



Saskatchewan, Canada: The Hub Model for Community Safety

How a data- and outcomes-driven approach is helping to improve community safety.

KEY POINTS

The Hub model moves outside the typical response- and program-centric view of human services systems—it gathers important information about the actual lives of individuals and families and connects them with the right services at a time of need, improving and changing the trajectory of their lives.

- Collaborative multiagency efforts that reduce silos in the delivery of human services can lead to improved outcomes for at-risk, vulnerable, and marginalized populations.
- A simple but disciplined four-stage filter process is used to protect the privacy of clients and enable the sharing of nonidentifiable data and, where appropriate, identifiable information to help drive better outcomes.
- The Hub takes a structured and institutionalized approach to data collection and data sharing that includes systematic recording of Hub situations in a provincial database. Data analytics are critical for ongoing measurement and evolution of the model, thus the establishment of a research and analysis arm to track and review data is a key component of the model's framework.
- Commitment and buy-in from senior leadership in government have fueled the success of Saskatchewan's Hub model.
- A quantitative study of the Saskatchewan Hub model has shown that it has contributed to reduced crime rates and helped to realize significant cost savings in policing. Commitment and in-kind sector resources are needed on an ongoing basis to achieve scale and sustain progress.

Background

Saskatchewan has a higher than national average rate of youth mortality, high incidences of hepatitis C, HIV, and intravenous drug use, and low school completion rates for its Indigenous population, with high rates of truancy and absenteeism. The province also lacks adequate housing for its most vulnerable citizens. In 2007, crime rates in Saskatchewan were 75 percent higher than for the whole of Canada. There was a 128 percent increase in the number of arrests made between 1998 and 2008, many due to alcohol-related incidents. There was no sign of a let-up in this trend, and as the first responder on matters related to community safety, Saskatchewan's police force was overwhelmed around the clock with calls for help to address incidents that traced back to these social problems. The pattern of arrests suggested broader community and service provision challenges rather than a need for more policing.

The Approach

Launched in February 2011, Saskatchewan's flagship Hub model, Community Mobilization Prince Albert (CMPA), is a government-led community safety strategy modeled after Scotland's collaborative and community-centric approach to addressing policing issues.¹ The main objective of the Hub is to provide an integrated response to at-risk, marginalized, and vulnerable populations proactively, based on an understanding of composite risk factors, while improving community safety and well-being. The Hub has strong support from senior leadership in government, including the premier of Saskatchewan, who has been an early champion.

Core Elements of the Saskatchewan Hub Model

The Hub meets twice weekly for a 90-minute discussion forum that brings together representatives from human service agencies operating in the local and surrounding communities. The focus of the Hub is to identify individuals or families with acutely elevated risk factors that cannot be addressed by a single agency alone and to mobilize human service agencies toward a targeted and timely response specific to individual and/or family need. The discussions foster shared ownership of targets and outcomes and help to strengthen partnerships between government agencies and nongovernmental service providers. The average length of time devoted to the discussion of a situation is about nine minutes. The goal is to connect individuals in need of services within 24–48 hours of a discussion. On average, 53 percent of interventions achieve closure in a week, with 79 percent ending within two weeks. Typical interventions include door knocks (home visits) or meetings with individuals and families during which voluntary support is offered. Three years into the establishment of CMPA, the Hub had dealt with more than 800 situations.

The Hub collects nonidentifiable information on the individuals and families it serves. The information is stored in a database created in partnership with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice. The database includes risk categories and composite risk factors developed in collaboration with the University of Saskatchewan.

In addition to facilitating data collection and storage, the database provides a platform for continuous review of data and interventions to drive policy direction and inform systemic improvements, with a focus on evaluating the effectiveness of service delivery. The database captures information that includes risk factors, age category, gender, originating agency, lead agency, and assisting agencies.

“*Privacy protects people's information; information sharing protects people's lives.*”

—Dale McFee, Deputy Minister of Corrections and Policing, Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice, at a training session for the Chelsea, Massachusetts, Police Department, June 5, 2017

1. Prince Albert is the third-largest city in Saskatchewan, after Saskatoon and Regina.

The Hub relies on a four-stage filter process to ensure that only relevant stakeholders and service providers who will engage in an intervention have access to a client's information, and specifically, no more than they need to take action. A cross-government Information Sharing Issues Working Group provides oversight and advice on privacy and other legal issues. The simplicity and transparency of the four-stage filter process along with the overall narrative about the role of the Hub—its mission is community safety and well-being, not law enforcement—have helped mitigate privacy sharing issues and concerns. To date, there have been no documented cases of privacy violation complaints across any of the Hubs in Canada.

THE HUB'S FOUR-STAGE FILTER PROCESS PROTECTS THE PRIVACY OF INDIVIDUALS

Filter 1: The originating agency determines need for multisector involvement.

Filter 2: The identifying information is removed from the description of the situation brought to the Hub table.

Filter 3: The Hub table reaches consensus on presence of acutely elevated risk—limited information is disclosed to determine which agencies should be involved.

Filter 4: Intervention planning is performed only by the lead and supporting agencies, who meet to share information and determine the right intervention for the situation.

Center of Responsibility (COR)

The Hub members are agencies that are focused mainly on getting into the community to provide services in a timely manner. Their ability to address broader systemic issues facing the community is often constrained by a shortage of time and lack of resources. The Center of Responsibility (COR) serves as a research and analysis model and information dissemination unit. The COR model was introduced to complement and deepen the work of the Hub. It is staffed by specialists from multiple agencies and disciplines. Its main functions are centered around data collection, research, and quantitative analysis of the Hub. The COR sets the framework to:

- establish rigorous data collection protocols for the Hub database, which houses real-time data;
- identify systemic issues and evaluate trends to mobilize service delivery at the local level;
- generate opportunities to research solutions to social problems; and
- measure overall outcomes of the Hub model.

Only one COR is operational in Saskatchewan, based in Prince Albert. An early attempt at establishing a regional COR model has been put off in favor of a provincial data center in partnership with Statistics Canada and other primary stakeholders, including Saskatchewan's universities and ISM Canada.

“*The Hub is an intervention before crime happens.*”

—Presenter at a training session for the Chelsea, Massachusetts, Police Department, June 5, 2017

Results

Although the majority of cases that come through the Hub still originate with the police, law enforcement rarely plays a leading role in the resulting intervention. With the Hub model, crisis response and intervention are assigned to the agency that is best suited to address the specific problem. This approach has helped to decriminalize poverty, mental health issues, drug and alcohol misuse and addictions, and other social problems.

The Hub institutionalizes a data- and evidence-driven approach to addressing the composite risk factors that prevent individuals, families, and communities from achieving their fullest potential. It has triggered a shift toward a solution-oriented mindset among government agencies and service providers by placing greater emphasis on the impact of social services designed to improve community safety and well-being. Specifically, a quantitative study by the University of Regina has shown that CMPA has resulted in a 37 percent reduction in crime since 2010 in Prince Albert and an estimated \$3.2 million in cost savings for policing in Prince Albert for the period 2011–2014. The success of the Saskatchewan Hub model in Canada has inspired replication of Hubs across eight provinces in Canada and in the United States.

Looking Ahead: Proliferation of the Saskatchewan Hub Model

The Hub model lays a strong foundation for exponential improvements in the provision of services targeted to Saskatchewan’s most marginalized and vulnerable residents that ultimately can lead to better lives for the entire community. The standardized risk tracking system and data collection that take place during Hub discussions have created a structured and institutionalized platform for collating localized risk data, which are used to inform new approaches to integrated service delivery and address the systemic issues that prevent residents from accessing the support they need.

By-products

The Healthy Family Initiative (HFI) was introduced in 2016 as a two-year pilot program to provide integrated services for up to ten families (45 individuals). It is based on lessons learned from the Hub model and the successful Troubled Families Programme in the UK. HFI is testing a new, holistic approach to service delivery in which one worker (or system navigator) provides comprehensive case management to the family unit as a whole. This is different from the Hub model in which multiple agencies may be involved in providing support to one individual, emphasizing that the Hub does not provide case management but rather connection to services. HFI builds on the practice of data sharing across agencies to more effectively and efficiently provide targeted services to vulnerable families and will eventually link to the Hub as a way to identify eligible families.

The Predictive Analytics Lab and its inaugural Missing Persons project, launched in 2015, expands on the Hub model's risk tracking system. The Analytics Lab will examine large databases to better understand the risk factors that contribute to a child or youth running away.

Finally, research has been conducted on Technology-Enabled Hubs which are being considered as a way to reach remote communities that cannot engage as readily in face-to-face interactions with human service providers.

Conclusion

Saskatchewan's ability to take the Hub and COR models to the next phase is contingent on four foundational principles: (1) the support of strategic partners; (2) data-driven integration and sharing at all levels of government (federal, provincial, regional, and local); (3) a commitment to local solutions; and (4) a shift to outcomes-based approaches with a focus on collective outcomes, that is, having impact across the human service system and not solely on one sector.

A coalition of champions and advocates that includes government leaders, nongovernmental service providers, and funding organizations have put forth a model for an innovative national outcomes fund that would promote the use of limited government resources for specific, measurable outcomes focused on improving the well-being of individuals and communities.

The proposed outcomes-based approach builds on local Hub models and prioritizes results. It seeks to foster innovation in addressing needed improvements to service delivery and will necessitate robust information sharing and shared agreement on privacy rules and principles among government agencies and service providers. The funding would be managed by an entity that operates at arms length from government, takes a portfolio approach to managing interventions and associated risks, and leverages a suite of financial tools from sources such as philanthropy, corporate financing, and user taxes to pay for outcomes in service delivery. As this approach is explored further, commitment and leadership from federal and provincial governments, service agencies, statistical agencies, the police, and the community to addressing Saskatchewan's complex social and economic problems will need to be made explicit. Early support for the Hub model and the new initiatives it is spawning puts Saskatchewan in a strong position to build on these successes and enhance the effectiveness of human service delivery for its at-risk, marginalized, and vulnerable populations.

Authors and Acknowledgments

This case study was written by Abeba Taddese for Results for All. Funding for the research project was provided by the Global Development and Population Program at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Special thanks to Dale McFee, Deputy Minister of Corrections and Policing, Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice, and Raequel Giles at the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice, for their support on this case study.

For more information, please see <http://results4america.org/our-work/results-for-all/>.

Sources and Further Reading

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