



FACTSHEET

The Evaluation Capacity of Youth Grassroots Organizations In Northern Ontario

Content developed from the *Beyond Measure? The State of Evaluation and Action in Ontario's Youth Sector* report by YouthREX team members Alexander Lovell, Uzo Anucha, Rebecca Houwer and Andrew Galley

THIS FACTSHEET HIGHLIGHTS important findings on evaluation capacity in Northern Ontario based on in-depth interviews conducted for our *Beyond Measure? The State of Evaluation and Action in Ontario's Youth Sector* report. It provides insight on some of the major issues impacting evaluation capacity for youth grassroots organizations in Northern Ontario.

01. Without proper operational infrastructure, effective evaluation planning cannot take place.

Youth grassroots organizations in Northern Ontario lack the infrastructure needed to carry out effective youth programs, which limits organizational time and planning for implementing effective evaluation capacity processes. Insufficient funding and infrastructure puts Northern Ontario organizations in “survival mode” with staff members who more preoccupied with finding the means to keep programs up and running, rather than having time to engage in evaluation.

“ I don't need training; I don't need evaluation assistance. I need money for operation... just that. We're going to close our doors in July if something doesn't change. There's going to be 500 youth, the majority of them homeless, that are going to have again no place to go. ”

02. Having a smaller population density does not necessarily mean there is less need for funding and evaluation supports.

Due to a small population density, the overt focus on justifying the allocation of resources based on numbers has resulted in youth programs in Northern Ontario being under-funded and resource limited. The long distances and remote communities in the North require a different method that is not “numbers focused” for assessing what resources are needed to support youth grassroots programs in Northern Ontario.

“ A lot of resource allocation goes down to the heartland where the majority of the population is located. However, there's a very special challenge up here, even though the population isn't as big as the GTA. We are servicing over 250 First Nation remote communities that sometimes don't even have running water, which seems to be ignored, especially with the immigration of individuals leaving those remote communities. ”

03. There are limited evaluation services and supports in Northern Ontario.

In more densely populated regions, such as the GTA, youth grassroots organizations are able to more readily access organizational supports through a robust market of consultants, specialized firms and non-profits. This is not the case in the North, where evaluation services such as external, temporary or part-time consultants are very hard to find, even if organizations have money in the budget to hire them.

“ And sometimes you need not only someone who has expertise in evaluation but you might also need, for example, someone who is part of the clinical staff that takes hours away from them seeing clients. So it’s a challenge and that’s what I mean ... In Toronto you can hire a consultant. You can hire someone ... here you really don’t have that. You’re a little bit more limited. ”

04. There is a need to create an evaluation model that takes into account the systemic issues affecting Northern Ontario.

Evaluation models that work for the whole of Ontario must first acknowledge that many important basic needs haven’t been met in Northern Ontario. Issues such as lack of transportation or limited access to Internet are barriers that make conducting consistent and ongoing program evaluations challenging, if not, impossible.

“ We don’t have the tools we need. For instance Internet connection at the office, things like that. There is certain information we can’t take out of the office and we can’t work with it at the office because we don’t have Internet. ”