2020

Post-secondary Strategy Evaluation Report

IMPROVING EDMONTON'S URBAN WELLNESS

RECOVER

Edmonton

What this document is...

Hi!

Welcome to our evaluation of RECOVER's Post-Secondary Strategy. RECOVER is the City of Edmonton's approach to improving urban wellbeing.

RECOVER is multi-faceted, and involves working with people in a wide variety of settings. One of those settings is in the post-secondary system. This evaluation of the 2020 Post-Secondary Strategy is part of RECOVER's larger approach to evaluation, wherein we evaluate "on the go," for the purpose of learning about our work, and to guide future strategic direction and decisions.

Thanks for your interest in reading it!

~ The Evaluation Team
Heather Braid, Amanda Rancourt & Miki Stricker-Talbot

RECOVER is honoured to acknowledge that we learn, grow, and gather on Treaty 6 territory and Métis Nation of Alberta Region IV, which is the traditional and contemporary home of many Indigenous peoples including the nehiyawak, Niitsitapi, Nakota Sioux, Saulteaux, Dene, Métis, and Inuit among many others. It is a privilege to find ourselves in relationship to this ancient gathering place, and we commit to do all we can to recognize and renew those relations.

Overview of Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation was co-written by a small team of evaluators comprised of two members of the RECOVER core team and one staff member from MacEwan University.

Data for this evaluation was collected through the following sources:

- At the conclusion of the two courses at MacEwan that included RECOVER's Wellbeing Framework within their coursework, a survey was prepared by the core RECOVER team for the professors to distribute to their students.
- 12 survey submissions were received from the Anthropology course. There were no survey submissions received from the Business course in the summer semester, and 26 survey submissions for the fall semester.
- Members of the extended RECOVER team connected with the professor of the Anthropology course for a one hour interview following the completion of the course.

The evaluation team reflected on the data, and created this report to help RECOVER learn from the experience of the post-secondary work completed in 2020, and to guide future decisions about where to focus work in 2021.

Lessons Learned

RECOVER learned (or perhaps, more deeply came to understand) three key lessons through the 2020 post-secondary work:

Lesson #1:

Gifts Emerge From Relational Work

Lesson #2:

Practical application of the framework can be tricky

Lesson #3:

RECOVER's involvement in the classroom can be either "off-the-shelf" or "custom built"

Lesson #1: Gifts Emerge From **Relational Work**

In the realm of complexity and systems change, oftentimes the way in which people show up with each other is as -- if not more -- important as the work that they are doing.

Although it was not originally intended to do so, in 2020, the RECOVER Team and MacEwan University inadvertently experimented with different ways of being in relation to each other: a way of being that was transactional in nature, and a way of being that was relational in nature.

For the BUSN 201 course, team members were operating on a very short timeline for delivery of the Business course material. Course materials needed to be compiled over a matter of weeks, rather than months. As a result, meetings to prepare for these courses tended to be short, task-oriented, and operated under the unwritten rules of westernized "professionalism." Tasks were completed by team members efficiently. However, the relationship between team members only existed in a transactional manner. When the course ended, so too did the relationship.

For the ANTH 394 course, team members had the ability to get to work together over a number of months, rather than weeks. This additional time allowed team members to gather together in meetings that were more relational in nature. Team members learned about each other's pets and children and areas of interest outside of the confines of their particular shared project. They were able to more deeply examine the possibilities of the work, and how RECOVER's work could be applied within a classroom setting. The relationship between team members has extended beyond the individual course, and has resulted in items and actions including:

- More engagement and excitement in the Wellbeing Framework, and better outcomes for both parties
- The successful application for two Mitacs students to join the RECOVER team between May and September 2021
- The professor beginning to attend RECOVER team meetings to help the team deepen our understanding of what is possible for the wellbeing framework within an academic setting
- Planning for future courses with RECOVER - both at MacEwan and with professors at NAIT

Strategic question for consideration:

RECOVER's Wellbeing Framework speaks of Connection to Family and Friends. And, meaningful connections can also exist within professional relationships too. Of course, the building of relationships and trust takes time. What will be required for RECOVER to build relational relationships with other professors and academic institutions?
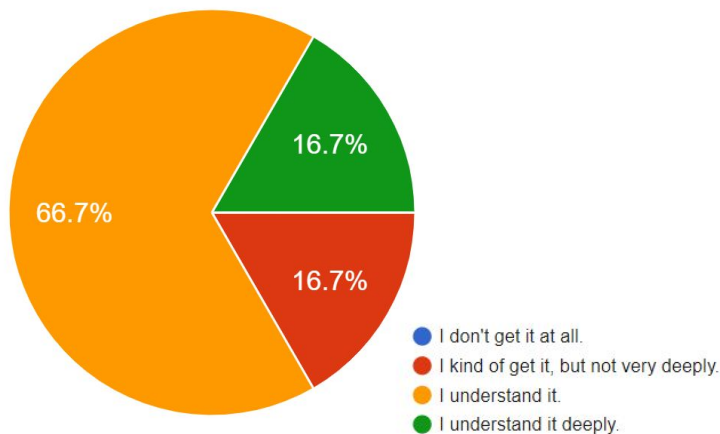
Lesson #2: **Practical application** of the framework can be **tricky**

Student survey question

How well do you understand the concepts in the City of Edmonton's wellbeing framework that was introduced to you in this course?
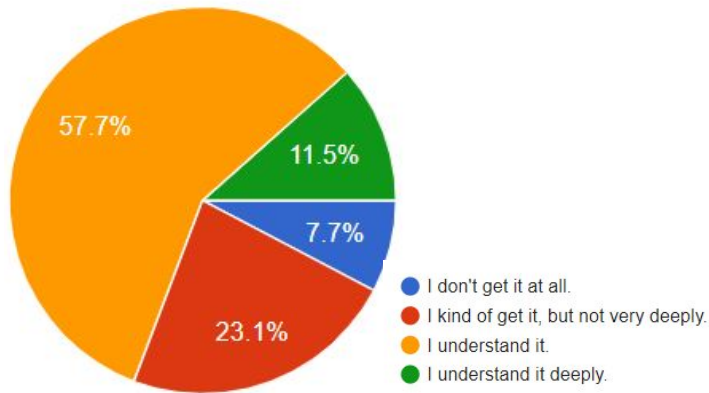
Survey results from BUSN 201 Course, 26 responses

Survey results from ANTH 394, 12 responses

Most students indicated that they understood the concepts included in the wellbeing framework. However, in speaking with the ANTH 394 professor at the conclusion of the course, it became clear that while the students understood the Framework in theory, putting it into practice was more challenging.

The Framework has emerged based on the deep insights and lived experiences of 59 people who are street-involved, along with a review of 3000 years of philosophical and religious thought. The stories presented alongside the framework have emerged from the realm of poverty, trauma, and grief. This starting place has been essential towards starting to shift the prevailing narrative of what it means to be well. However, given this starting place, students had a challenge in applying the Framework to other systemic problems, like racism.

This is an important learning for the RECOVER team. People who currently work in strategy and systemic change have learned how to interpret frameworks and tools, and how they can be applied to different situations. Undergraduate students have not yet had that opportunity.

This brings forward the importance of RECOVER to create tools and techniques to enable non-experts to understand and apply the framework. Students provide an optimal audience of testing, and even co-designing such tools, in the future.

Strategic question for consideration:

How might RECOVER create new ways to tell the story of the Framework, to help more people understand its application more broadly, beyond the realm of houselessness and poverty that they may perceive as "beyond their scope of work"?

Lesson #3: RECOVER's involvement in the classroom
*can be either **"off-the-shelf"** or **"custom built"***

Within the BUSN 201 course, RECOVER's research and Wellbeing Framework were used as a case study for existing course work. They were applied to a structure the professor had already created and had found successful within their context of teaching introductory business courses. Existing research was provided by RECOVER team members "off the shelf."

Within the ANTH 394 course, RECOVER's approach and Wellbeing Framework were used as inspiration for a "real life" application. Existing research was curated by RECOVER team members, for use for this specific course.

These two models provide a glimpse of how RECOVER's post-secondary strategy might be scaled.
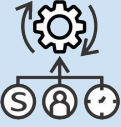
- The "off-the-shelf" version allows RECOVER to scale out -- basic existing research could be provided to professors to include as case studies within their existing course materials. RECOVER would be able to reach a larger number of professors and students using this approach.
- The "custom built" version allows RECOVER to scale deep -- working closely with a smaller number of professors and students, RECOVER would be able to more deeply understand the nuances of the desired outcomes of each course, and co-create course material that would help deepen RECOVER's application of the wellbeing framework; and at the same time, help students more deeply explore the wellbeing framework.

The chart on the next page outlines different ways to envision scaling. In working with professors and students in a classroom setting, RECOVER has the opportunity to consider scaling out or scaling deep.

Strategic questions for consideration:

How might students and researchers work with the RECOVER materials in a way that is deeply community connected, focused on reciprocity and shared learning? What sort of scaling is RECOVER most interested in for the post-secondary work?

The Dimensions of Scaling

Scaling Dimension				Key Questions
Scaling Deep	**Impacting cultural roots**		Changing relationships, cultural values & beliefs, mental models & heartsets	Who are the would-be adopters of the innovation? Why (or why not) are they interested in participating or supporting the innovation? How can we deepen their support?
Scaling Out	**Impacting greater numbers**		Replication and dissemination, increasing number of people or communities impacted	Who and where are the possible adopters of the innovation? How broadly can the innovation be replicated? How might the original innovation need to be adapted to different contexts?
Scaling Up	**Impacting laws and policy**		Adjusting larger policies, regulations, structures, and administrative practices to support the expansion of the innovation. Changing institutions at the level of policy, rules and laws	What parts of the larger systems support the scaling of the innovation? Which act as barriers? What needs to be adjusted to support scaling? How?
Scaling Scree	**Impacting norms and expectations**		Legitimizing a multitude of different small, and more relevant solutions	What else is required to make the original innovation successful? What other innovations can we build around this one to make it stronger?
Scaling Initial Conditions	**Impacting infrastructure**		Changing access to capital, data, talent, knowledge and networks	What types of financial, human, or technical resources does the innovation need to be sustained, to grow, and to expand? How can we increase their volume, quality of accessibility?
Scaling Impact	**Impacting impact**		Broadening and deepening the positive outcomes of the innovation.	What is the magnitude, depth, quality, and durability of the impact of the innovations on resident and neighbourhood well-being?

Inspired by the work of Here to There Consulting and InWithForward

What May Be Next

Opportunity 1
Intentionally Identify **Shared Outcomes**

The relationship between the Social Innovation Institute and the RECOVER team has been growing organically over the past three and a half years. Although the broad shared outcomes of the two organisations may be latently understood, these shared outcomes have yet to be formally articulated. Once they are formalized, there is much potential for deepening conversation within and across MacEwan University as an institution in the realm of wellbeing.

In addition, it is expected that other academic institutions would share aspirations for these outcomes as well, however, formal conversations have yet to take place… and could lead to fruitful collaborations.

Opportunity 2
Identify Additional **Options for Course-based** Learning

The experiences the team had with the BUSN 201 and ANTH 394 courses demonstrated that there are a number of different options for the applicability of RECOVER within post-secondary courses. Areas for possible expansion include:

- Working with 4th year or graduate Anthropology students, who would already be grounded in key concepts of ethnographic research, and better equipped to apply a deeper application of the Wellbeing Framework
- Working with Education students. Education students could help RECOVER explore how the Wellbeing Framework may be translated and taught in a classroom setting

Opportunity 3
Work with **researchers**

The RECOVER team recognizes that working with researchers could provide additional insights into the application of the Framework, and additional legitimacy into RECOVER's overall approach, the options for research are nearly endless. In 2021, it is recommended that the RECOVER team and MacEwan University work together to clearly identify the shared strategic outcomes they hope to achieve through research, and then foster relationships to achieve those outcomes. Based on workload and team capacity, RECOVER may also want to explore research with other post-secondary institutions in 2021.

Opportunity 4
Nourish existing **relationships**. **Cultivate** new ones.

The team will continue to work with Dr. Long, and her students. At this stage, it is unclear what the work will be, however, the RECOVER team has extended the invitation to Dr. Long to attend core team meetings, whenever she is interested, or when there is a topic of particular interest. It is anticipated that she will attend meetings fairly regularly over the summer months when the Mitacs students will be with RECOVER.

New relationships are developing with the Engineering with Decency group, spearheaded out of the University of Alberta. It is currently unclear what this group will evolve into, however, RECOVER team members will continue to attend meetings and build relationships with and within this group.

The Social Innovation Institute at MacEwan will continue to broker and foster relationships with other academic institutions.

An Overview of RECOVER's Post-Secondary Work

In 2020 MacEwan and Recover drafted a plan with the aim to bring together students and faculty at post-secondary institutions as well as community stakeholders to research and create socially innovative projects that improve the quality of life for Edmontonians. We started the processes of learning about how to work with post secondary institutions to match individuals, classrooms and teams to community-engaged learning opportunities in Edmonton.

The objectives of the strategy were to:
- Strengthen the partnership between RECOVER and post-secondary institutions.
- Build a larger pool of innovators equipped to engage in urban wellness projects.
- Build capacity of post secondaries to support scaling of pilots and understanding of urban wellness.
- Better equip post secondary students with Social Innovation tools.

The strategy included a work plan that consisted of five phases:

Phase 1: Engage Post-Secondary Partners
Phase 2: Curate Sample Materials
Phase 3: Test and Evaluate Sample Materials in Classroom Setting
Phase 4: Communicate Learnings to Stakeholders
Phase 5: Refine Sample Materials

The activities that were carried out in each phase were:

Phase 1: Engage Post-Secondary Partners

- Identified key groups, individuals, and programs to speak with including: MacEwan Research Office, MacEwan Careers and Experiential Learning, and experiential learning and research areas in other Post Secondaries in Edmonton. The key contacts were populated in a master spreadsheet document.
    - The key groups/individuals/programs that were engaged were:
        - Engineering with Decency, University of Alberta - monthly meetings from June 2020 to present..
        - Careers and Experience, MacEwan University
        - Community Engaged Scholarship, MacEwan University
        - Research and Innovation, Norquest College
        - External Relations and Development, Concordia University
        - JR Shaw School of Business, NAIT
        - Micah Centre, The King's University
        - Community Service Learning, University of Alberta
- Met with interested faculty at MacEwan and other post secondaries to learn about partnership opportunities.
- Selected BUSN 201 as a low-engagement classroom partner. The Summer 2020 (60 students) and Fall 2020 (200 students) semester classes were engaged.
- Selected ANTH 394 as a high-engagement classroom partner. The Fall 2020 semester class had about 20 students.
- Engaged University of Alberta Engineering Professor about being a medium-engagement partner for Winter 2020.
- Provided partners / classrooms with an overview of RECOVER

Phase 2: Curate Sample Materials

- BUSN 201:
    - Defined key objectives and desired outcomes for both Recover and course instructor.
    - Reviewed course curriculum and assignments to be adapted.
    - Revised assignments to integrate Recover materials.
- ANTH 394:
    - Defined key objectives and desired outcomes for both Recover and course instructor.
    - After initial meetings and background discussions with Recover representatives, the professor Dr. Jennifer Long developed the assignments and syllabus for the course
    - Course outlines/syllabi are often treated like a contract between students and faculty. Because this was community-based (directed, driven, responsive-toward), Dr. Long incorporated language that would allow for flexibility. For example, once her class learned that a 'quantification of qualitative findings would be beneficial', Dr. Long, working with members of the RECOVER core team, amended the assignment structure. There are typically notices in the syllabus that it is subject to change, but in highlighting the importance of flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity, and iterative research design, Dr. Long and the ANTH 394 students were able to respond better to community needs.
    - Dr. Long also integrated - where possible - design activities to help students empathize with the various community members and audiences they were creating information for/on behalf of. By hosting a series of guest lectures with community members (and partners) with various situated identities and knowledge/experiences, students were able to understand the importance of empathy and problem orientation (important in the design process).

- Engineering:
    - Defined key objectives and desired outcomes for both Recover and course instructor.
    - Submitted an additional project idea, included desired wellness outcomes, for an existing assignment.

Phase 3: Test and Evaluate Sample Materials in Classroom Setting
- BUSN 201 materials were tested in the Summer 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters. An evaluation was sent out for the Fall 2020 semester to gather feedback from students (see below).
- ANTH 394 materials were tested in the Fall 2020 semester. An evaluation was sent out and a debrief interview was conducted with the instructor to gather feedback (see below).

Phase 4: Communicate Learnings to Stakeholders (not done in 2020)
- Carrying out this evaluation
- ANTH 394:
  - Jennifer Long created a website to share information with stakeholders.
  - MacEwan's Office of Communication and Marketing will draft an article to share the experience.
  - Blog post on Recover website?

Phase 5: Refine Sample Materials (not done in 2020)
- This item is a work in progress. During 2021 MacEwan will explore what sample/template materials would be useful for courses and Recover and how to develop them. Some courses will benefit from having custom materials for their specific course.

urbanwellnessedmonton.com

edmonton.ca/urbanwellbeing

Edmonton

MacEwan
UNIVERSITY
SOCIAL INNOVATION INSTITUTE

IMPROVING EDMONTON'S URBAN WELLNESS

RECOVER.

Edmonton