



EVALUATING COLLABORATIVES OF COMMUNITY CHANGE:

Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction

Jobs Prosperity Collaborative



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1. Introduction and Background

Hamilton is a community with many assets and many complex challenges. Two significant challenges facing the community are the high levels of poverty (18.1% or 89,676 citizens – 2006 Census Data) and a changing economic dynamic with a significant decline in the major manufacturing industries. It is also a community that has chosen to face these challenges in innovative ways.

Hamilton has formed two cross-sectoral community collaborative tables that are designed to address the linked issues of poverty and prosperity and to determine solutions that will result in an enhanced quality of life for its citizens. These collaborative tables are called the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction and the Jobs Prosperity Collaborative.

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction (HRPR) was convened in May 2005 by the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Community Foundation to shine a strategic focus on the issue of poverty. Despite a wealth of community organizations, corporation and community investments, and government commitment, up to that time little progress was being made to reduce poverty in Hamilton. The convening of a collaborative table consisting of business, government, community, and low-income leaders was seen as a way of bringing many voices and resources to address this persistent issue.

The HRPR identified three strategies for addressing poverty in Hamilton, including a focus on policy and systems change, working with community partners to leverage investments in children and youth, and engaging the community to identify and develop their own solutions to poverty. The HRPR implemented these strategies by broadly consulting with the community about poverty, searching for innovative community-based approaches, connecting with thought leaders, and developing a Framework for Change which could drive progress around poverty reduction forward. The Framework for Change includes the aspiration of making Hamilton “the best place to raise a child” and the identification of five critical points of investment in the lives of children from birth to adulthood. These investments include early learning and parenting; skills through education, activity and recreation; targeted skills development; employment and asset building; and wealth creation. The HRPR and its support teams conduct this work through four contributing roles: maintaining a strategic poverty focus, broadly engaging the community, leveraging change and action, and evaluating progress and learning from results.

As the HRPR was developing and progressing with a strategic poverty focus, another collaborative table was emerging in Hamilton, called the Jobs Prosperity Collaborative (JPC). The Jobs Prosperity Collaborative is a cross-sectoral, community problem-solving table focused on jobs creation and prosperity. The JPC evolved from the Hamilton Civic Coalition, which had been established several years earlier to work collaboratively on community issues in Hamilton.

The Hamilton Civic Coalition decided to concentrate first on the issue of jobs, recognizing that creating jobs was fundamental to promoting prosperity for the City of Hamilton. To drive home its focus on jobs, the Hamilton Civic Coalition renamed itself the Jobs Prosperity Collaborative (JPC). The creation of jobs in Hamilton also would assist the work of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, already operating, and would go further to improve the health and vitality of Hamilton. The JPC took leadership on the jobs and prosperity agenda. With the current financial turmoil, loss of manufacturing jobs and economic slowdown projected for the next few years, the jobs agenda is even more crucial for Hamilton's prosperity. The JPC has developed a Framework for Change and set strategic directions for the achievement of its ambitions.

2. Purpose of this Evaluation

This evaluation provides a unique opportunity to evaluate two examples of collaborative community problem solving and the impact of these collaborative tables on a policy and systems change agenda. The major purpose of the Evaluating Collaboratives of Community Change project is to assess the process for establishing the two tables, their unique characteristics, their framework for change, barriers to progress, and lessons learned. This project also seeks to assess progress and outcomes of the collaborative tables with a specific focus on impact of policy and systems change. Another aspect of this project, which extends beyond project funding, is to share lessons learned in a practical Collaborative Tool Kit that will assist communities wishing to develop similar approaches to community change.

3. Evaluation Design

The evaluation design for the project included the development (a) of an evaluation scope of work document and (b) an Evaluation Framework based on the information needs of the major users of the evaluation. Dr. Arnold Love, an independent program evaluation specialist, conducted the evaluation. The evaluation adopted a participatory approach and employed multiple methods of data collection including a review of documents and key informant interviews.

The document review encompassed key foundational documents for both collaborative tables, such as agendas, minutes, presentations, summaries of consultations, and progress reports. The evaluation consultant completed 26 key informant interviews, including five semi-structured personal interviews with the leadership of the collaboratives and 21 semi-structured telephone interviews with other key informants. Of the total of 26 interviews, eight key informants had close knowledge of the HRPR collaborative, eleven knew JPC well, and seven were knowledgeable about both HRPR and JPC. On average, each interview took 45 minutes to complete. See Appendix I for a list of the persons interviewed and their affiliations.

The key informant interviews covered the following topics:

- Key factors in the process of developing the collaborative
- Unique characteristics of each collaborative
- Assessment of the contribution, if any, of the specific focus on poverty or job creation to the Framework for Change
- What worked well and not so well in the process of developing the collaborative
- If the collaborative could be designed all over again, what should be done differently
- Assessment of the impact of the collaboratives on policy or systems change, including specific examples of systems and/or policy change and discussions about the cause-and-effect relationship between the collaborative and the observed change

4. Ethical Considerations

The key informant interviews include processes for stakeholder recruitment, informed consent and privacy safeguards. The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction's Evaluation and Learning Working Group oversaw the evaluation processes and ethical considerations of each stage of the project. The HRPR Evaluation and Learning Working Group is comprised of senior level evaluation specialists from the academic community, government and the voluntary sector. Each potential key informant received an invitation to participate in the evaluation from Mark Chamberlain, who is Chair of both the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction and the Jobs Prosperity Collaborative. His letter described the purpose of the evaluation, outlined the interview process and described briefly the procedures for informed consent. A follow-up letter from the evaluator described the evaluation generally and outlined the specific topics for discussion during the interview. It also summarized the risks/benefits of participation, the confidential nature of the interviews and privacy safeguards. All participants were asked to sign a Consent Form and return it to the project administrator at the Hamilton Community Foundation before the interview.

Findings of the Evaluation

This section presents the findings from the evaluation of the HRPR and JPC collaboratives, according to the perceptions of the key informants.

5. Key Factors in the Process of Developing the Collaboratives

At the start of the interview, the evaluation consultant asked the key informants to describe the major factors that they thought contributed to the development of the collaboratives.

The first major factor was the organization of each collaborative around a community-wide issue, such as poverty and job creation, which could be addressed only the combined efforts of the entire Hamilton community. The key informants were clear that poverty and jobs were issues of such magnitude that they demanded a collaborative response. Furthermore, credible data (e.g., Hamilton Social Planning and Research Council's 2004 report *Incomes and Poverty in Hamilton*) and compelling personal accounts supported the importance of these issues for all residents of Hamilton. In response, the collaboratives created a shared civic space for addressing the challenging issues of poverty and jobs/prosperity.

Key informants viewed the leadership of the collaboratives as second key factor. The Hamilton collaboratives employed a "co-convener" model. A "convener" is defined as someone who brings people or groups together. Rather than leadership being provided by one individual or organization, the co-convener approach involved more than one convener organization. HRPC brought together the City of Hamilton and Hamilton Community Foundation. Then JPC joined, bringing together the City of Hamilton and McMaster University, with its expertise in higher education/professional development, economics and other fields, and research and innovation. The initial credibility of the co-conveners attracted other key partners thereby increasing credibility and building a broad base of support. The key informants thought that this approach was more effective than having the process led by a single planner or a bureaucrat.

The co-convener model also had the distinct advantage of expanding the reach of the collaboratives by involving conveners from multiple sectors. For example, in the instance of HRPR, the co-conveners came from the nonprofit and the public sectors.

The key informants felt it was essential that the co-conveners are individuals who are highly credible, trusted, and have access to the channels of influence in the community. It is also imperative that the co-conveners have a solid partnership and good working relationship with each other. In Hamilton the co-conveners came from organizations that were willing to invest financially in the collaboratives and key informants felt this support was another success factor.

Next, the key informants highlighted the role of the Chairperson of the collaboratives. The Chairperson must provide strong and skilled leadership and be trusted by the diverse members of the collaborative (e.g., by business, government, community agencies, residents). They felt that the Chairperson should champion the vision/aspirations of the collaborative and not be seen to pursue an agenda that resulted in benefits to the Chairperson personally or to his/her organization. One of the unique features of the Hamilton collaboratives is that the same person, Mark Chamberlain, served as Chairperson of both the HRPR and the JPC collaboratives. As a successful private sector business person and also as an individual with a long term commitment to addressing poverty and prosperity in Hamilton, he had credibility with the members of both collaboratives.

The key informants identified the provision of a skilled “back office” (staff and support) as another key factor. The conveners provided a strong back office for the collaboratives with exceptional staffing. Paul Johnson, Liz Weaver and other HRPR staff were critical components of the HRPR collaborative process and Tim Dobbie, former City Manager of Burlington, and his associates were invaluable for the JPC.

It is well known that collaboratives require a clear focus to gather broad support. Clear focus refers to the clarity of the vision and mission of the collaborative. HRPR creating a focal point through a slogan “Making Hamilton Best Place to Raise Child” and this proved to be an effective strategy. Likewise, JPC crystallized its focus on job creation, which is a persistent concern and directly related to prosperity. The sustained interest of media about the issues of poverty and job creation also contributed greatly to developing a collaborative response.

The key informants stressed the need to educate the members of the collaboratives and the broader community about the purpose of collaboratives. Collaboratives follow a development process that allows space for diversity of viewpoints, builds trust and yet translates the vision/ambitions into a clear Change Framework. A collaborative does not deliver services directly, but concentrates on building cooperation and promoting systems-level change. Developing multi-sector collaboratives requires building trust and understanding among members, as well as extensive consultations and network building. When members meet only a few hours once a month, achieving tangible results will take time. These distinctions regarding the roles of collaboratives are important for managing expectations and for avoiding duplication of effort with direct service providers. The key informants felt that HRPR and JPC must be vigilant and continuously reinforce the unique nature of collaboratives and manage expectations.

The key informants were definite that multi-sectoral collaboratives were essential for enduring community change. To be effective, there must be alignment of

participating organizations with the Change Framework. They felt that it was essential to include “grass roots” (e.g., people living in poverty) in the Change Framework development process and listening to their voices (e.g., Low Income Advisory Committee), as well as the “grass tops” (e.g., conveners and established leaders/organizations). They felt that more “grass roots” involvement is needed by both HRPR and JPC.

Both HRPR and JPC are in the process of implementing their change strategies. The key informants underscored the importance of the transition from the Change Framework to an Implementation Plan for the collaboratives. They felt it was vital to establish a manageable number of goals together with concrete targets and tasks. The implementation of these goals should be sequenced over a period of several years and goal attainment should be carefully monitored and reported regularly. According to several key informants an evaluation plan should be created right from the start of the collaborative to monitor and improve the collaborative with timely and relevant feedback during its development and implementation phases. They thought that these factors were essential for the success of the change strategies and for the sustainability of these efforts.

6. Unique Characteristics of Each Collaborative

Next, the consultant asked the key informants to identify the unique characteristics of each collaborative. Because most of the key informants had experience with other forms of collaboratives, this question drew upon their prior involvements to make clear those characteristics that distinguished HRPR and JPC.

6.1 Unique Characteristics of HRPR

The key informants identified the following unique characteristics of HRPR:

- Strong and clear leadership by co-conveners from the start
- Sharp focus on poverty
- Systematic development process leading to Change Framework that built upon existing and evolving areas of investment and contribution of partners
- Change Framework and HRPR development process were strongly evidence-based and drew upon latest research literature and practice experience
- Clear and compelling vision of “Hamilton is the best place to raise a child” made the purpose of the poverty Roundtable tangible to others
- Strengthening collaboration with existing groups (e.g., United Way, Port Authority, School Boards), encouraging other sectors and organizations to

see their work through a Poverty Lens, and then recruiting lead organizations across Points of Investment

- Very high profile in Hamilton and also in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada
- Sustained media interest and attention given to HRPR and its poverty agenda
- The role of HRPR as a catalyst rather than a provider was not well understood at the start and this issue still remains to a degree today
- Very high expectations that HRPR and investments by partners would rapidly and significantly address poverty in Hamilton; people living in poverty are still impatiently waiting for results that affect their lives.
- Support structure makes use of hired staff and HRPR is collocated with one of the convening organizations, rather than using consultants (JPC model)

6.2 Unique Characteristics of JPC

The key informants identified the following unique characteristics of JPC:

- JPC has brought together leaders from education, business and local government. Bringing these sectors together is critical to jobs creation and prosperity for Hamilton and it is very difficult to accomplish.
- JPC had its roots in the Hamilton Civic Coalition (HCC), which existed for five years as a forum for business leaders to facilitate economic development in Hamilton and lobby for change at the local level. As a result, JPC it had a different history and starting point as a collaborative than did HRPR.
- JPC wanted to be strategic and address the “enablers” of prosperity. Job creation was an enabler to eliminate poverty and grow the tax base. Attention to job creation gave JPC a clear strategic focus that many saw as the foundation for enduring prosperity in Hamilton.
- From its focus on jobs creation, JPC expanded to discussion about promoting Hamilton, improving the quality of life, and a broader focus on prosperity. Some members of JPC see prosperity not only as financial wealth but also in terms of overall well being, including the physical, social and spiritual well-being of Hamilton’s residents.
- JPC had notable leadership from its co-conveners (Peter George, President of McMaster University and Tim McCabe, Hamilton Department of Economic Development), as well as from its Chairperson, Mark Chamberlain.

- Mark Chamberlain serves as the Chairperson for both HRPR and JPC. Because HRPR began operation 12-18 months before JPC, he was able to transfer his knowledge and experience with the HRPR collaborative to the JPC effort.
- The Mayor of Hamilton and City staff, as well as other civic leaders and organizations, contributed strongly to the formative work for the JPC. This participation gave visibility to JPC and credibility because JPC was seen as forging a close partnership between the City and other sectors.
- In 2007, Hamilton City Council endorsed JPC as an organization to work with the city. According to key informants, it was the first time that Council recognized that Hamilton's prosperity required a joint effort with the broader community and it was not just a government responsibility.
- JPC serves as a Economic Development Advisory Council to the City. This Council meets four times a year with staff of the Department Economic Development. According to key informants, every recommendation made by the Advisory Council during its year-and-a-half of existence has been approved.
- JPC has developed a strategic plan, defined specific goals and set priorities. The plan will allow JPC to focus on action and achievement of measurable results. These steps have progressed the image of the collaborative from a "talk shop" to an action-oriented "work shop."
- JPC has attracted a huge diversity of high-level leaders from different sectors. This has presented challenges as well as opportunities given diverse viewpoints and management styles. For example, some of the high-level leaders want immediate action, rather than process, and others see the collaborative requiring more process to achieve sustainable and enduring results. In general, JPC has accepted this diversity and is developing strategies for working with it.

7. Contributions of the Specific Focus on Poverty or Job Creation to the Framework for Change

The key informants felt that collaboratives must have a specific focus that partners and the public can understand. A sharp focus is necessary because it brings critical attention to important issues. Poverty reduction and jobs creation definitely gave focus to the collaboratives. HRPR made poverty reduction more concrete by strategically focusing on children with the slogan *Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child*. JPC made prosperity more concrete by focusing on jobs creation.

At the same time, however, some of the key informants felt that the focus must be sufficiently broad to engage everyone in the community. The real success of

collaboratives comes from empowering all people in community to contribute what they can to resolve a issue or challenge. They thought that neither poverty reduction nor job creation were broad enough to include everyone in community. For example, there are individuals who do not identify with poverty because of their age group or sense of financial security. Likewise, regarding jobs, most individuals do not expect to be employed until after 20 years of age and retired persons do not expect to have jobs. The core working age is 24-54 years and the full-time workforce is only about half of the population.

Some key informants felt that prosperity was the correct focus provided that prosperity involved more than just economic needs. Everyone can identify with prosperity. With a focus on prosperity the challenge would be, “What could each person in Hamilton do to increase prosperity for him/herself but also for others.” The downside with a such a broad focus is that it can miss specific, complex and uncomfortable problems that need to be solved.

The Framework for Change served as the overarching map for each collaborative. The process for creating the Framework for Change challenged the members of the HRPR and JPC collaboratives to carefully consider their “theory of change” that linked the aspirations of the Hamilton community and the intended outcomes of the collaborative (e.g., poverty reduction, job creation) to specific strategies and actions for change. The Framework for Change presented a rationale that was grounded in the latest change theories, evidence-based practices, and the experience of the collaborative’s members for achieving the community’s aspirations and outcomes.

According to the key informants, the Framework for Change produced numerous benefits. Because the Framework portrayed where the Hamilton community was now and where the community wanted to be in the future, the Framework whetted the “appetite for change” and fired the public imagination that significant change was possible. As a creative tool, the Framework for Change generated impressive strides “in thinking and living big” for the Hamilton community. The conveners leveraged these aspirations to bring powerful players from multiple sectors to the collaborative. The use of community reporting and media served to broaden and deepen engagement.

Key informants also thought that the Framework for Change served as a map that showed participants where they could align their efforts and contribute to the overall focus of the collaborative. In similar fashion, the focus of HRPR (poverty reduction) and JPC (job creation) were seen as complementary sides of the same coin—the unique focus of each collaborative attracted different groups yet allowed them to contribute to the overall change process. For example, JPC has garnered strong support from private sector businesses to contribute their knowledge and skills to a community change effort. The overall benefits of this approach will become more evident as the efforts of the individual collaboratives are joined together more closely in the future.

8. What Worked Well and Not So Well in the Process of Developing HRPR and JPC

The evaluation consultant then asked the key informants for their views about what worked well and what did not in the development of the collaboratives.

8.1 What Worked Well and Not So Well in Developing HRPR

According to the key informants, the following aspects of developing HRPR went well:

- The co-conveners of HRPR were highly credible, trusted, and had access to the channels of influence in the community
- The co-conveners had a strong partnership and effective working relationship
- The HRPR Chairperson, Mark Chamberlain, demonstrated strong and skilled leadership and he was trusted by the diverse members of the collaborative (e.g., by business, government, community agencies, residents)
- The HRPR support structure made use of hired staff and collocated the HRPR office with one of the convening organizations (Hamilton Community Foundation)
- HRPR was able to recruit highly skilled and effective “back office” staff
- HRPR sustained the interest of the media in the poverty issue, especially the interest of *The Spectator*, and proved instrumental in promoting HRPR and its poverty agenda
- HRPR engaged in a systematic development process that resulted in the creation of a Change Framework
- The HRPR Change Framework built upon evidence-based practice and drew upon existing and evolving areas of investment and contribution of partners
- Participating organizations aligned themselves with the Change Framework
- HRPR strengthened collaboration with existing groups, encouraged them to see their work through a Poverty Lens, and then successfully recruited lead organizations across Points of Investment

In terms of what did not work as well, the key informants made the following observations:

- HRPR spent too much time on process of building collaborative before moving to action. The challenge is implementation and this still remains if HRPR is to achieve its potential. HRPR should develop practical plans that engage all sectors of the community and produce tangible results over a one, three and five year period. It should monitor the achievement of outcomes.
- Acceptance of an implementation plan, including ambitious targets, requires effective community engagement to build ownership and commitment by everyone. To date, there has been limited engagement with people living in poverty.
- The Change Framework incorporated multiple Points of Investment and a complex range of activities. There is a need now to concentrate on limited number of goals and action items, break into working groups to allow action-oriented people to participate, set principles and values but have working groups recruit/fire participants.
- Some individuals attended meetings but did not participate. The key informants felt that everyone who is involved in HRPR should contribute and not just be an observer.
- Some key informants felt that the co-conveners and the HRPR Executive took decisions that should have been the responsibility of entire Board. They felt that the governance structure should be revamped to encourage a broader range of participation. Important issues should be discussed with the entire Roundtable first before decisions are taken.
- The time (mid-day) and length of HRPR meetings precluded the participation of some individuals.
- HRPR should embrace greater inclusiveness and diversity, including people living in poverty, immigrants and the business sector.
- Rather than concentrate on institutions and organizations, HRPR should deepen its neighbourhood focus and support neighbourhood leaders and neighbourhood organizations—this is the foundation of enduring community change.
- Continue effective communications strategies but clarify HRPR mission and role as catalyst and not a service provider

8.2 What Worked Well and Not So Well in Developing JPC

The key informants felt that the following aspects of developing JPC went well:

- The co-conveners of JPC were highly credible and were able to obtain the support of diverse stakeholders.
- The JPC Chairperson, Mark Chamberlain, demonstrated strong and skilled leadership. He was trusted by the diverse members of the collaborative as having the interests of Hamilton at heart. He had the added advantage of service also as Chairperson of HRPR and was able to link the two collaborative efforts.
- JPC developed a strong and unique relationship with the Mayor, City Council and City staff. JPC was accepted officially as a trusted advisor to the City on economic development. JPC also convinced City government of the important role of collaboratives in coming to grips with complex issues that affect the entire community, such as jobs creation and prosperity.
- The JPC support structure made use of experienced consultants rather than hired staff. This staffing model was different from that employed by HRPR but it has proved to be equally effective.
- The JPC has succeeded in attracting a diverse group of stakeholders, including those who are competitors with each other. The stakeholders have had an active role in the creation of the Framework for Change and the action planning process.
- JPC sent a clear message that business has an important part to play in the collaborative effort to create jobs and ensure prosperity in Hamilton. This has given hope to businesses about their future in Hamilton as they struggle with the economic downturn and uncertainty about the future.
- JPC has a strong action focus and this stance tends to reflect the orientation of most of its stakeholders.
- Whereas HRPR has had a high media profile, JPC has deliberately adopted a low media profile to manage expectations regarding job creation.

In terms of what did not work as well, the key informants made the following observations about JPC:

- Some key informants felt that the role of collaboratives as catalysts for systems and policy change was not understood widely and JPC would be judged harshly if it did not create more jobs and increase income and revenues in Hamilton. They expressed concern about the ability of JPC to create jobs. They felt that the roles and limitations of collaboratives should be more actively promoted and better understood.
- Some key informants felt that JPC was not action-oriented enough and it

spent too much time on process issues. In particular, they noted that JPC has lost the support and participation of entrepreneurs. They thought that the nature of a collaborative is counter-intuitive to the entrepreneurial mindset. They felt that JPC should make every effort to avoid being seen as only a “talk shop” by setting priorities and action plans that achieve measurable results.

- Many of the key informants were concerned that the focus of JPC is being lost because the strategic plan is too complex and there are too many action items than possible to be delivered by volunteers. There are 21 priorities and 70 volunteers, whereas three or four priorities would be more realistic.
- In a similar vein, some key informants felt that the diversity of the multi-sector collaborative with widely diverging interests and viewpoints of its stakeholders, has led to disagreement about action plans. This has let action-oriented entrepreneurs and business people, in particular, to began to become disillusioned with JPC. They see the nonprofit and social service members of JPC as too process-oriented and that JPC progress towards an action agenda has been too slow.
- On the other hand, some key informants (including business people) feel that that some JPC stakeholders are power-oriented, authoritarian and want to force others to act in a certain way. These key informants valued the inclusive nature of JPC and feel that building trust and understanding among members takes time. They feel this is very difficult to achieve when members come together only five times a year for a few hours.
- Some key informants complained that there were too many members of JPC, some members drifted in and out of meetings and involvement, and the recruitment of members needed to be more selective and purposeful.
- Breaking into working groups and teams has allowed more action-oriented people to participate. Although this has been effective, JPC needs more work regarding clear purpose and agenda. Even in working groups there is overlap in priorities and work of teams. Some of these working groups should consolidate and merge. The key informants saw these changes as natural part of the collaborative process; otherwise JPC would be a Task Force.
- Some key informants felt that the annual Economic Summit should be reviewed. They felt that the first Economic Summit was valuable, but the second Summit was same as the previous year with the same messages. The agenda, process, design and facilitation of the Economic Summit should be carefully assessed and improved.
- Some key informants felt that the evaluation of JPC should be designed at the start of the collaborative. They were concerned that the potential of the

collaborative has not been achieved and that implementation has been slow. They felt more attention should be given to specifying measurable outcomes and then providing regular reports on the achievement of those outcomes.

9. If the Collaboratives Could Be Designed All Over Again, What Should Be Done Differently?

The key informants cautioned that other cities must be careful not to take a “cookie cutter” approach by replicating narrow strategies or trying to duplicate Hamilton’s approaches exactly. Although the Hamilton experience should be carefully studied and considered, the key informants felt that other cities need to experiment, try and perhaps fail in the effort to engage their communities and create local collaborative solutions.

9.1 If HRPR Could Be Designed All Over Again, What Should Be Done Differently?

If it were possible to design HRPR again, the key informants suggested doing the following:

- Educate about purposes and roles of collaboratives
- Keep focus on systemic change and actively manage expectations
- Achieve a better balance between process and action
- Make efforts to bring provincial and federal government, business and grassroots to table
- Actively recruit leaders who are action-oriented, especially now during crucial implementation phase
- Expect leaders to get more people involved on working groups to achieve specific goals and be accountable for deliverables
- Encourage workgroup leaders to get together and exchange ideas and plans
- For HRPR and for working groups, set agendas carefully so there are clear roles and reasons for individuals (and their staff) to participate and deliver
- HRPR must focus more on outcomes, goals and implementation; even if process is organic, cultivate the ground with concrete short- and intermediate-term goals
- Identify individuals with time, energy and credibility to champion specific aspects of HRPR action plan

- Shorter (one hour), more focused meetings of working groups with specific goals and time lines
- Credible co-conveners are important, but governance should be more representative with Board rather than only co-conveners or Executive making key decisions
- Deepen community engagement and leadership
- To date, HRPR process has deepened awareness and catalyzed change but to engage and empower ordinary people, there must be a few priority directions that are real for them (affordable housing, safer neighbourhoods, supports for new immigrants, employment opportunities)
- Expect flagships, hubs and partners to involve and support community leaders at the neighbourhood level
- Find themes that can bring diverse groups together at the neighbourhood level
- Have a few opportunities per year where HRPR representatives and supporters can spend significant time together to build trust and understand each other's perspectives better
- HRPR should be conscious of time demands on limited number of staff and either set realistic priorities or supply more staff
- Plan evaluation of implementation during the implementation planning process
- Continue very effective communications strategy
- Continue to foster alignment, communication and cooperation between various collaboratives

9.2 If JPC Could Be Designed All Over Again, What Should Be Done Differently?

- Educate partners and the public about purposes and roles of collaboratives and educate partners about the theory of collaboratives, stages in collaborative development, and how to work effectively with diverse stakeholders in a collaborative model.
- Provide strong leadership from conveners and the Chairperson right from the start to give hope about change, build confidence in the process, maintain the

focus of the collaborative, manage conflicts, and effectively harness the energies of diverse stakeholders.

- Cultivate and maintain the positive working relationship JPC has attained with the Mayor, City Council and City staff.
- Achieve a better balance of process and action. The process aspect of collaboration building should be reduced and action begun earlier to maintain momentum and retain action-oriented participants.
- Ensure that the “process” aspects of the collaborative are carefully planned, well organized and supported by professional facilitators. This will help control “process creep” and “process drift” while ensuring the process of building a collaborative and a Framework for Change is honoured.
- Several key informants felt that the collaborative should have a more formal organizational structure, including a Charter and Board of Governors. In the current model, Mohawk College serves as administrator but this leads to some confusion concerning lines of authority and accountability.
- JPC has used experienced consultants as staff instead of employees. This model has worked well. Key informants felt that JPC and its working groups could not function without adequate support. Experienced consultants have worked well because they are part of meetings, follow through on agenda items and decisions, and help formulate strategies and responses.
- Some key informants expressed concern about the sustainability of JPC if there should be changes in staffing. If they were to design JPC from the start, they would develop a staffing strategy that addressed the sustainability issue.
- Be more deliberate when recruiting new members to JPC. Invite individuals who strongly support the vision and are willing to commit to specific aspects of the JPC action plan.
- Make the action plan more manageable and restricted to a smaller set of priorities. Plan over a three year time frame with one, two and three year goals and targets. Monitor and evaluate progress on a regular basis.
- Balance process/planning with implementation. During the crucial implementation phase, retain the workgroup model. Actively recruit leaders who are action-oriented and expect them to involve others on the working groups to achieve specific outcomes.
- Encourage workgroup leaders to get together to exchange ideas and plans and address any emerging opportunities or challenges.

- Low-income workers, unemployed workers, entrepreneurs, and newcomers are not involved enough in JPC. Some key informants felt it is important for JPC to represent the entire community and everyone in Hamilton should be challenged to contribute to JPC’s vision of jobs creation and prosperity for all—no matter how small each individual’s contribution. JPC should share the vision broadly and give everyone the freedom to take action in his/her own way. This increases chances of increasing jobs and building prosperity.
- JPC should sponsor one or two public meetings a year with good speakers to discuss the future of Hamilton.

10. Assessment of the Impact of the Collaboratives on Systems and/or Policy Change

The final phase of the interviews asked the key informants for their assessment of the impact of the collaboratives on systems or policy change. To improve the validity of these assessments, the evaluation consultant asked for specific examples of systems or policy change and discussed the cause-and-effect relationship between efforts of the collaborative and the specific impact. This process provided greater certainty that the impact could be reasonably attributed to the collaborative rather than to other factors.

When reading the sections below, the reader should be aware that in some cases where the cause-and-effect relationship between the collaborative and the impact was unclear because of the number of actors or complexity of the change process, key informants often were able to verify that the collaborative either influenced or contributed strongly to the impact, even if they were not able to state definitively that the collaborative alone was the primary “cause” of the impact.

10.1. Impact of HRPR

The key informants were clear that HRPR has had significant impact at the local, provincial and national levels. HRPR has been a catalyst for organizations in the community to work together on poverty reduction. HRPR has been extremely visible in Hamilton, largely as a result of the combined efforts of HRPR staff, HRPR partners and sustained media coverage.

HRPR also attracted the attention of provincial and national politicians, bureaucrats and organizations. The key informants gave HRPR credit for having important influence on the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy and on several important national systems-change initiatives, such as those undertaken by Vibrant Communities and Community Foundations of Canada. For example, the Hamilton Community Foundation, one of the HRPR co-conveners, was a major

participant in the Social Justice initiatives of the Community Foundations of Canada that addressed the root causes of poverty. With funding by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program, lessons learned from the HRPR approach to poverty reduction were captured by Community Foundations of Canada in an online toolkit titled *From Good Causes to Root Causes*.

Overall, the key informants thought that confronting the root causes of poverty was a correct focus for Hamilton because the community feels the impact of poverty in so many ways. Although poverty is an economic issue, the key informants thought that poverty is so much more. Poverty affects social and racial equality and the very fabric of a just society; and it manifests itself across multiple sectors, such as housing, health care and education. If nothing else, talking about the root causes of poverty has had enormous educational value for all segments of the Hamilton community and, as a consequence, it has given Hamilton a much better chance to deal with those root causes politically.

The key informants gave many specific examples of systems and policy change that they attributed to HRPR:

- Most of the key informants felt that HRPR has had great impact on the way the province works with communities and has influenced provincial policies related to poverty. By bringing diverse partners together and through effective media attention, HRPR has crystallized the importance of collaboration as the preferred approach to systems-based change. Consistent outreach campaigns, pre-election discussions and policy briefs have given HRPR a “tangible force” within the provincial government. A few key informants, however, felt that this impact should be attributed to the lobbying efforts with the provincial government and Hamilton MPP's that began in the mid-1990's. They saw the work of HRPR as a continuation and expansion of those efforts, but acknowledged that HRPR has produced a much higher level of multi-sector community involvement than observed before.
- According to the key informants, Minister Deb Matthews (recently appointed Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in October, 2009) has spent much time in Hamilton observing the work of HRPR since she was first elected to the Ontario Legislature in 2003 and both she and her staff have maintained close ongoing contact with HRPR initiatives. This contact influenced Minister Matthews when she served as Minister of Children and Youth Services and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services. This influence is reflected in her work on social assistance reform and the new Ontario Child Benefit. As noted earlier, the influence of HRPR is also reflected in the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy.
- HRPR has provided a structure for aligning policies around poverty as a community priority. As a consequence, the Province now able to invest public

money in Hamilton with confidence because priorities are clear and have been achieved through broad community collaboration.

- As part of Ontario Best Start, Hamilton Best Start was an early partner in HRPR and it is designed to complement other child-focused community planning efforts. In particular, Hamilton Best Start is on record as supporting and contributing to the work of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction and its vision of Hamilton being the best place to raise a child.
- Key informants praised HRPR for the effectiveness of its mobilization that influenced two major accomplishments: phase-out of the clawback of the National Child Benefit Supplement and development of a Hamilton transportation strategy for employed low-income residents.

First of all, HRPR, together with its partner organizations and the City of Hamilton, are credited by key informants as influencing the phase-out of the provincial clawback of the National Child Benefit Supplement for families on welfare and the introduction of a new Ontario Child Benefit aimed at all low-income families in the province, regardless of whether the parents are employed or are on welfare.

Secondly, HRPR played an instrumental role in the Affordable Transit Pass Program that helps employed City of Hamilton residents living with a low income to purchase an adult monthly bus pass from the Hamilton Street Railway for half price. According to key informants, HRPR organized a table to discuss programs for the working poor that led to the Affordable Transit Pass Program and is actively monitoring the situation as the time for end of funding approaches in December 2009. The efforts of HRPR have resulted in a high level of support from City Council about this issue. Some key informants feel that the role of the City as HRPR co-convenor has greatly increased City support for HRPR efforts.

- Key informants felt that the focus of HRPR and its partners on neighbourhoods has been beneficial. They noted the development “hubs” by Hamilton Best Start and the Hamilton Community Foundation in low income neighbourhoods to foster community engagement and leadership, as well as to bring essential services and supports under one roof. Growing Roots... Strengthening Neighbourhoods and Tackling Poverty Together are other examples. The evaluations of these programs are showing positive outcomes for the residents of low-income neighbourhoods. The inclusion of community engagement and leadership development in these programs is increasing the ability of the residents of these neighbourhoods to influence systems and policy change.

Some key informants also raised questions about areas where the HRPR might be less effective in stimulating change. These critiques included the following:

- One key informant felt that HRPR had not been successful in getting policy integration among municipal government, school boards and hospitals. The person also felt that the Change Framework and "Best place to raise a child" slogan ignored three major poverty groups in Hamilton—seniors, youth under 20 years of age, and Aboriginal people who were living in poverty.
- Another key informant was concerned that Hamilton has not confronted the racialization of poverty that may be found across Hamilton's institutions. Organizations such as HCCI have been trying to address the issue, but progress has been very difficult without acknowledgement by HRPR and without making racialization of poverty a focus for systems and policy change.
- A third key informant expressed doubts about the effectiveness of collaborative efforts on poverty reduction in terms of systems and policy change that makes a real difference in the lives of low income individuals. It was essential for HRPR to have more contact and collaboration with people living in poverty. The individual felt that HRPR is not tracking improvements in income, housing or living conditions. Likewise, HRPR is not asking whether collaborative and systems change efforts are having ripple effects that are meaningful for individuals and families. The person also was concerned about the unintended effects of HRPR—while the collaborative focused time and resources on high level change and generated much activity, little measurable results were happening in the lives of the poor.
- Another key informant felt HRPR cannot stop at having the Hamilton accept the need for collaboration. With 90,000 people living in poverty in Hamilton, HRPR must set concrete and challenging poverty reduction goals (e.g., 5% in 5 years). For example, HRPR must challenge communities to ensure that every single child is fed and has recreation opportunities. Although HRPR has been successful in setting a collaborative framework, it is now time to get more specific about impact on the lives of low income families and individuals.

10.2 Impact of the JPC

The key informants affirmed that JPC has contributed to major systems change for Hamilton. A fundamental change is that JPC has forged a new working relationship between the City of Hamilton and the business community as well as other sectors. The Mayor and the City Council and staff have formally recognized JPC as trusted advisors regarding job creation and economic development.

The key informants noted that JPC has successfully formed a true collaborative relationship with the City and they saw this as a noteworthy achievement. As evidence of the importance of this relationship, they singled out the pivotal role played by JPC in the acceptance of the Mayor's Economic Development budget last year. Other municipalities have commented on this positive relationship

between JPC and the City and see it as marking a new and positive partnership between community groups and municipal government.

Although JPC is identified with the business community, JPC has been a catalyst for a wide range of organizations to work together on job creation and prosperity. The economic landscape of Hamilton has changed over the last two decades. While manufacturing remains an important source of employment, organizations in the public and nonprofit sectors (e.g., health care, higher education, knowledge industries, human services) have now emerged as major employers in Hamilton. The key informants saw JPC as a catalyst for undertaking the difficult task of bringing employers and leaders from the different sectors together to work together to create jobs and build a prosperous Hamilton.

The key informants agreed that a focus on jobs was a wise approach for JPC. They felt that the focus on job creation was a concrete starting point that would fire the ambitions of organizations across different sectors. Whereas many saw the Hamilton Civic Coalition as being too broad, JPC's focus on jobs creation signalled a new and practical starting point for the collaborative. Many key informants also saw the coalition's link between jobs and prosperity as important. The concept of "prosperity" provided a "big tent" that could contain the contributions and participation of all members of the community. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of job creation and prosperity helped to crystallize the image of JPC as a "community builder" that numbered a broad and talented range of business and community leaders, educators, and innovators among its members.

The key informants gave many specific examples of systems and policy change that they attributed to JPC:

- Mayor, City Council and City staff all demonstrate a high level of respect for JPC and they have recognized JPC as official advisors
- Since involvement of JPC, more concrete plans are being developed by the City Economic Department
- JPC promoted new approach to economic development and redevelopment in Hamilton based on collaborative leadership and community engagement (see <http://www.investinhamilton.ca>). The Mayor and the City have accepted this approach as their preferred path forward.
- JPC was instrumental in the facilitation and approval of City's Official Plan that included integrated plan for regional inter-modal (air-ship-rail-truck) transportation and people/goods movement (see the video *Courage to Do: Implementing a Vision of Shared Prosperity* (<http://www.vimeo.com/4512996>)).
- HPC has created enthusiasm and optimism among private sector businesses regarding business opportunities in Hamilton

- JPC has energized private sector business regarding their role to “lead by example” in fostering sustainable development and local job creation
- JPC is recognized as encouraging innovation and creation of new technologies and industries based on research and collaboration between universities, colleges and industries
- A visible partnership has formed among Hamilton Chamber, JPC and City of Hamilton in creating successful annual Economic Summits (see <http://www.investinhamilton.ca>)
- JPC is credited for encouraging innovation (e.g., Art Bus) that promotes arts and culture sector in Hamilton and helped transform distressed communities into mixed-use and diverse neighbourhoods that are making a difference to local community
- JPC has supported environmental restoration through Environment Hamilton’s “green jobs, green economic development” initiative to develop green economic strategies and support local green businesses
- JPC has successfully encouraged businesses to redevelop properties, including brownfield properties, and the Ambassadors Program to stimulate tourism and appreciation of Downtown Hamilton. These efforts to encourage redevelopment of an urban centre are being widely acclaimed provincially and nationally

On the other hand, some key informants raised questions about the type of systems change being achieved by JPC. They were concerned that JPC is not having enough tangible impact on jobs creation. Up to now, they felt the focus on jobs creation was being blurred and its energies misdirected towards general economic development. Likewise, JPC does not have the measures of prosperity necessary to ensure alignment of diverse groups. After years of discussions and planning sessions, there is now great pressure to implement feasible strategies that will result in measurable job creation.

A few key informants raised issues about the nature of the collaboration between JPC and the City of Hamilton. Although the relationship is important and positive, they were concerned that JPC was doing the work of City staff and focusing too narrowly at the municipal level. They were concerned that JPC was not addressing fundamental factors affecting the prosperity of Hamilton that involved investments and policy changes by other levels of government or agencies, such as a regional approach to public transit, investment and achievement in innovation, providing affordable housing and rentals to attract newcomers to settle in Hamilton, and making maximum use of the skills and creativity of newcomers through effective settlement, training and employment strategies.

Appendix 1. List of Key Informants Interviewed

1. Key Informants with Knowledge of Both HRPR and JPC

Mark Chamberlain

Affiliation: President and CEO of Trivaris Ltd.; Chair, Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction and Chair, Jobs Prosperity Collaborative

John Dolbec

Affiliation: CEO, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce

Fred Eisenberger

Affiliation: Mayor, City of Hamilton

Paul Johnson,

Affiliation: Executive Director, Wesley Urban Ministries

Carolyn Milne

Affiliation: President and CEO, Hamilton Community Foundation

Darrel Skidmore

Affiliation: CEO, United Way of Burlington & Greater Hamilton

Judy Travis

Affiliation: Executive Director of the Hamilton Training Advisory Board

2. Key Informants with Knowledge of HRPR

Rick Beauchamp

Affiliation: Program Manager, Ontario Ministry of Children & Youth Services

Mark Cabaj

Affiliation: Executive Director, Vibrant Communities

Howard Elliott

Affiliation: Executive Editor, The Spectator

Peter Hutton

Affiliation: Chair, Hamilton Social Justice Coalition

Brian McHattie

Affiliation: Councillor, City of Hamilton

Leila Ryan

Affiliation: Chair, HRPR, Evaluation & Learning Working Group

Gary Warner

Affiliation: Member, HRPR Evaluation & Learning Working Group

Madina Wasuge

Affiliation: Executive Director, Hamilton's Centre for Civic Inclusion

3. Key Informants with Knowledge of JPC

David Adames

Affiliation: Executive Director, Tourism Hamilton

Laura Babcock

Affiliation: President, Powergroup Communications

H. Doug Barber

Affiliation: Board, McMaster University and Institute of Quantum Computing;
Member of the Ontario Research and Innovation Council

Tim Dobbie

Affiliation: Manager, Jobs Prosperity Collaborative; former City Manager of Burlington

Peter George

Affiliation: President, McMaster University

Tom Jackson

Affiliation: Councillor, City of Hamilton

Morteza Jafarpour

Affiliation: Executive Director, SISO Hamilton (Settlement and Integration Services Organization)

Cheryl Jensen

Affiliation: Vice President Academic, Mohawk College

Richard Koroscil

Affiliation: President and CEO, John C Munro Hamilton International Airport

Rob Maclsaac

Affiliation: President, Mohawk College; former Mayor of Burlington

Tim McCabe

Affiliation: General Manager, City of Hamilton Planning & Economic Development Department