



ABORIGINAL BUSINESS SERVICE NETWORK - B.C.

# Strategic Planning Session July, 2007

*Prepared for:*

*The Aboriginal Business Services Society care of the Central Interior  
First Nations Community Futures Development Corporation*

# **ABORIGINAL BUSINESS SERVICE NETWORK**

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING – JULY, 2007**

### **SUMMARY REPORT:**

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#### ***Introduction:***

The ABSN is a non-profit society under the BC societies act and was implemented following a regional research study (Gap Analysis) titled “*Assessing the Business Information Needs of Aboriginal Entrepreneurs in B.C.*”, published in January 2001. The steering committee that acted as advisors to this report are now the volunteer members of the ABSN BC, which is administered by the Community Futures Development Association of BC and supported by Western Economic Diversification. The ABSN BC is made up of Aboriginal business service providers, federal, provincial, and non-profit representatives.

On July 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007 ten Aboriginal business development people gathered in Vancouver to engage in strategic planning for the upcoming year. Participants were members of the board of directors of the ABSN and specially invited guests. For the detailed list participants and their contact information please see Appendix A.

#### ***Methodology:***

This session, facilitated by Paulette Seymour, spanned a day-and-a-half and included exercises to collect individual comments and input, small group forums, full group discussions and brainstorming, and energizers. A draft agenda was presented, participants’ input and acceptance of the process was sought and the following simple agenda was accepted.

#### ***Agenda***

- Review of the Society’s Purpose or Mission including examination of goals and objectives of the organization
- Evaluation of past strategic plan’s achievements, disappointments, strengths and weaknesses
- Collecting activities and initiatives for a new plan
- Formation of an organized new plan
- Longer term activity and next steps

In addition to this agenda, steps were taken to ensure expectations and methods were agreed upon, technical information was provided where appropriate and acceptable, and processes and exercises for planning were suggested and offered and mutually adopted. The facilitator was responsible for maintaining focus of discussions, allowing for debate of challenging issues, incorporating activities to keep the session energized, recording and posting planning notes, and collecting all generated information for this summary report.

### ***Expectations:***

The following question was presented to the group to generate and agree on what outcomes both the group and the facilitator could expect.

*“What do you as participants want to get out of this planning session?”*

- a)* Confirmation of whether the ABSN is “On” or “Off”
- b)* A clear direction of the organization
- c)* A set of deliverables of the organization
- d)* Deliverables that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely
- e)* Deliverables that are straight and simple
- f)* An outline of more specific services and deliverables
- g)* Milestones that are defined
- h)* Achievements that are defined
- i)* Avenues to see evidence of a “return on capital”
- j)* “What do we want ABSN to do?” answered.
- k)* A process of identifying the common role of each board member.
- l)* A definition of the purpose of the organization
- m)* The role of the ABSN within the province.
- n)* “Is there a role for ABSN?” answered.
- o)* A review of ABSN’s ability to meet identified needs.
- p)* “ownership” of ABSN defined
- q)* Exploration of how ABSN can *harmonize* with existing organizations.
- r)* A “PLAN” with deliverables.
- s)* Identification of gaps still open and if or how ABSN can fill them
- t)* An incorporation of the gaps from the GVRD analysis in any plan that is developed.
- u)* A focus on what ABSN can do well.
- v)* A definition of ABSN’s “client”

At the conclusion of the planning session, this list of expectations was reviewed to assess achievements. All expectations were achieved except point “*o*”, and point “*t*” which was tagged as “Not Yet”. Both items were tabled for “Next Steps”.

### ***Participant's Contribution Commitment:***

In order to build ownership of the session and to demonstrate the valuable resources individuals bring to this planning, participants were asked what, they as individuals, were prepared to contribute towards achieving the expectations they had just put forward. A round-table solicitation yielded the following contributions from individuals.

- \* Information
- \* Cooperative work and collaboration
- \* Participate
- \* Clients' experience
- \* 18 years of service experience
- \* Innovation and innovative ideas
- \* Energy and enthusiasm
- \* Technical expertise
- \* Connections to community organizations, Aboriginal groups, government departments, funds, businesses
- \* Time
- \* Community connections and examples
- \* Sharing and listening
- \* Client needs
- \* Sharing best practices
- \* Commitment

The bigger conclusion of this short exercise was that the group would get a plan as good as they were prepared to work for and that all present were very committed to successfully tackling the challenges presented by their expectations.

## ***Review of the Society's Purpose or "MISSION"***

A full group discussion was held to examine the existing purpose of the ABSN as laid out in the ABSN constitution of March, 2006. The group conceding to the following:

- \* Many members can't state the purpose,
- \* As currently outlined it is way too long and complicated,
- \* It does not help direct the organization or members and,
- \* It must confuse the public.

As a result the participants were divided into 2 smaller groups to thoroughly analyse the primary words of the constitution's organizational purpose and come up with a concise statement of purpose. The two resulting statements were discussed extensively by the full group and amalgamated. A revised mission of the ABSN was born. All participants ceremoniously signed it to demonstrate their agreement, support and authorship.

The society's mission is presented as follows. . . .

***"The Aboriginal Business Services Network will strengthen  
Aboriginal business service providers in British Columbia by  
enhancing access to business information and resources."***

## ***Evaluation of Past Strategic Planning***

A review of the last strategic plan's goals was conducted in small group format. The progress on each goal of the past plan was assessed and graded based whether the organization achieved success or not, and to what degree. Discussions were held regarding why ABSN might have been successful or why goals were not achieved. Additional discussions were held as to what worked well in the plan and what did not work so well. The lessons learned were recorded. Following are the results of this last discussion.

### Past Planning Insights: What worked well?

- Every one was there
- it was focussed
- steps were laid out
- deliverables were established
- an action plan was created
- the plan include How, Who, What, When, and Why

### Past Planning Insights: What did not work well?

- Planning with staff was considered
- Low ownership of the plan
- Plan hinged too much on the past plan that was weak and lacked ownership.

### Past Planning Lessons Learned:

- |   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| • Establish detailed agreements         | • Rewards for individuals   |
| • Establish joint investment agreements | • No measurable outcomes    |
| • Ensure adequate support recourses     | • No definition of success  |
| • Ensure commitment to targets          | • Lack of focus             |
| • Insistence and contractual            | • Know our niche            |
| • No acceptance of failure              | • Know our friends and foes |
| • Persistence and commitment            |                             |

The review of the past strategic plan also produced a list of possible carry-over action items that were not completed or fully realized.

- Reach sites – maintain the existing and establish new ones as necessary
- Board to meet regularly
- Develop a database?
- Establish mandatory policies
- Update the Simon Fraser University gap analysis
- Pursue 2010 procurement opportunities?
- Determine if Memorandums of Understanding are needed.
- Examine recommendations of roundtables.

## ***Collecting ACTIVITIES and INITIATIVES for a New Plan***

By way of a full group brainstorm participants put forward ideas, activities and interests that they felt ABSN should and could pursue. Each individual concept was presented on post-it notes that could be rearranged easily. Once all thoughts were exhausted the participants assembled them into groups of like ideas. Five main categories of activity became evident and form the five *Key Goals* of this strategic plan.

### ***Key GOALS:***

- 1. To demonstrate an effective and efficient organizational administration.***
- 2. To develop & conduct program activity that meets the mission of the Aboriginal Business Service Network.***
- 3. To seek participation and “buy-in” to the mission and activities of the ABSN of relative organizations, agencies and individuals.***
- 4. To enhance the Aboriginal business services network.***
- 5. To build the capacity of the network constituents.***

### ***Affiliated ACTIVITIES within Goals:***

The participants, in two separate groups and through small group discussion, addressed the key goals and the detailed activities related to them. The group work was to fine tune the key goal statement, sort, order and establish who, what, where, when for each activity.

Directions:

1. State the main goal,
2. List the activities under the goal
3. For each activity detail what, where, when, why and who.
4. Indicate what the measure of success will be. (quantitative & qualitative)
5. Argue attainability and provide brief rational.
6. proof of commitment
7. What is the time line?

**GOAL # 1: ABSN will demonstrate an effective administration.**

**ACTIVITIES:**

- a) Create proposal for 2007-2008 funding.
  - CIFN-CFDC to do it.
  - Draft to the board by the end of August
  - Proposal to WED by end of August.
  
- b) Clarify roles and responsibilities of the board and delivery agency.
  - Board does it
  - September board meeting for approval and October meeting for implementation.
  
- c) Develop required policies and procedures.
  - CIFN-CFDC to prepare draft by mid November
  - Board to ratify in December
  
- d) Develop a longer term plan
  - Board to do it
  - Begin discussion at September meeting
  - Finalize at December meeting
  - Submit to funders by mid January
  - Ensure ability to plug in outcomes from ABSN conference
  
- e) Develop interim contract for CIFN for completion of 2006-2007 activities
  - Executive to do as soon as possible
  
- f) Review and revise constitution and by-laws
  - Board to do by no latter than March 31, 2008.



**GOAL #2: ABSN will employ S.M.A.R.T. program deliverables.**

**ACTIVITIES:**

- a)* Hold an Aboriginal Business Service Network Conference
  - By the end of February, 2008
  - Planned by the board
  - Coordinated by the delivery agent
  - Objective of the conference to be:
    - Seek direction for the ABSN society from the network
    - Discuss and validate long term plans
    - Identify needs and do a reality check
    - Include [solicit] input into long-term planning
    - Provide forum for cross conversation
    - Ensure it's an opportunity for networking (include: corporation private sector, service providers, ABSN, public sector, and Economic Development Officers)
  - The delivery agent to do the leg work (inviting coordinators, taking care of logistics)
  - Board to establish budget, direction and planning.
  
- b)* Review of the SFU Gap analysis.
  - Board to begin discussion at September meeting to inform longer term plan
  - Completion in conjunction with long-term plan (December, 2007)
  
- c)* Assist business service centres to secure long-term funding
  - How?
  - Too political
  - Should not be an ABSN function
  - Confirmed by full group as **NOT** an objective of this plan
  
- d)* ACED (board member tool kit) loose strings, last pieces, next steps
  - CIFN
  - Completions – end of current contract (06/07)
  - Present and promote at CANDO (October 2007) and ABSN conference (February 2008)

**GOAL #3: The ABSN will build participation and buy-in:**

**ACTIVITIES:**

- a) Seeking additional players from other sources
- b) Create an event in late February
- c) Approach provincial, federal, corporate partners and other Aboriginal organizations
- d) To get referrals and to build Network & buy in
- e) Targeting # of participants (X)

**Results:** Increased membership Supporters of the ASBN mission & purpose

**Funding commitments:**

**Responsibility of:** Board and Delivery Agent (CFDC - CIFN)

**Time line:** Part of early stage of Lt Planning

**GOAL #4: The ABSN will enhance the network by:**

**ACTIVITIES:**

- a) Creating marketing materials to link
- b) Ex Brochure, who, what, where and why
- c) E-Newsletter
- d) Hard copy news letter
- e) Establish Contact list and keep current
- f) Ask for sharable info/submissions on best practices and success stories.

**Business resources**

- Activities/programs/in directives
- Business

**Provincial-Master group list:**

- Ongoing
- Regional Targets your area

**Newsletters with regional feature**

- Nov 15th
- Make sure we have a counter measure increases after the news is out there.
- E info site
- CFOCCIFN

**It's our mission**

- Est. ABSN Office;1-800#;fax etc. Sept 15<sup>th</sup>
- CFOCCIFN
- Connect with existing reach sites by Oct 15<sup>th</sup>
- Survey existing? What needs are?

**GOAL # 5: The ASBN will build capacity by**

**ACTIVITIES:**

**A) Build capacity of the general services providers**

- Target 3 sessions of Train-the-Trainer
- 3 Different locations, 45 participants total

**B) CANDO conference**

- Board registration
- Half travel and accommodation for existing board members
- Each attendant to register on their own and book hotel
- ASBN-booth (\$1500 +).
- Delegate agent to staff.
- Tools / Handouts.
- Oct 23 rd-25<sup>th</sup>
- See Website for details.

## **Appendix A**

ABSN

<b>Participant Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Phone</b>
1. Paulette Flamond	North East Aboriginal Business Centre	<a href="mailto:pflamond@neabc.ca">pflamond@neabc.ca</a>	(250) 785-187
2. Patti Phillips	Kootenay Aboriginal Business Advocates Society	<a href="mailto:patti@dabas.org">patti@dabas.org</a>	(250) 426-0595
3. Garth Stiller	Western Economic Diversification	<a href="mailto:Garth.stiller@wd.gc.ca">Garth.stiller@wd.gc.ca</a>	(604) 789-7716
4. Cordelia Williams	Community Futures Development Association of B.C.	<a href="mailto:cwilliams@communityfutures.ca">cwilliams@communityfutures.ca</a>	(604) 685-2332
5. Paula Cranmer-Underhil	Sto:Lo Development Corporation	<a href="mailto:Scf.paula@shawcable.com">Scf.paula@shawcable.com</a>	(604) 824-5276
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9. John Harper	Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation	<a href="mailto:john.harper@gov.bc.ca">john.harper@gov.bc.ca</a>	(250) 387-2536
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