

**Alliance**  
*for Mental Well-Being*

ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024





“Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. Mental health is a basic human right. And it is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development.”

- World Health Organization, 2022



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We acknowledge that the land on which our organization stands and the places we gather is unceded Mi'kmaq territory. We convey our respects to the Indigenous Mi'kmaq People, their knowledge keepers, and their brave, resilient leaders and children, who have occupied this land for over 12,000 years; past, present, and future.



# Message from our Board Chair



On behalf of the Board and Staff of the Alliance for Mental Well-Being, I am pleased to share a report on our work for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. We have many achievements to celebrate, each a reflection of the hard work and dedication of our exceptional team, the support of our community partners and stakeholders, and the unwavering belief in our mission. From our innovative programs and initiatives to the cultivation of new partnerships, we have demonstrated that with vision and perseverance, we can turn aspirations into achievements.

This year's collective accomplishments are a shining example of what can be achieved when we work together with purpose and passion.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to the Board of the Alliance. The work they have undertaken this past year to solidify our governance model, which guides our operational systems and processes, is invaluable. With any newly created organization, there is much work required to ensure a strong foundation. Your dedication, expertise, and unwavering commitment have been pivotal to our organization's successes and progress.

The valuable work completed by the Alliance this past year was largely driven by our passionate, skilled, and dedicated team. Our staff have demonstrated a deep commitment to the Alliance's mission and vision, working tirelessly and with great enthusiasm to advance our mandate. Their caring, collaborative and innovative approach has been integral to the collective impact we've achieved this past year alongside our many partners. On behalf of the Board, I want to express my deepest appreciation to every member of the Alliance team.

As we look to the year ahead with excitement, we continue to be inspired by the dedication of individuals and organizations working together to help create a future where everyone on PEI can achieve the best possible mental well-being through their lives and effectively navigate the challenges they face.

**John Horrelt**  
Chair of the Board of Directors

# Thank you to our Board of Directors



Mary Pendergast



Chelsey Rogerson



Carolyn Francis



Claudette Gallant



Lucas MacArthur



Paula Gallant



Annette Ryan



Sophie MacDonald



Ryan Maxwell





# About Us

## Who We Are

Launched in 2021 as a response to community-informed recommendations, the Alliance for Mental Well-Being is an independent, incorporated, non-profit with a mandate to create the conditions for positive change so that all people on PEI can achieve and maintain the best possible mental well-being throughout their lives.

Our work is grounded in the science of brain development and resilience. Our range of programs and initiatives continues to evolve as we respond to the needs of our community partners and incorporate the latest research into our work.

## Our Vision

To be a leader and champion of mental well-being on PEI, driving positive change by empowering our community partners to achieve their most ambitious goals.

## Our Mission

Our mission is to support and empower our community partners so we collectively create a future where everyone on PEI can achieve and maintain the best possible mental well-being throughout their lives. To achieve our mission, we are committed to:

- providing relevant learning and development opportunities
- incorporating the latest research into our practices and sharing knowledge with our community
- creating opportunities for deep connection and collaboration
- encouraging innovation and change
- providing capacity support
- advocating on behalf of our courageous community partners

# Our Values

## COLLABORATION

Collaboration is at the heart of everything we do. We believe that the sum is greater than its parts and that by working together we can go much further. We actively seek out partnerships with individuals, communities, and organizations who share our values and goals. Open dialogue and mutual respect underpin all our collaborative relationships. We empower our partners and leverage their collective strengths to co-create a better future for all.

## LEARNING

We foster a culture of curiosity, inquiry, and reflection, encouraging everyone in our community to pursue ongoing learning and personal development. We embrace new ideas, recognizing that diversity of thought strengthens our impact. We share knowledge openly and encourage creativity to drive transformational change.

## EXCELLENCE

We are committed to pursuing the highest standards of quality in our mission-driven work. Through innovation, continuous improvement, and care for detail, we strive to deliver exceptional outcomes that positively impact our community. We aim to inspire hope, foster resilience, and empower creativity to meet the challenges and change that is a constant in our work.

## AUTHENTICITY

We choose to be genuine, transparent, and true to ourselves and our mission. Honesty and integrity are rooted in our core being. We are committed to staying true to our values and what we stand for, even in the face of challenges. Through authenticity, we aim to create a world where everyone is empowered to be their truest selves.

## RESPECT

We respect and value the inherent dignity of every individual. We are committed to creating an environment where all voices are heard, and diverse perspectives are honoured. We believe in treating every person with empathy, kindness, and fairness. We strive to cultivate a community of understanding and support, where our staff, Board, and community partners can thrive.





# Creating the Conditions for Positive Change Through Collective Impact

Inspired by our vision and guided by our mission and values, everything we do is designed to create the conditions for positive change in how we collectively support mental well-being on PEI.

To drive this change forward in 2023-2024, we concentrated on our two key pillars of interconnected work:

- 1) building a shared knowledge base grounded in evidence; and
- 2) developing and nurturing partnerships to create the conditions collective impact.

## Building a Shared Knowledge Base of Mental Well-Being

Our work is to help build a common language and knowledge base of mental well-being amongst our community partners and other key stakeholders. This is foundational to understanding each other, connecting the dots, and collaborating effectively.

The science of resilience and brain development form the foundation of our knowledge-building activities. These areas of knowledge can inform

initiatives that support mental well-being, including activities that build protective factors (coping skills) and/or support healthy brain development.

We are committed to identifying and sharing the latest research with our community partners. We advocate for evidence and strive to dispel myths, misconceptions and misinformation about mental well-being. We also understand that when knowledge is complicated or inaccessible it cannot effect change. We see a role for us to help our research partners distil and communicate their findings effectively to those best positioned to leverage these insights into impactful work.

## Developing and Nurturing Partnerships for Collective Impact

We believe wholeheartedly that the sum is greater than its parts and that together we can go much further than we can alone. To this end, we thoughtfully create opportunities to build and strengthen a network of empowered organizations and individuals working together to achieve a collective vision of mental well-being on PEI.

Nurturing partnerships also strengthens our efforts to build a common knowledge base and shared language. This makes it easier for us to work together and have a strong, unified voice when speaking about mental well-being.



# Our Collective Impact

Our achievements and impact stories of the past year shine a light on the interwoven approach we embed into all aspects of our work to build a common knowledge base and nurture partnerships.

## 1 | Mental Well-Being Research Forum

In the fall of 2023, we hosted our first Mental Well-Being Research Forum. The forum brought together more than 74 individuals representing community organizations, policy, government, people with lived and living experience, and the research community.

During our day together, we began developing an agenda and action plan for future mental well-being research in PEI. We explored how we would work together to integrate and align research activities with our shared goal of improving mental well-being outcomes through evidence-based approaches. We also examined how research findings can be used as a foundation for innovative policy and effective practice.

### Building a Shared Knowledge Base of Mental Well-Being

This working session gave us a chance to ‘test drive’ the common language and knowledge base we are building around mental well-being with a diverse group of partners.

Each time we bring people together to discuss resiliency, protective factors, brain architecture, and other elements of mental well-being, we strengthen our collective understanding of mental well-being from a holistic, prevention-focused perspective.

Through facilitated discussions and working groups, we identified key opportunities and challenges in our current research landscape. Big ideas were generated, and we developed concrete next steps in smaller working groups.

In follow-up to our collaborative work at the forum, we identified three working groups to focus on key research priorities identified by forum participants:

1. **Championing access to data and information sharing;**
2. **Establishing a Provincial Advisory Council of Lived Experience to inform research, policy and practice; and,**
3. **Fostering the translation and sharing of research/knowledge and supporting evidence-based practice in our community.**

The Mental Well-Being Research Advisory Table continues to spearhead this valuable work, with the Alliance providing backbone support to act on key opportunities identified during the Forum.

### Developing and Nurturing Partnerships for Collective Impact

The Forum provided an incredible opportunity for participants to build new connections, deepen existing ones, and identify potential partnerships.

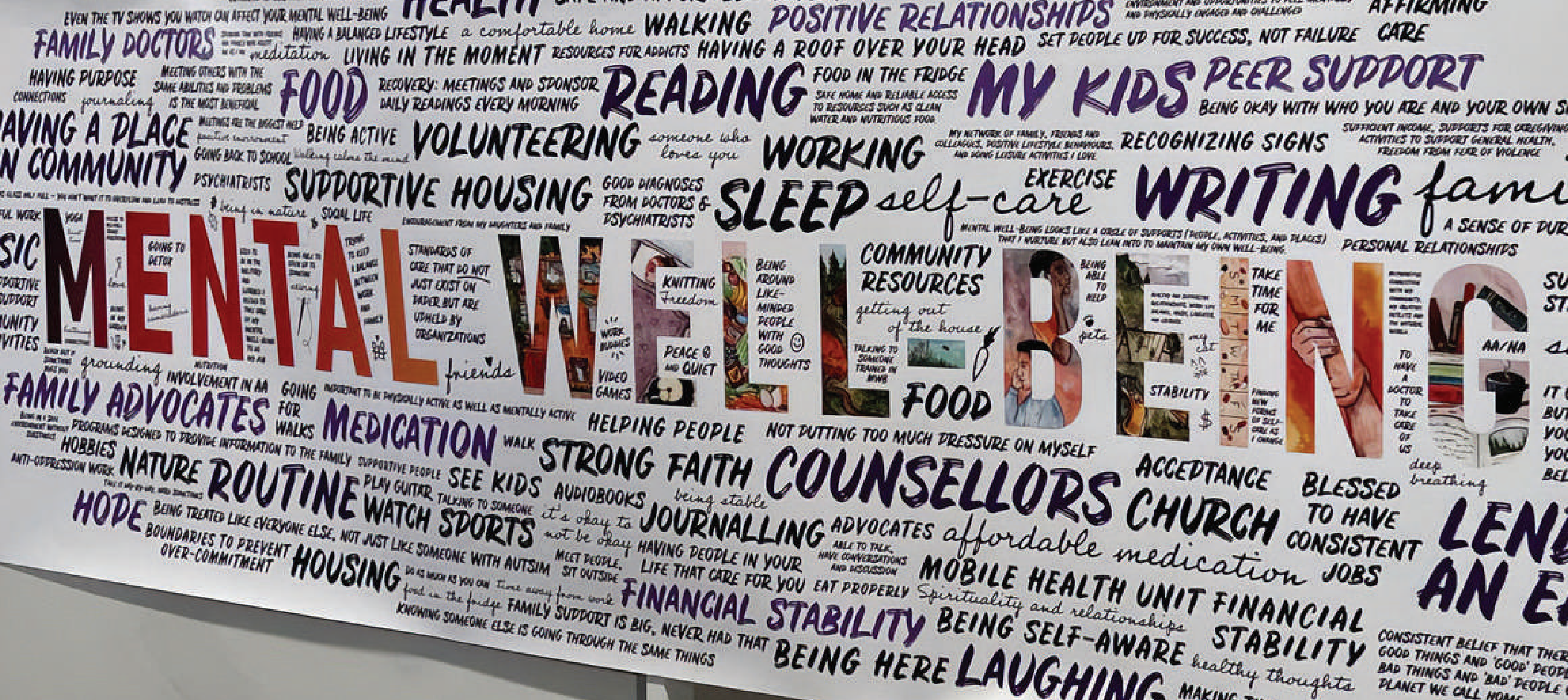
Bringing together a diverse range of participants helped foster engaging conversations and information sharing that doesn’t often happen when people remain isolated in their daily work.



**74**

individuals were brought together during the forum, representing community organizations, policy, government, people with lived and living experience, and the research community.





## 2 | Understanding How People Define Mental Well-Being

In the weeks leading up to the Mental Well-Being Research Forum, we collaborated with a community volunteer who had lived experience to understand how people define mental well-being. They traveled across PEI with our summer research student to speak with people from a wide range of backgrounds to gather their personal definitions of mental well-being. We learned that the concept of mental well-being means different things to different people.

This is an integral finding that we must keep front of mind in all our conversations, consultations, and communications. It's also an invaluable insight when pursuing collaborative research opportunities and when considering innovative public policy options. This important learning has and will continue to help shape and refine our approach to fostering connections and encouraging coordinated action amongst our community partners.

### Developing and Nurturing Partnerships for Collective Impact

Our work to develop and foster partnerships begins with our own connection building. This initiative provided valuable opportunities for the Alliance to meet with people across PEI, raising awareness of who we are and the vision we are working towards.

### Building a Shared Knowledge Base of Mental Well-Being

We are committed to conducting community-based research to inform our work. The insights from these initiatives will help us build a common language and understanding of mental well-being.





PHOTO PROVIDED BY: PEI LITERACY ALLIANCE'S READY SET LEARN PROGRAM

**\$1.8M**  
was awarded

### 3 | Focusing Action for Positive Change Grant Program

Our Focusing Action for Positive Change Grant Program supports community-based projects and initiatives focused on improving mental well-being for individuals, families and communities. To be eligible the proposed initiative must be led by a PEI non-profit or charitable organization, upstream in focus and prevention-based.

Through extensive outreach and engagement, including workshops, training and coaching, our Grant Program is designed to empower our community partners in their important work. We strive to help them build the science of resilience and brain development into their programs and services by sharing relevant knowledge and encouraging innovation.

#### Building a Shared Knowledge Base of Mental Well-Being

Our dedication to building a shared knowledge base is built directly into the eligibility criteria. Projects must focus on one or more of the three evidence-based approaches shown to build resilience and improve mental well-being: strengthening core life skills and executive functioning; reducing sources of toxic stress; and supporting positive 'serve and return' relationships. Every grant-funded initiative

serves as an opportunity to build our shared understanding of how 'real-world' applications of the evidence can contribute to mental well-being.

We also provide our grantees with many other capacity-building supports to help them develop more effective programs/services and give them the breathing room to plan more deeply and intentionally.

### Grant Program Recipients 2023-2024

| ORGANIZATION  | PROJECT  |
|---|--|
| Alzheimer Society of PEI                            | Thrive and Care - Therapeutic and Social Interventions for Caregivers                            |
| BGC Prince County                                   | BGC Prince County Community Engagement & Access Initiative                                       |
| Big Brothers Big Sisters of PEI                     | Teen Mentoring   |
| Canadian National Institute for the Blind           | Bringing Balance: Physiotherapy sessions for persons with sight loss                             |
| Clean Foundation                                    | Resilient Islanders, Resilient Island: Personal and Community Resilience to Climate Events.      |
| Cooper Institute                                    | Making Connections: Supporting Migrant Workers in PEI  |
| Kensington & Area Chamber of Commerce               | Planning for Resilience in Rural Business Communities  |
| Lung Association Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island | Taking Action on Youth Vaping/Smoking Harm Reduction   |
| PEI Association for Community Living                | Building Resilience in PEI Adults with Intellectual Disabilities and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder |
| PEI Coalition for Women in Government               | Fostering Resilience in Women Leaders: Developing Connection into Action                         |
| Rowing Prince Edward Island                         | Women on Water PEI   |

#### Developing and Nurturing Partnerships for Collective Impact

The grant program allows us to build deeper relationships with our grantees, which is integral to our vision of creating collective impact in the mental well-being landscape of PEI.

We also embrace innovation as a cornerstone of our mission. As such, we are committed to fostering trusting relationships and creating a safe place

for our grantees to get curious and try new/novel approaches to support mental well-being.

We bring our grantees together for learning opportunities, such as our Research Forum and Brain Story PEI Pilot, further building our shared knowledge base while nurturing connections and potential collaborations.





## 4 | Brain Story PEI Pilot

The Brain Story PEI Pilot Program represents two years of work by the Alliance to create a new, positive, and evidence-based dialogue on PEI about mental health and well-being.

The pilot program ran from December 2023 to June 2024 and was delivered in person to four cohorts at various locations across PEI. Each cohort was comprised of participants working in different capacities to support mental well-being. More than 114 participants from 31 community organizations and other entities, including police services and post-secondary institutions, participated in the training. To reduce barriers to participation, there was no cost to attend, and organizations were compensated for staff participation.

The comprehensive 35-hour training provided valuable insights into the science of resilience and brain development. The goal was to equip participants with knowledge and insights they can build into their prevention-based programming

and services. Participants learned how early childhood trauma creates a lifelong trajectory for poor mental and physical health outcomes. They also explored how protective factors (e.g. physical activity, literacy, social connections, etc.) can be built and strengthened throughout life to help children and adults navigate life's challenges. The content delivered is based on decades of research and science, compiled by the Center on the Developing Child (Harvard University) and Palix Foundation/ Alberta Family Wellness Initiative.

The training was also designed to foster connections and spark collaborative ideas amongst participants working to support the mental well-being of people living on PEI. As such, there were plenty of table discussions, engaging activities, and other ideation opportunities embedded into the design of each day. All participants will also be invited to PEI Brain Builders network, launching in 2024-2025.

A comprehensive evaluation of the Pilot was carried out by an independent 3rd party after each cohort training. The findings will help shape enhancements and future program delivery.

## PEI Brain Story Pilot Program Participants

|                                 |                                       |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Alzheimer Society of PEI        | Faculty of Education, UPEI            |
| Atlantic Summer Institute       | Family Service PEI                    |
| Advisory Committee              | Hijinks Design Agency                 |
| BGC Charlottetown               | Holland College Counselling           |
| BGC Prince County               | Kensington & Area Chamber of Commerce |
| Big Brothers Big Sisters of PEI | Lung NS & PEI                         |
| Blooming House                  | Native Council of PEI                 |
| Building GRAND-Families Inc.    | Paramedic Association of PEI          |
| Canadian National               | PEERS Alliance                        |
| Institute for the Blind         | PEI Coalition for Women in Government |
| CHANCES                         | PEI Counselling Association           |
| Charlottetown Police Services   | Public Schools Branch                 |
| CMHA PEI                        | Reach Foundation                      |
| Community Outreach Centre       | Rowing Prince Edward Island           |
| Community Sector                | Special Olympics PEI                  |
| Network of PEI                  | Student Well-being Team               |
| Cooper Institute                | The Adventure Group                   |
| Creative PEI                    | Your Life Design                      |

## Developing and Nurturing Partnerships for Collective Impact

Every element of the Brain Story Pilot Program was designed to foster connections and inspire collaborative ideas. From the thoughtful curation of our cohort invite lists to the assigned seating (which we changed daily), to the many group-based activities and discussions throughout the training, our emotional closing circle, and our post follow-ups to each cohort, we remained fully dedicated to creating space for genuine conversations, vulnerability, trust and deep connections to develop.

We also recognized that for many participants, the Brain Story Pilot would be their first interaction with the Alliance. We took care to ensure that we made the most of our 35 hours with each cohort, raising awareness about what we do and how we can support them in their work. Every member of the Alliance team also attended one of the Brain Story cohorts as a participant.

## Building a Shared Knowledge Base of Mental Well-Being

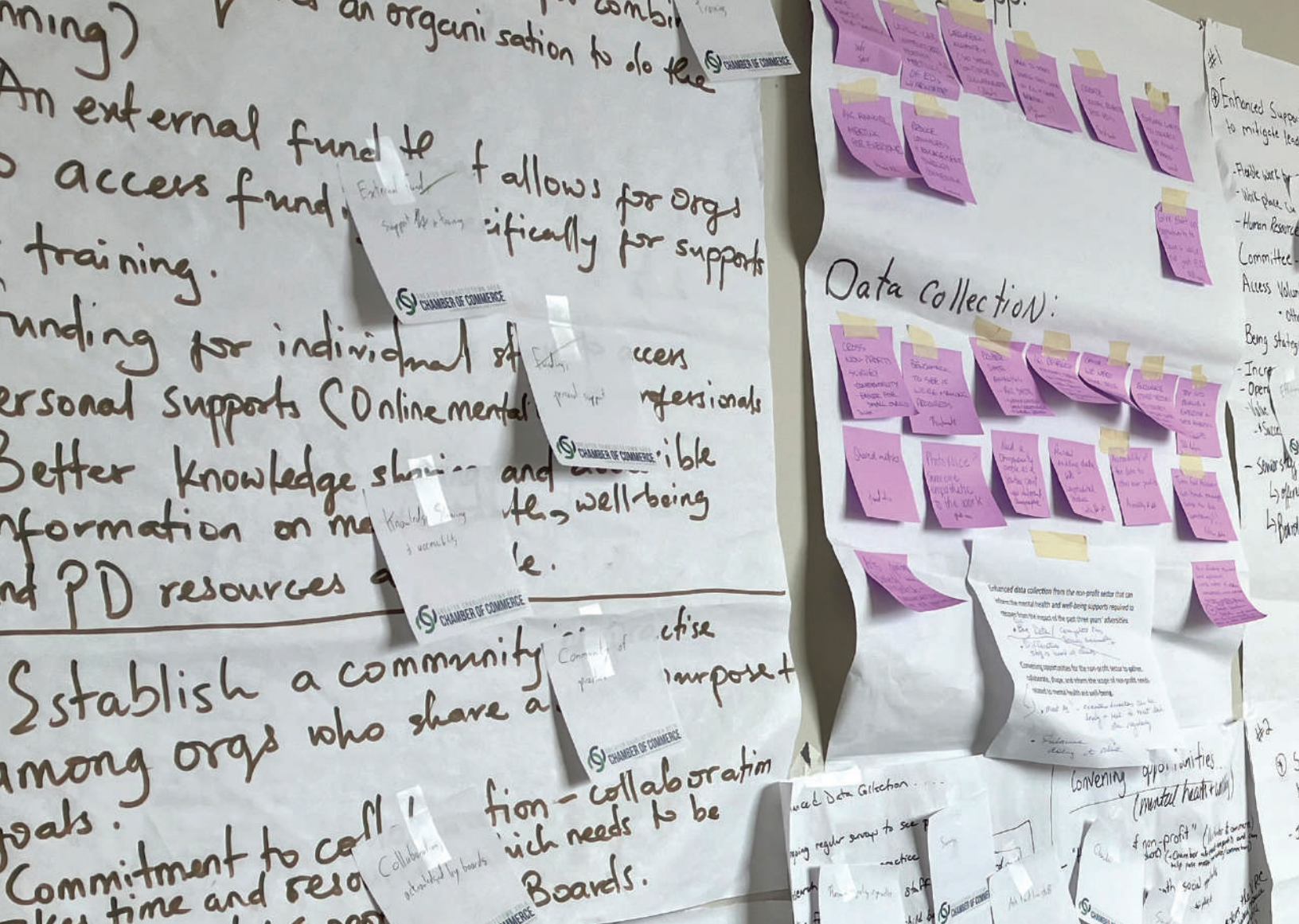
One of primary objectives of the Brain Story PEI Pilot is to build a common knowledge base and language amongst participants, which are integral to supporting the whole person in their mental well-being journey.

Our carefully designed curriculum explored science-based concepts such as resiliency, toxic stress, protective factors, etc. in many ways

(e.g. video content, hands-on games, table discussions, illustrations, etc.).

The intent was two-fold. First, we wanted to accommodate different learning styles. Second, we wanted to encourage conversations about these topics, so participants became comfortable speaking in this common language.





## 5 | Understanding the Mental Well-Being Needs of the Non-Profit Sector

We partnered with the Community Sector Network of PEI to gain a better understanding of the mental well-being realities and needs of staff and volunteers working in PEI non-profits. Together, we surveyed these essential ‘helpers’, with a focus on organizations that were responsible for the highest level of service to Islanders during the pandemic and in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Fiona.

Findings from the survey were presented to more than 40 individuals representing government, academics and the non-profit community at a workshop held in May 2023. The goal was to identify key barriers as well as opportunities to support the mental well-being of the non-profit community.

Actions and recommendations centered around the following themes:

- Resources and Training
- Sector Collaboration
- Supportive Work Environments
- Funding and Other Supports
- Research and Innovation

Insights from this collaboration helped inform how we support our non-profit community partners through our work, including the delivery of our Grant Program, Mental Well-Being Research Forum, and the Brain Story PEI Pilot.

## Highlights

**Understanding the Mental Health and Well-Being Needs of Non-Profit Organizations on PEI:**  
A survey delivered by the Alliance for Mental Well-Being and the Community Sector Network of PEI

**High employee morale is trending downward.**

**49%** of respondents ranked staff morale at 4 out of 5 prior to the declaration of the COVID19 pandemic.

**27%** ranked staff morale at 4 out of 5 post-Hurricane Fiona.

**The top three factors positively impacting the mental well-being and morale of staff and volunteers were reported as:**

- 64%** workplace culture
- 64%** workplace colleagues
- 64%** flexible work hours

**74%** of respondents reported seeing signs of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion in their staff.

**33%** of respondents reported offering staff training related to mental health and mental well-being-related topics.

**The top three factors negatively impacting the mental well-being and morale of staff and volunteers were reported as:**

- 73%** fatigue from juggling work/home responsibilities
- 70%** increasing demands from personal responsibilities
- 52%** pivoting priorities based on current activities and needs in our community

When asked what barriers leadership faced in supporting staff mental health and well-being needs, the top themes were: time, lack of staffing, lack of support for leadership, funding and resources.

[CLICK ON LINK FOR FULL REPORT](#)

### Building a Shared Knowledge Base of Mental Well-Being

The survey and workshop gave voice to non-profit community organizations who provide fundamental services that are critical to community well-being.

Participant responses helped us gain important insights that continue to inform the evolution of our programs, so they are designed to ‘help the helpers’.

### Developing and Nurturing Partnerships for Collective Impact

This project provided us with the opportunity to collaborate with the Community Sector Network of PEI, a partnership we value and continue to deepen.

The collaboration also developed/deepened connections with the many non-profit organizations that participated in the survey and the May workshop. Our goal was to ensure they felt seen, heard and supported through this project.





**80+**   
**individuals**  
 representing national, provincial and community-based organizations gathered to connect and learn about each other's actions and commitment to preventing mental health and substance use issues.

## 6 | National Summit on the Role of the Family in Preventing Harms Associated with Substance Use

In partnership with the Canadian Centre for Substance Use and Addictions (CCSA), we hosted a national summit on the role of family in preventing harm associated with substance use. The summit took place in Charlottetown, PEI on October 13, 2023. More than 30 participants from PEI and across Canada attended, representing diverse views, backgrounds, and responsibilities related to this important focus on harm prevention.

During the summit, we facilitated important conversations on evidence-informed, family-focused interventions and held break-out sessions focused on action planning. Together, we identified common themes and calls to action centered around the supports and resources families need to prevent substance use harms.

The summit also coincided with the meeting of federal, provincial, and territorial ministers of health and mental health and addictions. The Alliance was invited to present on our work and ministers were particularly interested in the grant program as an effective mechanism for accelerating prevention-focused activities.

A pre-summit dinner was jointly hosted by the Alliance and the CCSA. More than 80 individuals representing national, provincial and community-based organizations gathered to connect and learn about each other's actions and commitment to preventing mental health and substance use issues.

### Building a Shared Knowledge Base of Mental Well-Being

Summit participants, including the Alliance team and several PEI attendees, worked together to identify the supports/resources families need to help prevent harm related to substance use and focus on relevant action planning. In doing so, we enhanced the knowledge base on this key prevention-based topic.

We also used the gathering as an opportunity to strengthen our shared language around mental well-being, focusing on concepts such as resiliency and protective factors.

### Developing and Nurturing Partnerships for Collective Impact

Co-hosting this summit with the CCSA allowed us to deepen our relationship with this important national partner in harm prevention.

Small is beautiful, especially when the goal is to foster and deepen connections. The intimate scale of the Summit allowed everyone in attendance to connect and have valuable, in-depth conversations.



# What are your **expectations** from the MVPs Project? (What are your expectations for your Well-Being?)



## 7 | Measuring Our Impact

In February 2024, we held a collaborative working session to help inform how we serve our community partners and achieve our mission.

We welcomed more than 30 participants including the Alliance Board and staff, our grant recipients, members of our Peer Review Committee, Brain Story PEI participants, and other community partners, including

members of our Research Advisory Table. Together, we explored ways the Alliance can strategically evaluate our activities, measure our impact, and evolve our work based on these insights. We also gained valuable insights from participants on our working Theory of Change, which will help inform its final development.



### Building a Shared Knowledge Base of Mental Well-Being

This working session gave us a chance to test drive the common language and knowledge base we are building around mental well-being with a diverse group of partners. Each time we bring people together to discuss resiliency, protective factors, brain architecture, and other elements of mental well-being, we strengthen our collective understanding of mental well-being from a holistic, prevention-focused perspective.

### Developing and Nurturing Partnerships for Collective Impact

This session served as a valuable opportunity to deepen our connections within our team and with our community partners. It also provided participants from diverse backgrounds (e.g. research, governance, and community service) to connect around meaningful conversations about mental well-being. Finally, this working session demonstrated the Alliance's commitment to curiosity and collaboration and helped create buy-in to our vision and our 'help the helpers' approach.



# Board Chair & Executive Committee Report

Mary Pendergast - Chair of Governance and Nominating Committee



# Thank You

to our staff and the many volunteers who have dedicated their time, expertise and passion to our endeavours.

## Research Advisory Table

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Bill Montelpare (Co-Chair)   | Health Centered Research Network, UPEI              |
| Bonnie Lipton-Bos (Co-Chair) | Alliance For Mental Well-Being                      |
| Nicole Peters                | Health PEI  |
| Kate Kelly                   | Health Centered Research Network, UPEI              |
| Shamara Baidoobonso          | Chief Public Health Office                          |
| Mary-Ann Standing            | Health Centre for Health & Community Research, UPEI |
| Orgesa Dana                  | Dept. Health and Wellness                           |
| Michael McIsaac              | UPEI  |
| Emily Cook-McDonald          | UPEI  |

Thank you to all of the Alliance staff that have contributed to our work over the past year including our former and current team members, summer students and UPEI Nursing students.

### Peer Review Committee

Our Peer Review Committee is responsible for evaluating grant program applications against specific and clear criteria and making recommendations to the Board for funding approval. Our formalized Peer Review adjudication process ensures an independent review of applications; supports management of real and perceived conflict of interest; and facilitates diverse representation of the PEI context in the grant decision-making process. Peer Reviewers dedicate a considerable amount of time to this process, and we truly value and appreciate their investment.



Thank you to our funders for supporting our work.



Community Services Recovery Fund





# A Look Ahead 2024-2025

The year to come presents an exciting opportunity to build on our successes, tackle new challenges, and continue our commitment to making a positive impact. Here's a glimpse into what we're planning to accomplish in the year ahead:

- Delivering a fourth year of our Focusing Action for Positive Change Grant Program
- Increasing our outreach and connecting with more individuals and organizations working to improve mental well-being outcomes for people and communities in PEI
- Creating more opportunities for people working within the mental well-being landscape to come together, share, and learn from each other
- Facilitating tailored learning sessions to build a shared knowledge base across sectors
- Continuing to build a mental well-being research agenda and action plan
- Delivering a second Mental Well-Being Research Forum focused on community-based research
- Continuing to strengthen and enhance our governance practices and organizational capacity and resources.





# Advancing resiliency.

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