



**Sustainability Working Group  
Trauma-Informed Community of Practice**

December 4, 2024

Meeting Summary

### **Introduction and Context**

This Working Group meeting opened with participants sharing their motivations for attending the meeting and their connection to the topic of sustainability. Several projects are nearing completion in March 2025, and sustainability of programs after the funding period is an ever-present concern. Participants emphasized the need to explore strategies for continuing these programs with limited funding while maintaining their impact.

#### **1. Sustainability Challenges**

- The projects were originally funded to address unmet needs through the development and evaluation of new programs. To ensure sustainability, participants highlighted the need for strategies that enable organizations to continue using these programs with fewer resources.
- Leveraging partnerships and exploring cost-effective approaches, such as integrating programs into existing systems (e.g., hospitals and community organizations), were proposed.
- **Scaling and Dissemination**
  - Beyond the initial testing phase, participants want to explore the broader applicability of their programs in various contexts, including rural and remote areas, where access to services remains challenging.
  - Dissemination efforts should focus on forming partnerships with provincial and federal funders to facilitate knowledge transfer and implementation.
- **Barriers to Sustainability**
  - Limited funding, fiscal constraints, and a competitive funding landscape, particularly in the Maritimes, were recurring concerns. Participants discussed the systemic lack of resources for trauma and violence-informed initiatives, an issue rooted in neoliberal policy approaches.
  - While virtual care offers cost savings, some participants cautioned against over-reliance on online services, especially in under-served areas.
- **Strategic Funding Approaches**

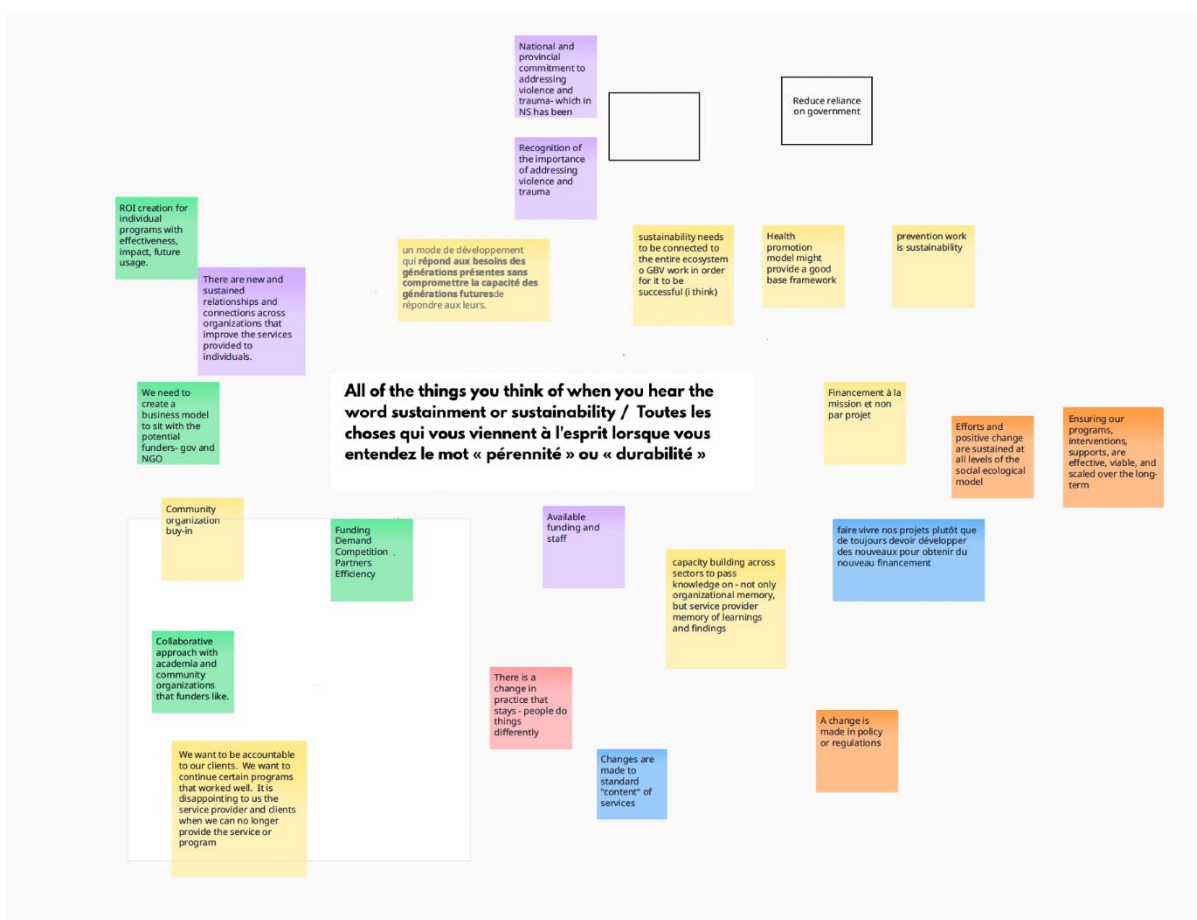
- Participants shared strategies for securing funding, including collaborations with universities and large foundations, exploring innovative models like licensing, social impact bonds, and "freemium" approaches.
- Emphasis was placed on building cost-effective programs from the outset and aligning them with healthcare and implementation science frameworks.
- **Government and Policy Concerns**
  - There is unease about the potential instability of government action plans, particularly in the context of political change. Participants advocated for the adoption of laws over action plans to ensure long-term support.
  - Sustainability requires demonstrating the return on investment and clarifying funding needs from the beginning of program development.
- **Learning Opportunities and Shared Experiences**
  - Participants expressed interest in learning from diverse funding models and sustainability strategies across provinces.
  - Partnerships with arts organizations, museums, and galleries were identified as potential avenues for expanding program reach and securing additional resources.

The meeting highlighted the critical need for sustainable funding and long-term planning in trauma and violence-informed initiatives. While challenges persist, participants are optimistic about leveraging innovative strategies and partnerships to ensure the continued impact of their work.

- Participants acknowledged the need for early and strategic planning to ensure program sustainability.
- Efforts should focus on cost-effectiveness, innovative funding models, and integration into existing service delivery systems.
- Dissemination and knowledge transfer should prioritize partnerships with funders and stakeholders to ensure the application of program learnings.
- Participants committed to continuing the conversation on sustainability and exploring practical solutions that address systemic barriers.

In order to continue to set the stage for future discussions, a white board activity allowed participants to share thoughts and ideas on:

- What do you think of when you hear the words sustainment or sustainability?
- What would you like to see sustained related to your program after PHAC funding comes to an end?



**Figure 1: Whiteboard response to question: What do you think of when you hear the words sustainment or sustainability?**

The following is a summary of the whiteboard activity and discussions about what sustainability means:

## 1. Sustainability and Funding

### Challenges:

- **Shift from project-based to mission-based funding:** Participants highlighted the need for “Financement à la mission,” which allows organizations to sustain long-term initiatives without the constant need to create new projects to secure funding.
- **Systemic funding constraints:** The group acknowledged limited funding availability, competition among organizations, and reliance on government resources.
- **Economic pressures:** Fiscal constraints in the current economic environment, shaped by neoliberal policies, make it difficult to secure stable, long-term funding.

### Opportunities:

- **Return on Investment (ROI) models:** Programs should demonstrate their cost-effectiveness, impact, and future applicability to attract funders.

- **Alternative funding strategies:** Suggestions included exploring licensing models, social impact bonds, and freemium models for program delivery.
- **Reduced government reliance:** Merging program implementation with other initiatives, such as settlement services, can optimize resources and reduce dependency on government funding.

## 2. Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing

### Challenges:

- The need for ongoing capacity building across sectors to retain and pass on institutional knowledge.
- Organizations must balance knowledge dissemination with maintaining operational effectiveness.

### Opportunities:

- **Cross-sector partnerships:** Building sustained relationships among community organizations, universities, healthcare providers, and settlement services can improve service delivery and knowledge exchange.
- **Participatory approaches:** Participant advisory committees can play a critical role in informing program development and ensuring inclusivity.
- **Dual-language mobilization:** Continued knowledge dissemination in both official languages ensures broader reach and equity.

## 3. Program Effectiveness and Scaling

### Challenges:

- Expanding program reach while ensuring quality and equity of access.
- Adapting interventions to diverse contexts, such as rural and remote communities, without compromising effectiveness.

### Opportunities:

- **Scalability:** Integrating programs into existing systems, such as hospitals and community organizations, can enhance their reach and sustainability.
- **Health promotion models:** Using a health promotion framework can provide a robust foundation for long-term program sustainability.
- **Virtual care models:** Hybrid approaches can reduce costs and extend service availability, though in-person care remains crucial for certain populations.

## 4. Policy and Advocacy

### Challenges:

- Reliance on government action plans, which may be vulnerable to political changes.
- Limited organizational resources to dedicate to advocacy efforts.

#### Opportunities:

- **Legislative advocacy:** Securing policy or regulatory changes offers a more stable foundation than temporary action plans.
- **Dedicated advocacy staff:** Allocating resources for advocacy positions can help organizations influence policy and funding landscapes.

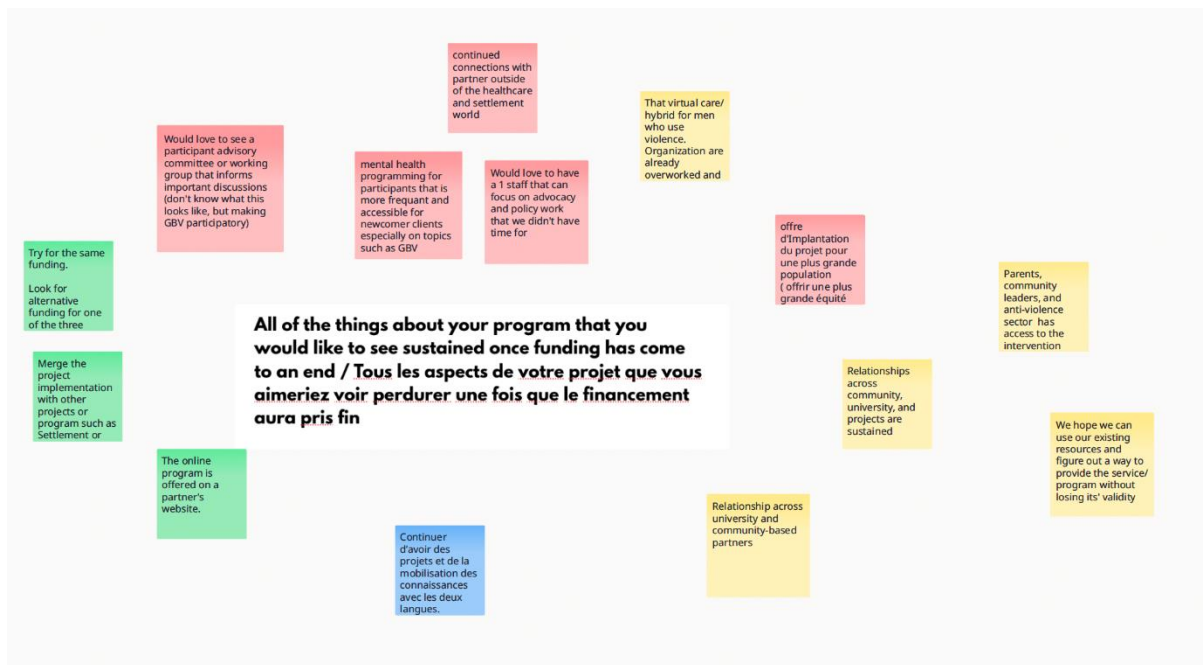
### 5. Participant and Community Engagement

#### Challenges:

- Ensuring that interventions are responsive to community needs and culturally relevant.
- Building trust and engagement with marginalized populations.

#### Opportunities:

- **Community mobilization:** Strengthening relationships with parents, community leaders, and anti-violence advocates can enhance program relevance and effectiveness.
- **Advisory committees:** Establishing participant advisory groups can integrate community voices into program development and decision-making.



**Figure 2: What about your program would you like to see sustained once funding has come to an end?**

The following is a summary of things people are thinking about related to sustainability as identified in the group discussion and whiteboard activity (Figure 2):

### **1. Funding Strategies**

- Develop a comprehensive business model to present to potential funders, focusing on ROI, cost-effectiveness, and program impact.
- Build partnerships with universities and foundations to diversify funding sources.
- Explore alternative funding mechanisms, including licensing models, social impact bonds, and freemium approaches.
- Demonstrate how programs align with funders' priorities, such as scalability and systemic impact.

### **2. Collaboration and Knowledge Transfer**

- Facilitate capacity-building initiatives to retain organizational memory and ensure knowledge dissemination across sectors.
- Establish long-term partnerships with community organizations, universities, and healthcare providers to enhance collaboration.
- Create dual-language resources to ensure equitable knowledge sharing and mobilization.

### **3. Scaling and Program Effectiveness**

- Integrate programs into existing systems (e.g., healthcare, settlement services) to expand reach while minimizing resource requirements.
- Use hybrid or virtual care models judiciously, balancing cost savings with the need for in-person services.
- Evaluate and adapt programs to address the unique needs of underserved populations, such as newcomers and rural communities.

### **4. Policy and Advocacy**

- Advocate for legislative changes to ensure stable and long-term support for trauma and violence-informed programs.
- Dedicate staff or resources to advocacy efforts to influence policy and funding decisions.
- Use data and program evaluations to demonstrate the broader social and economic benefits of sustained funding.

### **5. Community and Participant Engagement**

- Create participant advisory committees to ensure programs are informed by community needs and experiences.
- Strengthen ties with community leaders and organizations to enhance cultural relevance and accessibility.
- Involve participants in knowledge-sharing activities, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment.

## **Program Sustainability Assessment Tool**

The **Program Sustainability Assessment Tool (PSAT)**, was introduced. This tool is designed to help programs evaluate their sustainability capacity across **eight key domains**. Tailored for a broad range of public health programs, the PSAT has been rigorously tested at both community and state levels, ensuring its reliability and adaptability.

Participants were invited to try out the PSAT tool in their organization or with their project. The tool is available at: <https://www.sustaintool.org/>

## **Technical Assistance**

A reminder that capitalW is offering a free 30-minute consultation for projects related to financing, fundraising, etc. If you are interested, please connect with Niti Bhotoia [niti@capitalw.ca](mailto:niti@capitalw.ca)

**Next meeting:** Wednesday, January 15, 2025 1:00 – 2:30 pm EST