

2

YORK REGION FUNDERS' ALLIANCE

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, August 28, 2007, from the Commissioner of Community Services, Housing and Health Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report informs Regional Council of the York Region Funders' Alliance and its role in promoting the sustainability of York Region's non-profit sector.

3. BACKGROUND

In 2002, the York Region Funders' Alliance established itself as a semi-formal network of funding organizations representing provincial and regional funding bodies. The group's mandate is to promote the sustainability of York Region's non-profit sector to help maintain York Region's residents' high quality of life.

The York Region Funders' Alliance brings together independent, funding organizations who have broad and varied funding mandates, priorities, and programs in human and social services, arts, culture, heritage, sports and recreation, and the environment.

The current members include:

- The Regional Municipality of York, Community Services and Housing Department
- The Ontario Trillium Foundation
- The United Way of York Region
- The UJA (United Jewish Appeal) Federation of Greater Toronto
- The Province of Ontario:
 - The Ministry of Culture
 - The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
 - The Ministry of Health Promotion, Sport and Recreation Branch
 - The Ministry of the Attorney General

The York Region Funders' Alliance is currently chaired by Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Director, Policy and Program Support Services in the Community Services and Housing Department.

The York Region Funders' Alliance's role has become increasingly important as regional growth and demographics changes continue, and the needs of York Region's residents and gaps in community services mount, and funding remains limited. The focus of the York Region Funders' Alliance is on building the organizational strength of the non-profit sector to increase their ability to serve the community. This is different from other coalitions, such as the Human Services Planning Coalition, who focuses on advocacy for investment in human services.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The following provides a more detailed overview of the York Region Funders' Alliance's mandate, the types of supports that are provided by the Alliance, and overall benefits to York Region and the non-profit sector.

4.1.1 York Region Funders' Alliance informs its members and the non-profit sector

The York Region Funders' Alliance shares information among its own members as appropriate to fill funding gaps and avoid duplication. It also informs York Region based non-profit agencies on how to make sense of which funder, or combination of funders, is the best match for their particular program or service. It does this in several ways:

- Networking and information-sharing among its members and other funders on funding priorities, and socio-economic and demographic trends.
- On request, the members also support the evaluation of each others projects and proposals for funding.
- Providing opportunities to non-profit agencies to increase their knowledge and access to funding.
- Offering information and educational supports geared to assisting non-profit agencies in strengthening and building their organizational capacity and sustainability.

4.2 York Region Funders' Alliance assists non-profit sector to strengthen and build capacity

The York Region Funders' Alliance has collaborated to provide educational and networking opportunities to non-profit agencies through sessions that occur once or twice a year. These sessions:

- Increase the ability of agencies to network and collaborate effectively.
- Provide techniques that increase the ability of agencies to give residents the best services and supports possible.
- Increase agency knowledge of current and emerging Regional directions and resident socio-economic trends so that they can better focus on meeting true needs.

- Give agencies tools to plan more strategically and allow them to discover new ways to operate in an increasingly complex environment.
- Help agencies find ways to be less dependent on external funding.

4.2.1 York Region Funders' Alliance hosts a non-profit sustainability workshop

The most recent event hosted by the York Region Funders' Alliance was a "Community Sustainability Workshop". This session, which was held on June 11, 2007, was targeted to Executive Directors of non-profit agencies in York Region. The session was oversubscribed – over 70 participants from senior levels of the social services, newcomer, environmental, sports and recreation, the arts, culture and heritage sectors attended. The theme for the day was "Building Sustainability and Capacity in York Region's Non-Profit Sector."

Through this workshop, participants gained more insight into population and growth trends, demographic changes, frameworks for strategic planning, revenue diversification, innovation cycles, venture philanthropy, and partnership development.

4.3 Benefits to York Region

Membership on the York Region Funders' Alliance has benefited York Region in three key ways:

1. Provided the Region with a vehicle to negotiate arrangements with other funders to match or pick up projects that are needed that cannot be funded by York Region.
2. Strengthened collaboration between community agencies, assisting in the delivery of more effective services.
3. Provided York Region with a significant forum to negotiate how service dollars get allocated with other funders which results in reducing service gaps and duplication of services.

4.4 Benefits to non-profit agencies

Through workshops sponsored by the York Region Funders' Alliance, many non-profit agencies have:

- Increased their knowledge of funding and proposal strategies.
- Established connections with one another and with various funding organizations. These new partnerships have become especially crucial as agencies struggle to find ways to meet the new and growing service needs of our communities, with little or no additional funding.
- Increased their exposure to information about Region-wide issues and trends which would otherwise have not been available or easy to access.
- Acquired information on new and emerging socio-economic and demographic trends that can assist agencies in service planning, and can be used to inform funding proposals and business case development.

4.5 York Region Funders' Alliance's future activities

York Region Funders' Alliance members will continue their collaborative work, and as time and resources allow are considering:

- Providing more workshops based on the areas of need expressed by the non-profit sector.
- Broadening its membership to leverage more opportunities for collaborative community investment, networking, information sharing and partnerships.
- Developing an online directory of funders as a resource for non-profit agencies to get information and links to:
 - York Region Funders' Alliance members and their funding mandate, programs, priorities, and program specific information about upcoming proposal and funding application deadlines.
 - Other funding organizations both private and public.
 - Upcoming events and other resources that will be useful to the non-profit sector.

The directory will help agencies use their limited resources better, and pursue funding that is appropriate. The York Region Funders' Alliance will consult with the Region of Peel and the City of Hamilton who have developed similar online tools for their non-profit sectors.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The York Region Funders' Alliance does not collectively administer a funding program. Each member provides funding to the non-profit sector based on their own individual funding mandate, criteria and priorities. The members do however, share costs and provide in-kind support for workshops sponsored by the York Region Funders' Alliance. York Region's participation costs are within the current budget.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

York Region Funders' Alliance members support agencies that provide important programs and services to communities across York Region. Through investments in the non-profit sector, the York Region Funders' Alliance helps these agencies to respond better to the changing and growing needs of York Region's residents for services and supports.

7. CONCLUSION

York Region Funders' Alliance members work together to invest strategically in York Region's non-profit sector, with a common goal of strengthening community capacity, avoiding duplication, filling gaps and investing in ways that best meet our residents' needs. In addition, it is also becoming another vehicle for the Region's non-profit sector to collaborate and find innovative ways to become more responsive to the growing and

diverse needs of York Region's residents. This Corporation and its residents have also benefited.

The lack of funding for community development and the needs of York Region's growing and increasingly complex population will not be eliminated by the existence of the York Region Funders' Alliance. However, the Alliance's diverse membership has resulted in strong strategic partnerships that focus on meeting a valid community need which exists, regardless of the degree of funding.

For more information about this report, please contact Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Director, Policy and Program Support Services Branch.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.