



## **Community of Practice Zoom Meeting**

**October 11, 2023, 1:00-2:15**

### **“Recruitment Challenges and Successes”**

#### **Welcome**

Ajirioghene Evi opened the meeting with a land acknowledgement and welcomed everyone. The area of focus for the meeting was recruitment and retention strategies and solutions. PHAC representatives were not present, and this was mentioned

#### **Presentations by CoP Members**

Ginette Landry and Kyla Munn – Kid's Club and Moms Empowerment

Nicolas Berthelot and Kim Deschênes – Projet STEP

Julio Macario de Medeiros – Effets de l'Initiative Espace Parents sur les immigrants

Meenu Dhillon & Golnoosh Hakiman – Stories of Strength

PowerPoint presentations are available in the CoP portal in both [English](#) and [French](#).

#### **Small Group Discussions**

Meeting participants were put into small group discussions, with approximately 6 members per group plus a facilitator and notetaker from the Knowledge Hub team, talking about members' experiences with recruitment at various stages of their projects. Specifically, facilitators asked four broad questions:

- Did anything stand out for you in the presentations?
- What are some takeaways that you think could be useful in your own project?
- What are some of the distinctive challenges in recruiting partners, as well as participants?
- What important factors do you see in creating post-pandemic solutions to recruitment?

## Discussion Highlights

### Positive takeaways from presentations

- Members noted that they appreciated the way one of the presenters used the word “champions” to describe their partners and participants who took on roles of leadership within the project. They acknowledged the potential utility of this language in recruiting service providers and participants. Some also considered how this terminology might have proven advantageous in the project's ethical considerations.
- In all groups, there was a strong consensus that recruitment strategies must be tailored to specific populations and programs. This information is not new, but the need for consistent adaptation and attention to nuance is needed. Members reiterated that this process has always been and will always be challenging and this needs to be addressed even at the time of proposal writing. During the small discussion, it became evident that the significance of human contact was a key takeaway. Participants stressed the importance of dedicating time to establishing meaningful connections and fostering collaboration.
- The intricacies of follow-up with potential partners and participants were discussed at length. Members agreed that following up with phone calls is necessary but that it is difficult to know how many times, how often, whether people are busy and need reminders or not interested. There was interest in why it is easy to assume the maximum should be two times, and some felt that retention sometimes requires reaching out more than twice (and not only by phone, but by event invitation, and open houses. All groups felt that following up was critical to finding success with retention and recruitment.

### Recruitment strategies that worked for others

- In addition to what the presenters shared, CoP members in the small discussions reiterated the importance of more individualized strategies. There was a recognition that projects like those in the CoP cannot employ recruitment strategies in a traditional way. The most important aspect was knowing who the target audience is and employing strategies that centre around their needs. Some of the examples were:
  - Calling people at home; using text messaging
  - Using your network to distribute call for participants.
  - Open house concept
  - Hiring staff to focus on supporting recruitment.
  - Having multiple points of recruitment by allowing participants to join at different points of data collection.
  - Engaging with a program or group that is already well established
  - Meeting people where they are at (e.g., school parent-teacher meetings)
  - Connecting with participants who were unable to attend programs or data collection and following up to reschedule with them.
  - Bi-annual research engagement events that are strategically timed to fill long gaps between data collection.
  - Offering incentives or gifts (e.g., tickets to events, food, honoraria)

## Challenges

- Time was a challenge to all CoP members. It was recognized that this is not new. In doing this kind of work, relationships and trust cannot be rushed, but it is challenging to meet deliverables and account for progress during this stage. Regarding setting up times to meet partners and participants to meet or do data collection, members found it difficult to organize something that worked for everyone. Some members noted that many participants do not feel like they have the time in their daily lives to contribute to research or participate in interviews.
- Recruitment is an activity that requires considerable time, effort, and money to accomplish. Some projects are engaging champions or other people actively invested in research (advisory people, etc.) to promote the project. Others are allowing time in work schedules to recruit using a variety of strategies.
- Recruitment of community partners has also become more challenging. Some agencies do not feel they have the time or resources to commit to research projects. Additional budgets may be required to support their work and participation in research projects.
- Language barriers are a challenge for projects working with newcomers.
- Retention proved to be a challenge that many members were facing, particularly when there are large periods of time between data collection, and especially when there are 3-4 months in between data collection points. Projects are looking for effective strategies to keep participants engaged.
- Because there are so many steps to the research process, it is often difficult to keep people engaged throughout the entire process.
- Community organizations are stretched to the limit. With their diminished capacity, research is not a priority. For one group, their community partners all originally volunteered to participate but are rethinking this because their resources are so stretched. Sometimes recruitment is indirect, in that individuals rely on other spaces or groups that have been created or recruited for other similar purposes, and then the current program is limited from the start on relying on others for success in their recruitment.

## Postpandemic realities and solutions

- Group members agreed that post-pandemic changes have meant notable changes in practices. These changes have meant increased communication and program options but require more consideration and decision-making, and both create unique challenges for recruitment.
- In the case of online programming, while there are several advantages, there are considerations we are experiencing in real time that we did not anticipate. For example,
  - potential participants may need the equipment required to participate. One group had to pivot and purchase tablets to loan out to participants. Under-estimated some of the resource commitment (content) and extra work required for the combination of virtual and in-person options.
- Others shared that having an in-person connection is invaluable. Similarly, members shared the importance that whether online or in-person, recruitment is easier with good partners.
- Social media being increasingly used for recruitment in the post-pandemic context. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram have been helpful for recruitment through direct

posts and the creation of ads to certain geographic areas. Members note that the effectiveness of social media engagement is dependent upon building an audience, a budget for paid posts, and developing new social media skills (visually appealing and interesting posts) and this takes time.

### **Request for support**

The Stories of Strength program is looking for an evaluator. Please connect with Golnoosh Hakiman ([ghakiman@dcrs.ca](mailto:ghakiman@dcrs.ca)) or Becky Majoor ([bmajoor@dcrs.ca](mailto:bmajoor@dcrs.ca)) for more information.

### **Upcoming Events**

1. Virtual CoP Meetings
  - November 22, 2023 (Conducting needs assessments)
  - January 17, 2024 (Facilitator training)
  - March 6, 2024 (Creating safe spaces)
2. Knowledge Hub Presents!
  - October 18, 2023 (Mary Motz: Developing and testing a readiness tool for partnerships with community-based projects)
  - October 25, 2023 (Kara Brisson-Boivin: Moving on—Digital empowerment and literacy skills for survivors)
3. Knowledge Exchange
  - June 2024 (2 days, in person) - tentatively the week of June 3-7, 2024, Montreal
4. CoP Drop-In Sessions
  - Informal virtual sessions for discussions on various topics
    - Thursday, October 26, 2023, 12:00 – 2:00 ET
    - Thursday, November 30, 2023, 12:00- 2:00 ET
5. LN & KH Webinars
  - October 17, 2023 - Sexual violence against Black women
  - November 14, 2023 - Technology-facilitated GBV among teens
  - December 12, 2023 - Sizing up: Dismantling weight-based discrimination in the GBV sector
  - January 23, 2024 - Fleeing GBV for immigrant women living with a disability
  - February 27, 2024 - Reproductive coercion
  - March 19, 2024 - Animal abuse and intimate partner violence