

Getting the Most from Community Organization Grants, Op-ed

Department of Community Services

April 22, 2014

NOTE: The following is an op-ed piece from Community Services Minister Joanne Bernard.

Every day, community-run organizations are making sure thousands of families, parents and children have access to the supports and services they need.

And as a funder of these organizations, government's role is to make sure Nova Scotians are getting the best possible services with the resources available. Community Services is working on a new process that will ensure the tax dollars of Nova Scotians are being spent in the most effective and efficient way.

Throughout my professional career, I have seen firsthand that program evaluation is critical to providing the best possible outcomes for the people we serve. I bring that commitment to my ministerial role. This government believes that those organizations or businesses that receive taxpayer funding must be accountable for how it's being used. They have a responsibility to monitor and evaluate the benefits that taxpayers are receiving from their services. And the province must be a better partner in setting funding guidelines.

I believe by working together we can improve accountability and be more transparent for Nova Scotians.

Supporting healthy communities and keeping kids safe matters. Therefore, we need to evaluate and measure what programs and services are getting the best results. Simply put, if it matters, measure it.

Over the coming year, I want to partner with community organizations to build capacity while ensuring critical services are delivered cost effectively. The majority of organizations already have some degree of program measurements while others need a little extra help.

I have heard from community organizations who struggle to do multi-year planning when their funding is only provided on an annual basis. The province can't ask organizations to plan better without providing the funding tools to do that. Therefore, we will launch a grant process review which will create consistency and improve outcomes and accountability.

The review will also look at a multi-year funding agreement for those organizations that can show long-term and sustainable success for those they serve.

A review of the grant process is long overdue and will make sure our limited resources are being invested where they can do the most good. More information on the grants process review will be provided to existing grant recipients in the coming weeks as details of the current year grants are available. The grant process review will take place this year and be

implemented for the 2015-16 fiscal year.

An improved provincial grant process will allow all partners to better measure the quality of all of our work, and make sure vulnerable Nova Scotians are getting the best supports and services possible, in a transparent and accountable way.