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NATIONAL EVALUATION OF THE CANADIAN WOMEN'S
FOUNDATION TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS
PROGRAM, 2013-2017

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2017



PREPARED BY:
Tracy Byrne, PhD
Sarah Cunningham, BA



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

In 2013, the Canadian Women's Foundation implemented its *Teen Healthy Relationships Program* (the Program) – a four-year cycle of funding to 17 non-profit organizations across Canada in support of their provision of school-based teen healthy relationships programming. The Foundation's Program was comprised of two distinct (though interrelated) initiatives:

- 1) Teen healthy relationships project funding:** Four-year grants were given to support the implementation of 17 teen healthy relationships projects, which together were understood to represent the range of different approaches to the provision of teen healthy relationships programming currently being implemented in Canada; and
- 2) Grantee/sector capacity building:** By facilitating a variety of formal and informal learning and networking opportunities, the Foundation sought to enhance grantees' capacity to deliver effective programming and to strengthen the teen healthy relationships field at the sector and policy levels.

The Foundation engaged InsideOut Policy Research to conduct the evaluation of its Program. The four-year, mixed methods evaluation has generated findings in response to the following questions:

- What can be said about the approaches taken by the grantees to the provision of teen healthy relationships programming?
- To what extent do participants report positive effects of taking part in the projects?
- What are the conditions that support or limit project effectiveness?
- What effect has the Teen Healthy Relationships Program had beyond individual project participants (e.g. on participants' families, on teachers, and the school environment)?
- Did the Program contribute to building the teen healthy relationships sector?

During the evaluation process, as a means of dealing with the diversity of the approaches represented by the 17 funded projects, the evaluation team identified a number of key program design characteristics against which to describe and assess the projects, and to create groupings of project types. Two of these characteristics emerged as particularly important to the team's analysis of the data generated:

- Whether projects were "universal" (i.e. delivered to all students in a particular grade/community) or whether they were selective (i.e. targeting a specific sub-group of youth); and
- The amount of programming that each project provided for participating teens – known as "dosage."

Some of the most interesting findings of the evaluation relate to the reported effects of projects against these characteristics.

TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS PROJECTS FUNDING: KEY FINDINGS

Effects of Project Participation

Overall, teens reported positive effects of participation across all projects – both on the participant survey and as part of the site visit activities. However, statistical analyses of the participant survey data demonstrated that reported effects of project participation were stronger for selective projects than for universal projects and increased in strength with the increase in project dosage.

Aggregated Findings

“Most significant” impacts on participants

During site visits, project staff and stakeholders, and project participants were asked what they felt was the “real” or “most significant” impact of the projects on teens. There was broad agreement in their responses, with adults and teens identifying the following key effects of project participation:

- Increased knowledge about healthy and unhealthy relationships;
- Greater awareness and capacity for critical thinking;
- Increased self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence;
- Enhanced healthy relationships skills (e.g. communication, decision-making, problem-solving);
- Increased social, cultural and school connectedness.

In addition, project participants highlighted increased self-awareness and self-respect as an important outcome.

Participants’ understanding of healthy relationships

Overall, the funded projects were successful in increasing participants’ **understanding of healthy relationships**, regardless of project design. For instance:

- 72% of teens reported that, as a result of participating in their project, they *were better able to recognize what a healthy relationship is*.
- A “Healthy Relationships Posters” activity (conducted with selected participants from the majority of the funded projects) demonstrated that all groups were able to articulate the primary components of a healthy relationship, as well as the appropriate feelings and behaviours associated with such relationships.

Projects also enhanced teens’ **sense of fairness and equality**, with 70% of participants reporting that they better understand that all genders should have the same opportunities.

Participants’ acquisition of healthy relationships skills

Participant survey results suggest modest to strong positive effects of project participation on teens’ **healthy relationships skills**, including: effective communication; non-violent conflict resolution; and healthy boundary setting/assertiveness. Results for boundary setting/assertiveness were particularly encouraging with 66% of survey respondents reporting that they *are better at saying “no” to things that seem wrong or make [them] uncomfortable* and 67% reporting that they *are better able to choose friends who treat [them] respectfully*.



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“I learned that I was in an unhealthy relationship and learned how to get out of it safely.”

Project Participant

“I’ve become more aware of how I should be treated—what I deserve.”

Project Participant

Building participants' Protective Factors

Overall, participant survey results indicate that project participation was perceived to have had a positive effect on a number of protective factors associated with increased resilience, enhanced wellbeing, and a reduced likelihood of experiencing or perpetrating violence. For instance:

- **Sense of self-efficacy:** 85% of respondents reported that project participation had, to some extent (“yes”/ “kind of”), helped them to feel that they can better handle whatever comes their way.
- **Self-esteem:** 80% of respondents reported that project participation had, to some extent, helped them to feel better about themselves.
- **Social connectedness:** 72% of respondents reported that project participation had, to some extent, helped them make new friends or strengthen existing friendships.
- **School connectedness:** 72% of respondents reported some degree of positive effect on how safe they feel at school and 64% reported some degree of positive effect on how much they enjoy school.
- **Cultural connectedness:** 69% of respondents reported that project participation had had some degree of positive effect on their feelings of pride in their culture, race or ethnic group.

Findings for Selective Projects

A statistical analysis of the participant survey data by “selective” and “universal” projects demonstrated that the reported effects of project participation were stronger for the selective projects **across all of the survey items**. The items for which the difference in the results were particularly wide are:

- ***I have more pride in my culture, race or ethnic group*** (cultural connectedness) – 67% of respondents in selective projects compared to 31% in universal projects;
- ***I feel better about myself*** (self esteem) – 71% of respondents in selective projects compared to 37% in universal projects; and
- ***I am making new friends and/or strengthening the friendships I already have*** (social connectedness) – 68% of respondents in selective projects compared to 36% in universal projects.

These findings do not mean that the universal projects were not effective – rather they indicate the particular value of delivering targeted programming to subgroups of teens who may (for a variety of reasons) have fewer protective factors, and therefore have a higher risk of experiencing or perpetrating violence.

70% of teens said they better understand that all genders should have the same opportunities.

Findings for Higher Dosage Projects

A statistical analysis of the participant survey data by project dosage revealed that the reported effects of project participation increased in strength with increased dosage. **Broadly speaking, survey respondents in very high dosage projects reported the strongest effects of project participation and those in the very low dosage category, the weakest.** (As an indication of the spread represented by the dosage categories, very high dosage projects provided between 56 and 171 hours of programming, while those in the low and very low categories provided between 1.5 and 12 hours of programming.)

A select sample of results is shown below:

| Survey Item | "Yes" | | | | |
|--|-----------|------|--------|-----|----------|
| | Very high | High | Medium | Low | Very low |
| <i>I am better able to recognize what a healthy relationship is</i> | 87% | 81% | 66% | 58% | 60% |
| <i>I know where to go to get help with a problem</i> | 72% | 69% | 53% | 55% | 49% |
| <i>I feel better about myself</i> | 76% | 60% | 37% | 34% | 21% |
| <i>I enjoy school more</i> | 60% | 47% | 27% | 22% | 13% |
| <i>I have more pride in my culture, race or ethnic group</i> | 83% | 52% | 29% | 27% | 18% |
| <i>I am better at saying "no" to things that seem wrong or make me uncomfortable</i> | 76% | 76% | 58% | 60% | 59% |
| <i>I am making new friends and/or strengthening the friendships I already have</i> | 73% | 59% | 35% | 33% | 19% |

The difference between the reported effects is striking and illustrates the value of projects that are designed to engage and support participants over a longer period of time. The findings also provide some support to emerging evidence suggesting that single session workshops on healthy relationships topics are not particularly effective.



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“To be able to share my honest opinion and have everyone respect/listen to my opinion made me more confident.”

Project Participant

“I’ve come out ... to the group, as it’s my safe space and I know I won’t be treated unfairly.”

Project Participant

Key Project Components

A thematic analysis of the qualitative data generated by the project site visits identified a number of components of project design and implementation as being fundamental to effective programming. These are:

- **Creating a “safe space”** – to enable the building of trusting and respectful relationships within the project and to create the appropriate environment to explore relationships issues candidly and without judgement;
- **Giving participants the appropriate language** – to name their emotions and to talk about relationship-related issues respectfully and clearly;
- **Having important conversations** – to address teens’ inherent curiosity about relationships and their need for accurate and comprehensive information, and to provide opportunities for open self-expression;
- **Providing positive role models** – with whom teens can relate and who can model qualities such as respectfulness, inclusiveness and cooperation; and
- **Providing food** – an important component of after-school programming, feeding project participants not only satisfies their hunger but also supports social bonding and relationship building.

Other Notable Findings

The following emerged as important themes in the qualitative data gathered:

- **Quality and consistency of facilitation is critical to the effectiveness of a project** – effective facilitators possess key competencies with respect to connecting with youth, building trusting relationships and navigating sensitive topics adroitly and respectfully. Frequent turnover in facilitators, or hiring facilitators without the appropriate skills for working successfully with teens, compromises the potential impact of the project.
- **Tailoring projects to meet the specific needs of participants supports participant engagement and learning** – project content and delivery style should be responsive to the particular needs, interests and strengths of the group of teens being served. While it is more challenging for universal projects aligned to a provincial curriculum to achieve this, the design of universal projects should prioritize student-centred, active learning approaches that make space for participants’ voice and choice.
- **While delivering school-based programming is regarded as a promising practice with respect to teen healthy relationships work, establishing functional and sustained partnerships between the education community and the non-profit agency is fraught with challenges** – these challenges include: lack of buy-in from school administration; negative impact of staff turnover at the schools and non-profit organization; and limited capacity (on both sides) to put the time in to build reliable connections.
- **Comprehensive projects that provide school-based and community-based programming for teens, and that work with participants’ parents, are meeting more vulnerable teens’ need for wraparound supports that address a wide range of risk and protective factors** – in addition, the participant survey data suggests that such projects saw stronger effects on teens’ learning and behaviour change.

GRANTEE/SECTOR CAPACITY BUILDING: KEY FINDINGS

Overall, the outcomes of the Grantee/Sector Capacity Building Initiative suggest that the capacity-building approach taken by the Canadian Women's Foundation made an important contribution to:

- Fostering authentic and trusting relationships between members of the grantee network;
- Generating a sense of belonging as a group; and
- Supporting the exchange of ideas and expertise with respect to program delivery.

The approach did not, however, support the development of a network that had the capacity to take action nationally to positively affect the teen healthy relationships sector as a whole.

The following findings highlight some of the notable successes and challenges of the Foundation's approach to capacity building, as suggested by the qualitative and quantitative data gathered from grantees.

Successes

- Grantees reported **high levels of satisfaction** with the capacity building activities supported by the Foundation. In particular, grantees valued the opportunity to come together in person at the Annual Grantee Meetings.
- All grantees reported that being part of the grantee network had helped them to **apply learning about evidence-informed practices** to the design and delivery of their teen healthy relationships projects.
- The grantee network made substantial progress with respect to **learning about the field of teen healthy relationships**, especially as a result of learning from each other.
- Grantees reported the following **contributions of the network to the teen healthy relationships sector**:
 - Sharing of promising practices and validation of evidence-informed approaches;
 - Fostering a shared vision;
 - Enabling collaborative approaches to issues/challenges; and
 - Furthering dialogue at the community, regional and national levels.
- Grantees described the **experience of being part of the grantee network** as *wonderful, enriching, uplifting, and rejuvenating as well as educational, productive, helpful and insightful*.

Challenges

- **Lack of time and/or insufficient resources** was the main barrier to grantees' active participation in the learning and capacity building activities supported by the Foundation.
- Grantees were **not always clear about the expectations** with respect to participation in the capacity building and networking activities.
- Some grantees reported that the **lack of continuity with respect to the individuals attending the in-person Annual Grantee Meetings** had a detrimental impact on the ability of the network to become a formal body capable of making change at the sector level.
- **Lower participation in the networking activities by grantee Executive Directors** (or other leadership) may have constrained the capacity of the network to achieve sector-wide change, as those in more strategic roles and with an eye on "the bigger picture" were not sufficiently influencing the process.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FOUNDATION'S FUTURE TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WORK

A number of notable overarching strengths of the Foundation's Teen Healthy Relationships Program emerged as a result of the evaluation. These are:

- **Funding diverse grantees/projects** – this supported everyone involved (Foundation staff, grantees, and evaluators) to develop a deeper understanding about the effects of certain approaches to delivering teen healthy relationships programming to various groups and in different community contexts.
- **Providing four years of funding** – this provided security and continuity for the grantee organizations and the capacity to engage in learning and program refinement.
- **Holding in-person grantee meetings** – these allowed project staff to form strong connections, to share and learn from their peers across the country, and explore promising practices.
- **Supporting a comprehensive and collaborative evaluation of the Program** – this fostered collaboration and mutual learning and resulted in findings that (it is anticipated) will meet the needs of grantees and the Foundation with respect to their future work.

These strengths represent critical components of a robust program funding and capacity building initiative.

The evaluation has also identified the following opportunities for strengthening the Foundation's approach to funding and supporting its grantees:

- **Provide additional support for grantees to engage in program evaluation** – this might be achieved by providing evaluation training to potential grantees and/or by allocating more funds to grantees to undertake evaluation-related learning and practice.
- **Give more attention to the pay and working conditions of project facilitators** – the benefits of the Foundation's multi-year funding did not always extend to frontline staff, most of whom reported being on temporary/short-term contracts, with low rates of pay and no additional benefits. Action is needed by the Foundation to ensure that people working in Foundation-supported projects enjoy good working conditions.
- **Engage Executive Directors in the process of creating sector-level change** – the participation of agency leadership in a network that is seeking to effect change across the sector is crucial; these are the people who are best positioned to contribute to strategic planning and implementation.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR INCREASING IMPACT AND BUILDING THE FIELD

The following considerations are possibilities for the Foundation's future involvement in strengthening the field of teen healthy relationships. (They are informed by an analysis of the current evidence base with respect to teen violence prevention in combination with the data generated by the evaluation.)

- **Lead/participate in the development of a comprehensive national teen violence prevention strategy** – real reductions in the levels of teen violence require the involvement (and resources) of a number of organizations and entities, including governments.
- **Invest in programming for younger children** – there is a gap in the provision of healthy relationships programming for children in elementary school and evidence suggests that the emergence of risks associated with violence tends to begin during early childhood.
- **Work with teaching training programs to develop a healthy relationships course for new teachers** – that will build teachers' awareness of the importance of healthy relationships to teens' school engagement and give them the skills to develop respectful relationships with their students.
- **Work with a group of grantees to test effective ways to involve parents/families in teen healthy relationships programming** – research suggests that involving parents (and other family members) in teen healthy relationships work is associated with better outcomes for vulnerable teens. However, few of the funded projects were formally working with parents and families and most seemed reluctant or unsure about how to do this effectively.



“It has changed me in a positive way. It makes me feel connected to other youth and my community.”

Project Participant

INTRODUCTION

THIS REPORT

This report presents the results of a four-year national evaluation of the Canadian Women's Foundation's Teen Healthy Relationships Program (2013-2017) conducted by InsideOut Policy Research. It describes the evaluation approach and methodology, and details findings with respect to the design, implementation and outcomes of the Teen Healthy Relationships Program. It also offers considerations for the future iterations of the Teen Healthy Relationships Program, informed by the evaluation learnings.

THE TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS PROGRAM

The Canadian Women's Foundation (the Foundation) is a national public foundation dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls. The Foundation's role is unique in Canada and is focused on four core goals: *Stop the violence; End poverty; Empower girls; and Inclusive Leadership*¹. The Foundation's violence prevention work includes investing in projects that help teens to recognize and prevent abusive behaviour and relationship violence. These investments are made under the Foundation's Teen Healthy Relationships Program (the Program). In June 2013, the Foundation began a new four-year Teen Healthy Relationships funding cycle and engaged InsideOut Policy Research to conduct the program evaluation.

The Two Initiatives

The Foundation's Teen Healthy Relationships Program was comprised of two distinct (though interrelated) initiatives:

- 1) teen healthy relationships project funding; and
- 2) grantee/sector capacity building.

The Teen Healthy Relationships Project Funding Initiative

Through the Program, the Foundation awarded four-year grants to 17 non-profit organizations across Canada in support of their provision of school-based healthy relationships programming for young people aged 11 - 19 years. The value of individual grants ranged from \$20,000 to \$40,000 per year. The total value of the grants awarded was approximately \$2.4 million.

Together, the projects selected for funding were understood to represent the range of different approaches to the provision of teen healthy relationships programming currently being implemented in Canada. Consequently, to some extent (and especially initially), the Teen Healthy Relationships Program was seen as a collection of discrete projects rather than as a coherent program.

¹ See <http://www.canadianwomen.org/our-work> for a full description of the Foundation's work.

Grantee/Sector Capacity Building Initiative

With the Teen Healthy Relationships Program, the Foundation supported grantee capacity building through implementing and facilitating a variety of formal and informal learning and networking opportunities. The main capacity building activities supported by the Foundation during the four-year Program included: annual in-person grantee meetings (there were three of these); regular learning webinars; and monthly remote meetings with grantees (to support collaboration). The national evaluation of the Program was also characterized as a component of the grantee capacity-building work, given that it was to have a learning focus and be implemented collaboratively. In addition, the Foundation made capacity-building grants available to grantees to support their participation in local and regional conferences, training and/ or workshops on issues of relevance to teen healthy relationships.²

The Grantees and their Approach to Teen Healthy Relationships Programming

As noted above, the selection of projects for funding was informed (in part) by the Foundation's interest in learning more about different approaches to teen healthy relationships programming. Accordingly, the 17 funded projects were quite diverse. For instance, some focused on leadership development, others took a social justice approach, and others used a community development model. The projects also had distinct goals and objectives that ranged from increasing individual teens' knowledge about relationship violence, to building participants' relationship skills, to strengthening participants' capacity for resilience, to changing school culture.

The following table provides a very brief description of the approach taken by each of the projects. The intent is to give the reader a sense of the diversity of approaches and desired effects/impacts.



² The allocation and impacts of these additional grants were not tracked by the evaluation.

Table 1. Descriptions of funded projects (N.B. projects are listed west - east across the country)

| Project Name, Grantee & Location | Project Description |
|---|---|
| <i>Shift (Project Respect), Victoria Sexual Assault Centre (VSAC), Victoria, British Columbia</i> | <p><i>Shift</i> is one of a group of youth programs under the <i>Project Respect</i> initiative. <i>Project Respect</i> has been delivered by VSAC since 1999. <i>Shift</i> applies an anti-oppressive lens and is oriented to social action. Community-based facilitators support participants to develop and implement a social justice project in their schools.</p> <p>Key idea: Youth are not the ideas they hold; these ideas come from the surrounding culture and can be changed by supporting youth's capacity for self-awareness and critical thinking.</p> <p>Key goal and hope: Youth are engaged in social action to promote social justice.</p> |
| <i>Strengthening Youth, Cowichan Women Against Violence (CWAV), Duncan, British Columbia</i> | <p><i>Strengthening Youth</i> was initiated with Foundation funding. The project uses an interactive curriculum based on extensive youth consultation/dialogue and incorporating a feminist perspective.</p> <p>Key idea: Facilitate teens' social and emotional learning as a means of enabling violence-free, equitable relationships.</p> <p>Key goal: Build participants' sense of self-worth and self-awareness, and connections to community.</p> <p>Hope: Foster a culture of violence prevention and healthy relationships.</p> |
| <i>Respectful Relationships (R+R), SWOVA, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia</i> | <p><i>Respectful Relationships</i> (R+R) has been delivered to teens on Salt Spring Island since the early 2000s. The project addresses bullying, sexism, racism, and homophobia, with a focus on the development of healthy, non-violent relationships among adolescent boys and girls.</p> <p>Key idea: Working with Grades 7, 8, 9 and 10, content is presented and built upon over four years.</p> <p>Key goal: Working in partnership with schools and community to support teens and adults to build relationships based on equality, respect and mutual support.</p> <p>Hope: Eliminate violence and abuse.</p> |
| <i>Healthy Youth Relationships (HRY), Red Cross, Red Deer, Alberta</i> | <p><i>Healthy Youth Relationships</i> (HRY) is a component of the Red Cross Respect Ed program, which has been in existence since 1989. Volunteer adult facilitators provide (upon request by community agencies) a stand-alone workshop on characteristics of unhealthy and healthy relationships.</p> <p>Key idea: Apply an "inclusive," public health approach to violence prevention programming.</p> <p>Hope: Participants acquire the necessary information to help themselves and their friends deal with unhealthy relationships.</p> |

Table 1. Descriptions of funded projects (N.B. projects are listed west – east across the country)

| Project Name, Grantee & Location | Project Description |
|---|---|
| RESPECT, Immigrant Services Calgary, Calgary, Alberta | <p>Initiated with Foundation funding, <i>RESPECT</i> builds on earlier work by Immigrant Services Calgary. The project extends the organization's after-school programming to provide additional focus on healthy relationship development for immigrant/refugee youth 11-13 years of age.</p> <p>Key idea: Participants engage in arts-based activities that allow them to explore local socio-cultural issues and their sense of identity/hopes for the future.</p> <p>Hope: Participants will develop leadership skills and a strong sense of self-efficacy.</p> |
| Sacred Seven, Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba | <p><i>Sacred Seven</i>, delivered through the Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre at the University of Winnipeg, was initiated with Foundation funding and builds on the ongoing work of active community leaders. Traditional Indigenous teachings are integrated into two recreational projects – hoop dancing and basketball. Project facilitators include a married couple with a long-standing relationship; the couple is seen to model healthy and committed relationships.</p> <p>Key idea: Provide youth a safe and stable learning environment and positive, ongoing relationships with trusted adults.</p> <p>Key goal: To support Indigenous youth to grow into healthy, optimistic and successful adults by supporting development of their self-esteem, self-efficacy and cultural connectedness.</p> <p>Hope: Participants will develop the skills and confidence to succeed and to become leaders in their community.</p> |
| Newcomer Youth & Healthy Relationships Project, Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC), Manitoba | <p><i>The Newcomer Youth & Healthy Relationship Project</i> was initiated with Foundation funding and extends SERC's work with newcomer families in Winnipeg. The project is delivered through a partnership with an established newcomer/immigrant agency and is embedded as one component within that agency's school-based work. The project supports newcomer youth to navigate the transition from home country to mainstream Canadian culture, with respect to sexuality and healthy relationships.</p> <p>Key idea: Provide a safe space where youth feel able to ask questions and access information that they cannot ask for or find at home.</p> <p>Key goal: Foster parental involvement and support.</p> <p>Hope: Program graduates move into peer-led projects that support development of leadership skills.</p> |

| Project Name, Grantee & Location | Project Description |
|---|---|
| <p>Fourth R, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Northwest Territories</p> | <p><i>The Fourth R</i> is an evidence-based violence prevention project first tested in 2004. The implementation of the program is supported by the development of long-term relationships with school districts, and regional and provincial governments. Funds from the Foundation have contributed to bringing the <i>Fourth R</i> to the NWT and, specifically, students from Dene communities.</p> <p>Key idea: Ensure project fidelity (across a wide variety of schools and communities) by training teachers to deliver the content and offering a full range of teaching tools/resources as well as ongoing support.</p> <p>Key goal: Through role-play (and other active learning strategies) teens acquire a specific set of skills to navigate challenging situations and reduce their chances of experiencing violence and/or being involved in unhealthy relationships.</p> |
| <p>Be the Change, Sexual Assault & Violence Intervention Services (SAVIS) of Halton, Oakville, Ontario</p> | <p>Developed with Foundation funding, <i>Be the Change</i>, is an online healthy relationships teaching resource intended to support teachers to deliver provincial healthy relationships content.</p> <p>Key idea: Develop an online healthy relationships resource that is current, relevant and engaging, and that enhances teachers' delivery of the provincial healthy relationships curriculum.</p> <p>Key goal: Provide a tool that meets and supplements provincial prescribed learning outcomes related to healthy relationships.</p> <p>Hope: Classroom teachers use the <i>Be the Change</i> content and activities to stimulate meaningful conversations about what is and is not a healthy relationship.</p> |
| <p>ReAct, METRAC, Toronto, Ontario</p> | <p>Foundation funding has enabled METRAC to expand its <i>ReAct</i> project. <i>ReAct</i> is youth-centred – sessions focus on participants' interests, needs and experiences with respect to relationships and identity (including lived experience of oppression).</p> <p>Key idea: Popular education model (Paulo Freire) is used to help participants develop the knowledge, tools and skills to explore, analyze and address the gender-based and other systemic violence that they come across in their communities.</p> <p>Key goal: In a safe space, participants reflect critically on their experiences, develop a sense of self-efficacy, and build their capacity for healthy relationships.</p> |
| <p>Teens Against Gender-based Violence (TAG-V), Abrigo Centre, Toronto, Ontario</p> | <p>Foundation funding has enabled Abrigo Centre to provide more intense and focused healthy relationships programming to teens in neighbourhood schools. TAG-V includes a youth leadership focus – participants develop an outreach piece (such as a skit or presentation) that they share with peers and/or younger students.</p> <p>Key idea: “Planting seeds” of change with respect to promoting healthy and equitable relationships.</p> <p>Key goal: Build leadership capacity among teams of youth and support their ability to raise awareness of woman abuse, dating violence, peer violence, family violence and the development of healthy relationships among their peers.</p> <p>Hope: To enhance the health and well-being of the community.</p> |

Table 1. Descriptions of funded projects (N.B. projects are listed west – east across the country)

| Project Name, Grantee & Location | Project Description |
|---|---|
| <p><i>À l'action, Y des femmes,</i> Montréal, Québec</p> | <p>Developed with Foundation funding, <i>À l'action</i> is a project for boys and girls that focuses on social skills, critical analysis of gender and emotional dependency, and leadership development. Participants work in single-sex groups to create a media project that explores some aspect(s) of gender and relationships.</p> <p>Key idea: Young people learn best by doing – the media project supports self-expression, collaboration and the application of knowledge and ideas.</p> <p>Key goal: Strengthen the self-agency of boys and girls and support them to explore alternatives to the power relationships between the sexes.</p> <p>Hope: To reduce the incidence of gender-based violence, promote social equity and support teens to develop leadership skills.</p> |
| <p><i>Bâtir des relations saines,</i> BCHM, Montréal, Québec</p> | <p>Established in 2013 with Foundation funding, <i>Bâtir des relations saines</i> aims to equip young men and women with the skills they need to develop healthy relationships. Workshops support teens to respect and value themselves, discover how to reduce the impact of violence on their lives, and acquire more control over their lives. A community-specific and integrated model of service delivery enables BCHM to provide wraparound supports to youth.</p> <p>Key idea: Establish and maintain long-term, productive professional and interpersonal relationships between the BCHM team, school staff and administration, and youth and families who live in the community.</p> <p>Key goal: Link vulnerable teens to additional services and supports that will help ensure their success in school, in their relationships and in their future lives.</p> <p>Hope: Healthy and resilient individuals, families and community.</p> |
| <p><i>Making Waves/Vague par vague,</i> Partners for Youth, Fredericton, New Brunswick</p> | <p>In operation since 1995, the <i>Making Waves</i> project engages youth in a peer process to explore and raise awareness about relationship violence issues. The project model is evolving and currently involves a Student Advisory Committee leading a one-day event with youth and teachers from across N.B. Youth are then supported to develop and implement an action plan in their schools.</p> <p>Key idea: “Waves of change” – start the process then let youth continue to “make waves” back in their schools.</p> <p>Key goal: Teens become active leaders and partners in creating a world in which violence is not tolerated.</p> |
| <p><i>LOVE in Indian Brook and Membertou,</i> LOVE, Nova Scotia</p> | <p>Foundation funding supported the expansion of the <i>LOVE</i> project into two Indigenous communities in Nova Scotia. The project design is youth-centred, discursive and experiential. Through conversation and reflection, participants are supported to examine their own experiences of violence and oppression and link these to underlying factors of racism, sexism and colonialism. Embracing local culture and traditions, the project also uses the arts to foster participants’ self-expression.</p> <p>Key idea: You can’t have a healthy person without healthy relationships. You have to be in healthy relationship with teens to foster healthy relationships.</p> <p>Key goal: Provide consistent, reliable, long-term support to underserved youth.</p> |

| Project Name, Grantee & Location | Project Description |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Healthy Relationships for Youth</i>, Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Resources Association, Antigonish, Nova Scotia</p> | <p><i>Healthy Relationships for Youth</i> has been provided since early 2000 in partnership with the regional School Board. It is a peer-facilitated, school-based violence prevention project that focuses on creating and maintaining healthy relationships, supporting diversity, and challenging oppression and exclusion. Older high-school students are trained to deliver the classroom sessions to younger students.</p> <p>Key idea: Focus on developing the peer facilitators – build their healthy relationships knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Key goal: Foster youth leadership through peer facilitation training.</p> <p>Hope: Social change.</p> |
| <p><i>It's All About YOUth</i>, PEI Family Violence Prevention Inc., Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island</p> | <p><i>It's All About YOUth</i> was initiated in 2013 with Foundation funding. Using an experiential and reflective pedagogical approach, community-based facilitators support participants to increase their knowledge and understanding of gender-based discrimination and violence.</p> <p>Key idea: An understanding of unhealthy relationships can support youth to develop positive relationships.</p> <p>Key goal: Foster participants' capacity (knowledge, attitudes and behaviour) for healthy relationships.</p> <p>Hope: Deliver the program to all grade 7 students in the province of PEI and change school culture.</p> |

APPROACH TO THE EVALUATION

Evaluation Goals

Originally, the overarching goal of the evaluation was to answer two key questions:

- Is the *Teen Healthy Relationships Program* directly reducing violence against women and girls?
- Is the Program contributing to building the teen healthy relationships sector?

The first question was problematic. Evaluating prevention programming can be particularly difficult because the ultimate goal – to reduce (or fully stop) a behaviour from occurring – is often far into the future and can be influenced by many other intervening factors. The design of the Foundation's Program (17 distinct projects, with varied start and end times, and diverse durations), while perfect for learning about different approaches to teen healthy relationships programming, was not conducive to identifying and making an attribution of impact over an indeterminate and lengthy timeframe. For instance, it did not support the implementation of a pre-program assessment of participants' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours, nor was it possible to include a comparison or control group in the evaluation design, which is necessary for ruling out other causal or contributing factors. Also, the scope of the evaluation did not allow for following specific project participants over time in order to determine if the effects of the projects were being sustained.

However, what has been possible through this evaluation is to generate findings about the benefits of broad-based and targeted models of teen healthy relationships programming, as perceived by youth participants and stakeholders. The Foundation intentionally used the Teen Healthy Relationships Project Funding Initiative to fund a diverse range of projects, and this has enabled the evaluation to address the question, "*What works, for whom, and under what conditions?*" Under the umbrella of this overarching question, the evaluation has generated answers to the following:

- *What can be said about the approaches taken by the grantees to the provision of teen healthy relationships programming?*
- *To what extent do participants report positive effects of taking part in the projects – for example, on their understanding about healthy and unhealthy relationships, on their capacity to be in healthy relationships with others, on the protective factors associated with healthy and violence-free lives?*
- *What are the conditions that support or limit project effectiveness (as measured by participants' reported outcomes)?*
- *What effect (if any) has the Teen Healthy Relationships Program had beyond individual project participants – for example, on participants' families, on teachers, and the school environment?*

The second key evaluation question – *Is the Program contributing to building the teen healthy relationships sector?* – was more practicable. It has been possible to generate findings with respect to the ways in which the Foundation's Grantee/Sector Capacity Building Initiative has enhanced grantees' capacity to design and deliver effective teen healthy relationships programs. The specific evaluation questions associated with the Foundation's capacity building activities were:

- *Did participating in the Grantee/Sector Capacity Building activities increase grantees' use of best and promising practices (including program evaluation)?*
- *Did the Foundation's efforts to foster a grantee network enhance grantees' capacity to work collaboratively and to learn from each other?*
- *Have grantee learning and networking activities had any impact on the field of teen healthy relationships at the national level?³*

Finally, equipped with answers to all of these questions, the evaluation has also been able to answer the following:

- *Has the evaluation uncovered key opportunities for further development and refining of the Canadian Women's Foundation's Teen Healthy Relationships Program?*

³ From the Canadian Women's Foundation's, Teen Healthy Relationships Program RFP for Evaluation Consultants.

Principles and Values Guiding the Evaluation

The evaluation was guided by the following principles and values. Examples of how they were put into practice are also provided.

- **Working collaboratively with all participants in the evaluation:** The InsideOut evaluation team sought to facilitate the participation of the Foundation and grantees in the key steps of the evaluation design and implementation. For instance, we took a collaborative and iterative approach to designing the evaluation tools. We also shared emerging findings with grantees and sought their input on the meaning and relevance of these findings. Grantee and Foundation expertise also helped to shape our Descriptive Framework – a crucial analytical tool for the evaluation.
- **Being flexible:** The evaluation team aimed to be responsive to the needs and preferences of each grantee and to the specific context of each project. For example, while we had an overall framework for the project site visits, we engaged with each grantee to determine how their site visit would work best for them. When grantees felt that certain site visit data collection approaches would not be appropriate for their context, we worked around this and identified other, more suitable methods.
- **Being strengths-based:** The evaluation focused on identifying what was working with projects and supported grantees to show us the best of their efforts. Interview and focus group questions applied an appreciative inquiry lens, inviting grantee staff and their stakeholders to share success stories, to give examples of challenges that they had faced and overcome, and to identify what they would need to enhance their projects further. Similarly, the Participant Survey (the main tool for generating participant-reported data) focused on the positive effects of program participation.
- **Taking a utilization-focused approach:** Throughout the process, the evaluation team kept a close eye on how the Foundation was intending to use the findings (i.e. to support grantee learning and to inform future funding initiatives) as well as how the findings could best support grantees with respect to enhancing their projects and securing future funding. We shared findings with the Foundation and grantees at regular points throughout the evaluation process and met with the Foundation's Advisory Committee to explore the implications of the findings for future iterations of the Teen Healthy Relationships Program.
- **Ensuring that the evaluation was both evidence-informed and grounded in practice:** The evaluation questions, tools and indicators were informed by an initial review of relevant published research and refined in accordance with the evaluation team's ongoing reading of emerging evidence of effective practice throughout the evaluation process. In addition, the evaluation team drew on what we were cumulatively learning about the 17 funded projects to refocus data collection and to redesign tools. Research and practice guided our approach in an iterative manner – each helping to inform and improve our tools and our analysis of the data.

Developing the Descriptive Framework

During Year 2 of the Evaluation, the InsideOut evaluation team (in close consultation with Dr. Wendy Rowe of Royal Roads University in Victoria, BC) began developing a “Descriptive Framework” to support the team’s understanding and analysis of the 17 funded projects. Development of this Framework helped to address a key challenge of the evaluation: that the 17 projects used a variety of designs and approaches and could not be expected to achieve (and therefore be evaluated against) the same results.

The Descriptive Framework contains a number of descriptive dimensions against which we have been able to describe and assess the 17 projects. The Framework has supported the evaluation team to identify characteristics that groups of projects have in common, while still recognizing and taking into account their differences. The table below lists the descriptive dimensions.

Table 2. Descriptive Dimensions

| Descriptive Dimensions |
|--|
| What is the project’s orientation to prevention? (I.e. is it universal or selective?) |
| Does the project target a specific sub-group of youth? |
| Is the project mandatory or voluntary (for the youth participants)? |
| How many years has the project been operating? |
| What is the primary physical setting of the project? Is it delivered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In school, during regular hours of instruction; • In school, outside of regular hours of instruction; • Not in a school but elsewhere in the community; or • A combination of in school and elsewhere in the community? |
| Is the project aligned with the provincial/territorial curriculum? |
| Who delivers/facilitates the project? (Is it a schoolteacher, an agency facilitator, a youth facilitator or a combination of these?) |
| What is the average number of total project hours per participant? |
| Is the project co-ed or gender-specific, or a combination? |

The selection of the descriptive dimensions were informed, in the first place, by research evidence on characteristics of effective prevention programming for youth and were refined as we continued to gather project data. During the third Annual Grantee Meeting (Calgary, 2015), we gathered input from the grantees on some of the key descriptive dimensions and integrated that input into the Framework. Data generated from the 10 site visits conducted in Year 3 also informed the evolution of the Framework dimensions. In addition, the evaluation team reviewed and modified an iteration of the Framework with the Foundation’s Violence Prevention Director and Manager.

The Descriptive and Analytical Framework has been a central tool for our analysis of the project data generated. It has enabled SPSS analysis, allowing us to identify patterns and trends with respect to what approaches were working, for whom and in what context.

EVALUATION METHODS

We used a mixed methods evaluation design. Quantitative data collection tools included:

- Annual Grantee Survey;
- Annual Grantee Report to the Foundation; and
- Participant Survey.

Qualitative data were gathered through project site visits (one per grantee). There were four site visit data collection tools:

- Executive Director Interview Guide;
- Key Informant Interview Guide;
- Staff Focus Group Guide; and
- Arts-based Participant Focus Group Guide.

In addition, the evaluation team developed and implemented a Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change assessment tool to generate data on grantees' evolving capacity to collaborate as a network and create positive change within the developing teen healthy relationships sector.

Details of the Data Collection Tools

Annual Grantee Survey

This online survey (implemented in *FluidSurveys*) was designed by the InsideOut evaluation team in consultation with the Foundation's Director and Manager of Violence Prevention Programs. Administered in Years 2, 3 and 4 of the evaluation, the survey was revised and refined each year to reflect our evolving understanding of the funded projects and the needs of the evaluation. For each administration of the survey, grantees completed one survey for their project/organization.

Annual Grantee Report to the Foundation

Each year, the evaluation team designed a number of national evaluation questions to be included in the Foundation's template for its Annual Grantee Reports. Questions varied each year and reflected both our developing understanding of the funded projects and the needs of the evaluation. Data were generated for all four years of the evaluation.

Participant Survey

The Participant Survey was the main tool for generating participant-reported data on the effects of project participation. A pilot survey was implemented during Year 1 of the evaluation (with limited value in terms of the quality and relevance of data generated). Thereafter, the evaluation team (with input from Dr. Wendy Rowe and extensive consultation with grantees) developed a new Participant Survey, informed by evidence on components of successful prevention programming for teens and by literature on youth protective factors.

The revised survey was administered in Years 2 and 3 of the evaluation. In each year, the survey went to field in the late Fall in *FluidSurveys*, and remained "live" until the end of June. Grantees were also given the option of having youth complete a paper survey if they felt that they did not have the capacity to support participants to complete the survey online. Paper copies were mailed to the Canadian Women's Foundation in Toronto and the data entered by an intern.

The survey was designed to be completed by youth at the end of their participation in their teen healthy relationships project. Grantees determined which groups of participating youth would complete the survey. The InsideOut team provided guidance to grantees regarding the appropriate administration of the survey to ensure participants' privacy and confidentiality.

Overall, a total of 2,330 Participant Surveys were submitted by project participants from 16 of the 17 funded projects.⁴ (One of the grantees indicated from the outset that they would be unable to administer the Participant Survey to their project participants.) Of the 16 projects for which surveys were received, the rate of response ranged from 7% to 97%.

⁴ See Appendix A: Data Collection Tools for the ratio of participants to completed surveys, by grantee project.

with an average response rate of 45%. Ultimately, 2,153 surveys were determined to be valid and were included in the statistical analysis.

Site Visits

The site visit tools (see list of tools above) were developed collaboratively with grantees through a process facilitated by the InsideOut evaluation team. Grantees gave particularly detailed and valuable input into the development of the arts-based Participant Focus Group tool to ensure a format that youth would find engaging and feel safe participating in.

Typically, all four tools were administered during a single intensive day on site with project staff, and in schools and community with youth participants and project stakeholders. The evaluation team worked closely with grantees to identify suitable key informants for interview. These tended to include: a school teacher/administrator; a parent; and one or more people from other community organizations with whom the grantees had a relationship. Grantees selected the youth who participated in the Participant Focus Group, and worked with schools to schedule and facilitate implementation of that session. The Staff Focus Groups were held with agency staff members (paid and volunteer) who had been closely involved with designing and implementing the project.

Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change Tool

This was the primary method for generating data on the grantees' evolving network and their capacity to collaborate in order to create positive change at the practice and policy levels with respect to the developing the field of teen healthy relationships work. Two tools – the Wilder Tool and the Public Health Agency of Canada's Community Capacity Building Tool – were adapted by the evaluation team for measuring collective action by the group of grantees (i.e. the 17 grantee organizations – and their projects – as a collective entity). These tools were significantly redeveloped to meet the needs and purposes of the national evaluation and to support the gathering of relevant and useful data.

The Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change tool was administered in Years 1, 2 and 4 of the national evaluation. Through a reflective and discursive process it supported grantees to rate their collective experience of the *Teen Healthy Relationships Program* grantee network across four domains:

- a. *Linking and Learning with Others in our "Community of Practice";*
- b. *Learning from Others in the Field;*
- c. *Linking Learning to Action; and*
- d. *Leading Positive, Sustainable Change.*

Multiple Lines of Evidence

Across the main lines of evidence, data were gathered from over 60 grantee staff (leadership and project facilitators), 156 youth in focus groups plus 2,153 valid Participant Surveys, and 56 project stakeholders. During the site visits, we met and spoke with a total of 341 people. The table below details all the lines of evidence.

How the Data Were Analyzed

Quantitative data generated by the Participant Survey were analyzed in SPSS. This involved:

- Descriptive statistics on youth responses to questions about their participation in project activities, and new knowledge, attitudes and behaviours pertaining to relationships; and
- Simple chi-square and contingency analysis performed on each item to determine the significance of responses by gender and by key project characteristics.

A thematic analysis of the qualitative data was conducted using MAXQDA data analysis software.

Table 3. Lines of evidence used, by project year

| Lines of evidence | Quantity | Year 1 (13/14) | Year 2 (14/15) | Year 3 (15/16) | Year 4 (16/17) |
|--|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Administrative data | | | | | |
| Proposal Review | 17 proposals | √ | - | - | - |
| Annual Grantee Reports to the Foundation | 17 reports per year (68 reports in total) | √ | √ | √ | - |
| Grantee data | | | | | |
| Semi-structured Telephone Interviews | 17 interviews, 25 people | √ | - | - | - |
| Annual Grantee Online Surveys | 49 surveys (over 3 years) | - | √ | √ | √ |
| Capacity to Collaborate Tool | 3 rounds | √ | √ | - | √ |
| Staff Focus Groups | 17 focus groups, 43 people | - | √ | √ | - |
| Grantee Executive Director/Director Interviews | 17 interviews, 18 people | - | √ | √ | - |
| Participant data | | | | | |
| Participant Surveys | 2,153 | √ (pilot) | √ | √ | - |
| Project Participant Focus Groups (Site Visits) | 14 focus groups, 156 youth | - | √ | √ | - |
| Project stakeholder data | | | | | |
| Key Informant Interviews (Site Visits) | 52 interviews, 56 people | - | √ | √ | - |
| Other Site Visit Input: Observed 2 staff focus groups and 4 participant sessions | 68 people | - | √ | √ | - |

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Chosen Methods

Strengths of the evaluation design include:

- The use of mixed methods and multiple data sources, allowing for triangulation of data;
- The gathering of information from a large number of project participants (via the Participant Survey) to ensure that the data reflect a broad range of perspectives; and
- The inclusion of site visits. Site visits facilitate good relationships with the project stakeholders, which enhances data quality. In addition, they yield rich qualitative data.

Weaknesses of the evaluation design include:

- No pre-intervention survey of project participants; and
- No control or comparison group.

THE RESEARCH THAT INFORMS THE EVALUATION

Near the beginning of the evaluation process, the evaluation team conducted a targeted literature review to generate information on effective practices with respect to specific components of program design and delivery, and organizational-level effectiveness and capacity. These were components of particular interest to the Foundation and they included:

- Facilitator skills, qualities, education/training;
- Pedagogical approaches and program dosage;
- Engaging with young people's families/circles of support;
- Organizational factors underpinning program success;
- Cultural adaptations of mainstream programs; and
- Knowledge exchange tools for enhancing the field of practice.⁵

In addition, the evaluation team continued to consult relevant research throughout the evaluation, as the need for further guidance or clarity on any issue emerged (for example, related to tool design, to understanding promising program practice, to support data analysis, etc.).⁶ The topics and themes explored included:

- Principles and characteristics of effective youth prevention programming;
- Principles and characteristics of effective gender-based violence prevention programming;
- Research on protective factors associated with a lower probability of teens experiencing or perpetrating violence;
- Evidence of the effectiveness of:
 - Life and social skills programming; and
 - Dating violence prevention programming.

Drawing on the findings of the preliminary literature review and our ongoing reading throughout the four-year evaluation process, this section of the report summarizes aspects of the research that have proven to be particularly pertinent to the evaluation, either because they have enhanced our understanding of the 17 funded projects or because they have guided our approach to the evaluation.

⁵ The findings were synthesized into a report titled, Logic Analysis Findings (February 2014).

⁶ In the interests of efficiency, we focused our reading on systematic reviews and other types of research reviews. The sources referenced in this summary reflect that focus.

The Research Context for Teen Healthy Relationships Programming

The body of research literature relevant to teen healthy relationships programming is (broadly speaking) made up of two distinct, though interconnected, strands:

- Research that addresses the prevention of youth violence in general; and
- Research that focuses more specifically on the prevention of gender-based violence, including youth dating violence.

The former typically does not examine the root causes or dynamics of violence against women and girls, though dating and sexualized violence are referenced as examples of youth violence. The latter is exclusively concerned with violence against women and girls and the social values and power structures that underpin it.

Both strands are pertinent to the matter of understanding what works with respect to school-based teen healthy relationships programming. Indeed, these two strands were reflected in the approaches to programming that we saw among the 17 grantees, some of whom focused quite specifically on addressing gender-based violence (and violence in dating relationships), and others who took a broader lens and addressed relationships in general (i.e. with peers, parents, teachers, and other significant adults, as well as intimate partners).

A recent synthesis of the evidence on preventing youth violence produced by the World Health Organization examines a number of school-based strategies for youth violence prevention, of which two are particularly relevant to the Foundation's *Teen Healthy Relationships Program*:

- Life and social skills development programs; and
- Dating violence prevention programs.⁷

These strategies broadly reflect the two strands of research literature, with the life and social skills programs addressing relationships in general and the dating violence prevention programs focusing more specifically on gender-based violence in the context of teens' intimate relationships. The WHO report provides the following descriptions of each of the strategies:

- **Life and social skills development programs:** These programs “help young people increase their self-awareness and more accurately read and regulate their emotions. They also help young people establish and maintain positive relationships, and take the perspective of – and empathize with – others.” Programs designed to develop these kinds of skills “aim to enable young people to deal constructively with daily life demands and with stressors and interpersonal conflicts.”⁸
- **Dating violence prevention programs:** These programs “help youth to develop understanding and skills to maintain healthy, non-violent relationships, positive strategies for dealing with pressures, and the resolution of conflict without violence.” Specific topics typically include: “characteristics of caring and abusive relationships; how to develop a support structure of friends who can help each other; communication skills; and where and how to seek help in case of sexual assault.”⁹

⁷ The others are: bullying prevention; academic enrichment programs; incentives for adolescents to attend school; peer mediation; and after-school/other structured leisure time activities. World Health Organization. (2015). Preventing Youth Violence: An Overview of the Evidence.

⁸ WHO, 2015, p. 28.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 32-33.

Evidence of effectiveness of life and social skills development programming and dating violence prevention programs

- Research has shown that **life and social skills development** reduces aggressive behaviour and violence among primary and secondary school students. This is true for programs targeting all students (universal) and those focusing only on students deemed to be at higher risk of violence (selective/indicated). The evidence base is quite well developed.
- The effectiveness **of dating violence prevention programs** is uncertain. Multiple systematic reviews reach conflicting conclusions and meta-analyses show mixed effects. Studies tend to focus on changes in knowledge and attitudes rather than behaviour. The evidence base is not yet well developed.

(WHO, 2015)

The 17 projects funded by the Foundation represented both of these strategies – with some leaning more towards a focus on dating violence, some prioritizing the essential skills for healthy relationships in general, and others addressing both in more or less equal measure.

The importance of this research context is that it helps to situate the funded projects on a continuum of approaches, activities, and goals and objectives. It also highlights the range of philosophies and methodologies that underpin and shape interventions designed to support teens to have healthy relationships.

Principles of Effective Teen Violence Prevention and Gender-Based Violence Prevention Programming

In spite of their distinct foci, the teen violence prevention literature and the gender-based violence prevention research that we examined had a number of principles for effective practice in common. These shared principles and practices are:

- Theory-informed models developed on the basis of evidence;
- Understanding and addressing multiple levels of risk and protection;
- Comprehensiveness – targeting more than one setting in which teens develop;
- Designing programs of sufficient dosage and intensity to realize the desired outcomes; and
- Delivering programs that offer a combination of information and skill development.¹⁰

The literature on gender-based violence prevention identifies some additional principles and practices that are fundamental to effective approaches to preventing violence against women and girls. These principles and practices are key to realizing the goal of “transforming gender-power imbalances” and “promoting more equitable relationships between men and women.”¹¹ They are:

- Intervention designs based on an intersectional gender-power analysis; and
- Aspirational programming that promotes personal and collective thought, and enables activism on the right of women and girls to violence-free lives.

The following section of this research summary provides an overview of the significance of each of these principles, the implications for program design and delivery, and the way(s) in which they were taken into consideration in our approach to the evaluation.

¹⁰ Center for Disease Control. (2014). Preventing Youth Violence: Opportunities for Action; De Koker, P., Mathews, C., Zuch, M., Bastien, S. and Mason-Jones, A.J. (2013). A systematic review of interventions for preventing adolescent intimate partner violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 54, pp. 2-13; Ellsberg, M., Arango, D.J., Morton, M., Gennari, F., Kiplesund, S., Contreras, M. and Watts, C. (2015). Prevention of violence against women and girls: what does the evidence say?, *The Lancet*, 385, pp. 1555-1566; Gevers, A. and Dartnall, E. (2015). Violence prevention programmes: Considerations for selection and implementation. *SA Crime Quarterly*, 51, pp. 53-54; Michau, L., Horn, J., Bank, A., Dutt, M. and Zimmerman, C. (2015). Prevention of violence against women and girls: lessons from practice. *The Lancet*, 385, pp. 1672-84; Samarasekera, U. and Horton, R. (2015). Prevention of violence against women and girls: a new chapter. Editorial. *The Lancet*, 385, pp. 1480-1481; Small, S. (2011). Principles for Effective Family and Youth Prevention Programs. Center for Nonprofits Research Digest. University of Wisconsin-Madison; WHO. (2015). See also the Works Consulted for the preliminary literature review, Logic Analysis Findings (February 2014).

¹¹ Respectively; Michau, et al., 2015, p. 1672; and Samarasekera & Horton, 2015, p. 1481

Shared Principles and Practices for Effective Teen Violence Prevention and Gender-Based Violence Prevention Programming

Theory-informed Models Developed on the Basis of Evidence

There is broad consensus in the literature that “effective programs are based on empirically-supported theoretical models.”¹² Effective program design and implementation is “guided by a clear and logical program theory about how the program’s activities are expected to lead to its intended goals.”¹³ And, ideally, there is reliable evidence that the type of activities being undertaken will contribute to achieving the desired changes.

Notably, targeting the risk and protective factors that research has shown are associated with the program’s intended outcomes is cited as a robust theoretical foundation for programming. In addition, the application of an ecological lens to understanding and addressing these risk and protective factors is also recognized as a strong theoretical basis from which to develop interventions.¹⁴

Our attempts to understand the extent to which the funded projects were based on clearly articulated theories of change are described in this report.

Understanding and Addressing Multiple Levels of Risk and Protection

Recent analyses of youth violence and strategies to prevent it advocate for the application of a “risk and protective” factors lens to youth violence. The WHO report, for example, asserts that,

“A better understanding of ... risk and protective factors is essential for the development of prevention programmes. Prevention efforts must eliminate or reduce the risk factors that young people are exposed to, and strengthen protective factors.”¹⁵

Risk and protective factors can occur at the individual, family/relationship, community and societal levels.

Risk and protective factors - definitions

- **Risk factor:** A characteristic that increases the likelihood of a person becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence.
- **Protective factor:** a characteristic that decreases the likelihood of a person becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence or buffers against the effects of risk factors.

(CDC, 2014)

¹² Small, 2011, p. 2.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See, for example: Small, 2011; Michau, 2015; and Gevers & Dartnall, 2015.

¹⁵ WHO, 2015, p. 28.

Currently, understanding of protective factors associated with reduced youth perpetration of or exposure to violence is less well developed than understanding of risk factors. Nevertheless, the literature recommends taking a strengths-based approach to violence prevention programming by fostering development of teens' protective factors. Protective factors associated with reduced violence by and among teens are:¹⁶

- *At the individual level:*
 - Pro-social attitudes;
 - Self-regulation skills (low levels of impulsiveness); and
 - School readiness and academic achievement.
- *At the family/relationship level:*
 - Positive and nurturing relationships with caring adults;
 - Positive and warm relationships with parents/caregivers, within which parents/caregivers set consistent, developmentally appropriate limits;
 - School connectedness, including stable connections to school personnel; and
 - Feelings of connection to pro-social peers.
- *At the community level:*
 - Sense of belonging;
 - Community members' willingness to help others; and
 - Attachment to community.¹⁷

At the societal level, rates of youth violence are influenced by social and cultural norms about violence (i.e. whether those norms support or reject violence as an acceptable behaviour). Also, the presence of "broad determinants of health inequalities" (e.g. poverty and social disadvantage) will increase the risk for youth violence; reducing such inequalities will lower the risk.¹⁸

Strengthening protective factors: what programs can do

- √ Build young people's skills and competencies to choose nonviolent, safe behaviours
 - √ Foster safe, stable, nurturing relationships between young people and their parents and caregivers
 - √ Build and maintain positive relationships between young people and caring adults in their community
 - √ Develop and implement school-wide activities and policies to foster social connectedness and a positive environment
 - √ Change societal norms about the acceptability of violence and willingness to intervene
- (CDC, 2014)

The literature on preventing gender-based violence also articulates the need to address the key risk factors for violence against women and girls. These include cultural norms and individual beliefs regarding:

- Acceptance of men's use of violence against women;
- Acceptance of male superiority/female inferiority; and
- Acceptance of dominant masculinity/submissive femininity.

Or – positively framed – efforts to prevent violence against women and girls need to:

- "Promote non-violent norms around masculinity and less passive norms around femininity"; and
- "Support men and boys to encourage more equitable gender power relations and support the leadership and participation of women and girls."¹⁹

¹⁶ CDC, 2014 and WHO, 2015

¹⁷ Research is still at the beginning of understanding community-level protective factors related to violence.

¹⁸ CDC, 2014, p. 15.

¹⁹ Michau, et al., 2015, p. 1677 and 1678 (respectively).

Because protective factors exist at multiple levels, effective approaches to youth violence prevention and the prevention of gender-based violence seek to foster development of teens' protective factors at the individual, family/relationship, community, and societal levels. This is referred to as “work[ing] across the ecological model” and is widely recognized as crucial for making real and lasting change with respect to rates of teen violence and rates of gender-based violence.²⁰

In our evaluation, research on protective factors directly informed the design of the Participant Survey. Several of the survey questions were designed to generate data on the degree to which projects had had a positive effect on participants' (for example): social skills; capacity for self-regulation; social connectedness; and attachment to school.

Comprehensiveness

Closely aligned with the effective practice principle of working across the ecological model, is the notion of program “comprehensiveness.” The most effective programs “recognize that individuals develop within many settings such as school, family and neighborhood” and they therefore target more than one of those settings, or they partner with other agencies that reach the same audience in different settings.²¹ A comprehensive model of program design and delivery supports agencies (alone or in collaboration) to address risk and protective factors at different levels of the ecological model.

In their systematic review of interventions aimed at preventing adolescent intimate partner violence (IPV), De Koker, et al. (2013) found that **all** of the effective programs “were based in multiple settings (school and community).”²² Moreover, these findings were consistent with the results of an earlier review of IPV prevention interventions, “which concluded that the most effective interventions had the most comprehensive programs, including individual-level curricula and community-based components.”²³

As our understanding of the approaches to programming being taken by the grantees increased, we were able to characterize a number of the projects as “comprehensive” in that they were intentionally seeking to make changes for youth in a number of different settings (at school, at home, and in the community – as well as at the individual-level). An analysis of Participant Survey results by comprehensive projects is offered in this report.

Sufficient Dosage to Realize Desired Outcomes

The literature emphasizes that interventions must be of “sufficient intensity and duration” to have a real and lasting positive effect on participants. “Generally, the more severe or entrenched the problem being addressed, the greater the dosage [...] need[s] to be.”²⁴ De Koker, et al. (2013), examining the demonstrated effectiveness of a number of interventions for preventing adolescent IPV, found that the ineffective interventions tended to be of shorter duration. (Small, Cooney and O'Connor [2009] concede that while programs of longer duration are more likely to achieve enduring, positive outcomes, this needs to be balanced with the realities of budgets and people's willingness and ability to participate in programs of long duration.)

We developed a rubric for determining the relative “dosage” value of each of the 17 funded projects. Our approach to this as well as an analysis of Participant Survey data by project dosage is included in this report.

Programs that Support Skill Development

It is broadly recognized that effective programs “engage participants in the material and encourage them to practice and apply new behaviors, rather than just presenting information.”²⁵ If behaviour change is a goal of the program, then the program must provide opportunities for participants to:

“Strong programmes not only challenge the acceptability of violence, but also address the underlying risk factors for violence including norms for gender dynamics [and] the acceptability of violence.”

(Ellsberg, et al., 2015, p. 1564)

20 Michau, et al., 2015, p. 1673.

24 Small, 2011, p. 2

22 De Koker, et al., 2013, p. 12.

25 Ibid., p. 3.

23 Ibid.

- Practise new skills and behaviours; and
- Reflect upon and apply knowledge and skills to their own situations.²⁶

A systematic review of adolescent IPV programs by De Koker, et al. (2013) found that all of the effective programs addressed relationship skills. Ellsberg, et al. (2015), in their review of evidence for interventions to reduce the prevalence and incidence of violence against women and girls, concluded that “strong” programs “support the development of new skills, including those for communication and conflict resolution.”²⁷

The World Health Organization identifies 10 core “life skills” that support an individual’s capacity to be non-violent. These are: problem solving; critical thinking; effective communication; decision-making; creative thinking; interpersonal relationship skills; self-awareness building; empathy; and coping with stress and emotions. Emotional regulation features strongly in the research.²⁸ The literature on preventing gender-based violence also stresses the importance of developing women and girls’ leadership skills.²⁹

Our evaluation has generated quantitative and qualitative data on project participants’ acquisition of key social and relationship skills. Findings are discussed in detail in this report.

Additional Principles and Practices for Effective Gender-Based Violence Prevention Programming

Intervention Designs Based on an Intersectional Gender-Power Analysis

Since gender norms and power relations are the core drivers of violence against women and girls, prevention of violence necessarily includes the political work to question discriminatory perspectives and practices that perpetuate violence and inhibit an effective response.³⁰

Applying a gender analysis to program design and content, and supporting participants to think critically about socio-cultural gender norms is a fundamental component of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls.³¹ Since women and girls’ vulnerability to violence is “rooted in the greater power and value that societies afford men and boys,” interventions must seek to shift norms and attitudes that promote gender inequity and support violence to ones that reject violence and promote more equitable relationships between women and men.³²

The literature stresses the importance of programs working with both girls and boys – through a combination of gender-specific and mixed groups – to discuss the implications of violence, to explore and challenge the underlying issue of gender inequality, and to advance non-violent/non-dominant conceptualizations of masculinity and less passive conceptualizations of femininity.³³

In the evaluation, items included in survey instruments administered with grantees generated data on their application of a gender analysis to their project design and delivery. Further, the Participant Survey included questions regarding project participants’ attitudes towards gender equality. The findings are included in this report.

Aspirational Programming that Promotes Critical Thinking and Enables Activism

The analysis conducted by Michau, et al. (2015) of “practical experience and evidence” regarding what works in preventing violence against women and girls emphasizes the need for programming that engages and inspires young people’s activism. Programs need to offer a vision of positive, equitable relationships and how such relationships can benefit all people. The capacity for critical thinking – both individually and collectively – is key to this and therefore programs must support participants’ skills of analysis, questioning and reasoning.

Aspirational programming can help to create a feeling of solidarity between participants and support them to become “agents of change.” Changes in individuals and peer groups will then have “a ripple effect” throughout the community.³⁴

The importance of developing participants’ critical thinking and capacity for creating change was explored in the

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ellsberg, et al., 2015, p. 1564.

²⁸ See, for example, CDC, 2014.

²⁹ See Michau, et al., 2015.

³⁰ Michau, et al., 2015, p. 1681.

³¹⁻³⁴ See next page.

evaluation through interviews and focus groups. Analyses of these qualitative data are included in this report.

Other Characteristics of Effective Programming for Teens

In addition to the principles and practices detailed above, the following evidence-informed characteristics of effective programming for teens have informed the foci of the evaluation:

- **Use of active learning techniques:** to support participants' engagement with program content and facilitate skill acquisition. Such techniques include games, role-playing, group projects, debates and peer teaching.
- **Tailoring programs to meet the specific needs of participants:** to ensure that program content is relevant and meaningful. Needs include developmental, social, and cultural. Tailoring a program to the needs of the participating youth can improve engagement and overall program effectiveness.³⁵
- **Taking a strengths-based approach:** to ensure that the program space is fear and judgment free and to focus on building participants' competencies and assets. Providing young people with positive, personally rewarding experiences will help to enhance their sense of self-efficacy.³⁶ The aspirational programming described by Michau, et al., is inherently strengths-based. Stereotyping victims or perpetrators, fear-based or alarmist messaging, judging or shaming participants for their opinions and ideas have no place in such programming. Indeed they are characteristics of ineffective programs.

FINDINGS FOR THE TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS PROJECT FUNDING INITIATIVE

APPLYING THE DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK

The table below shows the results of applying the Descriptive Framework dimensions to the grantees' projects.

Of the 17 funded projects, roughly half could readily be characterized as universal (8 projects) and half as selective (9 projects). As the table demonstrates, the universal projects share three key characteristics:

- Participation in the projects is mandatory – students must attend because the projects are delivered within the regular school timetable;
- Projects are curriculum-linked – the content is designed to meet prescribed learning outcomes for healthy relationships in the provincial or territorial curriculum; and
- Projects tend to be shorter in duration (although there were some exceptions to this).

The selective projects also share common characteristics. These include:

- Projects target specific groups of teens (e.g. newcomer youth, Indigenous youth, racialized youth, underserved youth);
- Participation is voluntary – projects are delivered at school (during lunchtime/after school) and/or in the community and students elect to attend (or not);
- Projects are not curriculum-linked; and
- Projects tend to be of longer duration.

Of interest, 10 of the 17 projects were initiated with Foundation funding (i.e. they were new projects made possible by the Teen Healthy Relationships multi-year grants). Of those 10 new projects, seven were selective.

³¹ The Canadian Women's Foundation recognizes this. The application for funding under the Teen Healthy Relationships Program required potential grantees to describe how they apply a gender analysis to their program design and delivery.

³² Michau, et al., 2015, p. 1674; also Samarasekera & Horton, 2015 and Gevers & Dartnall, 2015.

³³ Michau, et al., 2015 and Samarasekera & Horton, 2015. Notably, the literature examined does not consider the implications for/needs of non-binary youth.

³⁴ Michau, et al., 2015, p. 1679.

³⁵ Small, 2011.

³⁶ Ibid.

Table 4. The Descriptive Framework dimensions applied to the funded projects

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Dimension | BCHM: Bâtir des relations saines | Partners for Youth: Making Waves/Vague par vague | Calgary Immigrant Services: RESPECT | Y des femmes: À l'Action | SERC: Newcomer and Youth HR | VSAC: Project Respect | Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre: Sacred Seven | METRAC: ReAct | LOVE |
| Orientation to prevention | Selective community | Selective | Selective | Selective | Selective | Selective | Selective | Selective | Selective |
| Targets a specific sub-group of youth | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Mandatory or voluntary | Mandatory/Voluntary | Voluntary | Voluntary | Voluntary | Voluntary | Voluntary | Voluntary | Voluntary | Voluntary |
| Project years of operation | 4 | 20+ | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 18 |
| Primary physical setting | In school & in community | In school & in community | In school - outside regular hours | In school - outside regular hours | In school - outside regular hours | In school - within or outside regular hours | In community | In school - outside regular hours | In school - outside regular hours |
| Curriculum-linked | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Project facilitated by | Agency facilitators | Agency facilitators & youth | Agency facilitators | Agency facilitators | Agency facilitators | Agency facilitators | Agency facilitators | Agency facilitators | Agency facilitators |
| Av. # total hours per participant | 77.5 | 23 | 26 | 12 | 15 | 12 | Hoop dancing = 57 Basketball = 171 | 56 | 56 |
| Co-ed/gender-specific/combination | Co-ed | Co-ed | Co-ed | 2 co-ed sessions; 8 -10 gender-specific | Co-ed | Co-ed | Genders-specific | Co-ed | Co-ed |

INPUTS

Project Funding

Through the *Teen Healthy Relationships Program*, the Foundation provided grants to eligible non-profit organizations to provide school-based healthy relationships programming.³⁷ Grants valuing approximately \$2.4 million were allocated to 17 organizations. The value of these grants ranged from approximately \$20,000 to \$40,000 per year over four years.

Collectively, the projects that were selected were understood to:

- Reach across the country;
- Demonstrate a variety of approaches to teen healthy relationships programming;
- Work with diverse groups of teens; and
- Represent various types of organization.

In addition, the projects were understood to reflect the criteria for funding stated in the Foundation's Teen Healthy Relationships Program Request for Proposals. These included certain fundamental values of the Foundation and promising practices associated with effective teen healthy relationships programming. (See Appendix B for our analysis of the Foundation's project funding decision-making criteria.)

Financial Contributions to Projects from Other Sources

At the end of Years 1, 2 and 3 of the Foundation's Program, grantees were asked to report additional project funds received from partners or stakeholders (including other funding organizations).³⁸ Aggregated results are shown in the table below:

Table 5. Additional project funding

| Program Year | # Grantees Reporting Additional Funding | Total Value of Additional Funding |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Year 1 (2013 - 2014) | 5 | \$136,500 |
| Year 2 (2014 - 2015) | 9 | \$222,203 |
| Year 3 (2015 - 2016) | 11 | \$311,433 |

In-Kind Support from Partners and Stakeholders

Grantees also reported details of the in-kind support received from partners and stakeholders. The types of in-kind support most frequently provided were staff/volunteers and space. Other important forms of in-kind support were associated with: project administration (e.g. promotion, participant recruitment, general administrative support); travel/transportation; food; and field trips (including event tickets).

Observation: *The Foundation may want to add a question to its request for funding template about the in-kind and financial contributions that potential grantees anticipate receiving for their teen healthy relationships projects. Ensuring that projects are appropriately resourced is a key aspect of promoting/supporting success of the projects. The capacity to obtain additional financial and in-kind resources is also evidence of capacity to achieve longer-term project sustainability.*

³⁷ "School-based" is defined as projects delivered during school hours as part of the curriculum, and projects delivered outside of the curriculum in a school setting (e.g. after-school programs).

³⁸ Item in the Annual Grantee Report to the Foundation templates.

Project Staff / Facilitators

Hiring and Supporting Well-Trained and Committed Staff

In his summary of Principles for Effective Family and Youth Prevention Programs (2011), Small observes that, “Programs are more likely to be effective if they have well-qualified, well-trained and committed staff who run them.” He proposes the following questions for organizations to reflect on with respect to enhancing their programs’ effectiveness:

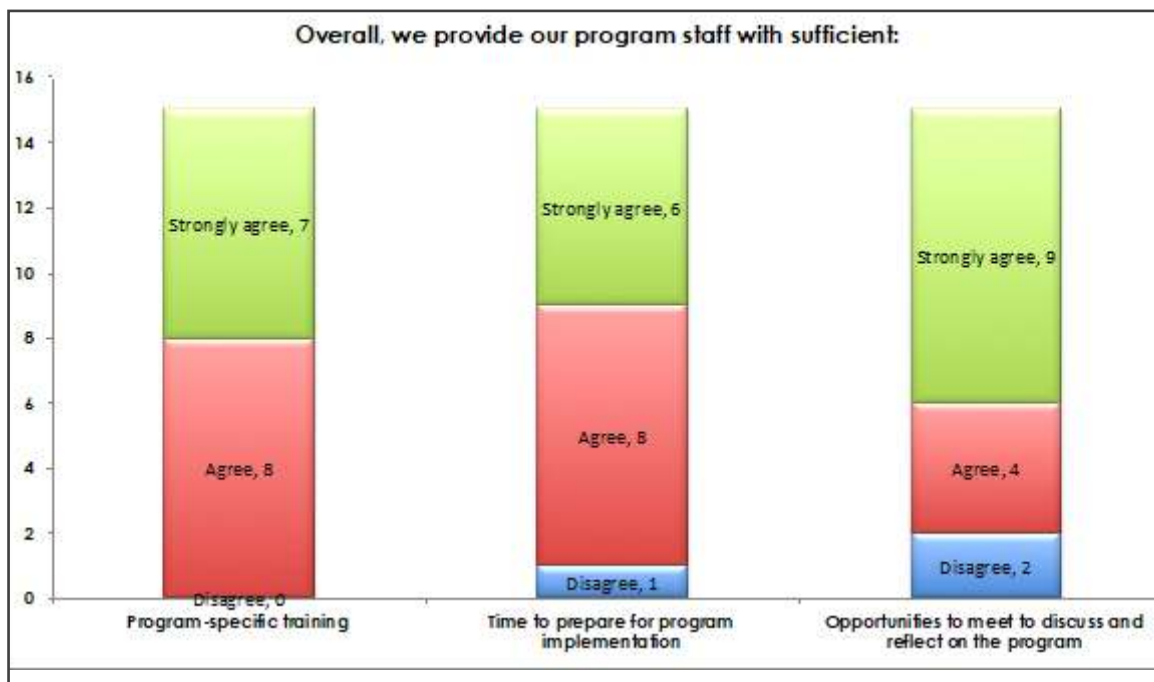
- *Are staff members given adequate training?*
- *Do staff members regularly meet to discuss and reflect on the program?*
- *Do staff members receive guidance and feedback from supervisors on a regular basis?*³⁹

In the Annual Grantee Survey implemented in Year 4, we used these questions to inform a number of items on the topic of project staff competencies. Overall, grantees reported high levels of satisfaction with the personal commitment and professional skills of their staff. For instance:

- 14 of 15 grantees (93%) who completed the survey said that they strongly agreed that their program staff *are consistently enthusiastic and committed to the program*. (The remaining grantee selected the agree option.)
- 9 grantees (60%) strongly agreed and 6 (40%) agreed that *when hiring program staff we are able to find people with the skills, knowledge, abilities, education and experience we consider necessary*.

The survey also asked grantees to report on the sufficiency of training, preparation time, and opportunities to reflect on program implementation/design that their project staff members were being provided with. The results, which are shown in Chart 1 below, indicate that, on the whole, grantees felt project staff were given sufficient time and opportunities to gain appropriate training, to prepare for project implementation, and to meet together to discuss and reflect upon the project.

Chart 1: Project staff training, preparation time, and opportunities to reflect on the program.



³⁹ Small, 2011, p. 4.

Notably, one grantee reported that staff members did not receive sufficient time to prepare for project implementation, and two reported that staff members did not have enough opportunities to come together to reflect upon and discuss the project. This is unfortunate and potentially detrimental to the effectiveness of project implementation. In interviews with project staff, the benefits of creating opportunities for facilitators to come together and review project implementation (overall or specific sessions) was a strong theme. Such opportunities were reported to enhance project implementation and individual facilitators' practice by:

- Enabling facilitators to deconstruct what is going well or what is not working – and to revise content/activities accordingly;
- Allowing facilitators to give each other feedback;
- Providing space for the sharing (and adaptation) of teaching tools and techniques;
- Enabling informal and ongoing coaching/mentoring;
- Enabling development of a support system between facilitators; and
- Increasing staff engagement with the program (and the agency as a whole).

Project Facilitators – Requisite Skills and Competencies

It is the quality of the facilitation that is critical.

(Grantee Executive Director)

If the facilitator is a dud you burn the topic for the kids.

(High School Principal)

The quality of facilitation can make or break a project. During the site visits to projects, we had the privilege of witnessing many examples of very fine facilitation – individual and teams of project facilitators who were demonstrably able to connect with the participants, build authentic relationships, address challenging topics with sensitivity, and support participants' intellectual, emotional and social growth. We also witnessed some examples of weak facilitation – instances where participants were not engaged, where too much time was spent sitting still and being talked at, or where participants did not feel safe.

In the qualitative data generated through conversations with project staff, grantee leadership, and community stakeholders, the subject of facilitator competencies was a strong theme. Overwhelmingly, grantee leadership and stakeholders spoke highly of the skills and competencies that project facilitators were bringing to their work. Only occasionally – and in reference to only two projects – did stakeholders draw attention to weak facilitation and the detrimental impacts thereof.

Some of the important facilitator competencies described by the people we spoke with are intangible in nature. They are personal, innate qualities that make certain individuals more suited to working well with teens, such as the ability to forge an instant connection/rapport with young people:

“I like this program because [the facilitators] connected with me, and they also maybe had had some of the same problems as me.”

Project participant

“Thanks to these workshops and the facilitator's energy, I feel less self-conscious about expressing my hopes and dreams.”

Project participant

[The facilitator] was able to connect right away to the group - as soon as she walked in to the classroom!

(School vice-principal)

[The facilitator's] personal qualities include her ability to make people feel comfortable and her remarkable way of memorizing each of the 30 kids' names instantly. She fosters a connection. (School vice-principal)

One facilitator also talked about the importance of simply liking young people:

You have to be happy to work with youth. There are a lot of people that don't like the idea of working with youth or who find it challenging. We sometimes go into the schools and teachers will tell us, for instance, "This kid, watch out for him." (Project facilitator)

However, the majority of the facilitator skills/competencies described by interviewees are tangible - they can be defined and quantified. They can also be learned, practised and mastered. The table below summarizes the important, tangible facilitator skills and competencies as identified by grantee leadership, educators and other community stakeholders, and project staff themselves. (They are listed approximately in order of the frequency with which interviewees referenced them.)



Table 6. Important facilitator skills and competencies (from the qualitative data)

| Skill/ competency | Impact | Illustrative quote(s) |
|---|--|---|
| Starting with where the participants are at | <p>Anchors project content in participants' own experience</p> <p>Engages participants</p> <p>Makes content accessible and relevant</p> <p>Meets participants' needs</p> <p>Supports participants to make connections between personal experiences and broader social issues</p> | <p><i>We do a sharing circle where they talk about their day or a specific topic they've identified – if there's something going on in the community that we need to talk about... I want them to be able to talk a little bit, from their own perspective, of what this is and what this means. (Project facilitator)</i></p> <p><i>Moving it at their pace is I think what it comes down to. Just doing things slowly. Putting it all in their terms – whatever they are comfortable with. If you're not a talker, we'll give you a healthy challenge of trying to talk more... (Project facilitator)</i></p> |
| Having the courage and sensitivity to handle difficult topics | <p>Opens up topics that are not dealt with elsewhere</p> <p>Supports development of respect for diverse opinions</p> <p>Participants remain open to learning</p> <p>Develops participants' capacity to reflect and think critically</p> | <p><i>They created tableaux that expressed their understanding of male and female and also LGBTQ and then the facilitators asked them about what society expects in terms of gender and sexuality. Some of their opinions were thought to be offensive but [the facilitators] expertise was so good they were able to help those with diverse views to have a chance to further express their views and to hear others respectfully. (Classroom teacher)</i></p> <p><i>[The facilitators] handle very uncomfortable and challenging situations. Kids feel they can share and [the facilitators] handle it. The other teachers just can't go there. (School principal)</i></p> |
| Using questions skilfully | <p>Anchors project content in participants' own experience</p> <p>Develops participants' capacity to reflect and think critically</p> | <p><i>We'll put out an idea and say, "What do you guys think about this? And do you agree or do you disagree?" And then we facilitate off of what they say. So if someone says, "I think that's stupid and it's wrong," then we'll be like, "Can you tell me more about that? And who agrees? And who disagrees?" (Project facilitator)</i></p> <p><i>A lot of our work is the art of the question. A lot of our work. Questions open up everything. (Project facilitator)</i></p> |

Table 6. Important facilitator skills and competencies (from the qualitative data)

| Skill/ competency | Impact | Illustrative quote(s) |
|--|---|---|
| Being honest, open and direct | Builds trust between facilitator and participants Makes facilitator “relatable” to participants Positions facilitator as a role model Supports authentic relationships | <p>Number one is the direct language and the direct approach. You've got to be direct, you've got to say it the way it is. (Project facilitator)</p> <p>[The facilitator's] approach is to be real/genuine. No BS. Youth are very real in this community and their experiences... we can't even imagine. There is no room for pretenders here. (School Vice-Principal)</p> <p>We always give examples from our own lives. We ask them nothing that we aren't prepared to answer first or give them an example of. Which they love, because that then makes us very real people. (Project facilitator)</p> |
| Being able to “read the room” - to tune in to the mood in the room and what participants need in that moment | Meets participants' needs Honours participants' feelings and experiences Contributes to creating a safe space Helps to ensure content remains relevant | <p>A great facilitator can really feel the energy of the room. (Project facilitator)</p> <p>With experience, you get really good at reading people and reading the physical and the emotional signs of what's going on for them. (Project facilitator)</p> <p>We can tell when we're talking if the energy falls and we need to lift it up. We're able to read the room and say, “Okay, we need to get up and move at this point.” (Project facilitator)</p> |
| Being respectful of the participants | Honours participants' experiences and expertise Participants feel valued and validated Models and develops respectful relationships Creates equality between facilitator/student | <p>There's not any of that power difference. It's all about, “You're here; we're talking. You are you, and everybody has their unique qualities, and we're here to bring those out in you. And we want to do that in a mutually respectful way.” (Project facilitator)</p> <p>I think it's about acknowledging and honouring that what they're experiencing and what they're saying is real. (Project facilitator)</p> <p>Treat these teens as an equal, as an adult. They're not stupid. They know more than we do actually because they're living it. (Project facilitator)</p> |

Table 6. Important facilitator skills and competencies (from the qualitative data)

| Skill/ competency | Impact | Illustrative quote(s) |
|---|---|--|
| Being nonjudgmental | Builds trust between facilitator and participants Contributes to creating a safe space Participants remain open to learning | <i>We really try and hold a space that's not about shame and about rules. (Project facilitator)</i> <i>It's a challenge in terms of the kids saying things that we really don't agree with. But we need to still support their decisions about what they are saying, and guide them towards a different point of view. (Project facilitator)</i> |
| Recognizing and capitalizing on "teachable moments" | Increases relevancy of project content Develops participants' capacity to reflect and think critically | <i>If someone uses othering language - like, "Well why does their food have to be different?" - then we use that as a learning moment where we can share about one another's culture. (Project facilitator)</i> <i>If somebody says, "I don't like it when somebody interrupts me," and then they go and interrupt somebody, we use that as opportunity to unpack how we're all implicated in these unhealthy behaviours in various ways. (Project facilitator)</i> |
| Listening to participants - and ensuring everyone in the room listens to each other | Participants feel valued and validated Builds participants' confidence and self-esteem Models and develops respectful relationships | <i>So I know these kids need someone to listen to them if they don't have that at home. You should see them with [our male facilitator]. They tell him stuff because they know he listens. (Project facilitator)</i> <i>We encourage listening skills to be developed. They've actually got 30 people around them who are actually listening. (Project facilitator)</i> |
| Modelling healthy relationships | Positions facilitator as a role model Reinforces (tangibly) project content | <i>We also bring our relationship into the space. The three of us have become really good friends. And so we model healthy and happy, loving relationships, and we welcome the students to join in that. (Project facilitator)</i> |
| Being flexible | Helps ensure content remains relevant Enables facilitators to be responsive to what is happening in the room | <i>What I really liked about [the facilitators] was that they were willing to change gears. At the beginning there was so much talking I could see they were losing the kids, but once I talked with the facilitators, they changed it up immediately. (Classroom teacher)</i> <i>The facilitators were fluid and organic. Tracking issues and coming back to them. (Classroom teacher)</i> |

“Being In Relationship” with Participants

Ultimately, all of the skills and competencies described and illustrated can be seen to contribute towards the development of two crucial – and inter-related – components of effective youth projects:

- Authentic and trusting relationships between facilitators and participants; and
- A safe space in which participants feel able to express themselves openly and share their experiences.

Interviewees described the former as fundamental to the whole process of teen healthy relationships programming. For example:

[The facilitators] build the relationships first and the learning is facilitated in the context of these relationships.
(School teacher)

It's not just teaching about healthy relationships. It's about building a relationship with the kids. And that's one of the things that comes out of the whole process. (Project facilitator)

One facilitator questioned whether it is actually possible to “teach” healthy relationships, remarking that healthy relationships need to be experienced and that the role of the facilitator is to “be in relationship” with youth.

Building relationships with teens – a matter of skills and personal qualities, not just time

Interestingly, while facilitators with selective projects that work with the same youth over multiple years noted that this gave them the time and space to develop deep and enduring connections with participants, the capacity to forge authentic and trusting relationships was not limited to longer projects.

Some of the highest praise from stakeholders in the education community with respect to the quality of the relationships that facilitators created with teens was awarded to two universal projects, one that delivers six one-hour sessions and one that delivers 10 one-hour sessions. Participants have no choice but to attend these projects and the content is constrained by being linked to the provincial curriculum. Yet, the facilitators were commended repeatedly for their ability to quickly establish a rapport with participants and create an environment of ease, safety and mutual respect.

Creating and sustaining a safe space was inextricably connected with facilitators’ capacity to build authentic and trusting relationships with participants. As one facilitator explained:

You can't have conversations until there's safety in the room. So the first thing we're doing is building relationships, and then we move from there. (Project facilitator)

The topic of creating a safe space is discussed in some detail in the section on “Important Projects Components” (p. 72 below).

Observation

We did not gather systematic data regarding facilitators’ professional training/backgrounds. We learned that a number of facilitators were trained social workers or youth workers. We also learned that some had backgrounds in fields completely unrelated to youth development (such as Biology, English Literature and Environmental Science). While those with a background in youth or social work credited this as useful to their practice with teens, equal importance was given to learning the necessary skills through practising them on the ground, as well as through learning from more experienced facilitators. In this regard, having sufficient opportunities for group reflection, discussion and (informal) coaching is crucial for enhancing facilitators’ skills and deepening their confidence.

Staff Continuity and Turnover

Staff resources are a crucial ongoing input that can affect program implementation and goal achievement. Because the *Teen Healthy Relationships Program* was a four-year funding initiative, it was clear that continuity of grantee staff resources could be a factor influencing its success.

In order to determine whether grantee staff resources were sufficient to meet the implementation and outcome goals of the *Teen Healthy Relationships Program*, we narrowed in on two questions:

1. Was project staff continuity maintained at the individual grantee level; and
2. If staff turnover was evident, did it affect project implementation?

Data on staff continuity was generated by:

- Tracking and documenting changes in project staff (as we became aware of them) in an Excel spreadsheet; and
- A question about the effect of staff turnover on projects on the 2016 Annual Grantee Survey.

We also factored in the level of involvement of each grantee's Executive Director, Program Director or Program Manager in their teen healthy relationships project. An assessment of this was made in collaboration with the Canadian Women's Foundation's Manager of Violence Prevention Programs.

We used the volume of staff turnover by grantee over the four years of the Program plus the assessment of the level of involvement of the Executive Director/Program or Director/Program Manager to create a measure of staff continuity. (See Appendix C: *Inputs - Assessing Staff Continuity* for a more detailed account of the methodology.)

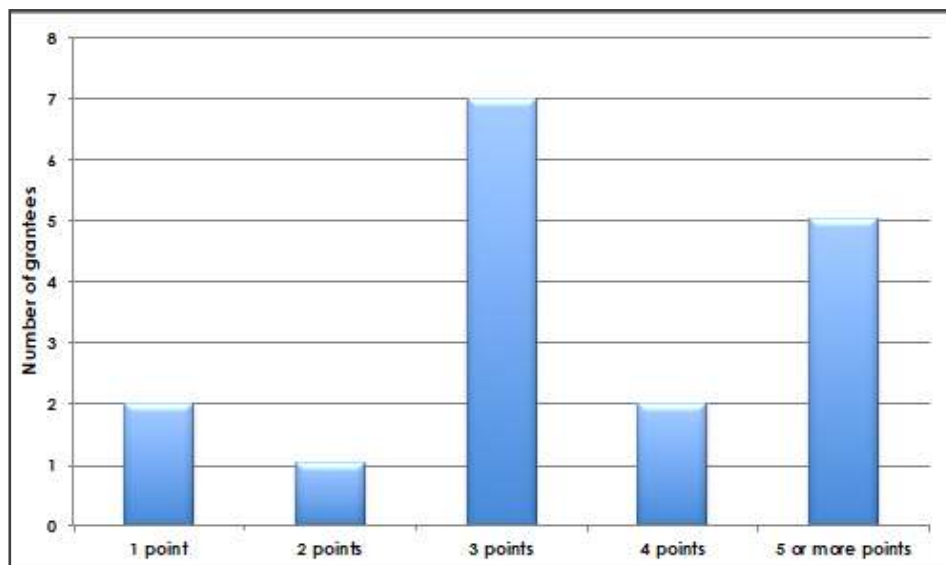
Staff Continuity Findings

Based on the data described above, grantees were assigned a rating on the following scale:

- 5+ points = Virtually no staff turnover and ongoing and active involvement of someone in a grantee leadership position.
- 4 points = Virtually no staff turnover but leadership uninvolved.
- 3 points = Turnover in leadership or in facilitator positions and/or uninvolved leadership.
- 1-2 points = Repeated turnover in leadership and facilitator positions and uninvolved leadership.

The results for the 17 funded projects are provided in chart below:

Chart 2. Staff continuity ratings



The findings indicate that, broadly speaking, involved leadership is associated with reduced staff turnover. We are aware that, in some instances, staff continuity was interrupted by parental leave. We did not include parental leave as a category in our calculation of staff turnover. In most cases of parental leave, the staff person returned and continuity was ultimately restored.

Impact of Staff Turnover

About one third (33%) of grantees reported that staff turnover had negatively affected the implementation of their project, with five of 15 selecting sometimes or often.

Table 7. Extent to which staff turnover affected project implementation

| At times, staff turnover has negatively affected the implementation of our program (n=15) | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Often | 13% | 2 |
| Sometimes | 20% | 3 |
| Rarely | 33% | 5 |
| Never | 33% | 5 |

Reflections on the staff turnover data

Staff turnover can be an indication that something within the organization, or the project itself, is not quite right, and therefore its cause needs to be identified, understood and mitigated. For example, during site visits, a number of project facilitators commented that they were not happy with the short-term contracts, the part-time hours, and/or the low wages (e.g. \$15 to \$18 per hour) that they were receiving. While they loved the work, they indicated that it was challenging to live on their remuneration. It is possible that some portion of the staff turnover recorded was due to poor working conditions.

Notably, consistency and reliability of staff (including frontline facilitators) emerged as an important theme in the qualitative data with respect to the perceived effectiveness of projects. Several stakeholders, associated with different grantees, identified this as a key indicator of successful projects. For community partners who are involved in supporting project implementation, knowing that project staff can be relied upon to be there, as arranged, is crucial. Consistent project staff is also crucial to building and sustaining trusting relationships with participants. This is especially important for teens who, for one reason or another, may lack stable and consistent relationships at home.

Observation

Limiting staff turnover by creating the conditions that support staff retention is an important aspect of using resources effectively, implementing projects as intended, and, ultimately, achieving the intended project goals.

Applying a Gender Analysis to Project Design

Because gender norms and power relations underpin relationship violence against women and girls, applying a gender analysis to the design of a teen violence prevention program is understood to be a best practice.⁴⁰ Application of a gender analysis was a key criterion for receiving funding from the Foundation.⁴¹

In Year 4, the Annual Grantee Survey asked grantees to indicate whether, during the course of the Teen Healthy Relationships Program, they had undertaken key elements of applying a gender lens to the development and design of their projects. Their responses are shown in the table below:

40 Michau, L., Horn, J., Bank, A., Dutt, M. and Zimmerman, C. (2015). Prevention of violence against women and girls: lessons from practice. *The Lancet*, 385, pp. 1672-84.

41 Question 8 on the funding application form asked, "How do you plan to include a gender analysis in your approach and activities? Give two examples of gender analysis in the program activities?"

Table 8: Application of a gender analysis to project development and design

| Answer options | Yes – did this as part of a formal process | Did this in an informal way | No – did not do this | Response count |
|--|--|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| a) Examined our program material to ensure it reflects gender balance in language, images, and | 11 | 4 | 0 | 15 |
| b) Examined our program material to ensure the everyday realities of girls/women, boys/men, and transgender people are represented. | 12 | 3 | 0 | 15 |
| c) Examined our program material to ensure it does not reflect the assumption that everyone in the class is straight or cis. | 11 | 4 | 0 | 15 |
| d) Ensured that our program facilitators actively avoid the terms 'boyfriend' and 'girlfriend' and instead use gender-neutral terms such as 'partner'. | 7 | 8 | 0 | 15 |
| e) Ensured that our program material includes role-plays or scenarios that challenge gender stereotypes. | 12 | 1 | 2 | 15 |
| f) Ensured that our program facilitators are capable of taking leadership in the classroom by naming gender issues. (For example, 'double standards' for different genders.) | 13 | 2 | 0 | 15 |
| g) Ensured our program facilitators have the capacity to remark upon or challenge sexist statements made by students (or other program staff) and are able to use these opportunities as teaching moments. | 13 | 2 | 0 | 15 |
| h) Ensured our program included teaching students how to explore stereotypes through self-reflective discussion, including asking how and why particular stereotypes may have emerged, and exploring the social or economic factors underpinning them. | 13 | 2 | 0 | 15 |
| i) Ensured that 'critical thinking' is positioned as an important skill and an important component of our program. | 13 | 2 | 0 | 15 |

With the exception of item (e), *Ensured that our program material includes role-plays or scenarios that challenge gender stereotypes*, all grantees reported applying all aspects of a gender analysis either formally or informally. In most cases, this was done as part of a formal process.

While the evaluation did not include a systematic assessment of how grantees were applying a gender analysis to their project design and implementation, data generated with respect to the topics that projects covered indicate that issues such as gender roles/stereotypes, gender-based oppression and violence, and gender identity received considerable attention. Similarly, data generated on the skills that project facilitators were seeking to teach participants, and that they felt were demonstrated by participants, show that critical thinking (item “i”) was an important focus – and effect – of the work undertaken. (See “Project Activities” and “Participant Outcomes” p. 62 and p. 84 below.)

Youth Involvement in Project Design

When the *Teen Healthy Relationships Program* was initiated, the Foundation anticipated that grantees would have Youth Advisory Councils (YACs), or a comparable structure, in place to support youth input into their project design and content. Early on in the evaluation, we determined that this was typically not the case and that YACs were, in fact, only being used by two grantees: SWOVA and Partners for Youth.

Data generated by a question in the 2016 Annual Grantee Reports to the Foundation provide an understanding of grantees’ approach to obtaining participant input to inform the content of their projects (overall and/or with respect to each individual project session).

The most frequently used method of obtaining youth input, employed by 13 of the 17 grantees, was *gathering teens’ feedback at the conclusion of their participation in the project and using that feedback to guide subsequent revisions to project content*. Ninety percent (90%) of the universal projects and 60% of the selective projects did this. We note that this type of input gathering tends to generate “satisfaction” style data and is less likely to offer findings that are relevant to project design or content.

The approaches taken to obtaining participant input by the universal and the selective projects were notably different. For example, the majority of grantees delivering universal projects reported that, *as part of the development of our program we consulted with youth and we used their input to help create the program content*, whereas only one of the selective project grantees reported taking this approach.

The method of obtaining youth input used most commonly by grantees delivering selective projects was *letting the needs/wishes of participants drive the content of every session (any content that we have planned to include takes second place to meeting these changing needs/wishes)*. Only two of the universal projects reported taking this approach. This makes sense given that the universal projects were (almost always) providing content that was linked to their respective provincial/territorial curriculum. By contrast, the selective projects were voluntary and their content was not linked to provincial/territorial prescribed learning outcomes. Consequently, it makes sense that these projects were able to maintain an ongoing focus on meeting the immediate learning needs/wishes of participants, rather than following a pre-determined curriculum/project plan.

Participant Recruitment

With respect to the universal projects, participants had no choice but to attend, as these projects were delivered during the regular school timetable and covered prescribed curriculum content. Grantees delivering selective projects (voluntary and afterschool) took a range of approaches to participant recruitment. These included:

- Introducing their project to potential participants at school-hosted information days about extra curricular opportunities for students;
- Working with Youth and Family Councillors in the schools to identify students who might particularly benefit from the project;

- Working with teaching staff and school administrators to identify potential participants; and
- Receiving students into the project through their connection with a partner organization.

As all of the selective projects were voluntary, “identified” students were at liberty to participate or not and other students were, generally, welcome to show up and take part.

Some specific models of recruitment are worth noting in more detail:

- The *Making Waves* project, run by Partners for Youth, takes place at the weekend and has a youth leadership/peer facilitation training focus. Places are limited to 10 students per school. We heard that Partners for Youth provides guidelines to schools on how to select students. *Making Waves* provides direction to the schools regarding the kinds of students that might best suit the project and how students might be chosen. However, in practice, approaches to this vary from school to school. For example, in some schools all students interested in participating can express that interest and the 10 participants are chosen through a draw, while in other schools students are more intentionally selected for participation.
- Participants in SERC’s *Teen Health Program* come to the project through their connection to The Peaceful Village. The Peaceful Village site leads at each partner school play a role in identifying and encouraging newcomer youth to attend the project.
- BCHM’s model encompasses a universal, mandatory, school-based component and more intensive, selective programming for targeted youth. Young people who may benefit from BCHM’s additional services are identified by the project facilitator and the agency social worker (who is regularly onsite at the school), in consultation with teaching staff and school administrators.

In interviews, school teachers/administrators described various “types” of youth whom they deemed “suitable” for participating in the selective projects. These included:

- Individuals with unconventional or not yet widely recognized leadership potential;
- “Natural leaders” and high achieving students;
- Individuals with a demonstrable interest in social justice;
- Students who are “on the fringes” and at risk of being/actually being the target of violence/bullying by their peers;
- Individuals who may be questioning their sexuality or gender-identity, or who are already out; and
- Dominant and high status students who may be perpetrating (or at risk of perpetrating) violence against their peers.

We heard from a number of grantees delivering selective projects that there could be a degree of tension between their perception of the kind of young people who would most benefit from participating and the perception of teaching staff. For instance, we were told that, for some projects, teachers had a tendency to select the students they saw as “natural leaders” or “high achievers,” even though grantees wanted to see a greater diversity of participants, including students who may not be presenting as obvious leaders and those who may be experiencing challenges at school. On the other hand, some teachers and school counsellors described encouraging the charismatic but disruptive students to attend projects – students who were exerting a negative influence over the broader school community. On several occasions, in interviews with members of the education community, these students were described to us as “the Alpha kids” or “drama queens.”⁴²

ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

Project Participants

Quantitative data regarding the number of project participants, the age of project participants, and their gender

⁴² In these instances, it was hard not to suspect that the schools were using the projects as a place to put students whose behaviour, or needs, they were otherwise at a loss to address.

identity were generated. The Participant Survey also asked respondents to tell us whether they were currently in a dating relationship or not. Through focus groups and interviews with project facilitators and leadership, the evaluation also explored perceptions of participants' needs and what projects were doing to meet those needs.

Number of Project Participants

A total of 18,104 young people participated in the 17 funded projects over the four years of the Teen Healthy Relationships Program. While the majority of youth participated in their project just once, others participated in projects that either formally or informally extended beyond a single year. Data regarding the number of 'unique' youth, however, were not tracked.

Table 9. Forecasted and actual participant numbers, by project and by fiscal year.

| Project | Actual Participants | | | | Total Participants |
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| | 13/14 | 14/15 | 15/16 | 16/17 | |
| Healthy Youth Relationships, Red Cross | 630 | 630 | 307 | 0 | 1,567 |
| Be the Change, SAVIS | 0 | 0 | 500 (est.) | 3,530 | 4,030 |
| R+R, SWOVA | 325 (est.) | 395 | 250 | 288 | 1,258 |
| All About YOUth, PEI Family Violence Prevention | 340 | 200 | 240 | 265 | 1,045 |
| Newcomer Youth & Healthy Relationships, SERC | 33 | 55 | 67 | 63 | 218 |
| À l'action, Y des femmes | 34 | 26 | 34 | 46 | 140 |
| Shift (Project Respect), VSAC | 52 | 21 | 40 | 35 | 148 |
| Strengthening Youth, CWAV | 260 | 205 | 368 | 220 | 1,053 |
| RESPECT, Immigrant Services Calgary | 21 | 48 | 68 | 66 | 203 |
| Healthy Relationships for Youth, AWRC | 797 (est.) | 346 | 726 | 654 | 2,523 |
| TAG-V, Abrigo | 130 | 85 | 210 | 220 | 645 |
| Fourth R, CAMH | 314 | 520 | 684 | 1,160 | 2,678 |
| Making Waves/Vague par vague, Partners for Youth | 72 | 205 | 150 | 116 | 543 |
| ReAct, METRAC | 30 | 41 | 60 | 44 (est.) | 175 |
| LOVE, LOVE Halifax | 60 | 55 | 52 | 62 | 229 |
| Sacred Seven, Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre | 46 | 40 | 51 | 32 | 169 |
| Bâtir des relations saines, BCHM | 385 | 420 | 315 | 360 | 1,480 |
| Total | 3,529 | 3,292 | 4,122 | 7,161 | 18,104 |

According to 2015 census data, there are 3,963,600 Canadians between the ages of 10 – 19.⁴³ We can estimate, therefore, that the *Teen Healthy Relationships Program* reached approximately 0.5% of the Canadian pre-teen and teen population (at a cost of approximately \$133 per person).

Observation

When a funder chooses to fund a social program that provides services to individuals, one might assume that they are looking to reach a certain number of individuals. In the case of the *Teen Healthy Relationships Program*, however, serving a specific number of teens was not a focus. Rather the intention was to learn about what works with respect to teen healthy relationships programming. However, if the Foundation (and their funders/partners) should decide that their interest is to increase the reach of teen healthy relationships programming to individual youth, they may wish to set (reasonable) targets with respect to numbers of teens served, and explore with potential grantees the viability of those numbers.

Age and Gender Identity of Project Participants

Based on Participant Survey respondent data, the age of project participants (shown in Chart 3) has been estimated as follows:

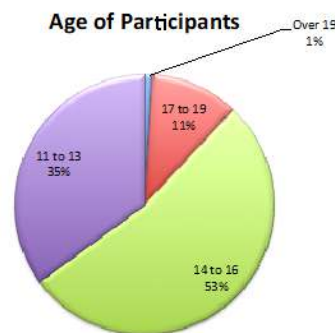
- 35% 11 to 13 years of age;
- 53% 14-16 years of age;
- 11% 17-19 years of age, and
- 1% over 19.⁴⁴

Researchers in the field of healthy relationships and dating violence prevention note that, “romantic relationships typically begin in early to mid adolescence.”⁴⁵ Consequently, “this stage is considered a critical period for prevention programs where youth can learn about, witness and experience healthy relationships and approach dating with greater self-confidence, problem-solving skills and emotional regulation.”⁴⁶ Of note, 26% of Participant Survey respondents indicated that yes, they were in a *dating relationship*.

Research also shows that prevention programs “need to be implemented early enough to influence the development of problem behaviour but also be age appropriate and developmentally sensitive.”⁴⁷ We also heard from project staff and stakeholders that the skills and capacity for healthy relationships (in the broadest sense, i.e. with peers, family, and significant adults, as well as with self) need to be developed in much younger children.

Chart 3. Age of project participants

Of respondents who answered the question related to gender, 56% identified as a girl, 42% identified as a boy, 2% identified as *two-spirited, transgender or gender non-conforming*, and 1% indicated that they were unsure.⁴⁸



43 <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo10a-eng.htm>.

44 The 2015/16 Participant Survey was used to generate data on the age and gender identity of project participants. We have used these percentages to estimate the total percentages of project participants, by age, for the four-year Teen Healthy Relationships Program.

45 Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health. (2016). Evidence In-Sight: Teen Dating Violence Prevention Programs, p. 4.

46 and 47 Ibid.

48 Of note, a 2015 article in the *Journal of Sex Research* observes that recent estimates suggest that as many as 1 in 200 adults may be trans. See: Scheim, A.I. & Bauer, G. R. (2015). Sex and Gender Diversity Among Transgender Persons in Ontario, Canada: Results From a Respondent-Driven Sampling Survey. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 52(1).

Observation

Reliable statistics on the percentage of youth identifying as transgender do not exist – neither in Canada nor in the United States. The Centre for Disease Control in the U.S. is reportedly looking at including a question on gender identity in a forthcoming version of its Adolescent Health Survey (though not before 2019). For now, estimates suggest that under 1% of adolescents identify as transgender.

Meeting Participants' Needs

In interview and focus group sessions, key informants and project staff were asked how projects were meeting the needs of participating youth. This question generated data with respect to the types and range of needs that participants had, and helped to flesh out the picture of who the participants were as well as (implicitly) the ways in which projects were being responsive to them.

These data speak to the issue of “project relevance,” one of the principles of effective youth prevention programs identified by Small (2011):

Effective programs are specifically tailored to particular ages or developmental stages rather than trying to address the widest possible group of individuals or families. They acknowledge the developmental differences that often characterize children and youth of even slightly different ages. For prevention programs, it is also important that information is delivered neither too early [...] nor too late.

The developmental needs of participants were top of mind for many of the project staff and key informants. In addition, people described the needs of youth with respect to a number of other categories or characteristics, including:

- Gender – specifically, the differing needs of girls and boys;
- Indigeneity – the needs of Indigenous youth;
- Race – specifically, the experience of black youth and youth of colour with respect to violence; and
- Newcomer status – the particular needs/issues arising from being a new or recent immigrant to Canada.

Finally, interviewees described needs arising from the nature of the local environment (cities, towns, regions) in which projects were being delivered. These were the needs associated with the particular socio-economic and geographic context of the communities in which the project participants were living and developing. Needless to say these categories intersect and many project participants had needs related to more than one.

Developmental Needs**Middle school – reported to be a “crucial” time for working on healthy relationships**

There was some consensus among the project staff and key informants we interviewed that Middle School (i.e. Grades 6, 7 and 8) is an appropriate – or even a “crucial” – time to start working on the issue of healthy relationships in the broad sense (i.e. relationships with peers, and with parents and other family members, as well as dating relationships). The reasons given were:

- Middle School students are entering puberty and experiencing the rush of confusing and powerful emotions associated with it. Healthy relationships programs can help teens to know that they are not alone in dealing with these emotions.
- This is a challenging and complex time with respect to social dynamics and peer pressure. Cliques are forming and young people are trying to fit in and they need support to navigate their social context and develop a healthy and positive sense of identity.

Emerging awareness of science on the teenage brain

The qualitative data on participant needs suggest that there was an emerging awareness among grantees of the increasing amount of scientific evidence on the elasticity of the teenage brain. The teenage years represent a time of huge growth and change in the brain. Some project facilitators and organizational leaders recognized that this presents an opportunity to foster in young people a sense of open-mindedness and the capacity for critical thinking.

- This is the age when stereotypical perspectives (relating to gender, sexuality, and appearance, for example) begin to be formed and when young people begin to judge themselves and their peers in accordance with those perspectives. Healthy relationships programs can support teens to reflect critically on these perspectives and encourage greater open-mindedness, awareness and respect.
- As they mature physically, students in Middle School begin to experience sexual feelings and start to explore their sexuality. Teen healthy relationships programs can provide a safe space in which to discuss – and to normalize – emerging (healthy) sexual desires and behaviours (such as, for example, masturbation).

When are young people “ready” for dating relationships content?

Data generated on participants’ developmental needs suggest that there is some debate about the most appropriate age to deliver healthy relationships content that focuses specifically on dating relationships. Grantees and key informants identified different “perfect” ages or grades for embarking on this material. Grade 7, Grade 8, Grade 9 and Grade 10 were all described as being the “perfect” age for introducing information and conversations about healthy (and unhealthy) dating relationships:

- **Grade 7:** Facilitators with one of the universal projects described Grade 7 as being “very responsive” to the material. They perceived Grade 8 and 9 students as being “too cool” to engage in conversations about dating. They also observed that Grade 9 was “too late” to begin learning about healthy dating relationships since by then students have “already started to establish those relationships” and may not be open to hearing that they are not in healthy ones. One parent of a child in a selective project felt that Grade 7 was a suitable time to introduce this material since, at this age, young people are “old enough to understand the issues” and “young enough to listen [to adults]” and learn from what adults have to say.
- **Grade 8:** One school counsellor described Grade 8 as the “perfect” time to teach students about healthy dating relationships, as this is the age when they are “either thinking about a relationship or are [already] in one.”
- **Grade 9:** Grade 9 was also perceived to be the “perfect life stage” for content about dating relationships, as (in the words of a community sexual health nurse) this is the age when “kids [...] are just starting dating relationships.”
- **Grade 10:** Age 15-16 was described by one vice principal as the age when young people are likely to be thinking about having sex and the most appropriate time, therefore, for introducing information around sexual health and decision-making. This key informant felt that students younger than Grade 10 were not sufficiently interested in intimate relationships to make dating relationship content relevant to them.

The debate really boils down to a) adult perceptions (perhaps informed by research, perhaps not) of when young people typically start dating and b) whether or not the commentator believes that healthy dating relationships content is best delivered **before participants are dating** or **when they are starting to date**. Facilitators with a selective project that takes a social justice approach to exploring relationship violence described the challenges that could exist when educators and project staff had conflicting opinions on when teens should be exposed to content about healthy and unhealthy dating relationships. Pitching their project to Middle School administrators, these facilitators were told that Grade 6, 7 and 8 students were “too young” for the content. Ironically, high school teachers had told them that they needed to reach younger teens since unhealthy relationship dynamics have often already been established by the time students are in high school.

“We were doing workshops in high schools and were being told, ‘This is great, but you need to do it younger.’ So that was very useful to leverage, because sometimes when the pitch went to middle schools, they said, ‘These kids are too young. Maybe you should go ask a high school.’ And we would say, ‘We’ve been through a ton of high schools and the relationship dynamics that we’re talking about are already playing out for sometimes years before we even get to them.’ So if we’re actually talking about prevention...

Project facilitator

A board member with a grantee organization that serves a socially conservative region of Canada expressed frustration that they were unable to reach youth before Grade 9 because of beliefs by educators and parents about the age-appropriateness of the project content:

In my experience, kids have some pretty strange ideas – particularly about women – long before Grade 9. So why do we work with Grade 9 kids? It's my understanding that the program content is not considered acceptable [by the school community and by parents] for younger kids. (Grantee board member)

If healthy relationship programs are to be effective in **preventing** violence in dating relationships then, arguably, they need to be delivered to students before they start to date. However, as our data indicate, opinions on what age teens (typically) start dating vary. The issue is also complicated by the fact that a teen's developmental age may not necessarily align with their chronological age – some students will be ready for content on dating relationships earlier than the majority of their peers. This poses an implementation challenge for project facilitators:

It's important to differentiate for different populations. We may have a sexually active Grade 6 kid in a class with some kids who may be vaguely aware of sex, and still others who are completely innocent. We need to be able to meet the range of those needs. (School principal)

Some interviewees expressed the opinion that it is desirable to start talking to children about healthy intimate relationships as early as elementary school, providing that this is done in a “developmentally appropriate” way.

Meeting the changing needs and capacities of participants over time

When projects work with the same students over several years, project designers and facilitators may be able to create content that builds incrementally in depth and complexity. Facilitators with a project that is delivered to all students from Grades 7 to 10 described the theoretical model underpinning their multi-grade project. The model involves working with the younger students on exploring their individual experiences and – over the course of 3-4 years – supporting students to gain an understanding of the systemic issues that underpin individual experiences. By Grade 10, students will be developmentally equipped to reflect more critically on their experiences, feelings, attitudes and behaviours, and to connect personal experience with the socio-political context in which they live.

Teens' need for connection

A strong theme in the qualitative data on participants' needs was the role that projects were playing to develop and support young people's sense of connectedness. Notably, it was the staff with the selective projects that spoke to this need. Social connectedness is recognized in the literature as a protective factor against both perpetrating and experiencing violence, and in this respect, facilitators of selective projects were identifying an important function of their work:

There is an overwhelming number of young people who need guidance, who need support, who need love... whether it is a lack of role models at home, or lack of mother and father, a lack of love, a lack of economic prosperity. But for many reasons, there are young people who need support, who need space, who need attention, and we're able to be there. (Project facilitator)

These facilitators demonstrated an understanding of the importance of enhancing students' connection to (pro-social) peers, to parents and family members, and to other trustworthy adults. In some instances, the facilitators also talked of young people's need to be more connected to themselves – to have a stronger, positive sense of identity and to understand their own needs, values and boundaries. Several facilitators (working with youth who may be at more risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence) described their teen healthy relationships work as filling a gap for young people who – for a variety of reasons – were not receiving the “guidance, support and love” that they needed from their family or from other adults in the community. In these instances, project facilitators themselves were meeting young people's need for a trusted adult (another protective factor against violence):

These kids have a lack of resources, a lack of attention. People talk about our kids and call them 'at risk' but I

don't use that word. We look after youth that are underserved. Youth need to be served and given what they need to succeed. For example, some kids have never had guidance from a capable adult. Our program fills that void. (Project facilitator)

Gender - The Differing Needs of Girls and Boys

There was a degree of consensus across project staff and key informants that (at least to some extent) girls and boys have different and specific needs with respect to teen healthy relationships project content and implementation. Notably, the issue of the needs of gender-diverse or gender non-conforming youth was not raised by the people we interviewed.

Girls-Only Projects or Sessions

The dominant theme with regard to girls' needs was the importance of providing opportunities for "girls-only" time - whether that be through including gender-segregated sessions within co-ed programs or by providing programming that is only open to girls. The perception was that girls-only spaces encourage and support girls' active and candid participation, because such spaces are inherently safer. As one facilitator with a project that incorporates gender-segregated sessions explained:

All our girls' groups have clearly stated that they want to be only with girls and that they wouldn't want to address certain issues, especially anything that had to do with their body, if a male was in the room with them. They clearly tell us that they're happy that it's a girls' space and they always say it's because it's female-only that we can talk about anything we want. (Project facilitator)

This perception is backed up by the data generated by the open-ended question in the Participant Survey, where a significant number of participants identifying as girls chose to express their wish for more girls-only sessions. In a couple of instances, grantee staff indicated that girls in their communities were underserved when it came to girls-only programming and spaces. Project facilitators also described girls feeling shut down in a co-ed classroom. For example:

You always have a group of girls [in the co-ed classroom] who never say a word the whole entire time. And then you get them in a group by themselves, and they can't stop talking. It's sad. (Project facilitator)

A small number of interviewees observed that girls-only spaces allowed facilitators to work on creating greater social cohesion and connectedness between the girls, and to address the troubling issue of girl-on-girl violence. We heard that teenage girls are often "in competition" with each other for male attention. Facilitators reported that with the boys out of the room, the opportunity was created to explore and unpack the reasons why girls bully, tease and shame other girls - often judging them against the same (sexualized) stereotypes as boys do. Through unpacking this behaviour, project facilitators were also seeking to enhance the sense of "solidarity" that young women in the group felt for each other.

By contrast, staff with two of the selective projects argued the importance of co-ed program implementation because it allows facilitators to convey to the boys (and the girls) that girls' voices and opinions are valuable. By explicitly making space for girls' contributions and demonstrating respect for girls' ideas in a mixed space, these facilitators were aiming to teach all participants that girls and boys are equal, and equally deserving of attention and respect:

We don't do gender-specific workshops because when we separate boys and girls it's like we're saying you're not equal. We want to the boys to understand the girls' perspective and experience. To understand that girls have a right to speak too. By separating the genders you maintain the status quo - you keep the problem going.⁴⁹ (Project facilitator)

Social Stressors that are "Unique to Girls"

Project staff and key informants observed that girls are subject to a variety of social expectations and types of peer

⁴⁹ Notably, the two projects concerned were working with newcomer youth and project facilitators saw a need both to educate these teens about the gender equity that characterizes (at least in principle) Canadian society and to foster greater social integration between boys and girls.

pressure that boys (generally) do not experience. These include stressors with respect to how they look, how they dress, how they behave – all in the context of the pressures that arise from the hypersexualization of young women in contemporary culture.

Girls' Increased Risk of Experiencing Relationship Violence

Among interviewees who identified needs particular to girls and young women, many noted that girls' greater risk of experiencing intimate partner violence means that they have different needs with respect to teen healthy relationships programming. We were told that it is even more vital that girls learn how to be safe in their relationships and in their communities generally. Understanding what your boundaries are and how to assert them, recognizing when a situation is unsafe and how to get out of it – these were described as crucial skills for girls.

Interviewees observed that since a considerable amount of unhealthy sexual behaviour (by boys towards girls) has been normalized in our culture, there is a need to raise girls' awareness about the unacceptable nature of this behaviour and empower them to challenge it:

Girls have been really desensitized towards violence... Like a boy grabbing their bum – that's normal for a lot of young women. And we can show them that these behaviours are not OK and they are able to say, "All right, I can create a boundary now." (Project facilitator)

The Challenge of Engaging Boys

By far the most dominant theme emerging from the qualitative data on boys and their specific needs was how challenging it is to engage boys and young men in teen healthy relationships programming. Facilitators observed the following difficulties with respect to engaging male participants effectively:

- Boys are less likely to sign up for voluntary teen healthy relationships programming;
- Boys tend to segregate themselves (in the mixed classroom) and participate less than the girls;
- Boys have a tendency to "act out" and be disruptive; and
- Boys feel defensive (and may actively disengage) when the topic of discussion is male violence against women.

Such challenges suggest that (at least some) projects and project facilitators were not successfully meeting the needs of boys and young men. Indeed, in some instances, it appeared that their particular needs might not have been adequately explored or identified:

We hear that young men need a different experience – need more of a "doing things" approach. We are working on this. (Project facilitator) ⁵⁰

Boys' Need for a "Safe Space"

In response to the challenge of engaging boys in teen healthy relationships programming some of the grantees were offering boys-only spaces – either through entirely separate programs or through gender-segregated sessions within a broadly co-ed project. ⁵¹ These grantees argued that boys also benefit from having a space in which they can safely open up, express their emotions and reflect on the pressures that they are under to conform to male stereotypes. One project facilitator, for example, described how a boys-only session supported male participants to explore alternative masculinities and, in a number of cases, to articulate their interests in non-traditional hobbies, activities and career paths.

Boys May Identify More Readily with a Male Facilitator

In addition to boys needing male-only spaces in which to candidly explore healthy relationships topics, some project facilitators noted that, with respect to enhancing boys' engagement, it was helpful for projects to have at least one male facilitator. Staff members with projects that intentionally employed male facilitators (i.e. as part of a male-female facilitator pair) contended that there was an immediate connection between the male participants and the male facilitator. This

⁵⁰ Note that "Engaging Boys" was (more than once) a subject addressed through the grantee learning webinars supported by the Foundation. (See p. 112 below.)

⁵¹ The separate boys-only programs are not being funded by the Canadian Women's Foundation and are not part of this evaluation.

connection was seen to enhance boys' sense of safety in the room and increase their comfort level with respect to participating actively:

It's like there's a relationship that's there already... they [the boys] can feel it. And there's a comfort level that allows the boys to kind of unwind and feel that because there's a guy in the room they can say how they feel as a guy. (Project facilitator)

In situations where male project participants do not have positive male role models in their lives, a male facilitator was seen to fill that gap:

A lot of the young boys that we have don't have dads. So the relationship that they have with [the male project facilitator] is empowering for them - to know that they have a male that they can look up to. (Project facilitator)

The Specific Needs of Indigenous Youth

Interviewees described a range of needs and challenges faced by the young Indigenous Canadians they work with that, in large part, are rooted in the ongoing impacts of colonization and systemic racism. These needs and challenges include:

- A lack of connection to their Indigenous culture;
- Experiences of violence - at home and in the community (including exploitation and gang involvement);
- Experiences of trauma and loss;
- Few or no positive relationships with reliable and healthy adults;
- Difficulties trusting others and (therefore) forming positive relationships; and
- Lack of self-esteem, self-confidence and/or optimism.

With respect to meeting these needs and addressing these challenges, interviewees noted that the provision of culturally relevant programming that builds participants' sense of connection to their culture and their positive identity as Indigenous youth is crucial. They also observed that programming for Indigenous youth must:

- Take a holistic and long-term approach;
- Take a strengths-based and trauma-informed approach;
- Focus on healing - in the broadest sense;
- Prioritize the establishment of trusting, reliable relationships between participants and project facilitators;
- Provide opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills and take on leadership roles;
- Support participants to examine and deconstruct the systemic racism that underpins their experiences; and
- Develop participants' self-esteem and cultivate a sense of optimism about their future.

Project facilitators also described the resiliency of Indigenous youth and the great potential for healing and for growing into positive community leaders:

Some of these kids are natural born helpers and this [project] gives them a place to express themselves. It's an avenue for kids to develop their capacity for social action and justice from an Aboriginal perspective. (Project facilitator)

The Specific Needs of Black Youth and Youth of Colour

Project staff and stakeholders connected to projects that were working primarily with black youth and youth of colour spoke of the need to talk about the racial oppression that young people in black communities experience on a daily basis. They explained that family violence and gender-based violence are inseparable from racial oppression. Because of this, discussing and unpacking racial oppression was often the starting point for these projects:

Before they want to talk about gender violence... they need to look at their families. And we work from there.

Just a piece of it is gender violence, because it all goes to race. So some of the classes – not all – need to talk about racial oppression, because it's happening now. (Project facilitator)

Facilitators with a project that works with black girls in an underserved inner-city community illustrated their participants' daily experience of systemic oppression and violence with reference to the heavy police presence in neighbourhoods populated by people of Caribbean or African descent, and, in particular, the police practice of "carding" black youth (i.e. asking for their I.D.). The project responded to this socio-political context through supporting participants to explore and analyze the relationship between race, poverty and police harassment.

We heard that the need to discuss racial violence takes precedence for youth of colour over the need to discuss gender and violence. Nevertheless, facilitators of a girls-only project also described the importance of supporting young racialized women to explore the multi-layered nature of oppression and identity. Viz: What does it mean to be a young woman of colour in this time and place? Facilitators reported helping participants to deconstruct the many labels that society places upon them and the stereotypes to which they are under pressure to conform, and encouraging them to carve out their own (more positive) sense of identity:

For these racialized girls, girls that are black... the kind of women they see in the media is the loud girl that fights. But we want to show them how to be another way. (Project facilitator)

The Specific Needs of Newcomer Youth

Project staff and stakeholders working with newcomer youth described the challenges that young people who are new to Canada have with respect to navigating a new culture/society that may be quite different from their place of origin. Consequently, an important focus for newcomer teen healthy relationships projects was helping young people bridge between home and school:

There's a sense that they are stuck between the culture at school and the culture at home. For example, many of our kids bring a different set of clothes to school and change the second they get there and then change again when they get home. Many of our kids are dating at school, but they don't tell their parents because they're not allowed. So they're really stuck between these expectations here, those expectations there. We hear that over and over again – constantly – especially with the high school youth. (Project facilitator)

Consequently, projects for newcomer youth need to provide opportunities for participants to:

- Explore personal identity, including:
 - Reconciling/making sense of both cultures and both facets of their identity;
 - Validating their sense of pride in their culture of origin; and
 - Identifying personal values and setting boundaries;
- Explore and work out relationships with parents (and other adults in the family). We heard that differences between how things were done in the country of origin and the norms and expectations of mainstream Canadian society could create tension between teens and their parents. This was one of the reasons why we saw newcomer youth projects engaging with parents;
- Enjoy a space away from parents to explore safely issues and ideas that may be taboo in the country of origin;
- Discuss and reflect on cultural differences as they relate to gender, dating and sexuality; and
- Talk about experiences of racism.

It's difficult to find a balance between the environments/culture at home and at school. I think the young people need to explore for themselves "What can I do in my adolescence to find myself?" The program helps young people to find themselves, to learn who they are. (Project coordinator)

Project staff and stakeholders also described the pressures that newcomer families are frequently under when parents are working long hours (often in multiple jobs). In this context, afterschool projects provide a healthy space and activities for teens who may otherwise be unsupervised during the late afternoons/early evenings, and therefore vulnerable to becoming involved in unhealthy/anti-social activities:

Newcomer youth are easy targets for negative social attention/gangs, especially when they are left alone with no parental supervision. This program provides a positive alternative. (Community partner)

We were also told that some newcomer youth need help with emotional regulation – in particular with managing anger – and that projects were responding to this need by teaching anger management skills as well as constructive ways to express challenging emotions. Such skills were seen to support newcomer youth in being successful both socially and at school. School connectedness – helping youth to feel safer at school and more engaged with their education – was another important focus of projects working with newcomer youth:

We choose the neighbourhoods where we can support kids to find school more fun and help kids to engage with school and to stay in school. (Project coordinator)

Finally, we heard that newcomer youth need opportunities to use their talents, tap into their passions and gain the confidence that comes from experiencing success:

They need an opportunity to share both their talents and their good stories. To be able to express themselves freely. It is really very, very important. (Community partner)

Needs Arising from Local Contexts

The 17 funded grantees were working in a wide range of community contexts, each with different socio-economic conditions and associated challenges. Project staff and stakeholders serving rural communities noted that while such communities are usually tightly knit – with high levels of social connectedness – there can be a lack of privacy, which leaves teens feeling lots of pressure to conform to local norms (even when these are unhealthy). Rural regions also tend to be rather culturally homogenous. A board member with one grantee organization described how commonplace misogyny is in their rural, culturally homogenous part of Canada:

There is not a lot of experience here with different races, religions, etc. so all the negativity is focused on women. It is culturally OK to put down women, to talk about “us and them.” I hear lots of very negative language used to talk about women. (Board member)

In this context, we heard that the need – and the challenge – is to open young people’s minds to other (healthier) ways of being.

Economic disruption and poverty cut across the rural/urban divide. Several communities were described as being marked by economic disruption and poverty. These issues were seen as directly contributing to higher levels of violence at home. In one instance, a key informant with a project serving rural regions in Canada described how relationship violence is, for many families, normalized:

Even the adults don’t know what dating violence is. They may see behaviours as normal. (Former board member)

Both rural and urban communities were described as having few services and supports for teens, with urban teens in economically constrained neighbourhoods being deprived of the kinds of programs and activities typically available to their more affluent counterparts.

When Projects are Unable to Meet Participants' Needs

Some of the youth we met with – as well as some of those who completed the Participant Survey – described how projects that were unable to meet their needs, that were not relevant to them and their circumstances, failed to engage them. When this was the case, opportunities for new learning, growth and development were lost. Teens tuned out. Participants' comments demonstrated that they wanted to learn but that they had little patience with projects that failed to start with where they were at – developmentally, culturally and/or in terms of their personal experience of the world:

- *It would be nice if there was a little more talking about the problems that we are having, rather than about things that may not be happening in our lives. (Project participant)*
- *This program did not teach us what needed to be taught. Teach me something useful. Maybe then I'll be interested. (Project participant)*
- *It's difficult to connect [with the project] on a personal level. The boys don't want to talk and don't feel they can open up. Also, it's hard to see the truth of the statistics that the program presents. I can see the truth of it more now that I'm older. But the statistics don't resonate with Grade 7s – that's when you're focused so much on yourself. (Project graduate)*
- *There needs to be more age appropriate activities or separate programs depending on age. (Project participant)*

Project Dosage

Project “dosage” (as discussed in the “Research” section of this report, above) refers to the amount of programming an individual is exposed to through their participation in a specific project or intervention. For our analysis of the data generated by this evaluation we are using a “dosage measure” that includes the total number of hours and total number of sessions that make up a project.

Of the 17 funded projects, three had two distinct components (which, generally speaking, reached different youth). In terms of dosage, then, there were 20 discrete project components that needed to be considered. The charts below show the average number of hours and the average number of sessions for each of the projects/project components.

Chart 4. Average number of project hours, by project/project component

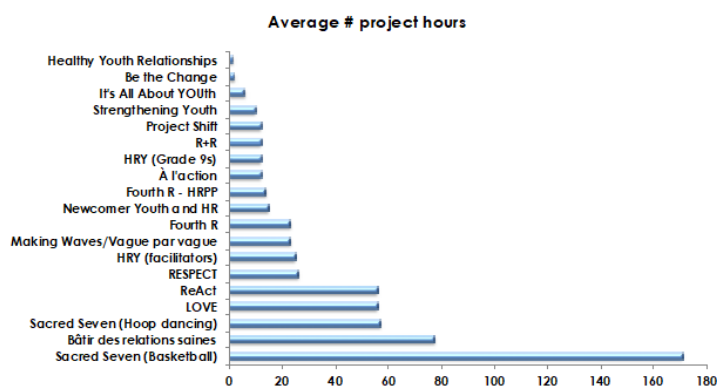
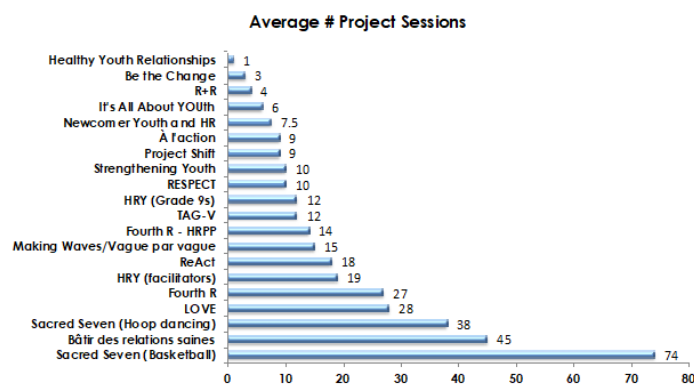


Chart 5. Average number of project sessions, by project/project component



Based on these figures, for the *Teen Healthy Relationships Program* overall the number of project hours per participant ranged from 1.5 to 171, with a midpoint of 12-18, and an average of 31.5 hours. The number of sessions per participant ranged from 1 to 74. The midpoint was 12 sessions and the average was 18 sessions.

Using these data, we were able to group projects by dosage. We then analyzed the Participant Survey data by dosage groupings using SPSS. Our methodology for determining project dosage groupings and the results of the SPSS analysis are provided and discussed in the “Outcomes” section on p. 118 below.

Project Activities

This section of the report details findings related to the activities implemented by projects in order to achieve their desired learning outcomes for participants. It looks at:

- *Topics and skills;*
- *Active and discursive learning methods;*
- *Youth leadership and peer facilitation; and*
- *Project comprehensiveness (i.e. projects targeting more than one setting in which teens develop).*

The section also highlights a number of project components that the qualitative data we gathered suggest are particularly important to project effectiveness.

The description of findings on project activities are for all projects overall. However, it must be stressed that not all of the projects were doing all of the activities detailed here – and nor was it an expectation that they would. Project activities should be aligned with: the needs, interests and developmental readiness of the youth participating; the interests, expertise and capacity of the organization providing the service; and the intended outcomes or impact of the project. For example, a grantee project working with newcomer teens in an urban neighbourhood provided participants with the opportunity to do photography as a means of exploring and communicating (in a non-verbal way) their sense of identity and their hopes for their futures. A project working with Indigenous youth in a large city focused on traditional teachings in order to support their participants to develop a stronger sense of cultural connectedness and pride. Two universal projects, while seeking to meet Provincial learning outcomes, focused on identifying and exploring the interests of the teens in the room through discussion-based learning.

Topics and Skills

During the site visits, we asked project staff/volunteers, agency Executive Directors and key informants what the projects were doing to achieve the changes that they were seeking to make. Broadly speaking, interviewees described a combination of information dissemination and skill building activities. Notably, this aligns with the best practice of providing programs for teens that develop skills and give information.

The tables below summarize what we were told with respect to the kinds of topics (information) that projects focus on and the kinds of skills that they aim to develop or strengthen in participants. Our thematic analysis of the data identified 26 discrete topics and 14 discrete skill sets. The order of the topics/skills in the tables broadly reflects their relative importance within the qualitative data set (from the most to the least frequently mentioned). The data do not represent a comprehensive picture of the topics and skills addressed in projects nor do they convey how much time projects typically spent on each topic and skill. Rather, they provide an indication of which topic areas and skills were top of mind for interviewees with respect to what the projects were doing to achieve their desired outcomes.

Table 10. Topics identified by project staff and stakeholders as important to achieving projects' desired outcomes

| Main topic | Sub-topics |
|--|---|
| Gender | <i>Gender-based violence; Gender-identity (fluidity); Oppression; Gender roles/stereotypes (analyzing and deconstructing); Relationship dynamics</i> |
| Consent | <i>Boundaries; Communication</i> |
| Where to get help | <i>Resources; Referrals</i> |
| Bullying | <i>Cyber-bullying</i> |
| Intersectionality | <i>Oppression; Gender; Race; Ethnicity; Power; Religion</i> |
| Types of violence/abuse | <i>Dating violence; Gender-based violence; Oppression; Systemic violence; Cycle of violence; Bullying; Cyber bullying</i> |
| Characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships | <i>Signs of an abusive relationship; Dating violence</i> |
| Online/cyber safety | <i>Cyber bullying</i> |
| Oppression | <i>Intersectionality; Roots of violence; Systemic violence; Power (analysis of); Media (deconstructing representations of gender, race, culture); Gender-based violence</i> |
| Sex and sexuality | <i>Anatomy; Body image; Pregnancy and birth control; STIs; Safer sex</i> |
| Communication | <i>Consent; Boundaries</i> |
| Bystander intervention | <i>Advocacy</i> |
| Traditional knowledge/practices | <i>No data</i> |
| Equality | <i>No data</i> |
| Media | <i>Media-literacy; Social media and safety</i> |
| Emotional/mental health | <i>Stress; Coping strategies</i> |
| Information that supports positive choices | <i>Characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships</i> |
| Diversity | <i>No data</i> |
| Respect | <i>No data</i> |
| Justice | <i>No data</i> |
| Love | <i>No data</i> |
| Relationship with self | <i>Self-care</i> |
| Relationship with community | <i>No data</i> |
| Cultural differences (newcomers) | <i>No data</i> |
| Family | <i>No data</i> |
| Personal safety | <i>No data</i> |

Table 11. Skills identified by project staff and stakeholders as important to achieving projects' desired outcomes

| Skill | Details | Perceived Value |
|---|---|--|
| Language/ vocabulary | Accurate and respectful language Language of asking for help Terminology for experiences of oppression Language for removing cultural and social barriers to well-being Language of oppression vs. language of empowerment and equality | The language to name things (e.g. "sexism," "racism") – supports understanding and knowing that they are not alone – healing potential of naming what is happening Language to name/articulate feelings – prevents anger/rage Supports youth to speak about the issues respectfully Increases young people's capacity for analyzing and understanding a situation or a dynamic Facilitates self-expression Supports non-violent communication Enables help-seeking/self-advocacy Supports cultural and social inclusiveness/ integration Supports respectful behaviour |
| Communication skills | "I-statements" Communication styles (passive/ aggressive/ assertive) Appropriate and accurate language | Non-violent communication Self-expression Supports honesty Improved communication – less conflict – between parents and children |
| Advocacy skills (on the part of self and/or others) | Bystander intervention skills Self-advocacy Developing the language of advocacy | Builds resilience Capacity to stand up for themselves or a friend if something negative arises |
| Emotional regulation | Anger management Language to name feelings | Helps prevent out of control experiences of anger/rage Transforming difficult feelings (e.g. anger, hate) |
| Problem solving | Refuse, delay, negotiate | Negotiating challenging situations (with peers) |
| Mindfulness | Self-reflection Mindful about one's actions | Supports emotional regulation |
| Conflict resolution | De-escalation "I-statements" | Reduces conflict; defuses unsafe situations |
| Critical thinking | How to be critical without being negative | Builds capacity to talk in depth about issues and engage in careful and robust thinking |

| Skill | Details | Perceived Value |
|-----------------------------|---------|------------------|
| Setting personal boundaries | | Safety |
| Decision-making | No data | No data |
| Leadership skills | No data | No data |
| Coping skills | No data | No data |
| Facilitation skills | No data | No data |
| Self-care | No data | Respect for self |

Active and Discursive Learning Methods

People learn best when they are actively engaged and have opportunities to practice new skills. Programs that use active and varied teaching methods and keep participants interested tend to be most successful. Effective programs engage participants in the material and encourage them to practice and apply new behaviors, rather than just presenting information.

(Small, Principles for Effective Family and Youth Prevention Programs, 2011)

Three questions on the Participant Survey were designed to generate data on the extent to which projects were using a mix of student-centred teaching and learning strategies and focusing on active learning techniques that emphasize skills acquisition. On the whole, the survey data indicate that projects were applying a range of active learning techniques and that facilitators were engaging participants in reflection and discussion. Specific findings include:

- 77% of participants reported **sharing their experiences and reflecting on those experiences through discussion;**
- 64% of participants reported that they **created and gave presentations;**
- 57% of participants reported doing **drama and role-play;**
- 51% reported taking part in **physical activities** (sports and active games); and
- 28% reported **taking photographs.**

While watching videos tends to be characterized as passive learning, when video material is current and relevant and when watching is followed by (or incorporated with) active discussion and analysis of what was seen, then the use of videos can both engage students with content and support learning. It appears that very few projects were falling back on passive video watching as a component of their content: only 6% of participants reported that they had watched videos “with no discussion.”

Arts and recreation activities frequently formed a part of the projects' content (as the last two items in the list above indicate). Overall, 79% of project participants reported taking part in some kind of arts-based or recreation activity.

“The activities are what is phenomenal. As a teacher I’m blown away with how interactive the program is. It is not ‘stand and deliver.’ Kids get to explore.”

Classroom teacher

Broadly, 15 – 20% of respondents reported doing cultural arts and crafts and/or taking part in cultural ceremonies or celebrations. This figure seems appropriate for the percentage of funded projects that were explicitly designed for and delivered to specific cultural groups.

The qualitative data gathered from project staff and key informants also provided evidence that projects were, overall, using active learning pedagogies and facilitated discussion to engage students meaningfully in the content and to promote skills and capacities such as:

- *Critical thinking and analysis;*
- *Self-reflection;*
- *Self-expression;*
- *Self-awareness;*
- *Empathy (and other aspects of emotional intelligence);*
- *Problem solving;*
- *Boundary setting;*
- *Interpersonal communication; and*
- *Leadership and group collaboration.*

“The facilitators were very energizing – with it being interactive. It helped us to absorb the information in a fun way. Although it could be daunting to learn this material, the interaction and fun approaches made it easier and fun to process.”

Project graduate

Broadly speaking, project facilitators recognized – and made good use of – the potential for active learning and facilitated discussion to:

- Deepen participants’ engagement with and understanding of the content;
- Support students’ voice and self-directed exploration of issues and concepts; and
- Make learning an “embodied” process (i.e. moving content from the verbal and conceptual to the physical and tangible – felt in the body).

Drama Activities

The power to make learning an embodied process was ascribed specifically to the use of drama pedagogy, such as role-play, improvisation and tableaux. As the Participant Survey data (above) suggest, drama techniques were popular pedagogical tools with project developers and facilitators. This is borne out by the qualitative data where the use of drama pedagogy was a strong theme. In addition to supporting embodied learning, project facilitators also described the particular strength of drama activities to:

- Support teens’ emotional understanding, including enhancing empathy for others;
- Enable participants to explore difficult situations and to practise skills – in a safe environment;
- Support teens’ self-expression – through non-verbal as well as verbal formats;
- Help to develop participants’ self-esteem and sense of agency; and
- Act as a catalyst for discussion and debate.

“Always a focus on doing. Because there is no better way to learn that to try and have it play out in your real life.”

Project facilitator

In interview, key informants were – broadly speaking – as enthusiastic about the use of role-play (and other drama techniques) as the project facilitators were. The following comments give a flavour of this:

- *The thing about this program I like is the built-in practice – the role-plays and all the games. If you don't practise with kids they don't get it. They really need to practise and then discuss and debrief.* (School principal)
- *There are tons of activities. Kids are not being told what to think, they are learning for themselves. Kids observe scenarios, comment on what they see, and then recreate the scene.* (Parent)
- *The girls like the role-plays. They get the girls' interest. It's engaging.* (School teacher)

“For the practice piece, role-playing is a critical component. Unless you practise these skills – such as how to resolve conflict, how to say no – they can't be learned. You have to practise so that they become second nature. If this doesn't happen, we're doing the kids a disservice.”

Executive Director of grantee organization

- *With the experiential learning, kids have to find their own way through these issues. It's left for them to discover. What does "respect" really mean for them in their everyday lives? (Parent)*
- *The role-plays open up a dialogue. The facilitators were so sensitive to enabling all opinions to be shared. This is where the real learning takes place. It's eye opening for the kids. (School teacher)*
- *The role-plays are the hardest part but also the most important part. (School Board member)*

One caveat applies, however. As the last two comments above suggest, facilitating drama activities effectively requires a considerable degree of skill on the part of the teacher/facilitator. This issue came to the fore in a focus group with mainstream classroom teachers delivering a teen healthy relationships project that incorporates role-play as a central tool for reinforcing and practising key relationship skills. Although these teachers (who were not drama specialists) had received some training to deliver the project, they described struggling with implementing the role-plays successfully:

- *There are some kids who will just not do it and there is always the kid who makes a joke about it. (Classroom teacher)*
- *The level of participation depends on the class - I have a group where it's like pulling teeth. (Classroom teacher)*
- *I have given up on doing most of the role-plays. I find that the kids who want to do it are the kids who want to be "on" - they aren't learning - they just want to be the centre of the show. Their participation is just an opportunity to shine. (Classroom teacher)*
- *They struggled with the role-plays. Not because the kids struggled with role-play, but because the teachers themselves struggled. (School Board member)*

While these comments speak to implementation challenges for one specific project, they flag the important issue of facilitators having the requisite training and competencies to facilitate drama activities - and other active learning techniques - in a way that supports the safe and meaningful participation of all students in the room.⁵²

Visual Arts and Media

For some projects, providing participants with the opportunity to explore healthy relationships content through visual arts activities and media projects was a central component. One grantee organization, that had structured its selective project around participants working in (single-sex) groups to create a video, valued the multi-media focus for its power to draw teens into the project (first of all) and then into the content itself:

The youth work on consent and relationships (and so on) through creating their media projects. It's through that process that they explore the content. They wouldn't necessarily be interested in a program if we said, "It's about healthy relationships." The hook is the media project. But then they find that they are interested in the topics and issues as well - and that they are having fun. (Executive Director)

Project facilitators also reported that visual arts and media, in particular, support self-expression in ways that do not necessarily rely on verbal expression. This makes them especially suitable forms for teens who may have difficulties with literacy or who may be non-native English/French speakers.

A notable example of the use of visual arts activities came from a project that works with newcomer youth in an urban centre. In this case, the project partners with a community arts organization, which enables them to bring in highly skilled arts facilitators to work with the teens. In the instance described to us, participants were equipped with cameras and invited to take photographs to communicate some positive aspect of their identity - what they liked most about themselves/their lives or what their goal or ambition was for their future. Supported by the community arts facilitator, participants selected which of their photographs they wanted to share and then discussed them with the group. The photographs were framed and displayed, and the teens got to talk about why they took a particular image and what it meant to them. A description by one of the project facilitators of a photograph created and shared by a young male participant illustrates the potential power of visual arts activities:

⁵² Ensuring that the more introverted students are included in the process, making sure that the really confident and extroverted students do not overly dominate, knowing how to deal sensitively with the variety of ideas and opinions that students will raise through the drama (some of which may be challenging or offensive) - these are a few of the core capacities requisite for effective drama pedagogy.

One of the projects they get to do is to take photos. With this one group, we said, "Where do you see yourself in the future? What's your goal in life?" So they took photographs of themselves and talked about the photos to the group. And there was this one guy... he said that no one in his family had ever been to university... they had lived in a refugee camp in South Sudan. And he wanted to go to university - to get a scholarship so that he could go... And he had gotten one of the kids to take a picture of him jumping - like shooting the basketball. And in the photo he was in the air - off the ground, right? Soaring. That's where he sees himself. Soaring. (Project facilitator)

Youth Leadership and Peer Facilitation

The literature identifies the provision of youth leadership opportunities and the use of peer facilitators as effective practices for youth prevention programming. However, generating reliable data on the extent to which the funded projects included leadership development activities and/or peer facilitation - as formal components of their work - proved to be problematic. Broadly speaking, grantees did not agree on what constitutes a youth leader or peer facilitator; the terms tended to be conflated and, with respect to the notion of "peer," there was considerable disagreement/confusion around exact definitions. The question of the age of a "peer" was a particular issue - with some grantees describing facilitators in their late 20s as "peer facilitators." Another unresolved issue was whether or not a "peer" needed to have similar life experiences and challenges as the project participants, and, if so, whether this trumped age. The result is that the evaluation was unable to generate reliable, consistent data on grantees' approaches to youth development and use of peer facilitation. We did not get at the real picture.

For example, while two-thirds (67%) of grantees reported that their projects included a component that involves training school-aged youth to facilitate teen healthy relationships workshops (Annual Grantee Survey, Year 3), finding corroborating evidence of this on the ground (i.e. during the site visits) was difficult. Rather, what we heard during the site visits were accounts of how challenging projects have found it to sustain the involvement of older students (i.e. Grade 11 and 12) as peer facilitators because of competing (academic) pressures on these students' time. Consequently, with the exception of two projects that explicitly use a peer facilitation model, peer facilitation appeared to be happening in a rather ad hoc and inconsistent way.

With respect to one of the projects that explicitly used a peer facilitation model (i.e. training high school students in Grades 11 and 12 to deliver teen healthy relationships content to students in Grade 9), we have Participant Survey data for the younger (Grade 9) students. Interestingly, the reported effects of project participation for these Grade 9s were notably weaker than for projects overall.

With respect to leadership development, the qualitative data suggests that most projects were taking an informal/organic approach to this, rather than an intentional, structured approach. However, from the projects serving Indigenous and newcomer youth, we heard about the importance of developing leaders from within the community. In these cases, becoming a leader was, to some extent, an expectation that grantees had of (at least some of) their participants. In the context of newcomer communities, identifying and nurturing young leaders was seen to be important for the resilience and health of the community, and in the context of Indigenous communities it was seen as crucial for cultural revitalization. The following comment from one of the grantees working with Indigenous youth illustrates this:

The wider Indigenous community also benefits from the development of the young leaders in our programs, as it revitalizes cultural knowledge and creates role models in our community for young children.
(Fourth Administrative Data Review - Annual Grantee Reports to the Foundation)

The reference to "role models" in this comment is pertinent because what the evaluation was able to capture more clearly than projects' youth leadership development and use of peer facilitation was the importance of role models as a key project component. (This is discussed on p. 78, below.)

Project Comprehensiveness

The most effective programs recognize that individuals develop within many settings such as school, family and neighborhood. Effective programs often target more than one setting, or partner with other programs that reach

the same audience in different settings. Effective programs often simultaneously address more than one process related to human behavior or development.

(Small, Principles for Effective Family and Youth Prevention Programs, 2011)

Grantees' Involvement of Other Groups in Project Implementation

The existence of active partnerships or relationships between grantees and other groups/organizations that work with young people in different settings is an aspect of taking a comprehensive (or “wraparound”) approach to supporting youth. In their Annual Grantee Reports to the Foundation in 2016, the majority of grantees (13 of 17) reported intentionally involving other stakeholder groups and organizations in the implementation of their projects. These groups, in order of frequency and perceived impact of involvement, included:

- *The broader school community;*
- *Relevant cultural groups;*
- *Other community organizations;*
- *Parents/caregivers and family;*
- *Other youth-serving agencies; and*
- *Faith groups.*

“The program is part of the fabric of the school community.”

Grantee

Grantees reported a range of benefits – for project participants and themselves – of working with other agencies, organizations and individuals.

With respect to engaging with the **broader school community**, benefits were:

- *Enhanced youth recruitment and participation;*
- *Reinforcement of session topics and lessons for participants;*
- *Opportunities for participants to showcase/share their learning with other students and school staff; and*
- *Reliable school support for the projects (including the time and space to deliver the sessions).*

“Participants consistently rate our cultural content as the main reason for attending.”

Grantee

The participation of **relevant cultural groups** was reported to strengthen projects by:

- *Ensuring that project content and materials were culturally appropriate;*
- *Strengthening intergenerational connections and bonds for participants;*
- *Enhancing participants' cultural connectedness;*
- *Providing youth with inspiring role models and mentors; and*
- *Linking participants to community based cultural events.*

Involving **other community organizations** (e.g. health and other social service agencies) in project implementation, reportedly helped participants (and their families) to learn about and connect with needed community services and resources. For grantees, relationships with other community organizations were seen to support their own project delivery (e.g. by strengthening project design and implementation, supporting knowledge transfer, and increasing awareness of their project) and enable them to offer activities outside of their own skillsets (e.g. partnerships with community arts organizations enabled projects to provide participants with high-quality arts-based activities).

Grantees described involving **parents/caregivers and family**

“If there is violence in the family, or anti-social behaviour, or if within the family the discourse is that your mother is useless, or your mother and sister are incapable – then these are the attitudes/values the kids take into the school environment. So we take a systemic approach – to work with the social/familial circle that surrounds the youth.”

Executive Director of an agency working with a comprehensive model

members by:

- *Inviting them to participate in project events;*
- *Providing them with project information at school events; and*
- *Delivering parent workshops.*

The reported benefits of these activities were:

- *Increased participant attendance rates;*
- *Creation of a safer space for participants;*
- *Support for participants to apply what they were learning in the project to their own lives;*
- *A shared understanding of healthy relationships by parents and youth;*
- *A clearer understanding of (and comfort about) the projects' content and objectives by families.*

For at least one grantee, working actively with families was seen to strengthen their community-development model of service delivery.

The involvement of **other youth-serving agencies** was reported to support:

- *Knowledge transfer from the project to the broader community;*
- *Participant recruitment;*
- *Participant referrals to/connections with additional services and/or post-program supports; and*
- *Development of content and materials that reflected the lived experience of specific groups of youth.*

For grantees that involved **faith groups** the reported benefits were:

- *Providing participants with the appropriate religious/cultural perspectives on healthy relationships; and*
- *Supporting grantees to adapt project content and materials to suit the faith environments of participants.*

Characterizing Projects as “Comprehensive”

The data described above indicate that most grantees were actively engaged in strengthening their projects through a range of relationships and collaborations that, broadly speaking:

- *Enhanced their capacity to deliver tailored, relevant and engaging programming;*
- *Built connections across and between the different settings in which young people develop; and*
- *Increased young people's access to a variety of complementary services and supports.*

However, during the course of the evaluation it became clear that only a small number of the projects could readily be characterized as “comprehensive.” In these instances, grantees were taking a more structured, integrated and sustained approach to targeting “more than one setting” within which adolescents develop. These grantees (and projects) were:

- *BCHM (Montréal): Bâtir des relations saines entre jeunes;*
- *SERC (Winnipeg): Newcomer Youth and Healthy*

“So [our partner agency] is offering their afterschool programs already, and we just throw our hat in. We're another one of their programs. So they might be offering, like, cooking classes or basketball classes or English classes, and so now they have our classes as well.”

Program coordinator, comprehensive project

“We become that family for them. They see us twice a week, sometimes more. We're not just doing a two-hour session. We're on Facebook, we're texting, we're on the phone at night.”

Facilitator, comprehensive project

Spotlight on comprehensive projects

Bâtir des relations saines entre jeunes, BCHM, Montréal

BCHM offers a suite of programs and supports aimed at increasing the health, wellbeing and social connectedness of young people and their families. These programs take place primarily at the community centre and include: youth mentoring; mediation between parents, schools and youth; academic support; alternatives to school suspension; and healthy cooking classes (to name a few). Bâtir des relations saines entre jeunes is delivered to some 300 students at the local high school, École Père-Marquette, as a series of school-based workshops. A key component of BCHM's model of healthy relationships programming is connecting students who may be in need of additional social or educational support with the programs and services available at the BCHM community centre. The Bâtir des relations saines entre jeunes facilitator plays a key role in identifying such students and linking them to the other services. Also, the BCHM team includes a social worker who is regularly on site at Père-Marquette and to whom the program facilitator can refer students. This interplay between the general healthy relationships programming at the school and the more intensive and individualized supports at the centre enable BCHM to provide comprehensive, wrap-around services to young people who may be particularly vulnerable to violence or conflict and/or may be experiencing challenges at school, at home or among their peers. Services include parent workshops that complement the programming being offered to youth.

Newcomer Youth and Healthy Relationships Project, SERC, Winnipeg

SERC delivers its teen healthy relationships project for newcomer youth within the context of a strategic partnership with The Peaceful Village (an afterschool educational community renewal initiative facilitated by the Manitoba School Improvement Program). Rather than creating a stand-alone, school-based initiative, SERC has situated its teen healthy relationships project as a 'program option' for youth who are already engaged with The Peaceful Village. The Peaceful Village has site leads at the middle and high schools in which it operates. The site leads contribute considerable practical and logistical onsite support for SERC's project (e.g. scheduling sessions and organizing food, rooms and equipment, etc.). Because of their direct connection with students through the broader Peaceful Village initiatives, the site leads also play a role in identifying and/or encouraging newcomer youth to participate in the healthy relationships project. These strong linkages facilitate and enable ongoing and regular participation by youth in this afterschool, voluntary, teen health program.

RESPECT, Immigrant Services Calgary

The RESPECT project operates in partnership with The Calgary Learning Village Collaborative, a collective of 12 organizations that supports "children's positive physical, social, emotional and cognitive development through a school-based model in Calgary's Greater Forest Lawn (GFL) area." The Learning Village leverages and coordinates the provision of services and programming in six schools in the community. The organization manages a physical program space in each school. These are furnished with couches and carpets, and feel welcoming and inclusive. RESPECT has access to the Learning Village space at no cost. The Learning Village also assists with the recruitment of participants for the RESPECT program. RESPECT also has a partnership with ANTYX, a community arts organization. As a result of this partnership, youth participating in RESPECT are supported to use arts activities, such as photography, to explore social-cultural issues that are important and relevant to them.

Sacred Seven, Wii Chiwaakanak Learning Centre, Winnipeg

Sacred Seven is a project of the Wii Chiwaakanak Learning Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Learning Centre is a University of Winnipeg community partnership initiative that provides educational and capacity building opportunities for Indigenous and inner city youth and adults. A critical aspect of the Centre's mission is providing the safe environment that is known to be essential if learning is to take place. Participants in Sacred Seven have access to the other resources and supports at the Learning Centre and through their association with the project become familiar and comfortable with the university environment. Participants may also benefit from the links that the project has to the University of Winnipeg's on-campus collegiate high school. Sacred Seven applies a family inclusion policy that supports the participation of the target youth by welcoming all family members, including younger siblings. A unique aspect of the project is that it is facilitated by 'mature' (heterosexual) couples, who are seen to represent stability and to model positive and healthy relationships. The project is understood to provide an important element of stability for participating youth. Facilitators take a holistic approach to working with participants and are available to the youth all year round and outside of regular project and office hours.

Relationships Project;

- *Immigrant Services Calgary: RESPECT; and*
- *Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre (Winnipeg): Sacred Seven.*

BCHM provides comprehensive programming to teens by a) offering a combination of universal school-based programming and selective agency-based services for youth and b) providing parallel programming for parents. The other three grantees all have in place a form of partnership with other programs that reach the same teens in different settings and with a variety of information and skills-based content. Notably, all four of these projects serve either newcomer/racialized youth (BCHM, Calgary Immigrant Services and SERC) or Indigenous youth (Wii Chiiwaakanak).

We have tentatively characterized the LOVE, Halifax project and METRAC's ReAct as comprehensive based on the fact that the projects' facilitators consciously take a holistic approach to engaging with the participants and routinely provide additional, individualized support beyond the conventional parameters of a healthy relationships program. Examples of such support include: providing help with scholarship applications; connecting youth with counselling supports; helping participants (and their families) through personal crises; and connecting with teachers or other school staff in support of the participants' educational success/school attachment. Notably, LOVE works with Indigenous youth (in this instance) and METRAC works with racialized youth.

Finally, CAMH's relationship with the Do Edaezhe program in the Yellowknife Catholic School District to deliver Healthy Relationships Plus (a targeted version of The Fourth R) is a good example of a mainstream organization finding a home for its programming within a local, more holistic and locally relevant initiative.⁵³

More detailed descriptions of the particular comprehensive models represented by BCHM, SERC, Immigrant Services Calgary, and the Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre are provided on p. 71.

Important Project Components

Through our thematic analysis of the qualitative data generated during the site visits, a number of components emerged as being fundamental to the design and implementation of effective projects. These are:

- *Creating a safe space;*
- *Giving participants the language;*
- *Having important conversations;*
- *Providing role models; and*
- *(For after-school projects) providing food.*

"I am able to express myself and am accepted for who I am."
Project participant

Creating a Safe Space

In interview, project staff and stakeholders described creating a "safe space" as an essential component of teen programming – a fundamental ingredient that enables projects to function effectively and to achieve their goals. Interviewees also highlighted that creating and maintaining a safe space is a vital part of **building relationships** within the project – both between the participants and facilitators, and between the participants themselves. With respect to the latter, it was noted that a safe space allows participants to connect with each other, to collaborate successfully with people outside of their usual friendship groups, and to develop a sense of solidarity or team identity, whatever their superficial differences may be.

Staff with one of the grantee organizations preferred the use of the term "safer space" in acknowledgement of – and to support the awareness of – the fact that absolute safety for all can never be completely assured. The same grantee organization noted that the safer space is closely related to the concept of consent:

⁵³ For an overview of the Do Edaezhe program see: <http://www.ycs.nt.ca/Do%20Edaezhe.php>. We do not have participant data for the Healthy Relationships Plus project.

I think what it really comes down to is consent culture... We're trying to build a community of consent in this room. (Project facilitator)

Youth needs associated with having a safe space

Hand in hand with the idea of the safe space as an essential project component is the perception that young people need such a space. In particular, focus group and interview participants talked a great deal about young people needing a space in which they **feel comfortable talking** about the issues, questions and challenges facing them as teens, and **able to express themselves freely**. Access to a space in which such conversations can happen safely (i.e. with no risk of being shamed, bullied, teased or disrespected in any way) was framed as a **developmental necessity**: *"Young people need a safe space to talk together and the program offers that"* (Project facilitator).

Project staff, EDs and key informants also identified other, broader needs to which the safe space provides a response. These were: gender-based needs; cultural needs; and needs of Indigenous youth arising from the impacts of colonization.

- **Gender:** Facilitators working with a girls-only project observed that the single sex space is inherently a safer one for young women. The vice-principal of the school in which this project was operating noted that being in an all-female space supports sharing and empowerment:

The girls are getting to speak their truth with other girls in a safe space, a non-judgemental atmosphere where they don't feel they are under surveillance. (School Vice-Principal)

- **Cultural:** Staff working in projects designed for newcomer youth noted that young immigrants to Canada need a space away from their parents in which they can safely explore questions related to dating, sex, and sexuality. These are issues that are particularly important and challenging for newcomer youth to navigate – replete, as they are, with different and often conflicting, cultural norms and expectations.

Observation

This raises a question about teen healthy relationships programs engaging with parents, which is a recognized effective practice. How might programs for newcomer youth reach out to and involve parents while still protecting the safe (confidential) space that young immigrants to Canada need to openly explore culturally sensitive and complex relationship issues? We note that SERC and BCHM achieve this by running separate but parallel programming for parents.

- **Indigenous youth:** Key informants for a project that works with Indigenous youth in small, rural communities observed that program participants are growing up in a context of historical trauma. While their communities have strengths, they are also dealing with a variety of socio-economic challenges, including violence. Consequently, having access to a safe space where they can express themselves and connect in healthy ways with their peer group is particularly important for these young people.

Creating (and maintaining) the safe space

Project facilitators described how they go about creating – and subsequently maintaining – a safe space with and for participants. Broadly speaking, this involves the use of formal processes and also relies on the personal qualities and interpersonal skills of the facilitators themselves.

Formal processes that facilitators use to establish a safe space include:

- **Creating an explicit (written) contract with the participants.** This details the expectations for how everyone will conduct themselves in the room. Some

Use (and abuse) of the circle

It is a common practice (when teaching non-academic subjects) to have students (along with their teacher/facilitator) sit in a circle. It's crucial to understand, however, that use of the circle does not of itself create a safe space. In fact, we heard about incidences where the circle structure was abused – where students felt forced into sitting and remaining in the circle and under pressure to share personal experiences.

facilitators have participants sign the contract. Typically the contract is displayed (or is readily accessible) and referred to as required to remind teens of the agreed code of conduct. The contract may also be added to or modified as the need or desire arises within the group.

- **Creating “safety posters” that capture what the group needs to feel safe in the room.** This is similar to creating a written contract but may be more appropriate/engaging for groups that prefer more visual forms of communication. Posters are displayed around the room and provide a permanent reminder of the group’s needs and obligations.
- **Using the circle to help create a democratic/equal dynamic between everyone in the room.**⁵⁴
- **Explaining the importance of confidentiality and assuring participants that what is said in the space will stay in the space.** This also requires being honest with participants about the limits of confidentiality (i.e. the circumstances under which facilitators are legally obliged to share information that a teen has offered up).
- **Starting each session with a check-in** (or other form of grounding exercise) to take the temperature of the room and to surface any tensions or issues that will need to be addressed before moving on to the main content of the session.
- **Ending each session with a check-out** to surface any issues that facilitators may need to come back to next session or provide immediate follow-up on.

Facilitator qualities and skills that support creating and sustaining a safe space include:

- **Being prepared to share personal experiences with the young participants** – modelling openness, honesty and vulnerability;
- **Being non-judgemental** – accepting all contributions from participants without censure or shaming;
- **Being kind, caring and loving;** and
- **Having the courage to call participants on any disrespectful comments or behaviour** – to do this as soon as it occurs and being able to resolve the situation calmly and respectfully.

“To be able to share my honest opinion and have everyone respect/listen to my opinion made me more confident.”
Project participant

The value of creating a safe space

As noted above, teens’ need for a space in which they can safely explore their ideas, opinions and experiences, and engage in conversation about sensitive and complex issues was a dominant thread within the qualitative data on safe spaces. Project staff reported that youth are excited to be in an environment where they feel both able and supported to talk openly about things that they would, in other contexts, be afraid to address. One facilitator of a universal project in an urban neighbourhood used the word “relieved” to describe how participants felt when they realized that they could talk candidly on any relationships-related topic.

Ensuring that young people’s ideas and experiences are “validated” when they share is crucial to generating and sustaining the conversations and keeping the process safe. Project facilitators have an important role to play in acknowledging the value of what participants choose to share and in accepting all kinds of perspectives and opinions. “What is important,” one project facilitator noted, “is that kids come away feeling heard.”

“Young people need to have a safe space to talk together and the program offers that. The youth are really grateful for this and they grow with the facilitators and through the program. There is a change in their thinking and perspectives. The young people feel safe enough to be honest and open – and also to disagree with each other, to have and to explore different ideas and opinions.”
Program facilitator

Project staff described a number of specific outcomes of having open conversations, including:

- *Youth in the program get to know each better and stronger connections are forged;*

⁵⁴ While the circle is a fairly commonly used tool in Western pedagogy, it is somewhat distinct from the use of circle by Indigenous peoples for whom circles are imbued with profound spiritual and symbolic meaning. Indigenous talking circles, for instance, symbolize completeness and equality. All participants’ views must be respected and listened to. All comments directly address the question or the issue, not the comments another person has made.

- Youth feel able to be their “true” selves without fear of being judged or criticized;
- Youth become aware of different realities and alternative ways of seeing things, and start to question their assumptions and beliefs;
- Youth acquire the language (i.e. strengths-based, respectful, accurate vocabulary) to discuss the issues with greater clarity and sensitivity.

Project staff and key informants also noted that the safe space supports teens to:

- **Resolve interpersonal conflict** – they can use the safe space to work out relationship issues;
- **Practise skills** – the safe space enables project participants to try out new healthy relationships skills in a low/no-risk environment; and
- **Explore their own needs and sense of identity** – without the fear of judgement or shaming, teens can openly reflect on their hopes, dreams and desires and develop confidence in who they are.

Limited safe spaces for youth outside of the projects

Several focus group and interview participants shared the perspective that there are few safe spaces for young people outside of those offered by the teen healthy relationships projects, either elsewhere in school or in the community. This perceived scarcity heightened the need to which the grantees saw themselves responding.

One grantee staff member, working with racialized girls in an urban, socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhood, observed that while their after-school project offers these girls a safe space in the school once a week, there are few (or no) equivalent safe spaces for them in the community. The suggestion was that there are limited places in their own neighbourhood for young women (and youth in general) to go, where they can be safe and supported. Youth are underserved in their community.

“Kids need to use the language about the subject (e.g. the language of emotion). And they need time to practise using the language where doing so is not threatening and is not about a test.”

School Principal

Additional supports extend the safe space

A grantee staff member, working in a racialized/newcomer community in a large city, noted that their project tries to extend the safety that is created within the classroom-based sessions into the school environment as a whole through the relationship that the school has with the grantee’s Social Worker. The classroom sessions facilitate participants’ sharing their experiences and the agency Social Worker is present in the school if any participants want subsequently to continue to work on an issue in private.

“To know that they can identify their feelings and articulate them. I think that’s the biggest thing I hope they’ll walk away with.”

Project facilitator

Giving participants the language

When asked what the projects do to achieve the changes that they are trying to make, participants in the focus groups and interviews most often identified “giving young people the language” as an important “skill.” Project staff and key informants were clear about the importance of young people having the right language to name their emotions and to talk about relationship-related issues, ideas, challenges and feelings respectfully and clearly.

Accurate and respectful language is vital to violence prevention efforts

The importance of language (and the associated capacity for clear self-expression) as a fundamental tool for reducing violence is encapsulated by the following comment from the facilitator of a project serving youth in an urban, racially diverse neighbourhood:

Violence arises from the inability to express yourself in words. And an obligation I place on myself is to equip them [the project participants] with the words through this program. (Project facilitator)

Project staff observed that being able to name an emotion accurately (e.g. that what I am feeling is “disappointment” or “embarrassment,” rather than simply “anger”) helps young people to deal with those emotions:

Now I can label my feelings. Now I can talk about my feelings instead of experiencing rage.
(Project facilitator paraphrasing participants)

As a violence-prevention tool, project staff described how they are seeking to give their participants the vocabulary to:

- *Identify and name their feelings accurately;*
- *Talk about and better understand relationships and, in particular, to facilitate their understanding of healthy relationships (e.g. through the language of empowerment and equality);*
- *Support an increased understanding of themselves and others (in the context of relationships) through recognizing and naming what is going on; and*
- *Seek support for a problem when they need it.*

“It’s important for students here to have a place to talk freely, to express themselves and talk about their lives, their experiences, what’s happening for them socially.”

High School Principal

Having important conversations

Facilitating – and supporting teens to participate in – conversations on important or “burning” issues was a notable theme in the qualitative data on project components. It is a theme that is closely related to that of “safe space” and “giving young people the language.” Both of these components need to be in play if the “important conversations” are going to happen.

What are the “important conversations”?

Generally speaking, the “important conversations” were seen to be those that pertain to a variety of sensitive, complex and sometimes controversial issues that fall within the broad parameters of teen healthy relationships content. In the words of one key informant (a school principal), they are (often) “the edgier conversations on the hotter topics.”

During interview and in the focus group sessions, project staff, leadership and stakeholders specifically mentioned the following as examples of the “hotter topics”:

- *Dating;*
- *Sex and sexuality;*
- *Equality;*
- *Abuse;*
- *Bullying;*
- *Racism;*
- *Self-harm;*
- *Cyber-violence;*
- *Pornography; and*
- *Sexting.*

A facilitator of an all-girls project observed that simple (and even apparently trivial) topics can become the entry point into a conversation about more

“So we’re talking about things that the kids want to talk about that aren’t talked about in school, and they’re hearing each other’s opinions. And how much more powerful is that than if I were standing there saying, ‘Here’s what you should think and here’s what’s right’? They’re hearing from each other and having conversations that they probably don’t have elsewhere.”

Project facilitator

“What is successful about the program is the kids are having important conversations about topics they wouldn’t otherwise talk about.”

School counsellor

serious issues. For example, talking about the “dos and don’ts” of make-up might develop into a discussion about self-image and the pressures on girls/young women to conform to certain ideals of beauty.

The conversation is “important” if it is important to the youth in the project – if it is a topic that they have raised and/or find compelling or relevant.

Young people need to have these conversations

There was a widespread perception among the people that we spoke to that teens “need” to have these conversations. We heard that young people:

- Are inherently curious about healthy relationships content (dating, sex, sexuality, gender roles, etc.). They have a lot of questions and need a venue for asking those questions;
- Need accurate information and honest, direct answers to their questions; and
- Need to share their experiences, ideas and opinions and have opportunities for open self-expression.

These needs were repeatedly affirmed by the members of the education community that we interviewed (principals, vice-principals, classroom teachers and school counsellors). One school principal described the conversations as “essential,” noting that the teen healthy relationships projects enable a much deeper exploration of the topics than might typically take place between a teacher and their students in class.

“Our biggest thing in schools these days is creating student voice. When you get students fired up, you get them talking. And all kinds of misinformation can get corrected, myths can be corrected, peer learning can take place. It creates an opportunity to respond to actual student learning needs.”

High school vice-principal

A community partner with a project serving newcomer youth observed that opportunities to talk about important issues may be especially valuable to young people who are new to Canada and who are navigating both home and school (mainstream) cultures: “They need an opportunity to share their good stories as well as their not so good ones.”

There was a common perception among the people we talked to that there are few (if any) other opportunities in school – or elsewhere (e.g. at home, in social settings) – for young people to have these conversations. Broadly speaking, the qualitative data on the theme of “having important conversations” give the impression of the funded projects (in many instances) acting as forums for young people’s ideas and opinions. In this case, projects are going far beyond simply teaching about healthy relationships.

The context that supports the conversations

We heard that program facilitators must create and sustain the kind of space in which participants feel comfortable about opening up. (See “Safe Space.”) It is important that participants’ ideas, feelings and perspectives are heard without judgement and without shaming.

The qualitative data also speak to the need for these conversations to be facilitated by adults. The people we spoke with suggested that youth are not having/would not have these conversations between themselves. The projects provide the opportunity and the structure for coming together to have the conversations in a mindful and measured way. Project facilitators play an important role in shaping and moderating the conversations. They provide and model accurate and respectful language, they offer new perspectives on topics, bring information to bear on the issues under discussion, and unpack the complex dynamics that often underpin issues.

The benefits of having the conversations

In interviews and in focus group sessions the adults we spoke to identified a number of benefits of facilitating these important conversations within the projects. These include:

- Participants have an opportunity to express themselves;
- Young people get answers to the many questions that they have;
- Project facilitators can provide information, advice and support to participants;
- Myths (related to dating, sexuality, gender, etc.) can be dispelled and misinformation addressed;
- Participants experience a sense of empowerment through sharing their ideas, opinions and experiences – they feel listened to (without shame or ridicule);
- Social connections and bonds of mutual support are forged between the youth – they realize they are not alone with their feelings and experiences;
- When the issues under discussion have been raised by the youth participants themselves (i.e. they are issues that are important to the youth), then “real student needs for learning” are addressed;
- Skilful facilitators can open up issues that may be controversial or emotive and help young people to navigate these issues, and the conflicting opinions and beliefs that surround them; and
- Young people develop a deeper and clearer understanding of what is happening to them – facilitated reflection on and analysis of the issues supports learning and personal growth.

“We ask them nothing that we aren’t prepared to answer first or give an example of. Which they love, because that then makes us very real people.”

Project facilitator

While the majority of the funded projects are delivered by external, community-based facilitators, a key informant for a project that trains the classroom teacher to deliver the healthy relationships content noted that this project “supports classroom teachers to have the kinds of conversations in their classrooms that they might not otherwise have with the students.” This suggests that “the important conversations” do not only happen with external project facilitators.

Role Models

Providing positive role models for youth emerged as a notable theme in the qualitative data for all projects; but it was a particularly important theme for staff and stakeholders with the projects that we have characterized as “comprehensive.” These projects typically work with the same youth over a longer period of time and place a greater emphasis on “being in relationship” with youth as a primary means of supporting young people’s wellbeing and resilience. Nevertheless, facilitators with shorter (universal) projects recognized the importance and potential impact on youth of modelling such qualities as respectfulness, thoughtfulness and cooperation through their interactions with one another (when there are two or more facilitators) as well as with the teens. Some projects were also seeking to help young participants develop into role models for other teens and their community in their own right.

Project facilitators as relatable role models

The most important role model in the room during a session of a teen healthy relationships project is, of course, the facilitator. Project staff and key informants emphasized the importance of teens being able to relate to the facilitator(s) and they described several different factors that may support this:

- **Facilitators have personal characteristics/backgrounds in common with the project participants.**

These include:

- Closeness in age – many of the project facilitators are in their early 20s;
- Gender – in particular, project staff observed the importance of having a male facilitator with respect to engaging boys; and
- Race/cultural identity.

Such shared characteristics were seen to help ensure that facilitators and project participants have personal experiences/perspectives in common.

“The facilitators are good role models. For some kids there’s an absence of positive relationships in the home.”

Project facilitator

- **Facilitators are prepared to share their own experiences (of oppression, anxiety, difficult relationships and violence, etc.) in an open and candid way.** When facilitators talk openly about their own experiences they model honesty and build connection and trust with the teens:

I always use my life experience. And the kids are so surprised. Like, "Oh my God! You've been through that too?" Like, they're shocked. But it really makes them listen because now they feel you're relatable. (Project facilitator)

Importantly, sharing personal experiences was also seen to enable facilitators to model such qualities as courage and strength, as they describe how they dealt with or overcame an adverse experience. In this way, teens are provided with examples of positive pathways through situations that they themselves may be dealing with:

So that's the most encouraging part for them – that because we've gone through this, they can do it too. (Project facilitator)

- **Facilitators share their dreams and successes with participants:** This emerged as particularly important for projects working with Indigenous youth, racialized youth and newcomer youth, when the facilitators themselves were also Indigenous, racialized or an immigrant to Canada. In these cases, the facilitator was seen to serve as an example for teens of someone who has succeeded in carving out a healthy and positive path for themselves. This can inspire hope and optimism in the project participants; they see possibilities for themselves that they may not otherwise have been aware of.

Some or all of these factors in combination helps to ensure that facilitators have credibility with the project participants. The potential power of this is well illustrated by the following account of the impact that a young Indigenous female facilitator had on the girls in one of the Indigenous projects:

She is in her early 20s – and Aboriginal. I remember her talking at one point about sharing her experiences. And she had some issues with relationship problems with young men. And she's learning along the way – you make mistakes. But she made this profound statement to the girls about, "Find somebody – when you eventually become an item with somebody – that compliments you and not completes you." And I thought, "That's a pretty profound thing coming from somebody who's going through some of these things." For her to say that, as a young Aboriginal woman, to these other young girls was pretty important. (Project facilitator)

Pairs of facilitators model healthy relationships

Most of the funded projects were delivered by two or more facilitators at a time. This enabled the facilitators to actively model healthy relationships through their interactions with each other. When a pair of facilitators was made up of a male and female it also provided an important opportunity to model healthy and respectful relationships between men and women.

In the context of one of the Indigenous projects funded, a mature male and female facilitator who have been in a relationship with each other for over 20 years were reported to model the kind of loyal and stable intimate relationships that young people may not see in their own families.

The kids are seeing us not only as facilitators, as mentors, but also, now, as part of their family. And they're learning how to be a loyal, loving couple. (Project facilitator)

The male facilitator was seen to be a positive male figure for the boys in the project, particularly those whose fathers were not present in their lives:

It's empowering for them [these boys] to know that they have a male someone to look up to. (Project facilitator)

Using mature facilitators who are in intimate relationships with each other was unique to this project and demonstrated a response to a particular community context – one where many young people are seen to lack guidance and support from healthy and older adults.

Facilitators may also model difference

A facilitator working with a project in a homogenous and socially conservative region of the country observed that she, as a gay, androgynous woman, models difference and diversity:

I'm an example of something maybe a little different from what they see. (Project facilitator)

“Food security is a huge thing in this neighbourhood. Providing the kids with good food is really important.”
Community partner

On the one hand, this facilitator was pushing the boundaries for teens in this region – opening up their perspectives and expanding their awareness/understanding of possible sexual and gender identities. At the same time, however, there would have been LGBTQ youth participating in the project (out or not) for whom this facilitator may have represented a positive and validating role model.

“We eat. We never meet without eating.”
Project facilitator

Supporting youth participants to become role models

For some of the funded projects – typically the selective projects that work with youth over multiple years – an explicit goal is to support young participants to develop into positive role models for other youth in their communities. Generally, facilitators with these projects described taking an informal, organic approach to this aspect of their work. As teens progress and mature with the projects, they are encouraged and given opportunities to mentor the younger project participants. One grantee organization that works with racialized youth in an urban environment described taking a more formal and intentional approach to developing young role models from within the community. In addition to (and complementing) its teen healthy relationships project, this organization provides mentor training to teens who demonstrate interest in and the potential for coaching and supporting other youth. The advantage of such peer mentors is the influence and credibility that they have with youth:

When adults speak with youth, they listen (more or less). But when they have a peer to guide them, that's so important. There's a greater impact. (Project coordinator)

Food – A Key Component of After-School Programming

Facilitators with the after-school programs were unanimous in their assessment of the importance of providing food to their teens. On the one hand, food was described as the lure that attracts youth to the projects in the first place (and also part of what keeps them coming). We heard that many teens arrive at their after-school projects feeling ravenous:

We start with snacks. [Entire group laughs.] So important. We start with snacks. (Project facilitator)

You have to feed teens after school. This is really important. (Project facilitator)

Having something to eat is essential if teens are to be able to participate in activities and learn something.

The provision of food by projects was also seen to go some way to addressing a real need in many communities served

by the grantees with respect to food security. For these grantees, providing food was not simply a lure. It was filling a gap caused by poverty and, in this context, the quality of the food that projects were providing was an important consideration. The following comment by a community partner with one of the grantees illustrates this:

The kids are happy to come. What pulls them in? Food is the draw. It's really important. I try to give them good food. (Community partner)

So, while we saw some groups of youth tucking into pizza and soda (the standard teen lure food, it seems, though not a healthy or nutritious choice), we saw other grantees providing fresh produce (salads, vegetables, fruit) and healthier meal options, such as wraps and sushi. One project actively engaged participants in choosing what food they would have at each session and used this as an opportunity to encourage healthier eating as well as increasing participants' sense of ownership of the project.

Eating together was also reported to play a huge role with regard to social bonding and relationship building.

Participant Engagement

In evaluation terms, the immediate output of a project's activities is participant engagement. With respect to project effectiveness, participant engagement is crucial: "effective programs engage participants in the material [...] rather than just presenting information."⁵⁵ The level of participant engagement informs the degree to which new knowledge is acquired and retained, and (ultimately) translates into behaviour change.

As a measure of participant engagement, the Participant Survey gathered data on:

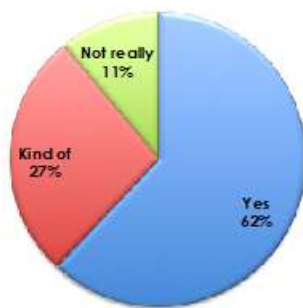
- The extent to which youth enjoyed the teen healthy relationships project they were in;
- The extent to which they joined in with activities and discussions; and
- Whether they felt that they were heard by the teacher/facilitator when they had something to say.

Overall, as the following three charts demonstrate, the self-reported data from participants indicate that they found the projects engaging and that their participation levels were high. In particular, teens reported feeling listened to by the teachers/facilitators leading the projects.

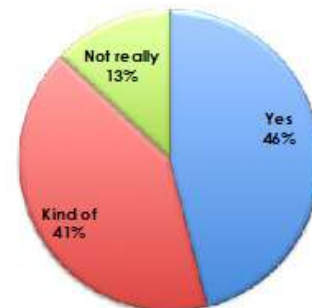
Chart 6. "I enjoyed my teen healthy relationships program/class"

Chart 7. "I joined in a lot"

"I enjoyed this program/class"



"I joined in a lot"

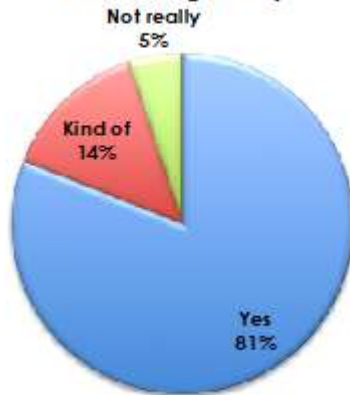


Observation

In response to the questions on project enjoyment and joining in, a significant group of participants (27% and 41% respectively) selected "kind of." This reflects the ambivalence or "in-between" state that is normal for the adolescent developmental stage. By contrast, a "yes" response may be regarded as a strong endorsement and a "not really" response as a strong statement of disapproval. Notably, relatively few respondents selected the "not really" option in answer to these questions (11% and 13% respectively).

Chart 8. "The teacher/facilitator listened to me when I had something to say"

"The teacher/facilitator listened to me when I had something to say"



Approximately 25% of survey respondents took up the invitation to provide an open-ended comment at the end of the Participant Survey. Many of these comments spoke to the respondents' level of engagement in their teen healthy relationships project. Most were positive in nature, expressing gratitude for a fun experience and engaging facilitators. Some pertinent examples are:

- *[The program] was really interesting and it helped me with A LOT of things, such as knowing what a good relationship looks like, how to spot abusive behaviour, etc. I really enjoyed this program and had a lot of fun doing it.*
- *Honestly this was such an amazing class! I would look forward to Fridays not because it would be the weekend soon but because I had this class! Thank you so much for all the insights.*
- *This is the best program! I was nervous to join but I kept coming back.*
- *This was awesome and I'm going to let my school know what's going on. Thank you so much. You're inspirational.*
- *AMAZING PROGRAM!!! GREAT EXPERIENCE!*
- *I can see how moved you [the facilitators] are by what you do, and you guys really do move and inspire the girls to do better and push themselves for what's best for them. Thank you for a great year.*
- *I feel this is a great way to empower and inspire people to take part in something bigger.*

Nevertheless, a small number of participants' comments spoke to their lack of engagement in their projects and described how certain design/implementation aspects of the projects failed to gain and sustain their attention. Pertinent examples are:

- *Sitting down for that long got me really fidgety, and really stressed and uncomfortable. I started freaking out and I needed air. I really think the program was way too long, and I just really was uncomfortable, and I did not like sitting in a circle in very uncomfortable chairs.*
- *Three hours of sitting in a circle is very boring and patience wears thin.*
- *Too long, lost attention.*
- *While I believe these programs have a great intention, they did not teach me much I didn't already know. A room of bored teenagers might not be the easiest crowd. The presenters could also do a better job of keeping us interested.*

These comments underscore the importance of active and varied learning methods that are appropriate for teens'

Spotlight on the dynamics of school-based programming

It was an explicit criterion of the Foundation's Program that eligible projects be school-based. Research indicates that school buy-in and strong relationships with school staff are essential for successful project implementation. Interviews and focus group sessions with project leadership and facilitators, and with school administration and classroom teachers, generated considerable information regarding the complex (and sometimes fraught) relationships between grantees and their partners in the education sector. The following points summarize what we were told about the challenges of school-based programming and what works.

Challenges:

- The time and effort required to get into the schools and then to maintain an ongoing connection.
- Lack of buy-in from the school administration: While an individual classroom/subject teacher might champion a project, support from the principal or vice-principal of a school is crucial for longer-term project success. Grantees reported that this is hard to obtain.
- The negative impact of staff turnover at the schools and the grantee organizations on the development of stable, long-term relationships: Several grantees reported the challenge of having to forge new relationships each year and navigate ever-changing territory within the schools.
- Limited capacity (on both sides) to put the time in to communicate clearly and frequently enough.
- Schools' concerns about project content and parent/community perceptions: Some grantees reported experiencing a "back-lash" from schools against "feminist" messaging and content. Other grantees noted that school staff had different perceptions from them regarding the "developmental appropriateness" of project content. In a couple of instances, grantees described schools being unresponsive to their overtures because the administration feared gaining a reputation for having "violence problems."

What works:

- Projects that are linked to the provincial/territorial curriculum: Teachers appreciate projects that help them to cover prescribed learning outcomes, and they are more willing to give up (precious) timetable space to the delivery of such projects.
- Projects that are responsive to the specific needs of teens (or groups of teens) in a particular school, neighbourhood or community and/or that fill gaps in the available supply of relevant resources/supports.
- School administrators and staff who recognize and value healthy relationships work: Grantees noted that educators who understand the importance of healthy relationships to their students' academic achievement and overall wellbeing are extremely supportive of the projects.
- Projects that are evidence-informed and have demonstrated their effectiveness: Some principals reported being inundated with offers from non-profit agencies to provide school-based workshops and programs. School administrators look to see evidence of an intervention's effectiveness before approving its implementation in their schools.

Some suggestions for how to work successfully with schools:

- Meet with the principal/vice-principal (or other key staff member) to learn about the school's needs, the needs of its students, and the dynamics of the community/neighbourhood. Don't simply promote a pre-existing program. Take time to learn about - and demonstrate that the program can be responsive to - the local context.
- Work with schools that are demonstrably committed to supporting the success of their students in the broadest terms (i.e. they see themselves as supporting students' wellbeing, building leaders, and strengthening the local community). The healthy relationships message will resonate.
- Cultivate champions at any and all levels of the school system. This takes time, but these relationships are crucial.
- Be prepared to be flexible with the program (but not so flexible that too much of what is important to the organization's values and mission gets sacrificed).

developmental stage and that keep participants interested. A number of comments from other participants calling for more active learning approaches reinforce this:

- *Do more role-playing and stand up activities.*
- *I would find the class much more enjoyable if it had more standing up activities and/or less talking.*
- *Do some more activities that involve games, pictures, videos and group games.*
- *Maybe do more activities that don't require pen and paper.*
- *More open discussions!!!!*
- *I think more organized and fun activities should be introduced because sometimes it gets really quiet and no one is sure what to say or do.*

OUTCOMES

Participant Outcomes - Aggregated Survey Results

The Participant Survey generated participant-reported data on the effects of project participation on three levels of individual change: new knowledge; changes in feelings or attitudes; and behaviour change.⁵⁶ The tables below show the aggregated results for all projects. Overall, they present a positive picture of the effect of project participation on teens.

Tables 12, 13 & 14. "Because I took part in my teen healthy relationships program/class..."

| Knowledge | Yes | Kind of | No |
|--|-----|---------|-----|
| I am better able to recognize what a healthy relationship is | 72% | 18% | 10% |
| I better understand that all genders should have the same opportunities | 70% | 19% | 11% |
| I know where to go to get help with a problem | 60% | 24% | 16% |
| I am more aware that I sometimes have ideas about people that are not true | 56% | 29% | 15% |

| Feelings/Attitudes | Yes | Kind of | No |
|--|-----|---------|-----|
| I feel more comfortable being around people my age who look or sound different from me | 58% | 26% | 17% |
| I handle better whatever comes my way | 54% | 31% | 15% |
| I am more in touch with my own feelings | 52% | 29% | 19% |
| I feel better about myself | 49% | 31% | 20% |
| I feel safer at school | 43% | 29% | 28% |
| I have more pride in my culture, race or ethnic group | 41% | 28% | 31% |
| I enjoy school more | 35% | 29% | 36% |

⁵⁶ This is an adaptation of The Kirkpatrick Model for levels of change as a result of a training intervention. *See next page for link.

| Behaviour | Yes | Kind of | No |
|---|-----|---------|-----|
| I am better able to choose friends who treat me respectfully | 67% | 21% | 12% |
| I am better at saying "no" to things that seem wrong or make me uncomfortable | 66% | 21% | 13% |
| I consider other people's feelings more | 65% | 23% | 12% |
| I am more likely to avoid doing or saying things that may be hurtful | 61% | 25% | 14% |
| I think more about other people's wishes before acting | 59% | 27% | 13% |
| I am better at speaking up for people who are being treated unfairly | 55% | 30% | 16% |
| I am making new friends and/or strengthening the friendships I already have | 47% | 25% | 28% |
| I am better at solving problems peacefully | 46% | 33% | 22% |
| I am better at telling others about my ideas and feelings | 43% | 30% | 26% |

Foundation Learning Priorities

Of special note, the effects on knowledge were particularly strong for three items that the Canadian Women's Foundation had believed to be fundamentally important for the Teen Healthy Relationships Program: understanding what a healthy relationship is; understanding of gender equality; and knowing how to seek help. A clear majority of survey respondents reported strong learning in all three areas:

- 72% of respondents reported that yes they are better able to recognize what a healthy relationship is;
- 70% reported that they better understand that all genders should have the same opportunities; and
- 60% reported that they know where to go to get help with a problem.

Skills for Healthy Relationships

Some of the "behaviour change" items speak to important skills for building and sustaining healthy, respectful and non-violent relationships. These include:

- Effective communication skills (I am better at telling others about my ideas and feelings);
- Non-violent conflict resolution (I am better at solving problems peacefully); and
- Healthy boundary setting/assertiveness (I am better at saying "no" to things that seem wrong or make me uncomfortable and I am better able to choose friends who treat me respectfully).

Results suggest modest to strong positive effects for each of these three skill areas, with particularly encouraging results for healthy boundary setting/assertiveness: two-thirds of survey respondents reported that yes they are better at saying “no” to things that seem wrong or make [them] uncomfortable and yes they are better able to choose friends who treat [them] respectfully.

Reported Effects on Protective Factors

Several of the items in the tables above relate to protective factors that research suggests are associated with building young people’s resilience, enhancing their wellbeing, and reducing the likelihood that they will either experience or perpetrate violence. The protective factors and linked survey items are:

- **Self-efficacy** – being better able to handle life’s experiences;
- **Self-esteem** – feeling better about self;
- **Social connectedness** – making new friends/strengthening existing friendships;
- **School connectedness** – feeling safer at school and enjoying school more; and
- **Cultural connectedness** – more pride in culture, race or ethnic group.

Overall:

- With respect to **self-efficacy** – 85% of respondents reported that project participation had, to some extent, helped them to feel that they can better handle whatever comes their way;
- With respect to **self-esteem** – 80% of respondents reported that project participation had, to some extent, helped them to feel better about themselves (49% yes, 31% kind of);
- With respect to **social connectedness** – 72% of respondents reported that project participation had, to some extent, helped them make new friends or strengthen existing friendships (47% yes, 25% kind of);
- With respect to **school connectedness** – 72% of respondents reported some degree of positive effect on how safe they feel at school (43% yes, 29% kind of) and 64% reported some degree of positive effect on how much they enjoy school (35% yes, 29% kind of); and
- With respect to **cultural connectedness** – 69% of respondents reported that project participation had had some degree of positive effect on their feelings of pride in their culture, race or ethnic group (41% yes, 28% kind of).

Observation

We may interpret the “kind of” responses to these items as indicative of positive change, albeit more modest or tentative. Combined results for the “yes” and “kind of” responses demonstrate an overwhelmingly positive trend with respect to respondents’ reporting on the effects of the projects on key protective factors. No matter what level of self-efficacy, self-esteem, social connectedness, school connectedness, and cultural connectedness participants had before taking part in their teen healthy relationships projects, the majority of respondents reported that those levels increased because of their project participation.

Participant Outcomes – “Healthy Relationships” Posters

One of the components of the project site visits was an arts-based Youth Focus Group session with groups of project participants. Designed with input from grantees, the session was intended to support teens to communicate what they had learned about healthy relationships as a result of participating in their teen healthy relationships projects. For the main activity of the session, teens in each project were asked to contribute to the creation of three healthy relationships posters. Mirroring the three levels of individual change that the Participant Survey was seeking to capture, teens were asked to use writing and drawing to illustrate:

- What I know now about healthy relationships (“head”);

goals of the Foundation's Teen Healthy Relationships Program and the three questions presented by the evaluation team. It is worth noting that the number of contact hours (a component of program dosage) did not dramatically affect or impede the success of projects' general messaging. Teens in the lower dosage projects (e.g. six hours) were able to articulate the primary components of a healthy relationship, as well as the appropriate feelings and behaviours associated with such relationships. While participants enrolled in higher dosage projects tended to respond to the questions with a greater degree of nuance and self-reflection (see below), fundamental concepts related to healthy relationships appear to have been grasped by the majority of the participants who took part in the Youth Focus Groups.



Internalizing Messages

Most often participants used key words or phrases to capture a general idea, feeling, or behaviour associated with a healthy relationship. Some frequent responses, for instance, included the importance of “respect,” the feeling of being “happy,” and the need to “listen” to others. Some of the participants, however, were able to apply the project information to specific scenarios or “real-life” situations. This was particularly true for participants of higher dosage projects. For example, in response to the question, “How do you behave in a healthy relationship?” participants in one of higher dosage projects offered the following responses:

- *Be their #1 fan @ [sports].*
- *Ask parents for permission to date.*
- *Don't text other boys.*

Likewise, participants in another high dosage project were able to apply key principles of healthy relationships to their own lives – often through the use of “I – statements.” In response to the same question as above (“How do you behave in a healthy relationship?”), teens wrote:

- *I act funny and fool around when I'm with my girls.*
- *I be myself around everyone with respect and trust, but I also have a fun side without being disrespectful about topics that are sensitive to people – so they don't feel unwelcome.”*
- *When I'm worried I go to a friend or adult I trust.*



It is possible that the higher dosage projects provided the participants with more time and opportunity to internalize the project information/messaging and consider how it might apply to their own lives.

Varied Project Foci

The poster data also convey the variety of foci represented across the funded projects. While the core principles of healthy relationships are evident for each of the projects, the posters also reflect the different themes and specific topics of interest that projects homed in on. To some extent these specifics illustrate topics that are of particular interest or relevance to the participating teens. For example, the posters produced by teens in a project for newcomer youth focus on themes of gender equality, the impact of bullying, and different types of communication – topics that are (arguably) especially relevant for newcomer youth as they navigate the cultural and societal norms of their new country and seek to find their place among a new set of peers. Similarly, feedback from participants in an after-school project for racialized girls reveals a strong focus on topics of friendship, mutual support, and feelings of safety. The diverse nature of the participant feedback highlights the flexibility of the Foundation's Program, within which grantees were addressing a broad range of specific and nuanced needs, while still delivering core healthy relationships messaging.

Observations on the “Head,” “Heart” And “Hand” Feedback

Head - Respect

The poster data suggests that participants across projects (regardless of dosage or the particular group of teens

targeted) recognized the importance of **respect** in a healthy relationship. While most teens identified the need to respect others and the importance of feeling respected by others, participants in higher dosage projects more often expressed the need to respect *themselves* as well. For example, the posters created by participants in a higher dosage, comprehensive project included a number of self-reflective phrases, such as, “respect yourself,” “love yourself,” and “understand yourself.”

Heart - Sense of Belonging

In addition to a general feeling of “happiness,” many participants noted that a healthy relationship should make you feel a strong sense of “belonging.” Terms related to this included, feeling “wanted,” “cared-for,” and “accepted” by others. The posters clearly articulate the fundamental importance of *inclusion* and *social connection* for many teens, and this sense of belonging is likely an essential component of healthy relationships for young people.

Hand - Importance of Communication

Many participants articulated the primary role of effective “communication” in a healthy relationship. Teens from all projects identified various ways to facilitate positive communication, using key terms such as, “listen,” “be truthful,” “be honest,” and “respond.” The combination of active terms such as “listen” and “respond” in tandem with more reflective terms such as “be truthful” and “be honest,” also suggests that participants have grasped the mutual nature of good communication – that is, it is up to both people in a relationship to participate and engage.

Projects’ “Most Significant” Impacts on Participants - What Adults and Teens Told Us

From the Adults’ Perspective

During the site visits, we asked project staff and stakeholders what the “real impact” of the project was on participants. The following important themes in answer to this question were identified in the qualitative data (listed in order of the frequency with which they were mentioned):

- Increased self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence;
- Greater awareness and capacity for critical thinking;
- Increased knowledge about healthy and unhealthy relationships;
- Increased social, cultural and school connectedness; and
- Enhanced healthy relationships skills (e.g. communication, decision-making, problem-solving).

Self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence

In interview, project staff and stakeholders frequently identified an increase in participants’ confidence as a main impact of the teen healthy relationships projects. In addition to demonstrating greater confidence in themselves, interviewees observed that project participants were showing the confidence to:

- Deal with difficult situations;
- Own their difference;
- Be open about their ideas and feelings;

“I think self-esteem and the courage to step outside of their comfort zone is one of the real impacts. A lot of young women that came and started very shy or quiet... you can see throughout the weeks and the months how they’ve really blossomed.”

Project facilitator



“So when they’re telling stories of, ‘This police officer did this...’ or, ‘Someone made fun of my name’ or ‘my shade’ - or things like that, that happen every day - we’re able to take that experience and connect it to oppressive systems and show them that connection.”

Project facilitator

- Share their learning and skills; and
- Stand up for others.

Notably, several stakeholders shared anecdotal stories of individual students who, through participating in the projects, had overcome shyness and self-consciousness to find their voices and take a lead in the activities. The following is one example:

An older girl, who will be graduating this year... I told her to just come. She said she would come but that she wouldn't say anything. And yet there she was, talking. She said, "Miss, I had a really good time." There's another girl who started coming maybe a month in. Very, very quiet. Now a real firecracker. My, have I seen a change in her! When she gets there she has so much to say.

(Student intern, working with one of the projects)

Enhancing participants' self-esteem also proved to be a key area in which facilitators felt they were having success. A facilitator with a project that serves racialized youth in an urban neighbourhood explained how and why their work places such an emphasis on supporting teens to develop better self-esteem:

You can teach healthy relationships until the cows come home, but if I don't feel good about myself, I'm still going to accept being treated badly. But if I feel really good about myself, I'm much less likely to tolerate people stepping on my boundaries. We talk about that expectation of being treated with respect and we model that... but we also are supporting everybody to realize that they're worth more

(Project facilitator)

This was echoed by a project working with teens in a rural area:

We've been doing a lot around self-worth and self-belief – simply around, "It's okay to say no," or just, "It's okay to like yourself." Self-worth is underpinning all our work. (Project facilitator)

Good self-esteem was seen to be the foundation for respectful behaviour towards others as well as for success in life. Enhancing participants' self-esteem emerged as central to the work of the universal, shorter-term projects as well as the selective, longer-term projects.

Interviewees also described how, as a result of an increase in their sense of self-worth, participants were feeling more empowered. In some instances, this reported sense of empowerment was associated with teens' increased feeling of control over their bodies and the ability to set personal boundaries:

"This is my body, and this is my health, and this is how I can keep my body safe. And if something is not okay, then I'm going to say 'no'."

(Project facilitator)

Other facilitators and stakeholders described teens feeling empowered to: set and achieve personal goals; make changes in their communities; and demonstrate their capacity to be leaders. For example:

So when you see them coming in, being quite vulnerable and not really engaged, to now – six or seven months later, feeling more empowered... They are now able to take the lead in certain areas. (Project facilitator)

"One of the girls came back and she said, 'You know, I was fighting with my boyfriend. We fight a lot. And, you know, for the first time, I thought about stopping and I thought, 'I don't have to do this. I can try to find out what's going on.'"

Reported by a project facilitator

"We do the discussions on violence and healthy relationships. Absolutely. But we use them as vehicles now to build connection."

Project facilitator

Greater awareness and capacity for critical thinking

Anecdotal evidence of projects' effectiveness with respect to developing participants' awareness of relationship issues and their capacity to think critically about the issues was a particularly notable theme in the qualitative data. Important

aspects of this type of project impact included participants':

- **Increased awareness of the extent, nature and impact of relationship violence**, and of gender-based violence in particular:
I think, of course, that the biggest impact is their increased awareness of violence and the impact of violence... particularly on women
(Project facilitator).
- **Increased capacity to reflect on and assess personal experiences and circumstances**, by simply being able to ask "Is this healthy or not?"
- **Enhanced capacity to question and to deconstruct their assumptions, conventional thinking and prejudices.** Project facilitators described successful efforts to open participants' minds to new ideas and different ways of thinking and behaving, including challenging social norms, gender stereotypes and sexism, and deconstructing privilege.
- **Ability to connect personal experiences to the broader social/systemic issues that underpin them.** Some project facilitators described supporting participants to be aware of the socio-political dynamics of relationships (with respect to gender, sexuality, race, etc.). They spoke of teens developing an understanding of systemic oppression and injustice and beginning to see that, as a society, we bear a collective responsibility for people's health and well-being.
- **Understanding that the violence that they see and/or experience in everyday life is not "normal" or acceptable.** Some project facilitators spoke of the need to de-normalize for teens the violent, oppressive behaviours that have become normalized at home, in their communities and/or in the wider society. Facilitators described participants becoming aware that violence in relationships is not okay and that they have to the power to choose how to behave - they can choose, for example, to be respectful to others:
It's awareness of more than the issues. It's awareness that they can make a difference, that they can be part of the solution. (High school teacher)
- **Increased understanding of gender identities and sexualities.**
- **Capacity to make a nuanced critical analysis of popular media**, including deconstructing media representations of women and analysing media representations of violence.

"One student - she was a person of colour - and she said, 'Racism is always going to exist. I just need to walk away from the situation.' And we were able to suggest that maybe that's not actually the case, and that, maybe, because of social movements and people struggling for change, things are better than they used to be and will get better still."

Reported by a project facilitator

Increased knowledge about healthy and unhealthy relationships

As would be hoped in the context of a teen healthy relationships funding program, project staff and stakeholders reported that projects were increasing participants' knowledge about what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like. This is validated by the Participant Survey data, where 90% of respondents reported that, as a result of participating in their teen healthy relationships project, they were "better able to recognize what a healthy relationship is."⁵⁷ It is also supported by the Healthy Relationships Posters that Youth Focus Group participants created.

A number of project staff and stakeholders observed that their projects are concerned with the full range of relationships that teens are likely to be in - e.g. friendships with peers, and relationships with family members, teachers and other significant adults - not just dating relationships. For example:

"One of the girls came back and she said, 'You know, I was fighting with my boyfriend. We fight a lot. And, you know, for the first time, I thought about stopping and I thought, 'I don't have to do this. I can try to find out what's going on.'"

Reported by a project facilitator

⁵⁷ Combined result of respondents who answered "yes" (72%) and those who answered "kind of" (18%).

This is not just talking about intimate relationships. Our end goal is that they're going to have this knowledge of what they can expect from all their relationships, which in the future they will then bring into their intimate relationships. (Project facilitator)

The overall goal is to support youth to have healthy relationships – with themselves, peer groups, family, in real life and on-line, and with authority figures. (Community partner)

Interviewees also offered examples of participants being able to apply their learning about healthy relationships to their own circumstances. For example:

I feel the youth are being empowered to negotiate really healthy relationships for themselves. And if they are in an unhealthy relationship they are given tools and resources to get help. (Community partner)

Increased social, cultural and school connectedness

Developing a greater sense of connection and belonging for teens emerged as another important focus for projects, and interviewees provided many examples of project success in this regard. Increased connection was described as taking multiple forms, including:

- Stronger (and healthier) bonds between students in the same class at school;
- Stronger (and healthier) bonds between students in different grades and different programs/streams (e.g. French Immersion and English stream students) within a school;
- Healthier connections between girls and boys in a class or group – i.e. breaking down the gender divide that is commonly seen in groups of (younger) teens;
- A greater sense of solidarity between girls (in all-girl groups);
- Enhanced school connectedness – with evidence, in some cases, of this leading to academic success;
- A stronger connection to culture – and with this a greater sense of pride in their culture; and
- Improved family relationships, particularly among teens and their parents.

Project facilitators and stakeholders spoke of the importance of teens feeling a “sense of belonging.” This was a phrase that featured prominently in the qualitative data and it is borne out by the participants’ contributions to the Healthy Relationships Posters where “belonging” emerged as an important characteristic of how teens feel in healthy relationships.

From the adults’ perspectives, projects of all types were facilitating such a sense of belonging. In the mainstream classrooms, for instance, facilitators with universal projects described how they saw a change in the quality of relationships between students – a greater level of respect, more comfort in exchanging ideas and thoughts, a breaking down of cliques, increased trust and openness. Conversations between classmates on topics related to relationships, sexuality and the challenges associated with being a teen were described as supporting a sense of solidarity, a powerful awareness that one is not alone with these (sometimes overwhelming) thoughts and feelings:

We talk about emotional angst and depression and some of those things, and to know that you're not the only person that's experiencing this, you're not unusual or different...

“We do the discussions on violence and healthy relationships. Absolutely. But we use them as vehicles now to build connection.”

Project facilitator

“The real impact is having a place to belong. It is a place where they are seen and they are heard. They are accepted no matter what. And they don't often get that. They are hugely validated for who they are and who they are going to be.”

Youth and Family Counsellor

Because you want to be in a box in some ways when you're a teenager. You want to fit in somewhat. And that feeling of belonging is something that a lot of teens don't feel a lot of the time. And so when we're even just talking about these things – opening up the conversation – I think that's really powerful for a lot of people who feel, "It's just me. It's just me. It's just me. It's just me." And then somebody else says it, and it's like, "Wow, it's not just me!" There's a lot of power in that. And so that's what we're moving towards more in our work.
(Project facilitator)

Facilitators with selective, after-school projects described how connections were being forged between participants of different ages and grades as well as from different schools and neighbourhoods. In these cases, participants were being supported to make new friends – often with people with whom they would not otherwise have had the opportunity to connect. A facilitator with a project that works with newcomer youth described the benefits of forging friendships across grades for these youth:

So they're in different classes. But when they meet at [the project], they build ties. So now they have stronger connections, friendship ties, and when they're in school – at recess, during lunch – they are there for each other.
(Project facilitator)

For selective projects that work with the same youth over multiple years, these new friendships were described as having become long-term, sustained connections.

An increase in participants' sense of social inclusion – of feeling connected to peers and of being part of a positive social network – was also described by some project facilitators as having a direct impact on participants' school connectedness and academic success. Supporting participants to succeed in school was an important focus for projects working with Indigenous, newcomer, and black youth/youth of colour, as the following examples illustrate:

We've watched kids go from potentially dropping out to graduating and actually pursuing post-secondary opportunities. I think that that's directly due to some of the work that we've done with them.
(Project facilitator)

One girl who came [to the project] ... She was explosive. Couldn't be with others. Couldn't manage her anger. She was suspended from school. We welcomed her here and our team worked with her and she was ultimately able to return to school – which for me was a great success. (Project facilitator)

"The biggest impact? Her close group of friends. She is with Aboriginal friends and together they are learning about Aboriginal everything. That is really important."
Grandmother of a participant in an Indigenous project

Cultural connectedness was fundamental to the work of Indigenous projects. Facilitators with these projects explained the close alignment between traditional culture and core healthy relationships concepts such as respect. Participants with one of the Indigenous projects were given the opportunity to learn traditional teachings and cultural activities and then to share what they had learned with their (non-Indigenous) peers at school:

For a participant to ask us to go and share what they are doing outside of school with their school and their peers – and most of them aren't Aboriginal – is huge. It's saying, "We're proud of who we are, so look at us." (Project facilitator)

Such work contributes to the process of cultural revitalization for Indigenous communities. As a parent of one of the participants told us, "We didn't grow up with this [cultural] stuff. We lived on reserve and the traditional knowledge was lost because of colonization. I just started learning the cultural pieces myself."

Enhanced healthy relationships skills

The acquisition of skills that are fundamental to making and sustaining healthy relationships was also described by project facilitators and stakeholders as a key outcome of the teen healthy relationships projects. These included, notably:

- Communication skills – this aligns with participants' emphasis on effective communication in the Healthy Relationships Posters activity;
- Problem solving and conflict resolution; and
- The capacity to make good decisions.

A stakeholder with one of the universal projects that places a particular emphasis on skill development commented:

I think of the students having more tools in their tool kits to deal with difficult situations. Everything from minor, uncomfortable situations to something really big like serious bullying or abuse in the home. They have more tools. (Public servant with a Ministry of Education)

One skillset that emerged as important to a number of projects was bystander intervention – having the courage and the appropriate strategies to step up and challenge unhealthy or disrespectful behaviours and/or to help someone in need.⁵⁸ Facilitators offered examples of young people who were feeling empowered to do this:

We're hearing [from school staff] that students are feeling more confident in standing up against racism and homophobia. (Project facilitator)

And actually we see that behaviour change. I've seen young men standing up for young women in the hallways, in a really powerful way. Face to face, saying, "You can't say that to her. That's sexist. It's not okay." (Project facilitator)

Some projects situated bystander intervention-type skills in the context of "helping a friend":

We give intervention strategies. "How do I help a friend?" (Project facilitator)

To be a friend to someone by intervening and saying, "Come, we'll get you some help." This is a big change that needs to happen. (Project facilitator)

"Most Significant" Project Impacts – The Teens' Perspective

Participants in the Youth Focus Groups were invited to take a card and, privately, write down the "most significant" impact that they felt their teen healthy relationships project had had on them. A thematic analysis of their input revealed the following key effects of project participation (listed in order of the frequency with which they were mentioned):

- Increased knowledge about healthy and unhealthy relationships;
- Enhanced healthy relationships skills (especially, communication and self-regulation);
- Greater awareness and capacity for critical thinking;
- Increased social and cultural connectedness;
- Increased self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence; and
- Increased self-awareness and self-respect.

With the exception of the last item, which does not feature as a strong theme in the project staff and stakeholder interview data, this list closely echoes the information that project staff and stakeholders gave us. This consensus between adult and teen perspectives reinforces the projects' "real impact" on participants. Taken together, participants' "most significant" project impact statements show that teens in the funded projects acquired new knowledge and new skills. In addition, projects enhanced teens' resilience by strengthening such protective factors as social connectedness, self-efficacy and self-respect.

⁵⁸ There is a growing evidence base for the effectiveness of bystander intervention in reducing sexual violence perpetration. See http://www.preventconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Resource-List_062617_Bystander-Interv.pdf for examples of research.

Increased knowledge of healthy and unhealthy relationships

Many teens provided straightforward assertions of having acquired new knowledge about healthy and unhealthy relationships. For example:

Our [project] has taught me what it is to be in a healthy relationship and I can now tell the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy one.

I know in my own life what is a healthy relationship and what isn't.

Some participants focused in on a particular characteristic/quality of a healthy relationship. Consent was a strong theme. Some comments demonstrated that participants had actively applied their new understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships to their own lives, in ways that had made a positive difference to their situations:

I have made changes in my life because I have a better realization of what is/isn't normal and healthy.

I learned that I was in an unhealthy relationship and learned how to get out of it safely.

I found that my relationship changed after going to this [project] because I learned things about my own relationship that weren't healthy.

Enhanced communication and self-regulation skills

For many participants, the “most significant” effect of their project was the acquisition or strengthening of healthy relationships skills. Improved communication skills featured strongly, especially the ability to tell others about their ideas and feelings. For example:

To be able to talk about how I'm feeling and express if I'm uncomfortable in a situation and how to handle it.

[The project] helped me be more open about my story... and helped me find healthy ways to express my emotions.

Participants also described learning and using formal healthy communication techniques. For instance:

I learned useful tips for effective communication.

Lately I've been in a bit of a fight with my friend and after we learned about the “I statements” I've been able to express my feelings in a healthy manner.

For several participants, the most important change was being able to regulate their emotions:

I know how to manage my anger.

Before I participated in [the project] I had diagnosed anger management problems. I was violent and out of control of my feelings. As a result of embracing this program, I can handle my anger and recognize my temper in a healthy way.

Greater awareness and capacity for critical thinking

A large number of participants provided comments that spoke to projects having enhanced their awareness and understanding of relationship issues. Teens wrote of experiencing a change in their perspectives. For example:

This really made me look at things differently.

It helped me to learn new ideas.

Several participants wrote that they have a stronger awareness of the impact that disrespectful or violent behaviour has

on others, including the use of hateful language. An increased understanding of the gendered expectations placed on girls and boys was also a strong theme. The following is one illustration of this:

Something interesting to me is the unit we did about how boys and girls are raised differently. It showed and taught me how different we are raised, and expected to act and not to act, and look like.

Increased social and cultural connectedness

Many teens identified stronger feelings of social and cultural connectedness as a result of project participation. Notable themes were making new friends and strengthening existing friendships, as the following examples illustrate:

I have opened up so many new friendships with people I respect.

I got to meet new people and build healthy relationships with them.

[The project] has made our bonds stronger.

[The project] brings my friends closer.

Moreover, the authors of the first two statements explicitly characterize their new friendships as positive ones – “with people I respect” and “healthy.”

In addition, some participants reported having gained a new appreciation for the importance of friends and friendship. Some wrote of an increased sense of belonging – of knowing that they are not alone with respect to their opinions and ideas. A small number of participants commented on having learnt more about their culture and feeling prouder as a result.

Increased self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence

A considerable number of participants attributed an increased sense of self-confidence or self-esteem to their participation in their project. Some associated such an increase with the positive experience of being listened to respectfully by the facilitator and other teens:

I have become much more confident in everything I do. To be able to share my honest opinion on a subject that isn't talked about a lot, and have everyone respect/listen to my opinion made me more confident.

Notably, a number of participants wrote that they had more “courage” as a result of participating in their projects – specifically, the courage to express themselves, and the courage to be different.

Some participants expressed an increased sense of self-efficacy in terms of managing their own lives and with respect to their capacity to effect positive change in the world.

Increased self-awareness and self-respect

A large number of comments articulated participants’ improved awareness of their own feelings and emotions. Emotional intelligence was a strong theme:

I know a bit more about myself with respect to my feelings and my passions.

Helping me understand myself, and why I might feel a certain way.

To recognize my emotions. Before I would say happy, sad or tired. Now I can go deeper into my emotions. I feel lonely, ecstatic, empathy, and so many more – to feel a need for something, a need to be loved or left alone.

Participants also attributed strengthened feelings of self-respect and self-worth to their participation in their teen healthy relationships project:

I respect myself more.

Knowing that I can set standards for myself in a relationship and be picky to make myself happy.

I've become more aware of how I should be treated - what I deserve.

Participant Outcomes – Statistical Analysis of Participant Survey Data

SPSS analyses were performed of the Participant Survey data by two of the key project characteristics identified in the Descriptive Framework. These are:

- Universal/selective projects; and
- Dosage.

In addition, we analyzed the Participant Survey data by gender identity. This section of the report details the findings of these analyses.

Findings by Universal and Selective Projects

When we conducted an SPSS analysis of the Participant Survey data by “selective” and “universal” projects, we saw that the reported effects of project participation were stronger for the selective projects than for the universal projects. Results were stronger for selective projects across all items and in every case the pattern identified was statistically significant (i.e. was not likely caused by random chance). In total, we received 2153 Participant Surveys, of which 748 were for “selective” projects, and 1405 were for “universal” projects. The tables below show the Yes results for all items.

Table 15. Participant survey results for engagement, by selective and universal projects (“Yes” responses)

| Engagement | Yes | |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| | Selective | Universal |
| The teacher listened to me when I had something to say | 88% | 78% |
| I enjoyed this program/class | 86% | 50% |
| I joined in a lot | 65% | 36% |

Table 16. Participant survey results for changes in knowledge, by selective and universal projects (“Yes” responses)

| Knowledge | Yes | |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| | Selective | Universal |
| <i>Because I took part in my teen healthy relationships program/class...</i> | | |
| I am better able to recognize what a healthy relationship is | 85% | 65% |
| I better understand that all genders should have the same opportunities | 79% | 66% |
| I know where to go to get help with a problem | 74% | 54% |
| I am more aware that I sometimes have ideas about people that are not true | 67% | 51% |

Table 17. Participant survey results for changes in feelings/attitudes, by selective and universal projects ("Yes" responses)

| Feelings/Attitudes | Yes | |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| | Selective | Universal |
| <i>Because I took part in my teen healthy relationships program/class...</i> | | |
| I feel more comfortable being around people my age who look or sound different from me | 71% | 52% |
| I feel better about myself | 71% | 37% |
| I handle better whatever comes my way | 69% | 48% |
| I am more in touch with my own feelings | 69% | 44% |
| I have more pride in my culture, race or ethnic group | 67% | 31% |
| I feel safer at school | 62% | 35% |
| I enjoy school more | 55% | 27% |

Table 18. Participant survey results for changes in behaviour, by selective and universal projects ("Yes" responses)

| Behaviour | Yes | |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| | Selective | Universal |
| <i>Because I took part in my teen healthy relationships program/class...</i> | | |
| I am better able to choose friends who treat me respectfully | 82% | 59% |
| I am better at saying "no" to things that seem wrong or make me uncomfortable | 77% | 61% |
| I consider other people's feelings more | 77% | 60% |
| I am more likely to avoid doing or saying things that may be hurtful | 76% | 55% |
| I think more about other people's wishes before acting | 72% | 54% |
| I am better at speaking up for people who are being treated unfairly | 68% | 49% |
| I am making new friends and/or strengthening the friendships I already have | 68% | 36% |
| I am better at solving problems peacefully | 63% | 38% |
| I am better at telling others about my ideas and feelings | 61% | 36% |

Participant Engagement

The first thing to notice is that participants in selective projects reported higher engagement levels than those in universal projects (Table 15 above). Given the demonstrated correlation in the research literature between student engagement and learning, we would therefore expect to see stronger effects overall for selective project participants with respect to changes in knowledge, emotions/attitudes, and behaviour.

It is worth pointing out that for the participant engagement item, the teacher listened to me when I had something to say, the difference between the results is much narrower than for the other two items. This is one indication that the quality of the facilitation of universal projects is not in question.

There are a number of reasons why engagement results for selective projects were higher than those for universal projects:

- The universal projects were mandatory – they were delivered as part of the regular school timetable and students did not have any choice over whether or not they attended. By contrast, teens elected to take part in the selective projects, which were delivered at lunchtime or after school. Almost everyone in a selective project had chosen to be there.⁵⁹
- The selective projects were typically designed to meet the needs and interests of a specific group of youth (e.g. Indigenous youth, newcomer youth, youth with an interest in social action/ leadership, etc.). The universal projects were linked to provincial/territorial curricula and were designed to meet specific learning outcomes for general health and healthy relationships within these curricula.
- Facilitators of the selective projects had more room/freedom to adjust project content and activities to be responsive to the needs and preferences of the participants in the room at any given moment. Similarly, participants in selective projects had more opportunity to inform/direct the focus of the project. The capacity of the universal projects to respond to the specific needs of particular teens/sub-groups of teens was constrained by the expectation that they would cover off certain provincial/territorial learning outcomes.

“I am simply a better me because of [this program].”
Participant in a selective project

In addition to supporting higher levels of participant engagement, selective projects tended to be of longer duration than universal projects. With more time to absorb and process new concepts and ideas, and more time to practise skills and apply them to real life situations, we would expect participants of selective projects to report stronger project effects on their learning.

Project effects

As the tables demonstrate, the effects of the selective projects were stronger overall, and in some cases, dramatically so. The difference per item with respect to the reported effects for the selective projects and the universal projects varies from a low of 13 percentage points and a high of 36 percentage points. When seeking to understand these differences, it is important to recognize that participants in the selective projects were, in some cases (though not all), more likely to be “at-risk” youth (i.e. facing more barriers to transitioning successfully into adulthood). They may have had (at the outset of project participation) fewer protective factors than the average teen in a mainstream classroom. Therefore, stronger project effects may be a reflection of the fact that teens in selective projects had further to go in terms of learning and building resiliency.

The items for which the difference in results is particularly wide are:

- ***I have more pride in my culture, race or ethnic group*** (a difference of 36 percentage points);
- ***I feel better about myself*** (a difference of 34 percentage points); and
- ***I am making new friends and/or strengthening the friendships I already have*** (a difference of 32 percentage points).

The results for the first item above may be explained by the fact that five of the nine projects that we have characterized as selective were designed for Indigenous

“For most of our kids the issue is that consistency has never been a part of their lives. They’re constantly being let down. They start something and never get to finish it. Whereas there’s completion with this. We don’t just go September ‘til June. We’re going July. We’re going August. We may not be having classroom sessions, but we are still at least two to three hours a day communicating with all of our kids, making sure that they’re safe, advocating for them. Because sometimes their families don’t even have food at home to have supper tonight. So there’s a whole other aspect that in order for everything else to be successful, some of those basic needs have to be met. So although we do classroom sessions from September ‘til June, we’re still going throughout the summer.”
Facilitator with a comprehensive, very high dosage project

⁵⁹ We say “almost” as it is possible that some teens may have attended at the insistence of a parent or teacher.

⁶⁰ See, for example: Poon, C., Homma, Y., Saewyc, E. & Smith, A. (2010). Is cultural connectedness a protective factor? *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 26(2), p. S4; and Henson, M., Sabo, S., Trujillo, A. and Teufel-Shone, N. (2017). Identifying protective factors to promote health in American Indian and Alaska Native adolescents: A literature review. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 1-2, pp. 5-26.

or newcomer youth. Culturally relevant content and/or a focus on enhancing participants' cultural connectedness were important components of these projects. Research shows that increased cultural connectedness is a protective factor against several risk behaviours and increases the likelihood of certain positive outcomes for teens.⁶⁰ To see selective projects succeeding in this area represents a real strength of their approach.

The considerable difference in the results for the item "I feel better about myself" may give support to the theory that participants in the selective projects had further to go with respect to their personal resiliency and general sense of wellbeing. Again, it is very encouraging to see such effects for projects that were working with teens who may have been more vulnerable than average.

The results for the last item in the list above, "I am making new friends and/or strengthening the friendships I already have," may be accounted for by the fact that the selective projects tended to involve teens from different grades and program streams within a school, and (sometimes) from different schools and neighbourhoods. Participants were therefore mixing with students they may not have interacted with otherwise and meeting people they would not have encountered outside of the project. In addition, the more informal structure of the selective projects may have better supported friendship development as well as the enrichment of existing friendships. Further, the (on the whole) longer duration of the selective projects would have provided the necessary time for new connections to become solidified. In the case of projects for newcomer youth (two of the nine selective projects), some participants (i.e. those that had very recently arrived in Canada) may have been starting off with relatively few friends. Increasing participants' social inclusion was, therefore, a central focus of these projects.

Findings by Project Dosage

In order to conduct an SPSS analysis of the Participant Survey results by project dosage, we created a dosage rating for each of the funded projects. (Note that three projects included two distinct components; accordingly, dosage ratings were assigned to each of the components for these three projects.)

The dosage rating incorporates two aspects of project dosage – the number of sessions and the number of contact hours.⁶¹ Once the ratings were calculated, projects were organized into the following set of groupings: *Very high dosage*; *High dosage*; *Medium dosage*; *Low dosage*; and *Very low dosage*. Note that these categories represent an internal comparison of the 17 funded projects. They do not refer to an external ("definitive") scale in, for example, the research literature on program dosage.⁶² (For more details regarding the dosage calculations and groupings, see *Appendix D: Dosage Calculations and Groupings*.)

When we conducted an SPSS analysis of the survey data by dosage category, we saw that **the reported effects of project participation increased in strength with the increase in dosage**. Broadly speaking, survey respondents in very *high dosage* projects reported the strongest effects of project participation and those in the *very low dosage* category, the weakest. In all cases, the patterns identified were statistically significant (i.e. they were not likely to have been caused by random chance).

Tables 19 – 21 on the following pages provide the results by dosage category for participants who answered "Yes" to the survey questions on engagement levels and on changes related to knowledge, feelings/attitudes, and behaviour. (For ease of reading, the highest result for each item is in **bold** font and the lowest is in italics.) The difference in the "Yes" results for the very low and *very high dosage* projects varies from 15 to 56 percentage points.

It is worth noting that the four projects in the very high dosage category were also projects that we have characterized as **comprehensive** (two readily and two tentatively – see "Project Comprehensiveness" on p. 68 above in "Outputs and Activities" section). So, to some extent, we are seeing effects of comprehensive programming in these results for high dosage projects. This makes sense, as more time is required (for example) to provide more holistic/wraparound services to youth and to engage with parents and families.

⁶⁰ *See previous page.

⁶¹ A more nuanced calculation of dosage would have included complexity of project activities. However, generating robust data on this component of dosage was beyond the scope of the evaluation.

⁶² The literature on program dosage consulted for the literature review at the start of the evaluation process concludes that interventions must be of "sufficient intensity and duration" to effectively address the problem being tackled, but does not quantify what "sufficient" entails for any given issue.

It is also important to point out that only one of the 17 funded projects fell into the very low category. This was the only project to be structured as a single, one-off workshop of approximately 1.5 – 2 hours in length. We received 141 completed surveys from participants in this project, which is a respectable number from which to draw conclusions.⁶³ However, it is possible that the relatively weak results for the very low dosage category are reflective of other (problematic) characteristics of this particular project, rather than of the effectiveness of one-off workshop projects in general. Consequently, it may be more reasonable and rigorous to compare results across the other four dosage categories only.

Nevertheless, during the course of the evaluation, the evaluation team and grantees heard from a leading academic in the field of violence prevention about emerging evidence that one-off workshops are not effective and may actually cause harm to participants.⁶⁴ In the context of such emerging evidence, the weaker results for the single very low dosage project may more plausibly be regarded as representative of projects that are delivered as single, short sessions.

In view of this conundrum, the analysis below keeps in view the results for both the low and very low dosage projects compared to those for the other dosage categories.

Participant engagement levels by dosage

Table 19. Participant survey results for engagement, by dosage category (“Yes” responses)

| Engagement | Yes | | | | |
|--|------------|------|--------|-----|----------|
| | Very high | High | Medium | Low | Very low |
| The teacher listened to me when I had something to say | 92% | 86% | 78% | 76% | 66% |
| I enjoyed this program/class | 87% | 79% | 55% | 39% | 26% |
| I joined in a lot | 74% | 52% | 37% | 31% | 20% |

We see much higher reported levels of engagement from participants in the higher dosage projects. As noted in the analysis of reported project effects by universal and selective projects, we would therefore expect to see stronger effects on learning for participants reporting higher levels of engagement.

Very high dosage projects scored particularly well on participant enjoyment (I enjoyed this program/class) and participation (I joined in a lot). The largest gap between very high dosage and high dosage project occurs for the participation item. This result may suggest that there were more opportunities for active participation in the very high dosage projects. For instance, one of the highest dosage projects included a regular physical component (sport and/or dancing). The result may also reflect the amount of time it takes to build the kind of relationships that support active participation by a majority of teens.

The spread for *the teacher listened to me when I had something to say* is much narrower than it is for the other two items.⁶⁵ This indicates that facilitators across all projects were successful with engaging with participants regardless of the constraints/parameters of their project design.

Project effects on participants’ knowledge, feelings/attitudes, and behaviour by dosage

Table 20. Participant survey results for changes in knowledge, by dosage category (“Yes” responses)

| Knowledge | Yes | | | | |
|---|------------|------|--------|-----|----------|
| | Very high | High | Medium | Low | Very low |
| Because I took part in my teen healthy relationships program/class... | | | | | |
| I am better able to recognize what a healthy relationship is | 87% | 81% | 66% | 58% | 60% |

63 See Appendix D for the numbers of completed surveys by dosage category.

64 Reported by Dr. Lana Wells (Associate Professor & Brenda Stafford Chair, Prevention of Domestic Violence, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary) during her presentation to grantees at the in-person Grantee Meeting in Calgary in 2015. As this evaluation took a strengths-based approach, the survey was designed to gather data on positive project effects only. Therefore, we have no findings related to any harms that the very low dosage project might be causing.

| Knowledge | Yes | | | | |
|--|------------|------------|--------|-----|----------|
| | Very high | High | Medium | Low | Very low |
| I better understand that all genders should have the same opportunities | 76% | 82% | 65% | 62% | 61% |
| I know where to go to get help with a problem | 72% | 69% | 53% | 55% | 49% |
| I am more aware that I sometimes have ideas about people that are not true | 64% | 69% | 51% | 45% | 41% |

Table 21. Participant survey results for changes in feelings/attitudes, by dosage category ("Yes" responses)

| Feelings/Attitudes | Yes | | | | |
|--|------------|------|--------|-----|----------|
| | Very high | High | Medium | Low | Very low |
| <i>Because I took part in my teen healthy relationships program/class...</i> | | | | | |
| I have more pride in my culture, race or ethnic group | 83% | 52% | 29% | 27% | 18% |
| I handle better whatever comes my way | 76% | 64% | 45% | 44% | 45% |
| I feel better about myself | 76% | 60% | 37% | 34% | 21% |
| I feel more comfortable being around people my age who look or sound different from me | 75% | 68% | 50% | 50% | 38% |
| I am more in touch with my own feelings | 71% | 63% | 42% | 45% | 36% |
| I feel safer at school | 66% | 56% | 32% | 37% | 23% |
| I enjoy school more | 60% | 47% | 27% | 22% | 13% |

Table 22. Participant survey results for changes in behaviour, by dosage category ("Yes" responses)

| Behaviour | Yes | | | | |
|---|------------|------------|--------|-----|----------|
| | Very high | High | Medium | Low | Very low |
| <i>Because I took part in my teen healthy relationships program/class...</i> | | | | | |
| I am better able to choose friends who treat me respectfully | 81% | 77% | 58% | 60% | 52% |
| I am more likely to avoid doing or saying things that may be hurtful | 78% | 70% | 55% | 55% | 45% |
| I am better at saying "no" to things that seem wrong or make me uncomfortable | 76% | 76% | 58% | 60% | 59% |
| I consider other people's feelings more | 76% | 74% | 59% | 61% | 48% |
| I am making new friends and/or strengthening the friendships I already have | 73% | 59% | 35% | 33% | 19% |

65 A difference of 26 percentage points from "very low" to "high" compared to 61 and 54 percentage points for the following two items respectively.

| Behaviour | Yes | | | | |
|--|------------|------|--------|-----|----------|
| | Very high | High | Medium | Low | Very low |
| I think more about other people's wishes before acting | 72% | 68% | 54% | 53% | 44% |
| I am better at telling others about my ideas and feelings | 69% | 52% | 35% | 34% | 27% |
| I am better at speaking up for people who are being treated unfairly | 68% | 66% | 47% | 46% | 45% |
| I am better at solving problems peacefully | 66% | 57% | 37% | 34% | 33% |

The first observation worth making is that, broadly speaking, we see a notable increase in the percentage of “Yes” answers as we move from the *medium* to the *high* dosage projects. Also, we see very little difference in the results for *medium* and *low* dosage projects. The average number of contact hours for medium dosage projects was just over 12 hours; the average number of project sessions was just under 10. The average number of contact hours for projects in the high dosage category was 23, and the number of project sessions 14. The participant survey results suggest, then, that notable increases in project effectiveness are associated with (around) 23 hours of project contact time over 14 (or so) sessions.

While the results for *very high* (and *high*) dosage projects are notably stronger across all items, there are some for which the difference between the *very high* and *low/very low* projects is particularly wide and therefore worth commenting on. These items are:

- ***I have more pride in my culture, race or ethnic group*** (a difference of 65 percentage points compared to the very low dosage projects, and 56 percentage points compared to low dosage projects);
- ***I feel better about myself*** (a difference of 55 percentage points compared to the very low dosage projects, and 42 percentage points compared to low dosage projects);
- ***I am making new friends and/or strengthening the friendships I already have*** (a difference of 54 percentage points compared to the very low dosage projects, and 40 percentage points compared to low dosage projects);
- ***I enjoy school more*** (a difference of 47 percentage points compared to the very low dosage projects, and 38 percentage points compared to low dosage projects); and
- ***I feel safer at school*** (a difference of 43 percentage points compared to the very low dosage projects, and 39 percentage points compared to low dosage projects).

The results for the cultural connectedness item (*I have more pride in my culture, race or ethnic group*) reflect the fact that the four funded projects in the very high category serve Indigenous youth (two projects) and racialized/newcomer youth (two projects). It is extremely encouraging to see that participants in these projects are reporting such strong effects with respect to increased cultural

“A young girl at the school we work in had a behavioural disorder. The school tried to handle it, but it was tiring for the teachers and in the end she was going to be suspended. To prevent her from being suspended – from being in her house and left to herself during the suspension – she came to us, and we welcomed her to our home [the Centre]. Here she was doing her homework and she was supported. I was supporting her individually and we made arrangements for her to attend the Mentor workshops. And at the end the school was able to reintegrate her. Two weeks later, the vice principal came by my office and told me he wanted to talk to me about the girl. He told me she was doing really well in her classes. He told me, “I don’t know what you did, but it worked. And what a difference we’re seeing!” A small positive comment, but it’s so satisfying to have the recognition that we can make a difference in someone’s life.”

Facilitator with a comprehensive, very high dosage project

connectedness, given the association (in the research literature on protective factors) between cultural connectedness and resiliency. Likewise, it is very heartening to see these (potentially more vulnerable) project participants reporting strong effects with respect to their self-esteem (*I feel better about myself*).

The results for the social connectedness item (*I am making new friends and/or strengthening the friendships I already have*) may reflect the fact that participants spend enough time together in the very *high* dosage projects to establish strong friendships. Three of the four very *high* dosage projects work with youth of multiple ages, enabling participants to make new friends with people from different grades and, in so doing, to build their network of support throughout their school.

Research indicates that school connectedness and a positive school climate (*I enjoy school more and I feel safer at school*) are protective factors against sexual violence, youth violence, bullying, suicide, and (in some cases) teen dating violence.⁶⁶ Aggregate results for these items (i.e. for all projects) were somewhat weak – 35% of all survey respondents indicated that “Yes” they are enjoying school more because of their teen healthy relationships project, and 43% indicated that “Yes” they feel safer at school. The notably stronger results for the very high dosage projects – which are also, we recall, comprehensive projects – suggest that both sufficient time, and a concerted effort to engage with school personnel and actively support participants’ academic success, can have a beneficial impact on students’ experience of school.

“As a newcomer, I’ve changed a lot from before. Solving conflict, feeling confident talking about my health, as well as talking about healthy relationships.”

Participant in a comprehensive, very high dosage project

“One of our kids started in grade 7. He was a very aggressive, often disrespectful kid (but always with a good heart) who wouldn’t give himself permission to get what he needed to grow and develop. But, in spite of that, he was going to the program, and he kept it up, even though he was getting into fights and having troubles. But over time, those bad behaviours became less and less and whatever he was getting out of the program and the school collaboration with the program team seemed to be helping. By Grade 10 he was developing some anger management skills. They were teaching him to walk away, to learn that that he could fix whatever his problem was ‘later’. His anger and impulsiveness caused him to behave in ways that he knew were wrong. The biggest thing was to keep him learning that. The skills he acquired meant that by Grades 11 and 12 he was much more able to manage this anger. There were so many times he could have walked away from us but he kept coming back to us and to the program.”

High school principal connected with a comprehensive, very high dosage project

Findings by Participants’ Gender Identity

When we analyzed the Participant Survey data on project effects by gender identity, only two statistically significant patterns emerged between respondents who identified as a girl and those who identified as a boy. Girls were more likely than boys to report that (because of taking part in their teen healthy relationships project):

- They better understood that all genders should have the same opportunities; and
- They were more able to think about other people’s wishes before acting.

Table 23. Statistically significant patterns with respect to differences in reported project impact for girls and boys

| | Girls | Boys |
|---|-------|------|
| I better understand that all genders should have the same opportunities (Yes/Kind of) | 79% | 69% |
| I am more able to think about other people's wishes before acting (Yes/Kind of) | 72% | 59% |

⁶⁶ They are also tied to academic achievement, school attendance and reduced risk for substance use and early sexual initiation. See the “research” section of this report. See also <http://www.preventviolencenc.org/positive-school-climate-and-school-connectedness> for other studies on school climate and school connectedness as protective factors.

The very small number of statistically significant differences between the projects' reported effects on girls and boys was surprising. We had anticipated that gender identity would be a more important characteristic with respect to project outputs (such as participant engagement) as well as participant learning.

Concerning the two items that were found to be statistically significant, the findings are somewhat discouraging. One would hope that boys would be reporting as strong (or stronger) effects on their understanding with respect to gender equity as their female counterparts. Moreover, one would like to see boys reporting a stronger effect in connection to their capacity to think about other people's wishes before acting as this is an item that relates to consent.

Other Outcomes – Changes in School, Home and Community

Data on the impact that the projects had on schools, on participants' families and on the wider communities in which they were operating were generated during the site visits (interviews with project staff and key informants) and through a question on the 2016 Annual Grantee Report to the Foundation.

Impacts on the School Environment

In their 2016 Annual Reports to the Foundation, grantees reported that their projects were having an effect on the broader school environment in instances where:

- Project facilitators and participants were becoming known in the schools;
- Participants were actively sharing what they were learning with other students, and/or were taking responsibility for being role models and setting positive examples for their peers; and
- Other students were becoming more aware of and interested in what was happening in the projects.

Grantees reported the following specific impacts of their projects on the school environment:

- ***Positive changes that had occurred in project participants (in terms of their knowledge, attitudes and behaviour) were also being seen in the broader school population.*** One grantee noted, for example:

Youth are talking about consent more and bringing it into casual conversations with each other, and when issues arise in the classroom, students are able to accurately label certain unhealthy behaviours when they see them.
(Grantee)

- ***Teachers and administrators were benefitting from the knowledge and expertise of the facilitators and staff with the teen healthy relationships projects.*** School staff members were also reported to have sought input from project staff regarding various school (and broader social) issues. Some grantees stated that teachers found the healthy relationships materials that they had developed valuable. One grantee reported that:

Some teachers and administration comment on how grateful they are for the "language" that they are picking up from the program. (Grantee)

- ***The presence of a project in the school was reported, in some instances, to have created a more accepting school environment.*** For example, some grantees reported an increase in the friendliness and safety of the school environment and noted that students' "feelings of belonging are much stronger."
- ***Where projects included social action activities, grantees reported a general, school-wide increase in awareness of and engagement with social justice issues*** (such as homophobia and gender-based violence).

In the qualitative data gathered through the site visits, the success of the projects in contributing to a healthier (and safer) school environment was a strong theme. Project staff reported receiving anecdotal feedback from teachers and administrators that their work had been helping to create a "more positive" climate in the schools, including:

- A reduction in violent incidents (e.g. fights between students);
- An increase in respectful behaviour among students; and
- Enhanced relationships between teachers and students.

Key informants corroborated these impacts. In interviews with parents, program graduates, school counsellors, and administrators we heard examples of how projects were positively influencing the school environment. Several noted improved (more respectful and understanding) relationships between teachers and students. Interviewees also described the benefits of projects that were working with students of different ages with respect to the relationship building that takes place across the grades. Connections between students of different ages were seen to strengthen the school community and students' sense of inclusion.

On the topic of inclusion, a number of key informants (several school counsellors and a parent) observed that their schools were becoming more accepting and inclusive spaces – places where, for example, students of all kinds could have a voice and where youth who were exploring their sexuality or gender identity could do so safely and with confidence.

Project staff also described the impact that their work had been having on the practice of classroom teachers. This included: enhancing teachers' knowledge about healthy relationships; giving teachers the skills to deal more sensitively and appropriately with a disclosure of violence from a student; and teachers actively seeking out and using project materials to support their own pedagogy and relationship building with students in the classroom. School staff and administrators corroborated these kinds of impacts, noting that:

- Some of the projects had helped to embed healthy relationships within the school context and teachers' individual practice;
- In some instances, teachers had changed how they were interacting with students (e.g. they were demonstrating more respect for students, adopting a more balanced approach with respect to their authority, and were less quick to make judgements); and
- Some teachers had brought tools and techniques from the projects into their own teaching.

Finally, staff members with three of the grantee organizations described how their agencies had become “go to” organizations for the schools they work in with respect to their expertise on healthy relationships and violence prevention. In one instance, the grantee was invited by several schools in their region to provide healthy relationships training to school counsellors. In another instance, the grantee was invited to sit on a high school's (new) anti-bullying committee to help shape school policy and initiatives. The third grantee reported having been able to increase the number of projects they implement across the school district in which they work, as a result of gaining the trust and confidence of school board personnel:

*This school board is the one that – at one time – wouldn't even let the sex education brochure into the schools! But we got past that. Now, because schools see us as part of the landscape, we've been able to pilot a bystander program and a sexual consent workshop. We wouldn't have been able to do that if we didn't have the relationships with the schools. These are other pieces to bring change to the school environment.
(Project facilitator)*

“I think the most important impact is the relationship building that takes place in the school between our Grade 12 students and our Grade 9s. There is great relationship building within our student body.”

School board representative

“They create safe spaces for everyone's individual gender, self and sexuality. They work with youth to empower youth to be confident in themselves and to create accepting environments around themselves.”

School counsellor

“I learned a hell of a lot going through this program last year! I stole ideas for activities. The content made me aware of my own taken-for-granted thoughts (e.g. about what is a girl/boy). It made me think differently about my sons – and their relationships with women.”

School Athletics Director

Impacts on Parents and Families

A relatively small number of the funded projects included intentional and structured engagement with participants' parents and families. In their 2016 Reports to the Foundation, most grantees reported that they were only indirectly aware of any project impact on families through conversations that project participants were initiating. As a result of such conversations, grantees reported learning that some participants had been sharing project content with their siblings and/or talking with parents about the ideas and issues raised in their projects.

Three grantees that deliver selective projects that work with parents and families in a more intentional way, reported the value of involving family members in their work with youth. One of these grantees noted the particular importance of involving parents of newcomer youth, observing that such involvement:

Has the potential to increase parental bonding with children/youth and supports the ongoing development of healthy familial relationships [...] Immigrant/refugee families often struggle to adapt to a new society and parents find it particularly difficult when their children move past them in the acculturation process. (Grantee)

"We try to work with parents to give them the skills to improve their communication with their kids, to address the challenge of kids not telling parents what's going on for them. So, we're equipping parents by explaining to them how to approach their kids, and many parents have told us that this has really helped their relationships with their children."

Program coordinator

In the case of newcomer families, this grantee explained, involving parents in initiatives for their children provides an opportunity for parents and other family members to increase their connection to the host society and to maintain an ongoing, positive connection to their children's activities.

The other two grantees reported the following impacts of their active engagement with parents and families:

- Families came to see the project as a place where their children were developing their sense of self-esteem and growing in confidence; and
- Parents had the opportunity to strengthen their parenting skills and practise the kinds of healthy relationship skills that would reduce the risk factors that contribute to violence in the home.

In interviews, staff members with projects that work directly with parents described some of the positive effects of this work, including:

- Improved communication between parents and children;
- An increase in families' connectedness to community resources and leisure activities; and
- Greater respect between parents and children.

In addition, the Executive Director of one of the grantee organizations described how their structured approach to working with parents and family members enhanced the impact of their programming with respect to violence prevention by helping to ensure that parents were gaining the same understanding and skills with respect to healthy relationships. Parents' understanding was reported to reinforce the school-based learning for their children.

"So we take a systemic approach - to work with the social/familial circle that surrounds the youth. Families that reach out to us are welcomed here - to a friendly environment. We have a meal together. And we talk about topics of concern - be that school, verbal abuse, cyber bullying... There are things that concern parents and we take the opportunity to address these, but in a relaxed atmosphere. And we find that this works well."

Executive Director of grantee organization that works with families

Impacts on the Neighbourhood/Community

In their 2016 Reports to the Foundation, several grantees described positive impacts that their projects had had on the neighbourhoods and communities in which they were working. These included:

- Project participants taking what they have learned beyond the classroom and school and into the community circles in which they socialize. Specifically, one grantee noted that the youth attending their teen healthy relationships project were exerting a positive effect on the behaviour of other teens who frequented the grantee-run community centre;
- Neighbourhood youth coming to the grantee agency to see what the teen healthy relationships project participants are doing; and
- Participants feeling able (with the project facilitators' encouragement) to engage with people in their social circles on issues connected to relationships, identity and equality.

"I learned a lot throughout this program from being involved for a few years. It has changed me in a positive way. It makes me feel connected to other youth and my community."

Project participant

A number of grantees reported positive impacts on specific cultural/ethnic groups in the community. Of particular note are:

- The impact of one grantee's partnership with their city's Ismaili Muslim community. The grantee reported that:

Community members have noticed a shift in the minds of young people and their thoughts and perceptions of women and girls. With the strong response from past participants and the changes the community has seen, [the project] has become a core component of the larger summer program. (Grantee); and

- The benefits that were accruing to the wider Indigenous community as a result of an Indigenous project's focus on leadership development:

The Indigenous community also benefits from the development of the young leaders in our programs, as this revitalizes cultural knowledge and creates role models in our community for young children. (Grantee)

In interviews, we heard of two examples of projects having been the catalyst for broader community-based activities. One involved a Grade 12 leadership class that, inspired by their teen healthy relationships project, created an initiative to work with elementary school children in their community on healthy relationships topics. The other involved a group of project participants being inspired to do more to address violence in their community. This led directly to the birth of a community-wide initiative, funded by Status of Women Canada, to develop and implement a community violence prevention plan.

Findings for the Grantee/Sector Capacity Building Initiative

The capacity building activities, outputs, and outcomes findings described in this section of the report have been generated from the following data sources:

- Four sets of Annual Grantee Reports to the Foundation;
- Three online Annual Grantee Surveys (administered in Years 2, 3 and 4);
- The Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change tool (completed by grantees at the in-person Grantee Meeting in January 2014, and then again in April 2015 and February 2017, supported by email and webinar sessions);⁶⁷ and
- The Canadian Women's Foundation's Teen Healthy Relationships Program administrative data tracking spreadsheet.

Inputs

The Foundation's Approach to Capacity Building

The Canadian Women's Foundation has a history of operating in partnership with their grantees and providing funding in ways that best support grantees' needs and the success of their programming. With respect to the Teen Healthy

⁶⁷ Outcome data for grantee collaboration and practice-level change come primarily from the Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change tool, comprised of: The Teen Healthy Relationship Capacity Assessment Tool (THReCAT) and The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory.

Relationships Program, the Foundation's approach included:

- Enhancing funding security for grantees by approving, from the outset, four years of project funding; and
- Building the capacity of grantees to deliver effective programming by supporting a range of grantee capacity development activities.

Consequently, a key input into the Grantee/Sector Capacity Building Initiative has been the Foundation staff themselves – in particular, the Director and Manager of Violence Prevention Programs.

Other Foundation resources were also brought to bear on the Capacity Building Initiative, including: communication technologies (e.g. webinar and online meeting platforms); financial resources for the in-person Grantee Meetings; financial resources for the National Evaluation; and other Foundation staff members, who provided logistical and administrative supports as needed for the Program overall.

Generally speaking, the Capacity Building Initiative inputs were implemented as planned with the exception of the fourth (and final) in-person Grantee Meeting, which was not held.

Staff Continuity and Turnover

In order to determine whether human resource inputs were present and adequate to meet the overall goals of the Grantee/Sector Capacity Building Initiative, we narrowed in on two questions:

- Was there continuity with respect to the particular grantee staff who attended the in-person Grantee Meetings; and
- If such continuity was lacking, did this affect the Foundation's efforts to support grantee/sector capacity building?

We used the following data sources to generate findings related to these questions:

- The in-person Grantee Meeting contact lists; and
- Grantees' reflective comments within the Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change tool (completed in February 2017).

Assessing In-person Grantee Meeting Attendance

In order to assess the continuity of grantee staff attendance at the in-person Grantee Meetings, we analyzed the meeting contact lists. The table below provides details of this analysis.

Table 24. Grantee staff attendance at in-person Grantee Meetings

| | Meeting #1 | Meeting #2 | Meeting #3 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| Total number of grantee staff attending | 35 | 31 | 30 |
| Number who attended all meetings "to date" | 35 | 23 | 13 |
| Number who attended "just this meeting" | 8 | 6 | 11 |
| Number who attended 1st & 3rd or 2nd & 3rd meetings | n/a | n/a | 6 |

Generally speaking, the Foundation's guidelines for staff attendance at the Grantee Meetings called for one senior leader (e.g. Executive Director or Program Manager) plus one frontline program facilitator from each funded organization to attend each meeting. This would mean a total of 34 attendees. As Table 22 shows, the number of grantee staff attending each meeting ranged from 35 for the first meeting to 30 for the third meeting. Fewer than half (13 or 43%) of the staff representing their organizations attended all three meetings. Of those, eight (8) were agency leaders.

Each meeting also included people who would ultimately only attend one meeting: eight (8) or 23% of those at the first meeting; six (6) or 19% of those at the second meeting; and 11 or 37% of those at the third meeting. Based upon this analysis, we conclude that there was something of a lack of continuity with respect to the grantee staff members (leadership and frontline) who attended the in-person Grantee Meetings.

Observation

The Foundation may want to consider the importance of continuity of grantee staff attendance at in-person Grantee Meetings for future initiatives. For instance, if the primary goal of such meetings is sharing and learning then attendance by diverse/varied grantee staff members may be a good strategy. However, if relationship building, strategic planning and action plan development are the goals, regular attendance by the same people may be the most desirable scenario.

Findings with Respect to In-Person Grantee Meeting Attendance

Although we had limited feedback on the impact of the lack of continuity with respect to in-person Grantee Meeting attendance, some grantees did offer comments when completing the final implementation of the Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change tool (February 2017). For example, one grantee noted that:

It was difficult to effectively communicate with some grantees when at each face-to-face meeting there were different staff and relationship building had to begin again.

Another grantee wrote:

We think the high turnover of staff at some organizations has had a detrimental effect on this project [the Teen Healthy Relationships Program]. We don't feel that we've developed a "formal" network at all, though we have developed informal links with some of the grantees who have been around for the full 4 years.

Some input generated during the site visits also suggested that the in-person Grantee Meetings were not always seen to meet the needs of the organizations' Executive Directors, and therefore, the Foundation's expectation that Executive Directors would attend was, in some cases, inappropriate or unrealistic. For example, in interview, one Executive Director indicated that the in-person Grantee Meetings would be of more use to people in her position if they were used to examine higher-level agency/organizational issues (rather than issues related to project design and delivery); otherwise, "the meetings should not expect to attract Executive Directors."

Observation

There may have been a "disconnect" between the Foundation's philosophy, expectations and desired outcomes for the in-person Grantee Meetings and the likelihood that (a) grantees were prepared/able to fulfil expectations (i.e. by sending organizational leaders to the meetings), and (b) that the in-person meeting process (as conceived by the Foundation) could be successful in building grantee capacity and building sector capacity.

ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

Activities

The main Foundation-supported capacity building activities were:

- Annual in-person Grantee Meetings;
- Regular "learning webinars" (including those related to mobilizing and supporting a Grantee Collaboration Working Group);
- Sharing of relevant research; and
- The National Evaluation (with its collaborative and learning-focused approach).

In addition, the Foundation made capacity-building grants available to grantees. Grantees could use these supplementary funds to complete evaluation activities or to attend events relevant to teen healthy relationships programming (such as conferences, training sessions, workshops, etc.).⁶⁸

In-Person Grantee Meetings: Detail

A total of three (3) in-person Grantee Meetings were implemented. These took place in month 7, 13 and 25 of the 48-month Program. Two representatives from each grantee organization typically attended each of these 1.5 – 2 day meetings. The types of grantee staff representing their organization varied across grantees, as well as for each grantee from meeting to meeting. Overall, representatives were mainly frontline Project Facilitators and Program Coordinators/Managers, although some Directors and Executive Directors attended.

The first and third Grantee Meetings were for grantees of the Teen Healthy Relationships Program exclusively. The second meeting (September 2014) was run as a joint gathering of Teen Healthy Relationships Program grantees and grantees of the Foundation's Girls Fund.

In all cases meeting activities included:

- Presentations by researchers and other experts working on teen healthy relationships or related issues;
- Formal and informal networking and relationship building activities;
- Sharing/learning about issues relevant to the field of teen healthy relationships; and
- Learning about program evaluation/participating in activities associated with the National Evaluation.

Specific activities and topics covered at each meeting included:

- **Meeting #1 (January 2014):**
 - Three knowledge-building plenary presentations and discussions. Topics were: *Engaging Boys* (R. Couchman, White Ribbon Campaign); *Social Media* (W. Craig, PREVNet); and *Trafficking* (M. Adams).
- **Meeting #2 (September 2014):**
 - Keynote address, *The World We're Entitled to Live In: Intersectionality in Our Programming* (K. Milan);
 - Six knowledge-building workshops (from which attendees could select to participate in two).

Topics for the first block of workshops were:

- *What's Sex (!!) Got to Do With It: A Consideration of Gender in Mentoring* (J. Pryce);
- *Communications – How You Tell the Story Does Make a Difference* (D. Hill, Canadian Women's Foundation); and
- *Understanding Roles and Responsibilities through an Indigenous Worldview* (L. Taibossigai, Three Things Consulting).

Topics for the second block of workshops were:

- *Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation: Discussing Risks and Vulnerability* (A. Crockwell, Thrive & Casey);
- *Gender Inclusive Programming: Integrating Changes to Better Meet the Needs of All Girls* (G. McKay, Sexuality Education Resource Centre); and
- *The Art of Managing the Media and Effectively Promoting Your Message* (S. Barker, Eva's Initiatives); and *A Community of Practice session* (Grantee Collaboration Working Group) – specifically for the Teen Healthy Relationships Program grantees.
 - **Meeting #3 (October 2015):**
 - Keynote address, *SHIFT: Project to End Domestic Violence* (L. Wells);
 - One knowledge-building plenary session, *Cyber Misogyny* (A. Brewin, Westcoast LEAF); and
 - Three Community of Practice sessions, including: *Regional Updates, Topics for Discussion and Next Steps* (Grantee Collaboration Working Group).

Learning Webinars: Detail

A total of 24 “learning webinars” were implemented over the four years of the Program, as follows:

⁶⁸ The National Evaluation did not include tracking the uptake of these supplementary grants.

- **Year 1** – two (2) webinars:
 - *Teen Healthy Relationships Program: Introductory Webinar* (August 2013); and
 - *Capacity to Lead Change* (G. Krupa, April 2014).
- **Year 2** – nine (9) webinars:
 - *Working with Schools and Other Partners* (October 2014);
 - *Working with Mental Health* (November 2014);
 - *Sharing Resources and Train the Trainer Models* (December 2014);
 - *Parental Involvement* (January 2015);
 - *Indigenous Practices in Programming and Evaluation* (February 2015);
 - *Bystander Intervention* (March 2015);
 - *Rape Culture* (May 2015);
 - *Successes and Challenges in Scaling Up Programs and Grantee Meeting Planning* (June 2015); and
 - *Engaging Boys* (July 2015).

Notably, following the second in-person Grantee Meeting, a learning webinar was implemented almost every month and each grantee was involved in delivering at least one of the webinars.

- **Year 3** – five (5) webinars:
 - *Self-Care and Youth* (February 2016);
 - *Working with Schools* (March 2016);
 - *Rape Culture* (April 2016);
 - *Engaging Boys* (May 2016); and
 - *Social Media and Cyberviolence* (June 2016).

There was an approximate six-month gap (between August 2015 and January 2016) in the provision of what had become monthly webinars. After this gap, monthly webinars were again delivered, by and for grantees.

- **Year 4** – eight (8) webinars:
 - *The National Evaluation* (covered twice – in September 2016 and June 2017);
 - *Collaboration for Year 4* (November 2016);
 - *Rape Culture and Consent* (January 2017);
 - *Cultural Competency* (February 2017);
 - *Parental Involvement* (March 2017);
 - *Slut Shaming and Victim Blaming* (April 2017); and
 - *Bystander Intervention* (June 2017).

We can see from the details of the “learning webinars” and the Grantee Meeting activities that certain topics were covered more frequently than others. The following topics were covered **three times**: *engaging boys*; *Indigenous approaches/cultural competency*; *rape culture*; and *social media (including cyberviolence/cybermisogyny)*. Topics covered **twice** were: *bystander intervention*; *parental involvement*; *trafficking*; and *working with schools/other partners*.

Network Capacity Building Activities

Activities and topics associated directly with building the capacity of the Grantee Network included:

- At the Year 2 and Year 3 in-person Grantee Meetings, the Community of Practice sessions (one at the Year 2 meeting and three at the Year 3 meeting) offered by the Grantee Collaboration Working Group; and
- Webinars – three in Year 2 covering topics related to capacity development/working collaboratively, and one in Year 4 to plan collaboratively the remaining webinars.

Evaluation Capacity Building Activities

Broadly speaking, the intent was to take a collaborative approach to implementing the National Evaluation. The expectation was that this approach would achieve two goals:

1. Grantees would build (and share) their knowledge about program evaluation; and
2. Concurrently the National Evaluation would benefit from the expertise of grantees and their knowledge of the youth they serve and the contexts they work in.

Evaluation capacity building efforts included both learning (theory) and implementation of activities and processes (practice). In addition, throughout the evaluation, the evaluation team maintained regular communication/information-sharing with grantees through the creation and dissemination of nine (9) National Evaluation Newsletters.

Over the four years of the National Evaluation, the evaluation team implemented three (3) in-person evaluation sessions (during the Grantee Meetings) and three (3) webinars (part of the “learning webinar” series) with grantees. Specific activities and topics were:

- **Year 1** – *In-person activities*: exploring hopes and fears related to the National Evaluation; sharing very early findings; administering the Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change tool; introducing Logic Models; facilitating a drama-based evaluation activity. *Online activities*: webinar to process the Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change results (April 2014).
- **Year 2** – *In-person activities*: sharing preliminary findings; and completing the first online Grantee Survey and sharing results in real time.
- **Year 3** – *In-person activities*: providing updates on interim findings; planning for upcoming evaluation activities; exploring emerging issues; and completing the second online Grantee Survey and sharing results in real time.
- **Year 4** – *Online activities*: webinar to process grantee input regarding their hopes for the final evaluation report; and webinar presentation and discussion of the preliminary analysis of the evaluation findings.

Grantee Participation in Data Collection Tool Development

Grantees participated in the development of several evaluation tools and processes, including:

- **Developing project logic models:** This activity was initiated at the first in-person Grantee Meeting, where grantees were supported to begin developing logic models for their projects (as, in most cases, these had not been developed or would benefit from additional work). Subsequently, the evaluation team rolled up the individual project logic models to inform development of the Foundation’s logic model for the Teen Healthy Relationships Program.
- **Designing the Participant Survey:** Grantees were actively involved in developing the revised Participant Survey. The evaluation team worked with grantees through the drafting and processing of several iterations of the survey. Collectively, questions were developed that would work for all 17 projects, and phrasing/terminology was sought that would make sense to young people ages 11-19 living in diverse communities across Canada. (Eight project participants, representing three projects from across the country, also reviewed the survey and provided input.)
- **Planning, designing and participating in project site visits:** Staff with each grantee organization participated in a telephone meeting with the evaluation team to plan collaboratively the site visit to their project. Grantee input was sought on: the timing of the visit; who would be involved; and (in particular) how the Participant Focus Group should be approached to ensure that the needs of participants would be met and their vulnerabilities respected.

Grantee Contributions to Data Analysis and Meaning Making

At the third in-person Grantee Meeting (October 2015), the evaluation team facilitated an exercise with grantees to “workshop” a draft version of the Descriptive Dimensions Framework. This process allowed grantees to contribute their insights, understanding and expertise into the development of the Framework, thereby helping to enhance its relevance and meaningfulness. Early in Year 4, grantees provided qualitative input to the evaluation team regarding their expectations for the Final Evaluation Report. This input was then processed collectively via webinar. In June 2017, the evaluation team shared its preliminary analysis of the evaluation findings with grantees via webinar. Grantees offered

their comments and reflections, which have helped to shape the analysis and conclusions.

Outputs

Grantee Participation in Grantee/Sector Capacity Building Activities

We collected data on the extent of grantees' participation in the Foundation-supported learning and capacity building activities through the Year 3 (October 2015) and Year 4 (November 2016) Annual Grantee Surveys. The results are shown in the table below.

Table 25. Grantee participation in capacity building activities, Annual Grantee Survey 3 and 4

| "Our grantee organization..." | Year 3 Grantee Survey (n=17) | Year 4 Grantee Survey (n=15) |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Read articles/research shared by the Canadian Women's Foundation | 88% "yes" | 100% "yes" (n=14) |
| Participated in (most of) the Collaboration Group Webinars | 94% "yes" | 93% "yes" |
| Undertook other collaboration activities with a grantee/grantees | 41% "yes" | 69% "yes" |
| Participated in at least one of the national evaluation-related webinars | 88% "yes" | Question not in survey |
| Was part of the group that worked to set the agenda for the third Annual Grantee Meeting | 35% "yes" | Question not in survey |

Barriers to Participating in Grantee/Sector Capacity Building Activities

On the same iterations of the Annual Grantee Survey (i.e. Years 3 and 4), grantees were asked if they had encountered barriers that had limited their participation in learning and capacity building activities. The table below shows the results.

Table 26. Barriers to grantee participation in capacity building activities, Annual Grantee Survey 3 and 4

| Barriers | Year 3 Grantee Survey (n=17) | Year 4 Grantee Survey (n=15) |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Lack of time/not enough resources to participate | 82% | 86% |
| Turnover in staff | 46% | 29% |
| Interruption to staff continuity | 27% | 21% |
| Topic of collaboration activity was not relevant to our project | 9% | 36% |
| Wasn't aware of the activity | 9% | 0% |
| Did not feel engaged /not always engaged by process | 0% | 21% |
| Other barrier | 9% (lack of child care) | 7% |

The main barrier - that almost all respondents indicated encountering - was *lack of time/not enough resources to participate* (82% of respondents in Year 3 and 86% in Year 4). This finding raises the matter of the pervasive challenge of heavy workloads and stretched resources in the non-profit sector.

Almost half of respondents identified turnover in staff as a barrier to participation in Year 3, though in Year 4 this was less of an issue with 29% of respondents identifying it as a challenge. About one quarter of respondents identified interruptions to staff continuity (e.g. parental leave, medical leave) as a barrier to participation in both Years 3 and 4. Of the remaining barriers, one notable trend is the increase in the number of respondents reporting that the *topic of the collaboration activity was not relevant to their project* - 36% of respondents in Year 4, compared to 9% in Year 3. Most

likely related to this increase was the rise in the number of respondents reporting that they did not always feel engaged by the process – 21% in Year 4 and 0% in Year 3. These two trends may be a reflection of the lack of a fourth (and final) in-person Grantee Meeting.

On a positive note, *lack of awareness* about a learning/capacity building activity was not identified as a barrier in Year 4 and by only 9% of respondents in Year 3, suggesting that the activities were being clearly and effectively promoted to grantees.

Grantee Satisfaction with Grantee/Sector Capacity Building Activities

Grantee satisfaction with the Foundation-supported grantee/sector capacity building activities was tracked through three implementations of the Annual Grantee Survey (Years 2, 3 and 4). The findings for each year are provided in the table below.

Table 27. Grantee satisfaction with capacity building activities, Annual Grantee Survey 2, 3 and 4

| Grantee satisfaction with... | Year 2 Grantee Survey (n=17) | Year 3 Grantee Survey (n=17) | Year 4 Grantee Survey (n=15) |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| In-person Grantee Meetings | 88% very satisfied/satisfied | 94% very satisfied/satisfied | 100% very satisfied/satisfied |
| Learning webinars | 77% very satisfied/satisfied | 77% very satisfied/satisfied | 87% very satisfied/satisfied |
| Shared research | 50% very satisfied/satisfied | 65% very satisfied/satisfied | 100% very satisfied/satisfied |
| National Evaluation activities | n/a | 77% very satisfied/satisfied | 93% very satisfied/satisfied |
| Conference calls | 71% very satisfied/satisfied | n/a | n/a |

By Year 4, almost all grantees reported being *satisfied/very satisfied* with the four main learning/capacity building activities (i.e. the in-person Grantee Meetings, the learning webinars, the sharing of research, and the National Evaluation activities). Satisfaction increased for all activities through the course of the Program, most notably with the sharing of research (from 50% of respondents indicating they were satisfied with this in the Year 3 survey to 100% reporting that they were very satisfied/satisfied in the Year 4 survey).

Grantee Satisfaction with Evaluation Capacity Building Activities

Overall, grantees were satisfied with the evaluation capacity building activities facilitated by the Evaluation Team although some expressed concerns with the amount of time these activities took up. For example, at the end of Year 1 a number of grantees reported (in their Annual Report to the Foundation) that they valued the collaborative aspect of the National Evaluation because it was enhancing connections between grantees, fostering mutual understanding, and supporting the development of the Grantee Network (specifically, by helping some grantees to see the “bigger picture” beyond their own project or agency). However, at the end of Year 2 some grantees (again in their Annual Grantee Report to the Foundation) reported that the National Evaluation – in addition to providing certain benefits – required extra time and effort on the part of project staff and administrators. One grantee noted that this additional time and effort was not something they had anticipated at the beginning of the Program.

In general, grantees reported that the approach taken by the evaluation team was helpful, encouraging and supportive (Annual Grantee Reports to the Foundation, June 2016). In particular, they described the site visits as especially beneficial. For example, one grantee commented that:

[The evaluators'] time with us helped us feel very connected to the broader Program and its objectives.

Another grantee noted:

It can be a little challenging to get across the true nature of the program in a written report, so having the

opportunity to sit down and talk about it was exciting.

A third grantee emphasized the value of the site visit with respect to enabling two-way communication:

We were so thankful for [the evaluators'] hard work and the time they took to come out to our project to engage with our young women and facilitators within our space. This level of engagement for an evaluation team is critical as it is able to give and offer an in-depth look at our programming at all levels.

Observation

We conclude that the element of the National Evaluation that grantees experienced as most beneficial – and most collaborative – was the site visit. The site visit represented the best opportunity for grantees to communicate to the evaluation team what was important and relevant about their projects in an open and discursive way. It also enabled them to show the evaluation team their project in action and to highlight the ways in which the project was responding to specific local needs.

The Extent to Which Grantees Were Evaluating their Projects

The first Annual Grantee Survey (September 2014) asked grantees whether their project is evaluated. All grantees (100%) indicated yes. However, informed by other anecdotal input, the evaluation team began to suspect that – in some cases, at least – grantees were regarding the completion of surveys by project participants at the end of their participation as a sufficient evaluation of their project. Meanwhile, as part of the evaluation capacity building work, the evaluation team was (incidentally) pointing out to grantees that unless data are analyzed, typically through a process of rolling up the data and preparing a written report, any data collected are of limited value.

The evaluation team decided to explore the idea of “written evaluation reports” in the second Annual Grantee Survey (October 2015). This survey asked grantees whether an *evaluation report had been prepared for their project during the past 12 months*. Seven (7) grantees (41%) answered yes to this question, 7 said no, and 3 said don't know. We interpreted these results as evidence that over half of grantees were (at best) not actively involved in their own project evaluations or (at worst) many of the funded projects were not being evaluated.

This finding was more or less confirmed by the responses to a third and final question in the third Annual Grantee Survey (November 2016). In this survey, grantees were asked to indicate whether *a comprehensive program evaluation had been completed for their teen healthy relationships program* in each of the first three fiscal years of the Foundation's Program, and in the case of fiscal Year 4, whether such an evaluation was planned. The survey question included the clarification that *by “comprehensive,” we mean more than the administration of a participant survey*. The results are shown in the table below.

Table 28. Number of grantees completing evaluations of their projects, by Fiscal Year

| Fiscal Year | Project Evaluation Completed | | | n = |
|-------------------|------------------------------|----|------------|------|
| | Yes | No | Don't know | |
| 2013-14 | 8 | 7 | 0 | n=15 |
| 2014-15 | 8 | 7 | 0 | n=15 |
| 2015-16 | 7 | 8 | 0 | n=15 |
| 2016-17 (planned) | 7 | 4 | 3 | n=14 |

Based on the data, we conclude that over the course of the four years of the *Teen Healthy Relationships Program* slightly less than half of grantees were regularly completing comprehensive evaluations of their teen healthy relationships projects.

Observation

Grantees came to the Foundation's Teen Healthy Relationships Program with different levels of evaluation knowledge, different intentions regarding evaluating their own projects, and varying amounts of resources (funding and capacity) to commit to evaluation. In spite of efforts to increase grantees' capacity for evaluation (as part of the Capacity Building Initiative), the data suggest that the overall number of grantees completing comprehensive evaluations of their teen healthy relationships projects did not increase. If it is important to the Foundation that the individual funded projects are evaluated (a reasonable expectation for a four-year funding grant), then we recommend that future iterations of the Program allow for more attention to be given to this throughout the granting process (i.e. from the application/proposal phase through to the contracting and funding phases). In the current instance, it was beyond the scope of the National Evaluation to provide all of the grantees who needed it with the support to move from only collecting participant satisfaction surveys to fully evaluating their projects.

OUTCOMES

Capacity Building and the Grantee Network

The goal of the Grantee/Sector Capacity Building Initiative was to support the development of a coherent Grantee Network that would:

- a) Help to enhance grantees' capacity to deliver effective teen healthy relationships programming; and
- b) Make a contribution to strengthening/growing the teen healthy relationships sector.

This section of the report describes to what extent and in what ways these goals were realized.

Contribution to the Grantees' Work

The expectation was that grantees' participation in the learning and capacity-building activities supported by the Foundation would contribute to the **effectiveness** of grantees' project design and delivery. Through various data collection tools over each year of the Program, we gathered input from grantees to assess the extent to which this was happening.

In September 2014, early outcomes arising from Foundation-supported capacity-building activities were explored through the Annual Grantee Survey, where grantees were asked to report, In terms of capacity building, what has made the biggest difference to your project? Their responses indicated that the **opportunity to collaborate nationally** had been making the biggest difference, in particular:

- The learning, resource sharing and networking opportunities afforded by the grantee network in general and the Annual Grantee Meetings in particular; and
- Being involved in the "Collaboration Group."

Other responses indicated that the Foundation funding had made the biggest difference. The value of the ongoing support offered by the Foundation was also highlighted.

At the midpoint of the Program, the Annual Grantee Survey (implemented in October 2015) asked grantees to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, *Participation in the grantee network has contributed to our project's effectiveness*. In all, 75% of grantees indicated that participation in the network had contributed to the effectiveness of their projects. This was an encouraging finding, as it showed that the majority of grantees were experiencing a direct relationship between the Network

"The grantee event [in-person meeting] has resulted in better collaboration, greater dialogue on the issues, sharing of ideas and/or available resources, as well as a collective vision. This year we experienced a greater connection and a continued need to collaborate on a shared common goal."

Grantee open-ended comment (Annual Grantee Survey, 2015)

activities and their capacity to design and deliver programming that they felt/knew to be effective. In addition, the 11 grantees who provided a response to the final, open-ended question on the survey underscored the value and impact of the in-person Grantee Meetings, and provided additional testimony of grantees' developing a shared identity as a network of practitioners with common interests and goals.

Furthermore, by the end of Year 3, in their Annual Reports to the Foundation, grantees were describing the networking and collaboration activities in glowing terms, indicating that the experience was proving to be *wonderful, enriching, uplifting, and rejuvenating as well as educational, productive, helpful and insightful*.

Finally, in the November 2016 implementation of the Annual Grantee Survey, grantees were asked to rate *the impact of being part of the Foundation's network of grantees over the past three years* by indicating their level of agreement with five statements. Results are provided in the table below.

Table 29. Impact of being part of the Foundation's Grantee Network

| Statement | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|
| We are applying what we are learning about evidenced-informed promising practices to modify the design and/or delivery of our program. | 60% | 40% | 0% |
| We are increasing our understanding of promising practices associated with teen healthy relationships programming. | 53% | 40% | 7% |
| We connect with grantees outside of Foundation-led activities. | 27% | 60% | 13% |
| We are more engaged in leading change activities in our school and/or community. | 13% | 73% | 13% |
| We are more engaged in processes to support policy change at regional, provincial and/or national levels. | 27% | 40% | 33% |

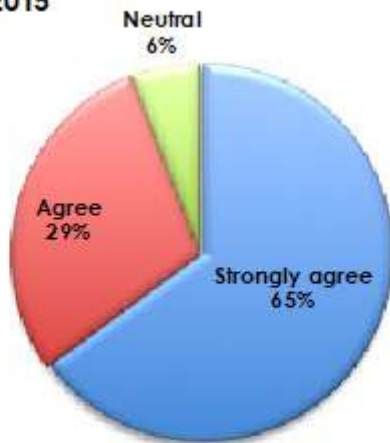
The strongest level of agreement was with the statement, *we are applying what we are learning about evidenced-informed promising practices to modify the design and/or delivery of our program* – 100% of grantees agreed or strongly agreed with this. Most grantees (83%) agreed or strongly agreed that they *connect with grantees outside of Foundation-led activities*. The weakest level of agreement was with the statement, *we are more engaged in processes to support policy change at regional, provincial and/or national levels*. The perceived capacity of the Grantee Network to create change at the policy and sector levels is explored in more detail (on p. 139 below) through the findings generated by the Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change tool.

Contribution to the Sector

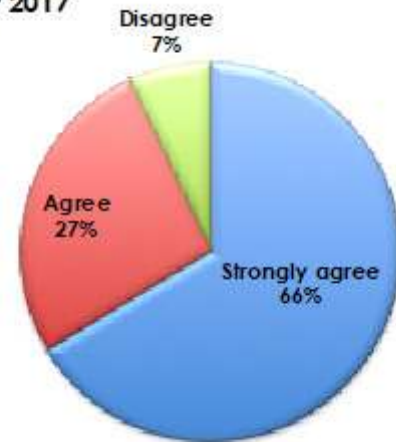
The Annual Grantee Surveys implemented in October 2015 and November 2016 included a question that asked grantees to indicate the extent of their agreement with the statement, *the grantee network is making an important contribution to building the Teen Healthy Relationships sector in Canada*. Results are shown in the charts below.

Charts 9 and 10. Extent of grantees' agreement with the statement: "The grantee network is making an important contribution to building the Teen Healthy Relationships sector in Canada".

October 2015



November 2017



The responses for both years are very similar, with two-thirds of grantees indicating that they *strongly agreed* with the statement and just under a third selecting *agree*.

The November 2016 Annual Grantee Survey also invited grantees who had strongly agreed or agreed with the statement to describe the contribution that they felt the Network had been making to the teen healthy relationships sector. Broadly speaking, respondents indicated that the Network was contributing to the sector by:

- Enabling the validation and sharing of promising, evidence-informed practices at national level;
- Furthering dialogue at the frontline, community level and national level;
- Fostering cross-country relationships and a shared vision for the sector;
- Enabling collaborative approaches to issues and challenges; and
- Facilitating the sharing of skills and resources to enhance practice.

"I think that the collaborative meetings and contacts are important in building a community of programs and agencies that are committed to providing Teen Healthy Relationships workshops and preventative work in the schools. We feel that we are part of a national movement to enhance the education of students about social justice and, particularly, gender issues.

Grantee comment (Annual Grantee Survey, 2016)

"The Network meetings and knowledge exchange between frontline workers is important for building a Teen Healthy Relationships sector in Canada. Allowing frontline staff to collaborate, share resources, and reflect on their practices establishes guidelines and creates spaces for critical engagement with the work we do. The connections with other groups and individuals undertaking this work allows us to more effectively think about our methods and learn from the successes and challenges THR programs are facing across the country."

Grantee comment (Annual Grantee Survey, 2016)

A promising start - but more work is needed

Of note, three grantees commented that the Network represents "a good start" but that there is more work to do with respect to gaining a deeper understanding of effective and promising practices, and developing a strong, collective voice.

Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change

The Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change tool was developed explicitly to support grantees' assessment of their experience of the (nascent and maturing) Grantee Network and its (growing) capacity to lead change beyond the individual agency level, including influencing provincial/territorial and national policy. The tool supported a group reflection process and elicited grantees' collective ratings of how the Network was doing across a number of "collaboration for change" domains. Implemented three times during the course of the Program, the ratings enabled the evaluation team to measure the developing capacity of the Network and the progress being made towards the Foundation's goals of sector level change. (See "Evaluation Methods" on p. 19 above and Appendix A: Data Collection Tools for more details about the tool and its implementation.)

The tool contained four domains:

- A. *Linking and learning within our "Community of Practice";*
- B. *Learning from others in the field;*
- C. *Linking learning to action; and*
- D. *Leading positive, sustainable change.*

During each implementation of the tool, grantees reflected on 15 elements within the four domains (overall) and assigned each element a descriptive rating. Rating options were: we've just started; we're on the road; we're nearly there; and we're there.

Summary of the Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change Findings

The data generated by the tool represent grantees' collective assessment of the progress they made – as a collaborative group – over the four years of the Program. The key findings arising from our analysis of Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change data are:

- Greatest progress was made in the areas of linking and learning within our "*Community of Practice*" (Domain A). This was not a surprising finding given that Network activities tended to be focused on relationship building and knowledge sharing. In particular, the Foundation's approach to grant making supported the development of positive, open and trusting relationships between grantees.
- The Grantee Network made substantial progress with respect to learning about the field of teen healthy relationships programming, especially as a result of *learning from each other* (Domain B). Grantees brought and shared considerable knowledge and expertise, informed by the diverse contexts in which they were operating. Notably, this kind of learning was only possible because of the Foundation's original decision to fund projects that were diverse in approach, design and location.
- Grantees made some progress with respect to *learning from* experts and practitioners outside of the Network (also Domain B). This was primarily facilitated by the three in-person Grantee Meetings. It was also supported by the research that was shared through the Network webinars.
- Limited progress was made with respect to identifying and connecting with provincial/territorial policy makers and decision makers in order to learn from them and ultimately to have an influence on policy decisions (Domains B and D). Relationships with policy makers needed to be forged if the Network was to be successful in influencing change at the policy level.
- The Grantee Network was successful in developing and deepening its understanding of the teen healthy relationships sector. However, limited progress was made with respect to linking this *learning to action as a collaborative entity* (Domain C).
- Ultimately, over the course of the four years of the Program, the Grantee Network did not emerge as a body organized to take action to improve the field of teen healthy relationships at the provincial/territorial and/or national levels (Domain D).⁶⁹

⁶⁹ In spite of this last finding, we note that a body has in fact emerged that is building on the work of the Teen Healthy Relationships Program, and is organizing to take action at the regional and national levels. This is the collaboration enabled under the Building the Teen Healthy Relationships Field Initiative, led by the Canadian Women's Foundation in partnership with key stakeholders and actively involving a number of the Teen Healthy Relationships Program grantees.

Reflections on the Capacity Building and Network Development Outcomes

Overall, the outcomes of the Grantee/Sector Capacity Building Initiative suggest that the capacity-building approach taken by the Canadian Women's Foundation made an important contribution to fostering authentic and trusting relationships between members of the Grantee Network, generating a sense of belonging as a group, and supporting the exchange of ideas and expertise with respect to program delivery. It did not, however, support the development of a body with the capacity to take action nationally to positively affect the teen healthy relationships sector as a whole.

"By coming together as a larger network (in all the different ways) I feel we have been able to share the work we have accomplished; learning from each other, sharing experiences, supporting each other, encouraging each other..."

Grantee comment (Annual Grantee Survey, 2016)

With the benefit of hindsight, we would suggest that the overall orientation of the Foundation's Grantee/Sector Capacity Building Initiative was unlikely to achieve sector-wide change (especially at the provincial/national policy level), because:

- The Teen Healthy Relationships Program Funding Initiative was the primary focus of the *Teen Healthy Relationships Program* resources – most of the money was dedicated to funding frontline services;
- The people who attended the in-person Grantee Meetings and the learning webinars were, in the main, frontline staff (project facilitators and coordinators);
- The topics covered at the in-person Grantee Meetings and in the learning webinars were largely informed by the needs of the people attending these events and, as these people were generally frontline workers, the focus of the topics tended to be on issues related to project design and delivery; and
- Only a small number of Executive Directors/organizational leaders – in more strategic roles and with an eye on the bigger picture – attended the Foundation-supported capacity building activities regularly.

Agency EDs (or other organizational leaders), with mandates to participate in sector development activities, needed to be present at the capacity building events, and actively involved in the Network for progress to be made at the sector level. Although there was an expectation on the part of the Foundation that EDs would participate in the network building process (in particular, the in-person Grantee Meetings), a considerable number of grantee organizations did not fulfil this expectation.⁷⁰ Notably, the EDs of three of the four grantees in the Atlantic region were actively and consistently involved with the capacity building work and the Grantee Network. Apart from them, our records show that only two of the other 13 agency EDs attended the in-person Grantee Meetings and regularly participated in the learning webinars.

While the Grantee/Sector Capacity Building Initiative may not have achieved all of the Foundation's desired goals and objectives, the Foundation's grantee capacity building efforts, as a key component of the Teen Healthy Relationships Program, has nevertheless realized important outcomes. Grantees have, as they themselves reported, made substantial progress with respect to learning and sharing about practice at the local/community level. In addition, the Building the Teen Healthy Relationships Field Initiative has emerged and is positioned to lead sector development at the provincial/territorial and national levels. Some of the active EDs in the Atlantic region and Manitoba have stepped forward to be part of this initiative, which in our view, is a logical development from the work undertaken and advances made by the Grantee/Sector Capacity Building Initiative.

"This provides a rare opportunity to build relationships with community agencies all over Canada and is a great network of resources, skills and expertise."

Grantee comment (Annual Grantee Survey, 2016)

⁷⁰ See, "Staff Continuity and Turnover" on p. 110 above.

Executive Directors' reflections on being part of the Foundation's Teen Healthy Relationships Program

In interview, the evaluation team asked agency Executive Directors (and other leadership) to give an example of how their organization had been affected by being a grantee of the Foundation's Teen Healthy Relationships Program. The example could be something positive or a challenge. The following is a summary of what they told us.

Positive effects:

- **Being a Canadian Women's Foundation grant recipient enhances the profile of a grantee's organization and its programming.** EDs reported being able to leverage the Foundation's national reputation and credibility to generate additional funding as well as to increase stakeholders' respect for and trust in their organization. "To be able to say that the Canadian Women's Foundation is a partner means a lot."
- **Grantees appreciate and feel well supported by the Foundation's approach to grant making.** EDs described the Foundation as a flexible and supportive funder. They emphasized the value of multi-year funding and the Foundation's strengths-based and learning-focused approach. "You feel really held [by the Foundation] and that your program matters."
- **Being part of the Grantee Network supported agency learning, sharing and connecting.** EDs described how the Grantee Network functioned as a valuable resource for agencies, especially with regard to opportunities to learn new ideas, problem-solve, and share promising practices. They also emphasized the importance of the relationships made and the sense of belonging to a shared enterprise. "Before the grantee network, we felt emergent and unique. But now we have been building relationships with other service agencies." "If something comes up that I feel I can't address, I can bring it to the network and someone will have some ideas."

Challenges:

- **There was a lack of clarity, at the outset of the Program, about the Foundation's expectations with regard to the Capacity Building component of the work.** Several EDs reported that they had not been aware, prior to receiving their funding, that the Foundation expected them (and other staff) to participate in the in-person Grantee Meetings, the learning webinars, and the National Evaluation activities. Ironically, this resulted in capacity challenges for the EDs at the agency-level.
- **Costs associated with the administrative and capacity building/networking components of the Program were higher than anticipated.** Some EDs reported that the costs (financial and otherwise) incurred as a result of their participation in the Capacity Building Initiative activities were not sufficiently covered by the value of their grant.

Evaluation Capacity Building

Data on grantees' experience with the National Evaluation and the extent to which they felt that participating in it was enhancing their own, internal capacity to conduct program evaluations were gathered each year in the grantees' Annual Reports to the Foundation.

Grantees brought with them to the Teen Healthy Relationships Program, and its evaluation, a wide range of experience with program evaluation – from novice to practised expert. With this diversity of experience in mind, broadly speaking, the data generated suggest that the National Evaluation has been successful in:

- **Increasing grantees' familiarity with key technical components of evaluation, evaluation-related terminology, and data collection tools.** For example, grantees reported acquiring a new or deepened understanding of program logic models, program outcomes, and impact evaluation. Grantees also highlighted the value of engaging with the InsideOut team in the collaborative development of data collection tools, such as the Participant Survey and the site visit focus group guides.
- **Building grantees' capacity for evaluative thinking:** A number of grantees reported that involvement in the National Evaluation had enhanced their understanding of and capacity for evaluative thinking. For instance, one grantee noted of their project site visit that it: "Allowed us to have a conversation about how we evaluate in our agency and how we may want to look at revising certain areas." Another commented that the National Evaluation had "contributed to [our organization's] thinking strategically about the need to evaluate effectiveness as we plan." A different grantee indicated that what they had found particularly helpful were the "evaluation questions that allow for deep reflections on what we know and learning about what we don't know."
- **Increasing grantees' appreciation of the value of program evaluation.** Several grantees commented on their growing recognition of the usefulness and benefits of evaluating programs. For example, one grantee wrote: "I have seen the importance of evaluation to demonstrate that you are effective." Another commented that, as an agency, their "views on evaluation" had been "enriched" and that this had enabled them to "exercise certain muscles useful in emphasizing our success." Grantees also highlighted their growing appreciation of the National Evaluation, including the importance of the contributions that they were making to it and the value of the learnings for strengthening frontline practice.

Evaluation Knowledge Uptake and Application

In their June 2016 Annual Reports to the Foundation, grantees were asked to rate the extent to which participating in the National Evaluation had increased their *awareness/knowledge* about program evaluation and the extent to which it had *informed or shaped their approach to evaluating their own program*. Fifteen (15) of the 17 grantees (88%) reported that they had acquired some or considerable new awareness or knowledge about program evaluation, and 11 grantees (64%) indicated that participating in the National Evaluation had had *some* or *considerable* impact on how they were approaching the evaluation of their teen healthy relationships projects.

The responses also demonstrated a variable relationship between acquiring new awareness/knowledge about evaluation and actually applying it. For example, three (3) grantees who reported that they had acquired some new awareness/knowledge also reported that it had had no impact on their approach to program evaluation. By contrast, two (2) other grantees who had also reported acquiring some new awareness/knowledge indicated that this had had considerable impact on their approach to program evaluation.

Observation

The finding regarding the inconsistency with which new evaluation knowledge was reportedly used to shape grantees' approach to program evaluation highlights the fact that the acquisition of new knowledge does not necessarily translate into behaviour change. (As we know from the teen healthy relationships programming work!)

Conclusion: Program Strengths and Opportunities, and Considerations for the Foundation's Future Work

The four-year National Evaluation of the Canadian Women's Foundation's Teen Healthy Relationship Program has, as this report testifies, generated considerable learning about approaches to teen healthy relationships programming and the effects that these approaches are having on teens' learning about and capacity for healthy relationships. Important findings with respect to the strengths and limitations of the Foundation's approach to grantee capacity building and network development have also been generated. The concluding part of this report takes something of a step back from the details of project delivery and individual participant learning, and from the specifics of grantee relationship building and sharing of promising practices to look at the notable strengths of and opportunities for the Foundation's Program overall. In addition (and lastly), this final section of the report offers some considerations for the Foundation with respect to enhancing its impact on and within the field of teen healthy relationships and violence prevention work.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

The *Teen Healthy Relationships Program* was designed by the Canadian Women's Foundation above all as a learning strategy. Its design was founded on their belief (informed by research and experience) that certain Program elements, including diverse grantees and projects, multi-year funding, support for capacity building, and program evaluation would facilitate the learning they sought. In addition, these elements represent key strengths of the Foundation's Program with respect to providing responsive, long-term support to grantees, enhancing grantees' knowledge and practice, and encouraging the development of relationships and shared understanding between teen healthy relationships program providers across the country.

- **Funding diverse grantees:** The funded projects were very diverse. As described in this report, they served different groups of youth with distinct needs living in varied communities and regions. They also took a range of philosophical and pedagogical approaches to program design and implementation. This approach to selecting grantees has meant that everyone involved (the Foundation staff, the grantees, and the evaluators) were enabled to identify and explore the similarities and differences between projects and to develop deeper understandings about the effects of certain approaches and program elements on particular groups of teens and in specific communities.
- **Providing four-years of funding:** The provision of four-year grants provided security and continuity to grantee organizations. This allowed Executive Directors and Program Managers/Coordinators to focus on program provision, rather than having to devote time and energy to acquiring new funding on an annual basis. This extra capacity and sense of security gave organizations the time to engage in learning and to adapt and refine projects to better meet the needs of the teens, schools and communities they were serving.
- **Holding in-person Grantee Meetings:** Almost without exception, grantees found the in-person meetings to be enormously valuable, both with respect to learning and to forging connections with other practitioners. The meetings allowed project staff to share and learn from their peers across the country through activities that fostered reflection and knowledge-exchange. This included exploring promising practices, learning from active researchers in the field of violence prevention, and processing emergent findings from the National Evaluation data collection activities. Relationships made at these meetings and subsequently strengthened/sustained by ongoing networking opportunities led, in some cases, to regional and inter-regional grantee collaboration initiatives.
- **Supporting a comprehensive and collaborative Program evaluation:** The multi-year nature of the National Evaluation and the involvement of the evaluation team in the in-person Grantee Meetings and the learning webinars facilitated collaboration and mutual learning. An important benefit of such collaboration is that the evaluation tools and methods better reflected the needs and realities of the grantees and their projects. (It is hoped that, as a consequence, the findings detailed in this report will meet the needs of grantees and the Foundation with respect to the ongoing refinement and implementation of their programs.)

WHAT NEEDS STRENGTHENING

There are also elements of the Canadian Women's Foundation's approach to funding that could be strengthened in order to achieve even more positive impacts. These include:

- Support for grantees to engage in program evaluation:** Service providers encounter a number of barriers to implementing program evaluation, including: a lack of organizational knowledge about and/or competency with evaluation models and processes; insufficient time to work through these processes; and/or a lack of money to support the implementation of evaluation activities. In some cases, service providers find evaluation confusing and/or overwhelming. We found that only about half of the *Teen Healthy Relationships Program* grantees were regularly evaluating their teen healthy relationships projects; fewer had articulated a coherent and logical theory of change for the approach/project design they were using. The lack of capacity to implement evaluation affects project delivery. If a project is predicated on a well-articulated theory of change, its implementation informed by a well thought-out logic model, and learnings are generated (and applied) through well-designed evaluation activities, then the project is more likely to be effective. Consequently, the Foundation may wish to consider providing (even) more evaluation support to grantees in the future. This might be done by providing evaluation training to potential Program applicants and/or by allocating more funds to grantees to undertake evaluation-related learning and practice.

Observation

The Foundation may find it productive to introduce an additional funding phase to their Program. During this phase, grantees would be financially supported to undertake the full articulation of their program theory of change, and to develop a logic model and evaluation plan. This phase would be implemented after a grantee has been selected for funding, but before the grantee receives the project implementation grant.

- Attention to the pay and working conditions of project facilitators:** While the Foundation's multi-year funding provided a degree of security to grantee organizations, it was evident that this did not always extend to frontline staff, such as project facilitators and project coordinators. Many of these staff members reported that they were hired on one-year contracts and that they found the precariousness of their employment situation stressful. In addition, we frequently heard that project facilitators were being employed on a part-time basis only and that the hourly rate they were receiving was low. Few appeared to be receiving any additional benefits (such as extended medical, pension contributions, etc.).

Observation

The (anecdotal) findings with respect to the working conditions for (many) frontline staff are inconsistent with the values of the Canadian Women's Foundation. As a result, action is needed by the Foundation to ensure that people working in Foundation-supported projects enjoy good working conditions, including: appropriate wages (commensurate with the position, and expected skills and education); full-time hours (could include combining two or more part-time positions); and multi-year or permanent employment contracts.

- Engaging Executive Directors in creating sector-level change:** The Foundation was hoping to achieve sector level change through the capacity building component of its *Teen Healthy Relationships Program*. They hoped, for example, that grantees would cohere into a network that was capable of leading positive change at the community, regional and national levels. We would suggest that sector-level change requires the active involvement and leadership of organizations' Executive Directors. However, it appears that the structure of the Grantee/Sector Capacity Building Initiative did not always support the involvement of staff at this (or a similar) leadership level. For example, some EDs indicated that they were not engaged in the capacity building work as it tended to focus on knowledge and skills related to frontline service provision, rather than on more strategic, sector-level planning and initiatives.

Observation

When seeking to facilitate sector-level change the Foundation may want to ensure that they are engaging the people who are most likely to care about and have the capacity to effect that level of change. We suggest that grantee EDs (and comparable leadership people) are best positioned to contribute to a strategic plan for sector-level change and to implement such a plan.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR INCREASING IMPACT AND BUILDING THE FIELD

The following considerations are informed by the evaluation team's understanding of the current evidence base on teen healthy relationships and teen violence prevention as well as by our analysis of the data generated by the National Evaluation with respect to gaps and challenges in service provision.

- **Spearheading/being part of a comprehensive national teen violence prevention strategy:** Evidence suggests that a strategic approach to reducing teen violence needs to include both universal (broad-based) programming **and** selective (targeted) programming (for teens that are at "higher-risk").⁷¹ With the 2013-2017 iteration of the *Teen Healthy Relationships Program*, the Foundation intentionally funded both universal and selective projects. Together, these projects reached approximately 0.4% of youth aged 12 - 19 in Canada. A strategy with a comprehensive reach would require the involvement (and resources) of a number of organizations and entities, including provincial/territorial and national governments. Given that the Foundation does not have the capacity to "do it all" with respect to a teen violence prevention strategy:
 - Who would the Foundation need to partner with to develop a regional, provincial/territorial, or national strategy to prevent teen violence?
 - Which piece of the work would the Foundation want to focus on?

Observation

One approach that the Foundation may want to consider is to let the Education Sector "look after" the universal programming and focus its funding on selective programs that reach more vulnerable teens. This may offer more impact for the Foundation's investment. However, as anecdotal reports generated by this evaluation suggest that the Education Sector is not always able to deliver high quality healthy relationships education, the Foundation may want to explore how it could work with School Boards/Ministries of Education (other than indirectly by funding universal non-profit projects) to enhance the delivery of core healthy relationships content in the provincial/territorial curricula.

- **Investing in programming for younger children:** During the evaluation, we repeatedly heard - from grantees, parents and the education community - of the need for healthy relationships programming for children in preschool and elementary school. The provision of such programming is supported by the research evidence: "Youth violence statistics tend to focus on youth aged 10-24 years. However, we should not wait until the teenage years to act to prevent youth violence. Changing behaviors after they are already established is harder than developing healthy behaviors from a young age. The emergence of risks that put young people on a path to violence often begins during early childhood."⁷²
- **Working with teacher-training programs to promote/develop/pilot a healthy relationships course for new teachers:** Key to changing school culture and promoting healthy relationships in schools is to ensure that: a) teachers are cognizant of the importance of healthy relationships to students' school engagement and academic success; and b) teachers are able to engage in healthy and respectful relationships with their students (i.e. to model healthy relationships in the classroom no matter what subject is being taught). The Foundation could explore a partnership with a post-secondary institution that has a teacher-training program to develop and pilot a healthy relationships course component for trainee teachers.

⁷¹ CDC, 2014.

⁷² CDC, 2014, p. 16.

- **Working with a (small) group of grantees to explore and test effective ways to involve/engage parents in teen healthy relationships programming:** Research on comprehensive programming suggests that involving parents (and other family members) in teen healthy relationships work is associated with better outcomes for more vulnerable teens. However, very few of the 17 funded projects were formally working with parents and families. Some had decided not to in accordance with the perspective that teens need a “safe space” away from their parents. During site visits with projects that were working with parents and families, the evaluation team heard about a number of approaches that were reportedly enjoying considerable success (i.e. enhancing parent-youth relationships and building parents’ capacity to provide appropriate guidance/structures for their teens). Given how important relationships at home are to teens’ wellbeing and the likelihood that they will enjoy violence-free lives, the Foundation may wish to consider funding an initiative to learn more about effective models for engaging parents and supporting healthy relationships between teens and their caregivers.

Appendix A: Data Collection Tools

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Proposal Review

A detailed review of the 17 proposals, as submitted to the Canadian Women’s Foundation, was undertaken. The purpose of the review was to establish baseline data against which future (primarily output) data could be tracked. Proposals were reviewed against a series of criteria including:

- Key project characteristics;
- Program dosage;
- Involvement of peer facilitators;
- Approach to meeting developmental and socio-cultural needs of participants; and
- Number of youth participants and peer facilitators.

A summary report, *Administrative Report #1: Grantee Proposals*, was prepared. It included individual tables summarizing each data set, by grantee and analysis. The general range of project activity was noted and quantified, where it made sense so to do.

Annual Grantee Reports to the Foundation

Each year, approximately 4 - 6 questions included in the Canadian Women’s Foundation’s Annual Grantee Report template were designed to gather data relevant to the national evaluation. The responses provided qualitative and quantitative data primarily about project implementation and delivery activities. These data were rolled up and analyzed and summary reports produced and shared with the Foundation (*Administrative Data Reports #2, 3 and 4*). Findings were used to develop the evaluation team’s understanding of projects and to inform ongoing refinements to data collection.

GRANTEE DATA

Semi-Structured Telephone Interviews

The purpose of the *Semi-Structured Interviews* was to connect with each grantee and obtain input to guide the early stages of the evaluation in general, and the evaluation component of the Annual Grantee Meeting in particular. A total of 17 semi-structured interviews were completed with approximately 25 people. Interviews took place in November and December 2013 and explored grantees’ hopes/concerns for the National Evaluation; early thinking on the issue of creating organizational and policy level change; and ideas for the evaluation activities at the first in-person Grantee Meeting. Grantees’ input was analyzed and summarized and used by the evaluation team to inform the focus of the National Evaluation session at the January 2014 in-person meeting.

Annual Grantee Surveys

This online survey was designed by the InsideOut Evaluation team with input from the Canadian Women’s Foundation. The intent of the survey was to gather data by project; therefore grantee staff worked in groups to complete a single survey for their project.

Three surveys were administered in total. During two of the in-person Grantee Meetings (in September 2014 and October 2015), grantee groups completed the survey in the same room at the same time and in the presence of the evaluation team. The evaluation team shared the survey results “live” using a computer linked to the Internet and connected to a projector. The link to the final online grantee survey was emailed to grantees in November 2016 and, once again, grantee staff worked in groups to complete a single survey for their project. Data from each survey were rolled up, analyzed and summarized.

Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change Tool

Two tools – the Wilder Tool and the Public Health Agency of Canada’s Community Capacity Building Tool – were adapted by the evaluation team for measuring collective action by the group of grantees (i.e. the 17 grantee organizations – and their projects – as a collective entity). The tools were significantly redeveloped to meet the needs and purposes of the National Evaluation and to support the gathering of relevant and useful data. The Capacity to Collaborate and Create Change tool was implemented first during the in-person Grantee Meeting in January in 2014. It was subsequently implemented in April 2015 and, finally, in March 2017.

Through a reflective and discursive process, the tool supported grantees to rate their collective experience of the *Teen Healthy Relationships Program* grantee network across four domains:

- a. *Linking and Learning with Others in our “Community of Practice”;*
- b. *Learning from Others in the Field;*
- c. *Linking Learning to Action; and*
- d. *Leading Positive, Sustainable Change.*

After each implementation, data were rolled up and a preliminary analysis conducted. For the first and second implementation of the tool, findings were shared with grantees (via webinar) in order to stimulate a collaborative reflection process and to generate suggestions for supporting and expanding the on-going development of the grantee network. Summary reports were prepared and shared with the Foundation (*Capacity to Collaborate Assessment: Action Reports #1 and #2*). For the final implementation, the evaluation team compared findings with the previous two data sets and made an analysis of the progress achieved by the grantee network. This analysis was integrated into the Final Evaluation Report.

Staff Focus Groups

The Staff Focus Group was one of four data collection tools implemented during the project site visits. The focus group guide was developed collaboratively with the Foundation and the grantees. The goals of the Staff Focus Group were:

- To provide staff with an opportunity to tell their story about their project – whatever is important to them; and
- To generate qualitative information about project activities and outcomes.

Questions were strengths-based and supported project staff to describe their project’s aims and successes, and to share their perceptions of the impact that their project was having on youth participants and on the broader school community.

Focus groups were held at 16 of the 17 site visits. (One grantee was excused from participating by the Foundation for reasons associated with a research study that the grantee was implementing.) Focus group participants included project facilitators, project coordinators, support staff, and volunteers. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes.

Each focus group session was recorded and the data transcribed. Data formed one of the sources of qualitative information analyzed in MAXQDA.

Grantee Executive Director/Director Interviews

The Grantee Executive Director/Director Interview was one of four data collection tools implemented during the project site visits. The interview guide was developed collaboratively with the Foundation and the grantees. The goals of the interviews were:

- To gather information about:
 - The impact of grantee capacity development activities; and
 - The design of the organization's teen healthy relationships project and the outcomes being realized.
- For the evaluation team to answer questions/provide information about the National Evaluation in general and/or the site visit in particular.

Seventeen Executive Director/Director interviews were conducted. Data were captured through two-sets of note taking and the notes cross-referenced. The qualitative data generated were analyzed in MAXQDA.

PARTICIPANT DATA

Participant Survey

In the spring of 2014, the evaluation team developed a pilot Participant Survey with input from the Foundation. This survey was implemented in May/June 2014. The usefulness of the data generated was determined to be unsatisfactory and in the fall of 2014, a redesign of the survey was undertaken. As part of this, the evaluation team worked closely with certified evaluator, Dr. Wendy Rowe, to restructure the survey and reshape the questions, informed by evidence on components of successful prevention programming for teens and literature on youth risk and protective factors. In addition, the redesign involved extensive consultation with grantees. Youth feedback was also sought on a good draft of the survey. The result was a survey instrument that met the needs and expectations of all.

Generally, the survey was designed to gather participants' reports on the effect of project participation on three levels of change: new knowledge; new attitudes; and new behaviours. The survey also included questions on project activities and participants' level of engagement. An open-ended question at the end of the survey invited respondents to share anything else they wanted to say about their project.

This revised survey was administered twice. It first went to field in December 2014 and then again in November 2015, both times in FluidSurveys. In both instances, the survey remained "live" until the end of the school year. Grantees were also given the option of having youth complete a paper survey if they felt that they did not have the capacity to support participants to complete the survey online. Paper copies were mailed to the Canadian Women's Foundation in Toronto and the data entered by an intern during the months of July 2015 and July 2016.

Data generated were rolled up, analyzed and summarized in the *Individual Participant Survey 2014-15 Report and the Individual Participant Survey 2015-16 Report*.

The table below shows the ratio of Participant Surveys received to participants for each project.

Table 30. Participant Survey completion rate, by project

| Project | Total # Project Participants (2014/15 & 2015/16) | Total # Participant Surveys (2014/15 & 2015/16) | Survey Completion Rate |
|---------------------------------|---|--|------------------------|
| À l'action | 60 | 58 | 97% |
| RESPECT | 116 | 110 | 95% |
| Making Waves/Vague par vague | 355 | 236 | 66% |
| TAG-V | 295 | 187 | 63% |
| Healthy Relationships for Youth | 1,072 | 523 | 49% |

| Project | Total # Project Participants (2014/15 & 2015/16) | Total # Participant Surveys (2014/15 & 2015/16) | Survey Completion Rate |
|--|--|---|------------------------|
| Shift (Project Respect) | 61 | 28 | 46% |
| LOVE | 107 | 49 | 46% |
| ReAct | 101 | 45 | 45% |
| Bâtir des relations saines | 735 | 301 | 41% |
| R+R | 645 | 237 | 37% |
| Strengthening Youth | 573 | 205 | 36% |
| Newcomer Youth and Healthy Relationships | 122 | 39 | 32% |
| Sacred Seven | 91 | 24 | 26% |
| It's All About YOUth | 440 | 110 | 25% |
| Healthy Youth Relationships | 937 | 142 | 15% |
| Be the Change | 500 (est.) | 36 | 7% |
| Sub-total | 6,210 | 2,330 | 38% |
| Fourth R (did not participate in survey) | 1,204 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 7414 | 2,330 | 31% |

Subsequently, 177 surveys were excluded from the database:

- Thirty-six (36) surveys submitted by Be the Change were excluded because they were not completed by the original target participants in accordance with the Foundation's school-based criterion;
- Eighty-eight (88) were deleted from the initial data base because they were incomplete (i.e. only one or two questions had been answered); and
- Fifty-three (53) surveys were excluded when the dataset was cleaned up for SPSS analysis.

Ultimately, 2,153 surveys were considered valid and were included in the statistical analysis.

Participant Focus Groups

The Participant Focus Group was one of four data collection tools implemented during the project site visits. The focus group guide was developed collaboratively with the Foundation and the grantees. Grantees gave particularly detailed and valuable input to ensure a structure/format that youth would be engaged by and feel safe participating in. The final design was arts-based and intended to generate participant-reported data on project effects, specifically participants' experience of the projects, and their learning about healthy relationships and the attitudes and behaviours associated with them.

The focus group activities included:

- **Ice breaker/warm-up activity** - What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think of your teen healthy relationships program?
- **Collaborative Healthy Relationships Posters activity** - using writing and/or drawing, participants create posters to convey:
 - *What I know about healthy relationships;*
 - *How I feel in a healthy relationship;*
 - *How I behave - or expect others to behave towards me - in a healthy relationship.*

- **Closing activity** – participants are invited to take a card and, privately, write down a response to the questions: *What has changed for you as a result of being in this program? What has been the most significant impact or most memorable thing?*

We held focus groups with participants of 14 of the 17 projects. (One project was still in the pilot stage and did not have participants; one project had had its start delayed due to teacher strike action and participants were not ready to take part in the focus group; one project declined to participate for reasons associated with the fidelity of their project implementation.) Each focus group session lasted 50 – 60 minutes and was attended by between 10 to 25 teens who were at or towards the end of their project participation.

Data were analyzed thematically in MAXQDA.

PROJECT STAKEHOLDER DATA

Key Informant Interviews

The Key Informant Interview was one of four data collection tools implemented during the project site visits. The interview guide was developed collaboratively with the Foundation and the grantees. The goals of the Key Informant interviews were:

- To verify information gathered from project staff and/or to generate new information about project design and project outcomes; and
- For the evaluation team to answer any questions stakeholders might have about the National Evaluation.

Key Informants were recognized as being stakeholders with some type of investment in the grantee project and its success. Each grantee was invited to identify three or four stakeholders to participate in key informant interviews. Between two and four interviews were conducted for each funded project for a total of 52 interviews. Interviewees included: school administrators; classroom teachers; school counsellors; parents (and other family members); project graduates; and staff members with other community-based social service agencies. Interviews took place in interviewees' places of work.

Data were captured through two-sets of note taking and the notes cross-referenced. The qualitative data generated were analyzed in MAXQDA.

Appendix B: Project Funding Criteria, Principles and Promising Practices Matrix

In order to determine whether the Foundation implemented the Teen Healthy Relationships Project Funding Initiative as intended, we undertook an analysis of their Grants Decision-Making Criteria. We selected two indicators: alignment to Foundation Principles; and links to promising practices (as identified by the Foundation through its National Learning Strategy on teen healthy relationships programming).

Based upon our analysis, we confirmed that funding criteria were well aligned with the Foundation's guiding principles and the promising practices identified through the Learning Strategy.

Table 30. Relationship between Foundation funding criteria, Foundation principles and promising practising for teen violence prevention/healthy relationships programming

| Grants Decision-making Criteria | Relationship to Foundation Principles | Relationship to Promising Practices |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Criteria associated with the capacity of the organization to successfully carry out the work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Up-to-date website/annual report ● Financial health ● Completed previous grants ● Clear and attainable goals ● Long-term program vision is feasible and sustainable ● Staff, volunteers, Elders, have appropriate experience and training as well as proven skills ● Demonstrated understanding of outcomes measurement and how evaluation strengthens programming | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Criteria used are generally assumed to contribute to successful project implementation ● Diversification of funders is understood to contribute to long-term sustainability |
| <p>Criteria associated with addressing needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Geographic distribution of projects ● Different types of communities supported (i.e. urban, rural, remote, northern); ● Focus on groups with greatest needs including: Indigenous, black and teens of colour; LBGTQ; teens with disabilities and Deaf teens; refugee or immigrant teens ● Age of participants ● Commitment to diversity and inclusion ● Work focuses on teens facing multiple challenges | <p><i>Address the greatest need, (including meeting the needs of Key Target Groups as identified in the VP report to Board Strategy 2011)</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The underlying assumption is that implementing programs across the country in a variety of communities to a range of participants will generate evidence regarding the impact of context on the provision of teen healthy relationships programming ● In particular, providing programming to young teens has been identified as an effective approach |

| Grants Decision-making Criteria | Relationship to Foundation Principles | Relationship to Promising Practices |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Criteria associated with the organization's experience working with women and girls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Experience preventing dating violence ● Attention paid to Gender Equity (in course content) ● Is a women's organization with significant experience in addressing violence against women | <p><i>Focus on women and girls</i></p> | <p>In particular, the focus on gender equity links to evidence indicating that building participant awareness of the reality for girls and women contributes to changing attitudes and behaviours that contribute to violence</p> |
| <p>Criteria associated with paying attention to participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To diverse participants' needs ● To reality of teens' lives (e.g. providing honoraria, transportation, etc.) ● Teens are involved in planning and decision-making about the program | <p><i>Listen to those closest to the issue</i></p> | <p>Peer involvement is associated with positive outcomes</p> |
| <p>Criteria associated with a positive approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Programming with attention paid to skill building and developing competencies – multiple approaches are incorporated ● Demonstrated full understanding of safety needs/issues ● The organization is open to learning from other approaches and interested in testing new ideas ● Proponents' ideas have clarity and viability | <p><i>Take a positive approach</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Links to best practices associated with engaging teens ● Links to best practices associated with achieving positive changes in participant attitudes and behaviours |

| Grants Decision-making Criteria | Relationship to Foundation Principles | Relationship to Promising Practices |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Criteria associated with involvement of women and girls: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and girls involved in decision making • Women are leading the project | <i>Share power</i> | |
| Criteria associated with community building: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with other groups/partners with VAW experience • Support letters up-to-date • This is a grass roots organization with a small budget | <i>Build a community</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong partnerships contribute to community building and long-term program sustainability • Supporting grass roots organizations can contribute to their development, on behalf of the individual communities |

Appendix C: Inputs – Assessing Staff Continuity

The number of grantee staff members who were actively involved in the *Teen Healthy Relationships Program* typically included 2 – 3 people, although there were some variations. By type of position, these tended to include two facilitators and/or project coordinators and, where a third person was involved, an organizational leader of some kind (such as an Executive Director, a Program Director, or a Program Manager).

With these “typical staff profiles” in mind, the evaluation team created a “staff continuity” rating tool. Points were assigned as follow:

- The same leader (Executive Director/Program Director/Program Manager) involved for the entire project = 2 points; if there was turnover once = 1 point; if there was turnover more than once = 0 points;
- The same project coordinator for the entire project = 2 points; if there was turnover once = 1 point; if there was turnover more than once = 0 points;
- The same facilitator(s) for the entire project = 2 points; if there was turnover once, per position = 1 point; for each position that turned over more than once = 0 points.

One additional point was allocated if the involvement of an Executive Director/Program Director and/or Program Manager in their teen healthy relationships project was assessed as “active” (based on a collaborative rating applied by an InsideOut evaluator and the Canadian Women’s Foundation’s Manager of Violence Prevention Programs). The active involvement of grantee organizational leaders was considered relevant, especially with respect to activities associated with building grantee/sector capacity.

Appendix D: Dosage Calculations and Groupings

DOSAGE CALCULATIONS

The table below lists the dosage data for the 17 funded projects (three of which had two distinct project components). It shows how the number of sessions and the number of contact hours has been added together to create a dosage number for each project.

Table 31. Dosage numbers, by project/project component

| Project/Project Component | Number of sessions + number of hours = dosage number | | |
|--|--|-----------------|---------------|
| | Number of Sessions | Number of Hours | Dosage Number |
| Healthy Youth Relationships | 1 | 1.5 | 2.5 |
| Be the Change | 3 | 2.25 | 5.25 |
| R+R | 4 | 12 | 16 |
| All About YOUth | 6 | 6 | 12 |
| Newcomer Youth & Healthy Relationships | 7.5 | 15 | 22.5 |
| À l'action | 9 | 12 | 21 |
| Shift (Project Respect) | 9 | 12 | 21 |
| Strengthening Youth | 10 | 10 | 20 |
| RESPECT | 10 | 26 | 36 |
| Healthy Relationships for Youth (HRY) - Grade 9s | 12 | 12 | 24 |
| TAG-V | 12 | 18 | 30 |
| Fourth R - Healthy Relationships Plus | 14 | 14 | 28 |
| Making Waves/Vague par vague | 15 | 23 | 38 |
| ReAct | 18 | 56 | 74 |
| Healthy Relationships for Youth (HRY) - Facilitators | 19 | 25 | 44 |
| Fourth R | 27 | 23 | 50 |
| LOVE | 28 | 56 | 84 |
| Sacred Seven - Hoop dancing | 38 | 57 | 95 |
| Bâtir des relations saines | 45 | 77.5 | 122.5 |
| Sacred Seven - Basketball | 74 | 171 | 245 |

DOSAGE GROUPINGS

Project groupings, which in the judgement of the evaluators reflect the five relatively distinct dosage levels provided by the funded projects/project components, were created as shown in the table below. The five dosage groupings are: *very high; high; medium; low; and very low.*

(Note: The intent of this process was to analyze participant-reported project effects by project dosage, and because we did not have Participant Survey data for *Be the Change* or *Fourth R/Fourth R - Healthy Relationships Plus*, those projects/components were removed from the final list of projects used to create the dosage groupings.)

Table 32. Projects/project components by dosage groupings

| Project/Project Component | Dosage # | Grouping | # Participant Surveys per Grouping |
|--|----------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Sacred Seven - Basketball | 245 | <i>Very high</i> | 420 |
| Bâtir des relations saines | 122.5 | | |
| Sacred Seven - Hoop dancing | 95 | | |
| LOVE | 84 | | |
| ReAct | 74 | | |
| Healthy Relationships for Youth (HRY) - Facilitators | 44 | <i>High</i> | 527 |
| Making Waves/Vague par vague | 38 | | |
| RESPECT | 36 | | |
| TAG-V | 30 | | |
| Healthy Relationships for Youth (HRY) - Grade 9s | 24 | <i>Medium</i> | 717 |
| Newcomer Youth & Healthy Relationships | 22.5 | | |
| À l'action | 21 | | |
| Shift (Project Respect) | 21 | | |
| Strengthening Youth | 20 | | |
| R+R | 16 | <i>Low</i> <i>Low</i> | 348 |
| All About YOUth | 12 | | |
| Healthy Youth Relationships | 2.5 | <i>Very low</i> | 141 |



For more information about the Canadian Women's Foundation's *Teen Healthy Relationships Programming*, please visit canadianwomen.org