



Public Health
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CAPC/CPNP National Projects Fund

Translating Knowledge into Public Health Action



Canada

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Du savoir à l'action en santé publique*

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The Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) and the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) are two distinct and complementary programs funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada that provide funding to community-based groups and coalitions across Canada. Both programs are committed to and aimed at promoting healthy birth outcomes and the healthy development of Canada's children. With close to 800 projects in thousands of communities across the country, both CAPC and CPNP provide an important catalyst for partnership development and community capacity building.

The National Projects Fund (NPF), established in 1997, is an integral component of both CAPC and CPNP.

CAPC and CPNP — A Dynamic Duo

Both of these programs of the Public Health Agency of Canada fund community-based groups and coalitions:

CAPC provides access to programs and services that address the health and development of children from birth to 6 years of age, and their families, who are living in conditions of risk. Currently, there are 465 CAPC projects operating in more than 3,000 communities in Canada.

CPNP funds community-based initiatives to promote public health and reduce health disparities affecting pregnant women and their infants. The program provides food supplementation, nutrition counselling, breastfeeding support, education, referral and counselling on lifestyle issues. Approximately 330 projects are operating in 2,000 communities across the country.



Strengthening CAPC/CPNP Projects

Just as CAPC and CPNP support the diverse needs of women and children at risk in Canada, the NPF provides essential support to CAPC/CPNP projects. For, although each CAPC/CPNP project is designed and delivered to meet the needs of participants and to make use of resources at the community level, evaluations have identified a number of needs and challenges common to many CAPC/CPNP projects. In fact, it makes sense that projects supporting women and children in similar circumstances face similar needs.

Challenges that numerous projects face include both process-related issues that arise in the day-to-day planning and running of projects, as well as the need for current information and knowledge about participants and the circumstances and conditions they face. Common challenges include, for example:

- *Understanding the needs and circumstances of participants* — such diverse issues as family violence and the role of fathering in healthy child development — as well as the challenge that poor literacy skills pose to participants and to project staff and volunteers alike.
- *Keeping current with information, knowledge transfer and effective approaches to program delivery* — a high proportion of CAPC/CPNP projects are located in small and/or isolated communities; keeping current with research and innovative program ideas is an ongoing challenge.
- *Managing staff, working with volunteers* — many CAPC/CPNP project managers must manage staff with varied education, training and experience, who may be employed by different organizations in the community. Most include a mix of paid staff and volunteers — providing excellent support to participants, but posing challenges to project managers.
- *Running a community-based, not-for-profit project* — unique circumstances and issues arise in this sector, particularly those relating to responsibility and accountability of projects.



Providing Transferable Resources, Supportive Infrastructure

The NPF provides a foundation of tools, resources and support available to all CAPC/CPNP projects. Through a process of consultation with project managers and staff, and based on results of evaluation of each and every project, the Fund determines the nature and type of support that are needed to improve the effectiveness of program delivery and enhance outcomes for participants.

Support is provided in diverse ways — a national office and seven regional offices provide complementary services to projects that enable them to thrive. The resources developed draw on evidence-based research, as well as on contributions of expertise by project staff themselves. Staff know the challenges and know what support is required to address them. The NPF recognizes and taps into the

expertise and first-hand knowledge — packaging it and making it available to all projects across the country.

Spin-Off Benefits of NPF Work . . .

CAPC/CPNP projects are not the only beneficiaries of NPF resources and support. In fact, most projects are collaborative efforts that include several community sponsors and partners — all of these community-based, not-for-profit organizations have access to the diversity of NPF support and knowledge through their participation in CAPC/CPNP projects. As a result, the broader web of community support to women and children at risk is stronger and richer.



Responding to Current and Emerging Issues, Reinforcing Public Health

The NPF provides a mechanism for project staff to identify and communicate ongoing needs, as well as those that are emerging. Early indication of challenges in some of the communities enables the Fund to respond quickly with the development of training, resources or even discussion forums. All projects can access the free resources, promoting strong and responsive project delivery that takes advantage of good practice at the community level.

For example, two major issues facing many, if not all CAPC/CPNP projects, are poor literacy skills of CAPC/CPNP participant populations and the importance of support for the involvement of fathers. From a public health perspective, both of these issues are important factors in determining healthy outcomes for children. Early recognition of the challenges, the needs of participants and the role projects can play in providing support to project participants on both fronts has led to the development of both literacy and fathering resources.

Training and Networking — Cornerstones of NPF Project Support

Training and networking go hand in hand for CAPC and CPNP staff. Once every three or four years, project staff within a region have the opportunity to participate in a training session that includes formal training sessions, the chance to share tools and experience, and less formal sessions that enable staff to forge solid linkages with staff in other projects — relationships that strengthen the knowledge and commitment of staff, improving their ability to do their jobs.

For the Québec and the Atlantic regions, training in 2003–2004 was the first opportunity to bring all project staff together. In total, approximately 1,400 project staff attended the training sessions across Canada during that year. In addition to training and networking, attendees participated in evaluation and feedback of the support they receive through NPF. The feedback was very positive with a request to repeat the experience in the very near future.



Making Use of Practice-Based Evidence + Evidence-Based Practice — The Best of Both Worlds

Resources developed and support provided by the NPF are based on the knowledge and expertise of project staff, drawing on their first-hand experience and evidence collected and documented through project evaluations. By making this “practice-based evidence,” available across the country, individual projects have ready access to resources and information to apply to their own projects and communities. At the same time, the active role of such organizations as the Centres of Excellence for Early Childhood Development, Family Resource Programs of Canada and universities ensures that broader research contributes to the foundation of evidence upon which projects are developed.

Supporting Sustainability of CAPC/CPNP Projects

One of the most important attributes of the NPF is its approach to both recognizing, valuing and honouring the work by front-line staff, and, at the same time, recognizing their need for support to sustain their projects and support their project participants. A challenge common to many community-based, not-for-profit projects is the threat to their sustainability. Much time and effort is often spent by project staff in securing funding, finding ways to retain staff in the face of sporadic and uncertain funding, and planning and delivering programming under such threats. The Fund responds to the challenge by supporting sustainability in a variety of ways.

For example, a range of resources that demonstrate the how-to of developing and maintaining sound operating practices, as well as those devoted to specific aspects of human resources and volunteer management, complement and enhance the skills of project managers and staff. These supports recognize and reflect that skill levels vary extensively across projects, and that many project staff have not had previous formal training in management and administrative functions.



National Projects Fund — How It Works

The NPF provides strategic project funding and is guided by three objectives:

- to support and strengthen CAPC/CPNP projects through training on specific issues, resource development and information sharing and dissemination
- to encourage and stimulate the development of a national network of community-based children's programs
- to share the knowledge base from CAPC and CPNP learning among CAPC and CPNP projects and with communities (including other children's services, researchers, educators and policy makers)

NPF initiatives are identified through consultation with CAPC/CPNP projects, the Public Health Agency of Canada program consultants and through the CAPC/CPNP renewal process (which includes regular review of each of the close to 800 individual projects).

NPF work is guided by a National Working Group. Comprised of representatives from program consultants in each of the seven regions of the Public Health Agency of Canada, the National Working Group members work collaboratively to provide guidance and recommendations to the National Office. The National Office functions with a \$1.9 million Grants and Contributions budget and a 1.5 person-year responsible for the management and delivery of the Fund.

The operating model of the NPF ensures that funds are directed where they are most needed — the women and children participants of CAPC and CPNP projects across Canada.



For more information on the NPF and the resources developed to date, contact:

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