

Virtual Services Evaluation

Community Living Parry Sound

COMPLETED BY LIANNE PICOT, BLUE MORPHO
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Ontario
Trillium Foundation



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About this report

An evaluation of virtual services was commissioned by Community Living Parry Sound (CLPS) as part of the Recover, Reconnect, Rebuild (3Rs) Project, funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

A consultant was hired to facilitate the evaluation process, which consisted of 14 individual interviews with leaders, coordinators and front-line staff. To summarize the findings, the consultant reviewed documents, processes and technologies currently being utilized by the organization.

The purpose of the evaluation was to establish what had and hadn't worked in the provision of virtual services from 2020-2022.

This report is a summary of the insights, ideas and information shared as part of the process.

Strategic Plan Priority: Purposeful Use of Technology



Focus on expanding the role technology plays in the lives of people to learn, communicate and socialize.

Support people in developing confidence and comfortability using technology.

Balance virtual and in-person supports to be responsive to people's needs.

● Technology is Important For Service Delivery at CLPS

The leaders and front-line staff that were interviewed in this process said that technology was an important part of the organization's future.

The main questions were:

- 1) How technology would impact service delivery for the people CLPS supports?
- 2) Do staff have the capacity to learn and use it?
- 3) Do staff have the motivation and interest to learn and use it?



Key Findings

01

The People CLPS Supports

Many people have expressed an interest in learning about how technology can help them deepen their connection to their communities. Individualized support with technology (i.e. tech labs) has proven to be effective in people's inclusion, learning and exploration as it relates to the digital world.

02

Virtual Service Delivery

Focusing on accessibility, equity and opportunity in service delivery as drivers of what virtual services are provided will be crucial for increasing buy-in and commitment from employees.

03

Staff Capacity & Interest

When faced with limited support hours, staff often prioritize activities of daily living over support involving technology. Time and competency levels were key issues in being able to help people access and learn about technology.

04

Technology

Technology offers convenience and increased opportunities for connection. However, when it comes to front line service provision, there is some resistance due to an assertion that people prefer face to face interactions.

Technology Utilized

Challenges Identified

Mobile phones

Staff capacity

Laptops

Lack of staff buy-in

iPads/Tablets

Lack of staff confidence and comfortability using tech

BlueJeans/Zoom

Affordability of internet

Facetime

Dexterity and pronunciation

Community Connect App

Personal biases

Adaptive Devices and Apps

Outdated workplace technology



Quote from front-line worker:

"If the pandemic had not happened, many of the people we support would not have had technology introduced into their lives."

Implementation Strategies

Hiring an external consultant to facilitate learning opportunities for staff.

1:1 Tech Labs for people to learn and try out new technologies

Creative Expression Group Workshops with a focus on online engagement

1:1 support from Community Activator for people CLPS supports

Direct purchase of technology for people using OTF funding

Access to Passport Funding for monthly internet payments and purchasing of devices

Virtual Services

Wellness Calls

Support and communication via FaceTime/Videochat or texting

Community Connect App

CLPS Virtual Events - Community Kitchen, Crafts, etc

Connecting people to community virtual events

Supported online ordering and virtual budget meetings

What Staff Are Saying:

On teaching technology:

"The key with people we support is to take one thing at a time. You need to be super open-minded."

On Wellness Calls:

"People are lonely and only get a certain number of support hours. Check in calls were really important. A connection was created and some people really thrive on that. Others were like 'I'm good' and didn't want to chat but we knew they were okay."

On technology overall:

"A lot of people have connected to each other during the pandemic. People could stay connected to their families because of technology."

On Learning Labs:

"People loved getting together the most. They were people of like minds getting together to learn a skill."

On virtual events:

"The virtual events were really good. Even though we were not able to see people face to face, connections were being made. The events also helped people learn new skills in using an iPad."

On Virtual Events:

The virtual social gatherings were really good. Even though we were not able to see people face to face, connections were made. They also helped people to learn new skills such as using an iPad.

It would be good to continue Community Kitchens as learning to cook a meal for oneself is very important. The virtual approach means someone is supported in their own apartment with their own kitchen tools. We could have staff helping them or they could do it themselves."

On Facetime:

"We were able to deliver support through Facetime and people we support could use it to connect with loved ones that don't live in the area."



What is Working



Tech Labs/1:1 Support

Many people have participated in Tech Labs and/or have received 1:1 support around technology. Overall, participants were excited and determined to learn. The tech lab facilitator must have an understanding of adaptive devices, apps and programs and as well, possess strong creative problem-solving skills.

In-Person Group Learning

Given the capacity challenges of only having 1 staff member to help people learn about technology, group learning was organized. The workshops were well received with most of the participants returning week after week. Having the opportunity to learn together was found to be very important to the group.

Wellness Calls

Despite some initial internal communication conflicts and a brief period of readjustment to the new service, wellness calls proved to be important for maintaining connection and ensuring support needs were met.

Community Connect

The Community Connect app is providing a safe space for the people CLPS supports to try out and learn about being online, connect with resources, each other and events in their community.

Paul's Story

by Danielle Monroe

Paul had some success speaking slowly into his Google home, however it wasn't something he was really able to use without staff support. Google home is a voice activated device and Paul has a speech impediment. We tried using a text to speech app and pre-programmed sentence commands. However, by the time Paul was able to locate the command he was looking for the device would time out.

After a little bit of digging I was able to find an app that would hopefully bridge the gap and allow Paul to use this piece of tech that he was so determined to use. We downloaded the Chatter Boards app and created a speech board complete with pictures. Paul was able to choose the colors, images and fine tune the pitch and tone of the voice he wanted to use. It took some trial and error but with this new app he is able to ask Google home to play music, tell him a joke, give him the weather and even connect his blue tooth headphones.

Paul's resilience and open mindedness to keep trying new ways to be able to use his Google home device inspired continuous creative problem solving.

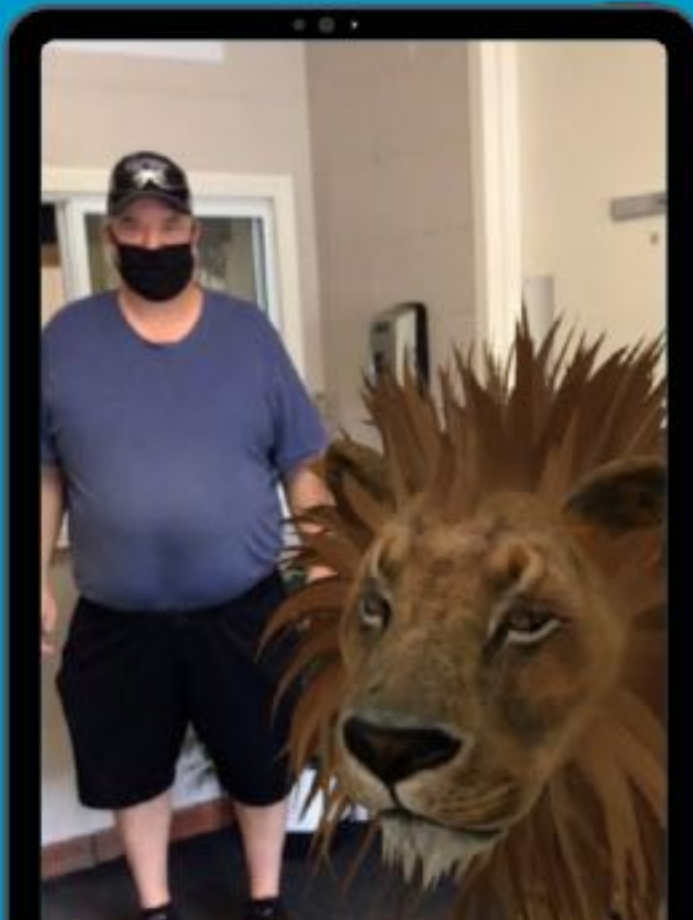
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LIFE SKILLS LEARNED

- How to Collaborate as a Team
- Different ways to Express themselves
- Confidence and Self-Esteem building
- Problem Solving and Resourcefulness

TECH SKILLS LEARNED

- How to use their devices to take pictures
- How to use different features within the camera app (video, zoom, selfie mode)
- How to upload pictures to Social Media and share content online
- How to use Canva to create posters
- How to use google 3d to take pictures with virtual animals
- How to navigate Community Connect





Quote from Community Activator:

"(A participant) took on a teaching role during our creative expression workshop where we spent the month of June learning how to take and post pictures to Community Connect in an effort to give opportunities for the people we support to have more of an online presence."

More Tech Success Stories

by Danielle Monroe

Donna was hesitant towards technology and would get easily frustrated when things would not work out right away. She was able to practice her patience and learn how to post pictures to community connect. Since learning this skill she has been posting pictures independently on a regular basis!

Trevor really hit the ground running with the online design program Canva. He is proud to have created the hours of operations poster for a local bookstore, Bearly Used Books, that is displayed for all to see. He continues to work on various projects in Canva that he enjoys sharing including holiday cards.

Chuck does not have access to internet at home and has limited supports through CLPS Passport Services. He was able to download Netflix movies to his tablet during our tech labs and will now be able to enjoy movies in his home!

What Staff Are Saying:

On technology and staff:

"It is more challenging with the staff to convince them to use it. They have a hard time connecting how tech would help them with the people they support."

On teaching technology:

"The glitches with technology are frustrating for staff and the people we support. It's hard to teach tech with someone when you have to use tech to teach them. Better to do in person."

On tech in 1:1 services:

"I don't see that individuals would want us to use technology in 1:1 services. They want to get away from their 4 walls. That is our mission. get people out into the community. Tech & social should be an aide to delivery only."

On interest in technology:

"The age and generation of majority of people we support is older. Their preference is talking not using technology."

On Community Connect:

"It has been pushed on people and it costs the agency quite a bit. What is the purpose of a staff going on and helping someone answer what their favourite ice cream is? There is nothing for staff. Nothing to bring you into it. "

On accessibility:

"I don't buy that people we support could not access technology because of their disability. Some of our staff are so programmed into their routine. They think they are here for a certain job but they need to be more flexible. There are ways around accessibility. You can use adaptive technology eg. a 'switch tool' to help people use technology. Staff just don't want to do it."

On Tech Distribution:

At one point we were pushing way too hard for people to have technology, to have a laptop or an ipad, even though they said no. We kept pushing and pushing."



What's Not Working



Staff Buy-In

A number of staff could see the value of technology for themselves but unfortunately did not see the same benefits for the people they support. There is a strong belief amongst staff that personal needs and physical connection to community are more important than supporting people to access the digital world or learn how to use technology.

Teaching technology virtually

There is consensus that using technology while trying to learn about technology is a major challenge. The learning is best-suited to in-person sessions, however, when it has been offered, there was very little staff up take. This directly impacts the people CLPS supports as they rely on staff to promote the use of technology.

Service Consistency & Equity

Because staff interest, ability and time play such major factors in whether people access technology, there is little consistency in service delivery. It has been an ongoing challenge to navigate the integration of technology into the lives of people due to these staff constraints.

Community Connect

Strong negative feelings from the beginning of the project continue to impact the success of Community Connect. Some staff have not interacted with it at all and/or don't enjoy the social media aspect of it. Despite many efforts to engage staff, there continues to be resistance to both utilizing it as a service tool and supporting people to utilize it themselves.



Quote from front line worker:

"We care about the people we are supporting and that they are safe. Sometimes we need to check our own biases around technology. And we need to remember that the people we support have a 'right to risk'."



Community Connect

The Community Connect App was developed as a pilot project in 2021 in response to the isolation and accessibility challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic posed for the people CLPS supports. The app was designed to help people with intellectual disabilities safely navigate the internet and provide them relevant and timely access to information.

The app is due for renewal in December so CLPS needs to decide whether to take it forward or not as part of the agency's future service provision.

Community Connect – 12 Month Snapshot

Members/Users

- 98 active users
- 15 people CLPS supports have clicked on posts over 100 times, and 5 of those folks have clicked on more than 500 posts each (one person has over 2300 clicks, and another has over 1200)
- There are close to 50 users who have clicked on something at least a few times per month

Events

- Over 300 individual events posted (both delivered by CLPS and in the community)
- Free and paid, in-person and virtual
- 708 RSVPs to events (Note: not everyone who attends has RSVP'd and vice versa)
- Activity in the community is difficult to see without access to the data. For example, there was an event with 400 post clicks (people clicked on the post to read/hear more about the event 400 times) and there were zero cheers and comments. It may look quiet from the outside, but we know people engaged because of the clicks.

Interactions

1213 total posts (not including events)

21% of posts were created by members (ie not hosts)

12,321 post clicks



905 comments






2065 cheers

Examples of posts with highest click rates:

- Events – (fun runs, community kitchen, craft sessions, virtual yoga, etc.)
- COVID Booster Clinic info
- Parry Sound Snow Fest event
- Free community lunches (details, location, times, etc.)
- LiveCams (watch live – eagles' nests, bears hunting salmon in Alaska, puppies, kittens, aquariums, national parks, etc.)
- A post with one of the highest engagement rates was created by a person supported by CLPS. They were showcasing their painting skills and how different daylight impacts colour
- Mental health posts such as 'how to use breathing to calm our system', might have 50-60 clicks but no cheers or comments.

Community Connect - August Event Calendar

50%






Community Connect CLPS

Home

Discovery

Members

About

Invite

Topics

Events LIVE


Interests

Groups


Courses & Stories

Community Living Parry So

CHAT

 Community Connect CLPS

31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7:30pm Festival of the S...	12:00pm Maawanjiidiwa... 3:45pm Jump Youth Gro... 6:00pm Men's Circle	5:30pm Meet the Author... 6:00pm Women's Healin... 6:00pm Women's Hand ... 6:00pm G1 Sports Club				
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
		6:00pm G1 Sports Club 6:00pm Women's Hand ... 7:00pm Free Bands on th...	1:00pm Floor Curling 6:30pm Miniature Paint ...	9:00am Mary Street Cent... 1:00pm Shuffleboard 1:00pm Light House Group 6:30pm Cruise Night wit...	5:30pm Jessica Sevier Liv... 8:00pm Full Moon Cere...	9:00am Parry Sound Ama...
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
10:00am Essentrics Stretc...	12:00pm Maawanjiidiwa... 1:00pm Light House Group 3:45pm Jump Youth Gro...	9:00am Mary Street Cent... 6:00pm Women's Healin... 6:00pm G1 Sports Club 6:00pm Women's Hand ... 3 More Events	1:00pm Floor Curling 1:30pm Intro to Yoga 6:00pm Men's Drumming	9:00am Mary Street Cent... 1:00pm Shuffleboard 1:00pm Craft Day with C... 6:30pm Let's Celebrate S...		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
10:00am Essentrics Stretc... 4:00pm Yu-Gi-Oh Events	12:00pm Maawanjiidiwa... 1:00pm Light House Group 3:45pm Jump Youth Gro...	9:00am Mary Street Cent... 10:00am Biosphere Walk... 6:00pm Bike Nights 6:00pm G1 Sports Club	10:00am Pickleball 1:00pm Floor Curling	9:00am Mary Street Cent... 1:00pm Game Day Canad... 1:00pm Shuffleboard		

 **Need Help?**

Battery status: 77% available (plugged in)

COMMUNITY LIVING CLPS

Search Community Connect CLPS

Topics SEE MORE

Support Stressbusting Club Story Club Health Club Outdoors Club

Top Courses & Stories SEE MORE

Box Breathing Technique Self-Esteem Building Course Course: How to Make a Budget Course: How to Use Community Connect! The Lo

Top Posts SEE MORE

Need Help?

Turtle Hatchery Tours and Release Opportunities



Aug 1 9:00am to Tomorrow 10:00am EDT

Georgian Bay... Get Directions

[Get Directions](#)

Turtle Hatchery Tours and Release Opportunities

Turtle Hatchery Tours and Release Opportunities

Exciting news! Georgian Bay Biosphere staff are offering small-group hatchery tours and turtle release events throughout August!

[Turtle Release Dates...continue](#)

Happening Now Event Animal Lovers 🐢🐢🐢🐢🐢🐢... Posted 1w ago

Angela Harvie

There was a fire across the street from me last night



POSTED BY chuck madigan

POSTED BY chuck madigan

POSTED BY Pauli Railosuvo

Maawanjiidiwag Coming Together

Mon, Aug 29 12:00pm - 2:00pm EDT

Canadore College Get Directions

Maawanjiidiwag Coming Together

The Parry Sound Friendship Center and Canadore College are hosting a weekly program on Mondays for older adults and elders.


Come together and Learn together!

Refreshments will be provided and...[continue](#)

Event Community Supports Posted 2d ago

Inclusive Instruments

Inclusive Instruments creates truly inclusive community through and wants to create meaningful social connections for anyone with a disability. They create custom musical instruments based on each person's needs, interests, and abilities, and offer inclusive sessions so that everyone is able to connect with a musical community.



Adaptive Acoustic → Adaptive Electric → Air Guitar →

Community Connect

Benefits	Challenges Identified	Ideas for Improvement
Safe online community	Too many steps for some people to easily access	Clarify target group for app and focus on promoting with that group
Opportunity for people to learn and practice being online	Limitations for integration of adaptive/ accessibility features/software	Create consistent app onboarding process, including reference to audio prompts
Access to community information, resources and events	Lack of dexterity can make it difficult for some people to use the app	Utilize accessibility apps to improve access
Access to learning, training modules and engaging content	Lack of staff buy-in	Demonstrate the value of the app
Opportunities for interactions and socialization	Not many active members	Embed app onboarding into initial planning process
Innovative method of service delivery in the sector	The original socialization of the app likely contributed to negative attitudes about it	Revisit the app with staff - potentially vote on whether to keep it
Ability to continue the delivery of services should another pandemic happen	Lack of capacity to train & support with the App on an ongoing basis	Access more funding for community activation & capacity building support

Future of Community Connect

SCENARIO: MOVE FORWARD WITH COMMUNITY CONNECT APP

Option 1 - Continue as it is currently functioning: The app is currently serving some people and progress is being made in working with staff and people CLPS supports on a 1:1 basis; the online community is slowly growing. Since this approach requires a high level of capacity in terms of technological skill, time and responsiveness, a project lead is necessary. Internal resources could be reallocated or CLPS can apply for funding from Ontario Trillium Foundation again in December to continue this work with a dedicated staff.

Option 2 - Re-purpose: There is potential for the app to be focused on support for families. It could provide an online space for families to convene, share resources and experiences as well as for CLPS to maintain ongoing contact with families, share service information and potentially provide direct support. This community could eventually be family-driven with support from CLPS in the background. CLPS could also apply for funding for this project from a variety of sources, including Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Option 3 - Expand beyond CLPS: Originally, there were thoughts around partnering with similar agencies that provide services for people with disabilities and their families in the region. Funding could be sought from the Ministry or other sources as a collaborative project to bring in consulting or staffing support to help with this process.

**It is recommended that however CLPS moves forward with Community Connect, that it considers turning it into a social enterprise that people can access with Passport funding and/or through a membership model.*

SCENARIO: DISCONTINUE COMMUNITY CONNECT APP

Option 4 - Decide not to renew: Community Connect was conceived as a pilot project to try to help people through the pandemic and provide a 'one stop shop' where people can connect with CLPS, their community and each other. CLPS can just decide not to move forward and use other technologies to deliver virtual services.

Option 5 - Offer to others: CLPS could effectively 'sell' or give Community Connect to another party such as Community Living Ontario or another agency that has or could access more capacity to deliver it.



Quote from leader:

"We are a bridge for teaching the people we support how to live in a digital era. We can use tech with them, help them learn, support them and fill the gap between where they are and what they need."

Key Recommendations for Moving Forward

01

Determine future of Community Connect

The renewal of the app takes place in January and the decision to renew must be made by December 1st, 2022. The renewal is funded for another year by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. However, additional funding must be secured to ensure ongoing management of the app.

02

Integration into service planning

Virtual service delivery addresses the potential barriers to accessing support (i.e. transportation, finances and time). It is recommended that CLPS embed a hybrid service delivery model and prioritize the provision of choice-directed support.

03

Dedicated technology support

At present, staff capacity to integrate technology into supports has been a challenge. Moving forward, it is crucial that we ensure all staff feel confident in their ability to deliver virtual support services. This will ensure that people can choose how they are supported.

04

Expectations & accountability

Leaders must define clear expectations as it pertains to virtual service provision. Highlighting the importance of technology in equity, accessibility and inclusion will ensure staff buy-in.

Proposed Hybrid Service Model

Choice & Flexibility

Provide choice and flexibility for people both in terms of communication preferences and how planning, 1:1 and other support services are delivered:

- In person
- By telephone
- By video (Zoom recommended)
- Facetime

Matching

Match people that are interested in learning about technology with staff that are enthusiastic, creative and committed to offering hybrid services.

Virtual Events

Virtual events were very popular and motivated people to learn and use technology. They created a sense of community and fostered independent living skills. Virtual events help people stay connected to their community from the comfort of their home.

Family Services

Online community for parents & guardians:

Integrating the emerging Family Support Network into the Community Connect app could offer a platform for families to share experiences, build advocacy skills, connect and reduce their isolation. A private group within the app could act as a directory of community resources and relevant information for families to stay connected and access supports. Virtual learning and social events could be implemented to build skills and create opportunities for connection. Due to their collective action, online communities like this one are often more effective in advocating for themselves.

Tech Competency Framework

BASIC

All front line staff should have the following tech competencies for CLPS to be able to effectively provide virtual services:

- Basic understanding of mobile Phones
- Basic understanding of laptops and computers
- Basic understanding of iPads/Tablets
- Ability to use Zoom (preferred over BlueJeans as easier for staff to access/manage on their own)
- Ability to use Facetime
- Ability to navigate Community Connect App and show others
- Basic Internet Safety knowledge and ability to share it with others

ADVANCED

Some staff need to have the following tech competencies for CLPS to be able to effectively provide virtual services AND help people CLPS supports to have increased accessibility to, and knowledge about, technology:

- Knowledge and understanding of adaptive technologies
- Knowledge and understanding of accessibility apps
- Deeper level understanding of mobile phones
- Deeper level understanding of laptops and computers
- Deeper level of understanding of iPads/Tablets

AND/OR The interest and ability to figure things out along the way - a key skill in working with technology!

***Please note that these competencies only relate to service related communications & supports.**



The Role of Leaders

When creating change, it is important that clarity exists in the leadership team. All leaders must be aware of their roles and what the organization expects from them. In moving toward hybrid service provision, leaders of all levels will be integral in determining the success of the initiative.



Provide Resources & Budget

The provision of virtual services will require resources. Ensuring staff have access to up-to-date, well functioning technology is crucial to their success. Funding is needed to increase staff capacity to deliver virtual services and provide learning opportunities.

Stay Current

Technology improves quality of life and creates opportunities for inclusion. Leaders need to stay current on what is happening in the province, with the government, other service providers and available technology.

Maintain the Vision

How leaders talk about and embrace change determines how effective the change is in an organization. Moving to a hybrid approach successfully and ensuring people CLPS supports have access to virtual services and technology will require leaders to both promote and retain the vision for CLPS services.

Hold Each Other & Staff Accountable

Resistance was felt by staff and leaders on the integration of technology to supports. It was felt that the process was rushed, and this is in part due to the sense of urgency that the pandemic created and as well the prioritizing of projects associated with funding that needed to be spent. In making a collective decision about a hybrid service, it is crucial to be intentional with implementation, and to maintain accountability to the organization, within the leadership team, and most of all, to the people CLPS supports.



"It is essential that the people we support are not left out of the digital world and that they feel like they belong in the virtual community - just like every other citizen."

CLPS Leader