

Residents at the Centre, Working from the Inside Out...

A report by Lawrence Heights Inter
Organization Network (LHION) In Transition



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Produced in partnership with the Collaborative Leadership in Practice (CLiP) project.

This report, and summaries of the report in English and French, are available on the CLiP website: www.clip-lcp.org

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Project Background.....	3
Transitioning LHION.....	3
CLiP Independent Reflection and Research Project	4
Community Consultation Process	5
Community Focus Groups: Who We Spoke To	5
LHION in Transition	7
History of Participation in the Network	7
Likes, Dislikes and Considerations for resident involvement in the new structure	8
Community Priorities and 2017 Action Committees	10

Introduction

Since August 2016, the Lawrence Heights Inter Organization Network (LHION) has been preparing to make a transition of its current structure to a new organizational structure with the intent to increase and improve the opportunities for residents and agencies working in these communities to meet and discuss the current and emerging needs of the community and execute specific activities. The LHION has engaged in community conversations that would review documents outlining community priorities and gather insight from the networks general members to provide guidance to this transition process that the new network structure emphasizes the priorities of community and properly reflects feedback from community members.

The resources for this community based research were made available through the LHION participation with Collaborative Leadership in Practice (CLiP), a two-year bi-lingual project to strengthen collaborative, equitable and inclusive leadership in the non-profit sector, specifically in the context of partnership and networks. CLiP is a joint project co-led by Health Nexus and the Ontario Public Health Associate (OPHA).

This report will outline the context, process and outcomes of a community consultation process aiming to support the transition of the local community network. The goal of this research and report is to advise directives to the transition of the LHION structure to enhance the participation of residents in key leader roles and to report back to CLiP key findings related to the equitable inclusion of residents into the networks core functions.

Project Background

Transitioning LHION

The Lawrence Heights Inter Organization Network is a coalition of organizations, service providers, residents and community groups that work to coordinate the delivery of programs and services in the communities of Lawrence Heights, Neptune, and Lotherton, the former Lawrence Heights priority neighbourhood as designated by the City in 2007.

The LHION aims to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of neighbourhood governance structures and to increase resident participation and empowerment. The LHION is an example of grassroots that engages residents to address community issues and coordinate efforts between organizations, the City and local residents towards building healthier communities.

For more than 10 years, over 40 different community agencies and numerous community leaders have voluntarily participated offering contributions to community development/building efforts in Lawrence Heights, Neptune and Lotherton. With a 20-year revitalization project currently underway in Lawrence Heights, the need for the network to improve its ability to action the many diverse priorities identified by those living and working in the three communities as well as manage the long-term changes that will come with the revitalization of Lawrence Heights has been the focus of many conversations at the LHION steering committee table and amongst the network partners.

Partners further acknowledged that for the network to strengthen its collaborative capacity, improve communication platforms and enhance its ability to create action within the community, the involvement of residents is central to success in these areas. In the transition of the network structure, the LHION will pursue equitable representation of residents and agency partners at all its decision-making tables. (LHION Transition presentation, appendix A)

To prepare for this structural transition to take place early 2017, to improve the efficacy of its current activities and increase the networks collective impact, the LHION steering committee with the support of local community consultants facilitated a series of resident and partner focus group discussions to inform community of the proposed structural changes and gather their input. Residents offered feedback into the ways in which they see themselves involved in the LHION as well as identify the priorities that will influence the formation of the 2017 action committees. Partners also offered input to develop the annual network priorities and identify resources in-kind and other.

The objectives of this consultation process were as follows:

1. Familiarize residents with LHION to create awareness of the network and its objectives
2. Create resident awareness and promote a continued interest in participating in LHION
3. Incorporate methods of resident involvement into the existing LHION transition plan and proposed new model
4. Gather input into the annual 2017 network priorities
5. Develop a final report outlining the consultation process and recommendations for the LHION Steering Committee to incorporate into the transition plan

CLiP Independent Reflection and Research Project

As a collaborating partner with the Collaborative Leadership in Partnership, the project co-leads Health Nexus and OPHA provided support LHION to conduct community based research to answer questions of particular relevance to the environment in which the network finds itself currently. The support of CLiP provided necessary resources to assist the consultation with community partners and residents to gather their feedback into the transition of the LHION and assist the network to deepen its understanding, address specific challenges and lead the production of new knowledge related to CLiP.

This independent reflection and research project being led by the LHION representatives will contribute to the activities of the CLiP project including case studies, stories, resources, webinars and workshops.

The key questions guiding this reflection and research project are based on the residents and agencies perspectives on the current and proposed network structure models.

1. What do they like and dislike?
2. What changes do they feel need to be made to the proposed model to support resident involvement?
3. In what ways do residents see themselves being involved in LHION?

This report will highlight the key findings of the community conversations while directing the process of transitioning the LHION network into 2017 action committees and supporting the composition of these committees to equitably incorporate residents into its core functions. The overall goals of this community consultation and research undertaking will deliver both the objectives of LHION and CLiP simultaneously, while expediting the transition of the network within its working time lines.

It is important to note that the progression of LHION transition has continued while the report has been in draft. LHION steering committee members and the general members have received updates on the feedback gathered during the consultations while steering committee members and select residents have participated in a data analysis process to determine the networks 2017 priorities and designated action committees.

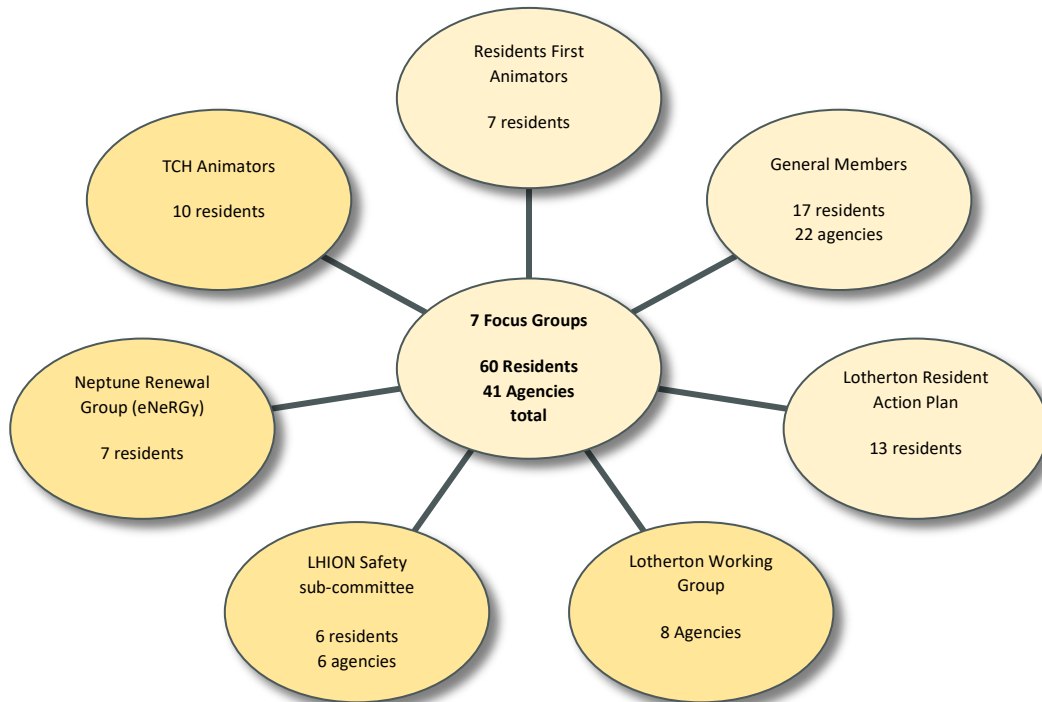
Community Consultation Process

Between the months of October-December 2016, a series of 7 focus group discussions, 1 community update presentation, and 3 data analysis sessions were facilitated with residents and agencies to familiarize them with the current structure of LHION, present the proposed structure and present a series of community priorities identified in various background documents outlining the current environment of the Lawrence Heights, Neptune and Lotherton. Opinions were gathered from the participants on the proposed structure, the supports needed to increase and encourage resident participation as well as input into key priorities and activities to direct the work of the network in 2017.

Following the seven focus groups, data analysis sessions were held with LHION steering committee members and key resident leaders to review the collected data and use thematic analysis to determine the action committees to house the action/work of the LHION throughout the year. A single report back was shared with the general members to present the listed comments compiled during the focus group sessions.

Community Focus Groups: Who We Spoke To

During our 2-month consultation process, we were able to gather information and considerations from 60 residents and 41 agency staff who participated in 7 focus groups. The consultations focused on the general membership of the LHION in Lawrence Heights, Neptune and Lotherton Pathways communities, with residents, youth, seniors, existing grassroots groups and LHION agency partners that provide programming and services to all three communities. While many of the participants are aware of LHION over the previous years, not all had been directly involved with or connected to the LHION in the past. Focus groups were conducted with existing groups meeting for various purposes including the Residents First project animators, LHION general meeting, Lotherton resident action plan (RAP), Lotherton working group, Neptune Renewal Group, LHION safety sub-committee and the Toronto Community Housing (TCH) revitalization animators.



The consultations are considered successful due to resident representation at each focus group, a sign of equitable input and participation, residents representing the majority of participants. Both residents and agency partners participated in reviewing the proposed model, discussing their likes, dislikes and any considerations that need to be made to the model as well as identifying ways in which residents see themselves being involved in LHION. Community members including our partners were also given an opportunity to provide input into actionable priorities for the year 2017. To outline the format of the focus groups, the workshop agenda is included as appendix B.

A commitment was made to participants to provide a report back once the focus groups were completed. A presentation was made at the December LHION general meeting which hosted 45 individuals to share the raw findings from the conversations and report to the group and next steps moving forward until the LHION 2017 Annual Planning Day on Thursday, February 2, 2017. We committed to present the 2017 action committees as part of the new structure of LHION for the first time at that event.

LHION in Transition

History of Participation in the Network

To open each of the focus groups conversations, participants were asked to name the ways in which they have been historically involved with or connected to the LHION over the past years. The responses from both residents and partners were diverse and covered a wide range of activities that connect all actions that have sustained the LHION and made its existence possible. This record of involvement also bears witness of the value of efforts of collective, collaborative community building; people are willing to contribute of their time if it matters to them.

The list of activities were grouped thematically and represent the LHION members who attended or participated in various LHION initiatives or events, received capacity development or leadership opportunities through involvement in the network and provided resources or staff hours to support the functions of the network over the past 10 years.

Participation or Attendance in initiatives or events	Resident Leadership, Development and Planning	Network Functions and Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at monthly meetings to provide updates on events, program(s) and employment opportunities (general, safety were two main tables identified) • Participation in Social Development Plan consultation meetings and community café's • Attended community festivals and events (harvest festival, one community, Jane's Walk, Lotherton bus tour) • Representative from community grassroot group to provide update and seek support for ongoing activities. • Have experienced a critical incident and have been supported by member of the LHION body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected co-chairs of the network and its working groups. • Developed skills, accessed trainings, forums, and conferences with different focus (Employment, Trades, Food Handler etc) • Networking opportunity with all levels of politicians- directly advocate and voice concerns. • Involved in developing funding proposal for LHION projects • Capacity building opportunity through a LHION pilot project named Building Equitable partnerships (BePart) • Access to employability training, resume building and interview preparation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Lawrence Heights, Neptune and Lotherton communities into vibrant, safe and healthy communities • Revitalization and the implementation of the Social Development Plan • Provide support and effective engagement around Employment and economic opportunity • Information sharing, connecting and collaboration alongside partners with similar mandate in community • Resident Engagement and Capacity Building • Events in collaboration with partners and community that focuses on the needs and ask of residents • Provide space for community meetings,

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered for the LHION email correspondence that filters updates, events and economic opportunities on a weekly basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident skill development opportunity named “Tools for Community Change” supported residence in facilitation experience and public speaking Coordinator of LHION Working Group Resident leadership roles in different LHION projects through several funding streams (Resident First, Youth Arts Action! Project) 	<p>programs, events, forums and café’s</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific representation from Lotherton to engage network on activities, updates and potential partnerships. Coordinators of LHION Working Groups Founding members of the Lawrence Heights Inter-Organization Network
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It was interesting to note that residents were more likely involved in the various network activities as a participant or attendee and were the recipients of leadership opportunities through LHION special projects or initiatives. The capacity development, leadership opportunities offered residents access to key roles in the network as co-chairs or coordinators, involvement with specially funded projects to train and enhance capacity, or as a community liaison. Agencies more often provided the in-kind resources that support the functions of LHION including space, administration, staff hours to facilitate and maintain meetings, programming, training and connections to resources. It is an exercise to bring more residents into the capacity development leadership roles in the network with the agencies continuing to provide the foundation pieces to house opportunities.

Likes, Dislikes and Considerations for resident involvement in the new structure

During consultation, we spent a significant amount of time gathering feedback from community residents and partners around:

- I. What likes and dislikes they had about the new structure for LHION?
- II. What they saw as gaps moving forward?
- III. What additional considerations need further discussion for residents to be actively involved?

It is relevant for the network to understand what members see as valuable in this transition, can they appreciate the need to make change and the shift in direction to do so? Also, consider how able LHION is to adjust and incorporate recommendations to the final structure to increase and support resident’s involvement.

Throughout the conversations, there were common responses and a general attitude of open mindedness to the inquiries in all focus groups. Below is a highlight of the comments and principal statements relating to participant’s feelings of the proposed LHION structure.

Likes:

- Community residents felt empowered through this process. Residents expressed they felt heard and included in making the LHION network accessible for active resident participation.
- The new model demonstrated resident leadership roles, capacity building and advocacy which is highlighted through the change of having 2 co-chairs; 1 which is an elected resident and 1 community agency for the network and all action committees
- Residents continued to express that the transparency of the proposed structure provided them with enthusiasm to be a part of the network function, specifically the action committees.
- The new LHION structure provide equitable opportunity to all three communities and ensures support and membership reflected of Lawrence Heights, Lotherton and Neptune
- Residents expressed numerous times the structure seemed way more practical, goal-oriented and achievable.
- The approach to resident engagement to the LHION has improved immensely. Residents have used the term “agency table” very strongly but now feel it is moving in the direction of “partner table”.
- The idea of yearly membership fee’s was accepted and found it important in supporting the action and sustainability of the network.

What’s Missing and Considerations:

- A coordinator position that specifically focuses on the functions and activities of the LHION.
- LHION need to consider other communication tools/mediums to further engage residents that were not a part of consultation method and are still not aware of the LHION Network in community (Quarterly newsletters, calendar boards).
- Accessibility to community meetings that is safe for all three communities for both general membership and action committees: space, time, location, childcare, refreshments at meetings
- Action committee meetings should rotate between all three communities for equitable involvement. This will also address some accessibility concerns for residents.
- Residents have asked for one additional general membership meeting to the year which will support resident involvement. Community has agreed to re-visit after a year of the transition.
- Yearly evaluation tool that will support how we move forward annually and will gather input from all key stakeholders on how the year went.
- Implement trainings identified through focus groups and in supporting documents, as a capacity building component.

The absence of dislikes from the comments is not deliberate, in fact, there were no direct negatives of the proposed structure brought forward by participants. What their reflections offered were important considerations to improve methods to keep residents aware of the network activities. Residents were impressed they were consulted and considered in this type of engagement; a step towards resident empowerment. The need to develop communication

tools to ensure that even residents not involved in network activities can still be informed of important activities and developments, and how do members show their membership? LHION action committees should also pay special attention to how they create accessibility of its meetings for resident participants. Being able to provide general accommodations, refreshments and transportation while rotating evening meetings between the 3 communities are first steps to increasing accessibility for residents in the LHION.

Community Priorities and 2017 Action Committees

The approach to analyzing the assembled data from the focus group sessions was to look specifically at suggested activities under a number of community priority areas. The 14 priority areas for community action were extracted from a number of existing documents from the focus communities including, Shaping our Future: A Social Development Plan for Lawrence Heights, the Lotherton Resident Action Plan, Youth Arts Action logic model for youth leadership and other supporting pieces taken from the 2016 LHION planning day and Neptune Renewal Group. The resulting 14 priority areas were an aggregate of issues already identified by residents and partners as requiring action in Lawrence Heights, Neptune and Lotherton to create community impact. It was an important factor in this consultation process that we acknowledge that community had already identified its needs and the LHION was ready to begin effectively taking action.

Participants were asked as the final activity during the focus groups to suggest actions they felt needed to happen under each priority. What was collected was a relatively lengthy list of specific activities in 14 areas. This list of priorities and activities provided the content for the data analysis review to take place. Areas with the greatest number of activities combined with a thematic grouping of the activities would help to identify which priority areas would become the action committees moving forward in 2017.

Considerable time and efforts were required to complete the thematic data analysis of each community priority. A total of 3 data analysis meetings at 3 hours each were coordinated with LHION steering committee members and community residents involved with the Residents First Project to complete this piece of work. This group of up to 20 participants led the task of condensing remarks by similarities, themes, popular action and/or activities, all, having only seeing the remarks for the first time. Between the three sessions conversations, questions and exchange took place while the group compared, contrasted and compiled key themes emerging from the list of activities. In addition to the group conversations, individual reflections were captured using the listed activities and data analysis workbook as a supporting tool. (Data analysis workbook and list of priorities, appendix C)

Through the analysis a number prevalent ideas and common themes emerged amongst the responses under all proposed 14 priority areas. Community residents and partners felt strongly that the following types of activities should be core actions under each priority:

- Resident training and skill development
- Mentor support and volunteer opportunities for residents
- Resident led initiatives

- Increasing spaces for social connections between residents, agencies and stakeholder partners
- Increased awareness and access to information, resources and key policies for residents

The final outcome of the data analysis process was the establishment of 6 action committees for operation in 2017. These committees demonstrate the majority activities and comments as contributed by the focus group participants and reflect the continued work of the agency partners already happening within the three communities.

Listed below are the 2017 action committees that will house the work of the LHION for the coming year: Community Action/Civic Engagement, Safety-Housing/Community Spaces, Economic Opportunities/Employment, Seniors, Healthy Living, and Youth Development and Engagement. Each committee will be comprised of community residents and agency partners already leading work in these areas and sharing a common interest to be engaged and provide support to community collaboratively.



The proposed 2017 action committees were approved by LHION steering committee members for presentation to community at the annual LHION planning day event. On February 2, 2017,

over 90 community members, including residents and partners were present at the 2017 LHION planning day event to participate in the first public reveal of the transition structure now complete with action committees. Attendees were provided a brief background of the last 6 months, a presentation of the new structure, and introduced to the final 6 action committees moving forward for 2017.

The remaining planning day activities focused specifically on planning within the 6 committees for the coming year and to encourage community to begin confirmation of their participation on the committee of their choice. The sheer number of attendees at the planning day and the enthusiasm brought forward at forging better relationships, partnerships and commitments to the communities is a definite step to strengthening the collaborative capacity in Lawrence Heights, Neptune and Lotherton.

With a successful community consultation completed and a well-received presentation of 2017 action committees, the LHION has made positive progress creating awareness and interest in the network with residents in Lawrence Heights, Neptune and Lotherton. Moving forward, the LHION will continue its transition through a one year pilot of the new structure. The steering committee and membership will continue to work to support the evolution of the network to 3 general meetings per year, monthly steering committee and action committee meetings with equitable representation of both residents and agency partners co-chairing these tables. Resident are excited and optimistic about the new structure and the increase of resident participation being encouraged and supported at the LHION table.

To continue to build a strong LHION that can emphasize and sustain the involvement of residents, the following recommendations are being made to the LHION steering committee:

1. The creation of a LHION coordinator position to specifically support the functions and activities of the network which will allow for a smoother transition throughout 2017.
2. The development of a communication strategy to assist in outreach to and engagement of residents in the network. Community wishes to be kept informed of current activities and developments regardless of their participation on action committees. A variety of consistent communication mediums to support information sharing among all three communities and internally in the network need to be considered.
3. Agency partners should consider best practices to provide mentorship and training to residents in leadership positions in the network and to other residents interested in leadership positions as a strategy to support continued resident involvement and succession to co-chair positions.
4. Action Committee co-chairs and members to review the outputs provided by community during consultations to develop their work-plan moving forward (LHION 2017 priorities: planning template, appendix D)
5. Develop an evaluation plan to examine how the pilot year of the transition and what to consider moving forward in the new year. The outcomes of the evaluation can be shared at the LHION 2018 Annual planning day event. Residents felt strongly about

adding a 4th general meeting to the year- this would be an appropriate time to revisit this specific ask.

The LHION network is committed to growing with the residents and partners of the Lawrence Heights, Neptune and Lotherton community. With this evolved network structure and reinvigorated engagement, it is the ambition of LHION to build the confidence and resilience of new resident leaders to advocate and take ownership of the network and their quality of life. The LHION will continue to be a network that focuses on the needs of community and supports the capacity building of residents.

The following pages are a collection of resources that were used to support the research and reflections of the focus group consultations with community members. They include:

- A) LHION restructure presentation in powerpoint
- B) Focus group agenda and workshop outline
- C) Data analysis agenda and workshop outline
- D) Data analysis workbook complete with content captured during the analysis sessions