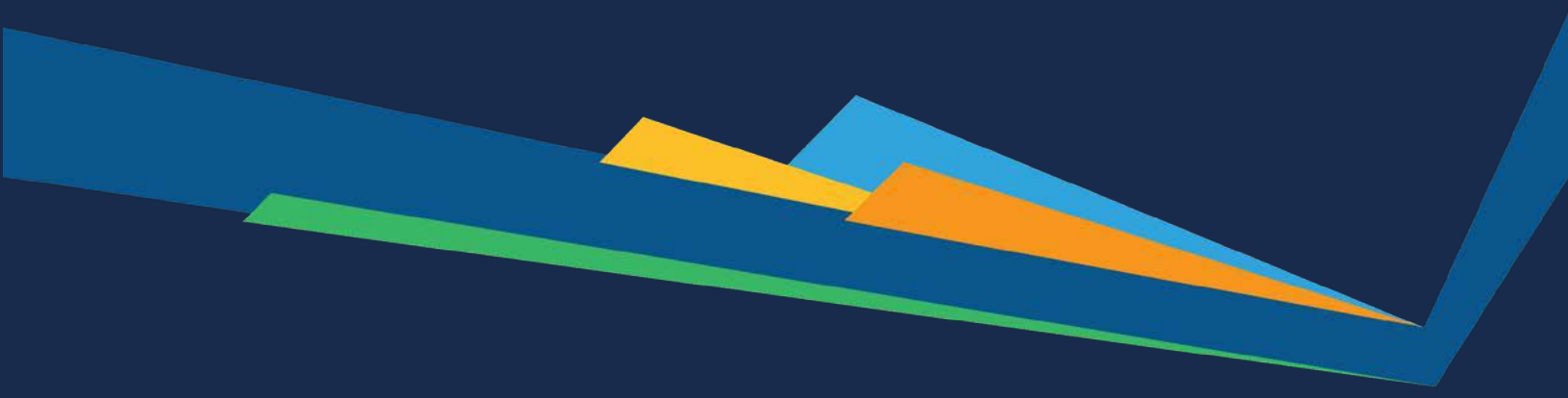
SOCIAL INNOVATION ON THE GROUND

ACCESSIBLE and EVIDENCE-BASED TOOLS FOR SOCIAL INNOVATORS

Final Project Report



BOW VALLEY COLLEGE

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Final Project Report

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Table of Content

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Executive Summary

In July 2015, Bow Valley College received a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada from the Community and College Social Innovation Fund, to conduct an applied research study entitled ***Social Innovation on the Ground: Accessible and Evidence-Based Tools for Social Innovators***.

The study set out to gain an in-depth understanding of social innovation in Canada from the perspective of diverse participants involved with social innovation initiatives in a range of capacities, and to explore the factors that inhibit and facilitate the success of these initiatives. Study findings informed the development of practical tools to assist social innovators, with a particular focus on novice innovators who are "on the ground". The research and subsequent resources will be broadly shared with colleges and not-for-profit organizations across Canada as well as with the partners and communities they share.

Three different research strategies were used to gain an in-depth understanding of social innovation. Based on an extensive preliminary literature review, a survey was completed by 104 social innovation stakeholders across Canada, three focus groups of social innovators were facilitated in Alberta, and three case studies were conducted on three very different social innovation initiatives in Alberta and Ontario. A key focus was on how participants in various levels of the system viewed factors as facilitating and inhibiting social innovation. Findings from the three research strategies were then compared for consistency and uniqueness.

Findings show a fair bit of consensus among participants in terms of understandings of facilitators of and barriers to social innovation. Trust among team members (and between partners) was a key facilitating factor, often enabled through purposeful collaboration strategies.

Also noted were shared understandings of vision, goals, and roles; demonstrated enthusiasm of leaders; and reliability of human and financial resources. Many of these findings were consistent with the social innovation literature.

Factors facilitating the success of a social innovation initiative, as was expected, were often a mirror image of those found to be barriers (e.g., stability of project funding was a noted facilitator, instability a barrier). Participants reported several distinct factors, however, that were seen or felt as barriers. A prominent theme relates to incongruences between the qualities of social innovation itself—such as its often non-linear, experimental, and developmental nature—and those of modern organizational structures. This theme consists of ideas around top-down approaches to decision-making, bureaucracy, and organizational inertia. Lack of funding, insufficient capacity to realize objectives, and aversion to risk were also frequently cited.

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The case studies yielded the greatest diversity of perspectives between staff operating at various levels in the hierarchy of an organization or social innovation project. Of all participants, it was generally those "on the ground"—those with the most direct and regular contact with clients or the community—who most acutely experienced the benefits of effective social innovation practices as well as the frustration resulting from deficiencies.

The difficulties expressed by frontline workers provides a perspective on social innovation that has, in our observation, been insufficiently addressed in the literature. This issue is being addressed in the subsequent phases of this project through the development of resources targeted specifically to this population.

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Introduction

Social innovation is increasingly seen as an essential ingredient for Canada's social and economic wellbeing, expected to make lasting changes that address social problems and lead to significant improvements in the lives of Canadians. Social innovation initiatives can be small, localized strategies aimed at addressing community needs or large projects targeting system-wide objectives. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) defines social innovation as referring "to the development of new ideas or the use of existing ideas to find solutions to social challenges. Social innovation entails an initiative, product, process or program that creates positive social outcomes for societies."[1] This work can be performed by governments, social service agencies, community organizations, businesses, universities, and—increasingly—by colleges.

In their 2011 report to SSHRC, Jurmain & Madder concluded that, "[w]ith their distribution in over 1000 communities across the country, colleges are well-positioned to take on a larger role in social innovation and accompanying social sciences and humanities research" (p. 24). Recognizing the vital role colleges play in collaborative social innovation, many institutions are now engaging with community partners to address issues related to education, community development, health, immigration, and workforce development, to name but a few.

Yet despite the considerable financial and human resources directed towards social innovation, the field lacks a clear understanding of this concept. To date, there are limited evidence-based criteria on which to base a shared understanding of the requirements of social innovation from the perspective of diverse stakeholders—including postsecondary institutions, communities, funders, and governments. Nor has there been a systematic effort to mobilize existing knowledge of social innovation from the scholarly and practical realms to Canadian stakeholders.

The research team in the Department of Academic Innovation & Applied Research at Bow Valley College saw an opportunity to contribute to filling this gap. In March 2015, the team submitted a proposal to SSHRC for a research grant through the Community and College Social Innovation Fund (CCSIF). The CCSIF is a pilot initiative intended to link colleges with community partners to foster and facilitate the development of social innovation research and practice. The proposal was successful, and the project officially began July 2015.
The goal of *Social Innovation on the Ground* is to provide practical, evidence-based support to those engaged in social innovation in Canada.

[1] http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/social_innovation-innovation_sociale-eng.aspx

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The objectives include:

- Developing an evidence-based set of criteria for assessing social innovation, and identifying factors that promote and inhibit its success;
- Developing strategies and tools for planning and evaluating social innovation;
- Mobilizing knowledge in social innovation planning and evaluation that will enhance the ability of communities and colleges to successfully address local needs; and
- Promoting ongoing knowledge sharing among colleges involved in social innovation, and between colleges and the communities they serve.

The original intent was to create a guide for planning and evaluating social innovation aimed at a general audience. As the project evolved, it became evident that the quantity of existing resources for social innovation (many of which published after our project began) necessitated a re-examination of our proposed contribution to this field. We noted that, of the resources available[2], many were targeted at leadership, entrepreneurs, or managers—in contrast to the 'on the ground' frontline staff who were the inspiration for our project title. This fact, along with Bow Valley College's role and reputation for preparing social service workers to contribute to the well-being of their communities, led us to re-focus the intended audience of project outputs. It was decided that the greatest contribution of this study would be to improve the knowledge and capability of future (students) and current (frontline staff) individuals working on social innovation projects.

The project was developed on the assumption that highly engaged partners and collaborators will contribute to the project across all stages of its development. Partners were strategically recruited to ensure both credibility of the project and quality of its outputs, including representatives of a community engaged in many social innovation projects (the Town of High River); a funder of social innovation (United Way of Calgary and Area); and a research institution (Mount Royal University). As the project developed, the team engaged several collaborators, including a provincial consortium of postsecondary institutions (eCampusAlberta) with links to sister consortia in other provinces; an third-sector organization serving 450 Calgary area non-profits (Propellus); a fellow college recognized for expertise in social service (Sheridan College); and multiple departments of Bow Valley College, namely Regional Stewardship and the Chiu School of Business.

[2] During the course of this three-year project, we encountered a number of excellent resources and toolkits that can inform social innovation management and practice. A sample of resources reviewed during our study can be found in Appendix B. While many of these resources may not be most appropriate for students and frontline social service staff, they are no less important contributions to the field.

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As an initial step into the field of social innovation, the research team undertook a literature review. In total, 112 sources were reviewed, with the objective of exploring findings related to the characteristics of, barriers to, and facilitating factors of social innovation. The review began as an effort to gain appreciation for the breadth of existing ontological and epistemological examinations of social innovation. Focus then shifted to literature featuring practical applications of social innovation knowledge to lived experience.

The search returned journal articles, published presentations, books, and graduate theses and dissertations. This was supplemented through search engine queries for public, private, and third sector reports, policy briefs, white papers, and other gray literature.
Some summary findings from our literature review can be found in Appendix A. As backdrop to this study, however, we will highlight two key observations from the literature that were found to be particularly useful in putting the state of the field in context.

First, the field features a number of existing reviews of the social innovation literature—nearly all of which have been conducted since the turn of the Twenty-First Century. This fact highlights the fast-changing character of social innovation studies. Table 1 lists existing literature reviews, which endeavour to define, unpack, and track the development of the concept. One of the earliest examples begins its introduction with, "There is no literature on social innovation - a fact that makes a literature review on the topic an interesting quest. The term 'social innovation' is rarely used either in a scholarly or in a commonplace way" (Nilsson, 2003, p. 3). Only twelve years later, a 2015 literature review by Edwards-Schachter and Wallace produced an initial return of 2,339 documents, from which 251 definitions of social innovation were identified.

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Table 1. Existing Reviews of Social Innovation Literature.

Review	Description
Nilsson, 2003	Reviewed 47 articles mentioning "social innovation" and explored theories that may be relevant to its study.
Cloutier, 2003	Analyzed literature in relation to three complementary axes: the terrain of socially innovative actors and processes; the living conditions addressed by social innovations; and how social innovation relates to the social organization of work and employment.
Sharra & Nyssens, 2010	Review of the various conceptions of social innovation as a first and indispensable step in order to foster the debate on the subject.
Andrew & Klein, 2010	Identified recurring themes from sources that approach social innovation as a response to social problems and conditions as well as within the context of democratic governance and development.
Edwards-Schachter, Matti, & Alcántara, 2012	Analyzed 76 definitions of social innovation and created a set of characteristics.
Caulier-Grice, Davies, Patrick, & Norman, 2012	Reviewed the concept and use of the term social innovation. The authors then posit a working definition of social innovation along with its core elements, common features, and a typology of SI across sectors.
Davies & Simon, 2013	Reviewed literature relevant to the question of how social innovations spread and scale.
Ruede and Lurtz, 2013	Reviewed 318 sources using a narrative approach to find commonalities in how authors conceived of social innovations.
Howaldt, Butzin, Domanski, & Kaletka, 2014	Multidisciplinary review of theoretical and conceptual understandings of social innovation.
Rana, Weerakkody, Dwivedi, & Piercy, 2014	Analyzed 105 papers on social innovation in the public sector to identify areas of impact and limitations.
Phillips, Lee, James, Ghobadian, & O'Regan, 2015	Analyzed 122 papers from 1987-2012 related to management of social innovation, social entrepreneurship, and links between these concepts.
Choi & Majumdar, 2015	Reviewed 16 definitions, identifying three uses of the concept as social change, intangible innovations, and social value creation.
Edwards-Schachter & Wallace, 2015	Scanned 2,339 documents across languages between 1950-2014, yielding a final selection of 251 definitions of social innovation.

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A second observation from our review was that the concept of social innovation is highly-contested. Several authors have sought to build a conceptual framework (e.g., Moulaert, Martinelli, Swyngedouw, & Gonzalez, 2005) or to propose a common definition (e.g., Caulier-Grice, Davies, Patrick & Norman, 2012). In their effort to understand social innovation in the context of social enterprise, Goldstein, Hazy, and Silberstang (2010) observe that social innovation "is by no means open to a facile understanding since *innovation*, by its very nature, involves the *un*precedented, the *un*predictable, and the *non*-deducible with respect to current circumstances." [italics in original] (p. 102). Others appear to concur with this assessment—the concept has been described as "fuzzy" (Bekkers, Tummers, Stuijfzand, & Voorberg, 2013, p. 12; Edwards-Schachter & Wallace, 2015, p. 24), a "buzzword" (Pol & Ville, 2009, p. 2), "normative" (Bekkers et al, 2013, p. 12), and so broadly applied that even its "social" component is indeterminate (Ruede & Lurtz, 2013, p. 10).

There is no consensus whether social innovation describes products, services, outcomes, or the process by which these come into being (e.g., Datta, 2011; Dawson & Daniel, 2010; Seelos & Mair, 2013). Social innovation has been used interchangeably with social entrepreneurship (e.g., Buckland & Murillo, 2013; Caulier-Grice et al, 2012; Stauch & Cornelisse, 2016), public sector innovation (e.g., Bland, Bruk, Dongshin, & Lee, 2010; Frees, Bouckaert, & van Acker, 2014; Kattel et al., 2014), and social change (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012; Choi & Majumder, 2015; Moulaert, Martinelli, Swyngedouw, & Gonzalez, 2005), among other terms.

Our approach to this study had to be mindful of the traps of trying to synthesize an ever-expanding body of knowledge and of trying to uncover the 'true' nature of social innovation.

We found inspiration in the work of Edwards-Schachter and Wallace (2015). In their review covering six decades of social innovation definitions, the authors discuss two complementary perspectives evident in the social innovation literature. We find the contrast between these perspectives useful as a means of framing the approach taken for our study:

- *Transformative*: Concerned with "a focus on social practices and social and/or technological change [over a] long time" (p. 25). This perspective is associated with the preponderance of academic literature.

- *Instrumental or Practical*: Views social innovation as "a blurred label of social practices that accompanies solutions to problem-solving through the development of 'new or improved products', 'new services', 'new organization method', and/or mixed 'pure' social inventions, such as 'law, norm, rule' or also institutional and political innovations" (p. 25). This perspective is reflected most notably in the practitioner and policy spheres.

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In this light, our research takes a decidedly *Instrumental or Practical* perspective—while acknowledging contributions of the *Transformative* view. The Instrumental view, with its emphasis on problem-solving, aligns with the target audience of this project: on-the-ground actors working to address social issues in their community and society. Such a perspective is also fitting with the mandate of colleges as institutes for applied research. Given this choice, it was important to view the literature from the lens of our stakeholders; specifically, what findings would be important to share with them through the project's knowledge mobilization stage.

Because of the complexity of this field, we decided that a multi-pronged research strategy was warranted to gain as complete a picture as possible of the current state of Canadian stakeholder understandings of social innovation. Using a developmental approach, we planned two phases of data collection. The first phase would explore general beliefs and understandings related to characteristics, facilitators of, and barriers to social innovation. The second phase would build on findings from the first by informing an investigation of real world social innovation initiatives. These methods and findings are described over the following three sections.

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Section I: Stakeholder Survey

The first phase of this research consisted of a national survey of social innovation stakeholders and a series of nominal group technique (NGT) focus groups (described in Section II). The methods and results of this survey are described below.

Methods

A questionnaire was chosen as a key strategy by which the findings from the social innovation literature could be compared with the experiences and perceptions of Canadians involved in various capacities with social innovation. The intent of the survey was to measure participants' ratings of the importance of various characteristics, facilitators, and barriers of social innovation. These ratings were later used to discern possible patterns across the demographic variables and were also considered in light of findings from the literature and nominal group technique (NGT) focus groups. Together, these findings informed a series on in-depth case studies of social innovation initiatives (described in Section III).

Sampling and Recruitment

The intended audience of the survey can be generalized as 'social innovation stakeholders' or, alternatively, 'people involved with social innovation'. Examples include persons who have planned, managed, directed, funded, evaluated, advised, or partnered on a social innovation.

The nature of an individual's involvement was intended to capture the full range of:

- Time commitment (e.g., occasional volunteer, full-time);
- Scope of the social innovation (e.g., a community, a province, international);
- Organization types (e.g., business, government, school); and
- Sectors (e.g., non-profit, public, private).

Thus, the population was potentially quite large—a reflection of the myriad ways social innovation has been conceptualized in the literature and to align with SSHRC's broad definition of the term[3]. As a result, it is difficult to estimate the size of this population. This challenge is confounded by the fact that some individuals do not think of themselves as social innovators (or might not be familiar with the term).

[3] "Social innovation refers to the development of new ideas or the use of existing ideas to find solutions to social challenges. Social innovation entails an initiative, product, process or program that creates positive social outcomes for societies" (SSHRC, 2015).

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Participants were recruited through a combination of purposeful sampling (deliberate targeting of stakeholder groups described above) and snowball sampling techniques. The snowball approach, whereby researchers rely on a small group of initial contacts to reach and recruit additional participants, was popularized by Becker (1963) for populations where random sampling is not feasible (Atkinson & Flint, 2004). This approach was necessary given that social innovators are known to be a difficult to identify population (e.g., Jankel, 2011; Kattel et al., 2014; Mulgan, 2006). A script was drafted describing the project, outlining the concept of social innovation, and encouraging participants to click the hyperlink to the online survey.

Members of the research team, Steering Committee, and project Advisors distributed the script via email to contacts in their professional networks along with a request that recipients forward the survey to additional parties whose work can be thought of as social innovation. In addition, the survey was 'fanned out' to several relevant distribution lists. Colleges and Institutes Canada, an organization representing publicly supported colleges, institutes, CEGEPs, and polytechnics, sent the survey to research and innovation leaders and personnel in 128 Canadian postsecondary institutions with a request to forward to other relevant parties. The survey was also sent to the distribution lists of several social innovation, community, and academic networks including the Mount Royal University Institute for Community Prosperity, Calgary Social Innovators Network, and the Vancouver Island Social Innovation Zone, among others. Finally, the team reached out to provincial and national organizations known to support social innovation (such as networks of community associations, social service agencies, and regional and national social innovation hubs). The extent to which the survey was disseminated though these venues is unknown[4]. The survey was open for 12 weeks between February and April 2016.

Data Collection and Analysis

Survey items were based on themes gleaned from the academic and grey literature on social innovation. Initial findings from the review were distilled into lists of concepts and constructs that appeared in a minimum of three sources and were pertinent to one or more of the research questions. Each idea was then transformed into one or more Likert-style questionnaire statements. Several iterations of the survey were produced through a process of review, feedback, and pre-testing with members of the research team and five individuals in different organizations involved with social innovation. A final draft of the online survey tool was circulated to the Steering Committee along with a short instrument designed to assess the survey's validity, reliability, accessibility, and applicability to a range of professions and sectors. Results indicated that the tool sufficiently achieved each of these objectives. Final revisions were implemented based on Steering Committee feedback, and the tool was subsequently approved.

[4] The use of distribution lists prevents us from calculating an accurate survey response rate; this is considered a study limitation that should be addressed in future research with a similar "fan out" distribution strategy.

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A French language survey was also produced to encourage broad representation of Canadian social innovators. A translation service was used, and the survey was reviewed by two French speakers to ensure clarity and that the meaning and intent of items were maintained.
The survey began with demographic questions examining the nature of respondent involvement in social innovation. These include up to three roles respondents have held (e.g., manager, partner, funder); up to three organization types with which the respondent has been affiliated (e.g., college, community or social service organization); size of the respondent's primary organization; degree of involvement (e.g., volunteer, paid full-time); and the scope of the primary population served (e.g., a community, a municipality, a province).

The remainder of the survey was composed of items derived from the literature[5], which used a five-point Likert scale and were organized by research question:

1. What are the key characteristics of social innovation?
   The first section contains 24 items framed around the question, "In your experience, to what extent are each of these qualities essential for social innovation?" Using a scale from "Not Essential" to "Absolutely Essential", respondents rated characteristics such as novelty, collaboration, community engagement, and measurable outcomes.

2. What are the facilitators of social innovation?
   This section consists of 28 items. In response to the overarching question, "In your experience, how important are the following to the success of social innovation?" respondents rated items on a scale from "Minimal Importance" to "Critical Importance". Questions were loosely group by similarity, including collaboration; leadership and organizational support; financial resources; and staff and expertise.

3. What are the barriers to social innovation?
   Twenty-one items comprise the last section, using a scale from "Not Significant" to "Very Significant" in reference to specific potential barriers to social innovation. Two questions guided responses to this section. The first, "From your experience, how significant are the following factors in preventing the success of social innovation?" referred to attitudes and qualities, such as risk aversion and insufficient information. The second, "From your experience how significant is the absence of following features for the ultimate success of social innovation?" focused on more tangible factors such as resources, planning, and communication.

[5] Multiple items were included for some themes from the literature based on complexity of the underlying concept.

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Respondents were given opportunity throughout the survey to elaborate on their responses or provide comments.
To determine the response distribution on the Likert items pertaining to characteristics, facilitators and barriers a Shapiro-Wilk analysis was conducted for each group of items, and findings reflected respondent's overall response tendencies.
Descriptive statistics were produced for the Likert item ratings to address the research questions. To help determine the importance of indicators and facilitate triangulation with other research strategies (e.g., literature review, NGTs) items were placed into 'conceptual groupings'. These groupings reflect emergent themes using mean rankings and analysis of respondent comments. Likert-scale items were analyzed by ranking their means and isolating the top and bottom 25 percent, and standard deviations were an additional indicator of overall agreement on an item. Respondent comments were coded according to characteristics, facilitators, and barriers of social innovation and analyzed thematically. Emergent themes were considered significant if mentioned by at least three respondents. Illustrative comments are included with this report.

Findings

Findings in this section are organized as follows:

- Demographic data from the sample
- Likert responses by rank and by conceptual grouping with illustrative quotes
- Tables with descriptive statistics can be found at the end of this report

Results are based on a sample of 104 surveys (95 complete plus 9 with partial Likert responses), including 87 English and 17 French responses. In addition, respondents provided 35 comments regarding characteristics, 20 regarding facilitators, and 11 regarding barriers. Missing data was minimal and increased toward the end of the survey with 0-3 occurrences for Characteristics items, 0-10 occurrences for Facilitator items, and 7-13 occurrences for Barrier items. It was decided to treat this data as missing, and thus no further analysis of the missing data is reported.

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Respondent Demographics

Role

The sample primarily consisted of Project Managers (*n* = 40); Director or Executive Directors (*n* = 33); Researchers (*n* = 32); and Partner Collaborator (*n* = 26). Responses to Other (*n* = 17) included project management (e.g., Research Manager, Grants Officer/Manager); Project Administration (e.g., Research Administration); and Development (e.g., Partnership Developer, Fund Raiser). The option to provide up to three roles found that respondents generally had more than one role in a social innovation project (See Table 2 for frequencies).

Organization Type

Frequencies of organization type were highest in post-secondary organizations: CEGEP, Community College, or Technical Institute (*n* = 58); and University (*n* = 31); Community or Social Services was also well represented (*n* = 43). Responses to Other was also primarily community or social services (e.g. Hospitals and High Schools, Non-profit Organizations). The option to list up to three organizations or sectors found that, again, respondents were likely to work in more than one organizational context (see Table 3).

Scope of Service

Respondents were asked about the breadth of the population primarily served through their involvement in social innovation (see Figure 1). These were: A Segment of a Community (*n* = 13); A Community (*n* = 27); A Municipality (*n* = 6); A geographic region (*n* = 24); A Province (*n* = 18); All of Canada (n = 11) and International (*n* = 5).

Organization Size

Respondents were asked the approximate size of the organization they are currently most involved with. These were: Fewer than 10 (*n* = 22); 11-50 (*n* = 31); 51-100 (*n* = 7); 101-500 (*n* = 13), More than 500 (*n* = 30), (See Figure 2).

Extent of Involvement

Respondents were asked to select the extent of their involvement in social innovation over the past 12 months, these were: Paid Full-Time (*n* = 64); Paid Part-time (*n* = 18); Volunteer (*n* = 7); and Other (*n* = 14), (See Figure 3). Responses to Other generally described job duties (e.g., as part of respondent's workload), or independent projects (e.g., a project as an academic).

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Figure 1. Scope of Service Group Frequencies

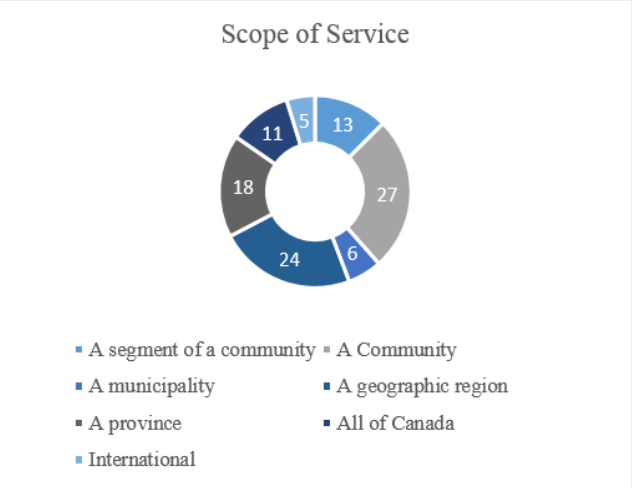


Figure 2. Organization Size Group Frequencies

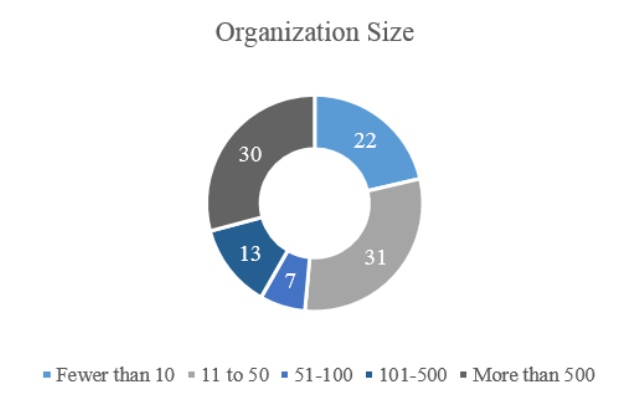
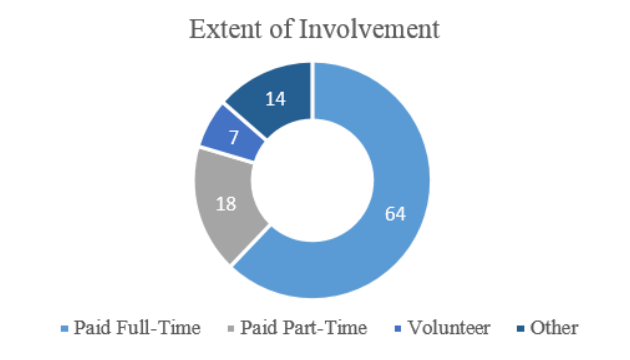


Figure 3. Extent of Involvement Group Frequencies



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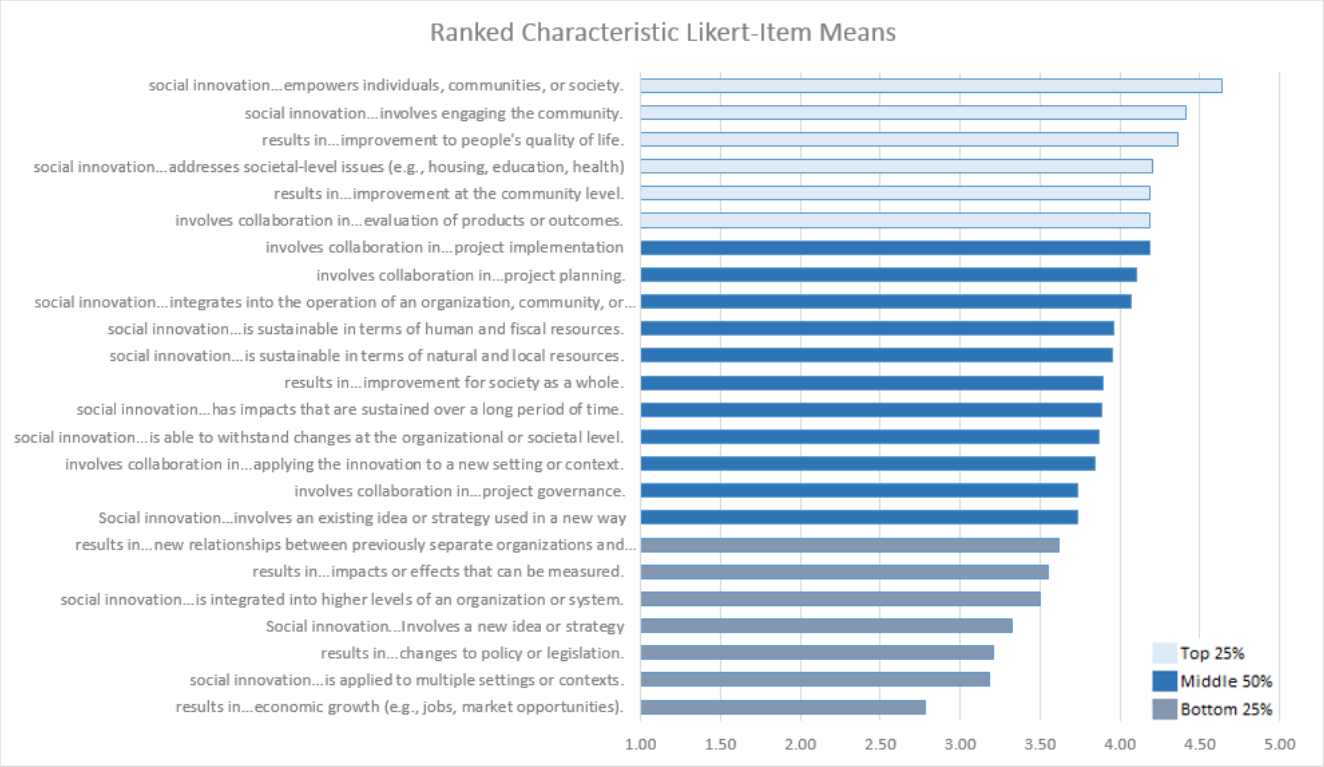
Province of Focus

Respondents were asked which of the 13 provinces and territories they were most involved in with social innovation, including: Alberta (*n* = 39), British Columbia (*n* = 9), Manitoba (*n* = 1), New Brunswick (*n* = 0), Newfoundland (*n* = 2), Northwest Territories (*n* = 1), Nova Scotia (*n* = 0), Nunavut (*n* = 5), Ontario (*n* = 39), Prince Edward Island (*n* = 0), Quebec (*n* = 6), Saskatchewan (*n* = 0) and Yukon (*n* = 1). The lack of provincial representation diminished its explanatory value; therefore, this variable was excluded from further analysis.

Characteristics of Social Innovation

Overall means for characteristics ranged from 2.78 to 4.63, and standard deviations ranged from 0.76 to 1.41 (see Table 4). Shapiro-Wilk analysis of the distribution showed that ratings were significantly negatively skewed, which indicated responses were on the upper end of the scale (all p <.05). Findings are organized according to post-hoc conceptual groupings. Figure 4 depicts all Likert items for this section in order of their means (1 = "Not Essential"; 5 = "Absolutely Essential"). Next, we present these findings organized by conceptual grouping.

Figure 4. Essential Characteristics of Social Innovation, by Rank



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Conceptual Grouping 1: Community impact and social-level challenges

Data showed that the highest rated characteristic was "Social innovation…Empowers individuals, community and society" (*M* = 4.63, *SD* = 0.76). Other top rated items included: "Social innovation…Involves engaging the community" (*M* = 4.41, *SD* = 0.97); "Social innovation results in…improvement of people's quality of life" (*M* = 4.36, *SD* = 0.87); "Social innovation addresses societal level issues" (*M* = 4.20, *SD* = 1.16); and "Social innovation results in…Improvement at the community level" (*M* = 4.19, *SD* = 0.89).

Comments stress involvement of the target community as a characteristic of social innovation:

> *I really see it as doing a social good. My project … is social innovation because it embeds in the students an understanding of hospital challenges and their role as community members to make the hospital what they want it to be.*

Other comments focused on the impact social innovation can have in addressing social problems:

> *Social innovation is about solving complex, stuck problems, by getting at the root causes and collaborating.*
>
> *SI is a mindset for how to go about solving problems. But, like in any complex-adaptive system, it creates solutions and new challenges to be overcome. SI is a journey, not a destination.*

Conceptual Grouping 2: Small-scale social change

Items among the lowest 25 percent of ratings suggest that the characteristic of widespread social change is comparatively less essential. For example, "Social innovation results in… Economic growth" (e.g., jobs, market opportunities) (*M* = 2.78, *SD* = 1.22); "Social innovation… Is applied to multiple settings or contexts" (*M* = 3.19, *SD* = 1.20); "Social innovation results in… Changes in policy or legislation" (*M* = 3.21, *SD* = 1.06); and "Social innovation… Is integrated into higher levels of an organization or system" (*M* = 3.50, *SD* = 1.28). Comments supported the lower ratings, and questioned the importance of long-term sustainability and scalability of social innovations:

> *A social innovation can occur at multiple scales, so while scalability is an important consideration, a social innovation can have transformative impact at a small scale. Integration to the maximum extent possible is important within a given system, but if it is a small system it is no less of a social innovation.*
>
> *Some great social innovations are short-term problem-solving solutions which need not be sustained. Sustainability is an idealized value, but not always relevant.*
>
> *Innovations need not be scalable or replicable if they address challenges in a unique context.*

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Conceptual Grouping 3: Newness of the innovation

Conceptualizing innovation as something that is inherently new was not supported by the rankings. The item "Social innovation…involves a new idea or strategy" (*M* = 3.33, *SD* = 1.17), it ranked in in the bottom 25 percent of responses, and comments likewise de-emphasized novelty as a characteristic of social innovation:

> *We actually oppose the definition of social innovation as something "new" because new doesn't always, necessarily, or even often characterize social innovation accurately. A process of prototyping, yes, but as always inherently the newest thing or the newest use of something, no.*
>
> *[M]ost social innovations may seem 'new' - but they don't have to be and could certainly be old ideas used in a new setting.*
>
> *For Aboriginal groups some of the innovations are not new…. they are traditional ways. [They are] New or Innovative to the mainstream.*

Conceptual Grouping 4: Measurability of outcomes

Ratings related to evaluation and measurement of social innovation showed a complex pattern when ranked. Items pertaining to measurability of outcomes were in the top 25 percent, including, "Social Innovation involves collaboration in…evaluation of outcomes" (*M* = 4.18, *SD* = 1.09). However, the mean for "Social Innovation results in…impacts and effects that can be measured" (*M* = 3.55, *SD* = 1.31) ranked in the bottom 25 percent of ratings indicating that evaluation is desired, but not necessarily a primary outcome. Comments also suggested that measuring the impact of innovation can be difficult:

> *Social innovation is timeless - it could impact 1 person for minutes or large groups for centuries - there are no metrics that make sense.*
>
> *[T]here are various ways to measure impact or effects and they are not all quantitative measures. Perhaps a better way to phrase it is "social innovation results in strong evidence of its impacts or effects". Social innovation should result in sustainability, but what is to be sustained needs to be identified by each individual project. We cannot merely assume it is a matter of resources, human capital, or finances.*
>
> *It isn't necessary for a change to be measurable to be meaningful. The metric requires often don't see the importance of slow systematic social change which is often more valuable than x # of checkboxes were marked off.*

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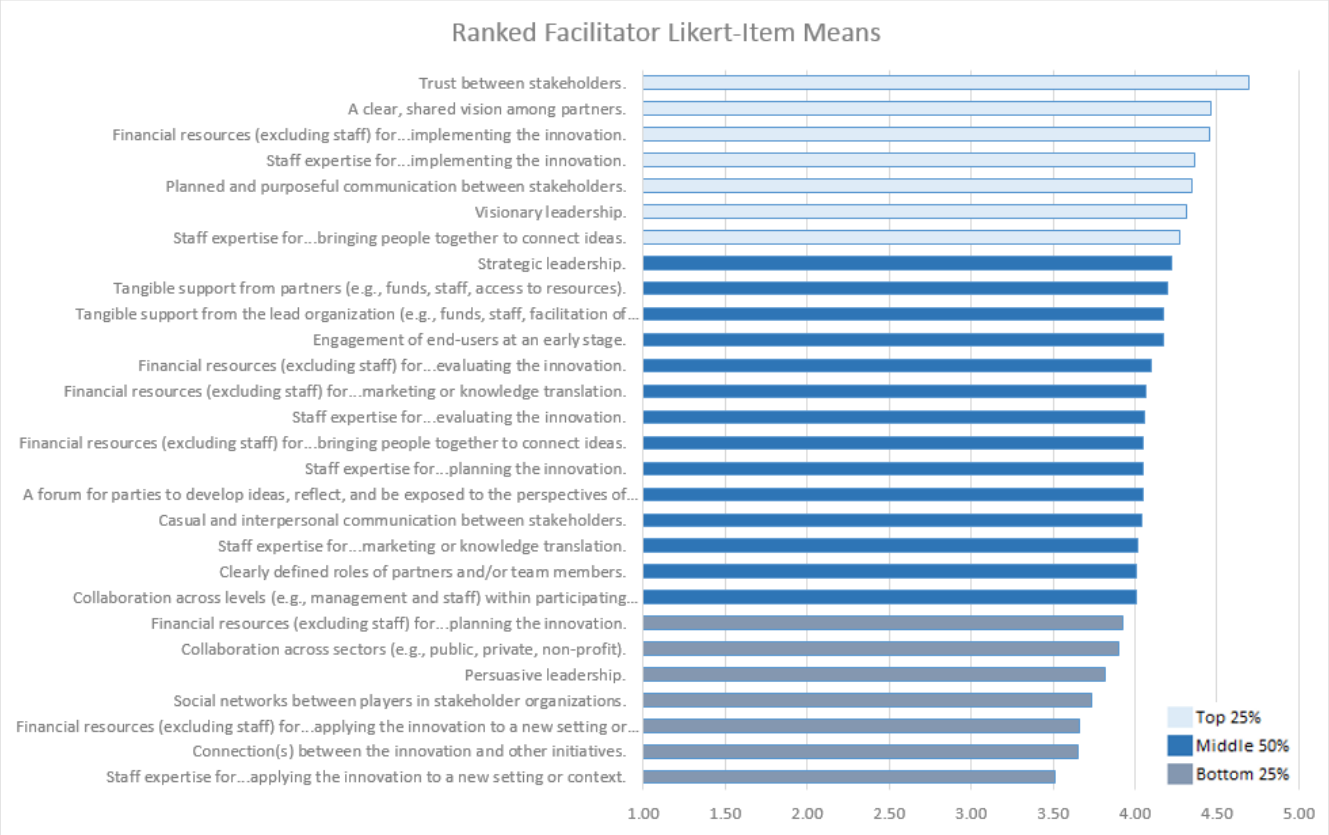
Facilitators of Social Innovation

Means for this section ranged from 3.51 to 4.70 (see Table 5). As with the characteristic items, Shapiro-Wilk analysis of the distribution indicated that ratings were significantly negatively skewed, which indicated that responses were toward the upper end of the scale (all $p < .05$). Figure 5 depicts all Likert items for this section in order of means (1 = "Minimal Importance"; 5 = "Critical Importance"). Next, we present findings by post-hoc conceptual grouping.

Figure 5. Facilitators of Social Innovation, by Rank



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Conceptual Grouping 1: Collaboration among stakeholders

Results provided evidence that collaboration facilitates successful social innovation. The items "Trust between stakeholders" (*M* = 4.70, *SD* = 0.54); "A clear shared vision among partners" (*M* = 4.46, *SD* = 0.84); "Planned purposeful communication between stakeholders" (*M* = 4.34, *SD* = 0.78); and "Staff expertise for bringing people together and connecting ideas" (*M* = 4.28, *SD* = 0.85) ranked in the top 25 percent.

Comments emphasized that successful projects build relationships with stakeholders by establishing shared values:

> *Collaboration is all about shared values & goals. The evaluation is increasingly qualitative, so the evaluation part is difficult to assess. It is all about building trust … which takes the most amount of time. But once the foundation is strong, you can move quickly.*

Other respondents emphasized incorporating stakeholder knowledge and perspectives into project governance:

> *Collaboration is critical for (1) gathering information on the community challenges being addressed from the viewpoint of different stakeholders, and (2) gathering unbiased information on outcomes of the innovation from the perspective of the various stakeholders. Collaboration is not essential in other areas if there is genuine engagement, responsiveness and collaboration when designing, selecting, and evaluating an innovation.*
>
> *While actually planning, conducting and evaluating project outcomes must be collaborative to be successful, establishing governance can be done through adoption of existing governance structure. Application to other contexts doesn't necessarily require collaboration from the original project partners and can involve a new set of external collaborators.*
>
> [F]*or the most intractable challenges, you are nowhere if you don't start by bringing together a microcosm of the system you seek to transform.*

However, collaboration was not universally highly rated. The item "Collaboration across sectors (e.g., public, private, non-profit)" was rated in the bottom 25 percent of facilitators (*M* = 3.90, *SD* = 1.13), and aligns with comments that indicated conditions where collaboration can slow innovation:

> *Yes, collaboration in implementation is absolutely essential, but governance and planning related to too many organizations can become a hindrance and time consuming.*
>
> *Often too much "collaboration" slows innovation. The balance is essential for empowerment, but to not dampen passion and motivations. Meaning of collaboration needs to be defined at each stage of development where roles differentiate responsibilities.*

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Conceptual Grouping 2: Fiscal and human resources

Means for items targeted at fiscal and human resources for implementation emerged in the top 25 percent of facilitators: for example, "Financial resources for…implementing the innovation" (*M* = 4.46, *SD* = 0.76), and "Staff expertise for…implementing the innovation" (*M* = 4.37, *SD* = 0.75). In addition, comments suggest that guidance and finances for putting a social innovation project in motion is important to its ultimate success:

> *I treat social innovation projects like other research projects - one needs funding to be able to complete the scope of the project. There need not be explicit funding for project development, only the will and interest of stakeholders, partners, and the team.*
>
> *I find more dollars are spent on activities that promote technical solutions, and not enough on those "fuzzy" activities that are critical for adaptive solutions. Informal meetings, and idea exchange is essential for developing partnerships, trust, and sharing ideas between diverse stakeholders. This is necessary to prepare the soil for innovations to grow.*
>
> *Resources are often required to remove pinch points or negate the naysayers who can kill projects before they start.*

Conceptual Grouping 3: Leadership and governance

The ranking data indicated that leadership style is important. Respondents felt "Visionary leadership" (*M* = 4.31, *SD* = 0.85), ranked in the top 25 percent, was more facilitative than "Persuasive leadership" (*M* = 3.82, *SD* = 0.92) which was in the bottom 25 percent. Comments supported the need for leadership to champion social innovation:

> *Social innovation seems to be a catch all for a wide array of activities and certainly some require financial resources (to understand options, and to implement the options), but often the key driver for a social innovation is often a champion(s) and facilitator(s) (whose role is to remove key barriers for the champion(s) and also can buoy the champion(s) when barriers [seem] insurmountable).*
>
> *Without a leader, any initiative won't go far. Without it being compelling other organizations won't help out. Without these 2, it isn't sustainable.*

Conceptual Grouping 4: Scaling and linking innovations

Items ranked in the bottom 25 percent of facilitators concerned the allocation of resources for broadening the scope of social innovation such as: "Staff expertise…for applying the innovation to a new setting or context" (*M* = 3.51, *SD* = 1.05); "Connections between the innovation and other initiatives" (*M* = 3.65, *SD* = 1.13); "Financial resources…for applying the innovation to a new setting or context" (*M* = 3.66, *SD* = 1.05); "Social networks between players in stakeholder organizations" (*M* = 3.73, *SD* = 0.96). This grouping was only indicated by the mean rating data.

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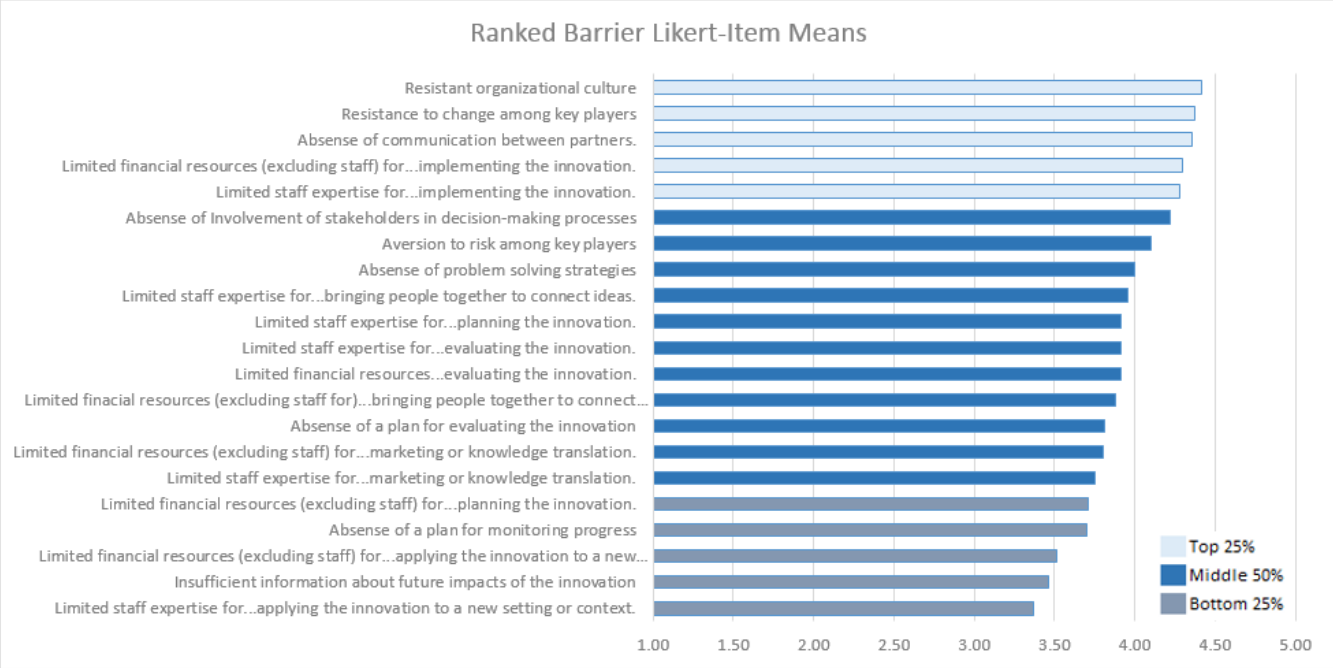
Barriers to Social Innovation

Mean ratings of barriers to social innovation ranged from 3.32 to 4.41, and standard deviations ranged from 0.82 to 1.12 (see Table 6). Shapiro-Wilk analysis of the distribution indicated that ratings were significantly negatively skewed and indicated that responses were toward the upper end of the scale (all p <.05). Findings are organized by post-hoc conceptual groupings. Figure 6 depicts all Likert items for this section in order of their means (1 = "Not Significant"; 5 = "Very Significant"). Next, we present these findings organized by conceptual grouping.

Figure 6. Barriers to Social Innovation, by Rank



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Conceptual Grouping 1: Resistance

The mean ranking data for items pertaining to resistance to social innovation, specifically, Resistant organizational culture (*M* = 4.41, *SD* = 0.89); Resistance to change among key players (*M* = 4.38, *SD* = 0.90), and Absence of communication between partners (*M* = 4.35, *SD* = 0.97), were in the top 25 percent of rated barriers to social innovation. Respondents' comments provide more insight into these barriers as they focused on institutional or organizational resistance to change and risk:

> *[T]he main barrier is understanding the causal architectures of the status quo. Not a lot of time is spent here, but that process is essential to understanding what innovation is possible.*
>
> *One of the largest factors that can prevent social innovation in a collaborative context (in my experience) has been the influence of individuals at any level (Sr, mid, front-line) who feel limited by the traditional 'rules' or constraints of their broader organization. There needs to be a drive to take risks and as 'why does this policy/rule/tradition exist?*
>
> *I find that bringing too many partners and stakeholders to the table actually inhibits social innovation; we get caught in bureaucratic speak and in the tyranny of the status quo. Instead, it takes one visionary person with the time and resources to do things differently. Unfortunately, that person often bumps up against institutional pressure to do things the same way they've always been done.*
>
> *Too often key leaders fixate early on a particular solution instead of loving the challenge. This is especially true when dropping an innovation that was developed within a different context. Also, lack of genuine engagement of those who will be impacted by the innovation inhibits adaption and use, no matter how technically good the solution is.*

Conceptual Grouping 2: Lack of resources

Corresponding to findings regarding facilitators of social innovation, the items Limited financial resources for implementation (*M* = 4.29, *SD* = 0.88) and Limited staff and expertise for implementation (*M* = 4.28, *SD* = 0.88) were found to be highly rated barriers to social innovation. This finding was supported by respondent comments such as:

> *You don't "plan" innovation. You listen, act, prototype, test, reflect, iterate. Implementing is the largest success factor. Discussions and collaborations are great, but if nothing is implemented, it's useless.*
>
> [S]*upport from all involved parties, not only financial but most of all access to staff and resources seems to be crucial. Without people who want and have time/resources to work on the project is essential.*

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Conceptual Grouping 3: Scaling and linking innovations

Respondents placed comparatively less significance on resources for scaling social innovations, Limited staff and expertise for applying the innovation to a new setting or context (*M* = 3.37, *SD* = 1.07) and Limited financial resources for applying the innovation to new settings or contexts (*M* = 3.52, *SD* = 1.09) both ranked in the bottom 25 percent of ratings. As a respondent stated:

> *Why would you assume that a given innovation can or should be applied to different contexts? If it was, it wouldn't be innovative … but more importantly it may well be inappropriate or even harmful in a different situation.*

Conceptual Grouping 4: Planning and evaluation

The data indicated that Limited financial resources for planning the innovation (*M* = 3.71, *SD* = 1.09) was ranked in the bottom 25 percent of responses, suggesting relatively less significance is given to the absence of planning resources for social innovation, as illustrated by the comment:

> [I]*nnovation often happens as we try to harness it, it becomes more difficult - the expectation that we could just plan better it would result in more social innovation seems wrong - we often don't value the innovation in the areas originally intended and that is ok.*

Similarly, more evidence from the rating data suggested that planning for and conducting evaluation should not be the ultimate concern. The items Insufficient information about future impacts of the innovation (*M* = 3.46, *SD* = 1.12); and Absence of a plan to monitor progress (*M* = 3.70, *SD* = 1.07) both fell to the bottom 25 percent of responses. Comments questioned the appropriateness of current evaluation for innovative work:

> *One of the key challenges in the success of social innovation is that the impacts are so long term and generally difficult to measure that it's nearly impossible to point to "that key social innovation project" as being the "gamechanger" that created "result x". So perhaps our biggest deficit in social innovation is figuring out how to pre-communicate what success looks like, allow success to happen, and then re-communicate the results to stakeholders.*

> *Social innovation has the potential to significantly and systematically change the way that we approach problems but often the short-term metric requirements don't allow real meaningful change to happen. You have to jump through measurable hoops on the well paved sidewalk even though the winding path through the trees will get you where you need to be faster, at less cost and less stress to the system overall.*

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Table 2. Frequency of Roles for Role Groups.

	Number of Roles				
Role	1	2	3	n	%
Director or Executive Director	13	3	17	33	17
Partner or Collaborator	6	2	18	26	14
Funder	1	0	7	8	4
Project Planner	1	0	8	9	4
Proposal Reviewer	0	0	3	3	2
Project Manager or Team Lead	14	5	21	40	20
Researcher	11	6	15	32	17
Evaluator	1	0	7	8	4
Advisor or Consultant	0	1	15	16	8
Other	8	3	6	17	9
Total	55	20	117	192	100

Table 3: Frequency of Organizations for Organization Groups.

	Number of Organizations				
Organization	1	2	3	n	%
Municipal Government	0	1	8	9	4
Provincial or Territorial Government	0	3	13	16	8
Federal Government	0	2	6	8	4
CEGEP, Community College, or Technical Institute	22	9	27	58	27
University	5	7	19	31	15
Community or Social Service Organization	6	13	24	43	20
Foundation or Funder	3	3	12	18	9
Small Business	0	2	10	12	7
Large Corporate Organization	1	2	2	5	2
Other	3	3	5	11	5
Total	40	45	126	211	100

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Table 4. Descriptive Data for Characteristics of Social Innovation.

Social innovation…	M	SD	n
involves a new idea or strategy.	*3.33	1.17	104
involves an existing idea or strategy used in a new way.	3.73	1.04	104
addresses societal-level issues (e.g., housing, education, health).	**4.20	1.16	104
involves engaging the community.	**4.41	0.97	104
empowers individuals, communities, or society.	**4.63	0.76	104
Social innovation involves collaboration in…			
project governance.	3.73	1.41	104
project planning.	4.11	1.15	104
project implementation.	**4.18	1.20	104
evaluation of products or outcomes.	**4.18	1.09	104
applying the innovation to a new setting or context.	3.85	1.16	104
Social innovation results in…			
impacts or effects that can be measured.	*3.55	1.31	102
improvement to people's quality of life.	**4.36	0.87	102
improvement at the community level.	**4.19	0.90	102
improvement for society as a whole.	3.89	1.00	101
new relationships between previously separate organizations and individuals.	3.62	1.18	101
economic growth (e.g., jobs, market opportunities).	*2.78	1.22	102
changes to policy or legislation.	*3.21	1.06	102
Social innovation…			
has impacts that are sustained over a long period of time.	3.88	1.02	102
is sustainable in terms of natural and local resources.	3.95	1.06	101
is sustainable in terms of human and fiscal resources.	3.96	1.02	102
is able to withstand changes at the organizational or societal level.	3.87	1.06	102
integrates into the operation of an organization, community, or society.	4.07	0.94	101
is applied to multiple settings or contexts.	*3.19	1.20	102
is integrated into higher levels of an organization or system.	*3.50	1.28	102

** = Top 25% Ranking, * = Bottom 25% Ranking

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Table 5. Descriptive Data for Facilitators of Social Innovation.

	M	SD	n
In your experience, how important are the following to the success of social innovation?			
A clear, shared vision among partners.	**4.46	0.84	99
A forum for parties to develop ideas, reflect, and be exposed to the perspectives of others.	4.05	0.99	99
Planned and purposeful communication between stakeholders.	**4.34	0.78	99
Casual and interpersonal communication between stakeholders.	4.04	0.97	99
Trust between stakeholders.	**4.70	0.54	99
Persuasive leadership.	*3.82	0.92	99
Visionary leadership.	**4.31	0.85	99
Strategic leadership.	4.22	0.95	98
Collaboration across sectors (e.g., public, private, non-profit).	*3.90	1.14	99
Collaboration across levels (e.g., management and staff) within participating organizations.	4.01	1.02	98
Social networks between players in stakeholder organizations.	*3.73	0.96	98
Clearly defined roles of partners and/or team members.	4.01	0.97	98
Engagement of end-users at an early stage.	4.17	1.02	98
Tangible support from the lead organization (e.g., funds, staff, facilitation of partnerships).	4.17	0.85	98
Tangible support from partners (e.g., funds, staff, access to resources).	4.20	0.81	97
Connection(s) between the innovation and other initiatives.	*3.65	1.13	98
Staff and expertise for…			
bringing people together to connect ideas.	**4.28	0.85	98
planning the innovation.	4.05	0.99	97
implementing the innovation.	**4.37	0.75	98
marketing or knowledge translation.	4.02	0.95	98
applying the innovation to a new setting or context.	*3.51	1.05	98
evaluating the innovation.	4.06	1.02	97
Financial resources (excluding staff) for…			

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	M	SD	n
bringing people together to connect ideas.	4.05	1.08	95
planning the innovation.	*3.93	1.04	94
implementing the innovation.	**4.46	0.76	94
marketing or knowledge translation.	4.06	1.03	94
applying the innovation to a new setting or context.	*3.66	1.05	95
evaluating the innovation.	4.10	1.04	94

** = Top 25% Ranking, * = Bottom 25% Ranking

Table 6. Descriptive Data for Barriers to Social Innovation.

	M	SD	n
From your experience, how significant are the following factors in preventing the success of social innovation?			
Aversion to risk among key players.	4.10	1.05	96
Resistance to change among key players.	**4.38	0.90	96
Resistant organizational culture.	**4.41	0.89	97
Insufficient information about future impacts of the innovation.	*3.46	1.12	97
From your experience, how significant is the *absence* of the following features for the ultimate success of social innovation?			
Problem solving strategies.	4.00	0.96	97
Involvement of stakeholders in decision-making processes	4.22	0.96	97
Communication between partners.	**4.35	0.97	96
Plan for monitoring progress.	*3.70	1.07	96
Plan for evaluating the innovation.	3.81	1.08	97
Limited staff and expertise for…			
bringing people together to connect ideas.	3.96	1.05	95
planning the innovation.	3.91	1.00	94
implementing the innovation.	**4.28	0.82	94
marketing or knowledge translation.	3.76	1.06	94
applying the innovation to a new setting or context.	*3.37	1.07	93
evaluating the innovation.	3.91	0.99	93
Limited financial resources (excluding staff) for…			

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bringing people together to connect ideas.	3.88	1.11	92
planning the innovation.	*3.71	1.09	92
implementing the innovation.	**4.29	0.88	92
marketing or knowledge translation.	3.80	0.99	91
applying the innovation to a new setting or context.	*3.52	1.09	91
evaluating the innovation.	4.10	1.04	91

** = Top 25% Ranking, * = Bottom 25% Ranking

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Section II: Nominal Group Technique

Alongside the national survey of social innovators (see Section I), a series of three focus groups were conducted to explore the perspectives of Canadians related to characteristics, facilitators of, and barriers to social innovation. The focus groups followed a specific strategy known as the nominal group technique (NGT). As described in the section that follows, the intent of NGTs is to focus heavily on generating data through participant interaction and engagement, with the researcher playing a more passive role compared to other methods of focus group facilitation. The NGT was therefore seen as an appropriate complement to a questionnaire, where the structure and scope of data collection is more directly influenced by the researcher.

Methods

The nominal group technique (NGT) has been used to investigate issues requiring input, agreement, or consensus from varied stakeholders. The technique was conceived as an alternative to the Delphi method, when—for practical or strategic reasons—the objective of consensus-building cannot be achieved through a systematic process of consultation (Fox, 1989). Whereas the Delphi method seeks input specifically from recognized experts, the NGT stresses principles of democracy and equal opportunity of participants regardless of backgrounds or placement in organizational hierarchies (Brauers, 1987). The group facilitator emphasizes these principles throughout the session by ensuring all participants and ideas are valued equally.

The NGT is typically applied when agreement is sought among individuals sharing a particular experience—such as involvement with the same institution or phenomenon. The procedure generates more ideas than a traditional focus group (de Ruyter, 1996) by having participants independently and simultaneously generate ideas in response to a central question or problem. Ideas are then narrowed democratically, typically through a private vote (Dunham, 1998). These traits of the NGT make it uniquely suited for a study of social innovation, a concept marked by a multitude of contexts, understandings, and activities (Choi & Majumdar, 2015). The NGT was chosen as a means of bringing actors together to present, discuss, and dissect ideas.

The NGT procedure has been applied in many settings for purposes as diverse as consumer research and organizational planning (e.g., Claxton, Ritchie & Zaichowsky, 1980) and improvement of public services (e.g., McMillan et al., 2014). In most cases, the procedure entails a four or five stage process beginning with at least one problem or question and concluding with solutions or answers reached via a democratic process. Prior to the first NGT session, the research team piloted a conventional NGT structure with a group of colleagues to determine its suitability for this project. Afterward, the facilitators collected feedback, watched the session recording, and compared observations. A series of adjustments were made to the planned NGT procedure with the intent of increasing participant engagement and to save time while ensuring all research questions were addressed. Table 7 depicts common stages of the NGT procedure and how common activities were adapted for this study.

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Table 7. The Nominal Group Technique Procedure.

Stage	Activity	Adaptation
Introduction	Facilitator explains the purpose of the session and any relevant background, outlines the session structure, and introduces the question.	Facilitator also provides a working definition of social innovation[6] to establish a shared understanding.
Idea Generation	Participants silently and independently write their ideas in response to the question, usually to the point of saturation.	Participants write their ideas on sticky notes, which are then posted on a wall or another large space.
Idea Collection	In a round-robin fashion, each idea is read aloud and recorded by a facilitator. Though clarification may be sought (e.g., to determine whether one idea is distinct from another), the veracity of individual ideas is not discussed. New ideas may be proposed at this stage.	Facilitators guide participants through an affinity grouping process whereby the sticky notes for ideas deemed similar are physically moved into clusters.
Discussion	Also through a round-robin, a facilitator draws attention to each idea and asks the group if they have any questions or comments. All participants are welcome to express their understanding and rationale for each idea. New ideas may be proposed.	Facilitators ask whether participants have any comments, questions, or need clarification for each idea cluster. Clusters are then moved to a large sheet of paper on an adjacent wall and given arbitrary labels (e.g., A1, A2) for voting.
Voting	Participants silently and independently vote on ideas, usually by priority. A facilitator tallies results and announces the highest ranked ideas.	Participants rank their top five idea clusters for each of the three research questions.

In addition, the research team made two overarching changes to the NGT structure. First, the group would go through the NGT procedure twice: once for the first research question (characteristics of social innovation) and again for the latter two research questions (facilitators and barriers). Second, the Idea Collection and Discussion stages would be audio recorded in order to capture qualitative data as ideas are clarified, unpacked, and discussed.

[6] The team used the definition provided by SSHRC (2015), which refers to social innovation as, "the development of new ideas or the use of existing ideas to find solutions to social challenges. Social innovation entails an initiative, product, process or program that creates positive social outcomes for societies."

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Sampling and Recruitment

The research team used a hybrid sampling strategy, including elements of purposeful sampling (e.g., deliberate targeting of stakeholders) and snowball sampling techniques whereby researchers rely on a small group of initial contacts to reach and recruit additional participants, was popularized by Becker (1963) for populations where random sampling is not feasible (Atkinson & Flint, 2004). The following recruitment methods were used:

1. An opt-in through the stakeholder survey for respondents residing in Alberta.
2. Emails to social innovation networks of the research team and Steering Committee
3. Newsletter distribution through Propellus, an organization serving 450 Calgary-area non-profit organizations and other social innovation stakeholders.

Twenty participants took part in three, three-hour sessions between May and November 2016:

NGT1

(*n* = 9) consisted of Bow Valley College employees. Participants possessed diverse roles and areas of expertise, though they shared the same institutional context.

NGT2

(*n* = 6) consisted of participants from four organizations. Three were involved with the non-profit sector, two with the post-secondary sector, and one with a private social enterprise.

NGT3

(*n* = 5) consisted of participants from five organizations. Two participants were academics, one oversaw funding of socially innovative initiatives, and three were involved with multiple simultaneous social innovations.

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Data Collection and Analysis

The data produced through the NGT consist of the ideas that receive votes from participants during the final stage of the procedure. The votes are typically taken to represent the areas of greatest agreement among participants in response to the central question or problem. As such, NGT data (the highest-voted ideas) are quantitative. This feature distinguishes the NGT from other focus group techniques, where a large volume of qualitative data is generated. To address our three research questions—and to facilitate comparison of findings with those from other data collection strategies—the data passed through a process of generalization (depicted in Figure 7). The process began with participants individually placing their ideas onto a large surface. Through group discussion and clarification, participants then grouped the ideas into clusters based on perceived and agreed-upon similarity. Across the three sessions, 139 idea clusters were produced. Participants then cast votes for their top five idea clusters, which the researchers tabulated to determine the top five clusters for each research question[7]. This narrowed the total number of clusters to 45.

Figure 7. Data Analysis Process

After the NGT sessions, three members of the research team independently assigned labels to each remaining cluster and then agreed on a label to bring forward to the next step. The researchers then compared clusters across the three sessions, grouping clusters into themes based on similarities in their labels and constituent ideas (e.g., "community involvement" was deemed similar to "community engagement"). Each theme was given a score by adding the points that participants had previously attributed to the clusters in that theme[8]. This was done in order to ascribe a rank to the final list of themes for each research question. Though the analysis process required some subjectivity on the part of the research team, care was taken to retain the intent behind the ideas and clusters themselves where possible.

Supplemental data came from audio recordings of the sessions. Discussions were transcribed and subsequently coded through an open-coding technique, using the three research questions as a frame of reference. Quotes and dialogue were used for comparison of how topics arose and were discussed across sessions. Thematic analysis of the transcripts was limited due to reliance on visuals during the sessions; thus, qualitative findings in this report are intended solely to complement the themes resulting from voting data by providing examples as well as the context or rationale underpinning ideas and clusters generated by participants.

[7] 5 points were awarded to a participant's top vote, 4 points to the second choice, etc. The five highest-ranked idea clusters for each research question were announced to participants and selected for further analysis.

[8] For example, if a similar cluster of ideas appeared in two sessions and was the highest voted cluster (5 points) in both sessions, the researchers assigned the resulting theme a score of 10 (5 + 5).

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Findings

This section is organized according to the three research questions. The data analysis strategy resulted in six themes for characteristics of social innovation, seven themes for facilitators of social innovation, and 6 themes for barriers to social innovation (see Tables 8-10).
Findings consist of key themes identified through the data analysis process depicted in Figure 1 above, along with illustrative quotes from the NGT sessions when available.

Characteristics of Social Innovation

Theme 1: Social innovation is primarily about outcomes

The clusters that had the highest level of agreement across NGTs contained ideas pertaining to tangible outcomes to social problem such as: "focus on impact", "desire for improvement" as illustrated by the following quote:

> To me social innovation has to be about outcomes, why it's there, who does it, and the process. The process of innovation seems very similar to me. I think it has to do with outcomes. -NGT 2

Further, these clusters contained ideas of benefiting everyone such as: "Valuable to society, not just private individuals", which was expressed by participants in the sessions:

> … [I]t's being done for a social good, so the value is for people in society, it's not narrowly focused, the benefits are distributed. -NGT 3

> …So basically, I was thinking in projects like if they are so much top-down you're just sort of creating things but they're not actually landing anywhere, like they're not actually meeting the need of somebody, then I think that's kind of like a fail right. What I'm saying with that is it should actually provide something that actually benefits somebody. -NGT 3

Theme 2: Social innovation is community-centered

Ideas from this theme centered on the importance of gathering support from a community such as "engaging a community", and "community involvement", these ideas reinforce the previous theme that social innovations should seek to provide a benefit to society, but here the ideas are more focused on seeking to inspire and instill a need for action from communities that foster these innovations:

> For me when there is something that is community I'm thinking of that egalitarian structure that we've got where everyone is coming together to create this change for a more socially just world and we'd all be equal partners in the process, so that's kind of how, for me, that's what I'm looking at. It would have to be an equal, a true partnership with those involved. -NGT 1

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Theme 3: Social innovation generates creative solutions

Participants across NGT sessions highlighted that those working toward innovation should be flexible in their thinking and seek to find unique solutions when existing solutions are not sufficiently effective. Idea clusters formed around the social innovation process having flexible or exploratory qualities. Participants noted that this process involves risk, while another cluster similarly highlighted a "creative" approach with ideas of "adaptive approaches" rather than traditional ways of thinking:

> ...questioning the permanence of any solution. The idea of social innovation, if you're coming up with social innovation recognizing that society is constantly evolving, then your solution should be evolving too. -NGT 1

Theme 4: Social innovation involves collaboration

The essential characteristic of collaboration was highlighted by all three NGT groups. Ideas comprising this theme included "collaborative", "collaboration", and "multi-sector collaboration". Beyond the basic concept of collaboration, a participant noted how social innovation's "greatest impact happens when things are done with others" – a view shared by other participants in the group. Working together was discussed in two areas in particular: allowing for collaboration in the solution generation process, and engagement of funders and target stakeholders:

> ... [I]t is sort of an arms-length, "we've given you the dollars, just go with it", right? They expect it to be an ongoing conversation. That's just one of those things that gets tweaked around. How we define the word stakeholders... who will benefit from the project? [C]ommunities really are the ones that have to identify who will benefit and how they will benefit, it's not whether I will decide who will benefit. We can have intentions about what the project is, but the community will decide. -NGT 1

Theme 5: Social innovation involves principles of social justice

To participants, social innovation aligns with equality of perspectives and is motivated by a desire for social justice. This theme was captured in two idea clusters: one comprising ideas related to inclusion, diversity, and uniqueness; and one related to disruption to social inequality, such as "challenging existing power relations" and "oppression". As one participant expressed:

> That was me, so it's sort of recognizing that traditional power relations are typically inequitable in their structure and their hierarchical structures. So, if it's socially innovative it should inherently be disruptive to those inequities. -NGT 1

Although there is some overlap between this theme and Theme 1 (around the capacity for social innovation to seek improvement to social conditions), the ideas expressed were sufficiently distinct to warrant a separate theme.

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Theme 6: Social innovation entails unique planning and assessment needs

The final theme related to characteristics of social innovation relates to considerations for planning and evaluation. One group focused on the idea that for a social innovation to last, the idea must go "beyond a desire for social improvement", but also be "viable", "sustainable", and first be "feasible". However, one participant expressed that feasibility should not stop an idea:

> That's interesting [when] you hear somebody say, 'must be feasible'. Well wait a minute, lots of things people thought couldn't be done but the whole point is that somebody refused to believe that … it's very true it's actually gotta be doable somewhere along the line, you would hope, but the flip side is that people don't see it as not feasible you go well that's not gonna stop me from thinking about it cause we're gonna get there at some point. -NGT 3

Similarly, NGT 2 discussed the unique nature of social innovation projects at length and centred on the idea that measurable outcomes can be difficult to demonstrate:

> Sometimes we have these really uneven ideas that we don't necessarily know the exact outcome. So, when I think about the non-profit sector often times when we're applying for funding we need to provide them with very specific outcomes for whatever gets that money to be used towards with social innovation I don't necessarily think you know what those eventual outcomes will be… what the result of that will necessarily be. -NGT 2

> … maybe we need to acknowledge that assessment and evaluation may look different depending on the enterprise or innovation that we are talking about and some of it's going to have quantifiable things and some of it's going to be very hard to quantify. -NGT 2

Facilitators of Social Innovation

Theme 1: Access to funds throughout the innovation cycle

Across all three NGTs the importance of funding and the need for funds from the start until the end of a project was highlighted as facilitators. One group conceptualized funding in relation to the need for long-term access to funds and commitment from funders; another talked about the need for funding broadly with "financial resources"; and another generated ideas such as "start-up funding" along with other resources such as "time" and "people".

> When I wrote funding, I meant two things: One—the seed of funding as well as revenue generating. In both perspectives but I could see how just writing funding would look like seed funding too much of that one. So, in terms of the characteristics of social innovation. The funding, seed funding and revenue would be part of the same idea. -NGT 2

This facilitator was ranked highly among all NGT participants—nearly double the next highest theme.

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Theme 2: A shared understanding that change is needed

Ideas connected to an apparent need for a solution to a problem were produced across the three groups. Two groups wrote that social innovation is facilitated by a sense of urgency for a solution, producing ideas such as a "crisis or tipping point", or a "pain point" to highlight the demand for change. Another idea was that of social unrest leading to a need to act—the idea of a "catalyst":

> An inspiration, but I think it goes to that you see that there is an immediate need that has to be acted on that when you see that there's a demand that there's a pain point. It's not just that it was a sad story, or you feel good about it but it's something that you read, that happened to you that you then saw the demand and went there. -NGT 2

Similarly, a participant in the third group submitted the idea "strong case for change". While this does not explicitly denote urgency, it does suggest that social innovation is facilitated when there is evidence of an issue in need of addressing.

Theme 3: An environment that is supportive of unique ideas and/or approaches

Across the groups, participants mentioned that a supportive environment helps social innovations grow. Specifically, this included "support from top administrators" who provide "time and space to explore ideas". Another idea discussed in this context was the idea that innovation teams need to be flexible and to realize that some ideas are not going to be successful. One participant also discussed collaboration as a facilitator in this respect, "as an interaction of convening forces and resources, and that social innovation should foster a "creative community culture":

> It's like one that you have this idea and it's great, but it's like is it possible to fit into the ethos of that community or that culture, like is it going to work is it going to mesh, and so you have an idea coming from somewhere separate and you're trying to pass it on, and then can they buy in and like is it just, 'does it work', 'is it gonna stick', and then even in terms of knowledge transfer like maybe there's upgrades or updates or new ways of doing things, and is it all going to work. And then how, yeah, the medium and modality of how that's transferred. -NGT 3

Theme 4: Leadership that is forward-thinking

Two clusters were based on ideas around effective leadership. One group noted that leadership should foster creativity, and another conceptualized it as a "source of inspiration." On a whole, participants talked about the facilitating effect of a mentor or "ambassador" for the project. This suggests that part of leadership is to commit to, guide a project through its lifecycle, and garner support for the idea:

> I actually meant kind of the partners … who will advocate, who would have a sense of, "This is important. I want to lend my voice, open the door. I might be advisory, I might help bring people together whatever I can do. So, I'm not core to your project but I'm someone who really likes the idea of what you're doing, and can I be helpful in some way, can I help wave the flag or whatever". -NGT 3

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> If there's one sort of key person or evangelist around our key drivers like if they leave then it doesn't just stop. -NGT 3

Theme 5: Community engagement

A cluster from NGT 1 that centered on community involvement, did not have a clear connection to clusters from the other groups. This standalone cluster contained ideas such as "community involvement" and "community engagement". The fact that this cluster was highly ranked suggests that getting a community or target group to embrace an innovation's objectives can support and lead to a successful outcome.

Theme 6: A clear vision for the project and process

In two groups, clusters were generated that related to the organization of a social innovation. For example, NGT 3 noted the concept of a "clear vision", and a participant expressed that having a clear idea on structure and process can help provide a "backbone" to a social innovation project:

> Yeah, so that's an example so my point was that there's some form of organization whether it's really formal or non-formal, there needs to be a collective entity of some form, right so you can't just be random, so it's gotta be organized, and a backbone in the collective impact methodology, one of the tenants of that is a backbone organization so that's one example right, but there's many ways to do this. -NGT 3

Another participant focused on laying the groundwork for a social innovation to be successful, which included clear goals and project organization. The participant suggested that a project is more successful when each team member understands the project and possesses sufficient capacity:

> [in reference to a written idea] ...what I meant was like when you're just setting it up or starting. You've done something similar to this, so the training is in place, there's trial, it's just set up and organized. -NGT 3

Theme 7: A commitment to social values

An idea cluster formed around sharing similar traits and values and suggestions that team cohesion facilitates the success of a social innovation. The group discussed the values of "passion", "social responsibility", "persistence", and "commitment". A participant suggested that these values can instill a sense of pride in a project:

> ...those are all values that you have to uphold as you approach your project right. Personal pride. -NGT 1

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Barriers to Social Innovation

Theme 1: Organizational power dynamics

The most agreed upon barrier to social innovation is the persistence of traditional, hierarchical structures to the innovation's process, as opposed to a more equal project structure. The ideas "lack of support from top administrators", "top-down approaches", "power" and "dominance" all suggest a power imbalance.
Competitive internal dynamics, such as "competing for funding" and "organizational competition", were highlighted by NGT 3. Participants also noted that a dysfunctional work environment poses a barrier to social innovation, such as when partners disagree on the nature of the project and its purpose. Additionally, a participant from NGT 1 expressed how power and "old ways" can impede innovation:

> ...power is a component of it, but also, it's around the challenge of implementing process. It's difficult so people don't want to do it. It's not necessarily related to power it's more about laziness for lack of a better word. Or the comfort of the old way, yeah. -NGT 1

Theme 2: A lack of consistent funding

A clear theme across all three groups is the need for funds to support social innovation. Above the general lack of project funds, participants wrote ideas related to the challenge of securing start-up funding and that multi-year funding is difficult to come by. As a participant observed, without ongoing funding a social innovation may not reach its potential:

> Yeah. I don't think funders always give us the space to explore what those outcomes we still have to give them what we think that they might be. It would be nice if we have existing relationships with a funder we've done great work in the past that if they trusted us to give us money to explore what specific outcomes could be happening. -NGT 2

Theme 3: Limited capacity and attention of key players

Apart from funding, participants clustered ideas around more diverse resources, such as having sufficient numbers of people to keep a project going and the battle against "burnout". The idea of time as a limited resource was offered consistently and was categorized in two ways: administrators not allocating sufficient time to plan a social innovation, and an innovation project being hindered by not having sufficient focus or time from team members.
Also prevalent in these clusters are ideas related to staff not possessing adequate expertise for implementation. For example, participants expressed that inadequate expertise could lead to the "poor execution of good ideas" which suggests a lack of capacity to properly handle a social innovation project. Thus, a lack of capacity and training could present a barrier to project success.

Theme 4: Resistance to risk or change

Participants highlighted barriers related to the organizational tendency to resist change, resulting in not embracing, new, potentially innovative ideas. Participants also noted that "fear of failure" among individuals in their organizations could lead to "stagnation" in the existing ways in which things are done.

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Theme 5: Prevailing assumptions and attitudes

This theme represents an idea cluster that arose in only NGT 2 yet was ranked highly by participants. The cluster consisted of barriers related to the damaging effect of "stereotypes", "prejudice", and "discrimination" present in society as expressed by a participant below:

> Understanding of the root causes of why we are in this place anyways and who are we just to check your own privilege and who are we to initiate this change or… I started as an international studies development student, and I had to do something in the developing countries and had to put all my white guilt over there and realizing my own history here. So, the discrimination and stereotypes those barriers are so important. -NGT 2

Theme 6: Restrictive regulatory context

The final theme includes ideas around systems barriers beyond the control of social innovators. Ideas in this cluster were few, but distinct, such as "regulatory barriers" and "inability to share info." Group discussion bolstered an inability to share ideas:

> You're not allowed to share, you're not allowed to talk to anybody else, or share your data, but wait how am I going to collaborate? -NGT 3

And marketplace barriers:

> There can be all kinds of barriers to entry even into that marketplace … [there] has to be some rigid structure or some kind of barrier to entry but, look, it's getting in the way of what's a really innovative opportunity or program that we can create together. -NGT 3

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Table 8: Themes, Clusters, and Ideas – "What are the Key Characteristics of Social Innovation?"

Theme (points)	Cluster Labels	Rank	Points	Example Participant Ideas
Social innovation is primarily about outcomes (12 points)	Distributed benefits	1	5	Benefits individuals/groups with social challenges; Valuable to society, not just private individuals
	Addresses social challenges	2	4	Problem Solving; Need Driven; Desire for improvement; Solution focused
	Solution focused	3	3	Focus on impact; Solve/reduce social problem; Solutions
Social innovation is community-centered (10 points)	Community involvement	1	5	Community driven; Grounded in community knowledge; Building community in the process of social innovation
	Serves people and communities	1	5	Public for the people; community involvement; serves community; Should primarily benefit people (not strictly environment)
Social innovation generates creative solutions (8 points)	Involves a flexible or exploratory approach	2	4	Willingness to risk and explore; Involves exploration; trial & error
	Creative approach	2	4	Creative and/or adaptive ideas or application; must move beyond habitual ways of thinking or acting
Social innovation involves collaboration (7 points)	Multi-sector collaboration	3	3	Blend of private-public expertise; Often public- private partnerships
	Collaboration	4	2	Collaborative; Collaboration; Greatest impact when done with others
	Collaborative	5	1	Relationships; Must allow for collaboration; collaborative
	Collaborative	5	1	Collaboration between stakeholders; Partnerships
Social innovation involves principles of social justice (6 points)	Disruptive to social inequality	2	4	Social justice; Disruptive to uncomfortable or challenging
	Is inclusive	4	2	Diverse; cultural; Involving those who are often left out of the conversation
Social innovation entails unique planning and assessment needs (3 points)	Is sustainable	4	2	Must be feasible; sustainable benefits/outcomes
	Assessment	5	1	Self-assessing; Metrics and execution of ideas; Doesn't necessarily have measurable outcomes

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Table 9: Themes, Clusters, and Ideas – "What are the Facilitators of Social Innovation?"

Theme (points)	Cluster Labels	Rank	Points	Example Participant Ideas
Access to funds throughout the innovation cycle (14 points)	Funding	1	5	Funding (long-term); Long-term focus and long-term commitment from funders/developers; Grants
	Resources	1	5	Start-up funding; sufficient resources ($, people, time)
	Funding	2	4	Funding; Finance; Financial resources
A shared understanding that change is needed (8 points)	Strong case for change	2	4	Strong case for change; Significant benefits
	Catalyst	4	2	Immediate need identified (must act now); Demand (pain point, how urgent is the issue); Catalyst
	Desire for change	4	2	Desire for change/social unrest; Crisis/tipping point
An environment that is supportive of unique ideas and/or approaches (7 points)	Open & supportive environment	2	4	Time & Space to explore; Support from top administration; Acceptance of failure
	Stakeholder commitment	4	2	Accept change; Stakeholder buy-in; Good collaboration
	Opportunity to collaborate	5	1	Creative community culture; convening forces/resources
Leadership that is forward-thinking (7 points)	Creative leadership	2	4	Creative leadership; Both leadership and mentorship of the project; creativity
	Committed leadership	3	3	Team advisors; Leadership/Ambassadors; Inspiration
Community engagement (5 points)	Community engagement	1	5	Engaged members; Community; Engagement; Community Involvement
A clear vision for the project and process (4 points)	Good foundation	3	3	Clear Goals and Objectives; Good Foundation; Organized
	Clear vision	5	1	Clear Vision
A commitment to social values (1 point)	Commitment to social values	5	1	Commitment; Social Responsibility; Passion & Persistence; Flexibility

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Table 10: Themes, Clusters, and Ideas – "What are the Barriers to Social Innovation?"

Theme (points)	Cluster Labels	Rank	Points	Example Participant Ideas
Organizational power dynamics (12 points)	Power dynamics	2	4	Power imbalance; Hierarchy; One model fits all; Dominance
	Top-down approaches	3	3	Top down approaches; Lack of support from top administrators
	Unstable organizational dynamics	3	3	Fighting for funding; Organizational competition;
	Internal disagreement	4	2	Partners in disagreement; Agreeing on the problem
A lack of consistent funding (10 points)	Lack of financial resources	1	5	Funding, start-up and ongoing; Lack of funding for resources; Money
	Lack of financial resources	1	5	Inadequate funding; Start-up and sustaining; running out of money; difficult to find multi-year funding
Lack of capacity and attention of key players (10 points)	Lack of resources/Capacity	1	5	Lack of resources (human, financial, time); Lack of resources; lack of know-how, skills to guide implementation
	Limited human resources	3	3	Good idea poor execution; Burnout Rate; Lack of staffing
	Time constraints	5	1	People's time; Time constraints; Lack of Time
	Insufficient time and focus	5	1	Lack of Time; Lack of Commitment; Lack of Time to show results; Emphasis on short-term deliverables
Resistance to risk or change (7 points)	Aversion to risk	2	4	Cynicism toward new ideas; fear of failure; fear
	Resistance to change/Risk	3	3	Fear of change; Stagnation; Existing way of doing things
Prevailing assumptions and attitudes (4 points)	Prevailing assumptions and attitudes	2	4	Prejudice; Stereotypes; Discrimination
Restrictive regulatory context (1 points)	Regulatory barriers	5	1	Regulatory Barriers; The inability to share information

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Section III: Case Studies

The second research phase of this study used a comparative case study methodology composed of semi-structured interviews and a review of project documents. While the first research phase (described in Sections I and II) examined general views of social innovation from Canadian stakeholders, the case studies built upon these learnings by investigating specific real world Canadian examples of social innovation.

Methods

The case study approach, as described by Yin (2013), is recommended when investigating connections between complex social phenomena and their real-life contexts; where no single set of outcomes exist; and where multiple sources of evidence are available. Complexity has often been associated with the phenomenon of social innovation. Mumford & Moertl, for example, characterized social innovations as, "highly complex events unfolding over substantial periods of time" (2003, p. 261). Others have noted that understanding innovation requires viewing the phenomenon as a complex and creative process (Jörg & Akkaoui-Hughes, 2013) requiring a complex, non-linear perspective (Westley, Antadze, Riddell, Robinson, & Geobey, 2014). Further, it is widely held that social innovation, as a strategy, is used to address social issues which themselves are highly complex (e.g., Alberta Social Innovation Connect, 2016; Grimm, Fox, Bains, & Albertson, 2013; Chalmers, 2011; Moore & Westley, 2011). Given the range of issues, fields, and sectors for which social innovation is pursued, there is potential for any number of outcomes and sources of evidence. Case studies are thus a highly appropriate means of investigating social innovation, allowing researchers to gather in-depth, objective evidence. Researchers have previously used comparative case studies to discern themes across multiple social innovation initiatives (such as Grudinschi et al, 2013 and Mumford, 2002). To our knowledge, this approach has not been used to examine Canadian examples of social innovation.

Case studies were designed to build upon findings from the first phase of the project by refining research activities, from social innovation in general to particular examples of Canadian social innovation. Researchers examined the development of these initiatives from inception to present day, noting how circumstances and contextual factors were associated with project success. These topics were explored through the perspectives of individuals involved with the initiatives in various capacities and levels of decision-making.

This stage of the research was guided by the following research questions:

- What factors or circumstances contributed to the development of the social innovation, from its inception to present day?
- What facilitated the development and/or success of the social innovation, and how?
- What impeded the development and/or success of the social innovation, and how?

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Data collection consisted of interviews with persons involved in each initiative and a review of project documents. A semi-structured interview process, characterized by a general frame of reference and flexibility in questioning (Bryman, Teevan, & Bell, 2012), was selected for two reasons. First, we anticipated a variety of social issues, project structures, funding sources, scopes, and institutional contexts. This diversity heightened the likelihood that no single set of questions could apply to all cases. Second, we wanted participation from persons involved in various capacities with the initiative yet recognized that no two projects would have the same hierarchical structure and responsibilities. Interview guides therefore needed to have the flexibility for interviewers to jump between sections, skip items not relevant to a participant, and probe for more information as needed. Semi-structured interviewing was thus a natural fit.

Interviews were supplemented by a document review of files associated with each case study site. This method was chosen because documents could provide a basis for tracking information about a project's development and implementation. Data from a document review served two purposes. First, project information helped researchers in creating profiles of each case study. Second, interviewers could use interview time most effectively, by focusing the interview guides on participant experiences and interpretations, and minimizing instances where participants are asked to recall objective details that could be obtained elsewhere.

Sampling and Recruitment

Two distinct forms of non-random sampling were used for the case studies: sampling of social innovation initiatives and of the people involved. Case study sites were identified through a process of purposeful sampling with the goal of maximum variation. Individual participants were identified through a combination of purposeful and consecutive sampling.

The research team sought diverse initiatives, with the rationale that such a spread may yield insights that could be applied across geographical and political contexts. It was therefore decided that a maximum variation sampling strategy would be most effective. As described by Palinkas et al. (2015), maximum variation sampling entails:

> the selection of cases with maximum variation for the purpose of documenting unique or diverse variations that have emerged in adapting to different conditions, and to identify important common patterns that cut across variations
>
> -Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 2

Two lists of criteria were developed: one for site inclusion and one for site variation. To be considered for inclusion, social innovations must have been Canadian, well-established (though not necessarily completed), and large enough that 10-20 people involved could potentially be interviewed. Social innovations meeting these criteria were reviewed against a set of characteristics to ensure no two case studies were so similar as to devalue cross-site comparison. This set of characteristics is outlined in Table 11.

Characteristics were based on findings from the first research phase of this study, which indicate that factors facilitating or impeding success of social innovation may be experienced differently based on a variety of features. Researchers assembled a list of these features, focusing on those that were most salient in the findings and that could be discerned from project documents. Next, the research team and project Steering Committee reviewed the list and recommendations were incorporated.

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Table 11. Characteristics for case study site selection.

Characteristics	Description
Scope	Geographic area covered by project activities
Population	Intended population served by the project
Sector	Sector of the administrating organization (e.g., public, private, non-profit)
Social Issue	Issues addressed by the initiative
Issue Complexity	Researcher-determined scale of complexity of social issues addressed (1-10)
Discipline	Relevant academic discipline(s) as determined by the research team
Partners	Number and sector of project partners (not including the administrating organization)
Funder	Source(s) of project funding
Funding	Amount of project funding
Duration	Duration of project, from the beginning of implementation to formal end
Sustainability	Extent to which the project was intended to be sustainable beyond end date

Sampling of interview participants was based on lists provided by site representatives (henceforth called key informants) of all individuals involved in their social innovation. The intent was to interview as many individuals as possible until a quota of 15 interviews[9] per site was reached—a form of consecutive sampling (Martinez-Mesa, Gonzalez-Chica, Duquia, Bonamigo, & Bastos, 2016). This was combined with elements of purposeful sampling, whereby the researchers wanted to ensure a spread of participants across various roles and responsibilities with each site (Bryman, Teevan, & Bell, 2012).

Site recruitment began with the research team circulating the final list of site characteristics to Steering Committee members and project advisors, with a request to suggest social innovation of which they were aware. For each, we also requested contact information of a person who could serve as a project representative. A number of suggestions were received. Researchers then contacted and met with project representatives to learn more about their social innovations and to outline our research project, its objectives, and why we were interested in studying their initiative. After researchers compared the social innovations and confirmed their diversity vis-à-vis the list of characteristics, a request to conduct a case study was sent to the appropriate decision-maker.

[9] Fifteen was chosen as an informal target that could ensure sufficient spread of participation while making most efficient use of project resources, with the research team open to additional interviews if needed.

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Once approved to conduct a case study, the research team explored whether additional consent would be required (e.g., of partners). Researchers then met with key informants to draft a list of potential participants. Participants included frontline staff, managers, directors, partners, funders, and other stakeholders with direct knowledge of and/or involvement in the initiative. Key informants later supported coordination of data collection activities by advising potential participants that a member of the research team would be in contact to request their time for a confidential interview. Recruitment of participants was then carried out by a member of the research team. Interviews were conducted between February and June 2017.

Data Collection and Analysis

A document review template was created to expand on information about the social innovations obtained for the list of site characteristics. The template would improve researchers' understandings of the initiatives and support the interview process. Requested documents included proposals, budgets, planning files, reports, and other materials that could provide insight on the development of the initiatives and that key informants were willing to share. The template contained fields for information related to project background, size/scope, structure, developments, impacts, facilitators, and barriers.

Researchers developed semi-structured interview guides to reflect a diversity of participant roles. A variety of roles was expected based on findings from the first phase of data collection, which indicated that involvement in social innovation takes many forms (e.g., visionary, planner, facilitator, staff member, manager, director, advisor, evaluator, funder, external stakeholder). Consideration of these findings, along with Steering Committee input and team discussion, informed the design of five interview guides:

- Planner, Manager, and Director[10]
- Frontline staff
- Partners
- Funders
- Benefactors

Guides were prepared with a view to tracking the development of each social innovation, as well as factors (e.g., events, conditions) that influenced that development. Some questions were used across all guides; others were only included in one or some guides. When unsure whether to include a question, the research team opted for inclusion—with the understanding that a semi-structured approach meant the guides would not be followed verbatim. Prior to each interview, the interviewer would obtain a base understanding of the participant's role in the social innovation and tailor questions accordingly. The tailoring process entailed coordination between research team members prior to the interview as well as in-the-moment decision-making on the part of the interviewer.

[10] These roles were combined due to considerable overlap in responsibilities observed in earlier research findings.

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Interview transcripts were coded using a qualitative data analysis software. An initial codebook was assembled based on findings from the first research phase, with codes corresponding to project characteristics; stages of the social innovation (e.g., planning, sustainability); and factors found to serve as facilitators and/or barriers to social innovation. Two research team members undertook a process of inter-coder reliability, leading to some changes to the codebook and the creation of code definitions. A second round of inter-coder reliability resulted in greater agreement in coding between the researchers, minor revisions to some codes, and the decision to move forward with the revised codebook. In keeping with the developmental nature of this study, codes were added as patterns emerged in participant responses.

Prior to analysis, the research team reflected that participant roles often did not neatly correspond to the roles used for interview guides. Therefore, researchers performed a post-hoc revision of these categories (described in the Findings section) and sorted transcripts accordingly.

A thematic analysis was performed on coded data. Themes emerged in reference to the case study research questions, with attention to factors or circumstances that may have facilitated or impeded the development, implementation, and sustainability of the social innovation. Additional information about each social innovation (e.g., characteristics, context) was observed and coded. For the purpose of this report, only findings with bearing on potential facilitators and barriers are discussed.

Findings

Below, are findings from the three case studies. We begin with background information on the three social innovation initiatives, followed by descriptions of roles of interview participants. Next, we present ten emergent themes—framed as characteristics of successful social innovation. Each characteristic is discussed in terms of how participants found them to facilitate or impede the development of their initiatives.

Site and Participant Description

Initiatives were considered a social innovation if they used a unique approach to address a social issue or benefit a population. Initiatives had to be well underway or nearly completed, in order to explore their development, management, and outcomes. Sites varied in terms of size, location, scope, and objectives. Site characteristics are summarized in Table 12[11].

[11] Four case study sites were selected; this figure was reduced once the research team concluded that saturation had been reached, during data collection for the first three case studies.

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Table 12. Sites by characteristic.

Site #	Population	Scope	Issues addressed	Partners	Funder	Funding	Duration	Sustainable	Status (Oct 2017)
1	School-aged children and their families	Small town	Mental health; Psychological trauma	Two school divisions; Provincial government department	Provincial government	$1 million	2.5 years	No	Complete
2	Adults facing co-morbid socioeconomic barriers	Large city	Mental health; Substance abuse; Housing; Employment	Five social service agencies	Private donor; two non-profit organizations	$550,000	3 years	Yes	Ongoing
3	Older adults	Urban metro-politan area	Well-being; Health; Cognition; Technology	10+ private sector partners	Federal government	$2.3 million	6 years	Yes (specific projects/ outcomes)	Complete

Below are profiles of each of the three social innovation sites described in this study:

Site 1

A youth wellness initiative based out of a rural community in Alberta, funded by the provincial government. The project originated shortly after a natural disaster (unprecedented flooding) as a collaboration between local school divisions, the provincial government, and a project team. The purpose of the initiative was to provide mental health services to primary and secondary students in the divisions, as well as families of these children. Interview participants consisted of counselors; support workers; school and division staff; social service workers; and community stakeholders.

Site 2

A service integration initiative based in a large Alberta city, funded through non-profit organizations and a private donor. The initiative intends to reduce barriers for adults dealing with co-morbid issues affecting socioeconomic stability, including employment, housing, and mental health-related issues. Its model involves a partnership of five social service agencies, with an objective to reduce duplication of activities for those seeking assistance through an integrated service approach. Staff, supervisors, executive directors, and other staff members participated.

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Site 3

A broad initiative consisting of more than ten individual projects, with the overarching purpose of using technology to support well-being among older adults. The initiative was based in a metropolitan area of Ontario, led by a college research centre in partnership with several private sector organizations, and funded by a federal research grant. Project staff, students, faculty, college support staff, and partners were interviewed.
Thirty-nine participants took part in interviews (summarized in Table 13). Despite the development of interview guides intended to probe various degrees of involvement in a social innovation, interviews confirmed our assumption that definitive categorization of participants may be problematic.

The research team thus reconceptualised participant roles during data analysis, settling on four groups[12]:

1. **Frontline staff**. Includes project staff and pre-existing partner staff involved in implementing of the social innovation.
2. **Management**. Includes direct supervisors of staff as well as administrative support for project activities.
3. **Senior Leadership**. Includes decision-makers and, for Site 2, partner executive directors.
4. **Partner/Stakeholder**. Includes community advisors (Site 1) as well as faculty supporters and partner representatives (Site 3).

Table 13. Interviews by site and participant group. *

	Frontline Staff	Management	Leadership	Partners/ Stakeholders	Total
Site 1	4	0	1	6	11
Site 2	4	4	6	0	14
Site 3	4	3	2	5	14
Total	12	7	9	11	39

*Interview participants have been assigned to the group for which the majority of their responses correspond.

[12] Even with these revised categories, several participants were found to conduct activities or perform functions that cover more than one group (e.g., due to project need or staff promotion).

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Case Study Themes

Findings are organized into 10 characteristics, which emerged during analysis and correspond to characteristics that may support or hinder social innovation. Findings are described in relation to the three research questions: factors or circumstances that contributed to the development of the initiative, what facilitated an initiative's development or success, and what impeded an initiative's development or success. The ten characteristics are listed and described in Table 14.

From prior research for this project, it was evident that factors facilitating social innovation and factors posing barriers to social innovation were often mirror images of one another. This observation was confirmed during case study analysis. In addition, case study analysis confirms many characteristics found earlier in this study are consistent with those identified for specific initiatives. Perspectives of participants indicate a multi-layered view of characteristics of social innovation—by referring to characteristics themselves as facilitators or barriers, and through success strategies or impediments to realizing the characteristics. As such, a summary of facilitators and barriers would inevitably result in repetition (i.e., the presence of something may be a facilitator; its absence a barrier). The ways in which facilitators and barriers were evident within and across site, however, were often dependent on context or perspective. In some instances, what was perceived as a barrier by one participant would be framed as a facilitating factor by another. Therefore, we summarize findings for each characteristic without separate sections for barriers and facilitators.

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Table 14. Case study characteristics and descriptions.

Characteristic	Description
Collaboration	Includes practices and processes by which independent organizations communicate and work with one another. This characteristic is intended to capture the more pragmatic and individualized aspects of collaboration.
Service Integration	A distinct form of collaboration, referring to the process whereby agencies link their services or products with the aim of benefitting a mutual population. This may include information sharing; concurrent and/or consecutive services; and agencies acting on behalf of one other in the interest of the partnership as a whole.
Partner Fit	Abstract, less tangible qualities of partnership and collaboration. Findings pertain to the dynamics and perceptions of organizational cultures, operations, and individual approaches.
Buy-in	Extent of engagement and commitment of individuals and organizations, such as willingness to change, perceptions of project viability, and commitment over a project's duration.
Expectation Setting	Establishment and maintenance of common understandings at the team, partnership, stakeholder, and community levels. Examples include problem identification, goals, resources, roles, responsibilities, and other project information.
Adaptation of Work	Micro and macro aspects of staff work in the context of a social innovation project—such as changes to activities, schedules, attitudes, and approaches.
Funding	Includes findings pertaining to sources and management of project resources.
Leadership	Findings specific to project leadership, including the qualities and actions of organizational and project leaders; formal and informal decision-making processes; and how leadership translates to behaviours, perceptions, and attitudes of team members.
External Realities	Factors and circumstances beyond the direct influence of the project team. These may be experienced at the level of: partner organizations; relevant sectors; the larger community or society; or other areas of the project's institution.
Evaluation	Intended to reflect the systems, processes, and practices by which progress is tracked, measured, and evaluated.

Characteristics emerged throughout analysis, with some added, revised, reconceptualised, or combined along the way. Each represents a collection of related findings and are not necessarily specific to a site or participant role. Prominent clusters of findings have been organized as aspects of a particular characteristic. For the most part, findings cross the boundaries of organizational hierarchy; however, some difference were observed in how characteristics were expressed and/or experienced. Where substantial, such distinctions are described.

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This section describes findings according to the above characteristics. Characteristics should be taken as groupings of findings, rather than mutually exclusive categories. Findings may overlap and contain similar underlying concepts (e.g., communication); thus, some findings may be interrelated with—or embedded in—those described in other sections. Each characteristic includes one or more representative quotes, a description of the characteristic, and salient findings—noting when these differ by participant role or by site.

Characteristic 1: Collaboration

> Collaboration is really about relationship building. I am far more likely to attempt to change something in my agency if I really like the people I am working with. If you don't get on well with someone then you are less likely to make a move for them, right?
>
> -Site 2

> Trickiest part was just sitting down and trying to figure out what would be a relatively reasonable amount of time that [partners] could commit. Because they were committing to staff time as well. [...] Occasionally they would worry a little bit about how accurate the in-kind [estimate] was. -Site 3

This characteristic describes practices and processes by which independent organizations communicate and work together. This characteristic is intended to reflect the more pragmatic and individualized aspects of collaboration.

All partner and stakeholder participants from Sites 1 and 3 spoke positively of collaborative elements of their projects. Leaders, managers, and stakeholders discussed project approach (e.g., bringing the right people together, forums for discussion) as a facilitator to productive collaboration. Leaders and managers identified barriers to collaboration, often having to do with operationalizing the partnership. Apart from this, there was considerable overlap in findings across roles.

Overall, four sub-themes emerged relating to collaboration, highlighting factors that interfere with collaboration as well as those that promote collaboration. These are: **communication and relationship-building, clarity of communication, decision-making, and** approaches to collaborating.

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Communication and Relationship-Building

The topic of communication was central participant descriptions of partnership and collaboration. Two qualities seen as vital were that effective communication be both *regular* and *ongoing*.

At Site 1 and Site 3, weekly meetings involving staff and a leader or supervisor were noted to strengthen connections between team members. Participants from each site spoke of regular meetings as facilitating collaboration among staff by serving as a venue for, understanding others' experiences, sharing insights, and feeling "heard". Four frontline participants believed their practice improved as a result of regular communication practices.

Four Site 2 participants, from various roles and partners, pointed to the importance of communication between staff across organizations. While the project was said to improve coordination and information sharing, communication between partner staff members was usually informal and unplanned—negatively affecting the ability of staff to obtain timely answers to questions. This barrier was offset, to an extent, through use of a shared software application.

Also of note was the importance of pre-existing relationships. A Site 1 staff member felt that being a familiar presence to teachers and administrators facilitated her acceptance when coming into schools as part of the initiative. Professional familiarity between Site 2 leaders was also cited as a strength for securing commitment to service integration. In the absence of pre-existing relationships, leaders with Site 1 and Site 3 recommended that time be set aside early in a project for establishing relationships between partners and their staff.

> The support took a while to get into action and to grow because it was such a relationship-based support. So those relationships had to be developed first before we actually saw some movement occurring. Those take time. -Site 1

Clarity of Communication

Ineffective communication and lack of understanding around roles of staff members were identified as barriers to implementation at each site:

- At Site 1, the entry of new service providers into schools—while intended to ease the workload of stress on existing staff—was reportedly perceived more as an encroachment. Participants reported that school staff were slow to embrace the project compared with students and administrators and felt project staff "were coming in to do their job".

- Site 2 staff expressed different understandings around one another's roles in coordinating services for shared clients.

- Students and leadership at Site 3 reported that breakdowns in communication between students and partners sometimes resulted in misunderstandings and activities being either delayed or missed. Communication breakdowns were attributed to insufficient

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face-to-face meetings and different understandings of terminology between partners and students. Leaders reported that intervention was at times needed to resolve miscommunications.

Participants referred to explanation and definition of roles—both early in a project and as changes occur—as a strategy to improve understandings around roles and responsibilities. A further barrier found at Site 2 related to insufficient communication around partner services and internal processes. Managers and staff reported that, some partners provided in-services, others out-service, and one partner did not conduct any direct client services altogether. These differences affected staff availability for meetings and ability to contribute, creating unclarity among partners. For example:

> I think lots of people thought [our organization] has counsellors and therapists and doctors on staff that were going to meet with their clients. And we don't have any clinical staff … We needed to learn more about [the employment partner] and more about the addiction partners that were around the table, so it was a big challenge to begin with.
>
> -Site 2

Steering committee members indicated it took time for assumptions within the group to be identified and clarified. Once identified, however, the effects of such assumptions (and differences between partners) on project implementation could be better understood.

Communication related to Decision-Making

Communication between decision-makers was reported to be strong when leaders met regularly. Site 1 staff members met weekly as a group to discuss ongoing and upcoming activities as well as any issues encountered. These meetings, in addition to open lines of communications for staff to text or phone the project leader, were reported by both parties to facilitate implementation. Project leaders at Site 3 maintained a similar communication style for their larger initiative. Students assigned to various projects met regularly together, usually in the presence of a supervisor from the research centre. In addition, informal communication among leaders was reported to be strong. Leaders had offices next to one another and would often drop in for updates or to go for a walk to discuss emergent issues with a project.

At Site 2, decision-makers met on a schedule as a project Steering Committee, which several reported was a successful strategy for tracking progress and agreeing on changes. In addition to regular meetings, managers and senior leaders noted the importance of an external party (described as both a "consultant" and a "facilitator") hired as part of the project. This person guided project design by ensuring equal opportunity for contribution among Steering Committee members and keeping the group focused. During implementation, the consultant supported the Steering Committee by managing project evaluations and taking on responsibilities such as report writing, easing the workload of senior leadership in the process:

> I think having a consultant [for support] was beneficial because you are talking about Executive Directors at the table that have a lot on their plate. There was definite value in that because I am not going to do the writing. -Site 2

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Approaches to Collaborating

An open approach to collaboration facilitated success for both Sites 1 and 2. Site 2 Steering Committee members reported that willingness of others to disagree and to challenge traditional ideas supported the design and implementation of their service integration project. The structure of Site 1, by comparison, did not have a Steering Committee; rather, the leader and partners assembled an Advisory Committee, which did not have a decision-making function but served as a means through which project representatives and community members could stay informed of progress and request support as needed.

In addition to this Committee, the project leader sought out an existing inter-agency gathering of community service providers and asked to join. Members of this committee were interviewed and observed that the leader's involvement with their group improved the work of their organizations, by enabling them to speak knowledgably about Site 1 to their own clients, some of whom were referred to the initiative for support. One member of the inter-agency group described this experience as:

> From the get-go we saw their faces and knew what they were doing. We met their [staff]. We knew where they could be found. And not only that but they were at the table hearing the chatter of trends and what we were seeing that was happening, so the two-way street. -Site 1

Characteristic 2: Service Integration

> I think we move faster [...] What would have taken maybe 6 months after a graduation in an addiction facility to have that personal road to success in employment, I can have that person out of the addiction facility and within a week they are employed, and they are starting their road to recovery in all of these different areas. We are moving faster with these guys. -Site 2

> You might only use one database but a lot of us have two databases, so we have [project database] and we have our database. We do double because we have ours, which has our treatment plan and they have theirs for the coordinated service plan. And the language isn't the same. -Site 2

Service integration refers to a distinct form of collaboration whereby organizations link their respective services or products, with the aim of benefitting a population that may otherwise be served separately. The process of integrating services may include information sharing; concurrent or consecutive services; and increased capacity of organizations to act on behalf of one another.

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Materials from Site 1 referred to project activities as an "integrated continuum of mental health services," while Site 2 documents describe the initiative as "integrated service delivery". Site 1 involved integrating mental health services provided by the project team with existing services available in schools and those provided by the provincial government. Integration was also at the core of Site 2, where five social service agencies piloted a coordinated service delivery model. Several participants from both sites made references to the service integration aspects of their partnerships and project activities.

Frontline staff, managers, and leaders shared examples of integrating services with partners. These included: disclosing information about clients; revealing the internal operations of their organizations; and implementing systems to streamline service integration. Frontline staff more often spoke of frustrations stemming from integration, such as parties having different standards for tracking information or different routine practices. Managers and leaders also observed barriers to integrating services—these participants more often spoke of the potential of service integration to benefit clients and streamline practices of partner agencies.

Service integration for Sites 1 and 2 involved referral systems. Site 1 staff served as a first point of contact with children, providing direct support or directing them to other mental health services as appropriate. The process was more complex with Site 2, where staff at all partner agencies referred clients on behalf of one another. Participants reported two consequences of this model. First, staff were required to possess knowledge of services provided by each partner. Second, some partners had to reassess and adjust the criteria by which clients would be accepted (see Characteristic 6: Adaptation of Work).

The primary mechanism for encouraging service integration at Site 2 was a shared software application developed for the project. The software reduced the need for clients to repeat intake processes as different services were needed (e.g., employment, housing). Staff and managers also reported that the software helped track client progress as various staff members entered information into the application. While the software made the client experience more efficient, however, it also served to add to the workload of frontline staff (described in Characteristic 6).

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Trust and Transparency between Partners

The quality of relationships between partner agencies emerged as a notable sub-theme of service integration. An open and transparent communication style was associated with efficient service to sites' target populations. At Site 1, the initial barrier of non-acceptance by school service staff was overcome through a deliberate process of trust building and reinforcement—among project staff and school administration alike—that staff were there to help address the increased need for mental health support after the flood. According to a frontline staff member, transparency in communicating also supported larger, community-based efforts:

> This project opens doors for conversations between service providers, community organizations, leaders in the community, and schools to really have a collective conversation about how do we build the community and reconnect as a community and support everyone's mental health. I think that was a really unique thing about the project. -Site 1

At Site 2, managers and senior leadership related openness of communication to project success. Integrating services across the five partners entailed sharing information not just around clients but around the internal operations of each partner. Leaders discussed what their approach would entail, how their organizations would be affected, and drafted agreements with one another. Managers and leaders had few comments on the planning of integrated services but made several observations with respect to its implementation. Three participants indicated that making their organization's processes visible to partners had the unanticipated effect of spurring internal improvements. The leader of one partner spoke of transparency required by service integration as "good incentive" to change a process within their own agency that "doesn't make sense to a partner". Another referred to service integration as creating motivation to 'clean house':

> The collaboration has made us put a microscope to our own services. And make sure that we are as good as we possibly can be. It is like when guests come over to your house and you make sure you house is clean. That is essentially what [Site 2] is. You have a bunch of guests that are working in your house, so we have to clean it up. So, it's kind of cool what happened with these challenges. -Site 2

Characteristic 3: Partner Fit

> [The project leader]'s area of research is very distinct, and it has taken time to start recognizing and seeing the synergies between [this] area and others. It is really now starting to blossom in the past year or two. Some of the areas that were previously more technically driven are now finding ways to use technology for social innovation and for innovations that are of benefit to society as a whole. -Site 3

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Whereas characteristics described thus far reflect substantive aspects of collaboration and partnership, 'fit' refers to the less tangible qualities of these phenomena. Findings pertain to organizational cultures and operations, as well as approaches of individuals and partners. Participants across roles referred to fit between one or more partners and the larger social innovation. In general, greater compatibility was seen to facilitate the initiative, while lack of compatibility—whether perceived or due to real structural differences between partners—was seen as a barrier. Fit emerged as a barrier for frontline staff, as a facilitator for managers, and as both for leaders and partners. Stakeholders and leaders discussed, as a barrier, misalignment between the specialized needs of partner organizations and the overall needs of the project. Managers and stakeholders discussed the importance of positioning the social innovation as beneficial to potential partners.

Four managers and directors from Site 2 spoke of fit in relation to conventional partnerships. Participants noted how their partnership was distinct from others their agencies had been involved with, as the partners focus on different services and, as one leader phrased it, had "completely different money". This was framed as a strength of the initiative: two participants noted that alignment between agency goals and commitment to client support helped sustain the collaboration, and two felt this style of partnership created opportunity for innovation.

Partner-project fit was reported to be something that could be actively influenced by project staff and leaders. The importance of positioning a project as appealing and beneficial to potential partners was stressed by managers, leaders, and stakeholders. Such comments tended to be in reference to the long-term sustainability of a project. For example, the six-year Site 3 project marked the first time the research centre had applied its expertise on aging to the private sector. Two leaders reported that the knowledge gained would be applied to new and prospective private sector partnerships, by investigating how the college and partners can work together to meet the current and anticipated needs of each. This point was echoed by a partner, who cited a mutually beneficial relationship as reason for continuing to work with the research centre beyond the end of their grant.

With respect to barriers to partner fit, evidence of lack of fit was found at each site:

- Staff at Site 1 used an interpersonal approach that involved "listening first" to children, teachers, and school staff. Participants reported this approach was met with varying degrees of acceptance, as each school had its own distinct operating philosophy. For example, school disciplinary practices were said to at times conflict with the project's more deliberate approach (see Characteristic 6: Adaptation of Work).

- At Site 2, there were differences in how each agency approached client service delivery. With regard to fit, however, participants spoke more frequently of a structural difference between partners. Of the five agencies, four provided client case management services. The fifth acted more as a supplier/administrator, with clients accessing case management through external partners. This was reported to hinder the engagement of representatives from this partner, who were reportedly unsure at times how to contribute to planning and decision-making around case management and sometimes missed meetings.

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- Over the duration of the Site 3 grants, the needs of some partners developed beyond what the initiative could support. Specifically, the grant prioritized hiring college-level students to support the initiative's various technology projects. As projects matured, the expertise required by partners exceeded what could be expected of a student. This development was a barrier to ongoing fit between the partner and the initiative.
-

Characteristic 4: Buy-In

> [The project team] knew that they were not forever and especially near the end [of the project] … it wasn't so much of a cry to all of a sudden get people connected with existing supports. They had always been doing that and I think that was from coming and sitting at the table with the community partners that they were not working in a silo. They were working as a partner within the community and I think that was what I saw. -Site 1
>
> The conflict comes when frontline staff are here saying, 'That makes sense to me. I understand why we are doing this. You have to understand my direct supervisor in my organization—who I actually report to, who is responsible for my job and my paycheck—they are telling me something else'. -Site 2

This characteristic relates to the extent and quality of individual and organizational engagement with a social innovation. Three types of buy-in became evident through analysis: community buy-in, partner buy-in, and buy-in by frontline staff. Findings relate to willingness of parties to change, perceptions of project viability, and commitment to an initiative over its duration.

Stakeholders most often reported facilitators affecting buy-in, and frontline staff most often spoke of barriers to buy-in. There was considerable overlap in findings, as many participants across roles discussed community awareness and project visibility as facilitators. Leaders and stakeholders specifically emphasized relationship building activities as facilitating buy-in. Of barriers identified by leaders, the majority were factors outside the control of decision-makers (e.g., turnover, stress). Frontline staff most often referred to lack of communication with partners as a barrier and reflective of partner commitment. Frontline staff at Site 2 and Site 3 also spoke of variations in staff commitment to the project and staff compatibility with partners.

Community buy-in

Project leaders played a key role in facilitating community buy-in. Leaders of Sites 1 and 3 were often referred to by name by partners and community stakeholders as essential for engaging networks and building trust. Leaders who were widely known in their community or field of expertise could act as "ambassador" for their project and helped encourage further collaboration.

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Visibility was a noted facilitator to community buy-in, associated with uptake and acceptance of a project with external stakeholders. A majority of participants for Site 1 noted how the project team participated in community events (e.g., setting up booths), coordinated their own events open to the public, and attended meetings of community service providers. The result was increased awareness of Site 1 by potential clients (children and families) as well as social service agencies that could refer additional clients.

Site 2 partners also held public events. In addition, a leader and a manager at Site 2 both spoke of the importance of considering current and potential future audiences for encouraging sustainability and growth of their service integration. To this end, the Site 2 Steering Committee developed a marketing strategy with the aim of increasing awareness of the initiative.

At Site 3, visibility meant growing the profile of the initiative as well as the research centre in which it was housed. Rather than the community in general, the intended audience consisted of the business community as well as academic departments of their college. For businesses, a key outcome of Site 3 was the creation of a network of professionals focused on aging through a private sector lens. Within the college, faculty and leaders noted, as evidence of buy-in, standing guest lectures and integration of aging-specific content into course materials. These activities were reported to be effective in increasing awareness of the centre and facilitating collaboration.

Partner buy-in

As noted in Characteristic 1, communication among partners that was regular, ongoing, and positive supported collaboration among partners. In the absence of such communication practices, partner buy-in was found to weaken. Participants observed that communication with some partners became less frequent over the course of the partnership, with partners in some cases ceasing to respond entirely to emails and phone calls from project staff and leaders. This situation was most pronounced at Site 3, which featured thirteen partners working on distinct projects. When a partner became non-responsive, it was found to negatively effect not only the project on which they were working, but also the ability of the research centre to administer the grant:

> The partners sometimes stopped answering us. [We would tell them] 'We need your information to report back to the government,' and we would never hear from them. We provided them with thousands and thousands of dollars of free student work, but they wouldn't answer our emails [...] I think that all was part and parcel of your signing on to something that is real and that is very formal and does have governing roles and you can't just ghost us. You can't just disappear, right? So, I think it would have helped us if that was very, very clear right from the start. -Site 3

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Managers and leaders with Site 3 attributed partner non-response partly to the nature of demands on the time and attention of small business owners, and partly to the need for better relationship-building strategies at the outset of the partnership.
Another barrier to partner buy-in was observed for Site 2. Although all managers and leaders spoke of their commitment to the initiative through at least the end of its three-year pilot, the ongoing structure of the partnership may influence commitment. Funding to administer the project was directed to only one of the five partner agencies, with no funding allocated to service delivery for any partner. Two participants believed this structure meant that the pressure for the project to succeed was more acute for the administering partner agency:

> [Leader]'s stress is always going to be way more than our stress [...] that is just the nature of the beast. The money goes to [the partner responsible for administering the project]. The money doesn't come to the other agencies so the buy-in is always going to be slightly different for us. We have no additional money to deliver additional services and I think one of the main learnings from [Site 2] might be that perfect kind of project to show that the whole system is underfunded. -Site 2

Frontline buy-in

Frontline staff associated level of commitment to a social innovation with their belief in its vision or goal. This was observed at Site 1, where frontline staff adhered closely to the approach advocated by the project leader. In addition, student frontline staff from Site 3 reported that they developed an appreciation of aging and related topics during the project, even in cases where aging was not a focus of their studies. Participants at both sites also reported that compatibility with a partner (schools for Site 1, businesses for Site 3) improved the frontline experience.

Separation of staff members from the day-to-day operations of an initiative was associated with lower commitment. Participants noted this for Sites 1 and 2, where existing staff at schools and service agency partners experienced the initiative as an add-on to their regular work. Stress and workload were mentioned as reasons why these staff members may be slower or less willing to fully embrace the social innovation.
At Site 2, multiple participants emphasized the importance of frontline staff understanding the initiative as a priority, and that this message must filter down from agency leaders to service providers. One frontline staff member, however, reported receiving inconsistent messages from a direct supervisor and another Site 2 leader, in which case the staff member chose to follow the instructions of the direct supervisor. Another frontline staff member referred to the effect of different partner approaches to client service on willingness to enroll clients in the initiative:

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> The way I pitch the program is different now. I am very honest with clients and say I do have a few who have really benefited from [partner] and have really positive things to say but I typically will say to the clients that, some people, [partner] is a great fit for them and other people it is just not the right fit and so I encourage them to give it a try and see for themselves … that way, clients don't go into it with expectations that it is necessarily going to be the same as what we offer at [my organization]. -Site 2

Characteristic 5: Expectation Setting

> When you are looking at social innovation, the whole idea behind it is, 'you can do it'. Not, 'no, this won't work'. And we didn't spend a lot of time talking about the no's. -Site 2

> There were some bumps along the way in establishing boundaries and roles and you know not stepping on each other's feet with regards to the work that each one of our team members was doing and because the role of [Site 1] wasn't really clearly defined it did take some ups and downs to develop that trust. -Site 1

This characteristic focuses on the establishment and maintenance of common understandings at the team, partnership, stakeholder, and community levels. Examples of common understandings may include problem identification, project goals, resources, roles, and responsibilities. Two threads of findings—qualities and establishment of shared understandings—were observed.

Shared understandings were deemed by participants to be most important early in an initiative. Lack of shared understandings was associated with faulty assumptions and breakdowns in communication, posing barriers to implementation. In particular, participants noted the need for common understandings around the roles and responsibilities of various actors, as well as what partners should expect from their involvement in the initiative. Participants across roles identified benefits of shared understandings of roles and responsibilities, as well as consequences of miscommunication or misunderstandings to the progress of their initiatives. Similarly, participants across groups spoke of the importance of communication and connection (usually face-to-face, sometimes phone) for establishing mutual understandings.

Qualities of a Shared Understanding

Participants named several topics as areas for establishing common understandings, usually during project planning. These included: project vision, the nature of the problem to be addressed, key concepts relevant to the problem, partner roles, staff roles, and qualities of the initiative that made it innovative. In general, the presence of shared understandings among staff and partners related to these topics facilitated success, and absence of shared understandings created barriers to success.

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Participants at all sites identified ways in which shared understandings facilitated progress.

- At Site 1, partners, staff, community stakeholders, and the project leader reported that a shared sense of purpose supported acceptance of the project at the schools and within the community. Several participants noted that a state of "crisis" or "urgency" after the flood contributed to this common purpose.
- Shared passion for client support was mentioned by various Site 2 participants. A frontline staff member reported that seeing the commitment to helping shared clients among other partner staff was motivating. Three Steering Committee members also spoke of the joint commitment among leaders to improve the client experience as a reason for their organizations' involvement in the initiative. Leaders reported that this commitment involved acknowledgement that the work of integrating services would be difficult.
- Participants from the Site 3 research centre reported there was a shared understanding with respect to expectations and commitment. As the initiative could involve ten or more active projects at any one time, leaders emphasized prompt communication between team members. Students reported that leaders were accessible as questions or issues arose.

Establishing a Shared Understanding

A facilitating factor at all sites was the presence of individuals serving as catalysts for creating shared understandings between partners. Participants reported that such an individual—usually a project leader or independent facilitator—was key to establishing agreement during the planning phase of the initiative.

- In the weeks after the flood that led to funding for Site 1, a community leader brought together various community stakeholders, such as social service providers, school representatives, and town council. The group discussed what members were seeing, what they felt was needed to support children in the community, and potential responses.
- Site 2 originated as the idea of service agency leader, who first brought the partners together around a shared vision of improved services for people facing socioeconomic challenges. After the initiative was funded, an external facilitator guided the Steering Committee through a process to establish agreement on core issues and strategies.
- The director for Site 3 had a vision that technology could be used to improve the health, wellbeing, and social engagement of older and elderly adults. The leader recruited thirteen partners to conduct separate projects with goals in service of this vision.

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Characteristic 6: Adaptation of Work

> I definitely think it is a learning process. I think there were assumptions made when we started that this was going to be easier than what it was. I don't think we had a delusion that it was going to be easy, but I think we thought it was going to be easier than it was. We thought, 'boom, here is the integration, now we all do our own regular work. And [Site 2] will not interfere with our regular work'. And it does [laughing]. -Site 2

This characteristic encompasses both micro and macro elements of staff work in the context of a social innovation project, including changes to activities, schedules, attitudes, and approaches. Adaptation may also refer to the questioning of assumptions by project team members. Findings relate to acceptance of change brought about by social innovation as well as the effect of changes on staff workload.

Recognition of the need to change individual or organizational behaviour was observed for all participant groups. Adaptation of work often related to individual willingness to change or the flexibility of an organization, or its funding, to allow change. Stakeholders spoke most frequently of project flexibility. Leaders more often referred to willingness of partners and their leaders to change. Staff and managers discussed impacts of changes to routine activities on workload.

Acceptance of Change

The extent to which changes were accepted by frontline staff and partners varied. Across sites, managers and senior leadership associated willingness to change one's practices, as an individual and as an organization, was facilitated the success of their initiatives. Such change was often motivated by a belief that doing so would better position the project for success. At the same time, participants at all sites referred to partners that were either reluctant or resistant to change. When a partner initially or completely resisted change, it was a source of frustration for frontline staff and leaders. For example, a participant from Site 1 observed:

> We were trying so hard and sometimes it felt like we would have these conversations with key players in the schools and then they would go back to their original way of dealing with the students. An example would be we worked with a kid and knew he had [problems at home] … We do all this work with him and then they [school administration] go and suspend him. At times you just want to throw up your hands. Yeah, frustrating. -Site 1

A facilitating factor for change, reported by participants across roles and sites, was flexibility in project design. At Site 1, flexibility took the form of frontline staff having freedom to adjust their approach to interacting with students, teacher, and school staff if a current strategy was not working. Through its Steering Committee and mid-project evaluations, Site 2 also had flexibility to make changes during the course of implementation. Site 3, with its objective to support small-and-medium sized enterprises, had built-in ability to adjust activities according to the needs of partners—provided the project could stay within budget and continue promoting wellbeing among older adults.

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Effect on Workload

Changes brought about by the social innovations affected staff workload in three ways. First, an initiative may ease the workloads of existing staff. Site 1 aimed to support the staff of local schools. While this aim was reportedly met with initial skepticism (noted in Characteristic 1: Collaboration), ultimately the initiative was accepted within the schools, according to both partners and staff.

Second, an initiative may add to workloads of existing staff, as was the case for Site 2. The shared software that supports service integration—while making the intake process simpler for clients and information sharing easier for partner agencies—created additional responsibilities for staff in practice. The software did not replace existing documentation requirements of staff (some of which had been created around the demands of funders). Instead, it added work:

> Some things that we have to think about and do right away [...] This is just another thing for me to do. It makes sense perhaps to some people, but to me it is like, 'Oh no, another thing!'
>
> -Site 2

A third way that social innovation may affect workload was speculated by leaders at Site 2. Several participants noted that, as the initiative continued and possibly grew, it may reveal redundancies in positions between partner agencies. As a result, future commitment to the initiative may entail restructuring for partners.

Characteristic 7: Funding

> I knew [the project] wasn't set up indefinitely. But I also knew that it was impossible to put a timeline as to how long this thing is needed. -Site 1

> If it were easy to have a faculty member get a course release or get involved in a project I think we would have had many more people. But the problem is ... you would have to plan it out 2 or 3 months in advance and when you are working with industry partners, their needs change so quickly that it was sometimes very difficult. -Site 3

Financial and human resources are essential to the design, implementation, and sustainability of social innovation. This characteristic includes findings pertaining to sources and management of project resources. Three threads were identified from analysis: planning for funding, funding uncertainty, and restrictions on the use of funds.
By far, leaders spoke most frequently about funding—both in positive and negative terms. Many comments from this group focused on conditions attached to funds as enabling (e.g., allowing for dedicated space and staff) or restrictive (e.g., adherence to timelines, stipulations around hiring). Stakeholders—specifically for Site 1—were concerned with the stability or sustainability of funding as well as the consequences of funding being withdrawn.

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Planning for Funding

Participants identified two strategies believed to facilitate the acquisition of funds. First, managers and leaders with Sites 2 and 3 agreed that positioning their projects to funders as a response to ongoing trends increased their likelihood of success. Participants at both sites believed that funders of social services were increasingly supporting initiatives that brought distinct organizations together to collaborate in response to a shared problem. At Site 2, participants observed that collaboration between social service agencies would be increasingly emphasized by funders. At Site 3, leaders reported that governments were increasingly funding partnerships between post-secondary institutions and the private sector. In addition, five Site 3 participants noted the widely-acknowledged demographic trend of Canada's aging population, which was thought to be a driver of funding opportunities.

Second, a number of participants indicated that effective use of resources was a means not just to maximize impact but appeal to potential funders. Service integration for Site 2, for example, was cited as having potential to result in cost savings (e.g., by removing duplication) and provide enhanced service to clients without need for additional funding.

Funding Uncertainty

A significant barrier for Site 1, mentioned by a majority of participants, was instability of project funding. Beginning shortly after a natural disaster, funding was discussed for two years, yet only promised for one year. After the first school year ended, funding had yet to be secured for the planned second year. The resulting uncertainty led to confusion within the community as well as stress among frontline staff, two of whom left the project for secure employment elsewhere by the time funding had been committed for another school year.

In addition, three community stakeholders with Site 1 indicated that a preoccupation with securing funds had a negative impact on the initiative. Two of these participants mentioned that this uncertainty took the leader's time and focus away from project implementation. All of the partners and community stakeholders interviewed believed that the initiative was still needed at the time it ended, with some expressing that the subsequent withdrawal of mental health services created a "void"—even though pre-existing mental health staff remained at the schools and some teachings of project staff had been incorporated into their work.

> I think they did their best in terms of doing a plan to transition out of the schools. It's just that when you have that level of resourcing you are always going to feel it when it's gone, right? I don't know if there is anything we could have done about that … Even with our best planning on our part and all of their efforts at transitioning out, it still just leaves a void because it is just such a high level of service that you are getting. -Site 1

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Funding Conditions

Conditions attached to funds were found to have an enabling or constraining effect, depending on the social innovation. The ability of Site 2 to finance an external facilitator was enabled by both core funding for the initiative and subsequent funds obtained during implementation. This position was widely reported to facilitate the planning and evaluation processes. As part of funding for Site 1, the initiative was able to secure space in one of the schools. Stakeholders and other participants referred to this "hub" as offering certainty to those seeking help as well as to other service providers in the community, who could refer families to a specific location. At the same time, one partner believed that locating the hub in one of the seven partner schools resulted in a "different level of support" being available to those students relative to others.

Restrictions on the use of funds were widely reported as a barrier for Site 3, which received a research grant from the federal government. The effects of funding restrictions were experienced most notably in the hiring of students and faculty to contribute to some of the initiative's various projects, including:

- Only being able to hire college-level students to support the initiative, meaning that work with partners had to correspond to skill levels commensurate with college programming (as opposed programming of other post-secondary institutions).

- Student employment needing to finish at the time of graduation. Often, longer-term projects with partners were unfinished when students graduated, leading to a lag before new students could be hired and onboarded.

- The grant did not provide funds for hiring faculty researchers. Though some funding was available to offset course release, participants reported this was not enough to account for the energy involved in staffing released courses. As was the case with students, the initiative also encountered challenges in aligning faculty availability with partner needs.

Separate from conditions attached to funds, the larger funding environment was found to present a barrier to social innovation. Specifically, several Site 1 participants—staff, partners, the project leader, and community members alike—believed that there was a pre-existing need for child mental health services in their community prior to the flood that led to funding. Many of these participants felt that such a crisis was needed for funding to materialize and expressed concern over what may happen after the initiative ended.

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Characteristic 8: Leadership

> [The project] just created a sense of whatever you needed for your mental health it could be served here. And it was really an open door, casual atmosphere that reduced that stigma. It didn't have that cold clinical medical feel to it. [...] That came from [the leader's] view and her vision for [the project] and it filtered down. I think her hiring was purposeful for that vision. -Site 1

This characteristic refers to qualities and actions of organizational and project leaders; decision-making processes; and how leadership translates to the behaviours, perceptions, and attitudes of team members. Findings from the case studies relate to leader relationship building skills, personal qualities of leaders, and capacity building through social innovation. Participants across roles referred to leaders as key to supporting uptake of the social innovation through communications with staff, partners, and community members. Leader and frontline staff participants most frequently focused on the ability of project leaders to develop staff capacity. Participants also referred to consistency of communication between leaders within an organization (e.g., directors and direct supervisors) and across partners (e.g., partner directors or representatives). Managers and frontline staff spoke of relationship-building by senior leadership as a facilitator for their initiative. Frontline participants referred to leader/staff relationships as both a facilitator and as a barrier. Managers highlighted two facilitating roles of leaders: acting as a project's ambassador and representing the interests of frontline staff.

Two barriers were observed related to leadership: inconsistencies in how an initiative is communicated between leaders, supervisors, and frontline staff (described in Characteristic 4: Buy-in); and progress being slowed by not having needed decision-makers present (addressed in Characteristic 1: Collaboration).

Leaders as Relationship Builders

The ability of leaders to build relationships and trust among stakeholders was cited as a facilitator at all sites. This was most evident at Sites 1 and 3, which consisted of smaller core teams, whereas Site 2 consisted of five equal partners with large staff complements. Participants stressed that the strength of their relationships with senior leadership enhanced their ability to be effective in their own roles. Trust allowed staff to act independently while knowing that issues could be brought forward and addressed as they arose.
Participants reported that leader relationship building skills also facilitated connections within the community, including new partnerships. The ability of leaders to appeal to external stakeholders was enhanced by being a familiar presence in their communities, along with recognition for expertise in their respective fields.

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Personal Qualities of Leaders

Personal qualities of effective leaders were reported by (non-leader) participants. In many instances, qualities were cited in response to questions around what was most influential to an initiative's success. Qualities mentioned by multiple participants include demonstrated passion, dedication, and enthusiasm for the subject matter of the social innovation. Participants at each site mentioned, in some form, a leader's willingness to commit time outside of regular working hours as beneficial to the initiative.

Capacity Building through Social Innovation

Another important aspect of leadership, referred to by project staff and stakeholders for Sites 1 and 3, was the ability of leaders to model positive qualities through their behaviour. An example of this modeling was given by a participant from Site 3:

> [Project lead] is really good at the little things. The thank-you notes. The, 'oh I saw this link and I thought of you'. She is good at those little outreaches to people, which may seem like they are nothing and yet often times have resulted in a, 'oh yeah. I was meaning to talk to you,' or 'I am glad you got in touch'. So, she is really good at those pieces, which I certainly learned a lot from working with her about the importance of some of those elements to relationship building and to successful project management.
>
> -Site 3

Capacity building was often driven by leaders, if not by the design of the initiatives themselves. Each social innovation involved some form of capacity building:

- Site 1 entailed capacity building components for both project and school staff. At the outset, training was provided to frontline staff around the leader's mental health philosophy. Over the 2-plus year duration of the initiative, capacity development for school staff became an increasing priority. Partners felt this training was successful, evidenced by the fact that schools had actively incorporated strategies from the initiative after it had ended.

- A change implemented by the Site 2 Steering Committee after their initiative's launch was to offer peer mentorship to clients. This feature built organizational capacity for partners that had not previously offered this service. The project also encouraged capacity building of agency staff by requiring them to speak knowledgably about partner services.

- In addition to development of research centre staff, all students hired for the Site 3 initiative referred to their involvement as a valued learning experience. Students reported developing skills in project management, leadership, and effective communication—on top of aging-specific knowledge and workplace experience relevant to their education. Faculty members also cited the practical experience provided by Site 3 as an asset for students and, by extension, the college.

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Characteristic 9: External Realities

> I am not 100% sure if I can tell you what 'successful' is, or if it is just a beast that cannot be changed, because I don't even think we have ever tried before. This is kind of our first roll at the game. And I imagine we might find out some—not all—of our answers. I would hate to say it that there is no such thing as utopia. There should be. But maybe, using this [project's] approach, maybe it doesn't change the beast enough. I don't know. -Site2

This characteristic comprises factors and considerations beyond the direct influence of the project team. These may be experienced at the level of partner organizations, relevant sector(s), the larger community or society, or in relation to other areas of the project's institution.

External realities were discussed mostly as barriers to social innovation. An exception was alignment between initiatives and societal trends (described in Characteristic 7: Funding), which was spoken of as a facilitator to social innovation by managers and leaders. Frontline staff, partners, and stakeholders from Site 1 expressed concern that a crisis was needed in order for a pre-existing need to receive attention (also discussed in relation to Characteristic 7).

Frontline staff and managers most often pointed to differences in the structures and operating philosophies of project partners as a barrier to implementing a social innovation. With Site 2, organization- and sector-specific barriers at times affected project effectiveness. Individual agencies lost funding, reorganized, or dealt with other competing priorities during the course of the initiative. A mitigating strategy was open communication between agency leaders at the level of the initiative's Steering Committee:

> For me collaboration is about the relationships you have with people. I think that has been really hard going. As I say, I think we are changing the tires on a moving vehicle here, right? While we have been doing this partnership, a number of agencies have lost funding and our funding has completely changed in some ways. So, we have to continue to communicate to each other kind of what it is our agency is doing. -Site 2

A further complication related to the local housing market. A persistent, sector-wide shortage of affordable housing meant that the housing partner had a very limited supply of units available to Site 2 clients. Though this was reported to be a source of frustration among leaders, participants understood that the partner was doing what it could, but that the system itself lacked capacity.

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Sector-specific challenges also affected Site 3. As the grant required partnership with small-and-medium sized enterprises, several partner organizations were comprised of only a handful of employees. Partners and research centre staff reported that partner needs and priorities could change quickly—attributed to the nature of small business, where owners often had many responsibilities to look after at a given time. Matching this fast-changing reality to the more regimented, scheduled college academic year was an ongoing challenge through the life of the initiative. This barrier was put succinctly by one college employee, who noted that, "School timelines do not align with business timelines".

A final, more nebulous barrier was reported by participants at Sites 1 and 2: the perception that stigma affected project effectiveness. Frontline staff and community stakeholders with Site 1 indicated there was a stigma in their town associated with seeking mental health services, with some believing this may have contributed both the inadequacy of existing community resources and the slow acceptance of the Site 1 initiative in its first months. For Site 2, the implementation of its peer navigation component was hampered by a shortage of volunteers. This barrier was framed as a recruitment challenge, for which solutions needed to be found to first identify people who successfully dealt with employment, housing, substance abuse, or mental health issues, and to encourage these people to volunteer without feeling stigmatized.

Characteristic 10: Evaluation

> Initially there was a lack of understanding of what services everybody provided, and I think perhaps some people had their own opinion, which lead to a breakdown in communication. And I think it was after our first review, 6 months into the program, and there was an opportunity for the clients we were serving and for us the implementation team and service providers - whoever was involved - to do an anonymous survey [...] we went through it all together and some people were frustrated and some people didn't have an opinion but we put it all out on the table and I think that really helped. -Site2

Social innovations often require documentation and evidence to inform project development and sustainability. This characteristic is intended to reflect the systems, processes, and practices by which progress is tracked, measured, and evaluated.
Documentation processes were slightly different across sites, with one site having a formal evaluation and the others entailing only reports to funders. These processes (excluding financial reports) are described below:

- Site 1: A total of five reports were submitted to the provincial government during the project's two-and-a-half-year duration, loosely corresponding to the mid- and end-points of each school year[13]. A report template was provided by the Province, requesting lists of outcomes, measures, and quantification of activities held and children served.

[13] The project began midway through a school year.

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- Site 2: This was the only social innovation to have an evaluation process in the project budget, controlled by the Steering Committee. The three-year pilot entailed two formative program evaluations—after which results were reviewed and changes considered—plus a planned summative evaluation at the end of the pilot[14]. The mid-term evaluations included analysis of data collected through the initiative's shared software application (e.g., numbers of clients, wait times, service data) supplemented by surveys and focus groups involving clients and staff. The evaluations were conducted by an external consultant.

- Site 3: Three reports were submitted to the federal government: two progress reports in the first three years of the initiative and a final report upon the initiative's conclusion. Report templates requested updates on status, deliverables, changes, impacts, and (in the final report) results for the various funded projects, leaving room for comments.

Feedback from site leaders regarding documentation and evaluation processes was mixed. While Site 2 participants spoke positively of the external facilitator/evaluator, few commented directly on the evaluation process because the initiative was ongoing. Leaders at Sites 1 and 3 indicated that their relationships with funders were positive. Generally, unless reports were due, it was up to the sites to contact the funder; in such cases, funder staff were said to be helpful. Regarding reporting and evaluation, however, leaders at both sites noted that no communication was received after submission of reports beyond acknowledgment of receipt. Participants expressed some disappointment with this absence of feedback.

[14] The final project evaluation was unfinished at time of writing.

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Summary

Though some differences between sites can be attributed to structural variations (e.g., sources of funding, applicable sectors), findings are insightful for understanding the roles of a range of factors and circumstances in affecting the development of these initiatives. We chose two lenses through which to examine these perspectives of those involved in these social innovations. First, we looked at differences across sites, wondering whether the nature, size, and complexity of the initiative might be connected to our findings. Second, we looked at differences according to participants' location in the organizational hierarchy.

It was interesting to note that at all three sites, despite major differences in size, structure, and complexity, similar facilitators (such as leader relationship building skills, shared sense of purpose among partners, and face-to-face communication) and barriers (such as misunderstandings of expectations and resistance to change) were observed. Themes that emerged strongly for only one site include the importance of engaging existing networks (Site 1), the support of an external project facilitator (Site 2), and barriers associated with funding conditions (Site 3).

When looking at the barriers and facilitators from the perspective of different participant roles, we saw that frontline staff, managers, senior leadership, partners, and stakeholders largely referred to the same characteristics in their reflections on—and assessments of—the initiatives. We did, however, note key differences in perspective. For example, frontline staff spoke most often about barriers related to implementation activities (including workload and routine interactions with partners), while leaders most frequently discussed barriers and facilitators of project design and funding, as well as barriers related to factors beyond their project's control.

In consideration of all findings from the three case studies, below are some summary observations relating to facilitators and barriers of social innovation.

- The need to adapt to differences in partner approaches or procedures was consistent across all sites. This included partner reluctance to change routine activities as well as adaptation strategies for individuals and organizations. Face-to-face meetings were said to be most important for establishing a mutual understanding of expectations, timelines, and the roles and responsibilities of individuals and partners.

- Site 2 was the only project to have an external facilitator to guide activities. Participant comments universally indicated that this position facilitated the design, planning, and evaluation of the initiative. The stakeholder Advisory Committee for Site 1 can be seen as serving a similar purpose (e.g., keeping partner leadership on the same page and focused on project objectives). Site 3 had no such mechanism for keeping partners connected, and experienced attrition in both an active (partner goes out of business) and passive (partner becomes non-responsive) sense.

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- Stability of funding was most frequently expressed as a barrier in relation to Site 1. Participants across roles spoke of consequences of funding uncertainty. Multiple participants noted that energy spent securing funds risked hampering project effectiveness and expressed concern over a void in services once funding ran out. Participants for Site 2, by comparison, where more concerned with the sustainability of their initiative's operating model than sustainability of funding to support it (though the latter was also evident). Site 3 participants more often discussed sustainability of individual partnerships as a priority, given that funding for their initiative had a known end date.

- Service integration—also referred to by participants as a continuum of service—was found to be a successful strategy both for securing funding and reducing barriers for target populations. Regular meetings involving decision-makers, frontline staff, and other relevant stakeholders were key to building commitment among partners and designing integrated service. Technology (e.g., shared software) offers promise in terms of facilitating information sharing among partners; however, the practice of service integration can reveal inefficiencies in form of duplication of staff work and lack of common standards.

Case study findings highlighted necessary characteristics of social innovation, concurring with findings from the literature and other data collection for the first phase of this study. Most participants referred to these characteristics throughout the interviews. However, these in-depth interviews revealed that the actualization or implementation of these characteristics required much deliberate thought and planning, often themselves meeting with barriers to their implementation—or, more positively, with factors that promoted their implementation.

Thus, we see that the key characteristics (Collaboration, Service Integration, Partner Fit, Buy-in, Expectation Setting, Adaptation of Work, Leadership, External Realities, and Evaluation) were all important aspects of the social innovation initiatives studied. However, there were significant differences in the perceptions of participants as to factors that impeded or supported these characteristics.

All in all, it is fairly well accepted that certain features or characteristics of a social innovation initiative are key to its success. Still, we conclude that attention is warranted on the barriers to avoid/mitigate, and the facilitators to leverage, in order to ensure these characteristics are realized as integral parts of successful social innovation initiatives.

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Observations Across Research Strategies

Our experience using a multi-method approach to this research proved to be highly enlightening. We were able to examine whether and to what extent these research methods yielded similar findings, where they enriched and enhanced the depth of findings, and even whether the findings were conflicting or inconsistent.

Findings from the various data collection methods—literature review, survey, nominal group technique (NGT) sessions, and case studies—came to build upon one another to provide a more comprehensive understanding. A background review of the social innovation literature from North America, Europe, and Australia led to the decision to focus the first research phase on characteristics, facilitators of, and barriers to social innovation. Further to this, observations from the literature informed the factors that respondents were asked to rate in the stakeholder survey. Finally, findings from the literature, survey, and NGTs highlighted areas and topics to explore in greater depth for the case studies.

The developmental approach espoused by the research team has allowed the need for and shape of these outputs to come into focus through cycles of data collection and analysis; thus, the imperative to hold findings side-by-side waned as the research approached its conclusion.

The purpose of this final section is meant to be more reflective than summative. The antecedent sections catalogue and categorize findings from academia and practitioners of social innovation. Here, these learnings and compared and contrasted, in hope that clusters of key findings may be of use to social innovation scholars and readers alike—and that they may serve as signals of the sorts of topics and issues that Canadian social innovators may wish to account for in their work.

This section sorts observations into barriers to and facilitators of social innovation, as the analysis of these domains was consistent throughout the research process. The descriptions that follow, however, must be viewed in context of their respective research strategies. The rationale, population, data type, and volume of findings differ for each research method.

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Table 15 outlines key similarities and differences among the methods of this study.

Table 15. Comparison of research methods.

	Literature Review	Survey	Nominal Groups	Case Studies
Rationale	An initial scan of the field	Perceptions of Canadian stakeholders (questions based on literature review)	Perceptions of Canadian stakeholders	Experiences of persons involved in real-world social innovation initiatives (questions based on previous three methods)
Scope	Global	Canada	Southern Alberta	Alberta, Ontario
Population	Scholars and policy-makers	Planners, managers, leaders, evaluators, administrators, frontline staff	Planners, managers, leaders, administrators, frontline staff	Planners, managers, leaders, administrators, stakeholders, frontline staff
Sample	112 sources	104 responses	3 sessions (20 participants)	3 social innovation initiatives 40 interview participants 55 project documents
Research Objectives	Characteristics, barriers, and facilitators of social innovation	Characteristics, barriers, and facilitators of social innovation	Characteristics, barriers, and facilitators of social innovation	Barriers and facilitators of social innovation
Data type	Text of academic publications, white papers, etc.	Descriptive statistics; some written comments	Ranking voting of participant-generated idea clusters	Interview transcripts; some document text

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How Findings were Compared Across Research Strategies

Due to differences in research strategies, slightly different themes emerged across methods. This necessitated development of categories or labels that could be applied across sources. The resulting categories were:

- Planning
- Shared Understandings
- Collaboration
- Networks & Community Engagement
- Leadership
- Organizational Culture
- Staffing & Expertise
- Funding
- External Factors
- Knowledge Mobilization & Impact

To arrive at these categories, key findings from each data source were reviewed, compared, and sorted. We took *key finding* to describe patterns in observations from the literature, survey, NGTs, and case studies. Key findings across methods that related to a common idea or concept were gathered into post-hoc categories. Some findings were repeated across multiple categories.

Next, key findings were analyzed by category (i.e., all findings related to planning) to identify areas of agreement and disagreement. This process of triangulation resulted in identification of numerous sets of findings that could be observed across multiple data sources. The most salient of these findings are reported below.

Some findings were unique to one research method—this was particularly true for the case studies, which yielded by far the greatest volume of data compared to other methods. The findings described below were observed in some form across a minimum of three of the four methods. Where applicable, differences in findings across data sources are also described. Few instances were noted where results from one method directly contradict those from another. This was not surprising, as the threshold for disagreement was thematic rather than at the level of findings from individual participants. Key findings are summarized below as facilitators of and barriers to social innovation.

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Facilitators of Social Innovation

Across the literature, survey, nominal group technique sessions, and case studies, three common threads in findings emerged. These, discussed below, are the importance of an open approach to social innovation, a shared understanding of project vision, and requisite conditions for effective collaboration. Inconsistencies in findings are also described.

Planning → Importance of an Open Approach to Social Innovation

Of key findings across research methods related to planning a social innovation initiative, many were qualities that facilitated an individual's or organization's approach. Similarities were observed in all four research strategies, relate to what we are calling an Open Approach to social innovation.

In a presentation to the International Research Network on Social Enterprise, Chalmers (2011) proposed that researchers and practitioners adopt an approach he termed "open social innovation". Open social innovation, he posits, is, "characterized by a porous organisational structure, committed investment in developing absorptive capacity, the involvement of multiple stakeholders—including the user—and a systematic focus on reducing the risk involved with innovation through broad knowledge sourcing activities" (p. 13). Though not all of these qualities refer to planning, much of what Chalmers describes was also reported by other authors, survey respondents, and focus group and case study interview participants. We found from the literature that a key facilitator of social innovation related to the purposeful early identification of, and collaboration with, a variety of stakeholders. Effective early collaboration strategies included everything from seeking and listening to stakeholder input through to co-creation and equal decision-making arrangements.

In our social innovation survey, the importance of *Planned and purposeful communication between stakeholders* was exceeded by only two other factors influencing the success of a social innovation (M = 4.35 out of 5; third highest among 28 facilitators based on the literature).

Three sets of ideas, which were ranked as top-five facilitators by two NGT focus groups, related to the importance of a supportive environment. Supportive environments entailed elements such as support from leadership, support for unique ideas and/or approaches, and flexibility.

Finally, openness and flexibility were observed as facilitators to social innovation in a number of interviews with case study leaders, managers, and stakeholders. In particular participants from two sites reported that flexibility during project design, allowing for changes to be made during implementation, was an important quality and contributed to success in the long term.

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Shared Understandings → Shared Vision among Partners and Team Members

The crucial importance of collaborators being on the same page is well-documented, and dozens of examples were reported throughout this study for the importance of a number of shared understandings. In general, it can be comfortably asserted that presence of shared understandings between parties facilitates social innovation, while their absence poses a barrier. Some specific understandings, however, stood out in most of all our research methods.

A shared vision for the project was found to be a key facilitator in the literature (e.g., Alberta Social Innovation Connect, 2016; Anderson, Curtis & Wittig, 2014; Nichols, Phipps, Gaetz, & Fisher, 2014). *A clear, shared vision among partners* was rated as the second most important success factor for social innovation (*M* = 4.46). Similarly, shared project vision was the third ranked facilitator by one NGT session, and fifth by another. The importance of agreeing on project vision was reported also by case study participants, particularly frontline staff and leaders.

Collaboration → Conditions that Foster Collaboration

Not entirely unrelated to the above facilitators, flexibility and shared understandings were reported to be fostered by the deliberate creation of a forum or process, involving diverse stakeholders, to plan and implement social innovation initiatives. Examples of fora for collaboration from the literature (typically in reference to real world social innovations that used them) included professionally guided group discussions, bridge-building workshops, and social innovation labs and incubators. In addition, strategies for successful collaboration such as the Collective Impact Framework (first described by Kania & Kramer, 2011) were cited as facilitators to social innovation.

As research shifted to perceptions of Canadian social innovation stakeholders, some comparable ideas emerged. When asked to rate the importance of a number of potential facilitating factors of social innovation, the option *Staff/expertise for Bringing people together to connect ideas* was rated seventh, placing it among the top 25% (*M* = 4.28). Ideas related to creating a supportive environment for social innovation were proposed by several NGT participants, including time and space for parties to explore ideas.
Of the case study sites, two involved carefully planned processes for ensuring collaboration and input from various project stakeholders—both of which were cited repeatedly as facilitators or project success. One site hired a neutral third party to facilitate a lengthy design phase and ongoing project monitoring, involving senior leadership from the five partner agencies. Another site entailed regular meetings among partner leadership with input from other community agencies that did not have a formal project role but nonetheless had a stake in the project's success.

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Differences in Findings related to Facilitators

Though few major differences were observed in findings across methods, two notable areas of incongruence are notable and warrant further exploration by social innovation researchers. First, there was some inconsistency in the data with respect to importance of similarities between organizations involved in social innovation partnerships. Participants from focus groups and case studies reported that similar organizational traits and values facilitated collaboration; however, several participants from one case study site considered it a strength that their initiative brought together agencies that had not previously partnered and that delivered different services. Two participants described this arrangement as 'disruptive', similar to the concept of disruptive innovation described by Christensen, Baumann, Ruggles, & Sadtler (2006), which involves unconventional partnerships and tactics intended to spur large-scale social change. Further study of the extent of similarities and differences between partners, and how this relates to project purpose and circumstances, could yield insight on successful strategies for a variety of social innovation initiatives.

A second inconsistency in the data was the amount of importance participants placed on community connections. Our survey found that *Connection(s) between the innovation and other initiatives* received the second lowest rating of importance among 28 potential facilitators (M = 3.65). This would seem out of alignment with the emphasis placed on linkages between innovations by some authors (such as Mumford & Moertl, 2003 and Young, 2011). It should be noted, however, that social capital and networking were, in general, reported to facilitate social innovation across methods.

Barriers to Social Innovation

Among barriers to social innovation, four key findings stuck out across data sources: lack of agreement on problems, goals, and expectations; need for specific skills to carry out the initiative; basic funding for social innovation; and risk aversion and resistance to change.

Organizational Culture → Risk Aversion and Resistance to Change

A prominent theme among each of four research methods relates to either risk aversion and/or resistance to change among partners in a social innovation initiative—this proved to be the clearest barrier for all samples and participants.
The literature on social innovation extensively documents problems related to risk aversion (e.g., Alberta Social Innovation Connect, 2016; Grimm, Fox, Bains & Albertson, 2013; Mendes et al, 2012; Schmitt, 2014), excessive cautiousness (e.g., Bureau of European Policy Advisors, 2010), comfort in perpetuating the status quo (Chalmers, 2011; Christensen et al, 2006), and bureaucratic inertia (Benneworth, Amanatidou, Edwards-Schachter, & Gulbrandsen, 2014; Caughron, Shipman, Beeler, & Mumford, 2009).

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Our subsequent national survey of social innovators found similar results. *Resistant organizational culture* was rated as the most significant barrier to social innovation ($M = 4.38$), and *Resistance to change among key players* was the second highest rated barrier ($M = 4.41$). Though the sample was not large enough for calculation of statistical significance, the primacy of these options among 21 potential barriers to social innovation should be regarded as an important indicator for social innovators.

For the nominal group technique sessions, the most agreed upon barrier to social innovation was the persistence of traditional, hierarchical structures. Idea clusters related to this theme were ranked as the second most important barrier to social innovation by one group, and as the third most important by the two others.
Finally, the case studies also found considerable evidence of risk aversion and resistance to change. This was especially evident among frontline staff and project leadership, who, across multiple sites, expressed frustration that partners were slow or reluctant to adopt changes recommended by the social innovation initiatives.

Shared Understandings → Lack of Agreement on Problems, Goals, or Expectations

Common understandings between stakeholders, as described throughout this report, were reported to enable progress in social innovation initiatives; and, conversely, misunderstandings were found to slow progress or even create tension between parties. Of the topic areas where absence of a shared understanding was reported to be a barrier across most research methods[15], agreements during the initial project stages were observed as barriers throughout this research.

Project definition and goals were a noted barrier in the literature as well as the focus groups. Ideas around partner disagreement on the nature and purpose of a project emerged in all three NGT sessions. Similarly, lack of goal congruence and problem agreement among collaborators was found to impede the progress of social innovation projects. (e.g., Bland, Bruk, Kim, & Lee, 2010; Simon & Davies, 2013). These findings were corroborated by the case studies, where frontline staff, leaders, and stakeholders alike reported that misalignment or disagreement between partners in terms of expectations, goals, and the nature of the problem(s) being addressed generated confusion and, at worst, conflict. Lack of clearly defined roles for project personnel was reported at all case study sites to contribute to further misunderstanding and conflict as projects proceeded through to implementation.

[15] The stakeholder survey did not contain questions specific to partner agreement during initial phases of a project.

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Staffing & Expertise → Need for Specific Skills

Lack of expertise to effectively conduct a social innovation project was reported to be a concern in all four research strategies. Need for resources, including staffing, throughout the innovation cycle was expressed frequently by authors in the social innovation literature. Of 21 factors listed in the stakeholder holder, *Limited staff/expertise for implementing the innovation* was rated as the fifth most significant barrier to social innovation (*M* = 4.28/5).

Limited capacity and attention of key personnel and decision-makers for an initiative emerged from the idea clusters of two of the three nominal group sessions—these clusters were ranked by participants as the most significant barrier to social innovation by one group, and the third most significant by the other. Lastly, the case studies found that the absence of managerial oversight (through either dedicated staffing or excessive workload) was said to have detrimental effects on the social innovation projects of two of the three case study sites.

Funding → Difficulty Securing Funds and Restrictive Funding Conditions

Though it may come as less of a surprise than other barriers, it should nonetheless be noted that inadequate funding was reported to be a significant barrier to successful social innovation across data sources. Lack of core financial resources for ongoing project activities was noted consistently in the literature. In the stakeholder survey, *Limited financial resources for implementing the innovation* received the fourth-highest mean rating for significance as a barrier to social innovation (*M* = 4.29). In addition, NGT participants clustered ideas around the theme of 'lack of consistent funding'. These clusters were ranked as the top barrier to social innovation success by two of the three groups[16], with participants expressing need for projects classified as social innovations to secure both start-up and multi-year funds.

The topic of funding as a barrier was also reported by managers, leaders, and stakeholders during case study research. These participants most frequently recalled funding conditions that were reported restrictive—for instance, restrictions that posed administrative hurdles or that impeded the project from responding to developing needs. Limited flexibility of project funding to respond to changing needs of the social innovation was also documented in the literature (e.g., Bureau of European Policy Advisors, 2010; Grimm, Fox, Bains & Albertson, 2013; Moore, Westley & Nicholls, 2012).

[16] The third group did not have funding in its top five ranked barriers

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Differences in Findings related to Barriers

Despite analysis revealing far more similarities than differences across findings, the following observations across methods may warrant future investigation:

- Plans for monitoring progress

  Despite the importance placed of planning for tracking the progress of social innovation initiatives by noted authors (e.g., Chalmers, 201; Flemig, Osborne, & Kinder, 2015), *absence of a plan for monitoring progress* was the fourth lowest rated barrier to social innovation (among 21 options) among survey respondents.

- Applying the innovation to a new setting or context

  The topic of scaling was perceived differently between research participants and those of the research examined for this project. As a case in point, *Staff and expertise for applying the social innovation to a new context or setting* was rated as the least important of 21 potential barriers (*M* = 3.37). The importance of scaling social innovation, however, is promoted by many prominent scholars (such as Buckland & Murillo, 2013; de Bruin & Stangl, 2013; Phills, Deiglmeier & Miller, 2008; Westley & Antadze, 2010).

On the whole, there was far more agreement in findings across data collection strategies—despite their differences—than disagreement. Where areas of disagreement or inconsistency are observed, typically these apply to a subset of the data, such as a single NGT or a small collection of publications. The relative prominence of these differences should not diminish their importance to future investigations of social innovation. For the purpose of our project outputs, however, focus is on the facilitators of and barriers to social innovation that tended to emerge again and again through the course of the study.

Study conclusions and recommendations based on these findings are outlined in the following section.

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Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

At the onset of this study, we set out to learn more about social innovation with a particular focus on the perspectives of those who are actually "on the ground"—that is, working in various roles in social innovation initiatives. Some of the distinctions described throughout this report between what is written about social innovation by scholars, and what is thought about social innovation from those who are actually planning and implementing it, is perhaps one of the key contributions of this study. When we see how important, for example, it is for frontline staff to receive reliable and ongoing communication from those in other areas of the hierarchy—while at the same time having the ability to provide input and feedback—we are reminded that the most innovative projects rely on people who feel good about their roles and work in order to make a project successful.

Two key, related conclusions stick out to us, seen repeatedly in all data collection methods and from participants and stakeholders in a variety of roles:

1. Importance of early planning

It seems quite evident from frontline participants on up to senior leadership, that most of what was most important to the success of a social innovation initiative was especially important at the earliest stages of the project. Similarly, most key barriers were often triggered or can otherwise be traced back to early planning and project development. This is all especially true for factors that are within the direct control of social innovation staff and leaders (as opposed to environmental factors or those related to external funding).
This is not to suggest that projects past the planning stage and into their implementation cannot benefit are destined to success or hardship. Participants from case study Site 1, for example, acknowledged that difficulties they were encountering stemmed from early role confusion between key players, and acted successfully to remedy this—to the ultimate benefit of the clients and community all parties were striving to serve. Ongoing planning and development is inherent to social innovation. It is never too late to mitigate a barrier or leverage a facilitating factor, provided the project is flexible enough to bend when and where needed.

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2. Importance of the frontline experience and perspective

We must also conclude—evidenced equally by a dearth of data in the initial phase of research and by the volume of data from the case studies—that understanding the perspectives of frontline staff is a crucial component of understanding social innovation itself. As our survey shows, frontline staff were a difficult population to reach. This may be attributable to distribution networks not connecting the survey to staff, or a prohibitive workload of client-facing staff (the latter possibility is certainly supported by case study findings). In any case, frontline staff are also largely silent figures in the social innovation literature, often created by and for academics, policy makers, and senior leadership.
This is a critical group to understand, as case studies demonstrate that frontline staff often hold conflicting views with those of their managers and senior leadership. All the best practices for planning social innovation can be undone when these strategies are not effectively and consistently communicated among all key personnel—or when any one group is not sufficiently involved in planning, including feedback for ongoing project development.

We wanted our project's output to address both of these, leading to our decision to focus the tools produced on frontline staff and new/novice social innovators. While some of the existing social innovation resources are useful to staff, there are few that take this group as their target audience.

To this end, a learning module comprised of three units was created. The units can be offered as part of a college curriculum, as a continuing education course, as a professional development opportunity for innovation staff, or simply for individuals who are interested in learning the "how to" of social innovation. The contents of the units are consistent with and includes findings from our research. They were designed by members of the research team along with curriculum development expert from Bow Valley College's Teaching & Learning Enhancement unit. A sample from one of the units can be found in Appendix C.

Recommendations

While many findings of this study can be offered as recommendations, to do so risks repeating the obvious. However, strategies for mitigating barriers that emerged through our research could contribute to greater success in innovation. These strategies include, but are not limited to:

Collaboration and Communication:

When planning social innovation projects, it is highly recommended to structure time, place, and methods for early and ongoing communication. Further, we recommend that sessions be coordinated featuring a wide array of stakeholders for the relevant social issue(s). Where possible, sessions must be facilitated by an impartial actor, responsible for guiding the group through openly discussion to agreement on fundamental elements of the social innovation, such as the problem identification, goals, objectives, and roles. Ideally, such sessions would continue at regular intervals throughout the social innovation to ensure shared understandings and equality of input.

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***Meaningful Involvement of Frontline Staff*:**

It is essential that open lines of communication occur not just between organizations, but within them. To this end, it is recommended that social innovations use multiple strategies for communication and feedback that take into account the perspectives, experiences, and needs of those who implement social innovations. Open communication encourages consistency of messaging and intent between leadership and staff, allowing all parties to be heard. The importance of ensuring that communication is not just top-down, but also bottom-up and lateral, cannot be overstated.

***Service Integration and Partner Fit*:**

Many social innovations require organizations to partner is ways where services and roles overlap or integrate to reach a common goal. Making such partnerships work requires ensuring that each organization has both the will and the ability to work jointly. Often technical details, such as hours of operation or parameters of job descriptions, can impede effective integration. Therefore, before "signing on" as partners, it is highly recommended that parties take a microscopic look at how the partnership will work, iron out details, and develop clear contracts that outline responsibilities. Next, it is essential to communicate these to every person and department involved in the partnership.

***Adaptation of Work*:**

When good ideas for innovation result in more work—or changes in the way people work—it is vital to forecast and assess the costs staff pay in terms of time, stress, and overall commitment to the initiative. Acknowledgement of these costs, openness to ideas for how to minimize them, and ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of adaptations are extremely important.

***Funding*:**

Funding, of course, is a major factor in the success of a project. It therefore behooves planners and directors of social innovation initiatives to ensure a realistic budget and think carefully about whether the project can manage with the resources that are in hand or promised. Passion, enthusiasm, and optimism must be balanced by a cold calculation of the likelihood of sufficient ongoing resources.

***Leadership*:**

The recommendation that simply follows from everything documented above is that a project leader needs to have the ability to implement the above recommendations, and more. If one had to prioritize the recommendations for project leadership, based on this study, it would be that leaders keep at top of mind the needs of social innovators "on the ground"—the frontline staff who implement what the planners plan and the directors direct.

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Appendix A – Literature Review Findings: Characteristic of Social Innovation

What is Social Innovation?

Many social innovation researchers have posited an answer to the question, "What *is* social innovation?" Table 16 presents a selection of conceptualizations of social innovation encountered during our literature review.

Table 16. Conceptualizations of social innovation.

Social innovation is …	Source
New products, services, processes, markets, platforms, organizational forms, and business models	Caulier-Grice, Davies, Patrick, & Norman, 2012
"ideas, turned into practical approaches"	Evers, Ewert, & Brandsen, 2014, p. 11
Activities, initiatives, services, processes, or products	Goldenberg, 2004
"new combination and/or new configuration of social practices in certain areas of action or social contexts"	Howaldt, Butzin, Domanski, & Kaletka, 2014, p. 12
"elements of social change"	Kesselring & Leitner, 2008 (cited in Howaldt & Schwarz, 2010, p. 23)
The "generation and implementation of new ideas about social relationships and social organization"	Mumford, 2002, p. 253
"changes of attitudes, behaviours or perceptions of a group of people joined in a network of aligned interests"	Neumeier, 2012 (cited in Caulier-Grice, Davies, Patrick, & Norman, 2012, p. 12)
New ideas, strategies, interventions, services, products, laws, or types of organizations	Réseau Québécois en innovation sociale, 2011
An initiative, product, process, or program	Westley, 2008

There is a clear distinction, noted by others (e.g., Edwards-Schachter & Wallace, 2015) between conceptualizations of social innovation from the perspective of consumption (e.g., goods and services), cognition (e.g., ideas, empowerment), or behaviours (e.g., changes, outcomes). Perhaps attempting to link these perspectives, Dawson & Daniel (2010) posit the "PCPG" model for understanding the term. The authors propose that a social innovation has four fundamental elements:

1. "people
2. the challenge (which may be a problem or an opportunity)
3. the process (by which that challenge is negotiated and understood)
4. the goal (resolution of challenge towards the objective of increased well-being)." (p. 16)

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Similarly, Gerometta, Haussermann, & Longo (2005) offer that social innovation is comprised of three dimensions: Content (related to human needs), Process (social change), and Empowerment (referring to social capacity building).

Who Does Social Innovation?

The answer to this question is open-ended—many authors characterize social innovators as persons, informal groups, formal organizations, networks, corporations, charities, and governments. Some, such as Mulgan (2006), somewhat refine the answer to "organizations whose primary purposes are social" (p. 146). Similarly, Kattel et al. (2014) include "public service providers, private service providers, NGOs, non-profits and citizens" among social innovators (p. 32), while public servants, social entrepreneurs, non-profits, and active citizens are cited by Jankel (2011, p. 3).

Perhaps the better question is, 'Who *should* be a social innovator?' Canadian studies offer some answers. Goldenberg (2004) makes the case that the non-profit sector is best positioned to conduct social innovation due to their social mandate and general absence of bureaucratic features common to the public and private sector. There has been a recent proliferation of social innovation centres across Canada, many associated with post-secondary organizations[17]. Canada's colleges specifically have been singled out as drivers of social innovation (see, for example, Jurmain & Madder, 2011), exemplified by recent college-specific grants from federal research funding agencies[18].

What makes Social Innovation "Social"?

We address this question in two parts, using a distinction that frames key works in the social innovation catalogue: The Young Foundation's Open Book of Social Innovation and the European Commission's report on social innovation in the European Union. Both reports approach the topic of social innovations as "innovations that are social both in their ends and in their means" (Murray, Caulier-Grice & Mulgan, 2010, p. 9; Bureau of European Policy Advisers [BEPA], 2010, p. 3).

Social ends

These refer to the objectives and outcomes of social innovation. There is consensus in the field that social innovation endeavours to improve some aspect of social life; most often, in the sense of fulfilment of human needs and solutions to social problems of varying scope and complexity (Bekkers et al., 2013; Phillips, Lee, Ghobadian, O'Regan & James, 2014). Social innovations often arise when existing approaches, strategies, or solutions to social issues are deemed inadequate (Anderson, Curtis & Wittig, 2014; de Bruin & Stangl, 2013; Moulaert et al., 2005). The impetus for social innovation may be some catalyzing moment or some "pressure to change" (Serrat, 2010, p. 4). Klein, Fontan, Harrisson, and Levesque phrases this point more forcefully:

[17] To name just a few examples, there is the Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience, the Mount Royal University Social Innovation Hub, and institutions connected with various Ashoka U initiatives.

[18] One example is the SSHRC Community and College Social Innovation Fund, which made this research and knowledge mobilization initiative possible.

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> [S]ocial innovation responds to a context of crisis or to the incapability of the institutional framework to find satisfactory answers to acute problems or to a context provoked by entirely new situations [...] Actors confront each other, which in turn produces compromises. It is these compromises that lead to the implementation of the right conditions for the creation of new institutions and new standards, crystallizing into social transformation. (Klein et al., 2012, p. 12)

Other authors seem to stipulate that for something to be a social innovation, it must succeed in producing results or outcomes that are better than existing solutions (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012; Howaldt et al., 2014; Salamon, Geller & Mengel, 2010). This may take the form of:

- *Identifiable* improvement in a community or society (Andrew & Klein, 2010; Benneworth et al., 2014; Young, 2011)
- *Measurable* improvements in people's lives (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012; European Commission, 2013)
- *Economic growth* such as new jobs and market opportunities[19] (Harrisson, Chaari & Comeau-Vallée, 2012; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2011)

Finally, a common feature of characterizations of social innovation is that it leaves individuals and communities stronger or more capable than more the innovation came about. Many refer to social innovation 'increasing society's capacity to act' (e.g., Murray, Caulier-Grice & Mulgan, 2010). Others similarly refer to empowerment of populations (Anderson, Curtis & Wittig, 2014), increase in "socio-political capability and access to resources" (Gerometta, Haussermann & Longo, 2005, p. 2007), and "giving people a place and a role in production" (OECD, 2011, p. 21) as characteristics of social innovation.

Social means

These refer to the processes and approaches that constitute a project or initiative. A thread throughout the literature is that social innovation entails social interaction, often through collaboration or other engagement with stakeholders (e.g., BEPA, 2010; Schmitt, 2014; Twersky, Buchanan, & Threlfall, 2012). There is less agreement among authors with regard to when and how collaboration features in social innovation. Benneworth and colleagues take the view that social innovation involves collaboration as a precipitator of social innovation, contending that "collective co-ordination between diverse actors" is key to "creating and securing access to the new knowledges necessary to stimulate innovations" (2014, p. 11).

[19] This paper does not discuss in depth the relationship between social innovation and social entrepreneurship. For more information about the distinction and overlap of these concepts, see Cahill, 2010; Howaldt et al, 2014; and Young Foundation, 2012).

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Dawson and Daniel (2010) also refer to social innovation being collaborative from a project's earliest stages of idea generation and selection. Others (such as Mulgan, Tucker, Ali, and Sanders (2007), view new social relationships as an outcome of social innovation. Young (2011) provides a more holistic take on the role of social interaction throughout the innovation process:

> "…when a social innovation first appears, it will typically gain a foothold in a relatively small subgroup of individuals that are closely linked by geography or social connections. Once the new way of doing things has become firmly established within a local social group, it propagates to the rest of society through the social network." (Young, 2011, p. 21285)

Many sources discuss the kinds of collaboration that characterize social innovation. The most salient theme in this regard is that social innovation involves working across sectors (Buerkler, 2013; Edwards-Schachter, Matti, & Alcántara, 2012; de Bruin & Stangl, 2013; Grimm, Fox, Bains, & Albertson, 2013). Other authors stipulate that collaborations should be between "stakeholders who do not normally interact" (Réseau Québécois en innovation sociale, 2011, p. 3), "diverse actors" (Benneworth et al., 2014, p. 11), or "previously disconnected groups" (Moore & Westley, 2011.

Finally, social means may also refer to the structure of a social innovation. For instance, several conceptions discuss social innovation as a combination of 1) community-based, grassroots, or participant-centred ('bottom-up'); and 2) organizationally or politically driven ('top-down') dynamics (BEPA, 2010; Goldenberg, Kamoji, Orton, & Williamson, 2009; Mulgan et al., 2007).

Newness

As implied by the term itself, social innovation is typically used to describe strategies, approaches, or products that are to some degree new or original. While some authors (such as Anderson, Curtis, & Wittig, 2014, p. 28) state explicitly that an activity must be new in order to quality as a social innovation, the novelty criterion is rarely applied in absolute terms. Rather, the concept may pivot on:

- *Context*. In their examination of 77 cases across Europe, Evers, Ewert, and Brandsen include in their definition that social innovations are "new in the context where they appear" (2014, p. 11). Similarly, Caulier-Grice and colleagues propose that, "Social innovations do not need to be completely original or unique. However, they do have to be new in some way to qualify as a social innovation – either new to the field, sector, region, market or user, or to be applied in a new way." (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012, p. 19).

- *Perception*. According to Rogers (2003), an innovation may be "perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption" (p. 12). Moore and Hartley (2008) also view newness as a matter of perception (in Bekkers et al., 2013, p. 6).

- *Setting*. Social innovation may also refer to the application of models or solution drawn from one setting to address issues in another (Mumford & Moertl, 2003, p. 263). This view of newness depends on both the existence of an antecedent social innovation and its diffusion to other actors and organizations (Howaldt et al., 2014; Pol & Ville, 2009).

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- *Capacity to create change*. Benneworth et al. (2014), among others, relate newness to the outcomes of social innovation. The authors contend that changes to how activities are organized, and the emergence of novel societal institutions, are inherent processes of social innovation (p. 11).

Social Change

Literature on social innovation often implies an intrinsic connection between the concept and social change. Kesselring and Leitner (2008) define social innovations as "elements of social change" (in Howaldt & Schwarz, 2010, p. 23). Hochgerner similarly characterized social innovation as a "component of social change" (2009, p. 15). Definitions of social innovation proposed by Jiang and Thagard (2014), Westley (2008; 2013), Jurmain and Madder (2011), Manzini (2014), and Howaldt et al. (2014)—among others—prominently feature the concept of social change.

The sort of change to be brought out through social innovation is typically more far-reaching than a simple variation in behaviour or outcome related to the target social issue. Change must be institutionalized—that is, incorporated into the structure or operation of an organization or community (Howaldt et al, 2014; Klein, Fontan, Harrisson & Levesque, 2012). Authors like Christensen, Baumann, Ruggles, and Sadtler (2006) and Jankel (2011) specifically advocate for 'disruptive social innovations', which challenge the status quos of society.

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Appendix B – Sample of Existing Resources for Social Innovation

In the course of this study, the research team sought to understand the nature and breadth of available resources for social innovation, in part to avoid reinventing wheels and in part to learn from the contributions of experts in the field. Ultimately, the review helped guide our decision to target project outputs at current and future frontline staff for social innovation—while our findings suggest this group could benefit from educational materials, our review also indicated this need may not be fully met by existing resources.

The table below summarizes a number of Canadian and international resources, organized into two categories: tools/methods for social innovation, and curated learning. This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

We present this table as a snapshot (with links and descriptions current as of January 2018) in case it may be of interest to readers.

Organization	Description of Resources	Topics Covered	Description
TOOLS AND METHODS			
NESTA DIY Toolkit	Tools are organized in 8 sections around key goals for social innovation. Each resource has an activity or a guideline, module, a how to guide and level of involvement. Case studies, videos and learning modules are also provided.	Background	This section offers a 'bird's eye view' of the main pillars underlying the theory and management of social innovation and for each of these topics we have provided references for further reading.
		Look Ahead	Tools for developing project needs and potential outcomes of a Social Innovation Project
		Develop a clear plan	Activities and modules, videos and examples are suggested to help build a plan for an innovation project, such as identifying risks, learnings, and stakeholders
		Clarify my priorities	Activities are suggested to help identify and specify what you want address with your social innovation project.
		Collect inputs from others	These activities are designed to gain input and ideas from others.

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Organization	Description of Resources	Topics Covered	Description
		Know the people I'm working with	These activities are centred on clarifying your target group and stakeholder characteristics for a further understanding of who you are working for and with.
		Generate new ideas	These activities are centered on developing or improving an idea using collaborative tools.
		Test and improve	This area advocates for a prototyping approach to test your work and adapt quickly.
		Sustain and implement	Activities for marketing, sustaining and scaling your social innovation findings.
Innoweave	Innoweave's Social Innovation Micro-Tools are provided as free tools for Social Innovators	Social Innovation Micro-Tools	Micro-tools are intended to be a quick free option for all levels of stakeholder to identify short term innovation needs. Topics covered include problem identification, root causes, and problem solutions. These tools are largely adapted from the NESTA DIY Toolkit
Project Innovation	Focuses on the mindset, methods and skills of social innovation. Three Principles: habits keep us in the comfort zone; Thinking and doing are equally important; and power influences change.	Mindset	An in depth theoretical framework is suggested for thinking about innovation projects that includes frequencies of interacting with others, thought based on research, and defining what impact means to your organization.
		Methods and Skills	Three methods are expanded on sideways learning, participation, and competition. Each section gives you ways of exploring innovation problem using that technique and they are bolstered with case studies.
Reos Partners	An international social enterprise that provides fee-based services to clients.	Social Labs	Includes background on the concept of social labs; linked examples of social labs facilitated by Reos; a webinar; and video (workshop recording)

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Organization	Description of Resources	Topics Covered	Description
	Designs, facilitates, and guides processes that enable teams of stakeholders to make progress on their toughest challenges.	Transformative Scenarios	Includes background on the concept of transformative scenarios (scenarios that seek to shape the future; not simply understand it), examples facilitated by Reos, a webinar, and the book *Transformative Scenario Planning: Working Together to Change the Future.*
		Learning Journeys	Includes background and process of learning journeys and linked examples of journeys facilitated by Reos
		Dialogue Interviews	Includes background and process of dialogue interviews and linked examples facilitated by Reos.
Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience	Is affiliated with SIG Knowledge Hub, so their resources are referenced.	Social Innovation Labs	Provides a guide for facilitating an innovation lab. Including introduction to and the lab process for stimulating creative ideas and problem solutions. This guide is also used by SIG Knowledge Hub.
ABSI Connect	Seeks to bridge and amplify social, economic, and ecological impact initiatives that are successfully challenging the status quo in Alberta. An ABSI "Kit" has been compiled incorporating the findings from their report as well a Networking Guide Lab and a snapshot of Alberta Social Innovators	Networking Lab	The lab process is explained with the specific goals to collaborate and share ideas through facilitated discussion and activities like the DIY Toolkit.
Ash Center for Democratic		self-assessment	A broad self assessment provides useful questions to assess readiness for Social Innovation.

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Organization	Description of Resources	Topics Covered	Description
Governance and Innovation (Harvard Kennedy School)	This toolkit is to be used by those who want to engage or engage others in successful social innovation in communities using "Civic Actions." These actions provide a framework of thinking about social problems. For most sections an "in action" case illustrates the implementation of this framework.	Identify the problem	This step encourages thought on problems and gives broad examples of how change is positive.
		Rethink current approach	This step acknowledges that the current approach has good intentions, but a change from a current approach to a problem can lead to creative new ideas.
		Scan the landscape	Advocates a 4 step "discovery" process for assessing what is out there and what is needed to craft an intervention solution to a problem.
		Craft your intervention	Four types of intervention are mentioned: 1. Civic realignment; 2. Technological glue; 3. Filling the management gap; and 4. New volunteer and goodwill pipelines
		Navigate between collaboration and disruption	In execution of an intervention scaling and growth are the goals at this step in the framework. Some barriers to implementation are mentioned so tempering disruption with collaboration is advocated.
		Balance top down and participatory approaches	Leadership is addressed in the need to show strong leadership, but to allow or participatory input. The difference between a top-down and participatory approach is outlined.
		Expect more individual responsibility	Some key questions are outlined for moving to an active role in an innovation process, including: Replacing patronizing systems; allowing for choice among clients/stakeholders; and curing the expectation gap.
		Open space for new ideas	Leaders are encouraged to be open to break down constraints and barriers to innovation. Three ways to do this are discussed.
		Advocate for success	Including and engaging the public is seen as a key for change. Three strategies to accomplish this are discussed.
		Leverage social media	Social media is seen as a great tool to mobilize support, ideas, and feedback as a form of participation.

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Organization	Description of Resources	Topics Covered	Description
		Focus your dollars on results	This step includes the question of the value and the effect the project will have on a community once it is implemented.
		Take the first risk	The last step advocates for taking risks and illustrates how risk taking can be positive.
CURATED LEARNINGING ABOUT SOCIAL INNOVATION			
ABSI Connect	Seeks to bridge and amplify social, economic, and ecological impact initiatives that are successfully challenging the status quo in Alberta. An ABSI "Kit" has been compiled incorporating the findings from their report as well a Networking Guide Lab and a snapshot of Alberta Social Innovators	Summary Report; Full Report	Outlines findings of a 7-month study on Alberta Social Innovations
		Alberta Social Innovation Ecosystem	A snapshot of socially innovative Alberta organization is given with brief descriptions.
Calgary United Way Leading Boldly Initiative Resources	Contains backgrounders on key Social Innovation topics and m ethods	Collaborative Social Innovation	Synopsis on collaborative innovation "backgrounder", example process of creating collaborative social innovation, and a video explanation.
		Prototyping	Background information is given on how and when to prototype. Additional books and resources are given as well as a workshop presentation on how to use Developmental Evaluation to support prototyping.
		Reflection-in-Action	Background information is given of this process and how to use it. Additional books and resources are listed.

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Organization	Description of Resources	Topics Covered	Description
		Peer Input	Background information, when and how to use the peer input process. This process is related to the collaborative social innovation process. Additional resources are suggested.
		Developmental Evaluation	The DE approach is explained, this approach is the same as the collaborative innovation process. When and how to use this process is explained. Additional resources are included.
		On Social Innovation	An annotated list of social innovation research is given.
Mount Royal University Institute for Community Prosperity	Research is presented in 4 sections that include mostly reports, presentations, case studies and surveys.	Social Innovation	Reports and presentations provide a window into social innovation present in various sectors of Alberta. It also provides information on social innovation in general.
		Leading Community Change	Resources cover leadership and tackling systems change and provide reports on leadership research.
		Investing in Community	How is the social economy, social innovation and community change financed? How are the roles of philanthropic foundations, corporate community investment, and public finance shifting? How significant is the rise of "social finance" in this picture? Presentation, report and article, as well as list of companies investing in communities.
		Non-profit & Social Economy	List of papers profiling social change in non-profit sector
Social Innovation Generation (SIG) Knowledge Hub	SIG resources are centered on key social innovation elements. "**Dip**" and "**Dive**" levels of information are	Social Innovation Dip Dive	**Dip**: This section provides a general overview of social innovation. In particular videos, case studies, presentations and book recommendations for social innovation. **Dive**: Offers case studies, suggested papers, and links to resources.

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Organization	Description of Resources	Topics Covered	Description
	provided to fit the needs of resource users. These resources are free and self-paced. SIG offers education and training alerts, videos, and curated information for those in different roles in a social innovation project. downloadable resources: http://www.sigeneration.ca/top-10-resources/	Systems Thinking Dip Dive	**Dip**: Offers a presentation and video explainers. A case study on Registered Disability Savings Plan is included. **Dive**: Curated papers and books are suggested.
		Resilience Dip Dive	**Dip**: Defines resilience as the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change. A presentation, paper and case study are curated here. **Dive**: A comprehensive webinar by Frances Westley that goes into these concepts further.
		Scaling Dip Dive	**Dip**: A talk and paper on introducing systems change. **Dive**: An in-depth look at the dynamics involved in scaling related to social innovation. A paper on bridging between scales and a video interview detailing the experience of scaling are provided.
		Institutional Entrepreneurship Dip Dive	**Dip**: Provides slides that speaks to this role and how it supports social innovation. One of the final frames outlines key activities for institutional entrepreneurs at different stages of the Adaptive Cycle. Case studies are also provided. **Dive**: Provides papers and an interview to further explain importance of IE.
		Social Entrepreneurship Dip Dive	**Dip**: Videos of entrepreneurs talking about the specific projects they were involved in. A talk on social metrics is provided as well. **Dive**: Provides papers on what it takes to be an effective social entrepreneur
		Public Sector Innovation Dip, Dive	**Dip**: Videos on successful public sector innovation are given, as well as recommendations from the BC Social Innovation council. **Dive**: Curated resources such as a paper and books are provided on public sector innovation.
		Corporate Social Innovation (CSI)	**Dip**: Provides talks and case studies examples of cross-sector partnerships, and their importance in driving innovation.

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Organization	Description of Resources	Topics Covered	Description
		Dip Dive	**Dive**: Stresses the value corporations can bring to social impact with videos and presentations on innovative thinking for corporations.
		Developmental Evaluation Dip Dive	**Dip**: Slides and videos provide an information primer on DE. **Dive**: Provides a practitioners guide to DE with considerations on who, when and why to use it.
		Impact Investing and Social Finance Dip Dive	**Dip**: Provides video and slides on the importance of investing in social initiatives. **Dive**: Curated list of papers and case studies highlight the importance of impact investing. A MaRS white paper on impact measurement is particularly highlighted.
		Social Technology Dip Dive	**Dip**: Talks and slides give practical ideas on how technology can help social innovation **Dive**: Videos highlight the use of social technology to encourage collaboration, program creation and implementation. The use of "open data" is highlighted. Innoweave mentioned as an example of a tech platform for social innovation.
		Social Innovation Labs Dip Dive	**Dip**: Labs are concentrated efforts to work on problems. Change labs and Design Labs are defined. Introductions on Labs and how to facilitate them are given in the form of videos and slides. **Dive**: A resource guide is provided (from UWaterloo) for facilitating change making labs.
		Roles: Several common social innovation roles are highlighted.	Caring Citizens: links to book *Getting to Maybe* Practitioners and Organizations: suggests social innovation, Social Entrepreneur and System Entrepreneur as well as a paper. Consultants: Suggests Systems and Scaling resources as well as a paper on changing patterns and practices for social innovation.

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Organization	Description of Resources	Topics Covered	Description
			Funders: Social Finance, Social Innovation and Developmental Evaluation are suggested as well as a publication on Philanthropy in Social Innovation Policy Influencers: Public Sector Innovation, Institutional Entrepreneurship and Social Technology are suggested, as well as a book on Leading Public Sector Innovation. Corporate Social Innovators: Social Finance and Institutional Entrepreneurship are suggested as well as a publication on creating shared value. Youth: Resources are similar to Caring Citizen.
		Education and Training	List of educational offerings in social innovation.
		Video Presentations	Organized video content in series: Inspiring Action for Social Impact, SIG Webinars, Graduate Diploma Thought Leaders, Net Change
Innoweave	Innoweave is organized into nine modules. Resources often includes self-assessment, case studies, coaching, and workshops. Some workshops are available to all, with in-depth support offered through an application process.	Impact and Strategic Clarity	This module helps community organizations clarify what they aim to achieve, how they will achieve it, and how they can measure success. Organizations conduct an in-depth analysis of their own program data and examine external evidence to clarify where to focus their efforts.
		Collective Impact	This module explains collective impact and how it enables a group of organizations to address a major challenge by developing and working toward a common agenda that fundamentally changes population level outcomes in a community. Unique to this module is a "youth collective impact" case.
		Scaling Impact	This module gives guidance to organizations on scalability and the right time to scale.
		Social Enterprise	This module introduces social enterprise, its value and potential fit for an organization.

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Organization	Description of Resources	Topics Covered	Description
		Social Finance	This module helps leadership teams of community organizations assess how social finance tools can work for them, and specifically to: clarify how they might use financing; develop and assess options to access financing; and take steps towards implementation.
		Outcomes Finance	This module is designed to help organizations explore whether outcomes finance (e.g. Social Impact Bonds) might be right for them, and to help determine whether they should implement. Unique to this module are multimedia explainers of Social Impact Bonds.
		Cloud Computing	This module explains cloud computing and its benefits for organizations that monitor innovation projects and for use by granters.
		Constructive Engagement	This module helps small groups of leaders identify their needs by clarifying barriers, understanding group member perspectives, determine actions to change policy or practice, selecting appropriate actions, and finalizing engagement strategies.
		Developmental Evaluation (DE)	Groups conduct a series of analyses to better understand how the initiative is being implemented, how well it is working, and how it should be adapted in real-time. A range of different data-gathering techniques, such as interviews, surveys, or focus groups are suggested.
NESTA	A Book of the learnings and methods drawing on the experience NESTA has in Social Innovation.	Open Book of Social Innovation	A book detailing methods and issues surrounding social innovation.

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Appendix C – Sample from Social Innovation Learning Module

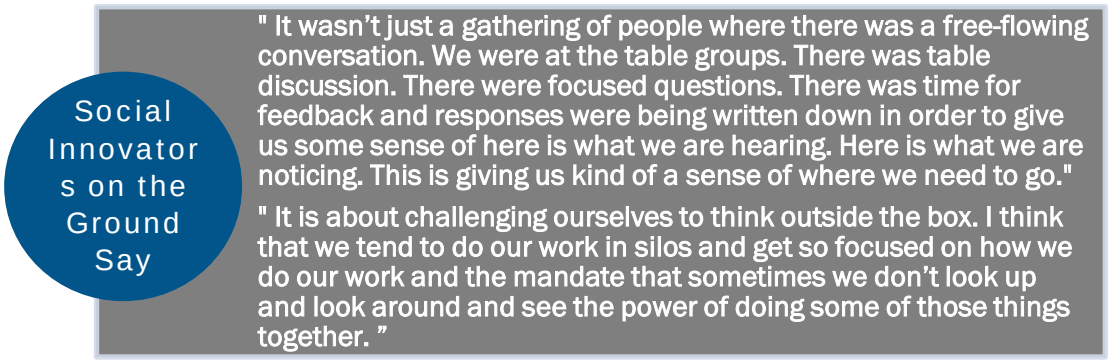
Below is a sample from the social innovation education module produces as a key output from this study. The sample is from the first of three modules units, on the topic of needs assessment and collaboration in the early stages of a project.

The complete module can be found on the Bow Valley College website or by emailing appliedresearch@bowvalleycollege.ca.

Topic Three: Gathering Input and Ideas from Others

How are new ideas for solving problems developed? Like our definition of social innovation, sometimes it will involve taking an old idea, but looking at it differently, thus adjusting the wheel, rather than reinventing it and, sometimes, it will involve taking a completely new approach. But whatever approach you will take, it is vital to get input from a variety of other people in this part of the problem solving process.

It is also important to try to get input from people who may have different perspectives, but have an interest in the outcomes of the project. These are called **stakeholders.** For example, if you were thinking about a problem that arose in your practicum in a mental health agency, you would try to involve someone who has been a client if this agency, people who work as front line staff in the agency, and someone in a leadership or decision making position. This is because the more diverse is the group for idea generation, the more likelihood of rich discussion and input.



An approach used by The United Way of Calgary and Area suggests that it is extremely important to have a good question to start any idea generation process. Basically, the question asks "how can we, or what can we do, to address a problem or accomplish what we want to achieve?"

Group discussions are generally used for idea generation – but if it is not possible to bring a group together, you can still use some of the tips for group discussions in conversations with people individually. Group discussion can be very informal, or more structured. To try it out follow the instructions below.

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Learning Activity 1.3: Idea Generation Techniques

Directions

1. Building upon the problem you explored in Learning Activity 1.2.
   Note: Be sure to keep an open mind to the perspectives of others.

2. Use the tables and follow the steps in the process.
3. Your goal is to use this time to create a shared understanding between different people. Gather together a group of 3-4 people to discuss the problem you are looking to understand further.
4. Notice that you will be a **group facilitator** of the discussion. This means you guide the process, but do not overly involve your opinion. You are a listener, and provide space for discussion. You may want to ask permission to record the session.
5. Alternatively, complete the Perspective Taking Technique.

PEER INPUT PROCESS TECHNIQUE		
#	**Steps**	**Key Question for the Stage**
1	Clearly state the problem or idea you want feedback on.	Why are you exploring this problem and what difficulties are you facing?
Facilitator Notes		
2	Let the group clarify the question	If the group is having a hard time explaining, allow time to clarify the question.
Facilitator Notes		
3	Allow the group time to ask probing questions	The group can now ask how, or why questions about the idea being explored to get an idea of the vision, and add their feedback
Facilitator Notes		

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4	Allow time for the group to discuss the question or idea amongst themselves now that they understand the vision.	What are the pros and cons of pursuing this problem?
Facilitator Notes		
5	Discuss the problem with others	What are others perspectives on the problem? If the problem is something that you are passionate about, likely others will be too.
Facilitator Notes		
6	The group facilitator can now provide feedback	What parts of the discussion really resonated with you? What decision can you reach based on the feedback of the group? Do you have any clear actions or direction from the group discussion?
Facilitator Notes		

Peer Input Process Technique adapted from United Way Calgary and Area Leading Boldly Peer Input Process http://www.calgaryunitedway.org/images/uwca/our-work/social-innovation/leading-boldly/6%20toolkit%20peer%20input%20process.pdf Retrieved on: October 26, 2017.

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While facilitating a process like the one above helps guide others through ideas. An idea to help think differently is **perspective taking**. Essentially, putting yourself in a mindset of others. Taking time to understand how they might feel about a situation, or problem.

Directions:

1. Follow the steps in order.
2. If you are learning on your own, without access to others like a trusted colleague or friend, try thinking about a problem from varying perspectives, and note all the observations that occur at each stage.

PERSPECTIVE TAKING TECHNIQUE		
Steps	**Perspective**	**Observations**
1	**Factual**	
2	**Emotional**	
3	**Logical**	
4	**Cautious**	
5	**Out-of-the-Box**	
6	**Managerial**	

Perspective Taking Technique adapted from NESTA DIY Toolkit Thinking Hats Worksheet: http://diytoolkit.org/tools/thinking-hats/ Retrieved on: October 26, 2017

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Questions for Consideration:

1. Summarize the key points discussed at each stage of either the idea generation process, or perspective taking process. What are some key insights you uncovered?

2. What did you find rewarding and challenging about this process?

For more ways to gain feedback from others and generate ideas, see these supplementary resources:

NESTA DIY Fast Idea Generator Photograph] Retrieved from http://diytoolkit.org/tools/fast-idea-generator/November 09, 2017

A more advanced idea generation technique is the *NESTA DIY Fast Idea Generator,* it provides a more advanced framework and techniques to approach your social problem in multiple ways.

This is a good resource if you are asked to develop ideas at work, and have more familiarity with the field, or problem you are addressing.

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The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention Photograph] Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/November 09, 2017

For a well-structured focus group approach the *Nominal Group Technique Guide* provided by The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention is an approachable explanation and breakdown of the steps involved in setting up a group discussion. Though slightly more advanced, it has shown to be highly effective in conceptualizing complex ideas.

Topic Learning Checklist

Can you identify?
☐ Can you identify the different stages of the peer input process?
☐ What are you trying to accomplish by gathering a group together?
☐ What is the purpose of perspective taking?
☐ How does the peer input process help you further refine your idea and understand the problem?
☐ What are the potential pros and cons of each approach?
☐ What are the potential pros and cons of each approach?
☐ Are you looking for similarity or diversity in opinion?

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