

AGING IN THE RIGHT PLACE PARTNERSHIP

JULY 2020 NEWSLETTER

Over the last year, our Aging in the Right Place Partnership has been engaged in pan-Canadian research to identify and understand promising practice shelter/housing models that prevent and address later-life homelessness in Montreal, Calgary, and Vancouver. Our partnership includes 8 co-applicants, 8 research assistants, 4 collaborators, 23 partner organizations, and 8 older people with lived experience of homelessness.

We were able to do this work after receiving a one-year Partnership Development Grant, funded through a joint initiative of the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). This grant was offered in response to a call from [Canada's National Housing Strategy](#) to better meet the housing needs of all Canadians. One key priority of the National Housing Strategy is "Housing for those in Greatest Need," which includes older people experiencing homelessness (OPEH).

A key goal of the Stage 1 project was the development and submission of proposal for Stage 2. **We are excited to announce the proposal was successful and CMHC-SSHRC have awarded funding for another 5 years to evaluate the promising practice shelter/housing models identified during Stage 1.**

In Stage 1, Local Advisory Committees (LACs) were formed in each of the three cities to



Figure 1. Montréal, Calgary, and Vancouver Partnership

provide experience-based intellectual leadership to the to the project. LAC members provided input on project goals and outputs, identification of potential new partners, project's research questions and activities, and input into emerging findings.

In order to identify and understand promising practices in Montreal, Calgary, and Vancouver, we conducted:

- 1) An environmental scan of existing promising practices that support aging-in-the-right-place for OPEH in the three cities.
- 2) A scoping review of international literature on supportive shelter/housing practices for OPEH.
- 3) Three World Café workshops – one in each city – to bring shelter/housing, social service, and healthcare providers together with OPEH to have discussions about local promising practices for sheltering/housing OPEH.



Figure 2. Shelter/housing continuum for OPEH based on the environmental scan findings

For the environmental scan, we searched the Internet and print material on promising practices for OPEH in the metropolitan areas of Montreal, Calgary, and Vancouver and then engaged in informal conversations with providers of the identified promising practices. In total, we found 53 promising practices (Montreal = 17; Calgary = 11; Vancouver = 25), which we categorized along a shelter/housing continuum of six categories ranging from short-term, emergency accommodation to palliative care/hospice.

Expanding beyond the local contexts of Montreal, Calgary, and Vancouver, our international scoping review involved a rigorous search of scientific articles published between 1999 and 2019 that described shelter/housing models for OPEH. Similar to the environmental scan, we organized shelter/housing initiatives for OPEH into five categories, ranging from case management and outreach to permanent supportive housing.

Finally, to complement these findings, we conducted a World Café in each city to identify gaps in the environmental scan and scoping review and to understand the capacity and functioning of local promising practices in each city. The Vancouver-based

World Café hosted 36 participants on June 6, 2019 at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society, while the Calgary-based World Café hosted 30 participants at the Calgary Dream Centre on September 13, 2019, and the Montreal-based World Café hosted 23 participants at McGill University on November 12, 2019. Using structured, casual conversation in an informal, café-like setting, participants first ‘discovered’ what currently exists, then ‘dreamed’ about what could exist, and brainstormed how to ‘design’ solutions, and finally, discussed what it would take to ensure promising practices become ‘destiny’.

Bringing together providers and OPEH at the World Cafés was critical to the success of the workshops and doing so widened the breadth of insights and enhanced opportunities for collaboration and networking among participants. Participants’ feedback of the World Cafés was positive, as exemplified by one attendee’s statement, “I loved the fact that people are wanting to make a difference in helping—sharing ideas that can be useful.” Another participant commented, “There are a lot of people that have had similar situations and are dealing with the same problems. If we work together, we can change the way homelessness is perceived and make positive changes.”



Figure 3. Themes of shelter/housing initiatives based on findings from the international scoping review



Members of Aging in the Right Place Partnership team in Edmonton, AB.

Overall, findings from Stage 1 highlight that a continuum of shelter/housing options is needed to support diverse OPEH. Promising practices range from case management and outreach with no direct housing provided, to highly supportive settings that provide specialized medical care.

A key theme that emerged from all three data sources was that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution. In addition, findings revealed that a rights-based approach to housing is critical to meeting OPEH ‘where they are at’ to ensure they are housed in a setting that supports their independence, autonomy, and long-term wellbeing.

During this past year, knowledge mobilization of preliminary findings has been ongoing. Project partners from all three cities had the opportunity to meet at the [Canadian Alliance](#)

to [End Homelessness Conference](#) in November 2019 in Edmonton, AB. During the conference, team members from Montreal, Calgary, and Vancouver got to know one another and learn about promising practices from the other cities. In addition, our team developed ideas for the Stage 2 proposal.

Together, study findings and partner input has informed our research agenda for the Stage 2 grant, which was awarded by CMHC-SSHRC. Over the next 5 years, we will conduct in-depth evaluations of 11 promising practices across Montreal, Calgary, and Vancouver to identify “[what works, why it works, and for whom it works.](#)” With the participation of our partners, we will explore how different promising practices can be expanded within communities or in different settings to meet the needs of diverse OPEH, including Indigenous older adults, veterans, older women fleeing abuse, individuals with substance use or mental health conditions, and racialized or marginalized groups.

We are thrilled that over the past year our interdisciplinary team of academics, community partners, and OPEH advisors has grown to include 70 partners across Canada and internationally. Thank you to all our partners for your dedication to this research. We look forward to sharing Stage 1 outputs with you as they are finalized and moving into Stage 2 of this exciting research.

Stay up-to-date on project progress by visiting our website
as we get the newly funded research underway!

<http://bit.ly/agingintherightplace>

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