Queen's University PhD Initiative Proposal

Community Partner
Community Foundation for Kingston and Area (CFKA)

Project Title
Kingston & Area Together: Strengthening Connections for Community Resilience

Short Description
This project aims to address the critical challenges of systems navigation and siloed services in Kingston, which disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. Through a comprehensive environmental scan, this project will identify service providers and community groups who are working on resilience across the lifespan. This consolidation of critical information into a comprehensive, accessible repository for community organizations and service providers will provide the essential foundation required for developing preventative and integrated resilience strategies within the community. Enhanced collaboration, streamlined systems navigation, and improved cross-sector communication will ultimately fortify community-wide resilience in Kingston.

Context
"Resilience across the lifespan" refers to the capacity of individuals, families, and communities to adapt and thrive in the face of life's challenges, changes, and stresses at every stage of life—from childhood through to old age. This approach recognizes that the needs and strengths of individuals evolve over time and that community supports must be diverse and adaptable to meet these changing needs effectively. Resilience isn't something that can be developed alone, and being able to navigate to and negotiate for the right resources to sustain wellbeing is crucial. Proactive prevention programs, robust support networks, and comprehensive services can facilitate resilience across different life phases, ensuring that every demographic within the community has access to the tools needed to maintain and enhance their well-being and quality of life.

Issue/Challenge
From our community-based work with the Older Adults Connection and Belonging Initiative (OACB) and the Adverse Childhood Experiences & Resilience Coalition of KFL&A (ARC) we know that Kingston faces significant challenges with fragmented service and community support systems that affect the effective delivery of health and community services, particularly for vulnerable populations. Though numerous organizations are working to support resilience across the lifespan in Kingston their efforts are often siloed within their sector, limiting knowledge and resource sharing that might grow their capacity. Despite expressing the need for a robust environmental scan to identify shared knowledge, resources, and potential collaborations, organizations cannot feasibly undertake such a project alongside their regular duties and with the considerable resources required.

Deliverable

The deliverable for this project is a comprehensive community report resulting from an environmental scan of resilience initiatives across the lifespan in Kingston. It would be disseminated by CFKA to over 35 partners we work with through the OACB and ARC.

Work Involved

- *Preliminary Research*- reviewing any existing literature or sector-specific environmental scans on community resilience across the lifespan in Kingston.
- *Stakeholder Identification*- compiling a list of key organizations and service providers across different sectors in Kingston.
- *Community Engagement*- engaging with interested parties through both existing CFKA and partner channels and through novel primary engagement to gather information about resilience work in the community and fill knowledge gaps.
- *Analysis*- identifying trends, gaps, and interconnections between providers.
- *Report Writing*- synthesizing the environmental scan into a structured plain-language report that can be widely disseminated, ensuring accessibility for all stakeholders. This scan could provide the basis for the development of an online tool that would allow iterative updates and ensure longevity and reach for this information.

Impact

This consolidated information, presented in a centralized, accessible, and usable format, will make this report an extremely valuable resource not only for CFKA and our current community partners, but for the entire Kingston community. We have received feedback from the City of Kingston, partner health service organizations, community leaders, and others, indicating that this report would be highly impactful. Unlike internal or sector-specific reports that might remain underutilized, this environmental scan will actively inform and enhance the operational strategies of a multitude of local organizations, fostering better collaboration and improving service delivery across the community.

Why This Partnership?

This project is highly feasible for a team of three interdisciplinary PhD students with the time they have to allocate to the initiative. Bridget Glassco, MSc (ARC Project Manager) and Elizabeth Nelson, PhD (OACB Project Manager) are ready to assist the students in forging key community connections, providing them with existing information, and offering guidance on executing participatory community engaged work. The interdisciplinary nature of the project not only enhances the learning and application for the student team but also leverages their diverse lived experiences as they engage with various stakeholders and community groups. This project is not rigid in its expectations, and we are excited to see how students will be able to integrate their own expertise and perspectives as they tackle this issue. The students will get to experience the impact of their work, contributing to both short and long-term capacity building to improve community well-being in Kingston. This project is particularly timely, addressing an urgent need within the community.