

Evaluation Report - Year 2 Healthy Communities Project

Submitted to Special Olympics PEI

March 31, 2020

THE Quaich INC.

Consulting & Marketing of Health Innovations

TEL (902) 894-3399
FAX (902) 626-3221
E-MAIL info@thequaich.pe.ca
WWW thequaich.pe.ca

25 Bolger Drive
Charlottetown
Prince Edward Island
C1A 7T2, CANADA

***Special
Olympics***
Prince Edward Island



**Healthy Communities Project
Year 2 - Evaluation Report**

March 31, 2020



Special Olympics
Health
MADE POSSIBLE BY **Golisano** FOUNDATION

Report prepared by The Quaich Inc.

THE **Quaich** INC.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2018, [Special Olympics PEI](#) (SOPEI) received three-year funding for a Healthy Communities Project. The vision of the project is to create communities where Special Olympics athletes and others with intellectual disabilities (ID)¹ have the same access to health and wellness resources – and can attain the same level of good health – as all community members, and where there is no “wrong door for someone with ID to walk through”. Components of the Healthy Communities Project include:

- Leadership for Sustainable Change
- Health and Wellness programming
- Access to follow-up care
- Health provider engagement
- Partnership Development

This project is part of an international outreach of Special Olympics International to establish similar projects worldwide. Funding is provided by the [Golisano Foundation](#) (April 2018 – March 2021).



In October 2018, [The Quaich Inc.](#) was contracted by Special Olympics PEI to evaluate the Healthy Communities Project. This report includes a summary of the evaluation approach and a report card on project activities during the second year of the project. It provides a picture of how the activities unfolded to meet the objectives and outcomes of the project, and serves to inform the funders and SOPEI Board of Directors on the project achievements. It also provides recommendations to SOPEI for activities planned for the third year of the project.

Approach:

Evaluation activities were initiated by SOPEI at the beginning of this project to assess its evaluability and ensure the project was well set up for evaluation. The Quaich Inc. worked with the Program Director to consult on the evaluation planning process, development of the logic model, the evaluation framework, and data collection tools. The following short and long-term outcomes were outlined in the logic model:

¹ **Intellectual disability** - An individual is considered to have an intellectual disability based on the following three criteria*:
i. Intellectual functioning level (IQ) is generally below 70-75;
ii. Significant limitations exist in two or more adaptive skill areas;
iii. The condition generally manifests itself before the age of 18.
(* based on the *American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* (AAIDD) definition)

Short-term outcomes:

- By 2021, the project will meet or exceed the minimum standards of becoming a certified Healthy Community as outlined by Special Olympics and will be closer to self-sustainability, providing more resources to other growing programs.
- The number of athletes involved in health and wellness programs will have increased by 20% and health status of athletes and others participating in health and wellness programs has improved, measured by reduction in obesity and improved self-reporting of mental health.
- A streamlined follow-up process will have resulted in 70% of athletes having access to follow-up care as recommended in screening results.
- At least 25 healthcare professionals in the community have an increased awareness of the health work of Special Olympics, the unmet health needs of people with ID and have increased professional support for people with ID.
- By March 2021, 10 new or redefined sustainable partnerships will have influenced a change in provincial policy and services taking a more whole of government, whole society, holistic approach to health for SOPEI athletes, for all who have an Intellectual Disability, and for communities in general.



Long-term outcomes:

- SOPEI Healthy Communities Project is recognized for leadership in informing and advocating for policy and service change at local, regional and national levels.
- Systems change through policy and programs has resulted in communities that are healthier and more inclusive.

The evaluation framework guided the development of methods and tools to evaluate both the process and progress toward the stated outcomes each year. Key methods used for data collection were document reviews, focus groups with the SOPEI Board, and Project Team.

Conclusion:

In reflecting on the project, the Project Team is in agreement that engagement in the evaluation and preparatory work continues to be invaluable, and provides a solid foundation for the project. The recommendations of the Year 1 Evaluation report (Appendix H) provided a priority list for Year 2, and

the templates developed as recommendations for exit surveys and records of meetings were used and adapted as needed. In addition, the methods have been incorporated in other aspects of SOPEI work and shared nationally.

- *“We have taken these processes into other work we are doing...have shared the methods with SOC and they are using some of the tools in their planning.”*
- *“Process of evaluation is more valuable for me as it allows me to reflect and have clarity.”*

The Project Team reports being more than satisfied with the project and the outcomes to date. When asked to identify the greatest contribution to advancing the project, the ED quickly acknowledged that having a position dedicated to this work and a supportive team were key. The Golisano funding currently supports the staff position and she is grateful for this. The Engagement Specialist agreed that she could not do all she is doing without the leadership provided to the project, having a supportive team, and time to dedicate to the work, as *“relationship building takes time”*.

- *“I am so fortunate that this is my primary job.”*
- *“Often don’t give ourselves credit as a whole team.”*

In completing the evaluation process for Year 2, the evaluators note a number of themes that have emerged: leadership, culture change, sustainability, relationships, and community. We are satisfied that the Project Team has acted on the recommendations from Year 1 and is committed to engaging with others across Canada to make a difference not only for SOPEI athletes, but for those in the broader community with ID. We have some recommendations for Year 3, but our strongest recommendation is to continue the good work, evaluate, innovate, engage and communicate, while providing leadership to others. We also acknowledge that this will be a challenge as SOPEI adjusts its programming to the realities of COVID-19 Global Pandemic, and we will be monitoring this impact over the next year.

Recommendations:

Project Activities

1. Project Management
 - Continue to innovate and adapt project activities to the new context experienced with the arrival of COVID-19
2. Partnership Engagement and Management
 - Continue to engage and nurture an increased number of diverse partnerships within community and systems, for sustainability and continuity of programs after Year 3 of the project is complete.

- Propose signing an MOU or Partnership Agreement with partner organizations, to formalize the relationship.
 - Set up a mechanism for evaluating existing partnerships and to continue engaging strategic partnerships, at many levels, local community, government, professional organizations, and funders.
3. Improving health outcomes
 - Place continued emphasis on health provider engagement and determinants of health working on community issues that impact the athletes.
 - If a full understanding of the follow-up compliance is desired by SOPEI, it should consider developing a method or searching for a method from best practice that is sensitive to confidentiality yet at the same time provides data on compliance.
 4. Sustainability
 - Use the Circle of Health, not simply as a framework embedded in a proposal, but as a tool that can be actively applied to the project - to both assess and plan going forward.
 - Continue efforts to allocate funds to the work within SOPEI and through new funding partners, after the Golisano Funding ends.
 5. Board engagement
 - Schedule a Q & A session for the Board of Directors and project staff on a quarterly basis.
 - Continue to consider Board member skill sets and gaps, with an eye to acquiring more members with a background in the health field.
 6. Dissemination
 - Consider publishing the process and outcomes of the SOPEI Healthy Communities Project in a journal article.

Reporting and Data Collection

1. Develop a communications strategy for the Healthy Communities project, and use it as a means of measuring the communications work undertaken.
2. Use a standard template as a formal record of meeting notes and action items, to capture key highlights and action items from internal meetings.
3. Include a question in participant surveys asking how they heard about the event, to collect information for comparison between events, as well as information to evaluate communication methods.
4. Collect more testimonials, to be shared with the public, potential partners and sponsors, and in recruiting Clinical Directors.
5. Circulate a volunteer survey after each event.

6. Use a revised version of the participant survey, to obtain additional information on repeat attendance and methods of publicity, as well to include inclusive language around gender.
7. Check in with families several months after health events, to see if the tools or ideas they learned were able to be sustained.
8. Continue to use the Volunteer Tracking Sheet to gather data for assessing volunteer participation levels between each year and/or each screening, and ensure that information is fully completed.
9. Continue to use the Community Engagement Tracking Sheet to record contact with potential partners and other community groups, and ensure that details are provided for each engagement.
10. After each Healthy Athletes event, recognize partners formally through SOPEI's media channels.
11. Invite members of the press to attend Healthy Athletes events.

2.2 Project Description

In January 2018, SOPEI received three-year funding for a Healthy Communities Project. The vision of the project is to create communities where Special Olympics athletes and others with intellectual disabilities (ID)³ have the same access to health and wellness resources – and can attain the same level of good health – as all community members, and where there is no “wrong door for someone with ID to walk through”.

This project is part of an international outreach of Special Olympics International to establish similar projects worldwide. Funding is provided by the [Golisano Foundation](#) (April 2018 – March 2021).

Objectives of the project include meeting or exceeding the minimum standards of becoming a certified Healthy Community as outlined by Special Olympics, no later than 2021.

Components of the Healthy Communities Project include:

1. Leadership for Sustainable Change

Objective 1: To increase sustainability of changes achieved by this project while achieving Healthy Community status as defined by Special Olympics International.

2. Health and Wellness programming

Objective 2: To improve the health status of athletes and others in their communities, by offering health and wellness programming, involving coaches and partners, ensuring 20% of athletes are enrolled in a year.



³ Intellectual disability

An individual is considered to have an intellectual disability based on the following three criteria*:

- i. Intellectual functioning level (IQ) is generally below 70-75;
- ii. Significant limitations exist in two or more adaptive skill areas;
- iii. The condition generally manifests itself before the age of 18.

(* based on the *American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD)* definition)

3. Access to follow-up care

Objective 3: To increase access to follow-up care by ensuring that a minimum 70% of athletes who receive referrals at Healthy Athletes (HA) Programs have a place to go for follow-up care

4. Health provider engagement

Objective 4: To increase health care provider comfort & knowledge of how to treat people with ID; and acknowledge health professionals in our community who demonstrate best practice in working with individuals with ID.

5. Partnership Development

Objective 5: To establish 10 sustainable partnerships to increase and sustain focus on holistic health in provincial services for athletes and the broader community.

For a detailed list of activities associated with each objective see Appendix A (Logic Model).



3. EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Evaluation Approach

To ensure the evaluation plan would be as comprehensive as possible within available timelines and resources, The Quaich Inc. worked with the Project Team to consult on the planning evaluation process with development of the logic model, the evaluation framework, and data collection tools. Year 1 of the project was considered a critical year and these activities laid the foundation for achieving anticipated project outcomes in Year 2 and 3. The evaluation undertaken for this project involves both formative and summative evaluation, and thus is focused on both process and outcomes. The report completed in Year 1 served as a formative evaluation, providing recommendations to guide the work of Year 2. While the Project Team addressed these recommendations, it also engaged in new activities, adapting the delivery of the project to meet project objectives.

The interim reports for Year 1 and Year 2 are part of a solid evaluation that is participatory in nature, engaging the Project Team in planning and measuring desired change. The summative evaluation in the final year of the project will help determine the impact of the project on the target population and the extent to which the project is successful in achieving the desired project objectives. Based on findings of this Year 2 report, additional reporting tools and methods will be developed for the final year of the project.

An overview of each of the evaluation planning activities and how they relate to the evaluation is provided in Appendix B (Evaluation Planning Activities).

3.2 Evaluation Planning Process

In planning the evaluation for this project, the first step was to develop a logic model to determine the project evaluability, i.e., whether the plan for the project was complete in its logic and could be evaluated (see Appendix A – Logic Model). The steps in developing the logic model included a review of the proposal and a draft logic model based on our understanding of the project. The logic model was reviewed by the Project Team, and edits were made to correct any errors in interpretation. The logic model was validated on February 14, 2018.

To guide the evaluation, the logic model outlined the five components with project objectives as outlined in Section 2.2 of this report. The following short and long-term outcomes were also outlined in the logic model.

Short-term outcomes:

- By 2021, the project will meet or exceed the minimum standards of becoming a certified Healthy Community as outlined by Special Olympics and will be closer to self-sustainability, providing more resources to other growing programs.
- The number of athletes involved in health and wellness programs will have increased by 20% and health status of athletes and others participating in health and wellness programs has improved, measured by reduction in obesity and improved self-reporting of mental health.
- A streamlined follow-up process will have resulted in 70% of athletes having access to follow-up care as recommended in screening results.
- At least 25 healthcare professionals in the community have an increased awareness of the health work of Special Olympics, the unmet health needs of people with ID and have increased professional support for people with ID.
- By March 2021, 10 new or redefined sustainable partnerships will have influenced a change in provincial policy and services taking a more whole of government, whole society, holistic approach to health for SOPEI athletes, for all who have an Intellectual Disability, and for communities in general.



Long-term outcomes:

- SOPEI Healthy Communities Project is recognized for leadership in informing and advocating for policy and service change at local, regional and national levels.
- Systems change through policy and programs has resulted in communities that are healthier and more inclusive.

Identifying the outcomes was critical for developing the evaluation framework (Appendix C - Evaluation Framework). Questions, data sources and methods were identified in the framework to measure achievement of the objectives and short-term outcomes. Consultation with the Project Team and subsequent conference calls resulted in a review and update to the evaluation framework. Key adjustments to the framework related to decisions on data sources. For example, a decision was made to not include the LETR Executive as a source of data for the Year 2 Evaluation. LETR is currently developing as an organization with new leadership, and while enthusiastic about fundraising for SOPEI, is not currently engaged in the Healthy Communities Project. Additionally, a decision documented in the Year 1 Evaluation, not to have an Advisory Committee and to seek advice on an ad hoc basis, was

also considered in determining data sources for this evaluation. The updated Evaluation Framework and the Data Collection Plan were confirmed on November 5 , 2019 (Appendix D – Data Collection Plan).

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Data for the Year 2 evaluation was gathered on project activities through focus groups, document review, stories and testimonials. Data collection instruments such as focus group guides (Appendix E – Focus Group Guides and Presentations) a grid for document review (Appendix F – Document Review Grid) and record of media articles (Appendix G - Media Articles) were developed by The Quaich Inc.

The key data collection methods used to gather evaluative information for the Year 2 report include:

Focus Groups – SOPEI Board of Directors, Healthy Communities Project Team

Focus groups were held on February 3, 2020 with the SOPEI Healthy Communities Project Team⁴ and on February 18, 2020 with the SOPEI Board of Directors.

Document Review

As per the data collection plan, the Program Director and Engagement Specialist compiled all essential documents in Dropbox for review by the evaluators.

3.4 Data Analysis

All textual (qualitative) information gathered from the project was collated and a thematic analysis conducted (frequency and intensity of responses). All quantitative data gathered from the document review were analyzed in reference to the objectives and questions in the evaluation framework.

⁴ The SOPEI Healthy Communities Project Team consists of Matthew McNally, Program Director; Kristen MacDonald, Engagement Specialist; Ellen Murphy, Sport Developer; and Charity Sheehan, Executive Director of Special Olympics PEI.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The evaluation findings are presented by data collection methods within the project components outlined in the logic model and evaluation framework.

4.1 Leadership for Sustainable Change

Highlights of activities undertaken by SOPEI to provide leadership for sustainability are outlined in this section. The proposed activities included setting up and managing the project, planning for partnership development, engaging in a communications strategy, and initiating an evaluation process and a plan for sustainability in order to achieve **Objective 1: To increase sustainability of changes achieved by this project while achieving Healthy Community status as defined by Special Olympics International.**

The reporting on these activities at the end of Year 2 relied on a review of documentation received from the SOPEI Healthy Communities Project Team and focus groups held with the SOPEI Board of Directors and the SOPEI Healthy Communities Project Team.

Focus Groups

Focus Group - Project Team

In the focus group with the Project Team (Program Director, Engagement Specialist and SOPEI Executive Director) held on February 3, 2020, each member responded to the questions posed and engaged in a full discussion.

At a briefing held on November 5, 2019 to review the logic model and evaluation framework, the Project Team reported that the work of the Healthy Communities Project had been integrated into the staff structure of the entire SOPEI organization as it seemed most strategic to maximize the impact of the project with the resources available. Evaluator Patsy Beattie-Huggan asked how that was working. The response of the Project Team was positive, noting that the shift had resulted in changing the culture of the organization so that health is integrated in all discussions, and working together on the project means that the SOPEI Staff Team is able to team up on all activities and in all events.

- *“Conversation is now more holistic in that in the Healthy Communities project we reach out to our athletes and beyond; in our sports projects we bring health into what events we set up. “*



The Program Director reiterated that when the project was first applied for, the purpose was to see a change in BMI but it has become more holistic and still meets the overall objectives and outcomes. All agreed that by the Project Team being flexible, they were able to find opportunities to partner with others who had similar values and vision. They also found the Golisano Foundation, as the funder, is supportive of the shift in the project, and also flexible in acknowledging that the project is a snapshot in time, a starting point. Although interested in quantitative measurements, the funder is also interested in their stories and wants to know how the whole community is changing.

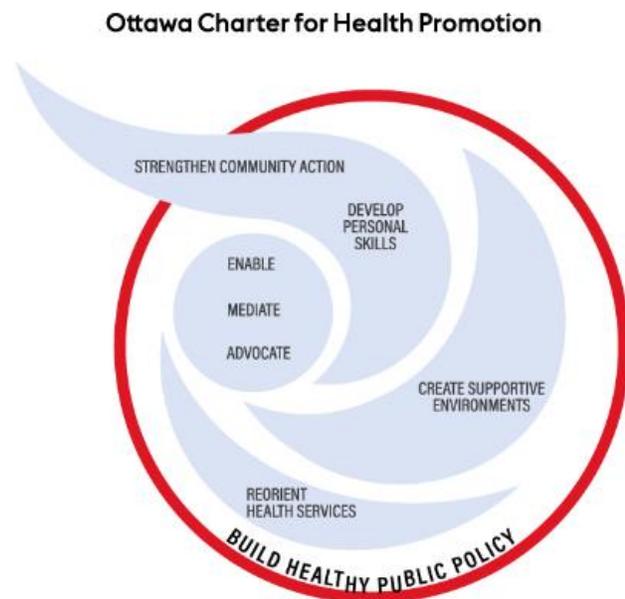
- *“Funders know that change takes time and will only happen with relationships – Its important to get to know the athletes and everyone involved in their world.”*

The Executive Director summarized the discussion saying that the project has taken the Project Team in many directions, and they needed to come back to the vision to decide which opportunities to pursue and who to partner with to meet the project goals. She believes that the project will create system change to improve the lives of people with ID because SOPEI staff and the Board believe in it. Her leadership is guided by the mantra:

- *“If we don’t see change happening and there is need for change to happen – we need to step up!”*

The Project Team is satisfied with the organization and productivity of their events and meetings. They have been keeping records of their meetings and used exit surveys for their Family Health Forum to continue learning from their efforts.

When asked about the effectiveness of the Healthy Communities Project communication strategy, the Engagement Specialist reported that she found the initial strategy difficult to use as a guide, since communication been organic and has evolved as the project has evolved. She stressed that communication is occurring with eight different professional organizations and all of them receive information in different ways. On the positive side, as recommended in the Year 1 evaluation, a one-pager was created that is branded with key messages. The template is flexible enough to be adapted to different audiences. In addition, she created a one page document that maps the project activities visually based the Ottawa Charter.



This document communicates the health promoting nature of the project, which she says has made it easier to communicate with the health sector. Creating a PowerPoint with the same messages that can be adapted to different audiences has also helped and she hopes that it can be a sustainability tool.

With regard to public awareness, the team reported that while they have responded to requests, made presentations to community groups (e.g. Men who Give a Shit) and highlighted activities on social media, they could be more proactive. The team anticipates that once they are clear on the kind of system change they want, they will rally public support and approach government for a public/private partnership. This will become more clear as many of the sub-projects now underway become more mature.

The Executive Director feels SOPEI is positioning itself well for sustaining the momentum of this project by having staff fully involved, planning with the Board for a budget to support the ongoing work, and having exploratory conversations with potential funding partners. All team members voice a commitment to the project and feel that the project structure enables them to tap into various skills of SOPEI as they are needed.

- *“The shift in organizational structure was a critical decision, designed to ensure sustainability given the current resources.”*

In conclusion, the Executive Director reflected on how to best secure government support going forward. She feels that screening drives funding because screening provides data to demonstrate change, and the data compiled from screenings can be a selling point in seeking government funding. Addressing key issues that impact the health of athletes will require ongoing SOPEI focus in partnering with other sectors to address underlying conditions and issues such as homelessness.

Focus Group - SOPEI Board of Directors

In a focus group with the SOPEI Board on February 18, 2020, with the Executive Director and Program Director participating, the Evaluator provided a PowerPoint presentation to highlight the evaluation process for the SOPEI Healthy Communities Project and outline the questions to guide the focus group (Appendix E - Focus Group Guides and presentations). Since the second year of the project has been completed, it was anticipated that Board members would be more aware and supportive of the project than reported in the evaluation of Year 1. This assumption was confirmed, as Board members feel that they are kept informed through project updates provided by the Executive Director at each Board meeting. They also feel that the project is advancing Board ends and expressed satisfaction with the way in which the project is unfolding and how it is impacting PEI.

- *“I think that the fact that we are focusing on the health of our athletes is amazing.”*

- *“I am satisfied that the project is going well – I am not seeking additional information or trying to influence the process, but satisfied that we are being kept up to date and headed in the right direction.”*

The Board affirmed the power of the project to influence change in the health care system to better address the health of athletes. One Board member raised the fact that SOPEI athletes are high-end in terms of health needs, and others identified that two factors are at play, i.e., most service providers are not comfortable working with individuals with intellectual disabilities, and many athletes are not motivated to access health services that are available. They concluded that the project has the potential to make both a significant shift in the way health providers relate to individuals with ID, and the motivation of athletes, their families and caregivers to access available services.



- *“It is an intriguing challenge to address the health of the athletes, as this population has traditionally not been popular for health providers to deal with and athletes have limited capacity and/or motivation to seek health care.”*
- *“It needs to be brought to the health profession that there are clients in need out there with complex problems to be addressed.”*
- *“We need to know what is covered for athletes through Medicare and what requires additional insurance.”*

The Board sought clarification as to whether the Healthy Communities movement is relatively new, and if it had a global aspect. The Program Director reported that while it is reasonably new, there is much to learn from three other Healthy Community Projects in Canada. For example, the British Columbia project has just completed their three year cycle and has built Healthy Community activities in their budget as a means of ensuring sustainability.

There was a unanimous sense among the Board members that sustainability is desirable. The question was raised as to where funding is available. The ED reported that currently there are limitations to seeking go-forward funding due to the terms of the three year funding from the Golisano Foundation. She also reported that she is already having internal discussions about how to sustain the work at the end of the Golisano funding, with such strategies as additional resources in the budget and developing partnerships with others.

- *“I think this is ongoing – we have to continue on with these activities. We are just opening doors with key organizations and need to open more doors.”*
- *“This is more like a movement than a project.”*

Board members were pleased to hear that the concern they identified during the Year 1 Evaluation regarding group home policies perceived to have negative impacts on activity and nutrition of athletes, was addressed. Efforts were made to open discussions with group homes and include residents in screenings. They expressed interest in having the project work more with health professionals and also address issues in the community that impact the health of SOPEI athletes such as housing. The Board recommended that the Healthy Communities Project make efforts to expand and sustain the work of the project.

Document Review

Documents reviewed for this section of the evaluation include correspondence, volunteer lists, Healthy Communities reports submitted to SOI, meeting and event reporting tools, media coverage, social media posts, graphics and presentations, the workplan, logic model and Year 1 evaluation report.

Project Management

SOPEI is thankful to have the resources for a staff member included with this project’s funding, to specifically focus on building awareness among the health professional community and building stronger relationships with the support networks that SOPEI athletes utilize daily. Even with a staff member dedicated to the project, managing time is a challenge, as many follow-up connections are needed to keep the momentum going on many pieces of the project.



Monthly reports show that project activities are working towards achievement of anticipated outcomes. SOPEI staff found the reflection meeting with the evaluators at the end of Year 1 to be helpful in looking back, as well as looking ahead to Year 2 and 3. They reviewed the logic model, workplan, Gantt Chart and Terms of Reference at the beginning of Year 2 to review: project objectives and outcomes, evaluation recommendations before taking on additional activities; and to formalize the roles of each staff member. SOPEI felt this was helpful, and a check-in meeting was also held in November 2019, in which reporting tools were discussed and some additional files were created or revised. An additional

discussion was held about how the Circle of Health can be used to better evaluate and define elements of the research project, in relation to the Ottawa Charter of Health Promotion.

The Board is aware of the project and supportive, but the team felt that a 1-page information sheet would be helpful to keep the Board aware of the overall project, along with recent accomplishments. This was created and is will be a helpful tool for sustainability.

Further engagement of the LETR Executive may happen in the future, but not now. The SOPEI Project Team hopes for their engagement with a wellness program, awareness and fundraising, and developing as an organization with new leadership. They expect to revisit these ideas in Year 3.

Meetings

It appears that meetings are being held in an organized manner with key personnel. SOPEI staff is constantly communicating with each other and volunteers to plan project activities, and many external meetings with potential partners/collaborators are also occurring,

It was recommended that using a standard template as a formal record of meeting notes (with someone assigned to complete one for each meeting) would ensure that action items can be easily followed up on, and would allow for ongoing monitoring of progress against the project workplan and logic model, for evaluation in Year 2 and 3. To date, this has not been used for internal meetings. The Engagement Specialist found a spreadsheet to be more useful for tracking her external meetings with potential partners and other community groups. More details about specific engagements can be found in the section 'Partnership Development'. We would still recommend, however, a method of capturing key highlights and action items from internal meetings.

SOPEI finds the meetings about the Healthy Communities project to be beneficial, as they can learn best practices from other jurisdictions. In addition, the Healthy Communities Canada gathering in October was positive. Three SOPEI representatives attended, along with 5 Special Olympics representatives from elsewhere in Canada. Health Leads from all 4 provinces shared their successes and challenges, and it helped the SOPEI team to understand how they can work collaboratively for sustainable project concepts. A challenge was not having a representative from SOC physically present, but despite this, it was a positive event.

Establishing Process for Partnership Development, Environmental Scan & Evaluation

Although an Advisory Committee was planned at the beginning of the project, it was identified at the end of Year 1 that it was not the right time for an Advisory Committee to be established. SOPEI hopes to

have an Advisory Committee functioning in Year 3 to plan for sustainability and engage the Board in promoting long term ownership.

More details about partnership development activities in progress by the SOPEI team can be found later in this report, under the section, 'Partnership Development'. The team has engaged in a significant amount of partnership and community engagement during Year 2.

The HC Project evaluation was used to validate and improve the project. The Project Team and consultants met to review some of the reporting gaps from programs held in Year 1, and develop simple tools to track and compare attendance and results from each health and wellness event. That increases the amount of complete, clear and consistent data that can be compared through Years 2 and 3.

The Year 1 evaluation showed that SOPEI was making great strides with its programming and outreach activities, but identified some areas for improvement. Many of the suggestions provided in the evaluation and through meetings, phone calls and email communications with the consultants since that time have also been implemented, such as tracking sheets for meetings and volunteer participation, as well as tools to obtain more feedback from participants, partners, and leadership. You will see some of this feedback throughout this report, in the form of photos and quotes. More comments about evaluation of health programming can be found in the section 'Health and Wellness Programming'.

Several tools were recommended in the Year 1 evaluation report, to aid in data collection for evaluation. As mentioned above, a standard template for a formal record of meeting notes is not currently being used, but a spreadsheet is being used to track external meetings with potential partners and other community groups.

The standard reporting form created after the Year 1 evaluation is being used following each event, and includes fields to capture data on the number of staff and volunteers who participated, including how many were new volunteers, along with space to share a debrief of successes and challenges from each event, and post-event action items.

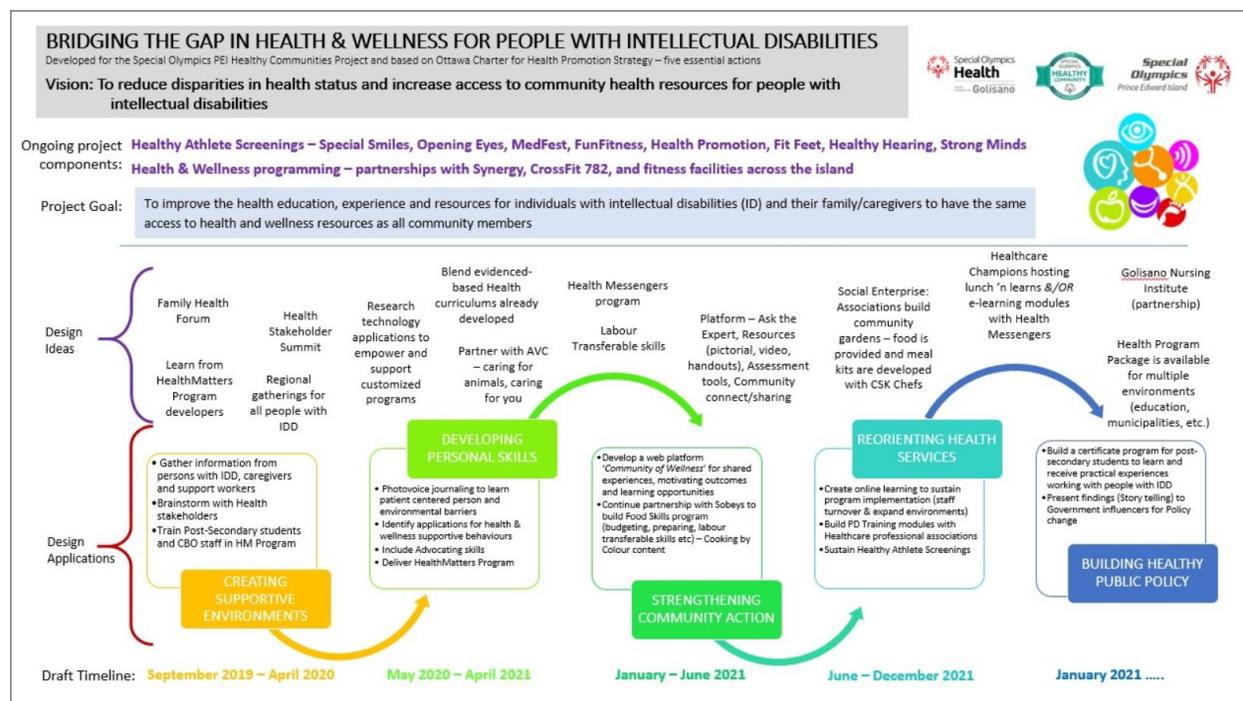
We continue to recommend that SOPEI circulate a volunteer feedback form after each event, to further information about: training and expectations; pre-event marketing and communication; the volunteer experience; suggestions for improvement, and a section to provide a memory or testimonial.

Communication

Although SOPEI continues to communicate with members, stakeholders and the general public, they shared during the November meeting with consultants that adhering to a specific communications strategy has been a struggle with current resources. We recommend that, within staff ability, SOPEI do

the best they can to revisit the Communication Plan as a key driver of communication activity in the project. Internal and external communication about program activities should be reviewed against the Communications Plan to ensure that key messages are conveyed, that considerations such as language, reading level, duplication, and target audiences are considered. Tools to evaluate the impact of the Communication Plan should be developed.

SOPEI has created a 1-page graphic representing the potential impact of the Healthy Communities project. It is a vision document that can be shared, when appropriate, with stakeholders, policy and decision making groups. It is a clear and eye-catching resource that was created while writing a funding application with UPEI. It represents possible impacts, recognizing that it may change based on actual circumstances and partnerships.



The SOPEI team has created several informative and eye catching PowerPoint presentations that have been shared with key partners. The information provided through those presentations and face-to-face meetings has been impactful and has led to follow-up meetings with key decision makers, and introductions to more key players in health and wellness on PEI. See the 'Partnership Development' section below for more details about engagement.

SOPEI has also attempted to collect more testimonials than in Year 1, and the use of feedback forms has contributed to this increase. In addition, they have enlisted the help of volunteer photographers for their events, which has led to a wonderful archive of professionally shot photos that can be used in

SOPEI promotional materials. We suggest that more testimonials be collected, to be shared with the public, potential partners and sponsors, and in recruiting Clinical Directors. Stories and photos can be powerfully persuasive.

The impact of current programs, and the information skillfully communicated about it, led to the reversal of opinion for a key figure in the dental profession on PEI. See the 'Partnership Development' section of this report for details.

An addition to the participant surveys for Healthy Athletes screenings was suggested – a question asking participants how they heard about the event. Answers to this question would give some illumination to where and how athletes and their caregivers are hearing about screenings. To date, this question has not been included in participant surveys, but doing so in future would provide more data for comparison, as well as information to evaluate communication methods.

The number of people volunteering in Healthy Athletes screenings each year is difficult to comparatively assess against Year 1, because each event and discipline setting requires a different number of volunteers. The Volunteer Tracking Sheet lists 31 volunteers during Year 2, encompassing the 5-Pin Bowling Provincials Healthy Athletes Screening, the Strong Minds screening held in partnership with Community Inclusions, and the Strong Minds screening held in partnership with Inclusions East. According to the tracking sheet, 5 individuals volunteered for more than one screening. This sheet encompasses only volunteers for Healthy Athletes event volunteer tracking for basic info and event planning/reporting. Longitudinal tracking of all SOPEI volunteers is done in the SOC database, which tracks details such as years of service, volunteer notes, full contact info, event enrollment potential, etc. Continuing to use the Volunteer Tracking Sheet will provide more information, over time, about repeat volunteers for Healthy Athletes events. In reviewing the spreadsheet while writing this report, several adjustments were made to the way data was input, to make it easier to identify repeat volunteers. It was also recommended that empty columns be completed (such as town and phone number) to make it easy to identify volunteers to contact for particular geographical events in the future.

Social Media:

During Year 2, SOPEI participated in professional development to enhance their social media skills. Volume 18, a Charlottetown consulting firm specializing in marketing and communications, provided full-staff training about how to focus content in a more efficient way. This helped to focus SOPEI's branding for PEI, while still staying in line with SOC, and has provided ideas and opportunities to highlight successes of various program areas, including activities associated with the Healthy Communities project.



SOPEI’s Facebook page is very well-maintained, and features many articles and items of interest. Page administrators post content several times each week, and more when warranted: photos, links to their monthly newsletters, program information, links to new articles, information about local collaborations and fundraisers, and cancellation notices. Posts have been frequent during Year 2, which helps to drive user engagement, and each interaction with a post (like, share, comment, etc.) increases the organic reach of this post, leading to even more views of the post. The page has over 3350 ‘likes’ and over 3500 followers.



SOPEI recently established a new method of communicating through a Facebook group, as they attempt to continue programming during the new realities of the COVID-19 pandemic. This provides a way for athletes, coaches, volunteers, caregivers and staff to stay connected between programs and have some fun while staying active. The group shares inspirational posts, personal messages, activities, and physical and

mental health and wellness tips. The current postponement of group programming is an emerging challenge and opportunity, and underscores the importance of having a communications plan.

SOPEI also has an Instagram account (@SpecialOPEI) with over 650 followers. Due to the nature of the platform, which places emphasis on photo sharing rather than simple text, posts are made less frequently than on Facebook, and photos consist primarily of celebratory events – entirely appropriate for this medium. Sponsors and partners are also recognized on social media, which is a positive way to recognize their contributions. The Instagram account was created late in Year 1, on February 1, 2019. Over 170 posts were made by SOPEI on Instagram during Year 2. In addition, @SpecialOPEI has been tagged in over 70 photos by other Instagram users.



In addition to social media, many news articles have been written about SOPEI events and athletes throughout Year 2 (Appendix F – Media Articles). While many of these were about athletes’ achievements in sport, all press coverage about SOPEI increases awareness of the organization and

public perceptions of goodwill, opening doors for conversations with potential partners about Healthy Communities project activities.

Sustainability

SOPEI has been working to make plans for sustainability – an ongoing process. Many of the current opportunities were a ripple effect from the environmental scan developed during Year 1 of the project. Multiple sources of funding have been explored and reviewed based on values of the organization. In addition to the information about sustainability found here, more details can be found in the 'Project Management' section of this report.

SOPEI is cognizant of the positive benefit that Board members play in the organization, and the value of the skills that they bring to their work. In the summer of 2019, SOPEI circulated a survey to Board members in an attempt to identify skill sets and gaps. The team indicated during a meeting with the evaluators that they would like to recruit more members with social media knowledge and health knowledge. SOPEI created a recruitment document for the general public, indicating that they were seeking new Board members. As a result of this, two new Board members were recruited, and one has a background in media and communications. No new members with a health background have yet been recruited, but it is still a focus. We recommend that gaps in skill sets continue to be considered during the recruitment process for new Board members, with an eye to acquiring more members with a background in the health field. In addition, it would be beneficial to periodically discuss skills with existing Board members, to determine whether current members have acquired new skills, and whether they see additional gaps in skill sets that would be beneficial to add to the Board.

SOPEI worked with a researcher at the University of Prince Edward Island starting in April 2019 to identify potential health project grants that will support work to benefit individuals with ID and/or community and support networks across PEI. The grant submission (*Understanding Disease Prevention and Risk Factor Modification in Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*) included a budget for SOPEI staff, tools, a research student to activate the project, and a Summit to identify promising practices and possible Community Action supports across the province to sustain program ideas and implementation strategies. Connecting with university researchers has allowed SOPEI to connect and find material that they wouldn't have otherwise found. The project team spent a significant amount of time collaborating on the grant application, leading to a strong relationship with the author, who has worked with changing the environments of group homes in Antigonish. Discussions have expanded the thinking of SOPEI staff, which has led to more reading about health programs that have been created for people with ID.

In addition to the grant application, SOPEI has signed a 5-year partnership agreement with UPEI to provide the opportunity for 3rd and 4th year students in the Nursing and Dietetics programs to have clinical/practical health care learning experiences by completing practicums with SOPEI. Both parties are excited about the potential of this collaboration. More details can be found in the section 'Health Provider Engagement'.

SOPEI has presented on the milestones of the Healthy Communities project and sustainability goals, to the PEI Minister and Deputy Ministers of Health and Wellness. A health promoter who works in the office of the Chief Medical Officer also attended, and has continued to engage with SOPEI, specifically because the logic model was altered to align with the language they are using from the Ottawa Charter of Health Promotion Strategies.



4.1.1 Evaluator Observations

In reviewing findings related to Leadership for Sustainable Development, we observed from the document review and focus groups that the Project Team and the SOPEI Board are enthusiastic about the project and believe in its potential for system change. Many of the recommendations made in the Year 1 Evaluation have been implemented through increased record keeping and emphasis on adaptable communication tools; the workplan and job descriptions have been reviewed with a realignment of SOPEI staff roles to support the project. We agree that organizational integration is a positive strategy to sustain the work. In addition, we believe that plans for future staffing should include budget allocation for a position dedicated to lead this work into the future.

While writing this report, we note that the COVID-19 Global Pandemic has required that programs and communication rely on innovative solutions to comply with social distancing, such as the use of social media. The adapted delivery of both programs and communication in meeting program objectives will need to be monitored during the final year of the project. We believe there should be a critical focus on the development of a revised communication strategy which can serve as means of measurement of the communication work undertaken. This is of even greater importance given the COVID-19 crisis.

The SOPEI Board is satisfied that the project is advancing Board ends and while not proactively involved, feel well informed as they are updated each month at their Board meetings. Interestingly, at the same time as the Board expressed the opinion that they were well informed, they used the focus group as an opportunity to seek information, ask questions and engage in discussion with the Executive Director and

Program Director who were both present during the focus group. Their questions and the response, as they relate to other objectives of the project are included in this report. Of note in this regard, it that the Board might benefit from a Q & A Session with Project staff on a quarterly basis. In addition, it would be helpful to build on knowledge of Board member skills and gaps, e.g., experience in the health sector, by recruiting members with these skills, discussing additional gaps in skill sets, and determine whether current members have acquired new skills.

Although project management is going well, there are some specific recommendations that would aid in the reporting process:

- Collect more testimonials to be shared with the public, potential partners and sponsors, and in recruiting Clinical Directors.
- Use a standard template as a formal record of meeting notes and action items, to capture key highlights and action items from internal meetings.
- Include a question in participant surveys asking how they heard about the event, to collect information for comparison between events, as well as information to evaluate communication methods.
- Continue to use the Volunteer Tracking Sheet to gather data for assessing volunteer participation levels between each year and/or each screening, and ensure that information is fully completed.

In summary, the Board believes that sustainability is based on working with the athletes and caregivers in settings where people live. They would like to see the Project Team continue its emphasis on health provider engagement and addressing community issues that impact the athletes. We are pleased with the support of the Board, the proactive work of the Executive Director in planning for sustainability within the parameters of the current funding, and for the evidence of culture change within the organization and its partners. When there is change in the culture of organizations, it contributes to sustainability. We will be monitoring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic over the coming year.

4.2 Health and Wellness Programming

Highlights of activities undertaken by SOPEI regarding its health and wellness programming are outlined in this section. The proposed activities included: developing and sharing a baseline for showing impact of the program; program design, implementation and evaluation; and promotion of Healthy Athletes events to achieve **Objective 2:** *To improve the health status of athletes, and others in their communities, by offering health and wellness programming, involving coaches and partners, ensuring 20% of athletes are enrolled in a year.*



The reporting on these activities at the end of Year 2 relies on a review of documentation received from the SOPEI Healthy Communities Project Team.

Focus Group

Focus Group Project Team

During the focus group discussion, the Project Team was asked whether the wellness program has expanded and whether it is making a difference in the health of athletes. Regarding expansion, the Program Director reported that project had a goal of having Clinical Directors for each discipline and they are close to that now. Regarding making a difference in the health of athletes, he explained that this is difficult to measure accurately, as the review of the 2016 report was a report of athlete data, and not really a good baseline for measurement of the success of the wellness programs. However, the project is taking steps toward improved means to measure progress. SOPEI is now collecting data in a more systematic way, i.e., this is the first year that a short letter has been sent to parents and coaches explaining screening, why it is part of our events, what to expect and how to support the athletes. Coaches are reporting that they now feel better prepared and are fielding questions from parents. Individual athletes and caregivers also receive the results of their screening which is part of the incentive to participate and see improvement. Aggregated results are compiled for reporting and can be used for evaluation of the impact of wellness programming.

The Project Team expressed the view that the improvement in the health of athletes is more qualitative than quantitative at the moment, and they note that the approach to wellness in this project is changing the culture of SOPEI. Athletes attend wellness programs in a public space, e.g., Cross Fit programs. As well, SOPEI has integrated health in their school programs. Athletes use their passport to monitor their progress and identify needs, which are then be addressed. By increasing the engagement of athletes and the community in wellness activities there are many benefits:

- *“Coaches notice a difference – athletes have more energy for their sport.”*

- *“Athletes are more conscious of being healthy.”*
- *“Partners are proud of hosting Special Olympic athletes.”*

The Engagement Specialist also note that while the Project Team did not come into the project with a health promotion background, the project clearly is a health promotion project. She spent time developing a diagram that links project activities with all the strategies of the Ottawa Charter, and found that the illustration was a good tool for communicating with the health sector.

- *“This is opening up a new lens and is providing a process for us to follow and has allowed us to develop a longer term strategy that can be activated over time as partners emerge.”*
- *“Understanding the determinants of health allows us to have broader conversations with mental health and addictions.”*

The Evaluator reflected on the fact that the Circle of Health had been ingrained in planning the project from the onset and asked if the team had thought of assessing the project through this lens. All agreed that this would be a good idea.

- *“Reviewing the project through the lens of the Circle of Health will allow us to assess our progress and frame the outcomes. This can also serve as a springboard to the future, writing proposals.”*
- *“Having the review as a team would be a good exercise in knowing the depth of the project and writing the story.”*

Document Review

Documents reviewed for this section of the evaluation include Healthy Athletes event materials and reports, correspondence, Healthy Communities reports submitted to SOI, volunteer lists, feedback surveys, social media posts, graphics and presentations, the workplan, logic model and Year 1 evaluation report.

Within its Healthy Communities project, SOPEI has a goal of building holistic wellness communities for athletes, families and caregivers, and due to this project, programming has expanded.

The Project Team has most certainly sought diverse opportunities to expand the Health and Wellness program. They have liaised with health officials and key decision makers in the province, from both government and professional organizations. They have also made strong connections with the two largest post-secondary institutions on PEI; the University of Prince Edward Island and Holland College. In addition, they have connected with many community organizations to



seek opportunities for collaboration, to enhance SOPEI's regular operations as well as programs offered through the Healthy Communities project. See the section 'Partnership Development' for more information about SOPEI's community engagement efforts.

SOPEI offers seven health and wellness programs consisting of at least six sessions each. The activities include general fitness classes, open swim, open walking tracks and some school partnerships that offer athletes an opportunity to enhance their training and contribute more to their communities. Between April-September 2019, 87 SOPEI athletes participate in 6 or more sessions of the programs, while 15 family members/caregivers participated in 6+ sessions. SOPEI also organizes fun days in PEI schools, and plans to connect with primary school representatives about their school hygienist program to see if they include students with ID and if the hygienists have training to communicate with students with ID.

Partners involved with the project during Years 1 and 2 have helped to reduce or eliminate costs for programming, promote engagement of health professionals and community volunteers, educate caregivers and athletes, and implement health events. These factors contribute to targets for the Healthy Communities project, and positively impact the quality and quantity of services that SOPEI is able to offer to its members. Continuing to engage and nurture an increased number of diverse partnerships within community and systems will allow SOPEI to expand programs in a sustainable way, and ideally continue presenting similar programs after Year 3 of the project is complete.

Opportunities were organized throughout the year for Healthy Athlete areas of screening. Strong Minds (33), FUN Fitness (51) and Health Promotion (58) were held on PEI. SOPEI athletes were also given the opportunity to participate in screenings with Special Olympics Nova Scotia: Special Smiles (19) and Healthy Hearing (17).



Screenings were either paired with competitions or as stand-alone events supported by volunteers and partners, such as through partnerships with Community Inclusions and Inclusions East. At screenings, athletes receive a sense of their follow-up needs, along with tools/equipment to support their needs, such as a 'Passport' which contains information about follow-up recommendations. At the Family Health Forum, participants were given a take-home package which included information, recipes and tools, and a package which included information and tools such as a stress ball and exercise band were provided at Strong Minds. They are encouraged to take the information and tools home. Soon after, representatives from SOPEI phone athletes and/or caregivers to explain the next steps for follow-up.

With regard to individual and collective results, the mid-year Healthy Communities report indicates that data is compiled using the SOPEI database. Due to the confidential nature of the information, evaluators did not have access to that database. Files were shared by SOPEI staff via DropBox and email.

FAMILY HEALTH FORUM

The Family Health Forum, held on September 7, 2019 was designed to engage families of people with ID in Special Olympics and offer an environment where parents and caregivers can gain direct access to health information, resources and support. Participants were educated about the benefits of Healthy Athlete screenings, and provided with introductory family-based nutrition programming and fitness challenges.

SOPEI partnered with 5 groups and individuals to host the event: Sobeys in Stratford, the Town of Stratford, which provided the use of their town hall in-kind, Canada's Smartest Kitchen, and two local photographers. Athlete and family representatives also collaborated with SOPEI, providing input to Family Health Forum planning. The Forum had originally scheduled for April, but was postponed due to full staff workloads and to allow more time to engage athletes and families in the planning process.

Registration summary:

- 13 athletes
- 6 family/caregivers (multiple athletes have the same caregivers)
 - *Note: A strong storm was forecast for PEI, which led to a decrease in participants. 19 athletes and 12 family/caregivers had initially registered.
- 3 SOPEI staff
- 4 volunteers from Sobeys staff
- 2 photographers



Special Olympics
Prince Edward Island

Family Health Forum

Sobeys  Date: September 7th
Time: 8:30am—4:00pm  Special Olympics Health
Location: Stratford Town Hall and Sobeys  Golisano

The day will include:

1. Guest Speaker Julia Romualdi, Special Olympics Ontario athlete, guest on the CBC TV Series "You Can't Ask That", Member of Ontario Athlete Leader Council and Health Champion.
2. Cooking session with Sobeys dietician and chef where athletes will prepare lunch or a healthy to-go snack.
3. Casual walking activity for all ages and abilities
4. Healthy Athletes information session
5. Question and Answer session

Participants will receive:

- FREE lunch and healthy snack to-go
- Handouts for healthy recipes and snacks
- Skills and increased knowledge of cooking tools and tips
- Sobeys reusable shopping bags filled with a \$10 gift card and other tools (up to 2/household)

Transportation

- Mileage forms will be provided for those who wish to submit a claim
- Transportation can be provided for individuals without access to transportation services – please notify the office when you register if you require transportation

Who is this forum for?

- Athletes and Families/caregivers (siblings ages 8+ are welcome to join) who want to learn more about cooking and leading a healthier lifestyle

Registration Deadline: August 23rd *Space is Limited

Please contact the office by phone (902-368-8919) or email (sopei@sopei.com) to register.

SUPPORTED BY: 



Athlete testimonial:

“Saturday was a great day. Julie did a wonderful job and provided benefit to all of us. It was nice to have an event that wasn’t in a meeting room all day – the kitchen part at Sobeys was enjoyable and it was nice to see everyone participate. Going for a walk and doing exercises together was also appreciated. It was something really different.”

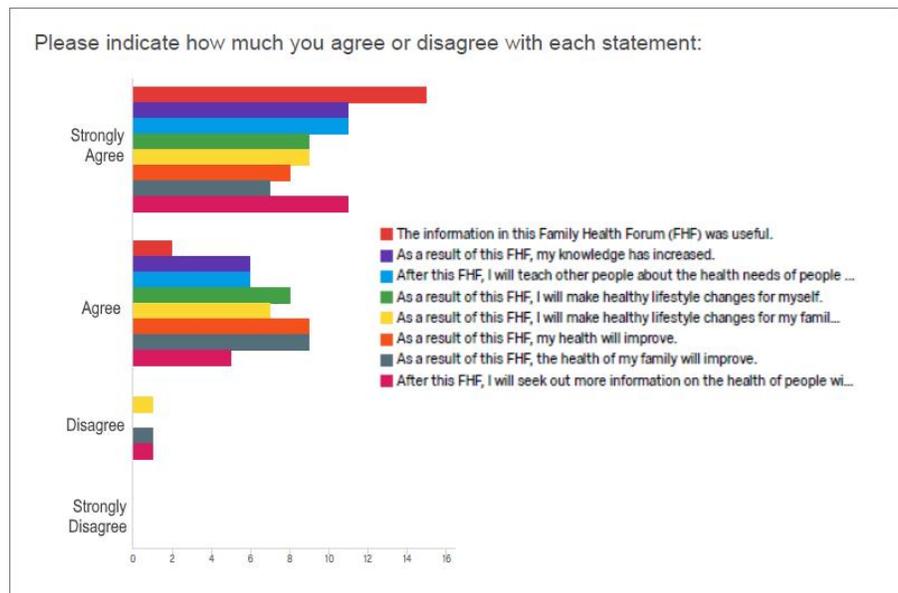
Partner testimonial (Sobeys):

“There were lots of smiles and laughter from the athletes, and we received some positive comments from families and caregivers.”

Leadership testimonial:

“[Highlights of the event were] Sobeys interaction with athletes making the snacks and seeing everyone so willing to participate in walking on the track and taking part in the Fit 5 activities.”

Participant responses to the FHF survey showed an overwhelmingly positive response to the FHF. Responses showed that participants not only enjoyed the Family Health Forum, but felt that it increased their knowledge and will make a positive impact on their health and that of their families, through intended lifestyle changes.



Examples of comments provided by participants:

“I had a good time, and learned lots of healthy tips.”

“It was an awesome day. Our guys really enjoyed it. Thank you for involving us into your group.”

“Excellent day. Hold this in other areas.”

“Great organizing of today. Guest speaker was very interesting.”

“AS a result of this forum, athletes have made new friends.”

“[The most valuable thing I learned was] the need for athletes to participate in health forums so they can learn to take charge of their mental and physical health.”

The SOPEI Family Health Forum evaluation form submitted to Special Olympics identified that SOPEI’s work in health (including the FHF) resulted in an increased number of partners and volunteers beyond health, increased awareness of SO through partnership advocacy and the media, increased athlete and family engagement, improved athlete sport performance, and an increased number of coaches bringing athletes to Healthy Athletes screenings.

SOPEI learned helpful lessons from connecting with BC about their FHF format. Continuing to share information about schedules, partnerships, and family recruitment would be helpful in the future.



Impact

“We have more athletes than ever participating in performance and wellness programs which has enhanced their sense of community, increased their perception self-worth/esteem, and made a difference in their energy levels for program. Overall the culture is slowly shifting at SOPEI, athletes want the wellness and fitness opportunities. It provides far more than physical wellness and direct results on the field of play. They really enhance the holistic wellness that Special Olympics can provide to an individual.” (mid-year report)



The impact of the Healthy Communities project on the health of participants is particularly evident in comments from participants and their families and/or caregivers. Quotes, photos and reflections can be found throughout this report, illustrating the positive benefits of the project. Surveys, along with verbal communication from participants, showed that the athletes, families and support workers who attended gained ideas for change in their home setting.

Participants have benefitted from opportunities to: connect with others; learn new skills (practical and social); realize ways that they can take control of their own health; and, in some cases to receive life-altering follow-up care that may not have occurred if they had not been present at a Healthy Athletes event.

Although SOPEI would like to increase the participation of family members at Healthy Athletes events, they have been pleased with the engagement of families that have participated.

SOPEI does not collect metrics showing how athletes and family members put their training into practice, but staff has increased communication to coaches and caregivers about what a healthy athlete lifestyle entails, screenings and wellness programs offered, and the process for follow-up care. As was indicated in the mid-year report, *“This helps prepare caregivers and coaches to understand the process and their role in ensuring action was taken. We also ensure these individuals know the office is there to support them through this journey.”* We recommend that SOPEI check in with families several months after events, to see if the tools or ideas they learned were able to be sustained.

In addition, the Healthy Communities program has helped SOPEI athletes become healthier and stronger in sport. During Opening Eyes, 22 out of 23 athletes received new or revised prescription glasses, which will have enabled them to see better during their sport programs. A very special good news story was that of an athlete who needed urgent follow-up care for cataracts. He is on the PEI 5-pin Bowling team and the care helped him to see better – and to see the pins better!

As a result of Healthy Athletes programming, athletes receive information and tools to eat healthy, strengthen their bodies and minds, as well as practical hygiene and body care. Some coaches are reinforcing these themes in their programs.

Each time SOPEI shares information with the public, through social media, traditional news, or through presentations to potential partners and community groups, Islanders become more aware of Special Olympics and the abilities of athletes, as well as the needs of people with ID in general. Meetings with groups such as the Dental Association have been a valuable way to educate people, and such meetings, as well as community partnerships such as with Sobeys have resulted in positive feedback about SOPEI and its programs. A spin-off from this is that the word spreads, and more people hear positive comments, increasing the reach.

To aid in the evaluation of events, the consultants drafted a leadership survey, partner survey, and volunteer surveys, to help SOPEI record both quantitative data and qualitative reflections on events, from the various types of participants. To date, the leadership and partnership surveys have been used and have yielded constructive comments that will aid SOPEI when planning similar events in the future, but the volunteer survey has not yet been circulated. It was not used at the Family Health Forum because volunteers were from a partner group (Sobeys), and a representative filled out the survey. We recommend asking each individual to fill out the survey in future, not just one representative for the whole team, to provide more reflective information for SOPEI to use to strengthen their events in future.

A participant survey had previously been developed by Special Olympics, and the consultants suggested that two additional questions be added, along with an adjustment to a third question; however, these suggestions were not included in the version of the survey handed out to participants at the Family Health Forum. The proposed additions were:

- Is this your first time attending an information event by Special Olympics PEI?
- How did you hear about this event?
- What is your gender? (added the options of “other” and “non-binary”, though perhaps simply “other” would be a more plain language option for inclusivity)

We recommend that these revisions be considered, as the responses will aid in providing more data that can be used for evaluation purposes.

4.2.1 Evaluator Observations

Efforts of the Project Team to engage community partners, volunteers, families and caregivers in advancing wellness programs to improve the health of their athletes is remarkable. SOPEI should continue to engage, nurture and evaluate an increased number of diverse partnerships within the community and systems, for sustainability and continuity of programs after Year 3 of the project is complete.

Also commendable is the work of the project to reach out to non-athletes with ID who live in the community and invite them to participate in their screening events. Faced with the issue of not having a baseline to measure improved health, the project is using a more holistic view of health and finding many other ways to measure the improved health of athletes, including a focus on quality of life, mental health and motivation to engage in activities.

Recommendations to aid in data collection include: circulating a volunteer survey after each event; and using a revised version of the participant survey to obtain additional information on repeat attendance, methods of publicity, and to include inclusive language around gender. We also recommend that SOPEI check in with families several months after health events, to see if the tools or ideas they learned were able to be sustained. This will help to determine the lasting effect of the lessons.

The Engagement Specialist is demonstrating creative means by which to communicate the project activities in health promotion language and the Project Team anticipates that using the Circle of Health, not simply as a tool embedded in a proposal, but as a tool that can be actively applied to the project to both assess it and plan going forward would be a useful exercise. We are impressed by the interest and commitment of this Project Team in evaluating the project in an holistic and innovative way.

4.3 Access to Follow-up Care

Highlights of activities undertaken by SOPEI regarding access to follow-up care are outlined in this section. The proposed activities included: providing information and tools to athletes, coaches and families; and processes for ensuring follow-up with athletes to achieve **Objective 3: *To increase access to follow-up care by ensuring that a minimum 70% of athletes who receive referrals at Healthy Athletes (HA) Programs have a place to go for follow-up care.***

The reporting on these activities at the end of Year 2 relies on a review of documentation received from the SOPEI Healthy Communities Project Team and a conversation with the SOPEI Board of Directors, based on a question that arose during the focus group discussion..

Focus Groups

Focus Group SOPEI Board of Directors

During the Focus Group with the SOPEI Board of Directors, Board members were curious to know if athletes were accessing follow-up care if recommended when they were screened. The Program Director responded that currently, an identified limitation of the project is that screenings are dependent on availability of Clinical Directors. When screenings take place, problems are identified and follow-up is arranged. However, athletes are not obliged to report success with the referrals, and only 60% report the results. This is a barrier to evaluating the impact of the project on health outcomes and is an example of an area which requires the proactive support of athletes, caregivers and professionals.

Document Review

Documents reviewed for this section of the evaluation include Healthy Athletes reports, Healthy Communities reports submitted to SOI, correspondence, media articles, the workplan, logic model and Year 1 evaluation report.

Follow-up care received after Healthy Athletes screenings is life-changing.

IMPROVING SIGHT THROUGH FOLLOW-UP CARE



SOPEI athlete Eric Smith received follow-up optometry treatment after attending an Opening Eyes clinic. He required urgent follow-up care for cataracts which previously went undetected. Eric, 36, had not had a surgical consult since he was two years old. Through the follow-up process after the Opening Eyes screening, Dr. Jayne Toombs tested Eric's eyes, made arrangements for a surgical consultation regarding his cataracts, and identified that he required a new prescription for his glasses. He received the new prescription free of charge due to the support of Opening Eyes partners Lions Club International, Safilo and Essilor.

"I was really impressed. There was a real ophthalmologist, Dr. Jayne Toombs, and she tested his eyes and she was very thorough with the examination. This helped him a lot. I want to say a huge thank you. Eric felt comfortable at the clinic. What they did was very professional and very helpful for my son and other athletes."

--Estelle Smith, mother of SOPEI athlete Eric Smith

"Our Healthy Athletes clinicians also have a great sense of how to work with individuals with an intellectual disability and their families. It's more than an in-and-out appointment – they provide that extra time, the extra care to listen to their story and understand the need. That goes a long way – it's a bit of a culture shift. They're doing a full eye examination that would normally cost upwards of \$100 to get done, and to top that off with a free prescription – it's really rewarding."

- Matthew McNally, SOPEI Program Director

(quotes from SOC website article: *Special Olympics' Healthy Athletes program unleashes PEI bowler's potential with new prescription glasses*)

SOPEI is using the follow-up resource from SOI with the addition of a few extra columns. Contact with athletes regarding follow-up care occurs with a take-home passport form the events, an email or letter sent from the SOPEI office, followed by a monthly phone call to outstanding referrals.

Participants requiring follow-up care:

- FUNfitness: 51 screenings, 9 referred for follow-up care
- Health Promotion: 58 screenings, 9 referred for follow-up care
- Special Smiles: 19 screenings, 2 referred for follow-up care
- Strong Minds: 53 screenings, 0 referred for follow-up care
- Healthy Hearing: 17 screenings, 0 referred for follow-up care

Athletes with urgent referrals have the opportunity to receive care. In some disciplines, SOPEI has engaged Clinical Directors who will see athletes as soon as possible, or connect an athlete with a colleague in the region. Alternatively, SOPEI will bring athletes with urgent referrals to the emergency room at a local hospital.

“Caregivers and athletes are grateful for the identification of their health follow-up needs. We have no specifics on type of treatment that was offered as a result of follow-up. However athletes who have connected to health/wellness opportunities following screening dates have provided positive testimonies about their overall joy, confidence and lifestyle changes. The follow-up component has been the most impactful step. With follow-up there are reminders, accountability, encouragement, and care being provided to athletes and their caregivers.” (mid-year report)

4.3.1 Evaluator Observations

Based on the document review, it appears that the SOPEI Healthy Communities Project is making great progress in achieving **Objective 3: To increase access to follow-up care by ensuring that a minimum 70% of athletes who receive referrals at Healthy Athletes (HA) Programs have a place to go for follow-up care.**

The SOPEI Program Director is pleased with the role of Clinical Directors and feels that in some areas the project has met or exceeded expectations. The Healthy Communities project has made a difference in improving accessibility to services for those with ID. Screenings are widely offered, and of those who are referred for follow-up care, SOPEI ensures that 100% of those individuals have a place to receive that care, if they choose to do so. This is higher than the number of 70% required for the project. A limitation to a full understanding of the engagement of athletes in follow-up care is that athletes are not obliged to avail of follow-up care or report about their referral experience, and only 60% share information about their referral. However, if a better understanding of follow-up compliance is desired by SOPEI, it

should consider developing a method or searching for a method from best practice. The challenge is to find a method that is sensitive to confidentiality yet at the same time provides data on compliance.

4.4 Health Provider Engagement

This section highlights activities undertaken by SOPEI regarding the engagement of local health care providers, to increase health care provider comfort and knowledge of how to treat people with ID, and demonstrate best practices. The proposed activities included: training; outreach within the community and amongst health care providers; and acknowledging peer excellence to achieve **Objective 4: To increase health care provider comfort & knowledge of how to treat people with ID; and acknowledge health professionals in our community who demonstrate best practice in working with individuals with ID.**



The reporting on these activities at the end of Year 2 relies on a review of documentation received from the SOPEI Healthy Communities Project Team and a focus group held with the SOPEI Healthy Communities Project Team.

Focus Groups

Focus Group Project Team

In the focus group with the Project Team, the evaluator asked how the project has taken steps to engage health providers over the past year. The Program Director responded that having new Clinical Directors who are passionate about this work has increased the opportunity to reach out to professional organizations. In addition, the Clinical Directors have become champions for the project within their own professional organizations.

- *“We have two more Clinical Directors and two more in the queue. They are go-getters and are looking towards opportunities to speak with professional organizations, offering Lunch & Learns.”*
- *“We don’t have to settle for mediocre when we have others who are promoting our brand.”*

The evaluator asked about the impact of the Golisano Award in engaging health providers. The Program Director reported that the event is held every two years, this year planned for May. The last time it was held, one physician was honored and that was the focus of the event. However, the Project Team sees the event as having greater potential for educating health providers and engaging the public given the broad audience in the room.

- *“I underestimated the opportunity to share the project given the people in the room – but now we are in Year 2 we will tap into the audience in the room.”*

- *“We have to develop criteria now and make a selection for the award, whereas the first year we awarded it to someone we knew was making a major contribution.”*

The team reports that they are also making inroads at the student level through the partnerships with UPEI and relationship with Holland College, which is laying the foundation for health provider engagement.

Document Review

Documents reviewed for this section of the evaluation include Healthy Communities reports submitted to SOI, Healthy Athletes screening materials, the UPEI partnership agreement, correspondence, the workplan, logic model and Year 1 evaluation report.

Outreach

A commitment to hosting many Healthy Athlete Screenings resulted in SOPEI staff reaching out to recruit and train more Clinical Directors than they had before April 1, 2019. It is anticipated that the benefits of these screenings will be sustained due to having local CDs. Due to the small geographical area of PEI, there is a fairly small healthcare professional field, which will allow the CDs to connect and network effectively on SOPEI’s behalf.

SOPEI now has 4 trained Clinical Directors on PEI.

- MedFest: Dr. Joanne Reid
- Strong Minds: Tara Costello
- Health Promotion: Marina Fay
- Fun Fitness: Haley Shepherd

Two individuals were CDs for all of Year 1, and two were trained at the end of Year 1/beginning of Year 2 and have been actively involved during Year 2. SOPEI has made progress on securing Clinical Directors for Special Smiles and Healthy Hearing, and they hope to report those successes during Year 3.

Relationship building has opened up opportunities to connect with more professionals than in past years. SOPEI’s engagement with the Dental Association (see the ‘Partnership Development’ section) can serve as a benchmark for partnering with other professional associations in the future. SOPEI hopes to present at more professional meetings, as this increases awareness of screenings and other SOPEI activities to more professionals province-wide, and could result in more support for follow-up care needs of athletes and others with ID.

Training and Acknowledging Peer Excellence

A 5 year agreement was signed on November 27, 2019 between UPEI and SOPEI to provide the opportunity for 3rd and 4th year students in the Nursing program to have learning experiences by completing clinical placements with SOPEI in the winter and fall terms, annually. Students will take the initiative to identify and complete projects to benefit SOPEI's health vision.

In January 2020, two 3rd year nursing students started their 'Community Health' clinical placements with SOPEI, spending 2 days (16 hours) a week for 10 weeks with SOPEI. They structured their project around developing curriculum/content for a lecture for their classmates in the postsecondary institution setting. They surveyed their classmates about their experience with and knowledge about individuals with ID (see graphic), attended many evening programs to engage with a variety of athletes, and reviewed training materials provided through SOPEI. They have created a presentation and a resource page for their colleagues, with the goal of helping future nursing professionals feel more comfortable interacting and communicating with individuals with ID. Due to the cancellation of onsite classes at UPEI due to COVID-19, that in-person presentation (which would have included a SOPEI athlete and family member) has been postponed, but there may be an opportunity to present the material in an online format, which could have the result of making it more widely available to health care professionals in other areas. SOPEI hopes to have more to report on this progress in the future.



In Fall 2020, a 4th year nursing student is scheduled to begin their policy-related practicum, working 4 days a week with SOPEI. They will build upon the 3rd year work and recommend policy change to benefit individuals with ID.



The Golisano Health Leadership Award was presented in Year 1 and will be presented again in Year 3. Although there was no other formal recognition of health professionals involved with the Healthy Communities project during Year 2, an athlete presented some of the statistics from the 2019 Healthy Athlete screenings at SOPEI’s annual AGM and awards night. This provided an opportunity for all attendees to hear about the work occurring through the Healthy Communities project, and the impact on athletes and their families. It highlighted the organizational change that has occurred within SOPEI – health is now integrated into everything they do, and everyone can see the impact.

4.4.1 Evaluator Observations

The Healthy Communities Project Team continues to expand the reach of the project by engaging health providers in the project. Through the strategic selection of Clinical Directors, they have found champions who are opening doors to professional organizations. As well, they now recognize the potential of the upcoming Golisano Awards to both celebrate the increasing number of professionals involved with SOPEI athletes and at the same time recruit and engage other health professionals. Entering into agreements with academic organizations is commended as a positive step in engaging professionals entering the field. The main recommendation in advancing this objective is to keep up the momentum in maximizing the opportunities available now and their future potential.

4.5 Partnership Development

This section highlights partnership development activities undertaken by SOPEI to achieve **Objective 5: To establish 10 sustainable partnerships to increase and sustain focus on holistic health in provincial services for athletes and the broader community.** The proposed activities included: conducting an environmental scan to identify opportunities, constraints, and potential partners; expanding networks within systems and communities; and integrating initiatives into established systems, through awareness activities.

The reporting on these activities at the end of Year 2 relies on a review of documentation received from the SOPEI Healthy Communities Project Team and focus groups held with the SOPEI Board of Directors, and the SOPEI Healthy Communities Project Team.

Focus Groups

Focus Group Project Team

In the focus group on February 3, 2020, the Project Team reflected on partnerships that have developed over the past year. On a local level, there is the view that the Environmental Scan gave the project “a bit of a kick start” and “opened up the doors to the broader community”.

- *“The invitation list to the Environmental Scan was an eye opener as to the number of people and organizations that could be involved.”*

From the scan, the Engagement Specialist reported that SOPEI learned a lot about various sectors, which is preparing them for more local engagement. For example, they learned they needed to better understand the health language of the health sector, such as becoming familiar with the Ottawa Charter, and in reflecting on the Circle of Health their understanding of the role of determinants of health has increased.

- *“When we consider determinants of health we are looking beyond sport to issues in the environment that impact our population such as housing, and will want to be a part of it. There is a lot of interest in housing currently but we feel we ‘need to have our ducks in a row.’”*

As a result of the connections that were made in conducting the Environmental Scan, relationships initiated with UPEI and Holland College have developed into partnerships and potential projects. For example, SOPEI has submitted a joint research proposal with UPEI to CIHR and signed a five-year partnership with the UPEI Faculty of Nursing to provide a practicum for the UPEI nursing students who will focus on curriculum development for future nursing students, with a focus on reflection, research, social media, road show, and curriculum design in which athletes would speak about lived experience. Holland College has approached the team to discuss the possibility of a one year certification program.

The Engagement Specialist indicated that the Environmental Scan Advisory Committee might be engaged in future as local champions for the project, as they could open doors with other sectors and partners. However, although there have been meetings with some of the committee on a 1:1 basis, this has not yet happened. The plan is to reach out to the Environmental Scan Advisory Committee and the broader community over the next year.

The Project Team reported on an unanticipated event that developed at a national level this year. The four chapters of Special Olympics Canada (SOC) receiving Healthy Community Projects funding through SOI by the Golisano Foundation had been sharing their experience during quarterly calls with SOC. However, representatives found that this did not allow enough time for adequate learning. Kristen MacDonald, SOPEI Healthy Communities Engagement Specialist advanced the idea of hosting a session where everyone could come face to face to share and learn more deeply as everyone is aware these projects have lots of components in their discovery journeys. Program Director Matthew McNally presented the idea to the senior staff of local chapters to explore funding to bring everyone together in PEI for Fall 2019. Each chapter committed funding for its staff to attend and the national office of SOC also supported the initiative. SOC had intentions of attending, but was not able to do so because of other organizational commitments overlapping this opportunity and the staff person responsible specifically for the Health was on maternity leave. It was positive to see a high level of commitment from Special Olympics International (SOI) who sent a staff person to attend the two-day gathering as much of their funding supports gatherings to the US chapters. Representatives of the four projects met

on PEI in 2019 and the result is a report that outlines a number of system changes that had been initiated from the grassroots up, and reinforces the value in partnering across projects to achieve results. The Project Team is excited about the role they played in providing national leadership for this initiative and is enthusiastic about the potential results as this collaboration continues.

- *“We are better together and can help the whole country.”*

Focus Group Board of Directors

When asked about their knowledge of partnership development, the Board acknowledged that while keeping informed of project activities, they were not currently being called upon to assist in developing new partnerships. The Program Director provided several examples of the momentum of the project, such as engagement with local gyms, schools, and the Island Gymnastic Academy, doubling the number of Clinical Directors this year from two to four, including group home participants in the screenings, hosting a road show of athletes and a Family Health Forum to engage parents, caregivers and athletes in steps that can be taken to improve the health of athletes, such as improving nutrition.

The Board discussed other issues outside of the health system that impact the quality of life of athletes, recognizing that some of the issues that impact athletes’ health are beyond the scope of the project now, but suggested that once the Golisano Foundation’s funding for the project is complete, SOPEI should be able set its own terms of reference and can expand into more areas that impact the holistic health of athletes, such as housing.



Document Review

Documents reviewed for this section of the evaluation include the Community Engagement tracking sheet, Healthy Communities reports submitted to SOI, correspondence, graphics and presentations, the workplan, logic model and Year 1 evaluation report.

“The partners within our project have helped our program minimize or eliminate expenses, promote engagement and awareness for health professionals, increase athlete enrollment in preventative health/wellness opportunities, educate caregivers and athletes, and implement health events. Each of these contribute to Healthy Communities targets and they have a major impact on the quality and quantity of services we are able to offer our membership.” (mid-year report)

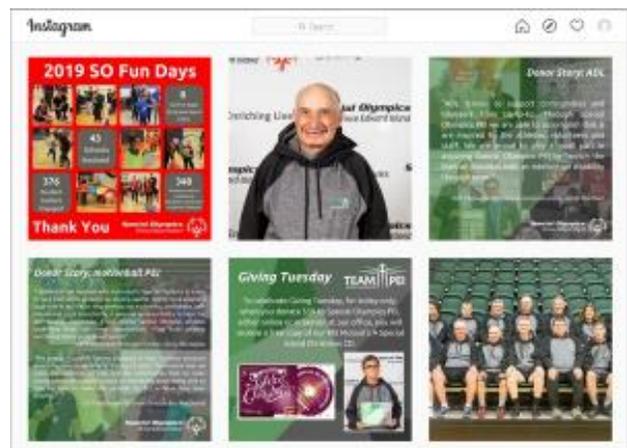
Over the past year, SOPEI has placed great emphasis on partnership development, and continued to build deeper relationships with healthcare professionals and government departments responsible for health. This commitment to relationship building (as evidenced from the many meetings and

collaborations summarized below) has resulted in great strides for the Healthy Communities project, and for awareness of Special Olympics programs in general and on PEI in particular. Much time has been spent specifically focused on meetings and interactions with researchers, healthcare professionals, and identifying collaborators and community associations to discuss the potential for collaboration on health and wellness initiatives. Through these connections, SOPEI has brought awareness to health for individuals with intellectual disabilities and their support networks.

A Meeting Report Sheet was provided to SOPEI by the consultants after the Year 1 evaluation, to assist in keeping records of both internal and external meetings. The Engagement Specialist found a spreadsheet to be more useful in her work; particularly, her external engagements with potential partners and other community groups. The tracking spreadsheet contains dates, names of organizations and representatives, meeting length, discussion topic and action terms. The sheet has been maintained throughout 2019 and 2020, with 86 engagements between April 9, 2019 and February 12, 2020, representing approximately 102 hours of partnership development. A limitation of this tracking form is the brief detail provided in some discussion notes, as well as some missing names and action items for certain meetings. Incomplete entries could lead to gaps in knowledge transfer if another staff member needs to make follow up contact. It would be beneficial, in the future, to attempt to include more details in the spreadsheet, to represent a more complete picture of the wide-ranging community engagement work being undergone by SOPEI.

At the November meeting between SOPEI and the consultants, the Program Director commented that they aim to evaluate their current partnerships and develop MOUs for succession and clear understanding from each organization. The consultants sent SOPEI an example of a partnership agreement initially developed for another non-profit client, which SOPEI can revise to suit their needs. To date, this has not been required, as the only written partnership agreement that SOPEI has signed during this period was with the University of Prince Edward Island, which was written by the university. This is not to say that few partnerships are taking place; rather, many informal partnerships and collaborations are indeed occurring, but without the use of a formal written agreement at this time.

Although SOPEI does a good job of promoting its partners and donors of various programs through its own channels (social media, newsletter, website), there has not been much formal media coverage of partnerships. There are many 'good news' stories to share, and attempting to share these stories more widely would benefit Special Olympics as a whole, as well as the Healthy Communities project. We recommend recognizing partners formally through SOPEI's



media channels, after each Healthy Athletes event, through sharing photos and tagging those organizations. It would be useful to invite members of the press to screenings and events to promote coverage of Healthy Communities project activities. News stories published between large events such as the Olympics and championship events will help to increase SOPEI's visibility in the community, and could have the additional benefits of encouraging donations and volunteers, as well as promote the goals of holistic health, wellness and balance sought through this project. Securing traditional media coverage can be challenging since it depends on current events, but social media is also a beneficial way of spreading information, and SOPEI has done a great job of highlighting partnerships and collaborations through social media. Through this, Healthy Athletes initiatives are promoted.



“Our Healthy Communities project has really improved our engagement level in the community more than we anticipated. From completing the Environmental Scan in Year 1 and identifying 'connection' and 'awareness' as two overarching important themes, Year 2 has allowed us to take those themes into our engagements, and additionally learn how to align our project goals and process mapping ideas with language related to what our health government department uses (the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion Strategies). This has started to show benefits and partners wanting to use our project as a potential learning project for other targeted population health system changes going forward.” (mid-year report)

According to the Community Engagement Tracking spreadsheet, meetings were held with the following organizations during Year 2 to explore partnership, collaboration and/or sharing information. The table below shows the partners listed in 2018, the organizations who expressed an interest in partnering in SOPEI’s environmental scan, and the organizations that SOPEI engaged with this year (right column).

Partner List (October 2018, pre-scan, indicated in mid-year report)	Organizations interested in partnering (fall 2018 environmental scan)	Organizations approached by SOPEI Year 2
Ahead in the Game	Autism Society of PEI	BioVectra
Bell Aliant Centre	Boys and Girls Club of Summerside	Campbell Hearing
Boys and Girls Club of Summerside	CHANCES	Community Inclusions
Canadian Cancer Society	City of Charlottetown	Cooper Institute
Cavendish Wellness Centre	Cooper Institute	Dental Association of PEI
City of Charlottetown	Crossfit 782	Dental Council of PEI
City of Summerside	Family Vision Centre	Dr. Joanne Reid, SOPEI Champion
Crossfit 782	Health PEI (Long Term Care)	Grand River Ranch
Dr. Jane Toombs	Health PEI (Provincial Children with Complex Needs)	Grant Thornton
Dr. Joanne Reid	Health PEI (Public Health and Children's Developmental Services)	Health Matters Program
Dr. Tanya Routledge	Holland College (Health & Community Studies)	Health PEI
Holland College	Holland College (Sport & Leisure Management)	Holland College
Island Gymnastics Academy	Inclusions East	Inclusions East
Montague Intermediate	Joyriders Therapeutic Riding Association of PEI	Medical Society of PEI
Murphy's Community Centre	Junior Achievement	PEI Association for Community Living
RBC	PEERS Alliance (formerly AIDS PEI)	PEI Community Connectors
Saltos Gymnastics	PEI Association for Community Living	PEI government
Sobeys	QEH Social Work	PEI Health & Wellness
Synergy Fitness and Nutrition	Sierra Club (Wild Child)	PEI Mental Health and Addictions
TCAP Fitness Centre	Synergy Fitness and Nutrition	Public Health
UPEI		Sobeys
		Stone Park School
		Surrey Place, Toronto
		Telus
		Tremplay
		UPEI

Many of these engagements have been very successful or moderately successful. Some highlights include:

- UPEI – Multiple meetings were held while writing and submitting the Catalyst research grant proposal. It has led to a deeper understanding of potential sustainable health programs, and expanded the thinking of SOPEI staff, resulting in more reading about health programs that have been created for people with ID. Discussed how topics on ID could be included in the Nursing program, through practicums and/or SOPEI athlete speakers. Signed a 5 year affiliation agreement, prepared and delivered an orientation for third year nursing students.
- Health PEI – Multiple meetings about the Community Catalyst Grant, a presentation about SOPEI work, continued conversations about partnership, discussions about re-orienting health services by partnering with post-secondary institutions on curriculum modifications.
- PEI government – Met multiple times with representatives from various government departments. The Director for Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity agreed to gather decision makers to hear a presentation about the Healthy Communities project. Met with the PEI Minister and Deputy Ministers of Health and Wellness, Family and Human Services, Mental Health and Addictions and a health promoter working in the Office of the Chief Medical Officer.
- Medical Society of PEI – The ‘Community Connectors’ program will be instrumental because it is positioned in each of PEI’s 3 regions, and connects clients to services. Would like to partners to have screenings in East and West. Helpful for sharing information with individuals with ID who aren’t already SOPEI contacts, since they have access to a provincial database. In order to learn more about the lived experience of athletes, the Society recommended connecting with the College of Physicians and asking Dr. Joanne Reid (a champion) to leverage her experience and network to obtain information and perhaps a tour of physicians.
- Dr. Joanne Reid, SOPEI Champion – Many good ideas came from these discussions: an idea for a professional development credit in collaboration with the College of Physicians; a Lunch & Learn about MedFest and tips for supporting people with ID; a MedFest rural roadshow. Drafted a survey to obtain more physician perspectives about challenges/gaps in supporting people with ID and their families.
- PEI Association for Community Living – Several opportunities to share SOPEI information with ACL caregivers. Presented about the Healthy Athletes program and the goal to train professionals. Involvement in an ACL workshop also led to the identification of another government staff member to connect with.
- Sobeys – an impromptu meeting with the dietician led to discussions with the chef and dietician team, and the Stratford location being a host for the Family Health Forum. Delivered an interactive healthy food session in the Stratford Community Kitchen.
- Community Inclusions – Presentation about the Healthy Communities project and partnership. Partnered on a Strong Minds screening.

- Inclusions East – Meeting with managers resulted in participation in a Strong Minds screening.
- Holland College – Meetings with various departments, and meetings to brainstorm for the Family Health Forum led to handouts. Discussed Health Matters and how topics on ID can be included in the Health and Community Studies program. Holland College has committed to talking to their Human Services instructors to see how SOPEI athletes could be part of the program delivery and how we could look at implementing Health Matters-type curriculum into the Wellness course for Human Services in the future. Plan to schedule a meeting for the spring during ‘feedback sessions’ with faculty.
- Cooper Institute - Discussed grants and forums, and how the Institute could play a role with advocacy. Considered using a framework for questions or using theatre as a tool.

CREATING PARTNERSHIPS WITH DENTAL PROFESSIONALS



When SOPEI Engagement Specialist Kristen MacDonald first reached out to the PEI Dental Council, the initial response confirmed what the SOI health stories had shown – it was not understood why a Special Smiles screening would be required because this population already see dentists on the island and all dental clinics are welcoming to every population.

However, with a strong intention and support from a local hygienist, SOPEI knew it was still important to get a trained Clinical Director on PEI. The Dental Council connected with the Dental Association of PEI, which turned into an opportunity. The Association President, Dr. Mike Connolly, was willing to receive more information, and hosted a meeting where Kristen could share concrete material about why the screenings are important. After hearing about Special Smiles, he indicated that he would like to see a dentist receive the training. He invited SOPEI to present at their quarterly meeting, and with approximately 40 professionals in attendance, Kristen, Tracy Demeulenaere (hygienist & 2018 Special Smiles volunteer) and athlete Heidi Mallet provided an informative and educational presentation. The presentation highlighted how to collaboratively support Special Smiles screenings (by volunteering or hosting a screening day), as well as considerations for welcoming and communicating with persons with intellectual disabilities and other populations to improve the comfort level of their dental clinics. Heidi’s presentation was well-received and an impactful moment for those in attendance. With Dr. Connolly’s support and dedication, at the end of February 2020 he connected SOPEI with a dentist who is interested in taking on the Special Smiles Clinical Director role.

SOPEI representatives attended several workshops and information sessions during Year 2, including those held by: the PEI Association for Community Living, SONA Health webinar, PEI Social Economy Working Group and Common Good Solutions, Health PEI Strategic Planning community engagement session, and a PEI Health Promotion Conference about the new 'Live Well PEI' framework, which discussed the social determinants of health and upstream actions to promote health and deepening community development.

The Project Team feels that they have been very fortunate to keep extending their relationship growth and build awareness about the health for individuals with ID. The biggest challenge they identify is maintaining and growing those relationships, since it requires time to check-in and find manageable projects that benefit both parties without being too cumbersome.

4.5.1 Evaluator Observations

The two themes that emerged from the 2019 Environmental Scan Report: 1) Awareness and 2) Connectivity, have served as important guides in engaging new partners. Evidence gathered in from the 2019-2020 document review and focus groups demonstrates the wide range of partners that have been engaged in the project over the past year, and the work is impressive.

Over the next year it will be important to set up a mechanism for evaluating existing partnerships and to continue engaging strategic partnerships at many levels: local community, government, professional organizations, and funders. We also recommend signing an MOU or Partnership Agreement with partner organizations, to formalize the relationships.

It will be important to continue to use the Community Engagement Tracking Sheet to record contact with potential partners and other community groups, and ensure that details are provided for each engagement.

With regard to partner recognition, we recommend consistently recognizing partners formally through SOPEI's media channels, after each Healthy Athletes event. The power of the press also cannot be underestimated, and inviting media representatives to Healthy Athletes events may garner some beneficial publicity for the project.

An unanticipated partnership that demonstrates the potential of this project for system change is the national collaboration that was initiated this year. We commend the SOPEI Healthy Communities Project Team for building on peer relationships with those involved in Healthy Communities Projects across Canada and stepping up to provide a national leadership based "grassroots" experience.

5. CONCLUSION

In reflecting on the project, the Project Team is in agreement that engagement in the evaluation and preparatory work continues to be invaluable, and provides a solid foundation for the project. The recommendations of the Year 1 Evaluation report (Appendix H) provided a priority list for Year 2, and the templates developed as recommendations for exit surveys and records of meetings were used and adapted as needed. In addition, the methods have been incorporated in other aspects of SOPEI work and shared nationally.

- *“We have taken these processes into other work we are doing...have shared the methods with SOC and they are using some of the tools in their planning.”*
- *“Process of evaluation is more valuable for me as it allows me to reflect and have clarity.”*

The Project Team reports being more than satisfied with the project and the outcomes to date. When asked to identify the greatest contribution to advancing the project, the ED quickly acknowledged that having a position dedicated to this work and a supportive team were key. The Golisano funding currently supports the staff position and she is grateful for this. The Engagement Specialist agreed that she could not do all she is doing without the leadership provided to the project, having a supportive team, and time to dedicate to the work, as *“relationship building takes time”*.

- *“I am so fortunate that this is my primary job.”*
- *“Often don’t give ourselves credit as a whole team.”*

In completing the evaluation process for Year 2, the evaluators note a number of themes that have emerged: leadership, culture change, sustainability, relationships, and community. We are satisfied that the Project Team has acted on the recommendations from Year 1 and is committed to engaging with others across Canada to make a difference not only for SOPEI athletes, but for those in the broader community with ID. We have some recommendations for Year 3, but our strongest recommendation is to continue the good work, evaluate, innovate, engage and communicate, while providing leadership to others. We also acknowledge that this will be a challenge as SOPEI adjusts its programming to the realities of COVID-19 Global Pandemic, and we will be monitoring this impact over the next year.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Project Activities

1. Project Management
 - a. Continue to innovate and adapt project activities to the new context experienced with the arrival of COVID-19
2. Partnership Engagement and Management
 - a. Continue to engage and nurture an increased number of diverse partnerships within community and systems, for sustainability and continuity of programs after Year 3 of the project is complete.
 - b. Propose signing an MOU or Partnership Agreement with partner organizations, to formalize the relationship.
 - c. Set up a mechanism for evaluating existing partnerships and to continue engaging strategic partnerships, at many levels, local community, government, professional organizations, and funders.
3. Improving health outcomes
 - a. Place continued emphasis on health provider engagement and determinants of health working on community issues that impact the athletes.
 - b. If a full understanding of the follow-up compliance is desired by SOPEI, it should consider developing a method or searching for a method from best practice that is sensitive to confidentiality yet at the same time provides data on compliance.
4. Sustainability
 - a. Use the Circle of Health, not simply as a framework embedded in a proposal, but as a tool that can be actively applied to the project - to both assess and plan going forward.
 - b. Continue efforts to allocate funds to the work within SOPEI and through new funding partners, after the Golisano Funding ends.
5. Board engagement
 - a. Schedule a Q & A session for the Board of Directors and project staff on a quarterly basis.
 - b. Continue to consider Board member skill sets and gaps, with an eye to acquiring more members with a background in the health field.
6. Dissemination
 - a. Consider publishing the process and outcomes of the SOPEI Healthy Communities Project in a journal article.

Reporting and Data Collection

1. Develop a communications strategy for the Healthy Communities project, and use it as a means of measuring the communications work undertaken.
2. Use a standard template as a formal record of meeting notes and action items, to capture key highlights and action items from internal meetings.
3. Include a question in participant surveys asking how they heard about the event, to collect information for comparison between events, as well as information to evaluate communication methods.
4. Collect more testimonials, to be shared with the public, potential partners and sponsors, and in recruiting Clinical Directors.
5. Circulate a volunteer survey after each event.
6. Use a revised version of the participant survey, to obtain additional information on repeat attendance and methods of publicity, as well to include inclusive language around gender.
7. Check in with families several months after health events, to see if the tools or ideas they learned were able to be sustained.
8. Continue to use the Volunteer Tracking Sheet to gather data for assessing volunteer participation levels between each year and/or each screening, and ensure that information is fully completed.
9. Continue to use the Community Engagement Tracking Sheet to record contact with potential partners and other community groups, and ensure that details are provided for each engagement.
10. After each Healthy Athletes event, recognize partners formally through SOPEI's media channels.
11. Invite members of the press to attend Healthy Athletes events.