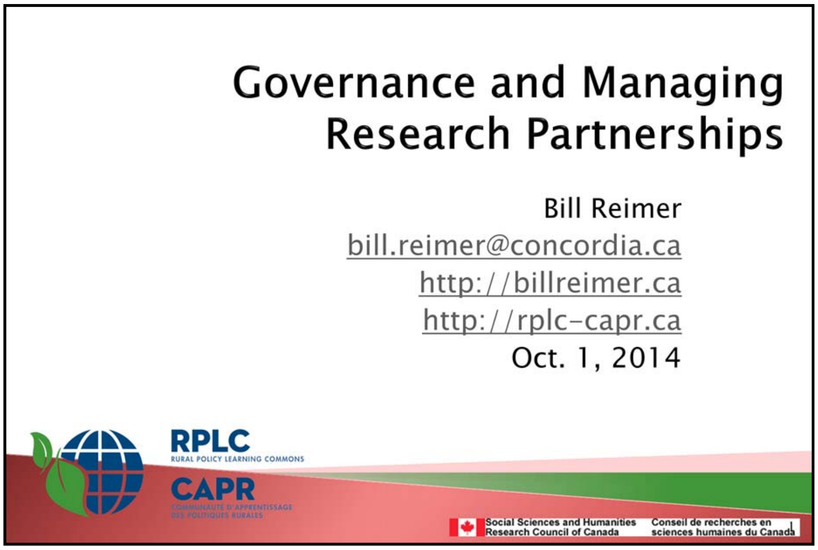


- Bill Reimer, Brandon and Concordia Universities
- Oct 1, 2014:
- Governance & Managing Research Partnerships
  - 1:30 to 2:00 pm
  - Panelists
    - D. Wolfe, University of Toronto
    - A. Paprica, Research Project Management (RPM)
    - W. Reimer, Brandon University
    - D. Western, African Conservation Centre
  - 2:00-2:30 Roundtable
  - 2:30-3:00 Open Mike Session
  - Assume 5 minutes
- Moderator: Jacques Critchley

- If you wish, drawing on your expertise and experience with undertaking a large scale research project, you could structure your contribution by responding to the following:
- What good/promising practices have you encountered or used?
- Identify 3 things:
  - a thing you would **not do** again
  - a thing you would do **differently**
  - a thing you definitely **do again**
-
- However, if you wish to frame your remarks differently, please do so!

•I have a relatively lengthy list of things I have learned over my last 20 or so years – mostly as the Director of the New Rural Economy project for 11 years.

•Don't have enough time to go through them all, so I have selected 5 of the most important ones to outline today.

•I have put more details on these and the other points so you can ask about them in the Q&A or take a look at the elaborations of them that I have posted on my website.

•Can formulate them in the categories put to us:

•(*)Organize the project as you would a voluntary organization.

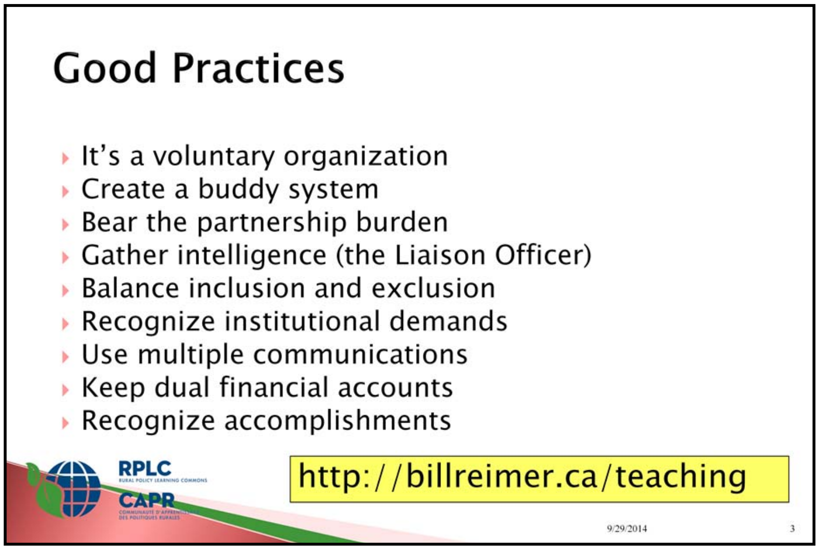
- •This emerges from the **Things I would not do again** category: I would not organize as a business or government (market or bureaucratic: Reimer, Bill, Lyons, Tara, Ferguson, Nelson, and Polanco, Geraldina, (2008) "Social capital as social relations: the contribution of normative structures" *Sociological Review*, 56:2, pp 256-274.)
- •Instead: Treat the project as a voluntary organization (associative and occasionally communal)
- •We all have our day jobs – and although research collaboration is an important aspect of them, there are many competing demands and opportunities we can use to fulfill this mandate.
- •Needs co-optation and seduction as a motivator, not coercion or exploitation

•(*) Create a buddy system

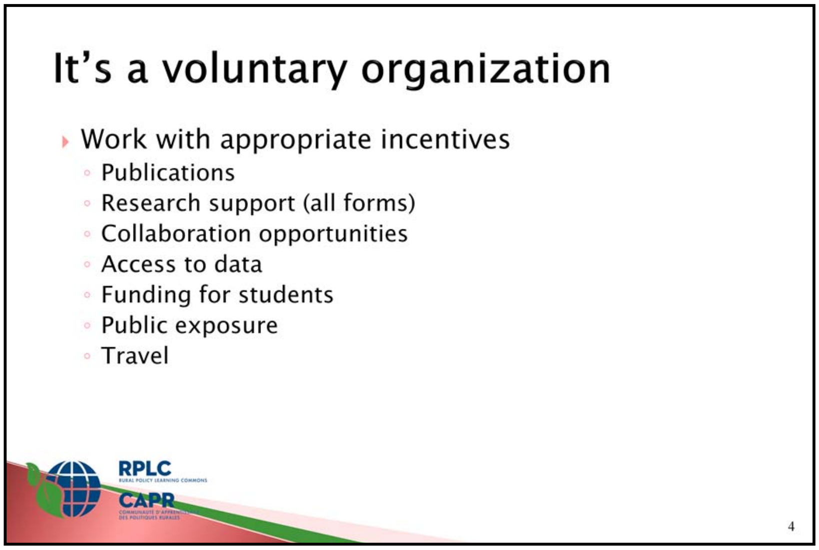
- •This is an example of the **Things I am doing different**
- •There are many other demands on our lives – including family crises and ski days.
- •Plan for this by establishing a lead person and an backup person for each task.
- •Backup is to keep up-to-day with the lead so they can step in when the lead person faces a deadline, a sick child, or an opportunity for a Mexican vacation.
- •I was pleasantly surprised by the other benefits that emerged from this approach (ask me later)

•(*)Bear the partnership burden

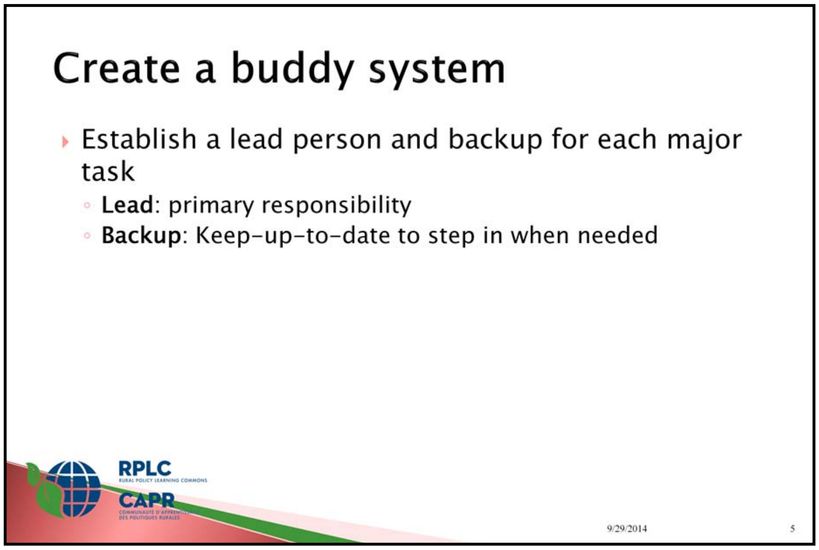
- •We're all busy; Use the partnership funds to support the mundane requirements of collaboration.
- •Especially important for tracking accomplishments (e.g. CVs)



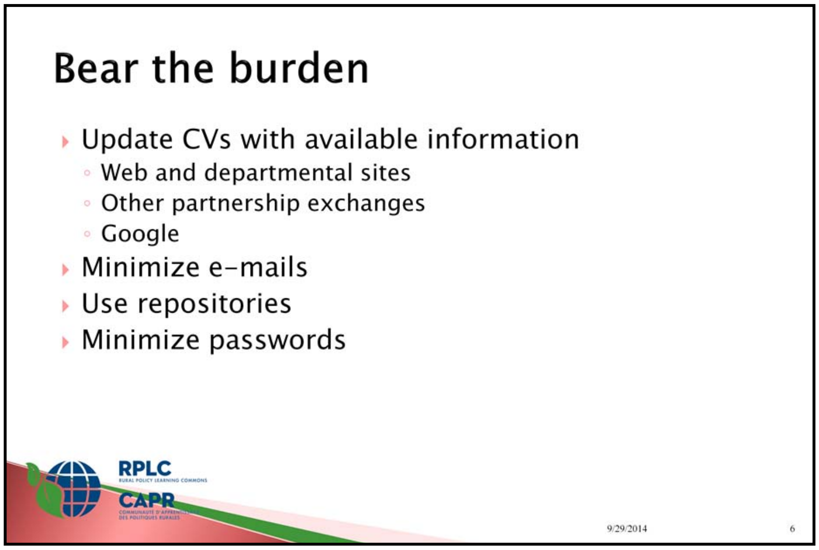
- (*)The Liaison Officer
  - The main item on my **Things I am doing again** list: hire one or two Liaison Officers
  - The intelligence-gathering agents of the partnership.
  - Regular contacts with each partner (by phone)
  - Four questions:
    - What have you done?
    - What are you doing?
    - What are you planning to do?
    - How can we help?
  - Pass it on to key staff, look for opportunities, plan for potential crises.
- (*)Balance inclusion and exclusion
  - Embed the project in an inclusive organization or network as a pool for mutual assessment of new participants.
- (*)Recognize institutional demands
  - We all live within context that create barriers to the accomplishment of our goals.
  - These barriers can often be overcome if we build them into our planning.
  - See my elaboration of this point (http://billreimer.ca/workshop/research/files/ReimerCRRFPrinceGeorgeKeynoteSep2014V09.pdf)
- (*)Explore the use of multiple communication venues
  - Internet activities like e-mail, web meetings, websites, and social media need supplementation with face-to-face, telephone, forums to build trust and facilitate communication.
- (*)Keep dual financial records.
  - Lag times on our institutional financial accounts typically have too much lag time and can't manage the complexities of partner commitments
    - Especially in-kind and cash contributions.
- (*)Recognize accomplishments
  - People need acknowledgement for their efforts and accomplishments.
  - Include traditional counts, but also anecdotes
  - We kept an impacts file to record short, medium, and long term impacts.
  - Celebrate collectively.



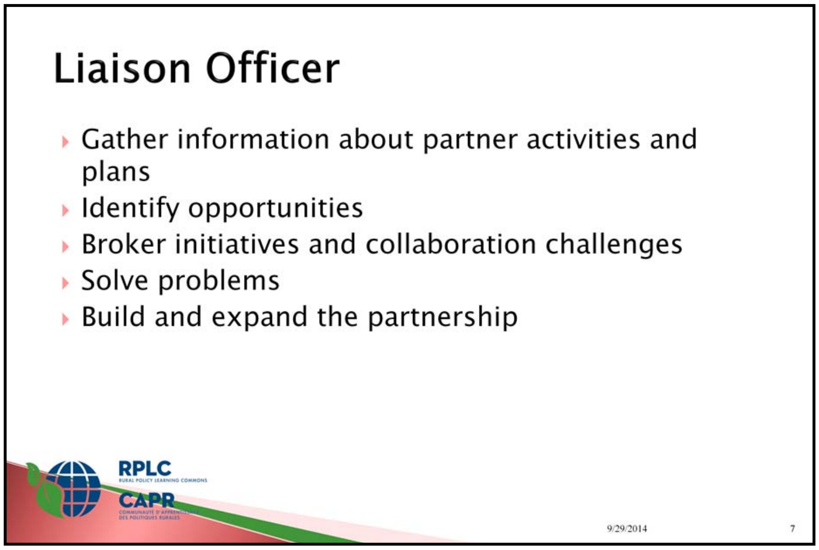
- Treat the project like a volunteer organization, not a business or bureaucracy
- We all have our day jobs – and although research collaboration is an important aspect of this, there are many competing demands and opportunities to fulfill this mandate.
- The researchers among us are highly trained professionals (with big egos) – so the usual incentives found in a business or bureaucracy don't work.
  - Not a criticism of big egos!
- Implications for governance
  - Work with incentives that are appropriate: publications, research support (financial and otherwise), collaboration opportunities, access to data, funding for students, opportunities for presentations and media exposure (for some), travel.
  - Respect and find ways of integrating divergent opinions



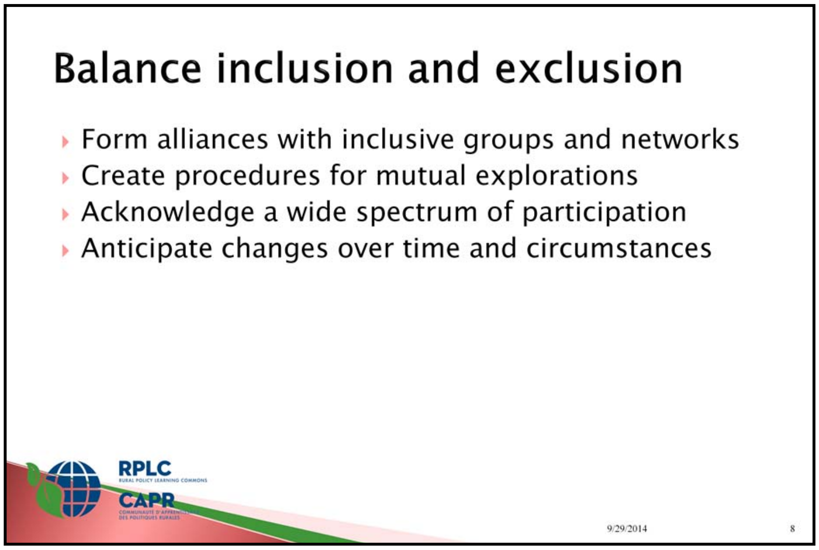
- Use a buddy system
- Life happens.
  - There are many other demands on our time: medical issues, family demands, vacations, and recuperation time.
- Recognizing this and planning for it can go a long way to maintaining the operation of the project.
  - I establish a lead and backup for each task/sub-project.
    - Lead is the person who is primarily responsible for the task.
    - Backup is responsible to keep abreast of the activity, support the lead, and be able to take over where the lead is unable to do so.
  - Each lead can also be a backup for someone else.
    - This also facilitates network communication since people become aware of details within the other tasks.
  - This approach also works extremely well for student assistants (they have their own set of diversions).
    - I will usually hire two students rather than one if I have the chance – even if I have to split the funding to do so.
    - It has the additional advantage of significantly reducing the demands on my time, since the students would generally work out the minor challenges on their own rather than bring them all to me.



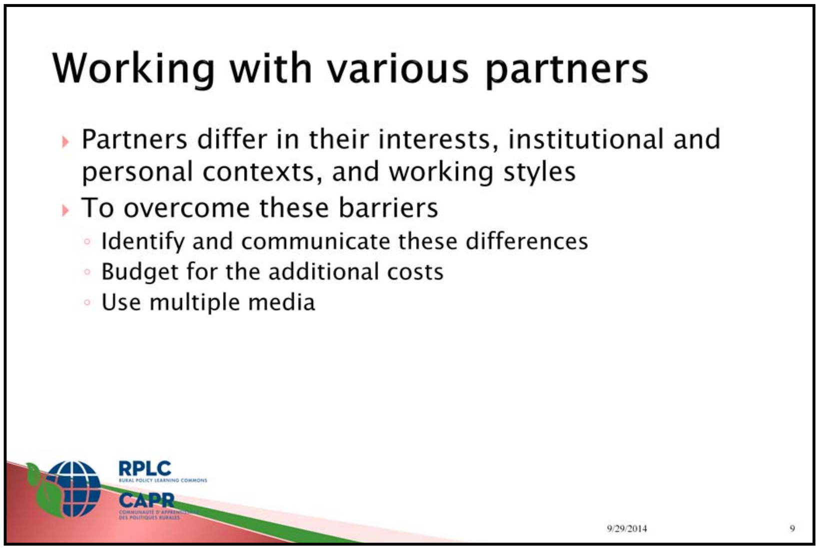
- Use the partnership funding to bear the burden of the collaboration.
- You will be working with people who already have busy agendas.
  - The most competent and interesting ones are usually overburdened.
- Use resources of the partnership to bear the burden of the many small things that are usually downloaded to the partners.
  - Don’t ask them for CV updates and recent activities unless absolutely necessary
    - Hire a student to do the research
      - Use the internet – it’s a research skill – check their university sites, media events, google
      - Prepare the document as best you can
      - THEN go to the partner with a formatted document and ask for changes and missing pieces
    - Integrate it with other activities
      - E.g. Steering committee minutes (include reports)
      - Task force minutes
      - Cf. next tip: Liaison Officer
  - Minimize e-mails.
  - Make use of posts, forums, common repositories like dropbox or sync to share material.
    - These allow partners discretion over when to access the materials – and provide an archiving system at the same time.
  - Minimize passwords



- One of the most valuable discoveries I made is the hiring of a Liaison Officer
- Role:
  - Gather information about partner activities, plans, and challenges (Intelligence gathering agent).
  - Identify new initiatives and serendipitous opportunities.
  - Broker plans and collaboration challenges.
  - Anticipate and solve problems.
  - Build and expand the partnership with new partners.
- Periodically, the Liaison Officer will phone each of the partners to chat about 4 things:
  - What have they been doing since the last chat?
  - What are the challenges and accomplishments they have faced?
  - What will they be doing for the next month or so?
  - How can the partnership help them?
- The chat is informal and includes more than just the information directly relevant to the partnership, for example, it includes discussions about:
  - Travel plans,
  - Exciting events in their lives (including family),
  - Crises and upcoming plans.
- Allows us to:
  - Anticipate downtimes (and discuss alternative support arrangements)
  - Identify opportunities – both for the person on the phone and for others
  - Address conflicts
  - Gather information for the partnership
    - New accomplishments
    - For CVs (see previous tip)
    - Working styles of the participant (each person is different so it is important to identify their styles and work with those styles)
  - Pass on information regarding other opportunities that may be available in the partnership
  - Improve the social cohesion of the partnership.
- Other tasks:
  - Pass on this information to other administrators,
  - Maintain log and databases on accomplishments, contacts, impacts of the partnership,
  - Support communication events: Conference calls, workshops, conferences, exchanges, social media, etc.
- In our case we have multiple Liaison Officers.
  - We cross many time zones and multiple sub-networks (Canada, USA, Europe, Other).
  - The Liaison Officers will share databases and communication.
  - We also use students in this role.
    - Provides unequalled opportunity for their careers – networking and learning about the multiple contexts of research
- The Liaison Officer activities require written, shared databases, however – to ensure institutional continuity
  - Shared databases also facilitate communication.



- Growing the partnership requires an initial dance period.
  - To mutually explore the overlap of common interests and professional and personal compatibility.
  - We can’t always get along.
- This requires methods for identifying potential partners, testing compatibility in a congenial and mutually rewarding context, and recognizing statuses on the road to full partnership inclusion.
  - It also requires face-saving methods of exclusion along the way.
- This is especially problematic in the research context since the quality of the research is an important criteria for funding and credibility. To meet these quality requirements the “rules” tend to be rather strict.
- At the same time, I am convinced that engaging researchers with those outside the academic context improves the research quality and utility – especially where social and political phenomenon are the objects of study.
- We were fortunate in the New Rural Economy project (http://nre.concordia.ca) since it was a project that emerged from a very inclusive organization (the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation – CRRF).
  - CRRF had a program of annual conferences, workshops, and communication that included a wide variety of participants: researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, and community people.
  - It was in CRRF that the dance could take place.
  - It provided a context for formal presentations and informal exchanges – in rural places, on field trips, over lunch, and in committees.
  - This allowed us to invite or discover potential partners from a large and inclusive pool of interested people, then provided opportunities for us to hear from each other in a safe environment.
  - The result was a list of a wide variety of involvement levels: full partners recognized by SSHRC, people who participated as critics and supporters to those who were interested but uninvolved other than as spectators.
- This meant that we could select the more exclusive group from among the more inclusive pool of CRRF.
- It also meant that these roles could change as peoples’ interests and the demands on their time changed.
- This can be organized in other circumstances by forming alliances with inclusive and broadly-focused networks.



•The interests, institutional and personal conditions, and working style of different types of partners are quite different.

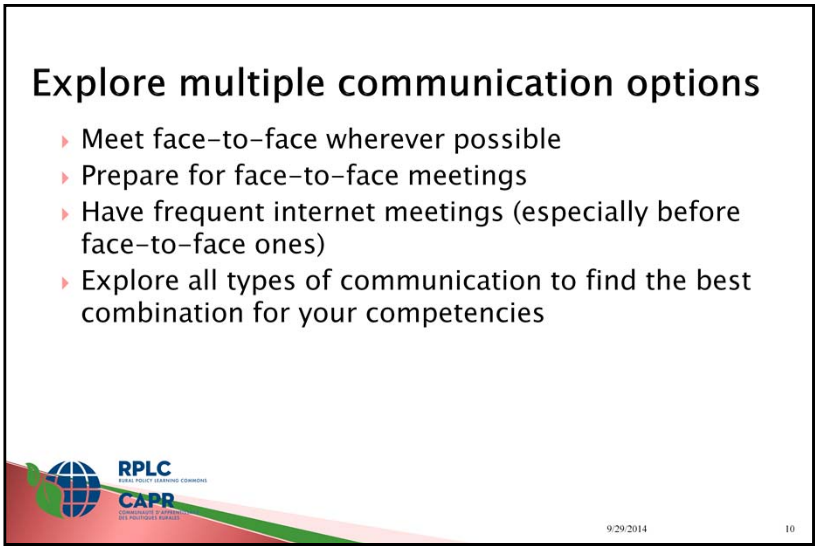
•This can create barriers to collaboration that need special attention.

•I have produced a presentation on this issue which focuses on three types of partners:

- •Researchers
- •Policy-makers
- •Community partners
- •(Reimer, Bill (2014) "Facilitating Collaboration for New Rural Realities" Keynote presentation at the CRRF Annual Meeting: New Realities, New Relationships, Prince George, BC, September 26.
- •http://billreimer.ca/workshop/research/files/ReimerCRRFPrinceGeorgeKeynoteSep2014V09.pdf)

•In that presentation I mention a number of ways to manage the barriers created.

- •Identify and discuss these differences and their implications for the project.
- •Anticipate the additional challenges and time that these differences create. Budget for them.
- •Identify and articulate an appropriate division of expectations and labour.
- •Use multiple media:
  - •Update letters, newspaper articles, radio interviews, posters, copies of research products, websites, community forums, council presentations.



- In large project, communication is critical
  - It is therefore necessary to explore and develop collective facility with multiple forms of communication.
- Internet-based tools are useful, but not sufficient
  - Need periodical **face-to-face** communication to establish and build trust and commitment.
    - Especially important for key and controversial decisions.
  - **Telephone** has the advantage of immediate feedback on an issue – and carries more information about tone and intensity.
  - **Forums** handle the time zone problem and allow the participant to decide the time of participation – but they require a level of commitment that is high since people must commit to going there frequently (or they must be seduced to do so).
  - **Web meetings** have the advantage of sharing and viewing, but the technology is fragile.
    - Especially in our case where broadband is limited in some locations.
    - We have to pair it with telephone (possible with Adobe Connect, for example)
  - **E-mails** good for specific items only
  - **Websites** useful for as notices and data depository
  - **Social media** for notices
- Tips from our experience
  - Meet face-to-face wherever possible
    - Since we are busy, we do it at conferences where groups of us are already attending.
  - Prepare for the face-to-face meetings well in advance since the time will be tight.
  - Have frequent internet meetings.
    - We schedule two a month using Adobe Connect
      - One for the Steering Committee
      - One as an “Open Office” event – for anyone to join
    - Deal with the minor details and sharing of information
    - Schedule extra ones before a face-to-face meeting to:
      - Get the minor issues dealt with
      - Identify the important questions to be dealt with at the face-to-face meeting
    - Record and make information and decisions from these meetings generally available
  - Include Liaison Officers – they are often having to repeat information

Managing finances

- Plan for a double set of financial accounts
  - The lead institution
  - “in-house” accounts for planning and management of partner commitments
- Anticipate considerable time for MOUs

RPLC
CAPR

•It is typically necessary to maintain two sets of financial accounts.

•One prepared by your lead institutional office.

•One prepared and utilized for planning and immediate accounting purposes

•Most institutions have a delay in entering items and have no facility for anticipating expenses.

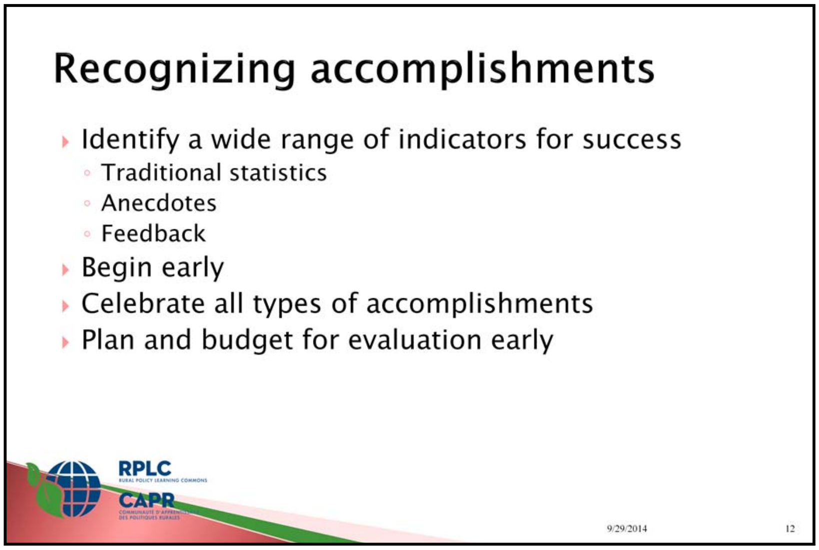
•Partnerships include multiple institutional conditions and demands for preparing, planning, and processing funds

•This is especially complicated with the management of in-kind and cash commitments.

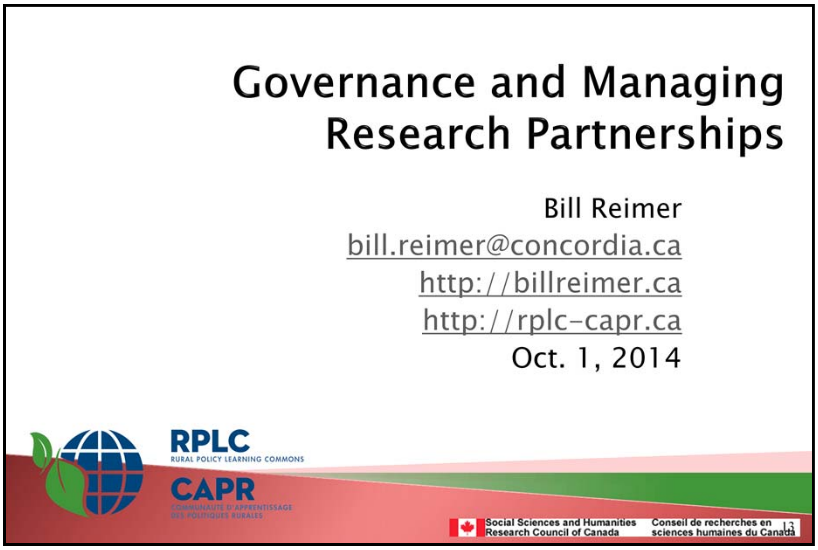
•Plan for a commitment of time and attention to managing all these elements – on an ongoing basis and for accountability.

•MOUs time consuming (especially where non-Canadian institutions are involved)

•Typically involve a variety of conditions that reflect institutional procedures and local culture.



- Need wide variety of indicators for success (and failure)
  - Traditional research outputs
  - Policy impacts
    - Anecdotes as well as statistics
    - Feedback as reflected in e-mails, comments, and requests
  - Community impacts
    - Anecdotes as well as statistics
    - Feedback as reflected in e-mails, comments, and requests
- Begin early
- Be inclusive by celebrating all types of accomplishments
- Plan and budget for evaluation early



•Bill Reimer, Brandon and Concordia Universities

•Oct 1, 2014: 1:30 to 2:00 pm

•Paprica, Research Project Management (RPM)

•Reimer, Brandon University

•NGO, Public sector (TBC)

•TBC

•2:00-2:30 Roundtable

•2:30-3:00 Open Mike Session

•Assume 5 minutes

•If you wish, drawing on your expertise and experience with undertaking a large scale research project, you could structure your contribution by responding to the following:

•What good/promising practices have you encountered or used?

•Identify 3 things:

- •a thing you would **not do** again
- •a thing you would do **differently**
- •a thing you definitely **do again**

•

•However, if you wish to frame your remarks differently, please do so!