**Excerpts from Community Living Essex County’s REAL Change Final Report**

*Prepared by People Minded Business*

**4.12 Evaluation and Accountability**

Evaluating innovation is necessary to determine if a new idea works. Attentiveness to evaluation and learning was a priority. Evaluation plans were designed for each pilot project at the front-end, pre and post data was gathered, and formative and summative evaluation completed, along with a meta-evaluation of REAL Change. Interim and final reports were submitted to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, as required, and a final presentation and celebration was held with the Board of Directors, employees, people receiving services, families, MCSS representatives, and other stakeholders. All of these activities underscore the importance of evaluation and accountability in the Agency’s culture.

# 10.0 REAL Change Meta-Evaluation10.1 Objective of the Meta-Evaluation

The objective of the meta-evaluation conducted for REAL Change was to summarize the major findings and trends emerging from all REAL Change pilots. It provides perspective on REAL Change as a whole project, from which broader conclusions can be drawn. It was also an opportunity to propose how the Agency can translate the findings into even stronger and more innovative services and supports.

The key question is: How did REAL Change measure up against its original objectives? By aggregating the learning compiled in the five REAL Change Pilot evaluations, and by reflecting on the REAL Change initiative as a whole, this question can be answered.

In order to gather this feedback and to provide a structured opportunity for reflection, the REAL Change Steering Committee members, REAL Change champions, a representative from New Day and additional employees of the Agency were involved in an interactive evaluation session held March 21, 2017.

**10.2 Results**

The group that gathered for the meta-evaluation began by reflecting on the direction of REAL Change as a whole. There was consensus amongst the group that the Agency is on the right track and that the REAL Change initiative was an overwhelming success. Because of the significant work invested by all of the employees and volunteers involved with REAL Change, the desire to continue to move forward has momentum and support. At the outset of REAL Change, the Agency identified the importance of further promoting a culture of innovation, and took deliberate steps to build on previous successes. Because of this focus on further promoting innovation as a pillar of the Agency, it was identified that the culture had further shifted and a ‘How might we’ mindset was evident in everyday work.

Through REAL Change, the Agency further solidified its commitment to collaborating on important initiatives with people from different positions in the organization, representatives from New Day and Ensemble, and volunteers from outside the organization, to ensure the direction of the Agency is inclusive of a broad range of opinions and experiences, and maximizes the talent and dedication of the people involved within the Agency. Again, this was not a new approach, but the impact of engagement was confirmed and further opportunities for engagement were built upon.

Taking time to celebrate and have fun were raised in the Meta Evaluation as reasons why REAL Change was widely embraced. The Agency has always firmly believed in the importance of taking the time to celebrate success and to recognize contribution, and this approach continued on through the REAL Change project. From the REAL Change barbeque, to the planned celebration at the end of the project, appreciation was given for hard work and opportunities to share success were taken. The community – whether it was the local community or the developmental services community – were consistently invited in to learn about the goals of REAL Change, progress made to date, and emerging results.

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| REAL Change Objectives | Results |
| Redesign Our Business Model | Through the REAL Change project, areas that must be modernized in order to accommodate new ways of providing support were identified. Some specific directions:* A Human Resources review is scheduled for 2017 – to accommodate increasingly flexible models of support
* New sources of revenue are being researched and secured, to allow for innovative expansion of flexible supports & to engage in knowledge exchange about innovative & successful practices.
* Savings through efficiencies are being replicated
* Increased capacity is being effectively reallocated
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| Engage People and their Families | * Families & individual advocates have joined many other diverse representatives in REAL Change
* Together with families & advocates, all representatives collaborated on decisions about consultants, training, planning, creative problem solving, implementation and evaluation
* Families and advocates were engaged through action research: focus groups, e-surveys, evaluation diaries and telling their story
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| Actively Design Innovative Supports | * Five pilot projects produced significant outputs and outcomes that have resulted in REAL Change for people supported and families
* The culture at the Agency has intentionally shifted to incorporate and embrace an innovation culture
* The scope & flexibility & affordability of supports is shifting to respond directly to the requests of families.
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| Lead the Modernization Movement | * Leadership and transparency has been demonstrated throughout REAL Change
* One of the core tenets of leadership is modelling the way. The Agency has succeeded in modelling innovative practices within the developmental sector, by sharing its process and learning along the way
* The concepts for the Centre for Innovation & Quality Supports further demonstrate leadership in the developmental services sector by responding to an identified need & gaps for greater collaboration on innovative & creative organizational & support models
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