
REPORT TO: Public Health and Social Services Committee

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, June 23, 2015

SUBJECT: Evaluation of 2012 Niagara Prosperity Initiative Projects

RECOMMENDATIONS

That this report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

KEY FACTS

- In September 2008 (COM 53-2008) Regional Council authorized staff to reinvest \$1.5 million in cost savings resulting from the implementation of the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) toward increasing prosperity for Niagara families living in poverty, and this funding commitment has been renewed annually since then.
- Committee reports have been completed for each year where NPI funding has been concluded.
- This report provides information on projects that were funded by the Niagara Prosperity Initiative (NPI) in 2012. Projects funded through NPI can be for one or two years. All of the projects funded in 2012 were completed in December 2014. The finalized evaluation of the 2012 projects took place in 2015.

CONSIDERATIONS

Financial

There were 46 projects funded in 2012 with a contracted amount of \$1,419,734. The actual spending was \$1,354,340, and the unused \$65,374 was added to the NPI funding allotment in 2013.

Corporate

By investing funding and collaborative action in neighbourhoods in need of attention, this program supports performance outcomes related to employment and community symptoms.

Governmental Partners

The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Community and Social Services expect, but do not require, municipalities to use OCB savings to maintain investments in programs that benefit social assistance recipients and their children.

Public and/or Service Users

An estimated 25,856 people were served through the 2012 NPI projects.

ANALYSIS

The NPI focuses on neighbourhood based interventions and development to increase prosperity for Niagara residents living in poverty. Research shows that strong neighbourhoods are ones that engage residents and are essential to healthy, safe and prosperous communities. Neighbourhoods in need of attention have been identified throughout the region based on key indicators such as the low income measure, unemployment rate, and educational attainment. To date since 2008, 277 projects have been funded by NPI with over 73 different community agencies involved.

In 2012 a total of 46 projects were funded through NPI through two calls for proposals. Funding was issued in May of 2012 for 25 projects and in November for 21 projects. NPI projects can be funded for one or two years. All projects were completed by December 2014. Details of each project are provided in Appendix A.

Projects were provided in the following locations:

2012 NPI Projects		% of Projects	Contracted Amount	% of Funding
West Lincoln	1	2%	\$142,155.31	10%
Niagara Falls	8	17%	\$233,561.05	16%
Port Colborne	3	7%	\$102,107.03	7%
St. Catharines	16	35%	\$467,751.39	33%
Welland	13	28%	\$376,756.34	27%
Thorold	3	7%	\$81,938.13	6%
Fort Erie	2	4%	\$15,464.38	1%
	46		\$1,419,733.63	

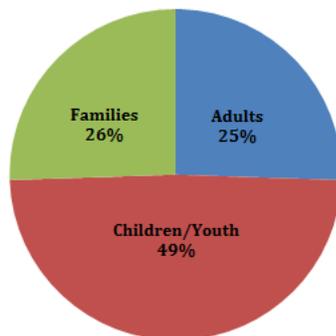
The types of projects funded are as follows:

NPI Contracted Amounts by Project Type - 2012				
Types of Projects	\$		# of Projects	
Assistance with Shelter	\$49,746.18	3.4%	2	4.3%
Research / Conference / Seminar	\$34,844.03	2.4%	1	2.2%
Job Specific Skills	\$144,777.47	9.9%	3	6.5%
Direct Services	\$26,364.12	1.8%	1	2.2%
Community Gardens	\$181,402.78	12.3%	3	6.5%
Life Skills Programs for Adults	\$294,914.87	20.1%	9	19.6%
Access to Food	\$49,746.18	3.4%	2	4.3%
Community Development	\$299,698.80	20.4%	7	15.2%
Educational Programs for children/youth	\$387,985.38	26.4%	18	39.1%
	\$1,469,479.81		46	

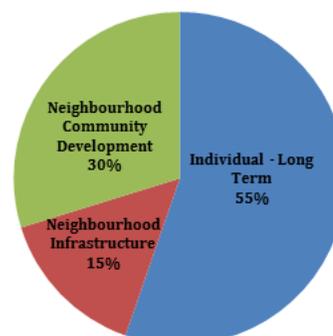
Over half of the projects funded in 2012 went towards helping children/youth and their families living in poverty. A quarter of the projects were aimed specifically at helping adults.

Over half of the projects went towards Individual-Long Term impacts, such as educational after-school programming for children and resource/skill building sessions for adults. Neighbourhood Community Development projects made up 30% of the projects, such as volunteer development programs and social enterprise initiatives. The remaining 15% of projects went to Neighbourhood Infrastructure, such as community gardens and the development of a training centre for business incubation and vocational training.

**2012 NPI Projects
by Targets Served**



**2012 NPI Projects
by Scope**



Evaluation Methodology

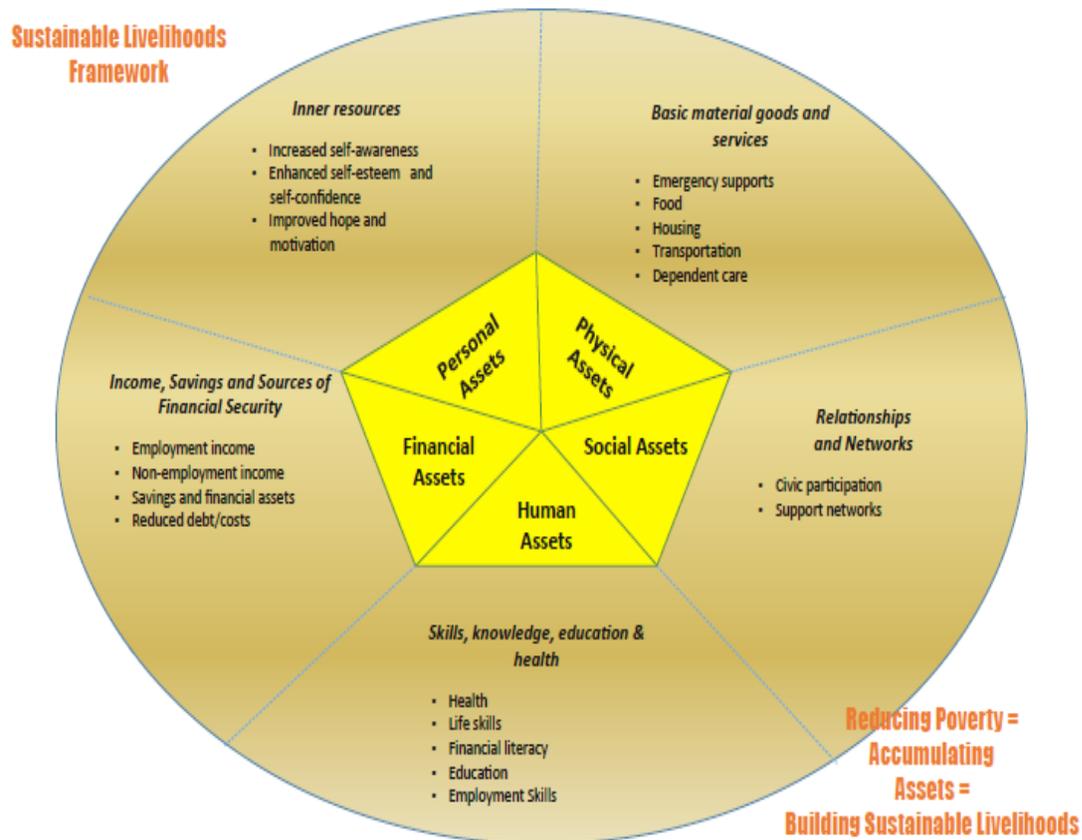
NPI projects are required to submit quarterly and final reports that include:

- The number of children (0-12), youth (13-18), adults (19-64) and/or Seniors (65+) served by the project
- Explanation of how the project achieved the outcomes set out in their application
- An account of how the project measured these achievements
- Lessons learned and recommendations for future initiatives
- A specific example of an occurrence where the initiative made a difference in the neighbourhood/community; and
- Testimonials from project participants

Along with the reporting from agencies, the NPI secretariat and/or the convener complete site/program visits/reviews throughout the time that projects are funded to ensure contractual obligations are being met.

Once all of the projects are completed a further analysis is completed to measure project impacts on individuals and communities. Through the collection of the testimonials a review is completed to measure how individual and community assets have been affected by the projects.

NPI has adopted the Sustainable Livelihoods measures as a measurement tool. Sustainable Livelihoods measures improvement in terms of individual and household assets in five asset areas: personal, social, human, financial and physical. Assets refer to the resources, capacities and entitlements that individuals and households can draw upon. NPI aims to enhance household and individual assets in each of these areas as these assets are associated with pathways out of poverty.



Projects are also evaluated based on the four NPI objectives using the following criteria:

Objective 1. CREATION OF STRONG AND PROSPEROUS NEIGHBOURHOODS:	
a) Improve public spaces in neighbourhood	c) Increased interventions that yield concrete benefits
b) Strengthen capacity to lead and produce local change	d) Contributes to poverty reduction activities at other levels of government
OBJECTIVE 2. GREATER ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION:	
a) Increase opportunities for civic engagement	c) Increased social capital and/or private sector investments
b) Increased engagement with a broad and diverse set of organizations and leaders	d) Contributes to initiatives that address more than one root cause of poverty
OBJECTIVE 3. IMPROVED SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH:	

a) Increased access to services and programs b) Improved service delivery in neighbourhood	c) Increased resources dedicated to reducing poverty d) Strengthened links between organizations and neighbourhood residents
OBJECTIVE 4. IMPROVED ECONOMIC PROSPERITY:	
a) Increasing household income b) Increased resource sharing and integrated services	c) Increased resources dedicated to reducing poverty d) The number of neighbourhoods in need of attention decrease across the region

Individual Project Evaluation Questions

All of the projects that received funding were reviewed by asking the following questions:

- Did the project deliver the approved programs and services as per the approved objectives?
- Did the project meet the targets they said they were going to meet: # of people served; # of Networks, links and/or partnerships formed in the community; # of people directly or indirectly involved in civic engagement activities; # of Jobs created and filled by people who live in poverty?
- Did they stay within their approved budget?
- Did they pass the site/program visit/review?
- Did they meet all of the contractual obligations such as sending in financial and program information?

Evaluation Results

All 46 projects funded in 2012 provided the services that the agency operating the project said they would provide and most met the objectives they choose to meet as per their response to the RFP.

A tally of the final reports from the 2012 projects funded showed that:

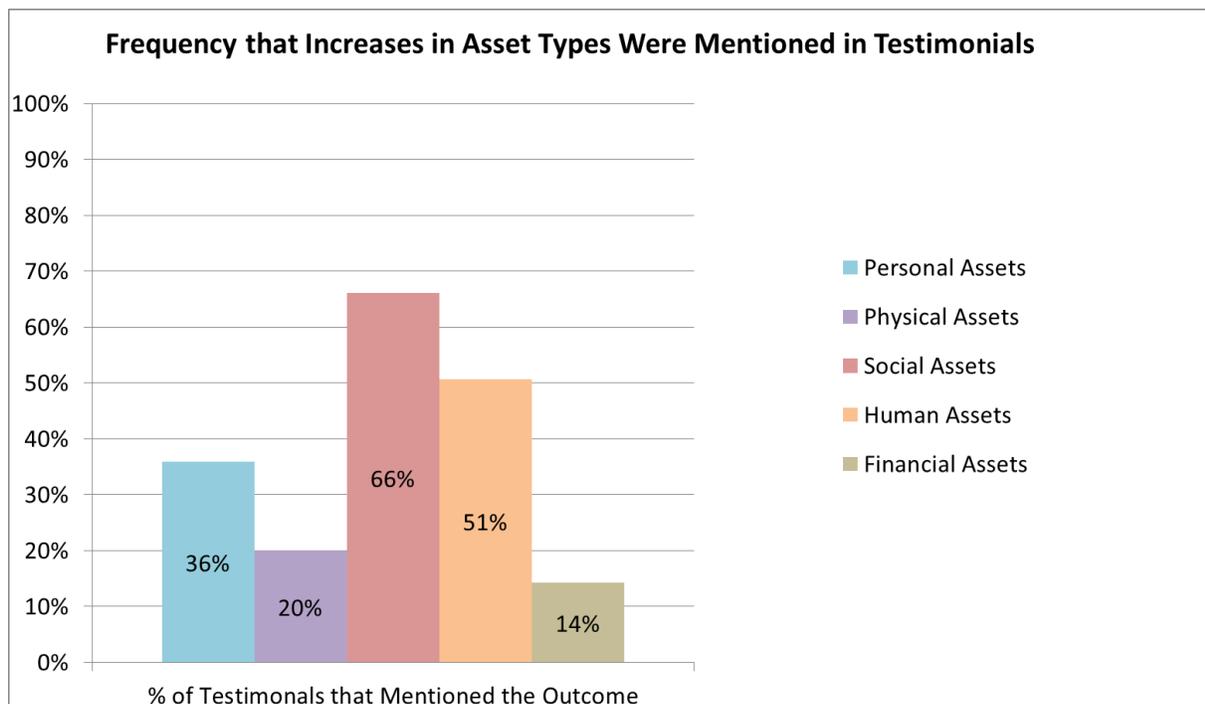
- The expected number of people to be served from the 2012 projects was estimated at 21,370. The actual total number of people served as reported by the projects was 25,856, an increase of 21%
- The total number of networks, links and/or partnerships formed in the community was estimated at 692 but reported at being 2,820
- The number of people directly or indirectly involved in civic engagement activities was estimated at 7,113 but was reported at 16,043
- The number of jobs created and filled by people living in poverty was estimated in the applications at 54 but was reported at 113

All of the projects funded in 2012 stayed within their approved budgets with some projects spending less than their allotment.

All of the projects passed their site/program visits/reviews and all of the projects met their contractual obligations.

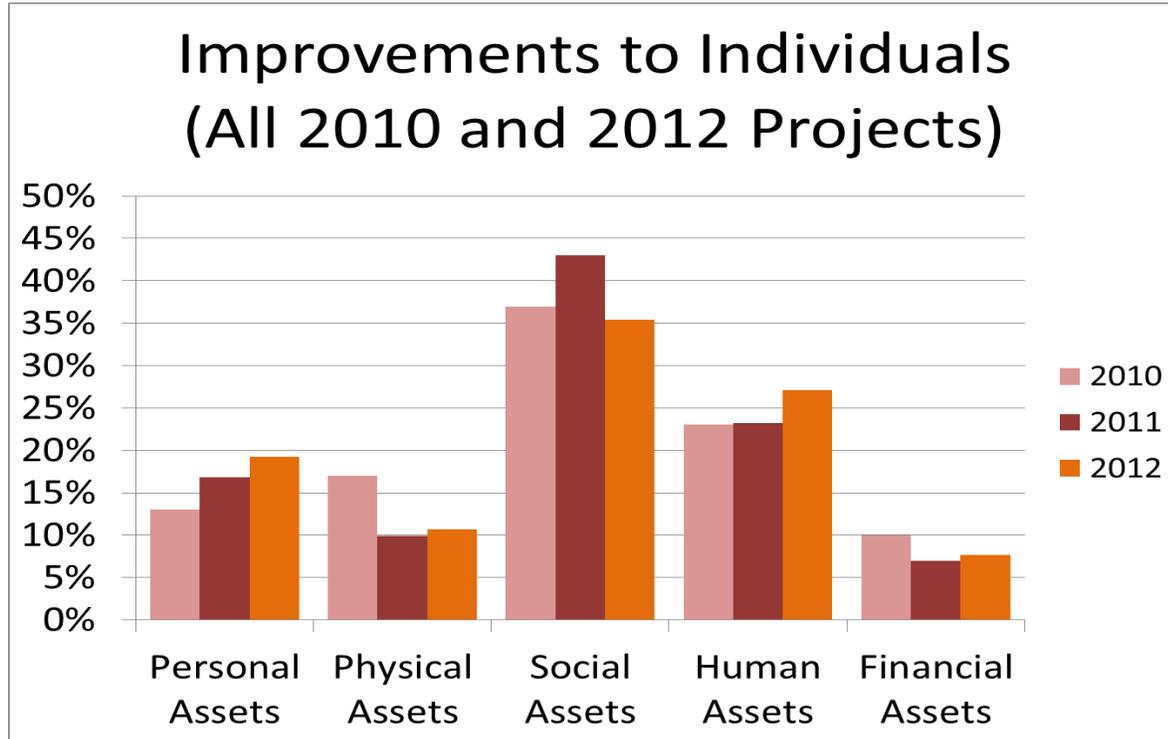
A total of 245 testimonials were received in 2012. From the testimonials, improvements to individual and household assets were categorized into the five asset categories. Based on the testimonials:

- 36% reported improvements in personal assets;
- 20% reported improvements in physical assets;
- 66% reported improvements in social assets;
- 51% reported improvements in human assets; and
- 14% of individuals reported improvements in financial assets.



An improvement in Social Assets continues to be the highest outcome of the NPI funding. Social Assets are the resources which people draw from in order to attain their life's goals. Social capital is important because it positively impacts:

- networks and a feeling of connectedness (between individuals with shared interests) that increase people's trust and ability to work together and expand their access to wider institutions
- is effective in improving the management of common resources
- relationships of trust, reciprocity and exchanges that facilitate co-operation, reduce transaction costs and provides the basis for informal safety nets
- innovation and the development of knowledge and sharing of that knowledge
- people's sense of well-being (through identity, honor and belonging) (source: <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0901/section2.pdf>)



ALTERNATIVES REVIEWED

This report is an evaluation of the 2012 Niagara Prosperity Initiative Projects.

ORIGIN OF REPORT

This report is initiated by staff.

OTHER PERTINENT REPORTS

- COM 04-2008 A Legacy of Poverty Addressing Cycles of Poverty and the Impact on Child Health in Niagara Region
- COM 53-2008 Increasing Prosperity for Niagara Families Living in Poverty
- COM 12-2010 Update on "Increasing Prosperity for Families Living in Poverty;" 2009 Prosperity Projects
- COM 45-2010 Administration of the Niagara Prosperity Initiatives (NPI)
- COM 44-2011 Niagara Prosperity Initiative Update (*Building a New Legacy: Building Prosperity by Improving the Quality of Neighbourhood Life*)
- COM 19-2012 2012 Prosperity Projects Funding Update
- COM 41-2012 Niagara Prosperity Initiative 2012 Update
- COM 37-2013 Niagara Prosperity Initiative 2013 Update
- COM 15-2014 Niagara Prosperity Initiative 2014 Update

