Social Prosperity
WOOD BUFFALO

Developing a Collective Impact Strategy for Youth-Related Issues in Wood Buffalo:
MEETING 5 REPORT

This report summarizes the proceedings of the fifth meeting in Social Prosperity Wood Buffalo's workshop series, Developing a Collective Impact Strategy for Youth-Related Issues in Wood Buffalo. The report presents the updated theory of change, reviews information about backbone organizations, and outlines a range of options for next steps. It concludes with results from the workshop evaluation.

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1.0 Developing a Collective Impact Strategy for Youth-Related Issues in Wood Buffalo

This workshop series brings together stakeholders from across the community to discuss and develop a collective impact strategy to address youth-related issues in Wood Buffalo. Meeting 5 focussed on backbone organizations, with conversations touching on the importance of continuous communication to their work. Participants also used an emergent learning table to explore possible next steps for this initiative.
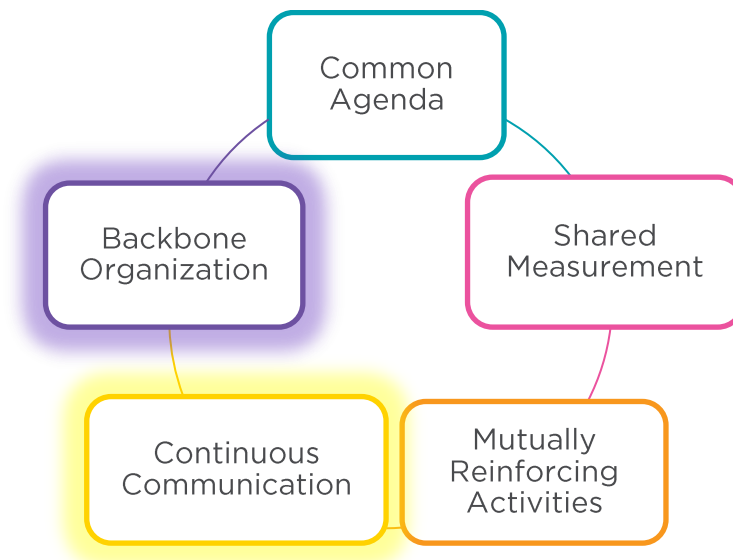
During Meeting 5, the last formal meeting of this workshop series, participants expressed uncertainty about the sustainability of this process without the continued support of the SPWB project team. In response to these concerns, SPWB Project Manager Ifeatu Efu will convene an additional meeting to continue to explore next steps and to determine how SPWB can effectively transition this work to leaders within youth-serving organizations.

To assist in this task, the SPWB project team has created three possible scenarios for next steps that are presented in section 5.1. The initial meeting convened by Ifeatu will determine which of these scenarios (if any) the group would like to pursue at this time.

1.1 Meeting 5, Intended Outcomes

Meeting 5 was designed to:

- Present an updated theory of change
- Explore the role of the backbone organization
- Develop an action plan for this initiative

1.2 Meeting 5 Attendees

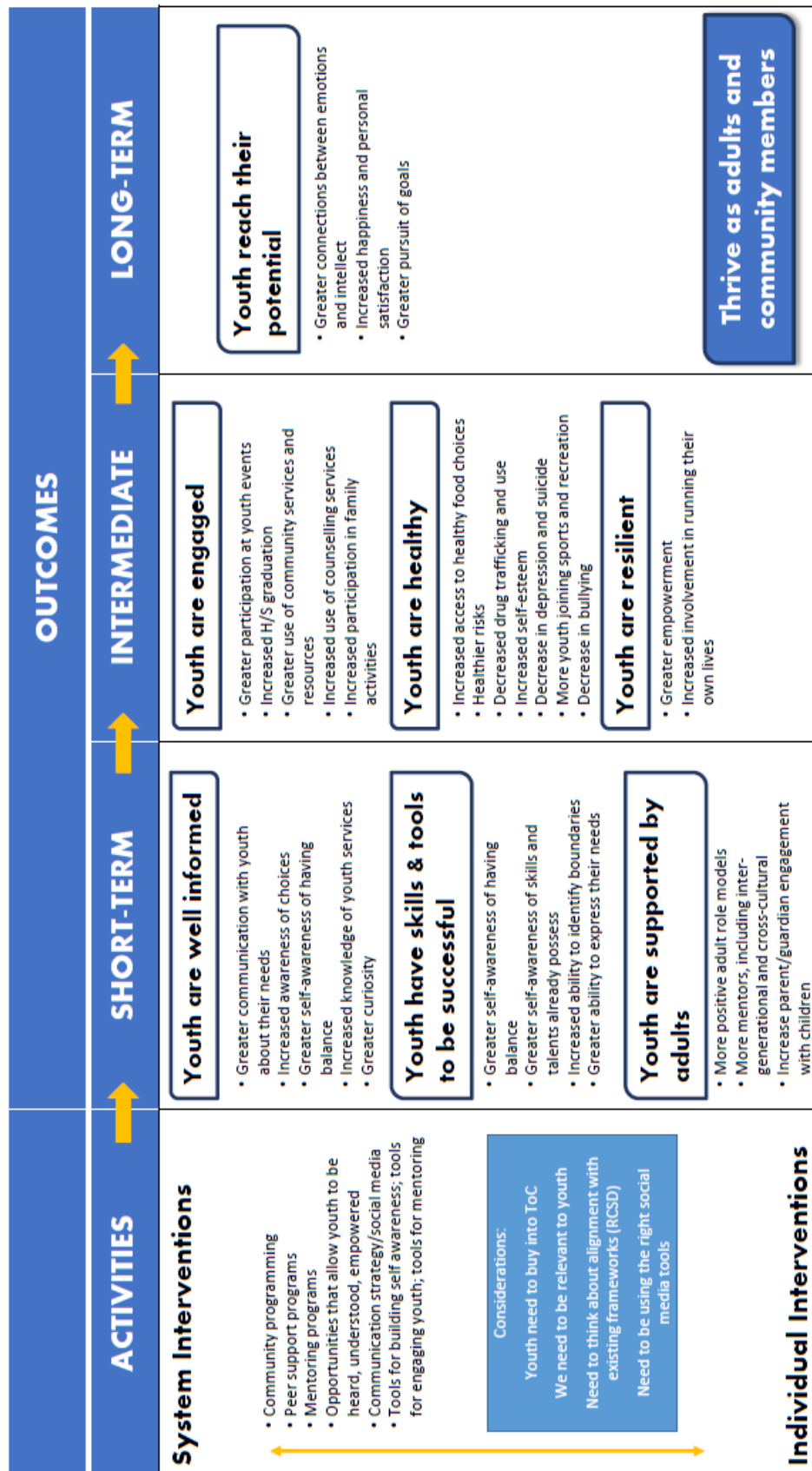Participants in the fifth workshop in this series included representatives from the following organizations:

- St. Aidan's Society
- Some Other Solutions
- Wood Buffalo Food Bank
- Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
- Kaos 91.1
- Alberta Health Services
- Children's Legacy Foundation
- Careers: Next Generation
- Stepping Stones Youth Services/Wood's Homes

2.0 Theory of Change

Tanya Darisi, Director of the O'Halloran Group, presented an updated theory of change incorporating outcomes and indicators identified by participants during meeting 4. The model illustrates the changes a collective impact initiative for youth-related issues could make in the community, outlining potential actions and desired outcomes.

Tanya emphasized that a theory of change is meant to be a living, evolving model and noted that further refinement would be needed as the group continued to define its priorities for action. She also suggested that youth buy-in and engagement would be necessary to validate the theory of change. This echoes participant conversations about the need to meaningfully engage youth in the design of the collective impact strategy.

Revised Theory of Change

OUTCOMES

ACTIVITIES

System Interventions

- Community programming
- Peer support programs
- Mentoring programs
- Opportunities that allow youth to be heard, understood, empowered
- Communication strategy/social media
- Tools for building self awareness; tools for engaging youth; tools for mentoring

Considerations:

Youth need to buy into ToC

We need to be relevant to youth

Need to think about alignment with existing frameworks (RCSD)

Need to be using the right social media tools

Individual Interventions

SHORT-TERM

Youth are well informed

- Greater communication with youth about their needs
- Increased awareness of choices
- Greater self-awareness of having balance
- Increased knowledge of youth services
- Greater curiosity

Youth have skills & tools to be successful

- Greater self-awareness of having balance
- Greater self-awareness of skills and talents already possess
- Increased ability to identify boundaries
- Greater ability to express their needs

Youth are supported by adults

- More positive adult role models
- More mentors, including inter-generational and cross-cultural
- Increase parent/guardian engagement with children

INTERMEDIATE

Youth are engaged

- Greater participation at youth events
- Increased H/S graduation
- Greater use of community services and resources
- Increased use of counselling services
- Increased participation in family activities

Youth are healthy

- Increased access to healthy food choices
- Healthier risks
- Decreased drug trafficking and use
- Increased self-esteem
- Decrease in depression and suicide
- More youth joining sports and recreation
- Decrease in bullying

Youth are resilient

- Greater empowerment
- Increased involvement in running their own lives

LONG-TERM

Youth reach their potential

- Greater connections between emotions and intellect
- Increased happiness and personal satisfaction
- Greater pursuit of goals

Thrive as adults and community members

3.0 Backbone Organizations

Having an effective backbone organization is one of the five conditions for collective impact, enabling partners to align their activities, maintain continuous communication, and monitor their impact.[1]

Dr. Katharine McGowan presented an overview of the role of backbone organizations in collective impact, describing them as:

1. A source of resources (for partners, for the public, for funding & funders)
2. A coordinator of activities, measurement, tools & shared vision
3. Evolving! They respond to emergence, learn & plan for the future

As a coordinator, backbone organizations often perform five central functions:[2]

1. Guide vision and strategy
2. Support aligned activities
3. Establish shared measurement practices
4. Build public will
5. Advance policy
6. Mobilize funding

Backbone organizations also play an important role in stewarding the learning cycle for a collective impact initiative. While the learning cycle can appear straightforward, in reality it is often a much more messy process in which one is required to move back and forth between acting, planning, coordinating, learning, and measuring throughout implementation:

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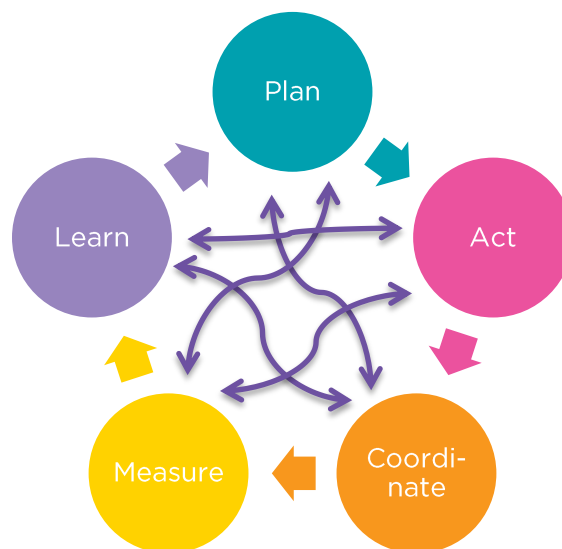
[1] "Collective Impact." John Kania and Mark Kramer. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 2011, p. 36.

[2] The following list is an excerpt from: "Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact." Shiloh Turner, Kathy Merchant, John Kania and Ellen Martin, Stanford Social Innovation Review, July 18th 2012. Retrieved from: http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/understanding_the_value_of_backbone_organizations_in_collective_impact_2

The backbone coordinates all of this activity, taking on the role of guiding, connecting, observing, and celebrating the work of the collective impact initiative.
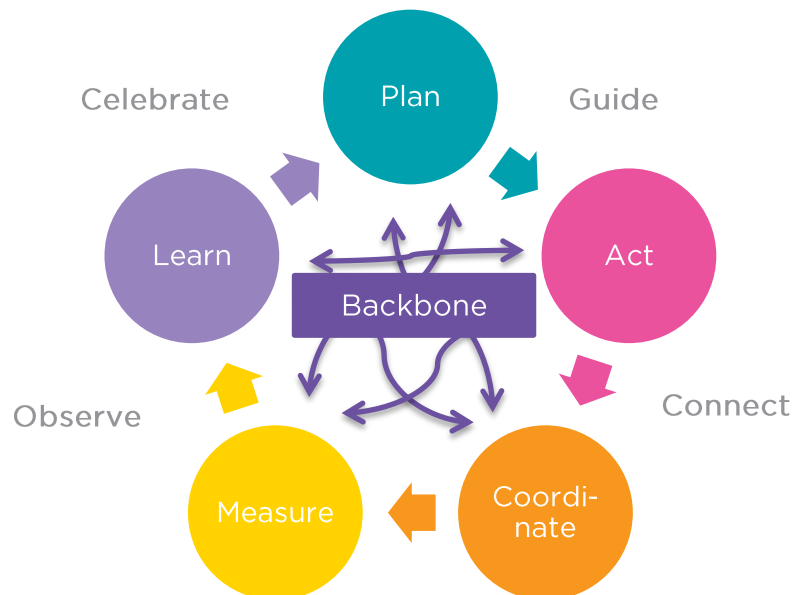
4.0 Determining Priorities for Action

4.1 Emergent Learning Table

In order to develop next steps for this initiative, participants used an emergent learning table,[3] a tool designed to help integrate learning into the strategy cycle. In an emergent learning table, each section builds on the one that came before in order to surface:

1. What we know (data)
2. Insights we can draw from the data
3. Hypotheses or assumptions we can make based on these insights
4. Action we can take to test our hypotheses

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[3] Emergent Learning Map adapted from Fourth Quadrant Partners, 2012.
http://www.4qpartners.com/Tools.html

Participants in Meeting 5 used the emergent learning table to consider the question:

What do we need to do to implement a collective impact strategy for youth-related issues in Wood Buffalo?

Below is a summary of key points from this discussion. (**The comments in bold relate directly to the framing question, answering what we would need to do to implement a collective impact strategy in Wood Buffalo.** The comments that are not in bold represent other important information generated during this discussion that are related to youth issues more broadly.)

What We Know (Ground Truth)
There is a history of collaboration amongst youth agencies – Y-connect
Collective impact requires time and energy
People need to be here and be committed
We're not getting together to collaborate
Youth have not been involved in the development of the collective impact strategy
At least 20 agencies participated in the development of the collective impact strategy
There is no inter-agency meeting focused on youth
There is a high expressed need for this
Youth agencies have a will to work together
Agencies are committed to collaboration under the right conditions
Youth agencies are not making use of each other's resources
Funders are interested in funding collaborations
A lot of information has been uncovered during this process
Too many services available that are doing the same thing (assumption)
Services are not duplicating – by getting together, we might figure it out
There is a high-risk population of youth
We often use MACOY, but middle-of-the-road youth are not consulted / engaged
Majority of youth live south of the river; services are north of the river
Services are available
Kids are not blank slates – need encouragement to express what they want
Youth are multi-faceted

Insights

There are good models out there, there are good backbones

We have connected as a sector in the past, but a new model needs to be built

We need to learn from past work

Youth need to validate the collective impact strategy

We need to learn to interpret the data that is collected

Need good leadership that is sustainable and supported

Need consistent communication tools

Need to ensure all organizations are included

Making decisions for youth without consulting them does not work

Learn from the past, from what has and hasn't worked in finding effective ways to connect and collaborate as a sector

Find ways to engage a diverse range of youth in this process

Organizations need to engage their own youth

We don't know how to evaluate our programs

Groups may be fearful to put their programs on the table due to competition for dollars & missions

We need to do a better job connecting with youth

We need to meet youth where they are

MACOY is perceived as the sanctioned voice of youth

Develop a regional youth council comprised of representatives from each organization

It's difficult to get youth to say what they need / want

Share resources / knowledge and take risks

Hypotheses:

If we involve the youth in the process, then we will have a valid understanding of their needs and more credible information

If we have committed, strong leadership, then we will build a sustainable model

If we have a backbone committee leader, we will have stronger communication in an interagency community

Hypotheses:

If we want to have a strong interagency community, we have to include the youth

If we have commitment and buy-in from youth agencies, then we will have more meaningful collaboration & positive results

If we identify agencies with common values / threads & have them work together, it will be easier to build a bigger collective impact initiative

If we learn to assess & evaluate our programs, we will be able to identify & fill the gaps in our community constantly / over time

If we share our knowledge, we will better fill gaps and build an action plan

Action Items:

Need to think about a sustainable "we"

Devise a strategy to engage diverse youth

Have a facilitated strategic planning meeting

Develop a strategic plan

Get like-minded organizations together

Create a new model of evaluation

Use the data we have

Compile all of our existing data
- Must be comparative to global standards

Take advantage of social media to keep each other informed and aware of each other's work

Explore resources about / funding for backbone organizations. Potential sources include:
- McConnell Foundation
- Need to learn how to be effective
- Innoweave – training for backbones
- United Way
- Social Innovation Endowment Fund

Action Items:

Connect with health services, RCMP

- How many children are in the ER?
- Put programs in place and track whether we are decreasing that number
- Make the value argument
- How does this connect to the common agenda?

Do research

Create a survey – index of what creates a great city for young people

- For the future

Big meeting for data / story sharing

Cross-reference information already available; link up programs, look for similarities, trends & gaps

Needs an advisory / support (create a support)

MOU: (SPWB can help)

Where are the opportunities?

Fuse as a resource

Identify your needs & problems

- Need to be able to articulate needs, gaps, youth focused

Create a skills matrix for organizations

4.2 Prioritizing Action Items

After creating a list of potential actions during the emergent learning table exercise, participants brainstormed next steps for the immediate, intermediate, and long-term future.

These next steps included actions that could be taken by individual organizations, ways that SPWB could offer support, and opportunities to seek assistance from local and national organizations dedicated to enabling collective impact.

Now	Next Year	Forever
Find point person to continue conversations		
Create MOU (SPWB to help)	Review MOU	Continue to review MOU
Create list of support we could use from FuseSocial	Write a business case for collective impact	
List of key contacts (obtain letters of support from each organization that wants to remain involved)	Develop an up to date list of youth organizations and organizations that network with youth	
Create a strategic plan (ask for FuseSocial's help)	Create an evaluation plan	Developmental evaluation
Find training opportunities in and outside of Wood Buffalo (FuseSocial, Innoweave)	Take advantage of training opportunities (Innoweave, FSG, Tamarack CCI)	
Link in with FuseSocial re: Capacity Assessment		
Research: What's been done, look at this critically		
Assess other backbone organization models	Learning	
Look at SPWB's collective impact reports		

5.0 Next Steps

At the end of meeting five, participants expressed the desire to carry forward the momentum for collaboration that has been generated during this workshop series. At the same time, the conversation surfaced uncertainties related to the winding down of SPWB's role as facilitators of the process.

In response, the SPWB project team will convene a conversation in the near future to explore the best route(s) toward continued networking, engagement, and collaboration among youth-serving organizations. This meeting will be convened by SPWB Project Manager Ifeatu Efu and will explore which (if any) of the options presented below best meets the needs of the collective at this point in time. The meeting will also give participants a chance to suggest alternatives.

Following this exploratory meeting, Ifeatu is available to host an additional conversation to determine how to operationalize the preferred scenario.

5.1 Scenarios to Consider

Scenario 1 – Moving Toward a Collective Impact Initiative with Backbone Support

In this scenario, SPWB would convene a meeting in the fall, inviting all executive directors / senior leaders of organizations that participated in the collective impact workshop series. The purpose of the meeting would be to determine whether there is interest in continuing to pursue a collective impact strategy at this time.

As you know, establishing a collective impact initiative requires support from a backbone organization. Backbone organizations can be configured in a variety of ways, from one staff person in one organization taking a lead to multiple staff people from multiple organizations contributing a portion of their time to the work of the collective.

Ifeatu sent out an email asking all organizations who are interested in providing backbone support to contact the SPWB team by Friday June 20th. Following this, SPWB will be having conversations with these groups to discuss what's involved, what resources are needed, and the long-term commitment that is required. These conversations are exploratory – SPWB will not pick 'winners,' but wants to support those working with youth in Wood Buffalo to consider whether they are capable and committed to engaging in backbone work.

Potential backbone options would be presented during this wider meeting and organizations would have a chance to express their interest in participating in the initiative. Organizations would also be assigned preparatory work in advance of the meeting so that they could arrive with a sense of the resources (staff time / data / financial resources) that they would be willing to contribute as collaborators.

Scenario 2- Developing New Mechanisms for Networking and Collaboration

Throughout this process, we have witnessed the value of bringing youth-serving agencies together to talk about the issues youth are facing in Wood Buffalo and to consider new approaches. While there have been formal mechanisms through which to do this in the past, there is currently no active interagency for youth organizations. The insights shared during meeting 5 suggest a desire to learn from the past while developing a new model for coming together as a sector.

In scenario two, youth organizations would be invited to a meeting to develop a new model to ensure sustained networking and collaboration within the sector. Establishing a new way to regularly convene youth-serving organizations would enable information sharing about programs and services as well as about youth issues and trends in the community. It would also help to build trust within the sector and could lead to the emergence of new collaborations in the future. This would not necessarily meet the definition of a collective impact initiative, but it would maintain and build on the relationships created/strengthened through the workshop series. Pursuing this option would not prevent a future backbone or collective impact initiative, but SPWB would not play a role in that future decision.

In this scenario, Ifeatu Ifu would convene a meeting to help develop a new structure for continued networking among youth-serving organizations.

Scenario 3 –Seeing Where the Learning Takes Us

Often, some of the most important results of a workshop series like this are the new partnerships, programs, and ideas that emerge informally as a result of the process. Even if this group decides not to pursue a collective impact initiative at this time, there is no doubt that many organizations will incorporate new strategies and approaches into their work as a result of the knowledge generated during the workshops as well as the connections made between participants.

In scenario three, we would not have any additional formal meetings at this time, but would instead wait and see where the learning takes us from here, recognizing that there may be opportunities to revisit collective impact in the future.

5.2 Collective Impact Resources

Looking for more resources, tools, and training opportunities related to collective impact? Here are SPWB's favourites:

Resource		Description	Available at:
network	Collective Impact Forum	Tools, resources, and advice for collective impact practitioners	http://collectiveimpactforum.org/
training	Innoweave	Webinars, workshops, and resources about collective impact and social innovation	http://innoweave.ca/en/modules/collective-impact
blog	Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations	4 Stanford Social Innovation Review blogs about the role of the backbone organization	http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/understanding_the_value_of_backbone_organizations_in_collective_impact_1
training	Tamarack Collective Impact Summit 2014	Tamarack: An Institute for Community Engagement is hosting a Collective Impact Summit October 6th – 10th 2014 in Toronto	http://events.tamarackcommunity.org/collective-impact-summit
blog	Channelling Change: Making Collective Impact Work	An in-depth look at what makes collective impact initiatives effective	http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/channeling_change_making_collective_impact_work?cpgn=WP%20DL%20-%20Channeling%20Change
article	Social Prosperity Wood Buffalo Collective Impact Workshop Series for Youth-Related Issues, Reports 1-5	Review the progress Wood Buffalo's youth agencies have made so far	http://www.socialprosperity.ca/reports-1

6.0 Conclusion

The SPWB Collective Impact Workshop Series for Youth-Related Issues ran from September 2013 to June 2014 and consisted of five workshops exploring the preconditions and conditions for collective impact. It engaged over 20 organizations serving youth in Wood Buffalo to consider new approaches to addressing community-wide issues. Throughout the workshop series, participants generated crucial information about youth and youth-serving organizations in the region and deepened relationships across organizational and sector boundaries.

A record of this workshop series is available in the meeting reports, which can be found on the SPWB website:
http://www.socialprosperity.ca/reports-1

Remember:

- Please look over the options for the future – do any of these seem feasible or attractive to your organization?
- Plan to attend the follow-up meeting to be convened by Ifeatu Ifu, Project Manager for Social Prosperity Wood Buffalo. Look for an invitation coming soon!

Appendix A: Meeting Agenda

Developing a Youth Collective Impact Strategy Workshop Series

Workshop #5

Wednesday, June 4th, 2014

1:00 – 4:30 pm

MacDonald Island Park

<u>Workshop Goals:</u> To explore the role of the backbone organization and to establish next steps for this initiative.

A G E N D A

1. Synthesizing What We've Done So Far - Dr. Katharine McGowan, SPWB
2. Reflecting on The Process - Group Discussion
3. The Role of a Backbone Organization - Dr. Katharine McGowan, SPWB
4. Emergent Learning Table - Group Exercise

Break

5. Debrief Emergent Learning Table - Group Discussion
6. Next Steps - Group Discussion

Appendix B: Evaluation of Meeting 5

Number of Attendees: 17

SPWB Staff and Guests: 5

Number of Survey Respondents: 6

Percentage of Wood Buffalo Attendees who Completed This Evaluation: 35%

1. Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the fifth meeting in the Collective Impact Workshop Series:
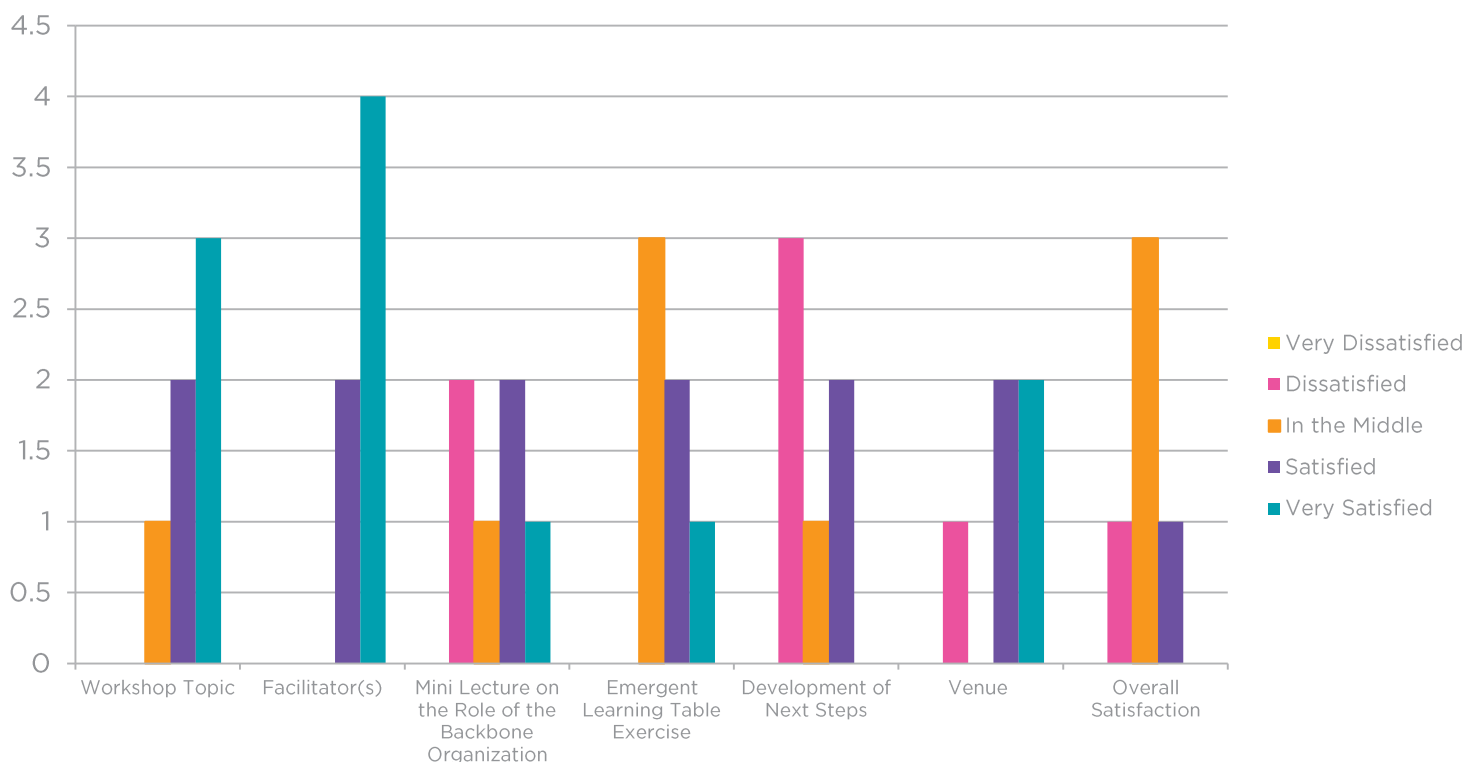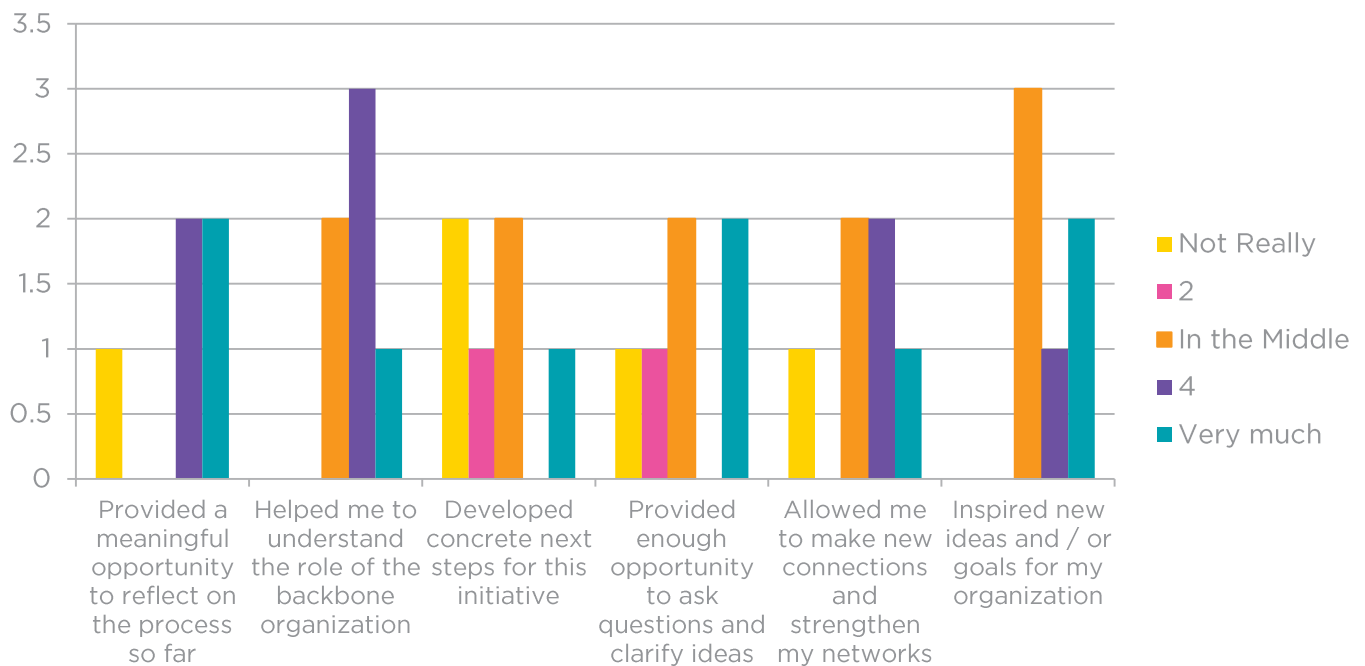

Comments:

a) We really need more information on the different types of backbone organizations and steps in establishing one.
b) During the last portion I felt there was more going on or was being influenced by historical factors. The table exercise was good and I understood its purpose. Our table's difficulty was keeping our ideas relating to the over-arching question of the backbone org.
c) I didn't feel comfortable with the way it ended. I don't think we came to enough of a conclusion about where we will be taking this initiative after social prosperity wood buffalo leaves.

d) Very pleased to see SP taking the lead for the next meeting. I look forward to helping to have a strong representation from the youth agencies.
e) Excellent - thanks!

2. The fifth meeting in the Collective Impact Workshop Series:

Legend:
- Not Really
- 2
- In the Middle
- 4
- Very much

Comments:

a) I understand and firmly believe a back bone organization will be critical moving forward however not confident we have a clear understanding of how and who to do that.
b) I feel like we had enough time to ask questions, but as new ones were asked the more confusing the whole process became.
c) Moving forward will be key to the youth agencies with a strong resource in place! Y agencies have thrived with the Y Connect structure however it's time for a new Youth Inter agency structure with "human resources" connected to it to ensure it continues with in the scope of the planning from the last year.
d) The negative vibe in the room seemed to have deterred from developing a strategy for united for a collective impact.

3. The most useful aspects of the fifth meeting in the Collective Impact Workshop Series were...

a) It gave me absolute clarity on the need for a back bone organization moving forward. References to FSG and McConnell have been helpful for me.

b) Knowing what exactly a backbone organization is and the fuse social is not a back bone organization for agencies.
c) The most useful thing that I have observed in the 5th meeting is that not everyone has a common philosophy in youth programs. Collective Impact has not been grasped, or misinterpreted by some.
d) The next steps

4. The fifth meeting in the Collective Impact Workshop Series would have been more useful if...

a) It was all day and the afternoon spent examining different types and roles of various back bone organizations in existence and then spending some time determining what kind of back bone organization we think would be best moving forward. Then obviously finding someone to be that organization.
b) I had participated in the other workshops.
c) There was more of a definitive answer of what we will do next. The list we made of steps seemed to have been thrown out the window by the time we closed the meeting.
d) It was the natural progression of the series, but not everyone was on the same page yet.
e) I would have been able to arrive when it started - my fault. I look forward to the updates.

5. I could have used more information about...

a) Types of back bone organizations.
b) The past history and outcomes of previous workshops. Pretending on my part would have made me more productive contributor
c) Next steps and how to be the leader in this whole process. I think we settled or at least I settled with the person who decided to take charge because I wasn't willing or didn't feel able enough to take charge of what happens next.
d) There is always a lot of discussion and explanation at these meetings. Well done!

6. Is there anything else you would like to share about this workshop or about this process more generally?

a) I have been vocal about my thoughts :-)
b) I think that not everyone understood the meaning or the impact of collective impact. I sense that some may have just attended to gain new perspective on their jobs and specific strategies that they could do for their program, but not realizing that this what a meeting to develop a united strategy on youth programming.