## Excerpt from Community Living Essex County REAL Change Final Report

*Prepared by People Minded Business*

## 10.3 Themes and Accomplishments

Recurrent findings, or themes, were identified within each pilot and across the work of the REAL Change project as follows:

Alignment of Initiatives with the Organization’s Strategic Plan and REAL Change Mission & Objectives

* The Agency started the REAL Change initiative by reviewing and updating its strategic plan, which had the effect of embedding REAL Change into the direction of the organization as well as engaging the Board in the REAL Change process
* The four strategic directions in the organization’s strategic plan drove the goals of REAL Change
* A clear mission and objectives were established for REAL Change at the outset, which were used to direct activities and decision-making throughout the project
* Measures of success for the pilots were aligned with the broader measures of success of REAL Change

Adoption of Innovation Across Pilots and Across the Organization

* A culture shift to a “How might we…” mindset. This phrase, originating in the innovation and creative problem solving sectors, was promoted across the organization as a new way to approach challenges
* A cyclical strategy that combined approaches used by public organizations and private businesses to generate and pilot innovative ideas was tailored and applied to REAL Change, and used consistently across all pilots
* Other consistent structures used across pilots included:
	+ Formation of the REAL Change Steering Committee, Communication Sub-Committee and Pilot Working Groups that included representation from a diverse range of stakeholders
	+ Project Management tools were adapted and used in all pilots – Pilot Guidelines & Expectations, Project Descriptions, Evaluation Plans, and Pilot Tracking Charts
	+ Resources were allocated to each of the pilots - leadership, administrative resources, assistance from consultants, assigned training & time
* The pilot projects proceeded outside of the permanent structures within the organization. Efforts were made to document systemic barriers that may impede implementation of the pilots. It was recognized that the results and learnings of the pilots would influence permanent changes

A Focus on Evaluation and Learning

* The importance of being adaptable and agile when conducting the pilots was a consistent theme. Each pilot revisited the original concept of the pilot, and adapted work plans based on current realities & learnings. Embracing uncertainty and being adaptable ultimately became less challenging over time, as the “How might we…” mindset became the norm
* By systematically planning for and collecting data, and by evaluating the results of the data, strategies were adjusted as needed, and ultimately reflected where progress was made in each pilot, and guided the future path for REAL Change
* Information learned from the training and pilots was openly discussed and will feed future success
* Pilots were an opportunity to learn and to try new things; unplanned direction, reflection and reorganization enabled the pilots to move forward

**10.4 Learning**

In reviewing the results and learning identified in each of the pilots, and across REAL Change as a whole, the Agency identified key learning that informs future activity, and can be of assistance to other organizations embarking on significant and transformational initiatives. Key learning included:

An Innovative Culture and Open Communication Need to Be Established, Modeled and Fostered

* Embedding innovation into the Agency’s culture takes time, involvement and intentional communication strategies
* Spending time at the front-end of projects to articulate the mission and objectives is critical to everyone understanding the purpose of the project and garnering commitment
* Involving diverse stakeholders brings broader insight into the creative-problem solving process, and helps establish productive two-way communication
* Taking risks and trying new things involves embracing the learning that surfaces through the cyclical strategy of ‘think, co-create, try, evaluate’
* Partnerships not only bring new ideas into projects, but they open doors, unlock new capacity, expand reach and result in innovation that would not otherwise be possible

Intentionally Planning, Designing and Resourcing Pilots Leads to Greater Success

* Having a clear strategy keeps activities on track and momentum moving forward
* Attaching resources (money, time, employees) to pilot projects is necessary for short-term planning and longer-term implementation and sustainability
* Formalizing structures and processes, and following through on them can be time consuming and, at times, seems to slow progress down, but thoroughness pays off
* Planning for multi-method evaluation at the early stages of pilot development provides rich and telling data that measures progress made
* Spending the time to research what is happening elsewhere can lead to new solutions and potential joint ventures and partnerships

Pilots are an Effective Tool For Trying Out New Ways of Doing Things Before Permanent Change Is Made

* The ultimate goal of any pilot is to better meet the needs of the people who use services or supports. A pilot provides an opportunity to try out a new idea without creating significant chaos in people’s lives, or in the organization as a whole
* Pilot projects should identify where organizational structures and additional change may need to evolve; trying to evolve permanent structures at the same time may result in greater difficulty until the results of different approaches has been proven
* Trying to ‘prove’ that a proposed approach is the best way is not the purpose of a pilot. If things need to change, accept this reality with the knowledge that the new direction may be a better way than was originally planned - or it may not
* Permanent structures will need to evolve if the results of pilots are going to be built upon. Existing structures need to transform as well as services and supports
* Success in a pilot breeds success – the desire and momentum for continued change

**10.5 Applications Moving Forward**

Looking ahead, REAL Change is now at a point where the accomplishments and learning can be further acted upon and embedded across the organization.

Through the meta-evaluation process, the following is planned:

* To continue to look for ways to offer people and families innovative, flexible and affordable supports
* To ensure a diverse group of stakeholders is involved in research and co-design efforts
* To continue exploring and developing new partnerships, and expand existing partnerships
* To use the strategy, structures, and processes that were found to be useful and successful in REAL Change, into the next phase of the organization’s development, and in future projects
* Reflect on the REAL Change results, to guide the redesign of business practices
* Provide leadership and innovation in a modernized Developmental Services sector
* Initiate a Centre for Innovation & Quality Supports, to give other organizations the opportunity to learn from and build on the results of REAL Change
* Develop a REAL Change Successful Practices guide to share across the Province.