideas around infographics or any other features that you think would make the Vital Signs website *the place* to go for discussion/action on community indicators.