

**Evaluation of the
Community Laundry Co-op:
Building Capacity and Leadership**

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Executive Summary

Evaluation of the Community Laundry Co-op

Purpose of the evaluation

To provide Centretown CHC (CCHC) and Community Laundry Co-op (CLC) staff and management with information about if and how CLC members experience a change in capacity and leadership, as a result of their involvement with the CLC.

Background

The CLC and CCHC wanted to know if and how the Co-op develops leadership and builds capacity for its members. The data is to be shared with funders and Boards of the two organizations. The evaluation began in spring 2009. We conducted individual interviews with Co-op members, volunteers, and staff and one focus group with Board and staff.

Findings

The Co-op develops members' skills in three areas: interpersonal, life skills, and leadership.

The Laundry Co-op helps its members develop interpersonal/life skills and leadership skills. Members use these new skills in their personal relationships, at their jobs, and in the community where they live.

Yet throughout the course of this evaluation, the CLC staff and Board explained that they did not see that they worked in the area of leadership development. The evaluation findings, however, are undeniable. The CLC's role in leadership development is very clear - the CLC **is** a leader. This fact needs to be "embraced" more fully.

"Active" participation is key to capacity building.

How long someone has been a CLC member does not necessarily equal increased capacity. Rather it is how active the member is in the Co-op's many learning and leadership development activities. Of its 1200 members, about 320 members regularly do their laundry and of those, about half (approximately 160 members) actively participate in CLC activities. There are many "stories" of members who have positive experiences with the CLC that lead to increased involvement. However, it is important to remember that some CLC members come just to do their laundry. They may not have the time or interest to become more involved in CLC activities.

Three other key factors for member capacity building are the Co-op's environment, its staff and member's willingness and commitment to learn.

The Co-op is clean, respectful and accessible. Staff build trusting relationships with members. They are positive role models. They consult members on Co-op activities. They provide encouragement and give feedback. Active members also increase their capacity through their desire to "give back", and through their own ability and willingness to learn and experience new things. However, some members find that some of the training offered to them (and/or which they are required to attend) is not always relevant to their role at the CLC.

Members have other suggestions for how the Co-op could strengthen its capacity, for example by continuing to support volunteers (e.g., provide them with networking/bridging opportunities with

Board members), expanding membership and connecting with other like-minded community businesses and Co-ops.

CLC volunteers and Board members say they have a “sense of community” (belonging) when they participate in CLC activities.

People interviewed said things like: “I feel satisfied that I have done something to help”; “I met a new community”; “It feels like a team, like a home”; “I am worried about members I haven’t seen for a while”; and “I socialize with a few people here...I have made a few friends”

Recommendations

There are five recommendations for program improvement based on the evaluation findings.

1. Clearly explain to members the purpose of any skill development training (e.g., workshops, other learning opportunities).

If the CLC can explain to members the purpose of training, if and why it is mandatory, how it relates to their role at the CLC and/or their personal goals (as identified during the “Asset Map” process), this may increase members’ “buy-in” to the skill development opportunities. Continue to consult with members re: what training opportunities they would like to have. Evaluate all training opportunities. Identify 4 or 5 questions that you can ask members at the end of all training sessions.

2. Explicitly communicate the CLC’s role in “leadership development”.

While leadership is but one feature of “capacity building”, it is an area where the CLC excels. Consider the following actions:

- A. Review the logic model. Ensure that leadership development activities (and its related outcomes and indicators) are clearly articulated. Ensure that the CLC’s leadership work at all levels –with individual members/volunteers, the CLC itself as an organization and at the community – is reflected. The logic model could also have a separate component on partnership development.
- B. Talk with members about how the volunteer and training/development opportunities offered to them are intended to develop leadership skills. Offer opportunities along the “continuum” of skill development – interpersonal skills/life skills/leadership skills. Explain to members how leadership development can benefit them, the Co-op and the broader community (see recommendation #1).
- C. Communicate to funders the role that the CLC plays in leadership development. Talk with funders about how the CLC is a good model for leadership development and therefore a solid program for them to invest in.
- D. Connect with other “like-minded” organizations, businesses and co-ops in the community, with a goal to share experiences with leadership development and learn from each other.

3. Develop a strategy to increase opportunities for “connection” between CLC members/volunteers and the CLC Board. Board members describe a sense of pride, connection and “community” when they were in the Co-op. Some CLC members expressed a desire for greater connection with the Board. Increased opportunities for connection may result in further benefits for both the members and Board. Consider exploring the following:

- A. Have “open” Board meetings, for all members to attend if they wish.
- B. Post minutes of Board meetings in the Co-op.
- C. Post the Coordinator’s monthly reports in the Co-op.
- D. Invite Board members to attend CLC member training events, when possible.
- E. Provide networking/bridging opportunities between volunteers and Board members, particularly for those members who are transitioning out of Support Volunteer/CED positions.

4. The Co-op could increase its own capacity to monitor and evaluate CLC leadership and capacity building in a more formal and consistent way.

The Co-op could strengthen how it monitors and evaluates its leadership and capacity building work. Options include:

- A. Re-write the Logic Model (see recommendation #2).
- B. Evaluate its learning and development workshops (see recommendation #1).
- C. Re-visit the Asset-Map tool:
 - i. Write out a clear explanation at the top of the Asset Map tool, in order to more clearly explain its purpose, and to ensure consistent “messaging” amongst all staff.
 - ii. Develop a system to follow-up with members re: the goals that they have set and progress towards achieving these goals.

5. Develop a plan for how the CLC can begin to explicitly articulate Cooperative Principles and how these relate to capacity building. Four of the seven “Cooperative Principles” are also inherent in capacity building (e.g., democratic member control; education, training and information; concern for community; cooperation among cooperatives). It would be helpful to make explicit the link between the two concepts, in order to “ground” the capacity-building efforts in the Cooperative Principles and the principles in the capacity-building efforts.

Introduction

This report summarizes the findings of an evaluation of the “Community Laundry Co-op” (CLC), a program of the Centretown Community Health Centre (CCHC). The objectives of the evaluation are:

- to provide CCHC and CLC staff and management with information about if and how CLC members experience a change in capacity and leadership, as a result of their involvement with the CLC;
- to determine for the CCHC Board of Directors if and how CCHC has “developed and supported community leadership” (one of CCHC’s Strategic Directions for 2009 – 2011).

The Co-op will use this information to improve its’ programs. The evaluation was conducted from March – June 2009 and as such reflects the program as it existed at that time.

The report is divided into four parts. The first provides the background to the study including a description of the program. The second describes the evaluation questions and provides a brief review of evaluation studies in the literature. The third section describes how the evaluation was conducted (the “methodology”). The last section reports the findings and recommendations.

The evaluation was conducted by Lise Labrecque, an evaluation consultant hired for this project. The evaluation’s key stakeholders (CCHC’s Community Health Promotion manager & community planner; CLC’s Coordinator; Counsellor) were consulted on all phases of the evaluation, including: definitions of key concepts; evaluation questions and indicators; design; data collection methods and measures; participant recruitment; interpretation of data; and formulation of recommendations.

This report is intended for multiple audiences (e.g., CCHC and CLC management and Boards of Directors, and CLC staff). For the sake of brevity and readability, the report covers only the main topic areas. More detailed information can be found in the appendixes.

Program Description

Goals and objectives of the CLC

The CLC provides accessible, affordable, environmentally-friendly self-service laundry for anyone who needs it. Located on Rideau Street in downtown Ottawa, the Co-op is open six days a week, including three evenings and Saturdays (“women’s only” day). Membership is open to anyone and costs \$1.00 per person for one year. Laundry costs \$1.00 per load (wash and dry) and includes detergent, bleach and fabric softener. There are 2 self-serve washers and 2 dryers. Members make appointments for the day/time they would like to do their laundry.

Along with providing affordable laundry, the C-op offers its members volunteer opportunities, annual social events, and a community economic development (CED) program. (See Appendix A for a logic model developed by CLC staff that describes the program’s activities, outputs and outcomes). In the CED program, the CLC takes on laundry contracts with community organizations and small businesses (e.g., community health centers, fitness centres, housing shelters). The laundry is done by CLC members who are trained for the position and are paid for each load they do. There are separate industrial-quality washers and dryers for the CED contracts, with a capacity to do 225 loads per week.

The Co-op opened in 1999, after participants at Ottawa's 1997 "People's Hearings on Effects of Cuts to Social Programs" said that one effect of poverty was not having clean laundry. Originally sponsored by three organizations - First United Church, Centretown Community Health Centre (CCHC) and McLeod-Stewarton United Church (now known as the Centretown United church) – the Co-op will become an independent, incorporated organization on July 1, 2009¹.

Program Participants

The CLC has over 1200 members, who are mostly people living on low-incomes including single mothers, immigrants, the disabled, and people with mental health and addiction issues. Most CLC members require financial assistance (e.g., Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works, Workers' Compensation). Of the 1200 members, about 320 regularly use the self-serve laundry facilities on a monthly basis.

Program support/administration

The CLC's annual budget is approximately \$200,000. Fees from the self-service laundry and the CED program cover a portion of the cost of laundry supplies, utilities, etc. The rest of CLC funding is from multi-year grants and "special project" one-time funding. Key funders include: Sisters of Service, Sisters of Charity, United Way/Centraide Ottawa, the Community Foundation of Ottawa and the Co-operators. The CLC does not have any on-going, operational funding.

The CLC has two full-time, paid staff positions – a Coordinator (who has been with the CLC for approximately 7 years) and a Counsellor (who was hired in April 2009). The Coordinator is responsible for day-to-day operations, program development, and for the long-term development of the CLC. The Counsellor oversees the self-service laundry operations, supports members and the CED Program, and provides overall administrative support. The Co-op is governed by a Management Board that is involved in overseeing the overall program operations. The Board meets monthly and there is an annual general meeting usually held in May. There are nine board members, with two positions reserved for CLC member representatives.

The CLC has a member volunteer/participation component to its operations. There are three types of volunteer/support positions:

- Operational Volunteers – 12-15 volunteers, responsible for staffing the front desk, making appointments for and collecting money from self-serve laundry.
- Support Volunteers – 5 volunteers, responsible for more "behind-the-scenes" administrative work, such as inputting statistics into computer databases, photocopying, updating forms and memberships, purchasing supplies, etc. They receive a small donation from the CLC for their work. These positions last for one year, to allow other members the opportunity to become Support Volunteers.
- CED Participants – 18 workers, who are responsible for washing, drying and folding the laundry during regular, weekly shifts. Members either self-refer themselves to the program or are approached by staff. They receive training and mentoring support from staff and/or other CED participants. As previously mentioned, they are paid by the load.

¹ The Co-op has changed its name from Centretown Laundry Co-op to Community Laundry Co-op.

All staff, Board, volunteer and support positions have job descriptions clearly outlining roles, responsibilities and reporting structures. All member volunteers are required to attend training on a variety of topics e.g., conflict resolution, resilience, goal-setting, etc. Some workshops are open to all members e.g., cooking workshops. CED and Support Volunteers are also required to complete an Asset Map, in which they self-assess their own strengths and abilities (“capacities”). The Asset Map is described in greater detail in the next section.

The CLC works closely with many partner agencies, which refer clients to the CLC. The agencies buy laundry “vouchers” from the CLC, which they in turn give to clients. A new area of partnership development for the CLC is supporting other organizations who are interested in starting laundry co-ops and/or CED programs. The CLC has supported groups in Montreal, the U.S and in Ottawa (e.g., the Families Matter Co-op).

Evaluation Questions

This evaluation is intended to determine if and how CLC members have experienced changes in their capacity and leadership, as a result of their involvement with the CLC. Six questions guided the evaluation:

1. Do members have increased/strengthened knowledge and skills? If so, in what areas?
2. Do members apply their new knowledge and skills?
3. Do members have increased participation/involvement in CLC opportunities?
4. Do members feel an increased “sense of community”/belonging?
5. What are the demographics of those CLC members who report increased capacity?
6. What happened in CLC activities that led to increased capacity? What or who makes this possible?

An evaluation framework (see Appendix B) lists the evaluation questions, the related indicators, data sources and methods.

A review of the literature on similar programs

Research on “capacity building” program theory and design

The CLC’s underlying program theory is threefold. First, it addresses basic needs related to poverty, as well as the effects of social isolation, in order to improve people’s health. Second, it offers CLC members opportunities to learn and develop life-skills, so that they have an increased ability to take action on issues that affect their health. Third, it follows the principles of a “cooperative” which are: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; cooperation among cooperatives; and concern for community (International Cooperative Alliance, as cited in Zeuli & Cropp, 2004, p. 45). There is plenty of published literature to support the CLC’s theory, as well as the need for the CLC. There is a growing evidence of the link between determinants of health² and health outcomes. This research also states that

² These determinants are biology and genetics; income and social status; food security; social support; education; employment and working conditions; physical and social environments; personal health practices and coping skills; early life and healthy child development; health services; culture; and gender (Bhatti & Hamilton, 2002, p. 5).

individual-focused, lifestyle interventions are ineffective in addressing health outcomes if attention is not paid to the broader determinants of health. (See Butler-Jones, 2008, and Raphael, 2007 for reviews of the key research).

There is also research on capacity building, its underlying concepts and features, and how to evaluate it (Hawe et al., 2000; Kwan et al., 2003; MacLellan-Wright et al., 2007, to name only a few). Given the broad literature on this topic, it was important to define key terms for the evaluation, such as “capacity building”, “community capacity”, and “leadership”. Table 1 (see Appendix C) summarizes the key definitions chosen by the evaluation stakeholders as being the most relevant for the CLC. These definitions form the basis for key indicators for the evaluation questions.

Evaluations of similar programs

The literature was briefly reviewed³ to see if and how other programs aimed at building capacity and leadership have been evaluated, and if so, what the evaluation findings were. This was done in order to be able to compare the CLC evaluation design and results to other similar evaluations, in order to put the findings and recommendations into a larger context.

Better Beginnings Better Futures (BBBF). This community project in South-East Ottawa recently conducted research to explore strategies that promote social inclusion and barriers to participation (Jenkins, 2008). While this research focuses on social inclusion, the concepts of capacity building and leadership are inherent in social inclusion; therefore it is relevant to the CLC’s evaluation. The BBBF research identified the program’s underlying values and how these are linked to best practices. It also identified factors that support social inclusion: “Those elements frequently mentioned by staff and residents include an openness to different cultures, flexibility in programming, non-judgmental staff, consistency in staff and services, and opportunities to participate” (Jenkins, 2008, no page number).

Leadership Learning Community. The United Way of Toronto researched best practices in leadership development, how best to develop and support that leadership, and how to evaluate it. They recognized that “collaborative, multi-partner programs are the most sustainable and effective strategies to address our leadership challenges” (Gibson and Macklem, 2008, p. 8.) While the report addresses leadership development in paid, senior-level/executive management positions, there are several sections relevant to individual and community leadership. Of particular note is the “Framework for leadership investment and evaluation” (see Gibson and Macklem, 2008, pp. 114-115; and Reinelt, 2009). The framework is a matrix of activities and outcomes of capacity at the levels of individuals, organizations, the collective and systems. The reports' section on evaluating leadership is also helpful, along with an excellent bibliography of leadership resources.

³ Databases, websites or literature that were consulted include: the Association of Ontario Health Centre’s research database website; the Canadian Evaluation Society - Journal of Program Evaluation and “grey literature” database of published evaluation reports; a literature review (of peer reviewed journals and grey literature) that the evaluator had previously conducted on capacity building; the world-wide-web through “Google”. Search terms included: capacity building; community capacity building; leadership skills/development, evaluation of capacity building. It should be noted that much of the literature on capacity building states that there is a lack of published literature of evaluations of capacity building efforts.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s Scan of 55 Leadership Development Programs: The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2002) did a scan of 55 leadership development programs to determine what approaches they were using to capture, document, and evaluate leadership outcomes. They found that “...despite the diversity of desired outcomes, programs tended to evaluate and report on outcomes related primarily to individual and group leadership development. Increased competencies such as collaboration, cultural competence, and communication; personal transformation including increased self-awareness, confidence, and broader thinking; relationship building, such as enhanced professional networks, communities of practice, and collaborations are widely demonstrated outcomes of leadership programs” (p. 3). The report identifies outcomes at the level of individuals, organizations, communities, “communities of practice”, and systems. The report also identifies data collection methods appropriate for evaluating leadership outcomes, including: surveys/interviews, storytelling, case studies and anecdotal evidence.

Effectiveness of empowerment initiatives to improve health. The World Health Organization (Wallerstein, 2006) found that empowerment initiatives can indeed lead to health outcomes, and therefore that “empowerment” is a legitimate public health strategy. Yet the reviews of the effectiveness of empowerment programs found that participation alone is not enough. Initiatives must also include build the capacity of organizations and individuals in decision-making and advocacy (p. 4). Effective empowerment strategies are described as interventions which have:

- created or adapted to local contexts (e.g., culturally and gender appropriate);
- small group efforts to build supportive environments and a sense of community;
- “...collective involvement in decision-making and participation in all phases of public health planning, implementation and evaluation;
- ...transfer of power and decision making authority to participants of interventions;
- ...(been) sensitive to the health care needs identified by community members themselves” (Wallerstein, 2006, p. 5).

Community Laundry Co-op. The CLC itself has initiated a number of outcome monitoring/evaluation efforts:

- Staff have anecdotal evidence (gained through observation and/or through informal discussions with members) of members’ progress over time (e.g., increased confidence in their volunteer abilities with the CLC; getting a job; increasing their level of independence in the community through employment, housing, education, etc).
- An evaluation was conducted in 2001 (Johnson, 2001), which assessed twelve different areas of operation and outcome, such as the CLC’s progress in its first two years of operation (membership, member characteristics, volunteer involvement); needs being met/unmet; impact on health and well-being of members and which activities lead to intended outcomes. One of the findings was that the Co-op should continue to build community and encourage members to develop their skills and self confidence.
- A three-part “Asset-Based Evaluation Framework” was implemented in 2002, which includes an Asset Mapping tool⁴. Asset Map results are summarized annually, into one

⁴ The CLC’s Asset Mapping tool is based on the work of the Women and Economic Development Consortium in Toronto (see references for more information). Five asset areas (human, personal, social, physical and financial) are self-assessed by members on a 5-point scale. Members complete the Asset Map three times – when they start with the program, at six months, and at the end (usually after one year).

aggregate “map”. This information is given to funders, to demonstrate growth in individual level outcomes for CED and Support Volunteer members. In 2008, the year-end summary showed that there was a slight increase in all assets, the greatest increase being in financial assets, and the smallest being in social assets.

Evaluation Methodology

Evaluation Type

This evaluation used an outcome evaluation method,⁵ given that the CLC and CCHC wanted to demonstrate to Boards, funders and staff that CLC members experienced a change in individual-level capacity and leadership, as a result of their involvement with the CLC. We used a non-experimental design (i.e., no comparison group), due to the qualitative nature of the research.

Data collection methods and participants

Qualitative methods: Two qualitative data collection methods were used (individual interviews and a focus group) with three groups of participants (CLC members/volunteers, Board and staff). Interviews with CLC members were held first, followed by the Board/staff focus group, and ending with the CLC Coordinator interview. The evaluator collected and analyzed all of the data.

Qualitative methods were chosen because interviews and focus groups were a better fit for CLC members who may not be comfortable with written surveys/questionnaires, and/or whose first language may not be English, and focus groups were a more time efficient way to gather data.

The instruments (measures): Data collection instruments included questionnaires for the individual interviews (developed by the evaluator) and one pre-existing measure, called the “Community Capacity Building Tool”⁶ (CCBT), which was used for the focus group and staff interview, (see Appendix D for tools). The CCBT describes nine features of community capacity: participation, leadership, community structures, role of external support (for example, a funding agency), asking why, obtaining resources, skills, knowledge, and learning, linking with others, and sense of community (PHAC, 2007). The tool uses a metaphor of a journey, asking you to rate or “track” your location in your project as being at one of four mapping points: “*Just started*”, “*On the road*”, “*Nearly there*”, and “*We’re there*”. Each of the questions is followed by an open-ended question asking you to “describe” your rating.

While the tool assesses community-level capacity, and this evaluation was focused on individual-level capacity, the tool provides a good framework in which to have a group discussion. It also addresses several individual-level capacity domains that we were interested in, specifically skill/knowledge development and leadership.

⁵ Outcome evaluations assess “...the *changes* that occurred as a *result* of your program and whether it is having the intended *effect*.” (Porteous et al., 1997, p. 2, emphasis in the original text). Outcomes are the “benefits or changes for individuals or populations during or after participating in program activities” (United Way of America, 1996, p. 2).

⁶ The CCBT was developed through research that drew on the expertise of practitioners and researchers across Canada and is being used by the Public Health Agency of Canada. The tool and a data analysis manual are in the public domain (see references for web-link).

The participants: A convenience sample was used for each data collection method, due to time constraints. The sampling strategy is described in Appendix E and the participant recruitment is described in the following sections. Participants gave informed consent, as per procedures outlined in CCHC's research policy. Participant anonymity has been protected by removing/changing all identifying information in the evaluation report.

Individual interviews with CLC members: Eight individual interviews were conducted at the CLC in May 2009. All interviewees received incentives (\$10 restaurant gift certificates). Interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. There were two types of CLC interview participants: CLC volunteers/CED participants, and general members. The CLC Coordinator initially described the evaluation to all potential interview candidates, either through notices posted at the CLC or by telephoning people directly. After the Coordinator received CLC members' verbal permission to participate, the evaluator telephoned six CLC member volunteers and scheduled interviews with them based on availability of both the member and the evaluator. General CLC members were simply approached by the evaluator at the Co-op on a day designated for on-site interviews. Three members were approached and two agreed to be interviewed.

Only one interview was audio-taped, so detailed notes were taken. Some members did not want the interview to be taped, and in other cases it was simply too noisy (i.e., interviews were held in the open reception area of the CLC, near the industrial washers/dryers while they were in operation, outside on a park bench with the sound of traffic and buses nearby).

Participants were asked questions about their participation in CLC activities, what they learned from these activities, if/how they have applied their new knowledge/skills, who/what might have contributed to learning, how they feel when they participate in CLC activities, and how long they had been CLC members.

Participants ranged in age from late 20's to mid 60's. There were five men and three women. Membership with the CLC ranged from five months to seven years. All but one participant was a CLC volunteer, and all did their laundry at the CLC on a regular basis. Tables 2 and 3 (see Appendix F) indicate the length of CLC membership for the eight interviewees, as well as their participation in CLC activities. The length of time volunteering ranged from one week to five years, with the average being about one year. Two interviewees had completed Asset Maps. These were reviewed by the evaluator; however the information was not relevant for the purposes of the evaluation and therefore was not included in the data analysis.

Individual interviews with the CLC coordinator: One individual interview, lasting 1 ½ hours, was conducted with the CLC Coordinator in June 2009. The interview was not audio-taped but detailed notes were taken. Interview questions focused on the CCBT, which the Coordinator had completed on her own before the interview. Additional questions were included (see questionnaire in Appendix D).

Focus groups: One focus group, lasting 1 ½ hours, was conducted in May 2009 with CLC Board members and one CLC staff member⁷. There were originally seven participants, although one left before the discussion began and another left after one hour. Participants were community Board members (n=4), CLC member representative (n=1) and the CLC Counsellor (n=1). Four participants had been on the Board for several years and one was a new member attending his first meeting.

The focus group was held during the Board's regularly scheduled, monthly meeting. The Board Chair told members about the focus group by e-mail three weeks before the meeting. The focus group was not audio-taped but detailed notes were taken. Discussion questions focused on the CCBT, with one additional question about if/how members apply their new knowledge/skills. Only six of the nine CCBT questions were discussed, due to time constraints.

Data analysis

Data was analyzed and validated using techniques appropriate for qualitative research methods (See Creswell, 2007; Krueger, 1998; and Patton, 2002). Individual CLC member interviews were analyzed first. Notes were read several times and significant statements were highlighted. These were then clustered into themes (see Appendix G for member interview data analysis notes).

Focus group data were analyzed in three ways. First, an average rating was calculated for each "feature" of community capacity (e.g., participation), to arrive at one rating (between 1.0 and 4.0). Second, ratings for each question were calculated. These were either combined scores from the Focus Group and the CLC Coordinator, or in some cases Focus Group only⁸. Third, all notes were read several times and significant statements/descriptions were grouped together according to each focus group question. Focus group notes were also compared to the CLC member interview notes, to look for similarities/differences regarding how participants described their experiences. Data from the focus groups also helped to shape some of the questions for the staff individual interview. (See Appendix H for focus group data analysis notes). Data collected during the staff interview were also analyzed by comparing it to the CLC member interviews and the focus group results, looking for both similarities and differences between the three sets of data.

Findings were compared ("triangulated") between the three data collection methods. Data was then categorized according to each of the six evaluation questions, by indicating the main findings for each question and which data source(s) supported this finding. (See Appendix I for the main findings drawn during analysis of all three sets of data). Validation strategies (used to assess the accuracy of the data) included triangulating the data sets, sharing main findings with key stakeholders to get their feedback and reactions, and to review the findings in light of the literature reviewed.

⁷ Four additional Board members and the CLC Coordinator were not able to attend the focus group.

⁸ While the CLC Coordinator did complete the tool on her own and her open-ended answers are included in the summary notes (see Appendix F), sometimes her ratings were different from the Focus Group ratings. Her individual ratings are not reflected in the summary, in order to maintain confidentiality of her responses.

Limitations

Steps were taken to design an evaluation with the highest level of methodological rigour. There were nevertheless some limitations. Sample sizes were small and were drawn from a convenience sample. Interviews and the focus group were not audio-taped and data was recorded by taking notes, which introduces the possibility of bias and error. There may have been response bias amongst the participants (e.g., “social desirability” - the possibility that participants say what they think evaluator wants to hear). A final limitation is that there is no comparison group or comparison data.

Several steps were taken to mitigate these design limitations. The literature was consulted for program theory, evaluation design and measurement indicators. The program’s logic model was reviewed while preparing the evaluation plan. An evaluation design was developed in consultation with key stakeholders and the most appropriate data collection methods were chosen to suit the context. Interview protocols were pre-tested by CLC staff for readability and suitability. The pre-existing tool chosen (CCBT) has been tested for validity and reliability and has demonstrated sound psychometric properties. Multiple data sources were consulted, proper data collection procedures were followed for each of the three data collection methods and consent procedures were followed.

Findings

Main evaluation findings

The main findings are summarized below according to the evaluation questions. See Appendix G for more details regarding each of the main findings.

Evaluation Question #1: Do members have increased/strengthened knowledge and skills? If so, in what areas?

Evaluation Question #2: Do members apply their new knowledge and skills?

The Co-op develops members’ skills in three areas: interpersonal, life skills, and leadership. The Laundry Co-op helps its active members develop interpersonal/life skills and leadership skills. Members use these new skills in their personal relationships, at their jobs, and in the community where they live.

Yet throughout the course of this evaluation, the CLC staff and Board explained that they did not see that they worked in the area of leadership development. The evaluation findings, however, are undeniable. The CLC’s role in leadership development is very clear - the CLC is a leader. This fact needs to be “embraced” more fully.

Evaluation Question #3: Do members have increased participation/involvement in CLC opportunities?

“Active” participation is the key to capacity building. Over time, many CLC members become more involved in CLC opportunities. However, how long someone has been a CLC member does not necessarily equal increased capacity. Rather it is how active the member is in the Co-op’s many learning and leadership development activities. Of its 1200 members,

about 320 members regularly do their laundry and of those, about half actively participate in CLC activities. There are many anecdotal reports (“stories”) of members who have positive experiences with the CLC that lead to increased involvement.

More data is needed to determine if this finding is also true for the general CLC membership. It is important to remember that some CLC members come just to do their laundry. They may not have the time/interest to become more involved in CLC “extra-curricular” activities.

Evaluation Question #4: Do members feel an increased “sense of community”/belonging?

Volunteer members and Board members all report an increased “sense of community” (belonging) when they participate in CLC activities. They describe this in the following ways:

- Positive feelings about one’s contribution to the CLC - *“feeling satisfied that I have done something to help”, having “met a new community”*
- Celebrations of success – *“Honoring our 1000th member by interviewing her and offering free laundry for all members”*
- An atmosphere of “home” or “family” - *“feeling like a team, like a home”*
- Concern for CLC or community-level issues – *“worried about members I hadn’t seen for a while”*
- Taken action on community issues - *“I see an interconnection between my experiences at the Co-op and my social activism work”.*
- Taken action on my own issues – *“I feel good. I am busy. It is important for me to stay busy”*
- Trust in others *“I socialize with a few people here...I have made a few friends...I am careful with who I make friends with”*

Evaluation Question #5: What are the demographics of those CLC members who report increased capacity?

Length of membership does not necessarily equal increased capacity; rather it is how active the member is. It appears that those who are “active” CLC members (e.g., do their laundry, volunteer, attend CLC social events, attend workshops) have increased capacity and leadership skills.

Some members interviewed for this evaluation had been members for 1 year or less, yet were active volunteers and also reported skill/knowledge development, applying new skills/knowledge, sense of community, etc.

Evaluation Question #6: What happened in CLC activities that led to increased capacity? What or who makes this possible?

In addition to active membership, three other factors for member capacity building are the Co-op’s environment, its staff and member’s willingness and commitment to learn.

Other factors that lead to increased capacity for members include the Co-op's environment which is clean, respectful and accessible, and the staff who build trusting relationships with members by acting as positive role models, consulting on Co-op activities, and providing encouragement and feedback. Active members increase their capacity through a desire to "give back", as well as through their own ability and willingness to learn and experience new things. However, some members find that some of the training offered to them (and/or which they are required to attend) is not always relevant to their role at the CLC.

All of the evaluation's participants made suggestions for additional ways in which the CLC might further increase capacity – for members and for the CLC itself:

Increase volunteer capacity, through the following actions: continue with volunteer appreciation events; help volunteers to transition out of positions; and provide networking/bridging opportunities between volunteers and Board members.

Increase the CLC's capacity:

- For evaluation e.g., on-going monitoring (using the log book more consistently and/or implementing other methods); program improvement (evaluate workshops/volunteer training; ask members to suggest CLC activities); and tracking client outcomes (describing Asset Map more clearly; ask members how they apply their learning)
- For laundry e.g., add more self-serve laundry machines
- For membership numbers e.g., recruit students from Ottawa U.
- For membership contributions e.g., lead workshops, do chores
- For community connections e.g., build relationships with other like-minded Co-op organizations, to help the CLC get more money and feel less isolated
- Improved day-to-day operations e.g., newsletters, craft classes, puzzles and magazines in waiting room
- Improved on-site security

Recommendations for program improvement

There are five main recommendations for program improvement based on the evaluation findings. These were developed in consultation with the key stakeholders.

1. Clearly explain to members the purpose of any skill development training (e.g., workshops, other learning opportunities).

If the CLC can explain to members the purpose of training, if and why it is mandatory, how it relates to their role at the CLC and/or their personal goals (as identified during the "Asset Map" process), this may increase members' "buy-in" to the skill development opportunities. Continue to consult with members re: what training opportunities they would like to have.

Evaluate all training opportunities. Identify 4 or 5 questions that you can ask members at the end of all training sessions (see CCHC's generic group evaluation form as one example and/or read about Donald Kirkpatrick's model of four levels of evaluation to assess the effectiveness of training. This information is easily found on the Web).

2. Explicitly communicate the CLC's role in "leadership development".

While leadership is but one feature of “capacity building”, it is an area where the CLC excels. Consider the following actions:

- A. Review the logic model. Ensure that leadership development activities (and its related outcomes and indicators) are clearly articulated. Ensure that the CLC’s leadership work at all levels –with individual members/volunteers, the CLC itself as an organization, and at the community – is reflected. The logic model could also have a separate component on partnership development. Consult Wallerstein (2006, p.5 & 20-22) and Reinelt (2009) for guidance on what activities and outcomes to include in a revised logic model.
- B. Talk with members about how the volunteer and training/development opportunities offered to them are intended to develop leadership skills. Offer opportunities along the “continuum” of skill development – interpersonal skills/life skills/leadership skills. Explain to members how leadership development can benefit them, the Co-op and the broader community (see recommendation #1).
- C. Communicate to funders the role that the CLC plays in leadership development. Consult with Reinelt’s “Framework for Leadership Investment and Evaluation” (Reinelt, 2009 - see references) for terminology, concepts and levels of leadership capacity. Talk with funders about how the CLC is a good model for leadership development and therefore a solid program for them to invest in.
- D. Connect with other “like-minded” organizations and other co-ops in the community, with a goal to share experiences with leadership development and learn from each other.

- 3. Develop a strategy to increase opportunities for “connection” between CLC members/volunteers and the CLC Board.** Board members describe a sense of pride, connection and “community” when they were in the Co-op. Some CLC members expressed a desire for greater connection with the Board. Increased opportunities for connection may result in further benefits for both the members and Board. Consider exploring the following:
 - A. Have “open” Board meetings, for all members to attend if they wish.
 - B. Post minutes of Board meetings in the Co-op.
 - C. Post the Coordinator’s monthly reports in the Co-op.
 - D. Invite Board members to attend CLC member training events, when possible.
 - E. Provide networking/bridging opportunities between volunteers and Board members, particularly for those members who are transitioning out of Support Volunteer/CED positions.

- 4. The Co-op could increase its own capacity to monitor and evaluate CLC leadership and capacity building in a more formal and consistent way.**

Options include:

- A. Re-write the Logic Model (see recommendation #2).
- B. Evaluate the learning and development workshops (see recommendation #1).
- C. Re-visit the Asset-Map tool:
 - i. Write out a clear explanation at the top of the Asset Map tool, in order to more clearly explain its purpose, and to ensure consistent “messaging” amongst all staff.
 - ii. Develop a system to follow-up with members re: the goals that they have set and progress towards achieving these goals. Consider using a method similar to the “Goal Setting +Action Plan” that is used in some groups at CCHC

which has participants not only write out the goal but assess their level of confidence that they can achieve the goal (e.g., See CHC's "3F's" group – contact Janet Edwards for more information). Also consider the use of short, medium, long-term goal setting.

- 5. Develop a plan for how the CLC can begin to explicitly articulate Cooperative Principles and how these relate to capacity building.** Four of the seven “Cooperative Principles” are also inherent in capacity building (e.g., democratic member control; education, training and information; concern for community; cooperation among cooperatives). It would be helpful to make explicit the link between the two concepts, in order to “ground” the capacity-building efforts in the Cooperative Principles and the principles in the capacity-building efforts.

Conclusion

Significance of findings, relationship to other evaluations and areas for future research

This outcome evaluation has provided valuable feedback to the organization. Staff received confirmation of many of their “hunches” about the successes of the program and now has data to back up what they observe on a daily basis. The CLC helps CCHC in achieving its strategic direction of developing and supporting community leadership. The findings suggest that the CLC helps its members develop leadership and life skills. This is especially true for members who actively participate in the Co-op's many activities. Members use these new skills in their personal relationships, at their jobs, and in the community where they live.

The findings from the CLC evaluation are similar to those found in the evaluations and research of similar programs, described earlier in this report. The BBBF research found that being open to different cultures, having non-judgmental staff, and being given opportunities to participate all help to increase participation and build social inclusion. The Kellogg Foundation and United Way of Toronto's research on the evaluation of leadership programs highlighted the importance of evaluating using a variety of methods, a few of which the CLC is already using (e.g., storytelling, anecdotes). The Kellogg Foundation's research on the outcomes of leadership development programs identified many of the same outcomes that the CLC's evaluation highlighted, including communication, personal transformation (e.g., increased self-awareness, confidence, and broader thinking); and relationship building (e.g., enhanced professional networks, communities of practice, and collaborations). This research discussed the importance of sharing evaluation tools, data and “lessons learned” with others who are in the same “business” of leadership development.

The CLC's theoretical foundation of “capacity building” has been confirmed by the literature. However capacity-building and leadership efforts are “implicit” in the CLC's logic model and program documents. This should be made more “explicit”. It is important to note that this evaluation was an outcome evaluation and as such did not assess the CLC's context or processes. It is difficult in such an evaluation to determine direct “attribution” (i.e., we cannot say with 100% confidence that it is the CLC alone that caused the outcomes for participants). Nor do we have complete data on which program processes led to which outcomes, and/or if (or how) a member's individual context may have led to increased capacity. As such, the CLC could

consider conducting case study research to highlight 2 or 3 in-depth “cases” that lead to the development of capacity and leadership – e.g., for an individual member; for a partner agency (Families Matter); for the CLC itself as organization.

Strategies to promote the use of evaluation findings

A key strategy in this evaluation has been to involve key stakeholders in all steps of the evaluation process. This was done to help to build their evaluation capacity as well as to ensure the buy-in and eventual use of the evaluation findings. As previously mentioned, the recommendations for program improvement were developed jointly by the evaluator, program staff and management. This helps enormously in promoting the use of evaluation findings. There are several ways in which the evaluation findings will be used:

- CLC staff, in consultation with the Board, will prioritize the evaluation recommendations, based on what they have the capacity to do first. They will create a timeline for how to implement the recommendations.
- CLC staff and Board will use the findings when they report to their funders. It is hoped that these findings will help to secure more funding, including on-going operational funding.
- CCHC will use the findings to report to its Board of Directors on achievement of the strategic direction related to developing and supporting community leadership.
- CCHC will also reflect on the findings and recommendations and draw “lessons learned” from the CLC experience and expertise on how to cultivate leadership and community capacity.

List of Appendixes

- A. CLC Logic Model
- B. Evaluation Framework
- C. Definitions of capacity building terms
- D. Data Collection Tools
- E. Sampling strategy
- F. Demographics of CLC members interviewed
- G. Data analysis notes – CLC member interviews
- H. Data analysis notes – Board/Staff focus group and CLC Coordinator interview
- I. Summary of findings

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