

**AN EVALUATION OF THE
INTERGENERATIONAL
MINI-GRANT PROGRAM
IN THE TOWNSHIP OF NORTH
DUMFRIES**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Intergenerational Mini-Grant Program was created and implemented in January 2005 as part of Phase 2 of the Social and Economic Inclusion Initiative (SEII), a project co-sponsored by the Social Planning Network of Ontario and the Public Health Agency of Canada (Ontario and Nunavut Region).

Its purpose was to empower residents of the Township of North Dumfries so that they could address issues affecting their quality of life. This was done by providing incentives for projects aimed at “closing the distance” between youth, seniors, and the larger society.

Well-received by the community, the mini-grant program stimulated proposals from a variety of formal and informal groups. Of these, five were funded. Awards were small but led to the creation of varied and interesting projects. In total over 300 people took part in the projects over a seven month period.

Building on work begun in the previous phase, the Intergenerational Mini-Grant Program had the following goals:

- To foster positive relationships between different age groups by providing opportunities for youth and seniors to work together on local projects.
- To mobilize as many segments of the community as possible by promoting the formation of new partnerships/collaborations.
- To showcase the competencies of youth and seniors by publicizing these projects throughout the township.

Information was gathered from a variety of sources including on-site observations, participant reflections, discussions with project organizers, newspaper articles, brochures, newsletters, and questionnaires. Data were analysed using an inclusion lens.

This evaluation demonstrated that the Intergenerational Mini-Grant Program effectively addressed multiple dimensions of social exclusion and inclusion. The various projects provided opportunities for exploration and discovery, they enabled competencies to be recognized, and led to positive relationships between different age groups. Participants gained an increased sense of empowerment, new linkages were formed, and in at least one case these linkages ensured a project's continued viability.

The results documented through this research establish the effectiveness of the Intergenerational Mini-Grant Program as strategy for social inclusion. They also identify ways to enhance the benefits of this initiative, including the need to publicize the program more widely.

The Intergenerational Mini-grant Program generated a great deal of interest and enthusiasm within the community and it is important to keep up the momentum for change. The evaluator recommends continued work around population health and social inclusion in the Township of North Dumfries.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

“To be included is to be accepted and to be able to participate fully within our families, our communities and our society. Those who are excluded, whether because of poverty, ill-health, gender, race, or lack of education, do not have the opportunity for full participation in the economic and social benefits of society. Simply put, exclusion is the problem; inclusion is the solution” (Guilford, 2000, p.5).

The Social and Economic Inclusion Initiative

The Social and Economic Inclusion Initiative (SEII) is a multi-year, province-wide project co-sponsored by the Social Planning Network of Ontario and the Public Health Agency of Canada (Ontario and Nunavut Region). As the above definition illustrates, many factors can lead to social exclusion. Not surprisingly then, each of the regional projects funded in the first phase of the SEII (2002-2004) had its own distinct focus and emphasis.

Ontario Central West Region

In Ontario Central West, Phase 1 was a collaborative effort between three different social planning councils and the emphasis was on isolated youth and seniors in rural and urban parts of the region. This phase saw youth, seniors, and community leaders from Cambridge-North Dumfries, Kitchener-Waterloo and Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk engage in learning forums and “kitchen table talks” to discuss barriers to participation in their respective communities. Based on these discussions, each community went on to identify its own local focus.

Cambridge-North Dumfries

In Cambridge-North Dumfries, youth articulated a number of concerns including limited opportunities for involvement and the need for more varied and permanent programming. They expressed a desire to take part in planning, and wanted to feel more connected with their community. Seniors wanted to utilize the knowledge and experience acquired over a lifetime; connection with others was a central theme; and leadership capacity was identified as an increasingly important issue (Quader, 2003). Both groups identified the presence of negative attitudes and age-based stereotypes.

Project staff worked with the community to identify strategies to address some of these issues. One of the highlights of the first phase was a workshop that “poked holes in perceptions on both sides of the age gap.” This workshop was very well received and went a long way toward dispelling myths and stereotypes and shifting negative perceptions.

The Intergenerational Mini-Grant Program

Of the three projects in Ontario Central West, only the Cambridge-North Dumfries project continued to the next phase of the SEII which began late in 2004. To capitalize on experience gained and lessons learned in Phase 1, a decision was made to narrow the scope to target youth and seniors in rural areas only, i.e. the Township of North Dumfries.

A Program Coordinator was hired and local participation in the planning process was sought through the North Dumfries Community Development Network (the Network), an informal association of township residents who are working together to strengthen their community.

The Network hosted a public meeting on January 31, 2005. At this meeting community leaders, seniors and youth made a commitment to build on and extend the work begun in the previous phase. One of the strategies suggested was to offer small grants that would create opportunities for seniors and youth to work together on projects that would benefit the community. This was agreed on by consensus and the intergenerational mini-grant program was born.

HOW CAN A MINI-GRANT PROGRAM HELP THE COMMUNITY?

Consistent with the principles of a population health approach, a mini-grant program is about empowering local people so that they can address issues that affect their health and well-being.

Program Goals

The Intergenerational Mini-Grant Program had the following goals:

1. To foster positive relationships between different age groups by providing opportunities for youth and seniors to work together on local projects.
2. To mobilize as many segments of the community as possible by promoting the formation of new partnerships and collaborations.
3. To showcase the competencies of youth and seniors by publicizing these projects throughout the township.

Details of the Work Plan can be found in Appendix 1.

In order to carry out the program, youth and adults were invited to serve as volunteers on an Advisory Committee. This committee was charged with establishing criteria (Appendix 2), reviewing applications, and selected five winning mini-grants. Committee members included the Chair of the Network Steering Committee, a resident of the Township of North Dumfries, and a member of the Cambridge and North Dumfries Community Foundation.

The call for proposals was met with great enthusiasm and more applications were received than could be funded. Below are descriptions of the successful mini-grant projects (paraphrased from grantee final reports).

Description of the Projects

Spruce Up Our Community (Community Support Services/Ayr Horticultural Society)

On April 23rd a group of 15 people, both youth and seniors, engaged in a spring clean-up of downtown Ayr including Centennial Park, the Campbell trail, as well as the areas behind the old Library and the Lawn Bowling Club. The cleanup was a collaborative effort between the Youth Council and the Ayr Horticultural Society. The pizza lunch that followed allowed participants to connect on a more personal level and begin to build and strengthen relationships. Several of the youth continued to work with the Horticultural Society on a second project - the design and production of an historical booklet about the Village of Ayr.

Youth Art Program (Fresh Ayr Festival)

The Youth Art Program was a new initiative where artists, art teachers and art professionals came together to help youth explore their creativity and nurture an interest in art. The goal was to help young people learn to express themselves and build confidence and self-esteem through art. The highlight was a one-day workshop on May 14th where 15 local artists taught their skills free of charge. Over 165 youth participated in classes offered in the following mediums: oil painting, acrylic painting, watercolour painting, drawing, collage, sculpture and photography.

Project Restore (Knox Senior Youth Group)

This service project was developed by a group of young people from Knox United Church in Ayr. The purpose of Project Restore was to help residents of a local retirement home with yard work and general maintenance. The youth assembled picnic tables and benches, mowed lawns and planned, designed, and planted a vegetable garden. The June 11th work bee concluded with an intergenerational barbeque.

Lawn Bowling (Community Support Services/Ayr Lawn Bowling Club)

Lawn Bowling was a six week long summer program in which members of the Ayr Lawn Bowling Club introduced local youth to the basics of the sport. The goal was to provide an opportunity for youth to learn a new recreational activity and to develop an appreciation for lawn bowling as a "sport for life".

Summer Concert Series (Ayr-Paris Band)

This series of four joint concerts by the Ayr-Paris Junior Band and the Ayr-Paris Senior Band saw children of all ages and adults as old as 78 playing side by side with the enjoyment of music as the common goal. The series' strong commitment to inclusion was evident with members of the Senior Band acting as mentors to members of the Junior Band during rehearsals and the selection of music that would appeal to younger musicians.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Evaluation questions were developed by the Program Coordinator with input from the Advisory Committee. Because this was a new initiative, there was interest in knowing:

- How the mini-grant application process went and how it could be improved.
- How many people were affected by the intergenerational projects that were funded.
- How successful the mini-grant program had been as a strategy for social inclusion (i.e. how effective it had been in “closing the distance” between youth and seniors and the larger society).

To help interpret results the evaluation used concepts from Shookner’s (2002) Inclusion Lens, a useful tool for “analysing legislation, policies, programs, and practices to determine whether they promote the social and economic inclusion of individuals, families, and communities” (p.1). According to Shookner (2002), social and economic exclusion and inclusion can be seen along several dimensions – cultural, economic, functional, participatory, physical, political, structural, and relational. The evaluation examined how the Intergenerational Mini-Grant Program acted on these different dimensions.

A detailed description of Shookner’s Dimensions of Social and Economic Exclusion and Inclusion can be found in Appendix 3.

METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

Data collection methodology included a grantee Final Evaluation Report (Appendix 4). Adapted from a questionnaire used by a similar neighbourhood mini-grant initiative in Oakland, California, the format included both open-ended and closed-ended questions (see Banh et al., 2004). Closed-ended questions were used to collect certain demographic information (participant numbers, age ranges, etc.). Open-ended questions allowed grantees to describe their projects in detail, share their accomplishments and challenges, and indicate future plans. A separate questionnaire was developed to evaluate the application process itself (Appendix 5).

Information was gathered throughout the program from a variety of sources including newspaper articles, participant reflections, discussions with project organizers, on-site observations, brochures, and newsletters.

As with all research, limitations in methodology must be kept in mind when interpreting results. These limitations include:

- Small sample size – There were only 5 projects, each of relatively short duration.

- Self-selection – Since participation in the mini-grant projects was entirely voluntary, it is conceivable that the youth and seniors who took part in these projects may have differed in some way from those who did not.
- Reporting bias – The evaluator was known to project participants and people may have skewed their comments to please the evaluator.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Information about Participants

All projects reported on their activities. Four of the grantees completed Final Evaluation Report forms while one submitted information in a different format.

Participants	Project Restore	Spruce up our Community	Lawn Bowling	Summer Concert Series	Youth Art Workshop
Children/Youth	12	12	10	30	165
Adults/Seniors	4	5	4	45	15

We asked how many people had participated in the projects.

- There were 302 participants in the five mini-grant projects. The largest project (Youth Art Workshop) had 180 participants; the smallest (Project Restore) had 16.
- In addition to the participants themselves, over 100 other people attended project-related events (notably the Summer Concert Series).
- While all projects reported participation from teens (13-19) and seniors (60+), most reported the involvement of children (5-12), young adults (20-24), and adults (25-59) as well.

To help determine how well the program had been publicized, we asked grantees how they had heard about the Intergenerational Project Mini-Grants.

- Sources of information were varied and included the Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries, the Project Coordinator, the local newspaper, and a social service agency.

To determine the level of development, we asked how long each group had been together.

- All groups had been in existence for more than 2 years, with one group (the Ayr-Paris Band) making preparations to celebrate their 50th anniversary.

We asked about other community projects.

- All groups had been involved in other community projects. These included the Fresh Ayr Festival, supporting the food bank, hosting youth conferences and participating in community parades and concerts.

We asked about the mini-grant application process.

- All groups but one (Knox Senior Youth Group) had previous experience with grant writing. All groups rated the application process “easy” or “very easy” and there were no suggestions for changes in the future.

Achievement of Outcomes

The major findings from this evaluation will be examined in relation to the indicators of social inclusion outlined above.

1. Has the mini-grant program increased the ability of youth and seniors to participate in the community and have their competencies recognized?

While all of the mini-grant projects welcomed the involvement of youth and seniors, two projects in particular were valued as opportunities for exploration and discovery:

Lawn bowling is not taught in local schools and young people normally have limited exposure to this recreational activity. This led to a certain amount of pre-event nervousness on the part of the project’s organiser who wondered whether youth would join in. In the end the worry was for naught. Ten young people attended the first session and their discovery that “lawn bowling is not a sport just for seniors” was greeted with much relief. A core group of young people became regular weekly participants.

The Youth Art Workshop also provided an opportunity to try something new. As one parent observed, with competent instruction in a variety of mediums the project “allowed kids to explore their artistic and creative side.”

Mini-grant projects provided an opportunity to showcase talent:

Participants in the Youth Art Workshop collaborated on a canvas that was eventually donated to the community. Their individual artwork was displayed at the Fresh Ayr Festival, and selected pieces were submitted to the Youth Art Contest. In this way young people were encouraged to publicly share their artistic impressions of rural life.

Project Restore involved tasks at which the Knox Senior Youth Group proved very adept. As one satisfied participant remarked, “The seniors now have a happier, cleaner place to live.”

At least two of the mini-grant projects made special accommodations for the youth:

The Summer Concert Series included arrangements of popular music that would appeal to the younger performers. As noted by the program organizer, this sensitivity to the interests of young people really paid off:

"We received great response and praise from our audience at the concert. They were very impressed with how many young people were playing with the band. We [also] had people of all ages come to listen to our music."

In fact, this project was plagued by its own success: "The only problem which we worked out was getting so many musicians in the pavilion."

The Lawn Bowling Club made a point of having lighter bowls on hand for the younger players.

Overall, the mini-grant projects proved to be hugely popular, with over 300 people in total taking part.

2. Has the mini-grant program led to positive relationships among the different age groups? Do youth and seniors enjoy recognition, cooperation, and respect?

The five projects encompassed very different kinds of activities, ranging from youth serving seniors (Project Restore) to seniors serving youth (Lawn Bowling, Summer Concert Series, Youth Art Workshop) to youth and seniors working together for the benefit of the community (Spruce up our Community). Regardless of the activity engaged in, caring relationships soon developed between project participants as illustrated by the following comments:

"The younger [band] members looked forward to sitting and sharing with the senior [band] members at the next practice" (Summer Concert Series)

"We have formed a unique relationship with the people of that home and hope to stop by to see how everything is going in the near future" (Project Restore)

A real strength of the mini-grant program was that participation was completely voluntary. People chose which projects they wanted to be involved in and were surrounded by others who had similar interests. Through shared effort and cooperation, youth and seniors developed a mutual respect for each other:

"Overall, participants were enabled to recognize their similarities regardless of the gap in age" (Spruce up our Community)

As often happens, once abilities were recognized new opportunities soon presented themselves:

"[After the project ended] several of the youth continued to work with some of the Horticultural members" (Spruce up our Community)

3. Have youth and seniors gained a sense of empowerment, an increased sense of their ability to contribute to the community?

Organizers of the Youth Art Workshop were pleased to have successfully recruited a number of local artists to volunteer their time. An excerpt from the May 25th edition of the Ayr News sheds some light on their motivation:

"When asked why they did this, the answer was simple: it was because of their commitment to art and their desire to pass along these passions to the young people in our community."

As a testament to the success of this project, most of these artists expressed a willingness to continue as teachers/mentors to youth in the future.

One of the aims of the mini-grant program was to make funds available to small, informal groups who may not qualify for funding through other sources. One such group was the Senior Youth Group from Knox United Church. These high-school-aged students conceived of, planned, and carried out Project Restore with minimal adult involvement. While acknowledging that it had been hard work, the group felt that it was "definitely worth it" and were ready for the next project:

"It would be a great opportunity to be involved more in the community and we would be interested"

Participants in other projects shared similar sentiments, and some groups even made tentative plans:

"We are thinking of a project around Christmas time - maybe getting the junior band to participate in the Ayr Santa Claus parade along with the senior band." (Summer Concert Series)

"[We will] develop and intergenerational planning group to outline two projects per year" (Spruce up our Community)

4. Has the mini-grant program increased access to training programs locally? Have new partnerships formed among community groups?

We asked grantees whether the mini-grant program had helped them connect with other local groups. All five reported that it had. Community Support Services formed new partnerships with two groups. It partnered with the Horticultural Society for Spruce up our Community. It also partnered with the Lawn Bowling Club for the Lawn Bowling instruction. Organizers of the Youth Art Program received help from local artists. The organizer of the Summer Concert Series reported: "It has helped us connect with a group of local Scottish dancers which we would like to have perform at one of our concerts." Even the Social Planning Council partnered with the Cambridge and North Dumfries Community Foundation to develop criteria for the Mini-Grant Program.

We also asked if the mini-grant program had helped get new resources. The Youth Art Program had levered funding to obtain an Arts Council Grant. Community

Support Services submitted a recreation proposal to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

A very pleasant unanticipated outcome was an offer by the Optimist Club of Ayr to co-host a recognition event with the Network honouring mini-grant participants. That event is scheduled for September 2005.

A very creative example of sustainability was reported by the Youth Art Workshop. This project gave children an opportunity to learn new skills in various different mediums and art forms. In this small rural community with limited resources the project provided opportunities they would not otherwise have had. As one parent whose child attended the workshop commented:

"[Prior to this event] children in Ayr must go to other communities to develop artistically...yes, we are in desperate need of these programs"

With 165 children participating, the Youth Art Workshop was an unqualified success. However, not willing to stop there, organizers published a brochure listing artists available for private instruction. In this way they ensured that young people would continue to have the opportunity to train locally.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results documented through this research establish the effectiveness of the Intergenerational Mini-Grant Program as strategy for social inclusion.

Youth and seniors worked together on a variety of projects. Caring relationships developed between participants. Project participants gained a sense of empowerment. All groups reported new connections with other local groups, and in at least one case these connections will ensure the continued viability of the project.

There were some physical improvements in the community as well – a park was cleaned up, a garden was planted, and mural was painted.

While the program was successful overall, a number of recommendations are suggested to enhance the benefits of this initiative.

1. The Township of North Dumfries encompasses a sizeable geographic area, yet all of the proposals came from groups in the Village of Ayr. It would be advisable to revisit the advertising strategy and timeline to ensure that the program is well-publicized throughout the township and that newer and smaller groups are supported during the application process.
2. Greater representation from youth and seniors on the Advisory Committee would benefit both the individual and the program.
3. Although many individuals and groups expressed a willingness to take part in other community projects (and some had even made tentative plans), this evaluation only looked at short-term outcomes. It would be instructive to make contact again in a year's time to see whether these plans had ever materialized.

Overall, the intergenerational mini-grant program generated a great deal of interest and enthusiasm. It is important to keep up the momentum for change. We see the North Dumfries Community Development Network as playing a key role in supporting continued work around population health and social inclusion in the Township of North Dumfries.

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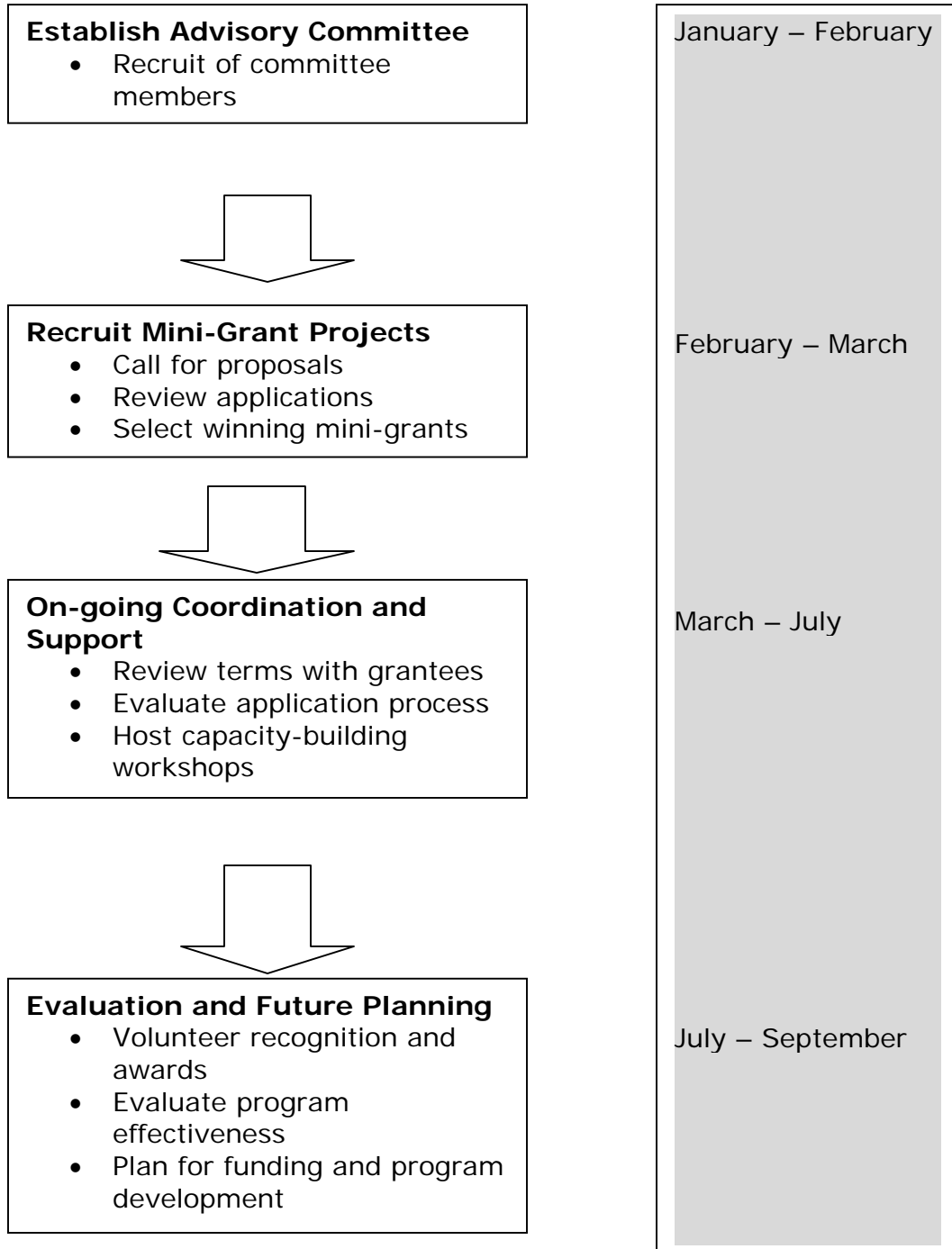
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Mini-Grant Program Work Plan



APPENDIX 2: Project Rating Sheet

**North Dumfries Community Development Network
Mini-Grant Project Rating Sheet**

Name of Group: _____

Project Title: _____

Date: _____

Criteria	How Well Proposal Meets Criteria (0-5)	Weighting	Total (1x2)
1. Targets youth and seniors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • older adults serving children and/or youth, • children and/or youth serving older adults, • older adults and/or youth collaborating in service to the community, • older adults and/or youth engaging in informal learning activities 		.50	
2. Anticipated benefits/outcomes		.10	
3. Capacity to carry out program		.10	
4. The budget is reasonable		.10	
5. The group will use mini-grant funds in combination with other community resources		.10	
6. WOW factor		.10	
Total		1.0	

Meets criteria – 0=not at all; 5=very well

APPENDIX 3: Dimensions of Social Inclusion and Exclusion

Elements of Exclusion	Dimensions	Elements of Inclusion
Disadvantage , fear of differences, intolerance, gender stereotyping, historic oppression, cultural deprivation.	Cultural	Valuing contributions of women and men to society, recognition of differences, valuing diversity, positive identity, anti-racist education.
Poverty , unemployment, non-standard employment, inadequate income for basic needs, participation in society, stigma, embarrassment, inequality, income disparities, deprivation, insecurity, devaluation of caregiving, illiteracy, lack of educational access.	Economic	Adequate income for basic needs and participation in society, poverty eradication, employment, capability for personal development, personal security, sustainable development, reducing disparities, value and support caregiving.
Disability , restrictions based on limitations, overwork, time stress, undervaluing of assets available.	Functional	Ability to participate , opportunities for personal development, valued social roles, recognizing competence.
Marginalization , silencing, barriers to participation, institutional dependency, no room for choice, not involved in decision making.	Participatory	Empowerment , freedom to choose, contribution to community, access to programs, resources and capacity to support participation, involved in decision making, social action.
Barriers to movement, restricted access to public spaces, social distancing, unfriendly/unhealthy environments, lack of transportation, unsustainable environments.	Physical	Access to public places and community resources, physical proximity and opportunities for interaction, healthy/supportive environments, access to transportation, sustainability.
Denial of human rights , restrictive policies and legislation, blaming the victims, short-term view, one dimensional, restricting eligibility for programs, lack of transparency in decision making.	Political	Affirmation of human rights , enabling policies and legislation, social protection for vulnerable groups, removing systemic barriers, will to take action, long-term view, multi-dimensional, citizen participation, transparent decision making.
Isolation , segregation, distancing, competitiveness, violence and abuse, fear, shame.	Relational	Belonging , social proximity, respect, recognition, cooperation, solidarity, family support, access to resources.
Discrimination , racism, sexism, homophobia, restrictions on eligibility, no access to programs, barriers to access, withholding information, departmental silos, government jurisdictions, secretive/restricted communications, rigid boundaries.	Structural	Entitlements , access to programs, transparent pathways to access, affirmative action, community capacity building, inter-departmental links, inter-governmental links, accountability, open channels of communication, options for change, flexibility.

Source: An Inclusion Lens: Workbook for Looking at Social and Economic Exclusion and Inclusion (Shookner, 2002, p.5)

8. Has the Mini-Grant initiative helped you or your group to get new resources?
__Yes __No __Don't Know

If yes, which ones?

9. How would you or your group like to be involved in intergenerational projects in the future?

10. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your project?

☺ **Thank you for filling out this report!** ☺

*Adapted from: <http://comhealth.home.igc.org>

