Feasibility of a Social Enterprise

Shifting Our Focus- Important Lessons We Learned on Our Journey

March 31, 2017

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Framing the Social Enterprise Exploration

Our overall objective for this Age Friendly grant was to develop a model for the creation of a *Centre for the Well-Being of Seniors.* The premise was that such a Centre would be able to provide navigation through the present fragmented services, as well as a coordinated provision of community-based, best practice outreach services for seniors in our communities. This model would be built on equity and inclusion and would address the social determinants of health. It would create a sustainable system of coordinated, collaborative and community based initiatives to improve the health and well-being of our senior population.

To facilitate the implementation and sustainability of the model, we examined the feasibility of a social enterprise.

Briefly, the proposed Centre for the Well-Being of Seniors (hereafter referred to as the Centre) will be for all seniors (age 55 years +) of Richmond County/Strait Richmond Area, volunteers of all ages and younger participants in intergenerational programming. The stakeholders/builders of the Centre will be the population of Richmond County (and potentially the Strait Area) working together through a collective impact approach, forming cross-sector partnerships with a common agenda, performing mutually reinforcing activities and connecting through continuous communication to achieve enhanced health of seniors.

It will be established as a not-for-profit, charitable volunteer organization, governed by a Board of Directors. The majority of its members (51%) will be 55 years and over. It will have paid professional staff including an Executive Director, an administrative assistant position, a seniors' safety coordinator, and other program staff, such as an outreach navigator position and volunteer coordinator.

The Centre would not be a physical building, but a virtual hub model of services. It would embrace a 'One Stop Shopping' concept to become the one organization that a senior or family member could contact, be provided with information, and find what they are looking for. The Centre would partner with an existing organization to set up its administrative base (a physical space). Service and program providers would be located around the area, some working from home, many travelling to other locations established through partnering with seniors' clubs and other organizations for space for programming.

Funding would be sought from multiple sources. Ideally it would include annual operational funding from both the Municipal and Provincial governments as well as other grants, fund raising initiatives and charitable donations.

The social enterprise business would also generate funds, some of which would be re-invested in the Centre's overall operations. Two social enterprise options are presented.

Background

Profile of Strait Richmond Area/Richmond County

Nova Scotia has the highest percentage senior population in Canada and Richmond County has the second highest senior population in the Province. Our challenges include our sparsely populated, rural geography (population density of 7.5/km^2, 2016 Census Canada data). In Richmond County, approximately 41% are above the age of 55 (2011 census Canada data). The expectation is the percentage and number of seniors will increase significantly over the next decade. By 2018 it is expected the population over 55 years old will be 52% (Manifold Demographics).

An additional challenge is that 22% of our population are French speaking, and for older Acadians, French is their first language.

Richmond county has 27 distinct communities including the Village of St. Peter's and Potletek First Nation. Many are very rural, with no convenience store, church or community centre. Richmond County has two long term care facilities located at St. Anne's Centre in Arichat, with 24 long-term care beds and five beds designated for Veterans. Richmond Villa in St. Peter's has 59 long-term care beds and one respite bed.

There are 91 seniors' public housing units with approximately 50 seniors on the waiting list. The more requested units are in Arichat and St. Peter's where amenities are located. Richmond County has approximately 10 senior clubs in various communities offering a wide range of social and recreational activities.

The Town of Port Hawkesbury, Inverness County, along with surrounding areas and Richmond County is known as the Strait Richmond Area. Port Hawkesbury had a population of approximately 3200 in 2016. This was a decrease of about 150 people since 2011.

Approximately 32% of people in Port Hawkesbury are over the age of 55 years (~1070 people). There is one nursing home in Port Hawkesbury with a total of 66 beds, including 59 nursing beds, 6 beds for Canadian Forces personnel and one respite bed. There are thirty-seven public housing units in the town with a waiting list of thirty-three.

The Strait Richmond Hospital is located in Richmond County in the community of Evanston. It has emergency and outpatient facilities as well as 15 in-patient beds, 5 restorative care beds and 11 beds for addiction services patients.

The Richmond County Municipality received funding through the Department of Seniors Age Friendly Community Grant to for the development of an age friendly plan. The proposed Centre would be ideally suited to provide the leadership and vision to embrace the age friendly concepts and actively promote these throughout our communities.

The Richmond County Municipality also received funding through the Community Projects Funding, Mental Health and Addictions, Department of Health and Wellness for a project called *Mind, Body and Spirit: A Collaborative Community Approach Addressing Seniors Mental Health and Addictions in the Strait-Richmond Area.* The proposed Centre would be ideally situated to provide the necessary oversight and coordination to sustain the benefits of this project in the long term.

The Town of Port Hawkesbury has also recently received funding to begin its age friendly consultations. The local seniors club and Municipal Council have been invited to participate in the development of this Model and a partnership with Port Hawkesbury seems quite possible and there is an interest in supporting this initiative.

Brief Description of the Proposed Centre Model

The Think Tank, held on March 13, 2017, provided a rich opportunity to begin to explore the vision, mission and values for the Centre. These will be established by the Board of Directors of the Centre if the project goes forward. In addition, participants shared their ideas and provided valuable input. This information has been captured and will be helpful to the Board of Directors when they begin to work of this important endeavour.

Broadly speaking these are the proposed objectives for the Centre:
- decrease the number of seniors who feel socially isolated
- build on the talents and resources of seniors to enhance the health and well-being of community members
- increase the number of seniors who are physically active and properly nourished
- decrease the adverse effects of the social determinants of health
- improve access to programs and services for those presently unable to participate in community-based programs of their choosing
- provide support to caregivers (volunteer, family and professional)

Expected outcomes for the Centre:
- seniors are engaged in endeavours that decrease the impacts of frailty, illness and disability on independence and quality of well-being of themselves and other seniors
- seniors increasingly identify and contribute to the community their knowledge and skills
- increasing numbers of seniors are physically active and receive proper nourishment
- upstream endeavours to decrease the impact of the social determinants of health are undertaken
- seniors who were previously unengaged and inactive within their community are participating
- caregivers feel supported and have access to needed resources

Proposed Governance Structure

A not-for-profit, charitable volunteer organization, governed by a Board of Directors, is proposed. A majority of Board members (51%) will be 55 years and over.
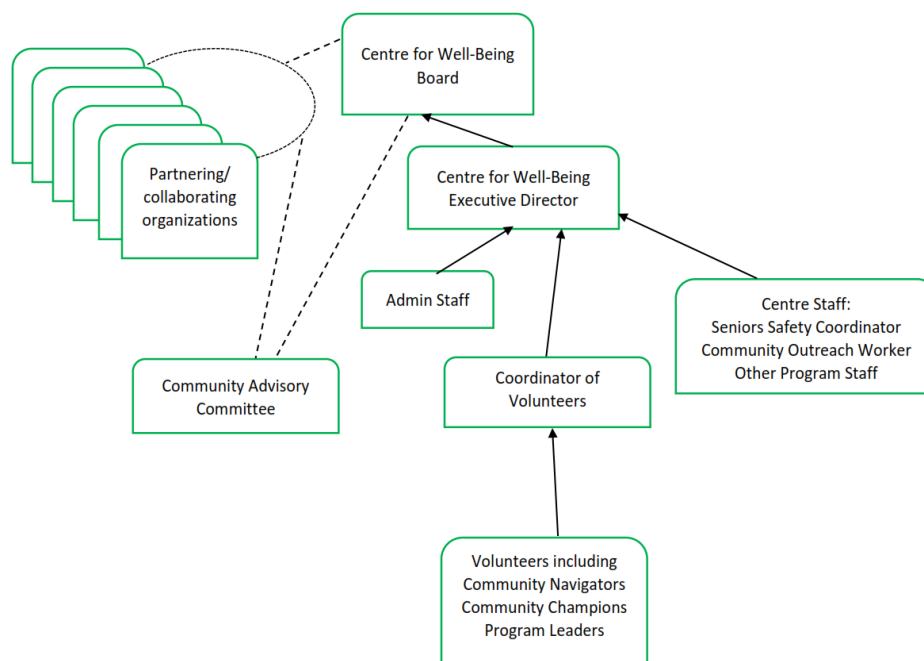
The Centre would not be a physical building with programs and services provided at that location. Rather, it would operate as a virtual/hub model of services. Using a 'One Stop Shopping Concept', it would become an organization that a senior or family member could contact, be provided with information, and find what they are looking for. Partnerships will be developed for staff to be present in communities and deliver services in existing seniors club buildings, with Municipal partners and other service partners who have access to suitable physical spaces. The Centre would partner with an existing organization to set up its administrative base.

Funding would be sought from multiple sources. Ideally it would include annual operational funding from both the Municipality and Province, as well as other grants, fund raising initiatives and charitable donations. A social enterprise business would also generate funds, some of which would be re-invested in the Centre's overall operations.

An interlaced network of partners will be established, each having a commitment to five framing pillars (age-friendly communities, social determinants of health, collaborative practice/community health centres and attention to all aspects of well-being. The Centre's network of partners will enable breaching of traditional boundaries and sector siloes. It will view the health and well-being of seniors from a population-based, overarching system perspective (an umbrella organization)- one that links with all pertinent levels of government, sectors and health care components.

Foundational Pillars

The proposed model is based on five foundational pillars.
- Age-Friendly Community
- Social Determinants of Health
- Social Enterprise
- Dimensions of Well-Being
- Concept of Wellness Health and Home
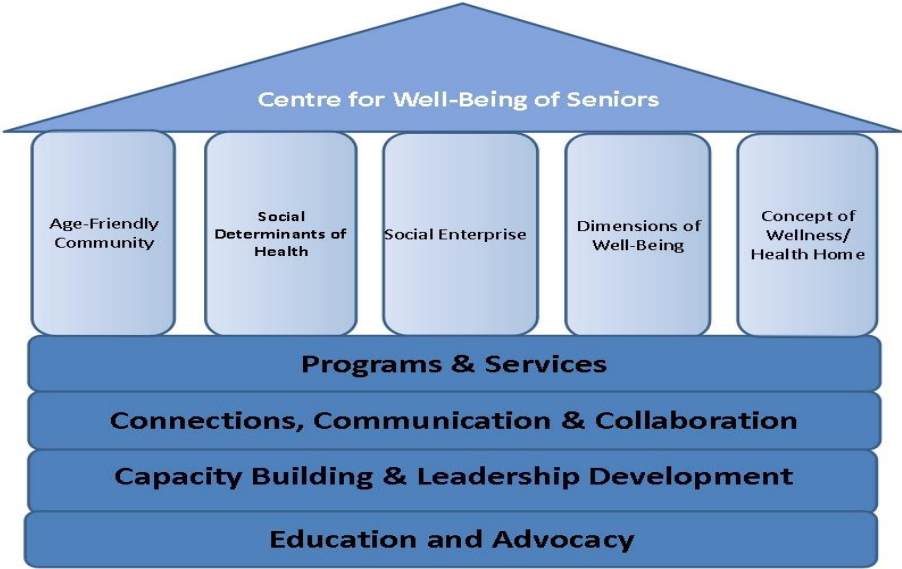
The **first pillar** represents an age-friendly community. The eight essential components of an age-friendly community are illustrated in the figure below.

World Health Organization, Public Health Agency of Canada.

The **second pillar** represents the social determinants of health (with an emphasis on highlighted areas). The social determinants of health include the following:

1. **Income and Income Distribution**
2. **Education**
3. Unemployment and Job Security
4. Employment and Working Conditions
5. Early Childhood Development
6. **Food Insecurity**
7. Housing
8. **Social Exclusion**
9. **Social Safety Network**
10. Health Services (**community-based**)
11. Aboriginal Status
12. Gender
13. Race
14. Disability **(accessibility)**

The **third pillar** features a social enterprise business that will provide needed services to seniors while generating income to reinvest in the operations. This will serve a dual purpose in that it will meet an unmet need in the community, while also contributing the financial sustainability of the Centre. An additional benefit will be the opportunity to potentially employ seniors as well as explore other inter-generational ideas.

The **fourth pillar** embraces the dimensions of well-being. Well-being is a broader concept than health as it is generally conceived. Individuals, groups and communities may have many areas of potential well-being: social, emotional, spiritual, environmental, occupational, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and civic engagement. Implied in this definition is the understanding that people can have many areas of well-being even if one or more areas are compromised. Well-being implies a self-perceived sense of satisfaction with one's life. Most people value feeling secure, belonging, having a purpose, being of significance, achieving fulfillment and continuity of persons and place (Nolan, 2006).

The **final pillar** adopts the concept of wellness/health home. A wellness home is a community development approach that values collaboration, partnerships where planning occurs with community members to ensure the most appropriate and accessible services are available; where the social determinants of health are addressed from a root cause perspective; and where health equity and social justice are foundational beliefs.

Why Start a Social Enterprise?

"Social enterprises are businesses owned by non-profit organizations, that are directly involved in the production and/or selling of goods and services for the blended purpose of generating income and achieving social, cultural, and/or environmental aims. Social enterprises are one more tool for non-profits to use to meet their mission to contribute to healthy communities" (Social Enterprise Council of Canada).

(Common Good Solutions)

Most social enterprises exist because of an identified gap in a market and an opportunity to fill it. The gap often exists because of the failure of public and private sectors to supply accessible services to the community. Social enterprises have grown to play a very important role in the communities they serve. Social enterprise provides an opportunity to promote new ways to boost our economy and our society through its approach.

There are three key reasons to start a social enterprise:
1. to meet a need in the community or the local market not met through traditional business models
2. to advance or achieve a specific social justice mission
3. to contribute to the financial sustainability of a non-profit organization (Social Enterprise Canada, 2016).

Trends from the last several decades show that social entrepreneurs have moved from their traditional philanthropic and charitable ways to find more effective and sustainable solutions to social problems using the tools from the world of business. One of the earliest modern day social entrepreneurship initiatives was Oxfam or Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, established in 1942 by a group of social activists and Oxford academics.

In our research, we learned that in recent years, many not-for-profit organizations are developing innovative ways to meet social, cultural, and environmental needs. While social enterprises have been around for many years, they are becoming an important tool for community development and for the sustainability of not-for-profit organizations. Social enterprise can be one approach to rural revitalization. This is particularly important in the Richmond County/Strait Area, which is made up of largely rural communities, has a declining population, youth out-migration and an aging demographic.

There are several reasons why the idea of a social enterprise is being embraced by not-for-profit organizations and charities:
- there has been a reduction in and a shift in government funding.
- in some communities, the market does not always meet all needs and address gaps.
- a social enterprise can create an opportunity to advance mission-related goals.

Nova Scotia has a rich history of many successful social enterprises that have both created opportunities and generated important income for the organization. New Dawn Enterprises is one of the better known social enterprises in Cape Breton. New Dawn Enterprises is a community development corporation committed to building community capacity. By identifying community needs, it has been very successful in developing a diverse menu of services that benefit the community. Others like Stone Hearth Bakery is a social enterprise that offers a work-based training program focused on the sale of baked products, thus also providing employment for people who have been challenged to find regular employment. The Shelburne Association Supporting Inclusion is an organization that provides vocational services, residential services and Supported Living assistance for adults with intellectual and mental health disabilities.

A seniors' social enterprise called the Neighborhood Program in Eastern Passage, Nova Scotia, launched in March, 2016. "This new venture is based on the U.S. Village to Village program...which allows a person to stay in their community and gives support to seniors in the place they call home" (https://oceanv.ca/neighbourhood). Seniors pay a membership fee which gives them discounts on vetted services such as plumbers, lawn care, housekeeping or handypersons at a significant discount, as well as access to fitness programs, planned day trips, and movies. The Ocean View Foundation is a strategic partner; The Neighborhood Program is part of Ocean View Serving Seniors. Careforce Home Care Cooperative, is a collective of compassionate and skillful caregivers who provide services such as companionship and 24-hour care that enables clients to live comfortably in their home or within a care facility. Whether these social enterprises are multi-faceted or provide one product to the market, they are meeting a need in the community and making a social impact.

During our research phase, we discovered the existence of Common Good Solutions within Nova Scotia. It is a company with a mandate to support the development phase of new social enterprises. They can provide the tools, technical resources and networking opportunities social entrepreneurs need to build sustainable, prosperous businesses across Nova Scotia. They also provide an "impact incubator". "The Impact Incubator is for aspiring and existing entrepreneurs who want to create positive change in their communities through business. It provides the technical resources, coaching and networking opportunities needed to build sustainable, prosperous businesses across Nova Scotia. Resources are provided as needed, so clients can focus on bringing their idea to market and support a practical, incremental, hands-on approach to start-up and growth" (http://commongoodsolutions.ca/impact-incubator/).

This was an important discovery in our journey, as we came to realize that the development of a social enterprise arm was going to require considerable more expertise and work. We also came to realize that it would be premature to carry out the development of a business plan without the input of those who agree to take the development of the Centre to its next steps. The development of a business plan for a social enterprise(s) will become the responsibility of the Centre's Board of Directors. Our contribution to this process would be to offer our insight, input and share our learnings.

Informing and Supporting the Need/Value of a Social Enterprise

Seniors who live in Richmond County and the Strait Area have identified several areas of need that must be addressed if they are to be successful 'ageing in place'. The communities in which they live do not have enough affordable housing, services or long term care facilities to meet the growing demand.
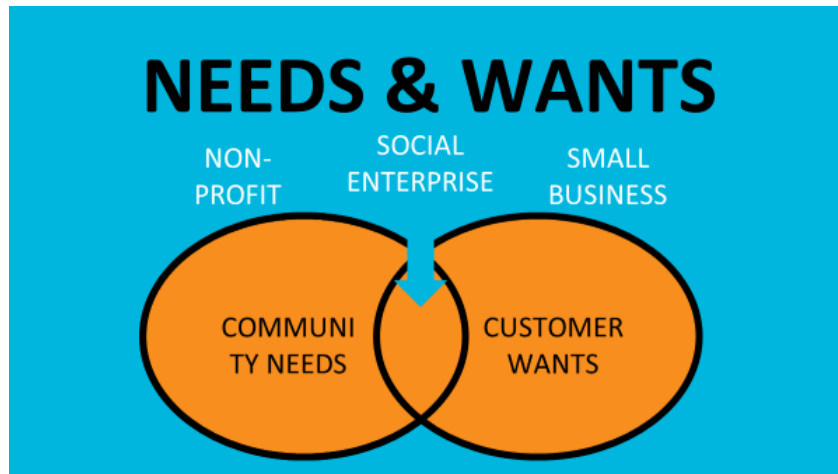
(Common Good Solutions)

The vast geographical area and rural locations pose a threat for seniors who want to remain in their own homes as they age. Many live alone, are isolated, are not close to amenities and their homes are not designed with safety in mind.

Focus groups, surveys, community conversations and seniors' groups and organizations have identified that many seniors in our County are not meeting recommended guidelines for physical activity and nutrition. Many seniors are socially isolated, not engaged in our community, have inadequate housing or limited or inadequate income. Many have more than one chronic disease.

These same sources have also identified that there are many seniors in our communities with untapped skills and knowledge that could benefit our communities' health and well-being; that with collaboration, we all could make significant contribution to the well-being of our communities.

A recent survey called *Seniors Living Safer and Longer in Their Homes and Communities* was completed by 93 seniors throughout Richmond County. When asked what services they would like to see offered in their communities, the following were identified as most needed:
- companion visits (40)
- yard work support (43)
- snow and ice removal (54)
- house cleaning (37)
- safety assessment of their home (35)

When asked what services and programs are currently available, the above services were notably absent in most communities. This survey reinforced the perception that there is a gap between what is needed, what is available and what is affordable. A social enterprise arm as part of the Centre could provide a menu of services such a lawn maintenance and yard work, snow and ice removal, household chores, minor car and house repairs, meal preparation, transportation to appointments, pet and house sitting, and respite care to name a few.

A social enterprise endeavour can be viewed from several perspectives.

- From a **service perspective**, a social enterprise could provide a needed service in our communities and fill identified gaps. This was felt to be important for any social enterprise undertaken for the Centre.

- From a **fiscal perspective**, it could contribute to decreasing the organization's costs. Income sources can range from private clients paying the full cost or discounted services paid for by seniors with lower income seniors, supported by contract for government-funded services. We hope that any chosen social enterprise could make a significant contribution to the financing of the Centre.

- From an **outcomes perspective**, it could lead to an improvement in the overall health outcomes for seniors. A social enterprise is a double-valued proposition as it could both create jobs and deliver services in our communities. It can also directly support the Government's mandate of Aging in Place.

(adapted from vibrantcanada.ca/files/social_enterprise_guide.pdf)

Two Potential Social Enterprise Business Ideas

Two potential social enterprise ideas were briefly discussed by Think Tank participants.

ONE STOP SHOPPING

The first idea under consideration is a 'one call' request by seniors for assistance with daily living tasks that they are no longer able to do safely or do not have the skills.

> **One call can get you there; one call can access all!**

Requests would be matched up with providers and the Centre staff would make the necessary arrangements to have the work completed. All service providers would be part of a team that has been vetted by the Centre. Often mobility issues, transportation issues, financial issues, food insecurity, poverty, chronic disease, medications and mental illness prevent seniors from living a full, safe and productive life in their own homes.

For those not able to afford the market rate, assistance of lower cost or partially funded services provided by a social enterprise business (through volunteer and paid staff), seniors will receive the assistance necessary to stay in their homes longer. With the Province's commitment to *Ageing in Place,* such a business model is ideally suited to help reach this desired outcome.

ADOPT A GRANDPARENT CHILD CARE

Another second social enterprise idea would be a Home-Based Child Care Service, *Adopt a Grandparent Child Care*.
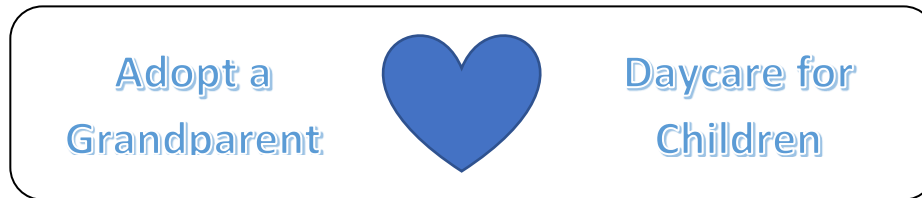
One of the challenges in living in rural communities is recruiting young professionals to relocate. This is in part due to the lack of child care. A business that engages seniors in providing child care would also be an ideal fit for the Centre and would contribute greatly to the economic prosperity and revitalization of our community.

There are very few day care centres in our community and many parents must travel to another community to drop off their children in a private home and then go to work. At the same time, there are many seniors in our communities whose own children are living away and this would provide an ideal opportunity for them to use the many skills they have acquired through their lifetime of parenting, while generating a small income or participating in a barter arrangement to access services they need from the One Stop Shopping business. This service could be full time, part-time or on occasion where a parent has a sick child, or when there are school closures. In addition, this business idea would promote inter-generational programming and provide an opportunity for cultural traditions, language and history to be shared with future generations.

Where we are in our Social Enterprise Journey

The Canadian Social Enterprise Guide (second edition) gives steps to follow when exploring the idea of developing a social enterprise. These steps include:
1. develop your vision and objectives for the enterprise
2. generate ideas and identify opportunities
3. conduct a pre-feasibility analysis (develop way to screen potential ideas/opportunities)
4. undertake a feasibility study of one or two ideas/opportunities
5. do a business plan
6. implement the social enterprise
7. measure the outcomes
8. adapt and evolve

We are early on in our journey towards establishing a social enterprise. We have general agreement that any social enterprise undertaken should benefit the well-being of seniors in our area, particularly those who are challenged by the social determinants of health. Seniors would also participate as leaders and providers of services/programs. Any social enterprise undertaken would reflect the foundational pillars of the proposed Centre as well as the values and principles established for the Centre.

During the two Think Tanks, there was early exploration of resources needed for any social enterprise as well as identifying two major gaps in availability of services/programs locally as outlined above. Our hoped for financial outcome is an enterprise that can generate substantial revenue to support the Centre.
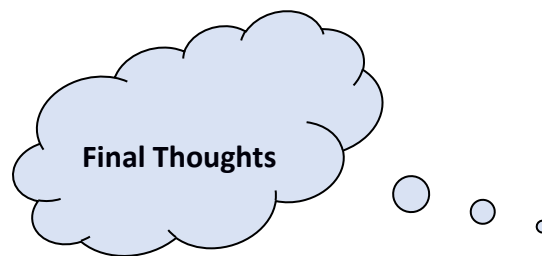
Final Thoughts

The original intent of this part of our project was to develop a business case for a social enterprise as part of a proposed model for a Centre for Well-Being of Seniors. The discovery of the organization Common Good Solutions, Nova Scotia enabled the formation of a valuable linkage to learn more about social enterprise and how to approach the design and implementation of a social enterprise business. It became clear as time passed, that while the concept of having a social enterprise business in this model was sound in theory, it was premature to finalize anything until the actual wellness model was fully endorsed by the community and leaders emerged to move forward on the implementation phase of the Centre.

Authentic community engagement is critical to the further development and implementation of the proposed Centre and potential social enterprise. Respectful community engagement will ultimately achieve better outcomes and will go a long way to ensure the community is engaged and takes ownership. Engaging community and stakeholders is not always an easy thing to do; it must be intentional and takes time.

> **Real, sustainable community change requires the initiative and engagement of community members.**
>
> Helene D Gayle

The implementation of a business idea into a social enterprise at this stage in development is premature. This was confirmed during both Think Tanks where it became apparent that selling the idea of a Well-Being Centre is going to require its own public engagement strategy to ensure wider community buy-in. This will require a leadership team who can move this Model from a conceptual idea into a reality.

Assuming the community endorses and buys into the proposed model, beginning a social enterprise will require several critical steps to ensure its success. Setting up and operating a successful social enterprise within the Centre will require a desire to meet a need (or demand), planning, people management, marketing, and risk assessment. While a social enterprise can provide the Centre with the opportunity to diversify their sources of revenue, it will not likely be solution to meet all the financial needs to operate the organization. In the early years, a social enterprise may need a significant investment of staff resources to ensure its success. It may take some to begin to generate a profit. A social enterprise, from a sustainability perspective, is a long-term strategy for a not-for-profit, not a short-term solution.

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