



Year Three Evaluation Report: Creating Community for Isolated Ethno-Cultural Seniors

SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL OF OTTAWA

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Social Planning Council of Ottawa: Creating Community for Isolated Ethno-Cultural Seniors

Creating Community for Isolated Ethno-Cultural Seniors is a collaborative project aiming to reduce social isolation for immigrant and ethno-cultural minority seniors, many of whom are also living on low income, have poor official language skills, and have disabilities. The Social Planning Council of Ottawa provides core organizational capacity to the groups, and the groups bring their expertise on the needs of their community members and in program delivery. In year three, **26 ethno-cultural seniors groups** participated in the program; these were:

- Arabic Seniors
- Cambodian Association of Ottawa Valley
- Canada Nepal Solidarity for Peace
- Caribbean Ethno-cultural Seniors of Ottawa
- Club Casa de los Abuelos
- Daryeel: A Youth and Seniors Serving Centre
- Deshantari of Ottawa Carleton
- Ethiopian Community Association Ottawa
- Excelsior Cultural and Spiritual Association
- Family Support and Care Services
- Indo-Canadian Community Centre (ICCC) Seniors
- Indo-Canadian Services Association Barrhaven, Ottawa
- Kanata Chinese Seniors Support Centre
- National Capital Region Bulgarian Community
- Nord-Sud Développement Racines et Cultures
- Ottawa Korean Evergreen Society
- Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Seniors
- Ottawa Valley Filipino Canadian Seniors Citizen Association
- Polish Canadian Women's Federation
- Regroupement Affaires Femmes
- Rwanda Social Services and Family Counselling
- Sikh Community Services Ottawa
- South Nepean Muslim Centre
- Sri Lanka Canada Association of Ottawa
- Strathcona Heights Women's Group (Guri Aman Somali Association)
- Vietnamese Canadian Community of Ottawa

The volunteer- led grassroots groups have extensive contacts with members of their respective ethno-cultural communities and are ideally suited to identify and engage isolated seniors in their community in culturally appropriate social, recreation, volunteering and community events. In addition to such activities, the groups provide their members with information and individual service navigation support to connect senior community members with available supports and services.

The SPCO supports the groups by:

Supporting participating groups with existing Third Party Agreements to continue their activities

Holding monthly meetings to facilitate peer learning, and sharing of promising practices

Monitoring the progress of participating groups, and renegotiate or replace agreements with underperforming groups
Supporting groups to foster and build cross-cultural understanding

Overall, with the support of the SPCO, the groups:

- Inform seniors of available services and provide supports in navigating and accessing them
- Connect and engage isolated seniors in knowledge-building activities
- Develop opportunities for isolated seniors to socialize and engage them in recreational activities
- Empower isolated seniors to contribute their knowledge and skills
- Expand awareness about dementia and dementia supports among seniors and volunteers
- Train seniors and volunteers to recognize elder abuse and identify appropriate supports
- Increase the capacity of ethno-cultural minority groups to serve their communities

In so doing, the program aims to build strong social networks for sustainable peer support in order to improve the connectedness and wellbeing of their senior community members.



How much did Creating Community for Isolated Ethno-Cultural Seniors accomplish in years one and two?



28

third party agreements signed

26

ethno-cultural seniors groups participated



3,865

individual seniors participated

55,652

total encounters



3,960

program & activities

1,034

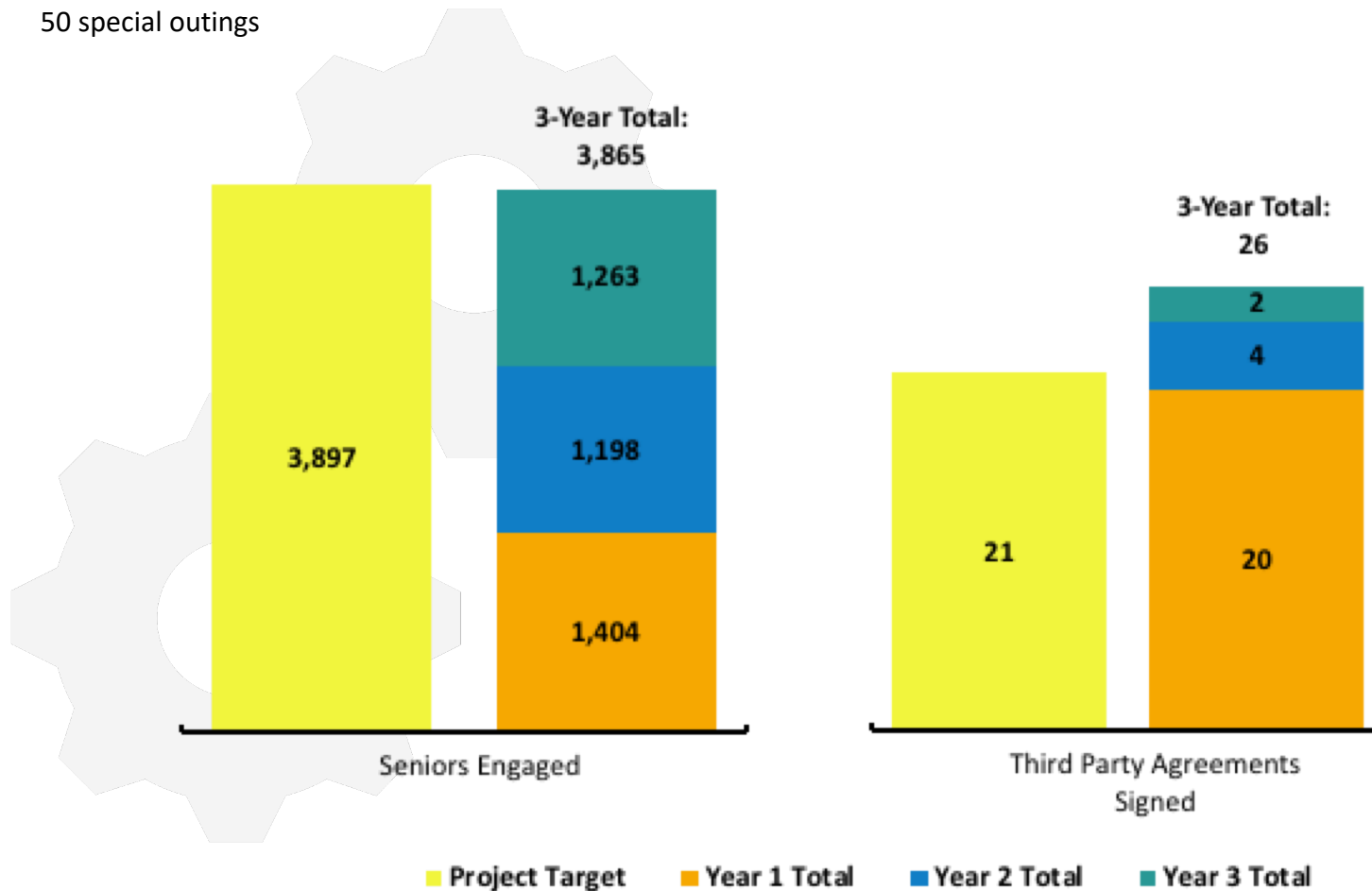
senior volunteers

Progress toward Project Level Objectives

Deliverables Over 3 Years

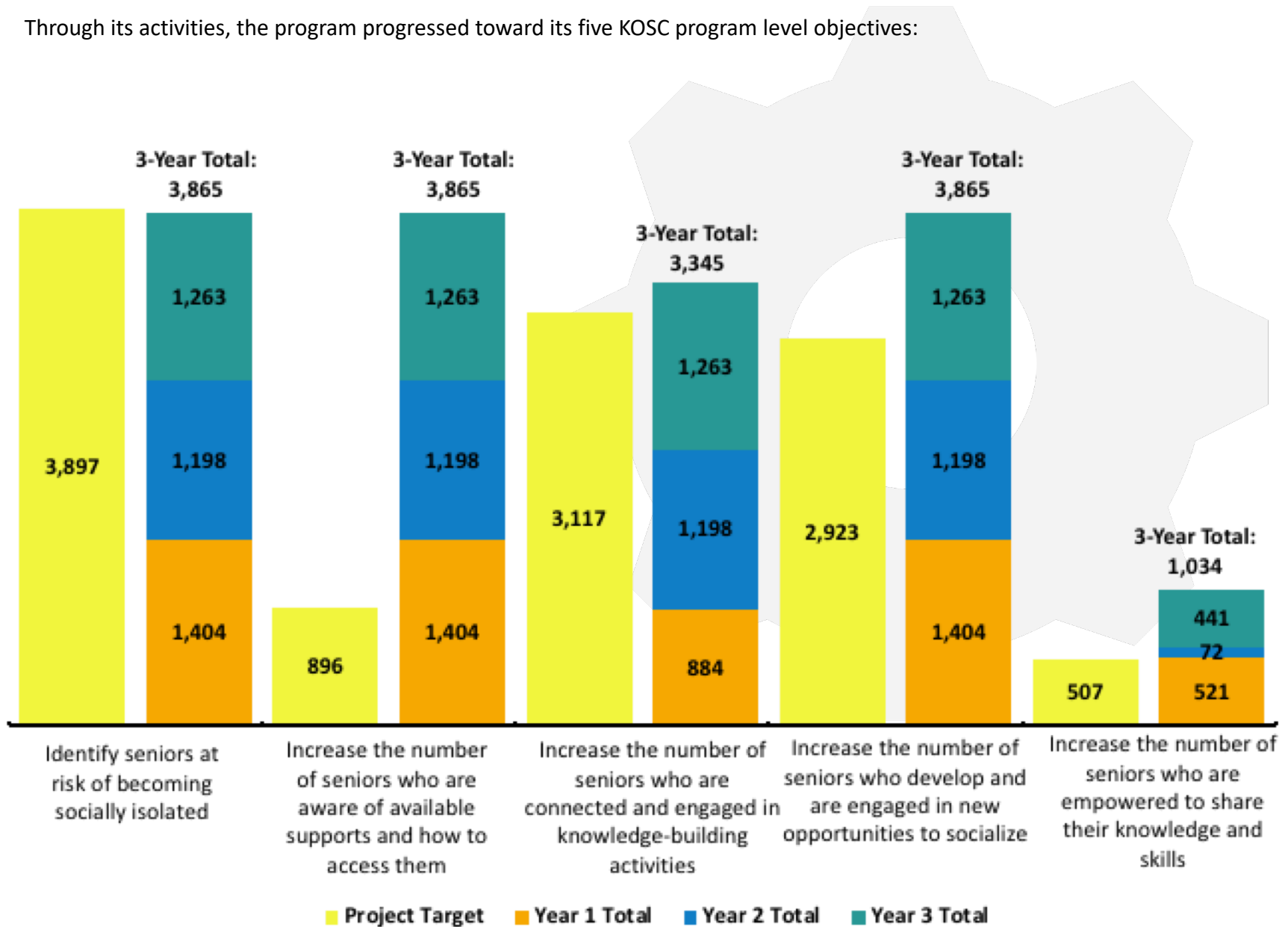
The numbers reveal that the program has made excellent progress and has met or exceeded its target numbers. It has already exceeded its target of signing more than 21 groups over three years and has reached its participant target of close to 4000 seniors. The evaluation data demonstrated that seniors participated in a wide variety of activities:

- 31 types of different activities
- 44 topics of lectures, seminars and information sessions
- 50 special outings



Project Level Targets

Through its activities, the program progressed toward its five KOSC program level objectives:



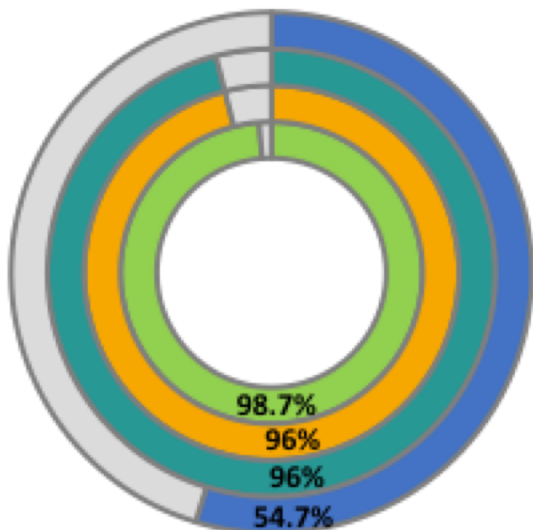
How well has it been done?

The program has progressed well. It has met or exceeded its program level objectives and has made significant contributions to the goals of KOSC. It is maintaining high program quality while working to collaborate with both KOSC and non-KOSC partners. Data was collected through site visits, pre-post participation questionnaires, informal conversations, semi-guided interviews and focus groups with seniors; year-end questionnaires, semi-guided interviews and informal check-ins with group leaders; and semi-guided interviews and informal check-ins with the project team.

Helping Seniors

The program is effective in helping seniors to be more active, and to feel more supported, more connected, and more valued.

Participants report that they...



98.7% feel more valued
96% feel more supported
96% feel more connected
54.7% increase socializing

Volunteer Opportunities

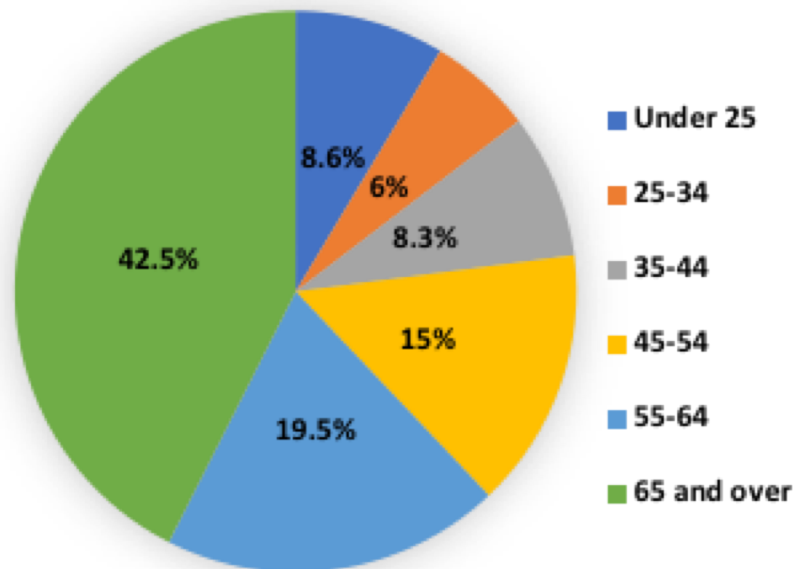
There are many opportunities for seniors to volunteer in the ethno-cultural seniors groups. There are many different volunteer roles that the seniors fill, which contributes significantly to the success of the groups. Volunteering with the groups also provides meaningful and empowering experiences for the participants to share their knowledge and skills.



62%

of the volunteers are seniors
ages 55 & over

Age of Volunteers



In-Kind Support



\$694,500

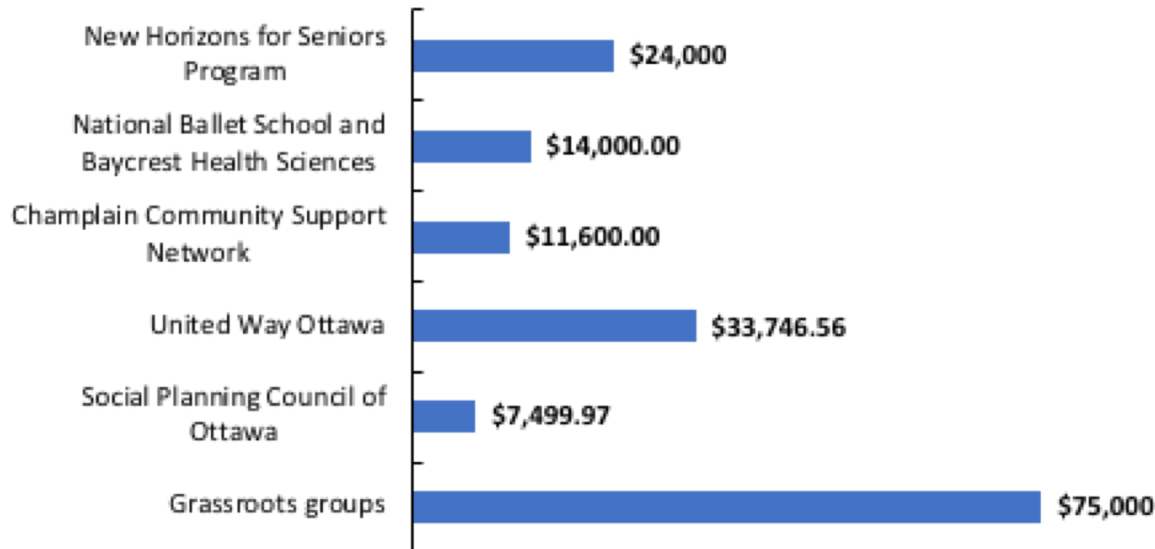
of in-kind support was received from April 2018 to January 2019



\$83,345

of cash support was received from April 2018 to January 2019

Sources of Support



In Year Three, the project also produced four offshoot initiatives:

- ✓ Champlain Community Support Network: to develop culturally responsive dementia care
- ✓ United Way Ottawa: to develop culturally responsive elder abuse and caregiving resources
- ✓ National Ballet Institute: to deliver a dance-based exercise program, Sharing Dance for Seniors
- ✓ New Horizons for Seniors Program: to develop culturally responsive caregiver training

Highlight: Sharking Knowledge & Skills

Two prominent senior members of Indo-Canadian Community Center, Mr. Nand Tandan and Mr. Prabir Neogi, with the assistance of Dr. Indu Gambhir, co-authored and published a book titled, “A History of Indo-Canadians in Ottawa – A Journey Across Generations”. The book launch was held on July 14, 2018 and was attended by Mayor Jim Watson; Mr. Vikas Swarup, High Commissioner of India; and Mr. Chandra Arya, MP. The book project was supported through a grant received from the City of Ottawa. In response to the book’s publication, Mayor Watson wrote, “We trust this book project will serve as an inspirational model for other cultural communities to document and share their history of arrival, resettlement and integration into Canadian society”.

Reaching Isolated Seniors

The groups are succeeding in reaching seniors who are isolated or at heightened risk of becoming isolated, particularly those who live on a low income, have a disability, and have a language barrier. The only target group that is underrepresented are those who live in a rural area, and this is to be expected given that members of ethno-cultural minorities are more likely to live in urban areas.



38%

of the participants live alone



16%

of the participants are self-identified as having disabilities



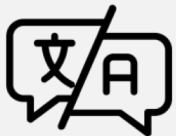
55%

of the participants have a household income less than \$30,000



61%

of the participants are women



48%

of the participants report having a language barrier

The program is reaching isolated seniors through both the collective and individual efforts of the groups. If they did not participate in the ethno-cultural seniors groups' activities, many of the group members would have limited opportunities to socialize with others, especially with others who share the same language and culture. Some seniors indicated that they felt isolated and lost their sense of purpose after retiring, but once they joined the group it gave them something to look forward to and provided them with an opportunity to continue to learn, meet new people, and socialize. As one senior from ICCC said, "I come here to meet people rather than sitting at home alone and thinking about unnecessary problems." For this senior, and many others, the ability to get out of the house and share stories, jokes, laughter, and songs with those who share the same language and culture was important for this overall health and well-being.

The groups also help to create a sense of community and support among the members, particularly for those who are isolated. Seniors shared that when they didn't see someone who regularly attended the activities, they would call and check on the person to see if they were ok or needed support or they would encourage their friends, neighbours, and other acquaintances to take part in the groups' activities. Additionally, the group leaders make substantial efforts to reach those in their ethno-cultural communities who are isolated and unable to attend activities.

For example, the group leaders of Daryeel: Youth and Seniors Serving Centre discussed how they make frequent home visits to help their group members who live alone and may need extra support with cooking and errands and to those who live in long-term care facilities and may face difficulties due to language barriers. In Year Three, the groups made over 2000 interactions through visits and telephone reassurance, thereby reaching and supporting some of the most isolated and vulnerable seniors in their communities (this number is likely much higher as many group leaders and volunteers underreport these interactions because they feel that this is just part of their role as a community member). The group leaders also make efforts to reach out to those in their ethno-cultural communities who are new to Ottawa and/or those who may have fewer social ties. Many of them are involved in outreach activities and connect with several other non-profit organizations to promote the ethno-cultural groups' programs, so that more seniors can participate in their activities and events

Awards:

- ✓ Four seniors from the Kanata Chinese Seniors Support Centre were nominated for the Kanata North Best Senior Citizen Award. Of these nominations, Mrs. Louisa Huang received the award.
- ✓ June Girvan, a senior from North South Development – Roots and Culture Canada, received the Black Seniors Leader award
- ✓ Entrepreneur Women of Ottawa-Gatineau honored the Executive Director of Club Casa de los Abuelos, Ana Maria Cruz-Valderrama, for her work and years of dedication and commitment to serve the Latin American community and seniors.
- ✓ Polish Canadian Women's Federation received a medal for their volunteer work by the Visiting Senator from Poland.



KOSC Vitality

Being part of the collaborative has provided the groups opportunities to work with new organizations across the city and to deliver training to community members throughout Ottawa. The coordinator meetings are particularly helpful because they provide regular opportunities for collective information sharing and problem solving. This enables interagency crosspollination of promising practices and knowledge on how to solve complex problems related to seniors' social isolation. This is significant because front line staff tend to have fewer opportunities to meet with staff from other agencies than managers do.



Being part of KOSC has contributed to the program's success and collaborations have continued to improve throughout Year Three. For example:

- ✓ The **Catholic Centre for Immigrants Ottawa** continues to work with the SPCO to deliver their English Conversation Circles to some of the groups, including Club Casa de los Abuelos and the Vietnamese Canadian Community of Ottawa.
- ✓ **Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre's** Community Helpers program has been beneficial for the group leaders and the resources from the program will continue to be used for the SPCO's project related to caregiving.
- ✓ The **Council on Aging of Ottawa's** Social Inclusion Committee (one of the Council on Aging's sustainability initiatives related to KOSC) has benefitted from the involvement of the SPCO Coordinator who continues to advocate for and represent the ethno-cultural groups.
- ✓ The **Council on Aging** has also provided space for the ethno-cultural group leaders and some of the groups to meet. Access to space continues to be a barrier for many of the groups and this collaboration has been one way to address it.

The collaborative has fostered more connectivity and crosspollination between ethno-cultural minority leaders and mainstream services, which has enabled the leaders and other KOSC partners to identify opportunities to make mainstream services and programs more inclusive and responsive to the needs of ethno-cultural minority seniors.

Non-KOSC Collaborations

The SPCO has also engaged in extensive collaboration with non-KOSC partners, which includes the following:

- In Year Three, the SPCO created the **Ethno-Cultural Seniors Access and Advocacy Committee**. This was a direct result of last year's Collective Impact Learning Forum, "Aging in your Community: Addressing the Needs of Ethno-cultural Seniors" (March 2018) organized by the SPCO in collaboration with ethno-cultural senior groups, the **City of Ottawa**, and the **Champlain Local Health Integration Network**. The purpose of the committee is to address the lack of inclusion of ethno-cultural minority seniors in mainstream services. The committee includes representatives from the ethno-cultural groups, the **City of Ottawa**, the **National Association of Federal Retirees**, **Jewish Family Services**, **Ottawa Fire Services**, **Pinecrest Community Health Centre**, and **Centretown Community Health Centre**. The committee held their first meeting in November 2018.
- Stemming from a successful partnership in Years One and Two, the SPCO is continuing to work with **Canada's National Ballet School (NBS)** on their Sharing Dance for Seniors project, which is also in collaboration with **Baycrest Health Sciences**. This project is a safe and accessible dance program that engages older adults in meaningful dance activity that benefits physical, cognitive, and overall health. Baycrest and NBS provide a weekly video dance class and funding for space, a facilitator (who provide assistance and interpretation), transportation, and refreshments. As of April 2019, 5 ethno-cultural groups have taken part in the program, with more groups beginning in the summer. The feedback has been very positive from the participants and many shared that they appreciate the opportunity to dance, exercise, and socialize.
- The **Ottawa Public Library** is one of the SPCO's main collaborators related to low-cost space. Many of the ethno-cultural group leaders' monthly meetings are held in library spaces and some of the groups also use library space for their Sharing Dance activities. This partnership has been very beneficial for the activities related to Creating Community for Isolated Ethno-Cultural Seniors.
- In March 2018, **Champlain Community Support Network**, dementia health care practice approached SPCO to develop a model of practice on culturally responsive dementia care for ethno-cultural seniors and requested that the SPCO develop a pilot project with one ethno-cultural group. In collaboration with three South Asian ethnocultural seniors' groups the SPCO held a forum in September 2018 to develop a model which will be used to educate and assist members of the South Asian community and to enhance the practice of health and social service providers.



- In Year Three, the SPCO also received funding from the [United Way Ottawa](#) to develop elder abuse educational resources and materials that are culturally appropriate for ethno-cultural minority seniors and their families. The SPCO Coordinator, with the help of the group leaders, has conducted focus groups with many of the groups to see how these resources could be developed. Through this funding, the Coordinator has also developed and delivered presentations on “Respect, Dignity, and Safety in Aging” (based on the work of The Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria) to 175 ethno-cultural minority seniors.
- The SPCO also continues to collaborate with many organizations and groups in Ottawa to share relevant information with the group leaders who then pass on the information to their group members. During the group leaders’ monthly meetings, led by the SPCO Coordinator, representatives from these organizations (e.g., [City of Ottawa’s 211](#), [the Council on Aging’s Health Issues Committee](#), [Ottawa Humane Society](#), [Ottawa Public Library](#), etc.) lead workshops on issues relevant to seniors and information sessions about their services and programs. These monthly meetings are useful ways to not only share information, but also for the group leaders to build their community network.

These non-KOSC collaborations allow the SPCO to advance their work and the priorities of the ethno-cultural groups, while working towards sustainability of what has been accomplished over three years.

Given the significant connections and relationships that the SPCO has with ethno-cultural minority communities in Ottawa, the SPCO Coordinator played a large role in both facilitating and supporting relationship-building and trust between the various ethno-cultural seniors’ groups and between them and mainstream organizations and services that were involved in KOSC, and those outside of KOSC. These relationships have proven to be very impactful in mobilizing the groups to work as a collective to support their seniors, but also in fostering the inclusion of ethno-cultural minority seniors in mainstream organizations, initiatives, and services. Both of these demonstrate the positive impact of the SPCO’s inclusion in KOSC and the multiple contributions of the SPCO and the group leaders to the collective’s goals of reducing seniors’ social isolation and increasing seniors’ social inclusion.

A Look at 5 Ethnocultural Seniors Groups

Creating Community for Isolated Ethno-Cultural Seniors brings together the work of 26 different organizations. Each year the work of 4-5 different groups is explored in greater detail as part of the evaluation process. It helps to highlight the work of the individual groups, while also illustrating the diversity among them. The groups selected for Year Three are:

- ✓ **Cambodian Association of Ottawa Valley**
- ✓ **Caribbean Ethno-Cultural Seniors of Ottawa**
- ✓ **Daryeel: A Youth and Seniors Serving Centre**
- ✓ **Indo-Canadian Community Centre (ICCC) - Seniors**



Cambodian Association of Ottawa Valley

The Cambodian Association of Ottawa Valley seniors' group was formed in 2017. After moving the temple to a new location with more space in 2015, the Association was able to provide activities for the broader Cambodian community, but realized that there was also a need just for seniors to gather and socialize. Consequently, the Association started the seniors group in 2017 with support from the SPCO. Currently, the group has about 45 members, including about 4 members who volunteer with the group. The group organizes weekly activities for the seniors that are held on Sundays after attending services at the temple, which makes it convenient for the seniors as they are already at the temple. The activities include exercise, gardening, sharing a meal, information sessions, and meditation. The group leaders and volunteers also provide support to the members through some service navigation and support. The group leaders and other volunteers contribute approximately \$31,250 worth of in-kind contributions through their volunteer work with the group, and the group requires roughly \$6000 in cash resources to operate per year.

Data collected through site visits, surveys, semi-guided interviews, and focus groups show that the group members experience numerous benefits through their participation in the group. As one senior said, "being able to get out and come to these activities is good for your health because staying in you become isolated." Some of the other benefits include the opportunities to:

- ✓ Build connections within the Cambodian community in Ottawa
- ✓ Share information in the Cambodian community
- ✓ Get people together in one place
- ✓ Attend the temple, which helps to lower stress and increase happiness
- ✓ Be part of an inclusive and welcoming environment
- ✓ Exercise both indoors and outdoors
- ✓ Go on outings that they would not be able to otherwise (e.g., Upper Canada Village, apple picking, strawberry picking)

By having opportunities to connect with the Cambodian community in Ottawa, the seniors have stronger social support networks and are better connected to services and supports. Many of the seniors also do not speak English, so being able to participate in activities where they share the same language and culture as other group members, and where they learn information in their own language, helps them to feel engaged, included, and more empowered to make decisions and seek support.

Caribbean Ethno-Cultural Seniors of Ottawa

Caribbean Ethno-Cultural Seniors of Ottawa is a relatively new group; it was formed in mid-2018 by Judy Madhosingh, who was president of a past group that was dissolved, but wanted to start a new group in her community as she saw the need for a group that provided opportunities for seniors in her community to exercise and socialize with other seniors. Currently, the group has about 25 members, including about 3 members who volunteer with the group. The activities offered by the group include exercise classes, sharing a meal, information sessions, and group discussions. This group is also taking part in the Sharing Dance for Seniors weekly exercise program. The group leader and volunteers also provide support to the members through home, hospital, and long-term care facility visits and telephone assurance. Judy also helps support members who are more isolated by providing them with meals and transportation to appointments. The group leaders and other volunteers contribute approximately \$18,200 worth of in-kind contributions through their volunteer work with the group.

Data collected through site visits, surveys, informal conversations, semi-guided interviews, and focus groups show that the group members experience numerous benefits, including both physical and mental health benefits. One senior member shared that she has knee problems that were quite debilitating and limited her ability to go out and that even though she has to do modified exercises, the exercise and social components of the group have been very beneficial for her both physically and mentally. Some of the other benefits include the opportunities to:

- ✓ Improve physical and mental health
- ✓ Gather with seniors in their community in a convenient location
- ✓ Socialize and build friendships with other seniors in their community
- ✓ Have something to look forward to each week
- ✓ Learn new information and feel empowered to share information
- ✓ Engage in insightful discussions with other group members
- ✓ Participate in enjoyable forms of exercise that can be modified for most seniors (e.g., Sharing Dance for Seniors)

Through her strong connections in the community, Judy has been able to foster a strong sense of support among the group members. Even though it is a new group, it has grown significantly from when it started, as many of the original members of the group have encouraged their friends and neighbours to attend, which demonstrates the positive impact that the Caribbean Ethno-Cultural Seniors of Ottawa group is having in the community. The members feel empowered to share their knowledge and skills and supported and welcomed in the group, which Judy has worked hard to foster since the beginning.

Daryeel: A Youth and Seniors Serving Centre

Daryeel: A Youth and Seniors Serving Centre was formed 12 years ago by Ifrah Mahamoud and Ruweida Shire, but became an officially known as Daryeel in early 2018. The group was formed in response to a large demand in the Somali community in Ottawa for support for seniors and a need to reduce the isolation of seniors. The group currently has over 300 members, including about 4 who regularly volunteer with the group. The group gathers twice a month for exercise, social activities, and health information sessions and to share a meal. In the summer, the group typically gathers in parks so that the members can enjoy the outdoors. The group leaders also provide significant support to the members through home, hospital, and long-term care facility visits and telephone assurance. They also help some of the more isolated group members with errands and meal preparation, and they play a strong advocacy role for seniors who are living in long-term care facilities and have little family support. The group leaders and other volunteers contribute approximately \$78,000 worth of in-kind contributions through their volunteer work with the group, and the group requires approximately \$15,000 in cash resources per year to operate.

Data collected through site visits, informal conversations, and semi-guided interviews, show that the group members experience numerous benefits and that being a part of the group is a very positive experience for them. As some of the senior members shared, given that they can participate in activities in their first language, the group is a safe haven because where they can be understood and understand first-hand what is being shared, rather than relying on an interpreter, which demonstrates the importance of having linguistically and culturally-based activities for the seniors. Some of the other benefits include the opportunities to:

- ✓ Get out in the community
- ✓ Socialize in their first language with others seniors from the Somali community in Ottawa
- ✓ Share a hot traditional meal with others
- ✓ Have something to look forward to twice a month
- ✓ Have strong community support and advocacy
- ✓ Improve their English language skills
- ✓ Be connected with leaders in the community who can provide translation and transportation support
- ✓ Learn about and be connected to community support services
- ✓ Learn health information and gain knowledge about living in Canada

The group leaders of Daryeel have been very successful in reaching out to seniors in the Somali community in Ottawa, evidenced by the many referrals they get from community members. They have been able to support isolated members of the community and help seniors build social support networks, so that they feel valued and connected in the community.

Indo-Canadian Community Centre (Seniors Group)

The Indo-Canadian Community Centre's seniors' group was formed in 2011 by Dr. Indu Gambhir who wanted to address a gap in the community by providing social opportunities for Indo-Canadian seniors. It is part of the larger Indo-Canadian Community Centre that has been operating since 1974. Currently, the group has about 350 members, including about 35 members who volunteer with the group in various capacities. The group is run by a dedicated group of volunteers in the following positions: ICCC Seniors Chair; Team Captains for trips and outings, workshops and seminars, seniors directory, and technology. There is also one coordinator for each site where the group holds activities. Many other group members volunteer during the activities by bringing food, serving food, helping with set up and take down, and cleaning up the kitchen. ICCC Seniors offers activities once a week at four different locations (Tanglewood, Kanata, Orleans, and Durga Mandir, a Hindu temple in Ottawa), for a total of 4 activities each week. The activities offered by the group include yoga, social gatherings, seminars, birthday celebrations, cultural celebrations and events, and outings. The group is also in the process of developing a digital education program for their senior members. The group leaders and volunteers also provide significant support to the members through home, hospital, and long-term care facility visits and telephone assurance. The group leaders and other volunteers contribute approximately \$50,000 worth of in-kind contributions through their volunteer work with the group, and the group requires approximately \$15,000 in cash resources to operate per year.

Data collected through site visits, surveys, semi-guided interviews, and focus groups show that the group members experience numerous benefits through their participation in the group. As one senior said, "ICCC Seniors is doing a lot for our community and is having a very positive impact by bringing us together." Another senior shared how being a part of ICCC Seniors bring him a lot of joy as it gives him a chance to meet with others and sing songs in Hindi and Punjabi. Similarly, another senior mentioned how the group helped her to feel connected to her roots through songs and festivals and to aspects of her culture that were important when she was growing up. Some of the other benefits include the opportunities to:

- ✓ Connect to the Indo-Canadian community in Ottawa through stories, language, songs, and food
- ✓ Build friendships that carry on outside of the group, especially for those who live alone
- ✓ Celebrate cultural events
- ✓ Be physically active
- ✓ Learn important health information
- ✓ Have meaningful and personal conversations with each other
- ✓ Use their skills and help others by volunteering with the group and be recognized for it
- ✓ Have something to look forward to
- ✓ Feel empowered by sharing knowledge and skills to help others
- ✓ Build social support networks

By having a transparent, well-organized, strong group of group leaders who can bring the community together and by using technology to connect with seniors in the community, the group leaders have been able to build relationships with isolated seniors, connect them with group activities, and use members' feedback to plan for future outreach, events, and activities.

Is it making a difference? What have we learned?

Data collected for Year Three suggests that the program is making a positive difference in the community. Having the opportunity to socialize with those who share the same culture and language is very important for ethno-cultural minority seniors. Additionally, the groups are able to operate on a relatively low budget as they are mainly supported by the in-kind contributions of the group leaders, which equates to \$687,000 of support. Despite this, the group leaders and members are concerned about the sustainability of their groups after Year Three, as funding will come to an end and many groups rely on the funding to pay for space, transportation, etc. Some groups have been successful in their applications for other sources of funding, but the majority of the groups face challenges in acquiring small amount of funding to support their ongoing activities. These challenges mainly relate to completing the often complex funding applications, the administrative tasks related to grant management, and funding only being provided for new and innovative programs, not for successful existing models. There is a need for the groups to have consistent and long-term funding.

The group leaders work tirelessly to support their members and often face many barriers in carrying out their activities, such as the high cost to rent space and run activities, transportation for their group members to get to activities, reaching those who are most isolated in the community, finding and keeping dedicated volunteers, finding health professionals who speak the same language of the group members so that an interpreter is not always needed for information sessions, getting health professionals to come in on weekends (if that is when group activities are held) for information sessions, and having access to consistent and long-term funding.

Through semi-guided interviews with the SPCO Coordinator and group leaders in Year Three, the main barriers to reducing social isolation among ethno-cultural minority seniors reinforce those identified in Year Two, but also provide new insights into the challenges that seniors face. These include seniors' limited knowledge of community supports and services and how to navigate them (e.g., it often takes a crisis situation that forces the senior to access services); the demands placed on caregivers leading to caregiver burnout and isolation; the lack of inclusion of ethno-cultural minority seniors in mainstream supports and services and in policies related to seniors; and limited financial support for grassroots groups. As evidenced by the SPCO's KOSC and non-KOSC collaborations, they are working to address many of these challenges through advocacy, policy, and practice.

Highlight: Advocacy

Ten seniors from different ethno-cultural groups attended a Town Hall Meeting with Honourable Filomena Tassi, Minister of Seniors, on November 26th, 2018. The seniors advocated for the needs of ethno-cultural minority seniors in Ottawa and raised awareness about the challenges that they face related to social inclusion. They also highlighted the many contributions of ethno-cultural minority seniors to the Ottawa community.



For the SPCO, there were 6 recommendations that came out of the learnings from Year Two; these recommendations fell into 2 main categories: sustainability, and engagement and collaboration. As outlined below, the SPCO has made great progress in working towards these recommendations:

1. Sustainability

Throughout Year Three, the SPCO has engaged, and is continuing to engage, the group leaders and their senior members in sustainability efforts, including leadership workshops, support with grant proposals, fundraising, and mobilization in further collective impact planning.

Highlight

In June 2018, SPCO hosted a “Sustainability Through Succession Planning and Effective Leadership Workshop” delivered by Anne Clarke, from Clarke & Associates. The objectives of the workshop were to create a common understanding of succession planning and to establish key strategies for sustainability and future growth. As part of the workshop seniors were given tools and resources to guide them in developing their future vision and goals.

2. Engagement

As identified by the numerous KOSC and non-KOSC partnerships, throughout Year Three, the SPCO, with the help of the group leaders, engaged and collaborated with many organizations, groups, and individuals to reduce ethno-cultural minority seniors’ social isolation. There were many opportunities for cross-cultural relationship-building and collaborations and for the engagement of a range of stakeholders in supporting ethno-cultural minority seniors.

Highlight

In September 2018, the SPCO hosted a very successful forum: “Culturally Responsive Dementia Care for the South Asian Community.” Sixty people participated in the Forum, which included service providers, seniors, and community members. The information gathered from the focus group discussion held at the Forum has led to planning for an Adult Day Program for seniors from the South Asian Community and their families and also increased the knowledge and capacity of service providers to support South Asian seniors with dementia.



Promising Practices

Multiple promising practices that have the potential to directly and indirectly contribute to the reduction of social isolation among ethno-cultural minority seniors in Ottawa are emerging from the groups. These reinforce the promising practices identified in Year Two, but also illustrate additional ways in which the groups are contributing towards reducing the social isolation of ethno-cultural minority seniors in Ottawa.

✓ *Building Trust and Being Connected in the Community*

One of the most common factors that group leaders and group members attribute to the success of the groups is the trust that the group leaders are able to build with their group members. For example, the Caribbean Ethno-Cultural Seniors of Ottawa group is relatively new, but it has increased significantly since its start in August 2018. Judy, the group leader, discussed how through her connections in the community, she has been able to build strong and trusting relationships with many seniors in her community, which is why they joined the group when it started. Ifrah and Ruweida, the group leaders of Daryeel: A Youth and Seniors Serving Centre shared a similar perspective. They described how they have many connections and good relationships in the Somali community in Ottawa, which has led to many referrals to their group from members of the community. The group leaders work hard to build trust with the seniors in their ethno-cultural communities and also make significant efforts to be connected in their communities. This encourages seniors to join the groups and helps them to feel welcome and comfortable.

✓ *Building Relationships*

Many group leaders discussed how a main purpose of their groups is to build relationships among the group members in order to increase the support that group members have. The success of this is evidenced by the 96% of seniors who reported that they feel more supported as a result of participating in their group's activities. As Rivaux and Vuthy, group leaders for the Cambodian Association of Ottawa Valley, discussed, the Cambodian community in Ottawa is relatively small, so many people know of each other. When the Cambodian seniors join the group, these relationships grow from an acquaintance to a friendship, which build their support network in the Cambodian community. One of the members of ICCC seniors' group shared that when her husband was not well, the group members visited, brought food, and helped provide support. She described how this level of support would not be there if she was not a member of the group.

Having one organization, with a highly competent and compassionate coordinator to work with the ethno-cultural minority seniors' groups, has proven to be a very promising practice in reducing social isolation among ethno-cultural minority seniors. The SPCO Coordinator's role as a connector and supporter of the groups has been very beneficial in many ways through the mobilization of the groups to work collectively; the momentum- and capacity-building of the group leaders by facilitating access to resources, learning opportunities, fundraising, administrative support, new funding opportunities, and relationship-building; and the compassion and care of the SPCO Coordinator in building relationships and including new groups and supporting existing groups. The relationships between the groups and the SPCO is one that is a very promising practice.

✓ *Sharing Community-Specific News, Events, and Celebrations*

The groups provide an opportunity for the seniors to share stories, news, events, and celebrations that are specific to their ethno-cultural community. Many of the seniors mentioned how this was one of the benefits in being part of the groups. For example, the Cambodian seniors shared how they appreciated that the group gave them a chance to gather and share news, stories, and events related to the Cambodian community in Ottawa and also those in Cambodia. The groups are also a place where the seniors can celebrate their specific cultural and/or religious holidays and festivals that are not celebrated Ottawa-wide. During one of ICCC's weekly gatherings, the group members celebrated Lohri, a Punjabi folk festival. Sharing in these events, celebrations, and stories helps the seniors to remain connected to their culture, feel valued in the community, and makes it fun and enjoyable to attend the group activities.



✓ *Fundraising*

To help with the sustainability of the groups, fundraising occurs both through the SPCO's support and through the individual groups. For a second consecutive year, the SPCO Coordinator is organizing a Walk-a-Thon for the groups to participate in. The walk-a-thon is held so that seniors can raise funds for space rentals or other group activities. In addition to the walk, seniors also sold snacks and food to raise funds. The groups also find ways to raise funds on their own. Based on the needs of their senior members, some groups choose to charge their members a small yearly membership, others have a small fee for each activity, and others have annual big fundraising events in their ethno-cultural communities. These small amounts of money can go a long way for the groups to support their activities and helps to supplement other funds that they receive.



✓ *Fostering Volunteerism*

A final promising practice identified by the SPCO Coordinator, group leaders, and members is fostering volunteerism among the seniors. The SPCO Coordinator noted that as a result of fostering and supporting their leadership skills, mentorship from others, the drive to benefit their communities, and increased experience leading their groups, the volunteer group leaders have grown significantly in relation to their advocacy and working together to create change. Additionally, within the individual groups, the group leaders (who are also volunteers) discussed how they know that the success of their groups is based on the efforts of volunteers, whether they help out in big or small ways. Consequently, the group leaders make sure to provide a range of volunteer opportunities (e.g., being a board member, contributing to the group activity meals, visiting isolated seniors, etc.) and also recognize their volunteers and let them know how much they are appreciated. For example, Anil, the group leader for ICCG, shared how there is one group member who volunteers to lead the clean-up of the kitchen and dishes and does it without hesitation each week. Anil wanted her to know how much they appreciated her volunteering, so at one of the large community events, she was celebrated and recognized for her volunteer contributions. It was an unexpected gesture, but one that helps volunteers feel appreciated and supported and encourages them to continue.



Over the three years of KOSC, the Creating Community for Isolated Ethno-Cultural Seniors project has created significant positive change in the ethno-cultural minority community in Ottawa. As the SPCO Coordinator indicated, there are numerous ways in which this project has benefited the community and contributed to increasing the social inclusion of ethno-cultural minority seniors in Ottawa: 1) the grassroots volunteer-led groups have faced less financial pressures and fewer challenges related to large funding applications, which has allowed them to work on what they do best: connecting and supporting their ethno-cultural community members; 2) it has also provided the groups with a platform to support their work (i.e., the SPCO can provide letters of reference and other forms of support to advance the work of the groups); 3) by coming together under one project, rather than working individually, the group leaders and group members have been empowered and have a stronger voice to advocate for the needs of ethno-cultural minority seniors in Ottawa; and 4) it creates an opportunity to bring groups together to share in their diverse cultures, histories, and food and to build relationships between communities of seniors in Ottawa. Through the many community partnerships and the efforts of the SPCO, group leaders, and group members, the groups are contributing in valuable ways to ensure that ethno-cultural seniors' voices are included and heard in the community.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Keeping Ottawa Seniors Connected (KOSC)

KOSC is a Collective Impact Initiative designed to measurably reduce the rate of social isolation in Ottawa’s pre-senior (ages 55 to 64) and senior (ages 65 and over) populations. Grounded in the knowledge of local community leaders and service providers and in the most up-to-date research and statistical data about the risk factors that make seniors vulnerable to becoming socially isolated, KOSC focuses its efforts on those who face barriers to participation due to: low income, mental, physical, or cognitive disability, elder abuse, poor official language skills and rural residency.

- As a Collective Impact Initiative, KOSC rests on five interconnected components:
- A shared understanding of the issues surrounding senior social isolation and a shared agenda and vision about how to address the issues.
- A shared measurement system to assess the progress of KOSC towards its stated objectives.
- Mutually reinforcing activities that address different main factors that increase vulnerability to senior social isolation – low income, disability, poor official language skills, elder abuse and rural residency.
- Continual communication between the partners and the broader community of stakeholders to build mutual trust, facilitate intersectoral learning and cross-fertilisation of promising approaches and practices, improve and refine shared understanding and vision and sustain mutually reinforcing activities.
- Backbone support provided by the Council on Aging of Ottawa, through the KOSC team, composed of the KOSC Director, the KOSC Lead Evaluator and the KOSC Co-Evaluator. The Director provides ongoing administrative and communication support and works closely with the Evaluators to: guide and refine KOSC programs, processes, practices, visions and strategies; better align the activities of partners and other stakeholders; mobilize the will of the broader community, including that of different levels of government and the private sector; address the issue of senior social isolation; mobilize additional resources to advance KOSC objectives; and facilitate continual evaluation processes.

KOSC is composed of seven funded partners and of a Social Inclusion Stakeholder Table:

- The **Council on Aging of Ottawa (COA)** serves as the **Backbone Organization** providing administration, communication and evaluation support organization for the collective.
- The **Catholic Centre for Immigrants (CCI)**, a local immigrant settlement agency, provides an innovative **Senior Centred English as a Second Language Program**.
- The **Nepean Rideau Osgoode Community Resource Centre (NROCRC)** program, **Elder Abuse Response and Referral Service (EARRS)** provides awareness, education and training sessions to seniors and service providers to raise awareness about elder abuse and provides intake and referral services for abused seniors.
- The **Ottawa West Community Support (OWCS)** program, **Healthy Connections, Healthy Communities (HCHC)** engages seniors living in Ottawa Community Housing buildings in activities and programming that provide them with opportunities to socialize and to connect with other seniors, community members and volunteers, and connects them with appropriate supports and services.

- The **South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre (SEOCHC)** program, **Strengthening Senior Neighbourhood Networks**, works in more than 15 neighbourhoods to identify low-income, isolated seniors, to connect them with existing supports and to set up social networks that connect seniors and empowers them to share their skills and knowledge.
- The **Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPCO)** program, **Creating Community for Ethno-Cultural Seniors** works with more than 18 different ethno-cultural seniors groups to support them in offering activities that will help to reduce isolation among seniors in their communities.
- The **Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre (WOCRC)** program, **Reducing Rural Isolation** trains volunteer community helpers to support seniors in rural areas.
- The **Social Inclusion Stakeholder Table** brings together a growing network of stakeholders who are committed to reducing senior social isolation in Ottawa and to ensuring the sustainability of this effort after the ESDC funding for KOSC expires.

KOSC internal partners & their collaborative relationships

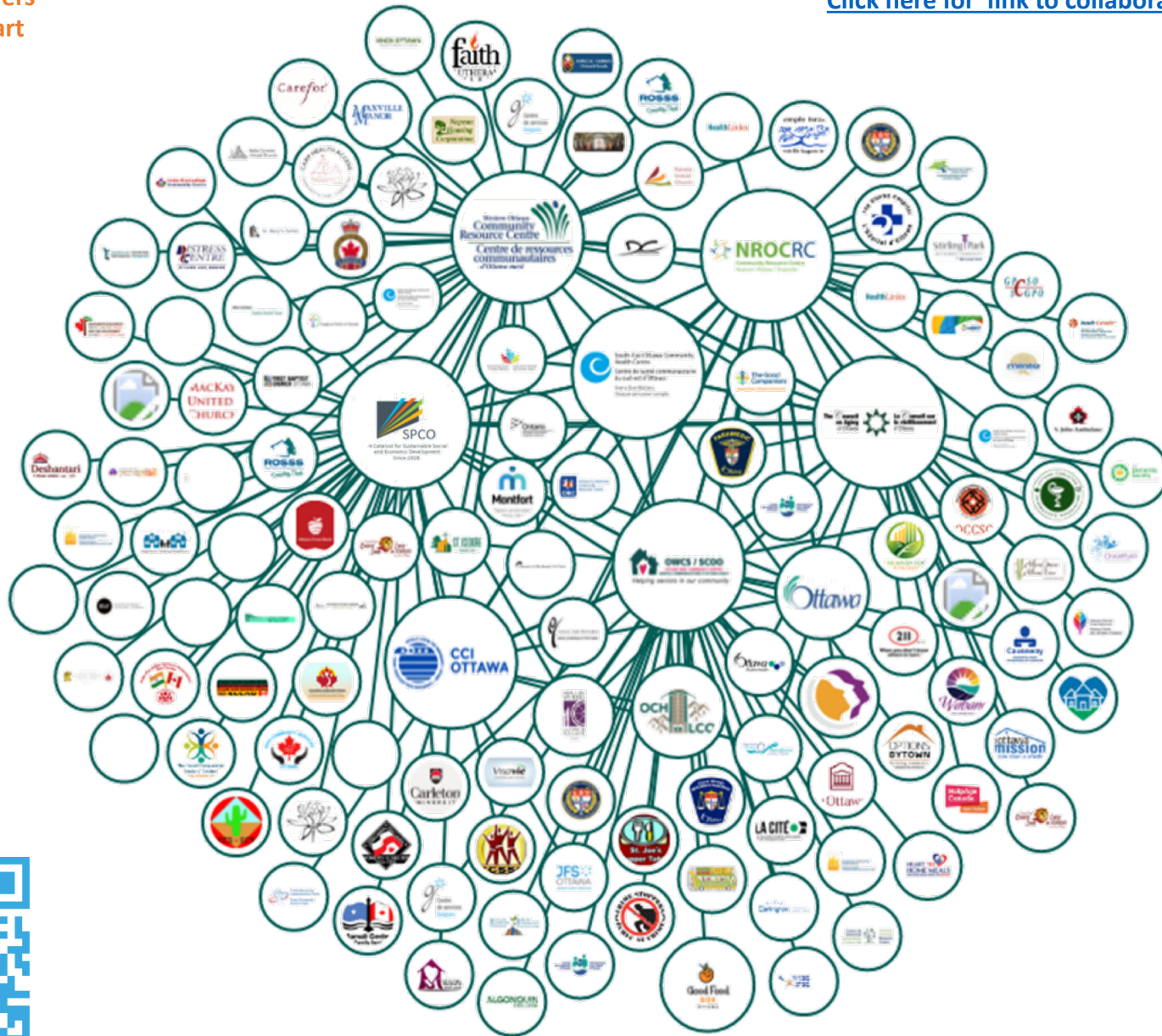


Through the work of the Backbone organization, the programs of the six funded partners and the work of the Social Inclusion Stakeholder Table, KOSC:

- ✓ connects seniors with the supports they need to overcome barriers to participation and connection
- ✓ provides seniors with opportunities to socialize with their friends, families and communities and
- ✓ empowers seniors to share their considerable knowledge and skills
- ✓ identifies barriers to social inclusion, connection and participation
- ✓ identifies promising practices to help seniors to overcome these barriers
- ✓ identifies ways of mitigating of dismantling systemic barriers to social inclusion, connection and participation
- ✓ develops strategies to enable KOSC to reach its goal of significantly reducing senior social isolation in Ottawa

KOSC Internal &
External Partners
Network Chart

[Click here for link to collaborative network map](#)



KOSC Population Level Change Goals

From June 2016 to May 2019, KOSC has committed to achieving four outcomes:

1 Increase the proportion of seniors who have support and help when they need it by 8% (3,541 individuals).

This is based on 2011 baseline data taken from the Canadian Community Health Survey in which 19.2% (43,147) of people who were 55 years of age or older in the Ottawa Census Metropolitan Area indicated that they had someone to help them with daily chores some, little or none of the time. Our rationale is that KOSC will serve 10,159 seniors over three years, of which we estimate that roughly 50% (5,080 individuals) will have adequate supports and we commit to connecting roughly 70% of the remaining half with the support they need.

2 Increase the proportion of seniors who participate regularly in activities by 20% (5,871 individuals).

This is based on 2011 baseline data taken from the Canadian Community Health Survey in which 12.9% (28,990) of people who were 55 years of age or older in the Ottawa Census Metropolitan Area indicated that they participated in activities with friends and family less than once per month. Our rationale is that KOSC will serve 10,159 seniors over three years, of which most will not have been participating in regular activities and that half of those reached will become engaged in regular activities.

3 Increase the proportion of seniors who feel connected by 16% (4,696 individuals).

This is based on 2011 baseline data** taken from the Canadian Community Health Survey in which 13.2% (4,696) of people who were 55 years of age or older in the Ottawa Census Metropolitan Area indicated that they had someone to listen to them some, little or none of the time. Our rationale is that 10,159 seniors will be served by the project over three years, of which most will not feel connected and that half will feel connected thanks to their participation in KOSC activities.

4 We committed to increase the proportion of seniors who feel valued by 10%. BUT:

We did not have an initial benchmark for this outcome. Based on the year one KOSC Pre-Participation Survey of 210 seniors, we were able to determine that roughly 26% did not agree or strongly agree that they felt valued by their friends and family. Applied to the number of individuals that will be served by KOSC over three years (26% of 10,159 individuals) this represents a total of 2,641 individuals who do not feel valued. Applied to the population total used in the 2011 benchmark (26% of 224,724 individuals), this would mean that 58,428 individuals do not feel valued. In order to increase that number by 10%, KOSC would have to help 5,843 seniors feel more valued, which is more than the total number of people who are likely not to feel valued among those who will be engaged in the three years of KOSC. Therefore, this outcome is not realistic. If we aim high and say that we will help half of those who do not feel valued to feel valued, the most we can hope to achieve is a 2.3% (1,321 individuals) increase in Ottawa seniors who feel valued.

IMPACT PLAN OUTCOMES



Reduce the proportion of seniors at risk of being or becoming socially isolated by increasing the proportion of seniors who:

1. Have support and help when they need it by 8%
2. Participate regularly in activities by 20%
3. Feel connected by 16%
4. Feel valued by 2.3%

PROJECT LEVEL OUTCOMES

Seniors who are isolated or at risk of becoming isolated are identified.

Identified seniors are aware of available supports and know how to access them.

Identified seniors are connected to and engage in knowledge-building activities.

Identified seniors develop and engage in new opportunities to socialize.

Identified seniors are empowered to contribute their knowledge and skills.

TARGETED BARRIERS TO SOCIAL INCLUSION

Low Income

Poor Official Language Skills

Disability

Abuse

Rural Living

ENABLING PROJECTS

Backbone Support - COA

CCI

English Conversation Circles for Seniors

NROCRC

Elder Abuse Response and Referral Service

OWCS

Healthy Connections
Healthy Communities

SEOCHC

Strengthening Senior Neighbourhood Networks

SPCO

Creating Community for Ethnocultural Minority Seniors

WOCRC

Community Helpers Program

