

“Getting Everyone on the Same Page”
**An Integrated Transition Planning Process for Youths with an
Intellectual/Developmental Disability with a Social Return on Investment
Perspective**

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TRANSITIONAL AGED YOUTH

ABSTRACT

Transitioning out of high school is a significant step in a young person's life. The Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region of Ontario, Canada has developed a single integrated transition plan for youths with an intellectual and/or developmental disability (I/DD). This plan unfolds collaboratively, with education and community professionals meeting at the same planning table with the family and the youth beginning at the age of 14 years. Notably, no new government funding was provided to support this process. The case study reported herein explored both the potential benefits of the Tri-Sector Planning process and the ways in which this multi-sector planning procedure might be improved. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with fourteen participants, including youths, parents, and professionals. A qualitative thematic data analysis was conducted. Collaboration was identified as an important component of the multi-sector integrated planning process, critical to promoting successful outcomes for youths, including gainful employment and entry into post-secondary education. On the question of possible improvements to the procedure, promoting increased youth engagement and agency during the planning process emerged as an important consideration. In addition, a Social Return on Investment (SROI) quantitative and qualitative data analysis was completed on the case study data to examine the identified impacts of the process. Even with the investment into the Niagara Region Tri-Sector TAY Planning process based only on an estimate of funding from participating organizations, the net SROI ratio was 1.00:4.92, illustrating that for every \$1.00 of funding contributed by participating organizations, the after-cost impact benefit was \$4.92.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction to the Study

The transition from adolescence to adulthood represents a time of life when youths with an intellectual and/or developmental disability (I/DD) face changes in their roles, daily activities and support systems. These life changes require preparation and planning for circumstances, such as the movement from high school, children's programs and supported living to new situations, demands and challenges (Wehmeyer & Webb, 2012). Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) planning was the focus of this study and, in particular, the process of designing and implementing an integrated and collaborative transition planning system. For youths with I/DD, planning for the future involves looking at what they aspire to be as adults. In Ontario, this transition planning process is initiated at the age of 14 through the education or developmental service sectors and continues as an ongoing written plan until the youth reaches the age of 18 years. The purpose of this plan is to assist the 18-year-old with their transition out of services that are focused on children and youths.

This study explored the outcomes and social impacts of the planning process for transitional aged youth with I/DD in the Niagara Region of Ontario, Canada. This planning is a coordinated multi-systemic process that assists youths aged 14-17 years and their families to create strategies for the young person to move from children's developmental services to adult services and supports when they reach 18 years of age. The transition planning process fosters goals, such as living in the community and developing and strengthening social networks, while incorporating the needs, preferences and decisions of the youths and their families. The intention of this planning process is to promote youth-centered engagement in the goal-setting and planning process as they make decisions about their future such as post-secondary education, employment and/or increased independent living in adulthood. The benefits of actualizing an

effective transition plan may include social impacts such as continued and/or improved quality of life for the youth and their families, smoother coordination among services and advantageous social networking collaboration (Wehmeyer & Webb, 2012).

The experiences of youths and their families and the impacts of the current Niagara Region Tri-Sector integrated TAY Planning process was analyzed in this study by using feedback from the youths, their families, and education and community service providers. This Tri-Sector initiative included the joint effort and shared planning action of the adult developmental service sectors, children's services, and education as they united to support youths with I/DD and their families to develop a single transition plan. The Niagara Region TAY Planning process is based on the 2013 Ontario Tri-Sector (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services [MCSS], Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services [MCYS], & Ontario Ministry of Education [EDU]) integrated TAY Planning approach that is in place to promote the collaboration of education and developmental service professionals along with youths with I/DD and their families. In addition to planning a smooth transition for the youth, the intent of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process is to provide service providers with a viable process to support the implementation of transition planning protocols.

The 2013 Ontario tri-ministry protocol (MCSS, MCYS, & EDU, 2013) states that transition planning should begin as early as the age of 14 and involve the collaborative support of the three sectors to promote successful transitions. As a note of reference, developmental services for children and adults in the Niagara Region operate as separate organizations from each other and currently are funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS; formerly the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Community and Social Services). In the Niagara Region young people with I/DD at the age of 18 years leave

children's services which, until June 2018, were funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS). At the time of this service change, the young person moves to adult services which, until June 2018, were funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS).

In 2006 Ontario-based research described the young person's shift from children's to adult services as "the cliff" (Mercer Delta Consulting, 2006, p. 13); vivid imagery that suggests a potentially fear inducing leap or push into the unknown. The Mercer report used this metaphor to illustrate how navigating the gap between the two sectors was uncertain and complex. The authors identified a significant lack of support available for the young person after this transition to maintain meaningful daily activity. The critical need to improve the process of the young person's transition at 18 years of age was identified in a summary report providing consultation for people who have a developmental disability (Chapter 4 provides details on this report). With this realization, in 2013 an Ontario Tri-Sector (MCSS, MCYS, & EDU, 2013) approach was developed with the focus on aligning the youth transition planning process by using the inter-ministry collaboration of what were previously identified as the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Education. The purpose of this Tri-Sector approach was to implement a framework to advance a more systematic, coordinated and transparent approach to promote effective planning and a smoother transition between youth and adult services. Prior to 2013, each sector developed its own separate written plan, resulting in numerous, often unintegrated transition plans for the young person with I/DD (Niagara Region Local Community Agreement, March 2017). The key component to this new planning process is establishing a single written plan developed

collaboratively by the three sectors to guide the young person's transitional phase and, ultimately, create a smoother transitional pathway for the young person and their family.

Social Ecological Perspective

The ministries' objective is that smoother transitions may occur when youths, their families, schools, and other social services engage in working collaboratively to develop this plan (MCSS & MCYS, 2011). From a social ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986), the dynamics of transition planning are complex and entail relational components with the *individual*, the *microsystem*, the *mesosystem*, the *exosystem*, the *macrosystem* and the *chronosystem*. These terms and the social ecological model are described in detail and discussed in-depth later in this dissertation. The relational components of youth engagement and multi-sector collaboration also are explored.

Youth engagement during their transition planning process and Tri-Sector collaboration are key features throughout the multi-level social and ecological system and are essential to understanding the TAY Planning process; a process that can build the young person's community and support system through the development of meaningful social networks and self-determination. Building community relies on development in social settings, systems and institutions that influence the young person's personal growth (Moritsugu et al., 2014) and contribute to improved quality of life.

Quality of life and wellbeing of the transitional aged youth and their community members can be optimized through attainment of goals the youth is engaged with and a long-term vision supported by the planning team (e.g., professionals from all sectors). This study used an ecological perspective to emphasize the focus on the individual in the context of social systems that play a critical role in individual development (Carter, 2011; Nelson & Prilleltensky,

2010), such as the home, school and community networks and other contexts experienced by the transitional aged youth. The positive qualities of an individual's environment promote personal competencies, well-being and growth. Looking at the ecological perspective of the TAY Planning process for adulthood gives a better understanding of a value-based approach. In a world that can easily focus on linear and dichotomous perspectives, the relational lens of the ecological perspective can expand the importance of social connectedness to include values-based community praxis. One focal point of this study was to look at the levels of engagement and collaboration described by transitional aged youth with I/DD, their families, education professionals and community service providers. Engagement and collaboration were key pillars of exploration in reference to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, its impacts (e.g., building community and improved quality of life) and the amount of social value created by it.

Knowledge Translation

In this study, the information gathered from individual interviews was used to describe the inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region. This information was then positioned in the Nicholls, Lawlor, Neitzert, & Goodspeed (2012) Social Return on Investment (SROI) model, which is designed to describe and quantify the value of service outputs and impacts. The SROI analysis was used to quantify the impacts of the TAY Planning process for youths and their families and to describe impacts for all stakeholder groups that could not be quantified.

In partnership with Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services (CN), this community-based research provided the organization and the Tri-Sector partners with feedback regarding stakeholders' perceptions of the new TAY Planning process (e.g., its functioning, impacts, etc.) as well as an analysis of the program's social value creation. The

primary goal of this study was to explore the current collaborative single plan TAY Planning process, first, by examining its benefits, outcomes and social impacts as described by stakeholders, and, second, by assessing the value of these social impacts.

Definition of Intellectual and/or Developmental Disability

This study focused on young people with I/DD. Before moving forward with the overall topic of the study, it is critical to present and provide discussion regarding the terms *developmental disability* (DD), *intellectual disability* (ID) and *intellectual and/or developmental disability* (I/DD). These terms often are used interchangeably in research. To clarify this terminology for the purpose of this dissertation, the following sources have been considered: the Niagara Region Local Community Agreement (2017), the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act (MCSS, 2008), the Ministry of Education (2017), and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Reference to these documents assisted in the determination of a consistent terminology to be applied in this dissertation.

Transitional Aged Youth Planning (Niagara Region Local Community Agreement, 2017) specifies that the integrated transition planning process is for youths aged fourteen and older who have been defined as having a “developmental disability under any of the EDU, MCSS and MCYS legislation frameworks or agency criteria” (p. 3). In this study, I focused on *developmental disability* to remain consistent with the Niagara Region’s Transitional Aged Youth planning protocol. The challenge with this terminology was the inconsistent definitions of developmental disability used in the clinical, educational and social services. A formal diagnosis of developmental disability (DD) is determined through a psychological assessment. This

assessment can be completed through the educational system for academic purposes, through social services, or privately through a registered psychologist.

Recent legislation in Ontario describes a broad definition of DD within the developmental/social services sector. The *Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008* (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2019) refers to persons who experience

...significant limitations in cognitive functioning and adaptive functioning and those limitations,

- a. originated before the person reached 18 years of age;
- b. are likely to be lifelong in nature; and
- c. affect areas of major life activity, such as personal care, language skills, learning abilities, the capacity to live independently as an adult or any other prescribed activity. (c.14, s. 3[1])

The Ministry of Education (2017) has developed the *Special Education in Ontario, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Resource Guide* to assist educators in the administration of programs and/or services for students with exceptionalities. This document defines DD as

... a severe learning disorder characterized by:

- a. an inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities because of slow intellectual development;
- b. an ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development;

- c. a limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support. (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 13)

In the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), a manual used by clinicians and researchers to diagnose and classify mental disorders, the term “developmental disability” is not used (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The DSM-5 categorizes the diagnosis of intellectual disability (ID) as one disorder under the broader category of neurodevelopmental disorders. All neurodevelopmental disorders are characterized by a group of features with onset occurring in the developmental period of life. Developmental deficits include impairments in personal, social, academic, or occupational ability. The DSM-5 acknowledges that neurodevelopmental disorders will commonly co-occur with other disorders, such as in the case of a person with autism spectrum disorder who also has an intellectual disability.

According to the DSM-5, intellectual disability (intellectual developmental disorder) includes both intellectual and adaptive functioning deficits in conceptual, social, and practical domains. The following three criteria must be met:

- A. Deficits in intellectual functions, such as reasoning, problem solving, planning, abstract thinking, judgment, academic learning, and learning from experience, confirmed by both clinical assessment and individualized, standardized intelligence testing.
- B. Deficits in adaptive functioning that result in failure to meet developmental and sociocultural standards for personal independence and social responsibility. Without ongoing support, the adaptive deficits limit functioning in one or more activities of daily life, such as communication, social participation, and

independent living, across multiple environments, such as home, school, work, and community.

C. Onset of intellectual and adaptive deficits during the developmental period.

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 33)

While intellectual disability does not have a specific age requirement, an individual's symptoms must begin during the developmental period and are diagnosed based on the severity of deficits in conceptual and adaptive functioning. The disorder is considered chronic and often co-occurs with other mental conditions such as depression, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and autism spectrum disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

For the purpose of this study, the initial intention was to explore the TAY Planning process with young people with an intellectual or developmental disability. Under the above described areas of legislation (EDU and MCCSS), intellectual disability falls under the definition of developmental disability. However, the comprehensive list of other specific disabilities or disorders that would fall under the definition of developmental disability may be open to interpretation. For this reason, the categories of disabilities or disorders that would be classified as *developmental disability* were left to be defined by the professionals who participated in this study in accordance with their experiences with the TAY Planning process. However, for the purpose of consistent terminology in this dissertation, transitional aged youth involved in this planning process were referred to as persons with an intellectual and/or developmental disability (I/DD).

CHAPTER TWO: Systems Models

This chapter will discuss the different models used in this study to explore the TAY Planning process by explaining their foundational theories, the different components within each model and how they helped in the analysis of the complex process of TAY Planning. These include Bronfenbrenner's social ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986) based on ecological systems theory and the Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis (Nicholls et al., 2012) that is based on the logic model (Yin, 2018) and the theory of change (TOC).

By applying Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model as an organizing framework, this study offers an in-depth exploration of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services [MCSS], Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services [MCYS], & Ontario Ministry of Education [EDU], 2013) and the ways in which the Niagara Region integrated TAY Planning protocol in Ontario, Canada is used to promote transitional aged youths' goals and outcomes. The ecological model helps to capture the complexity of a progressive TAY Planning process and accords with the view that there is no single, best way for a transitional aged youths with I/DD to move from secondary school and adolescent life into post-secondary activities and adult life. For example, the capacity of transitional aged youth and their family embedded within the community context cannot be isolated from the learning environment of school, nor can school be isolated from the youth's life outside of the educational system. A holistic view is necessary. Furthermore, the contexts of an inclusive education and an inclusive community influence each individual youth's pathways to adult life just as the needs of the youth influence their education and community contexts. These complex relationships are not easily understood (Sontag, 1996). Adopting Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model to frame the TAY Planning process can provide a viable conceptual

framework that leads to a comprehensive understanding of the different contextual influences and the dynamics of the multiple settings embedded in this process. Utilizing this model helped to frame this study's focus on the different types of influences on the TAY Planning process and youths' outcomes.

This chapter is organized into four main sections. The first section discusses Bronfenbrenner's model and the ecology of human development. This includes an overview of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 2005) ecological systems for human development. Next, I will expand into discussion involving the context of family and community in reference to the concept of transition. This second section discusses the theory of change by describing what the theory intends to explain along with its strengths and limitations. The third section describes the logic model which is based on the theory of change and is the visual representation of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis. Because this study was focused on the Tri-Sector approach and the integrated TAY Planning process (MCSS, MCYS & EDU, 2013), with the exploration of multi-setting influences on the transitional aged youth's outcomes as the primary focus, the experienced or projected impacts on moving to adult life were further analyzed through the lens of social accounting using the SROI analysis (Nicholls, 2017). The fourth section describes the SROI model in detail by providing an historical overview, its purpose, how it is used, its seven key principles, and concludes with its strengths and challenges.

Bronfenbrenner and the Ecology of Human Development

Urie Bronfenbrenner was a well-known developmental psychologist whose research led to his ecological systems theory of child development. Having a father who was a neuropathologist, Bronfenbrenner was raised as a young child on the premises of Letchworth Village, New York, a state institution for "the feeble-minded." He described it saying "[i]n those

days the institution was a functioning community; the patients spent most of their time out of the wards, not just in school classrooms but working on the farm and in the shops” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. xi). Bronfenbrenner recalls his father’s despair when “perfectly normal children” were committed to the institution by the New York City courts and how he observed the irreparable outcomes for these children who grew up in this setting. Later in life, Bronfenbrenner established the perspective that a person’s abilities were significantly dependent upon the larger social and cultural context that impacted the person’s needs and aspirations. This theoretical perspective conceptualizes the developing individual, their environment, and the interaction between the two. According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), there are many different levels of environmental influences that ultimately affect an individual’s personal growth. The next section of this chapter describes Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model in detail and includes a discussion of the model’s applicability to transitional aged youth and their path of development into adulthood.

Ecology of Individual Development

Following Bronfenbrenner’s model (1979), a person’s ecological environment is represented as a set of structures (see Figure 2.1) embedded inside each other, similar to the image of Russian dolls (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005). The innermost structure is the *individual*. The immediate settings the individual is involved with constitute the next level of the ecological system. This level is identified as the *microsystem*. For the developing child, examples of the micro-settings can be their home, the classroom, the Girl Guides club, and the local hockey team. Each of these settings is a context that the individual interacts with in a direct, face-to-face manner. To develop as a person, the individual establishes *dyadic* relationships in a particular setting such as with a parent at home, a teacher at school, a friend at Girl Guides, or a coach at the rink. Bronfenbrenner (2005) extends this description to conclude that

[a] microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical and material features and containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems belief.

(p. 148)

Within the micro-level, a social process is involved in which not only do the surrounding adults/peers shape the development of the individual but the individual also shapes the behaviour of the adults/peers in an interactive process. Bronfenbrenner (2005) identifies this bi-directional influence at the individual level and claims that it is clearly not a one-way process.

Looking further into the social ecological model, it is evident that there will be times when one setting will interconnect with another setting regarding the individual, such as home and school, as in the case where an email/phone call from the parent to the teacher requests the early release of the child for a medical appointment. In this circumstance, a more complex interaction has evolved, where the individual's micro-settings are connecting and creating a *system of microsystems* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005). The linkages or processes that occur between two or more of the individual's settings compose the *mesosystem*. At the meso-level, the individual actively participates in each setting which, in turn, develops or creates relationships, interconnectedness and social networks.

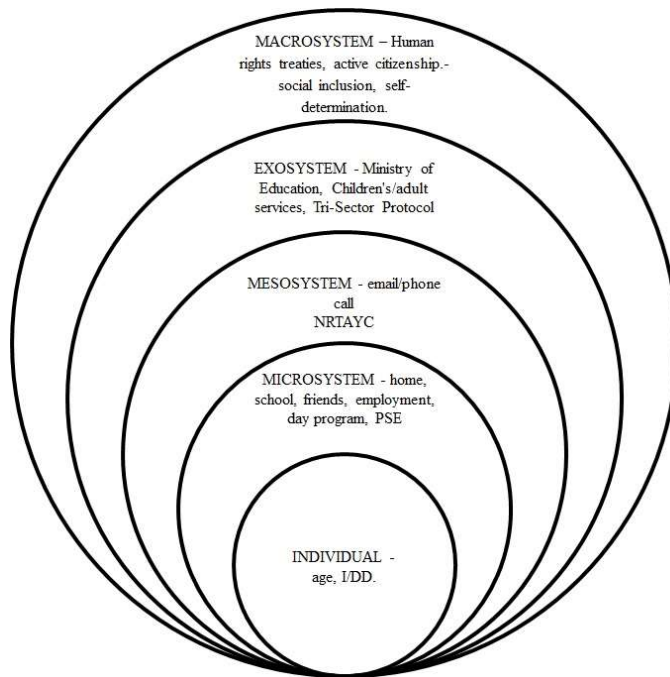
Additionally, the individual's development may be affected by activities occurring in settings which do not have the individual present, such as parental workplace circumstances, a sibling's classroom, local school board meetings, organizational policy-making and government funding cuts to services used by the family. Such activities occur and while they are not face-to-face relationships, they still influence the individual indirectly. These activities are identified in

the ecological level of the *exosystem*. The settings in the exosystem include the individual's neighbourhood, social services, media or political arenas, to name a few examples. The exo-level surrounds the individual's immediate environmental settings and influences critical structures (e.g., home, school and community) of the individual's society (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) as they function at the micro-levels of the individual's environment. For the purpose of this study, the Niagara Region's Tri-Ministry TAY Planning protocol (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, & Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013) would be a part of this level in the ecological systems model. However, it is important to acknowledge that the boundaries between the levels in the ecological system are not always straightforward or clear. For example, when looking at this study, the Niagara Region Transitional Aged Youth Committee (NRTAYC) is a regional committee that includes membership representation from the services in the child, adult and education sectors. This group initially met quarterly to collaborate on the TAY Planning process and its implementation (Personal Communication, S. Kowalski, August 16, 2019). This Committee may be considered to be part of the mesosystem due to the nature of numerous microsystems (education, community and ministerial service providers) joining together on behalf of the TAY Planning process. Yet, this committee's activity may be claimed by some to be part of the exosystem due to its role in the Niagara TAY protocol development. This uncertainty was not a disadvantageous factor in this study because, regardless of the imprecise designation, the purpose of the study's focus remained on the outcomes and impacts that resulted from the NRTAYC and the Tri-Sector protocol on the transitional aged youths with I/DD and their families.

Finally, there is the process of the individual's ecological environment pertaining to how the individual, their micro-level, meso-level, and exo-level tend to be alike, as if "a blueprint for

the organization” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 4) exists and this organizational structure elicits or changes the individual’s behaviour and corresponding relations. For example, in Ontario each classroom looks and functions much like another. This structure produces a cultural institution, a system’s blueprint that filters down to the developing individual, the student with I/DD in this case. The given culture is evident in a specific social belief system, assumed knowledge, ideology, resources or values and customs that are embedded within the broader system. This broader system is called the *macrosystem* (see Figure 2.1). Each macrosystem may vary in terms of socioeconomic, ethnic, or religious belief systems and lifestyle but it perpetuates a specific ecological environment for each microsystem. The features of the macrosystem ultimately affect the specific circumstances and processes of the microsystems. Inevitably, the individual is indirectly yet significantly influenced by the macro-level (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). For example, in referring to this study, the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) by Canada in 2010 set the political climate that human rights and equitable opportunities are now to be granted, thus promoting policies for social inclusion and person-directed planning in Ontario for persons with disabilities. How this political climate trickles down and influences the school system, social service providers, the family, and ultimately the *individual* is complex and it can be uncertain as to what are the best ways to enact such ideologies in service provision and practice.

Figure 2.1 *Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecological Model: A person's ecological environment is represented as a set of structures embedded inside each other with the macrosystem as the surrounding setting (inspired by The Psychology Notes HQ, n.d.).*



Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecological Model Applied

Bronfenbrenner's social ecological systems model is a common conceptual framework in social science research. In reviewing some of the recent studies that have used this model, it was helpful in the context of this dissertation to clarify how the model was applied and to validate its practicality and suitability. The following section describes some of these recent studies and the various constructs the model was applied to, particularly as they relate to transitional aged youths with I/DD.

Prior to explaining each study and how it supported the use of the Bronfenbrenner's social ecological model in this dissertation, some concepts that were the focus in each study will be clarified. Shogren (2013) explores the concept of self-determination, which coincides with the notion of decision-making. Historically, persons with I/DD often have had decisions made for

them by a hierarchy of professionals and family (Carey, 2011). This dissertation ran on the assumption that increased self-determination (e.g., youth determining their future goals and pathway to adulthood for themselves instead of these objectives being determined for them) would influence youth engagement and positive transition outcomes. Simplican et al. (2015) discuss the concept of social inclusion, which is a term used to describe a person's sense of belonging and active citizenship within their community in reference to types of activities, relationships and environments. Two other studies discussed below look at the concepts of person-centered planning (PCP) and person-directed planning (PDP). Both of these terms refer to the level of participation facilitated for the youths who are attending their planning meetings as well as to their level of involvement in the overall planning process. The distinction between PCP and PDP is that PCP occurs when planning *for* becomes planning *with* the person. The PCP approach promotes values and strategies that scaffold towards PDP, an extension of the PCP process where planning *with* becomes planning *by* the young person (Martin et al., 2016). Now, each study is discussed in terms of how it used Bronfenbrenner's model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to understand transitional aged youths in regard to each of the specific concepts just described.

Shogren (2013) uses the social ecological perspective to explore literature regarding self-determination and persons with disabilities. The study concluded that the person's level of capacity, age, family, race and gender were among the influencing factors operating at the individual and micro-levels. Youths having a higher volume of social networking and social capital among peers experienced improved social skills which, in turn, enhanced their self-determination status. Shogren included influences at the meso-level, such as school program characteristics and opportunities to demonstrate self-determination and leadership skills in Individualized Educational Planning (IEP) meetings when the youth was given the chance to

lead the IEP meeting. Finally, Shogren discussed the macro-level of public policy, service practice and the experiences of persons with a disability. This study provides an example of the TAY Planning process with consideration of youth participation in terms of self-determination and, as such, is closely aligned with this dissertation's focus on youth engagement.

In a second study conducted in the UK, Small et al. (2013) recognize the transition of youths with I/DD as a time of changes and uncertainty. They describe the transition period as being marked by the loss of some of the youth's microsystems (e.g., teachers, peers). The authors explain the importance of a person-centered planning (PCP) approach to the transition planning process to increase the youth's service delivery and outcomes, as well as the development of partnerships (microsystems) to increase personal options. They conclude that recognizing the transitional aged youth as an active agent is critical and that the disruption of their micro- and meso-systems caused by the transitioning process is important to address with a TAY Planning process (the exo-system and meso-system). This planning process should accommodate the youth (the individual) by acknowledging the youth's rights and their voice, rather than require the youth to accommodate to the systems in which they are embedded. This study provides an example of applying Bronfenbrenner's model to the transition planning process and to the construct of PCP in particular, and in this respect aligns with the focus of this dissertation on transitional aged youths' experiences of engagement within the planning process.

A third study, conducted in the United States, provides a detailed examination of social inclusion. The construct of social inclusion of persons with I/DD is explored using the ecological model where the breadth of the definition of social inclusion included a variety of activities, relationships and contexts that the construct encompasses (Simplican et al., 2015). Simplican et al. (2015) conclude that attempting to define social inclusion in a narrow sense limits the broader

ecological view, yet defining social inclusion too broadly is immense and will miss some individuals in terms of how social inclusion may individually pertain to them. Ultimately, these authors claim that social inclusion is a construct that is influenced by all the ecological levels and that interpersonal relationships and community participation are critical factors to promote it.

Finally, looking at a couple of Canadian studies that have been published recently, these include discussions of Bronfenbrenner's model in relation to persons with I/DD. Martin et al. (2016) discuss this model in their exploration of person-directed planning (PDP), which is an approach that uses youth self-determination in goal setting. Martin et al. (2016) conclude that successful PDP hinges upon the different ecological systems being flexible and organized in such a manner that they can be responsive to the youth's needs at each ecological level. This claim is applied to each system of the ecological model, from PDP staff training at the micro-level to self-directed funding from legislation at the exo-level.

The second study by Lindsay et al. (2018) includes the ecological systems model in an examination of transition pathways to post-secondary education (PSE) for youths with physical disabilities. Lindsay et al. (2018) use the ecological model in a very similar capacity to this dissertation as they describe 20 youths who had a physical disability and were planning their transition to PSE. It was found that some of the important skills of youth that promote a smoother transition include communication, self-advocacy, goal setting, planning skills and perseverance.

In contrast to previous studies, this dissertation has extended planning to include transitioning to PSE, employment, daytime community activities, living accommodations and personal outcomes. This dissertation also extended the exploration of the TAY Planning process

to describe the collaboration inherent in the Tri-Sector planning approach and youth engagement and how these constructs impacted on the youth with I/DD and their family.

Ecology of the Family

External systems affect the family's capacity to foster the individual's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Even though the importance of family has direct effects on the individual, external conditions also have powerful influences on the intrafamilial processes. These external systems within the mesosystem include micro-settings such as daycare, peer groups, hospitalization, and school to name a few examples (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). These are micro-systems that compose an individual's community and ultimately affect the individual. External systems within the exo-system include such elements as parental workplace regulations impacting family life, parental social networks impacting well-being, as well as the acceptance of human diversity in the community influencing a sense of belonging. In his writings, Bronfenbrenner (1986) refers to *community* only in terms of a geographical description (i.e., a specific physical location) and does not expand this concept to include a person's sense of belonging to a community. This section will consider the application of Bronfenbrenner's model to explore the impact of *transition* on the individual and their family, a process that occurs over time.

The impact of a life transition on family processes and the development of the individual can be explored using the *chronosystem* analysis (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; The Psychology Notes HQ, n.d.). This is an additional ecological component that expands Bronfenbrenner's model. This component of the model addresses the sociohistorical context as well as events and changes/transitions in an individual's life over time. A life transition can be defined as *normative* (registering for school, entering the workforce, marriage, retirement) or *nonnormative* (a death,

serious illness, relocating residency). “Such transitions occur throughout the life span and often serve as a direct impetus for developmental change” (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 724). The impact of external transitions on intrafamilial processes may be evident in disruptive or destabilizing outcomes; outcomes influenced by factors outside the individual’s immediate family but where family behaviour is affected and the effects have an impact on the youth.

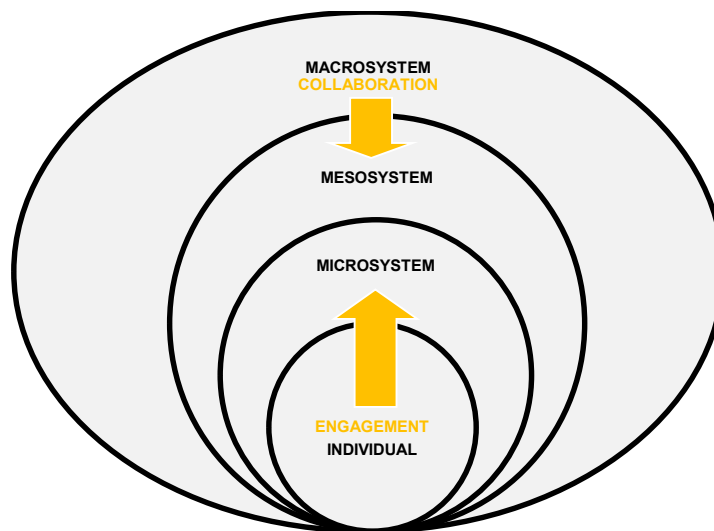
Bronfenbrenner (2005) recognized that “the heart of our social system is the family. If we are to maintain the health of our society, we must discover the best means of nurturing the heart” (p. 260). The family is embedded in the neighbourhood, the neighbourhood in the city, employment and government and all are embedded in the broader context of culture. The factors that influence any broader context trickle down to impact the innermost ecological element, the individual and their family. In regard to the TAY Planning process, the promotion of social inclusion and youth autonomy at the macro-level has impacted the meso-level of Ontario policies, protocols, and strategies for the purpose of influencing service development at the meso and micro-levels with the fostering of collaborative and engaging activity for the TAY Planning process in Ontario.

Social Ecological Transition and Transitional Aged Youths

Using the social ecological model as a framework for the exploration of the TAY Planning process was valuable in examining the transitional aged youth’s experience. This framework allowed consideration of what influence the social network, the *microsystem*, had on the youth and also how the influence of the youth’s needs shaped their social networking. The ecological model afforded the opportunity to inquire about the extent to which a bi-directional pathway of influence existed within the microsystem of the transitional aged youth’s life. This idea of a bi-directional flow of influence is explored later in this dissertation when discussion of

the conceptualization of engagement and collaboration is aggregated into the ecological model (see Figure 2.2). With this in mind, the notion of social connection was a focus in regard to the TAY Planning process.

Figure 2.2 Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (1979) with the additional components of transitional aged youth engagement and Tri-Sector collaboration.



The TAY Planning process is a phenomenon of social networking that involves the interaction of the youth with their family, with their community support services, or with their school. The ecological model captures the processes of different time periods and how social relations change, for example, before and after the young person leaves high school. The *mesosystem* is a system of microsystems (Moritsugu et al., 2014) in which the *individual* is an active participant and where feelings of connection or disconnection among *microsystems* may occur. The ecological systems model served as a useful framework with which to explore the levels of support the young person received at the meso-level when a collaborative approach was implemented, such as the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in Ontario. For this research, information gathered and organized using the model was used to understand the planning process at the various ecological levels.

Ecological Transition

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology of human development identifies *ecological transitions* that occur when the individual shifts roles and/or settings, as in the case of transitional aged youth changing from adolescent to adult status, children to adult services, secondary school to post-secondary school/employment and home life to independent/supported community living. Ecological transitions occur throughout the lifespan of the *individual* and each transition is marked by physical changes and altered environmental situations. With an ecological transition, the individual's behaviour, their role expectations, and social relations change. The *power of roles* in the broader context is found in the features of reciprocity, balance of power and affection within the relationships in which the individual participates. Bronfenbrenner (1979) described how the placement of a person in a new role tends to evoke perceptions, behaviour and patterns of relations consistent with the expectations associated with that role. This process would be evident for a transitional aged youth when their *role transitions* from adolescent to adult status and the young person's position in their ecological environment is altered.

According to the ecological systems model, an individual's development is facilitated through participation in an ever-expanding *role repertoire*. Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasized the criticality of an individual's increased role exposure. Different settings will give rise to a variety of roles, behaviours and relations which can enhance an individual's social growth and maturity. Additionally, *multi-setting participation* involves the individual engaging in interrelations between different settings and evokes an ecological transition where the young person can develop as the *primary link* between these settings and social networks (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained,

The developmental potential of settings in a mesosystem is enhanced if the roles, activities, and dyads in which the linking person engages in the two settings encourage the growth of mutual trust, positive orientation, goal consensus between settings and an evolving balance of power responsive to action in behalf of the developing person. A supplementary link that meets these conditions is referred to as a *supportive link*. (p. 214)

Supportive links promote a mesosystem that is more strongly connected, especially if the supportive links are primary relationships such as the role of parents. Looking at the transitional aged youth and TAY Planning through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's model provides the conceptual framework to understand the potential shift in the youth's role transition, the importance of exposure to education and employment options to expand their role repertoire, the role of youth and their family engagement in the planning process to enhance primary links (e.g., the youth and their families are directly connected with service provider contacts) and the nature of supportive links. The transitional aged youth's participation and engagement with this TAY Planning process was a key component of this study's focus.

Broadening the Ecological Model

Bronfenbrenner's model provides a significant foundational framework for understanding the intersection among societal, organizational and individual dimensions. The utility of the ecological model in regard to a young person's development has been well established (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986, 1992, 2005); however, the model has some limitations in addressing a thorough explanation of personal development and community building praxis. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) original theory focused on relationships, both between people and among different environments, which constitute people's lives and the broader community they

live within (Christensen, 2016). To enhance this perspective, further examination of social structures may be required to include the aspect of community practice where people “are engaged in systematic reflective practice and learning together” (Quinn Patton, 2015, p. 141). In the process of seeking to locate the concepts of building community and active citizenship in this study, a fundamental question arose: Were the constructs of individual engagement and collaborative mesosystems critical parts of the TAY Planning process?

By using the social ecological model together with the additional foci on engagement and collaboration, it becomes clear how people are influencing each other’s lives directly by the manner in which they interact multi-directionally. Even though the social ecological theory maintains the individual always develops within a context embedded within the broader macrosystem, the model does not explicate the multi-directional interaction of cooperative, committed, informative, and mutually connected interrelationships among all levels. For example, the presence of youth engagement may provide teachers and support providers (micro-level) valuable and person-directed information about what is working well or needs improvement within the TAY Planning process. As this information is taken to be shared among professionals at the NRTAYC (meso-level), it provides pathways to government ministries that may impact the macro-level. With multi-directional relations, societal development (at the macro-level) may be more directly influenced by the individual. In this dissertation, Bronfenbrenner’s model was complimented with an intra-level process that describes the youth’s degree of engagement in collaborative interaction with their family and professionals during the TAY Planning process. The addition of the foci on engagement and collaboration to the social ecological model (see Figure 2.2) illustrated how the quality and essence of interaction within the mesosystems may strengthen the individual’s capacity to build their future life within their

available settings. The youth's passage towards these future settings may create pathways to meaningful community building and wellbeing. A prosperous community may promote a productive society. In this perspective, individual wellbeing, community wellbeing, and societal wellbeing are interconnected and interrelational (Moritsugu et al, 2014). This study looked at the transitional aged youths' description of their engagement in respect to the TAY Planning process and the families' and supporting professionals' description of inter-agency collaboration between and among each other. The theoretical framework of theory of change was used to examine the TAY Planning process by exploring the nature of the planning process with the youth, families and service providers in regard to their level of engagement, sense of collaboration and other possible factors that may have impacted their experience.

The theory of change (TOC) and the logic model (Yin, 2018) are discussed in the next section of this chapter to explicate the theoretical assumptions behind the SROI analysis.

Theory of Change

The SROI model is geared towards the purpose of estimating the value of the outcomes and impacts of social services as described by their users and other key stakeholders. This analysis allows researchers and practitioners to examine the merit of investing to advance our social world, such as in the case of the return on the valuable resources that are being invested for the purpose of TAY Planning in the Niagara Region for youths with I/DD. The basis for this model is in alignment with the theory-based perspective of TOC (Muyambi et al., 2017). Theory of change, in terms of using a logic model, guides the SROI analysis. The TOC guides strategic thinking and action in a complex environment, such as that of the TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region. Within the SROI model, TOC is used to describe the cost/benefit assumption that investment should create social improvement (Laing & Todd, 2015). Further, the SROI

analysis links evaluation of an organization's activity to the outcomes of the recipients (Vik, 2017). Theory of change sets a foundation for community-based research and social initiatives (Janzen et al., 2016). The following section of this chapter is an overview of the TOC and its application to social improvement.

What is Theory of Change?

Theory of change is a branch of program theory (Janzen et al, 2016; Vogel, 2012; Yin, 2018). It consists of evaluative features based on the interpretive framework of logic (Valters, 2014). It is a commonly used approach for community developers and those who aspire to social improvement. When social programs aim to create social outcomes, TOC is an outcome-based strategy which involves critical thinking about a program's/organization's design, execution and monitoring process (Laing & Todd, 2015; Valters, 2014; Vogel, 2012). Theory of change entails logical thinking that involves mapping out the steps from the stage of inputs through to the stage of outputs within the program/organization (Janzen et al., 2016). It is also a reflective process of values, interpretive frameworks and assumptions regarding how and why a sequence of activities will lead to specific outcomes (Vogel, 2012). Vogel reports that there is no single definition of TOC but rather it is applied to the needs of the specific context and situation. Coherent flexibility is important as it leaves space for creativity and advancement within program development. Furthermore, this flexible nature requires an authentic approach to explaining challenging situations with commitment to reflective and realistic perspectives on complex and unclear circumstances (Valters, 2014; Vogel, 2012). Literature referring to the description of TOC commonly refers to "critical thinking" in terms of interrogating assumptions and beliefs that underpin the program/organization (Valters, 2014). For the purpose of clarity within the parameters of this dissertation, "critical thinking" will not be a component of the SROI analysis

or the TOC objectives in the sense of attempting to deconstruct the TAY Planning process or to attain some form of transformation of an ideology or problematization of some deep-rooted social assumption. Critical thinking within the context of this study pertained to reflective contemplation in a pragmatic and descriptive fashion. The objective of critical thinking regarding the new TAY Planning process in this study was to directly explore its outcomes and impacts, both experienced and anticipated, and to consider what more could still have been done; this reflects a constructive and optimistic approach.

Within the parameters of this dissertation, TOC certainly and easily applied to the exploration of the Niagara Regional Tri-Sector TAY Planning process for youths with I/DD. The Niagara Region's new approach to transitional planning was driven by the motivation to improve the process and to continue to contemplate the enhancement of service provision with the ideal goal of creating a seamless transition for young people with I/DD as they move from high school into adult services. The establishment of the Niagara Region Transitional Aged Youth Committee (NRTAYC) (for details see chapter 4) follows this theory in practice as the committee, which consists of professional representation from the three service sectors involved in the new TAY Planning process, regularly congregated to reflect on and adapt the TAY Planning protocol to reach the needs of transitional aged youths within the process as much as was possible realistically. The NRTAYC purposefully implemented a multi-organization collaborative TAY Planning process that had been in place long enough (i.e., 6 years at the time that this research was started) to allow exploration of the outputs of the planning process (e.g., social gains) and personal impacts that were the focus of this dissertation.

In Vogel's (2012) summary report, TOC is described as having the following essential features. It is a continuous process that requires procedural transparency, high resource

consumption and uses a narrative-based rationale. It entails a mapping out system to project intended outcomes, uses a visual chart that acknowledges social impacts and, finally, it potentially speaks to the valuable gains achieved by the program by providing an acknowledgement of the importance of the program's sustainability (Vogel, 2012). Vogel's summary review report illustrates findings of their survey that involved 40 interviews with employees at 25 development organization (e.g., donor, NGO and training agencies). The comments and feedback from these participants were incorporated in their final report to describe people's perspective regarding TOC as a logical tool and methodology while others had described it as an exercise in critical thinking and reflective processing.

It is important to consider that not all outcomes and impacts from a program/organization can be known from the start of program conceptualization. Social gains are frequently discovered later in the program's/organization's implementation. Although this dissertation did not rest on a critical analytic approach, using TOC and logic model principles steered this study's exploration away from linear, mechanical and teleological thinking (Valters, 2014) and toward the tenet that, as humans, we cannot accurately predict the impacts of a program/organization – “change is rarely predictable” (p. 4). Thus, the objective of this dissertation was the exploration of these impacts.

Strengths of Theory of Change

Vogel (2012) describes that TOC used in programs is credible because of the transparency of assumptions and beliefs people bring into the program and the critical thinking component that moves a situation forward in a socially valued way. It is becoming a common tool used to challenge and change implicit assumptions in society and in social organizations/programs (Valter, 2014). Theory of change can be used to evaluate/review a

program's/organization's effectiveness in terms of the societal gains that it contributes to and it can be used to clarify the value of professionals' work and service recipients' social gains. It also promotes accountability when resources are limited and social needs are high. This point was particularly evident in the Niagara Regional TAY Planning process where no new funding was allocated to this process even though professionals were attempting to provide additional planning services for transitional aged youths with I/DD within existing budgets.

Laing and Todd (2015) describe the benefit of how TOC surpasses traditional approaches to program/organization evaluation/review. Traditional approaches usually measure outcomes that are identified at the outset of the program initiative (known/expected outcomes) with baseline measures established. The predominant feature of TOC is that many outcomes may not be known prior to the implementation of the program initiative, such as increased self-esteem, improved well-being or increased social status. Using TOC acknowledges that context is imperative and outcomes are complex and multi-levelled. An example is a youth with I/DD who gains employment (one outcome) which produces increased income (a second contingent outcome) that has the potential to promote higher self-esteem, self-worth, and an increased social image (contingent social impacts).

Another benefit of TOC includes the potential for input from all stakeholders to assist in the assessment and monitoring of a program allowing the opportunity for collaboration around complex issues and building further partnership (Laing & Todd, 2015). This was a key objective in this dissertation – to gather the voices from the *individual*, thereby dignifying the voices of the youth as the experts, and then comparing the feedback from other stakeholders who were participating directly in the TAY Planning process. A final benefit includes that TOC presents a realistic and flexible way of thinking within a tool/strategy that embeds stakeholders' narratives

or lived experiences, their contexts and a logical sequence of events that marshal long-term social changes in people's lives (Valter, 2014; Vogel, 2012). For example, within this dissertation, the logic model based on TOC provided a tool for surpassing the quantitative measure of success regarding the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process (e.g., counting the number of Tri-Sector TAY plans completed) by providing an opportunity to identify and use qualitative strategies to examine the planning process through stakeholders' expressions of what important aspects of the process were working well and what more needed to be done. This approach fostered an *informed* social practice of program/organization analysis or review (Valters, 2014).

Limitations of the Theory of Change

One criticism some researchers claim regarding TOC is that it is viewed as a cause-and-effect theoretical framework (Vogel, 2012), "*If we take X action, then Y change will result.*" Does this not resemble a more positivist type of viewpoint? The perspective that guided this research was that this model is much more in-depth than the above criticism would suggest. Theory of change goes beyond simply stating that *X causes Y* (Janzen et al., 2016). Expected outcomes are explored in the real-world setting; a quite suitable foundation for community-based research. Many social impacts are not known at the outset of the *X*. Once *X* has been in place for a sufficient amount of time to become established and the context of *X* is clear, TOC looks at explaining what constructs may be at work and how they function (Laing & Todd, 2015). Using the standardized principles of TOC and procedural assurances, such as genuine transparency, validates the use of TOC with a sense of creditability. The authenticity of this model is dependent upon rigorous exploration of the issue at hand; it is not a superficial and mechanistic approach (Vogel, 2012). Valter (2014) clearly states that "while theory of change approach can create space for critical reflection, this requires a much broader commitment to learning from

individuals, organizations, and the development sector itself.” (p. 3). By interviewing key stakeholders, this dissertation provided the avenue to explore what was going well in the new TAY Planning process and to consider what else could be done to genuinely improve the lives of transitional aged youths with I/DD and their families. The findings from this exploration of outcomes and impacts were illustrated in a logic model.

The Logic Model

Theory of change is depicted in a logic model using a chart or diagram to illustrate the flow of inputs, outputs, outcomes of a specific program/organization. It provides visualization of the program's/organization's components, much like a roadmap. As described earlier in this dissertation, the logic model relates to the TOC where TOC describes *how* and *why* a program is expected to have certain outcomes and logical connections are represented in the logic model (Yin, 2018) to describe the *what*, the *why* and the *when* of a program's or organization's processes and outcomes. As mentioned previously, a caution in using a logic model is that the model assumes causal connections among the parts of the model. It is important to recognize that the logic model does not illustrate some type of permanent truth but, rather, it is a useful tool to create a shared understanding of how and why a program/organization is expected to work.

The logic model is composed of six basic parts. The first step is the description of the *situation/problem* the program is designed to solve. Second, the *inputs* are listed as the concrete resources invested, such as funding, staff time and office space as some examples. Third, is the list of *outputs* that include activities, services and participation by program recipients, such as TAY Planning meetings and developing a written plan that includes such goals as joining a club or volunteer work in the community as further examples. Fourth, *outcomes* are listed that fall into either short-term or long-term categories (Yin, 2018). Short term outcomes are direct

outcomes that are evident immediately after the completion of the program, such as a youth with I/DD who has acquired a work-skill set and is job-ready. A long-term outcome pertains to outcomes that follow in time, such as a youth with I/DD obtaining a permanent job. Fifth, *external factors* are listed which include circumstances in the immediate environment that influence the program but over which the program has little control. Finally, assumptions are taken into account to describe the conditions or resources needed for the success of the program. From this framework, it is critical to consider what would happen if this *situation* no longer existed. In this step, impacts are identified, such as a youth with I/DD would not have the opportunity to learn work skills, to acquire employment, and ultimately would not have increased independence financially and socially. The complete logic model is the basis for the SROI analysis which is explained in more detail later in this chapter.

The Logic Model Applied

A logic model was used to evaluate children with disabilities who were placed in a non-traditional, inclusive classroom in Australia (Clapham et al., 2017). The authors discuss in detail the use of the logic model and their methods. Clapham et al. (2017) claimed that there are variations and varying levels of complexity in the way the method of a logic model can be used. Yet, the core purpose of the logic model, to outline the expected outcomes of a program, remains in place. It is an effective model to explain how a program operates and what key components work together to achieve short and long-term outcomes. With its application to community programs that are progressive and frequently, if not continually, changing the authors describe that a logic model is simply a “snap shot” (p. 97) of a program/organization at a specific period of time within a specific context. After interviewing key stakeholders and completing the logic model for the children’s program these authors reviewed, it was concluded that the program was

highly efficient and its innovative approach was able to work across all environments (school, home and community). As the authors conclude, “The logic model helped to show how a coordinated and collaborative approach can work across multiple environments... to support parents and children... with the potential of improving their meaningful engagement in society” (p. 104).

The alignment of policy, support and personal outcomes for persons with an intellectual disability was explored by Shogren et al., (2015) using a logic model. Shogren et al. (2015) emphasizes the importance of a person’s context (direct environment, personal characteristics and surrounding social-ecological systems) as a key factor in work with persons with I/DD in regard to policy goals, the systemization of service and service recipient outcomes. Their research examined the alignment of inputs, such as policy development, outputs, such as service strategies to improve peoples’ lives, and outcomes, such as increased quality of life. The logic model was applied across ecological systems, such as the microsystem, the mesosystem and the macrosystem, to acknowledge important contextual features in each that enhance a person’s quality of life. Claes et al., (2017) apply a logic model to the evaluation of policy related to persons with I/DD in Belgium. Similar to Shogren et al. (2015), this research found contextual components at the micro, meso, and macrolevels that influenced policy evaluation. For example, person-centered planning and empowerment are key influences at the micro-level of policy enactment for an outcomes-driven organization that is committed to quality improvement by including continual assessment, planning and reviewing at the meso-level or macro-level (Claes et al, 2017). These authors found that using this structured logic model approach to policy review and examination of operational values, support systems and overarching societal changes brings together a more comprehensive understanding of the complete service development process.

Benefits of the Logic Model

Using a logic model provides a summary of the key elements in the program/organization being reviewed. It illustrates a theory to explain the program's/organization's activities and, with this, an understanding of the connection between the activities and outcomes is established. Because social programs/organizations are complex, a logic model provides a visualization to clarify *why* the program/organization is in place and *how* it aims to reach its objectives (Peyton & Scicchitano, 2017). Development of program theory and action can be documented in the logic model to promote purposeful program design. However, the extended benefit of the logic model is the further use of the model to review and evaluate the program/organization once it has been implemented for a period of time. Even further, Peyton and Scicchitano (2017) encourage using the logic model for a program/organization as an ongoing process and applying what they describe as a “drill down approach” (p. 156). With this in-depth application, the activities identified in the logic model are explored for *sub-activities* and specificity of actions that connect the program's/organization's goals with their outcomes and impacts. The details of the program/organization are much more specific than the overall logic model, which the authors describe as *unpacking* general components of program activity to realize the inner workings within the existing logic model allowing the opportunity for recommendations for day-to-day operations and/or possible changes at this sub-level (Peyton & Scicchitano, 2017). An example provided by these authors included the program adjustment where results of using a logic model approach to evaluation may recommend that instead of continuing to carry out document reviews with all staff this practice was only required for specific staff. Hence, the logic model analysis helped program managers to realize that document review should be undertaken only by designated staff and not consume unnecessary time of other staff. This adjusted the program's

activity (input expectations) to save the cost in staff time. Valuable information was determined through the use of the logic model analysis and applied wisely to improve staff productivity. Peyton and Scicchitano claim that “[t]he deeper the model drills, the higher the quality of information...” that is found (p. 158). The focus of this dissertation was not to use the “drill down approach” but it is mentioned in this section to illustrate the extent to which use of a logic model can benefit program/organization staff, managers, and service recipients by helping to structure program design, implementation and review on an ongoing basis along with identifying social outcomes and potential recommendations for enhancement of a program/organization. Now that the theory of change and the logic models have been discussed, the next section of this chapter describes the SROI in detail and how it was applied to this study.

Social Return on Investment

Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis refers to the social accounting tool used in this study. This analysis is based on the logic model and the theory of change. The following section in this chapter will discuss these elements in detail, starting with an historical overview of SROI, a description of SROI methodology and how it is implemented.

Historical Overview

The SROI methodology was initially developed in the United States by the Roberts Enterprise Developmental Fund (REDF) in the 1990s (Muyambi et al, 2017; Nicholls, 2017; Vik, 2017). The premise of the SROI model comes from cost-benefit analysis (CBA) found in the economic evaluation framework (Muyambi et al, 2017). The main mission of REDF was to provide people who had faced serious barriers to employment acquisition with the opportunity to work toward the goal of achieving an improved life. REDF was not sure their work in the social enterprises was truly improving people’s lives. They started with a CBA but soon realized a

modified approach was required (Nicholls, 2017). It was important to convince others, such as practitioners and philanthropists/investors, that each dollar invested in the program resulted in positive outcomes for the persons using the program as well as for society as a whole.

Ultimately, the purpose of the REDF's use of the SROI analysis was to illustrate the created value of the employment program (Vik, 2017). This new accounting approach also took hold in Europe.

By 2004, SROI practitioners in both the USA and Europe were supported by the Hewlett Foundation which consisted of a small group of practitioners who developed accounting standards and principles to regulate the SROI method. Two of the critical principles that came from this group were the significance of including stakeholder input and the urgency to ensure creditable reporting of the analysis. The New Economics Foundation (NEF) was formed to aggregate methods and to develop new guidelines for practice (Nicholls, 2017). This information was shared across Europe and the SROI network was established in the UK by 2008.

The SROI Network was able to continue the standardization of SROI methods internationally; however, it is realized there is “[o]ne consequence... despite the increasing global standardization, [that] SROI continues to be interpreted in different ways” (Nicholls, 2017, p. 128). A guide to SROI was published by the SROI Network in 2009 and then updated in 2012 to address the needs of the international growth of its use. In 2011, the Social Impact Analysts Association (SIAA) was founded in the UK serving practitioners who worked for social enterprises and charities. Since that time, the SROI model has become a holistic framework for social enterprises using a *blended value* method which demonstrates both economic and social gains (Muyambi et al, 2017). This methodology was also tailored for the UK population, in 2008, by the New Economics Foundation (NEF), which established key principles of practice

standardization (Muyambi et al, 2017; Vik, 2017). In 2015 the SIAA merged with the SROI Network to become Social Value International (SVI). Social Value International now governs the SROI national networks and generates a principle-based method (Nicholls, 2017).

Further in this section, a detailed description will be provided of how the SROI analysis is designed. At this point, a very brief summary will be given to illustrate how SROI analysis of programs allows unseen impacts of well-being and quality of life to become tangible, visible and measurable. Socially driven activities, such as those of social service providers who are often working in non-profit agencies, can illustrate the value of the full range of their program impacts through an SROI analysis statement. The process incorporates *inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts* as the basis for determining a quantitative return, an environmental return, and a social return on resources that are invested in a program. This represents a triple bottom-line of return on investment (Aeron-Thomas et al., 2004; Nicholls, 2017) by using cost/benefit and social accounting methodologies along with a principle-based approach. The costs and benefits are evaluated and a SROI ratio is established to demonstrate how an investment of one dollar creates X dollars of social value. This brief summary will be explained in much greater detail later in this section. First, some examples of the SROI application in Canada will be considered.

The SROI analysis was developed in 1996 in the United States but it has had limited application for social services in Canada (Nicholls, 2017) and an even smaller number of cases can be found that illustrate Canadian use of SROI within the developmental service sector. One example in Saskatchewan, described by Hoeber (2011), is a case study involving youths with disabilities and the opportunity for supported employment. This study showed results with a SROI summary report indicating a substantial social return of \$5.69 for every dollar invested. A second example is a case study funded through the provincial and federal governments of

Newfoundland and Labrador (Avalon Employment Inc., 2012). This case study involved Avalon Employment Inc. who supports persons with I/DD to obtain and sustain a permanent and long-term connection to the labour force. A SROI analysis was conducted to identify the value created by their services and how change occurred. The SROI ratio established was 1:3.80, demonstrating a positive return on investment. A third example is a case study exploring an innovative employment option for persons with developmental disabilities in Toronto (Owen et al., 2015). The SROI ratio established was 1:1.77, suggesting the nominal value of the employment program and how the impacts exceeded the financial requirements to operate the organization. A fourth case study was Good Foot Delivery in Toronto, Ontario (Vieta et al., 2015), which involved a SROI analysis completed on a package delivery social enterprise that employs persons with developmental challenges. This SROI analysis was used to identify key business inputs, outputs and social impacts that influenced their main stakeholders. Key outcomes for Good Foot's workers included increased social inclusion, physical and/or mental health and employment skills. The impacts included the acquired feeling of pride, independence, self-confidence and being part of the community. Their SROI ratio revealed 1:3.06 of social value created by their social business. Each of the above examples described the use of the SROI analysis and how it was able to illustrate the positive social gains of each organization by translating the positive impacts into quantitative terms. In a time of neo-liberalism and capitalistic priorities, SROI is an effective tool to advocate for social innovation.

Third sector organizations (i.e., organizations that are independent of government, are value-driven, and reinvest their profits back into their organization to maintain sustainability) have played a leading role in social innovation and community building capacity. These organizations have been increasingly required to fill gaps left unaddressed by government

funding. Social services in Ontario are faced with financial limitations, leaving these services in a precarious position. With reliance on government funding being insufficient to cover the needed investment into social services, the for-profit sector is playing a significant role in social innovation. “The business sector, for example, is starting to accept what is now referred to as the ‘triple bottom line’... (‘people, planet, profit’) as a business strategy for sustainable growth” (Goldenberg et al, 2009, p. 7).

This new way of doing business involves a different type of partnership and the adoption of cross-sectoral strategies and relationships. To better balance the understanding between financial and social innovation, research regarding SROI and social innovation in Canada is called upon (Goldenberg et al, 2009). The framework of SROI represents a tool that provides a better “understanding of how people are affected by the activities of an organization in order that resource allocation decisions can take these effects into account. It put[s] those affected at the heart of the process” (Nicholls, 2017, p. 127). Hall and Milo (2018) referred to this as “capturability [where] the content of the ‘relevant’ activities, events and outcomes is specific to each particular policy context” (p. 354). The SROI model is based on international standardized principles that rely on stakeholder engagement in the assessment process of a social service or organization (Torjman, 2012). The novelty of this dissertation was the application of the SROI analysis to describe the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process which was not related to any social enterprise program and was not a program that has received any new financial investment to promote an improved transitional planning for youths with I/DD. However, the SROI analysis was used in the same manner to broaden the research base in Canada and to generate knowledge translation regarding the value of Niagara Region’s protocol (Niagara Region Local Community Agreement, 2017).

Social Return on Investment and its Purpose

What is the measure of human value, such as quality of life or well-being? Traditional quantitative evaluation metrics might examine the number of service programs developed, the number of service users and the amount of funding invested in the programs. However, is enough effort being placed into seeking the opinions of the program users or funding recipients? These recipients may be involved in a social program, but what impacts do they gain as a result of their participation in the programs? Quantitative measures alone cannot express these existential factors (Torjman, 2012). The SROI model promotes the measurement of what people value most: social improvement and how it is created. SROI is a model that focuses on “What is the process?” and not solely on “What are the financial costs and benefits?”

There are three primary reasons for using a social impact assessment, such as SROI, to measure social value. First, SROI can be applicable to monitoring performance of an organization as a whole or one of its specific programs (Pathak & Dattani, 2014) and can be used as a management tool (Vik, 2017). A second reason is to attract external investment or funding (Pathak & Dattani, 2014) by demonstrating evidence-based information of the effectiveness and impact of such investment endeavours (Vik, 2017). Finally, SROI can be used to strengthen the organization’s purpose and operations with robust self-legitimization which influences policy and allocation of funding and spending (Pathak & Dattani, 2014; Vik, 2017). When evaluating traditional cost-benefit accounting analysis reporting, we need to recognize that it neglects social impact assessment. The SROI analysis includes social impact assessment as its foundational component. Consider that, “[i]f a SROI analysis proves the impact of one organization and its activities, then presumably a collection of SROI studies within one sector will inform our understanding of the extent and nature of impact of the sector as a whole” (Vik, 2017, p. 8). A

significant strength of the SROI analysis is its effectiveness as a communication tool (Maier et al., 2015).

Quantitative accounting methods allow researchers and other users to analyze and explain public policy decisions and actions in a classic cost-benefit context (Hall & Millo, 2018, Vik, 2017). Accounting methods tend to be an intricate part of an organization's system to justify, rationalize and legitimize policy decisions made. However, a strong intersection of accounting methods and non-profit sector policy has developed in recent years. SROI is uniquely distinct from traditional program evaluations (Torjman, 2012). Being narrative-based (e.g., narratives provided by the program's stakeholders that express created impacts coming from their experiences with the program), its foundation rests on stakeholder consultation and the TOC. How stakeholders think about specific public policy issues becomes relevant to what types of organizational activities are captured and deemed to be important (Hall & Millo, 2018; Vik, 2017). Transparency is enhanced with stakeholder involvement and engagement in the process. This allows for participatory and consumer-empowered evaluation (Muyambi et al, 2017). However, to understand the SROI process, terminology is an important aspect to clarify.

For the purpose of this dissertation, it was helpful to clarify some terminology that was used consistently. The terms organization, program and activity were used frequently. The term *organization* was used in reference to an agency or educational institution that provides a specific social service to the public. An example would be a service for children or adults with I/DD or an educational system such as secondary schools or post-secondary colleges or universities. An organization will govern a *program*, such as an integrated TAY program planning process that generates a plan that is attached to the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) for youths with I/DD, supported group home living for a person with I/DD, or a job readiness training workshop.

The program will entail an *activity* such as life skills training for group home living, an Integrated TAY Plan meeting for youths with I/DD transitioning from children's services to adult services, or a training session on work expectations. According to Gargani (2017), the term "program [is used] to mean the systematic application of resources by one or more organizations to activities that are intended to improve the lives of people beyond what is strictly necessary for commerce" (p. 116). For the purpose of this dissertation, an activity was an outcome of a program that was a service or product financed by a non-profit or education/community organization. For most organizations, the primary source of funding to operate any of these services would be government/ministry allocated. This funding represents the input of the SROI analysis of an organization's program.

Financial (e.g., government funding) and human skills (e.g., professional knowledge/experience in the field required for transitional aged youth capacity assessments) inputs support the internal operational components of the organization (e.g., high school or community service) that make the social outputs possible for individuals or groups who benefit from the service. An organization's program outcomes (i.e., a TAY Plan) and program processes (i.e., the Tri-Sector Planning protocol) are focused upon using an interactive approach that can impact participants (i.e., transitional aged youths and families) but also have a broader community impact (e.g., smoother service-to-service transitions that provide opportunity for a more successful transition). Thus, coming back to a Bronfenbrenner (1979) perspective, organizational outcomes and program processes impact the individual but also impact the societal level (i.e., the micro- and meso-system levels). "One of the most important aspects of SROI is that it links the services and products of an organization with outcomes for individuals and groups that are not part of the organization" (Vik, 2017, p. 8).

Process results may include, for example, new partnerships between organizations, fewer conflicts and tensions among certain groups, or a review by local government or private businesses of their respective policies and practices. Local leadership may be strengthened or renewed. The community's capacity to convene and facilitate multistakeholder collaboration may have improved, resulting in a shared community vision and plan of action. (Torjman, 2012, p. 5)

This statement and line of thinking aligns with this dissertation's focus on exploring the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process with a particular focus on youth engagement in the planning process and on inter-organization collaboration as a foundational aspect of the planning model. This dissertation included a SROI analysis that described the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in Ontario by identifying its inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts. The impacts related to the transitional aged youths' transition outcomes could be ones such as as entry into post-secondary education (PSE) or a position of employment. Social impacts that come from these outcomes (e.g., PSE or gained employment) could be ones such as increased self-image due to academic accomplishments (e.g., being recognized as a "college student") or increased income for youths to improve their standard of living due to employment (e.g., being financially able to attend community activities/social clubs, make consumer purchasing preferences and/or have higher standards of housing options).

How is Social Return on Investment Used?

As has been described, SROI is a reasonably contemporary strategy used to translate social gain into quantitative terms. Although it is similar to a cost-benefit analysis, SROI determines a cost and benefit ratio that has occurred within a specific time period (Pathak &

Dattani, 2014). This goes back to Clapham et al. (2017) describing the continuous change in social organizations and how the logic model represents a time-limited “snapshot.” The model procedurally accounts for the broader value of social, environmental and economic outcomes identified as the impacts arising from the use of human resources and social service programs (Nicholls et al., 2012). Yet, it summarizes more than just the cost/benefit ratio as it also includes a narrative component about change described in an organizational case study. The narrative component is derived using a qualitative approach (Pathak & Dattani, 2014) to identify and describe the social impacts of the organization’s program/programs that then are analyzed using the SROI methodology.

Social returns are described as non-financially defined aspects of the social world, such as improved quality of life. Relying on the theory of change (TOC), the application of the SROI analysis validates the social benefit of economic input and illuminates its resulting social impacts. “[I]t seeks to reduce inequality...and tells a story of how change is being created by measuring social, environmental and economic outcomes and uses monetary values to represent them” (Nicholls, 2017, p. 127).

The costs and benefits are evaluated and a SROI ratio (e.g., $1:X$) is calculated to demonstrate how an investment of one dollar creates X dollars of social value. A program may be able to support its advocacy for ongoing financial investment if it can demonstrate a positive SROI ratio. *Social value* is used to help change the way we understand the world around us and to make decisions about *where* to invest resources and/or funding (Nicholls et al., 2012). SROI is considered to be an important model that combines a holistic approach with monetized language (Pathak & Dattani, 2014).

A social investment may not always show immediate returns; however, it may serve the stakeholders' needs in the future due to the program's social network initiative outcome which can have a long-term impact. This is an instance where a short-term outcome, such as completing a program, has ramifications for long-term support of social capital (Torjman, 2012). The details of this methodology are described later in the methods section of the dissertation.

SROI can be used to evaluate program impact retroactively or it can estimate future program costs and benefits and, by using discounting, can calculate the SROI ratio prospectively using a figure expressed in current monetary language (Vik, 2017). Social returns accounting is a way to assess an organization's or a resource's impacts, to evaluate the success of their efforts, and to use money as a proxy for the value of their outcomes. Social Return on Investment analysis is a tool that has been shown to evaluate as well as to forecast *social valuation* (Nicholls, 2017). An *evaluative* analysis assesses value that is already present. This type of SROI analysis is retrospective and summative in nature, possibly occurring at the end of a project to assess its efficacy and social impacts (Muyambi et al., 2017). In the case of describing the intent of generating social impact, a *forecast* analysis is used to claim retrospective and prospective value (Lawlor et al., 2008; Muyambi et al., 2017). "Forecast analysis resembles formative evaluation and is used during the planning stages of a program to assess planned outcomes that may be created if activities meet their intended outcomes" (Muyambi et al., 2017, p. 33). Thus, the SROI analysis can be an evaluative approach, assessing the impacts and efficacy of the organization's activity, or a forecasting approach to determine where to invest and expect future impacts (Vik, 2017).

As mentioned earlier, the SROI analysis is conducted within a specific time period and can be integrated at any stage of an organization's or program's development, implementation or

continuation phase (Muyambi et al., 2017). The SROI model is validated by key principles of accountability, stakeholder involvement and rigorous transparency (Nicholls, 2017). In traditional discourse, investors want to see a return on their investment and SROI translates this return on positive social outcomes into quantitative terms through the use of monetary *proxies* for social impacts. It is a powerful way to demonstrate impact by enabling investors, and those who have a stake in the resources implemented for social change, to actually weigh this resource and evaluate how it is used (Lawlor et al., 2008a).

The importance of being able to express, explain and rationalize public policy and funding expenditure and resulting service impacts is described as “communicability [in that] to represent and communicate outcomes in a format that is accessible and understandable to their relevant audiences” (Hall & Milo, 2018, p. 335). Thus, SROI translates the outcomes of created social change into financial and non-financial terms. The creation of social value is demonstrated in data that communicate to a broad range of stakeholders: from investors and policy decision makers, to staff and supporters, to those who directly benefit from the program (Lawlor et al., 2008b).

The SROI analysis is a framework used to calculate the SROI ratio as the end result. However, more importantly, the model is a process to explore *how* an organization, an organization’s program or a program’s specific activity has created social value (Muyambi et al., 2017). In this perspective, “measuring what matters” (Lawlor et al., 2008b, p. 6) is based on the premise that although direct financial accounting, which can be referred to as financial capital, significantly drives policy decisions, hidden benefits, which can be referred to as social and human capital, are not taken into account because they may not have obvious market value (Muyambi et al., 2017). From the SROI standpoint, to ensure that the measurement of an activity

is meaningful, the focus must shift to how the activity is generating social value and societal well-being (Lawlor et al., 2008). These hidden benefits, such as increased quality of life, improved self-esteem/confidence, increased participation/inclusion, and well-being (Muyambi et al., 2017), are uncovered and expressed through the narrative component of the SROI model and valued through quantitative proxy equivalents. According to Sinzer (2012), social impact measurement needs to be applied with the same robustness as financial measurement. This occurs when the simplistic focus of financial return on investment is shifted to the complex focus on positive social value creation for the investors, the investees and any impact recipients to promote understanding and accountability.

The created value of societal activity explicated by using the SROI analysis allows unseen impacts of well-being/quality of life to become tangible, visible and measureable. Socially driven activity by social service providers, that are often non-profit agencies, illustrate the full range of their impacts. Calculated impacts are derived from the SROI model which involves a *value mapping* process. The value mapping process incorporates *inputs*, *outputs*, *outcomes*, and *impacts* as the basis for determining a financial return, an environmental return, and a social return; a triple bottom-line of return on the investment is determined (Aeron-Thomas et al., 2004; Nicholls, 2017) by using cost/benefit and social accounting methodologies along with a principle-based approach.

The Seven Principles of the Social Return on Investment Methodology

The SROI model is based on seven critical principles. “The principles are not individually remarkable, they have been drawn from principles underlying social accounting and audit, sustainability reporting, cost benefit analysis, financial accounting, and evaluation practice” (Social Value International, 2015, p. 2). These seven principles include stakeholder

engagement, identification of what changes occur, description of the outcomes that are valued most, impacts that are most relevant, certainty to not over-claim, transparency of method, and verification of findings. According to Social Value International (2015), using these principles provides a consistent and credible analysis that is based on a rigorous approach.

The first and core principle to initiating the SROI analysis is the involvement of the stakeholders. Stakeholders are defined as those people or organizations who influence or are influenced by the organization. Stakeholders provide the critical information to describe the change due to the organizational activities. This critical information, informed by the stakeholders, will describe the existential outcomes, their prioritized value, their indicators of change, and resulting impacts (Social Value International, 2015). This key principle is neither a component of traditional financial accounting nor cost-benefit analysis approaches (Nicholls, 2017).

The second principle revolves around the theory of change. This domain of the SROI articulates *what* changes have occurred and *how* these changes have been created. The stakeholders will describe what has changed in their lives (Social Value International, 2015). These changes may be positive and/or negative changes and the process of how these changes have transpired will be considered; the process of how change has been created is an outcome of the organizational activity. The outcomes are measured to provide evidence that change has actually occurred due to the organizational activity.

The third principle emphasizes the importance of “measuring what matters” (Lawlor et al., 2008a) by identifying stakeholders’ preferences and their range of value levels. The value of the outcomes will be determined using financial proxies.

The fourth principle refers to materiality (Social Value International, 2015). The information included in the SROI analysis must include a clear picture of what outcomes were included or excluded and a clear explanation of the rationale for their inclusion or exclusion. This component of the analysis process provides assurance that the material included or excluded in the SROI process is recognized and acknowledged for its relevance to the stakeholder's decisions about the organization/program/activity. "Materiality requires a decision to ensure that the outcomes included, both positive and negative, are those that, if omitted, would affect the decisions of the stakeholders" (Nicholls, 2017, p. 131).

The fifth principle addresses the potential for "over-claiming" outcome impacts. The assessment of change caused by the organization/program/activity is compared to baselines, patterns and criteria. Only the value that the organization/activity is responsible for can be claimed (Social Value International, 2015). According to Nicholls (2017), the comparison to financial accounting is that "[i]f a business is succeeding and sustainable then the value created is additional or at least the costs of duplication are offset by the benefits of competition" (p. 129).

The sixth principle is to be transparent within the SROI analysis process. This component involves accuracy and honesty, along with continuous explanations documented in relation to each decision made regarding stakeholders, outcomes, sources and methods of data collection and full disclosure of reported findings.

The final principle addresses the subjectivity within the SROI analysis with the stakeholders' verification of the reported findings. This part of the SROI process is to show that decisions are made in a reasonable fashion (Social Value International, 2015). Transparency and verification are principles that apply to all business models, not just SROI (Nicholls, 2017).

All seven principles are expected to be rigorously applied in an SROI analysis to ensure creditable results.

Strengths of Social Return on Investment

The SROI method as a tool is useful to communicate not just outputs, but also impacts in a legitimizing manner for the business minded audience (Maier et al., 2015). As clearly stated by these authors,

...SROI reduces complexity by boiling the difficult task of communicating value down to one figure. This figure can be used as a tool to shape public opinion on distributive justice...or to legitimize [organizations] by communicating their impact to audiences less receptive to qualitative evidence. (p. 1811)

This legitimization has the potential to help organizations to advocate for secure funding and prevention of financial cuts.

The SROI model provides an analysis that facilitates pragmatic resource allocation (Maier et al., 2015) by capturing a broad range of impacts, shifting the focus from outputs to impacts and, therefore, acknowledging positive change that is aimed for in an organization's mission. From the SROI analysis, organization members can learn about their value creation processes, impact value chains (what smaller outcomes arise from larger outcomes), and service recipient perspectives (Maier et al., 2015).

CHAPTER THREE: Youth Engagement, Systemic Collaboration and Community

The notion of authentic youth engagement is complex. It is a concept that is elusive and is used broadly in implementation. The recurring expression of youth *engagement* tends to include the terms *connection*, *involvement*, and *participation* which often are used interchangeably (Nguyen et al., 2019). Defining engagement is the first task of this chapter. As this dissertation focused on transitional aged youths who are in the school system, engagement was explored through research and literature concerning student engagement from a pedagogical perspective. This approach seemed reasonable as transitional aged youths are students who are navigating from within this context to another. Using the term engagement from this perspective was a comfortable leap to make because research has illustrated that student engagement impacts student performance (Lester, 2013; Ng et al., 2018). Therefore, this dissertation was based on the assumption that student engagement can easily transfer to the premise that meaningful youth engagement in the transition planning process would improve the productivity of the youth's transition.

To define engagement requires the need to comprehend what this concept involves and how it may be observed (Ng et al., 2018). However, engagement is not simply defined as overt behaviour (Lester, 2013). It also entails cognitive and emotional components. As stated clearly by Ng et al. (2018):

Engagement involves thinking, emotion, and commitment of time and sustained effort. It occurs when individuals undertake activities which they value. While it is possible to engage in an activity by oneself, often others are involved through interaction and collaboration. (p. 9)

Furthermore, a holistic perspective leads to the additional component of *social engagement*, which includes a more complete description of youths' involvement, such as with the transition planning process and youths' expression of active engagement.

As engagement is explored in this chapter, it will become evident that *collaboration* is a significant affiliate. Collaboration presents another complex concept that entails essential components, such as communication, coordination and cooperation of the group members to produce effective collaboration. As the chapter explores these two constructs in regard to their definitions, it will also explore their interpretative application to the transition planning process. Finally, the concurrence of youth engagement and group collaboration is considered in terms of the transition planning process and building community with youths. As similar to the definition of engagement and collaboration, a simple definition of *community* will not be found to be used. However, several key concepts connected to the meaning of community will be explored. The concept of community building was used in this dissertation to link its features with the notion of citizenship of youths with I/DD.

Engagement

The term engagement is a widely used concept that can pertain to an extensive list of human behaviours that are influenced by many different contexts in many different ways (Lester, 2013). Lester (2013) composed a literature review regarding student engagement in the academic context. In this literature review, the overall conclusion described how the complex nature of engagement creates the challenge of establishing a single-dimensional definition. Hence, engagement may be considered as having different levels of actuality in different environments. For example, in reference to this dissertation's purpose, *formal* engagement of a transitional aged youth may pertain to their level of involvement in their TAY Planning meetings. However,

informal engagement may pertain to the time, energy, interest and expected responsibilities the transitional aged youths invest in outside of their planning meetings to promote their TAY Planning actions and goals. In addition, Lester (2013) explored three different categories of engagement: behavioural, emotional, and cognitive. These three categories are discussed to explicate their meaning and how they may apply to the TAY Planning process.

Behavioural engagement would consist of a transitional aged youth's involvement in home, school and community activities which entail beneficial participation. This may include the youth's behaviour of showing attention and effort, asking questions and contributing ideas and expressing preferences in the planning process. Examples of these may include whether the transitional aged youth attends the meeting for their TAY Plan, gives eye contact with the others at the meeting, and expresses ideas to contribute to the design of the plan. *Emotional* engagement would consist of the youth's attitudes and preferences in relation to who they decide to have assist them with their planning, their desires and future dreams, their reactions as either positive (e.g., feeling happy and/or hopeful about their future goals) or negative (e.g., feeling anxious or bored) towards the planning process, and if they feel a sense of belonging within the planning meeting/planning process. Finally, *cognitive* engagement would consist of the youth's motivation and willingness to participate in the planning process and in developing strategies for and how to plan for their future.

Lester (2013) discusses the importance and the benefits of educators encouraging student engagement where increased student engagement can produce an essential positive influence on a pupil's outcomes. The author discusses that quality and quantity of interactions between the youths and educators can promote *active* engagement and youth development. Within this dissertation, it was a comfortable jump to apply this theory directly towards the transition

planning process. Facilitators of the transition planning process may encourage the involvement of the transitional aged youth with frequent and meaningful encounters to promote active engagement and positive outcomes, thereby fostering inclusive participation.

Ng et al. (2018) focused on student engagement for youths who tend to be marginalized by society due to such aspects as with a disability. These authors followed the same engagement model as Lester (2013) using behavioural, emotional and cognitive categories of engagement but with more theoretical depth and illustrating how each impacts the others at times. Ng et al. (2018) claimed *behavioural engagement*, such as school attendance, attention to tasks and compliance with classroom rules, are evidence of school performance; however, the authors noted that “strict student compliance may not be an appropriate indicator for learning tasks that demand higher-order thinking and processes. Similarly, it is not a good indicator of students’ level of enjoyment and interest” (p. 20). *Emotional engagement* is illustrated by a youth’s feeling of happiness (e.g., liking school) and in a youth’s attitude towards an activity (e.g., looking forward to a TAY Plan meeting). These may be evident in the case of youths with I/DD in regard to relationships with teachers or service providers. Such positive relationships are critical in supporting positive emotional engagement. The authors claimed that limited research has looked at the negative emotions, such as anxiety or sadness, and their impact on youths’ engagement. The third component, *cognitive engagement*, is difficult to observe; however, it can impact emotional engagement (e.g., anxiety) when the learning task requires a high level of cognitive ability. Further, levels of motivation and interests may influence cognitive engagement in terms of preference for easier, more manageable tasks (Ng et al., 2018). For example, managing a person-centered plan (PCP) meeting could be daunting and beyond one’s level of confidence, especially if youths with I/DD are not prepared and trained for such circumstances that require

higher-order thinking, effective communication, and social skills, and especially if the necessary supports are not in place to facilitate a PCP atmosphere.

Ng et al. (2018) extended the three *types* of engagement and added *social engagement* to evaluate student performance. This aspect of engagement refers to youths collaborating with other people, sharing roles and responsibilities, and showing a sense of working together in the process of task completion (e.g., the development and implementation of an integrated TAY Plan). This may include the sharing of ideas and displaying prosocial interactions. As Ng et al. (2018) explained: “Defining engagement therefore requires conceptualization that encapsulates its multiple dimensions, spanning cognitive, behavioral, and socio-emotional aspects and its task-specific or activity-specific characteristics” (p. 9). Accordingly, the term engagement is closely linked with the concept of participation.

Engagement is the person’s level of participation and interpersonal connection with other people in the group. A person may have different *degrees* of involvement in a group and these can be conceptualized as *presence*, *encounter*, and *participation* (Simplican et al., 2015). Presence is physically being there with little or no contact with other people, but is a precursor to participation. Encounter can be considered as interactions in a group meeting that provide the opportunity for participation and a sense of belonging within the group. Participation is a person’s involvement in the group activity which can promote a development of interpersonal relationships and strengthen the person’s social network. The three *types* of engagement described earlier - behavioural, emotional and cognitive (Lester, 2013; Ng et al., 2018) - would apply to each of the three *degrees* of engagement that Simplican (2015) presents. For example, a transitional aged youth may have physical presence at their TAY plan meeting, a *cognitive* understanding of the purpose of their meeting, but, due to *emotional* factors such as anxiety

about speaking in a group or having the preference for a specific teacher/service provider who is not at the meeting, the youth may not increase their degree of engagement to the level of encounter or participation. Please note that this example is not used for the purpose of placing the onus solely on the youth to determine their level of engagement at a TAY plan meeting. As described earlier, engagement is a very complex concept where many variables (e.g., context, group dynamics, or professional training regarding the TAY Planning process) compound each other in bi-directional ways to establish a mosaic composition of what engagement really is in practical terms.

Using this spectrum of engagement means considering the relationship between a place (e.g., a geographical space where one lives, works, schools or plays) and where social interactions happen among people (Bigby & Wiesel, 2011). Some places and events will foster more opportunity for encounter and participation than others. Interestingly, this construct (engagement) is easily applied to the format of transition plan meetings since these meetings are concrete in nature. However, it may be important also to relate these levels of engagement to a youth's personal space in terms of how transitional aged youths may engage with the overall process as well. In regard to this dissertation, levels of engagement were explored by looking at how the youths and families describe their experiences in regard to the TAY Planning process. They were asked to reflect upon their perceived degree of engagement within the planning process and upon these three levels of engagement: *presence*, *encounter*, and *participation* (Bigby & Wiesel, 2011; Simplican et al., 2015). Additionally, they were asked to reflect upon the aspect of collaboration and the transition planning process.

Youths are required to plan for their transition to adulthood in collaboration with others (ie., parents, teachers, service providers). If youths actively participate by being supported with

an effective means of communication, opportunities to express their interests and preferences, and actually share their ideas and the responsibilities, they are engaged in a collaborative activity (Ng et al., 2018). This expands the description of the TAY Planning process where the onus of engagement is not placed solely on the youths. Depending on the dynamics of interactions that happen during collaboration, different levels of engagement will occur. Ng et al. refrained from dichotomizing levels of participation as either simply *engaged or disengaged* but rather perceived each one as a part of the other. Thus, (dis)engagement fluctuates due to situational and contextual influences such as a youth's personal capacity, their preferences, the level of task requirement, their social environment (interactions and interrelationships), and the support provided. Ultimately, providing a transition planning process that is empowering, trustful and framed with authentic opportunities for youths to engage will foster the dynamics of a planning process that sustains active participation with youths who may otherwise be at risk of disengagement (Ng et al., 2018). When engagement is conceptualized as active participation, it is both an outcome and a process in itself. In addition, the theory of engagement for youths can be generalized to their level of community engagement.

Renwick et al. (2019) explored the importance of *community engagement* through the voices of youths with I/DD who were transitioning to adulthood. This research was conducted in Ontario, Canada and its theoretical framework illustrated that the sense of belonging included youth engaging with similar people, establishing interpersonal networks, developing authentic roles and managing social standards to the extent of feeling that they "fit." Belonging was found to be essential to the transitional aged youths' transition experiences. Renwick et al. (2019) reviewed literature that had explicated the importance of community living for youths with I/DD in regard to developing worthwhile interpersonal relationships. Acknowledging that this

literature had not been based upon the perspectives of youths with I/DD themselves, these authors expressed the importance of filling this gap in current research. Thus, due to the exclusion of the direct voice of persons with I/DD in most research findings, they concluded that “several methodological and theoretical gaps limit current understandings of inclusion, engagement in the community life and friendship, and their effects on quality of life for youths” (p. 947). One of the concepts described in their study was engagement in reference to social relationships. There were two categories of engagement cited by the participants; first, having people to talk to and second, having people to do things with. Engagement involved having the opportunity to communicate with others but also that the actions of the others conveyed an understanding of acceptance. To actually engage in activities with others did create a sense of belonging and, in turn, promoted further engagement. In terms of how this information applies to this dissertation, it was not a far stretch to take these findings and consider how facilitating a high level of engagement within the TAY Planning process may create a feeling of a sense of belonging for transitional aged youth.

Another interesting concept in the Renwick et al. (2019) findings that related to this dissertation was the notion of negotiating between the expectations of others (i.e., parents, teachers, and service providers) and the youths’ own wants. Specific negotiating strategies were not identified in this research. However, the aspect of youths’ ability to negotiate others’ expectations would seem to be a reasonable component in youths’ transition planning process, such as negotiating goals in a planning meeting. This may be a critical skill for youths to learn in their school environment and to develop within their community life in order to be more directly engaged in transition meetings and the overall process. Renwick and colleagues completed inclusive research in the area of transitional aged youth in Ontario, Canada exploring community

engagement through the voices of the youths who discussed their experiences related to a sense of belonging and engagement in community life. Similarly, one of the objectives of this dissertation was to explore engagement and the Tri-Sector collaboration within the TAY Planning process primarily through the voice of the transitional aged youth who were currently involved in the planning process and of young people with I/DD who had recently transitioned from a planning process. Their voices regarding their described level of engagement within the process were noted. As mentioned earlier, engagement is a concept that is closely affiliated with collaboration.

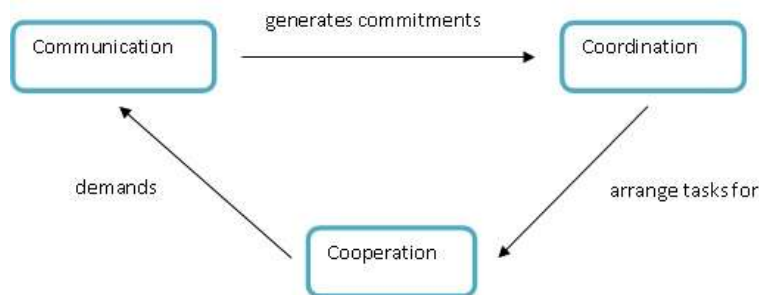
Collaboration

Collaboration is an expression of collective action (Claiborne & Lawson, 2005) and can vary extensively depending on a group's goals, their setting, the collaborators, and their resources (Dailey & Hauschild-Mork, 2017). Further, all collaborations are a human activity. For the purpose of this study, collaboration was considered to be a critical component in the TAY Planning process, since the planning protocol identified the need for interdisciplinary and multi-sector co-action. Yet, defining the term collaboration is complex. The first and simplest step is to recognize that collaboration refers to two or more stakeholders who are engaged and interacting with each other as they work in the direction of a common goal (Dailey & Hauschild-Mork, 2017). Each collaborator in the group may have a certain level of authority over their particular contribution to the whole group, acknowledging individual autonomy while the collaborator is still contributing to the group task as a greater whole (Dailey & Hauschild-Mork, 2017). This definition of collaboration incorporates collaborative relationships that endorse cooperation.

Authentic collaboration develops through group cooperation. Cooperation does not exist if one or two people dominate the group or if some voices are not included (Claiborne & Lawson, 2005; Heron, 1996). This does not ignore the fact that people will fill different roles within the group. For example, one person may have more knowledge in a specific area, one person more experience, another more investment or impact. These are all factors that will contribute to the type of roles people will fill within the group. The different roles each member plays have significant contributions to the overall outcome. Equitable contribution can be established at group meetings with such practices as rotating the formal leadership role around the group membership, having group discussions that involve each person taking a lead in the discussion while the rest of the group genuinely listens, and providing a venue that promotes regular review periods when all members can express how they feel the planning process is working. In this case, cooperation is based on communication (Claiborne & Lawson, 2005).

While communicating, collaborators/stakeholders express ideas, negotiate options and make decisions. Communication leads to a level of coordination where ideas and activities are organized with the potential to prevent loss of communication and decline in cooperation (Claiborne & Lawson, 2005). Communication helps the right people to get involved with the group by clearly providing information about the purpose or goals of the group's task and helping collaborators to decide whether to participate or not. According to Dailey and Hauschild-Mork (2017), in the 3C collaboration modal, *communication* generates commitments that are advanced by *coordination* and advocate *cooperation* (see Figure 3.1). Cooperation stimulates further communication, as the cycle of the 3Cs continues. This 3C collaboration model has traditionally been applied to computational support for a variety of settings. Even so, the conceptualization of these three components was easily applicable to the purpose of this study.

Figure 3.1 *Simplified Version of the Collaboration Model of the 3Cs (Dailey & Hauschild-Mork, 2017).*



Collaboration is a dynamic and complex process that exists in different types or forms (Claiborne & Lawson, 2005). These different types of collaboration include inter-professional collaboration (e.g., community service providers and education professionals) and inter-organizational collaboration (e.g., education and community service representatives on the NRTAYC). Inter-professional or inter-disciplinary collaboration refers to two or more stakeholders from different organizations or professions who come together to improve the services for their recipients/consumers (e.g., the education and community services professionals who collaborate to implement the Tri-Sector TAY Planning approach in the Niagara Region, Ontario). Inter-organizational collaboration refers to “two or more independent organizations, usually with different missions, [that] develop formal agreements for working together toward a common purpose or goal” (Claiborne & Lawson, 2005, p. 95). Inter-organizational collaboration is represented by the work completed by the NRTAYC. The nonprofessional category of service recipients (i.e., youths and their families) expands participation in the collaborative process. The added dynamics of nonprofessionals include youth-centered collaboration and family-centered collaboration. Claiborne & Lawson (2005) extended the categories of collaboration to include community collaboration that involves all stakeholders who are dedicated to improving the

wellbeing of community membership. These may be community members, institutions, and agencies that can provide supports and resources to the community. As these authors stated:

Community building... entails social integration mechanisms aimed at interdependent relations (e.g., awareness of identical needs, mutual interests, and common goals). It requires norms of reciprocity, social trust, and supportive settings for interactions. It results in a collective identity, consensus, and the capacity for collective action. (p. 96)

Overall, the term collaboration refers to multiple stakeholders/collaborators. The collective action of the collaborative process is relevant to all levels of human activity: from the individual to the service provider, to the organization, and to the structural/policy making level (Dailey & Hauschild-Mork, 2017). Collaboration has the potential to create connections, synergy and social networks that build community. This theoretical perspective of the collaborative process, involving the complexity of various social levels of interaction, is relevant to the social ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) including the realization of group members' roles, contributions, and expectations of partnership and managing power dynamics among the group members (Nuygen et al, 2019). Hence, if collaborative intent, such as in the case of the Niagara Region Tri-Sector TAY Planning approach, can potentially build community, does this mean building community within and between the various sectors? Does building community apply to the youths themselves who are in transition?

Building Community – A Vision for Transitional Aged Youths

When attempting to clarify the concept of *community*, research and literature illustrate a diverse range of definitions (Carey, 2011). Community can be viewed as a locality, a geographical space where a group of people reside, interact with each other, and engage in

shared values and practices (Nye-Lengerman & Hewitt, 2019). Expanding this view to consider community also as a social network composed of social linkages, common experiences, and shared resources liberates the conceptualization of community past the geographical space of one's neighbourhood, school or local gym to include connections that promote a sense of identity, interdependence and belonging. In the words of Nye-Lengerman and Hewitt (2019), "Community can be both a feeling and a place" (p. 3).

Community is a concept that is central to discussion regarding citizenship and human rights issues (Carey, 2011). Which rights are recognized and practiced speak to who has what type of membership within a community and the relationships endorsed by citizenship. Regardless of the kind of community definition that is viewed, persons with I/DD historically have experienced an exclusionary position in relation to traditionally dominant communities; that insider/outsider view of community that included their being physically removed to institutions. However, human treaties such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and other initiatives reflect some change in this traditional view. Social citizenship is a significant aspect of community and reflects a sense of belonging. Thus, viewing community as more than simply a locality, but as a space of social ties and supportive social capital leads to the consideration of opening opportunities for youths with I/DD to determine their way into adulthood with options and self-determination that are supported by resourceful and meaningful relationships. From this viewpoint, building community means building social capital to achieve one's goals (Carey, 2011). Further, building community does not stop at simply accumulating as many social networks as possible – it also means building a culture that supports inclusion and that values youth with I/DD. The Tri-Sector TAY Planning protocol for the Niagara Region established a planning process to "provide a person-centered/family-centered

approach to transition planning” (Niagara Region Local Community Agreement, 2017, p. 4) for the purpose of incorporating a collaborative planning process that includes and empowers youths and their families; a local community agreement.

Building Community and Citizenship

Community building involves the practice of creating connections between the person and their ecosystems and establishing positive patterns of individual and community behaviour based on mutual responsibility (Gardner, 1993). Key aspects essential to community building include strengthening the processes among people and organizations that work collaboratively in an atmosphere of trust, that lead to accomplishing a goal of mutual benefit. The development of healthy and viable social interactions, such as those in the transitional aged youth’s life, include the production of conditions thought to be necessary for more authentic participation in their community’s organizations and service agencies. Such social interactions are the catalyst for social change (Gardner, 1993).

Social change can emerge at Bronfenbrenner’s macro-level as a result of government policy initiatives and resulting funding that may be made available for local implementation. Community building principles also can be embedded into daily operations of service provider agencies, schools, and policy-making boards in order to elicit change. In this approach, communities represent entities that change their structure and function to respond to social, political and financial developments (Gardner, 1993). The strength of community building practice constitutes interactions among people through systems that promote and enhance interaction. The downfall of this approach is that there may be people who are part of a community who do not have the desire or may not be given the opportunity to participate.

In the case of this dissertation, the focus was to explore the Tri-Sector Planning process through the stakeholders' perceptions of its impacts in regard to social networking through the implementation of the Tri-Sector collaborative approach to TAY Planning. With the potential for building community, this study aimed to examine whether collaborative planning may not only create social impacts for the individual but also result in social gains for the wider community. Community building involves the mobilization of collective autonomy for change (Peterson, 2018). Through social change strategies and alternative structures, "individual wellbeing and transformation to community wellbeing" (Peterson, 2018, p. 6) can constitute profitable social change and contribute to societal change. The Tri-Sector TAY Planning protocol in the Niagara Region of Ontario, Canada represented one of these alternative structures. Community does exist in structures and community is systemic (Carter, 2011). This viewpoint brings the discussion back to a systemic perspective of what is community, how is it created, what impacts it has on the individual (e.g., the transitional aged youths), and how the needs of the individual impact the greater system.

What is community?

A more in-depth theoretical interpretation of the notion of community is illustrated by Carter (2011) who said that *community* involves a system that facilitates interaction between "society" (p. 88) and microsystems. Like engagement and collaboration, community is a complex and broadly used concept. Those persons included in a community have a conscious awareness that they are a part of this membership and tend to organize themselves with common objectives. Carter discussed how community presents itself with differential justifications and generates networks to address the needs of macrosystems (e.g., government, institutions), microsystems (e.g., professions, families), and individuals (e.g., transitional aged youths with

I/DD). “The citizen and the community influence each other with family, small group, and organizations as intermediaries” (Carter, 2011, p. 89). In this interpretation of ecological systems, community generates from individuals and small groups, yet community represents not only a piece of “society” (Carter, 2011, p. 4) but society itself. As discussed earlier in this chapter, community can be referred to in terms of geographical space (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Carey, 2011) or it can be used to describe a sense of cooperation and collaborative action towards common objectives and activities (Carey, 2011; Carter, 2011). There is a “sense of wholeness” (Carter, 2011, p. 93). For a community to maintain its existence, interactions which Carter describes as “energy exchange” (2011, p. 96) must flow between the social group and the larger social environment. The community operates to provide for its surrounding communities and its identity/features determine its relationship to other communities and to the larger system(s) it exists within. As mentioned previously, in the 3C collaboration model (Dailey & Hauschild-Mork, 2017) communication is a significant feature of community operations and a key “energy exchange” within the social networks. As such, the concept of social networks has the potential to support a collaborative and youth-engaged TAY Planning process; an objective the Niagara Region aspired to with their local agreement (Niagara Region Local Community Agreement, 2017) and their Tri-Sector TAY Planning approach. At this point it may be asked whether collaboration (i.e., children’s, adult and education sectors working together) potentially promotes a sense of community (e.g., by building resources together) and whether building community (e.g., social networks and social engagement) could frame citizenship (such as enactment of the UNCRPD).

Citizenship

Theoretically, the concepts of citizenship and community can be perceived to be closely connected. Hewitt (2014) describes citizenship as being a member of a community, living a meaningful life in the community and experiencing a self-determined quality of community-living status. Community living involves where a person lives (e.g., having a home), employment in a real job of the individual's choice that pays real wages, friendships/social connections, opportunity for education, membership in community groups/organizations and assumption of the responsibilities of citizenship (e.g., voting). In Hewitt's opinion, full citizenship comes from the opportunity to participate in an inclusive community. Building community, promoting inclusion and honouring citizenship are all part of rights-based praxis.

As Yeung et al. (2008) describe it, active citizenship includes citizenship participation (e.g., contributing to your community, being accepted, and having an inspiring vision for your future). Furthermore, the Canadian Association for Community Living (2017) equates citizenship with social inclusion, respect for diversity and respect for human rights. This discussion of citizenship has been presented for the purpose of linking the concepts of youth engagement and TAY Planning collaboration with the potential for building a sense of community and social citizenship.

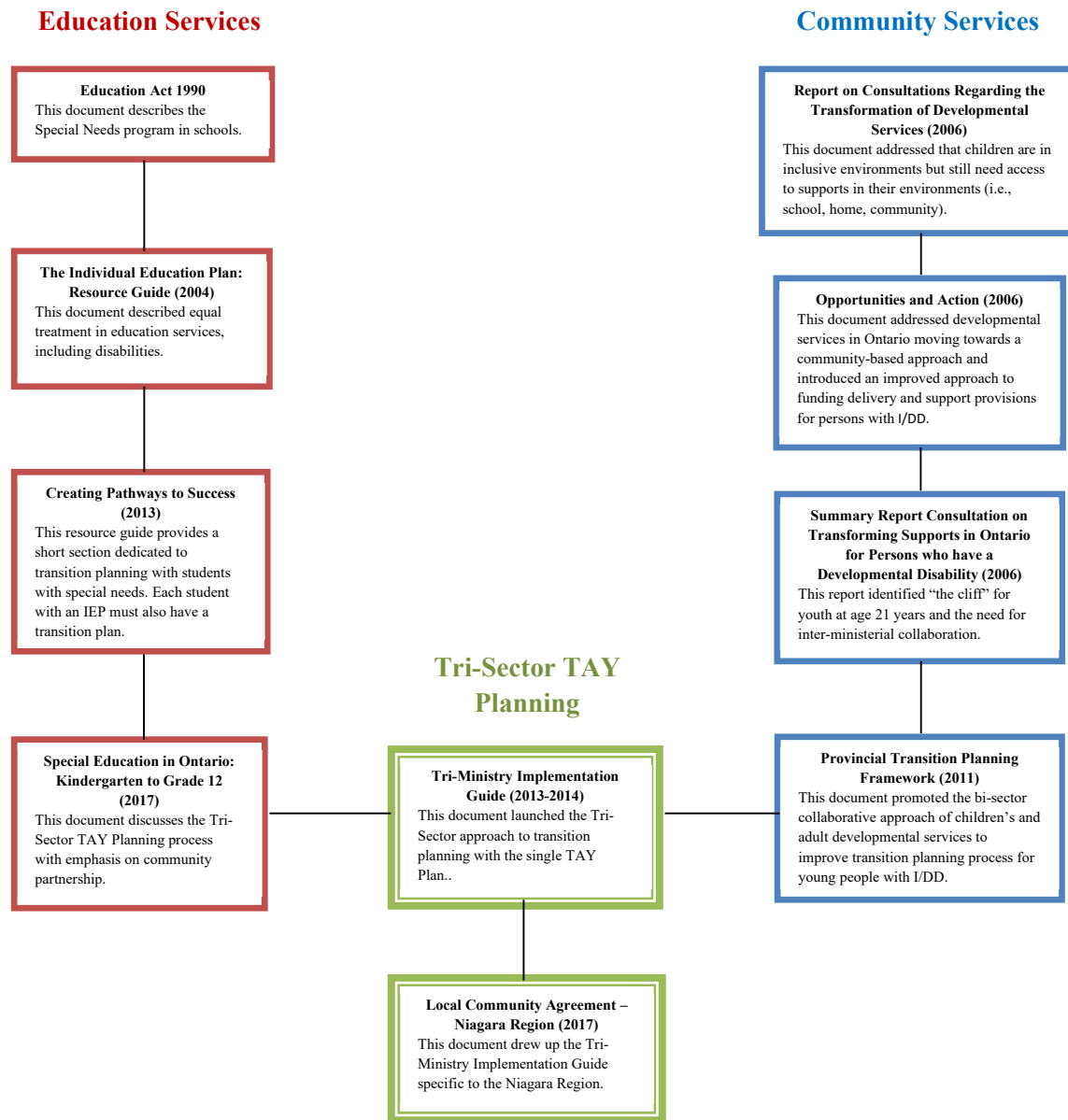
Linking engagement and collaboration to the notion of building community applies to the inter-agency interaction in the Tri-Sector planning approach. It also applies to transitional aged youths and their families. Further, linking the notion of community to a sense of citizenship seems like a natural progression in thought and theory when coming from a value-based and rights-based perspective.

The complexity of the definition of engagement unfolds in the multi-dimensional dynamics of the concept. Active participation is a significant component of the expression of engagement. There is a spectrum of youths' engagement (e.g., types and degrees of engagement) that happens over a range of situations from simply being physically present at a TAY Planning meeting to co-planning throughout the transition process. Engagement can be described as “a deeper and more interpretative partnership (strong rapport), relationship building, and active effort throughout [the process]” (Nguyen et al., 2019, p. 312). Active engagement connects with group collaboration. The concurrence of active participation and group collaboration creates the opportunity for community building in many ways and at various ecological levels. There are many ways to understand community. To focus on building positive social networks is one component involved at the micro-level of building community while promoting a meaningful sense of citizenship by fostering inclusive participation for youths as they build their future towards adult life.

CHAPTER FOUR: Policy and Practice

This chapter begins with background on social services and legislation in Ontario, Canada including the legislative initiatives that has taken place in the last two decades in regard to transition planning for youths with I/DD. This overview will cover the education in Ontario with reference to the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and a brief description of inclusive education. This description will follow with background of education leading up to today's education system in Ontario and the education sector in regard to its developing policies and practices related to students with I/DD. This is followed by a description of transitional aged youths' involvement in the planning process, professional competencies and collaboration that are necessary to support them. Finally, the current multi-sector transition planning process in Ontario is discussed. To illustrate the various documents that will be discussed in this chapter, Figure 4.1 is provided as a reference.

Figure 4.1 *The illustration of the education and community developmental services policy and practice timeline leading up to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process.*



Legislation Background on the Transitional Aged Youth Planning Process in Ontario

With the *Report on Consultations Regarding the Transformation of Developmental Services* (MCSS, 2006b), it was identified that children with I/DD required supports and services that were accessible, adequate and sustainable in their inclusion-based school and home environments. The key recommendations from this consultation process included the need for equitable access to adequate community supports, the urgency to address the person's and family's life-stage needs (transitions to adulthood or senior care), the need to adjust governmental funding such as Special Supports at Home and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ie., disability pension), the need for a commitment to address the challenges of persons with I/DD who at that time were being mandated to leave their residence in one of the three institutions that were still operating and integrate into a community living placement, and the desire to move towards *individualized funding* in some areas of funding provision (MCSS, 2006b).

The *Opportunities and Action* report (MCSS, 2006a) addressed youths transitioning out of school, the challenging stage of life this can be, and the importance of early planning starting at age 14 in the school system (MCSS, 2006a). It was acknowledged that schools provide not only an educational program but also a setting for socialization and structured daily activities. Under the Ministry of Education, any student with exceptionality (e.g., a child with I/DD) was to receive special education programs and services without additional cost to the family (MCSS, 2006b). Furthermore, when leaving high school, the youths tended to have less opportunity for continued daily activities, meaningful employment and/or independent living outside of the family home; opportunities that would typically be available for their age peers without a

disability (MCSS, 2006b). It was recognized that improved opportunities needed to be established.

The Mercer Delta (2006) summary report followed the MCSS (2006a) consultation report. It was a summary to address the much-needed fundamental systems transformation in the delivery of services for persons with I/DD. The report identified that once a youth reaches the age of 21 years and is no longer eligible for secondary schooling, a dramatic decline in available supports and daytime activities occurs. This abrupt decline in supports and daily activity was described as “the cliff” (p. 13) and identified the significant decrease in a young person’s independence and quality of life when transitioning to adulthood. The Mercer Delta (2006) report made the suggestion to adapt services to “[p]rovide support services on a ‘continuum,’ rather than a program-specific basis to build a support service system that is person-focused and holistic rather than program and ministry-focused” (p. 16). The need for inter-ministerial collaboration was identified and the recommendation was made to coordinate the Ministry of Education (EDU) and the MCSS. This recommendation (Mercer, 2006) was in direct alignment with the *Opportunities and Action* report (MCSS, 2006a).

The next phase was the development of the *Provincial Transition Planning Framework* (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services [MCSS] & Ministry of Children Youth Services [MCYS], 2011). The Provincial Transition Planning Framework was initially introduced in May 2011 with the objective of improving the transition planning process for young people with a developmental disability (Ontario MCSS & MCYS, 2011). This framework outlined key objectives, policy directions, and protocol design components with the purpose of providing guidelines to promote and support best practices within the transition planning process. The MCSS and MCYS partnered to

introduce this framework for further development by each region in the province. It was recommended that these regional TAY protocols include a clear definition and designated responsibilities regarding the transition planning process. It stated that “[i]n partnership, the [two] ministries will... engage and collaborate with other ministries on inter-ministerial approaches for supporting transitioning young people with developmental disabilities who will require adult accommodation, health services and community services and supports, and/or educational or vocational training” (Ontario MCSS & MCYS, 2011, p. 5). This document upheld the guiding principles of service collaboration, youth participation and person-centered planning with the intent to foster the youths’ development of self-determination and self-advocacy (Ontario MCSS & MCYS, 2011).

Further, in 2013, to expand the development of smoother transitional planning for young people with I/DD, the Ontario government implemented an integrated transition planning process that introduced a Tri-Sector approach: the *Transition Planning Protocol and Procedures* (MCSS/MCYS/EDU, 2013-2014). This involved the MYCS, and MCSS working together with EDU to support the youth with a single integrated transition plan to transition to adulthood. This document’s purpose was to incorporate the *Provincial Transition Planning Framework* (Ontario MCSS & MCYS, 2011) with school board practices. The integration of these three ministerial processes created the shared objective of developing a single integrated transition plan for every young person with I/DD (MCSS, MCYS, & EDU, January 2013). No changes occurred in legislation, regulations or policies. This single integrated transition planning process involved “school board officials, principals, teachers, students and their families, and others who support the young person with a developmental disability such as community agency staff and health

care providers” (MCSS, MCYS, & EDU, January 2013, p. 2). The single transition plan was intended to be an ongoing document, an evolving plan that would start at fourteen years of age and be reviewed and updated as part of the youth’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) planning process. As the tri-ministry memorandum (MCSS, MCSY & EDU, January 2013) stated,

The intent of the integrated transition planning is to build on effective collaborative transition planning practices, facilitate a smooth and comprehensive transition experience and to support positive transition outcomes for each young person with a developmental disability and their family/caregiver. (p. 2)

The next step in the transition planning process was the design of the regional *Transition Planning Protocol and Procedures* (MCSS, MCYS & EDU, September 2013). This document replaced all previously written transition planning protocols. To clarify the provincial areas, the term *regional* in relation to this dissertation referred specifically to Brant, Haldimand, Hamilton and Niagara Regions. The purpose of this current regional document is to describe transition planning procedures, to identify the service providers who take the lead or contribute to the transition plan, to identify their roles and responsibilities and to describe the guiding principles to be used for developing and fine-tuning local protocols. The content of this document has been transferred into a local protocol for the Niagara Region as a community agreement format. The Local Community Agreement – Niagara Region has been in place since 2017. This protocol labels the process as Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) Planning. The local protocol maintains the original 2013-2014 regional protocol principles and guidelines and clarifies the single integrated transition planning process with specific designation of service provider roles and responsibilities along with service tracking procedures. Thus, working jointly on transitional

aged youths' plans, the children's and adult developmental services had connected with the education system.

Education in Ontario

The Education Act (Ministry of Education, 1990) describes special education as a program that uses ongoing assessment and evaluation practices to assist in the design of specific objectives and required services for all identified exceptional students. Each student is required to be identified within the first 30 days of placement in a special needs classroom. This identification process is completed by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC). The next step is the development of the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Individual Education Plan

An IEP is a written document that describes the special education strategies a student who is identified as exceptional will need according to their learning expectations and is developed with feedback from the student who is 16 years or older and their family/guardian (Ministry of Education, 2000; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019). The IEP may describe modifications or accommodations and/or alternative programs, how a teacher will monitor student advancement, and the reporting of this progress to the student and their family. The youth's learning program is adjusted on an ongoing basis through continuous assessment and evaluation practices (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019). "The IEP reflects the school board's and the principal's commitment to provide the special education program and services, within the resources available to the school board, needed to meet the identified strengths and needs of the student" (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 4). An IEP does not include the specific curriculum that will be taught to the student, teaching strategies, records of learning expectations, or daily lesson plans (Ministry of Education, 2002). The IEP is to be developed in a collaborative fashion

within the education sector and include the student and their family along with community support staff, if appropriate. For students, such as youths with I/DD who require modifications to the learning expectations of the provincial curriculum, adaptations may be implemented (Ministry of Education, 2017). In addition,

The IEP for an exceptional pupil who is fourteen years of age or older and who has not been identified solely as gifted must contain a plan for the transition to postsecondary education, or the workplace, or to help the student live as independently as possible in the community. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 1)

Inclusive Education

The inclusive education approach has been a paradigm shift in theoretical terms from the traditional segregated approach to classroom structure. It focuses on including students who are considered to have special needs in the regular classroom (Bennett & Gallagher, 2011). However, placing this theoretical perspective into practice remains challenging. As Bennett and Gallagher point out, “Across Canada and around the world, the gap between the theory of inclusion and the practice of inclusion impacts the educational and social lives of students with exceptionalities” (2011, p. 107). This dissertation rested on the perspective of rights-based inclusion as this study operated on the assumption that inclusion in the educational system is an important ingredient in the transition to overall community-based inclusion.

Ontario Education System and Transition Planning Process

Transition planning for youths with special needs over the age of 14 in the school system has been legislated since 1998 under Ontario Regulation 181/98. In 2000, the Ministry of Education introduced a policy document entitled *Individual Education Plans: Standards for*

Development, Program Planning and Implementation (Ministry of Education, 2000). This document described the purpose of transition planning by noting the importance of preparing youths for post high school objectives that align with their strengths, needs and preferences. The transition plan was designated to be a part of the youth's Individual Education Plan (IEP) and was required to include planning for destinations after high school such as further education, employment and living in the community (Ministry of Education, 2000). The content of the transition plan was to include particular post high school goals, the actions required to accomplish these goals, the designation of responsibilities for the required actions and timelines for goal completion. Compliance with these requirements was evaluated through IEP reviews.

Transitional Aged Youths

The course of one's life consists of different stages, each of which involves a period of transition. Preparing for adulthood is one of them. The term *transition*, for the purpose of this study, refers to the stage in life when a young person with I/DD is moving from the status of being a child to an adult. From a service provider's perspective, this transition occurs at the age of eighteen. The transition planning process in Ontario, Canada involves a written plan that is attached to the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

The needs of a youth with I/DD will change and vary throughout their adolescent and young adult life, hence their supports will need to adjust and vary as well (Kleist et al., 2019). The youth and their family should actively look ahead and plan for when the young person will turn 18 and be considered to be entering adulthood. Wehmeyer and Webb (2012) describe this period of a youth's life when their student status shifts to adult responsibilities and expectations. This transition can be strengthened by youth engagement and collaboration of academic programs, adult service providers and natural supports within the community that are initiated as

early as possible in the youth's life, no later than the age of 14. Wehmeyer and Webb (2012) explain that the youth with I/DD should take on as much responsibility for their planning process as is feasible for their circumstances. Noonan and Morningstar (2012) describe how post-secondary outcomes for youths with I/DD had options; however, they remained more limited than they were for neuro-typical transitional youths. The limitations of the options available in higher education, employment and housing were due to their complex needs and the limited resources available to them. The authors' description includes low rates in high school graduation, employment acquisition, enrolment in postsecondary school, and social engagement. These authors also identify interagency collaboration faced barriers of inadequate referral procedures and coordinated service processes. Yet, it was noted that interagency collaboration was identified as a predictor of effectiveness in enhancing postsecondary outcomes for transitional aged youths with I/DD (Noonan and Morningstar, 2012). From a school-based perspective, some basic strategies that applied to interagency collaboration included the ability to organize scheduling and staffing, attendance of youth and their families at meetings, and training for youths, families and professionals – all strategies that promoted an interagency collaborative process.

Youth Involvement, Professional Competencies and Collaboration in Transition Planning

Youth Involvement in Transition Planning

Wehmeyer and Webb (2012) describe the importance of meaningful youth involvement where self-assessments and formal assessments guide postsecondary goals with a vision. These goals should be updated annually and should consider the youth's preferences regarding options for employment, postsecondary education and independent living. However, Grigal and Deschamp (2012) report barriers that prevent youths with I/DD from attaining better outcomes in

the planning process, including limited youth involvement, inadequate training for professionals, and lack of service provider collaboration. Active student participation in transition planning and school-home collaboration remain significant challenges to overcome in the transition planning process (Rodriguez et al., 2017).

Research has identified that youth involvement in the planning process is associated with positive outcomes such as higher employment rates (Grigal & Deschamp, 2012). The challenge seems to be translating these findings into transition planning practice. If the young person with I/DD is not provided with information and training regarding how the planning process works, and if professionals and parents tend to recommend the transition goals instead of goals being based on the youth's preferences, the young person's incentive could affect their goal attainment (Grigal & Deschamp, 2012). Thus, youth competencies were associated with being educated about the transition planning process and given opportunity to have the input into the goal setting process. In addition, this practice was connected to professional competencies.

Professional Competencies

Research has identified trained professionals effectively influence the transition planning process (Grigal & Deschamp, 2012). According to these authors, five key tenets of professionals' competencies include the following aspects. First, professionals should have an understanding of the basic components of the education and community services requirements under legislation along with the recommended practices. Second, it is essential to have a knowledge base regarding effective practices such as youth-focused planning, family involvement, how to implement a person-centered approach to goal setting, and strategies to incorporate a multi-agency collaborative planning process. Third, professionals should receive training to assist their skill development in effective transition assessment, curriculum planning, and interagency

service coordination. Fourth, professionals require knowledge regarding effective strategies to facilitate the collaboration of a broad and complex assemblage of education and community programs and services. Finally, the competency of professionals requires the knowledge to address challenges and, depending on their position, to implement strategies regarding services at the local, provincial and federal levels (Grigal & Deschamp, 2012); hence, knowledge to address challenges encompassing their level of the ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) but also collaboration within and between these levels, if necessary.

Collaboration in Transition Planning

Interagency service coordination and transition planning collaboration are significant components to effective transitional aged youth plans. “Transition planning is a collaborative effort involving students, family members, special education personnel, and community service providers” (Grigal & Deschamp, 2012, p. 405). This joint effort represents all stakeholders coming to the planning table to combine each others’ resources and to create a potentially seamless transition. Interagency collaboration is critical for the success of this process because no one service provider holds all the necessary resources or knowledge to execute an effective transition plan. Consolidating resources through service collaboration at an early stage in the youth’s transition planning process can ensure that the necessary stakeholders are involved and essential relationships develop (Grigal & Deschamp, 2012) to establish a well-built community and to support youths’ rightful citizenship.

The Transition Planning Process in the Education System in Ontario in 2013.

The Ministry of Education published a resource guide entitled *Creating Pathways to Success: An Education and Career/Life Planning Program for Ontario Schools* (2013a; hereinafter referred to as *Creating Pathways to Success*). This guide clearly states educational

objectives that affirm the priority of youth development towards successful post high school destinations. A short section in this resource guide was dedicated to transition planning with students with special needs. It clarified that each student with an IEP must also have a transition plan and it was encouraged that the transition plan be individualized, identifying the youth's strengths and needs. Within this document, transitions included a youth moving from one activity, one classroom, one grade and/or one school to another, as well as the transition out of high school (Ministry of Education, 2013a).

The policy outlined in *Creating Pathways to Success* required that all youths in grades 7-12, including those with I/DD, have an Individual Pathway Plan (IPP) to facilitate movement towards their desired post-secondary destinations (Ministry of Education, 2017). The information about the youth that was provided in the IPP could be complimentary to the youth's transition plan in terms of their strengths, needs, preferences and their long-term goals. In addition, another education planning document could involve health and safety considerations. This plan set out supports for the youth that could include a safety plan, a behaviour support plan and/or a medical plan (Ministry of Education, 2017). According to the Ministry of Education (2017), all of these plans should be integrated with the youth's IEP and Transition planning process.

In 2017 the Ministry of Education in Ontario released a policy and resources guide, entitled *Special Education in Ontario: Kindergarten to Grade 12*, to address special education from kindergarten to grade 12 (Ministry of Education, 2017). This document provides extensive details regarding transition planning for youths with exceptionalities. One section of the document discusses integrated transition planning for youths with I/DD within the Tri-Sector perspective. Emphasis is made on the importance of collaboration with community partners and the Ministry of Education's commitment to collaborative planning with the children's and adult

developmental service sectors to enhance the youth's support system. In this document, the youths having a formally identified "developmental disability" is the criterion for this transition planning process and the definition of developmental disability is open to interpretation; however, it may be used under all three sectors' respective legislative frameworks (Ministry of Education, 2017). The aim of this collaborative approach is to promote a smoother transition stage to adult life and the process is identified to involve the student, their family, teachers, principals, and community and health care support providers.

The youth's transition planning process creates a single integrated plan that is a part of the student's IEP; it promotes a long-term vision that begins at the age of 14 with a timeline of expected steps and accomplishments through to the end of high school to facilitate bridging into adult services (Ministry of Education, 2017). The components of this integrated transition plan remain the same as those developed in the transition plan as part of the IEP process. The extent to which the transition plan is a part of the youth's IEP is left to the discretion of the school board and may be determined by the youth's needs and overall profile (Ministry of Education, 2017).

The goals of the transitional aged youths will vary depending upon the person's needs and aspirations (Ministry of Education, 2017). These goals may aim towards future employment, further education and/or more independent living. How the goals are worked towards will also vary and be dependent upon the youth's required supports to achieve the goals. Transition planning goals should be consistent with IPP goals. "Where possible, students should assume responsibility for identifying their transition goals and the steps needed to achieve them" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. E47). The youth should be supported to consider goals that aspire to their dreams, realize possible barriers and decide upon what actions will help them to

accomplish their goals. Goals may include skill building in areas such as communication, social skills, and physical capacity.

The actions required to accomplish the youth's goals are expected to be strategies that align with the youth's identified academic profile. Addressing barriers may be a part of the planning process with steps determined to overcome the challenges where possible (Ministry of Education, 2017). The special education resource guide, *Special Education in Ontario: Kindergarten to Grade 12* (Ministry of Education, 2017), describes the importance of listed actions to be articulated clearly and easy to identify when accomplished. Implemented strategies are implemented for future steps in planning goals and designating team support providers and their future responsibilities for any given action. All persons or organizations that are responsible for completing any action should provide consent for this process, comprehend their role in the given action, agree to the timeline of accomplishment and notify the transition planning lead person if they are unable to fulfill their responsibility at any point in time (Ministry of Education, 2017). Every action that is involved in the transition plan should have a distinct itinerary. Some actions may be long-term actions towards future accomplishment, for example applying for post-secondary education. In such a case, action includes follow up from the post-secondary institution, for example, the support of the special education office at the college to develop accommodations if required (Ministry of Education, 2017).

CHAPTER FIVE: Design and Methodology

This chapter will discuss the purpose of this study, the researcher's positionality, the research questions, design and methods of data collection and analysis.

Purpose and General Description

The primary objective of this study was to explore the Tri-Sector integrated TAY Planning process that is being used in Niagara through the perspectives of key stakeholder groups. The first and most important of these groups is the transitional aged youths who are currently in the process of planning as well as those who have completed the transition, either through the current or previous transition planning processes, and have moved into an adult life style and adult services. This research examined and compared the lived experiences and outcomes (or projected outcomes) of these youths who either had a formal transition plan or had no plan and considered the impacts of their planning process that they described in an anticipatory or retrospective manner. The youths' information was complimented with further accounts from family members, community service providers, education professionals, and members of the Niagara Region Transitional Aged Youth Committee (NRTAYC). The experience of stakeholders, including the outcomes and impacts of the TAY Planning process and their recommendations for further possible improvements, were described in the case study analysis. Inputs, outputs and impacts of the TAY Planning process were then translated into quantitative monetary terminology by the application of the SROI analysis model. The SROI analysis was used as a form of knowledge translation to express the social change and social gains related to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process.

Social Ecological Model

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social ecological lens was applied to frame the overall social dynamics of the TAY Planning process in this study. A key feature of the ecological approach in this research was that it gave a better understanding of how social systems impact a person's life, and also provided the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the person's impact on the social systems. In partnership with community partners and with the aim of providing a platform to capture the voice of the key stakeholders in the TAY Planning process, this study's purpose, methods and design were developed collaboratively using a community-based approach (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). This approach provided an ecological perspective that included a range of stakeholders' voices from the youths with I/DD to those in the microsystem (e.g., families, school, community) and the mesosystem (i.e., the Niagara Region TAY Planning protocol and the committee that oversaw it), emphasizing the interconnecting relations between the individual and these systems (Eriksson et al., 2018).

Conceptual framework

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of social development provided a conceptual model and insight into the input, throughput and output components and indicators of service-delivery systems at the individual, the microsystem, and the mesosystem levels. With the social ecological model regarding the individual and the micro level of support organizations in mind (Rodriguez et al., 2017), the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was examined to explore its role in transition planning between the youth/their family and their service delivery system. As discussed previously, the additional components of youth engagement and inter-agency collaboration within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) framework also were explored in this dissertation.

Qualitative Research

This study did not follow the conventional approach where research is perceived as “objective and value free” but rather took the standpoint that community-based research is “values-driven” and complex (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010, p.253). This pragmatic community-based research project focused on the process, outcomes and impacts of the Niagara TAY Planning process incorporating analysis with a particular focus on youth engagement and youth/family and service system collaboration.

From an ontological position, this research tapped into the expressed realities of various individuals at various levels within the ecological system of the TAY Planning process. Each reality expressed had its own construction and interpretation by the person providing information from their personal viewpoint.

From an epistemological position, the information provided by the participants that is expressed in this research will be aggregated into a summary report that will be presented back to the community members. The aim is to emphasize the importance of the voice of the youth, and to acknowledge their lived experiences and their recommendations for development of an improved process.

From an axiological position, this was a community-based research project that incorporated a values-based foundation (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). The individual transitional aged youths who were planning for adulthood were acknowledged to be the highest valued participants in this research. The importance of the youths’ lived experience was highlighted as being central in the ecological model and the system of the transition planning process studied in this dissertation.

Philosophical Framework

Community-based research (CBR) is an investigative approach that focuses on collaborative fieldwork, data collection, interpretive findings and dissemination of assertions. Compared to traditional research approaches that are researcher-driven by an outsider conducting an examination of the community, CBR emphasizes bi-directional development by co-researchers who are the scholars and the community members designing together. This approach depends upon equity of power, capacity building, partnership and trust with each contributor being viewed as a valuable expert (Vaughn et al., 2017).

For the purpose of this CBR study, “community” was defined as the transitional aged youth, their families, education professionals, social service professionals and scholars who were located in the Niagara Region of Ontario. Community engagement and participation in this research project occurred along a continuum of outreach, involvement, partnership consultation and collaboration in regard to the study’s emerging design and processes. In this study, community members were involved from the onset of the project to ensure that the study’s process reflected their knowledge and experience, as recommended by Vaughn et al., (2017). A Community Research Committee (CRC) was established at the start of this study. The CRC membership included employees from Contact Niagara for Children’s and Developmental Services (CN) and community/family consultants (i.e., a young person with I/DD and a parent). With the CRC, this CBR approach promoted multiple and diverse perspectives, captured contextual and social nuances, and allowed for feedback to the community that may have an impact on community action and practice in the future.

Researcher's Positionality and Practice of Reflexivity

The purpose of this section is to explain my multiple identities/positionalities as a researcher. To begin, my work used a qualitative methodology. My interest focused on persons with I/DD and was based on the premise of equitable human rights. My research goals included gaining a greater understanding of disabilities and rights, providing an invitation for the voice of persons with I/DD to be spoken, and aspiring to disseminate their information in a way that could yield social change. These goals rose from my personal, academic and employment background.

I am a life-long learner. For the last forty years I have been employed in the field of social services for persons with I/DD. During this time, I have continued to access a university education. John Dewey, a well-known philosopher, once stated "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself." I interpret this statement to describe that education is acquired from many sources and is sought in a lifelong manner. This interpretation emerges from my ontological perspective that considers our world to be complex, ambiguous and where "truth" shifts and is fluid, posing multiple realities (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

My educational accomplishments created my openness to the acquisition of further knowledge (information) that expanded my existing knowledge but, also, shifted my consciousness towards alternative viewpoints and rationales prompting critical thinking. As a doctoral student, I pursue the personal quest to maintain openness to a plurality of viewpoints and to use reflexivity not as a strategy but as a discursive practice (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). My philosophical definition of my ontological position would describe the fundamental parts of the world and how they relate to each other in terms of interpreting what is reality.

The nature of what is “reality” in our world is one of fluidity. Our world is shaped by human action which is identified by some commentators as individual agency. It is also shaped by human interaction which relates, in my view, to social construction and to human *intra-action* which designates intra-relations (Barad, 2003). Intra-action describes humans embedded in the material world and their relationship *with* and *among* each other where individual agency and social structure are not separate components but, rather, emerged in mutual entanglement (Barad, 2003). With such entanglement, no one truth can stand alone (Lincoln et al., 2011). Multiple realities exist which mesh and/or conflict with each other when under the lens of an intersectional perspective. From an ontological perspective, this describes a social constructivist framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The nature of what is truth is also influenced by historical, cultural, economic, and political contexts. To pinpoint a singular reality as the only truth, from this standpoint, would be short-sighted and pose significant limitations. From the lens of a social constructionist, the world is shaped through a process of created truths which entail actions that carry symbolic representations of a past, present and imagined future (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Using qualitative research provides the methodological freedom to capture different truths, at different times, about different people.

I acknowledge the profound value of quantitative research design and the overarching data it brings to the subject matter. This information shows trends and patterns that can help with the aspiration for predictability. However, with the quantitative studies I read, I wonder about the “outliers” as well as having a desire to hear the individual voices of the informants. With my interests in individuals, their social behaviour, and a call for social justice, I prefer to challenge the quantitative findings with the inquiry: what was the story of the “outsiders,” the minorities,

who were not significant in the data's summary? However, it is important to clarify my research position does not see value as only in qualitative verses quantitative, but as in both; each to their own right and serving their own purpose, and complimentary of each other. This notion is emphasized by Lincoln et al. (2011), with the statement that "qualitative methods are stressed within the naturalistic paradigm not because the paradigm is antiquantitative" (p. 117) but because they provide a different lens to address different research questions. From my positionality as a researcher, the qualitative lens serves my purpose.

Qualitative research provides the opportunity to study phenomena in depth and detail. The researcher is the instrument (Quinn Patton, 2015) for letting research informants speak for themselves because they are an unbiased voice when authentically included (Lincoln et al., 2011). Within my own research practice, I am committed to building a participant-researcher relationship that neutralizes hierarchical boundaries and fosters trust, similar to the strong sense of responsibility described by Mosselson (2010) who strived "to hear the voice of each participant" (p. 483). As a researcher I can speak to socially powerful structures and social injustice, provide a critical perspective, identify sources of inequality, and make visible the ways in which power benefits some and disadvantages others, while building capacity for future action and social change. From an ontological perspective, this describes a critical disability framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018) when applied to my past research about persons with I/DD and employment options (Readhead, 2012). Having identified this perspective, it is imperative and it must be indicated that this is not the intended lens of this specific dissertation. It was determined that the most productive and practical approach to this study was to use a constructive, pragmatic and helpful application. This perspective has been taken in order to serve the community recipients of this study's findings in a positive fashion.

Prior to my M.A. research, I had an employment position that involved the role of “liason” in the organization and I coordinated a university and community research partnership. This multi-year project included human rights research developed at Brock University which focused on persons with I/DD. The academic-community partnership served research and organizational advancement. Since the completion of the project at this organization, I have initiated, developed and continue to facilitate a human rights review committee at the organization for service recipients to access and present their complaints. This committee provides a venue for their voice to be heard, their human rights to be honoured, and a shift in organizational culture and practice. This effort, along with my research interests, is all in the essence of fostering social change and social inclusion (Readhead, 2012).

Social change provides the opportunity for essential discourse and further growth of academic knowledge. This process involves creating a research space where knowledge is derived from the “expert.” Who is this expert? My position with this question is that both the researcher and the participants are the experts collaboratively. This follows the “knowledge democracy” approach (Tett, 2016) where expert knowledge includes viewpoints from multiple levels. As a researcher, I have the capacity to contribute external knowledge, for example, providing literature to situate the research topic. As participants, the study’s informants have the capacity to contribute knowledge from direct lived experiences. Creating this situation, the researcher and participants act together and develop a learning community (Quinn Patton, 2015). This practice of collaboration follows critical theory in the sense of placing control in the necessary places and follows the constructivist’s intent to allow participants to take a more active role in the developmental process of research (Lincoln et al., 2011). Collaborative research

promotes educational space where an academic and community partnership exists; where humans learn from each other and trusting relationships are built.

As a doctoral student, I take the responsibility seriously of recognizing the power relationship of a researcher. I acknowledge the key axiological perspective that participants represent much more than data (Mosselson, 2010). By recognizing the importance of my reflexivity in the research process, I understood the importance of addressing the hegemony in the cultural, social, economic, and political lives of persons with I/DD who I shared this exploration of the transitional planning process with.

As I conclude this section, I reflect and evaluate this attempt to capture my role as a researcher and my practice of reflexivity in this study. It is important to realize that I do not wish to compartmentalize myself in a rigid or permanent ontological, epistemological and axiological position. As with my current ontological viewpoint that truth is fluid, my competence in self-reflection will shift and my position has adjusted as I have journeyed through my doctoral studies.

Reflexivity

When considering reflective practice, I identify three major influences my positionality had in this study. First, my numerous years of employment in the field of supporting persons with I/DD provided me with extensive experience and knowledge regarding the employment and community life of this group of people. This position was an asset to understanding many aspects of their lives. The second aspect that was important to disclose was the significant lack of experience and knowledge that I had in the education system. This posed a downfall to my ability to pick up nuances within interviews in regard to information about the educational system. Continuous note taking and memoing practices (Yin, 2018) were implemented to

maintain a reflective and honest research practice. The third critical aspect of my positionality was my inability to converse in the French language. Due to this significant limitation, I was unable to obtain ethics approval from the two Niagara Region French speaking school boards: Conseil Scolaire Viamonde and Conseil scolaire catholique Mon Avenir. This posed a limitation in terms of acquiring more thorough data collection and analysis.

In addition, interestingly, I am not a financially driven or focused person. I do not strive to obtain expensive material belongings or have undue concern for upholding a prosperous life style. I tend to be socially-driven with the intent to always strive for opportunity to improve the human condition of those less advantaged. I feel it is essential to explicate this personal position because, even though I privately do not believe that economics should designate how human beings experience quality of life, the unfortunate reality of effective social services rests upon financial investment and sustainability. Years of real life circumstances have brought me to the indignant yet orthodoxical position that *money talks in today's harsh economic climate*. My attraction to the SROI model is that it creatively translates implicit human values, such as quality of life, into explicit monetary terms. My hope is that this can be an effective tool to advocate for and validate social services in a concrete, productive, and more righteous way by speaking to the funders and policy decision-makers. Ultimately, I am attracted to using the SROI model to create a “truth” regarding the need to invest in effective social services and a socially healthier society.

Ethical Considerations

Multiple research ethical reviews were required for the authorization of this case study. The first authorization involved the Research Ethics Board (REB) at Brock University as it reviewed the study's intent and process. The Brock University ethics committee approved the study, and the next phase required all other ethics approvals from the school boards (who have

their own ethics boards). This next phase included two school boards: the Niagara Catholic District School Board ethics approval and the District School Board of Niagara ethics approval both of which were obtained.

Some of the considerations I included in the ethics proposals were to provide a rigorous practice to ensure participant confidentiality. Other considerations included the benefit of two research assistants to witness consents, record documentation of interviews, ensure an extra level of professionalism and promote researcher safety during interview sessions. Both research assistants were coached on the purpose of this study and the role they would play. Research assistants signed an oath of confidentiality (see Appendix U).

The community-based research approach used to design this study needed to be applied authentically. However, there were times when one co-researcher's expertise was needed to dominate the opinions of other co-researchers whose knowledge was less. For example, the language for the youth consent form was dominantly determined by a co-investigator who represented persons with I/DD. In general, respect and understanding for each person's domain of knowledge was needed, upheld and proficiently negotiated to sustain the integrity of the study. This approach followed the integrity of community-based research.

Pragmatic Community-Based Research

It was a natural step to include a community-based methods approach and this study represented a *pragmatic* qualitative inquiry. The project was developed using a community-based research design applied to a descriptive embedded single-case study (Quinn-Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). The complexity and magnitude of the single case design focused on the TAY Planning process which is operating in the entire Niagara Region and the embedded units within the case included key stakeholder groups living in the Niagara Region; this included transitional

aged youths, family members, education professionals, community service professionals with experience in TAY Planning and the Niagara Region Transitional Aged Youth Committee.

The purpose of this study was to seek out practical understandings and knowledge in regard to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process that exists in place in Niagara. This study was not “... validating the nature of reality, getting at the essence of some phenomenon, generating grounded theory, or deconstructing social constructions” (Quinn Patton, 2015, p. 152). Rather, this study aimed to discover meaningful findings that could be useful and apply to real practice. The findings are insightful in a practical way and participant-driven recommendations have been conferred at the conclusion of this study. Generally, the pragmatic approach followed an inductive process at some points in the methodological strategies because data collection and analysis hinged on the community situation and emerging opportunities, especially during the restrictions related to Covid 19 (Quinn Patton, 2015). The design of this research followed traditional methodology, however, also was open to a flexible methodological process that allowed for shifts and adjustments along the path of method design, implementation and data collection (i.e., changing from conducting face-to-face interviews to virtual/online interviews when the the global pandemic of Covid-19 created public health restrictions. However, some methodological aspects could not be negotiated. For example, one school board ethics committee recommended recruitment of a specific target group of participants from their education professional pool of potential participants. This recommendation was adhered to with the belief that their expertise of who would provide the most effective knowledge was important. Thus, this research combined diverse approaches to ensure that the complexity of the TAY Planning process was uniquely captured with genuine openness and willingness in order to uncover what

knowledge the lived TAY Planning process offered youths, families, professionals and academics alike.

Community Research Committee

As discussed earlier, this study was a community collaborative research project that was designed in close partnership with Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services (Contact Niagara) through the CRC that was formed specifically for this project. Members of this Committee were myself - Anne Readhead (Ph.D. candidate), Nadine Wallace, Susan Kowalski and Katie McKay (three employees of Contact Niagara), Barb and Carla Nicole (two Family and Community Consultants), and Professor Frances Owen (dissertation co-supervisor). Members of the CRC jointly developed the research questions, the participant recruitment process, the interview and focus group questions, and they reviewed and revised the recruitment materials and the Transitional Aged Youth consent document. In addition, the Niagara Regional TAY Committee (NRTAYC), which consisted of representatives from four Boards of Education in Niagara, mental health services, residential services, community services, child protection services and Ontario ministry professionals from both child and adult services, was consulted about the research questions to ensure that the study foci reflected issues of broad community concern.

To confirm this research partnership, consent forms were signed by all the CRC members. The consent form was distributed to three designations of committee membership. The first type of consent form (see Appendix I) was addressed to the Contact Niagara employees. The second consent form (see Appendix X) was addressed to the Family and Community Consultant member of the committee. This consent form was modified from the Contact Niagara consent form to exclude any Contact Niagara and Organization components that did not pertain to this

family member. The third Community Research Committee consent form (see Appendix W) was addressed to the Family and Community Committee member with an intellectual/developmental disability. This consent form contained the same components of agreement as Appendix X with the modifications of plain language composition and the addition of comprehension questions and answers.

Consent was obtained from all members of the CRC and they agreed to be identified by name as co-investigators (see Appendices I, W or X). In January 2020, Susan Kowalski left her employment at Contact Niagara for another opportunity. All documents that were composed or used after this time period (e.g., consent forms) no longer contained this former CRC member's name. However, it is noted that this CRC member was a significant contributor to the design and initial launch of this study in many valuable ways.

Research Methods

The primary research questions were as follows.

1. What components or aspects of the Niagara Integrated transitional aged youth planning process were described as beneficial and advantageous for the transitioning youth and their family and for the Tri-Sector service providers?

2. What components or aspects of the Niagara integrated transitional aged youth planning process were described that could be better or ideal for transitioning youth and their family and for the Tri-Sector service providers?

These two questions were developed by the CRC as their desired area of exploration in this study: what were the benefits and areas of improvement in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process? These two inquiries guided the development of this research. To compliment these two

primary inquiries, three additional contextual research questions were explored. The first of these contextual inquiries explored the “process” of transition planning with the anticipation to help provide an understanding of the context for the reported results regarding benefits and improvements. The other two contextual inquiries (i.e., youth engagement and collaboration) were theory-driven to bring depth to the inquiry of the transition planning for youths and the Tri-Sector approach. The three contextual research questions were:

1. How did the stakeholders describe the process of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning?
2. How did the stakeholders describe youth engagement in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process?
3. How did the stakeholders describe collaboration between sectors in this planning process?

In addition, the SROI analysis examined the value of the outcomes and impacts described in this study. The SROI quantified the social value created by the integrated TAY Planning process to illustrate the financial value of the social impacts of the TAY process as described by the youth, their families, educational professionals and community organizations that included services for persons with I/DD.

Recruitment

Letters of invitation and letters of information were distributed by Contact Niagara (see Appendices A, B, C, D, E, O, and P). All responses to volunteer for participation in this research went directly to myself, Anne Readhead (Ph.D. candidate), using my Brock University email or my phone number for contact. The five target groups for participation recruitment were the following: transitional aged youths and family members, education and community professionals

and members of the Niagara Region Transitional Aged Youth Committee (NRTAYC). Participant recruitment was conducted through Contact Niagara and involved youths and families who had been or currently were involved with the TAY Planning process and professionals (e.g., distribution of recruitment material to education and community organizations) who were also involved in the process. Contact Niagara requested members of the NRTAYC to assist with distribution of this recruitment material to education and developmental service providers. Interviews were conducted in English only. Contact Niagara also contacted the NRTAYC membership in order to invite their participation in the data collection stage.

Recruitment of Transitional Aged Youths and Family Members.

Because Contact Niagara had the service files of the young people in the Niagara Region who had been or were currently involved with a TAY Plan, Contact Niagara directly distributed recruitment material on behalf of the researcher (see Appendices A, B and O) to youths and families through Contact Niagara's regular mail by mailing a Letter of Invitation (see Appendices A and B). For youths and family members who resided at the same address, recruitment letters for each, sealed in separate envelopes, were mailed together in one large envelop with a cover letter (see Appendix Y) to explain the contents of the two separate envelopes contained inside. All participants were asked to respond directly to Anne Readhead's (PhD candidate) Brock University email address or phone, so that Contact Niagara would not be aware of who chose to participate. In the first stage, 50 recruitment letters were mailed out and no responses were received from any youth or family. Two weeks later, a second stage of 50 recruitment letters were mailed out and again no responses were received. The assumption was made that this was not an effective means of recruitment. The follow up approach was to distribute a simple flyer to youths and families with the heading "Will You Tell Your Story?"

(see Appendix Z). The distribution of this flyer was completed through my direct contact with the Executive Directors of the local developmental service agencies. Executive Directors in each organization individually decided the best means of distribution and directed me accordingly. For example, I was given a contact person within the agency to make the connection with and move forward under their guidance and support.

All transitional aged youth participants were asked to complete a face-to-face interview at a location of their choosing that suited the needs of an appropriate interview environment (e.g., to ensure privacy). Such locations were libraries or other organizations. The recruitment criteria for this study required that young people with I/DD have the capacity to verbally express themselves independently with full autonomy. The youths could choose to have a support person attend the interview along with them; however, this support person was not to contribute to the content of the interview responses in any way.

The same method of recruitment was applied to recruit families who already had supported a family member with the transition to adult services or who currently were supporting a family member who was preparing for this transition in the future. Family members also were asked to choose an interview location that was comfortable for them and that provided a private environment. Some youths and their family members responded together. In this case the interview with the youth was conducted at a completely separate time than their family member's interview.

Recruitment of Education and Community Service Providers.

Recruitment of professionals created two clusters of participants. The two groups were educational professionals and community service providers. Each participant was asked about their history with transition planning for young people with I/DD and their experiences with the

current and previous TAY Planning processes. Education and community service professionals were recruited using a snowball technique (Creswell, 2013). Contact Niagara initially distributed all recruitment materials (see Appendices C, D and P) for recruitment of professionals to the members of the NRTAYC who then distributed these letters of invitation and letters of information in their specific organization(s). Professionals who wished to reply to the letter of invitation did so by directly emailing my Brock email address. In addition, I distributed Letters of Invitation (see Appendices A, B, and C) to community service organizations to ensure that a thorough range of organizations was reached. This recruiting material was distributed by email to Executive Directors and/or program directors/managers of services for persons with I/DD and mental health services that worked with youths with I/DD with the request that they share this with personnel in their organizations who were or who had been involved with the TAY Planning process. As previously stated, all responses to the letter of invitation went directly to me.

Recruitment of Members of the Niagara Region TAY Committee.

The final source of recruitment came from the NRTAYC. This group, as a practice, met quarterly and its membership included approximately 20-30 stakeholders from educational, community and Ontario ministerial sectors. This membership range was explained by the fact that membership of this committee varied depending on the agenda and the needs at the time. For example, early in the committee's development, the focus was on protocol development and implementation. At this time the majority of the membership was composed of senior management personnel. Later in time, the committee's focus had shifted to effective praxis and the addition of other management and frontline personnel occurred.

The original plan was for a focus group(s) to be conducted to gather data from members of this group regarding the description of their committee's function and their overall perspectives of the TAY Planning process. Two Contact Niagara employees (members of the Community Research Committee) who facilitated the NRTAYC distributed a letter of invitation (see Appendix E) and a letter of information (see Appendix P) to the NRTAYC members to inquire who may be interested in participating in the focus group. All Committee members who wished to reply to the letter of invitation did so by directly emailing me at my Brock email address. A focus group to conduct data collection did not occur. The inability to determine a consensus on a date and time for the group of participants was resolved by conducting individual face to face or phone interviews. The same interview questions were used in these individual interviews as would have been used with a focus group.

All interviews were audio-taped for later transcription and data analysis. All interview/focus group questions were semi-structured (see Appendices K, L, M and N). Consent (see Appendices F, G and H) was obtained prior to any interviews. If an interview participant decided to stop their participation prior to the completion of the interview session, they were provided with the opportunity to sign the withdrawal and partial retention consent (see Appendix J) to indicate their wishes regarding the data collected from them up to that point. There were no withdrawals.

Inclusion Criteria.

Participants were selected for participation on a first-come basis. Please see the Participants section below for a breakdown of the maximum number of participants we aimed to recruit in each category. It turned out that we did not reach these recruitment goals, the final recruitment of participants was lower than hoped for. Youth participants were persons with I/DD

aged 14-35 years who were able to verbally and independently express their information in English and this recruitment restriction posed a limitation in terms of data collection and representation of a broader scope of this target group of people i.e., young people with I/DD who would rely upon a trusted support person to provide data were excluded from this study. Thus, this limitation eliminated the voice of a more balanced or complete perspective of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All professionals were service providers from the community or education sector who had been or were currently involved with TAY Planning.

Participants

In respect to recruitment, the following was the objective to accomplish, however not attained. Going into this study's commencement, there were seven main groups of participants with a targeted number for each group (see Table 5.1). Some participants were able to compare the current Tri-Sector TAY Planning process to previous methods of transition planning. Others focused exclusively on implementation of the current Niagara Tri-Sector TAY Planning process.

Table 5.1 *Participant groups and number of participants expected from each group. There were 3 groups of youths and 3 groups of family members to explore the experiences of using a TAY plan or not.*

	Targeted Number of Participants:	Actual Number of Participants
Youths 14-17 years of age who currently have a Tri-Sector TAY Plan.	3	0
Youths 18-25 years of age who used a Tri-Sector TAY Plan in their transition.	3	1
Youths 18-35 years of age who did not used a Tri-Sector TAY Plan in their transition.	3	1
Family member of youthss 14-17 years of age who currently have a Tri-Sector TAY Plan.	3	1

Family member of youths 18-25 years of age who currently have a Tri-Sector TAY Plan.	3	1
Family member of youths 18-35 years of age who did not use a plan a Tri-Sector TAY Plan.	3	2
Community service providers	3	4
Education professionals	4	2
Niagara Region TAY Committee	2-3 focus groups	3 Participants (Individual Interviews)
	Total: 25+	Total: 15

Youth Participants.

The first participant group was youths with I/DD who either had experienced a Tri-Sector TAY Plan or who had not. Participants in this group were interviewed to explore their experience with transitional planning, either the current Tri-Sector TAY process or a previous planning process, and how they were now at the age to utilize adult services. This exploration focused on retrospective data collection to describe their experiences with transitional planning prior to turning eighteen with reflection on the experience and the results of that planning. The two youths who participated, one who had a Tri-Sector TAY Plan and the other who did not, provided data to describe both current and previous TAY Planning processes.

The second group of participants was family of youths with I/DD aged 14-17 years who were experiencing the transition planning process with their family member or who already had completed a single TAY Plan or multiple sector plans and their family member was now in adult services (i.e., aged 18-35 years). The third group was education professionals. These participants were affiliated with English Public and Catholic school boards. The fourth group was community

service professionals. These participants were affiliated with services for children or adults. The fifth group was members of the NRTAYC who were recruited for focus group(s) and also an interview if any members preferred that option. It was not possible to arrange a focus group for the participants who volunteered, thus individual interviews were conducted instead. The total committee membership who received recruitment material was about 20-30 people.

Demographic information was collected about all participants. This included personal information, professional data and contact information (see Appendices Q, R, S and T). A Tim Horton's gift card (\$5.00) was given to each participant at interviews or mailed to those who volunteered for a virtual online interview or phone conversation to demonstrate our gratitude for their time and effort to support this study and provide their valuable information.

Informed Consent

Research consent was obtained from all participants prior to any research participation (see Appendices F, G, H). It was clearly stated to each research participant that they could withdraw from participation at any time during the study without any repercussions. Participants were able to request that their existing data gathered to the time of their withdrawal from the study be eliminated, as long as data had not been aggregated. A consent form was available for any interview participant who withdrew from the study prior to participation completion but agreed to partial data retention (see Appendix J). No participant withdrew from this study.

I contacted all interested informants to arrange an interview or potential focus group. I provided those who volunteered to participate with a written copy of the informed consent by email and at the start of each interview (see Appendices F, G, or H). Each participant signed the consent that was co-signed by the researcher assistant(s) and by me during face-to-face interviews. Consent acquisition for all phone interviews was obtained by emailing to the

participant a scanned copy of the consent form with the request to sign and scan it back to me. For those who could not use the scanned copy option, the consent was read at the beginning of the recorded interview and the participant gave verbal consent to it. This was then transcribed. My Brock email address was used to receive all signed consents.

At the end of each consent process, there was a section on the consent form to clarify whether the participant wanted to be included in a member checking procedure and how they wished to be contacted. Please see data collection section below for details regarding the member checking process. If youth participants consented to the member check process, the consent form included an explanation of the purpose of the member check, how it would be provided to them with a written copy of a summary of their interview information and how they were responsible for securing this information to maintain confidentiality. Confidentiality of all participants was emphasized to each potential informant. Cessation of participation was explained as it could occur at any time during the participation process. All interviewing and consent were witnessed by a research assistant who had signed an oath of confidentiality (see Appendix U).

Informed Consent from Transitional Aged Youths.

All youth participants were aged 14-35 years. The participants were interviewed about their youth transition experience. For the purpose of an effective consent process and to ensure that young people with I/DD involved in the data collection were provided with an authentic and non-coercive opportunity for autonomous participation, they were asked to sign their own consent or provide a verbal consent that was transcribed (see Appendix F). Recognition of their right to consent was congruent with their role in the transition planning process and the fact that the focus of the study was on their personal perception of that process. Through the development of this study, one of the Family and Community Consultants, who was a co-investigator, was a

young person with I/DD who assisted in composing the consent form for youth participants using clear and meaningful plain language. This Community Consultant also did a mock consent session with the researcher to ensure that each question was comprehensible.

The two participants in this group provided their own consent (see Appendix F). To ensure that each young person who planned to participate truly understood the content of the consent form (see Appendix F) each question was followed by a comprehension question. For example, the researcher would read each consent statement, such as “I understand that my name will not be used in the project when the report is written and given to other people to read.” The researcher then followed this statement with a comprehension question such as “Will your name be used in the project’s paper?” and the participant was required to answer “no” to illustrate their comprehension of the consent item. Both participants were able to give informed consent using this process. If a young person had been unable to provide correct answers to the comprehension questions they would not have been able to participate in the study. Care would have been taken to ensure that they did not feel rejected. They still would have received their gift and the researcher’s deep appreciation for their time. Transitional aged youth participants had the option to have a person, who knew them, stay with them while they completed their consent. Neither participant chose this option and stated that they were comfortable participating independently.

Informed Consent from Family Members and Professionals.

All family members and professionals completed a verbal consent and a written consent form was signed at the onset of the face-to-face interview time and prior to any participation in this study. For phone interviews, verbal consent was audio-taped, transcribed and kept on file until a scanned email copy was received (see Appendix G and H).

Informed Consent from Contact Niagara.

Consent was received from Contact Niagara, the organizational partner in this research project (see Appendix V) to acknowledge the collaboration between myself and Contact Niagara on this project. The Executive Director of Contact Niagara also consented to the use of the organization's name in publications and presentations (see Appendix V).

Informed Consent from Community Research Committee Members.

Each member of the Community Research Committee signed a consent form (see Appendices I, W and X) to confirm their participation in this research project and their agreement to having their names disclosed on all research material and documents. This consent process was to acknowledge Community Research Committee co-investigator contribution and involvement with the research design and to confirm their agreement to the use of their names in presentations, publications, and academic reports/documents. If any of these Community Research Committee members chose to volunteer to participate in an interview for the purpose data collection, they went through the consent process, as described above, according to participant criteria (youth, family, or professional).

Demographics

Participants' names, age, gender identification, contact information, address, organizational affiliation, titles, and years of experience with TAY Planning were documented on a separate form for the purpose of demographic referencing (see Appendices Q, R, S and T). All consent forms had identifying information regarding the person's full name, occupation/location of current employment and contact information. Each form also had an identifying number/code to align it to the same identifying number/code that identified the person's demographic information, audio-tape and written interview transcript computer file.

The demographic and consent forms were kept in a separate secure file location from the computer and written transcriptions. No personal identifiers were present in the data or in this dissertation. All consent forms, notes, transcriptions and audio-tapes were kept locked in a secure location at student researcher's home during the data analysis process. Recordings and transcripts were housed in a secure location at the home of a transcriber during the transcription process. All data were transferred to the student researcher following completion of transcription.

Description of the participant groups in the dissertation and in any subsequent publication or other dissemination of the research results included professional occupations, average duration and range of length of employment, types and duration of involvement with TAY Planning and number of participants who identified as members of the NRTAYC. This information was only used if it did not lead to identification of a particular participant. In these cases, information used was more generally described to avoid possible personal identification. Data will be retained by the student researcher for five years following completion of the study and dissemination of results or for seven years if so required by a journal to which we may submit an article on this project.

Data Collection

All participants were advised that the interviews would take 1 to 1.5 hours of their time to complete. In actuality, the time of an interview ranged from 45 to 120 minutes. Family members, professionals, and NRTAYC members were given a choice of whether they preferred face-to-face or phone interviews. It was anticipated that participants who had an I/DD would have face-to-face interviews. However, in March 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic public health restrictions prohibited any face-to-face interviews. All interviews that were conducted after this

date were conducted on TEAMS platform. For any youths involved with this method of interview provided verbal consent was audio-taped, transcribed and securely filed.

Please note that members of the NRTAYC were also professionals so they could choose to participate in the Committee interview and also in an interview in their professional capacity since the questions asked of these two groups differed in focus. One participant made this choice.

Stages of Data Analysis for the Case Study

Data analysis involved both deductive and inductive approaches (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018). The NVivo computer-assisted tool was used for the purpose of facilitating data organization and coding of categories and patterns in the data into themes (Yin, 2018).

Thematic data analysis occurred in stages (Vaismoradi, et al., 2013). In the initial stage, each interview was transcribed verbatim by a research assistant. The next stage involved my listening to the audio-tape and conducting a first reading of the transcript as a whole for accuracy and with no formal analysis process involved (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the second reading of the transcript, an inductive approach was used and salient comments or points were identified using a highlighting and memoing technique to mark these prominences (Yin, 2018). I prepared and attached to each interview a written summary of salient points. These salient points or comments were identified as emergent participant answers, phrases or words that caught me by surprise (e.g., a comment I did not expect), ideas that did not relate to the question being asked of the participant and/or a “story” told by the participant that stood alone and was relevant to the research topic (Quinn Patton, 2015). This material informed the study with new ideas or concepts that O’Connor & Gibson (2003) described as “rich points” (p. 70). For example, a common phrase used by many participants was “getting everyone on the same page” that became an overarching theme.

The third reading entailed the recognition of concepts using a deductive approach in that answers to each interview question were identified and labelled with a code in the form of a word(s) using a semantic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Deductive coding was research and literature driven, for example coding was designated for the valuable outcomes/social impacts of the TAY Planning process or the descriptions of engagement and collaboration. Following this step, what information was left that did not pertain to the interview questions was also identified and coded inductively. At this stage, the analysis results were used to create the member check content for those participants who were interested in reviewing this summary list of key findings that I noted in the interview. They had the opportunity to provide further comments (e.g., changes, edits, additional information or recommendations). The member check summary list was composed using the most precise/exact wording possible that was used by the participant. The purpose of this effort was to maintain the summary list in the words that represented the participant's direct expression versus my interpretation and paraphrasing. The exception to this practice occurred when the language used in the participant's verbatim transcript would not be language represented in the study and interpretation was required to be able to include this information (Birt et al., 2016). For example, one participant was asked about youths during the planning meetings. I asked the participant: "Do some have pictures [to communicate with]?" and the response was "we do use pictures, um, and then, another young man, it's his mom but he's really, he's really high needs." The member check interpreted part of this response into the following full sentence; "Pictures are used for some youths who do not have the verbal capacity to communicate their choices." The participant returned the member check summary back to me with no edit to this particular point. The member check process also provided me with the opportunity to ask additional questions or to clarify any responses that seemed to stand out while

the third reading of data analysis occurred. All returned member check summary edits, changes or additions were added to the original transcript, documented in italics, labelled as member check edit and dated.

Once the participant member check and each individual within-participant analysis had been completed in hard copy form, a second analyst (one co-supervisor) completed a review of this coding for consistency across cases in terms of logic and consistent coding practice (Quinn Patton, 2015).

Because analysis is not a linear exercise but rather more of a recursive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the next stage taken in data analysis was a within-participant data analysis that was completed on NVivo software. This stage of data analysis involved transferring the participant's original transcription, which included the member check edits, into NVivo software. The within-participant analysis was done deductively and inductively, as a fresh attempt at data analysis for this transcript. The deductive approach entailed looking at the interview question (i.e., what is the purpose of the NRTAYC?) and coding the full answer as "Purpose of the Committee." The same answer was then analyzed line by line or phrase by phrase to establish each meaningful response or thought. Each of these sections of the participant's response was inductively coded. The coding (i.e., nodes in NVivo such as "vision of committee" and "strengths of the committee") established from this process was then compared to the coding scheme established in the hard copy data analysis process. This confirmed coding that matched in both hard copy and NVivo for each section of the transcript but also brought attention to differences in some coding which generated further coding (i.e., sub-categories or tree-nodes). This process was conducted on each individual transcript. Finally, a within-group analysis was completed for each of the participant groups.

Once an in depth within-group analysis was conducted for the data in each group or data set for the youth, family and professional groups, the last stage of data analysis was a cross-group analysis for all groups/data-sets for the youth, family, professionals. In this stage, categories and grouping of codes placed together determined overarching descriptions, themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). This was the last stage to establish overall findings, using codes to identify consistent themes and descriptions to support this study's discussion in terms of findings that described experiences with the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and experiences without (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Visuals and mapping were used for organization of the within-group data analysis (see Figure 6.1). During the within-group analysis, all findings were related back to the two primary research questions (i.e., the benefits and what could be better) and the three contextual research questions (i.e., how were the planning process, youth engagement, and cross-sectoral collaboration described). For the cross-group analysis, the focus remained on the two primary research questions. Figures were composed to illustrate each of these results sections (see Chapter 6). Thus, for reporting, themes were discussed under the research and/or contextual question(s) to which they related.

Member Checking

Member checking was used in this study as a procedure to establish data accuracy, credibility and validity in an appreciative manner (Birt et al., 2016). Informant validation helped to explore any missed information, decreased errors in interpretation and strengthened trustworthiness (Nyumba et al., 2017). It was important to do the check soon after the interview to ensure that time was not a critical factor for participants' memory of what they said and why, to ensure an accurate portrayal of the participant's voice (Candela, 2019). All member check

summaries were given to participants within a two-week period following the actual interview. All member check summaries were returned to me within a three-week time frame.

Member checking involved the following steps. After the researcher had completed the second reading of the participant's transcript, a summary report was composed that included all of the participant's key points to each interview question as well as any other aspects/ideas the participant also provided during the interview conversation. All key comments/statements/ideas were included in the summary report unless it was a repeated comment/idea already stated in response to another question. All content in the summary report remained in the participant's words as much as possible. Wording was only changed in the cases where the participant's language or phrases were extraneous, lingo-type or idiomatic in nature. In this circumstance, I provided wording that was interpreted as conveying the same meaning and representative of the study's terminology. The benefit of this member checking procedure was the opportunity for me to confirm that any changed language I had made in the summary report was accurate and preserved the participant's intentional meaning. Ultimately, the intent of this study's data analysis process was to include all information that each participant provided, whether this information pertained to the specific research inquiry or any other aspect of the TAY Planning process.

Youths.

Youth participants were asked if they would like to meet with the researcher a second time to review a condensed form (e.g., a summary) of their transcript and to make any changes they wished to it. It was emphasized to the youth that this second meeting was to ensure that the researcher had their information correct; if they chose this opportunity they were provided with the time to read the revised transcript or, if they preferred, it was read to the youth. A second

option was that they were provided with a document that included the main concepts of their individual interview. The same process was followed; they were asked to confirm and/or change any of the content. If they did not wish to meet, but still wished to receive a copy of the transcript and/or concept summary, they were asked what method they would like the researcher to use to send them a copy of the document(s) (see Appendix F). The youth was given the option to read this document and to contact me if they wished to change or add any information. All youth participants requested only to receive a written summary by email that they returned to me with any changes, additions and confirmations of its content. This process was conducted by email. For all groups, no transcript or modified version or list of individual interview concepts/main points included any identifying information, such as a person's name or unique details of their life. This was done to ensure that risk to confidentiality was minimized (e.g. if this document ended up in another person's possession). Details to explain the steps taken in each stage of within-group and cross-group analysis are provided later in this dissertation in the results chapter. However, to provide an overview of the stages of design and methods for the case study, I have included a summary chart (see Table 5.1) for a reference point that can be looked back on as you read the upcoming results in Chapter 6 and 7.

SROI Analysis

The second data analysis involved a deductive approach and entailed identifying the inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the Transitional Age Youth Planning process. There were two SROI analyses completed; one focused on youths aged 18-25 years with a single integrated transition plan developed using the Tri-Sector protocol, and a second for youths 18-35 years who did not have a transition plan completed using the Tri-Sector protocol. The process of separating these foci consisted of centering the SROI on the two youth participants, one in each

category, and augmenting their data with that of the family and professional participants who had experience with the Tri-Sector protocol or with transition processes before the initiation of the Tri-Sector protocol. All professional participants reported experience with only the Tri-Sector protocol. These participants' findings were used in the SROI analysis for the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan. Some family participants who had experience with the Tri-Sector TAY Plan were used for the SROI analysis representing the youth with the Tri-Sector TAY Plan. Other family participants who had no experience with the Tri-Sector TAY Plan were used in the SROI analysis for the youth with the same experience i.e., no Tri-Sector TAY Plan.

The created social value of societal activity described by using the SROI analysis allowed unseen impacts, such as well-being/quality of life, to become tangible, visible and measurable. Calculated impacts were derived from the SROI model which involved a value mapping process. The value listing process incorporated *inputs*, *outputs*, *outcomes*, and *impacts* as the basis for determining a return on the investment (Aeron-Thomas et al., 2004; Nicholls, 2017) by using cost/benefit and social accounting methodologies along with a principle-based approach. The first step was to analyse the *input*. This calculation was determined by the various sources (e.g., meeting time cost) and uses (e.g., estimated salaries and travel time and mileage costs) of resources described by the participants as being necessary to develop the TAY Plan. This allowed for an estimation of the total investment cost of the Tri-Sector planning process (Nicholls et al., 2012). The value of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was monetized by examining any direct savings that were described by the youth, family and professional participants, and by estimating the value of described outcomes and impacts through the use of the calculation of direct increase in income (e.g. youths obtaining access to ODSP funding earlier than they would have without a plan) and proxy equivalents for skill and quality of life impacts.

This process was applied separately for the youth, family, and professional group data valuations (Nicholls et al., 2012).

The next step was to add up the monetized benefits that had been reported in the data collection. This involved adding up the benefits to all stakeholders by calculating financial and non-financial benefits determined by listing all the *outcomes* that were indicators of change (Nicholls et al., 2012). Any negative impacts or outcomes were subtracted from the total benefits accrued. Additionally, four calculations were used to avoid overclaiming the value of program impacts: *deadweight*, *displacement*, *attribution*, and *drop-off*.

SROI used a benchmark to calculate what would have happened in the absence of an activity/service (Vik, 2017) by measuring the amount of the described activity outcome that would have occurred without the activity (Nicholls et al., 2012). In the SROI analysis, this was referred to as the *deadweight*. Following the SROI principle standards, deadweight was calculated most accurately by incorporating information about the individual or group by comparing to a population that was as close as possible to that individual or group i.e., the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan. For this study, no deadweight was calculated. This is explained in the results section (see Chapter 7).

Another aspect of impact that was not calculated was *displacement* which represented the amount of an outcome that displaced outcomes for other individuals or groups. Not every SROI requires a calculation for displacement (Nicholls et al., 2012). This study did not.

It was also important to calculate how much of the outcomes and impacts were due to the contribution of other processes or organizations that were not part of the TAY Planning process. This calculation was referred to as *attribution* (Nicholls et al., 2012). When calculating the attribution rate (Steed & Nicholles, 2011), it was important to not over-claim the TAY Planning

process impacts. When evaluating what portion of the impact was significantly due to the organization's influence on youths' change, *attribution* was factored into the analysis. Because the interview questions focused specifically on the TAY Planning process, attribution calculation was not necessary.

How long an outcome derived from the TAY Planning process was not calculated as the *drop-off* rate (Nicholls et al., 2012). The extent to which this was not a factor in the SROI calculations for this project was determined based on the extent to which the support services that were part of the TAY Plans were unable to be calculated.

The outcomes identified, narrated, and quantified in the value mapping process were converted into the final impacts (Vik, 2017). The social return value was represented as the ratio of the TAY Planning process cost (input) to the TAY Planning impact value (Nicholls et al., 2012).

Two SROI of these analyses were completed. One analysis represented the process for a youth who experienced a Tri-Sector TAY Plan including both financial/quantitative calculations and outcome/impact descriptions. The quantitative evaluation illustrated the financial ratio of investment to social gains. The descriptive evaluation illustrated the qualitative impacts that could not be quantified reliably. The second SROI analysis represented a youth who did not experience the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in their transition from high school. This analysis was solely descriptive to illustrate the qualitative impacts of their transition because no reliably quantifiable outcome/impact data were available. These analyses will be explained in detail in the results section later in this dissertation (see Chapter 7).

Challenges, Limitations and Concerns with SROI

Social return on investment is becoming a common framework for social impact assessment. However, there is significant variability in how it is applied across projects (Pathak & Dattani, 2014). With this in mind, it is prudent to situate all discussion regarding SROI limitations within the appropriate context due to the realization that “many tensions emerge out of a gap between ideal and practical” (Maier et al., 2015, p. 1816). Thus, the SROI ratio can be misinterpreted.

A fundamental issue with SROI comes from the criticism of it being foundationally based upon utilitarian ideology (Maier et al., 2015). There has been criticism that qualitative data are transformed into monetary data and then compared with a common metric of currency. However, “hopes have been voiced that, by translating often-ignored impacts into the language of money, SROI analysis might put them into the limelight” (Maier et al., 2015, p. 1816). When considering its inherent limitations, there is a tendency for the focus of the SROI to be on reporting the end monetized value. It would be an error to assume that a single figure will represent the success or failure of an organization/program; this ratio is too narrow a focus. It is important that additional information is provided that describes how this monetary value was calculated (Maier et al., 2015) to address this potential limitation.

A second inherent limitation that is important to acknowledge is that the SROI analysis depends upon judgments. Each analyst must make their own discretionary decisions, for example when choosing proxies (Maier et al., 2015). The more transparent a SROI analysis is, the fewer assumptions and judgments are relied upon.

A third limitation is that the SROI analysis is a very labour-intensive method of social accounting evaluation. Depending upon the scope and complexity of the program/activity, the

resources needed to complete the analysis can be costly. There are possible ways to reduce the costs such as limiting the scope of the analysis to the most important stakeholders or using shared databases of proxy information (Maier et al., 2015).

It has been suggested that to strengthen the robustness and evaluative power of the SROI model, the addition of a theory-based approach to the analysis provides complements and supplements the process (Muyambi et al, 2017). For the purpose of this dissertation, the SROI model was used in tandem with the case study being used to *review* the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, not to formally *evaluate* it. With this intent, the focus was on discovering what aspects of the new Tri-Sector TAY Planning process were described by key stakeholders as effective components or planning activities and what additional aspects could further enhance the planning process. As a second examination of these data, the SROI analysis was used to translate this knowledge into financial/quantitative terminology.

Limitations of This Study

There were two extremely significant disruptions to data collection during the time of this study. The first major barrier to data collection of education professional participants was the provincial-wide teachers' labour issues. Data collection began in November 2019 when Ontario teachers were engaged in job action (i.e., work to rule campaign, rotating strikes or a provincial-wide walkout). Data collection attempts continued until August 2020 and the status of secondary teachers' unrest (i.e., rotating strikes) did not resolve by that time.

The second massive disruption to data collection was the onset and duration of the Covid-19 pandemic that began globally in January 2020 and impacted the Niagara Region with public health regulations of social distancing and closure of all non-essential services, businesses and public activities by March 2020. These extraordinary circumstances continued for the duration of

this study and immensely impacted my ability to collect a robust data set (i.e., especially with youths).

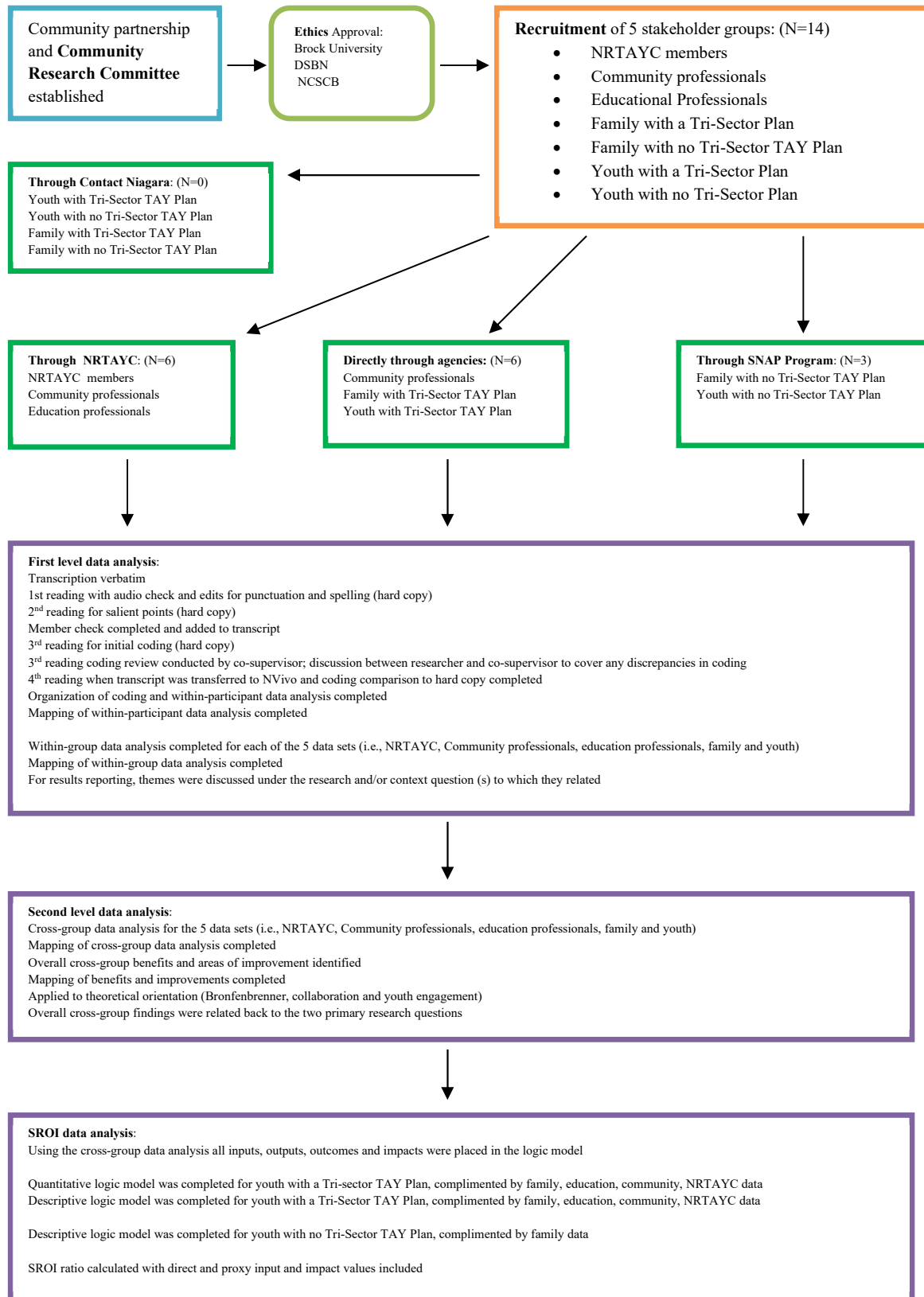
Another limitation to consider in the data collection process was the unaccomplished objective of conducting a focus group for the NRTAYC. Due to the inability to reach scheduling consensus with the committee member participants, individual interviews were conducted as a second approach. This change in data collection method resulted in the missed opportunity to have the participants provide their information in a joint effort where ideas and comments would have bounced off of each other's information and possibly enhanced the data collected.

Recruitment Concerns

The objective to recruit transitional aged youths with I/DD as the dominant or leading voice in this study was not achieved. Lack of youth participation and reliance on proxy data (i.e., youth experiences described by family or professionals) weakened the findings that represent this group (Glidden et al., 2011). In hindsight, this failing may have occurred for a number of reasons. Past research on the recruitment of persons with I/DD has discussed strategies that impact recruitment of this group of people. With this research in mind, one factor that may have been a contributor to the low participation was the reliance on a third party to introduce this study and seek volunteers (Cleaver et al., 2010). My direct contact with potential participants could have provided clarity of the study, its purpose and the immense value their voice would represent (Lennox et al., 2005). This personal approach may have provided a more comfortable space for youths to feel safe in volunteering. In addition, I could have increased familiarity in a small way by placing my photo on the recruitment flyers. Also, setting up formal or informal meetings at organizations for youths to meet with me would have created a more "active recruitment" (Nicholson et al., 2013, p. 653). With all these strategies in place, low participation

could still have occurred in this study, however, research has shown that these strategies can be helpful. My compensation for this recruitment limitation was to ensure that the youths' voice was still kept front and center in the results and findings of this study. All data analyses were conducted with the youth's voice being expressed as the primary focus in the cross-group analysis and the SROI analyses.

Figure 5.1 Summary of Steps Involved in the Study Design and Methodology



CHAPTER SIX: Results and Findings

Preface for this Chapter

This dissertation began with an exploration of the Niagara Region Local Community Agreement (2017) that was developed by a regional committee called the Niagara Region Transitional Aged Youth Committee (NRTAYC). This committee's membership is composed of social services organization, community agency and education representatives and has been the steering force behind the launch of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region (NR). The research in this dissertation was developed in partnership with Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services (CN), the agency that facilitates the NRTAYC. As a community-based research project, a community research committee was established for this research and proceeded to determine the key research questions. The committee's primary research inquiries were a) to explore the benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY planning process and b) to investigate what aspects could make it a better or even ideal process. This chapter reports on findings related to these research questions.

To understand the background components of these two primary research questions, three additional background or contextual research questions were added. These three areas of inquiry were: (a) description of the planning process which addressed the stakeholders' contributions (i.e., inputs of the SROI) and the explanations about this process; (b) description of youth engagement at TAY Plan meetings which addressed the value of youth involvement in the process; and (c) description of collaboration as the foundation of the multi-sector process and its identified benefits to all stakeholders. Each of these three questions is connected significantly to the discussion of benefits, the key research question of this study. A summary of the overall

benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was the main contributing data for the SROI results.

The five research inquiries of this dissertation were: 1. How did the stakeholders describe the planning process? 2. How was youth engagement portrayed by the stakeholders? 3. How did the stakeholders describe collaboration between the sectors in regard to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process? 4. What were the described benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process? 5. What could make it a better/ideal process? The current chapter will explain the results of the interviews with the 5 groups of participants: members of the NRTAYC, education professionals, community professionals, family members and youths. Each group's results will be presented in a separate section of this chapter, with each section illustrating the themes that emerged from my reading of participants' experiences and thoughts relating to the research questions noted above. The last section of this chapter will present the cross-group thematic analysis to illustrate the overall results and outcomes of this study. The results from each group describing their individual contributions (i.e., inputs) and benefits (i.e., outcomes and impacts) of the Tri-Sector TAY planning process were then used in the SROI results explained in Chapter Seven. (For the sake of clarity, in this chapter each of these sections will be headed using an American Psychological Association Publication Manual Level 1 heading that usually is reserved for chapter titles) (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Before delving into the results sections, a general description of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process will be provided to explain the basic practices of multi-sector planning for transitional aged youths, the functions of the TAY Plan itself, and the nature of TAY Plan meetings and the people involved. This is all foundational and background information to provide a clearer understanding of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. The following

descriptions were derived from the descriptions and explanations provided by the participants in the five stakeholder groups.

General Description of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process

Considering the overall planning process, it was evident that it had many parts. The onset of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning occurs when CN receives the referral that a youth with I/DD aged 14-17 years is in need of a TAY Plan. The process of identification at CN would be initiated when a youth is identified by a service provider or education professional (C-02, C-03, C-04).

Once Contact Niagara has designated the education or community professional as Lead, the next step is for the Lead to schedule a TAY Plan meeting. The Lead contacts the youth's parents by phone or letter (C-01, C-02, C-03) to explain what will be involved in this planning process such as: "[t]his is the tri-ministerial project. Everybody's working together. This is what you can expect. I am very clear with parents that the children - the youth is to come to the plan... and express their goals" (C-02). Once the family and youth have completed their first TAY Plan meeting, future TAY plan meetings occur annually as they continue to review/update the TAY Plan document. If it is an annual review TAY Plan meeting, the content of the phone call or letter of contact by the Lead changes because the parents are now familiar with the process.

As the Lead organizes the scheduling of the TAY Plan meeting, the family can decide who they want to attend the TAY Planning meeting (C-04). As Lead, some community professionals connect with the youth's teacher and any other service providers who may be listed on the Tri-Sector TAY Planning referral that they received from Contact Niagara. As one participant described it, "we set up a date and we usually meet at the schools just because it is more convenient for the schools... and we all get together and we meet and we just start the process" (C-01). The community professional as Lead may phone or meet with the parents prior

to the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meeting to prepare them: “if they’ve never heard of it [the TAY Plan]... sometimes I will meet with them, sometimes it’s just good enough to do over the phone, depends on the parent” (C-01). One participant described scheduling a whole day at the school to have Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings. An exception to this meeting location was a youth who is home schooled or a parent who is unable to leave their house (C-02).

As mentioned, the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings are held at the school during school hours to accommodate the education professionals and the student. It was described the first Tri-Sector TAY Plan meeting will run from one to one and a half hours in length while the subsequent annual meetings tend to be shorter (i.e., one hour long). “Sometimes it can be difficult, sometimes it’s a lot of questions to the young person to get them, and a lot of times they don’t know what they want to do” (C-02). To ease this process for the youth, the community professional, who is Lead, begins the meeting by explaining its purpose to the youth.

Within the school system, the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process starts with the student being identified as exceptional, followed by special education placement with either full-time or partial integration, assignment of a resource teacher, development of an IEP and then referral for the TAY Plan application through CN. Contact Niagara designates a Lead person who would tend to be a community service provider, if the student was connected to a developmental service agency. However, if the student does not have a connection to a developmental service agency, the school is automatically designated as Lead and the planning process is reliant upon the family and the educational professional.

The Lead person takes on the responsibility for contacting families and professionals, arranging the TAY Plan meeting, completing the necessary documentation for the TAY Plan and overseeing follow up to the TAY Plan. The TAY Planning meetings usually include the

attendance of the classroom teacher, educational resource teacher, possibly educational administration if needed, the family/guardian and any representatives of community agencies (i.e., Community Living, Bethesda, or Pathstone Mental Health). It also was described if the needs of the youth require it, a special education consultant may attend the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meeting.

The Lead arranges and facilitates the meeting for all other persons who attend. As TAY Plans are reviewed at the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings on an annual basis, the TAY Plan template involves a check list of goals and considerations for the youth's future. The TAY Plan also has a checkbox to confirm that a Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) application is in place at age 16 years which includes applying for the adult funding of Ontario Disability Support Pension (C-03).

At annual TAY Plan meetings following the onset of the planning process, the youth's goals are reviewed, revised and updated. After each Tri-Sector TAY Plan meeting, the Lead is responsible for completing the TAY Plan document and providing copies to all meeting attendees and to Contact Niagara. This follow-up of the Tri-Sector TAY Plan was described as being done for the following purpose: "For sharing information with the team members because after [the meeting]... a copy of the TAY Plan goes to the family, and a copy to the school, and a copy to Contact [Niagara]" (C-02). This described the administrative role the Lead plays and the time and workload associated with this role.

The Results of the Five Stakeholder Groups

Each stakeholder group will have their own individual section that presents the findings for that specific group. Each section will follow a consistent format that covers the 3 contextual or background research questions of this dissertation: a description the

Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, youth engagement and collaboration. Each section also will cover the two primary research questions: what are the benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and what could make it better? Within each of these five areas of inquiry, themes will be identified and explained as to how they relate to other areas and/or the research questions, including the SROI results where applicable. Each section will provide a Figure to illustrate the five research questions and their associated themes. The order of the result sections are: NRTAYC, Education Professionals, Community Professionals, Family and Youths.

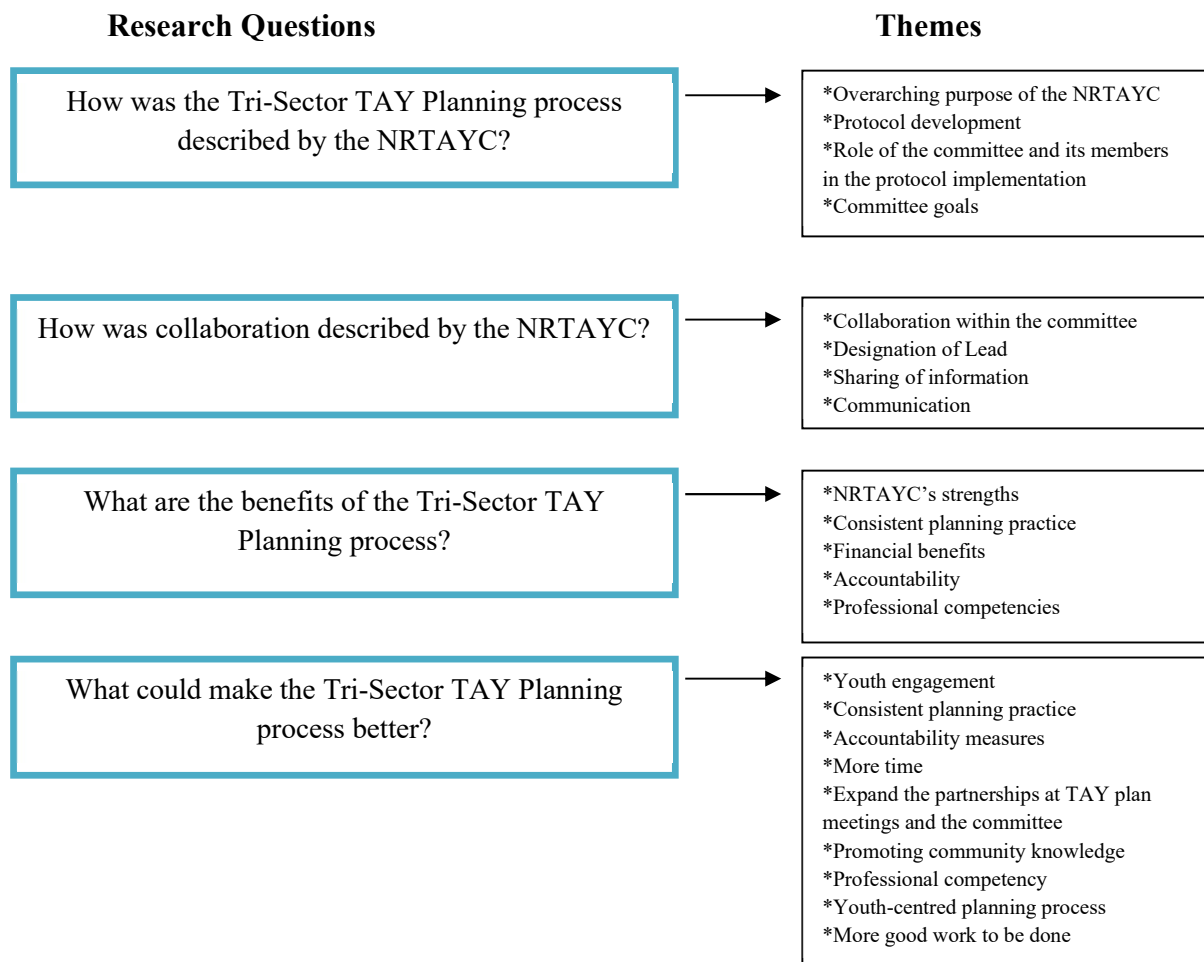
Section 1: NRTAYC Results

The first section of this chapter will discuss the results of the data analysis of the NRTAYC group. A brief description of the committee will be provided to give a general context for the data. In context to the other four stakeholder groups that will follow this section (i.e., education professionals, community professionals, family and youth), the NRTAYC participants received a different set of interview questions that focused on a broader perspective which related to the ecological meso-level of the TAY Planning process. This section will present the results of the interviews with three NRTAYC participants that address two of the contextual research questions: how this group of stakeholders described the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and how collaboration was described by these committee members. The other contextual research question exploring youth engagement is not included in this results section because it was not asked about in the interviews of this particular group of participants; it reflected a focus that did not pertain to the exploration of the committee's operations. Accordingly, the first of the research inquiries involves the description of the process and presents four key themes

that were closely connected to each other and emerged from participants' responses to the interview questions: *overarching purpose* of the committee (i.e., the initial reason for which the NRTAYC formed and continues to exist), the local community agreement's (2017) *protocol development*, the *role of the committee* (i.e., the function played by the NRTAYC in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process), and the *committee's goals* (i.e., the NRTAYC's desired results). To clarify the distinction between some of these closely knit themes, the overarching purpose of the committee pertained to information the participants provided about the primary motives for commencing the committee such as the transformation of the Provincial Transition Planning Framework (2011) into regional practice. The distinction between this theme and that of committee goals is that goals pertained to more specific objectives put in place by the committee to serve the overarching purpose. Accordingly, the theme of roles of committee members serves to explain the information provided by the participants that related to specific actions taken by committee members that lead to goals and helped enact the overarching purpose. Each of these themes will be described and, when applicable, considered in terms of how they relate to the main research questions regarding benefits of and/or suggested improvements to the TAY Planning process. The discussion of each of these themes will end with a message explaining its relevance to understanding the TAY Planning process. This is followed by the next research question looking at how collaboration of the sectors was discussed during the participants' interviews. This area of inquiry included the themes of *collaboration of the committee*, *designation of Lead*, *sharing of information* and *communication*.

Next to be addressed are the results pertaining to the dissertation's two primary research questions: the benefits of the TAY Planning process and what could be better or create an ideal Tri-Sector TAY planning process. With regard to the issue of the benefits of the planning process, the themes identified in the interview data were: *NRTAYC's strengths, consistent planning practice, financial benefits, accountability, and professional competencies*. Finally, the last area of inquiry investigated the question of what could make the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process better/ideal. From the participants' interviews, the following themes emerged: *youth engagement, consistent planning practices, accountability measures, more time, expand the partnerships at the TAY plan meetings and the committee, promoting community knowledge, professional competency, youth-centered planning process, and more good work to be done* (see Figure 6.1). It is to be noted that even though youth engagement was not explored as a research inquiry for this stakeholder group, it did appear as a theme in the areas of what could make the planning process better.

Figure 6.1 *The four research questions are illustrated with their associated individual themes that represent the results of the analysis of data from members of the NRTAYC*



General Description of Niagara Region Transitional Aged Youth Committee (NRTAYC)

The interview questions for this group of stakeholders were different from those that were asked of the other four stakeholder groups (see Appendix N). The questions for the NRTAYC participants focused on the characteristics and functions of the committee and focused on description of the NRTAYC meeting structure, operations and general practices. The data analysis also included an in-depth examination of the participants’

perspectives and views regarding the committee's characteristics and objectives in relationship to the overall TAY Planning process.

The core membership of the committee consisted of representatives from children's, adult, education and mental health services. This collective included representatives from the four school boards (i.e., Public/Catholic and English/French speaking) as members of the committee. Having education professionals collaborating with the children's and adult services was noted as being a valuable asset to the TAY Planning process. As one NRTAYC participant stated: "So that is awesome that they [the educational professionals] bought into this and are really actively involved in ... trying to get transitional aged youth plans for people in Niagara that need them" (NRC-02). The purpose of establishing multi-sectoral collaboration in the committee membership was to include a platform for building consensus and unity across services for transitional aged youths.

The NRTAYC was initiated in 2013 and officially began focusing on the TAY Planning process by 2014. The committee membership has been somewhat fluid in that the actual membership was described by the participants as being up to 30 members with the average meeting attendance varying from 15-20 people. Initially, the committee met on a monthly basis to establish the Local Community Agreement – Niagara Region (2017). However, at the time that this study was conducted the committee was meeting quarterly. Each meeting was reported by the participants to last from 2 to 2.5 hours and meeting locations were described as rotating among the members' organizations. The committee meeting agendas were developed by CN staff who also facilitated the

meetings. Committee members described CN as showing strong, passionate and committed leadership in the development and longevity of the NRTAYC.

Overarching Purpose of the NRTAYC

This theme explored the committee members' observations and perspectives of the purpose of the NRTAYC (i.e., the reason why it is in place. In their responses, the participants viewed the committee as promoting smoother transitions for youths with I/DD by establishing common procedures, such as the Integrated TAY Plan template, for use in individual planning across Niagara based on the Local Community Agreement – Niagara Region (2017). One committee member described the purpose of the NRTAYC as “to make the TAY process as effective as possible for as many people as possible” (NRC-01). Another committee member described it as promoting a process that allowed for youths and families in the community to benefit from having a TAY Plan by paving a smoother pathway for youths transitioning from children's to adult services. As mentioned, consistency was identified as an important feature of an effective planning process. This was achieved by the NRTAYC's development and implementation of a single TAY Plan template based on the procedures outlined in the Local Community Agreement – Niagara Region (2017) that was used by both education and community service providers during individual planning meetings.

To establish strategies to fulfill the committee's purposes, their meetings provided the platform for cross-sectoral review of the TAY Planning process and the leeway to enhance it based on each sector's concerns and recommendations being presented, heard and incorporated. One example of this progress at the time of this study was the development of a sub-committee that aimed to revise the TAY Plan template to create a

more user-friendly document for professionals and families in the future. In accordance with the shifting purpose and tasks of the NRTAYC, from development of the initial protocol to the revision of frontline planning documentation, the committee membership had changed from senior management of organizations to include frontline staff to reflect the evolution of the role of the committee and its changing needs.

Moving beyond the general description of the NRTAYC, the committee members described a productive and growing TAY Planning process that was catalysed by the committee's collaborative work. The overall purpose of the NRTAYC was described as "getting *everyone on the same page*, following the same protocol and process" (NRC-02). This overarching theme of the NRTAYC data set was the common phrase stated by all participants: "getting *everyone on the same page*" (NRC-01, NRC-02, & NRC-03). This phrase, which became the title of this dissertation, reflected two major actions related to the TAY Planning process itself: protocol development and community practice. The main committee tasks began with the development of the Local Community Agreement – Niagara Region (2017) protocol for the Integrated TAY Planning process that led to the implementation of the Local Community Agreement – Niagara Region (2017) that focused on the level of community practice. Thus, as the key purpose of the NRTAYC, both the protocol development and its implementation in community practice contributed to the aspiration of getting *everyone on the same page*.

Protocol Development

This theme identified the participants' interview responses that described how the Local Community Agreement (2017) was designed, such as to develop a consistent procedure, and the steps involved in reaching agreement across service sectors. The early

stages of the committee's development of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process were described as being arduous "because there was a lot to sort through and... a lot of different... entities involved in it" (NRC-01). With persistence and collaboration, representatives from the three sectors met monthly in the first years to determine an amenable Local Community Agreement (2017) for the Niagara Region. The agreement on this document required consensus among the representatives of many different organizations working together. It was reported that in this early stage sectors such as education and adult services had different views about what the TAY Planning process meant to each: "there seemed to be some... lack of agreement - I guess would maybe be a way of describing it - between education and the... DS [developmental services] sector organizations about what... this process meant to... each" (NRC-01).

Navigating an agreement meant working through these sectoral differences and striving for a consistent process "because they wanted people to sign off on the protocol - that everybody's willing to work together, to ... you know, come up with these ... TAY Plans for people" (NRC-02). Senior management-level professionals sat on the committee at that time while the committee's focus was on the development and launch of the Local Community Agreement – Niagara Region which was accomplished in 2017. As mentioned previously, this Agreement was established "to get everybody onboard with the protocol" (NRC-03). Collaboration, a research inquiry to be discussed in detail later, was a critical component of the protocol's development implementation in community practice.

Role of the Committee and its Members in the Protocol Implementation

This theme explores the participants' descriptions of the function played by the committee in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. Its function included raising multi-sector community awareness about the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. It also explores the participants' descriptions of their role (i.e., their individual functions) as ongoing committee members providing community-based feedback on agenda items as the planning process unfolded across the region.

The first role of the committee was to promote the enactment of the 2017 protocol to actual community practice with cross-sectoral collaboration by disseminating information about the protocol to organizations and school boards. This sharing of information included community and education professional representatives, as committee members, reporting the implementation challenges and benefits back to the NRTAYC for review and further consideration.

The role/function of committee was described by one participant as engaging in "systems work" (NRC-02) with the implementation of the TAY Plan template that was based on the procedures outlined in the Local Community Agreement – Niagara Region (2017). This "systems work" was explained as involving awareness-building across service sectors and among organizations within each sector, updating information on an ongoing basis, promoting TAY Planning access to youths and families with the development of youths' goals in mind, and ultimately foster these components through cross-sectoral and multi-organization collaboration.

As noted above, the overall purpose of the NRTAYC was described as "getting everyone on the same page following the same protocol and process" (NRC-02). Naturally, the role of the NRTAYC itself was closely tied to the purpose of the

committee; however, the description of the role of the individual committee members (i.e., what function they played as a committee member) varied among the participants. One committee member described their role on the committee as being a representative of their organization providing feedback on the agenda items during any particular meeting. A second member discussed their role as a two-way messenger carrying information and issues between their organization and the committee, along with sharing direct experiences with other committee members. This described role relates to the “systems work” mentioned earlier. A third committee member described their role on the committee as an advisor in discussing best practices and moving the TAY Planning process forward in ways such as to educate families about the process.

By the gathering of information and reported experiences from the different sectors, the committee responded to changing community needs. The committee progressed by expanding its membership as these needs arose. As such, the themes of purpose, protocol development and role of the committee and its members are closely linked. Facilitating protocol use in practice was a benefit generated by multi-sector collaboration; a benefit generated by the NRTAYC’s purpose to do so and the role of its membership. It also was described the NRTAYC’s objectives and goals at the time of this study were to raise community awareness regarding the process and the resources available in the NR for youths with I/DD.

Committee Goals

This theme identified the participants’ interview responses that described their perception of the committee’s current goals and objectives (i.e., desired results). Some of these ambitions included developing a more congenial process for designation of Leads

(the designated professional who facilitates the individual Tri-Sector TAY Plan), increasing promotion of resource sharing, developing a user-friendly TAY Plan, and expanding the committee's service provider membership (i.e., private schools).

The committee participants did not describe the committee as being goal-focused. Rather their description of the committee's objectives seemed to be community responsive and driven. When asked what goals the committee had in place, participants did not recall any specific long-term goals. One committee member described neither specific formal short-term nor long-term goals had been identified by the committee. However, another committee member identified short-term goals of the committee that included achieving consistency in the planning protocol and planning process, in the identification of Leads, and accomplishing raised awareness about TAY Planning by "spread[ing] the word" (NRC-02) as well as sharing resources. These descriptions seemed to be goals that were sensitive to the TAY Planning process and how it was unfolding in community practice. Another committee member identified the committee's recent short-term goal as being the formation of a sub-committee to revise the TAY Plan template. All these objectives were described as having been committee agenda items at one time. All these objectives were responsive to community feedback and identified needs to move the TAY Planning process forward in a beneficial way.

The overarching short-term goals were described as being the review of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and broadening community collaboration, such as the recent membership invitation extended to the private schools. As one participant stated:

Right now the ... new [TAY Plan] form is... the main goal... and looking at better community collaboration. We've just recently brought in a couple

of new members that are... from the private schools, ... and bringing them in to make sure everybody's *on the same page*. (NRC-03)

This collaborative approach was identified as being the committee's key strength; the foundation of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process's benefits. As one participant noted, "[the committee] should be commended for... building of a strong relationship with education... so that we can work together" (NRC-02).

How Was Collaboration Described By the NRTAYC?

The exploration of collaboration, for the data analysis of the NRTAYC data set, was divided into themes to include collaboration within the committee itself, among community services and within the education sector. The construct of collaboration was identified as a result of participants' references to experiences that reflected the 3Cs (see Chapter 3). These 3Cs included components of *communication* among sectors about their perspectives and viewpoints (e.g., what TAY Planning means for that sector), *coordinated* information sharing and making compromises (e.g., determination of Lead designation in the best interest of the youth) and *cooperative* sharing of resources between and among the different service providers. The 3Cs will be discussed as they relate to the four themes found in the analysis related to this research question: *collaboration within the committee*, *designation of Lead*, *sharing of information*, and *communication*. The next four sections will explain each of these themes in detail.

Collaboration within the Committee

This theme explores the participants' observations and described experiences of how the committee members communicated, coordinated and cooperated as a unit.

The committee displayed overt collaboration in terms of the *coordination* of rotating meeting locations among the various representatives' organizations. Meeting location was decided based on available space and locations that were convenient for the majority of members. To develop the Tri-Sector protocol for the Niagara Region, the three sectors (education, children's and adult developmental services) were able to work through their differences based on the *communication* of what the process meant to each sector. This stage of moving towards *cooperation* was described as a challenge in that "it seemed like that was something that had been ... quite a struggle to navigate - the ... politics of it" (NRC-01). Even though a strong relationship has been built between the sectors, it was described the different perspectives between the education and developmental sectors still had some distance to travel to completely merge onto "*the same page*" regarding what TAY Planning meant: "There, we are not 100% *on the same page*" (NRC-01).

It was described committee members' commitment to regular meetings, initially on a monthly basis, supported the collaborative outcome of the implementation of the TAY Plan template that all three sectors came to agree upon and promote for use in community practice. The committee used their collaborative approach to implement the Local Community Agreement – Niagara Region (2017) protocol and to promote the Tri-Sectoral consistent use of the TAY Plan template "to get everyone on board" (NRC-02). A long-term member of the committee strongly commended how the committee had brought the three sectors together and accomplished working together: "that's no easy task in itself, you know. They really got buy-in of the Board of Education which I think

has made all the difference in the Niagara Region with ... the TAY Planning ... they've leveraged that ... building of a strong relationship with education" (NRC-02).

The promotion of the consistent use of this Agreement protocol across the Niagara Region was described as being an outcome of the committee's collaborative work that was underpinned by CN's commitment to the TAY Planning process:

[CN] they... should pat themselves on the back and they could be... really relied on... for some best practice and... how... they have been successful in getting this far with...[a] large group of cross-sectoral representation moving together towards better planning for... transitional aged youth.

(NRC-02)

It was described as taking a long time to coordinate the sectors and organizations, but once the committee was established members were committed to supporting the TAY Planning process and developing collaborative community practice. CN was described by one participant as being the driving force behind this collaborative approach in supporting the committee members of all three sectors. With the three sectors sitting on this committee, the protocol was established with the cooperation of each sector being "*on the same page.*" To achieve this, important discussions were held including "who [the] Lead was ... probably the biggest example that I've seen... in terms of everybody getting on to the same page" (NRC-01).

Discussions at the committee table regarding which sector service provider should be Lead for the development of each individual TAY Plan and the reasons why helped each sector to understand the other sectors' positions. For example, early in the process some teachers and school boards assumed that a community service provider should

automatically be designated as the Lead for all individual TAY Plans. However, after committee discussion and communication among sector representatives, it was realized that there may be circumstances when the education service provider was the better designate because they were more familiar with the youths, whereas the community provider, in some cases, did not know the youths as well or at all. The Tri-Sector representatives who sat on the committee were described as having the commitment to be collaborative; however, this collaborative process, unfortunately, became less evident as the TAY Planning process moved into day-to-day operations. This decrease in collaborative action was described as being due to the loss of vision to carry out TAY Planning in the classroom:

Education I don't think necessarily often knows why they're doing plans and ... there's good reason for that. Like, I think, it's hard for education because they have a lot of staff movement... so you'll get... [a] Special Ed Consultant... that really gets the TAY process and really digs into it and then they're in a different... zone or they're in a different maybe department altogether and... you've lost that contact, you've lost that knowledge and some somebody new is coming in... and it's bringing that person into the fold and this is why you need to be doing those and these plans and all of those things. (NRC-01)

While collaboration at the level of the NRTAYC was a result of the commitment of sector representatives to the planning process driven by strong leadership from CN, in the context of direct implementation of the Planning process, issues such as staff changes (i.e.,

the frequent turnover of Special Education professionals) made getting frontline professionals *on the same page* challenging to coordinate.

Designation of Lead

This theme explores the committee participants' observations and experiences of the committee's impact on who would be designated as the Lead to facilitate TAY Plan meetings for individuals and how this designation would be decided. The committee was described as having had a lot of discussion in past meetings regarding the topic of Lead designation to reach agreement on this part of the TAY Planning process. At the NRTAYC, personal and organizational experiences were brought to the committee and shared to assist with reaching an effective decision regarding the designation of the Lead in the TAY Planning process:

[I]n our organization, we find that the certain school boards or certain teachers ... will refer all of their kids back to us as the Lead, ... thinking that it's the community agency's responsibility. So, I know we've had some discussion around, are we responsible for the Lead, because there's kids that are in school and we've never met, we don't seem like the best people to be the Lead in those scenarios. Um so I think the committee, it really helps to allow for those discussions because we're all at the table for that. (NRC-01)

Through committee members' communication of the pros and cons of specific procedures, it was decided that the professional who was most familiar with the youth would take on this role. However, this was not a fast and easy solution to implement at TAY Plan meetings. Committee members had to hear each others' concerns and

viewpoints (e.g., taking on the extra work associated with being Lead) and not lose sight of what was best for the youth in the planning process.

Less collaboration was evident in the example of the designation of Lead. It was described the designation of who should be the Lead was sometimes a contentious issue between service providers in the different sectors. To address this difference of opinions, the committee members discussed how being the Lead in a TAY Plan should focus on the value of the Plan in place instead of the focus being on what being the Lead meant in terms of more work on the provider's already busy workload. This was described as a collaborative approach to begin to promote the youths' best interests first, as one participant explained:

maybe an increase... in... the value that people place on the plans might help. But... it's not like we don't recognize their [the Plan's] value. So... I think maybe that's just the workforce and you just... get that in every workplace where people want less work to do. (NRC-01)

As this position fell either to the education or the community service provider, it created discussion regarding who should take the position of Lead for each transitional aged youth. An outcome of being Lead was the extra work that it brings with it and this may have deterred a collaborative disposition. Thus, as previously mentioned, when considering first, what is in the best interest of the youth, it was recommended at the committee level that the professional who is most familiar with the youth should tend to be Lead. This suggestion would be an example of information a committee member would then communicate back to the agency level. With this in mind, the themes of collaboration and the discussion of designation of Lead were found to have a strong

relationship to the component of communication at the level of TAY Planning meetings as well as at a committee level.

The theme of designation of Lead illustrates a part of the NRTAYC's collaborative approach that is still developing. With active communication among sector representatives and a shared commitment to consider solutions, the cooperation between community and education professionals was described as a benefit. As such, having a Lead who knows the youth and is able to facilitate a meaningful Plan benefits the youth and their transition Plan.

Sharing of Information

This theme identifies how information was shared between and among the sectors at the committee and agency levels. Overall, an atmosphere of collaboration was evident as committee members represented specific education, children's or adult developmental service organizations in the Niagara Region. Through participation in the NRTAYC process they had the opportunity to take information back to their own organization as well as to bring any information, questions or comments from their respective organizations back to the committee for discussion. The committee members collaborated by sharing with each other their specific organization's information and opportunities for youths 14-18 years of age. This was information that otherwise would not have been easily accessible to each organization because there was no platform for TAY information sharing across sectors prior to the initiation of the NRTAYC. One participant described an example of the value of information sharing: "one resource that was shared that's coming up... is being [name of organization for developmental services] ah [name

of resource that relates to successful transitions] which is a really... robust ... transitional aged youth... event quite honestly” (NRC-02).

The committee meetings provided a platform for each organization and each sector to share information about their services and resources all of which then could be communicated to families and youths they serve. Learning from each other, representatives went back to their organizations with new ideas to try and/or different ways to provide supports to families and youths. One participant stated that

there may be all kinds of opportunities that can be provided across the areas [in the NR]. Um, as opposed to just our... own little groups – [the sharing of each others’ information] has been really good. We get some ideas on different activities that can be tried [to help a youth attain a goal], different ways to set up [the TAY Plan]. So that’s really good.

(NRC-03)

This information sharing was a recent committee practice that was creating a networking paradigm. It was described NRTAYC members would like to see this sharing approach continue and they aspired to broaden the information sharing to other organizations and to increase choices of resources and activities for families and youths:

[S]ervices, programs, we [the different agencies] run very differently. Um, they might have something coming up that we’re not aware of - they have a larger... summer job program than we have. So being able to collaborate with what’s available and share that with families. (NRC-03)

One example of sharing information among the NRTAYC was described by a committee member who planned on sharing with the committee information about a conference on a

topic related to the committee's work: "[W]e are having somebody come in [to our agency] to teach [a certain topic] - so I'm kinda hoping to be able to bring some of that back to the committee" (NRC-03).

This theme illustrates how the process of collaboration among sectors can create coordination of practices among the professionals and cooperative sharing of resources and supports for youths and families. The key mechanism of information sharing was communication.

Communication

This theme explores communication as one of the 3Cs of collaboration in more detail in relation to participants' interview responses describing the process of Lead designation and the committee's ability to provide a platform for each sector to communicate their positions on this matter, and the sharing of resources available for youths and families. The steps taken to resolve the issue with Lead designation began with sharing viewpoints and coming to an agreement on Lead determination (i.e., it should not automatically fall to the community professional at the TAY Plan meeting). Communication helped professionals come to determine what was in the best interests of youths. Communication was also referred to in terms of the benefit of sharing agency training opportunities with other committee members; communication of what resources in other agencies are possibly available for youth and family to tap into.

Additionally, as discussed earlier, committee communication involved members sharing information packages, distributing information at committee meetings and inviting members' organizations to special events and presentations that one organization was hosting in their community:

[F]or instance [named a children's agency] has an information... there's somebody that's present to ... give a presentation - I believe it is on TAY Planning. Um, so.. there would be the opportunity for information packages, things like that to be distributed. Um, attending different... community livings will have information nights. (NRC-01)

This communication across sectors and organizations by the members of the NRTAYC was a created benefit when the resources of an individual service or organization are limited.

What Are the Benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process?

This research question explored the benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process with the participants' descriptions of their perception of positive outcomes in the TAY Planning process. The work of the NRTAYC was described as developing meaningful collaboration between and among the sectors by building partnerships and consistent community practices. Other benefits included financial benefits for the youth, professional accountability to complete individual TAY Plans, and raised professional competencies as a NRTAYC member and as a Lead at TAY Plan meetings.

NRTAYC's Strengths

One committee member described the collaboration among NRTAYC members as "a huge step" (NRC-01) because it was important to accomplish but not easily attained. The NRTAYC participants were proud of the committee's dedication to bringing the sectors together and building strong relationships and partnerships. The committee seemed to generate a sense of accountability at the committee level in that its membership of representatives from organizations may be more compelled to follow

through with TAY Plans. This is a notion that is discussed later under the theme of accountability. The outcome of this sense of answerability perpetuated the importance and value of TAY Planning during a time when professionals were overworked and easily could have set this process to the side, as described by one participant:

[T]he reason I say I think it's a huge step to have the committee, ... without that accountability coming from having a committee of our peers, of having ... Contact Niagara - it ... has always felt to me like TAY would be the easy process to let lapse. (NRC-01)

It was acknowledged by two participants that CN's leadership had been the core of the committee's success and their vision for future committee endeavours.

Consistent Planning Practice

As described earlier, when the Tri-Sector Transition Planning Protocol (2013) was put in place, "everybody was able to get *on the same page* and ... understand the expectation that was happening" (NRC-01). With all professionals and service providers using the same document (Local Community Agreement – Niagara Region, 2017), everyone started working within the same parameters and expectations, including the same time frames to get things done using the same overall procedures for developing individualized TAY Plans. In accordance with effective planning, the NRTAYC created a platform for the actual TAY Plan to be evaluated or assessed for its effective use and is moving forward with template revisions to address user needs. "[T]he format of the form is difficult to use sometimes. So, there will be ideas on how to make that a lot more user friendly" (NRC-03). This strategy came from the NRTAYC reviewing the information

received through their feedback loop from professionals and service providers; a strategy to increase more effective and consistent TAY Plans.

Financial Benefits

Further benefits were described with the acknowledgement that most youths with I/DD were now being identified in the system, either by the school or community services, before they turn the age of 18 years. This insured that most youths who were turning 18 were in a good position to apply for and receive Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Passport funding. Receiving funding equated into having shelter, food, employment and attending community activities/events. Failure to access these funds, as one participant noted,

could mean homelessness, it could mean... they don't have a meal, things like that if they don't... have that ODSP and they need it for their for rent or things like that... now we have DSO eligibility confirmed for most of our kids 6 months, a year before they're turning, becoming adults. (NRC-01)

The TAY Planning process helped in the timing of applications for psychological assessments that are necessary to establish TAY eligibility for Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) applications. This has meant youths getting assessments done in time for DSO applications to be adjudicated before they turn 18 years of age. With more timely identification of the need for an assessment, youths were still ending up on a waitlist to get the assessment completed but by getting on this waiting list earlier it was not a barrier to a timely DSO application and a smooth transition to purchasing supports and being eligible for adult services. Additionally, it was described the integrated TAY Plan

information was used for DSO intakes to pass on relevant information for future adult services and the identification of the young person's needs and goals as part of the development of their adult service plan. This theme will be discussed in more detail in the upcoming results sections (i.e., education, community professionals and family stakeholder groups).

Accountability

This theme identifies the presence of the NRTAYC and its impact on each sector's sense of accountability when attending committee meetings. One participant discussed that the NRTAYC had generated accountability and motivation for organizations to follow through with implementation of the Local Community Agreement's procedures (2017): "[T]here's a lot of accountability to make sure that our agencies aren't just... letting the ball drop because I don't think, I don't know that there's anything in place that would keep us account[able] full[y] otherwise" (NRC-01). This notion also was mentioned earlier as a strength of the NRTAYC in that a sense of answerability created more value in the completion of TAY Plans at the committee level. Within this theme, accountability is addressed in terms of broadening this value to the education and developmental services and individual TAY Plan meeting level.

Being a member of the NRTAYC was described as generating a sense of shared accountability (NRC-01). The committee provided a valuable sense of accountability among the members in the Niagara Region. It was stated that this sense of accountability came from sitting on this committee of peers/colleagues and this presence as a member insured the TAY process did not regress or decline in terms of a lack of accountability at the committee level. Without this committee membership to keep the TAY Planning

process as a regular focus, “there’s nobody that would be saying like, hey, you didn’t get your TAY plans done this year” (NRC-01).

Finally, even though there was no formal measure of accountability in place for the TAY Planning process during the time of this study, the growth and continued promotion of the planning process was described as existing due to CN. This organization was described as being committed to facilitating progressive strategies for the TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region and their leadership has promoted individual accountability within each committee member with their modelling of dedicated commitment to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process.

Professional Competencies

This theme explored the participants’ observations and interview responses that described the impact of the NRTAYC on professional standards in terms of the completion of youths’ Plans.

With the NRTAYC generating a sense of accountability, as described above, professionals and service providers have been motivated to uphold the TAY Planning process and increase their standards of planning with youths (i.e., getting TAY Plans completed). Education and community service providers were described by some of the NRTAYC members as putting full days into TAY Plan meetings that were scheduled back-to-back. There were a lot of pieces to organize and facilitate, including phone calls to those participating in individual planning meetings, facilitating the planning meetings, aggregating the youth’s information into the TAY Plan, and following up on implementation of planning goals. It was described an important piece of the TAY Planning process was the promotion of its value to families, youths and professionals to

keep the planning process active, effective and improving to higher standards. It was recognized at the NRTAYC level that the skills set of professional competency was recognized at the frontline level, but also at the committee level regarding the development of overarching documentation and established procedures such as the Local Community Agreement – Niagara Region (2017) and the TAY Plan template. The NRTAYC members had shown their competency by getting representatives of multiple service sectors to collaborate and agree to commit to the process (i.e., the Community Agreement). In addition, with regularly changing staff of Special Education professionals it was mentioned that maintaining a high standard of understanding of the personal, community and financial needs of youths with I/DD at TAY Plan meetings could be challenging, as in the case where an experienced educator is replaced by a new educator who then will require some time to gain the same level of experience and professional competency.

Additionally, it was suggested that the designation of Lead should be the person whom the youth/family saw as being most familiar and most involved with the youth. This description may have pertained to professional competency in terms of having a personal connection with a youth. For example, the youth's teacher would be an appropriate Lead because of having a personal connection with and more knowledge about the youth to facilitate a TAY Plan. In contrast, it was explained that "there's kids that are in school and we've never met, we don't seem like the best people to be the Lead in those scenarios" (NRC-01).

This theme illustrates the committee's recognition of the importance of professional skills necessary to execute the TAY planning process and the benefits of this planning for transitional age youths.

What Could Make the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process Better?

The NRTAYC participants in this study were asked what could improve the TAY Planning process and what would make it an ideal process. Each key recommendation or suggestion represents one of the themes discussed below. These areas of improvement were: *youth engagement* (i.e., encourage more youth involvement), *consistent planning practices* (i.e., maintain CN's commitment and committee membership), *accountability measures* (i.e., implement a compliance procedure), *more time* (i.e., to complete Plan), *expand the partnerships at TAY Plan meetings* (i.e., to invite the Ministry of Health to the planning table), *promoting community knowledge* (i.e., disseminating committee knowledge about TAY Planning to local service providers and creating opportunities for mentorship), *professional competency* in regard to professional development of TAY Planners (i.e., Leads mentoring each other about planning strategies), *youth-centered planning process* (i.e., ensuring a youth-centered planning approach is used), and *more good work to be done* (i.e., enhancing TAY Planning standards to an A+ level and a list of more systems work)).

Youth Engagement

This theme explores the construct of youth engagement that was addressed in Chapter 3 with the levels of engagement defined as presence, encounters, and participation. The theme involving these three levels of engagement was brought forth by

participants' observations regarding the importance of youths' involvement in or possible challenges with participating in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process.

The importance of optimizing youth engagement to a level of active participation was discussed by two of the participants as being an area for improvement. One participant described what I interpreted as a level of encounter in youth engagement:

I don't know how many [youths] have really taken ownership of their TAY process. Um, I don't... I would say that it's still dominated by the parents, by the teachers, by the agency staff. And the kids are there and if they're asked a direct question, they'll give a direct response. (NRC-01)

Youth engagement, as a key contextual research question in this dissertation, is a theme that will be discussed in more detail in the results sections of the next four stakeholder groups to follow (i.e., education and community professionals, family, and youth).

Interestingly, though youth engagement was not a focus in the interview questions for this specific stakeholder group, it was still acknowledged as an area that could be better in the planning process.

Consistent Planning Practice

During interviews, participants were asked what they saw as being the future of the NRTAYC. One member described the committee had done a lot of important work so far with the implementation of the Local Community Agreement – Niagara Region (2017) and was now focusing on getting a new TAY Plan template in place. Promoting successful TAY Planning should involve “more conversations about really setting people up for [an] awesome adult life - instead of just setting them up for adult life. Um so, I, I think that the committee could really start to shape some of that stuff” (NRC-01). This

related to the suggestion for more consistent practices in the planning process with the implementation of a user-friendly document (TAY Plan) and persistently promoting a detailed Plan format for youths' success. One committee member saw the future of the NRTAYC as providing community and professional training in regard to TAY Planning. For example, when a more user-friendly TAY Plan template is developed training could be provided in best practices for its implementation.

Another recommendation to maintain the quality and standards which were established in the NRTAYC was that the CN Executive Director and the CN employee who facilitate the NRTAYC remain in this position and not leave. Their knowledge, commitment and leadership were seen as driving the process forward because "I think Contact Niagara that must have done a lot of work to streamline the process because I know that they really drive... our community to make sure that... we're all getting these things done" (NRC-01). This recommendation included ensuring that NRTAYC meetings continue so the forward momentum will be maintained and the TAY Planning process will remain relevant. This includes prompting the great value of TAY Planning and validating the process.

Other improvements include recommendations for more consistency in the vision of the TAY Planning process between the educational professionals and the community service providers, consistent cooperation and decreased tension about the designation of the Lead, a more user-friendly TAY Plan template, and consistent practice with more training available to education professionals and community service providers regarding TAY Planning, such as holding conferences, workshops and peer sharing groups.

Accountability Measures

To promote administrative consistency and elevate credibility, it was recommended to implement Ministry oversight to ensure accountability of the TAY Planning process for youths and families. This oversight would make it more difficult for professionals but also more valuable. As one participant stated: “to me the Ministry being a little more involved with it would provide that check mark to the TAY committee and the TAY process saying that these guys and this process really matters to us” (NRC-01). It was described this would add credibility to the process in the eyes of families and provide support for organizations that are requesting that families and youths participate in it. It was suggested that this Ministry “check mark” could be in the form of a compliance process labelled with a TAY Plan title: “mak[ing] it that brand name type of thing that you’re putting out there [to youths and families] where we can go in and say we need to do this Ministry required... process with you” (NRC-01).

With no ministry oversight of the TAY Planning process, some implemented form of compliance check was recommended because “it has always felt to me like TAY would be the easy process to let lapse... there’s no... Ministry oversight of it or anything like that... there’s nobody that would be saying like, hey, you didn’t get your TAY plans done this year” (NRC-01). This was described as making the process more arduous but also more valued. A ministry mandate would have provided backing and clout/authority to service providers in the eyes of families and youths who may not see value in the TAY process. Ultimately, it was emphasized that “[p]eople seeing the value in it” (NRC-01) was important to the TAY Planning process. However, lack of a sense of formal or informal accountability could lead to TAY Planning standards not reaching top-level expectations. Even though there is no ministerial compliance measure for TAY Plans,

one participant pondered whether the committee could be facilitating a back-end push to keep the TAY Planning process moving towards further improvements.

More Time

Another proposed area of improvement was that professionals and service providers have more time to carry out TAY Plans. This would allow for some flexibility in planning meetings such as when there is a need to go over the scheduled time limit. It also would be helpful to have the flexibility to reschedule meetings to a time when families could more easily attend and at a time that is agreeable for the youths instead of the time being dictated to them. More time to prepare and complete necessary phone calls and paperwork was an additional recommendation. As one committee participant said:

there's not enough hours in the day for her to get all of those [tasks] completed. And I think the things that we hear from the school boards and what not are along the same lines - that they're trying to teach, they're trying to get IEPs done, they're trying to get report cards done, and you might want them to be TAY Lead for 5 or 6 kids and then to participate in potentially 30 or 40 other plans. Um, I think that is a big strain on everybody that's participating in the process. (NRC-01)

This theme of more time reflects the need for flexibility in scheduling TAY Plan meeting times to accommodate professionals and families. This theme also highlights the issue raised regarding the time commitment of TAY planning and how it places added strain on professionals who are required to take on added tasks and responsibilities – an issue raised, but without a solution provided.

Expand the Partnerships at the TAY Plan Meetings and the Committee

It was suggested to allow families and youths to have more control as partners in the planning process. NRTAYC participants also recommended expanding the Tri-Sector to be a four-sector protocol agreement with the inclusion of the Ministry of Health and developing an extended community of practice among the different regions in Ontario so they learn from each other:

[O]nce this [other] community [outside of the Niagara Region] got into a groove and... people... were committed to... supporting it... I think the membership... and the importance... across the larger region... would catch on quickly as a real opportunity to... work better together..., whether it was a community practice or whether they just... met with Contact Niagara to... learn of... what worked for them, what worked well [in the Niagara Region], what didn't - to help move them as far along in the TAY Planning as Niagara is. (NRC-02)

This participant recognized the value of knowledge sharing that was described as being a key component to planning with efficiency and effectiveness. This should include strong relationships across sectors and services including bringing private schools and the Ministry of Health on board.

Promoting Community Knowledge

A Part of community practices involves supporting families with varying cultural backgrounds and beliefs. Over time, and with more experience of the process, the NRTAYC itself developed a platform for its organizations' representatives to build upon each others' knowledge of regulations for these families. It also was recommended that these families should receive some type of orientation about the legal and cultural

parameters of the Niagara Region. An example was described where one family's distinctive religious beliefs did not coincide with the regulations in a developmental service agency. This type of situation and lack of cultural understanding created tension and overt misunderstandings of services and TAY Planning practices.

In addition, it was stated that improvement for families moving to this region from other countries and cultures should be addressed by increasing knowledge and awareness of service. Future committee endeavours also should include more TAY Plan training and mentorship for professionals to share knowledge, best practices and advice within and across service sectors. Additionally, training also could be provided in effective skills for networking and for being a Lead.

Professional Competency

Along with the notion of knowledge building at the community level, a recommendation also was made to expand the collaborative approach to include having education and community direct service providers meet to share TAY Plans to compare practices with the thought that this could enhance the respective professionals' planning skills to an even higher level of competency. This was described by a participant who had been involved in the planning process:

[W]hen we were initially trained with TAY Plans, I was given a form and said - here go do a TAY Plan. It's nice to be able to speak to others that have done them and see what kinds of things are coming out of their plans as well. To see what's being missed on my end, maybe there's something I've done someone else has not. (NRC-03)

This participant also made the comment that “I’ve never seen a TAY Plan that’s not my own. So it would be nice to be able to see others’ [Plans]” (NRC-03). This was an example of a committee member reflecting on the need for sharing information and collaborative experiences at the community service level.

A Youth-Centered Planning Process

When the NRTAYC participants were asked to think about an overall perfect TAY Planning process, it was suggested that it should entail youth engagement and be person-driven where youths have ownership of the planning process with education professionals and community service providers all working together in harmony so youths experience completely smooth transitions. This would require having the right people involved in the planning process to address each youth’s situation, develop natural supports and create a full compliment of people who fulfill the needs of the TAY Plan to optimize the youth’s successes.

More Good Work to be Done

This theme represents a list of recommendations that were presented by the participants. The committee members recognized that the committee work is on the right path to serving their purpose (i.e., creating smoother transitions for youths with I/DD); however, also they realize there is more to be done. This theme presents their check-list of future considerations to strive for.

One vision was described in terms of enhancing the TAY Planning process standards to be “A+” (NRC-01); to strive for the highest standards instead of average standards as being good enough. Additionally, it was stated that the future of the committee should include more “systems work” (NRC-02) by getting everyone using the

single TAY Plan in the Niagara Region's planning process, by gaining cross-sectoral awareness of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and its procedures, and by producing easier access to general TAY Planning information and mentorship support during the planning and overall transition processes. This "systems work" was described in terms of "[n]ow we're going to move in tandem with that systematically... to increase awareness and education... around... continued TAY Planning and collaboration between... the children and adult service sector" (NRC-02). Ideally, there would be no waitlists for adult services and there would be equal access to the TAY Planning process regardless of the youths' needs or support need complexities. Ultimately, it was described as "all TAY not just TAY with complex needs would have a solid transition plan coming out of high school" (NRC-02).

Section 2: Education Professionals Results

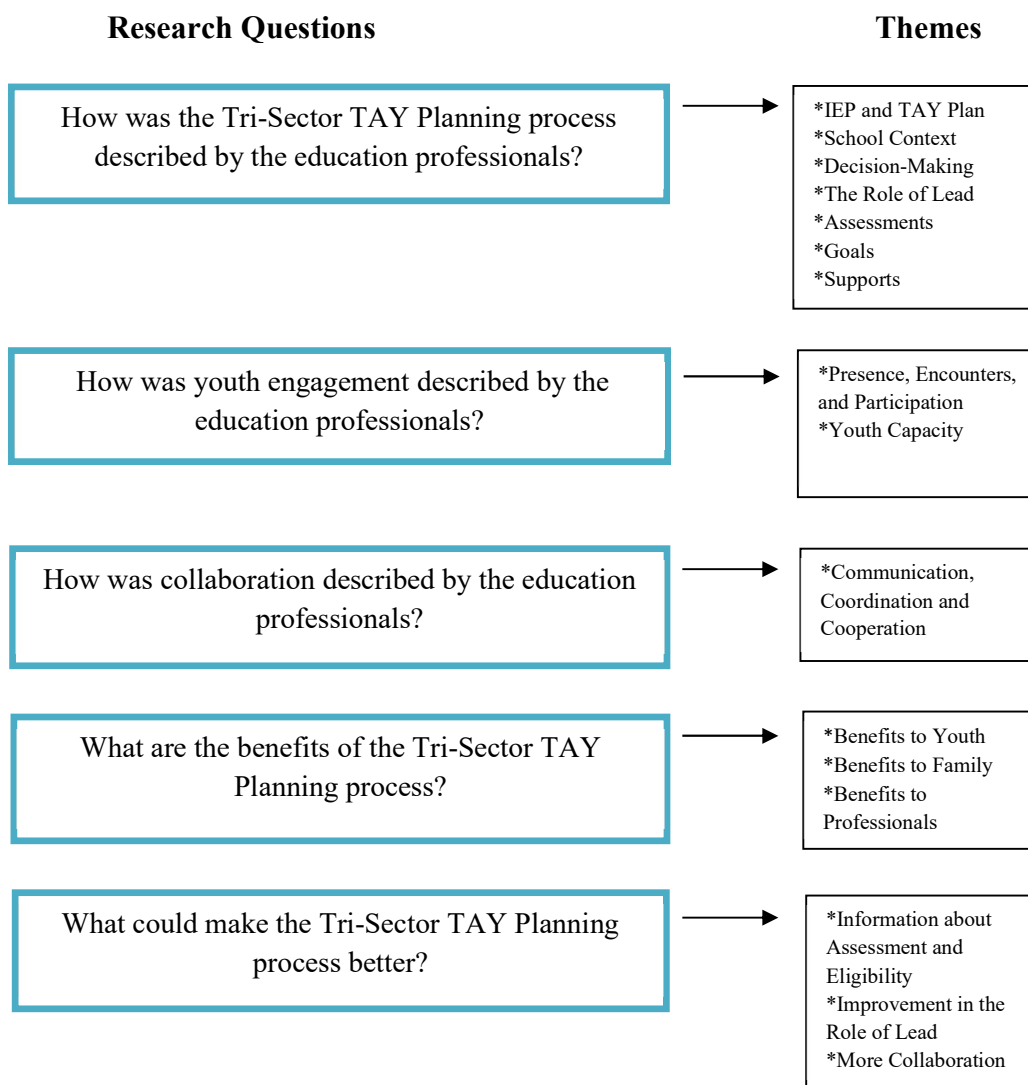
In this section, the results of the interviews with education professional participants will address the five research questions. The first area focuses on themes that emerged from the interview questions (see Appendix M) aimed at exploring how this group of stakeholders described the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. Seven key themes were identified: *IEP/TAY Plan*, *school context*, *decision-making*, *the role of Lead*, *assessment*, *goals*, and *supports* (see Figure 6.2). Each theme will be described and, when applicable, considered in terms of how it underpins the research questions regarding benefits of and/or suggested improvements to the TAY Planning process as identified by participants - questions examined more fully in the subsequent sections. The discussion of each theme will end with a message explaining its relevance to understanding the TAY Planning process.

The second area will involve explores how youth engagement was described by the education professionals, with emergent themes including *presence*, *encounters*, *participation* and *youth capacity*. This is followed by the third area looking at how participants viewed and discussed the collaboration of the sectors, with themes in this case including *communication*, *coordination* and *cooperation*. These three contextual research questions address the key inquiry in this dissertation: the planning process and how youth engagement and collaboration are related to this process (see Figure 6.2).

The fourth and fifth areas explore this dissertation's primary research questions. The fourth area will involve explaining the advantages of the planning process by identifying the benefits that emerged from participants' descriptions of their experience with the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process (see Figure 6.2). The emerging themes from

this area included *benefits for youths, benefits for family, and benefits for professionals*. The fifth and final area involves a presentation of results associated with improvements (see 6.2) specifically put forth by the participants when asked what could make this planning process better or even ideal for future consideration. The themes of *assessment and eligibility, role of the Lead, and collaboration* were included in the results addressing this research question (see Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2 *The five research questions are illustrated with their associated individual themes that represent the results of the analysis of data from education professionals*



Description of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process

IEP and TAY Plan

The core of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process is the TAY Plan that is developed for each high school student with I/DD and reviewed each year from grade 9 to grade 12. An education professional described the meetings used to develop these individual plans as involving the full compliment of an educator, the family and a community agency representative to bring a more complete plan together versus just having family and an educator present with the focus being only on academic matters and missing “any connection with an outside agency that’s helping support the family” (E-02). It is this connection among educational plans and the agency and family plans that are used together to develop the single TAY Plan that will be examined in this section. The TAY Plan reflects both the youth’s academic goals that are the focus of the educators, and the community and family goals, including planning for eventual access to adult services that are the focus of community professionals on behalf of families and youths.

The key education planning document that educators bring to the TAY planning table is the IEP (see Chapter 4 for details). To describe the relationship between the IEP and the TAY Plan, it was explained that “they’re two different documents...and two kind[s] of different processes...but they’re one and the same” (E-01). As another education professional said:

But I think if you were to put them side [by side], in most cases...you would see that the conversations... and the goals that are laid out in the integration transition plan are mirrored or supported by what the student is actually working on in school [with the IEP]. (E-02)

This participant described this convergence of goals as an assumption and did not have direct experience to confirm that the IEP and TAY Plan goals did align on a consistent basis. The IEP was described as having a section where transition goals were tracked, but while the IEP “does not use [the] language - transitional aged youth” (E-01) the participant stated that the goals on the IEP and the TAY Plan were the same. It was further explained that the Tri-Sector TAY Plan was filled out by the community support provider and the parents and that it included areas of the student’s assessment, strengths and needs, and goals.

It was emphasized that when a Tri-Sector TAY Plan did not include community service agency involvement, the focus remained solely on academic goals and, in these circumstances, “[t]hat’s where it can be a little blurry, I mean what’s the difference between, you know, educational planning through IEP discussions and an integrated transition plan meeting when the only people involved are the family and school?” (E-02). This comment highlights the idea that the responsibility of the education professional at TAY plan meetings is solely to establish the academic goals, which are derived from the IEP goals; and accordingly that the remaining goals on the TAY Plan (i.e., work, housing and community participation) are the responsibility of the family and community professionals.

One education professional said they did not know a lot about the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process; however, they were aware of the importance of determining youths’ eligibility for funding for adult developmental services. This comment speaks to the point that education professionals are knowledgeable about academic matters and limited in their awareness of the community-based matters of a youth’s TAY Plan; yet the

importance of establishing youth eligibility for adult services was clearly understood by the education professional. Eligibility was a factor clearly highlighted in the SROI results (see Chapter 7).

This theme illustrates the origin of the academic goals on the TAY Plan and the benefit of the collaborative planning process (i.e., multi-sector approach) to complete a full TAY Plan that addresses academic and community goals together.

School Context

This theme explores participants' descriptions of the types of educational programs and resources available to students with I/DD, including types of courses (i.e., academic, applied and locally developed), types of supports provided, and types of education credentials they can earn (i.e., certificate or diploma). This description of how the school context is laid out for a youth with I/DD is helpful information to facilitate understanding of the academic contribution to youth transition planning and how academic-based decisions are made.

One education professional described the school system as having levels of academics that resulted in students achieving either a certificate (which is the completion of a less in-depth academic curriculum than for a diploma) or a diploma at graduation. (Later in this chapter, in the family and youth results sections, the importance of certificates as prerequisites for admission to College CICE programs will be discussed.) The certificate level involved the accomplishment of 14 "locally developed" (E-01) courses, such as English with an Educational Assistant (EA) supporting the student in an integrated classroom. It was explained that a benefit to a locally developed course was that there was some latitude to modify the course content to meet the needs of the

individual learner. If it was decided that the student would attend the course but would not reach credit criteria, the course curriculum would be set at a realistic and achievable level. This participant said that another option was open level courses where “you have academic kids, applied kids and locally developed kids in the same classroom” (E-01).

In addition to the courses described, all students with I/DD were scheduled to attend the special needs class for at least one or two periods a year. One education professional explained that 20% of the students in a special needs class remained in that class all day. These students were described as possibly having non-verbal communication capacity and requiring hygiene supports with hand-over-hand guidance: “I set up their programming and their day - they’re working with an EA, one on one all day and their programming is ultimately based on life skills and, you know, different things” (E-01). The other students in that class were described as attending other classes such as Phys Ed, English, and Art with possible EA support. Some students also would have service providers from a developmental service agency come during school hours to support them with job placements one day a week, such as one morning a week working at a local store for an hour.

This information regarding school context explains the school curriculum, course options, and supports available to help youths with I/DD to achieve specific educational outcomes as part of the TAY Planning process. This theme highlights the benefits of the TAY Plan’s goal setting for academic accomplishments.

Decision-Making

During the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, significant decisions are made. The theme of decision-making reflects participants’ observations regarding collaboration and

youth engagement, particularly in terms of who has the power to make a decision and how it is made. When participants were asked who made what decisions during a TAY Plan meeting, one education professional described the TAY Planning as “sort of a collective decision-making process” (E-02). This description included the comment that a parent or guardian would have the strongest voice. Another education participant described, in ideal circumstances, students with I/DD should have input into their goals and the planning process should be “student-driven” (E-01). It was feasibly interpreted that at TAY Planning meetings the decision-making process is relevant to benefits, in that decisions are being made to move a youth’s Plan forward, yet it also impacts the youth’s level of engagement which will be explored later in this chapter with other stakeholder groups who verify this impact (i.e., community professionals and youths).

The Role of Lead

This theme includes all references made by education participants to the role of the person who functions as the Lead during the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process for individual youth. It also includes the outcomes or impacts the Lead may experience in relationship to this role. When asked about the TAY Planning process, discussion regarding the role of Lead prompted some important comments from education participants, such as referring to community professionals’ valuable knowledge of adult services and funding, and the partnership that is built between the two sectors when the community professionals take on the role of Lead.

One education professional stated that the community service provider, in comparison to education professionals, had more information that was critical to the TAY Plan in regard to “the funding piece” (E-01) and applying for adult developmental

services - an observation consistent with the division of labour implied earlier in connection with professionals' perceptions of the responsibilities for IEP goals versus broader life goals. The partnership between the education and community sectors was described as being an important factor in the role of Lead and in effective transition planning: "[W]e're spoiled here in [city in the Niagara Region] because...community living... support workers... connect with me and then we... have them as the Lead but then we have the meetings at the school" (E-01). This participant valued and appreciated the collaboration of the Tri-Sector approach being in place where the community professional was willing to be involved with the TAY Plan as a designated Lead. However, it also was noted that, in some locations in the Niagara Region (NR), community service agencies did not provide this collaborative approach, with one participant stating that "I would end up being the Lead for those kids and I would have the meeting with the parents myself" (E-01).

With the TAY Plan involving more than an educational focus, the community professionals play a key role at planning meetings to provide their knowledge of community services and funding, to facilitate the areas in the Plan that go beyond academic goals. The valued partnership of the two sectors speaks to the value of the imposed multi-sector planning process. This partnership also speaks to the extent of support and resources essential to plan effectively for youth goal attainment, with the role of the Lead as a central component to the coordination of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. Thus, the theme involving the role of Lead notably speaks to not only the planning process but also to the research question regarding collaboration.

Assessments

This theme entails the description of participants' responses to interview questions about how youths with I/DD are formally assessed and diagnosed, the purpose of these assessments, and any impacts or outcomes arising from them. In short, this theme addresses the issue that the function of a psychological or psychoeducational assessment within the school context is to serve educational programming purposes only. One education participant emphasized that parents and community professionals need to be clear on this matter to understand that, even though assessment to determine a youth's eligibility for adult services may be a TAY Plan goal, the educational system does not conduct assessments for this specific purpose.

Education participants made reference to the psychological assessment a youth would receive for the determination of a diagnosis (i.e., having an I/DD), which often serves the purpose of informing academic programming. One participant described two avenues to acquire this assessment. One avenue is for families to have a psychoeducational assessment or similar formal assessment completed privately, the results of which would be shared with the student's school and Special Education department. It was explained that the resource teacher would review this information with the school board psychologist and the IPRC process would be used to determine the student's category of exceptionality and their education program needs. The second avenue was explained as occurring when the school uses their own psychoeducational model, which is supported by the school board's Special Education team and allows the team "to better understand the student's cognitive and intellectual abilities" (E-02). Either avenue provides a document of assessment for the purpose of informing the youth's IPRC and IEP. This theme highlights the purpose of assessments for youths with I/DD

and how the Tri-Sector planning process brings forth the realization that an assessment needs to be in place to apply for adult developmental services. However, if a psychoeducational assessment is not available, one must be obtained privately or through community services.

Goals

As mentioned previously in the theme of IEP and TAY Plan, goals are a core component of the TAY Plan. Education participants described the types of goals that were included in TAY planning, their function to plan for the youth's future and how goals can change from year to year during high school. The participants used the language of goals to discuss job building skills at Co-ops, preparation for PSE programs and for future employment readiness. Discussion around goal setting indicated the importance of looking at future housing options for the youth and what financial considerations would be needed, such as ODSP. Parents were noted as a key support system to facilitate goal attainment.

When the education professionals were asked what types of goals usually were found in the Tri-Sector TAY Plans, one described Co-ops such as working at the local Home Hardware store learning to stock shelves with no school support, job placements such as working for a pet store with community agency support, completing the necessary courses in readiness for PSE such as the CICE program at Niagara College, developing life skills and emotional self-regulation, and promoting skills that help the student to access the community successfully. Another education professional described student goals related to living arrangements once they become an adult, such as moving

into a group home, applying for DSO eligibility and funding/financial support, PSE, and Co-op placements that could lead to community employment after graduation.

From one education professional's perspective, planning for the future and leaving high school involved the following thoughts: "so what does... that look like? What is... the day gonna look like for those kids?" (E-01). This participant described how if the student would be going to college then Co-op opportunities would be considered as part of their TAY Plan during high school to prepare them. If the student was looking towards other goals, this educator would rely on community agencies to look at "where they can go and become a part of this [community] and they offer things so the key is to make those connections" (E-01). This process of making community connections and building of social networks for youths also involved the cost of services to purchase and for families to have the funding to access such services. In fact, promoting community inclusion and obtaining eligibility status for the income to access adult services were seen as being valuable goals to accomplish and are feasibly interpreted as some of the benefits of the TAY Planning process.

In terms of goal setting, one educator said: "So [the TAY Planning process] forces us to have these meetings" (E-01) during which families, educators and the student think about the future, their goals and the steps to accomplish them. This structure helped to meet goal-based deadlines, such as completing the necessary documents to apply for funding of adult services (i.e., passport funding or ODSP) in a timely manner to ensure the financial supports would be in place by the time the youth was 18 years of age. In addition, it was explained that as the student passed into the higher grades, their yearly IEP review "becomes much more... customized... or focused on some of the skills, the

life skills, that the student might be working towards, striving towards in their integrated transition plan” (E-02). As a student approached the time of high school graduation, the goals at school were geared towards “specialized programming whether they’re doing alternatives something other than Ontario curriculum will become focused on” (E-02).

Prior to the age of 18 years and during the transition stage of TAY Planning, parental involvement was expected and outcomes from the TAY Plan required collaborative follow up as the Plan’s goals needed actionable strategies to achieve the goals. With goal setting as a main function of the TAY Plan, parents were described as being crucial stakeholders in the TAY Planning process by “getting the parents on board to think about it [what goals should be set] because... I think when they leave high school - they’re the ones who are relied on the most [to support theses goals]” (E-01). This comment speaks to the parental input necessary for a successful TAY planning process to emerge.

The theme of goals not only connects to the theme of IEP and TAY Plan, but also illustrates the list of goals that potentially become the youth’s post-secondary outcomes and the benefits that speak to the SROI analysis in Chapter 7.

Supports

This theme was identified by the participants’ explanations regarding what assistance was available to youths as they journeyed through the TAY Planning process and who provided the assistance. Academic goals such as Co-ops were supported by education professionals and EAs while other goal attainment outside of school activities was reliant on parental support.

Achieving TAY Planning goals included insuring that necessary supports were available for the youth at Co-ops and job placements during school time. One education professional described student support by an education professional at the onset of a Co-op placement and how there was an expectation that the student would eventually carry on independently with the Co-op placement without this support. Co-ops were described as taking place at businesses, such as Sobeys grocery stores or nursing homes, as “an opportunity to get a taste of the real world” (E-01). In this way, community businesses were described as providing the student with the opportunity to learn, such as by giving them the chance to reconsider a previous choice and correct a situation instead of being fired (e.g., when not showing up for scheduled work). These Co-ops were part of the student’s planning process within the academic system.

In terms of achieving their goals, an education professional described the critical role of parents. This participant stated: “It is my opinion that, the students’ parents are the... key factor in goal attainment and quality of life after high school ends” (E-01). In further discussion, this participant explained that within the school setting, Educational Assistants (EAs) provided support throughout the school day. For example, “so whether that’s in an English class or whether it’s getting to class and back or whether that’s a behaviour support” (E-01) the EAs were an integral factor and this support was provided to assist in achieving the academic goals of the transitional aged youths.

It was explained that approaches to learning may be accommodated in various ways. As one participant noted, “you know we have kids who we learn early on that just don’t like writing and they don’t like reading but audio books work well for them right?” (E-01). Additionally, part of the Tri-Sector TAY Plan involved the student working on

transportation skills, hygiene, laundry, dishes, and behavioural/emotional regulation if needed. Educational Assistants provided the majority of day to day supports in the academic setting. Although EAs were not included in the participants' description of supporting youths with their TAY Planning goals, the need for support in the academic context following the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meeting was recognized.

The importance of this theme is how it illustrates the coordination of a support system to achieve attainment of TAY Plan goals. The support of goals was the scaffold to future goals and successes. In the SROI analysis reported in Chapter 7, these supports were identified as inputs that contributed to the positive impacts of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process.

How was Youth Engagement Described?

Presence, Encounter, Participation

Youth engagement was addressed in Chapter 3, with the levels of engagement defined as *presence* of the youth at a meeting, *encounters* by others in the meeting such as making eye contact/a warm smile that could foster *participation* where the youth becomes actively involved with the meeting's discussions. The theme involving these three levels of engagement was brought forth by participants' observations regarding the youths' involvement in or possible challenges with participating in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. These participants' responses offered confirmation to the three levels of engagement introduced in Chapter 3. Youth attendance at meetings, what grade the youth was currently in and their perceived capacity by professionals were factors that impacted their level of youth engagement.

One participant described most planning meetings where youths did not attend but would have “definitely [attended] if the parent... were insistent on it and felt... that their voice was necessary” (E-02). This comment reflects on the lack of youth *presence* in this circumstance. When asked to describe the level of youth engagement from 1 (not engaged in any way) to 10 (where the youth is fully engaged and directing their planning process), one education professional rated youth engagement at an average level of 6 out of 10, explaining that when youths are in the earlier secondary grades (i.e., grades 9 or 10) their engagement level would be at a level of 3-4 out of 10, but this level of engagement would increase to a 6 out of 10 in the higher grades, such as grades 12 or 12B, where youths were given more opportunity to have a voice in the latter stages of secondary education. This comment may reflect upon youth, who attend TAY Plan meetings, shifting in the level of engagement from *encounter* to *participation* as they reach the higher grades.

With this said, another participant rated youth engagement at 8 out of 10, explaining that planning meetings were an opportunity to ask the youth what they thought they may want to be doing after high school (i.e., prompting youth participation). This education professional described how youths tend to struggle with these major life decisions:

I always ask it early on and I say that I want you to be able to answer that enthusiastically by the time you finish high school or even sooner than that... And that’s why I like the question and it forces them to... comprehend a question and give a response that’s... a reflection of who they are, right? (E-01)

A participant described youth involvement in the TAY Planning process as being based on the individual's profile, their learning needs, their diagnosis and their ability to comprehend the situation. As this participant stated, "I would imagine that a consideration would be that the child's ability to... participate... and their intellectual level on [their] ability to be part of that conversation" (E-02). This comment reflects on the notion of youth capacity impacting the level of youth engagement described (a theme addressed more fully below).

Additionally, it was identified that some youths may feel unconfident in a structured meeting situation and there were times when the education professional would verbally initiate conversation with the student to inquire if they agreed with a point or wished to add any information. As noted previously, one participant did explain that students attended meetings "even if the student is non-verbal," so family and professionals could learn about the needs of the individual (E-01).

In this theme, the participants expressed language that related to the three levels of youth engagement and how they were impacted by youth attendance, their grade (e.g., grade 9 versus grade 12) and their perceived capacity to be involved. The participants' descriptions illustrate the benefits of youth engagement in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, such as youth attendance to gain a valuable perspective of the youth's needs, but also suggest areas of improvement, such as providing a planning process where the youth voice can be confidently expressed.

Youth Capacity

Clearly, as some of the comments reported above suggest, education professionals associated youth engagement with their competency to participate. The theme of youth

capacity emerged inductively as the participants discussed their ideas regarding a youth's diagnosis, cognitive and expressive abilities, and age. For example, the level of engagement of a youths with I/DD was associated with their "profile... their learning needs, their diagnoses are very real and so some kids have... the ability and potential to ... ultimately comprehend what's going on" (E-01). Youth capacity impacted the youth's academic goals, supports and outcomes (e.g., a modified curriculum), and who provides consent on the TAY plan.

One education professional said their educational experience included working with youths who require a high level of support. It was explained that the school board used an independence rubric to measure the student's progress in areas of life such as social, academic, physical and safety potential. The outcome of this rubric impacted the youth's academic programming. As such, students who were unable to achieve applied level credits were geared towards locally developed credits:

[s]tudents who are integrated in classes fall into two categories. A: they are going for credit and work towards the ministry curriculum guidelines (with slight modifications) and significant – sometimes - accommodations as detailed in their IEP. B: they are "not" working towards the credit, but are working towards realistic and attainable alternative learning goals set by the teacher within 30 days of the start of the semester. (E-01)

This participant discussed "the higher functioning kids" and the importance of building their self-esteem and connecting them to the community through social groups or clubs. This comment was an interesting perspective on associating the importance of high self-

esteem with high capacity and leaving it open for further inquiry regarding youths of lower capacity and building self-worth.

It also was described how integration into society was important “so the higher functioning kids who would be integrated in classes a lot - we’ve done a lot of the life skills with. Once they turn 19 and 20 they need to move on, basically” (E-01). This comment alludes to the idea of how youth capacity influences not just the TAY Planning process but also the student’s received curriculum.

Finally, the student’s age (being 18 years old or older) was used as one of the criteria to determine their capacity to provide independent consent versus needing parental consent. With this criterion, youths’ independent involvement did not occur during their planning process at high school. With this idea in mind, it could be feasibly interpreted that youth engagement is influenced by the professionals’ perception of incompetency resulting in lack of opportunity for meaningful involvement in their Plan. Thus, the theme of youth engagement brought forth the notion of whether youth do or should attend TAY Planning meetings and how age and the concept of youth capacity or ability could be deciding factors.

How Was Collaboration Between the Sectors Described?

Communication, Coordination and Cooperation

The construct of collaboration emerged as a result of participants’ references to experiences that reflected the 3Cs (see Chapter 3) components of *communication* of designated work duties, *coordinated* information sharing and *cooperative* relationships in the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings and overall planning process. These participants’ responses offered confirmation to the three components of collaboration introduced in

Chapter 3. An education participant who was new to the TAY Planning process described the value of their collaboration with peers who shared advice and how this guided them in their work on their students' Plans. Further, this participant described themselves as being involved and active in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. They were engaged in making phone calls and reaching deadlines for the TAY Plan, but also they strongly relied on the community professionals to support them and the families with the Tri-Sector TAY Plan.

These comments speak to the levels of collaboration involving effective communication and coordination of roles and work duties in the planning process. They saw immense value in the community professionals taking the role of Lead: "I don't know that I could do as good of a job if it was just myself as the Lead" (E-01). The educational professionals realized the significant knowledge and expertise that the community professionals brought to the TAY Planning process along with the time saving factor, as one participant stated: "I'm so busy and having someone to lean on for this piece is huge" (E-01). The success of this collaborative approach seemed to rest on the *cooperation* of the community professionals who appeared to be described as willing participants in the role as Lead.

Building this collaborative partnership between sectors (education and children's developmental services) was a key aspect of the TAY Planning teamwork. Some education and community professionals "have really established... a great working relationship with the school... and it [has] created opportunities for the students to be involved in... their own planning... and exploring opportunities that are available to them" (E-02). This effective working relationship was further described as community

professionals in one agency working with a Special Education teacher, as a team, providing students with training to promote future thinking and planning ideas: “they gave the kids an opportunity to participate in workshops and thinking about what ... the next steps in their life is going to be like” (E-02). The participant who described this training expressed the desire for more development of education-community partnerships to conduct the same practice across the NR.

When asked to rate the level of collaboration the education professional had experienced with the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and why they choose that number, the ratings varied. One participant described their level of collaboration as a 6-7 out of 10 and defined this level as not having to take on sole responsibility for the planning process. Another participant stated there is room for growth in the collaborative approach and that heavy workloads can promote protectiveness related to a professional’s work-time and liability: “they’re protecting their... workers... their workloads... their responsibilities... I think they’re protecting... their culpability or their liability in the process” (E-02). According to this participant, collaboration of families, community and education professionals at the planning table was described at a level of 4-5 out of 10. This relatively low level of collaboration was attributed to the frequent expectation and/or misunderstanding by family and/or community service providers regarding the school completing an assessment for the purpose of determining DSO eligibility. As the participant described it: “constantly we are [having] to say we don’t do assessments to get funding” (E-02) and this expectation seems to be a repeated issue for education professionals and a noted area for improvement to enhance a more coordinated collaborative practice.

Exploring the 3Cs of collaboration highlighted the importance of a collaborative approach to building a multi-sector partnership and the numerous benefits that rise from it such as saved work time for the education professional and shared information to better plan with the youths.

What Are the Benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process?

This research question was examined in participants' disclosures about their experiences and/or aspects of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process that were described as going well, including what positive outcomes and impacts have come from this process. When participants were asked directly what they experienced as benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, they emphasized the benefits to the youths, families and professionals. Benefits also were derived from interview questions that asked the participants to imagine what planning would be like were the collaborative planning process not in place.

Benefit to Youths

One education professional described how the conversations that occurred during Tri-Sector TAY Planning meetings resulted in opportunities such as a student being offered a Co-op placement or registering for the Community Integration through Cooperative Education (CICE) program because "we've had a couple of kids go there with great success" (E-01). Benefits to students with I/DD also included building self-esteem beyond academic achievements and promoting community engagement through involvement in integrated settings.

Benefits to Families

A successful TAY Plan would be part of a process where families felt supported through the transition stage by “considering everything they needed to consider and they’re not missing any opportunity” (E-02). So, families and youths are supported by professionals instead of being in the position of trying to find connections and services on their own.

Benefits to Professionals

Having the multiple sectors (community and education service providers) at the one planning table expanded the knowledge that supported the academic and community connections necessary to develop and implement the Tri-Sector TAY Plan. As one educator stated, “like I’m in the school to teach the kids - not necessarily my job to know everything about the outside world supports for these kids - so, having a 3rd party who’s a professional... accessing resources and understanding them - that’s the biggest benefit.” (E-01).

During the interviews, participants were asked what it would have been like if the Tri-Sector Planning process was not in place. The purpose of this inquiry was to consider benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY planning process from the “what if” perspective. One education professional described how, without the Tri-Sector approach to TAY Planning being in place, they would be required to allocate a lot more of their own time to the planning process. This comment relates back to the theme of collaboration, where coordination of work duties and the cooperation of community professionals to take on this extra workload and time required, was identified. As such, this participant also explained that to have the extra time to complete the Tri-Sector TAY Plan as a Lead was a definite concern given their already heavy workload:

and if someone were to say the... community living... piece is not in place anymore and I'm the Lead then - I would have to do some homework and I would have to do some more phone calling and I would have to do... some more organizing. (E-01)

The participant explained that this would result in less direct time being spent with students and attending to their programming needs. They described their job as being time-consuming with a significant number of clerical tasks, parental contact, organizing schedules and appointments and managing EAs. Here, time and knowledge both were expressed as being important factors. In fact, it was recommended that other educational professionals rely on the knowledge of community service providers in Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings, as they can provide good advice.

The themes describing benefits for youths, family and professionals emphasized the positive outcomes generated by the TAY Planning process for these stakeholder groups. Additionally, this section of the results speaks to the SROI analysis completed in Chapter 7 where each stakeholder group is individually identified with their specific outcomes experienced in the planning process.

How Can the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process Be Better?

This area of inquiry was identified as the suggestions or recommendations made by the participants with the vision for a better and even the ideal TAY Planning process. When the participants were asked if there were any suggestions or areas in need of improvement in the TAY Planning process, they made recommendations in the areas of *assessment and eligibility* for adult services, the *role of the Lead* and room to expand the *collaborative* approach between sectors even further. Participants emphasized the

importance of collaboration as key to effective TAY Planning. This was noted in the importance of further *communication* between sectors to clarify the expectations around school-based psychological assessments. The need for *coordination* of the multi-sector approach to include community representation at all TAY Plan meetings was brought forth. Finally, the *cooperation* of further sector partnerships to continue knowledge building opportunities for youths, families and both groups of professionals should be considered.

Information about Assessment and Eligibility

This suggestion relates to the idea that easier access to information can be a benefit in preparing families and youths for assessment needs and the crucial establishment of eligibility for adult services prior to age 18. One education professional described TAY Planning could improve if the information about the change from children's service funding to adult service funding was more easily accessible to families. Another participant emphasized the importance of families and community service providers clearly understanding that the school system cannot conduct psychoeducational assessments only for the purpose of establishing eligibility for adult services and funding.

Improvement in the Role of Lead

This recommendation relates to the important role the Lead plays at the planning table and how the community professionals are a crucial piece to completing the full TAY Plan beyond academic goals. An education participant discussed the situation of a student with I/DD who was not a recipient of developmental services and, therefore, lacked any community service provider representative at their TAY Plan meeting. It was suggested that in such circumstances it would be best to not have the educator as the Lead

meeting alone with families but rather that a representative from CN would be a helpful addition to these planning meetings “so somebody from maybe Contact Niagara to be a part of those conversations and be willing to step up... and be there” (E-02). Ultimately, the importance of multi-sector representation at TAY Plan meetings is “[t]o ensure that there’s no one agency on their own as Lead” (E-02). This comment speaks to the notion that if education professionals are left on their own to facilitate a TAY Plan, planning does not go beyond academic-based goals. This underscores the importance of the multi-sector collaborative approach.

Collaboration

In the area of collaboration, the theme of more communication and more coordination was identified. One suggestion made was that education professionals across the NR get together more often to share knowledge about the TAY Planning process, their experiences and successful practices where “department heads get them together, trust their professionalism, give them time, paid time to share best practices... *Get on the same page* about what’s working, what’s not working. So that would be excellent” (E-01). Of course, this comment also feasibly speaks to the need for school board coordination for this to happen.

Some education professionals and their local community service providers have developed congenial and collaborative relationships that have established a partnership that promotes effective TAY Planning actions. It was recommended to replicate this relationship building more consistently across the NR because

it would be great if we could see consistently across the Region as opposed to just... these isolated pockets... of support in taking the best

practices... that come up in one ... from one agency and sharing it with others and... duplicated it and replicated it with other Board[s], with other agencies. (E-02)

It was described the level of collaborative partnership between a school and an agency varied across the Region: “it’s night and day in terms of the level of involvement” (E-02). Here, improvement in the area of collaboration was emphasized.

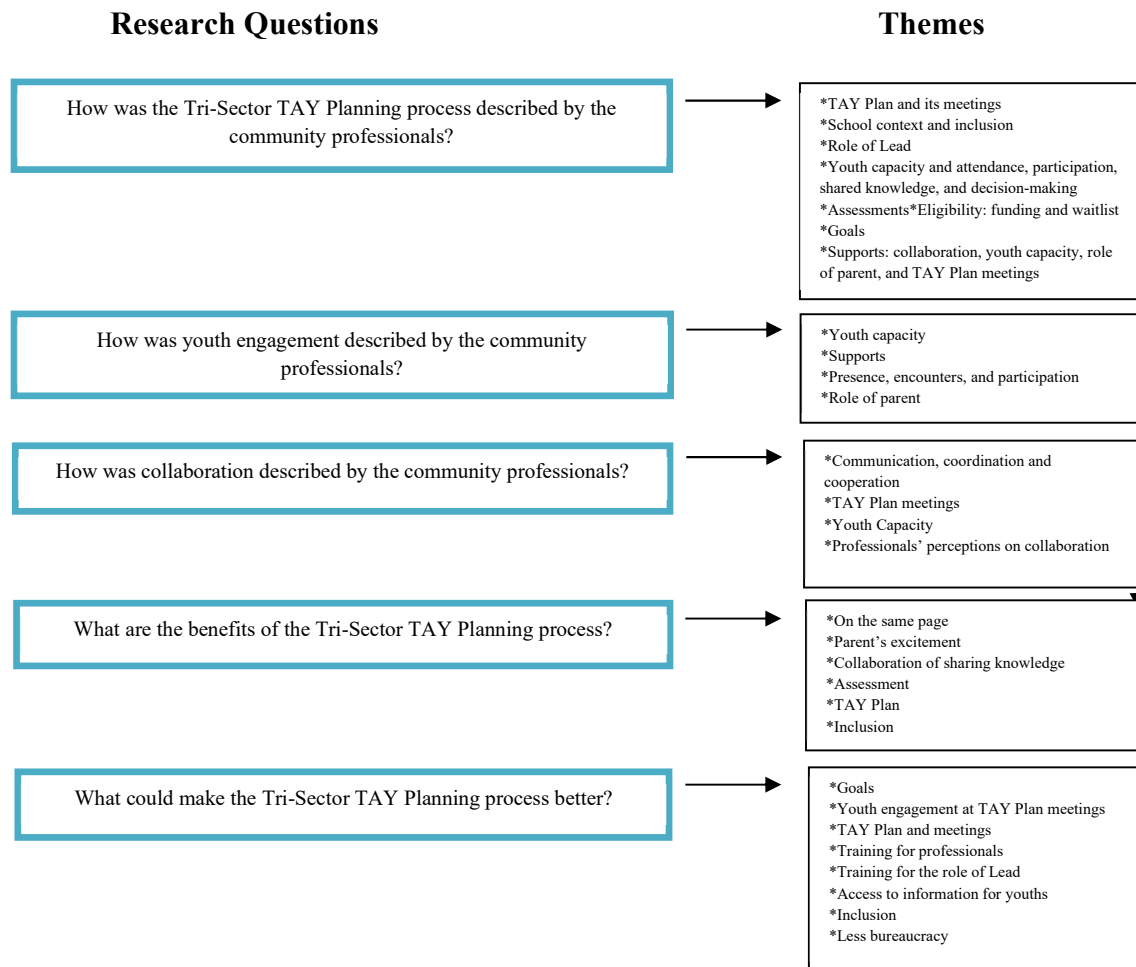
Section 3: Community Professionals Results

This section of the dissertation will discuss the results of the within-group data analysis for community professionals. This data set involved a group of 4 participants who represented different developmental service agencies in the Niagara Region. The results of this stakeholder group will initially address the three contextual research questions of this study: how this group of stakeholders described the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, youth engagement, and collaboration (see Figure 6.3). The first of these inquiries involves the description of the process and presents nine key themes that emerged from participants’ responses to the interview questions: the *TAY Plan and its meetings*, *school context*, *the role of Lead*, *youth capacity*, *assessments*, *eligibility*, *goals*, and *supports*. Each theme will be described and, when applicable, considered in terms of how it underpins the main research questions regarding benefits of and/or suggested improvements to the TAY Planning process as identified by participants - questions examined more fully in the subsequent sections. The discussion of each of these themes will end with a message explaining its relevance to understanding the TAY Planning process. The second research question investigates how the participants portrayed youth engagement in regard to the planning process. Five themes emerged from the description of the community professionals: *youth capacity*, *supports*, *presence*, *encounters*, and *participation* (i.e., a variegated theme

expressing levels of the youth engagement model – see chapter 3), and *the role of parent*. This is followed by the third research question looking at how collaboration of the sectors was discussed during the participants' interviews. This area of inquiry included the themes of *communication, coordination and cooperation* (i.e., the 3Cs), *TAY Plan meetings, youth capacity* and *professionals' perception of collaborations*.

Next to be addressed are the results pertaining to the dissertation's two primary research questions: the benefits and what could be better/ideal in the Tri-Sector TAY planning process (see Figure 6.3). With regard to the issue of the benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY planning process, the themes identified in the interview data were: *on the same page, parent's excitement, sharing knowledge, assessment, TAY Plan, and inclusion*. Finally, the fifth area of inquiry investigated the question of what could make the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process better/ideal. From the participants' interviews, the following themes emerged: *goals, youth engagement at TAY Plan meetings, TAY Plan and meetings, goals, training for professionals, training for Lead, access to information for youths, inclusion and less bureaucracy* (see Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3 *The five research questions are illustrated with their associated individual themes that represent the results of the analysis of data from community professionals*



Description of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process

TAY Plan and its Meetings

This theme was identified as the participants' descriptions of the various functions and characteristics of the actual TAY Plan meetings for individual youth (i.e., types of questions presented to youths) and the individual TAY Plan itself (i.e., a document with a checklist). This theme illustrates the changes in goal focus over time, the importance of post-secondary preparation for financial benefits, and the need for TAY Plan content to focus on youth strengths.

At the TAY Planning meetings, the TAY Plan covers major areas of the youth's life. With the participants' comments in mind, it was evident that the TAY Plan itself is the core element of the TAY Planning process. The annual TAY Plan meeting functions as the time to envision the youth's future and to review the TAY Plan checklist to ensure important aspects of the youth's life are discussed (e.g., DSO application). The TAY Plan meeting includes youths being asked a variety of questions. The types of questions asked seemed to reflect the fluidity of the planning process and the perceived competency of the youth.

Similar to the educational professionals' description, the community professionals explained that the types of questions asked of the youth when they are 14 years of age are preliminary or foundational to future decisions the youth will have to make. However, at the age of 17 years, the questions become more specific. "[I]t's more about work, it's about are they going to go on to post-secondary school, what's that going to look like" (C-01). In addition, the type of questions the professionals asked youth at the meeting was influenced by their understanding and perception of the youth's ability and perceived lack of competency. (This is a factor that will be discussed later in this section regarding youth capacity.)

The TAY Plan checklist includes items that initiate awareness of different application requirements such as applying for DSO at the age of 16. With this check-list, the Tri-Sector planning approach also creates the opportunity for academic programming to foster what the youth aims for after high school, such as employment or post-secondary education (PSE). As similarly described with the education professionals, the planning for these post-secondary goals was a benefit of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process.

The TAY Plan document prompts the meeting's facilitator (Lead) to ask the youth details about their goals and their strengths that are then documented in the TAY Plan. It was described

the TAY Plan covers all necessary areas (e.g., education, work, housing and community participation) of the youth's needs for planning; there are no missing areas (C-02). This participant emphasized the importance of the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meeting being strength-focused in regard to the youth's capacity and their planning prospects. "This is the one time where we are talking about what they can do and they want to do" (C-02). This comment reflects the importance of the benefits of youth-centered meetings.

School Context and Inclusion

The term inclusion refers to the youths being included within a group or context. This concept can be taken one step farther to infer a space that is normative in nature and accepts the youths as a part of that context in a way that is equal to others in the same space. This theme includes the participants' interview responses relating to school curriculum, graduation outcomes (e.g., diploma versus certificate), post-secondary goals such as college, level of youth academic potential, and inclusive education for youths with I/DD. The latter reflects a key position held by community professionals who bring to the planning process a strong belief in the benefits of an inclusive school context.

It was described high school goals should include earning credits to earn a diploma for youths who aspire to attend PSE (i.e., college). When looking at the high school special education curriculum, one participant suggested that the academic focus should remain on achieving credits and a possible diploma (C-03). This desire for an inclusive approach of promoting a mainstream educational experience for youth with I/DD (e.g., the practice of placing students with special education services in a general education classroom during specific time periods based on their skills) aligns with a strength-based perception of youth capacity. In this

way, it was felt that it was important for education professionals to acknowledge youth capacity (i.e., a theme that will be discussed in subsequent sections) and their competencies:

in a system where special education is taught in a certain way or that you believe that specialized programming is the only option which comes with its own set... of biases beforehand, you can't see past that... [even though] in reality none of this is done intentionally. (C-03)

This participant was a strong advocate for inclusive education.

Some of the other community professionals in this study also spoke of the need for more inclusion for youths in the secondary school system. It was discussed that high schools have peer programs but more are needed to foster an inclusive educational experience (C-01). The distinction was made between integration (e.g., mainstream classroom with little or no assistance) and inclusion (e.g., mainstream classroom modified for various needs) and how some education professionals may see these two concepts as being one and the same. Examples were given of how youths may either have separate social events, be excluded from the students in other classes, or may be asked to participate in special school events but without being prepared to be full participants with the rest of the students (C-01). These comments speak to the belief that there is room for inclusion to rise into a better practice in the school context.

One participant discussed inclusive education in terms of equitable opportunities that build the youth's skills and experiences for post-secondary life (C-03). Another participant described an example of integration that was missing the inclusion aspect in which the youth was in attendance in a business class but was not actually engaged with the course content (C-01). This comment lends to the notion of youth presence in the classroom with the omission of meaningful participation and how an inclusive education goes beyond mere presence.

To extend the discussion of inclusion beyond academics, with some participants it was felt that inclusion in a general sense can be promoted easily within the high school setting through increased access to social interaction with their peers who were not associated with special education. For example, a “[s]imple thing like eating in the cafeteria and not in the special education room because we wanted to build social capital” (C-03). With these comments, it was clear that community professionals questioned why the school system did not promote a more inclusive environment for youths with I/DD. The participating community professionals clearly saw the value and benefit of an inclusive educational experience for youths; an aspect of youths’ planning that has room to be better e.g., providing youths with I/DD with meaningful inclusive educational opportunities.

The Role of Lead

This theme was defined by all the participants’ descriptions regarding the function, role, and attributes of the role of Lead, and who would be involved in holding this position within the Tri-Sector TAY planning process. This theme illustrated that there were mixed results regarding which sector should take the role of Lead. Notably, the Lead sets the tone of the planning meetings in terms of youth attendance, promoting the value of the TAY plan and remaining goal-focused at the meetings. The Lead also may take on the added role of an advocate for youth competency and this can be a valued benefit to the youth’s outcomes.

The Lead may be a community professional (i.e., the children’s service provider for the agency the youth is involved with) or an education professional (i.e., the special education or learning resource teacher). One participant described when the Lead designate was an education professional, they preferred the “classroom teacher” also referred to as the “homeroom teacher” who could provide more personal information about the youth. “I would... rather have the home

teacher rather than the LRT [Learning Resource Teacher] because the LRT just goes by the *IEP* which lots of times, like I said before, is cut and paste” (C-01). This comment speaks to the notion of the “mirroring” of IEP and TAY goals that the education professionals identified in their interviews and the benefit of the Lead being a person who is familiar with the youth.

The participants all reported that they were the Lead for the majority of TAY Plans. However, they expressed mixed views regarding who they believed should be the Lead in Tri-Sector TAY Plans. One participant described their belief in the community professional being the Lead because they will be overseeing the youth’s services across the life span and for the education professional it is more of a short-term involvement: “ we’re involved for lifetime...So we’ve decided that it makes the most sense in our... our agency to be Lead” (C-02). In contrast, another participant believed the education professional should be Lead. This belief was explained as “[what] we should be doing is building... something really cool within the school system with Co-ops, with education, with looking at gaining credits and getting what you need so that when you get to the adult system you really don’t need it” (C-03). All this building of structural supports to prepare for when the youth reaches adulthood is part of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning meetings.

Another participant identified that the Lead can set the tone of the TAY plan meeting, determine whether the youth attends, and promote the value of the TAY Plan (C-04). In addition, one participant viewed the role of Lead beyond facilitating meetings to include advocacy “it’s hard ‘cause... you’re being a Lead plus advocate so you know your job is having conversations... with schools about - so we want this as our end goal...it’s not as simple as... checking off a housing box or a PSE box” (C-03). This participant also described their role as Lead as including advocacy for the youth when others in the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meeting may

not be supporting a youth's ambitious goal. "Here's an end goal - well we need to get there. What's... the harm in trying? I don't understand the harm in trying and presuming that this person's going to get there, right" (C-03). This role of advocacy relates to the previous comments by participants regarding youth capacity, perceived competency and the need for planning to remain focused on youth strengths.

One participant described the TAY Planning process in terms of the meeting's Lead keeping the TAY Plan goal-focused. The TAY Plan "should be building what is happening at the school in terms of education so... I want to be a... landscaper when I'm done, right, so what are all the things I need to do to obtain that. Do I need to go to post-secondary... do I need to have Co-op, what... educational piece do I need" (C-03). It was seen as the Lead's role to facilitate this goal focus. Another participant described their role as the meeting's Lead in detail to illustrate their role as facilitator and promoter of youth engagement:

So my role is to keep the meeting on track... and making sure... the parents don't override the youth. So the questions always go to the youth first, so they can give their honest opinion and then we'll ask the parents... I like the children to be able to have their voice. (C-02)

Thus, the role of Lead entails numerous features including that of organizer, facilitator, advocate and negotiator, a skill set to be recognized and attributed to the list of benefits this Tri-Sector TAY Planning process can offer.

Youth Capacity

Youth capacity was identified in this analysis as the abilities and competencies of the youth that were either formally assessed and/or presumed by others, in some cases based on age. For example, youth capacity was related to the TAY Planning process in terms of decisions

about who to contact about the planning process and if the youth would be invited to meetings. The theme of youth capacity was broken down into the categories of *attendance at planning meetings* (i.e., does the youth attend and the reasoning behind this presence or absence), *participation* (i.e., the level of youth involvement in meetings that was encouraged by professionals), *shared knowledge* (i.e., professionals sharing their information about the youth with each other to prevent underestimation of a youth's abilities) and *decision-making* (i.e., what decisions youths were given the opportunity to make or not make and the reasons why).

Attendance at Planning Meetings.

When asked if the community professional would contact the youth first instead of the parent, the answer was “no” and the participant explained that this related to the youth's age. “I have never had that [i.e., contacted the youth]... because the youth they're under age. I always work through the... parent because... [I] always contact the parent first” (C-04). However, age was not the only factor. Youth capacity also was an influence when education professionals decided to not invite youth to the TAY plan meetings. One participant recalled attending TAY Plan meetings and prompting the education professional to invite the absent youth. However, another participant discussed other education professionals who see the importance of youth attendance at TAY Plan meetings. This participant described many Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings where, regardless of their perceived capacity, the youth did attend and participated in the planning process; a key component of youth engagement.

Participation.

Education professionals' underrating of youth capacity was identified as being problematic at times in terms of the level of youth involvement that was promoted during the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process.

It's about competency, it's not seeing the students - their competency and that comes from systems and diagnosis and all kinds of stuff... there might be some challenging things around the student... but I honestly infer [that if only] people did not see incompetencies [but rather] in thinking these people as competent. (C-03)

This participant explained that clearly this misunderstanding about a youth's capacity to achieve goals is not intentional in any way. and truly appreciated when an education professional was willing to listen to the community professional to consider the strength-based approach.

Shared Knowledge.

When professionals shared their knowledge about a youth (i.e., what abilities the youth had) as part of the planning process, a more accurate shared perspective of the youth's capacity was developed. This shared perspective was one of the benefits of the process. One participant described how education and community professionals learn more about the true capacity of a youth to accomplish things in life by sharing their knowledge and experiences. One participant gave the example of people underestimating the ability of a youth for whom people at school provided a lot of mobility help. When this person attended an outdoor program in the community, they were able to participate in physically demanding tasks (C-01). When the professionals took the opportunity to share the experiences of this youth in these different contexts there was a shift in understanding the youth's true level of capacity. With this, community professionals described working hard to support youths' goals and helping them to get as close to their dreams as possible. Sharing this knowledge with education professionals at TAY Plan meetings was advantageous to decisions made for the TAY Plan; shifting the focus of the youth's goals to a perspective of youth's strengths.

Decision-Making.

This theme illustrates the participants' observations and descriptions regarding who were the decision-makers during the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, especially at TAY Plan meetings. Youths were given the opportunity to make decisions at times (i.e., the scheduling of their meeting), while in other circumstances parents made the decisions. Situations also were described where the youth and parent disagree. In addition, education professionals tend to preside over academic decisions.

Although the parent is the contact person and the school is the meeting location, one community professional attempts to schedule the TAY Plan meeting time based on the youth's decision.

I will speak to the youth... I said I am booking your TAY plan for this year... I am looking at a 10am how does that fit into your schedule? Because I have some kids that, for example, hate gym, book it in a gym time, or really enjoy a certain subject and the last thing if I am pulling them from a favourite subject - they're not going to give me the answers I want, they're going to quick answer and get out. So I will connect with the youths.... And they're usually pretty open in saying... [what their preference is] (C-02).

In contrast, another community professional reported: “[a]nd the parent tends to decide [the contents of the TAY Plan but]... the youth is present” (C-04). Additionally, there are times when there is a difference of opinion between the youth and the parent during the TAY Plan meeting and it seemed to depend on the type of decision that determined who would be the decision-maker. Another participant stated that: “Well... the parent usually always has the final yes or no. Like they will say... okay that sounds good, or... depending on the age of the student... try to

support their child, but the parent pretty much has the say whether that is something they're comfortable with" (C-04). However, teachers make the academic decisions.

In terms of the completion of an assessment to establish eligibility for adult funding and services, youth capacity formally addressed is paramount especially in terms of avoiding a waitlist after the age of 18. Here, youth capacity is impacted by a formal diagnosis which assists in establishing the youth's funding eligibility status but also can impact perceived capacity to make decisions and to be invited to engage in the planning process. The necessity for addressing youth capacity in the formal sense as a theme cannot be avoided as it brings to light important benefits, such as the youth's future financial status, but also brings forth drawbacks that connect to youth engagement and decision-making.

The concept of diagnosis was in the community professionals' discussion in terms of youth being formally identified with I/DD and the impacts this label may have on their life experiences beyond the determination of eligibility for adult services. It was expressed that this label should not influence a youth's individual planning path in any way, even though, as mentioned later in the theme of assessment, it is an essential piece to the DSO application process.

One participant did not like to consider a youth's specific diagnosis as a dominant factor in the planning process for a youth: "we know regardless of what maybe is on paper that everybody has an opportunity to learn" (C-02). In this case, the community professional did not approach planning based on a diagnosis; however, they expressed concern about some education professionals doing so and that possible "judgment biases" may come into play (C-03). Another participant described: "I find when someone has the more... obvious disability the parent speaks more for the youth and it's more of a parent/teacher...[and the] youth often is not as involved"

(C-04). This comment alluded to the impact a diagnosis could have in regard to youth participation during planning meetings.

One community professional described a concern regarding how an assessment and the resulting diagnosis label can be interpreted in terms of youth as being “deficit-based... we’re looking at all the things people are not able to do as opposed to... what people can do” (C-03). This concern was linked to parental and professional assumptions of perceived lack of competency in youths with this expected lower youth capacity due to their diagnosis of I/DD. This was evident in the organization of the TAY Plan meetings when a youth’s ambitious goals were declined.

Assessment

The theme of assessment emerged from the community professionals’ explanations regarding students being formally diagnosed as having a developmental disability to determine their eligibility for adult funding and services at the age of 18 years. This eligibility determination was seen as a significant benefit of the TAY Planning process.

As discussed previously in the education professionals’ results section, a psychological or psychoeducational assessment is needed to support a diagnosis of developmental disability such as I/DD (C-01, C-02, C-03). The purpose of the assessment from the perspective of the community professional is to ensure that eligibility for DSO support is determined by the age of 18 years (C-02, C-03) when access to children’s services is terminated. As stated, “Without DSO they have no services” (C-02). Some youths have missed the opportunity for timely assessment because “Well, there’s still a lot of kids that fall through the cracks that they’re not connected [to developmental services] that... for whatever reason... some kids have not had assessments” (C-01). Without eligibility being established, a youth may transition with the outcome of being

placed on a waiting list for assessment which, in turn, delays their access to adult services. As one participant described the process,

I have had several students who'd had to wait to get an adult assessment. So the DSO may say this assessment's too old, we need an update. Or this assessment doesn't speak to the adaptive function, we need that. Or they're borderline so we need more information. (C-04)

This waiting period can be significant: "If youth is 17 years old with no assessment a referral to Twin Lakes is made for an assessment through adult services. The assessment is usually completed within 6 months to a year" (C-02). In regard to the TAY Planning process, the eligibility assessment was described as being a critical piece of the youth's transition.

Eligibility: Funding and Waitlists

This theme represents the possible consequences of being on a funding or service waitlist for a substantial period of time if the eligibility determination is delayed.

The TAY Plan document prompts TAY Planning to look at the DSO application. "So, on the TAY plan... we'll tick off the boxes when it's appropriate, we'll apply at 16 or whatever it is and... apply for ODSP" (C-03). This check box system works in a youth's favour when planning starts at 14 years of age because it provides the time to get an assessment completed before the age of 18 years. For the youths, waiting to establish eligibility means waiting to receive funding in the form of a monthly income. "I had one person wait almost 4 years for Passport funding when they first changed it over [to adult services]" (C-04). It also means waiting for adult services (C-04). The Tri-Sector TAY Planning process helps to avoid this loss of income at the age of 18 years – a critical benefit that is recognized in the SROI analysis in Chapter 7.

Goals: Types and Influencers

The theme of goals was defined by the participants' description of the type of goals that were included on a TAY Plan. Factors that were identified as influencing the youth's goals were aspects such as the youth's age, changing their mind about their own goals and understanding what goal options are realistic with support by parents and professionals.

When expressing aspects that influenced goal setting, one participant described how with them the youth's diagnosis does not impact the youth's goals in the TAY Plan process. "The label of the diagnosis doesn't really play a part as far as determining which goals we're going to work on. They have goals, we work on 'em. That's it" (C-02). From a pragmatic perspective, one participant described how the age of the youth influences the focus and type of goals set. When considering the youth's age, one participant identified the importance of goal setting for transition happening as early as possible and that starting to plan near the end of high school is too late.

Even from year to year the goals can change as youths change their minds. One community professional described how they manage the shifts in goal setting as the youth respond to new experiences by engaging in dialogue with the youth:

It's okay because by the time we meet next year you might have changed your mind 7 times, and that's okay. I have one youth that will email me every time [the youth] changes [their] goal and just say I've changed my mind and this is what I want to do when I am older. (C-02)

These emails and their content are reviewed at the youth's next TAY plan meeting and added accordingly to their TAY Plan. This is also a credible example of youth engagement.

When explaining the types of goals youth plan for, two of the goal areas on the TAY Plan are “work” and “housing.” Community professionals described education professionals traditionally consider expect that, usually, these involve youth leaving high school and moving into a group home and attending a day program. The community professional who is part of the planning process helps to set more realistic goals by explaining that these services are generally unavailable. Thus, realistic goals can be set as a benefit of the multi-sector planning approach. In addition to work or housing, as mentioned previously, the TAY Plan covers all possible areas of a youth’s life including goals for personal items; “that’s where we hear things like the driver’s license - that comes up fairly frequently” (C-02).

Some of the goals that youth aim towards include: mechanics, culinary, part-time college, interest courses at college, Academic Career Entrance – an adult goal program, computers, photography, business classes, college, doing welding or small engine repair, and life skills (C-01). It was described TAY Plan’s implementation of youth goals can pave the pathway to success:

So... they go take... small engine repair or whatever. They actual[ly] become Niagara College students which is just wonderful because they get the card and it just makes them feel so good, look “I’m a Niagara College student” ... and... they go once a week and so we have had a lot of young people doing that. So that works well. (C-01)

Additional TAY Plan goals described included learning shoe tying, participating in a CICE program or job readiness program, finding their own place to live, getting married, addressing a serious medical concern and ensuring everyone is aware of the youth’s needs, working or obtaining a Co-op placement in horticulture, becoming a singer, joining a self-advocacy group,

having pets, becoming a gamer, going go-carting, going to community dances, and a big goal is making friends (C-02).

Additionally, another participant listed the following goals: opening a café, taking a basic literacy class or a math class, participating in a Co-op of the youth's interest, getting a summer job, gaining credits toward a diploma, attending PSE, and exploring community recreation options (C-03). Finally, other goals not already mentioned may include to get a driver's education book to read, learn to ride the bus, developing a resume, making an appointment at the job gym, and joining a community club (i.e., scouts), joining an acting club, going to a dance studio, joining the YMCA, delivering mail, and going to a skate park (C-04).

The central function of the TAY Plan is to set goals to plan for the youth's future; all benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process when these goals are supported towards attainment.

Supports

The theme of supports was broken down into sections (i.e., collaboration, youth capacity, role of parents, and TAY Plan meetings) to categorize the different types of supports that represent the participants' description of the type of assistance provided to the youth to attain their goals. First, collaborative planning to build a support system and, second, not using a diagnosis to assume lack of competency in youths were advantageous to positive transition outcomes and impacts. To support any of the goals on the youth's TAY Plan, the education professionals supported goals or pieces of a larger goal that related to academics and occurred during school hours. Community professionals and parents provided the other supports needed outside of school for goal attainment. These particulars (e.g., who supports what goals) are discussed during the TAY Plan meeting.

Supports with Collaboration.

This section of the theme of supports was identified in the participants' descriptions of how people worked together towards goal attainment. At the TAY Plan meeting, the Lead may set up how goals will be achieved and then this is reviewed at the next annual planning meeting. Collaborative supports can be put in place for a youth's goal when the goal is being supported in the youth's different contexts: home, school and community. This example illustrates the benefit of multi-sector planning steering an effective support system to ensure goal accomplishment. However, sometimes it can be challenging for community professionals to facilitate goal support within the school context. An example was provided that described a youth with a specific post-secondary goal. The community professional asked an education professional to develop some strategies in the youth's school agenda to build some skills that would assist in attaining this post-secondary goal. The education professional could not see this request as a feasible possibility because of the education professional's perception of the youth's disability (C-03). In this example, perceived youth capacity was used to explain this lack of support for a youth's ambitious goal and the school capacity to support the goal. This example illustrated a situation in which failure to collaborate was not in the best interest of the youth and their goal attainment. However, when in place, collaboration between sectors to establish a support system was a benefit.

With limited school resources, this participant also described the connection between what goals are addressed in the TAY Plan and what supports are provided in conjunction with what professionals perceive to be the youth's capacity. This connection also occurred when deciding where resources will be applied. Yet, in other cases, school and community services may work on the same goal together with a youth but in different ways: for example, learning to

count money at school and actually spending money to buy a coffee in the community (C-01). Another example of collaboratively supporting youth's goals was described as when a youth's goal was to work in horticulture; however, due to specific circumstances, working at a community Co-op in this field would have placed the youth at serious risk.

So a horticulture Co-op didn't really work but they [the school] were willing to have [the youth help with plant care activities] around the school so [the youth] was able to fill [the] goal... [The youth's]... goal was to do this piece, so how can we work together to make it work and we did. (C-02)

This example speaks directly to the benefit of multi-sector collaboration.

Supports and Youth Capacity.

Perceived youth capacity was a repeated point of discussion. One participant expressed the importance of not pre-judging a youth and their dreams (e.g., opening a café) due to their label of I/DD and the assumptions that can be attached to it. This participant found it difficult to understand why IEP goals would not support a youth's TAY Plan goals "because that will help us build what that programming might have looked like... throughout the high school career" (C-03). This was a call for further collaboration in the Tri-Sector TAY planning process.

Supports and the Role of Parents.

As has been mentioned previously, parents can play a significant role in the support system that is developed during the planning process. Participants described people leave the TAY Plan meeting with the objective of supporting the youth to achieve the established goals; however, some parents may leave the TAY Plan meeting and lose sight of their part: "[I]t's like don't call me until next year type thing... I'm not judging them, they just have so much on their plate that... sometimes it's hard for the parents" (C-01). This comment reflects on the notion that

parental support cannot be a certainty. However, as one participant described, often parents tend to be the support behind many youth goals with the guidance of the community professional and occasionally the education professionals.

One participant described the choices available for a Co-op in school can be limited when considering a youth's interests. "[T]hings like Co-op... well parents have to find their own Co-ops or... it may not even be part of... what the person interests fit" (C-03). For successful goal attainment, everyone contributes to the necessary support steps because "everybody has a piece in this" (C-03). The parents take on the extra-curricular needs such as organizing tutoring sessions and fostering social relationships. The education professionals should set up the educational program that supports the youth's goals in the academic context. Community professionals provide the majority of out-of-school supports. Collaboration of the sectors' combined supports tied most importantly to benefits for the youth and their goal attainment.

Supports and TAY Plan Meetings.

This section of the theme illustrates the benefits of the TAY Plan meetings in terms of supporting parents to see the youth's progress and accomplishments.

A community professional described how the actual TAY Plan meeting can be exciting for parents. "Absolutely... meeting annually means parents get to see the progress. When you live with your youth every day, progress doesn't seem like progress until you look back to - holy smokes in a year we've done this!" (C-02). This description of the TAY Plan meeting illustrated one of the implicit values of the TAY Plan (i.e., reflecting on youth progress) to accompany its explicit usefulness (e.g., planning for the youth's future). In addition, one participant described it was found to be useful to keep accomplished goals attached to the TAY Plan to celebrate goal that were accomplished and, also, to keep an historical account of goals that were fulfilled and

the reasons why. This strategy has been helpful to parents as well. The historical account of the youth's goals helps future adult service professionals as well as contributing to the celebration of goals achieved.

How Was Youth Engagement Described?

This research question explored the definition of engagement provided in Chapter 3 of this dissertation (e.g., three levels of engagement) along with any nuanced description recognized in the participants' comments. The themes that emerged from the participants' interview responses illustrated the diverse levels of youth engagement within the Tri-Sector TAY planning process. In examining how some of these levels were described, youth engagement was found to relate to the themes of *youth capacity, supports, opportunity for presence, encounter and participation, TAY Plan meetings, the role of parents*, and illustrated an effective strategy of having the youth speak first at meetings to promote a high level of youth engagement.

Youth Capacity

Youth capacity seemed to have a notable influence on youth engagement in the Tri-Sector Planning process. This included specific areas of capacity, such as whether the youth has the ability to use verbal communication, and also the broader perception of the youth's capacity that adults bring to the planning process.

Some professionals may believe that youths are not prepared to participate in the planning meetings so they should not be invited. One participant said "I've had situations where the school said yeah they don't need to come, they'll just get confused or it'll disrupt their day, and often a particular school does not encourage students [to] attend which is quite... a concern for me" (C-04). One suggestion was made to include a youth engagement section in the TAY Plan because "it would be great... maybe [if] there was...[a spot] specifically in the document...

that talks about student voice... Often times it is parents and educators that are having most of those conversations” (C-03).

Some community participants challenged this focus on youth limitations and advocated for an emphasis on the strengths that youths bring to the planning process. As one participant said, “It’s about competency, it’s not seeing the students - their competency and that comes from systems and diagnosis and all kinds of stuff” (C-03). It was emphasized that TAY planners (i.e., those who attend the meeting) should focus on what the youth’s goals are and visualize a path to their accomplishment. This participant focused on the need see the opportunities that are available to the youth versus barriers: “So you know there might be some challenging things around the student... but I honestly infer [that if only] people did not see incompetencies [but rather] in thinking [see] these people as competent” (C-03).

Perceived youth capacity, their level of engagement in planning and the role of the Lead can align to impact the youth’s involvement in various ways. However, the youth’s opportunity to participate was found to be influenced by more than just their perceived capacity.

Supports

The supports provided to a youth during the TAY Plan meetings can be beneficial to their level of engagement from becoming comfortable with the context of their first meeting to running the meeting themselves. One participant simply described the onset of the planning process as “we all get together and we meet and we just start the process. We explain to the young person, especially if this is the first one, why we are doing this... and then we just start from there talking” (C-01). An alternative approach to promote youth engagement with nonverbal youth was using augmented forms of communication along with the consideration that “[i]t involves how much time we book. Then we book a little extra time for the

communication... I have to book with school board so with the extra time, you can tell me exactly what you want, I have time to listen” (C-02).

One participant described a youth who “could have participated to the point [they] could have run the meeting” (C-02). Initially, this youth was uncomfortable being associated with this planning process that was associated with a disability label and that included authority figures. The strategy to overcome this scenario was to have the youth write their goals down and the community professional presented them at the meeting on the youth’s behalf to accommodate the youth and to ensure that their message was communicated.

Presence, Encounter, Participation

As explained in Chapter 3 and discussion of the three levels of youth engagement (Simplican, 2015), the first level of presence (i.e., youth in attendance at meetings) is a precursor to participation.

In terms of youth attendance at TAY Plan meetings, one participant described “for the most part 90% of my children take part in [and attend] the TAY Plan, there are a few that are unable or unwilling” (C-02). It was reported that some may chose not to attend a meeting because the type of setting provokes feelings of anxiety or intimidation. If the youth is unable or chooses not to attend, they can tell the community professionals what their goals are prior to the meeting and the community professional will share this information with the planning team to promote the youth’s involvement. However, “It’s a case by case. Um, my goal is always as much youth participation as possible” (C-02). This example illustrates a community professional placing youth engagement at the forefront of the planning process even though physical presence may not be possible. This community professional described this range of engagement by explaining that, for some of the youths with whom she works, the stress of a meeting such as this

could be traumatizing while other youths are capable of running the meeting (C-02). Another participant who rated youth engagement as 2-3 out of 10 explained “[T]here is very little engagement... I’m thinking of youth who will nod or they look to their parent to, what? So... they’re present and very little [involvement]” (C-04). This is an example of a low rating being associated with presence but minimal encounters with the youth at planning meetings.

According to the discussion in Chapter 3, the two levels of youth engagement that follow presence are encounter (e.g., eye contact/a warm smile) and participation (e.g., actively expressing preferences and engaging in decision-making). Another participant who also rated youth engagement as low explained: “Well I’ve never been involved where the kid is whole heartedly being engaged... and so it’s probably a 2 or 3 [out of 10]” (C-03). It was explained that this low level of engagement could be attributed to the meeting being a setting of intimidation. “You’ve got all these adults around the table talking about things that you may not be ready to talk about in some cases” (C-03). Lack of engagement was described as being due to lack of interest in matters such as where the youth will live in the future. Also, it was discussed that youth may not have a meaningful enough part in the decisions that are being made in the meeting (C-03, C-04). These examples suggest that some planning meetings may not have a welcoming and comfortable environment that would promote youth encounter and participation.

One participant described promoting youth engagement by ensuring that the youth was asked to speak first at the TAY Plan meetings with the parents speaking afterwards (C-02). However, it was explained that because a youth is under the age of 18 years, the professionals always contact the parents during the TAY Planning process (e.g., to arrange a meeting time). When asked if they had ever contacted the youth instead of the parent, it was described the

parent is always contacted first. This example speaks to the times when youth engagement is not considered due to the age factor.

On the other end of the spectrum, a high youth engagement rating of 8 out of 10 was given by a participant who explained “they get really excited because they know that they’re going to talk about themselves and it’s like what they want so I would say for them probably an 8” (C-01). Another participant described when a Tri-Sector TAY Planning meeting would be rated as a 10 because the youth is the driving force behind the Plan, arriving at the planning meeting with a clear agenda. “It’s probably one of the better meetings because all I do is provide the guide... [I]t’s a fantastic TAY Plan to write because [the youth is] doing it... [The youth] knows the TAY Plan’s coming... knows what day it’s on... [will] start now to have a goal in mind” (C-02). This example describes a high level of youth engagement and the clear benefits that this has for the youth’s personal growth in planning ahead of time and their independence in the TAY Plan meeting.

Role of the Parent

This theme identifies when parents are required to engage at meetings on the youth’s behalf (e.g., with goal setting, making final decisions for them, and strategies that community professionals can use to avoid parental override).

During TAY Planning meetings, the community professionals recognize the importance of the youth’s involvement in goal setting: “I really do have the youth try to speak as much as possible, like what do you want, what do you want, what do you want” (C-01). If a youth does not have the verbal skills, the parent makes the decisions or augmented communication is used, such as pictures. At the end of the day, one participant described “the parent usually always has the final ‘yes or no’” (C-04). It was stated that because the youths are still under the age of 18,

the parent often makes the decisions (C-04). To coincide with the notion of parental decision-making, one participant described teachers tend to look at the parent for decisions to be made.

I will end this section with an example provided by one participant that highlights a successful strategy used at TAY Plan meetings to promote the ultimate youth engagement by facilitating the TAY Plan meeting so the youth engages first to answer the TAY Plan questions. This strategy avoids the parent overriding the youth.

So the questions always go to the youth first, so they can give their honest opinion and then we'll ask the parents... to add any supplemental and from there education support to add any supplemental information... I like the children to be able to have their voice. I find if a parent were to talk first a lot, some of my kids are very parent-pleasers, so they'll say whatever mom said (C-02).

This last comment provides the description of a community professional who places youth engagement at planning meetings as priority and forefront to the planning process by recognizing the dominance of parental decision-making and strategically balancing this parental role with the need for youth engagement.

How Was Collaboration Described?

Communication, Coordination and Cooperation

This research question explored the model of collaboration provided in Chapter 3 (i.e., the 3Cs). In their response to the interview question about collaboration and in their description of their experiences with the TAY planning process, the following evidence of the 3Cs was found: *communication*, by sharing pertinent information with education professionals and requesting the youth be invited to attend TAY Plan meetings; *coordination*, by introducing the youth to the adult community professional prior to transition and balancing sector differences in

policy; and *cooperation*, by initiating a TAY Plan even though the youth has not been officially referred by CN.

One form of multi-sector collaboration was described when community professionals provided education professionals with information about community developmental services. As such, the communication of information between agencies was useful in developing a TAY Plan. One suggestion was made to increase the level of collaboration by inviting the youth's teacher, (not the LRT) to TAY Plan meetings, who knows the youth the best because this promotes communication with a more personal discussion for the youth. The relationship between professionals is an important factor, as one participant described: "we cultivated a relationship... where there's some trust and... I also think the ones [the youth] who were really successful is when [sic]... it's a give and take ... Everybody has a piece in it" (C-03). Communication promotes networking among the professionals.

To coordinate a smoother transition to adult services, another participant described how their agency's adult community professional attends the TAY Plan meeting before the youth turns the age of 18 years and transitions into their department: "If she's able, she comes to that last TAY meeting to meet the families, introduce herself, and again it's trying to make that smoother transition" (C-02). This within-agency collaborative approach was described as being helpful to a smoother transition.

The level of multi-sector collaboration varied and was challenging to coordinate at times: "Working with other agencies is way easier than working with the school... They [the school] have different guidelines. They have different policies and procedures" (C-01). It was stated that the education professionals focus on education whereas the community professionals focus on all aspects of the youth's life such as inclusion and friendships (C-01). The education professionals

remain focused on the content from the IEP. It was described the community professionals have more control over the planning process “because more parts relate to us” (C-01). Thus, communication to create and coordinate a single TAY Plan between sectors was challenging.

One participant expressed cooperation between agencies with the description of the community professional initiating a youth’s TAY planning process, even though the referral had not been processed with CN. This example illustrated the effort of the community agency to prevent any time lag with the planning process by not waiting for the formal intake procedure to come first.

Each description expressed by the participants in this section confirmed experiences relating to the 3Cs of collaboration model and the benefits collaboration brings to the Tri-Sector TAY planning process, such as sharing knowledge about their services, aligning of sectoral practices, including the youth’s circle of support at the meetings, and building trusting relationships between the professionals.

TAY Plan Meetings

This theme explores the participants’ descriptions of collaboration at the TAY Plan meetings in reference to the coordination with adult community service professionals attending the TAY Plan meeting and cooperation between the education and community sectors aligning academic and community goals on the TAY Plan. Planning meetings create the platform for professionals to collaborate and build relationships.

With the intent to create a smoother transition to adult services, some children’s community service professionals include the adult community professional at the TAY Plan meeting when the youth is approaching the age of 18 years. In another case, “Adult services

don't come in. We don't have them attend. [W]e've start[ed] bringing in our adult services consultant. She'll come in [and] describe her services" (C-02).

As well, some children's community professionals coordinate successfully with education professionals to align the youth's academic program (e.g., learning math skills) with community-based goals (e.g., learning to follow a budget). These examples illustrate multi-sector collaboration at the Tri-Sector TAY planning table resulting in coordinated goal setting to support the youth's TAY Plan.

Youth Capacity

Another important factor in facilitating collaboration was the community and education professionals having a shared vision of the youth's potential: youth capacity. For example, a case was described where the youth had an ambitious goal. The community professional advocated for academic activity to gear towards a type of learning at school that was related to this goal; however, the teacher did not see the goal as a realistic possibility for this youth (C-03). For each professional and family to perceive the youth's potential and strengths (not their disability) was described as a key component to everyone supporting the youth's ambitions.

I think a more... robust type of... planning for [the youth], so that it's looking at a full picture I think... and... everybody takes a piece of it and that's the other thing, you don't want to just again say it's the education system to do all of this. Family certain[ly] has a piece, the service provider has a piece, the school has a piece, the community has a piece. (C-03)

This collaborative strategy of shared efforts builds a collaborative, holistic and "robust" TAY plan.

Professionals' Perception of Collaboration

Community professionals' opinions and experiences with the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process were explored in terms of working together for the purpose of one outcome – a single TAY Plan that encompasses the youth's life. When asked to rate their perception of the level of collaboration in the TAY Planning process their responses ranged from 5-8 out of 10 (C-01, C-02, C-03, C-04). As one participant described, “[f]or the overall, for the whole meeting, around an 8. We’ve gotten pretty good at parents being *on the same page*, as schools being *on the same page* as community supports. I would say it’s pretty high between a 7 and an 8” (C0-2).

Collaboration can be dependent upon people's personalities. “[Y]our personalities are going to have a big influence” (C-03). One participant described quality conversations at the TAY Plan meetings involving the family and the professionals; however, the youth was not described as being part of this collaborative action. “I do think everybody has their voice except the youth... so... the youth is not always in that circle” (C-04). This point begs the recurring question of how the youth can be brought into the collaborative circle in a way that would impact their engagement, a theme already presented in this results section. As such, the more collaborative TAY Plan meetings were described as “focus[ing] on the youth and be[ing] excited about figuring out what they want” (C-04). Ultimately, the level of collaboration in a Tri-Sector TAY Plan meeting was described as “it seems to be a mindset when you enter in [the meeting]” (C-04). This mindset also was a contributor to the various levels of youth engagement described by this study's participants earlier in this results section.

A collaborative approach within, between and among the agencies and services that support the youth is important to effective implementation of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. This speaks directly to the concept of getting *everyone on the same page*; which is a primary benefit of the collaborative Tri-Sector TAY Planning process.

What Are the Benefits of the TAY Planning Process?

Some of the benefits of the planning process have been discussed in the preceding themes. These illustrate how the process of the Tri-Sector planning itself underpins the many benefits it generates including the planning outcomes and their impacts. These outcomes and impacts are used to establish the SROI analysis in Chapter 7.

The benefits that were described by the participants' responses to the interview questions revealed a range that included the collaborative outcome of getting *everyone on the same page* where the sectors have a common understanding and outlook on the planning process. Benefits also included the parental affective outcome of having the opportunity to acknowledge the youth's accomplishments. The shared knowledge shared between professional sectors and with parents provided a richer TAY Plan. A key outcome of the plan was completion of an assessment to establish eligibility for youth to receive adult funding and services without delay when they reach the age of majority. This was a significant theme for educator and parent participants as well. Other benefits identified were the wide range of areas of the youth's life that were addressed in the TAY Plan and the potential of the Planning Process to promote more inclusive strategies within the academic context.

On the Same Page

This theme rose from the frequent and repetitive use of this phrase by participants and was related to benefits of the collaborative approach to planning. When asked what were the actual benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, numerous outcomes and impacts were described such as "every year we do that to make sure... there are *goals* number one... that we're all *on the same page*... so we try and look at the kid like as a whole person and not just a

student or just a youth” (C-01). The benefit is illustrated as *everyone* working on the same goals with the same aspirations.

Parent’s Excitement

This theme, though short in content, identifies the importance of collaboration and its impact on families. This benefit was described in terms of parents who get to see the progress in their youth (C-02) such as their skill building. The collaborative approach has impacted the family as “parents are very excited that finally we’re all working together rather than... we do this, the school does that, that agency does that. They’re really excited to hear that... finally everyone is going to be *on the same page*” (C-01). The parent’s excitement is aroused by their sense of how this collaborative planning process is contributing to their youth’s progress.

Collaboration in Sharing of Knowledge

This theme illustrates the collaborative approach to planning in terms of professionals coming to understand each others’ work specifications, teamwork in how to develop the TAY Plan, and sharing information that prepares parents for what may lay ahead.

One benefit of the TAY Plan meetings was described as the opportunity for the professionals to connect at the meeting to know what each other does and what they do with the youth, such as behaviour analysts and community professionals linking up and, through the meeting conversations, becoming more familiar with each others’ work and the roles they play in the youth’s service delivery or support system. The benefits also extended to the professionals because “we can keep in touch. I have to say... [T]his... TAY process has really helped us professionals... get close to each other and know what we’re doing, what our roles are because before that... I didn’t know what a behaviour therapist did” (C-01).

One participant described the benefit of the TAY Planning process as having more eyes and more ideas at the TAY Plan meetings. “[S]o I think that might be one of the benefits. I think... making sure that all the people that need to be around the table are there, so it doesn’t happen... in isolation... it’s not just one group doing it” (C-03). This sharing of professionals’ ideas also can extend to sharing knowledge about one’s service sector.

During the TAY Planning meeting, opportunity is available for the community professional to explain that the youth’s future should not count on group home living or day programs being readily available. As such, with this planning process in place, parents become more prepared for their youth’s future. “[T]hey understand a little bit more what’s ahead. There’s a little more... peace I think I find in people... So there’s more knowledge of... what’s ahead and not the unknown” (C-04). The collaborative approach establishes that each person knows what is being worked on.

This theme speaks to and confirms the model of collaboration discussed in Chapter 3 by emphasizing the importance of communication (i.e., sharing information) and coordination of the TAY Plan.

Assessment

This theme involves the participants’ descriptions of the process of establishing eligibility for adult services and funding with the objective of avoiding a waitlist for the youth at age 18, a benefit that was identified as being due to the TAY planning process.

The notion of benefits was derived from the interview question that asked participants to imagine “what if” there was no TAY Planning process. One participant described if the TAY Planning process was not in place, the need for an assessment could be missed, potentially resulting in delayed determination of eligibility for adult services and funding: “A psychological

assessment referral might not be needed until the child was 17. Well, it's a 4 year waitlist which means that youth is without services for 3 years at least. Um, now we are starting at 14 making sure these assessments are completed" (C-02). With the Tri-Sector TAY Plan in place, professionals are reminded to cover this item that is so necessary for a smoother transition period. The serious consequences of missing these essential pieces of planning were described: "[T]hat gap in service could be catastrophic for some families. Um having no services for 3 to 4 years is extremely difficult financially and just having those supports in place" (C-02). The TAY Planning process promotes the youth's transition with established eligibility in place before age 18 when children's services end: "It's a little more organized... if there's not an assessment it gives us a jump start to figure out how do we get one" (C-04).

Not having eligibility established as the youth transitions into adulthood means a loss in receiving funding and services. There would be enormous impacts on youth and their family if this planning process was not in place.

[I]f they elect to get out of school, it could be that person sitting on a couch, watching TV, collecting ODSP and depression could set in, right... I think we are increasing the risks for their mental health and just their own well-being. The child is going to be home alone while the parent has to work - are they necessarily able to make the food that they need... it could be very disastrous. This is making sure those pieces are in place for them to be safe, cared for and successful. (C-02)

As has been described previously, assessments are a critical component of the Tri-Sector TAY planning process and its outcomes for a transitioned youth.

TAY Plan

In this theme, participants expressed the benefits and positive outcomes from the Tri-Sector TAY Plan. These benefits include the reminder to apply for DSO with an assessment in place before age 18 and the utility of the Plan to inform the DSO intake. The process with meaningful goals ensures that a plan is in place for the youth's transition and is a document that promotes the potential opportunity for youth voice to be expressed at the planning meetings.

The process was seen as being a helpful resource for professionals. As one participant described, "I really like the TAY Plan as far as making sure that my part is done. I want to make sure those referrals are all in, especially that psychological assessment" (C-02). The TAY Plan's information can be used to inform the DSO intake. "I think it's a huge benefit in making sure things are not getting missed both from the youth side and from the school side" (C-02). This was described as being an essential piece of TAY Planning to transition to adult life with the assurance that Passport and ODSP funding is in place to cover food, lodging and personal/community activity (C-04).

From a pragmatic position, the TAY Planning process ensures that the actual TAY Plan gets done. Another participant described the benefit of everyone involved being responsible for planning a meaningful life for the youth. For example, "in some cases we've been able to figure out better Co-op opportunities" (C-03). Additionally, being involved in an engaging TAY Plan "is helping the youth realize they are being heard which then, in the long term, they aren't hesitant to share their opinion" (C-02).

The importance was noted of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process fostering an opportunity for youth engagement. For community professionals who place youth involvement at the forefront, if the TAY Planning process was not in place "my fear is that their voices wouldn't

be heard” (C-02). The structure of the Tri-Sector TAY Plan ensures that a collaborative approach is used to design the Plan and review its content on an annual basis.

One participant found it difficult to imagine what it would be like without the TAY Planning process. “Some thoughts were that the conversations between education and community professionals would not happen such as [s]ome organizations might not have any involvement with the school and the school might not be able to get it from a future plan” (C-03). In addition, the family would feel they are on their own by not having the advocacy of professionals, and TAY Plans may not even be completed at times. Thus, having the collaborative approach to planning was valued.

Inclusion

This theme was presented earlier in this results section, but has been identified as a benefit as well. As such, one participant described the benefit of how the planning process helps education professionals to find new ways to promote inclusion and better Co-ops, and to consider better options for their student’s life after high school.

Overall, the participants expressed numerous benefits to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. These benefits were applied to the SROI analysis in chapter 7.

What Could Make the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process Better?

Through the interviews, many different suggestions about areas for improvement were mentioned. This section will proceed to describe these ideas in relation to the TAY Plan meeting its goals and youth engagement, the need for professionals, TAY Plan Leads and youths to have access to the opportunity for professional development/training about the process, the importance of the promotion of an inclusive educational process, and the shift to less bureaucracy in the process.

Goals

This theme returns to the relationship between the IEP and the TAY Plan, previously discussed in the education professionals' results section. This theme also includes what the participants viewed as influencers to successful goals and their attainment. Looking at the TAY Plan, one participant suggested that the goals in the IEP and TAY Plan be done at the same time instead of the IEP being completed prior to the TAY Plan. "So if we could do the TAY Plan while the teacher is actually setting up the IEP with the parents... I just think that would be better" (C-01) because goal setting is a crucial component of the TAY Plan. The suggestion was made for education professionals to consciously raise their expectations of what youths can accomplish (perceived youth capacity) and focus on meaningful educational goals versus basic life skill goals. "Schools are there to educate, to give Co-op experiences, to give you [the youth] the competencies you need in subjects to be successful" (C-03).

In terms of goal setting, one participant recommended that education professionals look at the TAY Plan not as a duplication of the youth's *IEP* (i.e., not just a repetitive, time-taking job) but as an enhanced version of academic goals. "I've heard from the teachers saying... I'm not doing this and this, I don't have time for this... so it's still a struggle to get them... to really see it as a valuable process" (C-04).

A successful TAY Planning process would include where "everybody stays focused on the goals. Sometimes it is easy, schools, ourselves, whoever to let the goals slide" (C-02). A perfect TAY Planning process would entail barrier-free steps to goal attainment. "Making sure that everybody stays *on the same page*. Successful plans are when everybody is working with the youth instead of for the youth" (C-02). Goal development and attainment should involve "having

an open conversation would be perfect... and having those goals stay at the forefront, and having those goals met” (C-02). Acknowledgment of goal attainment is powerful.

Sometimes the kids themselves don't really see it. So, when they see [goals achieved like] “I said I was going to get a friend and I did.” And... be able to take pride in that he did this goal. Yeah, that is the perfect TAY Plan and then all the supports are in place. And stay in place. (C-02)

One participant described the perfect planning process as one that is full of excitement; “we're all going to be excited for its use, and then we're going to do, value... it's worth and we're going to look at it regularly” (C-04). The perfect process would entail that the complete TAY Planning team sees the youth for the individual who they are and helps them dream, where the shift in thinking moves from the TAY Plan as a document that is mandated to be completed to a process that is valued.

Youth Engagement at TAY Plan Meetings

This theme reflects participants' descriptions of how the youth interacted at TAY Plan meetings. These observations and experiences of the participants highlighted numerous areas in need of improvement to increase the level of youth engagement at these meetings. Youths were described as requiring more exposure to academic and employment discussions, orientation as to the functions of the meetings and details of the actual TAY Plan to help them understand the purpose of the meeting.

To consider increasing youth engagement at the planning meetings, one participant said if youths had more exposure to mainstream and inclusive life experiences, this would increase their engagement with the planning process.

They don't have access to things... to exploration to... all... those things that we know typically kids [have]... So... [if the youth] had more opportunities to have discussions about what [their] school life is going to look like and careers-focused or education-focused, [they] might have more input into those decisions. (C-03)

Additionally, another participant suggested that the process should be better explained to youths to improve their level of engagement (C-04): "So when a youth is there, usually... they're there and they're nodding and agreeing and smiling and... it's hard to pull any information out because I really don't think their... understanding is there about what we're doing" (C-04). These recommendations were brought forth with the idea that youth orientation to the purpose of the TAY Plan meetings would enhance youth engagement from merely presence or encounter to a meaningful level of participation in developing the Plan.

TAY Plan and Its Meetings

This theme identifies participants' suggestions for enhanced TAY Plan meetings with professionals getting to know the youth as the individual person who they are as a whole, documenting the youth's involvement on the TAY Plan, providing more follow up and frequent reviews between TAY Plan meetings to ensure the agreed Plan remains in action, and ensuring the right people attend meetings.

One participant described how the TAY Planning process can evolve. The TAY Plan should promote "robust learning opportunities. I think having some more thoughtfulness in some of those things... to expand the conversations" (C-03). The TAY Plan should represent a full vision of the youth's future and the TAY Planning team members are informed about who this youth is. An example was a TAY Plan meeting where an education professional learned how the student was very accomplished in community activities such as a specific sport and had a clear

career goal. When completing the TAY Plan, it should entail looking at the “whole person” and not looking at the TAY Plan as “just filling in the boxes” (C-03).

One participant described the need for more training-focus type of question areas on the TAY Plan and a spot on the Plan to document actual youth input. Having sections on the TAY plan that incorporate the youth’s voice and their personal description would promote the development of an individualized profile and a clear vision of their future. This recommendation also would promote increased youth engagement by requiring that the youth’s involvement be documented.

Once the TAY plan is completed, one participant identified the need to not lose sight of the youth’s goals during the interval between the annual TAY Plan reviews.

Sometimes the goals get missed. Sometimes we’ll go back and [a] year later and oh you were going to do this. You were going to connect with the drama club. Did that happen? And the kid’s like ‘nope!’. So, policing the goals is really difficult.
(C-02)

A recommendation was made to provide more time to return to the TAY Plan during the year. The purpose of this would be for “[j]ust making sure that those goals stay in the forefront” (C-02). This speaks to the participant’s perspective on the value of the TAY Plan and the need for professionals to have more time to follow up with its required actions to goals. The perfect conditions for the TAY Planning meetings would include having more time and not being rushed (C-01).

In accordance with this acknowledgement, this participant advocated for more EAs for “one to one time they can sit down for 40 minutes and it’s okay. Or we want to work on reading skills” (C-02). One participant recommended that the process include TAY Plan reviews every 3-

6 months instead of each year. This participant also felt confident that more frequent reviewing of the TAY Plan and its goals would help acknowledge all the good things that are happening behind the scenes as well. “I know there’s lots of good things happening, but it’s not documented on that TAY process” (C-04). All these good things can be reported on the TAY Plan if reviewed formally with more frequent meetings.

Looking at the TAY Plan meeting attendance, having the home room teacher attend was preferred to having the LRT “because they know the kids better... There is more input... it’s much more personal... the parent feels much better” (C-01). It was mentioned that EAs can bring a different and more personal perspective as well to the TAY Plan meeting. For a community professional, it also would be a benefit to have DSO representation at the planning table to explain to parents how their system works because “we really don’t have any representatives from DSO unless we do a workshop for parents. That piece... it does get missed. If there was a way to bring adult services in better, it would be a smoother transition” (C-02). As a youth plans for their future, it can be hard to know what options are available for adult activities. “If I could bring DSO with me that would be ideal” (C-02). It also was suggested that the scope of people who attend the meetings be broadened to include people such as a sibling, a friend, or the church pastor. The engagement level of the youth would be higher with such additions. As such, one participant described the TAY Plan meetings can be a great platform for building networks for the youth (C-04).

Training for Professionals

This theme addresses the community professionals’ seeking further knowledge and skills. One participant suggested more training be provided regarding strategies and new ideas for

developing an exceptional or more impressive TAY Plan (C-01). An example was described as “I always feel like they [the TAY Plans] aren’t good enough” (C-01).

Another participant also welcomed the thought of training. “My training on TAY was... here’s the form you need to fill out... and I think that was the case for everybody. And we’ve kind of all done our own thing” (C-02). The idea was appealing for one participant to set up a type of mentoring group where community professionals could share TAY Plan designs and strategies.

Training for Lead

This theme identifies the importance of the skill set involved with the role of the Lead; a skill set that requires training. The role of Lead can be time consuming so professionals may hesitate about volunteering to undertake it. As one participant said, “I think that everybody thinks that somebody else should be the Lead” (C-03). An interesting suggestion was made to have trained facilitators who understand the TAY Planning process and facilitate TAY Plan meetings: “it would be really cool if they had facilitators that were specifically trained to be in the big picture discussion” (C-03). The planning process relies on the development of the Tri-Sector TAY Plan and the role of the person who takes responsibility as the Lead in the planning meetings is the key factor in promoting a collaborative approach among meeting participants and facilitating valuable youth engagement in the planning process.

Access to Information for Youths

This theme addresses the participants’ recognition of the complexity of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and the suggestion that youths receive better explanations and access to information around what the TAY Plan is about.

I think it could be... something that's... almost like a class, something that's almost like - this is what we do in Grade 9. We talk about this, we talk about goals, we talk about you, we talk about what you're going to do in the future, we're not just talking about school but it might be actually - I'm not going to say a class, but... something this is incorporated into... that first year. (C-04)

This accessibility of information could enhance the opportunity for youth engagement, build their independence with planning for their future and promote a more inclusive approach for youths during the TAY Planning process.

Inclusion

This theme identified participants' experiences with and observations of the school system and their recommendation for inclusive educational practices. It was discussed that some changes in the school system would be beneficial to improve academic inclusion. "Well, they [teachers] think that a kid sitting in the classroom means that they are included and they're not" (C-01). Community professionals would suggest that the school system move towards authentic inclusion (C-01, C-03). One participant had a strong belief that planning for youths should start in elementary school where "it needs to start at day 1 of JK and at day 1 of JK up until Grade 12 or 21[years old] - there needs to be a systematic change in how we view students' competencies" (C-03). This point refers back to the concept of inclusion and equitable opportunities and how if these concepts are established early in the school system, youths can build some "core competencies."

Less Bureaucracy

This theme addresses the reflections made by participants in terms of the administration demands of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. One participant

suggested that, ideally, to improve the TAY Planning process it should be less bureaucratic (i.e., ticking off check boxes on the form) and become a more natural process where youths with I/DD are a part of the same discussions and opportunities that typical students experience. Rather than segregating educational services, one participant discussed how “[i]t is the same path... [T]he path might look a little different in terms of what we have to do educationally... but the outcome is the same” (C-03). The school system has the structure to support students in finding a career path, getting help with mental health concerns and building future visions. This structure should be used inclusively with all youth planning for their future. “In my experience in high school the guidance counsellors, that was their job - was to ensure the health, well being, careers of the students of the school” (C-03).

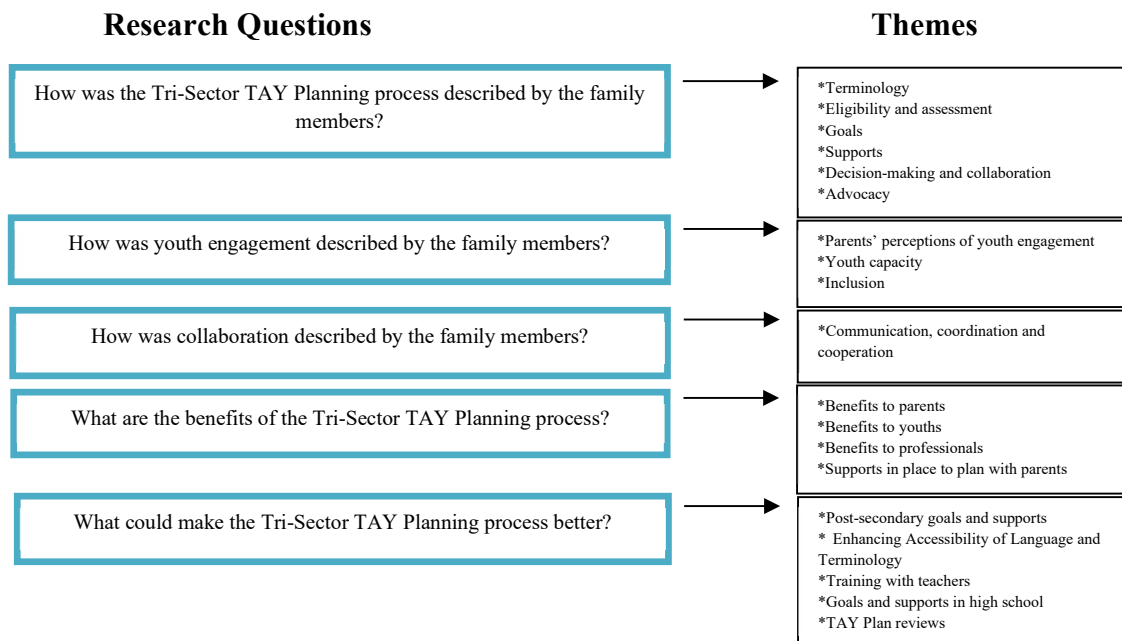
With the exploration of the final research question involving what could make the process better, it was illustrated that although there are many benefits to describe what is going well with the Tri-Sector TAY planning process, there also is room for continued growth and development. The participants were able to put forth valuable suggestions and recommendations from their experiences with the planning process and from their perspective as community professionals.

Section 4: Results for Family Members

This section will follow the same format as the preceding results. It contains the results of 4 interviews conducted with parents. Each parent represented a distinctively different context, period in time, and experience in regard to a youth’s transition out of high school. As such, I begin with a brief explanation of each parent’s context and how the data were identified and categorized according to the five research questions:

description of the process, youth engagement, collaboration, benefits and improvements (see Figure 6.4). Due to the different contexts of these participants, they have been labelled as either Completed TAY Plan, Existing TAY Plan, or No TAY Plan. The distinction among these groups is explained as follows.

Figure 6.4 *The five research questions are illustrated with their associated individual themes that represent the results of the analysis of data from family members*



The Completed TAY Plan involved a parent whose young family member recently graduated from high school and was in the process of entering into Post-Secondary Education (PSE). This parent was able to describe their experience from the lens of entering into, completing and exiting from the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. The results from this participant represented data from their experience with the entire TAY Planning process. It is to be noted that this youth's TAY Planning started at the age of 15-16 years, not the typical age of 14 years when a youth usually would start the TAY Planning process.

The Existing TAY Plan involved a parent who had just entered into the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and was able to describe only the initial stages of the TAY Planning process. For this reason, the parent was not in a position to provide reflection or hindsight on the process. The results from this participant represent data for a parent who was currently involved with their young family member planning for future transition out of high school, which entailed having a Tri-Sector TAY Plan in place and working toward identified goals.

The No TAY Plan involved two parents who had had a youth leave high school 10-30 years prior to the existence of the current Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. As such, these parents were involved with their young family member transitioning out of high school with no specifically identified TAY Plan in place. These two parents represented two unique contexts within their own group. One parent experienced their young family member's transition a few decades ago, with the youth in question receiving an early diagnosis of I/DD and transitioning into a segregated workplace called ARC Industries. The other parent experienced intermittent and semi-detached involvement with their young family member during their time of transition and, accordingly, had more limited—albeit still pertinent—experience to draw on for the interview. For this second parent, moreover, the youth's transition occurred outside of the Niagara Region, which surpassed this study's initial criteria for recruitment; additionally, the youth was not diagnosed with I/DD until late into their high school years, which was concurrently added to other previously diagnosed disabilities. While this parent's general descriptions of provincial processes referring to transitional planning remained part of the data for this group, I did not include any data from this parent that were specific to

regional processes, such as a circumstantial practice describing a specific school or local agency.

The participants from all three contexts will be addressed together in each theme in each research question to illustrate comparisons (e.g., similarities and contrasts) between their situations. As such, the results section will begin with the first research question exploring how the participants described the planning process according to their circumstance (i.e., Completed TAY Plan, Existing TAY Plan, No TAY Plan).

Description of the Planning Process

Terminology

This theme explores participants' descriptions of the language and terms used as a parent navigates the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in comparison to the experience of parents whose youth did not have the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. Their descriptions described concerns or observations about either the absence of a language system (no specific transition terminology), or the need to initially learn and then master specialized terminology that was associated with the transitioning process they experienced.

There was no specific terminology that referred directly to the period of transitioning for parents who were the No TAY Plan participants. The transitioning of a youth in those days meant "preparing for the world" (F-03) or dealing with the procedural acquisition of provincial funding (F-04). In contrast, in the case of having a Completed TAY Plan, all terminology that referred to the planning process was described as "TAY" (i.e., TAY meetings, TAY goals, TAY Plan). However, for a parent with an Existing TAY Plan, frequently the terminology was not easily understood. For this parent, more

specifically, the meaning of “transitional aged youth” was equated to a youth becoming an adult. Yet, to a great extent, terminology was delivered to the parent using abbreviations such as “TAY,” “DSO” and “IEP,” instead of in its unabbreviated form. This jargon left the parent with a lack of comprehension and feeling as though “you’re thrown into the deep end” (F-02). This confusion was especially evident when this parent was initiating the application process to determine eligibility for provincial funding for adults.

This theme speaks to the added expectations and demands a parent has with the task of learning new terminology when entering this planning process. As such, this theme also relates to the discussion of what could make this process better (i.e., an easier way to help parents understand and utilize this terminology), a discussion that will arise later in this results section.

Eligibility and Diagnosis

This theme explores how the different family participants represented their experiences with developmental service practices and governmental protocols in terms of the requirement of a formal diagnosis to receive adult funding and services. The youths’ financial transition was described as being smooth for all 4 participants; however, each parent described different supports and different concerns that were involved in its accomplishment.

For the participant whose youth transitioned at the age of 18, 30 years ago, the process was automatic because life-long service was provided from childhood through adulthood at that time. Applying for developmental services was conducted directly by the parent (e.g., with no support) at the local agency that would become their service

provider. In comparison to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, there was no formal planning process in place.

At the time of the interview, the participant with an Existing TAY Plan, was just initiating the application process for submission to DSO, as their young family member was just turning the age of 16 years. This parent was unsure of the application process and so was reliant upon the professionals through the TAY Planning process to ensure it was completed in a timely and effective manner. Through this process the parent also became aware of the need for an updated assessment to confirm the youth's eligibility for DSO support. While this parent did not comprehend what was required for the completion of this application, they did know that it was important to submit early to ensure a timely approval of the application because "everything is a waiting game" (F-02).

This understanding of early submission was in alignment with the experience of the parent with a Completed TAY Plan. Here, the youth's eligibility was established and the DSO application submitted well in advance of the age of 18 years. For this youth, the transition was smooth in regard to receiving provincial funding as soon as they reached this specified age of eligibility. This example speaks to the value of establishing eligibility in a timely fashion and, by implication, helps bring into sight one of the benefits of the TAY planning process.

In contrast, different experiences were described by the parents with No TAY Plan. One parent of the No TAY Plan group explained (i.e., 30 years ago) the transition to adult services was "automatic" with no application required. The second parent recalled their young family member (i.e., 10 years ago) not being diagnosed with I/DD until late

in their high school years, then applying for and receiving provincial ODSP and Passport funding that subsidized the youth's community participation and living costs (F-04).

While this youth did not miss the step of establishing eligibility in preparation for adult funding, the parent was on their own to complete the application process – it was not automatic.

This theme highlights parental concerns and the importance of education and community professionals using the TAY Planning process to ensure that adult service eligibility status is established for youth before they leave high school. Families need this professional support because becoming a recipient of adult funding is no longer “automatic” but help from these professionals can ease parental stress as they navigate the application process.

Goals

The component of goals is defined as objectives or ambitions aimed at the achievement of specific outcomes in the youth's life. All three contexts (i.e., Existing, Completed and No TAY Plan) include parents' observations and experiences in regard to the type of goals that were planned (i.e., immediate skills building, future financial status, education accomplishments, and post-secondary employment), how goals were derived and supported (e.g., what resources were available at the time), and their outcomes for the family members, such as a successful or failed transition into PSE or inclusive employment worksite.

For the parent with the Existing TAY Plan, the youth's goals were focused on immediate matters such as learning to ride the bus independently or to develop independent shopping skills; skills that would be applied to the youth's daily life. This

parent explained that the TAY Plan was composed of a substantial number of goals for education, work and for “community participation and social involvement” (F-02). Being new to the planning process with a young teenager, this parent was focused on the present needs of their young family member, such as learning “to be able to become social... to become more independent” (F-02). This included an academic focus, “I would really like for the child to be able to [be]come independent and be able to read and write” (F-02).

The parent with a Completed TAY Plan reflected on how eligibility, applying to DSO and obtaining an updated assessment were goals that were established for their youth’s TAY Plan as they turned the age of 16 years. In addition to the funding focus, this parent described their young family member as having had long-term TAY Plan goals that would reach further into their future, such as ensuring the youth was enrolled in the necessary high school courses to graduate with a diploma, not just a certificate, in preparation for college. This goal was met and at the time of the interview the youth was preparing for PSE entry. As part of the TAY planning process, goals were set and then the steps required to achieve them were listed. Goals that did not relate to academic accomplishments were linked to employment preparedness, such as arranging a successful work Co-op in a location that was familiar to the youth so it provided a comfortable environment in which to learn new skills. This participant explained that it was the parent’s responsibility to find the Co-op placement. The youth’s preferences and capacity were taken into consideration; however, parental input was evident to ensure that certain goals were in place, such as those related to life skills, behavioural concerns, financial literacy and career-based objectives. With goal setting as the core element of the TAY Plan, it was evident the parent was the key factor in goal setting.

Of the two parents with No TAY Plan, the first was involved with their youth's high school graduation several decades ago when the transition from children to adult services was seamless and there was no pause in funding. This participant described that the key post high school goal for their family member was employment. However, a segregated worksite (ARC Industries) was the final outcome even though an inclusive worksite had been hoped for. "[T]here were some options suggested, but again because of... the level of support... that [the young person] would require to be successful, it was not... feasible because... there were no informal supports available and... there were no paid supports available. There was no funding available... for supports" (F-03). This less desired work option was necessitated due the structural limitations at the time that included a lack of support for the young person in the workplace once they left high school and lost the school system's support they had received during the school Co-op.

The family member of the second parent with No TAY Plan graduated more recently but before the advent of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process but at a time when the parent was the one who had to complete an application for ODSP. This parent explained that their goals were for the youth to become a PSE student and an ODSP recipient. The concern was completing the application form for adult funding accurately. Unfortunately, they also described an unpleasant experience with the transition to PSE. Once the youth had entered college and without supports in place, "what she thought she could do, the college obviously thought she could not do... [I]t was not a... good experience" (F-04).

Looking at goal setting across the three contexts it is understandable that the Existing TAY Plan parent who had just started the planning process had a more short-

term goal orientation while the Completed TAY Plan and No Tay Plan parents reflected on their respective experiences with transition from a long-term perspective. However, what they had in common was every parent participant aspired for their family member to transition into a normative lifestyle of PSE and/or employment of some form, although the available employment options have changed over time. These parents contributed extensive effort into achieving these aspirations.

Supports

This theme explores the participants' viewpoints of what types of goals require support, who provides the supports and the circumstances where supports are absent or get lost over time such as when the youth turns the age of 18. Parents described they provide the majority of supports for the family member. It was clearly explained that more supports and resources are required in the school system for academic goal attainment. Resources that do exist have to be advocated for by the parents. Secondary education supports and networking are lost once the youth transitions.

Some parents reported providing a substantial amount of support for their young family member's goals. The participant with the Existing TAY Plan supported their young family member with most goals, such as supporting the youth to ride the bus to school and transporting to other community activities. This parent felt that job skills should be learned at school. EAs were described as supporting the youth in academic classes. However, it was noted that the school system needed more support people "because you... need more EAs in here to be able to... get these kids that are high functioning... into a better world... to be able... to protect and help them" (F-02). Outside of the school system, this youth received supports from community professionals

in terms of respite services, leisure and social activities so that the youth and their peers had the opportunity “to get them all together to be able to go out into the community and enjoy themselves” (F-02).

For the parent with the Completed TAY Plan support systems did exist, but the parent had to advocate for them. This participant also described being the one to provide the majority of support for the youth in between TAY Plan meetings: “I don’t understand this, but for goal planning, I think there was... a disconnect there because we have these great goals but then what are we going to do between now and next year?” (F-01). These parental supports included helping the youth with Co-op acquisition and preparation, providing emotional support, and navigating the PSE application process and program options.

The lack of support for a youth to transition into PSE also was noted by one participant with No TAY Plan (i.e., 10 years ago). For the second participant of the No TAY Plan group (i.e., 30 years ago), employment support for a Co-op placement was provided by the school system. To look into supports outside of the school system, back in this time, a parent was able to call a community agency directly to inquire about their services. This was described as being simpler and with fewer steps for the parent to achieve contact and retrieve information.

This theme speaks to the ongoing need for sufficient supports to assist youths with their goal attainment and the necessary steps and actions needed for positive outcomes to occur. It also speaks to the central role of parents as advocates and support providers of the youth’s work, social and learning activities.

Decision-making and Collaboration

This theme was representative of the participants' responses to the interview question about who were the planning decision-makers during IEP meetings, for parents whose family members graduated with No TAY Plan in place, and during the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings, for those have been part of that process. Overall, most participants discussed decision-making only in relation to goal setting and identified a hierarchy of who made what decisions in these processes. This theme reflects generally professional-parent stratified decision-making over the youth's future and the planning process used to get there. Examples are provided to illustrate limited collaboration with parents with No TAY Plan and other examples of more in-depth collaboration with parents with a TAY Plan. Youths were described consistently as not being an active part of the decision-making.

For both parents with No TAY Plan, academic goals were decided by the teachers and established in the IPRC/IEP meetings. Parents had the choice to agree to the goals and sign the IEP or to dispute the goals through a complaint process. One participant described the decision-making used by educational professionals in these meetings as not being collaborative; parental input was not included in the determination of the youth's academic goals and needed supports. However, for another parent with No TAY Plan, a support system was created between the school and home to communicate about the youth's progress: "there was... always a daily communication book... from school and... so that in itself it wasn't... a planning process per se, but... it was almost like... a daily monitoring of... the goals and the... issues that were identified in the IPRC" (F-03). These two examples from the No TAY Plan era illustrate one parent's experience with unilateral academic decision-making by educators in comparison with a limited

collaborative decision-making process experienced by another parent. From a descriptive perspective, this comparison reflects the hierarchy of decision-making that existed prior to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process; professionals over parents. This is a hierarchy that has now softened in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process to give parents the dominant position but a hierarchy that continues to remain in place over the youths' decision-making power. Overall, for all three participant categories (Existing, Completed and No TAY Plans), the parents and education and/or community professionals were identified as the major decision-makers regarding the IEP (i.e., by the education professionals), community service plan (i.e., by the community professionals and parents), or TAY Plan (by education and community professionals and parents), and the implementation of supports. Youth decision-making was not included in the planning process for any of these cases.

Youth input was described by parents with a Completed TAY Plan as included at planning meetings. Participants with No TAY Plan explained that decisions were made between the parent and professionals while keeping the youth's preferences in mind. Youth goals for employment sometimes were determined by a parent to be unrealistic, thus impacting the youth's input. One participant with No TAY Plan described the need to over-rule the young family member's decisions.

Where we're... dealing with let's say a situation where ... regardless of what... [the youth has] said... [such as] "I wanted to see this happen... "[The parent replies:] "Well, no you can't do that." [The youth replies:] "Oh okay, well I'm done." Ah, then [the youth would] just move on. (F-04)

While not included as key decision-makers, youths who were involved in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process were described as having more input than was described by the parents with No TAY plan experience. The parent with the Existing TAY Plan explained that decisions were mostly made by community professionals and that the youth made some decisions: “Well... the [youth] will put their foot down and say I like to do this and this” (F-02). This parent acknowledged that parental and youth decisions were received by education professionals during the TAY Plan meeting such as for the youth to be enrolled in a preferred class. The participant with a Completed TAY Plan described how TAY Plan decisions were made as a group that included the parent, teacher and community professional with the youth’s input. However, the parent ensured that specific aspects were addressed in the TAY Plan, such as goals for literacy skills and social skills, even when the youth did not agree with these goals: “Well we would still put it in anyway because like deep down inside [the youth] knew that that was important but [the youth] may not have wanted to do it” (F-01). The feasible interpretation of the parents’ data is that decision-making by the youth was not frequent and may possibly have explained the low youth engagement ratings and descriptions that were provided by the parents; a discussion that will be covered later in the theme for youth engagement.

Advocacy

This theme explored the parents’ descriptions of their efforts to obtain resources that were in the best interests of their family member. The key aspect of advocacy for these parents was the search for more supports.

All four parents were advocates for their young family members’ goals, supports and promotion of inclusive opportunities. At various points in the planning process, all

parent participants took on an advocacy role. For participants with No TAY Plan, advocacy was described in terms of a past time when schools were just embracing the concept of inclusive education but advocating for supports was essential.

The participant with the Existing TAY Plan spoke about the importance of advocating for their young family member, such as asking for feedback on the youth's progress from professionals and asking for more EAs to support higher functioning students (i.e., using the school's complaint process or addressing a concern with the principal). This parent explained that they had to persist with professionals to obtain services such as to get the youth's assessment completed for the DSO application. Similarly, the participant with the Completed TAY Plan described parental involvement and support as being very important and related to youth capacity: "I've always been an advocate for [the youth] from early days, that's just me and my personality... and I needed to get as much support [as possible]... 'cause [the youth] would not have had the mental capabilities of doing it on [their] own" (F-01).

Advocacy was used by parents to ensure the accomplishment of academic goals, including career planning and diploma attainment. Parental advocacy was not a benefit coming from the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in any way but was described as being an essential parental skill/characteristic for a successful transition and relates to the theme of supports discussed above.

How Was Youth Engagement Described By the Family?

Parents' Perceptions of Youth Engagement

This theme was explored as the participants rated the youths' level of engagement during the TAY Planning process (i.e., at planning meetings). These ratings relate to the

planning context with which each parent had experience. Reasons for lack of youth engagement included either youth not persevering with an idea for a length of time, being unable to articulate their goals, or having a “bad day” (F-01).

Being new to the TAY Planning process, it is understandable that there were no data from the parent of the Existing TAY Plan in regard to youth engagement. In comparison, the participants with No TAY Plan were parents who rated youth engagement at a level of 5 out of 10. An example used to describe why one of these parents chose this rating involved explaining that the youth would try to engage with one decision or idea but then would not persist and would move on to another idea. This young person did not persist with decisions because they tended to be overruled by their parent. This relates to the previously mentioned theme of decision-making and the following theme of youth capacity. The second participant with No TAY Plan was a parent who explained that the young person was described as being *present* but unable to “articulate... goals... and desires in a realistic way” (F-03).

From a completely different perspective, the participant with a Completed TAY Plan rated the “opportunity” for youth engagement at a level of 10 out of 10 (F-01). This parent made this judgement based on the opportunity to engage explaining that it was dependent upon the youth’s mood. To explain this further, if the youth was having “a good day,” they participated by answering questions and making suggestions. However, when the youth was having “a bad day,” (F-01) they did not participate and preferred to be back in the class they liked, or they felt overwhelmed or fearful of facing future prospects (i.e., decisions about the future were sometimes scary for the youth to consider). This parent said that the youth could not be pressured to be engaged but also

included that the youth had the capacity to understand that the TAY Plan meeting's scheduled time had to accommodate the parent's work schedule instead of the youth's class schedule: "Yeah... I mean from my work schedule I would try and do it first thing in the morning... so I could just go into work late, and [the young family member] understood that" (F-01).

Youth Capacity

The theme of youth capacity emerged inductively as the participants discussed their ideas regarding a youth's physical, cognitive and expressive abilities. Capacity in this context includes both assessed/objective physical and cognitive abilities and the perceptions that key decision-makers have of the youth's abilities. The impact of objective and perceived capacity on youth outcomes is impacted positively or negatively by the accessibility, accommodations and supports that are provided in the youth's environment.

For the participant with a Completed TAY Plan, the TAY Planning process was described as being parent-driven on the basis of youth capacity. The parent would steer planning discussion towards a career in which they felt the youth had the capacity to succeed "because with [the youth's] learning problems, like I knew that [the youth] was limited in what [the youth] could do. So it's like, what career or what courses can [the youth] take that: a) [the youth has] interest in and b) [the youth] can flourish in" (F-01). In the role of advocating for their young family member to reach their full capacity level in education, this parent guided this youth to graduate with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma, that opened the door to PSE acceptance, while the school had anticipated that the youth would achieve only a certificate.

The theme of youth capacity also was found in the data of participants with No TAY Plan in terms of what supports were provided and what youths outcomes were experienced. These youths' community-based opportunities were determined by their perceived abilities and the supports that were available at the time, which, in turn, impacted their outcomes following their transition out of school. For example, one youth, who was described by their parent as having a high level of support needs due to their diagnosis and was categorized as being "more difficult to serve" (F-03), had limited options and opportunities for engagement with inclusive settings. Their best determined option was working at ARC Industries, which was a segregated worksite. The second parent with No TAY Plan described similar outcomes as their young family member was challenged to succeed in inclusive PSE opportunities due to having limited physical and communication capacity and lack of appropriate supports to assist the youth (F-04).

In comparison, the parent with a Completed TAY Plan planned for their young family member's successful entry into inclusive PSE and employment regardless of the youth's perceived limitations by the education system where the youth was initially assumed to aim for a certificate instead of a diploma. Overall, the key contrast between parents with No TAY Plan and parents with a TAY Plan was the aspect of what supports were available to address the youth's capacity needs.

This theme illustrates parents' perceptions of youths' abilities and the resulting assumptions they make about their young family members' ability to accomplish post-secondary employment or education goals. "We were making decisions at that point in time that we were really positive were in [the youth's best interest]... maybe we should have taken [the youth's] viewpoint into more perspective" (F-04). The youth's capacity

also relates to the context of the resources and supports that they would need to achieve their goals. The reality of what resources and supports are available at any given time is a major factor in mitigating the impact of capacity concerns. The difference between the lack of options and unsuccessful transition for parents with No TAY Plan and the opportunities and successful outcomes for the Completed TAY Plan parents speaks to the benefit of having a TAY Planning process in place during a time when more supports and goal options were available and when collaborative planning coordinated these options for the youths.

Inclusion

This theme highlights the parents' ideas regarding youth not having the same experiences and options as typical youth do in normative environments, such as the classroom or the worksite. Participants shared their hope that their young family members would have the opportunity for inclusion and described their youth's experiences in education and employment. Lack of inclusion was described in relation to the following situations: barriers faced in lack of support for post-secondary community employment, lack of shared learning (i.e., class design to learn public transportation) in high school classes and exclusion from typical student preparation for college (i.e., PSE orientation). These points about lack of inclusion related to the parents' reference to the lack of exposure to typical experiences that they felt would help youths to be better equipped to be more independent in their future.

As mentioned previously, for the parent experiencing No TAY Plan who hoped for a community-based employment option for their young family member, accepting a segregated worksite outcome was difficult. However, lack of available supports at that

time made inclusive (i.e., community-based) employment impractical given this youth's support needs.

Parents who were involved with the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process described ways in which their youth's needs could be met in a more inclusive way. In some contexts, supports for inclusion may be created through realignment of existing resources. An example of this is the parent with the Existing TAY Plan who suggested that for their youth to learn to use public transit it would be helpful if the students in the class could all learn together how to map a route, rather than having their young family member singled out: "Maybe they can get a map of the city put it up and let the students together with the help of the teachers try and map out a route even if it's to Tim Hortons to get a tea" (F-02). This was the parent's idea of getting their youth's goal attained by engaging their peers in the learning experience at the same time; multiple youths who would be engaged in the learning process of riding a bus, with an inclusive destination as the outcome. This comment also relates to the research question of what could be better in the planning process – the promotion of more inclusive educational experiences.

The focus on community inclusion also was evident in the data of the participant with the Completed TAY Plan who described the importance of youth having equitable (i.e., fair and impartial) opportunities in life. An example is having PSE orientation at the high school for a college apprenticeship program, like the orientation that typical students receive for college/university: "College representatives come to the high school and present how application for college works – the steps involved. They did have these for students going the regular college route but not for the apprentices or for the students with special education needs" (F-01). Parents valued youth being provided with typical

lifestyle opportunities, such as accessible transportation and recreation in inclusive settings. “I think just to make sure that... these children get a chance in life just like everybody else and... that we need to work together to ensure that” (F-01). These parents’ hope for inclusive experiences for their young family members relates to their expressed concern that without this exposure to typical experiences their young family members are limited in their ability to engage in planning their transition goals and ways they can be achieved.

How Was Collaboration Between the Sectors Described?

Communication, Coordination and Cooperation

The construct of collaboration was based on participants’ references to experiences that reflected the 3Cs (see Chapter 3) components of *communication* in finding “the right person” to talk to, *coordinated* support systems between school and parents, and *cooperative* relationships in the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings and overall planning process.

Overall, for parents with No TAY plan, the education and community professionals did not collaborate. It was more about the parent finding “the right person” to talk to (F-03): “[Y]ou sometimes just simply had to talk to the key person and things would happen. Um whereas, if you just walked through the front door... wanting an application for... whatever services, um okay, six months waiting list” (F-04).

In contrast, the parent with the existing TAY Plan rated cross-sector collaboration as an 8 out 10 because education and community professionals sat together to develop the TAY Plan with the family and “we put our points down on the table... [as the parent would say -] I would like this to happen and they say... the child’s too young or we don’t

have the resources or the support to be able to do it” (F-02). This collaborative approach was described as including a positive rapport between professionals. From the parent of the Completed TAY Plan, the collaboration between the education professional and young family member’s children community professional was rated as 7 out of 10; however, adult community professionals were not involved. With parental and youth cooperation, it was required for the Completed Tay Plan parent to meet for the annual TAY Plan reviews at the school location: “So um, there was no choice – that was... the school’s schedule” (F-01). The collaborative approach among education and community professionals was recognized by this parent at TAY meetings but the parent noted that no collaboration occurred in the interval between annual TAY meetings.

This theme highlights the progress of the Local Community Agreement’s (2017) objective to get the family and sectors planning at one table to create one plan. However, areas in need of further collaboration were identified in terms of bringing the adult community professionals to the planning table and maintaining a collaborative practice between annual review meetings.

What Are the Benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process?

This research question was examined in participants’ disclosures about their experiences and/or aspects of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process that were described as going well, including what positive outcomes and impacts have come from this process. When participants were asked directly what they experienced as benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, they emphasized the benefits to parents, youths, professionals and having the supports in place to assist parents in planning. The

description of these themes is brief but worthy of consideration and useful to the SROI analysis in Chapter 7.

Benefits to Parents

When asked what the benefits from the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process might be, the participant with the Existing TAY Plan explained that it was difficult to see any specific benefits—most likely because they were new to the planning process. However, this parent was able to reflect on the benefit they derived from hearing about resources such as DSO funding and the PSE option of the CICE program for their young family member (F-02). This speaks to Tri-Sector TAY Planning process focus on collaborative information sharing which this parent found was beneficial.

Benefits to Youths

The parent with a Completed TAY Plan had the most specific information to share about an important direct outcome of the TAY Planning process for their young family member. This youth's TAY Plan included goals focused on the development of employment readiness skills through various high school Co-op experiences. This process leads to the youth's successful admission to a college apprenticeship program “which involves on the job training plus college, which years ago I didn't think she would ever be at that stage, never be a college student. So that's a big thing for her” (F-01).

Benefit to Professionals

One parent extended the list of benefits to also include that knowledge of a youth's capacity was shared between an LRT and a community professional to develop the TAY Plan. “So it's like this is what she wants to do, what courses are available in

high school that she can take. So so, it was the two working together” (F-01). The benefit was identified as the collaboration of the education and community professionals working together to figure out the youth’s future together.

Supports in Place to Plan with Parents

When considering what life would be like for youths and families if the TAY Planning process was not in place, both parents from the existing TAY Plan and the completed TAY Plan envisioned that all the planning would be left to them (F-02). The parents would have been alone and each youth’s goals and needed supports may have been missed.

Well, I think for me it was a matter of if you were stuck and didn’t know how to do something you know you could contact the school, you could contact your worker so it sort of was your backup support system. So [if on your own] you would sort of loose that and you would be totally doing it on your own. So, it would put more pressure on the parent and then a lot of times maybe they wouldn’t be able to find the resources that they would need. (F-01)

One parent explained that all the work involved in the transition planning would have been done by the parent and there would have been added pressure on them to find information and solely navigate the education and developmental service systems. “I think... there could be many children that do not reach their full potential, that do not have a plan after school” (F-01) if the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process was not in place.

Overall, the themes describing benefits for youth, family and professionals emphasized the positive outcomes generated by the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process for

these stakeholder groups. Parents described being informed about the steps that are necessary to plan for adult funding and services, youths being provided with job readiness Co-op experience that facilitated PSE admission, professionals involved in the planning process sharing information about youth to facilitate more effective goal setting, and parents receiving help navigating necessary support systems for their young family member. The Tri-Sector TAY Planning process provides families with emotional and administrative supports and resources.

This section of the results speaks to the SROI analysis completed in Chapter 7 where each stakeholder group is individually identified with their specific outcomes experienced in the planning process.

What Could Make the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process Better?

This area of inquiry was identified as the suggestions or recommendations made by the participants with the vision for a better and even an ideal TAY Planning process. When the participants were asked if there were any suggestions or areas in need of improvement in the TAY Planning process, they made recommendations in the areas of *post-secondary goals, terminology, training with teachers, supports, and TAY Plan reviews*.

Post-Secondary Goals and Supports

The need for more support from community professionals to assist youths with college applications was identified by the participant with the Completed TAY Plan as an area in need of improvement.

I think there has to be more emphasis on post high school... and what do you want to do, how do we help you with it and once you're done high

school... what supports are there that can help you achieve your goal. (F-01)

This parent described that more assistance was required to support youth and their parent with navigating local apprenticeship program criteria and attending PSE information meetings at the college to request accommodations and supports in preparation for college entry. In addition, it was suggested that it would have improved the planning process if high school and PSE professionals would meet to plan a smoother exit from high school and to guide a smoother entry into college by laying out the steps necessary to achieve the TAY Plan's PSE goal. This is where collaboration with adult community professionals could be addressed in terms of their attendance at planning meetings more often than just the last planning meeting.

Enhancing Accessibility of Language and Terminology

Contrary to the completed TAY Plan experience, the parent with the Existing TAY Plan identified different areas of improvement. This parent expressed the need for footnotes on documents to explain terminology. For example, DSO would be notated at the bottom of the page as Developmental Services Ontario. For new parents, time should be taken to explain what program options are available and what community services they offer. In addition, this participant suggested that a resource book be designed for parents that would provide questions to ask the different agencies and professionals (i.e., when in contact with CN or Bethesda).

I'd rather have a resource book... where [you are provided with questions to ask so]... you can contact a whole lot of... organizations... to be able to

contact them because you don't know how to word the email or you don't know how to start the conversation when you call them (F-02).

Training for Teachers and Parents

Additionally, within the education sector, more training for teachers regarding disabilities was recommended by one parent as well as more training for parents to provide information about planning and how to prepare for their young family member's future. It was suggested that professionals organize a parent support group where professionals introduce themselves to the parents and provide resource information and contact names. This would build familiarity for future contact.

Goals and Supports in High School

For the parent with the Existing TAY Plan, better planning meant focusing on skills to build the youth's independence for the future (i.e., reading, writing and obtaining a driver's license) and ensuring that the supports to accomplish this are in place.

TAY Plan Reviews

For the parent with the Completed TAY Plan, a better planning process would have family, education, and community professionals all working together to build the youth's future. They would focus on ensuring that supports are in place and would meet weekly/monthly instead of just annually for the TAY Plan follow up or check-ins. There would be more detailed planning for PSE with high school and college professionals working together for a smooth transition.

Section 5: Results for Youths

This section will follow the same format as the preceding results. It contains the results from the interviews conducted with two young people with I/DD. The two different contexts of these participants represented one youth who transitioned out of high school with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan in place and the second young person who left high school before the 2014 Tri-Sector TAY Plan model was developed. As such, I begin with a brief explanation of each youth's context and how the data were identified and categorized according to the five research questions: description of the process, youth engagement, collaboration, benefits and improvements (see Figure 6.5). The examination of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process revealed the themes of the *TAY Plan and its meetings, goals, youth capacity, and supports*. In terms of this research question, these two young people experienced a different process to prepare for transitioning out of high school (i.e., one youth with a TAY Plan and one without). Both young people aspired towards similar goals, such as Co-op experiences representative of their employment choice and PSE enrolment, however the young person without a TAY Plan did not receive the necessary supports to accomplish the goals.

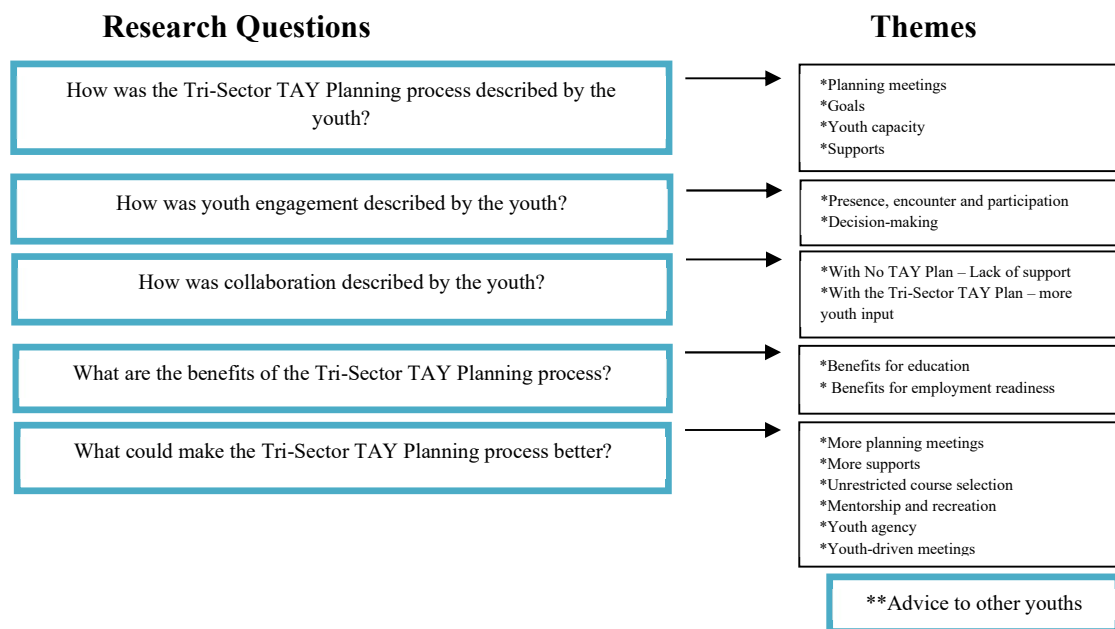
When exploring the second research question, the themes of *presence, encounter and participation* and *decision-making* were found. Both young people described mid-range levels of engagement during their planning process and attributed this, in part, to their lack of decision-making power. The third research inquiry regarding collaboration revealed the themes of a *lack of support* for the youth with No TAY plan and the request for *more youth input* into the planning process for the young person who had a TAY Plan. The fourth research question was identified with the themes of *benefits for*

education and benefits for employment readiness. It was found that the TAY Planning process prepared the youth for PSE and future employment. When asked what would have happened without the TAY Planning process the youth said these benefits would not have happened, the young person would not have applied to college or ended up in a preferred job.

The final research inquiry was considered from the perspective of both young people to include their recommendations of what could make transition planning better. It was expressed that *more planning meetings* (i.e., frequent check-ins throughout the month), *more support* and resources to support youths' goals, *unrestricted course selection* for high school courses and Co-op choices (i.e., options not reliant on the perceived capacity of the youth), *mentorship and recreation* options, increased opportunity for *youth agency*, and the promotion of *youth-driven meetings* – these would all be ways to improve the planning process.

Finally, the results section will end with the theme of *advice* provided by both youths who emphasized the need for youths who are currently in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process to make their voices heard. To begin, I will proceed to explain each youth's general circumstances separately.

Figure 6.5 *The five research questions are illustrated with their associated individual themes that represent the results of the analysis of data from youths*



The experiences of the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan were shaped by the single TAY Plan approach that was used during their high school years. This youth attended high school and graduated with the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in place. For this youth, the TAY Planning process promoted significant outcomes of earning a high school diploma, gaining entry into college and obtaining a paid job. These achievements were accomplished because planning was guided by the youth’s parent and professionals. However, the youth’s dream of a career in the arts was not pursued which left the youth with remorse and regrets. In contrast, the second young person attended high school and did not experience a single TAY Plan approach. This participant graduated over 10 years ago prior to the existence of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. For this second young person, a late diagnosis of I/DD (i.e., after leaving high school) concurrent with other already established diagnoses contributed to their high school experiences in terms of fewer available support systems. If the youth had been

diagnosed with I/DD earlier while still in high school, possibly they would have had access to more supports, and that might have contributed to more positive post-secondary outcomes (i.e., successful first year of PSE). This young person experienced a lack of supports including those for accessibility to attend mainstream high school classes and assistance of an EA for Co-op opportunities. This youth felt that more effective planning would have resulted in more successful outcomes beyond their graduation with a high school diploma such as a career choice or smoother entry into PSE.

Interestingly, both young people shared some common experiences and outcomes such as graduating with a high school diploma. They also experienced distinctive and unique situations. The youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan experienced collaborative planning with school and developmental service working together and the accomplishment of a successful high school Co-op placement, while the youth with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan experienced a lack of support systems, such as a lack of physical access to mainstream classrooms and Co-op of choice in high school.

Even though the two participants shared common themes, their expressions within some of these themes were different. As I describe the results of the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan and this participant's thematic content, I will include the second participant's thematic outcomes as well to compare each theme and their relationship or connection to the other themes.

How Was the TAY Planning Process Described By the Youths?

Planning Meetings

This theme was identified through analysis of the participants' descriptions of the various functions and characteristics of the actual TAY Plan or IEP meetings they

attended (i.e., how it felt being in these meetings and who attended) and the nature of their individual TAY Plan or IEP (i.e., the youths' documented goals such as Co-op placements to prepare for future employment and college application processes). The Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was described as helpful for the first youth to prepare for their transition. The IEP planning process for the second youth was not as supportive in their transitioning phase (i.e., lack of Co-op options).

For the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan in place, the process of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning started in grade 11 and it did not feel comfortable at first. The youth described the experience of meeting to make goals.

After, it was just a little strange because I didn't really understand what was happening... and then we were all sitting down, me and my mom, um, some EAs... these teachers that help us [and] support workers... I just thought it was all like too much for me at first. But after just talking about it, I was getting more eased into it and I was just ready to move on with my life when it came to... [planning goals for the future]. (Y-01)

This youth attended the Tri-Sector TAY Planning meeting once a year with the teacher, parent and community worker from a children's service in attendance. The community professional assumed the role of leading these meetings. The TAY Plan documented the youth's goals for their life and the supports needed to achieve them.

[I]t was just what my life goals were, and what I want to succeed in college and... clubs, learning strategies of what would help me in college, like if I need to have a note taker in my classes, or if I need to record lectures (Y-01).

At the annual TAY Plan meetings, it was noted by the young person that the teachers were there to listen and give advice. “So... they would say - oh maybe you should have a reduced course load in college so it wouldn’t give you so much stress” (Y-01).

This youth did not recall any planning for housing or living arrangements at Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings. It was noted that the TAY Plan was more about the youth’s education. Yet, after the transition from high school and children’s services, the Tri-Sector TAY Plan was used to inform the adult community professional’s service Plan (i.e., an Individual Support Plan). In the young person’s mind it was the same “Plan” but the goals changed.

In contrast, the young person with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan had an IEP and review IEP meetings. For the IEP meetings, they met with the resource teacher, the parents, a physiotherapist (PT), an occupational therapist (OT) and a psychologist. This young person recalled having two-hour IEP meetings that were held 2-3 times a year. The parent and school professionals attended the meetings with the youth attending meetings when they felt comfortable to miss the particular class that was scheduled at the same time. IEP meetings focused on the young person’s academic goals, such as moving into PSE (i.e., college). Planning meetings included the guidance counsellors who advised them on the college application process; “...they helped me apply to college. That didn’t work out and... basically, well, I didn’t have much [support]” (Y-02); college entry was an unsuccessful outcome.

As such, the young person described having an IEP but did not find it addressed their needs such as safe accessibility in stairways to attend certain classes. “I was stuck... on the main floor of the school. I couldn’t take science, I couldn’t take computers

which... I enjoyed the computer classes and the science ‘cause I wanted to take biology” (Y-02). The IEP did not seem to reach the academic goals of the young person, despite the collaborative opportunity of educational and health professionals at the meetings with the youth and their parents.

This theme illustrates both youths’ awareness of the need to plan for their post-secondary existence. While the processes were different, the planning meetings they experienced highlighted this awareness for the youths with PSE and employment as the primary objectives both were directed to pursue.

Goals

The theme of goals was defined by the participants’ descriptions of the type of goals that were included in their TAY Plan or IEP. Factors that were identified as influencing the youths’ goals were aspects such as the determination to work hard to stick with and achieve some goals, deciding/compromising on their career path, and their capacity to achieve.

The youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan had two primary goals; to graduate with a high school diploma (not a certificate) and to apply for college (PSE). This youth understood that a high school diploma was the key to college admission and was proud of this accomplishment. “[J]ust getting my diploma [was] my big achievement” (Y-01). To graduate with a diploma relied upon the completion of high school courses with a specified grade percentage achieved. Aspiring to reach for elevated grades and not abandon the goal of earning a diploma was an arduous task.

‘cause in Grade 11... I didn’t really want to continue with high school

‘cause... I wasn’t really doing that well and I wasn’t really happy with it,

with my marks that I was getting. It was like 60s and 70s and my goal was to get like all 80s and 90s in high school. But... with my disability... it was a challenge to strive to my goals. (Y-01)

Along with achieving elevated grades, determining which career path to take in college relied upon high school Co-op placements to establish the youth's interests and preferences in the field of work. Employment goals were explored through these placements leading to the elimination of some potential career paths and the acceptance of another path.

I don't want to help in a [name of a social service] anymore because I don't want to really get into that field... because I did a Co-op for two years and the last Co-op I did I wasn't really like happy with it.... [In the new Co-op at the restaurant]... you're doing new things, you're learning. (Y-01)

The extended goal to become a chef was the positive outcome of having the opportunity in these Co-op placements to explore career choices while in high school. "I'm going to get my Red Seal to become a chef" (Y-01). A Red Seal Chef is a nationally recognized expert cook in the industry.

This career choice was established after several different occupations within Co-op opportunities had been attempted and investigated. It was noted that parental guidance and instruction contributed to the final career determination. "I would trust her... advice to see if I should do this, or if I should do another thing. So, I mostly lean on my mom for the good decisions, but it's also me who wants to have good decisions" (Y-01). Once involved with the Co-op option of cooking, the youth attempted another career alternative

but ended with the culinary option. However, this youth also discussed having a much stronger passion to be in the arts but this goal was not pursued.

I have a passion for... [cooking], but it's not that strong passion that my mom thinks I have. I always wanted to be like [in the arts] because I really, really love [being in the arts] ... I really wanted to be [in the arts] but being a chef is... my main priority right now. (Y-01)

This is a comment that will be returned to later in this results section when I discuss the theme of decision-making. Additionally, some decisions around goal setting relied upon the youth's time schedule and availability. For example, the youth wanted to work on some financial skills but the available program was in conflict with their high school schedule. This was a program offered by the community developmental services. Thus, this goal was put on hold to avoid missing classes because aiming towards their high school graduation was priority.

Having achieved the goal of graduating from high school and entering PSE, future goals were still evident and were not only attending college. One of these goals included living more independently one day, such as living in residence at college as other college students do. However, until certain life skills were acquired (i.e., doing their laundry independently), this was kept as a future consideration. Overall, this youth's experiences with goal setting and Co-op placements were comparable to the young person with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan in place during their high school years, but with dissimilar outcomes.

Similar to the youth with the Tri-Sector TAY Plan, the young person without the Tri-Sector TAY Plan also had the main goal in high school of graduating with a diploma

and transitioning into college - a goal that was parent-driven. Following the same disposition as the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan, this young person without a TAY Plan expressed pride and celebratory acknowledgment regarding their high school graduation. This young person was proud to announce their most successful goal achievement, “I graduated!” (Y-02) and this graduation included acquiring a diploma not a certificate. This second youth did not have the Co-op options available to help them to decide about their career path due to lack of supports in place – a discussion that will be covered later in the theme of supports.

Parental advocacy was a strong influence on goal setting for the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan. “Basically, it was my mom, my mom who wanted to see me succeed. So mostly it was my mom” (Y-01). This youth described a trusting and dependent relationship with their parent.

This theme illustrates the differences in transition planning between the Tri-Sector TAY Plan and the IEP processes. Both youths focused on working to achieve high school diplomas and to enter PSE. However, while the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY plan had several supported high school Co-op experiences that helped them to decide on a clear career path, the youth without a TAY plan did not have this Co-op support involving preferred worksites and multiple Co-op experiences. As mentioned in other results sections, setting goals is the core element of transition planning; a core element that existed before the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was established.

Youth Capacity

The theme of youth capacity emerged inductively as the participants discussed their ideas regarding their diagnosis, cognitive and expressive abilities. In this theme

successful goal attainment of Co-op preferences was impacted by the issue of capacity for the youth with No TAY Plan but not for the young person who did have the TAY Plan. Other goals such as living independently at college were impacted by youth capacity for both young people. In addition, the young person who had No TAY Plan was restricted from both mainstream and segregated classes due to their capacity.

Adult perceptions of their capacity had an impact on the youths' goal setting (i.e., what Co-op the youth is supported to attend versus the Co-op of their preference).

Returning to the previous discussion of goals, I will remind you of two points. First, the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan discussed the hardship of attaining high grades in order to apply to college; a youth being pushed to reach above their expected capacity (i.e., having I/DD) in the education system. Second, this participant also discussed the potential for independent living as a future consideration, once certain skill sets were in place and less parental dependency was required; youth capacity still to be developed.

The discussion of inability/capacity to live unsupported in a college residence also was present for the young person with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan; a circumstance where limitation of youth capacity did not have the necessary supports put in place to address the youth's needs for this goal attainment. Also, for this young person, the concept of capacity was an issue with school Co-ops and accessibility concerns; a discussion to follow in the next theme of supports. In these circumstances, limited youth capacity impacted the goals that were aimed for in the IEP for the second youth i.e., denied mainstream classroom experience or Co-op preference due to physical impairment. Conversely, when this young person with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan wanted to attend some of the high school's life skills classes they were informed that they were "too high

functioning” (Y-02). This was a young person whose perceived levels of capacity were a disadvantage to their goal acquisition from both ends of the spectrum – either not capable enough or too capable.

Supports

The theme of supports was explored through the youths’ descriptions of who supported their goals and what goals were successfully supported in their respective plans (e.g., Co-op choices). This theme included the youths’ expressions and ideas that were used to categorize the different types of supports or assistance provided to the youth to attain their goals. For the youth with the Tri-Sector TAY plan in place, a strong support system was provided that resulted in a decided career path and a smooth entry into college life with their ODSP support income established. For the youth with no TAY Plan, a less effective support system was in place and an unsuccessful college life was the outcome (i.e., unable to complete a first-year course placement due to lack of physical accessibility and its bilingual requirement).

Looking at the impressions of the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan in place, the majority of supports were provided by the community professional. The community professional would discuss concerns or issues with the youth, whether they were school or home matters, but only spent actual time at the youth’s school for the annual TAY Plan meetings.

[The community professional supported the youth’s]... school and house life. So if we had a problem in our house she would come in and she would... talk about it. And inside of school she would help me with like,

what's going on, what can we work on in school, so she was like there for me. (Y-01)

The community professional was described as checking in with the youth on a regular basis. "She was always checking in to see how things are going and stuff like that" (Y-01). As mentioned, the community professional provided support with home matters. For example, the community professional assisted with disagreements between the youth and their parent. "[B]ecause we would always argue about grades and like who I'm hanging out with, if I'm hanging out with the wrong crowd... or ... if I had problem in class" (Y-01).

When this youth turned the age of 18 years, their community professional changed from the children's services to an adult services worker. This was another adjustment in terms of getting to know a new professional to work with and comprehend new practices.

[S]o as soon as I turned 18, things switched apparently. I wasn't really informed. All I knew was that I'm getting a new support worker and...

[now] since I'm like older its more me being independent and reaching out to her... but yeah it's different. (Y-01)

The change in community professionals from the children's service to the adult professional impacted the young person's sense of rapport and comfort with the new professional. This was pivotal to the change in the expectations imposed on the young person and a change in their responsibilities as a young adult.

So I'm just... would like more support from her and more of her reaching out to me, but apparently it's my responsibility to reach out to her and then

if I want my mom into this, I can get my mom involved with the meetings but it's mostly me and [the community professional]. (Y-01)

This shift in support and the change in professional personnel impacted the young person's perspective of the quality of supports being received.

[I]t's just – she's not very supportive. She's not like [name of children's services professional] where's it always – like she would always give me good advice, but [name of adult community professional] she gives advice but it's not the best advice. (Y-01)

Shifting to adult services also involved applying to DSO. Regarding the youth's application for adult funding i.e., ODSP, their parent looked after all of this process. “She set it up... It was just my mom... she was asking questions to [the community professional] about it... she handled all of that” (Y-01). Overall, the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan appeared to receive all necessary supports, accomplish most of their goals, and transition into the outcomes they aimed for and expected to accomplish during their high school years. This was not true for the young person who transitioned without a Tri-Sector TAY Plan.

For the young person with a TAY Plan, supports in the school system revolved around Co-ops. This youth explained that they attended Co-op placements independently once the teacher had set up the placement, such as a placement at a social service worksite. “My Co-op teacher set it up for me and then I just had to have a meeting [to confirm the placement]” (Y-01). The youth received school credit for work at the Co-op site. “So, my teacher would give an envelope to my supervisor [at the Co-op] who I worked for and she would ah evaluate me every single day to see what I am doing and

what I need to work on” (Y-01). The teacher would then evaluate the youth based on these reports from the worksite supervisor. Co-ops were the building blocks for the youth’s adjustment to future community employment when they transitioned to adult life. These Co-ops assisted the youth in deciding on a career path for adulthood.

The young person with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan experienced a lack of accessibility in high school (i.e., unable to do stairs with classes on the second floor). In addition, there was a lack of support as well as at the college level such as how to “navigate the college halls and what not” (Y-02). Due to lack of supports and effective planning strategies, this young person did not succeed with their placement goal in their first year of college. “I think I could get pretty good grades and I did until they sent me to placement with stairs. So I had to drag my walker up I think about 5-6 stairs... [and]... I failed placement” (Y-02). Ultimately, this young person felt that if they had been able to have EA support, they would have accomplished goals such as a job placement or volunteer job. “I would have loved [having] an EA” (Y-02). However, obtaining this needed support system was not in the young person’s realm of decision-making. On a positive note, even though not their preferred worksite for a Co-op (i.e., their first choice was denied to accessibility issues), this young person did have one successful Co-op during high school located at an elementary school. This success was attributed to the placement’s environment that provided the youth with respect and physical supports. “I actually had a placement at... [an] elementary school and was, I guess, a – what do you call it – a teacher assistant ... which worked out awesome because... the teacher was phenomenal” (Y-02). This identifies the critical need for effective planning and

infrastructure to be in place to support the accommodation needs of youth with disabilities during their high school and post-secondary years.

How Was Youth Engagement Described by the Youths?

This research question explored the definition of engagement provided in Chapter 3 of this dissertation (e.g., three levels of engagement) along with any nuanced description recognized in the participants' comments. The themes that emerged from the participant's interview responses within the Tri-Sector TAY planning process illustrated the moderate levels of youth engagement and the impact of limited decision-making on their motivation for engagement at planning meetings. For the youth with no TAY Plan and their IEP planning process, moderate levels of engagement were reported as well with the themes described below.

Presence, Encounter and Participation

Both youths experienced presence (e.g., attended planning meetings), encounter (e.g., asked for their opinion in terms of setting up particulars to their goals such as what courses/Co-op to take) but full participation was not promoted when it came to decision-making (e.g., remaining in school until the age of 21 years or achieving their dream career path). Both youths described their level of engagement with a moderate rating and reported having limited decision-making power.

The youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan described a moderate level of engagement in the planning process with a rating of 5 out of 10. The explanation for this rating related to decision-making and the lack of opportunity to feel their voice was heard.

Because I was there. Half the time it was adults talking. They were talking to me but I was like zoning out because I'm like... what's the point of me

being in this meeting if no one [asks for my opinion]. There's asking me questions but it's also like – my mom's just answering the questions. So it's like why do I have to be here if I don't really get asked that many questions. (Y-01)

A similar position was conveyed by the young person with no TAY Plan. This young person rated their level of engagement at IEP meetings as a 6 out of 10. This was explained as being due to numerous decisions made by parents along with missing some IEP meetings that conflicted with class time the youth did not want to miss. “[L]ike my parents... wanted... what was best for me and, or maybe some of... the meetings I didn't go to because I didn't want to skip... that class... [the meetings] were mostly in the morning and... mornings are not the best time for me” (Y-02).

Decision-Making

This theme was representative of the participants' responses to the interview question about who were the decision-makers in the IEP or Tri-Sector TAY Planning process including the Plan meetings. Participants discussed decision-making in relation to goal setting. They described parents and professionals as being the dominate decision makers. For both participants, goal setting and post-secondary outcomes decision-making were dominated sometimes by the parent yet at other times by the young person. However, the degree to which each young person was given the opportunity to make their own decisions differed between the two participants.

For the youth with the Tri-Sector TAY Plan, sharing their ideas at the TAY Plan meetings was one aspect of the decision-making during goal setting. However, when there were differences of opinion, the parent would dominate the decision made. “We

would get into an argument and then [the parent] would just tell me to be quiet and I would say – okay, I'll just let you run the meeting” (Y-01). With parental directive as a dominant force, the youth described a time when their goals would be denied. “Well, I actually did [make my own goals] but they all got turned down” (Y-01). Additionally, this youth described a specific career goal that was not supported; an occupation the youth dreamed of being in and was not given the chance to accomplish. “I think that place would be me being [in the arts] instead of a cook. And then me trying to figure out what college I would be going to – to help me get into that [arts] environment” (Y-01). With the youth’s first career choice not supported, there was also controversial decision-making around other career options that followed. As discussed earlier, exposure to the actual worksite of these choices helped with the youth’s acceptance with the parental decision-making.

Well, I said I didn’t wanta be a chef... I wanted to be a [name of personal care profession] at first, but then things changed and then I experienced, I really don’t want to do this, and then I’m like “okay” and then my mom said you’re going into cooking, and I’m like... “okay”... so I think my second option was going into cooking – which was fine. (Y-01)

In comparison to the first youth, the young person with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan had similar experiences with parental direction in goal setting. One of the decisions of this young person was to remain in high school past the age of 18 years, i.e. until the provincial maximum of age 21, but it did not happen due to the parent’s persistent goal of college. Interestingly, when asked if the youth with No TAY Plan wanted to go to college they responded “Not at all... I feel like it was pressured on me” (Y-02). As such, when

asked who made most of the decisions, the young person explained it was their parents, such as the decision to go to college, but that the young person did make some decisions as well, such as choosing to which colleges they would apply. “Um, choosing what schools [colleges] to apply to... [Also,] while I was in high school, I got to choose what courses to take and what not to take” (Y-02). In contrast to the youth with a TAY Plan, while this young person described that they were given the opportunity to make decisions such as what courses they wanted to register for in high school, unfortunately they were unable to follow through with these decisions when an EA was not provided for the necessary support.

With the exploration of this theme, it was clear that both youths experienced that primary decisions were made by their parents. Both expressed their discontent about decisions being made for them, yet they also acknowledged their need for this parental guidance and direction.

How Was Sectoral Collaboration Described by the Youths?

This research question was explored through the youths’ responses to their interview question that asked about how the professionals worked together to help them plan for their future. With no TAY Plan, the participant’s responses spoke to the reality of limited resources and *lack of support* system provided through the IEP planning process for the young person. The young person who did experience a TAY Plan commended the professionals for working with each other but expressed the wish that they could have been involved as a meaningful member of that collaborative approach.

With No TAY Plan-Lack of Support

For the youth with no TAY Plan, there was no Tri-Sector approach to discuss. However, this young person met for IEP meetings with the collaboration of the resource teacher, the parents, PT, OT and psychologist (all professionals connected to the education system). No community professionals attended any IEP planning meetings at the school however community professionals supported this youth outside of school with such needs as respite care (Y-02). As mentioned in the discussion regarding their goals and supports, this youth experienced a lack of support to attend the regular classrooms (on the second floor) or their Co-op of choice due to mobility limitations. With this explained, it was concluded that even though a circle of professionals attended the IEP, academic goals were not attained such as attending the Co-op of their choice.

With the Tri-Sector TAY Plan-More Youth Input

In comparison, the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY plan described the teachers, community professional and the parent working together. “I think it’s just emailing back and forth, asking and meeting” (Y-01). Yet, where collaboration did not seem to exist was planning for PSE. When asked if high school professionals helped with the goal for PSE it was explained that “[w]e let them... know [that we were applying] but they weren’t really... supportive of what we were doing... [at the meetings] they were just there” (Y-01). When asked to describe the collaboration between professionals and their parent, it was described as being positive however, at times, the youth felt left out of this collaborative approach.

Yeah, everyone worked well with each other. We all got along good... everyone was supportive of what I was saying, what my mom was saying, but I think they were more supportive of what my mom was saying than

what I was saying because they would always have to like be like so do you “really” want to do this or do you want to do something else? So, they would always like edge me to like the other side of it, if you understand what I am saying. (Y-01)

This comment relates back to the previous discussion in terms of the theme of decision-making in the transition planning process and how more youth decision-making could promote more youth engagement. This youth expressed the need for more youth decision-making in terms of bringing the youth into the collaborative circle of planning.

What Were the Benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process?

This research question was explored with the first youth’s descriptions of the positive aspects of their Tri-Sector transition planning process. To extend the discussion of what was advantageous about the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, the youth also was asked to consider what it would have been like for them if this planning process had not been in place. Analysis of these data yielded two key themes, *benefits for education* (e.g., pushing to get high grades) and *benefits for employment readiness* (i.e., Co-op experience). It was also explored how the youth described imaging if the TAY Plan was not in place (i.e., a no PSE outcome).

Benefits for Education

The planning process helped the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan to set goals and aspire towards high grades. “It did, because it got me focused and it got me ready and um I wanted to make sure that I got all my marks to the 80s by the time I graduated high school. So... it helped” (Y-01). When asked what their life would be like if the Tri-Sector TAY Planning meetings had not been in place the

youth felt that they would not have been attending college and would have been in a job that was stressful and not of their choosing.

I don't think I would be successful if I didn't have anything in place for me because I think I would be lost. I think I wouldn't know exactly what I want to do without my mother telling me what I want to do. I wouldn't be success. I won't really be in college. I think I would just be working... probably at McDonald's or something if I didn't really got my job where I am right now. (Y-01)

This youth clearly explained that with the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in place, these significant benefits were evident and they were grateful for them.

Benefits for Employment Readiness

It was explained that once the young person had left high school they did not go to Co-ops anymore because they had served their purpose. "Um yeah, 'cause I didn't really need to do them anymore because I figured out what I want to be... and what I wanted to do" (Y-01). This time of worksite exploration with the various Co-ops was of great benefit in career path determination.

What Could Make the Planning Process Better?

Through the interviews, many different suggestions about areas for improvement were mentioned. This section will describe these ideas in relation to the two youth's separate results, when asked what could have made their planning process better. The youth with No TAY Plan discussed the following themes: *more planning meetings, more supports, unrestricted course selection, and mentorship and recreation*. The youth with

the Tri-Sector TAY Plan discussed issues related to the themes of *youth agency* and *youth-driven meetings*.

More Planning Meetings

I will begin with the young person with no Tri-Sector TAY plan as I felt it was valuable to ask this participant what they perceived to be a better planning system in comparison to the planning process they experienced. This young person suggested having more frequent and regularly scheduled meetings.

I would also have like maybe weekly meetings with the resource teacher or an EA and just to like check in to make sure they've got everything like already, like a binder or something that is solely for... college prep, work prep, um their resume or application for a day program or something along those lines. All those in like one magic little... folder so it doesn't get lost.

(Y-02)

This is a recommendation that also was made in the results of the family and community professionals.

More Supports

Implementing effective supports was a key component for this young person with no TAY Plan as well. This young person suggested the need for more supports to be in place for college entry and for a smoother transition. Learning some life skills in high school to become more independent and more prepared for college life also was highlighted.

... [T]here's my first year of college... there should have been like some sort of... community support worker or something that checks in on you

to make sure you're doing ok 'cause there's, like then I didn't know how to pay bills or anything. (Y-02)

Other supports that this participant said should be implemented in high school included having more visual supports such as pictures and words to explain and guide the steps required to reach an objective. "Oh, it would have been like, me with guidance counsellor or with whoever and maybe a picture of a book...or something" (Y-02). Other areas of improvement included having an accessible bus for transportation and EA support for things such as note taking in high school.

Unrestricted Course Selection

As discussed earlier, this young person had wished to attend life skills classes in high school but was told that "I was too high functioning" (Y-02). The free choice in course participation was identified as an area to improve youth engagement and agency.

Mentorship and Recreation

Additionally, this young person with no TAY Plan was able to envision the perfect planning process as including "guest speakers with same, similar disabilities [who] come in and chat with the class" (Y-02). The perfect planning system also would include social opportunities with "all kinds of... clubs, or like a cooking club or something. You know there's chess clubs, kinda like that" (Y-02). Finally, there would be opportunity to learn life skills such as cooking and money management, "so they can maybe figure out how to be a little bit more independent" (Y-02). This speaks to the circumstances of providing more resources and supports.

Youth Agency

The youth with a Tri-Sector TAY plan had a very different focus for improvement; that was youth agency. This youth felt that they should have had more opportunity for their own expression and voice to promote a Tri-Sector TAY Plan that would have engaged them in their planning process and their goals.

I think maybe less input from my mother and more input from me 'cause I just kept getting shut down, but, honestly, I think it would be more input from me and just have the courage to say what I want to say but I was too afraid to say it. I didn't want to upset my mother, so I think it would just be more vocal, more vocal. (Y-01)

Youth-Driven Meetings

With youth agency in mind, the young person explained that it would be an improvement if the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process allowed for planning meetings to be youth-facilitated. "If I was running the meetings, it would actually be nice" (Y-01). This would be a meeting where the youth directs the decisions.

I think I would just want to be, so this is what I want to do, this is how I want to do it, these are my goals, and that's it. That's how we are doing it.

I would just be straight on, that would be it. (Y-01)

This comment speaks to the issue of youth engagement and how this youth desired the opportunity to be allowed to express full participation in their individual planning meetings.

Advice to Other Youths

This theme represents the voice of the youths in the study speaking directly to other youth. I will begin with a reflection on envisioning the future by the youth with a

Tri-Sector Plan provided. I will then move on to advice for youths and professionals from the young person with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan I will conclude with a series of motivational thoughts from the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan.

The youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan shared advice that they thought would be pertinent for high school youths who are attending TAY Plan meetings but having difficulty envisioning their future.

I would say, put yourself in your... [life] 10 years from now, just think.

What do you want to do? What is your favourite thing to do? Don't focus on school. Just think, what do you really want to do with your life? With me it's like – I want to be [in the arts] but now I have to actually get an education. You also have to think what makes the most money but also what do you want to do? (Y-01)

The young person with No TAY Plan shared the following advice for youths:

“Ask questions about... what kind of... services are available” (Y-02).

“You have to fight tooth and nail... [for] certain accommodations” (Y-02).

“Just go in with an open mind and listen... tell them everything, don't be shy, be as honest as you can because it's gonna help you in the long run” (Y-02).

“Learn to count money instead of just using a debt card” (Y-02).

“I would do mock interviews and mock..., I guess, job search on a computer or... in a newspaper like... as a life skill. [Learn] what to say for an interview, how to dress, that kind of thing” (Y-02).

“...[L]ook into affordable housing and supportive housing, depending on what their needs are” (Y-02).

For professionals, the youth with no TAY Plan emphasized that, in order to lessen the “roadblocks” to effective planning, they need to develop “more awareness of... all kinds of disabilities” (Y-02). This professional awareness project should extend to a broad range of people that includes: “Everybody, college professors, employee, employers, different businesses, just everybody” (Y-02).

Finally, the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan had these words of wisdom for youth currently in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, who need to cast themselves as strong self-advocates and whose voices should be heard by parents and professionals. To these youths who are currently attending TAY Plan meetings this experienced Tri-Sector TAY Plan participant advised:

“Voice your opinion” (Y-01).

“Don’t be scared, just do it!” (Y-01).

“You want your parent’s advice but it’s also... your life plan it’s not their life plan” (Y-01).

“Just do it, you only have one life. Live it, just do it!” (Y-01).

Section 6: Results of the Cross-Group Data Analysis

This section of my dissertation will describe the overall results derived from the cross-group analysis of all the case study data sets for the youth, the family, the education professionals, the community professionals and the NRTAYC participants. These 5 data sets represented three levels of the Bronfenbrenner social ecological model (1979) referred to in Chapter 3 (see Figure 3.1). The first level and the primary focus of this study was the youth who represented the individual level of the ecological system. They remained the central focus of this cross-group data analysis. The family, education and community professionals entailed the micro-level of the ecological system. The NRTAYC represented the meso-level. With the youth as the focus, the cross-group analysis was separated into two main groups: the youth with the Tri-Sector TAY Planning experience versus the youth with no Tri-Sector TAY Planning experience. With this approach, data from the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan were analyzed with the data from the three NRTAYC participants, two family participants, two education professionals and four community professionals, all of whom had experience with the Tri-Sector TAY Plan. In the same way, the data from the youth with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan were analyzed with the two family participants who also had no experience with the Tri-Sector TAY Plan. First, I will describe the steps and general method I used to complete this cross-group analysis.

In step 1, all themes from each of the within-group data set analyses were arranged into their specific social ecological categories with the youths' themes as the central category (see Figure 6.6). For example, all the themes established in the within-participant data set for youths were written on individual sticky notes and placed in the

principal circle representing the individual-level of the Bronfenbrenner model. The same process was used for the families, education professionals, community professionals at the second (micro) level of the Bronfenbrenner model and members of the NRTAY at the third (meso) level. Because this first step involved the within-group data, this included all data from both the TAY Plan and No TAY plan participants.

Figure 6.6 *Illustration of the 5 data sets themes arranged using the Bronfenbrenner social ecological model (1979)*



Once completed, this arrangement of the five participant data sets within the Bronfenbrenner model (1979) was double checked against each of within-participant analyzed data sets and the within-group figures (i.e., that illustrated the five research questions) to ensure that themes were not missed through this process of second level analysis. Next, in step 2, common themes across the five data sets were identified and organized to constitute dominant themes as larger and more reductive categories. During this step, each theme's content was separated into two areas of presentation: results pertaining to the Tri-Sector TAY Plan experience or No TAY Plan experience. At this step, youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan were aggregated with the two family, two education, four community and three NRTAYC participants

with TAY Plan experience. In the same fashion, youth with No TAY Plan experience was aggregated with the two families who had No TAY Plan experience. In step 3 figures were designed to compliment the two youth groups with the added information from the themes derived from education, community and family (see Figure 6.7 and Figure 6.10). The two figures display each research question and their associated themes. The two main figures were composed to summarize the two transition planning contexts (i.e., having a Tri-Sector TAY Plan or not) and were compared for similarities and differences. With the steps involved in the cross-group analysis and their supporting figures explained, I will now provide a brief introduction to this section's content.

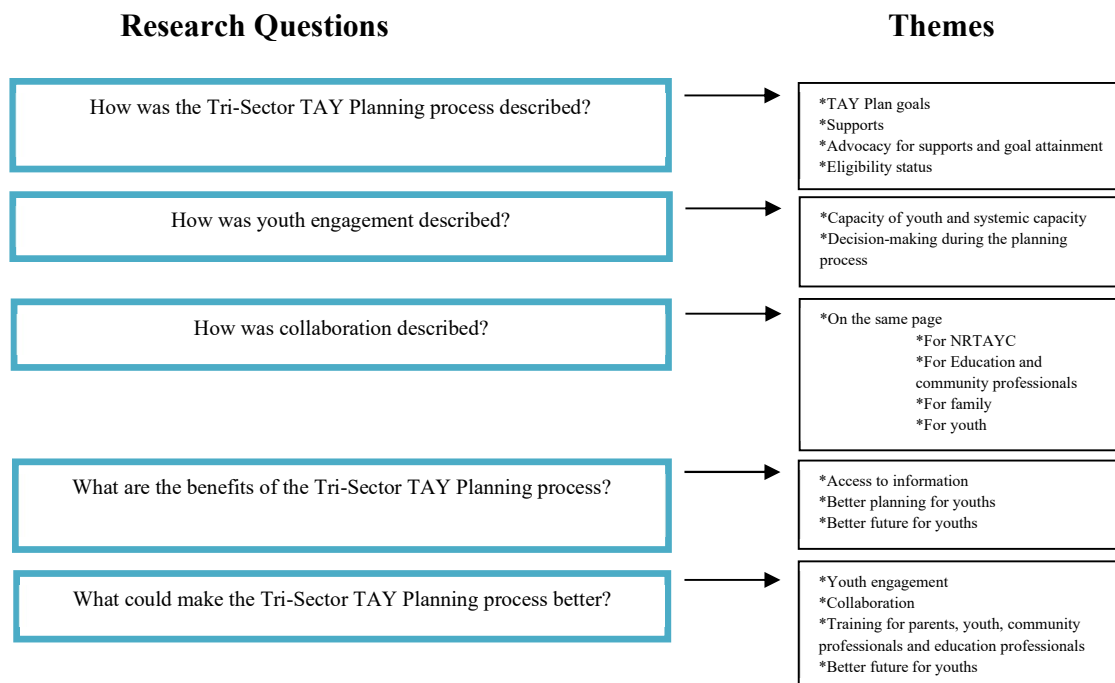
The format of this results section will follow the same outline as the preceding results sections. The three contextual research questions (i.e., process, youth engagement and collaboration) and their corresponding themes will be addressed in relationship to the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan. The two primary research questions will follow: what are the benefits and what could be better in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process (see Figure 6.7). In effect, these results tell the story of a youth with the Tri-Sector TAY Plan experience that is complimented by the experiences of family, community professionals, education professionals and committee perspectives. To follow, a second outline will proceed that illustrates the same procedure of reporting—and corresponding narrative—for the youth with no TAY Plan (see Figure 6.10). This section will then be compared to the results of the youth with a TAY Plan to conclude this results section.

Transitioning Youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan

This section pertains to a youth who transitioned with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan in place. The five research inquiries were the following: how did the five stakeholder groups describe the

process, youth engagement, collaboration, benefits and areas of improvement. Each of these five research inquiries is illustrated with their associated themes in Figure 6.7.

Figure 6.7 *The five research questions are illustrated with their themes that represent the results of the cross-group analysis for a youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan*



How Was the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process Described by the Five Stakeholder Groups?

The NRTAYC had the protocol of the Local Community Agreement (2017) in place that laid out the necessary procedures and expectations for the Tri-Sector TAY Planning meetings. From the meso-level of the Bronfenbrenner model (1979), this document laid the foundation for the micro-levels (i.e., education and community professionals) to implement the Tri-Sector TAY Plan. The next stage was putting the protocol into practice and establishing consistency in completion of the youths’ TAY Plans across Niagara. Achieving goals was dependent upon goal setting and

implementation planning through each youth's IEP academic goals transferred to the full set of goals in the TAY Plan and then reviewed at annual meetings.

The first theme, which I discuss in more detail below, was the *TAY Plan goals* of the youth. Setting goals and achieving them involved both pre-transition goals, which were part of the high school years, and post-transition goals, which were geared towards after high school. The second theme was the *supports* required to uphold these goals. Education professionals tended to support academic goals while community professionals supported the community-based goals. The third theme was *advocacy for supports and goal attainment*. Parents provided support for youths' goals; however, their advocacy for the youth's required supports to accomplish their goals was essential. The fourth theme was status of *eligibility* for adult services and government funding starting at the age of 18 years. Establishing this eligibility required a psychological assessment that determined a diagnosis of developmental disability. A key benefit attributed to the Tri-Sector TAY Plan is establishing this status prior to the youth's transition out of high school so there would be no delay in acquisition of adult funding and services.

TAY Plan Goals

Participants' discussed short-term goals that were more immediate and could be achieved while in high school. These goals have been described in depth in the results of the within-group analyses; for example, the goals ranged from learning to ride the bus to what secondary school courses to complete. They also identified long term goals to be achieved after high school, such as attending PSE. The majority of short-term goals were scaffolded for later long-term goal attainment and a smoother transition, such as

completing the necessary high school courses to graduate with a diploma in order to have the prerequisite for PSE admission.

Youth goals were documented on their Tri-Sector TAY Plan, which included academic goals from their school board IEP along with other life goals, such as career planning. However, to extend the TAY Plan from merely the completion of the document into a more meaningful practice of goal attainment, supports needed to be in place to move the written goals into action; for example, Co-op options that gave the youth the opportunities to explore their career choices and preferences. Goal attainment, in short, required supports.

Supports

What types of supports were required depended upon the type of goals the youth aspired to achieve along with their individual needs. IEP goals that were transferred to the Tri-Sector TAY Plan were academically based and supports were academically driven and school-resource dependent. The remaining goals in the Tri-Sector TAY Plan were community-based and their supports were community-driven, resource dependent, and family reliant. This point of identifying available supports will be referred to later in this chapter with the theme of capacity in regard to youth capacity impacting the type of goals set and resource/systemic capacity (i.e., in the community, family and school system) to provide the supports required for the youth's goal attainment. Parental advocacy played a strong part in goal setting and getting supports in place for youths.

Advocacy for Supports and Goal Attainment

Parental and youth advocacy influenced the acquisition of required supports needed for a youth's goal attainment. The act of advocacy was an essential contributor to

both pre-transition and post-transition goal attainment. In fact, this component was a significant piece of *advice* provided by the youth participant in this group to other youth: “Voice your opinion... Just do it, you only have one life” (Y-01). These words of wisdom expressed the importance of planning for the future with a sense of self-determination—a noted discussion that will be focused on later in this chapter in the discussion of the dominant theme of decision-making. Even though setting goals was not always decided by the youth and, instead, tended to be parentally and professionally directed, numerous benefits of goal attainment were identified. The most significant goal attainment was establishing eligibility status for adult services.

Eligibility Status

As described earlier, eligibility status for adult services was obtained for youth through completion of a recent psychological assessment that indicated that the youth had a developmental disability, thus meeting the key criterion for adult funding through DSO at the age of 18 years. It was acknowledged that one of the benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Plan was the document’s prompt to set the goal of implementing the DSO application and determining if an assessment would need to be completed to accompany the application. Thus, with the Tri-Sector TAY Plan and setting of goals, the youth’s need to establish eligibility was brought to attention in a timely manner in preparation for a smoother transition financially.

Within the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, the community professionals were the most knowledgeable regarding the best timing for an assessment, determination of diagnosis, and what adult funding resources to apply for. The typical waiting period for an assessment was described as possibly being up to three years. This factor explained

the need to address this matter closer to the age of 16 years so that eligibility could be confirmed prior to the youth's transition time at the age of 18 years, especially if the acquisition of a recent assessment was going to be needed. In addition, it was expressed clearly that, even though assessments are sometimes completed by the education system, these are solely budgeted for academic purposes and cannot be scheduled for community service purposes, such as the DSO application. This meant that families had to find alternative assessment resources, either through a community agency or by hiring a private practitioner. Regardless, as already noted, establishing eligibility status in a timely manner was usually prompted by the Tri-Sector Plan process and supported by the community professional, if one was involved with the youth. The concern would arise if there was not a community professional involved and only an education professional led the TAY Plan meeting; applying for DSO in a timely fashion possibly could be missed and parents may have to decide whether to have the youth sit on a waiting list or pay for the completion of an assessment.

How Was Youth Engagement Described by the Five Stakeholder Groups in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process?

The first theme related to factors that impacted youth engagement in the planning process was *capacity of the youth and systemic capacity* to provide resources to support their needs. The second theme captured the practice of *decision-making* and, more specifically, who makes what decisions in relation to the TAY Plan. Both themes have been clustered under the research inquiry regarding youth engagement because they both have a strong impact on it.

Later in this results section, youth capacity is revisited as a recognized area of needed improvement within the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. This was identified in the sense that a youth's level of capacity should not be a determinant of goal setting that inhibits social inclusion (e.g., learning to ride the bus with peers with the objective of a community destination) due to lack of a support plan.

Capacity of the Youth and Systemic Capacity

Capacity was defined in terms of the individual abilities of the youth, their inabilities as perceived by adults, and the capacity of available systemic resources to support their needs. Youth abilities and perceived inabilities impacted decision-making. This impacted goal setting along with what level of supports should be in place to move written goals into action. For example, a youth was pressured to push hard to achieve a high school diploma in order to be able to enter PSE while another youth was discouraged from participating in reading assignments that could be geared towards learning to run their own small business one day. In these two scenarios, one youth was pressured to set high goals while another was denied the high goal to which they aspired.

Systemic capacity was another part of this theme, an aspect that was discussed previously within the theme of supports. Parental advocacy was identified as a factor in getting the highest level of supports the service system could provide. In this way, family members, in expressing their experiences, felt it was important to be strong advocates, such as by insisting that education goals for the youth include a diploma instead of a certificate outcome in high school. As discussed, youth capacity was identified in terms of establishing eligibility status as waitlists, assessment completion and diagnosis determination. These were all factors that could impede a smooth transition when

systemic capacity was unable to provide resources in a timely manner. Systemic capacity also could impede the Tri-Sector Planning process when resources and needed supports simply were not available (e.g., the amount of EA support was not adequate to reach all of a youth's needs so the higher functioning youth went without). This also was associated with systemic areas of improvement, with participants making recommendations for a planning process that somehow permitted more time for professionals with heavy workloads to participate proficiently—a discussion that is presented later in this section with further details.

Systemic capacity to support the TAY planning process also included scheduling meetings at a time when youth would be comfortable attending and adequate time for the professionals to conduct planning meetings without being rushed. In addition, a systemic barrier to youth engagement was the fact that youth consent for their own Tri-Sector TAY Plan was not mandatory because they were under the age of 18 years. Parental consent was required. Some professionals facilitated both youth and parent consent to acknowledge youth capacity in a positive way. This promoted youth engagement with documentation at the level of the TAY Plan. As such, it was evident that youth consent on the TAY Plan was not mandatory and when youth consent (i.e., to sign the TAY Plan) would be requested by the Tri-Sector TAY Plan Lead it would rest on their perception of the youth's capacity to do so.

In addition, youth capacity based solely on a diagnosis-focused perspective was a hindrance to fostering higher youth engagement when a youth-strengths perspective was not incorporated into the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process by professionals. Thus, implementing improvements to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process included youth

capacity based on their recognized ability to participate in their planning process with meaningful engagement at the planning meetings. The youth recognized their desire for agency in decision-making but also their dependency on parental judgement in some circumstances. For example, one youth regretted being denied the career goal of aspiring to be in the arts, yet at the same time recognized their continued dependency on parental support for such aspects as financial and domestic tasks. This seemed to identify a youth-parent dynamics where independence and maturity to adulthood is incremental. However, this youth described career choice as an area where they should have been given more independence.

Decision-Making during the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process

Decision-making during the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was dominated by parents along with education professionals who relied on parental answers unless they pertained to a decision regarding the academic programming. Parents acknowledged their presiding authoritative disposition; however, they justified it as being in the best interests of the youth (e.g., the insistence of encouraging the youth to aspire towards PSE). This authoritative practice was accounted for because of concerns parents had about their youth's level of capacity for making acceptable decisions themselves. It also was related to the realistic availability of education and community professional resources and supports to put youth goals into action.

In contrast, youth expressed decision-making as an important area in need of improvement in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, which could be resolved by increasing the opportunity for youth agency (e.g., deciding their own goals, such as being in the arts instead of being a chef). Recommendations for improvement to develop an

ideal planning process included the need for increased youth decision-making, a discussion that is addressed later in this results section in regard to what could be better in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. One example of improvement in youth engagement provided by participants included youth having control over the scheduled time of their TAY Plan meetings to fit agreeably with their academic schedule. It was felt that this may set a more positive tone for the planning meeting. Another example involved youth determination in terms of the planning meeting agenda, development of their new goals, and what supports would be helpful from the youth's perspective. The Lead of a TAY Plan meeting was described as the person most likely to be in a position to promote youth-engaging meetings and youth-determined goal setting. Not giving youth this decision-making power also was associated with youth capacity in terms of youth being perceived as being unable/incapable of making good decisions. Thus, decision-making as a theme connected with numerous aspects of capacity and youth engagement.

How Was Collaboration Described by the Five Stakeholder Groups?

Collaboration was summarized in one key theme; getting everyone “*on the same page.*” This theme conveyed the actual phrase that frequently arose in the adult participant data sets. It was referred to in terms of everyone working together with positive, collaborative relationships and common intent to provide proficient practices in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. This theme appeared to capture the overall nature of this process. This section will explore this cross-group theme in relation to each stakeholder group individually.

On the Same Page

The notion of building future collaboration among the different sectors (i.e., children's community agencies, adult community agencies and education) was frequently referred to as getting everyone "on the same page." This term was used to describe current collaboration as well as, at times, to refer to recommendations for the future to encourage *getting* "on the same page." Through this section the discussion of both being and getting "on the same page" will be presented. Overall, what that "same page" referred to for the various participants included everyone working together to plan the youth's transition at the age of 18 years and for their future; however, different participants' details of the "same page" varied.

NRTAYC.

The NRTAYC, representing the meso-system level of the social ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), considered the past "same page" in terms of the development of the Local Community Agreement (2017) and the current and future "same page" as the promotion of practicing multi-sector collaboration in the implementation of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process as a community practice. Commitment from the different sectors, especially the NRTAYC with representatives from developmental services, school boards and children's services, was a necessary component to create a shared vision for smoother youth transitions. This shared vision was extended to questions of Lead designation: who would best fill this role in facilitating the development of each youth's TAY Planning process and how that was determined. Communication at the meso-level also was a key contributor to the development of the process of Lead designation in terms of shifting from a single option to a more flexible variety of options

to allow for individualization of the planning process. For example, instead of the Lead automatically being designated as the professional who submitted the TAY referral to CN, it shifted to shared communication regarding who would best serve this role by designating the Lead as the person who was most familiar with each individual youth. In addition, in reference to the meso-level, it was acknowledged that a missing sector at the Tri-Sector Planning table was the Ministry of Health. This will be discussed later as an area for improvement. Overall, the NRTAYC took pride in their collaborative accomplishments to establish being “on the same page” for the development of the Local Community Agreement (2017) and getting “on the same page” for its implementation in community practice.

Education and Community Professionals.

Within the community practice realm of the micro-system level of the social ecological model, education professionals saw the notion of getting “on the same page” as including family and community professionals understanding the fact that academic psychoeducational assessments cannot be requested solely for the purpose of DSO applications. It also was recommended that a CN representative attend Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings to play the role of Lead in a collaborative manner in the cases where youth do not have community services. In alignment with the education professionals, community professionals agreed with the same notion of Lead designation and its importance to effective Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings. They also endorsed the importance of all sectors working collaboratively to ensure that the necessary supports are in place to promote the youth’s goal attainment. Community professionals described

being “on the same page” equated to everyone using one Plan and how the benefit of designing one Plan together added value to the planning process.

Family.

Families understood everyone getting “on the same page” to mean that a parent who was new to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was required to learn “TAY” terminology and the various service support systems. Families appreciated the collaboration of the different professionals working together and the convenience and reliability of all parties at one planning table.

Youth.

At the individual level of the social ecological model, youth acknowledged the collaborative approach of education, community and family sitting at the planning table to set youth goals and how these people had built a helpful and positive rapport with one another. Where youth identified areas of improvement in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was in the need for elevated opportunity to promote youth engagement, such as training youth to conduct youth-facilitated TAY Plan meetings in which the youth is considered a meaningful member of the collaborative planning team.

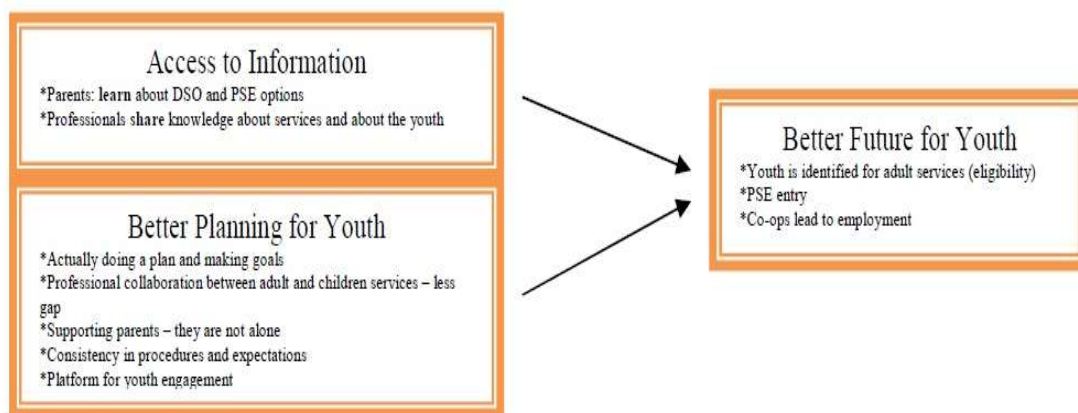
What Are the Benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process?

Looking at the youth, family, community agency, education and NRTAYC data related to the transitioning of youth with the Tri-Sector TAY Plan in place, the central message was that, with the collaborative relationships promoted by the NRTAYC, commitment to proficient communication and cooperation over time transferred the Local Community Agreement (2017) from a written protocol to a beneficial community process. At the individual level, this process for the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan in

place involved all service sectors and the family being or working towards getting “on the same page” to smooth the transition. This collaborative approach relied on everyone working together in the best interests of the youth and their future. In practice, transition plan decision-making was done primarily by the parents and professionals with the intent to benefit the youth’s future. The key objective for all youth was to transition into adulthood with a confirmed status of eligibility for adult support services and government funding.

A key theme in the cross-group analysis regarding what benefits came from the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was that it built a *better future for the youth* (see Figure 6.8).

Figure 6.8 *What were the benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process? The cross-group analysis from youth, family, community professionals, education professionals and NRTAYC data sets*



The two other themes of the Tri-Sector TAY Plan benefits included *access to information* and *better planning for the youth*.

Access to Information

Parents learned about how the youth’s transition to adult services involved applying to DSO prior to the age of 18 years and the procedures necessary to ensure that

a successful application was made by the time the youth reached that age. Parents gained insight into the post-secondary options that were available for youth, such as the CICE program at college. Access to information was enhanced for professionals (i.e., education and community) by sharing knowledge about their own services and also their knowledge about the youth they commonly supported. Sharing knowledge from various sources was one component that impacted better planning for the youth in goal setting.

Better Planning for Youth

The requirement of completing a Tri-Sector TAY Plan promoted goal setting that otherwise could have been missed. As such, the Tri-Sector TAY plan meetings provided the platform for youth engagement to happen and parents to realize they were not planning alone. The gap between children's and adult developmental services was lessened with consistent planning practices and with protocol expectations being in place. These were all components that contributed to generating a better future for the youth.

Better Future for Youth

One essential benefit of planning for a better future for youth included establishing eligibility for adult services and funding. A second benefit was PSE enrolment. Finally, a valuable benefit was the experience of multiple Co-ops to build a career path to preferred paid employment. These results answered this study's research question regarding what aspects of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process were going well. This study also included the research question of what aspects of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process could be improved.

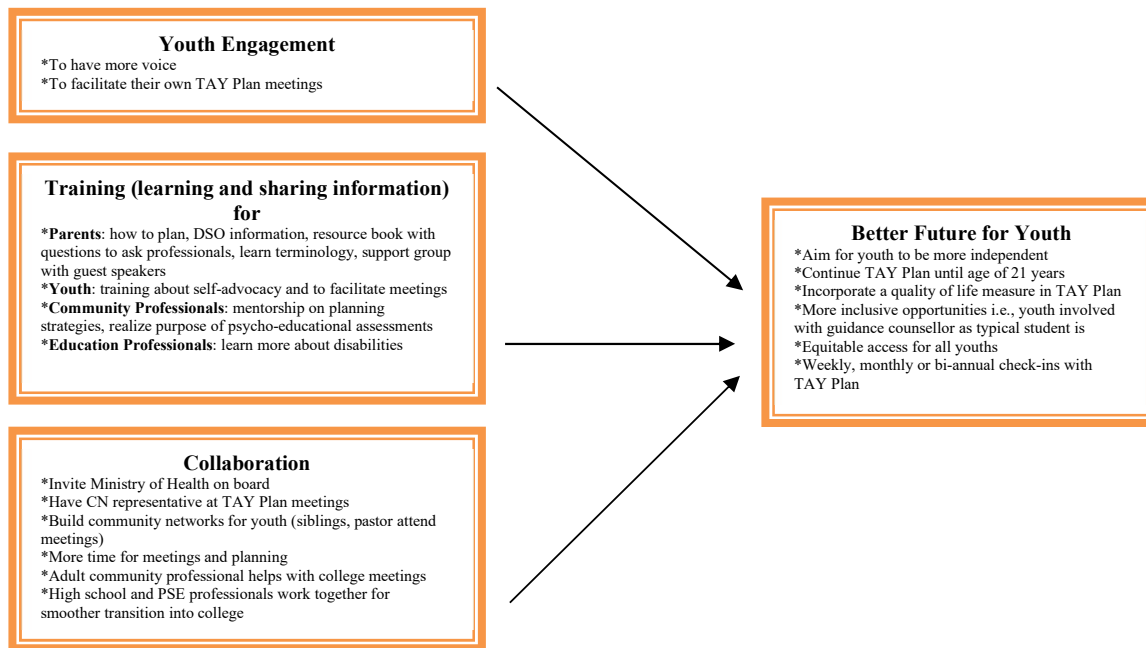
What Could Make the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process Better?

The suggested areas of improvement to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process included more promotion of youth engagement at planning meetings and a collaborative approach among the sectors in goal setting. Training for all stakeholders was identified as an area for recommended growth. Both enhanced youth engagement and stakeholder learning and sharing of information were described as creating pathways to a better future for youth (see Figure 6.9).

A Better Future for Youth

One key theme regarding how to better the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was *better future for youth*.

Figure 6.9 *What were the recommendations for improvement to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process? This illustrates the cross-group analysis from youth, family, community professionals, education professionals and NRTAYC*



To generate a better future for youth, three other themes were involved: *youth engagement, training and collaboration*.

Youth Engagement

Although the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings provided a platform for youth involvement, there was still the need for increased opportunity to allow for youth voice in their planning and a platform for youth-directed meetings. The most critical suggestion for improvement to the process was to invite opportunity for increased youth engagement in the planning process through elevated youth decision-making power. As the youth with a Tri-Sector Plan stated clearly: “You want your parent’s advice but it’s also... your life plan; it’s not their life plan” (Y-01). While the collaborative approach had fostered the collaboration at the micro-system level (i.e., family, education and community professionals) working together at one planning table to create a single TAY plan, this collaborative approach should be extended to include more active engagement of the youth themselves at the Tri-Sector Planning meetings to holistically get *everyone* (including the youth) “on the same page.”

Training for Parents, Youth, Community Professionals, and Education Professionals

Training was proposed for youth, parents, community and education professionals. The theme of training included the components of learning and sharing information. Training for youth included teaching youth self-advocacy and facilitation skills. Training for parents included learning about: a) how to plan; b) what questions to ask professionals in meetings; c) TAY terminology; and d) information about DSO. Along with these suggested areas of better access to information, parent support groups also were suggested to host professionals as guest speakers who could introduce themselves to parents and explain their services, for example a DSO professional.

Education professionals were recommended to receive training about disabilities to enhance their proficiency in planning. Community professionals were recommended to

set up mentorship with other professionals to share planning strategies and information. For example, one important piece of information education professionals would share with families and community services is the fact that a school board psychoeducational assessment cannot be completed solely for the purpose of diagnosis to determine eligibility for adult services and funding. As you can see, these numerous recommendations for improvement spread across the groups (family, education and community professionals) of the micro-system level of the Bronfenbrenner model (1979) and all suggestions were geared towards the individual-level by generating a *better future for youth*.

Collaboration

While the progress made toward getting all stakeholders “on the same page” was discussed, optimizing collaboration is a dynamic process. Increasing collaboration was a significant identified need in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and many valuable recommendations were put forth in all five data sets. The collaboration of the education professionals, community professionals and family members (micro-system level) with the youth (individual level) working together has the potential to facilitate getting everyone “on the same page,” an objective to keep striving towards. The collaboration component was fostered by the NRTAYC’s Local Community Agreement’s (2017) protocol moving past simply being a document of procedures to establishing it in action as a consistent community practice. To reach this meso-system level (i.e., NRTAYC) of impact by shifting protocol to practice, the micro-system levels (e.g., the family, educators and community professionals) were recommended to expand their collaborative approach by enhancing their vision of a shared practice built on cooperation

(e.g., who should be Lead) and shared knowledge (e.g., opportunity for mentorship and shared resources across service agencies). Recommendations also included the need for more consistency with a sense of accountability built into the culture of TAY Plan completions that were meaningful to the youth. This collaboration of cooperative relationships between micro-systems (i.e., education, community and family) also included promoting the necessary supports were in place to facilitate the youth's goal attainment.

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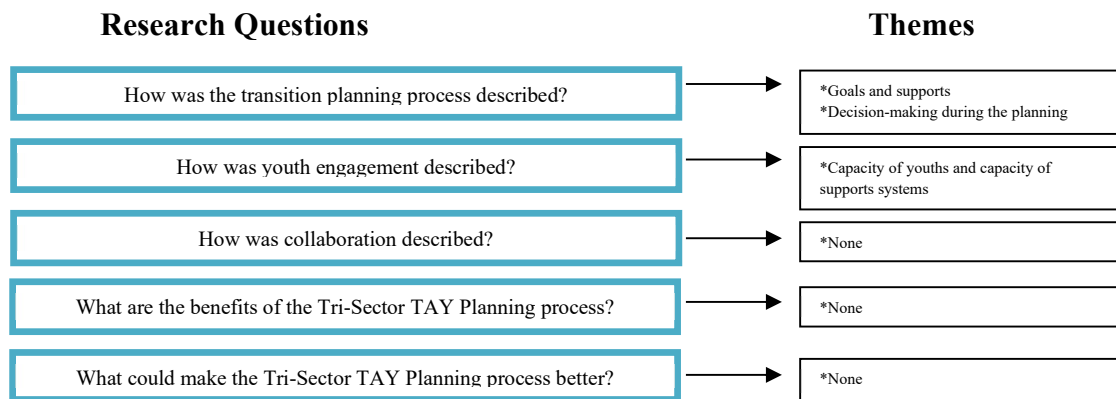
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Transitioning Youth with No Tri-Sector TAY Plan

This section of the cross-group analysis pertains to the youth who transitioned with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan in place. The two contextual research questions regarding how participants described the planning process and youth engagement are included in this section of the results. Since they did not pertain to the youth with no TAY plan, the collaboration, benefits and improvements research questions are not a part of this presentation of results; there was no data available to claim. Three themes related to the youth with No Tri-Sector TAY Plan were explored. These three themes were the same as those of the first youth group with a Tri-Sector

TAY Plan but related to different experiences and outcomes. The first theme was the *goals and supports* of youth and the second was *decision-making during the planning process*. These two themes were related to the research inquiry regarding the planning process, with the latter theme of decision-making overlapping into the second research inquiry regarding youth engagement. The third theme was *capacity of youth and capacity of support systems* and it was related to the research inquiry of youth engagement. The definition or meaning of these themes remained consistent with the previously discussed cross-group analysis of the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan in place. The difference in this cross-group analysis that needs to be noted is that analysis from a Bronfenbrenner perspective only involved the individual-level of the youth and two family members at the micro-system level (see Figure 6.10). Of course, this is expected as the NRTAYC did not exist and no data were collected for this study from education or community professionals who were able to reflect back to the time before the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was in place.

Figure 6.10 *The two research questions are illustrated with their themes that represent the results of the cross-group analysis for a youth with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan*



This section will proceed to look at each of the three themes and describe their connectivity to each other. To start, as already mentioned, the key purpose of transition planning was to set goals in the various areas of the youth's life with the essential intent of promoting goal attainment.

Goals and Supports of Youth with No Tri-Sector TAY Plan

The experiences of the youth participant with no Tri-Sector TAY plan were quite different from the youth participant with a Tri-Sector TAY plan. This youth had distinct goals set for pre-transition (e.g., to complete mainstream courses such as science and math) and post-transition (e.g., attending PSE) goal attainment. However, due to lack of supports in place (e.g., inaccessibility of a second floor high school classroom, inaccessible community Co-op), numerous goals were not achieved. The transition goals were directed from the youth's IEP by the education professionals. Lack of supports to shift the IEP goals from a written document into action resulted in unsuccessful goal attainment, despite parental advocacy requesting such supports. Youth advice to other youth focused on the importance of youth being involved with their goal setting to build life skills and awareness of service options that are available to them.

From a parental perspective, planning for transition was an easier process at that time (e.g., 15-30 years ago), with less bureaucracy than was perceived to be in place for youth and families today. The system at that time was described as being a “one stop shop” (F-03), but it had fewer options and opportunities resulting in limited choice of goals to set and supports to access. This scarcity of options and supports extended to goals for community inclusion. As such, goal setting for the youth relied upon adult decision-making and, similar to the first youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan, decisions tended to be dominantly made by the parent and/or education professionals.

Decision-making during the Planning Process

In contrast to the youth with the Tri-Sector TAY Plan, this youth had some agency over their matters, such as which courses to take in high school and what colleges to apply for. However, the youth was overruled on numerous decisions in goal setting, such as applying for PSE. Similar to the youth with the Tri-Sector TAY plan, this youth’s lack of agency for the significant matters in their life, such as post-transition education, was associated with only moderate youth engagement during the planning process. Even so, parental decision-making was identified as a benefit to transition planning and was justified by parents as being in the best interest of the youth to accommodate their lack of perceived capacity to make acceptable decisions.

Capacity of the Youth and Capacity of the Support Systems

The youth with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan reported only moderate youth engagement due to parental perceptions that they made poor judgements when it pertained to the setting of significant goals (e.g., applying to PSE or striving for community-based employment). Youth physical capacity impacted an inclusive education experience. This youth’s physical impairment

excluded them from participating in person in mainstream classrooms due to accessibility issues even though their academic capacity permitted them to complete the course material alone on the main floor of the school where the resource room was accessible. In addition, despite this youth's request to take life skills classes the youth was excluded due to being identified as being "too high functioning" (Y-02)—quite the paradox. Thus, goal attainment related to class participation was unsuccessful due to the youth's objective and presumed capacity as well as due to the school system's capacity to accommodate their needs. In this case, a late diagnosis of I/DD was a possible contributing factor to the capacity issues leading to limited goal attainment and lack of availability of needed systemic supports.

Overall, the similarities and differences between the experiences of the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan and a youth without demonstrated the benefits and added value of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. The next section will provide a brief overview of this comparison.

Comparison of Transitioning Youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan and Transitioning Youth without a Tri-Sector Plan

I will briefly summarize the results from the two youths' and four family members' experiences in transitioning from high school. I will examine the similarities and the differences between the experiences of those who were involved in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and those who were not in relation to the three common themes of *goals*, *decision-making* and *capacity*.

Achieving Goals

For the youth with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan, pre-transition and post-transition goals were set but not achieved. These goals included participation in mainstream courses, life skills classes,

community Co-ops and PSE. Supports were not provided to foster goal attainment in these areas. Yet, the one goal that this youth did proudly achieve was earning a high school diploma.

In contrast, when looking at the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan, it was evident that this planning process generated successful goal achievement, a process that included participating in community Co-ops to explore career options and obtaining a paid job in their chosen career path. Graduation from high school with a diploma and entry into PSE were achieved outcomes. Supports were in place to foster this goal attainment.

The family members with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan were limited to IEP goals for their family member and advocated to get some supports in place. The process of finding services was simpler but with fewer support options existing. Family members envisioned their family member having an inclusive life in the community, yet this vision was not reached. In contrast the families with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan in place or in process experienced some effective supports in place but still in need of more (e.g., help with the PSE application process, learning to ride the bus). These family participants also envisioned and advocated for an inclusive life for their family member; this vision was reached for the parent whose family member had completed transition.

Both youth participants relied upon but also were overruled by parental decision-making. Both youths reflected on only moderate engagement rates because of this lack of agency in their transition planning process and goal setting.

All family participants felt that it was necessary for them to provide direct decision-making for their family members' goals and aspirations for their future after high school. This parental use of authority was related to perceived youth capacity with the intent of ensuring decisions were made with good judgement. The possible upside to this lack of youth agency due

to parental decision-making was that the two youths graduated with a diploma instead of a certificate and were in the position to attend PSE (i.e., college) due to parental persistence with this goal.

Capacity (Youth and Systemic)

To compare, both youths had the capacity to graduate with a diploma. Only the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan had the opportunity to complete community Co-ops to determine a preferred career path, although it was not their first choice, while the other youth did not experience Co-op options to help determine a career path due to their level of capacity and lack of accommodation.

Eligibility for adult services was established for the youth who had the Tri-Sector TAY Plan to prompt this goal prior to their transition out of high school. For the youth with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan the diagnosis of I/DD was determined at the end of the youth's secondary education. For one parent with no TAY Plan, eligibility for their family member was "automatic" when their family member transitioned because, at that time (i.e., 30 years ago), there was no organizational division between developmental services for children and adults. For the two family participants with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan in place, it was a matter of researching the funding options and learning the application process to establish eligibility for ODSP and for Passport funding to allow the youth to purchase services.

Prior to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process being in place, post-transition options in support systems were more limited than today, for example the only feasible employment option was a segregated worksite 30 years ago. Yet, parents with the Tri-Sector TAY Plan still needed to advocate for opportunities and supports to be in place and, even then, available resources were limited at times (e.g., having an EA available to support the youth to learn to ride the bus).

Chapter Seven: Results from the SROI Data Analysis

This section of the chapter will describe the results obtained from the SROI data analysis. It will begin with an overview of the seven key principles of the SROI model (Nicholls, 2017; Nicholls et al., 2012) and how each of these principles was addressed during the process of analysis. The purpose of the SROI application in this study will be discussed in terms of the qualitative (e.g., descriptive information) and the quantitative (i.e., direct or proxy value) evidence found in the analysis that related to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. The SROI analysis is an attempt to monetize described social impact and change. More specifically, the results of the SROI analysis will be used to describe the value potentially created by the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in terms of its inputs (e.g., wages of professionals) and generated outcomes (e.g., youth's Co-op opportunities) and impacts (e.g., youth's acquisition of paid employment) to illustrate the value related to a single youth with a 4 year Tri-Sector TAY Plan and the families' and professionals' contributions that were involved in that planning process. In the case study, youth described their experience with the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. Family members, education professionals, community professionals and the NRTAYC participants spoke about its impact on themselves and each other. All this information was used to calculate and portray the results of the SROI analysis as it would relate to a single youth. Indicators and data sources will be described for each outcome and each financial proxy used and why they were chosen. I will begin with a description of the seven principles of SROI: 1.) involve stakeholders; 2.) understand what changed; 3.) value what matters; 4.) include what is material; 5.) do not over-claim; 6.) be transparent; and 7.) verify the results.

The Seven Principles of SROI Analysis

The first principle emphasizes the importance of the stakeholders' involvement in the deciphering of what information should be analyzed. During the development of this study's design and methodology, the Community Research Committee (CRC), which included agency professionals and community consultants, assisted with this development (see Chapter 5 for details). This collaborative designing of the stakeholders to be recruited and the interview questions was a valuable component, as the CRC members informed the best decisions in preparation for productive data collection. The five data sets represented the five stakeholder groups: youth and their family along with community, education and NRTAYC professionals. Identifying the key stakeholders was a necessary first step to then address the second principle; understanding what has changed with the implementation of with the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process being.

The second principle, understanding what has changed, was accomplished by the data analysis of the five stakeholder groups and their results. These five groups of participants provided the direct information about what had changed due to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. This direct information was generated from the data collection stage of the case study when participants were asked such questions as: what were the benefits of this planning process and what would have happened if the planning process had not been in place? The participants' responses to these questions addressed the third principle.

The third principle of SROI analysis, valuing what matters, was recognizing the outcomes of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in terms of what was described by the stakeholders as beneficial outcomes of the planning process. All outcomes were identified through the within-participant and cross-group data analyses of the five data sets. An outcome

was declared either as having direct quantitative value, a descriptive outcome for which a proxy financial value was attached, or it was claimed merely as a qualitative matter that was described by the participant as an outcome attributable to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process but that could not be attached reliably to a financial value. Throughout the data collection stage of the study, information was collected that pertained to many situations. It was not always abundantly clear if this information reflected specifically the Tri-Sector TAY Planning meeting and the TAY Plan or referred to other meetings that also involved these stakeholders (i.e., an IEP meeting). For example, a parent referred to their child's level of decision-making in terms of the youth who "puts [their] foot down" (F-02). It was not clear if this was a form of communication actually used at TAY Planning meetings or at another time and place in the youth's life. As such, this descriptive outcome of decision-making was not included in the SROI as specific information to be factored in the SROI calculation.

This determination of what matters was connected to the fourth principle, to include what is material, in that only information that was clear evidence of outcomes of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was included in the SROI analysis. As such, decision-making, even though a prominent concept in the study's findings, was not included as an outcome in the SROI analysis and the decision was made that the exclusion of these data would not alter the SROI results but rather represented a construct to be covered in this study's discussion and conclusion section. Along with determining what data mattered in the SROI results, ensuring the restraint of any over-claiming was crucial.

The fifth principle, do not over-claim, emphasizes the importance of reliable claiming. This was rigorously attempted by remaining mindful of not over-claiming these results. This tendency was compensated for by moderately estimating inputs and conservatively estimating

impacts in the SROI results (e.g., not claiming the highest level when a range of proxy values was possible). With this conservative approach, the SROI model was developed using only data from the case study interviews and this data-driven method was retrospective. The decision was made to hold true to this approach in order to establish reliable and credible results. Credibility also was ensured by respecting transparency as the SROI model was calculated to follow the sixth principle.

The sixth principle, to be transparent, was followed throughout the SROI analysis. The continuous intent was to describe the steps taken in the SROI analysis below, explaining each step, the decisions made for each step and why these decisions were made. This honoured the sixth principle regarding the importance of transparency. Finally, in accordance with the seventh principle, verify the results to promote the appropriate assurance of the judgements made in these decisions, the SROI model and its established content were reviewed by this study's co-supervisors and a business faculty member of the study's supervisory committee.

Each of these seven principles will be addressed in the sections to follow as I move forward to explain in more detail the scope of the SROI analysis, the inputs, outcomes and impacts of the Tri-Sector TAY Plan, and the overall results.

The Scope and Stakeholders of the SROI Analysis

First and foremost, it is important to disclose that investment committed specifically to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was zero dollars; there was no financial investment (i.e., no direct cash flow) directed to this new program from the government or any other agency. With this in mind, from a SROI perspective, the hours and employee wages committed to this planning process were legitimately considered as service agency volunteer hours as the professionals (i.e., education and community) were receiving no extra income or salary to

compliment this additional workload. Their estimated wages and valuable (volunteer) time were identified within the input portion of the SROI to acknowledge the proxy valuation of their input to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. Accordingly, the outcomes and impacts of the Tri-Sector TAY Plan were identified in the interviews of the five stakeholder groups (youth, family, education and community professionals and the NRTAYC). As the primary stakeholder, information provided by the youth who had experienced a Tri-Sector TAY Plan throughout their high school years created the central SROI model for these results. Even though this logic model was represented by only one youth participant, it was rich with identified outcomes, impacts and valuations. Determination of the outcomes and impacts was established directly from the youth's described benefits to their planning process and the attainment of their goals. It was reasonably interpreted that this youth's impacts were likely ones that would have long term benefits, however, it was concluded that any trajectory was beyond the scope of the study. Thus, no forecasting calculation was included in these results.

Because the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process had followed an already existing TAY Planning process and a long-serving IEP process, it was not an easy task to always confidently identify an outcome that was a result merely due to the Tri-Sector Plan. For some outcomes that were in doubt, they were either entirely excluded or included only as descriptive matter and not assigned any financial value. For example, the outcome described by the NRTAYC regarding how the Tri-Sector TAY Planning meetings hosted a platform for youth voice was excluded. This was an outcome not common to the other data sets and it was decided not to be a creditable outcome to identify in the SROI; instead it was a finding that was saved for the discussion and conclusion sections of this study.

Ultimately, all outcomes from the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan were included because they occurred during the Tri-Sector TAY Plan era and thus were credited to this time of multi-sector collaboration in planning practice. To compliment this decision, a comparable non-financial logic model was composed for the youth who did not experience a Tri-Sector TAY Plan. This second descriptive logic model illustrated clearly the lack of outcomes and impacts with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan in place. This comparable model provided credibility to the first youth's successes that were claimed as impacts created by the Tri-Sector TAY Planning. Finally, the significant outcomes and impacts of the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan also were generally consistent with impacts described by the case study family, education, community and NRTAYC participants. In the same way, for the youth with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan, the family participants' descriptions were generally consistent with the lack of outcomes and impacts. This section will now proceed to explain the central SROI analysis that outlines the valuation of the outcomes of the youth with the Tri-Sector TAY Plan found in Table 7.1 and the descriptive impacts found in Table 7.2.

Table 7.1 SROI analysis illustrated for one youth who experienced the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process and includes family, education professionals, community professionals and the NRTAYC. This table reflects all quantitative (financial) and qualitative (descriptive) inputs and impacts

GROUP	INPUTS	COSTS OR PROXIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
<p>Youth interviewed after leaving high school (N=1)</p> <p>Graduated June 2020</p> <p>Time of interview: attending 1st year college</p>	<p>4 hours = 4 TAY Plan meetings</p> <p><i>Personal Cost Factor = had to miss 4 classes</i></p>	<p>No Monetary</p> <p>No Monetary</p>	<p>4 TAY Plans</p>	<p>1. TAY PLANNING PROCESS OUTCOMES</p> <p>1a. Multi-disciplinary interaction</p> <p>2.OUTCOMES OF TAY GOALS MET:</p> <p>2a. Hired during a Co-op</p>	<p>1a.Youth has experience with meeting and planning</p> <p>2a. Income increase</p>	<p>1a.Proxy: Cost of counselling session \$25.00-75.00 per session with fee subsidy rates</p> <p>2a. Direct Value as estimated min. wage paying job (\$14/hr x 8hrs/week</p>	<p>1a. \$50.00 x 4 TAY Plans = \$200.00 total</p> <p>2a. Minus ODSP deductions = \$3,888.00 yearly extra income</p>

GROUP	INPUTS	COSTS OR PROXIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
				<p>2b. Plan contained “life goals”</p> <p>2c. <u>Adult Services:</u></p> <p>i. Assessment completed</p>	<p>2b. Confidence and well-being</p> <p>2c.</p> <p>i. Avoid 1-3 year waitlist at 18yrs</p> <p>ii. No delay in receiving funds</p>	<p>for final year of High School.</p> <p>2b. Proxy. Life coach fees at \$290.00 (mid-range)</p> <p>2b. Proxy: online training (free)</p> <p>Cost of internet \$25.00 per month for four months</p> <p>2c.</p> <p>i. Proxy: purchasing private assessment</p> <p>\$600-2,500 max or \$200/hour</p>	<p>2b. \$1160.00 total cost</p> <p>2b. \$100.00</p> <p>2c.</p> <p>i. Psych assessment</p> <p>\$1550.00</p> <p>ii. \$38,056.00 avoiding lost income</p>

GROUP	INPUTS	COSTS OR PROXIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
				ii. Eligibility for Adult Services Funding confirmed before age 18 2d. Acceptance to PSE	to obtain adult services 2d. Apprenticeship program	ii. Direct Value: ODSP \$1,169 monthly and Passport \$5,000 a year 2d. Direct value: Used estimated apprenticeship wage of \$14.00/hr for 1 year value (age 19-20 years).	minimum. Plus avoiding loss of benefits for 2 years not included in this value. 2d. Not including ODSP, \$3888.00 total extra income gained.

GROUP	INPUTS	COSTS OR PROXIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
Monetary Valuation:	Inputs:	\$0.00				Impacts:	\$48,842.00
Family (N=2) Both working.	Travel cost	Gas Costs estimated at 32km = \$57.60 total travel costs	4 TAY Plans	1.TAY PLANNING PROCESS OUTCOMES: 2. ACTUAL and ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OF TAY GOALS MET	None. None.	None. None.	None. None.
Monetary Valuation:	Inputs:	\$57.60				Impacts:	NONE \$0.00

GROUP	INPUTS	COSTS OR PROXIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
<p>Education Professionals (N=2)</p> <p>\$61,000-\$108,000 Salary = estimated average of \$86,606.00 = \$41.64/hour for average wage</p>	<p>1 hour extra meeting per student</p> <p>Visit Co-op 1 hour x 2/Co-op visits</p> <p><i>Note: Only estimating cost for 1 student to keep financial ratio consistent</i></p>	<p>\$166.55 total cost for 4 years per student</p> <p>\$333.10 total cost for 4 years, per student</p>	<p>4 TAY Plans</p>	<p>1. TAY PLANNING PROCESS OUTCOMES:</p> <p>1a. Interaction with community professionals</p> <p>2.TAY GOALS MET OUTCOMES</p> <p>2a. ODSP and Passport</p>	<p>1a. Increased knowledge</p> <p>2a. Less stress on parents</p>	<p>1a. Proxy: OADD yearly membership</p> <p>2a. Proxy: MH Counselling session for parents \$130.00 per session x 3.</p>	<p>1a. \$75.00</p> <p>2a. \$390.00</p>

GROUP	INPUTS	COSTS OR PROXIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
Monetary Valuation:	Inputs:	\$499.65				Impacts:	\$465.00
Community Agency Professionals (N=4) Average wage of community support coordinator is \$20.60-26.32/hr = \$23.46	Preparation meeting 2 hours x 4 years 1 extra planning meeting per year TAY Lead responsibility 24 hours/ year x 4 years	\$187.68 total cost for 4 years \$93.84 total for 4 years \$2,252.16 total for 4 year	4 TAY Plans	1.TAY PLANNING PROCESS OUTCOMES: None 2.TAY GOALS MET OUTCOMES None	None None		None None

GROUP	INPUTS	COSTS OR PROXIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
<p><i>Note: Only estimating cost for 1 youth to keep financial ratio consistent</i></p>	<p>COST: Travel 10-15 km (12.5 km average) x 0,45 cents per km per youth per year x 4 years</p> <p><i>Job Coaches Salary for job placement</i></p>	<p>\$45.00 total</p> <p>1.5 hours per week x DSW wage of \$20.85/hr x 40 weeks in school year x 4 years = \$5004.00</p>					

GROUP	INPUTS	COSTS OR PROXIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
Monetary Valuation:	Inputs:	\$7,582.68 total				Impacts:	\$0.00
NRTAY Committee (N=3)	2 hour meetings x 4 meetings/yr X 17 people x 7 years at \$39.13 (high end salary for Educ and Community wages with their average) per hour divided by 928 youth	Wages for TAY Planning period (2014-2018, 2019-2020) per youth = \$35.15 + \$31.12 = \$66.26 per youth	Regional Plan and admin support student			<i>Descriptives for all of outcomes and impacts in the NRTAYC data set.</i>	<i>No Monetary values.</i>

GROUP	INPUTS	COSTS OR PROXIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
	<p>Costs: Travel 30-45 minute max. round trip at \$0.45 per kilometer at 60kl/hr ratio (1 kl per minute).</p> <p>Midrange of 37.5 kl round trip x \$0.45 x 4 meetings x 7 years divided by client count (928)</p>	<p>\$14.29 travel costs per youth.</p>					
CN	<p>Staff TAY costs</p> <p>Administration at 2 year cost</p>	<p>\$109.05 per youth for a 4 year TAY Plan</p>	<p>Regional Plan and admin</p>				

GROUP	INPUTS	COSTS OR PROXIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
	(\$45,381.00) plus 5 year cost (\$55,810.00) divided by 928 youth		support student				
Monetary Valuation:	Inputs:	\$189.60				Impacts:	\$0.00
Final SROI Monetary Valuation	Total Inputs:	\$8,329.53				Total Impacts:	\$49,307.00

The Youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan: SROI Analysis

As mentioned previously, Table 7.1 the quantitative valuation describes a youth who experienced the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process throughout their high school years up to their time of graduation. During the time of the participant's interview for this study, they were attending their first year of college. The youth described their input to the planning process to include one-hour meetings held once a year for a four-year high school period. A noted personal cost of these planning meetings that is included in the input column was the fact that these meetings were scheduled without the youth's consultation, resulting in the youth's dilemma of having to miss their preferred class to attend the planning meeting. There was no monetary value attached to these two inputs; however, missing class was clearly a descriptive value to be identified as it created ill feelings and frustration. As such, the input valuation for the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan was calculated to equate to \$0.00.

The TAY Plan itself was the output of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process for this youth. The TAY Plan generated the youth's goals with the hope of attainment. Outcomes were divided into two areas; TAY Planning process outcomes and outcomes of the TAY Plan goals met. The youth experienced two outcomes from the TAY Planning process. First, the youth experienced multi-sector planning meetings providing exposure to multi-disciplinary interaction. The impact of this outcome was that the youth was able to observe a positive working interaction among education and community professionals and their parent. This exposure to a collaborative planning and support system entailed four planning meetings by the time of high school graduation and was given a proxy equivalent to four counselling sessions to acquire a somewhat similar type of support. The proxy value at a local counselling service was estimated at a range of \$25-\$75.00 per session (Niagara Community Information Database, 2021). To be

conservative, I used a mid-range value of \$50.00 per session and multiplied this value by four sessions to be equivalent to four TAY Plan meetings (see Table 7.1). With this calculation, the first outcome was valued at \$200.00.

The second outcome the youth described involved the forward momentum in their life towards college. The impact of this aspiration towards PSE entailed the youth's strong motivation to work extra hard at their high school courses to attain high grades and graduate with a diploma (i.e., not a certificate). The only equivalent proxy to this impact was identified as graduating from high school with a certificate and then attending a college upgrade program to acquire an Academic Career Entrance (A.C.E) certificate. The A.C.E certificate acknowledges the young person as upgrading to the level of a diploma and allows entry into college (Niagara College Canada, 2021). There was no fee for this program. This impact was attributed with a descriptive but no monetary value (see Table 7.2). The descriptive value emphasized the importance of the youth's accomplishment of graduating with their diploma as a direct impact of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process with the academic credentials to move into PSE without delay. The Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, which generated the two outcomes just discussed, revolved around the Tri-Sector TAY Plan itself and its annual meeting.

Table 7.2 This illustrates the SROI analysis in terms of the descriptive inputs and impacts for one youth with the Tri-Sector TAY Plan. All descriptors are related to the value of one youth including the family, education professionals, community professionals and the NRTAYC

GROUP	INPUTS	COST OR PROXY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
<p>Youth interviewed after leaving high school (N=1)</p> <p>Graduated June 2020</p> <p>Time of interview: attending 1st year college</p>	<p>4 hours = 4 TAY Plan meetings</p> <p><i>Personal Cost Factor = had to miss 4 classes</i></p>	<p>No Monetary</p> <p>No Monetary</p>	<p>4 TAY Plans</p>	<p>1. TAY PLANNING PROCESS OUTCOMES:</p> <p>1. Without TAY Plan: No College</p> <p>2. OUTCOMES OF TAY GOALS MET:</p> <p>2a. Co-ops for school credits</p>	<p>1. Got diploma</p> <p>2a. Practical work experience</p>	<p>1. No post – secondary upgrades required</p> <p>2a. Working in preferred career path</p>	<p>1. No Monetary</p> <p>2a. No Monetary</p>

GROUP	INPUTS	COST OR PROXY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
Total Monetary Valuation:	Inputs: \$0.00						Impacts: \$0.00
Family (N=2) Both working.	1-2 hours preparation meeting per year 1 hour extra meeting (TAY	No Monetary No lost of salary for parents No Monetary	4 TAY Plans	TAY PLANNING PROCESS OUTCOMES: 1a. Access to information i. To ensure an important part of the youth's life is not missed in the planning	1a. Learning about DSO and passport funding	1a. No Proxy i. No proxy	1a. No Monetary i. No Monetary

GROUP	INPUTS	COST OR PROXY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
	<p>Plan) per year</p> <p>10 hours of support per week for 4 planning years</p>	<p>No loss of salary for parents</p> <p>No Monetary</p>		<p>1b. Shared workload and responsibilities</p> <p>2.ACTUAL AND ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OF TAY GOALS MET:</p> <p>2a. Passport funding achieved at 18 years without delay</p>	<p>1b. Not alone in planning</p> <p>2a. Avoided cost to parent for wage of hired DSW in Ontario \$20.85/hr</p>	<p>1b. No proxy</p> <p>2a. REPEAT. 240 hours/year of extra support</p>	<p>1b. No Monetary</p> <p>2a. No monetary.</p>

GROUP	INPUTS	COST OR PROXY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
				2b. Skills building during high school 2c. Co-ops	2b. Independence – not to live in group home 2c. Apprenticeship and career choice	2c. REPEAT impact	2b. No Monetary 2c. No monetary
Total Monetary Valuation:	Inputs	\$0.00				Impacts:	\$0.00

GROUP	INPUTS	COST OR PROXY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
<p>Education Professionals (N=2)</p>			4 TAY Plans	<p>TAY PLANNING PROCESS OUTCOMES:</p> <p>1a. Not being Lead</p> <p>2.TAY GOALS MET OUTCOMES:</p> <p>2a. Co-ops</p>	<p>1a. Less paperwork</p> <p>2a. Chance to experience the real world</p>	<p>1a. No proxy</p> <p>2a. No proxy</p>	<p>No monetary</p> <p>2a. No Monetary</p>
<p>Total Monetary Valuation:</p>	<p>Inputs:</p>	<p>\$0.00</p>					<p>Impacts:</p> <p>\$0.00</p>

GROUP	INPUTS	COST OR PROXY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
<p>Community Agency Professionals (N=4)</p>			<p>4 TAY Plans</p>	<p>1.TAY PLANNING PROCESS OUTCOMES:</p> <p>1a. Shared knowledge between sectors</p> <p>2.TAY GOALS MET OUTCOMES ;</p> <p>2a. Co-ops</p> <p>2b. Job placement</p>	<p>1a. Holistic view of the youth’s capacity</p> <p>2a. Future job</p> <p>2b. Youth gets their own spending</p>	<p>1a. REPEAT Impact</p> <p>2a. REPEAT Impact</p> <p>2b. REPEAT Impact</p>	<p>1a. No Monetary</p> <p>2a. No Monetary</p> <p>2b. No Monetary</p>

GROUP	INPUTS	COST OR PROXY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
				<p>2c. Summer job</p> <p>2d.DSO application</p> <p>2e. Social networking and natural supports</p>	<p>money to buy what they want</p> <p>2c. Job ready after high school</p> <p>2e. More Independence</p> <p>2e. Increased self-esteem</p>	<p>2c. No proxy</p> <p>2d. REPEAT Impact</p> <p>2e. REPEAT Impacts</p> <p>2e. REPEAT Impact</p>	<p>2c. No Monetary</p> <p>2d. No Monetary</p> <p>2e. No Monetary</p> <p>2e. No Monetary</p>

GROUP	INPUTS	COST OR PROXY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
				2i. ODSP and Passport funding at 18 years 2j. See youth's progress	2i. Food, lodging, personal items, YMCA membership 2j. Parent's excitement	2i. REPEAT Impact 2j. No proxy	2i. No Monetary 2j. No Monetary
Total Monetary Valuation:	Inputs:	\$0.00				Impacts:	\$0.00

GROUP	INPUTS	COST OR PROXY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
NRTAY Committee (N=3)			1. Regional Plan and oversight 2. Protocol Local Agreement signed 3. Lead Designation 4. TAY Plan Template	2. Strengthens relationships between sectors 3. Better understanding 4. Everyone uses same plan	2. Everyone on the same page 4. Accountability on professionals	<i>Descriptives for all of these outcomes and impacts in the NRTAYC data set.</i>	<i>No Monetary values.</i>

GROUP	INPUTS	COST OR PROXY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
			5.TAY plan Revisions TAY PLAN GOALS MET: 1. Adult funding 2. Avoid 1-3 year waitlist and 1 more year for DSO	5. Easier to use 1. Parents are not paying for support worker from their own finances 2. Smoother transition – funding in place	5 . Less time consuming 1. REPEAT Impact 2. Supports available i.e., for BSP, Respite etc		

GROUP	INPUTS	COST OR PROXY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES OF TAY PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS MET	IMPACTS OF TAY PLAN AND GOALS MET	PROXIES/ DIRECT VALUE	ESTIMATED VALUE OF IMPACTS
			3. Less engaged parent attend planning meeting	3. Opportunity for increased parental engagement	3. Increase awareness of youth's needs 3b. Increase QoL		
CN			Regional Plan and admin support student		REPEAT Impacts		No Monetary
Total Monetary Valuation:	Inputs:	\$0.00				Impacts:	\$0.00

The planning process promoted the output of the youth's actual TAY Plan and eventual goal attainment. According to the youth, five significant TAY Plan goals were identified as having been met. First, the youth was able to participate in a number of Co-op opportunities of their choice while in high school and received school credits for this work. The created impact from these Co-op options was the personal growth acquired from a variety of different work experiences. The impact value of working in a worksite of their preference was identified in descriptive terms with no monetary value (see Table 7.2) because the outcome of Co-op options was scaffolding to their second outcome of an employment opportunity in their preferred career path.

The youth's second outcome was a hired position that stemmed from a Co-op opportunity. With this, the impact of gained income at the minimum wage of \$14.00 at the time this person was working (Employment Standards Act, 2021) was estimated for the youth's last year in high school at the age of 18-19 years with my feasible approximation of 2 hours a day, 4 days a week, 4 weeks a month for 12 months for a total of \$5,376. The estimation of calculating the full 12 months for their last year of high school was derived from the demographic data collected regarding their birth date to confirm this value. As such, the youth would have been collecting ODSP for the 12 months of that school year prior to college. When an ODSP recipient gains employment earnings (i.e., \$14.00 per hour x 8 hours per week x 4 weeks per month – leaving 4 weeks vacation time = \$448.00 per month), the total earnings for the month are first reduced by \$200 (i.e., \$448.00 – 200.00 = \$248.00), then 50% of the remaining amount (i.e., \$248.00 divided by 2 = \$124.00) is deducted from the recipient's monthly ODSP amount (i.e., \$1,169.00 monthly income support amount minus 124.00 = \$1,045.00). In reference to this SROI analysis, after ODSP deductions, due to the employment income claimed against the regular

ODSP amount (Horvath, S., personal communication, March 25, 2021), the youth was estimated as making \$3,888.00 extra for the entire year in addition to the regular ODSP amount (i.e., yearly regular earnings of \$5,376.00 [i.e., \$448.00 x12 months] minus ODSP yearly deduction of \$1,488.00 [i.e., \$124.00 x 12 months] = \$3,888.00 extra yearly income after ODSP reduction.

The third outcome described by this youth was the TAY Plan content that included preparation for PSE such as considering what supports would be required (i.e., a note taker) in addition to the youth's goals of building social skills and creating leisure activity. The impact of planning for these life goals included a youth with more confidence and sense of security for their future endeavours. The feasible assumption was made that a well-planned future would lay out how that future may happen, with specific steps and supports in place to promote a meaningful and successful future after high school. Two proxies were identified to estimate an equivalent value to the outcome of such a well-planned future. The first proxy involved a fee for life coaching services that could range from \$80-\$500 with the average taken as \$290.00 per session (Superprof blog, 2021). This value was multiplied by four to represent the equivalent of the four TAY plans in each of the four years of high school. The total of this proxy was \$1,160.00 for the four years of the TAY Planning process. In addition to this same impact, a second proxy was included that identified the coaching from People First Ontario (2021) online training resources which entailed videos on numerous life coaching topics (i.e., home, work, love and marriage). These videos were free to watch; however, the monthly cost of internet to access this online resource was estimated at \$25.00 per month for one of the low to average costs for a local internet package (Teksavvy, 2021) and to represent four TAY Plans by the end of high school. I multiplied the monthly cost of internet for four months (i.e., as a proxy for the equivalent of 4 TAY plans) to equate a total valuation of \$100.00.

The fourth outcome identified was the smooth financial transition to receiving ODSP at the age of 18 years. Having the DSO application submitted in the necessary time frame to ensure this smooth transition meant avoiding the 1–3 year waitlist for a required assessment to accompany the application, avoiding a one year waiting time for application approval and no delay in establishing eligibility for adult funding and services. The proxy used for the completion of an assessment was the cost of a privately purchased psychological assessment because this would have been the only course of action to take as an alternative to being on a waitlist. The cost of a local service for assessment attainment ranged from \$600-\$2,500.00 (Lohnes, personal communication, March 29, 2021) so an average of \$1,550.00 was used. This valuation would have been a one-time cost.

In accordance with the impact of having eligibility status established by the age of 18 years, the income impact of receiving ODSP and Passport funding at the age of 18 years without administrative delays was immense. With a waitlist of 1-3 years for an assessment (C-01), I conservatively estimated a one-year wait. This one-year wait was added to the one-year wait for application approval equating to two years in total that were multiplied by 24 months of ODSP monthly income (i.e., \$1,169.00 monthly) and two years of Passport funding at \$5,000.00 per year (YSSN, 2021 March). This estimation equated to a lost income of \$38,056.00 as the minimum valuation of the impact of a two year wait time. This valuation is greatly under-claimed because the cost of benefits for medications, optometrist and dental services were not included in this value, yet they represent a very significant inclusion in the ODSP monthly benefit package (MCCSS, 2021 March).

The fifth and final outcome described by the youth was the acceptance into PSE. The impact of this outcome involved an apprenticeship program that would train the young person for

their future career. This impact's financial value was estimated based on local apprenticeship wages at the minimum rate of \$14.00 per hour for the college year of 2019-2020 (Payscale, 2020, June). The hourly wage was multiplied by an estimated eight hour a week work schedule. The work schedule of eight hours per week was decided upon as a fair estimate to represent a full-time college student's schedule as well as a consistent estimate to the eight hour per week estimation used for the youth's high school employment valuation (i.e., the second outcome discussed above). Again, this extra yearly estimated income of \$3,888.00 (i.e., \$14.00 x 8 hours x 4 weeks x 12 months minus the ODSP income deductions) was valued as a one-year impact to identify the youth's first year at PSE participating in the apprenticeship program.

At the end of the SROI calculations for the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan, the amount of direct cash flow investment in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was \$0.00. The calculated inputs by the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan were \$0.00. The calculated impact gains for the youth were estimated to be \$48,842.00.

This section will now proceed to explicate the valuations of the outcomes and impacts described by the family, education, community and NRTAYC participants with the intention to use these valuations to compliment the SROI valuation of the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan.

Family: SROI Analysis

The family data set was composed of two participants who were parents with experience in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. The one family member was just entering the planning process with a child aged 14-15 years. The second parent had experienced a complete process with a child who had just graduated from high school. Both parents described attending one-hour TAY Plan meetings once a year. Community professionals described having parents attend a one-hour preparation meeting (C-04) per year for the four-year high school planning period. The

decision was made that it was fair to add this information to the family's input column of the SROI model. The two parent participants both were employed during the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. However, both parents described not losing any wages to attend TAY Plan meetings or their preparation meetings described by community professionals. Yet, the no loss of wages did correspond with adjusting their work schedule to accommodate the school's schedule for the TAY Plan. In this way, no monetary valuation was identified with the family input for the SROI results in terms of parents' loss of income (see Table 7.2). However, an estimated value was assigned to respect their time contributions to both the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and related activities related to goal achievement. When asked how much time on average was devoted to the planning process, one parent reported: "I don't know, I mean it's hard to say, maybe, I don't know, ten hours a week. It's hard to really break down" (F-01). The context of activities the parent discussed included such things as Co-op transportation and emotional counselling of their young family member regarding Co-ops. In terms of the broader context for this estimate, when asked what would happen if this planning process was not in place the parent said "I think with me, it would have happened anyway 'cause I would have made it happen but not everyone is going to do that" (F-01). This parent's family member had their first plan at the age of 15-16 years so this youth had three rather than the typical four years of Tri-Sector TAY Planning. Given that this parent described their support hours as not all being tied specifically to the TAY Planning process and that, from a business perspective, this parent was carrying out parental responsibilities (not volunteer hours), this input was included in the descriptive SROI analysis (see 7.2).

Travel time and gas expenditures were identified. This was estimated as a direct input valuation and was determined by taking the largest city in the Niagara Region (i.e., St.

Catharines) and estimating the farthest distance to travel across the city as 16 km (Brock University to Lakeport) and multiplying this as a round trip ($16 \times 2 = 32$ km total) with an estimated \$0.45 per km (NRC-02). For a 4-year span of 2 meetings per year, the total input travel cost was calculated at \$57.60. As such, the input of travel equated to a total of \$57.60 for a single youth for the 4-year duration of the TAY Planning process.

When looking at the family outcomes for the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, there were two outcomes identified. First, parental access to key information about transitioning and organizational practices was made available. For a new parent starting out in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, this was important in terms of learning about DSO applications, adult funding and services. This outcome was identified as a descriptive impact for the family with no monetary claims made. Related to this, it was described that the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process ensured that important parts of planning for the youth's life were not missed because "if you don't have that [planning process] in place for families, I think... there could be many children that do not reach their full potential" (F-01). The second outcome identified in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was the shared responsibilities and workload to support the youth with their planning. The impact of these shared duties was families not feeling alone. No monetary value was attached to this impact, however, it was considered to be an important descriptive matter to identify and include (see Table 7.2). In addition, three actual and anticipated outcomes of the Tri-Sector TAY plan were identified. The first anticipated outcome was the goal of the youth obtaining Passport funding at the age of 18 years with the impact of having added supports for independence such as using this funding to hire a support person for leisure activities (e.g., going on vacation without their parent). This outcome was represented as

a descriptive value because Passport funding already had been claimed in the youth's section of the SROI analysis.

The second outcome for family was identified as the benefit of the youth's Co-op in high school leading to an apprenticeship in their first year of college. From a financial perspective, this estimate already was claimed in the youth's portion of the SROI, and therefore was not claimed again for the family portion. Yet, this repeatedly described outcome supported the creditability of this SROI's claims. The third outcome identified by the family involved the building of the youth's skills during high school, which created the impact of anticipated independence after high school in such areas as not living in a group home. No quantitative proxy was attached to this impact.

At the end of the family section of the SROI analysis, the estimated travel cost of \$57.60 brought the total family input value to \$57.60 (see Table 7.1) for one youth with a four-year TAY Planning cycle. The total monetary valuation of the identified impacts was \$0.00 to avoid duplication with the youth SROI but the impacts were included in the descriptive Table 7.2.

Education Professionals: SROI Analysis

For the education professional group, two participants contributed to this information for the SROI analysis. The education professionals' hourly pay rate was estimated according to the salary (i.e., estimated range of \$61,000.00 to \$108,000.00 with an estimated average of \$86,606.00) of a high school teacher in the Niagara Region (Payscale, 2021). It is to be noted that the average (not the mid-range as used in other estimates in the SROI analysis) was used in this proxy because this amount actually was provided by the source (Payscale, 2021). The calculation of the one-hour annual TAY Plan meetings multiplied by four years multiplied by the average hourly rate of \$41.64 (i.e., taking the average salary and dividing this by 52 weeks and

40 hours) equated to \$166.55 for the first financial input included in the education professionals' section of the SROI. The second financial input included in this section was the 2 hours of Co-op supports the teacher provided per student per year (E-01). The same hourly rate was used and multiplied by 2 hours x 4 years to equate a total calculation of \$333.10 for one youth over a four-year planning cycle. Thus, the total financial inputs provided by the education professionals were estimated to be \$499.65 for one youth (see Table 7.1).

The education professionals described two outcomes related to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. The first outcome involved the circumstance of the community professional taking the role of Lead at the majority of TAY Plan meetings. The impact of this outcome was the advantage of saving the education professionals taking on this extra administrative work and it was included as a descriptive impact (see Table 7.2). The second outcome entailed the education professionals' interaction with community professionals with the impact of increased knowledge about community services. This impact was attached to a quantitative proxy of a one year membership in the Ontario Association on Developmental Disabilities (OADD, 2020). The membership in OADD would be equivalent to access to information regarding community services and the annual membership for 2020 was \$75.00. To ensure a conservative estimate, this proxy was used to calculate a membership for one-year in total for one education professional.

The education professionals described two outcomes related to the TAY Plan goals being met. The first outcome in this area was the described value of the work experience that a youth gains during their high school Co-op opportunities. Because this outcome already had been claimed in the youth section, it was not claimed with a quantitative proxy again in this section. However, this repeated descriptive matter reinforces the reliability of this outcome and its initial financial claim for the youth. The second outcome for this area was another repeated outcome

involving the establishment of ODSP and Passport funding for the youth at the age of 18 years. However, the impact was described as creating less stress for the family member. The value of this impact was estimated using a proxy of 3 counselling sessions for a parent to address such stress. It was decided to estimate 3 sessions as a fair number of sessions to address a parent's stress with the feasible notion that some parents may use fewer and some more may use more. The cost of a counselling session in the Niagara Region was estimated at \$130.00 per session (Niagara Community Information Database, 2021) and when multiplied by 3 equated to a total financial cost of \$390.00 for one parent over the four-year TAY Planning cycle. As such, the total financial proxies for the impacts described by the education professionals equated to \$465.00 related to planning for a single youth.

Community Professionals: SROI Analysis

For this group of participants, four community professionals contributed to this section of the SROI analysis. All of these professionals worked within the developmental service sector and were involved with the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process at the time of the study. With this group, there were five quantitative inputs identified (see Table 7.1) and ten descriptive outcomes (see Table 7.2). This section will begin by explicating the five inputs and how a monetary value was estimated for each. All quantitative estimations entail an average value pertaining to one community professional in reference to a single youth.

The average wage of a community professional was derived from the common job title of community support coordinator. This title represents a higher employment status than a DSW (Indeed, 2021b) and thus follows the conservative approach with a generous estimation of the wage scale. The hourly wage of a community support coordinator was estimated at \$20.60-\$26.32 (Indeed, 2021a). As mentioned, to follow the conservative approach to estimation, it was

decided to use the average wage of \$23.46 multiplied by two-hour preparation meetings (i.e., preparation meetings were described as running 1-2 hours) multiplied by 4 years totaling \$187.68. The same calculation was attached for the one-hour TAY Plan meeting to equal \$93.84. The third financial input was the described input of community professionals taking on the role of Lead in the majority of cases. This entailed phone calls, emails, completion of TAY Plan documentation, and administrative follow-up to TAY Plan meetings. This workload was described by a community professional as averaging 24 hours a year for a single youth. As such, the total proxy monetary value was calculated as 24 hours multiplied by 4 years multiplied by \$23.46 for a total estimated input value of \$2,252.16 for a single youth.

In addition, the input of mileage costs of an estimated 10-15 km. trip (averaged to 12.5 km. one way) to a school for a TAY Plan meeting (C-03) multiplied by the value of two to include this value as a round trip, multiplied by the estimated mileage payment of \$0.45 per km., multiplied by four years for a total of \$45.00 per youth was described by a community professional.

The final financial input involved the inclusion of the hourly wages of job coaches for a youth's job placement while in high school. It was decided to add this input value based on the report from a community participant (C-01) that some students participate in a job placement (i.e., 1.5 hours per week) and are supported by a job coach who would be equivalent to a DSW in wages of \$20.85 per hour (Indeed, 2021b). As such, the average of 1.5 hours per week multiplied by a forty-week school year multiplied by 4 years yields an estimated value of \$5,004.00 for one youth over the four-year planning cycle. When this valuation is added to the other four estimated financial inputs, the total input valuation for the community professionals equated to \$7,582.68 for this section of the SROI analysis. There were no financial outcomes to accompany this

valuation because each of the outcomes and impacts described by the community professionals either were already claimed as a monetary value and could not be duplicated in the calculation or the impacts were only descriptive in nature (see Table 7.2). Thus, the monetary valuation of the impacts for this section of the SROI analysis was \$0.00. However, this section will proceed to review the ten descriptive outcomes and their impacts as their rich qualitative nature remained important to include in this analysis.

In the area of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, two outcomes were identified by community professionals. First, the planning process provided the opportunity for serious concerns (i.e., abuse towards a youth) to be recognized and addressed with the proper authorities (C-02). The impact of this outcome was the protection from future abuse. The second outcome in this area was the described shared knowledge among sectors. The impact of this shared information was the holistic view of a youth's capacity (i.e., a teacher realizing that a youth had the ability of more mobility than initially understood) (C-01). As well, the youth's goal setting and potential attainment were impacted by this shared knowledge.

In the area of TAY Plan goal achievement, the first identified outcome was the benefit of Co-op opportunities. Even though this was a repeated outcome described by other participant groups, it continued to emphasize the impact that this outcome has on future employment for youth. The second outcome in this area was the youth's opportunity for a job placement during high school. This opportunity differed from a school Co-op in terms of being a work option that was arranged and supported solely by the developmental service agency during school hours. It was described as a brief weekly placement such as 1.5 hours a week with a stipend wage (C-01). The impact of this employment outcome was identified as "he is doing something he likes...I don't think he really cares about the money...[The youth thinks to himself] so I come here, I get

this [\$5.00] and I get to buy an ice cream and go to Tim Horton's or McDonalds... so kinda nice" (C-01). The third outcome identified was the opportunity for a summer job placement. This opportunity was described as an unpaid work experience, but the impact was being job-ready when leaving high school (C-02).

Continuing in the area of TAY Plan goal attainment, the completion of the DSO application to ensure the youth becomes a ODSP and passport funding recipient at the age of 18 years was again described as an essential goal to achieve. In addition to the obvious quantitative impact of avoiding waitlist delays in receiving this funding (i.e., Passport funding to build community connection), the outcome of social networking and natural supports that were sometimes generated by the TAY Plan created youth independence and social capital (C-03). This increase in social connections also was associated with higher youth self-esteem (C-02). Developing independent skills, such as riding the bus (F-02) and budgeting, promoted the impact of a youth having more agency and control in their life (C-03).

The seventh outcome in this area was the option to apply for the Community Integration Co-operative Education (CICE) program in college (C-02). This program requires a high school certificate and the impact of a youth and their family coordinating this goal together promoted family connection (C-02). Another outcome of TAY Planning was volunteer work during high school time. This was an alternative to a Co-op or job placement option and viewed as an employment type of activity that generated an impact of potential youth confidence and job-readiness (C-02). An additional aspect attached to the goal of being an ODSP and Passport recipient was the critical impact of having a future with the basic needs being met for food, lodging and community inclusion, such as purchasing a YMCA membership. The final outcome described by the community professionals was the outcome of family actually seeing the youth's

progress from year to year as it was reviewed and celebrated at the TAY Plan meetings. The impact of parents having that moment to feel excited and proud of their child was described as a prominent impact.

In conclusion, the community professionals contributed the input value of \$7,582.68 and \$0.00 outcome value to the SROI analysis. However, the descriptive and repeated outcomes and impacts remain critical aspects of the overall social gains portrayed in this analysis and the study's findings.

Niagara Region TAY Committee (NRTAYC): SROI Analysis

This group of participants involved three committee members with varying experience sitting on this committee as well as bringing a variety of career experiences to share with the group. The SROI analysis for this group was conducted in the same manner as the community professionals in the sense that the committee members' wages and travel costs were included in the SROI calculation as financial inputs, representing the financial contributions of their respective organizations, and all the outcomes and impacts were identified as either a repeated outcome that could not be included due to resulting in duplication of quantitative claiming in another section of the SROI analysis or due to being a descriptive impact that could not be quantified.

To estimate the average committee member's salary costs, the average hourly amount that would represent the high-end range of the average salary for a committee member (ranging from community professional high end hourly wage of \$26.32 (Indeed, 2021a) and the education professional high end hourly wage of \$51.93 (Payscale, 2021) was used: this value equated to \$39.13 per hour. The high-end hourly wage for both types of professionals was used to represent senior management staff who attended the onset of the NRTAYC membership. The described

average attendance at NRTAYC meeting was 17 people who participated in two-hour committee meetings that were held 4 times per year for the first 5 years (i.e., 2014-2018) and 2 times per year for the 2 most recent years (i.e., 2019-2020). The final calculation for wages as a financial input was then divided by the client count for the span of all 7 years (i.e., 757 youths for 2014-2018, 171 youths for 2019-2020). This final calculation equated to \$66.26 per youth.

The last two financial inputs that were included in the SROI calculation were the travel costs (for staff mileage calculated by time travelled at the average speed of 60 km per hour = \$0.45 per km) which were described as ranging from 30-45 minutes round trip (average of 37.5 minutes used) and equated to \$14.29 of mileage cost. The cost of salary cost per hour during travel time was not included on the assumption that this time may have been shared with other travel tasks. CN's administration costs to operate the committee meetings and to conduct other administrative functions related to the TAY Planning process which equated to \$109.05 per youth. For full equation of these calculations see Table 7.3 (excel spreadsheet). It was decided that these two costs were not measured as deadweight, meaning that these input costs were specific to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and would not otherwise have been undertaken. The total input valuation for the NRTAYC and CN administration costs since the inception of the TAY Planning process in Niagara was \$189.60 per youth served with \$0.00 valuation for described impacts.

Table 7.3 Excel spreadsheet to illustrate the CN costs for TAY planning process per youth

Inputs										
Hourly of Community	Hourly of Education	Average Hourly Proxy	Length of Meeting (Hours)	Number of Meetings (2014-2018)	Number of Years	Number of People	Client Count	Total Cost of TAY Plans		
\$26.32	\$51.93	\$39.13	2	4	5	17	757	\$35.15		
Hourly of Community	Hourly of Education	Average Hourly Proxy	Length of Meeting (Hours)	Number of Meetings (2019-2020)	Number of Years	Number of People	Client Count	Total Cost of TAY Plans		
\$26.32	\$51.93	\$39.13	2	2	2	17	171	\$31.12		
Travel Time Low (hours)	Travel Time High (Hours)	Average Travel Time	Estimated Speed (Km/h)	Estimated Travel Distance (Kms)	Cost per Kilometre	Number of Travellers	Number of Meeting (2014-2018)	Number of Years	Client Count	Cost of Travel
0.5	0.75	0.625	60	37.5	\$0.45	17	4	5	757	\$7.58
Travel Time Low (hours)	Travel Time High (Hours)	Average Travel Time	Estimated Speed (Km/h)	Estimated Travel Distance (Kms)	Cost per Kilometre	Number of Travellers	Number of Meeting (2019-2020)	Number of Years	Client Count	Cost of Travel
0.5	0.75	0.625	60	37.5	\$0.45	17	2	2	171	\$6.71
.3 FTE Salary (2014-2015)	Number of Years	Client Count	Total Salary of CN (2014-2015)							
\$22,692.00	2	928	\$48.91							
.15 FTE Salary (2016-2020)	Number of Years	Client Count	Total Salary of CN (2016-2020)							
\$11,162.00	5	928	\$60.14							
Impacts										
No Financial Impacts										
Valuation of Inputs										
			Summed Inputs per youth		928					
TAY Plans (2014-2018)	\$35.15		Tay Plans		\$66.26					
TAY Plans (2019-2020)	\$31.12		Travel		\$14.29					
Cost of Travel (2014-2018)	\$7.58		CN Salary		\$109.05					
Cost of Travel (2019-2020)	\$6.71									
CN Salary 2014-2015	\$48.91									
CN Salary 2016-2020)	\$60.14									
Total Valuation of Inputs	\$189.60									
Impacts										
No Financial Impacts										
		\$0.00								

In comparison with the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan, the next section will describe the youth who did not experience a Tri-Sector TAY Plan. To comprehend the differences in the developmental service between the youths' two periods of time of transition (i.e., 2008 and 2019), I will provide a brief outline of DSO and the changes in developmental services after DSO came into place.

Brief Historical Background of Developmental Services Ontario

Developmental Services Ontario came into place in July 2011. At this same time, MCCSS policy directed the requirement of a written assessment to confirm eligibility for ODSP and adult developmental services (L. Mione, personal communication, March 31, 2021). This historical information is important in reference to the young person with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan and the two family participants because their described experiences were retrospective of an earlier time (i.e., 1993 and 2008) prior to the operations of DSO (2011). These participants were involved in transition planning at a time when it was a simpler system to navigate but there were fewer options in service programs and fewer supports available. Consistent with today, planning with the education professionals involved an IPRC and an annual IEP to address academic goals. Planning with the community professionals involved an Individual ISP to address personal life goals. The two plans were completed separately. If a youth was involved with developmental services before the age of 18 years, they would automatically move into adult services (F-03). For a youth who was not diagnosed with I/DD during childhood (i.e., as in the case of the youth with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan) accessing developmental services could be missed. As such, the creation of the Tri-Sector TAY Plan protocol (MCCSS, MCYS & EDU, 2013) initiated the education and community professionals coming together to sit at the planning table to establish one Plan; a more holistic approach that leaves less room for gaps. Comparing the SROI

outcomes of the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan with the outcomes of the youth with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan, illustrates similarities in their outcomes, such as graduating with a high school diploma and entry into PSE. However, it also shows contrasts in Co-op experiences and employment outcomes. With the above SROI analysis completed for the youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan, this section will now describe the youth with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan in terms of a descriptive SROI analysis.

The Youth with No Tri-Sector TAY Plan: Descriptive SROI Analysis

This section of the SROI analysis involved a qualitative approach describing the planning process for a youth with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan during their high school years. There were no monetary or quantitative values attached to the inputs or outcomes of this section of the SROI analysis. This youth graduated from high school 15 years prior to this study, at a time when TAY Planning was not a formal specific process for youth who were transitioning out of high school. This youth experienced more than one diagnosis and was not assessed and diagnosed with I/DD until shortly after high school graduation. The two parents who participated in this study experienced their child exiting high school without a specific TAY plan. One parent supported their child leaving high school around 1993 and the second parent around 2005. Although these two parents do not represent the transitioning period of a TAY Planning process that occurred prior to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and DSO, they provided a rich description of the experience of the process prior to the DSO requirement and Tri-Sector TAY Planning initiative. This group of family members allowed for comparison between the Tri-Sector TAY plan and No TAY Plan experiences in terms of their respective inputs, outcomes and impacts. As such, some similarities were found; however, many differences were identified.

The inputs, outcomes and impacts were derived from the data collected from one youth's interview complimented by the interviews of two family participants (see Table 7.4). The inputs and impacts were descriptive in value because it was not possible to quantify them due to lack of specific descriptive detail. For example, there was not enough information provided by the youth or families to quantify the impact of a lack of Co-op options or the only option of a segregated worksite. As mentioned, the youth did not experience a specific TAY Plan to guide their exit from high school. Instead, in consideration of inputs, their planning and goal setting were completed during IEP meetings which occurred 2-3 times a year. The youth described how their parent, the resource teacher, occupational therapist (OT) and physical therapist (PT) were in attendance. The output was an IEP. With this planning process, and the OT and PT in attendance, no outcomes for improved accessibility at high school or PSE were established. This was evident when the youth's preferred Co-op placement was denied and another Co-op entailed an inaccessible situation for this youth who had a mobility disability. The negative impact of this outcome was that the youth was not employed. In contrast, a positive outcome was graduating with a diploma with the impact being that the youth was accepted into college. However, the youth described that entry into PSE did not result in successful completion and this had the impact of the youth feeling discouraged and frustrated.

To compliment the youth's descriptive accounts, the family participants provided the same input of attending IPRC/IEP meetings with an output of an IEP that contained academic goals. The outcome of established IEP goals had the impact of parents feeling that because these were academic goals, the educational professionals made the decisions about these goals. Another outcome described by a parent involved a young person leaving high school with the only employment option being a segregated worksite, even though an inclusive workplace was

hoped for. This illustrates the differences of this time in developmental services when the most common path for a youth leaving high school was a sheltered workshop. The impact of a lack of community support and connection was a troubling result for this parent. However, on the positive side, a parent described a time when accessing service was a much easier process and described it as a “one stop shop” (F-03). Unfortunately, the downside to this situation was the lack of developmental services and programs to provide support and program options for youth. This also was a time when transition from children’s to adult services was made automatically (i.e., no application was required), with the impact being a smooth transition to receiving ODSP funds.

Table 7.4 *This illustrates the SROI analysis in terms of the descriptive inputs and impacts for one youth without tri-sector TAY plan. All impacts are of descriptive (qualitative) valuation*

GROUP	INPUTS	COSTS/PROX IES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACTS
Individual (N=1) High school graduation date: 2005 In College now (online)	Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings 8 hours of IEPs = 8 hours total of missing class time PT and OT at meetings	No monetary cost	IEP and academic goals	1. Co-op denied 2. Graduation from high school with diploma 3.PSE entry, unsuccessful to graduate	1. No employment 2.PSE Acceptance 3. Discouraged to try again
Family (N=2) Time Period: Graduation of 1993 and 2005	IPRC/IEP annual meetings Estimated at 2hours x 4 years = 8 hours total	No Monetary	IEP No TAY Plan	1. Academic goals 2. Segregated worksite	2. Due to lack of community of support required 3.

	Community agency support			<p>3. Easier access to services</p> <p>4. Automatic transition to adult services</p>	<p>Youth has limited options and supports</p> <p>4. ODSP recipient without application</p>

Deadweight, Attribution, Displacement and Drop-Off

Traditionally, the SROI analysis includes calculations for deadweight, attribution, displacement and drop-off values of a program that has had formal cash flow invested by the government or other sources into its operations. The Tri-Sector TAY Planning process had no such directed cash flow investment. All input values were identified and calculated as pre-existing organizational funding that was designated to this new planning process to reflect the resources that, in effect, were directed by the participating organizations from their existing government funded operations. The contributions by family members were not directly funded by government. One family participant described investing 10 hours a week (reduced to five hours per week for four years as described in the calculations above) to support their child’s TAY Plan which represented a significant value that could have been omitted from the calculations of the SROI inputs because, as described earlier, the parent literally explained that “I think with me, it would have happened anyway ‘cause I would have made it happen but not everybody is going to do that” (F-01). However, this input proxy valuation was included in the SROI valuation to illustrate the volunteer hours that a family member may invest into the planning process, to respect the dedicated efforts of the family and to identify this integral part of the youth’s Tri-Sector TAY Plan.

As a reminder, deadweight refers to the estimation of value of the amount of outcome that would have occurred even if the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was not in place (Nicholls et al., 2012). It is calculated by using a comparison group that has a similar circumstance and examining the difference between the two groups, in this case, a youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan and a youth with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan. Both completed high school when DSO assessment and application processes were required but unfortunately there was no data from youth for the latter. Yet, description for this time period was provided by community professionals who referred to the implications of waiting for ODSP at age of 18 years with delay in becoming a funded recipient. Comparisons between Tri-Sector TAY Planning and no Tri-Sector TAY Planning from the pre-DSO period were done qualitatively and not monetized. In the case of this study, there was no baseline value established and the purpose of this study was not to generalize the SROI results to all youths with I/DD who were involved with the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. The purpose of this study's SROI analysis was to monetize the case study data and to discuss it symbolically by reducing the valuation estimates to an individual level. A very conservative approach was taken to monetization in this analysis. Direct value or proxy values were calculated only for outcomes and impacts that were described by participants as being related to the TAY Planning process. For these reasons, no deadweight reduction was estimated.

In similar fashion, there was no calculated attribution deduction established for this study's SROI. The component of attribution refers to the assessment of how much of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning processes are due to other agencies or other people (Nicholls et al., 2012). The decision to determine that there was no attribution reduction reflects the fact that all parties (i.e., sectors and parents) who are involved in a youth's Tri-Sector TAY Plan are now expected

to be sitting at the same planning table as a shared process rather than planning separately. Displacement refers to the assessment of the amount of an outcome that has displaced another outcome (Nicholls et al., 2012). No displacement deduction is necessary because the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process is not disadvantaging anyone else and, in fact, is designed to facilitate synergy among previously separate planning processes and to add the specific focus on transition to adulthood.

SROI Final Calculation

In conclusion, the total *input* calculation of \$8,329.53 and the total *impact* calculation of \$49,307.00 equated to a positive social return. The return of \$1.00 of existing/diverted funds invested into the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process had generated a *social gain* of \$4.92 to each dollar of input. The equation for this calculation is [Return minus Investment] divided by Investment. Thus, [\$49,307.00 - \$8,329.53] divided by \$8,329.53 equals \$4.92. This is expressed in SROI terminology as a net return of \$4.92 for each dollar inputted. In the corporate world, this ratio would translate into representing the total investment cost of \$4.92 cost value per dollar invested. With this significant positive return on investment, this ratio continues to illustrate the benefits and social gains potentially created by the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in Niagara Region.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Discussion

The purpose of this chapter will be to review, discuss and offer conclusions about the findings of this study of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region. The first step will be to review the purpose of this research by providing a brief review of the case study and its exploration in terms of the contextual foci on youth engagement (Lester, 2013; Ng et al., 2018), collaboration (Dailey & Hauschild-Mork, 2017), and the social ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

This will be followed by a short summary of the principal findings for each of the 5 stakeholder groups, the cross-group data analysis, and the SROI analysis. Each stakeholder group will be followed with a brief discussion regarding how these findings related to the study's theoretical orientation of the ecological system and the constructs of collaboration and youth engagement. The concept of collaboration will be associated with the social ecological levels of the meso- and micro-systems (Bronfenbrenner 1979) in terms of multi-sector interactions.

This will be followed by a review of the key messages coming from the overall findings regarding the benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process (i.e., access to information, better planning for youth and a better future for youth), and the suggested areas of improvement and/or description of participants' ideal planning process (i.e., increased youth engagement, training for all stakeholders, increased collaboration and a better future for youth). Each review of the key messages also is discussed in reference to the study's primary research questions: the benefits and needed improvements in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process.

The SROI analysis will be looked at in terms of its contribution to the study's subject matter and its findings will be discussed in relation to knowledge translation. The discussion section will return to some concluding thoughts regarding the ecological system and the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and specifically the relevance to the construct of collaboration. Findings regarding the moderate level of youth engagement will be discussed in terms of the potential for further development.

In addition, this chapter will provide a brief section to discuss the concept of phronesis (Ord, 2014) as an adjoining conceptual contribution to the discussion of the study's findings. Limitations of this study and their implications will be put forth. Finally, future research considerations will be provided with a conclusion culminating in several final thoughts regarding the study and its accomplishments.

This chapter will begin with a brief description of the case study and the purpose for which this study was designed.

Case Study of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process

Clearly, the transition from adolescence to adulthood is a distinct time when Transitional Age Youth with I/DD are faced with possible changes in education, work, housing, community participation and personal areas of their life. These life changes require preparation and planning for circumstances such as the movement from high school, children's programs and supported living to new situations, demands and challenges (Wehmeyer & Webb, 2012). The Niagara Region has focused on designing and implementing a planning process that includes an integrated and collaborative approach. This dissertation entailed a case study of the Niagara Region Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. This process came from a government memorandum (MCSS, MCYS

& EDU, 2013) and a follow up local protocol (Niagara Region Local Community Agreement, 2017) which was tied to education procedures (Ministry of Education, 2017). The purpose of this research was to explore the outcomes and social impacts of this multi-sector planning system through a pragmatic lens driven by a community-based research perspective. With a community research committee in place, a specific research focus was designed and carried out (i.e., see Figure 5.3 for an overview of the study's design and methodology).

The primary research questions were as follows. First, what components or aspects of the Niagara Region Tri-Sector Transitional Aged Youth Planning process were described as beneficial and advantageous for the transitioning youth and their family and for the Tri-Sector service providers? Second, what components or aspects of the Niagara Region Tri-Sector Transitional Aged Youth Planning process were described to better the planning process for the transitioning of youth and their family and for the Tri-Sector service providers? This second research inquiry was extended to also explore how the Niagara Region Tri-Sector Transitional Aged Youth Planning process could be enhanced or strengthened to create an ideal planning process for all stakeholders. These two primary questions guided the development of this research.

In addition, an SROI analysis (Nicholls et al., 2012) was conducted to examine the estimated quantitative value of the benefits described in the case study. The SROI described and, where appropriate, estimated the quantitative value of the impacts and outcomes of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process described by youth, families, educational professionals and personnel from community organizations that included services for young people with I/DD.

The principal findings that will be reviewed later in this chapter relate to the primary research questions. In addition, this study examined the five stakeholder groups' descriptions of their experiences with the Tri-Sector approach to transition planning, and the roles of youth engagement and inter-agency collaboration in this process.

Youth Engagement, Systemic Collaboration and the Ecological Systems Model

This study began with consideration of what parameters could define youth engagement, with the research by Lester (2013) and Ng et al. (2018) being used to build a conceptualization of this construct. The complexity of the definition of engagement was examined in the multi-dimensional dynamics of the concept as described in Chapter 3. Active participation was identified as a significant component of the expression of engagement. There was a described spectrum of youth engagement (e.g., types and degrees of engagement) that could happen over a range of situations, from simply being physically present at a TAY Planning meeting to co-planning throughout the transition planning process, as well as being behaviourally, emotionally and cognitively engaged.

Active engagement was connected with group collaboration, which was related to the ecological levels of social organization (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The concurrence of active participation and group collaboration was considered key for creating the opportunity for community building, expressed in many ways and at various ecological levels via the 3Cs model: communication, cooperation and coordination (Dailey & Hauschild-Mork, 2017). In the Niagara Region, multi-sector collaboration for the TAY Planning process was commenced by government legislation (i.e., at the exo-level) that started with the children's and adult developmental services and expanded to include the education sector.

The progression of education and community service development in legislation, policy, and practice in reference to transition planning for youth with I/DD was the foundational movement of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region. To recap, in 2011, MCYS and MCSS established the need to close the awkward gap (i.e., “the cliff”) between their services for youth transitioning into adult life. The addition of the Ministry of Education to the planning protocol in 2013 enhanced the ability of the planning process to promote a more seamless transition and the creation of a single integrated transition Plan for each youth. The purpose of the present study was to explore the descriptions provided by youth, their families and education/community professionals regarding how this youth engaging, multi-sector collaborative planning process was unfolding in the Niagara Region.

With the theoretical orientation of the social ecological system model, the constructs of collaboration among sectors and youth engagement, and the primary research questions established by the CRC briefly reviewed, this chapter will now review and discuss the principal findings of this study.

Principle Findings

To answer the research inquiries, five groups of participants were interviewed: the NRTAYC, education professionals, community professionals, family and youth. The overall results of this study were derived from these interviews and the participants’ responses were categorized into the two main areas of inquiry: benefits and how things could be better or even ideal in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region. This section will begin with a short summary of each group of stakeholders and

follow with the findings being briefly applied to this study's theoretical orientation and contextual constructs.

Summary of the NRTAYC Within-Group Findings

The within-group data analysis for the NRTAYC data set established key themes related to the development of the planning process and its benefits including *protocol development, designation of Lead, sharing of information, consistent planning practice, financial benefits, and accountability* with the objective of getting *everyone on the same page*. Additional themes relating to what could be better included increasing *youth engagement, achieving more consistent planning practice, incorporating an accountability measure, needing more time, planning to expand the partnerships at the TAY Plan meetings and the NRTAYC to other sectors, and promoting community knowledge and professional competency* (see Figure 6.1). It is noteworthy that both *consistent planning practice* and *accountability* were identified as both benefits and areas that needed ongoing development. The central message from this group's findings was that the pathway of the NRTAYC moving from the protocol development of the Niagara Region Local Community Agreement (2017) to its actual implementation in community practice involved collaboration. The action that promoted effective collaboration was getting *everyone on the same page*. Working towards getting *everyone on the same page* required communication, commitment and sharing of information and knowledge within and among the sectors.

Applied to Theoretical Orientation and Constructs.

Getting *everyone on the same page*, from a social ecological system perspective, was the center of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process at the meso-level of this social

ecological organizational change. The commitment from Contact Niagara to initiate and facilitate a multi-sector committee (i.e., the NRTAYC) accomplished the development of a multi-sector community agreement in order to launch the Niagara Region Tri-Sector TAY Planning protocol. The commitment of Contact Niagara created the platform for the NRTAYC's meetings to advance the protocol development (i.e., at the meso-level) into community practice (i.e., at the micro-level). This platform for advancement of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning protocol into community practice was described as requiring *communication* between the sectors to establish cooperative practice for Lead designation and using the TAY Plan consistently. The progress of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was promoted by multi-sector communication in the sense of sharing information and knowledge between sectors to create collaboration for better community practice. In relation to this study's definition of collaboration, communication of knowledge (i.e., about DSO applications and assessments) and addressing specific sector needs (i.e., coordinating who should be the Lead at TAY meetings) were evident in these findings. Coordination and cooperation also played an important role in collaboratively determining the TAY Plan template (i.e., to ensure each youth with I/DD at a TAY Plan meeting is established with the goal of eligibility for adult funding and developmental services by the time they transition). As such, the NRTAYC played a critical role in the transformation of the Niagara Region's Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and the 3Cs model (Dailey & Hauschild-Mork, 2017) of collaboration was found to be a part of this transaction.

Summary of the Education Professionals Within-Group Findings

The within-group data analysis for the educational professionals' data set established some key themes such as the *IEP and TAY Plan* (i.e., individual documents that mirror each other), *the role of Lead* (i.e., building a partnership with community professionals), *assessments* (i.e., to be used only for educational programming), *goals and supports* in youth transition plans, *presence, encounters and participation* of youth in the planning process (i.e., identifying lack of decision-making by youth), and *youth capacity* (i.e., objective and perceived). Benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY planning process related to youth, families and professionals while areas of improvement included the themes of *assessment and eligibility* for adult services, *improvement in the role of Lead*, and *more collaboration* (see Figure 6.2).

Applied to Theoretical Orientation and Constructs.

From a social ecological system perspective, this group and their findings represented one of the three professional constituencies in the micro-level that was a part of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process (i.e., with children's and adult developmental service sectors as the other two). The collaborative TAY Planning meetings provided the opportunity for the education professionals to learn more about developmental services (i.e., DSO application process) and to share information with community professionals (i.e., psychoeducational assessments are completed solely for academic purposes). The coordination and cooperation of who should be the designated Lead for TAY Planning meetings was evident in the collaboration between the education and community service professionals. Limited youth engagement was related to perceived youth capacity (e.g., the youth's ability to comprehend the context of a TAY Plan meeting) and their

attendance at TAY Plan meetings. There was a notable absence of collaboration in association with youth engagement (e.g., it was not a primary consideration during the description of TAY Planning for education professionals).

Summary of the Community Professionals Within-Group Findings

The analysis of the TAY Planning process in this group established the administrative background and its concepts that inform the Tri-Sector TAY Plan before, during and after the TAY Plan itself is completed. The themes of *assessments* and *eligibility (funding and waitlist)* were found to be key components of the planning process. Participants described if the TAY Planning process was not in place, there would be serious repercussions for the youth's future such as possible delay in receiving government financial support, much needed adult services and the resulting limitation of the young person's potential autonomy (i.e., opportunity for more independence).

The designated *Lead* plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of the TAY Plan; however, this role entails taking on increased work responsibilities and having a proficient facilitation skill set (e.g., to foster youth engagement at TAY Plan meetings). One of the main responsibilities of the *Lead* is to oversee the TAY Plan on an ongoing basis. The Plan produces *goals* that are geared towards the development of the youth's future. The planning of goals could be enriched by youth having typical student educational experiences (e.g., seeking assistance from the guidance counsellor). The TAY Plan meetings involve multi-sectoral *collaboration* and can promote valuable *youth engagement* (i.e., the platform is there to promote their voice). Perceived *youth capacity* was an aspect that impacted either youths' high level of participation at planning meetings (e.g., a youth who was considered capable and was facilitated to speak first at

the meeting) or lack of opportunity to *engagement* (e.g., a youth who was not considered capable to comprehend the meeting's content and thus was not in attendance to be able to engage).

The described benefits of the TAY Planning process speak to the importance of collaboration in this approach to planning to ensure that the youth's future needs are planned for effectively. One suggested area of improvement for the TAY Planning process was the need for a shift in some professionals' mindset to a youth-strengths approach. Other ways to better the planning process involved further *training* opportunities for youth and professionals, positioning the youth to be the main actor in the Plan and considering some new strategies for the completion of and follow-up to the TAY Plan.

Applied to Theoretical Orientation and Constructs.

Collaboration was identified as a key component of TAY Plan meetings at the micro-level of the social ecological model. This collaboration also was identified as having room for improvement, especially in the area of youth engagement. It was described including youth voice is a critical factor at the meetings; this being accomplished by their attendance at meetings either physically or representatively (i.e., providing their goals to the community professional to present at the meeting on their behalf). This level of youth participation relates to the study's engagement model of the youth's degree (i.e., *presence*) and type of engagement (i.e., emotional involvement with the Plan). For these professionals, getting "everyone on the same page" meant promoting TAY Plan meetings that are holistically youth-focused. At TAY Plan meetings, professional competencies were related to TAY Planning skills and Lead facilitator skills.

Collaboration between and among the sectors (the different micro-levels of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process) was described as being in place to facilitate sharing information (i.e., the DSO website to a teacher), aligning academic goals with community goals where possible, and having the adult community professional attend the last TAY Plan meeting before the youth turns the age of 18 years. Overall, effective collaboration has contributed to building positive rapport (i.e., usually taking the role as Lead) and working relationships (e.g., sharing knowledge about the youth), all aspects that would rely on *communication* (i.e., asking the teacher to bring the youth into the TAY Plan meeting), *cooperation* (i.e., educational professionals become more aware of youth's competencies) and *coordination* (i.e., TAY Plan is completed with goals and supports in place) between education and community professionals.

Summary of Family Members Within-Group Findings

Regardless of context, parents planned for their young family members' future after high school. Each parent's planning process was consistent with the other by having an educational plan for academic objectives and a community plan for comprehensive areas of life development. The difference with parents who had a young family member transition prior to the existence of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was that they had two plans that were created and reviewed separately: one at school with education professionals and the other at the developmental service agency with community professionals. This meant two planning meetings attended on an annual basis. Both planning meetings addressed the young family member's life after high school. For example: Will the young person be working or will they be continuing with further education? What skills and knowledge did the young family member need to obtain in

preparation for this stage in life? What actions and supports did the young person require to accomplish some form of employment or higher education opportunity? These questions did not change for parents in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. However, with the amalgamation of a single TAY Plan with one annual meeting (instead of two independent Plans – an education TAY Plan and a community service TAY Plan), more areas of the youth’s life were open for discussion to complete the TAY Plan and the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process itself was more complex.

The complexity of TAY jargon (terminology) was confusing and frustrating for a new parent trying to learn the planning system. Constructing accessible references to explain abbreviations and idiosyncratic TAY language was one area of needed improvement identified in the results. This could alleviate one source of stress for new parents until terminology becomes customary as it did for the seasoned parent who had just completed their journey through the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. The complexity of terminology used in TAY Planning did not exist for the older group of parents (with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan); neither did the intricacy of developmental service attainment because they had fewer post-secondary choices available (i.e., no supports for inclusive PSE or employment).

Prior to the Tri- Sector TAY Planning process, for parents with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan, establishing adult developmental services was either done “automatically” by the community professional or independently by the parent who worried about completing the application form accurately. The simplicity of the No TAY Planning process was the parent’s direct access to potential agencies when they wanted to acquire services. This direct contact generated a more personal experience but allowed for

inequitable access. In contrast, equitable access was ensured for parents in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process but with the repercussion of it now feeling like “everything is a waiting game” (F-02). On the upside, parents with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan were guided through the more complex application process in time for the youth to be eligible for adult services when their young family member reached the age of 18 years, which meant a smoother transition to receiving adult income supports and services.

Tri-Sector TAY Planning for a smooth transition at the age of 18 years hinged on the effectiveness of the TAY Plan, its established goals and the necessary supports being in place. Long range academic goals were a critical foundation to future PSE, such as ensuring that the required high school courses were completed as prerequisites to the youth receiving a diploma as opposed to only a high school certificate. Scaffolding of immediate skill building, such as reading and writing, was part of the academic short-term goals. The goals of employment, housing, and community involvement accompanied the academic goals in the TAY Plan. Collaboration between professionals was an asset to goal planning, even prior to the existence of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process when an example of school support and community worksite collaboration generated a successful transition outcome (i.e., employment at a sheltered workshop). Tri-Sector collaboration in the TAY Planning process was recognized as a bi-sector reality because the education and children’s community professionals sat at the same planning table but without the adult community service professional. However, the need for this third collaborator (i.e., the adult community professional) was never expressed at the high school level but was identified as a needed support for PSE application and admission planning. As such, the recommendation for increased professional

collaboration (i.e., between education and children's services) beyond the annual TAY Plan meeting was made. It was added that as many people as possible should be at the planning table in order to design a stronger support system to carry on after the youth's transition to employment or continued higher education.

Support systems in school and community were lacking resources from the perspective of all the parents. This position could be feasibly interpreted as a logical conclusion for parents who were overloaded with extra parental responsibilities and tasks due to their young family member's needs. Every parent felt that they were carrying most of the load in regard to supporting the young person with skill building for work, community involvement and/or PSE. The need for increased support transitioning into as well as out of high school was clearly identified. This need was accompanied with the recommendation for increased training opportunities for educational professionals and support groups for parents.

Parental aspirations and decision-making were solid contributors to the young family member's TAY goals, at times through determined effects of advocacy with professionals and other times by an act of countermanding an unrealistic youth expectation. Taking on the roles of advocate or manager of youth goals and their required supports was arduous for parents. These were imperative tasks with the residual impacts of successful outcomes accompanied with regret for too much over-ruling in decision-making for the reflective parents. Each parent's dream of inclusive life for their family member was apparent and, at times, left unfulfilled. Yet, parents' goals and visions for their young family member's future seemed to have a strong influence on both the No TAY Planning and the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in many ways. Thus, parental

engagement in the planning process was powerful. Contrasting the strength in parental advocacy, results of only moderate youth engagement were found.

Minimal youth engagement was evident in these findings. Youth capacity, their level of ability to articulate their preferences, their motivation to plan out their future, the opportunity to make decisions on their own terms, and their willingness to comply with the decisions of the professionals and parents may all or partially have been contributors to the youths' reportedly only moderate engagement in this planning process. Whether prior to the TAY Planning process or with the current Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in place, neither the simplicity of the No TAY Plan nor the complexity of the Tri-Sector *TAY Plan* promoted youth engagement. Having said this, it must be noted that each parent expressed dedication to their young family member's best interests and viewed transition planning as beneficial.

The overall benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning, both before and/or during the current Tri-Sector process, included the assurance that adult service and funding eligibility were established before the transition period, the sharing of information regarding education and developmental services, the collaborative approach of more people working on the same transition Plan, the reality check of what resources were not available as an emotional preparation for parental expectations regarding supports and services, the accomplishment of a young family member's employment or PSE admission, and, ultimately, the achievement of a planned out life for their young family member.

The perfect planning process was described as a system that gives rise to a TAY Plan that, when implemented, ensures that effective supports are in place so the young

family member transitions into a life after high school that is robust and promotes independence, positive self-esteem and social inclusion.

Applied to Theoretical Orientation and Constructs.

From a social ecological perspective, the family played a significant role as advocate for the youth (i.e., the individual) in terms of negotiating with the other micro-levels (i.e., education and community professionals). The importance of learning the TAY terminology was a possible factor to this advocacy role and effective negotiating action (i.e., communication with education and community professionals). Collaboration among the professionals in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was a benefit to establishing a youth's eligibility (i.e., a key factor to a smoother financial transition); however, expanding this collaborative circle (i.e., micro-levels) to include more support from the adult developmental service sector was identified as a need (i.e., a key factor for a smoother academic transition). Youth engagement was not highly recognized, with limited youth decision-making being feasibly interpreted as a significant contributor. This was evident in regard to the engagement model where a youth was described as being present and involved with their TAY Plan meeting (i.e., cognitively able to answer questions) but behaviourally and emotionally unengaged at other times (i.e, feeling overwhelmed or fearful of future and decision-making).

Summary for Youth Within-Group Findings

The interviews with two young people, one who transitioned with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan in place and the second who transitioned years earlier with no Tri-Sector Plan in place, revealed similar experiences such as graduating with a high school diploma and applying to college. They had shared experiences with some of their goals being set by

parents who wanted the best for their futures and both youths expressed a moderate rate of engagement in their planning meetings due to lack of agency in decision-making. Both young people experienced planning meetings, one in the form of a Tri-Sector TAY Plan and the other an IEP. The difference in these types of meetings was evident in the frequency of meetings that were held each year (i.e., annually versus 2-3 per year) and who attended (i.e., community agency professionals or not). The concept of collaboration among family and professionals was solely described in the attendance list in which community professionals were included in the Tri-Sector TAY Plans but not in the earlier years of IEPs.

The Tri-Sector Planning process encompassed the discussed themes (e.g., goals, supports and decision-making) but youth engagement entailed references to youth capacity where the young person's perceived limitations (i.e., either not capable enough or over capable) also were contributing factors in decision-making and goal setting. With the premise that any process or system can have room for improvement, the young people who participated in this study made credible suggestions. These recommendations, if acted on, could promote increased youth engagement in transition planning (i.e., promoting planning meetings facilitated by the youth themselves) and the provision of more effective supports to enhance goal attainment during high school (e.g., providing Co-op opportunities to match the experience preferences of the individual youth). These valuable suggestions complimented the helpful advice advocated by these two young people who had both graduated from high school. These participants provided clear advice for youth who are currently in the Tri-Sector Planning process by encouraging them to learn about information regarding services and to insist that supports they need to

reach their goals are made available. They also advised transitioning aged youth to build the skills necessary to promote opportunities to be more independent and, most importantly, to be strong self-advocates in terms of steering planning towards their preferred future.

Applied to Theoretical Orientation and Constructs.

In terms of the social ecological perspective, the youth (the individual-level) in this study generally was a passive recipient of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. With the recommendation for youth to become stronger self-advocates, it was evident that youth should have more agency and self-determination in the decision-making about their transition goals. Notably, when the young person who had a Tri-Sector TAY Plan was asked what their life would have been like if this process had not been in place, the young person envisioned not getting into college and not working with their specific job of preference, equating to unsuccessful outcomes. In alignment with this comment, the young person with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan actually did experience such unsuccessful outcomes (i.e., not experiencing a job preference or successful completion of PSE). Thus, the question could be asked: Would the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process have made a significant difference in this young person's transitional outcomes, if it had been in place?

The concept of collaboration was a key component to this study; however, it was not a significant factor for these two participants. Yet, the question could be asked: If the young person with no Tri-Sector TAY Plan had had a Tri-Sector TAY Plan (i.e., with the collaboration of services), would they have received an earlier diagnosis of I/DD and, in

turn, a more effective support system to accomplish their goals with a multi-sector collaborative approach in place?

From a social ecological perspective, the youth (the individual-level) identified the most significant micro-level of the system model as being their parents. The combination of tension and appreciation in the youth during their planning process was possibly a typical youth-parent relationship and decision-making was a dominant marker reflected in wanting more independence by the youth yet also wanting the safety net of parental guidance.

Summary of the Overall Cross-Group Findings (5 Stakeholder Groups)

Looking at Bronfenbrenner's social ecological model (1979), results for the cross-group analysis identified the three levels of the ecological system with the meso-system level generating the Local Community Agreement (2017) protocol that guided community practice through the fostering of collaborative relationships among the micro-levels of family members, education and community professionals. Collaboration at the micro-system level among the sectors contributed to building a better future for youth because the TAY Plan goal of a smooth post high school service transition was achieved due to sufficient systemic capacity to ensure the youth's eligibility for adult services was established by age 18. Parents were strong advocates for PSE in youth goal setting and the scaffolding required to achieve their goals. Youth desired increased agency within the planning process in terms of decision-making which could improve their level of engagement in the planning process in a valuable manner. It was important for parents to see their family member transitioning into an inclusive lifestyle after high school and striving for independence.

Applied to Theoretical Orientation and Constructs.

Would acknowledging and honouring youth decision-making in the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings be the starting point to build youth independence? This notion of increasing youth agency could provide some interesting discussion among the sectors and families at the meso-level (i.e., at NRTAYC meetings) with the kind of collaborative approach that was accomplished with the Local Community Agreement (2017). The NRTAYC was described as an effective agent in promoting collaboration between and among the different sectors through facilitation of ongoing communication that travelled down to the micro-levels (i.e., developmental service agencies and schools) as well as the communication travelling back up to the meso-level (i.e., NRTAYC members reporting back regarding best practices in their services). The establishment of the protocol at the meso-level was able to initiate the community practice at the micro-level with the sectors using cooperation and coordination between and among themselves.

The community practice of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process has created a collaborative planning process that now captures the importance for establishing government funding eligibility by the age of 18 years in preparation for a financially smoother transition to adult funding and services. This in itself was a tremendous benefit of the Tri-Sector TAY Plan.

Summary of SROI Findings

The results of the SROI were calculated on the assumption that the valuation pertained to the estimation of outcomes and impacts for a single youth and, as such, the valuation regarding the outcomes and impacts of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process were not calculated to be generalized or to represent the overall process. With youth at

the center of the SROI analysis, youth inputs, outcomes and impacts were the spotlight of the analysis. The family, education professionals, community professionals and the NRTAYC provided supporting information and a broader perspective of the SROI results in terms of their experience with the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process for youth during and after high school. The SROI results amplified the acknowledgment that, even though no new formal provincial cash flow was invested in the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, a remarkable number of outcomes and impacts were described by the participants in the case study on which this SROI analysis is based.

Employment opportunities were provided and career preferences were explored through collaborative planning of Co-op placements. The impact of personal growth in self-esteem and independence was evident. As the youth had the experience of a multidisciplinary interaction at planning meetings, high school goals were accomplished with the tangible outcomes of being an ODSP recipient at the age of 18 years, employed at minimum wage, entering PSE with a high school diploma and starting a chosen career with an apprenticeship program to ignite the way. For this successful outcome, numerous inputs were identified as contributors to the planning process. The youth's loss of class time, the professionals' wages and travel costs and the parents' dedication to providing additional time and required supports to ensure the TAY Plan follow-up were identified as some of these inputs.

With the collaborative approach of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, the outcomes of shared knowledge about the different sectors' operations and about youth themselves created described impacts of less stress for the family and more options for youth to consider when setting goals. The sectors were able to consider the administrative

responsibilities of being Lead and to develop an improved practice of Lead designation over time to reflect working together for a more efficient process. This replaced the earlier practice where the professional who made the referral submission to CN would automatically be designated as Lead yet not always the best person to take this role. The community professionals were significant contributors to the inputs of administration duties, time, travel costs, taking the Lead responsibilities, and providing required supports for the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. In the same way, the NRTAYC took the forefront in initiating the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region with multi-sector collaborative designing of regional documents (i.e., protocol and TAY Plan template) to provide the foundation and promote accountability of the process.

The SROI results illustrate a planning process that has grown from protocol to community practice with the dedication and hard work of the NRTAYC, the education professionals and the community professionals striving to get “everyone on the same page” and to aspire to lay out a planning process that serves the needs of transitional aged youth well. When comparing the outcomes and impacts of a youth who did not have a TAY Plan to navigate their high school years and transition from high school to a youth who did experience a Tri-Sector TAY Plan, the relative lack of outcomes for the first youth contrast with the substantial outcomes and impacts of the latter. Qualitatively, the one youth’s outcomes of PSE and employment speak to the change potentially created by the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. In addition, the financial outcome of ensuring a youth does not have any delay in receiving ODSP and Passport funding at the age of 18 years describes how coordinated TAY Planning through the high school years ensures

that the DSO assessment and application requirements are met in a way that prevents missed income as the youth enters adulthood.

Applied to Theoretical Orientation and Constructs.

The SROI results provided a comprehensive overview of all the contributions (i.e., inputs) made by family and multi-sector professionals to collaboratively plan a youth's transition. The SROI findings emphasize the benefits (i.e., outcomes and impacts) the youth was able to experience. As such, the SROI findings provided a quantitative conclusion that clearly illustrated the positive social value potentially created by the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process.

Discussion of the Study's Findings

This section of the chapter will return to the study's primary research question and cover what components or aspects of the Niagara Region Tri-Sector TAY Planning process were identified as beneficial or advantageous for the transitioning youth, their family and the different service providers; proposed areas of improvement will be addressed in turn.

Benefits

Three key dimensions were identified in the findings: access to information, better planning for the youth and better future for the youth (see Figure 6.10). Access to information involved parents learning about DSO regulations and the importance of a timely application submission. Established eligibility for the youth prior to turning the age of 18 years was identified as a critical component to a smoother transition.

Access to Information.

For the professionals, both education and community sectors identified the benefit of access to information in terms of learning from each other and sharing knowledge. Shared knowledge entailed learning about what services the other sector provides for a youth but also shared knowledge about the individual youth with the potential to create a more holistic plan with them. Access was promoted by the collaborative planning approach. This access to information was a benefit to better planning for the youth.

Better Planning for Youth.

Better planning for the youth entailed the starting point of actually meeting together, working through the formal documentation and completing the Tri-Sector TAY Plan, and developing goals with the youth. Better planning involved a collaborative approach where parents did not feel alone in the planning process. With family feeling support, guidance and shared oversight of their child's planning, their stress levels may be lessened and leave more energy to drive their family member's planning process forward.

The collaborative approach extended to include the children's and adult developmental services connecting and building a bridge for the youth and their family to experience less of a gap when the youth turns the age of 18 years. With the Tri-Sector TAY Plan, consistency in procedures and expectations was a benefit by providing some sense of stability and predictability. The last benefit identified in this dimension of better planning for the youth was the fact that the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings provided the platform for youth engagement to transpire. This noted benefit will be discussed later in this chapter in regard to moderate youth engagement, some reasons to explain this level

of participation and some future considerations. All the benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process were associated with creating a better future for youth.

Better Future for Youth.

The benefit of better planning for youth was the foundation of a better future for the youth. That better future was identified when a youth experienced Co-op choices that potentially lead to paid employment, was accepted to PSE and established eligibility for adult funding and services at the age of 18 years. Acknowledging the valuable benefits of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was also highlighted with all the outcomes and impacts identified in the SROI analysis discussed earlier in this chapter. This recognition of the many advantageous components of the planning process was accompanied by areas of improvement and considerations for the ideal planning process.

Areas of Improvement and the Ideal Planning Process

Four key dimensions were identified in the findings: youth engagement, training opportunities, expansion of the collaboration approach and a better future for the youth (see Figure 6.11). The following sections will provide discussion in terms of these four dimensions.

Youth Engagement.

Youth engagement was identified as a significant area for improvement as one young person requested the opportunity for their voice to be expressed more often and heard with understanding and acceptance. One youth stated that they desired to facilitate their own TAY Plan meetings, creating the condition where the youth has more control over the meeting and with more of the decisions made. This situation leads to the second dimension because for youth-facilitated TAY Plan meetings to be a feasible process, the

youth may require some training for the development of self-advocacy and leadership skills.

Training.

The second dimension regarding areas for improvement involved opportunities for suggested training which would involve sharing and learning information. Training was identified as suggestions for, as well as by, youth, family, education professionals and community professionals. As mentioned previously, youth may benefit from instruction and guidance regarding the operational aspects of a TAY Plan meeting and specific skills that can be used for effective facilitation if they choose to lead their own TAY Plan meeting.

Training proposals were not just related to youth. Areas of suggested training for parents included the foundational knowledge of how to plan for a youth. With their awareness of the need for learning planning strategies, parents also realized their need for instructions that could help them to understand the DSO procedures and requirements. The suggestion was made to develop support/focus groups with guest speakers to share general TAY Planning information, and service providers' contact information. This was identified as a forum that could assist families with acquisition of knowledge in the field of I/DD and the TAY Planning process. Another suggested training resource for parents was the development of a resource book that could guide a new parent in the planning process with effective questions to ask the various service providers and explanations of TAY and developmental service terminology.

As parents identified their need to learn more about the operations of services, it was suggested that education professionals have the opportunity to learn more about

disabilities. As educators with a broad range of student needs, it was suggested that the opportunity to learn more specifically about I/DD from other education professionals as well as from community sources may benefit their TAY Planning strategies.

For community professionals, it was suggested that the opportunity be provided for collegial mentorship among themselves to expand their planning strategies and their understanding of issues in the educational system such as the fact that school board psychoeducational assessment can be requested only for academic purposes and not for the sole purpose of directly aiding with DSO application requirements. All these areas of improvement have the potential to lead to service recommendations at the education and community service level as well as to prompt consideration for future research. These suggestions and proposals for learning encompassed the collaboration of shared knowledge to enhance stakeholder proficiency during the planning process.

Collaboration.

The third area of improvement discussed by participants was collaboration. One consideration was to expand the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process to invite the Ministry of Health to join the multi-sector planning process. This additional sector may provide the opportunity for this multi-sector collaboration (i.e., education and community sectors working together) to build a future that encompasses a potentially trans-disciplinary approach to TAY Planning. In addition, it was noted that parents and youth desire more support from community professionals to attend college registration meetings in preparation for PSE entry. With this notion, it was suggested that when all sectors are working together it also should include high school and college professionals working together. Ideally, another stakeholder to invite to TAY Plan meetings could be a

representative from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to assist with PSE planning. The intention with this area of improvement is to have high school and college professionals work together for a smoother transition into PSE for youth heading in that direction.

In accordance with TAY Plan meetings and who attends, when a youth is not receiving services from a community developmental service, a participant from the education sector advised that CN have a community professional representative sit at the planning table as a substitute in place of the missing community professional. It was felt this could ensure a collaborative multi-sector approach is still in place. This recommendation illustrated the value of multi-sector collaborative planning. A missing stakeholder such as the community professional at the TAY Plan meeting was recognized as an absence that impacts the youth's planning process.

Ultimately, it was recognized that with the complexity of TAY Planning, more time allotted for professionals for the planning process may contribute to effective planning at meetings and their follow up tasks until the next meeting. It also was recognized that the TAY Plan meeting may be enhanced by the invitation of some additional important people in the youth's life, such as a sibling or their church pastor, to build broader community networking and natural supports. This may begin to pave the way for the youth's construction of their individual sense of community and independence; to potentially build a better future for the youth. As such, the three dimensions discussed thus far (youth engagement, training and collaboration) are the foundation of the fourth dimension of a better future for youth.

Better Future for Youth.

The ideal planning process scaffolds youth development and with the learning of various skills to build independence, such as learning to read and write in order to get their driver's licence. It was suggested that the TAY Plan should continue to be in place until the age of 21 years for young people who decide to remain in high school until that time period. In addition, part of this long-term visionary TAY Plan would entail a significant systemic change that would involve how students' competencies are viewed by focusing on their abilities not their deficiencies; by using a strength-focused planning approach.

Along the same line of thinking, the suggestion was brought forward to consider restructuring the school support system to include an inclusive approach to the academic services provided to students with I/DD. The suggestion followed the idea of opening up the student service resources that a typical student may access, such as the services of a guidance counsellor to include servicing students with I/DD. This suggestion brings forth the concept of moving away from segregated treatment to deal with student diversity and moving towards the promotion of inclusion in high school experiences for all students.

Accordingly, during the time of this study, the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was envisioned as being the perfect process if there were no wait list for psychological assessments and for DSO application acceptance. At the ideal TAY Plan meeting, community professionals always would be in attendance and highly involved in the Plan with positive relationships established among education and community professionals; all for the purpose of promoting a better future for the youth.

Building a better future included the proposal of extending the planning process to a weekly, monthly or at least semi-annual check-in with the youth and their supporters of the TAY Plan. This vision included the allotment of more time for everyone to sit at the planning table, to not be rushed. With this in mind, ideally, goals would be met and celebrated. For example one community participant smiled as they spoke about their favourite TAY Plan meeting for a youth where, through specific steps taken, a new friend was made. In the perfect planning process, the youth realizes their successes, parents can see the progression to success, and supports are in place and stay in place to generate the goal setting and to promote goal attainment.

All the suggestions discussed above show the passion that the youth, family, education and community professionals who participated in this study had for all the benefits that have come from the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and their drive for it to be even better in the future. One of the ways this dissertation attempted to highlight the valuable outcomes and impacts currently generated from the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was the use of SROI model to identify these advantageous components and translate their social value into quantitative terms. The quantitative statement was calculated to convey the gained social value with the purpose of knowledge translation to policy makers and even the promotion of potential future investment.

SROI: Knowledge Translation of Social Gains

As explained previously, the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process had no targeted provincial or regional funding. The development and implementation of the Local Community Agreement (Niagara Region, 2017) was accomplished by already under-resourced organizations contributing their staff time without any additional resources.

The point of discussion in regard to the SROI analysis and its results is to highlight the outcomes and impacts of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning regarding how collaboration of diverse stakeholders created social change. The purpose of including the SROI model in this study was not to establish an argument of causal effect, such as claiming proof that the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process is the ‘cause’ of smoother transitions for youth with I/DD. Rather, the point of discussion regarding the SROI outcome is to acknowledge that the Tri-Sector planning process built on existing infrastructure to ‘help’ to create a smoother transition for youth with I/DD. The planning process was analysed through the perspective of the five stakeholder groups within the social ecological framework. The ratio (\$1.00:\$4.92) that the SROI analysis concluded with provides potential incentive to provincial funders to invest in this worthwhile and beneficial program that has room for even further social developments.

Ecological Systems and the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Process

This study used the Bronfenbrenner model (1979) because the Local Community Agreement (Niagara Region, 2017) came from the meso-level of the ecological system and the focus was to explore its enactment by looking at the micro-levels in comparison to the outcomes and social impacts of the youth. The meso-level involving the NRTAYC was a unit of professionals from numerous sectors (i.e., education, children’s and adult community service) who worked together with a collaborative relationship among each other. They laid out the foundation for a local community protocol to be used by the three sectors and their commitment to leadership of this protocol’s implementation created the growth of a local protocol into the beginnings of an important community practice. At the meso-level, the development of the Local Community Agreement (Niagara Region,

2017) document was collaboratively put into action. This involved representatives from agencies sitting at the committee table with the bi-directional communication of bringing agency knowledge to the committee as well as bringing communication of knowledge back to the agency; a potentially valuable feedback loop (Carter, 2011) to guide the development of the protocol and its implementation into community practice. The NRTAYC's regularly scheduled meetings created a platform for each sector's representatives to discuss, debate, negotiate and begin to resolve issues and nuances within the Tri-Sector TAY Planning processes in terms of the micro-levels. For example, the design of the TAY Plan template now ensures that the need for eligibility begins to be addressed for a youth at the age of 16 years to avoid delays in adult services at the age of 18 years.

Another micro-level was the family of the youth transitioning from high school. Parents in this study described themselves as strong advocates for the youth in their family. They took on the voice of the youth and pushed hard for the youth's independence and social inclusion even at times when other professionals may not have seen the youth's full potential. Some parents pushed hard for higher education for the youth, starting with the youth's high school goals to achieve a diploma and applying to PSE. In one sense, this commitment from a parent to push their child to succeed to the highest levels possible (even when the child had other intentions and goals in mind) could be attributed to a normative parent/child relationship. However, the extent to which some parents felt they had to take and the excessive amount of time invested in these aspirations may be viewed as more involved than a typical parent/child relationship may entail. Regardless of this viewpoint, parents expressed playing a strong role as an

advocate in the child's TAY Planning process. There are two points of discussion regarding parental advocacy.

First, parents have opportunity for connection with the direct service providers with each of the sectors (education and community) at the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings once a year, and most likely separate meetings with of the sectors on an individual basis (i.e, at an IEP meeting and at a community plan meeting). Their voice and input to the meso-level regarding the needs of the TAY Planning process would depend upon the professionals' experiences with them and conveying these experiences at the NRTAYC meetings. This lends the potential opportunity for family input to indirectly reach the meso-level of implementing effective community practices. The second point of discussion is the description of parental advocacy and its impact on youths. Family participants described overruling youth decisions at times on the basis of advocating for their best interests. As mentioned in the results section, youth described wanting parental guidance and relying on their creditable judgement, yet also wanting more agency in the decisions made i.e., their choice of career path. This opens the discussion of balance and who should decide what and when.

With all this information in mind, the Bronfenbrenner model (1979) helped to frame the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in terms of its flow of information, its areas of development and its areas of growth at all three levels of the ecological system. This framework applied to many aspects of the process including collaboration and youth engagement.

Collaboration

As already highlighted in the sections above, collaboration was a key component to the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. In this section collaboration will be re-explored in terms of inter-disciplinary and multi-sector co-action. As a reminder from chapter 3, collaboration refers to two or more stakeholders interacting with each other as they work in the direction of a common goal (Dailey & Hauschild-Mork, 2017). Each stakeholder in a particular group may have a certain level of authority over their particular contribution to the whole group, yet this individual autonomy does not interfere with the contribution to the group as a greater whole (Dailey & Hauschild-Mork, 2017). As discussed in Chapter 3, authentic collaboration develops through group *cooperation*. Cooperation does not exist if one or two people dominate the group or if some voices are not included (Claiborne & Lawson, 2005; Heron, 1996).

In the results of this study, the identified missing voice in collaboration was that of the youth (Y-01). However, from a Bronfenbrenner perspective of collaboration, the key stakeholders in the meso-level of the NRTAYC and the micro-level of the education and community professionals are the cooperative parties at play in the implementation of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. The development of cooperative relationships among family and professionals was evident at the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings. The findings in this study suggested that cooperation is at the developing stage because the education and community professionals have been organizing an improved process for Lead designation at TAY Plan meetings. *Communication* between the community and education professionals has aided in this matter and a more proficient procedure for designation of the Lead is in place.

Communication is a stakeholder's form of expression to convey ideas and aid with decision-making. It can lead to various degrees of *coordination* (Claiborne & Lawson, 2005). Effective communication can assist with getting the right people involved with the group – in this case getting the right people at the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings and at the NRTAYC meetings. This form of coordination was evident in the evolution of the NRTAYC membership that began with upper-level management personnel when the protocol development was occurring and then switched to include more lower-level management and frontline personnel to address the protocol's implementation towards community practice. One of the goals of this study was to potentially add to this action of communication and provide anonymously gathered information to enhance the overall NRTAYC agenda and the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. Communication, coordination and cooperation were the three key components to the 3C collaboration model (Dailey & Hauschild-Mork, 2017) and were evident in this study's findings.

The model of collaboration also includes different types of collaboration (Claiborne & Lawson, 2005). One of these types was professional and inter-organizational collaboration (e.g., two professionals from different professions coming together). Another type of collaboration was the nonprofessional (e.g., youth and family). The point of discussion in regard to these types of collaboration in terms of the Bronfenbrenner model would be that the professional or inter-organizational collaboration is being established at the NRTAYC meso-level. The inter-organizational collaboration is also being established at the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meeting (i.e., the micro-level) with the education and the children's developmental service professionals

sitting at the same planning table along with the non-professional collaboration of the family and in some cases the youth. The collective action of this practice results in a Tri-Sector TAY Plan that fosters a smoother transition for the youth and hopefully a better future.

Through the findings of this study, it was evident that the collaboration of the NRTAYC has shifted the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process from provincial memorandum to regional protocol in order to launch into action with guided community practice. The professional collaboration has bi-directionally *communicated* by providing input and a feedback loop to the NRTAYC operations and to the TAY Plan meetings by *coordination* of shared knowledge among the professionals and their *cooperation* of Lead designation. The development of this collaborative approach has reflected the potential to create interpersonal connections, synergy and social networks that build community (Dailey & Hauschild-Mork, 2017).

Community Building

Community building stems from a sense of cooperation and collaborative action towards common objectives and activities (Carey, 2011; Carter, 2011). There is a “sense of we-ness” (Carter, 2011, p. 93). The findings in this study did not support a strong sense of building community for the youth in terms of their transition planning. Yet, there were nuances that definitely steered the planning process in that direction. Carter (2011) explains synergy in terms of “increasingly available energy that results from heightened [social] interaction among system’s components” (p.10). Synergy in simple terms is people working together and “getting everyone on the same page” within a goal-directed activity. Synergy at the committee level may be enhanced with the inclusion of family

and youth membership. Unity of more players at the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meeting may increase effectiveness of youth goal setting and potential attainment (i.e., including representatives from other sectors such as Ministry of Health or Ministry of Colleges and Universities). Exchange of shared information promotes unity at the committee (meso) level and at the TAY plan meeting (micro) level. The area of discussion at this point is: where does the individual, the youth, fit into this collaborative process and more specifically how can the youth be brought into the cycle of the 3C modal? Can the youth bring added co-action to the NRTAYC and the overall Tri-Sector TAY Planning process? Could this additional membership to the NRTAYC (the meso-level) bring the social ecological model full circle; a social ecological system where the individual-level communicates, coordinates and cooperates with the meso-level (i.e., the NRTAYC) of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process development? The answers to these questions within the context of this specific study are merely speculative and theoretical. However, in terms of considering the concept of synergy and collaboration, it has been well articulated: “The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Better together than alone” (Coombe et al., 2020, p. 432). In the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, one of those parts is youth engagement.

Youth Engagement

The construct of youth engagement was defined in this study with the three categories of behavioural, emotional and cognitive (Lester, 2013; Ng et al., 2018) and the three degrees of engagement (i.e., presence, encounter and participation) were added to this model (Simplican et al., 2015). One of the objectives of this study was to explore the level of youth engagement within the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process primarily through

the voice of the youth currently involved in the planning process or recently experienced the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process. The latter was accomplished with a single youth who had just completed high school with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan. The youth described only a moderate level of engagement in their planning process and this lower rate of engagement was associated with their lack of agency during their TAY Plan meetings in terms of decision-making and nonprofessional collaboration (i.e., the youth collaborating with the rest of the TAY Plan meeting attendees). A definite recommendation for future research could be to specifically conduct research through the voice of youth with I/DD in terms of what they would define as authentic youth engagement and what components need to be in place to support their engagement in such situations as transitional aged youth planning processes. In context to this study, decision-making and capacity of the youth were important aspects.

Capacity of the Youth

The findings of this study clearly associated lack of youth engagement during the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings with adult perspectives that questioned the youth's competency to make certain decisions. In comparison, there were community professionals who reported diverse experiences with youth engagement at the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings. To recall, the range in level of youth engagement varied from a youth who had not been invited to attend the meeting (C-03) to a youth who directed the community professional prior to the meeting by way of its agenda and the goals that would be set (C-02).

Youth engagement in these descriptions can be referred to Ng et al.'s (2018) types of engagement in terms of a youth that cognitively, behaviourally and emotionally

engaged with their TAY Plan meeting; however, the parent's opinion impacted the youth's motivation to continue with their participation, reducing their level of engagement to simply being present. In other cases, for a youth that was initially not included at the TAY Plan meeting until prompted to be brought in from class (i.e., by the request of the community professional or the family), the first level of engagement – presence – was not initiated to provide the first step to engagement without request. However, it must be noted that lack of presence does not always equate lack of youth engagement and agency with decision-making. This was evident in the description of a youth who completely informed their community professional through emails/lists and direct conversations as to the TAY Plan meeting agenda regarding goal setting. This youth chose not to attend the meeting but ensured their authentic participation was established – without physical presence. The point of discussion here involves the clarification that physical presence does not solely define engagement because presence at a meeting can be established in alternate form with the youth who exerted selected representation.

This authentic form of youth engagement, where the community professional followed the direction of the youth and represented the youth's pre-determined decision-making, was an example of a professional with proficiency in TAY Planning strategies with the intention of ensuring youth engagement. This was a professional who saw the Tri-Sector TAY Plan as much more than just a check list to be completed. The Tri-Sector TAY Plan meeting was a platform for the youth to have the opportunity to “speak first” (C-02). This was a professional who may be described as exhibiting phronesis.

A Reflection on Phronesis

This chapter will end with a brief discussion regarding the concept of phronesis (Ord, 2014). This is not a concept that was purposefully explored in this study, nor was it a concept directly covered in the findings of this study. However, as this study and its findings illustrate, the work of the NRTAYC has accomplished the implementation of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region and activated the Local Community Agreement (2017) into community practice. Additionally, the families, education and community professionals must have worked to coordinate of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process with regards to their cooperative work to support individual youth with I/DD with a smoother transition to adult services and a better future. The emergence of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region has been accomplished with high levels of knowledge applied to community practice by incorporating a collaborative approach as it's key pillar to "getting everyone on the same page." How does this relate to phronesis? The first step in this discussion relies upon a brief overview of Ord's (2014) account of phronesis; a complex concept that is only touched upon in this discussion with the intent to tempt professional reflection.

Phronesis is Aristotle's third level of knowledge that Ord (2014) suggests a professional could aspire to hold. This higher level of knowledge develops through the professional's experiences, training, reflecting, and critical thinking. Virtuous decision-making comes from this level of knowledge; knowledge that is applied to professional actions based on ethical values. "These actions are guided by values associated with a sense of what is the right thing to do for humanity, being a good person, and living a good life" (Massingham, 2019, p.3). Phronesis is a virtue of one's character, and applied

to this study, speaks to the actions a professional displays in going beyond basic content knowledge of the Local Community Agreement (2017) that a youth needs to plan for their transition into adult services. It goes beyond the technical knowledge of completing a TAY Plan. Phronesis in a professional rises to the level of knowledge where “practice” becomes “praxis” and, ethically, the professional’s actions move beyond simply completing TAY Plans *for* youth to planning *with* youth based on decisions that are informed by what best serves the youth and their future. Ord (2014) describes phronesis as the ability of a professional to move beyond sheer technical skill to develop judgement and insight, gaining the ability to expand one’s perspective. It is a process in itself. Ultimately, phronesis captures the professional’s ability to hold a thought or opinion that includes as many other viewpoints as possible, therefore making their opinion more valid (Ord, 2014).

Phronesis in some professionals was evident in this study as professionals are learning best practices collaboratively. Their practices are being extended beyond simply completing the Tri-Sector TAY Plan check list. Professionals are recognizing there is room for growth and are seeking out further training and mentorship between and among themselves. They identify the complexity of this planning process and embrace its challenges with commitment and passion. The professionals’ actions for transition planning have emerged through positive strategies for youth engagement during the planning process and at the Tri-Sector TAY Plan meetings (i.e., requesting youth in attendance if not invited or preparing the youth’s agenda with the youth prior to the meeting). As Ord (2014) states, “Phronesis implies that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, i.e., a qualitative difference is achieved which is not reducible to a succession

of stages” (p. 67). As discussed, the Niagara Region is beginning to capture this concept of community wisdom in a number of ways. Professionals could aspire to future phronesis development. This dissertation recommends professionals working with youth and the TAY Planning process, review this study’s findings, and consider which areas of improvement seem feasible for themselves and others to move forward with the aspiration to continue their growth in knowledge and praxis.

Recommendations and Future Research

Numerous recommendations have been touched upon in this chapter. The voices represented in this study have put forth valuable suggestions and areas of improvement: more accessible TAY terminology for new parents, a higher level of youth decision-making at the planning table, opportunities for mentorship and training for all five stakeholder groups, expanding the NRTAYC membership to include other stakeholders, and a focus on a strength-based youth planning process with inclusive approaches, supports and outcomes.

Future research should focus on developing specific inquiry to define the key components of engagement for youth with I/DD. This future research could benefit by using a youth-based design and methodology. With youth-based research, their suggestions may include recommended youth development of training and mentorship sessions regarding facilitation, self-advocacy and leadership skills. Youth could be involved in the design and implementation of such training and mentorship projects. For example, research could look at when the youth are given the option to facilitate a TAY Plan meeting and investigate how this may require preparation to arrange the agenda for the meeting and plan some meeting strategies. Overarching topics could look at youth

collaboration at the meso-level of policy development, at youth leadership at the micro-level of policy implementation and at the effects of youth agency within the transition planning activity.

Research on youth engagement specifically for youth with I/DD may be an intriguing prospect. At the time of this study, no research had been located that addresses youth engagement in this specific TAY population of youth with I/DD, while there is an abundance of research on youth engagement in general and with youth with mental health concerns. It cannot be assumed this research can be generalized to engagement for all youth with I/DD. More research is needed in this area. Additionally, if taken to task, this future research may be found to compliment other established researched areas such as social inclusion, self-determination, self-advocacy and quality of life for persons with I/DD. My question to future researchers would be: Is authentic engagement for youth with I/DD the “key” component of these other constructs (i.e., social inclusion, self-determination, self-advocacy and quality of life)? Does youth engagement need further study using specifically the voice of youth with I/DD to provide the answer?

Limitations

No research is conducted without limitations. A number of anticipated limitations were identified in the methods section (see Chapter 5). However, further insight into limitations arose after the study was completed. A prominent limitation in this study was the small sample size with a single youth with a Tri-Sector TAY Plan experience and no representation of youth who had a TAY Plan but not a Tri-Sector version of the Plan. This restricted the ability to compare experiences from the different contexts and expand the findings.

A second limitation was the inclusion criterion for recruitment of only youth who could provide independent consent. This intentional criterion provided the circumstance for the youth voice to not be compromised by someone speaking on their behalf or influencing their responses to interview questions. However, it excluded a broad range of youth, who through augmented means of communication or with the trusted representative to support their voice, from authentically been a part of this study. With this limited participation, future research may consider expanding the inclusion criteria to include the voices of other youth with diverse capacity to explain what is working well and what could improve for them within the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process.

Conclusion

The strength of this study lies in the wide scope of voices that contributed to its findings. Each group of stakeholders had their own foci of what was more important to them in regard to the TAY Planning process, when looking at one group versus another. The NRTAYC's objectives were to progress the committee work to enhance the community practice of the Niagara Region Tri-Sector TAY Planning process by building a stronger knowledge base with information sharing among sectors and establishing a smooth process for Lead designation. Education professionals understand that academia is their wheelhouse and they rely on community professionals to lead the TAY Plan meeting and to navigate the other areas of the TAY Plan (i.e., housing, community participation). They assert that families and community professionals are required to recognize that psychoeducational assessments cannot be requested for the purpose of DSO applications for youth.

For the community professionals, the Tri-Sector TAY Plan requires a youth-strength approach that encompasses inclusive academic student experiences and fosters youth participation and decision-making. The family members also emphasized the desire for an inclusion-focused goal setting process for the TAY Plan that steers the youth towards graduating with a diploma, applying for PSE and /or employment opportunity. In consideration of goal setting, youth acknowledged their reliance on parental guidance but also wanted more jurisdiction around these goals and decision-making.

Having considered these differences between the voices of each stakeholder group, there also was a dominant overall trend that existed across the groups. This common pattern was the strong agreement that it is imperative that the youth effectively plans to apply for financial support (i.e., ODSP and Passport funding) in a timely way that avoids any waiting period to receive this funding once they reach the age of 18 years. This aspect of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process was a key take away to this study and was reinforced with the SROI findings.

In conclusion, has the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process bridged the gap between children's and adult services? Has "the cliff" been lessened to a manageable step for youth to navigate a smoother transition at the age of 18 years? This study provides some positive answers to those questions. It was found that a youth who did not experience the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process did not receive a timely diagnosis of I/DD and lacked a support system in place to accomplish goals during high school and post-secondary, in comparison to a youth experiencing the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process who had more successful outcomes with PSE and employment opportunities.

The most significant outcome for youths experiencing the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, in comparison to youths who did not experience the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process, is that they now transition with their eligibility status in place for receiving adult funding and services after the age of 18 years. Transitioning into a financially established adulthood brings numerous impacts with it. The repercussions of transitioning without established eligibility in place can be devastating. With the collaborative approach of multi-sector planning to create a single TAY Plan, a youth's future can hold prospects of PSE and employment with supports in place to promote their planning goals into action and attainment. The collaborative approach to planning has shown to potentially create social change for transitioning youth in areas of education, work, housing, community building and personal growth.

Ultimately, better planning for youth means “getting everyone on the same page” so the youth has a better future!

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Glossary

Developmental Disabilities (DD) refers to a person who has a mental impairment in cognitive functioning that is a lifetime condition and its onset occurs prior to 18 years of age. A person with DD has limited adaptive behaviour that may compromise their social, life, and intellectual skills.

Developmental Services refers to organizations and agencies that provide services for persons of all ages who are experiencing physical, mental health or intellectual concerns and are seeking assistance from professionals for educational or daily needs.

Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) refers to the single access point for people seeking adult developmental services in Ontario. This service is government funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS). The interested adult must apply for adult developmental services through DSO and obtain eligibility to become a service recipient.

Integrated Transition Plan refers to a written plan that records the information being collected for the purpose of transition planning for a transitional aged youth. The document includes personal identification information, personal strengths and needs, goals for community participation/work/education/housing along with designated responsibility, contact information and timelines. It is commonly referred to as a **Tri-Sector TAY Plan** in this dissertation.

Ministry of Education (EDU) refers to the Ontario ministry that is responsible for early years, child care and publicly funded education from kindergarten to grade 12.

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) refers to the Ontario ministry that is responsible for Social Assistance (Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program) and for Community & Developmental Services.

Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) refers to the ministry (up until 2018) responsible for children's services in the community. These services include behavioural consulting, residential and community resources.

Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) refers to the ministry (up until 2018) responsible for adult services in the community. These services include behavioural consulting, residential and community resources.

Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) refers to a financial support program that is government funded. It is a monthly income provided to qualified recipients, the age of 18 years or older, who reside in Ontario and match the criteria of eligibility with an admissible disability.

Post-Secondary Education (PSE) refers to college or university education that follows high school and secondary education. PSE requires a high school certificate or diploma depending on the program.

Transitional Aged Youth refers to any youth aged 14 to 17 years who, under the eligibility of EDU, MCYS, and MCSS meets the criteria of having a developmental disability.

Tri-Ministry refers to the joint TAY Planning process that includes the MCYS, EDU and MCSS to collaboratively develop and support a TAY through the transition period from children's services (MCYS) to adult services (MCSS). In June 2018, when the MCSS and MCYS were joined to compose the MCCSS, this reference of this term was changed to "**Tri-Sector**" within this dissertation.

Youth refers to an individual young person, under the age of 18 years, with I/DD.

Youths refers to more than one young person, under the age of 18 years, with I/DD.

Appendix A

Letter of Invitation

For Young People with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability

We are asking you to help us with a project titled: **Integrated Transition Planning Process for Youth with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability (a.k.a. TAY Planning process): A Social Return on Investment Perspective.**

WHAT IS THIS?

- This project is looking at young people **14 to 25 years** of age with an intellectual/developmental disability and having them tell us about their plans for what they will do after they turn 18 years old and become an adult.

CAN YOU HELP?

- YES – If you would like to tell us about your plans for turning 18 years old and what may help you.

OR

- YES – If you have already turned the age of 18 years and you would like to tell us what it was like for you as you became 18 years old and an adult.
- YES - If you are able to communicate/express **your own ideas** and do not need someone else to talk for you.
- YES - If you are **14-25 years old** with an intellectual/developmental disability.
- YES - If you live in the **Niagara Region**.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

- If you want to talk with us, you can ask a family member, friend or support person to be with you.
- **When we meet to talk we will ask you questions and listen to your answers. This meeting will be 1 or 1 & ½ hours long.**
- When we meet to talk, we will record you on a voice recorder and write notes so we can later remember what you said. No one who knows you will be able to hear this tape or read the notes. The talk will be kept confidential.

- If you decide to meet and talk but then change your mind you can stop the meeting at any time and this would be okay to do. Nothing negative would happen because you decide to stop.

OR: To follow social distancing regulations due to Covid-19, MSTeams® or Lifesize® platforms will be accessed through Brock University. To maintain the privacy of the participant(s) using either the MSTeams® or Lifesize® platforms, participant(s) will be provided with a unique invitation number for a one-time video meeting (password, conference number, etc). The video will not be recorded on either platform and the audio will be recorded using the pre-approved hand-held digital device that is used in face-to-face or telephone interviews.

During the online interview, the privacy of the participant will be the participant's responsibility as the participant will determine their remote location, access to a network (internet, WiFi, etc), and a person to assist with the technology as needed.

The interviewer will be located in a closed office setting without other people present.

If you are interested in meeting and helping with this project: PLEASE CONTACT Anne Readhead at annereadhead@brocku.ca or call 905-327-1023. Anne is the student from Brock University that will be running the meeting. When you email or call Anne, she will call or email you back to set a time to meet.

What people are working on this project?

- Professor Frances Owen and Anne Readhead from Brock University.
- Professor Donato Tarulli, Professor Maureen Connolly and Professor Jennifer Li from Brock University
- Nadine Wallace and Katie McKay, from Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services, St. Catharines.
- Carla and Barb Nicole, two Family and Community Consultants
- A sponsor of this project is Goodman School of Business IIIA Funding.

This project has been reviewed and granted clearance by the Brock University's Research Ethics Board [File # 18-323]. If you have any questions about your freedom and rights in helping with this project, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905-688-05550 ext. 3035), or at reb@brocku.ca

Appendix B

Letter of Invitation – For Family Member of a Youth

We invite you to help us with a research project titled: **Integrated Transition Planning Process for Youth with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability (a.k.a. TAY Planning process): A Social Return on Investment Perspective.**

What is this?

- This project is focused on learning about young people who are 14 to 25 years of age with an intellectual/developmental disability and their future plans.
- We want to talk about how you as a family member helped with this planning and how you have experienced the TAY Planning process in the youth's life.

Can you help?

- YES – if you are **family** members (parents, siblings, guardians, etc.) and would like to tell us about the process of helping with the development of your family member's plans. For example: *“What is/was it like for you as a family member helping a young person in your family to plan for their adulthood?”*
- YES – if you live in the Niagara Region.

Why help?

- The information you share about your experiences will be used to **help future families and Transitional Aged Youth** with the transition process.

What will happen?

- When we meet, you will be recorded on a voice recorder and notes will be written down so we can remember what you tell us. No one who knows you will be able to hear this tape or read the notes. All your information will be kept confidential.
- When we meet, the interview will take 1 to 1 & ½ hours of your time.
- If you decide to meet but then change your mind, you can stop the meeting at anytime. This would be fine to do and would not pose any problems for you.

OR: To follow social distancing regulations due to Covid-19, MSTeams® or Lifesize® platforms will be accessed through Brock University. To maintain the privacy of the participant(s) using either the MSTeams® or Lifesize® platforms, participant(s) will be provided with a unique invitation number for a one-time video meeting (password, conference number, etc). The video will not

be recorded on either platform and the audio will be recorded using the pre-approved hand-held digital device that is used in face-to-face or telephone interviews.

During the online interview, the privacy of the participant will be the participant's responsibility as the participant will determine their remote location, access to a network (internet, WiFi, etc), and a person to assist with the technology as needed.

The interviewer will be located in a closed office setting without other people present.

TO PARTICIPATE: PLEASE CONTACT Anne Readhead at areadhead@brocku.ca.

Your participation will be kept confidential and you can withdraw from the project at any time.

People working on this project are:

- Professor Frances Owen and Anne Readhead from Brock University.
- Professor Donato Tarulli, Professor Maureen Connolly and Professor Jennifer Li from Brock University
- Nadine Wallace and Katie McKay, from Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services, St. Catharines.
- Carla and Barb Nicole, two Family and Community Consultants

A sponsor of this project is Goodman School of Business IIIA Funding.

This study has been reviewed and granted clearance by Brock University Ethics Board (File #18-323). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905-688-05550 ext. 3035), or at reb@brocku.ca

Appendix C

Letter of Invitation – For Service Professionals

We invite you to participate in a research project entitled **Integrated Transition Planning Process for Youth with an Intellectual /Developmental Disability (a.k.a. TAY Planning process): A Social Return on Investment Perspective.**

What is this?

This project is focused on exploring the (Tri-Sector) integrated transitional aged youth (TAY) planning process that is currently in place for youth with intellectual/developmental disabilities in the Niagara Region.

Can you help?

Possible participants for this project will include:

- **Community professionals** such as residential service providers, behavioural consultants, mental health professionals, leisure and recreational support workers, etc. who are supporting now or have supported a youth during their transition planning phase of moving from children's services to adult services and adult life.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to volunteer your time for a 1 to 1 & 1/2 hour interview.

The questions in the interview will ask about your perspective on and experience with the transitional aged youth planning process.

OR: To follow social distancing regulations due to Covid-19, MSTeams® or Lifesize® platforms will be accessed through Brock University. To maintain the privacy of the participant(s) using either the MSTeams® or Lifesize® platforms, participant(s) will be provided with a unique invitation number for a one-time video meeting (password, conference number, etc). The video will not be recorded on either platform and the audio will be recorded using the pre-approved hand-held digital device that is used in face-to-face or telephone interviews.

During the online interview, the privacy of the participant will be the participant's responsibility as the participant will determine their remote location, access to a network (internet, WiFi, etc), and a person to assist with the technology as needed.

The interviewer will be located in a closed office setting without other people present.

1 interviews will be voice recorded for the project's records only. This tape will not be shared with other people.

Your information will be aggregated with all other participants and provide the service providers' voice for future developments.

****TO PARTICIPATE: PLEASE CONTACT Anne Readhead at areadhead@brocku.ca.** Your participation will be kept confidential and you can withdraw from the project at any time.

Principle Student Investigator: Anne Readhead (PhD Student), Child and Youth Studies, Brock University.

Principle Faculty Investigator: Professor Frances Owen, Child and Youth Studies, Brock University.

Co-Investigators: Professor Donato Tarulli, Professor Maureen Connolly and Professor Jennifer Li from Brock University

Nadine Wallace and Katie McKay, Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services, St. Catharines.

Carla and Barb Nicale, two Family and Community Consultants

A sponsor of this project is Goodman School of Business IIIA Funding.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905-688-05550 ext. 3035), or at reb@brocku.ca

This project has been reviewed and granted ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board [File # 18-323]

Appendix D

Letter of Invitation – For Educational Professionals

We invite you to participate in a research project entitled **Integrated Transition Planning Process for Youth with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability (a.k.a. TAY Planning process): A Social Return on Investment Perspective.**

What is this?

This project is focused on exploring the (Tri-Sector) integrated transitional aged youth (TAY) planning process that is currently in place for youth with intellectual/developmental disabilities from the perspective of educational professionals in the Niagara Region.

Can you help?

Possible participants for this project will include:

- **Education professionals** such as special class teachers, resource teachers, principals, etc who are or have been involved with planning for a youth during their transition phase of moving from children's services to adult services/adult life.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to volunteer your time for a 1 to 1 & ½ hour interview. The questions will ask about your perspective on and experience with the integrated transitional aged youth (TAY) planning process.

All interviews will be voice recorded for the project's records only. These tapes will not be shared with other people.

OR: To follow social distancing regulations due to Covid-19, MSTeams® or Lifesize® platforms will be accessed through Brock University. To maintain the privacy of the participant(s) using either the MSTeams® or Lifesize® platforms, participant(s) will be provided with a unique invitation number for a one-time video meeting (password, conference number, etc). The video will not be recorded on either platform and the audio will be recorded using the pre-approved hand-held digital device that is used in face-to-face or telephone interviews.

During the online interview, the privacy of the participant will be the participant's responsibility as the participant will determine their remote location, access to a network (internet, WiFi, etc), and a person to assist with the technology as needed.

The interviewer will be located in a closed office setting without other people present.

Your information will be aggregated with all other participants and provide the service providers' voice for future developments.

****TO PARTICIPATE: PLEASE CONTACT Anne Readhead at areadhead@brocku.ca.** Your participation will be kept confidential and you can withdraw from the project at any time.

Principle Student Investigator: Anne Readhead (PhD Student), Child and Youth Studies, Brock University

Principle Faculty Investigator: Professor Frances Owen, Child and Youth Studies, Brock University

Co-Investigators: Professor Donato Tarulli, Professor Maureen Connolly, and Professor Jennifer Li from Brock University

Nadine Wallace and Katie McKay, Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services, St. Catharines

Carla and Barb Nicale, two Family and Community Consultants

A sponsor of this project is Goodman School of Business IIIA Funding.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905-688-05550 ext. 3035), or at reb@brocku.ca

This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board [File # 18-323]

Appendix E

Letter of Invitation – For Niagara Regional Transitional Aged Youth Committee

We invite you to participate in a research project entitled **Integrated Transition Planning for Youth with an intellectual /Developmental Disability (a.k.a. TAY Planning process): A Social Return on Investment Perspective.**

What is this?

This project is focused on exploring the (Tri-Sector) integrated transitional aged youth (TAY) planning process that is currently in place for youth with intellectual /developmental disabilities from the perspectives of youth, families, educational professionals and community professionals in the Niagara Region.

Possible participants for the overall project will include:

- Any member of the Niagara Regional Transitional Aged Youth Committee.

Can you help?

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to volunteer your time for a group discussion. The questions at the group discussion will ask about your perspective and experience with the transitional aged youth planning process.

This group discussion may take 1 to 1 & ½ hours of your time.

All group sessions will be visually and/or voice recorded for the project's records only. These tapes will not be shared with other people.

Please note: To ensure confidentiality the Contact Niagara staff listed below as Co-Investigators will not participate or be informed as to the identity of any NRTAYC members who volunteer for this group.

****TO PARTICIPATE: PLEASE CONTACT Anne Readhead at areadhead@brocku.ca.** Your participation will be kept confidential and you can withdraw from the project at any time.

Principle Student Investigator: Anne Readhead (PhD Student), Child and Youth Studies, Brock University.

Principle Faculty Investigator: Professor Frances Owen, Child and Youth Studies, Brock University.

Co-Investigators:

Professor Danoto Tarulli, Professor Maureen Connolly, and Professor Jennifer Li from Brock University.

Nadine Wallace, Susan Kowalski and Katie McKay, Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services, St. Catharines.

Carla and Barb Nicale, two Family and Community Consultants

A sponsor of this project is Goodman School of Business IIIA Funding.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905-688-05550 ext. 3035), or at reb@brocku.ca

This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board [File # 18-323].

Appendix F

Consent to Research Participation – Young People with I/DD

Title of Project: Integrated Transition Planning for Youth with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability: A Social Return on Investment Perspective.

Members of the Research Team:

Researchers: Anne Readhead (PhD Student) from Brock University.

Frances Owen (Professor) from Brock University

Co-Investigators: Donato Tarulli, Maureen Connolly and Jennifer Li from Brock University
Nadine Wallace, Susan Kowalski and Katie McKay from Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services, St. Catharines.
Carla and Barb Nicale, two Family and Community Consultants

A sponsor of this project is Goodman School of Business IIIA Funding.

Research Assistants will also help the Researchers.

Name of Participant: (Please print)

Q1. I will help with this project independently. Yes_____ No_____

If this question is not applicable then move to Q2.

Will you help with this project by yourself?
--

Q2. I agree to have a support person stay with me while I have my interview/meeting for this project. Yes_____ No_____

The person's name is: _____

Who will stay with you while you help with this project?
--

Q3. I understand that the purpose of the project that I have agreed to participate in is to help the Brock University project team to get information about what young people with intellectual /developmental disabilities want to do when they leave high school.

What is this project for?

Q4. I understand that I will meet with the project people (Anne and her helper) to tell them about what my plans and goals are.

Will I be asked questions about my goals in life?

Q5. This meeting/interview will take about 1 to 1&1/2 hours.

How long will the meeting take?

Q6. I understand that my participation in an interview/meeting and the project is voluntary and that I do not have to answer any questions I do not want to answer. I can stop being part of the project at any time without anything bad happening to me. No one will be upset if and when I choose to stop.

Can you stop being part of the project at anytime?

Will anything bad happen to you if you stop being part of the project?

What will you say if you do not want to answer a question?

What will you say if you want to stop being part of the project?

- Q7. I understand that I will receive a \$5 Tim Horton's gift card as a thank you for my time helping with the project.

Will you receive a \$5 Tim Horton's card for helping with the project?

- Q8. I understand the interview/meeting will be audio-taped and people will take notes about what I say in the interview and this will be kept private and confidential. Only the people who are part of the Brock University Project Team will hear my audio tapes and see the interview notes about me. These people are Anne Readhead, Frances Owen, Donato Tarulli, Maureen Connolly, Jennifer Li) and research assistants who work with them.

Do you agree to be audio taped and your information written down in the interview/meeting?

- Q9. I understand that, after the interview is over, Anne and research assistants who help her will type into a computer what I said on the interview tape. After they have finished typing my answers they will destroy the tape of my interview. My name will not be on my typed interview answers. Other people will be able to see these typed up interview answers but my name will not be on the typed copy.

Will people be able to see your typed interview answers without your name on them?

- Q10. I understand that my name will not be used in the project when the report is written and given to other people to read.

Will your name be used in the project's paper?

- Q11. During the interview/meeting if I talk about hurting myself, hurting someone else or about someone hurting me, it will be reported to the Executive Director of Contact Niagara – Nadine Wallace. She will help me with the situation.

If a court wants to see all the information from our project we will have to give it to them with your name.

If I talk about getting hurt or being hurt or hurting someone else, who will they tell?

Q12. All the project’s information and recordings of the interview/meeting will be kept in a safe place at the researcher’s home (Anne Readhead) and at the home of someone who is helping us by listening to the tapes and writing down what you say. The tapes will be destroyed after the interviews have been written down.

Will all your private information be kept safe so only the people from the project can see it?

Q13. I give permission for Brock University people to contact me about future projects I might want to participate as well.

Can one of the team members contact you to ask you to help with another project in the future?

I agree:	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to participate in a project that is gathering information about people who have an intellectual and/or developmental disability; 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that I will be audio-taped; 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that my family can see my consent form (NB: agreement to this statement is not mandatory to participate in the project); 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to be contacted about participating in other studies like this one; 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to stop being a part of the project if I feel like it. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to have my information that is gathered in this project used for future projects about the same topic within five to seven years after this project has been completed. 		

FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS: [Yes or No] I would like to meet with the researcher again so I can see what they wrote about my interview. If I want, when we meet again I can make changes to what they wrote about my interview.

[] Phone me and we can meet to have it read to me: _____

My Contact Number: _____

I will receive a copy of my interview in writing so I can keep it and a copy of the summary report about the whole project when it is over. Please send me the copy of my interview and the summary report by:

[] Email at this address: _____

[] Mail at this address _____

[] I understand that it will be my responsibility to keep my written interview in a safe place so my information is kept confidential.

Participant's name (Print full name):

Participant's Signature:

Date:

Witness's name (please print):

Witnesses Signature:

This research project has been reviewed and granted clearance by the Brock Research Ethics Board. (File # 18-323). If I have any questions or concerns about my participation in the study, I can contact Frances Owen at 905-688-5550 ext. 4807. I may also contact the Brock University research Ethics Officer in the Office of Research Services at 905-688-5550 ext. 3035, or email at reb@brocku.ca.

Appendix G

Consent Form – Family/Guardian/Friend (Face-to-face version)

- Title of Project:** Integrated Transition Planning for Youth with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability: A Social Return on Investment Perspective.
- Researchers:** Anne Readhead (PhD Student), Child and Youth Studies, Brock University
Frances Owen, Child and Youth Studies, Brock University
- Co-Investigators:** Donato Tarulli, Maureen Connolly and Jennifer Li from Brock University Nadine Wallace, Susan Kowalski and Katie McKay from Contact Niagara for Children’s and Developmental Services, St. Catharines.
Carla and Barb Nicale, two Family and Community Consultants

A sponsor of this project is Goodman School of Business IIIA Funding.

Purpose

- I understand that the purpose of this research project in which I agree to participate is to study the Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) planning process and its implementation for those who may be eligible for adult developmental services when they reach age eighteen. I understand that I will be asked for my experience with and perspective on the outcomes and impacts of the TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region
- I understand that this study is being conducted as PhD dissertation research.

Participation

- I understand that my participation may include participating in one or more of the following:
 - A one hour to one and ½ hour face-to-face interview
 - If a face-to-face interview is not possible, a one to one and ½ hour telephone interview
- I understand that I will be answering questions about my experience with the TAY Planning process.
- I understand that I will not give any specific information about the young person I helped with a TAY Plan, such as the young person’s name, specific goals, personal identity, etc. All the information I give you about the young person I speak of will be in general terms.
- I understand that during my interview session, the student researcher and her assistant will be audio-taping (for later transcription) and writing down my answers.
- I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary and I have no obligation to participate in any way.

- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the project, my interview at any time without penalty as long as I do this before the transcribed data have been aggregated with the information provided by other participants.
- I understand that I will receive no payment for my participation in this project.
- I understand that by participating in this research project, I may benefit from learning more about the transition planning process for persons with an intellectual/developmental disability.
- I understand that I may be at minimal risk by participating in this project because it is possible that an interview question could cause me to feel psychologically uncomfortable if discussing a difficulty that I may have faced during my experience with the TAY Planning process. If this happens, I can be referred to Contact Niagara for assistance.
- I understand that you may publish articles and books, book chapters and/or make professional and public presentations using the information that all the people who helped in this project give you. However, my name will never be used in these circumstances.

Confidentiality

- I understand that my name and specific personal information (i.e. contact information) will be kept confidential but my general information (i.e. gender, age or occupation) may be included in summary reports, dissertation, publications and/or presentation of findings, and recommendations except if this information, when used, will create the risk of me being individually identified.
- I understand that through the course of answering interview questions if I disclose information regarding an incident of a youth who has been abused or will be abused, or if I make a threat to harm myself or others, or if your information is subpoenaed you will have to report this information to appropriate authorities using my name. In this situation, I understand that my personal information will have to be given to the courts if the law requires it.

Data – Information Gathered from me

- The information you get from me along with the information you get from other participants will be aggregated and compiled. I understand that my name will not be associated or connected to any of the comments or information I provide to you.
- I understand that the only place my name and contact information will be documented will be on this consent form. This consent form will be kept in a secure location at the researcher's home (Anne Readhead).
- I understand my audio-file and written notes will be kept in a separate secure file at the transcriber's home and, following transcription, at the researcher's (Anne Readhead) home. My name will not be on any of these recordings. All recordings will be identified by a number only. All audio-files will be deleted once they have been transcribed.
- I understand that only the principle student researcher, the faculty supervisors

(Drs. Frances Owen, Donato Tarulli, Maureen Connolly, Jennifer Li) and research assistants and transcribers working with them will have access to all forms of data and information (audio and written) gathered from this research project.

- I understand that recordings and transcripts may be housed in a secure location at the home of a transcriber during the transcription process. All data will be transferred to the researcher following completion of transcription.
- I understand that the written information that has been gathered will be kept on file with the exception that personal identifiers that tie participants to their data will be destroyed following defense of the dissertation. These files will be secured and stored in a secure location or on a computer with security password. All information will be deleted from the computer and all hard copy documents will be shredded five to seven years after completion of the study and dissemination of results.

Withdrawal from this Research Project

- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from participating in this study at any time and I can request that any information I have already provided will not be included in the project's results and summary report however data removal will not be possible after my data have been aggregated with the information provided by other participants.
- I understand that there is no penalty or repercussion for my withdrawal.

****Please check each box you consent to:**

- [] I wish to volunteer to participate in a one-on-one interview.
- [] I wish to volunteer to participate in a phone interview.
- [] You may publish articles and books/chapters in books, and make professional and/or public presentations using the information that I and all the people give to you.
- [] I understand the nature of this project and my involvement in it.
- [] I give you permission to contact me after this project is completed to ask me more questions or to ask if I wish to participate in another project.
- [] I give permission for my information gathered in this project to be used in future projects regarding the same topic within five to seven years after this research has been completed.

FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS: [Yes or No] I will receive a copy of my interview's overall main points to review and to make changes. I will return the document to the researcher with any revisions I make by the date that will be specified on

Consent Form – Family/Guardian/Friend (Online version)

Consent Form – Family/Guardian/Friend

- Title of Project:** Integrated Transition Planning for Youth with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability: A Social Return on Investment Perspective.
- Researchers:** Anne Readhead (PhD Student), Child and Youth Studies, Brock University
Frances Owen, Child and Youth Studies, Brock University
- Co-Investigators:** Donato Tarulli, Maureen Connolly and Jennifer Li from Brock University Nadine Wallace and Katie McKay from Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services, St. Catharines.
Carla and Barb Nicale, two Family and Community Consultants

A sponsor of this project is Goodman School of Business IIIA Funding.

Purpose

- I understand that the purpose of this research project in which I agree to participate is to study the Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) planning process and its implementation for those who may be eligible for adult developmental services when they reach age eighteen. I understand that I will be asked for my experience with and perspective on the outcomes and impacts of the TAY planning process in the Niagara Region
- I understand that this study is being conducted as PhD dissertation research.

Participation

- I understand that my participation may include participating in one or more of the following:
 - A one hour to one and ½ hour face-to-face interview
 - If a face-to-face interview is not possible, a one to one and ½ hour telephone interview
 - **OR:** To follow social distancing regulations due to Covid-19, MSTeams® or Lifesize® platforms will be accessed through Brock University.
 - I understand that I will be answering questions about my experience with the TAY planning process.
- I understand that I will not give any specific information about the young person I helped with a TAY Plan, such as the young person's name, specific goals, personal identity, etc. All the information I give you about the young person I speak of will be in general terms.
- I understand that during my interview session, the student researcher and her assistant will be audio-taping (for later transcription) and writing down my answers.
- I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary and I have no obligation to participate in any way.

- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the project, my interview at any time without penalty as long as I do this before the transcribed data have been aggregated with the information provided by other participants.
- I understand that I will receive no payment for my participation in this project.
- I understand that by participating in this research project, I may benefit from learning more about the transition planning process for persons with an intellectual/developmental disability.
- I understand that I may be at minimal risk by participating in this project because it is possible that an interview question could cause me to feel psychologically uncomfortable if discussing a difficulty that I may have faced during my experience with the TAY planning process. If this happens, I can be referred to Contact Niagara for assistance.
- I understand that you may publish articles and books, book chapters and/or make professional and public presentations using the information that all the people who helped in this project give you. However, my name will never be used in these circumstances.

Confidentiality

- I understand that my name and specific personal information (i.e. contact information) will be kept confidential but my general information (i.e. gender, age or occupation) may be included in summary reports, dissertation, publications and/or presentation of findings, and recommendations except if this information, when used, will create the risk of me being individually identified.
- I understand that through the course of answering interview questions if I disclose information regarding an incident of a youth who has been abused or will be abused, or if I make a threat to harm myself or others, or if your information is subpoenaed you will have to report this information to appropriate authorities using my name. In this situation, I understand that my personal information will have to be given to the courts if the law requires it.
- To maintain the privacy of the participant(s) using either the MSTeams® or Lifesize® platforms, participant(s) will be provided with a unique invitation number for a one-time video meeting (password, conference number, etc). The video will not be recorded on either platform and the audio will be recorded using the pre-approved hand-held digital device that is used in face-to-face or telephone interviews. During the online interview, the privacy of the participant will be the participant's responsibility as the participant will determine their remote location, access to a network (internet, WiFi, etc), and a person to assist with the technology as needed.

The interviewer will be located in a closed office setting without other people present.

Data – Information Gathered from me

- The information you get from me along with the information you get from other participants will be aggregated and compiled. I understand that my name will not be associated or connected to any of the comments or information I provide to you.
- I understand that the only place my name and contact information this consent form. This consent form will be kept in a secure location at the researcher's home (Anne Readhead).
- I understand my audio-file and written notes will be kept in a separate secure file at the transcriber's home and, following transcription, at the researcher's (Anne Readhead)

home. My name will not be on any of these recordings. All recordings will be identified by a number only. All audio-files will be deleted once they have been transcribed.

- I understand that only the principle student researcher, the Brock faculty supervisors (Drs. Frances Owen, Donato Tarulli, Maureen Connolly, Jennifer Li) and research assistants and transcribers working with them will have access to all forms of data and information (audio and written) gathered from this research project.
- I understand that recordings and transcripts may be housed in a secure location at the home of a transcriber during the transcription process. All data will be transferred to the researcher following completion of transcription.
- I understand that the written information that has been gathered will be kept on file with the exception that personal identifiers that tie participants to their data will be destroyed following defense of the dissertation. These files will be secured and stored in a secure location or on a computer with security password. All information will be deleted from the computer and all hard copy documents will be shredded five to seven years after completion of the study and dissemination of results.

Withdrawal from this Research Project

- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from participating in this study at any time and I can request that any information I have already provided will not be included in the project's results and summary report however data removal will not be possible after my data have been aggregated with the information provided by other participants.
- I understand that there is no penalty or repercussion for my withdrawal.

****Please check each box you consent to:**

- [] I wish to volunteer to participate in a one-on-one interview.
- [] I wish to volunteer to participate in a phone interview.
- [] I wish to volunteer to participate involving an online interview with ___ Lifesize or ___ TEAMS platform.
- [] You may publish articles and books/chapters in books, and make professional and/or public presentations using the information that I and all the people give to you.
- [] I understand the nature of this project and my involvement in it.
- [] I give you permission to contact me after this project is completed to ask me more questions or to ask if I wish to participate in another project.
- [] I give permission for my information gathered in this project to be used in future projects regarding the same topic within five to seven years after this research has been completed.

FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS: [Yes or No] I will receive a copy of my interview's overall main points to review and to make changes. I will return the document to the researcher with any

revisions I make by the date that will be specified on the document. I understand that my original transcript will be used for analysis if I do not provide revisions by the specified date. I also will receive a copy of the summary report about the whole project after it has been completed. Please send me these documents by:

Email at this address: _____

Mail at this address: _____

When I receive the document I will be given the option of having a phone or in-person meeting with the researcher to discuss the content.

I will be participating as: a direct family member – parent, sibling, grandparent

a guardian

other: _____

Participant's name (Print):

Participant's signature:

Date:

This study has been received and granted by Brock Research Ethics Board (File # 18-323).

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this research project, please contact Frances Owen at 905-688-5550 ext. 4807 or the Brock University Research Ethics Board Officer in the Office of Research Services at 905-5550 ext. 3035

Thank you for your valuable time and help with this project!

A copy of this consent form has been provided to the above volunteer.

I have fully explained the procedures and design of this study to the above volunteer.

Primary Researcher signature:

Research assistant signature:

Date:

Appendix H

Consent Form – Education/Community Professional (Face-to-Face Version)

- Title of Project:** Integrated Transition Planning for Youth with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability: A Social Return on Investment Perspective.
- Researchers:** Anne Readhead (PhD Student), Child and Youth Studies, Brock University
Frances Owen, Child and Youth Studies, Brock University
- Co-Investigators:** Donato Tarulli, Maureen Connolly and Jennifer Li from Brock University
Nadine Wallace, Susan Kowalski and Katie McKay, Contact Niagara for Children’s and Developmental Services, St. Catharines.
Carla and Barb Nicale, two Family and Community Consultants
- A sponsor of this project is Goodman School of Business IIIA Funding.

Purpose

- I understand that the purpose of this research project in which I agree to participate is to study the Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) planning process and its implementation for those who may be eligible for adult developmental services when they reach age eighteen. I understand that I will be asked for my experience with and perspective on the outcomes and impacts of the TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region.
- I understand that the purpose of this study will also be to look at the experiences of young people who have an intellectual/developmental disability who have already transitioned into adult services but may reflect back on their experiences when the transition occurred.
- I understand that I will not give any specific information about any specific young person I helped with a TAY Plan, such as the young person’s name, specific goals, personal identity, etc. All the information I give you about young people I speak of will be in general terms.
- I understand that this study is being conducted as PhD dissertation research.

Participation

- I understand that my involvement in this research may include participating in one or more of the following:
 - A one to one and a half hour face-to-face interview
 - If a face-to-face interview is not possible, a one to one and ½ hour telephone interview
 - A one to one and a half hour focus group (if a NRTAYC member)

- I understand that I will be answering questions about my experience with the TAY Planning process.
- I understand that during my interview and/or group session, the student researcher and her assistant will be video and/or audio-taping (for later transcription) and writing down my answers.
- I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary and I have no obligation to participate in any way.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the project and/or my interview at any time without penalty as long as I do this before the transcribed data have been aggregated with the information provided by other participants. While participants in the Focus Group can withdraw from Focus Group participation, their partial data cannot be removed from the focus group file.
- I understand that I will receive no payment for my participation in this project.
- I understand that by participating in this research project, I may benefit from learning more about the transition planning process for persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities.
- I understand that I may be at minimal risk by participating in this project because it is possible that an interview or group session question could cause me to feel psychologically uncomfortable if discussing a difficulty that I may have faced during my experience with the TAY Planning process. If this happens, I can be referred to Contact Niagara for assistance.
- I understand that you may publish articles and books, book chapters and/or make professional and public presentations using the information that all the people who helped in this project give you. However, my name will never be used in these circumstances.

Confidentiality

- I understand that my name and specific personal information (e.g. my contact information) will be kept confidential but my general information (e.g. gender, age and/or occupation and, for focus group participants, membership on the Niagara Region TAY Committee) may be included in the summary report, dissertation, publications and/or presentation of findings and recommendations except if this information, when used, will create the risk of me being individually identified.
- I understand that through the course of answering interview or group session questions if I disclose information regarding an incident of a young person who has been abused or will be abused, or if I make a threat to harm myself or others, or if your information is subpoenaed you will have to report this information to appropriate authorities using my name. In this situation, I understand that my personal information will have to be given to the courts if the law requires it.

Data – Information Gathered from me

- The information you get from me along with the information you get from other participants will be aggregated and compiled. I understand that my name will not be associated or connected to any of the comments or information I provide to you.

- I understand that the only place my name and contact information will be documented will be on this consent form. This consent form will be kept in a secure location at Brock University.
- I understand that my video and/or audio-tape and written notes will be kept in separate secure file location at Brock University. My name will not be on any of these recordings. All recordings will be identified by a number only. Recordings and transcripts may be housed in a secure location at the home of a transcriber during the transcription process. All data will be transferred to the researcher following completion of transcription. All video and/or audio-files will be deleted once they have been transcribed.
- I understand that only the primary student researcher, the faculty supervisor and research assistants and transcribers working with them will have access to all forms of data and information (video and/or audio and written) gathered from this research project.
- I understand that the written information that has been gathered will be kept on file. These files will be secured and stored in a secure location or on a computer with security password. All information will be deleted from the computer and recorder and all hard copy documents will be shredded five to seven years after completion of the study and dissemination of results.

Withdrawal from this Research Project

- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from participating in this study at any time and I can request that any information I have already provided not be included in the project's results and summary report, except if this information has already been aggregated with the information provided by other participants. The exception to data elimination is Focus Group participants who can withdraw from participation at any point, however their partial data cannot be removed from the Focus Group data file.

I understand that there is no penalty or repercussion for my withdrawal.

****Please check each box you consent to:**

- [] I wish to volunteer to participate in a one-on-one interview.
- [] I wish to volunteer to participate in a phone interview.
- [] I wish to participate in a group session (NRTAYC).
- [] You may publish articles and books/chapters in books, and make professional and/or public presentations using the information that I and all the people give to you.
- [] I understand the nature of this project and my involvement in it.
- [] I give you permission to contact me after this project is completed to ask me more questions or to ask if I wish to participate in another project.

- I give permission for my information gathered in this project to be used in future projects regarding the same topic.
- I agree to be video-taped during my interview session.
- I agree to be audio-taped during my interview session.

FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS: [Yes or No] I will receive a copy of my interview's main points to review and to make changes. I will return the document to the researcher with any revisions I make by the date that will be specified on the document. I understand that my original interview transcript will be used for analysis if I do not provide revisions by the specified date. I also will receive the summary report on the whole project after it has been completed. Please send me these documents by:

Email at this
address: _____

Mail at this
address: _____

When I receive the document I will be given the option of having a phone or in-person meeting with the researcher to discuss the transcript.

I will be participating as:

- an educational professional
- a community professional
- a NRTAYC member
- other: _____

Participant's name (Print):

Participant's signature:

Date:

This study has been received and approved by Brock Research Ethics Board (File # 18-323).

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this research project, please contact Frances Owen at 9050688-5550 ext. 4807 or the Brock University Research Ethics Board Officer in the Office of Research Services at 905-5550 ext. 3035

Thank you for your valuable time and help with this project.

[] A copy of this consent form has been provided to the above volunteer.

[] I have fully explained the procedures and design of this study to the above volunteer.

Primary Researcher signature:

Research assistant signature:

Date:

Consent Form – Education/Community Professional (Online Version)**Consent Form – Education/Community Professional**

- Title of Project:** Integrated Transition Planning for Youth with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability: A Social Return on Investment Perspective.
- Researchers:** Anne Readhead (PhD Student), Child and Youth Studies, Brock University
Frances Owen, Child and Youth Studies, Brock University
- Co-Investigators:** Donato Tarulli, Maureen Connolly and Jennifer Li from Brock University
Nadine Wallace and Katie McKay, Contact Niagara for Children’s and Developmental Services, St. Catharines.
Carla and Barb Nicale, two Family and Community Consultants
- A sponsor of this project is Goodman School of Business IIIA Funding.

Purpose

- I understand that the purpose of this research project in which I agree to participate is to study the Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) planning process and its implementation for those who may be eligible for adult developmental services when they reach age eighteen. I understand that I will be asked for my experience with and perspective on the outcomes and impacts of the TAY planning process in the Niagara Region.
- I understand that the purpose of this study will also be to look at the experiences of young people who have an intellectual/developmental disability who have already transitioned into adult services but may reflect back on their experiences when the transition occurred.
- I understand that I will not give any specific information about any specific young person I helped with a TAY Plan, such as the young person’s name, specific goals, personal identity, etc. All the information I give you about young people I speak of will be in general terms.
- I understand that this study is being conducted as PhD dissertation research.

Participation

- I understand that my involvement in this research may include participating in one or more of the following:
 - A one to one and a half hour face-to-face interview
 - If a face-to-face interview is not possible, a one to one and ½ hour telephone interview
 - A one to one and a half hour focus group (if a NRTAYC member)

- **OR:** MSTeams® or Lifesize® platforms will be accessed through Brock University.

participant will be the participant's responsibility as the participant will determine their remote location, access to a network (internet, WiFi, etc), and a person to assist with the technology as needed.

The interviewer will be located in a closed office setting without other people present.

- I understand that I will be answering questions about my experience with the TAY planning process.
- I understand that during my interview and/or group session, the student researcher and her assistant will be audio-taping (for later transcription) and writing down my answers.
- I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary and I have no obligation to participate in any way.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the project and/or my interview at any time without penalty as long as I do this before the transcribed data have been aggregated with the information provided by other participants. While participants in the Focus Group can withdraw from Focus Group participation, their partial data cannot be removed from the focus group file.
- I understand that I will receive no payment for my participation in this project.
- I understand that by participating in this research project, I may benefit from learning more about the transition planning process for persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities.
- I understand that I may be at minimal risk by participating in this project because it is possible that an interview or group session question could cause me to feel psychologically uncomfortable if discussing a difficulty that I may have faced during my experience with the TAY planning process. If this happens, I can be referred to Contact Niagara for assistance.
- I understand that you may publish articles and books, book chapters and/or make professional and public presentations using the information that all the people who helped in this project give you. However, my name will never be used in these circumstances.

Confidentiality

- I understand that my name and specific personal information (e.g. my contact information) will be kept confidential but my general information (e.g. gender, age and/or occupation and, for focus group participants, membership on the Niagara Region TAY Committee) may be included in the summary report, dissertation, publications and/or presentation of findings and recommendations except if this information, when used, will create the risk of me being individually identified.
- I understand that through the course of answering interview or group session questions if I disclose information regarding an incident of a young person who has been abused or will be abused, or if I make a threat to harm myself or others,

or if your information is subpoenaed you will have to report this information to appropriate authorities using my name. In this situation, I understand that my personal information will have to be given to the courts if the law requires it.

- To maintain the privacy of the participant(s) using either the MSTeams® or Lifesize® platforms, participant(s) will be provided with a unique invitation number for a one-time video meeting (password, conference number, etc). The video will not be recorded on either platform and the audio will be recorded using the pre-approved hand-held digital device that is used in face-to-face or telephone interviews.

During the online interview, the privacy of the participant will be the participant's responsibility as the participant will determine their remote location, access to a network (internet, WiFi, etc), and a person to assist with the technology as needed.

The interviewer will be located in a closed office setting without other people present.

Data – Information Gathered from me

- The information you get from me along with the information you get from other participants will be aggregated and compiled. I understand that my name will not be associated or connected to any of the comments or information I provide to you.
- I understand that the only place my name and contact information will be documented on this consent form. This consent form will be kept in a secure location at the primary researcher's home (Anne Readhead).
- I understand that my audio-tape and written notes will be kept in separate secure file location at the transcriber's home and then at the home of the researcher (Anne Readhead). My name will not be on any of these recordings. All recordings will be identified by a number only. Recordings and transcripts may be housed in a secure location at the home of a transcriber during the transcription process. All data will be transferred to the researcher following completion of transcription. All audio-files will be deleted once they have been transcribed. Personal identifiers that tie participants to their data will be destroyed following defense of the dissertation.
- I understand that only the primary student researcher, the Brock faculty supervisors (Drs. Frances Owen, Donato Tarulli, Maureen Connolly, Jennifer Li) and research assistants and transcribers working with them will have access to all forms of data and information (audio and written) gathered from this research project.
- I understand that the written information that has been gathered will be kept on file with the exception that personal identifiers that tie participants to their data will be destroyed following defense of the dissertation. These files will be secured and stored in a secure location or on a computer with security password. All information will be deleted from the computer and recorder and all hard copy

documents will be shredded five to seven years after completion of the study and dissemination of results.

Withdrawal from this Research Project

- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from participating in this study at any time and I can request that any information I have already provided not be included in the project's results and summary report, except if this information has already been aggregated with the information provided by other participants. The exception to data elimination is Focus Group participants who can withdraw from participation at any point, however their partial data cannot be removed from the Focus Group data file.

I understand that there is no penalty or repercussion for my withdrawal.

****Please check each box you consent to:**

- [] I wish to volunteer to participate in a one-on-one interview.
- [] I wish to volunteer to participate in a phone interview.
- [] I wish to volunteer to participate involving an online interview with ___ Lifesize or ___ TEAMS platform.
- [] I wish to participate in a group session (NRTAYC).
- [] You may publish articles and books/chapters in books, and make professional and/or public presentations using the information that I and all the people give to you.
- [] I understand the nature of this project and my involvement in it.
- [] I give you permission to contact me after this project is completed to ask me more questions or to ask if I wish to participate in another project.
- [] I give permission for my information gathered in this project to be used in future projects regarding the same topic.

FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS: [Yes or No] I will receive a copy of my interview's main points to review and to make changes. I will return the document to the researcher with any revisions I make by the date that will be specified on the document. I understand that my original interview transcript will be used for analysis if I do not provide revisions by the specified date. I also will receive the summary report on the whole project after it has been completed. Please send me these documents by:

Email at this
address: _____

Mail at this
address: _____

When I receive the document I will be given the option of having a phone or in-person meeting with the researcher to discuss the transcript.

I will be participating as:

an educational professional

a community professional

a NRTAYC member

other:

Participant's name (Print):

Participant's signature:

Date:

This study has been received and granted by Brock Research Ethics Board (File # 18-323).

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this research project, please contact Frances Owen at 9050688-5550 ext. 4807 or the Brock University Research Ethics Board Officer in the Office of Research Services at 905-5550 ext. 3035

Thank you for your valuable time and help with this project.

A copy of this consent form has been provided to the above volunteer.

I have fully explained the procedures and design of this study to the above volunteer.

Primary Researcher signature:

Research assistant signature:

Date:

Appendix I

Consent Form – Community Research Committee Members

Contact Niagara Employee

Dear

Even though you have agreed to be a partner in helping me to design my PhD research project it is important that you are fully aware of what this partnership entails. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the specific information about this study. At the conclusion of this letter there will be a section for you to sign. This signature will indicate that you agree to participate. Please return this letter to Anne Readhead (Brock University PhD student) and keep a copy for your records.

The name of the study is: **Integrated Transition Planning for Youth with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability: A Social Return on Investment Perspective.**

The nature and purpose of this PhD dissertation research is:

- To learn about the impact of the implementation of the (Tri-Sector) Integrated Transition Planning for Young People with Developmental Disabilities memorandum and resulting protocols.
- To work with Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services (Contact Niagara) through a community-based research methodology to develop a project design that will provide a source of feedback regarding the Tri-Sector Transitional Aged Youth planning process.
- To interview young people with intellectual/developmental disabilities, families of youth with intellectual/developmental disabilities, educational service providers, community service providers and members of the Niagara Regional Transitional Aged Youth Committee. We will also conduct focus groups.
- The results of this research may be presented at academic and community conferences, workshops and in classrooms and other educational settings.
- The findings of this research may be published for academic, professional and/or general audiences, in refereed journals, books/book chapters, as facts sheets and/or in presentation formats.

Your participation in the research will include:

- giving your permission to involve your organization in the research by participating in research planning, distributing recruitment information to TAY

and their families, and by allowing me to identify your organization by name in my research.

- participating in the development of research design, document editing, participant recruitment, data analysis and development of recommendations based on the research results.
- agreeing that individual organization members' decision to participate will be based on their personal choice, be confidential and that you will not influence their decision whether to participate in any way.
- forwarding the study recruitment letters to young people, their families, and service providers.
- allowing the name of your organization and its general services in the presentations and publications that arise from the research.

What will we do to protect your privacy and confidentiality:

- All information will be confidential to protect the identity of participants and minimize any potential risks.
- Data will be kept in a secure location at Brock University. Recordings and transcripts may be housed in a secure location at the home of a transcriber during the transcription process. All data will be transferred to the researcher following completion of transcription.
- Only the principle investigators and research assistants will have access to participants' identifiers.
- Participants will not be identified by name in presentations of the research findings.
- Contact Niagara and its partnering organizations will not be individually identified by name in any results or recommendations that are documented in the research findings, presentations, publications, or academic reports. All documentation of results, findings, and recommendations that are derived from this research will be described only by general description of organizational categories such as the educational system or community services. There will be some description included to provide the audience/reader with the necessary context to understand the information (e.g., a community service that provides employment services) only when it will not identify a specific organization.
- Although there is no specific plan to use the data from this study for the purpose of reanalysis, secondary analysis of data from this research, for purposes consistent with the intent of the study, may be undertaken by the primary student investigator (Anne Readhead), by Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services and/or by Anne Readhead's dissertation committee members (Frances Owen, Donato Tarulli, Maureen Connolly, Jingyu Li) after the completion of the primary student investigator's dissertation. Only anonymized

data will be accessed for this purpose. Any future secondary analysis will only take place after the Executive Director at Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services has been notified, understands the purpose of the re-analysis and provides renewed consent.

Potential limitations to our ability to guarantee anonymity are:

- The identity of all participants will remain confidential except in circumstances where abuse or threat of harm to self or others are disclosed or if the data are subpoenaed.

Potential benefits, which might come from this research:

- The study will provide participants with an avenue to voice their experience(s) and give suggestions to enhance the Tri-Sector transitional aged youth planning process.
- The study will provide findings that may inform future revisions and implementation of transitional aged youth planning protocols.
- The study will provide an understanding of the impacts of the Tri-Sector transitional aged planning process for youth, their families, and service providers.
- The study may allude to service provision capacity issues that face service organizations and the Niagara Regional Transitional Aged Youth Committee and strategies to address them based on the data collected and the broader research literature.

Potential harm if any is:

- If participants become upset during an interview they will be referred to you for access to support services provided via Contact Niagara.

Please complete the section below:

Yes or No (circle): I agree that my name will be identified as Co-Investigator in such documents as the Brock University Research Ethics Board application, the District School Board of Niagara and the Niagara Catholic District School Board Research Ethics Board applications, publications, presentations and in classrooms or other educational settings.

Yes or No (circle): I give permission for my information gathered in this project to be used in future projects regarding the same topic.

If you agree to participate in this research partnership please sign below:

I, _____ (print name), agree to the above conditions.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at ar92qi@brocku.ca or my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Frances Owen, at either fowen@brocku.ca or at 905 688 5550 ext 4807. Questions can also be addressed to the Research Ethics Board at Brock Research 905 688 5550 ext. 3035, email: reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anne Readhead (PhD Candidate, Brock University)

Appendix J

Participation Withdrawal and Partial Data Retention for Individual Interview Participants

- Title of Project:** Integrated Transition Planning for Youth with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability: A Social Return on Investment Perspective.
- Researchers:** Anne Readhead (PhD student) and Frances Owen (Professor) from Brock University.
- Co-Investigators:** Donato Tarulli, Maureen Connolly and Jennifer Li from Brock University
 Nadine Wallace, Susan Kowalski and Katie McKay from Contact Niagara for Children’s and Developmental Services, St. Catharines.
 Carla and Barb Nicale, two Family and Community Consultants.

A sponsor of this project is Goodman School of Business IIIA Funding.

- Yes No I have decided to stop helping with the project
- Yes No I want all my information collected to this point destroyed. I understand that it is not possible to remove my information if it has been aggregated with information provided by other participants or due to my participation in a Focus Group.

OR

- Yes No I want them to keep all my information collected to this point and still use it for the project and future projects about the same topic.

If “yes” to partial retention:

[Yes or No] I will receive a copy of my interview’s main points to review and to make changes. I will return the document to the researcher with any revisions I make by the date that will be specified on it. I understand that my original interview transcript will be used for analysis if I do not provide revisions by the specified date. I also will receive a summary report about the whole project after it has been completed.

Please send me these documents by:

[] Email at this address: _____

[] Mail at this address: _____

Participant's Name (Print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness (Print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix K

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Youth

Script for 14-17 years

Interviewer: Talk about if person remembers when they went from grade 8 to high school. Talk about how this change in their life was a “transition” where a lot changed etc. Then explain that leaving high school (turning 18 years old) is going to have changes as well and that is the “transition” we are asking about in this interview.

Discuss what the young person’s understanding is regarding “TAY Planning meetings”, having a “written plan”, “goal setting” etc, to establish a general knowledge base of terminology. Throughout the interview, a standard prompt for description and elaboration of examples will be used when more detail is needed.

1. Describe **what** your plans are for your future (when you leave school/turn 18).
 - a. Describe your goals (ODSP, PSE, work, living arrangements, hobbies/fun things, new friends, health etc).
 - b. Tell me about the goals you have already completed. How did these goals turn out for you?
 - c. What do you think will change in your life?
 - d. What do you think will stay the same?
 - e. What are your dreams? What are you excited about for your future?
2. Please give examples of **how** you are planning.
 - a. Can you tell me how this planning process all works?
 - b. Are there meetings (with whom, where, how often?) Tell me what these meetings are like. Do you get to talk to people about your future? Do you feel the other people listen to you? How do they show they are listening (or not listening)? Are you asked what your ideas are? Do you feel these other people are respectful toward you? Why?
 - c. Who is the “boss” of your planning, of your goals?
 - d. *Interviewer*: show visual cue of numbers and faces from 1-10. From 1 (no decision power) – 10 (make all the decisions), how much do you get to make your own decisions about your future plans for turning 18 years old/leaving school? Tell me why you picked that number.
 - e. Please tell me to the best of your ability, what kinds of things it takes (you have to do) to be able to participate in your planning process
 - i. Are there any changes in your usual/regular daily routine because of your meetings? Is there any change in your school schedule?
 - ii. Is there any change in your afterschool routine/things you usually do?

- iii. Are other things you have to do when you have planning meetings?
 - iv. Consider things such as missing class time, getting a ride to the meeting, physical effort, phone calls, etc)?
 - f. Do you have a **written plan**? Please give examples of what is in this plan. Who has a copy? Who decides what information goes in your written plan?
 - g. Are there any special things people need to know about you that are not in your plan?
 - h. Tell me about what training or information you were given to learn how to plan for your future/turning the age of 18; How to conduct yourself in planning meetings or the planning process.
3. Tell me who helps you plan for your future.
 - a. How do they help? Teachers, family, community support workers etc. Do they attend all your meetings?
 - b. How is this help important to you? What would happen if you did not have this help right now – what do you see your future looking like (better or worse)?
 - c. What things do you feel you can plan by yourself? What parts of planning can you do for yourself?
 - d. Can you give examples of other people that you wish were helping you that are not right now?
 - e. Who motivates you the most to plan for adulthood/turning 18? Can you describe how that works? Can you give me an example?
 - f. Describe how others (e.g. other support workers, teachers, your family, etc.) work together in the planning process. Describe what other people do to show they are working together overall in the process and/or with your plan.

Preamble: Interviewer will discuss that “engagement” is the person’s level of participation and interpersonal connection with other people in the group. People have different degrees of involvement in a group and these can be conceptualized as presence, encounter, and participation (Simplican et al, 2015).

- Presence is physically being there with little or no contact with other people, a **precursor** to participation. In plain language: you are just there but not connected or taking any part in the meeting.
- Encounter can be considered as interactions in a meeting that **provide opportunity** for participation and a sense of belonging within the group. In plain language: you know the people and they smile and nod at you, you want to listen to what is said, you make eye contact, understand the rules of the meeting etc.

- Participation is a person's involvement in the group activity which can promote a development of interpersonal relationships and increase/strengthen the person's **social network**. In plain language: you get to talk/answer questions, give ideas, make decisions.
4. From 1 (not at all) – 10 (completely), for each level of engagement described above, how much do you feel you are engaged (involved) with the planning process? For Presence? For Encounter? For Participation? Why do you choose this number?
 - a. What challenges you to feel you face about being engaged with your planning?
 - b. Describe what is like when you feel engaged? When, where, how often does this happen for you when you are planning for your future?
 5. What are the **good things** about planning? Describe these good things. Tell me how they are good.
 - a. What parts of you planning for the future should stay the same? What works well in your transition planning?
 6. What does success look like? Tell how **successful** you think your plan is going to be. Why?
 7. If you could imagine **no planning** was in place, what would happen?
 - a. How would your future be different maybe?
 - b. What would not happen for you?
 8. Is there anything you **do not like** about planning for the future?
 - a. Is there anything that bothers you about your plan and how it is being done?
 - b. Are there any concerns (possible prompt: well-being/safety?) you have about your future.
 - c. Would more time, money, human resources, information, or any specific training help the process function in a smoother fashion? Explain. (In plain language: If I gave you a million dollars to make your plan what would it look like?)
 9. What **advice** would you give other youth (teens) about effective TAY Planning?
 - a. Why do you feel this is important advice?
 - b. Do you feel that 14 years is a good age to start planning for adulthood? If yes, why? If no, then what age? Why?
 10. If you had a magic wand (**or** 3 wishes), what would be the **perfect way** to plan (to get ready) for your future/ turning the age of 18 years?
 - a. Describe the perfect way to plan for turning 18 years old if time, money, help, and rules, not an issue.

Conclusion: Is there any other information you would like to tell me? Or is there anything that you thought I might ask you about that I have not asked? Do you have any questions you want to ask me?

Script for 18-25 years

Interviewer: Do you remember when you turned 18 years old? Talk about when the young person did leave high school (for those young people who have already left high school or changed classes to an adult classroom) and how this change in their life was a “transition” where a lot of things changed for them such as what they did during the day time, who their friends were etc. OR simply talk about when the young person turned 18 years of age and was now considered an adult and how some of the people (e.g. supports, service providers, etc) or activities (e.g. no more teen camp etc) in their life may have changed. This was a “transition”. We are going to talk about this “transition” during this interview.

Discuss what the young person’s understanding is regarding “TAY Planning meetings”, having a “written plan”, “goal setting” etc, to establish a general knowledge base of terminology.

Throughout the interview, a standard prompt for description and elaboration of examples will be used when more detail is needed.

1. Do you remember planning the leave school/turn 18 years old?
2. If you think back, what age did you start your (TAY) planning for turning 18/leave school?

IMPORTANT: If the participant was involved with the TAY Planning process prior to 2013, ask them to give the same information about the old planning system.

3. Describe the planning process you experienced before you turned 18 years/leaving school. How did this planning work?
 - a. Did you have meetings? If yes, what did you do in these meeting?
 - b. Describe **what** things you specifically did in the planning.
 - c. Were there other times outside of meetings when people were talking about your plan? Can you tell me about those times? Were you part of those discussions? If yes, please describe.
 - d. Describe what your part was on decisions made for your future goal(s). Describe how decisions were made. For example: what decisions, by whom and when, etc.?

- e. Who was the “boss” of your planning (and your goals), before you turned 18 years old?
 - f. *Interviewer*: show visual cue of numbers and faces from 1-10. From 1 (no decision power)-10 (made all the decisions), how much did you get to make your own decisions about your future plans for turning 18 years old? Tell me why you picked that number.
 - g. What does success look like for your life? Tell how **successful** you think your plan was. Why?
4. **What** choices were you offered to plan for (alternative wording: to get ready for) turning 18 years old or adulthood?
 - a. What happened after you were offered these choices about what you could plan for to get ready for turning 18 years/leaving school?
 - b. Describe if you had goals during the school years (before you turned 18 years of age) to plan for your future.
 - c. Describe **how** goals were made and planned for during your high school years, before you turned 18 years old.
 - d. *(If applicable): Explain the **outcomes** of these goals. Alternative wording: How did these goals turn out for you? Prompt: What things came from these goals?
 5. **Who** helped you (Prompts: teachers, supports staff, family etc) to prepare for your life when you were going to turn 18 years/leave school?
 - a. How did they help you before you?
 6. What do you think would have happened if there had been **no planning** prior to you turning 18 years/leaving school? OR (if had no plan) what do you think would have happened if you had planned prior to turning 18?
 7. What in the planning process you experienced seemed to **work well**? For you? For your family? For others? OR (if no plan) what could have worked well?
 - a. What did you find helpful about the planning process?
 - b. Were there benefits (good things) for using a (or the TAY) planning process? If yes, can you describe them?
 - c. Why would you consider these as benefits?
 - d. Who benefited? How did they benefit?
 - e. Were these short or long term benefits?
 - f. What would have been important things to keep doing in the planning process your future?
 8. Describe anything you wish could have **been different** if you could plan over again, if you could go back before you were 18 years of age.
(*Alternative wording*: What do you wish you could have changed about your plan?)

Prompt: Think about when you were younger than 18. If you could go back to when you were younger than 18 years old, is there more people could have helped you with?

- a. What difference would that have made to your life now?
 - b. Do you wish you had had other/different people helping you as well? If yes, who, why, and how?
 - c. Thinking back, can you tell me anything (examples) that would have made things easier in planning for your future?
 - d. Would more time, more money, more people helping you, information, or any specific training have helped the planning process be smoother for you and your family? Explain. (*In plain language*: If I had given you a million dollars to make your plan what would it had looked like?)
 - e. Do you have any worries, fears or safety concerns in your life right now? Could there had been things done in the past to help these things now?
9. Describe how others (e.g. other support workers, teachers, your family, etc.) **worked together** in the planning process. Describe what other people did to show they were working together overall in the process and/or with your plan.

Preamble: Researcher will discuss that “engagement” is the person’s level of participation and interpersonal connection with other people in the group. People have different degrees of involvement in a group and these can be conceptualized as presence, encounter, and participation (Simplican et al, 2015).

- *Presence is physically being there with little or no contact with other people, a **precursor** to participation. In plain language: were you just there but not connected or taking any part in the meeting.*
- *Encounter can be considered as interactions in a meeting that **provide opportunity** for participation and a sense of belonging within the group. In plain language: did you know the people and they smiled and nodded at you, did you want to listen to what was said, you made eye contact, understood the rules of the meeting etc.*
- *Participation is a person’s involvement in the group activity which can promote a development of interpersonal relationships and increase/strengthen the person’s **social network**. In plain language: did you get to talk/answer questions, give ideas, make decisions.*

10. Describe your level of **engagement** with (*alternative wording*: how much you were actively working with) your planning process before you turned 18 years of age.

Prompt: From 1 (not at all) – 10 (completely), looking back, how much did you feel you were engaged with the planning process for each level of engagement

described above? For Presence? For Encounter? For Participation? Why did you choose this number?

11. What **advice** would you give another young person still in high school right now who is trying to plan for their future (turning 18 years old)? Why do you feel this important advice?

Prompt: Do you feel that 14 years old is a good age to begin planning for becoming an adult? *Prompts:* If yes, why? If no, then what age? Why?

12. Thinking back, if you had a magic wand (or 3 wishes) describe what the **perfect way** to plan for turning 18 years old could have been if all the money, time and help, etc. were available.
- a. What would that way of planning have looked like?
 - b. What difference would that kind of perfect plan have made to your life now? For your family, teachers, support people, others?

Conclusion: Is there any other information you would like to tell me? Or is there anything that you thought I might ask you about that I have not asked? Do you have any questions you want to ask me?

Appendix L

Semi-Structured Interview Question for Family/Guardian

***Interviewer: Preamble about what is the TAY Planning Process (e.g. were you given a written copy of your family member's plan?), explain Tri-Sector protocol.*

Throughout the interview, a standard prompt for description and elaboration of examples will be used when more detail is needed.

1. Describe what the **term** “TAY Planning” means to you within the developmental TAY Planning process.
 - h. What terminology do you use when talking about the planning process (e.g. Integrated Transition Plan, TAY Planning, what do you call the written plan etc)?
2. Describe **why** are you helping this person plan for their future (turning 18 years old)?
 - a. How did you get involved with the TAY Planning process?
 - b. How many times have you been involved with helping plan for this person to set goals for their future?
 - c. Was it the same plan or a different plan with different people involved in planning? Describe please.
 - d. In your opinion, what is a good age for a young person with I/DD to start planning for the adult years? Why?
 - e. Describe your most significant achievement helping your family member and reaching their goals.
 - f. Looking at your role/part in participating in the TAY Planning process, can you give me some examples of any goals you have for yourself during the time you are a part of the planning process?
 - i. For example: do want to learn more about what adult services are available, how they operate, what they offer etc.
 - ii. Do you have personal goals such as getting different employment once your family member is living in another arrangement?
3. Describe **what** steps/stages you understand are involved with the planning process.
 - a. Are there any parts of the planning process that you feel you do not understand?
 - b. How many meetings have you attended (e.g. this year, last year etc)?
 - c. How long do these meetings usually last?
 - d. Who usually attends these meetings besides yourself?
 - e. Where do these meetings usually take place?

- f. If you were not attending these meetings, what would you have been doing (e.g. would you be at your place of employment)?
 - g. Is there a written plan? What areas of the young person's life have been discussed and planned for in the written plan?
 - h. Is your family member eligible for or could be eligible for adult developmental services (ODSP/Passport funding)? Explain how this works.
 - i. Tell me about what services your family member currently receives or what services and supports they have received in the past from (and please describe) developmental community services, special education programs etc.
4. Does having this planning process in place **make a difference**? To the young person, you, your family, others? Describe. Tell me why and how these differences occur.
- a. Tell me what is helpful in the planning process (e.g. to the young person, you, your family, teachers, any other people).
 - b. Are there benefits for using the TAY Planning process?
 - i. If yes, can you describe them?
 - ii. Who benefits?
 - iii. How do they benefit?
 - iv. Are these short or long term benefits?
5. Describe anything that could be made easier or **improve** the TAY Planning process.
- a. Could anything be changed to improve it?
 - b. Would more time, money, human resources, information, or any specific training help the process function in a smoother fashion? Explain.
 - c. Tell me what is specifically not helpful in the planning process (e.g. to your family member, you, your family, others).
6. If **you did not have** the TAY Planning process in place to help plan for your family member's future, please describe what would that look like for you.
7. Describe the **perfect** TAY Planning process if time, money, help, human resources, and rules/regulations were not an issue.
- a. Why do you envision this as the perfect planning process? For your family member, the family, professionals, other.

Preamble: Interviewer will discuss that "engagement" is the person's level of participation and interpersonal connection with other people in the group. People have different degrees of involvement in a group and these can be conceptualized as presence, encounter, and participation (Simplican et al, 2015).

- *Presence* is physically being there with little or no contact with other people, a **precursor** to participation.
 - *Encounter* can be considered as interactions in a meeting that **provide opportunity** for participation and a sense of belonging within the group.
 - *Participation* is a person's involvement in the group activity which can promote a development of interpersonal relationships and increase/strengthen the person's **social network**.
8. From 1 (not at all) – 10(completely), how much do you feel your family member is **engaged** with the planning process for each level of engagement described above? For Presence? For Encounter? For Participation? Why do you choose this number for each?
- a. Describe their challenges with being engaged with the planning process.
9. Describe how **decisions** are made. For example: what decisions, by whom and how, etc.
- Prompt:* at meetings, during the planning process overall etc.
- a. How are differences of opinions handled?
 - b. Describe what part you play regarding decisions made for your family member's future goal(s).
 - c. Describe what part your family member has on decisions made for their future goal(s).

Preamble: Interviewer will discuss that “collaboration” is when a group of people work towards accomplishing a task using cooperation. People in the group may play different roles due to their area of knowledge and/or experience. Each person contributes to the overall outcome (Heron, 1996).

10. Describe your level of **collaboration** with others during the planning process.
- a. From 1 (not at all) – 10(completely), how much do you feel you work collaboratively during the planning process? Why do you choose this number?
 - b. Describe your level of satisfaction with collaborating with other people during the planning process.
 - c. Describe your challenges with collaborating with other people during the planning process.

Preamble: Researcher will discuss and clarify the difference between outcomes and impacts. The terminology of “outcomes” refers to the things that are a result of the planning process (e.g. planning for DSO eligibility to receive ODSP funding when turning 18 years old – the outcome is receiving Passport funding). The terminology of “impacts” refers to the results of the outcomes (eg: receiving ODSP funding will provide income for more independent living – the impact is increased independence).

11. Describe what **outcomes** you anticipate will result from your family member planning for their transition to turning 18 years or adulthood.
- a. Give me some examples of what (social) impacts might come from your family member's planning process? For yourself, your family, others, etc.
 - b. Please tell me to the best of your ability, what you invest to be able to participate in the planning process (such as travel, time – number of hours estimated, effort)?
 - c. What time goes into planning overall on your part as a family member, not just at meetings, but also on other commitments such as preparation and/or follow up requirements related specifically to your family member's TAY Planning process?
 - d. Same question as I – on your family member's part.
 - e. Describe what resources do you require to participate effectively in the planning process (such as reading time, phone calls, time off work, training/internet searches, travel costs, babysitters, etc.)?
 - f. Tell me about the number of TAY Planning meetings you are involved with each year, for example, last year, this year etc.
 - g. Tell me about the number of goals your family member has achieved during the planning process. For example: in the areas of social, employment, education and living arrangements.
 - h. Tell me about what training or information you are provided with to be involved with a planning process.
 - i. If you could imagine the TAY Planning process is not in place, what would the preparation for the transition of turning 18 years of age be like right now?
 - i. What outcomes and impacts would not be in place or planned for right now?
 - ii. What outcomes and impacts would still be in place?
 - j. Without giving any identifying information, can you tell me about the most significant planning outcomes you have seen so far or anticipate happening in the future?
 - i. For your family?
 - ii. For service providers?
 - iii. How common are these kinds of outcomes and impacts? (Prompt for frequency, percentages, etc.)
12. What **advice** would you give other families about effective TAY Planning? Why do you feel this is important advice?

Conclusion: Is there any other information you would like to share with me? Or is there anything that you thought I might ask about that I have not? Do you have any questions you want to ask me?

Script for Family/Guardian of Youth 18-25 Years

***Interviewer: Preamble about what is the TAY Planning Process (e.g. were you given a written copy of your family member's plan?), explain Tri-Sector protocol. Determine if the family member was planning prior to 2013 or not. This will determine the type of planning process to discuss.*

Throughout the interview, a standard prompt for description and elaboration of examples will be used when more detail is needed.

1. Describe what the **term** "TAY Planning" means to you within the developmental TAY Planning process
 - i. What terminology do you use when talking about the planning process (e.g. Integrated Transition Plan, TAY Planning, what do you call the written plan etc)?
2. Describe the planning process you experienced before your family member turned 18 years old.
3. Describe **why** you helped this person plan for their future (turning 18 years old)?
 - a. How did you get involved with the TAY Planning process?
 - b. How many times were you involved with helping plan for this person to set goals for their future?
 - c. Was it the same plan or a different plan with different people involved in planning? Describe please.
 - d. In your opinion, what would have been a good age for a young person with I/DD to start planning for the adult years? Why?
 - e. Describe your most significant achievement helping your family member and reaching their goals.
 - f. Looking at your role/part in participating in the TAY Planning process, can you give me some examples of any goals for yourself during the time you were a part of the planning process?
 - i. For example: did you want to learn more about what adult services are available, how they operate, what they offer etc.
 - ii. Did you have personal goals such as getting different employment once your family member was living in another arrangement?
4. Describe **what** steps/stages you understood were involved with the planning process.
 - a. Were there any parts of the planning process that you feel you did not understand?
 - b. How many meetings did you attend (e.g. per month, year etc)?
 - c. How long did these meetings usually last?
 - d. Who usually attended these meetings besides yourself?
 - e. Where did these meetings usually take place?

- f. If you were not attending these meetings, what would you have been doing (e.g. would you have been at your place of employment)?
 - g. Was there a written plan? Please describe its contents, who had a copy of it etc.
 - h. What areas of the young person's life were discussed and planned for in the written plan?
 - i. How was your family member determined eligible for adult developmental services (ODSP/Passport funding)? Explain how this worked.
 - j. Tell me about what services your family member received prior to turning 18 (and please describe): developmental community services, special education programs?
5. Did having this planning process in place **make a difference**? To the young person, you, your family, others? Describe. Tell me why and how these differences occurred.
- a. Tell me what was helpful in the planning process (e.g. to the young person, you, your family, teachers, any other people). What worked well (for you, the family member, professionals, others)
 - b. Were there benefits for using the TAY Planning process?
 - i. If yes, can you describe them?
 - ii. Who benefited?
 - iii. How did they benefit?
 - iv. Were these short or long term benefits?
6. Describe anything that could have been made it easier or would have **improved** the TAY Planning process.
- a. Could anything have been changed to improve it?
 - b. Would more time, money, human resources, information, or any specific training have helped the process function in a smoother fashion? Explain.
 - c. Tell me what was specifically not helpful in the planning process (e.g. to your family member, you, your family, others).
7. If you **had not had** the TAY Planning process in place to help plan for your family member's future, please describe what would that have looked like for you.
8. Describe the **perfect** TAY Planning process if time, money, help, human resources, and rules/regulations were not an issue.
- a. Why do you envision this as the perfect planning process? For your family member, the family, professionals, other.

Preamble: Researcher will discuss that "engagement" is the person's level of participation and interpersonal connection with other people in the group. People have

different degrees of involvement in a group and these can be conceptualized as presence, encounter, and participation (Simplican et al, 2015).

- *Presence is physically being there with little or no contact with other people, a **precursor** to participation.*
 - *Encounter can be considered as interactions in a meeting that **provide opportunity** for participation and a sense of belonging within the group.*
 - *Participation is a person's involvement in the group activity which can promote a development of interpersonal relationships and increase/strengthen the person's **social network**.*
9. From 1 (not at all) – 10(completely), how much did you feel your family member was **engaged** with the planning process for each level of engagement described above? For Presence? For Encounter? For Participation? Why do you choose this number for each?
- a. Describe their challenges with being engaged with the planning process.
10. Describe how **decisions** were made. For example: what decisions, by whom and how, etc.
- Prompt:* at meetings, during the planning process overall etc.
- a. How were differences of opinions handled?
- b. Describe what part you played regarding decisions made for your family member's future goal(s).
- c. Describe what part your family member had on decisions made for their future goal(s).

Preamble: Researcher will discuss that “collaboration” is when a group of people work towards accomplishing a task using cooperation. People in the group may play different roles due to their area of knowledge and/or experience. Each person contributes to the overall outcome (Heron, 1996).

11. Describe your level of **collaboration** with others during the planning process.
- a. From 1 (not at all) – 10(completely), how much did you feel you worked collaboratively during the planning process? Why do you choose this number?
- b. Describe your level of satisfaction with collaborating with other people during the planning process.
- c. Describe your challenges with collaborating with other people during the planning process.
- d. In your opinion, can you describe the overall amount of collaboration between everyone (all people) involved in the planning process and give examples to help me understand your descriptions.

Preamble: Researcher will discuss and clarify the difference between outcomes and impacts. The terminology of “outcomes” refers to the things that are a result of the planning process (e.g. planning for DSO eligibility to receive Passport funding when turning 18 years old – the outcome is receiving ODSP funding). The terminology of “impacts” refers to the results of the outcomes (eg: receiving ODSP funding will provide income for more independent living – the impact is increased independence).

12. Describe what **outcomes** you feel resulted from your family member planning for their transition to turning 18 years or adulthood.
 - a. Give me some examples of what (social) impacts came from your family member’s planning process? For yourself, your family, others, etc.
 - b. Please tell me to the best of your ability, what you invested to be able to participate in the planning process (such as travel, time – number of hours estimated, effort)?
 - c. What time went into planning overall on your part as a family member, not just at meetings, but also on other commitments such as preparation and/or follow up requirements related specifically to your family member’s TAY Planning process?
 - d. Same question as I – on your family member’s part.
 - e. Describe what resources did you require to participate effectively in the planning process (such as reading time, phone calls, time off work, training/internet searches, travel costs, babysitters, etc.)?
 - f. Tell me about the number of TAY Planning meetings you were involved with each year, for example, last year, this year etc.
 - g. Tell me about the number of goals your family member had achieved during the planning process. For example: in the areas of social, employment, education and living arrangements.
 - h. Tell me about what training or information you were provided with to be involved with a planning process.
 - i. If you could imagine the TAY Planning process had not been in place, what would the preparation for the transition of turning 18 years of age had been like?
 - i. What outcomes and impacts would not now be in place?
 - ii. What outcomes and impacts would still be in place?
 - j. Without giving any identifying information, can you tell me about the most significant planning outcomes you have seen?
 - i. For your family?
 - ii. For service providers?
 - iii. How common are these kinds of outcomes and impacts? (Prompt for frequency, percentages, etc.)

13. What **advice** would you give other families about effective TAY Planning who are planning for their family member today? Why do you feel this is important advice?

Conclusion: Is there any other information you would like to share with me? Or is there anything that you thought I might ask about that I have not? Do you have any questions you want to ask me?

Appendix M

Script for Professionals

Interviewer: Preamble to discuss what is the TAY Planning process, Tri-Sector protocol and show copy of the protocol to clarify.

Throughout the interview, a standard prompt for description and elaboration of examples will be used when more detail is needed.

1. What **terminology** do you use to label a youth's planning process and the written plan (ie: TAY Planning, Integrated Transition Plan, etc)?
 - a. How do you define developmental disability?
 - b. How is it defined in your sector?
 - c. How is it determined or assessed in your sector?
 - d. What documents guide this identification process?
 - e. Describe what the term "TAY Planning" means to you within the developmental sector.
 - f. Describe the communication and terminology you have experienced being used between sectors regarding TAY Planning.
 - i. What terminology is used in the educational sector?
 - ii. What terminology is used in the children's service sector?
 - iii. What terminology is used in the adult service sector?

The interviewer will need to make the age distinction of 14-17 years old as the age group being referred to in this question.

The interviewer will ask the participant about the description of Transitional Aged Youth they have been involved with and what developmental disability they typically plan with (I/DD, a dual diagnosis, other identification).

- g. In terms of the planning process, are there any overall differences in planning for youth with developmental disabilities based on diagnosis (e.g. I/DD versus Dual Diagnosis)?
 - h. What is the relationship between an IEP and an Integrated Transition Plan?
 - i. Is the Integrated Transition Plan attached to the IEP?
2. Describe the planning process and the steps/stages involved. (What is the process?)
 - a. How is the youth typically identified as being in need of TAY Planning?
 - b. At what age is the person usually identified? By whom?
 - c. Is there an application process to request formal planning to begin?
 - i. Describe how this step happens
 - d. Can you describe the consent procedure? For the youth, the family etc
 - e. How is it submitted to Contact Niagara for Developmental Services?

- f. Are assessments involved in the TAY Planning process? If yes, how does the acquisition of assessments happen? If yes, who gets the assessment information? Who is notified that an assessment is completed? Who has access to the assessment contents? If yes, what purpose(s) do the assessments serve?
- g. In your organization, give examples of who organizes the planning process? What are the person's job title and their role in the planning process? How does the person become designated as either the "Planner" or the "Lead" in the planning process? What responsibilities are they expected to oversee?
- h. Describe how are the family and youth first contacted to initiate the planning process? How are they contacted for the ongoing procedures of the planning process? What is the process for youth and family contact? When? By whom? How often? Does age of the youth influence direct contact with them versus their family at any time?
- i. Describe a planning meeting. Give examples of who attends planning meetings? Describe these people and their roles in the planning process. How often do these meetings occur? How long does a typical meeting last? Where do these meetings typically take place? How is it decided who should attend? Who follows up with the meeting decisions? Describe how is this follow-up conducted? Describe how are the meeting decisions documented? Who is provided with documents from the planning meetings? Are there any people you feel are missing from the TAY Planning meetings or the overall planning process? Describe who these people are and what contribution(s) they may bring to the process.
- j. Is there a difference in the planning process for youth aged 14-15 versus 16-17 years old? If yes, describe the differences. For example: do the youth's goals change in any way? Describe. If yes, describe how does this change in focus happen or occur? If yes, do you feel these differences are important? Why?
- k. Please explain if/how DSO eligibility affects the planning process?
- l. Tell me the last time you were involved with a TAY Planning process.
 - i. When was this? For example: month and year.
 - ii. What was your role in the planning process at that time?
 - iii. Describe any other role(s) you have played in helping youth (14-17 years old) plan for their future.
- m. What are the goals that tend to be the focus for the TAY Planning process? Are there consistent goals (themes) overall when looking at all the TAY plans you are/have been involved with? *Or*, does it vary from young person to young person?

- n. Describe the supports that are typically needed? To make the plan work? To achieve the young person's goals?
- o. What is your opinion of a successful plan? There are the 4 main areas of a written TAY Plan. These four categories are social, education, employment and housing. Does that cover all areas needed to develop a good plan?
 - i. If yes, explain.
 - ii. If no, are there any other areas that would be beneficial to add?
Prompt: such as relationships, marriage, healthcare etc.

NB: This participant may have played different roles in different youths' plans – have the participant identify and describe each experience/plan separately.

- p. How many years in total have you been working with Transitional Aged Youth (e.g. in your current position, in past positions/employment etc)?
 - i. Describe the extent of your **experience** in this area (TAY Planning process).
 - ii. What age were these young people at the time you were helping each one of them with their planning?
 - iii. How many plans overall (e.g. the number of young people, 14-17 years) have you been involved with?
 - iv. Can you describe a time when you have been involved with different types of plans for the same person? If yes – tell me more about these different plans.
 - q. In your opinion, what is an **ideal age/grade** for a young person with a developmental disability to start planning for their transition to adult services? Can you explain?
 - r. Describe how **decisions** are made at planning meetings and during the planning process overall and/or with any specific individual plans. For example, how are differences in opinions handled?
3. Describe the TAY Planning **process prior** to 2013 (if you were involved in the planning process prior to 2013 and this question is applicable).
- i. *Prompt the participant that this was when the education and children service sector developed separate plans with a young person.*
4. Describe the TAY Planning process **today** (if you are currently involved in the TAY Planning process).
- i. *Prompt the participant that this involves the Tri-Sector approach of developing a single plan.*
 - ii. Are there **similarities** between the old and new way of planning? Please describe.

- iii. Are there **differences** between the old and new way of planning?
Please describe.
5. Describe if there are **benefits** for the current TAY Planning process?
 - i. If yes, can you describe them?
 - ii. Why would you consider these as benefits?
 - iii. Who benefits?
 - iv. How do they benefit?
 - v. Are these short or long term benefits?
 - vi. What components would you consider important to retain in any planning process?
6. Describe anything that could be made easier or would **improve** the TAY Planning process. Could anything be changed to improve it? Could anything be added to the planning process to improve it?
 - i. Would more time, human resources, or any specific training help the process function in a smoother fashion?
7. Describe the **perfect** TAY Planning process if time, human resources, and regulations were not an issue. For the young person? For the family? For professionals? For others?
 - i. Can you give me examples?

*Preamble: Researcher will discuss that “**engagement**” is the person’s level of participation and interpersonal connection with other people in the group. People have different degrees of involvement in a group and these can be conceptualized as presence, encounter, and participation (Simplican et al, 2015).*

- *Presence is physically being there with little or no contact with other people, a **precursor** to participation.*
 - *Encounter can be considered as interactions in a meeting that **provides opportunity** for participation and a sense of belonging within the group.*
 - *Participation is a person’s involvement in the group activity which can promote a development of interpersonal relationships and increase/strengthen the person’s **social network**.*
8. From 1 (not at all) – 10 (completely), how much do you feel youth are engaged with the planning process for each level (presence, encounter and participation)? Why do you choose this number for each?
 - i. Describe their challenges with being engaged with the planning process.

*Preamble: Researcher will discuss that “**collaboration**” is when a group of people work towards accomplishing a task using cooperation. People in the group may play*

different roles due to their area of knowledge and/or experience. Each person contributes to the overall outcome (Heron, 1996).

9. Describe your level of collaboration within the planning process. From 1 (not at all) – 10 (completely), how much did you feel you worked collaboratively during the planning process? Why did you choose this number?
 - i. Describe your level of satisfaction with collaborating with other people during the planning process. Give examples.
 - ii. Describe your challenges with collaborating with other people during the planning process. Give examples.
 - iii. Describe how other players (e.g., other service providers, youth, family etc) seem to collaborate in the planning process. Describe others visible level of collaboration overall in the process and/or with a specific individual plan. Give examples.

Preamble: Researcher will discuss and clarify the difference between outcomes and impacts. The terminology of “outcomes” refers to the things that are a result of the planning process (eg: planning for DSO eligibility to receive Passport funding when turning 18 years old – the outcome is receiving Passport Funding). The terminology of “impacts” refers to the results of the outcomes (eg: receiving Passport funding will provide income for more independent living – the impact is increased independence).

10. Please tell me to the best of your ability, all the different people you know who are apart of the TAY Planning process.
 - i. What role does each person play? Prioritize the list of people to identify key stakeholders.
 - ii. What do they invest to participate in the process (such as travel, time, effort)? In terms of your own role and experience, tell me the number of TAY Plans you are involved with each year.
 - iii. Describe what you invest to participate in the process (such as travel, time, effort).
 - iv. What resources are required for you to participate in the planning process (such as administrative support, training, etc.)?
11. Describe the outcomes you have seen as a result of using the TAY Planning process. Example: for youth, families, yourself and other professionals.
 - i. Could you describe what outcomes you value more? Please rank these outcomes from most to least important. Explain.
 - ii. Describe the impacts that result from these outcomes of using a TAY Planning process. Example: for youth, families, yourself and other professionals.
12. Describe the impacts that result from these outcomes of using a TAY Planning process. Example: for youth, families, yourself and other professionals.

- i. What would it be like if the TAY Planning process was not in place?
13. Describe your most significant contribution to a planning process.
- i. Describe your most significant achievement helping a young person with DD and their goals.
 - ii. Looking at your role/part in participating in the TAY Planning process, do you have any goals for yourself? For the process?
14. What **advice** would you give transitional aged youth, other professionals, families, anyone else who are planning for a transitional aged youth today?

Conclusion: Is there any other information you would like to share with me or is there anything that you thought I might ask about that I haven't asked? Do you have any questions you want to ask me?

Appendix N

Semi-Structured Interview Questions – For NRTAYC

Welcome everyone. I'd like to start by explaining how this group interview will be conducted:

- I will be audio-taping us as a group.
- I will be giving you each a number card before we start the interview questions.
- I will be asking the group a number of questions about this committee and its role with the TAY Planning process and the Tri-Sector protocol.
- Whenever you answer/speak – if you would please start with “This is number X” for the purpose of the audio-recording.
- Key points will be written on a flip chart for a visual to help us follow our ideas.
- I want to assure you that any agency names, people’s names or other identifying information that is mentioned in this group session today will not be included in any public or published materials or reports.
- Before we begin with the group questions, I will provide each of you with a consent form which we will review. We will then spend a few minutes completing the consent and a general information form (demographics).
- When you return your consent form and general information form to me – you will receive your designated group number card.
- I should note that the recording often picks up additional noises (e.g. tapping your foot, moving your chair etc). It is very helpful for transcription purposes if we can try and keep these noises to a minimum, understanding that people may need to shift for comfort etc... Thank you!
- If you decide to leave the Focus Group and discontinue your participation during this Focus Group interview time, please leave your designated group number card on the table and exit as quietly as possible.

**Are there any questions or concerns before we get started with the group discussion?

YOUR DESIGNATED GROUP NUMBER IS: _____

Interview Questions:

1. Can each person one at a time introduce themselves by starting with their card number and describe their role as member of this committee.
2. A few starter questions to ask regarding the operation of the committee:
 - a. How often does this committee meet?
 - b. What is the length of time you meet each time?

- c. Location of meetings?
- d. Travel time to attend meetings?
 - i. *Prompt*: please estimate.
 - ii. *Prompt (write on flip chart)*: Gather each participant's estimated time, create a spectrum and add the number of participants at each area of the spectrum.
- e. What is the usual number of members who attend?
 - i. *Prompt*: lowest number to highest number and average attendance estimated.
 - f. What administrative resources are required to operate this committee?
- 3. What is your understanding of the purpose of the NRTAYC?
- 4. Was there a similar committee prior to 2013?
 - a. What purpose did this former committee play in the TAY Planning process?
 - i. For example: what outcomes or impacts resulted from the committee's role? Please describe.
- 5. Has the committee played a different role in any way since 2013?
 - i. *Prompts*: What changed as a result of the 2013 Tri-Ministry TAY initiative?
 - ii. *Prompts*: What changed for the Committee? *For example*: have you seen any different outcomes or impacts from the TAY Planning process for Transitional Aged Youth, for families, for professionals due to the committee's work since 2013? Please describe.
- 6. Since 2013, has the purpose of the NRTAYC changed or evolved in any way? Explain.
- 7. How does the committee currently fulfill its purpose (refer back to answers for # 3 & 6)? *Prompt*: Please describe (e.g. what does the committee do to implement the Transition Planning Protocol and Procedures (2013) and/or the Transitional Aged Youth Planning – March 2017 – Local Community Agreement?).
- 8. What did planning look like for youth with a developmental disability prior to the Tri-Sector Integrated Transition Planning Protocol? Please describe.
- 9. What does it look like now? Please describe.
- 10. What has the Tri-Sector TAY Planning Protocol accomplished since it was initiated in 2013?
- 11. What are the current short-term goals of this committee?
- 12. What steps are in place to support the goals identified in #11?
- 13. What are the long-term goals of the committee?
- 14. What steps are being put in place to support the goals identified in #13?
- 15. What may be some long range future goals of this committee?
- 16. What do you feel this committee has done really well? Why?
- 17. Is there anything that could help to make things easier for this committee's work to be accomplished? What? Why?
- 18. If this committee could describe the "perfect" TAY Planning process – what would that look like?
 - a. What role would this committee play in that perfect planning process?

- b. As a group of professionals who support the TAY Planning process, what would you see as resources that would be helpful for this committee?
- c. What resources would be helpful to others?
 - i. *Prompt:* youth, families, service providers etc.
- d. What key outcomes and impacts would this perfect TAY Planning process possibly produce?
 - i. *Prompt:* For example, would it decrease the waitlist for receiving adult services when a youth turns 18 years of age, increases success of TAY Planning goals (in numbers, in time frames etc)?
 - ii. *Prompt:* Would it decrease stress? For whom? How?
 - iii. *Prompt:* Would it increase quality of life for youth turning the age of 18 years? Describe.

Yes or No (circle) In addition to my verbal responses during this Focus Group activity, I agree to have my written responses included in the summary of the information provided by this group collectively.

Appendix O

Information about the Project – For Young People and Families

Integrated Transition Planning For Youth with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability: A Social Return on Investment Perspective

Contact Niagara is working with a Brock PhD student (Anne Readhead) and Brock University Professors (including Frances Owen) along with two Family and Community Consultants to study the Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) planning process for youth with an intellectual/developmental disability (I/DD). They want to know how it is working or has worked for young people with I/DD when planning for adulthood (turning 18 years old).

- We want to know what young people and their family think about the youth becoming an adult. Do they need help with this change in their life? What help did they get? Who helped? What help should they get? What is good or not helpful about the process? Does or would getting help make a difference for youth and their family in preparation for moving as smoothly as possible into receiving support from the adult service system (at 18 years old)?
- In 2014, the province set out expectations for when a young person (14-17 years old) is planning for adulthood. As part of these expectations, the Niagara Region has developed a local Transitional Age Youth protocol, which has developed steps that support school staff and agency staff to work together with the young person and the family to design a good plan to support the transition from children's to adult services. We want to know if you have had a plan or wish you had a plan. This is why we would meet to talk.
- The information from meeting with you will be used to describe any good things and/or not good things about the planning process. All information will be kept private. Only your ideas will be used, but not your name in any way.
- We will also be asking school staff and different agency staff to explain their experiences with supporting young people and their family in planning for adulthood.

Project Planning

For this study, the main Research Team consists of Contact Niagara employees (Nadine Wallace, Susan Kowalski and Katie McKay), Carla and Barb Nicole as Family and Community Consultants and Anne Readhead and Frances Owen from Brock

University. Together, the Community Research Committee has decided to look at the TAY Planning process and its benefits for everyone including youth, families, educational professionals, and professionals in community organizations that include services for persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD).

Project Questions

The Community Research Committee is interested in the following questions:

1. What parts of the Niagara Transitional Aged Youth planning process are good and/or not helpful for the transitioning young person and their family?
2. What parts of the Niagara Transitional Aged Youth planning process are good and/or not helpful for the teachers, principals, and other staff at school and support staff in the community?
3. How could the TAY Planning process be made better?

Appendix P

Information about the Project – For Professionals

Integrated Transition Planning For Youth with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability: A Social Return on Investment Perspective

Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services (Contact Niagara) and two Family and Community Consultants have developed a research project partnership with a Brock PhD student (Anne Readhead) who is supported by her thesis supervisor (Frances Owen) and a thesis committee at Brock University. This partnership allows the academic and service sectors to come together and it provides the possibility for community-based research. With this opportunity, the aim is to study the Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) planning process and its implementation for those who may be eligible for adult developmental services when they reach age eighteen. We would like to explore the outcomes and impacts of the TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region through the perspectives of youth and their families, educational professionals, and professionals in community service organizations. Our interest is to look at the integrated TAY Planning process and what impacts it has had for youth, families and service providers. In addition, did any of these impacts make a difference in preparation for navigation and coordination of steps needed in transitioning as smoothly as possible from the children's service sector to adult services? A Tri-Sector approach is in place in the Niagara Region that promotes the collaboration of educational and developmental service professionals along with youth who have developmental disabilities and their families. In addition to planning a smooth transition for the youth, the intent of a Tri-Sector TAY Planning process is also to provide service providers with a viable process to support the transition planning process.

For the purpose of her academic dissertation, Anne will write a case study of the TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region. The information she will gather from individual interviews and group discussions will be used to describe the inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the TAY Planning process which was initiated in Niagara in 2013. This information will then be examined using the Social Return on Investment (SROI) model that is designed to determine a monetary value of social impacts, such as the ones that may be described by participants in the case study. The SROI analysis translates any personal and social gains into financial terminology.

Social Return on Investment (SROI)

The SROI model was developed in 1996 in the United States but it has had limited application in social services in Canada. The appeal of the SROI model is that it creatively translates implicit human values, such as quality of life, into explicit monetary terms. SROI may be an effective tool to advocate for and validate social service impacts in a concrete way by illustrating the cost/benefit ratio of the TAY Planning process as implemented through application of the Tri-Sector (formerly known as Tri-Ministry involving MCYS, MCSS and EDU) regional and local protocols.

Project Planning

For this study, the Community Research Committee consists of Contact Niagara employees (Nadine Wallace, Susan Kowalski and Katie McKay), Carla and Barb Nicale (a youth and adult family member who have experienced the shift from child to adult services) and Anne Readhead and Frances Owen from Brock University. Collaboratively, the community research committee has decided to explore the nature of the Tri-Sector TAY Planning process and its impacts on and benefits for all stakeholders including youth, families, educational professionals, and professionals in community organizations including services that support persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD).

Research Questions

1. What components or aspects of the Niagara integrated Transitional Aged Youth planning process are described as beneficial and advantageous for
 - a. the transitioning youth and their family;
 - b. for the Tri-Sector service providers?
2. What components or aspects of the Niagara integrated Transitional Aged Youth planning process are described as not helpful for
 - a. the transitioning youth and their family;
 - b. for the Tri-Sector service providers?
3. How could the Tri-Sector Niagara integrated Transitional Aged Youth planning process be enhanced or strengthened to create an ideal planning process for all stakeholders?

These three questions will guide the development of this research. In addition, the SROI analysis will examine the estimated monetary value of the outcomes and impacts described in this study. The SROI will translate the social value created by the integrated TAY Planning process into monetary terminology to illustrate financial value of the social impacts of the TAY process described by the youth, their families, educational professionals and community organizations that include services for persons with I/DD.

Appendix Q

Demographic Information**Participant Identification :** _____

Name of Person: _____

Personal Contact Information: _____

*Address: _____

*Phone number: _____

*Email: _____

D.O.B/Age: _____

Gender identity/expression: _____

Preferred pronoun (e.g. she, he, they): _____

For Young People:

Researcher: I am going to ask you questions now so you can tell me about yourself and your life.

1. **(All ages):** Do you go to school? _____

*If yes, name of your school: _____

*If yes, Grade/Class: _____

*If no, when did you stopped going to school: _____

2. **(All ages):** Describe your living arrangements. For example: do you live with family, roommate, alone etc?

*Are you happy with your living arrangements? Tell me why.

3. **(All ages):** What kinds of things do you do now when at school or during the day?*Prompt: Name your daily activities (e.g. prompt for frequency and duration).*

*Work:

*Volunteer:

*Day program:

*Leisure/fun:

*Other:

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher Assistant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix R

Demographic Information

Participant Identification : _____

Name of Person: _____

Personal Contact Information: _____

*Address: _____

*Phone number: _____

*Email: _____

Gender identity/expression: _____

Preferred pronoun (e.g. she, he, they): _____

For Family/Guardian:

Your relationship to the transitioning person:

Relative (please specify – father, mother, sister, etc.): _____

Guardian: _____

Friend: _____

The transitioning person’s current age/D.O.B: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Name: _____

Researcher Assistant Name: _____

Appendix S

Demographic

Participant Identification: _____

Name of Person: _____

Contact Information: _____

*Address: _____

*Phone number: _____

*Email: _____

Gender identity/expression: _____

Preferred pronoun (e.g. she, he, they): _____

For Professionals:

Occupation: *Education (e.g. attached to a school board) _____

*Community Service Provider (e.g. Community Living) _____

*Other _____

*Children's Services _____

*Adult Services (18+) _____

Position/Title: _____

Employment site: _____

Length of employment at current position: _____

Past employment related to this field: _____

Length of employment in the field: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Name: _____

Researcher Assistant Name: _____

Appendix T

Interview Questions – For NRTAYC

Focus Group

Demographic Information

Group Card Number: _____

Date: _____

Name of Person:
Contact Information: *Email address *Phone
Briefly describe your role/representation as a member of NRTAYC:
Your Current Employment Title:
Brief description of your employment responsibilities: Please put an X beside each of the following that describe your job: *Education (e.g. attached to a school board) ____ *Community Service Provider (e.g. Community Living) ____ *Other ____ *If you mark X here, describe: _____ *Children’s Services ____ *Adult Services (18 years +) ____
Length of time in your current position:

Length of time in the field:
Description of your experience with TAY Planning process (below): A. Were you involved in TAY Planning process <u>prior</u> to 2013? Yes or No (circle one) B. If yes , please describe what role(s) you played in the planning process at that time. C. If yes , please estimate the number of plans you participated in developing (e.g. the number of youth in total). D. Have you been involved with TAY Planning <u>since</u> 2013? Yes or No (circle one) E. If yes , please describe what role(s) you played in the planning process at this time. F. If yes , please estimate how many TAY plans you have acted as the Lead in facilitating the planning process (e.g. the number of youth in total).
Would you like to participate in a one-on-one interview to provide more details about the TAY Planning process? <i>If you mark "yes", I will contact you to arrange an interview.</i> _____ Yes or _____ No

Thank you for your help with this project!

Appendix U

Confidentiality Agreement – Research Assistant

- Principle Student Investigator:** Anne Readhead (PhD Student), Child and Youth Studies, Brock University.
- Principle Faculty Investigator:** Professor Frances Owen, Child and Youth Studies, Brock University.
- Co-Investigators:** Professor Donato Tarulli, Professor Maureen Connolly, and Professor Jennifer Li from Brock University.
- Nadine Wallace, Susan Kowalski and Katie McKay, Contact Niagara for Children’s and Developmental Services, St. Catharines.
- Carla and Barb Nicale, two Family and Community Consultants

Name of Assistant: _____

Purpose

- I understand that the purpose of this research project in which I have agreed to assist is to study the Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) planning process and its implementation for those who may be eligible for adult developmental services when they reach age eighteen. This will be done by looking at outcomes and impacts of the TAY Planning process in the Niagara Region through many perspectives.
- I understand that this study is being conducted as part of a PhD dissertation.

I _____ (name of assistant) agree to keep all information that I hear, read and write about during my time assisting in this research as confidential. This includes”

- Any information, recorded or not, received or acquired in connection with my duties is considered confidential.
- All information given out or discovered about any participants, schools, organizations and the university’s operations shall be held in confidence.
- You will not make any public statements to media or other on behalf of this research.

- You will act in a professional manner in the performance of your role as assistant to this research.

I have provided a copy of my TCPS2 certificate (attached to this form).

Signature of Research Assistant: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Primary Student Researcher: _____

Appendix V

Contact Niagara – Letter of Consent



May 14, 2019

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services, I would like to acknowledge the collaboration between Brock University PhD candidate Anne Readhead and Contact Niagara, with respect to the examination of the Transitional Age Youth Process. Please consider this our consent to the use of our Organization's name (*Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services*, and subsequently *Contact Niagara*) in Ms. Readhead's research, and in any publications and presentation related to this research. This consent is provided on the understanding that Ms. Readhead would first consult with the Executive Director of Contact Niagara, should there be any reason to believe any reference would put Contact Niagara, or its clients, at-risk in any way.

Thank you again for this wonderful opportunity. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me as indicated below.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Nadine Wallace".

Nadine Wallace Executive Director Contact Niagara for
Children's and Developmental Services and
Co-ordinator of the Independent Clinical
Review Process for the Ontario Autism
Program nadine@contactniagara.org

905-684-3407 extension 7233

1-800-933-3617 extension 7233

Tel: (905) 684-3407 * 1-800-933-3617 * TTY (905) 684-6289
* Fax: (905) 684-2728

info@contactniagara.org * www.contactniagara.org

Appendix W

Consent Form – Community Research Committee Members

Family and Community Consultant with Intellectual/Developmental Disability

Dear

Even though you have agreed to be a partner in helping me to design my Brock University project it is important that you are fully aware of what this partnership means. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with important information about this project. At the end of this letter there will be a space for you to sign. This signature will mean that you agree to help. Please return this letter to Anne Readhead (Brock University PhD student) and keep a copy for your records.

The name of the study is: **Integrated Transition Planning for Youth with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability: A Social Return on Investment (SROI) Perspective.**

What this title means is that we want to look at young people with I/DD who have already or are trying to plan for when they become an adult (such as leaving school, going to a day program, finding work, and/or living in a different home). We want to know who helps them plan and how they help them plan and what would make this planning better. The SROI means that we want to look at what it costs to plan and what money is maybe saved by planning with many people and/or at a young age.

Q1. What do you think this project is about?

Why Anne is doing this project:

- To learn about how staff at schools, children's programs and adult programs for persons with I/DD with I/DD with I/DD work together to help a young person prepare to have an adult life (such as leaving high school, going to college, getting work, finding important things to do as an adult).

Q2. Does Anne want to look at how people work together? Yes/No

Q3. If yes, who does she want to learn about?

- To work with Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services (Contact Niagara) to make a project that will help find out how young people with I/DD are getting or did get the help they need to plan for their adult life.
- To interview young people with intellectual/developmental disabilities, families of youth with intellectual/developmental disabilities, school staff, community program staff and members of the Niagara Regional Transitional Aged Youth Committee. We will also conduct group interviews for this committee where they answer the interview questions together.

Q4. Who might be some of the people Anne talks (interviews) to and asks questions with?

- What we find out in this project may be talked about at conferences, workshops and in classrooms for anyone who wants to learn about what we found out.
- What we find out in this project may be written in books/book chapters, in Anne's thesis for her Brock University degree, on pieces of paper, written articles and/or in presentations that are shown on a projector/computer. This information will be available for anyone who is interested in learning about what we found out.

Q5. Will the information about this project be taught to new people who want to learn about young people with I/DD who are planning for adulthood?

Q6. Can you give me some examples of where this information might be written down or presented?

What you need to do to help with this project:

- Tell us if it is okay to use your full name on all information that any interested people can read. For example: we will send out letters to young people, families, and to places such as to schools, day programs and staff who work with young people with I/DD.

- If you agree, we also will use your name in presentations (such as in classrooms, workshops, conferences) and publications (books, reports, my thesis and/or written articles) that happen after the project is done.
- If you agree, your full name will be used to let people know you are helping with the project.
- If you agree, you will be identified as a “Family and Community Consultant.”
- Help us decide the best ways to do this project. For example: you will help us make up some of the questions we will ask people and ask them in language they can understand.
- That you will not try to get people to come for interviews for this project by yourself or encourage people to volunteer in any way. For example: if you see a friend or someone you know, you will not try to talk them into signing up for an interview. It is completely their choice to volunteer or not.

Q7. Will you try to get people to volunteer to be interviewed for this project?

What will be done to protect privacy and confidentiality:

- All information found in the project will be kept confidential to protect the identity of participants and minimize any possible problems. For example: when people tell us information in an interview – we tell other people this information but not who said it.
- Information we get from interviewing people will be recorded on audio-tapes and written down on paper. All this information will be kept in a locked location at Brock University after someone has written down what people tell us in the interviews.
- Only Anne Readhead, Professor Frances Owen and their project helpers will have access to the names of people who decide to be interviewed. You, yourself, will not be able to see the names of anyone who volunteers to be interviewed.
- The people who volunteer to be interviewed will not be called by name in presentations, reports or publications that talk about what we find out in this project.

When a person’s name will be told:

- If a person is being interviewed and starts to talk about getting hurt or going to hurt someone, their name will given to someone who will help them with this problem. If the police or courts ask for their name, it has to be given to them.

Some good things about doing this project:

- The project will give people a chance to talk about their experience with planning or helping someone plan for adult life.
- The project might find out what things can be done in the future to help young people even more while they plan for their adult life.
- The project will help school, children's program and adult program staff to understand what young people with I/DD need and what makes it easier for them to plan for adult life.

What could not be good in this project:

- If someone is being interviewed and becomes upset about how their planning for adulthood is going or how it went, we will ask them if we can give them the number of someone they can call so they talk about their problems and get help. Or, we will ask them what we can do to help. The person may also decide to stop the interview all together or do the interview again at another time.

Q8. Do you have any questions that you would like Anne to answer about what we have just talked about?

Is there anything you would like Anne to explain again or talk more about?

Please complete the section below:

Yes or No (circle): I agree that my full name will be written as a Co-Investigator and I will be called a "Family and Community Consultant" in such documents as the Brock University, District School Board of Niagara and Niagara Catholic District School Board Research Ethics Board applications, and also may be included in publications, and presentations at conferences, in classrooms or other educational settings. For example: I understand that my full name may be in written articles, books, Anne Readhead's thesis, reports and on presentations that are shown to people in classrooms or workshops or meetings or conferences.

Yes or No (circle): I give permission for anything I help to develop in this project (such as my ideas about the project) to be used in future projects about the same topic. For example: the interview questions that I helped decide to use may be questions used in another project in the future.

A. Do you agree to be a partner in this project research partnership?

Yes ___ No ___

B. Do you agree having your full name listed as a co-investigator for this project in ethics applications, in publications, reports, in Anne's thesis, and in presentations?

Yes ___ No ___

C. Do you agree to being called a Family and Community Consultant in ethics applications, in publications, in reports in Anne's thesis and in presentations?

Yes ___ No ___

D. Do you agree to have your email address listed on Anne's Brock University, District School Board of Niagara and Niagara Catholic District School Board ethics applications?

Yes ___ No ___

****If you agree to everything in this form please sign below:**

I, _____ (print name), agree to the above conditions.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Relationship to person: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at ar92qi@brocku.ca or my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Frances Owen, at either fowen@brocku.ca or at 905 688 5550 ext 4807. Questions can also be addressed to the Research Ethics Board at Brock Research 905 688 5550 ext. 3035, email: reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anne Readhead (PhD Candidate, Brock University)

Appendix X

Consent Form – Community Research Committee Members

Family and Community Consultant

Dear

Even though you have agreed to be a partner in helping me to design my PhD research project it is important that you are fully aware of what this partnership entails. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the specific information about this study. At the conclusion of this letter there will be a section for you to sign. This signature will indicate that you agree to participate. Please return this letter to Anne Readhead (Brock University PhD student) and keep a copy for your records.

The name of the study is: **Integrated Transition Planning for Youth with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability: A Social Return on Investment Perspective.**

The nature and purpose of this PhD dissertation research is:

- To learn about the impact of the implementation of the (Tri-Sector) Integrated Transition Planning for Young People with Developmental Disabilities memorandum and resulting protocols.
- To work with Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services (Contact Niagara) through a community-based research methodology to develop a project design that will provide a source of feedback regarding the Tri-Sector Transitional Aged Youth planning process.
- To interview young people with intellectual/developmental disabilities, families of youth with intellectual/developmental disabilities, educational service providers, community service providers and members of the Niagara Regional Transitional Aged Youth Committee. We will also conduct focus groups.
- The results of this research may be presented at academic and community conferences, workshops and in classrooms and other educational settings.
- The findings of this research may be published for academic, professional and/or general audiences, in refereed journals, books/book chapters, as facts sheets and/or in presentation formats.

Your participation in the research will include:

- giving your permission to use your name and ask your advice in the research by participating in research planning and by allowing me to identify you by name in my research.

- If you agree, you will be identified as a “Family and Community Consultant.”
- participating in the development of the research design, document editing, interview question development, and development of recommendations based on the research results.
- agreeing that you will not recruit potential participants in any way.
- allowing your name to be used in the presentations, the thesis and publications that arise from the research.

What will be done to protect privacy and confidentiality:

- All information will be confidential to protect the identity of participants and minimize any potential risks.
- Data will be kept in a secure location at Brock University following transcription.
- Only the principal investigators and research assistants will have access to participants’ identifiers.
- Participants will not be identified by name in reports, publications or presentations of the research findings.

Potential limitations to our ability to guarantee anonymity are:

- The identity of all participants will remain confidential except in circumstances where abuse or threat of harm to self or others are disclosed or if the data are subpoenaed.

Potential benefits, which might come from this research:

- The study will provide participants with an avenue to voice their experience(s) and give suggestions to enhance the Tri-Sector transitional aged youth planning process.
- The study will provide findings that may inform future revisions and implementation of transitional aged youth planning protocols.
- The study will provide an understanding of the impacts of the Tri-Sector transitional aged youth planning process for the youth, their families, and service providers.
- The study may allude to service provision capacity issues that face service organizations and the Niagara Regional Transitional Aged Youth Committee and strategies to address them based on the data collected and the broader research literature.

Potential harm if any is:

- If participants become upset during an interview, they will be referred for access to support services provided through Contact Niagara.

Please complete the section below:

Yes or No (circle): I agree that my name will be identified as Co-Investigator and I will be called a “Family and Community Consultant” in such documents as the Brock University, District School Board of Niagara and Niagara Catholic District School Board Research Ethics Board applications, and also may be included in publications, Anne’s thesis and presentations at conferences, in classrooms or other settings.

Yes or No (circle): I give permission for my information gathered in this project to be used in future projects regarding the same topic. For example: the interview questions that I helped decide to use may be questions used in another project in the future.

Do you agree to be a partner in this project research partnership?

Yes ___ No ___

Do you agree having your full name listed as a co-investigator for this project in ethics applications, in publications, reports, in Anne’s thesis, and in presentations?

Yes ___ No ___

Do you agree to being called a Family and Community Consultant in ethics applications, in publications, in reports in Anne’s thesis and in presentations?

Yes ___ No ___

Do you agree to have your email address listed on Anne’s Brock University ethics application?

Yes ___ No ___

****If you agree to everything in this form please sign below:**

I, _____ (print name), agree to the above conditions.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Relationship to person: _____

Researcher’s Signature: _____ Date: _____

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at ar92qi@brocku.ca or my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Frances Owen, at either fowen@brocku.ca or at 905 688 5550 ext 4807. Questions can also be addressed to the Research Ethics Board at Brock Research 905 688 5550 ext. 3035, email: reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anne Readhead (PhD Candidate, Brock University)

Appendix Y

Hello:

This envelope contains two small envelopes.

One envelope is for the young person with an intellectual or developmental disability who lives at this address. The other small envelope is for the young person's parents or guardian.

Inside each envelope is an invitation asking you to participate in a project at Brock University.

Please realize that you are welcome to participate in this project whether or not your family member who has received the second small envelope wishes to participate.

This study is **not** looking for parents and young people to attend this study **together**.

The two letters are only being sent together in one large envelope because you both have the same address.

****Please see the letter inside** your small envelope.

Contact Anne Readhead at areadhead@brocku.ca if you are interested in this study or have any questions.

Thank you for considering these invitations.

Appendix Z**Will You Tell Your Story?**

We would like to talk to Parents or Guardians and young people with an intellectual and/or Developmental disability aged 14-25 years old.

We want to find out how young people are planning for the future!

What is going well?

What needs to be better?

The results of this research study may help other young people like you and your family!

This study has been reviewed and granted clearance by Brock University Ethics Board (File # 18-323)

If you want more information or details about how to participate in this research study:

Contact: Anne Readhead (Brock University PhD Student)

Email: areadhead@brocku.ca

Phone: Provided in original document.

Or you can contact: Professor Frances Owen at: fowen@brocku.ca

Thank you!

Appendix AA

Within-participant Thematic Analysis: NRTAYC’s Work and the TAY Planning Process

***Deductive Themes**

***Inductive Themes**

PAST – Process

PRESENT – Process

**FUTURE –
Improve/Vision**

***Community Agreement**
(document)

***Community practice**

***Increase youth engagement** (Only 10%)

* CN (drivers)

***Sharing** information and resources – **families**, sectoral

Less document

More person-driven

Commitment

*** Collaboration**

***Collaboration** (not there)

*Keep CN staff

Communication

Educ & Community

Commitment

Knowledge

Lead Designation

*Standardize **community practice** across regions

Visions differ

Positive relationships!

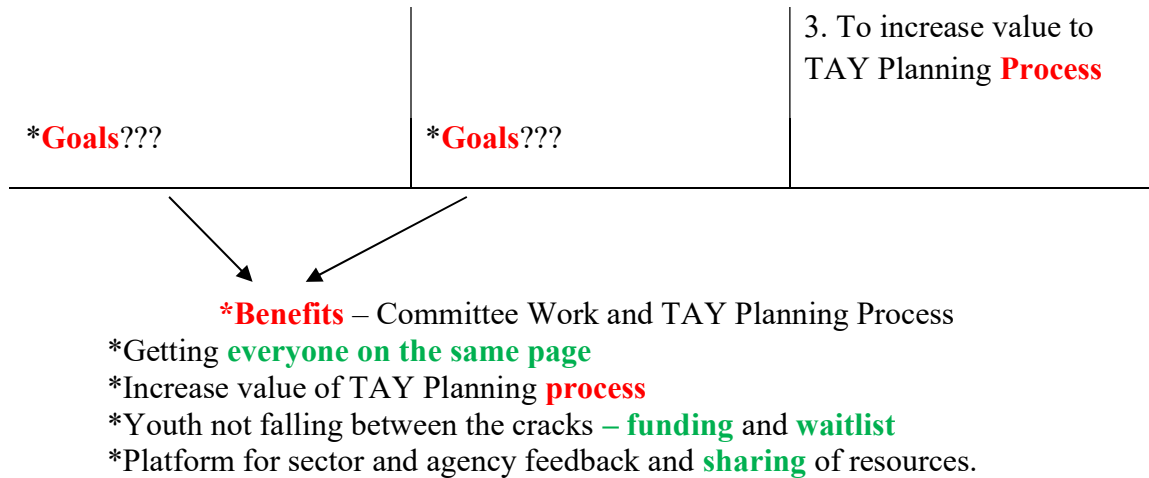
***Accountability**

*Ministry compliance

***Professional Competency**

1. To increase **accountability** with agencies

2. To increase credibility with **families**



Key Point: Through the work of the NRTAYC, implementation of the Local Community Agreement has assisted to identify youth who require adult funding and services, however, further collaboration between the community and education sectors along with an imposed measure of accountability to the process and practice will enhance the TAY Plan's credibility and its perceived value.

Appendix BB

Mapping of Education Professionals' within-group data analysis

