

## Sharing What We're Learning

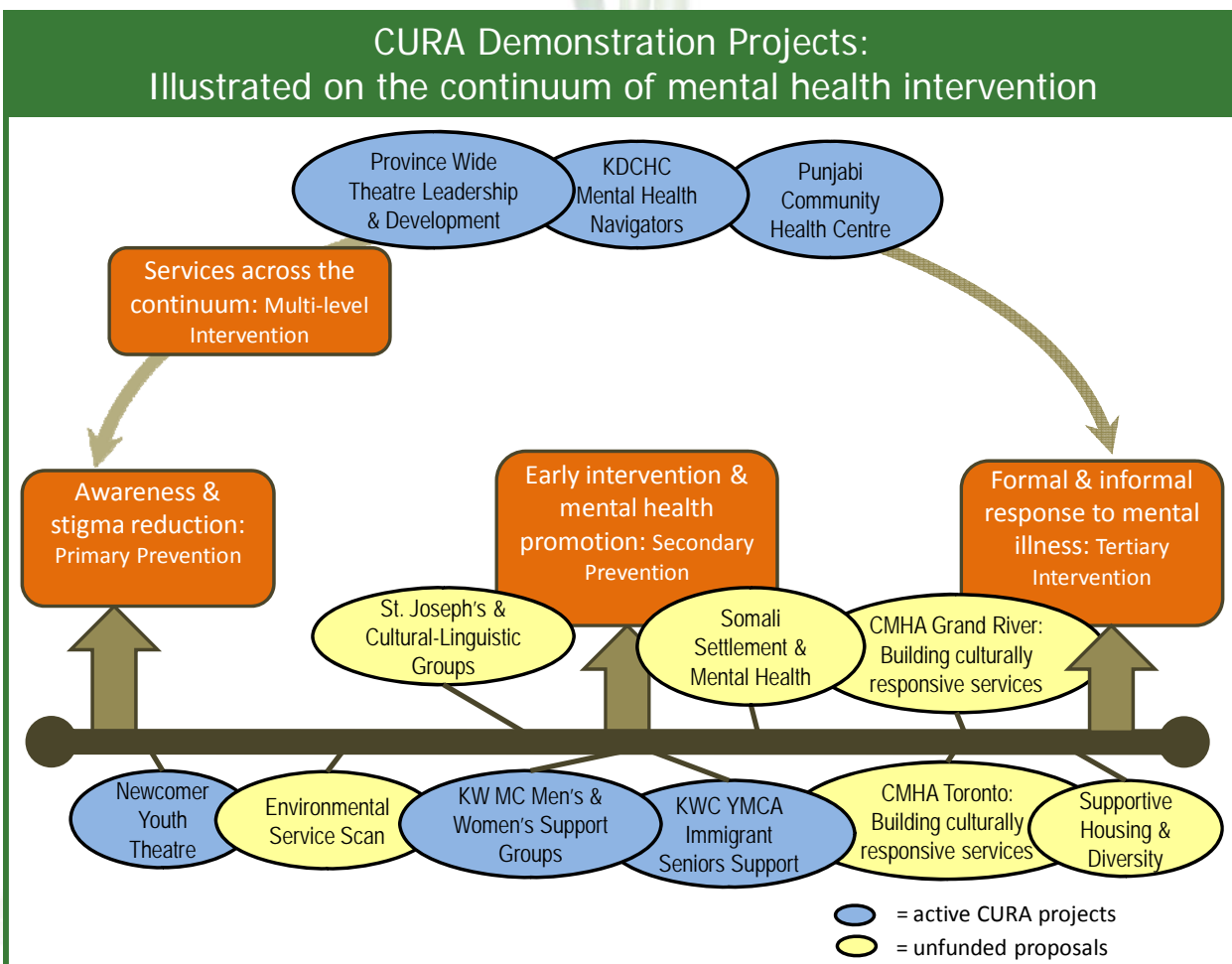
### CURA Demonstration Project Evaluation

In this third and final phase of the CURA project, our focus is on developing, implementing and evaluating innovative demonstration projects. These projects are all, in various ways, linked to the conceptual framework developed through the CURA research process.

Twelve demonstration project proposals emerged through collaboration among CURA Partners. In some cases these proposals were initiated out of the data collection phase of the CURA project that took place in 2006-2007. Although not all of the projects were successful in obtaining funding, the stories of their development offer rich insights into the practical utility of key CURA concepts.

In particular, many of the demonstration project ideas are concerned with reciprocal collaboration, community mobilization/community capacity building, organizational change through responsive programming, and empowering cultural-linguistic groups through education, awareness and opportunities for input. All address the existing power imbalance within the current mental health system and the need to shift this power imbalance. Within the focus on mental health system change, the twelve demonstration projects range from primary prevention (awareness and anti-stigma) to tertiary intervention (formal and informal responses to mental illness) (see figure).

For the first phase of the demonstration project evaluation process, interviews and focus groups



were conducted with a selection of key organizers for each of the twelve proposals. In total, 24 interviews and two focus groups were conducted throughout the summer and fall of 2008, with 48 participants taking part. During these interviews, it quickly became apparent that the process of developing a demonstration project idea into a funding proposal was a form of intervention. In some cases, partners began collaborating on other initiatives in addition to the CURA, having benefited from fostering positive working relationships during proposal development.

The evaluation interviews and focus groups set out to explore the *processes* involved in developing a demonstration project, the *values* represented in the project, and the *outcomes* associated with the project at this early stage. Analysis of this data is underway, focusing on identifying key similarities and differences across projects on each of these dimensions (processes, values, outcomes).

Of the twelve demonstration projects that were developed, six were funded and are currently active (five in Waterloo Region and one in Peel Region of the GTA). While it must be clarified that some factors leading to successful funding are by no means controllable, preliminary findings suggest some common elements were shared by all of the successful projects.

These common elements include:

- 1) A shared vision amongst project developers and good working relationship between partners (many of which were built on previously developed relationships).
- 2) The presence of a "champion" within the project team who was able to garner sustained support and enthusiasm from mental health and settlement organizations and funders.
- 3) Shared influence into project development from multiple sources (ie – successful projects were ones which combined a diverse array of stakeholders, including cultural-linguistic community members, mental health & settlement services, funders, and members of the CURA project).

In addition to these common elements, demonstration projects that were funded (represented by colour-coding in the figure) were ones that focused on services across the mental health service delivery continuum (three funded projects fit into this category), or projects which focused on mental health promotion, stigma reduction and prevention (three funded projects fit into this category)... whereby the projects offer mainly awareness and capacity building within cultural-linguistic communities.

For the active six demonstration projects (described in more detail in the current issue of CURA NEWS and at [takingcultureseriouslyCURA.ca/projects](http://takingcultureseriouslyCURA.ca/projects)), an overarching evaluation and site-specific evaluations are underway.

### *Recent Presentations*

- CURA Partners (2009). Taking Culture Seriously in Community Mental Health CURA. Presented at From Innovative Research to Innovative Solutions: Bringing Diversity in Mental Health From the Margins to the Core *A Roundtable for Action*. Toronto, April 2009.
- Moorlag, Elin (2009). Taking Culture Seriously in Community Mental Health: A participatory approach to engaging ethno-cultural communities. Presented at the *Annual Meetings of the Canadian Sociological Association*, Carleton University, Ottawa, May 2009.
- Moorlag, Elin & Ochocka, Joanna (2009) Evaluating innovative practice in mental health: A dialogue between cultural communities, practitioners, and the mental health system. Presented at the *Annual Meetings of the Canadian Sociological Association*, Carleton University, Ottawa, May 2009.
- Ochocka, Joanna (2009). Community based research: Inspiring social innovation. Presented at *CUPP Conference*, University of Brighton, United Kingdom. April 2009.
- Ochocka, Joanna (2009). From Research to Action: Mobilizing cultural communities through Participatory Action Research. Presented at the *Annual Meetings of the Canadian Sociological Association*, Carleton University, Ottawa, May 2009.

### *Recent Journal Articles*

- Janzen, R., Ochocka, J., Jacobson, N., Maiter, S., Simich, L., Westhues, A., Fleras, A. and the Taking Culture Seriously Partners (under review). Synthesizing Culture and Power in Community Mental Health: An Emerging Framework. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*.
- Simich, L., Maiter, S. & Ochocka, J. (in press). From social liminality to cultural negotiation: Transformative processes in immigrant wellbeing. *Anthropology and Medicine Journal*.
- Westhues, A., Janzen, R. & Roth, D. (under review). Community mental health organizations in Ontario: Perceptions of responsiveness to the needs of diverse cultural-linguistic communities. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*.