



Weaving it Together

What we heard about opportunities for integrated service delivery for youth in NL
Updated: March 2019

Background

Thanks to an unprecedented alignment across multiple government departments and community agencies and a powerful youth voice, Newfoundland and Labrador is on the verge of systems change that have the potential to make it a nationally leading jurisdiction in providing support to at-risk and homeless young people.

Driven by the 54 recommendations of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, *Towards Recovery*², major change is already well underway in the province's mental health and addictions care system. The education system is also making a major shift, driven by the 82 recommendations from the Premier's Task Force on Educational Outcomes included in their *Now is the Time* report³. The housing and homelessness system in the province is also in the process of transformation, with a new Housing and Homelessness Plan under development and a consolidation of emergency shelter services within the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. The child welfare system is being revised with new legislation to for children, youth and families with a particular focus on prevention, family preservation, and improving outcomes for indigenous youth. Outside of government, Choices for Youth – the largest youth-serving agency in the province – is embarking on an expansion of its programming outside of St. John's for the first time, and many other community agencies are looking to provide more wrap-around services for vulnerable youth. Taken together, this is an extraordinarily far-reaching and well-aligned set of reforms.

Running through all of these systems changes is a common thread: *integrated service delivery*. Youth in the current system face a complex landscape of service providers and eligibility criteria; different locations, different hours of operation, and other barriers all exclude youth from service, or require them to tell and re-tell difficult personal stories. Service providers face barriers to coordination with each other, and must spend a great deal of time helping youth navigate these complex systems. There is a better way. Closer integration between the many services vulnerable youth need – whether through sharing physical space, sharing programs, or sharing information – is a well-established best practice in many jurisdictions and has been flagged explicitly as an element of systems change in the mental health and addictions system as well as within the education system. Choices for Youth, in its own wide-ranging provincial consultations last year, heard a desire for more service integration from young people and service providers in every corner of the province – these conversations are summarized in CFY's *We Are Ready* report³. Our own experiences in St. John's at our Outreach & Youth Engagement Centre reinforce these ideas - we have seen first-hand the value of integrating services.

More integration of services for youth in Newfoundland and Labrador is going to happen. What should it look like? That is the question Choices for Youth sought to answer through a province-wide consultation process in April-May 2018 – and people had a lot to say.

Spring 2018 – Initial Consultations

In April and May 2018, Choices for Youth staff hosted a series of regional consultations with service providers, with a special focus on engaging with staff from the government departments – Children, Seniors, and Social Development (CSSD), Advanced Education, Skills and Labour (AESL), Health and Community Services (HCS), the Regional Health Authorities, and the Department of Education – who are currently engaged in major systems change. At the same time, in each region we hosted a youth workshop to gather

² *Towards Recovery* (2017), Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, http://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/all_party_committe_report.pdf

³ *Now is the Time* (2017), Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/task_force/report.pdf

³ *We are Ready* (2017), Choices for Youth, <http://www.choicesforyouth.ca/s/We-Are-Ready.pdf>

youth perspectives on service integration, building on focus group guidelines used in British Columbia by the integrated service provider network Foundry.⁴

<p>9 Service Provider Consultations</p>	<p>7 Youth Forums</p>
<p>Marystown Clarenville Gander Grand Falls-Windsor Corner Brook Stephenville Labrador City Happy Valley-Goose Bay Nain</p>	<p>St. Lawrence Gander Corner Brook Stephenville Labrador City Happy Valley-Goose Bay Nain</p>
<p>80 + Attendees</p>	<p>100+ Youth Participants</p>

Youth Voices

CFY held consultations across the province with youth ages 15-29 focused on a series of key questions:

1. What does “Wellness” mean to you? / What would the best day ever look like?
2. Who/where do you go to for help in your community/region?
3. If we gave you a magic wand, what would you change to improve youth wellness in your community?
4. What do you think young people right now are thinking, feeling, and doing? What would they be thinking, feeling, and doing if things changed the way you wanted them to?
5. What would you say to convince a peer to use an integrated service program?

Young people had a lot to say and key points from their insights are shared below:

- **Wellness is comprehensive:** young people are looking for supports that balance their physical, mental, and social needs and support healthier and more open relationships with their families. Mental health challenges and drug use are huge issues that they see every day, but they also see a need for healthier relationships with their families and their peers. Indigenous youth in particular highlighted their relationships both to the land and to elders in their communities as a key part of their wellness.
- **The path to help is unclear:** young people all cited family and friends and the place they go for help, but beyond that, paths vary. Many young people struggle to access the services they need and are uncomfortable seeking help through their school. Specific youth-serving agencies are seen as important resources and the recent addition of walk-in counselling programs were positively remarked on - however the hours of operations remain a challenge. Across the board, young people struggled to provide a quick and consistent answer when asked "Where would you go for help?"
- **Young people want big changes:** An end to bullying. Safe spaces to gather. Things to do. Places to feel welcome. Healthy communities. Meaningful jobs. Inclusion. An end to the drug crisis. Support for their families. Opportunities to lead. Young people were not thinking small about what they thought could, and should change in their communities – and they saw youth-oriented service sites as having a big role in making these things happen. To make that work, though, better transportation and flexible opening hours are a must.
- **Physical spaces matter:** Young people all over the province are feeling the severe lack of spaces that feel like “theirs”, and the scattered nature of the supports available to them. Many of them had

⁴ <https://foundrybc.ca/>

some strong ideas for what integrated service sites should look like (colourful, comfortable, clearly for youth) and, more importantly, what they should feel like (safe, peer-supported, nonjudgmental).

- **Safety is multifaceted:** building a truly safe space for young people is a complex process. Particularly in small communities, youth were looking for a place they could go without being stigmatized or outed – this is especially true for LGBTQ2S youth, for whom homophobia is still a regular experience. Safety also means being able to interact with support people who clearly have the training and ability to help them and understand their challenges.
- **Breaking bread together:** integrating food into youth service sites was a winner with youth everywhere. Food breaks down barriers, brings people together, and is a simple way of bringing young people into spaces where help can reach them. For some young people, access to nutritional food is a real challenge. By ensuring food is available to everyone at these sites, we can also avoid creating stigmatizing experiences for young people for whom a meal at a site may be their only one for the day.
- **Young people are ready to lead:** in every region of the province there are young people who would happily help shape the ongoing development of youth services and to provide some of those services in the form of peer support.

Key Ideas: Service Providers and Government

CFY's consultations with service providers and government staff engaged both ground-level staff and high-level decision-makers around service integration for youth. Across the province, there was excitement for the coming of such a major systems change, and a very clear recognition of what the challenges will be. Several key themes stood out:

- **There is buy-in:** community agencies and government departments all recognize the value of closer integration of services for youth and have often been exposed to ideas and examples from other jurisdictions
- **Staff want to make it work:** across all the government departments and community agencies CFY spoke to, there was a strong desire to make service integration work and to move staff out into community settings. There was also a recognition that, particularly within government, there needs to be clear and resourced direction from the top to prioritize this work
- **Awareness of systems change is low:** outside of the *Towards Recovery* recommendations, which are very well-known, there is little awareness of the scale of the systems change that is happening in Newfoundland and Labrador right now (though that may have been shifted somewhat through these consultation processes)
- **Service integration is ongoing, but inconsistent:** in some regions, different government departments work quite closely together and have formal agreements signed with each other for information-sharing. In others, very little of this happens – or previously created collaborative tables are dormant. Integration between government agencies and community partners is likewise highly variable from region to region – but there are good examples to build on, particularly in Western Newfoundland and in St. John's.
- **Different models for different ages:** there was a strong sense from many service providers that children and young adults require services in different ways, and that it was unlikely that a single service model could serve both populations adequately.
- **Structural barriers to employment:** employment programs are not, by and large, designed to work for the most vulnerable youth. On the social supports side, the telephone-based, centralized system for service access is a consistent challenge for youth and other service providers alike. With staff lacking the resources to fully engage with vulnerable youth, AESL would benefit greatly from closer integration with other services and agencies that have a stronger outreach element. Improved access to employment has both an impact on young people and on the communities that they quite often want to remain in.
- **Sharing physical space makes sense:** every community had at least one ideal location in mind for an integrated youth services location. In Labrador City it was the Mall. In Clarenville, a school. Whatever the location, both community and government service providers wanted to share it and recognized that sharing physical space was a “quick win” that could lay the groundwork for more in-depth program and process integration.
- **Quick wins are possible:** more broadly, service providers recognize that proceeding in the spirit of collaboration and shared principles will open up opportunities for meaningful change in young people's lives even before ISD models and the associated agreements and policy changes are fully implemented.
- **Staffing challenges:** some of the positions that would fit most closely into an integrated service model for youth – such as CSSD Life Skills Coordinators and AESL Liaison Social Workers – are

currently unfilled or facing an imminent retirement. Turnover is a huge challenge, particularly in Labrador where pay is not increased to compensate for cost-of-living in the same way it is in other Northern jurisdictions.

- **Distinct youth staff for distinct youth needs:** In agencies that serve both youth and older adults, caseloads are often divided so that there are few to no purely youth-focused staff positions. Reallocating responsibilities to concentrate youth caseloads on youth would facilitate integration of services.
- **Policy and legislative change may be needed:** privacy legislation can present a formidable barrier to service integration. The time of informal information-sharing about clients is long past, but there is not yet a fully enabled system of legislation or policy to enable a more structured version of it. At the more granular level, many smaller policies will need to change to make service integration work – including, in particular, working hours for client-facing staff. Crises in young peoples' lives rarely contain themselves to Monday-Friday or 9-5. Foundry in B.C. and the school-based integrated service model in New Brunswick have made excellent progress in this space.
- **Opportunities to engage law enforcement:** In communities policed by the RNC, the introduction of mobile crisis response teams is receiving a very positive response. Community agencies across the province have long struggled to engage the RCMP in particular in these conversations. The structure of the RCMP, with quick turnover of officers and heavy workloads, does not make it easy. They were, however, very cheered by recent efforts by the RCMP to engage community groups in more strategic thinking about the RCMP's role and priorities. In many small communities, this could be a strong element of successful service integration
- **Housing services need to be integrated:** Successful outcomes for vulnerable youth land, very often, on housing options. Without a safe and secure place to live it is very difficult to create the space in a young person's life for other supports to work. Service providers across the province are looking for more resources to be put into housing young people – particularly with the wrap-around supports that the most vulnerable often need for success.
- **Backbone support will make this happen:** Service integration is not something that can be pulled together from the side of anyone's desk. In communities across the province there are people ready and willing to contribute their time and ideas, but paid staff support for the planning, development, and implementation of these models is going to be absolutely essential to their success. Communities were clear in saying that they were interested in having CFY play a significant leadership role in these sites, in partnership with coalitions of local organizations.

2018 Consultations: Conclusions

These consultations have shown CFY and our government partners that there is willingness, there are ideas, and there are people ready to play a role in making integrated service delivery the cornerstone of an improved system of care for youth. There is clearly now a need for a more detailed planning process to bring these models into reality. Choices for Youth is ready to play a significant role in supporting it.

By creating a planning process that engages youth voices, includes new human resource commitments, gets enthusiastic buy-in from the highest levels of government, and allows for region-to-region flexibility on details, this province will be one big step closer to taking on a leading role in doing better by its most vulnerable youth.

Follow-up to the Consultations

Following the results of our 2018 consultations, CFY began work on a draft program model for a network of regional sites across the province that could share some key back-end services while maintaining locally rooted service and program models. Draft organizational charts are provided in Appendix A of this document.

This model was based on several sources:

- Program models from integrated service delivery organizations elsewhere: Foundry (BC), Headspace (Australia), Youth Wellness Hubs (ON)
- 15 years operating an integrated service delivery model at our Youth Services Centre on Carter's Hill Place in St. John's
- Planning sessions with our program staff
- Consultations with youth, service providers, government staff, and community members
- Input from our National Working Group, including representatives from the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, A Way Home Canada, and Foundry

There are three key principles to our model:

- **Backbone support:** CFY is able and willing to provide core staffing, property management, and shared program models
- **Shared administration: there is an opportunity to** leverage CFY's existing capacity to share some services (accounting, HR, etc) to serve multiple sites
- **Locally rooted services:** individual sites must have the freedom to vary significantly from location to location; local organizations can take on parts of core services or add to them; local leadership and youth councils will help direct them

CFY's working assumption is that ISD sites will be placed in larger communities with existing service provider resources, serving their larger surrounding regions. With that in mind, staff brought together service providers and government staff in seven communities to gather feedback on the draft model and gauge interest in proceeding with a planning process.

Meetings to share and discuss these models were held in:

- Marystown
- Clarenville
- Gander
- Grand Falls-Windsor
- Corner Brook
- Stephenville
- Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Feedback on the Draft Model

Overall, participants in our workshops approved of the draft model presented – but they did have numerous suggestions.

Some early tweaks:

- Clarity around recreational/cultural programming is needed
- Diversity of clinical services needs to be reflected in the model
- LGBTQ2S+ resources need to be highlighted more clearly

Places for further thought:

- Transportation and regional satellite sites
- Land-based programming
- Integration/congruence with the emerging Stepped Care framework

CFY anticipates much more feedback and change as these models continue to evolve and local teams work to adapt them to their local contexts.

Next Steps

At this stage, CFY is looking to move ISD from concept into implementation by developing detailed proposals for local sites, and will provide the necessary secretariat support to local leadership teams to refine and cost out detailed models for communities that wish to move forward. CFY will also engage with national partners and foundation funders and continue to engage with government to gain insight as to their plans regarding implementation. The goal will be to have formal proposals ready in Fall 2019.

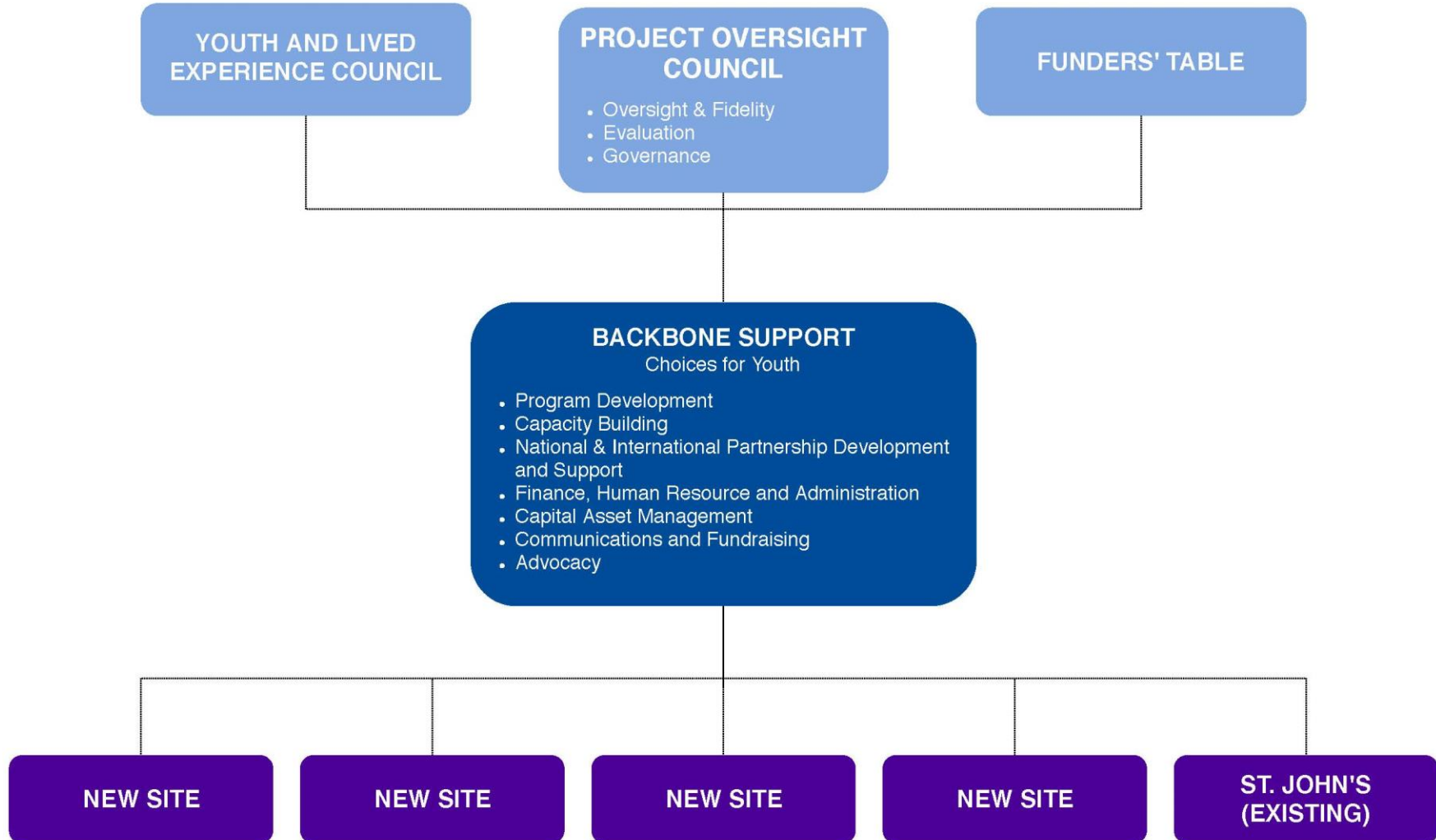
The key decision point will now be at the local level: do community organizations and government partners want to embark on a planning process? If they do, their work will be supported.

Project Contact

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Appendix A – Organizational Chart (Updated after initial consultations)

INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY | STRUCTURAL OVERVIEW



Appendix A – Organizational Chart (Updated after initial consultations)

INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY | REGIONAL SITE STRUCTURE

New Local Positions

Existing Resources

External

Future Expansion

