# Community Hub Development
# Building Community through Collaboration

Includes:
**Final Report**

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Research Report

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# Table of Contents

Executive Summary

1. Introduction........ 5
2. Methodology........ 5
3. Literature Review
   - 3.1 Introduction........ 6
   - 3.2 Historical Context........ 7
   - 3.3. Social Capital........ 8
   - 3.4 Contemporary Community Hubs........ 9
   - 3.5 Conclusion........ 10
4. Research Findings
   - 4.1 Discussion........ 11
   - 4.2 Physical Resources and Space........ 12
   - 4.3 Organizational Structure and Governance........ 13
   - 4.4 Funding and Sustainability........ 14
   - 4.5 Staffing and Coordination........ 15
   - 4.6 Programming and Services Model........ 16
5. Recommendations........ 19

Bibliography........ 20

Appendix
- Community Hub Principles—United Way of Toronto........ 22
- Research Questionnaire........ 24

# Executive Summary

From October 2012 to March 2013 research on non-school-based community hubs was conducted on behalf of the Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network (PPRN). Community hubs serve as a resource for residents of neighbourhoods with the purpose of building both resident and neighbourhood capacity.

Specifically the PPRN wanted to discover how community hubs are developed, made sustainable, both organizationally and financially, as well as how these partnership-based community service mechanisms are governed.

Therefore, a broad literature review was conducted that examined community hubs from both historical and contemporary contexts. 12 interviews were also conducted with key informants in both Peterborough and in Toronto who are involved in hubs that are both nascent and mature.

Key findings included:

a) 3 main hub models seem to exist, with the first two being predominant: physical, virtual, and mobile (singly and in combination)

b) Knowledge of community (through consultation) and collaboration between agencies and organizations are fundamental to hub relevance and success, including appropriate governance model adoption

c) Hub sustainability is tied to primary (and recurring) funding (e.g., foundation, government) in combination with grants and dynamic partnerships

Keywords: community hubs, capacity building, sustainability, governance, social capital

# 1. Introduction

### Background

The purpose of this project is to research models of non-school-based community hubs in Canada and provide best practices for community hub models. Community hubs are centres of activity and provide a gathering place for adults and children to enjoy educational, social, recreational and cultural activities. Each hub is unique in terms of its programs, and community partners. Events and sessions often reflect the needs and priorities of the children, families, individuals and communities that the hub serves. Community hubs are, ideally, vibrant and safe places which provide opportunities for people to engage in the community and develop new skills.

### Scope

The focus of this project is directed at examining how community hubs are developed, what form they take, how partnership arrangements are developed and managed, and how they are sustained in terms of funding and organizational structure.

# 2. Methodology

In order to answer the research questions posed above, the following approaches were taken:

a) Conduct literature review to place community hubs within the historical and social context. This includes any relevant documentation about existing hub development, feasibility studies, news articles and papers written by individuals involved in community hubs.

b) Find examples of existing hubs to discover what others have been doing.

c) Conduct key informant interviews with those who are directly involved with hubs, both nascent and established, within and outside Peterborough.

d) Synthesize the findings from the literature and interviews in order to make recommendations.

# 3. Literature Review

## 3.1 Introduction

The sense and meaning of community has undergone a certain ebb and flow as society has evolved from traditional to the modern industrial form it takes today. In traditional society, the notion of community was implicit and required no elucidating or explaining, as a predominantly rural existence automatically congealed around a sense of communality. While one can assume that some accrued greater wealth in the relevant temporal form, the divisions of class within the community were subtle—far more so than those that arose as a result of the industrialization of nations. Here, the landowner, or, in the Marxian sense, the owner of the means of production, accrued great wealth, while those of the urban industrial working class (often migrants from rural communities) were relegated to the poorer end of the class spectrum.

It is in this context of a classed society that we see the rise of community consciousness that is manifested around institutional communitarian frameworks that seek to ameliorate and improve the lot of the poor—often migrant—working class. While the motivations for undertaking these community-based projects may differ, the essence that drives their need remains the same: a response to the corrosion of society, in particular, communities as a result of *laissez faire* economics and a state reluctant, or unable, to intervene. The turn of the twentieth century, at the height of the industrial revolution, marked the advent of the settlement movement that began in Britain and quickly spread to the United States and Canada. And more recently, at the turn of the twenty-first century, with the renewed rise of inequality brought forth by the retrenchment of the welfare state, we see a reinvigorated movement that aims to revitalize and better serve those in need within the framework of the neighbourhood: a movement centred on the concept of a community hub.

This paper will briefly examine the history of the settlement movement—particularly the one in Canada—by reviewing the foundational sentiments that mobilized 'reformers' to undertake the movement, as well as discussing the role that settlements (as they are commonly known) played in community development. I will also review some of the discourse around community building, particularly that of the notion of social capital, and how it informs the vernacular of community in the contemporary sense. Then I will turn to the latest iteration of the neighbourhood-focused institutional support framework: the community hub. I will review the 'hub movement' in the broad sense, interrogating the meanings associated with the concept, how hubs are being operationalized, both internationally and in the Canadian context. As I will show, while the contemporary context may be somewhat different from the time of the settlement movement, these differences are only nuanced by their temporal and spatial separation; at their foundation, the aims of the settlement movement and today's community hubs are manifestly similar, both in their intent, their clientele and their delivery of community-driven services.

## 3.2 Historical Context—Settlement Movement

The settlement movement arose out of a critique of the both the underlying philosophy and resulting *modus operandi* of charitable organizations before the turn of the twentieth century. At this juncture, with the industrial revolution well entrenched, charities oftentimes worked in isolation from one another but were grounded by a common philosophy: they held that the means of compelling the poor to "uphold the virtues of industry, sobriety, and honesty [...] was to make the application for relief difficult and chastening, and to ensure that the support was barely sufficient to cover the needs of the individual" (James 2001, 62). Prevalent amongst charitable workers of the day was an attitude or belief that charitable contributions may even be responsible for causing poverty and generating pauperism (Ibid.).

The key difference between charities and the settlement movement was found in their particular "fundamental unit of society" (Ibid. 63): whereas charities focused on individual poverty, the settlement movement "advanced a community-oriented approach to welfare work" (Ibid. 56). Unlike charities, which reified ghettoization of the poor as means, one could say, of punishment or ridicule, subscribers to the settlement movement believed in the importance of the homogenization of neighbourhoods, where classes would mix, thus engendering trust and understanding through association (Ibid. 64).

In some ways, however, the settlement movement remained an elitist one that, while seeking to aid the poor and those new to a neighbourhood (e.g., an immigrant, or migrant from the countryside), did not question the inequality of power structures—i.e., capitalist accumulation and the mode of production. It rather avowed that "community cohesion was [...] vital" to strong communities, which, in turn, were the foundation of a strong democratic nation:

> [Settlement advocates] argued that a capitalist democracy could only endure if all citizens understood themselves to be an integral part of the body politic and felt able to share, collectively, in the cultural benefits [i.e., social capital] available to the middle class—in other words, only if everyone had access to the opportunities and the tools necessary for the development of their 'best selves' (Ibid. 65).

Therefore, the settlement movement did not resist existing liberal democratic power structures, but rather provided an alternative approach, a middle ground, within which to achieve its communitarian goals by working within the structural framework of contemporary society. In this way the movement would not alienate the middle-class which it would depend on for resources, nor would it be inaccessible to the working class which was its *raison d'etre*. In this respect, the settlement movement bridged the divide between social groups as it "sought to recreate [...] the cooperative community they thought characterized the English-speaking world before the industrial revolution" (James 1998, 51).

The settlement movement was physically actualized through settlement houses that are described by James as "part middle-class residence, part social welfare agency, part recreation centre and part cultural outpost in the slums" (Ibid. 50). Settlement houses (hereafter 'settlements') were a

'middle-class residence' due to the underlying philosophy that those who founded and operated them—those from the middle- and upper-classes—were required to be "neighbours, not merely visitors in 'neglected' districts" (Ibid.). Therefore, Canadian settlements were largely sponsored by "post-secondary students, Local Councils of Women, church groups, study clubs and civic associations" (James 2001, 66). Settlement work, not unlike the charitable kind, was highly gendered, with mostly university- and college-educated women "gravitat[ing] to settlement work" (Ibid. 70). (This gender division will be discussed further below in relation to the notion of social capital.)

Typical activities and services offered by settlements included kindergarten and nursery classes, music and drama classes, gymnastics, as well as medical and dental clinics (Ibid. 71; see also Irving et al 206). As the need arose as a result of state neglect of service provision, other services were added, including libraries, homework classes and tutorials, as well as community outreach programs that included medical and health services and affordable lunches for neighbouring factory workers (Ibid. 81). (One could argue that ostensibly through its neglect, the state downloaded the delivery of social services to non-state actors—a present day reality faced increasingly by municipalities in Ontario (and elsewhere) as Provincial governments slash budgets and download the responsibility for social service provision to communities.)

In all aspects of its programming and in "keeping with the tenets of the movement, all settlement programs centred on the group rather than the individual, and they all maintained a practical education orientation" (Ibid. 76). As a neighbourhood service centre (as settlements came to be known in Toronto circa 1960; see Irving et al 167), settlements served "to facilitate contact between its middle-class residents" and the neighbouring poor and immigrant population, thereby disrupting and casting aside "the barriers thrown up by class and ethnicity" (Burke 44). It can be argued that those who undertook settlement work took to heart Falconer's words when he said, "'Find the highest good by serving your fellows [...] through your intellect, your wealth, your position, or whatever talent you may possess'" (Falconer quoted in Burke 53). Jane Addams, the pioneer of the American settlement movement and founder of Hull House wrote, "'so far as a Settlement can discern and bring to local consciousness neighbourhood needs which are common needs, and can give vigorous help to the municipal measures through which such needs shall be met, it fulfills its most valuable function'" (quoted in Burke 44).

## 3.3 Social Capital

In order for a settlement, or contemporary community institution like a hub to operate, it first must capitalize its resources; these resources may include, but are not limited to, economic and social capital. While economic sustainability is of paramount importance to ensure the sustainability of any venture, it is outside of the purview of this paper. I will, therefore focus on social capital. Settlements benefited from the outset as being the projects of community-minded reformers of means, typically from the educated middle- to upper-classes, who were able to leverage their presumably substantive social connections to incite the movement. The social connections, or social capital, would be necessary to acquire the funding to purchase the

necessary real estate, as well as gain the support of officials and associated institutions along the way to actualize the settlement. Putnam offers the following definition of social capital:

> Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called 'civic virtue' (19).

The notion of social capital as concerned with the 'common good' (or 'highest good' referenced by Falconer) is closely linked as requisite to "secur[ing] benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures" (Onyx 3)—e.g., settlements, hubs, etc. By putting the notion of 'community' itself into the framework of social structure, we can describe it as "a regularly interacting system of networks" (Ibid. 5), where these networks are reinforced or actualized through the 'accumulation' of social capital by its particular actors (individuals or groups). Therefore, social capital is an essential prerequisite for collective action (Ibid. 6).

Settlements and community hubs, I argue, can operate as a means of consolidating, legitimizing and operationalizing social capital. When I evoke the idea of these institutions as being a legitimizing force, I am referring to the idea that "social capital for institutions might lie in their capacity to restore agency and trust to citizens concerning formal structures and processes" (Dale 26). This capacity to restore agency and trust may be realized by recognizing and fostering neighbourhood networks "as an important way to build empowerment, trust, cooperation and collective norms" (Ibid.). The establishment of trust by bridging classes was a key tenet of settlements, as shown above, as was the necessity of establishing mutual cooperation. By concretizing a sense of collective empowerment and trust, institutionally driven networks can "contribute to increas[ing] social capital" within communities (Ibid. 26-27). Therefore, in terms of the usefulness of social capital theory, I suggest that settlements and community hubs provide the "structural or institutional [...] framework for the development and/or mobilization of social capital" (Barraket 78; see also Kay and Johnston 17-30). Put another way, social capital "builds organizational infrastructures that encourage citizens to take direct action and prosper through collaborative efforts" (Kay and Bernard 59).

## 3.4 Contemporary Community Hubs

Precipitated by the entrenchment of neoliberal hegemony, the retrenchment of the welfare state has brought society, in some ways, full circle to the conditions of inequality, poverty and ethnic segregation (TCSA 2) that characterized the industrial revolution. Along with a return to reifying liberal individualism (Yan 54), we have seen a consistent reduction in funding to communities as governments pull back on, or eliminate funding schemes, or pass along responsibility. As a result, there is a shift of "caring function from the state to alternative sources of support in the civil society" (Yan 53). Therefore, the concept of settlement, or community hub, arose as a means to mobilize community-based resources. In this sense, 'community' is constructed, or actualized by "the imagination of a group of people who identify themselves as members of a

community" (Ibid. 55). A settlement or community hub provides a locus of "service delivery, community building and social change" (Ibid. 57) as a necessary part of constructing community networks that aim to improve residents' quality of life, "develop solidarity" and "to nurture and enhance social capital" (Ibid. 60).

As the latest iteration of settlements, community hubs ('hubs') are now the focus of neighbourhood service delivery as part of overall urban design. While hubs take on different forms, depending on their purpose, I will focus on a hub designation that is characterized by a service site that co-locates multiple organizations that deliver a range of community services as well as provides space for groups and neighbourhood events (Elton Consulting 10; Public Interest 3).

Hubs are about 'placemaking', that is, "creat[ing] a common vision" of what a neighbourhood space would embody to meet residents' "needs and aspirations" (pps.org). Put simply, hubs are not just a bureaucratic institutions that attempt to 'process' poverty and fragmentation 'out' of the community, but rather are a dynamic reflection of what a community aspires to in order to actualize itself to the fullest. As structural way of operationalizing community social capital, hubs provide a set of compelling benefits, such as heightened service coordination and delivery through activation of service integration (also, co-location of organizations provides better access and cost efficiencies), and community building as a result of strengthening social networks (City of London 3-4; Elton Consulting 11-12; TCSA 12; Woodgreen 5, 7).

While the mandate and services of hubs are particular to their location, some facilities and services included in the literature include family support services, social and employment services, health clinic, child care, library, multipurpose space, activity programming for seniors and those with disabilities, training and integration programs for new Canadians, and so on. Facilities and services are contingent on a community needs assessment combined with inventories of resident skills and social capital.

## 3.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, with the renewed rise of inequality brought forth by the retrenchment of the welfare state, we see a reinvigorated movement that aims to revitalize and better serve those in need within the framework of the neighbourhood. This movement, based on the settlements created by reformers at the turn of the twentieth century, has taken on the vernacular of the needs of the twenty-first century, and is now framed as 'community hub'. While over a hundred years have elapsed since the first settlement was established, the continuing need to imagine and construct people-centred community networks as a solidary response to liberal *laissez faire* ideology connects the two movements.

# 4. Research Findings

## 4.1 Discussion

As a mechanism to address the challenges of neighbourhoods that most require greater access to services and programming reflective of their needs (i.e., socioeconomically depressed, undervalued, underemployed, underserviced areas), the development of community hubs is a good fit, as it provides a community development process that depends on the particular purpose and people it is to serve. That being said, it is also necessary that a properly working community hub integrates a mechanism of flexibility that makes it responsive to changing needs, both from a neighbourhood standpoint, but also in a strategic sense. In other words, the nature of a community hub is such that it is more a process than a static entity; it evolves as the needs and wants of the residents it serves change.

As an evolutionary entity, a community hub may change over time in terms of its strategic outlook, physical location, hub model (i.e., physical, virtual, mobile, or hybrid—see below), staffing, governance and actual programming and services. This characteristic highlights how the conceptualization of the community hub diverges from that of the community centre. Unlike hubs, community centres are fairly static and homogenous in purpose; that is, they serve as community spaces that are available for functions (e.g., church groups, community events, weddings, etc.) often for a fee. One of the key features of the hubs surveyed is 'community spaces' for residents' use, these spaces are made available at no cost.

While some hubs may operate from a "community centre" it is their service delivery model that sets them apart: hubs facilitate community engagement making them a confluence of skills and knowledge, both emanating from the hub into the community and from the community back into the hub. This synergy serves to bring people together, create opportunities for collaboration and, thus, builds stronger communities. Community hubs are not just a place to go to access services and programming, but are also a catalyst for linking residents to resources that they require to build individual capacity and create a better life. Hubs are a community-based mechanism for facilitating relationships and trust building that are essential to engaging residents and building solidary neighbourhoods.

The following section examines the particular elements that together define the characteristics of a community hub. Again, as mentioned above, there is "no cookie cutter" model that must be followed in the development of a hub (KI #5). Rather, it is essential to lay a foundation that works for the neighbourhood the hub is to serve, as well as establishing strategies for sustainability, governance and hub coordination.

The key elements foundational to hub development are:

a) physical resources, infrastructure and space—refers to the actual space and infrastructure required for hub operation; includes any capital expenditures, physical resources and equipment.

b) operational structure and governance—refers to how a hub operates with respect to partnerships (actual and strategic), collaborative framework, and governance model.

c) funding and sustainability—refers to funding arrangements, challenges and considerations associated with sustaining a hub, as well as strategies employed for sustainability.

d) staffing and coordination—refers to the human resources that are involved in operating, managing and coordinating a hub.

d) programming and services model—refers to the kinds of programming and services that are associated with hubs and how they are delivered to clients; e.g., what hub model is used, such as physical, virtual, mobile or a hybrid.

## 4.2. Physical Resources, Infrastructure and Space

The notion of 'placemaking' as described above in the Literature Review section, posits that it is necessary to create an environment, a physical space, that is based on a "common vision" and serves to meet the "needs and aspirations" of residents who are to come to this place—i.e., community hub. According to The Working Centre's Joe Mancini, "[w]ithout the place, our ideas were like sand in the wind. With a place we saw the potential of gathering people together" (2012). Therefore, it is essential that this 'place' be approachable, inclusive and accessible: approachable, meaning evoking an inviting appearance from the street; inclusive, where all residents are welcome, regardless of 'status' or background, to come in with a willingness to "hear each other's stories" (KI #3); and accessible to all, regardless of physical ability, as well as be within walking distance or near public transit.

Community hubs can be purpose built, but more often are existing structures that have been renovated and repurposed. Examples include spaces in vacant (or near vacant) strip malls (e.g., Victoria Village, Toronto), an old police station (East Scarborough Storefront), schools or other institutional infrastructure no longer required and being sold (Sadleir House). In each case, space that once served another purpose has been rejuvenated, bringing back life to that which was once under-utilized or vacant in order to "create space for community activity" (KI #2). An instrumental effect, then, of creating a community hub to help build capacity in a depressed neighbourhood is the increased capacity in infrastructure that it also creates. This is evident in the rejuvenation and re-use of existing space around where hubs are located (KI #6).

The most common form of space that is evoked by the notion of the community hub is one associated with a particular physical space in the community where a number of relevant service organizations are co-located (e.g., series of Toronto hubs sponsored by the United Way and the City of Toronto: see http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com/whatWeDo/communityHubs.php). Hubs, however, can also exist as a virtual space, either entirely virtual (as in the Brantford Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee (Rogers 45)), or virtual in the sense that the 'core' of the hub is

located within an established organization, with a "constellation" of service providers that are located elsewhere (e.g., YWCA START hub, KI #4). The notion of the virtual, or hybrid, hub model will be discussed below in the Programming and Service Model section.

## 4.3 Organizational Structure and Governance

By their very nature, community hubs are collaborative endeavours that involve multiple stakeholders, including agencies, organizations and residents. Therefore, collaboration is considered by all those interviewed to be absolutely essential to the functioning and sustainability of a hub. Appropriate education, experience and leadership skills are also considered essential (KI #9). Put another way, the ability to work together is critical, where keeping the client at "centre of view" is most important and setting aside political and philosophical (i.e., personal) differences is key (KI #4). A "commitment to 'values not factions'" (Westhues 15) needs to be a defining characteristic of all hub stakeholders. Organizational sustainability depends on who is involved (both in terms of people and the agencies they represent), how agencies are integrated and governed, as well as how stakeholder and other organizations and residents perceive the hub and its function (e.g., Is it approachable? Does it offer accessible programs and services for residents?) (KI #5). Therefore, the 'credibility' factor of a hub can impact its sustainability as much as funding factors. Commitment from the lead agency, that is, the organization that manages the hub and works with other agencies to deliver services and programming, is critical, particularly with respect to its focus on community engagement (Ibid.).

To ensure that community hubs engage with the neighbourhood, continue to be relevant and ultimately sustain their existence, it is necessary to know they community that is to be served. A number of strategies can be employed to accomplish this task: examine area statistics (e.g., using Statistics Canada data; undertaking a literature review (including news stories and the area's historical context); speaking with other area agencies, especially those which may be considered for hub partnerships/participation; and most importantly, engaging with residents directly through "porch talks", posters, surveys, newsletters (with feedback opportunity), etc. (KI #8; Meagher 22-23). As Stephanie Mancini, one of the founders of The Working Centre, pointed out, "'We started first by listening. We didn't start with answers'" (Barrick 2012).

A mechanism for tracking hub usage is also considered essential as a means for demonstrating a neighbourhood need, but it also shows that the organizational structure of the hub is relevant and working in the manner it was intended. While some hubs only track the number of times services are accessed and do not utilize what some might consider a "lengthy, uncomfortable intake process" (KI #11), others give each new hub user a questionnaire and collect user-specific data (e.g., gender, age, demographics) using the Community Information and Mapping System (CIMS)[1] (KI #12). One approach is not superior to the other, rather it depends on the 'core'

1 "The Community Information and Mapping System (CIMS) is an infrastructure to support voluntary sector groups and community members in Ontario to do local community based research to understand and improve population health." (http://www.cims-scic.ca/)

service of the hub and its mandate as outlined in the guiding principles that govern it that reflect how each hub collects and manages its information. In the first case, the 'core' of the hub is an Employment Ontario service provider, whereas the second is a Community Health Centre.

Establishing the purpose and mandate of a community hub is essential to successful governance and delivery of services (KI #3; KI #5; KI #10). Specifically, it is useful to develop and/or adopt a set of principles that ground the intent of the hub, how it will be governed and its mandate for serving the community. It is best for these principles to be developed using a participatory approach, which leaves some room to be "flexible" as well as "stable" (KI #3). For some hubs, the adoption of a governance model by all stakeholder agencies occurs after some time has passed, where an "informal integration" model (KI #5) has evolved to a point that is fully collaborative and cooperative (KI #12).

The governance model used by hubs varies with composition, purpose, and level of community engagement. Governance is typically hierarchical, where a lead agency will lead a board of directors of the community hub, along with representation from each stakeholder agency. This follows the typical board of directors model that usually consists of a president, secretary and other responsibilities particular to being a member of a board. While the hierarchical model is not always explicit, it remains implicit with respect to the organizational structure of each community hub.

Effectively, as indicated above, hubs typically operate as partnerships, and this is reflected in their governance make-up. In some cases, there is some consideration to include resident representatives (e.g., those that use hubs) on the board, but residents can also participate in hub governance through 'town halls' and annual general meetings (KI #6). As mentioned above, on-going activities to acquire feedback from hub users on daily basis also provides direction for governing hubs.

## 4.4 Funding and Sustainability

Like all non-profit agencies, community hubs are constantly seeking sources of funding. All hub representatives agreed that "funding is huge" with hub financial sustainability "at the whim" of funders (KI #11). While grant writing and proposal submission are both *de rigueur* for those working in the non-profit sector, these activities alone cannot be relied on as the entirety of hub funding. Preferably, some form of core funding support should be arranged prior to launching the hub (in association with the activities described above). For example, the United Way of Toronto funds each of the hubs in its initiative in the amount of $150K per year, as well as infrastructure funding through the "Infrastructure Ontario" loan program ($1M price tag per hub on average) (KI #5).

Along with core funding, hubs are supported through the rents (and any other associated fees) paid by partner agencies, which is a significant part of the UWT hub funding model (Ibid.; KI #6). Other sources of funding cited included charitable donations (should hub have an

association with a charity, e.g., church or other non-profit organization), private individuals, community groups, foundations, and all levels of government. Grant writing, and the subsequent deliverables that are typically required by the latter two sources, presents both a challenge and an opportunity to learn and grow organizational capacity. By making the process of creating funder deliverables "meaningful"—i.e., organizational learning and capacity building—hubs can "demand" some flexibility while at the same time educating funders as to how funding and deliverables can be make more relevant to program beneficiaries (KI #11).

Creative approaches to developing organizational structures can lead to both leveraging core competencies, as well as streamlined accounting and human resources practices. For example, the East Scarborough Storefront is a "project" of Tides Canada, in what is called a "shared platform model". For an administration fee (9% of funding receipts), Tides Canada provides legal and fiduciary duties, taking responsibility for payroll, HR and contract issues and provides a charitable number. This model allows hub staff to focus on grant writing, building and managing partnerships, etc. (KI #11).

Where access to further funding is not readily available, another approach that offers at least a short-term solution is an organizational audit and rework of job descriptions and duties of existing staff (KI #7). This approach allows the hub to fulfil its key mandates for the time being, while arguably demonstrating the organizational intent and community need in the process that may make a case for attracting necessary additional, longer-term hub funding.

## 4.5 Staffing and Coordination

Across all types of hubs studied, a common assertion with respect to staffing requirements of a community hub is the absolute need for a dedicated coordinator—i.e., a "go-to person" who is paid, accountable and skilled (KI #7). Along with this position it is also critical that a staff member from each partner agency (co-located or off-site/virtual) is assigned to ensure ongoing hub collaboration (KI #4). The hub coordinator can often be assigned from the lead agency, so the efficacy of the hub hinges on the community-oriented service framework of that agency and the person assigned to the task (KI #5).

Hub coordination, or management, also often entails the day-to-day operations of the hub, including physical resources and financial management (KI #6). As hubs are typically not large enough to warrant hiring an operations manager, the hub coordinator, or manager will either require an abundance of innate knowledge of such matters, while also be community focused, or have access to adequate 'social capital' to fill any gaps in capacity.

Beyond staffing the coordinator position, hubs often have other positions that are complementary and necessary to delivering their mandate. As a hub is a highly collaborative enterprise, the type of individuals who are employed must possess the ability to work with others, as well as develop professional capacity. With this in mind, the East Scarborough Storefront has adopted a particular hiring methodology that screens applicants for their ability to collaborate and cooperate by first

conducting group interviews. Once a candidate 'passes' this step, they are interviewed by a panel composed of those he or she will potentially collaborate with as coworkers. This inclusive process, then, is one that considers personal capacity for building relationships more highly than credentials (e.g., post-secondary accreditation) (KI #11).

## 4.6 Programming and Services Model

Each community hub is as unique as the neighbourhood it serves. Therefore, as mentioned above, there are no 'cookie-cutter' templates for hub design when it comes to the services and programming that a hub will provide, as well as the method employed to deliver them (e.g., physical, virtual, mobile).

### *Services*

The suite of services offered form the foundation of the hub, and are identified and developed to address the particular needs of the neighbourhood. Identifying both existing needs, as well as the core competencies of the agencies involved is a critical step in hub service formation. An effective community hub will offer "one stop shopping" for residents and yet be responsive and flexible to people's needs (KI #5). As one interviewee put it, "you hold on to what you are committed to and let go of what you are attached to" (KI #11). By adopting this philosophy a hub, particularly the lead agency involved, will be more likely to avoid the pitfalls of "mission drift" (KI #2) that can arise when one tries to be all things to all people.

Services offered by the community hubs surveyed reflected a number of those listed in the literature review, including services that address employment, health, immigration/settlement, family and children, youth, and seniors. This serves as only a representative list and is certainly not comprehensive. Most importantly, it is not the number of services that a hub offers that give it substance, but rather their relevance and effectiveness in meeting the needs of the neighbourhood served.

### *Programs*

The other facet of community hubs is the programming that is developed alongside the core suite of services. Programs are initiated either by hub staff or by residents in response to identified needs and interests. Just like services, programs range broadly from arts, food sourcing and preparation, and knitting groups, to youth involvement in physical hub development (e.g., architectural and colour design) and resident initiatives. The latter is a specific feature of hubs that defines how they are different from more static or limited service providers. Here the hub as catalyst for individual and community capacity building is most evident, as it acts to facilitate and mentor residents who wish to launch a program, either using community space in the hub or some other site.

The importance of supporting resident initiatives is reflected by many of those interviewed. In particular, The East Scarborough Storefront (which has been operating for over 12 years) has formalized its support these initiatives through what it calls "Neighbourhood Trust" which supports the Storefront's mandate to build community capacity by facilitating resident-driven projects (see http://www.thestorefront.org/what-were-working-on/neighbourhood-trust). By taking this approach, the Storefront avoids draining its own capacity which can result from trying to "professionalize everything" (KI #11).

As a community-based resource, hubs provide a place for people to make connections and then get involved, either in an existing program, or in creating one of their own (KI #6). The philosophy of the hub as 'placemaking' creates a culture of community building, where people from different backgrounds can meet and share their skills and experience (KI #6; KI #12); that is, hubs facilitate connections, and by building relationships a collection of individuals transforms into a community of neighbours.

### *Hub Models*

Programs and services can be delivered by a hub model where partner agencies are co-located, virtually (or semi-virtually) with coordinated service access through the 'core' or 'nodes', or even through a hub that is mobile (i.e., where programs and services travel to various communities at regular intervals). Alternatively, a hub may be a hybrid version of these models.

A physical hub is one characterized by a particular purpose-built (or renovated) building, or unit (e.g., in a strip mall) where a number of service providers are co-located. This collection of service providers, usually coordinated through a lead agency (e.g., the UWT series of hubs), is selected based on community-based needs. While these agencies each deliver a particular type of service, it is possible that a resident may need to access more than one (e.g., employment and health services).

A virtual hub can be entirely virtual, or be virtual with coordination by a lead, or sponsor agency (e.g., START Hub, where YWCA is lead agency). This coordinated service access model integrates a collection of agencies and services (nodes) into a deliberate program that aims to serve a particular need. Unlike physical hubs, a virtual hub is not defined by geographic boundaries (i.e., 'neighbourhood'). Therefore, this model can be employed to serve a broader community and offers greater reach, as well as flexibility.

A mobile hub is a collection of services and programs that 'travel' to remote or under-serviced communities that do not have the capacity to offer them. Mobile hubs would likely partner with an organization or agency within each community they serve, thus providing continuity and maximizing service and program capacity. Over time a mobile hub may generate adequate capacity within these communities to warrant establishing a full-time community hub (e.g., the

Peterborough Family Resource Centre facilitates and coordinates five community hubs it once served 'by bus').

A hybrid hub, typically a combination of physical and virtual, offers the 'placemaking' physical accessibility of a physical location with the reach available through a virtual model. This model works where an organization offers a core service (which provides foundational funding), but has neither the space nor the capacity to have full-time, on-site co-located service partners. Instead, dedicated office space—each with a desk, chairs, computer (internet access) and phone—is made available for representatives from partner organizations to use to meet with clients at regular intervals (e.g., weekly, monthly, etc.). This arrangement allows the 'host' organization to focus on delivering its core services and programs, while providing residents access to a broad range of relevant services not available in the community (e.g., the East Scarborough Storefront has partnerships with some 40 agencies from across Toronto).

# 5. Recommendations

Based on the findings four key recommendations can be put forth as critical to addressing the research questions posed in the Introduction about community hub development. To recap, this project set out to examine how hubs are developed (and what form they might take), how they are made sustainable and how they are governed (given the complexities of multiple agency partnerships).

1. Build knowledge and mutual trust through ongoing neighbourhood consultation and interaction (e.g., surveys, “porch talks”, inclusive events, open-doors/drop-in).

2. Embrace a flexible model that allows programs and services to continuously evolve to reflect the needs specific to the community being served.

3. Appoint a hub coordinator (and coordinating agency) who has both the necessary skills (coordinating multiple stakeholders, diplomacy, tact and a keen sense of mission) and recognizes the importance of community engagement to hub sustainability and success.

4. Create a “street-level” (where possible) hub that is resident driven, engaging, inclusive, accessible and highly visible (i.e., central to the neighbourhood and not "off the beaten track").

5. Acquire a primary funding source. Seek capital funding where necessary and available (e.g., "Infrastructure Ontario").

6. Adopt a representative and functional governance model and sense of “place”.

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# Appendix A—United Way of Toronto[1]

## PRINCIPLES GUIDING COMMUNITY HUB DEVELOPMENT

*Recognizing the critical role of partnerships and the synergy of collective action, United Way expects each hub to have its own defined partnership agreement to guide the engagement of organizations, local groups and community residents. Given the complexity of hub development and uniqueness of local conditions, hub leads, partner agencies and community stakeholders have to work together towards establishing their own value statements and principles that would guide the various types of relationships related to hub development.*

*United Way promotes the following hub principles and anticipates that the hub leads incorporate the core principles and considers the optional principles in the development of their partnership agreement.*

## CORE PRINCIPLES

***Neighbourhood based and locally responsive***[2]***:*** Hubs reflect the needs and interests of the local neighbourhood. The design, development and on-going operation of community hubs will include participation from neighbourhood residents, service providers, local institutional leaders, and other community stakeholders.

***Accessible and engaging of diversity***: Hubs embrace the diversity in local communities and will involve the diversity of people who live in the local area such as : different age groups, racial, cultural and linguistic groups, and differently-abled people. Hub programs and activities are designed to be accessible to particularly addressing the interests and needs of marginalized and racialized people living in the neighbourhood. To encourage involvement and participation of diverse individuals and groups, hubs will establish inclusive policies and practices.

***Community involvement in decision making***: Hubs have transparent decision making and accountability structures that encourage local residents to participate and determine priorities and directions, jointly with hub agency partners, local organizations and other community stakeholders.

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1 Source: United Way of Toronto.

2 Neighbourhood-based and locally responsive – Hubs are envisioned to minimally serve the identified priority neighbourhoods.

***Service Coordination and Collaboration***: Hubs are a platform for service providers to coordinate the delivery of a broad range of relevant and accessible services/programs and to collaborate on addressing and responding to local neighbourhood needs and priorities.

***Community Space:*** Hubs will include space that is available to resident groups and grassroots groups involving residents, as well as agencies responding to resident requests for service on a flexible basis. This space will be free to residents for the purposes of community engagement or community and social services activities. Community groups and/or residents will be involved in developing the policies and procedures regarding use of the community space.

***Financial Sustainability:*** Hubs establish mechanisms to efficiently and effectively manage financial resources as well as secure additional revenues for on-going financial stability and viability of operations.

***Evaluation:*** Hubs assess progress of operations as well as effectiveness and impact of implementation to building opportunities in the community.

## OPTIONAL PRINCIPLES

***Shared Resources/Logistical Support***
To increase cost-efficiencies, hub partners may agree to leverage resources and share logistical support, as needed.

***Community Capacity Building***
Hubs may support and build capacities of existing and emerging community groups/individuals by providing opportunities to get engaged in hub activities and share their knowledge, resources and expertise.

**Collective Learning**
Hubs agree to maintain information, share experiences and reflect on learnings to build shared understanding and knowledge on community hub implementation.

# Appendix B—Project Questionnaire

What is your background in community-based organizations, groups or projects?

How did you become involved in the Community Hub?

How did your hub start? Who was involved, what challenges did you face early on and how did you overcome them?

What facilities and services are offered through your hub? How were these identified as relevant to your community/neighbourhood (e.g., needs assessment)?

How many organizations or service providers are co-located at your hub? In your opinion, what are the advantages of these organizations and services being available in one location (both for hub administrators/workers and clients)?

How is your hub governed (i.e., what is the nature of governance/management structure?)
What are your sources of funding (start-up and ongoing)? What is your sustainability strategy? Has this changed over time?

How many people in your neighbourhood access the hub each day/month/year?

What aspect of your hub would you say is the most important to your community?

Are there any plans to modify/expand/improve your existing hub? Do you solicit input and suggestions from its users in order to adjust/improve service delivery? How?

What advice would you offer to community groups who are trying to develop a community hub in their neighbourhood?