

Memorial University of Newfoundland
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Term Project
**TWILLINGATE—NEW WORLD ISLAND
DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION STRATEGIC
PLAN OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS**

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“It’s easier to get funding for a project with a social focus
than one focused on economic development.”

- RDA representative

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of social inertia is that people are comfortable with the way that they live and do not want to be moved. According to the Law of Inertia an object at rest will stay at rest unless acted on by a force and if moving in one direction, changing this direction requires an opposing equal or greater force. Without the influence of the Twillingate—New World Island Development Association, the Twillingate—New World Island region would be in constant decline with no strong force to oppose this trend. Twillingate- New World Island region is located on the northeastern coast of Newfoundland. The region is home to approximately thirty towns and communities and has a population of 5,835.¹

The Twillingate—New World Island Development Association is a group of people within the area that recognize common needs within the region and bring them forward to be tackled by themselves and the public. 80% of the RDA consists of executive membership — all of whom have greatly contributed to the advancement of the region. The Twillingate–New World Island development plan follows the linear process of planning towards development. There was the development of a vision, which would address current issues the region faced, followed by the development of a planning process. The plan was then to be put into motion and involved various stages of implementation. The Twillingate—New World Island plan toward economic and socio-economic development is highly community driven, in which neighboring individual communities in the region teamed up to address common issues and work together to develop a plan that would bring a resolution. With the help of various groups, stakeholders, and volunteers the development plan was conceptualized in 2005 and was accepted in 2006.

The purpose of this report is to concentrate on the Twillingate-New World Island region of Newfoundland and their multi-community development plan and to discuss the steps and processes taken to put the plan in motion. Within this paper we will discuss different

¹ Stuckless, J. and N. Renaud. 2008. Twillingate - New World Island Regional Profile.

aspects of the development plan which was done by the Regional Development Association (RDA) and the Strategic Planning Committee. We will be discussing the details of the planning process, the steps taken towards implementing the plan as well as the key factors in implementation success, the already achieved outcomes of the plan, as well as the barriers and challenges that were faced and how they have been overcome. We were able to gather all of our information on the planning process of Twillingate-New World Islands by conducting both face to face as well as phone interviews with individuals who were directly involved in the development plan (a list of persons interviewed is provided in the reference list below).

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Twillingate—New World Island Development Association as well as the Strategic Planning Committee, identified the need for a planning process that began to conceptualize in 2005 and was officially adopted within the RDA in 2006 to set future objectives. There was a need for a structured development plan that was taken on by a separate group within the Development Association (DA). The group meets once every month to establish future goals and to measure the progress of previous targets. Some of the most critical markers in the development plan include *regionalism*, *communication*, *socio-economic planning*, as well as *succession planning*—all of which will be discussed further in the latter part of the analysis. This is a multi-community planning process because within the area, surrounding communities are too small and they are too widely dispersed to gain government attention and therefore the plan is more regionally centralized rather than community based. It provides more benefits throughout all the communities by amalgamating with their neighboring communities.

The process was linearly structured in such a way that progress measurement was manageable and uniform. They began by defining a common *goal*, followed by a clear *objective*. An *action plan* was then outlined to define exactly how the participating region would proceed. Since this process was a five year action plan, *target dates* were set—whereby the progress was measured both proactive- and reactively throughout the duration of the planning process.

Within the planning process the only stakeholders were the members of the RDA, the various municipal councils within the region, Local Service Districts (LSDs), and special interest groups. Originally the only special interest group was RDA membership, but then extended further to tourism associations and various levels of government. Stakeholders in the strategic planning process were kept involved through various methods—including the regular monthly meeting of the board, through media releases (e.g. The Pilot—a local newspaper), and through community engagement via general surveys and town meetings. This process generally stayed within the RDA. They have a policy that only if a member of the RDA has further involvement with outside groups will they pursue outside assistance.

The overall document was written by the Strategic Planning committee, a sub-committee created within the RDA. The writing of the Strategic Plan had low cost because it was done in house and primarily on a volunteer basis. The overall planning process included funding to create a Job Creation Partnership position within the Strategic Planning Committee, which was provided by Service Canada.

There were specific strategies outlined in the plan, including the aforementioned *regionalism, communication, socio-economic planning, and succession planning*. The entire process was relatively self-contained to its specific Twillingate—New World Island region. It did not intentionally compliment any other regional plans; however the entire process was sampled from the Strategic Plan for the Gander Hospital. Cottlesville and Summerford were already in the planning stages of their own community socio-economic plans when the RDA initiated the regional strategic plan to encompass the broader area. This process did not conflict with the already started plans—however they did alter their individual community plans to accommodate the RDA Strategic Plan, as it was in their interest to do so with more potential for success.

MOVING FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION

There are several aspects of the socio-economic plan that have been implemented,

however not all have come to the same levels of success. There has been a fair bit of research invested in the development of cranberry farms and the development of wind farms in the area. Through the RDA website there is a list of vacant buildings and spaces within the communities that are available to prospective businesses. Apart from economic development, there was work done with primary health to bring more basic health options to the region. There were also needs for the local communities identified by this process such as babysitting and snow clearing. These needs come from the intense outsourcing of employment, leaving single-parent families with a great deal of responsibilities that may be more than they are able to cope with. Addressing the needs of those remaining in the community may help keep these residents as community members. There have been various contacts made through regular RDA meetings, as well as the recent creation of a Community Youth Network (CYN) Coordinator, and an instructor position for Adult Basic Education (ABE) within the region.

Within the socio-economic plan, there were specific initiatives that were prioritized by both the RDA and the Kittiwake Economic Development Corporation (KEDC). *Communications, transportation and recreation* were the focus areas of the socio- aspect of this specific sub-section of the plan. The need for transport infrastructure (roads), communications (broadband internet connection), and recreation (regionally accessible facilities) were outlined by the KEDC; however, the prioritization and implementation of these needs were catalyzed by the RDA.

The timelines for the plan have been met to an impressive extent. In comparing the revised plans between 2006 and 2008, there has been phenomenal headway made in regards to target dates being met. The implementation process was taken on fully by the RDA. Responsibilities were assigned for each priority initiative, whereby delegated sub-committees were to report back to the RDA. Human resources for implementation were also taken on by the RDA, with no operational funding. Financial resources were conceivably non-existent. The RDA, including executive ventures, is all a volunteer process. There is a small level of funding for the JCP staff, but nothing further than that. Overall, implementation has been overseen by the Strategic Planning committee, under

the umbrella of the RDA.

Monitoring and evaluation of implementation practices was and is carried out in accordance to Direction 7 of the 2006-2010 Strategic Plan, under Accountability. Its goal is to develop transparency with the objective to implement ways of improving accountability and confidentiality to stakeholders. This is done through a multi-step action plan, providing written and/or oral reports at each board meeting of the activities of the board, executive and committees. It is also recommended that the RDA:

- Provide for an appropriate internal and external financial and operational audit on a yearly basis
- Conduct an annual general meeting
- Develop an annual work plan by the Strategic Planning Committee
- Development and review a:
 - Conflict of interest policy
 - Code of ethics
 - Appropriate measures to ensure proper handling of finances including: audit; bonding; signing officers; petty cash
 - Good records
- Review and update the Strategic Plan by the Strategic Planning Committee

OUTCOMES TO DATE

Intended outcomes and benefits to date from the planning process are quite extensive. Under *Regional Cooperation* there have been numerous stakeholders brought into the process. Annually, there is a \$10,000 grant given to the region for the Unity Games—a regional sporting competition that brings all the surrounding communities together. As well, the region has attained one of only four regional Recreation Directors in Newfoundland. Under *Succession Planning*, there are revised membership lists done annually, as well as numerous presentations carried out to various potential stakeholder groups. *Communications* have been advanced through the regional newspaper, and a

monthly RDA column that brings the area up to date on happenings. For people moving into the area, there are Resident Guides available through the RDA to help them identify where various amenities are available, and where to go to gain information on certain things that would be different to them after moving into a new area. There continues to be ongoing lobbying for broadband internet connections in the area and the RDA maintains an updated website, keeping the local communities informed about their happenings. *Socio-economic development* includes examination and research into potential cranberry farms, wind farms, a collective vacant building list, pursuing marina development, primary health involvement, and general community enhancement. Unexpectedly, the CYN Coordinator was given to the region, as well as the annual \$10,000 government grant for the Unity Games. When everything is analyzed and accounted for, the RDA has a 40 year reputation with more than \$1,000,000 budget flowing through it, contributing significantly to development in the area.

KEY FACTORS IN IMPLEMENTATION SUCCESS

A major factor in any planning process is clearly a good volunteer base. A major concern in the Twillingate-New World Island area continues to be declining population and retention of youth, however the aged population provides a strong volunteer base that recognizes that their efforts could eventually lead them to economic growth and promote a more stable youth retention rate. Prior expertise helped a great deal with the Strategic Plan. Capable people on the executive brought a previous knowledge base of strategic planning, making for a more cohesive and polished process of the initial planning. The RDA's commitment to the reporting of their activities to the public helps to convey confidence, which is another key factor in their long-standing reputation within the region.

Despite the amount of success throughout the RDA Strategic Plan, there are limiting factors that hinder certain implementation processes. Clearly, a lack of funding seems to be a universal concern among regional development organizations in the province. A lack of specialized personnel also seems to be an arising concern for the Twillingate—New World Island Development Association, including a need for people such as an Economic

Development Officer (EDO) to help bring more mobility to the economic aspects of the committee this comes back full circle to the limitations of funding, which is the biggest challenge to overcome. Even as a multi-community planning process, an EDO to oversee the plans of the RDA is a necessary step to move closer to regional economic mobilization.

REMOVING BARRIERS AND ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

Playing into the previous comments on limiting factors, the optimum challenge to overcome is funding. All the planning is in place for further implementation of the Strategic Plan, but there is serious barrier halting progress. On the provincial and even federal government's part, an annual grant to the RDA would help greatly with daily operations. Approximately \$25,000 is not a large amount considering that amount will only go for a part-time clerk position and office supplies. At the community level, more of a cooperative approach to regionalization would help address this challenge. Publicly, there seems to be the shared notion that regionalization is being pushed on them. There needs to be a diversion in that way of thinking that leans them more towards the incentives associated with the cooperation of communities.

CONCLUSION

The Provincial government has to begin to think regionally. The purpose of the RDA, in part, is so that governing bodies will look at the area of municipalities and LSDs as a region; rather than individual pods looking for assistance. Together they stand to gain more from the planning and development process with fewer resources than if each community operated independently. For the sake of \$25,000 a year, the provincial government will put a stop to the potential loss of thirteen people that are employed through the RDA—if not directly, then through their regional efforts. This small operation fee will prevent the collapse of the Twillingate—New World Island Development Association. Continuing the functioning of the RDA will strengthen the movement towards social and economic growth for the region. More funding and a more open-minded approach to regionalization will take the RDA and the region from the grass roots where it started; to the thriving economic base that it has the potential to be.

REFERENCE LIST

Stuckless, J. and N. Renaud. Twillingate - New World Island Regional Profile. Prepared for the Rural-Urban Interaction in Newfoundland and Labrador: Understanding and Managing Functional Regions Project, Memorial University. 2008.

Twillingate New World Island Development Association. "The Strategic Plan." 2006.

Interviews were also conducted on October 13th, 2009 with three members of the Regional Development Association Executive and with a provincial government representative who helped in the planning process on November 19th, 2009.