



Background

Antigonish 2020 Foresight is a community-based project facilitated and project managed by the Antigonish Area Partnership (AAP). The project was initiated by the AAP in October, 2005 and a concept paper was brought forward in January, 2006. That document outlined the proposed approach and pathway for the development and implementation of the Antigonish 2020 Foresight project.

A fundamentally important aspect of the project was the development of effective lines of communication and access to information on a community-wide basis. In order to address this vital need several components were integrated into the strategy. A series of “town-hall” style community meetings were held in six locations across the Antigonish Area. Extensive use was made of the local media including press, radio and television to promote the project and raise awareness throughout the community. A new section of the AAP web site was created specifically for the project.

The project managers gathered a group of about 40 people representing the broadest possible cross-section of the Antigonish area community to form what became known as the Concept Committee. This committee has been the driving force behind the project.

By the fall of 2006 the project had received direct input from over 200 local residents. The Concept Committee, working with the project managers prepared a comprehensive document reflecting the various visions and ideas gathered, and a community conference was planned and held in September 2006. An important part of that conference was the publication of the Antigonish 2020 Foresight Workbook, complete with data about the area, information about the project, and a set of six thematic vision statements which came out of the preparatory work of the committee and the people in the area.

Following the September 2006 Community Conference, and based on resolutions passed at that event, a refreshed team, including both current and new members, embarked upon the task of developing a set of vision for the community. Source material included all input received throughout the project including the material developed during the conference.

One of the first actions of the new committee was to decide to collapse the original six thematic areas into the four pillars of the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) framework as defined by the federal and provincial governments as a means of developing transfer agreements to municipalities under the gas transfer tax program. Since Antigonish 2020 Foresight is in essence a municipality-based project this made good sense.

During the period from late fall 2006 to November 2007 the committee met regularly and also created sub-committees to deal efficiently with each pillar. In order to ensure an integrated approach a team leaders committee was set up. This became a core committee of the project and greatly enhanced momentum and productivity.

On December 1, 2007 a second Community Conference was held. As a result of that conference a set of tangible actions was defined in each of the ICSP pillars, and a unanimous resolution asked for the project to continue with continued project management by the Antigonish Area Partnership.



Project Objective: Broadening Engagement

Responding to the resolutions and visions developed at the December 1, 2007 conference creates the requirement for an enhanced level of community access and participation. With the visions now more finely tuned and quite tangible in nature, action is needed, and that means community engagement at as many levels as possible.

In that regard we have devised a concept or wish-list of capacity to address this need. Fundamentally it involved using the Internet and associated applications to provide easy access in a user-friendly environment. Our project relies on the participation of numerous volunteers who are very busy and geographically distributed. In addition we have an objective to gain representation from all over the county particularly from rural areas. As a result, we need to evolve ways for individuals to participate in a collaborative fashion that does not require attendance at physical meetings. In particular the challenges of engaging our young people and/or those in more remote parts of the county (or for that matter, those at a greater distance with an interest in the Antigonish area) suggest the need for a powerful and also very user-friendly means of interactive communication.

There are 3 components of functionality/service required:

Component 1

A system that will enable project volunteers to participate in a wide variety of project activities regardless of time and geographical constraints:

- The system must allow participants the ability to join on-line discussions about project activities as well as enable a collaborative approach to the development of project materials.
- The system must allow for the development and maintenance of a group calendar to track activities.
- The system must allow for the assignment and tracking of project “to dos”
- The system must have the ability to identify members that are currently on-line and provide the facility for quick ad-hoc on-line communication.
- The system must have varying levels of security to allow access to portions of the system to be tailored to the needs of the individuals.
- The system must be easy to understand, setup, and maintain.

Component 2

The core participants in the project require additional communication and collaboration capabilities that can no longer be addressed by email alone as well as the ability to utilize an easily customizable web site. A system is required that will help the participants with collaboration and scheduling as well as providing enhanced email and on-line chat capabilities.

- The system must work with a wide variety of platforms in native mode, (Windows, Linux, Apple)
- The solution must provide security and spam filtering.



- The system must enable users to move between various methods of communication and collaboration.
- The system must be stable and reliable.
- The system must include a web interface that will be accessible by the public, and contain content that can be manipulated, updated, reviewed and approved by the project participants without the need for IT technical assistance.

Component 3

The Antigonish 2020 Foresight project does not have nor desire to have IT expertise to manage hardware and software for this project.

- Any solution must be hosted and maintained by the system provider.
- Training in the use of the system must be provided by the system provider.

Local Capacity Building

As an essential goal of the Antigonish 2020 Foresight project is to build local capacity, and given the strong legacy prospects for this aspect of the Antigonish 2020 Foresight project, preference will be given to local suppliers capable of providing the levels of service, training, hosting, development and customized software necessary to fulfill the requirements of the project.

Required Supplier Contribution

The successful candidate must agree to contribute a matching in-kind contribution to the cost of the project, not to exceed the project's own cash input.. This contribution will be recognized as an Investment in the project's management organization, the Antigonish Area Partnership.

Financial Information

The project has received approval for a cash contribution of \$8,000 from the Province of Nova Scotia. This represents the entire cash capacity for this project. The supplier will be required to match this amount as an in-kind contribution to the Antigonish 2020 Foresight project.

Project Impact & Benefits

Antigonish 2020 Foresight has already had an impact and reaped benefits for our community. As one of the first communities in Canada to develop and implement a visioning process, and as a pioneer in terms of small communities, the Antigonish area serves as a model for others wishing to pursue a similar course.

In terms of local impact, the project, having identified a set of tangible visions and actions going forward is now poised to stimulate activity in a number of areas covered by the Integrated Sustainability Plan (ICSP) framework. Some of this action will be accomplished through our municipalities, some by the private sector, and some by NGO and other local organizations.

Actions in line with the four pillars of the ICSP are as follows:



Economy

In the case of the economic goals, they are highly focused on local and regional marketing efforts, workforce development, sustainable industrial development and a local tourism strategy.

Social

The social goals and action focus on three main areas: early childhood development (including pre and in school), affordable transportation, and improving out literacy and its related poverty issues. All of these are to be addressed through the strategic employment of our existing assets.

Culture

This area has a very rich cultural life based on a diversity of people and media. The development of a centre for cultural expression and development as well as a vehicle for expanding and disseminating the information (both in and out) about our cultural assets were top-of-mind actions.

Environment

The vision and goals put forward by the project include educational and practical components. The vision of the project is to make the Antigonish area a leader in sustainable development through a cooperative approach including the public sector, various community organizations, the business community, and the community at large. The actions include both educational components as well as practical ways to become more environmentally sustainable.

All of these visions, goals and actions require people and resources. In some cases there is a significant opportunity to create new, sustainable jobs, in others an opportunity to reposition and/or expand existing assets to meet the challenge.

The proposed software project will provide all participants with an opportunity to work in real time and together through a virtual meeting place; the ability to work on multiple-authored documents and other aspects of the project where interactivity is beneficial. As well, the software will provide an opportunity for ordinary citizens to participate in the building of the various action-based projects and to participate fully in the process.

An important aspect of the Antigonish 2020 Foresight process is to stimulate change in outlook. Even in the project's early stages we have seen success as people have become engaged in the process. Change is always challenging, however this process has seen success on an incremental basis. The software project we propose will both broaden and accelerate that change, and will make it easier, on the one hand, and a richer experience on the other as more members of the community participate.

Given the nature of this project it is impossible to predict the number of jobs that will be directly or indirectly created. However it is possible to state that many existing jobs will be protected through the success of this project, and, without doubt, as the economy develops, more jobs will become available. While the Antigonish area is very fortunate to host some significant "pillar"



employers such as the university and the hospital, it is also very dependant on less secure sectors such as fishing and forestry. Also, due to succession planning issues agriculture, a very important industry in this area, is at risk. Such initiatives as stimulating the market for locally produced food, a local transportation system, an area marketing and events management office, and various services will create opportunities which could help us retain our well-educated young people and help rebalance our demographic profile.

Partnerships

Antigonish 2020 foresight is, by its very nature, a project based on partnerships between all stakeholders. A review of the list of committee members as well as attendees at various meetings reveals that all major community stakeholders have participated to some degree or another with this initiative.

In addition the project has benefited from financial support from the following:

- Province of Nova Scotia
- Town of Antigonish
- Municipality of the County of Antigonish
- StFX University
- Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (GASHA)
- 101.5 The Hawk
- CJFX Radio
- The Casket Printing & Publishing Ltd.
- East Nova Business Journal
- Greenway Claymore Inn
- Admiral Signs and Designs
- StFX Enterprise Development Centre
- Ross Screen Print
- Antigonish Area Partnership

This tangible evidence of support for the project is a clear indication fo stakeholder support and uptake.

Project Management & Implementation

The Antigonish Area Partnership has been the project manager and facilitator for the Antigonish 2020 Foresight project since its inception. At the close of the December 1, 2007 Community Conference a motion was put and unanimously passed to have the AAP continue in this role. The AAP Board of directors has confirmed its support for the project. The AAP will continue to fulfill its project management and facilitation functions as the project progresses to its next stages, including the software project that is proposed here.