Building the Model - 2012 to 2015

| 2012	2013	2014	2015
Niagara Connects conducted an environmental scan of evidence, best practice and existing assets for the NPRN (Niagara Poverty Reduction Network), with Niagara Prosperity Initiative (NPI) funding support. The scan included: • 2008 - 2012 Putting the Pieces Together sessions • 2009 Niagara Prosperity Initiative (NPI) Community Conversations • Ontario Social Assistance Review sessions in Niagara • NPRN Collaboration Subcommittee • 2012 Niagara Region Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP) consultation 100 front-line community service workers from over 40 agencies gained Practice Talk skills for the purpose of supporting client success by sharing ideas with colleagues about solutions to practice challenges.	57 Executive Directors (EDs), Managers and Front-line Workers from 29 organizations defined principles for collaboration: • Work together as a Niagara-wide network in a Collective Impact* framework • Facilitate learning and knowledge-sharing opportunities • Focus on person-centered service delivery to support client success • Engage knowledgeable people at all levels in the community service continuum in Niagara: Clients; Front-line Workers; EDs and Managers; Agency Board Members; Government Leaders; Funders *Collective Impact, Kania and Kramer, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter, 2011	Shared Learning Local Hub (SLLH) Leaders in 5 areas of Niagara gathered front-line community service workers to connect, share ideas, and identify Burning Issues concerning clients' access to services and benefits SLLH Leaders validated a tool to record Burning Issues, to support annual Niagara-wide analysis of themes arising 70 participants from 37 agencies participated in a webinar: Building a Financial Literacy Toolkit for Community Service Workers in Niagara http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/building-a-financial-toolkit-for-community-service-workers-in-niagara-event-recording/ Virtual tools were explored to support specific conversations about resource-sharing	101 people from 36 organizations attended the webinar: Person-Centered Thinking and Service Delivery in Niagara http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/person-centered-thinking-and-service-delivery-in-niagara-event-recording/ SLLH and NPRN leaders defined critical elements to sustain inter-agency collaboration: • Communication about opportunities to connect • Technical tools to encourage conversations, collaboration • Consistent support that is formalized, Niagara-wide 15 SLLH sessions were held in 5 areas around Niagara, with an average of 12 front-line workers from 10 different agencies participating. (Burning Issues themes for 2015 are provided on page 2 of this document.) Information about upcoming SLLH Sessions is shared through the Niagara Knowledge Exchange with Niagara Connects providing Backbone Support*.

Priorities for Refining the Model

• **Continually build collective skill and knowledge base** of people working in Niagara's community service continuum

• **Strengthen Communication** by engaging people at all levels in the community service continuum, to support focused planning and decision-making

• **Meet Practical Requirements** of agencies and the individuals they serve

• **Monitor Progress** by measuring impact in the lives of people being served

• **Pursue partnerships** with funders who invest for impact and bring their expertise, knowledge and networking to the table
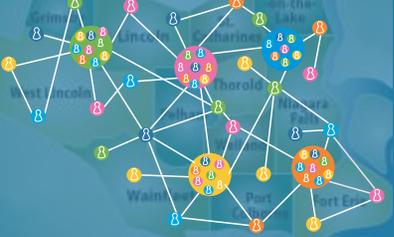
Burning Issues: Themes Emerging from 2015 Shared Learning Local Hub Sessions around Niagara

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In 2015, a total of 15 Shared Learning Local Hub (SLLH) sessions were held in 5 areas around Niagara. An average of 12 front-line community service workers from 10 different agencies gathered at each session, to share information and ideas for supporting the success of the individuals they serve. The number of session participants ranged from 6 to 22; the number of agencies present ranged from 6 to 15. The frequency of sessions varied: 4 each were held in Fort Erie and St. Catharines; 3 in West Niagara; 2 in Port Colborne-Welland-Pelham; and 1 in Niagara Falls.

Emerging Themes (in order of frequency of mention)

1. Affordable, safe, stable housing, including maintenance and utilities
2. Importance of agencies working together in a Collective Impact* framework
3. Access to affordable transportation
4. Obligatory funder requirements (eg. reporting; completing paperwork)
5. Access to employment services, including services to help newcomers use their existing credentials, learn the language, and find employment
6. Access to affordable childcare
7. Access to affordable dental care
8. Helping clients overcome barriers to obtaining social assistance and a livable income
9. Long waitlists for mental health and other services
10. Literacy, including financial literacy
11. Staff burnout
12. Engaging the community and attracting volunteers

*Kania & Kramer, Stanford Social Innovation Review - Winter, 2011

Emerging Solutions

A number of collaborative initiatives are taking a systems approach to making measurable impact on people's lives in Niagara:

- The A Home for All Task Force is formed www.niagararegion.ca/social-services/action-plan/home-for-all-task-force.aspx

- The Getting There model for centrally-dispatched access to health and human services for Niagara's most vulnerable people is being phased in http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/community-blog/getting-there-business-case-established/

- Over 70 organizations are implementing the 9 Principles of the Niagara Mental Health and Addictions Charter http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/community-blog/implementing-the-niagara-mental-health-and-addictions-charter/

- NPRN Task Groups gathered data and information to describe Living Wage, and Cost of Living in the Niagara context http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/community-blog/living-wage-and-cost-of-living-a-guide-for-niagara-employers/

- SLLH groups in 5 areas of Niagara are connected Niagara-wide, with Backbone Support* provided by Niagara Connects http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/partners-projects/shared-learning-local-hub-sessions/

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