



# CanWaCH

Canadian Partnership for  
Women and Children's Health

## Introduction

CanWaCH hosted a webinar session - Small and Medium Organization (SMO) Exchange: Sharing Lessons Learned on April 2nd, 2020. This session dove deep into the lessons learned and opportunities for SMOs looking specifically at operational best practices practices, such as scaling up, resource sharing and capacity strengthening opportunities. Access to the [session recording \(english only\)](#) can be found here.

## How to use this document

Below you will find a **summary** of the SMO Exchange discussion, as well as a list of **resources** that were shared.

With gratitude,

CanWaCH with support from Ethiopiaid Canada, Horizons of Friendship, the Ontario Council for International Cooperation, the Spur Change Program and Fund for Innovation and Transformation

## Your feedback is important to us

Please complete this brief survey to let the organizers know how you found this exchange, the resource document here, and opportunities for improvement. Available in [English](#) or [French](#).

## Outcomes

### *Discussion Highlights*

#### Partnerships and Governance

- **Relationship building:** whether with existing or new relationships, a significant amount of capacity (time, relationship and trust building) is needed, in particular with institutional actors such as government agencies.
- **Invest in strong and respectful partnerships:** among stretched timelines and pressures, having clear lines of open communication is key, taking more time for field visits has been supportive, ensuring clearly defined roles and decision-making protocols. These relationships have become even more important in the context of COVID-19, we are able to make collaborative

decisions about how to manage the next steps and on the ground our community partners are able to stay in touch with vulnerable communities and continue supporting them.

- **Partnerships as you scale:** Be aware that as your organization scales up programmatically, the trust in your relationship with partners and flexibility is key to adapting your programming effectively so everyone is on board.
- **Be prepared to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity** of existing partners if they are involved as challenges arise with use of local existing databases. Invest in strong monitoring and evaluation systems and processes and staffing from the outset of program design and ensure it translates directly in the proposal.
- **Annual planning** with all key stakeholders is key to success and having an external perspective (ex. Centre for Intercultural Learning) is helpful
- **Building strong relationships with major funder:** For ex. With GAC, establishing strong relationships with project officers will facilitate better program adaptability, which will inevitably occur. Being flexible with your program is key. Be open to learning alongside your project officer and working towards your unique needs together.

## Fundraising and Financing

- Until a contribution agreement is signed there is oftentimes no funding received - you must be prepared to staff this initial period of necessity and complete preparatory work without any bridge funding. Organizationally plan for this contingency, as there is time in between notice of approval, signing contribution agreement, and transfer of funds.
- Cost of inflation has risen from the start of the proposal design to implementation, but the funding amount doesn't change, requiring adjustments to activity and budget.
- Don't lose sight of other fundraising strategies and maintain diverse funding: when most resources are diverted towards one/few large programs, organization needs to be prepared in terms of capacity and fundraising how to support wider programming across geographical communities and/or organizational commitments.
- **Good governance:** question yourself can you rely on your Board to support your project (ex. project committee, finance committee)? Having financial controls in place with proper good governance protocols being followed is key to having multiple eyes on the project's quality.
- If you're at the beginning of your project, amass a set of **volunteers** from local universities, and summer job programs to help with fundraising, direct mail - do not let stewardship fall to the wayside.

## Capacity Strengthening

- **Landscape Setting:** Larger organizations received 60% of CIDA/DFATD funding (at the time of research), 17% received by medium sized organizations, 1.8% received by smaller organizations. While SMOs make up a large number of

international development actors across Canada, they receive a smaller proportion of government funding. [Source: 2014 ICN Report, Brian Tomlinson.](#)

- **What we don't hear enough:** bigger is not always better and more doesn't always make an organization nimble. Benefits of being small allows pivoting quickly, but also pros of being a larger organization who has distinct established roles for M&E, HR etc.
- **Get to know others:** Simple contact sharing list created by SMOs to stay connected have strengthened individual confidence with the ability to depend on colleagues for support on selecting consultants, assessing and measuring aligned next steps in the funding cycle, don't be afraid to ask for help!
- **Knowing when to ask for help:** ask yourself i) do you have the knowledge/skill to complete the task? ii) how much will it cost for you to learn and complete the task? iii) when should you hire a consultant?
- **Fund for Innovation and Transformation (FIT):** provides funding to Canadian SMOs to test innovative ideas and solutions that advance gender equality in the Global South.
  - Focused on innovation, testing and learning - and supporting at a proof of concept stage (before idea is ready to scale).
  - Funding of up to \$250,00 for testing period of 6-15 months. Open to all Canadian SMOs who meet fund criteria.
- **Spur Change program:** 2nd year of a 5 year initiative aimed to strengthen capacity of SMOs. Needs assessment was conducted for key learning priorities and learning methods. Key takeaways: i) flexibility - some are SMOs with few staff and volunteers ii) not all are located in large cities so activities need to be geographically diverse iii) differential experience with donors - some are GAC funded and others have adapted to different funding ranges. The full report will be available [here](#) by the end of April.
- **Attend learning opportunities** and stay up to date by signing up for [Spur Change mailing list](#) for future capacity-building and learning opportunities. For more listed opportunities, see slides 31-34.

## Pivoting amid COVID-19

- **Fundraising:** add an insert for donation to your emails, be consistent with messaging, share resources, and be transparent with your donors that a crisis like this signals coming together - include your donors on this journey. Keep donors in the know and communicate delays or shifts (ex. tax receipts).
- Keep all communication lines open with local partners, get creative with Skype, Whatsapp, facebook messenger etc.
- Guatemala: no public activity can take place, currently in lockdown, continuing to adapt plans, such as moving in-person meetings to phone-calls.
- Ethiopia: trying to do a gendered analysis and baseline - can consider doing it locally.
  - **Safeguarding mechanisms:** creating regional task forces to transmit public health messages in local contexts focused on sanitation and prevention measures. Programming currently adapting to strengthen training capacity.

## Resources Shared

### Partnerships

- International Partnership Brokerage Association
- Brokering Better Partnerships handbook-see the first bullet point on Resources page

### COVID-19 Resources

- CanWaCH COVID-19 Resource Centre | CanSFE Centre de ressources sur la COVID-19
- OCIC's COVID-19 web page and shared COVID-19 resource document
- CCIC document to share practices, experiences and questions
- CCIC's resource document for COVID-19
- Data 2X: Gender data and resources related to COVID-19

### Capacity Strengthening

- CanWaCH Project Explorer and Analytics Portal (EN/FR)
- CanWaCH Global Health Impact Report (EN/FR)
- RESULTS Canada Advocacy Tools (EN/FR)
- The Global Hive (Inter-Council Network) Public Engagement Toolkit
- Camp Tech: Digital Communications Skill Training
- Brian Tomlinson report on Canadian SMOs (commissioned by the ICN) (April 2016) - (EN/FR)

### Scaling

- E-book: *Scaling Impact: Innovation for the Public Good*. By: Robert McLean and John Gargani. Routledge, including contributions from Andr anne Martel.
- WHO: Nine steps for developing a scaling up strategy
- Stanford Social Innovation Review - topic articles on scaling
- Centre for Intercultural Learning | Centre d'apprentissage interculturel
- SPUR Change Program | Programme Activer le Changement
- Fund for Innovation and Transformation (FIT) | Fonds pour l'innovation et transformation
- FIT gender equality resources | FIT ressources  galit  des genres