

Supporting the Implementation of the UBC Wellbeing Strategy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared by:

Isabella Picui, UBC Sustainability Scholar, 2018

Prepared for:

Karen Selby, UBC Wellbeing

Natasha Moore, UBC Wellbeing

Matt Dolf, UBC Wellbeing

August, 2018

Introduction

UBC Wellbeing operates across both the Vancouver and Okanagan campuses with the goal of enhancing the general wellbeing of all students, staff, faculty, and other members of the university community. My project sought to support the implementation of a university-wide Wellbeing Strategy, which focused on several aspects of wellbeing that were identified as key priority areas. The Wellbeing Strategy aims to develop a vision of wellbeing across the campus community to be implemented over the coming years and decades. As such, my project sought to answer the following questions: how does our campus envision wellbeing? What aspects of wellbeing should be prioritized? How do students, staff, faculty, and other members of the university community act in relation to their wellbeing?

Methodologically, this project exemplified the engagement of key stakeholders in order to guide the direction of the research; these working groups were essential in establishing descriptions of success, long-term system and population based targets, and indicators by which to measure these targets. The goal of this methodological approach was to create a vision of wellbeing that was supported by our community. Over the course of the term therefore, this project conducted research by focusing on existing literature, interviewing stakeholders, and drawing information from working group meetings.

Background

In 2016, UBC committed to the Okanagan Charter and began identifying ways through which to improve the wellbeing of its community. From this Charter emerged several aspects of wellbeing that were identified as key priority areas – namely, food and nutrition, physical activity and sedentary behavior, social connection, and mental health and resilience. Each of these priority areas aimed to provide an overarching description of success, precise targets, and indicators by which to measure the performance of these targets. My project sought to support this process, and specifically conduct data collection to provide working groups with the information needed by which to select the targets to be used in the strategy, and subsequently, the indicators for these targets. As such, the final deliverables of my project centered on supporting the development of targets and measures by which to assess the degree to which the themes gleaned from the descriptions of success were realized.

Methodology

The methodology undertaken for this project used different modes of qualitative research. At the beginning of the project, the descriptions of success were being drafted and finalized in

conjunction with the working groups. For each priority area, the project required (1) identifying main themes from the description of success; (2) brainstorming potential targets at the system-level and population-level; (3) selection of targets by the working group; (4) finalization of targets; (5) brainstorm indicators for each target; (6) research of existing and potential indicators at the university level; (7) selection of indicators by the working group; (8) data collection of baseline data (if existing) of each indicator. The nature of the project created a unique methodological challenge, where different modes of research were required in order to discern and derive feasible measures at the university level across both campuses. The process relied extensively on literature reviews, an examination of existing policies, practices, and data collection at different universities, data collection of measures at UBC, interviews with stakeholders and researchers, as well as working group meetings with key stakeholders across each of the four priority areas. In this section, I will overview the specific methodological process used to collect my data.

As mentioned above, each step of the process was iterative, and relied on the feedback of working groups by which to guide the direction of subsequent research. I started with draft descriptions of success (DoS) for each priority area. I should note that this process was repeated for each priority area; that is, I used this method to produce four sets of deliverables. In examining the drafts, I identified several of these overarching themes in order to guide my research. I then conducted a literature review that included research into existing visions, practices, and policies at UBC as well as other post-secondary institutions. Drawing on this literature, I was able to brainstorm and derive targets that correlated with the descriptions of success in each priority area. In order to provide the working groups with as much selection as possible, I aimed to provide 3-4 potential targets for each theme identified in each description of success. These targets were then brought to the working groups, who provided feedback and selected a few targets to focus on. By facilitating meetings with these groups, we were able to ensure that the goals of the Wellbeing Strategy were in line with a campus vision that fit our community needs.

As I received feedback on which targets the working groups thought to prioritize, I revisited the literature to derive potential indicators of these targets, and determine whether these measures were feasible. Essentially, I began research into what was being measured at different institutions, as well as at UBC in order to propose indicators for each target. The goal in developing indicators for each target was to identify valid, robust, and feasible measures; this would ideally serve as baseline data by which to track the target's success. A challenge in developing indicators was finding data, especially for population-based targets. Much of the existing survey data was focused on undergraduate students, or staff and faculty; it was difficult to find indicators that were tracked across the campus population in general. As I developed

potential indicators, I tried to emphasize the feasibility of each measure so the working group could make informed decisions.

Once I received feedback regarding the general indicators being selected, I was responsible for researching existing data at the university-level that could inform these measures. I hoped to find existing and comprehensive data that could be used as a baseline. If data did not currently exist or was not publicly available, I attempted to discern whether the measure could be implemented moving forward, or if it would be possible to obtain this data. From this research, I was able to collect some of the data that serves as a baseline to track the success of the Wellbeing Strategy in the future. Overall, the methodology of this process, developed in conjunction with the staff at UBC Wellbeing, allowed me to develop measures by which to assess the success of the strategy over time.

Summary

The scope of this study was limited to developing a framework, identifying measures, and cultivating baseline data for the Wellbeing Strategy. The findings and deliverables of this study are the targets, indicators, and data for each priority area as derived by the Descriptions of Success and collaboration with working groups to guide the research. In total, we were able to finalize each Description of Success, and identify eight targets across four priority areas. Several indicators and their data (if existing) have been collected for each target, and await a final selection by their respective working groups. A significant amount of research has also been conducted into other targets and indicators that were not selected for the Wellbeing Strategy. Nevertheless, this data may inform other research for the Wellbeing Team, or be used in other parts of the strategy; as such, I have compiled a document that includes all of this research.

Next Steps

I was able to support the implementation of the UBC Wellbeing Strategy by developing targets and facilitating research into existing measures at the campus level. The correspondence with various working groups made it difficult to complete research across each of the four priority areas. As such, future research should aim to continue working with these stakeholders to develop and finalize the measures. Subsequent steps would involve the publication of these documents into the finalized Wellbeing Strategy, and tracking the performance of the measures over time.
