

Vancouver Community College & Healthy Minds | Healthy Campuses

REFLECTIONS ON AND KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM A COLLABORATION & DEVELOPMENT PROCESS TOWARDS A MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING FRAMEWORK FOR VCC

Prioritizing the Process

The biggest factor in the success of this collaboration and the framework development process was the way in which we prioritized the process. This started with the involvement of Jonny Morris (CEO, CHMA-BC) at the initial VCC day who extended a 'challenge' to VCC take a more college-wide and systemic approach. This was followed by the development of formal partnership agreements and the use of formal project management approach/tools/plans between VCC and CHMA-BC in moving the work forward. Most importantly, of course, was our emphasis on ensuring a highly engaging process with the College community and all key stakeholders.

The Collaborative Process

This initiative benefited greatly by the use of formal agreements and joint planning documents between VCC and HM|HC. It allowed for us to identify the goals and expectations of our work together (including roles and responsibilities) and set the stage for establishing effective tools and ways of working together (e.g., use of 'Microsoft Teams', project management tools). Given the tight timeline that was predetermined by the funding grant, staying in scope and on-time was critical and is never easy, especially with strong engagement and consultation with the College community. Having a formal Project Coordinator, and mutual expectations within the support team was critical. At times working styles may have felt uncomfortable for some, the planning process and documents, especially our focus on key outcomes, led us to a great result. The project also benefited from continuity within the support team and steering committee. Only one of the HM|HC leads had to leave the project early for understandable reasons, and only one member of the steering committee had to send a delegate. Support from senior leadership at VCC and HM|HC was also essential especially given the many other demands for our time relative to other aspects of our jobs.

The Engagement Process

The College community engagement process exceeded many expectations. This engagement included the creation of a comprehensive and diverse Steering Committee to help guide and support the engagement process. With this support, HM|HC hosted 25 focus groups and four (4) community dialogues, and supported the creation of a student and employee survey that received over 1500 responses. Student engagement within the focus groups and dialogues was challenged but this was mitigated by the strong student response to the survey (64%). Although it would have been better had we had the opportunity to do some in-person engagement, the virtual approach did allow us to conduct more engagements and not have to factor in travel

time and other related hosting costs etc. Given the disconnect that was occurring due to our need for remote work / school under COVID restrictions, we received much feedback that the virtual engagement process on this topic was not only appreciated but timely. It provided an avenue for members of the College community to connect with each other, first and foremost, and, have dialogue on an important topic. The benefit of having HM|HC facilitate the engagement activities was paramount as it provided the College community with third party subject matter experts and instilled confidence in their objective, neutral voices and the quality of their facilitation.

The Framework Creation

Informal feedback received would indicate that the College community and in particular the Steering Committee really valued the collaborative, open and caring approach that the HM|HC leads used in conducting the actual creation of the framework document. Feedback was regularly sought and kindly received. As third party subject matter experts, the leads also carefully and respectfully filled gaps in the framework and inserted ways for the college to improve and did not rely solely on the input of the community to move VCC forward and challenge existing mindsets and approaches. The accessibility (readability) of the document was strained in the early version, but with support from the Steering Committee and especially VCC's Marketing and Communications department, this was greatly improved. Ensuring this happened without compromising community input received or the authors' intent was essential and well worth the dedicated time.

The Strong Emphasis on Evaluation

The importance of ensuring that effective, relevant and ongoing evaluative efforts were included in the framework was strongly noted by the HM|HC leads as well as the VCC Steering Committee. The College community welcomed this insistence as it provided some reassurance that the framework would not just live on a shelf and collect dust but rather give emphasis to the importance of "checking for progress in fulfilling our mission and in meeting our declared commitments" and establishing "monitoring processes for consistent application of the framework's values and principles in our everyday practice at VCC." As such, VCC feels more confident that by keeping a focus on the evaluation process we will not only be able to better assess 'how we are doing' but also more strategically activate the broad and holistic work that needs to be done to give rise to the six (6) commitment areas of the framework. This emphasis should also help us ensure the Steering Committee works collaboratively with efforts of Indigenization, EDI and Environmental Sustainability in our methods and approaches of assessment in micro and macro ways.

Respectfully submitted for VCC by Clayton Munro (AVP, Student & Enrolment Services / Steering Committee Co-Chair)