

Hub Tool: Practice Guidance from Mental Health Promotion Innovation Fund Projects' Pandemic Adaptations

Tool overview

Suggested use: By teams who are experiencing a period of transition or adaptation in their project planning, implementation, or evaluation efforts. This tool shares project experiences from the Mental Health Promotion Innovation Fund (MHP-IF) as they adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic. The emphasis is on specific actions. Teams using this tool may find the actions themselves helpful. They may also find it useful to connect directly with projects whose experiences resonate with their own. To do so, project names and contact information are provided.

Tool content: Following a brief overview of the Hub-led pandemic adaptations study through which project stories were gathered, this tool describes the various actions taken by MHP-IF project teams as they adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes actions related to: i) adapting to virtual implementation; ii) maintaining youth participation and engagement; iii) changes in research and evaluation; and iv) meeting fundamental needs introduced by the pandemic. Specific actions are illustrated in Appendix A which includes direct quotes from project teams. Appendix B provides project contact information.

Tool format: 5-page overview of actions; Appendix A: project quotations by action category; Appendix B: project contact information

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STUDY BACKGROUND

The Mental Health Promotion Innovation Fund (MHP-IF) is a national program that seeks to learn about promising approaches for advancing mental health promotion among young Canadians. Projects funded through the MHP-IF were just underway in early 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic escalated and were focused on program design, development, or implementation. Project teams were forced to adapt to this new context, each facing their own unique challenges. The pandemic created an opportunity for meaningful learning across projects – one of the purposes of the KDE Hub. The Hub conducted conversations with each of the 20 projects in December 2020 to better understand what adaptations were made and to learn from project experiences. This tool showcases those experiences and shares the various actions taken by MHP-IF projects as they adjusted to the COVID-19 pandemic context.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS IN FOUR AREAS

A. Adapting to virtual implementation

A1. Researching and testing new virtual delivery methods

As MHP-IF project teams began to realize that the pandemic was a longer-term adjustment and the shift to virtual programming and training was inevitable, some began to research options for new virtual delivery methods. This included environmental scans to identify options for online programming. Others sought consultation from experts in the field and other organizations with experience in online delivery (e.g., asking for advice regarding student engagement). Some projects relied on advice from project staff with previous experience in online programming.

Virtual programming was new to some projects, so teams took the opportunity to test out the implementation of virtual programming. They ran mock sessions with facilitators, collected feedback from participants (youth, parents) after sessions, and made adjustments based on the feedback received. Collecting real-time data and feedback with this shift was important. Some built this testing and feedback into their evaluation structures.

A2. Adapting resources and materials for virtual implementation

Finding creative ways to deliver program content for participants

With the shift to online programming, project teams had to find creative ways to both deliver program content and improve or maintain youth engagement. Their efforts included:

- Developing films and videos for better youth engagement
- Developing PowerPoint slides to accompany program elements
- Finding and using visualization software
- Deciding on best options for most effective delivery
- Finding ways to implement experiential-based learning in virtual settings
- Developing workbooks to support online learning for experiential-based program
- Building in engagement opportunities to minimize screen time
- Changing program content to fit the new pandemic context for youth

Rethinking design and materials for virtual training

Project teams also adapted their training for facilitators, new project staff, and/or youth brokers. This often involved adjustments to the design, implementation and materials used for training. Projects made shifts such as creating training videos, embedding scripts into PowerPoint slides for facilitators and finding creative and effective ways to deliver content so that it was ‘splashy’ and engaging.

A3. Adapting session format for online implementation

Alongside adjustments to program content were changes to session format for enhancing participation and engagement. Some projects adjusted group size, often leading to more frequent, but smaller group sessions to maintain a sense of connection. Many projects made adjustments in response to new needs of their participants (e.g., family, childcare needs) including increased flexibility in program timing and options for participation. There were challenges related to ‘Zoom fatigue’ which led to changes in meeting length and frequency. Some found that shorter sessions allowed for better engagement recognizing that there is a big difference between attending a 2-hour in person session compared to a 2-hour Zoom call. This was relevant to both youth and family programming as well as online training sessions. In some cases, group sessions online (versus 1:1 training) led to the development of peer support networks, which tended to be well-received.

Even the duration, like instead of two hours at a time, we found we needed to maybe even go down to like half an hour snippets because so many participants were online at school. They'd be Zooming all day, maybe Zooming with friends or talking with friends, and then by the time we wanted to have some of their time, they were done with the computer screen.

B. Maintaining youth participation and engagement

B1. Adapting outreach and recruitment

The shift to online programming also involved changing the way project teams reached out to youth and families and recruited new participants. These adjustments changed how facilitators and youth brokers worked to build relationships with their participants. Additional challenges were experienced by those projects that relied on schools for their recruitment and programming. Some teams felt that they needed to market their programs more and highlight its importance during the pandemic. Project teams had to work hard to build awareness of their programs, especially through social media. They were more intentional in their efforts, for example creating care packages for their participants to build interest. Recruitment and outreach efforts were further complicated for projects with sites in various locations under differing restrictions.

B2. Ensuring project teams and participants had resources needed to implement and/or participate in online programming

Another added challenge was ensuring project teams and participants had the resources needed to participate in online programming. Many projects discussed concerns related to lack of internet or technology in homes. They provided computers, iPads and tablets for participants and some even used additional funding to provide licensed Zoom accounts. Some focused their attention on website development to reach youth without access to smartphone apps. For projects that were considered more ‘hands-on’, teams created kits to send home with kitchen supplies, art supplies and workbooks.

We had to figure out if we were continuing to do art-based kind of activities. What if families don't have the supplies? So we had to figure out how to get the supplies ourselves and put together kits and courier them to families.

B3. Making connections and maintaining engagement with youth online (use of social media)

A large concern for many projects was the challenge related to building relationships with youth and maintaining engagement in an online setting. Many projects made effective use of social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, TikTok, Instagram) to communicate with youth. Some developed apps to reach youth participants. Experiential-based projects had unique challenges as not all activities can be easily shifted to a virtual space. One project used virtual programming to build excitement for the eventual return to in person programming. Anticipating youth questions also became important in preparing for virtual implementation due to lack of real-time feedback and discussion that would more naturally occur in person.

C. Changes in research and evaluation

C1. Ethics considerations

Many project teams had to make changes to their ethics applications for approval of virtual program implementation and data collection. Project decisions regarding ethics included gaining participant consent in a virtual setting, finding new methods for data collection, and approvals for data collection using specific online platforms. The biggest considerations were related to privacy and security. Multi-site projects also had to overcome challenges regarding provincial differences in approvals for data collection using specific platforms.

The ethics piece was large and complex. Yeah, really tough, and then even though we chose Zoom and it had much better features for ethics to do our interviews, [the university] hadn't yet approved Zoom for ethics, so we had to kind of convince them that it was a superior platform, but they just hadn't gotten a response back themselves from Zoom to answer questions around it. So there were just like endless hurdles, especially around ethics.

C2. New methods for virtual data collection and assessment

Beyond ethical considerations, project teams had to identify ‘user-friendly’ online data collection platforms that met their needs (e.g., Sharing the Stories, Simple Survey, Survey Monkey, Mentimeter). Projects discussed unique methods for data collection (e.g., using text messages) and methods for conducting interviews and focus groups online. Some identified having to manage and adapt to varying

comfort levels regarding online qualitative data collection. Adjustments were made to community agreements regarding data ownership and collection. Incentives were used in some cases (for both schools and individual participants) to promote participation in online data collection.

C3. Recognizing new opportunities

Because of the impact of COVID-19 on normal programming and research and data collection plans, many project teams were quick to adapt their research questions and data collection efforts to ensure that there were no missed opportunities for new learning. Some teams adapted data collection to COVID-19-related research (e.g., COVID impacts on participants and/or researching new methods). Others took advantage of the opportunities for natural experiments created by the pandemic (e.g., exploring digital divides).

We undertook quite a bit of research, through the summer and fall, related to assessing the impact of COVID on our communities and community organizations. We've been collecting RCMP data and ecological data, land use data, CERB data. As well, we've conducted surveys of community organizations. All of this started in April and we've continued on and continued to grow on it.

D. Meeting fundamental needs introduced by the pandemic

D1. Providing support for project staff

In the early days of the pandemic, many MHP-IF projects focused on the well-being of their own project staff. They offered more flexible work hours particularly for those juggling multiple family needs; focused on staff appreciation (e.g., providing incentives and opportunities for self-care); and provided support for staff in relation to new technologies. Technology support included providing new hardware and/or software as well as providing training in working with new technology.

D2. Shifting project goals to meet population needs

Many project teams needed to shift their priorities to focus on the social determinants of health, with their own participants and beyond. This meant addressing fundamental needs such as housing, food security, and safety. Projects focused on determining which populations were most at-risk and most in need of support during the pandemic. This often meant pausing their own project efforts and joining forces with other local organizations that were focusing on supporting high risk families and youth. These changes were about 'maintaining a commitment to youth' despite the challenges of COVID-19. Teams understood that they had to be flexible and adapt to meet the needs of those who were struggling through the pandemic. Projects worked with other community partners to identify and provide for the most vulnerable populations that required additional support.

D3. Actions taken to address inequities

The pandemic highlighted many inequities that already exist in Canada and MHP-IF project teams identified ways to address health inequity during the pandemic. Many built in ‘safety nets’ for youth in challenging situations (e.g., providing access to counsellors, addressing safety and privacy concerns for youth, building in ‘follow-up’ processes). This was a particular concern for those trying to assess the needs of youth who relied on schools for internet access or technology. While access to the program increased for many projects with the switch to virtual programming, some populations were identified as being left behind, especially those without access to technology and those with language considerations. Some projects were able to send mobile devices to homes for increased participation. Regarding language and cultural sensitivity, projects adapted by translating materials, using multi-lingual facilitators, and using tools such as closed captioning to increase their projects’ accessibility.

I think there are also different things to manage that they didn't have to deal with before. Who has a computer? Who doesn't? Who has internet at home or not? These questions weren't asked before, since the computers were at the school. The school was the hub and everything was done at school, and now everything is done from home.

Appendix A: MHP-IF project quotes by section



The project quotes are shared in the language that they were spoken. Please reach out to the KDE Hub (kdehub@uwaterloo.ca) for English or French translations of the quotes.

A. Adapting to virtual implementation

A1. Researching and testing new virtual delivery methods

Consultation and learning from others with experience in online delivery

- *We basically talked to the youth who had been referred to us and they all seemed very interested and keen, so that was a big help. And then we started looking at the in person component and what we saw in our evaluation planning as being a key piece of the developmental relationship-building. We started looking at how can we do that online, so we did lots of research on how to make Zoom as engaging for this age group as we could. We talked to the people who had already been teaching online. We looked at what other facilitators were doing and just did a scan, basically an environmental scan of what was out there. (Agenda Gap)*
- *We had connected with the Students' Commission of Canada, which is one of the other funded projects and we had done some early kind of knowledge sharing between our two groups. So [a project team member] from the Students' Commission did a little presentation to our team around the creation of safe online spaces and some of their best practices that they had been working on in that area, and then we did a little share on some of the measurement approaches that we've been using for planning evaluation and that kind of thing. So, there's been a nice relationship established there, which has been, I'd say, a positive thing. (Agenda Gap)*
- *The other thing that was going early on, is this intervention was developed in partnership with people in Ontario and in the States. There's a group in Chicago, a group in Boston, a group in New York that are also doing this. So we were also trying to share information with the way that was going forward. The Children's Hospital in Chicago developed some session-by-session strategies and sent them to us and we were able to talk about the success of our pre-engagement phase, so I think that was also really helpful. (STRONG)*
- *It was just about finding the best ways to move remotely and not losing that human element as well because that's important for us, especially when it comes to some of the things we are discussing in terms of making those first connections with youth. The first time you meet a youth, obviously is a really critical and important moment for you to be able to build that trust and start beginning to build that sort of sense of security with the youth. And finding strategies and ways to do that and bringing in our therapists team to talk about that first initial conversation, what you do and don't want to get into. The reality is that doing that over Zoom takes away some of the personal aspects of that. Like our therapy team, I remember [project team member] who is one of our therapists that deals with youth, came to help us convey what her processes are. She said it herself, she said, "you know, it's really difficult to convey how I am over Zoom because you're missing a portion of the body language, you're missing sort of my tone in my speech, a lot of it". So it was just about making sort of mental notes of those differences and making note of the differences between Zoom and in person*

and being able to acknowledge those so that our brokers weren't surprised by them later on.
(Celebrating Culture, Celebrating Life)

Testing and evaluating online delivery (e.g., mock sessions and feedback)

- *We didn't have any of the adapted materials, we didn't know whether or not it would even fly in a virtual format. The program is highly interactive and collaborative with parents, so we had to find a way to figure out how we would capture that quality virtually. So as we were developing, and as we've done with this, is to go back and forth all the time and get input and adjust. We work with Connect facilitators from across Canada and internationally to do mock sessions to see, 'does this work?' 'does that work?' And so on. ... we were asking them all the way along for their feedback. You know, how was it for them? How was it for the facilitators? We created an additional evaluation structure so that we got the feedback of every level, the level of the agency, what's their experience of it, the level of the facilitators, what's their experience of this virtual program, and the level of the parents that we serve.* (Supporting Kinship & Foster Parents)
- *Et là, dans le contexte virtuel, c'était comment on fait pour leur faire vivre malgré la distance. Donc, on a fallu vraiment qu'on teste ces activités, mais je pense qu'on devient des experts en la matière, parce qu'on s'est rendu compte qu'on a développé une expérience réelle dans l'élaboration d'une formation ludique, expérientielle, même à distance.* (Nurturing the Future)
- *Between August and September, the sites were then given the go ahead to deliver a minimum of eight workshops related to the program for the target population, so 13-19 years old. The idea behind this was that they were going to be testing out activities or workshops with the youth that we ultimately wanted to include in the 10-week program. The hope was that they could use this opportunity to build stronger relationships with young people in their community and to get a lot of feedback throughout the process. So, to really check-in with the youth as they were offering these workshops and see how it was feeling for the young people and then the other side of it is that we're using that feedback and the reflections from the facilitators in order to continue flushing out this 10-week program manual.* (Mind Your Food)

A2. Adapting resources and materials for virtual implementation

Finding creative ways to deliver program content

- Developing films or videos youth engagement
 - *We've started to have discussions within our team about additional materials, additional online film-based materials that we could look to develop that we think might be particularly useful should this continue as an online intervention and so we've been thinking about more narrative or story-based film and drawing on, again, some previous research that our team has worked on and used film in the kind of mental health and harm reduction context with youth. Also developing something where we could teach without it feeling like a teaching-learning kind of context or session but more entertaining and following somebody's story or experience but then having some facilitated discussion around what it was that they viewed and seeing how that might work as a way of engaging people in the work of policymaking for mental health promotion.* (Agenda Gap)
 - *Probably the biggest struggle that we are going to have is [that] our project is land-based. So, we can't go on doing surveys and research topics and stuff like that without having people in person. So, some of the things that we're doing [are] a video of how to tie your*

hook onto a fishing line, that kind of stuff and how to make a snare, to snare rabbits and then what to do with it once you get a rabbit and that kind of stuff. (The Cedar Path)

- Developing PowerPoint slides to accompany program
 - *Prior to the pandemic, our material or our programming was just on paper. It was in person. We had no need to think about virtual programming. We weren't going to deliver it virtually. And, and now we've had to make that happen. I think now our project has legs, right? Like, we have adapted our paper, in person delivery model to virtual. If we have to, I hope it's not the case... but we can deliver this virtually to 2022. We have created PowerPoints to complement our program. We never had that before. We never thought about doing that before. So I think the reach, potentially, is far wider than it was prior to the pandemic. And maybe our project has a bit more buy-in now where it didn't before. We can offer these additions that we didn't have to think about prior to pandemic. (Enhancing Mental Wellness of Refugee Children, Youth and Families)*
- Finding and using visualization software
 - *We found ways to adapt to using Whiteboard and some of the tools on Zoom to really have that [engagement] still be at the core of the group and I think the work that really helps with that in providing some of the visualization for youth who learn better that way. But then we are able to bring it together and share together because we have this platform. (Families in TRANSition)*
- Deciding on best options for most effective delivery
 - *What's happening now is that we're looking at some materials and seeing, in terms of the digital dissemination piece, what would be something that would be easy to disseminate and in what capacity? Is it just through the workshop? If you can't necessarily hand it out, then is it something posted through media, is it through email, how is it going to work. And so, I think those are some of the struggles that we're currently working with at this point. (Nurturing Child Development and Well-being in Refugee Children & Families)*
- Finding ways to implement experiential-based learning in virtual settings
 - *On a dû faire beaucoup de réflexions parce que l'idée de l'AFÉSEO, car ce qui était un succès pour nous dans le passé, c'est qu'on faisait vivre l'apprentissage. Donc, ce n'était pas juste la théorie. On amenait les gens à bouger, on amenait nos apprenants à vivre une situation concrète. Et là, dans le contexte virtuel, c'était comment on fait pour leur faire vivre malgré la distance. Donc, on a fallu vraiment qu'on teste ces activités, mais je pense qu'on devient des experts en la matière, parce qu'on s'est rendu compte qu'on a développé une expérience réelle dans l'élaboration d'une formation ludique, expérientielle, même à distance. (Nurturing the Future)*
 - *Because we're land-based, you have to be able to feel what you're doing and part of feeling is the tactile but also the knowledge that you gain from elders and residential school survivors and knowledge keepers in the community. A lot of them are not comfortable doing a video. It's hard to get that information to them in a way that we would if we were in person. We're trying and you know, we're doing what we can, but like I said, it's... a lot of people are just not comfortable doing it. And we can do the whole 'get videos offline or online' or whatever similar things, but it's not reaching the needs of our youth and families in this area because it's not specific to them. (The Cedar Path)*

- Developing workbooks to support online learning for experiential-based program
 - *A big change we had to make was curriculum delivery, because all of our group curriculum is very experiential, and so it was designed to be done in a room with an artistic format or other kinds of things that rely on physical presence. So, we had to make a decision about how we were going to re-design everything so it would fit into an online platform. We had initially focused on creating a program manual that could then be used in our scale-up and that was an instruction manual or like a technical guide for facilitators. We instead switched to developing our workbook curriculum and those are almost finished now - so that we could have a resource that our parents and youth participants could use as a resource that would support their learning online so that we could still be experiential. So, there were several large adaptations we had to make to the way that our activities are run and documenting them in an interactive way, like visual format on paper. (Authentic Social Identity and Mental Health)*
- Building in engagement opportunities to minimize screen time
 - *I think one of the key pieces that [a project team member] and his team gave us was to minimize looking at the screen and build in as much engagement between the participants as possible. And that I would say has been a very, very helpful piece of advice. It's really worked well. They just love the breakout rooms. They love the drawing, the creative stuff that we brought in. (Agenda Gap)*
- Changing program content to fit the new pandemic context for youth
 - *Oui. Je dirais que nous avons également pu retravailler le contenu jeunesse que nous allions proposer. Nous avons dû adapter le contenu. Par exemple, maintenant nous prenons en compte le fait que les jeunes sont toujours à la maison, avec leur famille, tout le temps, donc cela peut avoir un impact sur leur santé mentale. Nous avons dû adapter nos idées et propositions de contenu avec les spécialistes pour qu'ils répondent aux besoins actuels et à la nécessité de prendre tout cela en considération. (La santé mentale, on s'en parle!)*
 - *Once we got the staff settled, [the focus was] the adaptations to our content. And these are skill-based programs where some cognitive behavioural skills are intended for helping kids with social anxiety. That was pretty much put to bed with the pandemic with the isolation. So, we had to really make a shift to identify what were the causes of anxiety? I mean a lot of health-related anxieties and modifying and adapting our program skills in the context of COVID-19. And here's the interesting thing - because we're Pan Canada, we had to pay special attention. We're in the second wave here in Nova Scotia and we've been following every wave across Canada. We've had to make sure that we know what's going on in every province because our staff on the ground, virtually, have to understand the context for those provinces. You know, what's going on in the Northwest Territories and how it's impacting those individuals? What about the places where there's school restrictions and online learning and the challenges? Because our behavioural program very much is focused on the challenges, the behavioural challenges families are having. The increased risk of child abuse and that type of thing. We really had to pay attention to some of those contextual adaptations for our programs to make sure that our programs are always meeting the needs of our clients. (Parents Empowering Kids)*

Rethinking design and materials for virtual training

- Adapting training for more effective delivery (e.g., videotaping sessions)
 - *I think it was mid to end of May that we were like, “You know what? I don’t know when we’re going to go back. I don’t know when we’re going to be able to travel.” We’ve got people who need training. We are committed to coaching. We need to figure out how we’re going to do all of this online. At that point we started to actually create structures, online webinars, we worked with our partners at About Kids Health at the Hospital, and we created a training pathway document – it’s much harder, right, they’re not with us for three days – and the training has all these different parts and there were practice things they had to do. So, we created this training pathway, we video-taped the training. We had to cut the training down because it wasn’t fair to think, “Oh, people are going to sit and watch three days’ worth of webinars,” so we had to really cut things down to what was most important, and then we started to implement our coaching sessions. (Nurturing the Seed)*
- Embedding facilitator scripts into PowerPoint slides
 - *Yeah, I think once we decided on the platform and figured out what facilitators would continue with us, I think it was pretty easy going. There was a bit of work I guess on my part. Just in terms of adapting the materials into an online platform. there was a facilitator guidebook that sort of had a script and then there was a separate PowerPoint. A lot of the work that I did as Program Coordinator I guess was to sort of streamline that a little bit. So, I created new PowerPoints where I embedded all of the facilitator’s scripts directly in. (Positive Solutions for Families)*
- Making the training more ‘splashy’ for virtual delivery
 - *We kind of thought that we could just take our program and our workshops and some of our trainings and just do them online. Not realizing that we did have to shift, and we did have to redevelop those workshops and those trainings for an online setting. You can’t just pick up the guide and read it and go through it online the same as you would in person. There’s more requirements to it, right? Like, you need to have something that’s kind of splashy. You need to have things that’ll keep attention. (Authentic Social Identity and Mental Health)*
- Hiring a significant number of new staff during pandemic and completing online training
 - *[Our] challenge is hiring quickly to meet the demands. We’ve hired and trained 33 people since the pandemic started, and that’s huge. We just found virtual ways of training... We’ve done virtual training because [a project team member] actually has been involved with virtual training when we’ve launched in other countries. So, we’ve launched in Finland and we launched in Vietnam with various research projects. And she would lead that. We would first be face-to-face for a couple of weeks of intensive training and then she would do ongoing training virtually. So it wasn’t new to us, but wow! I can’t believe how effective an entire virtual training program can be. I think we attracted eight coaches from Ontario. It’s the first time we’ve had that many that we’ve 100% virtually trained on our core services. (Parents Empowering Kids)*

A3. Adapting session format for online implementation

Adjusting group size for online calls

- *Initially we kind of anticipated having everybody on one call at a time to reconnect, but that was kind of unwieldy, so we shifted and pivoted towards small groups. Which meant a lot more Zoom calls for us though; where we maybe had planned on once a week, it ended up being like four or five, maybe... more Zoom meetings a week, just to maintain connection. (Authentic Social Identity and Mental Health)*
- *The other logistic [adaptation] was making groups a lot smaller. We're recommending four to six whereas school groups could be 10 to 12, just because it's all online and was still new. (STRONG)*

Considerations re: sessions to meet family needs

- *We have adapted our whole routine and professional schedule around the delivery and what is the best fit for the families in terms of delivering those groups too, right? So, we're doing most of them in the evening time and what that meant is a change in the way that we're working or the way that we would have worked, maybe even differently in the past, if we were to do these face to face. And for families as well, right? To accommodate that time for the kids. (Enhancing Mental Wellness of Refugee Children, Youth and Families)*
- *If the schools remained closed, what does that mean for recruitment and for conducting interviews with children in the background? How do we support caregivers in creating flexible times and spaces for them to be involved in the project and to be part of that study? So, that was something that I think was certainly felt by the team, ensuring that we are always flexible but also there's I think an added piece that, it's online and it's not as contained as say, meeting someone in their home or somewhere in the community or wherever it may be, that we would have offered, but it adds a different layer of responsibility when there's other implications of other people involved in having that interview. (Nurturing Child Development and Well-being in Refugee Children & Families)*
- *I think adapting to this virtual world has reminded us and made us more intentional about best practices of working with newcomer youth and families. You know, like you need to be flexible in terms of your delivery time and delivery space. The best practice is to do our best to engage parents, meeting them where they are at. (STRONG)*

Providing different service options based on participant needs

- *We take into consideration everyone's situations because we know if we're adding extra work on top of their plate when they're already stressed, we're truly not going to be a helpful service for them. So, we've done extra training with coaches about certain situations. And considered what other provinces are experiencing and not just what we're experiencing to make sure that we're being very sympathetic to the situation... making sure that we're going to be a helpful service for them. We've offered families suspension [options], so if they want to put their file on hold [OR] we'll shorten the calls or we'll do more check-ins or email. We'll adapt the way that we're providing services so that we're not adding that extra stress but working with them to meet their needs while still fulfilling program requirements by setting them up for success with skill acquisition to address their specific circumstances. (Parents Empowering Kids)*

Changes in meeting length and frequency = recognizing zoom fatigue

- *It wasn't fair to think, "Oh, people are going to sit and watch three days' worth of webinars," so we had to really cut things down to what was most important, and then we... we started to implement our coaching sessions. (Nurturing the Seed)*
- *I think even the duration, like, instead of two hours at a time we found we needed to maybe even go down to like half an hour snippets because so many participants were online at school. They'd be Zooming all day, maybe Zooming with friends or talking with friends, and then by the time we wanted to have some of their time, they were done with the computer screen. (Authentic Social Identity and Mental Health)*
- *In addition to adapting the actual program, we had to adapt the training, right? So we also had to do that. And piloting it out, it's a three-day training, it's intensive. We realized early on that three straight days of Zoom is a bit of a mind-numbing experience, so we had to adjust all that and shift it to six half days. (Supporting Kinship & Foster Parents)*
- *Our thought was, if in a perfect world had Zoom not existed, we were going to be taking this training for three weeks really extensively, like four or five hours a day with breaks in between with fun activities. And we were going to be together, and we were going to be enjoying food, so it was going to make it more digestible. Right? But over Zoom we don't have any of that so we needed to think about how long we wanted to stay on a certain topic and we needed to think about how much our group of four brokers was able to digest in a day over video conferencing because there were some studies coming out at that point where they were telling us, oh, you know, videoconferencing, it's harder to stay focused in 20 minute intervals than it is in person, so we were thinking about that as well. (Celebrating Culture, Celebrating Life)*

Focusing on group session formats (compared to 1:1) to build in peer support networks

- *What we found was before COVID-19, we had a hard time getting adults to commit to a telephone coaching group. Because, think about it, if you're one-on-one, it's more flexible. We can change your appointment around. But if you've got a group of 10 or 12 people who are meeting once a week at a certain time, just one person dropping off of that group and missing one to two calls are going to be lost and not fully benefit from our service offerings...What we found was we couldn't keep groups together in the initial phases, pre-COVID, largely due to peoples' preference and busy work schedules. When the pandemic hit, we were doing more and more group sessions. Do you know why I think that is? It's because of the isolation. We're offering that peer support. They get on the phone together, problem-solve together, support each other. And it's just so amazing and it's just as effective as a one-on-one for those who can commit to it. And I think that's a really neat aspect to see that because of our innovation and group-based coaching, we can provide that support for them. (Parents Empowering Kids)*

B. Actions related to maintaining youth participation and engagement

B1. Adapting outreach and recruitment

Changing the way youth brokers reach out and build relationships with families and youth

- *We had to completely change how we were initially going to start contacting youth. And that was really tricky because we went from a really organic and self developing style, where these youth brokers were just going to be joining fun activities and joining our homework clubs and offering that support and then being able to identify a few youth that might need help and then building that*

relationship over time, building that trust over time. But now [we are], 'cold calling' clients and members of the community or families, particularly families that we felt might be particularly vulnerable and might need particular support. So that completely changed how we were going to initially carry out our projects. (Celebrating Culture, Celebrating Life)

- *We have youth groups that we also hold and three of those youth groups are in the three vulnerable communities that we work with, with this project. And our idea and the thought was that our youth brokers would begin to be able to visit those youth groups to build those relationships over a long period of time and then gradually begin to develop those relationships into one-on-one relationships with the youth where they are able to provide that support. So that was sort of what we were hoping was going to be the organic way to gather some of the youth that we know are at risk and to develop those one-on-one connections with the youth brokers. But of course with the pandemic our youth groups were put on pause. So it was sort of a decision of, do we sit on our hands and sort of wait until the youth groups are either reopened remotely or, do we sort of try to build those relationships in another way? ...And we decided to sort of try to go about it in a different way...So, we decided to sort of contact the youth group leaders, sit down with them, sit down with some of the community leaders and say who are some of the youth that we feel during this pandemic, might need that extra support and how do we position our youth brokers in a way where they are able to offer that support? How do we position them in the best way to succeed for themselves and for the youth? And those were some of the things that we had to decide on, so we sat down with the brokers and we said, would you guys be open to potentially reaching out and having it work a little bit differently because originally again, you were going to be in these groups, you were going to be building these relationships not organically, no pressure. (Celebrating Culture/Life)*

Highlighting the importance of the project in relation to the pandemic context

- *Notre projet traite de la santé mentale, et lorsque nous en parlons ces jours-ci, nous recevons parfois l'objection qu'il y a des choses plus urgentes à régler en ce moment. Fondamentalement, la pandémie prend tellement de place que les gens ne peuvent penser à rien d'autre. Nous essayons donc de rendre le projet un peu plus attrayant en disant qu'il prend en compte les réalités de COVID-19. Donc, dans ce sens, la façon dont nous décrivons et exécutons le projet a un peu changé. (La santé mentale, on s'en parle!)*

Projects needing to market themselves more

- *Le plus difficile est d'attirer les gens avec tout le marketing que nous avons à faire maintenant. Avant, on organisait des réunions, des tests, des collations, ce genre de choses. Maintenant, nous n'avons pas ce tirage pour attirer plus de gens. C'est le plus dur pour nous maintenant, l'aspect prospection. C'est un peu compliqué. (La santé mentale, on s'en parle!)*
- *We are a youth organization, so as people age out of our programing, we have this huge alumni network. Every year we gain more participants, right? So, [because of the pandemic], without that steadiness, without the schools' help, that is something that we've had to modify. So, we are now online more; on social media, trying to reach out to participants. We are advertising our programing far more because we know that we may not have the teacher touchstone that we've had in previous years. We are also advertising in our regular newspapers as well... especially in the north. And then of course our posters on walls and stuff. That is one of the main ways that people get information out in the Northwest Territories. (FOXY)*

Needing to be more intentional regarding recruitment (e.g., creating care packages)

- *We're so much more intentional in the pre-engagement phase. So early, on people were talking about it being hard to get youth or children on groups to show up, to stay. And so we've put way more time and energy and thinking into this. For example, our partner pre-orientation meetings with each parent separately. Our community partner made these care packages that had everything kids would need for the group and a couple of little extras and got those to their houses so that they had that. And then there was the group with the moms. Like normally, if you do anything, maybe it's kind of one parent information session, but it was this very intentional stage engagement to get people in. (STRONG)*

Adapting outreach for different project sites under different restrictions

- *The other complicating factor that we had to work with as we were thinking about these eight workshops is that the three delivery partners are located in different parts of Canada. So, there were different restrictions in place in their communities around what was possible and what wasn't. For example, one of the delivery partners is here in Toronto, and throughout the summer, it hasn't been possible for them to run any kind of in person programming. So, they've started online programming for young people but the other two community food centers particularly through late summer/early fall, had the ability to bring people together for programming just in smaller groups. So, we kind of had to shift our outreach goals, the number of youth that we were hoping to engage through the program. We had to make some of those sorts of adjustments with the hope that making those adjustments wouldn't steer us too far from the essence of the program. (Mind Your Food)*

Finding other sources for recruitment when school outreach is no longer possible

- *School schedules have also been kind of funny for youth. And because of everything that's happening the CFC's [community food centres] aren't seeing as many youths in person and so, they're really having to think about how to do outreach in a different way to even get them aware of the Mind Your Food workshops that may still be happening in person in some cases or are happening online. And the standard ways of poster in places where you gather, that's not working anymore so they're having to think about outreach in a different way. (Mind Your Food)*
- *We've been able to reach enough youth this way, we kicked off this program with focus groups or sharing circles with youth in each of the communities. And so we still have that contact information from the youth that we had connected with from the very beginning, so we've been able to reconnect with them. And we also, during those sharing circles and focus groups, asked the youth a bit about other organizations that they were involved with and so, there are some youth councils or youth groups that we became more aware of and then the facilitators have forged partnerships with these different organizations in the community and have been able to make connections that way. (Mind Your Food)*

B2. Ensuring project teams and participants had resources needed to implement or participate in online programming

Sending computers, iPads, tablets to project teams and participants

- *Préparer nos équipes au virtuel, car beaucoup de nos équipes n'étaient pas prêtes à travailler virtuellement. Nous devons envoyer des tablettes et apprendre aux gens comment les utiliser, utiliser les programmes pour qu'ils soient prêts. De plus, le projet nous a permis d'acheter ses*

tablettes. Les déplacements n'étant plus possibles, ils sont acceptés qu'on achète des tablettes avec ses fond. Ceci a permis au parent et aux équipes de participer à distance dans ce projet. Donc, beaucoup d'aspects qui vont nous rester, comme des connaissances et de nouveaux processus. (Nurturing the Future)

- *Oui, il y a tout le problème logistique et matériel. Ils ont également réalisé que tous les enfants n'avaient pas accès à un ordinateur. Alors ils ont dû leur donner des ordinateurs à ramener à la maison. (La santé mentale, on s'en parle!)*
- *Something new that we just decided, is we're going to be providing iPads to families who register online for the workshops. Not all families have the technology to access online, so we're figuring out if families register for the online modules, that they can access an iPad to help them go to the sessions and have a better experience because a lot of the facilitators were saying that a lot of families were just using their phones. The auditory component was most important because facilitators felt a little awkward sometimes. They couldn't always see their face or they didn't have access to a camera or a headset or things like that. So, just being able to provide something like an iPad with everything already on it might be easier and may help access too. (Positive Solutions for Families)*

Managing new technology

- *We're not the National Film Board, so when you talk about creating video [or] pre-recorded webinars, you have to worry about things like sound quality. And then in our training we use a tool that they have to complete. What are you, like, holding that up on your screen...We went through a couple of iterations before we found a way to deal with that. That was just before the holidays we figured out a new way to do that. So, you know, I think [it's] just managing the technology. And we do have somebody who's pretty savvy with it and knows how to edit video. And the amount of time it took. It wasn't just as simple as, "oh, well, just get on Zoom and I'll just go through my slides and easy-peasy." It was not that straightforward or simple at all. (Nurturing the Seed)*

Providing participants with licenced zoom accounts

- *Something that went well was having the option for people to use licenced Zoom accounts, and we were able to provide them if somebody requested it. Having this as an option was helpful in my opinion, and as well as coordinating with the guest speakers and folks that we wanted to come and speak on a topic to have more engaging sessions was made easier. (Do You Mind)*

Sending resources and kits home (e.g., kitchen kits, art kits)

- *In the case where the one delivery partner decided to go online, they've just wrapped up a mini Mind Your Food series and so a four-part series where they were online with the youth. And there were different logistics to consider and accessibility concerns had to change. They had to think about what people have access to at home and then how do they support people in a different way. It's not thinking about how you get them to the CFC [community food centre] but thinking about how you ensure they can participate from their homes. So, they put together these full kitchen kits and each week ingredients would be delivered to the youth so they had to think about, how to make sure that that food is being delivered and other considerations around food safety. What if someone's not home when the food is dropped off. (Mind Your Food)*
- *We had to figure out if we're continuing to do art-based kind of activities, what if families don't have the supplies. So, we had to figure out how to get the supplies ourselves and put together kits and*

courier them to the families Well, I'll say the smooth process was definitely getting [our team] to really work to create a workbook and have that couriered to the youth so that everyone had the same sort of tool to work on. That was super helpful. (Families in TRANSition)

Developing a website to reach youth without access to smartphones or apps

- *Nous nous sommes rendu compte que tous ces enfants n'auraient pas nécessairement un smartphone pour télécharger notre application. Nous avons donc dû repenser cet aspect et c'est pourquoi nous avons décidé que nous avons besoin d'un site Web, pour rendre ces ressources disponibles en français. Nous avons dû nous adapter. J'ai oublié de le mentionner plus tôt, mais nous nous sommes également rendu compte pendant la pandémie que les gens avaient souvent accès à des ordinateurs et à une connexion Internet parce que ceux-ci étaient fournis par l'agent d'établissement, mais ils n'avaient pas nécessairement de téléphone intelligent. Nous avons donc dû trouver comment fournir ces ressources. (La santé mentale, on s'en parle!)*

B3. Making connections and maintaining engagement with youth online

Using media platforms (Facebook, Tik Tok, Instagram, messenger)

- *Being able to pivot to Zoom meetings but also a lot of text messages, a lot of Facebook Messenger conversations, those types of things. So, I think a multimedia approach was one adaptation. I think we pivoted to be able to embrace the understanding that this person likes to text, this person's on Facebook, this is an Instagram person, right? And kind of like being able to individualize the approach to maintaining relationship, and not putting all of our eggs in one basket. That's something that's definitely going to carry forward. It's just understanding it's not a one-size-fits-all. (Authentic Social Identity and Mental Health)*
- *Nous avons créé une Page Facebook, car le centre n'en avait pas avant la pandémie, pour rejoindre les gens et publier des informations valides et précises pour informer la population, et leur donner accès à des ressources, à des références et à des outils pour promouvoir et protéger la santé mentale. (HORS-PISTE)*
- *Nous avons également mis en place une page Instagram pour toucher plus directement les jeunes, car cette expérience nous a appris que les jeunes n'utilisaient pas vraiment Facebook. Nous avons donc créé une page Instagram, même si elle n'a pas vraiment produit de résultats. Mais au moins nous avons essayé quelque chose de nouveau (HORS-PISTE)*
- *Our two superstar facilitators, one who's employed by [our community partner] and one who's a grad student with us, actually did some TikTok videos as well to describe the group and to... [describe] the [program] logistics. Like they were finding, texting people and saying, "Remember, you know, 4:30 on Tuesday, bring your headphones." For people, that wouldn't register, but they had a TikTok video that said when and where and what you need and those were quite successful. So, I think we learned a lot about that locally. (STRONG)*

Developing a mobile app to reach youth

- *Pour l'instant, la page Instagram est inactive car nous avons décidé de concentrer nos efforts sur notre page Facebook. Mais nous cherchons toujours des moyens plus efficaces d'atteindre les jeunes. Avec la subvention supplémentaire que nous avons reçue, nous pourrions développer une application mobile qui pourrait nous aider à atteindre plus facilement les jeunes. (HORS-PISTE)*

Using online programming as a way to build youth excitement for future in person programming when COVID restrictions ease

- *Probably a huge success would be like the acceptance of the community and the public and the youth because everybody is in the same boat and everybody knows that this is how it has to be for the time being, so they're actually excited about [the program] and they want to be involved but they know they can only be involved virtually at this time. So it's kind of like building up the excitement for when we can have a culture camp, we can have more land-based activities. Like it's kind of taking it to its peak in their minds and everything like that because they can see what the potential is of what they'll be doing on the land, but they haven't been able to do a lot of it, so I think they're pretty excited about it. (The Cedar Path)*

Anticipating and addressing potential questions from youth during experiential programming (to replace the natural 'back-and-forth' communication that is missing)

- *It's easy to communicate on a video (well I mean for some people it is, other people not so much), but to convey the message in land-based teachings that needs to be conveyed, it's really hard because you have a lot of back and forth normally. Because they'll ask questions and we'll answer questions. Now, when we do it online, we have to anticipate those questions, if we can't do it, one-on-one, like our one in a group of ten, for whatever reason. Because some of them don't have internet, because of our location or they don't have reliable internet, then we have to do, like just a presentation on a video and so we kind of have to anticipate what the questions might be and answer them as we go without having that back and forth, so that makes it a little bit more difficult sometimes. (The Cedar Path)*

C. Actions related to changes in research and evaluation

C1. Ethics considerations (data collection; virtual implementation; security and privacy challenges)

Getting Research Ethics Board approvals or ethics amendments for virtual data collection

- *We submitted the research path-- protocol to the Ethics Board in mid-February and, before any decision came, the pandemic came and the University put hold on data collection for a couple of months first. And also, the Ethics Board became irregular. So, it was taking time for us to get the Ethics approval. And it took really long, I think we got approval in September. So it took long time for the REB to give us the approval. And, again, we got approval for online remote data collection instead of in person data collection. So, we started to collect data for the evaluation, but we have to tailor everything or stream data collection instead of in person data collection that was originally planned. So, this is how we are now adapting everything - especially considering the kind of plans that we have, we need a lot of adaptation to make sure that we can collect the data from the clients remotely. (Enhancing Mental Wellness of Refugee Children, Youth and Families)*
- *We had to really redevelop our evaluation methodology. We had a methodology that was multimodal, like we had an artistic activity and then the kind of surveys and a qualitative interview plans and all of that, and all of the security and privacy and ethics needed to be redesigned as well to accommodate distance format. The ethics piece was large and complex. Yeah, really tough, and then even though we chose Zoom and it had much better features for ethics to do our interviews, [the university] hadn't yet approved Zoom for ethics, so we had to kind of convince them that it was a*

superior platform. But they just hadn't gotten a response back themselves from Zoom to answer their questions around it. So, there were just like endless hurdles, especially around ethics. (Families in TRANSition)

Getting participant consent virtually

- *La première chose qu'on a dû réfléchir à reporter était d'aller physiquement obtenir le consentement sur place des différents participants au projet. Nous avons changé tout au complet pour aller virtuellement et pour travailler virtuellement avec les équipes, avec les EPE et les parents, surtout aller chercher leur consentement virtuellement, et par écrit. Parce que nous devons garder à l'esprit notre code d'éthique avec [le comité d'éthique] - ils sont très spécifiques sur certains points qui ne pouvaient pas être modifiés. Nous avons dû nous réajuster et nous avons travaillé avec notre chercheuse et son équipe pour voir comment nous pouvons aller chercher ces consentements. Nous avons vraiment tourné sur un dix cents (patois francophone) assez vite pour être capables d'y arriver. (Nurturing the Future)*

Provincial differences for virtual platform approval – privacy and security considerations

- *[There were] big challenges in getting approval for the virtual format. Every province does this differently. Every province approves only certain platforms. The platforms were changing rapidly in terms of their security. We developed it for Zoom because we always work from the lens of the client. Zoom is easy. Zoom is something they know that they're doing with friends. We wanted to use that. And well of course early on there was the Zoom bombing, you probably heard of and so agencies were flat-lining. It was like, we can't use Zoom. And then it was 'Zoom is okay now that it's got security'. Somebody wants to use Teams. When you're doing a program virtually and all of your materials are developed for that virtual platform, it's very difficult and time consuming to redo them for a different platform. So, we're actually having to do a bit of that in the project now, because in Ontario they're using Teams and they didn't get approval for Zoom. So, I don't know how others are doing with the virtual health delivery but man, would it ever be helpful if we could have a national approved health delivery virtual format that is easy for clients to use. We can adjust to it...we can deal with the issues, but if it doesn't work in an easy way for the clients, it won't get used. So that was one of our biggest challenges, it continues to pop up. I'm sure you are probably aware of this, even in your agency, about approvals and how long that takes and nobody can do anything until you get those approvals. (Supporting Kinship & Foster Parents)*

C2. New methods for virtual data collection and assessment

Finding user-friendly online data collection platforms (e.g., 'Sharing the Stories' platform; 'Simple Surveys' platform, 'Survey Monkey'; Mentimeter) and software

- *We have an online data collection platform called 'Sharing the Stories.' So, people create an account and then they can log on with their own profile and then they have surveys that'll be set up to their own profile to complete. And so definitely we're going to be focusing a lot more on that, because typically we would set up a 'Sharing the Stories' profile and then have somebody go in person to help walk through how to set that up. So now I think we're going to be trying to pivot so that it's more user-friendly and requires less of us having to be involved with that process. (Authentic Social Identity and Mental Health)*
- *There were definitely things that we kept intact, like training evaluation forms, we just moved from doing them on paper to doing those online. We used Simple Survey and families were able to just*

click on a link after each training session they went to and then they would fill that out. So some changes in the data collection methods for sure but overall, I think we were able to overcome those. (Positive Solutions for Families)

- *Ce qui s'est passé, c'est qu'ils ont vraiment dû s'adapter—parce qu'il y avait eu beaucoup de déplacements prévus à travers la Colombie-Britannique, et ils ont donc dû apporter des changements importants à cet égard. Ils étaient censés se rendre dans les écoles pour parler de l'application et écouter les jeunes en parler. Au lieu de cela, ils ont dû mettre en place différentes plateformes, comme Zoom ou Mentimeter. Il y avait donc beaucoup de changements à arranger avec les équipes dans les écoles et avec les jeunes pour régler tout ça. (La santé mentale, on s'en parle!)*
- *There's not really much benefit to COVID at all but I think one thing is the future of Canada in embracing E-Mental Health solutions. We've known for 20 years that they work. And now it's fully embraced. And maybe there will be more funding support for that because technology costs to maintain it and to update it. Like I said, IRIS is our 5.0 version - we spent millions of research funding on various adaptations and programming languages. So, you know, that's a whole other talk I could give on what we've learned over the time as being a charity that develops software. So, I do believe that that's one of the benefits is providing us the funding to really raise the bar on our technology and innovation, right down to E-Coaching components for those user interfaces. (Parents Empowering Kids)*

Unique ways of collecting data (e.g., text messages) and approaches to online interviews

- *We got ethical clearance to gather data through text messages now. So, I think that's something, too, that's going to be really utilized a lot more as well as interviews. So, one-on-one interviews, I think, is going to be one of our strongest data collection points. (Authentic Social Identity and Mental Health)*
- *I think again, like, in terms of data collection it does, I mean we send surveys all the time, but on-line interviews probably were not as frequent. It was mostly you would say in person or on the phone. So, I think it will shift the way we do the work in some ways and opens up some opportunities that probably we would not have necessarily considered if it wasn't fast tracked through this kind of adaptation through a pandemic. (Nurturing Child Development and Well-being in Refugee Children & Families)*

Providing incentives for schools to participate in assessment and/or data collection along with program implementation

- *Les écoles mettent en œuvre le programme et collectent des données parce qu'elles y croient et veulent contribuer au bien-être des élèves, mais elles n'en ont pas les moyens. Ils le font en plus de tout le reste. Pas seulement la facilitation des ateliers, mais aussi toute la partie évaluation. Et le bilan est substantiel ; il y a tout un protocole qui va avec. Les étudiants doivent répondre à une centaine de questions, au moins deux, voire trois fois par an. Ensuite, il y a des enquêtes pour plusieurs parties prenantes, des groupes de discussion, etc. C'est extrêmement exigeant. Et la COVID l'a mis en danger. La collecte de données a été écourtée l'année dernière, mais nous avons quand même réussi à obtenir des informations intéressantes. L'année dernière, près de 2000 étudiants ont complété le pré-test et le post-test, et pas mal de personnes ont répondu aux sondages, même si nous n'avons pas pu tout compléter. Cette année, nous avons ajouté des incitations pour que les écoles participent au volet recherche : elles peuvent choisir de mettre en œuvre le programme sans l'élément d'évaluation, mais nous aimerions vraiment qu'elles fassent l'évaluation pour plusieurs raisons, principalement pour voir si le programme aide du tout. (HORS-PISTE)*

Hiring community member within lock down zone to complete data entry for project team (agreement that data stays in indigenous community)

- *Because we are working with Indigenous communities, our agreement was that the data would never leave the community. Our researchers were going in and they would sit off to the side and they would enter all the data. Well, all of a sudden they couldn't go in, right? So what we have done is our research partner has actually found funding to pay a community person in each of our communities to do the data entry. So this week or next week, I think they're actually training those people and they will start to enter the data. (Nurturing the Seed)*
- *What was tricky was our hiring of facilitators and service providers to do the interventions. That was particularly tricky because many of our facilitators and service providers worked outside of the territory, are from the territory but had gone down south to do other work and had intended to come up. Our regular evaluator was actually in Ontario so wasn't able to come up, and so we had to hire other contract employees in order to do that work, so that was quite tricky. (FOXY)*

Dealing with challenges, delays, or concerns regarding data collection and new methods

- *The focus groups were difficult and challenging, just because everyone was [having] a difficult time and nobody wanted to join a group to talk about a project. They were barely surviving, you know, it was a dark time for a lot of families and a lot of groups that I tried to get together, even professional groups as well, they were just too busy. Health professionals and everybody... they couldn't even spare 30 minutes and I didn't blame them. And so, we did have to adapt it. I had a lot of cancellations, a lot of email preferences rather than connecting face-to-face. People weren't used to the technology, weren't comfortable with it yet. So that was a big challenge. But we were able to still make it informative and make sure that we were inclusive in our co-design, by including the diverse perspectives from our indigenous communities and professionals and LGBTQ2+. So that was definitely one challenge that we overcame. (Parents Empowering Kids)*
- *We've actually had more focus groups, like smaller groups or more people giving us information to inform what we do. Because it's been over a longer period of time so we've been continuing to show them things that we're doing and asking for their feedback. And a lot of people do prefer to do it one-on-one, but we do plan on having a larger focus group in January now that this is the new normal for having meetings in a group over technology which is definitely a difference since the pandemic, 100 percent. (Parents Empowering Kids)*

C3. Recognizing new opportunities

Switch data collection to Covid-related research

- *We undertook quite a bit of research, through the summer and fall, related to assessing the impact of COVID on our communities and community organizations. We've been collecting RCMP data and ecological data, land use data, Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) data. As well, we've conducted surveys of community organizations. All of this started in April and we've continued on and continued to grow on it. (Innusirvik Community Wellness Hub)*

Turning challenges (e.g., digital divides) into a natural experiment for new learnings

- *When all of Canada pivoted to the digital platforms, we were totally left in the dark. So, part of what we're doing is evaluating that narrative as well... how the lack of investment in our infrastructure in Canada's North, like telecommunications, results in all of our [collective] brilliance getting cut off*

because we can't connect... And so then for the Inuusirvik hub, for the Inuusirvik project, when we were reassessing how we pivot that or what we do with it in the spring... Our whole project idea is based on bringing human beings into the same space, right? So they can access services, which we're not allowed to do [under the current circumstances of the pandemic]. Then we have to re-evaluate how we do it. Can they still access programming? Can we have videos that we're preparing and launching. Can they access some of the same content in different ways? But ultimately, like less than half of our population has regular reliable internet access and of the internet access we have, you can't even have a Zoom call half the time.... So I mean for us, [the impact of the pandemic] is much broader. It's not just specific to our Inuusirvik project - it's highlighting all of these other challenges that we're definitely documenting. We're learning - It's like a natural experiment... We're learning so much about the model that we're trying to pilot. We're learning so much about how our communities work together. I mean the really beautiful thing that we've seen and we're documenting is how the pandemic has really created an opportunity for Inuit values to shine. (Inuusirvik Community Wellness Hub)

Finding creative ways to learn about youth experiences in the COVID context

- *We actually put together some really neat stuff. 'Cause we had been doing some art stuff in the space... And then once we had to go back online she was sort of still following through with some of those concepts. It was really talking about youth and some of their experiences and exploring it through art. And sort of was around... well, we had started [on topics] like fear. ...You asked some of the youth to either do it through art or through videoing around their COVID experiences while we were in the first stages of COVID and youth were giving their feedback about their experiences and how they were coping with COVID. And also hand-in-hand coping with their substance uses in regards to that.... So we expanded on that a little bit and then sort of followed through with a little bit more of the artwork in regards to more coping mechanisms of what youth were utilizing and how they were trying to get through the loneliness and not being able to connect. And so there were some good videos from some of the youth, there was some good artwork that we had gotten. (Nation of Wellness)*

D. Recognizing and mitigating impacts of the pandemic on mental health

D1. Providing support for project staff

Modifying or being flexible with staff work hours

- *I come from an organization dedicated to young children, but even with one of my staff who has a toddler, we had to take a really firm line, you know, when she made the decision not to send her child to school, and she was trying to convince us that she could work and take care of this toddler, we were, like, No, you can't. I need you during business hours and you've got to figure this out. Like, you've got to get a sitter in, or we'll work with you to try and find a solution. But the solution is not, 'I'm going to be a mom and work all at the same time every day.'" And, we got there. You know? Because she has a sitter for the mornings and then he goes to sleep for two or three hours in the afternoon and, you know, that at least means that she's available for the bulk of the business day. But it was hard. And I'm sure there are families where employers are not being supportive. (Nurturing the Seed)*

Showing appreciation for staff – providing incentives, opportunities for self-care

- *But staff who already have anxiety or depression and then the pandemic hits that they're not expecting. So, we did a great job, as a company I think, really focusing on supporting our staff, wrapping around our staff. Like [project team member] said, we really tried to come together as a team. We have an active social committee who continued to offer events, spirit week and getting the team to focus on gratitude and things that we're grateful for as a way to really come together even though we were so separated because we have such a close-knit team. A lot of self-care strategies and taking the time. (Parents Empowering Kids)*

Supporting staff in learning and using new technology

- *You're in the position as a Project Manager or as an Executive Director or a leader of any organization during these times, that it's kind of on you to make sure that everybody knows how to do it and that everybody is adapting as they should. It kind of brings a larger, more strict responsibility because you have to try your best to meet your targets, but then you also have to worry about your staff or your team learning new skills at the same time. And everybody has certain anxieties or whatever about their lack of ability to work with technology. So, it's kind of having that balance that's hard to measure unless somebody says to you, 'well I need your help' and then you know, 'this makes me feel like I'm not doing a good job' so there's that on top of supporting the staff and helping them access the training. (The Cedar Path)*
- *Just making that switch to online, making sure all the facilitators were comfortable. That they felt like they were going to be able to still connect with parents. So, teaching them how to be able to navigate their way with the presenting in Microsoft Teams so that they could show their screen but then also pan back to face-to-face you know, and letting participants know that they could mute their mics or show their faces as they were comfortable. You know, making sure that they understood what their options were to participate as well. So, just a lot around making sure that we didn't lose the connection component and the momentum that we had already started to build. (Positive Solutions for Families)*

D2. Shifting project goals to meet population needs

Re-focusing on the social determinants of health

- *I was really lucky in that I had a boss that, that allowed me to kind of pivot and continue to do a lot of work with the young people that might've been outside the scope of the actual parameters of our project. So, there was a lot of trying to find shelter spaces, a lot of trying to move people into safer spaces. I got some funding locally to do some housing initiatives, which I can always make the case for these things being attached to a project, because when we're talking about mental health it's hard to talk about it without talking about all the other issues, right? Housing, addiction, posttraumatic stress disorder, you know, those kinds of issues. So, I was really lucky in that I was able to still pivot and be able to work on a lot of those types of projects even if they weren't directly involved. (Authentic Social Identity and Mental Health)*
- *What we learned from [a national] survey was that families felt like before the pandemic, they could get information about how to support their child's development. And that dropped dramatically by more than 50 percent. And families were struggling to get information about the pandemic, but also information about how to support their child, and then they were struggling with their own mental health as well. So that information has really influenced our coaching conversations with our sites,*

right? Because we're able to reinforce for them, like, "You are really important." And you may be the only connection. Even if it's with a phone call, you might be the only connection for that mom, you know? So that is definitely this age group, these families, it's been really tough and I think our systems have no clue how tough it is. (Nurturing the Seed)

- *Anybody who has to isolate with unsafe people and any families that are food insecure... There have been kids, for example, who are reliant on the school food programs and were suddenly cut off [in the first lockdown]. So, in our town, one of the teachers said I'm going to continue to run the breakfast program and I'm just going to put bags on a table and I'm going to invite the kids to just come three days a week in the mornings and just come and grab a bag and everybody's wearing a mask... Basically, finding ways to make sure families [who are] experiencing more challenges get that support. So, I think our biggest concern around vulnerable populations is the population that might access counseling services in person and need someone to talk to - can't. Not everyone has a home phone, even fewer have a cell phone. Few have internet, right. So then, progressively, anybody in those categories gets further removed potentially from help that they need. (Innusirvik Community Wellness Hub)*
- *We also developed a program called Quarantine Cuties so where basically we were able to find out from people what they might need in terms of groceries or diapers or whatever, and we really just... what we decided to do was not question anyone-- not tell anyone how much they could or couldn't get, just say, "What do you need?" ... The main goal to that was just that a lot of the youth that are involved in our program, several of them are from the Child Welfare system and really were feeling, very quickly, really isolated and totally lost 'cause most people have families that they could still connect with. So we wanted to get, as quickly as possible, some kind of manifestation of, "You still matter." (Nation of Wellness)*

Ability to be flexible and adapt for youth in need

- *A lot of what I'm hearing in the discussion here is that in this project, what had to happen when COVID happened was people to say, "Okay, how are we going to just change our activities, or some specific things about what we're doing so that we can continue to make progress on these big goals that we have together." It's about being flexible and adaptive and all of those buzzwords. But it also allows projects like this to be really strong in the face of major social upheavals, right? It was the questions that people got to ask themselves were really about, "Okay, so how do we do the next thing now? Okay, COVID's happening. But this is, you know, our commitments to youth and to this work - to being together in a certain way have not changed. So how do we adapt to do that?". (Nation of Wellness)*
- *We were trying to hold off and hope that the pandemic would pass quickly and that we could resume in person contact or that there would be some shifts in terms of protocol at the university-level that would allow for us to do some in person work. But we were continuing to have virtual connection with our previous youth group, and it was quite clear that the pandemic was having significant mental health consequences for them, for their peers, that was definitely coming through in our contact with them. And so I would say for me and [project team member], this was critical in informing our decision that we needed to figure out other ways of delivering the material and moving it forward and recognizing that while it would be ideal to do it under the circumstances that we'd intended, that perhaps the need was even greater under the current circumstances and that this warranted some further work and figuring out how to transition to online delivery. (Agenda Gap)*

- *En effet, lorsque nous avons constaté que les groupes d'intervention précoce ne pouvaient pas démarrer, notre équipe a rapidement élaboré et approuvé un nouveau plan d'action que nous avons appelé le « Plan COVID-19 » pour répondre le plus rapidement possible aux besoins de la population et tenter néanmoins de contribuer au bien-être des jeunes pendant cette pandémie. Nous avons créé une page Facebook, car le centre n'en avait pas avant la pandémie, pour rejoindre les gens et publier des informations valides et précises pour informer la population, et leur donner accès à des ressources, à des références et à des outils pour promouvoir et protéger la santé mentale. (HORS-PISTE)*
- *I think the [health] field needs to do a way better job of meeting youth where they're at because, especially with the pandemic, we have seen so many more social media posts of desperation, depression, of youth who are experiencing violence in their homes, youth who are experiencing violence online, like through their own cellphones, that cyber and technology base bullying as well as harassment. So, I think it's so important we are meeting youth where they are at, and that means going online, that means making sure we are doing regular check-ins, that means having those spaces where you can come together and have a trusted supportive adult in their life who can help guide them through their journeys. (FOXY)*
- *It became very evident that we had to support the mental health of families and children in a totally different and unanticipated way for everybody. And then each of the organizations that were involved in the project had to do that in with their respective stakeholder groups. We didn't put any pressure on anyone. You know, we are all home with kids. We're all just trying to figure out and navigate and support each other to the best of our ability. For us, we want to be capturing all the strengths, because you couldn't, for example, get research funding to test the impact of a full-time paid hunter 'position' in the community for six months [and the impact on food security] ... And then also the mental health benefits [of being on the land], and then [the added benefits to individuals] when they take somebody out with them that they're mentoring, and it continues, right? So, we're looking at all these different pieces that relate back to the wellbeing of our families and children. (Innusirvik Community Wellness Hub)*

Supporting other organizations for CYMHP

- *We're still working to keep our relationships open with everybody and we tried to support them to continue to do what they were doing with families and children in the greater mental health landscape of four communities, even if it wasn't physically all out of the same building. Reaching people in different ways, helping make those connections and relationships. Raising the profile of different services and programs that are available under the new restrictions. Things like that. (Innusirvik Community Wellness Hub)*
- *All of the partners on this specific project closed [for their regular programming and services]. Well, one of them just had to close, the Early Learning Centre, and wait it out until restrictions lessened in June. And then the other Inuit counseling program, they became the main food distributor in their community. It's not in Iqaluit, it's in another community. They became the main food distributor for the community and were heavily involved in the management of all the food programs, but also working with the municipality and all the COVID response packages that went out in the community. So, they experienced that significant pivot and then same our organizations us, where we moved into COVID assessment and impacts monitoring (Innusirvik Community Wellness Hub)*

Pausing project to allow partners and collaborators to focus on their direct population needs

- *Community Food Centers Canada and our partners, in this case the Community Food Centers, are designed to address food insecurity but we see food insecurity as something bigger than or beyond hunger. While the community food centers all along have had programming and work focused on food access, the way that they were doing it pre-COVID was through in person community meals, through markets and so when COVID hit, their mandate, in order to meet increasing food needs in the community, really shifted and the way that they had to do it also dramatically shifted. All of the sudden, staff at the community food centers had to be thinking about how to do take away meals, how to do food kits, hampers, maybe some online programming. It was a completely different way of working for them. And the Mind Your Food program, though really important and aligned with the work we were doing, because we were in such a place of strategic development and we were envisioning it as a very hands-on in person program, it kind of had to be paused while the CFC staff really worked to meet this immediate and growing concern around access to food in their communities. So, I would say the first thing we had to do was almost let the dust settle a bit. Like we had to allow people to respond to what was happening and what was most pressing and urgent in their communities (Mind Your Food)*

Discussions with community partners re: capacity and meeting most pressing community needs

- *We had a lot of conversations with our delivery partners about what needs and opportunities they were seeing within the community. What they could do in the immediate term or the near term. We were also talking to them a lot about capacity, like what they would have the ability to actually implement, conditions constantly changing and as I was mentioning, their responsibilities as an organization sort of shifting and people feeling a bit stretched. So, what we ended up coming to was that each delivery partner would run eight Mind Your Food workshops over year two. In addition to those eight workshops, the thinking was that the delivery partners could find ways to support food needs for the youth between programs or just like really keep food access in mind as they were delivering these workshops, because we know that food insecurity rates have increased quite dramatically throughout Canada during this time. And so, they were given a little bit of extra funding to do that sort of work between workshops especially because the workshops weren't happening as frequently. (Mind Your Food)*

D3. Actions taken to address inequities

Building in safety nets for youth in challenging situations and those who may need more support

- *We're talking about queer mental health, so what are the support resources we have place and is that enough for these virtual sessions over Zoom? There were some challenging aspects, and I say challenging, because over Zoom we only have so much control of what can go right and what can't go right. In person there is a sense of safety. This is a safe space physically [when] we're engaging but over Zoom - it's like everybody is by themselves in their home. So, that was one of the aspects where we really had to be mindful, especially I know for Edmonton, it was a very dynamic group so we made sure there was a counsellor who'd be available over the phone, and the counsellor was also a community member who would volunteer. That's how we mitigated this anticipated challenge. (Do You Mind)*
- *When the delivery format shifted online, there was a housekeeping section during the presentations where we talked about privacy issues and liability issues, and options for folks to share any feelings of being unsafe and whatnot. So, there was a dedicated section for this to make sure that these were*

some of the items that were addressed directly ahead of the session and not just left to assumptions. (Do You Mind)

- *I guess definitely an adaptation is thinking about ways in which a conversation can end automatically. So having youth have a different tab open on their computer so if they wanted to close out Zoom real quick, they could do that and seem as if they're working on something on YouTube. We have protocol if someone leaves, then one of the facilitators is going to contact them by text. So, I guess we did adapt to have these like different safety features in place just in case for some folks. (Families in TRANSition)*
- *But as part of STRONG, we screen the youth, the participants, for post-traumatic stress disorder. And one of the things we had to think of before we started this is if you're going to do a stage -- a Tier 2 intervention and you're going to screen for Tier 3 symptomatology, you better have a clear path of care, right? Like it's not very ethical or helpful to say, "Wow, it turns out four of you have posttraumatic stress disorder, good luck with that," or, "Here's a waitlist for six months in the community." So, we put that in place. We're just very careful, extra careful because they're in their home so there's no informal support opportunities where if somebody's struggling, more upset, they can talk to the facilitator at the centre before or after group, like they're really home. So, we did develop a better plan for if needed to refer someone. And we did need to make a referral and that referral didn't get followed up on, it tells us that we probably still [have to] look at how we're engaging parents and helping them understand even specific things, like why would we ask youth to talk about the journey. (STRONG)*

Increasing accessibility for all participants (also related to: 'participants had access to resources' above)

- *We also discuss any cultural considerations or diversity considerations, what their preferences would be with respect to those things and how they're acknowledged in the work that we do together. So, we're continuing to do that and that's helpful in overcoming this virtual context, right? Because it's really important for them to feel safe and to feel supported and we have a tech person that works with them specifically so that they can help them get onboard and how to manage everything and so on. So those things help with accessibility and they help in creating kind of a bond which is especially essential on a virtual platform. (Supporting Kinship & Foster Parents)*
- *The digital divide is also another issue. We take great pride in making sure that we bridge that digital divide. We know that people in Northwest Territories or far reaches of Labrador do not have reliable internet and we also know that some people can't afford. So, we make sure that we can still do the traditional printed materials with telephone coaching, people don't have to have a computer. I think one of the strongest messages is with our knowledge, the amount of funding that it takes to support our technology, to increase the innovation. But also, we have cyber insurance annually. We do annual security audits. I mean just that alone; we're talking tens of thousands of dollars a year. And without that support, it's really hard when you're working with marginalized budgets. (Parents Empowering Kids)*
- *We had to change the logistics of the meetings and coordinate with other vendors/stakeholders and made sure that we are still able to provide those meaningful meetings. In some instances, Zoom may not be that engaging because it's over a screen, and sometimes people don't have the privacy to connect over [zoom]. In addition, we wanted to ensure that we were acknowledging the time that participants were spending with us at and that it is meaningful to them and there was an incentive available for them. We had little 'thank you' notes along with the incentives, so that it feels more*

meaningful to the participants. Logistical decisions were made about how to reduce the barriers for folks to attend those Zoom meetings and if somebody cannot be on Zoom what are some other options available. Like do we connect on a conference call or have a chat group, a slack group or WhatsApp messenger? These were some of the conversations that have happened as well. (Do You Mind)

- *I think that the most challenging has been thinking about how to deliver the groups in a way that we could ensure retention, that we could support the children, youth and families already facing a number of barriers because of technology [and] the language skills still developing, because of lacking resources needed that COVID has impacted as well. So, that was probably one of the most challenging aspects: thinking of ways to still stay true to the project and wanting to really enhance the wellness and wellbeing, but in a way that also was accessible for them, for the children and their families. So, yeah, I think that coming up with different strategies to make sure that it was a two-way, that we could really sort of give and take in a way that made sense. (Enhancing Mental Wellness of Refugee Children, Youth and Families)*

Addressing the needs of youth who relied on schools for internet access or technology

- *Je pense qu'il y a aussi différentes choses à gérer qu'ils n'avaient pas à gérer auparavant. Qui a un ordinateur ? Qui ne le fait pas ? Qui a internet à la maison ou pas ? Ces questions n'étaient pas posées auparavant, puisque les ordinateurs étaient à l'école. L'école était la plaque tournante et tout se faisait à l'école, et maintenant tout se fait à la maison. En ce sens, vous n'avez pas le même niveau de suivi pour chaque élève. Maintenant, il y a tellement plus de choses à gérer qui n'étaient pas un problème lorsque les écoles étaient ouvertes. Cela demande beaucoup plus d'organisation. Maintenant, nous devons planifier les réunions bien à l'avance et prendre toutes les dispositions. (La santé mentale, on s'en parle!)*

Language considerations and cultural sensitivity (newcomers and refugees)

- *Our best way of communicating is through the Zoom meetings or like Google Meets because they had had the closed captioning option. So again, for accessibility we were mindful, like these are the two platforms that could really help us. So yeah, that's how we moved forward.*
- *Originally one of our centers, we had two of our facilitators, one who was Arabic speaking and one who was English speaking, because the population there, a large percentage of the attendants at the Maritime Muslim Academy were Arabic speaking so what we were finding for the in person sessions was that one of the facilitators would say the blurb in English and then our other facilitator was translating on the spot. So those that were speaking English had to sit and wait and listen and vice versa. So, it was taking them a little bit longer in the evening, you know, at the end of an already long day, they were kind of finding that to be a little taxing. So that was certainly on our radar, is how we can kind of streamline it. So, when we had to adapt to the online format, it was nice because the Arabic speaking facilitator made the suggestion that she could do a separate session for those families that spoke only Arabic. So, we were able to kind of offer the session separately whereas in person we weren't able to do that. ... And now, with the Arabic, translating the materials in Arabic, we're also working on translating into French and Mi'kmaq to implement the workshops in more diverse communities during our next phase. (Positive Solutions for Families)*
- *I think it just reminds me of the candid conversations we had with [our community partner] at the beginning as to the fact that these groups are going to be run in their homes and are the parents going to be comfortable with allowing into that space because technically, you're not going to be afforded the same privacy. Regardless, also building that relationship and the rapport and that sense*

of safety with newcomer parents takes a lot longer or they want some sense of familiarity. So, we had to have candid conversations as to who would they be comfortable facilitating the group, especially at the onset of these groups because we had a lot of learning and growth to do ourselves. We wanted to pick people that maybe had a cultural proximity to the participants, so in language or in understanding of that collectivist background or a faith, things of that nature as well. So we would have somebody from our team because we're very fortunate to be very diverse. We were able to afford a facilitator that was able to co-facilitate with MRC and be able to have that rapport and to make the families feel comfortable which is really the main focus here. (STRONG)

- *Well, the curriculum that we are looking at will probably need to be delivered by someone who is Arabic speaking, depending on who the participants are., So, depending on who the participants are, we will adjust accordingly to that, and some of the materials obviously may need to be translated, so, I mean, again, think about accessibility of different populations. That's a key piece. (Nurturing Child Development and Well-being in Refugee Children & Families)*
- *First of all, there is Zoom fatigue. I think everybody has Zoom fatigue. But additionally, I think, in newcomer communities, you have larger families, you have accessibility to technology. You might have five clients and one device. Language is always a barrier, and just the kind of tech savviness. It's things that we never had to think about a year ago. So, just brand-new challenges that we had to address. (Enhancing Mental Wellness of Refugee Children, Youth and Families)*

Appendix B: Contact information by project

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