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SERVING ETHNOCULTURAL COMMUNITIES: BUILDING UNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY

Appendix G

Project Proposal to PCREII

SEC Project: Serving Ethnocultural Communities 2004-2005

PROJECT PROPOSAL submitted to the Prairie Center for Excellence Community Research Fund. Submitted by:

Multicultural Coalition

for Equity in Health & Well Being

Advocating for equitable access to support health and well being

10897-97th Street
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada
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Project Proposal

November 22, 2004

Dear Drs. Baha Abu-Laban and Tracy Derwing,

We, the Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op (MCHB) and the Multicultural Coalition for Health and Wellbeing are writing in regards to the Prairie Center's Community Research Fund, for which we are applying through this letter. Our sponsoring PCERII affiliated researcher is Dr. Denise Spitzer who will act in an advisory manner for the duration of the research.

ORGANIZATION PROFILES

Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative

The Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative (MCHB) is a formally registered not-for-profit workers co-operative with the province of Alberta. As a workers' co-operative, our organizational mandate is to support immigrant and refugee individuals and families in attaining optimum health through relevant health education, family support, community development and advocacy. Each year, the MCHB Co-op provides services to over 1000 families within the Chinese, Vietnamese, South Asian, Spanish-speaking, and Arabic-speaking communities, as well as families of refugee background (Somali, Kurdish & former Yugoslavia). Since incorporating in November 1998, we have served over 4,000 immigrant/refugee families in Edmonton.

As a worker's co-operative, our organizational structure operation and governance is established in accordance with the three principles of co-operatives: 1. democratic governance in relation to its members, 2. direct responsiveness and accountability to the communities that we serve, and 3. equity and social justice in relation to our work with mainstream public institutions within the health and social service sectors. Because of these foundational organizational principles, our organization has been able to pursue and sustain a unique practice – health brokering, that resonates with population health goals:

Within the health brokering practice, we are committed to being:

1. holistic and attentive to the social, cultural and economic determinants of health. We support families and communities in addressing issues such as inequitable access to health & social services, lack of income & food security, isolation and early childhood development.
2. oriented to community capacity building and mobilization. We are constantly seeking opportunities to create supportive networks among families to address common struggles, or to engage community members & leaders in taking action on community issues.
3. mindful of the systemic & institutional barriers to equity and social justice. We strive to support incremental changes in practice, programming and policy development among our partner institutions towards cultural responsiveness and equitable access.



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Currently, the MCHB Co-op’s three primary areas of **successful operations** are: Perinatal Education and Outreach (contract with Community Health Services- Capital Health), Primary Health Care (contract with the Northeast Community Health Centre – Capital Health) and Family Support & Early Parenting (contract with Ma'mowe Children Services). In addition, we serve on several coalitions/initiatives to address critical health and social health issues in immigrant communities, such as the Community-based Immigrant Mental Health project funded by Alberta Health & Wellness, and the Building Healthy Immigrant Communities project funded by National Crime Prevention.

In 1995 – 1998, Brighter Futures funding assisted the founding members of the MCHB Co-op to establish the health brokering practice. In 1998, Health Canada (regional funding) provided the Multicultural Health Brokers with funding to learn & conduct participatory action research for engaging communities in meaningful action for change.

Members Practice Goals are guided by a holistic, family-oriented approach.

- We work with families on the basis of trusting and respectful relationships.
- We focus on capacity building and create community development opportunities that would lead to better health and well being of individuals and families.
- We seek to facilitate maximum access for individuals and families to existing health and social services.
- We strive for complementary practice with health and other human service professionals.
- We support incremental changes among our institutional partners toward greater cultural responsiveness and equitable access.

In summary, there are three key reasons why our organization is well positioned to sponsor and oversee the proposed project. First, we have established, over time, a vast network of trusting relationships within immigrant/refugee communities & the health sector that would allow for meaningful collective actions. Second, we have gained the necessary experience and insight, through other initiatives, in establishing and sustaining effective relationships and action groups. Third, through the years, we have learned to design, implement and evaluate initiatives grounded in community capacity building and participatory principles.

All Together Now: A Multicultural Coalition for Health and Wellbeing

Since 2002, the MCHB has spearheaded an innovative project which aimed to develop a civic space for ethnic minority engagement through a coalition project in Edmonton, Alberta. Since September 2002, a total of 120 community members participated in 36 policy education workshops. Four priority issues were identified by community participants as major determinants of ethnic minority health. These are: unequal access to suitable employment opportunities for foreign-trained professionals and workers; limited access to educational opportunities for newcomers and underfunding of ESL supports; inability to access affordable and culturally appropriate health services; and isolation and exclusion of ethnic minorities from civic and political participation in Canadian society. This multicultural coalition consists of ethnic minorities which in cooperation with government and community organizations aimed to articulate and advocate a policy agenda for health and well-being. It was initially funded by Health Canada through the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI).



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The ongoing objectives of the Coalition are to:

- enable ethnic minorities to generate collective knowledge about health issues and recognize the policy implications of these issues
- create opportunities for institutional/sector partners to build their “participatory capacity”
- introduce ethnic minority communities to the language and process of policy development
- foster organizational skills of ethnic minorities to act in their own interest and become agents of policy
- establish an alliance of organizational and community partners, across health sectors, committed to ethnic minorities and equity in health.

The coalition project is guided by the principles of conscientization, participation, and community capacity building.

Since the Multicultural Coalition for Health and Wellbeing is still seeking funding to continue its activities after the initial VSI funding ended last April, and formalizing its bylaws to become a formal non-profit organization. Therefore, the MCHB’s initial role as a guide for Coalition development and vector for the initial mobilization has changed into one of supporter and friend, cooperating and assisting the Coalition when called upon.

It is as such that we are applying as a sponsoring organization for PCERII’s community fund. Together with the Coalition we have identified a need for research that will not only benefit the Coalition’s ongoing activity as a grassroots advocate for immigrant issues, but also the immigrant serving agencies and researchers involved in such fields.

PROPOSED RESEARCH PROJECT

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Identified Need

One of the main learnings gained in the mobilization process for the MCHW has been the realization that immigrant and refugees from a diversity of cultural backgrounds share common barriers to integration in Canadian society. A necessary element for the development of the Coalition’s group solidarity included the ability to move beyond speaking for a specific ethnic minority group (e.g. “These are the issues that face the South Asian community”) to *speaking on behalf of immigrant issues as a whole* (e.g. “These are the issues that face the immigrant community”).

With the MCHB’s support, the Coalition has promoted this learning and their goals to their own communities in order to gain their input and ensure legitimacy. Two major community forums have been successfully implemented during the past two years attracting community members, immigrant serving agencies, government, and researchers to share an open dialogue about identified issues.

Nevertheless, the Coalition has realized the need to better attract the participating of ethnocultural serving community groups, of which there are 95 registered with the Edmonton Multicultural Society alone. These community groups are focused on their



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specific communities, a collaborative effort between such organizations and the Coalition would increase both of their abilities to address the advocacy needs of the immigrant and refugee communities. Rather than staying focused on particular needs, we could build relationships and become a stronger voice for shared barriers.

The key to successful community mobilization/civic participation are relationships based on trust and reputation. Because these ethnocultural organization have a lot of social capital in the community, the mobilization process can be greatly accelerated.

In order to engage these organizations, the MCHB and the Coalition need to understand their profiles: their needs, successes, strategies, main players, and overall experience serving their communities. We thus propose that Coalition members will seek meetings with identified community organization leaders in which such issues would be discussed and recorded in an interview type manner. This will become the foundation of a database which is currently unavailable, a great concern considering that there are over 50 such ethnocultural organizations in Edmonton.

We simply do not know what their experiences and organizational capacities are:

- What is structure of the organization?
- What are and how do they obtain resources?
- How does the organization maintain legitimacy vis-à-vis their communities, other agencies, the government?
- What is its powerbase and sphere of influence?
- Who are they serving? What are the issues facing their communities and how have they responded to them?
- What strategies have they found most successful in their work?
- Do they believe they can mobilize their communities?
- What have been their greatest barriers?
- Do they share commonalities across ethnocultural groups?
- What are the patterns we can deduce from these findings?
- How can the Coalition help or support these organizations in their work?

Intended Outcomes, Timelines, and Participants

The interview is also the beginning of rapport and relationship building between the Coalition members and the ethnocultural community leaders. We hope that through this we can engage them in our activities and increase their knowledge about our work and objectives. We will contact all of the organizations and hope to meet with 30 of their representatives.

The hired Masters trained researcher will specialize in qualitative data collection and the principles of Participatory Action Research. She will train the Coalition members in the conducting of interviews as well.

Once the collected data from the interviews, it will be analyzed by the researcher. Through the prepared report, we hope to be able to show ethnocultural community organizations common needs they share with other ethnocultural organizations and with the Coalition. Based on this, we will invite them to a workshop to discuss the findings and invite their participation as members or collaborators of the Coalition.



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The researcher will include the discussion and decisions of the workshop in a final report to be distributed to municipal/provincial politicians and service providers in municipal and provincial governments, settlement agencies, researchers, community members as well as the participants. This will increase their knowledge about ethnocultural community organizations profiles.

Aside from the increased and documented knowledge about ethnocultural community organizations which will be useful to community groups, immigrants and refugees, agencies, government and researchers, the Coalition and these groups will have the opportunity to network with one another and realize their commonalities.

It is our hope that the end result forms such dialogue will be their increased knowledge of immigrant and refugee issues and an ability to move from the particularities of their communities to a stronger voice untied across ethnic and religious divisions as agents for policy change committed to ethnic minorities.

The timeline for the projects spans from January until September 2005 during which the aforementioned activities would be undertaken. Please see the attached logic model for details.

Proposed Budget

We want to provide the Coalition members and ethnocultural community organization representatives, who are volunteering their time, a \$30.00 honorarium for transportation/childcare during the interview. We hope to conduct 30 interviews, which would result in \$1800.00 for honoraria.

We project that the costs of the workshop will be \$500.00 to cover the facility, supplies, and food for the participants.

We also project 135 hours at \$20.00 per hour for the Masters prepared researcher who will design the research tools, instruct Coalition members on interview procedures. This works out to approximately 4 hours a week for the 8 month period. The researcher will also identify potential interviewees with the MCHB's assistance. The analysis of the data and the report writing, meeting notes, etc. will also be the responsibility of the researcher.

Thus, the total proposed budget is \$5000.000.

Remarks

To conclude, we sincerely thank you for your consideration for this funding and hope that the PCERII will recognize this as a beneficial research initiative for a grassroots movement aiming to increase the immigrant and refugee population's participatory capacity. We hope to hear positive news and if you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to call either Dr. Lucenia Ortiz (MCHB), or Dr. Denise Spitzer for clarification.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lucenia Ortiz
(423-1973), lucenia@interbaun.com

Dr. Denise Spitzer (492-0139)
denise.spitzer@ualberta.ca

DATE	ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES	INDICATORS
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Coalition members assisted by the researcher prepare interview guides and identify the contact information for approximately 50 ethnocultural community organizations. The researcher trains the Coalition members in qualitative interview methods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalition members have increased knowledge of ethnocultural community organizations. The Coalition members have increased knowledge qualitative interview methods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalition members report increased knowledge in meetings.
February - March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Coalition members contact the ethnocultural community organizations and set up meetings with 30 representatives. The Coalition members conduct the interviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalition members and ethnocultural community organizations leaders have increased knowledge of each others' profiles: their needs, successes, strategies, main players, and overall experience serving their communities. Coalition members and ethnocultural community organizations leaders have increased their abilities to network with other community leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalition members report increased knowledge and increased ability to network in meetings. Ethnocultural community organizations leaders report increased knowledge in the interview with Coalition members.
May – June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The researcher analyzes the collected data and produces a summary which is shared with the Coalition. The Coalition members contact the ethnocultural community organizations to invite them to a workshop discussing the findings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalition members have increased knowledge of ethnocultural community organization profiles: their needs, successes, strategies, main players, and overall experience serving their communities. The Coalition members have increased their abilities to successfully engage the ethnocultural community organizations in their activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalition members report increased knowledge in meetings. Ethnocultural community organizations leaders accept and attend the workshop.
Early July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The researcher presents the findings to the workshop participants. The workshop participants discuss the findings and decide on new directions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalition members and ethnocultural community organizations leaders have increased knowledge of each others' profiles. Coalition members and ethnocultural community organizations leaders have increased rapport and networking opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalition members and Ethnocultural community organizations leaders report increased knowledge after the workshop through the evaluation questionnaire. Ongoing cooperation between the Coalition and ethnocultural community organization.
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The researcher analyzes the outcomes of the workshop in light of the interview findings. The workshop participants discuss the findings of the report and decide on new directions. The report is distributed to municipal/provincial politicians and service providers in municipal and provincial governments, settlement agencies, community members, researchers and workshop participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalition members and ethnocultural community organizations leaders have increased ability to decide on new strategies which include advocacy collaboration across cultures to address shared issues. Municipal/provincial politicians and service providers in municipal and provincial governments, settlement agencies, and community members have increased knowledge about ethnocultural community organizations profiles: their needs, successes, strategies, main players, and overall experience serving their communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy changes to increase equity for ethnocultural communities, programs better address their needs, community member access ethnocultural community organizations to meet their needs.