



CONNECTIVE

Leadership Gathering 2025

**PUBLIC HEALTH, PUBLIC SAFETY, & COMPLEX
NEEDS: FINDING COMMON GROUND**

Summary of Proceedings and Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

Since 2022, Connective's Leadership Gathering has offered leaders and experts from the justice, health, housing, and social sectors—including Indigenous voices—a non-attributed space for open, candid, and constructive conversations.

Despite the significant overlap in clients and outcomes across these sectors, collaboration on shared challenges and opportunities remain far too rare. The Leadership Gathering seeks to change that.

By encouraging participants to set aside internal and external pressures, preconceived notions, and past frustrations, the Leadership Gathering fosters honest dialogue, strengthens connections between leaders, and advances progress on shared goals.

Over two days of guided discussion, participants exchange diverse opinions and expertise, identify common roadblocks, and workshop a series of recommendations for improving service delivery to populations facing complex challenges.

This year, attendees gathered on the traditional and unceded territories of the WSÁNEĆ (Saanich), lək'wəŋən (Songhees), and Wyomilth (Esquimalt) Nations, around the theme of Public Health, Public Safety, and Complex Needs – Finding Common Ground.

In an era where an “us vs. them” mentality has come to dominate public discourse, outdated and harmful understandings of sensitive issues have reemerged and spread. This year's theme acknowledged this growing polarization and endeavoured to move beyond it. Instead, attendees focused on improving the coordination and delivery of services to those facing the acute and overlapping crises of homelessness, overdose, addiction, and mental health disorders.

To aid in the creation and selection of recommendations, participants were invited to consider the following:

How can we find common ground and foster cooperation and collaboration?

How do we reconcile our competing objectives & divergent mandates?

What does evidence tell us about solutions that support both individuals and communities?





SUMMARIZING THE DIALOGUE

Day one began with two expert-led panels that explored the historical roots of current service delivery gaps and shortcomings.

Though guided by the same prompts—historical choices, external factors, key moments, and missed opportunities—each panel reflected the unique perspectives of its leaders, offering insights into topics like the National Drug Strategy, deinstitutionalization, and affordable housing.

“I would argue that individual systems might be working, but none of the parts are working together. A system indicates flow. There’s no flow here.”

Participants first reflected on the panel discussions in small groups. Insights from these groups were then brought to a larger plenary discussion, and further refined into key issues limiting effective cross-sectoral collaboration.

“Police should not be the first responders to mental health issues, but here we are, 35 years since deinstitutionalization, and police are still the first responders. How has that not changed?”

Day one concluded with case histories, drawn from real and hypothetical scenarios. These were first discussed by a panel, and then in smaller groups. Attendees identified ideal approaches to meet each client’s needs, as well as potential risks and mitigation strategies.

These case studies emphasized the uniqueness of personal experience while encouraging a whole-system approach and reminding participants to “see the world through the eyes of the people we serve and recognize the need to give individuals the opportunity to change.”

On day two, breakout groups discussed one of four sets of factors impacting service delivery for people with complex needs.

Human: Factors related to how people are to be treated (culture, experience, age, gender, history, etc.)

Operational: Factors related to aligning resources, sharing information, and delivering services with diverse settings, partners, and costs.

Empirical: Factors related to evidence for treatment, services, interventions, and performance measurements.

Political or Normative: Factors related to public perception, resource allocation, stigma, accountability, and ethics in service delivery.

Using the information from these discussions, participants identified recommendations within their breakout group’s thematic scope. Throughout the remainder of the day, these were further defined, presented, and voted on.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Leadership Gathering brought together participants from the justice, health, housing, and social sectors to share their expertise and insights through moderated and open discussions. A series of recommendations were developed, with participants voting on which ones to bring forward.

The following received two-thirds majority or more support at the Leadership Gathering.



Voting on the recommendations was optional. Individuals who perceived a conflict of interest—whether personal or on behalf of their employer—were free to abstain from voting.

Majority support of a recommendation does not imply endorsement by any particular participant or organization.

Recommendation 1

Strengthen community-based mental health response and **establish a comprehensive crisis care continuum** in British Columbia, through creation of **civilian mobile crisis teams, dedicated crisis stabilization beds**, and integration of **mental health care as a fourth emergency response option** alongside police, fire, and medical services.

Recommendation 2

Expand access to comprehensive prevention and early intervention services in British Columbia **through age 30**, integrating programs that prevent homelessness and reduce incarceration risk within a supportive framework that provides dedicated navigation, advocacy services, and care coordination to connect young people with needed resources.

Recommendation 3

Create sufficient tertiary mental health care capacity in British Columbia to respond to psychiatric patients with acquired brain injury with serious mental illness and/or substance use; with developmental disabilities with serious mental illness and/or substance use; and with histories of extreme violence and/or current aggression as well as serious mental illness and/or substance use.

Recommendation 4

Establish a collaborative alliance, consisting of senior leaders from the health, justice, social and housing sectors, ensuring strong Indigenous representation. The alliance will **develop a common position on the centrality and importance of safe and adequate housing** as foundational to progress on the most stubborn health, public safety and social challenges facing British Columbia, and work to have this position universally adopted and outwardly championed by professional, service, advocacy, and industry associations, and their member agencies across the sectors.

CONCLUSION

Designed to transcend service silos, bridge organizational, ministerial, and sectoral lines, and coordinate on overlapping crises, the Leadership Gathering recognizes the inherent complexity of service delivery.

Rapidly evolving social, political, and economic landscapes mean that many of today's toughest challenges look unrecognizable from when our systems of service and care were first developed.

Toxic drug deaths remain at historic highs. Untreated mental health and substance use disorders harm individuals, strain communities, and burden the justice system. Homelessness persists, while global instability drives up the cost of living and an ongoing housing crisis puts safety and stability out of reach for many.

Overcoming these and other complexities, and ensuring we meet the needs of those we serve, demands the kind of openness, flexibility, and ingenuity captured by our two-day dialogue.

The recommendations developed by this cohort of leaders represent the impact that's possible when working together from a place of collaboration, and a concrete step toward improved outcomes for those facing overlapping crises.

Moving forward from this year's Leadership Gathering, Connective will work with willing partners to sustain momentum, encourage action on the recommendations, and identify ways to advance these objectives together.

Looking further ahead, we are committed to a continuation of this dialogue and the evolution of the Leadership Gathering.

We encourage you to share this report with your networks. This conversation must go beyond the dialogue that took place at the Leadership Gathering. Broad readership is crucial to our collective path forward.



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The Connective team who are involved in all aspects of this event – from coordinating logistics, to crafting this report:

- Danielle Dufresne, Manager of Communications
- Muireann Gahan, Executive Support Specialist
- Tyler Blacquiere, Senior Communications Specialist

Your generosity of time, knowledge, and passion makes all the difference. Thank you for being an essential part of the Leadership Gathering.



Do you have questions about the Leadership Gathering or this report?
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