



# Review of Non-Governmental Organizations

Conducted by the Department of Health and Social Services

September 2019



# Background

In 2017, the Government of Yukon appointed the Financial Advisory Panel (the Panel), an independent panel that advised the Government of Yukon on options concerning financial policies and tools to help the government build a sound and sustainable financial future for Yukon.

In the Panel's final report, issued in November 2017, one of the options was that the government "consider a comprehensive review of the healthcare sector akin to the one done in 2008 focusing on the factors driving costs and on the quality of the outcomes being delivered to Yukoners."

Another option from the Financial Advisory Panel was that the government review, compare and assess the performance of government-funded societies who are part of the health and social system, providing services on behalf of government.

In early 2018, the Department of Health and Social Services (HSS) initiated the Comprehensive Review of health and social programs and services. Although the Financial Advisory Panel's option was a review focused on the healthcare sector, the Yukon government expanded the scope to include health and social program and services because the programs are interrelated in these areas.

## The Review of HSS Agreements with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

The early phase of the Comprehensive Review included a preliminary inventory and analysis of agreements with those NGO and service-providing organizations providing health and social services on behalf of government, to ensure that resources were appropriately allocated and aligned to meet program requirements.

This portion of the review, called the NGO Review, consisted of an assessment of agreements with 33 funded Not for Profit organizations and two For Profit organizations, for a total of 35 organizations that received funding from HSS in 2018/19. Some of the organizations had more than one agreement which meant an assessment of 38 transfer payment agreements in total, constituting \$14m in funding.





The NGO review began on May 7, 2018 when the department sent letters to all HSS-funded NGOs informing them of the Review, with one-year status quo funding agreements for 2018-19 while the review of NGO funding agreements was underway. This letter indicated the review would focus on defining and assessing the delivery of outcome-based measures that support the health and well-being of Yukoners.

The review concluded in March 2019 when individual NGOs were informed of their specific funding agreement with the department for fiscal year 2019-20, including the length of their funding agreement and any applicable cost of living increase.

During this 10-month period, officials within the Department of Health and Social Services reviewed the agreements with NGOs and completed preliminary assessments based on the department's experience, previous reports provided by the NGOs to the department as part of their regular reporting process and routine interactions with these organizations. The department also conducted program evaluations (in specific cases). The department identified a number of gaps and requirement for additional information. Without this information, it was unable to fully assess improvement in the outcomes of clients served by these NGOs.

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With the information available, the organizations and their agreements were assessed based on the following criteria:

- Alignment with client needs
- Organizational mandate and performance
- Potential to increase programming and scope
- Ability to help other NGOs build their capacity

The department assigned NGOs and their agreements to one of the following categories:

- High performing: excellent alignment with client needs, organizational mandate and performance; potential to increase programming and scope; and ability to help other NGOs build their capacity.
- Moderate performing: meeting expectations but requiring improved alignment with client needs and organizational mandate; opportunity for potential partnerships with other NGOs.
- Low performing: performance issues, better alignment with client needs and organizational mandate is required; services may be out of scope from Transfer Payment Agreement terms and conditions.

## The NGOs

Ensuring that Yukoners have access to high-quality programming is a priority of the Yukon government and non-governmental organizations in the territory play a critical role in helping the government achieve this important goal. NGOs deliver high-quality, person-centred services that support the health and wellness of many and the health and social system could not meet the needs of Yukoners without the dedication and expertise of staff and the commitment from the volunteer members of Boards of Directors from these organizations. This was highlighted in conversations with department staff who meet and work with these organizations on a regular basis.

Yukon NGOs provide many essential services and supports that we as the Department of Health and Social Services do not provide.



Although not an exhaustive list, the main services provided by HSS-funded NGOs are:

- Housing supports and services for vulnerable populations;
- Supports for children and adults with cognitive disabilities;
- Services for seniors; and
- Advocacy and education

## The Findings

The vast majority of our NGOs are high performing, focused on client needs, with a clear organizational mandate. Many have the potential and desire to increase their programming and scope to meet unmet needs. In many examples, these organizations are implementing innovative improvement initiatives and trialing new ways of providing supports to their clients and building capacity among their staff. Working with NGOs, the Department of Health and Social Services is committed to further building the capacity of the NGO sector as a whole.

Of the 38 agreements:

- The majority of the NGOs received 3-year funding agreements (27) based on alignment with client needs, organizational performance and reporting. Of these 3-year agreements, 20 received 2% cost of living increases while 7 agreements are grant-like contributions where cost of living was not applied.
- The department entered into four (4) 1-year agreements with a cost of living increase. In some cases, this was done to align with external factors such as collective bargaining cycles. In other cases, HSS is working with NGOs to assist them in aligning their services to better meet client needs and their organizational mandate.
- The department renewed 6 agreements for 1-year without a cost of living increase. NGOs who did not receive a 2% cost of living increase were either in the moderate or low performing categories or were undergoing transitions or negotiating collective agreements or received a grant rather than a service agreement.
- 1 agreement was suspended during the review period due to that NGO being out of compliance with the Societies Act.



Cost of living increases are for fiscal year 2019/20 only. Future cost of living increases will be decided each subsequent year.

Of the 35 organizations, 26 were assessed as High-performing, 5 were assessed as Moderate-performing and only 4 were assessed as Low-performing.

## What We Learned from the NGO Review

The original plan as shared with NGOs was to work with individual organizations to complete the review of the existing agreements; however, the work did not begin until later in the year and the department did not complete the work as originally planned.

The department completed the assessment of the agreements using the extensive knowledge of departmental staff who work with these NGOs on a regular basis, previously filed reports and program evaluations in some cases.

The department did not begin this process with a clear picture of the types of data or performance indicators that were being collected by the various NGOs. As a result, it was difficult to evaluate outcomes without having pre-identified common measures of success for different client populations. Without this information, the department was unable to fully assess whether NGOs are successfully achieving performance outcomes.

Although the department has done some initial work in this area for its own operations, we recognize that we have more work to do in this area as well.

The department recognizes that we need to work with the NGO community in a more collaborative way going forward to achieve all of the original objectives of the NGO Review.

The department is committed to working in partnership with our NGOs and other organizations to develop an outcome-based performance framework for the entire health and social system.

We recognize that Yukon government staff from many different areas of the department and across departments are working with NGOs on the delivery of services to clients. As a result, we may have inadvertently been inconsistent in reporting requirements and other expectations creating some confusion within the system.





The department recognizes that there are opportunities to work together with NGOs to potentially streamline reporting while still ensuring accountability for public funds when developing future agreements with NGOs.

The department acknowledges that the communication regarding the NGO review process and the way in which we conducted the NGO review created some confusion and stress among NGO service partners. Going forward, the department will use more collaborative approaches in our communications with our partners.



## Next Steps

The department has referred the bigger question of how to improve health outcomes through a broader range of coordinated health, community and social services to the Independent Expert Panel conducting the Comprehensive Review of health and social programs and services.

We expect this work to happen at a strategic, systems level, rather than by reviewing individual agreements with individual organizations.

The Independent Expert Panel on the Comprehensive Review has already begun the process of engaging with HSS-funded NGOs during meetings held between June 3 and June 14. A significant number of NGOs participated in a series of workshops that discussed what's working, what's not working, ideas for improvements to the health and social system, and advice to the panel as it continues with its work. The discussions with the panel were frank and constructive and the panel will continue these conversations in the fall during the second phase of public engagement.

As the Comprehensive Review of health and social programs and services continues, the department will work collaboratively with NGOs on the development of an outcomes-based system to support the work of the NGO community in improving the health and wellness of Yukoners. We recognize that we share a common interest with NGOs working in the health and social field to provide high-quality, person-centred services that improve health and wellness for Yukoners and we are committed to demonstrating our support for our NGO partners going forward.

It is our intent to bring together a working group comprised of government and NGO partners to design how we work together in the future, what we need from each other and how we can determine, jointly, what our performance measures will be.

