

D.A.M.E. INITIATIVE, PHASE III

“Developing Actions towards Meaningful Employment”

Women’s Network PEI founded in 1984, is a not-for-profit organization that works to strengthen and support the efforts of PEI women to improve the status of women in our society. Women’s Network PEI’s mandate is:

- to promote the equality of women in PEI through feminist analysis and practice.
- to provide a forum or the voices of women on PEI,
- to provide opportunities for women to realize power, knowledge, skills, abilities, visions and financial security, and
- to empower women through the recognition of women’s achievements and potential and through listening to women’s voices.

In DAME Phase I, Women’s Network PEI’s conducted two pieces of original research. The first was a series of focus groups held with targeted, marginalized women to learn of their experiences in using Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) services. The second research document was a Gender-Based Analysis (GBA) of HRDC services and service delivery. This is national policy that directly impacts on PEI women.

DAME, Phase I research showed that there is an imbalance in the employment situation in Prince Edward Island with respect to women. For example, the unemployment rate for women on PEI is 14.7%; while women of Aboriginal ancestry have the highest unemployment rate for women on PEI at 22%. (Source: *Comparisons of Unemployment Rates Across Employment Equity Groups, by Gender, Prince Edward Island - Access granted by HRDC*)

Through our research, both women and community organizations have identified many barriers which impede the employment situation for women in PEI. These barriers include culture, language, physical disability, mental disability, age, geographic location, family violence, lack of education, poverty, sexual orientation, aboriginal ancestry and lack of adequate housing. In order to employ women, these barriers need to be addressed.

In Dame Phase II, we were able to move some of the research recommendations forward by:

- continuing policy dialogue with HRDC,
- introducing women in their communities to community economic development through a “Power Group” approach, and
- working with employers to better understand women’s needs in the workplace through Gender-Sensitivity workshops examining their workplace policies.

In DAME Phase III, we are going to continue to work towards long-term goals by:

- examining pay equity issues on PEI,
- furthering the policy dialogue with HRDC, and
- supporting the women who participated in the two Power Groups.

Goal :

To improve the level of women's economic equality on Prince Edward Island.

Objectives:

1. Pay-Equity:

To initiate research and partnerships to understand the issues, challenges and barriers of pay-equity on PEI.

2. Facilitating Change:

To further dialogue with HRDC's Women's Bureau in order to advocate for policy changes. To facilitate specific supports for women who participated in the Phase II "Power Groups" to explore their Community Economic Development options.

Schedule of Activities

Activity # 1: Development of Project Support Structure

Time Line: Month 1 then ongoing (primary focus)

- Project staff will be hired using standard Women's Network PEI hiring procedures,
- the Project Coordinator is responsible for the overall management of the project and is answerable to the Executive Director of Women's Network PEI,
- the Project Coordinator will develop a project support structure by re-establishing contacts with the DAME, Phase II steering committee members. This group was active in all activities during the first and second phase and are expected to continue to be interested in work that will see their recommendations acted on. We will expand the committee by inviting partners relevant to this phase of work. This would include contacting government, non-government organizations, community groups, unions and private employers to sit on the Steering Committee of DAME Phase III, and
- the Steering Committee will meet regularly through DAME Phase III to oversee the progress of the initiative. Project Coordinator will support the committee with agendas, minutes, reports, etc.

Activity # 2: research and partnerships regarding pay-equity.

Time Line: Month 1 then ongoing (primary focus)

- Project Coordinator and Community Coordinator will travel to New Brunswick to meet with women's equality seeking organizations working on the issue of pay equity, in particular the Coalition for Pay Equity in New Brunswick. The purpose of the trip would be to learn first-hand accounts of the issues, challenges and solutions by understanding the process and partnership they worked with and the research they conducted and how they are communicating and disseminating their messages.
- Community Coordinator and the steering committee will examine the New Brunswick process and learnings.

- Community Coordinator and steering committee will create a plan to conduct the necessary research on PEI to understand the issues from our provincial perspective.
- The Community Coordinator will carry out the necessary research on pay-equity on PEI.
- Community Coordinator and steering committee will use the research findings to develop a comprehensive 1-day pay-equity workshop,
- Community Coordinator will plan, host and evaluate a 1-day pay-equity workshop,
- Community Coordinator will put the proceedings of the workshop and the research into a format for use by other community organizations, including web-based materials.

Activity # 3: Dialogue with HRDC’s Women’s Bureau.

Time Line: Month 2 then ongoing (minimal time)

- Project Coordinator will further dialogue with HRDC-PEI and with HRDC’S Women’s Bureau on specific policies found to be problematic in Phase I research, and
- Project Coordinator will meet with organizations that have requested a presentation on the DAME Project.

Activity #4: Facilitate supports for Power Group women.

Time Line: Month 2 then ongoing (minimal time)

- Community Coordinator will provide information to the steering committee to ensure all members understand the concept of “Power Groups” and Community Economic Development (CED),
- the Community Coordinator and Project Coordinator will liaise with Women for Economic Equality Society (Nova Scotia) to examine follow-up procedures used after the CED plain language learning series has been used,
- the Community Coordinator and the steering committee will create an outline of how they will manage and evaluate the facilitated supports for the women who participated in the “Power Groups”,
- the Community Coordinator will work with EPWIC and the Carousel Family Resource Centre to provide supports for their CED participants,
- the Community Coordinator will conduct a third “Power Group” in Charlottetown including the facilitate specific supports for the women immediately afterwards, and
- the Evaluator will conduct evaluation to look at the process and outcomes for the three separate “Power Groups” taking into account the vast differences in how all three groups were conducted and the learnings from each process.