SLC2

Growing Systems Leadership for Children
Call for Expressions of Interest
March 2018

We are seeking 2 or 3 intersectoral groups in British Columbia who would like to be part of a ground breaking project to deepen leadership and collaboration towards improving the life chances of children in our province. These groups may be geographic or organizational "communities" who have a history of working together to create change.

Rationale:
It is the premise of this project that improving outcomes for children and their families hinges initially on the emergence of effective systems leadership, at many levels, and across child-serving systems.

Opportunity:
An intensive, first of its kind, training opportunity for intersectoral groups working on improving outcomes for young children. The training aims to strengthen capacity in compassionate leadership and systems thinking. Participants will be better prepared to work together towards change, as well as gaining a deeper sense of personal meaning in their work.

Context:
The path to healthy development for children in Canadian society is becoming increasingly complicated, and there are reasons to be concerned. For too many of our children, the path to a healthy adulthood has become broken. The systems we have designed to support Canadian children and families are simply not doing an effective job and in many communities our young people are in crisis.

> The deep changes necessary to accelerate progress against society's most intractable problems require a unique type of leader—the system leader, a person who catalyzes collective leadership.

Peter Senge

There is not at present an integrated system for children, nor are there mechanisms that effectively bridge the distinct systems that serve children and families. Our challenge is to create a system that reflects children's developmental needs and provides seamless care from birth to school entry by weaving existing systems together more effectively.

Host Organization and Trainers

The Systems Leadership Centre for Children (SLC[2]) is an emerging hub at the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP). Housed at the University of B.C., HELP is a collaborative, interdisciplinary research network committed to partnering with communities to improve outcomes for children. Their internationally renowned research explores how different early environments and experiences contribute to inequalities in children's development. SLC[2] will be a hub for research, training, coaching, tools and hands on assistance to strengthen systems leadership.

The lead for the project is HELP's Senior Policy Fellow, Joanne Schroeder. The project is supported in its first two years by the Max Bell Foundation. Ms. Schroeder will be joined by HELP's Deputy Director, Pippa Rowcliffe as the capacity building work unfolds in communities. The training content will also build on the work of HELP's lead community systems researcher, Dr. Brenda Poon. It will draw on the depth of expertise across HELP, in child development research, community capacity building and knowledge translation.

Approach:

The training approach draws on the belief that effective leadership requires shifts in how each individual leader, thinks, feels and behaves. It draws from a foundation of building skills in *complex systems thinking* and in enhancing the *social and emotional learning* of individuals. It aims to build compassionate leaders who can think and act systemically and who have a collective commitment to change. It is an applied, learner focused, approach that builds on a continuous cycle of acquiring skills and knowledge, practicing those skills and reflecting on their impact. The training will focus on the following qualities of leadership:

- Alignment with personal and collective vision
- Individual practice of reflection and mindfulness
- Feedback for continuous learning
- Facilitating capacity of others
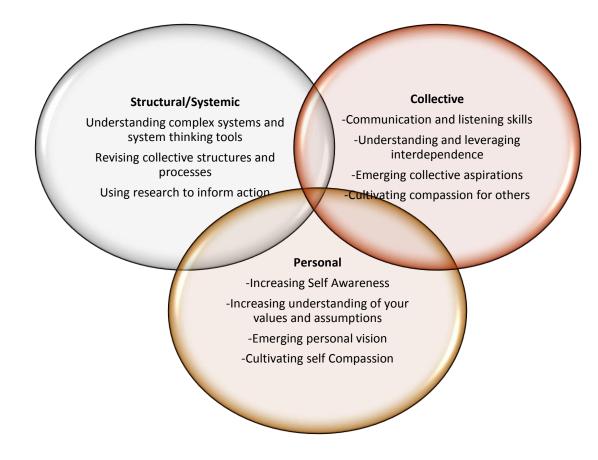- Understanding complexity and being able to use system thinking tools

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- Drawing on a base of evidence in child development and proven interventions

The program will focus on three interconnected core areas of change: personal, collective and structural/systemic.

Structural/Systemic

Understanding complex systems and system thinking tools

Revising collective structures and processes

Using research to inform action

Collective

-Communication and listening skills

-Understanding and leveraging interdependence

-Emerging collective aspirations

-Cultivating compassion for others

Personal

-Increasing Self Awareness

-Increasing understanding of your values and assumptions

-Emerging personal vision

-Cultivating self Compassion

Program Commitment:

The following are the commitments that participating communities, and all identified leaders, must be able to fully participate in:

- Three two day in-community training sessions (proposed June2018, November 2018, May 2019)
- 2 hours per week for the duration of the program for individual and group reflection and coaching (provided).

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Note about Costs: There is no registration cost. All costs for the trainers are covered by the project. Communities will have to support salary costs for participants and costs for venue and refreshments during training days.

Assessment Criteria:

In reviewing proposals for this program, the following criteria will be used:

- Commitment of 6 – 8 individuals who have a history of working together and who share a dream of improving outcomes for children in their community[1].
- Mix of participants to include representatives from public agencies (e.g. Health, education and MCFD) and diverse representation from non-profit, Indigenous, multicultural and private organizations.
- Level of engagement of a broader network of community stakeholders.
- Organizational support (salary and time) for all participants to fully take part.
- Assessment of readiness for the project to be determined by the group's history of collaborative work, community strengths, and alignment with the vision for the project.

Application Requirements:

All applications must be submitted by April 13, 2018, at 4:00pm. Submissions should be sent by e-mail to Joanne Schroeder, joanne.schroeder@ubc.ca

Applications must include:

- A list of participants, their organization and contact information.
- A collective statement identifying the hoped for outcome of participation in the training.
- An individual statement from each participant articulating their commitment to being involved. This statement should be endorsed by the participant's organization.
- A brief history (a maximum of 500 words) of the collaborative work in the community.
- A self-assessment of community strengths and "readiness" for the project (maximum 250 words).
- Supporting documents may also be included (e.g. Strategic Plans, Community Based evaluations).

Questions should be directed to Joanne Schroeder, 250-702-0534 or joanne.schroeder@ubc.ca

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[1] Applications are not limited to geographic communities, but may represent cross organizational or cross cultural groups.

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