Makeover: Women's Leadership Co-Creation Studio Advancing Equitable Non-profit Sector Change

Final Evaluation

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Introduction

This evaluation report provides an assessment of the Makeover Project and its key components. It assesses the project outcomes, activities conducted, and outputs delivered in the evaluation framework; and provides recommendations based on the project experience.

The analysis of the outcomes is intended to examine the extent to which the project objective was achieved, and the overall impact it had on the participants. The report provides a detailed account of the various activities undertaken to achieve the project objective. Additionally, the report evaluates the quantity, and relevance of the outputs delivered within the project timeframe.

And finally, drawing upon the insights gained from the project experience, this evaluation report offers valuable recommendations for future projects or initiatives. These recommendations are based on a thorough analysis of the strengths and weaknesses identified during the project implementation.

Background

The Makeover Project, funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), ran from January 2022 to April 2023 for a period of 15 months. Capacity Canada engaged a diverse group of stakeholders including women from underrepresented communities, to co-create solutions for systemic change.

Project Objective

Identify and address systemic barriers for underrepresented women, trans, and non-binary individuals in not-for-profit leadership.

Project Outcomes

1. Environmental Scan

The Environmental Scan of the Waterloo region was conducted to develop a baseline assessment of gender diversity across a sample of charitable sector boards and organizations, and assess and examine gender-based leadership practices in a small sample of gender-serving charities. The scan comprised of a literature review, 18 qualitative semi-structured key informant interviews (from 6 board leaders, 7 senior staff and 5 community stakeholders), and a qualitative survey of not-for-profit organizations and community members to examine state of governance and leadership practices through a feminist lens at the beginning of the project.

The findings of the Environmental Scan provided a solid foundation for understanding the scope of the problem.

2. Journey Map

In September 2022, Capacity Canada assembled a team of women from several non-profit organizations in Waterloo Region to gather stories from women in the community who are too often underrepresented in the decision-making roles in the non-profit sector. Each of the self-identifying women who shared their stories

possessed multiple diversity characteristics that when combined create overlapping modes of discrimination and marginalization. The diversity characteristics of the 13 women included: racialized, newcomer, low income, youth, disabled, indigenous, two-spirit, lesbian and queer.

The Journey Map will help organizations recognize and address barriers through Attraction, Activation and Advocacy.

3. Impact Survey

Mid-way through the project, an impact survey was conducted with 13 non-profit boards to understand the importance of a board's accountability and responsibility towards diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and its impact within the organization.

The survey findings reflect that perceived accountability and responsibility from the Board results in prioritization of DEI in service delivery, a reflection in behavior of the board and conducive board culture, as well as opportunities for leadership for a diverse group. In line with that, there is also an awareness for a need for diversity in leadership positions as well as a gap in DEI training for Board members.

The insights gathered from the survey helped to inform the focus and direction of the final design sprint.

4. Mentorship Network Concept

In March 2023, a team of four community members led by facilitators were challenged to devise an innovative approach to mentorship that would increase the participation of equity-deserving groups in leadership roles within the non-profit sector. The team was given a research brief that summarized some of the work that has been done in this area and was tasked with developing an early concept solution.

The group decided this concept would be grounded in the idea of radical equality or self-directed learning where everyone has something to teach and something to learn. This would remove the hierarchy of mentor and mentee and bake confidence-building and networking into its design. The group also wanted a mentorship experience that would enable knowledge transfer and skill development in a way that was safe, interactive, and collaborative.

The guiding principles and concept design could be used to inspire changes within current mentoring groups, or provide the foundation of a grant proposal for a Waterloo Region mentorship project.

5. Organizational Culture Change Tool

In March 2023, a team of four community members led by facilitators engaged a team of under-represented women to help us design a tool to help existing leaders think about and map their organization's transformation toward being a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible culture (DEIA).

The resulting tool uses the metaphor of building and nurturing a fire as the associated elements mirrors those that need to be considered when transforming organizations to reflecting a more DEIA culture.

This tool can help leaders chart and navigate their transformation to a more DIEA culture. The fire metaphor can yield many useful change insights. Leaders can find/develop and use their equivalent "fire" elements to customize to their organizational context.

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Project Outputs

Output Statement	Key Output Activities	Output Indicator(s)	Target Type	Output Targets	Outputs Achieved
1. Initiate relevant communities' collaboration	Collaborate with various partners to set respective processes required, both unique to each element and for project overall	# of organizations participate as part of the Advisory Table	Local organizations representative of First Peoples, 2SLGBTQ+, non-status, refugee, immigrants or newcomers, rural, low income, disabilities, and racialized communities	5	5
	Collaborate with organizations for co-creating solutions	# of organizations participate in Design Sprint 1	Local organizations	5	5
		# of organizations participate in Design Sprint 3	Local non-profits and charitable organizations	2	3
		# of boards that have taken Impact Survey 2	Local non-profit boards	10	13
2. Co-create the right models to barrier removal	Engage with women who self-identify with a range of diversity characteristics for co-creating solutions	# of women participate in Design Sprint 1	Women who self-identify with a range of diversity characteristics including: racialized, newcomer, low-income, youth, disabled, indigenous, two-spirit, lesbian and queer	10	13
	Engage with women from underrepresented communities for co-creating solutions	# of women participate in Design Sprint 2	Women from underrepresented communities	20	26

	Engage with leaders & community members for co-creating solutions	# of leaders participate in Design Sprint 3	Leaders in non-profits or charitable organizations	2	3
		# of individuals from communities of underrepresented women participate in Design Sprint 3	Individuals from communities of underrepresented women	5	8
3. Develop policies that systematically facilitate and reinforce the co-created change models	Analyze underrepresentation of women in nonprofit leadership and related sector governance challenges in Waterloo region	# of reports produced	Environmental Scan report	1	1
	Develop prototypes/ solutions from each Design Sprint in collaboration with Advisory Table and other stakeholders	# of prototypes/ solutions developed	– Prototype from Design Sprint 1 (Journey map infographic) – Prototypes from Design Sprint 3 (Mentorship Concept, Culture Change Tool)	3	3
4. Building awareness and make the resulting information accessible	Build project awareness and share project findings	# of web pages developed	– Project web page – Environmental Scan web page	2	2
		# of social media posts made	Social media posts	50-60 posts and stories	24 Facebook posts 25 Instagram posts 22 Twitter posts

					12 Instagram/ Facebook Stories
		# of newsletters	Newsletters reaching an audience of 1,000+	2	4
		# email blasts	Email blasts reaching an audience of 1,500+	5	9
		# presentations made to non-profits and charitable organizations	Local non-profits and charitable organizations	5	6
	Hold webinar for stakeholders	# of webinars	Webinar	1	1

Table: Makeover Project Evaluation Framework

Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, the Makeover Project has made significant strides in addressing systemic barriers, raising awareness, and providing practical tools and resources to promote gender diversity, equity, and inclusion in not-for-profit leadership. The project's outcomes serve as a catalyst for ongoing efforts towards systemic change and empower organizations to create more inclusive and diverse environments for underrepresented women.

The Makeover Project has provided valuable insights and learnings from underrepresented women in the community, as well as organizations and leaders. Several key themes emerged, highlighting the importance of raising awareness, creating tools, and continuing conversations to address the challenges faced by underrepresented women. At the beginning of the project, we heard "[Colleagues] make me feel like I am solely responsible for "fixing diversity" within our workplace when it needs to be a conscious team effort and a shift in everyone's frame of mind" from a Senior Leader; we heard "You are the wrong color, wrong gender" from a Community Member. As the project progressed, and tools were co-created, we heard "We created a vision for something that can act as an enabler" from a Design Sprint participant. Reflecting on the project, we heard from TK Pritchard, an Advisory Table Member, "It's clear that boards, non-profits and leaderships not only have a responsibility to reflect the communities they serve but also are made much stronger by doing so."

The evaluation report also acknowledges the ongoing challenges faced by the women's rights movement and the trans community, particularly in light of recent legal and political developments in the US that have socio-cultural impacts in Canada. The report recognizes the importance of advocating for the protection of reproductive rights, including the landmark Roe v. Wade decision, and highlights the necessity of supporting and amplifying the voices of the trans community.

It is also important to highlight the need for sustained dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders to address the multifaceted challenges faced by women. It is crucial to foster a supportive environment that encourages open discussions, where voices from diverse backgrounds are heard and respected. The report underscores the importance of fostering positive conversations to break down barriers, challenge discriminatory norms, and promote equality.

The following recommendations are drawn from the lessons learned:

Compensation

To address the challenge of consistent participant engagement, it is recommended to implement a compensation framework that recognizes and values the contributions of participants. Offering compensation for their involvement in the project will serve as a key motivating factor, encouraging participants to prioritize this work amidst their numerous other commitments, such as family, work, and other volunteer obligations.

Additionally, by providing financial incentives to participants, we can acknowledge the significance of their time, expertise, and lived experiences, demonstrating a commitment to their engagement and fostering a sense of value and appreciation.

Funding

Considering the enthusiasm generated by the community's active involvement in the Design Sprints, it is strongly recommended to secure funding for the development and implementation of the mentoring tool and the integration of the culture change tool within organizations. By investing in these initiatives, we can capitalize on the momentum gained and advance further towards achieving greater equality.

Impact

It is imperative to recognize that understanding the full impact of the project cannot be achieved immediately upon its conclusion. To comprehensively assess the outcomes and effectiveness of the tools developed, it is recommended to allow organizations sufficient time to utilize these resources and study the results over an extended period. This post-project evaluation will provide a more accurate understanding of the tools' impact and their ability to drive sustainable change.

Moreover, as Capacity Canada, it is essential to lead by example and implement internal changes that reflect the principles and values promoted by the project. By making organizational adjustments that prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA), we can demonstrate our commitment to the community and inspire others to follow suit. By embracing DEIA principles within our own organization, we can contribute to the broader movement towards creating inclusive and equitable environments, further amplifying the impact of the project.

Finally, while the Makeover Project made strides in bringing challenges faced by underrepresented women to the surface and providing tools for organizations to recognize and address these barriers, it is essential to recognize that no single project can solve all the complex issues faced by women in the workforce. The evaluation report acknowledges the interconnected nature of systemic challenges and emphasizes the need for sustained efforts, policy changes, and collective action across various sectors to achieve lasting impact.