

## ABLC Meeting June 13, 2019: 10:00 – 11:00 AM Atlantic – **DRAFT**

**Attended:** Caroline Ploem (AIRN), Dena Simon (ACNS), Donna Bulman (UNB), Jacquie Gahagan (Dal), Jeannine McNeil (PHAC), Jo-Ann MacDonald (UPEI), Larry Baxter (Community), Michael Liddell (Community), Michelle Proctor-Simms (NSACA)

**Regrets:** Charles Furlotte (STU), Diane Bailey (Mainline), Gerard Yetman (Co-Chair, ACNL), Greg Harris (MUN), Julie Dingwell (Avenue B), Lois Jackson (Dal), Marni Amirault (CAAN & AHA Centre), Susan Kirkland (Co-Chair, Dal), Stacey Burns-MacKinnon (PEI DHW)

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## MINUTES

### 1) Welcome and Focus of Today's Meeting (Jacquie)

- Given the impending Best Brains Exchange and AIRN Planning Day, we decided to go ahead with this meeting in Susan's and Gerard's absence. Jacquie chaired the meeting. The focus was to get some input on the high level agenda and to start thinking through some broader governance issues.

### 2) Review and Approval of Current Agenda and Minutes from April 25<sup>th</sup>

- The current agenda and minutes from April 25<sup>th</sup> were approved as circulated.

### 3) Overview and Input on Draft AIRN Planning Day Agenda

- Jacquie reviewed the draft agenda provided to members in advance of the meeting and asked for feedback.

#### Questions and Discussion

- Jacquie was asked to clarify AIRN's future in terms of the STBBI framework. Are we now going to focus more broadly on STBBIs rather than HIV and HCV?
  - Lois and Jacquie will become the co-directors of AIRN July 1<sup>st</sup>. Sees this as an opportunity to rethink our identity. AIRN has struggled with funding from its inception.
  - In terms of economy of scale, we need to maximize our capacity within AIRN's membership so as to not be spread so thin. We have expertise in members who have been doing harm reduction and testing research across STBBIs in the Atlantic Region.
  - The national push and Pan-Canadian Framework for Action on STBBIs will provide funding opportunities.
  - The new model will need to come with some institutional support from Dalhousie, and we need to figure out a way for AIRN to be self-sufficient and not so dependent on REACH funding. We need to be more strategic and not focus on topics that are not tied to the capacity that we don't already have.

- Larry noted the need to be up-front about this new direction at the beginning of the AIRN Planning Day. There may be some people, himself included, who may want to step away at this point.
  - Jacquie agreed that she would start the day with a reality check in terms of our funding and need for AIRN to focus more broadly on STBBIs.
- Registration numbers to date: BBE (35) and AIRN Planning Day (25). These numbers may change slightly.

#### 4) AIRN's Governance Model (see ToR)

- Jacquie asked for input as to what is working, what is not working re. the ABLC Terms of Reference (ToR). The following points of discussion were raised:
  - The ToR discussion may need to be wide open. Depending on what happens on June 25th, AIRN may need a different governance structure.
  - The AIRN we are talking about today is different that the AIRN of yesterday which was very focused on HIV Research.
  - The landscape has changed – e.g. the focus on harm reduction based on PHAC funding and political shifts has resulted in the “pretzelization of organizations.”
  - The same thing that happened to ASOs is happening with AIRN.
- We have to remember that AIRN has only one staff person, and that AIRN has done a lot with a very tiny budget. There are a lot of moving pieces for one person across 4 provinces and REACH – it's a massive job. We need to make the best use of the staff person's time in moving forward projects that are beneficial to AIRN. There has been too much on the Research Manager's plate and the job is not sustainable as it is.
- Will need to spend time setting the stage in morning session so that everyone understands the current landscape. While we are grateful for the connections made with REACH, we need to do a bit of a reality check. We have been relying on one staff to provide a lot of support, coordination, reporting, administration, etc.

#### Action:

- ✓ Everyone to review the ABLC ToR before June 25th and bring their feedback to the AIRN Planning Day.

#### 5) Preliminary Thoughts around Rebranding (e.g. Do we need a name change?)

- Some people find the name long and cumbersome. Are there ideas around rebranding that folks have at this point? Key discussion points:
  - A change in focus may signal a name change. Concern is that there may be some brand recognition problems.
  - Our name currently implies a focus on HIV and HCV. It may need to be simplified and reflect what we do.
  - We first need to figure out who we are, where we are going, and then determine the need for rebranding and a name change.
  - We could always drop the big title and keep the acronym (AIRN) like CATIE did. It is important to see what happens on June 25th though.

## 6) Other Items?

### OPINIO Survey

- Rather than sending out an OPINIO survey prior to the face-to-face, we agreed to send AIRN members (~270) a summary of the preliminary outcomes from our discussion in terms of who we are, where are we going, governance model and rebranding ideas, and ask them to weigh in and let us know what they think.

### Need for a Designated Facilitator?

- The group agreed that it was a good idea to have a facilitator. We need someone to ask the critical questions and get the feedback that we need. It is important to have objectivity, and to have all ABLC members able to participate in the conversation.
- Members agreed to invite Francisco. Francisco will be attending the BBE on June 24<sup>th</sup> and the AIRN Planning Day on June 25<sup>th</sup>. He is connected but not an integral part of AIRN.

### Materials to Send Out in Advance of June 25<sup>th</sup>?

- The following will be sent out to participants, along with the agenda: Terms of Reference (2018), Pan-Canadian STBBI Framework (2019), and the link to the AIRN website – [www.airn.ca](http://www.airn.ca).

### **Action:**

- ✓ Jacquie will ask Francisco to facilitate with the caveat that the audience in Halifax is more conservative than many of the venues in which he works. He may need to approach things a bit differently.
- ✓ Caroline will send out the meeting materials.

## 7) Next Meeting (continue every second Thursday of the month from 10:00 – 11:00 am?)

- Members agreed to continue meeting over the summer at the usual time to proceed with the transition planning.