A Guide to Developing Community Hubs With Seniors

South Vancouver Seniors Hub 2014

Published by South Vancouver Neighbourhood House www.southvan.org

Acknowledgements

The South Vancouver Seniors Hub is made possible through the dedication of seniors, community agency partners, funders and researchers who pool their resources, energy and talents to create this dynamic and innovative approach to engaging older adults as leaders in addressing seniors' issues and needs.

Thanks to the older adults of South Vancouver who contribute thousands of volunteer hours in many different roles, including: Seniors Hub Council, Hub committees, providing outreach and support to isolated seniors, undertaking advocacy on issues and leading stimulating activities for their peers.

Thanks to the Hub community agency partners: South Vancouver Neighbourhood House (lead agency), Champlain Heights Community Association, Killarney Community Association, Killarney Seniors Association, Sunset Community Association and South East Vancouver Seniors Arts and Cultural Society which have embraced collaborative planning, joint programming and generously contribute staff time and other resources to the Hub.

Thanks to Hub funders: The City of Vancouver, United Way of the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Coastal Health, and Vancouver Foundation who provide funding, participate as partners in the work and reduce the administrative burden of reporting by agreeing to use one funder's reporting template as a common report.

Thanks to Hub evaluation partner UBC Centre for Hip Health and Mobility for taking a hands-on participatory evaluation approach, creating community friendly tools and building the Hub's capacity for measuring impacts and making results oriented decisions.

Thanks to Joan Wright, Seniors Hub Coordinator, whose community capacity building skills ensure all parties are fully engaged in visioning, planning, implementing and celebrating the work of the Seniors Hub.

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Introduction

Collaborative communities are composed of people, organizations and businesses working together to enhance the wellbeing of those who live, work and play in the community. Collaborative partners are diverse and may include residents groups, neighbourhood houses, community centres, community policing, community health services, libraries, schools, faith groups and recreational facilities. A healthy community is created from the ground up when diverse community networks connect for sharing information and pooling knowledge and resources to address community needs. A Seniors Hub was created with seniors in South Vancouver to formalize collaborative partnerships into an integrated network that addresses issues and needs for older adults living in this community. Seniors lead and govern the Hub such that decisions and activities are guided by and for seniors.

BACKGROUND OF THE SOUTH VANCOUVER SENIORS HUB PROJECT

The goal of the South Vancouver Seniors Hub project is to support the independence and active participation of older adults in community life. Playing a leadership role in planning and governance, seniors develop their capacity to guide and sustain the Hub using a community development approach that connects seniors and organizations at the neighbourhood level.

In January of 2010 South Vancouver Neighbourhood House (SVNH) www.southvan.org received funding from a collaborating funders group composed of The City of Vancouver, United Way of the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Foundation and Vancouver Coastal Health (SMART) to develop a Seniors Hub using the Neighbourhood House approach. The 3 year pilot project was implemented by older adults, community agencies, funders and evaluators working together. Evaluation partner UBC Centre for Hip Health and Mobility employed a thorough community-based evaluation process documenting the Hub's development and outcomes, creating the potential for sharing information and replicating the model in other communities.

The South Vancouver Seniors Hub ("The Hub") is working on behalf of seniors residing in Southeast Vancouver-an area with over 18,000 seniors. The Hub is governed by a dedicated group of seniors making up a Seniors Council (see section *Guiding Principle: Senior Participation* for more information). The Hub Council and related committees organize health and wellness activities, hold information sessions on issues affecting seniors, identify assets and gaps in community services and produce a newsletter that highlights stories and information of interest to older adults. Seniors Hub members also link with other city-based and provincial oriented groups to extend their impact on issues beyond the local community.

The Hub community service partners also work collectively to better serve local seniors. To that end they have committed to interagency meetings and planning that includes integrating service schedules to reduce duplication, promote each others' programs and undertake mutually beneficial projects. The partnership is formalized through a 'Memorandum of Understanding' (MOU) that each partner's Board of Directors helped develop and approve.

SVNH as the lead agency manages the development and coordination of The Hub. The Hub Coordinator is a full time employee who uses a grassroots community capacity building approach to ensure that the Hub is co-created from the ground up and is governed by and for seniors. The Coordinator also serves as the key link between the various community partners and the Hub council.

Integrating community services and resources through a collectively managed governance structure can be a challenging process, requiring different management strategies from those traditionally followed. The key to successfully managing and coordinating these complex arrangements is good governance and communication practices supported by clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the different Hub players. These roles and relationships have been outlined in a governance manual created by the Seniors Council.

The Hub has been nationally recognized as an example of collective impact and social innovation. Through this collaborative structure, the Hub supports seniors' independence and active participation in the community, builds capacity of service providers and seniors to connect with each other and work together while addressing seniors' issues and interests in the local community and beyond to other levels of society. The pilot project has demonstrated that the South Vancouver Seniors Hub is an approach worthy of replicating in other communities.

Why has this resource been developed?
This *Guide to Developing Community Hubs with Seniors*, herein referred to as 'The Guide', has been developed to provide practical information to organizations and groups about how to develop a collaborative community Hub where seniors are the leaders behind planning, implementing, governing and evaluating the project. The Guide refers to a companion toolkit that contains tools and documents needed for community groups wanting to start a Hub. This comprehensive toolkit is currently being developed and will be completed and posted on www.theseniorshub.org by December 2014.

Who will want to use this Guide?
The Guide will be particularly useful for place- based or neighbourhood centred organisations, such as neighbourhood houses that are experienced in community development and have a pre-existing network of interagency partnerships and collaborative relationships with local residents in the geographic area served. The Guide will also be useful for local governments and funders who support development of grassroots community driven structures/organizations.

Starting a Hub may feel overwhelming. This Guide provides a flexible framework for taking steps towards Hub development. The Guide identifies four distinctive elements needed for developing a Hub: vision and type; scope and catchment; governing bodies and stakeholders; and evaluation. Developing and implementing a community Hub requires that a community be 'ready', with a number of precursors in place. As such, this guide emphasizes the readiness and 'success factors' that allowed South Vancouver Seniors to successfully launch a Hub. While this guide is based on the development of a Seniors Hub, the elements could equally apply to place -based hubs pertaining to other interest groups.

When to use the Guide
This Guide can be used at any point in the planning or operational phase of a Hub. The principles of grass roots development and accessible tools for good governance and evaluation remain the same regardless of the group or setting.

The companion document of this guide, *A Comprehensive Toolkit for Developing, Governing and Evaluating Community Hubs,* will be completed by December 2014 and provides further detail, resources and guidance on the key elements needed to help ensure the success of a Hub. The 'Further Information' section at the end of this Guide describes these tools and materials in more detail.

Definitions and principles

What is the Seniors Hub?

- The Hub is a network that brings together seniors from diverse backgrounds and experiences, community agencies and other institutions to engage, serve, and address issues pertaining to seniors.
- The Hub is driven by a seniors' governance council who works with seniors and agencies to identify needs, community assets, make strategic decisions about community priorities and provide leadership in organizing activities.
- The Hub governance structure shifts power to older adults in the community who work alongside service organizations as partners.
- Service partners rely on The Hub as a way to integrate communications and coordinate programs for seniors in the local community.

Principles of a good Hub

A well governed Hub involves sound decision-making and accountability mechanisms.
- **The Seniors Hub works within a networked service model** that brings together seniors, community agencies and different organizations to help engage and serve seniors.
- **The Seniors Hub is driven by and for seniors.** Seniors lead, govern, identify needs and organize activities to meet those needs.
- **The Seniors Hub benefits individual seniors.** Seniors gain confidence, socialize interculturally, learn new things and create opportunities for isolated seniors.
- **The Seniors Hub benefits community services.** The network of partnerships has resulted in better coordination of services and activities

Readiness: Precursors for success

- A seniors council composed of older adults from different parts of the community and already active in volunteer leadership roles or a pre-existing base of relationships with older adults in the community who could form a leadership council.
- Partnerships with community centres and other organizations who have a history of working with/serving seniors and a desire to find a more integrative approach to programming and expanding activities for older adults
- A lead organization with a commitment to social justice and a mandate to build collaborative service networks and engage residents as leaders in service planning and community development
- Funding partners committed to multiyear funding, enabling staff to focus on development of The Hub rather than spending time sourcing financial resources
- Evaluation partners committed to hands on participation and helping the organization and seniors evaluate their processes as the Hub develops

Overview chart of Development, Governance and Evaluation

The chart below provides an overview of some key considerations for each of the four components involved in developing, governing and evaluating a Hub. It also embeds that the guiding principle of seniors leadership and participation throughout each of these four components.

Although the scope and complexity of individual Hubs will dictate the applicability of each component listed, it is recommended that each component be considered and explored. These questions are a starting point for discussion only.

Guiding principle: Senior participation	Component 1: Vision and type	Component 2: Scope and catchment	Component 3: Governing Bodies and stakeholders	Component 4: Process Evaluation
Key considerations				
How will the seniors be engaged throughout all stages of the development and operation of The Hub? What formal mechanisms will enable seniors' input and ownership of decision making? How does the governance structure represent seniors' interests?	What is the vision for The Hub? Who should be involved in visioning? What knowledge and other requirements are needed to inform the Hub's vision and the activities to be delivered? What type of Hub is needed considering the community and its stakeholders?	Who will use The Hub? What are their needs and goals? How does The Hub fit with other community plans and strategies? What are the geographic or other boundaries for participation in the hub?	What are the roles and responsibilities of the lead agency, community partners and other stakeholders? What documents will be used to identify partners' roles, responsibilities and agreements? Who will fund the hub and how do all partners contribute to its sustainability? Who will provide operational management of The Hub?	What evaluation tools will be used? Who will be responsible for collecting data on hub processes and goals? How will the Hub data be compiled assessed and reported? How often will updates on hub progress be provided to stakeholders? Who assists with completing funding reports?

Guiding principle: Senior participation

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Governing Body: Senior participation in a Hub Council needs to be representative of the diversity of seniors in the community and must be considered for all parts of the governance and operations of The Hub. Senior Hub Council participation helps The Hub become a part of the fabric of a diverse community, rather than just a place to conduct meetings or obtain services.

Operations: When promoting senior's participation in the Hub Council the sponsoring lead agency will facilitate success by:

- Informing: provide the seniors with balanced information about community issues, opportunities and/or solutions they can act upon
- Involving: work directly with the seniors throughout the process to ensure that seniors' concerns and aspirations are consistently understood, considered and documented
- Collaborating: partner with a variety of seniors, service agencies, cultural or other underrepresented groups to ensure representation from diverse members of the community
- Empowering: ensure final decision making is in the hands of the seniors

Tools
The following tools have been developed to assist in development of leadership and volunteer roles for council members and other hub participants (found in the Hub Governance Manual):

- Formal interviews, reference checks and intake forms to welcome committed volunteers to participate in the Seniors Hub
- Hub position descriptions outlining the duties and expectations of individuals involved in The Hub.
- A Volunteer management manual that we found helpful is Volunteer Management: Mobilizing All The Resources Of The Community 3rd edition (2011) by Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch

Success factors

- Providing council members and other leading volunteers with the information and skills (e.g., literacy, note taking, organization, computer and email, etc.) they need to participate in a meaningful way
- Working together to reach a mutual understanding of aspirations and concerns
- Acknowledging and considering seniors' feedback
- Showing regular appreciation for the senior volunteers (appreciation certificates, service recognition, thank-you lunches or dinners, etc.)
- Requesting that all council members make a long-term volunteer commitment (e.g. 1 year) to The Hub
- Paid staff such as the Hub Coordinator take a capacity building role in supporting the active participation of seniors
- A trained and supported Seniors Council Executive Committee (Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary) who guide the Seniors Council
- Mentorship is used to support new members coming onto the Council

Challenges

- Limited recognition of, and communication with council members may result in inefficient and unsustainable decision making
- Turnover and time demands: older adult council members may fall ill, travel for large portions of the year, return to the paid workforce, or have caregiving duties arise

Component 1: Vision and type

Focus and Vision: A Hub vision focuses on what is possible to achieve through community-based collaboration. The governance and operations of integrated seniors Hub activities will be implemented according to that shared vision.

As the needs and goals of Hub partner agencies will be varied, it is important to understand the priorities and structures of the different organisations involved. Agency administrative requirements and governance processes will need to be understood and incorporated in the vision for working together toward shared goals of a community integration approach.

The South Vancouver Seniors Hub Mission Statement:

Our Mission, Active Together!

"Our mission is to work together to provide accessible, inclusive, timely and high quality programs and services for the diverse population of seniors living in South East Vancouver, such as long term residents, new immigrants, urban aboriginal and young seniors who are making transitions in their lives."

The goal of the Seniors Hub is to implement a collaborative community-based model that supports seniors' independence and active participation in the community.

Tools

The following tools may be used to inform and document developing a shared vision for a Hub:

- *Communication Plan*: to provide direction and clarity about the purpose and vision of The Hub (the communication plan includes a website, print and digital newsletters, blog, and social media strategy to share the purpose, vision and activities of The Hub with the broader community)
- *Vision Statement (included in the Governance Manual)*: to convey the aims and aspirations for The Hub
- *Annual Action Plans*: developed at annual retreats, outlining the key goals and activities of The Hub for the coming year. Action plans are typically organized to reflect the different goals and priorities of the Hub (e.g., an Annual Action Plan on Transportation, an Annual Action Plan on Health & Wellbeing)………..

Success factors

- Engagement with seniors community members and organisations to develop the vision, outcomes and activity plans
- Initial consultations and ongoing annual retreats with the Seniors Council to develop, reflect and refine the aims and aspirations for The Hub
- Budget for professional services for the development of the website, logos, branding, ensure materials are seniors friendly etc.
- Hub coordinator position, dedicated to developing the relationships and partnerships necessary to launch and sustain the ongoing success of The Hub

Challenges

- Competing priorities for use of space and other resources
- Competing interests. For example, different population groups or organizations may have different needs and expectations of Hub activities and services
- Limited opportunities for partnerships and collaborations, often due to time or resource constraints
- Compressed timeframes: the initial development of these essential Hub tools can take several years to successfully create and implement

Component 2: Scope and catchment

The vision and operation of a community Hub will vary depending on the scope of the catchment, the demographics, the community issues, the scale of services and number of activities being provided. Small neighbourhood Hubs with one or two integrated community services or activities will be governed differently from a Hub in a larger centre with a variety of services/activities. The types of organisations considered most appropriate for integration in the Hub will be determined by The Hub's vision, purpose, scope and scale.

Tools
The following information and assessment tools can be used in developing and operating collaborative and integrated community services, taking into account an understanding of the needs and aspirations of the community:

- Catchment information, including demographic statistics, existing community plans etc. that may help to plan for current and projected demand for facilities, services and activities

- A map of community assets such as the spaces, organizations, services and facilities in the catchment that may potentially be included in The Hub

- Needs assessments, interviews, anecdotal stories, focus groups or other documentation of issues/gaps to be addressed by the Hub

Success factors

- A strong local alliance of diverse parties is participating

- A partnership approach to community planning

- Regular meetings and ongoing email communication between The Hub partners and other stakeholders

- A strong understanding of community assets, needs, expectations

- A strong understanding of agency partners' internal pressures and demands

- A willingness to adapt or change Hub documents, such as the *Memorandum of Understanding,* to address changes in community and satisfy all parties involved.

- Passionate partners, who are all committed to the Mission and Vision of The Hub

- The Seniors Hub Council are actively involved in all processes

Challenges

- Without regular communication, there may be unrecognized service gaps and/or duplication

- Budget limitations necessitate compromises

- Unforseen changes in catchment demographics

Component 3: Governing bodies and stakeholders

Identification of different stakeholder groups is important because the communication needs for each group are different. Appropriate communication to stakeholders is essential for accountability, decision-making and integrated performance. Clear communication can reduce misunderstanding between parties in relation to collaborative community initiatives.

Clarity regarding the governance roles and responsibilities for different components of The hub should be discussed, agreed to and recorded. The Lead Agency may provide leadership in the beginning to establish systems of accountability between the different Hub components and ensure legal obligations are met; however, once these systems and parameters are established the governance of daily activities of the hub rests with the Seniors Council.

Internal Stakeholders

Hub operations stakeholders (directly involved in delivering hub activities)
- Individuals working for The Hub (including both staff and volunteers).
- Seniors currently engaged in The Hub activities and programs.
- Seniors Hub Council (oversees and governs Hub).
- Lead agency staff
- Interagency staff team.

Hub development and sustainability stakeholders
- Community organization partners' boards of directors:
- Evaluation Partner
- Funding agencies

External Stakeholders

- Local seniors, community leaders, faith groups, community agencies, institutions, businesses
- Seniors sector and advocacy organizations addressing bigger issues
- Local government representatives

Tools

The following tools can be used to document the relationships between the lead agency and stakeholders involved in governing The Hub:

- Terms of reference (found in the *Governance Manual*) to define the purpose and structure of a committee or council
- Codes of conduct for members (found in the *Governance Manual)*, including conflict of interest procedures to outline expected conduct and integrity required of members
- Written position descriptions (found in the *Governance Manual*) that outline the roles and responsibilities of The Hub staff members and volunteers; new tool governance training to assist members in meeting their responsibilities
- *Memorandum of Understanding* will be signed by all partner agencies, confirming and outlining their participation in The Hub
- A streamlined annual evaluation reporting tool

Success factors

- Seniors who reflect the diversity of the community are participating as Council and Committee members, with commitment to longer-term volunteer positions (e.g. a 1 year)

- A facilitated process with the Seniors Council for building governance and leadership capacity and creating a *Governance Manual.*

- Volunteers who are not seniors, but who have specific skill sets and who are committed to The Hub Mission and Vision

- Regular communication with all of the stakeholders, through in-person meetings and consistent email communication

- Partner agencies understand The Hub governance structure, role of lead agency and periodically review the MOU.

- Hub partners are committed to collaboration, service integration and embed hub partnership in their organizations

- Partners have a clear understanding about limitations of sharing resources and what community

delivered programs fall under The Hub's community governance.

Challenges

- Literacy: give careful attention to language in governance documents, in particular when working with seniors who speak English as a Second Language

- Time: ensure adequate time is provided for developing and understanding how to implement governance documents (this can take up to a year)

- Community confusion may result from lead agency's multiple roles in community: on the one hand the lead agency is responsible for resources applied to The Hub which is a community governed initiative. On the other hand the lead agency may have grants and service contracts for seniors programs that are agency driven and not governed by the hub.

- The lead agency and partners find a balance to integrate their agency delivered services within the integrated hub structure while retaining control over the programs they deliver under the auspices of their boards.

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Component 4: Process Evaluation

The evaluation of a new Hub project is essential in order to track its initial development and community impacts. The Process Evaluation is guided by the Outcome Measurement Framework (OMF) (see the *Evaluation Plan),* which was determined in collaboration with the Hub and the Funding Agencies. The OMF identifies goals, activities, outcomes and indicators of success.

The Seniors Hub partnered with the UBC Centre for Hip Health and Mobility (a research centre, www.**hiphealth**.ca) to develop and implement the evaluation. The evaluation team includes The Hub Coordinator, The SVNH Executive Director, a funders table representative from the Vancouver Foundation, and the researchers (including students) with experience in evaluation research and work with older adults from the UBC Centre for Hip Health and Mobility.

Tools
- Outcome Measurement Framework (found in the *Evaluation Plan),* agreed upon with the stakeholders and funders, clearly outlining the outcomes and deliverables that The Hub is expected to accomplish for its period of funding
- An *Evaluation Plan* which includes a toolkit and timeline, outlining how each element of the OMF will be measured, assessed and reported

Success Factors
- All parties have a three year commitment to the evaluation process
- A willingness of hub participants to adapt and course-correct. e.g, at year 1, funders were willing to change sections of the OMF to better reflect the evolving work of The Hub
- Seniors and agency staff are fully engaged in developing and testing evaluation tools they will be using
- Key evaluation tools were translated into several languages, reflecting the diversity of seniors

Challenges
- Evaluation activities are often overlooked or underfunded in pilot project budgets
- Time: a robust evaluation requires regular meetings and dedicated staff time designing, testing and implementing the evaluation plan and toolkit over a year
- Buy-in: all stakeholders will be required to participate in the evaluation, and as such, need to understand the value-added of a robust evaluation; otherwise, it can feel like added work

Development, Governance and Evaluation summary checklist

This chart summarises the elements of development, governance and evaluation as a series of questions.

Senior participation	Component 1: Vision and type	Component 2: Scope and catchment	Component 3: Governing bodies and Stakeholders	Component 4: Process Evaluation
Governing body Is the governing body representative of the diversity of seniors?	**Focus and vision** Is there a written vision and documented goals for The Hub?	**Scope and catchment** Is the catchment for The Hub, its services and activities understood by key stakeholders?	**Council and committee membership** Have the terms of reference and roles for the Council and committee members been documented?	**Outcome measurement** Is there a written agreement with the funders, outlining the anticipated outcomes? Are the outcomes measureable?
Operations Does operational and program planning involve seniors?	**Services and activities** Do the types of activities and services address diverse seniors' needs and goals? Are activities integrated on a continuum with service partners? Are activities utilizing leadership capacities of older adults?	**Participants** Are the Hub participants engaged in communicating their needs and goals?	**Agreements and documents** Are there clearly defined written agreements setting out the responsibilities and obligations of each stakeholder, including the lead agency, staff and volunteers?	**Evaluators** Are there individuals with the skills and time required to undertake a community- based evaluation? Is capacity building a key objective of the evaluators approach?
Appreciation Is there an appreciation plan in place to acknowledge the work of the senior volunteers?	**Organisations and associations** Are the roles, responsibilities and commitments of all parties agreed to and recorded?	**Strategic planning** Is a strategic action plan in place and ready to be regularly updated by the governing body?	**Governance development** Have sufficient time and resources been allocated for the lengthy development of the various governance documents, procedures and policies required?	**Evaluation Plan** Is there an evaluation plan in place, with the appropriate tools in order to measure the anticipated outcomes?
Role of the seniors Is there a documented senior's engagement strategy?	**Community engagement** Has there been engagement with community members and organisations to develop the vision, outcomes and service options?			

Good governance requires that the agreements, arrangements and responsibilities for a collaborative/integrated community initiative are agreed to and recorded by The Hub project partners. As the roles and responsibilities of people and organisations can be recorded in many different ways, a glossary of the various governance tools and resources mentioned in this document have been compiled and can be found in the companion document of this guide: *'A Comprehensive Toolkit for Developing, Governing And Evaluating Community Hubs'* as follows:

Action Plan: This document is developed at annual planning retreats, outlining the key goals and activities of The Hub for the coming year. Action plans are organized to reflect the different goals and priorities of the Hub (e.g., an Annual Action Plan on Transportation, an Annual Action Plan on Health & Wellbeing).

Communications Plan: This document documents communication priorities, procedure, and best practices to increase the effectiveness of communications with all stakeholders- not only to seniors, but also to partners within the Hub and to external parties as well. The plan purpose is to make communicated information easy to see, easy to hear, easy to understand and easy to use.

Governance Manual: The Seniors Hub Council is not a legal entity and, as such, is limited in its governance authority by the policies and practices of the sponsoring lead agency- South Vancouver Neighbourhood House. The Governance Manual is a handbook (written in plain English) that will help a Seniors Hub Council develop a vision for its role to understand governance responsibilities. The manual provides tools and guidelines for meeting processes such as creating an agenda and minute taking. It also provides tools to help council members develop volunteer job descriptions, and terms of reference for committees as needed. The process of working through the manual helps the governance council to develop new skills and feel empowered in its role as the democratic structure representing local seniors and providing strategic leadership in the community.

Memorandum of Understanding: This document is signed by The Hub and partner agencies, outlining their mutual participation in The Hub

Evaluation Plan: The evaluation framework is guided by the Seniors Hub outcome measurement framework (OMF). The OMF is designed to capture, highlight, monitor and assess all of the important work done by the Hub. The evaluation team consists of researchers from the UBC Centre for Hip Health and Mobility and staff members from South Vancouver Neighbourhood House. Guided by the OMF, the evaluation tools are designed to capture outcomes for vulnerable seniors, seniors who are volunteering as leaders, how intersectional relations are developing and function, how community needs and program opportunities are addressed, and how The Hub model fosters community capacity-building. The evaluation documents The Hub approach, so that we and others can learn from the development and implementation of this novel approach.

For further information about this Guide and contact information please visit The Senior's Hub website at **http://www.theseniorshub.org/**