Building Connections: Student Parent Support Worker Pilot Project Appendix
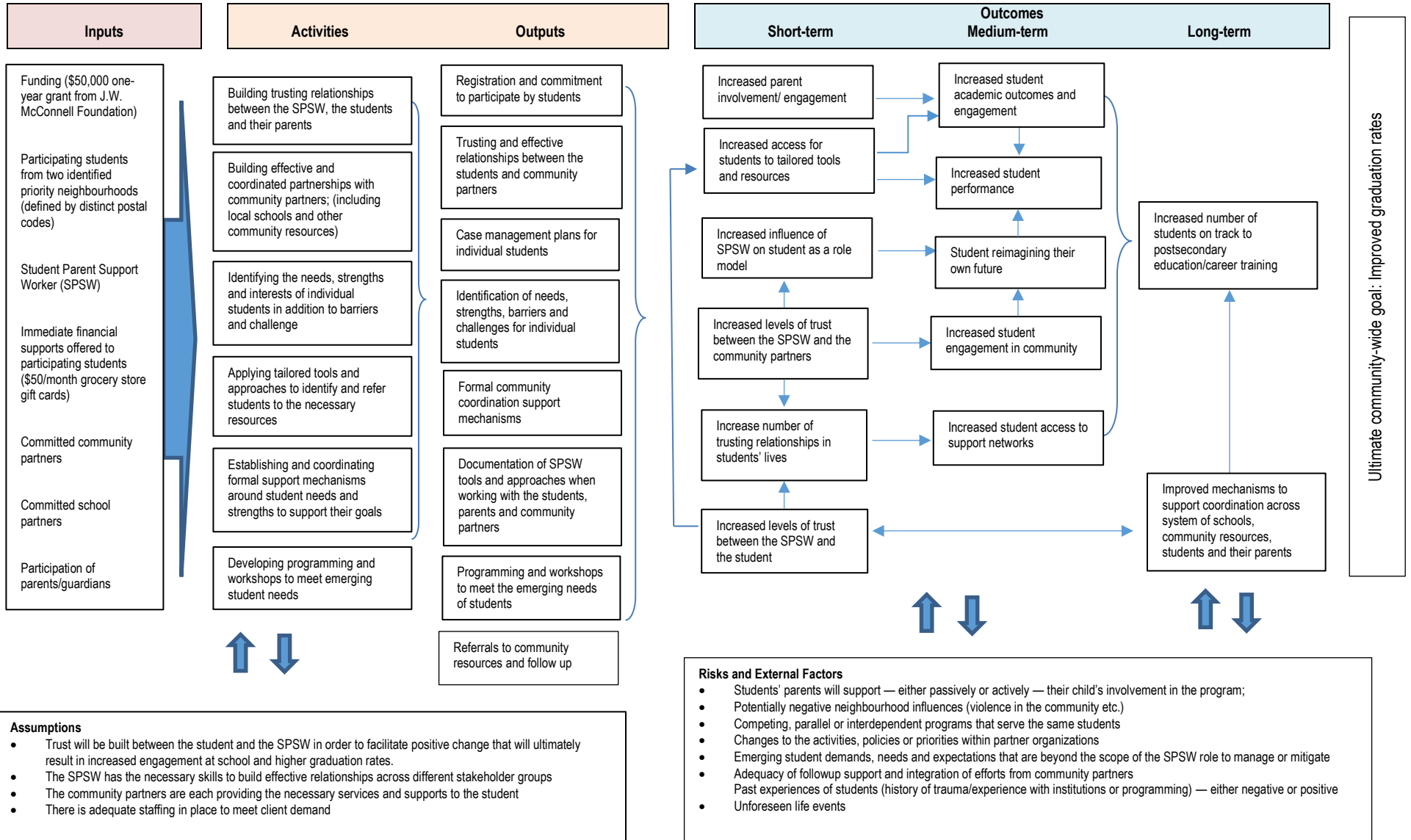
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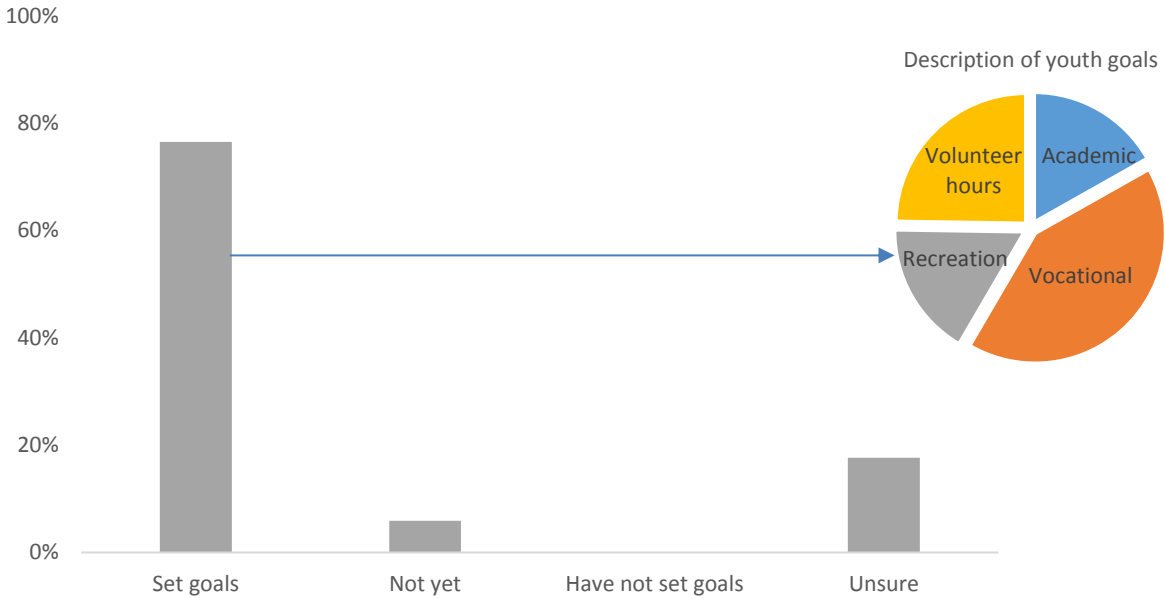
Appendix 1: Student Parent Support Worker Logic Model

Inputs

- Funding ($50,000 one-year grant from J.W. McConnell Foundation)
- Participating students from two identified priority neighbourhoods (defined by distinct postal codes)
- Student Parent Support Worker (SPSW)
- Immediate financial supports offered to participating students ($50/month grocery store gift cards)
- Committed community partners
- Committed school partners
- Participation of parents/guardians

Activities

- Building trusting relationships between the SPSW, the students and their parents
- Building effective and coordinated partnerships with community partners; (including local schools and other community resources)
- Identifying the needs, strengths and interests of individual students in addition to barriers and challenge
- Applying tailored tools and approaches to identify and refer students to the necessary resources
- Establishing and coordinating formal support mechanisms around student needs and strengths to support their goals
- Developing programming and workshops to meet emerging student needs

Outputs

- Registration and commitment to participate by students
- Trusting and effective relationships between the students and community partners
- Case management plans for individual students
- Identification of needs, strengths, barriers and challenges for individual students
- Formal community coordination support mechanisms
- Documentation of SPSW tools and approaches when working with the students, parents and community partners
- Programming and workshops to meet the emerging needs of students
- Referrals to community resources and follow up

Outcomes

Short-term

- Increased parent involvement/ engagement
- Increased access for students to tailored tools and resources
- Increased influence of SPSW on student as a role model
- Increased levels of trust between the SPSW and the community partners
- Increase number of trusting relationships in students' lives
- Increased levels of trust between the SPSW and the student

Medium-term

- Increased student academic outcomes and engagement
- Increased student performance
- Student reimagining their own future
- Increased student engagement in community
- Increased student access to support networks

Long-term

- Increased number of students on track to postsecondary education/career training
- Improved mechanisms to support coordination across system of schools, community resources, students and their parents

Ultimate community-wide goal: Improved graduation rates

Assumptions

- Trust will be built between the student and the SPSW in order to facilitate positive change that will ultimately result in increased engagement at school and higher graduation rates.
- The SPSW has the necessary skills to build effective relationships across different stakeholder groups
- The community partners are each providing the necessary services and supports to the student
- There is adequate staffing in place to meet client demand

Risks and External Factors

- Students' parents will support — either passively or actively — their child's involvement in the program;
- Potentially negative neighbourhood influences (violence in the community etc.)
- Competing, parallel or interdependent programs that serve the same students
- Changes to the activities, policies or priorities within partner organizations
- Emerging student demands, needs and expectations that are beyond the scope of the SPSW role to manage or mitigate
- Adequacy of followup support and integration of efforts from community partners
  Past experiences of students (history of trauma/experience with institutions or programming) — either negative or positive
- Unforeseen life events

Appendix 2: Youth Goals

Description of youth goals

Appendix 3: Reports of Duplication across Programs and Services in the Community

Appendix 4: Wheel of Involvement Engagement Exercise

In order for the Equity in Education collective impact initiative to move forward with the identification of priority areas, a Wheel of Involvement exercise was conducted at the October 2017 stakeholder meeting. The purpose of this exercise was to determine the interest and engagement of group members across various priority areas. Members were asked to indicate their level of engagement in the following three action areas:

a) **Wraparound supports** (i.e., communication and coordination between stakeholders and services in each area of the city in order to comprehensively support youth)

b) **A neighbourhood approach** (i.e., neighbourhood-specific strategies and action plans to leverage existing resources in order to comprehensively support youth, each of which varies according to assets and gaps in different neighbourhoods)

c) **Improving school experience**

Engagement was to be noted on the following spectrum:

a) **Interested**: Informed of the progress of the initiative, but not be directly involved in the work (e.g., newsletters, event opportunities)

b) **Supportive**: Provide some form of support and input (e.g., attending future community forums, answering surveys or providing input online).

c) **Involved**: Frequently consulted and given opportunities to provide in-depth feedback.

d) **Core**: Actively involved in the functioning and development of the idea.

Twenty-four members attended the Equity in Education stakeholders meeting, sixteen of whom were eligible to submit the Wheel of Involvement (these were organizations not involved at the backbone or steering committee level of the initiative). All eligible members submitted.

Inspiring Action in Stakeholders

The 100% response rate on the Wheel of Involvement exercise in and of itself was an indication of engagement across the Equity in Education stakeholders. In fact, one-third of participants indicated that they would like to be engaged in all three of the proposed action areas, which included wraparound services, a neighbourhood approach, and the school experience. Just under 30% indicated engagement in two of the three action areas. Forty-three percent of overall engagement was in the area of wraparound services, while one-third was in the area of neighbourhood approach and one-quarter of stakeholders indicated their engagement in the area of school experience (Table A1). In terms of their level of engagement, 43% indicated that they expected to be engaged in the action area(s) of their choice at the "involved" level, meaning that they wished to be "frequently consulted and given opportunities for feedback" (Tamarack Institute, 2017). Twenty-one percent each planned to be
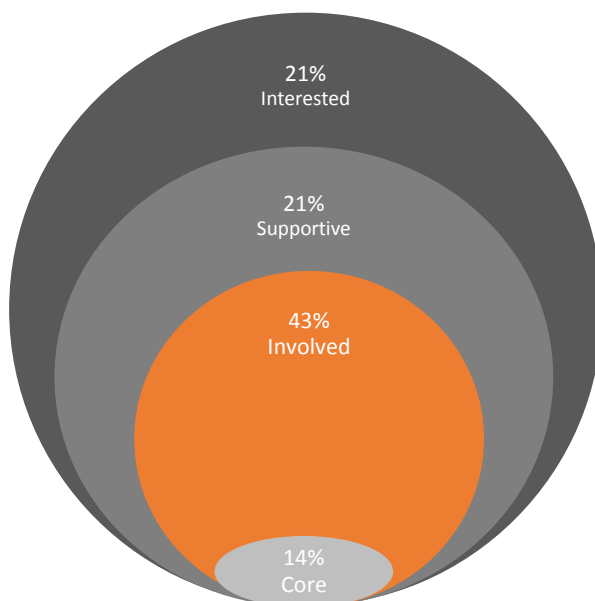
engaged at the "supportive" level, that is, provide support and input regarding the action area, and the "interested" level, at which stakeholders expect to be kept informed of progress but not directly involved." (Tamarack Institute, 2017). Fourteen percent of stakeholders indicated that they would like to be engaged at the "core" level, which means that members are interested in being actively involved in, or potentially leading, the development of the action area

Participants further defined what they expected some of these engagement levels to look like in practice. At the "involved" level, stakeholders expected to provide space, support capital needs, coordinate supports, volunteer time and provide expertise when possible. At the "supportive" level, members expected to provide concrete supports to the action areas, such as needs assessments and links to relevant resources. At the "core" level members expected to lead or co-chair the group and support the activities of the group.

Table A1: Number of members engaged at each level of engagement across action areas

	Interested	Supportive	Involved	Core
Wraparound support	2	4	6	0
School experience	2	0	3	2
Neighbourhood approach	2	2	3	2
TOTALS	6	6	12	4

Figure A1: Proportion of Members at Each Level of Engagement

Appendix 6: Credit Accumulation

At the inception of the program, the pilot project targeted students that were transitioning from Grade 8 to Grade 9. As such, the baseline data requested from the school boards was Grade 9 credit accumulation rates for the cohort of students that preceded those participating in the pilot. All four school boards provided credit accumulation totals for Grade 9 students in the catchment area in the year the SPSW project was being implemented (2016–17 school year). Compiled data for all four school boards for all Grade 9 students in 2016–17 cohort can be found below in Table A2.

Table A2: Credit Accumulation Rate for Comparison Cohort

Grade 9	N=29
7+ credits	20 (69%)*
6 or fewer (failed at least 2 courses)	9 (31%)*

*At the time of writing (February 2018), one school board had only provided one semester of data and another school board had only reported on students that had obtained seven or more credits. Thus, data was compiled to reflect the data available (passed at least seven credits, or passed six or fewer, out of a total of eight). The numbers in the table may be conservative as there may be additional students that may have failed two or more classes (i.e., if a student had only failed one class as of first semester of Grade 9, they were included in the 7+ credit category and were considered to have passed all classes second semester.)

Report cards were obtained for all students in the Equity in Education SPSW pilot. First semester credit accumulation rates can be found in Table A3 below. Several of the students in the pilot were taking a careers course and as a result accumulated more than the full-time caseload of four credits.

Table A3: Participant First Semester Credit Accumulation by Grade

Grade 8	N=3
Accumulated all credits	3 (100%)

Grade 9	N=12
4+ credits	10 (83%)
3 or fewer	2 (17%)
2 or fewer	0 (0%)

Grade 10	N=6
4+ credits	4 (67%)
3 or fewer	1 (17%)
2 or fewer	1 (17%)

There were inconsistencies in the format of data obtained from the school boards and the sample size of the youth in the project is too small to definitively represent all youth in the catchment area. This will prevent this paper from making any definitive conclusions regarding the impact of the project. These issues will be addressed in future studies. However, several observations can still be made that do indicate that youth in the project did experience improved academic outcomes.

Eighty one percent of students that benefited from two semesters of SPSW support passed all of their classes in first semester of Grade 9. Only two students failed one class and no students failed more than one class. In the comparison cohort, only 69% of students passed all of their classes and 31% failed more than two classes over the course of an entire year. (Note: The school board credit accumulation baseline data actually showed that of this 31%, several students had failed at least three classes and one student had actually dropped out of school.)

Initial analysis of this credit accumulation appears to show that students with SPSW support have better academic achievement rates than other neighbourhood youth without access to these supports. However, it should be noted that more analysis is needed to determine the impact of the project on participants (i.e., the historical achievement rates of participants in the project should be further explored to ensure that a participation bias is not present).

Note on outlier in academic achievement data:

Only one out of the 21 students in all grades of the pilot program failed more than one course in first semester. It should be noted that this student had only registered for the program in September 2017. This student was identified by the school as well as his parent as needing the supports of the program and was registered due to available capacity of the SPSW. An anecdotal success to note was that this student and parent did request the support of the SPSW in a meeting with school administration after the first semester report cards were issued. The student, SPSW, administration at the school and the parent came up with a plan to help this student get back on track and access the resources necessary to increase their chances of academic success. Although this student's academic outcomes were not improved over the course of the semester of working with the SPSW, it is hopeful that the SPSW did provide support to the youth and their family that will increase the chances that this youth remains engaged in school.

Academic versus Applied Course Selection

Prior to the SPSW meetings/workshops three of the Grade 8 students transitioning to Grade 9 were planning on registering for Academic courses, six were planning on registering for Applied courses and one was to be enrolled in Locally Developed courses.

As a result of workshops/meetings, three students out of 11 accessed the SPSW's support in either switching completely from Applied to Academic courses or beginning the transition by switching one or more courses. This was obtained through self-reporting and also tracked by referencing the student's individual progress and report cards. This left six students in Academic courses, three in Applied and one in Locally Developed courses.

These numbers and their percentages can be found in Table A4 below.

Table A4: Participating Student Course Level Selection

Course Type	# of students in each course level before SPSW meetings	# of students in each course level following SPSW meetings/support
Academic	4 (36%)	7 (63%)
Applied	6 (54%)	3 (27%)
Locally Developed	1 (9%)	1 (9%)

Having a knowledgeable and supportive adult that was able to communicate the importance of course selection decisions made in Grade 8, that was able to advocate on behalf of students and their families and connect them to relevant resources and supports appears to have had a measurable impact on the future career and postsecondary options of these students. It is important to note that students in the program had high achievement levels in terms of their first semester credit accumulation. Therefore, there did not seem to be a negative impact of students switching from Applied to Academic courses. Supporting youth in switching their intended course levels was an unexpected outcome of the SPSW pilot and an issue that will be examined in greater detail moving forward.

Appendix 7: Stakeholder Engagement

Table A5: Frequency of Stakeholder Attendance at Meetings

# of meetings attended	# of stakeholders
6	11 (31%)
5+	15 (43%)
4+	18 (51%)
3+	23 (66%)
2+	27 (77%)
Only 1 meeting	8 (23%)

Sixty-six percent (23) or close to 2/3 of stakeholders have attended at least half of the meetings and 31% of stakeholders have attended all of the meetings. Of the 11 stakeholders that have attended all of the meetings, eight are either directly involved in the governance of the collective impact initiative or are host agencies for pilots coordinated through the Equity in Education initiative. However, of the 23 that have attended at least half of the meetings, only 11 are directly involved in the governance of the initiative or are playing a meaningful role in the delivery of the pilot projects. This demonstrates that stakeholders continue to attend meetings even if they are not directly benefiting from pilot projects or involved in the governance of the initiative.

22% (eight stakeholders) have only attended one meeting. However, for four of those stakeholders the sixth meeting was the only one they attended. This is due to the fact that they had only recently been introduced to the initiative. When those four are removed as outliers only 13% of stakeholders have come to one meeting and not returned. Meaning 87% of stakeholders have returned to a subsequent meeting after attending one meeting.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholders reported that when they originally joined the Equity in Education meetings, their reasons were primarily to learn (29%), work collaboratively with partners (24%), network (12%) and offer support (12%). Members also noted that the work being done seemed to align with their agency's mandates (12%) and had the potential to benefit their clients (12%). These reasons were not very different from the reasons stakeholders continued to be engaged in the Equity in Education stakeholder group, which continue to include learning opportunities (35%), resource sharing (6%), offering support (6%), and working collaboratively (6%). Stakeholders also noted that there is good work being done (12%) and that this work is addressing real community concerns (6%). It should be noted that since this initiative is being led by the Pathways to Education program, many stakeholders initially assumed that the goal of the project was to replicate the Pathways to Education program in other communities across the city. The Equity in Education initiative had to be very clear and consistent in their messaging that this was not the intended end result. Clarifying the goals of the initiative did not seem to negatively impact stakeholder engagement.

There were a couple of stakeholders who had modified how they delivered services as a result of attending Equity in Education meetings. Members reported that what they learned at these meetings, including the successes, challenges and best practices of partners, helped them to guide the work of their own programs. Twenty-nine percent of stakeholders reported an increase in confidence after attending Equity in Education meetings, reporting that they were better able to serve their clients due to an improved understanding of the available resources in their communities. In addition, partners were inspired to see the positive effects of working collaboratively. Fifty percent of partners also reported that participation in the collective impact initiative had led to partnerships between themselves and other members outside of the stakeholder meeting setting. Forty-three percent of members rated their knowledge of existing programs and services as moderate, while 29% reported that they were somewhat knowledgeable and 14% each claimed to be extraordinarily or only slightly knowledgeable. This assessment can be used as a baseline for future evaluations, with the expectation that, over time, awareness will continue to increase as collaborative work becomes more in-depth. It also points to the possibility that those that are currently attending are organizations with a history of, and belief in, collective approaches to serving their communities.

When asked about their willingness to contribute to the collective, stakeholders offered training, connections with clients, their own expertise, program resources and supports, and evaluation to moving forward with the overall goal of increasing graduation rates. Several partners specifically noted

an openness to coordinate with partners or change how they were currently running their programs to align with the common agenda of the Equity in Education collective impact initiative.

Most respondents agreed that shared learning contributes to collaboratively reaching goals. The importance of a common language in ensuring effective communication was noted as well as the importance of sharing knowledge and expertise and opening a dialogue around best practice in the field. Learning in the form of shared training opportunities was also mentioned. An evaluation of the shared learnings throughout the process of implementing the collective impact initiative itself would be meaningful to stakeholders and funders.

Eighty percent of partners were open to having regular opportunities to share learnings, while 20% remained unsure. This was, in part, due to barriers such as staff capacity to attend regular meetings. Stakeholders noted the value of gaining alternate perspectives and learning from one another's successes as well as challenges. There was a suggestion to provide those staff members in similar roles with opportunities to share knowledge and learnings with one another. Further, the importance of compiling and synthesizing learnings and best practices into a useful format was noted, as well as the notion that this format may facilitate the regular participation of partners with low capacity.