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## Supporting Youth Aging out of Government Care with their Transition to College

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## **Abstract**

For youth in and aging out of government care in British Columbia, accessing and completing college programs is a challenge that is gaining awareness in educational settings and the larger community. The research is clear; youth in and aging out of care are not as prepared as their peers to transition to college and have much less support to access them (Nichols et al. 2017, Shaffer et al. 2015). This paper identifies some of the main reasons for the discrepancy in educational outcomes, from an institutional perspective and as a broader wicked social problem. This Organizational Improvement Plan addresses this challenge by increasing supports and services for youth in and aging out of care transitioning to a British Columbia community college. It examines this problem of practice using feminist and political theoretical frameworks. Servant leadership guides the development of the plan and its characteristics are utilized to create a vision for change. Further analysis of institutional change readiness is explored using Bolman and Deals (2013) Four Frame Model. A change implementation plan is presented that streamlines services for youth in and aging out care to ensure necessary supports are provided for improved transition and the completion of Grade 12 and college programs.

**Keywords:** *Youth in and aging out of care, college transition, career exploration, academic upgrading, Service Delivery Model, servant leadership.*

## **Executive Summary**

This Organizational Improvement Plan examines the problem of practice (PoP) of youth in and aging out of government care in British Columbia and their transition to post-secondary settings. Organization X is a large urban community college in British Columbia that historically has made significant contributions to improving educational access in the community in which it resides. This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) will allow Organization X to build on this reputation by better serving this vulnerable population of students that need to be considered a priority within the institution. Specialized support to significantly change educational outcomes, as well as early interventions for younger youth to plan their transition to the College are required.

Chapter One explores the organizational setting and context including leadership, current political climate and readiness for change. A literature review examines the factors that contribute to the low educational outcomes of youth in and aging out of care. This problem of practice is defined as a wicked social problem and analyzed through feminist and political frameworks. Leadership styles are discussed with the Change Agent/Leader choosing servant and feminist leadership characteristics and attributes as the best fit to address this problem of practice.

Chapter Two focuses on planning and developing an Organizational Improvement Plan beginning with leadership approaches to change. The Change Agent/Leaders approaches to change include utilizing political theory to create awareness and foster support both internally and externally. Trauma informed practice is described as a tool that can be implemented by faculty and staff to help students feel comfortable, supported and understood in the transition process. A critical organizational analysis utilizes Bolman and Deals (2013) Four Frame Model

for identifying specific factors that impact change readiness within the organization. Possible solutions are presented and one is identified the best option to realize change within the institution.

Chapter Three presents a comprehensive implementation plan based on the development of an internal partnership. A Service Delivery Model is proposed that streamlines services with the goal of improving transitional supports and services for youth in and aging out of care. The Service Delivery Model ensures that younger youth ages 15-18 develop an education and career plan before they finish high school for early intervention; and youth ages 19-26 are still able to access educational and career supports. An overview of the specific Department and Areas involved is discussed as well as their contributions to realizing change. A monitoring and evaluation plan that emphasizes the monitoring process is presented to ensure implemented changes are successful in improving outcomes. Empowerment evaluation is selected as an appropriate fit for the purpose of this Organizational Improvement Plan that has youth in and aging out of care be the primary focus of the evaluation process. Finally, a plan to communicate change by building awareness, creating a vision for change and utilizing internal and external opportunities to share information is developed. Emotional intelligence competencies of social awareness and relationship management are used by the Change Agent/Leader to effectively communicate change within the institution and community.

With the current government implementing a tuition waiver program at every public post-secondary institution in British Columbia for youth aging out of care, the ability to significantly increase educational outcomes is a present reality. However, more factors than just tuition impact this student group, including increased trauma, mental health issues, and poverty. The institution needs to adapt supports and services to meet the needs of this student

demographic. How to change current educational outcomes and best support youth in and aging out of care through effective leadership within the College is a key focus throughout all three chapters of this Organizational Improvement Plan.

## Acknowledgments

This has been a journey filled with surprises, challenges and growth. I learned so much about myself to become a better student, teacher and leader. Dr. Paula Brook, your guidance and support was more than I had ever hoped for. I deeply thank you for all your advice and encouragement through some seriously challenging times. To the classmates and faculty I was fortunate to work with at Western, thank you for being a part of this journey and for sharing in this learning as colleagues.

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To my Mom, Mary, you are the best proofreader and cheerleader on the planet, thank you for all your constant support in every single stage of this three-year journey. To my Dad, Pat, who passed away in September 2018, Dad, you and Mom always encouraged me to follow my dreams, be brave and challenge myself. Without your lifelong encouragement, love and support, none of this would be have been possible.

Finally, to youth in and aging out of care, the ones I have served and ones I hope to serve in the future. I dedicate this work to you and hope that I can continue to help and support you to reach your educational and career goals.

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## **Glossary of Terms**

**Access Department (AD):** The Department that offers self-paced, online and class based academic upgrading at the College for adults 18 and older.

**The Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED):** The provincial government department that provides funding and oversees public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia.

**Basic Education Youth Area (BEY):** An Area within the larger Access Department that offers high school level course to youth ages 15-18 with the goal of high school graduation in a supportive setting.

**Careers Area (CA):** An Area within the larger Access Department that offers Grade 12 level career exploration and decision-making courses in classed based and online formats. The area works with students ages 15 and up.

**Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP):** This document developed as part of the requirements for the University of Western Ontario's Doctor of Educational Leadership Program.

**Service Delivery Model (SDM):** The model developed to streamline supports and services for youth in and aging out of care applying to Organization X to complete Grade 12 and post-secondary programs.

**Youth in Care:** Youth ages 15-18 in the care of the Ministry of Children and Families. They may be living independently on an adult youth agreement, in a foster home or in residential home.

**Youth Aging Out of Care:** Youth ages 19 years old who are no longer considered the responsibility of the government. Youth may still be on an adult youth agreement, but must adhere to strict rules around education and employment to qualify for assistance.

**Youth in and Aging out of Care (YAC):** Referred to most often in the OIP, are Youth ages 15 to 26 that are or have been in care for at least two years of their childhood or adolescence and eligible for the College's tuition waiver program.

**Tuition Waiver Program:** The provincial program that waives post-secondary tuition fees for youth formerly in care for two years or longer during their childhood or adolescence

## CHAPTER ONE-INTRODUCTION AND THE PROBLEM

“One of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a serious, correct political analysis, is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be.”

Paulo Freire (1994) p. 3.

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) addresses a lack of appropriate supports within a British Columbia Community College for youth in or transitioning from government care to post-secondary education. This lack of supports has resulted in low educational outcomes and completion rates of these youth for both Grade 12 and College programs. (Rutman & Hubbersty, 2016; Shaffer, Anderson & Nelson 2015). The challenges faced by this student population require a different approach than is currently offered by those assisting them with educational attainment. The College, government agencies and community must work in partnership to change outcomes. Potential areas for change are examined throughout the three chapters of this paper. The first chapter describes the organizational context and leadership style of the Change Agent/Leader. It also details the problem from a larger societal perspective and the readiness of the organization to initiate change. Chapter Two presents a critical organizational analysis and recommends potential solutions to address the problem. Chapter Three focuses on implementing, communicating and evaluating the best possible solution outlined in Chapter Two in order to streamline College supports and services for youth in and aging out of care.

## **Organizational Context**

One of the largest and oldest urban Community Colleges in Western Canada (referred to as Organization X), it has been in operation for over 50 years. With several campuses, extensive online offerings, and over 22,000 students annually, the primary focus of the College is on programs that connect students to the labour market. Health Sciences and Trades Programs are two of the largest areas of the college. The College employs over 500 unionized faculty members, has unionized support staff as well as a growing number of administrative positions. College values are identified as student success, excellence, diversity and stewardship. The vision statement for the College emphasizes innovation, experiential and lifelong learning (Organization X, 2017). This speaks to the applied nature of many of its programs, and acknowledges most students are participating in post-secondary education at many different stages of their lives, often to gain, advance or change careers. The Integrated College Plan identifies partnership development and new transitional/bridging programs as priorities for the next five years (Organization X, 2017). Both of these goals align with the purpose and desired outcomes of this Organizational Improvement Plan. The first goal is to create supports and services that will successfully bridge youth in and aging out of care to the College to complete programs. The second goal is to develop internal and external partnerships that will strengthen all supports needed for college success for these youth.

A variety of educational programming is offered at the College, from basic education to four-year degree programs. Serving the needs of the community is a strategic priority and innovative partnerships with various external groups have been successfully implemented. The

partnerships have included culinary arts training offered on reserve for Indigenous students, tuition free cohorts of the Medical Office Assistant Program and academic upgrading taught at a community centre that provides childcare and lunch to participants. The programs were offered as a result of securing outside sources of funding through requests for proposals, provincial government funding initiatives or community partnerships. This also speaks to social, economic, and cultural factors that influence College offerings. A history of successful partnerships with industry, community agencies and employers is evident.

### **Departmental Structure**

This section discusses key components of this organization, which include departments, faculty, students, and administration. The Access Department and the Careers Area are both explained as the location for student support and organizational change. The Access Department offers academic upgrading for students wanting to complete their Grade 12, or needing pre-requisites to enter other post-secondary programs. It has one Department Head, five Area Coordinators and approximately thirty faculty positions. This number includes both full-time and part-time regular faculty and full-time and part-time non-regular faculty. Regular status means faculty are guaranteed work that is available and have more security. Non-regular faculty are essentially on contract, when the contract ends there are not guarantees of more work. A non-regular faculty's workload can change at any time during the semester, depending on how much work regular faculty is taking. This leads to an uncertain work environment for many and can cause friction in some of the areas due to allocation of work.

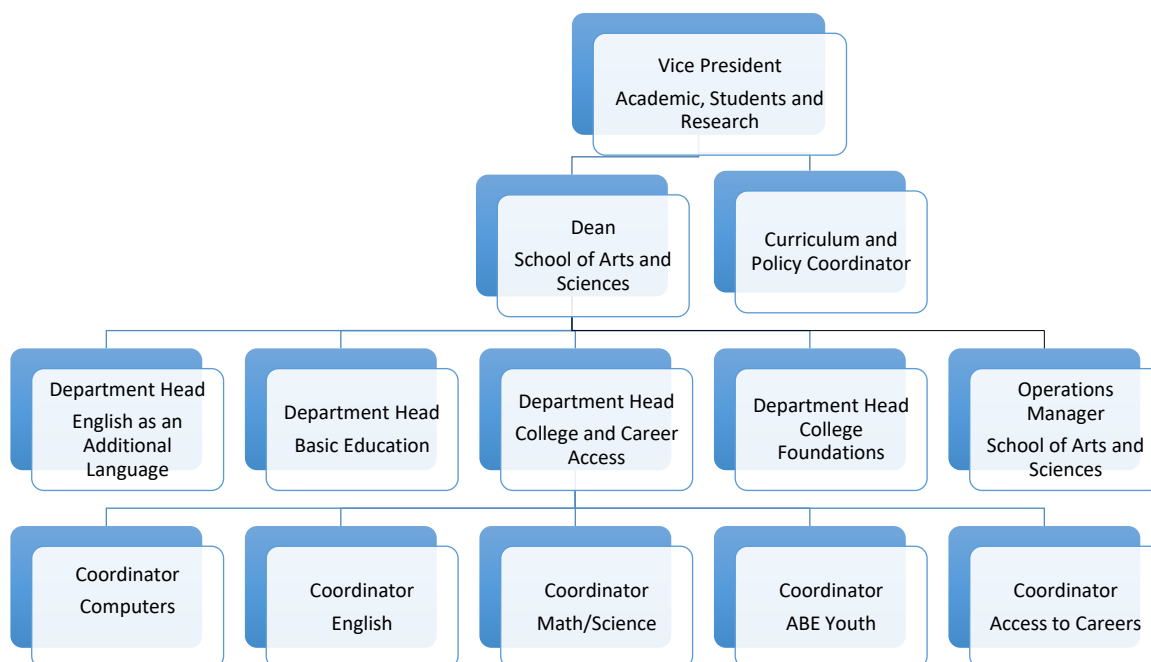
Faculty strive to make the setting inclusive and supportive for all students, and this works well for non-traditional learners. Many students that have been out of an educational setting for a long period of time are enrolled in the Access Department. The Access Department offers academic upgrading with the goal of assisting students to acquire pre-requisites to enter other programs and or complete their Grade 12 credential. The courses in this Department are often described as a “gentle transition” to the college setting. The class environment is supportive, and students have numerous options with how the courses are delivered including self-paced, class-based and a growing number of online options. This gives students more flexible timelines and the ability to complete courses at their own pace.

The Careers Area in the Access Department serves students who are in education and career transition. The student population is diverse and includes immigrant professionals, those in mid career transition and many students of all ages without a Grade 12 Diploma. The courses offered in this area include Career Exploration, Career Decision Making, Job Search and Communication Skills. The courses are tuition free and can be taken as credit towards a Grade 12 Diploma. Partnerships are a focus in this department, with most student referrals coming from the faculty’s contacts within the community. This is a fundamental difference from most of the College’s programs. Typically, a student will apply for a program online, submit documentation and be accepted, whereas in the Careers Area students are required to attend an information session where they meet with the Coordinator in order to register. Although this is time consuming, it assures that students understand the purpose of the class and can determine before registering if it is a good fit for them.



Students are referred by community agencies, internal departments such as counselling, as well as other service providers such as alternate high schools and community mental health programs. The success with relationship building for referrals is due to the fact the Coordinator has been at the College for over ten years, mostly in the Careers Area but also in Community Partnerships and Indigenous Education in administrative roles. All faculty members in the Careers Area are trained in career counselling practices and have backgrounds working with vulnerable populations within community and post-secondary settings.

The Organizational Chart (Figure 1) does not represent all the institution, only the academic upgrading departments of the College within the School of Arts and Sciences. Academic upgrading includes all areas that offer courses at the Grade 12 level or below. Basic Education, Basic Education Youth, the Access Department, and College Foundations all work together to support students to complete the high school courses they need to continue in other post-secondary programs. This specific chart is most related to this Organizational Improvement Plan as it includes all academic upgrading that a potential youth in or aging out of care may need to access before applying to the College or another post-secondary programs.



*Figure 1. Organizational Chart: School of Arts Science-Academic Upgrading. Adapted from: Organization X (2018). Organizational Chart.*

The Curriculum and Policy Coordinator also plays a role in developing College policies that pertain to the tuition waiver and support services for youth in and aging out of care. The departments represented in the chart offer very basic literacy and math to college foundations. Students are assessed, can then start at their current educational level, and work their way through these departments for their upgrading and pre-requisites for College programs.

## **Organizational Trends**

The institutional trend is to employ more contract faculty and have fewer full-time regular positions. This is aligned with the pervasiveness of corporatization in post-secondary settings in North America (Giroux & Giroux, 2004, Giroux, 2013). Presently, there is tension between the faculty and administrative areas of the College due to conflicting priorities. Some faculty feel underappreciated and that they must justify their workloads. Layoffs have been standard practice over the last two years. Fortunately, the Faculty Association is a strong advocate for its members.

Administrative turnover, specifically in senior leadership positions, was unusually high from 2010 to 2015 but has stabilized within the last four years. The vision, as well as the style and practice of leadership has seen frequent change, requiring all College personnel to adjust to new approaches and personality styles as leaders changed. These leadership styles included relational, bureaucratic and hierarchical ones, depending on the leader. This has resulted in a lack of leadership consistency, the ongoing introduction of different values and agendas, and some initiatives being disregarded that were not a priority of a new leader. This makes it difficult to speak to the state of the organization as it presents with some unknown factors resulting in shifting values, leadership practices, and conflicting priorities. Yet there is support and interest in this problem of practice from important members of the administrative team, specifically the Vice President, Academic, Students and Research, who is vocal about supporting vulnerable student populations. This senior leader supports faculty who take initiative to create programs for these groups. There has been positive financial change within the college over the last years,

with the President making fiscal sustainability an institutional priority. Presently the overall institutional mood is positive and collaborative, particularly with the present administrations support and increased government funding.

Another important institutional trend is the most recent directive from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Training to the Colleges Board of Governors. This document specifically requested that the College “continue to improve education success of former youth in care who pursue post-secondary, including implementation of the tuition waiver program and other supports at your institution” (The Ministry of Advanced Education and Training, 2018, p. 2). The provincial government is expecting all institutions in British Columbia to improve supports and strategize on how to best serve this student population. Overall, the organization has the capacity to respond to the needs of this problem. There is motivation within the College to strengthen supports based on the current directive of their funders.

### **Position Statement**

As the Coordinator and faculty member of the Careers Area in the Access Department, and a former youth worker, I have the educational resources, experience and background to support the transition of these youth to the College. Years of relationship building with community agencies in my current role means partnerships can be easily strengthened and further developed. Communication, relationship building, transparency, service, consultation and community engagement are what I value and believe are essential for success in leadership. As the Change Agent/Leader and a faculty member, utilizing emotional intelligence competencies

has been a key strategy in developing excellent working relationships, creating partnerships and having a lasting positive impact on students. Goleman (1996) asserts the four main areas of emotional intelligence as relationship management, social awareness, self-management and self-awareness. Within the area of social awareness, Goleman (1996) identifies the competencies of organizational awareness, empathy and service, which are key themes within this Organizational Improvement Plan. My informal leadership role in bringing awareness of this issue to the College community is significant. This includes sitting on committees, consulting with other post-secondary institutions, stating the case to senior leadership and securing support from community partners. I took this on, not as a directive from those who lead me, but out of passion and commitment to change the educational outcomes of these youth.

My leadership style is that of a servant leader, believing that through service to others, the most positive change for both individuals and institutions can occur. Servant leadership is a theory that aligns with the concepts of helping vulnerable populations and giving back to society (Greenleaf, 2002). For this improvement plan this means serving youth, the community and the organization by offering different leadership styles for each group. This includes but is not limited to, teaching, facilitating, advocating, presenting, information sharing, helping, collaborating, building awareness, and creating a vision for change.

Servant leadership theory can be utilized to address this problem of practice. It requires leaders, both formal and informal, to focus on the needs of the followers and being of service regardless of the position one holds within the institution. Servant leadership is a concept that

was introduced by Robert Greenleaf who became frustrated by our public institutions that “were created to be of service, but often behave in unresponsive, bureaucratic, even destructive ways” (Shugart, 1997, p. 238). It is clear that for youth in and aging out of care, the bureaucracy and unresponsiveness of our institutions are significant barriers to successful admission and completion of a college program.

Servant leadership implies that a follower becomes the focus, that their well-being and success is the preferred outcome. Further, that as a result of being “led” by a servant leader, followers ultimately takes on the role of a servant leader. As Greenleaf (2002) states:

Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived? (p. 27).

Servant leaders strive to improve the quality of their follower’s lives and inspire them to become leaders themselves. As the Change Agent/Leader, I share the same goals of achieving this for youth in and aging out of care. Similarly, this problem of practice aims to have youth aging out of care become healthier and wiser through enrolling in post-secondary and having a positive educational experience. The goal is for them to become more autonomous and likely to become servants themselves by completing their College program--finding employment and becoming of service to community and society. These outcomes in turn break the cycle of poverty for youth in care, as they will be less reliant on the welfare system for their lifetime.

Youth in and aging out of care require many supports to succeed in post-secondary education. The next section frames this problem for greater insight from a leadership perspective and presents theoretical frameworks that facilitate a deeper understanding of the problem.

### **Leadership Problem of Practice**

This leadership problem of practice addresses a lack of appropriate supports within a British Columbia Community College for youth transitioning from government care to post-secondary education. This lack of supports has resulted in low educational outcomes and program completion rates of these youth (Rutman & Hubberstey, 2016; Shaffer et al., 2015).

With high school settings in the province unable to provide courses after the age of 18, and youth who are still attending high school settings not engaging in career and educational planning, a community college becomes the primary institution where a high school credential along with career planning can be attained. Yet with the other challenges faced by youth in and aging out of care (e.g., mental health issues, homelessness, suicide and pregnancy), a Grade 12 Diploma and transition into the College require more supports than are currently available (Nichols et al., 2017; Rutman & Hubberstey; 2016; Shaffer et al., 2015).

The gap in current practice is clear-- financial support, assistance with navigating college structures, career planning and academic upgrading are not in place to address the challenges that are impeding success. It will not work just to address the graduation/credential issue. Specialized support is necessary to significantly change educational outcomes. How these supports can be implemented within the College and with external partners is discussed throughout this Organizational Improvement Plan. A more desirable organization state would

start with the institutional wide acknowledgment that this student population requires more supports from staff and faculty. Further, youth in and aging out of care would have access to advising that takes into consideration their unique challenges. Educational and career guidance, upgrading supports, and referrals to assist with other issues would be accessible for students to be successful in a college environment.

### **Framing the Problem of Practice**

In British Columbia approximately 700 youth age out of care each year. “Youth leaving care are often without the family support system that can provide the financial, instructional and emotional base necessary to make the often difficult transition to adulthood” (The Representative for Children and Youth, 2014, p. 3). Research indicates that educational outcomes, basic academic skills and access to post-secondary education are directly related to the level of education parents themselves have. (Gaudet, 2007). Youth who grow up in a home with educated parents have a clear advantage. There is a lack of information on what effective transitional policies or programs have been implemented and whether they have positively impacted the poor educational outcomes of youth in and aging out of care. The limited research on the topic suggests that youth aging out of care require access to a “range of supports and services, including educational bursaries, access to someone to provide youth with assistance and guidance when needed, and appropriate housing, health and mental health services” (Rutman et al., 2007, p. 46). Also, these supports must be available well past the age of 19, some suggesting over 26 years of age (Rutman et al., 2007; The Representative for Children and Youth, 2014; The Representative for Children and Youth, 2017).



Graduation rates for youth aging out of care are well below their peers, “in 2013/2014, 47% of all BC youth in care completed high school; by contrast 84% of BC youth in the general population completed high school” (Rutman & Hubberstey, 2016, p. 4). Although reports from the Ministry of Children and Families report improved graduation outcomes since 2001, much of this improvement can be attributed to the school completion certificate being implemented, which is an easier credential to earn and may not prepare youth for college level programs (Rutman & Hubberstey, 2016). In fact, the percentage of youth leaving care with a Dogwood Diploma in 2015/2016 was only 29.3% (The Ministry of Children and Families, 2017). This is an important consideration, as the majority of post-secondary programs require prospective students to have a Dogwood Diploma and explains why the number of youth transitioning to college settings is low.

### **How Society Defines Youth**

How society defines the age of youth has a major impact on the absence of educational supports for those in and aging out of care. In Canada “census defines the following age groups: 0-14 (child), 15-24 (adolescent) and 25-64 (adult)” (Gaudet, 2007, p. 80). From the federal government standpoint youth are categorized for a much longer range than 19 years of age. There is a clear disconnect between what the government classifies as youth and what its officials are willing to financially support under the classification of youth. There is growing evidence that all youth require financial and parental support for a longer period of time. “The traditional view of a short and relatively simple passage into adulthood is now largely obsolete. This is partly due to a relationship between education and employment that has shifted

dramatically” (The Vancouver Foundation, 2014, p. 12). One Government of Canada policy report proposes a new age group--emerging adulthood, from 17 to 24--and identifies the longer education that is required to access today’s job market as the reason this new stage is necessary (Gaudet, 2007). Further, “it is access to post-secondary education which has the most impact on the entire youth trajectory, particularly with respect to social inequalities” (Gaudet, 2007). The societal trends are clear: a longer transition to adulthood and more time spent in school for all youth, but less access for disadvantaged youth groups.

### **Specific Demographics of Youth in Care**

Another important factor in this problem is the demographic of children and youth in care. Over sixty percent of youth in care in British Columbia are Indigenous, although they account for only eight percent of the provincial population (Shaffer et al., 2015). The history of Indigenous people in British Columbia means Indigenous children/youth are “more likely to have experienced current and historical legacies of colonization, racial discrimination, systematic devaluing of culture and language, and the multi-generational impacts of residential schools” (Rutman & Hubberstey, 2016, p. 2). These factors have caused many Indigenous people to have a negative perception of educational institutions, with good reason. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action recommends that post-secondary institutions “provide sufficient funding to close identified achievement gaps within one generation” as well as improve “attainment level(s) and success rates” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 10). Supports for youth in and aging out of care need to consider these calls to action by incorporating Indigenous protocol, cultural norms and cultural safety to be successful.

## **Corporatization and the POP**

The corporatization of higher education also impacts this problem of practice by prioritizing profit and gain over the larger societal role of education as a public service that produces engaged citizens. The corporatization of education “dismantles those public spheres, social protections, and institutions serving the larger society” (Giroux, 2013, loc. 1533). As public institutions become corporate spaces, the potential to serve vulnerable populations loses its importance in the academy. A binary of rich/poor, those with means and those without is clearly more evident and creates tension in the institution for those who cannot pay. Contrary to this trend, the BC Campus 2020 report identifies “equaliz(ing) public post-secondary participation and attainment rates among income quartiles” (Plant, 2007, p. 15) as a specific goal. It is clear that this has not yet been achieved and the provincial government has a significant role to play financially in improving equal access in the post-secondary system.

This problem of practice is in large part a financial problem, with the provincial government not allocating sufficient funds to support this group for a longer period of transition to adulthood. Youth in care lose any funding assistance from the government at age 19 if they are not working or attending school on a full-time basis. “When students reach 19, they simultaneously age out of the majority of Ministry supports provided to children and adolescents. Young people who have experienced multiple traumas, without the benefit of family supports, are particularly vulnerable to poverty, crime, hunger and unemployment” (Creighton et al., 2014, p. 22). Youth aging out of care may find a full time academic workload overwhelming, considering the other challenges they may be dealing with. Flexible course loads and timelines

for program completion is a reasonable expectation. Many youth attend school part-time and work part-time, the government needs to be flexible with their expectations and look at each case individually rather than applying one rule to all youth.

The economic benefit of supporting youth aging out of care financially as they obtain post-secondary education and training has been researched in Canada and the United States. These benefits include better long-term self-reliance, less teen pregnancy, homelessness and criminal involvement (Shaffer et al., 2015, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013). The studies analyzed the economic case and found that long-term, it cost the government less to support the transition to educate youth aging out of care than having long-term reliance on welfare systems.

Many articles discuss recommendations for improving the outcomes of youth aging out of care (Blueprint, 2013; Merdinger et al.; 2005, Nichols et al.; 2017; Reilly, 2003; Rutman & Hubberstey, 2016; Schwan et al., 2005; Shaffer et al., 2015; The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013; The Representative for Children and Youth, 2014). However, they fail to address how specific transition plans, policies, initiatives or funding have actually changed outcomes to date. There is a lack of recent literature that identifies best practices and the available research focuses on poor outcomes and recommendations rather than providing specific information. Government initiatives that assist with transitions do not take into account the lack of life skills, and that the risk factors for these youth are significantly higher than youth living in a parental home (Shaffer et al., 2015). Further, these initiatives assume that youth aging out of care are equipped to navigate the complex structure of college settings, and are informed of all processes that need to be completed to do this-which is not the case.

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

### **Wicked Social Problems**

Utilizing theoretical frameworks provide tools for a deeper understanding of the many diverse elements that can impact a problem of practice. Wicked social problems are by nature, complex, constantly changing and “tend to focus on weaknesses and deficiencies in the public sectors implementation and delivery mechanisms” (Head, 2008, p. 106). Similarly, wicked social problems often have high levels of “complexity, divergence and uncertainty” (Head, 2008, p. 103), which leads to no action being taken and a lack of understanding of who is responsible for changing it. Within the institution, there is a lack of understanding of the challenges this population faces and inadequate internal support to begin implementing changes in a systematic way. There is also a lack of proactive coordination among staff, faculty and senior leadership to implement policies, programs and procedures that could ease the transition to college.

Youth in and aging out of care are often considered the responsibility of the other, and not identified as a group that is a clear priority to any potential stakeholder. It appears that not one ministry, community agency or public post-secondary institution is willing to address the needs of this group either independently or collaboratively. In fact, “the most frequently expressed barrier (for youth in and aging out of care) is interagency antagonism with education and child welfare systems blaming each other for the poor outcomes” (Rutman & Hubberstey, 2016, p. 11). Without internal college change champions, community agencies, stakeholders from the K-12 system, and the Ministries of Children and Families and Advanced Education working together, it is difficult to seriously address this problem.

Wicked social problems often “have no obvious precedent, and there is no well-practiced or simple way to solve them” (Ramaley, 2014 p.13). This is indeed the case in this problem of practice. Although some post-secondary institutions have successfully implemented supports for youth aging out of care, most notably Vancouver Island University, there is no formula or directive from government on what exactly institutions should be offering or doing. Often, one change agent with a passion for this issue becomes the point person leading change within an institution. Services are offered by trial and error and that informs best practices within individual institutions. Although it is useful to borrow from these best practices of others, the overall lack of direction and coordination can leave institutions not knowing how to proceed and unsure of what the right steps are.

### **Feminist Theory**

Another theory that guides this OIP comes from the idea that inequity is pervasive in society’s institutions. Further that privilege is “gained and retained by dominant perspectives and groups” (Blackmore, 2015, p. 149). Feminist theory is a less conventional approach to examining problems of practice. Unlike conventional models, feminist theory challenges organizations to adopt a “social justice perspective to be infused into traditional organizational life” (Manning, 2013, p.160). There is a misconception that feminist theory is simply about having more equal power in leadership and institutions among genders; however it reaches far beyond this concept. It aims for equality for every group that experiences inequity in organizational settings, including exclusion based on race, religion, sexual preference, and economic status, to name a few (Blackmore, 2015).

Applied to this problem of practice, feminist theory provides a framework that questions the status quo, examines pre-conceived notions of education and challenges society to think about the role of education for vulnerable populations in society. Organizations are influenced by what is prevalent in society, and feminist theory considers how these norms become accepted within the institution (Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011). Servant leadership and feminist theory both emphasize the importance of those who are oppressed taking an active role in implementing and being part of the change process. (Freire, 2014; Greenleaf, 2002; Kark, et al., 2016). For example, when youth in and aging out of care are viewed with a feminist lens, decisions are based on what the youth have expressed is needed.

The web of inclusion is a concept that Helgesen (1995) identified as a feminine leadership principle that promotes inclusivity, access, relationship building and collaboration. The web is characterized by a lack of hierarchy and improved communication within a complex and changing environment. Further, as this author expresses, “you can’t break a web into single lines or individual components without tearing the fabric, injuring the whole” (Helgesen, 1995, Loc. 855). This collaborative, inclusive approach is required to implement successful programs and initiatives for youth in and aging out of care and are similar to the characteristics required to solve wicked social problems. Recent reports that speak to the complexity of helping youth in and aging out of care transitioning to post-secondary settings reiterate this need for a “web” of support. Specifically, they outline the importance of making our institutions more responsive to the needs of youth so they can be successful in post-secondary settings (Nichols et al., 2017).

The web's characteristic of permeability (Helgesen, 1995) means that required stakeholders such as the Ministry of Children and Families, the Ministry of Advanced Education, non-profit organizations and most importantly, the youth themselves can be brought into the web as needed to participate in the decision making process. This again is similar to what one document states is required to solve wicked social problems. It includes engaging stakeholders, working across agency boundaries, utilizing innovative and flexible approaches and holistic rather than linear thinking (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007). The web of inclusion and feminist theory provide concepts that help us understand the complexity of this problem of practice as a wicked social problem. It allows leaders and stakeholders to start asking the right questions and begin solution-focussed inquiry.

### **Questions Emerging from the Problem of Practice**

There are many of lines of inquiry that can be explored in this problem of practice-many questions about why the educational outcomes for these youth are so low. This paper focuses on three specific areas of potential change: internal change, partnership development, and program development. Questions for consideration emerge from these three areas.

#### **Internal Change Questions:**

1. What policies need to be developed internally to address this problem of practice?
2. What leadership strategies can be utilized to get institutional buy-in?
3. How can the Change Agent/Leader facilitate and expedite the policy development process?



This line of inquiry considers two internal elements: how to write an effective policy and how to get college personnel committed to the change. These are crucial for implementation of any programs.

#### Partnership Development Questions:

1. How can existing relationships be strengthened to offer more support and leverage resources for these youth?
2. What other stakeholders need to be involved and how can relationships be developed with these groups?

Identifying key stakeholders can potentially leverage financial resources and provide more comprehensive services for youth. The goal is not to duplicate services that are already offered but to strengthen the offerings through effective partnerships.

#### Program Development Questions:

1. What current programs and services are offered in other institutions for assisting youth in and aging out of care?
2. What existing College programs and community services could be used to help support the transition of youth in and aging out of care to college settings?
3. What needs to be added to existing College programs to support the transition of youth in and aging out of care?

Examining successful programs in British Columbia, Canada and The United States will allow the Change Agent/Leader to borrow from best practices. Determining what is already in place that can be utilized will save time and financial resources.

The answers to these questions will have some impact on how the OIP is received and implemented within the institution. They will provide insight into what strategies and approaches may work as well as challenges that may be faced. If the initial approach is ineffective, it is possible to reconstruct the lines of inquiry and change the strategy for implementation.

### **Leadership Focused Vision for Change**

When articulating the gap between services offered and a more ideal organizational state, having clear recommendations can identify priorities for change. The following recommendations are a result of consultation with youth; British Columbia post-secondary institutions with successful youth in care initiatives, community agencies, alternate high school programs, and the youth themselves. These recommendations do not represent what will change or the process of implementation, but they articulate the gaps between what is offered now and a more ideal envisioned future state. The recommendations are guided by the three change areas referred to throughout this organizational improvement plan, internal change, partnership development and program development.

1. **Development of internal systems:** Creation of a specific organizational policy to address the new tuition waiver program and implementing specialized youth in care services.
2. **Pre-admission support:** A point person who can help with college transition for this student population. Implementation of specific programs that help with all aspects of applying and completing programs.
3. **Financial support:** Tuition waiver program being accessed by more youth aging out of care. Referrals to other potential funding options for living expenses.
4. **Community support:** Create a community network including peer mentors, community agencies and college staff.
5. **Implementation of a working committee:** To implement and evaluate college initiatives for youth aging out of care.

These recommendations will be guided by a servant leadership approach that requires both formal and informal leaders to focus on the needs of the followers and being of service regardless of the position one holds within the institution or community. Servant leadership implies that the followers become the focus and that the preferred outcome is their well-being and success (Greenleaf, 2002). Looking at change through a servant leadership perspective would be aligned with Buono & Kerber's (2010) guided change, which is an

emergent process that focuses on collaboration and responsiveness. It can occur at any level in the organization and relies on the commitment of those involved in the change process. Guided change emphasizes “learning and information sharing, encourages questions and experiments, values alternative viewpoints and tolerates mistakes in the interest of learning” (Buono & Kerber, 2010, p. 11). Although radically different, using guided change can increase the possible solutions to this problem through its creative and innovative approach.

All College staff and stakeholders who participate in implementing these recommendations can “serve’ youth in and aging out in their respective role, regardless of position or title. It requires many to be involved without distinguishing who is leading. In this way it is similar to distributed leadership in that “there a number of sources of influence, initiative taking or forward thinking” (Gronn, 2010, p. 417), which may be contrary to what many working in public post-secondary are used to. In fact, in becoming a servant leader “uses less institutional power and control while shifting authority to those who are being led” (Northouse, 2016, loc 4839). It is two tiered, the leader serving those followers within the institution who are implementing the recommendations, and all internal and external stakeholders serving the youth in their transition and successful completion of College programs.

My leadership approach is somewhat different than the dominant ideological approach of my workplace depending on which area of the institution is considered. The general leadership approach is a mix of hierarchy and bureaucracy with some senior leaders being more relational and collaborative. Within my department, my servant/grassroots, collaborative leadership approach fits extremely well with my colleague’s styles of leadership. All five Area Coordinators

and the Department Head have a similar supportive and collaborative style with faculty, staff, students, and each other. As we were elected into our positions, the opinion of our colleagues about our leadership abilities influenced whether or not they voted us into a leadership role. The care and concern among and for our team members is evident in how we treat each other, deal with crisis and navigate complex demands from students, government and the institution we face as a department daily. I have been fortunate to have the support of my Dean, who allows me to engage in projects related to access and supporting underserved student populations. My Dean values my initiative and willingness to take on new projects.

### **Organizational Change Readiness**

Buono & Kerber's (2010) approach to change readiness encourages leaders to examine organizational factors at the micro, meso and macro levels. This is particularly applicable to this problem of practice as change agents, stakeholders and leaders are at the individual, departmental, institutional and community level. Both the organization and community have active roles in the change and leverage existing resources. This being the case, assessing change readiness also becomes more complex as the relationship between the organization and other external stakeholders cannot be compartmentalized. Tools that assess change readiness must be selected with this in mind.

A net benefits case, meaning a solution may be "more difficult or costly than the current policy, its resulting benefits will at least make it more desirable than the status quo" (Buller, 2015, p. 77) is harder to implement than a needs case. It can be argued that this problem of

practice is both a needs based case and a nets benefit case. This is aligned with a wicked social problem as it is hard to define and difficult to classify. It is urgent to change existing structures that impede the success of youth in and aging out of care. As discussed in the Organizational Trends section, although this proposed change aligns with College values, the push towards corporatization is also a potential obstacle that could be faced (Giroux & Giroux, 2004).

The strategic compass encourages leaders to ask themselves what they do best, and how starting with this question can lead to successful change in post-secondary institutions (Buller, 2015). Once that question is answered, that can lead to opportunities for change that are innovative, creative and entrepreneurial (ICE). Reflecting on this idea in this context, community colleges are best at engaging the community actively and finding opportunities to serve non-traditional learners. This includes, identifying potential partnerships in the community and creating opportunities for students to connect with education and employment.

One effective approach that can be used for an environmental scan for change readiness that would be the STEEPLED combined with the OT (Opportunity and Threats) portions of the SWOT analysis. STEEPLED is an acronym that refers to social, technological, economic, environmental, political, legislative, ethical and demographic drivers that impact change (Cadle, Paul & Turner, 2010). It addresses both internal and external factors, formulates next steps, as well as informs change drivers within the organization and community. STEEPLED is a strategy that can encourage “leaders to make a systematic scan of eight different areas to determine which drivers of change may be relevant in each of them” (Buller, 2015, p. 68). By integrating these two ideas, we can clearly see what factors need to be addressed for change whereas SWOT looks

at only four areas and may not be as comprehensive in the analysis of the issues impacting change readiness. SWOT “prefers to deal with factors that can be quantified or pigeonholed. It assesses the assessable” (Buller, 2015, p. 113). Therefore, combining these two tools can assist in a more comprehensive analysis. Appendix A demonstrates how this can be applied to this problem of practice and Organizational Improvement Plan.

### **Informal/Grassroots Leaders and Change Readiness**

An important consideration in preparing for any change as a leader is determining your level of agency within the organization (Kezar, 2014). Informal/grassroots leaders can navigate challenges with levels of agency by broadening their own support networks and identifying champions in change. The three strategies for informal/grassroots leaders that are most applicable are joining and utilizing existing networks, working with students and partnering with influential existing stakeholders (Kezar, 2014). These three strategies can be utilized by formalizing partnership agreements, creating a safe forum for student input and information sharing with community organizations and joined networks. The Change Agent/Leader needs to be doing more advocating for change within the institution, not just advocating for the youth themselves. This is particularly important as informal/grassroots leaders may prefer to work independently, but must strive for collaboration with and not opposed to those in formal leadership roles (Kezar, 2014). The support of senior leadership and permission to develop initiatives, combined with the work of the Change Agent/Leader are both imperative.

### **Key Stakeholders**

This change requires support and buy-in from senior leadership, the College at large and external stakeholders. Initially the Vice President of Academics, Students and Research will play an important role by promoting this initiative. Fortunately, the Vice President has already shown support for increasing services for youth in and aging out care. The Coordinator of Curriculum and Policy Development will be key in creating the internal tuition waiver and student support policy. The Registrar's Office will assist with the creation of systems for application and admissions under the tuition waiver program. As the Change Agent/Leader, I am responsible for getting buy in from these stakeholders, stating the case and providing the data and information to support the change. In other words, I will plan and guide the changes, but senior leadership will direct them. As the College is now required to have the tuition waiver program implemented by the provincial government, change is not a desired state but a mandatory state. This is important in communicating why this change needs to happen now and not sometime in the future. Resistance will be addressed by reiterating the necessity of this as a government directive, Chapter Three provides more detail on how this government directive can be used to create a sense of urgency and justify change.

Resistance from stakeholders is often a result of conflicts in priorities and values. Value conflicts "require political negotiation and compromise among policymakers and interest groups- much like that which occurs in larger society" (Cuban, 1990, p. 8). One strategy to address this is to state the case for these partnerships, emphasizing their "fit" with institutional values. The Change Agent/Leader will accomplish this by sharing positive outcomes with the College and community, which also speaks to the need to constantly collect data. This can be in the form of



presentations, informal sharing of information, community involvement and identifying like-minded individuals who support the change.

In this chapter, framing this problem of practice as a wicked social problem has emphasized the complexity and number of stakeholders involved. Further, that determining an organization's readiness requires an evaluative approach that uses various tools to measure different components of change readiness. The next chapter will consider possible solutions to address this problem of practice based on leadership style and organizational considerations.

## **CHAPTER TWO-PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

As outlined in Chapter One, an approach to leadership that focuses on service, social justice and inclusion is necessary to solve this wicked social problem. Chapter Two examines specific aspects of planning and developing this Organizational Improvement Plan. Leadership approaches that foster change within the institution are discussed using servant leadership, feminist theory and political theory. This includes the concepts of service to both the organization and youth in and aging out of care, shared power, the web of inclusion, the leader as servant, and grassroots/informal leadership. Chapter Two applies these leadership change approaches to analyze the organization. Further, Bolman and Deal's Four Frame Model (2013)

and to a lesser degree Allison's (1971) Organizational Process Model are utilized to identify the gaps and actions needed for change.

### **Leadership Approaches to Change**

Youth aging out of care are twice as likely to attend a community college than a four-year university (Dworsky, 2018). A community college setting is an ideal starting point for youth in care to begin their transition to post-secondary education. The College has the organizational capacity to provide the high school credits needed in a range of delivery methods including self-paced, online and class-based. Yet a Grade 12 Diploma is often a significant barrier that prevents youth from applying to post-secondary programs. In the College setting, youth are able to earn a Grade 12 Diploma, receive career guidance and assistance navigating the College systems.

Helping these youth is the focus of this institutional change plan. Approaching change utilizing a servant leadership style is aligned with the purpose of this OIP as well as with the inherent values of a community college. These values include helping others, empowering those being served, and supportive practices that are community based. Leadership at the College is critical to foster these values, and there is a leadership competency framework which outlines the characteristics, skills and attributes required for being in a leadership role. The two values in the College's competency framework that are most aligned with how to approach this change are transforming systems and building partnerships.

Transforming systems is defined as leading through vision as well as championing and orchestrating change. Building partnerships is strengthening relationships, building networks and engaging stakeholders. An individual leader can utilize what the institution identifies as essential

leadership characteristics to realize change. These competencies speak to the organizational vision and fit well with servant and feminist leadership theories that are aligned with this OIP.

### **Servant Leadership**

A servant leadership approach guides information sharing and influences others within the institution. It focuses on the importance of service, with the goal of building relationships and supporting the growth of others (Buchen, 1998). Taking the ten characteristics of servant leadership developed by Robert Greenleaf, Table 1 illustrates how the Change Agent/Leader can use a servant leadership change approach. The influence and role of the institution are also noted for their contributions.

Table 1. *Ten Characteristics of Servant Leadership applied to this OIP*

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Relation to OIP</b>	<b>Servant Leader's Role</b>	<b>Institution's Role</b>
Listening	Imperative to understanding needs of both youth and organization	Communicate clearly, employ active listening, relay messages to whole institution	Listen to needs of youth aging in and out of care (YAC) and implement their suggestions into college wide policy
Empathy	Understanding the experiences of YAC and why change is needed	Educate staff, community, bring awareness to this problem	Acknowledge the challenges of YAC
Healing	Implementing supports and services that acknowledge YAC challenges	Educate staff and community on the problem, ask youth for feedback	Create safe spaces for youth, provide advocacy and mentorship

Awareness	Awareness of what YAC experience and impacts on how they interact with institutional settings	Raise awareness inside and outside of institution using informal and formal methods. Advocacy	Presentations to employees, community stakeholders and at conferences
Persuasion	Utilize communication to change outcomes and convince stakeholders	Persuading senior leadership to support youth through institutional initiative	Implementing tuition waiver, college wide awareness campaigns
Conceptualization Foresight	Needed for creation of effective programs and services	Anticipating potential resources, monitoring government initiatives	Responsive to funding opportunities, ready to adapt current practices
Stewardship	Responsibility to youth and community	Responsible management of funds and all resources	Allowing resources to be accessed, leveraging available supports, creating systems that utilize existing structures
Commitment to the growth of others	A fundamental concept for this OIP and to change outcomes for YAC	Developing relationships, advocating and mentoring	Providing the existing resources to assist in this growth, tutoring, counselling, career exploration etc.
Building communities	Partnerships build community both internally and externally	Creating spaces for information sharing	Prioritizing community building, being true to mission and vision of institutions

*Note.* Adapted from: *Servant leadership, a journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness. (25<sup>th</sup> anniversary Ed.)* By R. Greenleaf, 2002, [Kindle Edition]. Retrieved from Amazon.com

The utilization of these characteristics will not only help with implementing change, but will also serve as a general model of effective leadership practice. Some are more immediate needs to propel change; some are more relevant for sustaining change.

There are similarities between servant leadership characteristics and emotional intelligence competencies (du Plessis et al., 2015). The competencies of relationship management, specifically teamwork, collaboration and developing others (Goleman et al., 2013) are aligned with servant leadership. Relationship management also includes being a change catalyst, which is defined as “initiating, managing, and leading in a new direction” (Goleman et

al., 2013, loc 755). Social skills, according to Goleman (1996) include influence, communication and conflict management all of which can be used by the servant leader to promote change that is well received and supported by those in the institution and community.

The concept of servant leadership can also be considered as an attribute of the institution itself and that this is fundamentally its main purpose in society. In other words, institutions must “raise both the capacity to serve and the very performance as servant as existing major institutions by new regenerative forces operating within them” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 62). There is a fine balance for a servant leader of leading by example and communicating the importance of service so others may also take on the role (Thompson, 2014). Again this fits with the approach for change in this OIP, as identifying key people inside and outside the institution to take responsibility (serve) for just a small piece of the solution is crucial for its success.

### **Feminist Leadership**

Chapter One provides a detailed analysis of feminist theory in relation to this OIP. In relation to leadership, a leader who embraces a feminist perspective approaches change by considering larger ethical and social problems and how they can be a part of fixing them. “Feminist ethical thought is finding its way into efforts to re-theorize organizations and to addressing concerns for ethical practice in organizational analysis and management practice” (Casey, 2004, p. 307). Leaders adopting a feminist perspective would acknowledge the necessity to serve this population and work towards equal access for this group in post-secondary settings.

Reorganization of existing structures and practices are required for this change, and feminist theory supports this. Feminist theory acknowledges that in leadership, traditionally

female attributes are less valued but often more effective in leadership positions (Helgesen, 1995; Kezar & Wheaton, 2017). These identified feminist leadership qualities such as communication, building relationships, shared leadership, inclusion and collaborative decision making are all required to address this problem of practice. These are also identified as key competencies in solving wicked social problems (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007). Hegelsen (1995) observed that feminist leaders structure their organizations more like a web rather than a linear hierarchy. This is a key concept in this OIP, as many leaders will be working concurrently and collaboratively on different tasks within the institution and in the community. Roles can be interchangeable as needed and the Change Agent/Leader can use the concept of the web to build the services for youth but also to implement and manage them.

A feminist theoretical approach would identify where the specific challenges are within the organization, preventing access for this student population. For example, making it easier for youth in and aging out of care to self identify to the institution allows the organization to offer supports at the time of application. It is clear that both a servant leadership and a feminist approach to change will support the implementation of this OIP. The next section expands on leadership frameworks and how they can be utilized in the planning and development phase.

### **Framework for Leading the Change Process**

This OIP will focus on leveraging existing resources that are available both internally and externally while capitalizing on the new tuition fee waiver changes in the province. Generally, these changes will be incremental, meaning that changes are made “through minor improvements in existing structures or policies” (Buller, 2015 p. 212). Building on existing infrastructure

lessens fiscal strain, and allows those involved to gradually adapt to small changes while using the structures, processes and policies with which they are already familiar. Incremental change views the leader as the renovator, not having to redesign systems that already work, rather thoughtfully looking at improvements or modifications to benefit all involved. In leading this incremental change, in addition to servant and feminist leadership, I will use concepts from political theory to create a sense of urgency and get the “buy in” from key internal and external partners.

### **Political Theory**

Political theory is used to begin the process of change. Peral (1997) describes the defining characteristics of political leadership as interaction, collective purpose, individual political behaviour, non-routine influence and utilizing both political and non-political resources. Although the Change Agent/Leader uses all of these characteristics, the three that are most relevant are collective purpose, non-routine influence and utilizing both political and non-political resources. The following is a description of each characteristic (Peral, 1997) and how the Change Agent/Leader would utilize them.

**Collective purpose.** Emphasizes the need to get those within the institution to understand the importance of this change. Create the vision so that others see the purpose and feel connected and passionate about the need and urgency for change.

*Action:* Create a working group of those who want to support this OIP, engage those with institutional decision-making power, create a vision for change, engage community partners to share information and raise awareness.

**Non-routine influence.** The goal is to change routine organizational practices that can prevent youth in and aging out of care from being successful. Also this is a non-routine leadership situation initiated by an informal/grassroots leader.

*Action:* Communicate how and why the institutional status quo is not working while identifying key institutional values that are aligned with the OIP. Raise awareness about provincial initiatives connected to the College.

**Utilizing both political and non-political resources.** Political resources include optimizing new political agendas for youth in and aging out of care and persuading those with political influence within the institution to champion this change.

*Action:* Assess where the political power sits within the institution and develop strategy utilize it when needed. Engage community partners and the youth themselves as they understand the need for change and can be a part of the process through participation and support.

Using political theory change approaches, as the Change Agent/Leader I would present to the College Board, leadership team as well as different college departments such as student services. These presentations aim to create a sense of urgency, monitor for potential challenges



and create a sense of collective purpose. Giving specific data on the poor educational outcomes and challenges this student population faces can motivate others to help and support. Strengthening partnerships with external stakeholders in government ministries and community organizations is also a crucial action. External stakeholders can be instrumental in raising awareness by communicating why the change is necessary. A formal memorandum of understanding to acknowledge these partnerships and the intention of working together will add validation to the proposed changes.

As discussed in Chapter One, the College is responsive to the needs of the community and has a reputation for successful partnership development. In addition to formal presentations, informal discussions among faculty and staff about this problem will also raise interest and support. As Kezar (2014) suggests, “galvanizing members toward action can occur through raising awareness or disseminating information” (p. 167). One potential action that may be easily implemented is to create a working group that builds on previously developed relationships, as well as college staff, faculty and youth to share information, best practices and knowledge.

Obstacles for the Change Agent/Leader with using political theory include the risk that stakeholders both internally and externally can change. This can impede progress or change strategic direction due to new stakeholder having different values or agendas. Value conflicts “require political negotiation and compromise among policymakers and interest groups-much like that which occurs in larger society” (Cuban, 1990, p. 8). The Change Agent/Leader can state the case for these partnerships, emphasizing their “fit” with institutional values and current provincial government priorities. Internal and external stakeholders sharing positive outcomes

can accomplish this, including community partners and the youth themselves.

### **Critical Organizational Analysis**

An effective approach to change requires the Change Agent/Leader to diagnose what is present but also what is not present within the institution that is required for a smoother college transition, and improved educational outcomes. Cawsey, Deszca & Ingols (2016) identify this in their Change Path Model as awakening, when the Change Agent/Leader to perform a gap analysis to identify what is missing between the current state and preferred state. In this situation, the gap indicates that the organization needs to adopt methods of access and retention that are proven to work with this student population. As previously stated, it is clear that tuition waivers are important, but they do not address some of the underlying issues that keep this group from applying, attending and completing college programs. Adopting a supportive transitional model by utilizing and advocating for trauma informed approaches can ease the transition process for youth aging out of care.

### **Trauma Informed and Relational Practices**

Presently, the organization is also lacking services that can make the institution a more welcoming place for students and this is an important area to change. Informal discussions the Change Agent/Leader has had with key stakeholders in institutions that improved transitional support services emphasized the importance of implementing a different service model for youth. Specifically, taking an approach that understands challenges and barriers that may be present, but not necessarily obvious. The trauma that youth in and aging out of care have experienced does not leave them when they register for college (Hallet et al., 2018). For example, some youth may

be intimidated or feel that those assisting them do not understand their previous experiences. Developing a trauma informed, relational approach to student transition is an easily adopted solution for change, specifically when potential students have initial contact with the College. It acknowledges that as a result of being in care, youth have experienced trauma in many forms: abuse, instability, homelessness, lack of supports, increased mental health and addiction challenges (Nichols et al. 2017; Rutman & Hubberstey, 2016; Shaffer et al., 2015). Also, interactions with personnel in institutions may have been negative, resulting in distrust and fear when dealing with these settings and those working in them. As Morgan et al. (2015) indicate, trauma informed practices acknowledge youth may have challenges and experiences that impact their transition. This requires the person interacting with the youth to adopt a relational approach, which is not utilized in most post-secondary structures.

In Chapter One, pre-admission support was a recommended area for change; a trauma informed approach is one strategy to accomplish this. Personally I have developed this approach in my previous work settings along with my personal servant and feminist leadership style and beliefs. Trauma informed approaches are aligned with servant leadership as they both require service to others and consideration of needs. Feminist theory is connected as it is concerned with social justice and access for underserved populations (Blackmore, 2015). Within the organization, when the Change Agent/Leader models trauma informed practices others see that it is an effective method to serve vulnerable students.

In the College's leadership competency framework discussed earlier in this chapter, a priority was transforming systems, which requires leading through vision while championing and

orchestrating change. This is accomplished by engaging in informal discussions with colleagues, staff and administration about why our institution needs to be sensitive to the needs of vulnerable students. Further, the importance of advocacy for education, and serving students is formally and informally communicated. Grassroots/informal leadership is happening everyday through continual discussion and communication, asking others to consider how we relate with vulnerable students when offering assistance.

Making the physical space more welcoming can also impact pre-admission support. This can be a small but significant change, making offices less formal, removing glass windows and allowing staff to sit down with a student to discuss admission and respond to student questions and concerns. The goal is to change how we relate to this student population by making systematic changes to how we engage with them from the first interaction with the College. This is achieved through researching and visiting other institutions to learn how they have made their spaces more welcoming. This information can be presented to administration as a cost-effective way to be innovative; which is one of the Colleges identified strategic directions.

Trauma-informed approaches can also be as simple as having one designated point person within each area of the College who is responsible for providing information and support. This designated person would have a different way of relating and listening to these potential students. As youth in and aging out of care are now identified on the College application for admission, referring the individual youth to the right point person within each department is realistic. Each point person would be educated on trauma-informed practices, and why this is an imperative approach when working with this student population. The point people would also be

asked to join the College working group to support youth in and aging out of care which would give everyone an opportunity for input, discuss challenges and to share best practices.

Acknowledging that the youth may not feel comfortable in the College environment and referring them to the supports and services can ease the transition. The point person does not counsel, rather they listen and acknowledge experiences, while having the knowledge of internal supports for referrals. The implementation of trauma-informed relational approaches is a small but significant change within the organization that could significantly impact student outcomes.

### **Bolman and Deal's Four Frame Model**

To analyze all factors impacting change readiness in an organization, Bolman and Deal's (2013) Four Frame Model provides a comprehensive framework that uses four lenses: structural, human resource, symbolic, and political. This approach encourages leaders to reframe and analyze the organization to identify what is missing in these areas that can impede successful implementation and change readiness. The structural frame refers to how an organization operates and the systems it uses including how work is coordinated and allocated. Bolman and Deal describe this frame as the social architecture because it focuses on having rules, policies and procedures that maximize the efficiency of an organization. The human resource frame looks at an organization through a lens of what humans require to be productive and successful. Change requires meaningful employee engagement, commitment and passion by those involved. The symbolic frame is concerned with what events actually mean to people. Vision, culture and values can have different meanings to individuals in the same organization. The culture of an organization has a deep impact on everyday activities and events and will directly impact

whether change will occur. Finally, the political frame sees organizations like political arenas. Different people have agendas and interests within the same organization and sometimes they compete for resources. Both government and institutional priorities directly influence change. This frame considers who holds power both formally and informally. It also requires resources from the college and approval from those in power. Table 2 gives an overview of what the Change Agent/Leader needs to change in the organization considering each frame.

Table 2. *Bolman & Deal's Four Frames Applied to Organizational Change*

<b>Frame Type</b>	<b>Relation to Organization and OIP</b>	<b>Specific Changes to be made by Change Agent/Leader in Organization</b>
Structural Frame	<p>Internal processes need to be developed to better serve YAC</p> <p>Structural changes are slow and will be met with resistance</p>	<p>Development of policy to serve YAC</p> <p>Internal structure changes in admissions and financial aid</p> <p>Continual monitoring through data collection</p>
Human Resource Frame	<p>Without the people in the organization, nothing can change.</p> <p>People want to feel engaged and part of the betterment of society</p>	<p>Communicating need for change, understanding why it needs to be an institutional priority</p> <p>Consultation and buy in from staff</p> <p>Give staff the opportunity to participate in this change</p> <p>Offer training to staff who want to be the point person within their department</p>
Symbolic Frame	<p>A culture of community involvement exists</p> <p>Mission, values and community priority align with this OIP</p>	<p>Promote the practice of trauma informed care into the existing mission and values of the College</p> <p>Relate this OIP to current strategic agendas and shape meaning</p>

Political Frame	<p>Many stakeholders with different priorities involved</p> <p>Allocation of scarce resources</p>	<p>Solicit senior leaderships support and endorsement of this plan for change</p> <p>Identify internal and external champions for change and give them specific ideas of what they can do (presentations, information sharing, supporting initiatives)</p>
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Note. Adapted from *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, choice and leadership*. (5<sup>th</sup> Ed), by L.G. Bolman & T.E. Deal, (2013) San Francisco. Jossey-Bass.

As depicted in this chart, all frames are important to analyze needed change; however, the political frame is the most relevant. As discussed previously, political theory is extremely applicable to this OIP as it offers insights in how to communicate change, navigate existing agendas and build both internal and external allies. The political frame requires deeper analysis of existing power dynamics in all areas of the organization, and whether or not they support the change. The political frame also implies that senior leaders are not the only individuals who hold power in an organization. “It views authority as only one among many forms of power-it recognizes the importance of the individual (and group) needs but emphasizes that scarce resources and incompatible preferences cause needs to collide” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 195). As discussed earlier in this chapter, my own grassroots/servant leadership approach can be effective when using the political frame as it can be done by anyone, in any position within the institution. It is achieved by taking on an advocacy role and building internal networks that educate others about this problem of practice. As a Leader/Change Agent it is a constant and consistent approach to sharing information so others can support the change and become



advocates of it. This is relevant to the College as negotiating priorities is constant, and faculty, students or the community often drive strategic action.

Similar to the political frames focus on scarce resources is Buller's (2015) Ten Analytical Lenses that can be used by the Change Agent/Leader. The Bifocal Lens "allows us to see more clearly what's right in front of our eyes. It urges us not to ignore existing infrastructure and resources, no matter whether those are pieces of equipment, facilities, sources of funding, or people" (Buller, 2015, p. 51). This includes utilizing other departments such as Access (academic upgrading) to address some of the learning gaps this population may have or upgrading they may need. Student services such as counseling can also assist with trauma-informed, relational support for college transition. Financial Aid can provide sources of funding, and partnerships can be developed with the Colleges Community Partnerships office. Most importantly, the Change Agent/Leader must work with the students to identify what kind of programs and policies will support their transition and completion of college programs. As a servant feminist leader, creating a safe forum for student input and participation, as well as advocating for change within the institution is a priority. As a result, the College is more likely to adopt a collaborative decision making style that allows for adequate student input.

The political frame also emphasizes that conflict and power struggles are a reality in any large organization. Bolman and Deal state that conflict need not be perceived as a negative. "Conflict is normal and inevitable. It's a natural by-product of collective life" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 201). Considering this in my organization, there is a healthy level of debate and discussion around most issues that impact faculty, staff, students and the community at large.

The fact that the College is open to healthy debate and hearing the opinions of others will support the proposed change outlined in this OIP. The key for the Change Agent/Leader is not to let conflict stop progress but to accept that it will happen in any political environment.

Related to political and feminist theories, critical theory can be used to analyze conditions in society that are impeding any change while also challenging existing power structures. Paulo Freire (1972) applied a critical lens specifically to society and institutions in order to expose oppressive structures and circumstances. There is a lack of scholarly resources that utilize critical frameworks in a cohesive, applicable and specific model. This may be the case as critical frameworks are generally philosophical and lateral, ask questions and challenges rather than applies a specific formula to a problem. Yet there is much overlap with critical, political and feminist theories. Critical theory can be applied to this improvement plan specifically by questioning both the status quo and accepted practices that hinder access.

In the area of policy development, Allison's (1971) Organizational Process Model applies a specific method to policy development. As policy development is crucial in this improvement plan, it is a model that can assist particularly in the initial stages. Haddid & Demsky (1995) identified the following steps in the Organizational Process Model:

- Analysis of existing situations
- The generation of policy options
- Evaluation of policy options
- Making the policy decision
- Planning of policy implementation
- Policy impact assessment
- Subsequent policy cycles

Appendix B applies this model specifically to the tuition waiver policy development portion of this improvement plan. As previously stated, the tuition waiver program has recently been implemented into all British Columbia post-secondary institutions. It offers free tuition for youth who have been in care for a total of two years in their lifetime. When a youth identifies as being a former youth in care, the Financial Aid Department is responsible for confirming their eligibility with the Ministry of Children and Families. The tuition waiver policy will create the foundation for other changes such as financial supports for living expenses and books, which a student may require. Using various theories, frameworks and models at different times in the improvement process, like this model for tuition waiver policy development, will help those involved be adaptable, responsive and able to utilize the best model or tool for a specific area of change.

In recent strategic approaches, institutional priorities included financial sustainability and business development. As identified in the political frame, the competition for those scarce resources can lead to competing interests (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The Change Agent/Leader must leverage financial resources and bring together existing supports. This is aligned with the grassroots leadership concept of joining and using existing networks. In practice, this may include using College facilities and faculty, but utilizing existing community agencies for other necessary supports. The challenge here is not to load faculty and staff with more work than

identified within their current portfolio of duties. Organizational change readiness will depend on the change being perceived as not only necessary, but also one that builds on infrastructure (structural frame), ideas (symbolic frame) and people (human resource frame) that are currently in place.

### **Possible Solutions**

Three different solutions are described, compared and evaluated, with one chosen as the best option. When examining possible solutions, it is important to consider what will be the easiest to implement initially and what other supports and services could be added incrementally. This is beneficial to the institution as it allows time to gauge effectiveness and add programs, supports and services as needed and required. It also fits with the approach of the provincial government with providing services to youth in and aging out of care, with increased supports and services being added incrementally over a number of years. The goal for both the government and the College is to build on initiatives that are successful to strengthen services over time.

#### **Solution One: Maintain current level of support**

The first solution is maintaining the current level of service and continuing to make change with my own informal/grassroots and feminist servant leadership approach. It is common for informal/grassroots leaders to utilize political theory for change initiatives. It is clear this is being done presently through “partnering with influential external stakeholders” (Kezar, 2016, p.112). This includes working with established partners from the alternate school and community centre for the past five years, which has proven to be effective. Informal feedback and findings

by those referring from the alternate school and community centre indicate that youth in and aging out of care that attend courses in the Careers Area are more likely to successfully transition to college settings. Relationships have also been established within the institution with student services, counselling, financial aid and Indigenous student services. These relationships are used to help students receive the support and services they need with all aspects of college access and completion.

More formal research and data collection is required to prove that these courses work for this specific student population. These interactions with the alternate school and community centre often begins with informal visits to meet the youth, telling them about the classes and inviting them over to the college. The youth worker bringing the potential student to the College to discuss courses and receive assistance with registration often follows this. Attending community events that focus on increasing support for youth in and aging out of care also leads to referrals to the Careers Area. All of these actions follow a servant leadership model, where the leader is the servant first (Greenleaf, 2002), providing service within the institution, as well as in the community.

Recently, the Careers Area is getting more youth who have aged out care registering and completing courses. In one current class, thirty percent of participants were youth who had aged out of care. The Careers Area recently added an online version of the class that is self-paced. This can be an excellent option as students do not have to attend classes, can work at their own pace but still access to supports and guidance through the Department and the College. The goal with the online class is to have a blended learning model so students can have interaction and

feedback with their instructor. Most importantly, students can return to the online version after periods of absence and pick up where they left off without losing any work they complete. The work being done can develop into other projects without creating a new plan; the change is both gradual and pre-existing. Further, there is minimal impact on resources as most of this work is done by one person and does not require additional financial or other resources to make small changes. The existing college infrastructure can be utilized without additional cost such as offices, support services, classrooms and computers.

Although this solution is a logical place to start, it does not offer the comprehensive change needed to address this wicked social problem. It becomes disconnected from other potential stakeholders and partners that could have a greater impact on the problem. There is also a concern about burnout when one leader is taking on the majority of work. If enrolment increases, further resources would have to be explored; however, the need would already be proven. This solution also heavily relies on the relationship with two youth care professionals, one from the alternate school and one from a community centre. These are longstanding, successful professional relationships that have resulted in many youth transitioning to the College. If these partners were to leave their position, the time and effort to re-establish this level of partnership, shared goals and seamless referral processes would be extremely difficult and time consuming.

As the Careers Area serves a wide range of students including new immigrants, students from other programs in the College, those in mid career transition and those referred by occupational therapists, it will be a challenge to serve all these groups and still focus on

improving supports to youth aging out of care. This will require present partners to continue to provide supports outside of the college setting. For example, life skills, liaison with the Ministry of Children and Families, mental health and addiction services as well as housing supports will need to be addressed outside of the College. Referrals to these services can be made, but it is extremely important to be realistic about what supports and services the Careers Area can offer with the current level of resources.

### **Solution Two: Expansion of service**

This option would integrate services offered through the Careers Area into another College area. The College delivers the Basic Education Youth program that offers education leading towards a Grade 12 Diploma in a supportive, self-paced environment for 15-18 year old youth. This option does not eliminate the need for external partners, but it relies less on their participation in the initial stages to make the changes. This suggested internal partnership could also be planned and implemented while still undertaking the first solution. Incrementally, external partner roles and responsibilities can become stronger and more integrated into the existing structure. Essentially the Careers Area courses would be tailored specifically to fit the needs of youth, and be offered in the Basic Education Youth Area. This would include but not be limited to, flexible, self-paced career courses and assistance navigating both internal and external structures. This is proposed as a shift in how and where the courses are offered, targeting this specific student demographic. The College has historical examples of this; the Careers Area once served as a full-time program that targeted women in transition. Eight years ago, the

program shifted to offer modularized part-time courses that were open to everyone regardless of age or gender. The goal was to improve access and target a larger student demographic.

A large percentage of Basic Education Youth student population will be in care or aging out of care within a very short time of being in the program. It is logical that this would be a suitable internal partner, as they are already serving the target demographic. Also, the Basic Education Youth Area and the Careers Area belong to the same Access Department, and they share the same Department Head and Dean. The two areas also share the same registration process, options for financial aid grants and use the same system for registering, tracking and marking students. This means nothing will need to be created and all current infrastructures can be used.

The internal partnership between the Basic Education Youth and Careers Areas would provide career exploration and transition to every youth student that is close to high school graduation and is in need of transitional support. The students would register for the self-paced online version of the courses, and would be able to work through this coursework while finishing their other Grade 12 course requirements. Ideally, there would be onsite office hours by the Careers Area faculty to advise, support and answer questions. As the Basic Education Youth Area is not on the college campus, some efforts could also be made to have some activities on the campus for the students. This will allow them to feel more comfortable and familiarize themselves with services and supports at the College.

This solution would require the leadership to be shared between the leaders of the Basic Education Youth and Careers areas, with support and input from the Department Head and Dean.



A relationship between these two area leaders is already established, and informal discussions about a partnership have taken place. Both area leaders also have established relationships with student support services, as they have needed to utilize these services for previous students. The leaders would share responsibilities as would their staff, including assisting with the application process, explaining how to get transcripts, showing the potential student around the campus, providing information about supports and services including counselling, learning centre and academic upgrading. Other areas of the College would need to understand the purpose of this internal partnership and how they can support it. For example, the Financial Aid Department could have a specific advisor (point person) assigned who understands the unique challenges that can be present for youth in and aging out of care.

This is similar to solution one as it relies mostly on college personnel, resources, and infrastructure, utilizing external stakeholders for referrals and information sharing. It is different as it brings two departments together rather than relying on the work of just one. The impact on resources would be minimal as what is needed to make the change is already in place, but requires this intentional internal partnership to work. Some of the challenges are the different physical locations of these two programs, which could be a barrier. One reason why the partnership between the previously mentioned alternate school and the Careers Area is so successful is that they are located right across the street from each other. This makes the referral process easy, and access fast and simple.

### **Solution Three: An outreach model**

This solution would consist of working with an external partner in an existing program for youth aging out of care. The Careers Area would offer courses to youth who are participating in a life skills education program that includes financial literacy, health and wellness, housing support, counselling and general living skills. This would be classified as a cross sector educational partnership as it would bring together a non-profit organization with educational services and a public post-secondary institution. The management, supervision, recruitment and “wrap around” support services are the responsibility of the existing program and are already in place. The College would play an important role in the college transition component of the services. “For students, partnerships across educational sectors can help ease the transition from K-12 to postsecondary education” (Amey et al., 2010, p. 335).

The Careers Area would go to meet students in the existing program, provide information and register them in career courses and either offer these online or teach in a classroom setting, at the College or in the community. The potential students are already receiving other necessary supports, which would improve the chances of them making a successful transition to college.

Being a program that works specifically with youth aging out of care would give the Careers Area a consistent group of students that are exactly the student demographic this OIP aims to support. The program has expertise in working with these youth, and could add extensive career exploration courses to program delivery. There may be opportunities for program staff from the external agency to provide professional development to college staff in working with youth aging out of care. Like solutions one and two, there would be minimal impact on fiscal resources, as it would take human resources in the form of faculty to teach the course. Again this

type of initiative has been successfully implemented in the past when the Careers Area taught courses at a local community centre to a mothers' group and worked with an addiction recovery program to teach courses to their clients. It is clear that this model of delivery is effective based on these examples, and that implementation could happen quickly. Unlike solutions one and two, the external stakeholder/partner would have more responsibility and decision making power than the College. The planning process would require clear expectations of the agency and institution. Clear guidelines would need to be in place to ensure a successful partnership.

The challenges with this solution include developing the necessary relationships with the community partner to implement this idea. Also this program only works with youth who have aged out of care, so there is no opportunity for early intervention for youth aged 15-18. It would be presented as a pilot project to determine whether the partnership is a good fit for both partners and most importantly, works well for the youth. Throughout this OIP, the focus on building and maintaining successful relationships has been key in the success for change. Much of the work already done has been as a result of solid internal and external relationships developed over time. The community agency would have to see the benefit in partnering with the College and being a part of their existing structure. This solution is very different from the first where the Careers Area would be directing and guiding the change. Here the College becomes a support to an existing program rather than being the sole service provider. The resource needs would be minimal, as it would only require students to register in college courses. The faculty's time and effort formalizing a partnership agreement would be the biggest need.

Considering all presented, a combination of solutions one and two, developing an internal partnership while still delivering current services is the best choice. Maintaining the status quo will not offer the level of supports and services that are necessary to change. Also, the services being offered now in solution one will continue while the internal partnership is developed. This is aligned with a provincial Ministry of Education and Ministry of Children and Families joint report that states youth in care must be part of “all planning and decision-making processes, including planning around post-secondary education or career training options and awareness of available supports” (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2017. p. 8). This includes knowledge of the tuition waiver program, support with obtaining prerequisites and a specific action plan for youth that maps out how to access the educational program they have chosen.

The two most important changes needed for youth in and aging out of care for a successful transition to college are Grade 12 attainment complimented by assistance with career planning and direction. Developing the internal partnership will also make use of already developed relationships for information sharing and referrals. There is a shared understanding and vision for change with the Career and Basic Education Youth Areas. These two areas can also bring together external stakeholders that have been developed by each program---extending the network of possible referrals. For example, the Basic Education Youth Area resides in a building where many prominent youth services are located. The capacity to develop relationships with them to provide more extensive supports could be developed in the future as a result of this

initial internal partnership. Chapter Three will further discuss specific implementation of a service delivery model based on this solution.

### **Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change**

Understanding the responsibilities of the organization and connecting feminist and servant leadership to ethical considerations in this OIP requires approaching change by being of service to others first and focussing on equity and access. Our ethical commitment as a community college is to serve students and the community in a manner that promotes inclusion, social justice and caring. This is applicable both to individual leaders and to how the organization serves the community at large. Servant leadership can be applied not just to individual leaders but also to the whole organization. “The strength of servant leadership as an ethical approach is that while it can be a personal approach to leadership, it can also be a system that is taught to an entire organization” (McMahon, 2012, p. 341). Applying servant leadership to daily duties, as well as modeling these characteristics, regardless of formal titles and roles, can achieve this. In other words, it is a commitment of everyone within the institution to consider and change how we interact and relate to one another. Not only do servant leaders practice these ethical characteristics with colleagues, but also with students as well as in the community.

Earlier in this chapter the ten characteristics of servant leadership were discussed in relation to the OIP; those that are most applicable to ethical considerations are empathy, persuasion and listening. “Within the frame of servant leadership, ethical obligations of our community institutions and those who run them is to make a contribution, at least proportional to it’s

opportunity, toward building a better society” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 63). The values of the organization are promoted using a caring, empathetic and socially responsible approach.

Greenleaf (2002) proposes the servant leader and the organization both take on the role of a trustee. The “most important qualification for trustees should be that they care for the institution, which means they care for all the people the institution touches, and that they are determined to make their caring count” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 68). Being a trustee also implies taking responsibility for the proper use of all resources; this can be applied to both physical and human resources and is certainly an ethical consideration for both the leader and the organization. For ethical practices to be realized, servant leaders can utilize specific methods. These include listening, creating space for others, taking a relational approach and allowing others to develop their own roles as trustees within the institution. The relational view of ethical leadership is concerned with how the leader affects others (Liu, 2017). A commitment to inclusive change processes and collaboration are necessary. This encourages input from everyone the institution touches rather than a more traditional bureaucratic decision making style.

Bolman and Deal (2013) also examine what it means to be an ethical leader within a political frame. It is imperative when using political frames to assess when to be collaborative and open, and when a more directive and insistent style is needed for change. As these authors suggest “In making such choices they have to consider the potential for collaboration, the importance of long-term relationships, and most important, their own and their organization’s values and ethical principles” (Bolman & Deal, 2013 p. 223). Although a directive and insistent

style of change may not seem the most ethical approach, a sense of urgency and assertive communication within the organization may be needed to push forward an ethically driven change. This is aligned with the servant leadership characteristic of persuasion as it considers various approaches and which will be best received within the institution.

Organizations and individual leaders must consider ethics within each stage of the change process. In the planning stage, ethical consideration requires the College considering impact of any change on the community, and including stakeholders in the decision-making. The characteristics of empathy and listening are important in order to develop a change plan that meets the needs of those it is meant to serve. It would be unethical to assume that leaders have the answers without properly consulting those directly affected. In implementation, balancing the corporate bottom line with altruistic agendas will require consultation with senior leadership and other potential community partners. Further, leaders must explore how these two very different agendas may be able to support each other. For example, finding funding opportunities can help with financial considerations while still making underserved student populations, like youth in and aging out of care, a priority. In the evaluation stage, identifying any ethical issues that have arisen will be key to considering adjustments that need to be made. Further, an unbiased evaluation can determine if the change was successful in meeting ethical considerations of this OIP. The questions to be asked are: Did we take a relational, trauma informed approach? Did we persuade those inside and outside of the institution that it was ethical to make this change? Were those being served treated in an inclusive, caring and equitable manner?

The most significant ethical commitment of individual leaders and the organization is to youth in and aging out of care. This problem of practice was developed considering these commitments to improve outcomes for this group, while being aware that a change must occur in our service obligations to them. Ethical commitment to change requires addressing inequities, as they currently exist for this student group. Feminist theory and servant leadership both aim to improve access for underserved groups and empower them. Ethical feminist, servant leaders understand that “the purposes of higher education (is to) encompass the fulfillment of human potential, social justice and social change” (Manning, 2013, p. 185). Leaders and the organization must identify these inequities as unethical and work within our respective roles to improve outcomes. For leaders, this means educating others in the organization and community about the problem. For the organization, it means committing to a change to improve outcomes as an ethical priority.

As clearly stated throughout this OIP the two most important changes needed for youth aging out of care for a successful transition to college are Grade 12 attainment and career planning and direction. Thus, the best solution to address this problem of practice is to develop an internal partnership between the Basic Education Youth area and the Careers Area at this institution. The next chapter presents a change implementation plan that aims to strengthen programs and services to accomplish these goals for these youth. This partnership ensures that older youth (19-25) who have aged out of care can still access supports, and that younger youth (15-18) can benefit from accessing both Basic Education Youth and Careers Areas for their Grade 12 completion and a developed career plan before they age out of care. All aspects of



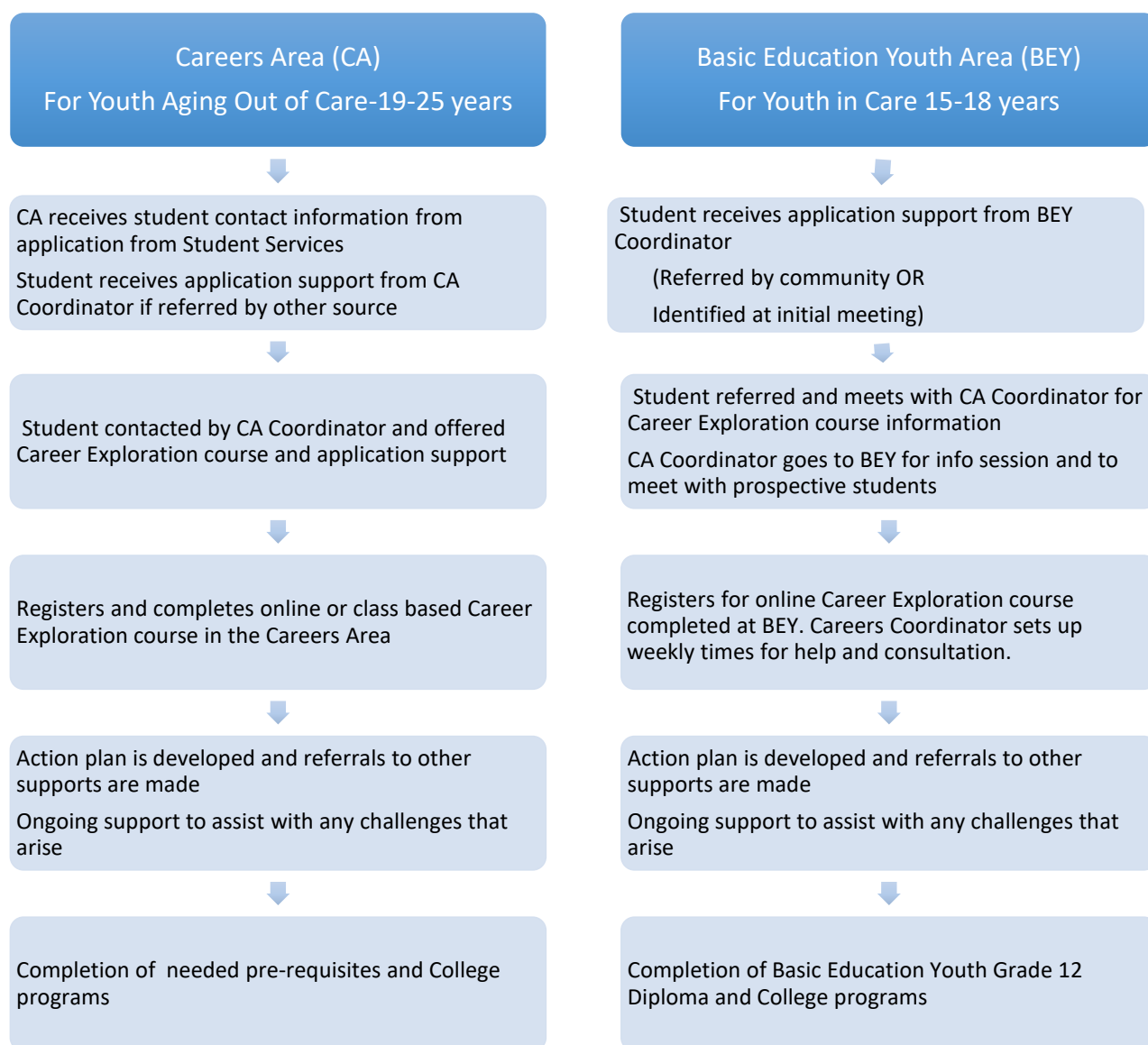
implementation are examined including stakeholder reactions, monitoring and evaluation and a communication plan.

## CHAPTER THREE--IMPLEMENTATION, COMMUNICATION AND EVALUATION

### **Change Implementation Plan -The Plan Strategy**

An internal partnership between Careers and Basic Education Youth Areas in the College can be managed in the Access Department of which both are a part. There is already an established relationship between Basic Education Youth and Careers Areas. They have shared values and goals for improving educational outcomes for these youth. Both have similar methods of intake--students come in and meet with a Coordinator to talk and register for the courses they need. Both Coordinators are familiar with trauma informed practices and aware of the extra supports a student may need to register, attend and complete college courses or programs. Older youth 19 and over who have aged out from provincial care yet still require Grade 12 are able to complete courses through the Access Department and receive the supports from the Careers Area when needed. Younger youth ages 15 to 18 still in care can benefit from support from both Basic Education Youth and Careers for early intervention. Youth in or aging out of care are easily identified on the application for admission and can be offered services through the Careers and Basic Education Youth Areas. External stakeholders and partners will still be involved for input, support for youth, referrals and to share information.

Figure 2 presents a Service Delivery Model (change plan strategy) to streamline the services of the Basic Education Youth and Careers Areas to improve application support, and the completion of a Grade 12 Diploma and Career Exploration courses to enter college programs.



*Figure 2. The Service Delivery Model for Youth in and Aging Out of Care. By Schubert, A. (2019).*

As can be seen in this model, both areas work together to reach as many youth in and aging out of care as possible. The process ensures that regardless of what age or the way a youth comes into the institution, they are informed about what options are available to them and can access services to ease the transition to the College.

Many students will complete the application for admission with the Careers or Basic Education Youth Coordinators. A student that completes the application individually is identified as “a current/former youth in care” on the admission form and that information is given to the Careers Area Coordinator by Student Services. The Careers Area Coordinator then initiates contact and offers to meet this potential student to discuss the courses in the Careers Area. As seen in the last stage of the Service Delivery Model, these courses provide an action plan and guidance for College enrolment (when the student has met pre-requisites for College).

For youth in care (ages 15 – 18), Basic Education Youth staff completes the admission form with each person in an initial one to one meeting. At the initial meeting, each student will be given information and enrolled in the Career Exploration course so they can identify a chosen career path and develop an action plan for college entry. Basic Education Youth students take Grade 12 as well as the Career Exploration course that also counts as credits towards their Grade 12 Diploma (shown in the last phase of the Service Delivery Model). Basic Education Youth students take the Career Exploration course within their program, as it is self-paced and they are able to work on it when attending the Basic Education Program. Both the Careers Area and Basic

Education Youth Area Coordinators assist students in identifying other support services needed throughout this delivery plan/process and connect them with key people in those departments.

Many of the attributes needed to work with these youth are already in place; this change plan will streamline the service process. The internal partnership of these two areas aims to increase pre-admission support by integrating services and improving communication among all areas of the College that serves this student group. It is not a creation of new programs and services--it is combining and strengthening existing ones. The changes may be subtle but they are important to improve the organizational programming for this student group. This plan will not require restructuring of roles, responsibilities or positions, nor will it result in changes to the organizational structure—it enhances service delivery for these vulnerable young people through a partnership of existing programs and services.

### **Stakeholder Reactions**

Understanding stakeholder reactions and being adaptable to adjustments based on them is important for the successful implementation of the change plan. In this case, both the institution and senior leadership stand to gain a great deal from implementing improved services for youth in and aging out of care. As explained in the first chapter, the Ministry of Advanced Education has directed the College to continue to improve supports and services for this student population (Ministry of Advanced Education and Training Letter, 2018). The timing of this OIP could not be better, as the College has received this request from their funders to make improvements. When the Board of Governors reports for the year, this OIP can be utilized to prove that services for former youth in care were improved. Stakeholders within the College, specifically senior

administration, will react positively to the internal partnership as it shows a commitment to the directives laid out by the Ministry of Advanced Education. Other departments impacted include Student Services and Financial Aid, may interpret this change as “making work” for already overburdened staff. It is crucial to minimize any workload impact for these areas. This can be achieved by working collaboratively to develop efficient systems and completing as much work as possible within the Basic Education Youth and Careers Areas.

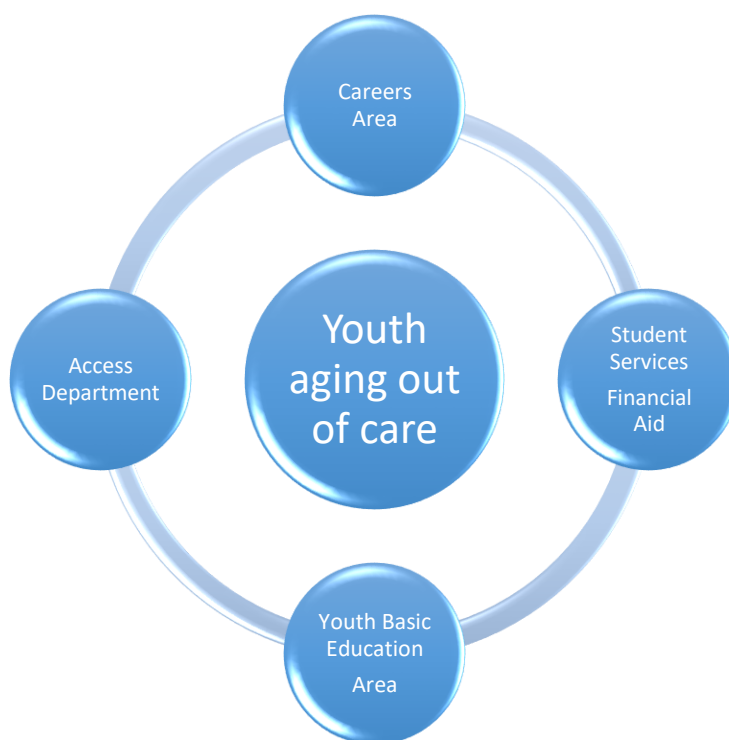
Basic Education Youth staff will react to this change as an enhancement to the existing services they offer. Feedback from the Coordinator and faculty of Basic Education Youth emphasize the importance of offering the online version of the career-planning course to their students. Also, Grade 12 credit for this Career Exploration course is essential to make the plan work for these students. The Access Department will want to be involved in the planning and structuring of the service model, as they play a role in offering upgrading to students over the age of 18. The Department Head who is responsible for these two areas will play a fundamental role in developing and implementing the Service Delivery Model, as well as sharing information with the Department and administration. This input, support and advice would be welcome and encouraged from all members of the larger Access Department, as well as the Dean of Arts and Sciences.

A key stakeholder/leader within the Financial Aid Department has a clear understanding of the issues vulnerable students face, and has acted as the point person within the Department for cases requiring exceptions to the rule. The communication plan section provides further discussion of how to prevent stakeholder concerns by presenting a clear service plan.

Community stakeholders have reacted very positively to the idea of having more supports within the College to assist with admission support and planning. It gives them a reliable place to refer youth when existing resources for transitioning youth are scarce. Youth are the main stakeholder with the most to gain from this change being implemented. It is important to monitor youth reactions to identify areas that can be strengthened in the Service Delivery Model as well as those that are working well for them.

### **Key Personnel and their Potential Contributions**

This section provides an outline of how key personnel will be involved in the change and how the Service Delivery Model is developed and implemented. Figure 3 identifies the key areas involved in this change. It also reiterates creating a web of support and inclusion (Helgesen, 1995) for youth to be supported in the College.



*Figure 3.* Key areas contributing to youth success in college transition.

The top and bottom circles represent the key area coordinators who will manage the change collaboratively within their areas. The side areas represent supporting departments used for admission information (identifying youth in and aging out of care), support and advice including disability services as well as counselling and advising. The Coordinators of Youth Basic Education and Careers will be the two main drivers and champions of this change, with the Careers Area Coordinator taking the lead in instigating change. Within the larger Access Department, the Department Head and other area coordinators (such as English and Math/Science) will be called upon to support this vision for change and collaborate on how they

can best support it College wide. This may include sharing information, referring students and supporting students in registering for academic upgrading courses.

This section outlines more specifically how key personnel will contribute to the Service Delivery Model implementation. Key personnel will be responsible for the portion of the change that is needed within their department. This allows for tasks to be distributed without overloading an individual or department within the College. The Change Agent/Leader will ensure that tasks are manageable within the scope of work duties. Ideally, individuals will be identified within each department that want to be part of the change and have the skills to assist with implementation. Table 3 breaks down specific contributions of the key personnel involved in the institution on the OIP's three recommended areas for change.

Table 3. *Contributions of Key Personnel*

<b><u>Position/Department</u></b>	<b><u>Position/Department</u></b>	<b><u>Position/Department</u></b>	<b><u>Position/Department</u></b>
Careers Coordinator (Lead Change Agent)	Basic Ed Youth Coordinator	Access Department Department Head Faculty and Staff	Student Services/Financial Aid



<p><b><u>Internal Change</u></b></p> <p>Facilitate review of student support policy</p> <p>Present need for separate YAC policy</p> <p>Create vision for change</p>	<p><b><u>Internal Change</u></b></p> <p>Give input on what should be included in the policy</p> <p>Get feedback from youth on what should be included</p> <p>Give input and shares vision for change</p>	<p><b><u>Internal Change</u></b></p> <p>Review and give feedback on policy</p> <p>Collaborate/offer input and shares vision for changes</p>	<p><b><u>Internal Change</u></b></p> <p>Collaborate on policy development from their service area perspectives</p> <p>Provide YAC student contact information to Careers Coordinator</p> <p>Shares vision for change</p>
<p><b><u>Partnership Development</u></b></p> <p>Maintain and develops partnership</p>	<p><b><u>Partnership Development</u></b></p> <p>Maintain and develops partnership</p>	<p><b><u>Partnership Development</u></b></p> <p>Act as partner: offering upgrading to youth 19-25.</p>	<p><b><u>Partnership Development</u></b></p> <p>Act as partner: providing essential information on admissions and financial aid</p>
<p><b><u>Program Development</u></b></p> <p>Work collaboratively with BEY Coordinator and Access Department Head Reviews current program offerings</p>	<p><b><u>Program Development</u></b></p> <p>Work collaboratively with Careers Coordinator and Access Department Head Reviews current program offerings</p>	<p><b><u>Program Development</u></b></p> <p>Offer information sessions on upgrading options</p>	<p><b><u>Program Development</u></b></p> <p>Offer sessions in program on study skills, mental health, applying for bursaries, etc.</p>
<p><b><u>Other considerations</u></b></p> <p>Develop a marketing strategy utilizing College website and print material</p>	<p><b><u>Other considerations</u></b></p> <p>Help develop a marketing strategy utilizing College website and print material</p>	<p><b><u>Other considerations</u></b></p> <p>Help develop a marketing strategy utilizing College website and print material</p>	<p><b><u>Other considerations</u></b></p> <p>Provide information on services for the marketing strategy</p>

The Careers Coordinator is responsible for initiating change and providing a rationale to other key contributors as to why the change is important. Responding to contributors concerns and feedback can strengthen the Service Delivery Model.

### **Supports and Resources**

The infrastructure in the Careers and Basic Education Youth Areas, and Access Department that is already in place is an important resource for change. The areas work within the leadership types outlined in the previous chapters—a feminist approach that utilizes servant leadership characteristics. Both areas work with students from initial meeting to completion with follow up and supports, but this can be improved through the partnership. The Access Department teaches upgrading so no new courses need to be implemented, just a strengthening of referrals and supports.

External partners such as alternate high schools and community agencies working with youth in and aging out of care are a resource as they provide support in endorsing the change and speaking to why it is so important for the youth with whom they work. These partners act as referral sources and can provide connections to outside supports when needed. The Careers Coordinator is currently working with external partners on community committees and working groups. These are opportunities to provide information on new resources that can be shared with youth, staff and faculty.

Ideally, a separate College policy would be created specifically for youth in and aging out of care. However, the College has two policies in place that can support the college transition for some of this student population. The Flexible Admissions Policy allows students over the age of 19 who have not graduated from high school to take a class within a department such as University Transfer, without being accepted into that program. The student would still require an English 12 with a minimum C grade (Organization X., 2015, Policy D. 3.6.1). The second is the Aboriginal Enrolment Policy, which aims “to increase and facilitate Aboriginal participation and

enrolment” (Organization X., 2017, Policy D. 310). This policy includes making contact with students who identify on the admissions form as Indigenous, and following up with admission and funding support. This is similar to the proposed service model, which gives the Change Agent/Leader a precedent to work with within the institution. These policies are supports for youth as they apply for programs within the College and can be utilized while the new specific policy is developed.

### **Potential Implementation Issues**

One potential implementation issue for this OIP is that some faculty, administration and staff within the institution may feel the College is presently doing enough to support these youth. Individuals may be resistant to change, and may feel defensive as the change suggests we are not doing enough. Kezar (2014) contends, “Most people have invested their identities in the way the organization is currently working, so recommended changes might suggest in some way they are not doing their jobs correctly” (p.161). To avoid this, the emphasis needs to be placed on strengthening and streamlining existing services based on youth needs rather than on College deficiencies. Also, the Change Agent/Leader is not just suggesting change for others, but starting with change in their own area based on identified service gaps. Stakeholders and potential partners are asked to participate in the change based on their expertise to help solve this wicked problem rather than on a current deficiency in service. The Change Agent/Leader is responsible for framing the change to gain support rather than to deal with resistance and defensiveness.

### Goals and Priorities

In order to identify the priorities of the planned changes, it is important to consider general short, medium, and long term goals. The short-term goal of this Organizational Improvement Plan is to raise awareness and start implementing the change plan within the institution. The medium range goal is to have the Service Delivery Model implemented and running. The long-term goal is to build upon and improve the Service Delivery Model including more external supports and partners. Table 4 outlines what the priorities are in the areas of internal change, partnerships development and program development Change Agent/Leader to achieve the goals.

Table 4. *Priorities for OIP Implementation*

Internal Change 3-6 months	Internal Change 6-months to 1 year	Internal Change 2 to 5 years
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<p>Proposed Service Delivery Model for students based on their age and needs is developed</p> <p>Implementation of tuition waiver policy for YAC discussed with Policy and Curriculum Coordinator</p> <p>Key staff are identified as supporter, roles are defined and working group created</p>	<p>Tuition waiver policy is developed and posted for feedback from College community</p> <p>Systems changes for student identification and referral are implemented</p> <p>Reports progress to senior leadership and college community</p> <p>Funding options are explored further such as grants from foundations and government</p>	<p>Improved outcomes in Grade 12 attainment and transition to college programs</p> <p>Systems changes are reviewed and improved</p> <p>Streamlined process from external sources to internal application</p> <p>Expanded supports for YAC in College</p>
<b>Partnership Development 3-6 months</b>	<b>Partnership Development 6-months to 1 year</b>	<b>Partnership Development 2 to 5 years</b>
<p>Discussion of best practices, what programs and services are working and how can they be expanded and combined</p> <p>Information packages are created to share with youth</p>	<p>Evaluation and changes if needed. Focus on student experience and feedback</p> <p>Applied research conducted to collect data, measure success and inform next steps</p>	<p>Continued evaluation and analysis of initiatives, adding and omitting as needed</p> <p>Expansion of programs and services that are responsive to student feedback</p>
<b>Program Development 3-6 months</b>	<b>Program Development 6-months to 1 year</b>	<b>Program Development 2 to 5 years</b>
<p>Discussion of best practices, what programs and services are working and how can they be expanded and combined</p>	<p>Evaluation and changes if needed. Focus on student experience and feedback</p> <p>Applied research conducted to collect data, measure success and inform next steps</p>	<p>Continued evaluation and analysis of initiatives, adding and omitting as needed</p> <p>Expansion of programs and services that are responsive to student feedback</p>

Key performance indicators for the short and medium term will include more youth in and aging out of care registering in Careers, Basic Education Youth and the Access Department.

Having a process in place to identify students at the time of application will ensure contact is made and support offered to them. Long-term performance indicators include external partnerships that add to the quality of service, and external funding to improve services, and an effective and established Service Delivery Model.

### **Challenges and Limitations**

This change plan will be limited by financial constraints within the organization. As discussed in Chapter One, although this proposed change aligns with College values, the push towards corporatization is also a potential obstacle to be faced (Giroux & Giroux, 2004, Giroux, 2013). In recent strategic actions institutional priorities include financial sustainability and business development. Fiscal considerations must be addressed before this plan will receive any support from senior leadership, which is why the scope of change is limited. Leveraging resources within the three departments involved, Careers, Basic Education Youth and to a lesser extent, the Access Department, will initially address this challenge. Stakeholders can be influential in college governance both fiscally and in their wider obligations to the communities they serve (Austin & Jones, 2016). Once policies and programs are in place and supported by these stakeholders, other funding options can be researched and accessed to help sustain this change.

### **Monitoring and Evaluating Change**

An effective monitoring and evaluation plan will assess the Service Delivery Model and its effectiveness in changing educational outcomes for youth in and aging out of care. Ongoing participatory monitoring will measure what strategies have been effective and what further

changes and improvements are required at every step of implementation and delivery. Creating a monitoring and evaluation framework is particularly effective when a “program is committed to learning what works for its intended beneficiaries and to adjusting its delivery model based on those learnings” (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016, p. 7). Monitoring will require a structure and format including what data to collect and what questions to ask.

As this is a new service delivery program, the emphasis in this section will be developing a comprehensive monitoring plan that will provide information and shape how the evaluation process will proceed. Although the main area monitored will be the student experience, all staff involved will be part of assessing what structures and systems of the program are effective and which need adjustment. Some areas that will be monitored in this case may be easier to track, namely how many youth in and aging out of care are accessing the services of Careers, Basic Education Youth and the Access Department. This information can be obtained from the Student Services Department. The data collected through monitoring can be used to evaluate change effectiveness and make adjustments as required.

The component of monitoring and evaluation that relies on assessing student experience may be more challenging to collect. This can be partly achieved by ensuring that participatory evaluation is used both in developing and using a monitoring and evaluation plan. In this section a monitoring format specific to this OIP is developed. Further, empowerment evaluation is discussed as a framework used in monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure the program participants are the key source of data for evaluating program success and determining what changes are necessary.

## **Monitoring Plan**

Participation in the process of monitoring, “particularly of marginalized people, is a human right and advances their empowerment and increases effectiveness, accuracy and the process of evaluation” (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016, p. 51). Utilizing Markiewicz & Patrick’s (2016) Monitoring Plan Format with emphasis on empowerment and student participation, the following table presents the format that will be used for monitoring the program implementation and initial delivery. The Change Agent/Leader will be responsible for collecting data and keeping records. These records will prove the program effectiveness, guide needed changes and provide data that can influence internal change as well funding options.

*Table 5. Monitoring Format for The Service Model Plan for youth in and aging out of care.*



<b>Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Focus of monitoring</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Monitoring success data</b>	<b>Who is responsible and when</b>
<b>Appropriateness</b> How many youth were contacted or referred from Basic Education for career courses and supports?	Participants	Increased number of youth access service delivery model	100% of youth that identified on application form are contacted	Contact log And feedback from those contacted	Careers Coordinator Basic Education Coordinator Ongoing
<b>Effectiveness</b> How many youth completed Career Exploration and an action plan?	Participants	Increased course enrolment in CA, BEY and AD	Developed action plans for participants That complete Career Exploration	Post service questionnaires that leave room for information on youth experiences	Careers Coordinator Basic Education Coordinator 3, 6 and 12 months
<b>Efficiency</b> Were existing resources (human and infrastructure) used?	Coordinators and faculty	No new resources added to begin service model	No added budget items for first year	Small amount of expenses for departments involved to offer the services	Careers Coordinator 3, 6 and 12 months
<b>Impact</b> Did more youth access services and transition to College?	Participants	Increased enrolment	80% of eligible youth register for upgrading and Career Courses	Admission data--how many youth identifying on application transition CA or BEY	Careers Coordinator 3, 6 and 12 months
<b>Sustainability</b> Is the Service Delivery Model realistic to run long term?	Participants	Service Delivery Plan was helpful/assisted with transition	Program continues after first year of changes	Survey Exit interviews with youth	Careers and Basic Education Coordinator

Note. Adapted from: *Developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks*, by A. Markiewicz & I. Patrick, 2016. [Kindle version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com.

Targets are intentionally general for some of the questions (i.e. sustainability and efficiency sections) as this is a new model and it will be difficult to predict the number of youth that will be served at this time. Once a baseline exists, which will be established in the first year, it will be easier to quantify what the numbers served will be. It is clear that this plan can also be used for evaluation purposes.

### **Evaluation Plan**

The evaluation plan for the Service Delivery Model is formative and relies heavily on the information gathered through the monitoring processes. Evaluation will be used to prove effectiveness, determine impact of the program for participants and justify expanding programs and services. This section outlines specific activities that will be used for collecting data through monitoring and evaluation. Empowerment evaluation is a specific method of evaluation that is “designed to help people help themselves and improve their programs using a form of self-evaluation and reflection” (Fetterman et al., p. 5, 1995). Empowerment evaluation requires participants to take active roles, is highly collaborative and concerned with social justice (Fetterman et al., 1995).

As the goal with the Service Delivery Model is successful transition to college, a plan that empowers participants is necessary for achieving this result. Two methods of evaluation will occur after the first year of delivery. Quantitative data collected from program records will indicate how many students have enrolled and gone on to post-secondary programs. This is a specific indicator of whether the program is working and being accessed by youth in and aging out of care. This requires collecting information at various times, as each student’s timeline for

completion of upgrading and entering a college program will be different. However, the main focus will be qualitative data--gathering information from the students about their experiences accessing services and completing Basic Education Youth, Careers and Access courses.

The concepts of empowerment evaluation will guide the monitoring and evaluation process as it is aligned with the major themes of this OIP. Specifically, participants guide and direct the evaluation process. Fundamentally empowerment evaluation measures “the effects of interventions” with a focus on empowering those involved in the evaluation (Fetterman, 2015), and as the youth are the target of the intervention they are the experts on how effective it is. They can speak to how the Service Delivery Model impacted their transition and self-efficacy. This is similar to servant leadership in that those being served ideally take on leadership roles (Greenleaf, 2002). It is also aligned with feminist theory as it promotes the inclusion and active participation of those who accessing services. This does not exclude other key stakeholders from the evaluation process, college staff in participating departments, community stakeholders and the Department/Areas (Careers, Basic Education Youth and Access) that are guiding the change will be surveyed for feedback. Youth and those working with them (youth workers, counsellors, peer mentors) will be asked questions and encouraged to share their experiences about their transition experiences using surveys and informal interviews.

Empowerment evaluation includes participants and stakeholders in every step of the evaluation process. After gathering initial data, the evaluator can then utilize empowerment evaluation to guide the changes by creating a theory of action (Fetterman, 2015). Empowerment evaluation

aims to “help program participants evaluate themselves and their program to improve practice and foster self-determination” (Fetterman, 2015). This fits with this OIP as the organizers and participants will be creating new structures within the College, requiring ongoing evaluation that relies on the feedback of those accessing these new services. Furthermore, by being a part of evaluation process youth foster confidence and leadership skills, as they know their feedback is taken seriously and can impact future program delivery. Empowerment evaluation helps people develop skills so they can become independent problem solvers and decision makers” (Fetterman et al. 1996. p. 4). Fetterman (2015) describes ten guiding principles for empowerment evaluation. Appendix C describes in detail how each principle can be applied. Guided by these principles, the evaluator can then use all or some of the ten steps in empowerment evaluation (Fetterman, 2015) to inform questionnaires, interview methods and other evaluative measures that will be determined as the organizational improvement plan evolves. Emphasis on community and youth participation means the evaluator facilitates rather than directs the evaluation process.

### **Gathering Data and Gauging Progress**

#### **Ongoing Informal Discussion and Feedback**

One strategy to empower youth and give them a sense of program ownership is to ask them for informal feedback throughout the process. The Coordinators and faculty can create an environment where students feel comfortable sharing their feedback. Asking open-ended questions and having open dialogue with students are two ways to achieve this. Also, by having structured times in the program where the participants share in writing their thoughts and

feelings about the process. The questions are short and simple such as, “I liked”, “I didn’t like”, “What I need to know more about”. The student’s feedback plays an important part in making changes that can benefit future students. The approach with informal discussion and feedback is to incorporate it into every part of service delivery. This ensures that it is an ongoing, participatory and expected activity. As discussed in Chapter Two, it is also a trauma-informed approach, as youth are encouraged to share what they find challenging, the Change Agent/Leader can use this feedback to improve individual support and the Service Delivery Model.

### **Questionnaires**

Gathering data and gauging progress will be completed in both monitoring and evaluation. The Careers and Basic Education Youth Coordinators will achieve this through student questionnaires and informal discussions with youth that are using the Service Delivery Model. These questions include feedback on what could have been done better and what worked well based on their experience. Appendix D provides a sample of monitoring and evaluation questions that can be used to gauge progress, improve services and identify where modifications are required.

### **Exit Interviews**

Coordinators will keep the feedback from each participant at each stage of their progress as outlined above and this will be discussed in a final exit interview with the student. Student will also be asked to submit a written paragraph that outlines their experiences in the program. This will provide information in the student’s own voice, that can be used for qualitative evaluation. An exit interview with the Basic Education Youth or Careers Coordinator will

empower students in multiple ways. It allows them to celebrate their success and give feedback on both the courses and the Service Delivery Model. One key component of the exit interview is that the Coordinator stresses the fact that supports and services are still available to them after they have completed their action plan. Finally, monitoring and evaluation results will be presented in report form as well as in presentation form when and where appropriate, so it can be shared with senior leadership, college boards, the community and participating areas/departments. Presentations in the community, at academic conferences and within the College can lead to increased support and funding.

### **Plan for Communicating Change**

A plan for communicating change will be guided by the concepts of emotional intelligence (EI) and servant leadership. As the Change Agent/Leader utilizing the EI attributes of influence, social awareness and relationship management (Goleman, 1996) will positively impact communicating both the need for and the plan for change. Asking for feedback, as well as listening and gauging the reactions of others will be crucial for both implementing and sustaining this change. As a servant leader, I have raised awareness as to why, as an institution we need to better serve youth in and aging out of care. Many informal discussions about how this student population experiences the transition to the College setting differently have taken place within the Access Department, with senior leaders and community members. Creating formal and informal opportunities for communication on this problem of practice have influenced the priorities of this OIP--listening to the stories of youth and those who work with them.

Developing a communication plan must highlight the necessity of the change based on youth experience, then build on positive outcomes from implementing the Service Delivery Model.

Figure 4 displays the key delivery locations and modes the Change Agent/Leader will be using to communicate change. This includes both formal and informal methods of sharing information in the College and the community. Outreach is a key concept in this communication plan, which requires the Change Agent/Leader to go to where the youth are to inform them about the Service Delivery Model. This is aligned with the concepts of servant leadership to engage in the community, as well as trauma informed practice, by choosing a place to meet potential students that is comfortable and familiar for them.

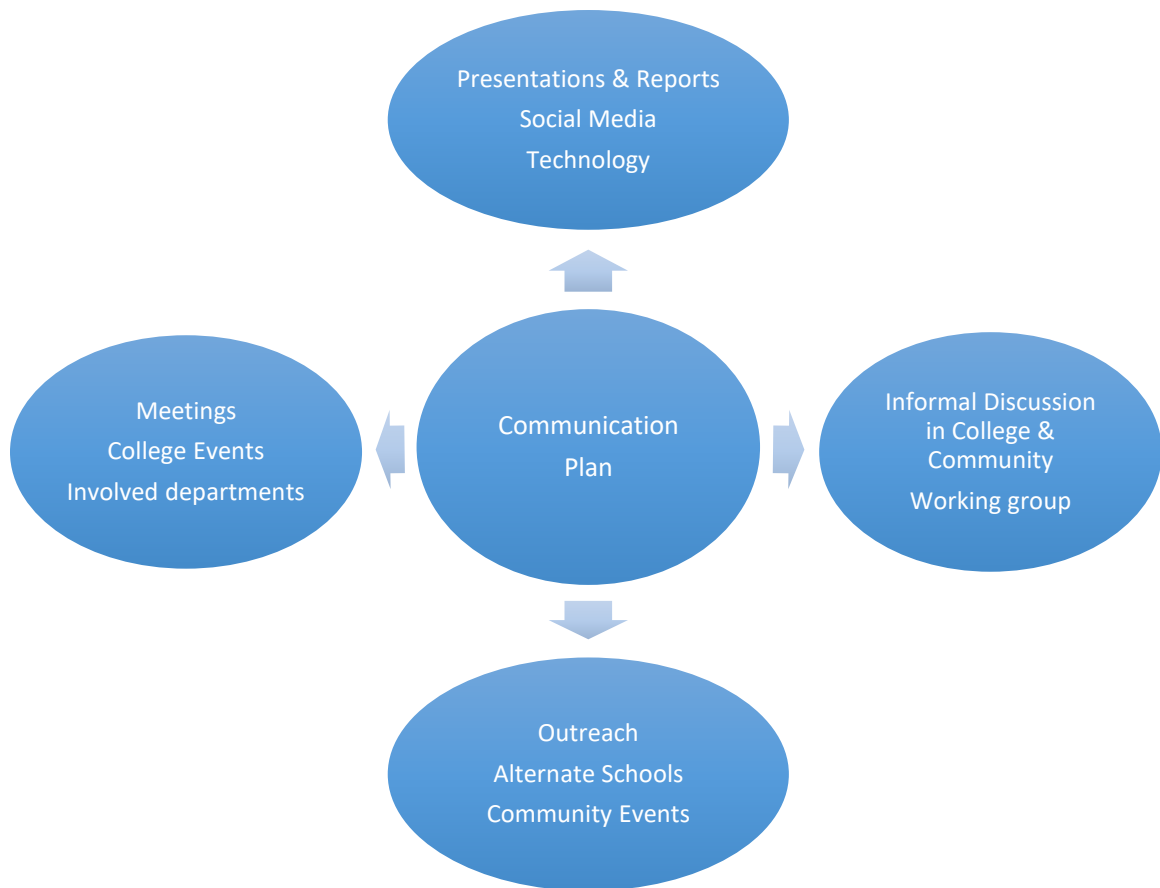


Figure 4. *Communication plan: Key delivery locations and modes.*

The next sections outlines how and where the communication will take place and expand on the concepts outlined in Figure 4. It will also describe the tools and methods that will be used in the communication plan.

### **Building Awareness**

Communication in the initial development stage will seek to engage those who want to be a part of the change, and this can be accomplished by building awareness. This requires finding



as many opportunities to speak about the Service Delivery Model, how it used, and why it is needed at the institution. The Careers and Basic Education Youth Coordinators will build awareness at the monthly Access Department meetings by offering updates, but also provide general information about why our areas/department is the ideal place to implement the Service Delivery Model. Feedback and suggestions from the larger Access Department faculty and staff will be added before the proposed service model is presented to the Dean, Student Services and Financial Aid departments. Their feedback and suggestions will also be implemented before the model is presented to the institution at large.

The process of building awareness creates opportunities to identify those who can advocate for and support the change within the institution. Some of these individuals have already been identified through informal discussions. It may also indicate areas where communication needs to be adapted or strengthened for audiences that may have doubts and concerns. This requires the emotional intelligence competency of understanding others which requires “sensing others feelings and perspectives, and taking an active interest in their concerns” (Goleman, 1998, p. 138). This can be the difference between having support within the College and having some individuals who are disinterested or resistant to the proposed change. The Change Agent/Leader must create opportunities for formal and informal feedback, and follow up when these have been addressed in the change plan.

### **Framing Issues for Specific Audiences**

Framing issues for different audiences requires the Change Agent/Leader to use the emotional intelligence competency of influence. This includes fine tuning “presentations to appeal to the

listener and use complex strategies like indirect influence to build consensus and support” (Goleman, 1998, p. 169). Gauging audience reactions and being aware that changes in communication strategies may have to be adapted and adjusted requires social awareness. The following describes communication strategies and methods that will be used with key internal and external stakeholders. In the Access Department, Basic Education Youth and Careers Area, communication will emphasize our expertise and suitability to help this student group. A collaborative approach will be used for service plan development. Monthly faculty meetings will provide a consistent opportunity to update the department, discuss challenges and ask for support if needed. With the Board of Governors and Senior Administration, the Change Agent/Leader will deliver formal presentations that focus on poor student outcomes and how the developed Service Delivery Model will integrate existing services without financial strain on the College. With Student Services and Financial Aid, the Change Agent/Leader will emphasize that small changes can be made to assist the Careers and Basic Education Youth areas to identify youth in and aging out of care and initiate communication with them. The Change Agent/Leader will ask for feedback and input on how all of these internal areas can work together to make systems easier to use for youth, without creating more work for College personnel.

Communicating with external stakeholders including youth agencies and community partners will be utilize established networks to promote the new service plan. An outreach model will be used where the Change Agent/Leader goes to the community agencies and schools to meet the youth. An “info sheet” will be provided for them to distribute to youth and other service providers. A link to information on the College website will also be provided.

Government agencies such as The Ministry of Children and Families and The Ministry of Advanced Education will receive reports on the changes made, and the impact it has made on educational outcomes. Communication with youth in and aging out of care will focus on what the Service Delivery Model can do that is different than the service they are currently receiving. Additions to current website content will be made to include information on the new Service Delivery Model.

With all of these audiences, a working group that brings together internal and external stakeholders to advise, share ideas and best practices will be created. Many working groups have been established at the College to inform areas like student career development and technology. The difference with this new group is it will also include community partners, youth in and aging out of care, and ideally a stakeholder from the Ministry of Children and Families.

### **Tools for Communicating Change**

Surveys are a popular tool used for getting feedback from all areas of the College. This can be easily used for feedback implementation, but would be focussed on the departments directly affected by the implementation of programs and services. This allows everyone to feel that not only their voice is heard but also that recommendations are acted upon. The College website is a way to communicate to the public, especially service providers and youth. The website is used extensively by future students to research programs. Currently there is a page about the tuition waiver program on the College website. The new supports and services available can be added to the existing page that allows students who have not applied for

admission to be informed. This can also be used as a resource for those who work with youth in or aging out of care.

The College's Marketing and Communications Department works to showcase new programs and areas to a larger audience through a variety of methods. They produce professional print materials, posters and banners for conferences and events. The Coordinator will work with Marketing and Communications to develop a youth friendly brochure that explains the programs and services that are available to youth in and aging out of care at the College. As the service model includes three areas (Careers, Access and Basic Education Youth), the cost of the brochure can be shared in the upcoming fiscal year. The College also has a Twitter account that can be utilized to post about student success and special events and is an effective way of sharing small pieces of information about the Service Delivery Model.

PowerPoint presentations can be used internally and externally for raising awareness and having others realize the importance of this change. This tool can be very powerful, particularly if it includes stories of how the change directly impacts youth. This is a method that has been used numerous times by the Change Agent/Leader both at College and community events, and has been highly effective in communicating the work that is being done. Factual data of outcomes, stories from the youth themselves, and ideally video of youth sharing their experience creates an emotional story that has great impact.

### **Internal Communication Opportunities**

The College has many events and activities where the proposed change, and subsequently the progress of the change, can be presented and reported. These are specific examples of where the change can be communicated within the College.

**Leaders Forum.** A monthly meeting that presents new information pertinent to those in leadership positions within the College. It features a monthly department showcase, sharing what they do. The Change Agent/Leader will present the proposed change and whom it will impact and benefit. This provides an opportunity to gauge the reactions of the College community at large, answer questions and receive feedback. Much informal discussion happens among leaders at this monthly event, and it is an opportunity to share progress and gain support.

**College Wide Learning Day.** An annual event that showcases departments and new innovations in teaching, learning and program delivery. A workshop will be given by the Change Agent/Leader to present the Service Delivery Model, its creation, outcomes and future direction.

**New Technology Showcase.** A biannual event that features new technology being used in different College programs. This presentation can highlight how the online Career Exploration course is impacting the transition experience youth in and aging out of care.

### **External Communication Opportunities**

Networking events for professionals who work with youth in and aging out of care are in place. These include social workers, child welfare agencies, The Representative for Children and Youth and community programs. These meetings and events are an ideal venue to communicate the change at the College, as described here.

**Monthly meeting for Education and Employment Community Committee.** This is a group from education and employment programs that meets monthly to discuss services and events for youth in and aging out of care in regards to their employment and educational opportunities. It is an ideal place to communicate information on the Service Delivery Model, and how it can support the youth they are working with.

**Annual Youth Aging out of Care Event.** Service providers have tables at a yearly event where they promote programs and services to youth aging out of care. Youth and social workers looking for information on services attend it. The Careers Area has attended for two years, and has found it an excellent way to connect with service providers and youth. When the model is implemented, the Careers Coordinator can promote it and other College programs and services. Basic Education Youth Area and Access Department will be invited to attend as well. Printed material will be developed with relevant information including how to contact the College about accessing the Service Delivery Model.

Although this may seem like an ambitious list of events for internal and external communication, most of these activities are already taking place. The Change Agent/Leader is already attending monthly meetings and events in the community and the College. The presentations about this delivery model, once developed, can be quickly adapted to suit different events and audiences.

### **Use of Technology and Social Media**

With a younger student demographic, social media is effectively used to share information and market programs and services. A Facebook page for the Access Department

was created five years ago, and can be used to promote the new model. It can also be used to post updates on other programs and services as they develop. Use of the Marketing and Communications Department Twitter feed may evolve into creating a specific page about College services for youth in and aging out of care.

Social media can be used when students are in a program to share information and update students on specific program developments. Future actions may include having students develop a page that shares information and includes their own stories of success. This gives youth the opportunity to be a part of the communication plan, and share experiences. This is related to servant leadership, as those who have been served become servant leaders themselves, helping other youth find out about the Service Delivery Model. This will inspire other potential students to access the Service Delivery Model and register at the College.

### **Conclusion**

This Organizational Improvement Plan addresses the problem of youth in and aging out of care transitioning to college settings. It identified a lack of a Grade 12 Diploma as a main barrier that makes the transition to post-secondary, without receiving extra supports, services and educational/career guidance extremely challenging. This problem of practice was identified as a wicked social problem because of both its complexity and lack of specific and measurable actions within one College to serve this group. Furthermore, post-secondary institutions are lacking policies and specific service delivery plans to improve educational outcomes for this student population.

Chapter One described the current organizational climate as being conducive to change and equipped to implement this OIP. Recent government initiatives make youth in and aging out of care in British Columbia a priority. Improving educational outcomes is a specific goal and government directive for all post-secondary institutions in the province. The Change Agent/Leader has an excellent opportunity to achieve the changes outlined in this OIP, using characteristics from political, feminist and servant leadership. The political framework guides the use of established networks in the College and community to gain allies. It also supports the Change Agent/Leader's work with others, especially in senior leadership positions, to become champions for implementing change. Feminist theory frames the problem considering the larger societal issues impacting this problem including access, equity, and the need to empower vulnerable populations. Servant leader attributes and characteristics guide the change plan in every stage of development and implementation.

Chapter Two focussed on the planning and development of the OIP. A critical organizational analysis utilizing Bolman and Deal's (2013) Four Frame Model identified the specific changes the Change Agent/Leader needs to make. The change plan was developed using the concepts of servant leadership, serving this student population by creating a Service Delivery Model that considers their unique strengths and challenges. When youth are able to successfully complete both academic upgrading and College programs they are able to inspire others to do the same. A servant leader then supports youth in becoming servant leaders themselves. As the Change Agent/Leader, feminist theory again provided guiding principles for the change model by focussing on inclusivity, equity for underserved populations, and access to



support. The related concept of trauma informed practice can be implemented by faculty and staff to help youth feel safe and comfortable while accessing the Service Delivery Model. This model targets not just youth aging out of care but those in care, ages 15 to 18, for early intervention. This ensures a Grade 12 credential and a specific education and career plan is in place for them when they exit high school. For older youth, the Service Delivery Model offers both access to academic upgrading to obtain Grade 12, specific pre-requisites needed for college entry, and Career Exploration courses.

Chapter Three presented a change implementation plan, the Service Delivery Model that focussed on improving the supports and services through an internal partnership between the Basic Education Youth and Careers Areas at the College, utilizing external stakeholders to help communicate the change to these youth as well as for referrals. The model process aims to identify youth in and aging out of care that are applying to the institution. Once these youth are identified, it ensures they are contacted about the increased supports and services available to them. This includes explaining the provincial tuition waiver process, assisting with course selection, and creating an education action plan based on the student's career goals. A monitoring and evaluation plan was outlined with an emphasis on empowerment that keeps students as the focus of these processes.

### **Future Considerations**

Although the current political situation in the province is perfect for the implementation of this change, The Change Agent/Leader must consider that political support may only last while the current government is in power. The plan must be communicated to key stakeholders

to raise awareness, create a vision for change, and be implemented in a timely manner to not miss this current opportunity. Steps towards making this Service Delivery Model financially viable and proven effective are imperative for long-term sustainability and success. The monitoring and evaluation plan presented in Chapter Three can be a rich source of data on this success.

Next steps include researching other sources of funding and external partnerships that may be developed to further expand supports and services. From a leadership perspective, the guiding concepts of equity, inclusion and service will continue to drive this change. Finally, a long-term commitment will be required of the Change Agent/Leader and the College to significantly improve the transition process and educational outcomes of youth in and aging out of care. This Organizational Improvement Plan is the first step in that effort.

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## Appendix A

### Environmental Scan Assessing Readiness for Change: STEEPLED and OT from SWOT

STEEPLED	Opportunities	Threats
Social Drivers	Increased media attention focussed on the neglect of YAC (youth aging of out care)	Not enough knowledge in the institution and public of the lack of support and low educational outcomes of YAC
Technological Drivers	Opportunities for YAC to work in a self-paced transitional environment utilizing online platforms	Low completion rate for online programs Negative perception of online offerings
Economic Drivers	Increased funding by BC government  New tuition waivers for YAC in all BC post-secondary institutions  Potential for foundation grants and/or funding from provincial government initiatives	Constantly changing funding models and priorities  Concern from citizens that it may not be a good use of tax money  Concern from senior leadership that there is no budgetary allowance to support increased support and services
Environmental Drivers	Not applicable	Not applicable
Political Drivers	Change in BC government that has a renewed agenda to increase supports to youth aging out of care  Institutional politics-buy-in from some key senior leadership	Some may not believe this is important or necessary  Change in political stakeholders  Opposing parties and agendas can influence change (or lack of change)
Legislative Drivers	Two phases of service being implemented by BC government in the next two years to increase the supports of YAC	Any change in government priorities and funding could impact change initiatives
Ethical Drivers	Stating the case for it being the right thing to do, citing poor life/educational outcomes	Some may not see it as the right thing to do, their ethical lens may favour other approaches
Demographic Drivers	122 youth aging out of care in metro Vancouver in 2017  More youth from outlying areas could be served as the campus is centrally located and easily accessible	Number of youth could decrease drastically within the next five to ten years

## Appendix B

### Organization Process Model applied to Tuition Waiver Implementation

<u>Model action</u>	<u>Internal actions</u>	<u>External Actions</u>
Analysis of existing situations	Review any policies internally that may be similar (flexible admissions, financial aid policy, Indigenous student admissions policy)  Research the policy approval process	Look at new government policies for tuition waiver program and youth aging out of care
Generation of policy options	Working group for creating the policy  Policy Coordinator is contacted and informed.  Process information is shared	Researching existing policies at other institutions Borrowing best practices
Evaluation of policy options	What is realistic in the first conception of this policy?  What are the elements that are non-negotiable?  What if any financial considerations need to be addressed?	How is government participation accounted for in policy development?  What elements need to be approved by outside sources?
Making the policy decision	Policy goes to college community for feedback	Key external stakeholders are included in decision making
Planning of policy implementation	Internal Policy Coordinator works in partnership to create policy  Internal systems are created	Agencies and those working with youth are made aware of the new policies
Policy impact assessment	Have the outcomes been impacted? Are more youth registering with the new policy in place	Data is collected from community and key stakeholders on the impact of tuition waiver policy
Subsequent policy cycles	Making the case to keep the tuition waiver program. Adapting the policy as changes to government policy are made	Stating the case to government that their tuition waiver policy and college tuition waiver policy has resulted in better outcomes

Adapted from: Haddid, W.D., Demsky, T. (1995). Education policy-planning process: an applied framework. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Retrieved from: [http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/11\\_200.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/11_200.pdf)

### Appendix C

#### *Fetterman's Evaluation Principles Applied to OIP*

<b>Guiding Principle</b>	<b>Application to OIP</b>
Improvement	More youth accessing and completing college Better experience accessing college Needs assessment: present situation verses ideal situation
Community Ownership	Stakeholders are involved and inform evaluation process Open and transparent evaluation process
Inclusion	Youth participation is sought out and encouraged Participation is valued, supported and acted upon Evaluation includes qualitative data of youth experiences
Democratic Participation	Youth make decisions about what is needed Youth empowered in the evaluation process Evaluator is a facilitator rather than driver of process
Social Justice	Challenges for youth are presented College community takes up this problem Inequities this group face are acknowledged and addressed
Community Knowledge	Communities of practice are part of evaluation Partners share experiences and challenges with navigating systems with their clients
Evidence-based strategies	Best practices continued to be researched. Data is collected throughout each stage of program Evaluation is used to state the case for change
Capacity building	Evaluation is built in to OIP Youth, college staff and resources become experts and are able to speak to what works Resources are shared
Organizational Learning	Data is evaluated and presented to organization Youth speak to their experiences to Senior Leadership Both success and challenges are recorded
Accountability	Has there been a change in outcomes? Can more be done and what does that look like? Are resources and partnerships utilized effectively?

Note. Adapted from Empowerment Evaluation by D. Fetterman, 2015, *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. (2), 7, 577-583.

## Appendix D

### Sample Questions: Monitoring

#### First contact with Coordinators

1. How did you find out about our programs and services?
2. Was the information you received helpful?
3. Is there further information you need?
4. Do you have other feedback or suggestions?

#### When registered in Careers Courses

1. What careers/educational programs have you identified that you would like to research further? (Please list them)
2. How can we best assist you with the next steps?
3. Are there improvements that can be made to the course or things you think could be added?

#### When registered in upgrading (Basic Education Youth and Access)

1. What do you like about your upgrading program?
2. What do you think could be improved upon in your upgrading program?
3. Do you require extra supports and services at this time?
4. Would you like to meet with your Coordinator to review your progress?

### Sample Questions: Evaluation

#### Given when Action Plan has been developed

1. What services and courses have helped you the most?
2. What are the next steps that you need to take?
3. Do you have feedback for us? Things we can add to the Service Delivery Model or improve upon?

#### Given after three and six month of program participation

1. Have you followed the steps on your action plan?
2. Have you hit any challenges that we can help you with?
3. Would you like to come and meet with us?