ABSTRACT

This action research project was conducted in conjunction with the Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria (BGCV). The central research question is: how can BGCV build collaborative evaluation capacity in order to develop an evaluation framework. A survey of the frontline staff established that there were varying levels of understanding regarding evaluative practices at BGCV, and a focus group with the senior-level management uncovered evidence of evaluative practices currently occurring at BGCV, including both internal and external program reviews. The findings also suggested that the historical and cultural context of the organization affect its operations, and that there is a perceived trend towards increased accountability in the nonprofit sector. The recommendations reflect these findings, and suggest that BGCV should continue to build on the human and technological capital that exists within the organization, and create an alumni program and program-specific build logic models.
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There are a vast array of amazing individuals that offered me insight and inspiration, without which I would have never been able to embark on this project. I will not attempt to thank all of these people here, but I do hope and trust they know the impact they have on people who surround them. From the outset of this program I felt like I was a small fish swimming with some big players; at first this seemed intimidating, but eventually I realized how much I had to gain, and how lucky indeed I was to be in the relative early stages of my professional career.

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Figure 1. Systems Map for Building Evaluation Capacity and Developing an Evaluation Framework

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CHAPTER ONE: FOCUS AND FRAMING

BGCV has been providing quality programming for children, youth, and families in the Greater Victoria area for over 50 years (Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria, 2013). During this time, dedicated generations of staff have provided new opportunities to clientele, allowing them to overcome barriers, build positive relationships, and develop skills for life. While BGCV considers innovation to be at the core of its values, a comprehensive program evaluation has never been developed to provide a framework for programmatic innovations. The prevention department at BGCV is blessed with a passionate team experienced in program development and implementation. Through my own reflections, along with numerous conversations with colleagues, I believe BGCV is adept at much of the project cycle (Networklearning, 2009, p. 2), effectively developing and implementing programs while relying on internal expertise and experience to provide excellence. If BGCV were to strengthen the final phase of the project cycle, program reviews, the organization might be encouraged to pursue perpetual programmatic innovations and poise itself to provide enhanced service delivery in a competitive nonprofit marketplace (Duerden & Witt, 2012, p. 4).

BGCV has five core values, including encouragement and support, as well as working together (Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria, n.d., Our Mission section). To help honour these values, the agency could incorporate innovation for its programs by building its evaluation capacity and developing a framework to evaluate its programs. The central question of this project will be: How can BGCV build collaborative evaluation capacity in order to develop an evaluation framework? Sub-questions related to this inquiry process will include:

1. What is BGCV’s current evaluation capacity?
2. What barriers currently exist in expanding evaluation capacity?
3. How can program evaluations affect service delivery in the nonprofit sector?

4. What strategies and actions will enhance BGCV’s evaluation capacity in order to support an evaluation framework?

As the Victoria Community Clubs Supervisor, I oversee a handful of programs ranging from licensed out-of-school care services to youth leadership and adventure-based programs. Pursuing community development, as my position responsibilities require, has allowed me to hear members of the public and partnered agencies describe the impact BGCV programs have on its clientele and the communities in which they live.

**Significance of the Inquiry**

There is increasing momentum behind the need for an individual nonprofit agency to engage in program evaluations (Fine, Thayer, & Coghlan, 2000; Benjamin, 2008) as a way to “demonstrate its accountability, improve its performance, increase its abilities for obtaining funds or future planning, and fulfill the organizational objectives” (Zarinpoush, 2006, p. 4). There is also the need to service demand for programs in the Esquimalt neighbourhood – an area categorized as a low-income, urban neighbourhood, with a notable proportion of families living under the poverty line and operating as single-parented households in which the parent works more than one job (Statistics Canada, 2007, p. 2). Pursuing organizational evaluation capacity-building (ECB) and developing a program evaluation framework may help BGCV realize its own success in meeting these needs, and outline areas for improvement.

It is also important to examine the competitive context in which BGCV resides, and the challenges that continue to face the organization as it moves forward. Prugsamatz (2010) suggested that while there exists a positive growth in the nonprofit sector over recent years, nonprofits are increasingly grappling with complex challenges that face them as they move
forward in a global economy, including declining public trust, increasing operational costs, the increasing emergence of for-profit companies entering the realm of social service provider, and the critical challenge of “sustaining and expanding successful programs along with a lack of capacity in ensuring responsiveness and quality service” (p. 244). Embracing learning systems, and incorporating new tools and improving on old ones regarding evaluation practices, might help BGCV launch itself into this increasingly competitive environment, and fuel an internal process of continual innovation for its operational and programmatic practices.

While BGCV is affiliated with numerous accrediting bodies that can help the agency become more attractive for investment, evidence suggests that evaluation from these accreditors does not ensure that nonprofits will “deliver higher quality services” (Carman, 2007, p. 66). Ultimately, building evaluation capacity and developing an evaluation framework can have numerous effects on different stakeholder groups (see Appendix A) for a more detailed stakeholder analysis; it can help engage employees, catalyze higher quality programs for BGCV’s clientele, help BGCV to become more adaptive to the changing needs of the communities served, attract more investment opportunities, and foster an environment of collaboration and innovation (Carman, 2007; Bruch & Reynolds, 2012). However, left unchecked, the absence of evaluation practices may constitute a real problem for organizations in competitive nonprofit environments. A study by Carman and Fredericks (2013) saw 40 percent of organizations surveyed listing the ability to gain a competitive advantage over other organizations as the primary reason for pursuing evaluation practices (p. 58). Furthermore, a lack of program evaluations leaves funders less able to gauge the effectiveness of their investments (Carman, 2008, p. 375).
This research has occurred in an era of increasing accountability for nonprofit organizations, but also aligns with BGCV’s ongoing commitment to accountability and change. One of BGCV’s main values, working together, states that the organization is committed to working “together with young people, families, volunteers, our communities and government…[in order to] provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships and develop confidence and skills for life” (Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria, n.d., Our Mission section). To truly honour this value, the organization must remain accountable and transparent to these stake-holding groups.

Organizational Context

BGCV delivers accessible programs and services to the families that need it most in the Greater Victoria area (Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria, 2013, p. 4). In 2012, BGCV hosted 1100 participants at its Outdoor Centre, 483 children in its out of school care services, 137 children in its Literacy and Numeracy program, and over 200 parents in its parent support programs, with a substantial amount of program fees partially or fully covered by the agency for those who have the highest financial barriers in place (Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria, 2013, p. 2). This spectrum of financial flexibility offered to BGCV’s clientele may not be tenable in the absence of the numerous grants the agency receives from its funding bodies.

BGCV’s operations encompass four program departments and one administrative department, with all organizational operations being supported and governed by a board of directors working in conjunction with the executive director, a leadership executive assistant, a human resources generalist, and five managers (see Appendix B) for an organizational chart).
Four of BGCV’s managers (excluding our finance and administration manager) and the executive director make up the leadership team, a group that handles decisions affecting the entire organization, and responsible for disseminating information down through the community club supervisors regarding all major policy and procedure updates, program updates, funding decisions, and organizational strategic direction. Program types vary departmentally, ranging from youth justice programs, parenting support programs, care homes, out-of-school care programs and camps, and administrative support. A staff team of approximately 85 personnel are split between programs in these five departments. As stated in its mission, BGCV aims to provide these children and youth with new opportunities, help them overcome barriers, and assist them to build positive relationships and skills for life (Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria, n.d., Our Mission section). Hints of these great accomplishments are evident on the organization’s website; between 2007-2010, BGCV was able to provide service to 6000 individuals in the Greater Victoria area, operate 30 programs, serve 35000 breakfasts to children in before-school care programs, offer summer camp programs to 1400 children, offered teens 40 safe and secure care home facilities, partnered with 100 community organizations, and received support from 800 volunteers (Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria, n.d., Our Impact section). Since BGCV opened its doors in 1961, it has increasingly offered access to programs such as these, and as the organization moves forward, it hopes to continue to do community services of this magnitude.

BGCV has recently emerged from numerous changes in leadership, and has grown from previous experiences that have caused turmoil within the agency. Adapting to and learning from change has been a recent reality for the organization, and looking at the capacity to collaboratively develop an evaluation framework will help continue this journey. Senge (2006)
conceptualizes this ongoing learning commitment as being a pillar for any organization perpetually seeking the results desired by continuing to learn through the reflection and engagement of the experiences that have occurred (p. 3).

**Systems Analysis of the Inquiry**

Understanding the vast array of stakeholders and pressures involved in the process of developing an evaluation framework will help underline both the need and the process for change. Seeing the entirety of the internal and external processes and people involved provides an informative backdrop of the current realities facing the organization. Senge (2006) sees the systems analysis of an organization as more of a “framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things… [and] for seeing patterns of change” (p. 68). Therefore, establishing an understanding of the multiple systems involved in the project will help highlight the scope of the inquiry and the parties influenced directly or indirectly by the change process. This is sometimes best done through graphical representation (see Appendix C); when the action and possible effects are captured in a diagram, “the insight into the patterns of the system may be illuminated” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 95). Figure 1, seen below, helps depict the different systems in play in this research topic.
Figure 1. Systems Map for Building Evaluation Capacity and Developing an Evaluation Framework.

This diagram lists internal and external factors in green and blue boxes respectively, and serves as an overview for the interrelated systems involved in this inquiry topic. The funding climate can affect BGCV’s prioritization on developing an evaluation framework, as nonprofit organizations are facing increasing pressure from funding bodies to establish higher levels of transparency and accountability for their programs (Carman, 2008, p. 375). As such, any decrease in funding availability might help further spur nonprofit organizations to develop more
thorough evaluation practices. Understanding and catering to changing demand for programs in the Esquimalt area will also affect how BGCV is able to develop evaluation frameworks; some programs may require more rigorous and difficult evaluation than others. For example, collecting data from alumni-participants to track the long term effects of a youth justice program may be more difficult than collecting data for a literacy program aimed at increasing reading comprehension over a one-year period. BGCV’s technical capability will also play a role in how evaluations are able to unfold. If the agency decides to adopt new technological systems, such as replacing an outdated database system, it may alter the ease in which data is collected and stored.

An analysis of the variance and interactivity between these different systems, and the stakeholders involved, becomes richer when contemplating the relationships through Bolman and Deal’s (2003) four organizational frames: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. Evaluating the structural environment of BGCV ranks, and understanding the differing levels of decision making-power or access to information, can be crucial in recognizing those who are in positions of authority and can impact the direction of the project. On the other hand, a symbolic lens may reveal some long-lasting historical residuals that might affect the research planning and delivery. It is important to see which frame individuals or groups of individuals tend to lean towards, and to appreciate how organizational change “should be regarded as a continuous process that occurs in the historical, cultural, and political context of the organization” (Choi & Ruona, 2011, p. 60). There is also value in addressing the strengths of each frame; if BGCV wants to honour its core value of working together (Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria, n. d., Our Mission section), then, as Bolman and Deal (2003) suggest, the human resource frame may be an effective lens through which to observe the problem and how different systems react and interact (Matching Frames to Situations, para. 5).
There is a growing urgency amongst nonprofit organizations to “design [program] evaluations that are culturally responsive to community and that are inclusive of relevant program stakeholders” (Chouinard, 2013, p. 237), and this entails a collaborative effort by the stakeholders that are able to influence ECB and develop program evaluations and those that are affected by the implementation of program evaluations. The relationships between the stakeholders and systems they operate within are complex and of vast importance; Senge (2006) suggests that understanding these relationships at an organizational level will deliver real advantages to the organization (p. 315). Understanding how different systems can affect or be affected in various ways by this project might help encourage a balanced inquiry process, fostering the development of a framework that embraces a tradition of collaborative development.

There are a multitude of different parties and systems involved in facilitating program evaluations at BGCV. There is also a growing urgency in the nonprofit sector to address ECB and evaluate programs in a way that will help satisfy reporting requirements from funding bodies as well as provide transparency to the public and other stakeholders. A reflection of literature from authors in the evaluation field will help to better understand the myriad of pressures, both external and internal, that are guiding evaluative practices in nonprofit organizations.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

To address how BGCV can build evaluation capacity and develop a program evaluation framework, a synthesis of an array of the academic works related to these topics helps create a better understanding of how this has or has not worked in other organizations, and provides a background on contemporary thought regarding the direction of evaluation practice. This chapter analyzes a field of literature regarding evaluation capacity-building (ECB) and program evaluations which, alongside the research collected in this project, help procure the recommendations for BGCV that are laid out in Chapter 5 regarding how the organization can continue to develop evaluation capacity and incorporate an evaluation framework and its externalities into its daily operations. An understanding of the learning organization, and how it might foster innovation in the workplace, builds a foundation to delve into the realm of outcomes-based reporting, and the practice of ECB. These definitions help underpin the questions asked in the research phases of this inquiry. While the first topic in this literature review revolves around building ECB in the nonprofit sector, the second topic discusses the role of program evaluations by analyzing the collaborative nature of program evaluations. The collaborative nature of an evaluation process can also unearth the impact these evaluations can have on empowering the staff to help pursue perpetual innovations for the programs they are responsible for delivering. Outlining how program evaluations assist nonprofit organizations to deliver programs effectively and efficiently illuminates the potential impacts of an evaluation framework, and recognizes the drivers that promote program evaluation capacity. Finally, it is paramount to recognize, particularly in a competitive nonprofit climate, how program evaluations can help organizations become accountable to funding bodies and the greater public. This chapter will first define the role of a learning organization, outcomes-based reporting, and
the process of ECB in the nonprofit sector, before detailing the role of collaborative program
evaluations in affecting service delivery and enhancing accountability to organizational
stakeholders.

**Building Program Evaluation Capacity in the Nonprofit Sector**

An array of literature (Arnold, 2006; Carman & Fredericks, 2010; Compton &
Baizerman, 2007) highlights the definition of evaluation capacity as being foundational to
developing a quality program evaluation framework. Engaging in these evaluations in a
participatory capacity, rather than in a traditional, distanced approach, can enhance the
collaborative culture of an organization as its employees begin to develop their knowledge and
abilities involving program evaluation together (Arnold, 2006, p. 262). In order to better
understand the process of ECB, I will first discuss the definition of learning organizations, and in
particular how they accept and embrace successes and failures in their operations, and how they
foster innovation within their cultural fabric. Then I will define ECB itself, and finally look into
how ECB interacts with the trend towards outcomes-based reporting.

**Learning organizations and innovation.** Senge (2006) defined a true learning
organization as one “where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they
truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective
aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together” (p. 3).
Senge (2006) also argued that individual learning occurred cyclically, with two cycles occurring
side-by-side: on one hand, he saw a learning cycle as detailing what an individual can do through
organizational action, outcomes produced, and the assessment of these outcomes, but Senge also
envisioned a concurrent cycle that has a deeper meaning for the individual in that it focuses on
practices, capabilities, relationships, awareness, and beliefs and assumptions (p. 284). For a
learning organization to exist, he argues, the organization must accommodate both cycles of learning to occur. However, Senge’s (2006) definition of a learning organization fails to differentiate between members of an organization learning as individuals, and groups of employees learning together to help drive organizational success.

Preskill and Boyle (2008) connected learning organizations with organizations that are able to pursue ECB through using a multidisciplinary model that sees ECB strategies as a part of a larger system that relies on the organization’s learning capacity (p. 445). This model captured ECB efforts as part of a multi-loop system; the authors suggested that ECB was a learning cycle that involved coaching, internship, technology, inquiry, training, and written materials, and that this loop engaged in a transfer of knowledge with a concurrent loop of sustainable evaluation practice which involved continuous learning regarding how evaluations are implemented and how that knowledge is disseminated throughout an organization (Preskill & Boyle, 2008, p. 445).

Learning organizations are those that can accept and embrace failure. Kouzes and Posner (2007) labeled failure as a very necessary externality of the learning process; the cycle of “try, fail, learn” (p. 20) helps support a perpetual cycle that encourages employees to learn from their mistakes and build a culture of learning across the organization. The authors suggest that “making mistakes is part of the price people pay for innovation,” and see these mistakes as being fundamental, and entirely necessary, to driving organizational innovation (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 205). They also suggested that leaders who spur innovation and change must do so alongside the inherent risk of mistakes and failures, and furthermore, these leaders must embody honesty and inspiration even in times of uncertainty and in light of failure (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 32). Senge assessed failure as a more systematic entity. While discussing creative
tension, Senge (2006) alluded to failure as being this very gap in the tension: “failure is, simply, a shortfall, evidence of the gap between vision and current reality” (p. 143).

Learning organizations ultimately need to be responsive to change, and understand that change. Burke, Lake, and Paine (2009) suggested that in order for organizations to remain competitive and innovative, they must make themselves “vulnerable and receptive to external sources and to new, unexpected, even unwanted information” (p. 24). This organizational learning, and the process of change and innovation, may often need to be championed by senior level leadership. Choi and Ruona (2011) identified organizational leaders as being tasked with a perpetual responsibility to apply various change initiatives to their organizations, despite the fact the authors suspect approximately two-thirds of all change initiatives fail (p. 47). However, Choi and Ruona (2011) went on to detail the role of the individuals involved in change, suggesting that since organizations are ultimately an embodiment of its employees, then true, long-term organizational change can only occur through the change in its employee base (p. 49). When analyzing or engaging in an organizational change process, it is also important to consider that these organizations or members of these organizations may also face resistance to the change proposed.

Burke et al. (2009) understood this resistance as a five-stage process, where early on in the change process there may exist only a few champions for change coupled with widespread resistance, whereas later stages start to reverse this imbalance as the champions voice their arguments more fervently, gain support, and ultimately render the “old adversaries...as few, and as alienated, as were the advocates in the first stage” (p. 365). Choi and Ruona (2011) analyzed this change process and contended that those championing change might even create resistance by expecting resistance; the authors suggested that “change agents’ expectations predispose them
to look for resistance and to make sense of others’ actions in such a way to confirm their expectation” (p. 50).

**Defining outcomes-based reporting.** Outcomes-based reporting appears to be a growing trend evident in the nonprofit world. Carman (2007) suggested that nonprofits face increasing pressure to disseminate performance measurement indicators to funding bodies so the funding contracts can be reviewed (p. 60). As such, accreditation is becoming increasingly prevalent in the nonprofit community; funders continue to seek verified and credible information regarding the efficacy of the programs and services they fund in order to ensure that the money invested is providing a maximal impact (Carman & Fredericks, 2013, p. 52). In this regard, and of particular importance to BGCV which is an accredited organization itself, a study by Carman and Fredericks (2013) analyzed the role of accreditation in nonprofit performance, and suggested that “accredited service providers have better outcomes that non-accredited service providers” (p. 52).

Outcomes-based reporting is establishing a report card for an organization so it can prove and reflect on the relative effectiveness of its programs and services, and this practice is increasingly being required by many funding agencies (Carman, 2008, p. 375). Garcia-Iriarte Suarez-Balcazar, Taylor-Ritzler, and Luna (2011), recommended using a program logic model to help tabulate the outcomes of a program, since, by using one funding body as a particular example, “[l]ogic models are one of the predominant design approaches for evaluation and one of the core components of the United Way approach to measuring program outcomes” (p. 172). Kekahio, Lawton, Cicchinelli, and Brandon (2014) defined logic models as a tool that connects the work done to the outcomes achieved, and suggested that logic models typically include five components: resources, that is, the materials needed to create, operate, and review a program;
activities, or the process functions involved with the program; tangible outputs that are related to the program; short- and mid-term outcomes that can be observed almost immediately following a program’s completion; and long-term outcomes, which the authors refer to as impacts, or lasting influences created by the program (p. 2).

For agencies that are mandated to provide support for individuals to help them develop from a young age, such as many of the services and programs BGCV offers, it is pertinent to assess the literature regarding instances where outcomes-based reporting includes an alumni program, that is, collecting input from previous members of a program to help evaluate the program’s long-term effect on its participants. A study that analyzed how an alumni program helped evaluate the efficacy of a master’s and doctoral level program at an American university helped illuminate the importance of implicating previous students in evaluating its programs (Davidson-Shivers, Inpornjivit & Sellers, 2004). The report documented how through inviting and analyzing the input from previous students, the university was better prepared to remain current and adaptive to trends experienced by its student body (Davidson-Shivers et al., 2004, Summary section). This tool aligns with collaborative evaluation practices (to be discussed later in this chapter) that encourage all stakeholders to be involved in program evaluations (O’Sullivan, 2012, p. 518). A similar study was conducted on adults who had been in foster care as a child or adolescent, and the findings brought to light the importance of surveying alumni in efforts to foster programmatic improvement (Anctil, McCubbin, O’Brien & Pecora, 2007). This study found that alumni from previous foster care experienced a much higher rate of depression, a lower rate of educational success, and a lower overall income relative to those growing up outside of any foster care programs, and the researchers identified a gap existing in the support services provided to this population as a direct result of analyzing their experiences later in life.
Much like BGCV, organizations that strive to create positive change by supporting young people to be more successful later in life should naturally be turning to those same folks later in life to realize if the services being provided are proving to be successful.

Young’s (2012) assertion that nonprofit “managers have no accurate way of estimating the relationship between costs and benefits” (p. 29) appears to be debatable as it seems this is not the case for some nonprofit organizations. Outcomes-based reporting is a globally growing trend for nonprofits; Thomson’s (2010) study showed that in 1996, only 14 percent of a sample group of nonprofits reported having a focus on outcomes, where as a later study in 2000 estimated that approximately 44 percent of a sample group of nonprofits focused on outcomes in their evaluation practices. In both of these instances, organizations were weighing program goals with the costs associated. Yet Young’s (2012) suggestion that “non-quantitative information often is more important than that contained in [our] routine reports” (p. 246) might be pertinent for nonprofit agencies that often blend qualitative and quantitative data in their evaluations.

**Evaluation capacity-building.** Labin, Duffy, Meyers, Wandersam, and Lesesne (2012) recognized ECB as “an intentional process to increase individual motivation, knowledge, and skills, and to enhance a group or organization’s ability to conduct or use evaluation (p. 308). In their synthesis of literature regarding ECB, these authors also identify that each piece of literature they reviewed specified that ECB was a process that was independent of actually performing program evaluations (Labin et al., 2012, p. 308). Huffman, Thomas, and Lawrenz (2008) understood ECB as having an ultimate goal to entrench program evaluations as being a routine and comfortable activity within an organization (p. 358). Arnold (2006) maintained that ECB is a complex effort that is dependent on the context of the organization, and this requires
the organization to gage its current capacity, which involves the “role of stakeholders, the source of the demand for evaluation, the multilayered and often quite nuanced levels of an organization, the types of methods and trainings needed, and the resources and flexibility required for successful capacity-building efforts” (p. 258). Garcia-Iriarte et al. (2011) suggested approaching ECB using a “collaborative immersion approach [that included] teaching and learning strategies of brainstorming meetings, trainings, technical assistance, and coaching” (p. 171). Given the collaborative nature of program evaluations, as discussed later in this chapter, the suggestion entails that the learning involved in ECB should also be of a very collaborative nature.

With the seemingly complex exercise of driving ECB, it may be the case that a framework could offer employees of an organization a tangible roadmap on how to achieve the desired results. Arnold (2006) established a framework that spells out the expansion of an organization’s capacity to evaluate its own programs, and prescribed using a four-step ECB framework that trains employees to implement program logic models, involves one-on-one counsel for program evaluation, encourages small groups to collaborate in evaluating programs, and dictates large-scale evaluations across different sites within the organization (p. 259). This model is intriguing as it offers organizations and individuals a gradual transition from small, one-on-one environments to large-scale evaluations, and sees the root of a successful ECB effort as the effective training of all members involved. On the other hand, Huffman et al.’s (2008) suggestion elicited the reverse plan of action; they saw ECB efforts as beginning with complex and real-world situations, believing that in order to:

help individuals develop rich, well-structured understanding of complex concepts such as evaluation…learners need to engage with the concepts in a social and cultural context so
that their individually constructed understandings will mesh with social and cultural norms of understanding. (p. 360)

Finally, Preskill and Boyle’s (2008) multidisciplinary model of ECB, as explained earlier, offered an expansive overview of the systems involved in pursuing ECB, recognizing the complexity and amount of resources, time, and people that are required to engage in these efforts (p. 445).

Technical capacity also appears important in the effort to encourage ECB at an organizational level; Carman & Fredericks’ (2013) research cited a lack of “infrastructure to support performance” as one of the key barriers to ECB efforts (p. 59). Arnold (2006) emphasized the importance of technology in her multidisciplinary model, suggesting that it is required as an input in order to create positive ECB outcomes, and that substantial one-on-one training must accompany the usage of technology in ECB (p. 261). This model is a four-step framework for expanding evaluation capacity; firstly, the organization should build logic models for each program; secondly, one-on-one consultations should occur between expert evaluators and those in charge of evaluating the program; thirdly, small, team-led evaluations should occur as a knowledge-building activity; and finally, larger, organization-wide evaluations can take place (Arnold, 2006, p. 259).

The authors reviewed agree that in order to effectively attempt ECB, there needs to be a champion or expert evaluator that is able to provide the organization with “training, technical assistance, consultation, and other activities to one or more staff within [the] organization” (Taylor-Ritzler, Suarez-Balcazar, Garcia-Iriarte, Henry & Balcazar, 2013, p. 191). It is critical to empower the staff of these organizations, ensuring that they have the “[a]wareness of the benefits of evaluation, motivation to conduct evaluation, and [c]ompetance (knowledge and skills) to
engage in evaluation practices” (Taylor-Ritzler et al., 2013, p. 192). Interestingly, the purpose behind the efforts to pursue ECB is also important in the outcome; Carman and Fredericks’s (2010) research suggested that “nonprofits that focus on using evaluation to make changes and improvements, as opposed to using evaluation for accountability purposes, also have more success with implementation” (p. 85).

It is important to recognize the challenges facing organizations wishing to engage in ECB. Labin et al. (2012) saw that 60 percent of the organizations they studied cited organizational-level factors getting in the way of pursuing ECB, with the largest component of this being the lack of resources (p. 317). Carman and Fredericks (2010) agreed, stating that their research shows most nonprofits lack the time, staffing hours, and resources required to build effective evaluation capacity (p. 85).

Another challenge facing ECB efforts is fear and anxiety amongst employees involved, or that is, a lack of education provided to employees regarding the intentions of ECB. Chouinard (2013) suggested that the process of ECB can be better understood if the employees involved can see the truly relational aspect of evaluation, that is, seeing “evaluators and stakeholders work[ing] together in the joint construction of evaluative knowledge” (p. 243). However, Taylor-Ritzler et al. (2013) argued that educating employees about ECB practices is not enough on its own, noting that “when individual staff members have the knowledge and motivation to engage in evaluation activities…these activities are less likely to occur if their organization does not provide the leadership, support, resources, and necessary learning climate” (p. 200).

Furthermore, Arnold’s (2006) research pointed out that when training does indeed occur, a time-lag issue can often exist as employees reported being very excited about the ECB training but became disillusioned after so much time went by before they were able to apply the training
material in real-life evaluation, and ultimately, this “lapse in time between learning and application often resulted in their abandoning the effort all together” (p. 261). Finally, the literature available in the field of ECB is relatively sparse as the field continues to grow; Carman (2008) cited the lack of empirical literature in the field as being a hindrance to increasing the access to knowledge regarding evaluation capacity, but a reality given the relative youth of the field (p. 375).

With an understanding of efforts needed to pursue ECB, including defining a learning organization and the role of outcomes-based reporting, the environmental factors that support program evaluations being put into practice can be recognized. Throughout the literature reviewed, ECB activities are certainly seen as the foundation required prior to building evaluation frameworks and implementing program evaluations (Labin et al., 2012, p. 308; Garcia-Iriarte, 2011, p. 169). Furthermore, understanding the complex and numerous challenges that exist for organizations that might attempt to expand evaluation capacity is important for organizations to think about and prepare for to overcome the obstacles that are present. However, as a learning organization might, there is much to be seen through the actual practice of having employees effectively evaluate programs, and this leads us to look at how program evaluations typically occur in the nonprofit sector.

Program Evaluations in the Nonprofit Sector

Developing and implementing an evaluation framework can be complex, and an analysis of research can help detail the particular effects that these evaluations can have on nonprofit agencies. These participatory and collaborative approaches to evaluating program delivery can help “to address diverse program and organizational needs across a broad range of local, program, and cultural contexts” (Chouinard, 2013, p. 238). Understanding the financial and
service delivery implications in using evaluation methods can also help outline the perceived benefits and costs involved with the process.

**Defining collaborative program evaluations.** With a shared commitment to accurately evaluate the performance of its programs, both those supervising a program and those involved with directly administering it can collaborate to develop the indicators used in the evaluation, and subsequently can analyze the data collected and create appropriate strategies to address the issues that are raised. Rodriguez-Campos (2012) understood this collaborative approach as systematically connecting and involving all the stakeholders involved in the four phases of an effective evaluation cycle: the development of a framework, the implementation of it, the analysis of the results, and the review of the status of the program evaluated (p. 524). In essence, this cycle demands active participation rather than distanced observation, and may help entrench a collaborative culture in the workplace that constantly seeks improvement. Bruch and Reynolds (2012) also recognized how the development of a collaborative evaluation framework can act as a champion for seeking perpetual programmatic innovation, stating that:

> [t]he purpose of assessment is not simply to defend programs as they already exist nor to simply reinforce the framework of assumptions reflected in program design. Rather than merely measure program success, assessment should enable programs to incrementally change over time. (p. 12)

Collaborative and participatory styles to program evaluations require an ongoing engagement of all the stakeholders involved, be it during the development, implementation, or review of an evaluation framework. This type of evaluation necessitates an “active, on-going engagement between evaluators and program staff, result[ing] in stronger evaluation designs, enhanced data collection and analysis, and results that stakeholder [sic] understand and use”
A study by Orsini, Wyricka, and Milroy (2012) demonstrated that not only do collaborative evaluations help increase the accuracy of data collected, but they are also designed to encourage action in reaction to the data collected; the authors claim that collaborative evaluations “are recognized for maximizing the utilization of evaluation results” (p. 533). Increasing the ties between the stakeholders and the evaluation framework helps to empower the parties involved to participate in the process of program review and innovation, utilizing these stakeholders as “clients, partners, evaluation assistants and data sources” (O’Sullivan, 2012, p. 520). Fine, Thayer, and Coghlan (2000) agreed, suggesting that inviting stakeholders to be active participants in the evaluation process strengthens the long-term effectiveness of results-based strategies that emerge from the evaluation results; “stakeholder involvement increases the likelihood that evaluation results will be used and that evaluation processes will continue” (p. 334).

Rodriguez-Campos’ (2012) research suggested that collaborative program evaluations is a four-step process: firstly, a full review of the program status, taking into consideration the program context and the climate for evaluation; secondly, a collaborative development of the program logic model; thirdly, the implementation of the evaluation, with the stakeholders actively involved in data collection; and fourthly, the dissemination of evaluation findings, both internally and externally for the public to see (p. 524). This method sees both the leading evaluators and the stakeholders as being mutually involved in the evaluation process. O’Sullivan (2012) argued that the strength of a collaborative program evaluation lies in the initial stages where in the organization is able to involve a broad base of stakeholders to help capture the objective for evaluation and assist in designing or choosing the data-collection instruments that are appropriate for a particular program evaluation (p. 520).
**Effects of program evaluations on service delivery.** It is important to recognize the impact of evaluations on the ability of nonprofits to garner more revenue. Labin et al. (2012) employed the term empowerment evaluation to tie together the link between evaluation and service delivery, arguing that this type of evaluation aims to improve program outcomes as its primary focus (p. 308). However, others argue that collaborative evaluations also focus on the idea of increasing the effectiveness of service delivery (O’Sullivan, 2012, p. 519). As such, the purpose of this research project will focus on the inherently collaborative nature of program evaluations rather than comparing the difference between evaluation approaches.

Orsini et al. (2012) reviewed a collaborative evaluation conducted by an American high school. In their review, the authors found that effective implementation of the evaluation led to program improvements in the school, reporting the high school was able to better align lessons by teachers to their program objectives, and that following the evaluation the high school was able to deliver a greater amount of lessons to their student base (p. 533). Preskill and Boyle’s (2008) research agreed with these findings, suggesting that the well-planned and effective implementation of program evaluations helped improve overall program quality (p. 452). Duerden and Witt (2012) agreed, arguing that evaluations conducted on how programs were implemented lead to improvements in program effectiveness. The authors also recognized that evaluations too often occurred once a program is well underway, and they suggest that evaluation that occurs as a program is being implemented can create meaningful impacts for the future of that program (p. 6).

O’Sullivan (2012) suggested that the collaborative nature of program evaluations also increases buy-in from the employees involved, and evaluations aim to “increase the likelihood that programs will achieve results by increasing the capacity of program stakeholders to plan,
implement, and evaluate their own programs” (p. 520). While this project will not delve into individual styles of evaluation, opting to focus on the inherent collaborative nature of most evaluations, it is worth noting that evaluation can beget more evaluation, and that can lead to positive effects on the employees involved. Preskill and Boyle (2008) found that employees who engaged in regular evaluations increased their ability to create program logic models, design methods to collect data, collect valid and applicable data, analyze the data, and train other on evaluation practice (p. 452). Preskill and Boyle (2008) went on to investigate these cognitive outcomes on the staff involved in evaluation, suggesting that these staff developed an increased commitment to perform evaluation, develop more positive beliefs surrounding the data and the evaluation, take more ownership over the value of their work, and experienced a reduction in the anxiety and stress that can typically accompany those involved in evaluations that do not have much experience in the practice (p. 452).

BGCV has a link of network partners that help inform their practice in multiple ways, be it passing along demographic trends in the communities served, discussing grant strategies, sharing recent training, and referring and accepting referrals from other nonprofit organizations operating similar programs. As such, BGCV’s brand in the community is an important aspect of its operations, and the brand helps network with other likeminded organizations. Preskill and Boyle (2008) found that implementing effective program evaluations also “enhanced credibility and accountability within partner organizations” (p. 452).

**Accountability for funders and other stakeholders.** There is increasing momentum behind the need for more intensive evaluation practices in the nonprofit sector (Benjamin, 2008; Carman & Fredericks, 2010; Chouinard, 2013). Some scholars suggest that this is indeed “one of the most important issues facing the [nonprofit] sector” (Benjamin, 2008, p. 201), and a major
focus that permeates much of the literature reviewed focuses on how nonprofits use evaluation practices to maximize transparency and accountability to their funders. Carman (2007) found that most nonprofit organizations build evaluation capacity and develop evaluation frameworks due to internal and external pressures, including “contract monitoring and reporting, organizational learning, and informing public policy and program practice” (p. 60). Fine et al. (2000) determined that over 40 percent of nonprofit organizations that responded to a survey stated that they utilized program evaluations to report program outcomes or impacts in accordance with various funding requirements (p. 333). Interestingly, 20 percent of the respondents in this survey cited United Way requirements for outcome measurement as a reason for implementing program evaluations (Fine et al., 2000, p. 333), a statistic that should resonate strongly with BGCV since the United Way is one of the agency’s primary sources of funding (Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria, 2013).

The nonprofit sector is often plagued by weak, inconsistent, or diminishing sources of funding for program operations, yet continues to face relatively high expectations for social service delivery (Carman & Fredericks, 2013, p. 52). Carman (2011) suggested that managers in nonprofit agencies who typically engage in program evaluations are doing so as a result of organizational resource dependency more often than because of an urge to catalyze programmatic or administrative improvements (p. 352). Taylor-Ritzler et al. (2013) argued that organizations employ evaluation systems “in order to understand and strengthen program implementation, improve program outcomes, and meet the accountability requirements of funders and accrediting bodies” (p. 191). Given the restrictive funding climate for nonprofits, it is important to note that expanding evaluation capacity might help provide reporting necessary to access more funds, but may also be expensive to implement; Simister and Smith (2010)
suggested that some organizations choose not to pursue ECB if they see the costs of doing so as outweighing the perceived potential benefits (p. 24). If this is the case, then it is imperative that nonprofit organizations are able to capture the areas of need for the communities they serve, and to evaluate their operations to determine whether their existing or proposed programs are meeting or could meet these needs.

Reporting on programmatic successes can be equally important to secure future funding. Bruch and Reynolds’s (2012) assessment of a program evaluation highlighted the response from students, one of the key stakeholders in this particular evaluation, and noted how this feedback illuminated to the key areas of strength and success in the program for the funders (p. 14). Utilizing program evaluations to highlight positive results and provide a balanced understanding of a program’s ability to meet a certain need can help engage “the complex accountability environment in which nonprofits operate…[and address] the implicit and explicit expectations of key stakeholders to which nonprofits must attend” (Benjamin, 2008, p. 202). Allowing the active involvement of these stakeholders will only enrich the process and provide another layer of accountability and transparency for funding bodies in the nonprofit sector.

**Chapter Summary**

Linking together the need to pursue ECB at an organizational level with the benefits of conducting program evaluations helps to depict the landscape of evaluation practices in the nonprofit sector. Understanding the collaborative nature of program evaluations helps underpin their ability to provide results for organizations; the organization can reap benefits through enhanced service delivery of its programs or its ability to be more transparent to funders and the public, and thus more eligible for funding opportunities. Carman (2011) saw an overarching trend towards more accountability as ultimately being driven by three forces: increased pressure
facing government and funding bodies to prove that funds are being spent efficiently and
effectively, increased scrutiny over the behavior of nonprofit organizations, and increasing
competition in the nonprofit arena (p. 375). However, some nonprofit organizations are also
driven internally to increase the efficacy of their services, and this pressure cannot be overlooked
as we delve into the research at BGCV which aims to illuminate the views of the organization’s
employees on why evaluation is becoming such an important practice.
CHAPTER THREE: INQUIRY APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter identifies the research methodologies and data collection methods that were involved in this inquiry. The chapter will also outline the participants that were included in the action research phases, how the data was analyzed, and detail any ethical considerations that may have been present before, during, or after this research process. The project will provide findings and recommendations regarding the overarching question of how BGCV can build collaborative evaluation capacity in order to develop an evaluation framework. The four sub-questions that guided the research were:

1. What is BGCV’s current evaluation capacity?
2. What barriers currently exist in expanding evaluation capacity?
3. How can program evaluations affect service delivery in the nonprofit sector?
4. What strategies and actions will enhance BGCV’s evaluation capacity in order to support an evaluation framework?

Inquiry Approach

This project employed an action research approach, relying on the collection and analysis of qualitative data to describe the current evaluation capacity and the current culture of collaborative evaluation practices within BGCV. This data was analyzed for the purpose of prescribing a possible course of action to expand evaluation capacity and begin the development of an evaluation framework within the organization. The approach of this inquiry revolved around “focus[ing] on research in action, rather than research about action” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 5). Coghlan and Brannick (2010) suggested that action research is distinctly different than traditional research, primarily in that it focuses on first-person research (p. 5). Traditional forms of organizational research typically involved a third party writing a report for
another third party, whereas action research is much more collaborative in that it involves
“jointly analysing the data, jointly planning action, taking joint action and evaluating jointly,
leading to further joint data gathering” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 5).

Stringer’s (2007) action research cycle of looking, thinking, and acting, guided this
inquiry process to begin “in a straightforward manner and build greater detail into procedures as
the complexity of issues increases” (p. 8). This process was mirrored in this project, as I was able
to collaborate with my sponsor to develop the research questions, collect the results from the data
collection phases, think about how to categorize the themes present in the data, and procure an
analysis of the results as well as some recommendations to spur future action at BGCV. Rowe,
Graf, Agger-Gupta, Piggot-Irvine, and Harris (2013) mirrored this cyclical nature of Stringer’s
(2007) three-step loop, but expanded it to include the action that results as the project moves
through the readiness, transitional, and change phases.

Action research is collaborative, “incorporating the perspectives and responses of key
stakeholders as an integral part of the research process” (Stringer, 2007, p. 20). This research
process with BGCV allowed for a collective analysis of the particular issue and aimed to resolve
“organizational issues in conjunction with those that are experiencing them” (McDermott,
Coghlan, & Keating, 2008, p. 3). Given the scope of this project, the aim was to craft a
 collaborative experience such that stakeholders themselves will have a chance to play an active
role in the inquiry process. Using collaboration to enhance an evaluative inquiry has permitted
the very process of the inquiry to encourage organizational learning at BGCV (Coghlan &
Brannick, 2010, p. 29). Furthermore, given that working together is a core value that is entwined
in the culture at BGCV (Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria, n.d., Our Mission
section), this type of action research witnessed a high level of interactivity (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 39) that helped to complement this very value of collaboration at BGCV.

Action research also nurtures the concept of capacity-building through its processes. Stringer (2007) highlighted the capacity-building of action research in the form of the dividends that those involved in the research receive, suggesting that “[n]ot only do research participants acquire the individual capacity to engage in systematic research that they can apply to other issues in other contexts, but they also build a supportive network of collaborative relationships that provides them with an ongoing resource” (p. 21). Stringer (2007) argued that this in fact allows employees involved in the action research process to build the knowledge required to champion ongoing, sustainable change in their organizations (p. 21).

Finally, action research embraces an idea that the collaborators and action researchers are catalyzing change, and recognizes that it may take time, resources, and ongoing efforts to continue to build momentum for change. Coghlan and Shani (2014) saw this notion reflecting an “emergent inquiry process [which] engages in an unfolding story, where data shift [is] a consequence of intervention and where it is not possible to predict or to control what takes place” (p. 525).

The data collected in this inquiry was qualitative, and the project utilized two methods for data collection: an electronic survey and a focus group. The research process included, for the most part, the integration of an appreciative stance which allowed the inquiry to “focus on what already works in a system, rather than a focus on what is deficient” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 47). This appreciative focus employed an assets-based and collaborative approach to learning, and identified and incorporated the strengths within the organization as part of the project (Preskill & Boyle, 2008, p. 447). The inquiry process in this project honoured Pasmore,
Woodman, and Simmons’s (2008) understanding that effective action research must reflect three critical indicators: the action research must be rigorous in that it is data-driven, uses several methodologies, and must be reliable and publishable; that it must be reflective, incorporating the historical context of the organization and involve the organization’s community of practice; and that it must be relevant, containing some true significance to the organization, have elements of re-applicability, and that the research findings must be codetermined and practical for that organization (p. 569-575).

I have the fortunate position to be a full member of the agency I have researched, allowing for insider action research to have taken place (Holian & Coghlan, 2013, p. 400). This position allowed me to reflect on a more intimate understanding of the organization and the topic through day-to-day interactions, rather than coming in from outside of the organization and forging a “reconstructed understanding” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 101) of the systems at play. However, as further identified in an ethical issues discussion later in this chapter, I had to be cognizant of how being a full member researcher might lead to some potential conflicts, such as creating a role duality situation where in the researcher might “encounter role conflict and find themselves caught between loyalty tugs, behavioural claims and identification dilemmas” (Holian & Coghlan, 2013, p. 401).

Project Participants

The inquiry process incorporated a representative cross-section of the organization’s stakeholders; it was able to canvas the opinions of senior-level management, with each manager speaking on behalf of their experience in their own department, and the agency’s executive director able to speak on behalf of her experiences with the agency as a whole. These thoughts were complemented by the input from full-time frontline staff in the prevention department. The
blend of the participants involved helped to offer a balanced perspective of the issue at hand, as well as respected the idea that those who affect change within the organization should be included in the inquiry process when possible (Stringer, 2007, p. 45). The selection of participants in the data collection process subscribed to an inclusive environment (Stringer, 2007, p. 35), focusing on maximal involvement from the groups affected as well as including all the relevant issues related to building evaluation capacity and developing an evaluation framework. Therefore, the project included all full-time frontline staff – 13 employees – from the prevention programs department (see Appendix B). Given that BGCV currently employs 85 full-time, part-time, and on-call employees, these thirteen individuals constitute roughly 15 percent of BGCV’s workforce. All of these frontline staff were invited to participate in the data collection process out of respect to the fact that they could be directly affected by or take effect on the issue at hand (Stringer, 2007, p. 43). Surveying a broad base of opinions and perspectives from these employees helped to pinpoint areas of concern associated with building evaluation capacity, and opened up a channel of communication that could be useful as the development of an evaluation framework carries on (Burke, Lake, & Paine, 2009, p. 304). The second phase of the research involved BGCV’s leadership team which includes four managers and the executive director. The leadership team was invited as they are directly involved in the topic, but also because they hold positions of influence and authority in the organization, and their buy-in and collaboration in designing the project, as well as the data they provide, are important in encouraging change to occur as a result of the research and recommendations (Stringer, 2007, p. 45). This aligns with Taylor-Ritzler et al.’s (2013) postulation that meaningful change cannot occur within an organization unless its employees are supported by the resources and guidance from its leadership management (p. 200).
The people involved in the data collection process were invited to participate using survey invitations (Appendix G) and focus group invitations and consent forms (Appendix G and H). In both cases, invitations outlined the project’s focus, my role within it, how data will be collected and stored, the deliverables the project hoped to achieve, and the voluntary nature of choosing to participate or not to participate in the research process. Free and informed consent helped to establish a fair inquiry process and procure more accurate results.

While these methods both involve key stakeholders in the group – senior management and frontline employees – the reason not to incorporate the families and clients served, another main stakeholder group, was to honour the main objective of building internal evaluation capacity in order to be able to construct an evaluation framework. Once a framework is established, then perhaps BGCV’s clientele can become an important resource to help determine areas of need, and current methods to collect feedback from clientele can be expanded upon.

Finally, the use of an inquiry team was also paramount in providing an outside view to the issue at hand, offering fresh and alternative perspectives that complemented existing outlooks accumulated during the research process. This team consisted of one community clubs supervisor, one frontline staff, and one member outside of the organization who is a fellow Royal Roads Master of Arts in Leadership student. These inquiry team members were invited via an electronic form that outlined the project, the confidentiality required, and a free and informed consent (see Appendix I).

**Inquiry Methods**

**Data collection methods.** The first phase of data collection involved the use of an electronic survey delivered to all the full-time frontline staff in the prevention department, and sought to collect data on the current capacity at BGCV to evaluate programs, practices that are
already in place for evaluation, and the barriers that prohibit these evaluations from occurring more effectively and frequently. This method was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, the survey is a “very useful tool for extending the data collection process to a broader range of participants” (Stringer, 2007, p. 78). Given the larger number of employees that were involved in the first phase of data collection, this method helped accommodate cost and time efficiency during the research phase. The survey was offered to these employees for two weeks, between November 17, 2014 and December 1, 2014.

The decision to use this method to commence the data collection process was to collect and outline some early themes in the data, and disseminate the raw responses to the leadership team in the second phase of data collection. Stringer (2007) suggests that “information acquired from participants in the first cycles of a process [can be] relevant to other individuals and groups” (p. 78) within the organization. The survey questions (see Appendix D) were developed to attempt to capture some early themes eminent in the feedback from employees. The design considerations for the survey were threefold.

Firstly, an electronic survey helped harness the benefits of technology; electronic surveys can be cheaper than phone or mailed surveys, can be easier to analyze data embedded in the survey results by exporting the data to statistical software, and can “reduce the time and resources required, especially when handling large datasets” (McPeake, Bateson & O’Neill, 2014, p. 25). Secondly, the individual questions, designed in concert with my project sponsor, were designed to be answered in an open-ended fashion, and were built to provide “one question for each issue or piece of information” (Stringer, 2007, p. 79). These questions followed Lewis’ (2013) recommendation that questions are: clear and intelligible, not too abstract, relevant and useful, and feasible (p. 48). Ultimately, choosing narrow, yes-or-no questions might mute
valuable information that elaborates upon the response; Lewis (2013) suggested that questions be focused, but not too narrow in scope (p. 48). However, choosing to administer questions in this open-ended format can also “induce problems of vagueness and generalizability” (Yang, Wang & Su, 2006, p. 603) for those involved,

The electronic delivery of the survey honoured Coghlan and Brannick’s (2010) idea that technology is increasingly popular in the research phase, and that it has “transformed the world of communication” (p. 76). However, it is important to note that electronic surveys typically have lower response rates than paper-based surveys (Costa e. Silva & Duarte, 2014, p. 307). This project employed an electronic format as the cost and efficiency in surveying a large population was perceived to outweigh the benefits of hand-delivering paper surveys.

The second phase of data collection involved one focus group conducted with the five members of the leadership team at BGCV on December 2, 2014. This represents all four program managers at BGCV, and the five participants in the focus group make up 6 percent of BGCV’s workforce. This method was chosen in part to complement a drawback of using a survey in that they “are likely to reflect the perspective, interests, and agendas of the researcher(s)” (Stringer, 2007, p. 78). Furthermore, this method mirrors Garcia-Iriarte’s (2011) assertion that evaluators should engage individuals that are involved in current evaluation practices, and encourage the “sharing and clarifying [of] motivations, assumptions, and expectations for the evaluation” (p. 170). A focus group method provided a level of guided reflection, inviting participants to describe their “experience and perspective in their own terms, without the constraints of interpretive frameworks derived from researcher perspectives, professional or technical language, or theoretical constructs” (Stringer, 2007, p. 74). Questions for this phase (see Appendix E) were created with this personal and reflective nature of the focus
group process in mind, and sought to offer a compare and contrast opportunity with the electronic survey questions for frontline staff. The questions in the focus group mirrored the questions asked in the survey, and this design was chosen to reflect Stringer’s (2007) suggestion that when conducting across an entire organization, allowing for these similar questions to be asked to employees in different capacities can help the researcher to “reveal different interpretations of problematic features of the organization and sources of the problems” (p. 110). The questions themselves were designed to contain neutral language, allowing the participants of the focus group to “express their experience in their own terms, without the constraints of interpretive frameworks derived from researcher perspectives” (Stringer, 2007, p. 74).

The focus group used in this project was employed to honour Finch and Lewis’s (2013) claim that focus groups are a well-established and “extremely valuable data collection method” (p. 170). Finch and Lewis (2013) found that focus groups help to garner genuine data as this research method relies less on an interaction with the inquirer, and more on the interaction between those involved in the focus group, offering the potential for spontaneous conversation which can reflect the context where in the individuals find themselves (p. 171). While employing an individual interview method for data collection was considered for this project, a focus group format was ultimately chosen as it helps to provide “‘safety in numbers’, and thus make research accessible to people who might, for various reasons, find a one-to-one encounter intimidating or uncomfortable” (Lewis, 2013, p. 59). Finally, the nature of ECB might require some creative brainstorming; Lewis (2013) found that focus groups are effective tools when “what is required is creative thanking, or solutions and strategies” (p. 58).

This project was also influenced by Glesne’s (2010) interpretivist lens which focused on “interpret[ing] the social world from the perspectives of those who are actors in that social
world” (p. 6). This way, the actors that were involved in the data collection process were also active members of the organization and the issue being researched, an idea that resonates strongly with core action research principles (Stringer, 2007, p. 20).

**Study conduct.** Assistance from the inquiry team was sought to reflect a balance of perspectives from within and outside the organization. They helped review the questions and responses from both the surveys and the focus group, with the hope that this might help mitigate the potential risk that the questions have been “tainted by the researcher’s perceptions, perspectives, interests, and agendas” (Stringer, 2007, p. 70).

All of the full-time frontline employees were sent survey invitations (see Appendix F) electronically. The survey was anonymous, requiring no name or identifying input, and it included ten questions regarding how BGCV might expand its capacity to evaluate, the perceived benefits of conducting evaluation, and the perceived obstacles facing the agency in pursuing ECB. All questions were optional to answer. It was estimated to the potential participants in the invitation (see Appendix F) that the survey would take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete, and it was open for two weeks between November 17 and December 2, 2014. One reminder to participate was sent on November 28, 2014, respecting the fact that “reminders are associated with an increased response rate” (Costa e. Silva & Duarte, 2014, p. 305). The consent was clearly laid out in a webpage before entering the survey, asking the participants to select ‘yes’ or ‘no’ after reading the outline (see Appendix F). The software used was FluidSurveys, a Canadian company that stores data on a Canadian server. The invitation outlined the terms of research, and the survey itself included a detailed explanation of conditions for free and informed consent. Reaching out to hear all of the perspectives from the frontline staff was a way to capture the views of those that could be affected by or take action on the issue (Stringer, 2007, p. 43).
The leadership team was invited to participate, recognizing that they are directly affected by the development and implementation of evaluations since this is currently in their portfolio of duties. Furthermore, while choosing participants who have a varying spectrum of perspectives and opinions can be beneficial for data collection, the fact that the leadership team operated within a similar positional scope is not entirely prohibitive. Qu and Dumay (2011) suggested selecting a “sample of interviewees [that are] fairly homogenous and share critical similarities related to the research question” (p. 317). As mentioned in the invitation to voluntarily partake in the focus group (see Appendix G), the potential participants were let known this discussion would last approximately 40 minutes. These invitations were sent electronically, and included in the same email was a copy of the consent forms (see Appendix H), which were signed and collected prior to the start of the focus group held at BGCV’s headquarters on December 2, 2014. The questions mirrored the questions asked in the survey, but also included a final piece that allowed for the leadership team to review the raw data collected during the survey process (see Appendix E). I facilitated the focus group, having no power-over concerns with the members involved, and the conversation was captured by our receptionist who took notes. This discussion was also recorded and transcribed by Teletouch Services Incorporated, a Canadian company that will keep the transcription results on their Canadian server for up to one year. The transcribed results were returned to me, with the members coded in an anonymous fashion. The use of a third party transcriptionist also enabled me to evaluate the focus group data in its entirety, avoiding overlooking comments that may have been difficult to hear on the audio recording. Teletouch Services Incorporated and BGCV’s receptionist signed a letter of consent outlining the confidential nature of the research prior to being involved in the inquiry.
The questions that were drafted for use in both methods (see Appendix D and E) were developed in conjunction with the input from the project sponsor, and aimed to address the organizational issue as the management saw it. A benefit of having this type of two-phase data collection cycle is that the results from the survey helped inform members of the leadership team regarding the sentiment regarding the research topic as emanated from the surveyed frontline staff. Glesne (2010) agreed with this idea, suggesting that “data analysis done simultaneously with data collection enables you to focus and shape the study as it proceeds” (p. 148).

Data analysis. Inquiry team members assisted me in reviewing the data collected, and provided insight into the trends that emerged from both phases of research, offering different perspectives from my own. An inquiry team was included to help affirm that Stringer’s (2007) research communication principles were being adhered to, which means that: (a) those involved could understand what was being communicated, (b) the information from the inquiry was accurate, (c) the researcher’s communication was sincere in nature, and contained no hidden motives; and (d) that the communication style was appropriate given the setting and the people involved (p. 30). The perspectives of the inquiry team did not make any major changes to this research project, but their input helped to verify that no major role-duality issues had arisen during the action research wherein myself, as an employee of BGCV, might be “caught between loyalty tugs, behavioural claims and identification dilemmas” (Holian & Coghlan, 2013, p. 401). Inquiry team members read over numerous drafts of this paper, and had access to the coded data from both the survey and the focus group.

To study the survey results, an analysis of the themes from the responses helped sort the data collected. Categorizing and coding was used to classify answers from each question asked, providing outlines of themes as they emerged. This form of data analysis involves reviewing and
unitizing the data before establishing categories for emergent topics in the data, and finally identifying themes that are present in the data that “are held in common across stakeholder groups” (Stringer, 2007, p. 101). To analyze the focus group results, categorizing and coding was also employed in a way that reflected the genuine perspectives and experiences of the participants; the use of a “verbatim principle” (Stringer, 2007, p. 99) helped develop categories in a way that complemented this genuine reflection.

Other indicators used to extract and analyze themes from both phases of research were word repetition, comparing and contrasting the results from the survey with the results from the focus group, and identifying connecting patterns in the data. The narratives collected from both the survey and focus group portions of the project were anecdotal and qualitative, inviting me to analyze the data in a way that highlighted the key experiences of the major stakeholders in attempt to unearth the importance they placed in certain areas, and this included particular moments and periods that marked a significant impact on the participant(s) (Stringer, 2007, p. 103). Data analysis was triangulated by using three methods: coding and categorizing, word repetition, and connecting themes in the data. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) saw the importance of using more than one type of data analysis, providing data analysis triangulation and preventing a “one-size-fits-all approach…[that may] lead to interpretations that are not consistent with the underlying data” (p. 562).

Having my inquiry team review my data analysis procedure helped to limit my own bias that may be present as being an insider action researcher. While data analysis is indeed an act of interpretation (Stringer, 2007, p. 98), providing multiple perspectives on the same dataset might help construct credibility. Stringer (2007) described credibility in action research as a process that fosters trust with the participants involved, and this includes: a prolonged engagement where
in participants in the data collection process are granted extended opportunities to voice their opinions; member checking, a process that allows participants to review any raw data so that they are able to discern whether it represents their genuine perspectives; and referential adequacy, a process that ensures that the concepts and recommendations from a research project reflect the perspectives of the participants involved in that research (Stringer, 2007, p. 58).

Stringer (2007) also sees triangulation as playing a key role in credible research, suggesting that researchers are better able “to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomena are being perceived” (p. 58). Triangulation is also “often cited as one of the central ways of 'validating' qualitative research evidence (Ritchie, 2013, p. 43).

Finally, it is important to recognize that “[u]nless participants are able to trust the integrity of the processes, they are unlikely to make personal commitments that are essential to a well-founded inquiry” (Stringer, 2007, p. 57). While measures are in place to establish honest accounts of the data collection (as discussed below in Ethical Issues), it is important to recognize that the researcher may not always be fully attentive, and that it is possible for data to be skewed by the potential the researcher may be miss or inadvertently distort the data collected (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 23). Allowing the inquiry team to look at the raw and coded data collected might help catch any of these errors.

Ethical Issues

The research process involved in this project was guided by the Tri-Council’s three core principles: respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010, p. 8).
**Respect for Persons.** Persons involved in the research process were respected by the provision of a free and informed consent outline at the outset of both phases of research. All persons involved were offered a full understanding of all the angles involved in the research, since an informed choice can only be exercised once the individual gains a complete understanding of the “purpose of the research, what it entails, and its foreseeable risks and potential benefits, both to the participant and to others” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010, p. 9). The participants’ autonomy was respected by ensuring that “they were free to choose without any interference” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010, p. 8) if they did or did not want to participate in the research.

**Concern for Welfare.** A major tenant to respect the welfare of a research participant is to address their privacy and the control of information in the project (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010, p. 9). This project utilized consent forms for both phases of research (see Appendix F and H) which allowed the participants to understand that the data collected in the electronic survey would be securely stored on a server and a locked cabinet, and that the focus group recording would be transcribed by a third party. Furthermore, as a researcher I understood that a risk involved in the research processes may include the damaging of workplace relationships, and as such I made sure the participants knew that participation in the inquiry was strictly voluntary (see Appendix F and H).
**Justice.** Choosing who is involved in an inquiry process can be “an important component of the fair and equitable conduct of research” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010, p. 11). The decision to include all full-time frontline staff in prevention, as well as managers to represent each department at BGCV helped to honour Stringer’s (2007) suggestion that in order to procure an unbiased and thorough inquiry, one must “engage subjects as equal and full participants in the research process” (p. 10). Furthermore, any power-over issues needed to be addressed before the research could commence. The issue of power-over might manifest itself through the fact that a group of people I manage, the full-time frontline staff, were invited to participate in the research process. Care must be made not to exploit my position as a supervisor in order to achieve “personal gain or to unduly influence the responses of the interviewee” (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 253). To help address this, invitations and consent forms were sent out as a voluntary option, and the survey results were collected by a third party in a completely anonymous way that did require names. Furthermore, the surveying program did not disseminate any information that might disclose any geographical information of the participants or any information that may allow me to see what sort of electronic device was used to complete the survey.

**Other Ethical Considerations.** A contextual or historical bias may exist for me as I have been an employee of BGCV for nine years, and am a full member of the agency I am researching (Holian & Coghlan, 2013, p. 400). While being an insider may have some advantages, such as a richer, experiential understanding of the cultural and political issues at play, it can also be disadvantageous as I might be “likely to be part of the organization’s culture and find it difficult to stand back from it in order to assess and critique it” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 95). The
inquiry team helped to offer me differing perspectives during the research process that assisted in managing any bias I might have accrued during my employment with BGCV. Furthermore, the intuition I have developed within the agency during these years has in fact proved to be a valuable research tool, respecting the thought that “intuition goes beyond linear thinking to recognize patterns, draw analogies and solve problems creatively” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 95).

Ultimately, it must be understood that “[a]ll data analysis is an act of interpretation” (Stringer, 2007, p. 98). The aim in the ethical considerations done prior to this research helped mitigate the ethical dilemmas imbued in these interpretations, rather than strive to be completely void of subjection or focus on being entirely neutral. Coghlan and Brannick (2010) suggest that as an action researcher, “you are not neutral, but an active intervener making and helping things happen” (p. 18).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I explained why action research was employed in this inquiry, and how it was fitting for this type of organizational inquiry. I also described which participants were invited to partake in both phases of the research – an electronic survey and a focus group – and why they were suitable candidates to help offer a representative perspective for BGCV’s employees. The way the data analysis occurred was detailed, describing the methods of categorizing and coding, word repetition, compare and contrast, and connecting patterns in the data. Finally, this chapter discussed how certain ethical considerations may impact the research. Chapter 4 will follow on this information, providing an in depth analysis of how the data was analyzed, and the findings that ensued.
CHAPTER FOUR: ACTION INQUIRY PROJECT RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter focuses on the guiding question of how BGCV can build collaborative evaluation capacity in order to develop an evaluation framework. The inquiry will also include four sub-questions:

1. What is BGCV’s current evaluation capacity?
2. What barriers currently exist in expanding evaluation capacity?
3. How can program evaluations affect service delivery in the nonprofit sector?
4. What strategies and actions will enhance BGCV’s evaluation capacity in order to support an evaluation framework?

This chapter will include my analysis of the results of the research that took place, using categorizing and coding, word repetition, comparing and contrasting between the data collected in both phases of research, and finding connecting patterns in the data. Survey respondents were coded as members S-1 through S-7, and focus group participants were coded as members I-1 through I-5. A list of six key findings reflected the data analysis that took place.

Study Findings

The results in this section reflect the data collected through employing an electronic survey to all full-time frontline staff in the prevention department, and through the administration of a focus group for the leadership team – a group of four managers along with BGCV’s executive director. The data collected and analyzed using the methods outlined in Chapter 3 helped procure the following research findings. These findings constitute the strongest themes extrapolated from the electronic survey and the focus group data:

1. Current evaluation practices are in place at BGCV, and have varying utility in affecting the organization’s operations.
2. The full-time frontline employees have moderate awareness and little training in regards to evaluative practices currently occurring at BGCV.

3. Approaching ECB requires a culture shift at BGCV.

4. Technology plays a key role in the success of ECB efforts and the implementing of program evaluations at BGCV.

5. There is a trend in the nonprofit world towards accountability to funding bodies and to the public.

6. BGCV continues to search for ways to convert evaluative findings into meaningful action and change in the organization.

The focus group saw a full participation rate; the five members of the leadership team who were invited to participate were all in attendance, along with BGCV’s receptionist who accepted an invitation to take notes. The survey had a lower participation rate; of the 13 individuals invited to partake, only seven did so, representing a response rate of approximately 54 percent. The themes that were analyzed as being present in each phase of data collection are explained in depth in the following sections.

**Finding 1: Current evaluation practices are in place at BGCV, and have varying utility in affecting the organization’s operations.**

Comments from both the electronic survey and the focus group discussion helped establish the current climate of evaluative practices at BGCV. The focus group participants engaged in a rich conversation regarding the current culture of evaluation at BGCV, and parts of the discussion revolved around how BGCV learns and adapts to better serve its clientele. One participant recognized how collecting data in a systematic and targeted way permitted the organization to compare its programmatic success in relation to previous years, helping the
organization to capture trends and demographics evident in the communities it serves (I-2, focus group). Another focus group participant connected this idea to a suggestion that conducting this sort of evaluative investigation might also allow BGCV to compare statistics to other programs it operates within the agency as well (I-4, focus group) helping support the move towards operating as one club, rather than individual departmental silos. Finally, another focus group participant built on these ideas regarding a comparative approach to evaluation, suggesting that allowing staff teams to access the evaluation data from programs in other departments would enable staff to compare program outcomes inter-departmentally (I-4, focus group). These three ideas connected to the perceived internal benefits of evaluation as offering a comparison both between programs, between timeframes, and between BGCV departments.

The theme of collaborative practice within program evaluations also emerged from comments by several focus group participants as well as a survey respondent. One survey respondent drew a link between collaboration and having sound program logic models engrained in BGCV’s programs, stating that “[c]ollaboration would be helpful in determining what the actual outcomes of a program are, and how [BGCV employees], as assessors, can measure what meeting those outcomes looks like” (S-4, survey). A focus group participant developed this idea further by suggesting that “a collaborative approach is actually a capacity building opportunity and especially around something like program evaluation” (S-1, focus group).

The focus group discussion also highlighted the application that program evaluations can have at the very outset of a program’s implementation. Participant I-1 explained how the agency could canvas the need and gaps in service for programs in the communities BGCV serves, and might be able to use this data as a compass for developing new programs (focus group). A survey
respondent suggested that evaluation could also lead to the cancellation of programs, getting “rid of programs that no longer service the participants best interests” (S-1, survey).

Finally, a focus group member explained how program evaluations could also be used as a way to reduce “cost pressures such as insurance…[suggesting that if] you have an evaluation that shows we have reduced the risk factors of this quadrant x amount, you can negotiate lower costs of insurance” (I-2, focus group). Participant I-1, expanding on this thought, suggested that the use of program evaluations constitutes an effective risk management tactic (focus group).

These findings suggest that there are methods of evaluation currently in place at BGCV. Participants from both phases of research recognized the collaborative nature of BGCV operations, the logic models that the organization employs, and the advantage of using evaluation to offer comparison between programs within the agency and between years. Participants in the focus group also recognized evaluation as a risk management tool.

Finding 2: The full-time frontline employees have moderate awareness and little training in regards to evaluative practices currently occurring at BGCV.

Data collected from the discussion in the focus group helped support the idea that evaluation practices are currently in place at BGCV. However, data collected from the survey respondents did not establish any clear consensus regarding the frontline staff’s perspective regarding how evaluation occurs at BGCV; three of the seven survey respondents cited an activity planning form as evidence that evaluation is occurring at BGCV (S-3, S-5, S-6, survey). Activity planning forms explain the instructions on how to facilitate an activity, what supplies are needed, how many participants will be involved, and the form includes a section for the program facilitator to assess what went well with the activity, what was challenging, and whether or not they thought the activity should occur again, and if so, with what changes. However,
another three respondents stated that they have not witnessed any program evaluations taking place at BGCV (S-1, S-4, S-7, survey). This represents a split between the frontline staff survey respondents on whether they had experienced program evaluations taking place within the agency. While it is positive that three respondents had witnessed evaluation, with a fourth suggesting that group debriefs were how they witnessed evaluation occurring at BGCV (S-2, survey), there is certainly room for BGCV to increase program evaluation exposure to its frontline staff, given these results.

The members of the focus group engaged in a conversation regarding exactly how to increase exposure to program evaluation for BGCV employees. One member of the focus group suggested that BGCV may require some sort of a “communication plan” (I-1, focus group) to help disseminate information to all employees regarding the evaluative practices and tools used. Focus group participant I-2 spoke to how evaluative results could be shared with program staff in order to allow them to understand what is happening within their programs (focus group). Finally, a focus group member connected these ideas, advocating for the publication of a document on a regular basis for all staff to see the results of evaluation (I-2, focus group).

This idea resonated with some of the data collected in the survey; one respondent cited the lack of clear collaboration between frontline staff and management as an issue that will challenge BGCV’s ability to expand its evaluation capacity (S-2, survey). However, the leadership team appeared to have an investment in collaborative solutions at BGCV; two members of the conversation spoke to collaboration as being a value at BGCV (I-1, I-3, focus group), and that collaborative decision-making is something that the management have intentionally pursued, stating that “the collaborative approach is different than another approach
getting to the same place and this is our chosen one in whatever change initiatives that we put in place” (I-1, focus group).

Perhaps one of the reasons why frontline staff were not unanimously aware of evaluative practice at BGCV could be the existence of a workload issue within the organization; three of the seven respondents directly cited a lack of time when discussing what is standing in the way between BGCV and conducting effective evaluation (S-4, S-6, S-7, survey). Two members of the focus group also made reference to the nature of this issue, stating that the organization does not prioritize evaluation with the way it manages its time (I-4, focus group). Another focus group participant suggested that the BGCV, in order to “help promote capacity…[the agency must] create the intentional space to do that and ask those questions.” (I-2, focus group).

This particular finding highlights the lack of a clear understanding of BGCV’s evaluative practices as brought up from the survey respondents. While the leadership team saw collaboration as a key element to BGCV’s daily operations, the frontline staff suggested that it is indeed a lack of collaboration that is inhibiting the organization’s ability to perform program evaluations. Evidence appeared suggesting that a burdensome workload may be one of the main reasons for frontline staff not engaging in evaluation more often.

**Finding 3: Approaching ECB requires a culture shift at BGCV.**

Throughout the focus group conversation, a theme emerged regarding the risk and challenge of engaging in ECB efforts. One of the members of the leadership team captured the sentiment regarding the link between approaching ECB and the necessity of an organizational culture shift by stating that:

“When you engage in evaluations that are intended to direct your outcomes and outputs it is a culture shift. So that involves taking seriously the critique you are getting from the
evaluations and the culture has to be willing to accept those observations and adjust practice without a sense of guilt, remorse or fear. So that is a culture thing” (I-2, focus group).

Another participant in the focus group echoed this comment surrounding the fear of evaluation, stating that the worry may be the fact that evaluation has the potential to produce results that the organization’s employees “weren’t expecting and then they may have some uncomfortable results” (I-1, focus group). One member mirrored this comment by explaining how evaluation may make employees nervous that the evaluator will uncover evidence that suggests the employee is not performing well in the workplace, and linked this sentiment a perceived “history of fear around evaluation” (I-3, focus group) at BGCV. These responses constitute thoughts similar to those of three out of the five members of the focus group. This concern was also raised in the survey results; respondent S-4 explained the worry regarding “the potential that evaluations for overall programs do not reflect the progress or successes/challenges of the individuals within the program” (survey).

During the focus group, word repetition analysis showed that conversation regarding the historical and cultural context surfaced six times by three different individuals in the focus group (I-2, I-3, I-5, focus group). The discussion of a culture shift at BGCV appears timely, as it is within a greater organizational evolution towards, as one focus group asserted, the “one club” (I-2, focus group) model that aims to break down barriers between departments and operate across the organization in a more unified manner. The idea that program evaluations help catalyze change was discussed throughout the focus group; all five members weighed in using the term change in this context, and in total, comments regarding change management occurred seven times throughout the conversation (I-1, I-2, I-3, I-4, I-5, focus group).
The focus group also discussed the idea that expanding evaluation capacity is about protecting BGCV as an organization by enhancing its sustainability (I-1 & I-2, focus group). For participant I-2, this meant shaping the culture of evaluation at BGCV in a way that allows its employees “to be evaluating [its] programs ongoing” rather than only evaluating in certain instances. This individual went on to describe the perpetual nature of effective evaluation practices, stating that as evaluation goes on repeatedly, BGCV can attain “larger volumes of data then [the organization] can start to look at trends and again that should be a shared relationship amongst programs” (I-2, focus group). Another focus group member built on this idea, suggesting that capturing these trends can help BGCV to continue “meeting the needs of the community and as the community changes” (I-1, focus group).

The data collected from both phases of research outline the culture shift required to fully embrace evaluation at BGCV. The discussion revolved around the historical and cultural context of evaluation within the organization, and analyzed the fear regarding evaluation as well as the added sustainability that evaluative practices could bring to BGCV.

**Finding 4: Technology plays a key role in the success of ECB efforts and the implementing of program evaluations at BGCV.**

During the focus group, two of the five participants discussed Sharepoint or Sharevision during the conversation (I-2, I-4), while three of the seven survey respondents appeared cognizant of both of these technologic tools (S-3, S-6, S-7, survey). Sharepoint and Sharevision are two online database tools utilized by BGCV to store program information, including enrolment information, survey results, and general statistics regarding programs and employees. Typically, all results from any evaluation currently conducted within the organization, be it participant surveys or capacity indicators, are tracked on either of these two tools. Two of the
survey respondents suggested that Sharevision might help BGCV expand its evaluative capacity (S-6, S-7, survey), and two focus group participants spoke about the important role of technological tools in evaluation (I-1, I-2, focus group). This represents a moderate awareness that technologic tools are present and utilized at BGCV. However, one respondent mentioned that the agency does not utilize technologic tools to their full potential (S-3, survey). This appears in contrast to the focus group discussion where three members saw benefit in the use of technology in program evaluation (I-1, I-2, I-4, focus group). It is important to note that this differentiation may be present because the roles and responsibilities of those on the leadership team may implicate a higher level of interaction with these technologic tools than might exist for frontline staff.

Two participants of the focus group also conversed about the role of using online methods, such as electronic surveys, in engaging the populations targeted for evaluation (I-1, I-2, focus group). This conversation helped recognize that technology might enable BGCV to adapt to change more effectively, citing the use of an online survey as being representative of this change, and that it constitutes an important “tool for which evaluation gets the buy in and it creates the credibility” (I-2, focus group). These ideas linked to one survey participant who cited the use of online surveys as being integral to collecting data from the youth involved in the program to assess whether the “program outcomes are being met” (S-4, survey).

This finding establishes that technology currently plays a role in evaluative practices at BGCV, and will be paramount in expanding evaluation capacity within the organization. The two main technological tools, Sharepoint and Sharevision, continue to be utilized, and knowledge of and access to these tools will be critical in the effort to expand evaluation capacity at BGCV.
Finding 5: There is a trend in the nonprofit world towards accountability to funding bodies and to the public.

Focus group member I-4 suggests that in today’s nonprofit atmosphere, program evaluations need to take place in order to prove to funding bodies that the organization is being effective in the way it spends their money, and BGCV must be able “to show them impact” (focus group) in order to attain additional funding. Another focus group member touched on this trend, suggesting “in the last 20 years of work there are way higher levels of accountability around practice” (I-5, focus group). Building on the idea that evaluation and accountability is of growing importance for nonprofit organizations, three members of the focus group elaborated on how this increased accountability could affect BGCV (I-1, 1-2, I-3). Participant I-1 cited the critical role of transparency as it relates to those involved, and how it informs all stakeholders about why the evaluation is required and how and when it occurs (focus group). Participant I-2 suggested how tabulating evaluation results would make it easier for BGCV to create informative slideshows that can be taken out for presentations in the communities BGCV serves to help show BGCV impact in those communities (focus group). One focus group participant suggested that that in many cases programs at BGCV are funded by British Columbian taxpayers, so when it comes to accountability through evaluation, the agency “doesn’t have a choice” (I-2, focus group). Finally, one focus group member built on this idea of accountability and reporting to the public, suggesting that evaluating programs systematically will allow BGCV to garner more in depth qualitative and quantitative data, not simply “just talk[ing] about the program but…about the number of people served and the impact” (I-2, focus group).

These ideas connected to five responses from the electronic survey. One respondent maintained that “[e]valuating [BGCV’s] programs and making them public could make [BGCV]
more transparent to the public” (S-7, survey). Another survey respondent echoed this comment; speaking on behalf of BGCV, this individual suggested that:

[H]ard evidence in how our programs impact the youth we serve is a great motivation for donors and funding agencies…it shows the legitimacy of our work in a tangible way. (S-4, survey)

Respondent S-1 mentioned that evaluation “[l]egitimizes [BGCV’s] spending to third party funders” (survey). Finally, respondent S-4 mentioned that providing evaluation results would make it “much easier for BGCV to become accountable to the contributions that programs are making in the community” (S-4, survey) and that “before making a significant investment in BGCV, [BGCV] may secure more investors if [the funders] are able to see the traceable impact of their donation” (S-4, survey). These five comments reflected ideas from BGCV’s frontline staff that accountability to the public and to various funding agencies is critical for BGCV’s future success.

As BGCV is active in the “helping field” (I-5, focus group), this accountability piece is crucial for the public to be able to recognize the work that the organization does, and gage its relative success. When answering the question on how program evaluations might help BGCV report to its funders, five out of the seven electronic survey respondents eluded to the fact these evaluations make the organization more accountable (S-1, S-3, S-4, S-6, S-7, survey). Focus group member I-1 expanded on this theme, stating that program evaluations are “about transparency and…about being accountable to everybody for when it happens and how it happens” (focus group).

The importance of facilitating external program reviews was a theme that resonated in the findings from both phases of action research, and pointed towards this idea of increased
accountability to funders and the public. The focus group engaged in a conversation regarding the utility of hosting external reviews; participant I-1 elaborated on the importance an outside perspective might have, stating that “[s]ometimes when we have been doing something for a long time it takes somebody else to come in and lay it out for us” (focus group). Over the course of the focus group discussion, some sort of external review procedure – be it an accrediting body or file audits – was mentioned five times by three different members of the conversation (I-1, I-2, I-4, focus group). One of the members also saw accreditation as helping BGCV target and adapt to change, stating that this different perspective can help fuel a “shift to survive” (I-1, focus group) mentality within the organization. Another member followed this comment up by using an example from 2013 where in an accreditation review helped catalyze BGCV to change the location of its headquarters (I-2, focus group).

The data collected in this research project suggest that there is an increasing emphasis on evaluation in the nonprofit world. The discussion outlined the need for accountability to the public and to funding bodies, and the role external evaluations play in increasing this accountability.

Finding 6: BGCV continues to search for ways to convert evaluative findings into meaningful action and change in the organization.

Three members from the focus group talked about “closing the loop[s]” (I-1, I-2, I-3, focus group) that are left open when evaluative results are not converted into action. Furthermore, two survey respondents cited how program evaluations could help effect the delivery of these programs; one mentioned how program evaluations could “help to hold programs to a certain standard” (S-5, survey), while the other mentioned how evaluation might help rendering the program “better and more effective the next time around” (S-6). Both these
thoughts mirror the theme in the focus group that evaluations can help catalyze tangible change in BGCV’s programs.

An individual in the focus group recognized the lack of systems in place at BGCV to turn evaluative findings into meaningful action, stating that the organization does not do this effectively, and BGCV would benefit from “finding a better place to understand what is being evaluated and what it is telling us through an agency piece whether it be a quarterly, monthly or yearly published document” (I-2, focus group). This idea connects with the suggestion from focus member participant I-1 that BGCV should create a communication plan that helps staff understand when evaluation will occur and how they can participate in it (I-1, focus group). The principle here is that if BGCV is “engaging people in quality assurance as an agency commitment…[they should] communicate the plan for that” (I-1, focus group).

Ultimately, there is an understanding at BGCV, as evidence through the focus group and survey results, that there needs to be a plan of action tied to any evaluative findings. Members from both phases of research expressed the history at BGCV of following up on the results from evaluation, and the need to disseminate these results to other members of the organization.

**Study Conclusions**

The study conclusions from this research project reflect the findings collected during the organizational inquiry as well as the literature that was reviewed. The conclusions are a response to the overarching research question: how can BGCV build collaborative evaluation capacity in order to develop an evaluation framework? The conclusions mirror each of the four sub-questions:

1. What is BGCV’s current evaluation capacity?
2. What barriers currently exist in expanding evaluation capacity?
3. How can program evaluations affect service delivery in the nonprofit sector?

4. What strategies and actions will enhance BGCV’s evaluation capacity in order to support an evaluation framework?

The conclusions are as follows:

1. BGCV currently has a healthy culture of evaluation embedded in its operations.

2. Some barriers currently exist that are inhibiting BGCV from more effectively expanding its evaluative capacity.

3. Program evaluations are positively affecting the way BGCV builds, delivers, and reviews its programs.

4. The research and the literature reviewed outline numerous strategies to assist BGCV to expand its evaluative capacity.

**Conclusion 1: BGCV currently has a healthy culture of evaluation embedded in its operations.**

BGCV currently has a healthy culture of evaluation in place; the responses from the electronic survey revealed evidence that reflects some understanding of evaluative practices within the agency, and the focus group discussion illuminated a strong recognition of BGCV’s current evaluative capacity, including several important technologic tools and a management team that is very invested in ECB efforts. At the core of this evaluative capacity is a culture at BGCV that is conducive to organizational change. The focus group discussed elements of change that the organization has weathered over previous years, such as an accreditation process which spurred BGCV to evolve from a grass roots mentality to a more professional model of practice, an external review that catalyzed BGCV to restructure a program department, and an evaluation process that spurred a change in headquarters for the organization. The practice at BGCV to
elicit organizational change to allow for innovation has been embraced by the agency with recognition that it must continually seek quality improvements in order to stay successful in a very competitive nonprofit environment.

BGCV has been conducting program evaluations in response to numerous reasons that align with Preskill and Boyle's (2008) analysis of the impetuses for evaluation capacity-building (ECB): organizational restructuring, intentional efforts from management to educate its employees about evaluation, and the necessity to access more sources of funding (p. 446). It is also encouraging that the leadership team at BGCV recognizes both the internal responsibility it has to innovate its programs and the professional development that program evaluation training could offer to its employees, possibly even for later in their careers. This internal pressure to pursue ECB aligns with Carman and Fredericks’ (2010) assertion that organizational leadership should help reframe evaluation “away from defining evaluation as an external accountability tool designed to satisfy funders and accrediting bodies, and toward defining evaluation as an internal management tool” (p. 100).

BGCV has been diligent in investing in its technological capital to help support its evaluative practices; the organization has long used Sharepoint to help aggregate data collected from internal evaluations and has recently introduced Sharevision to better track its individual stakeholders and compile the data that is collected from them. Carman and Frederick’s (20010 research identified how the “lack of investment in information technology and computers really seemed to hinder the ability of the nonprofit organizations to do evaluation” (p. 99); thankfully, BGCV has been able to mitigate this potential hindrance to ECB by allocating resources to its technological evaluation tools. Ultimately, leadership at BGCV has decided to invest in the
organization’s technological capacity, and the dividends from this allocation of funds include more effective evaluation practices.

**Conclusion 2: Some barriers currently exist that are inhibiting BGCV from more effectively expanding its evaluative capacity.**

Several barriers currently exist at BGCV which are inhibiting the organization’s ability to expand its evaluation capacity. These barriers include workload issues that discourage employees from taking on additional responsibilities, financial restraints that are preventing the agency from allocating more hours towards training, and a lack of a clear communication plan to share the findings from program evaluations.

Arnold (2006) advocated for one-on-one training consultations for employees in order to truly enhance their “evaluation capacity on real projects that hold personal value” (p. 260). The training process at BGCV should allow for collaborative experiences as well, as the nature of program evaluations can involve working together to review service delivery. Carman and Fredericks (2010) argued that this sort of training should involve “collaborative evaluation experiences, whereby experienced evaluators guide evaluation teams through the evaluation process” (Carman & Fredericks, 2010, p. 85). The findings from the research in this project signify that the leadership at BGCV recognizes the allocation of hours for further training and engagement in evaluative practices as being a critical component in being able to fully embrace ECB.

The issue of challenging workloads for BGCV employees reflects an existing obstacle that BGCV will need to address as it strives to pursue ECB. The findings from this inquiry process reflected that some of BGCV’s frontline staff and all of its management team see a lack of time as being a potential challenge to ECB. Yet allocating sufficient time and space to engage
in evaluative training is critical for ECB; Garcia-Iriarte et al. (2011) mentioned that organizations’ lack of “staff time…often negatively affect the process of implementing ECB efforts” (p. 168). Arnold’s (2006) research discussed this time issue as well, suggesting that employees facing time constraints:

rarely have time to thoroughly plan programs in a way that supports evaluation…[and]

[a]s a result, the evaluation is often an afterthought, hastily put together to document something about the programs they do. (p. 260)

Management at BGCV will have to be clear and direct in confronting this challenge; Preskill and Boyle (2008) recommended that leaders in the change process:

discuss how participants will balance their other work demands with the evaluation activities and processes and what, if any, organizational issues might arise that may challenge their level of engagement as well as their ability to use their evaluation knowledge and skills after the ECB activity has concluded. (p. 451)

The lack of a clear communication plan to disseminate information accrued through program evaluations also reflects a challenge in expanding ECB at BGCV. Preskill and Boyle (2008) encouraged ECB facilitators to ponder communication strategies regarding how the methods, populations implicated, inquiry questions asked, and frequency of evaluation will be explained to the employees involved, and that they should:

consider the ways in which information about the ECB’s purpose, goals, and expectations is communicated with the intended participants…[in order to] cultivate demand and excitement among participants to learn about and conduct evaluations. (p. 451)
Moving forward, the management at BGCV will need to determine how they plan to share information accrued through evaluation activities, and create a communication plan that shares this information in a clear and understandable way for all levels of BGCV employees.

**Conclusion 3: Program evaluations are positively affecting the way BGCV builds, delivers, and reviews its programs.**

Program evaluations are affecting BGCV’s service delivery in multiple ways: they are encouraging the agency more transparent to the public, funding bodies, and other stakeholders; they are spurring the organization to innovate its programs; and they are offering its employees important experience that helps to enhance their professional development. Furthermore, program evaluations helped to catalyze a change in BGCV’s headquarters and restructure the organization’s Youth Justice Department.

The focus group discussion relating to the trend in increasing accountability in the nonprofit sector reflected how the management at BGCV understands current evaluation requirements, and how these requirements affect the way the organization operates. Carman (2007) mirrored this understanding, suggesting that nonprofits are increasingly “operating in an environment where they are being asked to collect and report various types of evaluation and performance information to funders and other stakeholders” (p. 61). Preskill and Boyle (2008) suggested that evaluators may reflect on the beginning of the 21st century as a time where organizational leaders became interested in, and committed to, building the evaluation capacity of their members (p. 443). The feedback collected from the leadership team echo these comments through a clear understanding of how increasing pressure to evaluate has affected BGCV’s operations.
BGCV has also experienced some integration of program logic models into its overarching operations, and their selection of sound indicators to help gage programmatic success through the outcomes recorded has helped to increase the engagement of the employees involved, and encouraged these individuals to “develop capacity for sound program planning and understanding potential evaluation areas and methods” (Arnold, 2006, p. 260). The focus group discussion elaborated on the necessity for BGCV employees to understand the relevance of the work that they do and relate this to the results of evaluation activities. Furthermore, the Boys and Girls Club of Canada has a national logic model that guides the operations of clubs across the country (Kerr, 2011, p. 10).

Finally, BGCV has attempted to adapt its technological capacity to shifting trends in evaluative practice. The focus group discussion touched on the important role that online methods, such as electronic surveys, have in engaging targets for evaluation. The organization’s use of electronic surveys constitutes a relatively efficient method to help collect data from employees, families, and program participants. Using electronic surveys on a regular basis has also allowed BGCV to capture trends over time as they are an effective and efficient medium to “understand respondent attitude, knowledge and practice at a point in time or to compare changes over time” (McPeake et al., 2014, p. 24). Ultimately, BGCV has been able to adapt to changes in technology and has taken advantage of these changes by incorporating new mediums to collect data into its evaluative practices.

**Conclusion 4: The research and the literature reviewed outline numerous strategies to assist BGCV to expand its evaluative capacity.**

Finally, the findings illuminated several strategies that might help BGCV expand its evaluative capacity. The organization would benefit from encouraging more peer-to-peer
evaluation, it could invest more heavily in training for frontline staff about program evaluations and engage them in evaluation activities, it could design individual logic models for each of its programs, it could employ implementation evaluations to better understand the early stages of new programs, and it could build an alumni program to help capture feedback from an important group of stakeholders.

Engaging BGCV employees in regular program evaluation activities, particularly in a peer-to-peer capacity, will help these employees see other programs from a new perspective, and could enhance their understanding of BGCV’s operation in an organization-wide capacity. BGCV is currently planning a peer review program involving neighbouring Boys and Girls Clubs, and this practice will add another layer of evaluation to the organization’s repertoire.

BGCV currently uses an organization-wide logic model, distributed from its national branch, to guide its overarching program objectives. However, the construction of individual program logic models for each program at BGCV is currently not in place. Garcia-Iriarte et al. (2011) and Kekahio et al. (2014) agreed that the use of program logic models is critical in setting up an environment conducive to effective evaluation. The national logic model for Boys and Girls Clubs across the country involves short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes (Kerr, 2011, p. 10), and so could the logic models for individual BGCV programs.

The use of implementation evaluations is not currently in place at BGCV, but could assist its employees to better understand the process of designing and launching a new program. There was concern raised during research process regarding the difficulty launching new programs and experiencing slow progress boosting enrolment. Implementation evaluations could respond to similar concerns, offering an outline of early enrolment indicators as new programs launch and fostering a more in-depth understanding of the demand for services in the community for BGCV
employees. Duerden and Witt (2012) suggested that organizations too often overlooked the utility of implementation evaluations, neglecting the possibility that this type of evaluation can have a meaningful impact on the future of the program (p. 6). They also asserted that this form of program evaluation is critical in establishing and interpreting a tangible “relationship between the program and observed outcomes” (Duerden & Witt, 2012, p. 2).

Some of the literature reviewed in this project (Davidson-Shivers et al., 2004; Anctil et al., 2007) outlined the effectiveness of establishing a system to collect data from alumni of the program(s) under evaluation. The focus group conversation highlighted the necessity for BGCV to be accountable to all of its stakeholders, be it participants, families, employees, and the community. Stringer (2007) agreed, suggesting that a thorough evaluation should “include a member from each of the major stakeholding groups” (p. 128). For BGCV to honour this assertion, previous program participants would need to be included in its evaluation process.

Ultimately, these study conclusions help to gage how BGCV can collaboratively expand its evaluative capacity. The conclusions depict current evaluative practices within the organization, barriers that exist, the effect program evaluations have on the agency’s program planning efforts, and how logic models, an alumni program, and a communication plan could benefit the organization.

Scope and Limitations of the Inquiry

There were several limitations that surfaced during both phases of the research process. Firstly, the group sample size for the electronic survey was relatively small with only 13 individuals invited to participate due to the eligibility requirements of having to work full-time rather than including on-call staff as well. The reason for this smaller sample group was that full-time staff members encompass individuals who are involved in some sort of program evaluation
already as part of their job description, whereas on-call staff typically do not engage in evaluation. However, the on-call frontline staff may have been able to provide some rich data regarding their perception of the culture of evaluation at BGCV. Thankfully, the responses from seven of the 13 individuals invited to participate in the research equated to a relatively high response rate of roughly 54 percent. It may have been more beneficial to canvass all frontline staff from all the program departments at BGCV – prevention programs, Youth Justice, and Youth and Family Services (see Appendix B for an organizational diagram) – as the seven results collected in this phase of research only reflect the particular views of prevention programs staff. Expanding the number of frontline staff surveyed to all departments would also mirror the representative nature of the sample group involved in the focus group; four managers involved in the focus group represented the four program departments at BGCV, while the executive director represented the agency as a whole.

There were also lots of questions in the survey that participants chose not to answer. I suspect that disallowing this as an option may have coerced individuals into answering questions they may not have an answer to, and this could potentially skew the results and have negative ethical implications. However, allowing a participant to choose a ‘no comment’ option, rather than leaving it blank, may have allowed me to determine if the individual does not want to answer the question, rather than entertain the possibility they may have missed the question or forgot to come back to it before submitting the survey.

Finally, I included a brief overview of the project aims in regards to expanding evaluation capacity, but there are certainly could be challenges in surveying staff who may not understand the elements of evaluative capacity itself. On the other hand, including a more detailed explanation of ECB might have run the risk of priming the answers offered by the surveyed
individuals. This education piece may be unavoidable with many survey topics, and the answers collected from the electronic survey did not necessarily suggest that the staff that participated did not understand program evaluations.

**Chapter Summary**

In conclusion, these findings correlate to the data accrued during the two phases of organizational research at BGCV. The data from these phases of research highlighted repetition in the words and thoughts that surfaced and connected individual ideas together to help outline emergent themes. The recommendations in the next chapter have been guided by the findings established in this research, and aim to honour BGCV’s current evaluation capacity and expand upon it in various ways. The findings in this chapter were established from the comments of numerous employees at BGCV, and these employees will continue to play a central role in analyzing and possibly carrying out some of the recommendations laid out in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER FIVE: INQUIRY IMPLICATIONS

This chapter aims to provide practical recommendations to address the overall question of how BGCV can build collaborative evaluation capacity in order to develop an evaluation framework. Four sub-questions were also involved in this research:

1. What is BGCV’s current evaluation capacity?
2. What barriers currently exist in expanding evaluation capacity?
3. How can program evaluations affect service delivery in the nonprofit sector?
4. What strategies and actions will enhance BGCV’s evaluation capacity in order to support an evaluation framework?

The study recommendations brought forward in this document reflect the themes that resonated from data collected in both phases of action research: the electronic survey and the focus group. These recommendations are based on these themes, and are supported by literature from the field. This chapter will also outline the organizational implications of the research for BGCV, offer suggestions for future inquiry within the agency, and summarize the action research project.

Study Recommendations

1. Continue to nurture a BGCV culture conducive to organizational change.
2. Continue to expand BGCV’s human and technological evaluation capital by investing resources in utilization and training for evaluation tools, and expand the access of these tools to more of its employees.

1. Create separate logic models for each BGCV program.
2. Create a standard BGCV program implementation evaluation process.
3. Establish a BGCV alumni program to incorporate feedback from previous members.
Recommendation 1: Continue to nurture a BGCV culture conducive to organizational change.

Both the literature reviewed and the data collected from the electronic survey and the focus group illustrated a trend towards accountability to the public, funding bodies, and the organization’s own employees. Furthermore, the literature reviewed has established that in order to truly shift the culture of an organization towards one that practices effective and efficient program evaluations, the organization’s employees must be offered leadership support, incentives, resources, and chances to apply their learning in the workplace. This requires the organization’s management to create systems, policies, and processes to facilitate this process, and allow ECB efforts to become common practice in the workplace.

BGCV must continue to strive to be an adaptable and innovative organization. The focus group discussed elements of change that the organization has weathered over previous years, such as an accreditation procedure which spurred BGCV to move from a grassroots model to a more professional and competitive organization, an external review process that examined some programs and spurred BGCV to subsequently restructure its programs based on the feedback from the review, and an evaluation activity that helped catalyze BGCV to relocate its headquarters. It is clear that BGCV has been able to adapt to and act upon external forces that advocated specific changes. The change processes involved in ECB practices can also link to larger change initiatives; BGCV should strive to mirror the success of other nonprofits who have managed to integrate evaluation practices into their daily operations by including evaluation in larger management initiatives.

The participants in the focus group seemed to mirror some of the opinions found in the literature; a consensus appeared as the participants agreed that there are not only higher levels of
accountability expected for contemporary nonprofit organizations, but that BGCV must continue to shift its culture to stay innovative in an increasingly competitive environment. This suggests that BGCV needs to build on its current evaluation practices, and that it should continue to strive for a level of accountability that exceeds the industry standard.

This recommendation, building off comments made in the focus group, proposes that BGCV create a communication plan to disseminate information accrued during evaluation activities. This plan could include some narrative regarding the performance indicators and outcomes measurements through the agency’s email updates. It could also use agency newsletters to increase exposure of its program evaluations, and share this data with the general public and other stakeholder bodies. This level of transparency to the organization’s own employees might highlight its commitment to communication and collaborative practice, and honour BGCV’s tradition of working together in an environment that mirrors a one-club perspective rather than a group of individual program streams. Furthermore, as evidenced by the survey results, a continued effort should be made to encourage frontline staff to feel more connected to the organization as a whole, and allowing them to access and review evaluative results might increase their engagement to the organization.

Furthermore, BGCV should build on the evaluative practices currently in place, such as quarterly reports and external evaluations, by continuing to plan to have departments evaluate each other, or by having staff teams of the same department evaluate each other’s programs. This will help create an unbiased evaluation approach, and will also offer these staff valuable experience in performing program evaluations. Staff could begin by gaining this experience evaluating small programs, and work their way to some of BGCV’s larger programs. Peer review, as BGCV is planning to begin, can happen within the same department, inter-
departmentally, and even between other Boys and Girls Clubs in Canada. Once a plan is established on how and when these evaluations will take place, the entire workforce at BGCV should be informed and prepared for the routines and responsibilities that will be involved.

**Recommendation 2: Continue to expand BGCV’s human and technological evaluation capital by investing resources in utilization and training for evaluation tools, and expand the access of these tools to more of its employees.**

The role technology plays in expanding evaluative capacity is critical for nonprofit and for-profit organizations. The focus group members engaged in a conversation regarding the use of technology in evaluation, and how, for example, electronic surveys are increasingly playing an important role in the organization’s evaluation practices. Continuing to use electronic surveys to collect information from its employees might help BGCV to spur employee engagement. Furthermore, allowing frontline staff expanded access to and training for the organization’s technologic tools might help increase the agency’s accountability to its own workforce.

The main technologic tools currently utilized by BGCV to aggregate and track its evaluative findings are Sharepoint and Sharevision, the latter of which is relatively new to the organization. As BGCV management continues to learn and recognize the value Sharevision will have in enhancing evaluation capacity, they must also understand that in order to reap more utility from this tool, a larger proportion of the agency’s workforce will have to be onboard. Increasing the education regarding Sharevision through training sessions and expanding the access of this tool to more frontline staff will be paramount in ensuring the agency as a whole is invested in the tool, rather than only middle- and upper-level management. Feedback from the research in this project suggests that this is not being entirely realized at the moment, despite
evidence that there is a genuine interest from frontline staff regarding the use of Sharevision in the agency’s operations.

This recommendation suggests that BGCV should continue to communicate with the frontline staff regarding the use of Sharepoint and Sharevision as part of its evaluative efforts, and attempt to gauge where and how training should be facilitated to educate these staff about the programs. These surveys should not be a one-time event; establishing a timeframe to train and engage frontline staff in the use of Sharevision and delivering concurrent electronic surveys will help allow the agency to track changes in the opinions of its frontline employees regarding evaluation at BGCV, and the perceived utility of technology in these efforts.

The training component here is critical; a one-on-one training consultation format will foster adequate knowledge of these tools for BGCV employees, and encourage the engagement from the frontline staff in utilizing the tools. The training should focus on building individual capacity to evaluate, and this may entail facilitating environments that offer collaborative experiences by using group-based evaluation activities as part of BGCV’s training model. This effort to build evaluation capacity at an individual level will help to both strengthen engagement from employees, but also to benefit their professional knowledge and skills. BGCV is fortunate to have personnel partially dedicated to evaluation practices in this role already (see Quality Assurance Manager in Appendix B), and perhaps they can help create a generalized training for frontline staff that explains how evaluation plays a role in operations at BGCV, and how the organization’s frontline staff will be important in these evaluations moving forward.

It is reasonable to expect that these sorts of training sessions may place additional strain on the resources and time available within BGCV. However, it is critical that the agency prioritizes its funds in a way to help overcome this obstacle; the lack of funding allocated to
training and information technology has been witnessed throughout the nonprofit world, and this
deficiency tends to cripple organizations’ abilities to engage in evaluation. Given the current role
that Sharepoint and Sharevision play in programs at BGCV, the organization does not appear to
have a large deficiency in funding for this technical capacity. This recommendation promotes an
ongoing investment in these tools, and a focused effort to train a larger body of BGCV
employees to help them understand the utility of the tools and expand their capacity to interact
with them.

Another potential obstacle to this recommendation is the workload issue that was raised
in both the surveys and focus group; like many nonprofits, the workload for BGCV employees is
already taxing, so there may be some resistance to adding responsibilities to individual staff. This
appears to be a common problem across nonprofit organizations, and organizations that neglect
to allocate the time to pursue ECB often create environments where evaluation is a reactive
process rather than a proactive one. BGCV has already been investing in its technological
capital, and some training relating to it, but as it moves forward, the organization will need to
ensure that it is making genuine commitments of resources and time to ensure that ECB is
approached in a full capacity, from the leadership team right through to the frontline staff. This
will require some discussion at the management level on how the organization plans to split up
the work commitments that relate to this training, and how they can ensure that employees being
trained are able to balance their other work commitments with this new knowledge. Offering
training that illustrates the applicability of these technologic tools to the job responsibilities of
the employees being trained will help raise engagement amongst these staff members.
Recommendation 3: Create separate logic models for each BGCV program.

The use of logic models in program planning, as BGCV has experience with, can help build evaluation capacity and improve the buy-in amongst the employees involved in delivering these programs. Linking logic models to each program at BGCV will help frontline staff responsible for facilitating the programs to understand exactly how the program is evaluated, and will allow them to better understand the value of the outcomes that are reported. The idea of logic models integrating into programs at BGCV is nothing new; the organization has been using them across the organization as part of a larger, national framework, as well as for certain programs within the agency. However, these logic models have typically involved larger-scale implications for the agency; BGCV mainly uses a central logic model that is influenced by senior-level management reviews and that is guided by the national Boys and Girls Club logic model. There is less evidence of logic models truly being employed and understood for individual programs that BGCV delivers.

This recommendation encourages BGCV to collaboratively build logic models for each program in consultation with the staff involved in these programs. Ultimately, BGCV will not be able to build the evaluative capacity necessary to implement effective program evaluations if the people that are involved in the programs in a frontline capacity do not see the relevance of these evaluations in their own job responsibilities, or in the direction of the program involved. Building program logic models collaboratively with the staff involved in creating and facilitating those programs might help shed light on the importance of evaluation, and empower these employees to become more comfortable with regular, ongoing program evaluations, and to better understand the needs of their clientele. This sort of activity should be built into the program
planning element of each program at BGCV, and will thus entail additional resources to be allocated for this procedure.

In BGCV’s case, these logic models, to some degree, would need to reflect the model from the national Boys and Girls Club of Canada, but could include additions from employees who work in the community who may be able to identify objectives specific to the needs in those communities. This practice would honour BGCV’s value of working together, and help reflect the need for collaboration as mentioned by the survey respondents and the focus group participants. Finally, attaching individual and unique logic models to each program the agency delivers will help honour the nature of diversity that exists between the selection of services the organization provides; with four departments who work with relatively different age groups and a vast variety of goals for these participants, unique program logic models will help tailor BGCV’s service delivery to the needs of the participants in each program.

**Recommendation 4: Create a standard BGCV program implementation evaluation process.**

The argument for using implementation evaluations surfaced both in the electronic survey and the focus group, with members from each participant group weighing in on the early stages of new programs at BGCV. An implementation survey has several benefits which may help the BGCV evaluate its programs.

Firstly, an implementation evaluation might help address expectations early on for enrolment. Sometimes programs at BGCV start with low enrolment numbers, and gain participants more slowly than anticipated, while in other instances new programs fill to capacity almost instantly. Analyzing enrolment numbers, specifically for the first three months of a program, will help the organization gage the internal success of the program plan, but also
illuminate the external factors that may be shaping the demand for services provided in the community. As such, these evaluations should include multiple stakeholders, such as the participants involved, the families involved, the staff facilitating the program, and other nonprofit service providers. Literature suggests that implementation evaluations are often overlooked in the nonprofit world, but that they have an important function on how organizations plan and launch new programs.

These evaluations will add another layer to an entrenchment of evaluation practices in BGCV’s routine operations, kindling a stronger relationship between the program and the outcomes observed directly after the program launch. Understanding how a program is performing early on might also help BGCV understand how they can better train and prepare staff to build and facilitate programs. It will also help inform managers on how they can empower their staff to make alterations to a program in reaction to the needs of the community served.

Finally, it is important to disseminate the findings of a program implementation evaluation not only to those involved in creating or facilitating that specific program, but other members of the organization involved in other programs. The focus group engaged in a conversation on how sharing the results of a program evaluation with other departments, or comparing these results against those from prior years, will help inform and empower the employees involved in the program and the evaluation, and enhance collaboration between departments. Furthermore, employees should be involved prior to facilitating any sort of implementation evaluation, ensuring that these staff are clear on the motivations, expectations, and assumptions associated with facilitating program evaluations. This speaks to the idea of a
communication plan that can educate BGCV employees on when to expect evaluation, how it is going to unfold, and in which capacities they can get involved in the process.

**Recommendation 5: Establish a BGCV alumni program to incorporate feedback from previous members.**

Previous members of an organization’s programs are an important stakeholder that can offer valuable insight into the successes and areas of challenge associated with the specific program(s). Both the literature and the focus group discussion examined the role that stakeholders play in evaluation and the importance of including as many as possible in the process. Not only would including alumni in the data collection process help to increase the organizations accountability to the public, the feedback received from former BGCV clients could help fuel innovation for the organizations ability to build, facilitate, and review programs that better meet the needs of the communities served.

Now that the research within the organization regarding ECB has begun, creating an alumni program might also help elicit the formation of more representative action groups to help expand BGCV’s ability to evaluate, given that these action groups are most effective when they include members from a wide array of stakeholder groups. For BGCV, this might include representation from each department, BGCV’s Board of Directors, BGCV’s Best Practices Committee, program staff, funding bodies, and families and individuals that are currently involved in the program as well as those that have previously been involved (see Appendix A for a stakeholder map).

Eliciting the feedback from previous participants in BGCV’s programs might entail a sort of external review, as the alumni will be removed from the program, and thus might be able to offer a different perspective to those within the organization who are still associated with the
program under review. This outsider’s perspective might help mitigate the bias that can exist when a manager adjudicates the performance of their own staff and the programs that they are responsible for overseeing, and a fresh perspective might illuminate details that were overlooked by the staff performing evaluations while simultaneously being involved with the program. Furthermore, an alumni program might best represent BGCV’s vision of enabling “[a]ll children and youth discover and achieve their dreams and grow up to be healthy, successful and active participants in society” (Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria, n.d., Our Mission section). In order to discern if members of BGCV’s programs do end up being successful participants in their communities, the agency should attempt to retrieve feedback from previous members years after they discontinue participating in BGCV’s programs. Finally, for an organization that relies heavily on private donors, an alumni program might help BGCV stay closer in touch with previous members of their programs, and this might lead to an increase in donations.

This alumni program would have to be carefully prepared; considerations should include the sample sizes involved, the programs under review, the time intervals to canvas the alumni, the procedure to disseminate results back to the alumni, and who will be involved in creating action plans to address the outcomes. Considerations for implicating vulnerable people in this alumni program would have to be respected, so the format of anonymous surveys sent out to entire population groups previously involved in a program, along with a clear free and informed consent explanation, would help allow previous clientele to submit their feedback in anonymity and with a clear understanding of how and why they are being asked to submit their feedback. Finally, the process of sending out surveys to large numbers of people might be more efficient
for BGCV as the agency continues to compile all stakeholder members into its Sharevision database, including each of their contact information.

**Organizational Implications**

This project has come to fruition through ongoing consultation between me and my sponsor, allowing her insight into BGCV’s operations to guide the process of developing overarching questions for this research and collecting data from segments of the organization’s workforce. The research findings that ensued identified that a culture of evaluation is present, to some degree, at BGCV. The leadership team appears to be cognizant of trends in evaluative practice, and are very invested in continuing to grow ECB at an individual and organizational level. The management is also aware of the challenges that continue to persist at BGCV and the amount of time and resources that still need to be allocated to promote ECB amongst its entire workforce.

However, the scope of this project was kept purposefully narrow; the idea was not to focus on creating upheaval and widespread organizational change from the research conducted, but rather to offer some tangible goals to encourage the agency to build on the capacity it already has in place, and add any other pieces that may allow the agency to develop a broader, organization-wide evaluation framework. Furthermore, the project is about starting a conversation around ECB at BGCV, respecting the idea that these conversations need to take place before meaningful action can occur.

Very early on in the research it became apparent that ECB efforts need to take place before the development and administration of new program evaluations can take place. Requirements such as resources, time, training programs, and practice evaluative activities must be in place in order to support program evaluation activities. This consideration also honours the
nature of action research, which is an incremental process. Much like the difficulty with administering program evaluations with no or little organizational capacity to actually facilitate the evaluation, action research exudes a similar trait in the sense that it is not effective to simply go out and conduct research if there are underlying conditions which might inhibit the research from occurring in an effective and accurate fashion.

I hope that the organizational impact of this project is experienced over years to come at BGCV, and that it helps engage frontline employees and management alike to continue to think about and collaborate to pursue ECB. The very advent of a survey and focus group in this setting will hopefully help the conversation revolving around ECB gain momentum. Again, this idea of patient and sustainable change might look like Coghlan and Brannick’s (2010) multiple spirals of action research; this research will hopefully only represent one of multiple cycles of research, and that this initial cycle helps guide further implications for the organization in a way that fosters creativity and allows the research to focus more on the quality participation of the stakeholders rather than on the cycle of research itself (p. 10).

Increasing communication regarding these efforts may impact the way BGCV disseminates information amongst its employees. ECB facilitators should ponder communication strategies regarding how the methods, sources, content, targets, and frequency of evaluation will be explained to the employees involved. Furthermore, BGCV should strive to communicate the intentions of evaluation exercises, and explain that evaluation does not determine whether an employee is doing a good enough job, but rather, evaluation exists to help support the employees involved in the program(s), and to encourage them to feel comfortable with the process of organizational change.
The implementation process of the recommendations may not require a vast amount of resource allocation and change. There are some tangible and effective means of evaluation currently being employed at BGCV. The challenge may be more about devoting the time and resources to inform the agency’s employees about what these practices are, why they are being used, and how the findings can shape future program planning. This process will require leadership to evaluate several challenges that arose during the research phase, and the recommendations in place hope to guide this process. The issue of a workload challenge, for example, will have to be carefully evaluated, and the costs associated with increased training must be weighed against the benefits of this process.

My role in the review and possible adaption of some of these recommendations might be limited; while I am keen on seeing the progress and continual expansion of evaluative capacity at BGCV, these decisions will need to be made at the senior-management level—the leadership team. My role will be more facilitative; I will work with leadership at BGCV to help implement the changes at the programmatic level, and I will work alongside my frontline staff team to ensure that the process involved in these changes begins by ensuring the staff have a clear understanding of what evaluation will look like.

**Implications for Future Inquiry**

This research was an opportunity to gage how the leadership and the frontline staff at BGCV felt about ECB and conducting program evaluations. As this project’s research included surveying only the frontline staff in the prevention department, I recommend that BGCV administer another survey for frontline staff members from the other three program departments. Data collected in this fashion would offer BGCV management a more balanced and representative report of the opinions of the organization’s frontline staff. Furthermore, BGCV
should continue to survey these staff and aggregate responses in order to create a reflective analysis of how the feedback from the frontline staff changes, if at all, from year to year. Failing to include the remainder of BGCV’s frontline staff was an oversight in the research planning phase, and future research projects at BGCV should aim to involve a representative cross-section of the organization’s employees.

It might also be useful to use either the same questions from this inquiry project, or similar ones, in a brainstorming activity at one of BGCV’s all-staff meetings. This activity could be facilitated by attaching individual research questions to each station, and a member of the BGCV leadership team could be in charge of facilitating the conversation at each station. If I were offered the opportunity to re-plan the research phases for this inquiry project, I would have involved focus groups in the form of these stations at an all-staff meeting. I chose not to do this as I believed I had two very effective methods of collecting data from BGCV employees.

Current practices of inquiry in place at BGCV should continue to occur as well. Quarterly reports are an effective means to aggregate statistics from programs from each department. Furthermore, the use of surveys with the clientele base at BGCV also helps to gage the effectiveness of the agency’s programs. Also, the host of external evaluations conducted by credible, third-party organizations that occur at BGCV will continue to offer the organization increased transparency in its decision-making process. The advent of a peer review system within the Boys and Girls Clubs network might also help neighbouring organizations hold each other accountable, and learn about how they plan and offer programs and services to their respective communities.

Finally, I would have liked to reframe several of the questions asked during both phases of the inquiry process. I found that the questions partially overlapped each other; replies that
were offered applied to numerous questions that were asked, often resulting in repetitive answers. While it was important to discern whether or not a theme emerged in the answers that were accrued, themes would hold more value if they arose from a range of more varied questions rather than from a range of similar questions. I would also consider asking fewer questions, perhaps only three or four, to allow the focus group participants to engage in a more in-depth conversation instead of feeling as if they are rushing through questions.

**Report Summary**

This chapter outlined five recommendations aimed to provide incremental but meaningful change at BGCV in relation to its ECB efforts. The recommendations exist as a reflection of the data collected during the research phases, and are supplemented by opinions from scholars who have been involved with the process of evaluation within nonprofit organizations.

The impetus for ECB is multifaceted: sometimes the urge comes from organizational restructuring, much like BGCV’s recent history of change with a new executive director and the restructuring of its Youth Justice services; or the capacity-building is driven by an intentional effort from leadership to provide learning regarding evaluation; or ECB is driven by a perceived lack of training and skills in the field; or it is catalyzed by a renewed effort to access more sources of funding. It may be the case that the desire for ECB at BGCV is driven in part by all four of these things, yet what emerged from the focus group discussion is that the organization has a management team that is committed to the long-term direction of the agency and who are keen to foster a culture of evaluative practice. The leadership team is willing to accept recommendations and adjust organizational operations accordingly without a sense of guilt or fear.
The leadership team at BGCV was also able to identify deeper reasons to engage in ECB, such as fostering professional development for its staff, even if it is for later in their careers with other organizations. The data collected ultimately reflects the engagement of the leadership that exists within the organization. While BGCV has certainly experienced external pressures that catalyze evaluation, the theme of the focus group conversation also focused on the internal pressures, and honoured the idea that expanding ECB and facilitating program evaluations at BGCV should come primarily from these internal pressures and from an organizational drive to keep its operations innovative, rather than from the external pressures such as external review or changing trends in the requirements to evaluate.

The leadership at BGCV will play a pivotal role in the near future as the organization continues to expand its evaluative capacity. After a flurry of recent change within the organization, there certainly appears to be a willingness to enter into a period of relative stability. However, stability does not entail stagnation; BGCV must continue to seek out and adapt to change, and ensure that its employees feel confident throughout the process. The accountability piece will also be vital, and as BGCV has encountered, being accountable also means being accepting of change. The leadership team at BGCV recognize this, and understand how they are increasingly operating in an environment where they must engage in evaluation, analyze the data collected, and report the results to funders, the public, and other stakeholders.

Finally, BGCV is guided by a set of core values that speaks to the way the agency conducts itself on a daily basis. As BGCV moves towards establishing a broader evaluation framework, it should also continue to honour its culture and history, and allow those contexts to influence the overall process of evaluation. The organization might be guided by a national body, yet the issues that face the communities of Greater Victoria are unique, and merit an evaluation
approach that aims to address these specific conditions and challenges. Given BGCV’s longstanding value of collaboration, electing to pursue this process in a collaborative nature, by engaging all of the stakeholders involved, will help the organization honour the culture it has worked diligently to build.
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APPENDIX A: A STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS FOR BUILDING EVALUATION CAPACITY AND DEVELOPING AN EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Leadership Team
Identify indicators involved in program evaluations

The Board of Directors
Develop overarching evaluation objectives

Best Practices Committee
Ensure evaluation framework adheres to quality assurance policies

Program Staff
Assist in delivering family surveys and submitting own program feedback

Funders
Deliver grant reporting requirements

Families served
Submit feedback for evaluation development

Partner agencies
Share relevant evaluation experiences and expertise

Communities served
Drive the trends for areas of most need

Building Evaluation Capacity and Developing an Evaluation Framework
APPENDIX C: PROJECT AND SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

How do program evaluations affect operations of nonprofit organizations?

**Intended internal effects**
- Entrenching and fostering a culture of collaboration and empowerment
- Enhancing ability to secure existing and new grants opportunities
- Empowering staff involved in program development & implementation to assess performance targets & indicators
- Collaborative practice; utilizing support and input from colleagues to drive the project

**Providing a framework to collect data for evaluations, but also to map trends in our communities and amongst our client base**

**Intended external effects**
- Innovating services to tailor to the changing needs of the community served
- Building relationships through encouraging clientele to be part of the change
- Enhancing accountability to funding bodies
- Enhancing transparency in operations for the public
- Building a collaborative community within our Community Clubs between the staff and the clientele

**Stakeholders**
- Executive Director
- Program Managers
- Best Practices Committee
- Frontline program developers & implementers
- Client-participants & families
- Partnered agencies
- Funding bodies

• Which people’s support will be crucial to the research?
• How does the current culture & values work with or work against this topic?
• Who is most affected? What is at stake for them?

• How can this project improve client satisfaction?
• How will this project nurture relationships in the community?
APPENDIX D: ELECTRONIC SURVEY INVITATION

This is an invitation to take part in a research survey for a Royal Roads University Master’s of Arts in Leadership (MAL) Thesis Project. I, Ian Culbertson, am conducting research within the Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria (BGCV) to address my topic area, and fulfill a requirement for the MAL degree. The title of this research project is: Program Evaluations in the Nonprofit Sector. My credentials can be verified by contacting Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director and Associate Professor in the School of Leadership Studies at Royal Roads University. As part of a thesis project, a final report will be published through Royal Roads University in a public domain. Participation in this project is entirely voluntary, and participation in this electronic survey will demonstrate free and informed consent as outlined below.

My central question for this research is: How can BGCV build evaluation capacity in order to develop an evaluation framework? To address this question, I will begin researching the current levels of evaluation capacity at BGCV, and which obstacles, if any, exist in expanding the capacity to develop and implement program evaluations. Secondly, I will attempt to determine how a program evaluation framework can enhance service delivery in the nonprofit sector, and bring forward recommendations on how we can develop such a framework.

The time required to participate in the survey is approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Information will be collected via an electronic survey provider, and the survey does not require you to provide your name. The results will be delivered back to me electronically, and all electronic data will be kept strictly confidential on a password encrypted USB drive in a locked cabinet within the office of Ian Culbertson at the Harbourside-Esquimalt BGCV facility and on an encrypted server of the surveying company, Fluid Surveys. More information regarding their secure surveys can be found at www.fluidsurveys.com. This data will be used to help produce
recommendations for BGCV to expand evaluation capacity and create an evaluation framework for the agency’s programs. While confidentiality will be a priority in this research process – the data will be aggregated by the surveying company to protect any individuals from having their responses being recognized, after which, only I will analyze the data – the research data will be included in a publically published document, and the findings will remain in a publically accessible domain. Please remember that participation in this research process is entirely voluntary, and you will be able to withdraw at any time while taking the survey. However, given the anonymous nature of this survey, it will not be possible to destroy the data if a withdrawal occurs after the survey has been submitted. There is no foreseeable harm in participating in this research, other than any inconvenience in volunteering your time to participate, and there exist no potential conflicts of interest between the researcher and BGCV. All data collected during this research will be destroyed by January 15th, 2016.

I am happy to answer any questions should they exist before you proceed with this consent. Please accept or decline this invitation by October 1st, 2014.

Sincerely,

Ian Culbertson
Victoria Community Clubs Supervisor
APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP INVITATION

This is an invitation to take part in focus group for a Royal Roads University Master’s of Arts in Leadership (MAL) Thesis Project. I, Ian Culbertson, am conducting research within the Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria (BGCV) to address my topic area, and fulfill a requirement for the MAL degree. My credentials can be verified by contacting Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director and Associate Professor in the School of Leadership Studies at Royal Roads University. As the nature of a thesis project, a final report will be published through Royal Roads University in a public domain. Participation in this project is entirely voluntary.

My central question for this research is: How can BGCV build evaluation capacity in order to develop an evaluation framework? To address this question, I will begin researching the current levels of evaluation capacity at BGCV, and which obstacles, if any, exist in expanding the capacity to develop and implement program evaluations. Secondly, I will attempt to determine how a program evaluation framework can enhance service delivery in the nonprofit sector, and bring forward recommendations on how we can develop such a framework. This focus group will carry forward themes extracted from an earlier phase of research, and involves, in an anonymous fashion, the results of a survey of approximately 30 program leaders, programmers, and team leads in the Community Clubs department.

The time required to participate in this focus group is approximately 40 minutes, and the meeting will be conducted at the BGCV’s administrative headquarters. Information will be recorded through a hand-written form and by recording the audio of the focus group discussion. Results of the focus group will be transcribed by a third party, and submitted in an anonymous manner. All physical and electronic data will be kept strictly confidential in a locked cabinet within the office of Ian Culbertson at the Harbourside-Esquimalt BGCV facility. This data will
be used to help produce recommendations for BGCV to expand evaluation capacity and create an evaluation framework for the agency’s programs. While confidentiality will be a priority in this research process – the audio recording will be transcribed by a third party, and notes will be taken during the focus group by a third party, and only I will analyze the data – the research data will be included in a publically published document, and the findings will remain in a publically accessible domain. Please remember that participation in this research process is entirely voluntary, and you will be able to withdraw at any time while participating in the focus group, and the data collected up until this point will be destroyed. However, the nature of a focus group means that each individual is not sharing information in an anonymous way, so while removal of the recorded data is possible, comments from participants who withdrew may still guide the direction and outcome of the conversation. The publication of any recommendations in this project will not include the names or identifying factors of any participants. There is no foreseeable harm in participating in this research, other than any inconvenience in volunteering your time to participate, and there exist no potential conflicts of interest between the researcher and BGCV. All data collected during this research will be destroyed by January 15th, 2016.

Please see the attached consent form for more information and to agree to participate in the project. Please accept or decline this invitation by November 1st, 2014.

Sincerely,

Ian Culbertson

Victoria Community Clubs Supervisor
APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

This is a consent form that demonstrates free and informed consent to participate in a focus group for a Royal Roads University Master’s of Arts in Leadership (MAL) Thesis Project. I, Ian Culbertson, am conducting research within the Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria (BGCV) to address my topic area and fulfill a requirement for the MAL degree. The title of this research project is: Program Evaluations in the Nonprofit Sector. My credentials can be verified by contacting Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director and Associate Professor in the School of Leadership Studies at Royal Roads University. As part of a thesis project, a final report will be published through Royal Roads University in a public domain. Participation in this project is entirely optional.

The central question pertaining to this research is: How can BGCV build evaluation capacity in order to develop an evaluation framework? To address this question, I will begin researching the current levels of evaluation capacity at BGCV, and which obstacles, if any, exist in expanding the capacity to develop and implement program evaluations. Secondly, I will attempt to determine how a program evaluation framework can enhance service delivery in the nonprofit sector, and bring forward recommendations on how we can develop such a framework.

Free and informed consent for this project includes the following:
1. The right to withdraw from participating in a research process at any point. If withdrawing part-way through this process, all data provided up to that point can be destroyed if requested.
2. Involvement in this focus group will require approximately 40 minutes.
3. Information will be recorded through a hand-written form and by recording the audio of the focus group discussion.
4. The audio results of the focus group will be transcribed by a third party, and the transcript will be returned to Ian Culbertson in an anonymous fashion.

5. All physical and electronic data will be kept strictly confidential in a locked cabinet within the office of Ian Culbertson at the Harbourside-Esquimalt BGCV facility.

6. Participants will respect the confidential nature of the focus group by not sharing identifying information about the other participants.

7. All physical and electronic data will be kept strictly confidential in a locked cabinet within the office of Ian Culbertson at the Harbourside-Esquimalt BGCV facility.

8. The research findings may be incorporated into recommendations that will be shared with BGCV management, but the participants involved in the research process will not be individually identified in the final report.

9. All data collected during this research will be destroyed by January 15th, 2016.

10. I am happy to answer any questions should they exist before you proceed with this consent.

In signing below, you demonstrate your free and informed consent for this research process.

Name: (Please Print): ______________________________________________________

Signed: ___________________________________________________________________

Date: ____________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX G: INQUIRY TEAM MEMBER LETTER OF AGREEMENT

This is a consent form that demonstrates free and informed consent to participate in a focus group for a Royal Roads University Master’s of Arts in Leadership (MAL) Thesis Project. I, Ian Culbertson (hereafter referred to as the researcher), am conducting research within the Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria (BGCV) to address my topic area and fulfill a requirement for the MAL degree. This research project aims to determine how BGCV can build collaborative evaluation capacity in order to develop an evaluation framework. My credentials can be verified by contacting Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director and Associate Professor in the School of Leadership Studies at Royal Roads University.

Inquiry team members that volunteer to assist in this project will help review the methodologies used, the data collected, and the study conclusions and recommendations. This will include reviewing the final draft of this document and alerting the researcher of any perceived ethical flaws or other issues. Participation as an inquiry team member is entirely optional. During the course of this activity, inquiry team members may be privy to confidential research data, and as part of a thesis project, a final report will be published through Royal Roads University in a public domain.

Confidentiality of Inquiry Data

This project is in compliance with Royal Roads University Research Ethics Policy, and as such, any confidential information accessed by inquiry team members will only be used within the context of this research project, and must not be disclosed to anyone other than the researcher. The data collected from this research will be destroyed by January 15th, 2016. The data collected through the electronic survey will be compiled in an anonymous fashion by a third-party company Fluid Surveys, a Canadian company that stores data on a Canadian server at
www.fluidsurveys.ca. The focus group recording will be transcribed by a third-party company, Teletouch Services Incorporated, and the data will be returned to the researcher with coded names for the focus group participants.

The inquiry team will also review the research to verify that there were no instances of biases being present. As the researcher is also an employee of BGCV, the inquiry team members can offer different perspectives which may uncover any biased accounts of the research findings or literature reviewed. Inquiry team members asked to take on these third-party duties will be under the direction of the researcher and will be briefed by the researcher as to how the process will work and how the researcher’s work will be reviewed. Any inquiry team members who are uncertain about any elements of the project or the review process will clarify this with the researcher.

**Free and Informed Consent**

Free and informed consent for this project includes the following:

1. The right to withdraw from participating in the inquiry team review process at any point.
2. Participation in the inquiry team will take approximately three to ten hours.
3. The electronic survey data will be collected by a third party, Fluid Surveys, and information will be stored on their Canadian survey at www.fluidsurveys.ca.
4. The audio results of the focus group will be transcribed by a third party, Teletouch Services Incorporated, and the transcript will be returned to Ian Culbertson in an anonymous fashion.
5. All physical and electronic data will be kept strictly confidential in a locked cabinet within the office of Ian Culbertson at the Harbourside-Esquimalt BGCV facility.
6. Inquiry team members will respect the confidential nature of this research project by not sharing any data or project information with anyone other than the researcher.
7. All data collected during this research will be destroyed by January 15th, 2016.

8. I am happy to answer any questions should they exist before you proceed with this consent.

I have read and understand this agreement.

________________________ _________________________  _______________
Name (Please Print)   Signature    Date
APPENDIX H: ELECTRONIC SURVEY QUESTIONS

Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria – Program Evaluation Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your feedback is much appreciated, and important in establishing some information regarding the current capacity for evaluation within the Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria (BGCV) and the perceived benefits of developing a program evaluation framework for BGCV.

My central question for this research is: How can BGCV build evaluation capacity in order to develop an evaluation framework? To address this question, I will begin researching the current levels of evaluation capacity at BGCV, and which obstacles, if any, exist in expanding the capacity to develop and implement program evaluations. Secondly, I will attempt to determine how a program evaluation framework can enhance service delivery in the nonprofit sector, and bring forward recommendations on how we can develop such a framework. The questions below were created to attempt to answer these questions.

Please remember, participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you are able, at any time, to cease your participation with this research, and have the data you provided destroyed.

Free and Informed Consent

This consent outlined below articulates free and informed consent to participate in a research survey for a Royal Roads University Masters of Arts in Leadership (MAL) Thesis Project. I, Ian Culbertson, am conducting research within the Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria (BGCV) to address my topic area, and fulfill a requirement for the MAL degree. My credentials can be verified by contacting Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director and Associate Professor in the School of Leadership Studies at Royal Roads University. As part of a thesis
project, a final report will be published through Royal Roads University in a public domain. Participation in this project is entirely optional.

Free and informed consent for this project includes the following:

1. The right to withdraw from participating in a research process at any point. If withdrawing part-way through this process, all data provided up to that point can be destroyed if requested.

2. Involvement in this survey will require approximately 20 to 30 minutes, and require internet access.

3. Participants’ input will be recorded by a third party survey company, Fluid Surveys, and the results will be returned to Ian Culbertson in an anonymous electronic format and will be stored privately on Fluid Survey’s Canadian servers.

4. Participants will respect the confidential nature of the survey by not sharing identifying information about the other participants.

5. All electronic data will be kept strictly confidential on a password encrypted USB drive in a locked cabinet within the office of Ian Culbertson at the Harbourside-Esquimalt BGCV facility and on an encrypted server of the surveying company.

6. The research findings may be incorporated in to recommendations that will be shared with BGCV management.

All Program Leaders and Team Leads in the prevention department have been selected to participate in this survey. The data collected in these surveys will be used to help produce recommendations for BGCV to expand evaluation capacity and create an evaluation framework for the agency’s programs. While confidentiality will be a priority in this research process – the data will be aggregated by the surveying company to protect any individuals from having their responses being recognized, after which, only I will analyze the data – the research data will be
included in a publically published document, and the findings will remain in a publically accessible domain.

Please remember that participation in this research process is entirely voluntary, and you will be able to withdraw at any time while taking the survey. Once submitted, the survey results will not be able to be destroyed. The survey should only require 20 minutes of your time.

In clicking ‘yes’ below, you demonstrate your free and informed consent for this research process.

**Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria – Program Evaluation Survey**

1. How have you witnessed program evaluations being used at BGCV?

2. How do you see collaboration playing a part in performing program evaluations at BGCV?

3. How do you feel invested in the long-term direction of BGCV?

4. What do you see as being the potential benefits to evaluating BGCV’s programs in the following capacities:

   a) Ability to identify areas of success and areas needing improvement in BGCV’s programs.

   b) Ability for BGCV to report to funding agencies.

   c) Ability for BGCV to secure more investment.

   d) Ability for BGCV to become more accountable to the public for its programs.

   e) Other.

5. What do you think could help promote BGCV capacity to evaluate its programs?

6. What do you think, if anything, is standing in the way of BGCV developing an evaluation framework?
APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How have you witnessed, if at all, program evaluations being used at BGCV?

2. How do you see collaboration as playing a part in performing program evaluations at BGCV?

3. How do you feel invested in the long-term direction of BGCV?

4. What do you see as being the potential benefits to evaluating BGCV’s programs in the following capacities:
   - Ability to identify areas of success and areas needing improvement in BGCV’s programs.
   - Ability for BGCV to report to funding agencies.
   - Ability for BGCV to secure more investment.
   - Ability for BGCV to become more accountable to the public for its programs.
   - Other.

5. What do you think could help promote BGCV's capacity to evaluate its programs?

6. What do you think, if anything, is standing in the way of BGCV developing an evaluation framework?

7. Table other questions regarding themes extracted from the analysis of the data collected during the survey process.