



SHARE & CONNECT

HELPING CREATE A COMMUNITY OF WELL-BEING
GATHERING SUMMARY



EVENT HOSTED ON
APRIL 19, 2023

THE
WINNIPEG
FOUNDATION



Your Community Foundation
For Good. Forever.

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INTRODUCTION

In April 2023, The Winnipeg Foundation gathered community partners both at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and virtually on Zoom to hear how the community was recovering after pandemic lockdowns, which of our Vital Signs® 2022 priorities organizations felt most aligned with, and how groups saw themselves in *Community of Well-being; The Winnipeg Foundation's 2023–2026 Strategic Plan*.

The facilitated discussions were robust, and several common issues and sentiments were shared by those in attendance. The following is the summary of the top issues referenced.

WHAT WE HEARD

Longer and more flexible funding

The most common issue expressed was the need for core, multi-year funding to stabilize operations and to help organizations leverage other funders. While organizations noted the importance of project-based funding in meeting short-term and emerging needs, they stressed that flexible funding would be more effective in meeting the long-term needs of community. Also, groups would prefer to focus on their core mission rather than having to create new projects annually to secure funding. In addition, it is difficult for groups to plan and maintain the same level of service annually when relying exclusively on project funding.

Organizations also expressed gratitude for the flexible grants available during the initial pandemic lockdowns, noting that funders trusted organizations to respond – proving that organizations can work with less oversight.

Pandemic impacts and ongoing challenges

Virtual services worked better for some and less for others during pandemic lockdowns. For those organizations that found virtual programs and services valuable, they shared some of the benefits; including reduced isolation for some community members, the ability to reach a larger audience, and reduced supply costs. Organizations that found virtual service delivery less effective cited accessibility as an issue, since some community members did not have access to virtual options, and a general loss of interest and engagement in virtual programming.

Also, organizations shared that systemic challenges such as poverty and racial discrimination were exacerbated by the pandemic, noting that those with the most significant barriers to success experienced the most challenges.

Relationships with government

Attendees expressed frustration with government funding sharing specifically that their government funding has not increased, funding is inflexible, and reporting is onerous.

Additionally, it was noted that funding programs introduced early in the pandemic like the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) loan program were helpful during the pandemic lockdowns.

Increased staff support

Recruitment and retention of staff in the sector is an ongoing challenge, attendees said. Organizations expressed the need for living wages and paid benefits sector-wide to improve staff recruitment and retention efforts. Since volunteerism has sharply decreased and most groups have seen increased demand, staff are experiencing burnout, and this has caused significant turnover. In addition, there has been no increase in existing funding or new funding to support the larger workload. Nearly all groups highlighted the need for mental health supports for staff.

VITAL SIGNS® PRIORITIES

While most groups identified with each of the six Vital Signs® 2022 priority areas, there was significant discussion in the areas of mental health, belonging, access to food and trust in institutions.

Mental health needs in community

There is a sharp and significant increase in the need for mental health services in the community. Attendees shared that the healthcare system has not met the need and non-profits have had to step in to fill the gap, trying to address needs from desperate community members. In addition, during pandemic lockdowns, people have suffered from loss of social connection and communication, resulting in significant mental health challenges.

Belonging

Most of the agencies participating identified building a sense of belonging as one of their primary activities or interconnected with the work they do. Groups highlighted the importance of arts, cultural programming, and student support within their communities as important for building a sense of belonging and improving mental health. Environmental organizations (ENGO's) also noted the relationship between their work and building a sense of belonging. As ENGO's work to build grassroots understanding of the need for change, the community must feel a sense of belonging or ownership to lead the change.

Food security

More than a dozen agencies noted they've seen an increase in food insecurity. During the pandemic lockdowns, there was additional support to help feed community members, but that funding has now ended, and food insecurity persists.

Trust in institutions

Attendees shared that community members tend to seek their services because of inability to access government resources, leading to mistrust of these systems. Indigenous and other racialized communities lack trust in government services and despite increased calls for diversity, equity and inclusion, these communities are seeing little action.

NONPROFIT NETWORK

When organizations were asked to share their ideal approach to community building, they spoke enthusiastically about the notion of a nonprofit network and agreed there is a need for one in the sector. Attendees shared ideas for the function of this group including:

- An advocate for the sector with government.
- Capacity builders in developing non-profit leadership.
- An administrator of a shared benefits, pension program.
- A connector, relationship builder and information hub.

MOVING FORWARD

We are grateful to our community partners for sharing their challenges and how they feel The Winnipeg Foundation can support them in their work. As we reflect on this feedback, we are confident many of the sentiments shared are aligned with our Strategic Plan. We look forward to working together with the community on these issues so we can continue to support the great work organizations and others are doing in Winnipeg.





The Winnipeg Foundation

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