



COMMUNITYWISE RESOURCE CENTRE

COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK
PRELIMINARY LEARNING REPORT
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TAPESTRY EVALUATION AND STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to reflect on what we have learned so far in the development, implementation and evaluation of the collaborative framework at the CommunityWise Resource Centre. The report will also share any changes we are planning to the evaluation approach, including our most recent evaluation questions and methods.

BACKGROUND: COMMUNITYWISE

CommunityWise Resource Centre (CWRC) is a nonprofit centre located in the Beltline in downtown Calgary. Formerly named "The Old Y" (due to its location within the historical YWCA building since the early 1970s), CWRC underwent a rebranding process (from 2011-2013) to distinguish itself as a unique, community driven, collaborative space for multi-sector groups to pursue their activities in the context of community development and social change.

Directly employing a staff of four, CWRC supports approximately 80 diverse member groups to fulfill their individual mandates. CWRC maintains a historic venue that provides offices, meeting rooms, activity spaces, both indoor and outdoor common spaces, and shared office equipment, in addition to facilitating community development, collective self-care, and collaborative opportunities for both members and the broader community.

Most of CWRC's members are small, volunteer-run initiatives providing peer-support or advocacy for marginalized communities or social issues. The membership includes arts and culture organizations, immigrant community organizations, child and youth-serving agencies, LGBTQ community resources, Aboriginal community resources, environmental groups, social justice advocacy groups, counselling and peer support services, as well as co-operative and educational organizations.

A draft organizational-level theory of change for CWRC can be found at http://prezi.com/qnvnwi9yznms/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share. This theory of change was developed along by the CWRC staff collective in collaboration with board members and other CWRC stakeholders in early 2014.

BACKGROUND: COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK

Owing in significant part to their small sizes, the majority of CWRC's member organizations bump up against capacity shortfalls at the individual, organizational, and institutional levels. Their budgets are scarce, they have few paid staff, and they typically lack access to the necessary time and financial resources needed to seek out training opportunities that could contribute to enhanced competencies, skills, and knowledge. As a result, they are not adequately equipped to effectively survive and thrive within CWRC on the one hand, or in the non-profit sector more generally. They are far too often operating in "survival mode" which is not conducive to higher-level organizational development. This is despite a deep-seated eagerness to increase the viability of their organizations.

Since 2013, CWRC has been developing a Collaborative Framework to amplify and formalize opportunities for member capacity building – both individual and organizational - through collaboration. This Framework responds to the increased need for services provided by CWRC's member organizations alongside reduced organizational resources in the context of heightened economic strain, a situation that has only intensified (e.g. CCVO Fall 2015 Economic Climate Survey Results). The overall aim of the Framework is to increase the resiliency, collective efficacy, and sustainability of members via a

continuum of collaborative opportunities while providing multiple flexible entry points for diverse participation in the CWRC community.

Examples of what this looks like include: lunchtime learning sessions where a member organization shares its knowledge and skills with other members, or where an external organization is brought in to offer a session for multiple member groups simultaneously; the hosting of community forums; events to encourage networking; collaborative fund development between two or more organizations; practicum students and other learning positions which are coordinated by CWRC but shared between organizations; the pooling of funds for members to collaboratively partake in external learning and training opportunities.

In addition to this role serving member organizations, CWRC also provides a setting for diverse community participation and community development. Individuals involved with CWRC are often involved in more than one role or in roles that change over time (e.g., staff or board member of staff organization, volunteer, member of staff collective, attendee or participant in services offered by member organization). The Collaborative Framework also involves formalizing and expanding opportunities for all participants to become more involved with CWRC and to explore the type of social change that this type of community development can bring about.

The **Mission** of this Collaborative Framework is: to intentionally facilitate opportunities for *collaboration** in order to unleash the potential of *CWRC participants** and member organizations.

The **Vision** of this Collaborative Framework is: CWRC participants and member organization are fully able to fulfill their diverse social change missions.

OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION AND EVALUATION PLAN

Robyn McLean (formerly Robyn Sachs) began to work with CommunityWise in Fall 2013. Funding for evaluation comes from a portion of funds from the Calgary Foundation, as well as a Knowledge Builder's Grant from First Calgary Financial and an Innoweave Developmental Evaluation (DE) grant.

The early part of this evaluation work involved working closely with the CWRC staff collective to understand the context and CommunityWise as an organization. As the project progressed we have focused more and more on understanding strategies and outcomes related to collaboration.

THEORY OF CHANGE FOR THE COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK

A theory of change was first drafted in summer 2014 while applying for Innoweave Developmental Evaluation funding. Since then, we have made several rounds of revisions the Theory of Change. The most recent version can be seen on the following pages, and includes several related visuals. The theory of change is also explored by the causal loop diagram from the Outcome Harvest Report.