Evaluation Findings and Recommendations for a Strategic, Coordinated Approach to Violence Prevention Programming for Children and Youth in Calgary, Alberta: 2012-2015

Contents

1.0 Introduction

Violence prevention programming in schools has proven an effective means of reducing interpersonal violence such as bullying, sexual violence and domestic violence.[1] In Calgary, these types of programs are currently offered by over a dozen different service providers, each having developed or adopted a different approach. The need to coordinate these efforts has long been recognized in this city, with coordination initiatives extending back as far as 2002. To date, however, attempts to develop a more cohesive and strategic approach in Calgary have been unsuccessful.

In 2012, *Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence* approached two funders – the United Way of Calgary and Area (UWCA) and the City of Calgary's Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) – to support renewed efforts to coordinate violence prevention programming in this city. The need for coordination was heightened by the fact that Fourth R (Relationship), a teacher delivered evidence-based violence prevention program for youth in grades 7-9, was going to be scaled by Shift across Alberta. Having been alerted to this change in the programming landscape, service providers were eager to come together to consider the implications for their programs.

In May 2012, UWCA, FCSS and Shift, convened a group of local service providers, school board representatives, and funders to present Shift's research and discuss the prospect of reviving efforts to coordinate violence prevention programming coordination in this city. Facilitated by Lana Wells, the Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence (Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary), the meeting led to the development of a three-year coordination initiative entitled *Building a Strategic, Coordinated Approach to Violence Prevention Programming for Children and Youth in Calgary.* Generally referred to by the truncated acronym VPP for Violence Prevention Programming, the initiative spanned three years (2012-2015), and was designed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Seamless violence prevention services for K-12 are developed
- Schools and community-based organizations utilize evidence-based violence prevention practices
- Schools and community stakeholders (i.e., funders and community-based organizations) engage in coordinated violence prevention planning
- Enhanced supports for higher risk communities exist[2]

Fourteen community-based agencies were invited to participate in the initiative. They were selected on the basis of their involvement in delivering some form of violence prevention programming for youth in Calgary (either in schools or in community). In addition,

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[1] World Health Organization. (2010). *Preventing Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Against Women: Taking Action and Generating Evidence.* London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; Geneva, Switzerland.
[2] *September 16, 2013 Meeting - PowerPoint Presentation*, slide 7.

representatives from the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) and the Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD) were involved, as were representatives from UWCA and FCSS. (See Appendix A for a full list of participants). This larger group met infrequently (eight times over the course of the project); however, a small advisory group comprised of two agency representatives, the funders, school board representatives, and Shift met more frequently.

While the project produced a number of good resources for educators and service providers[3], stakeholder engagement in VPP steadily declined, and the initiative began to lose momentum. As a result, the project was placed on hold in the Spring of 2015, and an evaluation consultant was contracted to gather feedback on the initiative, document learnings, and develop recommendations for next steps. This report offers a brief summary of the findings and recommendations arising from the VPP evaluation.

2.0 Methods

The evaluation drew on two key sources of data: 1) Interviews with members of the VPP initiative (n=12), and a review of the documentation associated with the project.

2.1 Stakeholder Interviews

A total of nine interviews were conducted with 12 stakeholders,[4] including representatives from:

- Agencies (n=5)
- Shift (n=4)
- Funding organizations (n=2)
- School board (n=1)

Stakeholders were selected by a team from Shift, which included the Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence and three consultants who helped lead the initiative). Participants were selected to ensure a range of voices, including those who were highly engaged and those who were not. Care was also taken to ensure representation from each stakeholder group (i.e., agencies, school boards, funders, Shift).

Most of the interviews were conducted in-person, although a few people elected to be interviewed by telephone. The interviews were facilitated by the evaluation consultant, and were based on a semi-structured guide (Appendix B). Interviewees were asked to report any highlights, challenges, impact and learnings associated with the project. The interviews ranged

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[3] These resources have been compiled in a document entitled *Building a Strategic, Coordinated Approach to Violence Prevention Programming for Children and Youth in Calgary: Resources,* which can be found on Shift's website (www.preventdomesticviolence.ca).
[4] The funders were interviewed together, as were three consultants hired by Shift. Everyone else was interviewed separately.

in length from 25 minutes to 1.5 hours, with most lasting about 45 minutes. The consultant took careful notes during the interviews, capturing verbatim quotes where possible. Written notes were then coded, and coded blocks of narrative were grouped into larger themes.

2.2 Document Review

The document review included over 200 documents associated with the project, including: meeting agendas, minutes, PowerPoint presentations, attendance records, work plans, budgets, funding proposals, ethics submissions, contact lists, research reports, and Shift monthly summaries. In addition to these documents, other sources of documentation (e.g., email strings, consultant's notes) were solicited from the Brenda Strafford Chair and two of the consultants who were associated with the project. The documentation was reviewed with the purpose of 1) understanding timelines, 2) identifying key developments/changes of direction in the project, 3) identifying gaps, issues or challenges. The document review also provided a way of verifying and/or contextualizing stakeholder comments.

The evaluator also spent considerable time asking questions and checking/re-checking information with Shift consultants via telephone and/or interviewees by email.

This research project was approved by the University of Calgary's Research Ethics Board.

3.0 Project Overview and Key Developments

The VPP project was divided into three phases: research, framework development and implementation. Each of these phases is described briefly below, with a list of key developments drawn from the document review.

3.1 Phase One: Research (May 2012-May 2013)

The initiative formally began in May 2012 with a meeting of community service providers, school board representatives and funders that was convened by Shift, the UWCA, and FCSS. At that meeting, the group agreed to start the process of developing a more strategic approach to violence prevention programming for children and youth, and determined that an environmental scan and best practice research was required to build a foundation for the initiative. Thus, Phase One centred on building an evidence base for the initiative.
Key developments in this phase included:

- **Program Scan & Best Practice Review** –Two key research projects were undertaken during Phase One. The first was a mapping of school-based violence prevention programs in Calgary. Shift consultants identified a total of 24 programs (delivered by a total of 14 agencies), and mapped them by age, geography and program content to identify potential gaps and/or areas of overlap. The consultants also conducted a review of the literature to identify nine evidence-based principles that could serve as a guide

for the development and implementation of effective violence prevention programming. Findings from both the scan and the best practice review were presented to VPP stakeholders in January 2013, and summarized in a report entitled *Violence Prevention Programming for Children and Youth in Calgary.*[5]

- **Working Group Established–** Participants were asked to indicate whether they wished to serve as a working group member to help develop a framework to guide a coordinated and strategic approach for programming across Calgary. A total of 17 stakeholders responded to the initial request. In practice, however, the Working Group was fairly small, with only two agency representatives involved (one from Calgary Sexual Health and one from Hull Services) in addition to the funders (UWCA and FCSS) and Shift.

3.2 Phase Two: Framework Development (June 2013-May 2014)

Phase Two of the project focused on the development of the VPP framework. Entitled *Strategic, Coordinated Approach to Violence Prevention Programming for Children and Youth in Calgary,* the framework was intended to be developed through a collaborative process involving facilitated working group sessions. On September 20th, 2013, an email was sent out to stakeholders asking for their feedback on the definitions that would be used in the Framework. However, none of the VPP members responded to this request. A month later, the Working Group discussed the lack of response by the larger group and made the decision to forego collaborative development of the Framework. While the group acknowledged the implications this might have for ownership and buy-in, they felt that it was the best way to move things forward.

Key developments in this phase included:

- **Framework Completed –** The Framework was completed and presented to the Working Group, who signed off on it on November 8, 2013. The Framework (Appendix C) identified three areas for action: 1) Systems and Policy Change; 2) Enhanced Capacity of School Delivery; and 3) Enhanced Capacity of Community Delivery.

- **Decision to Focus on School-Based Delivery** – At the same meeting, the Working Group decided to focus on one action area – enhancing school-based delivery – because they felt it would *"offer a combination of quick wins, manageable focus but with opportunities for advocacy and policy work."*[6]

- **Framework Presented to Large Group –** On January 27, 2014, the *Framework for Action* was presented to the large group[7] of stakeholders. The action area that had been

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[5] A PDF version of this report can be accessed at: http://preventdomesticviolence.ca/research/violence-prevention-programming-children-and-youth-calgary

[6] *VPP Meeting Notes, November 8, 2014,* p. 1.

[7] This refers to full roster of agencies, school boards and funders who were invited to participate in the project.

selected for implementation (Enhanced Capacity of School Delivery) was expanded to include the following four components:

- o Enhancement of evidence-based practice (EBP)
- o Coordination between NFP [not for profit] service providers
- o System coordination between funders, school and NFP service providers
- o Policy and Legislative changes that support violence prevention and healthy relationships programming[8]

Outcomes for each of these areas were also presented (Appendix C[9]). In addition to a presentation of the Framework, the group was briefed on the Education Act and the redesign of the Alberta curriculum by a representative from Alberta Education. The notes from the January 2014 meeting show that two key priorities were decided upon by the group: *1) "Coordination between community-based organizations (us);" 2) "Understanding Alberta Education and their priorities and strategies to see how the group can inform policy and curriculum design."*

3.3 Phase Three: Implementation (June 2014- March 2015)

The final phase of the project was intended to focus on implementation of the Framework. A number of products were developed by the Shift consultants during this phase, including two checklists – one for schools and one for community organizations. Capacity building workshops were also offered during this time. Despite these efforts, the project experienced declining engagement on the part of stakeholders during this phase.

Key developments in this phase included:

- **Leadership Changes** – The group had decided that a coordinator was needed for Phase Three of the project. Brian Hansen stepped into this role in June 2014, with Caroline Claussen (a Shift consultant) advising him. While Lana Wells continued to direct some of the decisions, she stepped back from playing a more central role in the VPP project once the Coordinator was in place, so was not as visible during this phase.

- **Development of Resources** – A number of resources were developed during this phase, including:

  - o A checklist to guide educators in selecting VPP programs for their schools

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[8] *January 27, 2013 PowerPoint Presentation,* Slide 9*.*
[9] Note: A more fully developed Framework (as shown in Appendix B) was presented to the Working Group on January 7th. This version included Activities/Tasks. For reasons not documented, the version that was presented to the larger stakeholder group had only Outcomes and not activities or suggested strategies for achieving those outcomes. There is no indication that the group ever saw the full Framework. Nor was it put into a document that they could reference. (The Framework was only captured in a PowerPoint presentation).

- A checklist to guide community-based agencies that deliver VPP programs in determining what schools would be a good fit for their programs
- A geographic mapping of school-based violence prevention and healthy relationship programs currently operating in Calgary
- An online compendium of violence prevention and healthy relationship programs for schools

- **Capacity Building Efforts** – In Fall 2014, two training sessions were offered to the group: Heathy Relationships Training Module (HRTM) and Healthy Relationships Plus Program (HRPP). Four agencies involved in the VPP project sent staff: Hull Services, YWCA, CSSD, Calgary Sexual Health. (The training was also made available to agencies who were not associated with the VPP project). A third 'training' on program design was offered in February 2015 and received positive feedback.

- **Declining Engagement** – In Phase Three, attendance at the large group meetings began to decline, ranging from a high of 21 in June 2014 to a low of eight in March 2015. A meeting that had been scheduled for December 2014 had to be cancelled because only four people had RSVP'd.

- **World Café** – One of the more successful meetings during this phase was a World Café that was hosted in January 2015. After having to cancel the session in December, the January meeting attracted 14 participants and received positive feedback. The session focused on four questions: *1) In an ideal world, what would coordination look like? 2) Who is left out in the current landscape of programming? 3) What would agencies and schools require to engage in coordination? 4) What concerns do you have around coordination?*[10]

- **Decision to End the Project** – In Spring 2015, during a telephone conversation between the Brenda Strafford Chair and the United Way funder, a decision was made to end the VPP project based on lack of momentum dwindling engagement, and shifting priorities. The decision was announced at the final VPP meeting on March 24, 2015.

- **Evaluation** – In May 2015, representatives from Shift and the United Way agreed that the remaining funds left in the project would go to support an evaluation to highlight successes and challenges and to inform recommendations for next steps.

4.0 Findings from the Interviews

Twelve members of the VPP initiative were interviewed for this evaluation. Stakeholders were asked to offer their perspectives on the highlights and challenges associated with the VPP project, as well as the value/impact of the project, and offer suggestions for next steps. Their responses are briefly outlined that follow.

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[10] *World Café Group Meeting Notes, January 21st, 2015.*

4.1 Highlights and Successes

Many of the stakeholders felt that the VPP research and resources were the biggest successes arising from with the project. Specifically, they pointed to the mapping of VPP programs, identification of best practices, and the development of the Framework, School Checklist, and Non-Profit Checklist as highlights of the project. (However, they also noted that none of these tools have been disseminated or used yet, and some expressed concerns that these resources will just *"sit on a shelf somewhere."*)

> *The Framework was valuable because it really intentionally broke down different entry points to collaboration in a staggered approach to coordination of the work. One directed at policy (which we agreed wouldn't be taken on), one on promising practices/best practices – increasing capacity of VPP workers, working with education system – it all made good rational sense. … It all flowed. It's a fabulous thing. But my fear is it's going to sit on a shelf.*

Several stakeholders also reported that the initiative had increased their understanding of evidence-based practice related to VPP, structural issues (e.g., funding, the ways that Calgary schools make decisions), and existing service gaps in Calgary.

> *We had very important conversations at the beginning. How can we better serve children grades one to 12 with all the great programs we do? One school having 24 programs and others having nothing isn't right. It's not based on anything except perceived need.*

> *So much was learned from each of the research people …. Great conversations. Great relationships.*

> *It really developed my understanding of the problems – including the structural and funding problems. We treat programs like an open vat to be filled.*

4.2 Challenges & Barriers

Interviewees were asked to identify key challenges or barriers associated with the initiative. They identified six interconnected challenges, including issues related to: process, motivation, engagement, pace/momentum, leadership, and membership.

4.2.1 Process

Some stakeholders felt that the types of processes that are required for this type of initiative were not attended to carefully enough, particularly processes related to establishing a shared agenda, and developing collective/transparent decision-making processes. Several also felt that more effort could have been invested in developing trust and building relationships.

I think there has to be a real common 'Why are we here'? What is it that we really truly want to do?

There was all kinds of stuff that happened in between meetings. I know there's a balance between having a collaborative or committees and moving forward, but you also have to balance it with keeping inclusion.

[Y]ou have to build relationships. We didn't do that.

4.2.2 Motivation/Lack of Readiness

Almost all of the stakeholders interviewed identified lack of motivation on the part of participants as a key challenge in this initiative. A few pointed out that, for many agencies, the initial motivation for engaging in the initiative was likely associated with fears related to funding – and when it became clear that changes to funding were not imminent, their motivation may have dissipated. For this reason, several stakeholders felt that there needed to be an external *"driver of change"* – a *"carrot"* or *"stick"* in the form of demands or incentives from funders and/or school boards.

The initial interest probably came out of fear that they could lose funding …that they could lose opportunities if they were not at the table. Once they saw there was no teeth, no big stick moving people along, they [lost interest].

I think it comes back to the old thing around collaboration and people sticking to what they do and really just wanting to focus on what they do. And no one wants to make changes that way they just want to continue to get funding and not have to work together.

A learning is that without readiness it goes nowhere. You need some driver for change. Sitting at a table isn't the same thing as being engaged in a change process.

4.2.3 Engagement

Stakeholders said that, while there was excitement about the project in the early stages, enthusiasm began to wane in Phase Two, when participants seemed unmotivated to take on framework development and/or respond to emailed requests. As the consultants began taking on more and more of the work, participants became increasingly disengaged. Stakeholders reported that halfway through Phase Three, attendance began to decline and agencies began sending fewer senior representatives.

A factor that was likely both a cause and an effect of disengagement was the high level of turnover among the group. Several interviewees noted that relationship-building is critical to an initiative that is focused on enhancing coordination, and this was challenging because of the

inconsistency among members. They also noted that the time spent during the meetings orienting new members was *"painful for those who had gone consistently."*

> *So much turnover – so agencies would send someone and a lot of time was spent updating folks.*

> *In the last nine months, every time we got together there were so many new people. We'd lose half an hour doing an overview of what had been done.*

> *Participants became quite passive. They'd get an overview, get an update from the consultants, then ask a couple of questions – that was it.*

4.2.4 Pace/Momentum

Pace was another challenge that was cited repeatedly by participants. They tended to attribute the lack of momentum to three key factors: 1) Long lag times between meetings, 2) Lack of *"quick wins"* or *"actions"* early in the process, 3) Scope (i.e., they wondered if the scope of the initiative was simply too large for actionable pathways to be developed).

> *There were huge gaps between meetings.*

> *I wanted more action. We get asked to sit on a lot of committees. We don't have time to sit on a committee where things aren't really happening – we don't have the resources for that.*

> *The biggest struggle was that we didn't <u>do</u> things. We always talked about doing stuff but we never did. [Interviewer: Why?] So many reasons – lack of engagement. We'd say 'Here's some ideas' and we'd get push back. Trying to get buy-in was hard. We had a good working group, but we'd land on a direction and then talk about other things and end up somewhere else.*

4.2.5 Leadership

While this was intended to be a community-led initiative, most participants felt that the leadership for this project came from Shift. Interviewees noted that it is helpful for a project like this to have a *"neutral"* body to convene agencies – one with *"the ability to bring resources and research to the table."* Many were appreciative of the efforts Shift made in bringing agencies together and providing research support. They also commented on the capacity of the Brenda Strafford Chair, Lana Wells, to initiate change and inspire commitment. For a variety of reasons, however, Lana stepped back somewhat in Phase Three of the project. Leadership of the initiative was given over to the co-chairs and the consultants. This seemed to create some confusion in participants about the priority of the initiative. It may have also undermined the collective confidence around creating wide-spread change.

…in something like this you need a visionary leader to help inspire people to keep going. People have a trusted relationship with Lana – when she exited, I think it was less clear about the priority of the work. Maybe it did lack a bit of leadership.
It wasn't the funders bringing folks together, it was Shift. And … at a certain point, that lack of presence was felt.

While many of the comments around leadership focused on Shift, some interviewees questioned the role that the funders took in this project. The representatives from UWCA and FCSS had decided to engage as *"equal partners,"* and avoid unduly influencing the direction of the group or forcing their hand in any way. While participants could appreciate the rationale for a more *"passive"* role, several felt that it contributed to the lack of momentum and mistrust.

I think the funders could have moved it forward. They made the decision to just be participants – just be there, no power role. If they had said 'Our expectations are these three deliverables…' then maybe. But they were passive. And it makes people suspicious. They think 'They're observing me.' You're kind of screwed either way…

4.2.6 Membership

The final set of challenges raised by stakeholders related to the membership of the VPP group , particularly in the context of having a range of people in the group (*"We had program staff, we had EDs of shelters, and everything in between…"*) and a *"lack of decision makers at the table."* Interestingly, the attendance records that are available indicate that those who attended were often in senior management positions. However, this may have been a reference to school board representatives. Stakeholders noted that programming decisions within education are decentralized, with school principals/teachers rather than District-level staff making the decisions. The school board representatives who participated in VPP were neither senior enough to influence board policy, nor grassroots enough to affect school decisions.

Schools are so principal-driven. So having a system person there doesn't make that much of a difference. If we had a principal who was keen to try whole school approach maybe but…

We had some people from the school board who support this work, but no one who sets policy, strategic direction, no one with a mandate to make this a priority.

The school system was represented but not the level at which programming decisions are made – so what's the purpose of engaging them?

4.3 Perceived Value and Impact

Most of the stakeholders who were interviewed for this evaluation saw value in this initiative. However, the value they saw was largely associated with the *potential* of the project rather than with what had actually been achieved. Based on stakeholder comments, the biggest impact seemed to be to the level of knowledge and awareness among those who participated. Interviewees reported that the VPP project helped to increase stakeholder understanding of:

- Evidence-based practice
- Geographic distribution of programs
- Program offerings *("what others are doing")*
- Programming gaps (e.g., programs for grade 10-12)

A couple of stakeholders spoke to the potential of their practices or programs to change in the future as a result of this initiative. Funders, for example, saw the potential of this initiative to influence funding practices and the kinds of questions they ask; and agencies said that they expect to use what they've learned through the initiative to inform future program development.

> *I know it will impact our programs [in schools]. The binders – those will be helpful.*
> *It helps us as funders to think about how we fund these programs. [...] I think we'd ask more questions – look at it more closely in terms of how long are you in the school, is this a one-time thing?*

A couple of interviewees said they had checked their programs against the best practices identified in the Literature Review, but changes did not ensue because *"our programs were already based on evidence."*

Notably, stakeholders did not see any evidence that the process had had any impact on the intended outcome of the initiative – that is, enhanced coordination among and between agencies and school boards and/or equitable distribution of VPP programs.

4.4 Feedback on Next Steps

Stakeholders were asked for their ideas about next steps for the VPP project. For the most part, all felt that the initiative needed to transition in some way – that the status quo was not sustainable.

> *I think trying to reinvigour[ate] the VPP group is not a good use of anyone's resources. Maybe we can get traction for implementation of the FW but maybe under a different body or structure.*

At the same time, several interviewees shared concerns that the work that was done would be lost or *"go by the wayside."* They wanted to ensure that *"Shift doesn't pack it away in a box and file it in the basement…"*

> *It feels like a lot of work was done and we have a Framework sitting there waiting to be implemented. …Without that presence or someone to initiate I don't think it will be implemented – which is sad.*

> *Maybe it's just a pause instead of a stop. Maybe once we get something going on a different level, maybe we can get this going again. Because it has to happen.*

When asked for their suggestions for ways that this project could transition or move forward, interviewees suggested the following:

1. **Work with schools rather than non-profits:** Several stakeholders suggested that schools might be a more promising starting point than non-profits. By helping schools to understand and insist on programming that accords with evidence-based principles, we might create the kind of demand that would motivate service providers to make changes.

2. **Work to develop VPP as a priority at the provincial level:** Some stakeholders felt that a provincial mandate or vision for VPP was needed before change would happen at the grassroots level. A couple suggested working with The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities to support them to take this on provincially; others wondered if there might be opportunities to promote change at the Ministry level now that a new government is in place.

3. **Support a small pilot:** Some stakeholders wondered if *"we started too big,"* and said that a more targeted approach might help to the project to gain traction. To this end, they suggested piloting coordination efforts with just a few agencies in a limited geographic area or a set number of schools.

4. **Use funding incentives to drive change:** Some interviewees felt that the funders should lead this initiative, and use funding to incentivize non-profits to enhance their programming options and work with others to achieve more equitable distribution.

5. **Write up the learnings and share them broadly:** A couple of stakeholders noted that some valuable learnings emerged from this project. They felt these should be shared through conferences and publications.

5.0 Discussion

The need for enhanced coordination among service providers delivering violence prevention programming is something that has been recognized in Calgary for at least a decade. However, efforts to move in this direction have consistently stalled. Understanding why this sector has been unable to move forward on this universally recognized priority is critical so that future efforts can build on what we have learned. This evaluation points to some key design factors that may have contributed to an inability to gain traction.

First, the true nature of the effort might not have been understood. In this initiative, 'coordination' seemed to be framed as largely an administrative problem – i.e., if we just identify the gaps and build a common outcomes framework, agencies will align themselves accordingly. Consequently, mapping and research efforts focused on *programs,* not on *players* or system dynamics.[11] For these types of initiatives to be successful, considerable groundwork is required to map out relationships, influences, supply and demand dynamics, barriers, pockets of resistance, school system dynamics/constraints, funding dynamics/constraints, organizational dynamics/constraints – i.e., all the dynamics that contribute to programs being delivered in the way that they are. The programs are simply an *output* of these dynamics. For this reason, a programs mapping cannot offer much information about how the current situation came to be or what it would take to change it. Furthermore, coordination of this type involves a significant level of change. Rather than framing it as an administrative issue, then, it might be more helpful to frame coordination efforts in the context of change management.[12] Change management recognizes that one can have the best tools (e.g., Frameworks, checklists, mappings), but unless the '*people* side of change' is supported, uptake is unlikely. Future efforts to coordinate the sector might therefore consider drawing on the tools that have been developed in the Change Management field and/or contract a change management consultant. At a minimum, future efforts should seek to assess readiness, identify pockets of resistance, cultivate ownership and motivation, and surface/address barriers to change.

This also has implications for the time and effort involved. Orchestrating change of this magnitude requires intensive work both with the larger group and one-on-one with individual agencies. This project may have stalled because meetings were infrequent (e.g., in 2013, the large group met only once) and largely involved one-way communication (e.g., presentations) rather than the kind of facilitation that helps to build mutual understanding, trust and relationships. It also lacked the type of intensive behind-the-scenes work that is associated with successful collective learning efforts. Etienne Wagner, one of the leading experts on

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[11] The idea of Stakeholder Mapping was discussed and appears on one of the Working Group agendas, but the idea was not pursued because it was perceived by the group to be too research-oriented.

[12] Change management is *"the application of a structured process and set of tools for leading the people side of change to achieve a desired outcome."* http://www.prosci.com/change-management/definition/

communities of practice (COPs)[13] points out that mutual learning communities can easily flounder unless there is sufficient "back-channel work, one-to-one meetings, and check-ins…. Most of the work for maintaining a successful COP is in the background."[14] This type of work requires committed leadership – a person or group that can devote sufficient energy and attention to building processes that are compelling, anticipatory, responsive and productive. As a couple of Shift consultants pointed out, this project could have been a full-time job. The time demands associated with this type of work should be more realistically calculated going forward.

Collective ownership of this process is also critical – and this emerged as a significant challenge in the VPP initiative. While there seemed to be some excitement around the project in Phase One, engagement waned significantly in Phase Two when, for example, agencies were unresponsive to requests to review definitions or help build the framework. In response, the Working Group suggested that the consultants build the framework themselves, without the involvement of the community. While this may have provided a sense of momentum in the short term, it may have also contributed to the growing lack of group ownership and responsibility. An alternative might have been to meet one-on-one with members to understand why they were so disengaged. Two types of information might have come from this process: 1) Shift and the Working Group might have gained insight into some of the issues and barriers, and responded by restructuring the process accordingly, or 2) They might have learned that there really was no readiness for this type of initiative and determined early on that the project should not have gone forward at that time. Both types of information are extremely valuable, and would have helped to avoid the pattern that emerged (i.e., where the consultants spent considerable time investing in the development of products that the community didn't really want, and became increasingly frustrated when they couldn't gain traction).

Another factor that likely contributed to a lack of momentum was the absence of a 'carrot' or 'stick.' At the outset of this project, the funders made an intentional choice to avoid creating any incentives or pressures related to participation in this project. They had hoped that intrinsic motivation based on the need to improve services and address gaps would be sufficient. However, agencies were not initially invited to the project on the basis of a self-identified need for change; they were invited to participate because something in their environment was changing (i.e., Fourth R was being scaled up in schools across Alberta), and they needed to understand the implications for their programs. Thus the initial reason for participating wasn't necessarily a desire to achieve greater coordination – and, in the absence of this type of intrinsic motivation, agencies may have needed incentives/funder requirements to stay

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[13] While this was not formally deemed a community of practice, it shares many of the same goals as practice change (alignment with best practices) and capacity building were key objectives for this initiative. The lessons learned from communities of practice are therefore applicable here.
[14] Drawn from an interview conducted by the evaluator with Etienne Wagner on February 3, 2015.

engaged. This speaks to the need to carefully assess readiness and understand the actual (vs. stated) reason for participation.

6.0 Recommendations

The following five recommendations for next steps are based on findings arising from the evaluation.

1. **Develop a dissemination plan for existing resources**
   A number of resources were developed through VPP but never disseminated. To honour the work that was done and get as much value as possible out of the project, dissemination plans should be developed and implemented for these resources. This could include the following:

   - *Online Binder of Programs* - At a minimum, the online compendium should be posted on Shift's website and sent to VPP stakeholders and Calgary schools. Budget permitting, a strategy should be developed for: 1) Keeping the Binders up-to-date[15], and 2) Gauging whether and how the binders are being used (as there's no point updating the Binders if they are not used).

   - *Non-Profit Checklist* – Ideally, the checklist should be piloted and revised accordingly. If there is no appetite for this, then it should at least be distributed to VPP stakeholders and posted on Shift's website.

   - *The Framework* –Currently, the full version of the Framework exists only in PowerPoint form, and is therefore likely to be forgotten. In order to aid future efforts to coordinate violence prevention programming, the Framework should be put into a document and posted on Shift's website. This format will also allow it to be more easily shared with other jurisdictions that are doing this type of work.

2. **Explore transition options**
   The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities has been conducting similar work at a provincial level. Shift/UWCA should consider meeting with Safe and Caring to determine whether there are any parts of the Calgary VPP project that could be taken up at the provincial level. If resources such as the Framework could find a champion at the provincial level, the impact of the VPP Calgary could potentially be significant.

3. **Explore opportunities to impact school policy and curricula**
   Stakeholders felt that the most promising leverage point for shifting practice around VPP lies with schools and boards and/or the Ministry of Education. As this kind of work already aligns with Shift's Healthy Youth Relationships Strategy, transitioning VPP efforts to this

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[15] This could be as simple as sending the link to all VPP organizations once a year with a reminder for them to update their program offering as needed.

type of work may provide a way of extending the work that was done with agencies. VPP agencies could receive updates from Shift about their efforts in this area.

4. **Conduct a small pilot**
    During the interviews, some of the more engaged members of VPP expressed interest in piloting coordination efforts in one or two schools. This might offer a tangible and meaningful way to understand the processes associated with coordination. If the pilot were supported with developmental evaluation, then the learnings from the pilot could serve as a starting point for a larger, sector-wide effort. (Note: Given its focus on policy and systems work rather than implementation, Shift should not lead this effort. Therefore, if this recommendation is to be implemented, some thought would need to be given to how to structure and support a multi-agency pilot).

5. **Provide proper closure to this stage of the project**
    General consensus among the stakeholders that were interviewed is that the VPP project should not be continued in its current state. Closure of the project should be conducted in a careful and deliberate way to ensure that 1) The reasons for closing the project are clearly communicated, 2) Stakeholders have an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback, 3) Next steps are agreed upon by the group. Ideally, this should take the form of an in-person meeting. Highlights from this evaluation should be shared so that stakeholders understand the level of care that was taken in reaching this decision.

7.0 Conclusion

Large-scale coordination efforts are challenging, and require significant resources, time, and readiness to implement effectively. The VPP initiative lost momentum, and stakeholders generally agreed that the project should not continue in its current form. However, a number of promising resources were developed through this initiative and can serve as a legacy for this project provided that they are effectively disseminated. The learnings that accrued around relationship-building, community ownership and change management through this initiative also serve as a potential legacy, as they may have application for other sector-wide coordination initiatives.

Appendices

Appendix A: List of VPP Stakeholders

Note: The list below was taken from the master list of contacts and comprises anyone who had any association with the initiative. Many of these people might have attended only one meeting.

Richard Campbell	Antyx Community Arts
Ella Pringle	Awo Taan
Marie Boryxsky	Awo Taan
Isabelle Korpela	Calgary Bridge Foundation
Danielle Aubry	Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse
Haley Scott	Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse
Caroline Frew	Calgary Family Services
Jenna Miller	Calgary Family Services
Rekha Gadhia	Calgary Immigrant Women's Association
Diana Wark	Calgary Sexual Health Centre
Pam Krause	Calgary Sexual Health Centre
Anita Harder	Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter
Gill Weaver-Dunlop	Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter
Lissa Samantaraya-Shivji	Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter
Minh Le	Catholic Family Service
Vic Lantion	Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary
Simon Ross	Ghost River Rediscovery
Kathleen Hagan	Hull Family Services
Susan Gibson	Hull Family Services
Jassima Al Mosawi	Immigrant Services Calgary
Darlene Petrie	McMan Family Services
Nicole Nash	McMan Family Services
Wanda Hennigas	McMan Family Services
Tegan Vandershee	Red Cross
Sameera Qureshi	Renfrew Educational Services
Rhonda Kent	YWCA
Heather Cobb	AHS
Kim Campbell	Alberta Education
Laureen Lailey	Alberta Education
Helen McKinnon	Calgary Catholic School District
Janice Popp	Calgary and Area RCSD
Marybeth Mulligan	Calgary Catholic School District
Thomas Hickey	Calgary Catholic School District

Corinne Ofstie	Calgary Domestic Violence Collective
Heather Harden	Calgary Domestic Violence Collective
Dianne Roulson	CBE
Ken Der	CBE
Nadeen Halls	CBE
Sue Stretton	CBE
Karen Sadler	CPS
Susan Westenberger	CPS
Amy Alexander	FCSS
Rietta Lau	University of Calgary
Karen McCullagh	Boys and Girls Club of Canada
Tracey Pickup	Practicum Student, Shift

Appendix B: Interview Guide

1. Tell me about a bit about your involvement with the VPP initiative. How would you characterize your experience?
2. Were you fairly actively involved in the VPP initiative (e.g., attended most meetings)?
    a. If yes, what kept you involved?
    b. If no, why was your involvement limited?
3. What were some of the highlights of the initiative for you?
    a. What worked well?
4. What were some of the challenges?
5. How would you characterize Shift's role in the project?
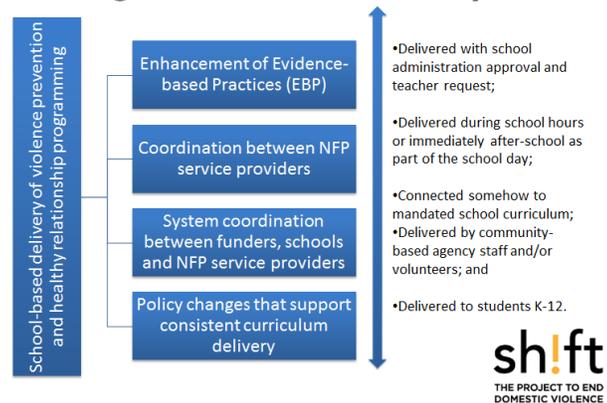   a. In what ways (if any) was Shift helpful?
    b. Do you have suggestions for how Shift could have been more helpful?
6. What changes (if any) have you observed that you think may be attributed to this initiative? Prompt for changes to:
    a. knowledge and awareness
    b. practice
    c. number of programs available
    d. quality of programs
    e. distribution of VPP/HR programming
    f. coordination
    g. funding
    h. public/organizational policy
    i. stakeholder relationships
7. Did the initiative produce any unintended or negative outcomes?
8. The initiative resulted in the development of a strategic framework. Do you think the framework is helpful? (Why/why not?)
    a. Do you see evidence that it's being used? (If so, how?)
9. Do you think there is value in this initiative? (Why/why not?)
10. What (if anything) did you learn through your involvement with this initiative?
11. This type of initiative is not new in Calgary. RESOLVE initiated this work over a decade ago, but the project lost momentum. This project has also begun to lose momentum. Why do you think it's difficult to sustain something like this?
    a. What would you need to keep you around the table?
    b. What would it take to make this project successful?
12. What do you think should happen with this project now?
13. Do you have anything else to add?

Appendix C: VPP Framework

Framework for Action

Violence prevention & Healthy Relationship Programming, practices and policies

- Systems and Policy change
- Enhanced capacity of school delivery
- Enhanced capacity of community delivery

Strategies
- Monitoring & Evaluation
- Research
- Partnerships
- Coordination

Resources
- Human
- Technical
- Financial
- Organizational
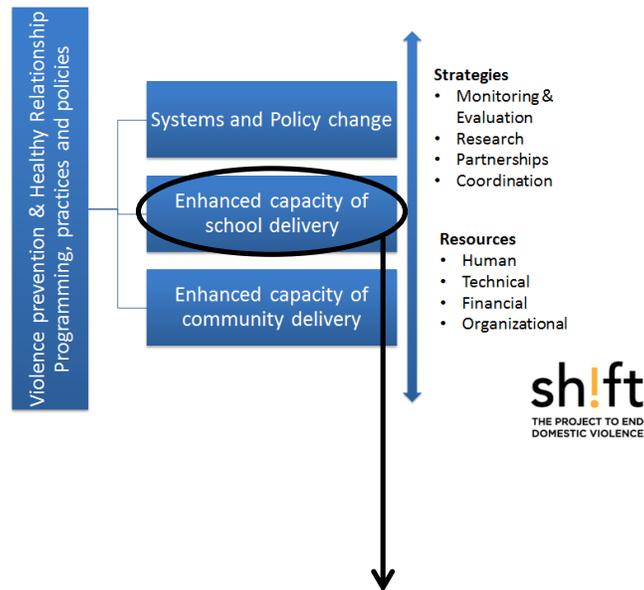
Framework for Implementation: Enhancing School-based Delivery

School-based delivery of violence prevention and healthy relationship programming

- Enhancement of Evidence-based Practices (EBP)
- Coordination between NFP service providers
- System coordination between funders, schools and NFP service providers
- Policy changes that support consistent curriculum delivery

- Delivered with school administration approval and teacher request;
- Delivered during school hours or immediately after-school as part of the school day;
- Connected somehow to mandated school curriculum;
- Delivered by community-based agency staff and/or volunteers; and
- Delivered to students K-12.

1. Enhancement of Evidence-Based Practice

Outcome
- School stakeholders have the knowledge they need to make informed choices about effective HR & VP programming.
- NFPs service providers deliver programs based on evidence-informed principles
- Funders support investment in evidence-informed HR & VP programs and services

Stakeholders
- Teachers, principals/administrators, NFP service providers, funders, researchers

Activity/Tasks
- Stakeholder analysis
- Collate available resources available evidence-informed resources (example Best Practice Portal at Public Health Agency or PrevNet)
- Develop a user-guide for assessing evidence-informed programs and services
- Support capacity in refining programs to reflect evidence-informed principles
- Collect and gather research-related initiatives related to VP and HR
programs and resources (e.g., Social-emotional, brain development

2. Coordination between NFP service providers

Outcome
- Increased group understanding of what is offered in the community
- Increased trust and buy-in facilitate open and transparent conversations about the relevance, process and outcomes of coordination between providers
- The equal distribution (to the proportion of needs) of HR & VP programs both geographically, demographically, and throughout grade levels.

Stakeholders
- NFP service providers, funders

Activity/Tasks
- Stakeholder analysis
- Facilitated conversations
- Sector-wide planning forums

Outcome: System Coordination of Schools, Funders and NFP Service Providers

Outcome
- Schools understand the need for a developmental approach to VP and HR programs and resources

- Processes are in place for appropriate depth and breadth of VP and HR programs and resources

Stakeholders
- School administration, non-profit organizations providing VP and HR programming within schools and funders

Activity/Tasks
- Planning forums for processes to allocate VP & HR resources
- Coordination of the delivery of programs across the school system based on an understanding of student population and need
- Hosting research-focused meetings with key decision makers to increase strategic decision-making on VP and HR programs and resources

3. System Coordination of Schools, Funders and NFP Service Providers

Outcome
- Schools understand the need for a developmental approach to VP and HR programs and resources
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Stakeholders
- School administration, non-profit organizations providing VP and HR programming within schools and funders

Activity/Tasks
- Planning forums for processes to allocate VP & HR resources
- Coordination of the delivery of programs across the school system based on an understanding of student population and need
- Hosting research-focused meetings with key decision makers to increase strategic decision-making on VP and HR programs and resources

4. Policy Changes to Support VP and HR Delivery

Outcome
- School boards develop comprehensive policies and practices to support VP and HR programs and resources
- Provincial policies that impact VP and HR programs are identified and enhanced
- Enhanced alignment between provincial departments and ministries to support VP and HR programs and resources

Stakeholders

- School boards, Government of Alberta (GOA) Ministries, Researchers, and other relevant provincial stakeholders (e.g., Alberta Health)

Activity/Tasks

- Review relevant provincial policies and craft recommendations for GOA and school boards as a result of findings
- Collect and capture relevant ministry initiatives that impact VP and HR programs and resources
- Host stakeholder sessions to review policy findings