

Evaluating work to amplify survivor voices for systems change



Supporting survivor-led approaches to systems change required a flexible evaluation plan to facilitate learning and meaningful engagement in a complex environment.

Sector:
Justice

Primary service:
Evaluation

Client:
**Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland
Nova Scotia (EFSMNS)**

Project:
**Evaluation of the On Our Terms
Project**

6+

**Survivor experts leading
project implementation**

4

**Atlantic Provinces included in
project activities**



The situation:

The EFSMNS launched the *On Our Terms* project to explore survivor-led approaches to advancing systems change related to gender-based violence (GBV). The project was led by an Expert Advisory Committee of survivors of GBV, trafficking, and sexual assault with experience of the justice system. The project focused on **amplifying survivor voices to encourage positive changes to the justice system**. This work happened in a complex environment with evolving priorities, significant stigma, and uncertainty about how systems would respond to survivors, so ongoing learning and adaptation throughout the project were critical. EFSMNS engaged RPI to provide independent evaluation to support reflection, guide decision-making, and identify lessons learned for future initiatives.

Complexities

- Working across four Atlantic provinces with different systems
- Supporting meaningful and trauma-informed participation of survivors with diverse experiences and perspectives
- Evaluating an innovative project with activities that changed substantially over time
- Working to make change in complex systems where change can often be slow and difficult to achieve



The approach:

RPI worked closely with EFSMNS and the Experts to complete a developmental evaluation of the project. **Developmental evaluation** was used because of the innovative and evolving nature of the work and the need to adapt project activities as learning emerged. Developmental evaluation uses an ongoing and iterative approach to collecting, analyzing, and reporting evaluation data.

RPI conducted the following **key evaluation activities**:

- Developed an **evaluation and learning framework** to guide reflection and assessment throughout the project.
- Supported **ongoing learning and sense-making** with project staff and members of the Expert Advisory Committee.
- Collected and analyzed information from interviews, meetings, project documentation, and other project activities over a three-year period.
- Produced **evaluation reports** documenting project achievements, implementation challenges, and promising practices.
- Identified **practical lessons learned** for effectively implementing survivor-led projects to advance systems change.

The evaluation documented how the project evolved from an initial focus on action for system change to creating opportunities for survivors to share their perspectives through storytelling, public engagement, and community art as mechanisms for raising awareness and supporting longer-term change.



The impact:

The evaluation demonstrated the value of survivor-led approaches in supporting healing, building confidence, developing relationships, and increasing community awareness. Findings highlighted effective practices for involving survivors in leadership, engagement, and systems change efforts while identifying lessons learned for future initiatives. The evaluation provided EFSMNS with key principles and approaches for strengthening survivor-led projects and helped establish a foundation for continued efforts to amplify survivor voices and advance systemic change related to gender-based violence.



The project team:



Clare Levin
Partner



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Consultant



About RPI

RPI helps organizations find and identify insights to support decision-making and drive evidence-backed change. The RPI team brings extensive experience in the areas of health, accessibility, education, community services, and other public sector services.

Organizations come to RPI for support when:

- They need credible evidence to support decision-making, especially around funding or program/policy change
- They need help setting direction, planning for, and navigating complex policy, implementation, and system-level changes
- They need support hearing and making sense of diverse perspectives to inform implementation and next steps

Reach out to talk about how RPI can help you.

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