

Collective Impact Plan

Bronson RISE

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SECTION ONE: COMMON AGENDA

OVERVIEW

In 2019, Bronson Centre was awarded a 5-year, \$2.1M project focussing on seniors inclusion, funded by Employment and Social Development Canada, New Horizons for Seniors Program. The project is known as Bronson RISE (Real Inclusion by Seniors Everywhere). It is a collective impact initiative that brings together diverse organizations to address the opportunities arising from the notion of seniors inclusion in our society. From the perspective of the project, this means for all those who are 55+ and to engage them in all things that we do, everyday, especially in community spaces. The collective impact initiative includes a series of projects, implemented through sub-agreements with collaborating organizations, mostly from the Bronson Centre community of tenant not-for-profit organizations. The purpose of this collective effort is to measurably address and increase culturally diverse seniors' social inclusion in every aspect of the Bronson Centre community hub, especially those seniors who are or who may be at-risk of isolation in Ottawa and its surrounding area. Bronson Centre is a 45,000 square foot facility, located in the heart of downtown Ottawa, and is home to about 35 organizations and Ottawa's newest mid-size performance venue.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

From September 3, 2019 to May 29, 2024, the Bronson Centre will establish and sustain a cohesive collective impact initiative that will measurably address and increase culturally diverse seniors' social inclusion for seniors who are or may be at-risk of isolation in Ottawa and its surrounding area.

- Reduce ageism in the not-for-profit sector by increasing engagement, retention, and even employment of seniors through an intergenerational spectrum of activities.
- Increase the social entrepreneurship and innovation capacity of participating organizations in ways that address barriers to seniors social inclusion.
- Improve access to information and raise awareness through creative digital technologies and on-line cooperation.

ASSETS TO BUILD ON

ABOUT BRONSON CENTRE

Bronson Centre is a dynamic neighbourhood hub, with a renovated entertainment venue and a robust community of more than 36 culturally diverse and inclusive social justice non-profit organizations, serving seniors, families, and individuals.

- These centralized community assets, including people, spaces, services, programs, and shared history form the foundation for building social inclusion, community and belonging.
- Community and belonging are intimately linked. Members who feel a strong sense of belonging and are committed to their community are willing to seek commonalities rather than focus on differences. They also have a sense of being able to contribute to and influence their community, and a willingness in turn to be influenced by it.
- An individual's sense of community and belonging can be complex and related to the individual's social network, sense of social support, perceived social cohesion, and levels of community engagement. A strong sense of community and belonging is associated with improved mental health, and the perception of social cohesion can be used as a predictor of health.
- There is real stigma around loneliness. People are often reluctant to identify as lonely, or to sign up for a lonely person's project. There's also a concern that just introducing people to each other won't create a real connection: you can't prescribe friendship. People need to feel that they are valued as individuals, not seen as problems to be solved. This explains the importance of finding meaning.
- It could be volunteering for a cause you believe in, taking on responsibilities that make you feel useful and valued, maintaining or developing the interests and relationships you care about. They all involve looking beyond yourself, and beyond perceived loneliness, to focus on what matters to you.
- Giving back to the community is particularly powerful in reducing feelings of isolation. Volunteering has a double benefit, improving the wellbeing of both volunteers and the people they support. For many of us, knowing that we have contributed improves our sense of self-worth.
- Belonging to a community reduces the sense of embarrassment and shame around loneliness. It's hard to fix a problem that you won't acknowledge. When communities shine light on loneliness, making it easier to name it and seek help, we can help to catch it earlier, before it becomes entrenched.
- Community spaces give people the chance to share interests, to celebrate, to exercise or enjoy themselves. They allow people to come together naturally, in relationships that develop at their own pace. Ill health and poverty are key indicators of loneliness, so making Bronson Centre spaces more accessible – by removing transport and cost barriers – is vital.
- Community spaces give everyone a chance to participate in preventing loneliness, so kindness matters. Isolation can make people feel very fragile so a friendly welcome can be the difference between making a real connection or withdrawing again. Small moments of connection such as opening the door for someone, smiling and saying hello can make a big difference. As we aim to support whole communities, we can all help to improve people's perception of themselves, the people around them and the places where they live.

RESEARCH TO INFORM THE ISSUES

A substantial body of evidence exists to demonstrate the barriers that make it difficult for older Canadians to enjoy naturally occurring social connections and to access services and information that enable social inclusion. While many factors have contributed to the social isolation of seniors – mental, physical and cognitive disabilities, low income, LGBTQ status, being Indigenous or Black, being or at risk for being criminalized, language barriers - the onset of the covid-19 pandemic in Q4 of project year 1 has caused historic global upheaval, exposing and emphasizing the vulnerability of older adults, the pervasiveness of ageism and the potential of small-scale, neighbourhood hubs to make a positive impact in reducing social isolation and loneliness.

About Bronson RISE Neighbourhood Seniors and how they are coping during COVID

According to the June 2017 United Way Ottawa Report – *A Profile of Vulnerable Seniors in the Ottawa Region* - seniors at risk for social isolation are overrepresented in the West Centertown neighbourhood where the Bronson Centre is located. It is home to about 3000 seniors – approximately 53% living alone, and 30% living in low income. At-risk Ottawa seniors, along with the Bronson Centre-based not-for-profit organizations that serve them, are the primary focus of the Bronson RISE seniors social inclusion project, utilizing a place-based collective impact, intergenerational approach. A Sept. 2020 COVID-19 Seniors Survey Update, from the Council on Ageing of Ottawa, found that of 2221 older adults surveyed, only 1/3 were coping well with self-isolation and the pandemic in general. 40% said they were lonelier than before the pandemic and almost 50% reported being more anxious.

The recent survey offered insights to guide Bronson RISE in identifying high-value interventions and recommendations on coping strategies and mental health during the pandemic such as facilitating meaningful social contacts with family and friends, reinforcing trust in public health messaging and institutions, encouraging physical activities, providing access to credible information, encouraging and seeking advice and stories about seniors life experiences that build resilience and confidence that helps others in our community.

Most importantly, our project team and partners are learning how to build a sense of belonging with seniors by expressing gratitude and appreciation for the support that comes from our relationships with them, and letting them know we admire the way they are living during this difficult time. Seniors stories, ideas, feedback, advice and leadership are sought after continuously to reflect what we do, who we work with, how we work and learn together, and where we go from here.

DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION RESEARCH

Just prior to the onset of the pandemic, between Jan. 2020 and Jan. 2021, the partners, community organizations and advisory team for the Bronson RISE project undertook a developmental evaluation approach to share their knowledge, understandings and research, under the egis of the Project Advisory Team, in order to develop the Bronson RISE Theory of Change.

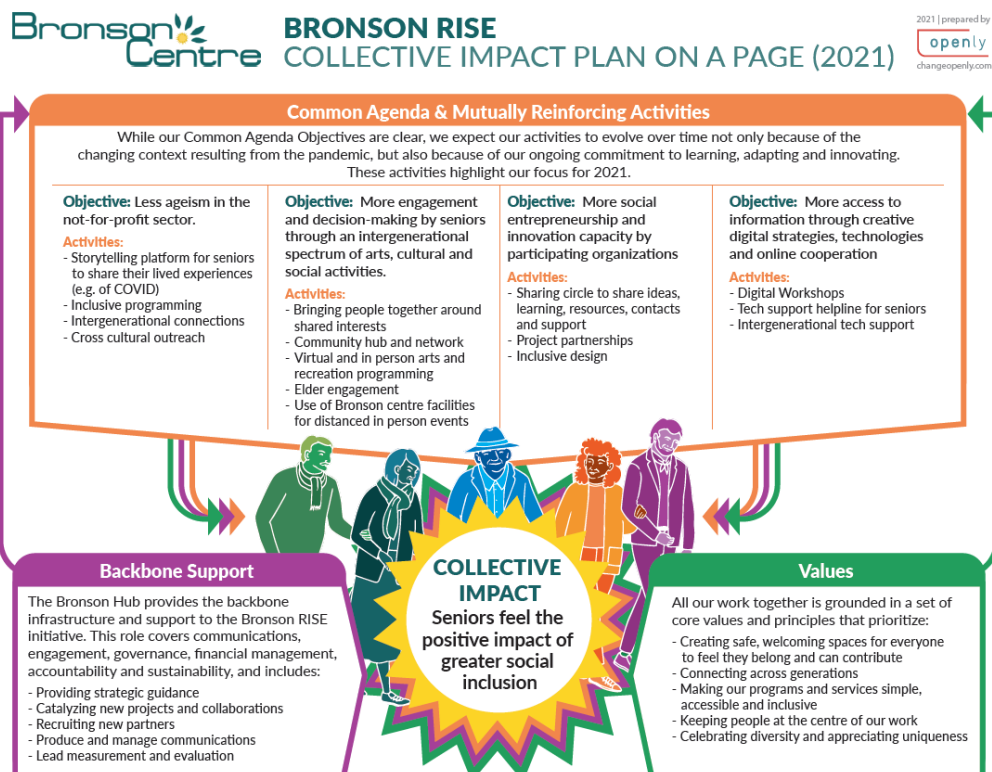
This developmental evaluation approach resulted in a deeper understanding of the community, the target audiences, the specific needs of subpopulations of seniors – Black seniors, LGBTQ, Chinese, Indigenous, criminalized seniors - during the pandemic and prepared collaborators to respond.

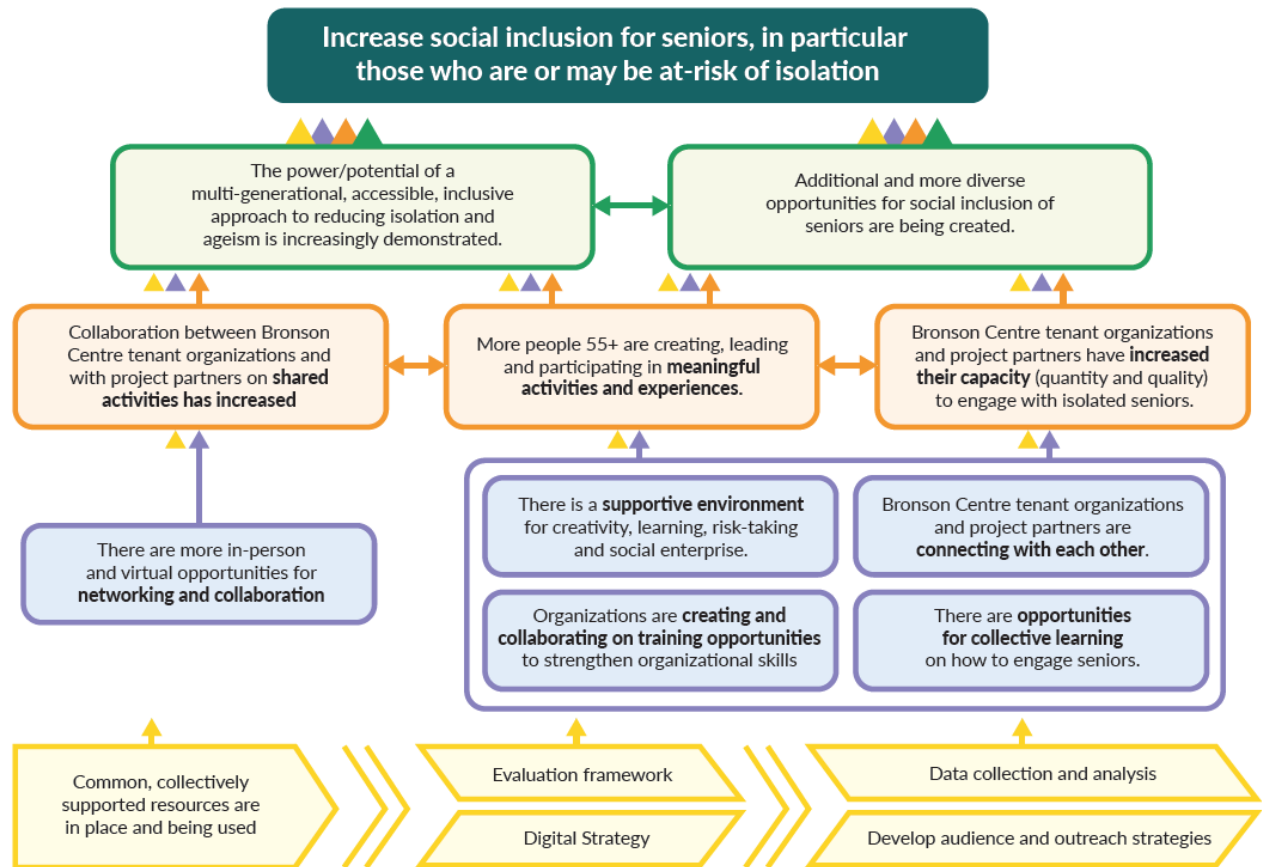
FORMING COMMON UNDERSTANDING WITH COLLABORATORS

Bronson RISE funded several short-term projects over the initial start-up period and onset of the pandemic, during which several organizations emerged as meeting the criteria for becoming long-term, foundational collaborators.

Organizations came from various sectors and most were long-term tenants at the Bronson Centre but had not previously undertaken intentional partnerships or projects. All had been invited to participate in early stakeholder engagement efforts, including as participants in the project advisory team, and the Theory of Change.

The process of developing the project Theory of Change supported development of a common understanding of challenges and problems, what we might do together and the outcomes we want to achieve.





Summary of Theory of Change

The concepts expressed in the Bronson RISE Theory of Change are summarized as follows:

- *If* collaborators use their unique and diverse cultural knowledge and skills, identify common aspirations for change, shared measurement, and learnings, to develop high impact activities that demonstrably engage the community, and improve access to information and awareness through digital strategies,
- *Then* collaborators can expect more at-risk seniors and more multigenerational members of the community will be leading and participating in meaningful activities and experiences at and with the Bronson Centre,

So that:

- Seniors will experience an increased sense of belonging, reduced isolation, increased civic participation and;
- collaborators will have sustainable partnerships and;
- increased capacity in social entrepreneurship and innovation and;
- enable connecting, learning and increased capacity to engage with people 55+ reducing ageism in the not-for-profit sector.

The Theory of Change is focused on mapping out what the project does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved. We did this by first identifying the desired long-term goals and then worked back from these to identify all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these related to one another causally) for the goals to occur.

Collectively, the partners and collaborators are committed to develop and implement intergenerational, culturally sensitive pilot initiatives to address social inclusion issues in order to better integrate all seniors 55+ living in the Bronson Centre neighbourhood, one of Canada's most diverse communities, with a particular focus on seniors with disabilities, seniors living alone, immigrant and Indigenous populations. More specifically, this collective impact strategy will address ageism and other systemic barriers to social inclusion of vulnerable multicultural seniors.

Having undertaken the initial process of contributing to the theory of change and project vision, Bronson RISE collaborators undertook new, scalable projects and sub agreements. These projects demonstrated their organizational capacity, established connections to at-risk seniors, and demonstrated leadership and relationship-building skills, as well as a shared agenda and common vision for change in the community.

Within the five-year scope of this project, Bronson Centre's Bronson RISE project team (as the Backbone Organization) will collaborate with up to 8 foundational organizations, based on signed Memorandums of Understanding and unique sub-contracts, as described in the ESDC funding agreement. The collaborating organizations will play a key role in the collective impact plan over the remainder of the grant period, having expressed support for the common goals of the project and a willingness to undertake collective impact efforts, including as members of the project advisory team and potential sub agreement holders.

SECTION TWO: MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES WITH COLLABORATORS

The role of Bronson RISE collaborators will be to:

- contribute to the development of the collective impact Theory of Change, collective impact plan and evaluation,
- undertake programs, projects, and events,
- develop and promote digital content,
- build one another's capacity for community service,
- receive the bulk of funding from the Bronson RISE project
- contribute knowledge, skills, and data-gathering.

Bronson RISE Collaborating Organizations & CI Key Success Factors:

Bronson RISE partners, collaborators and participants believe that preventing loneliness has the potential to strengthen communities and improve lives.

Through projects and sub agreements, Bronson RISE funds a range of projects that offer solutions by:

- bringing people together to build connections and community cohesion
- creating opportunities to connect, learn and build relationships around shared interests
- creating community networks and spaces
- communicating, storytelling and raising awareness, to reduce stigma and make loneliness everyone's business.
- Measuring and reporting progress, challenges and lessons learned.

Bronson RISE Collaborating Organizations

- **Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa:**

Activities: Bronson Safe Open – socially distanced activities for the Bronson Centre community, specifically criminalized older women and mental health support groups, and corresponding virtual workshops and activities to promote belonging, reduce loneliness, support health/wellbeing and cultural learning in collaboration with other community organizations.

Ongoing contributions: content expertise regarding criminalized women; program management, digital strategy, communications, evaluation, Advisory Team.

- **Psychiatric Survivors Ottawa:**

Activities: On-line and socially distanced, safe space for seniors and youth managing the stress of a pandemic, mental illness and at-risk for self-harm, isolation, loneliness.

Ongoing contributions: content expertise regarding survivor-directed mental health and wellbeing; program management, digital strategy, communications, evaluation, Advisory Team.

- **Flo's Seniors**

Activities: On-line workshops and activities to promote belonging, reduce loneliness, support health/wellbeing and cultural learning in collaboration with other community organizations, specifically targeting Black seniors.

Ongoing contributions: content expertise regarding Black-led organizations serving seniors; digital strategy, communications, evaluation, Advisory Team.

- **Kateri Native Ministry**

Activities: On-line Sharing Circles, offering an Indigenous model for intergenerational, cross-cultural story-telling and history exchange, supported by young indigenous artists who are developing a mural and other forms of artistic interpretations of learning from elders.

Ongoing contributions: content expertise regarding indigenous history/culture/intergenerational learning; program management, digital strategy, communications, evaluation, Advisory Team.

- **Jaku Konbit**

Activities: On-line revenue development workshop series targeting Bronson Centre organizations, to increase capacity for collective learning, revenue development, community of practice for grant-writing, targeting increased programs and services for seniors.

Ongoing contributions: content expertise regarding Black-led organizations serving seniors; Program management, digital strategy, communications, evaluation, Advisory Team.

- **Dalhousie Food Cupboard/Dalhousie Food Action Group**

Activities: Community garden project established to provide volunteer learning/leadership development, created source of produce for food cupboard, initiated development of community kitchen concept.

Ongoing contributions: content expertise regarding community food bank; digital strategy, communications, evaluation, Advisory Team.

- **Yet Keen Seniors Day Centre**

Activities: Online workshops and activities to promote belonging, reduce loneliness, support health/wellbeing and cultural learning in collaboration with other community organizations, specifically targeting Chinese seniors.

Ongoing contributions: content expertise regarding Chinese seniors-serving organization; digital strategy, communications, evaluation, Advisory Team.

- **BEING Studio**

Activities: Online workshops/podcasts for artists with developmental disabilities to provide on-going learning, support, networking, and marketing opportunities for artists' work.

Ongoing contributions: content expertise regarding senior artists with developmental disabilities; digital strategy, communications, evaluation, Advisory Team.

Strategic Priorities for Action

Research, consultation, and developmental evaluation informed the project priorities.

The key strategic priorities are to:

- Focus on ongoing relationship/leadership development and communications, utilizing the rich resources and culture of diversity and inclusion of the Bronson Centre community.
- Apply an intergenerational approach.
- Utilize and strengthen the historic, arts/culture/built environment of the Bronson Centre.
- Focus on those sub-populations of at-risk older persons who are already connected to collaborating organizations and who face barriers because of mental or physical disabilities; low income; language barriers; Indigenous elders; Black-led seniors' organizations; Chinese seniors; Spanish speaking seniors; seniors with cognitive disabilities.
- Focus on older women who have been or may become criminalized, to increase participation in meaningful activities and experiences, and increase sense of community belonging.
- Focus on identifying and connecting with seniors living in Ottawa Community Housing Ageing in Place buildings, to increase participation in meaningful activities and experiences, and increase sense of community belonging.
- Focus on identifying and connecting with people 55+ in the Bronson Centre neighbourhood, to increase participation in meaningful activities and experiences, and increase sense of community belonging.

An overall CI Work Breakdown Schedule, including CI objectives and milestones, is included as Appendix A

SECTION THREE: SHARED MEASUREMENT & TOOLS:

Working with the project Advisory Team and consultants to create and begin using shared measures has been a key component of the start-up phase of the Bronson RISE collaborative effort. The attached Evaluation Plan— see Appendix B - identifies a targeted set of indicators that everyone signed onto and is now pursuing with the intent of using that data both to track progress and to improve efforts over time.

Evaluating the overall impact of Bronson RISE has been an important part of the start-up phase, with a focus on understanding community context and designing and implementing the initiative. This has

included establishing the five core conditions of collective impact, as well as the coordinated implementation of multiple sub agreement programs, activities, and digital communications according to the initiative's overarching theory of change.

A set of early performance indicators is described in the evaluation framework to track progress in establishing key elements of the initiative's infrastructure. Additionally, a developmental evaluation was undertaken – see Developmental Evaluation Report Appendix C-, aimed at helping partners understand the Bronson RISE context and learn more about how the initiative is developing.

SECTION FOUR: CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATIONS:

A Communication's Plan (see Appendix J) and Digital Strategy (see Appendix K) have been developed to ensure a predictable schedule of planned communications and meeting activities and events between the Backbone staff, collaborating organizations, stakeholders in the broader community and seniors.

The Digital Strategy includes an abundance of innovative and creative approaches to promoting and recruiting seniors for activities and events, opportunities to work and volunteer with collaborating partners, a platform to share arts, music, storytelling, and lessons-learned about staying connected during COVID.

SECTION FIVE: BACKBONE ORGANIZATION

As the backbone organization, Bronson Centre and the Bronson RISE team acts as a facilitative support team who can plan, manage, and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the myriad logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative to function smoothly.

The backbone organization supports the collaborating organizations and the successful delivery of the contract with ESDC, balancing the role of coordination and maintaining accountability to the contract.

Backbone support is provided in the following six areas:

- Guide Vision and Strategy:
 - Building a common understanding of the challenge of senior's inclusion in Ottawa and supporting shared knowledge about ways it can be addressed.
 - Provided strategic guidance to recruit members to the project Advisory Team, and work with an evaluation consultant to develop common goals, agenda and Theory of Change
- Support Aligned Activities:
 - Undertake stakeholder mapping;
 - Identify and recruit stakeholders
 - Convene partners and key external stakeholders
 - Establish sub agreements with collaborators;
 - Monitor and report on sub agreement activities and outcomes;
 - Monitor and report on progress with the collective impact as a whole;
 - Coordinate and facilitate partners' continuous communication and collaboration
 - Catalyze new initiatives or collaborations during COVID
 - Identifying capacity-building opportunities and supporting administrative capacity (e.g., coaching and mentoring, providing training and fundraising support)
 - Identify and recruit new partners, as needed
 - Seek out opportunities for alignment with other efforts – i.e. previous ESDC funded senior's inclusion projects, Council on Ageing, Social Planning Council, Good Companions, etc.
- Establish Shared Measurement Practices:
 - In consultation with Advisory Team and consultants, undertake developmental evaluation and evaluation framework
 - Identify tools for data collection and shared measurement systems for use across all project activities
 - Collect, analyze, interpret, and report data
 - Provide technical assistance for building partners' data capacity

- Support Public Engagement:
 - Successful delivery of sub-agreements and support of collaborating organizations:
 - Support community member engagement activities
 - Produce and manage communications (e.g. digital strategy, news releases, reports)
- Advance Policy:
 - Maintain project activities alignment with project objectives, outputs, and outcomes
- Mobilize Resources:
 - Mobilize and align public and private resources (e.g. funding opportunities) to support initiative's objectives
- Sustainability Plan
 - Develop and monitor implementation of a long-term sustainability plan that supports the intent of collective impact.

APPENDIX:

A - Workplan (Work Breakdown Schedule)

B - Evaluation Plan

C - Theory of Change

D - Communications Media and Digital Strategy

E - Sustainability Plan