Innoweave Impact and Strategic Clarity Case Study

Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver

“Before working with Innoweave, it was difficult to concisely explain not only the breadth and depth of EFry’s work but also how and why we do what we do. Our Theory of Change has helped us do that, as well as set out criteria upon which the impact of each aspect of our work is measured.”

Shawn Bayes, Executive Director, Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver

Organization

The Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver (EFry) was founded in 1939 by a small group of volunteers dedicated to improving conditions for women in custody. Since then, EFry’s work has grown exponentially and is delivered by approximately 100 staff and 450 volunteers each year. EFry operates more than thirty programs that support women, girls and children at risk, involved in or impacted by the justice system. Serving over 9,000 clients annually, EFry helps them avoid or break the cycle of poverty, addiction, mental health issues and crime.

Challenge

EFry participated in the second cohort of the Impact and Strategic Clarity module over the spring and summer of 2013. As noted by Shawn Bayes, Executive Director, the impetus for undertaking this work was similar to that motivating many of the more than 30 organizations involved to date:

“It feels like we have everything we need to have the capacity to move EFry forward and now we need help with a process and some structure to let us explore all the parts of the puzzle. We need to figure out which of a number of potential options we proceed on, or how we shift to enable us to maintain the amount of social policy work we are doing and deal with running a business (social enterprise) that is aggressively growing.”

Over the course of the Impact and Strategic Clarity process, EFry dedicated more than forty days of senior management time to formulating their original hypothesis of their Intended Impact and Theory of Change; testing their hypothesis through rigorous data analysis and evidence research; refining and focusing their strategy, and developing a learning agenda and implementation plan.

The result is a clear strategic focus on outcomes and a framework for making decisions, allocating resources and collaborating with others in an increasingly complex sector. Their Theory of Change is also proving to be a useful tool in communicating internally and externally: the agency has realigned their board reporting, their annual report and communication with staff and funders to their clearly articulated and powerful Theory of Change.
First steps
EFry began by compiling an overview of all thirty programs and services offered by the agency across sites and geographies, specifically articulating the target beneficiaries, principle activities and tangible outcomes for each of these. The team’s work in this initial stage showed three target groups of beneficiaries (many of whose needs overlapped) and three pillars of service: supporting individuals, building a strong and adaptable community and system advocacy. These three pillars would, over the course of the five-month project, develop into five complementary strategies.

Data Analysis and Evidence Research
EFry gathered evidence from academic literature and the guidelines of many Canadian and international bodies focused on crime prevention, public safety and public health, and distilled the protective factors and risk factors associated with criminalized and marginalized women. The team conducted a detailed analysis of one program for which a strong outcomes measurement system (the Goal Attainment Scale) was already in use and aligned those measures with the risk and protective factor framework.

This new framework derived from evidence research and internal outcomes measures was then applied across all of EFry’s programs. What risks does each program address? Which protective factors is each program supporting? How well is each program aligned to one or more of our strategies? By answering these questions the team could evaluate each program’s effectiveness and its alignment with EFry’s intended impact.

Learning Agenda and Implementation Plan
The final part of the Impact and Strategic Clarity work is the development of a learning agenda (which maps out all of the outstanding questions the work has generated and a plan for answering them), and an implementation plan (which in EFry’s case was focused on the rollout of new outcomes measures and communication of their new Theory of Change to all stakeholders.)

The final product
EFry has a Theory of Change that can serve as a framework for decision-making and outcomes measurement well into the future. They have developed a strong outcomes measurement framework and a plan for organizational development. An excerpt from their Theory is reproduced below. For more information, visit www.elizabethfry.com/publications
Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver: Theory of Change

How We Do It

Individual women are willing and able to take responsibility for their own lives if provided with the opportunity, choice and skills to do so. Our five strategies support individual women and marginalized women in general in taking responsibility.

PROGRAMS
- Homeless Shelters (5)
- Support Recovery & Relapse Prevention (5)
- Family Counselling (3)
- Person-to-Person B.A.S.E.
- Resource Centre (3)
- Third Party Administration (1)

PROGRAMS
- Prison Volunteer Program
- ACON Prison Outreach
- APM Prison Homeless Prevention
- Girls Youth Prison Advocate
- Burnaby Youth Court Centre

PROGRAMS
- Systemic Advocacy JustRight

PROGRAMS
- Transitions to New Beginnings
- Restive Rays
- Colombo Place
- CEC
- CDC Work Program & Asphahal Gals
- Strengthening Homeless Families Initiative

Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver

Supporting incarcerated women & girls

Reducing risk factors

Remedial systemic barriers that marginalize women

Working to break the legacy of crime

Aiding successful prison to community transitions