



Partnering with Business to End Homelessness: Strategies for Success

In this seminar, Paul Born, Garry Loewen and Loren Grebanier discuss how best to engage the business sector in social change efforts to end homelessness.

They identify various roles that businesses can play in addressing social issues. They talk in detail about the guide, [*Collaborating with the Business Sector to End Homelessness in Toronto*](#) - the context in which it was created and the six step process it outlines for engaging business in the work of social change. Some of the common challenges of working with business are discussed, but inspiring stories of success are also shared, with Clovis Grant of Eva's Initiatives joining to tell the heartening story of the Phoenix Print Shop.

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Learning Objectives:

- To understand the context for the guide, *Collaborating with the Business Sector to End Homelessness in Toronto*
- To learn how the business sector can contribute to eradicating homelessness
- To understand what it really means to “collaborate with business”
- To become familiar with Garry’s six steps to obtain business involvement
- To explore some of the challenges of collaborating with businesses
- To hear inspiring stories of successful initiatives

On this page you’ll find:

- Meet the thought leaders
- The context for the guide
- What the business sector can do
- What it means to collaborate with business
- The six steps to get business involved
- The challenges of collaborating with businesses
- A story to inspire you

Meet the Thought Leaders:

Garry Loewen - In his early career, Garry was Executive Assistant to the President and then General Manager of Air Canada’s Operations at Toronto International Airport. He later became a parish minister, an economic development director and a community activist.



Currently, Garry is Chair of the Board of the Assiniboine Credit Union. Prior to this, he served as the Executive Director of the North End Community Renewal Corporation in Winnipeg, and the Executive Director of The Canadian Community Economic Development Network. He also served for ten years as the Community Economic Development Director for Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba. In that capacity he was the founding Executive Director of SEED Winnipeg, a micro-enterprise development organization. He was also the founding President of Opportunities for Employment, an organization that assists welfare recipients to make the transition from welfare to work. Garry is author of the guide, *Collaborating with the Business Sector to End Homelessness in Toronto*.

Loren Grebanier - Loren Grebanier uses his passion for capacity building to advocate adaptive learning for organizational strength.



As Policy Development Officer for the Shelter, Support and Housing Administration Division in Toronto, he provides support to organizations to improve their performance and impact on the communities they serve, as he uses adaptive learning techniques to build on their capacity and knowledge. Loren facilitates this sort of organization development through several initiatives, including a partnership with the United Way of Greater Toronto.

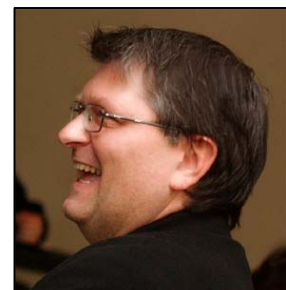
Clovis Grant - Clovis is General Manager of Eva's Phoenix, a transitional shelter for homeless youth. He oversees the 50-bed shelter and all its services including a Print Shop, Mentorship, Housing and Employment Programs.

Prior to working at Eva's, Clovis worked for 9 years with the Community Services Department at the Region of York where, as Supervisor, he helped shape the development of the Department's first employment program. Clovis was also Executive Director of HOPE *worldwide of Canada*, a not-for-profit organization that performed charitable works in major cities across Canada.



Paul Born - Paul is the President and Co-founder of Tamarack and has worked with many organizations and communities to develop innovative and sustainable ideas that motivate people to collaborative action and change.

Paul also founded and was the Executive Director of the Community Opportunities Development Association (CODA) - now called Lutherwood - one of Canada's most successful community economic-development organizations. As a master storyteller, Paul infuses his work, relationships, community, and life with the magic of conversation. He shares his passion



for conversation in his book *Community Conversations: Mobilizing the Ideas, Skills, and Passion of Community Organizations, Governments, Businesses, and People*.

The Context for the Guide

Over the years, many non-profit organizations have sought to engage the business sector in collaborating with them to enhance the services they bring to the communities they serve. Many have been successful, but some initiatives have floundered, in part due to lack of knowledge of how to engage with the unfamiliar business culture.

Loren points out that the SSHA has been open, interested and active in working collaboratively with the private sector for some time, and openly encourages other agencies they work with to do the same.

In Loren's unit alone, they have provided a series of five workshops on multi-sectoral collaboration to end homelessness in Toronto and have twice offered a 10-part training series on fundraising & resource development which included working with the private sector.

SSHA provided funding for the guide; a brochure called *Ending Homelessness is Good Business*, and arranged the March 4 tele-conference.



[Listen to Loren talk about the 5 primary objectives for the creation of Collaborating with the Business Sector to End Homelessness in Toronto](#)



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What the Business Sector Can Do

Garry was motivated to write the guide by his 25 years in business and his current work with people who are marginalized and living in poverty. He had always been interested in how business can be used for social change and his experience in a number of fruitful collaborations convinced him that the process could be transformative for people on both sides.



[Listen to Garry tell an inspiring story of what happened in Pittsburgh when State Farm Insurance got involved with low-income people](#)



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What it Means to Collaborate with Business

It can be intimidating for some people to think about approaching businesses in their community. They know they don't look like business people themselves and are afraid they will be stereotyped. They don't know enough about what the businesses do to be able to make an intelligent "ask."

Garry has identified three different levels of relationship, which give people a template for thinking about the approach. Will they just ask for money or equipment? Do they want the staff of the business to get involved in their community organization? Is there some way that both community agency and business can benefit?

 [Listen as Garry describes the three approaches](#)

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The Six Steps to get Business Involved

Paul pointed out that Garry and others tried very hard to make the guide simple, clear and accessible to anyone who might need it.

The reader is taken from initial planning stage right through to gathering supporting evidence and making the approach. Garry stressed that people in business have extremely valuable expertise that they are, in many cases, anxious to make available to those who can benefit from their knowledge and skills.

 [Listen to Garry and Paul discuss the six steps](#)

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The Challenges of Collaborating with Business

Garry pointed out that although there is much potential for good will between business and those who work with low-income people, there is also the reality of a certain level of culture clash. Community agencies are strong on process and inclusion. Businesses are much more geared to outcomes.

It's also important to know if your tactics are going to be confrontational or collaborative. It's hard, if not impossible, to do both at once!

 [Garry talks about some of the challenges](#)

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A Story to Inspire You

Clovis gave a brief description of *Eva's Initiatives* which operates 3 unique shelters for Youth in Toronto. The primary focus of the shelters is to provide opportunities for youth to become self-sufficient.

In particular he pointed to the Phoenix print shop, a socially and environmentally responsible training facility, which illustrates the best of collaboration between business and a community agency.

 [Listen here as Clovis talks about the print shop](#)

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Reflection Questions

1. What businesses might find the community organization I work with an appealing match?
2. Are there ways I could engage their interest, before asking them to meet specific needs?
3. What kinds of skills and knowledge am I looking for?
4. Who do I already know in the business world who might provide an introduction to the organizations I've identified?
5. What are some of the stereotypes I have about people in business?

To reflect on these and other important questions, please refer to the Resources and Links below.

Links and Resources

Collaborating with the business sector to end homelessness - This manual is organized into a six-step process for planning engagement with business. Download the manual [here](#).

Ending homelessness is good business - This brochure can be used by organizations to engage the business sector in their work or project. Download the brochure [here](#).

John Weiser – John is a leading thinker and facilitator of corporate involvement in expanding opportunities for low income communities. Read how, as community citizens, employers, purchasers and producers, businesses can make a difference [here](#).

The City of Toronto Shelter, Support and Housing Administration - SSHA has programs to assist low income people and end homelessness in Toronto. Visit their website [here](#). To download a resource kit from an SSHA workshop on *Corporate Partnerships: Building Relationships with the Private Sector*, click [here](#).

Communities Collaborating Institute - This is just one of Tamarack Institute's initiatives to target individuals from a cross section of organizations using collaborative processes to find new solutions to the complex issues facing their communities. Learn more about CCI 2008 [here](#).

Eva's Initiatives – This is a program that reaches out to homeless and at-risk youth ages 16 to 24 to get them off the streets permanently. They operate three shelters in the Greater Toronto Area that house 122 youth each night. Learn more about the program [here](#).

The Assiniboine Credit Union – This credit union operates with a fundamental belief that strong, sustainable communities are good for people and good for business. Read more [here](#).



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