

SOLUTIONS LAB UPDATE

Community Housing for the Future

Taking *Collective* Action
Toward Resiliency

Solutions Lab Phase 1 & 2 Update / as of August 2021

Presented by

ONPHA
ONTARIO NON-PROFIT
HOUSING ASSOCIATION



Definition and Discovery Phase Update

This Document

This document provides an overview of the progress made over the course of the first two phases of this Solutions Lab, the Definition and Discovery phases.

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Lab Methodology

Phases and Dates

Nov to Dec 2020

Jan to May 2021

May 2021-onwards

Phase 1

Definition

This phase will set the context for the Lab work and to confirm project understanding among the Lab team, other external partners, and Lab participants.

Phase 2

Discovery

This phase will find and frame the problem we are trying to solve, by dedicating time to challenging our own assumptions and achieving alignment with Lab partners and stakeholders.

Phase 3

Development

This phase will begin the ideation process, providing Lab participants with tools and approaches to brainstorming and synthesizing some of their ideas.

Phase 4

Prototype

This phase will focus on bringing the solutions and ideas to life in engaging and interactive ways, for participants to interact with the ideas and provide feedback.

Phase 5

Roadmap

This phase will provide time to assess the feasibility and viability of some of the prototyped ideas and provide an implementation plan for realizing the most promising solutions.

Collaborative Conversations

- ✓ **Event:** Kick-off meeting with Advisory Committee
- ✓ Information gathering, desk research, and participant recruitment
- ✓ **Survey:** Housing provider survey

- ✓ **Event:** Interviews with housing providers and subject matter experts
- ✓ **Workshop 1: Discovery Phase Lab** with housing providers and other stakeholders **[January 29]**
- ✓ **Workshop 2: Discovery Phase Lab** with housing providers and other stakeholders **[March 26]**

Upcoming in Sep 2021

- ✓ **Event:** Meeting with Advisory Committee to review Discovery Phase findings
- **Workshop 3: Development Phase Lab** with housing providers and other stakeholders

- **Event:** Meeting with Advisory Committee to review Development Phase findings
- **Workshop 4: Prototyping Phase Lab** with housing providers and other stakeholders

- **Event:** Meeting with Advisory Committee to build out Roadmap
- **Output:** Culminating Lab report and Roadmap for future implementation
- **Event:** Close-out meeting with Advisory Committee

Workshop 1 & 2 Attendees

57 
participants

14 
facilitators

Service Managers

- City of Greater Sudbury
- City of Hamilton
- City of Kingston
- City of London
- City of Ottawa
- City of Toronto
- City of Windsor
- County of Simcoe
- District of Nipissing SSAB
- District of Timiskaming SSAB
- Durham Region
- Grey County
- Halton Region
- Niagara Region
- Peel Region
- Sudbury DSSAB
- Waterloo Region
- York Region

18 Service Managers

Housing Providers

- Bellwoods Centres for Community Housing
- Birch Housing
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Can-Am Urban Native Non-Profit Homes
- Castle Arms Non-Profit Seniors Apartment
- Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation
- Columbus Place for Seniors of Fort Frances Inc.
- Community Housing Management Network
- Eastwood Housing Corporation
- Homes First
- Homestarts Incorporated
- Kitchener Housing Inc.
- Mainstay Housing
- Multifaith Housing Initiative
- New Beginnings Housing Project of Chatham

- Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services
- Ottawa Community Housing Corporation
- Ridgeford Charitable Foundation
- SHIP
- Victoria Park Community Homes
- Wigwamen Inc.
- WoodGreen Community Services

22 Housing Providers

Associations

- Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada
- Ontario Municipal Social Services Association
- Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association

3 Associations

Discovery Phase Workshop 1 Overview

a brief recap of the workshop on January 29, 2021

The objectives of the Discovery Phase Workshop 1 were to:

- Kick off this Solutions Lab on *Community Housing for the Future* and the dialogue around taking collective action towards resiliency.
- Establish an understanding of the group's ambition for change and "where they are 'at' today".
- Begin to identify what might be getting "in the way" of change and innovation in the housing system in Ontario.
- Hear each other's visions for the future in 2051.
- Build some alignment around a collective vision for the future in 2051.

Activity 1

Reflecting on our ambitions for change

We started by reflecting on the potential success of a change initiative by discussing:

- D** • Our level of **dissatisfaction** with the current situation;
- V** • The strength of our **vision for the future**;
- F** • Our level of clarity around the **first steps** that are required to navigate towards that future; and
- R** • Our level of **resistance** to change.

Activity 2

Identifying the assumptions holding us back from change

We took some time to identify orthodoxies in our organizations and in the housing system more broadly. These may be holding us back from innovation.

An orthodoxy is a generally-accepted theory or practice.

We can think of an orthodoxy as part of our commonly-held wisdom about our work and the system we operate within.

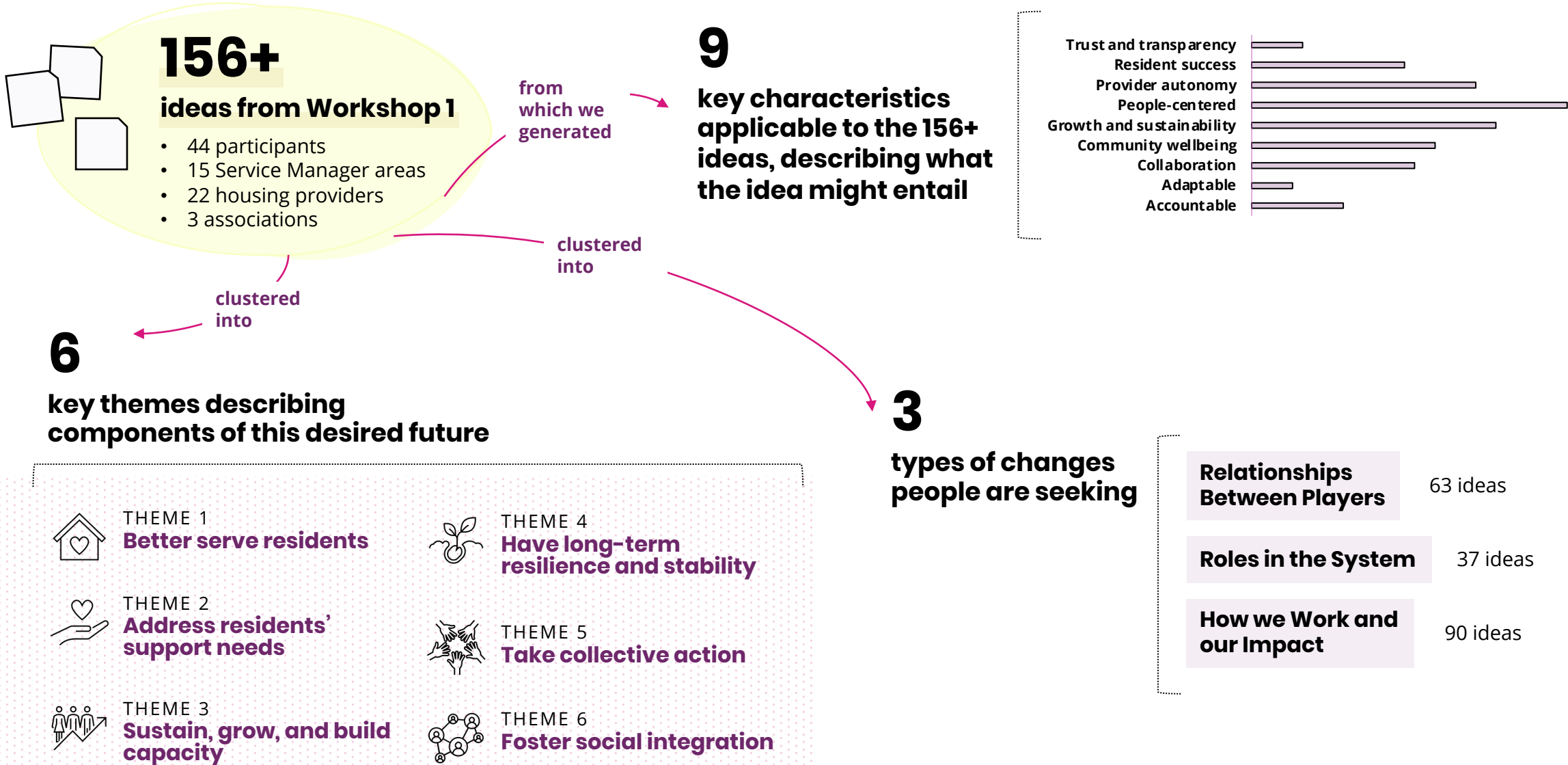
Activity 3

Building our shared visions for the future

In breakout rooms...

- 5 min* • **Reflect on your own** to begin to develop your organization's vision for the future (for Horizon 3 in 30 years).
- 15 min* • **Share your organization's vision** with your group.
- 30 min* • **Build a desirable future state** with your group
- 10 min* • Discuss what you want to **"keep" from Horizon 1**.
- 5 min* • Prepare to **report back** to the main session.

Reporting Back from Workshop 1



**We hope to have a
community housing
sector for the future
that...**



THEME 1
Better serves residents



THEME 2
**Addresses residents'
support needs**



THEME 3
**Sustains, grows, and
builds capacity**



THEME 4
**Has long-term resilience
and stability**



THEME 5
Takes collective action



THEME 6
Fosters social integration

by reimagining...

**Relationships
Between Players**

Roles in the System

**How we Work and
our Impact**

**and incorporating
characteristics of...**

- 1. Trust and transparency**
- 2. Resident success**
- 3. Provider autonomy**
- 4. People-centered**
- 5. Growth and sustainability**
- 6. Community wellbeing**
- 7. Collaboration**
- 8. Adaptable**
- 9. Accountable**

Orthodoxies

This is just a quick snapshot of the **dozens** of orthodoxies identified.

What's holding us back from change?

We took some time to identify orthodoxies in our organizations and in the housing system more broadly. These may be holding us back from innovation.

- **You are only successful if you own a home;** renters, whether, market, affordable or especially social housing tenants are looked down on by society.
- There is a belief that rural and urban areas are being serviced, however these do not always include **Indigenous housing**.
- There is an assumption **we will continue to be full funded indefinitely.**
- **We have to work with what we're given:** we make the funding we receive "work" and this does not promote agility or flexibility in innovating new models.
- **Needs of the community are stable over time**--once we receive funding, it's "one size fits" for eternity.
- **We are collectively bound by past paradigms related to legislative and prescriptive agreements** and it can be a challenge to let those go and envision what could be.
- **Bureaucracy is slow moving,** getting support where it needs to go is a long process.
- There is a belief that **people do not want to live in social housing** - we want to be the housing of choice.
- **Rules and processes are prohibitive to innovation.**
- **People don't want our housing in their neighbourhoods.** There is resistance in neighbourhoods across Ontario to having our clients live in their neighbourhoods.

Feedback

How did you feel at the end of the session?

”

“

I felt that the format of the session encouraged participants to share their thoughts and hear the perspectives of others in a welcoming and comfortable environment.

Pleased to have found some common ground.

I felt like my opinions and thoughts matter and that we will see good results moving forward. It was an excellent session with great discussions from across all realms, government, service managers, property providers & ONPHA.

I felt better about our collective direction.

I thought the participants reflected a variety of providers and service managers which was excellent to see. You could feel the push and pull from some participants and it was great to have a venue to freely and safely discuss some hot topics.

More hopeful.

I felt that we had moved through quite a bit of information and thought provoking questions. It was good to see that we seem to have some very common threads of our vision for the future.

Felt good and look forward to see what actions are taken.

Discovery Phase Workshop 2 Overview

a brief recap of the workshop on March 26, 2021

The objectives of the Discovery Phase Workshop 2 were to:

- **Refine and validate our collective vision for the future.**
- **Craft a set of instructions for the next generation of housing workers to guide them in doing their work and moving towards the collective vision.**
- **Prioritize and refine the list of potential ideas to act on in Workshop 3.**

The Workshop 2 activities focused on “how” to get to our collective vision by creating a set of guiding instructions and by prioritizing the potential ideas from Workshop 1.

Activity 1

Creating a set of guiding instructions

Shift 1 in breakout rooms...

- 5 min* • **On your own, use your theme’s top 3 characteristics to write a set of instructions** to the next generation of housing workers to help guide them as they do their work. *[Using a personal slide]*
- 20 min* • **Share your guiding instructions** with your group and write a set of 3 instructions that represent the ideas from the group. *[Get started on Shift 2’s work if you have time]*
- 5 min* • Highlight your group’s top instructions to be reported back.

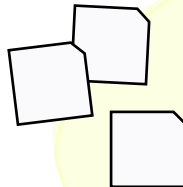
Activity 2

Prioritizing the potential ideas from Workshop 1

Shift 2 in breakout rooms...

- 10 min* • Your facilitator will bring you up to speed on the work of Shift 1. Take a few minutes to add to Shift 1’s work.
- 5 min* • **On your own**, consider the idea or ideas that you would like to see us take action on building in Workshop 3. *[Using a personal slide]*
- 10 min* • **Prioritize a potential idea (or combination of ideas) from Workshop 1** that you would like to see us take action on building in Workshop 3.

Reporting Back from Workshop 2



340+
pieces of input generated from Workshop 2

- 35 participants
- 10 Service Manager areas
- 20 housing providers
- 3 housing associations

including

93
potential ideas to pursue through this Solutions Lab, requiring changes to three elements of the system

including


224
instructions related to describing how we might change the system to embody the 6 themes

Relationships Between Players

Roles in the System

How we Work and our Impact

17  THEME 1
Better serve residents

49  THEME 4
Have long-term resilience and stability

36  THEME 2
Address residents' support needs

48  THEME 5
Take collective action

45  THEME 3
Sustain, grow, and build capacity

29  THEME 6
Foster social integration



Better serve residents

Instructions

A snapshot of some of the guiding instructions provided related to better serving residents:

Being people-centered

- Have a clear understanding of tenant needs to establish where to invest resources (e.g., surveys, one-on-one conversations, focus groups).
- Treat residents as people, not numbers--practice good communication to understand where they are at and what their priorities are.
- Foster relationships with other agencies and organizations that can provide a shared benefit.

Promoting resident success

- Find organizations in the community who can work with you to help meet tenant needs. Bring them in (this may require a community engagement person).
- If something isn't working, take the time to ask "why".
- Fund community engagement and support activities--they are part of providing affordable community housing.
- Ensure you are measuring resident success.

Enhancing community wellbeing

- Bring community resources into your building when tenants can't go out to seek support.
- Help tenants become more included in their communities so people don't feel stigmatized and are connected to the neighbourhood.
- Connect with the surrounding community--create flows by including the community in events.

Potential Actions

Relationships Between Players

- Create an engagement strategy to reduce the one-way communication, listen and learn from tenants/members, providers, and SMS, and use the feedback to inform policies and practices.
- Engage in a collaborative effort between large and small providers to allocate resources to where communities need it, instead of the overarching need.

Roles in the System

- Develop clear definitions of roles and responsibilities in the system to have a more efficient and productive system and create a path to how we will get to a new future.

How we Work and our Impact

- Design an approach to simplified administration that focuses on the core mission, clarity of roles, and the ability to build capacity of providers.
- Employ an equity lens to collecting and making sense of feedback from residents so that unique needs can be met.



Address residents' support needs

Instructions

A snapshot of some of the guiding instructions provided related to addressing residents' support needs:

Being people-centered

- Ensure access to supports is easy by offering one contact person or point of access who can make the appropriate referrals.
- Have programs and policies be flexible, respectful, diverse, and locally-appropriate.
- Ensure tenants have access to supports, no matter the housing provider.
- Develop toolkits (training) for the staff and board to better support tenants.

Promoting resident success

- Build connections with support partners.
- Proactively allocate funds to supporting the success of residents.
- Connect with other agencies who are already funded and capable of providing supports.
- Have the flexibility to support tenants through all stages of life and recovery (build in a fluidity of supports over time).
- Create mixed communities where people have a range of needs.

Be adaptable

- Focus on the needs of residents as opposed to the needs of providers.
- Think of your role as a provider as adaptable--physically (bricks and mortar) and administratively.
- Reduce the administrative burden of funding so that providers can be adaptable (e.g., instead of having a tenant join a waitlist for a modified unit, allow the landlord to modify the unit to meet their needs).

Potential Actions

Relationships Between Players

- Create a systems framework that provides clarity around roles of individual providers.
- Find ways to integrate with support service agencies.
- Integrate our funding with MoH so we can take a coordinated approach.
- Integrate our funding with MCCSS so we can take a coordinated approach.

Roles in the System

- Housing providers should be the 'connectors' to services.
- Reduce the administrative burden (staff and board) on providers so they can spend time supporting tenants.
- Create mixed-income communities by having a clear definition around what a "balanced community" means to you.

How we Work and our Impact

- Articulate a framework and philosophy for the community housing sector of the future.
- Use the new community housing sector philosophy to support different housing models or rules for providers.
- Have staff be aware of connections and resources in the community so they know where to refer residents in need.



Sustain, grow, and build capacity

Instructions

A snapshot of some of the guiding instructions provided related to sustaining, growing, and building capacity:

Fostering trust and transparency

- Shift from a regulation and enforcement system to consultation, collaboration, and capacity-building.
- Begin conversations from the "bottom, up"--start with tenants, building staff, management, boards, then service managers.
- Look for low-cost solutions first.
- Come to the table willing and open to allow for open conversations that build trust.

Promoting provider autonomy

- Help providers thrive.
- Recognize the differences between providers--some lack capacity.
- For some providers, it would be helpful to be less prescriptive (e.g., don't claw back surpluses, allow for cash flow to be re-invested in the mission, etc.).
- Have a less one-size-fits-all system, instead focus on outcomes and risk-based analysis.
- Give providers options and choice so they can infuse creativity and be more entrepreneurial.

Promoting collaboration

- Build shared resources or services so each organization doesn't have to be an 'expert in everything'.
- Pool equity across providers to enhance social impact and reach.
- Use performance measures to share and learn from each other.
- Trust the board to set the vision and direction, instead of the government.
- Respect people and organizations in their roles and ability to make decisions.

Potential Actions

Relationships Between Players

- Have shared key performance indicators across the system.
- Foster trust and transparency by having reporting requirements that focus on 'useful' and 'insightful' reporting.
- As a Service Manager, provide constructive feedback on the reporting results to providers so they can learn and grow.

Roles in the System

- Give providers the financial capacity to manage their assets.
- Provide support for innovative and non-traditional models.
- Convene partners in the system to help solve problems.
- Build capacity to hire our community members to work and contribute to where they live.

How we Work and our Impact

- Infuse flexibility and an outcomes-based approach into the way we work.



Have long-term resilience and stability

Instructions

A snapshot of some of the guiding instructions provided related to having long-term resilience and stability:

Be accountable

- Focus on outcomes and achievements from a data-driven, risk-based lens (vs. compliance).
- Have a role for members, tenants, and the broader community to help hold organizations accountable.
- Focus on governance-- that is where the accountability lies.
- Accountability needs to focus on outcomes we are achieving for people.

Promoting growth and sustainability

- Allow providers to establish appropriate reserve funds with defined purposes.
- Support providers in becoming "more sophisticated organizations" with greater capacity and capabilities.

Promoting provider autonomy

- Reduce regulatory restrictions so you can focus on outcomes and achievements.
- Put in place a financial system that allows providers to plan for the long-term.
- Consider ways to reduce dependency on the system.
- Give providers the opportunity to make decisions within a framework of flexibility.
- Have a clear vision for the sector.
- Incorporate 10-year plans at the provincial level.

Potential Actions

Relationships Between Players

- Create a system that allows providers to plan for a 35-year cycle of capital repairs.
- Establish a shared understanding of the purpose and value of community housing to inform our metrics for success.

Roles in the System

- Allow for more flexibility to incorporate other revenue streams including mixed-income.

How we Work and our Impact

- Create policies that are flexible in defining what an "affordable housing unit" is, to support long-term financial sustainability.
- Find ways to enable strong governance of community housing providers (a focus on vision and direction).



Take collective action

Instructions

A snapshot of some of the guiding instructions provided related to taking collective action:

Being accountable

- Respect and understand each others' roles.
- Establish and confirm key definitions and key performance indicators.
- Have regular check-ins across the system--communication and predictability.
- Share responsibility for outcomes across the system.
- Include incentive-based programs and policies.

Fostering system collaboration

- Provide opportunities to build trust in the partnership (set shorter-term goals to build trust).
- Imbed partnerships in the local housing and homelessness plans.
- Convene a diversity of players from top to bottom (local-level) to work towards common goals at a "system table".
- Share stories of challenges and successes.

Fostering growth and sustainability

- Move from short-term grants to multi-year allocations and funding models.
- Document and share lessons learned, especially from COVID.
- Promote each other -- host community events and celebrate successes.
- Have long-term financial viability (stress test).
- Take a portfolio approach to growth.

Potential Actions

Relationships Between Players

- Make it easier to build mutually-beneficial partnerships.
- Build on the strengths of the community housing sector.
- Build partnerships at the local level so decisions are made locally.
- Form a "systems table" across ministries, providers, and SMs that encourages dialogue and collaboration.
- Connect with Ontario Human Rights work.

Roles in the System

- Have more conversations about funding sources to support providers' cash flow challenges.
- Identify opportunities for innovation and do "more" than housing (e.g., land trusts).
- Form a commitment to creating a sense of community and being stewards of the system.

How we Work and our Impact

- Support providers by helping them define the skillset required to reach their vision.
- Facilitate opportunities to engage in regular visioning for the system.



Foster social integration

Instructions

A snapshot of some of the guiding instructions provided related to fostering social integration:

Fostering growth and sustainability

- Shift community housing to be more socio-economically diverse.
- Expand the co-operative housing sector.
- Adopt a new mentality to expand our reach and grow (e.g., mix of income ranges, support needs, etc.)--consider funds from other sources.
- Consider collaborative approaches for new builds (e.g., creating a supportive community office space that could generate revenue and bring health supports locally).

Promoting resident success

- Provide access to supports and programming for tenants locally (directed through housing providers with the goal of a more integrated approach).
- Involve and empower residents in various ways to offer them opportunities to develop skillsets, knowledge, sense of control, and self-worth.
- Have tenant representation on boards.

Enhancing community wellbeing

- Bridge the social ties between people in community housing and the surrounding area.
- Think of community housing as "holistic", drawing on aspects of health, education, training, and support for new Canadians.
- Integrate programming that is not specific to residents, to help bring people from the surrounding community 'in'.

Potential Actions

Relationships Between Players

- Find ways to work with our neighbours as equals.
- Help tenants join external community groups.
- Empower and support residents in different ways so it's meaningful to each person.

Roles in the System

- Rethink the model of dedicated supportive housing.
- Provide transition programs for new residents moving in after experiences of homelessness (e.g. legal clinics, understanding the RTA, etc.).

How we Work and our Impact

- Revisit the language we use to talk about what we do (e.g., "affordable housing) to help reduce stigma.
- Support and communicate the importance of having well-maintained buildings and exterior properties.
- Have a deep understanding of tenant needs so we can create built environments that set them up for success.
- Support tenants re-entering the workforce.

Next Steps

Moving into Phase 3

Preliminary Considerations

The following are some preliminary considerations for the Phase 3 activities. We are currently in the process of synthesizing all of the information from Workshop 2, which will provide a clearer picture of where we will start in Phase 3 of this Lab.

- Validating our shared visions of the future and bringing more rigor to the six themes
- Prioritizing the conversations to be explored in the “change state” to arrive at our shared vision of the future
- Identifying the prioritized ideas for action based on Workshop 2 and building an approach to creating low-fidelity “mockups” of these ideas

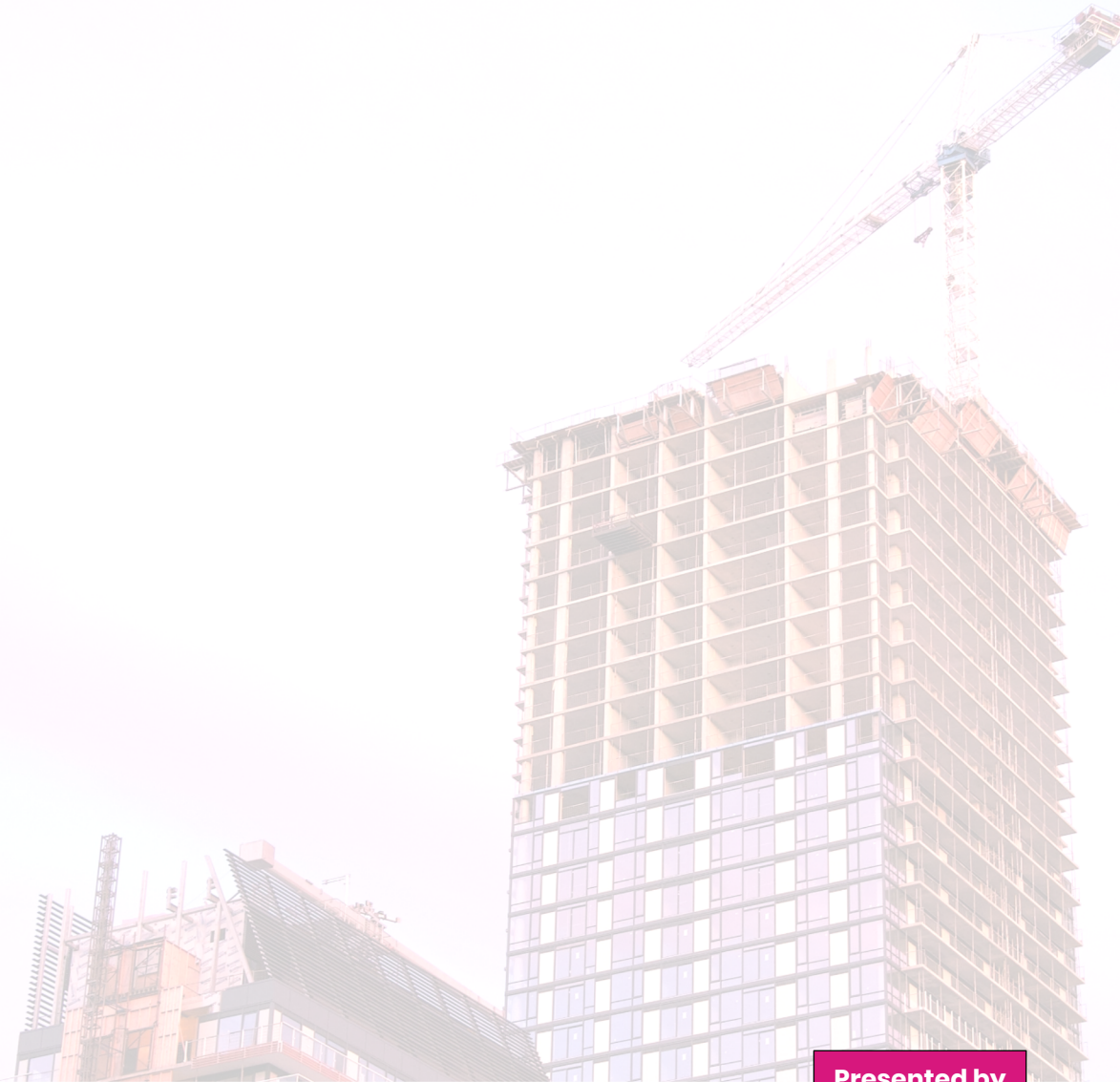
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