

The Role of Cross-Community Networks in Enhancing Capacity for Systems Change in Housing First

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DIFFERENT TYPES OF NETWORKS TARGETING HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA

Cross-community networks:

Networks of individuals who hold similar roles but work in different organizations or jurisdictions

Other types of networks

- Online networks
- Multi-stakeholder community networks
- Multi-stakeholder regional network



CROSS - COMMUNITY NETWORK CASE STUDIES

Purpose:

- To examine how participating in a cross-community network influences capacity for implementing Housing First

Main Questions:

1. How does participation influence members' individual and collective capacity for implementing and sustaining Housing First?
2. What contextual factors influence the capacity building activities of the network?

Method:

- Case studies of the 7 Cities and the Southwest 5 (document review, individual interviews, member check/focus groups)
- Single case analysis and multiple-case analysis

ONTARIO SOUTHWEST 5



ALBERTA 7 CITIES



7 cities
on housing
and homelessness

www.7cities.ca



KEY FINDINGS



1. FOSTERING TRUST AND COMMUNICATION

Within the core team, leaders...

- Build trusting relationships
- Demonstrate commitment to HF and to the network
- Encourage open dialogue
- Provide mutual support



“This is ‘cone of silence’ time. This is protected time. We have to trust this group so we can express our points of view openly and honestly. [...] we need that open dialogue to get to the heart of some of the complex issues that we have to face.”

-SW5 Core Leader

2. INFORMING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Participating in the network helps leaders to enhance HF locally by...

- Advancing local practice
- Increasing agility and responsiveness to issues
- Generating momentum for change



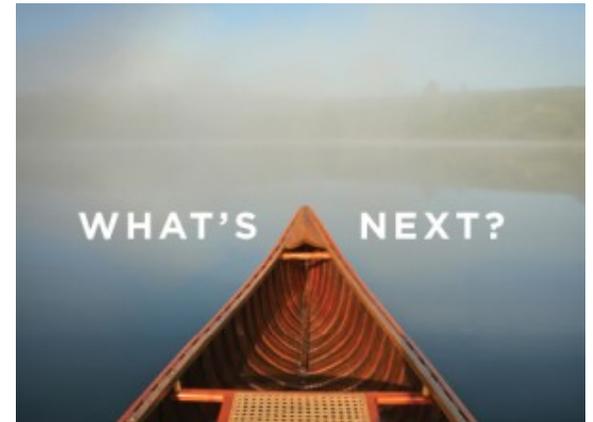
“With Housing First...we are literally developing the plane as we’re going. Honouring how decisions were made, why decisions were made, the knowledge we had when decisions were made is so important to this work”

– 7 Cities Core Leader

3. NAVIGATING AMBIGUITY

Cross-community connections help advance planning for HF through...

- Sharing knowledge in context
- Enhancing collective breadth of knowledge
- Informing “strategic insight”



“We’ve learned so much [...] in a very short amount of time [...] to be able to be successful in our own communities in uncharted territory.”

—SW5 Core Leader

4. CREATING CONDITIONS FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

Leaders draw upon shared learning to facilitate systems change by...

- Championing HF
- Educating stakeholders
- Developing collaborative relationships with stakeholders



“We're not here to fight with government. We're here to work with them to serve clients”

– 7 Cities Core Leader

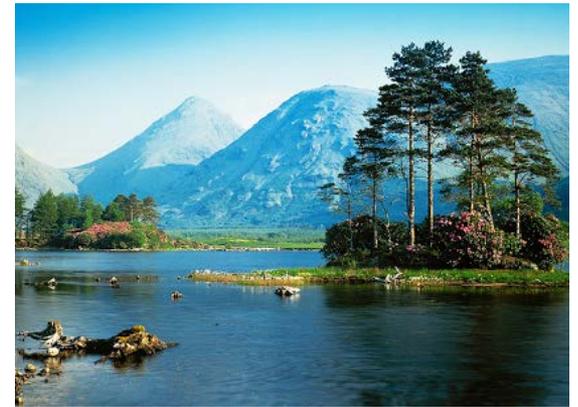
“[This work] is not isolated to the housing and homelessness sector... We're trying to branch out into other systems”

– SW5 Core Leader

5. ADVANCING AND SUSTAINING SYSTEMS CHANGE

Leaders draw upon shared learning to facilitate systems change by...

- Developing strategic direction
- Planning systems change
- Monitoring outcomes
- Informing policy change



"We're really trying to build systems within our individual municipalities but trying to do it in a mindful, strategic, and coordinated way together. "

– SW5 Core Leader

INFLUENCE OF CONTEXT

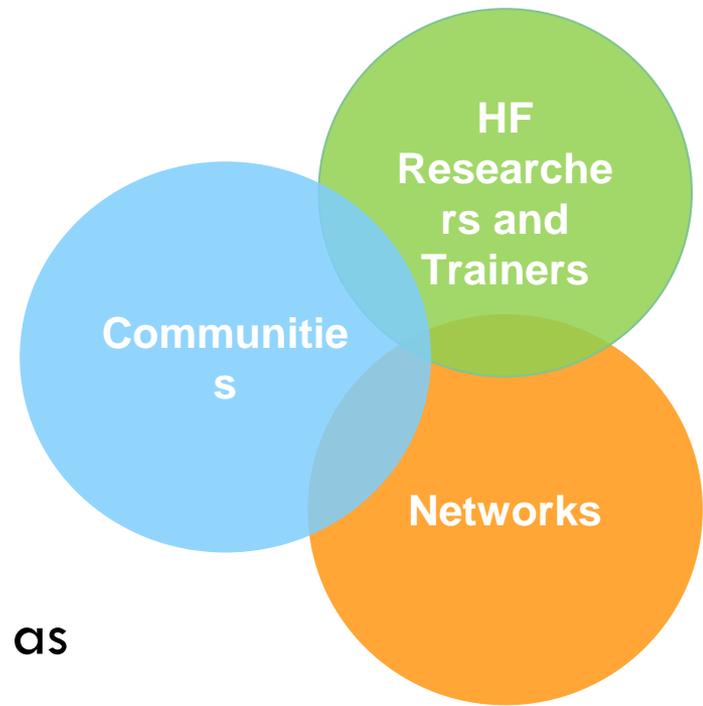
A number of factors influence the ability of both networks to build leadership capacity...

- Common philosophy, values, and roles
- Small, committed core leadership
- Stage of HF implementation
- Maturity of the network
- Organizational support
- Political and economic landscape



IMPLICATIONS

- Opportunities for shared learning across networks
- Need for ongoing research and training/technical assistance on HF as a systems approach
- Importance of sharing knowledge in context
- Networks for scaling up successful community practices
- Networks as a means of building capacity among “champions”



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THANKS!

Any questions?

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