

Alberta Council of Technologies Multimedia Network Proposal

Summary

The Alberta Council of Technologies (ABCtech) has a mission to advance the commercialization of emerging technologies in Alberta. They have 10,965 subscribers in 20 industry groups, including the communications & media industries. There is a growing sense that emerging technology innovators in Alberta do not have enough access to culturally responsive media & communications services and this is a barrier to advancement. This proposal is to assess whether there is a genuine need that can be met with the creation of a full-time, independent, multimedia network composed of ABCtech's existing media & communications subscribers.

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February 6, 2013

Alberta Council of Technologies Society
c/o Perry Kinkaide

Dear Perry:

Thank you for introducing me to this interesting project. Enclosed, please find my proposal to assess the need for and feasibility of creating a multimedia network that would provide media and communications services to Alberta Council of Technologies (ABCtech) subscribers and the general Alberta public. I understand this proposal, in whole or part, will be incorporated into ABCtech's grant applications.

I have identified a way forward that carefully assesses and documents the gap in the marketplace that this full-time, independent multimedia network would fill. I also have identified a process for ensuring that the multimedia network - if going ahead - functions efficiently, reliably and ethically and that ABCtech subscribers' information is protected and valued.

There is a media consultation, a communications consultation and a market research process identified in Stage One of my proposal. Ideally each of these would be conducted by separate contractors to avoid bias cross-contaminating the results.

Stage Two involves the creation of a communications strategy for ABCtech and a project proposal for the multimedia network and its first productions - pending approval by ABCtech board and advisories.

The budget I have provided covers Stages One and Two.

Stage Three, communicating and producing, requires approval at the previous two stages and another round of budgeting and fundraising. For reference, I have enclosed some of the ideas enthusiastically put forward by the media & communications and industry advisory committees. Pending successful fundraising, the communications consultant and media consultant could then move into coordinator roles.

I trust this proposal will provide the basis for productive discussions with the ABCtech board and the advisory committees, as well as information for your grant application. I would be happy to answer any questions that may arise.

Sincerely,

Barb Allard,
Environmental Communications Specialist
Producer/Director, RBCC



Introductions

The Alberta Council of Technologies (ABCtech) is a not-for-profit society with a mission to advance the commercialization of emerging technologies in Alberta. As of January 2013, the Alberta Council of Technologies is composed of a voluntary board of 13 directors and a “network of networks” - 20 industry sub-groups and 10,965 subscribers sharing an interest in diversifying Alberta’s economy through technology. Included in this subscriber base are a handful of media companies and communications specialists who have donated services to the organization on a per-project basis. These donated services include a regular e-newsletter, “QuikTech Notes”, abctech.ca web-site development, graphic design, conference organization, live presentations, video documentation and web-casting of conferences.

Barb Allard is an independent communications specialist and video producer with a mission to foster understanding of environmental issues and the role of clean technologies in Alberta. Perry Kinkaide of ABCtech approached Barb Allard for consultation regarding the feasibility of creating an independent, full-time, multimedia network consisting of ABCtech's existing media partners.

Proposed ABCtech Multimedia Network Goals

1. Provide better media and communications services to ABCtech's subscribers.
2. Foster public support for Alberta's innovative entrepreneurs by sharing stories from the frontiers of emerging technology commercialization.

About this Proposal – Assessing Proposed Goals

While researching this proposal, Barb Allard attended several meetings with the ABCtech media & communications and industry advisory committees. There is enthusiasm for the potential services that the multimedia network would deliver, and ideas for this are included for reference. However, Barb recommends first doing a thorough assessment of subscriber and social needs, on one hand, and capacity of the media partners on the other hand. This will ensure the validity of the project goals, as well as increase the potential for underwriting Stage Three (not yet budgeted) with foundational financing.

Barb interprets ABCtech's vision and mission as fitting within the Ecologically Sustainable Community Economic Development (ESCED) framework. Needs assessment protocols come from the Roger Kaufman model. (See appendices for more information.)

Budget is for Stages One and Two. It covers parallel processes defined as communications consultation and media consultation and includes services from external market research experts.

Proposed budget: **\$97,000.00**

Proposed timeline: one year



Stage One: "A" is for Assessing Needs and Capacity

Timeline: eight months

Budget: \$85,000.00

Deliverables:

- Non-media-industry subscriber needs assessment, with list of recommendations
- Media & communications subscriber requirements and capacity assessment
- Draft multimedia network plan - *or explanation if not feasible*
- Alberta general population market research study

To confirm the two proposed multimedia network goals, Stage One answers the following:

1. Are ABCtech non-media-industry subscribers satisfied with the media and communications services available to them?
2. Can a full-time, independent multimedia network composed of ABCtech media & communications subscribers provide better media and communications services to ABCtech's non-media-industry subscribers?
3. Are Albertans exposed to enough of our own stories from the frontiers of emerging technology commercialization to generate public support for our innovators?
4. Do ABCtech media & communications subscribers and non-media-industry subscribers share the goal of consistently sharing stories from the frontiers of emerging technology commercialization with a general Alberta audience?
5. Can a full-time, independent multimedia network composed of ABCtech media & communications subscribers bring a consistent stream of stories from the frontiers of emerging technology commercialization to a general Alberta audience?
6. Should these findings be published and shared? If so, with whom?

Part One: ABCtech Non-media-industry Subscriber Needs Assessment

Targeting goal one, the communications consultant conducts an extensive needs assessment with ABCtech's non-media-industry subscriber groups (30) on their usage, desired results and current results of pre-existing media and communications services. She collects data in two ways: via survey of ABCtech's entire subscriber list and through individual interviews with selected or elected representatives from each industry sub-group. A SWOT or similar analysis is used. She compiles a list of needs.

Communications consultant then invites all non-media-industry representatives to one intensive needs assessment (brainstorming) meeting, with the goal to prioritize the list of needs and propose solutions. Media consultant is on hand to provide information regarding feasibility of meeting needs with the proposed ABCtech multimedia network.



Part Two: ABCtech Media & Communications Subscribers Capacity Assessment

Media consultant conducts individual interviews with representatives from ABCtech's media & communications subscribers (8) to determine capacity and requirements for specialization, audience and geographical reach, organizational goals, current obligations and financing. In addition, she surveys and reports on the output of these media & communications providers over the assessment period.

Media consultant then selects the media & communications subscribers able and willing to operate together in partnership to service the non-media-industry subscribers from ABCtech's "network of networks." She pulls them together for a one-day brainstorming session, where they sketch out proposed production flows, partnership structure, audience mapping, information ethics & protocols, and models for sponsorship and fundraising. Micro-level analysis identifies gaps that could hinder productivity.

Part Three: Alberta Population Market Research

Hired market research firm assesses proposed goal two: fostering public support for Alberta's innovators and entrepreneurs by sharing stories from the frontiers of Alberta technologies. We test the assumption that existing media and communications networks are not currently meeting this goal. The study includes trends in media consumption and service gaps (availability, accessibility, choice, cultural responsiveness). There are three components: a media/literature study looks for existing coverage; Alberta-wide survey (rural & urban samples) determines awareness of the topic; focus groups (four) reveal attitudes to topic.

Conclusions

Consultants report on findings to ABCtech board and media & communications and industry advisory committees. The board decides whether to create a full-time, independent multimedia network proposal and other planning for Stage Two. At this point, they decide whether to publish and share the findings.

Stage Two: "B" is for business planning

Timeline: four months

Budget: \$12,000

Deliverables:

- ABCtech strategic communications plan
- *Pending needs/capacity assessments* - project proposal for multimedia network
- Budgets, fundraising and sponsorship plans

Through meetings with ABCtech board and media & communications and industry advisory committees, communications and media consultants confirm communications goals, audiences, key messages, topics, themes and timelines. Strategies to attract and manage sponsors and funding sources are also on the table.

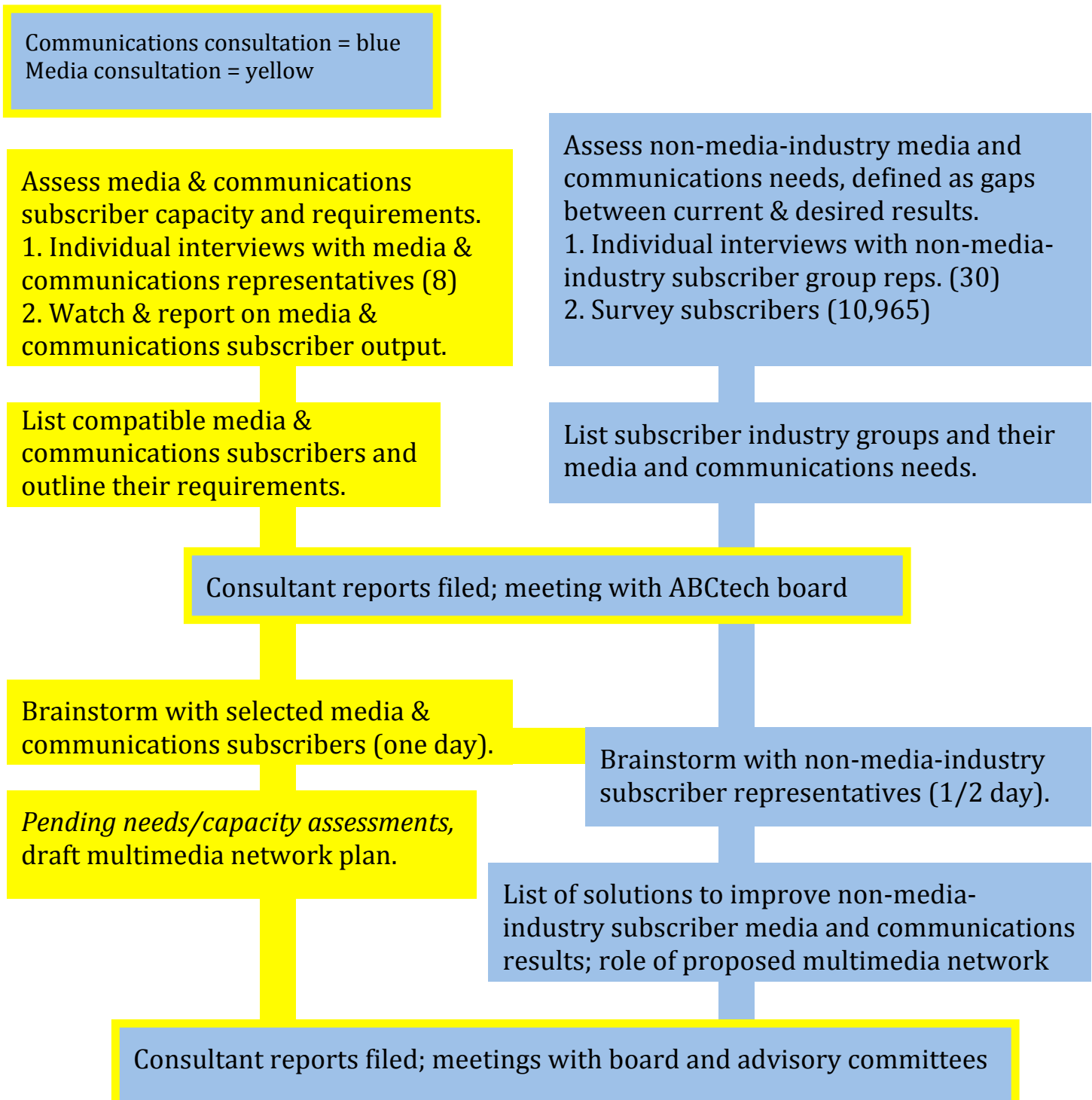
Communications consultant writes strategic communications plan and budget.

Media consultant creates a proposal and budget for contracting and coordinating the multimedia network. She drafts a charter for the multimedia network, including ethical, legal and professional criteria.

ABCtech grant-writer receives budgets and applies for funding for new initiatives in Stage Three.



Flow Chart – Stages One & Two - Assessments & Planning





Flow Chart – Stages One & Two - cont'd...

Communications consultation = blue
Media consultation = yellow
Market research company = green

Assess whether Albertans are exposed to our own stories from the frontiers of emerging technology commercialization. Assess level of coverage and attitudes to topic.

1. Literature/media study (10 days)
2. Survey of general public, including rural and urban populations (400-900 sample)
3. Focus groups composed of representatives from key demographics (four)

Consultants meet with ABCtech board and two advisory committees to plan for next stage: goals, audiences, key messages, topics, themes, timelines, funding & sponsors. Decide whether to pursue multimedia network.

Market research report received

ABCtech strategic communications plan

Pending board & advisory committee review & decision...
Project proposal and charter for multimedia network.

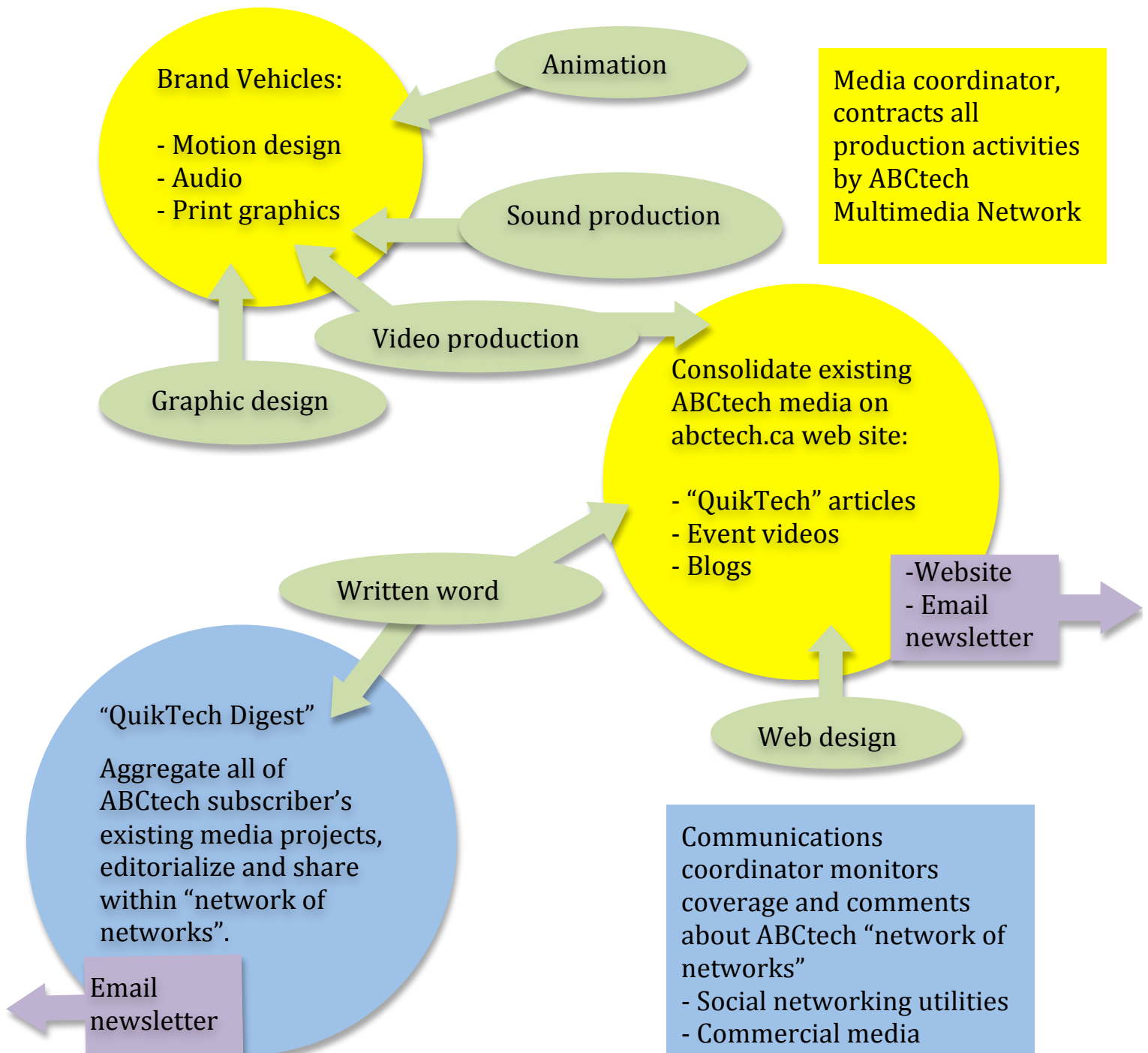
Budget and funding plan for Stage Three delivered to ABCtech grant-writer



Proposed Stage Three: "C" is for Communicating

NOTE - This section is pending results of assessments and successful fundraising.

Ideas for the first eighteen months of ABCtech Multimedia Network activities include:

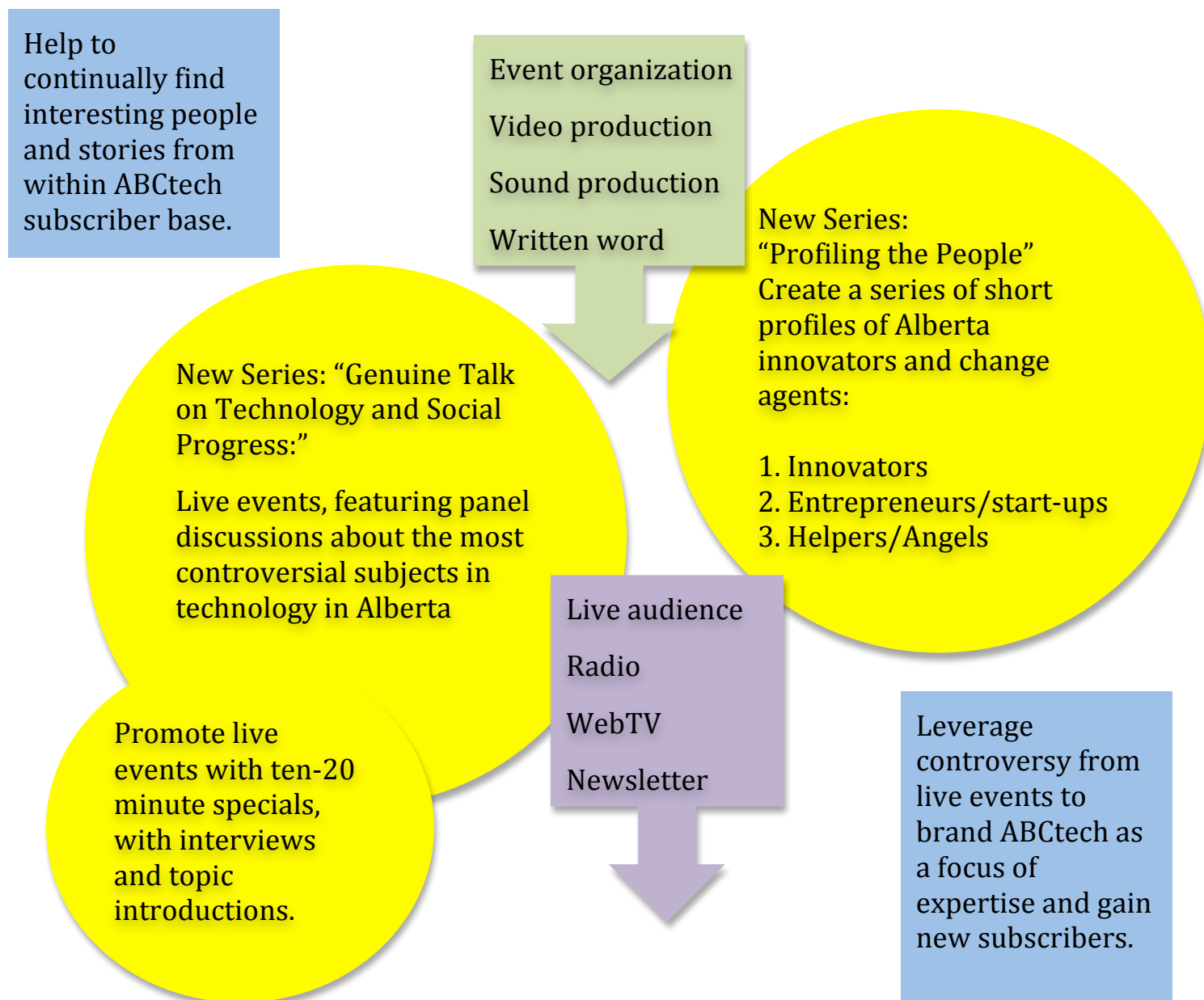




Proposed Stage Three: "C" is for Communicating, cont'd...

NOTE - This section is pending results of assessments and successful fundraising.

Ideas for the first eighteen months of ABCtech Multimedia Network activities include:



Assess the multimedia network productions in light of communications goals.



Appendix One: The People (no particular order)

Alberta Council of Technologies (ABCtech) “network of networks:”

- Board of directors
- Board contractor and point person
- Media & communications advisory committee
- Industry advisory committee
- Grant writer
- Web designer
- Graphic designer
- Media & communications subscribers (producers & distributors)
- Industry subscriber interest groups (20)/Total subscribers (10,965)
- Communications consultant/contractor
- Media consultant/contractor

In addition:

- Contracted market research firm

Audiences, current and desired:

- Entrepreneurs & innovators
- Youth, students
- Investors
- Entrepreneurial helpers
- Industry innovators & supporters
- Politicians & government decision makers
- General Alberta public

Appendix Two: The Media (no particular order)

- Website, abctech.ca
- Brochures & flyers
- Newsletter(s), eg. “QuikTech Notes”
- Social networking utilities
- Conference, public events
- Videos, web TV
- Radio, web audio
- Print articles
- Animation
- Graphic design



Appendix Three: ESCED

Society or mega-level needs assessment forms part of the Ecologically Sustainable Community Economic Development (ESCED) model for projects that aim to ensure:

1. Ecological enhancement
2. Social vitality
3. Economic resilience
4. Citizen political participation

Appendix Four: Roger Kaufman Model for Needs Assessment

Needs = fill the gap between current results and desired results

Solutions = personnel, processes and inputs

Extensive needs assessment = survey, broad-based, collect a lot of data

Intensive needs assessment = analytical, focused on prioritizing solutions

Mega-level needs assessment = relate to the impact an organization has on society

Macro-level needs assessment = relate to an organization's products, outputs

Micro-level needs assessment = relate to an organization's internal processes, inputs

SWOT analysis = brainstorm to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Appendix Five: Research & References

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Needs_assessment

http://www.mpiweb.org/cms/mpiweb/uploads/doclibrary/1136860_7142008_100418_am_.pdf

<http://www.greenbook.org/Manage-Market-Research-Companies.cfm>

<http://www.trendresearch.ca/index.php>

<http://www.banister.ab.ca/>

<http://www.environics.ca/>

<http://www.growthalberta.com/>

http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~pbd/pdfs/Focus_Groups.pdf

<http://www.icology.co.uk/>



Appendix Six: Barb Allard Bio & Selected Resume

I have selected some projects where experience fits very well. For a full resume please visit my website.

MEET BARB ALLARD

I think globally and work locally.

I produce independent media. In 1996, I founded **Rainbow Bridge Communications Company (RBCC)**, an owner-operated video production and marketing company with a mission to provide affordable, professional media services for promoting an environmentally sustainable, peaceful and technologically advanced society. I produce, direct and write videos.

I am an **environmental communications specialist**. I have been studying environmental problems and solutions for 22 years. My strong suits are **problem solving, dedication** to seeing a project through to completion, a **background in activism**, and being **ultra-creative** on any budget. I write educational and promotional materials, create and conduct live presentations, organize events and organize video coverage of events.

I have been fortunate to **learn through collaboration** with many talented people. My network includes those working at the forefront of **renewable energy, sustainable lifestyle advocacy, boreal forest conservation, electronic media, community-based media and economic diversification**. I'm proud to have been part of the **leading edge** in such areas as **video webcasting** (since 2000) and promoting **"Made-in-Alberta"** new energy solutions (since 2004).

Being a mom has been my greatest learning experience.

Selected Video Production Experience:

Local Motion: Parkallen 2009 – Video Series and Documentary

The challenge: how many people from one Edmonton community can leave their personal automobiles at home and get eco-mobile for the month of June 2009? Several City of Edmonton branches partnered with the Community of Parkallen to provide assistance, with the international ICLEI organization watching and encouraging. Between March and July 2009, my RBCC team and I documented and shared the progress in a series of four-minute short programs, aired on Shaw Community Television, webcast on several sites, and screened at a live event. I then produced an educational documentary in phase two of the project.

Green Monday – Video Series Pilot

I produced a ten-minute pilot for a series to highlight Canadian new energy initiatives. Based on the success of *Made-in-Alberta* and my experience as an environmental communicator, *Green Monday* is an innovative model that allows for ongoing, regionally based coverage, shared through a network of independent producers, and ready to go whenever Canadians want to document our transition out of the fossil-fuel age.



Appendix Six: Barb Allard Bio & Selected Resume, cont'd...

I have selected some projects where experience fits very well. For a full resume please visit my website.

Selected Video Production Experience, cont'd:

Made-in-Alberta – New Energy Stories – TV and Web Series

Energy, water and climate – these are hot topics for the 21st century! In this weekly series of four-minute programs, I investigated and documented the new energy future being built right here in Alberta. I produced a total of 100 *Made-in-Alberta* episodes, each broadcast 48 times by my partner, Shaw TV. Sponsors included the Solar Energy Society of Alberta and many local businesses, not-for-profit societies and government agencies, all sharing an interest in advancing Alberta new energy solutions.

Selected Communications Services, Event Planning and Documentation:

Alberta Council of Technologies Society – Environmental Communications & Event Planning

I provided environmental communications services at three separate events, which led to the founding of the Alberta Clean Technologies Industry Association, under the umbrella of the Alberta Council of Technologies. I sat on a panel and provided connections between lifestyle, energy technologies and sustainable development. I organized a table display and conducted a two-hour seminar to further reveal these connections. I participated in writing resolutions at the conference where the new industry association was created.

Speaker Series/Solar Seminars – Video Documentation

I directed video documentation of several lectures in Edmonton on topics related to sustainable energy production. I directed the editing, expert review and release of four of these lectures on DVD and YouTube. I also promoted the Solar Energy Society of Alberta's seminar series by interviewing the speakers and releasing short teasers on the *Made-in-Alberta* show. Partners and sponsors included Grant MacEwan University, Sierra Club of Canada-Prairie Chapter and the Solar Energy Society of Alberta.

Group of Six Billion Peoples' Summit - Video Documentation

I co-organized video coverage of this four-day summit at the University of Calgary as an independent media coordinator with enough experience to handle 60-odd hours of highly sensitive material. I co-organized the set-up of a media centre on campus, complete with video equipment, dubbing and editing facilities, craft services, and a list of protocols for Indymedia volunteer videographers. We then made copies of the archive and sent them to speakers all around the world. Partners included the International Society for Peace and Human Rights, Alberta Indymedia and other social justice and media collectives.

- end resume selections -