
Fogo Island- Change Islands Socio-Economic Strategic Plan

Review and Assessment

By Jessica Peckham and Brian Woodford



Photo source: <http://www.changeislands.ca>

**Submitted to: Kelly Vodden and the Gander New-Wes-Valley
Community-based Research Project Steering Committee
November 26th, 2009**

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	Page 3
Part 1: How was the planning process conducted.....	Page 3
Part 2: Moving from planning to implementation.....	Page 6
Part 3: Out comes from the planning process.....	Page 8
Part 4: Key factors that have contributed to implementation success (or lack of success).....	Page 9
Part 5: Removing barriers and addressing challenges.....	Page 10
Conclusion.....	Page 11

Introduction

The region of Fogo-Change Islands, located off of the north eastern coast of Newfoundland, is typical of rural Newfoundland in its landscape. The total population in the area is approximately 3000 people: 2700 on Fogo Island and 300 located on Change Islands¹. The Fogo Island-Change Islands Socio-Economic Strategic Plan was created in response to declines in the fishing industry and to rebuild and diversify the economy in the region. The strategic plan describes a variety of opportunities for the area and also how those involved plan to implement these ideas.

The purpose of this paper is to try and find solutions for moving from planning to implementation. The research for this began in Gander in October 2009 with meetings held by Rural Secretariat and the Community-based Research Project Steering Committee. Meetings were held with representatives from seven planning areas within the Gander New Wes Valley region, including three representatives from the Fogo-Change Islands planning process. After the Gander meeting, more research was conducted through additional e-mail and telephone interviews with representatives involved in the process. Some of these people included citizens from the area, as well as a planner who resides outside of Fogo Island- Change Islands. Unless otherwise stated, all figures, quotes and statements directly related to the planning process in Fogo Island- Change Islands have been taken from the interview responses and the planning report. After compiling the research results, it is obvious that the implementation stage is the hardest and most difficult stage of the planning process to complete. In order for implementation to occur, so the plan is not forgotten, we have looked at five different categories to create an overview of the planning process and the challenges associated with planning.

¹ These numbers were provided by a community representative but are supported by Community Accounts (2006), which reports 2,995 residents on the islands, 300 living on Change Islands.

Part 1: How was the planning process conducted?

The planning process for Fogo Island-Change Islands started in 2006 and took approximately two years to complete. There were strategic planning sessions held on both Fogo and Change Islands, but the two islands joined efforts to work on one overall vision and planning document. On Change Islands, the community members and council had recognized the need for a plan to be created. According to a citizen from the area, Change Islands started their own planning before being approached by Fogo Island. A Strategic Planning Committee was established on Change Islands in the fall of 2007 and a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted. This was conducted through the research of Dr. Maureen Woodrow of the University of Ottawa (seasonal resident), who with the help of David Carlson, created an action plan for Change Islands. In 2008, they were continuing with their own plan as a single island until they were approached by Kittiwake Economic Development Corporation (KEDC) to join the Fogo Island planning process.

On Fogo Island, the Fogo Island Development Association (FIDA), KEDC and Shorefast, a local foundation, had also identified the need for a planning process. A number of factors led to the decision that a planning process was needed in the region. Some of these factors included socio-economic pressures faced by the rural area such as access to work and income levels. Change Islands focused on the benefits that could come out of getting involved in a planning process, particularly funding available through the federal gas tax. In order to receive the gas tax, communities have to create an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP), with incentives provided by the provincial government for collaborative planning. After completing their situational analysis, members of Change Islands realized that they were too small on their own and needed to join with Fogo Island in planning, making them eligible to receive the federal gas tax and associated incentives. The plan was also a culmination of community-based initiatives pursued over the years by the development association and other groups in Fogo and Change Islands. Most importantly planning was initiated due to the aging population and the

volunteer burnout in the area. Like most rural areas across the province, an aging population is a problem and because of this there are less people to volunteer in Fogo and Change Islands. A strategic plan in an area such as Fogo- Change Islands would have to focus on this as a major concern and try to come up with solutions for this ongoing, common problem.

The planning process for Fogo- Change Islands involved multiple communities and not single communities because it made geographic and economic sense. The collaboration between towns is looked at as a strength because a regional approach to planning has more weight, and more probable economic outcomes. As well, both Change Islands and Fogo Island are under the same local area within the Gander New-Wes-Valley Rural Secretariat region and provincial economic zone (i.e. Kittiwake), in addition to having a shared ferry service. Also, according to one local representative, “the funding partners suggested bringing Change Islands into the plan and the planning process.” Another adds, “We needed to get everyone together and highlight the fact that we shared common obstacles and opportunities and need to figure things out together.”

The planning process was structured with a variety of steps over a certain timeline. The full process took approximately two years to complete, with the consultation process taking approximately six months. It first started with looking for financial partners to fund the project. Funding was received from Atlantic Canadian Opportunities Agency (ACOA) and from Innovation, Trade and Rural Development (INTRD), which led to the joining of a third party, a non- profit organization called Shorefast. Afterwards, representatives from the process proposed to FIDA the creation of a steering committee and to hire a staff person. Through the efforts of KEDC and FIDA, a community strategist, who was responsible for conducting all of the field research, collecting information and getting the engagement of the stakeholders, was hired. All of this information was then brought to a consultant, Dennis Knight. The strategic plan was created using information compiled by the community strategist who expressed the views and ideas gathered from members of the different islands communities. Knight

then assisted in the development of the strategic plan to complement the work of the community strategist. Knight was also involved in community meetings and one-on-one interviews. The final strategic plan was created and published in July 2008.

Many groups and stakeholders participated in the process. These groups included KEDC, Shorefast Foundation, ACOA and other provincial and federal government agencies, as well as community groups and committees, such as various local businesses, the chamber of commerce and community members. To get these major groups involved, many methods were used. These included things such as public meetings, public announcements in the local paper (Fogo Island Flame), and one-on-one meetings with the stakeholders. However, some citizens from the area feel that there are others that should have been included in the process. Youth engagement was a concern and they wanted to see more youth involved in the process to get their viewpoints on what is occurring.

The Change Islands strategic plan was coordinated between David Carlson and Dr. Maureen Woodrow, who pooled together their research and created the beginnings of their plan at little cost (“just the cost of muffins and coffee”²). The Fogo –Change Islands plan was written by Dennis Knight from D.W Knight Associates. He compiled the plan from information that was gathered by the Community Strategist. Overall, the Fogo Island-Change Islands planning process cost, which included the cost of the Community Strategist and Consultant, was between \$120,000 and \$150,000. The cost of the process was absorbed evenly by the three different funding agencies: ACOA, Shorefast and INTRD. Each group paid for one third of the planning process.

Within the plan, there were a number of specific strategies, projects and initiatives identified. One representative identified the need for a management team as being one of the most important

² This work was supported in part by a Natural Resources Canada-funded climate change adaptation project (see Brklacich et al 2008).

initiatives. As well, the majority of representatives agreed that the fishery is an important issue. They want to promote sustainable fisheries, create a fisheries forum and promote the idea of stewardship.

The plan in some ways was connected to broader regional plans such as KEDC's Strategic Economic Plan complementing them because the interests for the areas appeared to be similar. These include, for example, shared overall regional goals for the fishery, tourism and strategic cooperation. Some of the planners and groups involved in these two processes also overlap. The Fogo Island-Change Islands plan also recognized existing community plans on the islands, with research on past planning efforts being part of the research conducted by the Community Strategist and incorporated into the current Socio-economic Plan. Community members from the various municipalities also provided input on their own priorities.

Part 2: Moving from planning to implementation

Within Fogo-Change Islands, there are mixed opinions on whether or not implementation is really occurring. Several representatives from the region said that there is no implementation occurring in the area, while two individuals who reside in the area think differently. Some of the actions that have happened since the strategic plan was issued are the completion of two successful fisheries roundtable discussions held on Fogo Island. As well, the establishment of a farmers' market and agriculture cooperative have been successful initiatives thanks to financial assistance from Shorefast Foundation.

There have been various steps taken to get from planning to implementation. The majority of the contribution here comes from Shorefast Foundation because they saw some initiatives as a high priority and wanted to see them happen. They identified things that could be done in a relatively short amount of time and then prioritized them. Shorefast prioritized the initiatives according to what they thought was the most important out of the list of items in the plan. Some groups realized they had the

capacity to begin implementation and so tasks were broken down further and assigned to smaller groups which started the implementation one thing at a time.

After the plan was created, multiple resources were needed to implement the plan. These included human and financial resources. Human resources were provided by INTRD who provided support resources in personnel and also provided the financial resources. This included means of hosting a workshop and bringing the communities together. Shorefast Foundation has supported initiatives such as a seed capital fund for local entrepreneurs.

Since the plan was created, committees have been formed to try and get implementation moving and to see where they have to go from here. In June 2009, a Strategic Planning Steering Committee was formed and an implementation workshop held. The Committee consists of seven individuals representing different sectors of the region, who are responsible for the moving ahead and working towards implementation. One problem is that monitoring and evaluation of implementation was not a part of the plan.

Those representatives from the area, who said that implementation was not occurring, all agreed that the planning process was the easy part. Implementation is one challenge they have yet to overcome. As explained by a representative from Fogo Island, they have developed workshops to focus on the four main pillars of the plan: social, economic, tourism and natural resources. At these workshops, people were divided into groups to focus on one pillar each, and from here, they are creating an action plan on how to get implementation moving.

Part 3: Outcomes from the planning process

From the planning process, it was expected that implementation would occur after the plan was complete. There seems to be different assumptions made by various groups and individuals as to what exactly constitutes implementation. There has been a period of time that has passed where there has

been no significant movement towards achieving the goals set out in the plan. However, aside from implementation, there are multiple other outcomes and benefits that come from the planning process. These include both intended and unexpected benefits. Some of the intended benefits include involvement from the community, consistent involvement across the region and getting everyone together as one unified group. Also, as the planning process increasingly involved contributions from more people, a greater awareness was developed regarding the process and goals. According to one representative from Fogo Island, other outcomes have included creating a community garden for locals to use and maintain together, the organization of a farmers' cooperative to facilitate agricultural activities on the island and the creation of an artisan's guild.

Benefits and outcomes that weren't expected from the process included the attention of government departments, as emphasized by a representative from the area. This process got more involvement from ACOA, INTRD, and local committees from both Fogo and Change Islands. As well, the amount of community interest and support that came out of the planning process was really unexpected. There are a lot more key players now involved in the process and more community members are looking to volunteer their time and aid. Because the Fogo- Change Islands plan involved more than one community, there were also some additional benefits achieved. The main benefit was that this process brought Fogo Island and Change Islands together as a whole. The bringing together of both islands allowed groups to see that they had similar interests for their communities and they were able to bring those interests together to try to work together to get additional benefits, such as the ICSP gas tax.

Part 4: Key factors that have contributed to implementation success (or lack of success)

The fact that there are differences of opinion about whether implementation is occurring indicates that the term "implementation" means different things to different individuals. Some people

think the process of implementing the plan is happening and others do not. Implementation is a term that needs to be clearly defined for all groups and individuals involved in the planning process in order to fully understand what is really occurring. What kinds of factors lead to implementation success or lack thereof? The primary barrier to implementation is the absence of a forum for the community to take charge and move the plan forward, and clarification of mandates (i.e. who will implement and who will support). “We have a plan but it doesn’t have a home” explained one local resident, “and we’re not sure how to use it.”

Capacity and commitment are strengths of the region. “We have some strong leaders on our islands that have much to contribute to the process of implementation. The challenge is to find a way to “lead the leaders” that does not diminish the excellent work they already do but also moves the group as a whole towards the things that need doing as a group” explained one citizen of Fogo Island.

What are some of the other challenges faced in implementation? Some people feel that it all comes down to the communities working together. The communities face a slow process of change when being brought together and pooling stakeholders. As an illustration of the pace of this change it was noted that it took over six months to organize an implementation workshop (December to June). As one respondent suggested, “it takes time for any new process to take shape, even after it is spelled out in black and white. I think the various stakeholders are transitioning from the absorption stage into analysis and implementation.” Communication issues can also arise as result of the necessity of working together. A community leader from Fogo Island suggests “planning to effectively communicate is often ignored and becomes an afterthought to many initiatives. Keeping communication moving in an effective way is a big challenge that is critical to making the whole thing work”. This challenge has been one of the biggest barriers to implementation.

As well, funding presents a challenge to implementation in Fogo Island- Change Islands. For the implementation stage, there is a lack of funding stakeholders. There is currently a proposal created,

looking for financial support for the process, that has been given to Shorefast Foundation but there is still no commitment made. In particular, funding is needed for paid staff rather than relying only on volunteers. A specific funding consideration is the cost of participation for Change Islands representatives, who travel up to three hours and incur ferry and sometimes hotel costs to participate in meetings. The absence of a formal implementation structure is considered a barrier to fundraising efforts.

As for a multiple community planning process, one unique challenge appears here. That is, as stated by a citizen from Fogo Island, everyone wants to look at different implementation actions. Each community within the region wants to focus on the specific goals and initiatives that they think are more important. Further, “there is disparity between how the communities feel they need to move forward and government [feel they need to progress]”. The various groups have to come together and agree as a region what initiative they want to approach first – agreement on priorities must be part of the planning process.

Part 5: Removing barriers and addressing challenges

The most important factor in allowing implementation to successfully occur is removing barriers and addressing the challenges faced within the planning process. As mentioned above, there are multiple challenges within the Fogo Island-Change Islands implementation stage. What has to be focused on now are the steps that can be taken to overcome these and the specific groups that can get involved to assist. A citizen from Change Islands agreed that implementation is the main challenge and that Fogo Island-Change Islands residents and organizations need to back up the process and get control of the plan. They need to receive ownership of plan, which they currently do not have. A citizen from Fogo Island stated that there needs to be additional workshops put in place to work out solutions. As previously mentioned, this would include producing an action (or implementation) plan, with specific

tasks including dates, costs and leaders, for initiatives in each of the 'four pillars' of development.

Another respondent suggests that a formal body, with appropriate representation, should be formed and charged with implementation. It was also suggested that if a qualified local socio-economic planner is available to write the plan this is preferable to hiring a consultant from outside of the area.

What could government do to overcome challenges? The general agreement is that government must continue to show support for rural Newfoundland. Rural Newfoundland has many volunteers who do a lot with very little. A citizen from Fogo Island suggested that government should provide financial support and further human resource support. As an example, government should ensure that implementation is considered as part of planning processes, and thereby consider whether there are (or could be) people in place who could implement a given initiative. Another citizen of Fogo Island said that government should help out, but only at an arms' length. The group or committees don't want to be smothered by governments' rules and regulations. The communities want to be independent with their financial decisions and do not want to be patronized by government.

What can communities do to help remove challenges? Communities should have a greater role in the process, with equal voice with the members at various levels of government. They need to encourage involvement from the citizens and stakeholders. The communities also need to give support to members, councils and committees to move forward in the planning process. One representative from outside the Fogo Island-Change Islands area suggests that the amalgamation process is important, that is, a regional governance system would be ideal. In general, the communities need to come together and agree upon the necessary steps to take.

Throughout this process, there were many lessons learned about multi- community planning. A citizen from Change Islands suggests "We made a mistake of leaving our own process and joining the larger Fogo Island planning process". As a result, focus was lost on their own community-level planning efforts. A citizen from Fogo Island claimed that each community has an idea what community

development means to them. In some cases it is important to identify special needs that exist on Fogo Island (and Fogo-Change Islands) as a whole. At the same time, they have to emphasize that the interests in each of the smaller communities are similar to each other and interconnect. A citizen from outside of the area stated that “working together requires just simple person-to-person hard work.” It is hard to get people engaged and out to meetings. Multiple community planning involves a lot of cooperation between all of the communities involved, but requires a lot of time and resources as well. One focus group participant suggested a specific fund for travel should be established to allow community members from Fogo Island and from Change Islands to come together more often.

Conclusion

After being involved in this research process, it is clear that implementation is a major roadblock for the Fogo Island-Change Islands planning process. After interviewing multiple individuals from the region and others involved in the process, it is obvious that there are many different viewpoints being expressed about how the process is occurring. The main problem occurring in this region is how to move forward into implementation after the plan is completed. Also, there seems to be differences in opinion on what implementation really means. Some individuals say that there is implementation occurring, but the majority of individuals involved say that implementation has not yet been accomplished.

Roles and responsibilities of different committees, stakeholders and community groups need to be defined in order to move forward. There needs to be agreement on which players have power in this process. It is obvious that Shorefast has a lot of resources and control in the area and should work more with the region to successfully implement the plan. As well, funding partners need to get involved in order for implementation to occur. Funding seems to be a stumbling block when it comes to implementation, as learned in the early stages of the research. This includes budgeting for the level of

funding required and then accessing the funding. Currently there is no plan to how money would be spent, if received, because the plan did not prioritize and budget for suggested initiatives. There needs to be realistic goals put in place that include preparing a budget and prioritizing initiatives. However, if the funding was available, would implementation occur? After completing the interviews and continuing with more research, it is clear that financial problems are not the only ones. Other challenges of increasing communication and communities being able to work together have to be solved as well before the implementation process can truly begin.

Fogo Island-Change Islands have a lot of resources to make this plan follow through. However, this follow through does not seem to be occurring to the extent that it could be. The initial planning process itself was relatively easy, but now they are stuck in the implementation stage. In order to overcome this, leadership has to be assigned within the region and communities and all local groups have to be willing to work together and come up with common goals and solutions.

References:

Associates, D.W Knight. "Fogo Island-Change Islands Socio-Economic Strategic Plan." 2008.

Brklacich, Mike, Maureen Woodrow, Robert McLeman, and Kelly Vodden. "Enhancing the Capacity of Canadian Rural Communities to Adapt to Uncertain Futures." 2008.

Community Accounts:

http://www.communityaccounts.ca/communityaccounts/onlinedata/display_table.asp?p=%D1%B7%C0%8C%8C%9D%A5%A5%AB%9D%B4%93%87%9F%C5%BC%9Cq%C4h%96%95%BE%CD%AA%93%83%BD%90%B7%60%C8. 2006.

Fogo Island Tourism. *Fogo Island*. August 2009. <http://www.fogoisland.net/index2.htm>.

Stages and Stores Inc. *The Town of Change Islands*. February 2009. <http://www.changeislands.ca/#top>

Personal communications from individuals involved in Fogo-Change Islands planning process, October-November 2009.