

# Province-Wide Research Opportunity: Strengthening BC's Community Social Services Sector

## Background

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In July 2022, the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction announced the provision of a research grant to the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) to address gaps in knowledge and data relating to the community social services sector in the province. Evidence, information and knowledge generated through this research grant is intended to inform decision makers at multiple jurisdictional levels (provincial, regional, local, and First Nations) across several key topics, including 1) *system perspectives and impacts*, 2) *volunteerism*, 3) *post-secondary linkages to the sector*, and 4) *lived/living experiential knowledge and peer-support*.

## Summary of Research Opportunity

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SPARC BC is interested in partnering with individuals and organizations that wish to conduct research that contributes to one or more of the four key topics of inquiry, above. In addition, proposed scopes of work should clearly demonstrate how they may contribute to building capacity or informing the sustainability of the community social services sector (i.e., responding to a growing diversity and complexity of needs), locally, regionally or provincially. Indigenous community social services, reconciliation, institutional decolonization, and trauma-informed practice are also important areas of focus.

Proponents will have flexibility in proposing their own research designs, processes and approaches, although scopes of work should consider and reflect:

- The ability of data, information and knowledge to address a central research question tied to one or more of the four key topics of inquiry (i.e., 1) *system perspectives and impacts*, 2) *volunteerism*, 3) *post-secondary linkages to the sector*, and 4) *lived/living experiential knowledge and peer-support*);
- Proponents' capacity to carry out the work independently, or if they require support from SPARC BC or other technical and/or content experts; and
- How the research will address gaps in knowledge locally, regionally, provincially, and/or with First Nations communities to build capacity and/or contribute to the sustainability of the community social services sector in BC.

Examples of potential projects could include (but are not exclusive to):

- Evaluations of community social service organizations;
- Network analyses of community social service providers in particular jurisdictional areas;
- Community social service impact assessments;
- Case studies or best practice reviews on fostering reconciliation and decolonizing practices;
- Exploring effective practices for recruiting, developing and retaining human resources (e.g., skilled professionals, leaders, volunteers) in the community social services sector;
- Service gap analyses in particular communities or regions;
- Pilot studies of various types;

- Indigenous practices and knowledge that can inform the delivery of community social services in a culturally responsive manner;
- Exploring the linkages between post-secondary training programs (e.g., work-integrated learning, co-op studies, internships, etc.) and community social service organizations or networks;
- Examining the integration of peer-support workers with lived/living experience; and more.

## SPARC BC's Role in Research

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SPARC BC is currently conducting several research and knowledge development activities tied to this initiative. In addition, SPARC BC intends to gather, synthesize and report the findings of *all* research activities (including those derived from partner projects) to the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction as well as the Social Service Sector Roundtable Reference Group—a committee of community social service organizations from across BC.

Beyond this, SPARC BC will engage with research partners on a case-by-case basis to coordinate activities and outputs. Those partners requiring technical assistance and/or additional resources in order to achieve their stated research objectives may be accommodated by SPARC BC.

## Deliverables

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- A final report on the research project, its findings and discussion of implications (or another fulsome representation of the project in an accessible format);
- Brief mid-course progress update/report (for projects six-months or longer); and
- Brief webinar, presentation or video blog summarizing the project.

## Eligibility Requirements

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- Individuals or organizations **based in BC**;
- Demonstrated Knowledge and/or experience in the **community social services sector**;
- Demonstrated experience or expertise in **specific research topic area(s)**; and
- Demonstrated experience in conducting **community-based research and/or knowledge translation**.

## Research Term

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It is estimated that funded work will commence in January 2023, or soon thereafter. All work, including research development and final reports must be completed by January 1, 2024.

## Response Guidelines

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- Proposals should include: (10-pages or less)
  - Background and Rationale
  - Research question(s) and objectives
  - Project overview (including approach and/or methods)
  - Work plan with timeline
  - Budget for research activities and/or milestones

- Qualifications and experience of research team members (referencing similar projects conducted)
- Scope and budget of proposed projects may vary in size, for example:
  - *Small projects* (less than \$25,000, up to 6 months to complete)
  - *Medium projects* (\$25K-\$50K, between 6-8 months to complete)
  - *Large projects* (over \$50K, up to 12 months to complete)
- Proponents are permitted to submit multiple separate proposed scopes of work for consideration
- **Submissions will be considered on a rolling basis starting from January 3, 2023**
- Submissions and inquiries can be sent to Dr. Alex Price, Director of Strategic Initiatives at SPARC BC ([aprice\[at\]sparc.bc.ca](mailto:aprice@sparc.bc.ca))