

**Comments and Qs and (now the) As for the  
Strategic Planning Session  
Sault Ste Marie June 3, 2024**

**Q.1 How do we execute the plan and what would be the tasks that would go along with it? We are looking forward to seeing the implementation plan with action items that are measurable and timelines attached to that. Is the To-Do list grouped by themes and how does it fit into the next steps?**

Answer:

As many said at the conference, this is only helpful if it is made real. A plan where efforts are prioritized and aligned, timeframes set, and people joining in to help with individual parts of the plan, is what is needed.

To get the ball rolling, we will put in place a steering group in the next 6 weeks made up of those who choose to get involved. Participants will be welcomed from the boards and staff of CFO, Regional Networks and the CFDCs. The steering group will start by reviewing the to-do list presented at the conference, as well as other initiatives and ideas mentioned in this document.

**Action:** *An invitation to join the Strategic Direction Steering Group will be sent out shortly.*

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**Q.2 We have 60 CFC in Ontario, and we have 42 here today, how do we get the other 18 on board? We need the network as a full network.**

Answer:

This is 100% true. We almost need to think of ourselves as one organization with many offices. As more people get involved it gets easier, more creative, and done faster. By leaving no one behind, we make it clear to all our partners that we are efficient, effective and united in our shared efforts.

**Action:** *The discussions from the conference are being shared with all CFDCs. All follow-up efforts and outreach are being shared with all CFDCs. We will be sending*

*a message to those offices that were not able to attend to ask if they would like to have a follow-up meeting to discuss the new strategic plan.*

**Q.3 How are we going to do things differently since these have been unachieved? What happens next? Are we actually going to act on this?**

Answer: This has to be about culture change. If we are to do things differently, we need to think differently and ultimately behave differently. In this case, this is a question that we all need to answer, and we will share the accountability for success or failure.

**Action:** *Our first and biggest next step is the steering group to drive these efforts. This is at the root of that shared accountability. That group will regularly report back to the entire network to keep everyone on the same page and help drive that culture change.*

**Q.4 What is the biggest problem CF Ontario is facing at this time?**

Answer: Helping to bring out the change in culture across the CF network throughout Ontario and to build and maintain momentum for change.

**Action:** *In addition to our steering group, we will need to put in place new tools and mechanisms to foster this new way of doing business. The new website will be the backbone of the early efforts. We will be reaching out shortly to get more people involved in the site's redesign.*

**Q.5 Have to be very specific in terms of what kind of information you have, and have a really regular schedule in terms of every Thursday at 2pm. Put a priority on better information sharing.**

Answer: This comment raises several important points. First, information sharing is foundational for the success of this new approach. In this context, information sharing needs to flow both ways. Second, the idea of regularly scheduled follow-ups is key. This will help keep the efforts on task and moving forward.

**Action:** *A calendar will be kept with all the key dates of activities (meetings, etc.) that will always be available to all CFDCs (possibly the website or another tool).*

**Q.6 Getting creative and finding other sources of revenue and ask for increased operating funding. Broaden the scope of what CFDCs can do.**

Answer: This is a great point that gets at the heart of the idea of expanding our partnerships. Our Ontario-wide network is mature, stable and very credible. We can leverage these assets (both hard and soft) to reach out to deliver more for others. Whether, it is the province, municipalities, counties, the private sector or other non-profits, it is a good time to make a concerted and coordinated effort to reach out to increase our partnerships. In the past, these partnerships have offered us the opportunities to increase operational and lending funds. Looking to the federal government at this time is likely not to be successful unless it is part of new programming which will be part of future advocacy efforts.

***Action:** A partnerships tiger team will be created this summer that will take on the task of setting up a strategy and a coordinated multi-level approach to increasing our partnerships.*

**Q.7 Focus on advocacy, rural grassroots boots on the ground collaboration, leveraging our buying power, and making sure that our assets are being put to work, and bilateral Marketing and Communications.**

Answer: This comment is well aligned with the previous comment in terms of working the collaboration at all levels. What we need to support is local creativity, while at the same time sharing best practices and working these partnerships at all levels. We need to use the on-the-ground knowledge to teach each other, and potential partners, the advantages of working with CFDCs. There is a plan to rebrand (pun intended) the marketing and communications committee which will help provide the tools to support these expanded partnerships.

***Action:** Make sure that the partnerships tiger team and the new MarCom are working together and supporting their respective efforts.*

**Q.8 Interested in the unifying of branding across all the offices and be better joint marketing. How do we harmonize logo identifications? Some suggestions: business starts here, or growth starts here, or your future starts here.**

Answer: The branding question came up often at the conference and this is something we can come to ground on quickly. First, we need to inventory what CFDCs are using. Second, do a national check in to see what the plan is there. Third, ask ourselves what are the pros and cons of common branding. With this

analysis, then ask the CFDCs if a common brand is the way to go. If the view is yes, and we are aligned with a national approach, let's proceed with this. If there is no national plan or timetable this should not stop us from proceeding. The MarCom would lead the actual work. If the view is to not proceed at this time, then this is something MarCom can ask again in a year's time.

**Action:** *MarCom will lead a process this summer to evaluate the idea of a common brand across Ontario and then present the results of its efforts to CFDCs for confirmation of the approach and next steps, if any.*

**Q.9 Put technology at the forefront (e.g. proving cybersecurity). Why didn't the CFO take over cybersecurity rather than leave it up to individual CFs? And why isn't there one IT company paid centrally? What are the potential services that we could do jointly? What about common supplier frameworks and centralized procurement?**

Answer: Technology is one service that came up a number of times. The cybersecurity example was used to illustrate that the old ways of doing things with each CFDC finding its own solution to a common problem, should end. But it is only one example of areas where we can potentially get better bang for the buck by procuring centrally, or having a specialized service delivered (for a fee) by one CFDC to the network. Our current benefits committee asks the question of central procurement, but in a narrow way. This group needs to be redefined to broaden its scope to include any back-office service that could potentially be procured or delivered centrally. Like a small business, it will need to make the business case to CFDCs for any central service/procurement based on great service and great price!

**Action:** *The current benefits committee will be rebranded to become the procurement and services committee in the next month. It will then meet to discuss where it wants to focus its initial efforts, building a list of potential items for central procurement and service, validating that list with CFDCs, and then systematically moving through each item.*

**Q.10 Develop a delivery structure, a continuous tactical piece who is doing what. Have a Slack channel, or Microsoft Teams channel to enable us to share best practices back and forth and ask questions of each other.**

Answer: This mashup of two comments has both the question and the answer. Use the tools out there to exchange information in real time to share what we know and do not know with each other. These simple platforms can be used to build the foundation for collaboration and provide the means to work on the many initiatives mentioned so far, and to come.

**Action:** *Put in place within the next month a CFDC endorsed shared communications platform to allow for real-time communications of all elements of the new strategic direction.*

**Q.11 Better define those things that we are doing, build some accountability and KPIs into the process. Use data collection and KPIs to give you tools to leverage more funding for us and not just a quantitative KPIs but qualitative KPIs.**

Answer: 100% this is key to our success in moving in this new strategic direction. Measure what is important and use what you measure to improve how we operate and to advocate for new programs, funds, and improvements both operationally and in terms of program design. This data will also help us with our branding and marketing, as well as building new partnerships. It is the gift that will keep giving.

**Action:** *Establish the Advocacy Committee this summer and have the new committee meet in the same timeframe to consider its deliverables including measurement and data collection, as well as use of that information.*

**Q.15 How about leveraging knowledge, experience and skills of volunteers; perhaps a skills inventory?**

Answer: The power of volunteers was raised at the conference a number of times. Reaching out to this resource/asset is an important part of maximizing the tools we can bring to bear to move in this new direction. The skills inventory can help with this, and perhaps should include staff as well who bring a diversity of skills and experience to their jobs that often extends well beyond their career in CFDCs.

**Action:** *As part of its early efforts, the Strategic Direction Steering Group should take this question on as an early deliverable and target this summer to start the process of building such an inventory, as well as being inclusive on outreach on initiatives that come from the new strategic direction.*