Mental Health Commission of Canada

Commission de la santé mentale du Canada

Roots of Hope
Guide

Ce document est disponible en français

Health Canada   Santé Canada

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The Journey

Introduction

Suicide is a complex social issue, and effective suicide prevention initiatives require a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving the entire community. Roots of Hope is a flexible, evidence-based, community-led model that has been proven to reduce the impact of suicide. By embracing a whole-community approach, Roots of Hope fosters a supportive and compassionate environment that safeguards the well-being of all community members.

This Guide is a comprehensive resource for communities that provides a suggested approach to adopting, implementing, and sustaining the Roots of Hope model. It supports communities in developing suicide prevention and life promotion strategies and in fostering collaboration across diverse sectors and populations. It also empowers them to actively promote community resilience and capacity building.

Formation of the model

In 2015, the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) attended the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership (IIMHL) Exchange Suicide Prevention Match to explore community suicide prevention approaches with national and international stakeholders. The IIMHL is an international network of leaders, which in 2015 included members from Canada, Australia, England, Ireland, Germany, New Zealand, and the United States. Its purpose is to connect, support, and inspire mental health leaders around the world through the exchange of ideas, practice, innovations, knowledge, and learning. Through the network, leaders are supported to explore and adopt best and emerging practices that can help improve the mental health of people and communities locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Members of the 2015 IIMHL Exchange Suicide Prevention Match looked to identify the critical elements of a systematic and evidence-based community suicide prevention approach. Several existing models were reviewed, including:

- World Health Organization (international, based in Switzerland)
- LifeSpan (Australia)
- Help for Life (Quebec)
- European Alliance Against Depression (Europe, based in Germany)
- Okanagan Nation Response Team (British Columbia)
- Southwest Hub for American Indian Youth Suicide Prevention Research (United States)
- Air Force Suicide Prevention Program (United States)

This collaborative review identified the elements needed for a practical, effective, and comprehensive community-led approach to suicide prevention as well as the roles and responsibilities of different community stakeholders. National and international experts agreed that suicide prevention activities fit into 5 pillars of action and 13 guiding principles, which have become the foundation for the MHCC's community-led suicide prevention model, Roots of Hope.

Roots of Hope is grounded in national and international evidence-based practices. The 5 pillars of action focus on means safety, public awareness, research and evaluation, specialized supports, and training and networks. The guiding principles serve as the model's fundamental building blocks; they stress the importance of concepts that should be incorporated into all Roots of Hope efforts.

Roots of Hope: 5 Pillars

Means Safety

Working to limit access to methods while identifying and addressing "hot spots" in the community

Public Awareness

Educational efforts — developed locally and based on community context — to increase help-seeking behaviours and reduce stigma around suicide

Training and Networks

Training and learning opportunities for gatekeepers and leaders in the community.

Specialized Supports

A range of activities supporting specific populations or needs in prevention, intervention, and postvention

Research and Evaluation

Engaging in activities that expand the Canadian suicide prevention evidence base

Roots of Hope – Guiding Principles

Comprehensive

Use multiple interventions geared toward a wide range of individuals across a variety of settings.

Collaboration/ Coordination

Design programs to enhance collaboration among stakeholders.

Culturally Appropriate

Develop, implement, and evaluate interventions that respect a diversity of cultures and are responsive and appropriate (for the overall community and specific sub-populations).

Recovery Oriented

Focus suicide prevention efforts on giving people hope, treating them with dignity, and meaningfully including them in the decisions being made.

Evidence Informed

Use evidence-informed interventions, selected and informed by different kinds of evidence, including those outside of peer-reviewed quantitative studies.

Measurement and Evaluation

Measure outcomes and evaluate interventions to determine their effectiveness and inform future innovations.

Lived Experience

Recognize the important role of suicide attempt and suicide loss survivors, persons with lived experience, individuals bereaved by suicide, and caregivers in guiding suicide prevention efforts.

Flexible

While standardization is important when comparing communities or tracking progress over time, be sure that selected interventions can be tailored to the community for which they are being implemented.

Strengths Based

Build on existing strengths rather than on identifying and closing gaps.

Span the Continuum

Address suicide across the entire spectrum, including prevention, intervention, and postvention services.

Community Centered

Develop initiatives that are community led, tailored to its current level of readiness, and driven by engaging and empowering local stakeholders.

Sustainable

Design initiatives that allow for continued funding and leadership.

Innovative

Attempt, evaluate, and share creative and innovative ideas to advance suicide prevention efforts globally.

Roots of Hope communities

Research Demonstration Project (2018-2022)

The Roots of Hope Research Demonstration Project (RDP) studied the model's implementation and impact in eight communities.[1]

The goal of the study was to inform best practices for applying the model in communities and to identify promising practices that could be adapted to meet the needs of unique population groups. A second priority was to make recommendations for further refinement of the Roots of Hope model.

The MHCC served as the RDP coordinator and funded the evaluation work of Principal Investigator Brian Mishara.[2] The MHCC also helped participating communities connect through a community of practice that brought together coordinators, researchers, and other regional stakeholders involved in suicide prevention initiatives. The principal investigator also initiated a separate CoP for community researchers, which included a specialized website and collaborative gatherings to create the RDP evaluation protocol.

This evaluation confirmed that the Roots of Hope model was widely perceived as a valuable and effective framework for developing a community-based suicide prevention strategy. The evaluation results indicated that in all the participating communities, the adoption and implementation of Roots of Hope led to a significant increase in the readiness to undertake suicide prevention activities. In some cases, this translated to a notable increase in the number of new suicide prevention activities implemented in the communities.

These findings demonstrate that the model empowered communities to develop and implement practical strategies to reduce the impact of suicide. The RDP outcomes provide evidence of the model's effectiveness and highlight its potential for driving meaningful change in suicide prevention efforts at the community level.

Early Adopters (2021-2023)

The Early Adopters cohort consisted of 11 communities, including two provinces and one territory. The goals of the Early Adopters were to capture promising practices in the scale-up of Roots of Hope and to assess the effectiveness of the MHCC's support in sustaining the model. The Early Adopters cohort bridged the time between the Research Demonstration Project and national scale-up for Roots of Hope and implemented the model in a less structured way.

Supports for the Early Adopters centred on virtual supports (i.e., email, teleconference, videoconference, webinars, quarterly newsletter). The communities had access to existing model tools, templates, and quarterly CoP meetings, which provided a platform for the sharing of best and promising practices, knowledge exchange, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities. Communities also had access to a dedicated MHCC liaison; this access included quarterly teleconferences to support knowledge exchange and address requests for evidence to support implementation.

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[1] Refer to the *Roots of Hope: Reflecting on Our Journey* resource for more information.
[2] Brian Mishara is the founder of and a director at the Centre de recherche et d'intervention sur le suicide, enjeux éthiques et pratiques de fin de vie. (CRISE). He is also a professor in the Université du Québec à Montréal's Department of Psychology.

National Community of Practice (launched 2023)

In response to the success of the communities of practice in the Research Demonstration Project and Early Adopters cohort, the MHCC launched a National Community of Practice (NCoP)[3] in June 2023. Research showed that the strength of the CoP model is grounded in the connection it fosters between communities.

The Roots of Hope NCoP is a peer-to-peer medium that connects community coordinators, representatives, researchers, people with lived and living experience, and other regional stakeholders, enabling participants to exchange knowledge and collaborate with like-minded individuals. During NCoP quarterly meetings, participants can engage in strategic discussions, identify challenges and emerging issues, review successes, inform the other participants about future initiatives, introduce best practices, and track progress related to Roots of Hope in their respective regions and communities. The NCoP also provides a regular opportunity for the MHCC to share information with communities regarding research and upcoming events, webinars, training, workshops, and other items.

The goals of the NCoP include the following:

- enable the transfer of knowledge about the implementation, adaptation, and sustainment of the Roots of Hope model nationally and within each local context
- establish a network of members who can connect and resolve issues
- create a network for sharing information, best and promising practices, and other strategic advice regarding implementing Roots of Hope
- provide a platform to recognize the work and contributions of coordinators nationwide

Want to learn more?

For more information about Roots of Hope and the National Community of Practice, visit *Roots of Hope: A community suicide prevention model – Mental Health Commission of Canada* or contact rootsofhope@mentalhealthcommission.ca.

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[3] Refer to the *Roots of Hope National Community of Practice* resource for more information.

About this Guide

The *Roots of Hope Guide* was developed by MHCC in partnership with Roots of Hope communities. It takes into consideration their successes and builds in additional guidance around identified barriers and challenges.

The Guide provides communities with a suggested process for adopting and sustaining the Roots of Hope model. It should be viewed as a road map for the Roots of Hope journey, not as a rule book for communities to follow. Each community is unique and the leadership and readiness for the Roots of Hope model will vary. This Guide is intended as a resource to make the development and implementation of community-led Roots of Hope initiatives easier and more effective.

The four phases in this Guide are carefully defined and accompanied by tools, resources, checklists, and case studies to guide and facilitate successful implementation. The processes and tools combine the experience of Roots of Hope communities with project management and implementation best practices. Additional assistance in adopting and implementing the Roots of Hope model is available to communities through the individualized supports offered by the MHCC.

To learn more, contact rootsofhope@mentalhealthcommission.ca.

Important terminology

The following words and phrases will be used throughout the *Roots of Hope Guide*.

Roots of Hope: A comprehensive made-in-Canada framework for community suicide prevention and life promotion. Since 2018, communities across Canada have reduced the impact of suicide by adapting the Roots of Hope model to their local contexts.

Suicide prevention: Suicide is one of the top 10 causes of death in Canada. It's a serious public health problem with lasting, harmful effects on individuals, families, and communities. For every death by suicide, there are probably more than 20 attempts. The term *suicide prevention* encompasses all prevention, intervention, and postvention activities that are designed to reduce the number of suicides and attempts in a community.

Life promotion: A culturally and contextually informed approach and way of life preferred by many Indigenous communities. Life promotion is a holistic approach to the well-being of populations and communities that encompasses suicide prevention concepts. Rather than addressing suicide prevention through a language of deficit, risk factors, and triggers, life promotion represents a paradigm shift centring on life and hope.

5 pillars of action: Roots of Hope communities tailor their suicide prevention efforts around the model's 5 pillars: means safety, public awareness, research and evaluation, specialized supports, and training and networks. While communities may prioritize activities in certain pillars, the Roots of Hope model envisions community-based initiatives under each of the 5 pillars.

13 guiding principles: The Roots of Hope framework is underpinned by fundamental values and beliefs represented by 13 guiding principles: comprehensive, collaboration/coordination, culturally appropriate, recovery oriented, evidence informed, measurement and evaluation, lived experience, flexible, strengths based, span the continuum, community centred, sustainable, and innovative. Together, these guiding principles are essential to informing how the Roots of Hope work is done.

Exploration phase: The phase in which communities collect data on suicide rates and risk factors in the community, gather information and perspectives from key stakeholders operating in the suicide prevention space, and focus on understanding the current state and existing activities within the community.

Planning phase: The phase in which communities explore opportunities to introduce new suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities in the community, prioritize services and supports that align with the unique needs and context of the community, and focus on stakeholder collaboration and cross-sectoral partnership building.

Implementation phase: The phase in which communities develop and implement suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities, starting with those identified as highest priority, and focus on building momentum, serving at-risk populations, and evaluating impact.

Sustainability phase: The phase in which communities ensure the long-term viability and continuity of Roots of Hope initiatives within the community and focus on community ownership, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Remember to celebrate successes!

Community: Any group that shares a socially significant characteristic such as geographic place (e.g., city, neighbourhood, school district), identity trait (e.g., ethnicity, age, profession), shared experience (e.g., education, racism, illness), or interest/motivation to act (e.g., health equity, social justice).

People with lived and living experience (PWLLE): Lived and living experience can be understood as personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people. It can be thought of as the experiences of people on whom a social issue or combination of issues has had a direct impact. Within the Roots of Hope model, the term *PWLLE* includes those who have lived through suicide attempts as well as those who have been impacted by suicide loss. The term *PWLLE* can also include those who have experienced suicidal ideation/thoughts and behaviours.

Stakeholders: The individuals, groups, and organizations that are involved in or affected by Roots of Hope, including community members, local agencies, health-care providers, educators, and policy makers.

Gatekeeper: A person who has direct contact with community members as part of their regular routine and who is trained to identify the warning signs of suicide and refer those in need to supportive services.

Implementation science: The study of methods and strategies that facilitate the uptake of evidence-based practice and research into regular use by practitioners and policy makers. By identifying and addressing the barriers that slow or halt the uptake of proven health interventions and evidence-based practices, implementation science helps to close the gap between what we *know* and what we *do*.

SMART goals: A goal-setting framework where SMART stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. SMART goals help ensure clarity, track progress, and increase the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes.

PDSA cycle: An iterative problem-solving approach where PDSA stands for plan, do, study, act. The PDSA cycle focuses on continuous learning, testing, and improvement of strategies and initiatives during implementation.

Scale-up and spread: Scaling up Roots of Hope involves ensuring successful initiatives (e.g., pilot programs) are expanded to serve additional communities and populations. Spreading Roots of Hope entails taking successful initiatives and replicating them in new communities or regions. Both approaches can improve long-term impact, and the choice of where to focus available resources depends on the community's goals.

Key Considerations

Roots of Hope teams should consider the following cross-cutting areas of focus as they relate to suicide prevention and life promotion in their community:

- 2SLGBTQI+
- bullying, particularly within schools
- domestic violence
- economic inequality and poverty
- education and literacy
- health and structural inequalities
- homelessness and inadequate housing
- incarceration by the criminal justice system
- intergenerational trauma
- media and social media
- mental health illnesses
- newcomers and refugees
- problem gambling and technology use
- racism and discrimination
- social isolation
- substance use

People with lived and living experience (PWLLE)

Within the Roots of Hope model, the term PWLLE includes those who have lived through suicide attempt as well as those who have been impacted by suicide loss. It can also include people who have experienced suicidal ideation/thoughts and behaviours.

The effective engagement of PWLLE needs to be prioritized throughout the community's Roots of Hope journey. The unique perspectives and insights shared by PWLLE can substantially enhance the safety, effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability of community-based supports and services. The sharing of these stories can also further advocacy efforts to reduce stigma and provide hope to other community members.

Working closely with community members who have lived experience is particularly important during the early stages of developing new Roots of Hope initiatives. Involving PWLLE starting with preliminary discussions will give them more autonomy in the process and can help ensure initiatives are more focused, integrated, and culturally appropriate. Engaging PWLLE in the design of innovative approaches to suicide prevention and life promotion has the potential to drive transformational social change. It also helps to build more trust in community and health-care systems.

How to amplify the voices of PWLLE

Communities can amplify the voices of PWLLE in the following ways:

- Embrace the notion of lived experience and value this form of human wisdom and the knowledge it brings.
- Encourage PWLLE to share their stories and identify patterns and themes that can inform Roots of Hope initiatives.
- Avoid tokenism; don't expect a small number of PWLLE to speak on behalf of all PWLLE in the community.
- Consider nominating spokespeople to represent the knowledge and expertise of PWLLE if/when PWLLE find it difficult to speak openly in certain community settings.
- Support PWLLE involved in Roots of Hope to gather additional data and stories among their peers.
- Partner with and support community groups led by PWLLE.
- Involve PWLLE in the design, implementation, and communication of Roots of Hope initiatives.
- Provide meaningful, equitable, and inclusive opportunities for PWLLE to be change makers within the community.
- Recognize the value of their time and expertise by offering PWLLE compensation such as honoraria or gift cards. Consider offering other incentives such as child care during meetings, especially if there are tax considerations (e.g., for PWLLE who are on disability).
- Publicly acknowledge the contributions of PWLLE as often as possible.
- Seek out ways to tackle the systemic barriers, social stigmas, and wider inequalities that PWLLE face every day.

Indigenous communities

Roots of Hope communities need to ensure local First Nations, Inuit, and Métis populations are engaged in a holistic manner. It is imperative that Indigenous populations are engaged in a way that promotes Indigenous sovereignty and well-being. While this section refers mainly to definable Indigenous communities such as reserve populations, it is important for Roots of Hope communities to engage Indigenous people wherever they live.

Taking the time to get to know the dynamics of Indigenous communities in advance of engagement is a sign of respect. It will show that the Roots of Hope team members take their relationship with the Indigenous community seriously, that they want to engage respectfully, and that they understand the Indigenous community's history, achievements, and challenges.

Engaging with Indigenous communities is a long-term strategy that requires consistency, patience, and trust. Each Indigenous community is unique, with a diversity of strengths and challenges. It is important to dedicate resources and budget for relationship building and ongoing learning about Indigenous perspectives and needs.

First steps to engaging Indigenous communities

Roots of Hope teams can start the engagement process with their Indigenous communities in the following ways:

- Identify the Indigenous communities the Roots of Hope initiatives want to engage.
- Gather information about the history and traditions of each community.
- Learn about the stories and history of each community's journey with suicide.
- Find out relevant cultural practices for engaging the community (e.g., opening prayers, tobacco, gifts).
- Research the community profile including spiritual activities; fishing, hunting, and gathering activities; tribal council affiliations; treaty office affiliations; community priorities; and community protocols.
- Create an engagement plan including a carefully considered and well-informed communication strategy.
- Establish a strong foundation and understanding before considering any agreement or partnership.
- Seek to maintain relationships through openness, trust, and generosity.

In addition to engaging definable Indigenous communities, consider ways to connect with and learn about the needs of Indigenous people living throughout the region.

- Reach out to community-based Indigenous-led organizations such as local Friendship Centres, Indigenous Coalitions, and community health centres serving the needs of Indigenous populations.
- Establish connections with knowledgeable staff or volunteers and gain realistic insight into Indigenous vulnerabilities, services, and supports in the community.
- Keep the lines of communication open and meet regularly for knowledge exchange and to discuss collaboration and partnership opportunities.

Health equity lens

A health equity framework[4] promotes the ability of individuals and communities to have equitable and fair opportunities to reach their fullest health potential. Health outcomes are often rooted in unequal social relations, distributions of power, and resources. These inequities are often systematic, patterned, avoidable, and addressable. They include factors such as income, social status, race, gender identify, education, and physical environment.

Health equity seeks to reduce the excess burden of ill health among disadvantaged populations and to redistribute resources to improve living conditions so that everyone can be healthy. Roots of Hope communities are encouraged to promote health equity by recognizing health disparities and identifying solutions that can address the social determinants of health.

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[4] Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2023). *Toward an integrated and comprehensive equity framework for mental health policy and programming: Needs assessment report.* https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/resource/toward-an-integrated-and-comprehensive-equity-framework-report/

Social determinants of health

Social determinants of health affect how people thrive in their own lives and in society. Mental well-being is deeply impacted by social determinants of health, such as precarious housing, poverty, social exclusion, and racism. Certain populations are more likely to be exposed to these determinants and are often considered priority populations for suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities.

Addressing social determinants of health is a primary approach to achieving health equity. Roots of Hope communities are encouraged to "think outside the box" when identifying stakeholders and forming local partnerships. Engaging community leaders from a variety of sectors will enable Roots of Hope leaders to design and implement suicide prevention supports that speak to the lived reality of community members.

A Four-Phased Approach to Implementing Roots of Hope

Introduction

It is important to note that communities may have unique circumstances and different levels of readiness, leading to significant variability in the Roots of Hope implementation process and timeline. The four-phased approach outlined in this Guide is offered as a suggested process; it's expected that communities will adapt and adjust the approach according to their unique context and needs.

Exploration phase: Provides the framework for successful Roots of Hope implementation by fostering awareness and comprehension of the community's current landscape.

Planning phase: Equips communities with a well-structured action plan that serves as a comprehensive road map for Roots of Hope implementation.

Implementation phase: Puts the plan into action and collects Roots of Hope impact data to evaluate success.

Sustainability phase: Ensures the long-term viability and continuity of Roots of Hope within the community.

Phase 1: Exploration

The exploration phase provides the framework for successful Roots of Hope implementation by fostering awareness and comprehension of the community's current landscape.

In this phase, communities will use the *Community Exploration Tool* to create a community profile, collect data on suicide rates and risk factors in the community, and document existing supports and services. They will gather additional information and perspectives from key stakeholders operating in the suicide prevention space.

The focus during this phase is on understanding the current state and existing activities within the community. Communities will examine the unique needs, values, and cultural factors that impact local populations in preparation for future problem solving and solution-focused discussions.

By initiating a data-driven process, communities can establish the foundation for effective and culturally sensitive suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities, paving the way for subsequent phases of the strategy.

Objectives and expected outcomes

Lay a strong foundation for success. The exploration phase is about understanding the unique dynamics of the community. Communities should ensure their approach is community-centric, with particular consideration of the community's history, values, and specific needs.

Collect data and gather information. Whether starting from scratch or working with existing resources, data are the foundation for informed decision-making. Communities should complete the *Community Exploration Tool* to gather information and then analyze the data to inform their future strategy.

Understand the current landscape. Communities should build a picture of existing suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities in their community. They should engage key stakeholders to understand perspectives, gaps, and opportunities.

Recognize social and cultural factors. Being attentive to cultural considerations will help communities create a strategy that is relevant to diverse groups within the community.

> ## Key resources
>
> During the exploration phase, communities will want to complete the *Community Exploration Tool.*
>
> Communities may also find the *Community Readiness Assessment Tool* helpful.

Suggested process

The following steps are designed to guide communities in gathering and documenting information that will provide a better understanding of the current state and landscape of suicide in the community. Not all communities will follow the sequence outlined here; it is intended as an example of how to get started.

1. *Assess and allocate resources*

    It is recommended that communities begin by examining the resources available to them. The following steps can help in determining whether resources are sufficient and in deciding how best to assign them.

    - Review the *Community Exploration Tool* to get a sense of the information to be collected as part of assessing the current landscape of suicide prevention and life promotion within the community. This may include doing the following tasks:
        o   Make notes regarding what is already known. What quantitative data exist? What data are the community already using?
        o   Consider how to gather qualitative data from different stakeholders in the community. Whose stories need to be heard? Are there any reports or studies that might help to further understand community perspectives?
    - Identify available resources and the resource constraints within which the community needs to work.
        o   Who will direct the work required in the exploration phase? Who will do the work? How will they work together?
        o   How many staff hours can be dedicated to the exploration phase? Is there a budget to hire new or temporary staff, or will existing staff be tasked with this work?
        o   Are the staffing resources already knowledgeable about the community and about suicide prevention and life promotion efforts? How can contextual information be easily shared among team members?
        o   Has a deadline been established for completing the exploration phase? In other words, is there a date by which the community needs to decide whether to proceed with adopting the Roots of Hope model?
    - Allocate available resources to complete the exploration phase.
        o   Establish clear expectations regarding the number of staff hours and/or activities to complete this work.
        o   Ensure all team members have a good understanding of the Roots of Hope model and the parameters of the exploration phase.

> ## Community coordinator role
>
> The community coordinator is a pivotal resource in the implementation of Roots of Hope, serving as a communication link and ensuring alignment among all elements of the community-based model.
>
> Hiring or allocating the right person for this role sets the stage for the effective implementation and oversight of suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities in the community.
>
> Communities can use the *Community Coordinator – Sample Job Description* to help establish the qualifications and expertise required to undertake this important role.
>
> It is recommended that communities identify (and budget for) educational and knowledge exchange opportunities that will enable the community coordinator to be informed about suicide prevention and life promotion best practices.

2. *Identify data collection priorities and methods*

It's not necessary to fill out all the *Community Exploration Tool* right away — communities can return to this tool as time allows and activities require. The following steps can help the Roots of Hope team decide what is most important to include in the first round of data collection and how best to gather this information.

- Review again the *Community Exploration Tool* and highlight certain sections or questions that are particularly important to understand at this time. Consider these your priorities for data collection during the exploration phase.
- Determine which priority data can be collected independently by the Roots of Hope team (e.g., region/areas served, community characteristics, existing services and supports).
- Identify key stakeholders who will have access to the remaining priority data (e.g., mental health landscape, suicide data from local hospitals, community beliefs and perceptions about mental illness and/or suicide).
- Reexamine the Roots of Hope resource allocation as it relates to these data collection priorities and methods. Do adjustments need to be made?

3. *Collect data and gather information*

Communities will vary in how they choose to collect data and gather information. Make sure to establish and stick to data collection priorities during the early stages of the Roots of Hope journey. Additional information can always be gathered during a later phase.

While data collection often focuses on quantitative statistics, anecdotal information and personal stories are equally important to understanding the community. Communities should gather a variety of perspectives from Indigenous Elders, PWLLE, community leaders, mental health service providers, and others about community members' experience and perceptions about suicide. Whenever possible, qualitative data such as the stories shared by community members impacted by suicide loss or attempt and front-line service providers should be documented.

The following points should be thought of not as sequential steps but rather as activities to consider at this point in the Roots of Hope journey.

- Gather details on the context of the community and the current circumstances in the *Community Exploration Tool* (*Community profile* section). Start by capturing the basics and try not to get overwhelmed by the numerous examples provided; they are meant as thought provokers rather than data capture requirements. Other community data sources include:
  o Statistics Canada: census profiles, GeoSearch tool, population and demography resources
  o Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada: Community Information Database
  o Provincial and territorial governments: BC, AB, SK, MB, ON, QC, NB, NS, PEI, NL, YK, NWT, NU
  o City and regional governments: community profiles (e.g., Vancouver, Calgary, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto), open databases (e.g., Fredericton)
  o Independent neighbourhood studies (e.g., Ottawa)
  o Chambers of commerce and business improvement areas
  o Community forums and social media platforms
  o Gatekeepers (e.g., pharmacists, educators, politicians)
- Research suicide prevention and life promotion efforts within the community and use the *Community Exploration Tool* (*Existing services and supports* section) to document information on each one:
  o Capture data such as delivery agent, type of service provided, target population(s), availability, and affordability.
  o This information will help communities to identify current strengths as well as gaps and opportunities for new or enhanced supports and services.
- Community supports and services can fall under several categories, including:
  o suicide prevention – includes all mental health care supports and services, such as awareness campaigns, skills training, support groups
  o suicide intervention – distress services, specialized trainings, etc.
  o suicide postvention – resources, toolkits, policies, etc.
  o life promotion – frameworks, approaches, programs, etc.
- Capture information about existing events and campaigns about mental health, mental illness, and suicide.
- Review existing data on suicide rates at the national, regional, and local levels. Sources of data on suicide include:
  o Statistics Canada: vital statistics – death database description and data set by mortality cause (see the row for *intentional self-harm (suicide)* in that data set)
  o Canadian Institute for Health Information: self-harm, including suicide indicator description and provincial/territorial data
  o Centre for Suicide Prevention: cross-Canada statistics and provincial/territorial data
  o Local hospitals
  o Coroners service, medical examiner office
  o First responders (e.g., paramedics, police)
  o Local government or health authority reports

- Capture the data available for the community in the *Community Exploration Tool* (*Suicide data* section). Communities should document any information they can regarding the demographics related to suicides in their community.
- Examine suicide risk factors in the community (e.g., cross-cutting areas of focus as described in the Key Considerations section, patterns of alcohol and substance use, psychosocial stressors).

4. *Connect with key stakeholders*

Communities may want to engage with relevant stakeholders to gather additional information during the exploration phase. Consider the following steps to help guide these early connections:

- Prioritize stakeholders who have access to key information that is not publicly available. Communities should think beyond their usual partners and colleagues.
- Consider how best to approach the stakeholder. What sort of connection with this stakeholder best serves the community's Roots of Hope efforts? Is a transactional exchange of information sufficient and perhaps even preferable at this early stage? Has the community identified the stakeholder as a key source for strategic guidance? Might this stakeholder be a crucial Roots of Hope ambassador?
- Develop an introduction to explain the Roots of Hope model and what phase community is at in its Roots of Hope journey.
- Focus on the stakeholder's area of expertise and prioritize questions that enable them to share their knowledge and experience. Document as much of this information as possible.
- If time and setting allow, ask broad, open-ended questions that will provide more qualitative and contextual information. For example, ask the stakeholder to share their concerns about the current suicide prevention landscape of the community and how they would like to see those concerns addressed.
- Try to determine whether there is community support for expanding and improving upon existing suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities.
- Start tracking these stakeholders using the *Community Action Plan* (*Stakeholders & Partners* worksheet).

5. *Assess community readiness*

Consider using the *Community Readiness Assessment Tool* to help evaluate the community's readiness to effectively address the impact of suicide with the Roots of Hope model. It will help to:

- determine whether the context, perspectives, and needs of the community regarding suicide prevention and life promotion are well understood
- identify emerging issues and effective strategies to support action, specific to the community's context
- promote recognition of the issue and community ownership of suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities
- conserve valuable resources (i.e., time and money) by selecting and implementing the Roots of Hope initiatives that are most likely to be successful
- plan for some early successes as well as more complex, longer term initiatives
- identify where cooperation among systems and individuals may be possible and advantageous

- ensure that strategies and initiatives are culturally congruent and sustainable
- develop a plan to encourage community investment and ownership of suicide prevention and life promotion efforts

6. *Share findings*

It is important that communities make the time to share the results of their exploration work with those who generously contributed their knowledge and insight. They can do this in the following ways:

- Provide stakeholders with the opportunity to review the data and information the Roots of Hope team has compiled.
  - Consider sharing the community's completed *Community Exploration Tool* and ask stakeholders to provide further input as they see fit. Does the information make sense? Is anything missing?
- Make sure to clearly communicate next steps with the stakeholders that have been engaged during the exploration phase. What further action will the community take? What, if any, involvement does the Roots of Hope team hope they will have?

7. *Set review dates*

Communities should return to the exploration phase activities regularly to ensure data continue to be relevant. Revisiting the exploration phase will enable communities to continue documenting information that may not have been prioritized at first but can inform Roots of Hope initiatives and the implementation process. It will also allow communities to track changes in perceptions and stigma over time.

The *Community Exploration Tool* should be thought of as an organic and evergreen resource that can be edited and adjusted throughout the community's Roots of Hope journey. As community dynamics shift, it is critical to continue to review and update information to reflect the current state.

It may help to formalize this process by setting regular review dates (e.g., every six months) or by establishing more continuous data gathering processes. Deciding how to keep community data up to date will help communities to avoid potential pitfalls as efforts are planned and implemented.

Community reflection: Leveraging multiple suicide models

When incorporating the Roots of Hope model, communities do not need to start from the ground up. Roots of Hope has been proven to provide communities with an adaptable framework that can serve as the foundation for their community suicide prevention and life promotion model or to guide or enhance pre-existing suicide prevention frameworks.

For example, Edmonton, Alberta, was on the way to finalizing a comprehensive suicide prevention model; however, the city was able to amplify its efforts and refine its implementation strategy when it incorporated Roots of Hope into its existing framework. Key stakeholders were able to leverage their tailored resources and initiatives to enhance targeted interventions and expand the overall reach of suicide prevention initiatives in the region.

Implementing Roots of Hope in Edmonton led to a more collaborative and focused approach to suicide prevention initiatives. This empowered community agencies to strengthen their suicide prevention and life promotion initiatives and establish a more cohesive and impactful community response. Through this approach, Edmonton demonstrated how incorporating Roots of Hope allowed the community to adapt and optimize its suicide prevention and life promotion efforts.

Key takeaway:

Adopting the Roots of Hope model, even in a community with an active suicide prevention strategy, can create opportunities to optimize efforts, enhance collaboration, and expand the reach of suicide prevention and life promotion initiatives. Communities exploring Roots of Hope are encouraged to assess pre-existing suicide prevention and life promotion efforts during the exploration phase. The Roots of Hope model can then be adapted and tailored to augment and strengthen these pre-existing efforts or serve as the foundation to create a community suicide prevention strategy. Through careful planning and integration, the Roots of Hope model offers communities a practical pathway to enhance their suicide prevention and life promotion initiatives.

Phase 2: Planning

The planning phase equips communities with a well-structured action plan that serves as a comprehensive road map for implementation. During this phase, data gathered in the exploration phase are leveraged to align goals, objectives, and strategies with the unique needs and context of the community.

In the planning phase, communities will recruit staff and community members to form an effective and engaged team to support the Roots of Hope journey. They will collaborate with stakeholders from multiple sectors to identify and prioritize suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities for implementation. They will create a *Community Action Plan* to ensure Roots of Hope is sustainable and impactful, making a meaningful difference in their community and in the lives of those the community's suicide prevention and life promotion activities aim to support.

The focus during this phase is on stakeholder collaboration and cross-sectoral relationship building. It is important to engage community leaders, Indigenous communities, PWLLE, and other stakeholders in a variety of ways to gather insights on gaps, opportunities, and areas for improvement in mental health, suicide prevention, and life promotion supports and services.

Successful planning is the foundation upon which the success of Roots of Hope is built, ultimately leading to positive outcomes in suicide prevention and life promotion for the community.

Objectives and expected outcomes

Strategically allocate available resources. Ensure the proper allocation of available resources (e.g., funding, staff, equipment) to support the development of Roots of Hope initiatives. It's recommended that communities hire or allocate a community coordinator if they have not already done so and research capacity-building opportunities.

Engage key stakeholders and form a community coalition. Identify opportunities for collaborative partnerships and establish solid relationships with community stakeholders, organizations, and leaders. It's important to engage community members with lived and living experience early on in these collaborative discussions. Priority stakeholders can be recruited to form a community coalition.

Generate and prioritize ideas for Roots of Hope initiatives. Communities can work with their community coalition and other stakeholders to brainstorm potential suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities that serve the unique needs of their community. These ideas should be ranked in order of their priority for implementation.

Develop monitoring and evaluation strategies. Communities should determine how they will monitor and evaluate Roots of Hope implementation activities. They should create a well-structured plan using available tools and resources to identify success metrics and collect impact data.

> **Key resource**
>
> During the planning phase, communities will want to use the *Community Action Plan* to capture stakeholders, partners, and ideas for initiatives and activities.

Suggested process

The following steps are designed to guide communities in planning their Roots of Hope implementation activities. Not all communities will follow the sequence outlined here; it is intended as an example of how communities might approach work in the planning phase.

1. *Assess and allocate resources*

   As communities enter the planning phase, they first need to examine the resources available and make strategic decisions about resource allocation. They can take the following steps to identify key areas for consideration.

   - Reflect again upon the community coordinator role established by many Roots of Hope communities.
     - Does the person in this role have the right skills and experience to lead the planning and implementation of Roots of Hope? What supports might they need? What professional development opportunities are advised?
     - If communities have not yet hired or allocated a community coordinator, it is recommended that they do so now.
   - Determine roles and responsibilities for planning and implementing the Roots of Hope model.
     - Define the objectives for the planning phase and create a detailed list of the planning activities to be completed.
     - Confirm the decision-making process and timeline for advancing to the implementation phase. Who has decision-making authority? What information do they require? How often do they want progress updates?
     - Consider the impact of potential resource shifts as the community moves through the planning and implementation processes. How confident is the team that staffing levels will remain stable and employees will remain in their current positions? Is a significant budget increase expected as the community progresses toward implementation? How should these inform the community's resourcing strategy (e.g., documentation processes and requirements, short-term versus long-term hiring decisions)?
   - Assess community capacity including funding, staff, infrastructure, support networks, and other required resources.
     - Examine the resources required for all phases of the Roots of Hope journey. What is the community's current and/or expected budget? How many staff hours and/or full-time equivalents (FTEs) can be dedicated to planning and implementing Roots of Hope? Do team members have access to the physical resources they require to complete the work (e.g., computer, software)?
     - Consider whether current resources could be repurposed to align with Roots of Hope planning and implementation requirements. Is there funding to hire new employee(s) or will existing staff be tasked with this work? What qualifications and experience do staff require to complete the defined objectives and activities? Does this expertise exist in the current team?
   - Determine what resource allocation works best and is most feasible within the context of the community.
     - Consider potential knowledge gaps and identify ways to support staff as they scale Roots of Hope activities. Are the staffing resources the same as those used during

the exploration phase? If not, how will existing knowledge be transferred to new team members? What educational opportunities might provide staff with additional skills in suicide prevention and life promotion?

- o Establish clear expectations regarding the roles and responsibilities of each team member and document reporting relationships.
- o Ensure all team members have a good understanding of the Roots of Hope model, the information gathered during the exploration phase, and the parameters of the planning phase.

4P stakeholders

When identifying and engaging stakeholders, communities should consider those with power, purpose, passion, and presence.[5]

Power: Stakeholders who have the power to influence Roots of Hope efforts. They may be formal gatekeepers who control access to information, decisions, or other resources necessary to move an idea forward, or they may have access to power in more indirect ways such as through networks, reputation, or expertise.

Purpose: Stakeholders who have concerns and values that resonate with the Roots of Hope model. They may be personally or professionally engaged in mental health, suicide prevention, or life promotion efforts in the community. These individuals and groups are likely to find the Roots of Hope work meaningful and important.

Passion: Stakeholders who feel passion or compassion for reducing the impact of suicide in the community. They may have personal stories of loss or deep connections to at-risk communities that act as a driving force. It is important to identify and engage this type of stakeholder because emotional connections are key elements of the work of suicide prevention and life promotion.

Presence: Stakeholders who are willing to prioritize this work and invest their time and energy in Roots of Hope efforts. They will need to feel that it is safe to engage with this work while also having the capacity to get involved. Communities should try to distinguish potential change makers from those who merely provide verbal support.

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[5] Drake, Irmelin. (2018). *Social innovation and collaboration. Identifying and engaging stakeholders with power, purpose, passion and presence.*

2. *Stakeholder mapping and engagement planning*

Collaboration will be vital for sustained success and community engagement throughout the Roots of Hope journey. Given that Roots of Hope is a community-led model, it is crucial that communities foster connections, trust, confidence, and buy-in for their suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities.

Communities should be constantly gathering and documenting stakeholder information with a particular focus on identifying opportunities for collaboration and partnership. The following provides some guidance to assist communities in making a comprehensive list of stakeholders and creating holistic engagement strategies.

- Use the *Community Action Plan* (*Stakeholders & Partners* worksheet) to create a list of all the people and groups that have the potential to affect the community's Roots of Hope efforts.
    - Begin with the stakeholders identified during the exploration phase.
    - Stakeholder examples include Indigenous Elders, PWLLE, health-care providers, mental health agencies, faith communities, local businesses, formal and informal community groups, gatekeepers, politicians, and the organizations currently offering supports and services to community members.
    - Refer to the Key Considerations section of this Guide and consider multi-sectoral stakeholders involved in any of the cross-cutting areas of focus.
    - Consider community members who act as natural supports (e.g., barbers, estheticians, sport coaches, bartenders).
    - Identify where cooperation among systems and individuals may be possible and advantageous.
- Prioritize the stakeholders who are most important to engage at this stage of the Roots of Hope journey.
    - It is important to engage PWLLE and Indigenous communities as early as possible in the Roots of Hope journey. If a community has not already identified stakeholders in these priority groups, it should do so now.
    - Make notes regarding stakeholders' ability to affect community-based mental health, suicide prevention, and life promotion initiatives. Factors to consider include power, impact, attitude, beliefs, expectations, degree of influence, proximity, and interest.
    - Consider stakeholders with passion, presence, purpose, and power (4P stakeholders). Which stakeholders can help paint a comprehensive picture of the challenges and opportunities for implementing the Roots of Hope model? Which stakeholders have the power and influence to impact whether the community implements Roots of Hope initiatives?
    - Remember to consider stakeholders who may have negative feelings toward the work and who may actively resist the community's Roots of Hope journey.
    - Determine which of the identified stakeholders are highest priority to engage and track this information on the *Community Action Plan* (*Stakeholders & Partners* worksheet). This can be as simple as using a high/medium/low categorization, or stakeholders can be rated on a variety of factors and each assigned an assessment score. For example, stakeholders can be given a score out of five for each of the 4Ps and these scores can be totalled to create a priority score out of 20.

- There is no prescriptive one-size-fits-all approach to stakeholder engagement. Communities should create a tailored approach that works well with the dynamics of their community.
  - Define the objectives for engaging priority stakeholders. What is each stakeholder's current level of engagement with Roots of Hope? What level of engagement does the community hope the stakeholder will have going forward? How active does the community hope the stakeholder will be in planning, implementing, and sustaining Roots of Hope initiatives?
  - Consider using the *IAP2 Spectrum Resource*[6] which outlines different levels of public participation in decision-making processes.
  - Consider a variety of Stakeholder engagement methods such as focus groups, interviews, meetings, surveys, social media, webinars, and workshops. What is the stakeholder's area of expertise? What do they probably know that the Roots of Hope team doesn't know? What data and information might they have access to? How do they typically receive their information and engage with others?
  - After the community has selected which stakeholders it wishes to engage, it should determine the key messaging for each one of these stakeholders in accordance with the stakeholder engagement method the community plans to use. Consideration should be given to how to explain the following to stakeholders: the Roots of Hope model, the phase the community is at in its Roots of Hope journey, and the role in the process of the person who is approaching the stakeholder. How will the community clearly communicate what it wants the stakeholder(s) to do to support Roots of Hope efforts?
  - Continually assess future opportunities during engagement sessions. Which stakeholders will the community want to work closely with going forward? What partnerships will it need to establish to effectively implement Roots of Hope initiatives?
- Engage as many stakeholders as possible on a wide range of topics related to mental health, suicide prevention, and life promotion. Examples include:
  - concerns and insights about the community landscape
  - personal experience with suicide prevention and life promotion
  - views on how the community perceives suicide, suicide prevention, life promotion, mental health, etc.
  - knowledge of past suicide losses and attempts in the community
  - opinions regarding media coverage of suicide losses, attempts, ideation, and behaviours
- Follow up with participants after each engagement session (e.g., thank you, link to more information, review of next steps).
  - Make sure that there is a strategy to share aspects of the community's Roots of Hope implementation plan with the stakeholders who helped to inform it.
  - It is important to loop back with all stakeholders who were engaged during the planning phase, not just those with whom partnerships are formed for the Roots of Hope journey.

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[6] © International Association for Public Participation www.iap2.org.

Engagement impact data

Use the *Community Action Plan* (*Meetings & Engagement* worksheet) to capture key impact data on each stakeholder engagement.

At a minimum, document the date, duration, and number of participants for each stakeholder engagement session.

Stakeholder engagement methods

The following provides additional information on some stakeholder engagement methods[7] that are often used by Roots of Hope communities. Remember that each stakeholder engagement method also offers a different opportunity to raise awareness about the Roots of Hope model. For example, communities may include a short blurb with a link to the Roots of Hope webpage as the introduction to an online survey, or there may be an opportunity for a short presentation to kick off a town hall meeting.

Focus groups: Organize focus groups to facilitate in-depth discussions on suicide prevention and life promotion in the community. This can provide valuable insights into cultural factors, existing support systems, and potential barriers to implementing suicide prevention and life promotion initiatives. Try to include PWLLE in this process. It is recommended that communities develop a list of questions about mental health and suicide in the community and provide ample time for focus groups to respond and record their discussions. After the focus groups, communities should synthesize the data and identify what information stands out and if there are any emerging trends.

Surveys and interviews: Conduct surveys and interviews with community members, local leaders, mental health professionals, educators, and other stakeholders. Ask questions about their knowledge of suicide prevention and life promotion, their perceptions of issues and the barriers to addressing the challenges, and their observations about current strengths observed. These can be done in person or electronically using web applications. Communities should consider what avenue works best for them; web applications may allow them to reach a broader audience. However, in-person interviews may yield more qualitative data.

Town hall meetings: Schedule meetings open to the community regarding advancing a suicide prevention and life promotion strategy. These meetings can offer an inclusive and collaborative space for stakeholders to come together and share their perspectives, concerns, and experiences related to mental health, suicide prevention, and life promotion. The open format of town hall meetings encourages candid discussions, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the community's strengths, challenges, and specific needs. It is recommended that communities develop ground rules for town hall meetings and that they use a format that encourages open and respectful dialogue.

Collaborations and partnerships: Identify existing mental health, suicide prevention, and life promotion supports in the region. Connect with these community organizations and agencies and inquire about information and data they may have readily available. It is essential to recognize that ethical and confidential guidelines may restrict the data and information they can share.

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[7] For additional information on stakeholder engagement methods, refer to the Tamarack Institute's Index of Community Engagement Techniques.

3. *Form a community coalition*

No one person or organization should hold sole responsibility for implementing Roots of Hope; there would be a high risk for failure should a role change or staff turnover occur. Establishing a community coalition can help ensure the active involvement of multiple individuals with diverse roles across different organizations. Creating a community coalition also allows key stakeholders to combine their strengths and demonstrate their commitment to meeting the mental health needs of the community.

Communities should consider the following when forming a community coalition to help guide and inform their Roots of Hope implementation efforts.

- Determine initial preferences regarding the primary role of the community coalition (e.g., guidance and advice versus governance and decision making).
  - Consider different coalition structures that fit the community's unique needs (e.g., steering committee, advisory council, leadership roundtable).
  - Explore how best to ensure active involvement of all coalition members.
- Identify, prioritize, and recruit members for the community coalition.
  - Review the *Community Action Plan* (*Stakeholders & Partners* worksheet) and the findings from the stakeholder engagement sessions.
  - Focus on recruiting coalition members with diverse perspectives who will help ensure the community's suicide prevention and life promotion initiatives are inclusive and culturally appropriate.
  - Approach potential coalition members and invite them to participate in a kick-off meeting to learn more.
- Host a community coalition kick-off meeting to promote shared understanding among all members. Focus on how best to foster collaboration, problem solving, knowledge exchange, and resource sharing to drive collective suicide prevention and life promotion efforts.
  - Discuss the key points to be included in the community coalition's terms of reference (i.e., set of ground rules regarding general operations and objectives).
  - Use the *Community Coalition – Sample Terms of Reference* to help identify rules, guidelines, and responsibilities.
  - Define common goals and objectives that will guide the coalition's efforts in suicide prevention and life promotion.
  - Pay particular attention to developing the coalition's decision-making processes (e.g., consensus, consent, majority). Take as much time as required to ensure all members are in agreement with the chosen approach.
  - Agree upon meeting format, frequency, and location. Decide whether meetings will take place in person, virtually, or through a hybrid approach. Set a regular schedule that accommodates the availability of coalition members.
- After the community coalition kick-off meeting, finalize the terms of reference.
  - Revise the draft coalition terms of reference according to discussions and decisions made at the kick-off meeting.
  - Circulate the revised draft terms of reference to all members for review and feedback.
  - Have all coalition members formally agree to the terms of reference (e.g., signed copy, email acknowledgement).

- At the appropriate time, encourage the community coalition to consider how its roles and responsibilities might need to be adapted as the community moves through the implementation phase.

Evolution of the community coalition

As communities move through the implementation phase they will be working on numerous initiatives, and the community coalition will need to adapt accordingly.

Consider dividing coalition members into subgroups focused on specific tasks such as those listed below. Each subgroup should establish its own terms of reference to guide its work.

Sample tasks:

- reporting updates and news to the full community coalition on specific Roots of Hope initiatives
- collaborating with stakeholders to launch initiatives under the 5 pillars of action
- evaluating the engagement in and impact of new initiatives
- comparing new data with previous records to assess whether significant changes have occurred

Community coalition impact data

Use the *Community Action Plan* (*Stakeholders & Partners* worksheet) to document the involvement of coalition members (e.g., active/inactive, date joined, date departed).

Use the *Community Action Plan* (*Meetings & Engagement* worksheet) to capture key impact data on each coalition meeting. At a minimum, document the date, duration, focus, and number of participants.

4. *Identify potential initiatives*

During the planning phase, communities are encouraged to think big and generate a blue-sky list of possible Roots of Hope activities. Communities should use the *Community Action Plan* (*Initiatives & Activities* worksheet) to track these ideas so that they can return to them in the future.

The following provides some ideas on how to identify and document ideas for suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities.

- Use the *Community Exploration Tool* to review existing mental health supports and services offered in the community.
  - Identify gaps and areas for improvement.
  - Examine which efforts could be amplified for greater impact.
  - Consider potential partnerships and collaborations.
- Research the suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities implemented by other Roots of Hope communities across Canada.
  - Review the Roots of Hope case studies.
  - Watch the Roots of Hope Community Voices video series.
  - See the list of Example Roots of Hope initiatives.
  - Consider which of these activities could be adapted to suit the community's needs.
- Collaborate with community stakeholders to identify potential suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities.
  - Host a brainstorming session with the Roots of Hope team and key stakeholders.
  - Encourage participants to think creatively and outside the box so that a wide range of new and innovative ideas can be generated.
- Categorize potential initiatives to inform decision making and prioritization. Consider capturing factors such as:
  - expected duration (e.g., short term, long term)
  - resource needs (e.g., staff, budget)
  - external factors (e.g., partners, policies, processes)
  - anticipated reach (e.g., geographic area, expected number of participants)
  - perceived community need (e.g., underserviced needs of target populations)
  - supporting evidence (e.g., impact data from similar initiatives or from other communities)

Example Roots of Hope initiatives

The following examples are provided to help communities get started in brainstorming potential Roots of Hope activities.

Means Safety

- Distribute educational resources encouraging community members to reduce the risk of suicide by making their homes safer.
- Implement medication roundups and distribute medication lockboxes.
- Work with community partners to improve safety around public transit (e.g., light rail train systems).

Public Awareness

- Use social media to share educational information about mental health and wellness, suicide prevention, and life promotion.
- Implement traditional media awareness campaigns (e.g., press releases).
- Create a communication strategy in response to identified community priorities.
- Distribute hard-copy resources to inform community members about Roots of Hope initiatives.
- Host educational awareness events (e.g., webinars, in-person workshops).

Research and Evaluation

- Set research and evaluation priorities that fit the needs of the community.
- Determine surveillance activities that work with the community's resource availability and constraints.
- Work with community leaders to improve access to data at the local level.
- Monitor and evaluate all Roots of Hope initiatives by collecting impact data.
- Host and attend knowledge translation and exchange activities.

Specialized Supports

- Work with community partners to offer grief and bereavement programming.
- Create targeted services to serve youth in the community.
- Design programs to encourage help-seeking behaviour among boys and men.
- Work with local hospitals on post-discharge supports to improve continuity of care.

Training and Networks

- Deliver Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) twice a year for five years.
- Offer Mental Health First Aid training through a train-the-trainer approach.
- Connect community gatekeepers with LivingWorks Start training online.
- Encourage health-care providers to undertake MHCC's Suicide: Facing the Difficult Topic Together online self-directed training modules.
- Provide training on trauma-informed care and approaches to suicide prevention and life promotion.

> ## Community momentum
>
> When prioritizing initiative ideas, it is often helpful to focus on the main areas of concern in the community and identify some short-term "wins" to gain momentum. These initiatives can serve as building blocks for the community's overarching Roots of Hope objectives.
>
> Recognize that long-term efforts may require an extended period of relationship and trust building with community members and partners. It is important to achieve (and celebrate!) impact milestones along the way.

5. *Prioritize potential initiatives*

Communities should involve their community coalition and other key stakeholders in decision-making processes during all phases of the Roots of Hope journey. They can consider the following suggestions as they work to prioritize potential Roots of Hope initiatives and select which ones to implement first.

- Develop a prioritization method that utilizes the data and information the community has collected on possible Roots of Hope initiatives.
  - The planning columns in the *Community Action Plan* (*Initiatives & Activities* worksheet) provide some dimensions to consider (e.g., desired outcome, rationale, implementation partners, required resources).
  - Other dimensions to consider include supporting evidence for the initiative (e.g., effectiveness in another Roots of Hope community), perceived community need (e.g., would the initiative help those who most need it), and expected reach (e.g., geographic area, number of participants).
  - Consider creating a ranking scheme to prioritize the activities. For example, assign points (zero to five) across key dimensions and then sum up the points for an overall assessment.
  - Alternatively, consider using a simple high/medium/low scale to indicate the implementation priority of each identified initiative.
- Present initiative ideas to the community coalition and other key stakeholders to obtain their advice and perspectives.
  - Structure these discussions by asking members to group[8] or rank[9] the ideas for potential initiatives.
  - Give each member the opportunity to explain their choices and allow the group to discuss pros and cons together.
  - Facilitate a discussion aimed at establishing a consensus decision on which initiatives to prioritize for implementation.
- Consider whether to start by focusing on a specific component of the community (e.g., a smaller geographic area, a particular population such as men) and/or a specific pillar of action (e.g., public awareness through educational events and campaigns).

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[8] **Grouping:** classify ideas according to predefined categories such as high, medium, or low priority.
[9] **Ranking:** order ideas from most to least important.

- Consider prioritizing smaller scale, time-limited prototype activities that can help build momentum. This type of "quick win" can help communities strengthen partnerships and secure longer-term funding.
- Re-examine community capacity and resource allocation with regard to the priority initiative(s) that have been selected for implementation. Make adjustments as required.
  - Consider funding, staff, infrastructure, support networks, and other required resources. Can current resources be repurposed to align with Roots of Hope implementation activities?
  - Continue to explore capacity-building opportunities. Were any seed funding sources identified during the exploration phase? Might there be ways to share resources with community partners acting in this space?

Asset assessment

Once communities have identified the major challenges and opportunities within their community, they need to assess the assets available for the work before deciding which initiatives to implement.

Leadership

- What personnel assets are available for implementing Roots of Hope initiatives (e.g., staff, volunteers, active community coalition members, committed politicians)?
- Have these assets tackled similar initiatives and activities previously?
- What experience, knowledge, and qualifications do these assets bring to Roots of Hope?

Relationships

- In what broad areas of the community does the Roots of Hope team or the community coalition have existing relationships (e.g., community safety hubs, Indigenous communities, school boards, PWLLE, poverty reduction roundtables, law enforcement)?
- With what external businesses, organizations, non-profits, or government agencies does the Roots of Hope team or the community coalition have existing relationships (e.g., public health authority, friendship centres, unemployment centres, food banks, pharmacies)?
- How many of these existing relationships can be leveraged into implementation partnerships for initiatives under the 5 pillars of action?

Systems and structures

- Is it possible to take advantage of any existing engagement strategies (e.g., community roundtables, public meetings)?
- Does the Roots of Hope team or the community coalition use communications strategies that can be leveraged for Roots of Hope initiatives (e.g., promotional efforts, outreach activities)?
- What evaluation strategies is the Roots of Hope team confident it can utilize to measure the impact and success of initiatives?

Funding

- What funding is confirmed for Roots of Hope implementation?
- Do all initiatives rely on one funding source, or are there multiple funding streams?
- Is there a plan for how funding can evolve and grow over time to match the expected Roots of Hope budget?

Constraints

- What obstacles may pose as barriers to implementing Roots of Hope initiatives (e.g., structural stigma, community perceptions of mental illness and help-seeking behaviours)?
- What are the limitations of Roots of Hope initiatives and activities in terms of reach or significance in the landscape.

6. *Develop a Roots of Hope evaluation strategy*

Before moving into the implementation and evaluation of specific initiatives, communities should decide how they will evaluate the success of their Roots of Hope journey. This is an area in which many Roots of Hope communities have sought external support (e.g., from a local researcher or university partnership).

- Consult with the community coalition to discuss what evaluation information is important to collect and which metrics should be captured.
- Draft a plan to track, measure, and evaluate the implementation of Roots of Hope in the community.
- Determine how to monitor and evaluate the implementation tasks and activities that the community will undertake during the implementation phase.
- Identify specific metrics and key performance indicators to be used in tracking progress and evaluating success under each pillar of action.
- Decide how to regularly review the status of active initiatives and overall Roots of Hope implementation to ensure the community is meeting key milestones.
- Develop a process for engaging the community coalition to review milestones and ensure that the overall Roots of Hope implementation is on track. Use their input and feedback to adjust timelines, resources, and tasks to ensure success and sustainability.

7. *Set review dates*

Communities should return to the planning phase activities on a regular basis to keep information up to date. Setting a recurring review date will serve as a reminder to identify and engage new stakeholders and to discuss and document new ideas for Roots of Hope initiatives.

It is also important to establish a regular review process and timeline for aspects of the community coalition. Set milestone triggers to reassess the coalition's composition and member involvement to ensure the right voices are around the table. Schedule review dates for re-evaluating the terms of reference to ensure the structures and processes that guide the coalition are supportive rather than impeding its ability to take effective action.

Remember that brainstorming new opportunities and deciding which ideas to implement is an ongoing process. Consider setting recurring meetings to ensure the Roots of Hope team and community coalition regularly discuss implementation priorities. These collaborations can be structured as recurring [Priority gap analysis](#) exercises.

Community reflection: Community coalitions

Two different approaches to establishing partnerships and developing a community coalition are presented here.

Community 1: Halton, Ontario

After the Roots of Hope model was adopted in Halton, the community coalition, which originally brought together various stakeholders to address suicide prevention, was divided into working groups categorized on the basis of the 5 pillars of action. The full community coalition in the Halton region continued to engage in regular meetings; however, the creation of working groups promoted collaboration and resource sharing to drive suicide prevention efforts collectively.

Community 2: Northern Zone (region), Nova Scotia

In contrast to the approach taken in the Halton region, the Northern Zone in Nova Scotia focused on establishing partnerships with existing community agencies. Recognizing the capacity of resources and the small population of the area, the Roots of Hope team took an approach that aimed to leverage the strengths of these agencies and promote capacity building and coordinated action.

Instead of forming a formal community coalition, the Northern Zone connected with local agencies, organizations, schools, health-care providers, PWLLE, and community leaders to develop innovative initiatives focused on suicide prevention and life promotion. These partnerships facilitated sharing of resources, expertise, and best practices in suicide prevention. They led to the launch of suicide prevention and life promotion initiatives under the 5 pillars of action. Although the approach did not align with the formal structure of a community coalition, it ensured that various stakeholders were involved in collaborative efforts to address suicide within the region.

Key takeaways:

By using the resources associated with the exploration and planning phases, communities can comprehensively assess their needs, available resources, and existing collaborative networks to better determine the most suitable approach for implementation. If resources and community dynamics allow, communities should consider establishing a community coalition. If creating a coalition is not feasible, they should focus on establishing partnerships with existing community agencies to maximize collective suicide prevention and life promotion efforts.

It is important to understand that all the approaches discussed in this Guide encourage information and resource sharing among stakeholders and partners to enhance the effectiveness of Roots of Hope initiatives. Communities should develop a collaborative approach that suits their unique needs, resources, and demographics.

Phase 3: Implementation

In the implementation phase, communities put their plan into action and collect impact data to evaluate success.

They will develop and implement suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities, starting with those they have identified as highest priority. They will use the *Community Action Plan* to develop Roots of Hope initiatives, measure progress, document outcomes, and assess whether each initiative achieves its objectives. The use of data-driven monitoring and evaluation strategies is critical, not only to assess the success of each initiative but also to engage in continuous improvement and to advocate for additional resources, funding, and development.

The focus during this phase is on building momentum, serving the needs of the community, and evaluating impact. Success will largely depend on active collaboration between the Roots of Hope team, the community coalition, local partners, and other community members. It is important to continually revisit and update the *Community Exploration Tool* and the *Community Action Plan* to help ensure stakeholders are kept informed and aligned in their efforts.

As initiatives are put into action in this phase, communities must remain vigilant and adaptable, revisiting key activities from the exploration and planning phases, capturing lessons learned, and summarizing outcomes. Taking this comprehensive approach will ensure that the Roots of Hope model continues to evolve, adapt, and effectively address the needs of the community.

Objectives and expected outcomes

Implement comprehensive initiatives. Build implementation and evaluation plans for each Roots of Hope initiative. Leave room for flexibility wherever possible.

Establish collaborative partnerships. Identify agencies with which to collaborate on the implementation and evaluation of community-based initiatives. Continue to drive collective efforts and ensure sustained and active engagement.

Capture impact data for each initiative or activity. Identify success metrics and monitor data for suicide prevention and life promotion initiatives. Remember to capture impact data for trainings, meetings, events, and awareness activities.

Transfer knowledge and document learnings. Develop a process to capture and share lessons learned, best practices, and critical insights, so that future initiatives can benefit from these data and captured experiences.

> **Key resource**
>
> During the implementation phase, use the *Community Action Plan* to track initiatives and activities and to capture impact data.

Suggested process

A great deal of work will be done during this phase of the Roots of Hope journey. Most of this work will be specific to the initiatives each community undertakes. The following outlines some of the key activities and milestones for communities to consider.

1. *Implementation roles and capacity building*
   - Regularly reassess resource allocation and adjust as necessary.
   - Ensure reporting structures and communication processes are efficient and serve the needs of team members.
   - Determine resourcing gaps and identify opportunities to build capacity.
   - Continue to identify opportunities for Roots of Hope capacity building over the longer term (e.g., external funding including grants, resource sharing with community partners).
   - Engage local community leaders to advocate for investment in suicide prevention initiatives, life promotion activities, and mental health care efforts.
   - Broadly communicate the importance of dedicating meaningful resources, such as funding, formalized partnerships, professional development, and positive messaging.

2. *Establish community partnerships*

   Explore opportunities to partner with community organizations to implement Roots of Hope initiatives more efficiently and effectively. Focus on resource-sharing, knowledge-exchange, and awareness-building opportunities.

   - Connect with key stakeholders to explore opportunities for joint initiatives, collaborative activities, and potential partnerships.
   - Use the *Community Action Plan* (*Stakeholders & Partners* worksheet) to document roles and other engagement factors (e.g., important historical information, commitments).
   - Use the *IAP2 Spectrum Resource*[10] to track the level of involvement your stakeholders and partners need to have with Roots of Hope initiatives. The Roots of Hope commitment will fall under one of the following:
     - **Inform:** The team will keep them informed of events and updates.
     - **Consult:** The team will keep them informed, will listen to them and acknowledge their concerns, and will provide feedback.
     - **Involve:** The team will work with them to ensure their concerns are reflected in the initiatives and activities developed.
     - **Collaborate:** The team will look to them for advice and innovation in formulating initiatives and will incorporate decisions made collaboratively.
     - **Empower:** The team will implement what they decide.
   - When appropriate, formalize key partnerships to set the stage for coordinated efforts that maximize impact. But remember that formal partnerships are not desirable for all stakeholders.
   - Consider delineating roles through partnership agreements or memorandums of understanding. See the *Memorandum of Understanding Guide* for more information.
   - Ensure that all in-kind resources and other partner contributions are tracked, to understand the true cost of Roots of Hope efforts.

3. *Create and implement initiatives*

   The *Community Action Plan* empowers communities to use project management best practices as they plan, implement, and sustain each Roots of Hope initiative. It also facilitates

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[10] © International Association for Public Participation www.iap2.org.

the collection of impact data that can then be used to communicate success and advocate for additional resources.

Communities can use the *Community Action Plan* to clearly define each initiative that they have identified as a priority.

- Document a measurable goal or outcome for the initiative. Consider using the SMART[11] principles to define goals that are clear, attainable, and meaningful. The use of SMART goal-setting principles is outlined in the following example of a Roots of Hope initiative.
  - **Specific:** Increase suicide prevention and life promotion services available for youth aged 15-24 years in the community.
  - **Measurable:** Increase youth's health-seeking behaviours and access to support services by 20% within two years.
  - **Achievable:** Collaborate with local mental health agencies to develop and implement targeted prevention programs and access data to measure results.
  - **Relevant:** As of 2019, suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15- to 19-year-olds, second only to all unintentional injuries (accidents) combined, including unintentional drug overdose.[12]
  - **Time-bound:** Begin implementation within six months and achieve the desired results within two years.
- Identify support partners for the initiative as well as the engagement and communication strategies that will be used.
- Determine how the Roots of Hope team will evaluate whether the initiative is successful and what impact data will they collect, when, and how.
  - Identify and define outcome indicators, data sources, and data collection frequency.
- Consider using the RACI structure to clearly define and document roles and responsibilities for each initiative.
  - **R** – who is *responsible* for completing the implementation tasks and activities.
  - **A** – who is *accountable* for making sure the implementation tasks and activities are successfully completed.
  - **C** – who needs to be *consulted* for input and feedback during the implementation process.
  - **I** – who needs to be *informed* about status and progress during the implementation process

4. *Evaluate initiative impact*

Without the ability to measure progress and outcomes, it is challenging to assess if an initiative has achieved its objectives. Data and metrics are essential not only for assessing impact but also for advocating for additional resources and funding.

Suicide prevention is an area in which quantitative results (e.g., reduction in suicide rate) are extremely difficult to measure. This makes it even more important to document as much quantitative data and qualitative information as possible to help demonstrate community impact.

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[11] SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.
[12] Centre for Suicide Prevention (2023). *Youth suicide prevention*.

Communities can use the following to help identify evaluation activities for collecting quantitative and qualitative data.

- Collect impact data for each initiative as per the evaluation strategy identified in the *Community Action Plan* (*Initiatives & Activities* worksheet).
  - Impact data can include key metrics such as community members reached or engaged, awareness events hosted or attended, and educational resources distributed.
  - Collect community feedback and testimonials to demonstrate impact through stories.
  - Track the impact of Roots of Hope on community partners, PWLLE, Indigenous communities, and other stakeholders.
  - Analyze the data collected to reveal patterns, trends, and correlations.
- Evaluate to what extent the initiatives have achieved their intended goals and objectives as outlined in the *Community Action Plan* (*Initiatives & Activities* worksheet).
  - Determine which aspects of the initiatives have been successful and well received by stakeholders, as well as areas that may require improvement or further attention.
  - Document lessons learned and how the community's awareness and knowledge of the issues are changing over time. What are the Roots of Hope team and the community coalition learning through undertaking this work?
  - Consider whether the Roots of Hope work has had any impact on reducing stigma and/or shifting community systems (policies, practices, resource flows, power dynamics, etc.).
- Analyze whether initiatives require adjustments or enhancements to better align with community needs and achieve desired outcomes.
- Use the *Community Exploration Tool* to conduct frequent reviews of regional and/or community data on suicide rates, help-seeking behaviours, community perception, and other relevant metrics.
  - Track change over time to measure the statistical impacts of suicide prevention and life promotion initiatives and to identify ongoing shifts in community dynamics.

5. *Evaluate Roots of Hope*

As the work builds to implement specific initiatives, it is important to dedicate time and resources to evaluating the impact of all Roots of Hope activities in the community. Communities should regularly return to their overall evaluation strategy to ensure they are keeping an eye on the bigger picture. Some questions to consider in collaboration with the community coalition and other key stakeholders include the following.

- Do activities align with the context, perspectives, and needs of the community?
- Is there continued community support for suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities?
- Have initiatives been implemented under each of the 5 pillars of action?
- Do the suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities align with the 13 guiding principles?
- Are community collaboration opportunities utilized regularly to identify priority gaps and opportunities?
- Are efforts sufficiently defined while remaining flexible and open to new opportunities?
- Do funding and resource levels match current and future work plans?

- Is the community coalition effective in providing strategic guidance and defining high-level aspirations?
- Can collaboration and evaluation efforts be sustained through established processes and effective systems?

6. *Provide progress updates*

It is crucial to recognize the time and effort community members invest in supporting the Roots of Hope journey. Supply the community coalition and other key stakeholders with regular progress updates to communicate the impact of active Roots of Hope initiatives.

- Share new or emerging information relevant to Roots of Hope and indicate its significance with respect to financial investment, level of effort, strategic importance, degree of impact, or other considerations. Does it represent or require a change in direction?
- Describe the most significant achievements for this period (e.g., one or two key achievements, maximum 400 words). Focus on demonstrating the value, reach, and impact of Roots of Hope initiatives.
- Share a concise summary of key lessons learned for this period.
- Identify any challenges that may affect Roots of Hope deliverables, timelines, or level of engagement. Describe the challenge and propose a mitigation strategy.
- Discuss specific at-risk population groups including Indigenous populations, veterans, first responders, health-care providers, seniors, caregivers, children and youth, PWLLE, and remote communities.

Community reflection: Different initiatives based on community needs

The successful launch of suicide prevention and life promotion initiatives during the implementation phase requires a comprehensive understanding of community dynamics and the formation of collaborative relationships with local partners and stakeholders.

Community 1: Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan

Roots of Hope in Meadow Lake developed the *We Care Kits* initiative in which a comprehensive package of resources was provided to community members when they visited the local hospital with suicidal thoughts or having made a suicide attempt, or were seen by intake workers for mental health and addiction services. The package included information about mental health supports available in the region and suicide prevention resources such as a Safety Plan template for individuals to use in creating a personalized safety plan. A one-pager with information about accessing local services clarifies that a doctor's referral is not required to access mental health or addiction services. *We Care Kits* send the message that the community cares and the resources empower community members to take an active role in their mental health and well-being and to be aware of the mental health support services available in the region.

Community 2: Wellington, Ontario

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted Roots of Hope communities across Canada, removing traditional opportunities to gather for awareness events and training sessions. Roots of Hope initiatives needed to align with community needs during this time, so it was necessary to pivot to another way to connect. In Wellington, Ontario, the Roots of Hope community coordinator developed a postcard campaign titled "Messages for Hope" to facilitate social connection among community members feeling isolated. Postcards were created for community members to write messages of hope, and these postcards were distributed across the community to areas including schools, health-care facilities, and senior centres. Digital versions of the postcards were also made available for wider dissemination. The initiative fostered a sense of connection and belonging in the Wellington community.

In response to the continued impact of COVID-19, Roots of Hope in Wellington also developed a podcast series called "Stories for Hope" to share stories of resiliency, hope, and transformation in the community. The podcasts addressed the current challenges faced by the community and provided a space to highlight how significant losses to suicide can be turned into something with a meaningful positive impact. Social media campaigns were utilized to promote podcast episodes and engage the community in discussions surrounding resiliency and mental well-being.

Key takeaways:

By acknowledging community dynamics and responding to evolving circumstances, communities can effectively engage and support their regions through a broad array of suicide prevention and life promotion initiatives. There are limitless opportunities to develop initiatives that align with suicide prevention and life promotion, as endeavours in the Roots of Hope model are designed to be specific to the unique dynamics and context of each community.

Phase 4: Sustainability

The sustainability phase ensures the long-term viability and continuity of Roots of Hope within the community.

In this phase, communities will develop strategies and resources to continue successful initiatives and maintain the impact of Roots of Hope in serving the needs of community members. They will review and analyze existing data to identify opportunities for scaling up initiatives and spreading reach. Keeping the *Community Action Plan* up to date will enable data-driven decision making and facilitate continuous improvement efforts.

The focus during this phase is on maintaining community energy and enthusiasm for the work while embedding systems and structures to sustain initiatives and ensure ongoing impact. Remember to celebrate successes!

Objectives and expected outcomes

Review the Roots of Hope model. Comprehensively evaluate the impact of the Roots of Hope model. Utilize data-driven insights to identify successful components and areas needing improvement.

Conduct ongoing performance evaluation. Regularly evaluate the performance of initiatives using previously established success metrics. Assess effectiveness and identify opportunities for ongoing refinement.

Assess opportunities to scale up and spread. Look for ways to reach a broader audience and engage new agencies and communities.

Engage in continuous improvement. Proactively adapt the Roots of Hope model in light of changing community dynamics to ensure its viability, relevance, and effectiveness over time.

Exchange knowledge and share learnings. Develop resources and share information that highlights impact. Use evidence to raise awareness and secure additional support.

Key resource

During the sustainability phase, use the *Sustainability Action Plan* to fine-tune initiatives and identify opportunities to expand Roots of Hope.

Communities may also find the Tamarack Institute's Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool helpful in guiding their efforts.

Suggested process

1. *Community investment and ownership*

It is important to develop a plan to encourage community investment and ownership of Roots of Hope suicide prevention and life promotion efforts.

- Regularly share impact data and success stories that showcase Roots of Hope initiatives and express gratitude to community members who were involved.
- Publicly acknowledge stakeholders, partners, and coalition members for their ongoing commitment to community-based suicide prevention and life promotion.
- Develop Roots of Hope champions through capacity-building opportunities and awareness-building activities.
- Work to foster an environment that encourages professional growth and personal development within the context of the initiative.
- Deliver training and educational resources at a frequency that keeps efforts top of mind without being overwhelming.
- Embed recurring stakeholder engagement activities to better understand and incorporate cultural values, beliefs, and preferences into the design and delivery of initiatives, making them more relevant and effective.

Priority gap analysis

It is important to continue collaborating with the community coalition and other key stakeholders to ensure Roots of Hope initiatives are relevant and effective. One way to do this is to undertake a priority gap analysis on a regular basis.

- Ensure all identified opportunities and initiative ideas are documented on the *Community Action Plan* (*Initiatives & Activities* worksheet) and share the list with stakeholders.
- Host an annual brainstorming session to generate new ideas for suicide prevention and life promotion activities. Exploration questions could include:
  o After reviewing the ideas generated, does what we have captured so far resonate?
  o What have we missed?
  o What are the priorities for moving forward?
- Consider using a strengths-based, asset-mapping approach by exploring questions such as:
  o What is working well in the community?
  o How can we support and build upon what is already happening?
  o What barriers exist to growing and expanding Roots of Hope?
  o How can we remove these obstacles?
- Facilitate a discussion around resource allocation to further define priorities.
  o Assess what resources the community needs to execute priority initiatives in a realistic and timely manner.
  o Decide what is reasonable to accomplish given the resource constraints.

2. *Sustain implementation efforts*

Consider ways to sustain implementation of the Roots of Hope model, such as the following:

- Continue to explore funding sources and capacity-building opportunities to sustain Roots of Hope (e.g., grants, funding applications, partnerships).
- Use the empirical evidence gathered in the *Community Action Plan* to demonstrate impact. Remember to include community voices in sharing personal stories.
- Consider working with the community coalition and other key stakeholders to apply an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) process for sustainable community-driven development. Note that in practice, the ABCD process is cyclical, not linear, and is underpinned by the following elements:
  - **A** — building awareness and capacity, understanding what Roots of Hope is doing in the community and getting everyone on the same page.
  - **B** — assessing the Roots of Hope baseline, which means understanding where suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities are today with respect to sustainability.
  - **C** – creating a compelling vision for community-led Roots of Hope efforts, which includes meeting the principles of sustainability.
  - **D** – prioritizing actions to bridge the gap between where Roots of Hope is today and where the community wants or needs it to be in a sustainable future.

3. *Continuous improvement*

Communities should develop systems and processes for continually improving upon the Roots of Hope model, suicide prevention initiatives, and life promotion activities.

- Track initiative progress and determine whether specific improvements or adjustments are required related to engagement levels, impact measurement, resource allocation, or alignment with community needs.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to evaluate whether Roots of Hope initiatives are reaching their intended objectives and to identify ways to foster continuous improvement and innovations.
- Implement changes or adjustments to ongoing Roots of Hope initiatives that are informed by both data analysis and feedback from stakeholders.
  - Monitor and measure the impact of the changes made. Collect new data and compare them with the data collected before the adjustments.
  - Assess whether the changes have led to the desired outcomes. Have they improved engagement? Did they address the challenges?
  - If the adjustments produce positive results, consider scaling up the changes to other initiatives or parts of the community.
  - If the changes have not been effective, analyze the reasons and make further adjustments or explore alternative strategies.
- Consider using the *Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Tool* as a systematic method for testing and refining strategies, making data-driven adjustments, and optimizing the outcomes of Roots of Hope initiatives.

4. *Sustainable systems*

It is important for communities to ensure their collaboration and evaluation efforts can be sustained through well-established processes and effective systems. To ensure sustained funding and resources, consider the following strategies:

- Brief organizations and governments on the overall impact of Roots of Hope by showing tangible results from the data accumulated from its initial phases. This will ensure that stakeholders are presented with a compelling case grounded in evidence-based success for sustaining and enhancing suicide prevention and life promotion efforts.
- Apply for grants and funding opportunities to promote financial sustainability for Roots of Hope or identify funding streams to assist in expanding it. Review the *Grant Proposal Guide,* which offers a step-by-step approach to creating persuasive grant applications that increase communities' chances to obtain sustainable financial support. It provides practical advice, such as tailoring proposals, using data-driven approaches, and maintaining clear communication with funders.
- Join and participate in the Roots of Hope National Community of Practice (NCoP) to enhance knowledge, foster connections, share experiences, and learn from other Roots of Hope communities.
- Explore opportunities to incorporate additional suicide prevention frameworks such as Together to Live and Zero Suicide to deepen the impact of Roots of Hope and enhance data capabilities.

5. *Opportunities to expand*

To sustain and improve Roots of Hope, communities may want to expand the reach of suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities. The following ideas can help communities to scale up and spread Roots of Hope.

- Use the *Sustainability Action Plan* to gain an in-depth understanding of the Roots of Hope's efficacy and identify actionable insights to fine-tune strategies for lasting impact.
    o Review and analyze the findings from evaluation processes.
    o Use the existing data to describe and highlight areas of strength and areas for improvement under nine core elements (vision, evaluation, strategic resourcing, broad community support, key champions, adaptability, internal processes, communications, and sustainability).
    o Rank the community's progress using a five-point scale that ranges from "haven't started" to "made significant progress."
    o Synthesize all evaluation findings to showcase Roots of Hope's impact for stakeholders including decision makers and potential funders.
- Consider using the *SCOPE Analysis Tool* to further examine specific suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities that might be well suited for Roots of Hope scale up and spread efforts.
- As Roots of Hope gains momentum and demonstrates its efficacy, look to strategically expand the model's reach and influence and extend Roots of Hope and associated initiatives to a larger audience.
    o Ensure initiatives are maximally effective and sustainable within their current context.
    o Identify the capacity for Roots of Hope growth and expansion in the community.
    o Examine whether initiatives can be scaled up and spread to increase their impact.
    o Explore avenues for spreading Roots of Hope at the broader systems level.
    o Discuss opportunities for expansion with potential collaborative partners, such as government agencies, other Roots of Hope communities, educational institutions, and community organizations.

Conclusion

The *Roots of Hope Guide* is a comprehensive and dynamic resource designed to support communities in reducing the overall impact of suicide. It is grounded in evidence-based tools and resources and informed by lessons learned in Roots of Hope communities.

Roots of Hope is an adaptable approach that empowers communities to create meaningful and effective suicide prevention and life promotion initiatives. This Guide provides a framework for the Roots of Hope journey that will resonate with the unique needs of each participating community. It demonstrates commitment to continuous improvement and recognizes that this is a collective endeavour that embodies shared responsibility.

The importance of quantitative and qualitative data is highlighted throughout the 4 phases discussed in this Guide: exploration, planning, implementation, and sustainability. Data serve as the compass for navigating suicide prevention and life promotion efforts. Data collection empowers communities to identify successful initiatives, pinpoint areas needing improvement, and adapt strategies to changing community dynamics. Without data, the success and true impact of a community's efforts will remain unknown, and the journey will remain incomplete.

The MHCC recognizes that a community's journey to addressing suicide may be challenging, but we believe that when they are equipped with the right model, tools, resources, and partnerships, communities across Canada can achieve success together.

Financial contribution from

Mental Health Commission of Canada
Suite 1210, 350 Albert Street
Ottawa, ON   K1R 1A4

Tel: 613.683.3755
Fax: 613.798.2989

@MHCC_   /theMHCC

/1MHCC   @theMHCC   /theMHCC

/Mental Health Commission of Canada

mhccinfo@mentalhealthcommission.ca
www.mentalhealthcommission.ca