

Working Together

Achieving collective impact and systems change through collaboration in Manitoba's gender-based violence sector



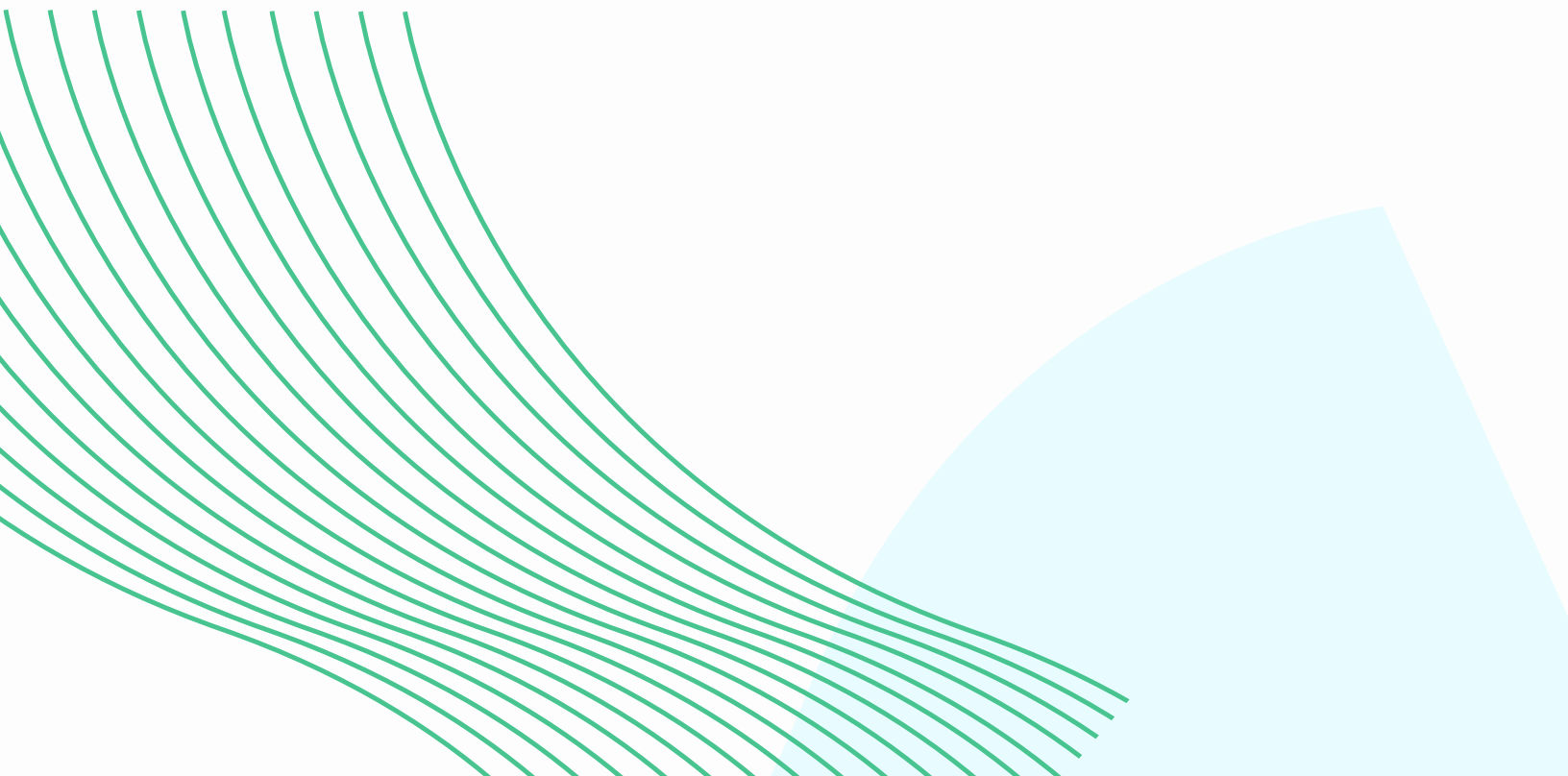
Blueprint

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Blueprint is a mission-driven nonprofit, founded on the simple idea that evidence is a powerful tool for change. We work with leaders across Canada to solve complex challenges through data-driven, evidence-informed solutions. We envision a Canada where evidence and innovation are used to improve lives, build better systems and policies and drive social change.



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Executive Summary

Introduction

Addressing social issues as deeply entrenched and complex as gender-based violence (GBV) requires solutions that go beyond what any single organization, working on their own, can achieve. Grounded in this understanding, there is currently an opportunity to implement a Collective Impact (CI) initiative to support Manitoba's GBV sector in advancing equity and achieving population- and systems-level change through collaborative capacity building and learning and collective alignment of actions, activities, and investments. Led by the Family Violence Consortium of Manitoba (FVCM) with funding from Women and Gender Equity Manitoba (WAGE Manitoba), this initiative builds upon earlier efforts to enhance collaboration in the sector and aligns with establishing the foundation required to effectively implement the federal National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

One of the defining features of CI approaches is having a backbone organization with dedicated staff to support with coordination among collective members. Because the structure and function of backbone organizations is necessarily context-specific, FVCM recognized the need for additional research to understand how a backbone organization could effectively support the implementation of a CI initiative for Manitoba's GBV sector. In August 2023, Blueprint was

engaged to identify promising backbone models that could be adapted to the project context, understand the needs and priorities of FVCM member agencies and other key stakeholders, and develop recommendations regarding creation of a backbone organization.

About this report

The purpose of this report is to summarize key learnings from our research and outline potential options for structuring the backbone organization and a proposed implementation process. The findings in this report were generated through the following research activities:

- A literature review and sector scan to identify promising practices
- 29 consultations with 37 stakeholders in Manitoba's GBV sector
- A key informant interview with Sagesse, the backbone for Alberta's IMPACT CI
- A collaborative sensemaking and validation workshop with 6 FVCM member agencies

Throughout these research activities, we were guided by a set of mutually agreed upon principles, which included ensuring that our work is trauma-informed and survivor-centred, committed to decolonialization and anti-oppression, and grounded in local context. A more detailed overview of our research activities and approach is included in this report.



Backbone options

These options, ranked to reflect their relative popularity among stakeholders consulted, include:

1

The creation of a new organization

The sole purpose and function of the organization would be to support with the coordination and implementation of the CI initiative for the sector.

2

MAWS becomes the backbone

The mandate, structure, and function of MAWS would necessarily change so that it could effectively support the CI initiative for the entire sector.

3

A different organization becomes the backbone

An existing organization (potentially one that is external to FVCM) would be selected to assume the role of the backbone.

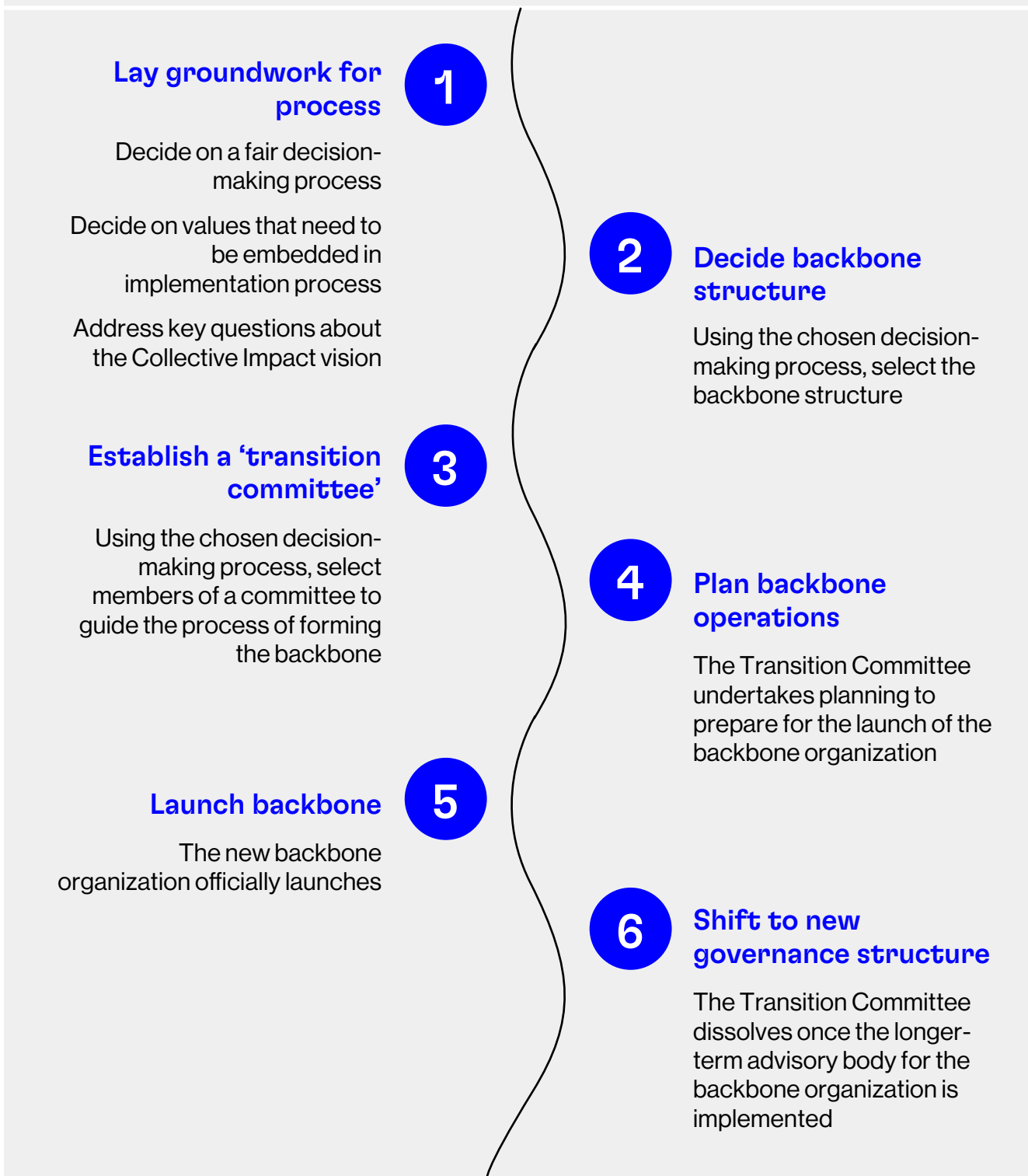
Key learnings

Informed by our literature review and sector scan, we conducted in-depth consultations with FVCM members and other key stakeholders to better understand the current state of the sector, including priorities for advocacy, barriers to collaboration, and research needs. We then sought to identify how a backbone organization could effectively support the sector, including how it would need to be structured and governed, the roles and responsibilities involved, and the values that it must uphold. Based on the findings across all phases of our research, we identified three potential options for structuring a backbone organization.

The report elaborates potential benefits, limitations, and considerations for each of these options and provides additional context and suggested criteria to support members of the CI in choosing an appropriate structure for the backbone organization.

We conclude the report with a proposed operationalization process, which includes the following steps:

FIGURE 1 | Proposed operationalization process



We hope that the findings detailed in this report will support FVCM members and other stakeholders in taking the next steps toward implementing a CI initiative to enhance collaboration and maximize impact as they work to address GBV in Manitoba.



There is currently an opportunity to implement a Collective Impact (CI) initiative to support Manitoba's GBV sector in advancing equity and achieving population-and systems-level change.

About this report

This report summarizes research findings to support the development of a collective impact (CI) initiative and backbone organization for Manitoba's gender-based violence (GBV) sector. Led by the Family Violence Consortium of Manitoba (FVCM) with funding from Women and Gender Equity Manitoba (WAGE Manitoba), this initiative aims to strengthen coordination and build capacity among agencies working to address GBV across the province. It aligns with the federal National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, which envisions building a strong foundation based in leadership, coordination, and engagement; data, research, and knowledge mobilization; and reporting and monitoring.

Blueprint was engaged by FVCM in August 2023 to design and implement a research approach to support this initiative. Our work was guided by the following overarching objectives:

- **Identify promising CI backbone models** that could be adapted to the Manitoba GBV sector, including best practices related structure, governance, and decision-making;
- **Understand the needs and priorities of FVCM member agencies** and other key stakeholders in relation to establishing a CI backbone organization; and
- **Develop recommendations regarding the creation of a CI backbone organization** to support the GBV sector in Manitoba

This report includes five sections:

Section 1 – About the initiative: Includes information about FVCM's membership and vision and provides context related to their work to design and implement a CI initiative and backbone organization. This section also introduces the key components of CI initiatives.

Section 2 – Our approach: Outlines Blueprint's research approach, including the principles that guided our work.

Section 3 – What we learned: Summarizes insights from the literature review and sector scan, themes and recommendations emerging from Blueprint's conversation with a CI backbone organization in the GBV sector in Alberta, and key findings from consultations with FVCM member agencies and other stakeholders in the sector.

Section 4 – Backbone options: Describes a series of options for the backbone organization structure with strengths, limitations, and considerations for each.

Section 5 – Implementation: Outlines a potential implementation process for the backbone organization.



About this initiative

FVCM represents over 30 agencies who receive funding through WAGE Manitoba's Gender-Based Violence Program (GBVP, formerly known as the Family Violence Prevention Program (FVPP)). Member agencies include shelters, second stage housing programs, resource centres, and other specialized services across the province working to support those impacted by GBV. The overarching vision of FVCM is to foster *"healthy, strong communities and people, with women, gender diverse individuals, and families who are proud and empowered; well-supported by organizations and programs which honour their stories, recognize the impact of colonialism, and work collaboratively to share, undertake, and give voice to best practices."*

The current project is grounded in FVCM's desire to implement a CI initiative that will advance equity and achieve population- and systems-level change through collaborative capacity-building and learning and collective alignment of actions, activities, and investments. This initiative grew out of earlier efforts to enhance collaboration within the sector, which included the Challenge for Change project (2017-2020) and a 2-day retreat convened by the Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters (MAWS) in February 2023. Member agencies also noted that the imperative of enhancing collaboration within the sector was reinforced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the broader Canadian context where GBV organizations face inadequate and unstable funding, competition over scarce resources, and high levels of burnout and turnover among staff (Trudell & Whitmore, 2020), this project represents a unique investment in enhancing the capacity of the GBV sector in Manitoba. Working alongside the stakeholders we engaged, Blueprint is excited to be part of a project with the potential to not only strengthen the supports that GBV survivors in Manitoba receive, but also to drive change that addresses the underlying structural and social roots of violence.

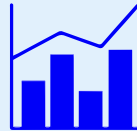
What is Collective Impact?

Collective Impact (CI) is an approach to addressing complex social issues based on the idea that no single organization alone can effectively address long-standing social problems. It proposes a way for organizations to work together that goes beyond partnership in order to address common goals. CI has five elements:



Common agenda

Collaborating organizations must agree on a common agenda, including a shared understanding of the problem and a mutual agreement on how to solve it.



Shared measurement systems

A set of shared performance measures allows partner organizations to track progress, learn about what works and what does not, and to hold one another accountable.



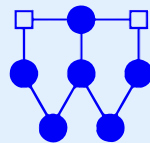
Mutually reinforcing activities

The activities of each partner organization must align with those of other partners in a mutually reinforcing plan of action in service of the common vision.



Continuous communication

Open and continuous communication ensure partner organizations remain committed to a common agenda and build trust and momentum.



Backbone support organizations

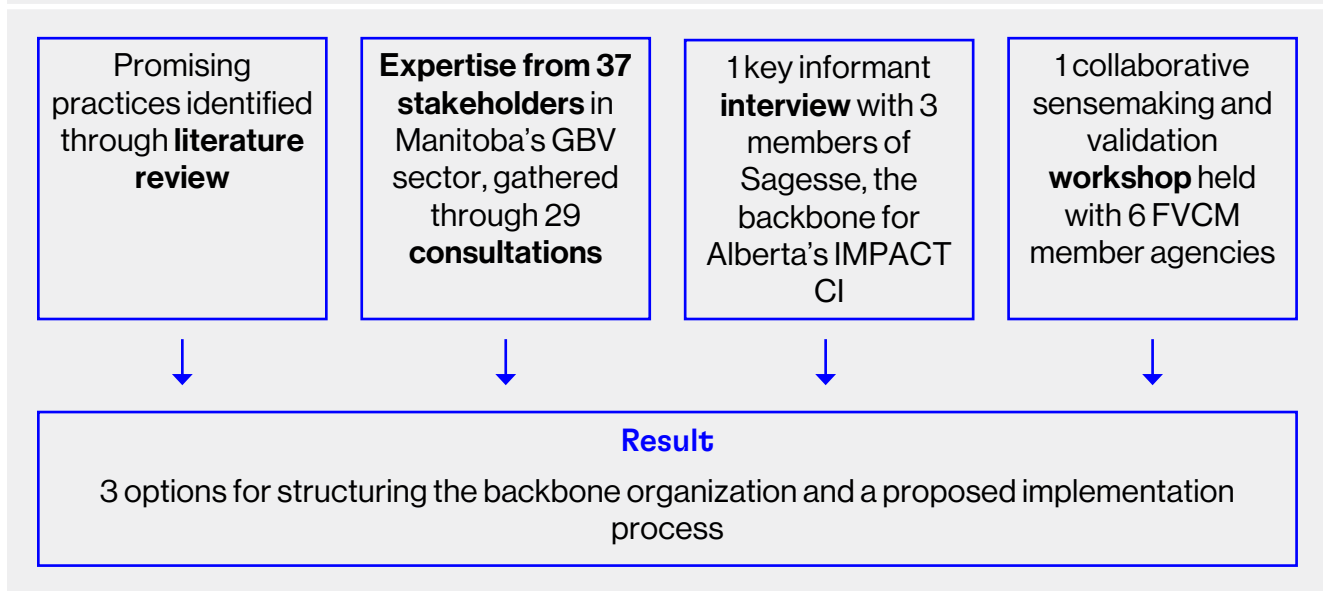
A central organization with dedicated staff coordinates the efforts of partner organizations and ensures activities are congruous.

Our approach

Our overarching approach to this research sought to combine Blueprint’s skills and experience in consulting, evidence generation, and developing actionable recommendations with our recognition that FVCM member agencies bring significant expertise in understanding the needs and priorities of Manitoba’s GBV sector and the nuance and specificity of the communities they serve. As such, we sought to work collaboratively to design our approach and identify guiding principles for our work. For example, at the outset of the project, we held in-person workshops with the FVCM executive and with members of MAWS to gather feedback and surface additional considerations, which we used to further refine our approach. We also reviewed relevant documents shared by FVCM member agencies to deepen our understanding of the evolution of efforts to implement a CI initiative in Manitoba’s GBV sector and of the project context.

In this section, we provide a more detailed overview of our research approach and the associated activities. The inputs generated through these activities were combined to inform the options for structuring a backbone organization (see p. 47) and the implementation process that we propose (see p. 55), as Figure 2 illustrates:

Figure 2 | Research inputs and results





Guiding principles

Recognizing the sensitivity of this project and the importance of embedding key principles and values in the process to see them in the results, we committed to working in a way that was:

- Trauma-informed and survivor-centred;
- Oriented toward harm reduction;
- Explicitly decolonial, anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and intersectional;
- Tailored to and grounded in local context;
- Deeply collaborative and committed to open dialogue and transparency; and
- Aligned with the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

Below, we describe how we sought to enact these commitments throughout four primary stages of work:

- Literature review and sector scan (September to October 2023)
- Key informant interview with Sagesse (February 2024)
- Consultations (November to December 2023)
- Analysis and reporting (December 2023 to March 2024)

Literature review and sector scan

In the first stage of work, we gathered and synthesized information from a broad range of sources, including grey literature (predominantly reports by researchers and leading practitioners in CI, often produced for government or research institutes), publicly available information on existing CI initiatives, and peer-reviewed academic literature. The literature review and sector scan explored two broad questions:

- What does the wider literature on CI tell us about the role, structure, and governance of backbone organizations?
- Are there examples of CI models in GBV or other social policy sectors? What is the role of the backbone organization in each?

Structured around these guiding research questions, the literature review and sector scan helped us identify promising practices related to backbone organization structure, governance, and decision-making processes and key learnings about potential successes and challenges. It also provided examples of CI models and how their backbone organizations are structured.

The findings emerging from the literature review and sector scan were used to inform the design of the consultations, including identifying knowledge gaps to be addressed and shaping research questions and areas of focus. Key learnings related to backbone organization structure, governance, and decision-making processes also informed our recommendations for how the FVCM membership could go about establishing a CI initiative and backbone organization for Manitoba's GBV sector.

Key informant interview

Based on the findings of the literature review and sector scan, we identified the IMPACT CI initiative, which focuses on the primary prevention of domestic and sexual violence in Alberta, as a particularly relevant example. We contacted Sagesse, the backbone organization for IMPACT, and they agreed to participate in an interview. The interview included three staff members who lead Sagesse's backbone work and addressed the following questions:

- What recommendations do you have related to the process of selecting and/or setting up a backbone organization?
- As the backbone, how do you ensure that all members of the CI feel represented or see themselves reflected?
- What have been your most significant successes and challenges as the backbone for IMPACT?
- What advice would you give a new backbone organization?

Consultations

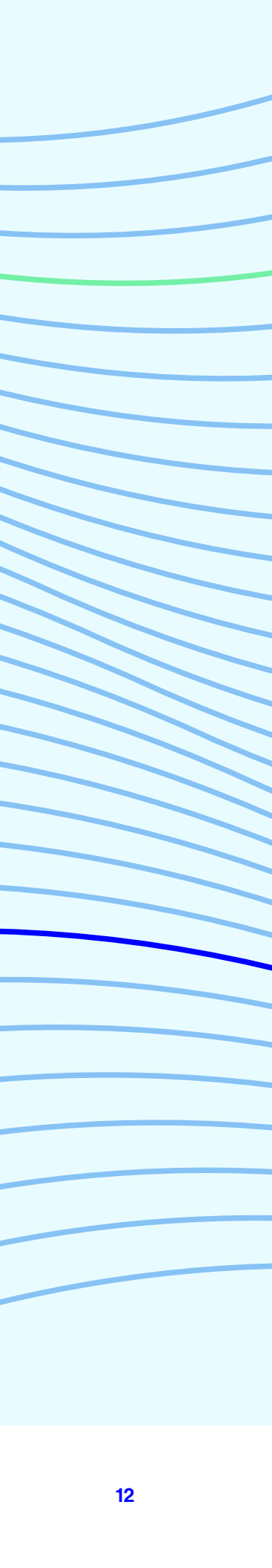
The purpose of the consultations was to gather input from FVCM member agencies and other stakeholders in the sector about what they see as the most urgent priority areas for the backbone organization to address, how the backbone organization could maximize collective impact, and how they would like to see the backbone organization structured and governed. The consultations also built upon previous efforts to ensure that the design and implementation of the CI initiative is collaborative and reflects the diverse needs and experiences of the member agencies. We recognized that this process was important not only ensuring that all voices are heard, but also in building buy-in and a shared sense of ownership for the initiative overall.

Some of the key questions that we explored in the consultations included:

- What are **priority areas** for advocacy, capacity-building and training, collaboration, and collective impact?
- What are the **gaps** in the sector's continuum of services? What are the gaps in data collection? Where are resources lacking?
- Where are there **opportunities** for collaboration and knowledge sharing across the sector? Where can current and future initiatives be aligned to create the greatest possible impact?
- **How would a backbone organization best support the sector?** What would be the priorities for its work? How should the organization be structured to achieve its goals and objectives?

All FVCM member agencies were invited to participate in the consultations. The FVCM executive circulated a recruitment email to the membership and the Blueprint team attended a FVCM meeting to discuss the consultations and answer questions. We also invited the FVCM executive





to identify other stakeholders who have had prior knowledge or involvement in efforts to implement a CI in the GBV sector in Manitoba. As a result, we interviewed representatives from 27 FVCM members, including MAWS, as well as key stakeholders from Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Manitoba and the Manitoba Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). In total, we conducted 29 consultations with 37 individuals (see Appendix C for a full list of participating organizations). By design, the majority of the consultations were held with Executive Directors, though some included other staff members such as Shelter Managers or Directors of Counselling. We held each consultation separately to ensure that stakeholders had an opportunity to share their unique perspectives and to better understand the specific contexts and communities in which they work.

To address the key questions outlined above, we combined discussion-based consultation with an activity where participants were provided with examples of common roles and responsibilities that backbone organizations might undertake, based on the findings of our literature review (see Appendix B). Participants were asked to assign each responsibility to the backbone organization, CI initiative members, or other stakeholders based on who they thought should lead or co-lead that task. Participants were asked to explain their reasoning and were prompted to share any other potential roles and responsibilities for the backbone that were missing from the examples provided. This activity sparked dialogue, supported collective brainstorming, and encouraged different types of participation that led to insights that likely would not have been captured through discussion-based methods alone.

It was important for us to ground this work in local context and establish trust during the consultation process. For this reason, along with our awareness of the potential sensitivity of the discussions, we offered to hold consultations in person. While most of the consultations occurred in person (17 out of 29), a fair number (12 out of 29) were held virtually over Zoom to accommodate the preferences and scheduling considerations of some stakeholders. For the in-person consultations, we visited Winnipeg, Steinbach, Winkler, Thompson, Portage la Prairie, and Brandon. These in-person engagements also provided an opportunity to better understand the day-to-day work of the agencies and the communities they serve, as well as the constraints they may face (e.g., challenges related to the physical layout of their space).



Analysis and reporting

After completing all consultation activities, we moved into data analysis and reporting. We analyzed data from the consultations to draw out key insights related to the current state of the sector and how a backbone organization could best support agencies in achieving collective impact. We then reviewed these insights alongside findings from the other research activities to develop a set of options for how the backbone organization could be structured and governed.

We engaged the FVCM executive team in a sensemaking and validation workshop, where we presented key findings from the consultations, options for the backbone's structure and governance, and a potential implementation process. The purpose of this meeting was to collectively 'make sense' of the findings and how they fed into the drafted options and identify any gaps or areas for refinement. We then incorporated the feedback generated through the sensemaking workshop to finalize this report.

What we learned

Literature review and sector scan findings

As outlined in the previous section, our literature review and sector scan helped us identify promising practices related to backbone organization structure, governance, decision-making processes, and implementation, as well as key learnings about potential successes and challenges. It also provided examples of CI models and how their backbone organizations are structured. A broad range of sources were consulted, including grey literature, publicly available information on existing CI initiatives, and peer-reviewed academic literature.

Our findings are organized by the two key questions that underpinned our review.

1. What does the wider literature on CI tell us about the role, structure, and governance of backbone organizations?

This section begins by discussing the extent to which the existing CI literature can inform the design of backbone organizations. It then provides a summary of how the concept of the backbone organization has developed since it was first articulated over a decade ago. It concludes by offering some initial steps for organizations setting out to establish a backbone organization for their CI initiative.

The CI literature

In the decade since Kania and Kramer laid out the key components of Collective Impact ([see p.7](#)), there has been a proliferation of interest and research in the CI approach. Following the establishment of the Collective Impact Forum in 2014, Canadian organizations, such as the Tamarack Institute, have become deeply engaged in CI work, and CI has become a common approach to tackling seemingly intractable social issues, including GBV.

A broad, well-developed body of literature on CI has emerged since the term was first coined in 2011, including both peer-reviewed papers and grey literature. The literature provides insights into what backbone organizations should do within a CI approach, the forms they may take, and some of the most common yet persistent misconceptions about their role. For example:

- The Collective Impact Forum has a “backbone toolkit,” which identifies four key functions for backbone organizations: ensuring strategic coherence, coordination through a steering committee, fundraising and outreach, and setting up working groups. It also outlines 43 different strategic and logistical activities across these four areas. DuBow et al. (2018) is another useful resource on key backbone functions.

- Similarly, Crespin and Moser (2018) list common issues faced by collaborative projects and the sets of practices backbone organizations should consider in order to address them.
- Walker (2011), among others, outlines some common misconceptions about the role of backbone organizations and argues that backbone organizations should not set agendas, be responsible for driving solutions, receive all of the funding, or be self-appointed.

These contributions to the literature on CI are undoubtedly useful, but they do not provide clear guidance on *how* to go about setting up a backbone organization. Klempin (2016) argues that the literature on CI focuses on the functions that backbone organizations should perform, but any guidance on how to go about establishing one is limited, often vague, and occasionally contradictory.

However, a closer examination of the literature on CI in general, and on backbone organizations in particular, suggests that clear roadmaps or blueprints to creating backbone organizations may not be possible. Kania and Kramer (2011) state, “there is no one way to structure a backbone organization.” Instead, **the function and form of the backbone organization is highly context dependent.** It will take different forms depending on the strengths and capacities of the partner organizations. Arriving at a final form for a backbone organization can be an intense and protracted process involving deep engagement with all partners and stakeholders and sometimes external experts. We recognize that this particular CI initiative emerges from previous collective visioning activities led by MAWS and FVCM and that the consultations facilitated by Blueprint represent another step in the process of deep engagement. As we outline in the proposed implementation process below, it will also be important to establish opportunities to reassess the structure and function of the backbone at regular intervals to ensure that it is effectively supporting CI members in maximizing their impact.

From “backbone organizations” to “containers for change”

Collective Impact 3.0

The CI approach underwent a period of evolution in the years following Kania and Kramer’s foundational work. This work was led by Weaver and Cabaj at the Tamarack Institute, who took inspiration from other social innovation frameworks to address some of the major criticisms of the CI approach. “Collective Impact 3.0” represents a conceptual fine-tuning of CI: an update of a framework Weaver and Cabaj believe to be “broadly

correct.” This update has been welcomed by Kania, Kramer, and others instrumental in the initial articulation of the model (see Brady and Splansky Juster, 2016).

Criticisms of the CI approach focus on the lack of attention given to community engagement, meaning the approach may not always align with the principle of “nothing about us without us.” CI also tends to overinvest in technical supports and capacities in order to focus on short-term outcomes, which can lead to underemphasis on the role of policy and systems in producing and reproducing social issues (Smart, 2017). As a result, there is a significant risk that CI projects end up taking a “managerial” approach by focusing on managing an issue within the current system, using existing resources and methods, rather than seeking broader, transformational change.

Cabaj and Weaver (2016) define CI 1.0 as proto-CI initiatives that existed prior to Kania and Kramer’s foundational articles in 2011, CI 2.0 as CI initiatives carried out from 2011 to 2016, and CI 3.0 projects as those adopting their proposed alterations to the CI approach from 2016 onwards. Overall, CI 3.0 aims to move CI from a “managerial” to a “movement building” paradigm in order to refocus CI initiatives on broad systemic change. Weaver and Cabaj ask practitioners to **“act like an organization, think like a movement.”** The changes they propose aim to bring a wider policy and systems orientation to what are often on-the-ground, project-driven initiatives.

Weaver and Cabaj outline broad shifts to the five conditions that underpin the CI approach and are outlined in Figure 3 below. Notably, there is a shift from **backbone organizations** to **“containers for change.”**

Figure 3 | From CI 2.0 to CI 3.0



Backbone organizations within a container for change

A container for change is an environment in which partner organizations feel safe enough to experiment with new ways of doing things without fear of failure (“safe to fail”), but also feel enough friction and pressure to push forward with innovative and challenging work. This is in recognition of the idea that innovations emerge through rounds of designing, testing, improving, and learning, of which failure and setbacks are an inherent part. Without a safe and inspiring space to try new ideas, CI initiatives can quickly revert to tweaking existing services (Smart, 2017).

Creating a container for change requires the backbone organization to perform a different, or additional, set of skills and adopt a different leadership style. Backbone organizations must demonstrate more “**soft skills**,” like ensuring a diversity of perspectives are heard and considered, building relationships of trust between partners, facilitating open dialogue, navigating power relations, and balancing competing organizational and personal agendas (Kania et al. 2014, Senge et al. 2015).

These skills are typically perceived as secondary to technical expertise (e.g., financial and administrative skills). However, Salignac et al. (2017) found that “relational factors,” like developing positive relationships and building trust and honesty between partners, were seen as essential to the success of CI projects. In this sense, **backbone organizations function as the “nervous system” of a CI initiative: mediating, communicating, and working to move the initiative forward without determining the direction** (Crespin and Moser, 2018).

The shift to a “container for change” approach has implications for the backbone organization’s form and structure. It may make it harder for any single organization to perform the backbone role as it now entails not only “technical skills” but also a raft of “soft skills.” This may restrict the number of partners that have capacity to perform the backbone role to a small handful of larger, higher-capacity organizations. Equally, it could lead to multiple organizations collaborating to form a backbone. The shift to a “container for change” approach may also prompt partners to think more critically and creatively about the core functions of the backbone organization and those that could be performed by other organizations in the CI initiative.

The final sub-section of this review makes some high-level suggestions about practical steps that partner organizations could take to set up backbone organizations.

Moving towards a backbone organization

From functions to capacities

Breaking down the major functions of backbone organizations into distinct capacities and tasks can be a useful first step in determining the ideal role and structure of a backbone organization. Mathematica (2021) identified four functions of backbone organizations based on a review of current literature: managing relationships, managing knowledge, holding partners accountable to a shared agenda, and orchestrating collective efforts. They broke down these four functions into 23 capacities and distributed them across stakeholders in the context of a CI initiative in K-12

education in the US. The resulting allocation of capacities across participating organizations left the backbone organization to focus on two functions: managing relationships and orchestrating collective efforts. Table 1, below, shows these functions, capacities, and stakeholders.

Table 1 | Backbone functions and capacities

Function	Capacities	Stakeholder
Manage relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to others and understand their perspectives, motivations, and expertise • Build trust • Develop strong ties • Craft resonant narratives • Resolve conflicts • Cultivate champions 	Backbone organization
Manage knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hear and understand the needs of the community • Identify and share promising practices • Solicit solutions from the community • Curate, navigate, and filter information that is external to the community 	Community-based organization, research institute, local non-profits
Hold partners accountable to a shared agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a regional vision in collaboration with others • Build public will • Set up and manage accountability frameworks 	Steering committee
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret data and communicate results (e.g., to promote transparency and to address inequities across subgroups) • Use data for continuous improvement and to drive strategy 	Think-tank, research institution
Orchestrate collective efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance policy 	Policy/advocacy liaison
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene partners and bridge divisions • Facilitate discussion and structure group engagement • Coordinate with partners and support mutually reinforcing activities • Design and manage work plans • Pilot test and provide direct services • Manage expectations 	Backbone organization
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilize resources 	Local foundations or funders

Note: Adapted from Mathematica, 2021.



While the analysis presented in Table 1 delegates many capacities to partner organizations, it does leave the backbone organization performing both “technical” (most capacities listed under “orchestrate collective efforts”) and “soft” skills (all capacities under “manage relationships”), which may still prove challenging for any single organization.

Despite this, dividing functions into capacities does present a **useful early step** for organizations setting out on a CI initiative, especially those with little spare organizational capacity and no large organization among their ranks. It could be possible to distribute these remaining “technical” and “soft” capacities across two or more partner organizations to decrease the breadth of expertise and resources required by any one stakeholder. The result would be a backbone organization made up of staff from several organizations, which Hanleybrown, Kania, and Kramer (2012) cite as an option for CI initiatives.

This process could also help organizations to think through the other types of partners who could be brought on board to fulfill specific capacities. For example, data collection and evaluation could be performed by a local research organization and local research organizations and subject-matter experts could assist with knowledge mobilization.

Determining the appropriate structure of the backbone organization

There are many different options for structuring a backbone organization, including selecting an existing organization, creating a new organization, and distributing responsibilities across multiple organizations. The [Backbone Starter Guide](#) outlines several different types of backbones, along with their potential benefits and limitations.

Table 2 | Backbone types

Types of backbones	Description	Pros	Cons
Funder- Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One funder initiates CI strategy as planner, financier, and convener 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to secure start-up funding and recurring resources Ability to bring others to the table and leverage other funders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May lack broad buy-in if CI effort seen as driven by one funder Potential perceived lack of neutrality
New Nonprofit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New entity is created, often by private funding, to serve as backbone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived neutrality as facilitator and convener Potential lack of baggage Clarity of focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of sustainable funding stream and potential questions about funding priorities Potential competition with local nonprofits
Existing Nonprofit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established nonprofit takes the lead in coordinating CI strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credibility, clear ownership, and strong understanding of issue Existing infrastructure in place if properly resourced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential “baggage” and lack of perceived neutrality Lack of attention to the CI initiative if poorly funded
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government entity, either at local or state level, drives CI effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public sector “seal of approval” Existing infrastructure in place if properly resourced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bureaucracy may slow progress Public funding may not be dependable
Shared Across Multiple Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous organizations take ownership of CI wins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower resource requirements if shared across multiple organizations Broad buy-in, expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clear accountability with multiple voices at the table Coordination challenges, leading to potential inefficiencies
Backbone of Backbones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior-level committee with ultimate decision-making power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad buy-in from senior leaders across public, private, and nonprofit sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clear accountability with multiple voices

Note: Adapted from Collective Impact Forum, 2017.

Selecting a backbone organization

Once the structure and capacities required of the backbone have been determined, the selection process can begin. Weaver and Teo (2021) identify three broad approaches that a coalition of partner organizations can take to identify a backbone organization: open, semi-open, and pre-determined.

Open processes involve issuing an RFP and interviewing applicants. A semi-open process involves forming an “early backbone” to guide the initiative’s early work, then determining whether to continue with this initial configuration or try a new arrangement, typically with new organizations and stakeholders. In a pre-determined approach, the backbone organization is simply named, often by the funders. Table 3, below, shows the advantages and drawbacks of each.

Table 3 | Approaches for selecting a backbone organization

	Open Process	Semi-open process	Predetermined
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct landscape scan of key players. • Build understanding of the role of a backbone organization among early initiative leaders. • Approach high-potential backbone organizations to assess their interest. • Issue an RFP. • Interview applicants. • Steering Committee selects backbone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An “early backbone” helps to guide the initiative in its initial stages, including selecting the Steering Committee. • 6-12 months after the first Steering Committee meeting, a determination is made to either make the “early backbone” permanent or move towards new arrangements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on existing knowledge of key players, a backbone is “named”, often by funders. • The backbone helps to recruit a Steering Committee, often with the help of an early advisory group, or the funder.
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent, builds credibility, open to many organizations with different skill sets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for a backbone to “try out,” backbone staff are available from the beginning of the initiative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick, avoids difficult conversation in the short-term.
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes time, must work through potentially difficult decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be politically difficult and inefficient to switch backbones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low credibility, may not select the organization with the best skillset, assumes funders know best.

Note: Adapted from Weaver & Teo, 2021.

What to consider

The backbone organization needs to be able to perform both “technical” and “soft skills.” Weaver and Teo (2021) provide a list of more technical considerations for assessing the suitability of an organization, or organizations, for the backbone role. The backbone organization should demonstrate:

- Shared interest in the issue or problem addressed;
- Alignment of its own organizational mission with the initiative’s agenda;
- Ability to provide administrative and operational oversight;
- CEO participation and senior leadership and board-level buy-in;
- Sufficient administrative and financial management capacity;
- Credibility among other stakeholders;
- Good financial standing; and
- Ability to attend meetings

Additionally, backbone organizations must also demonstrate the “softer” skills required to push the initiative towards policy and systemic change. This includes working with participating organizations to help them loosen their cultural and emotional biases, navigate differences in power, mediate between competing perspectives, and ensure a diversity of voices are heard, including those of people with lived experience (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016). This helps to build trust, which is a vital component of any CI initiative (Virtanen et al. 2021, Ennis and Tofa, 2021, Weaver, 2014). Some communities will have high pre-existing levels of trust; others will not but will need to take steps to build it. Without trust, partners may act solely out of self-interest, which is unlikely to make for a successful initiative.

Backbone organizations must also be skilled at balancing the paradox inherent in social change work: the need to achieve short-term wins to demonstrate effectiveness and maintain momentum, while remaining focused on the longer-term, more ambitious work of systems change. These aims need to be skillfully balanced to motivate stakeholders to seek new approaches to complex problems without feeling overwhelmed (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016).



Budgeting for a new backbone organization

The Collective Impact Forum's Backbone Starter Guide suggests that an initial budget for a backbone organization typically ranges from US\$400,000 to US\$600,000 for the first few years (C\$532,000 to C\$798,000)¹. Staff salaries are the most significant expense, followed by data management systems, communications, and office and administrative costs. Partner organizations often contribute office space or IT systems to reduce this annual budget. As the initiative matures, additional costs, such as evaluation and knowledge mobilization, can be added. More established CI initiatives typically operate on annual budgets of US\$500,000 to \$750,000 (C\$665,000 to \$997,500)².

Weaver and Teo (2021) use the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction (HRPR), a long-running, Ontario-based CI initiative, as an example (see Table 4, below). The Tamarack Institute is one of HRPR's national partners. It is important to note that these figures are only rough indications of the budgets of other initiatives, which may run on tighter budgets.

Table 4 | CI budgeting

Year	Staff	Estimated budget
1	Director Researcher Admin staff Tamarack Coach	C\$100-250k
2	Director Researcher Admin staff Tamarack Coach Tamarack Evaluator	C\$300-500k
3 onwards	Director Researcher Admin staff Tamarack Coach Tamarack Evaluator Contract staff	C\$300-500k

1 Figures are in 2016 CAD, Approximately C\$660,000 to \$989,000 in 2023 CAD.

2 Approximately C\$825,000 to C\$1.24m in 2023 CAD.



Literature review conclusions

Overall, while the literature on backbone organizations in CI initiatives is well-developed, it does not provide a clear roadmap on how to set up a backbone organization for any given initiative. For organizations setting out on CI initiatives, this may feel like a frustrating oversight. However, the literature is clear that the structure, form, and functions performed by the backbone organizations are highly context dependent. More recent developments, namely the shift towards creating a “container for change,” have expanded the breadth of skills required of the backbone organization. Nevertheless, this shift has also been accompanied by a growing understanding that many of the jobs performed by backbone organizations can be distributed across coalition partners.

Despite the lack of a roadmap, the literature can provide some high-level guidance for partners to consider when establishing a backbone organization. Breaking down the functions of a backbone organization into capacities can help to clarify the core duties of the backbone role, which gives partner organizations (or a Steering Committee) a clear idea of what to look for in potential backbone candidates. Early leadership can use an open, semi-open, or predetermined process to select a backbone organization(s), taking care to ensure that the organization, or configuration of organizations, has the requisite “technical” and “soft” skills. However, this guidance is high-level and tentative. The form and structure of the backbone organization adopted by FVCM will be heavily dependent on the constellation of stakeholders working on GBV in Manitoba.

2. Are there examples of CI models in the GBV, family violence, or other social policy sectors? What is the role of the backbone organization in each?

Blueprint was able to identify a number of CI initiatives in GBV, family-violence, or other related social policy areas. These CI initiatives were discovered based on publicly available information, typically from grey literature or online content made public by participating organizations. However, this information is generally high-level and gives few details into the specific approach taken, instead focusing on the initiative's goals and the impact of their project-level work. The available information for each example CI initiative identified through Blueprint's research is summarized in Appendix A.

This section outlines a series of key takeaways from an analysis of available information related to the identified CI initiatives. These takeaways may be useful to consider as FVCM implements a CI backbone organization.

Key takeaways:

- **Some of the identified CI initiatives have backbone organizations, but others do not.** Instead, they are led by steering committees or other arrangements. It is possible to undertake a CI initiative without a backbone organization as long as other organizations in the coalition are performing the necessary functions (similar to the “container for change” formulation discussed in the previous section).
- **Most have separate bodies for leadership (typically a steering committee) and project work** (usually done via working groups into which partner organizations self-select depending on interest and expertise).
- **Some have large, high-capacity providers, or government, as backbones.** These organizations typically play a major role in the initiative, providing clear direction, taking ownership, and driving it forward.
- **Some have research help from national partner organizations,** who are experts in specific aspects of CI, or have skillsets useful to CI initiatives (e.g., coaching and learning, policy development and evaluation support, financial supports, and funder engagement).

One of the CI initiatives identified through Blueprint's research is the IMPACT initiative, which uses CI approaches to advance primary prevention of domestic and sexual violence in Alberta. Given the relevance of the IMPACT initiative, Blueprint connected with staff from Sagesse, the initiative's backbone organization, to learn more about the initiative, its approach, and the work of Sagesse. The following section provides information about IMPACT and the role of Sagesse, and summarizes key learnings and recommendations shared by the Sagesse team.

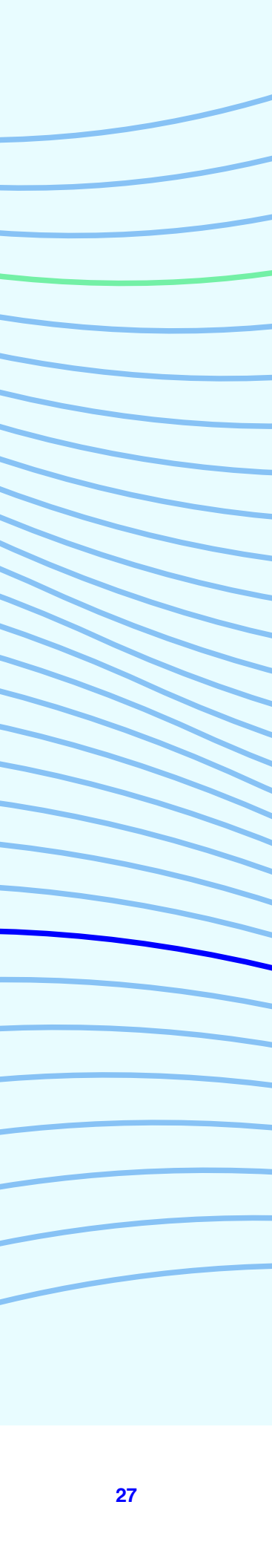
Insights from Alberta's IMPACT initiative

IMPACT began in 2018 when the Government of Alberta partnered with Sagesse, a service delivery organization focused on abuse prevention and intervention work, to initiate a collective response to domestic and sexual violence in the province. Sagesse worked with an existing domestic violence initiative in Calgary to define what a collective response might look like. After connecting with organizations across the province to introduce the idea of a CI initiative, Sagesse organized a provincial summit, bringing together over 150 delegates from across the province to further define the sector's priorities for collective action.

Sagesse also engaged 'mobilizers,' or community leaders already working around domestic and sexual violence, who helped establish the framework for IMPACT's work. These mobilizers connected with other stakeholders in their local communities, helping to build buy-in for IMPACT's work across the province. IMPACT now comprises 300 members ranging from non-profit organizations to government stakeholders, law enforcement, and academic institutions. In partnership with Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence (University of Calgary), IMPACT is developing an evidence-based primary prevention framework for domestic and sexual violence in Alberta.

Staff from Sagesse shared several key learnings from their work as the backbone for IMPACT:

- **Know when to lead and when to provide background support:** While the literature generally conceptualizes the backbone as playing a background supporting role, Sagesse suggested that there may be instances where the backbone organization is best positioned to lead. This dynamic may relate to the fact that Sagesse was already a well-established organization in the GBV sector before they became the backbone organization for IMPACT. They emphasized that the critical balance of leading CI work and supporting others to lead the work must be achieved through direct and honest communication with the CI membership. In alignment with the literature review findings, they noted that the backbone should not dictate the CI initiative's goals and priorities but rather that the goals and priorities should come from the CI members. Importantly, they shared that when an existing organization becomes the backbone for a CI, the organization's Board of Directors must be supportive and understanding of the fact that the priorities and objectives of the CI may differ from those of the organization itself.
- **Prioritize honesty and transparency:** Sagesse emphasized that the backbone must be critically reflexive and honest and transparent with the CI membership. This includes communicating with the CI membership about power dynamics and the backbone's biases, perspectives, and opinions. The backbone must be willing to have difficult conversations and open to adapting in response to changing CI membership needs and priorities. This aligns with findings from the literature review regarding the importance of re-evaluating the structure of the backbone at regular intervals to maximize effectiveness.

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- **Meet members where they are at:** Sagesse underscored that the backbone must be equipped to support and hold space for CI members with varying levels of engagement and commitment to the CI initiative and its goals. They shared that Sagesse typically moves at the speed that the majority of IMPACT members are comfortable with, while also supporting members who may not be as ready or engaged. While this can feel like a contradiction with feminist commitments to inclusivity, they shared that waiting for everyone to agree could significantly stall momentum. Instead, they suggested that the backbone should continue connecting with all potential CI members and making an effort to meet them wherever they are at and support them in getting up to speed.
 - **Allocate time and budget for relationship-building:** In alignment with literature review findings regarding the importance of 'soft skills,' Sagesse underscored the importance of strong relationships to the success of the CI initiative. They emphasized that there must be adequate time and budget devoted to building relationships amongst CI members and between members and the backbone. They suggested that funders of the CI must value relationships as important outcomes of the CI work and must be willing to fund opportunities for this relationship-building to occur.
 - **Develop guiding documents at the outset:** Sagesse recommended developing guiding documents and internal policies prior to the launch of the backbone and ensuring that there is a process to assess and revise these documents to meet the evolving needs of the CI initiative. In particular, they noted that these documents should include a conflict resolution process and should define the mandate of the backbone in a flexible and adaptable way.

Consultation findings: Current state and future priorities of Manitoba's GBV sector

The following section summarizes key findings from our consultations about the current state of Manitoba's GBV sector. By identifying existing strengths and opportunities within the sector, our aim was to better understand how the implementation of a CI initiative and, more specifically, a backbone organization, could support CI members by enhancing capacity and coordination to advance equity and achieve population- and systems-level change. Findings in this section are grouped by areas of inquiry addressed during the consultations.

Gaps in programs and services

Stakeholders identified a range of program and service gaps in the sector, which fall broadly into four areas: shelter space and housing affordability, inadequate resources in rural and Northern communities, barriers to equity and inclusion, and limited capacity to engage in prevention and outreach. Our consultations emphasized that many of the gaps in Manitoba's GBV sector are related to broader structural issues that constrain the sector's ability to meet the high demand for services. While addressing these structural challenges will require broader cross-sectoral collaboration, stakeholders perceived them to be priorities for advocacy for the CI and, potentially, for the backbone organization.

Adequate and accessible shelter space, transitional housing, and the broader housing affordability crisis

The lack of shelter space across Manitoba was identified as one of the most significant gaps in the sector. Stakeholders reported that existing eligibility criteria for shelters can be limiting and may leave individuals experiencing different forms of GBV without shelter. Due to long waitlists and inadequate shelter space, stakeholders shared that it is common for clients to have to leave their home communities to seek safety, which can serve as a barrier and/or lead clients to return to abusive environments. Relatedly, many noted a lack of safe and affordable transportation to shelters and other services, which is not necessarily a support that they have capacity to provide for clients.

Stakeholders also reported a lack of transitional housing and second stage programming in the sector. They shared that this creates backlogs within the shelter system and longer waitlists, as shelters cannot move clients into more permanent housing. While second stage programs facilitate continuity of support between emergency shelters and individuals accessing their own housing, there are only four second stage programs funded through GBVP. Some resource centres have begun to provide transitional housing units, which has helped to address this gap but remains a short-term fix.

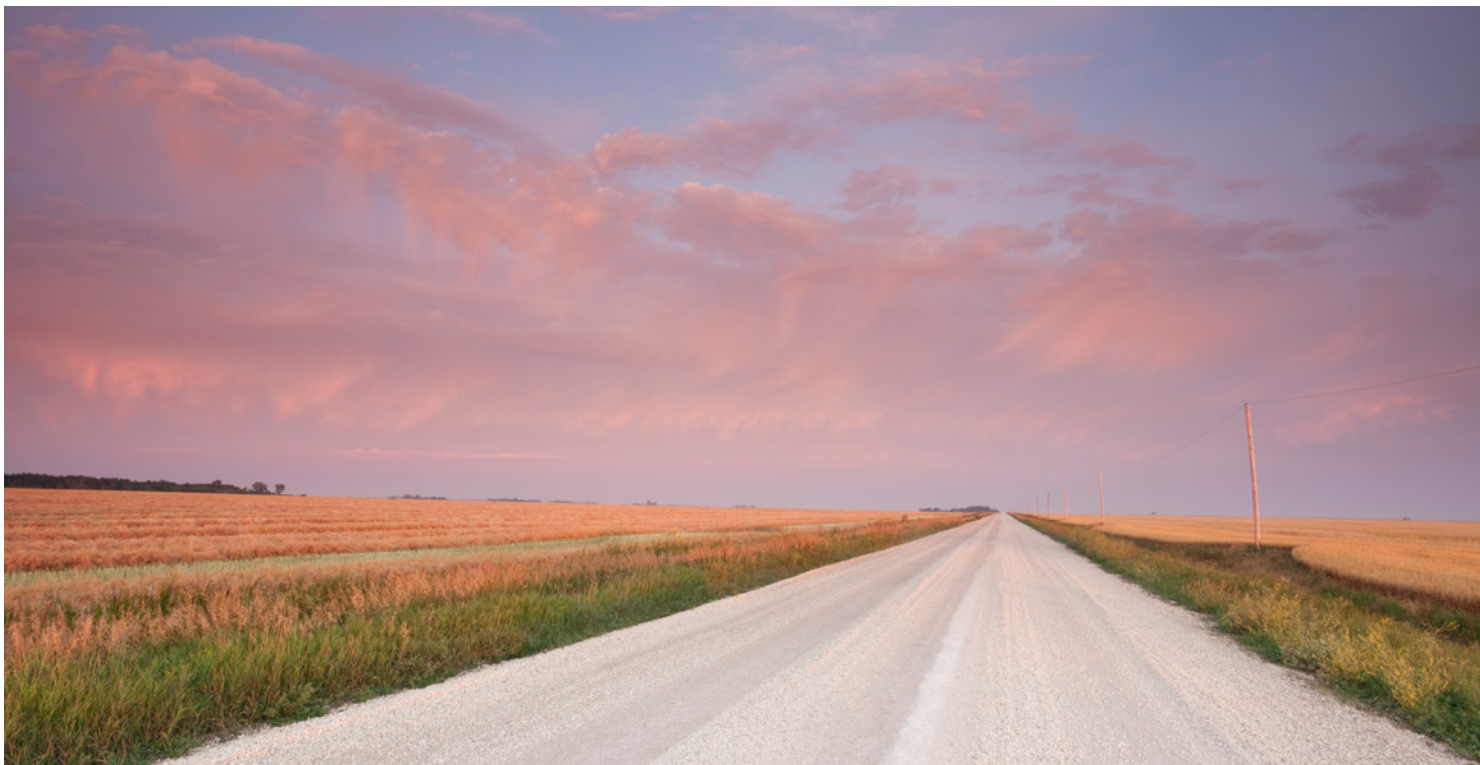
While advocating for increased shelter space, transitional housing, and second stage programming was seen as a key priority for the CI initiative, stakeholders also emphasized that the shortage of affordable housing is a core structural issue driving much of the increased



demand for shelter space. Many shared, for example, that the length of shelter stays has increased dramatically as securing safe and affordable housing has become more difficult. Stakeholders suggested that the CI initiative could work with other sectors to advocate around increasing access to affordable, permanent housing to tackle the root causes of the increased need for shelter space.

Lack of resources in rural and Northern communities

Rural and Northern agencies shared that they face unique challenges, including large catchment areas; increased rates of isolation, negative mental health outcomes, and substance use; as well as a lack of recreation and leisure opportunities. Compounding these challenges, stakeholders reported that there is generally a lack of services and resources in rural and Northern areas. For example, many noted that the inadequacy and inaccessibility of shelter space, transitional housing, and second stage housing (as well as affordable housing overall) is particularly acute in the communities that they serve. Rural and Northern agencies may also have to take on work that would typically be distributed between different types of service providers (e.g., shelters providing counselling and wraparound supports for non-residential clients). Challenges related to the lack of sexual assault services (including sexual assault nurse examiners) and gaps in RCMP coverage were also identified. While agencies working in urban communities may have access to more services and resources, it is important to note that some stakeholders cautioned that this does not necessarily mean that those services and resources are effectively meeting the needs of the people they serve.



Ensuring programs and services are equitable and inclusive

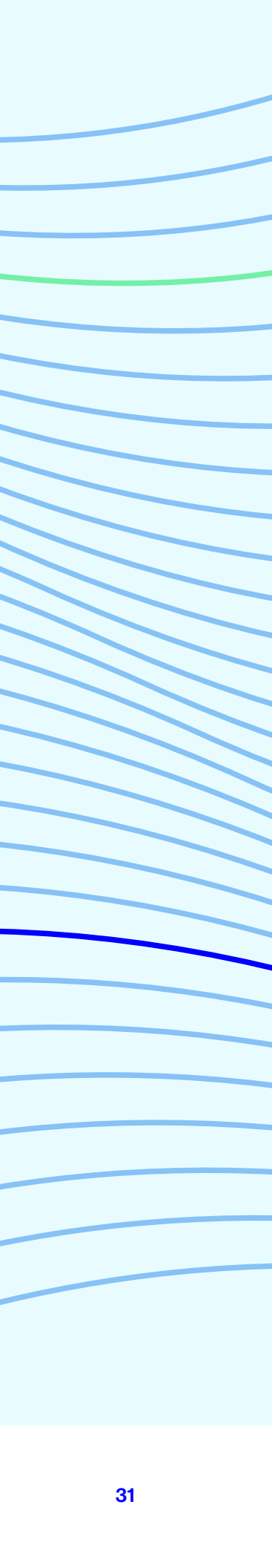
Many longstanding agencies within the GBV sector (in Manitoba and across the country) were established with a particular concept of who victim/survivors of GBV are. This affects the types of services that agencies offer and how they offer them, which impacts who is able to access support in the sector and who is not. While agencies have made important strides towards making their programs and services more equitable and inclusive, stakeholders acknowledged that there are still significant opportunities to improve service experiences for clients who may face barriers, as illustrated by the specific service gaps in rural and Northern communities described above. Opportunities to advance equity and inclusion within the sector were highlighted in relation to several populations, including Indigenous clients, 2SLGBTQ+ clients, and clients experiencing substance use and complex mental health challenges, among others. While we address them separately below to attend to the nuances and specificities raised during the consultations, we understand that these categories of identity are intersecting rather than mutually exclusive.

- **Advancing decolonization and supporting Indigenous clients:** Stakeholders often highlighted a perceived lack of knowledge in the GBV sector about how to best support Indigenous clients and how to provide services in a decolonizing, trauma-informed, and culturally sustaining way. This was identified as a priority for future training and capacity-building. Advancing decolonization across the sector was seen as an essential advocacy role for the CI initiative.

Many stakeholders described a lack of Indigenous-led agencies and dedicated services and programs for Indigenous clients, who are overrepresented among those accessing services relative to their share of the population. However, there are several Indigenous-led and -staffed agencies who are part of FVCM, such as Ikwe-Widdjiitwin, Velma's House (part of Ka Ni Kanichihk), and the Thompson Crisis Centre. There are also Indigenous-led agencies working to address GBV in Manitoba who are not members of FVCM, as they do not receive funding through GBVP. This finding highlights the need to think critically about the CI initiative's membership to ensure that Indigenous stakeholders are at the table, that the work of Indigenous stakeholders is recognized and honoured, and that opportunities for increased collaboration with Indigenous stakeholders are supported.

- **Supporting 2SLGBTQ+ clients:** Stakeholders also identified equitable services and programming for 2SLGBTQ+ clients as a gap. While many said that they are open to providing services to 2SLGBTQ+ clients, in general, they shared that there is a lack of understanding within the GBV sector about the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ clients and how to best support them. Based on our consultations, policies and procedures vary widely across agencies and some acknowledged that they were not set up to provide equitable services for 2SLGBTQ+ clients. For example, while some shelters house trans, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse clients in the main shelter space, others arrange for them to stay in hotels. Stakeholders noted that clients staying in hotels would not necessarily have access to the same programs and services available in the main shelter.



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- **Francophone services:** In addition, some stakeholders reported that there are very few dedicated spaces for francophones in Manitoba's GBV sector. The lack of francophone services may impact client confidentiality and agencies offering services in French reported that francophone clients sometimes access anglophone services for increased privacy and security. These agencies also reported that there is a lack of francophone services in other sectors, making it challenging to refer their clients to wraparound supports, in turn creating issues with effective continuity of care. In addition, francophone agencies reported that anglophone service providers sometimes neglect to include francophone services on their resource lists.
 - **Clients experiencing substance use and complex mental health challenges:** Across the province, the stakeholders that we consulted reported that they are encountering a significant increase in the number of clients who are experiencing complex mental health issues and challenges related to substance use. One of the potential barriers to providing equitable and inclusive services for these clients is that there are significant differences among agencies' policies and procedures related to substance use and implementing a harm reduction approach. Stakeholders shared that there is an overall lack of knowledge about what constitutes harm reduction and how to best integrate harm reduction principles into agency operations. While the top priority is balancing access with managing risk and keeping clients safe, agencies shared that they are struggling to understand what is realistic and possible. In addition, there is consensus that what works for one agency may not work for another due to the unique contexts of each organization. Stakeholders shared that they are interested in learning more about best practices related to harm reduction and about how others are integrating these practices into their services and policies.

Lack of capacity to engage in prevention and other types of programming

In the broader context of chronic underfunding and challenges with staff burnout and turnover, coupled with the high demand for support, stakeholders noted that they do not necessarily have the capacity to implement the full spectrum of programs and services that they would like to. For example, a few referenced feeling like the sector is in a constant state of crisis and is only able to attend to the urgent and immediate needs of their clients. The following examples illustrate other types of programs and services that agencies may be interested in providing if capacity allowed:

- **Prevention and education:** Stakeholders reported that throughout Manitoba’s GBV sector, there are more resources allocated to response work than to prevention and education. They suggested that the overall lack of resources and funding in the sector means that capacity to do prevention and public education work is low, contributing to a cycle where rates of violence continue to increase and there is more and more response work to do. Increasing public awareness and education on GBV, particularly how GBV intersects with other forms of violence and oppression, was seen as a key area of advocacy for the CI initiative. Providing education and training to law enforcement, members of the legal field, and those in sectors adjacent to GBV was also seen as a priority.
- **Programs and services for men:** Based on our consultations, few agencies currently provide support and services to men who have either experienced and/or perpetrated GBV. Agencies who do provide these services reported that the need for them is so significant that they are serving men from across the province through virtual programming. More generally, stakeholders noted the lack of services and resources for perpetrators of GBV, regardless of gender. It is important to note that there may be other agencies who provide services for men who experience and/or use violence, but who may not be part of FVCM. If so, it may be worth considering whether and/or how they could be engaged in the CI initiative.
- **Outreach with religious institutions and communities:** In some instances, our consultations highlighted a perceived disconnect between agencies in the sector and religious communities. Factors that were cited as barriers to building relationships included political differences, lack of trust between religious leaders and agency staff, and gaps in training on how to engage in this type of bridging work. Stakeholders shared that this dynamic can make it difficult for them to do outreach and education with religious communities and to address their specific needs and experiences in relation to GBV. This can, in turn, reinforce the perception that survivors of GBV must choose between acceptance within their religious community and seeking safety. Some also noted that in certain communities, agencies may feel pressured to approach service delivery in a way that aligns with local religious values, which may mitigate the relationship challenges outlined above, but may also exacerbate others (e.g., equity and inclusion for 2SLGBTQ+ survivors).

Research and data collection

Many stakeholders noted the lack of high-quality, reliable data across the sector and viewed this as a barrier to identifying successes, challenges, and areas of improvement. Overall, they reported that there is low capacity for high-quality data collection at the agency level, as frontline staff are overworked and often have more pressing priorities.

According to stakeholders, challenges related to limited staff capacity are exacerbated by current data collection and management systems, which are not working well for the sector. They shared that the number of different systems—WISH (Women In Safe Housing), HIFIS (Homeless Individuals and Families Information System), Izzy, etc.—and the lack of integration between these systems create confusion for staff, duplication of data, and loss of data, in some cases.



The provincial government has mandated all shelters funded by the GBVP to use the HIFIS data collection and case management system. Stakeholders reported that HIFIS is not necessarily appropriate for the GBV work that they do, as it was designed for the homelessness sector. As a result, none of the agencies currently using HIFIS feel that it is working well and some are reluctant to use it. Others have layered HIFIS on top of other data collection systems in the name of compliance. Stakeholders reported that HIFIS is difficult to use, creates extra work for frontline staff, and is not customizable to meet the needs of the agencies. They also noted significant issues with client confidentiality, as HIFIS may share sensitive data between different staff members and across different agencies. Stakeholders emphasized that the data systems they use must respect the specific risks and safety concerns inherent in the sector and the importance of confidentiality.

In addition, stakeholders widely agreed that the data requested by the provincial government does not accurately reflect the amount of work being done across the sector, the types of services and supports being provided, or the range of contexts that agencies are working in. They suggested that the requested data paints a limited picture, both at the agency level and the sector level. Key gaps included limited information about the clients they serve and their support needs, as well as the various types of programming offered (by focusing, for example, on the total number of bed nights). Many stakeholders said that they cannot report on all the work they do because the government reporting templates do not allow them to. Some also suggested that it is unclear what the government does with the data that is collected.

Some agencies use their own internal systems to do data collection beyond what the provincial government requests. In general, this additional data collection is used to better understand what services are being accessed and by whom and is meant to capture information that is more

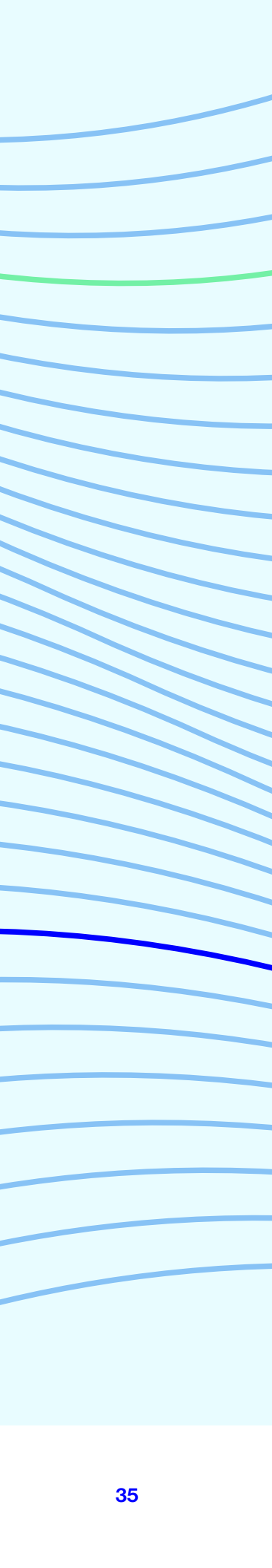
relevant to the specific contexts that agencies are working in. Some agencies with higher capacity for data collection do program evaluations. They shared that this data is used internally, as well as for funding applications and year-end reports.

Given the current state of data collection across the sector, many identified this as a key area where the backbone could support. There is also significant interest in learning how other agencies do data collection and in exchanging best practices. The backbone organization could coordinate data collection training and facilitate knowledge exchange. It could also develop tools, templates, and other resources for data collection that agencies could access and customize to fit their needs. Some suggested that the backbone organization could set minimum standards so that data collection could be better coordinated across the sector to identify sector-wide trends and ensure that advocacy efforts are evidence-informed.

Collaboration

Stakeholders reported that collaboration across the sector is currently made more difficult by the lack of time and energy for collaboration, insufficient funding and administrative support (i.e., by prioritizing funding for projects and programming over core operations and broader coordination activities), and the presence of persistent siloing in the sector. Despite these challenges, stakeholders expressed an openness and interest in increasing collaboration among FVCM members and with others in the sector. They agreed that this is an area where the backbone organization could support by taking on work related to coordination (e.g., convening meetings, facilitating regular communication, etc.) In this section, we highlight some of the current barriers to collaboration that emerged during the consultations.

- **Shelters and resource centres:** Throughout most of our consultations, stakeholders described complex histories and relationship dynamics that impact collaboration across the sector, especially between shelters and resource centres. While some felt that these challenges stem from inherent differences between the work of shelters and of resource centres, others pointed out that better collaboration could facilitate warm referrals, better service navigation, and a continuum of care for clients. Some stakeholders felt that the support that shelters receive from MAWS may contribute to perceived divisions between shelters and resource centres, who do not currently have access to a similar level of dedicated support and coordination. In addition, stakeholders highlighted that resource centres are generally concentrated in Winnipeg and the surrounding communities, which can make it challenging for rural and Northern shelters to collaborate with them.
- **Second stage programs:** Second stage programs are also affected by the siloing and barriers to collaboration in the sector. Second stage programs offer an important continuity of care for clients transitioning from emergency shelters and they emphasized that their objectives are different from those of shelters and resource centres. As their work has its own unique considerations, some second stage agencies reported that they do not feel that their specific needs are addressed by either MAWS or FVCM or that their perspectives are heard or



prioritized within these collectives. Because there are only four second stage programs currently funded through the GBVP, they are also not well-represented in FVCM or MAWS.

- **Rural and Northern agencies:** In addition, stakeholders reported that there are divisions between agencies located in Winnipeg and those in Northern and rural areas. As compared to Northern and rural agencies, agencies in Winnipeg are perceived to have more opportunities for collaboration, relationship-building, and mutual support due to their proximity and similar contexts and challenges. Northern and rural agencies reported that they often feel isolated from other agencies in the sector and that collaboration is more difficult. Moreover, many feel that there is a general lack of understanding of the distinct challenges in their areas, including the lack of access to resources and support, as outlined above. There is a perception among Northern and rural agencies that the sector is disproportionately guided by the needs and priorities of agencies in Winnipeg and that their perspectives are not currently heard or prioritized in collective spaces.
- **Current funding structures:** The competitive funding landscape can also make collaboration between agencies more difficult. For example, some noted that during a recent increase, shelters received more funding than resource centres due to the specificities of shelter work (including, for example, that shelters often require more staff and are open 24/7). Stakeholders reported that these funding differences can create tension and reinforce siloing between resource centres and shelters. In addition, agencies must supplement provincial funding with funding from other sources and often apply for the same grants.

Relatedly, some stakeholders highlighted that collaboration between FVCM member agencies and others in the sector is also impacted by funding structures. While the Consortium includes all agencies receiving funding from the GBVP funding stream of WAGE Manitoba, there are other organizations working in the GBV sector that receive funding through other sources, including federal funding and funding from other provincial departments, such as Justice, Housing, and Health. When implementing the CI initiative, it may be useful to consider moving beyond FVCM membership to ensure that all relevant stakeholders in the sector can work together to achieve meaningful change. In addition, it may be important to explore how the backbone can work towards addressing siloing within the government by bringing together various departments that need to be in conversation with one another to effectively address GBV.

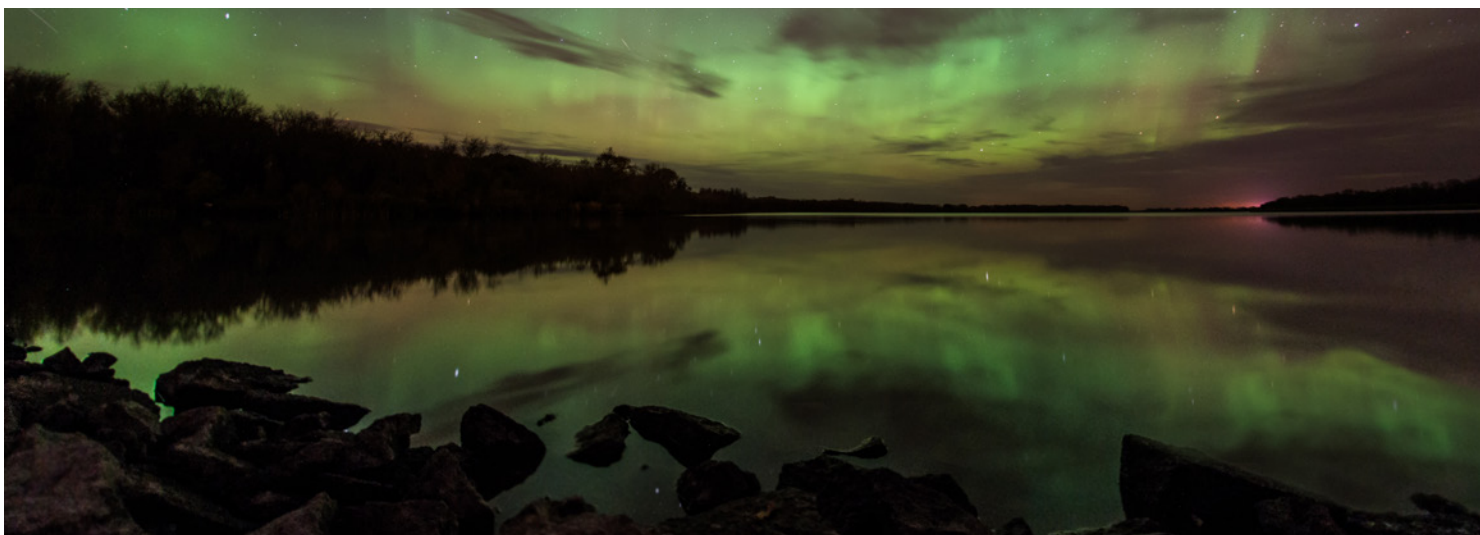
- **Coordination meetings:** Stakeholders reported that another way the backbone could increase collaboration in the sector and reduce siloing could be convene dedicated spaces for CI members to connect. Aside from the Consortium’s quarterly meetings, the monthly meetings held by WAGE Manitoba for agencies funded through the GBVP funding stream are currently one of the main opportunities for Consortium members to gather. However, most did not find these meetings helpful. Agencies reported that the meetings are primarily a space for WAGE Manitoba to share information with them, rather than a space for the agencies to share information with WAGE Manitoba or connect with one another. In general, they felt that more collaborative meetings would be a better use of their limited time. Specific suggestions included providing more time for agencies to talk about their work and allowing them to add items to the meeting agendas.

Capacity building

Stakeholders stressed that the high demand for services and increasingly complex client needs greatly exceed the sector’s current capacity. They identified a range of challenges affecting the sector’s capacity, including inadequate funding, a lack of support for staff, barriers to accessing training opportunities, inadequate buildings and spaces, challenges related to Boards, and a lack of consistency in policies and practices. Many of these challenges were perceived as important areas of advocacy and intervention for the CI initiative and the backbone organization.

- **Inadequate funding:** Stakeholders identified a lack of adequate and sustainable funding as being at the root of many of the sector’s issues related to capacity building. They shared that insufficient funding affects the number and types of services and programs they can offer, the number of clients they can serve, the kinds of spaces where they can operate, and the number of staff they can hire, among other impacts. Executive directors also pointed out that inadequate and unstable funding means they must spend time writing grant applications and fundraising, in addition the day-to-day work of running their organizations. Increasing core funding and creating sustainable funding models is seen as a top priority for advocacy for the CI initiative. Stakeholders stressed that funding must be distributed equitably; for example, funders must recognize that agencies in the North typically have higher operating costs.
- **Staff retention:** Partially due to inadequate funding, staffing continues to be a consistent issue across the sector. Many agencies are experiencing serious challenges related attracting and retaining staff at all levels. They shared that work in the sector is generally undervalued and underpaid, especially when considering the emotional toll involved and the skillsets required. They noted that this makes it difficult to attract qualified and experienced staff. Low wages also lead to high rates of turnover, as staff often leave for other sectors where they can earn higher wages. Several agencies also reported that, due to low numbers of staff, it is difficult to ensure that there are multiple staff members working at once, which is a safety issue for both clients and staff. Better staff-to-client ratios would increase safety for all and ensure that client needs are met.

- **Burnout:** Relatedly, there is also a lack of support for staff, who often experience secondary trauma and burnout. Stakeholders agreed that more supports for staff at all levels would help to address challenges related to retention and would increase the sustainability of the agencies. Many suggested that the backbone organization could create designated spaces for staff to connect and talk about the ongoing challenges and successes of the work. These spaces could be separated for different levels of seniority and types of staff and could be a place to ask for advice from others in similar roles.
- **Physical space constraints:** Many of the agencies are also facing challenges related to the spaces in which they operate, including spaces that are too small, building layouts that prevent adequate privacy for clients, and/or spaces that lack necessary features or facilities (such as an adequate number of washrooms). For those who rent their spaces or are located in Manitoba Housing buildings, it is often not possible to change, renovate, or expand their spaces to meet their needs. Agencies who rent their spaces are also facing increasingly unaffordable rent prices. In addition, some share buildings with other organizations or businesses and reported that this can present challenges, including issues related to client privacy. Stakeholders underscored that these challenges limit the number of clients that they can serve and the number and types of services and programs that they can deliver. Ensuring agencies have buildings and spaces that meet their needs and, ideally, are able to purchase their spaces was seen as a key area for advocacy for the CI initiative.
- **Training opportunities:** Stakeholders also reported difficulties accessing training for their staff. Many shared that it is often not possible for them to afford high-quality training or that they are forced to redistribute funding meant for other purposes to cover the associated costs. In-person training typically takes place in Winnipeg, meaning that agencies in other regions must pay for travel in addition to the cost of the training. Beyond the issue of cost, some agencies shared that they often do not have enough staff members to cover the shifts of those attending training.



For these reasons, many agencies prefer virtual training which does not require travel and may be cheaper than in-person training. MAWS offers asynchronous online training to their members; while most members found this training helpful, some reported that it was too basic for their staff. Stakeholders were generally interested in training related to equity, decolonization, trauma-informed practice, harm reduction, mental health, and substance use, among other topics.

- **Board engagement:** Many stakeholders shared that they have experienced challenges with their Boards that have impacted their capacity. For example, some noted that their Board members lack knowledge about the frontline work that they do and may not have governance or strategic planning experience. While a few agencies felt that their Boards were too heavily involved, it was more common for agencies to report difficulty in getting their Board to meet regularly, which presents a significant challenge when Board approval is required for budget requests and operational decisions. As such, Board recruitment and training may be an area where the backbone organization could support.
- **Sector-wide standards and best practices:** Some stakeholders also highlighted a need for more consistency in policies, standards, and best practices across the sector, including, for example, minimum standards for data collection and guidelines for policies around substance use and harm reduction. They emphasized that more consistency would allow clients to know what to expect when accessing different agencies. More consistency may also facilitate coordination; for example, minimum data collection standards could identify gaps in services and priorities for advocacy. However, it is important to note that most agencies also emphasized that they all work in distinct contexts and therefore must have control over their day-to-day operations. As such, it will be important to consider how to increase coordination across the sector while ensuring independence for agencies.

These values and principles resonate with what we heard about the needs and priorities for the sector (as discussed in the previous section), including the importance of advancing equity and decolonization and of enhancing collaboration through respect, fairness, and representation. Stakeholders suggested that collectively agreeing upon the values for the backbone (e.g., in a dedicated workshop) could be an important activity at the initial stages of implementation. This activity could, in turn, inform the development of foundational policy and practice documents, such as a conflict resolution process, in alignment with Sagesse's recommendation. Moreover, it will be important to consider how these values and principles can be embedded in the implementation process itself. Stakeholders could assess, for example, the extent to which the various options for structuring the backbone organization reflect these values and principles, as well as which decision-making process would be most appropriate for selecting an option. These values and principles could also be incorporated into the job descriptions and hiring process when staffing the backbone.

Backbone governance

During the consultations, most envisioned the backbone being guided by a Board or Steering Committee made up of representatives from the member agencies. Importantly, stakeholders suggested that Board members should be elected for time-limited terms. This structure could help ensure that the work of the backbone remains accountable to the evolving needs and priorities of the CI members. They also noted that thinking critically about the Board's membership could ensure that the backbone reflects the diversity of the sector. For example, there could be a representative from each area of the province and/or type of organization. In addition, stakeholders emphasized that there also must be Indigenous and 2SLGBTQ+ representation.

While the Board could lead some of the more pragmatic decision-making for the CI initiative, stakeholders stressed that the collective members must have a say in decisions related to setting priorities and goals for the initiative. Some suggested making decisions by consensus and referenced the history of consensus-based decision-making in feminist movements.

Some stakeholders also suggested monthly meetings between the backbone and the CI initiative members. These meetings could increase accountability to the collective and provide an ongoing channel for feedback. Many also described a sense of meeting fatigue, which suggests that if monthly meetings with the backbone are adopted, these meetings must meet the needs of the members by, for example, allowing them to add items to the agenda.

Many stakeholders recognized that advancing decolonization throughout the sector should be embedded within the structure and function of the backbone. For example, they suggested that staffing for the backbone could follow a Two-Eyed Seeing Model (Bartlett et al., 2012), which strives to embrace the strengths of both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing and could involve implementing a co-director structure with one Indigenous director and one non-Indigenous director. A common suggestion was to ensure significant Indigenous representation



on the Board of the backbone organization, including Elders and Knowledge Keepers. A Grandmothers Council, either as part of the Board or working alongside the Board, was also suggested. In addition, some noted that using a talking stick during collective meetings could ensure that all perspectives are heard and respected.

Backbone roles and required skills and capacities

Roles and responsibilities

Stakeholders were asked what roles and responsibilities they would like the backbone to lead or co-lead with the members of the CI initiative. Building on our literature review, we provided a list of typical backbone roles and responsibilities to choose from. However, many stakeholders suggested additional tasks for the backbone. In general, most agreed that the primary function of the backbone should be supporting and convening and that the overarching vision and priorities for the CI initiative should be decided collectively by its members.

Vision-setting and strategy

Tasks related to vision-setting and strategy for the initiative that were viewed as backbone responsibilities included:

- Collating input from member agencies to support with vision-setting on an on-going basis; and
- Ensuring equity and decolonization are advanced through CI initiative activities, including coordinating trainings for member agencies and working closely with Giganaawenimaanaanig, Manitoba's MMIWG2S+ Implementation Committee

Coordination and administration

Tasks related to coordination and administration were seen as areas where the backbone could support to free up the capacity of member agencies. These tasks included:

- Facilitating regular communication among member agencies;
- Organizing meetings among member agencies and other stakeholders involved in the CI initiative; and
- Developing external communication materials on behalf of the CI initiative

Capacity building

Stakeholders agreed that one of the primary purposes of the backbone is to build capacity among CI members and ensure that they are able to do their work as effectively and efficiently as possible. Tasks related to capacity building assigned to the backbone included:

- Coordinating training and/or sharing educational materials with member agencies;
- Supporting with grant-writing by providing high-level strategic advice, resources, and/or training on grant-writing and connecting agencies to different opportunities;
- Promoting consistency among member agencies and supporting them to implement minimum standards for programming, drawing on best practices;
- Supporting member agencies with testing and iteration of new programs and policies;
- Providing system navigation support to member agencies by maintaining a database of existing programs, resources, and contacts and making that information available to the collective to facilitate referrals;
- Supporting member agency staff, including, for example, coordinating mentorship opportunities and organizing collective spaces to meet, debrief, and seek advice from others;
- Maintaining a database of information and resources, such as example policies and information on best practices, for member agencies to easily access; and
- Connecting member agencies with technical expertise, such as HR and legal support (either as a core function of the backbone staff, or through a shared consultant)

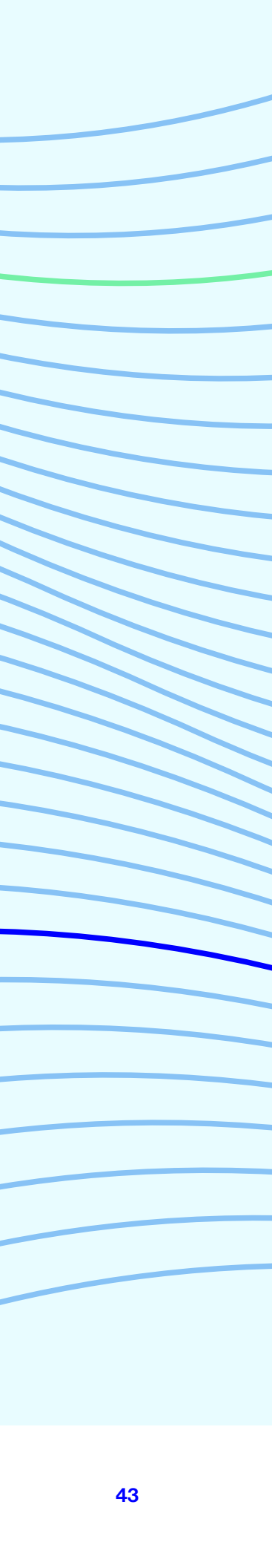
Advocacy

Advocacy, particularly in relation to government and policymaking, was also seen as a key responsibility of the backbone. Stakeholders suggested that the backbone could either lead advocacy or could support CI members by, for example, helping to develop an advocacy plan and assisting with communication. Types of advocacy work included:

- Advocating for increased funding and sustainable funding models or supporting member agencies to do so; and
- Advocating for policy and systems-level change or supporting member agencies to do so

Research, data collection, and reporting

Research, data collection, and reporting were seen as areas where the backbone would require expertise and could make a significant impact in supporting CI members. Tasks related to research, data collection, and reporting included:

- 
- Identifying promising practices within the GBV sector using input from member agencies;
 - Supporting member agencies in collecting data and using it for learning and evaluation;
 - Creating reports about the CI initiative outcomes and key learnings; and
 - Staying informed about relevant policy changes and research findings and disseminating this information to member agencies

Required skills and capacities

Our literature review and sector scan, outlined on pages 14 to 26, highlighted that backbone organizations require a combination of ‘soft skills’ (such as facilitating open dialogue, ensuring that a diversity of perspectives are represented, and building trusting relationships), in addition to technical skills related to advocacy, data collection and interpretation, and coordination, among others. Our consultations reinforced the need for backbone staff who bring both ‘soft skills’ and technical expertise and provided additional nuance related to the specific context of the initiative. The list below describes the skills and capacities that were most frequently suggested during the consultations. Importantly, there is significant alignment between this list and the desired values and principles for the backbone outlined above, which provides additional insight on how these values could be reflected in the job descriptions and hiring process for backbone staff.

- **Knowledge of Manitoba’s GBV sector:** Most stakeholders agreed that the backbone staff must have deep knowledge of the sector, including an awareness of how the sector has changed over the years, familiarity with pre-existing relationship dynamics, and knowledge of the needs of service providers. Some wanted backbone staff to have experience working in the sector, either in frontline or leadership roles. However, others noted that if backbone staff have previously worked in the sector, there may be concerns related to potential bias.
- **Knowledge of decolonization and Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action:** Some stakeholders emphasized that backbone staff must have knowledge of Indigenous histories within Manitoba, as well as the Indigenous nations and communities that live on and care for the land today. In addition, backbone staff must have a deep understanding of how anti-Indigenous racism and settler colonialism shapes the sector’s work. Experience working with Indigenous communities and/or pre-existing relationships within Indigenous communities was also seen as important.

- **Understanding of anti-oppression and intersectionality:** Some stakeholders stressed that backbone staff must understand how different systems of oppression work together and must be able to demonstrate this understanding in their work. Some also felt that lived experience as a survivor of GBV and/or experience with homelessness, addictions, or mental health challenges would be an asset.
- **Advocacy skills:** Stakeholders agreed that the backbone staff must have advocacy skills and experience working for systems-level change. This includes being able to keep the big-picture vision in sight, while also being able to break this vision down into strategic goals and a clear plan for achieving them. Existing relationships and/or the ability to build and maintain a network of decision-makers and others working to advance change is critical.
- **Facilitation and communication skills:** Stakeholders highlighted that the backbone must have experience bringing together groups of people with diverse experiences and perspectives and ensuring that they all feel heard and included. The ability to understand and synthesize diverse opinions is also an essential skill.
- **Knowledge of policy and government:** Stakeholders emphasized that backbone staff must have knowledge of relevant policies, as well as government procedures, structures, and jurisdiction. It would also be useful for the backbone to have experience working with government and knowledge of or pre-existing relationships with decision-makers who need to be at the table.
- **Administrative and coordination skills:** As stakeholders would like the backbone to take on administrative and coordination tasks, it is essential for backbone staff to be organized, responsive, and communicate clearly, and to have experience with coordinating large groups and scheduling meetings.
- **Research skills:** Skills related to research, data collection, data analysis, and knowledge translation and mobilization were all seen as necessary for the backbone. Experience with grant-writing and program evaluation were seen as assets.
- **Bilingual or multilingual:** Francophone agencies emphasized that at least one staff member should speak French in order to build relationships with francophone communities and agencies in Manitoba. Having at least one staff member who can speak Cree, Ojibwe, or another common Indigenous language was also seen as an asset.

Staffing structure

Stakeholders generally thought that the backbone should have between two to five staff members. They suggested that one of these staff members should have a leadership role (or two if using the Two-Eyed Seeing model), while the remaining staff should have more specialized roles. Common suggestions for specialized roles included research and data collection, policy and government relations, and administration and communications. Appendix D provides an example of how common CI backbone roles and responsibilities can be divided among staff members, as well as a link to sample job descriptions for each role. Decision-making about backbone staffing for this particular CI initiative will depend on several factors, including the funding available, the backbone structure selected, and whether there are members of the collective who may be best positioned to share or assume some of the roles currently assigned to the backbone (e.g., a research and knowledge mobilization partner), among others.

Backbone membership and stakeholders

Among stakeholders, there was an interest in exploring the possibility of expanding CI initiative membership beyond current FVCM members or those receiving GVBP funding. This could be an important step toward breaking down siloes in the sector created by current funding structures, as described above. Other potential members included:

- Clients and/or individuals with lived experience of GBV
- Giganawaenimaanaanig, Manitoba's MMIWG2S+ Implementation Committee
- Employment and Income Assistance (EIA)
- Child and Family Services (CFS)



- Manitoba Housing
- Law enforcement, including RCMP and police services
- Sexual Assault Rural Response Network
- Manitoba Harm Reduction Network
- Mental health and addictions services, including the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and Addictions Foundation Manitoba (AFM)
- Northern Regional Health Authority
- Manitoba Justice
- Circling Buffalo

Determining whether and how to engage with other stakeholders will be a key decision-point during the backbone implementation process. Refining the overarching vision for the CI initiative could provide additional clarity regarding who would need to be at the table to effectively realize this vision. Conducting comprehensive asset or sector mapping could also be useful in understanding the breadth and scope of GBV-related work currently happening in Manitoba and in identifying potential CI members. Moreover, drawing on the example CI initiatives that emerged in our literature review and sector scan (see Appendix A), there are various options for structuring membership, which could include different tiers (e.g., depending on the extent to which GBV is the central focus of a stakeholder's work) or limiting membership to specific working groups, among others.

There are also potential benefits and limitations related to the timing of engaging other stakeholders. Engaging new members at this stage could require significant time to bring them up to speed and delay the implementation of the backbone organization, jeopardizing the momentum that currently exists. If this engagement were to occur once the backbone organization has been established, this is a task that backbone staff could lead. However, there is a risk that waiting to engage stakeholders until after the CI initiative and backbone are up and running could impact their level of buy-in and sense of shared ownership over the initiative (which may or may not be desirable, depending on the stakeholder).

Options for structuring the backbone

Drawing on the findings from all phases of our research, this section outlines three different options that members of the CI initiative could consider in determining how to structure the backbone. It is important to note that these options reflect those that emerged during our consultations and are not necessarily the only possible configurations. For example, Table 2 (see above) presents several other options for structuring a backbone that may or may not make sense for the GBV sector in Manitoba (e.g., a funder- or government-based backbone).

For each option presented below, we outline strengths, limitations, and additional considerations based on what we heard during the consultations, as well as on findings from the literature. The options are ranked in order of popularity, beginning with the most popular. By identifying these options, our aim is to support CI members in assessing which backbone structure may be most effective in achieving the desired collective impact. Selecting the backbone structure is entirely up to the members and we have included a proposed process to support with decision-making and implementation in the following section of this report.

Option 1: A new organization becomes the backbone

In this option, a new organization would be created to serve as the backbone. The sole purpose and function of the organization would be to support with the coordination and implementation of the CI initiative for the sector.

Strengths

- **Perceived neutrality:** A new organization could help ensure that the needs and perspectives of all collective members are considered equally, without bias. In addition, a new organization could be built to represent the entire sector from the start, rather than expanding the mandate of an existing organization.
- **Fresh perspectives:** Depending on the staff, a new organization could potentially bring new ideas and ways of working together, as compared to an existing organization.
- **Opportunity to rethink the membership of the CI initiative:** Creating a new organization could present an opportunity to rethink the membership of the CI initiative. This could include expanding or refining the membership to ensure that the appropriate stakeholders are involved and dismantling some of the siloing based on current funding streams.

- **Greater input from CI members:** Compared to selecting an existing organization as the backbone, this option would give collective members more decision-making power over the structure and governance of the backbone. There would be no need to negotiate with the leadership and policy structure of an existing organization and the focus could be solely on the needs of the collective members.
- **Collective visioning for the backbone could build trust and increase buy-in:** The process of working together to determine the structure and governance of the backbone could help to build strong relationships between the different collective members and increase buy-in and commitment, essential to the success of the backbone and the CI initiative.

Limitations

- **Requires significant time and resources:** Compared to the other options, building a new organization from scratch will take significant time and resources. The amount of time it will take to set up the backbone organization is a key consideration, given that many stakeholders referenced the need to maintain momentum and maximize the window of opportunity that exists with the current provincial government's support for this initiative.
- **May require investment in building relationships:** Since the collective members would not have a pre-existing relationship with the backbone, it may take time to build trust. Meaningfully incorporating the perspectives and needs of members when establishing the backbone could be one way to increase buy-in and mitigate this challenge.
- **Lacks external recognition and credibility:** As the backbone would be a new organization, it could take time to build recognition and establish credibility with stakeholders outside of the sector, which is critical to the success of the CI initiative.
- **May exacerbate staffing challenges:** If staff from GBV agencies are hired to work for the new backbone, this could exacerbate issues related to the shortage of skilled and experienced staff.
- **May create additional work for leaders within the sector:** Some stakeholders expressed reservations about the fact that creating a new backbone organization with its own Board could exacerbate capacity challenges for Executive Directors, particularly if MAWS and the backbone co-exist and there is pressure to serve on both Boards.

Considerations

- **Lack of consensus on backbone staffing:** In addition to the capacity challenges referenced above, stakeholders had mixed opinions about how a new backbone organization should be staffed. Specifically, there were perceived tensions between the desire for staff to bring deep knowledge of the sector and concern that hiring those already working in the sector could replicate existing relationship dynamics, thereby mitigating some of the potential benefits of creating a new organization. Regardless, most stakeholders felt that there should be a formal application process and job interviews.

- **Relationship with MAWS:** During the consultations, stakeholders referenced several potential implications that this option could have in relation to MAWS. These included, for example, concerns about duplication of effort and resources, particularly as MAWS currently fulfills some of the roles identified for the backbone (e.g., tasks related to training and advocacy, though specifically for shelters). If the new backbone were to replace MAWS, stakeholders emphasized the importance of ensuring that MAWS' work (e.g., training materials, networks, etc.) is not lost.
- **Maintaining shelter-specific supports:** Stakeholders expressed the desire to ensure that the shelter-specific supports currently provided by MAWS are not lost, particularly if it is decided that the backbone will replace MAWS. CI initiatives typically include several working groups, so this could be a potential space to address concerns that are specific to different subsets of CI members.
- **Popularity:** This option was the most popular among the stakeholders consulted, representing 67% (or 18/27) of participating FVCM members. However, it is important to note that there were different logics for selecting this option. Some preferred this option because they did not feel that MAWS could effectively serve as a backbone for the entire sector (see Option 2) or could not envision a different existing organization becoming the backbone (see Option 3). However, the majority of participating MAWS members (7/9) also preferred this option, largely because they wanted to avoid expanding MAWS' current mandate or changing its structure.

Option 2: MAWS becomes the backbone

In this option, MAWS would assume the backbone role. The mandate, structure, and function of MAWS would necessarily change so that MAWS could effectively support the CI initiative for the entire sector.

Strengths

- **Existing organizational structure and knowledge:** MAWS is already established, which may mean that MAWS could assume the backbone role more quickly than a brand-new organization. For example, the fact that MAWS already has charitable status was cited as a factor that could potentially expedite the implementation of the backbone. MAWS staff also have a deep understanding of the needs and priorities of shelters, though, according to stakeholders, not necessarily other types of agencies in the sector.
- **Established relationships:** As an existing organization that has been working within the sector for a long time, MAWS already has relationships with some of the CI initiative members. This may help with buy-in.
- **Understanding of Collective Impact models:** MAWS has been involved in envisioning the implementation of a CI initiative for the sector since the 2017 Challenge for Change project and convened the two-day meeting in February 2023 so they already have an understanding of what CI initiatives involve.
- **Experience with backbone responsibilities:** MAWS already has experience in many of the areas that were identified as core responsibilities of the backbone. For example, MAWS currently engages in advocacy on behalf of Manitoba shelters and provides training and problem-solving support to their members.
- **May reduce siloing:** If MAWS became the backbone, their mandate, structure, and function would need to change to reflect the needs and priorities of the full sector, which was cited as a potential means of reducing siloing between shelters and other agencies.

Limitations

- **Difficulty representing the sector as a whole:** MAWS currently supports only a subset of agencies who would be part of the CI initiative and the perception that they may have difficulty gaining the trust of non-member agencies was widespread. Many suggested that MAWS does not have the desired neutrality to be come the backbone and that the needs and priorities of shelters would be privileged, given MAWS' current mandate.
- **Erosion of shelter-specific support:** Some MAWS members fear that expanding the mandate and role of MAWS could lead to negative outcomes for the shelters that currently benefit from MAWS' support. Instead, most MAWS members would like to see it continue to focus on supporting shelters and collaborate with the backbone organization in some way.

- **Impact on MAWS' relationship with current external partners:** MAWS has been a strong voice for Manitoba shelters. Expanding its mandate to support the whole sector was perceived as having the potential to impact its ability to collaborate with key shelter-specific advocacy partners, such as Women's Shelters Canada.
- **Time and resources required for restructure:** If MAWS became the backbone, it would likely involve changing its official mandate and hiring new staff. This could take significant time and resources, though likely less than setting up a new backbone.

Considerations

- **MAWS members value the supports that MAWS currently provides:** Members of MAWS value the shelter-specific supports that MAWS currently provides. For these agencies, it is important that these supports continue, even if the mandate and structure of MAWS changes to address the needs and priorities of the larger Collective.
- **Popularity:** This option was the second most popular, with 19% of FVCM members (or 5/27) consulted favouring it over the others. It is important to note that the majority of those who preferred this option were affiliate members of MAWS (3/5 agencies) and one was not part of MAWS. As discussed above, the majority of full MAWS members preferred Option 1, largely because they did not want to see MAWS' mandate expanded. One full MAWS member selected this option because they preferred to avoid a scenario where the backbone and MAWS co-existed as they may be torn between them.

Option 3: Another existing organization becomes the backbone

In this option, an existing organization (potentially one that is external to the FVCM) would be identified and selected to assume the role of the backbone. Because this was not a popular option among stakeholders, the following strengths, limitations, and considerations were developed primarily using insights from the literature review rather than the consultations.

Strengths

Existing infrastructure: This option could require less time and fewer resources than the other options, as an existing organization would likely already have non-profit or charitable status, internal policies and procedures in place, a funding reserve, etc. Depending on which organization is selected, it may already have some staff in place, which could streamline the process of establishing the backbone and could mitigate potential capacity concerns related to the transfer of agency staff to the backbone. The selected organization may also already have a dedicated space, which could mean that the resources required to rent space for a new backbone organization could be invested elsewhere.

May have recognition, credibility, and a network: Selecting an organization that has a strong reputation and credibility within the sector and with external stakeholders could allow the CI initiative to hit the ground running without having to invest as much time (compared to a brand-new organization) in building recognition and establishing trust.

Potential to avoid relationship ‘baggage’: Selecting an existing organization to be the backbone could bring fresh perspectives but could also potentially avoid some of the baggage associated with pre-existing relationships within the sector. This option could fulfil the desire for a neutral backbone.

Limitations

Existing infrastructure may mean inflexibility and compromise: The governance structure of the backbone (the Board, Steering Committee, or another body) would potentially have to work within or negotiate the existing policies, practices, and governance structures of the selected organization. In this option, the backbone would not be solely designed around the needs and priorities of the CI initiative members.

May not have deep experience in the sector: If an organization other than MAWS or an FVCM member agency were selected, they may meet many of the requirements for the backbone but may lack expert knowledge of Manitoba’s GBV sector. This could, in turn, create challenges related to credibility and buy-in from the CI initiative members. Having a strong governance structure and ensuring that the backbone remains focused on playing a background supporting role could potentially mitigate this challenge.

May not be solely focused on the CI initiative: An existing organization would likely be involved in other programs and initiatives, which could mean that the CI initiative may be one among many competing priorities for the backbone. By contrast, if a new backbone organization is created, the CI initiative would be its sole priority.

Considerations

- **Selection process matters:** If selecting an existing organization, stakeholder preference was to use a similar process and approach to when Blueprint was hired. They suggested forming a selection committee and ensuring that CI members are kept informed throughout the selection process. This suggestion aligns with the open selection process described in literature review findings (see Figure 3), which also include technical considerations that would be important when assessing the suitability of organizations interested in becoming the backbone.
- **Popularity:** This option was the least popular and was preferred by only one of the FVCM members consulted. Reasons for not selecting this option included the critical importance of having a backbone with a deep understanding of the GBV sector in Manitoba and the perception that there are no GBV organizations that would have the capacity or neutrality to become the backbone.

Operationalizing the CI initiative and backbone organization

In this section, we build on what we heard during the consultations and learnings from our literature review and key informant interview with Sagesse to outline potential next steps. Our goal is to support FVCM member agencies in maintaining current momentum and moving toward implementation, but the steps required to get there may depend on decisions made along the way. As such, the process that we propose in this section is fairly high-level and will likely need to be built out further as these decisions are made. Preparing for implementation involves the following overarching phases:

- **Establishing a vision for the CI initiative overall:** What change do we want to achieve for the sector through a CI approach? Who needs to be included in the CI to achieve this change?
- **Establishing a vision for the backbone organization:** What activities does the backbone need to take on to support the sector's vision for change? Are there other CI members who would be better positioned to lead or share certain roles or responsibilities initially assigned to the backbone (e.g., research and knowledge mobilization)?
- **Developing the backbone organization structure and governance model:** How should the backbone organization be structured to best undertake these activities and achieve the sector's vision? How will we ensure that the backbone organization reflects the diversity of the sector and avoids reproducing siloing?
- **Planning an implementation process:** How do we get there?

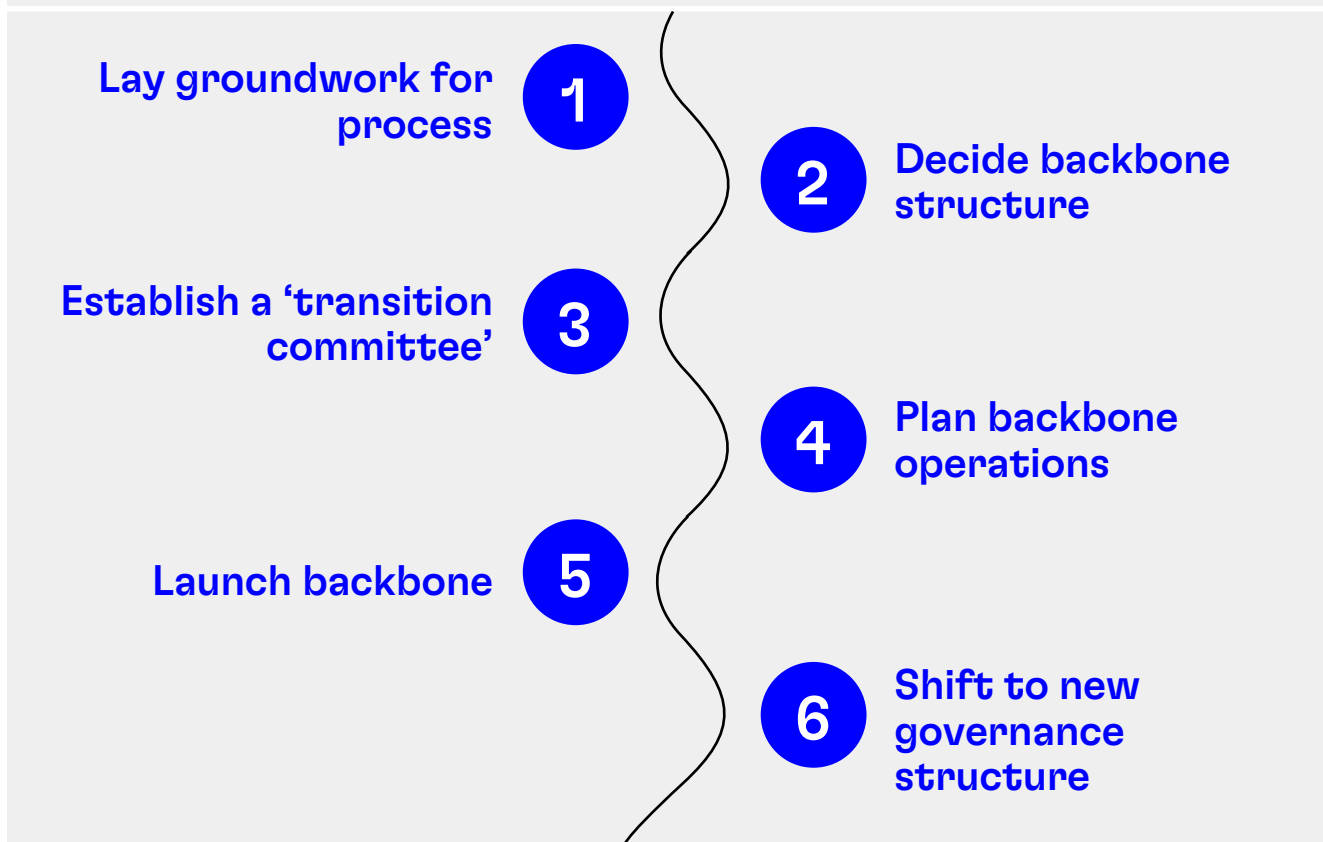
Across all these phases, it will be important to consider opportunities for alignment with the priorities and values discussed in the earlier sections of this report. For example, how could challenges related to siloing and to advancing equity and decolonization be addressed through decisions made in each phase? How might the values and principles identified during the consultations be enacted in these processes?



Proposed implementation process

Once the first three phases described above have been completed, members of the CI initiative can begin planning for the implementation of the backbone organization. In this subsection, we describe a possible implementation process, which contains six steps and is summarized in Figure 1 below.

FIGURE 1 | Proposed operationalization process



Step 1: Lay groundwork for the process

Decide on a fair decision-making process

The FVCM membership determines how they will make the important decisions needed to launch a backbone organization (e.g., deciding on the structure and governance for the backbone and the membership of a 'transition committee' to implement the new CI initiative and backbone organization). This could include consensus, a voting process, a combination, or another option (see "Decision-making methods" call out).

Decide on values that need to be embedded in implementation process

As discussed above, it is important for the implementation process to reflect the values and principles that were shared during stakeholder consultations. For example, equity, decolonization, inclusivity, collaboration, and fairness were frequently suggested and are important to consider at each stage of the implementation process.

Address key questions about collective impact vision

While sector vision and strategy will be long-term work (and ideally supported by the backbone), certain questions will have implications for how the backbone is structured. For example, determining the change the sector wishes to make may inform who the CI membership should include and how the backbone organization should be staffed and governed.

Decision-making methods

There are several different ways the FVCM membership could approach decision-making. Recognizing that, given the diversity of perspectives highlighted above, unanimity is unlikely in this context, a couple other methods include:



Decision by consensus:

FVCM members discuss the decision and all potential options, with space provided for each member to share their perspective. As a result of the discussion, members come to a consensus. This means that all members agree that the decision is acceptable, even if it is not their preferred option. Consensus-based decision-making enables all members to share their thoughts and influence the decision, which can increase trust and buy-in after the decision is made. There is also a long history of consensus-based decision-making in feminist organizations, and this option may align with the values of the sector. However, reaching consensus can also be difficult and time-consuming (see learnings identified by Sageesse).



Decision by voting:

FVCM members vote to make decisions, with the option with most votes winning. This method is fast and uses democratic participation. However, those with minority views may not feel heard or respected within this process, which may affect buy-in, trust, and relationship-building among CI initiative members.



Step 2: Decide backbone structure

Using the chosen decision-making process, select the backbone structure

The FVCM membership considers the possible options and their implications to make a decision about how to establish the backbone, including the backbone's structure and governance processes. Assessing each option against the following criteria could support with decision-making:

- Fairness and representation
- Feasibility (including financial feasibility)
- Obtaining the right skillset and expertise for the activities the backbone needs to do
- Alignment with values and desired ways of working

Step 3: Establish a transition committee

Using the chosen decision-making process, select members of a committee to guide the process of forming the backbone

We recommend establishing a transition committee to guide the process of establishing the backbone. The members of this committee could be chosen based on the following criteria:

- Expertise needed to set up the organization (e.g., knowledge of the legal process of forming a nonprofit or charitable organization, HR expertise, budget development, etc.)
- Representation of the diversity of the sector, including representation from different types of agencies and different areas of the province (urban, rural, Northern)
- Recognition that those who join this committee would be exempt from becoming a backbone staff member, as this could present a conflict of interest

Step 4: Plan backbone operations

Transition committee undertakes planning to prepare for the launch of the backbone

This step could include planning related to:

- Governance and membership (e.g., determining Board structure, working groups, staff, and roles and responsibilities)
- Mandate and scope of work (i.e. which activities the backbone will be responsible for)
- HR (including writing internal policies and hiring backbone staff)

- Budget (i.e. how will the backbone fund its work and how its activities should be scoped to fit within a budget)
- Physical space (i.e. where the backbone will operate from)
- The transition committee must also decide if the backbone will be a non-profit organization or a charitable organization. Information on the differences between non-profit organizations and charitable organizations and how they are incorporated and registered can be found in Appendix E.

Step 5: Launch backbone

The new backbone officially launches

Once all operations planning is complete, the backbone launches and begins its work in supporting the CI initiative.

Step 6: Shift to new backbone governance structure

The transition committee dissolves once the longer-term governance structure for the backbone is implemented

The transition committee dissolves once the backbone organization officially launches and the new governance structure is implemented.

The chosen governance structure could take the form of a Board of Directors or a Steering Committee and working groups to ensure representation of all interests.

It is important to note that the structure and function of the backbone organization may need to shift over time, in alignment with changing needs and priorities in the sector. As such, once the backbone organization is up and running and the longer-term governance structure is implemented, we recommend establishing a cyclical review process to reassess the backbone at regular intervals. This process could promote transparency and accountability to the members of the CI initiative and ensure that the backbone is effectively supporting them in maximizing their collective impact.

Conclusion and acknowledgements

Blueprint is grateful to have had the opportunity to partner with FVCM members in working toward implementing a CI initiative for Manitoba's GBV sector. We recognize that investment in enhancing sector-wide capacity and coordination is relatively novel, and we hope that our research will support FVCM in demonstrating why this type of investment is essential to address social issues as complex as GBV. In writing this report, our goal was to develop evidence-informed options for establishing a backbone organization that reflects the priorities and values of FVCM members as they seek to not only strengthen supports for survivors, but also to drive population- and systems-level change that addresses the underlying root causes of violence.

We are grateful to all the stakeholders who welcomed us into their spaces and communities and shared their perspectives with us. Thank you for trusting us with your stories. We have sought to treat them with care, and we hope that we have done justice to the nuance and complexity of everything we heard in this report. A special thank you to the FVCM executive for their support with coordination and logistics, and to WAGE Manitoba for funding this important initiative.

In writing this report, our goal was to develop evidence-informed options for establishing a backbone organization that reflects the priorities and values of FVCM members as they seek to not only strengthen supports for survivors, but also to drive population- and systems-level change that addresses the underlying root causes of violence.



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Appendices

Appendix A: Sample CI initiatives

In this appendix, we provide an overview of other CI initiatives in the GBV, family violence, or other social policy sectors, which were identified through our literature review and sector scan. These examples illustrate different ways of structuring backbone organizations within CI initiatives. As we discuss on pages 26 and 27, we conducted a key informant interview with members of the backbone for the IMPACT initiative outlined below. FVCM could consider reaching out to others on this list to learn more about their experiences.

Table 5 | CI initiatives in the GBV, family violence, or other social policy sectors

IMPACT (Alberta)	
Partners	300+ partner organizations across Alberta
Aims and description	IMPACT’s goal is to eradicate domestic and sexual violence in Alberta. Their work is focused on primary prevention and on identifying and disrupting the upstream factors that contribute to violence. Members continue to provide intervention supports in parallel. IMPACT has partnered with Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence (University of Calgary) to develop an evidence-based primary prevention framework for the province.
Structure	<p>Sagesse is the backbone organization. It is fiscally accountable for IMPACT, and provides infrastructure and oversight, including supervision and financial accountability for staff and contractors.</p> <p>In addition to Sagesse as backbone, IMPACT has: Co-chairs from participating organizations from different parts of the sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stewards: formal and informal leaders with a deep understanding of the issues who guide the initiative. • Mobilizers: people who are leaders within partner organizations who undertake initiative work through working groups and other initiatives. • Working groups: small groups of participating organizations with interests and expertise in a specific area. • Associate members: organizations or individuals actively working on domestic or sexual violence in Alberta.

Shared Safety (Philadelphia)

Partners	32 member organizations
Aims and description	<p>Designs and implements a coordinated approach to relational violence. Established in 2015, in response to a need for a more coordinated response to relational violence in municipal health and human service agencies (more than a justice system issue).</p> <p>Aims to bring together stakeholder groups to ensure better communication and coordination.</p>
Structure	<p>Coordinating council meets bimonthly to set policy. Members include public, non-profit and subject-matter experts, including Women Against Abuse. Co-chaired by the Office of Domestic Violence Strategies, WOAR Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence, and African Family Health Organization (AFAHO).</p> <p>Short-term projects are developed by working groups. Projects include a “Safe in Philly” resources map and Shared Safety Toolkits.</p> <p>Communication sub-committee manages infrastructure for sharing information, data, and resources.</p>

Vibrant Communities Canada

Partners	Originally a 10-year action research project in 13 communities established in 2002. As of 2018, there were 80 local initiatives in 300 municipalities in Canada and the US.
Aims and description	Supports cities and local leaders to develop and implement large scale changes to reduce poverty through learning networks.
Structure	<p>Vibrant Communities has established a national network using a three-part structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail blazers: local urban collaboratives designing and delivering municipal poverty reduction initiatives. • National sponsors: three national sponsors (Tamarack, Caledon, McConnell) providing resources and guidance (e.g., coaching, administration, financial supports, knowledge mobilization, funder relations, policy development, design and evaluation support). • Pan-Canadian learning community: a platform for local and national partners to learn about successes and challenges.

Child and Youth Network (London, ON)

Partners	170+ child and youth service providers.
Aims and description	Established in 2007, the network aims to reduce poverty; improve literacy; promote health lifestyles, including physical activity; and create family-centred services.
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The network pre-dates the CI literature. Post-2012, the network clarified and codified its approach using the CI framework. • CYN has a Child and Youth Agenda which sets out the priority areas mentioned above. • The CYN Partner organizations are individuals and organizations that work together to implement the priority areas of the Child and Youth Agenda • Each priority area has a Community Chair (a partner organization or individual) to provide community leadership, including providing strategic guidance, facilitating planning and decision-making processes, and serving as a ‘public face’ to build goodwill and engage community partners. • The backbone organization coordinates and supports CYN partners. City of London is the backbone organization (contributes 0.5FTE public health nurse from Municipality of London Health Unit and has 17 employees engaged. \$1.1m annually). The MLHU coordinator ensures the Unit’s involvement is efficient by locating gaps in programming and opportunities for the unit to contribute.

Child and Youth Health Network of the Capital Region, Vancouver Island

Partners	About 20 partner organizations.
Aims and description	<p>The initiative aims to improve youth mental health by increasing the connectedness of youth to their families, schools, and communities.</p> <p>CYHN was established in 2014 and grew out of several coalitions working in youth and children’s health and wellness. An expert who had been working with all these coalitions over the years recognised the commonality of their aims and brought them together. The coalitions saw that youth services were fractured and looked to CI to effect systems change.</p>
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CYHN has a Stewardship Committee rather than a backbone organization – more of a “container for change” than a formal backbone organization. • The Committee coordinates the work of self-organizing working groups (youth, shared measurement and the “index of connectedness”, physical health/physical literacy, T&R Action Response, Victoria Early Years Centre, and active transportation.)



Projet Impact Collectif

Partners	8 philanthropic partners, 2 institutional partners (municipal government), 1 community partner (Montreal Coalition of Neighbourhood Tables, which is comprised of 32 Neighbourhood roundtables)
Aims and description	Launched by Centraide of Greater Montreal (United Way), Project Impact Collectif aims to mobilize neighbourhoods to reduce poverty and address social exclusion.
Structure	<p>As a larger, well-established organization, Centraide (United Way) Montreal acts as convener for the partners, providing support, training, and participatory workshops. Centraide brings in funding partners and helps neighbourhood tables to plan, implement and evaluate their projects.</p> <p>Between 2016 and 2021, five neighbourhoods received intensive support, while 12 more received moderate support. In 2022, the initiative was scaled up to 32 neighbourhoods.</p>

Appendix B: Consultation guide

About your agency

1. We'd like to begin by learning a bit more about your agency. Can you briefly describe the types of programs and services you provide and the people you're serving?

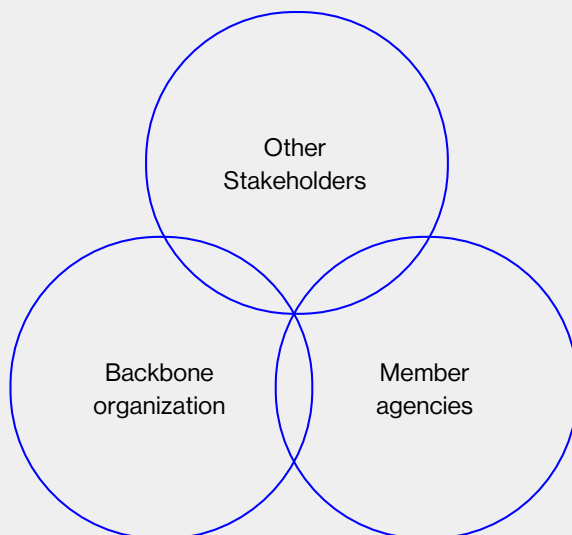
Vision for a collective impact initiative

2. How would you describe the gaps that currently exist within the GBV sector in Manitoba?
 - a. What sorts of challenges or barriers is your agency encountering in your work?
 - b. Could the implementation of a collective impact initiative support with addressing these gaps? If so, how? If not, why?
3. From your perspective, what are the priority areas for advocacy within the GBV sector?
 - a. Could the implementation of a collective impact initiative advance these advocacy priorities? If so, how? If not, why?
4. How would you describe your agency's needs and priorities when it comes to capacity building?
 - a. Could the implementation of a collective impact initiative support with capacity building? If so, how? If not, why?
5. How would you describe the current state of data collection at your agency and within the GBV sector more broadly?
 - a. Is the data that you're currently collecting helpful in making program improvements and telling the story of your agency's impact?
 - b. Could the implementation of a collective impact initiative support with consistent data collection and storytelling across the sector? If so, how? If not, why?
6. How would you describe the current state of collaboration within the GBV sector?
 - a. Could the implementation of a collective impact initiative facilitate collaboration? If so, how? If not, why?
7. Do you have any concerns about the implementation of a collective impact initiative within the GBV sector?

Collective impact backbone organization

8. To what extent do you feel that a dedicated backbone organization is required to support the implementation of a collective impact initiative within the sector?
 - a. How do you envision the relationship between this backbone organization and other stakeholders within the sector, such as the Manitoba Association of Women’s Shelters (MAWS) and Giganaawenimaanaanig, the MMIWG2S+ Implementation Committee?
9. **Activity:** What roles and responsibilities do you envision the backbone organization leading?

Figure 5 | Structure, Roles & Responsibilities



Vision-setting	Advocacy & Research	Capacity-building	Coordination	Research
Stay informed about relevant policy changes and research findings	Advocate for policy and systems-level change on behalf of CI	Provide system navigation support to member agencies	Coordinate fundraising efforts	Support member agencies to use data for learning and evaluation
Identify promising practices within GBV sector	Outreach and community engagement	Recruit volunteers	Facilitate regular communication among member agencies	Manage data collection among member agencies
Collate input from member agencies to support vision-setting	Public education and awareness raising	Support member agencies with grant writing	Develop external communication materials	Create reports about CI outcomes, key learnings
Ensure equity and decolonization are advanced through CI activities	Advocate for increased funding and/or sustainable funding model	Provide training and/or share educational resources with member agencies	Liaise with external stakeholders	
			Organize meetings of member agencies	

10. What kind of capacity would the backbone organization need to effectively lead the roles and responsibilities we've just assigned?
 - a. How many full-time staff, in what roles, and with what skills?
11. How would you like to see this backbone organization structured? Does it make sense to select an existing organization as the backbone or to create a new organization?
 - a. If selecting an existing organization, what should the selection process look like?
12. What role, if any, should the backbone organization play in governance for the collective impact initiative?
 - a. How should the backbone organization itself be held accountable to the collective impact members?
13. What would need to be true to ensure that the backbone organization reflects the diversity of the agencies working within the sector, as well as the diversity of the folks you serve?
14. What values would the backbone organization need to embody and enact? Can you define these values or briefly describe what they mean to you?
 - a. To what extent could the backbone organization support in advancing equity and decolonization within the sector?

Wrapping up

15. How did this conversation compare to what you were expecting? Is there anything you thought that we would ask that we didn't?
16. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Appendix C: Participating agencies and stakeholders

FVCM members

- Agape House
- Alpha House Project
- The Women's Centre Brandon
- Bravestone Centre Inc.
- Chez Rachel
- Fort Garry Women's Resource Centre
- Genesis House
- Heartwood Healing Centre
- Ikwe-Widdjiitiwin Inc.
- Lakeshore Family Resource Centre Inc.
- Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters (MAWS)
- Men are Part of the Solution (MAPS)
- North End Women's Centre Inc.
- Norwest Co-op Community Health Inc.
- Nova House Inc.
- Parkland Crisis Centre Inc.
- Pluri-Elles Inc.
- Prairie Harbour Inc.
- Samaritan House Ministries Inc.
- Survivor's Hope Crisis Centre Inc.
- Swan Valley Crisis Centre Inc.
- Thompson Crisis Centre Inc.
- Velma's House (Ka Ni Kanichihk)
- West Central Women's Resource Centre
- Willow Place Inc.
- Women's Safe Haven Inc.
- YWCA Brandon

Other stakeholders

- Abuse Response and Prevention, Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba
- Women and Gender Equity Manitoba



Appendix D: Sample roles for backbone staff

The following table, which is part of the Collective Impact Forum’s Backbone Starter Guide, illustrates how the typical primary functions of a backbone organization could be distributed amongst members of a three-person staff team. The Collective Impact Forum also provides draft job descriptions for each of these roles, which can be accessed in their [Tools for Backbones](#) resource.

Table 6 | Sample roles for backbone staff

Executive Director	Guide Vision and Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a common understanding of the problem • Serve as a thought leader / standard bearer for the initiative • Ensure common agenda is updated as needed as strategy unfolds
	Advance Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for an aligned policy agenda • Stay on top of policy developments that impact the effort
	Mobilize Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilize and align public and private resources to support initiative’s goals (and the backbone itself)
Facilitator	Build Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a sense of urgency and articulate a call to action • Support community member engagement activities • Produce and manage communications (e.g., news releases, reports)
	Support Aligned Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate and facilitate partners’ continuous communication and collaboration (e.g., run taskforce meetings) • Recruit and convene partners and key external stakeholders • Seek out opportunities for alignment with other efforts • Ensure taskforces are being data driven
Data Manager	Establish Shared Measurement Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect, analyze, interpret, and report data • Catalyze or develop shared measurement systems • Provide technical assistance for building partners’ data capacity



Appendix E: Comparing charitable status with NPO status

One of the key decision points related to structuring the backbone is determining whether it should be registered as a charity or as a non-profit organization. The following table from Canada Revenue Agency summarizes the differences between each designation.

Table 7 | Registered Charity vs. NPO

Topic	Registered Charity	NPO
Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be established and operate exclusively for charitable purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can operate for social welfare, civic improvement, pleasure, sport, recreation, or any other purpose except profit Cannot operate exclusively for charitable purposes
Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must apply to the CRA and be approved for registration as a charity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not have to go through a registration process for income tax purposes
Charitable registration number	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is issued a charitable registration number once approved by the CRA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is not issued a charitable registration number
Tax receipts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can issue official donation receipts for income tax purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot issue official donation receipts for income tax purposes
Spending requirements (disbursement quota)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must spend a minimum amount on its own charitable activities or as gifts to qualified donees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not have a spending requirement
Designation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is designated by the CRA as a charitable organization, a public foundation, or a private foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not receive a designation
Returns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must file an annual information return (Form T3010) within six months of its fiscal year-end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May have to file a T2 return (if incorporated) or an information return (Form T1044) or both within six months of its fiscal year-end
Personal benefits to members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot use its income to personally benefit its members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot use its income to personally benefit its members
Tax exempt status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is exempt from paying income tax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is generally exempt from paying income tax May have to pay tax on property income or on capital gains
GST/HST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally must pay GST/HST on purchases May claim a partial rebate of GST/HST paid on eligible purchases Most supplies made by charities are exempt Calculates net tax using the net tax calculation for charities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must pay GST/HST on purchases May claim a partial rebate of GST/HST paid on eligible purchases only if it receives significant government funding Few supplies made by NPOs are exempt Calculates net tax the regular way



Blueprint