



**Creating Regional Cross-Sector
Collaboration For Wellbeing**

KGHFOUNDATION



We acknowledge that Thrive Okanagan gathers on the unceded, ancestral and traditional territory of the syilx Okanagan Peoples. We honour the syilx stewards whose relationships with this land have sustained its waters, forests and communities since time immemorial.

We commit to working with honesty and openness. We recognize that true partnership takes time, that Indigenous voices must guide our actions, and that building trust means acknowledging where we fall short and learning together. As we advance our mission to promote community wellbeing and health, we draw on syilx teachings of balance—knowing that the health of land, body, mind and spirit are intertwined.

We pledge to:

- Listen deeply and welcome feedback at every stage
- Share decision making power by inviting Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community members to co-design the work
- Honour syilx principles of generosity, reciprocity and relational responsibility in all we do
- Integrate holistic wellbeing approaches that respect both traditional knowledge and modern public health practices

By holding ourselves accountable to these promises, we seek not just to work on this territory but to walk in genuine kinship with the syilx Okanagan Peoples and all who call these lands home—together nurturing a healthier, more connected community.



Thrive Okanagan is a collective-impact backbone that brings together diverse partners across social, cultural, health, built, natural, and economic environments to co-create systemic solutions, align shared goals, and measure progress toward sustainable wellbeing.

OUR WHY

Thrive Okanagan strives to unify health and social care by fostering regional collaboration across diverse services and organizations. By connecting and coordinating this complex network, we enable collective action among healthcare providers, community organizations, and local partners by facilitating joint efforts and resource sharing. Our approach promotes proactive, preventive strategies that enhance mental and physical health, nurture social connections, and enable more equitable access to resources for all Central Okanagan residents.

We understand that community services and systems are often stretched, reacting to immediate issues. Thrive Okanagan is committed to driving systemic change by addressing social determinants of health, reducing inequities, and fostering resilience and wellbeing. We focus on the factors that sustain community health, many of which extend beyond healthcare and are interconnected, requiring a collective shift in thinking and action across all sectors.



BACKGROUND

The initiative emerged in response to a growing mental health crisis. In 2022, the KGH Foundation rallied the community to raise \$1.7 million to meet the immediate needs of community mental health care providers as well as drive long-term, system-wide change.

In its initial phase, more than 30 key leaders and decision-makers across sectors in the Central Okanagan came together to understand what was needed for an effective mental health and substance use system of care. A key challenge identified was the lack of coordination where many organizations were working independently, limiting the ability to address the complex, interconnected nature of mental health care. The pandemic further exacerbated this challenge.

Thrive Okanagan was established to break down these silos by building relationships, sparking collaboration, and fostering a more integrated, culturally safe, and effective system of support using a collective impact approach as a backbone support.

TIMELINE

2022

"We See You"
Mental Health
Fundraising
Campaign

2023

Development of
MHSU System of
Care Report

First "Convening" of
Leaders in
Community

2024

"Test" Collective
Impact Projects
Focused on Mental
Health &
wellbeing, and
Annual Convening

The building of a
backbone support:
Thrive Okanagan

2025

Thrive Okanagan –
Phase 2 Projects
and Annual
Convening

Complete Year 1
Projects and
Evaluation

Planning for Year 3
Projects



OUR APPROACH

In the Central Okanagan, collaboration is essential to address complex wellbeing challenges. These issues are interconnected and require coordinated efforts across various sectors, including government, non-profits, Indigenous communities, and the private sector, to create sustainable solutions.

Built on a **collective impact model**, Thrive Okanagan engages the community to explore systemic challenges to co-create and fund solutions. To drive meaningful change, Thrive Okanagan invests in the five core conditions of collective impact including:

1

Setting a Common Shared Agenda: Aligning partners and sectors through the Thrive Okanagan Goals for Wellbeing Framework, which outlines actionable goals for community wellbeing.

2

Backbone Support through Convening and Facilitation: Strengthening collaboration through providing dedicated resources that can gather and lead conversations and action.

3

Shared Measurement & Continuous Learning: Measuring progress with clear indicators and fostering continuous learning to adapt and improve over time.

4

Project Funding Through Mutually Reinforcing Activities: Providing financial resources to catalyze and sustain initiatives that address community needs and promote systemic change.

5

Continuous Communication: Ensuring transparent and ongoing communication to keep all partners aligned and engaged in the process.

SETTING A COMMON SHARED AGENDA

Setting the agenda for the vision of Thrive Okanagan, this framework was developed through a community-led steering committee as the guiding tool for shaping our approach to community wellbeing. It incorporates input from over 20 organizations, including local government, healthcare, academia, social enterprises, Indigenous communities, and law enforcement, to address the unique needs of the Central Okanagan. Drawing from global best practices, such as the Community Wellbeing Wheel, Social Determinants of Health, and UN Sustainable Development Goals, the framework aligns with local frameworks like Imagine Kelowna and the Central Okanagan Vital Signs Report, ensuring consistency with regional goals and priorities.

The Framework provides a comprehensive, systems-based foundation for addressing the complex factors that influence both individual and collective health. It challenges traditional, top-down methods by focusing on a shared responsibility for wellbeing, integrating individual/personal agency with community-driven action.



It identifies four key environments—Social and Cultural, Health and Social Care, Built and Natural, and Economic and Work—that are essential for fostering long-term wellbeing. Within these environments, 16 actionable goals are outlined to address areas such as mental health support, social cohesion, access to recreational spaces, and economic stability across the age-span.

This framework not only aims to align partners but also to catalyze systemic change and enables the community to measure and track progress.



BACKBONE SUPPORT THROUGH CONVENING

Backbone support is the coordinating infrastructure that holds the collective-impact model together. For Thrive Okanagan, it means dedicated resources to support facilitation, convening, and coordination of projects that align diverse partners around a shared vision and drive system-level change.

Year 1 launched three pilot initiatives, including dedicated Community Catalysts to foster connections with Indigenous communities, a Primary Care for Newcomers Working Group to improve access and coordination, and a multi-sector Community Disaster Planning Workshop to strengthen emergency response, particularly with respect to vulnerable populations. In Year 2, Thrive Okanagan has established a Physical Literacy Collaborative Table and is providing backbone support for Food Security collaboration.



Lead Community Catalyst

Thrive Okanagan's Lead Catalyst (Shelagh Turner) provides strategic stewardship for backbone functions ensuring alignment, managing funded projects, and nurturing relationships across sectors. Community Catalysts convene working groups and committees, secure project funding, and champions shared learning to maintain momentum toward collective goals.



Indigenous Community Catalyst

In Year 1, Indigenous Field Catalyst (Ali Butler) supported Thrive Okanagan to establish relationships with Elders, knowledge keepers, and Indigenous-led organizations to initiate conversations that explore culturally grounded recommendations for mental health initiatives as a key step toward strengthening trust between Indigenous communities and system partners.



Primary Care for Newcomers

In spearheading the Primary Care & Immigrant Services Working Group, our Lead Community Catalyst convened health-care and settlement agencies to illuminate the barriers immigrants and newcomers experience accessing health and social care services and establish an action plan. The group secured new funding to enhance translation and service navigation tools for the community.



Disaster Planning Workshop

In Year 1, Thrive Okanagan convened a multi-sector Community Disaster Planning Workshop, bringing together over 30 government, health, Emergency Response and non-profit leaders to map evolving resources and co-develop emergency protocols for our community. The workshop yielded a consensus-built response framework, new resources and an enhanced network of coordinators.



Physical Literacy *Active Year 2 Project*

A Community Catalyst (Drew Mitchell) is convening a Physical Literacy Collaborative Table with local partners, overseeing an environmental scan, building partnerships, and supporting practitioner training—all to strengthen the link between physical health and mental wellbeing to ensure equitable access to physical activity across the age span in the community



Food Security *Active Year 2 Project*

A Community Catalyst (Melissa Blair) is providing backbone support to the Central Okanagan Food System Collaborative, helping to mobilize pilot initiatives that improve food distribution and access across the region. Additionally, the catalyst is to support key partners that provide food security through strategic collaboration.

SHARED MEASUREMENT & CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Thrive Okanagan's shared measurement and continuous learning pillar brings clarity and rigor to our collective-impact work by tracking progress, uncovering insights, and adapting in real time. Anchored by a Year 1 developmental evaluation led by Dr. Amy Salmon, we've captured qualitative and quantitative learnings across all funded initiatives, identifying the fundamental importance of relationships in advancing systemic change, what's worked, where processes could be improved, and the value of dedicated backbone support.

Additionally, Thrive Okanagan funded and supported three targeted research projects to deepen our understanding of critical issues impacting our community: a sector review of upstream mental-health resilience strategies for youth; a participatory analysis of intimate partner violence service system from a child-centred perspective; and a literature review on youth dating violence. Together, these efforts ensure Thrive Okanagan continually refines its approach and drives evidence-based solutions.



Developmental Evaluation

Thrive Okanagan's Year 1 developmental evaluation, led by Dr. Amy Salmon (UBC), used 35 key partner interviews, document reviews, and meeting observations to assess our backbone support and initiatives. It found that facilitated support helped clarify roles for 90 percent of participants and enabled over 75 percent of the projects to launch within three months, while rapid-cycle feedback and peer-learning exchanges drove swift progress. The evaluation also identified that the Central Okanagan lacks a clear and collective vision of wellbeing and unclear accountability, which have now become key areas of focus going forward.



Youth Wellbeing Sector Review & Summit

A comprehensive scan of upstream resilience strategies for young people and conducted interviews across 28 organizations. The resulting Youth Summit and report identified the need for greater focus on belonging, access to safe spaces & supports, and it informed the design of future prevention initiatives with ideas to meaningfully engage youth.



Intimate Partner Violence – Child Centred Perspective

Participatory research with families and sector partners to identify service and collaboration gaps for children and caregivers experiencing IPV. While still to be completed it will produce a gap-analysis report and prototype models for culturally responsive, integrated support pathways that will lead to a better service system for our community.



Youth Dating Violence Literature Review

An academic review of technology-facilitated harm among adolescents was commissioned to understand more about an emerging issue for young people. The literature review synthesized global evidence and recommends peer-education and community-led interventions to prevent the negative impact of digital misuse.

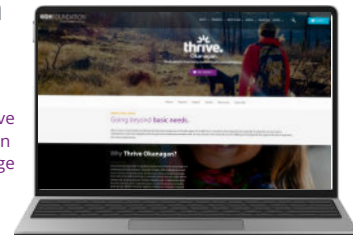
CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATIONS

Thrive Okanagan, originally called "Strengthening Connections," was rebranded to align with Thrive movements in cities like New York and Toronto. As the initiative has progressed, a comprehensive communications strategy was developed to effectively engage various audiences, including internal staff, partner organizations, funders, and the public. Key communication tools, including webpages, newsletters, and one-pagers, were created to maintain clear messaging. Moving forward, Thrive Okanagan will focus on promoting sustainability, sharing impactful stories, and highlighting projects and cross-sector collaboration to further strengthen community wellbeing.



KGHF Summer
2025 Newsletter

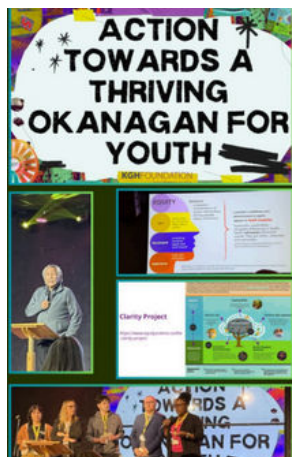
Thrive
Okanagan
Webpage



MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES

Mutually reinforcing activities in the collective impact model refer to coordinated actions across multiple organizations or partners that align with a common goal. These activities are designed to

support and strengthen one another, ensuring that each effort contributes to the overall impact and progress of the initiative. Thrive Okanagan embodies this principle by organizing activities and events that reinforce its overarching mission of improving community wellbeing. A key example is the annual November convening, which serves



as a platform for presenting updates on Thrive Okanagan's mental wellbeing goals and co-created strategies for organizational implementation. The event brings together diverse partners from multiple sectors, providing an opportunity to share progress, reflect on system mapping efforts, and align resources for greater impact. Another notable event hosted in 2025 was the "Action Towards a Thriving Okanagan for Youth," which specifically focused on engaging young people in shaping the future of the community. This youth-centered event provided a platform to capture Thrive-related content, integrate youth voices into the community's wellbeing framework, and gather insights and research that directly contribute to broader system improvement.



THE BACKBONE TEAM



Shelagh Turner **Lead Community Catalyst**

As lead catalyst for Thrive Okanagan, Shelagh convenes partners by building trust, setting agendas and driving action through relationship-building and collaborative spaces that mobilize partners toward shared health and wellbeing goals.

Project

Lead & Contract

YEAR 1

Indigenous Community Catalyst
Central OK Youth Wellbeing Sector Review
Central OK Wellbeing Framework (Report Card)
Thrive Okanagan Developmental Evaluation

Central OK Disaster Planning Workshop
Intimate Partner Violence Participatory Research
Youth Dating Violence Literature Review
Thrive Okanagan Communications Strategy
Central OK Primary Care for Newcomers Working Group

Ali Butler, *Urban Matters*
Melissa Feddersen, *MF Consulting*
Melissa Blair, *Urban Matters*
Dr. Amy Salmon, *Advancing Health Outcomes UBC*
Erin Welk, *Urban Matters**
Dr. Cassidy Biener, *Kelowna CYAC*
Dr. Cassidy Biener, *Kelowna CYAC*
Melissa Blair, *Urban Matters*
Shelagh Turner

YEAR 2

Central OK Wellbeing Framework	Melissa Blair
Central OK Physical Literacy Working Group	Drew Mitchell
Central OK Food Security Collaborative	Melissa Blair
Central OK Primary Care for Newcomers Working Group	Shelagh Turner

* Project supported by a collaborative team including Colleen Cornock; Social Development City of Kelowna; Naomi Woodland; United Way of South & Central Okanagan; Melissa Hunt-Anderson Social Development City of West Kelowna; Shelagh Turner, Thrive Lead Catalyst



WHAT'S NEXT

Thrive Okanagan's focus for 2025 and beyond is clear: to continue to deepen cross-sector collaboration to deliver preventive health and well-being solutions across the region. Throughout 2025, Thrive will continue providing backbone support to its collaborative tables such as the Physical Literacy Collaborative Table and the Central Okanagan Food System Collaborative ensuring these groups remain well-resourced, connected and aligned around upstream resilience strategies.

By convening partners from health, social services, Indigenous communities, education and local government, Thrive Okanagan will aim to foster coordinated prevention activities that address isolation and build community cohesion before issues escalate.

In parallel, Thrive will pilot the Goals for wellbeing framework with a cohort of early-adopter organizations. Partners will test the 16 actionable goals across the Social and Cultural, Health and Social Care, Built and Natural, and Economic and Work environments, creating real-world feedback into shared indicators and continuous-learning processes. Insights from this pilot will be showcased at the annual November convening. Continuous communications, including through the website and newsletter, will aim to keep all partners informed, sustain momentum, and highlight preventive impacts as Thrive Okanagan advances toward a more resilient, thriving community.

THANK YOU

kghfoundation.com/thrive-okanagan