

## Summary

- The Connection New Brunswick (CNB) pilot project was developed and implemented to support older adults aged 65+ who are lonely, frail, or live in poverty.
- This community-based program aimed to enable older adults to remain at home, healthy, safe, and supported by their community.
- The overall objectives of the project included:
  - Locate community resources and preferred approach to identify individuals at risk of having unmet needs based on socioeconomic status, health, and loneliness/social isolation.
  - Develop an asset map of programs and services addressing unmet community vulnerabilities and identify current gaps.
  - Conduct an umbrella review focused on community-based approaches designed to address loneliness and social isolation with focus on elderly people.
  - Co-design and small-scale testing to contextualize interventions.
  - Refine and contextualize approaches to identify individual vulnerabilities and deploy them in target communities.
- The CNB program used system navigators to provide social and healthcare support for older adults. After visiting their homes, system navigators assessed the specific needs of the older adults and connected them to appropriate services. The CNB project team also worked with communities to understand their needs and the services and resources available.
- 93 older adults (aged 65+), including 63 women and 30 men participated in the evaluation of the pilot project. 21 identified French as their primary language and 72 identified English as their preferred language.

## HSPP Focus Area

Using community approaches to reduce health inequities

## Project Start & End Date

July 1, 2019-March 31, 2024

## Organization/Agency

Canadian Red Cross Society

## Location

Saint John and Moncton, New Brunswick

## Principal Investigator(s)

[Bill Lawlor](#)

Indicator	Impact / Outcome / Result	Quote
<b>Participant satisfaction</b>	<p>Overall, participants were satisfied with the program and support received from Community Connectors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 82% of participants who were surveyed indicated that they were 'highly satisfied' with the services received.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"The connector had answers for me and found things that I didn't know where to look for"</i></p>
<b>Improved access to data, information, and coordination of services</b>	<p>An asset map of programs and services available in the target communities was developed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,030 formal and informal services were mapped across four target communities.</li> <li>• Partnerships with various community organizations, health authorities, municipalities, and other organizations were developed.</li> </ul>	
<b>Strengthened sense of connection</b>	<p>The program provided various opportunities to strengthen participant's sense of connection in the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants were referred to programs such as the Red Cross Friendly Calls program that provided regular social connections over the phone.</li> <li>• Participants were connected to various organizations within the community where they could volunteer, attend social events or support groups.</li> </ul>	

Indicator	Impact / Outcome / Result	Quote
Decreased loneliness of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The findings from the interviews indicated that not all participants were seeking services. Instead, they were looking for support to reduce feelings of loneliness or social isolation by connecting with peers, improving their quality of life at home, and engaging in activities that brought them joy and fulfillment.</li> <li>In the interviews, participants indicated decreased feelings of loneliness.</li> </ul>	<p><i>“Through CNB, I got involved with a local community group and a grief centre – and through that have made friends. My oldest daughter says my introvert status has changed because I take more phone calls now. When things go wrong, it is hard to keep a good perspective if you don't have some-one to talk it through with.”</i></p>

### Methods and Comparison

Initially, planned as a mixed method project, data was collected through surveys, interviews, and community engagement sessions. Interviews were conducted with 10 participants and 3 community engagement sessions were held in 2023. Satisfaction surveys were completed by 17 participants. Due to low survey response rates on the Current Challenges Questionnaire, this survey data was not analyzed.

### Conclusions and Lessons Learned

- Overall, there is a strong need for a *single source of information* with knowledge of available services, programs, to support aging in place.
- As a result of engaging with CNB, participants:
  - were highly satisfied with the program and the support received from the Community Connectors.
  - reported feeling less lonely and more connected to their communities.
- The program improved access to data, information, and coordination of various programs and services within the community.

### Recommendations

- Facilitate collaboration between service providers and community-based groups at early stages of program development and design to accommodate the needs of potential project partners.
- Consider coordinating efforts and sharing information with other projects addressing social isolation, loneliness, and supporting persons living with disabilities.

### Next Steps

The project has not yet secured funding for scale-up and sustainability. The project is exploring various funding opportunities for future research.

### Disclaimer

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