Sustainability Working Group Meeting #3 – February 12, 2025
Summary

This third meeting focused on discussing strategies for securing sustainable funding for various initiatives, including exploring alternative funding sources and improving sustainability plans in funding applications. Participants shared experiences and challenges related to program sustainability, emphasizing the importance of collaboration, community connections, and government coordination. The group also discussed concrete suggestions to support instructions related to sustainability in future funding applications.

Foundations and private funding

The Knowledge Hub team shared a list of charitable organizations compiled from the GBV Capital W Database. This list includes 17 charitable organizations that could potentially support some of the projects within the CoP. The document is available in the CoP portal. The possibility of leveraging local community foundations or creating foundations for a specific topic was discussed.

It was noted that many foundations specifically support one organization. The Boussole project is being implemented through the Marie Vincent Centre d'expertise. Melanie Murphy spoke of the Marie Vincent Foundation and its primary role in supporting the clinical services of the Centre d'expertise. She also noted that the foundation's research component is backed by the Marie-Vincent Research Chair.

Jen Johnson spoke about how the BOW program initially began with funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Jen expressed her desire to have the BOW program identified as a core activity with sustainable funding. In order to be successful, these initiatives need to be attached to core services, but there is limited funding available even for core services. There is also concern about if the current interest/attention given to gender-based violence wanes, that there may be even fewer funding opportunities.

People in academia have limited funding opportunities, most of which are focused on core research only, and don't necessarily provide funding for service provision.

There is ongoing concern regarding the current political climate and the ability to access funds in Canada and internationally. A variety of funding sources in Canada and internationally are disappearing. Lorraine Greaves (Strong Women) shared an important insight regarding foundation funding. She identified the need to establish a foundation's

structure within an organization before applying for funding. Having a charitable registration number may be necessary to successfully receive funds.
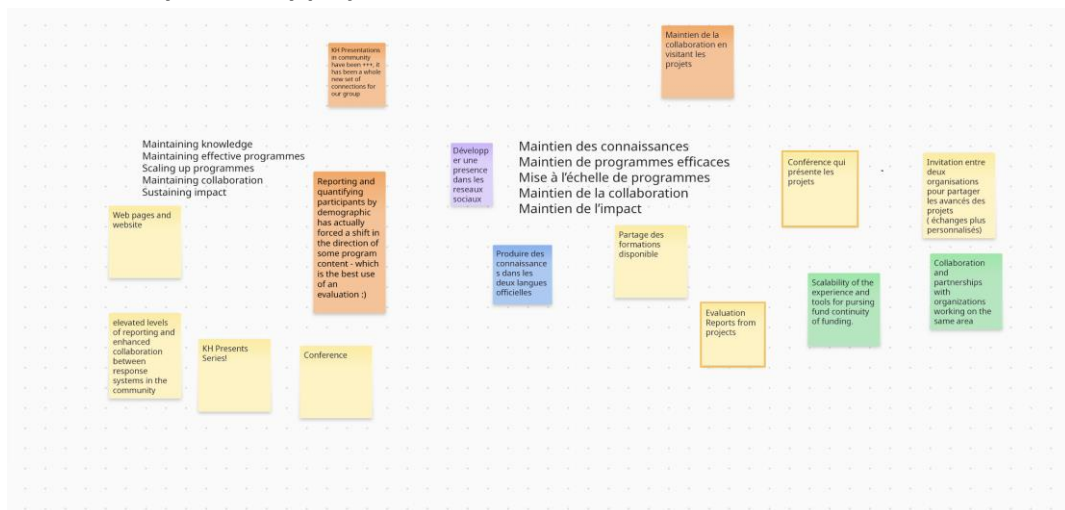
Some people talked about the importance or need to create a business plan or costing study to show feasibility of programs, through mechanisms such as Social Return on Investment. A strong evaluation plan will support these activities.

Lianne Lee (ConnectED Parents) discussed her organization's efforts to integrate into the tech sector, automate aspects of their intervention, and reach a wider audience. She also shared her participation in a program (Social Innovation Hub) at the University of Calgary. She is hoping to develop a Sustainability plan as a result of her participation in the program.

Akm Alamgir (HEAL) Akm outlined their plan for securing future funding for the HEAL project. The primary strategy is to pursue continuous funding from PHAC by presenting a strong business case that demonstrates the project's value and social return on investment. As a backup plan, they propose splitting the program into sections, including art-based approaches for newcomers and gender-based violence initiatives, while also exploring international partnerships. Additionally, they plan to incorporate a research component to improve evaluation metrics and address discrepancies between quantitative and qualitative data.

The group discussed the need for government coordination and sustainability planning for entire groups, suggesting the possibility of a community of practice taking on this role. They acknowledged the limitations of their current approach and sought further ideas and insights.

Current Sustainability Efforts by projects

We used a whiteboard to share some of the current activities currently being implemented based on the following aspects of sustainability such as maintaining knowledge, effective programs, collaboration, and impact; and scaling up successful programs.
Some activities identified include:

- Enhanced reporting and collaboration between community response systems
- Knowledge production in both official languages

- Social media presence and sharing available training resources
- KH Presentations series and conferences to share project advancements
- Partnerships with organizations in the same field
- Quantifying demographics in reports to shape program content
- Ensuring funding continuity through scalable tools
- Conducting a costing study to explore cost effectiveness

Addressing Sustainability in Funding Applications

The following 2 questions guided the conversation:

- What do applicants need to know to properly propose a sustainability plan in an application? What should we be telling the funder?
- What should a funder ask for and look for in sustainability plans in project applications? (how to evaluate**)**

Participants agreed that a track within the application to discuss sustainability should be included. They discussed the importance of budgeting and low-cost adaptations as part of the application to build in funding for sustainability. The concept of ownership was also brought up, with a suggestion that the organization should keep the ownership of the knowledge and projects they create. The idea of connecting with provincial and municipal governments to aid in program sustainability was also proposed. Lastly, the possibility of showcasing previously funded successful projects to learn from their sustainability strategies was suggested. Opportunities to scale up and move forward seem more optimistic when there has been long-term government support (e.g. ten years of more).

Participants identified challenges in developing a sustainability plan, particularly even before any funding has been realized. To ensure rigor, the group advocated for funders to provide explicit guidelines for sustainability plans, including measurable milestones, budget allocations, and timelines. This specificity would improve accountability and help applicants articulate realistic, context-sensitive strategies. It may be helpful to identify expenses within an application that are project-specific and those that may be required beyond the funding period.

Some suggestions for guidance related to how to include sustainability in funding applications

- Consider categorizing sustainable actions by resource requirements : Sustainability measures were proposed to be classified into two distinct categories:

- o **Resource-Dependent Actions:** Initiatives requiring ongoing organizational support, core funding, or dedicated human resources, such as maintaining training programs or operational sites.
  - o **Resource-Light Actions:** Activities achievable with minimal or no additional funding or staffing, such as replicating existing project frameworks or adapting outputs for new contexts.

A clear categorization would enable evaluators to fairly assess feasibility, ensuring equitable opportunities for diverse applicant organizations.

- Replication and Scalability of Proven Initiatives : Participants identified opportunities to amplify impact by replicating successful projects across provinces. Low-cost adaptations of existing models—such as tailoring tools or methodologies to regional needs—were highlighted as efficient pathways to scale sustainability outcomes. Funding applications could incentivize such strategies by requiring proposals to outline adaptable, cost-effective replication plans.

- Consider using the **Program Sustainability Assessment Tool** elements as an evaluation tool that helps to guide the application and the evaluation of the application. There is concern that 2 indicators: organizational capacity and funding stability may favor organizations and institutions with core funding and therefore may not be equitable indicators.

Budgeting Suggestions

- Consider including funds for developing a business plan in the final year's budget, possibly by hiring a consultant.
- Consider building in funds for time spent developing certain aspects of the sustainability plan – like funding elements of an integrated knowledge mobilization plan.

Next steps for the Working Group

- KH team to connect with previous projects and gather learnings to share with CoP members in the next couple of months.
- KH team to send out meeting summary and resources to CoP members.
- CoP members to provide feedback on any specific sustainability topics they want to explore further.
- CoP members to review and provide feedback on the sustainability report that the Hub team will compile.