



A Proposed Evaluation of the Youth Ambassador Program
Prepared for Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre
February 4th, 2017

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To: Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre
Re: Youth Ambassador Program

Chrysalis Consulting is pleased to have the opportunity to work with the Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre to facilitate the evaluation of the Youth Ambassador Program.

We commend the Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre for undertaking an evaluation of its Youth Ambassador Program and hope that the comprehensive evaluation plan developed by Chrysalis Consulting meets your needs. As requested, we have enclosed the following components

- Overview of the Youth Ambassador Program and its evaluation needs
- Proposed program logic model and program logic model narrative
- Description of the proposed evaluation approaches
- Description of the incorporation of a contribution analysis
- Description of the proposed methodologies for addressing evaluation questions
- Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice
- Evaluation matrix

Past clients have selected us for our innovative approach to evaluation and our demonstrated ability to work with a vulnerable population. Our consulting team is comprised of credentialed evaluators, all of whom have extensive experience using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Several of our members are particularly well-versed in empowerment-focused evaluations and have experience applying contribution analysis. Given our combination of strong methodological abilities and expertise in evaluating youth-centered programs, we are confident in ensuring the success of the evaluation at hand.

We sincerely hope that this evaluation proposal will benefit the Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre. We thank you for this opportunity and look forward to discussing our evaluation plan with you further.

Regards,

Chrysalis Consulting



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1. Overview of Youth Ambassador Program

The Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre (KMHRC) is a provincial resource centre located in central Vancouver, British Columbia that links children, youth, and families across BC with information, resources, and peer support regarding mental health and substance use. All services are free of charge, as KMHRC operates under the BC Children's Hospital as a mental health literacy program. Established in 2013, the Youth Ambassador Program is an initiative of the KMHRC that was developed in partnership with BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services and KMHRC's Youth in Residence (part of the F.O.R.C.E. Society for Kids' Mental Illness). The aims of the Youth Ambassador Program are to provide British Columbia youth (ages 17-25) with opportunities to engage in promoting mental health and well-being among their families, friends, and communities through: (a) developing mental health promotion projects; (b) providing feedback and helping revise current KMHRC initiatives; (c) promoting and participating in KMHRC events, and; (d) contributing to the KMHRC website, with the ultimate goal of reducing the stigma that surrounds mental illness through increased dialogue.

We understand that the Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC) is soliciting a consulting team to develop a comprehensive evaluation plan addressing program success through a Contribution Analysis (CA), including the development of a logic model and evaluation matrix. Furthermore, the ESC has requested that the uptake, reach, and effect of the program on Youth Ambassadors and those that they engage with be evaluated. Considering what the evaluation entails, Chrysalis Consulting feels that the project at hand can be conducted in the desired 30-40 days.

2. Theory of Change

Chrysalis Consulting has devised a comprehensive theory of change based on our understanding of the Youth Ambassador Program's resources, activities, and desired outcomes. We propose that the Youth Ambassadors are the sole participants in the established theory of change, as activities primarily serve to engage them in program operations, resulting in their direct influence on outcomes at all stages. That being said, we recognize that the broader community and mental health system are involved in the program activities and outcomes in indirect, albeit significant ways. For the purposes of developing an interpretable theory of change, we intend to consult with members of the community and mental health services, rather than incorporating them directly within the program logic model (PLM).

The proposed theory of change incorporates Empowerment Theory, as it recognizes the Youth Ambassador Program's aim to have youth affected by or interested in mental illness to be involved in the reduction of mental illness-related stigma (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005). The PLM (see Appendix A) we have developed consists of several underlying assumptions. Importantly, it is assumed that the peer-based approach taken by the Youth Ambassador Program is appropriate for the Youth Ambassadors and for the endeavour at hand (empowering youth and tackling stigma surrounding mental illness). Through the utilization of contribution analysis, it is assumed that causality exists between program activities and outcomes, as well as between the various stages of outcomes (short-term, intermediate, long-term, and ultimate). For example, we

have assumed that increased empowerment experienced by Youth Ambassadors increases their motivation and desire to become Youth Mentors, reflecting the causal linkage between the two desired outcomes.

In addition to these assumptions, we have identified life events that are external to the program experienced by Youth Ambassadors as a potential external factor. If a Youth Ambassador experiences a traumatic life event (e.g., a death of a family member), it could serve as a barrier to their full participation in program activities, subsequently affecting the achievement of desired outcomes. A potential risk that could disrupt the outlined causal linkages is the broader sociocultural beliefs that exist in the B.C. community. If beliefs regarding mental illness do not align with program values, this could function as a barrier to the achievement of Youth Ambassador empowerment, the dialogue that takes place between young people, and in turn, the reduction of stigma in the community. For example, a dialogue between a Youth Ambassador who desires to spread awareness about mental illness resources and a community member who is largely against openly discussing mental illness may result in the Youth Ambassador feeling less empowered, and the community member feeling more opposed to discussing mental illness. On the contrary, sociocultural attitudes in the broader B.C. community that align with the Youth Ambassador Program's values could serve as a facilitator for the functioning of the outlined causal connections.

Ultimately, the outcomes we have established based on our understanding of the Youth Ambassador Program will cause a decrease in stigma surrounding mental health in the community. In order for this to occur, stigma must first decrease amongst the Youth Ambassadors and young people themselves, facilitated by their empowerment and engagement in dialogue. We hope that the theory of change we have developed reflects an accurate understanding of the Youth Ambassador Program, and we look forward to collaborating with stakeholders for refinement and elaboration.

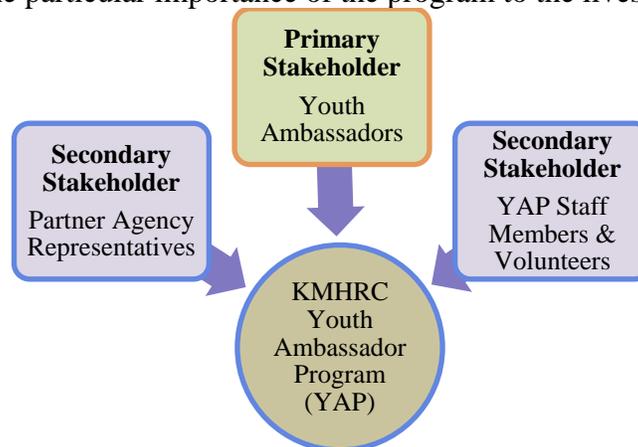
3. Scope and type of evaluation

The purpose of the proposed evaluation is to determine whether the Youth Ambassador Program is operating as it was intended, whether program activities could be improved, whether there are barriers and/or facilitators to program uptake and reach, the extent to which the program is achieving short and intermediate outcomes, and whether there is evidence to support the assumed causal linkages in the program theory of change (TOC). We recommend a combined process and outcome formative evaluation of this program. A formative evaluation is undertaken to improve the program by making its activities more effective and efficient and, consequently, maximizing the potential for desired outcomes to be achieved. Furthermore, the Youth Ambassador Program has only been in operation since January 2013 meaning it is important to check if program activities are operating as planned. This can be achieved using a process evaluation, which involves measuring for correspondence between program delivery and the design (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). The process evaluation will involve a focus on the fidelity of activity implementation, which stresses developing an understanding of the extent to which the program activities are being carried out as they were intended to be (Century, Rudnick, & Freeman, 2010). The accompanying outcome evaluation will allow us to investigate

if Youth Ambassadors are experiencing the Youth Ambassador Program’s intended short- and intermediate-term outcomes. Additionally, the results from an outcome evaluation can help inform how the Youth Ambassador Program’s service delivery may be improved for Youth Ambassadors. Due to feasibility issues (e.g., 30-40 day timeframe), the current proposal is not designed to directly examine the long-term outcome of the Youth Ambassador Program (reduce mental illness stigma). Rather, we propose indirectly examining this long-term outcome by focusing on gathering empirical support for the assumed causal linkages between the short-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes outlined in the Youth Ambassador Program TOC.

4. Theoretical approach

We recommend the proposed evaluation be led by three theoretical approaches. These are the empowerment approach (Fetterman, 1994), utilization-focused approach (Patton, 1997), and contribution analysis (CA; Mayne, 2012). Because the Youth Ambassador Program is designed to provide support and opportunities for vulnerable youth who may be experiencing mental illness, we recommend that the proposed evaluation be guided by a combined empowerment and utilization-focused approach. Empowerment evaluations are participatory and collaborative in nature, in which the evaluator’s role includes consultation and facilitation to develop skills within the agency (i.e., staff and Youth Ambassadors) so that they can contribute to the evaluation (and even conduct evaluations on their own in the future). This approach also helps individuals use the results more effectively for advocacy and change efforts, as well as to experience a sense of control over a program which affects their lives (Rossi et al., 2004). A utilization-focused approach to evaluation focuses on gathering information that will be most useful and relevant for the Youth Ambassador Program. This approach also calls for evaluators to make all decisions in collaboration with an identified group of primary users (Patton, 1997). Therefore, we suggest the creation of an Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC) that includes representation from all stakeholder groups, but most importantly the primary users of the program (Youth Ambassadors). This committee will help guide, support, and be involved with the evaluation process. We have identified the key stakeholders involved with the Youth Ambassador Program and represented them in the diagram below. Overall, Chrysalis Consulting considers each stakeholder group as vital to the evaluation process and a valuable member of the ESC, but recognizes the particular importance of the program to the lives of Youth Ambassadors.



In addition, CA is suggested as an approach to the current evaluation because of Youth Ambassador Program's request to assess the long-term goal of reduced mental illness stigma. CA will allow the Youth Ambassador Program to know whether this program is the primary reason why Youth Ambassadors are experiencing the identified outcomes of interest. This is because a CA can infer causality as long as the evaluation can find evidence for: 1) whether the program is based on a well-structured TOC; 2) the program activities are being implemented as they were intended; 3) there is evidence that the expected outcomes occur and that the TOC is effective; and, 4) external alternative factors for outcomes have been accounted for (Mayne, 2012).

In order to enact the CA with the Youth Ambassador Program, Chrysalis Consulting has proposed employing the key steps to CA outlined by Mayne (2012) in collaboration with the ESC, and most importantly the Youth Ambassadors. As outlined in our methods section and evaluation matrix, there are a number of evaluation questions and activities which we have proposed that will assist us in assessing the various steps of CA. Please refer to the Program Theory Workshop section for further details on how the ESC will be engaged with assessing the Youth Ambassador Program TOC. Specifically, the goal of this initial workshop is to gather information from ESC members about steps 1, 2, and partially 3 of a CA (Mayne, 2012):

- 1) how the program contributes to reduced mental illness stigma (causal problem); the scope of mental illness stigma in the community/society; how wide reaching the effects of the Youth Ambassador Program might feasibly be; what other key influencing factors there may be;
- 2) whether there are external influencing factors or other explanations for the proposed TOC causal linkages; whether there are additional risks and assumptions related to the TOC not already identified by Chrysalis Consulting (see PLM); and
- 3) strengths and weaknesses of the TOC

Once this information is gathered from the ESC and the additional proposed evaluation activities are implemented, Chrysalis Consulting proposes holding an additional Program Theory Workshop where the remaining CA steps (3-6; Mayne, 2012) are completed. The overall goal of these final steps is to outline a credible contribution story of the Youth Ambassador Program. While the current proposal reflects our initial evaluation plan, Chrysalis Consulting looks forward to working closely with the steering committee at all stages of the evaluation in order to ensure it best reflects the specific needs of the Youth Ambassador Program. To further ensure maximal quality and integrity while conducting this evaluation, Chrysalis Consulting will adhere to the standards set out by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE; Yarborough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011), which have been adopted by the Canadian Evaluation Society.

5. Methods

The proposed evaluation questions, indicators, and methods of data collection are summarized in the evaluation matrix (Appendix B). Chrysalis Consulting recognizes that all methodological approaches have specific advantages and inherent limitations. Therefore, we will use a variety of complementary qualitative and quantitative methods when evaluating the Youth Ambassador Program. This triangulation of data strengthens validity and ensures the highest

standard of evaluation possible (Schwandt, 2009). All data collection will be guided by the ethical principles of integrity and accountability adopted by the Canadian Evaluation Society. This includes measures such as gaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring participant-centred methods. In consideration of the Youth Ambassador Program's desire to conduct a contribution analysis, we recognize that this evaluation is part of an iterative process that must continually be revisited and refined, particularly in regards to a program's TOC. With these considerations in mind, we recommend the following six evaluation methods:

Textual Reviews: *Literature review, environmental scan, and documents review*

We recommend a systematic and thorough review of relevant academic research literature to determine whether the newly-developed TOC for the Youth Ambassador program is empirically supported (evaluation question 1), and to search for relevant external factors that could account for the contribution claims postulated by the program TOC (evaluation question 2). Scholarly peer-reviewed research (e.g., mental illness stigma, peer-to-peer models, etc.) will be summarized and synthesized to obtain a comprehensive knowledge base on these topics.

A systematic environmental scan (Albright, 2004) will also be conducted to determine whether successful peer-based mental health promotion programs draw on a similar theory of change (evaluation question 1). An environmental scan will also be used to assess the current sociopolitical climate surrounding mental illness in BC (evaluation question 2).

We also recommend a thorough review of several Youth Ambassador Program documents. Firstly, we recommend reviewing any relevant documents relating to program delivery, such as a policy and procedures manual. This will allow for a comparison with focus group findings regarding intended and actual program implementation (evaluation question 3). Lastly, we will review internal records of program participants' recruitment and retention to calculate the percentage of Youth Ambassadors who have become Ambassador Mentors (evaluation question 8).

Advantages of textual reviews:

- Efficient/economical way to ensure Youth Ambassador Program is empirically supported
- Identifies best practices for future program improvement

Limitations of textual reviews:

- Research demonstrating positive results and favourable outcomes may be reported more often than those demonstrating negative results and unfavourable outcomes
- Relies on accuracy and completeness of previously recorded data

Questionnaires

Chrysalis Consulting recommends a questionnaire be employed to evaluate the Youth Ambassador Program's short-term outcomes (evaluation question 5). This brief questionnaire will include the 10-item General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995), which is a widely used and psychometrically sound measure of self-efficacy. In addition, open-ended questions will focus on Youth Ambassadors' experiences of peer connections, mental health promotion skills, and awareness regarding both mental illness and available mental health resources. The questionnaire, which will be developed by Chrysalis Consulting in conjunction with the ESC, will be conducted online in order to reach as many participants as possible. Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques (e.g., means, percentages) and qualitative data will undergo a content analysis, which allows for emergent

themes related to evaluation questions to become apparent (Thomas, 2006).

Advantages of questionnaires:

- Relatively simple, quick, and cost-effective
- Allows for anonymous responding, which can help reduce social desirability and issues of peer pressure that may arise in focus groups

Limitations of questionnaires:

- Direct causal conclusions from the program to outcomes cannot be made
- Does not allow the opportunity for participants or evaluators to ask follow-up questions

Key Informant Interviews

Chrysalis Consulting recommends conducting semi-structured interviews with a purposeful sample of key informants both inside and outside the Youth Ambassador Program (KMHRC and BC Ministry of Health staff) to gather information regarding their perceptions of barriers and facilitators of program uptake and reach. We envision contacting mental health coordinators (either in-person or by telephone) in Vancouver Coastal Health and more sparsely populated regions (e.g., Northern Health) in order to gain a more complete picture of how the Youth Ambassador Program could improve its reach and uptake, and how feasible this would be (evaluation question 4). Interviews will include open-ended questions developed with the ESC and will be tailored towards key informants. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed, then analyzed theoretical thematic data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Advantages of key informant interviews:

- Obtain detailed and informative responses from people with the most experience
- Provides an opportunity to gather recommendations for future planning given unique contextual factors (e.g., differences based on geographical location)

Limitations of key informant interviews:

- Requires extended time commitment
- May be difficult to arrange interview times with those most appropriate to answer

Artistic Medium Inquiry

Artistic Medium Inquiry (AMI) is a qualitative research method in which the Youth Ambassadors will express their personal stories through various artistic mediums, such as poetry, photography, drawing, painting, and written narratives. This method will specifically allow Youth Ambassadors to share their stories about their feelings of empowerment (evaluation question 6) and their experiences of sparking peer- and community-based dialogue around mental illness (evaluation question 7). To recruit participants for this method, evaluators will give Youth Ambassadors instructions at the end of the online focus groups. Participants will be able to address as many or as few of the evaluation questions they wish. Once completed, evaluation team members will contact participants to discuss their artistic pieces, their underlying content and themes, and the overall impact that program participation has had on them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The evaluation team will use audio recording and transcription to develop these themes into a comprehensive report on participants' experiences with the Youth Ambassador Program in relation to the evaluation questions listed above. Further, at the discretion of the Steering Committee and the participants, the artwork will be presented, where feasible, to the public at an open art exhibit. This will share the participants' experiences with a

broader audience, engage the community, and raise public awareness. AMI is also an innovative method in that it builds trust between participants and evaluators, creates a sense of ownership, and empowers participants to express themselves creatively and on their own terms, fitting seamlessly with the Youth Ambassador Program's mandate as well as Chrysalis Consulting's theoretical approach.

Advantages of AMI:

- Allows for the elicitation of unexpected outcomes
- Can empower potentially marginalized group (i.e., young people with mental illness)

Limitations of AMI:

- Requires prolonged effort on part of participants
- Art may be biased towards participants' positive experiences

Focus Groups

Chrysalis Consulting recommends conducting focus groups with key stakeholders (e.g., Youth Ambassadors, KMHRC/Youth Ambassador staff/volunteers) to gain a greater understanding of program design (evaluation questions 1 and 2), delivery (evaluation questions 3 and 4), and outcomes (evaluation questions 5, 6, and 7). All focus groups will be facilitated using the best practices outlined by Krueger and Casey (2008). Focus group participants may be recruited through emails and/or written invitations circulated among agency staff and Youth Ambassadors. In line with our focus on empowerment evaluation, selection of focus group participants and questions will be done in collaboration with the ESC to develop their evaluation capacity and sense of control/empowerment in the evaluation process.

Two focus group formats are recommended: in-person and online. In-person focus groups are applicable to KMHRC/Youth Ambassador Program Staff, who work in close proximity to one another, and online focus groups provide an alternative for groups of geographically dispersed individuals (e.g., Youth Ambassadors). We suggest using Google Hangouts for online focus groups as it is free to use with a Google account (e.g., Gmail). Focus groups will include 5 to 10 participants in order to allow adequate participation from each member (Krueger & Casey, 2008). Focus groups will audio recorded and transcribed by Chrysalis Consulting, but the analysis and development of key themes will be done in consultation with the ESC.

Advantages of focus groups:

- Obtain rich, qualitative data regarding program design, delivery, and outcomes
- Require less time and funding than individual interviews for the same number of participants

Limitations of focus groups:

- Potential for peer pressure or for few members to dominate conversation
- Difficult to schedule a group of people together

Program Theory Workshop

Chrysalis Consulting will conduct a program theory workshop with members of the ESC. This method will be used primarily to employ the key steps to CA outlined by Mayne (2012; see theoretical approach section above), thus answering the first question outlined in our evaluation matrix (Appendix B). A major tenet of contribution analysis is identifying and accounting for external factors that may facilitate or inhibit the influence of program activities on intended outcomes, thereby strengthening the contributory claim that can be made concerning the

program (Lemire, Nielsen, & Dybdal, 2012). Thus, by collaboratively working with stakeholders to identify the TOC, external factors may be identified beyond those in the revised PLM. As the workshop will be conducted early in the program evaluation, these external factors may inform other evaluation activities (e.g., focus group) during the evaluation process to help build a stronger contribution claims. In line with empowerment evaluation approach, the program theory workshop will allow program stakeholders to collaborate with Chrysalis Consulting, and even oversee and undertake evaluations on their own in the future (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005).

Advantages of Logic Modeling Workshop

- Allows for discrepant views among stakeholders to be identified
- Can build internal evaluation capacity of stakeholders

Limitations of Logic Modeling Workshop

- Requires extended time commitment from stakeholders
- Potential for a few stakeholder members to dominate the conversation

6. Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice

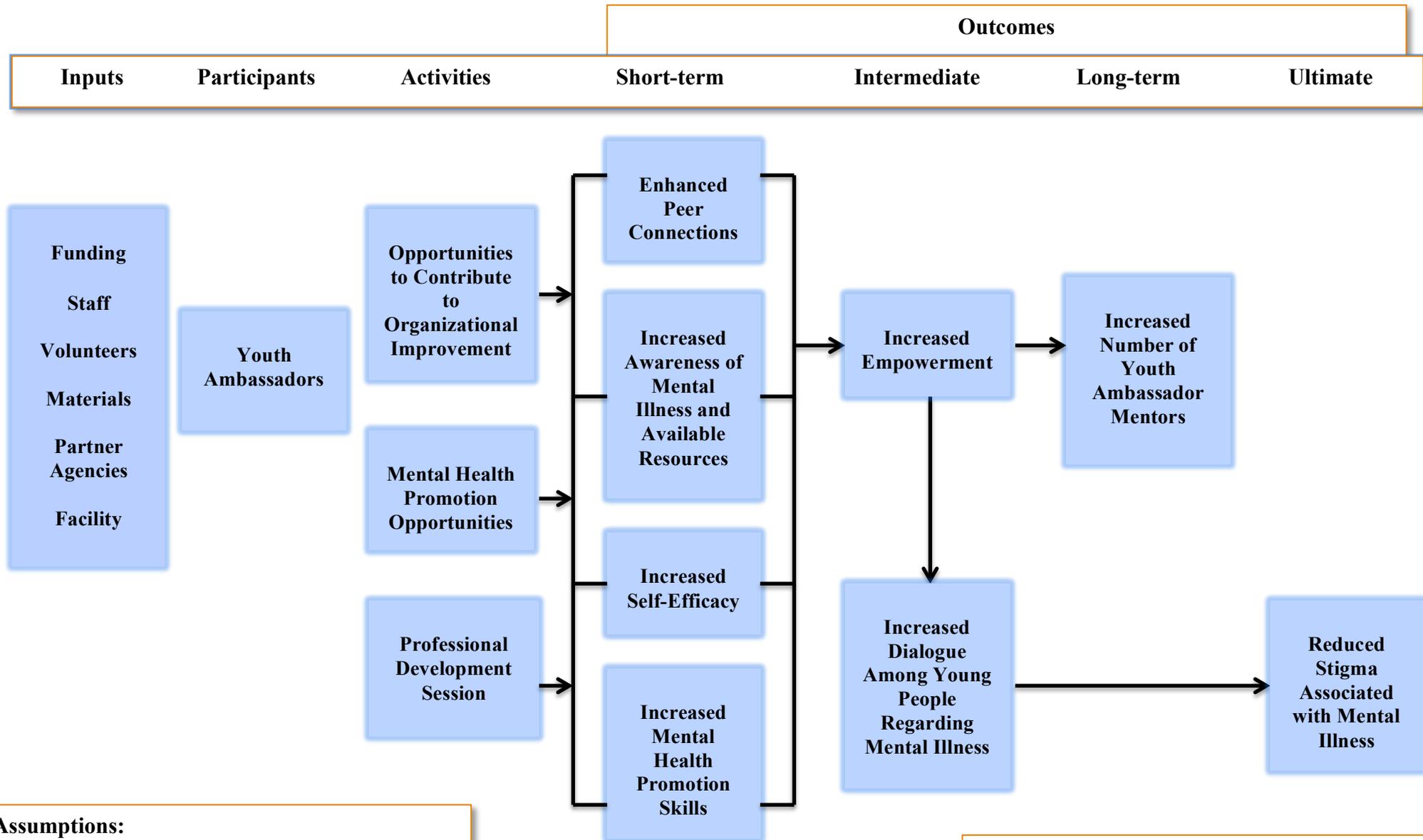
The Chrysalis Consulting team is made up of evaluators credentialed through the Canadian Evaluation Societies Professional Designation Program (PDP). As such, the three pillars of the PDP credentialing program will guide the recommended evaluation design and data collection methods outlined in this report. The three pillars include: the code of ethics, the standards of practice, and the evaluation competencies (CES, 2010). The way we have designed our proposed evaluation demonstrates the following five competencies in particular:

Competency	Evidence of Demonstration
Reflective Practice Competency 1.3: Respects all stakeholders	As demonstrated by our inclusion of stakeholders in the Program Theory Workshop and our overall Empowerment approach, Chrysalis Consulting has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognized the importance of stakeholder inclusion in developing a valid and respected theory of change, Program Logic Model, and identifying the assumptions and risks required to conduct an Contribution Analysis • Valued the input of stakeholders by ensuring that members from all stakeholder groups are included in the Evaluation Steering Committee
Situational Practice Competency 3.2: Examines organizational, political, community, and social contexts	As demonstrated by our proposal’s Contribution Analysis approach and partnering with stakeholders and community members (such as the BC Ministry of Health) Chrysalis Consulting has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified the importance in understanding how the program’s context impacts participants differently, as well as participants’ own contexts (e.g., culture, family structure) • Understood the social context in which the evaluation is to occur • Recognized the political influences that may influence the evaluation or the outcomes of the program
Interpersonal Practice Competency 5.9: Attends to issues of diversity and culture	As demonstrated by our proposal’s anticipated risks as well as our chosen evaluation methodology (such as the Artistic Medium Inquiry), Chrysalis Consulting has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified the needs and beliefs of diverse constituents and communities including: ethnicity, language, social class, culture, religion, local customs, and organizational cultures • Displayed cultural sensitivity • Responded proactively to address issues of diversity, striving to be both equitable and inclusive

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Appendix A: Program Logic Model



Assumptions:

- Activities and outcomes are connected through the specified causal linkages
- The peer-based approach is appropriate for the facilitation of causal linkages between activities and outcomes

Risk:

- Broader sociocultural beliefs within the community may not align with program values regarding mental illness

External Factor:

- Youth Ambassador experiences external to the program may influence participation and achievement of outcomes

Appendix B: Evaluation Matrix

All of the proposed evaluation questions will be informed by the contribution analysis and empowerment approaches outlined above. As requested, each question will be limited to 1-3 indicators.

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Methods
Program Design		
1. Is theory of change underlying the program supported?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empirical evidence from social science literature Self-reported perceptions from program stakeholders Evidence from similar successful programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature review Focus groups (in-person and/or online) Program Theory Workshop Environmental scan
2. What are external factors that could account for the contribution claims of the program theory of change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empirical evidence from social science literature Youth Ambassador self-reports of alternative supports Evaluator assessment of current sociopolitical climate related to mental illness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature review Focus groups (online) Environmental scan
Program Delivery		
3. Are program activities implemented as intended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder perceptions of intended and actual program delivery Degree of adherence to organizational policies and procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus groups (in-person and/or online) Documents review
4. What are the barriers and facilitators to uptake and reach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Ambassador self-reported experiences of recruitment process KMHRC and BC Ministry of Health employee perceptions of barriers and facilitators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus groups (online) Key informant interviews
Outcomes		
5. To what extent are the short-term outcomes for Youth Ambassadors being achieved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Ambassador self-efficacy scale scores Youth Ambassador self-reports of short-term outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questionnaires Focus groups (online)
6. To what extent are Youth Ambassadors experiencing increased empowerment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Ambassador self-reported experiences of empowerment Staff perceptions of Youth Ambassador empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artistic Medium Inquiry Focus group (in-person)
7. To what extent has dialogue among young people regarding mental illness been increased and enhanced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Ambassador self-reported experiences of increased and enhanced dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artistic Medium Inquiry Focus groups (online)
8. To what extent are Youth Ambassadors transitioning into the role of Ambassador Mentors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of Youth Ambassadors who become Ambassador Mentors to new Youth Ambassadors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents review