

# Innovation in Evidence

## Committing to Action

Next Steps for Canada's Evidence Ecosystem

BY LISA LALANDE, JOANNE CAVE & ADAM JOG

**MowatNFP**  
MOWAT'S NOT-FOR-PROFIT POLICY RESEARCH HUB

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Mowat NFP undertakes collaborative applied policy research on the not-for-profit sector. As part of an independent think tank with strong partnerships with government and the sector, Mowat NFP brings a balanced perspective to examine the challenges facing today's sector and to support its future direction. Mowat NFP works in partnership with umbrella organizations to ensure our research and policy recommendations are timely and relevant to the sector and reflect its values.

Mowat Centre

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The Mowat Centre is an independent public policy think tank located at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto. The Mowat Centre is Ontario's non-partisan, evidence-based voice on public policy. It undertakes collaborative applied policy research, proposes innovative research-driven recommendations, and engages in public dialogue on Canada's most important national issues.

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Without an easy  
and simple way to  
access the right  
knowledge in a way  
that makes sense  
to organizations,  
we're all doing our  
best with incomplete  
and imperfect  
information.

# FOREWORD

In the UK, evidence institutions known as What Works Centres (WWCs) have been developed to improve the way organizations and governments access and use evidence to inform policy and practice. These Centres aim to provide decision-makers with the best available evidence in a way that is timely, useful and easy to understand. Ultimately the creation of these Centres enables the social sector to deliver the best possible outcomes for the individuals and communities it serves.


Without an easy and simple way to access the right knowledge in a way that makes sense to organizations, we're all doing our best with incomplete and imperfect information. These Centres make more informed, better decisions possible and will result in greater access to evidence for the social sector in Ontario. This evidence can be used to improve program design, improve allocation of resources, and ultimately lead to better outcomes for the people of Ontario. For organizations and funders, this means working towards being able to deliver and invest in the most promising initiatives.

As this paper documents, there are ongoing challenges to address together, from generating evidence, to translating it, to adopting it. By bringing diverse partners together as we have tried to do in partnership with the Mowat Centre, these challenges can be met in a way that respects different ways of knowing, different values, and meets the needs of all parties in the social sector – with the shared goal in mind of improving the lives of the people we are serving as funders and practitioners.

OTF is committed to advancing the use of evidence to achieve social and environmental outcomes, and this paper is an important step towards understanding what it will take to make this a reality. It provides a discussion of key considerations and principles to help us move forward, as well as a list of recommendations. OTF is continuously seeking ways it can expand its efforts. We urge others to join us and the Mowat Centre in this effort.

**Katharine Bambrick**

Chief Executive Officer,  
Ontario Trillium Foundation



“In line with the recommendations in the Inclusive Innovation report, Canada has an opportunity to invest in community-driven approaches to social innovation. When shifting systems so that they work better for people and the planet, we need to base policy and program changes on evidence about what works. What Works Centres or networks can provide this assurance in a timely and efficient manner – while also pointing out what doesn’t work, and where further social R&D is needed. Their importance to a successful socio-economic transition at this critical juncture cannot be overstated”

STEPHEN HUDDART, PRESIDENT AND CEO,  
MCCONNELL FOUNDATION

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Evidence-informed policymaking is no longer a nascent concept. Every social policy issue - from homelessness to early childhood development - relies on evidence-informed policies and practices to maximize impact.

While the *why* of evidence-informed policymaking and service delivery is well-understood, important questions remain about *how* to do it in practice. What steps are needed to move from talking about using evidence to guide policy and practice to actually doing it consistently - and doing it well?

Evidence institutions such as policy labs or the UK What Works Centres have been proven to better link research with practice and build capacity for experimentation in the policy development process. We can benefit from drawing on lessons learned from these initiatives, and other similar approaches, to inform new approaches here in Canada.

In recent months, Mowat NFP hosted an international conference, *Innovation in Evidence* and a follow-up convening event. Both events sought to enable Canadian organizations and governments to learn from leading efforts to improve evidence-informed policymaking and service delivery in Canada, the US and the UK, as well as to explore the merits of the UK-based What Works Centre (WWC) approach.

This paper summarizes learnings from the events and identifies opportunities to strengthen the Canadian evidence ecosystem. Specifically, this paper:

- Provides background on Mowat NFP's multi-year research project that led to the *Innovation in Evidence* events.
- Summarizes promising practices in the US, UK, and Canada to generate and mobilize evidence.
- Identifies underlying conditions crucial for the success of these practices.
- Provides detailed case studies of innovative evidence institutions and incubation efforts.
- Outlines concrete recommendations to governments, funders and social sector organizations.

Now is the time for serious consideration of the evidence infrastructure and to commit to action. The Government of Canada announced a \$755M Social Finance Fund to invest in high-impact projects and assist social sector organizations with readiness to participate in the social finance marketplace.<sup>1</sup> It also announced a \$225M investment over 4 years in the creation of a Future Skills Centre and \$75M every year thereafter.<sup>2</sup> The Community Safety Knowledge Alliance in Saskatchewan is one of several Canadian organizations that have been exploring the opportunity of transitioning into a Canadian What Works Centre-like entity.

Unlocking the potential of Canada's evidence ecosystem<sup>3</sup> will have a significant impact on improving social outcomes. The recommendations in this report point towards the need for a strategic, system-wide approach in Ontario and Canada more broadly.

1 Government of Canada (2018). "Fall Economic Statement 2018". <https://www.budget.gc.ca/fes-eea/2018/docs/statement-enonce/chap02-en.html>.

2 The Future Skills Centre will focus on developing a national network of key partners, building an evidence base focused on labour market skills and trends, experimenting with new programs/approaches and mobilizing evidence to social sector organizations, educational institutions and policymakers.

3 The evidence ecosystem is the collective environment of evidence institutions, policy think tanks, data centres, academic research institutions, government bodies and service delivery organizations that collect, use and disseminate research and data.



## Research approach

In November 2018, Mowat NFP and the Community Safety Knowledge Alliance hosted a national conference in Regina, Saskatchewan with more than 130 attendees.<sup>4</sup> The conference featured 12 speakers from international evidence institutions and foundations, and these speakers are listed in Appendix E. A subsequent Ontario-based convening event was held in February 2019 with more than 40 attendees to ground learnings from the conference in a provincial and not-for-profit sector context.

Both the conference and convening events were used as critical inputs for the recommendations in this paper. The design of these events was largely informed by Mowat NFP's conference background paper and previous publications, including *Evidence That Works* and *Bridging The Gap*.<sup>5</sup> Materials from the conference and convening events were supplemented with information drawn from both academic and non-academic literatures. After the Innovation in Evidence conference in November 2018, Mowat NFP also set up a crowdsourcing platform to map evidence institutions across Canada.<sup>6</sup>

Drawing on interviews with key informants, Mowat NFP has also prepared case studies and practice profiles that dig deeper into "how" evidence institutions are strengthening their evidence ecosystems. Appendix A explores the approaches that three innovative evidence institutions in the US, Canada and the UK take to improve policymaking and service delivery. Appendix B includes case studies on the developing What Works Centre for Children's Social Care in the UK and the Carleton Centre for Community Innovation's pilot project, "Common Approach to Impact Measurement." Appendix C provides further details on organizations, initiatives and tools that are having an impact.

Since the inception of this research project in 2016, more than 120 interviews have been conducted with experts in evidence-informed policymaking, both across Canada and internationally. We focused on UK and US-based informants and case studies to complement Canadian examples due to the similarities in the policy environments and evidence ecosystems.

The term "end user" is used throughout the paper. End users can include members of the general public, non-profit organizations, practitioners/service providers, research/academic institutions, policymakers or the media.

This paper also explores the vital role of the social sector in advancing the evidence ecosystem in Ontario and Canada. As in Mowat NFP's previous papers, we use the term "social sector" to refer to non-profit and charitable organizations, social enterprises and other social purpose organizations, including cross-sector initiatives.<sup>7</sup>


4 Lalande, L. and Cave, J. (2018). "Strengthening Canadian Efforts to Identify What Works (and What Doesn't) in Social Policy." Mowat Centre: Toronto, Canada. <https://mowatcentre.ca/innovation-in-evidence-conference-background-paper/>.

5 Cave, J., Aitken, K. and Lalande, L. (2017). "Bridging The Gap: Designing a Canadian What Works Centre." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/bridging-the-gap/>; White, A. (2018). "Evidence That Works: Building The Canadian Evidence Infrastructure for Social Policy." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/evidence-that-works/>.

6 The Mowat Centre (2018). "Canada's Evidence Institutions." <https://mowatcentre.ca/canadas-evidence-institutions/>.

7 Cave, J. and Lalande, L. (2019). "Breaking The Inertia: Repositioning The Government-Sector Partnership." Toronto: Mowat Centre. <https://mowatcentre.ca/breaking-the-inertia/>.





“Multi-sectoral approaches are crucial to addressing the complex human services challenges we face. Those efforts must be grounded in data-driven decision-making, local community-based solutions and strategic partnerships. They must be outcomes-focused and achieve value for resources. We don’t have to start from scratch — in our quest for ‘what works’ there are models we can learn from and adapt to our environments”

CAL CORLEY, CEO,  
COMMUNITY SAFETY KNOWLEDGE ALLIANCE

# 2 BACKGROUND

In 2017, Mowat NFP published *Bridging the Gap* to provide concrete recommendations to design a Canadian What Works Centre (WWC). That paper was the first in-depth assessment of the viability of adapting the WWC approach to a Canadian context, drawing on successful examples from the US and the UK. *Bridging the Gap* recommended that a Canadian WWC be independent from government and align with the requirements of the What Works Global Network.<sup>8</sup> The paper and the subsequent *Evidence that Works* report also identified employment, skills and training, poverty reduction, Indigenous wellbeing, child welfare and juvenile justice as opportunities to significantly strengthen the evidence base.<sup>9</sup>

*Bridging the Gap* catalyzed a more extensive research project on evidence-informed policymaking and service delivery issues in Canada. Mowat NFP has since released research papers on outcomes-based measurement practices<sup>10</sup> and building integrated data ecosystems in the non-profit and charitable sector,<sup>11</sup> and has developed a crowdsourcing platform to map existing Canadian evidence institutions.<sup>12</sup>

This body of research has identified several key challenges to strengthening Canada's evidence ecosystem:

- Lack of data literacy and capacity in social sector organizations that do frontline work with beneficiaries.
- Outdated legislative and regulatory frameworks that impede data-sharing and cross-organizational collaboration.
- Misaligned incentives for organizations to contribute to a broader evidence ecosystem and link their findings to the policymaking process.
- Lack of standardization in processes and methods (e.g. standards or hierarchies of evidence) to allow for comparability.
- Gaps in how academic researchers and social sector organizations produce evidence and how policymakers obtain and use evidence.
- Lack of capacity of social sector organizations to access existing research evidence and implement it.
- Fragmentation in the existing evidence ecosystem, where evidence institutions work in isolation on related social policy issues.

8 Cave, J., Aitken, K. and Lalande, L. (2017). "Bridging The Gap: Designing a Canadian What Works Centre." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/bridging-the-gap/>.

9 Cave, J., Aitken, K. and Lalande, L. (2017). "Bridging The Gap: Designing a Canadian What Works Centre." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/bridging-the-gap/>; White, A. (2018). "Evidence That Works: Building The Canadian Evidence Infrastructure for Social Policy." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/evidence-that-works/>.

10 Lalande, L. and Cave, J. (2017). "Measuring Outcomes in Practice: Fostering an Enabling Environment for Measurement in Canada." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/measuring-outcomes-in-practice/>.

11 Cave, J., Gyateng, T., Lalande, L. and Lumley, T. (2018). "Collaborating for Greater Impact: Building an Integrated Data Ecosystem." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/collaborating-for-greater-impact/>.

12 The crowdsourcing platform can be found here: <https://mowatcentre.ca/canadas-evidence-institutions/>.

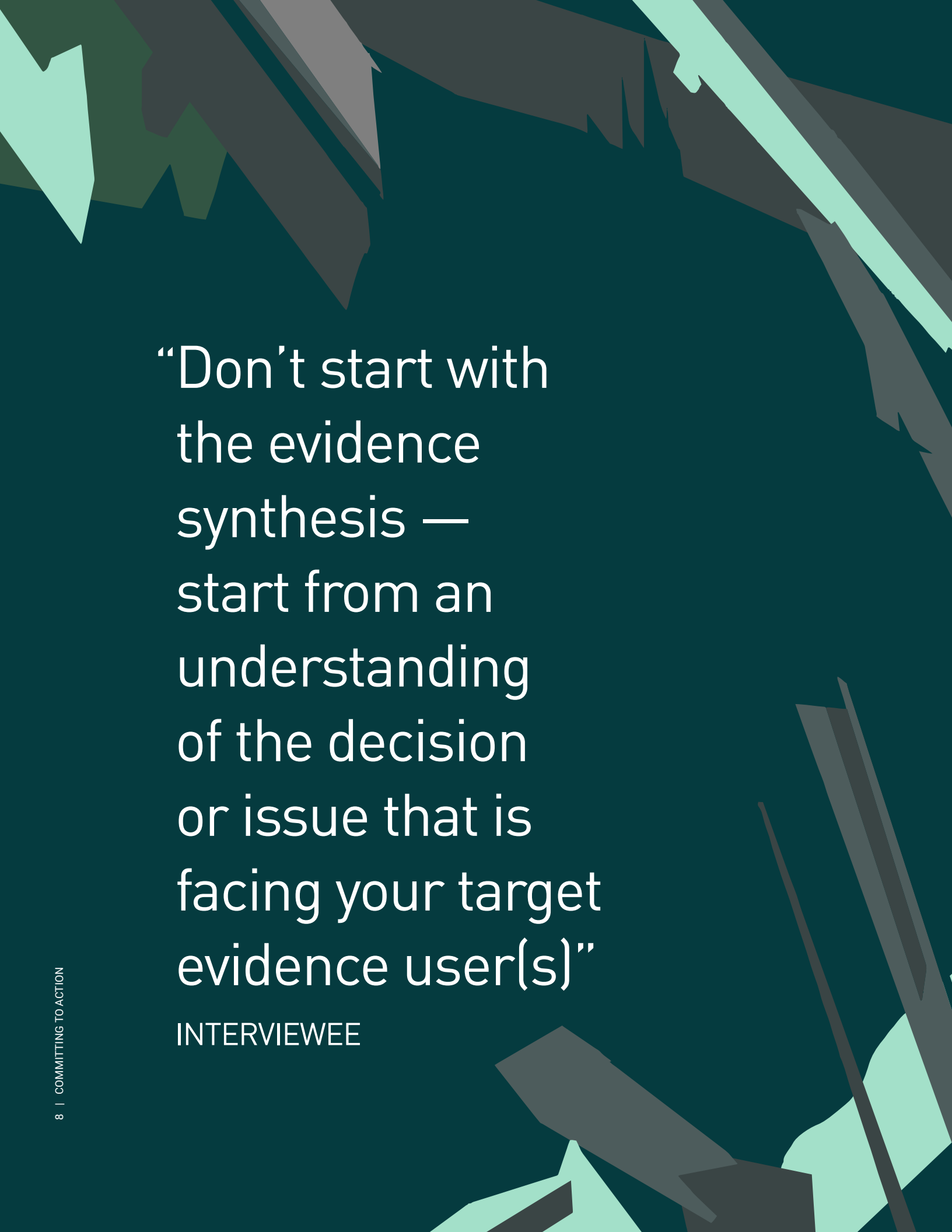
Despite these challenges, many social sector organizations, research institutions and government departments are making a significant impact with evidence. What can we learn from their efforts and how can we scale up these promising practices within the broader ecosystem?

The *Innovation in Evidence* events were designed to identify opportunities to improve the use of evidence in policymaking and program delivery in Canada. The conference and convening events focused on key themes and challenges identified through Mowat NFP's multi-year research project (refer to Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1**

### Key event themes

Theme	Description	Key Challenges
Generating Evidence	Acquiring the resources, human capital and organizational infrastructure required to create high-quality evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Aligning efforts against standards or hierarchies of evidence.</li> <li>» Engaging end users in research design.</li> <li>» Generating evidence that can meaningfully inform policymaking process and service delivery.</li> <li>» Building shared data infrastructure.</li> <li>» Developing frontline technical expertise.</li> </ul>
Translating Evidence	Ensuring that evidence is accessible, understandable and useful to stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Distilling complex data into action-oriented findings.</li> <li>» Engaging end users in knowledge translation processes.</li> </ul>
Adopting Evidence	Facilitating links to the policymaking process and promoting uptake of evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Identifying appropriate incentives.</li> <li>» Creating feedback loops for policy development process.</li> <li>» Building government capacity to utilize evidence.</li> </ul>
Funding Evidence	Exploring funding models to invest in capacity building, expand use of evidence and scale up promising practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Sustaining and diversifying funding sources.</li> <li>» Linking emerging non-traditional funding models, like social finance, to existing organizations.</li> <li>» Facilitating readiness of non-profit organizations for outcomes-based funding arrangements.</li> </ul>
Innovation and Experimentation	Facilitating innovation and experimentation in the use of evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Funding innovative and experimental approaches.</li> <li>» Constraining legislative and regulatory frameworks.</li> </ul>



“Don’t start with  
the evidence  
synthesis —  
start from an  
understanding  
of the decision  
or issue that is  
facing your target  
evidence user(s)”

INTERVIEWEE

# 3 PROMISING PRACTICES

The following section synthesizes key insights from promising domestic and international evidence initiatives profiled at the events. These insights identify what has been effective for evidence institutions in generating and mobilizing evidence. They provide guidance for Canadian organizations and governments seeking to scale evidence-informed practices. For a description of these key themes, refer to Figure 1 on page 7.

## Evidence about evidence: Is the What Works Centre model working?

Several evaluation reports have been released about What Works Centres and key lessons learned since *Bridging the Gap* was published in 2017. Some of their key findings include:

- » What Works Centres in the UK have expansive reach, covering social policy areas that account for £200B in public expenditure. Since their inception, What Works Centres have commissioned 48 systematic reviews and produced or commissioned 288 evidence reviews.<sup>13</sup>
- » What Works Centres are just one part of the Network. They are complemented by several other research collaborations and initiatives within government (e.g. the Cross-Government Trial Advice Panel, which has been utilized by 18 government departments) to maximize the Network's impact.<sup>14</sup>
- » Several What Works Centres (Education Endowment Foundation, What Works Centre for Crime Reduction) have indicated that they have been most impactful by running their own randomized controlled trials and liaising with frontline practitioners directly, rather than summarizing and disseminating existing evidence.<sup>15</sup>
- » Standards of evidence have posed a challenge for individual What Works Centres and the Network as a whole. Within individual Centres, standards were applied differently based on the available evidence in the sector. The Network could benefit from greater clarity about how and when to use certain standards.<sup>16</sup>

Many of these reflections and observations were explored further by speakers at the *Innovation in Evidence* conference.

13 UK Cabinet Office (2018). "What Works Network: Five Years On." <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-what-works-network-five-years-on>.

14 UK Cabinet Office (2018). "What Works Network: Five Years On." <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-what-works-network-five-years-on>.

15 France Strategie (2017). "British What Works Centres: What Lessons for Evidence-Based Policy in France?" [https://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/assets/Ansa\\_A4UE\\_whatworks\\_final\\_Full-report-standard.pdf](https://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/assets/Ansa_A4UE_whatworks_final_Full-report-standard.pdf).

16 Gough, D., Maidment, C. and Sharples, J. (2018). "UK What Works Centres: Aims, methods, contexts." London: University College London Institute of Education, p. 10.

# Generating Evidence

## Sharing and Linking Data for Maximum Impact

Data sharing and data linking can lead to the generation of high-quality evidence. Being able to integrate data on individuals who interact with multiple service delivery systems can provide a fuller picture of their experiences and needs. In Alberta, PolicyWise's Child and Youth Data Lab has linked data across a variety of government ministries to produce findings that help inform public health policies and service delivery.<sup>17</sup> PolicyWise has also undertaken projects with non-profit service delivery organizations in Calgary and Edmonton to link client data to better understand client trajectories and coordinate services.<sup>18</sup>

Statistics Canada's project on re-contact with Saskatchewan's criminal justice system is another useful example of linking data. The project combined administrative data from the policing, courts and corrections sectors to track how individuals interacted with the system.<sup>19</sup> Using microsimulation modelling techniques, researchers were able to predict which individuals were most at risk of re-offending and identify factors (e.g. educational attainment) that could be targeted to reduce their future interactions with the criminal justice system.

Legislation is often needed to facilitate sharing and access. Saskatchewan has introduced the Data Matching Agreements Act which will allow government organizations to link data.<sup>20</sup> In the UK, The Digital Economy Act 2017 provided a gateway for researchers to access government data;<sup>21</sup> this was followed by the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) recent investment of £44M in the Administrative Data Research Partnership (ADRP), which will make anonymized administrative data from across government available to researchers.<sup>22</sup>

## Using Intermediaries to Build Capacity for Generating Evidence

Thought leadership organizations in the UK and the US - such as the Alliance for Useful Evidence, the What Works Team in the UK Cabinet Office and the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab<sup>23</sup> - play a significant role in strengthening their evidence ecosystems and providing common frameworks, strategies and tools, as well as building the capacity of government and non-profit organizations in measurement and data. In Ontario, the Carleton Centre for Community Innovation is leading a two-year collaborative pilot project to create a common approach to impact measurement for social enterprises. The project is in partnership with Employment Social Development Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Its aim is to create enabling infrastructure, common processes of measurement and standard indicators.<sup>24</sup>

17 Powered by Data (2018). "Maximizing Impact through Administrative Data." <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5623f0e8e4b0126254053337/t/5b16d1812b6a28229d85f118/1528222082472/Public+Briefing+Document+-+Admin+Data+-+June+2018.pdf>.

18 Please refer to Appendix A for a case study on PolicyWise's data activities, and to Appendix C for more detail on these two projects (i.e. Calgary Thrives and the Collaborative Data Linkage Project).

19 Brennan, S. and Matarazzo, A. (2018). "Re-contact with the Saskatchewan justice system." <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2016001/article/14633-eng.htm>.

20 Fraser, D.C. (2017). "Saskatchewan introduces data-matching law." <https://leaderpost.com/news/saskatchewan/saskatchewan-introduces-data-matching-law>.

21 ESRC (2019). "Administrative Data Research Partnership." <https://esrc.ukri.org/research/our-research/administrative-data-research-partnership/>.

22 ESRC (2018). "Addressing major societal challenges by harnessing government data." <https://esrc.ukri.org/news-events-and-publications/news/news-items/addressing-major-societal-challenges-by-harnessing-government-data/>.

23 Please refer to Appendix C for more information on the Government Performance Lab.

24 Please refer to Appendix B for a case study on the project.

## Building a foundation for an Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy

In March 2018, Alberta's Ministry of Culture and Tourism funded a project to develop the foundation for a provincial non-profit data strategy. The project would aim to enhance the acquisition, analysis and use of data in Alberta's non-profit sector, and would be the first of its kind in Canada.<sup>25</sup> The Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (CCVO) is serving as the fiscal agent for the project and is chairing the project's Advisory Committee.<sup>26</sup> The first phase of the work involved developing a roadmap for the strategy by soliciting sector input on datasets of interest to the sector and key challenges and opportunities.<sup>27</sup> The roadmap was finalized in February 2019 and will be implemented using a modified constellation model of governance.<sup>28</sup> The data strategy will be developed over time by accumulating learnings derived from executing initiatives or projects outlined in the roadmap.

Beginning in 2019, PolicyWise will be leading the second phase of the data strategy over a 12-month period. Their work will explore how to:

- » Improve access to provincial government data.
- » Improve access and sharing of community agency data.
- » Create a central data hub to store and access data.
- » Build capacity in the non-profit sector to better collect, access and use data.

25 Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations. (2018). "Building a Foundation for an Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy: Project Whitepaper." <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aef5b46cef3728571e6c46c/t/5b8ef05340ec9a1cebbd5d9a/1536094415329/Project+Whitepaper+-+Alberta+Nonprofit+Data+Strategy+-+July+2018.pdf>.

26 The Advisory Committee includes representatives from Alberta Culture & Tourism (Community Engagement), Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, Service Alberta, and Volunteer Alberta. See Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations. (2018). "Building a Foundation for an Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy: Project Whitepaper." <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aef5b46cef3728571e6c46c/t/5b8ef05340ec9a1cebbd5d9a/1536094415329/Project+Whitepaper+-+Alberta+Nonprofit+Data+Strategy+-+July+2018.pdf>.

27 Zakaib, G. (2019). "Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy Roadmap." <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aef5b46cef3728571e6c46c/t/5c745650eb393140a620215e/1551128147129/ANDS+Roadmap+-+February+2019.pdf>.

28 Constellation models of governance are network-based and promote multi-organization collaboration and accountability for a shared process/vision. See: Zakaib, G. (2019). "Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy Roadmap." <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aef5b46cef3728571e6c46c/t/5c745650eb393140a620215e/1551128147129/ANDS+Roadmap+-+February+2019.pdf>.

## Exploring Hierarchies and Standards of Evidence<sup>29</sup>

Standards of evidence are commonly used in scientific research to rank, or compare, types of evidence. Standards of evidence can be used to compare interventions, develop evaluation plans, allocate funding and improve evaluation practices within an organization. Several What Works Centres (WWCs) have created their own standards of evidence, while others adopt or adhere to existing standards in the scientific community.<sup>30</sup>

The UK-based Alliance for Useful Evidence has proposed a matrix of evidence rather than a hierarchy, recognizing that there can be significant differences in objectives, study design and research outputs.<sup>31</sup> A principles-driven approach may be more appropriate given the proliferation of standards of evidence and unique needs of each sub-sector.<sup>32</sup>

There has been significant debate and discussion about whether standards of evidence should be aligned/coordinated across evidence institutions. Recent research has suggested that there are significant barriers to alignment - namely, the need for evidence institutions to share their technical expertise and change their practices to adopt a unified standard. In 2018, the Alliance for Useful Evidence conducted an extensive mapping exercise of the 18 different standards of evidence used in social policy research across the UK.<sup>33</sup> The Alliance concluded that standardizing and streamlining existing standards of evidence may be beneficial for comparability and integration across the sector.<sup>34</sup>

## Creating Space for Different “Ways of Knowing”

There are different views on what qualifies as rigorous and credible evidence and what constitutes ‘impact’.<sup>35</sup> Rigorous experimental approaches such as randomized control trials (RCTs) are often seen as the “gold standard”<sup>36</sup> as they provide a valuable source of valid and reliable evidence. However, they sometimes fail to capture the ‘whole’ human context relevant to building actionable evidence in the social sector.<sup>37</sup> Approaches that focus on theory or process can provide information about “why” a particular intervention succeeded or failed, something which RCTs cannot answer.

Similarly, the digitization of data can make storytelling about impact more powerful, but data on its own can also be taken out of context and could do harm. Convening event participants

*“My role is in governance, but to do it well we need good data. We can’t do it as all the machinery around us takes data from us. And, with respect to our data, we don’t want to measure things like death; rather, we want to measure vitality. We want to measure vibrancy! We had to start defining what that is... and the data we collect needs to account for that...making sure the system is working for citizens.”*

GWEN PHILLIPS,  
KTUNAXA NATION

29 Largely popularized in evidence-based medicine, a hierarchy of evidence is an approach to structuring evidence by the level of methodological rigour. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs), systematic reviews and meta analyses are commonly placed at the top of a hierarchy of evidence as the gold standard. A standard of evidence is a framework for evaluating and organizing evidence based on pre-determined criteria (e.g. relevance to systems change, methodological rigour). A standard of evidence may be organized as a hierarchy of methods, but it is not required.

30 For more information about standards and hierarchies of evidence see: Cave, J., Aitken, K. and Lalande, L. (2017). “Bridging The Gap: Designing a Canadian What Works Centre.” Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/bridging-the-gap/>, p. 7.

31 Nutley, S., Powell, A. & Davies, H. (2013). “What counts as good evidence?” Alliance for Useful Evidence. <https://www.alliance4useful-evidence.org/assets/What-Counts-as-Good-Evidence-WEB.pdf>.

32 Puttick, R. (2018). “Mapping the standards of evidence used in UK social policy.” Alliance for Useful Evidence. [https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Mapping\\_Standards\\_of\\_Evidence\\_A4UE\\_final.pdf](https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Mapping_Standards_of_Evidence_A4UE_final.pdf).

33 Puttick, R. (2018). “Mapping the standards of evidence used in UK social policy.” Alliance for Useful Evidence. [https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Mapping\\_Standards\\_of\\_Evidence\\_A4UE\\_final.pdf](https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Mapping_Standards_of_Evidence_A4UE_final.pdf).

34 Vine, J. (2018). “Standardising standards: the case for shared standards in the evidence sector.” London: Alliance for Useful Evidence. <https://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/assets/2018/10/A4UE-Standardising-standards-v2-2.pdf>.

35 Lalande, L. and Cave, J. (2017). “Measuring Outcomes in Practice: Fostering an Enabling Environment for Measurement in Canada.” Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/measuring-outcomes-in-practice/>.

36 Puttick, R. and Ludlow, J. (2013). “Standards of Evidence: An Approach That Balances the Need for Evidence with Innovation.” London: Nesta. [http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/standards\\_of\\_evidence.pdf](http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/standards_of_evidence.pdf).

37 Schnorr, L. (2012). “Broader Evidence for Bigger Impact”. Stanford Social Innovation Review. Leland Stanford Jr. University.



highlighted the need for stakeholders in the evidence ecosystem to recognize that there are different characteristics and sources of knowledge, such as Indigenous knowledge traditions. Stakeholders have an important role in creating space for ‘other ways of knowing’- co-creating approaches to research, measurement and sense-making that account for different cultural and knowledge traditions.

There is great potential to make progress in the context of these known tensions. For example, the Winnipeg Boldness Project took a holistic, participatory approach with Point Douglas residents, parents, knowledge keepers and leaders in setting indicators and designing a measurement framework and tool, the North End Wellbeing Measure. Similar to the teachings of the medicine wheel, they measure wellbeing from a strength-based perspective in all aspects of self: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.<sup>38</sup> All of the Winnipeg Boldness Project’s research and prototypes are shaped by Point Douglas community members, many of whom are Indigenous and offer Indigenous perspectives.<sup>39</sup>

The convening event also explored the role of artists in reframing issues and generating “full picture” insights to solve complex problems. Newcomer Inventions by Creative DW (Decent Work)<sup>40</sup> was profiled as a unique example of an experimental project that used art to help gain new insights into challenges facing newcomers in the settlement process, to support community cohesion, and to provide paid Canadian work experience. Please refer to Appendix C for additional information.

## Researching from the Ground Up

Beneficiaries can provide invaluable input into shaping research because they have an intimate understanding of their context. Drawing upon the lived experience of beneficiaries can help ensure that evidence is relevant to their needs, reflects their cultural wisdom and is used effectively. Qualitative research is particularly effective for engaging beneficiary perspectives. InWithForward employs ethnographic research methods to capture how beneficiaries are interacting with the human services system. Working with beneficiaries in this way can lead to the development of policies and programs that are more responsive to their lived experience. Please refer to Appendix C for additional information on InWithForward.

## Building Community-Driven, Nation-Based Data Governance

First Nations data sovereignty remains an important issue in Canada, requiring governments and community organizations to be sensitive to issues of First Nations data governance, autonomy and independence. Governments and social sector organizations are involved in questions of data sovereignty when they collect First Nations data, deliver programs or services in First Nation communities or collaborate on research or data-sharing projects with First Nations.<sup>41</sup> The OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access and Possession) principles are a useful framework for organizations to review their own practices related to collecting and using First Nations data.<sup>42</sup>

The First Nations Data Centre (discussed further in Appendix C) is one example of strong Canadian leadership in the area of data sovereignty. Informed by the OCAP principles, the First Nations Data Centre provides de-identifiable, record-level data from various First Nations

38 Winnipeg Boldness Project. (2017). “Ways of Knowing, Being, Doing and Feeling: A Wholistic Early Childhood Development Model.” <http://www.winnipegboldness.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Child-Centred-Model-November-2017.pdf>.

39 The Winnipeg Boldness Project (2016). “Strengthening a Foundation for Success and Wellbeing: Reflecting Back in Order to Journey Forward.” <http://www.winnipegboldness.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Two-Year-Report-Long.pdf>.

40 <http://www.creativedw.com/>.

41 Cave, J., Gyateng, T., Lalande, L. and Lumley, T. (2018). “Collaborating for Greater Impact: Building an Integrated Data Ecosystem.” Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/collaborating-for-greater-impact/>.

42 First Nations Information Governance Centre (2019). “OCAP Principles”. <https://fnigc.ca/ocapr.html>.

surveys for researchers to use for statistical modelling.<sup>43</sup> The Data Centre can also provide access to community and region-specific data with consent from the First Nations Chief and Council or regional authority. The Data Centre is led by the First Nations Information Governance Centre, which focuses on promoting First Nations data sovereignty and building local capacity for information management and governance.

## Translating Evidence

### Validating Accessibility of Evidence

Many What Works Centres have developed toolkits which synthesize the evidence base for programs or interventions in a given field and allow users to compare the impact, cost and quality of evidence.<sup>44</sup> To ensure that their evidence is presented in an accessible format, WWCs often test their tools and platforms with end users. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has practitioners sit on a panel that reviews its materials to provide input.<sup>45</sup> The What Works Centre for Crime Reduction has beta tested its new Crime Reduction Toolkit to determine whether it helps users understand the evidence more clearly. Please refer to Appendix C for detail on the EEF's Teaching & Learning Toolkit.

### Using Networks to Translate Evidence

Several WWCs identify advocates or champions to communicate key evidence findings among their peers. The EEF's Research Schools Network uses Research Schools, selected through open competition,<sup>46</sup> for outreach to surrounding schools. The Society of Evidence-Based Policing, a group of practitioners who are evidence enthusiasts, have also been effective for translating key crime reduction findings among the policing community.

### Working to Scale

The decision to focus on depth or breadth reflects an organization's broader philosophy about how to translate evidence effectively. Some WWCs and evidence institutions focus on translating evidence in a deep way, working closely with several learning sites or pilot projects over time. What Works Scotland is one example of this approach, in which the organization worked closely with four community planning partnerships to test community action research methods on specific social issues.<sup>47</sup>

Other evidence institutions, such as the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction, focus on breadth by producing systematic reviews, toolkits and evidence summaries for wide dissemination in the sector. The organization's Crime Reduction Toolkit is a compelling example of how evidence institutions can present a breadth of research and evidence in a format that is understandable and accessible. However, one of the challenges with this approach is that systematic reviews can obscure evidence quality and it may be difficult to communicate the context-specific factors to consider when deciding whether to replicate a particular program or intervention in a local community.

43 First Nations Information Governance Centre (2019). "The First Nations Data Centre". <https://fnigc.ca/fndc>.

44 UK Cabinet Office (2018). "What Works Network: Five Years On." <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-what-works-network-five-years-on>.

45 Education Endowment Foundation (2018). "Annual Report 2018." [https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/AnnualReports/EEF\\_-\\_2018\\_Annual\\_Report\\_print.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/AnnualReports/EEF_-_2018_Annual_Report_print.pdf).

46 Please refer to Case Study #2 in Appendix A for more information on the Research Schools Network.

47 Brunner, R., Bennett, H., Bynner, C. and Henderson, J. (2018). "Collaborative Action Research and public services: insights into methods, findings and implications for public service reform." What Works Scotland. <http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/WWSCollabARCrossSiteFinal.pdf>.

# Adopting Evidence

## Sustaining Meaningful Engagement

The movement for evidence-informed policymaking and practice is fundamentally about relationships and trust building. Meaningful engagement, which fosters trusting relationships, can help encourage evidence uptake. Co-creation and feelings of ownership/co-ownership lead to greater investment from the users/beneficiaries and make it more likely that they will implement evidence and commit to the outcomes (e.g. involving government partners in the process can be an effective way to spur policy change).

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) implementation field teams have proven effective at building end-user capacity, working with local practitioners on how to action evidence, and the Prime Minister's implementation taskforces in the UK have been effective at engaging end users routinely.

## Bridging to the Policy Process

While it's important for evidence institutions to be independent from government, there needs to be some connection to the policy process.<sup>48</sup> What Works Centres and evidence institutions have adopted numerous approaches to establish this link more clearly.

In the UK Cabinet Office, the What Works Team and the What Works National Adviser have been important mechanisms for sharing evidence from the WWCs across government and driving evidence-informed change. This approach creates a government mechanism that can liaise with evidence institutions on an ongoing basis.

## Tapping into Technical Expertise

There have been positive developments in Canada's federal public service towards experimentation and innovation in the past few years.<sup>49</sup> However, more capacity building for public servants and non-profit organizations is needed to explore innovative ways of adopting evidence.

In the UK, the Trial Advice Panel set up by the What Works Team in Cabinet Office connects academics to civil servants to provide advice on running high-quality trials.<sup>50</sup> Evidence institutions with expertise and research capacity, such as the Behavioural Insights Team, can also help governments run experiments.<sup>51</sup> In Canada, PolicyWise is one example of a non-profit intermediary organization leading data integration initiatives in partnership with the Government of Alberta (refer to Appendix A for more information).

48 Cave, J., Aitken, K. and Lalande, L. (2017). "Bridging The Gap: Designing a Canadian What Works Centre." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/bridging-the-gap/>.

49 These developments include, but are not limited to, the following: The Government of Canada's Experimentation direction for Deputy Heads, which reinforces the Government's commitment to devote a fixed percentage of program funds to "experimenting with new approaches"; the creation of units housed in the Privy Council Office focused on results-driven approaches; and the establishment of an Innovation and Experimentation Team within the Treasury Board Secretariat focused on building public servants' capacity in experimentation.

50 Gold, J. (2019). "How experiments craft better policy: inside the world's What Works teams." [https://apolitical.co/solution\\_article/inside-worlds-what-works-teams/](https://apolitical.co/solution_article/inside-worlds-what-works-teams/).

51 Breckon, J. (2015). "Better public services through experimental government." <https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/better-public-services-through-experimental-government/>. Please refer to Appendix C for more information about the Behavioural Insights Team.

# Funding Evidence

## Building Evidence into Funding Processes

Embedding evidence requirements into government funding processes can be a powerful means for encouraging evidence-informed behaviour. This can be achieved through requiring funded organizations to demonstrate their supporting evidence base and conduct routine evaluations. Many social sector organizations lack capacity in evaluation and measurement.<sup>52</sup> Building organizational capacity in research and evaluation for social sector organizations is often required to do this effectively. The Ontario Trillium Foundation's Grow Investment Stream is an example of a large, outcomes-based fund being used to advance this approach to evidence-based grant making. The program provides multi-year funding (\$50,000 to \$250,000 per year) for scaling, replicating or adapting evidence-based projects.<sup>53</sup>

## Matching Funding Commitments to Intended Outcomes

Securing funding for a new What Works Centre or evidence institution often occurs in a piecemeal way. However, many successful evidence institutions have received strategic funding commitments that corresponded clearly to the intended scale and outputs of their work. The following table is based on guidance from the UK What Works Network and informant interviews and summarizes how the annual budget of a WWC would correspond with to scope of its capabilities.

**FIGURE 2**

**Operating budgets for evidence institutions and corresponding capabilities<sup>54</sup>**

Annual Operating Budget	Evidence Institution Capabilities
£1-1.5M (\$1.75-2.62M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Evidence synthesis; possible to develop toolkits.</li> <li>» Limited capacity for dissemination (therefore, may be difficult to demonstrate clear impact).</li> <li>» Unlikely to have sufficient capacity to invest in new studies or fulfill evidence gaps.</li> </ul>
£2M (\$3.5M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Evidence synthesis and systematic reviews.</li> <li>» More capacity to scrutinize existing datasets and quasi-experimental approaches.</li> <li>» Could support systematic learning with a small number of organizations (basic engagement and evidence dissemination to improve practices).</li> </ul>
£4-5M (\$7-8.75M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Evidence synthesis and dissemination.</li> <li>» Could run randomized controlled trials and pursue a research agenda to fulfill evidence gaps.</li> <li>» Could test and evaluate existing programs and practices that have not been robustly evaluated.</li> </ul>
£10M (\$17.5M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Sufficient funding to transform knowledge of what works in sector and strengthen evidence-informed funding allocations.</li> <li>» Could conduct deeper analysis or randomized controlled trials to replicate and scale interventions.</li> </ul>

52 Lalande, L. and Cave, J. (2017). "Measuring Outcomes in Practice: Fostering an Enabling Environment for Measurement in Canada." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/measuring-outcomes-in-practice/>.

53 Ontario Trillium Foundation (2017). "OTF Investment Stream: Grow." [https://otf.ca/sites/default/files/grow\\_background\\_en.pdf](https://otf.ca/sites/default/files/grow_background_en.pdf).

54 UK What Works Network. (2017). "Considerations Around Setting Up a What Works Centre." Note that this table assumes that GBP and CAD are equivalent in terms of organizational capacity.

## Exploring Long-Term Funding Models

Endowments are an ideal funding type for evidence institutions. They provide long-term security for organizations, can insulate them from political turnover, and save organizations resources spent trying to continually secure funding. The EEF was created through a £125M endowment from the Department for Education, which will sustain the organization for 15 years. Through investments, fundraising and other activities, the EEF has grown that investment to £200M.

UK informants noted that What Works Centres with endowments should have “spend-down requirements” to create a sense of urgency and to keep the organization focused on achieving impact over a shorter time horizon. The £200M Youth Endowment Fund in the UK is currently being set up using the same model – the funds will have to be spent over a 10-year period.

While endowments are the ideal, multi-year funding (e.g. five-year grant cycles) can also give evidence institutions greater financial security.<sup>55</sup>

## Using Evidence to Drive Outcomes-Based Funding

WWCs in the UK typically do not engage directly with outcomes-based funding arrangements. The UK Government’s Centre for Social Impact Bonds functions very distinctly from the What Works Network, but intermediary organizations such as the Blavatnik School of Government’s Government Outcomes Lab (GO Lab) at the University of Oxford are starting to bridge that gap.

The GO Lab has developed a Social Impact Bond Readiness Framework<sup>56</sup> to help organizations assess their readiness to participate in a social impact bond (SIB). The GO Lab is also involved in the evaluation of the £80M Life Chances Fund by comparing SIBs to other commissioning models.<sup>57</sup>

### How can evidence institutions assist directly with outcomes-based funding arrangements?

- » Providing advisory services to service delivery organizations and governments to review terms of an outcomes-based funding arrangement (similar to the GO Lab’s approach with Life Chances Fund proponents).
- » Publishing systematic reviews to summarize the range of expected outcomes for particular programs/interventions to inform funding contracts.
- » Brokering relationships between government departments and high-performing social sector organizations.
- » Providing independent advice/recommendations to government departments about the types of programs/interventions that would be best-suited to outcomes-based funding arrangements.
- » Providing technical assistance/resources to social sector organizations to build their capacity to participate in an outcomes-based funding arrangement or SIB (e.g. “pre-contract” readiness support).
- » Enabling the sharing of data in open formats to increase and improve the use of data by stakeholders.

55 Cave, J., Aitken, K. and Lalande, L. (2017). “Bridging The Gap: Designing a Canadian What Works Centre.” Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/bridging-the-gap/>.

56 <https://golab.bsg.ox.ac.uk/guidance/sib-readiness-framework/>.

57 Government Outcomes Lab (2019). “Our role in evaluating the Life Chances Fund.” <https://golab.bsg.ox.ac.uk/our-projects/our-role-evaluating-life-chances-fund-projects/>.

# Innovation and Experimentation

## Introducing Public Service Experimentation Directives

Within the federal public service, directives emphasizing results, experimentation and innovation have been adopted by departments across government. Dedicated units in the Privy Council Office and the Treasury Board Secretariat have been especially helpful at driving behavioural change within government departments towards evidence-informed practices.<sup>58</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada has also played a significant leadership role in creating an enabling environment for social innovation and social finance related initiatives across the public service.<sup>59</sup>

In 2017, the President of Treasury Board of Canada issued a directive to Deputy Heads to devote a fixed percentage of program funds to experiment with new approaches to addressing social problems (e.g. conducting randomized controlled trials or studies with experimental designs, exploring user-centered design or methods of policy co-creation).<sup>60</sup> An Innovation & Experimentation Team was established within Treasury Board to support government departments in implementing the experimentation directive. Their initiative, called “Experimentation Works,” focuses on building capacity among public servants to lead experimental initiatives to generate the evidence base for effective policymaking.<sup>61</sup>

## Engaging UK Intermediaries as “Incubators” of New What Works Centres

In the UK, intermediary organizations such as Nesta and the Alliance for Useful Evidence play an important incubation role in assisting governments, academics, and non-profit organizations in transitioning to new approaches to generating, translating and adopting evidence. As experts in the field, they provide consulting advice and guidance to help organizations and governments establish new evidence institutions or enhance existing ones.

58 White, A. (2018). “Evidence That Works: Building The Canadian Evidence Infrastructure for Social Policy.” Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/evidence-that-works/>.

59 Government of Canada (2018). “Inclusive innovation: new ideas and new partnerships for stronger communities.” <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/social-innovation-social-finance/reports/recommendations-what-we-heard.html>.

60 Government of Canada (2016). “Experimentation direction for Deputy Heads - December 2016.” <https://www.canada.ca/en/innovation-hub/services/reports-resources/experimentation-direction-deputy-heads.html>.

61 Experimentation Works (2018). “Introducing ... Experimentation Works.” [https://medium.com/@exp\\_works/introducing-experimentation-works-87c7215b56cb](https://medium.com/@exp_works/introducing-experimentation-works-87c7215b56cb).

## Establishing the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care

Nesta and the Alliance for Useful Evidence are leading the development of the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care. Working closely with its research partner, CASCADE at Cardiff University, the development team is supporting the incubation of the new Centre in three main phases:<sup>62</sup>

» **Phase 1: October 2017 – June 2018**

The development team engaged with the sector and researched the use of evidence, the policy environment and sources and dissemination of evidence. The team also designed the organization and started the recruitment process for the executive team for the future centre.

» **Phase 2: June 2018 – June 2020**

The development team is providing mentoring and support to the new executive team to help the development of the Centre as an independent organization.

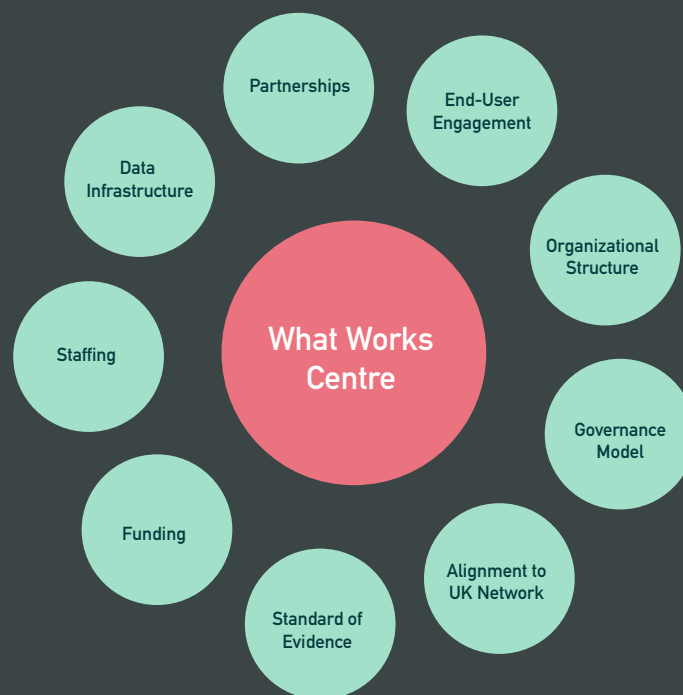
» **Phase 3: June 2020 - Onwards**

The development team completes its role and the Centre becomes an independent, sustainable organization.

There are various design elements to be considered when either creating or transitioning existing evidence institutions into a What Works Centre. These include organizational structures (e.g. collaboration with a partner organization; stand alone; or unit within government), governance models, choosing or creating a standard of evidence, funding models, data infrastructure and cross-sector partnerships.<sup>63</sup> Lessons from the development of the new What Works Centre for Children's Social Care in the UK can guide Canada in designing new or enhancing existing institutions. Please refer to the case study in Appendix B for more information on the Centre.


**FIGURE 3**

Key design considerations for a 'What Works' evidence institution



62 Lalande, L. and Cave, J. (2018). "Strengthening Canadian Efforts to Identify What Works (and What Doesn't) in Social Policy." Mowat Centre: Toronto, Canada. <https://mowatcentre.ca/innovation-in-evidence-conference-background-paper/>.

63 Cave, J., Aitken, K. and Lalande, L. (2017). "Bridging The Gap: Designing a Canadian What Works Centre." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/bridging-the-gap/>.



“Show people  
your heart  
before you  
ask for their  
hand”

CHIEF CADMUS DELORME,  
COWESSESS FIRST NATION



# 4 CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

The research indicated that several conditions are critical to improve evidence-informed policymaking and service delivery in a meaningful way.

## Relationships, Trust and Meaningful Engagement

Relationships, trust and meaningful engagement were identified as foundational elements in the movement for evidence-informed policymaking and service delivery. Efforts to improve Canada's evidence ecosystem will require collaboration across sectors and within governments to address multi-faceted social issues that transcend vertically-defined boundaries. The best collaborations emphasize co-creation and co-ownership and engage beneficiaries directly in the design of research and evaluation projects (e.g. the Winnipeg Boldness Project) or the design of new types of evidence institutions (e.g. the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care).

## Leadership and Culture

Strong leadership is vital for advancing evidence-informed policymaking and service delivery. Having strong communication skills, a technical skillset and political sensitivity have been cited as three key characteristics of credible leadership.<sup>64</sup> It is essential to recruit leaders and staff with a wide range of skills and credibility with the institution's target audience.

Leadership needs to be complemented by a broader culture that supports evidence-informed decision-making. While there have been important changes in the culture of the federal public service, there is a continued need to encourage risk-taking, transparency, horizontal collaboration and cross-sector partnerships. Collaborative initiatives will require aligning incentives both within government and between government and the social sector.<sup>65</sup>

*"The culture within the federal government needs to change to value implementation, evaluation and measurement as much as getting the initial design of the program or policy right."*

CONFERENCE SPEAKER

## Set Realistic Expectations

Having realistic expectations can guard against disappointment and help inform the design of a new type of evidence institution. It is hard to find interventions that work; replicating effects in other contexts can be very challenging. Even when we do find something that works, it is extremely difficult to implement that evidence effectively. How will a new type of evidence institution in Canada address these issues? In developing new evidence institutions or enhancing existing ones in Canada, insights from past and current efforts in other contexts should be used to avoid missteps that others have already taken.

64 White, A. (2018). "Evidence That Works: Building The Canadian Evidence Infrastructure for Social Policy." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/evidence-that-works/>.

65 White, A. (2018). "Evidence That Works: Building The Canadian Evidence Infrastructure for Social Policy." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/evidence-that-works/>.

## Avoid Academic Capture

A What Works Centre (WWC) is not just another research centre. These Centres have been proven to bridge the gap between research and practice by generating and translating academic research in a way that is timely, useful and easy to understand – a gap that has been more challenging to bridge for academic institutions. For this reason, many speakers and informants have expressed concerns about placing these Centres inside of an academic institution. If the decision is taken to locate a new type of evidence institution within a university, there are steps that funders should take to minimize risk of academic capture.

Funders can adopt a staged approach to funding, providing some percentage of funding upfront and making future installments conditional upon achieving certain performance outcomes. Funders can also encourage an incubation period where the new type of institution has time to test approaches and strategies and become prepared to manage sizeable financial investments.

## Focus on Translation and Adoption Early On

One of the key findings from the experience of the WWCs in the UK is that end users could have had a more prominent role early in the process to inform how evidence would be translated in practice. Stakeholder input can help ensure that a Centre's activities and products are relevant to the needs of their target audience and actionable. As we continue to develop or adapt existing evidence institutions in Canada, end users should be engaged early in the process to strategize about translating and adopting evidence. End-user engagement and input should be embedded in the institutional structure from the outset.

## Be Opportunistic

There is a window for systemic change in Canada because both the political level and public service are embracing evidence-informed approaches to public policy and service delivery. While there are valid concerns about establishing new types of evidence institutions too quickly, there is value in getting something up and running.

It is important for new evidence institutions to focus on quick wins (e.g. publishing evidence reviews, introducing pilot projects) to generate buy-in. This focus on early wins should be complemented by a longer-term vision about the institution's goals. Similarly, it is important for an institution to take advantage of where there is appetite for change – momentum may signal funder interest.

## Avoid Duplicating Efforts

Consideration should be given to evidence institutions that already exist and how a new type of institution would relate to them. Existing domestic resources (e.g. evidence institutions, funding streams) can be leveraged to avoid duplicating efforts.

Efforts to build the evidence base in social policy and practice in Canada can also be enhanced through international collaborations. It is often the case that similar initiatives or structures are operating concurrently in multiple regions. By working with other countries, the evidence base can be built more quickly, generating more evidence about promising interventions. The nature of these collaborations will vary, but initial efforts could involve co-funding systematic reviews and trials or broadening the evidence base for toolkits.

There are numerous considerations involved in pursuing these collaborations, such as differences in policy contexts and obtaining funding. Some WWCs have created special granting programs to support other countries' efforts to test and evaluate local interventions.

## The Education Endowment Foundation's international work

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is a leader among the UK What Works Centres in forming international partnerships. Since 2014, the EEF has partnered with Australia, Scotland, Latin America and the Caribbean to help contextualize its Teaching & Learning Toolkit by incorporating local studies. In 2018, the EEF partnered with BHP Foundation for a five-year project that will scale its efforts in helping more countries use evidence to improve teaching and learning.<sup>66</sup> As part of this project, a £5M Global Trials Fund will be provided to help scale the generation of evidence.<sup>67</sup>

The EEF is seeking to be more systematic in its approach to forming these partnerships. Initially considered to be incidental to their core focus on English schools, forming international partnerships is now perceived to support their domestic goals. In selecting its international partners, the EEF looks for countries that have the necessary infrastructure in place. Some key considerations involve the nature of the country's links to the UK, whether they share similar systems, the commitment level of governments and the resourcing of schools.

66 Education Endowment Foundation (2018). "Building a global evidence ecosystem for teaching." <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/scaling-up-evidence/international-work/building-a-global-evidence-ecosystem-for-teaching>.

67 Education Endowment Foundation (2018). "Building a global evidence ecosystem for teaching." <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/scaling-up-evidence/international-work/building-a-global-evidence-ecosystem-for-teaching>.

## Unlock the Social Sector's Potential: Create an Enabling Environment

The social sector plays an important role in the evidence ecosystem in Canada. Government data improves the work of the sector and sector data helps inform better policymaking. However, governments often do not consider how best to support the sector's efforts, such as improving access to data. There are few examples of ministries or departments that work directly with sector stakeholders to maximize their impact. Charities and non-profit organizations are caught up in complex organizational systems within the federal government that constrain rather than enable their work.

Unlocking the sector's potential requires moving away from traditional approaches where outcomes are reported only in funding contract renewal processes. It requires reframing the social sector's relationship with the government - from constituent/client to strategic partner.<sup>68</sup> An enabling environment includes:


- Modern legislation and regulation.
- Mechanisms for effective collaboration with provincial, municipal and Indigenous governments.
- Capacity-building support to conduct frontline research and development.<sup>69</sup>
- Integrated funding models that promote an outcomes-based focus and support innovative approaches (e.g. earned income, social finance).
- Shared data infrastructure and data matching legislation to understand and improve on outcomes for Canadians.
- Support for a healthy, dynamic labour force (e.g. decent work, recruitment and retention of early career staff, retirement security).

The proposed Social Sector Office and infrastructure investments recommended in *Breaking the Inertia* could support this objective.<sup>70</sup>

68 Cave, J. and Lalande, L. (2019). "Breaking The Inertia: Repositioning The Government-Sector Partnership." Toronto: Mowat Centre. <https://mowatcentre.ca/breaking-the-inertia/>.

69 Social Innovation Generation. (2017). "How Can We Support R&D in Canada's Social Sector?-2017 Roundtable Highlights." <http://www.sigeneration.ca/new-can-support-rd-canadas-social-sector/>.

70 Cave, J. and Lalande, L. (2019). "Breaking The Inertia: Repositioning The Government-Sector Partnership." Toronto: Mowat Centre. <https://mowatcentre.ca/breaking-the-inertia/>.



“The most difficult thing  
is humility. It’s hard to  
acknowledge that what  
you’re doing might  
not be effective.  
At its foundation,  
the ‘what works’  
movement is really about  
what we don’t know –  
admitting what we don’t  
know, and trying to plug  
those knowledge gaps”

DR. DAVID HALPERN, UK GOVERNMENT WHAT  
WORKS NATIONAL ADVISER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE,  
BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS TEAM

# 5 THE WAY FORWARD

The decisions made by social sector organizations, funders and policymakers can have a profound and lasting impact on people's lives and the communities they live in. We are all striving for the best possible outcomes. Yet sometimes the decisions that are made by policymakers are rooted more in experience, anecdote or political considerations than in research and the best available evidence. If the *why* of evidence-informed policymaking is well-understood, the question is *how* to do it in practice. How can evidence be made available in a way that is timely, useful and easy to understand and act on?

There are exciting efforts already underway in Canada to increase collaboration, knowledge generation and information sharing. For example:

- In the social sector, Powered by Data is convening a “civil society coalition” comprised of funders, service providers and advocacy groups to design a national policy agenda around administrative data sharing<sup>71</sup> for social impact.<sup>72</sup> While the Social Innovation Generation (SiG) has sunsetted, it played an important role in building capacity and support for research and development in the social sector.<sup>73</sup>
- In Ontario, the Centre of Excellence for Evidence-Based Decision-Making and the Policy Innovation Hub are two examples of how the public service is adapting to integrate evidence more meaningfully in the policymaking process.<sup>74</sup>
- At the federal level, the Minister of Finance's \$755M announcement to establish a Social Finance Fund, with an Investment and Readiness stream, signals a strong commitment to expanding this work.

While the evidence ecosystem is growing significantly in Canada, it still remains very fragmented. To move forward on transforming Canada's evidence ecosystem, all stakeholders must be invited to the table. Beneficiaries, frontline workers and social sector leaders have a particularly important role to play in bringing an on-the-ground perspective to this work. The *Innovation in Evidence* conference and convening events emphasized the critical role of the social sector in the evidence feedback loop — sharing data and frontline expertise, informing the design and implementation of research projects and using evidence to drive change in policy and practice.

Canada has the benefit of learning key lessons from other jurisdictions (such as linking with international partners and identifying standards of evidence early in the process) and course correcting accordingly. The *Innovation in Evidence* events highlighted the importance of having a strategic, system-wide perspective and building links between evidence institutions, academic researchers, policymakers and practitioners.

71 Administrative data refers to operational data that governments and organizations collect as part of their service delivery (e.g. emergency shelter users in a particular time period). It is typically collected as part of record keeping (e.g. T3010 data from the Canada Revenue Agency).

72 Powered by Data (2019). “Progress update: Exploring administrative data reuse in Canada with civil society.” <https://poweredbydata.org/blog/2019/2/18/progress-update-exploring-administrative-data-reuse-with-civil-society>.

73 <https://www.thesigstory.ca/>.

74 Government of Ontario (2017). “Discussion document: Transforming the Ontario Public Service for the future.” <https://www.ontario.ca/page/discussion-document-transforming-ontario-public-service-future>.

## Principles for moving forward

The following principles emerged from the Innovation in Evidence conference to guide Canada's efforts to strengthen the evidence ecosystem:

- » A centralized, horizontal, coordinated "whole of government" approach.
- » Integrated efforts between provincial and federal governments.
- » Capacity-building supports and sustainable funding.
- » Locally-driven solutions (people focused).
- » Strategic multi-sector partnerships.
- » Enabling legislation and data infrastructure.
- » An enabling culture within public services (that promotes and incentivizes experimentation).
- » An enabling environment for the social sector so organizations can more easily participate in evidence-based work.

The next step is committing to action. The recommendations that follow provide strategies for doing so, recognizing that efforts are already being made across the country to strengthen the evidence ecosystem.

These recommendations build on those made in other related Mowat NFP papers including:

- Evidence that Works: Building the Canadian Evidence Infrastructure for Social Policy<sup>75</sup>
- Collaborating for Greater Impact: Building an Integrated Data Ecosystem<sup>76</sup>
- Peering into the Future: Reimagining Governance in the Non-Profit Sector<sup>77</sup>
- Breaking the Inertia: Repositioning the Government Sector Partnership<sup>78</sup>
- Measuring Outcomes in Practice: Fostering an Enabling Environment for Measurement in Canada<sup>79</sup>

75 White, A. (2018). "Evidence That Works: Building The Canadian Evidence Infrastructure for Social Policy." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/evidence-that-works/>.

76 Cave, J., Gyateng, T., Lalande, L. and Lumley, T. (2018). "Collaborating for Greater Impact: Building an Integrated Data Ecosystem." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/collaborating-for-greater-impact/>.

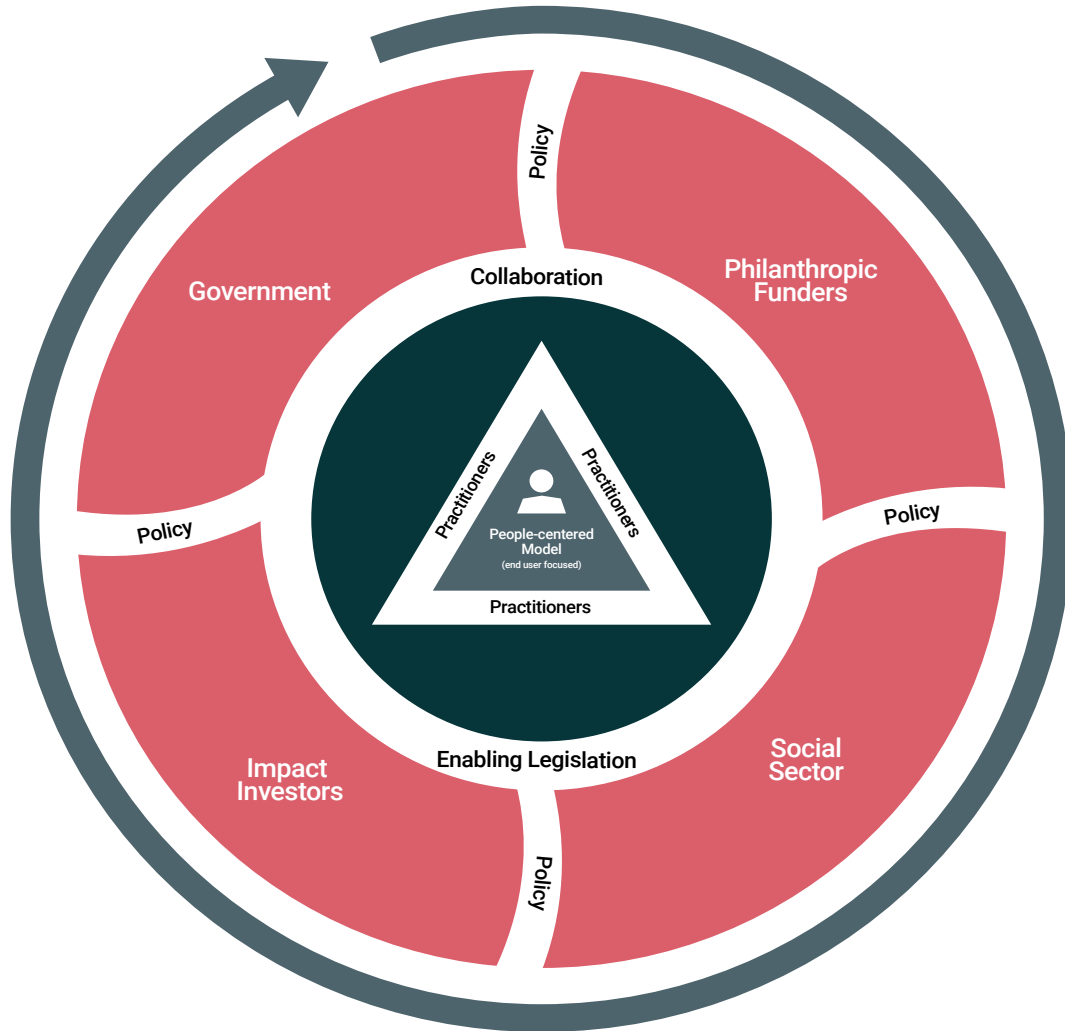
77 Lalande, L. (2018). "Peering into the Future: Reimagining Governance in the Non-Profit Sector." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/peering-into-the-future/>.

78 Cave, J. and Lalande, L. (2019). "Breaking The Inertia: Repositioning The Government-Sector Partnership." Toronto: Mowat Centre. <https://mowatcentre.ca/breaking-the-inertia/>.

79 Lalande, L. and Cave, J. (2017). "Measuring Outcomes in Practice: Fostering an Enabling Environment for Measurement in Canada." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/measuring-outcomes-in-practice/>.

**FIGURE 4**

Transforming the evidence ecosystem - A people-centered, integrated, systems-wide approach



#### 'One-Stop-Shop' within the Federal Government

- » Office for Social Innovation and the Social Sector
- » Social Innovation Council
- » Social Finance Fund
- » Impact Readiness
- » Enabling legislation
- » Collaborative data infrastructure

#### National Incubator

- » Support organizational design of evidence institutions
- » Lead efforts to identify shared standards of evidence
- » Build capacity for governments and social sector to generate and work with evidence

#### Evidence on What Works

- » Evidence synthesis, translation and adoption
- » Identify gaps in research
- » Undertake primary research

#### Enabling Experimentation

- » Data labs
- » Rapid prototyping
- » Regulatory sandboxes





“While public servants  
have been given license  
and encouragement  
to innovate and  
experiment, it is not  
enough. We still need  
rules, capacity amongst  
people, and culture that  
enables innovation and  
experimentation”

MATTHEW MENDELSON, DEPUTY SECRETARY TO THE  
CABINET FOR RESULTS AND DELIVERY, PRIVY COUNCIL  
OFFICE, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

# 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthening Canada's evidence ecosystem is an ambitious initiative, and collaboration is essential to moving this work forward. The recommendations outlined below are opportunities for federal and provincial governments, philanthropic funders/research councils, social sector umbrella and intermediary organizations, and individual service delivery organizations to contribute to this important effort.

**FIGURE 5**

## Summary of recommendations by stakeholder

Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Test the What Works Centre model with a Canadian evidence institution linked to the What Works Network.</li> <li>» Allocate dedicated funding to strengthening Canada's evidence ecosystem.</li> <li>» Introduce enabling legislation to facilitate evidence-based policymaking at the federal and provincial level.</li> <li>» Create data liaisons/teams within government departments to work with social sector organizations on data-sharing and capacity building.</li> </ul>
Philanthropic Funders/ Research Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Create an incubator to build evidence capacity among social sector organizations and government departments.</li> <li>» Scale up incentives for academics to embed knowledge translation activities as part of their research with support from evidence institutions/incubators.</li> <li>» Increase evaluation budgets in existing grants for social sector organizations to assist with capacity building and technical assistance.</li> <li>» Pilot grant programs for social sector organizations to engage end users/ beneficiaries in research design, data collection and analysis.</li> <li>» Support 'vertical' leadership development in the sector.</li> </ul>
Social Sector Umbrella and Intermediary Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Work at the sub-sector level to align against a shared standard of evidence, where possible.</li> <li>» Provide more intentional support for convening, capacity building, technical advice, and sharing promising practices at the sector and sub-sector level.</li> </ul>
Social Sector Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Develop an "evidence strategy" for the social sector at the organizational and sub-sector level.</li> </ul>

# Governments

## 1. Test the What Works Centre approach with a Canadian evidence institution linked to the What Works Network

Building on the recommendations outlined in *Bridging the Gap*,<sup>80</sup> Canada should create a Canadian version of a What Works Centre (WWC). While this new type of evidence institution can be created anew, transitioning an existing evidence institution into a What Works-like entity may be more effective in the short-term. This Canadian version should focus on a particular issue area rather than adopting a broad policy focus. Mowat NFP's recent report, *Evidence that Works*, offers issue assessments for consideration.<sup>81</sup> This institution should also seek membership<sup>82</sup> in the UK What Works Network to maximize its impact on an international scale.

One option would be to link to the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care that is currently in development in the UK. While child welfare is an issue of provincial jurisdiction in Canada, there may be value in creating a national evidence institution to consolidate evidence, share promising practices across jurisdictions and track outcomes on key issues, such as child poverty. To fulfill this mandate, the evidence institution may require a parallel data centre (similar to PolicyWise's Child and Youth Data Lab in Alberta).

## 2. Allocate dedicated funding to strengthening Canada's evidence ecosystem

Funding evidence-informed policymaking initiatives often occurs in a project-based, piecemeal fashion as pilot projects are gradually scaled. This approach works well for policy initiatives that are emergent or experimental. However, strengthening Canada's evidence ecosystem is a policy priority that is supported with extensive research, data collection and sector participation. Participants resoundingly expressed a need for dedicated funding at the *Innovation in Evidence* conference and convening events. Incremental funding will not achieve the large-scale change that is required to meaningfully strengthen Canada's evidence ecosystem on a national level.

By providing an envelope of dedicated, long-term funding, federal and provincial governments can take a strategic step towards strengthening the evidence ecosystem. In the UK, the What Works Network has this type of strategic, system-wide oversight of the What Works movement (though the Centres manage their funding individually).

Using the UK WWCs Network's estimation that £10M would be required to fully transform evidence-informed policymaking in one particular issue area (page 16), federal and provincial governments should allocate funding with this comprehensive, sector-wide approach in mind.

For instance, a strategy with the potential for the biggest impact would include an investment of \$70M for four evidence institutions for five years (\$17.5M/institution based on the UK funding framework on page 16). While further research is still needed to assess the evidence landscape, *Bridging the Gap* and *Evidence that Works* identified employment, poverty reduction, Indigenous wellbeing, child welfare and juvenile justice as promising opportunities. Funding could be matched by philanthropic and other private sector funders similar to the UK WWCs.<sup>83</sup>

"Trickles of funding divorced from government policy and accountability won't get us there. Funders need to understand that"

Conference participant

80 Cave, J., Aitken, K. and Lalande, L. (2017). "Bridging The Gap: Designing a Canadian What Works Centre." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/bridging-the-gap/>.

81 White, A. (2018). "Evidence That Works: Building The Canadian Evidence Infrastructure for Social Policy." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/evidence-that-works/>.

82 Membership requirements include operating independently from government, having a clear policy focus, sharing evidence for decision-making and focusing on the needs of evidence users and stakeholders.

83 Cave, J., Aitken, K. and Lalande, L. (2017). "Bridging The Gap: Designing a Canadian What Works Centre." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/bridging-the-gap/>; White, A. (2018). "Evidence That Works: Building The Canadian Evidence Infrastructure for Social Policy." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/evidence-that-works/>.

### 3. Introduce enabling legislation to facilitate evidence-based policymaking at the federal and provincial level

The Government of Canada and provincial governments should explore legislative mechanisms for strengthening evidence-informed policymaking and service delivery. Introducing enabling legislation would address barriers that social sector organizations, funders and government departments face in working with evidence to improve outcomes; it would also protect against turnover resulting from changing political administrations.

An area requiring legislative solutions concerns data-sharing and data linking. Enabling legislation could appoint “data carriers” to act as third party operators in linking data, as is the case with Alberta’s *Children First Act* which named PolicyWise as the recipient of anonymized health and social data relevant to children and families for the purpose of conducting research.<sup>84</sup> Legislation can also be introduced to encourage within-government data sharing and data linking, such as Saskatchewan’s *Data Matching Agreements Act*.

In January 2019, the US federal government passed the *Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act*.<sup>85</sup> This Act will require federal agencies to develop evidence-building plans for consultation by the public, appoint chief evaluation officers and chief data officers in government agencies, and establish a uniform application process for outside researchers to access federal data.<sup>86</sup> This type of legislation may be useful in Canada to promote a government-wide culture change and require policymakers to be transparent about their use of evidence when making policy and program decisions. The UK’s Evidence Transparency Framework (developed by the Institute for Government, Alliance for Useful Evidence and Sense About Science) could be adapted for the Canadian context as part of this legislation.<sup>87</sup>

### 4. Create data liaisons/teams within government departments to work with social sector organizations on data sharing and capacity building

There is a need to connect social sector organizations to administrative and programmatic government data that can help them deliver programs and services more effectively and measure their impact. Having a data liaison/team located in individual government departments at a provincial and federal level would facilitate access to data and help build capacity. These liaisons/teams could also focus on improving and maintaining data quality, and protecting individual privacy by ensuring that data is secure.

It may also be beneficial to have a centralized data team to facilitate data sharing, both internally and externally. At the federal level, the Results & Delivery Unit in the Privy Council Office or the proposed Social Sector Office may be optimal choices to ensure strategic coordination across the public service.<sup>88</sup> The Government of Canada’s Open Government team may be a useful starting point for this work, with the added emphasis of connecting sector data to government departments who could use that data to inform the policymaking process. This approach would be a more “bilateral” data-sharing relationship.

84 Cave, J., Gyateng, T., Lalande, L. and Lumley, T. (2018). “Collaborating for Greater Impact: Building an Integrated Data Ecosystem.” Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/collaborating-for-greater-impact/>.

85 National Council on Family Relations. (2019). “U.S. Evidence-Based Policymaking Act Signed Into Law.” <https://www.ncfr.org/news/us-evidence-based-policymaking-act-signed-law>.

86 National Council on Family Relations. (2019). “U.S. Evidence-Based Policymaking Act Signed Into Law.” <https://www.ncfr.org/news/us-evidence-based-policymaking-act-signed-law>.

87 <https://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/assets/IfG-Evidence-Transparency-framework-v6.pdf>.

88 Cave, J. and Lalande, L. (2019). “Breaking The Inertia: Repositioning The Government-Sector Partnership.” Toronto: Mowat Centre. <https://mowatcentre.ca/breaking-the-inertia/>.

# Philanthropic Funders/Research Councils

## 5. Create an incubator to build evidence capacity among social sector organizations and government departments

An incubator in Canada can be a champion for evidence-informed social policy and practice. The incubator can help build capacity among social sector organizations and government departments to work more effectively with evidence.

The incubator could spearhead initiatives to adopt 1 or 2 shared standards of evidence across evidence institutions, such as the developing Future Skills Centre. Unlike the WWCs in the UK, Canada has an opportunity to foreground consideration of shared standards of evidence across evidence institutions.

Given that there are varying opinions regarding what constitutes “good” evidence (let alone “evidence” itself), it will be necessary to build consensus among those that would be affected by the standard.<sup>89</sup> An independent incubator could serve as an effective convener and mediator. They can also assist with the organizational design of new or emerging evidence institutions.

*“A suitable evidence standard should be able to answer: if it works, for whom, under what circumstances, how, why, and at what cost. Not all do”*

JONATHAN BRECKON,  
ALLIANCE FOR USEFUL EVIDENCE

### Opportunities for incubator support in Canada

- » The Government of Canada is funding the development of a Future Skills Centre, which will build and mobilize evidence of what works in the skills and employment training sectors at a national level.
- » The Social Innovation and Social Finance Strategy Co-Creation Steering Group has recommended that the government invest in an evidence lab that would work with various stakeholders to research and test best practices on impact measurement.
- » The Carleton Centre for Community Innovation is developing a common approach to impact measurement for social enterprises in Ontario.
- » In Ontario, Mass Culture is exploring the What Works approach as an organizational option for generating cultural policy research.
- » In Saskatchewan, the Community Safety Knowledge Alliance is drawing inspiration from the What Works approach in the UK to transition into an integrated social policy evidence hub.
- » In Quebec, the developing Observatoire québécois des inégalités seeks to synthesize and mobilize evidence to reduce economic inequalities.

89 Puttick, R. (2018). “Mapping the standards of evidence used in UK social policy.” Alliance for Useful Evidence. [https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Mapping\\_Standards\\_of\\_Evidence\\_A4UE\\_final.pdf](https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Mapping_Standards_of_Evidence_A4UE_final.pdf).

## 6. Scale up incentives for academics to embed knowledge translation activities as part of their research with support from evidence institutions/incubators

Academic research is often not aligned with the needs of practitioners and policymakers, or the implications of the research may be difficult to translate into practice. Incentives may be beneficial to align academic research initiatives with the practical needs of stakeholders. To do this, research councils can scale up the existing incentives they include in their grant programs to promote knowledge translation and mobilization and help academic researchers build meaningful partnerships. This could include incentives to work with evidence institutions to support stakeholder/beneficiary engagement.<sup>90</sup> There is a particular need to incentivize participatory research and applied co-learning activities, which are especially resource- and skill-intensive for academic researchers.

## 7. Increase evaluation budgets in existing grants for social sector organizations to assist with capacity building and technical assistance

Social sector organizations often lack the capacity and resources to regularly conduct rigorous evaluations of the programs and services they deliver. Tying a portion of grant funding to evaluation can encourage capacity building within organizations and also provide resources for social sector organizations to contract out evaluation expertise and support. Funding should be provided for developmental evaluations to allow social sector organizations to learn from their practices and to improve service delivery while programs and services are being implemented.

Where possible, government and philanthropic funders could also extend the length of their grant cycles to allow social sector organizations sufficient time to capture long-term outcomes. While many funders require interim reports to renew longer-term funding cycles, a longer overall funding cycle would improve the quality of data that is collected and allow organizations to refine their approach on an ongoing basis.

## 8. Pilot grant programs for social sector organizations to engage end users/beneficiaries in research design, data collection and analysis

Government funders and philanthropic foundations should test grant programs that require non-profit organizations to engage their beneficiaries in research design, data collection, and analysis. Such grants could encourage the creation of advisory groups comprised of beneficiaries to inform the development of prototypes and could encourage the use of more participatory research methods.

## 9. Support 'vertical' leadership development in the sector

Applying a systems-level perspective to evidence in program and service delivery is a learned skillset, and social sector organizations could benefit from having that perspective embedded at all levels (not just senior leadership). Philanthropic funders have an important role in providing leadership development opportunities to emerging leaders, including frontline staff.

The EEF introduced the National Leaders of Education capacity-building program as a “cohort-based model,” in which individual teachers and other education leaders who are emerging leaders in their area can participate in additional leadership training on the use of evidence.<sup>91</sup> Canadian models could take a similar approach.

<sup>90</sup> Please refer to case study on What Works Centre for Children's Social Care on page 46 for a detailed example.

<sup>91</sup> Education Endowment Foundation (2019). “National Leaders of Education training courses.” <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/scaling-up-evidence/nle-training-courses/#search>.

## Social Sector Umbrella and Intermediary Organizations

### 10. Work at the sub-sector level to align against a shared standard of evidence, where possible

While the proposed incubator can lead the effort to adopt 1 or 2 shared standards of evidence across evidence institutions, efforts to adopt shared standards can also occur at the sub-sector level. These efforts can be led by umbrella organizations, and where possible should be coordinated with efforts led by the incubator. The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness' hierarchy of evidence is one example of this approach being adopted successfully.<sup>92</sup>

UK-based Project Oracle's standard of evidence for youth interventions helped to inform the standard adopted by YouthREX in Ontario, which is an interesting example of how sub-sectors can share promising practices and seek alignment on an international level.<sup>93</sup>

### 11. Provide more intentional support for convening, capacity building, technical advice and sharing promising practices at the sector and sub-sector level

Umbrella and intermediary organizations have a unique “birds eye view” of the sector and its strengths and challenges with evidence. They are well-positioned to assist the sector with convening, capacity building and technical advice. PolicyWise is a compelling example of an intermediary organization that takes a hands-on approach to supporting the sector's work with evidence. PolicyWise offers training courses for social sector organizations (e.g. data visualization, data analytics), data collection tools and software solutions, funding opportunities and sector-wide conferences and knowledge mobilization events).

## Social Sector Organizations

### 12. Develop an “evidence strategy” for the social sector at the organizational and sub-sector level

Social sector organizations can develop evidence strategies for their internal use. These strategies can contain policies and processes to facilitate effective data management, data sharing and linkage, and collaborative research activities with partner organizations. Evidence strategies can also be used to clarify how the organization will use evidence as an input in the policy development process. These strategies can also identify skills training and capacity-building opportunities for staff to develop their evidence capabilities.

To the extent possible, these evidence strategies could be used to inform policy development at the sub-sector level (e.g. homelessness). At a national level, the proposed Social Sector Office, recommended in *Breaking the Inertia*, can play a role in overseeing an evidence strategy for the social sector.<sup>94</sup> Where possible, the development of evidence strategies should align with other existing strategies and initiatives.

92 Homeless Hub (2018). “Hierarchy of Evidence.” <https://www.homelesshub.ca/gallery/hierarchy-evidence>.

93 YouthREX (2015). “Comparing Contexts: The State of Evaluation and Action in the UK Youth Sector.” <http://youthrex.com/comparing-contexts-the-state-of-evaluation-and-action-in-the-uk-youth-sector/>.

94 Cave, J. and Lalande, L. (2019). “Breaking The Inertia: Repositioning The Government-Sector Partnership.” Toronto: Mowat Centre. <https://mowatcentre.ca/breaking-the-inertia/>.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A:

### Case Studies Profiling Innovative Evidence Institutions

There are numerous challenges to generating and mobilizing evidence to inform public policy and service delivery. The most challenging social problems cut across multiple policy areas, yet the ability to link and analyze data across government agencies is restricted. Groups with valuable skills and knowledge that can contribute to solving these social problems are often disconnected from each other (e.g. academic researchers, policymakers and practitioners). End users of evidence do not always receive information that is relevant to their needs and, even when they do, they may still face obstacles to taking effective action. The following case studies profile how some organizations have overcome these challenges in practice and what other organizations can learn from them:

#### » CASE STUDY #1

The California Policy Lab: Building a Better Delivery System for Program Evaluation and Intervention Design

#### » CASE STUDY #2

Education Endowment Foundation: Working With Teachers to Generate and Mobilize Evidence

#### » CASE STUDY #3

PolicyWise for Children & Families: Collaborating with Governments, Academics and Non-Profits to Inform Policy and Practice



## CASE STUDY #1

# The California Policy Lab: Building a Better Delivery System for Program Evaluation and Intervention Design

**Year Established:** 2017

**Location:** Los Angeles and Berkeley, California

**Type:** Non-Profit Intermediary (situated within academic institutions)

**Number of Staff:** 18 (not including affiliated faculty members)

**Annual Operating Budget:** \$4 million

**Funding Sources:** 10 per cent Government and 90 per cent Foundations

**Sector:** Social Services

**Key Stakeholders:** Government departments, academic research institutions and residents of California

## What does the CPL do?

The California Policy Lab (CPL) works with state and local governments in California to facilitate connections to academic researchers at UCLA and UC Berkeley. These research partnerships generate evidence from individual-level government administrative data to inform policy that improves the lives of Californians.

## How does the CPL do it?

The CPL takes a three-pronged approach to translate data into policy change: (1) make it easier to generate evidence by providing the infrastructure to link and analyze data; (2) focus on developing relationships that are responsive to the research needs of policymakers; and (3) engage policymakers in the research process from the start.

## What does this look like in practice?

- 1) To perform their services, CPL requires access to both identifiable and de-identifiable data. As a result, when forming new partnerships with government agencies the CPL will put in place a long-term master data use agreement that can be used for numerous projects. This substantially streamlines the process for accessing and using data for future projects. The data is stored in the CPL's Data Hub, which is a secure, remote access, auditable computing cluster. Data is kept in easily linkable formats. The data is then documented and curated for future use.
- 2) The CPL provides data analytics, technical assistance, program evaluation, policy research and predictive modelling to design targeted interventions. Their approach is adapted to meet government agencies' existing level of data maturity. The aim is to meet people where they are at in their use of data and to pull them towards more rigorous research methods over time.

- 3) Government partners play a joint role in setting research agendas with the CPL and academic researchers. While researchers are responsible for project execution, policymakers are consistently engaged in interpreting results. The CPL asks policymakers upfront to consider possible policy changes that could be made if certain results are obtained. This question is kept front of mind as the process unfolds.

### What makes the CPL's approach unique?

The CPL's "value add" is providing resources and expertise that government agencies and academic researchers do not typically have (e.g. setting up data use agreements and secure IT infrastructure). This enables the CPL to more effectively facilitate connections between academic researchers and policymakers.

They are able to both help evaluate the success of initiatives as well as help inform program design. By forming long-term partnerships with government agencies, the CPL is able to lower the barriers to academic researchers of undertaking policy-related research. Being situated within academic institutions provides independence and confers credibility to the CPL's work. This positioning also gives the CPL greater access to faculty with diverse subject-matter expertise. This is an asset for CPL in addressing cross-policy questions, as research expertise can be matched with relevant policy areas. Residing within a public academic institution also makes it easier for them to enter into data-sharing agreements with government partners due to restrictions in California's privacy laws.

Academics are often challenged with translating research findings to a non-academic audience. To address this, CPL hires non-academic writers with practical experience in the policy areas and an ability to understand the nuance of the research.

### What challenges does CPL continue to face when mobilizing evidence?

The CPL has recognized that it can be difficult to address research questions that cut across different policy areas and require complex data linkages. Discrete research questions focusing on a particular policy issue are often easier for academic researchers to explore, but they may not effectively capture the system-wide implications. Being situated in an academic research institution means that CPL has to navigate a certain level of institutional bureaucracy which can slow efforts down.

### How has their approach impacted policy?

- The CPL conducted a study on a pilot program which showed that providing defense attorneys immediately upon arrest reduced pre-trial incarceration. This study led to an additional year of funding for the pilot program.<sup>95</sup>
- A CPL study demonstrating the ineffectiveness of an existing intervention to reduce drug use in California prisons led to its replacement with an alternative.<sup>96</sup>

95 Sernoffsky, E. (2018). "Public defender's new pretrial release program slashes SF jail stays: Study". California: San Francisco Chronicle. <https://www.sfchronicle.com/crime/article/Public-defender-s-new-pre-trial-release-program-12917099.php>

96 Thompson, D. (2017). "California shifts from scanners to dogs to halt prison contraband." <https://www.sfgate.com/crime/article/California-shifts-from-scanners-to-dogs-to-halt-11144185.php>.

## What are their key learnings?

Clearly defining the CPL's role has helped them cultivate lasting partnerships with key stakeholders. The CPL has been careful to avoid “mission creep” and focus their scope narrowly on bridging the government-researcher relationship for a core set of social policy issues. They decided not to expand their scope to work directly with non-profit organizations on applying evidence-informed practices unless those non-profit service providers had a role in implementing policy changes made by government departments (e.g. implementing a government-led pilot program).

The CPL emphasizes that successful collaborative research projects require government buy-in at multiple levels - the executive, program and data level. Having “champions” within the organization at these different levels can make the research process more streamlined and efficient. CPL has also cultivated niche expertise in data linkage and quantitative data analysis for several focused policy areas (e.g. poverty and homelessness). By focusing on depth — rather than breadth — CPL has been successful at developing deep, long-term relationships with key government and research partners.

## CASE STUDY #2

# Education Endowment Foundation: Working With Teachers to Generate and Mobilize Evidence

**Year Established:** 2011

**Location:** London, UK (England-wide mandate)

**Type:** Charity (member organization of the UK What Works Network)

**Number of Staff:** 38

**Annual Operating Budget:** £14.2M<sup>97</sup> (2018)

**Funding Sources:** £125M endowment from the UK Department for Education and uses this to leverage investment income and philanthropy

**Sector:** Education

**Key Stakeholders:** Teachers and School Administrators

## What does EEF do?

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) focuses on reducing the disparity between children's socioeconomic status and academic achievement. EEF generates and mobilizes evidence for teachers and school administrators to improve student learning outcomes in the classroom. Specifically, EEF takes a three-pronged approach: (1) synthesizing research and setting up randomized controlled trials; (2) communicating findings in straightforward way; and (3) implementing successful findings in schools.

## What does this look like in practice?

EEF uses the following strategies:

- Implementing a Research Schools Network of 22 schools across the UK that work locally to build capacity among neighbouring schools. These Research Schools, selected through open competition, are advocates of evidence-informed education practice. They engage schools in their regions by communicating relevant and timely evidence, delivering training and continuing professional development, and helping to scale innovative approaches across other schools.
- Commissioning randomized controlled trials and other high-quality evaluations on specific education interventions (e.g. literacy teaching strategies) to assess their efficacy and scale up where appropriate. The EEF funds projects through open and themed funding rounds. They receive applications from a range of organizations, and programs are designed in collaboration with a delivery team and an independent evaluation team. The delivery team is responsible for implementing the trial within schools, and teachers have been involved in almost every trial that the EEF has funded. Programs that demonstrate promising results move along a pipeline, with the end goal being to scale the delivery of successful programs to a wide number of schools.

<sup>97</sup> Of the £14.2M total expenditures for the EEF in 2018, £11.2M was distributed in grants.

- Developing toolkits and evidence summaries<sup>98</sup> of evidence-informed teaching strategies for teachers and school administrators to access and implement.

### What makes EEF's approach unique?

EEF's approach focuses on school-based program delivery as a means of improving educational outcomes. Through funding trials, EEF is simultaneously building the evidence base on educational interventions and changing classroom practice. EEF's approach is very user-centric. The organization produces numerous resources, toolkits and evidence summaries that are designed for individual teachers and school administrators to implement quickly and efficiently. EEF informs policy development using a "bottom-up" approach (evidence is generated in schools, scaled up and then used to inform evidence-based policy at the national level). EEF starts with generating evidence and focuses on scaling evidence as the end goal.

The EEF is also a leader among the UK What Works Centres in forming international partnerships. Additional information on their international work is profiled on page 23 of this report.

### What challenges does EEF continue to face?

The education system in England is fragmented, with schools run as individual institutions either as part of a school chain or by local government. Thus, the paths along which knowledge mobilization should proceed within the education system are not always clear. The EEF has therefore focused on providing resources to teachers and school administrators directly and encouraging them to build capacity and collaborate with their colleagues at the local level. EEF's approach to funding promising projects has evolved organically, and it has been difficult to apply a strategic perspective based on specific thematic areas (e.g. literacy, numeracy and citizenship). EEF also started by focusing on evidence-informed programs rather than individual teaching practices, and this made it more challenging to scale up promising projects across school sites.

### How has EEF's work impacted policy and practice?

EEF has produced important findings that have influenced both policy and practice. For example, in 2018, the UK government announced that they would invest £26M to deliver a free, universal, before-school breakfast club to 1,775 schools across the country, focusing on disadvantaged schools. The EEF found that the program demonstrated improvements for students in reading, writing and math.<sup>99</sup> EEF trials also determined that teaching assistants can have greater impact on student achievement when they are better trained in small-group interventions. This approach is now being adopted in more than 900 schools.<sup>100</sup> Their Teaching and Learning Toolkit has informed Pupil Premium<sup>101</sup> spending decisions for close to two-thirds of school leaders.

98 <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit>.

99 Education Endowment Foundation (2018). "Annual Report 2018." [https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Annual\\_Reports/EEF\\_-\\_2018\\_Annual\\_Report\\_print.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Annual_Reports/EEF_-_2018_Annual_Report_print.pdf).

100 UK Cabinet Office (2018). "What Works Network: Five Years On." <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-what-works-network-five-years-on>.

101 Introduced in 2011, the Pupil Premium is a government grant that provides extra funding for schools in England to help lower the attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged and more affluent backgrounds. See Ofsted (2013). "The Pupil Premium: How schools are spending the funding successfully to maximize achievement." [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/413197/The\\_Pupil\\_Premium\\_-\\_How\\_schools\\_are\\_spending\\_the\\_funding.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413197/The_Pupil_Premium_-_How_schools_are_spending_the_funding.pdf).

## What are their key learnings?

Cultivating relationships and partnerships is essential to make a bottom-up approach successful, but it takes time to gain trust and generate buy-in from the sector as a whole. Building individual relationships with teachers and school administrators who are influential within their local networks has been significant for improving evidence uptake. Creating ongoing feedback loops is also important to track progress throughout the evidence mobilization cycle. EEF created a panel of advisors from the Research Schools Network to provide advice and feedback throughout the process and recommend changes as needed. Collecting ongoing feedback allows the organization to course correct as needed, rather than conducting a significant program evaluation at the end. The EEF matches an independent evaluator to each of its mobilization approaches to test whether they're effective or not.

## CASE STUDY #3

### PolicyWise for Children & Families: Collaborating with Governments, Academics and Non-Profits to Inform Policy and Practice

**Year Established:** 2003

**Locations:** Edmonton and Calgary

**Type:** Non-profit Corporation, Registered Charity

**Number of Staff:** 41

**Annual Operating Budget:** \$5M (2018)

**Funding Sources:** 63 per cent Government, 37 per cent Non-Government (Foundations/Corporate, Individual)

**Sector:** Health and Social Services (children, youth & families)

**Key Stakeholders:** Non-profit organizations, universities, government ministries

#### What does PolicyWise do?

PolicyWise is an innovative, non-profit organization that exists to improve the wellbeing of children, families and communities. PolicyWise works collaboratively with provincial government ministries, non-profits and academic research institutions to inform health and social policy, and practice. Of focus for this study is the data initiatives at PolicyWise.

PolicyWise has spent the last 11 years working with Alberta social-sector government ministries to anonymously link data at the individual level through the Child and Youth Data Laboratory (CYDL) initiative. The CYDL has provided unprecedented insight into the journeys of Albertans through the health and social services sector. PolicyWise also helps researchers and community organizations liberate data through Secondary Analysis to Generate Evidence (SAGE), a data and research platform that enables the secondary use of data related to child and youth development, health and wellbeing. PolicyWise provides capacity-building supports for non-profit organizations to collect, organize and share their data with other partners through training, consulting, and customized data collection tools/warehouse solutions (data cleaning, data agreements, data linkage and analytics).

#### What does this look like in practice?

The CYDL receives anonymous data from across Government of Alberta Ministries through data-sharing and privacy agreements.<sup>102</sup> To preserve privacy, PolicyWise collaborated with the ministries to develop a data anonymization process that removes personal identifiers prior to analysis.<sup>103</sup> PolicyWise was funded by government to link and analyze the data, and the legal authority to do so comes through a research agreement with Alberta Health, and acknowledgment of its role to inform integrated policy through the Alberta Children First Act.

<sup>102</sup> Ridsdale, C. (2016). "Mobilizing Evidence to Impact Policy: PolicyWise for Children & Families. Research Data Centre." <https://www.rdc-drc.ca/mobilizing-evidence-to-impact-policy-policywise-for-children-families/>.

<sup>103</sup> Ridsdale, C. (2016). "Mobilizing Evidence to Impact Policy: PolicyWise for Children & Families. Research Data Centre." <https://www.rdc-drc.ca/mobilizing-evidence-to-impact-policy-policywise-for-children-families/>.

The SAGE data-sharing platform was initiated by PolicyWise and is not government funded. It provides the technical tools (e.g., remote access platform, metadata tools) and the governance support (e.g., reviewing and vetting process, consent and agreement templates) to enable the sharing of data that is in the best interest of participants, data owners, and researchers. This platform has been a catalyst for secondary analysis of data, both within the non-profit community and academia.

PolicyWise has partnered with six community-based, non-profit organizations to explore the technical, ethical and legislative boundaries of data sharing.<sup>104</sup> This project led to the release of a whitepaper on the legislative context for data sharing in the non-profit sector in Alberta and allowed sharing and anonymous linkage of data between some non-profit organizations. Other data-sharing initiatives with community are underway (e.g. The Collaborative Data Linkage Project<sup>105</sup>).

### What makes the PolicyWise approach unique?

PolicyWise is an independent organization, separate from government, and not embedded in an academic institution. As an intermediary, PolicyWise contributes technical expertise and maintains neutral, data-sharing infrastructure, which allows non-profit organizations and researchers to share data more easily. In the case of the CYDL, the governance for the project is with government and the priorities for analyses are driven by gaps identified by policymakers.

PolicyWise has developed an approach that is built on collaboration with multiple partners and stakeholders across a variety of sectors and disciplines. The primary goal of PolicyWise is to create and maintain a focus on utilization. The approach is built on trusted relationships, processes and evidence to result in comprehensive understanding, collaborative action, knowledge advancement and, ultimately, meaningful impact and change.

### How has the work at PolicyWise impacted policy and practice?

- The CYDL analyzed administrative linked data from 25 program databases across six ministries<sup>106</sup> to inform a six-year, longitudinal study, which was used to address several complex cross-ministry policy questions (e.g. promoting resiliency, increasing supports for children in care and supporting youth in transitions).
- PolicyWise has recently been asked to help lead the second phase of the Data Strategy for Alberta's non-profit/voluntary sector. The strategy is built on needs identified by the sector, and focuses on "data on the sector," "data held by the sector" and "data that the sector needs."
- In partnership with the Alberta First Nations Information Governance Centre, PolicyWise co-created a data, research and evaluation capacity-building program for community members, which will run for 10-months.
- The research and evaluation initiatives lead by PolicyWise have been used in numerous provincial policy frameworks to address improvements in the child interventions system, prevent youth suicide, enhance disability services, implement integrated service delivery models and school mental health programs.<sup>107</sup>

104 Alberta Children's Services (lead ministry), Alberta Community and Social Services, Alberta Indigenous Relations, Alberta Education, Alberta Advanced Education, Alberta Health, Alberta Justice and Solicitor General.

105 <https://policywise.com/sage/projects/>.

106 Alberta Children's Services (lead ministry), Alberta Community and Social Services, Alberta Indigenous Relations, Alberta Education, Alberta Advanced Education, Alberta Health, Alberta Justice and Solicitor General.

107 PolicyWise. (2018). "Generating New Evidence, Project and Research Report." [https://policywise.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2018-10OCT-17-Project-Report\\_REVISED.pdf](https://policywise.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2018-10OCT-17-Project-Report_REVISED.pdf).



## What barriers has PolicyWise encountered?

Focusing only on the data initiatives, the funding for the CYDL has been discontinued due to fiscal government constraints. Additional challenges to the CYDL have included a project-based approach, lengthy approval processes, making it a priority for government, changes in leadership and complexity due to cross-ministry coordination.

## What are some key learnings?

- Enabling legislation and government support are critical to provide “access points” to gain access to and link government administrative data across ministries. Alberta is currently creating a central data repository that will need to overcome current legislative barriers due to the lack of authority to link health with non-health data. Saskatchewan’s new data matching legislation appears to be a model for Alberta to consider.
- Strong consistent governance is needed for cross-ministry data initiatives. Several deputy ministers within the Government of Alberta played a significant leadership role in starting the Child and Youth Data Lab, and this provided strong internal leadership within the public service to scale up evidence-based policymaking efforts.
- PolicyWise also emphasizes the importance of building trust to cultivate a data-sharing culture across organizations. As an intermediary organization, the role of PolicyWise has been particularly important for bridging research and data collection with the policymaking process and assisting with data linkage.
- There is additional advantage for an external organization to manage longitudinal data studies and maintain a long-term focus due to reactionary needs and often changing leadership in government.
- The effectiveness of evidence-based policymaking depends on the quality of the data that is used as an input. Many non-profit organizations face data collection challenges, and there are few grants to assist organizations in building capacity to improve their data collection practices. Greater support for capacity building in measurement and data collection in the sector is needed.

## APPENDIX B:

### Case Studies Profiling Incubation Efforts

The following case studies explore how key design considerations are being addressed in the development of a What Works Centre in the UK and how a common approach to impact measurement for social enterprises is being developed in Ontario.

#### » CASE STUDY #1

The What Works Centre for Children's Social Care: Designing and Launching a New What Works Centre in the UK

#### » CASE STUDY #2

Carleton Centre for Community Innovation: Working Towards a Common Approach to Impact Measurement for Social Enterprises (Pilot Project)

#### CASE STUDY #1

### The What Works Centre for Children's Social Care: Designing and Launching a New What Works Centre in the UK

**Year Established:** Centre to begin operations as fully independent organization in April 2020

**Location:** England

**Type:** Non-Profit

**Number of Staff:** 15

**Annual Operating Budget:** £3.3m

**Funding Sources:** £10m provided by the Department for Education to develop Centre over 2017 to 2020

**Sector:** Social services (children & families)

**Key Stakeholders:** Social care leaders, managers and practitioners

#### How was the Centre incubated?

The UK Department of Education contracted Nesta to lead a consortium of stakeholders and co-design the organization and leadership for the Centre. Nesta worked with the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE) at Cardiff University to conduct early research and evidence synthesis and conduct a preliminary study of what key issues could be addressed in the children's social care sector. Nesta and CASCADE formed a development team with the Alliance for Useful Evidence, Social Care Institute for Excellence, Traversum (a social impact consultancy) and FutureGov (a public service reform organization). The development

team reports to the Department for Education's Steering Group on a weekly basis.<sup>108</sup> The development of the Centre has been largely informed by learnings from other What Works Centres and international efforts more broadly.

### How does the Centre engage stakeholders as it develops?

Stakeholders are being consulted through a variety of engagement activities to inform the Centre's research priorities, evidence base and knowledge mobilization strategy.<sup>109</sup> From July - December 2018, the Centre worked closely with 21 different charitable organizations and local authorities across the UK to co-design new tools/services.

The Centre is working with over 30 local authorities on the design and delivery of their early program of research and trialing; and on the prototyping of innovative approaches to the building of local capability, motivation and opportunity to adopt evidence-based insight. Their efforts include:

- Training through "Evidence Masterclasses."
- A self-evaluation framework.
- A data benchmarking tool called DEMO (Diagnosing the Evidence-Minded Organization).
- A framework for 'do-it-yourself' evaluation.

They are also engaging with stakeholders through site visits and events/conferences for practitioners in the sector.

### What is the Centre's organizational structure?

The What Works Centre for Children's Social Care is being developed by a consortium led by Nesta and the Alliance for Useful Evidence, in partnership with CASCADE (its research partner). The Centre is independent from government and part of the What Works Network. The Centre is currently housed within Nesta, with the plan of becoming a fully independent standalone organization by 2020.

The Centre is currently establishing a national Advisory Council with representatives from government, local authorities and frontline organizations that support children and youth. An Expert Advisors Panel is working closely with CASCADE on the development of the standard of evidence and outcomes framework.

### How is the Centre governed?

From July 2018, the development of the Centre was overseen by a Founding Board comprised of four members and six stakeholder panels and groups.<sup>110</sup> These panels and groups include families and parents, sector leaders and subject-matter experts, representatives from key charities, children and young people aged between 13 and 24 years of age and practitioners.<sup>111</sup>

Members of these panels and groups meet in-person and the frequency of meetings varies by panel/group (e.g. some panels/groups meet regularly, while others, such as a group of voluntary sector leaders, have only met twice since July 2018).<sup>112</sup>

108 Nesta (2018). "Governance." <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/about/governance/>.

109 Nesta (2018). "Working With." <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/working-with/>.

110 Nesta (2018). "Governance." <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/about/governance/>.

111 Nesta (2018). "Governance." <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/about/governance/>.

112 Nesta (2018). "Who's Involved." <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/working-with/whos-involved/>.

## How is the Centre staffed?

As of January 2019, Michael Sanders began serving as the Centre's Executive Director.<sup>113</sup> The Centre is currently recruiting a Head of Research.<sup>114</sup> The aim is for the Centre to have 40 staff by the end of 2020/21. In the interim, staff from Nesta and CASCADE have been supporting the development of the Centre.

## What is the Centre's approach to standards of evidence?

CASCADE at Cardiff University was responsible for selecting the standard of evidence for the Centre. They have chosen the EMMIE framework created for the College of Policing, which rates systematic reviews of interventions. The EMMIE framework is freely accessible and analyzes evidence in a very context-specific way. Most standards of evidence in the UK social policy field assess impact, but EMMIE also accounts for additional factors relating to an intervention such as how it works, the context in which it was implemented, how it was delivered, and the associated costs/benefits.

## What funding models is the Centre exploring?

The development of the Centre is initially being funded by the Department for Education. The value of the initial contracts to 2020 is £10M.<sup>115</sup> The development team for the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care has been using a 'growth model' to prepare the Centre for its eventual independence. The Centre will test approaches and strategies to become prepared to manage sizeable financial investments.

## What kind of data infrastructure will the Centre use?

The Centre is establishing a data-analytics capability that allows them to maximize the insight from existing and emerging datasets. The aim is to use the insight to provide commentary on debates and issues within the sector, helping to establish the Centre as a credible source of independent, evidence-based advice. This is similar to the UK's Institute for Fiscal Studies in relation to fiscal matters.

The first project on the agenda is a re-analysis of the EEF's extensive range of data sets – built up from their work across over 150 trials over the last seven years - to draw insights around the children in need population. This is a project that will enhance the magnitude and quality of the evidence base with which the Centre can work.

The Centre is also accessing and mining datasets from local authorities and national bodies such as *Ofsted* (The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills), and the Office of the Children's Commissioner. It is also exploring opportunities for deriving further insight from the extensive range of data sets held by the Department for Education.

## How will the Centre approach evaluating its own work?

The development team is collecting qualitative data on the Centre's impact in its development phase, with the possibility of conducting RCTs in the future.

113 Nesta (2018). "Michael Sanders." <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/person/michael-sanders/>.

114 Nesta (2018). "Head of Research Candidate Brief." [https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/WWCSC\\_-\\_Head\\_of\\_Research\\_JD\\_Fl-NAL\\_nesta.pdf](https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/WWCSC_-_Head_of_Research_JD_Fl-NAL_nesta.pdf).

115 Nesta (2018). "About Us." <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/about-us>.

## What are their key learnings so far?

Having multiple organizations involved in the development (incubation) of the Centre proved to be difficult from a coordination perspective. This was further complicated by the two separate contracts that were issued in the development phase for the organizational design (conducted by Nesta) and the preliminary research (conducted by CASCADE). The two organizations had to work closely on aligning the research agenda, outcomes framework and standard of evidence. This challenge could have been addressed by subcontracting out the research activities from the lead organization that was coordinating the overall design of the organization.

Selecting a standard of evidence also proved to be challenging for the Centre. The EMMIE Framework was suitable because it was so context-specific, but it resulted in a lack of alignment with other What Works Centres that use different standards (e.g. the Early Intervention Foundation). Different standards of evidence can compromise comparability and create confusion, so it is ideal if What Works Centres can align on common standards where possible.

The Centre has also focused on recruiting trusted and credible leadership in the sector. Some of the characteristics the Centre focused on in the recruitment process were strong communication skills, technical proficiency and political sensitivity.<sup>116</sup> These skills will help organizations and governments build a transparent and accessible evidence culture.

The Centre's goal is to promote a wider pro-evidence culture among social workers. They are modelling their approach based on the work of organizations like ResearchEd and the Society for Evidence-Based Policing that have sought to find and nurture communities of practitioners. Their aim is to create a similar grassroots movement for the children's social care sector. This work started with a series of workshops with small groups of motivated practitioners and a conference in January 2019 attended by over 100 staff.

116 White, A. (2018). "Evidence That Works: Building The Canadian Evidence Infrastructure for Social Policy." Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/evidence-that-works/>.

## CASE STUDY #2

### Carleton Centre for Community Innovation: Working Towards a Common Approach to Impact Measurement for Social Enterprises (Pilot Project)

**Year Established:** 2018

**Location:** Ontario

**Type:** Pilot Project

**Number of Staff:** One staff lead with volunteer support (through consortium of organizations)

**Pilot Project Budget:** \$1M (over two years)

**Funding Sources:** 80 per cent Government (40 per cent federal, 40 per cent provincial), 20 per cent Non-Government (in-kind from partners)

**Sector:** Social Enterprise (non-profit and for-profit)

**Key Stakeholders:** Social enterprises, government funders, impact investors, philanthropic funders

#### What is the project?

The pilot project (entitled “Common Approach to Impact Measurement”) is a two-year initiative in partnership with Employment and Social Development Canada and Ontario’s Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (formerly Ministry of Economic Development and Growth) to create a flexible, community-driven approach to impact measurement for social enterprises in Ontario. The project is housed in Carleton University’s Centre for Community Innovation and will be delivered via a consortium of organizations.<sup>117</sup>

#### What is the background on the Project?

In 2016, Ontario’s Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT) launched a five-year strategy to support social enterprise growth in Ontario. The absence of a common approach to measuring and reporting impact is a significant barrier to social enterprises in Ontario. Given that, the strategy included the creation of an Impact Measurement Task Force to explore uniform impact measurement approaches for social enterprises. The Task Force’s work was informed by a conference, convening event, and corresponding paper produced by Mowat NFP - *Unpacking Impact: Exploring Impact Measurement for Social Enterprises*.<sup>118</sup> The Task Force undertook additional consultations, convening events, interviews and research. The result was a MEDJCT five-year action plan to deliver the following recommendations<sup>119</sup>:

117 Centre for Social Services Engineering at the University of Toronto, The Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNET), Centre for Social Innovation (CSI), Pillar Nonprofit Network and Social Resource Development Canada (SRDC), Sametrica, Nourishing Communities, Centre for Social Enterprise Development, Ontario Nonprofit Network, Paro Centre For Women’s Enterprise, and the Canadian Index of Wellbeing at the University of Waterloo.

118 Lalande, L., Cave, J. & Sankat, R. (2016). “Unpacking Impact: Exploring Impact Measurement for Social Enterprises in Ontario.” Toronto: Mowat NFP. <https://mowatcentre.ca/unpacking-impact/>.

119 Social Enterprise Impact Measurement Task Force. (2017). “Amplifying the impact of Ontario’s social enterprise community: An Action Plan towards a common approach to impact measurement.” <https://carleton.ca/3ci/wp-content/uploads/IM-TF-Action-Plan-Report-ENGLISH.pdf>.

- Establish a common process for impact measurement leveraging international best practices.
- Develop impact indicators for social enterprises in Ontario. The Task Force recommended mapping indicators to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>120</sup> SDGs provide a globally consistent framework for impact reporting and are broad enough to accommodate variance across organizations in measurement practices. This is also consistent with number of impact measurement tools (e.g. B Impact Assessment, Canadian Index of Wellbeing, IRIS) that have begun mapping their indicators to SDGs.<sup>121</sup>
- Establish a common set of organizational indicators building on prior initiatives.<sup>122</sup>
- Set up a Data Centre that will provide a data standard, platform or repository of organizational and impact data, and allow for analyses of the data. The Data Centre could be an open model with several software providers or a model with a sole software provider.<sup>123</sup>
- Establish a Centre of Excellence in Ontario that will oversee the Data Centre and shared approach. The Centre will provide leadership, coordination and communication of best practices, and educational support to assist social enterprises with measurement.<sup>124</sup>

MEDJCT and Employment and Social Development Canada collaborated to support a pilot project that would deliver key aspects of the action plan over a two-year period.

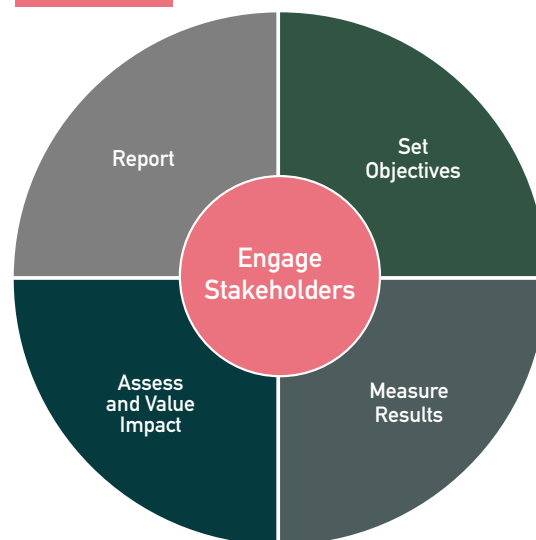
## How have these recommendations been pursued to date?

### A Common Process

The Task Force recommended a five-stage process that social enterprises could use to adopt impact measurement practices. The process was adapted from leading global best practices.<sup>125</sup> The project has adopted this approach and is supporting the sector to implement it province-wide.

The Canadian Community Economic Development Network and the Social Enterprise Ecosystem are developing a resource directory and self-assessment tools to help social enterprises implement the common process in practice.<sup>126</sup> This element of the project is being referred to as Common Foundations.

FIGURE 6



120 United Nations (2018). "Sustainable Development Goals". <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>.

121 Social Enterprise Impact Measurement Task Force. (2017). "Amplifying the impact of Ontario's social enterprise community: An Action Plan towards a common approach to impact measurement." <https://carleton.ca/3ci/wp-content/uploads/IM-TF-Action-Plan-Report-ENGLISH.pdf>.

122 Social Enterprise Impact Measurement Task Force. (2017). "Amplifying the impact of Ontario's social enterprise community: An Action Plan towards a common approach to impact measurement." <https://carleton.ca/3ci/wp-content/uploads/IM-TF-Action-Plan-Report-ENGLISH.pdf>.

123 Social Enterprise Impact Measurement Task Force. (2017). "Amplifying the impact of Ontario's social enterprise community: An Action Plan towards a common approach to impact measurement." <https://carleton.ca/3ci/wp-content/uploads/IM-TF-Action-Plan-Report-ENGLISH.pdf>.

124 Social Enterprise Impact Measurement Task Force. (2017). "Amplifying the impact of Ontario's social enterprise community: An Action Plan towards a common approach to impact measurement." <https://carleton.ca/3ci/wp-content/uploads/IM-TF-Action-Plan-Report-ENGLISH.pdf>.

125 This process has been based on and adapted from the work of the Expert Group on Social Entrepreneurship Sub-Group on Impact Measurement (GECES Sub-Group) and the European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA).

126 Common Approach to Impact Measurement (2018). "Common Foundation." <https://carleton.ca/commonapproach/common-foundation/>.

## Common Impact Indicators

The Carleton Centre for Community Innovation and a partner in the consortium, Nourishing Communities, are developing a system that will permit social enterprises to define their own impact indicators. The system aggregates those measures into common themes aligned with the SDGs. This allows organizations to measure their impact towards the SDGs, and it allows funders and investors to assess portfolio-level or fund-level impact without specifying the indicators that will be reported.

Through a series of convening events, 115 social enterprises across Ontario have mapped their organization-specific indicators to all 17 SDGs. Over 900 indicators have been collected. Moving forward, the project will focus on two SDGs: SDG2 - Zero Hunger and SDG8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth.

## Common Organizational Indicators

The project is working with foundations, government funders and impact investors to reach a single common set of organizational indicators (financial indicators, sector classifications, etc.).<sup>127</sup> Data service providers will collect information from social enterprises that also aligns with existing indicators from other organizations, such as IRIS and the B Impact Assessment. These common organizational indicators will also include information from the Canada Revenue Agency and the UN's International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations (ICNPO).<sup>128</sup>

## The Development of a "Data Centre"

Social enterprises, funders, academics and policymakers will access data through an open model. Multiple data platforms will be aligned with a single, common data standard (which is being referred to as the "Data Centre"). The standard will ensure that data is interoperable (i.e. can move across different data systems). There will not be a single data repository; instead, data will be decentralized through non-profit and for-profit data solution providers aligned to a common open data standard.

Sametrica<sup>129</sup> and The Centre for Social Innovation (CSI) Impact Dashboard<sup>130</sup> have been developing impact measurement software with simple user-interfaces and cloud-based functionality to aggregate indicators into common themes. The cloud-based functionality is based on an open data standard currently being developed by Mark Fox at the University of Toronto which will allow data to be shared, aggregated and compared. The open standard will allow new data providers to join and existing ones to expand.<sup>131</sup>

## Centre of Excellence

Rather than a single Centre of Excellence the project will involve creating multiple "Centres of Excellence" housed within organizations across the province. Convening participants encouraged the project to leverage existing resources (rather than creating new ones) and to avoid establishing an oversight body with too much autonomy.<sup>132</sup>

127 Common Approach to Impact Measurement (2018). "Common Set of Organizational Indicators." <https://carleton.ca/commonapproach/common-set-of-organizational-indicators/>.

128 Social Enterprise Impact Measurement Task Force. (2017). "Amplifying the impact of Ontario's social enterprise community: An Action Plan towards a common approach to impact measurement." <https://carleton.ca/3ci/wp-content/uploads/IM-TF-Action-Plan-Report-ENGLISH.pdf>.

129 <https://www.sametri.ca/>.

130 <https://impactdashboard.org/>.

131 Common Approach to Impact Measurement. (2018). "Data Centre." <https://carleton.ca/commonapproach/data-centre/>.

132 Ruff, K. (2017). "A common approach to impact measurement for Ontario's Social Enterprise Community: Insights on a path forward." <https://carleton.ca/commonapproach/wp-content/uploads/Ontario-Social-Enterprises-Insights-on-a-path-forward-1.pdf>.



The Centres of Excellence will utilize a constellation model of governance<sup>133</sup> and will be guided by a secretariat created within the Carleton Centre for Community Innovation. Each of these Centres would have thematic and geographic areas of expertise and can provide capacity building and infrastructure supports in their respective regions.

The project is currently developing the mission, vision, values, mandate and initial operating budget for this distributed governance structure, along with a five-year plan for an incubation period. The development of the Centres will be led by Pillar Nonprofit Network. The consortium will test the distributed structure, however, launching the network of Centres is beyond the remit of the project.

### What are some potential challenges and opportunities?

- The Government of Canada recently announced the creation of a Social Finance Fund and an Investment and Readiness stream.<sup>134</sup> This presents a unique opportunity to connect the work of the project with efforts underway to design these federal programs.
- The project has taken an innovative approach to structuring the Centres of Excellence and Data Centre, as they are commonly thought of as place-based facilities rather than distributed networks. The use of the terms to describe this innovative approach, however, risk them being confused with the Government of Canada's Networks of Centres of Excellence. Simplifying terminology may help to address this uncertainty and communicate the Centres' work more effectively to stakeholders.
- At this stage of the pilot, it is unclear if the long-term goal is to have the data service providers support social enterprises in their efforts to link their data to government administrative data. If so, special consideration should be given to potential privacy and security issues that might arise. For example, the project is using a single open data standard with multiple data platforms from both non-profit and for-profit providers, but experience shows governments and some nonprofit social enterprises may be constrained by privacy regulations or otherwise less willing to share or link data with for-profit platforms.
- The Centres of Excellence have the potential to make a very unique contribution to Canada's evidence ecosystem. It will be important to translate their key learnings to other sectors beyond social enterprises (e.g. traditional non-profit service delivery organizations).

133 The constellation model, developed by and for the Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and the Environment (CPCHE), emphasizes self-organizing and concrete action within a network of partner organizations working on a common issue.

134 Government of Canada (2018). "Fall Economic Statement 2018." <https://www.budget.gc.ca/fes-eea/2018/docs/statement-enonce/chap02-en.html>.

# APPENDIX C:

## Examples of Organizations, Initiatives, and Tools Profiled at Events

Generating Evidence	
<b>EMMIE Framework</b>	The EMMIE Framework is a standard of evidence created for the UK College of Policing and recently adopted by the developing What Works Centre for Children's Social Care. The framework rates systematic reviews of interventions. Most standards of evidence in the UK social policy field assess impact, but EMMIE also accounts for additional factors relating to an intervention such as how it works, the context in which it was implemented, how it was delivered, and the associated costs/benefits. The framework makes a distinction between what the evidence suggests and the quality of the evidence itself. <sup>135</sup>
<b>Behavioural Insights Team (BIT)</b>	Initially established in the UK Cabinet Office, BIT is now a social purpose company that generates and applies behavioural insights to improve government policies and services. <sup>136</sup> Staffed by ex-civil servants, policy specialists and academics, BIT helps its partners solve problems by sharing policy expertise, building experimentation capacity and developing interventions. <sup>137</sup> While in government, BIT helped to popularize the use of empirical methods, especially RCTs.  BIT has conducted trials across a variety of policy areas, including taxation, employment and education. These trials are often replicated in other countries to learn more about interventions; generating knowledge about "what works" is important, but it is also important to know where, when, how and why something works.
<b>InWithForward</b>	InWithForward is a social design organization that employs a variety of qualitative research approaches to inform the design of policies and programs that are relevant to and produce positive outcomes for beneficiaries. <sup>138</sup> Their starting point is the lived experience of vulnerable individuals navigating human services systems. They take a bottom-up approach to design, helping people develop their own interventions – this increases the likelihood that interventions will be implemented and outcomes will be committed to. The "thick" data collected through their ethnographic methods can complement service data to provide a fuller picture.
<b>Calgary Thrives</b>	Calgary Thrives is a project jointly led by PolicyWise and six service delivery organizations to link client records to identify common clients and assist with cross-agency referrals. <sup>139</sup> PolicyWise worked with these organizations to build trust, standardize intake forms and simplify data-sharing agreements to make the process less cumbersome. Notably, PolicyWise created software called LinkWise to link population-level data from different data sources without revealing identities. <sup>140</sup> The project has improved intake and data collection processes.

135 Johnson, S.D., Tilley, N., & Bowers, K.J. (2015). "Introducing EMMIE: an evidence rating scale to encourage mixed-method crime prevention synthesis reviews."

136 The Behavioural Insights Team (2019). "About us." <https://www.bi.team/about-us/>.

137 The Behavioural Insights Team (2019). "About us." <https://www.bi.team/about-us/>.

138 <https://inwithforward.com/>.

139 PolicyWise (2018). "Generating New Evidence: Project and Research Report." [https://policywise.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2018-10OCT-17-Project-Report\\_REVISED.pdf](https://policywise.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2018-10OCT-17-Project-Report_REVISED.pdf).

140 PolicyWise (2018). "LinkWise: A Modern Privacy Preserving Record Linkage Software." <https://policywise.com/2018/03/15/linkwise/>.

<b>The Collaborative Data Linkage Project (CDLP)</b>	<p>The CDLP is a partnership between PolicyWise and five community-based agencies in Edmonton referred to as the C5: Terra Centre for Teen Parents, Boyle Street Community Services, Norwood Child &amp; Family Resource Centre, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society.<sup>141</sup></p> <p>The CDLP aims to link data between the agencies to integrate decision-making, planning and evaluation efforts. The project will involve analyzing the clients' involvement across agencies and recommending steps for a shared intake process. PolicyWise will also support capacity building with the C5 agencies in using and sharing data.<sup>142</sup> The project will run from November 2018 to March 2020.</p>
<b>Social Data Linkage Environment (SDLE), Statistics Canada</b>	<p>The SDLE is a secure data linkage platform provided by Statistics Canada, to allow external organizations to link their data to Statistics Canada data.<sup>143</sup> Statistics Canada can also provide technical assistance and consulting services, and all of the services are provided to organizations on a cost-recovery basis. The SDLE provides the needed data infrastructure for non-profit organizations to increase the power of their data and draw new insights about the social and economic issues they are working to address. The SDLE is particularly effective for linking related social issues and focusing on possible root causes, rather than providing purely descriptive data.</p>
<b>Newcomer Inventions by Creative DW (Decent Work)</b>	<p>Newcomer Inventions is an experimental program that uses an arts-based approach to improve employment outcomes for newcomers to Canada. It was delivered in 2016 in partnership with CultureLink, Canada Culture for the Arts and the Centre for Social Innovation.<sup>144</sup> The program offers short-term consulting contracts in the form of various art projects to newcomer professionals with 4+ years of foreign work experience. Projects are tailored to participants based on their goals, profiles, and skill sets. Participant backgrounds have ranged from finance to engineering to education. The artistic process enables participants to adapt and re-invent their experiences and sense of self, re-framing their habitual stories for greater employment success in Canada.</p>
<b>First Nations Data Centre, First Nations Information Governance Centre</b>	<p>The Data Centre is housed within the First Nations Information Governance Centre and provides pay-per-use access to unpublished record-level First Nations survey data on topics such as health, early childhood education, employment. The survey data is organized by theme, so researchers and policymakers can access relevant data quickly and easily. To access on-site data, researchers must demonstrate that they completed online training on the OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, Possession) principles.<sup>145</sup> The Data Centre complements the Centre's online data platform, which provides the survey data in aggregate for the general public to use.</p>

141 PolicyWise (2018). "Data Collaboration Projects." <https://policywise.com/sage/projects/>.

142 PolicyWise (2018). "Data Collaboration Projects." <https://policywise.com/sage/projects/>.

143 Statistics Canada (2018). "Social Data Linkage Environment (SDLE): Overview". <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/sdle/overview/>.

144 Creative DW. (2018). <http://creativedw.com/>.

145 First Nations Information Governance Centre (2019). "Data Centre." <https://fnigc.ca/fndc>.

Translating Evidence	
Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching & Learning Toolkit <sup>146</sup>	The Toolkit presents international evidence from thousands of studies in an accessible format for teachers and senior leaders. The Toolkit allows users to filter interventions by impact (communicated as extra months of learning that approaches might lead to during a school year), evidence strength (rated on a five point scale indicating confidence that can be placed in the findings), and costs. <sup>147</sup> The Toolkit is updated regularly to include up-to-date research findings including results from EEF-funded trials. <sup>148</sup> Almost two-thirds of school leaders use the EEF's Toolkit to inform Pupil Premium spending. <sup>149</sup>
Behavioural Insights Team's EAST Model	Developed by the Behavioural Insights Team, the EAST model (Easy, Attractive, Social, and Timely) is a pragmatic model for thinking about behaviour change. <sup>150</sup> The EAST model can inform strategies for communicating with practitioners and policymakers. People tend to be loss averse, which might suggest that framing your message in terms of losses, rather than gains, will resonate more. People tend to favour stories over hard facts, which might suggest that being able to situate your evidence in a compelling narrative could be an effective way for gaining your audience's attention.
Adopting Evidence	
Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP)	Created by the Washington legislature, WSIPP is a public service agency that produces practical research for the legislature. WSIPP works closely with legislators, legislative and state agency staff, and experts in the field to ensure that studies answer relevant policy questions. <sup>151</sup> Fiscal and administrative functions are provided by The Evergreen State College. While WSIPP has connections to the legislature and the College, it is explicitly non-partisan and maintains independence in its research.  WSIPP has a wide governance structure. The board is comprised of members of the state legislature, executive branch and academic community. <sup>152</sup> While there is turnover, there is enough carry-over that board members feel ownership for the work. It has proven a useful model for generating buy-in.
Funding Evidence	
Arnold Ventures (formerly Laura and John Arnold Foundation)	Arnold Ventures is a philanthropy in the US investing in evidence-based solutions to social problems. Arnold Ventures funded the creation of policy labs in the US, including the California Policy Lab.  Arnold Ventures takes a tiered approach to funding what works: they fund the expansion of programs backed by strong evidence ("top tier"); they fund and rigorously evaluate programs backed by highly-promising evidence ("middle tier"); and they invest in the development and initial testing of many diverse approaches. <sup>153</sup>

146 <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit>.

147 Education Endowment Foundation (2018). "Annual Report 2018." [https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Annual\\_Reports/EEF\\_-\\_2018\\_Annual\\_Report\\_print.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Annual_Reports/EEF_-_2018_Annual_Report_print.pdf).

148 Education Endowment Foundation (2018). "Annual Report 2018." [https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Annual\\_Reports/EEF\\_-\\_2018\\_Annual\\_Report\\_print.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Annual_Reports/EEF_-_2018_Annual_Report_print.pdf).

149 UK Cabinet Office (2018). "What Works Network: Five Years On." <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-what-works-network-five-years-on>.

150 The Behavioural Insights Team (2014). "EAST: Four Simple Ways to Apply Behavioural Insights." <https://www.bi.team/publications/east-four-simple-ways-to-apply-behavioural-insights/>.

151 Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2018). <https://www.wsipp.wa.gov/>.

152 Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2018). "Board of Directors." <https://www.wsipp.wa.gov/About/Board>.

153 Baron, J. (2018). "Paths forward to support evidence-informed social policy in Canada." Toronto: The Mowat Centre. <https://mowat-centre.ca/paths-forward-to-support-evidence-informed-social-policy-in-canada/>.

<b>Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab</b>	<p>The Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab, situated inside Harvard University, provides pro bono technical assistance to state and local governments.<sup>154</sup> The Lab deploys a set of strategies (referred to as “results-driven contracting”) to help governments improve their contracting processes with service providers.<sup>155</sup></p> <p>The following are some key learnings derived from the Lab’s approach:<sup>156</sup> Continual engagement and sharing of data between service providers and governments can improve program implementation; small performance-based payments can encourage conversations focused on achieving outcomes; the program’s target population should be clearly defined to avoid service providers pursuing clients that are easier to serve; and set outcomes should be measurable and relate back to the government’s goals.</p>
<b>Innovation and Experimentation</b>	
<b>Fostering Social Investment by Changing Government Accounting and Budgeting Practices</b>	<p>Dr. Jeremiah Hurley at McMaster University is advocating for a new approach to public sector accounting, which would allow governments to amortize the cost of program investments in prevention and early intervention initiatives (as is the case with tangible government assets). This approach, while still theoretical, would allow governments to demonstrate cost savings or increased tax revenue over time for long-term investments in social programs. This area of reform is very challenging, but it would allow governments to introduce evidence in the policymaking and public budgeting process in a more robust way.</p>
<b>Calgary &amp; Area Child Advocacy Centre (formerly Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre)</b>	<p>The Calgary &amp; Area Child Advocacy Centre is a Centre of Excellence for community responses to child abuse, and they work closely with numerous government and community partners to promote a “hub and spoke,” wraparound service delivery model.<sup>157</sup> The Centre is based on four memorandums of understanding between different systems service providers. The Centre acts as a one stop shop and first point of contact for families, connecting them directly with resources in criminal justice, victim services, Indigenous services and the health care system. Frontline workers are allowed to share data with other service providers about the children they work with under Alberta’s information-sharing legislation and the Children First Act. Working closely with many service providers allows the Centre to use and generate evidence in a multi-disciplinary way.</p>
<b>Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) - Imagining Canada’s Future</b>	<p>Imagining Canada’s Future is a foresight exercise led by SSHRC, in which six key social issues were identified after two years of national and international consultation. Some of these issues include higher education and labour market transitions, energy and natural resources and reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples.<sup>158</sup> SSHRC has embedded these “challenge areas” into their existing funding streams to promote focused research on areas of pressing social concern. SSHRC is using these challenge areas to identify key knowledge gaps and direct resources in a targeted way.</p>

154 Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab (2018). “About Us.” <https://govlab.hks.harvard.edu/gov-lab>.

155 Azemati, H. (2018). “Paths forward to support evidence-informed social policy in Canada.” Toronto: The Mowat Centre. <https://mowatcentre.ca/paths-forward-to-support-evidence-informed-social-policy-in-canada/>.

156 Azemati, H. (2018). “Paths forward to support evidence-informed social policy in Canada.” Toronto: The Mowat Centre. <https://mowatcentre.ca/paths-forward-to-support-evidence-informed-social-policy-in-canada/>.

157 Calgary & Area Child Advocacy Centre (2019). “The Centre”. <https://calgarycac.ca/thecentre/>.

158 SSHRC (2018). “Future Challenge Areas.” [http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/challenge\\_areas-domaines\\_des\\_defis/index-eng.aspx](http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/challenge_areas-domaines_des_defis/index-eng.aspx).

# APPENDIX D:

## Innovation in Evidence Conference Partners

Mowat NFP is grateful for the support provided by our conference partners:



Treasury Board of Canada  
Secretariat

Secrétariat du Conseil du Trésor  
du Canada

# APPENDIX E:

## Speakers and Facilitators

### International speakers



**Jon Baron**

Vice President of Evidence-Based Policy, Arnold Ventures



**Colleen Ebbitt**

Senior Policy Advisor, Investment Finance Specialist, Government Inclusive Economy Unit



**Dr. Jonathan Breckon**

Director, Alliance for Useful Evidence, Nesta



**Dr. Jen Gold**

Head of What Works Team, Prime Minister's Implementation Unit, UK Cabinet Office



**Dr. David Halpern**

Chief Executive, The Behavioural Insights Team



**Sasha Tregebov**

Principal Advisor, The Behavioural Insights Team



**Stephanie Lee**

Director, Washington State Institute for Public Policy



**Tris Lumley**

Director, Innovation and Development, New Philanthropy Capital (NPC)



**James Turner**

Chief Executive Officer, Sutton Trust



**Nerys Thomas**

Knowledge, Research and Practice Lead, College of Policing



**Evan White**

Executive Director, California Policy Lab at UC Berkeley



**Hanna Azemati**

Program Director, Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab



## Domestic speakers



**Andrew Parkin**

Director, Mowat Centre



**Samantha Tattersall**

Assistant Secretary, Priorities and Planning, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat



**Matthew Mendelsohn**

Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet for Results and Delivery, Privy Council Office, Government of Canada



**Robyn Blackadar**

President and CEO, PolicyWise for Children & Families



**James Hughes**

Executive Lead, Government and Partner Relations, McConnell Foundation



**Dr. Jonathan Dewar**

Executive Director, First Nations Information Governance Centre



**Dale McFee**

Chief of Police, Edmonton Police Service



**Yvan Clermont**

Director of the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada



**Dr. Jeremiah Hurley**

Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Professor of Economics, McMaster University



**Adam Jagelewski**

Lead Executive, MaRS Centre for Impact Investing



**Jean-Pierre Voyer**

President and CEO, Social Research and Demonstration Corporation



**Sarah Schulman**

Lead of Social Impact, InWithForward



**Ursula Gobel**

Associate Vice-President, Future Challenges, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council



**Diane Roussin**

Project Director, Winnipeg Boldness Project



## Domestic speakers (cont'd)



**Ron Anderson**

Assistant Deputy Minister,  
Community Safety & Wellbeing,  
Government of Saskatchewan



**Chief Cadmus  
Delorme**

Cowessess First Nation



**Dr. Chad Nilson**

Community Engaged Scholar/  
Advisor, Centre for Forensic  
Behavioural Science and  
Justice Studies, University of  
Saskatchewan



**Mark MacLeod**

CEO, ISM Canada



**Lynn Barr-Telford**

Director General, Health, Justice  
and Special Surveys, Statistics  
Canada



**Stephen Gaetz**

Director, Canadian  
Observatory on  
Homelessness



**Sara Austin**

CEO, Calgary & Area Child  
Advocacy Centre



**Helen Yung**

Artist-Researcher, Culture of  
Cities Centre



**Dr. Daniel Garfinkel**

Psychologist, Child Abuse Service  
at Alberta Children's Hospital



**Dr. Vianne Timmons**

President and Vice-  
Chancellor of the, University  
of Regina



**Carrie Sanders**

Practice Specialist, Calgary & Area  
Child Advocacy Centre



**Cal Corley**

Chief Executive Officer,  
Community Safety  
Knowledge Alliance



**Sheldon Kennedy**

Co-Founder, Respect Group



**Honourable  
Christine Tell**

Ministry of Corrections and  
Policing, Government of  
Saskatchewan

## Facilitators



**Joanne Cave**

Senior Policy Associate,  
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**Lisa Lalande**

Executive Lead, Mowat  
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**Sarah Doyle**

Director of Policy and Research,  
Brookfield Institute for Innovation  
and Entrepreneurship



**Andrew Parkin**

Director, Mowat Centre



**Betty Ferreira**

Founder and Principal Consultant,  
ReStructure Consulting



**Karen Pitre**

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**Raequel Giles**

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**Anne White**

Senior Policy Advisor, Privy  
Council Office, Government  
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**James Hughes**

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