



Brantford Neighbourhood Hub for Prosperity

Report on Community Conversations and Literature Review

Submitted to:
City of Brantford

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Executive Summary

This report on the proposed Brantford Neighbourhood Hub for Prosperity was undertaken for the City of Brantford by Ginette Lafrenière, consultant, from January - March 2013.

The **key objectives** guiding the development and completion of this report were:

- To determine the parameters of this project in consultation with the City of Brantford, in order to *“develop a common framework based on the principles of collective impact to ensure the successful implementation of a Neighbourhood Hub”*;
- To engage in a comprehensive review of the existing literature on neighbourhood hubs;
- To facilitate two community conversations held at Bellview Public School (Eagle Place) and Major Ballachey Public School (Echo Place) on February 15th, 2013.

To address each of these key objectives, the following report has been divided into three sections: (1) background context and objectives; (2) literature review; and (3) findings from the community conversations.

Section 1: Background Context and Objectives summarizes important information provided by the City of Brantford regarding the development of the Neighbourhood Hub for Prosperity Project, including significant work initiated by a core group of stakeholders. It also outlines key processes and objectives preceding the activities that form the basis for this report and identifies parameters for the consultant’s role in undertaking these activities.

Section 2: Literature Review summarizes key elements of the current research/practice literature focused on people’s experiences of developing and establishing neighbourhood hubs. The review includes: definitions of hubs and types of services provided by hubs, school-based hub models, reported impacts of hubs and key lessons learned across jurisdictions with a particular focus on the Ontario policy and practice context. The review is intended to serve as a resource for multiple stakeholders committed to the establishment of the Brantford Neighbourhood Hub for Prosperity.

Section 3: Findings from the Community Conversations provide an overview of the major themes that emerged during the community conversations at Bellview and Major Ballachey Public Schools. Each community conversation produced a comprehensive list of the strengths and challenges specific to the Eagle Place and Echo Place neighbourhoods, and potential services that could help meet the needs of both neighborhoods. Ultimately from these discussions a belief in the strength and potential of the community as opposed to sustaining need in people clearly emerged from

these discussions. Building capacity by enlisting community members as leadership committee members, volunteers and peer supporters were also ideas which were shared within these conversations as well as ensuring an inclusive governance model and creating a space for more engagement of Aboriginal organizations within the project.

A **common vision** emerged from the consultation process that included the following key elements:

- *The Hub seeks community prosperity*
- *A community development approach*
- *Inclusive service model: A balance of universal and targeted services*
- *Creating a place of possibility*

The following **priority directions** for the Hub's development were distilled from the combined findings of the literature review and community conversations.

- 1. Develop a Clear Leadership and Governance Model**
- 2. Hire a Coordinator**
- 3. Develop a Plan for the Location and Logistics**
- 4. Community Engagement and Feasibility**

“Common measurement” did not emerge as a priority issue for stakeholders at the current time. However, suggestions are included for the development of a strengths-based community assessment and shared evaluation plan.

Based on the work completed for this report, it is recommended that clarification and action regarding the priority areas listed above be considered important elements that will strengthen the common framework for the Hub and lay the groundwork for how the Hub will function in the community.

1. Background Context and Objectives

Introduction

In January 2013, Kathryn McIntyre, Project Manager for Public Health, Safety and Social Services of the City of Brantford approached me to explore the possibility of facilitating community conversations with several agency and community partners who either had been previously working on conceptualizing and elaborating the idea of a Neighbourhood Hub or had been engaged in conversations with those partners who were interested in the initiative. In addition, further project development necessitated a rigorous literature review to be conducted on the strengths and challenges of engaging such an ambitious project in order to assist the various stakeholders in Brantford make informed decisions regarding the roll out of the Neighbourhood Hub for Prosperity Project.

I was delighted at the possibility of working with Kathryn and the various community and agency partners who care deeply for Brantford. A series of communications were exchanged between Kathryn and me in order to conceptualize the best course of action in organizing and facilitating the community conversations.

The following is a recount of the various steps which were undertaken for this project:

- Several exchanges/discussions between Kathryn McIntyre and myself in order to explore the scope and depth of the report as well as to report on its evolution;
- Review of printed material (reports, surveys, statistical profiles of Brantford neighbourhoods, articles, etc.) provided to me by Kathryn McIntyre in order to familiarize myself with the history, context and nature of the Neighbourhood Hub for Prosperity Project;
- Extensive literature review highlighting the lessons to be learned from other communities' experiences of establishing a neighbourhood hub;
- Facilitation of two community conversations organized by the City of Brantford with participants representing over 30 agencies and community-based organizations in the City of Brantford;
- Report writing and recommendations based on information collected;

- Public presentation of findings to the stakeholders of the Neighbourhood Hub for Prosperity Project.

Context

According to the City of Brantford (Report No. PHSS2012-59, September 17, 2012), in early 2011 the Public Health, Safety and Social Services staff were asked to investigate projects that would help build prosperity in the City of Brantford. The request came on the heels of the *Hamilton Spectator* investigative series entitled “Code Red”, which found a stunning 21-year difference in life expectancy between residents in the most affluent and most disadvantaged neighbourhoods of that city. These findings identified several social determinants of health that sparked strong neighbourhood development efforts in several Ontario communities. The idea of “place based” interventions were and are considered a best practice for building prosperity in a community as it is in neighbourhoods that residents live, raise their children and collide socially with one another.

The idea for a neighbourhood hub in Brantford presumably emerged from the research that City of Brantford staff aptly carried out. In their research efforts, staff were able to clearly identify that the idea for a neighbourhood hub would support and intersect with a number of planning exercises being undertaken within the City of Brantford, namely, the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Strategic Plan, the City of Brantford Economic Development Strategy, the Food Systems Community Plan and the Grand Erie District School Board Compensatory School Plan. City of Brantford staff also clearly argued that exploring the possibility of implementing a neighbourhood hub in Echo Place and Eagle Place would be a wise investment for the community.

Key Project Objectives for the Neighbourhood Hub

One of the key strengths of this project lies in the realization that a neighbourhood hub cannot come to fruition if it does not embrace all of the stakeholders who can make such a project a success. The City of Brantford should be congratulated for its leadership in supporting a core group of agency leaders who spearheaded the initial conversations regarding the establishment of the Neighbourhood Hub.

The core collaborative group of stakeholders who have met during the past year consist of the following stakeholders:

Monique Goold, Grand Erie District School Board, Principal, Bellview Public School

Kathryn Lickley, Brant County Public Health, Public Health Nurse

Susan Yates, Brant County Public Health, Director

Nancy Brunton-Brown, Mohawk College, Child and Youth Worker Program

Sherry Haines, Community Development, Housing and Poverty, City of Brantford

The group was then expanded to include the following stakeholders:

Grant McKinnell, Grand Erie District School Board, Principal, Major Ballachey Public School

Sue Evenden, Manager, Ontario Works Employment

Since September 2012, the following stakeholders joined the core group:

Kim Romano, Best Start Network, City of Brantford

Melodie Spears, Best Start Network, City of Brantford

Michelle Williamson, CAS Manager

As mentioned earlier and as evidenced by the team of core stakeholders dedicated to the project, the objectives of the Neighbourhood Hub for Prosperity Project were clearly articulated in their submission to the Chair and Members of the Social Services Committee for approval and consideration in June 2012. According to the June 6, 2012 document, the following items were presented as the “Key Project Objectives”:

Using a community development approach, the objectives of the Neighbourhood Hub Prosperity Project will be to address poverty and its social issues through:

1. Increasing the knowledge, involvement and engagement of neighbourhood residents with programs that will improve personal resiliency and social inclusion and build knowledge and skills to create healthy families based on culture and values (cultural diversity).

2. Increasing the knowledge of health and wellness approaches for residents and children through tackling the six pillars of poverty reduction to build prosperity. Examples include:
 - a. Build resident knowledge of healthy eating and cooking skills for budgeting and shopping economically;
 - b. Build resident wellness by coordinating health fairs and clinics for immunizations, vision, tobacco use, substance use;
 - c. Build resident economic well-being by making connections to social services, literacy and employment training.
3. Increasing youth, family and resident engagement to create a safe, healthy, vibrant neighbourhood applying crime prevention protective factors such as “place-making” that will align with the Community Safety and Crime Prevention strategic themes of resilient youth, healthy families and safe neighbourhoods.
4. Developing collaborative and integrated partnerships to build a shared community vision for hubs so that all at-risk neighbourhoods and its residents will benefit from the presence of and activities in a hub.
5. Developing a measurement system with an evaluation framework embedded in the activities and the interventions, using a “Living Lab” concept for the neighbourhood hub and using the research capabilities of the partnerships in all agency sectors.

The Neighbourhood Hub will be all about service integration so that solutions are found to their common problems and making supports available that are easier for residents to access while eliminating the systemic barriers that these children, youth, families and residents have.

(City of Brantford, Report No. PHSS2012-36, June 6, 2012, pages 5-6)

Neighbourhood Hub Site Selection

According to the same report (City of Brantford, Report No. PHSS2012-36, June 6, 2012), the Hub site selection was initiated in order to address the needs of neighbourhoods demonstrating poorer health, social and economic factors that are the demographic indicators of poverty. Both the leadership at Major Ballachey and Bellview Public Schools expressed an interest in the establishment of a neighbourhood hub. According to demographic research analyses of both neighbourhoods produced in 2006, the following statistics indicate the prevalence of factors related to high levels of poverty:

- 21% of families in Eagle Place and 23% of families in Echo Place are lone parent families;

- Approximately 80% of those lone parent families are led by females which historically are low income earners with low educational attainment and few job skills;
- 29.3% in Eagle Place and 22.4% in Echo Place children under the age of 6 are below the Low Income Cut Off line;
- The median income is less than \$26,000, below Low Income Cut Off for a three person family in Brantford;
- Approximately 40% of residents of these neighbourhoods have no high school diploma therefore low job skills. (City of Brantford, Report No. PHSS2012-36, June 6, 2012, page 8)

Both Major Ballachey and Bellview schools have been designated Compensatory Education Schools by the Grand Erie District School Board (GEDSB). The designation means that students and parents will be provided with more intense and frequent interventions to address the financial, academic and social implications of poverty. GEDSB's compensatory schools are selected based on neighbourhood demographics of median income, single parent families and educational attainment. The GEDSB's selection of schools relied on several studies that indicate the underlying root cause of poor student achievement co-occurring with these factors is, in fact, poverty. Therefore, compensatory schools receive additional staffing and funding support through the Ministry of Education (City of Brantford, Report No. PHSS2012-36, June 6, 2012, page 8).

According to 2010 Education Quality Indicator Test scores (EQAO) scores, which ranks Ontario schools in terms of academic performance, Bellview and Major Ballachey ranked in the bottom 10 of all schools in the province (City of Brantford, Report No. PHSS2012-59, September 17, 2012, page 8).

Key Objectives for the Present Report

Last year, Kathryn McIntyre Project Manager for the City of Brantford successfully received a small budget to carry out community conversations focused on the Neighbourhood Hub for Prosperity Project. The funding was received by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services framed under the “re-engineering of existing resources” envelope. According to the grant proposal submitted to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the objectives for my work as a consultant were to *develop a common framework based on the principles of collective impact to ensure the successful implementation of a Neighbourhood Hub*. This would be achieved by:

- helping to set priorities and ensure that the community conversations would assist participants in sharing a common agenda
- ensure participants understand the importance of a shared measurement system
- engage in mutually reinforcing activities and begin an ongoing communication strategy between hub participants
- attempt to initiate dialogue to build trust between agencies and create a backbone for the involved agencies to plan and manage communication, data collection and reporting so that no one organization or individual would solely be responsible for moving the project forward.

Limitations of the Parameters of this Contract

I was pulled in as a consultant in mid-January to work on this project, and although this timeframe provided less than eight weeks to complete the project, the objectives as described for the present report have been achieved to greater or lesser degrees. This is in part due to the very labour intensive work that had already been undertaken by the core group of individuals who had been working close to a year on conceptualizing a common framework for the Neighbourhood Hub. As such, many of the objectives outlined in the funding proposal for the community conversations had been partially achieved by the very nature of the collaborative work executed before the funding for this particular project was allotted. The critical work accomplished by the core group (as described above) needs to be recognized and honoured as a key success factor which opened up the doors for an authentic gathering of individuals whose deep affection for the City of Brantford and the welfare of its residents was evident during the community conversations.

Therefore, the core group of agency stakeholders representing various areas of educational and social services was key in the initial conceptualization of the Neighbourhood Hub. Through their respective networks, the idea of the Hub was communicated through various mediums and spaces.

The core group had therefore successfully reached out to the larger community months prior to the community conversations. To be fair and balanced, there were and are no doubt certain apprehensions, some of them serious, with respect to the implementation of the Neighbourhood Hub, and this is of course very normal and healthy when it comes to introducing a new initiative within a community development framework. What is important to reiterate, however, is that in my experience as a consultant for this project, I did not encounter any significant opposition to the

idea of a Neighbourhood Hub while working on this project. That in and of itself is a celebratory element of success in the journey towards the development of the Hub. The next section will describe the roll out of the community conversations, followed by the extensive literature review conducted for this project as well as an examination of the information collected from the conversations.

Community Conversations

On February 15th, 2013, I was invited by the City of Brantford to facilitate a community conversation from 9:00am to 12:00pm at Bellview Public School. In total, 23 agency and neighbourhood representatives were in attendance as well as three placement students from Mohawk College and two parents whose children either attended or had attended Bellview Public School and who were not connected to the Parent Association of Bellview Public School.

The following is a list of agencies and neighbourhood stakeholders who were in attendance:

- Bellview Public School
- Jean Vanier School
- Grand Erie District School Board
- Brant County Public Health
- City of Brantford
- Brantford City Councillor
- Eagle Place Community Association
- Recovery Theatre
- Bellview Parent Association
- CUPE
- Grand River Community Health Centre
- Brantford Native Housing
- Brant Community Church
- Brantford Food for Thought
- Mohawk College
- Community Legal Clinic
- YMCA

- Child Hunger Brantford
- Ontario Works - Steps to Success Program
- Children's Aid Society Brant
- Ontario Early Years Centre
- Lansdowne Children's Centre
- Art After School Project

In the afternoon, a very similar community conversation took place at Major Ballachey Public School. The following agency representatives and community stakeholders were in attendance:

- Major Ballachey Public School (four representatives)
- Grand Erie District School Board
- Parents Committee - Major Ballachey Public School
- Major Ballachey school volunteers
- Brantford Food for Thought
- Child Hunger Brantford
- Brant County Health Unit
- City of Brantford
- Brantford City Councillor
- Children's Aid Society Brantford

The community conversations achieved the following aims:

- To create a space for the core leadership of the Neighbourhood Hub to present the background and context for the arduous task of conceptualizing the idea for a neighbourhood hub and receiving buy-in from the City of Brantford for the Neighbourhood Hub;
- To introduce the scholarship defining and illustrating the strengths, merits and challenges of neighbourhood hubs and engage a conversation with both agency representatives and community stakeholders in light of the information shared from the literature review;

- To engage dialogue with agency representatives and community stakeholders which would generate ideas on how best to move forward with the implementation of the neighbourhood hub;
- To create a space whereby agency representatives and community stakeholders could entertain various ideas on what strengths and challenges existed in each of the Major Ballachey and Bellview Public School neighbourhoods;
- To explore what would be the needs of community stakeholders and if these needs were cogent with the services that agency representatives were prepared to offer through the Neighbourhood Hub;
- To encourage both agency and community stakeholders in Echo Place and Eagle Place to interact socially over lunch in order to further discussions among one another regarding the implementation of the Neighbourhood Hub;

2. Literature Review on the Merits of Starting a Neighbourhood Hub: 10 Lessons from across the Globe

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of this review is to highlight lessons from the literature of experiences of establishing neighbourhood hubs. The review is intended to serve as a resource for multiple stakeholders committed to the establishment of the Brantford Neighbourhood Hub for Prosperity.

The review draws from peer-reviewed journal articles and other sources from Canada, and communities in similar contexts including: the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Netherlands, Iceland, Greenland and Australia. Highlights from informal conversations with three working professionals connected to community hubs in Ontario are also shared.



This review is *not* intended as an extensive illustration of the literature on hub models. Excellent reviews that provide thorough overviews of the various models exist elsewhere and are cited in this report. Rather, the focus is on **common lessons learned across jurisdictions** with a particular focus on the Ontario policy and practice context.

The ultimate goal of this review is to serve as an ongoing, practical reference point for Brantford’s stakeholders to assist in hub development and planning. The “lessons” presented in this report offer the community of Brantford highlights of important issues to consider in developing neighbourhood hubs.

The review begins with a brief description of what a neighbourhood hub is as well as a summary of the evidence of potential benefits associated with hubs.

What Is a “Hub”?

A “neighbourhood hub” is also referred to as a “community hub” (in Ontario, US, UK, Australia), a “full service extended school” (UK), a “community school” (US), a “family centre” (Sweden, Finland), a “family’s home” (Norway) and a “youth and family centre” (Netherlands).

Generally, hubs share three common elements (adapted from Woodgreen Community Services, 2011):

1) Place-based

The hub is intended to be an accessible, public space that includes informal and formal meeting areas.

2) Activities & Services

The hub may offer a place to meet, connect, learn, and access services.

3) Collaboration

A hub model is run by a group of organizations, groups and interested stakeholders and reflects a co-location of various services and groups.

Definition

There is no single agreed upon definition of a community or neighbourhood hub. The following definition, however, aptly encapsulates the raison d’être of a neighbourhood hub:

A conveniently located public place that is recognised and valued in the local community as a gathering place for people, and an access point for a wide range of community activities, programs, services and events. (Rossiter, 2007)

Across the globe, hubs may serve to meet varying objectives and needs. One of the primary aims of a neighbourhood hub is to better meet the needs of service users through more intentional, coordinated efforts by service providers (Graves, 2011). The hub model of service, while not a new model, is gaining popularity and spreading rapidly throughout North America and the world.

Why use a “hub” model?

One of the main arguments for using a hub model is to address community issues such as poverty or to support healthy child development in a collaborative manner. A barrier to effective service provision is that service providers work in isolation from one another or in silos, and thus services are less effective and less accessible. It is theorized that by coming together, services can achieve a greater impact (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

What is in a hub?

The typical services found in school-based hubs vary across a range of social, health, academic, recreational and economic supports. Examples of services, programs and activities include:

Child care	Early Learning programs	Screening programs	Counselling	Informal meeting spaces	Case management and referral services	Recreational programs	Online learning options
Prenatal programs	Speech pathology	Housing support services	Adult education programs	Wellness programs	Information & referral	Family programs	Health services, clinics, fairs
Volunteer coordination	Programs for children with special needs	ESL classes	Community events	Meals	Gardening	Before and after school programs	Meeting space
Summer programs	Tax assistance	Clubs	Mental health services	Tutoring	Resource support	Case conferencing	Art & Drama programs

School-based Hub Models

Hubs which make use of schools are referred to as community schools, community schools partnerships, learning centres (Graves, 2011), comprehensive schools (Cummings, Todd & Dyson, 2007) or full service (community) schools (Dryfoos, 2005) among others depending on their unique implementation and governance strategy as well as goals.

Clandfield's Continuum of School-Based Hub Models: Transactional to Transformative

Clandfield (2010) situates school-based hubs along a 5-point continuum from “community use of schools” to “fully integrated school-community relationship” (which Clandfield refers to as “the true hub”).

Clandfield's Continuum of School Based Hubs (Clandfield, 2010, p. 15-19)

From Transactional to Transformative

[A] Sharing On Demand	<p>1. Community Use of Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community groups can book school space for use after hours - Processes in places involving a formal permit application to access space and community group will pay for costs incurred 	<p>Both of these forms of contact between school and community are to some extent market-driven: they run on a first-come first-served basis, the school has unused space at certain times and allows it to be used by outsiders, typically for a fee on a cost-recovery basis.</p> <p>Public policy issues involve the creation of user fee grids and scales, exemption policies, overhead calculations, liability costs.</p>
	<p>2. Parallel use & shared use of schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involves an ongoing arrangement for space sharing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - akin to a time-shared lease (i.e. dance class every Saturday in the gym, private after-school care provider) 	<p>Relationship takes the form of a business contract whose details are negotiated privately, following an RFP process, and subsequently kept private for reasons of “business confidentiality.”</p> <p>Low community involvement.</p>
	<p>3. Co-location of community Services</p>	<p>More of a public policy model.</p>

<p>[B] Rationalizing Services and Use of Space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public and private agencies come together in a shared space to co-ordinate their resources and services in a planned, mixed-use site without necessarily limiting facilities to those that serve primarily the needs of children and their families. <p>4. Full-service schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Typically builds its array of services around the needs of children and their families. - A range of child and family services are offered at the shared location. 	<p>The additional use of the school are those planned and chosen by public agencies - the school board, the municipality, the board of public health, etc. - to provide services deemed necessary for the welfare of the surrounding community.</p> <p>Community consultation may play a role in the development of the policies and the allocation of resources.</p> <p>Usually limited to providing what a public body of specialists and bureaucrats consider beneficial for the recipient community.</p> <p>In models #1-4, there is nothing that by necessity integrates the life of the school with the community uses of the school.</p> <p>The sharing can and usually does remain parallel.</p> <p>What is going on in the school often seems to unfold in ways that have no impact on community life outside the school or even on the community users of the school space: “They are like ships that pass in the night, fellow consumers of space.”</p> <p>Overall, in these models, the school provides room for others to use its space without any necessary benefit to its educational programs, and the community makes use of the facilities without gaining anything from what is going on in regular school classes.</p> <p>For the relationship between school and community to go beyond this - extra effort is required.</p>
<p>[C]</p>	<p>5. The School as Community Hub</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exists when children’s learning activities within the school 	<p>A community development model.</p> <p>Community organizations, the local community and schools</p>

<p>Imagining a Different Community School: The Two-Way Hub</p>	<p>contribute to community development and when community activities contribute to and enrich children’s learning within the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Among the key vehicles for the development of that relationship will be the various community programs and services located within the school space (as in parallel space and full-service models) and in its immediate environment (as in co-location models). 	<p>develop an interactive relationship based in mutual exchange: what the community has by way of knowledge and skills flows into and across a curriculum.</p> <p>Engaging its students in understanding and changing the world</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pupils can develop their own expertise and put it to work in the service of the community. <p>Community is engaged in the hub and community needs and voices are responded to by Coordinator and governance body.</p>
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Do Hubs Work? What Is the Impact of Hubs?

Why a School-based Hub? The Rationale

The purpose of school-based hubs in North American, UK and Australian contexts is to overcome the recognized economic and social disadvantages in school communities (Black et al., 2010). The school-based hub is a means to address the complex needs of children, families and the community that schools alone cannot meet (Dryfoos, 1994; Dyson, 2011).

In Nordic contexts (i.e., Sweden, Norway, Denmark), hubs are more often seen as an access point for universal child and health services that may or may not include services to address inequity (Kouvonen, 2012).

Intended Aims of School-based Hubs & the Theory of Change

A theory of change is the belief or theory about how a program or initiative works to reach its intended goals or results.

The theory of change implied by most school-based hubs (Shah et al., 2009) is that a combination of services and programs in school-based hubs work together to address the whole child, family and neighbourhood systems to build strengths and prevent problems, resulting in positive effects that promote greater health, well-being and academic success for the entire community.

Critics of the traditional approach to hubs (Clandfield, 2010; Middlewood, 2009) take the intended goal of improving child, family and neighbourhood conditions a step further, stating that the ultimate aim of hubs should be to transform whole communities: including children, families, neighbourhoods, schools and community organizations. In this view, it is not enough to merely offer more services or services in different ways.

In describing the vision of the SchoolPLUS model in Saskatchewan, Tymchak (2001) takes this transformative view: “School Plus is therefore concerned with ‘nothing more and nothing less than the forging of a new society” (Tymchak, 2001, p. 25). In a transformational model, the emphasis is on including community strengths and contributions in the model and acknowledging that there is also a need for community organizations and schools to change and that the hub should develop capacity for this transformation (Dyson, 2011).

Not all hubs are created equal! In their review of community schools across the US, Blank et al., (2003) found that quality matters. Higher quality hubs had better outcomes. Quality was defined as: number and type of programs, participant engagement, and how long the programs had been running.

The evidence available is difficult to generalize to other contexts because each hub model is unique and aimed at unique target groups. Often evaluations focus on programs within the hub and do not evaluate the impact of the hub as a whole.

Many of the higher impact and well-researched hubs have been long established and offer a comprehensive array of services including early learning and care programs (Arimura et al., 2011;

Blank et al., 2003; Zigler & Finn-Stevenson, 2007). This is important for smaller initiatives to keep in mind as they plan and evaluate local hubs.

The Evidence: Interpret with Caution



Overall, the field is lacking in rigorous, credible research demonstrating evidence to support the theory of change.

As Dyson (2011) and others (Black et al., 2010) note, the evidence available is:

- 1) of varying quality
- 2) focuses more on process vs. impact
- 3) often includes a “spirit of advocacy” or an air of positive regard, rather than a critical eye of an evaluator.

In the literature there is consensus about one thing: hubs are inherently difficult to evaluate. The hub model is a strategy, not a program. There are many levels of complexity that make quality evaluation a significant challenge.

Despite these cautions, a number of evaluations indicate that effective models show evidence of positive impacts and good potential for impacting children, families, schools and the community.

For children: student engagement in community and school, improved educational outcomes and self-confidence and well-being (Ariumura, et al., 2011; Communities in Schools, 2010; Cummings et al., 2007; Quinn & Dryfoos, 2009). Participating students show improvements in academic achievement and social development (Blank et al., 2003; Cummings et al., 2005, 2006, 2007).

For families: Families of participating students have increased stability, communication with teachers and school involvement. Parents are more engaged in children’s learning (Blank et al., 2003; Cummings et al., 2005, 2006, 2007).

For schools: Volunteer supports for students reduced pressure on teachers to support higher needs students (Luna, 2011). Community schools enjoy stronger parent-teacher relationships, increased teacher satisfaction, a more positive school environment and greater community support (Blank et al., 2003). Teachers perceived improved social and academic supports for higher needs students and some schools saw improvements in achievement (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2010).

For neighbourhoods: Better use of school buildings allows for increased security, heightened community pride and better rapport among students and residents (Blank et al., 2003; Cummings et al., 2007).

For community organizations:

For service providers, hubs can also be of benefit. For example, coordination or partnerships can result in increased sharing of knowledge, resources and referrals among various types of agencies working together that may not otherwise occur and a common goal of assisting the community in a systematic way. Partnerships can also result in increased funding opportunities (WoodGreen Community Services, 2011). Partnerships may also reduce duplication across services and highlight gaps (Our Kids Network, 2011).

“The Promise of Hubs”

There is general consensus as well as quantitative and qualitative evidence from the literature that hubs show “promise”, “hope for benefits” or “potential” for meeting broader, more ambitious goals. That is, there is evidence that through the supports offered that lives and systems can be changed, although there is no conclusive evidence (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2010; Black et al., 2010; Dyson, 2011; Dyson & Todd, 2010).

The Critiques of School-based Hubs

1) “Show me the evidence”

Should policy be invested in hubs if they show more “promise” than evidence? One critique of hubs is that the quality of evidence of their effectiveness is lacking. Yet, there is a general agreement that hubs seem to have positive impacts or at least are showing progress towards positive changes. In addition, there are few complex social interventions that reveal conclusive overwhelming impacts. There does exist an overwhelming body of research supporting the impact of early learning and related child development interventions, typically found in school-based hubs (Pascal, 2012) and similar results exist for programs typically found in hubs such as recreational programs.

2) Professionally driven and “needs” focused

Another common critique of hubs is that they often lack community engagement (Black et al 2010, Clandfield, 2010; Dyson & Raffo, 2007). Often the community “needs” are determined by the professionals leading the initiative and community engagement is an afterthought. Child, family and community strengths are often overlooked, given lip service, or treated as secondary. A power imbalance may be established early and becomes difficult to overcome. For hub projects aimed at making broader community change, power imbalance and professional roles are important considerations.

Decisions made by professionals alone may well overlook the realities of disadvantage that only those experiencing it fully understand. Moreover, professionally driven attempts to ‘help’ people facing disadvantage may, paradoxically, drive such people further into a state of isolation and dependency (Dyson, 2011, p. 185).

Similarly, the choice of school-based hubs or having schools as lead organizations has been criticized because traditionally schools have been unwelcoming places for marginalized children and families such as low-income, non-English speaking or Aboriginal children and families (Ziegler & Finn-Stevenson, 2007).

Critics of traditional models of school-based hubs note that hubs may benefit some of the students, but lack widespread or long-term impact without changing the culture of the school (Clandfield, 2010).

3) Do not address root causes and macro level policy issues

The hub models in North American, Western European and Australian contexts are criticized for an emphasis on the educational and individualized needs of children and families without attending to the social and economic reforms needed for changing communities (Anyon, 2005). Hubs do little or nothing about the core issues that they are interested in responding to: poverty, inequity, housing, and transportation barriers. Hubs have been criticized as a way for governments and society to focus on charity for marginalized groups, rather than social change or larger scale effective social investments. Dyson (2011) and others argue that hubs are simply one example of a local, community-driven intervention to a complex macro-micro set of problems.

In Nordic countries, hubs reflect more of a macro, policy driven response. This is reflected in a more universal and comprehensive offering of supports and services (Kouvonen, 2012)

4) Can integration truly happen at the local level?

Most North American hubs have a “lack of central steering”. There is locally-driven collaboration without higher level direction, buy-in and commitment (Cummings, Todd, & Dyson, 2007). Without higher level service integration (for example at the Ministry level in the Ontario context), effective collaboration, resources, mandates and sustainability may pose significant challenges for hubs (Pascal, 2012).

The 10 Lessons Learned

There is a large and growing body of literature describing the experiences of the hub model. Across jurisdictions, there appear to be many similar challenges and lessons learned that are helpful considerations for groups interested in starting a hub project. Below are the most common issues discussed in the hub literature.

#1 Invest time in building **Positive Relationships** between people in the community, organizations and schools

This list of 10 Lessons is not in order of importance, with the exception of #1: there is an absolute consensus in the literature that **better collaboration is associated with meeting the needs of children and families**. There is also evidence that those areas where collaboration existed prior to the hubs fared better (Arimura et al., 2011; Black et al., 2010; Toronto First Duty, 2006).

Collaboration is both a key element for success and the key challenge for hubs. Effective collaboration involves: mutuality, shared responsibility and trust. Positive relationships require effort, commitment, time and leadership to grow and establish.



Integrating services brings together a complex web of cultures, mandates and professional orientations - this is challenging, especially for school partners who are often less familiar with social care systems.

Common in the literature and in conversations with hub leaders was the importance of nurturing relationships early and often and not to restrict relationship building to a small group: go broad and diversify early. Shared training was often stated as an important venue for relationship building for professionals and the community. Consider new and creative opportunities for partnerships such as local universities, colleges and local businesses.

Spend time on developing common values and understandings of what the hub is about. Some hubs flounder because partners continue to be unclear about the purpose of the hub years later.

Develop a conflict management protocol as the hub becomes more formalized.

Tackman's (1965) model of group development seems to play out within the development of hubs: hub development proceeds through the four identified stages of forming, storming, norming and performing. Groups must muddle through these stages to grow together, tackle challenges and deliver results. Group work and collaboration takes time and a willingness to persevere. As Black et al. (2010) state, ideally partners bring a "willingness to participate in something that will evolve and be implemented over a long time frame" (p. 18).

#2 Starting a hub takes longer than expected: there are many logistical and planning issues

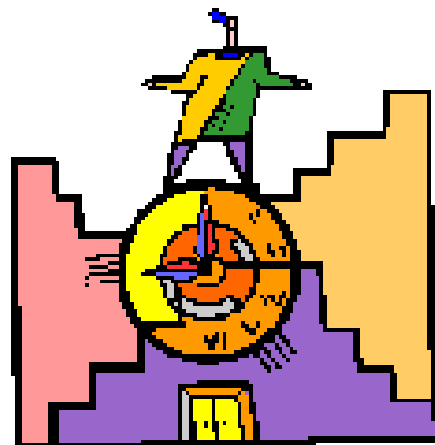
From the literature, logistical issues, consultation and planning take up more time than expected (Arimura et al., 2011).

It is clear that a much needed early step in implementing a hub is reaching consensus on the goals of the hub. Each partner should share the vision and goals and feel that their agency, whether co-located or not, can play a role in achieving the established goals (Our Kids Network, 2011). Along a similar vein, care should be taken to invite enough and appropriate partners. Small agencies and community members should not be left out. This process may take several years and is easier said (and written about) than done (Our Kids Network, 2011).

Planning is important, but also jumping in and trying something new is also encouraged.

Common logistical issues include:

- Space and location of the hub
- Security
- Funding
- Legal issues
- Staff roles, responsibilities
- Operating procedures



Other issues to consider:

- Get passionate people at the table
- Allow for conversation and have people discover what their part is
- As people start working together, the momentum builds
- Keep the vision as a guide: what should a community look like for people to thrive?
- Need time to plan and time to “do”
- Keep the conversation focused (“keep it draped in data”)
- Have good solid local and national data to inform planning and to show progress and learning
- Realize the work is messy - you are working with diverse mandates, sectors and relationships
- Look for common ground across groups at the table
- It’s never as neat and easy as it seems
- **Focus on the partnerships and inclusion**

#3 Understand the Resources Required

Resource challenges are common across hubs. Few hubs are well resourced. Most exist on a patchwork of time limited grants from governments and/or foundations along with pooled resources from partner organizations. Few exist on volunteer resources alone.

Common resource challenges include:

- Staff time
- Space
- Capital
- Maintenance
- Transportation
- Volunteers & volunteer management



There is a false sense among policymakers and governments that hubs are a less costly way of delivering services. In general, there is little evidence that suggests that hubs cost less than traditional services. The rationale behind hubs is more about doing work together to offer *better* service than less costly service. Integration can sometimes mean actually requiring more resources - not less. If done well, in the long run the hub model intends to make more *effective* use of resources.

Transportation is a significant issue for most hubs (Kronick & Dahlin-Brown, 2010). For example, after school programs for children who are not within walking distance of the school prohibits participation. There were no examples of hubs that have adequately addressed this concern.

Time is another aspect of resources to consider. Black et al. (2010) found that most effective school-based initiatives increased workloads for schools when the programs started. To do most things well requires time and effort: this is true for hub development.

Hubs have found that as people became aware of services, demand increases which brings further resource demands.

The positive side of the resource dilemma is that hubs often open up new and expanded opportunities for funding. Governments and foundations find partnerships to be worthy investments. Hubs tend to result in innovative ideas that result in successful grant applications. Additional funding supports the work of the hub, but can also be a challenge as grants are most often project-based and require resources to develop and manage.

Common strategies to address resource concerns include:

- Understanding the time commitment necessary - get partners who believe it is time well spent!
- Pooling partner resources creatively and flexibly
- Getting partners with resources committed early
- Having political leadership buy-in
- Developing relationships with funders early

#4 Leadership roles and the Coordinator role are important

The importance of leadership for hub development and sustainability is emphasized in most discussions about hubs. In particular, there is a consensus that shared leadership, with all its



shortcomings, is an important factor for hub success (Arimura et al., 2011; Black et al., 2010).

Without leaders who understand and champion the vision and mission of the hub, the work can be overtaken by turf disputes and organizational culture issues.

Middlewood (2009) states that effective leadership in the hub context requires “relentless flexibility” (p. 16).

Common leadership challenges for hubs are: high turnover of leaders, turnover of staff, unbalanced sense of ownership by school/community organization/neighbourhood and lack of clarity on governance issues (who is responsible for what?) (Black et al., 2010).

For school-based hubs, commitment from school officials and teachers can “make or break” the hub (Kronick & Dahlin-Brown, 2010).

Importance of formalizing (eventually): As Kouvonen (2012) notes, the work of “passionate enthusiasts” is a key factor for hub success. The work of passionate enthusiasts is often organic and happens in meetings, hallways and behind closed doors. It is important to document this work before it is lost.

Governance

Some evaluations noted the importance of developing a clear governance and management structure (Kouvonen, 2012; Woodgreen Community Services, 2011). Be clear about the roles and responsibilities of each group. A strong lead agency model is common among effective school-based hubs. Some argue that community-based agencies may offer a good choice for initiatives aimed at young people who are disconnected from schools since lead agencies may become the “brand” of the hub (Black et al., 2010).

One example of a common governance model is the Toronto First Duty Model (Woodgreen Community Services, 2011). The school and Woodgreen Community Services are the leads. There is a management committee which includes: parents, Woodgreen, school leaders, City of Toronto child services and public health, TDSB, a charitable foundation and OISE/University of Toronto.

Coordinator

Authors emphasize the importance of the Coordinator role to hub success. The Coordinator is often seen as the “the face” of the hub. Successful coordinators have effective community development skills. They know the community well and what community resources are available. They are good connectors so that they can bridge service users and service providers. They must also be “relentlessly flexible”, committed to the vision and have well-developed relationship and leadership skills. Difficulty in recruiting in smaller communities has been identified as a challenge as well as high turnover (Kouvonen, 2012).

#5 Community Engagement is essential

There are a number of commonalities across hubs (even more so in the Nordic context), but there is consensus that even hubs that offer universal services should be unique to the local context (Black et al, 2010; Dyson, 2011).



Furthermore, the hub planning and leadership group should seek to understand and engage the community in hub development - ideally from the outset.

Questions to consider throughout:

What do you mean by community engagement in your hub context? What does an ideal version of engagement look like?

What is the geography and make-up of the community the hub will serve?

What is the diversity within the population?

What is the strategy to engage the “hard to engage”?

Who is being left out? For example: ESL children and families? Children with special needs?

Who has something to offer that may be overlooked? (for example, seniors and people with disabilities often have time to volunteer and have gifts that are overlooked).

A major critique of hubs is that the dominant approach to hub development is professionally driven (Clandfield, 2010; Dyson, 2011). Service provider perspectives dominate. Perhaps as a result, the dominant approach is mostly needs driven and overlooks individual and community strengths and capacities.

The dominant approach. . . has been needs driven. This approach starts out by focusing on the needs, deficiencies and problems of communities, and accordingly devises strategies to address these needs and problems.

[However,] the needs-based approach creates mental maps of communities that encourage its members to think about themselves as fundamentally deficient and as powerless victims of their circumstances. (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006, p. 462)

What does a strengths-based approach to hub development and implementation look like in practice? Often there is rhetoric about using “asset-based approaches”, but it is less clear about what this approach looks like in practice (Dyson, 2011). Is an asset-based approach realistic given that most systems and services are needs-based? Proponents would argue that creating a hub is a convenient time to adopt new approaches and to challenge traditional models of service provision (Clandfield, 2010).

Effective strengths-based approaches require intention, planning, and training as they are most often new ways of thinking for many service providers. Another challenge to this approach is that data available for planning are often deficit/needs based. Consider collecting community data that include information about strengths and resources.

#6 Be Clear and Realistic about Objectives

It is important to dream big and have ambitious visions for social impact and change when starting out new initiatives. Shared values and ambitions motivate community leaders.



The hub literature is saturated with big, broad ambitious goals (Black et al., 2010; Dyson, 2011). Ambitious goals may offer a strong shared value base, but consider if such goals are realistic and achievable in terms of actual outcomes?

What is the theory of change behind the hub? A theory of change describes the series of linked steps that are believed to be necessary to reach a stated goal. A logic model can also be an example of demonstrating the connections between the intervention and the actions required to logically meet desired outcomes. What are the realistic short, medium and long term outcomes that can be reached through the work of the hub? This step is a challenge for most hub leaders and staff as it takes time, collaboration, effort and a willingness to document realistic expectations (Dyson & Todd, 2010).

Dyson (2011) notes:

There is no convincing evidence that they [hubs] can transform whole communities, much less that they can disturb established hierarchies of advantage and disadvantage...resources are “puny” in response to the scale of disadvantage (p. 186).

How can we dream big and still be realistic in setting goals and objectives? This is a challenge for most hub development teams.

Yet Dyson (2011) also notes that there is much evidence that even small, seemingly “puny” initiatives have the power to change lives and hubs may be viewed as an important component in the broad range of interventions necessary to address inequality and social suffering.

Consider:

- Resources - what are reasonable objectives, given the resources available?
- Quality of hubs matter. Several evaluations of school-based hubs reveal that quality of the hub is linked to overall success in meeting objectives. Suggested indicators of quality included the number and kinds of activities, how long the program has been in operation, and the degree of student participation (Blank et al., 2003). If the hub starts out slow, with limited supports - be realistic about expectations.

- What is of most importance: service integration or transforming communities to address the issue of inequality? Can you do both? How? This is often a challenge for hubs.
- Is there a “paramount focus” for the hub that may facilitate better outcomes (child health, student engagement, student achievement)?

#7 Universal or Targeted Approach?

A key issue to address early on and throughout hub development is the extent to which the hub is prevention vs. problem-focussed. For example: should the services available in the hub focus on whole populations of children and families

(universal) or be targeted at specific populations of interest or concern? And who are the populations of with whom we are most concerned? There is great debate in the literature of child development on this issue.



Nordic models are firmly etched within a prevention/universal model. Nordic hubs include universal access to a broad range of maternal health, child health, and early learning and care supports and services. Nordic family centre hubs also are located within a social policy context that is more generous, equitable and universal than North American contexts. Interestingly, a challenge for a number of Nordic family centres is engaging “hard to reach” populations due to *lack* of targeted programs (Kouvonen, 2012).

American models typify the targeted approach that reflects the enormous social inequality and academic disparities in neighbourhoods and schools across the United States.

Dr. Fraser Mustard, a world renowned child development researcher (McCain & Mustard, 1999) favoured universal hubs with targeted programs where indicated. Just over a decade later, a complimentary study on early childhood, *The Pascal Report* (2012), expressed similar preference for universal, integrated programming with a balance of targeted programming. A key aspect of this model is the importance of linking early years programs to schools.

This debate hinges on the definition of vulnerability and the finding that the “risk” for children to experience social, academic and physical problems is not a simple equation that links poverty directly to increased vulnerability. Rather, findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth have demonstrated that the *majority* of children at risk for poor health and educational outcomes are not low-income, but may face issues of parental stress and mental health issues, abuse, social exclusion, parental education and domestic violence (Wilms, 2002). Income is an important risk factor but should not be *equated* with risk and is not the only factor that makes children vulnerable (Wilms, 2002).

Likely, a balanced approach suits a Canadian context best. The Toronto First Duty model is considered a Canadian example of balanced universal and targeted services.

Consider:

- Will the hub be welcoming to all families? How?

#8 Professional Development & time for professionals to meet

The hub model requires professionals to adopt new roles and interact with different professional orientations, cultures and mandates. Many experienced hub leaders and staff note the importance of professional development and making time for service providers to develop positive working relationships (Arimura et al 2011; Our Kids Network, 2012).

Professional development is often described as an important issue that is overlooked and/or under resourced (Black et al., 2010).



It is recommended that hubs seek resources to support shared gatherings and workshops to build and share knowledge as knowledge building has been found to be a key outcome of hubs (Our Kids Network, 2012).

Common issues addressed through shared professional development are:

- Referral procedures
- Confidentiality issues
- Other common areas for development identified by the team

There was a notable absence of literature describing how community and neighbourhood leaders connect to professional development, likely a reflection of the fact that most hubs are professionally-driven. However, the role of residents could also be a consideration. Consider shared workshops and training that includes both residents and service providers.

Consider events that can bring partners and community members together in fun, informal gatherings.



#9 Be Realistic about Evaluation: This model is complex and challenging to evaluate

There is **overwhelming consensus that hubs are difficult to evaluate** (Black et al., 2010; Dyson, 2010, 2011; Kouvonen, 2012, Whalen, 2002).

Yet funders and policymakers often want clean, easy-to-interpret data to prove that their investments have impact. Difficulty with evaluation is yet another reason to be realistic and not over promise in terms of measurable impact. Most evaluations in the literature focus on process and not outcomes.

Credible outcome research is often very costly and requires a lot of time and expertise. The challenge of outcome evaluation exists for many social programs. The evaluation of hubs is complicated by the fact that they are **not** programs. Rather, a hub is a collection of programs, projects, events and interventions.

Some refer to a hub as a “strategy” rather than a program. It is the complexity related to how a strategy works that makes evaluation a challenge.

Other challenges to evaluating hubs include:

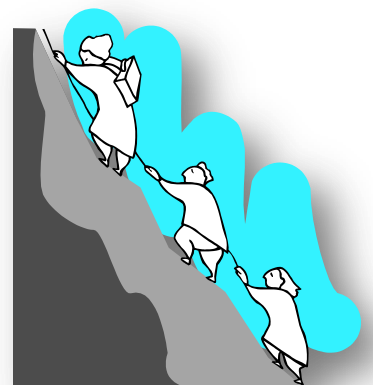
- Unclear, overly ambitious outcomes
- Outcomes that are not logically linked to aspects of practice
- Diversity of interventions
- Common quantitative measures (standardized tests) have been shown to have a “methodological insensitivity”
- Difficulty in making causal linkages
- Hubs do not exist in a bubble - there are many complex processes that impact communities, families and individuals that are difficult to control (including the impact of outside services)
- Uniqueness of the strategy results in lack of comparison or control groups
- Developing a system of shared data (i.e., a common database) can take years and a lot of time and many dollars (one report estimated millions had been spent developing shared databases). Privacy legislation may also pose significant challenge to this approach (Kramer, Parkhurst, & Vaidyanathan, 2009).

Yet evaluation is an essential aspect of the hub strategy.

#10 Acknowledge the Challenges and Limitations

The challenges that arise while developing and implementing hubs are numerous. However, no views have been encountered that argue hubs are harmful or unworthy investments. Most evaluations showed positive outcomes or significant promise that positive outcomes would result in the future from the efforts being undertaken in the hubs.

As highlighted in this document, the literature offers many strategies for meeting the challenges that arise.



To learn, one must acknowledge the challenges that exist. It is important to discuss and document challenges so that they can be dealt with collaboratively and avoided in the future as time passes.

Honest and credible evaluation can be one tool for illuminating challenges and collecting strategies to deal effectively with the challenges.

Consider the value of developing external relationships with other hubs in Ontario and learning from their experiences.

A significant strength of the hub model is that collaboration brings together many diverse minds to problem solve as well as shared resources to respond to new and ongoing challenges. As highlighted earlier, that is the beauty of collective impact.

3. Ideas Generated from Community Conversations

Summary

Now that we have familiarized ourselves with the scholarship, let us now examine the ideas shared during the course of the community conversations and how the essence of those conversations affirm or challenge the findings of our literature review.

Bellview Public School

Strengths/Assets of Community

- Programs/services that are already running (eg, Best Start in schools, Homework Help at the libraries) - there is an opportunity to learn from those models
- “Resiliency” and “strength” are suitable terms to describe Eagle Place as a community
- Data for the neighbourhood are available through Best Start program research
- An established neighbourhood with a long history and active neighbourhood association
- People have grown up in Eagle Place and have stayed
- Native housing agency provides help to Aboriginal residents

Challenges/Needs of Community

- Transportation to services in downtown Brantford (north) is difficult
- Transportation within rural areas lacking public transit (eg, Haldimand Norfolk)
- Loss of a sense of neighbourliness and community
- Need to raise consciousness and literacy of families
- Addictions
- Native Friendship Centre closed five years ago
- Low enrollment in group programs in community (eg, basketball)
- Negative portrayal of Eagle Place in local press
- Lack of effective communication about existing programs/services - inconsistency, misinformation

Suggested Hub Services

- Early intervention/prevention role for hub - 'focus on family'
- Aboriginal programming - 35% of school population is Aboriginal
- Community gardens and cooking groups
- Informal social events: BBQs, coffee get togethers, arts/craft classes
- Workshops
- Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous meetings in hub
- Connect to other existing programs
- Medical services
- Recreational programs for children - workshops for parents on registering kids in programs
- Subsidized day camps in summer
- Programming for seniors
- Training session for agencies in community development (ie, Asset-based Community Development Model)
- Adult education courses, skills upgrading

Major Ballachey Public School

Strengths/Assets of Community

- School offers great services (eg, The Wish Closet)
- Agencies are already engaged in collaboration and consultation (eg, CAS worker in school)
- Student teachers have been very helpful in revitalizing [community]
- Gymnasium in school
- Computers in school
- The students can go to Ward 5 library for tutoring; engage the parents/kids through schools
- Existing collaborations with various schools (high schools, colleges, universities)
- Capacity for community to all pull together
- Community members are really impressed by what is going on in the school

Challenges/Needs of Community

- Should do a needs assessment specific to the community - engage parents in process
- Difficulty for residents to access services due to distance from community
- Pride of residents (contributing to potential reluctance to access services)
- Space is a potential issue at schools, including Major Ballachey (Major Ballachey has partnerships, but no real space to house service providers)
- Two major problems are physical space and coordination of services
- Low literacy levels of residents
- Food insecurity
- Mixed messages and services - residents need help to 'navigate' services
- No information about services - need mechanisms to get the word out
- Need is not always obvious
- Financial hardship
- Requires leadership [to initiate programs]
- Huge need for childcare
- Social isolation. People don't know each other.
- Some community members are unaware of poverty.

Suggested Hub Services

- If you can get parents into the school, families do better.
- Early interventions
- A diversity of services available to everyone, not just 'the needy'
- Recreational activities for kids
- Workshops for parents - pick one issue to get parents through the door
- Academic/educational courses
- Employment assistance (eg, resume clinics, computer literacy)
- Draw in community volunteers: 'People helping each other'; 'A hand up, not a hand out'
- Provide opportunities for people to come together (socially) and learn together (eg, community BBQ - involve whole community, welcoming to everyone)

Towards a Common Framework

Overlapping visions and values:

➤ *The Hub seeks community prosperity:* a successful, flourishing, or thriving condition

➤ *A community development approach*

- A community self-help model seemed to be preferred over a service model by many: people imagined ‘opportunities’ not ‘services’
- Suggestion that Hub agencies should ‘lead from behind’ - community should be the ‘driver’
- Adopt a Strengths-based vs. Deficits focus
- People may want to access service providers as well - Talking to a coordinator, talking to ‘an expert’ in something
- Community engagement needs to be front and centre: enlist parents, teachers to spread word about the Hub
- The Hub needs a ‘community philosophy’: Hub leaders need to believe in ‘the strength and potential of the community as opposed to sustaining need in people’
- The Hub should find well-suited people to do community outreach (‘connectors’)
- Change the service provision model to ensure a more even balance of power - Need to walk along with people.

➤ *Inclusive service model: A balance of universal and targeted services*

“The hub should be universal, not just for the needy, [this is] important to reduce stigma.”

- Should be a place where residents in the community can connect with others and seek support for a variety of concerns - this perspective recognizes that poverty is an important risk factor for vulnerability but is not the only factor that can be addressed
- Spoke and wheel concept: a connection for people to services elsewhere; take the services out into the community - the school is the ‘hub’ of a ‘spoke and wheel’ larger system
- Collaboration and service integration are important in this context
- Multigenerational networking
- Reflect the community and the school - for example, the Aboriginal population



- Strengths focus is important but also recognizes that there are people in the communities experiencing the harsh realities of poverty.
-
- *Creating a place of possibility*
- Welcoming
- Engaging and inclusive
- A place that connects people to develop new ideas, share knowledge and contribute their gifts to their community
- Opportunities for building connections and new initiatives that are both agency-led and resident-led

Four critical issues produced differing viewpoints or raised concerns:

- (1) the merits and drawbacks of a service provider ('expert-led') versus a community-led model of governance;
- (2) the need for a Hub Coordinator to provide coherence and consistency, yet uncertainty regarding the precise role of the Hub Coordinator;
- (3) concerns regarding the general accessibility of the Hub services when located within school settings;
- (4) concerns regarding the inclusivity of the Hub, or its capacity to engage all neighbourhood residents.

Several people voiced concern that deficit-oriented statistics and representations of the community increased stigma and would pose a barrier to residents' use of the Hub. Surveys on the strengths of communities should be conducted in an inclusive and respectful manner (eg, a 'needs assessment' approach versus asset or strengths mapping; school-based survey versus community meetings). These issues should be prioritized in future discussions and planning involving the Hub's development.

Top Emerging Priorities

From the literature review and the stakeholder consultations, we recommend that the Hub planning group consider moving forward on the following priorities.



1. Developing a Clear Leadership and Governance Model

The core group expressed an interest in shared leadership. The typical model that is cited in the literature is shared responsibility, but most often includes at least one lead agency which takes on additional responsibility for moving the work forward and supporting the Coordinator.

A governance model which includes agency representatives, members of parent groups from both schools as well as members of the Eagle Place Community Association would render a balanced and heterogeneous mix of individuals who could move this project forward.

Additionally, there is room to include a representative from Laurier Brantford who could act as a bridge between the university and the Neighbourhood Hub in order to facilitate and fulfill the vision of a “Living Lab” by providing opportunities for student placements and community service learning. This could represent thousands of hours of in-kind services from various departments and programs of Laurier Brantford and solidify interesting training and research partnerships within a university-community collaboration framework.

2. Hiring a Coordinator

This position is key and it is often challenging to find and retain the right person. Coordinators need to excel at connecting people and should have skills and experience related to community development. He or she should be comfortable at planning tables, thinking strategically as well as be approachable, engaging and knowledgeable about the community and community services.

Adequate support for the Coordinator is essential, as some hubs face staff turnover due to frustration over a lack of leadership, support and focus for the Coordinator position.

The Coordinator will need the right mix of strategic vision and providing practical support to community members.

The Coordinator will also need a skill set that will assist with moving the broader vision of the hub forward.

3. Developing a Plan for the Location and Logistics

There appeared to be general consensus that the Hub would most benefit the community - particularly the children - if services, programs and space were provided to *all* members of the community. This would mean serving individuals without children and elderly people alongside families.

Although it was felt that schools could offer a convenient, well-known and central location for the Hub, some concern was also expressed regarding the possibility that the school location could pose barriers for certain populations (eg, the elderly, rural populations living outside the geographic boundaries). Attention would need to be paid to multigenerational and culturally sensitive networking within the community in order to make the school physically accessible and welcoming to non-parent, non-student groups.

Questions were posed regarding the level of integration of the Hub within the school, and it was not clear if the goal for the Hub would seek “full integration with the school” or would function as a relatively distinct entity. At the same time, it was articulated that the school should be conceptualized as “the hub of a spoke-and-wheel system,” and that services should not be sequestered within the school alone, but taken out into other possible community spaces.

Moving ahead, it will be important for the partner agencies to work with the school administrations to work out the Hub’s precise space and time requirements in relation to school activities and schedules. For example, will Hub services be offered during school hours? How

will space and scheduling for shared space be arranged (eg, the gymnasium for recreational activities or large meetings; kitchen facilities for cooking classes)?

Perhaps more importantly, how will neighbourhood residents who may not be familiar with the school gain easy access to Hub services? Will significant infrastructure changes within schools be required to provide space for Hub services while maintaining the security systems that are currently in place to protect the students? If separate entrances and areas are required for the Hub users, how will this be communicated and made visible to neighbourhood residents?

Are areas available on school property for community gardens to be established? Will these spaces continue to be accessible to residents during the summer months?

These are some questions that will become important to consider within the specific contexts of both Bellview and Major Ballachey Public Schools.

It was also widely expressed that activities offered by the Hub (and not just services) should be fully subsidized to allow for residents' participation. For informal programming such as community BBQs and summer day camps, will the Hub recruit volunteer workers and/or sponsors to provide financial and in-kind support for these activities?

4. Community Engagement and Feasibility

A clear message from the consultations and the literature review was that an attitude of “if we build, they will come” is to be avoided at all costs. Continued community engagement efforts and further community assessments must be priorities that are acted upon immediately. It is recommended that there be a set of actions developed tied to this priority. Some suggestions we have include:

- Engage in a **Strengths-Based Community Assessment** (avoid focussing on needs-only or deficit models)
 - o Further explore community strengths, priorities, hopes and ideas of how to work together to improve the well-being of community residents

- Consider a school survey so that all parents are able to contribute their perspectives and assess the feasibility of various services
- Consider door knocking to collect the perspectives of residents who are available during the day and after business hours
- Understand the diversity within each neighbourhood
- Explore options for addressing transportation issues
- Develop an inclusion strategy. Who are the groups that the hub might overlook?
- Explore new partnerships: Laurier Brantford has academic expertise and students available for a variety of volunteer opportunities
- Engage volunteers in the community
- Brand the hubs and promote them in the communities
- Hold events (BBQs)

The Issue of “Common Measurement”

Common measurement was identified by the City of Brantford and the core group as a priority. The issue of measurement did not emerge in the conversations. It appears to be an issue that is not a priority at this time for many stakeholders. At the best of times, evaluation is a challenging topic, so given the focus on starting the Hub, it is not surprising that evaluation was not a pressing topic.

Based on the literature review we make the following recommendations regarding “common measurement”.

1. Review the challenges to evaluation cited in [Lesson #9](#) on this document
2. Consider re-phrasing the term “common measurement” to “**Shared Evaluation Plan**”. Evaluation is important; however, the term “common measurement” connotes a shared measurement tool or shared database. This level of integration has been shown to be mostly unfeasible and, when feasible, incredibly costly. Consider reviewing the possibility of this integrated approach to data collection and measurement in the longer term as the hub becomes more established.
3. Consider developing a more flexible approach to evaluation that reflects the hub model’s uniqueness, complexity and flexibility.

4. Consider the following strategies for evaluating hubs:
- Understand that hubs are not simple, linear programs - so traditional evaluation methods are usually not advised
 - Set realistic, measurable objectives
 - Include multiple methods and perspectives
 - Have resources available to support the expertise and time required
 - Work with experienced evaluators who accept complexity, uncertainty and challenges
 - Work with evaluators who understand credible qualitative evaluation methods and who accept the notion of indeterminacy and foster creativity
 - To illustrate the importance of this, Dyson (2010) concludes that qualitative methods offered the most illuminating and in-depth results, and allowed the evaluators to track changes over time. Most of the compelling outcomes would have been missed in a traditional design using quantitative measures:
When we sought evidence of area change through an analysis of neighbourhood statistics, we found nothing. However, when we put together case studies of individual community members, accounts from individuals of how their networks of families and friends were changing, and reports from community professionals of what their observations suggested, we began to see at least the first stirrings of area-level impact (Dyson, 2010, p. 16).
 - Aim to capture potential
 - Be holistic

Conclusion

The findings communicated in this report through the literature review and community conversation summaries as well as the previous work executed by the core working group are directly connected to the project's objectives in the following ways:

- This research reported herein provides a comprehensive overview of models of existing hubs, ways of understanding their **collective impact** as well as examples of **evaluation and measurement approaches**;
- The literature review and summary of findings produced by the community conversations provided key insights and resources for Brantford stakeholders to

continue the process of community engagement in developing a **common framework** of agreed upon **priorities**;

- This report and the facilitation of community conversations assisted to foster a solid foundation for ongoing **planning, trust building, communication** and **collaboration** among various stakeholders involved in the Brantford Neighbourhood Hub for Prosperity.

I share the promising vision associated with the Brantford Neighbourhood Hub for Prosperity which was enthusiastically developed and shared by the core group with various stakeholders in the community. I believe that the Hub's success will significantly depend on its capacity to ensure the full and meaningful engagement of neighbourhood residents in the selection, planning and implementation of its various activities and services. I am convinced that under the leadership of the core group and the City of Brantford, that this is within the realm of the possible.

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