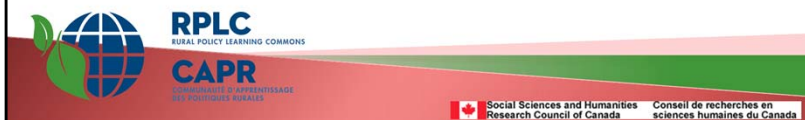


Digital Tools for a New Form of Partnership

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- Title: Digital Communications for Organizational Development: The case of rural networks
- CRRF Conference
- Guelph, Ontario
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- Digital communications have become increasingly important for the development and maintenance of organizations – both formal and informal. This is especially the case for rural and northern networks where distance and low density are critical challenges. This panel examines the importance of digital communication in rural and remote areas. In particular, the panelists consider partnership development through communication strategies; organizing communications; poor broadband connections and their impacts on communication; and options for rural communities and organizations. Using the cases of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, the New Rural Economy Project, and the Rural Policy Learning Commons, we will identify some of the; and lessons learned, strategies, and tips and tricks for digital communications. Through this panel, we hope to demonstrate the usefulness of digital communications but also the challenges that come with it, and how best to deal with those challenges through both personal experience and experience of organizations.
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- Bill to talk about strategies for partnership development and the implications of digital communication (this presentation should come early in the panel as a way to set the context for the subsequent contributions.)
- Options could include Bojan talking about podcasts and someone else talking about Zoom.
- Sarah will talk about the strategy used with team supports.
- Wayne to talk about rural broadband?
- We could bring in Sarah Cool to talk about different strategies/tips and tricks, and Michael or Mesha to talk about lessons learned.
- Come up with a cool different format?

New digital tools over 29 years

1987+	CRRF	Telephone, snail mail
1997-2008	NRE	E-mail, Google
2014_	RPLC	Social Media



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- Major transitions from CRRF (1987+), NRE (1997-2008), RPLC (2014+)
 - CRRF: largely established via telephone and snail mail
 - Internet and e-mail became established around 1980s (started in 1970s but were restricted to military and universities - ARPANET)
 - Were just getting used to word processing and duplication (photocopying and faxing [late 60s])
 - Google established about 1998 - expanded in early 2000s
 - Searching for answers critical

What have we learned?

- ▶ Partnership communication
 - Flow of information (transmitting, receiving, seeking, controlling)
 - Development of confidence and trust
 - Discussion, debate, decision-making
- ▶ Digital tools supplement face-to-face encounters
- ▶ Digital tools have expanded demands on our time and focus

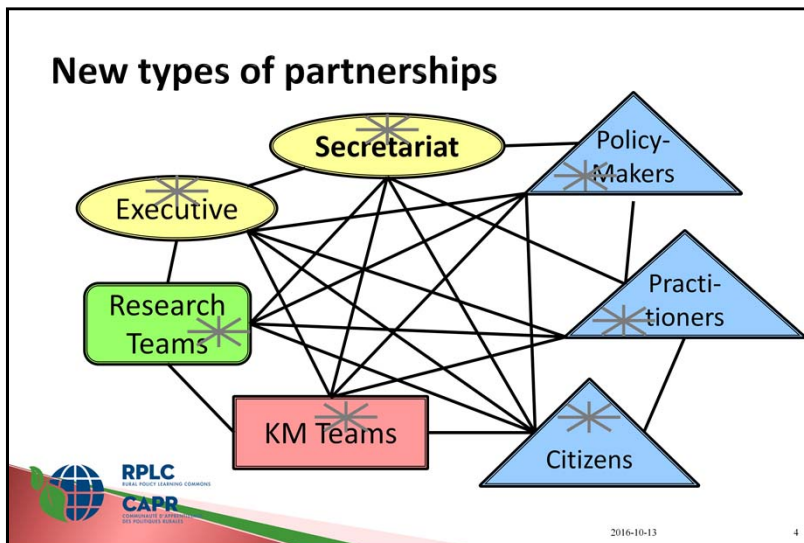


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•What have we learned?

- Partnership depends on thick communication
 - Flow of information (transmitting, receiving, seeking, controlling)
 - Development of confidence and trust
 - Discussion, debate, and decision-making
- Digital tools supplemented but didn't substitute for face-to-face encounters
 - Gradually becoming less true as we become more familiar with the technology (new generation of youth)
- Digital tools have expanded the demands on our time and focus
 - Greater competition for attention
 - Greater stress
 - Multiple partnerships can be imagined and managed



- Partnerships can be more distributed in control and authority
 - CRRF has a long history of representing this in a traditional way
 - RPLC represents our latest experiment in this manner
 - Can we imagine increasing partnership resilience by creating a less hierarchical and more "mesh" structure?

Questions to consider

- ▶ Does this tool facilitate communication?
 - How does it allow more/easier control by the supplier(s)?
 - How does it allow more/easier control by the user(s)?
 - How does it improve the engagement of more suppliers and users?
 - Who are the supplier(s) and user(s)?
- ▶ How does the tool improve the development of trust and confidence?
- ▶ How does the tool improve the opportunities for discussion?
- ▶ How does the tool improve the achievement of collective decisions?



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- Questions to consider
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 - Who are the supplier(s) and user(s)?
- How does the tool improve the development of trust and confidence?
- How does the tool improve the opportunities for discussion?
- How does the tool improve the achievement of collective decisions?