

PROGRAM EVALUATION OF SHELTER MOVERS: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Ongoing program evaluation activities can help to improve stakeholder experiences, better manage resources, inform decision making, and provide evidence of success. To date, evaluation activities within Shelter Movers (SM) have been limited to short-term contracts or contained special projects with volunteers, without consistent approaches or longer-term planning. Throughout 2021, Alyssa Kelly – an independent evaluation consultant and PhD candidate in Health Policy, Management & Evaluation – led the first comprehensive program evaluation.

Responses to seven evaluation questions were informed by 15 primary and secondary data sources collected between September 2019 and December 2021 by four SM teams and three external consultant groups. A mixed-methods approach was used to integrate, analyze, and interpret the quantitative and qualitative data sources in an insightful way, by contextualizing numerical findings within the subjective experiences of SM staff, volunteers, referral agency workers, and clients. This work was guided by evidence-based tools and frameworks prevalent in the fields of implementation science, sustainability, and health services evaluation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings from the seven evaluation questions informed the development of 15 recommendations with a total of 48 sub-recommendations, outlined below. The full report describes each sub-recommendation, notes alignment with the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, and offers suggestions about who within SM might take the lead on implementing the recommendation.

SECTION A: RECOMMENDATIONS RE: EXTERNAL SUPPORT & PARTNERSHIPS

1. STRENGTHEN NETWORK WITH EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS TO GARNER ADDITIONAL SUPPORT
 - a. Establish a chapter-level role committed to developing and nurturing relationships in the community
 - b. Identify key players and organizations from the GBV/VAW sector at the local, provincial, and national levels and schedule meetings to discuss potential partnerships, opportunities for collaboration, and how to better integrate SM into the sector.
 - c. Commit to improving relationships with local security and police services.
2. COMMIT TO KNOWING AND PRIORITIZING CLIENT NEEDS & RESOURCES TO IMPROVE CLIENT EXPERIENCES
 - a. Conduct a root cause analysis to understand barriers to providing timely support and explore opportunities for improvement.
 - b. Collect and monitor feedback from clients and referral agency workers on an ongoing basis and disseminate key findings with suggested approaches for addressing common concerns.
 - c. Identify and secure the additional resources necessary to adequately support existing chapters.
 - d. Look to other sectors for innovative methods to complement and strengthen existing supports such as government funding available to cover the moving costs of eligible survivors.
3. IMPROVE PUBLIC REPORTING AND TRANSPARENCY TO BUILD TRUST AND DEMONSTRATE IMPACT
 - a. Ground marketing and communications in the 2022-2025 SM Strategic Plan to clearly convey the goals, successes, and necessity of SM to audiences like clients and referral agency workers, current and potential donors, and current and potential staff and volunteers.
 - b. Conduct a rigorous outcome evaluation to produce high-quality evidence about SM's successes and understand the societal value and longer-term impacts of SM.
4. ENSURE DECISIONS TO EXTEND/EXPAND REFLECT THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY AND SM AS AN ORGANIZATION
 - a. Revise the current Expansion Protocol to align with the realities of SM in 2022 and beyond.
 - b. Conduct a rigorous needs assessment to understand how SM can complement and strengthen community supports prior to committing to a chapter extension or expansion.

SECTION B: RECOMMENDATIONS RE: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & COMPONENTS

1. ESTABLISH ORGANIZATION-WIDE UNDERSTANDING OF SUCCESS AND COLLECTIVE IMPACT TO INCREASE MOTIVATION
 - a. Agree on the guiding principles that underly the goals of SM and use these principles to streamline transparent goal setting and decision making.
 - b. Integrate core components of the Collective Impact Framework into daily tasks, decision making, and public reporting to facilitate a sense of collective contribution and impact across SM.
 - c. Ensure goals at the chapter, functional, and organization level are *SMART* and clearly articulated to stakeholders internal and external to SM.
2. COMMIT TO BUILDING AN ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE THAT PRIORITIZES LEARNING AND FAILING FORWARD
 - a. Facilitate non-punitive opportunities for leaders to express their own shortcomings and need for team members' assistance and input.
 - b. Increase opportunities for team members to feel that they are essential, valued, and knowledgeable partners, and feel psychologically safe to seek support and try new methods.
 - c. Provide sufficient time and space for reflective thinking and evaluation to encourage proactive planning and innovative brainstorming over reactive decision making and problem solving.
3. INCREASE TRANSPARENCY OF COMMUNICATION AND DECISION-MAKING TO BUILD TRUST AND FACILITATE MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS
 - a. Clarify and articulate the responsibilities of core positions across SM in terms of communication pathways, reporting structures, collaborative relationships, and areas of decision-making.
 - b. Identify opportunities for shared decision making to ensure a diversity of perspectives are considered and formalize a decision-making process that outlines the key stakeholders responsible for various types of decisions.
4. ADDRESS HUMAN RESOURCES GAPS NECESSARY FOR ACHIEVING GOALS
 - a. Assess the current organizational structure to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats specific to staffing and human resources.
 - b. Establish a national-level leadership role dedicated to supporting chapter development and organizational growth.
 - c. Establish a national-level leadership role dedicated to leading ongoing evaluation & reporting activities for continuous improvement and to meet the needs and expectations of stakeholders including SM staff, volunteers, clients, referral agency workers, and donors.
5. IMPROVE ABILITY FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS TO SUCCESSFULLY PERFORM THEIR ROLES
 - a. Review paid and volunteer role descriptions across the organization and examine the extent to which individuals holding the roles are equipped to carry out the tasks expected of them.
 - b. Enhance guidance and support for adapting processes.
 - c. Review and revise expectations pertaining to Fund Development at local and national levels.
 - d. Improve the move coordination process from the perspective of volunteer movers to ensure that the policies and procedures in place align with the realities and limitations of volunteers, demonstrate respect for volunteer contributions, and prioritize mental and physical wellbeing.
6. ADAPT COMMUNICATION PROCESSES TO HELP MANAGE EXPECTATIONS AND IMPROVE EXPERIENCES OF CLIENTS AND REFERRAL AGENCY WORKERS
 - a. Develop a handout for clients and referral agencies to showcase the key aspects of SM.
 - b. Proactively establish communication expectations with each referral agency worker during the intake process and share with the intake team and move coordination team.
 - c. Proactively establish communication expectations with each client during the introductory move coordination call and share with the move coordination team and intake team.
 - d. Review current processes for communicating with clients and referral agencies with a focus on quality, accessibility, and being trauma informed.

- e. Develop a secure database for sharing information about frequently visited shelters to streamline planning and minimize the number of questions asked to clients and referral agency workers.
 - f. Schedule a phone call with the client, move coordinator, and lead mover before the move.
 - g. Frequently remind clients and referral agency workers of the SM complaints process and invite them to report any incidents in the spirit of continuous improvement and ongoing learning.
7. STREAMLINE PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES SURROUNDING SM STORAGE TO IMPROVE CLIENT EXPERIENCES
- a. Develop brief handout for clients and referral agency workers explaining SM storage services.
 - b. Establish a standardized process for organizing storage units physically and electronically and provide targeted training to lead movers and operations team members.
 - c. Implement an electronic booking system to allow clients with belongings in SM storage to schedule times to visit the storage unit.
 - d. When storage capacity is available, increase awareness of the free storage services offered by SM.

SECTION C: RECOMMENDATIONS RE: INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY & COMPETENCIES

1. COMMIT TO RECRUITING, ENGAGING, AND RETAINING THE APPROPRIATE VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF FOR STRENGTHENING THE SUCCESS AND IMPACT OF SM
 - a. Develop and implement an explicit mandate to prioritize equity, diversity, and inclusion in recruitment efforts for staff and volunteers.
 - b. Revise the volunteer screening process to streamline the matching of applicants to available roles.
 - c. Monitor engagement, retention, and turnover of staff and volunteers on a regular basis.
2. ESTABLISH EXPECTED KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF
 - a. Develop and implement a series of brief, asynchronous, self-paced, virtual training modules that all staff and volunteers must complete either once or on a yearly basis, depending on the content.
 - b. Increase the breadth and depth of topics covered throughout the orientation session.
3. STRENGTHEN TRAINING OFFERINGS FOR INDIVIDUALS IN CLIENT-FACING ROLES
 - a. Mandate first aid, mental health first aid, and trauma-informed de-escalation training for lead movers.
 - b. Develop and offer an in-person session that movers and drivers must complete by a certain deadline to continue volunteering.
 - c. Evaluate training and orientation sessions regularly to assess if learning objectives are being met and revise as necessary.
4. STRENGTHEN PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFERINGS FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS
 - a. Facilitate opportunities for networking and skill-building that can be applied within and beyond SM.
 - b. Create a mentorship program where staff and volunteers who have been with SM for a certain length of time can volunteer to mentor others within the organization.
 - c. Increase the frequency of social activities that allow staff and volunteers to informally interact with each other, meet like-minded individuals beyond their team, and celebrate accomplishments

PRIORITY AREAS

This program evaluation produced an overwhelming abundance of rigorous findings and meaningful results. Many of the findings are interconnected so addressing a few key areas in a meaningful way should lead to exponential improvements. Suggested next steps for SM are to:

1. Define success
2. Clarify goals at the chapter, functional, and organizational levels
3. Fill organizational capacity gaps
4. Establish that SM is effective (i.e., informed by scientific knowledge and evidence-based guidelines)
5. Address concerns with the current Expansion Protocol before pursuing any expansions or extensions