Atlantic Node: The Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network

The Atlantic Node of the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships, otherwise known as the SES/ÉSD Network, was premised on an active partnership – with a focus on research and dissemination activities and in the governance of the Network. Atlantic Node members worked within academic institutions, community organizations and all levels of government. The original group, approximately 100 team members, coalesced within six research groups (or sub-nodes) across the four Atlantic provinces, which included more than 30 students contributing to research work. At the end of five years, the Atlantic Node team had grown to approximately 250 members, almost 100 of which were students completing thesis work or engaged as research assistants/participants in Node and Sub-node activities. The SSHRC funding of the Network helped the team leverage other funding, all of which supported graduate student research assistantships, research activities with community partner organizations, conference and other presentations, knowledge generation and mobilization, along with other Network activities and communications, including several meetings in the region hosting the full Atlantic Node team.

Atlantic Node Goals

- Contributing to the theory and practice of social economy in the Atlantic region.
- Internal bridging, bonding, mentoring and capacity building.
- Encouraging use of the “social economy” as a framing concept in the region.
- Linking Atlantic partners with other parts of Canada and the world.

The Atlantic Node Principal Investigator (PI), or Node Director, was located at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax. The Atlantic Node had six sub-nodes, which were linked to its research themes and afforded representation in each of the four Atlantic Provinces. Each of these sub-nodes had a SN Coordinator, or a team of two Co-coordinators. The Node had a four member Management Committee, comprised of two community and two academic partners, including the PI. The Node Steering Committee was comprised of each of the Sub-node Coordinators (or their alternates), the PI, and the only other community partner who was part of the Management Committee but not a Sub-node coordinator. In addition, those who were coordinating key pieces of node-
level work were, at times, invited to participate in Steering Committee meetings – the Chair of the Self-Evaluation Committee, the Chair of the Policy Research Committee, and members of the Mobilization Working Group. If an alternate for a SN Coordinator was required for a Node Steering Committee meeting, academics replaced community partners, and vice versa, wherever possible. The Atlantic Node team was required to partner an academic and a community partner for all of the 50+ research projects it completed, and each sub-node reviewed and approved its own series of research project proposals addressing one of the main research themes. Members of the Network contributed to a book of peer-reviewed papers addressing the Network’s research themes, (the book is forthcoming through Cape Breton University Press). In addition, the Network’s Coordinator, with participation from many of the community partners, completed a book of profiles of these organizations (Mapping the social economy of Atlantic Canada: Profiles of community partners in the Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network, 2005-2010 – MSVU, 2011).